

preserve of West Pakistan. East Pakistan over it nor any stake in its continuance in that form. It is clear that before 1965, the defense against external aggression was built up exclusively in West Pakistan, on the simple understanding that in time of war, armaments would be flown or shipped immediately to protect East Pakistan. But when the 1965 war against India started, East Pakistan was totally cut off for 17 days from any Military help from West Pakistan. The non-vulnerability of East Pakistan at times of war was thus nakedly exposed. The Bengalis felt that their safety and interests were at risk for a political solution of the disputed territory Kashmir, not part of Pakistan.

The 1965 Indo-Pak War proved it absolutely that East Pakistan was defenseless and the Pakistani forces were deployed for the defense of West Pakistan. East Pakistan was safe only because India did not invade it. The fact that India did not invade East Pakistan for several reasons was no satisfaction to the Bengalis because they had been demanding their right of defense capability since the 1950s. They however resented the fact that they were in danger of being occupied by India for the sake of distant Kashmir.

In this war, the Bengali military personnel contributed outstanding performance. The Central Government took the opportunity publishing this news in order to show the national integrity but it also raised the morale of the Bengalis regarding their potential resources in military skills. At a press conference, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stated; time has come for making East Pakistan self-sufficient in all respects.

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### **Six-Point Programme: A Charter of Demand**

The culmination of the AL's demand for regional autonomy came with the declaration of the Six-Point Programme in February 1966 by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It was virtually the 'Bengali's right to live', which Sheikh Mujib himself called our demand for survival. In the wake of the Indo-Pak war over Kashmir war, many politicians in West Pakistan did not want to miss the Golden opportunity to turn the political dissatisfaction with the



Tashkent Agreement into a major, political issue. To that end they called an All-Pakistan National Conference in Lahore on 5 February 1966. The declared purpose of the conference was to make a review of the post-war political situation. Mujib himself was not enthusiastic about participating in this conference since there was little likelihood of an open discussion there on matters of concern to East Pakistan. But Finally Mujib made up his mind to join and to press for the demand for autonomy in such a radical form that it would automatically command national attention.

More importantly, it would ignite the imagination of the people in East Pakistan. Originally consisting of seven points, it was reduced to six points in the final form. Tajuddin Ahmed, the best mind in the party and the ablest of Mujib lieutenants, helped to edit the text in its final form. Six-Point program was a significant politico-economic document. Politically, it sought to re-structure the political system in a manner which might ensure effective participation of the Bengalis. Economically it was designed to put the East Pakistani resource management at the disposal of the Bengalis. Militarily, it wanted to make East Pakistan self sufficient in defense.

### Background

On 12 February 1966, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Launched his Six-Point programme for full regional autonomy in East Pakistan before an All-Party conference in Lahore, the city where Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Huq moved the Pakistan Resolution in 1940 for a confederation of independent Muslim states. It needs to be emphasized that the Bengali Muslims always objected to the 1946 amendment of the Lahore Resolution, which changed the political concept of Pakistan from 'independent states' to a single state.

The source of the inspiration of the Six-Point Program lies on the original concept of Pakistan that it would consist of "Independent Muslim States". In 1942 Suhrawardy said: "Mr. Jinnah envisages the course followed in the evolution of the Union of the commonwealth of Australia and the Dominion of Canada. The Muslim States will first function as separate and independent units in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and if and when found feasible, confederate as equal partners by mutual consent with other parts of India and with other Dominions". On the eve of the partition of India, even the British authorities believed that the units of Pakistan would be administratively and financially autonomous.

Since the creation of Pakistan, the Bengalis were demanding full autonomy for East Bengal. In 1950, the working committee of the East Bengal Muslim League stated, "that since the railways and navigation system of the Eastern



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wing were separate from those of the West," communications "cannot and should not be a central subject." It also declared "that so far as the export and import trade of East Pakistan is concerned adequate provision should be made subject to the East possible control of the centre for the administration of this subject by the Government of East Pakistan." It should be noted that the famous 21-Point Program launched by the United Front in 1954 included the point number 19, which stated: "East Bengal will get complete autonomy according to the Lahore Resolution. Our defense, currency and foreign policy will be joint subjects with the centre. Army headquarters will be in West Pakistan and Naval headquarters are to be set up in East Pakistan, so that this wing can become strong to safeguard her freedom. The answer will be equipped with arms."

### **Six-Point Program**

Six-Point Program launched by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 12 February 1966, consisted of the following demands:

#### ***Point No. 1***

The character of the government shall be federal and parliamentary, in which the election to the federal legislature and to the legislature to the federating units shall be direct and on the basis of universal adult franchise. The representation in the federal legislature shall be on the basis of population.

