Die was cast for Bangladesh's Liberation War in April 1971

BRIG RP SINGH, VSM (RETIRED)

THE month of April 1971 was when the die for the future of Bangladesh's Liberation War was cast. Both Indian and Bangladesh governments got busy in planning operations for expunging the Pakistani occupation forces at the earliest. Indira Gandhi held numerous meetings with cabinet colleagues, bureaucrats and the army top brass. She appointed an Advisory Group (AG) consisting of senior officials to deal with the Bangladesh crisis—Durga Prasad (DP) Dhar, Chairman of Planning Commission, Parmeshwar Narayan (PN) Haksar, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Triloki Nath (TN) Kaul, Foreign Secretary, Prithvi Nath (PN) Dhar, Secretary in the Prime Minister's office, and RN Kao, Director of RAW. All of them were Kashmiri Brahmins and acquainted to Indira Gandhi and had worked with her father, Jawaharlal Nehru. Some of them were related to her as well as to each other. The AG came to be known as "Kashmir Brigade" in the corridors of power. They worked in perfect synchronisation and laid down the liberation strategy for Bangladesh. A timetable was formulated to achieve the objectives within the time-frame of maximum one year. By the end of April, India was fully involved in the Liberation War.

A conference chaired by Colonel MAG Osmani—attended by all Bangladeshi senior army officers—was held in the tea garden of Teliapara in Slylhet district on April 4, 1971. From the Indian side, the district magistrate of Agartala Mr Saigal and Brigadier BC Pandey of BSF also attended. A policy paper was prepared for raising liberation forces—called the "Telipara Document", it spelt out the strategy for Bangladesh's liberation. This strategy was later approved by the Mujibnagar Government.

On April 28, 1971, the PM summoned a meeting with her senior cabinet colleagues in her office to take stock of the situation arising out of Operation Searchlight by the Pakistani Army. Indian Army Chief General SHFJ Manekshaw was a special invitee. She was quite upset after reading the reports of the Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura about the unprecedented continuous inflow of Bangladeshi refugees. She asked Manekshaw to move into East Pakistan. The General advised her against going to war immediately due firstly, to the shortage of critical arms, ammunitions, equipment and manpower required for offensive operations. Secondly, the state of war worthiness of tanks and other weaponry was quite unsatisfactory due to non-allocation of adequate funds. Thirdly, mobilisation of armed forces to the borders would require all the rolling stock of the Indian Railways for at least one month as the troops were located in the cantonments in the interiors of the country. This would adversely impact the movement of recently harvested Rabi food grains from wheat producing states which may result in famine like conditions in the country. Fourthly, with the impending monsoon and Bangladesh being a flat country with a large complex river system, it would get flooded which would seriously hamper movement of armour. Last but not least, the Chinese PM Zhau Enlai had hinted of helping Pakistan in case of an Indian attack. Any move by the Chinese along the Himalayas would tie down a large number of Indian troops, thus reducing the required numerical superiority for offensive operations. However, by November end, the passes along the northern border would have closed thereby ruling out any major Chinese mischief.

An angry Indira Gandhi abruptly adjourned the meeting till 4 pm. One by one the cabinet members left her office. As the General saluted before leaving, Indira Gandhi told him, "Chief, will you stay behind?" Manekshaw sensing trouble said, "Prime Minister, before you open your mouth would you like me to send my resignation on grounds of health, mental or physical?" Mrs Gandhi smiled and said, "No, sit down. Was everything you told me true?" The COAS replied, "Yes it is my job to tell you the truth. It is my job to fight and win, not lose." The ministers and COAS reassembled in the evening of April 28. Major decisions for the plan to help the Bangladesh government to liberate their country from Pakistani occupation forces were taken in this landmark meeting. The major points of the conference were conveyed to the Bangladeshi government in Kolkata by AK ROY.

