

1971 Genocide



Pakistan Lying, Still

As Pakistan continues to deny its war crimes committed on the Bangalis in 1971, we have compiled reports on the war atrocities based on historic documents.

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The Daily Star

Sun rose from ruins

FROM PAGE 1

push -- the final battle. Let it be bitter and bloody but let it be over quickly, was the mood.

Nagra's two brigades of troops linked up with the Indian paratroopers who were dropped over there earlier. He then marched off towards Joydevpur and met a strong resistance from the Pakistan army. So Nagra left one of his brigades there to engage the enemy and took the second brigade with him to proceed. They crossed a river and marched towards Tongi.

But then Nagra changed his mind. Probably because information was there that he would meet stiff resistance. In front of him was a newly built road east of Kaliakair that linked up with Dhaka-Aricha highway. It was still unmarked on the map.

On December 14, General Nagra decided to place his bet on this axis and rapidly marched forward. On the way they had a bitter skirmish at Savar.

But then very early in the morning on December 16 he reached Mirpur, an outskirts of Dhaka. His troops took position across the Mirpur bridge and waited. A lull before the final battle.

Nagra had only 3,000 troops with him to take on 26,000 Pakistani soldiers hell-bent on saving Dhaka.

When the game was over. Meanwhile, in Dhaka a different drama was unfolding.

On December 14, Pakistan president Yahya Khan had sent a cable to General AAK Niazi, the commander of the Pakistan army in East Pakistan, and Governor AM Malik.

"You have fought a heroic battle against overwhelming odds.... You have now reached a stage where further resistance is no longer HUMANLY possible nor will it serve any useful purpose. You should now take all necessary MEASURES TO STOP THE FIGHTING....," the message read.

Just a little while ago, Niazi had visited a Bihari camp in Mohammadpur and boasted to journalists, "We will fight it out till the last. It is the price of freedom. Pakistan will stay, yes, Inshallah, we will stay."

And now when he got the president's cable, Niazi's hands trembled. He knew the full meaning of this message. It was a moment no career soldier ever expected to see. The most lousy, most ignominious moment of his life had arrived. The decision to lay down arms, to surrender to the enemy, was his to take.

NEGOTIATING SURRENDER

In the evening, Niazi and General Rao Farman Ali rushed to US consul general Spivack and asked him to negotiate the cease-fire terms with the Indians for him.

"I cannot negotiate a cease-fire on your behalf. I can only send a message if you like," Spivack said in a matter-of-fact tone.

So General Rao Farman drafted the message addressed to Indian Chief of Staff General Sam Manekshaw, according to Siddiqi Salik's book "Witness to surrender."

It called for an immediate cease-fire, safety of Pakistan Armed and paramilitary forces, the protection of the loyal civilian population against reprisals by the Mukti Bahini and the safety and medical care of the sick and the wounded.

Spivack promised to transmit the message in twenty minutes. But he actually sent it to Washington to get comments on Yahya Khan. Nobody

knew where Yahya was at that moment in time.

Finally when it reached General Manekshaw, the Indian chief of staff immediately replied. The cease fire would be acceptable provided the Pakistan Army surrendered. He also provided the radio frequency 6605 KHz by day and 3216 KHz by night with a call sign CALBAC on which Kolkata, the seat of Indian Eastern Command, could be contacted for co-ordination of details.

His message contained a stern warning as The New York Times reported: "Should you not comply with what I had stated you will leave me with no other alternative but to resume my offensive with utmost vigor at 0900 hours on 16 December."

He also withheld air strikes from 5pm, December 15.

The temporary cease-fire was to be from 5 pm on 15 December till 9 am the following day. It was later extended to 3 pm, 16 December, to allow more time to finalize cease-fire arrangements.

Niazi had no option left now. Bhutto's bid to institute a ceasefire and withdrawal of Indian troops through the UN had failed because of repeated vetoes by the Soviets.

So he asked his chief of staff Brigadier Baqar to issue the necessary orders to the formations and asked the local commanders to contact their Indian counterparts to arrange the cease-fire.

"It did not say 'surrender' except in the following sentence, 'Unfortunately, it also involves the laying down of arms,' writes Salik.

All was set for the fall of Dhaka.

FALL OF DHAKA

"Dear Abdullah

We are here. We have surrounded you. Your game is up. Choose between surrender or total destruction. We assure you will be treated according to the Geneva Convention. I personally assure you that you have no risk of life. Yours
Major General Nagra
8:30 am, Dec 16, 1972"

The message was clear and exact. Captain Mehta, ADC of Nagra, carried the message with him riding a jeep. A white shirt was tied to it for want of a flag.

