Chapter - III

Tripura in the Liberation Movement
(March-December, 1971)
Chapter - III

It is but natural phenomenon that Tripura got involved in the process of liberation movement of East Pakistan. Bikach Choudhury, a veteran journalist during the liberation movement and a witness to the historic release of Begam Mujib in Dacca in December, 1971, opines that almost 90% of the inhabitants of Tripura are the descendents of East Pakistan. Swapan Bhattacharjee, another well-known journalist, reports from Udaipur that long before the crackdown on 25 March, the people of Tripura were very much anxious about the developments in East Pakistan. They eagerly heard the radio news aired from Dacca & other radio stations of East Pakistan. The historic speech of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 7 March at Race Course enthralled the people of Tripura and they used to hear the speech time and again by using loud speaker with the radio. The geographical location and the cultural affinity between Tripura and East Bengal prepared the ground for the easy movement of the people of East Bengal towards Tripura.

The Amrita Bazar Patrika of 2nd April, 1971, reports with the headline: Pak Army’s Inhuman Torture Starts Total war in Bangla Desh:

"Agartala, April 1: Unprecedented in the history of civilization, West Pakistani military barbarism reached its climax today when the Martial Law Authorities launched an all out Army, Navy, Air force offensive against the almost unarmed freedom fighters of Bangla Desh and succeeded in bringing under their control the capital city of Dacca and Cantonment of Comilla after indulging in mass-murder of even civilian people, authoritative reports pouring in from across the Border said".

The Frontier, a weekly from Calcutta, of April, 24, 1971, reports thus:

"The army moved in at Dacca on the night of March 25. President Yahya had left the East Bengal capital for Islamabad after having all preparations for the crackdown; his sinister designs, however, had not become immediately clear. Speculations were rife as to what the Martial Law authorities would do next. ………… . What the authorities were up to became clear around 11 p.m. An eye witness account says that a convoy of military trucks and armoured cars drove to the Rajarbag police barracks, men in uniform jumped down, took positions and someone spoke over microphone asking policemen to fall in. The army had struck. The policemen, all Bengalis, knew that if they obeyed the instruction they would be promptly disarmed and then shot. They had
already heard of such tactics having been adopted by the army elsewhere while the talks at Dacca were in progress.

"The police were not slow in taking their decision. They replied to the Army's order with a volley of bullets. These were returned and in no time the battle which was to engulf entire East Bengal, since then Bangla Desh, started………Next to be attacked was the Pakistan Rifles camp at Pilkhana. ………. Meanwhile, those who were not engaged in the operations were busy carrying out their task of murder, rape, loot and arson. ………. 'Kill the student bastards', was the cry that repeatedly rent the air as Punjabi troops stormed into the Jagannath and Ikbal Halls. A large number of troops also went for the Rokeya Hall where the inmates were all women and till April 6 no accurate information could be had as to what exactly had happened there. ……….Dacca today is a dead city. People, the few that have not fled and have escaped murder, rarely come out of their homes. Armoured cars move about in the streets, loudspeakers fitted to them blaring propaganda in broken Bengali about how bad the Awami League is. Entire areas like Jinjira, Sankhari Bazar, Sadar Bazar have been razed to the ground and the civilian population massacred." 5

It is known from the same report that the Army was not alone in the massacre; it had its allies in the Muslim League who helped them in the form of Rajakars, Ansars etc.

Lieutenant-General (R) A. A. K. Niazi, former commander, Eastern Command, in his book, "The Betrayal of East Pakistan" surprisingly does not try to conceal the atrocities committed by his former comrades but vehemently testifies the above information by offering barbaric pictures of the Military barbarism in the Capital City of Dacca in the following way:

"On the night between 25 / 26 March, 1971, General Tikka Khan struck. Peaceful night turned into a time wailing, crying, and burning. General Tikka let loose everything at his disposal as if raiding an enemy, not dealing with his own misguided and misled people. The military action was a display of stark cruelty, more merciless than the massacres at Bhukhara and Bagdad by Changes Khan and Halaku Khan, or at Jallianwallabag by the British General Dyer."

General Niazi recorded more information about this mass killing by the Pak Military Junta.

"General Tikka, instead of carrying out the tasks given to him, i.e. to disarm armed Bengali units and persons and take into custody the Bengali leaders, resorted to killing of the civilians and a scorched-earth policy. His orders to his troops were: 'I want the land and not the people.' These
orders were carried out by Major-General Farman and his associates."

General Niazi quoted a ‘dangerous’ remark as he found it in the table diary of Major-General Rao Farman Ali which runs as follows: "Green land of East Pakistan will be painted red." It was really painted red by Bengali blood, remarked General Niazi.

General Niazi continues … "On the night between 25/26 March 1971 Yahya sneaked out of Dacca before the start of military action. He told Tikka before leaving Dacca, 'Sort them out.' Bhutto had remained behind to see what Tikka did. Bhutto saw Dhaka burning and heard the cries of the people, the crackle of burning material, the roar of tanks, the boom of guns and rockets, and the rattle of machine guns……. On reaching Karachi on 26 March, he told the people, 'Thank God, Pakistan has been saved.'"

The result of these inhumane activities of the Pak Military Junta was also narrated by the General; he said, "As General Tikka deviated from his given mission, nearly all the Bengali armed personnel and units slipped away with their arms, ammunitions, equipment, and transport and joined the Mukti Bahini forces, where they were soon joined by the Indian Army officers and men. Similarly, the leaders, except Mujib, escaped and established the Government of Bangladesh in exile in Calcutta." General Niazi seems to have missed here two very important developments: i) the Government of Bangladesh in exile was not established first in Calcutta but in the Circuit House (a Government Guest House) at Agartala, the Capital City of Tripura during the period from April 9 to April 11, 1971; ii) the exodus of refugees from East Pakistan to the states neighboured by East Pakistan. The States mostly affected by this exodus were West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya. One of the badly affected states of India was Tripura. The tiny Tripura experienced unprecedented exodus of refugees during the period of genocide caused by the Military Junta of Pakistan.

*History of Bangladesh War of Independence: Documents*: Vol. 8 provides with the following data on the refugees coming from East Pakistan from March 25 to December 15, 1971.
Table -3.1

Refugee influx in Indian States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial Number</th>
<th>Name of the States</th>
<th>Total Influx</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>7,493,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>1,381,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>677,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>312,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>8,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>9,899,305</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The First Wave of the Refugees in Tripura. Courtesy: Sri Robin Sengupta, Agartala*
Table- 3.2

DISTRIBUTION OF REFUGEES IN VARIOUS STATES OF INDIA

Refugee Population as on 15 December, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of States</th>
<th>Number of Camps</th>
<th>In camps</th>
<th>Outside Camps</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>4,849,786</td>
<td>2,386,130</td>
<td>7,235,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>834,098</td>
<td>547,551</td>
<td>1,381,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>591,520</td>
<td>76,466</td>
<td>667,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>255,642</td>
<td>91,913</td>
<td>347,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>36,732</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>36,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>219,298</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>219,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10,169</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>10,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>6,797,245</td>
<td>3,102,060</td>
<td>9,899,305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table- 3.3

Trend of Influx of Refugees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average Daily</th>
<th>Monthly Arrivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1971 (10th to 30th)</td>
<td>57,00</td>
<td>1,921,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. May 1971 102,00 3,158,00
3. June 1971 68,00 2,056,00
4. July 1971 26,00 797,00
5. August 1971 34,00 1,055,00
6. September 1971 57,00 804,00
7. October 1971 14,00 425,00
8. November 1971 8,00 217,00
9. Backlog 166,00

Total: 9,899,00

Table -3.4

List of Refugee Camps in Tripura

(Established during the period from April to Nov. 1971)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sq. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Name of Camps</th>
<th>Ref. No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>North District</td>
<td>Ambasa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 3</td>
<td>Kamalpur</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 3</td>
<td>Kumarghat</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 3</td>
<td>82 Miles</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 3</td>
<td>85 Miles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 3</td>
<td>Padmabil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 3</td>
<td>Srinathpur</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 3</td>
<td>Uptakhali</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>South District Bagafa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Chandrapur</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Dhajanagar</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Harina</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Rishymukh</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Kakraban</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Kalachara</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Kawamara</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Maichera</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Phulkumari</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Rajnagar</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Shrinagar</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>West District Amtali</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Barjala</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Brajapur</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Chechuria</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Dhanpur</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 3</td>
<td>Gandhigram</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Hapania</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 3</td>
<td>Ishanpur</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 3</td>
<td>Khowai</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Madhupur</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Matinagar</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Melaghar</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Mohanpur</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 3</td>
<td>Simna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 4</td>
<td>Teliamura</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The refugee question of Eastern Wing of Pakistan was one of the most important, complicated and embarrassing one in the history of the liberation movement of Bangladesh. While the Pak Government did not hesitate to declare that the refugee question was a fabricated propaganda of the Govt. of India which tried to demoralize the country in the world forum, the Govt. of India took the matter seriously and placed the issue systematically to the World forum.\(^\text{10}\)

A report of the *International Rescue Committee Emergency Mission to India for Pakistan Refugees*, submitted on July 28, 1971, by its Chairman, Mr. Angier Biddle Duke, to Mr. F.I. Kellog, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Refugee Affairs, Government of U.S.A., provides with a vivid picture of man-made human disaster in South-East Asia. In the introductory
part the report runs as follows:

"On March 25, 1971, began one of the largest mass movements in our time of people fleeing in terror to a neighbouring country. Six million Bengalis, Moslem and Hindus, have streamed out of East Pakistan, their homeland, to West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. Thousands of refugees arrive every day, and the pressures on India generated by this huge multitude of destitute refugees are mounting dangerously."11

On 5 July, 1971, Chester Bowles, a former U.S. Ambassador to India, wrote in the New York Times:

"Unless two rather unlikely developments occur, South Asia is in imminent danger of erupting into a tragic, needless war.

