# Bangladesh in German Media

Mohammad Amjad Hossain writes from Bonn

The recent trend in the German media is to accord more coverage to the events in

Bangladesh. There appears to be a positive trend to improve the image of Bangladesh.

T. N Germany, the media enjoy freedom under Article 5 of Lthe Basic Law, and the Federal Constitutional Court noted that "a free press, which is controlled by the state and not subject to censorship, is an essential element of the free country and that, in particular, regular press publications are indispensable to the modern democracy. If the people are to be able to make decisions they must be supplied with the information with which to assess opinions".

The Federal Republic of Germany, which is located in the heart of Europe, is surrounded by Denmark in the north, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France in the west. Switzerland and Austria in the south and the Czech Republic, as well as Poland, in the east. A country's foreign policy is very understandably influenced by its geographical bearings as well as its economic condition. Therefore, the media in Germany focus their attention, quite logically, on the developments in the neighbouring countries, apart from its own domestic issues of importance.

The intensification of political and economic relations with Asia, in particular South East Asia, was, of late, the central focus of the German foreign

In the light of the above geographical and economic compulsions, one could examine the prospect of receiving treatment by the media about Bangladesh, which is located får away from Germany.

The sudden but premeditated attack of the Pakistani forces in the night of 25 March 1971 on the 75 million unarmed people of Bangladesh and the savage brutality with which they tried to crush the democratic aspirations of the Bengalees shocked people all over the World. The events of the War of

Garfield ®

GARFIELD'S TONGUE

IS BURNED

Tom and Jerry

EVERY ANT IN THE PARK IS HEADING

Liberation and the determination and fortitude with which the people of Bangladesh fought the Pakistan occupation forces were followed by world news media with considerable interest, and in most cases, with sympathy and admiration. The German media were no excep-

They also accorded good coverage to the developments.

The interest continued even after the country was liberated in December 1971 and hundreds of journalists streamed into Bangladesh to see and report to the world how this devastated nation, torn by the convulsions of an all-pervasive war of liberation, was facing up to the gigantic task of relief, rehabilitation and reconstructions in all fields, under the guidance of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation and the great leader of the people whose inspiration and oratory ability steered the nation to freedom.

It is an acknowledged fact that the War of Liberation in Bangladesh was an epoch-making event of the twentieth century. Some excerpts from the German media on Bangladesh are given below:

> "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" (daily) of 23 September 1971 Editorial: The Bengal Fire by Klaus Natorp

"Humanitarian aid is most important and urgent. The care of the East Pakistani refugees in India and the equally numerous afflicted and needy in eastern Bengal could still be greatly improved. But the matter should not rest there. Not only the symptoms of the crisis are to be treated, but also the root of the sickness should be cured. Two requirements are

HOW DID THAT

HAPPEN?

necessary for that: the internal peace in Pakistan, that means, reconciliation of the estranged wings of the state jointly formed in 1947, and the abatement of the dangerous tension, which developed during the course of the East Bengal conflict between the subcontinental neighbours. Pakistan and India. As far as the latter is concerned, lately there have been some signs of relaxation.

The danger of the war seems to have lessened. Of course, the sounds of fighting can still be heard on both sides, but it seems in the meantime all responsible persons in New Delhi and Islamabad are convinced that a military confrontation would be a greater disaster for both countries than the present situation, which resulted from the violent suppression of the Bengali Liberation Movement."

The following matters must be discussed on a neutral basis "before new critical incidents

External relations: "How the East Pakistani refugees could be hastened to return to their homes as "their permanent maintenance is an unbearable burden to India"

Internal situation: The refugees would only return if ... they would be safe there and the West Pakistani troops" confined "to their barracks. The majority of the population still considers the West Pakistani soldiers as an occupation army and (also) looks upon the civilian administration. which was appointed by them as traitors." It will be difficult to get West Pakistan to 'admit that

by Jim Davis

By Hanna-Barbera

HE WAS LICKING A WAFFLE IRON

the reconciliation of the western wing with the eastern wing still lies far off, if it is at all possible" and "to accept the idol of the East Pakistanis, the imprisoned Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the other leaders of the Awami League in the general amnesty."

