

THE PASSAGE TO BANGLADESH'S ENTRY INTO THE OIC

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Abstract

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was founded in 1969, and Bangladesh formally got admitted to the organization on 23 February 1974 more than two years after her independence. The Arab states delayed recognizing Bangladesh as an independent state due to the misconceptions fabricated by Pakistani propaganda. Nonetheless, the OIC made its best endeavors to include Bangladesh as its member to make it a universal and viable international Islamic organization. Bangladesh also demonstrated its sincere interest to be a part of OIC, especially for its economic, political and security interests. Bangladesh successfully removed the gross misunderstanding in the Islamic world through its constant and ceaseless efforts which paved the way for gaining rapid recognition from the Muslim states. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's participation in the Lahore Summit marked a dramatic breakthrough and Bangladesh formally became a full-fledged member of the OIC. Admission to the OIC was a landmark diplomatic gain for Bangladesh in her relations with the Islamic world which paid much dividends in various sectors since 1974.

Key-Words: *Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Propaganda, Misconception, Arab world, Six-member delegation, Mission of reconciliation, Lahore Summit*

Introduction

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)¹ forms an important aspect in the entire gamut of foreign relations of Bangladesh. The OIC is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations which has a membership of 57 states. It is unique in the sense that it is the largest inter-governmental Islamic organization in the world. The OIC was founded in 1969. Bangladesh is not a founding member of the OIC as it emerged as an independent state around two years after the formation of the OIC. Bangladesh was formally admitted to the OIC on 23

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February 1974 more than two years after its independence. The anti-Bangladeshi propaganda of Pakistan, misconceptions in the Arab world and the dilemma of the Arab states recognizing Bangladesh as an independent state were largely responsible for the delay. Nevertheless, the OIC, as an international Islamic organization, laid much emphasis on the admission of Bangladesh in it despite misunderstandings by several Arab states and their prejudice towards Pakistan. At the same time, Bangladesh, immediately after its independence, emphasised on building formal relations with the Muslim states through joining the OIC. Priority was given to removing misunderstandings, Bangladesh became successful in its mission through its constant and ceaseless efforts which paved the way for gaining rapid recognition from the Muslim states. The OIC delegations played important role in normalizing relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh which made the task of its admission to the OIC easy. Formal recognition of Pakistan to Bangladesh and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's² participation in the Lahore Summit upon the invitation on behalf of the OIC marked a dramatic breakthrough which assured Bangladesh's formal entry into the OIC. In this paper, a discussion and analysis of different aspects of Bangladesh's entry into the OIC have been made.

Negative Propaganda of Pakistan in the Arab World during the Liberation War

Bangladesh, at the time of its independence, ranked as the second largest (now third largest) Muslim-majority country in the world after Indonesia. Historically, the people of Bangladesh had close connections with Islam and the Muslim world dating back to the seventh century (Haider, 8 April 1973). The connection began to deteriorate following the declaration of independence. Pakistan began a domestic and international propaganda against the armed struggle for independence in the Muslim world and especially in the Arab world. It made its endeavors to raise anti-Bengali Muslim sentiments by underestimating the Bengali Muslims that they were converted Muslims from the Hindus and they fostered the Hinduist culture. Pakistan made them understand that the freedom struggle of Bangladesh was instigated and influenced by the Hindus of India. It propagated that India encouraged Bangladesh to fight for independence from Pakistan. It tried to show that the War of Independence was a secessionist movement carried out by a section of misguided people with

the support of India. Pakistan carried out anti-liberation propaganda capitalizing the Indo-Pak hostility on the one hand and the Indo-Soviet-Bangladesh ties on the other. Bangladesh's geographic position is of immense strategic value to India (Hassan, 1989, p.52). Pakistan was able to persuade that the disintegration of Pakistan would weaken Pakistan and enable India to achieve a big strategic advantage over Pakistan in South Asia.