On May 1, 1971, General Manekshaw issued Operation Instruction No 52 to the GOC-in-C Eastern Command Lt General JS Aurora and heads of other arms and services which spelt out the broad outline for operational contingencies. The overall aim was to: a) Assist the Bangladesh government in rallying the people of East Bengal to support the liberation movement; b) Raise, equip and train East Bengal cadres for guerrilla operations in their own native land with a view to: i) initially, immobilising and tying down the Pakistani military forces in protective tasks in East Bengal; ii) subsequently, by gradual escalation of guerrilla operations to sap and corrode the morale of Pakistani forces in the Eastern theatre, and simultaneously to impair their logistics capability for undertaking any offensive against Assam and West Bengal; iii) avail the guerrilla cadres as ancillaries to Eastern Field Force in the event of Pakistan initiating hostilities against us. GOC-in-C Eastern Command was ordered to: a) Advise, guide and encourage the Bangladesh government with overall context of independent East Bengal in such a manner so that their concurrence is obtained with regards to: i) Setting up of political and military organisations for waging war; ii) Size of the guerrilla force; iii) Scope and intensity of guerrilla operations to be conducted in East Bengal and; iv) Evolution of an effective intelligence set up. b) Plan for organising and equipping a guerrilla force, initially limited to 20,000 men, which could subsequently be enlarged to 100,000. c) By a process of gradual escalation, enlarge the scope of guerrilla operations in East Bengal. d) Perfect the organisation for waging guerrilla warfare in East Bengal.

Members of the Mukti Bahini preparing for their next guerrilla attack. PHOTO: **ARCHIVES**

The following guidelines were to be kept in view by Lt General JS Aurora: Stage 1: i) The border in respective sector area was to be kept "hotted up" with a view to keep large numbers of Pakistani troops tied down. ii) The isolated Pakistani BOPs, where retaliation by Pakistani troops was difficult, were to be selected and eliminated by Bangladeshi forces with the help of Indian troops. Artillery and mortar fire support for capture of such posts was provided by Indian Army and BSF. Stage 2: i) induction of freedom fighters inside Bangladesh into various safe havens, where support from local population was readily available, was to be planned by the Op Jackpot sector HQs in conformity with the total number of freedom fighters to be inducted, which was to be laid down by HQ Eastern Command. (ii) Destruction of rail, road and water transport was to be planned progressively deeper inside Bangladesh with a view to isolating forward areas and the main support areas such as troops' concentration areas and cantonments (of Pakistan Army). iii) In order to establish guerrilla bases deep inside Pakistani held territory, 145 especially selected students were to be trained and infiltrated inside Bangladesh. The destruction of installations, machinery, and big industrial estates including tea factories, petrol dumps and other installations in Jessore, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rangpur and Dinajpur was to be undertaken by specially planned operations.

As per Indian proposal, the liberation force was to be based on the surviving East Bengal Regiment soldiers operating in small cells around Bangladesh to facilitate the eventual intervention by the Indian army. But Colonel Osmani proposed a different strategy.

Lt General JS Aurora passed instructions to his staff and the formations and coordinating conferences were held with the Bangladesh government and its Forces HQ for finalising the nitty-gritty for implementation of the plan. A coordination cell was established under the Eastern Command located at Kolkata for meeting the logistical and training needs of the Mukti Bahini. The Indian army also lent operational support and planning advice. Operation Jackpot was the codename given by Indian Army for Mukti Bahini Operations. Operation Jackpot was initially commanded by Major General Onkar Singh Kalkat, who took charge on April 27, 1971. However, he was replaced barely two months later by Major General BN (Jimmy) Sarcar.

General Sarcar being a Bengali was most suitable in coordinating the operations with Bangladeshi authorities. Colonel Osmani had differences of opinion with the Indian Army leadership regarding the role of the Mukti Bahini in the Liberation War. Indian leadership initially envisioned Bengali forces to be trained as the small elite guerrilla force of about 8,000 members. As per Indian proposal, the liberation force was to be based on the surviving East Bengal Regiment soldiers operating in small cells around Bangladesh to facilitate the eventual intervention by the Indian army. But Colonel Osmani proposed a different strategy. He wanted to raise Bangladesh's conventional force which was to occupy lodgement areas inside Bangladesh. The guerrillas were to be used as an auxiliary force. After a sizable chunk of Bangladesh's territory was occupied by Mukti Bahini, then the Bangladesh government would request international diplomatic recognition and intervention. Initially Mymensingh was picked for this operation but later Colonel Osmani settled for Sylhet as the hub of the intended operation. Simultaneously, it was decided to send the maximum number of guerrillas inside Bangladesh as soon as possible. However, a via-media was found and the raising, equipping and training of Mukti Bahini was carried out smoothly.

RP Singh, VSM is a retired Brigadier General of the Indian Army. He is a veteran of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, in which he was involved in different capacities from day one till the surrender of the Pakistan Army on December 16, 1971.

How BJP ducked CAA and retained Assam

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

RULING Bharatiya Janata Party created history in the north eastern Indian state of Assam by becoming the first non-Congress party to win two successive terms in the state assembly elections there.

