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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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DATE: September 30, 1974
TIME: 10:30 a.m.
UN

SUBJECT: Secretary Kissinger Calls on Bangladesh Prime Minister,
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

↳ SP

EXDIS REVIEW	
PARTICIPANTS: Bangladesh	
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Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
Foreign Minister Kamal Hossain
Ambassador Hossain Ali

The Secretary
Alfred L. Atherton, Jr., Assistant
Secretary, NEA
Mr. Robert Oakley, NSC
Mr. Peter D. Constable, NEA/PAB (Notetaker)

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The Secretary called on the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, at the latter's suite in the Waldorf Towers. Photographers took pictures while the Secretary and Prime Minister greeted each other.

THE SECRETARY: I am very pleased to meet you and to welcome you to the United States. I am very much looking forward to my visit next month to Dacca.

THE PRIME MINISTER: I am also looking forward to your visit. Please accept my regrets for the unfortunate illness of Mrs. Ford.

THE SECRETARY: It is a great pleasure to see you here. In 1970 when Yahya Khan was here for the UN, he explained to me why the elections in Pakistan would be well manipulated. He said there were 20 parties in East Pakistan. There would be no majority party and Yahya would therefore have an excellent opportunity to maneuver to control the situation. Then of course you achieved your spectacular majority, with 167 out of 169 seats in East Pakistan. Ever since then I have never believed political predictions, unless of course you make them.

PRIME MINISTER: I gave my prediction before the election at a press conference in Dacca. I was asked if I would get 90% of

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the votes. I said I would get 97%. Of course I have contested so many elections that I knew better than Yahya. I understood his ideas and plans to maneuver --

THE SECRETARY: There would have been no elections if he had known how it would turn out. The last time I saw Yahya was on the way to China--the trip which he arranged for me. He gave a dinner for me and said at the table, "People call me a dictator." He asked everyone: "Am I a dictator?" Everyone said "No." Then he asked me, and I said: "I do not know, but for a dictator, you run a lousy election."

PRIME MINISTER: Would you like something to drink?

THE SECRETARY: I would like some tea.

PRIME MINISTER: I am glad. I produce tea also.

[Tea and coffee were served.]

THE SECRETARY: As you know we are committed to the well-being of Bangladesh. Within our capacity we will do all we can to help you. Without meddling in Bangladesh's internal affairs, I want you to know that we believe you are the best guarantee for stability in your country, and we want to do what we can to help you.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you. That is very kind of you. After I got out of jail, we faced such big problems. Then you gave us massive help and we avoided famine.

THE SECRETARY: We will do what we can. We have committed 150,000 tons of foodgrains to Bangladesh in the first quarter of this fiscal year. We are trying to get approval for another 100,000 tons in this quarter, by the time you meet the President. I know that doesn't meet your total needs, but we have had a disappointing corn crop and that has put a strain on our wheat supplies.

PRIME MINISTER: Our problem is to try to recover and to be self-sufficient in food. We have made some progress. Our deficit of 3 million tons of rice is down to 2 million tons. We had no government when I got out of jail. We had nothing.

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THE SECRETARY: Everything came from West Pakistan.

PRIME MINISTER: At the end of the struggle we had nothing. No money, no resources.

THE SECRETARY: When did you return? In January 1972?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. When I returned everyone was armed and we had problems with that. Now we have a government. I have followed a policy of "forgive and forget" after coming out of jail.

THE SECRETARY: We very much appreciated the trilateral agreements you have worked out with India and Pakistan. You have been very statesmanlike.

PRIME MINISTER: This caused me some unpopularity because of the massacres that took place among intellectuals. I could give you names that you would recognize.

THE SECRETARY: The Bengalees are a rebellious lot. There were a number of Bengalees at Harvard when your Foreign Minister was a student of mine there.

FOREIGN MINISTER: Yes there were a number of Bengalees including Mr. Murshed.

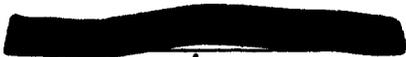
THE SECRETARY: Is he all right?

FOREIGN MINISTER: Yes.

PRIME MINISTER: The Pakistani General, Farman Ali Khan, wrote on his scratch pad, and we found it, "The green land of East Pakistan must be painted red." I told Bhutto about this when he came to Dacca. I showed it to him. I said to him, "Do something from your side." There are 67,000 non-Bengalee families living in Bangladesh who have opted for Pakistan. They don't want them back. We don't want them. They are in camps. We can't feed them. We have no assets. I've done my duty. I'm the victim of genocide. Why can't the Pakistanis show generosity?

