



**REVIEWS THE GUARD**—As Bangla  
Desh proclaims its independence, the  
country's acting president, Syed Nazrul

Islam (center), takes salute from honor  
guard. Gen. Mohammed Osmani, the mili-  
tary commander, watches at left. AP

# Bengal Declares Independence

Baidyanathala, Pakistan, April 17 (Reuter)—The independence of Bangla Desh, the Bengal nation, was proclaimed formally today in a mango grove in this East Pakistan village a mile from the Indian border.

Syed Nazrul Islam, vice president and acting president, read the proclamation before 5,000 assembled East Bengalis and a group of Indian and foreign newsmen.

He appealed for justice and help from the people of the world and from foreign governments.

"We call on the countries of the world to come to our help and do something to relieve the misery of the people of Bangla Desh," he told the newsmen, who had driven in convoy from Calcutta 90 miles away.

## Inner Cabinet

The vice president introduced his seven-member inner cabinet, including the prime minister, Tajuddin Ahmed, and the foreign minister, K. M. Ahmed.

The independence ceremony coincided with reports of more heavy fighting in East Pakistan

and indications that the Pakistan army is beginning to establish control over several towns in the western section of the secessionist nation.

Prime Minister Ahmed conceded that the Pakistan Army's superior firepower was forcing his men back from the towns, but he said that Bangla Desh soldiers still controlled the countryside.

During the proclamation under the trees, uniformed men of the liberation army stood guard with rifles.

Other Bangla Desh soldiers carried Chinese and Pakistan-made submachine guns, which they said they had captured from Pakistan Army troops.

Gen. Mohammed Osmani, elevated from colonel and now named commander-in-chief of the Bangla Desh Army, said the Pakistan Air Force is increasing its attacks in East Pakistan.

"They strafe the towns with rockets and machine-gun fire, mostly hitting civilians. They are always the same type, American Sabre jets.

"They come in twos, and it is very difficult for us because we

have no anti-aircraft guns," General Osmani said.

Answering foreign correspondents' questions, the prime minister said he last saw the Bengali leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, March 25—the day the Pakistan Army crackdown began in Dacca.

## Strafing Reported

Officials of the Sheikh's Awami League at the ceremony said that Pakistani Air Force jets strafed the town of Chaudanga yesterday. The town is provisional headquarters of the Bangla Desh government. Six persons were killed and 25 injured, they said.

The officials said the civilian population had been evacuated but the town, about 20 miles from here, was still in the hands of the "liberation army."

Despite press reports today that Chaudanga had fallen yesterday, the Press Trust of India news agency said the Pakistan Army had only reached the outskirts of the town.

But Pakistani officials in Dacca released a statement tonight saying that the Army

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captured Chaudanga yesterday reaching the Indian border town "without firing a bullet." It also of Krishnagar. said Pakistani troops had ambushed an Indian supply column near the border town of Benapol, killing infiltrators and capturing arms.

The statement added that both Chaudanga and Kushtia were under full Army control. The Indian news agency reported fierce fighting throughout East Pakistan and said the Army had entered Kushtia about 30 miles east of the Indian border, but was facing stiff resistance.

In the western sector, the Army had firm control of Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Rajshahi, it added. In New Delhi, the Indian government was circumspect about the East Pakistan situation, with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi away on holiday and the finance minister, Yashwantrao Chavan, attending a conference in Singapore.

Observers pointed out that government statements Thursday and yesterday, although condemning Pakistan government actions, did not indicate India would take any specific action, such as recognizing the Bangla Desh government.

From Rajshahi, the Army was fanning out in an operation to take Mirpur, still occupied by the "liberation army," the news agency said, quoting reports