

Chapter-1

The Political Movement in East Bengal and the Rise of Nationalism (1947-1970)

At the midnight of 14 August 1947, the colonial rules of the Raj ended in India, and gave birth to two independent nations called India and Pakistan. Pakistan was divided into two parts. The eastern part of Bengal was included in Pakistan as a province and it was named East Pakistan. The other part was called West Pakistan. Since the beginning, the administrative power of Pakistan had been vested in the rich section of the West Pakistan, which employed their power to control the Language, Literature, culture, economy, politics as well as the social system of East Pakistan and created discrimination. The people of East Pakistan organised protest against the injustice and discrimination, and started agitation and mass movement. The language movement took place to defend the mother tongue, Bangla. The Bangalees of the then East Pakistan were united on the issue. The spirit of the 'Language movement' encouraged the people of East Bengal to launch agitation, demonstration and mass movement against the communal rule of Pakistan. Based on the historic six point demands, the people of East Bengal voted in favour of the Bengalee nationalism in 1970, and gave their verdict for a secular nation named Bangladesh. A national unity was urged on the identity based on language, history, tradition, culture and Bengali nationalism. This national unification is called the Bangalee Nationalism that encouraged people to form a secular, non-communal Bangladesh. As its consequence, Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in 1971. In this chapter we will know about the political movements in East Bengal and the rise of nationalism.

After reading this chapter, we will be able to-

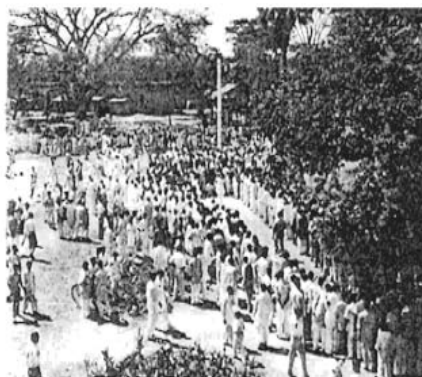
- explain the background and significance of the language movement;
- analyse the significance of the language movement in the formation of nationalism;
- explain the significance of declaring 21 February as the International Mother Language Day by the United Nation;
- be respectful to our own as well as the languages of others;
- explain the reasons of forming the Awami Muslim League and the Jukto (United) Front;
- explain the impact of the election in 1954 of the Jukto (United) Front;
- understand the reason of transformation from the Awami Muslim League to the Awami League in 1955, and explain the political situation from 1958 onwards;
- realize the spirit of the Bengali Nationalism;
- explain the reasons and consequences of the anti martial-law movement in 1958;
- analyse the nature of discrimination between West Pakistan and East Pakistan;
- explain the significance of the historic six point demands;
- explain the historic Agartala Case (State Vs. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Others);
- describe the background of the Mass Uprising in 1969;
- evaluate the role of the mass movement as an influence to the Liberation War;
- describe the election of 1970 and explain its aftermath;
- be conscious to defend the interest of the country.

Section 1.1: The Role of the Language Movement for Flourishing the Bengalee Nationalism

Background of the Language Movement

Even before the creation of Pakistan, the debate arose on the issue of its official language. As Mohammad Ali Jinnah proposed Urdu as the official language of the Muslim League in 1937, Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haque, a veteran leader of Bengal protested against it. When the establishment of Pakistan became absolutely certain in 1947, the debate again arose. On 17 May 1947, Chowdhury Kaliquz-zaman and in July, Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Aligarh proposed Urdu as the state language of Pakistan. Dr. Muhammad Shahid-ullah, an eminent linguist of East Bengal, Professor Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haque of the University of Dhaka and some other intellectuals protested against the proposal through their articles.

