

Secessionist Forces Offer Stiff Resistance

GEN TIKKA KHAN'S PINDI'S TROOPS FATE UNKNOWN 'SURRENDERING'

Rahman Assures His People He Is Free

PAKISTAN AIR FORCE JETS ROARED INTO ACTION ON SATURDAY IN SUPPORT OF HARD-PRESSED GROUND TROOPS AS CLASHES BETWEEN GOVERNMENT FORCES AND SUPPORTERS OF SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN, THE LEADER OF INDEPENDENT BANGLA DESH, ENGULFED THE WHOLE OF EAST PAKISTAN, SAYS PTI.

AIR FORCE PLANES FLEW SEVERAL SORTIES STRAFING RESISTANCE POCKETS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE PROVINCE INCLUDING COMILLA TOWN REPORTEDLY UNDER EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE SHEIKH'S MEN.

Earlier, Pakistan tanks went into action against East Pakistan rifles and police and civilian resistance units, causing heavy casualties, according to neutral reports trickling out of Dacca where severe military censorship is in force.

Pitched battles have been reported from Dacca and several other centres.

The Pakistan Army moved against the Sheikh's men early on Friday following an order by President Yahya Khan to crush his movement for full autonomy for East Pakistan.

The Sheikh replied to the army strike by declaring East Pakistan the independent Republic of Bangla Desh.

In a day of dramatic developments on Saturday, the Government-owned Radio Pakistan announced the arrest of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

But this was promptly denied by three secret radio stations operated by the Sheikh's supporters which said that he was free and not under arrest.

However, there is no independent confirmation of either claim.

Mr Rahman's voice was reportedly heard from one of the secret radio broadcasts in which he said: "I am free and all my commands."

Go ahead with your programme to achieve the goal of freedom. Do not be misguided by enemy propaganda".

In another broadcast, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has asked West Pakistan troops "to surrender. Otherwise we will avenge the

(See editorial: Bangla Desh)

blood of the Bengalis you have killed".

Radio Pakistan had said that the Sheikh was arrested during the small hours of Friday, but did not explain why the announcement of the arrest was delayed by more than 36 hours.

Conflicting reports were also received from the base of General Tikka Khan, Martial Law Administrator in Dacca.

One report said he was killed while directing operations against the Sheikh's supporters and another indicated he escaped with severe injuries.

While the situation in East Pakistan remained confused, all reliable reports indicated that the Pakistan army was facing stiff resistance from local defenders.

A Government radio broadcast from Dacca gave further credence

to these when it denounced what it called the "scorched earth tactics" apparently resorted to by the Sheikh's followers.

The radio announced a new martial law order banning the raising of any kind of obstructions such as barricades or digging holes on public highways, roads, railway lines or runways, affecting the movement of traffic.

The order further said that residents of houses or buildings within hundred yards of such barricades shall have to remove all such obstructions. Those refusing to comply with the order will be liable to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment, the order added.

The headquarters of Tippera district of East Pakistan bordering Tripura, Comilla has a population of about 50,000 and is about 200 miles from Calcutta.

According to a UNI report from Agartala, the Free Bangla Radio said that men of the Punjab Regi-

ment of the Pakistan Army had started surrendering to the liberation forces of Bangla Desh.

The broadcast said some Ansars had also surrendered.

It said that Dacca radio station had been surrounded by freedom

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SOUTH BLOCK THEIR NEWS SOURCE

From Our Special Representative

NEW DELHI, Saturday.—There was considerable diplomatic activity here today with many diplomats calling at the External Affairs Ministry for consultations and exchange of information about the latest developments in East-Pakistan.

With Dacca completely cut off from the outside world, many missions in New Delhi, including those of the major Powers, were understandably keen to glean whatever information they could pick up from Indian sources.

Apart from some platitudinous statements none of the major Powers have so far spelt out their stand on the East Bangla crisis.

