Lecture 9 Independence of Bangladesh

Introduction

1. After the fall of Ayub Khan the then Army Chief became the President of Pakistan. He promised to hold the national election soon.

2. Incidents after Ayub's fall occurred very fast. As promised by General Yahya Khan the national elections were scheduled to be held on 7 December 1970.

The 1970 Cyclone

3. Meanwhile, a devastating tropical cyclone struck East Pakistan on 12 November 1970. It remains the deadliest tropical cyclone recorded ever and one of the deadliest natural disasters in modern times. Approximately, 500,000 people of the low-lying islands lost their lives in the storm.

4. The Pakistani government led by General Yahya Khan was severely criticised both by local political leaders in East Pakistan and in the international media for its delayed handling of the relief operations.

Election of 1970

5. National Election was held on 07 December 1970. The main parties in the election were Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Pakistan People Party (PPP) led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Basing on the population, 162 and 138 seats were allocated to East Pakistan and West Pakistan respectively.

6. Awami League mobilised support in East Pakistan on the basis of its Six-Points Program. The election resulted in a stunning victory for the Awami League. The Awami League won 160 seats which gave them majority in the National Assembly. The PPP won just 81 seats.

7. The Awami League had won such a large number of seats that it now had a majority not only in East Pakistan, but also in the National Assembly as a whole. This meant that it was in a position to form the government on its own. In theory, the future Prime Minister and the entire cabinet could come from East Pakistan.

8. Awami League had won the election on the basis of six-point program. The program called for limiting the power of central government over the provinces. It also demanded that the provinces should have control of their foreign earnings from trade which would greatly reduce the funds available to the central government in West Pakistan.

The Crisis Deepens.

9. The session of the National Assembly was due to start on 03 March 1971. Bhutto declared his party's inability to join the National Assembly meet at Dhaka unless a compromise was previously made on the Six-point issue. On 1 March 1971 Yahya was forced to postpone the opening of the Assembly indefinitely.

10. The People of East Pakistan considered it to be a betrayal. The major cities were engulfed in violence which saw the security forces killing dozens of unarmed protesters. The atmosphere became tense. There were open calls from the masses to their leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to declare Independence.

07 March Speech

11. The Awami League called a mammoth public gathering at Dhaka's historic Race Course Maidan on March 7 to respond to the boiling tension across the province. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his famous speech in front of over two million people. The people were inspired to prepare for a potential War of Independence amid widespread reports of armed mobilisation by West Pakistan.

12. During the speech, Sheikh Mujib proclaimed, "Our struggle is for our freedom. Our struggle is for our independence."

Proclamation of Independence on 26 March 1971

13. Yahya's dialogue with Sheikh Mujib began on 16 March and continued intermittently up to 25 March. The Pakistani leaders continued discussion with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman while bringing arms and ammunition from West Pakistan. On 25th March, 1971, the Pakistan army began Operation Searchlight, their pre-

planned genocide of the people including targeted killings of Bengali intelligentsia and academics.

14. On the night of 25 March 1971, immediately before the military crackdown and moments before Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested by the Pakistan Army, he made a Declaration of Independence. Bangabandhu's declaration was as follows:

“This may be my last message: From today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you may be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved.”

15. The message containing Bangabandhu’s declaration was made available to EPR shortly after midnight and it was duly broadcast through EPR radio communication system. On 26 and 27 March two declarations of independence was made in the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from Chittagong Radio Station (later named as Swadin Bangla Betar Kendra) one by MA Hannan, general secretary of the Chittagong Awami League and the other by the then Major Ziaur Rahman.

Formation of Government of Bangladesh

16. Following the military crackdown by the Pakistan army in Dhaka and elsewhere on 25 March 1971, top Awami League leaders including some elected members of both National Assembly (MNA) and Provincial Assembly (MPA) crossed over to India for safety. By 30 March 1971, most of them were able to assemble in Kolkata. On 10 April 1971, the MNAs and MPAs who were able to meet together in Kolkata formed themselves into a constituent assembly in exile and drafted the formal Proclamation of Independence.

17. The formal meeting of the constituent assembly was held on 17 April 1971 at Baidyanathtala (re-named Mujibnagar after the proclamation), a border area in the present Meherpur district, where Professor M Yusuf Ali, an MNA formally read out the Proclamation of Independence at a simple ceremony. With this declaration the

newly formed Constituent Assembly was proclaimed to be the supreme and sovereign authority of Bangladesh.