A cultural organization called Tamaddun Majlis was formed at the University of Dhaka headed by Professor Abul Qasem in September 2, 1947. In a meeting of the young workers of this organization on 6-7 September, it was unanimously decided to propose Bangla as a medium of education and court proceedings. A fierce protest broke out in East Bengal when a decision was taken in an education conference in Karachi in December 1947 that Urdu should be the state language of Pakistan. People from all walks of life raised their voice to declare Bangla



Picture 1.1: The Procession of the Language Movement

as the state language of Pakistan instead. Articles were published focusing on the demand, and in December, Rasrtahasha Sangram Porishad was formed. Processions were brought out and meetings were held at different institutions including Dhaka University and the secretariat. The Pakistan government imposed Section 144 and banned meetings and rallies. Dhirendranath Dutta, a member of the Pakistan Assembly (The Gano Porishad) demanded Bangla along with Urdu and English as the medium of proceedings in the Assembly on 23 February, 1948. As his demand was rejected, there was a call for strike in Dhaka on 26 and 29 February. Rastrabhasha Sangram Porishad was reformed on 2 March at the University of Dhaka. March 11 was declared 'A Call for Bangla Language Day', and people observed hartal on that day. Founded on 4 January, 1948, the East Pakistan Muslim Chatra League played a significant role in observing the protest. At least 69 protesters including Sheikh Mujib, Shamsul Huq, Oli Ahad

were arrested while they were demonstrating with slogans we want Bangla as state language. In the present East Pakistan the student leader Shaikh Mujibur Rahman at the top was among other political prisoners for the demand of Bangla as state language. A strike was observed in Dhaka during 12-15 March against the arrests and repressions. Having no other way out, Khawja Nazimuddin, the Chief Minister of Pakistan signed an eight-point-agreement with the **Rastrabhasha songram Porishad**. The points are stated below:

1. All detainees in connection with the language movement would unconditionally be released;
2. The Prime Minister himself will make a statement after a thorough investigation of the police atrocities;
3. A proposal of declaring Bangla as one of the state languages would be tabled in the Bangal Legislative Assembly;
4. Bangla would replace English as the official language of East Pakistan, the medium of instruction also will be Bangla ;
5. All restrictions would be withdrawn from the newspapers;
6. No legal action would be taken against the participants of the language movement;
7. Section 144 imposed since 29 February would be withdrawn;
8. Confessing the guilt about the issue the Chief Minister would unequivocally state that the language movement was not provoked by the enemies of the state.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Governor General of Pakistan, came to Dhaka on 19 March, 1948. He unequivocally declared in a public meeting arranged at the Racecourse ground (now Suhrawardy Uddayn) on 21 March, that 'Urdu and only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan'. When he repeated the declaration on March 24, at the Convocation of the University Dhaka, the students had burst into protest and opposed his declaration saying 'No, No'. They also spontaneously protested against the declaration made by Jinnah in the Racecourse

Group work: Make a chart successive of the events of the language movement.

ground. At a certain stage the Pakistan Government proposed to write Bangla by using the Arabic alphabet. The Bengalees protested and agitated vehemently. Within a few months immediately after the emergence of Pakistan, the movement that erupted on the language issue was the manifestation of support for Bengali Nationalism. By defending the honour of the mother tongue, the people of East Bengal realised the importance of their development as a nation. The minority

ethnic groups of this land also supported Bangla, not Urdu, as the state language of Pakistan. Khawja Najimuddin, the new prime minister of Pakistan followed the footsteps of his predecessor Jinnah and announced on 26 January 1952 Urdu as the state language of Pakistan. In protest against it students observed strike on 30 January. Rastrabhasha Sangram Porishad was newly reorganised with Abdul Matin as its new convener. Movement continued and the political parties also joined it. Students observed an agitation. On 4 February in Dhaka. A resolution was adopted for a general strike on 21 February which was to also be observed as the 'State Language Day'. They declared their firm determination to continue the movement until the demand was realized. Imprisoned Sheikh Mujib, while under the treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, gave the students and the workers of the Awami Muslim League necessary instructions for observing the 21st February Programme. After that, Sheikh Mujib and another co-detainee Mohiuddin Ahmed were transferred from Dhaka Central Jail to Faridpur district prison on the charge of providing leadership in the language movement. As both of them went on a hunger strike till death demanding unconditional release of the arrested political leaders and immediate declaration of Bangla as the state language, the movement received a great became more serious. Public opinion was being formed throughout the province. The government imposed Section 144 since 21 February onwards, and banned all meetings, rallies and procession for a month. The leaders mobilising the movement decided to violate the section 144. A meeting was held at Amtala (under the mango tree in front of the present Dhaka Medical College) of the University of Dhaka at 11 am of 21 February. It was