"These developments are: First, the ruling West Pakistan Government turns away from the path of terror against its own subjects in East Pakistan and agrees to a settlement that will stem the flow of frightened, homeless refugees into India and second, that the world community soon mounts a massive campaign to relieve India of the burden of supporting nearly six million refugees who have already crossed the border."12

The Government of India under Mrs. Indira Gandhi, was not mere an on-looker of the serious developments that were going on in the neighbouring country like Pakistan. On 31 March, 1971, on the 6th day of genocide happened in the East Wing of Pakistan, the Prime Minister of India herself moved a resolution in the Parliament. The resolution starts with strong and sympathetic words to the suffering masses of East Pakistan. Mention may be made of some of the important parts of the resolution.

"This House expresses its deep anguish and grave concern at the recent developments in East Bengal. A massive attack by armed forces, despatched from West Pakistan has been unleashed against the entire people of East Bengal with a view to suppressing their urges and aspirations. ……The Government and people of India have always desired and worked for peaceful, normal and fraternal relations with Pakistan. However, situated as India is and bound as the people of the sub-continent are by centuries old ties of history, culture and tradition, this House cannot remain indifferent to the macabre tragedy being enacted so close to our border. Throughout the length and breadth of our land, our people have condemned, in unmistakable terms, the atrocities now being perpetrated on an unprecedented scale upon an unarmed and innocent people."
"This House expresses its profound sympathy for and solidarity with the people of East Bengal in their struggle for a democratic way of life. ……

"This House records its profound conviction that the historic upsurge of the 75 million people of East Bengal will triumph. The House wishes to assure them that their struggle and sacrifices will receive the whole hearted sympathy and support of the people of India."13

The Territorial Assembly of Tripura was in its important budget session during this period. But the Treasury Bench as well as the Opposition Party was moved by the unprecedented and barbaric developments in the neighbouring country. On an adjournment motion put forward by Sri Bidya Chandra Debbarma, an MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) belonging to CPIM (Communist Party of India, Marxist), on March 29, 1971, before the official support by the Govt. of India, the Speaker requested the leader of the House i.e. the Chief Minister of Tripura, Sri Shachindra Lal Singh, to offer a statement on this serious issue. At this the Chief Minister made an emotional statement supporting wholeheartedly the fight of the people of East Bengal and condemning the genocide committed by the Pak military Junta on the unarmed general mass of the eastern wing of Pakistan. As referred to earlier in the chapter I, the C.M. explained categorically the philosophy of their support to liberation movement of the people of East Pakistan. He shared his feeling thus:

"I fully realize the feeling of the House on the present situation in East Pakistan. We are a democratic country and in the Fifth General Election our countrymen have again demonstrated their unflinching faith in democracy ……It is, therefore, but natural that our will express great concern at the development in the East Pakistan where the recent happenings have stood in the culmination of the democratic process that was ushered in the general election in Pakistan that was held in December last and the people have been undergoing a severe trial for their faith in democracy …….. Our heart goes out in sympathy for the people of East Pakistan at this hour of trial." He finished his historic statement with the following strong words: "I may reiterate that we stand for democracy and socialism and we shall condemn any forces that stand in the way of these noble ideals in any part of the world."14

This statement seemed not enough to the honourable members of the Territorial Assembly. So, the CM after one day of the above statement moved another resolution in full support of the freedom loving people of Bangladesh for establishing democratic right and requested the Govt. of India to recognize the newly formed Government of Bangladesh headed by Seikh Mujibur Rahman
etc. Honourable members of the House wholeheartedly supported the resolution with their emotional speeches and ultimately the resolution was passed unanimously which ran thus: "In view of the grave situation arising out of the denial of human rights of the people of East Bengal and atrocity committed by Yahya and his followers on the people of Bangla Desh, this House extends its full support to the freedom loving people of Bangladesh in the struggle for establishing democratic right and request the Govt. of India to recognize the newly formed Government of Bangladesh headed by Seikh Majibur Rahman; and extend all kinds of help to the people of Bangladesh in their struggle for freedom.

“This House also keeps on record its sorrow and regard for those who laid their lives for the cause of freedom and democracy of Bangladesh”.15 (Italics are used by the scholar; the spellings are kept as these are in the original resolution)

So, the devastated refugees from East Pakistan did not find any obstruction in crossing over the International border. Anil Bhattacharjee, a veteran journalist from Tripura, mentioned that the Govt. of Tripura under Sachindra Lal Singh could anticipate that something wrong was going to be happened in the eastern part of Pakistan and that might affect the State of Tripura. So, he sent secret mission to the authority of BSF (the Border Security Force) not to obstruct the refugees willing to cross over the border. Sri Bhattacharjee also informed that influx of refugees started to enter the state of Tripura from March 26, a day after the genocide began in Dacca on March 25, 1971.16

But it is known from another source that the refugees began to take shelter in Sabroom area, the southern and to some extent remote area of Tripura from the 2nd week of March, 1971. It was in the wake of uncertain condition in Pakistan especially in East Pakistan arising out of undemocratic attitude of Pak Military Junta.17

The sudden influx of refugees perturbed the Govt. of Tripura; Tripura is a tiny and economically very poor and geographically remotest of the remote North-East India. The front page news of Weekly Samachar of April 25, 1971, carried the important speech of the Chief Minister, Sri Sachindra Lal Singh, which runs: "Due to the atrocities perpetrated by the Pak Military Junta on the people of East Bengal, almost one lakh men & women entered Tripura. Amongst them almost 60,000 registered their names with the Govt. authority; the remaining over 40,000 took shelters at the residences of their relatives or little known persons". He added that barring a few houses in the town areas also, almost all houses provided shelters to their known persons or their kith & kins.
Generally, people from undivided Comilla, Chattagram, Sreehatta and Noakhali districts came over there. Throughout 700 miles of the Indo-Pak border covering Tripura, thousands of devastated evacuees entered Tripura for shelter etc.\(^{18}\)

The above report of the *Samachar* is corroborated by a number of sources. One of this is the statement of the CM himself in the Territorial Assembly on June 21, 1971. On the request of the Honourable Speaker, the Chief Minister made a statement regarding the influx of the refugees in Tripura. In a 12-point statement, the CM detailed almost every aspect of the arrangements made for temporary shelter of the refugees. He informed the House that the Government of Tripura with almost 15 lakhs of people was overburdened with almost 10 lakhs of refugees already entered Tripura. It was not at all easy on the part of the Government with its limited resources to provide all kinds of arrangements for the evacuees like food, clothing, drinking water, sanitation etc. But he was enthusiastic with all-over cooperation of the people of Tripura.\(^{19}\) Another is Sri Sudhan Das, MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly), from Rajnagar under Belonia subdivision, South Tripura. In an interview at Rajnagar with the researcher on December 8, 2009, Sri Das recalled the unprecedented contribution by the people of Tripura towards the liberation movement of Bangladesh. He affirmed the scholar that their family members left their bedrooms to the evacuees and instead, they took shelter in the cowshed.\(^{20}\)

The Government of Tripura under Sri Sachindra Lal Singh was tireless to touch every possible corner to arrange shelter to the refugees. The Cabinet met several times in the first week of April, 1971, to sort out the unseen problems. The Government sent urgent message to the Government of India to treat the refugee problem as a “National Problem”. The Government first requisitioned all school, college buildings as well as Government & non-Government buildings for the preliminary shelter for the devastated evacuees but failed to provide shelter to everybody because the number was huge and it was increasing day by day. So, some people had to pass their days under the trees or in open spaces.\(^{21}\)

Sri D.B. Datta, the then B.D.O. (Bock Development Officer) of Bishalgarh Block and one of the successful officer in running the refugee camps during the liberation period, informed in an interview at his residence at Maheshkhala, Agartala, on 19 November, 2012, that during first three months, Headmasters of Senior Basic Schools were made camp-in-charges. The said camp-in-charges with the help of the local youths, students and other staff tried their level best to run the camps with limited resources.
Sri Datta continued to recall the unhappy situations with the increasing number of refugees and said the Government of Tripura initiated to construct temporary sheds in the open spaces with the help of local people, both the Bengali and the Tribal. Two simple bed rooms, one kitchen for each family and general latrine and urinal points were constructed. The local needy labourers were paid @ Rs. 5/ per day. Most of the local people worked freely. The Government issued special cards for registered families for providing ration and cash dole. The officers had to work hard. Sri Datta could recall some of them: Srimati Meena Dey, Social Education Officer, Rabindra Debnath, Co-operative Extension Officer. They worked tirelessly for the welfare of the refugees. Road communication was not good at that time; Srimati Dey walked miles after miles to look after the condition of the camps. As per the statement of Sri Datta, almost 1, 75,000 refugees took shelter under the arrangement of Bishalgarh Block. Madhupur and Aamtali refugee camps under Bishalgarh Block were famous for the huge number of refugees. At least 25000 refugees were accommodated in each of the camps. Aamtali camp was visited by Senator Kennedy and other dignitaries. Sri Datta could recall some local people also who worked sincerely for the cause of the evacuees. They were Umesh Saha, Jogesh Saha, Bijoy Datta Majumder (Charilam), Md. Tukku Miah (Kadaimurah) etc.22