The "Frankfurter Allgemeire Zeitung of 16 September 1972 wrote that the Awami League still appears to be the only political party personifying authority.

"Die Welt" of 8 December 1972 reported that the exclusive wheel of authority does not yet properly have effect and is. therefore, not in a position to change the words of Mujib which is understood as the guiding principle. This word at the same time accepts the place of material force. It may be weak but it works astoundingly strongly. That is actually the surprise of seeing Bangladesh again after ten or eleven months - that this state has not crumbled long ago into chaos after the withdrawal of the Indian troops, as many of them said it would.

This was the trend of the media in Germany until December 1972. After the euphoria of the War of Liberation and reconstruction of the war-ravaged economy was over, the world media in general and the German media in particular remained unconcerned. The stigma of Henry Kissinger's oftquoted words - basket case, disaster-prone, poorest of the poor, poverty-stricken etc., added to the story as and when Bangladesh was reported in the

A review made within the Embassy of articles which appeared in the period 31.01.96 to 11.11.96 reveals the fact that the print media in Germany is paying attention to the events other than natural disaster in Bangladesh. A total of 522 articles, in the form of press clippings made available to the Embassy by an office for media observation in Berlin, was taken into consideration: 288 articles dealt with the elections in Bangladesh in 1996. This was a very active period in Bangladesh, and this did not go unnoticed in the German press The articles included not only the results of the two elections in the period, but also the preelection and post-election situations. Also, the political personalities in particular the two top female feaders, were reviewed.

With a total of nearly 70 articles, flooding and cyclone catastrophes were described Child labour was dealt with in 30 articles, and it was not forgotten to mention that Bangladesh is doing all in its power to do away with this by giving children the opportunity to go to school. Living and working conditions were described in 16 articles.

It seems to be important to the German media to record catastrophes happening in Bangladesh, and the sinking of ships, both island ferries and sea-going ships (often fisher boats) never seemed to be disregarded

Although the textile industry in Bangladesh is a flourishing branch and one of the main sources of foreign currency, it

was deemed important by the German media over the given period only 11 times. The BMZ Minister Spranger, in the course of his trip to South Asia. was mentioned 8 times in connection with Bangladesh.

r never thought I will live this

of independence day and live

beyond that even. Allah graced

me with this opportunity and I

am grateful to Him. Being a

housewife and mother of nine

children I never thought of

writing any article in any

newspaper or journal. Writing

to me remained limited to daily

financial account and one letter

a month to my wards living

abroad. But in this special

month, I have the inner urge to

express myself and let the na-

tion know what my own family

especially my second son and

my late husband did at the very

beginning of the war of libera-

tion. My second son who is

now a professor of physics at

the Zambian University had

the habit of tuning his transis-

tor-radio and listen to different

stations after dinner. That is

how he could catch the military

conversation on the night of 25

March 1971 and also had the

farsightedness to tape record it

while one of my daughters

helped him in keeping this

permanent first-hand record of

cold-blooded brutality. This

tape was later broadcast by

Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra,

Akashbani, BBC, etc. during our

first days of bloody liberation

war. Taking family initiative,

we published the content of this

historical document of im-

mense record value and it was

published by Boi Para

Prokashana (Tikka Khan from

Control Room), alongwith two

television broadcasts. It got

wide newspaper coverage in

March last year. At my ripe age

I still feel the excitedness, out-

rage, frustration, hatred ex-

pressed by each and every

member of my immediate fam-

ily on that long and horrified

struggle to survive with our six

daughters at home, maintain-

ing dignity, and helping others

at the same time as much as we

could. Well, almost at the same

time we were put to another

task: just two days after this in-

cidence and during break-hour

of curfew on 27 March. Almost

all our relatives residing in the

more frequented, more visible

With this started the family

night of 25 March 1971.

long to see the silver jubilee

The Grameen Bank has now became better known due to the Micro-Credit Summit at the beginning of February 1997, but in 1996 it was mentioned only 5 times in the articles made available to the Embassy.