At around 9 in the morning, Niazi was handed the small chit of message. He read it silently and passed it to Rao Farman Ali. They were surprised to find Nagra's name on the message as they had expected General Jacob to be there. It also revealed how weak their defence was as Nagra was virtually breathing down their neck.

But the more urgent question was whether they would welcome Nagra or fight on.

"Have you any reserves left?" Major-General Farman asked Niazi, according to Farman's book "How Pakistan got divided."

Niazi remained silent just as he had been for the last three days.

"How long can you resist?" Farman Ali asked again.

As silence prevailed, Rear-Admiral Shariff said in Punjabi: "Kuj palley hai?" (Have you anything in the kitty?)

Niazi looked at major general Jamshed, the defender of Dacca, Farman Ali wrote in his book.

Jamshed shook his head sideways to signify "nothing."

"I cannot advise you anything," Farman Ali then said. "Go ahead and

do whatever you like."

Niazi sent Jamshed to receive Nagra.

"The Indian General entered Dacca with a handful of soldiers and a lot of pride. That was the virtual fall of Dacca. It fell quietly like a heart patient," Salik wrote.

"HELLO ABDULLAH"

Niazi was in a way relieved to meet Nagra, his longtime course mate at the military academy.

"Surely by the 13th day of the war, Abdullah knew that he had lost the war. It was only a question of time. Any further delay would have meant more casualties," General Nagra recalled in an interview with The Tribune, an Indian newspaper in 1998.

"And when I walked into Abdullah's (Niazi) office in Dacca, there was instant recognition. General Niazi had put on some weight though his face still had the same glow.

"Hello Abdullah, how are you?" I asked him.

Nagra then mentioned that Abdullah broke down and exclaimed: "Pindi mein bethe hue logon ne marwa diya (The people sitting in Pindi doomed us.) I let him talk to lighten his heart. There were reminiscences. Tea followed and of course there was forced friendliness," says General Nagra.

"TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT"

At 12 noon came the message from Kolkata that General Jacob will arrive with a 12-member negotiating team.

Jacob stepped off his chopper with the surrender deed in hand. When it was handed to Rao Farman Ali after a quick look by Niazi, the former objected to the clause that the surrender would be to the joint command of India and Bangladesh.

An angry Farman Ali said, "It is not acceptable to me.... Please delete the words Freedom Fighters."

Just then General Jacob entered the room with a cigar in hand, writes Farman Ali.

"It has come from Delhi. Either you take it or leave it," Jacob asserted.

Niazi had no alternative but to accept any terms being thrust on him. Jacob then asked General Jagjit Singh Aurora, chief of Indian Eastern Command, to come to Dhaka for the surrender ceremony.

BIRTH OF A NATION

A few hours later, the victors and the vanquished rode down to the Race Course at Ramna.

And here, "on a broad grassy field ... the Pakistani forces formally surrendered, 13 days after the Indian army began its drive into East Pakistan," The New York Times report of the day said.

"As I signed the document with trembling hands, sorrow rose from my heart to my eyes, brimming them with unshed tears of despair and frustration," Niazi later wrote of the moment.

Before the ceremony, a French reporter came to Niazi and asked, "How are you feeling, Tiger?"

"Depressed," was the curt reply Niazi could mutter.

It was from this Race Course that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 7 had called upon the Bangalis to wage a movement for independence and freedom. It was from here he promised to liberate the country at any cost.

And exactly that had happened here. A nation was born out of blood and fire.

The diplomat monk

FROM PAGE 1

liberation of Bangladesh.

The Buddhist Bhikkhu (monk) found his path after he came to know that some of his close acquaintances in Laksam of Comilla were murdered by the Pakistan army.

He decided to launch a campaign among Buddhist countries to expose the Pakistan barbarity and drum up support for the cause of Bangalees.

As a representative of war-time Bangladesh government, he travelled to Sri Lanka, Thailand and Japan. During the high-profile visits, he never gave up his way of life as a Buddhist monk. Whenever abroad, he stayed in temples.

His campaign helped prove to the world that the spirit of the Bangalees'

about the Pakistan army's atrocities.

Bangladesh mission officials, especially Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury, HT Imam and Akbar Ali Khan, started a regular communication with the monk on behalf of the government.

Jyotipal issued another statement with updates on Pakistan army's brutalities and sent it through telegram to UN secretary general U Thant; Sri Lankan prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike; president and general secretary of World Fellowship of Buddhists and officials of Bouddha Sobhatritto Sangha.

Jyotipal got the results of his endeavour within a few days. The government of Sri Lanka and religious organisation World Fellowship of Buddhists expressed their worry

conferences where the two delegates presented the full picture of East Pakistan.

