

Chapter Ten

Disparity between East and West Pakistan

In 1947 Pakistan came into being. With its birth the central government which was dominated by leaders from West Pakistan ventured into policies that created cultural, political, economic and administrative disparity between the two wings of Pakistan. East Pakistan (East Pakistan was known as East Bengal till 1956) immediately took a stand against those policies. From 1947 onwards therefore began another chapter in the history of Bangladesh where cultural, political and economic issues determined the course of history. Pakistan as it came into being in 1947 consisted of four provinces. In East Pakistan there was one province, in West Pakistan three. The three provinces were Punjab, Sind, and North West Frontier Provinces. There were also a number of states in West Pakistan like Bhawalpur, Khairpur, and Baluchistan State Union. All those units varied widely in population, resources and experience. The following table makes this clear.

Population and Resources of Pakistan in 1947

	Population 000	Per cent Total	Ann. Rev. Rs. mil	Rev. Per cap. Rs.
Punjab	18,815	24.9	246.2	
Sind	4,606	6.1	97.0	12.0
N.W.F.P	3,223	4.3	65.0	21.0
Bahawalpur	1,822	2.4	50.5	20.1
Khairpur	319	0.4	12.0	27.7
Baluchistan S Union	552	0.7	5.8	37.6
Baluchistan	602	0.8		10.5
Karachi	1,123	1.5		
N.W.F. Agencies	2,642	3.5		
Total W. Pakistan	33,704	44.6		
East Bengal	41,932	55.4	234.5	5.6 1
Total	75,636	100.0		

East Pakistan was separated from West Pakistan by a distance of more than one thousand miles. There was very little in common between the people of East and West Pakistan. Though in both the wings of Pakistan Islam was the predominant religion all other factors like language, culture, history, tradition, dietary habits, dress were different. Perception of life and the position of women in society, were also different. During the struggle for independence in 1947, however, the people of East Pakistan had supported the idea of a Muslim state not so much out of religious considerations as for economic reasons. After the failure of various proposals for an independent Muslim state in North-East India based on the Lahore Resolution of 1940 and especially of the concept of a United Independent Bengal, the Muslims of East Bengal saw in the creation of a Muslim state namely Pakistan a way out from the economic domination of the Hindus. After the birth of Pakistan the expectations of the people of East Bengal received a rude shock. In the new state of Pakistan, East Pakistan was deprived of its due share in the administration of the country and in its development programmes. Internal colonial and exploitative policies followed by the rulers of Pakistan destroyed the very basis on which Pakistan was supported by the people of East Pakistan.

156 Census of Pakistan, 1951, Table 6, and
Government for 1955-56,

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The central government adopted political, cultural, administrative and economic policies that went against the fundamental interests of East Pakistan. There were various reasons that contributed towards the exploitative and discriminatory policies followed by the group in power in Pakistan. First, soon after partition of India in 1947 there was an absence of leadership in East Bengal. Between 1937 and 1946 the Krishak Proja Party the leading party of East Bengal declined and became ineffective. Fazlul Huq the fiery leader of East Bengal, the mover of the Lahore Resolution was discredited and made ineffective in Bengal politics.² The 1946 election saw the defeat of the KPP and the victory of the Muslim League. The victory was possible due to the organising capacity of H.S Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim. But soon after the election, Suhrawardy was manoeuvred out of the Bengal Muslim League Parliamentary Party and the non-Bengali leaders and pro-Jinnah factions of the Muslim League captured all power. Khwaja Nazimuddin was made the Chief Minister and Maulana Akram Khan the Chief Organiser of the East Bengal Muslim League. On June 31, 1948 Nazimuddin ousted Suhrawardy from Dhaka and imposed a ban on his entry into the province.³ Earlier, on May 18 he was deprived of his membership of the Constituent Assembly. Suhrawardy sought the intervention of the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan. He was however informed by the Prime Minister that the action taken against him was a matter entirely for the provincial government and that he could not interfere in their administration.⁴ Thus by mid-1948 two great leaders of East Bengal were manoeuvred out of their power base. The leaders who were in charge to protect the interest of the Muslims of Bengal were mostly weak and pliable or only interested in promoting their own interests. Further they owed their position both at the centre and in the provinces to the non-Bengali leaders and not to their provincial party base. Their primary interest therefore was to please their masters. Leaders like Nazimuddin, Muhammad Ali of Bogra, Nurul Amin and Iskender Mirza could not therefore protect the interests of the people of East Bengal. Taking advantage of this, the West Pakistani dominated

2 Discussed earlier in chapter VIII.

3 Memoirs of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy edited by Md. H.R. Talukdar, p.35. (Henceforth Memoirs of Suhrawardy.)

4 Hasan Zaheer, *The Separation of East Pakistan. The Rise and Realisation of Bengali Muslim Nationalism*, p.18-19.

Government of Pakistan arrogated state power and resources to maximise the benefits for West Pakistan at the cost of East Pakistan.

Secondly the central government of Pakistan which was dominated by the leaders of West Pakistan had narrow political vision. They did not understand the need to evolve an enlightened national policy to integrate the two wings of Pakistan. They suffered from a false sense of superiority and under-estimated the political strength of the Bengalis. Hence right from the start they did not take the basic concerns of East Pakistan into consideration while laying the foundations of the new state of Pakistan. Pakistan leadership was a conglomeration of leaders from the Punjab, NWFP, migrant Muslim League leaders from servants. The leaders from East Pakistan were hand-picked and were subservient to the West Pakistan leaders. Decision making power especially after the death of Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 gradually shifted into the hands of the top bureaucracy who were backed by the army. Since the bureaucracy was dominated by the Punjabis the wider interests of East Pakistan was ignored. Moreover the top and middle positions in East Pakistan Secretariat were filled by former Indian Civil Service (ICS) officers who belonged to other provinces. Their loyalty was to West Pakistan rather than to East Pakistan. The West Pakistani leaders in an attempt to concentrate power in their own hands tried to create (i) a strong central government (ii) one state language namely Urdu (iii) to discredit the opposition parties that came into being after 1947 in East Pakistan. It was claimed by West Pakistanis that the leaders of those parties were agents of India and their purpose was to destabilise Pakistan. (iv) To keep East Pakistan under perpetual domination, policies were formulated to siphon off resources from East Pakistan to West Pakistan and finally (v) in February 1948 the restructuring of the Pakistan Muslim League was undertaken with the sole purpose of strengthening the non-Bengali Muslim groups in power.⁵ Henceforth the party no longer had any national commitment to pursue. Their sole objective was to preserve their own interest and perpetuate their own hold over the country. The disparity between East and West Pakistan

⁵ Hasan Zaheer, *The Separation of East Pakistan. The Rise and Realisation of Bengali Muslim Nationalism*. p.19

that followed was the inevitable consequence of this strategic shift in power.

I. Political disparity between East and West Pakistan

Soon after the birth of Pakistan, the central government of Pakistan which was effectively controlled by the leaders of West Pakistan took administrative measures to ensure the total political domination of West Pakistan over East Pakistan. The measures may be summed up as follows.

- a) The making of the Constitution was delayed for almost ten years and till 1956 Pakistan was administered under the Government of India Act 1935. This provided a very convenient legal leverage to deprive East Pakistan of its due share in the governance of Pakistan.
- b) Though the Act of 1935 stipulated that responsible government of a parliamentary type was to be introduced and autonomy was to replace dyarchy, it did not so happen in Pakistan. The Government of India Act 1935 gave the Governor - General as well as the Governor certain extraordinary powers which he was to exercise as his special responsibilities and could also disregard the advice of his ministers. Besides these, he had certain other powers which he exercised at his discretion. These included his power to issue ordinances which would have the force of law for a fixed period, the power to appoint and dismiss ministers and the power to suspend the constitution and take over the administration of the province. The Government of Pakistan retained these provisions of the Act of 1935 that provided for a strong central government in the Constitution of 1956. Thus article 92 A of the Act of 1935 under which the Governor-General took over the province and the Governor acted as his agent was retained in the Constitution of 1956 as article 193. This article was used as a weapon to prevent the provinces from challenging the authority of the centre. In 1954 after the victory of the Jukto Front (i.e. United Front of the political parties in East Pakistan) in the first election of the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly and the defeat of the ruling Muslim League Party, article 92 A, was used to dismiss Fazlul Huq's Ministry and impose central rule.
- c) Jinnah after the birth of Pakistan chose to become the first Governor - General of Pakistan, as a result the normal conventions of a cabinet government did not develop. The possibility of constructive advice from the cabinet to the Governor-General was unthinkable. As Dawn pointed out, "whatever the constitutional powers of the Governor -General of a Dominion may be, in Quaid-i-Azam's case no legal or formal limitations

can apply".⁶ The first cabinet meeting accorded Jinnah the right to call for information on any matter from the secretaries of ministries to overrule the decision of any minister and to review cabinet decision, to could also preside over all cabinet meetings on important issues.⁷

After the death of Jinnah in September 1948 the group that came into power had no intention of sharing power with East Pakistan. Though Khwaja Nazimuddin, the Chief Minister of East Bengal was appointed Governor-General after Jinnah, the real power was in the hands of Liaquat Ali Khan the Prime Minister of Pakistan. After the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan in October 1951 power was seized by the Punjabi leaders. It was decided that Nazimuddin should step down from his position of Governor-General and became the Prime Minister. Ghulam Mohammad the Finance Minister became the Governor-General and Chowdhury Mohammad Ali (both West Pakistanis) took up the leadership of the Punjabi group. In 1953 Prime Minister Nazimuddin was dismissed by the Governor - General. It was believed that the action taken by the Governor-General "was clearly political and beyond the normal scope of a constitutional head of state."⁸ Later Ghulam Mohammad installed the new cabinet with Mohammad Ali Bogra as the Prime Minister. Mohammad Ali was appointed the Prime Minister as it was widely insisted at that time, that if one of the two top offices went to West Pakistan the other, should be given to East Pakistan.⁹ Moreover Mohammad Ali was acceptable to the Governor-General and to the stronger Punjabi members of the new ministry namely Choudhury Mohammad Ali and M. A. Gurmani. The new Prime Minister therefore began his tenure of office as the man brought in by the Governor-General.¹⁰ Thus though both Nazimuddin and Mohammad Ali Bogra were from East Pakistan and held top positions they never enjoyed real power.

