

Sheikh Mujib flies in and sees Heath *Plea for aid*

By RONALD PAYNE, Diplomatic Correspondent

SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN, the 51-year-old "Father of Bangladesh," who made a surprise arrival in London at dawn yesterday, spent an hour last night in extremely cordial conversation with Mr. Heath.

The Prime Minister became the first head of government to speak man to man with the President of Bangladesh, who came to ask for millions of pounds and recognition for his newly-liberated country.

A good deal of time was taken up discussing the new republic's need for aid, both in the matter of refugees and in re-establishing the State's finances.

Anxious to help

Mr. Heath told the Bangladesh leader who was in a prison cell in Pakistan only a few days ago, that his Government was anxious to do what it could to help.

The Prime Minister put forward his point of view that the United Nations was the best agency through which to chan-

nel international help to quell the tide of human misery.

But he also agreed that if Britain with her special Commonwealth ties could help directly and bilaterally she would.

With Sheikh Mujib was his former adviser on constitutional affairs, Dr. Kamal Hussain. The Prime Minister had with him Mr. Ian Sutherland, of the Foreign Office who had spent a good deal of time earlier with the President of Bangladesh.

During the talks the question of British recognition of the new State arose. Mr. Heath explained in some detail the

normal British criteria for giving recognition.

While looking forward to future friendship and co-operation between the two countries he made it clear that Britain did not intend to give immediate diplomatic recognition. The President's disappointment was moderated by the obvious warmth of Mr. Heath's welcome to him.

President Mujib gave Mr. Heath a complete account of the events leading up to his arrest earlier in the year. Even more usefully he described his talks last week with President Bhutto of Pakistan.

Mr. Heath, like everybody else, wanted to know why Sheikh Mujib had chosen to fly to London as soon as he was released from prison and house arrest.

Sheikh Mujib told him that he had discussed where he



Picture: Charles Trustor

MR. HEATH shaking hands with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman outside 10 Downing Street last night as he left after meeting the Prime Minister.

War of words as pits risk 6-month closure

Sheikh Mujib told him that he had discussed where he should go with the Pakistani President and both Mr. Bhutto and he had agreed that London would be the best place.

Mr. Wilson, the Opposition leader, drove last night to Claridge's, where Sheikh Mujib had given a Press conference, for a talk with the Bangladesh leader. The meeting was arranged at Mr. Wilson's request. He was cheered by Bangladesh supporters when he arrived at the hotel.

The Opposition leader explained to Sheikh Mujib the normal basis on which a British Government would grant recognition, and said the Labour party would support any Conservative decision taken on these lines.

'Human suffering'

The burden of Sheikh Mujib's thoughts became obvious at the Press conference held within a few hours of his arrival. He declared emotionally: "Millions of my people have been martyrs, killed and tortured mercilessly. Even if Hitler were alive he would have been ashamed.

"No people have had to pay as high a price in life and human suffering," he cried. The British Government had always been good to him and he clearly hopes for substantial British aid in restoring his war-battered territory.

The President had asked to come to Britain originally because it is still impossible to fly direct from West Pakistan to Dacca. "Don't you know I was a prisoner," he asked.

Bangladesh officials said last

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Sheikh flies in

DEPENDENTS OF SERVICEMEN
aircraft at R.A.F. Brize Norton
first arrivals in the w



MARC GOODINGS, 11 months
mother, being lifted from the

night that a chartered Air India Boeing 707, had left Bombay earlier to take Sheikh Mujib to India on his way to Dacca. Mrs. Gandhi, Indian Prime Minister, had earlier invited him to visit New Delhi.

The leader of the Awami League has been in gaol ever since his party won elections in East Pakistan last March. In London he declared, "I cannot wait a single moment to return to my people."

He told of a mock trial in which he was condemned to hang. "I was mentally ready to die. The day I went to gaol I didn't know whether I was to live or not, but I knew that Bangladesh would be liberated."