Abdus Salam

Abul Barkat

Abdul Jabbar

Shafiur Rahman

Rafiquddin Ahmed

Picture: 1.2: Language Martyrs

decided that they would bring out small processions in turn comprising 10 persons in each. These processions approached from the Dhaka Medical College side by defying Section 144. At first, the police made some arrests, and later hurled the tear gas and charged batons at the demonstrators. At one stage, as the police opened fire on the protesters, Abul Barkat, Jabbar, Rafique, Salam and

others became martyrs, and many others received bullet injuries. The news of killing the students spread at Dhaka soon throughout the country. A huge mourning processions were brought out at Dhaka on 22nd February. Shafiur Rahman became a martyr due to the police assault. The mass people and the students together erected a Shahid Minar (memorial) in front of the Medical College on 21 February to make the martyrs' memory immortal. The Shahid Minar erected first was inaugurated by the father of martyr Shafiur on 23 February, but the police demolished the Shahid Minar on 24 February. Poet Mahbub-ul-Alam of Chittagong composed the first poem on the killing of 21 February, titled "Kadte Aashini Fashir Dabi Niye Aeshechi" (We've not Come to Cry, but with the Demand for Death Sentence by Hanging). Another poem was composed by young poet Aalauddin Al Azad titled "Smirit Minar" (Monument of Memory) on the instant reaction of the incident. Students, youth, mass people from different cities including Chittagong, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, Barisal, Comilla extended their supports to the language movement. A strong feeling of hatred to the West Pakistanis stirred the people of East Pakistan. The killing had a far reaching impact on the mind of the people. Journalist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury composed the immortal song *Amar bhaier rokte rangano ekushe February, ami ki vulite pan*, singer Abdul Latif composed and tuned songs like *ora amar mukher bhash kaira nite chaye and Tora Tora Dhaka shohor rokte vhashaili*. Dr. Munir Chowdhury from inside the prison wrote a drama titled "Kobor", Jahir Raihan wrote a novel "Arek Falgun". Basing on the language movement, a fierce protest against the Pakistan government spread through out East Bengal in the fields of art, culture and literature. The narrow stream of the Bengali nationalism was going to be a deluge. Started in 1947, the language movement took a turn into a violent struggle from 1948 to 1952. As a result, the Pakistan government was compelled to recognised Bangla as one of the state languages, and Bangla was included in the constitution of Pakistan in 1956. The Bengali and the other ethnic groups of East Bengal became the first Shahid self-reliant and brave relying on their history, tradition, culture Minar of Bangladesh and language. After the language movement in 1952, the whole decade of the 50s was the most eventful period for the preparation of establishing rights and independence by the Bengalis. The language movement was the source of inspiration to all the political movements afterwards. The movements made the people aware of their rights this movement made them aware of unity and independence. It was the first movement for the emancipation from Pakistani rule.

Development of Nationalism

The language movement which was the primary step to develop the Bengali

nationalism united the Bengalis first. The fascination for Pakistan faded away soon. The importance and interrelation between the language and culture became clear and unmistakable to them to build up their own national identity. They started realising the significance of politics, economy, education and culture of their own to be recognised as a nation. The language oriented unity made a solid foundation for nationalism which subsequently played the key role in emerging Bangladesh as an independent country.