18. The proclamation of Independence confirmed the Declaration of Independence made by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 25 March 1971. The Proclamation declared that the independence of Bangladesh be deemed to have come into effect from 26 March 1971. It also legalised the Mujibnagar government and gave direction to all involved in the War of Liberation for establishing the chain of command.

19. They announced that till such time 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. M Tajuddin Ahmed was appointed the Prime Minister.

18. Colonel MAG Osmany was made the Commander in Chief of the Bangladesh Forces popularly known as Mukti Bahini.

The Bangladesh Liberation War

19. **Sectors of Liberation War**. The war zone was divided in eleven sectors appointing a Sector Commanders. There was no sector commander for sector No 10 or naval sector. Naval Commandos used to fight under the command of the concerned sector commander whenever and wherever they carried out their operation.

a. **Sector 1**.

(1) **Area**. Chittagong District, Chittagong Hill Tracts, and the eastern part of Noakhali District

(2) **Commander**. Major Ziaur Rahman, Captain Rafiqul Islam

(3) **Location of Headquarters**. Harina.

b. **Sector 2**.

(1) **Area**. Districts of Dhaka, Comilla, and Faridpur, and part of Noakhali District.

(2) **Commander**. Major Khaled Mosharraf, Major ATM Haider

(3) **Location of Headquarters**.

c. **Sector 3**.

(1) **Area**. Area between Churaman Kathi (near Sreemangal) and Sylhet in the north and Singerbil of Brahmanbaria in the south.

(2) **Commander**. Major KM Shafiullah, Captain ANM Nuruzzaman.

(3) **Location of Headquarters**.

d. **Sector 4**.

(1) **Area**. Area from Habiganj District on the north to Kanaighat Police Station on the south along the 100 mile long border with India.

(2) **Commander**. Major Chittaranjan Dutta, Captain A Rab.

(3) **Location of Headquarters**. The headquarters of the sector was initially at Karimganj and later at Masimpur.

e. **Sector 5**.

(1) **Area**. Area from Durgapur to Dawki (Tamabil) of Sylhet District and the entire area up to the eastern borders of the district.

(2) **Commander**. Major Mir Shawkat Ali

(3) **Location of Headquarters**. Banshtala.

f. **Sector 6**.

(1) **Area**. Rangpur District and part of Dinajpur District.

(2) **Commander**. Wing Commander M Khademul Bashar

(3) **Location of Headquarters**. Burimari near Patgram

g. **Sector 7**.

(1) **Area**. Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogra and part of Dinajpur District.

(2) **Commander**. Major Nazmul Huq , Quazi Nooruzzaman

(3) **Location of Headquarters**. Tarangapur.

h. **Sector 8**.

(1) **Area**. In April 1971, the operational area of the sector comprised the districts of Kushtia, Jashore, Khulna, Barishal, Faridpur and Patuakhali. At the end of May the sector was reconstituted and comprised the districts of Kuhstia, Jshore, Khulna, Satkhira and the northern part of Faridpur district.

(2) **Commander**. Major Abu Osman Chowdhury, Major Abul Manzoor

(3) **Location of Headquarters**. Benapole

j. **Sector 9**.

(1) **Area**. Barisal, Patuakhali, and parts of the district of Khulna and Faridpur.

(2) **Commander**. Major M. A. Jalil , Major MA Manzur, Major Joynal Abedin

(3) **Location of Headquarters**.

k. **Sector 10**.

(1) **Area**. This sector was constituted with the naval commandos.

(2) **Commander**. HQ Bangladesh Forces

(3) **Location of Headquarters**.

l. **Sector 11**.

(1) **Area**. Mymensingh and Tangail along with parts of Rangpur - Gaibandha, Ulipur, Kamalpur and Chilmari.

(2) **Commander**. Major Ziaur Rahman, Major Abu Taher, Squadron Leader M. Hamidullah Khan

(3) **Location of Headquarters**. Teldhala until October 10, then transferred to Mahendraganj.

9. **Regular Brigade Formations**.

a. **Z Force**. Commanded by Lt. Col. Ziaur Rahman, was created on 07 July and consisted of 1, 3 and 8 East Bengal Regiment. Headquarters was at Teldhala.

b. **K Force**. Commanded by Lt. Col. Khaled Mosharraf, was created in September with 4, 9 and 10 East Bengal Regiment.

c. **S Force**. Commanded by Major K.M. Safiullah, was created in October 1971 and consisted of 2 and 11 East Bengal Regiment.

