

Complete normalcy in Khulna

KHULNA, Apr. 29:—Khulna, The sprawling third largest city of East Pakistan saw a lot of trouble during the past month at the hands of miscreants and anti-state people, but once the Army took control of the situation, life in this city has returned to complete normalcy with remarkable rapidity writes Mohammad Afzal Khan, APP's special correspondent.

The Pakistan Army cleared Khulna City by the end of last month and then steadily secured other important towns of the district during the following days. The last pockets of resistance at Bagerhat was wiped out last week and heavy casualties were inflicted
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on the Indian infiltrators and their collaborators. The survivors are reported to have fled across the border.

The entire district has now been cleared of miscreants and anti-state people. Every where the Army has followed its action against the miscreants with effective steps to normalise daily life and to protect the life, property and honour of peaceful citizens. This has greatly helped in inspiring confidence among the people who are fast resuming their normal trades all over the district.

When I visited Khulna last Saturday, I found it almost its old self, humming and bustling with a lot of activity. During March this beautiful town had seen much trouble. With the Army showing restraint under orders from the Central Government, the anti-state people, miscreants, hoodlums and all the riff-raff of the society had joined hands to take control of the city under cover of so-called non-cooperation movement of defunct Awami League. The civil administration was completely paralysed and a reign of terror was let loose on peaceful citizens.

When the Army started its action on March 26, the anti-state people assisted by armed Indian infiltrators quickly moved to destroy vital installations and commercial centres in the city in a bid to shatter its economy and disrupt communications. However, in a lightning action the Army secured all these installations including radio station, railway track, Khulna port, power house, Khulna newsprint factory and other big industrial units.

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Jessore, Kushtia and Bagherhat have been restored. Telephone service between Khulna and Jessore has also been operating for the last five days.

Almost 60 per cent industrial units have started working. More units are opening steadily with the return of the labour.

The Khulna Newsprint Mills resumed production about a week ago and has started shipping newsprint consignments to West Pakistan also. Already over 60 per cent of the normal production has been regained and is being increased as more labour report for duty.

During last one week about one thousand tons of newsprint was shipped to West Pakistan. More are being loaded at the Khulna port for consumption in West Pakistan and also for newspaper centres in East Pakistan.

The Khulna Port is functioning normally. During my visit there I saw a number of cargo launches and oil tankers loading and unloading. The port authorities said cargo service between Khulna and Chalna sea port was steadily being normalised and export of goods including jute and jute manufactures have also started. Steamer passenger service to inland towns has also been resumed.

The Army had also pre-empted a vain effort by the anti-state people to damage the Chalna sea port. The consignments being shipped to West Pakistan are already being handled at the port while international traffic is expected to be resumed within this week.

Sylhet

The Army, however, took about five days to clear the entire city from miscreants and infiltrators. This was due to their having taken position in some residential areas which forced the Army to move with caution in order to avoid harm to innocent citizens. The patriotic elements lent active support and cooperation to the Army and the miscreants were combed out.

With law and order restored the peaceful citizens demonstrated their jubilation by hoisting Pakistan flag on their houses took out processions and expressed firm faith in the solidarity and integrity of the country. Peace committees comprising representatives of various political parties were formed in various localities and later a central peace committee was constituted for the city which took the task of coordinating and helping efforts towards normalising things and channelling public complaints for immediate action by the Martial Law authorities.

The Martial Law authorities have put civic life back into gear with active help of the people. All civic amenities including electricity, water supply and telephone have been restored. Shops and markets remain open from morning to evening and there is rush of customers in markets at every corner. Articles of daily use are in abundance and selling at routine prices. Particular care has been taken to maintain flow of food supply.

Cigarettes seem to be the most sought after item. The rush of buyers and to some extent eagerness to stock seems to have created, what the administration believed as artificial scarcity, to a limited extent. I saw long queues of dealers at cigarette distributing agencies getting their cartons.

All Government and semi-government offices are functioning normally in Khulna with attendance reported to be more than 75 per cent. Police have assumed responsibility of maintaining law and order and traffic constables can be seen posted at road crossings and other busy points. Commercial firms are also resuming business activity with the return of their staff.

Train services from Khulna to various points including