Picture 1.3: The first *Shahid Minar* of Bangladesh

The Martyr Day and the International Mother Language Day

The 21 February has been observing as the Martyr Day since 1953 throughout the country. Every year we pay tribute to the martyrs by laying floral wreath at the Shahid Minar (Martyr Memorial) early in the morning after walking barefoot. It's a day to the Bengalis to be revived in the spirit of grief. The United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organisation (UNESCO) recognised 21 February, the martyr day of Bangladesh as the International Mother Language Day on 17 November 1999 as a result of initiatives taken by some Bengali emigrants in Canada and the diplomatic role played by the Awami League government. There are more than 6000 languages in the world. Since then the people of these languages realized the importance of Martyr Day of Bangladesh and thus have learnt the importance of their mother tongue. Besides Bangla, in our country there are different ethnic communities who have different languages. We will try to protect and develop their language and culture.

Section 1.2: The Role of the Political Movement in developing the Bengali Nationalism

The people of East Bengal understood the political peculiarities of the state called Pakistan, and realised the illusions of two-nation theory immediately after the establishment of Pakistan. Although the Bengalis were 56% of the total population, the West Pakistanis dominated everywhere in running the state, either occupying high administrative posts or availing of the economic and political privileges. The people of East Pakistan, i.e. the Bengalees were deprived of their rights. There were three streams in the political parties and leadership in that time: 1. Political parties loyal to Pakistan like Jamat-a-Islami, Nizme Islam, the Muslim League 2. Political parties defended the interest of East Bengal like the Awami League, the National Awami Party (NAP); 3. The political parties of the Left Stream.

The Formation of the Awami Muslim League

After a few months of the creation of Pakistan the Awami Muslim League broke away from the two-nation theory of the Muslim league, and emerged as a non-communal progressive party imbued with the ideal of the Bengali Nationalism. and established 'The East Pakistan Awami Muslim League' on 23 June 1949 in a conference at Rose Garden. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Shamsul Haque of Tangail were nominated as the president and the General Secretary respectively of the newly formed party, while Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became the Joint Secretary. At the very beginning, the party made an extended plan of activities in the interest of the Bengalis. They decided to place some demands before the government like provincial autonomy, sovereignty of the people, recognition of Bangla as one of the state languages, nationalisation of the jute and tea industries, abolition of feudal system without giving any compensation, distribution of land among the farmers, cooperative farming etc: The party became very popular within a very short time for voicing the demands to the government. Particularly Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became a victim of rage of the Pakistani rulers. Sheikh Mujib was arrested in 1949. But even while in Jail he provided leadership in the movements including the demand for state language. Consequently he was kept in jail until 27 February 1952. The Awami League was the key initiator to form Jukto (United) Front in 1954. In order to reflect its non-communal political ideology changed its name to from the 'East Pakistan Awami Muslim League' to 'East Pakistan Awami League' in 1955. So the Bengalis and the minority ethnic groups had the opportunity to be merged into the stream of nationalism. In this time, on the one hand, the party initiated movements outside, on the other hand, the members in the national assembly and the provincial government remained vocal inside the government to perform important role as a pro-people party.

The Formation of Jukto (United) Front, Election and Government

After the establishment of Pakistan, ruling party Muslim League did not take any initiative to form the central and provincial government for a long time. Besides, the dillydallying of the central government on the issue of forming the provincial government became clear to the people of East Bengal. The Awami League decided to establish Jukto (United) Front on 14 November 1953 to defeat the Muslim League in the forthcoming Pradeshi Porishad (Provincial Assembly) election of East Bengal. The Jukto (United) Front was comprised of four parties- the Awami League, the Krishok Sramik Party, the Nezame Islam and the Ganotantri Dal, The Provincial election was held in March of 1954. The people considered the 21 point demands of the Front the charter of their emancipation.