In five days, the duo met educationists, scholars, chiefs of the different government offices and Sri Lanka Buddhist Congress president Bipula Sar Thero, ministers and others.

The visit was extensively covered by all the news papers of the country.

On the last day of visit, they met five lawmakers in the Ganoparishad Bhaban where they described the total situation and requested them to stop the flying of Paksitani aircraft which in the guise of passenger planes were carrying soldiers and arms through Sri Lanka. It was only one flight route which was open for



Sree Jyotipal Mohathero hands over \$2,000 to then prime minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to help the flood victims in 1974.

PHOTO: SCAN FROM BANGLADESH MUKTI SONGRAMA

war was non-communal and people irrespective of religion and belief had stood up against the Pakistan occupation forces.

Apart from campaigning, Jyotipal used to visit Buddhists in different refugee camps to deliver speeches to boost their morale and teach them how to pass through such a difficult time.

However, it took four decades for the state to honour the Buddhist monk for his role in the Liberation War. Jyotipal Mohathero was given Ekushey Award in 2010 and Independence Award in 2011 but both posthumously.

Born in Laksam in 1914, Jyotipal Mohathero was known to Pakistan government as he was elected president of Bouddha Kristi Prochar Sangha. He was also respected for different social activities like setting up schools and orphanages.

The orphanage he set up at Baria Gaon in Laksam was opened to refugees, including Muslims and Hindus, from the end of March until he left for India. He used to collect food and medicines from different sources for the sick refugees.

For all this he was blacklisted by the Pakistan military. The occupation force was annoyed with him as he dedicated his two books to persons who had left the country for India in early days of the war.

The Pakistan army moved to pick him up on April 16 but failed as freedom fighters had broken the bridge on their way to the village.

When he heard that the military was after him, he left his temple with the help of his students and reached Agartala on April 19.

It was in Agartala he learnt about the killing of some of his fellows and decided to launch his campaign.

On April 22, Jyotipal called Gopal Bhushan Chakma, an Indian government employee and his follower, and expressed his willingness to hold a press conference on East Pakistan crisis. Gopal invited journalists including reporters of Akash Bani, Ananda Bazar and Jugantor and correspondents of the foreign media.

At the press conference at Prachya Vidya Bihar, a monastery of Agartala, he described how Pakistan army was conducting genocide, burning houses and torturing women.

As a religious figure he got attention from journalists and the next day, international media published his interview with high priority. Akash Bani and Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra repeatedly broadcast it.

The Mujibnagar government realised that the Buddhist monk would be the right person to persuade the Buddhist countries to recognise the new nation. Besides, he could inform the global Buddhist community

over the situation in Bangladesh.

After this he took four more Buddhist monks with him and wrote a joint statement on May 12 as eyewitnesses of the massive torture by the Pakistan army.

At about the same time, Dhaka Betar, which was being operated by Pakistan junta, claimed said that the information of the Akash Bani and Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra over the war was totally wrong.

To verify the statements of the Buddhist monks and others, a delegation of 35 foreign journalists came to Agartala. They especially sat with the Buddhist monks and recorded Jyotipal's speech.

This trip of journalists played a great role in exposing Pakistan Army's mayhem on innocent Bangalees, including minority community people. After this, International Buddhist community urged the Pakistan government to stop the attacks immediately.

To counter the statements of Jyotipal and his team, some pro-junta Buddhists claimed that their community had been living in East Pakistan peacefully. They alleged that monk Jyotipal had introduced Hindu refugees as Buddhists to foreign visitors.

In response, Jyotipal made an intelligent move. He told the Indian government as well as Bangladesh mission that he would like to set up a separate camp of Buddhist refugees so that the foreigners could identify them easily.

After getting nod, he built the camp at Tota Bari hill and at its entrance of he put up a signboard reading "Bouddha".

This intelligent move established him as a vital figure in diplomatic campaigns for the Liberation War. Indian and Mujibnagar government decided to send him to Buddhist countries. He went to Delhi on July 8 and started preparation for campaign abroad.

On July 21, Jyotipal and another Buddhist activist Ven Sridharma Birio met Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. She listened to them and before leaving said, "I am thinking what is to be done."

In the meantime, Bangladesh High Commission offered a fresh passport to him but under a different name. The Buddhist monk did not agree to accept the offer. Later, the high commission issued his passport using just one part of the name, Jyotipal.

Jyotipal and advocate Fakir Sahabuddin left for Sri Lanka from Delhi on August 7.

In Colombo, they got extensive support from the Ceylon Committee for Human Rights in East Bengal which had been working in favour of the Liberation War from the very beginning.

The committee had arranged two

Pakistan to enter East Pakistan.

The lawmakers wrote a letter to Sirimavo Bandaranaike to take action in this regard.