The Victory

20. Bangladesh Mukti Bahini and other forces fought bravely against the occupying Pakistan Army. With as many as 15 million refugees crossing into its territory by autumn 1971, India decided to intervene militarily.

21. Pakistan preempted Indian action by attacking northern India from West Pakistan on December 3. After a short war of 13 days, Pakistan army surrendered unconditionally to the allied Indian-Bangladeshi force on 16th December, 1971. Pakistani forces surrendered to the joint command of Indian and Bangladeshi forces.



Sectors of Liberation War of Bangladesh





Bangabandhu Campaigning for 1970 Election


Eleven sectors in Bangladesh Shadhinota Juddho (1971)
6. Rangpur (M Khademul Bashar)
Rangpur
Dinajpur
11. Mymensingh - Tangail (Ziaur Rahman, Abu Taher & M. Hamidullah Khan)
5. Durgapur - Danki (Mir Shawkat Ali)
Sylhet
7. Rajshahi-Pabna
(Nazmul Huq, Quazi nooruzzaman & A. Rab)
Mymensingh
4. Habiganj zilla (Chitta Rajan Datta)
Moulvi Bazar
Rajshahi
Tangail
Habiganj
Pabna
3. Brahamanbaria - parts of Sylhet (K M Shafiullah & ANM Nuruzzaman)
Dhaka
2.Comilla - Noakhali (Khaled Mosharraf & ATM Haider)
8. Kushtia-Jessore
(Abu Osman Chowdhury & MA Manzur)
Comilla
1. Chotrogram (Ziaur Rahman & Rafiqul Islam)
Jessore
Noakhali
Khulna
Barisal
Chittagong
9. Barisal-Patuakhali
(M A Jalil, MA Manzur & Joynal Abedin)
Patuakhali
Sundarban
Cox's Bazaar
10. Bay of Bengal
(Navy forces)
Note:
Z-Force = 1, 3, 8
K-Force = 4, 9, 10
S-Force = 2, 11



Maj Ziaur Rahman
(April 10, 1971 –
June 25, 1971)



Captain Rafiqul Islam
(June 28, 1971 –
February 14, 1972)

Sector 2



Major Khaled Mosharraf
(April 10, 1971 –
September 22, 1971)



Major ATM Haider
(September 22, 1971 –
February 14, 1972)

Sector 3



Major KM Shafiullah



Captain ANM Nuruzzaman

Sector 4



Major Chittarajan Datta



Lt Col Md Abdur Rob

Sector 5



Major Mir Shawkat Ali

Sector 6

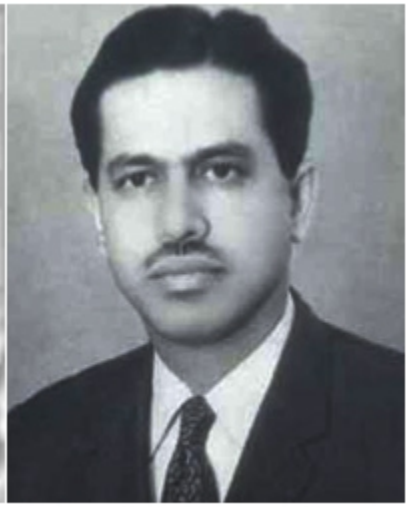


Wing Commander Khademul Bashar

Sector 7

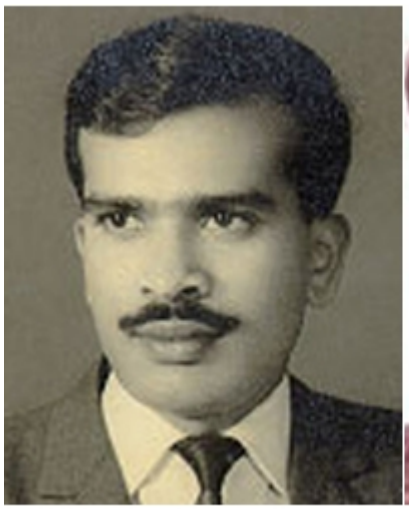


Major Nazmul Haque



Major Quazi Nuruzzaman

Sector 8



Major Osman Chowdhury



Major MA Manzoor

Sector 9



Major M A Jalil



Major MA Manzur



Major Joynal Abedin

Sector 11



Major Ziaur Rahman



Abu Taher



M Hamidullah Khan