The Jukto (United) Front got 223 seats out of 237 Muslim constituencies in the Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan, while the Muslim League bagged only 9 seats. The other parties got the rest of the seats. The people of East Bengal gave their verdict in favour of the Jukto (United) Front as they wanted to get rid of the authority and dominance of the West Pakistanis in the state power. It was evident that they wanted the Bengalis to see in the power, and the Jukto (United) Front had the mandate from the people to form the provincial government. The election again proved that people are the 'sources of all power'. They by rejecting the politics of the Muslim League brought about an end of their regime in East Pakistan.

The 21 Point Demands of the Jukto (United) Front in 1954

1. Bangla will be one of the state languages of Pakistan;
2. Feudal system will be abolished without giving any compensation; all brokery and certificate system will be null and void;
3. Giving fair price, the jute trade should be nationalised, and the culprits involved in Jute scam should rightly be punished;
4. Cooperative agricultural system should be introduced, and handicrafts and small cottage industries will be developed;
5. Salt industries will be expanded and the culprits involved in salt scam will be duly punished;
6. Homeless workers of the factory and technical trades will be rehabilitated;
7. Digging canals for Irrigation, and improvement of Agriculture; measures should be taken to initiate flood control system and to prevent famine;
8. East Bengal will be properly Industrialised, and the rights of the labourers will be duly protected;
9. Free and compulsory primary education will be imparted, and a decent scale of salary and allowance for the teachers will be ensured;
10. Thorough reforms of education system and Introduction of Bangla as the mediums of instruction,
11. University of Dhaka and Rajshahi will be given full autonomy, and all the black I will be repealed and higher education should be easily accessible;
12. Expenditure in running the administration should be reduced, and the discrimination between high and low waged staffs will be minimized;
13. All kinds of corruptions will be wiped out;

14. Political detainees will be unconditionally released, and freedom of speech, of meeting and assemblage, and of press will be ensured;
15. Judiciary will be separated from the administration;
16. Bordhaman House will be a hostel for the time being, and later be devt. research centre for Bangla language and literature;
17. A Shahid Minar (memorial) will be erected in memoriam of the langu
18. 21 February will be declared 'The Martyr Day' and it will be a governr
19. East Pakistan will have full autonomy as per the historic Lahor proposal;
20. Free and fair election will be held regularly;
21. If the Jukto (United) Front is defeated in three consecutive by-elections, the cabinet will resign;

The Government of the Jukto (United) Front

A K Fa'lul Haque, the leader of the Krishok Sromik Party, one of the allies of the Jukto (United) Front took oath as the Chief Minister on 3 April 1954. The Jukto Front remained in power just for 56 days. The Pakistan government could not accept the Jukto (United) Front government in East Bengal. They started conspiring to topple the government. Golam Mohammad, the governor general of Pakistan dismissed the Jukto Front government on 30 May 1954 on a flimsy pretext of the riot between the Bengalis and

Group Work: The anarchy created by the ruling class was responsible for the failure of the *Jukto (United) Front* government-show reasons in favour of this statement.

the Non-Bengalis at the Adamjee Jute Mill and Kornofuli, it was found later that the riot was provoked by the Pakistan government. Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fajlul Huq was placed under house arrest, Sheikh Mujib and other 3 thousand political leaders and supporters were arrested too. The enmity and the hatred of the Pakistani rulers were again expressed through this conspiratorial act. The despotic regime began in East Pakistan. The frequent changes of government in the centre and provinces increased unrest everywhere. The country passed under military rule.

Section 1. 3: The Martial Law and the subsequent political events

Under the military and civilian rulers of West Pakistan. As a result, the Parliament as well as the government could not play any effective role. The conniving groups were waiting for the chance to grab the power. In the Provincial Assembly, Deputy Speaker Shahed Ali was seriously injured and subsequently died in a hospital because of a brawl among the MLAs on a disputable issue. President Iskandar Mirza declared Martial Law on 7 October 1958 on the pretext of this incident.