For the Chinese, the latest developments appear to have been particularly embarrassing in the light of their current strategy of all-out support for West Pakistan. Peking has however not made

LATE NEWS

AGARTALA, Mar 27.—Nearly 100,000 people were feared killed in Bangla Desh as the Pakistani armed forces launched their massive military operations, a liberation force source said tonight, reports UNI.

The source said Dacca University was completely destroyed under heavy shelling by Pakistani Army tanks.

Heavy fighting was continuing in East Pakistan towns north of Tripura, with Pakistan troops using mortars.

SCORCHED EARTH BY TROOPS

GAUHATI, Mar 27.—Retreating West Pakistani troops resorted to scorched earth action in several areas in East Pakistan, according to highly reliable reports from across

More Troops Flown To Dacca

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fighters and the station was virtually under siege.

In another broadcast the radio claimed that the freedom-loving people of Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province and Pakhtoonistan had declared independence, following the example of Bangla Desh.

The person who spoke on the radio was identified as "Major Jia, Chief of the Liberation Army of Bangla Desh".

Reports from inside the troubled land, broadcast by the Free Bangla Radio stations and corroborated by other sources across the border, said bombs were dropped over Dacca and Khulna. In the bombing of Dacca a large hospital was destroyed and most of its in-patients killed.

There was no means of estimating the casualties, believed to run into thousands and fast mounting higher. One report put the number of persons killed till Saturday morning at 3,500. Among the dead were many women.

More Pakistani troops were flown into Dacca on Saturday to join the operations. The exact number of the troops and the route taken by the aircraft were not known.

The Pakistan army used tanks and artillery in Dacca and in the cantonment areas of Naraingunj, Chittagong and Comilla as well as in the border towns of Rangpur, Khulna and Jessore.

Casualties in Chittagong were said to be the heaviest. The Awami League supporters who seized control of Chittagong radio station overnight, were still holding it on Saturday morning.

In the Jessore airport areas alone, over 1,500 civilians, many of them clad in "lungis and bankans" were killed by machine-gun fire when the Sheikh's supporters armed with spears, lathis and daggers, tried to capture the airport.

More river and railway bridges were being blown up, roads destroyed and tele-communication channels snarled by resistance groups to obstruct movement of troops.

At least 180 people were killed in Comilla in a clash between the Pakistan army and Bangla Desh freedom fighters early on Saturday morning.

At Saidpur, at least 50 people were killed. As in other parts

of Bangla Desh, men of the East Pakistan Rifles and the police were fighting alongside of citizens at Saidpur.

The streets of Rangpur were strewn with bodies of civilians ~~blown down by~~ Pakistan army.

About 10,000 troops were despatched to recapture Chalna early on Saturday morning. A bloody battle raged there.

DEMONSTRATIONS IN INDIA

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"atrocities" committed by General Yahya Khan's Government.

At Sapru House writers, painters and some eminent men pleaded for the immediate recognition of "Bangla Desh". The meeting, by a resolution, requested the Indian Government to help the struggling people with material and active support and to take up the cause of East Pakistan at U.N.

The students and teachers of the University of Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University met Mrs Gandhi and demanded categorical Indian support to East Pakistan.

From our Calcutta office: Calcutta students observed a strike on Saturday in protest against the military action in "Bangla Desh". A similar strike was observed in the districts.

In the afternoon, supporters of the Bengal Provincial Students' Federation (Left), the Progressive Students' Union, the Federation of Revolutionary Students and the Democratic Youth Federation held a rally on the Calcutta University campus. The meeting demanded that the Central Government immediately recognize "Bangla Desh" and urged the "socialist forces of the world" to extend all possible assistance to the people of East Pakistan.

Later, the students went in a procession to the office of the Pakistan Deputy High Commissioner and burnt an effigy of President Yahya Khan.

Strong police arrangements were made to protect the premises of the Pakistan Deputy High Commissioner. The procession was stopped about 100 yards from the building.

A Youth Congress (R) deputation, led by Mr Priyaranjan Das Munshi, MP, presented a memorandum of protest to the Deputy High Commissioner.