

Pakistani Rebels Cite Independence

NEW DELHI (UPI) — East Pakistani rebels issued a formal declaration of independence Saturday in a ceremony in a mango grove near the Indian border.

The Press Trust of India, reporting from Kushtia in East Pakistan, said the acting president of the provisional Bangla Desh (Bengal Land) government, Nazrul Islam, read a proclamation to rebel officials and newsmen in the grove at Baidyanathtala, 120 miles northeast of Calcutta.

Nazrul told the group that Bengal lost its freedom to the British in a mango grove in 1757 and it was fitting that the free government of Bangla Desh should be established in another grove in the same district.

The reading of the proclamation was preceded by recitations from the Koran and the singing of patriotic songs.

Nazrul is acting president of the rebel government in the absence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the East Pakistani leader believed arrested by Pakistan authorities shortly after civil war broke out March 25.

The rebels had announced their independence March 26 but said the ceremonies today made the establishment of the new government official. Officials said the officer of the new government took their oaths of office a week ago.

All-India Radio said Saturday Pakistan planes had bombed the headquarters of the provisional government at Chuadanga, 10 miles from the Indian border, killing 50 civilians and injuring 100.

The broadcast said most of the population had fled from Chuadanga. It said reports reaching India indicated the rebels were regrouping in the Jessore area to continue the fight against the Pakistan army.