Tired by travel

He admitted he was not physically harmed in prison, although the intense heat and solitary confinement were almost unbearable.

Sheikh Mujib said West Pakistan had played a "dirty game" and there should be some sort of trial for the mass murders.

President Bhutto released him last week and then held talks with him. After these talks the Pakistanis agreed to allow him to return home by way of London.

Tired after his long journey Sheikh Mujib appeared wearing a Bangladesh badge on his grey tunic.

Leader at last

The conference, in an elegant blue salon, was a remarkable occasion. Here suddenly under the vicious television lights was a weary moustachioed Rip van Winkle from the sub-continent who after months of solitary confinement was a leader again at last.

His tan dimmed by prison, he spoke in the ringing tones of an old-fashioned non-conformist preacher. He declaimed with emotion pleasure at being out again and seeing his national political aims achieved and wrongs redressed.

Apart from that he had little to say. He could only respond to the lively shouts of "Long live Bangladesh" from enthusiastic supporters and reporters among his countrymen.

So long forcibly out of touch, there were many things that he did not know. How could he in a Pakistan prison have heard of

developments and changes in his own world, let alone the other worlds?

The threat of the gallows had not cleared his mind so much as emptied it of current political information. All this showed clearly as he looked around the audience which for the first time brought together Pakistanis, Indians and people from Bangladesh, even though they were only reporters.

Only the Foreign Office had known that Sheikh Mujib was coming to London and Mr. Sutherland, Head of the South Asia Department, greeted him at the airport as a guest of the British Government. Later Mr. Rezaul Karim, acting head of the unofficial Bangladesh Mission in London, had talks with him at his hotel.

Mr. Apa B. Pant, the Indian High Commissioner, also called. But so far there is no sign that other leaders from the newly-created republic intend to see him in this country.

Sheikh Mujib seems to have come to some kind of agreement with President Bhutto. At his Press conference, his first public appearance for almost a year, he disclosed that Mr. Bhutto had asked him to consider forging new links between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Pakistani hope

Before giving an answer he said he would need to consult his own people. But he did declare: "I have no ill feeling for the West Pakistan people and I wish President Bhutto good luck."

After their crippling defeat in the two-week war with India, the Pakistanis' only hope of maintaining links with Bangladesh is to get President Mujib's goodwill. After months in prison he will need to bring himself up to date before making decisions.

He said yesterday that he did not know about the Indian victory until President Bhutto told him last week. He only guessed that a war was going on because of blackouts and army movements.

The point now is whether Bangladesh will become completely independent, as President Mujib assumes it is. The other possibility is that it might become an autonomous state under his leadership within Pakistan.

But the Bangladesh leader refused to be drawn on the subject yesterday and simply declared that his country wanted links

with all countries. He preferred to speak of the misfortunes of his countrymen. "For the sake of humanity come and save the hungry millions of my people."

By flying to London President Mujib has contrived to put himself again in the limelight. But he went out of his way to express his confidence in colleagues now ruling Bangladesh and to approve their recent measures.

He had, in fact, called Mr. Syed Nazrul Islam, the acting Bangladesh President, and Mr. Tajuddin, the Prime Minister, for a briefing of the situation there.

President Mujib also telephoned his home in Dacca, where he talked to his wife, two sons and two daughters. It was the first contact he has had with his family since his arrest on March 26. Mrs. Mujib told her husband the family was alive and asked about his welfare.

Gaoler 'Hid Sheikh'

A Bangladesh official said in London last night that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman avoided execution with the help of a gaoler. He knew Yahya Khan was about to abdicate, and hid the sheikh in his personal quarters for two days.

A spokesman with the Bangladesh delegation at Claridge's said a shallow grave was dug in the cement floor next to the sheikh's cell in the closing days of the war. The sheikh was told later that Yahya Khan's execution squad arrived with false documents intended to show that the sheikh had been hanged at the end of October.