Staving off a spirited fightback from its main challenger Congress, the saffron party, along with its regional allies like Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), won 75 out of the total 126 seats, 11 less than the previous assembly elections five years ago. The Congress-led 10-party alliance including All India United Democratic Front (AIDUF) of perfume baron Badruddin Ajmal, finished runners up with a total of 50 seats this time. The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance, which did not have AIDUF in it in 2016 but had Left parties, got 26 seats in the 2016 poll.

There were two firsts in the election this time. For the BJP, the assembly election in Assam in 2021 stood apart from the other four states of Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry as the north eastern state was the only place among them where the party was eyeing to retain power. On the other hand, Congress went into this poll with AIDUF for the first time.

Leading the National Democratic Alliance with AGP, United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the Gana Suraksha Party (GSP), which mainly represent the Bodo and Sarania communities respectively, BJP faced challenges from two fronts this year—one from Congress-led Grand Alliance of which AIDUF, Bodoland People's Front (BPF) which has pockets of influence in Bodoland area, and small regional groupings Anchalik Gana Morcha, Communist Party of India (Marxist), CPI and CPI (Marxist-Leninist) and second from two nascent regional parties Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and Raijor Dal which were born out of the widespread violent street protests against the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019 when five people were killed in police firing. It had at that time appeared that anti-CAA protests would dent BJP's electoral prospects by stoking fresh fears about a fresh influx of undocumented migrants into Assam, particularly in upper Assam. It may be noted that the Indian government is yet to notify the rules to implement CAA.

How did BJP manage to retain power in Assam? More importantly, how did the party manage to deflect public attention from CAA? Victory in any poll has to be won by a strategy that takes into account various factors. In Assam, the party used polarisation, implementation of a series of welfare schemes like income support for housewives and land rights for indigenous people and, above all, by a very fine balancing act to navigate the minefield of CAA and NRC issues. Over the years, BJP has raked up the issue of influx in Assam from across the border with Bangladesh, accusing the previous Congress governments of encouraging illegal immigrants in return for their support. This had helped the party come to power in Assam for the first time 2016. Five years down the line, the same strategy remained in place. What provided more fodder for BJP's polarising narrative this time was Congress' tie-up with AIUDF as the ruling party projected Ajmal's party, which has a huge hold mainly among Bangla-speaking Muslims in Assam. BJP projected Congress-AIDUF alliance as detrimental to the interests of Assam's indigenous people and "the culture and civilisation of Assam." Anti-CAA activists, particularly in upper Assam, have always opposed the influx of migrants irrespective of their religion. The BJP established its sway in upper Assam, which has the largest chunk of 28 assembly seats, and this propelled the party to power for the first time in 2016.

According to Congress insiders, the alliance with AIUDF hurt Congress' bid to recapture power in Assam and resulted in the party's poor showing especially in upper Assam where AIUDF does not have any significant presence. The results show Congress-led UPA got just three out of the total 28 seats in upper Assam as against NDA's 23 this time. Congress had hoped to cash in on the opposition to CAA, which aims to give Indian citizenship to religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who have come to India till 2014. The party had even promised that if voted back to power, it would bring a law to nullify CAA. But the issue, as evident by the results, failed to cut ice with voters in upper Assam.

On the other hand, BJP successfully diverted the issue of CAA away from the political discourse by arguing that a "corrected" NRC would address the sensitive issue of "illegal" immigrants. Secondly, BJP President JP Nadda, while releasing the party's manifesto in Assam, countered Congress by saying CAA cannot be changed through a state-level legislation but did not commit to its implementation. Thirdly, votaries of anti-CAA agitation have always had reservations about AIDUF which they think is a supporter of illegal migrants. This is the chord BJP successfully struck in upper Assam by repeatedly pointing at AIDUF's presence in the company of Congress. Fourthly, BJP managed to mollify the people belonging to different anti-CAA indigenous communities in upper Assam by giving them positions not only in local administrative bodies created for them, but also in the party. All these factors cumulatively helped BJP blunt the resentment against CAA and National Register of Citizens and reassert its dominance in upper Assam, electorally the most crucial part of the state.

BJP lost a key ally in the form of BPF this time as the latter joined the Congress-led alliance in the run up to the election. But it meant little for the saffron party which roped in another Bodoland outfit, United People's Party Liberal, which helped it make substantial gains in Bodoland area where NDA got eight out of the 12 seats. Assam's Barak Valley, predominantly inhabited by Bangla-speaking Hindus and Muslims, gave BJP-led NDA nine seats and six to Congress-led alliance.