After assuming the power, the decisions he took were as follows: 1. Annulled the Constitution of 1956; 2. Dissolved the central and the provincial Assemblies. 3. Banned the political activities of the parties. Sheikh Mujib and some other leaders were arrested and sent to prison; 5. All fundamental rights were suspended.

Occupying Power by Ayub Khan

President Iskandar Mirza was ousted from power in a military coup on 27 October 1958 and was forced to leave the country. General Ayub Khan after assuming office as the President of Pakistan took the following steps: 1. Declared himself the chief martial law administrator; 2. Postponed the general election of 1959 declared earlier; 3. Expressed his commitment to wipe out corruption and illegal trafficking of goods; 4. Continue embargo on political parties;

Ayub Khan initiated a new system called fundamental democracy to linger the autocratic rule. In this system, an electoral panel will be formed with 80 thousand elected members of the union council from both West and East Pakistan. They will preserve the right of electing the President and the members of both the central and provincial assembly. It was an indirect election process. He was elected the President of Pakistan getting 80 thousand votes of the union council members. The administrative power was centralized on West Pakistan, and the discrimination between the two parts became blatant.

Discriminating Attitudes to the People of East Pakistan

Before the establishment of Pakistan, East Bengal was in a better position in economic, social, educational and other sectors in comparison with West Pakistan. However, Pakistan started lagging behind due to the oppressive rule of West Pakistan established in 1947. Discrimination between the two parts was looming large since then. Discrimination in the economic sector: West Pakistan was in a better position in comparison with East Pakistan due to the discriminatory policy of the Pakistan government. For example, East Pakistan received taka 113 crore 3 lakh and 80 thousand at the budget allocation from 1955-56 to 1959-60, on the other hand West Pakistan got taka 500 crore in the same period. Taka 6,480 million from 1960-61 to 1964-65, was allocated as for the East Pakistan and West Pakistan received taka 22,230 million in the same period. The foreign exchange earned through export of

Group work: Identify the fields of discrimination done to East Pakistan by west Pakistan.

Jute, tea, hide etc., used to be spent for the development of West Pakistan. As a result. East Pakistan started lagging behind in the fields of trade and commerce, industry and agriculture, and in economy.

Discrimination in the administrative sector: East Pakistan was prevented from playing any effective roles in the administration of Pakistan. The discrimination was very blatant. A comparative study of discriminatory administration of Pakistan in 1966 is shown below:

Nos.	Heads	The Bengalis	The West Pakistanis
1.	In the secretariat of the President	19%	81%
2.	Defence	8.1%	91.9%
3.	Industry	25.7%	74.3%
4.	Home	22.7%	77.3%
5.	Information	20.1%	79.9%
6.	Education	27.3%	72.7%
7.	Health	19%	81%
8.	Law	35%	65%
9.	Agriculture	21%	79%

Discrimination in the defense sector: The Bengalis would often experience discrimination in the recruitment and promotion in the Army, Navy and Air Force. Only 5% of officers, 4% of general soldiers, 19% of high official in the Navy, 9% of lower officials, 11% of Pilots in the Air force, 1.7% of technicians belonged to the Bengali community.

Discrimination in the education sector: East Bengal was far ahead of West Pakistan in the primary and secondary education before the establishment of Pakistan, but after its birth, the complexion in the education sector was totally changed as West Pakistan started receiving more than double allocation of funds in the annual budget every year. So, many new educational institutions had been established in the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels in West Pakistan.

Social Discrimination: The growth of the middle class in East Pakistan was hindered for the discriminatory policies of West Pakistan. The Bangalees became fragile financially. Disparity increased between the two regions. People started showing demonstrations and organising movements.