Misconceptions in the Arab World

As a consequence of Pakistan's propaganda, most of the Arab countries saw the liberation war of the people of Bangladesh with suspicion, imposed great reservations on it, and expressed bias to Pakistan's cause. Upon the campaign of Pakistan, they perceived the freedom struggle as the disintegration of Pakistan as well as of the Islamic *Ummah*. They considered the war against Pakistan, an Islamic state, as a foreign conspiracy to weaken the solidarity of the Islamic *Ummah*. The Muslim countries did not want that an Islamic country like Pakistan with the largest Muslim population to be dismembered and made weak in the context of the global political environment (Rashid, 2001, p.29). Some Muslim states like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco and the Gulf states gave their diplomatic support to Pakistan, while the other Arab states like Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Algeria remained comparatively silent, as did the Muslim countries of Southeast Asia (Asghar, 1971, p.193). The majority of Muslim states chose either to support Pakistan or remain neutral about the struggle for independence.

After the independence, Indo-Soviet influences, leftist elements in politics, secular and socialist ideology and so on, fueled the misperceptions in the Arab world (Hussain, 1984, pp. 84-85 & Rashid, 2001, pp. 21 and 52). As a result, some leaders of OIC accepted the defeat of Pakistan with much grief. For example, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, in his inaugural speech at the Third Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Jeddah from February 29 to March 4, 1972, said, "It was most unfortunate for the Muslims of Pakistan to have fallen a prey to the machination of the enemies of Islam. The happenings in Pakistan had hurt me deeply" (*The Pakistan Times*. March 1, 1972 & *The Dawn*. March 1, 1972). Furthermore, the presence of the Indian army on Bangladesh soil till March 1972 and the Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Treaty in 1972 sent the

wrong message to the Muslim countries. Pakistan made a strong appeal to the OIC for the withdrawal of the Indian army from Bangladesh. Furthermore, India also insisted that Bangladesh should not join the OIC because it would strengthen the rightist forces in the country (Hassan, 1989a, p.86). All these happenings delayed the recognition of the Arab states to Bangladesh and its entry into the OIC.

Pakistan's Attempts to Stave off Recognition of Bangladesh

After the independence, Pakistan made persistent efforts to restrain Arab states from recognizing Bangladesh. Pakistan threatened to cut off diplomatic relations with nations that recognized Bangladesh. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, toured various Arab states late in January 1972 to stave off their recognition of Bangladesh because this would give him time to prepare the way for Pakistan to normalize relations with Bangladesh (Wright, 1988, p.173 & *The Morning News*, 8 April, 1972). He was misleading the world by saying that he would start negotiations with Bangabandhu to restore a united Pakistan (Rashid, 2004a, p.226). The Arabs agreeably responded to Bhutto's overtures for withholding recognition presumably on the consideration that this would give him the required time to prepare the ground for normalizing relations with the new nation-state (Haider, 8 April 1973).

The Dilemma of Arab States to Recognize Bangladesh

Bangladesh had to wait more than two years to be part of the OIC. This is because of the dilemma of several of Muslim states, especially the Arab states, who delayed in recognizing Bangladesh. The misperceptions affected the Islamic counties so profoundly that no Arab country recognized Bangladesh immediately after its independence. Even, some Muslim countries made strong reservations towards Bangladesh.³ Some countries like Syria, Algeria and Egypt showed a comparatively early interest in recognizing Bangladesh. Egypt extended its support to Bangladesh during the Liberation War and criticized the oppressions of Pakistan against it. For example, *Al-Ahram* of Egypt, the most influential daily newspaper, extended overwhelming support to the liberation struggle of Bangladesh against the oppressive military rule of Pakistan (Haider, 8 April 1973). Of all the Arab nations, Egypt was the most sympathetic and responsive to Bangladesh in the first three years of its existence. Yet, these countries refrained from recognizing Bangladesh, because, Pakistan

threatened to cut off diplomatic relations with nations that recognized Bangladesh, thus discouraging these Muslim states from helping the new nation. The other Islamic countries did not come forward enthusiastically to recognize Bangladesh. Islamic world took time to recognize her.