BJP's polarising narrative led to a massive consolidation of Muslim votes in favour of Congress and AIUDF which together managed to get 31 legislators belonging to the minority community to Assam assembly this time, even though the treasury bench of the House would not have any Muslim member for the first time in half a century. The presence of 31 Muslim legislators—16 of Congress and 15 of AIDUF—this time is the second-highest in 38 years in a state where, as per the Census of 2011, Muslims account for 34.22 percent of the population, while Hindus and other religious groups account for the rest of the 3.12 crore total population. Of the 126 assembly seats, religious minorities decide the electoral fate in 23 seats, mostly in western and southern Assam and play a crucial role in about seven other seats.

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

ডাক, টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয়

লাইসেন্সিং কর্তৃপক্ষ, মেইলিং অপারেটর ও কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস প্রতিষ্ঠান

নম্বর ১৪.৩৮.০০০০.০০৫.১৮.০৮৭.২০.৩৪ তারিখঃ ১৮ চৈত্র ১৪২৭ / ০১ এপ্রিল ২০২১

সতর্কীকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

The Post Office Act, 1898 (Act No. VI of 1898) এর ধারা-4B এর মাধ্যমে মেইলিং অপারেটর কিংবা কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস পরিচালনার জন্য লাইসেন্স গ্রহণ বাধ্যতামূলক করা হয়েছে। একই আইনের ধারা-4C এর মাধ্যমে সরকারকে "লাইসেন্সিং কর্তৃপক্ষ" গঠন করে এর মাধ্যমে লাইসেন্স প্রদান এবং মেইলিং অপারেটর ও কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস কার্যক্রম নিয়ন্ত্রণের ক্ষমতা প্রদান করা হয়েছে। The Post Office Act, 1898 (Act No. VI of 1898) এর ধারা-4B ও ধারা 4C এর ক্ষমতাবলে সরকার এস,আর,ও নং-৩৪৯ আইন/২০১৩ মূলে "মেইলিং অপারেটর ও কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস বিধিমালা, ২০১৩" এর প্রজ্ঞাপন জারি করে যা ১১ নভেম্বর ২০১৩ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখে গেজেট আকারে প্রকাশিত হয়। উক্ত বিধিমালার বিধি-৪ অনুযায়ী "লাইসেন্সিং কর্তৃপক্ষ" গঠন করা হয় এবং বিধি-১১(১) মূলে লাইসেন্স ব্যতীত যে কোন ধরনের মেইলিং অপারেটর ও কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস ব্যবসা নিষিদ্ধ করা হয়।

লক্ষ্য করা যাচ্ছে যে, বিভিন্ন মেইলিং অপারেটর ও কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস প্রতিষ্ঠান লাইসেন্স গ্রহণ না করেই দেশের অভ্যন্তরে এমনকি আন্তর্জাতিক পর্যায়েও ব্যবসা পরিচালনা করছে, যা বে-আইনী এবং সম্পূর্ণভাবে বিধি-বহির্ভূত।

বে-আইনী এবং বিধি-বহির্ভূতভাবে মেইলিং অপারেটর ও কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস ব্যবসা পরিচালনাকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে এই বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের ৩০ (ত্রিশ) দিনের মধ্যে লাইসেন্সিং কর্তৃপক্ষের নিকট হতে বিধি-মোতাবেক লাইসেন্স গ্রহণের অনুরোধ করা হল।

নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে লাইসেন্স গ্রহণে ব্যর্থ হলে বে-আইনী এবং বিধি-বহির্ভূতভাবে মেইলিং অপারেটর ও কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস ব্যবসা পরিচালনাকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের বিরুদ্ধে আইনগত ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

সেলিমা সুলতানা
চেয়ারম্যান (অতিরিক্ত সচিব)
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GD-912

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শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

Invitation for e-Tender Notice

Memo No : 46.03.8800.061.07.109.17-877 Date: 06/05/2021

1	Ministry/Division	Local Government Division
2	Implementing Agency	Department of Public Health Engineering
3	Project/Program Name	PEDP-4 Project & Revenue Budget.
4	e-Tender IDs	OTM: 575094, 575095 and 576679, 576680.
5	Description of works	Construction of RCC WASH Block and Installation of Shallow Tubewell with # 6 Pump under PEPD-4 Project and Revenue Budget during the FY 2020-2021.
6	This is an online Tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested Persons/Firms can see details in the website: www.eprocure.gov.bd).	

(Md. Tabibur Rahman Talukder)
Executive Engineer, DPHE
Sirajganj District, Sirajganj.

GD- 927