Md. Tukku Miah, the then Headmaster of Kadaimurah Higher Secondary School under Bishalgarh Block, in a write-up provides the observers with some very important information on the benevolent activities of Sri Datta, the B.D.O. and the local people of Bishalgarh. The unbearable sufferings of the immigrants from rebellious Bangladesh made them think in a combined mood. So, in a joint meeting of the local people, a committee was formed with 31 members with the name: "Sharnarthi O Muktijuddha Kalyan Samiti" with Md. Tukku Miah as the President and Sri Haripada Debbarma as the Secretary. It was decided that subscription would be collected from the residents on printed receipt for helping the devastated immigrants. Some of other committee members were: Sri Bijoy Laskar, Priyalal Banik, Jaychandra Debnath, Neelendra Choudhury, Paltu Sarkar, Sukumar Choudhury, Dr. Sirajuddin Ahmed, Nurul Islam and others. Receipts were printed and welfare works were started on a large scale. Md. Tukku Miah affirmed that the committee members tried to touch the kind-hearted local residents of a long stretch of bordering areas from Kalamchoura to Konaban under Sonamura and Sadar Sub-division respectively. With the generous help from the people, the sufferings of the evacuees might be minimized to some extent. The committee members then initiated a common kitchen in the boarding house of the Kadaimurah Higher Secondary School with an ardent request from the B.D.O, Sri Datta. It was under Sri Neelendra Choudhury who managed the whole matter of feeding thousands of refugees with discipline.23
The Government of Tripura tried its level best to streamline the whole refugee matter under one umbrella. The Chief Minister himself affirmed the Territorial Assembly on 21 June that a separate Refugee Rehabilitation Department with one Director, three A.D.M., twenty six Camp Supervisors and other staff had been opened to minimize the burden of the Government. Not only that, for smooth running of the construction of the refugee camps with sanitation and drinking water facilities and repair of same, Govt. approval was made for opening of one Engineering Cell with one Executive Engineer, four Assistant Engineers, twenty six supervisors and necessary clerks. He also informed that in the face of scarcity of doctors, the Govt. had decided to appoint 107 refugee doctors on a daily remuneration of Rs 15/- per doctor. In the same line, the Government had decided to appoint the helpers to the doctors. Facilities were extended for medical treatment of the refugees. But scope in the G.B. and V.M. hospitals were limited in the face of the huge number of refugees and wounded freedom fighters. For that purpose tents were requisitioned and some of that reached Agartala. He assured the House that the Govt. had been planning to open necessary dispensaries in the area of the refugee camps which sheltered 20,000 or more refugees. Immunization work with injection etc. had already been completed.

The C.M. mentioned that for the relief and rehabilitation of the evacuees, the Government of India had already sanctioned Rs. 3.2 crores of Rupees and assured more, if necessary. Proposal had been sent to the Relief and Rehabilitation Department of the Govt. of India to open 4 more big-size camps with the capacity of 60,000 evacuees. The 24 Camps which were already in position could not cater all the refugees entered in Tripura. The CM thanked those inhabitants of Tripura who provided necessary help to the people who could not manage the Govt. accommodation. The stretch was given to open huge-size camps at North Tripura as that was not easily accessible from Agartala. The Govt. Tripura could not assimilate constant pressure of the refugees; it already reached the saturated points. So, proposals were sent to the Govt. of India to transfer some of them to other states. Keeping this fact in mind, the Govt. of Tripura had selected Dharmanagar as a transfer point because Dharmanagar only had, at that time, rail connectivity with rest of India. The C.M informed the House that for minimizing refugee pressure on Tripura, refugee transfer had, in a limited scale, been started through Airlines. Every day 4 American Aeroplanes were flying to carry 1000 to 1500 refugees between Gauhati (Guwahati) and Agartala. The plains lifted food grains to Agartala for the evacuees in the back journey. The huge demand for food grains could not be solved in this way. So, the Govt. tried to improve the surface transport; but it was not easy due to scarcity of trucks. The go-downs at Dharmanagar were full of food grains. The transport agencies already rotated 34 trucks and it requisitioned for 26 more trucks. The military trucks
were engaged for the purpose. Thus was minimized the food crisis24

Anil Bhattacharjee provides the readers with the following data on the rationing system applicable to the registered refugees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult per head per day</th>
<th>250 gram rice, 50g pulse, 25g salt, and 25g mustered oil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor per head per day</td>
<td>150 gram rice, 50g pulse, 25g salt, and 25g mustered oil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides that, the adults were allowed 33 paisa and the minors 25 paisa per head per day. Child care was not neglected; milk and other available foods for children were arranged as far as practicable. Various National and International voluntary organizations sent garments, processed foods, child foods, dry fish, woolen garments etc. The local individuals, organizations, political parties, business organizations, students & teachers were not far behind in helping the destitute.25 Lady Governor Joan Dias formed a female organization which tirelessly worked for the welfare of the refugees. Lady Governor Baleswar Prasad was also instrumental in these benevolent activities.26

Proper management of the refugee problem was really a Herculean task on the part of the State Government which was landlocked by three sides by East Pakistan and economically very weak. The number of refugees at one point of time reached almost to that of the population of the State. In addition to this Herculean task, the Govt. had to face the accommodation problem of the leaders of the various political parties especially that of the Awami League. Haroon Habib, a prominent journalist and a writer, gives the information that immigration into Tripura started on a large scale in the last week of March. A good number of M.N.A (the Member of National Assembly) M.P.A (the Member of Provincial Assembly) entered Tripura to have asylum; the military officers of the Chittagong mutiny reached Agartala via Ramgarh (in East Pakistan) and Sabroom in the first week of April. The famous of these officers were: Major Zia, Major Rafique, Captain Bhuinya and Captain Oli. Haroon Habib also tells that the leaders of the Awami League like Abdul Malek Ukil, Mijanur Rahman Choudhury, Nurul Haque and Mr. Mahasin (Khulna) reached Agartala on April 2, 1971, with their own cars flying Bangladesh Flags. That was followed by other ranks of leaders of Awami League, N.A.P (National Awami Party, Bhashani Group) and N.A.P (Muzaffar Group). The leaders of Awami League who came to Tripura through Ramgarh about this time were Jahur Ahmed Choudhury, Abdul Mannan, Abdul Hannan, M.R. Siddiki, Abdullah-al-Harun, Captain Mansur Ali and Musharaf Hossain along with other leaders. All were from Chittagong.27
The above information is corroborated by Anil Bhattacharjee, Robin Sengupta & other sources. Mr. Bhattacharjee mentioned that about 50 numbers of Members of National and Provincial Assembly were accommodated at Shreedhar Villa, a house owned by Niren Bhattacharya, a businessman in Transport sector. At the beginning, the accommodation was arranged for the top ranking leaders like Khondaker Mostaque Ahmed, Taheruddin Thakur, Mehbub Alam Chashi. Later on, leaders like Samsuzzoha and others took shelter at that Villa.28

Saroj Chanda, a veteran leader belonging to C.P.I (M), in a write-up stated that the Craft Teachers' Training Institute at Banamalipur, Agartala, (now Nazrul KalaKshetra) was allotted mainly for the leaders of CPB (Communist Party of Bangladesh) and NAP (Muzaffar Group) and M.L.A. Hostel at Melamath, Agartala was allotted mainly to the important Awami Party leaders.29

These all-out attempts for relief & rehabilitation of the refugees were not at all up to the mark. Mr. D.B. Datta, the then B.D.O of Bishalgarh Block, recalled a pathetic but encouraging story. In the words of Mr. Datta, "During my recent visit to the camps, I found tears rolling down through the cheeks of the young mothers; they cried and told me- 'You have arranged due food-stuff for us but no milk for the kids; Sir, how do we can take our meals keeping our kids unfed'. I felt extremely pained and keeping in view the humanitarian cause, I passed an order as below --- 'Milk should be collected from the neighbouring villages of the camps and distributed among the kids so that they remain alive. When milk supply is received from the higher authorities, this order should be treated as cancelled' ". Mr. Datta admitted that that was a bold decision no doubt but it was beyond his purview. A.L. Dias, the then Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Tripura, while on visit to the camps of that Block, charged Mr. Datta for this kind of order and said, "You can't pass such an order and you have no authority to do so." Mr. Datta calmly replied, "Sir, in my order itself, I have explained under which circumstances I have passed the order. Life is more valuable than rules & regulations". But the Hon'ble Lt. Governor repeated thrice, "You should not have passed this order". The young officer, however, fearless in front of his superior Boss and continued to stick to his previous view, "I took this decision for the sake of saving the lives of kids and on humanitarian ground." The Hon'ble Lt. Governor then started laughing and told, "I am very happy to see that a young officer has taken a very bold and correct decision". Mr. Umesh Saigal, the then District Magistrate & Collector, was also present there and asked the young officer, Mr. Datta, to ensure milk supply to these camps as early as possible and the BDO should continue this arrangement until the supply from the main store.30

