PUASA

At 5 a.m. on 24th April, Indonesian Moslems began to fast. This is Puasa, or the fasting month of Ramadan.

The month begins on the day on which a certain new moon is first seen to rise over the south coast of Java, news of which was at one time drummed from one end of the country to another.

During this month, Moslems may take no food or drink between sunrise and sunset. The time for the first meal of the day, called "buka puasa" — the opening of the fast — is announced by the drums being beaten in the small feeder mosques or langgars. The last meal is called saur, and is taken about half past four in the morning. People offer special prayers in the mosques and read parts of the Holy Qur’an.

Many people who do not consider themselves to be practising Moslems, like to follow Puasa nevertheless, for they consider it spiritual training in self-restraint.

Although of course it is not considered polite to be ostentatious with food, drink or cigarettes at this time, Moslems do not expect strangers to follow their customs.
CHINA PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE WITH U.S. TO RELIEVE TAIWAN TENSION

In a statement made on April 23rd, Chou En-lai, Premier and Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China, said that China is prepared to discuss with the United States of America the relaxation of tension in the Far East, especially in the Taiwan (Formosa) area.

The text of the short statement reads:

"The Chinese people are friendly to the American people. The Chinese people do not want to have a war with the United States of America.

"The Chinese Government is willing to sit down and enter into negotiations with the United States Government to discuss the question of relaxing tension in the Far East, and especially the question of relaxing tension in the Taiwan area."

This statement was made by Chou En-lai at the Bandung residence of Conference President Ali Sastroamidjojo, where Heads of some of the Delegations to the Conference had gathered to discuss how tension might be reduced in the Far East. Delegations represented were: Burma, Ceylon, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand.
"Suara Merdeka" of Semarang in Central Java wrote on 22nd April that one of the ideas which could smoothen the proceedings of the Bandung Conference is the understanding that the participating nations are in the first place Asian and African nations whose ways of thinking and destinies are not far different from one another. We can therefore reasonably expect that the Conference can arrive at concrete decisions regarding matters which can be carried out jointly.

If the Conference can produce tangible results, we are convinced that other conferences of Asian and African peoples to discuss problems of a more profound character can follow in the future. These conferences, the paper believed, could change the stand on fundamental principles of the nations now taking part in the Bandung Conference.

"Indonesia Raya" of Djakarta was of the opinion that despite the seemingly large number of participating countries, there were enough points of general agreement for a common stand to be taken in coping with the controversies faced by the great powers today.

Saying that nearly all the participants have once been colonised by Western countries, the paper pointed out that political independence is not enough. Economic independence is also important.

In the opinion of the paper a common stand on the question of preventing wars will not easily be reached, as most of the participating countries are bound militarily to the great powers. Nonetheless, "Indonesia Raya" said, the idea of preserving and promoting world peace will have the support of every delegation.

Writing in the same vein, "Thien Sung Yit Po", a Chinese language paper published in Djakarta, was of the opinion that owing to the different stands of the participating countries it will be difficult to come to unanimous agreement on practical questions, especially those relating to politics.

The paper termed the Conference "an epoch-making event in the world history" but regretted that some Asian and African countries, such as Israel, Formosa and Korea, had not been invited.
"Harian Rakjat" of Djakarta (English language) commented as follows:

"From many places in Indonesia messages were sent by the masses expressing their hopes that the Bandung Conference decide to demand the banning of the use and manufacture of atomic weapons.

"We are sure that these hopes are not only Indonesian hopes. These hopes are the hopes of Asia and Africa, of even the whole world.

"There are not words enough to depict the extent of the catastrophes which might be brought about if atomic weapons were used in any war, though President Eisenhower tried to cover it up with phrases such as "the tactical use of atomic weapons".

"Adlai Stevenson was right when in stating the alternative, he chose the formulation "co-existence or "no-existence".

"But no existence for whom? For mankind? For the world? For our whole civilisation?

"This cannot happen! Our strength and unity are too great to be wiped out together with imperialism.

"If an atomic war were yet to break out, the results would certainly be no-existence for imperialism!

