

Heavy fighting and burning in Chittagong

By MARTIN ADENEY

Japanese ships anchored at the port of Chittagong yesterday reported big fires raging in the city. Many had died in clashes between Government troops and civilians. At about noon the ships reported that the fires which began at about 6.30 the previous evening showed no sign of being brought under control. Troops were fighting them.

The messages (reported by the Japanese agency Kyodo) are the first hard information to emerge from Chittagong since the army began to massacre East Pakistanis on Thursday. They spoke of many bodies floating in the port. Ships had not been allowed to move out and port facilities were in danger from the flames. One British ship, the Clan MacNair, is believed to be in Chittagong.

The reports confirm suggestions of serious disorder in Chittagong. Confrontation between the army and the population began on Wednesday night, when people barricaded streets to prevent an army detachment unloading military equipment from a ship which had been waiting at a jetty for four weeks. The reports suggest that the troops have the upper hand if they are finding time to fight the blaze.

In Dacca, where a "Free Bangla Desh" radio said bitter fighting was going on, Radio Pakistan claimed that more shops were open and Government offices were almost fully staffed. Some internal air services, halted for a month, had resumed and four newspapers had appeared. A Bengali law student, who arrived in London from Dacca yesterday, reported that the army was in control of the city with armed jeeps, tanks, and fighter jets in evidence at the airport on Monday.

About 60 French and Yugoslav refugees evacuated from Dacca on a special aircraft said on arrival at Delhi that Dacca was mostly quiet, although large numbers of soldiers were on the streets.

One of the five men evacuated said that the curfew had been relaxed between 6 am and 6 pm and some shops were open. But troops were preventing people leaving or entering the city.

In the battle between the Pakistani and Indian news sources, the Government-controlled Radio Pakistan asserted that the situation in the East was firmly under control and there had been "no untoward incidents."

Martial law authorities had said people could now return to their homes with confidence. "Free Bangla Desh" radio, which Radio Pakistan had claimed had gone off the air at

midday, was said by Press Trust of India to have reported that Pakistan Air Force jets had strafed and bombed the towns of Comilla and Jessore (both brigade headquarters) to dislodge the "liberation army." But, it continued, the forces were holding the bases.

Whatever the reports say, more and more evidence is coming in of the carnage made by the Pakistan Army on innocent people. A Bengali law student, Mr A. K. M. Shamsul Alam Chowdhury, who left Dacca on Monday, spoke in London yesterday of students killed in their beds, of shanty dwellers lying dead in the streets outside their burnt dwellings from which they had been fleeing, and of crows pecking at a heap of bodies in Dacca.

A second protest was lodged yesterday by Pakistan against what it called "India's continued interference in Pakistan's internal affairs."

An Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman said that India will give "proper consideration" to any specific request from East Hindustani leaders for aid, but did not say what it would be or whether any request had been made. He said India was asking the United States, Russia, and other Powers to use diplomatic pressure to end the military action.

According to military sources in New Delhi, Indian border troops have been ordered to open fire on any Pakistani troops who may cross the border in hot pursuit of East Pakistanis.

In London, the Bangla Desh Students' Action Committee said that the news of mass massacre of unarmed civilians was a case of "pure and simple genocide." It urged Britain to recognise the republic of Bangla Desh and save the lives of millions of unarmed and helpless people. Its members on hunger strike outside Downing Street were demanding British recognition, the raising of the matter in the UN under the Genocide Convention, pressure on the West Pakistan Government to withdraw its troops, and immediate suspension of all arms supplies to Pakistan.

West's warning

Britain, the United States, and other Western Governments, have warned Pakistan that they are gravely concerned about the safety of their citizens in East Bengal. They say the Pakistan Army must lift restrictions on the free movement of diplomats so that they can carry out effective checks on people for whom they are responsible.

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