Efforts from Bangladesh to Remove the Misconceptions and to Develop Relations

Bangladesh in its early phase faced difficulties in establishing formal relations with the Arab countries because of the diplomacy of Pakistan and the dilemma of the Arab states recognizing Bangladesh. Under the circumstances, it was taken in the realization that Bangladesh's survival as an independent state both politically and economically largely rested on its Islamic character. Bangabandhu himself realized this fact and came forward to the cause of the Muslim world in a very pragmatic manner. Consequently, his government demonstrated its solidarity with the political objectives of the Arab states and influential Arab organizations (Wright, 1988, p.226). He and his government took an active involvement in the burning issues of the Muslim *Ummah*. Bangladesh extended its full moral support to the Arab people in their just struggle against foreign aggression and colonial domination. It recognized PLO as the legitimate organization and Yasser Arafat as the legitimate leader of the Palestinians. Bangabandhu refused to set up diplomatic relations with Israel to convince the Arabs and supported the causes dear to the hearts of the Arabs, though Israel had been one of the first countries in the world to announce its recognition to Bangladesh. During the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, Bangladesh supported the Arabs and Palestinians and sent a medical team and relief supply. This was highly appreciated by the Arab countries and there was a significant change in their attitude towards Bangladesh. In return, they supported Bangladesh to become a member of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the Algiers Summit in 1973. He attended the Summit largely to develop relations with the Third-World leaders as well as those of the Muslim states. As almost all the Muslim countries were members of the NAM, this membership paved the way for Bangladesh's admission into the OIC. He also emphasized the importance of membership of Bangladesh in the Commonwealth to open for Bangladesh a wider sphere in developing relations with non-communist countries including Muslim countries.

Bangladesh, at the same time, sought to remove the nagging misconception in the Arab world by sending high-level emissaries. Bangabandhu himself toured various brotherly countries and exposed the war with Pakistan as a liberation struggle about which the Arabs were generally misinformed. To smear the misconception regarding Soviet influence on Bangladesh, he declared Bangladesh as the 'Switzerland of the East'. By this declaration, he made it clear that Bangladesh would remain neutral from the Cold War rivalry. Such a declaration proved to be fruitful for the admission of Bangladesh to the NAM in 1973. It may be noted here that Bangladesh became less enthusiastic about her relations with the Soviet Union in the last two years of Mujib's administration (Wright, 1988, p.226). Bangabandhu wanted to lessen Indian military influences and by his endeavour Indian Army departed from Bangladesh in March 1972. He, thus, did everything to foster friendly relations with the Arab world. His tours to Muslim states and his position on Islamic issues proved to be fruitful. His visits had been conducive to the promotion of lasting bonds of friendship with the Arab world resulting in the mutually expected expansion of political, economic and cultural cooperation (Huq, 14 November, 1974). The sympathetic Arab world was evidently eager to enlarge the area of meaningful cooperation and positive participation in the economic programs of Bangladesh.

Interests of OIC to Incorporate Bangladesh

The OIC leaders realized that Bangladesh's inclusion in the OIC and recognition of Bangladesh as an independent state from the other Muslim states depended on the friendly relations between the two. Therefore, from the beginning of the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state, several Muslim states tried to bring about rapprochement between Bangladesh and Pakistan to incorporate it in to the OIC. The OIC showed its interest to consider Bangladesh as its permanent member for the following reasons:

Firstly, Bangladesh then formed the second-largest Muslim-majority country in the world. Even, the number of its Muslim population was then higher than that of Pakistan which had enjoyed the rank of the largest Muslim-majority country till its disintegration in 1971. The Muslim states in general saw Pakistan's participation in OIC vital from the outset of its formation to make it a universal Islamic organization. This was mainly for its large population. On the same ground, several Muslim states held the

view that such a state which had the second largest Muslim population could not be kept out of the organization permanently.

Secondly, it was that time when the OIC was gaining greater strength, beginning to consolidate and making significant progress in several ways. Several Muslim countries had been showing their passion to it confirming their admission to it. The years between Lahore Summit (1974) and Taif Summit (1981) can be rightly called the time of consolidation for the Organization (Baba, 1994, pp.98-99). On the way to its consolidation, it was necessary for the OIC to settle political and ideological differences among the Muslim countries and at the same time to incorporate various Muslim states with it. The OIC tried to dispel malice between Pakistan and Bangladesh and took official measures to label Bangladesh as an OIC country. The measures had been practically visible since the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Jeddah from February 29 to March 4, 1972.

Thirdly, in the meantime, the misconceptions about Bangladesh were considerably removed due to its persistent diplomatic relations with the Arab and Islamic states. Several Islamic states not only recognized Bangladesh but also extended financial assistance to it. On the other hand, Bangladesh and Pakistan came closer from the previous malevolent disposition and Pakistan had to accord recognition to Bangladesh before the Lahore Summit under pressure from other Muslim leaders. Under the circumstances, the Islamic leaders considered Bangladesh as an integral and important part of the *Ummah* and felt the emergence of immediate inclusion of Bangladesh in the OIC to make it a viable international Islamic organization.