"Let the imperialists, our hereditary enemies, make this choice if they prefer.

"But for us, why should we prefer existence with sacrifice to existence without sacrifice. Let us choose the latter! Let us make it from a possibility into a fact!

"The delegates who are now conferring at Bandung are in a position to do much in this respect."

BRITAIN

"The Times" of London on 21st April reported that the high hopes of the Conference had been shattered and the fears reduced. It commented that if the Conference had marked any swing in allegiances, so far it had been in acclamations to the neutralist forces. "The Times" continued that probably the most important work of the Conference was being done in its social gatherings through introductions between Asian premiers who had never met before.

The London daily "Telegraph" admitted that there was less anti-Westernism displayed by the Conference than it had expected.

"The Manchester Guardian" referred to the favourable aspects of the opening stages. This paper said that differences over communism were overridden by the feeling that Afro-Asianism was more important, and that the danger that communists might dominate the Conference had been averted by the moderate course adopted by Chou En-lai.

The most impressive feature of the Conference, the Manchester Guardian went on to say, was the widespread hope that Asian non-resistance was more powerful than the dependence of the industrialised powers on military weapons. "This neutralism which is inherent in every weak nation", the paper said, "becomes an inescapably powerful factor now that two continents, which hitherto have been despised, have found how much they have in common."

"The Economist" on 19th April reported a comment by G. Adam, who held that the Conference was mainly the work of Indonesia, probably in order to distract attention from her home troubles. But the result was historic because such a gathering of coloured statesmen had never happened before.

Adam said that it was interesting to see the role of China in the Conference where Russia was not present. Chou En-lai had a good platform for propaganda, but the Turks, Iraqis, Pakistanis, and possibly the Japanese were preventing him from dominating the Conference, and were in a position to strike a blow for freedom. If it is to be neither war nor communist imperialism, the East and West must learn to work together, and neither of them can live on their own, the report states. The "Economist" article concludes by saying that the test of the Bandung Conference will be whether it makes such co-operation easier or more difficult.

The "News Chronicle" contains an article by James Cameron who expresses the opinion that the destiny of man has shifted a few points from its course, which, he remarks, may be a good thing in the end. He says: "It is odd to think that probably the century's most momentous political meeting so nearly (so far as we are concerned) missed the boat altogether."

"The Afro-Asian Conference has been sweating it out in an atmosphere of drama, super-tension, exhilaration, anxiety and self-conscious wonder". Delegates have one thing in common, he says, and that is that they are neither European nor American and their skins are not technically white. But, for the moment, without a shadow of a doubt these representatives are the most important people alive.

The Conference is anti-colonial, the report continues, but it shows no signs of being anti-American. President Sukarno's address on the opening day is described as "genuinely moving". The article concludes by remarking that although hard facts are scarce, the significant point is that one half of the world's population has found a voice of a kind — and that is one of the biggest things that has happened in our time.
Asian and African journalists covering the Asian-African Conference held an informal meeting on Saturday, April 23, at 7.30 p.m. in the Press Room of the Conference building, Gedung Merdeka. The meeting discussed the possibilities for the setting up of an Asian-African Journalists' Association to cement the ties of friendship between the journalists of the two continents, and to further the purposes of the Conference.

The meeting called upon Asian and African journalists to form a non-political and mutually benefiting association, and urged for wider coverage in their newspapers of news on Asian and African developments. An exchange of journalists and the cutting of cable rates in their regions were also discussed.

The meeting expressed the deep gratitude of the journalists to the Governments of the sponsoring countries, in particular to Indonesia, for the arrangements which have been made for their convenience and comfort. The warm hearts and the hospitality of the people of Bandung were also appreciated.

The meeting was sponsored by S.J. Sulaiman of Indonesia, Antoun Assaf of Egypt, Denzil Peiris of Ceylon, Vincente J. Guzman of the Philippines, Kazem Zarnegar of Iran and Samad Ismail of Singapore.

*Dwi-warna Building, site of Committee meetings.*