

Pakistan troops reportedly attack rebel Bengali capital

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ALONG THE INDIA-EAST PAKISTAN BORDER — The provisional capital of Free Bengal was attacked by Pakistan army troops yesterday, according to Bengali resistance reports.

The capital, Chuadanga, has been one of the places most securely held by the rebels since the civil war broke out in East Pakistan three weeks ago.

However, as Bengali resistance appears to be crumbling throughout East Pakistan, the army has been able to move further from its bases and strike at rebel sanctuaries.

Unarmed Bangla Desh (Bengal Nation) supporters who man this unnamed border crossing point 12 miles from Chuadanga told reporters of the army attack.

"The situation has gotten worse and worse," one young man said.

For more than 10 days since it was declared the provisional capital, Chuad-

anga has been a rebel showcase. Indian and foreign reporters have been welcomed and given tours of the peaceful town.

However, the Bengalis here refused to allow reporters to visit Chuadanga and witness the fighting yesterday. "Things have gotten critical," a Bengali explained. "We don't have time for you now."

The army attack came on the day rebel leaders had announced they would swear in their provisional government at Chuadanga. The ceremony was canceled, but will be held elsewhere, Benagli officials said.

It is widely believed that most provisional government figures, including Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed, have been operating in Calcutta rather than Bangla Desh. The prime minister has appealed for aid over a clandestine radio and has invited diplomats and reporters to tour the "liberated" areas of East Pakistan.

Such a tour would be short — rebel-held areas have shrunk dramatically

over the last few days and there is no indication that the Pakistan army will be stopped as it tries to eliminate armed opposition before the monsoon rains begin late this month.

Some Indian observers sympathetic to the rebels are predicting that armed resistance will be finished within a week.

Meanwhile, Reuter reported from New Delhi that India yesterday accused Pakistani soldiers of machine-gunning Indian civilians in an attack on an Indian village on the East Pakistan border.

A protest note to the Pakistan high commission said India would hold the Pakistani government solely responsible for any consequences if the "aggression" did not end.

It was the first Indian allegation of Pakistani aggression since the Pakistan army cracked down on East Pakistan.

Pakistan has consistently said that armed infiltrators from India were stirring up trouble in the eastern province.