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d) Further attempt at centralisation was made through the enactment of Public and Representative Offices (Disqualification) Act, 1949 (PRODA) "debarring from public life for a suitable period of persons judicially found guilty of misconduct in any public office or representative capacity or in any matter relating thereto".¹¹ The aim of PRODA was thus to control provincial politicians, particularly of East Pakistan. The vagueness of the charges - 'nepotism', 'wilful maladministration' - meant that few ministers could be certain that they would emerge unscathed from an inquiry. The Act empowered the Governor-General or Governor to refer to courts or to special judicial tribunal charges of misconduct in public office. Alternatively the Governor-General or the Governor could act at his discretion i.e. he was not required to act upon the advice of his ministers. This later power was used as a weapon to coerce a recalcitrant officeholder. During the five years PRODA was in force disqualification was imposed on four provincial ex-ministers of Pakistan including Hamidul Huq Chowdhury from East Bengal.¹² PRODA was repealed on September 1954.

e) Since the governors were appointed by the central government and had close party link they invariably protected the interest of the centre and were used by the centre as agents or mechanism of centralisation. Moreover there was a popular feeling that Nazimuddin and Muhammad Ali Bogra were not the genuine representatives of East Pakistan. Lack of due share in the power structure of Pakistan was therefore a major cause of dissatisfaction in East Pakistan. The struggle for autonomy gained ground with every passing day and it became a make or break issue which ultimately led to the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

II. Economic Disparity

Economic condition of Pakistan during 1947-1970 an overview

In order to get a clear picture of the economic disparity that was inflicted on East by West Pakistan and to put it in perspective it is necessary to get an overall picture of the economic condition that prevailed in Pakistan in 1947 and the situation that developed by 1970 regarding per capita income, savings, trade and industrial growth.

⁶ Dawn, July 13, 1947.

⁷ A.M.A Muhiith, Bangladesh Emergence of a Nation, p. 41. K. Callard P

⁸ Callard op. cit p. 135.

⁹ Callard op. cit p. 134

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 138-39

¹¹ Ibid., p 102.

¹² Ibid. p. 101-105.

A comparison of the per capita income of East and West wings of Pakistan between 1947-48 and 1969-70. In 1947-48 though the per capita income of East Pakistan was slightly lower than that in West Pakistan, this gap steadily increased owing to the exploitative policies of the central government and by 1970 the difference almost doubled. In 1949-50 the per capita income in East Pakistan was Rs.305 and that in West Pakistan Rs.330¹³. The per capita income in East Pakistan was therefore slightly lower than West Pakistan at the onset. By 1969-70 however according to the Pakistan Planning Commission report the gap had widened alarmingly. While in 1959-60 West Pakistan's per capita income was about 30 per cent higher than that of East Pakistan, by 1969-70 it was about 62 per cent higher. A study by a group of scholars in Vienna found that while West Pakistan's per capita income rose from Rs 373 in 1960 to Rs.498 in 1970 that of East Pakistan during that period registered a very insignificant rise from Rs 288 to Rs.308.¹⁴

The following table shows this disparity:

Per capita income		
Period	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
1949-50	Rs 305	Rs 330
1954-55	Rs 298	Rs 356
1959-60	Rs 288	Rs 373
1969-70	Rs 308	Rs 498 ^{15a}

In spite of the low per capita income, the percentage of saving in East Pakistan was higher than in West Pakistan. The following table shows the savings rate of the two regions.

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Period	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
1950-55	6%	1.7%
1955-60	7.6%	4%
1960-65	4.3%	0.9% ^{15b}

In the matter of exports and imports East Pakistan exported more in 1948-49 and 1949-50 than West Pakistan. During the same period imports of East Pakistan was less than West Pakistan. The following table makes this clear.

Period	In million Rs.	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
1948-49 Export		1254	526
1949-50		597	518
1948-49 Imports		231	648
1949-50		214	632 ¹⁶

In 1947 in the sphere of industries, both East and West Pakistan had a balanced share of medium and large scale manufacturing industries. Pakistan's textile, match, sugar and tea industries were located in East Pakistan. In cement production West Pakistan had larger capacity but she had a nominal chemical industry and a small petroleum refining capacity i.e. 11 million gallons per annum. West Pakistan had cotton ginning capacity for 600,000 bales and wheat grinding capacity for 390,000 tons. East Pakistan on the other hand had jute baling capacity of 1.1 million bales and rice milling capacity for 1.7 million tons. Leather and engineering industries were evenly distributed between the two regions. In the cottage industry sector East Pakistan was in a little better position.¹⁷ Unfortunately immediately after the birth of Pakistan the economic growth of East Pakistan came to a standstill and soon after steadily declined owing to the one economy theory that was evolved and pursued by the Government of Pakistan.

¹³

Economic Survey of East Pakistan 1969-70 Planning Department, Government of East Pakistan, Dhaka, 1970, p.102-103. Muhith, op.cit., p.101.

¹⁴

Mohammad Ayoob and K. Subrahmanyam, *The Liberation War*, p.41 See for various

^{15a}

studies made showing marginal differences in actual figures.

^{15b}

Compilation from R. Jahan op.cit., p.31 and Muhith op.cit.p101

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Muhith, op.cit p 114.

¹⁷

Table compiled from *Constituent Assembly (Legislature) Debates*, Vol. I, No. March 25, 1951, p.311-12.

The following table shows the economy of Pakistan by 1949-50 and as it developed by 1969-70.

Gross Domestic Product of Pakistan by
(at constant factor cost of 1959-60 in million rupees)

	1949-50 Total	East+	West+	1969-70 Total	East	West
Agriculture	14669	850+	5890+	24593	12244	12249
Mining	27			158	10	148
Manufacturing	1433	120+	180+	6540	1993	4547
Construction	238			2728	1354	1374
Transportation	1239			3595	1300	1295
Trade	2856			6705	2508	4197
Service	1513			3521	1133	2388
Public Admin. & Defence	1063			3310	503	2807
Dwellings	1387			2296	1172	1124
Banking & Insurance	77			830	66	764
Total	24502	13130+	11830+	32383	31883 ¹⁸	

The One Economy Theory

Economic disparity between East Pakistan and West Pakistan resulted from a policy of economic exploitation pursued by the Government of Pakistan. From a very early stage the government adopted a policy of centralisation as recommended by Sir Archibald Rowlands, who was called in by Jinnah to advise the new state on economic issues.¹⁹ To promote national integration and to give the concept of nationhood its economic content, one of the cardinal principles, usually followed by a federal form of government is that

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transfer of resources should take place from a more developed or richer region to the less developed or more disadvantaged region. In Pakistan this principle was not followed. In fact just the opposite took place. To transfer resources from East Pakistan to West Pakistan one economy theory was enforced. According to this theory, economy of Pakistan was regarded as an integral whole. This policy went completely against the interest of East Pakistan as West Pakistan and East Pakistan were separated by one thousand miles. While this geographical separation did not prevent the flight of capital from East to West Pakistan, it prevented the East Pakistanis from reaping a share of the economic opportunities created from the investment of resources from East Pakistan in West Pakistan. Moreover geographical separation prevented the mobility of labour from East to West Pakistan²⁰ and thereby denied East Pakistanis the benefits from the development works undertaken in the Western part. According to a report of the Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan, the net transfer of resources from East Pakistan to West Pakistan, during the period 1948-49 to 1968-69 amounted to approximately 2.6 billion dollars.²¹

Major economic deprivations suffered by East Pakistan

The broad aspects of the major economic deprivations of East Pakistan by the central government of Pakistan can be examined under the following headings:

1. Sharing of revenues between the centre and the provinces.
2. Development planning and expenditure.
3. Disparity in trade policy between the two wings of Pakistan.
4. Agricultural policy.

1. Sharing of revenue between the centre and the provinces

Distribution of resources between the centre and the provinces were not straight forward. The central government not only did not give the provinces their due share but also adopted dubious methods to

²⁰ To be discussed later on in the chapter.

²¹ Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, Reports of the Advisory Panels for Fourth Five Year Plan 1970-75, Vol. I, Appendix 3, July 1970.

¹⁸ Muhith, op.cit., p.101.

