

HIS-103: Emergence of Bangladesh

Lecture 17

Mujibnagar Government, Liberation War, War Sectors



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Mujibnagar Government

- To conduct the War of Liberation, a government in exile was formed on 10 April 1971 consisting of the top-ranking leaders of Awami League. This government took oath on April 17 at *Baiyanathtala* which was later renamed as Mujibnagar of Meherpur in Bangladesh.
- The oath taking ceremony was conducted by Abdul Mannan MNA and the proclamation of independence was read out by Professor Mohammad Yusuf Ali. In this place a guard of honor was given to Syed Nazrul Islam, the Acting President of the newly formed government.
- The members of the government were: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib as the President; Syed Nazrul Islam as the Vice President; Tajuddin Ahmed as the Prime Minister; Khondokar Mostaq Ahmad as the Foreign Minister; M Mansur Ali as the Finance Minister and AHM Qamruzzaman as the Home Minister. Mujibnagar government was divided into fifteen ministries and divisions. Besides, some divisions were placed under the Cabinet.
- Tajuddin Ahmad also took the charge of Defense Ministry and appointed Colonel MAG Osmany as the commander-in-chief of the Bangladesh Forces, later named as Mukti Bahini.

Proclamation of Independence

- The Proclamation so announced in effect provided the fundamental instrument of law as well as an interim Constitution of the Mujibnagar government during the War of Liberation, including that of the government in liberated Bangladesh until the adoption of the Constitution, made effective from 16 December 1972.

- Full text of the proclamation runs as follow:

Whereas free elections were held in Bangladesh from 7th December 1970 to 17 January 1971 to elect representatives for the purpose of framing a Constitution,

AND

Whereas at these elections the people of Bangladesh elected 167 out of 169 representatives belonging to the Awami League,

AND

Whereas General Yahya Khan summoned the elected representatives of the people to meet on the 3rd March 1971, for the purpose of framing a Constitution,

AND

Whereas the Assembly so summoned was arbitrarily and illegally postponed for indefinite period,

AND

- Whereas instead of fulfilling their promise and while still conferring with the representatives of the people of Bangladesh, Pakistan authorities declared an unjust and treacherous war,

➤ AND

...continue

Whereas in the facts and circumstances of such treacherous conduct Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of the 75 million people of Bangladesh, in due fulfillment of the legitimate right of self-determination of the people of Bangladesh, duly made a declaration of independence at Dacca on March 26, 1971, and urged upon the people of Bangladesh to defend the honor and integrity of Bangladesh,

AND

Whereas in the conduct of a ruthless and savage war the Pakistani authorities committed and are still continuously committing numerous acts of genocide and unprecedented tortures, amongst others on the civilian and unarmed people of Bangladesh,

AND

Whereas the Pakistan Government by levying an unjust war and committing genocide and by other repressive measures made it impossible for the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh to meet and frame a Constitution, and give to themselves a Government,

AND

Whereas the people of Bangladesh by their heroism, bravery and revolutionary fervor have established effective control over the territories of Bangladesh,

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We the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh, as honor bound by the mandate given to us by the people of Bangladesh whose will is supreme duly constituted ourselves into a Constituent Assembly, and having held mutual consultations, and in order to ensure for the people of Bangladesh equality, human dignity and social justice,

Declare and constitute Bangladesh to be sovereign Peoples' Republic and thereby confirm the declaration of independence already made by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,

AND

do hereby affirm 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 be the Supreme Commander of all the Armed Forces of the Republic, shall exercise all the Executive and Legislative powers of the Republic including the power to grant pardon, shall have the power to appoint a Prime Minister and such other Ministers as he' considers necessary, shall have the power to levy taxes and expend monies [sic], shall have the power to summon and adjourn the Constituent Assembly,

AND

...continue

AND

do all other things that may be necessary to give to the people of Bangladesh an orderly and just Government.

We the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh do further resolve that in the event of there being no President or the President being unable to enter upon his office or being unable to exercise his powers and duties, due to any reason whatsoever, the Vice President shall have and exercise all the powers, duties and responsibilities herein conferred on the President,

We further resolve that we undertake to observe and give effect to all duties and obligations that devolve upon us as a member of the family of nations and under the Charter of United Nations,

We further resolve that this proclamation of independence shall be deemed to have come into effect from
26th day of March, 1971.

We further resolve that in order to give effect to this instrument we appoint Professor Yusuf Ali our duly Constituted Potentiary and to give to the President and the Vice-President oaths of office.