The Government was severely criticized by the members of the Opposition in the Tripura
Territorial Assembly while it was in session in June, 1971, for its failure in proper management of the refugee problem who took shelters in all most all parts of Tripura. The 12-point statement presented by the Chief of the State in the House on June 21 was not wholly believable to some of the members of the Tripura Legislative Assembly. Members like Taritmohan Dasgupta, Aghore Debbarma, Abhiram Debbarma, Bidya Chandra Debbarma singled out the weak points of the statement of the Chief Minister and sorted out the following lacunas in the process of relief and rehabilitation of the Government: the CM could not specify the actual numbers of doctors and associates appointed or to be appointed from the refugees; lack of cooperation and coordination among the workers and the Govt. machineries; Government's failure in distribution of ration to the refugees where corruption was already noticed and that was flashed in the News papers also; the Govt. could not solve its own problem like unemployment, disruption in agricultural sector; condition of the refugees who were sent to distant places like Raima & Sharma under Gandachhara, Asharambadi under khawai, Kadamta under Dharmanagar and so on; the Govt. could not take any measure against the corruption practiced in the different camps; Abhiram Debbarma specified this corruption citing the example of Kadamta camp; he mentioned that on 16.06.1971 the ration distributed amongst the refugees per head was worth of 72 paisa out of Rs. 1.10 and 38 paisa was looted in the way of corruption; the Govt. failed to make separate arrangement for the un-attached children, pregnant women, infirm people etc.; the Govt. could not provide any kind of help to the refugees who stayed out-side the camps; the most important allegation against the Govt. was that it could not open a proper registration system which led to the disruption & corruption in the whole process of refugee management; moreover, food situation of Tripura was not at all satisfactory; the Govt. could not check price-hike of different commodities; most important was that the Govt. machinery failed to check the death rate of children of the evacuees; so, it was impossible on the part of the same Govt. to solve the question of huge number of refugees already entered the state and were entering like streams of rivers. In this backdrop of the situation, the members criticized the Govt. of India at the same time for its failure to recognize the Government of Bangladesh in exile and its failure to protect the Indo-Pak border to resist the entry of more refugees in the state.31

Some of the members of the Treasury Bench like Prafulla Kumar Das and Devendra Kishore Choudhury tried to refute the allegations and argued that no Govt. could solve that kind of influx of refugees who entered the State almost without any information. To cope with this serious situation, two resolutions were moved in the House: One by Promode Ranjan Das Gupta along with two other members like Kshitish Chandra Das & Suresh Chandra Choudhury. This was read out in the House which ran thus: "This House urges upon the Government to supply the scheduled
dry rations to the evacuees from East Bengal residing outside the camps and besides dry rations,
for other items the evacuees living in camps should be paid in cash; cooking utensils, clothing
should be supplied to the evacuees; separate accommodation for unattached boys, girls and women
should be made and special diet should be given to the sick, sucking babies, expectant mothers
and infirm". Moving the resolution, Pramode Das Gupta and Suresh Chandra Choudhury ex-
plained the whole matter and other members participated in the discussion And the other by a
group of Members like Aghore Debbarma, Jatindra Kumar Majumder, Sunil Chandra Datta and
Naresh Roy. After prolonged discussion, debate and amendment to the resolution, the following
was adopted unanimously in the House:

"This House requests the Govt. of India to urge upon other States of India to share respon-
sibilities of evacuees from Bangladesh equally with the bordering states overburdened with the
problem and to take the entire financial responsibilities of the evacuees from Bangladesh".33

Formation of Bangladesh Government in exile at Agartala

Agartala, the capital town of Tripura, was first choice of the rebel leaders of Bangladesh to
meet together for the formation of the embryo of the Bangladesh Government in exile. Mr. K. P.
Datta, then a senior official in the Government of Tripura and privy to some of the deliberations, is
very much benevolent to tell the readers about the background mechanization, the hush-hush
meetings of the politicians, the youth leaders and the military personnel of the then East Pakistan
that played a prominent role in the emergence of Bangladesh. In an essay, Birth of Bangladesh :
the untold Story, published in the Times of India, Mr. Datta gives very important information
about the formation of Bangladesh Government in exile at Agartala. The provisional govern-
ment of Bangladesh was formed at Agartala at the historic two-day meeting of the Awami League
MNAs and MPAs attended among others, by Tajuddin Ahmed, Nazrul Islam, Mansur Ali and
Khondaker Mostaque Ahmed. The meeting was held on April 9-10, 1971. Agartala, the small
town close to the East Pakistan border, became the focal point of media blaze as being the main
centre of activities in the initial phase of the liberation war of Bangladesh. Incidentally, Sheikh
Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of the Awami League, visited Agartala on an undisclosed
mission before his arrest as prime accused in the Agartala Conspiracy Case which marked a water-
shed in the rise of nationalism in Bangladesh. The visit took the Tripura State Government by
surprise as there was no prior information about this mission. This historic Mission signifies the
importance of Agartala in liberation movement of Bangladesh. So, the statement given by Sucheta
Ghosh, in her dissertation, the Role of India in the Emergence of Bangladesh basing on the report
published by The *Hindustan Standard* (April, 13, 1971) that the foundation of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of Bangladesh was laid "at a secret conclave somewhere in Bangladesh" could not identify Agartala as the Birth place of the provisional government of Bangladesh.35

Mr. K. P. Datta unveiled other facts related to this historic event. Tajuddin Ahmed, Nazrul Islam and Mansur Ali were brought to Agartala in a B.S.F plane on April, 9, 1971. Khondaker Mostaque Ahmed who came all the way from Dhaka by road reached the same day. He remained in Dhaka for about a week after the military crackdown as he had reservations about coming over to India. Why he ultimately changed his mind remained conjectural, as argued by Mr. Datta. According to a close associate of the Awami League leaders who escorted him to Agartala, Mostaque was keen to be introduced to Indira Gandhi through the Chief Minister of Tripura to stake his claim to form the Government as the senior leader of the Awami League when reports about the preparation for forming the provisional government in exile reached him. Mr. Datta continues to say that the meeting of the elected MNAs and MPAs to form the constituent assembly and the government began at 6 p.m. on April, 9. Before coming to the meeting, Khondaker Mostaque Ahmed along with some other leaders met separately in a private house. Some officials including Mehbub Alam who had earlier resigned from Pakistan Foreign Service and who was made the Foreign Secretary of the Mujibnagar Government and Major Zaman, a retired army officer, were present.

Mr. K. P. Datta reveals that the first day’s session was stormy and inconclusive as a section of leaders was opposed to the formation of the government on the plea that final decision to declare independence could not be taken in the absence of clear directive from Sheikh Mujib whose whereabouts were unknown. It was the intervention of the armed wing of the Awami League threatening to form the government without the politicians if they failed to avoid differences over the issue that finally broke the impasse. The decision to form the government was taken on the second day of the meeting (April, 10). Tajuddin declined to talk to the pressmen after the meeting on the ground that he had come to Agartala *incognito* and could not, therefore, make any statement. The formal declaration was made on April, 17, at Meherpur in Bangladesh close to the border.36

The *Hindu* published news on this historic issue: *Mujib named President of Bangla Desh Govt. in exile.* The Report runs thus:-

AGARTALA, April 12. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was named President of a six-member
Bangla Desh Government announced today, according a highly report here. The Government came into being following protracted deliberations at a meeting of the National Assembly Members and the top Awami League leaders held somewhere in Bangla Desh (italic is used by the researcher to draw the attention that the actual birthplace of the Bangladesh Govt. in exile was not disclosed) It was also announced that the present Ministry would work as a war cabinet guiding and coordinating the war of liberation against the Pakistani aggression in different sectors of the new republic.

Syed Nazrul Islam was named Vice-President. He was Vice-President of the Awami League and Deputy Leader of the Awami League Party in the still-born Pakistan National Assembly.

Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed had led the Awami League team at the advisers-level meeting during the abortive constitutional talks of last month. The council of Ministers consists of the following: Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mr. A. H. M. Kamruzzaman and Mr. Mansur Ali.

Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed and Mr. Kamruzzaman were both General Secretaries of the Awami League. Mr. Kamruzzaman was also Secretary of the Awami League Party in the National Assembly. Mr. Khondaker Mostaque Ahmed was believed to be the Awami League's choice for the speaker-ship of the National Assembly which never met. Mr. Mansur Ali of Pabna, was the leader of the Awami League Party in the Provincial Assembly. The formation of the Government was announced in a broadcast from the newly set up Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra and confirmed by the Press Adviser to the President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Radio said: 'formal proclamation of the New Government would take place at 9 am tomorrow. The Headquarters would be Chuadanga in the liberated area' -----UNI and PTI.37

Prof. Mahabubur Rahman gives some different interpretation of the above historic event. He said that Khondaker Mostaque Ahmed who was the main contender of the post of Prime Minister of the provisional Government was waiting at the Circuit House at Agartala along with Abdus Samad Azad, Jahur Ahmed Chowdhury etc. After prolonged discussion, Khondaker Mostaque agreed to come to terms on the condition that he would be allowed to lead the Foreign Affairs of the provisional Government. Thus was formed the War Cabinet of the Bangladesh Government in exile as envisaged by Tajuddin Ahmed. The portfolios of the Ministers were distributed at Agartala. The War Cabinet was as under:
Organization of the Mukti Bahini

Turning to another basic need of the liberation movement is the organization of the Mukti Bahini which proved to be very effective offensive against the Pak Military Junta. Tripura was one of the finest sanctuaries for that basic need. The following discussion may prove this contention.