¹⁹ Hasan Zaheer, op.cit., p.49.

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encroach on provincial revenues and arrogate to itself the lion's share of that revenue.²² Firstly, since the inception of Pakistan, the statutory share of the provinces in the proceeds of income-tax was withheld without changing the law. Secondly, the central government unilaterally amended the constitutional provision regarding East Pakistan's share in the jute export duty.²³ Thirdly customs duty and duty on agricultural land became a central source of revenue. In addition 50 per cent of sales tax was also taken by the centre. All the provinces were affected by those measures but East Pakistan was hit hard the most, as control of the central government by the West Pakistani personnel gave the other West Pakistani provinces some relief. Savings, as already noted was higher in East Pakistan than in West Pakistan.²⁴ These savings from East Pakistan were invested in West Pakistan²⁵ which benefited West Pakistan. Moreover, West Pakistan gained from the revenue earnings of the central government as the earnings were primarily used to meet the current expenditure of the central government. East Pakistan also did not receive its due share from the central revenue expenditure. Practically all defence installations were located in West Pakistan. Almost all the defence personnel's were recruited from West Pakistan. This allowed the total concentration of all defence expenditure in that region. Only a token force was maintained in East Pakistan. From 1950-51 to 1968-69 out of a central revenue expenditure of Rs. 3796 crore, Rs 2132 crore or more than 56 per cent, was spent on defence. Bulk of the expenditure on civil administration was also concentrated in West Pakistan including the federal capital.²⁶ In defence of its policy the central government maintained that the central government needed more resources to rehabilitate the refugees and to strengthen the defence forces which were in the interest of both regions. Moreover West Pakistan usually maintained that East Pakistan did not contribute much to the revenue earnings of Pakistan and hence could not grudge heavy current expenditure in West Pakistan.²⁷

In February 1951 during a budget session in the East Pakistan Assembly members accused the Bengali representatives in the centre and in the provincial government of being "diffident in putting forward our legitimate claims to the central government and getting our dues. They appear to be afraid of the centre."²⁸ This forced Nurul Amin, the Chief Minister to take a stand and refute the Finance Minister Ghulam Muhammad's statement that East Pakistan was not earning enough. In support of this he gave the figures of East Pakistan's export and import during the years 1948-49 and 1949-50 (figures shown earlier in the chapter). Nurul Amin pointed out that, "what was earned in East Pakistan was spent here in West Pakistan," and blamed the centre's policies of import licensing and foreign exchange allocation for the deficit in the East Pakistan government.²⁶ Earlier on, Nurul Amin had demanded that population should be the basis of distribution of the surplus earnings by the central government (East Pakistan was allotted 25 million rupees out of 80 million rupees). In this he was supported by all the Bengali members. The Finance Minister however rejected the population principle for distribution of grants to the provinces.²⁷ The central government ultimately had to bring in Sir Jeremy Raisman, a British expert to examine the existing allocation of revenues between the centre and the provinces. The recommendations of Sir Jeremy were submitted in December 1952. For the time being it was accepted by the East Pakistanis as it felt that, some, though not full, justice has been done to the case of East Bengal.²⁸ Though the recommendations gave temporary relief to the pressure created by East Pakistan, the unscrupulous drainage of resources from East Pakistan continued unabated. This glaring deprivation eventually resulted in serious embitterment of the relationship between East Pakistan and the Centre and eroded the political foundation of Pakistan.

²² Zaheer, op.cit p.49.

²³ Ayoob, op. cit. P 45,cites Pakistan Economic Survey 1968-69 Statistical Section p.43

²⁴ Mulfih, op. cit p 78-80

²⁵ East Pakistan Legislative Assembly Proceedings, Vol V, No. 1, February 26, 1951, p. 382.

²⁶ Zaheer, op. cit. p.51.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 50, Constituent Assembly (Legislature) Debates Vol I No. 2 (March 21, 1951), p. 53

²⁸ East Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings, Vol. VII February 20, 1952, p. 16-17.

2. Development planning and expenditure

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in the allotment of funds for planned development work and non-development or non-plan expenditure. In the first three Five Years Plans, highly disproportionately low allocations of funds were made for development of East Pakistan. In addition, even this low allocation was not allowed to be duly utilised in East Pakistan through the mechanism of allocation and slow release of funds for projects. Releases of funds were delayed, projects were not approved on time and if approved execution of projects were to be held up and funds were allowed to lapse. Thus, steps were taken by the centre to ensure that development programmes were practically denied to East Pakistan. Fiscal policies of the central government were blatantly manipulated to throttle the economic growth of East Pakistan and to spur the economic development of West Pakistan.

During 1950-51 to 1954-55 East Pakistan's share of central government's development expenditure was as low as 20 per cent.²⁹ During the Second Five Year Plan period of 1960-65 its share was 31 per cent and in the Third Five Year Plan of 1965-70 East Pakistan received 36 per cent. During the Second and Third Five Year Plan, West Pakistan's share was 69 and 64 per cent respectively.³⁰ While in the Third Five Year Plan East Pakistan was, technically speaking allotted a bigger share of development funds, in actual practice it turned out to be much less than the funds made available for implementation of the Plan in East Pakistan. There was eventually a shortfall of approximately Rs 110 crore.] The target in the case of West Pakistan however was fulfilled. Thus, though the revised Third Five Year Plan provided for total development outlay of Rs.2700 crore for East Pakistan - i.e. for public sector Rs. 1600 crore and Rs. 1100 crore in private sector, the actual development expenditure during the Third Plan in the public sector was tentatively estimated at Rs. 1131 crore or about 71 per cent of the Plan allocation.

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While in the private sector only about 48 per cent of the Plan target i.e. Rs. 525 crore was spent.³¹

The outlay on non-plan development expenditure did not benefit East Pakistan at all. The concentration of central non-development expenditures in West Pakistan was four times larger than in East Pakistan. This placed East Pakistan in a seriously disadvantageous position. [The concentration of central non-development expenditure in West Pakistan gave the West clear advantages as it led to (a) higher income and employment generation and consequently expansion of market demand (b) expansion of physical infrastructure such as roads, transportation and communication facilities (c) rapid urbanisation and development of cantonment towns, defence related industries and services and finally (d) since the central government was located in West Pakistan it gave undue advantage to West.] The licensing and regulatory institutions of the central government that stimulated and facilitated the location of private sector activities as well as a substantial flow of capital brought in by the refugees from India all went in favour of West Pakistan.³² Development of Karachi city as the federal capital later on the transfer of capital to Islamabad and colossal investment in the development of Islamabad as the new capital of Pakistan, all these were outside the economic development plans. East Pakistan was never compensated for those enormous investments in the development of two major cities in West Pakistan on the excuse of developing the Federal capital. East Pakistan did not practically get any economic benefit from those large investments and very few Bengalis found employment opportunities while those cities in the West were developed with the money of tax payers in East Pakistan.

³¹ Economic Survey of East Pakistan 1969-70: quoted in Pakistan Observer (Dhaka) July 1, 1970. Ayoob p 44

³² Nurul Islam, *Making of a Nation* Bangladesh An Economist's Tale, p 64.

resources was dual. While its surplus foreign export earnings were utilized to finance the industrial development of West Pakistan, it was further used as a protected market where West Pakistan's manufactured products could be sold at artificially inflated prices".⁴⁰

4. Discriminatory policy regarding agriculture and education.

The central government of Pakistan followed a discriminatory policy regarding development and growth of agriculture and education in Pakistan which greatly benefited West Pakistan.

In the field of agriculture undue advantage was given to Punjab while East Pakistan's agriculture was allowed to stagnate. As far as the wheat-growing areas of West Pakistan particularly Punjab, were concerned, policy decision regarding agricultural inputs, in terms of tractors, seeds, fertilizer, insecticide, tube wells and other agricultural related products were taken and implemented with remarkable speed. One study revealed that the "green revolution" in Punjab was a result of this agricultural policy. 95 per cent of the tube wells were placed and 80 per cent of the tractors were given to Punjab. As a consequence by 1971, Punjab accounted for 80 per cent of the wheat, 70 per cent of cotton and sugar and 50 per cent of rice output in West Pakistan. Its per capita income became $2\frac{1}{2}$ times more than that of the other provinces of West Pakistan. This 'green revolution' bypassed East Pakistan.⁴¹ East Pakistan did not receive the same agricultural benefits from the central government as West Pakistan did. The result was stagnation in the production of rice. To add to this the price of jute fell in the world market. East Pakistan an agricultural based region was hit hard. It was estimated that the average rural per capita income in East Pakistan which was Rs.305 during the period 1949-50 to 1953-54, went down to

⁴⁰ Ayoob, op.cit., p.43.

⁴¹ Richard Nations, "The Economic Structure of Pakistan: Class and Colony". *New Left Review* (London), No. 68, July-August 1971, p. 18-19.

III. Administrative disparity between East and West

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Pakistan

Military

Civil Administration

After the birth of Pakistan the crucial decision making powers gradually went into the hands of the bureaucracy which was backed by the army. In Pakistan the bureaucracy was mainly manned by the West Pakistanis especially by the Punjabis and the immigrants, as a result of this, interests of East Pakistan suffered. The same was the case in the defence forces which was mainly manned by West Pakistanis. In 1968 East Pakistan's representation in the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP), the elite cadre which played a leading role in the centralisation of administration, was only 36 per cent. The position of the East Pakistanis in the other services like taxation, audit and accounts, customs etc. was no better.⁴⁵ It is worth noting that this figure was attained by 1968 due to the agitation mounted by the East Pakistanis. It was President Ayub who bending to the demands of the East Pakistanis introduced the quota system.