The elections were mentioned in all the larger national newspapers such as the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", "Die Welt" (from Berlin), the "Frankfurter Rundschau" and the "Suddeutsche Zeitung" (from Munich). The "Handelsblatt" (from Dusseldorf), an important economic daily, also mentioned the elections, and sometimes carried articles about the textile industry or the economic situation of the stock exchange in Dhaka in a list with all the other exchanges in the World. Bangladesh was, however

well covered in the eastern part of Germany and Berlin, not only by the national dailies, such as 'Der Tagesspiegel' (Berlin) and the "Berliner Morgenpost" published there, but also by local dailies, such as the Neueste "Potsdamer Nachrichten", the "Leipziger Volkszeitung' or the "Oranienburg Generalazneiger". Perhaps this reflects the close link to Bangladesh with the former East Germany at a previous stage in recent history.

The recent trend in the German media is to accord more coverage to the events in Bangladesh. There appears to be a positive trend to improve the image of Bangladesh.

Since the establishment of

diplomatic relations with Bangladesh in mid '72. Germany has constantly been extending economic assistance to Bangladesh to help in its economic emancipation. Apart from economic assistance, Germany has emerged as the second largest trading partner of Bangladesh in Europe. Trade relations between the two friendly countries are being expanded with the passage of time as private entrepreneurs from Bangladesh show an increasing interest in the participation in specialised trade fairs in the Federal Republic of Germany. These are positive indicators, which show the trend of a growing relationship between the two countries. Some Non-Governmental Organisations, such as Netz, Andheri-Hilfe, Die Lichtbrucke, the Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development and the Catholic Central Office for Development Assistance are involved in socio-economic development projects in Bangladesh. There is a lack of understanding of the German media in these aspects. The taxpayers of the Federal Republic of Germany have the legitimate right to know how their money is being spent. Here the media have the responsibility to inform the people of Ger-

the German-assisted projects. The people of Germany are also not aware of the fact that contacts and relations between these two countries have existed for centuries. Fairy tales and sagas from Bengal, which now constitutes Bangladesh, have found a place in German litera-

many of the developments in

Bangladesh, particularly about

The media in Germany have the special role to promote cultural relations between the two countries.

## March 1971: History Came Down to My Humble House for a Short While

by Jamila Khatun or posh areas like Nawabpur. Shantinagar, Malibagh, etc. expressed their desire to stay unnoticed at least for a couple of days in our house situated at a far less frequented area like Khilgaon. But the peak of this shelter taking reached when a colleague of both our second son and son-in-law of Atomic Energy Centre, Dhaka came to see my husband (now late) and requested him humbly to offer shelter for him and his preg-Well, it was no common scientist colleague of them; it was Dr. Wazed Mia, the husband of the eldest daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who surely

was at that time widely known to all of us as Bangabandhu and was the undisputed leader and who, we heard through the same military conversation, was arrested and taken away by the Pak Army. There is a hard fact to grasp and to visualize the situation here: my husband retired from his job at Karachi. came back to Dhaka and just finished (not quite though) the construction work of the first storey of our two-storied building, and that with a bank loan. It was the life-time dream of a father of nine children. The weight of this request was supposed to be heavy on him: the very existence of the building plus the safety and dignity of our six daughters vis-a-vis apprehension of a possible military attack that might have occurred any moment. It is also to mention here that one of our neighbours was non-Bengali to add to the already existing fear. But we feel proud to mention it every time during our family discussion that my husband didn't hesitate for a second, his straight forward answer was yes, come and take shelter with us as you express the desire. They came and stayed with us for a few days; well it was not that simple in reality. We had altogether around 40-50 people where no one was supposed to identify this couple, hence they were given a single room (they

ple, one cousin named Jelly and a boy servant). There was no gas supply at Khilgaon area back in 1971, my eldest daughter used to cook the food for all of us using a woodfuel-stove in the back yard. Interested readers can find a short description of this incidence in Dr. Wazed Mia's book "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibke ghiree kichu ghatana o Bangladesh" (ISBN984 05 01348) published by the University Press Limited (pages: 79,80,83,99).