Siddiq Salik in his Witness to Surrender gives the impression about Mukti Bahini in the following way: "Meanwhile, India did not allow the Pakistan Army a free hand in quelling the rebellion. She organized a rebel force, commonly known as the Mukti Bahini. The East Bengal Regiment and East Pakistan Rifles personnel who had defected from East Pakistan provided the backbone of this force. These were supplemented by students, Awami League Volunteers and able bodied refugees. Colonel (ret.) M. A. G. Osmani became their Commander-in-Chief."

Lieutenant-General (R) A.A.K. Niazi, former Commander Eastern Command, in his "The Betrayal of East Pakistan" elaborated the above information in Chapter 6 captioned as 'THE MUKTI BAHINI AND OUR CIVIL ARMED FORCES' and summarized the issue in the following way: "As a reaction to the military action ordered on 25 March 1971, all East Pakistan Police, East Pakistan Rifles, Ansars and East Bengal Regiment battalions, and East Pakistani members of some of the Army, Navy, and Air Force rose in revolt against the Government. These elements eventually formed the nucleus for Mukti Bahini, including its leadership."
"The strength of the Bengali armed forces which rebelled after 25 March 1971 was 162,000. The number of civilians trained by the Russians and the Indians (in stages) was about 125,000. Thus, the total number of Bengalis in Mukti Bahini was 287,500. Add the 50,000 personnel of the Indian Army who joined them in the garb of Mukties, the total swells to a formidable number. Helping their activities were thousands of armed Bengali dissidents. Before the Indians invaded East Pakistan on 21 November, we had been fighting, and keeping at bay and out of East Pakistan, this force for eight months. The Muktis joined the Indian Army when they invaded East Pakistan. ............ On 11 April, 1971, all these elements were put together and a separate force under the name of Mukti Bahini was formally created. On 14 April, 1971, Colonel M. A. G. Osmani (Retd.) was appointed its so-called C-in-C.

General Niazi alleged that almost 50% of insurgents managed to cross over to their pre-planned sanctuaries. The Indians had set up some fifty-nine camps along the border where the rebels were trained and equipped. Their training programme included indoctrination and motivation that was done by the political leaders, mostly MNAs/MPAs, professors and teachers. It was such a vast organization that the Indians had appointed a Major-General to organize and coordinate the training and indoctrination activities. .............. In order to paralyse river communications, special attention was paid by the Indians to under-water training. He argued that about 300 rebels were flown from Agartala to Cochin for training as under-water saboteurs. It was also known that about 300 frogmen were trained at Plassey, on the Bhairathi (sic) River in West Bengal. He also said that a women's wing of Mukti Bahini was also established. They were used as the mouth-pieces of propaganda for foreign correspondent."

No one can give much credit to General Niazi for the information on the Mukti Bahini because there was a lot of publications on the issue by that time; on the contrary, he missed some elaborations on this delicate issue; Prof. Mahabubur Rahman of Rajshahi University in his book, "Bangladesher Itihas, 1947-70, (The History of Bangladesh, 1947-70) illustrated the matter very categorically. On his information, the following picture is drawn:

MUKTI BAHINI = FF + MF

Muktiyoddha = Freedom Fighter (FF) + Mukti Fouz (M.F.)

(The Youths trained in India = Gono Bahini/Guerrilla) (The dissident army, E.P.R., Police etc.)
Besides the above, there were two more forces: BF i.e. Bangladesh Force and Mujib Bahini (Bangladesh Liberation Front). The Bangladesh Force was a later entry in the liberation war. In the end of the liberation war, an attempt was made to train people of the liberated area to strengthen the Mukti Bahini and was named as Bangladesh Force (B.F). General Niazi’s passing remark on the female wing of the Mukti Bahini is an attempt to belittle the role of Bengali female folk in the liberation movement. Prof. Mahabubur Rahman mentions in a broader way the contribution of the female Muktiyoddhas in the liberation Movement. He argued that with the commencement of the movement, the women contributed a lot in the Muktiyuddhya by the side of their male counterparts. Some of them fought in the battlefield with arms, for example, Karuna Begam, Shova Rani, Beethika Biswas, Shishirkana, Sahana of Barishal and so on; some helped in accumulating and supplying of arms; some arranged shelter to the Freedom Fighters; some cooked, gathered information of the Pak army; some provided mental support to the fighters by nursing them. Every woman either was a mother, sister or wife of a fighter; so, the contribution of women in the freedom movement can never be belittled in any way by anybody. Prof. Rahman mentioned about the Lembuchhara (near Agartala) Female Guerilla Squad which received modern arms training. Under leadership of Mrs. Furkan Begam eight women took special guerilla training. Kakan Bibi of Tripura, Bhanu Nessa of Pabna, Aamena Begam & Momena Begam of Gopal Ganj participated in the movement without any training. Capt. Sitara Begam tirelessly treated the wounded Muktiyoddhyas at Bishramganj temporary Hospital (Tripura) under sector II; she received 'Beer Protik' in the independent Bangladesh.43 Agni Konnya Begam Motia Choudhury was very much famous to the freedom fighters as well as to the evacuees who took shelter in Tripura. Saroj Chanda, Nidhu Bhushan Hazra, Robin Sengupta, Shyamal Choudhury and others recall with admire the name of the lady who stimulated the both freedom fighters and the refugees by her fiery speeches in the street corner meetings throughout the State. She did a lot for mental boosting of the people here at Tripura.44 On the Mujib Bahini one can rely on the information given by Major Rafiqul Islam: There was a guerrilla Group outside the control of the Mukti Bahini of Bangladesh. Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni, Sirajul Alam Khan, Abdur Razzak and Tofayel Ahmed were the Chief Commanders of this force and Supreme Commander was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This was actually the extension of the “Swadin Bangla Chhatra Parishad” which staged a March Past at Race-course on 23 March, 1971. Major Islam continues to inform that some other Youth Camps and Training Centres were formed in the bordering areas under the supervision of Chhatra Union (Motia Group), Bangladesh National Awami Party (Prof. Muzaffar Group), and Bangladesh Communist Party (Moni Singh Group). Thousands of guerrillas participated in the liberation war from these camps. Moreover, individual prominent personalities opened various
groups in their names; the most famous of these groups were: Kader Bahini (Tangail), Latif Mirza Bahini (Siraj Ganj), Akbar Hossain Bahini (Zinaida), Hemayet Bahini (Faridpur), Rafique Bahini (Pirujpur), Kuddus Mulla & Abdul Gafur Bahini (Barishal), Major Afsar Bahini (Mymensingh). These forces created enormous problems to the Pak Military Junta.45

However, General Niazi’s allegations like other Pakistani allegations on the formation & training of the Mukt-Bahini find its reflections in the activities of the administration of Government of India. On 31 March, 1971, the Indian Parliament passed a resolution saying, "This House wishes to assure them (the people of Bangladesh) that their struggle and sacrifices will receive the whole hearted sympathy and support of the people of India".46 Lt. General D.K. Palit testifies the allegation more clearly: "India's Prime Minister, however, had not followed an entirely passive policy…… Even as early as the first week of April —— when the armed forces were in a state of imbalance and hesitant to contribute to a policy of escalation that might lead to all-out war, she had taken action to assume a positive military posture along the Bangla Desh border —— albeit at a low level of confrontation. She had alerted the Border Security Forces (BSF) of the Home Ministry to handle the situation on the Border---where elements of Mukti Fouj, particularly the EBR and the EPR, were crossing into Indian Territory to escape pursuing Pakistani forces. It was the BSF who were the first to receive, accommodate, train and equip the force that was eventually to burgeon out into the Mukti Bahani of Bangla Desh: and it was Mrs. Gandhi who saw more clearly than most of her advisers, that the security threat posed by Pakistan’s rampage in Bangla Desh had to be met, from the very beginning, by a degree of military action."47

On the other hand, the all-out support of the State of Tripura was in fact on the green signal from the Government of India. This is clear from the interview of Captain B.R. Chatterjee who was then serving the Government of India in the capacity of Captain in the armed forces of India.