According to it 40 per cent of the seats in Civil Service of Pakistan was reserved for the East Pakistanis, 40 per cent for the West Pakistanis and 20 per cent were recruited on merit.⁴⁶ But here again mischief was carried out to deny the East Pakistanis of their due 40 per cent of the seats. Many of the dependents of non-Bengali Pakistanis who were in East Pakistan either as government servants or as businessmen entered the civil service on the East Pakistani quota thus denying the East Pakistanis of their legitimate share in the administration. In 1970 it is found that all the key officers appointed in the subdivisions, districts and secretariats in East

Army was the mainstay of the ruling West Pakistani junta. It was recruited mainly from the four districts of northern Punjab, namely Rawalpindi, Campbellpur, Jhelum and Gujrat and from two districts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) namely Peshawar and Kohat. Punjab accounted for almost 60 per cent of the army while 35 per cent came from NWFP and rest 5 per cent was taken from other places.⁴⁷

In 1955 East Pakistan's representation in the army was about 5 per cent. This did not seem to have changed much by 1971.⁴⁸ The number of officers from East Pakistan was only 14 compared to 894 from West Pakistan. In the navy and air force it was no better. In the navy there were 7 from East Pakistan and 593 from West Pakistan while in the air force there were 60 from East and 640 from West.⁴⁹ In 1956, out of 897 officers in the ranks of major and above only 15 were Bengalis. Most of those 15 officers were majors.⁵⁰ Between 1947 and the closing years of 1960's out of the 50 army officers who attained the rank of Major General and above 17 were from Punjab, 19 from NWFP, 11 from among Indian refugees and only one from East Pakistan.⁵¹ As an example of blatant discrimination against Bengali army officers it can be cited that General M. A. G. Osmany, Supreme Commander of the Liberation Forces was a lieutenant colonel in the British army before 1947. He was given only one promotion by the Pakistanis in twenty years and that is to the rank of colonel at the time of his retirement in 1967.

Pakistan were non-Bengali Muslims.⁴⁸ The situation regarding the top officers appointed in the subdivisions, districts and secretariats in East

government jobs was still worse. Till late in the sixties almost all government jobs were departmental heads were non-Bengalis. Few secretaries who were appointed by Yahya Khan but none were Bengali secretaries were appointed in the important ministries of Finance, Home and Defence.

⁴⁷ Khalid bin Sayeed, 'The role of the Military in Pakistan', in Jacques Van Doorn (ed.), *Armed Forces and society*, p. 276.

⁴⁸ R. Jahan, op. cit. p. 25, and Ayoub, op. cit. p. 38.

⁴⁹ R. Jahan, op. cit. p. 25. Refers to Dawn (Karachi) January 8, 1955.

⁵⁰ Talukder Mainuzzaman, op. cit., p. 7.

⁵¹ Ayoub, op. cit. p. 38 refers to Khalid bin Sayeed, 'The Role of the Military in Pakistan' op. cit. p. 276.

disillusion among the business, academic, and student communities." It was felt that, "these views would begin to be heard as soon as the emergency was lifted and would canalise themselves into a bid for provincial autonomy. The gambit would be to try to extract a price for continued co-operation with the centre. The price would be for a greater degree of autonomy."⁷² As events were to show the diplomat was not far from being correct.

Six-Points Programme

On January 10, 1966 the Indo-Pak war came to an end with the signing of peace treaty between India and Pakistan at Tashkent. The acceptance of a cease-fire without liberating Kashmir led to widespread unrest and movements all over West Pakistan particularly by the students and political parties. To discuss the Tashkent Declaration, at the initiative of the opposition parties in West Pakistan an All Pakistan National Conference of opposition parties was held at Lahore on February 5, 1966. At the Conference Sheikh Mujib called for peaceful settlement of international disputes and demanded on the basis of the Lahore Resolution, full autonomy for East Pakistan. At the conference he also placed his Six-Points programme. When the West Pakistani leaders refused to discuss the Six-Point, Sheikh Mujib walked out in protest.

In Dhaka, on March 23, 1966 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as President of the Awami League unveiled his Six-Points programme in a pamphlet titled, 'Our Right to Live.'⁷³ The summary of the Six Points are as follows:

1. The Constitution should provide for a federation of Pakistan in the true sense on the basis of the Lahore Resolution and for a Parliamentary form of government based on the supremacy of a duly elected legislature on the basis of universal adult franchise.
2. The Federal Government shall deal with only two subjects, defence and foreign affairs while all residuary subjects were to be vested in the federating states.

⁷² K. R. Crook, British High Commission, Dhaka to E L Sykes, Karachi Nov. 25, 1965. Roedad Khan, compiled and selected, *The British Papers Secret and Confidential India - Pakistan-Bangladesh Documents 1958-1969*, p. 416-417

⁷³ *Bangladesh Documents*, op. cit, p. 23-33

3. There should be either two separate freely convertible currencies for the two wings or one currency with two separate Reserve Banks to prevent inter-wing flight of capital.
4. The power of taxation and revenue collection shall be vested in the federating units. The Federal Government will receive a share to meet its financial obligations.
5. Economic disparities between the two wings shall be made to disappear through series of economic, fiscal and legal reforms.
6. A militia or para-military force must be created in East Pakistan, which at present has no defence of its own.⁷⁴

The Six-Points programme went further than the other political demands made earlier. It gave the Federal Government only two subjects defence and foreign affairs and not currency. It demanded a Parliamentary form of government where the members of the legislature would be elected on the basis of the universal adult franchise. This clause gave East Pakistan advantage over West Pakistan as the population in East Pakistan was larger than in West. Point four in the Six-Points which demanded that the power to tax and collect revenue should be with the federating units was also a departure from previous demands. The Six-Points programme of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman mesmerised the people of East Pakistan. There was massive support from all over the province. Soon after Mujib convened a meeting of the East Pakistan Awami League Council. In this meeting the Six-Points programme was formally adopted and included in the party manifesto. Sheikh Mujib was also formally elected President of the party. In his place Tajuddin Ahmed was elected as General Secretary.⁷⁵ To popularise it and to mobilise support for the Six-Points, Mujib launched a mass campaign. The response was overwhelming. The people of East Pakistan had been demanding democracy and autonomy for almost sixteen years. Sheikh Mujib provided the much needed historic leadership. His excellence as a charismatic leader of the people enabled him to carry forward the Six-Points programme to a point of no return. From that time, there was no turning back. Under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib the Bengalis of East Pakistan boldly moved forward till they achieved their freedom and democracy.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2-3, Shireen Hasan Osmany, Bangladesh Nationalism, History of Dialectics and Dimensions, p. 149

⁷⁵ Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, op.cit., p. 102

Chapter Twelve

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

From Six-Points to One Point

and

Emergence of Bangladesh

Agartala Conspiracy Case

The Six-Points Programme of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was naturally not well received by the rulers of Pakistan. They did not want to share economic and political power with East Pakistan. President Ayub Khan declared that the "six-point programme of the opposition is aimed at achievement of their dream of 'greater sovereign Bengal' which will spell disaster for the country and turn East Pakistan into slaves."¹ Ayub Khan thus failed to understand the real issue. Instead of finding a political and economic solution to the demands of East Pakistan he resorted to the use of naked force. Sheikh Mujib was arrested along with Tajuddin Ahmed, Khandokar Mushtaq Ahmed, Mansoor Ali, Zahur Ahmed Choudhury and others under the Defence of Pakistan Rules (DPR) on May 8, 1966. The arrest of Sheikh Mujib and others provoked resentment in East Pakistan. However, at that stage the support for the Six-Points was somewhat confined by and large to the middle class. This situation radically changed when Sheikh Mujib and the other detainees were charged with a conspiracy case, known as the Agartala Conspiracy

¹ Zaheer op. cit., p. 97 quotes from, Pakistan Chronology 1966, p. 20

Case. In January 1968 Sheikh Mujib along with 35² others – including some Bengali members of Pakistan Civil Service and some Bengali officers of the armed forces were charged with plotting to bring about the secession of East Pakistan with Indian help. This was declared in a press-note issued by the Pakistan Home Ministry. The press-note also claimed that, this group was maintaining close link with the Deputy High Commissioner of India in Dhaka and some of them visited Agartala (a place in India close to the border) and had meetings with Colonel Mishra, Major Menon and other Indian officials about their plan. It was also alleged that a large amount of money and arms were collected to make the plan a success.³ The Agartala Conspiracy Case transformed the movement for autonomy into a mass movement and made Sheikh Mujib the undisputed leader of East Pakistan.

To discredit Sheikh Mujib and to infuse fear in the people of East Pakistan it was decided to hold a public trial of Sheikh Mujib in Dhaka cantonment. The effect was just the opposite. The trial by a special tribunal began in June 1968. The proceedings were given wide publicity in the newspapers. The Bengalis did not accept the allegations and interpreted it as an attempt by the central government to discredit their leader and to deny them their due share in the governance of the country. While political discontent was thus simmering in East Pakistan developments in West Pakistan provided the necessary spark for a political outburst in East Pakistan.