As a housewife I witnessed

the whole episode of the war of liberation through the eyes of my family members. My eldest son was staying at Karachi with his family in 1971 and while trying to reach Dhaka through Kabul, Delhi his wife broke her collar bone. With all this account of very small importance of national scale I simply wish to say that almost all families and almost everybody in every corner of the country took part in the war in some way or other. Quite frequently, freedom fighters used to take shelters for a single night, hide their weapon for a period, hold short discussion meetings at our house, which was a normal sight in innumerable other houses also. And finally, after liberation, family friend and air force officer-cum-valiant freedom fighter Sultan Mahmud (later promoted to Air Vice-Marshal) landed his helicopter in front of our house to seek dog and blessings from my husband. After liberation, I said thank You Allah, I feel sure that at least no one has to listen to the phrase "BHUKA BANGALEE" like we had to at Karachi.

I still recollect all these days vividly and recollect surely seeing Sheikh Hasina in our house after liberation. I am really happy to live this long to see Sheikh Hasina leading the government.

At the end of my recollection, I have a small prayer to all the leaders of our country: make Bangladesh a safe and prosperous country for our future generations and let them be proud of our past by giving due credit and honour to every honourable citizen of this country.

## The First Bangladesh Mission During the War of Independence

were four altogether - the cou-

LL the 65 Bangladeshi offi-A cers and officials of Pak-▲ Listan Deputy High Commission, Calcutta opted to Mujibnagar Government of Banglatiesh under the leadership of Mr. Hossain All the then Deputy High Commissioner on April 18, 1971 and hoisted Bangladesh Flag on the Deputy High Commission building. These officials declared the Deputy High Commission as Bangladesh Mission at Calcutta and began to work for Bangladesh. Due to the endeavour of these officials, Calcutta mission became the prime centre of activities during the Independent War. The ministers including the Prime Minister of the provisional Mujibnagar Government used to visit and stay in Calcutta on various requirements and these 65 officials helped them in their activ-

In July 1971 Pakistan Government took option from these 65 Bangladeshis through the then Swiss Ambassador in India. We all opted for Bangladesh. Those few staff members

from Pakistan who were serving with us in Calcutta mission went back to Pakistan. We came to know later on that those Pakistani staff members were given special promotion and got good and lucrative posting in Pakistan mission abroad. But this is a matter of great regret that these 65 Bangladeshi, who worked for Bangladesh did not get any special benefits.

During the nine months struggle, we worked in the mission for Bangladesh. On September 15, 1971, all the staff members of Calcutta mission sat for a confidential meeting and passed resolution and sent the copies of the resolution to all Heads of Government/State through Indian Embassies/ High Commissions abroad to recognise Bangladesh and help our freedom fighters with heavy weapons to fight with Pakistani occupation forces. During the nine months of struggle the people of India specially the people of West Bengal helped us in all respects.

by ABM Khurshid Alam efforts and achievement of those 65 Bangladesh officers/ officials. To hoist Bangladesh flag and opting for Bangladesh on April 18, 1971 was an act was an event that must be remembered. After independe-nce so many people got gallan-tly awards (both Military/Civil) for their performances in the Liberation War. But I feel sorry to inform that nobody from those 65 Bangladeshis yet got any. Even the name of Mr. Hossain Ali is going to be forgotten. nobody perhaps recalls him even on his birth/death anniversary. Lest we forget him and his staff!

> After long 21 years Awami League, the freedom movement party, has come to power. We all the freedom fighters feel very happy. It is our urge to the PM, who is also daughter of Bangabandhu, not to forget those freedom fighters, specially the families of those 65 Bangladeshi officers/officials who started freedom movement at Calcutta, risking their king and belongings at home.