"I was on a yearly holiday at Agartala in the first week of May while stationed at Ladak, Kashmir. After some days, all on a sudden, I was summoned to the residence of the then C.M. of Tripura where I met Dr. Triguna Sen, the Central Education Minister and Tazuddin Ahmed, the Premier of the Bangladesh Government in exile and the Chief Minister himself. Dr. Triguna judged me on the basis of my experience in the guerrilla warfare in Jammu & Kashmir sector against the Pakistani insurgents. I assured them that if I am selected as an organizer I can form guerrilla force to fight inside East Pakistan. After 10 days, on an emergent call from the Higher Authority, I went to Delhi and met the Chief of Army, Field Marshal Manekshaw and the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and returned to Agartala after 3 weeks. Then I met I.P. Gupta, the Chief Secretary
of Tripura and asked for his help so that we may proceed to form the guerrilla groups to help the liberation movement of Bangladesh. He came forward and discussed the matter with the appropriate authority. I went to the office of the Bangladesh acting Government at Colonel Choumohani and met some leaders of Awami League who were present there. I can recall some of them: Mr. M.R. Siddiki, Prof. Nurul Islam, Khondaker Mostaue Ahmed, Debbrata Datta Gupta and others. The result of these discussions was decision for the formation of liberation force and establishment of at least ten training camps in the state. These were the Youth Relief Camps we formed after the names of the different rivers that flowing through Bangladesh like the Padma, Meghna and Yamuna etc. The veteran retired army officers were engaged for running the camps with the expenses to be borne by the Government of India. We took the helps of the MPAs / MNAs for running the camps smoothly. The following are the training camps I can recall:

1. Gokulnagar and Chhesrimai under Bishalgarh Block;
2. Boxanagar and Kalamchoura under Sonamura subdivision;
3. Palatana under Udaipur Subdivision;
4. Shantir Bazar under Belonia Subdivision;
5. Srinagar under Sabroom Subdivision.48

While inquired about the situation of North Tripura, he politely said that he was not concerned about North Tripura; but mentioned that there were some temporary camps at Teliamura under Khowai subdivision and Sachindranagar under Sadar Subdivision. The Indian soldiers took the responsibility of providing primary education as well as the guerrilla training to the youths of the camps and the base workers were sent to Bangladesh after training. The first and foremost duty of the guerrilla workers in East Pakistan was: to look after the movement of Pakistani soldiers; to create panic in the vulnerable areas; to boost the mental strength of the local people and to collect public opinion against the brutalities caused by the Pakistani administration and Pak military Junta. For this purpose, the ammunitions and hand grenades were supplied to them by the Indian authority. In most cases, the operations were successful as that was done on proper planning and instruction.
Mr. Chatterjee asserted that first batch of liberation force was sent to Bangladesh from Gokulnagar Camp in Tripura in presence of Mr. Triguna Sen, the Central Education Minister, Mr. Superkar, the Additional Chief Secretary, Sri Sachindra Lal Singh, the Chief Minister of Tripura, a few number of MPs of Govt. of India and some eminent leaders of the acting Government of Bangladesh. He also asserted that the second batch was despatched from the Chhesrimai camp situated under Bishalgarh Block in presence of Central Minister, Mr. Siddartha Shankar Ray and other eminent leaders. This followed the gradual despatch of various groups of liberation forces to civil war zones in East Pakistan. His assertion can't be testified because it is a top secret matter and not all the documents are declassified. However, recalling the liberation war of 1971, Mr. Sudan Das, the Member of Legislative Assembly of Tripura, said that A. S. M. Abdur Rab, a prominent leader of Bangladesh Movement, informed the public at Chottakhola Muktiyuddhya Park, at Rajnagar under Belonia, that the first batch of liberation force was despatched to East Pakistan from Chottakhala camp. The above statements bear truth; it seems that the guerrillas under the control of Mr. Chatterjee were Freedom Fighters (F.F) and that of Chottakhola was Mukti Fouj (M.F).

Mr. Chatterjee continues to inform that other than liberation force, there were camps of rebel Bengali soldiers who escaped from the Pak army and opened camps here obviously with the help of the Indian authorities. Out of these camps, the Melaghar (under Sonamura), Harina (under Sabroom) and Sonamura Camps were most prominent and these camps were looked after by the famous freedom fighters of Bangladesh like Major Khaled Musharraf and Major Ziaur Rahman under the guidance of the Indian Military officers. Mr. Chatterjee informed that he was well-versed in guerrilla techniques than the other Indian officers present in Tripura at that period. So, he had to shoulder main responsibility in the providing the guerrilla training to the youths. However, Colonel Subramonian helped him in maintaining the office activities. Mr. Chatterjee said that the task was not so easy and he had to face a lot of problems at different stages in forming and providing training to the liberation forces. However, the problems were lessened to some extent by the then District Magistrate and Collector (D.M) Sri Umesh Saigal, the B.D.O of Bishalgarh, Mr. D .B. Datta and the Chief Secretary of Tripura, Mr. I.P. Gupta and some others. The most important factor was the people of Tripura from all walks of lives who came forward to extend all necessary helps in forming the liberation force. The Higher Authorities of acting Bangladesh Government and Awami League leaders very often visited the camps for mental boosting and encouragement of the youths of the camps. He recalled some of the eminent leaders: Capt. Mansoor Ali, the Finance Minister of Bangladesh Government in exile, Prof. Nurul Islam, Prof. Debbrata Datta Gupta, Khondaker Mostaque Ahmed, Major Khaled Musharraf, and Captain Shafiullah etc.
A write-up of Shri Sachindra Lal Singh, the C.M, affirms the above statement about the formation of the guerrilla force in Tripura. He said that these guerrilla groups which sprang up in Tripura from north to south, from east to west received their names from the same rivers flowed through both the Countries such as the Gomati, the Titas, the Padma, the Megna etc. The youths mustered strong and get themselves admitted in these guerrilla groups. Their uniforms were light brown coloured (khaki); they used khaki pent, khaki shirt, cades, flux made of enamel etc.. The Hon’ble leaders of India were behind the curtain and they were: Shree Bhimani of Bombay, Mr. Triguna Sen, the Central Minister, Shree Surendra Mohan Ghosh, ex M.P, Mr. Ampuri Thakur, the Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr. Bangshi Lal, the Chief Minister of Hariyana, Shree Guljarilal Nanda, MP, Shasanka Acharjee, the son of Shasikanta Acharjee, the Maharaja of Mymensingh.52

Salam Azad gives the information that about 50,000 men were trained in Tripura. Indian army officers like Brig. Mishra, Brig. Sabek Singh, Maj. Subramonium, Capt. B. R. Chatterjee, Maj. Mitra, Capt. D. P. Dhar, Capt. R.P. Singh, Capt. S.K. Singh, Capt. S.K. Sharma, Capt. D.S. Maingni, Capt. G. S. Rawat and Capt. Nag were very much instrumental in providing training to the willing youths from East Pakistan. A two storey building at College Tilla at Agartala became the apparent camp for the youths. They were given strict military training and a rupee per day with free food. They used to popularise the slogan: "Build fortress in every village; use Mujib's weapon". This war was to restore the heritage of Bengali race and preserve the future of Bengali race.

Salam Azad continues to inform that the members of the Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) were given identity cards for easy movements in and outside Bangladesh. The Indian Authorities who were responsible for the entire training programme were: the Union Education Minister Mr. Triguna Sen, Chief Minister Shachindra Lal Singh, Director of Education, Tripura, Mr. K.P. Datta, Mr. Manu Bhai Vimani (of the Bangladesh Assistant Committee, India).53

Dr. Abul Azad in his work, "Muktiyuddhey Tripurar Sambadpatrer Bhumika", ("The Role of Newspapers of Tripura in the Liberation Movement") provides the readers with detailed information on how the soil of Tripura had been utilized for the operation of the Freedom Fighters. With the establishment of the Bangladesh Government in exile (Mujibnagar Government) at Baidhyanath Tala under Kusthia on April 17,1971, in front of domestic & foreign correspondents, the Headquarters of eastern Zone of Bangladesh Government in exile was also established (obviously with the permission of the Govt. of Tripura and at the same time the Govt. of India) at Krishnagar, Agartala (now, Care & Cure Nursing Home). The eastern zone of the Mujibnagar Government with the active cooperation of the Govt. of Tripura, as asserted by Dr. Azad, estab-
lished a number of camps at different places of Tripura for selection and training of the willing refugee youths who would fight for the liberation of their motherland. The following are the details:

1. **Reception Camp**: The Bengali youths who were willing to participate in the liberation movement, had to report to the Reception Camp and had to wait for 7 days in these camps; they were provided with normal diet, garments and medical treatment, if necessary. The representatives of both the Governments i.e. the Government of India and the Bangladesh Government in exile were given the responsibilities for running these camps. One of the MPAs or MNAs had to act as the Camp-in-Charge or the Deputy Camp-in-charge.

2. **Youth Training Camp**: Three fold programmes were performed by these camps: firstly, Political Motivation; secondly, Base Work Training; and, thirdly, Light Arms Training. In the first programme, the willing youths were motivated politically so as to inculcate in them the Bengali chauvinism so that the youths could fight the battle with ultimate aim of liberating their mother-land from the Pak military Junta. In the Base Work Training, the youths were made aware about the socio-economic condition of Bangladesh and the role and participation of youths in the development works of their country. And training was also given to the effect that in the case of prolonging of the liberation movement, the youths had to bear the pains of war for long time for their very existence. In the Light Arms Training, the youths were trained to work in the practical field which included athletics, parades, the art of thwarting the paths of the enemy as well as the art of Grenade-throwing, planting mines on the way of the enemies, the art of collecting secret news from inside Bangladesh and the art of Reiki.

On the performances of the youths in these camps, they were grouped in two sections: firstly, the physically fit youths who possessed admissible educational qualifications, mental strengths and necessary political motivation were sent to different training camps in India for better training under the auspices of the military administration. The others were engaged in the 'Bhitti Fouj'.