Sd/ Professor M Yusuf Ali

Duly Constituted Potentiary

By and under the authority of the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh

Liberation War

- On 27 March, Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi expressed full support of her government to the freedom struggle of the Bangalees. Indian Border Security Force (BSF) opened Bangladesh-India border to allow the tortured and panic stricken Bangalees to have safe shelter in India. The governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura established refugee camps along the border. These camps became ready ground for recruitment of the freedom fighters. The students, peasants, workers and political activists joined the Mukti Bahini with high spirit to liberate Bangladesh from the Pakistan army. They were given training on tactics and the use of arms and explosives. On completion of training, they were posted to different sectors to fight the enemy.
- Besides Mukti Bahini, many other bahinis were organized inside Bangladesh at different places to fight Pakistan Army. These Bahinis included Kader Bahini of Tangail, Latif Mirza Bahini of Sirajganj, Akbar Hossain Bahini of Jhinaidah, Hemayet Bahini of Faridpur, Quddus Molla and Gafur Bahini of Barisal, Afsar Bahini of Mymensingh and Aftab Bahini of Mymensingh. A crack platoon consisting of daring youths operated most valiantly in Dhaka city as well. These bahinis were established as a local force based on their own strength taking part in a number of battles with the occupation army.
- Another Bahini named as Mujib Bahini was organized in India with the active assistance of Major General Oban of the Indian army who was an expert in guerilla warfare. Mujib Bahini was trained at Dehradun. Student League leaders Sheikh Fazlul Haq Mani, Tofael Ahmed, Abdur Razzak and Sirajul Alam Khan were organizers of this Bahini.
- Mukti Bahini consisted of the regular and the irregular forces. The regulars were later called 'Niamita Bahini' (regular force) and the irregulars were called 'Gana Bahini' (people's force). The regulars included East Bengal Regiment and EPR troops. The irregular forces, which after initial training joined different sectors, consisted of the students, peasants, workers and political activists.

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- Irregular forces were inducted inside Bangladesh territory to adopt guerilla warfare against the enemy. The regular forces were engaged in fighting in conventional way. Bangladesh Air Force, which was organized by Air Commodore A K Khondaker, was created in Dimapur of Nagaland on 28 September.
- Similarly, Bangladesh Navy was also established with the Naval troops deserted from the Pakistan Navy. On 9 November 1971, the first naval fleet 'Bangabandhu Naubahar' consisting of six small ships was inaugurated. The command structure of the Bangladesh Forces was fully organized with the regular brigades, sector troops and guerilla forces, the Bangladesh Air Force and the Navy.
- The Mukti Bahini had fought many successful battles in putting up initial resistance. But within a short time, they were temporarily contained by the Pakistan army and were compelled to withdraw to the safe sanctuary in the Indian territory. The Mukti Bahini was, however, re-equipped, reorganized and retrained. As a result, it got into fighting with fresh zeal after April-May 1971.
- Having realized that the Pakistan army could not be defeated by conventional warfare method, it was decided to create large guerilla forces all over the country. All Sector commanders were accordingly ordered to recruit, train and induct guerillas inside the country.
- The joint command of the Mukti Bahini and the Indian army was underway from November 1971. Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, Commander, Eastern Command of Indian Army, became the commander of the joint forces. The joint command of the Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army, however, started operation from the evening of 3 December, when the Pakistan Air Force bombed Amritsar, Sreenagar and the Kashmir valley. Immediately, the Indian armed forces were ordered to hit back the Pakistan army and thus the Indo-Pak war broke out. The Mukti Bahini and the Indian army continued advancing inside Bangladesh and the defeat and surrender of the Pakistan army became a matter of time. International efforts for a cease-fire failed due to Soviet veto in the United Nations Security Council.

Sectors of Liberation War

- For the Liberation War, the whole geographical area of the country was divided into eleven sectors with a sector commander for each of them. For better efficiency in military operations each of the sectors were divided into several sub-sectors under a commander.
- Lieutenant Colonel M A Rab and Group Captain A K Khandaker were appointed as Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff, respectively. The Ministry of Defense divided the war zone into eleven sectors and appointed a sector commander for each of the sectors. But there was no sector commander for sector No 10 or naval sector. Commandos used to fight under the command of the concerned sector commander whenever and wherever they carried out the operation in a particular sector. Besides, there were three brigades called Z force, K force and S force. Major Ziaur Rahman, Major Khaled Mosharraf and Major KM Shafiullah were the commanders of the brigades respectively.
- The details are as follow:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXmUo9HAApE> [War Sectors] 6
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPG2VxnI93E> [Dhaka on March 26 1971] 3.48
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYehpS9_PRk [A Freedom Fighter's Tale] 13.19
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAHszBa1XXM> [Repression on Women] 3.50