Change in the political scenario in West Pakistan and its influence on East Pakistan

In 1966 after the All Pakistan National Conference, five parties of Pakistan including one from East Pakistan namely the National Democratic Front came together and formed the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). Its eight points programme included among others, demand for federal form of government and regional autonomy leaving only defence, currency and foreign affairs with the centre. Sheikh Mujib

not allow the Pakistan army to pursue my troops."¹²⁵ The towering personality of Col. Osmany galvanised the Mukti Bahini into a formidable fighting force. The occupation army of Pakistan was practically immobilised and completely demoralised by early December 1971.

The Liberation War

The Liberation War which thus began on March 26, 1971 continued for 9 months. India's response to the help sought by the Bangladesh government in exile was to give shelter and food to the thousands of refugees who were crossing over the border from occupied territory of Bangladesh. In this India received generous support and aid from the United Nations and individual countries. Mukti Bahini was given training and weapons to carry on with the liberation war. India also mobilised global support for the cause of Bangladesh. India signed the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with Soviet Union in Delhi on August 9, 1971. By doing this India enlisted the political and military¹²⁶ support of Soviet Union in case war broke out with Pakistan on Bangladesh issue.

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Bangladesh Liberation War was strategic, ideological and political dreams come true for India. India could not have asked for a more propitious opportunity to advance her self-interest in South-Asian strategic equation. Taking advantage of this historic opportunity, India achieved a number of objectives including the followings:

- i. In the bipolar world of the time, India was strategically much closer to USSR (now Russian Federation) while Pakistan was a strategic partner of USA and China. Dismemberment of Pakistan, forced on by the Punjabi junta, presented India with a golden opportunity to redefine the strategic framework of

¹²⁵ Banga Bir M. A. G Osmany A True Hero, Syed Zain Al-Mahmood, *The Star* (weekly magazine) March 27, 2009, P. 12

¹²⁶ Mizanur Rahman Shelly, *Emergence of a New Nation in a Multi-Polar World : Bangladesh*, p.66 see book for a detail study.

South Asia and to enhance her strategic standing in the global context. India further strengthened her military partnership with Soviet Union by signing the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation in August 1971. By hastening the end of the War of Liberation, India denied regional options to China for shoring up the pro-Chinese elements in the Mukti Bahini. Bangladesh was also perceived by India as a promising ally in dealing with the restive north-eastern states of India. Possible security threats from the east was by and large neutralised by India for good.

- ii. In diplomatic and political terms India gained a friendly or at least manageable neighbour in the region by helping Bangladesh to establish itself as an independent and democratic state. To that extent the political and diplomatic clout of Pakistan in South Asia stood substantially neutralised.
- iii. The ideological basis of Pakistan stood fully debunked with the emergence of secular and socialist Bangladesh. India thus gained a significant advantage over the ideologically bankrupt Islamic Republican of Pakistan, which was neither Islamic nor republican. Hindu ideology and culture in the garb of secularism hoped to gain ideological and cultural hegemony over the nascent polity of Bangladesh.
- iv. Through the abject defeat and unconditional surrender of Pakistani army, India emerged as by far the strongest military power in South Asia. This significant military gain helped India to scotch Pakistan's ambitions of military rivalry in South Asia. Pakistani military was cut to size.
- v. Economically, India sought to gain a good market for her capital goods and services. Pakistan killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. The economic objective of India was no more important than the other objectives

It was not till December 3, 1971 that India got directly involved in war with Pakistan. On that date Pakistan Air Force attacked the airfields in northern India.¹²⁷ In response on December 4, the Indian Army launched attacks on Pakistani forces in Bangladesh from three fronts – from West Bengal in the west and Assam and Tripura in the east. On December 4 the United States called for an urgent session of the UN Security Council, which voted 11 to 2 for an immediate cease fire. The Soviet Union however vetoed that one and as well as a second resolution soon after, moreover the Soviet Union "blocked international action until the capture of East Pakistan was fait accompli ... No cease-fire was agreed to until December 17."¹²⁸ In the meantime the Indian forces pushed their way towards Dhaka. At least three brigades of the Mukti Bahini fought along with the Indian Army, the rest of the Mukti Bahini carried on their guerrilla attacks.¹²⁹ The Pakistani Army was forced to surrender on December 16. Lieutenant General J.S. Aurora, the Indian commander of the combined Indian and Mukti Bahini forces, accepted the surrender of Lieutenant General Niazi.¹³⁰ The long struggle against economic, cultural and political domination by the Punjabis thus came to an end. Well fought and hard-earned victory was achieved by the Mukti Bahini and Mitro-Bahini (i.e. Indian Forces). Bangladesh became a free and liberated country. The people of Bangladesh are free once again to define their life, liberty and destiny in the democratic polity of Bangladesh.

¹²⁷ For further reading see Major-General Lachman Singh, *Indian Sword Strikes in East Pakistan* vekas pub. House U.P. India, 1979.

¹²⁸ Archer K. Blood, *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh*, p. 335

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 335

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Earlier General Tikka Khan was replaced by General Niazi as Martial Law Administrator

elected representatives of the people of Bangla Desh

Constitution, and give to themselves a government to meet and frame a people of Bangla Desh by their heroism, bravery and whereas the fervour have established effective control over the territories of Bangla Desh, we the elected representatives of the people of Bangla Desh ... duly

constituted ourselves into a Constituent Assembly declare and constitute Bangla Desh to be sovereign People's Republic and thereby confirm the declaration of independence already made by Banga Bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman", and "Do hereby confirm and resolve that till such time as a constitution is framed, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman shall be the President of the Republic and that Syed Nazrul Islam shall be the Vice-President of the Republic and that the President, shall exercise all the executive and legislative powers of the Republic.¹¹⁹

It was further resolved that the elected representatives would undertake to observe and give effect to all duties and obligations devolved upon them as a member of the family of nations and by the Charter of the United Nations.¹²⁰

Significance of the Proclamation of Independence Order.

1. The Proclamation of Independence Order declared Bangladesh as a de jure state to the world.
2. The Proclamation gave legitimacy and legality to the Bangladesh Government in exile and to the liberation war.
3. The Proclamation formed a Presidential system of government giving the President of Bangladesh absolute power till the constitution was framed.
4. Even though Sheikh Mujib was arrested and taken to Pakistan, the declaration of Mujib as the President of Bangladesh acted as a great unifying force. It brought all the different groups of the declaration forces) under the banner of the Mukti Bahini (Liberation war a patriotic Awami League, thus giving inspiration and a noble goal.

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5. The Proclamation to abide by the Charter of the United Nation secured for the new government in exile the much needed support of the world community.

6. It provided the basis for eventual de jure recognition of Bangladesh by India and signing of Peace and Friendship Treaty with Bangladesh which provided the legal rationale for India's war against Pakistan in support of Bangladesh.

Colonel (General) M A G Osmany and the Mukti Bahini

Colonel Mohammad Ataul Ghani Osmany¹²¹ was born in

Sunamganj, Sylhet on September 1, 1918. His father was Khan Bahadur Mofizur Rahman, who joined Assam Civil Service in 1898 and retired as the Director of Land Records, Government of Assam. Col. Osmany graduated from Aligarh Muslim University in 1938 and joined the British Indian Army the same year. He fought in the Second World War with high distinction and became the youngest Major in British Army in 1940.¹²² When the war ended he was a Lieutenant Colonel. In the Pakistan Army he was given only one promotion and made a Colonel and retired in 1967. His well-deserved legitimate promotions were denied by the Punjabi dominated army of Pakistan as he was a staunch advocate of the Bengali men and officers and their rightful cause.

Col. Osmany joined Awami League in 1969 and became a Member of Parliament in 1970. He was one of the key associates of Bangabandhu during the political negotiations for a constitutional solution to the problem caused by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's refusal to participate in the first session of the parliament in March 1971. On the fateful night of March 25, 1971, till about 10 p.m. Col. Osmany was with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his Dhammondi residence in Dhaka. Mujib advised the top Awami League leaders including Col. Osmany to protect themselves and to escape the drag-net of Pakistani army. For reasons of personal security from March 4 till a few days before the 25, Col.

¹¹⁹ Gen. Osmany is the brother-in-law of the author and much of the informations are from family sources.

¹²⁰ Obituary. G. M. A. G. Osmany Role in the Creation of Bangladesh. *The Times* Monday Feb 20, 1984 (UK)

liberated areas.¹¹⁷ Besides Chittagong, resistance against Pakistani army sprang up spontaneously in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Sylhet and other places in East Pakistan. The people were up in arms and from that point there was no looking back.

The Mujibnagar Government.

