

UDI declared under a mango tree

BAIDYANATHALA, 17 April

FORMAL proclamation of the independence of Bangla Desh was made today in a mango grove at this village a mile inside East Pakistan.

Indian and foreign newspaper reporters were invited here from Calcutta for the event and members of the secessionist government, headed by the Awami League leader, Tajuddin Ahmed, as Prime Minister, were introduced to them.

About 5,000 East Bengalis had gathered under the trees for the ceremony and were guarded by riflemen of the Mukti Foj—the Liberation Army.

But reports reaching India earlier in the day suggested that the secessionist forces had just been obliged to abandon Chudanga, the small town near the Indian frontier only recently proclaimed the provisional capital of free Bangla Desh. The Pakistan Army is said to have attacked the

town after bombing raids by the Pakistan Air Force.

Radio Pakistan said today that Pakistan Army troops had ambushed an Indian supply column near the India-East Pakistan border.

A Diplomatic Correspondent writes: China has been instrumental in helping Pakistan to checkmate a move by India and Russia to win international recognition for Bangla Desh.

Pakistan sources disclose that China was ready to recognise the Azad (Free) Kashmir Government, located in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan, as the government for the whole of the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Faced with the rapidly escalating confrontation between India and Pakistan, and anxious to avoid a new explosion in Kashmir, Delhi and Moscow apparently had second thoughts about recognising the provisional Bangla Desh government.