Next day, after boarding his plane for Thailand, Jyotipal saw in the newspaper that the Sri Lankan government had restricted Pakistan aircraft landing in their airport. It was a huge setback for the Pakistan government.

The delegates reached Bangkok on August 11 and got extensive support from Bishwa Buddha Sobhatritto Sangha by sending messages to the Buddhist countries including China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Louse, Nepal, Bhutan, and headquarters of Asia Buddhist Peace Conference in Mongolia.

After getting the message of the Sangha, Bhutan government sent a letter to Jyotipal thanking him for informing it the actual situation. The kingdom of Bhutan on December 6, 1971 became the first country to recognise Bangladesh.

From Thailand, the two-man team went to Japan on August 16. There, an organisation named Bangladesh Liberation Committee helped them a lot. It was led by a Japanese named Dr Prof Nara, who could speak Bangla.

Famous English daily The Mainchi and Japanese-Language newspaper Chugai Nip published interview of Jyotipal and Sahabuddin.

The two worked in Japan for seven days. Jyotipal then came back to India to participate in an international conference on behalf of Bangladesh. Sahabuddin went to Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore for campaigning.

After the conference, the monk came to his camp at Agartala on October 8 and stayed there until January 7, 1972. He returned home -- now a sovereign, independent country -- with his fifteen followers.

He was back to his Barai Gaon temple the next day. It was totally ruined by the Pakistan army. His library, which had hundreds of books, was destroyed too.

Jyotipal met Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his Dhanmondi residence on January 12. When Bangabandhu hugged Jyotipal and congratulated him, the Buddhist monk just said, "I did nothing for the country. I just cried in front of people abroad for Bangladesh."

After serving the country and the society for another three decades by establishing many educational institutions and orphanages as well as monasteries, including World Peace Pagoda, Jyotipal Mohathero died on April 12, 2002.

REFERENCE

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Food safety, public health at risk

FROM PAGE 1

"Pesticide" at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. The participants comprised of regulators, industry actors and farm experts.

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (Bari) Entomology Division Head Dr Syed Nurul Alam informed the roundtable that the government has banned as many as 195 hazardous pesticides over the past few years.

This prompted Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Shahidur Rashid Bhuiyan to point out that many of those banned pesticides were still being used in the country.

Agriculture Ministry Additional Secretary Anwar Faruque expressed a sense of urgency to tackle the evil practice.

He wondered how those pesticides, substandard and fake ones, were being marketed under the very nose of agriculture officials working at the grassroots.

Chairman of Bangladesh Crop Protection Association Musfiqur Rahman announced that they would take steps against such marketers, irrespective of their links with the association.

Other participants in yesterday's roundtable also emphasised on getting

the market rid of counterfeit pesticides so that farmers get unlimited access to effective and quality agro-input from the companies who follow the industry's good practices.

Syngenta's Asia-Pacific Region Stewardship and Regulatory Policy Manager David Penna, its Managing Director in Bangladesh Md Sazzadul Hassan, Head of R&D Mahubur Rahman and Bari Entomology Head Dr Syed Nurul Alam gave four separate presentations at the roundtable, highlighting the importance of pesticides in food production, farmers' training and their awareness building.

With Prof Khandaker Shariful Islam of Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, moderating the programme, The Daily Star Special Supplement Editor Shahnoor Wahid delivered the welcome speech.

Speaking as the chief guest, Agriculture Ministry Additional Secretary Anwar Faruque underscored the importance of judicious use of pesticides in safe food production.

He said because of poor affordability, many farmers go for cheaper pesticide products. He added that many good

companies are losing market as the bad ones are being allowed to supply the low-quality pesticides.

Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Centre (Barc) Dr Abul Kalam Azad said it's the responsibility of industry stakeholders to make the farmers sufficiently aware so that they don't overuse pesticides.

Syngenta MD Sazzadul Hassan said they have trained many farmers in Bangladesh to this end. He said they were also doing adaptive research in Bogra.

The roundtable was also participated by, among others, former executive chairman of Barc Dr Wais Kabir, HarvestPlus Country Manager Md Khairul Bashar, B-Safe Foundation President and ex-IRRI representative in Bangladesh M Zainul Abedin, Dhaka University teacher Dr Sirajul Hoque, Dhaka Medical College Hospital's Associate Professor Dr Md Robed Amin, Bri Entomology Head Dr Nur Ahmed, VSO Country Director Simon Brown, journalists Rezaul Karim Siddique and Ashequn Nabi Chowdhury and Syngenta officials, Dr Peter Loke, Md Ahsan Kabir, Dr Ziaur Rahman, Mohammad Habibullah and Mohammad Mosheur Rahman.