The sudden ruthless attack and genocide by the West Pakistani army took politicians, the Bengali army and civilians completely by surprise. On the evening of March 25 when Sheikh Mujib had asked his colleagues and followers to go underground many went across the border to India. Among the top leaders it is believed that Tajuddin Ahmed was the first to cross over and to get in touch with the top officials of the government of India. Syed Nazrul Islam, Captain Mansur Ali, A. H. M. Qamruzzaman, Khandaker Mostaque Ahmed, Col. M. A. G. Osmany and others soon crossed the border and went over to India. The genocide also led to a massive exodus of civilian population mainly women, children and the elderly. The vast majority of the population including Sheikh Mujib however did not leave their motherland, they stayed back to fight with all they had. Furthermore indiscriminate killing of intellectuals, bureaucrats and common people continued. However the killings only strengthened the resolve and determination of the people of Bangladesh to liberate themselves. Without the help of these fighting forces that stayed back in East Pakistan it would not have been easy for the government formed in Mujibnagar to achieve the goal of liberation.

Tajuddin Ahmed reached India most probably on April 1 or 2. He met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi but could achieve little as he had no credentials that he was the spokesman of the people of East Pakistan. Tajuddin therefore took a momentous step. He formed the Bangladesh government in exile declaring himself as the Prime Minister and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the President. By this time other senior Awami League leaders were in Agartala. Tajuddin Ahmed met them there on April 10 and it was decided that a cabinet of ministers would be formed.

¹¹⁷ English translation of an address by Tajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh broadcast by Swadhen Bangla Desh Betar Kendra, April 11, 1971. *Bangladesh Documents* op cit p. 283

The leaders were, apart from Sheikh Mujib and Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Nazrul Islam, Captain Mansur Ali, A. H. M. Qamruzzaman and Khandaker Mostaque Ahmed. In the absence of Sheikh Mujib who by that time was known to have been taken to Pakistan, Syed Nazrul Islam was made the Acting President. Mostaque Ahmed was in charge of Foreign, Law and Parliamentary Affairs. Qamruzzaman was in charge of Interior, Supply, Relief and Rehabilitation and Mansur Ali that of Finance, Commerce and Industries. Col. (Rtd.) Mohammad Ataul Ghani Osmany was made Chief of Staff of the Liberation Forces with the rank of a cabinet minister and Col (Rtd) Abdur Rab Chowdhury the Deputy Chief. On April 17, at Meherpur, which was still free from the occupation of the Pakistan army, the cabinet was formally installed. Meherpur was hence forth known as Mujibnagar. Though theoretically Mujibnagar was the seat of Bangladesh government in exile it was actually in Calcutta where the cabinet ministers and the other top leaders were located during the war of liberation.¹¹⁸

The Proclamation of Independence Order

On April 17, 1971 a Proclamation of Independence Order (PIO) was issued. It was back dated to April 10 naming Mujibnagar as the place of issue. It was further stated that the Proclamation would be deemed to have come into effect from March 26, 1971. The Proclamation declared that in the elections held in Bangladesh from December 7, 1970 to January 17, 1971 the people elected 167 out of 169 representatives belonging to the Awami League. General Yahya Khan for the purpose of framing a constitution summoned the elected representatives of the people to meet on March 3, 1971 however, "the Assembly so summoned was arbitrarily and illegally postponed for indefinite period, and instead of fulfilling their promise and while still conferring with the representatives of people of Bangla Desh, Pakistan authorities declared an unjust and treacherous war." The PIO went on to state, "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman ... duly made declaration of independence at Dacca on March 26, 1971, and whereas the Pakistan Government by levying an unjust war and committing genocide and by other repressive measures made it impossible for the

¹¹⁸ The politicians did not stay in Mujibnagar as they were sure it would become a target of attack by the Pakistani army, which at that stage they were not in a position to face.

Following this, on 13 February 1971, President Yahia announced that the National Assembly would meet in Dhaka on 3 March 1971. Welcoming this announcement, the AL said that it was a step forward towards achieving the goal of making a constitution. On 15 February 1971, Bhutto declared to boycotting the Assembly session beginning on 3 March, in Dhaka. In fact, the PPP chief was of the opinion that the constitution based on the Six-Point "could not provide a viable future for the country". On 16 February 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was declared the leader of the Awami League Parliamentary Party in the National Assembly. On 21 February, President Yahia dissolved his cabinet "in view of the situation prevailing in the country". Thus the political situation became very gloomy by the end of February and consequences were in way that led to the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971.

(C)

Liberation War of 1971

"The very word 'Mother'
is enough to restore my dying spirit"
- Hasan Hafizur Rahman

On 28 February 1971, the Awami League's draft Constitution embodying its Six-Point Programme was placed before the Parliamentary Party for its consideration. Governor Ahsan who was sympathetic towards the interests of the Bengalis could feel the seething political pulse in East Pakistan regarding the underhand dealings for postponing the opening session of National Assembly. On the same day he sent a telex to President Yahia Khan in Karachi mentioning: "I beg you even at this late hour to give a new date for summoning of the Assembly and not to postpone it sine die, otherwise ... we will have reached the point of no return." Within half an hour Ahsan found himself dismissed for his advice to President Yahia Khan that it would be futile to control the people of East Pakistan by Martial Law. He was replaced by General Shaibzada Yakub Khan on 1 March and when he left for West Pakistan.

On the same day (28 February, 1971), Bhutto (PPP Chief) proposed two alternatives to resolve the political crisis – postponement of the National Assembly session or removal of the 120 day time-limit for the Assembly to frame a constitution. He warred that if the Assembly session was held on 3 March as scheduled without PPP's participation, he would start a popular agitation from one end of West Pakistan to the other.

On 1 March 1971, President Yahia Khan undermined the democratic process with an announcement to postpone the National Assembly that was

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to meet on 3 March 1971. The March 1 announcement became a historical date for many reasons. First, it changed the whole perspective of the political movement that was taking place in East Pakistan; secondly, it was a new phase for the people of East Pakistan. This decision of postponement was the final blow to the confidence and trust of the people of East Pakistan towards the leadership of West Pakistan.

However, Yahia cited two reasons such a step. Firstly the major party of West Pakistan, the PPP, announced their intention of not attending the National Assembly session on 3 March 1971. Secondly, the general situation of tension created by India further complicated the position as a whole that necessitated such a step. He, moreover, assured the people that as soon as the environment would become conducive to constitution making he would have no hesitation in setting the session of the Assembly immediately.

Yahia's arbitrary decision resulted in an unprecedented mass upheaval in East Pakistan and a growing belief that Bengalis could never realise their just rights within the framework of united Pakistan. Radical elements among the students openly started demanding an immediate declaration of independence. For the first time the student leaders raised the slogan "Take up Arms, Heroes of Bengal" and clamored to hear what AL had to say about the crisis provoked by Yahia. The AL parliamentary Party was in a meeting in Dhaka when the news of the postponement reached. A spontaneous demonstration of public agitation soon grew up. The resentment which was a first limited to the city of Dhaka soon began to spread to the main cities, districts and Thana headquarters.

In a press conference soon afterwards, Mujib said that he could not allow the action of the President, "for the sake of a minority party's disagreement with the democratic process of constitution making", to go unchallenged. He announced a programme of action for the next six days including the observance of total strike in Dhaka on 2 March and throughout the province on 3 March. He said that a public meeting would be held on 7 March in Dhaka where he would place final programme. He further alleged that when all the members of the Assembly from 'Bangladesh' including West Pakistani members were present in Dhaka for attending the session, its postponement had virtually thwarted the democratic process.

As the dawn broke on 2 March, Dhaka had the look an embattled city. Barricades had been created overnight at key points to immobilize traffic. The strike was a complete success in Dhaka as well as in the district towns. In Dhaka, however, it was not entirely peaceful. Arms shop, were plundered, which was perhaps understandable. Curfew was imposed in the city from 9 p. m to 7 a. m the following morning but it was widely violated. The Army had been called in to enforce the curfew and they fired on curfew

violators at several places, resulting in nine deaths and fifty-one wounded. On 3 March, the AL condemned the killing of unarmed people by the forces and urged the government to desist from this reckless course. By the morning of 3 March the entire province of East Pakistan had been paralysed by the non-cooperation movement launched by Mujib.

Both Yahia and Bhutto were shaken by the complete success of the non-cooperation movement and Mujib's outright rejection of the proposal for an all party conference. Farman Ali was summoned to Rawalpindi to brief the President on the situation in East Pakistan. Before leaving, Farman Ali sought an urgent meeting with Mujib to get an idea of his thoughts. Farman Ali says he asked a direct question without any preliminaries:

FARMAN: Please tell me if Pakistan can be saved?

MUJIB: Yes, it can be saved if somebody listens to us. So many people are being killed by the Army. They listen to Bhutto but not to me. Even after all this, we are willing to discuss.

At this point Tajuddin arrived to join in the talks. Mujib asked Tajuddin's view on Farman Ali's question. Tajuddin said, "Yes it could be, but under a new formula. We cannot bear all this butchery sitting with Bhutto under the same roof. He is responsible for all this. Let the Assembly be divided into two houses, one for East and the other for West Pakistan. Each Assembly should write the constitution for its own wing. Then the two Assemblies should write a constitution Pakistan." It was a formula for confederation rather than federation, thought Farman Ali. Before Farman Ali left for West Pakistan on 4 March, Yakub Khan had resigned from his post, being no longer able to agree with the hard-line approach of Yahia to the problems of "Butcher of Baluchistan" as the Governor of East Pakistan but on 7 March the chief Justice of East Pakistan High Court, B. A. Siddiky, refused to administer the oath to him. However, later on 9 April, he administered the oath under threat. In the meanwhile, after holding five hours secret meeting with Bhutto, President Yahia on 6 March in a national broadcast, announced the new date for holding the session of the National Assembly on 25 March 1971.