The Anti-Martial Law Movement: Agitation started in East Pakistan against the autocratic regime of Ayub Khan since 1961. It was further intensified when Hossain Shahid Suhrawardi, a favourite leader of the Bengalis and former Prime Minister was arrested in January 1962. Subsequently Sheikh Mujib was arrested in February, and the people of this part launched movement demanding his unconditional release including all other political detainees. The students became vocal against the form of government proposed by Ayub Khan. Then they

declared 15 point demands. Various professional groups extended their supports to the movement on the issue of education policy. Besides, Jatiyo Ganotantrik Front (The National Democratic Front) was formed to reinstate the constitutional government. The front orchestrated agitation against the despotic regime of Ayub Khan. The political parties got the opportunity to go to the mass people with their political agenda against the military rules while they were campaigning for the Presidential election in 1965.

Indo-Pak War

Indo-Pak war broke out on 6 September 1956, and continued for 17 days. Then East Pakistan was totally unprotected. The government did not think of the safety of the people of this part. Though Pakistan was defeated in the war, the ruling quarter of West Pakistan-continued their anti-India campaign. Besides, this time they describing the songs of Rabindranath as Hindu culture, and complaining against the songs of Nazrul bearing influences of Hinduism tried to stop its practice, and termed it as anti-Islam. So the people of East Pakistan reiterated provincial autonomy to defend their own culture, history, tradition and political rights. People started feeling more urge for the politics of Secular Bengali nationalism.

The 6 Point demands: East Bengal's charter of freedom

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the proponent of the historic 6-points programme. The long movement against the Pakistan government's discriminatory policy and indifferent attitude to the people of East Pakistan took a deep and clear shape in the 6 point demands. Awami league president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman participated in a conference of the opposition leaders on 5-6 February 1966 in Labor. He stated the 6 point charter demands in a press conference to defend the rights of the people. The points are as follows:

1. In Pakistan there will be the Parliamentary form of government under federal system. The polling will be held under the general electoral system, and adult voters will enfranchise;
2. The central government will keep tevo ministries in their hand, the defence and the foreign affairs. The states will have full autonomy of the other affairs;
3. Two different but convertible types of currency should be introduced in the country, or a single currency might be used on some terms and conditions;
4. The state government will preserve the right to impose taxes, and a part of the collected revenue will be deposited to the treasury of the central government;

5. The states will be the owners of the foreign currency that they will earn, and similarly a portion will be deposited to the treasury of the central government;
6. The states will be given the power of forming militia force for their regional security;

Importance: The 6 points included economic, political, martial and other rights of the people of East Pakistan. The Ayub regime termed it as a separatist movement. The demands reflected the national spirit of the Bengalis. Although the demand of independence was not spelled out in it, the charter inspired the Bengalis in the spirit of independence, and in the end, it became the national charter for liberation. For his 6-points programme the Pakistani regime blamed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a Secessionist and enemy of Pakistan.

The Pakistan government did not accept the demands, rather started oppression that made the peoples' movement inevitable,



Picture 1.4: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the exponent of the provincial autonomy on the basis of the 6 point demands.

The Historic Agartala Case (State Vs. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Others)

The ultimate goal of the politics of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation was to achieve independence of Bangladesh, and he believed that the freedom would not be achieved without armed struggle. He gave consent to the revolutionary wing formed secretly to achieve independence of Bangladesh to go for armed struggle as per the plan. The revolutionary wing planned to attack all the cantonments being divided into different groups on a specific date at night in the commando style to snatch arms and ammunition from the Pakistani forces and hold them captive. Later they would declare the independence under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. With this plan in mind Sheikh Mujib had once visited Agartala, the capital of Tripura, India. As the plan was disclosed before being materialized, the historic irtala (State Vs. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others) case was lodged. The ruling clique termed it as a conspiracy case. A charge was framed against a total of 35 persons including political leaders, civil servants, in Service and retired army officers and other civilians.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was named the number one defendant. They were accused under Section 121-A and 131 of the Pakistan Penal Code for conspiring to make East Pakistan a sovereign and independent state through arms struggle. The hearing of the case started on 19 June 1968 in a special tribunal at the Dhaka Cantonment. As the trial began, a fierce movement launched by the people to withdraw the case. The farmers, labourers, students and general people spontaneously joined the agitation on the 11 point demands of the students. The political movement on the basis of the 6 and the 11 point demands took root among the masses, and the subsequent 'Historic Agartala Case' eventually encouraged the people to move for the independence.