THE SECRETARY: We strongly favor normalization of relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh. Our aim in the area will be to use any influence we have to promote normalization. I have the impression that it's a question of domestic politics in Pakistan. Is there anything concrete you want me to do?

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PRIME MINISTER: I have taken the liabilities. Why can't I have the assets? We received no gold, no planes, no ships. I have 75 million people. I have returned the prisoners of war to Pakistan. I could have held back 4,000 prisoners for bargaining. But I did not want to do that. I want good relations in South Asia. Bangladesh is a small country.

THE SECRETARY: With 75 million people Bangladesh is not a small country.

PRIME MINISTER: We are small in territory. In the first two or three months of independence we rebuilt the roads and the bridges, we opened government institutions, we approved a constitution. Our senior civil servants were detained for two years in Pakistan. I have resources in Bangladesh--fertile land, many people, gas, coal and livestock. And we hope to find oil.

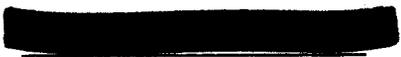
THE SECRETARY: Is there coal in Bangladesh? Have you found oil?

PRIME MINISTER: We have signed agreements with an American company for oil exploration and received bonus payments for the agreements.

THE SECRETARY: When you have the oil, perhaps we will borrow from you.

PRIME MINISTER: You won't need to borrow. We will repay you for all you have done for us. We need a Marshall Plan in Bangladesh. We need foreign investment in fertilizer plants and in petrochemicals. We have natural gas and we can sell it. Flood control is a very serious problem. During the Pakistan days there was a mission to survey flood control in 1955 and 1956. During the British days they had dredges to clear out the rivers so that they could carry goods to Calcutta. After World War II when the British withdrew, there was no more dredging. The Government of Pakistan buried the survey report and went ahead with the Indus Basin Project in West Pakistan. They did nothing in Bangladesh, and now we are suffering the consequences. We had no way to save our cattle, our foodgrains, poultry and vegetables from the flood. We can find a solution between us. You organized the Marshall Plan for Germany's recovery. Now you can start a Kissinger Plan for Bangladesh.

THE SECRETARY: If I can get my name on a plan, I will do just about anything.



PRIME MINISTER: You have had such good success in Vietnam and the Middle East. You can have success in Bangladesh. There are famine conditions in my country.

THE SECRETARY: The domestic situation in this country is much less favorable than it was at the time of the Marshall Plan. In fact, the domestic situation is unfavorable. Candidly, I must say that that sort of program is not likely. On the other hand we are joining the Bangladesh Consortium. We favor the most rapid development possible for your country. In 1971 our dispute with India was related to our China policy. We supported the independence of Bangladesh by peaceful methods. We will do the maximum that we can, but you should not have exalted expectations. We will be extremely active in the Consortium. Your problems will receive special attention. The fact that I am going to Dacca means that I will give them special attention.

FOREIGN MINISTER: Our problem is that we need a margin of time....

THE SECRETARY: It is the curse of bureaucracies that they only do enough to avoid crises but not enough to solve the underlying problems. I personally favor taking big steps. We will have to look again at your problems. I will meet with Mr. McNamara and we will see what we can do. Will you meet with him?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, in Washington. He has been kind enough to see me.

FOREIGN MINISTER: We need 3 or 4 years' margin to work on long-term development.

THE SECRETARY: Can you become self-sufficient?

FOREIGN MINISTER: Yes, in 3 or 4 years.

THE SECRETARY: We are looking for another 100,000 tons in this current quarter.

MR. ATHERTON: And without prejudice for the rest of the year. We will be considering what additional foodgrain we can provide.

FOREIGN MINISTER: We need vegetable oil, fertilizer and project aid for the development of all our resources to increase exports so that we can get out of the current situation. We have no political problems. We are still winning by-elections in spite of our 40% inflation rate.

THE SECRETARY: Take about 15 minutes in your meeting with the President to advise him on how you do this.

PRIME MINISTER: I set up 4,300 Union Councils in Bangladesh. I have to provide a free kitchen in every Union Council.

THE SECRETARY: Do you travel a lot?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, I try to mobilize the people to be self-sufficient, so that the country can be self-sufficient.

THE SECRETARY: How are your relations with India?

PRIME MINISTER: Very good. We have a foreign policy that is neutral, non-aligned and independent. We have good relations with India, USA, USSR and Burma. We are very anxious for good relations with China.

THE SECRETARY: We are improving our relations with India.

PRIME MINISTER: We welcome that. We have a Friendship Treaty with India and a Commission on River Control. I want to convey to you my assurances of our good relations. When I came out of jail, there was anti-US sentiment in Bangladesh. Now all my people are extremely friendly to the US.

