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INDO-PAKISTANI CRISIS - CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

The attached chronology of key events in the development of the Indo-Pakistani crisis from December 1970 to December 1971 was prepared by RNA at the request of NEA. It is drawn entirely from unclassified sources. Items selected for inclusion as key events were regarded as those significant for reference use in tracing the development of the crisis culminating in the Indo-Pakistani hostilities in late 1971; the list is not an exhaustive historical summary of events.

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INDO-PAKISTANI CRISIS: CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

1970

- December 7 General Election in Pakistan. Awami League wins 151 seats in National Assembly; when all elections complete, Awami League has 167 of 300 seats. Z. A. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) wins 83 of West Pakistan's 143 seats.
- December 17 Elections held for Provincial Assemblies in Pakistan. In the East, Awami League wins 268 of 279 seats declared.
- December 19 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declares there can be no new Constitution except on basis of Awami League's Six-Point Program.

1971

- January 3 At a public rally, Sheikh Mujib reiterates view that Constitution must be based on Awami League's Six-Point Program.
- January 14 President Yahya Khan, in talk to newsmen in Dacca, refers to Sheikh Mujib as "the future Prime Minister of Pakistan."
- January 29 Rahman-Bhutto talks on Six-Point Awami League Program and convening of National Assembly end in deadlock.
- January 30 Indian Airlines aircraft hijacked to Pakistan, and destroyed by bomb on February 2.
- February 2 India bans military overflights of India by Pakistan.
- February 4 India imposes ban on both civil and military overflights of India by Pakistan; charges official Pakistani "instigation, abetment, and encouragement" of hijackers.
- February 13 President Yahya Khan calls Pakistani National Assembly meeting in Dacca for March 3, establishing June 30 as deadline for framing of new Constitution (i.e., within 120 days of first meeting of National Assembly).
- February 15 Bhutto threatens to boycott National Assembly meeting on March 3 unless Sheikh Mujib gives up demand for full provincial autonomy. Repeats threat on February 19.
- February 27 Bhutto requests postponement of National Assembly meeting, promises PPP will attend at later date if 120-day limit for drafting new Constitution is lifted.
- March 1 President Yahya Khan announces removal of Vice Admiral S.M. Ahsan as Governor of East Pakistan.

Yahya Khan announces indefinite postponement of National Assembly session.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman calls for hartal (general strike) in Dacca on March 2, and country-wide general strike on March 3. Rahman says Awami League would launch non-violent, non-cooperation movement.

March 2

Demonstrations in Dacca lead to imposition of 11-hour curfew. Radio Pakistan reports demonstrators seen carrying placards proclaiming an "Independent Bengal." Clashes with Pakistani Army troops reported.

Pakistani Army troops observed flying into Dacca on Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) unscheduled flights.

Martial Law Administration imposes press censorship in East Pakistan.

March 3

At mass meeting in Dacca, Sheikh Mujib turns down Yahya Khan's invitation to a conference of political leaders in Dacca on March 10 to resolve deadlock in Constitution-making. Rahman calls for civil disobedience movement until the administration turned over to "people's representatives." Says hartal against postponement of National Assembly will continue for four days.

Sheikh Mujib tells press Pakistani Army is "behaving like an Occupation Force," machine-gunning unarmed people.

Sheikh Mujib tells AP correspondent in Dacca he is willing to share power with Bhutto, each to serve as Prime Minister in his region, to keep Pakistan together.

March 4

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman warns that Awami League volunteers will resist Pakistani Army troops if they are not returned to barracks. Hartal continues. Curfew lifted in Dacca, remains in effect in other East Pakistan towns.

March 5

Radio Pakistan announces troops will return to barracks March 6, following an "improvement in the situation as a sequel to Sheikh Mujib's appeal to people to remain peaceful."

March 6

President Yahya Khan announces March 25 meeting of National Assembly, does not specify venue. Attacks East Pakistani leaders for sponsoring disorders following earlier postponement of session.

Bhutto says PPP will attend March 25 session.