Interests of Bangladesh to Be a Part of OIC

On the contrary, Bangladesh laid equal emphasis to be a part of it as the OIC did to incorporate Bangladesh with it. The factors may be noted as below:

Firstly, the association of Bangladesh with OIC has appeared to be more for its economic, political and security interests than religious purposes. Bangabandhu's relations with Islamic countries were based more on political considerations than a religious one (Baba, 1994, p.168). In the immediate aftermath of the war of independence, war-devastated

Bangladesh needed goodwill and financial aid from all the countries especially the rich Muslim countries to relieve it from the damage. During the War of Independence, communication infrastructures were completely destroyed. The people of Bangladesh faced socio-economic adversity, poverty and unemployment problems. Bangladesh was confronted with huge problems of the rehabilitation of people and the construction of infrastructure in the country. Thus it needed foreign aid from any quarter of the world, particularly from the Muslim world.

Secondly, Bangladesh wanted to get economic and financial assistance and other benefits for its development from concerned affiliated institutions within the OIC.

Thirdly, it needed to use its diplomacy as leverage, for its relations with affluent Arab-Islamic countries, upon which it depends for aid, oil and foreign exchange remitted by its nationals working in these countries.

Fourthly, it needed to get political and diplomatic support of the Islamic solidarity for the achievement of its foreign policy objectives in international organizations.

Fifthly, it wanted to enhance its sense of security in countering any threat to its national security and also as a deterrent to the possible threat (Chakravarty, 1994, p.73 & Khan, January, 1982, p.42).

Role of the Delegation of the Six-Member States of the OIC

From the beginning of the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state, several Muslim states tried to bring about a rapprochement between Bangladesh and Pakistan to integrate it with the *Ummah* and the OIC. The emergence of Bangladesh was a matter of importance for the OIC. The issue became so vital to the OIC that it was added to the agenda of the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (the first one after the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state) for the first time in the OIC's history (Imam, 2000, p.24). The Conference leaders could clearly understand that Bangladesh's incorporation with OIC depends on the normalization of relations between the two countries. Consequently, the Conference decided to send a delegation to Islamabad and Dhaka to bring about reconciliation between the two countries. The delegation was composed of six member-states: Algeria, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Somalia, and Tunisia.

The aim of this delegation was to bring about agreement, conciliation and brotherhood between the two elected leaders Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Islamabad, and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Dhaka, in an atmosphere of Islamic brotherhood, freedom and dignity, as well as to study ways and means of assisting both leaders to solve the problems they were facing. This delegation for reconciliation would inform the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member states of the Conference of the results obtained by them and of their recommendations for further conciliatory efforts in this regard (*Joint Communique of the Third ICFM*, 1972). The six-member delegation could not proceed ahead in the planned visit to Islamabad and Dhaka as the Government of Bangladesh made it clear that it "would not receive a mission from states which have not recognized Bangladesh". Though Bangladesh refused to receive delegates from countries which had not recognized it as an independent state, it did not mean that it had refused relations with the *Ummah*. In reality, Bangladesh wanted to make counter psychological pressure on the Muslim states by refusing their delegates so that they along with Pakistan would offer quick recognition to it as an independent state. This diplomatic strategy proved to be fruitful.

The formation of the six-member delegation paved the way for the normalization of relations between the two states and Bangladesh's formal admission to the OIC. The member states despite the negative response from the Bangladeshi part did not give up their efforts in bringing the two sides closer till the Lahore Summit, held from 22 to 24 February, 1974. But, Bangabandhu took the position that unless Pakistan formally extended its recognition, Bangladesh would not have been able to attend the Summit. His position was just as he believed in perpetual and practical relations with the Muslim world and not the artificial one. Some Muslim states persuaded Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to bend a little and implore Bangabandhu to forget the past and join the Islamic fraternity. The Muslim leaders pressurized Pakistan to recognize Bangladesh. Under the circumstances, the Lahore Summit of the OIC was held which marked a dramatic breakthrough in Bangladesh's relations with Pakistan as well as Islamic countries and at the same time Bangladesh's formal entry to the OIC. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto declared while addressing the Summit:

"Big countries have advised us to recognize Bangladesh. But I never bow to the pressure from the Super Powers or from India. But at this

important time, when Muslim countries are meeting, we cannot say we are under pressure. It is not our opponents who advised us to take this decision but our friends and brothers.” (*Report on Islamic Summit 1974*. February 22-24, 1974)

Role of the Mission of Reconciliation of the OIC

It had been earlier agreed that Bangladesh would be formally admitted to the OIC at the Summit. The Foreign Minister Conference held on February 21, 1974, prior to the Lahore Summit Conference decided to form a group of seven members under the chairmanship of the Foreign Minister of Kuwait to bring about reconciliation between Pakistan and Bangladesh. The delegation was a goodwill mission and also known as the ‘mission of reconciliation’. The delegation, in addition to the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministers, comprised the foreign ministers of Lebanon and Somalia, representatives of Algeria, Senegal, the PLO and Hasan el-Tohami, the Secretary General of the OIC. The mission of reconciliation headed by the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister then flew from Lahore to Dhaka in a Kuwaiti plane to escort Bangabandhu. The goodwill mission had mainly two aims: to resolve the differences between the two countries and to ensure Bangladesh's presence at the Lahore Summit. Bangabandhu responded favorably, not-so-much for the sake of the so-called Islamic unity but keeping in view the essential requirements of the new state to get recognition from economically powerful Islamic states (Narain, 1987, p.167). The mission composed of high Ministerial level delegates was authorized to offer Pakistan’s recognition of Bangladesh provided that in return for the recognition Bangladesh had to abandon the proposed trial of 195 Pakistani prisoners-of war who were kept in Indian camps. The mission was a complete success. Bangladesh cordially received the offer. Bangladesh assured to release Pakistani prisoners-of war on the condition that their trial would be prosecuted in Pakistan’s own tribunal. In return, Pakistan accorded full diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh upon the advice of Muslim countries.⁴

Bangabandhu at Lahore Summit

The Pakistan National Assembly, in its resolution, had authorized Bangladesh in 1973, but Bhutto waited for some suitable opportunity to make that decision. Pakistan recognized Bangladesh on February 22, 1974 and the next day, Bangladesh Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman arrived at Lahore to attend the OIC summit. Recognition of Bangladesh by Pakistan added a degree of honour to both Bangabandhu and of Bangladesh. Prior to departure for Lahore, a formal invitation on behalf of the OIC was extended to Bangabandhu by Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber, Foreign Minister of Kuwait. The 12-member Bangladesh team headed by Bangabandhu left for Lahore by a plane sent to Dhaka by President Boumedienne of Algeria. Foreign Minister Dr. Kamal Hossain, Minister of State for Information and Broadcaster Taheruddin Thakur and Prime Minister's Political Secretary Tofael Ahmed were also members of the entourage. Bangabandhu received a warm reception from the delegates of other participating countries when he arrived at the conference hall in Lahore on 23 February, 1974 and the announcement of his participation by Bhutto, was greeted by loud clapping. With the participation of Bangladesh in the Summit, it became a permanent member of the Organization.

The Aftermath of the Lahore Summit

The reconciliation between the two Muslim states was one of the most important achievements of the Lahore Summit which not only normalized the relations between the two states but also confirmed Bangladesh's formal admission into the OIC. Bangabandhu, as a man of peace, hoped for the normalization of relations and the restoration of peace in the subcontinent. He made a clarification in this respect and said, "I want peace and neighborly relations in the subcontinent and that is exactly why I stand for good relations among the countries concerned." (*The Bangladesh Observer*, 23 February, 1994) The admission of Bangladesh to the OIC marked a turning point in its integration more profoundly than before with the global Islamic network. It also paved the way for further consolidation of the OIC. With formal joining the OIC, Bangladesh started its responsible roles in the organization. This was also a major diplomatic gain for Bangladesh which facilitated it not only in consolidating firmly her position in OIC and the Muslim world but also in paying many dividends in economic aid and assistance in every passing day since 1974. By 1974, almost all Islamic countries had recognized Bangladesh except Saudi Arabia (*Brief on the visit of Mr. A. R. Shams-ud Doha, Foreign Minister to the Organization of Islamic Conference*, 1983, p. 29).⁵ The Islamic countries particularly the oil-rich Arab countries extended hands to

Bangladesh and offered substantial economic aid and assistance. Bangladesh received substantial bilateral aid from these countries in various nation-building projects during the critical initial years of her nationhood.