THE SECRETARY: You showed great wisdom when you came out of jail. There must have been a great temptation to demagoguery and to deal harshly with Pakistan and the US. We have always had great sympathy for the Bengalees. It is a natural friendship on our side.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. Your long-standing interest is greatly appreciated.

THE SECRETARY: You have a special place in the hearts of Americans. On food for example, we are making a special effort.

PRIME MINISTER: I am grateful for what you are doing today and for the massive food help you have provided.

THE SECRETARY: You went to the UK and then back to Bangladesh. Did you take over the government immediately?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. It was very difficult. Everyone was armed and that created a serious problem. I appealed for everyone to

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surrender their arms. 150,000 arms were surrendered to me. The Pakistanis had armed everyone. The Pakistan military asked permission to arm civilians. We have documents that show the Pakistan Army asked permission to arm civilians at the end.

THE SECRETARY: How about the Chinese? Are they doing anything subversive in your country? Do you have relations yet?

PRIME MINISTER: Not yet. We know each other. I went to Peking in 1958 and they came to Dacca in 1962. I want friendship with China but we have our self-respect. I can offer friendship but the initiative has to come from them also. We appreciate the US support for Bangladesh in the UN. You steadily supported us there from the first day.

THE SECRETARY: My impression is that China will start to move in the next year to normalize its relations with you. They are concerned about India, but they do not have anything against Bangladesh. They will move slowly. Yours is the right policy: friendship with all the Big Powers and avoid all their quarrels. We certainly don't object to your good relations with the Soviet Union.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you. You've done wonderful things over the last two years.

THE SECRETARY: It is easy to conduct relations for an established country, but your Foreign Minister has had to conduct relations for a new country--to start from nothing. That is much more difficult. Were you released together?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. After they released me, I asked them why they forgot my friend. I asked them to release him because he was my Foreign Affairs Adviser.

THE SECRETARY: Were you treated badly?

PRIME MINISTER: They kept me in solitary confinement. The conditions were bad. It was 117°.

FOREIGN MINISTER: I was a little cooler because I was in the NWFP.

PRIME MINISTER: The case they made against me was a farce.

THE SECRETARY: We exerted very great pressure.

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PRIME MINISTER: Yes. I know you did. They tried to kill me on the night of the 16th. The officer-in-charge took me out and hid me for five days near the Chashma Barrage. They planned to say that there had been a revolt of the prisoners and the prisoners had killed me. They tried to kill me three times: in 1958, when Martial Law came, they arrested me; in 1966 they arrested me on a conspiracy charge; in 1971 they arrested me and tried to kill me. I am living on extensions.

THE SECRETARY: You have six more lives to live. They say that cats have nine lives. But you have made a great achievement. You have created a new state. You will find that the President will be very sympathetic in your talks tomorrow. We have our own difficulties with Congressional limits on aid and with our own food shortages, but we will make a special effort. I look forward to seeing you again in Bangladesh at the end of the month.

PRIME MINISTER: I have this special problem with these people who do not want to remain in Bangladesh. I have to do something. Should I expel them like Idi Amin did?

THE SECRETARY: You mean the Biharis?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Pakistan won't take them? We will take these questions up when we are there. You can explain this in more detail.

PRIME MINISTER: I have nothing in my hand to bargain with. I have taken risks. They killed professors, intellectuals, journalists just before the surrender. I have to explain this to my people. I never go back on my word, but this time I did. I said that they would be tried on Bangladesh soil. There has been no trial.

THE SECRETARY: It was a very humane and statesmanlike act to forego trials, so that you could work for a long-term relationship. I will take this up.

NOTE: As the Prime Minister and the Secretary left the Prime Minister's suite Bangladesh reporters asked for comments on the meeting. The Secretary said that he and the Prime Minister had

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had a very warm and friendly discussion. They had discussed the economic development and the well-being of Bangladesh. They had discussed ways in which the US might help with immediate problems and with long-term development. The Prime Minister stated that they had a warm and friendly discussion. He was glad to hear the Secretary's views on Bangladesh and expressions of concern for Bangladesh. The Prime Minister said the Secretary understood Bangladesh's problems and will try to do his best for Bangladesh. He noted that US-Bangladesh relations are very good and will grow stronger.

Both participants made similar comments to American newspapermen who questioned them subsequently. The Secretary was asked whether he had set a date for his visit to South Asia. The Secretary said he hoped to have something on that later this week.

Questioned about the Washington Post story that morning on the relationship between Bangladesh's sale of jute bags to Cuba and the signing of a PL 480 agreement, the Prime Minister brushed it aside, and the Secretary said the subject did not come up in their discussion. The Secretary introduced the Foreign Minister Kamal Hossain to the press as "another student of mine."