

## National

# Some innocent villagers were shot dead . . .

From Aroop Talkukder

People of Barisal took breath of relief after long 225 days since Barisal was occupied by the Pakistani Army on 27th April 1971.

Barisal was liberated on December 8, 1971. On 27th April Pak Army through combined operation from land, river and sky captured Barisal town a month after attacking the capital.

Pakistani military convoy marched ahead towards Barisal town along the Barisal-Faridpur highway on April 24. On way to Barisal they faced first resistance at Gownadi, some 26 kilometers from Barisal on April 25 morning by a small group of 20 Freedom Fighters armed with 303 rifles. It was the first resistance against Pak military on way to Barisal by the Freedom Fighters where in a face to face encounter. Freedom Fighters like Syed Abul Hashem, Mokhtar Ali, Alaudin and Parimal were killed.

The Pak Army armed with modern weapons on gunboat proceeded towards Barisal town through river routes were resisted at Junahar near the town. This resistance with two wooden body steamers and a couple of 303 rifles could not stand for a long time. The steamers were later sank.

At the same time Pak paratroopers were dropped at Taltali, a place just outside the town, where some innocent villagers were shot dead.

Capturing Barisal, Pakistani troops set up their headquarters for Barisal zone at the then WAPDA office building (now Water Development Board) in front of the Barisal Medical College Hospital. Later they made bunkers around the office, torture chambers, jail and army camp.

After the fall of Barisal district headquarters Freedom Fighters who were grouped in one split in smaller groups. The Freedom Fighters formed separate groups in different places of

manders in each thana areas. Mahtuddin Manik, a valiant Freedom Fighter worked as one of his best comrades. Base commanders were also given some modern arms and ammunitions for guerilla operations. Then some brave youngmen from different areas were sent to training camps in India for necessary training particularly on guerilla warfare.

But one time disguised spy of Pak Army and razakars albadars informed the Pak Army about the activities of Captain Omar. At the same time Captain Omar also received news of Pak Army's plan for attacking guerilla camps and headquarter. So in no time he shifted the headquarter from Dargabari to Binna at Swarupkathi. Surprisingly the next day Pakistani troops suddenly surrounded and attacked the Barakotha headquarter as well as the entire village. Finding no Freedom Fighters the troops in anger killed many villagers including women and children. At last almost all the houses of the village were set on fire.

In the meantime the Freedom Fighters kept on changing their position of camps.

By this time the Freedom Fighters planned to damage the communications link bridges and to engage the army in guerilla war including capturing arms and ammunition.

In November the Freedom Fighters successfully captured Banari Para thana after several attempts under the leadership of a base commander, Jahangir Bahadur. Uzirpur thana was also recaptured by the Freedom Fighters during that time where about 10 policemen and razakars were killed. Swarupkathi thana was also recaptured almost the same way in late November.

On December 6, Bakerganj thana was attacked by Freedom Fighters and fell after a day.



The foundation stone of the 'Muktijoddha Milon Kendra' at Barakotha village of Uzirpur.

— Star photo

the district. By that time these small groups of Freedom Fighters had to face both the armed dacoits and the attack from Pak military.

Some of the Freedom Fighters groups of the then greater Barisal district were led by Kuddus Molla at Mehendiganj, Jafar and Majibar Rahman Talukdar at Bakerganj, Jahangir Bahadur at Swarupkathi, A F M Hemayet Uddin and Haranath Bain (former MP) at Wazirpur, Nizamuddin Ahmed at Gownadi, Benilal Dasgupta and Mahiuddin Manik Bir Pratik at Banaripara, Arab Ali Mia at Dehergati, Abul Kashem, Majid Khan and Wahab Khan at Babuganj, Sultan Master, Ratan Sarif and Abdul Mannan at Kotwali, Sidiqu Rahaman at Bholia, Gazi Makim Ali at Nalichity.

From June to August under the leadership of Sarbahara Party chief Comrade Siraj Sikder built resistance against the Pakistani Army at the Guara Garden of Swarupkathi. One day all of a sudden the enemy and the Freedom Fighters were locked in face to face encounter and killed a number of troops there. Sarbahara Party members also fought against the enemy through guerilla warfare; hit and run. But at one stage they quit the area as the Pak Army had stronger forces with more modern arms and ammunition. The greater Barisal district was under the 9th sector command during the Liberation War.

In August Captain Sahajahan (known as Captain Omar) came to Barisal fleeing from the then West Pakistan Army camp. Later he was appointed as the first sub-sector Commander by the then exile Mujibnagar Government. Captain Sahajahan came back along with some of his EPR colleagues and Freedom Fighters trained in India. They also carried some arms and ammunitions with them.

Taking charge as Sub-sector Commander Captain Sahajahan Omar contacted the scattered Freedom Fighter groups and set up the first sub-sector headquarter in a primary school at Dargabari of Barakotha village under Wazirpur thana area of the district on September 6, 1971. Within days Captain Omar appointed base com-

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