- March 7 At rally in Dacca, Rahman calls for East Pakistan Government officials to obey him. He states Awami League will not attend National Assembly session unless: 1) martial law lifted; 2) troops returned to barracks; 3) an inquiry ordered into killings in East Pakistan by Army in previous week of demonstrations; and 4) power transferred to people. Declares no-tax campaign starting March 8. Stops short of call for independence.
- March 8 Non-violent civil disobedience movement formally begins in East Pakistan.
- March 9 Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan appointed Governor and Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan; East Pakistani judges refuse to swear him in.
- March 13 Central Government orders striking civilian defense workers in East Pakistan to return to work under threat of martial law penalties.
- March 14 Sheikh Mujib characterizes return-to-work order as provocation, asks East Pakistanis to defy order.
- Bhutto, in West Pakistan, calls for installation of Awami League Government in East Pakistan and one or more PPP Governments in provinces of West Pakistan, with military government left in control of central Government.
- March 15 Rahman issues series of 35 directives effectively taking over civil administration of East Pakistan by Awami League. Refers to East Pakistan as "Bangla Desh."
- President Yahya Khan arrives in Dacca for talks with Sheikh Mujib.
- March 16 Yahya Khan-Rahman talks begin.
- March 17 Martial Law Administrator for East Pakistan, Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, appoints Inquiry Commission to investigate Awami League charges on Army activities March 2-9.
- Sheikh Mujib rejects proposed inquiry as "device to hoodwink people of Bangla Desh," appoints his own three-member Committee of inquiry.

- March 21 Press reports reveal continuing PIA flights carrying Pakistani Army reinforcements to Dacca.
Bhutto arrives in Dacca.
- March 22 Yahya Khan postpones March 25 session of National Assembly indefinitely.
- March 23 Pakistan Day celebrated in East Pakistan as "Resistance Day"; Bangla Desh flag flown widely in Dacca and East Pakistan.
- March 25 Yahya Khan-Rahman talks continue during morning.
Radio Dacca reports Yahya Khan had agreed "in principle" to hand over power to elected representatives in East Pakistan; and had conceded Awami League's three other demands.
Press reports claim six shiploads of Pakistani troops (an estimated 10,000 men) landed at Chittagong and Khulna, adding to total of 60,000 troops in East Pakistan.
Afternoon meeting between Yahya and Mujib cancelled. Yahya leaves Dacca. Pakistani Army troops launch widespread attacks in Dacca focused on university, Hindu areas, East Pakistani police, East Pakistan Rifles barracks, and Awami League offices.
Mujib arrested 11:15 p.m. Foreign correspondents detained at Intercontinental Hotel.
- March 26 Widespread fighting between West Pakistani troops and Bengalis; rumors spread that Sheikh Mujib had gone underground with Awami League leaders.
In a broadcast to the nation, from Karachi, Yahya Khan charges Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with treason, bans Awami League, and orders Army to restore authority of central government in East Pakistan.
"Voice of Independent Bangla Desh" radio station broadcasts unilateral declaration of independence, saying Sheikh Mujib has declared sovereign independent Bangladesh.
Bhutto departs Dacca for West Wing.
- March 27 Radio Pakistan announces arrest of Sheikh Mujib.
35 foreign correspondents ordered expelled from East Pakistan by Martial Law Administration.

~~Bhutto tells news conference in Karachi he supports Yahya Khan's order to crush independence movement in East Pakistan.~~

- March 28 "Free Bangla Radio" announces formation of Provisional Government of Bangladesh headed by a Major Zia Khan.
- March 29 India requests UN Secretary General take initiative and advise or suggest restraint to Government of Pakistan, and try to prevent "mass slaughter" in East Pakistan.
- March 31 Indian Parliament resolution expresses sympathy and solidarity with people of East Bengal, pledges sympathy and support of Indian people.
- United States announces Dacca "thin-out."
- April 1 Pakistani Foreign Office alleges Indian infiltrations into East Pakistan.
- April 3 Soviet President Podgorny sends letter to Yahya Khan appealing for political settlement of East Pakistan problem.
- April 6 Yahya Khan replies to Podgorny letter, stating that support for interference in internal affairs of another country is a negation of UN Charter and asking that USSR use its influence with India to prevent India from "meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs."
- Pakistani Note to India again protests Indian interference in Pakistan's internal affairs.
- China accuses India of interference in Pakistan's internal affairs in Note about New Delhi demonstration against PRC embassy.
- April 12 Six-member Cabinet of Provisional Government of Bangladesh formed, with Rahman listed as President, Syed Nazrul Islam as Vice President, and Tajuddin Ahmed as Prime Minister.
- April 17 At Mujibnagar, Provisional Government formally proclaims Democratic Republic of Bangladesh. Proclamation dated April 10, 1971.
- April 18 Pakistani Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta and 70 Bengali staff members switch allegiance to Bangladesh.
- April 24 Pakistanis request closure Indian Deputy High Commission at Dacca, close Pakistani mission in Calcutta.