3. **Bhitti Fouj**: A scheme named 'Bhitti Fouj' was prepared by the Mujibnagar Government for those youths who took training in the Youth Training Camps for liberating their motherland from the arch-enemies but failed to pass the training programme or those youths who were not eligible enough to go to practical battlefield, or those who were very much eager to help the movement in other way and not by going to the war-field. The following leaders were
entrusted with the task of organizing such type of fouj:

a) Dr. Habibur Rahman (nickname Dr. Abu Yusuf) Convener

b) Janab Mahbub Alam Member

c) Janab Taheruddin Thakur Member

d) Prof. Debbrata Datta Gupta Member

The Mujibnagar Government established *Youth Training Control Board* and took the attempt to lead the camps. Prof. Yusuf Ali was elevated to the post of Chairman of the Control Board. The Members of the Board were as follows:

1. Mahbub Alam, The coordinator of the Scheme,
2. Dr. Habibur Rahman, The Director, Training,
3. Prof. Nazrul Islam Choudhury, The MNA,
4. Mujaffar Ali, The MPA,
5. Khaled Mahmud Ali, The MNA,
6. Bajlur Rahman, Politician,
7. Prof. Debbrata Datta Gupta, The Director and Coordinator, Training,
8. Mosharraf Hossain, The finance officer,

For smooth running of the activities of each camps, the following posts were created; e.g.

1. Chief of the camp one post.
2. Deputy Chief of the camp one post.
3. Camp Supervisor two posts.
4. Student Representative two posts.
5. Health Officer two posts.
6. Political Motivator four posts.
7. Physical Instructor four posts.

Dr. Azad also records the names of the Reception and Training Camps with their locations in different places of Tripura:

1. Banga Sardul Y / T Hanpaniya,
2. Kailashahar Y / T Kailashpur (sic) Subdivision,
3. Rajnagar Y / T Belonia Subdivision,
4. Jamuna Y / T Hanpaniya,
5. Badamurah Y / T Sonamura Subdivision,
6. Hatimarah Y / T do
7. Gomati Y / T Durgachoudhury Subdivision (sic),
8. Polatona (sic) Y / T Udaipur Subdivision,
9. Sreenagar Y / T Belonia (sic) actually Subroom Subdivision
10. Sheelachhara(sic) Y / T Subroom Subdivision,
11. Harina Y / T Belonia (sic) actually Subroom Subdivision
12. Boxanagar Y / T Sonamura Subdivision,
13. Titas Y / T Hafania (sic), Hanpania,
14. Bijana Y / T do,
15. Brahmaputra Y / T do,
16. Gomati Y / T do,
17. Charailam (sic) Y / T Udaipur Subdivision,
18. Gakulnagar Y / T Sadar Subdivision,
19. No. 1 Military Holding Camp Y / T Durgachoudhury Parah,
20. No. 2 Military Holding Camp Y / T do,
21. No. 3 military Holding Camp Y / T do,
22. Echhamati Y / T Durgachoudhury Parah,
23. Akinpur Y / T do,
24. Belonia Y / T Belonia Subdivision,
25. Subroom Y / T Subroom Subdivision,
26. Sonar Bangla Y / T Hanpania,
27. Murah Tilla Y / T do,
28. Machhima Y / T Sonamura Subdivision,
29. Bagabandhu Y / T Hanpania,
30. Kanthalia Y / T Sonamura subdivision.54

Outside the above list, mention may be made of some other Youth Training Camps which
did a lot for the same purpose; such as, Chottakhala Y/T, Rajnagar; Asharambadi Y/T, Radhanagar Y/T, Belonia, Rajnagar Y/T, Belonia; Padma, Gokulnagar, Sadar; Holding Camp, Kanthalia, Sonamura; Badatilla(Dimatali), Belonia.55

Dr. Azad says that from 500 to 2500 youths were provided training at a time in the Youth Camps. But lakhs of youths were disheartened while they were not enlisted for training due to certain difficulties in providing training to all willing youths. Among this huge number of youths, only 50 thousand were trained specially to become Bhitti fouj.56

Tripura was fully utilized for deployment of forces of the Mujibnagar Government as well as the Government of India. Haroon Habib provides us with the information that for the advantage of liberation movement the whole of Bangladesh was divided into 11 War Sectors; for strategic geographical location of Tripura, Sectors from 1 to 4 were located in the Tripura region; moreover, Sector no. 5 which included places like Sunamganj, Dauki, Bansh Tala, Jaintapur under Sylhet was neared to the border of Tripura. On the contrary, the main activities of Sector no.10 which was situated at the border-line of Mizoram and Burma were guided from Tripura.57

Here is the list of Sectors and Subsectors related to Tripura and the names of places including the names of the Commanders as listed by Prof. Mahbubur Rahman.58

**Sector no. 1 :** Chitagong, Chitagong Hill Tracts, upto Muhuri River flowing through Noakhali;

Sub-Sectors: Rishya Mukh, Sreenagar, Manughat, Tabalchhari, and Dimatali;

Sector Headquarters: Harina (Sabroom);

Sector Commander: Major Rafiquul Islam;

Number of MuktiBahini: Mukti Fouj=2000 (approx); Freedom Fighter= 8000 (aprox.);

**Sector no. 2 :** Dhaka, Comilla, Faidpur and part of Noakhali;

Sub-Sectors: Gangasagar, Akhaura, Faridpur, Kasba, Mandabhag, Shaldanadi, Motinagar, Nirboypur south of Gomati and Rajnagar;
Sector Commanders: Major Khaled Musharraf (at the beginning); while he became the Commander of "K" force, Major A.T.M. Hyder was appointed as the Sector Commander.

Number of Mukti Bahini: Mukti Fouj= 6000; Freedom Fighter= 35 thousand (approx.);

11 War Sectors of the Liberation Movement showing Tripura.

Source: Internet
Sector no. 3:
Sylhet, Brahman Bariah, Narayan Ganj, Kishore Ganj,

Sub-Sectors:
Ashram Badi, Baghai Badi, Haatkaata, Simla(sic)=Simna, pancha Bati, Mantala, Bijoy Nagar, Kalachhara, Kalkalia and Bamutia.

Sector Commander:
At the beginning Major K M Shafiulla; while he was appointed as the Chief of the "S" force, Major Nurujjaman was appointed as the Sector Commander;

Number of Mukti Bahini:
Mukti Fauj= Almost 30,000;

Sector No. 4
Almost 100 miles through the North-East Border of Sylhet;

Sub-Sectors:
Jalalpur, Badapunji, Amlasid, Kukutal, Kailash, Kamalpur;

Sector Headquarters:
At the beginning Karimganj; later on Masimpur;

Sector Commander:
Major Chitta Ranjan Datta;

Number of Mukti Bahini:
Mukti Fouj= 9000 (approx.), Freedom Fighter= 4000(approx.).

Sector No. 5:
Sylhet;

Sub-sector:
Muktapur, Dauki, Shela, bhola Ganj, Balat, Badachhara,

Sector Headquarters:
Bansh Tala;

Sector Commander:
Major Mir Shaukat Ali;

Number of Mukti-Bahini:
Mukti Fauj=1000; Freedom Fighter= 9000.

Sector 10:
Navy Commando.

Nothing more is mentioned about sector No. 10 in the list as provided by Prof. Mahabubur Rahman. Moreover, he did not mention the Headquarters of sector No. 2 and 3. But Robin Sengupta, the veteran photo-journalist and Sri Subal Rudra, ex-M.L.A of Tripura told the Researcher that the Headquarters of Sector No. 2 was Melaghar under Sonamura and that of Sector 3 was Teliapada (very near to Tripura border).
There is a practical description of the Melaghar Camp, the Headquarters of the Sector No. 2. Brigadier Jagdev Singh, AVSM, describes as he saw in his own eyes: "On the way we stopped at the Mukti Bahini Camp at Melaghar. Its commandant, Major Khalid Musharraf of 4 East Bengal Rifles—he got a head injury during the operations. He was killed during the power struggle in the post-Mujib era; …… He had no formal office as such and appeared to be commanding the whole operation squatting on his bed in his tent. He was highly motivated and full of confidence. He was simply charged with hatred for the Pakistani Punjabis, who, he said, tortured the Bengalis and killed them and raped their women. ……… He took me around the camp. It had a few tents, and there were a lot of shelters improvised out of Bamboo thatch, barely high enough to accommodate a standing person. There were only a few men in the camp, the majority of them being out on missions. A few men were being trained in arming and disarming of mines and explosives. The attitude of the men was totally casual. ………, back to his ebullient self and took me around to show his prisoners. Huddled in a tent, under the watchful eyes of two men armed with sten carbines, wearing trousers, banyans and no shoes or headgear, sat 10 odd persons, all Biharis. …….. The officer said he was going to shoot the whole lot. He pointed to two amongst them who, he said, had planted mines on a track where a Bahini-truck had got blown up and some its occupants had got killed. Another few, which included a 16 year old boy, he accused (sic) of killing the Hindu Bengalis and molesting their women while they were escaping to the Tripura Border from the Noakhali area. ……… He said he would have killed the prisoners the previous day but their graves were not ready.

"Who prepared their graves ?

"They themselves, who else ? ……

"He told us how the Mukti Fauj was trained. The rank and file generally came from young men of towns and villages. There were a number of boys from schools and colleges and picked up techniques of war including those of sabotage, much faster and more easily as compared to their brothers not associated with educational institutions. They, thus, were the stock from where most of the leadership got picked up.

"We gave them practice in shooting live targets too', the officer said and laughed, a full-throated, resonant laughter. To a question he said the prisoners dug their graves to avoid a death of pain and torture. To another question he said he was confident there would a Bangladesh…..
"The engineer commanding officer accompanying me told me that his men were imparting training in the handling of mines and explosives at these camps. The camps were located in Indian Territory, virtually all around East Pakistan, barely a few kilometers from the international border. All personnel of Mukti Bahini, whether propagandists or of Mukti Fauj or the saboteur class, were free to come to any camp anywhere, although, generally specified groups had been allotted specified sectors and camps. Sector headquarters were generally commanded by an Indian Brigadier with skeleton Indian staff; the bulk of the workforces at the sector headquarters were Bengalis of East Pakistan.