The people of East wing clearly saw in the militant maneuver of Yahia Khan, his hidden place of transferring troops from West military build-up became evident in East Pakistan and soon the army engaged in confrontation by widespread firing against unarmed Bengali civilians. The National Awami Party (NAP) and radical students became restive and demanded immediate declaration of independence. They chanted *Amar Desh Toman Desh Bangladesh*, *Bangladesh* and *Joy Bangla*, hoisting Bangladesh flag. The students formed *Sadhin Bangla Kendrio Chhatra*

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Sangram Parishad (Central Students' Struggle Council Independent Bangla). The AL secured the support from other top leaders, like Maulana Bhasani, Muzaffar Ahmed and Ataur Rahman Khan.

The 7 March 1971, is a red-letter day in the history of Bangladesh. On that day at a huge historic public meeting before a gathering of more than a million people at the Ramna Race Course in Dhaka, Sheikh Mujib announced four pre-conditions for attending the session of the National Assembly:

- (1) Immediate transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people, before the Assembly met on 25 March, 1971.
- (2) Withdrawal of Martial Law
- (3) Enquiry into the recent shootings upon the Bengalis.
- (4) Immediate return of the troops to the barracks.

Until these conditions were not addressed, he said, he could not go to the Assembly stepping over the blood shed by the Martyrs. He said that he did not aspire to become the Prime Minister of the country; he merely wanted the realisation of the rights of the people. He announced the closure of all government, semi-government offices in East Pakistan and the stoppage of all rents and taxes. He further declared, "Let every house in Bangladesh be turned into a fortress and I would ask you to get ready with whatever weapons you can lay your hands to resist the enemy. He concluded his speech by these stirring words:

"The struggle this time is the struggle for freedom, the struggle this time is the struggle for independence. Victory to Bengal." The crowd went wild with cheering and went away resolving to preserve fully his civil disobedience programme. Thus Mujib's 7 March speech feels short of a declaration of secession and independence from Pakistan. From now on Mujib was running a parallel government in East Pakistan by issuing defectively. In all 35 directives were issued which operated as law for about three weeks governing all departments of the government except defence. On 9 March at a public meeting, showing a pointed finger to Yahia, Maulana Bhasani said that the hour of compromise had passed and Pakistan would no longer remain a united country. He urged the president to recognise the independence of East Bengal and pledged his support to Sheikh Mujib.

On 13 March 1971, two days before the President was to arrive on Dhaka for talks with Mujib, Tikka Khan, the newly appointed Governor of East Pakistan issued a martial law order. This was clearly provocation all and the order had come to the AL leaders as well as to the general public as a surprise since the AL chief had already called for the withdrawal of martial law. Locked in this situation, all concentration turned towards Mujib and

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Yahia's arrival in Dhaka. Yahia khan arrived Dhaka under heavy security measures with some generals on 15 March for talks with Mujib and his arrival in Dhaka made it look like the visit of the commander of an occupying army than of the leader of a country. For some days a steady flow of battle ready troops had been ferried from the cantonment area round the airport. Mujib and Yahia met on March 16 and 17 but reported no progress other than an agreement to investigate the killing of demonstrators by troops. When the government proposed that a commission appointed by general Tikka Khan inquire into the deaths of the demonstrators, Mujib said it was merely a way to mislead the people. He then appointed his own three-man inquiry commission.

Yahia-Mujib talks continued in Dhaka with Yahia hinting on 20 March that he was agreeable to a draft proclamation, the salient features of which were lifting of martial law and transfer of power to civilian government by a presidential proclamation and transfer of power in the provinces to the majority parties. It was also connoted that Yahia would remain as interim President, that East Pakistan would be given autonomy on the ground of Six-Points and the Provinces of the Westerns wing would have power as provided in the 1962 constitution.

Such a constructive understanding between Yahia and the AL alarmed Bhutto. Bhutto earlier refused on invitation from Yahia to come to Dhaka, he now hurriedly arrived in Dhaka on 21 March. After a long briefing session with Yahia within hours of his arrival, the three principals met the next day on 22 March. The meeting, however, proved futile. It appears that by this time a clear collusion came into existence between Yahia and Bhutto, so that *Economist* wrote an editorial under the title 'does Pakistan exist?' "He (Yahia) left it Mr. Bhutto to try to get concessions out of Mujib." They felt strongly that their language of weapons could maintain the integrity of Pakistan. By March 24 in East Pakistan, the build-up of troops increase to 60, 000, according to local reports; only 25,000 troops had been present before the crisis.

On 23 March, the people of East Pakistan, frustrated by the inflexibility of the Yahia military machine, decided to observe 23 March (the National Day of Pakistan) as a day of resistance. In a tumultuous mass gathering in Dhaka the students ceremoniously hoisted the newly designed Bangladesh flag instead of the Pakistan flag.

The AL leaders met Yahia for the last time in the evening of 24 March before he flew out of Dhaka for West Pakistan the next day. Nothing positive was come out from the meeting. The whole process of political settlement came to naught when in the morning of 25 March, Bhutto communicated to Yahia Khan to convey his disapproval for any further political negotiations. In the late afternoon, Yahia Khan left Dhaka under

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navy security guards leaving the East Pakistan at the mercy of the butcher, Tikka Khan and his blood-thirsty soldiers.

Finally the failure of the talks, the presence of sizable contingents of Pakistani troops, and Yahia's decision to use them against the Bengalis by force produced a reign of terror beginning on March 25. It became obvious that a political and military storm had already loomed on the horizon of East Pakistan and Pakistan started crumbling pushing East Pakistan to blood bath and the eventual independence of the Bengalis, which they lost two centuries back at the Battle of Plassey.

Military Crackdown: Operation Searchlight

The 25 March, 1971 is remembered as a black day in Bangladesh. It was on this day, the most barbaric military crackdown by the West Pakistani army was unleashed against the unarmed innocent civilian people of East Pakistan. In the early evening of 25 March, Yahia Khan left Dhaka for Karachi leaving all instructions to his hawkish General Tikka Khan for an operation genocide in East Pakistan. With this, Yahia's part in the political drama was over but his military role had just begun. On the evening of 25 March 1971 Dhaka cantonment was a hive of intense activity as West Pakistan troops were getting ready to pounce on the targets assigned to them by the Operation Searchlight. They had been instructed to wait until midnight. By that time the plane carrying Yahia would be safely within the air space of West Pakistan. In Dhaka the troops were expected to be in their target areas an hour after midnight. Permission was granted and the troops led by tanks and armored personnel carriers started to move out of the cantonment shortly before midnight. Key points like the telephone exchange and radio and television stations were occupied by troops already in the city.

The hammer-blows of the tank attacked on four main targets: the Dhaka University Campus, the police lines at Rajar Bagh, the East Pakistan Rifles barracks at Peelkhana and the slums of old Dhaka. The Dhaka University was the main target, because it had always been the principal centre of agitation against the government since the language movement and its students and teachers had to be taught a lesson they would never forget. The troops were able to gun down many students who were unable to escape or hide. They also rampaged through the housing complex of the teachers and killed or wounded some members of the university teaching staff and terrorized the rest.

The police and the EPR were natural targets, since they were the only organized Bengali forces capable of offering armed resistance against the Army. As regards the slum dwellers, they were targeted presumably

Rounaq and org because they had eagerly participated in political movements and demonstrations against the military rule, especially since 1969. Slums and army phase, set on fire by flame throwers and the inhabitants fleeing from the blaze were shot. However, during the crackdown, a large number of innocent university students particularly those living in the Iqbal Hall, Jagannath Hall and Rokeya Hall were killed on the night of 25 March. In all nine renowned teachers of the University were killed and they, along with the students, Martial Law Administration in the ground in front of the Jagannath Hall. In were put into a mass grave in the Tati Bazar and Shakhari Bazar areas of the addition, the Hindu-populated areas of the residents killed. old city of Dhaka were set on fire and most of the city who pass their nights Moreover, the rootless women and children of the city who were completely on the streets and slums along the railway lines were completely exterminated. The killing continued throughout the whole night both in the old and new city of Dhaka. Hindus who were deliberately executed like J.C Ghosh, a chemist, other victims, Ranada Prasad Saha, a rich philanthropist Dhirendranath Dutta, a politician of great moral courage, who had first raised the question of recognizing Bengali as an official language ‘disappeared’ after they were arrested by Army.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested near about midnight of 25 March on charges of high treason; The AL was declared unlawful and complete press censorship was imposed. In a broadcast on 26 March, Yahia tried to rationalize the military crackdown by charging that the Awami League was plotting armed rebellion. On returning to Karachi airport on 26 March, Bhutto said, “Thank God, Pakistan has been saved.” Thus, the last nail in the coffin of unified Pakistan had been hammered in and the heroic war of liberation started. However, during killing, the Pakistan attacks in Chittagong, Comilla, Khulna and other garrison cities. Eminent professionals including Professors, Doctors, Journalist and others from the minority community were brought out from their residence and promptly shot dead in front of their family members. This was done on the belief that merciless killing of such intellectuals would stifle protests and demonstrations within the student community. The military dictatorship strongly believed that the rest of the world could be kept ignorant of the genocide in Bangladesh. Fortunately, this was not to be. Three journalists Simon Dring from the *Daily Telegraph*, London – Michal Laurent, an associated press photographer and Sidney H Schanberg of the *New York Times*, New York, were in Dhaka on that fateful night. They through their reports repudiated the false claims of ‘normalcy’ that had been put out by the Pakistani military authorities. On 28 March, they reported that the loss of life had reached 15,000 in the country side. On the Dhaka University campus, 17 Professors and some 200 students were killed in cold blood.