- May 6 India announces 1.48 million refugees from East Pakistan now in India, appeals to FAO for direct aid to refugees.
- May 18 Mrs. Gandhi warns Pakistan that "if a situation is forced on us, we are fully prepared to fight," challenges Government of Pakistan claim that all is normal in East Pakistan, saying that if that so GOP should call back refugees fleeing to India.
- May 19 U Thant appeals to all nations for contributions to help meet needs of refugees in India.
- May 21 Yahya Khan announces that bona-fide Pakistani citizens who had fled were welcome to return home to East Pakistan.
- June 5 Indian External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh departs New Delhi on visit to USSR, West Germany, France, Canada and United States to discuss refugee problem and Bangladesh. Returns to India June 22.
- June 6 Syed Nazrul Islam, acting President of Bangladesh Provisional Government, spells out in radio broadcast four preconditions for political settlement of Bangladesh issue:
- 1) release Rahman
 - 2) withdraw Pakistani Army
 - 3) recognize Republic of Bangladesh
 - 4) compensation for losses due to Pakistani Army "atrocities"
- June 28 Yahya Khan announces he will have a Constitution prepared by a group of experts. He bans secessionist Awami League from participation in program to transfer power to civilians "in four months or so."
- July 8 Indians estimate number of Bengali refugees in India at 6,733,019.
- July 15 Tajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister of Provisional Government of Bangladesh, declares "military victory is only solution in Bangladesh."
- July 19 Yahya Khan, in press interview, says he would declare war on India "if India made any attempt to seize any part of East Pakistan." He warns that Pakistan "would not be alone," and alleges that Indians were shelling many areas of East Pakistan.
- July 20 Indian Minister for External Affairs, Swaran Singh, cautions Yahya Khan against using freedom struggle in Bangladesh as a pretext for launching an attack on India, says "we will defend ourselves."

- July 23 India accuses Pakistanis of two violations on July 20 and 21 of Indian airspace by Pakistan Air Force over Srinagar, issues orders to shoot down future intruders.
- July 24 Pakistan denies violation of Indian airspace.
- August 5 Yahya Khan released July 30 TV interview, in which he stated situation in subcontinent was "very volatile, explosive and dangerous," repeats warning Pakistanis would fight if any attempt made to detach part of East Pakistan.
- August 7 Government of Pakistan deprives 79 Awami League members of their National Assembly seats, orders 59 to appear for trial.
- August 9 Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's visit to New Delhi results in signing of 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation between USSR and India.
- August 11 Press reports Sheikh Mujibur Rahman goes on trial on charge of waging war on Pakistan.
- August 17 Pakistan proposes "Good Offices Committee" of UN Security Council to "defuse" situation along Indo-Pakistan border.
- August 18 India rejects Pakistani proposal as another attempt to turn East Pakistan situation into an Indo-Pakistan issue. Asserts India not involved in conflict.
- August 21 Government of Pakistan announces lawyer A.K. Brohi had agreed to defend Mujib at trial.
- August 31 Yahya Khan appoints Dr. Abdul Motaleb Malik as civilian Governor of East Pakistan; replaces Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan as Martial Law Administrator with Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, effective September 3.
- September 2 Bhutto describes appointment of civilian government in East Bengal as "half-measure" and calls for immediate parliamentary rule.
- September 4 Yahya Khan announces general amnesty for all those who committed offenses in East Pakistan after March 1.
- September 9 Five main East Bengali political parties in Calcutta form 8-member Consultative Committee to advise Bangladesh Government and to provide closer ties to the Mukti Bahini.

- September 11 In Karachi, Bhutto says March events in East Pakistan could also occur in West Pakistan if power not restored to people's representatives.
- September 15 Indians claim total of refugees is 8,542,000.
- September 19 Pakistan Election Commission announce by-elections to fill 78 National Assembly seats vacated by "disqualification" of Awami League members will be held between November 25 and December 9.
- September 25 Pakistan complains to UN Secretary General against "India's open interference in Pakistan's internal affairs" in letter from Pakistani Foreign Secretary to U Thant.
- September 27 Mrs. Gandhi arrives in Moscow for 3-day visit to USSR.
- September 28 Yahya Khan's office confirms that Mujib's trial started on August 11, then recessed, and was resumed September 7.
- October 5 Pakistani Army ordered on 12-hour alert, Indian sources allege.
- October 12 In broadcast to the nation, Yahya Khan announces plan to promulgate new Constitution by December 20 and call reconstituted National Assembly on December 27.
- Indian press reports state Pakistani Army moving to forward positions on western border of India.
- October 14-16 President Yahya Khan in Persepolis for Iranian 25th Centenary, holds discussions with Soviet President Podgorny, Shah of Iran, and others.
- October 14 Indian press says Indian Army reinforces western border positions.
- October 17 Indian Defense Minister Jagjivan Ram warns in public speech that any war with Pakistan would be fought on Pakistani soil and India would not vacate territories occupied during conflict.
- October 19 Mrs. Gandhi, at news conference in New Delhi, declines to enter into talks with Pakistan to negotiate pulling back of troops, saying that crux of problem was Pakistani military regime's problems with Bengalis, which should be resolved directly between Yahya Khan and Bangladesh.