#### Fire at Demra

By Staff Correspondent A fire gutted at least seven small business installations at Kutubkhali under Demra thana in the city early yesterday. The damaged set-ups in-

cluded two kerosene stove manufacturing factories, packaging industry, sanitary factory, automobile workshop and a restaurant, police and fire brigade officials said. The origin of the fire that

broke out at about 4 am could not be known immediately. No casualty was reported in the incident till filing of this report last night. Two units of the fire fighters

about an hour and a half to extinguish the blaze. Police said the flame sparked off from Falcon Metal Industry, a stove manufacturing factory. The fire soon engulfed other shops and facto-

ries.

from Postagola station took

### SNS holds rally

By Staff Correspondent Sammilito Nari Samaj (SNS) staged demonstrations and held protest rallies in front of the Razarbagh Police Lines and the court premises in the city yesterday in protest of the increasing raping incidents of women and children, says a press release.

They (SNS) also held a street rally near the Sadarghat launch terminal to lodge their protest in this regard.

Urging the government to take necessary action to stop all kinds of repression on women

and children, the SNS leaders at the rallies called for increase social consciousness to put an end of barbarous incidents like raping of women and children. the press release said.

#### 5-year old boy killed in road mishap

I KNOW, I DON'T

By Staff Correspondent A five-year-old boy was killed and his mother was seriously injured as an oil tanker hit a rickshaw on Green Road at Dhanmondi in the city yester-

Police identified the dead as Zahidul Islam. His mother Jaitun Begum, 25, was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Jaitun came to the city from Shakhipur in Tangail with a relative, Meser Ali, for treatment of her son, Zahidul.

The accident occurred beside a filling station of the crossing of Mirpur Road and Green Road at about 1 pm. Jaitun, her son and Meser met the accident when they were going to Green Road to a relative's house in a rickshaw.

Dhanmondi police arrested Harun-ur-Rashid, the driver of the tanker, and seized the vehicle. A case was lodged with Dhanmondi thana in connection with the incident.

> Nurul Haq Bhuiyan indisposed

ASM Nurul Haq Bhuiyan (79) is undergoing treatment at the ICU in Diabetic Hospital (BIRDEM) in a critical condition.

A veteran activist of the Language Movement, the convenor of first Rastrabhasa Sangram Parishad, former chairman of the Department of Applied Chemistry and Chemical Technology in Dhaka University (DU) and former provost of Sir AF Rahman Hall of DU. Prof Haq seeks blessings from the relatives and wellwishers for immediate recovery.

#### Aurora calls on Navy chief

Lt Gen (Rtd) Jagjit Singh Aurora, former GOC-in-Chief of the Indian Eastern Command, yesterday called on Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Mohammad Nurul Islam at the Naval Headquarters, reports

#### FFs urged to be united to eliminate Razakars

By Staff Correspondent Speakers at a discussion yesterday said that the persons who did not hesitate to risk their lives by joining the Liberation War, were still the most

dignified citizens of the coun-

try, says a press release. Recalling the heroic leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during Liberation War, the discussants called upon the freedom fighters to be united to eliminate Razakars from the

Organised by Bangladesh Muktijuddha Sangsad (BMS), the discussion was held at the Dhaka District Krira Samity auditorium yesterday.

country.

A number of dignified persons and veteran freedom fighters including a member of the Planning Commission of the exiled government during the Liberation War Prof Anisuzzaman, organiser of the freedom movement poet Asad Chowdhury, Sculptor Rasha, Commander of the Sub Sector Nine Major (Retd) Ziauddin, Sadeq Ahmed Khan, Ishtiaq Aziz, Syed Abul Bashar, Zamaluddin Ahmed, Fazlul Haq took part in the discussion presided by the BMS convenor Saidur Rahman.

The discussion titled "Arrest of Bangabandhu on March 25 and the Mass Killing Day" was organised to mark the Black Night of March 25 and the arrest of Bangabandhu.



= Metropolitan =

Chief Justice Abu Taher Mohammad Afzal administering the oath of office to Prof M Mustafa Chowdhury, the newly appointed Chairman of Public Service Commission (PSC), at -PID photo the Supreme Court Bhaban yesterday.