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Eminent journalists from the US promptly believed that protests and dictatorship of the president of the Laurent, an New York through their put out by loss at the University of blood.

History of Bangladesh, 1905-2005

Rounaq Jahan in her book, *Bangladesh Politics*, mentioned, "Systematic and organized rape was the special weapon of war used by the Pakistan army during the Liberation Struggle". She mentioned "while during the first phase, young able-bodied males were the victims of indiscriminate killings, during the second phase girls and women became the special targets of Pakistani aggression. During army operations, girls and women were raped in front of close family members. Girls and women were also abducted and repeatedly raped and gang-raped in special camps run by the army. Many of the rape victims were either killed or committed suicide. Altogether, it is estimated that approximately 2000,000 girls and women were raped during the 1971 genocide."

In the last week of war, when the defeat of Pakistani army was virtually certain, Pakistan government engaged in its most barbaric genocidal campaign. During this time, villages were burnt and their inhabitants were killed. In order to deprive the new nation of its most talented leadership, Pakistanis killed most influential intellectuals and professionals in each city and town. From December 12 to 14, a selected number of intellectuals were picked up from their residences and murdered. Many of their names were later found in the diary of Major General Rao Farman Ali, advisor to Martial Law Administrator and Governor of occupied Bangladesh.

The victims of the 1971 genocide were Bengalis. Though Hindus were specially targeted, the majority of the victims were Bengali Muslims. The protected life of women was virtually shattered in 1971. Thousands of women were suddenly left defenseless and to find themselves as widows and rape victims. The rape victims were particularly vulnerable. Though they were the casualties of the war, many of them were discarded by their own families to avoid shame and dishonor.

For genocide only the Pakistani military leaders were not responsible. The PPP and its chief Bhutto supported the army action all through. There were also Bengalis who collaborated with the Pakistani regime. During the freedom movement, the Pakistan government deliberately recruited Bengali collaborators of the regime. Many of the Islamist political groups (ML and JI) opposed the AL and collaborated with the army. Peace Committees (the JI) opposed the AL and collaborated with the freedom fighters. were formed in different places and under their auspices razakars (armed volunteers) were raised and given arms to counter the freedom fighters. Two armed vigilantes groups (Al-Badr and Al-Shams) were trained, and the charge in the arrest and killing of the intellectuals. The non Bengali residents of Bangladesh – the Biharis were the other group of collaborators. Many of them acted as informants.

Emergence of Bangladesh

Declaration of Independence

The arrest of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from his residence on the night of 25 March and the massacre of civilians within the ambit of "Operation Searchlight" however set forth a new dynamics in the political process. Despite the strict precautions taken by the Pakistani Military, the arrest was followed immediately afterwards by a message from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib declaring independence of Bangladesh. It was passed on the wireless available with the then EPR. The message was as follows:

This may be my last message. From today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh, wherever, you are and whatever you have to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must continue till the last soldiers of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved. Joy Bangla.

This message was received by number of Politicians, Journalists, and Deputy Commissioners and by many police stations on 26 March 1971. On the same day, Abdul Hannan, the General Secretary of Chittagong AL read out the declaration of independence by Bangladesh from the Swadhin Bangla radio station at about 1430 hours.

The next day, i.e., on 27 March, at about 1930 hours, Major Ziaur Rahman, later President of Bangladesh, made an announcement from the same radio station. In his announcement, he said that Bangladeshi soldiers were fighting against the Pakistan army. He also declared:

I, Major Zia, provisional C-in-C of the Bangladesh Liberation Army hereby proclaim, on behalf of our great national leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the independence of Bangladesh.

The next few days witnessed savage attacks by the Pakistani army in Chittagong, Kalurghat, Kushtia, Joydebpur, Gazipur, Jessor, Saidpur and Rajshahi. They faced strong resistance from the Bengali freedom fighters. After the initial heroic resistance by the Bengalis came reassessments. It was felt that strategic necessity demanded a more formalized plan in the liberation war where the scattered and rudimentary forces will come under one command. The first step of organizing the freedom fighters was taken on 4 April 1971. When senior officers of the liberation army assembled at Teliapara, a semi-hilly area with green tea garden near the India border. At this meeting the responsibility of operational areas was given to four senior officers. Sylhet-Brahmanbaria-Mymensingh area was placed under the command of Major Shafullah. Comilla-Noakhali area to Major Khaled Mosarraf while Chittagong and Chittagong Hill tracts were given to Major Ziaur Rahman. The South Western region was placed under Major Abu Osman Chowdhury.

শিরোনাম	শাহীন বাংলা বেতারকেন্দ্র হতে মেজর জিয়াউর রহমান কর্তৃক প্রচারিত শাহীনতা ঘোষণা। *	শাহীন বাংলা বেতার প্রচারিত অনুষ্ঠানমালার টেপেরেকর্ট, ২৭ মার্চ, ১৯৭১; দি স্টেটসম্যান, ঢিল্লী, ২৭ মার্চ, ১৯৭১।	২৭ মার্চ, ১৯৭১
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Declaration of Independence by Major Ziaur Rahman on 27 March 1971

I, Major Zia, Provisional Commander-in-Chief of the Bangladesh Liberation Army, hereby proclaims, on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the independence of Bangladesh.

I also declare, we have already framed a sovereign, legal Government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which pledges to function as per law and the constitution. The new democratic Government is committed to a policy of nonalignment in international relations. It will seek friendship with all nations and strive for international peace. I appeal to all Government to mobilize public opinion in their respective countries against the brutal genocide in Bangladesh.

The Government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is sovereign legal Government of Bangladesh and is entitled to recognition from all democratic nations of the world.

The Formation of the Govt. at Mujibnagar and Sectors of the Liberation War

The allocation of different operational areas and the selection of commanders gave an organizational concept and command structure to the liberation force soon to be named Mukti Bahini six days later on 10 April 1971, a government of the peoples Republic of Bangladesh was formed. On the next day the Prime Minister announced the names of three more regional commanders-Captain Nawazish for the Rangpur region, Major Nazmul Haque for Dinajpur-Rajshahi-Pabna region and Major Jalil for Barishal-Patuakhali region. Group Captain A K Khondokar was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of Bangladesh Forces. Tajuddin appointed Col. MAG Osmany as the c-in-c of the Mukti Bahini. However, these regions were later renamed as sectors. Later, during the sector commanders' conference from 10-17 July 1971, due to the evolving situation, it was decided to divide Bangladesh into eleven sectors. The sectors were again subdivided into various sub-sectors for operational purposes.

History of Bangladesh, 1905-2005

On 17 April 1971, the Democratic Republic of Bangladesh was proclaimed as a formally constituted state to be run by a presidential form of government amidst thunderous cheers from a strong crowd which included contingents of the EPR, EBR and Ansars. It took place in a mango grove of a small village called Baidyanathata in Meherpur Subdivision of Kushtia district. It was renamed as "Mujibnagar". Syed Nazrul Islam was named as the Acting President and the Council of Ministers was constituted by the proclamation as follows:

Prime Minister : Tajuddin Ahmed

Foreign Affairs : Khondoker Mushtaque Ahmed

Home Affairs : A. H. M. Kamaruzzaman

Finance : Mansur Ali

Col. Osmani was appointed chief of the Bangladesh Army.

The mango grove of "Mujibnagar" lies at a short distance away from the mango grove of palassey, the scene of the British victory over the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Dowla, in the summer of 1757. Now, in the summer of 1971, another mango grove in the vicinity became the scene of inauguration of the government of the sovereign state of Bangladesh, erasing the humiliation of West Pakistan rule. The formation of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was hailed by almost all the progressive political parties of Bangladesh. Bhasani along with other leaders on 21 April appealed to 12 world representatives including the UN secretary General U-Thant, the British Minister Edward Henth, President of the USA Richard Nixon, the Chinese Chairman Mao Tse-Tung and the Russian and the French President to use their good offices and raise their voice against the brutalities committed by the trigger-happy soldiers of dictator Yahia Khan. The Communist Party of East Pakistan (CPEP) also supported the cause of the freedom movement of Bangladesh. It also made fervent appeal to all the fraternal communist and workers Parties and to all the democratic forces of the world to support the liberation War of the people of Bangladesh and recognize their government and render it all possible help to repulse the aggression by the Pakistan Army.

By this time, millions of helpless distressed and refugees were streaming into India from Bangladesh. The government decided that these displaced people would not only have to be provided relief and looked after but also that they should be used as a pool for recruiting freedom fighters and building up the Mukti Bahini. Soon after the formation of the Bangladesh Government in-exile and the appointment of the c-in-c, the importance and necessity of a well-organized liberation force was keenly felt by the Government. A large number of youth camps were set up along the border for such recruitment and for imparting initial training where both