Conclusion

In the light of the above discussion, it can be said that the dilemma of Muslim states recognizing Bangladesh as a result of the misperceptions and negative propaganda of Pakistan impeded Bangladesh's entry into the OIC. The Muslim states enthusiastically did not come forward to recognize Bangladesh as Pakistan Government threatened to cut off diplomatic relations with the countries recognizing Bangladesh. Nonetheless, the OIC made its best endeavor to incorporate Bangladesh with it to make the Organization a universal and viable international Islamic one. On the contrary, Bangladesh also demonstrated its desire to be a part of it, especially for its economic, political and security interests. Bangladesh successfully removed the gross misunderstanding in the Islamic world and recognition came quickly from the Muslim states as a consequence of the ceaseless efforts of the Mujib Government and especially the diplomatic relations of Bangabandhu with the Islamic world. Bangabandhu with his pragmatic, bold and effective leadership was able to convert rapidly the attitude of the Arab world towards Bangladesh. Hostile relation between Bangladesh and Pakistan until then was also a deterrence for Bangladesh's entry into the OIC. The OIC thus stressed the normalization of relations between the two countries by forming a six member delegation of reconciliation which was a step forward in its mission. The OIC achieved the complete success in its mission through the seven member delegation formed prior to the Lahore Summit. Under the pressure of the OIC-member states, Pakistan recognized Bangladesh and Bangladesh agreed to participate in the Lahore Summit. The Lahore Summit thus marked a dramatic breakthrough which assured Bangladesh's formal entry into the OIC. Bangladesh since then has been playing a vital and unique role in some respects in the OIC as a full-fledged member state. Admission of Bangladesh to the OIC was a landmark diplomatic gain for Bangladesh in her relations with the Islamic world which facilitated it and paid many dividends in various sectors in the passing times since 1974.

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Notes

- ¹ The official nomenclature, right from its founding, of OIC was 'Organization of Islamic Conference', but keeping in tune with the changing times the name has been changed to 'Organization of Islamic Cooperation' in 2011 with a view to reflecting better the functions and objectives of the OIC. Therefore, presently the elaboration of OIC is 'Organization of Islamic Cooperation'. The OIC recognized the importance of preserving the acronym (OIC) by which the Organization has been known throughout its long history.
- ² Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (17 March 1920-15 August 1975) is popularly known as 'Bangabandhu' (the Friend of Bengal). He is also shortly known as 'Sheikh Mujib' or 'Mujib'. He is also regarded as the 'Jatir Janak' or 'Jatir Pita' (Father of the Nation) of Bangladesh. He served as the first President and later as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.
- ³ Such attitude was fully demonstrated when all Islamic countries except Egypt and Iraq voted against the admission of Bangladesh into WHO (World Health Organization) in 1972. Bangladesh was represented by a four- man delegation at an Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference held in Cairo on 10 January 1972 for the purpose of its admission as full membership of the organization. Pakistan boycotted the opening session of the conference because of the presence of the Bangladeshi delegation. Libya, in support of the Pakistan position, even threatened to withdraw if Bangladesh was admitted. The issue was finally solved by the decision of an organization committee which showed that as long as the status of the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh remained in open question, Bangladesh's sovereignty in the eyes of the Islamic states was not a settled matter.
- ⁴ Later on, Bangladesh agreed to drop the issue of 195 PoWs and decided not to proceed with the trial as an act of clemency by the Trilateral Agreement (India-Pakistan-Bangladesh) of April 9, 1974.
- ⁵ Saudi Arabian attitude towards the creation of Bangladesh was not favorable as evident from their support to Pakistan and refusal to meet any Bangladesh representative during the Liberation war. This attitude continued even after the creation of Bangladesh mainly due to the adoption of secularism and socialism as the two fundamental principles of its state policy. Following the change of Mujib-Government in August 1975, Saudi Arabia announced its formal recognition to Bangladesh. Bangladesh Ambassador was posted there in October 1976. Saudi Government also opened its Embassy in Dhaka later.