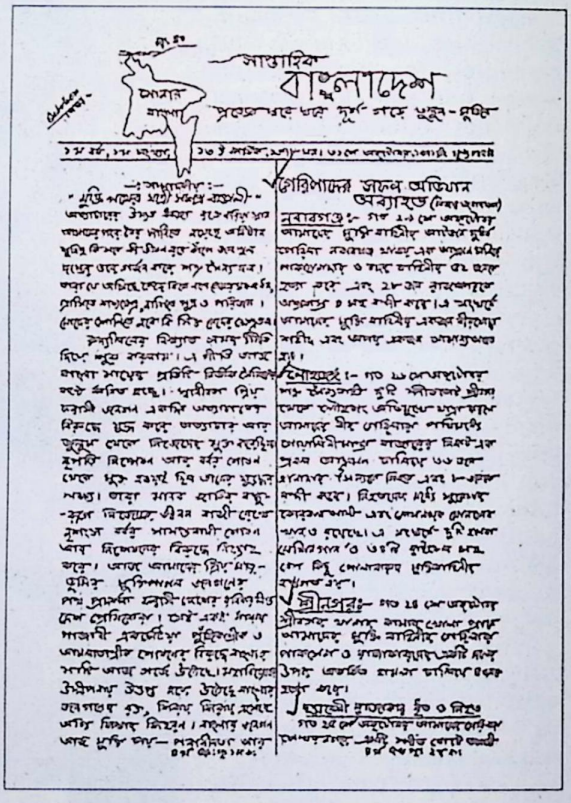
Newspapers in the Time of War

During the turbulent months of 1971, people from all sections came out with whatever they had to protest against the occupiers. While the Freedom Fighters fought the enemy, the print media tried its best to protest against the atrocities, defying the risk of arrests, bans or worse. At the time journalists and the common people took the responsibility of bringing out these newspapers. Their words became the voice for emancipation, the voice of the people.

ANANTA YUSUF



'Shaptahik Bangladesh' (Weekly Bangladesh).

The Pakistani military regime had taken all means of suppression and made a botched attempt to abort the birth of Bangladesh from the black spring of March 25, 1971. There was constant surveillance and censorship on the press and all publications in general. The Pakistani regime, moreover, started publishing newspapers from March 29 to spread its propaganda.

Despite all the obvious risks, to lift public morale against continuous crackdowns and mass killings, people from all over the country, be it the common people, freedom fighters and intellectuals began publishing daily newspapers and different periodicals.

At the beginning of the war, most of these newspapers were published by those close to the freedom fighters. But because of the non-political stance of these pioneers, they were isolated. In the course of time, these papers disappeared or were absorbed into bigger papers.

During the war from March 25 to 31 the three leading newspapers-- *Dainik Ittefaq*, *The people* and *Sangbad* published from Dhaka, were burnt down by the Pakistani army in course of their operation. Hasina Ahmed a veteran researcher and the Associate Editor of "The Journal of Social Studies" believes that there was an urgent need for newspaper publications, and so the common people and freedom fighters took the initiative to set up secret newspaper houses in the country. "1971 Muktijuddher Potropotrika" a research book written by Hasina Ahmed, recounts that with the help of freedom fighters, journalists brought out the latest information about the war and made public unity against Pakistani militants. At the time almost 65 newspapers were published - Most of them were weeklies and a few of them were dailies. Three newspapers had English editions.

In the early sixties, the military government of Ayub Khan enforced a law called the "Press and Publications Ordinance" to keep the newspapers under government's control. The black law became the biggest weapon for the occupiers during the liberation war. The salient features had been used drastically to control information. Journalists were bound to revise news content by the District magistrate. According to Hasina Ahmed, a military press advice authorized in July reads that the newspapers could not use words like-- Bangla-