"From what the officer said I got the impression that the organization was sound. …..”

The soil of Tripura was strategically utilized by the Indian army for lightning campaign of East Pakistan. As Major General Ashok Kalyan Verma, AVSM, (Retd.) expressed the position of Tripura in the following way:

"Tripura juts out like head of a predator, forming a significant salient into the eastern side of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). It provides the shortest approach to Dhaka, the capital city, being only 80 km from Agartala as the crow flies. ……. A look at the map of eastern Bangladesh would show the strategic placement of Tripura as it physically protrudes into that country from the east. Apart from the comparatively short distance from Tripura, the vulnerability of the railway line linking Sylhet to Chittagong and Dhaka to interference from Indian side, owing to the proximity, has been brought out earlier."

Anybody can have a glimpse of the strategic plans of General Niazi, as it is described by Major General D. K. Palit, to save East Pakistan from the all-out attack from India. He puts it in the way: Niazi put his strongest divisions on the western front---- opposite to Calcutta---- and constructed his most formidable defences, ………. However, in the east, because of the vital Dacca-Comilla-Chittagong road and rail link, a cluster of strong points was built at the border with Tripura. Headquarters of 14 Pak Infantry Division was located at Ashuganj. The newly raising 36 Pak Division Headquarters was at Comilla --- to offset the growing Indian build-up in Tripura. On the other hand, as Major General D.K. Palit confirms, the task before Eastern Army's GOC-in-C, Lieutenant-General J S Aurora, was quite clear, and he was determined to accomplish it; he must get to Dacca within a time- frame of 12-15 days from the declaration of war. So, he arranged the Order of Battle keeping Agartala as the Headquarters of IV Corps under Lieut. General Sagat Singh with three mountain divisions and allied forces; he kept II Corps at Krishnanagar under
Lieutenant General T.N. Raina; XXXIII Corps at Siliguri under Lieut. General M. L. Thapan, 101 Communication Zone at Gauhati under Major -General G S Gill (after General Gill was wounded, Major G.S. Nagra took command). Research is concerned here with Tripura. As Major-General Palit informs that in the IV Corps sector, in the east, the plan was to send in three divisional thrusts across the 250-Kilometre stretch of border between Meghalaya in the north and the Feni salient in the extreme south of Tripura. IV Corps task was to liberate all Banga Desh territory south of Surma and east of Meghna rivers. The strongest army corps in General Aurora's army, it had longest stretch of the border as its operational front. General Sagat Singh utilized the land of Tripura to attack along the Akhaura-Ashuganj axis and used south Tripura area to contain Comilla, one to strike out westwards towards Lakhsham and Chandpur, and one southward from Feni.

In the central sector, IV Corps Commander launched a division from the Agartala Area towards Akhaura. At this point of the border, the Mukti Bahini had already obtained a lodgment inside Bangla Desh and was in contact with the Pak defences at Akhaura. Major General Palit asserts that this was the division with which General Sagat Singh planned to "bounce" across the Meghna and race for the Dacca "bowl". The southern column from this division thrust towards Comilla from south of Agartala, with the aim of containing the strong Pak garrison holding the defences in the Maynamati Cantonment and working behind it to cut the I of c. In the south Tripura, the third division of IV Corps sent out two columns in two different directions. One brigade, heading westwards, made for the important rail junction at Laksham, another headed south for Chittagong. By the 8th, the fifth day of the war, as Major-General palit affirms, Brahmanbadia had fallen, Comilla was encircled and the Laksham column was heading for Chandpur. The whole of the sector opposite Tripura came under Indian control, while in the south --- where the Feni salient had already been liberated before the commencement of the war-a column from the southern division raced south for Chittagong.62

Another important aspect of the Bangladesh Government in exile is the organization of its administrative machinery which was not an easy task for the Govt. in exile. It was the Govt. of India which opened all avenues for the success of the Bangladesh Government. In the circumstances, the said Government divided whole Bangladesh administration into 11 administrative units covering Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya and West Bengal for better performance of the Government. The units were named as Zonal Council. Out of these Zonal Councils, the Headquarters of 3 units were established in Tripura.
Administrative Unit | Zonal Chairman           | Zonal Administrator | Zonal Headquarters
---|---|---|---
1. South-East Zone I | Nurul Islam Choudhury | S. A. Samad | Sabroom
2. South-East Zone II | Jahur Ahmed Choudhury | Kazi Roabuddin | Agartala
3. East Zone | Colonel M.A. Rob | Dr. A K Hasan | Dharmanagar

Other Zonal Units were established at the suitable places of Assam, Meghalaya and West Bengal.

These Zonal offices had the responsibility to coordinate with the Sector Commanders of the Mukti-Fouz within its jurisdiction; to look after the Training Camps of the Muktiyoddas, its recruitment & training; to oversee the problems of the refugees and to coordinate with Indian authorities; to distribute the leaflets of the Bangladesh Government amongst the peoples directly or indirectly involved in the liberation movement.

Thus, Tripura, on the eastern side of East Bengal, because of its remoteness and location, as summarized by Maj. Gen. Ashok kalyan Verma, AVSM (Retd.), played a very crucial but passive role in the Mukti revolt and the liberation movement from the end of March 1971, until the end of war in December. Maj. Ziaur Rahman after revolting against the Pak Military Junta in Chittagong zone took refuge in southern Tripura along with his men. Similarly, Maj. Khalid Musharraf, with 4 EB Battalion, who had earlier been in Comilla and Brahmanbaria, also found a safe haven across the Indian border south of Agartala in Tripura, after the crackdown. Maj. K M Shafiuullah also managed to escape from the cordon of Pak army and established his H.Q at the Teliapara area of Sylhet district, fairly close to the north Tripura border. The proximity of Tripura, a safe sanctuary for the rebel leaders, both civil & military, helped the rebels to gather at Teliapara and to take decision to the effect that the Liberation War would be continued under a central command and Col. M.A.G. Osmani, the senior most Bengali infantry officer was nominated as the Mukti commander-in-Chief. On political side, it was suggested that a Government-in-exile be set up immediately. It is, as Maj. Gen. Verma asserts, noteworthy that the prominent military rebels adopted a bold approach collectively, in spite of the odds being against them in the early stages. And, consequently, as mentioned earlier, Maj. Gen. Verma also asserts that a provisional government -in-exile was formed at Agartala on 10, 1971. The Eastern sector around Indian Tripura was most active and effective in the opposition to the Pakistanis, who tried to regain control. The three
Mukti sectors around Tripura were the most assertive as the terrain was favourable to the rebels.\(^{64}\)

**Notes and References :-**


2. Bhattacharjee, Swapan, attached to PTI and a District representative of Agartala-based Newspaper; he claims that he was the District President of *Chhatra Parisad* and very much involved in the process of liberation movement in 1971, in a write-up collected by the researcher from Udaipur, Tripura.


10. Statement by Ambassador Samar Sen, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, at the Social Committee of the ECOSC on Agenda Item 5 (a) reports on the Commission on Human Rights, on May, 17, 1971 as cited in *Bangladesh Documents*, Publication Division, Govt. of India, Patiala House, New Delhi, pp. 618-624. Also, vide the Address by
Senator Edward Kennedy to the National Press Club, Washington, on August 26, 1971, ibid, pp. 596-601.


12. Loc.cit.


15. Ibid. p. 20.


17. ibid, p. 107.

18. The Samachar, a weekly from Agartala, April 25, 1971.


20. Oral Interview with Sri Sudhan Das, MLA, at Rajnagar under Belonia, on 8 December, 2009.


24. The then Chief Minister, Sachindra Lal Singh, in Tripura Territorial Assembly on 21 June,

25. Bhattacharjee, Anil, in *Apare Akattar*, op. cit. pp.19

26. The State Archives, Govt. of Tripura, Agartala, File no. WBDRCC, B--388, S-15, 1971, Name of the File: *Women's Bangladesh Refugee Relief Committee*.


30. Interview with Sri D. B. Datta, op.cit.


32. Ibid, June 25, p. 42,

33. Ibid.


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42. Hasan, Hafijur Rahman,(ed.) op. cit. Vol. 9, 10 and 11


46. Bangladesh Documents, op. cit. p.672.


50. Oral Interview with Mr. Sudhan Das, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Tripura at Dimatali, Rajnagar under Belonia Sub-division, on 8 December, 2009.

51. Oral Interview with Captain Chatterjee, op.cit.

52. Sachindra Lal Singh, the then Chief Minister of Tripura and an ardent sympathiser and supporter of the liberation movement of Bangladesh in write-up as cited in -Muktiyuddhe Tripurar Sambad Patrer Bhumika (Role of Newspapers of in the Liberation Movement), by Dr. Abul Azad, Writers' Foundation, Bagladesh, Dhaka, 2004.p. 120.

53. Azad, Salam, -- Role of Indian People in the Liberation War of Bangladesh, Bookwell, 2008, p.113.

55. Ibid. pp. 102-103.

56. Ibid. p. 104.


63. Rahman, Prof. Mahabubur, op. cit. 254-255

64. Verma, Major General Ashok Kalyan, op. cit. pp. 5 & 7.