The Mass Uprising in 1969

The most important movement against the Pakistani rulers was launched in 1969 with full participation by the people from all walks of life. It was termed in the history as Unshottur Gano Abhuthan (The Mass Uprising of Sixty Nine) that took a revolutionary turn. All democratic parties, professionals, mass people spontaneously took part in the movement. Asaduzzaman Asad, a student of the University of Dhaka, and Dr. Shamsujjoha, a professor of the University of Rajshahi became the victims of brutal killings by the Pakistani Junta. People indiscriminate of professions took to the streets everywhere in East Pakistan to protest against the autocrat, and in the end, Ayub Khan was forced to release Sheikh Mujib unconditionally on 22 February 1969. Similarly the other political detainees were released too. The Agartala case was withdrawn. Chhala Sangram Parishad gave a warm reception to Sheikh Mujib at the Racecourse (now Suhrawardi Uddayari) on 23 February, and he was awarded the title 'Bangabandhu' in the reception meeting. The then Deputy V.P. Mr. Tofail Ahmed moved the motion.



Picture 1.5: Martyr Asad

The Historical influence of the Mass Uprising:

Pakistani Junta Ayub Khan was forced to resign as the consequence of the mass uprising in 1969, and before his resignation, he withdrew the Agartala Case. The new military government of General Yahia was forced to declare the general election in 1970. The nationalist ideals started germinating in the minds of the people of East Bengal for the successful uprising in 1969. They



Picture 1.6 : A glimpse of a violent procession during the mass uprising of 1969

realised a greater unity based on the Bengali nationalism. The mass uprising of 1969 had an influence in the polling of 1970 and the liberation war of 1971, and the achievements were made possible for the spark of the Bengali nationalism in the people's mind.

The Election of 1970 and aftermath

President Ayub Khan resigned his post on 25 March 1969. Yahia Khan succeeded him as the next dictator. In a statement on 28 March, he promised to hold a general election, but on this there was confusion because previously no general election was so far. Nor was there any election rules yet. Finally on 7 December 1970, the general election was held for the first time in Pakistan on the basis of 'one person one vote'. The Awami League, the NAP (Wall), the Muslim League (Kayurn), the Muslim League (Convention), the Pakistan People's Party, the Democratic Party, the Jamat-e-Islami and some other political parties took part in the election. The Awami league termed this election as a 'referendum' in favour of 6 point demands. 3 crore and 22 lakh out of 5 crore and 64 lakh voters belonged to East Pakistan. In the central parliament election of 1970, the Awami League bagged 167 (with 7 female seats) out of 169 seats preserved for East Pakistan. In the election of Provincial assembly held on 17 December, the Awami League got 298 out of 300 seats and won the absolute majority. The landslide victory of the Awami League in the election was unprecedented. They got the verdict of the people in favour of 6 point demands and for the formation of government.

Importance of the Election: The Awami League achieved the landslide victory in the National and provincial assembly. So it was authenticated that the people supported the 6 and 11 Point demands. The Bengali nationalism marked a political victory. On the other hand, it was a big blow to the Pakistani rulers. So they started hatching new plot against the Bengalis not to hand over the power to the elected body. The people of East Pakistan stood firmly against the dictatorship of West Pakistan. The significance of the election in emerging an independent Bangladesh in 1971 became clear. It also played a vital role to transform the spirit of nationalism to the spirit of freedom. As a result, a new country named Bangladesh emerged.

Individual work: Make a list of the political events contributed to the rise of the Bengali nationalism.

Short Questions:

Exercise

1. How did East Bengal become a Province of Pakistan?
2. What is the International Mother Language Day?
3. Identify the reasons of calling the historic 6 Point demands the charter of liberation.