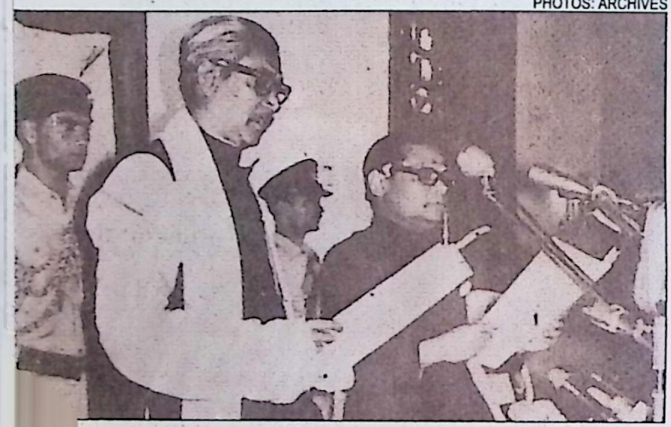


Victory at last. Freedom fighters entering Dhaka, December 16, 1971.

PHOTOS: ARCHIVES



President Abu Sayeed Chowdhury administering the oath of prime minister to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

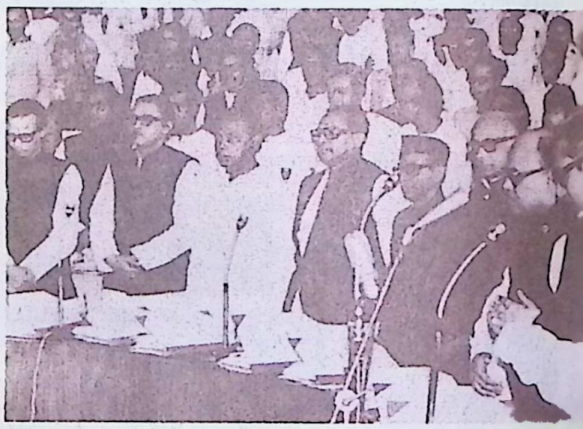
stitution. These principles had been articulated through popular historic movements in the period between 1947 and 1971."

These values and principles have their roots in the issue-centric, value based politics of the fifties and sixties and of course, the language movement.

"Secularism stands for the rejection of communalism in all its forms, and the abuse of religion for political purpose," says Dr Kamal Hossain. "We had seen the worst crimes committed in the name of Islam. The principle of secularism that was embodied in the Constitution was very carefully worded so as to make clear that it did not stand for hostility to the religion. The constitution-makers were fully conscious that the majority of the Bangali people were practicing Muslims. The principle of secularism, as spelt out in the Constitution, was to maintain a separation between the state and religion and to create an environment in which all religious communities could coexist in harmony, free from discrimination and religious intolerance."

Socialism reflected the commitment to create a just and egalitarian society. The Constitution also divided the government into national and local spheres in order to ensure active participation of people in the making and implementation of plans for social and economic development. The Constitution made provision for an independent and impartial judicial system. And it obliged the civil service to be broadly representative and to conduct itself in a transparent and accountable manner.

Long and detailed discussions had taken place within the Constitution Drafting Committee that worked long days and nights for months to finish the task they were entrusted with. A large number of amendments were proposed for the draft Constitution Bill, and over fifty of the amendments proposed by the members were incorporated. Bangla was declared to be the state language of the Republic. *Amar Shonar Bangla, Ami Tomai*



The first session of the national parliament.

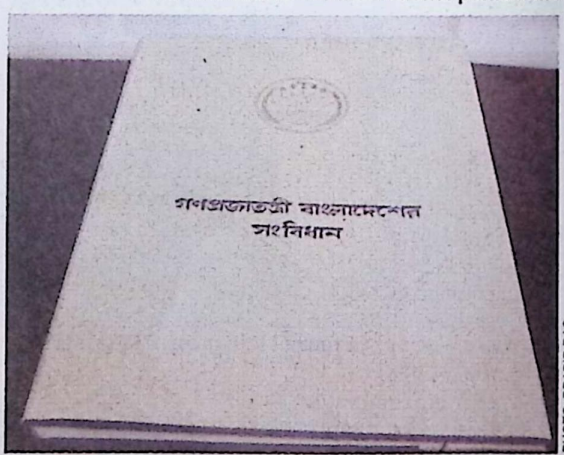


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A copy of the original Constitution at the national museum.

Bhalobashi... was adopted as the national anthem. Within seven months, the task of drafting the Constitution was completed. The speed with which it was done received a great deal of appreciation at home and abroad. Bangladesh was established as a nation state and the national identity of its people would no longer be questioned. However, smaller ethnic communities felt excluded by it. Mahendra Narayan Larma, an elected member, expressed his concerns at the Parliament.