#### ***Point No. 2***

The federal government shall be responsible only for defense and foreign affairs and subject to the conditions provided in (3) below, currency.

#### ***Point No. 3***

There shall be two separate, free convertible currencies for the two wings of the country or in the alternative a single currency, subject to the establishment of a federal reserve system in which there will be regional Federal Reserve banks which shall devise measures to prevent that transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to another:

#### ***Point No. 4***

Fiscal policy shall be the responsibility of, and the power of taxation shall vest in, the federating units. The federal government shall be provided with requisite revenue resources for meeting the requirements of defense and foreign affairs, which revenue resources would be automatically



appropriate by the federal government in the manner provided and on the basis of the ratio to be determined by the procedure laid down in the Constitution. Such constitutional provisions would ensure that the federal government's revenue requirement is met consistently with the objective of ensuring control over fiscal policy by the government of the federating units.

#### Point No. 5

Constitutional provisions shall be made to enable separate accounts to be maintained of the foreign exchange earnings of each of the federating units, under the control of the respective governments of the federating units. The foreign exchange requirements of the federal government shall be met by the government of the federating units on the basis of a ratio to be determined in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Constitution. The regional governments shall have power under the Constitution to negotiate foreign trade and aid within the framework of the foreign policy of the country, which shall be the responsibility of the federal government.

#### Point No. 6

The government of the federating units shall be empowered to maintain a militia or para-military force in order to contribute effectively towards national security.

#### Reactions of launching Six-Point Program

Soon after launching of the Programme, it caught the imagination of the people of East Pakistan and transformed it to a political battle cry for making East Pakistan free from all exploitation and domination by West Pakistan and achieving full autonomy.

In May 1967, five opposition parties, the AL, council ML, JI, KSP and NI formed a political organisation by name Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). In order to diffuse the appeal of the Six-Point Programme launched by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bhutto wanted to influence Maulana Bhasani behind Mujib's back. He impressed upon the Maulana that the Six-Point demand had the backing of the USA authority in order to lessen the growing friendship between Pakistan and China.

Meanwhile, In March 1966 Ayub Khan came to East Pakistan to launch his attack against the Six-Point Programme when he said that it would spell disaster for the country and turn the people of EP into slaves. On 20 March he denounced the Programme, stating that it aimed towards the unification of East Pakistan and West Bengal as an independent state. On the other



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hand, Sheikh Mujib then made a province wide tour to assess public opinion and popularize his Six-Point demand. At Chittagong he declared that the Six-Point Demand was essentially charter for maintaining a strong and united Pakistan where the people of both wings of the country would be able to enjoy the fruits of independence. The East Pakistan Students League particularly carried on a drive for the growth of Bengali language side by side with the Six-Point movement. This appeal to Bengali nationalism continued to play a decisive role in the later political developments in Pakistan. Since the launching of the man campaign by Sheikh Mujib for about months, the urban centres of East Pakistan seemed to be virtually in the grip of a 'man revolution'. This prompted the government to arrest the Sheikh Mujib and his chief Lieutenants on 8 May 1966.

Ayub Khan called Sheikh Mujib a 'secessionist'. In June the government banned the leading Bengali newspaper *The Daily Ittefaq* and arrested its editor, Tafazzal Hossain (Manik Mia). The government also forfeited the property of the paper. Hence, the EPSL shouldered the responsibility for carrying on the Six-Point movement. A complete strike was called by the AL on 7 June 1966. The students, labourers and people from all walks of life lent their support to this call and stopped all wheels from moving. As was expected, the government resorted to force and arrested many leaders and workers of the AL and issued warrant against many others. In order to disperse the strikers the police also resorted to firing as a result of which 13 were killed and several others seriously wounded. After about 21 months of detention, on 18 January, 1968, Sheikh Mujib was released but the military took him forcibly from the jail gate and confined him in the Dhaka Cantonment.

The impact of the Six-Point Demand was felt widely and it evoked tremendous enthusiasm amongst the people of East Pakistan. The programme was supported by different social groups in East Pakistan. The Ayub regime's policy towards the Six-Point demand was one of total suppression. It should once again that the regime failed to respond to the political demand. After the launching of the movement Sheikh Mujib had hinted that the demands were negotiable. He declared, in a speech in the town of Pabna that Six-Point can be dropped, if the capital of the country was shifted to East Pakistan. But the regime turned a deaf ear to this and instead of trying to come to some compromise began to malign him.

In 1968, agitation against the Ayub regime started in West Pakistan but it soon spread to East Pakistan.