Speakers at a discussion on 'Arrest of Bangabandhu on March 25 and the Mass Killing Day' in the city yesterday. - Star photo

#### More heads of state, govt greet

#### President, PM

More heads of state and government have congratulated President Shahabuddin Ahmed on the occasion of the 27th Independence and National Day, reports UNB.

In their messages they expressed the hope that the existing close and friendly relations between Bangladesh and their countries would be further strengthened in future. The messages so far received

from the President of French Jacques Chirac, President of Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Sultan of Brunei, President of Turkey Suleymen Demiril, President of Indonesia Soeharto and President of Pakistan Muhammad Rafiq Tarar, King of Malaysia, President of Malta, President of Hungary, President of Swiss Confederation, Ameer of the State of Kuwait Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, President of Kazakhstan, Pope John Paul-II of Vatican City and Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar General Than Shwe.

Meanwhile, Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and its Prime Minister Srimavo RD Bandaranaike have felicitated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the occasion.

#### Residence of DU teacher ransacked

By DU Correspondent Some unidentified persons yesterday ransacked the residence of AAMS Arefin Siddique, an Associate Professor of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of the Dhaka University, sources

### 32 get honorary commission

Twenty-four Armed forces personnel from the Bangladesh Army and eight from the Bangladesh Navy have been granted honorary commission and promotion on the occasion of the 28th Independence Day. an ISPR press release said in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Seven honorary lieutenants have been granted honorary commission in the rank of honorary captain, while five subedar majors and 12 subeders have been granted honorary commission in the rank of honorary lieutenant which will take effect from today except in case of 12 subeders.

In their cases, the honorary commission will be effective from one day preceding the respective days of their going on Leave Preparatory to Retirement (LPR).

Those granted honorary commission in the rank of honorary captain are: Honorary Lieutenants SK Moksudur Rahman, AC, Md Younus Khan, Artillery, Mohammad Nurul Islam Khan, East Bengal, Md Shafiqur Rahman, East Bengal, Abul Kawser, East Bengal, Md Bashir Ullah, Ordinance, Muslim Uddin Ahmed, EME.

#### Pak envoy hosts reception

By Staff Correspondent Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Karam Elahi hosted a reception at the Chancery premises on Monday to celebrate Pakistan Day on March 23.

Several ministers including Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury and former President HM Ershad attended it. It was also attended by foreign diplomats and elite of the

honorary lieutenant are: Subedar Majors Md Nurul Haque, Artillery, Md Kamal Uddin, ASC, Md Abdur Rouf, EME, Md Haider Ali Khan, EME, Md Nurul Islam, EME, Subedars Mosharraf Hossain, Engineers, Abdullah, Engineers, Md Shafiul Alam, Artillary, Md Anwar Hossain, Signals, Md Tajul Islam, East Bengal, Mohd Yousuf Ali, East Bengal, Shamsul Huda, East Bengal, Mukbul Hossain, East Bengal, Nurul Amin, East Bengal, Akkas Ali, East Bengal, Md Taieb Ali Ukil, CMP and Md Abul Khair, ACC.

The 17 junior commissioned

officers granted honorary

commission in the rank of

Meanwhile, honorary sublieutenant M H Kabir (S) of the Bangladesh Navy has been promoted to the rank of honorary lieutenant.

The seven JCOS of the Bangladesh Navy granted commission in the rank of honorary sub-lieutenant are: M S Uddin, MCPO (X)(GI), M A Salam, MCPO (X) TD-1, M K Uddin, MCPO (COM), M A Bashar, MCPO (E), M R Amin, MCPO (SW), M A Bari, MCPO (L) and M A Taher, MCPO (R).

#### Harinath Dey's death anniversary tomorrow



The 27th death anniversary of shaheed scientist Dr Harinath Dey will be observed tomorrow, says

a press release. He was killed by Pakistan Army on this day in 1971. A "kangali bhof" will be held at his residence 43, Malakartola Lane, Sutrapur, in the city.