In Le Monde interview published in Paris, Yahya Khan suggests that a "dialogue" between India and Pakistan should deal with whole of India-Pakistan dispute, not just "secondary questions."

- October 20 Official Indian spokesman says India would not entertain proposals for pullback of troops from border until Pakistan indicated willingness to reach political settlement with Bangladesh and facilitate return of refugees.
- In letters to Yahya Khan and Mrs. Gandhi, UN Secretary General U Thant offers his good offices to relieve tension on Indo-Pakistani border.
- October 21 In letter to U Thant, Yahya Khan suggests U Thant visit India and Pakistan to pursue his offer of reducing tensions in the subcontinent.
- October 22 Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin arrives in New Delhi for consultations under Article IX of Indo-Soviet Treaty.
- October 24 Mrs. Gandhi goes on six-nation trip, spending November 3-7 in United States.
- October 27 Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin concludes visit to New Delhi after talks with Mrs. Gandhi, External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh.
- October 28 In Vienna, Mrs. Gandhi tells press U Thant visit to India would not be sensible, but said she would not object if U Thant accepted Yahya Khan's invitation to visit Pakistan, since the key to a solution was there, not in India.
- Indian External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh tells Parliamentary Committee that India could count on USSR for total support in event of conflict with Pakistan. Refers to tense situation on border, but asserts India would never start a conflict.
- October 29 Indians claim refugees now total 9,587,000.
- October 29-31 Series of artillery exchanges in East Pakistan reported, with Indians claiming Pakistanis firing across Indian border and admitting return fire. Most incidents reported in Tripura, but one shelling incident and minor incursion by Pakistani troops reported at Uri in Kashmir.

- November 1 Press reports Mujib found guilty and death penalty recommended to Yahya Khan by military tribunal.
- Radio Pakistan quotes President Yahya Khan as having said to CBS interviewer that China would intervene in the event of an Indian attack on Pakistan.
- However, in exclusive Newsweek interview quoted by Karachi domestic radio service on same date, Yahya Khan is reported to have said that China would not tolerate an attack on Pakistan, and that the Pakistanis would "get all the weapons and ammunition we need from China short of physical intervention."
- November 3 Indian spokesman claims four Pakistan Air Force F-86's intrude into Indian airspace in Punjab.
- November 7 Bhutto in Peking as leader of "politico-military delegation" to China.
- November 9 Indian Air Force reports two Pakistan Air Force planes intrude into Indian-controlled airspace in Uri sector of Kashmir
- November 13 Mrs. Gandhi returns to New Delhi from overseas trip.
- November 22 Indians report three Pakistan Air Force F-86's shot down near eastern border by Indian Air Force Gnats.
- Pakistan charges Indians mounting all-out attack on East Pakistan, with Indian Army units moving on Jessore, Sylhet, and in Chittagong Hill tracts.
- November 23 Yahya Khan declares State of Emergency in Pakistan in view of "threat of foreign aggression."
- November 24 Mrs. Gandhi reveals in Parliament that Indian military commanders took action on November 21 to repulse a Pakistani offensive against the Mukti Bahini around Boyra some five miles from the Indian border when the Pakistani advance threatened Indian defensive positions on the border; 13 Pakistani M-24 tanks are reported destroyed. She states it was not India's intention to escalate the situation or start a conflict. She said Indian commanders had been ordered not to cross the border except in self-defense.
- November 25 President Yahya Khan reportedly hints at possibility of war "within ten days" in impromptu remarks at Rawalpindi banquet honoring visiting Chinese minister.
- November 26 Indian troops again cross East Pakistani border, destroy one Pakistani tank in Hilli area, according to Indian sources.

November 28

Indians report three more Pakistani tanks destroyed in Hilli area.

December 3

At 1050 GMT Mrs. Gandhi was in Calcutta, where she told a rally that Pakistani troops must be withdrawn from Bangladesh.

At 1230 GMT, air raid warning in New Delhi.

At 1245 GMT, Radio Pakistan interrupts regular service to report Indian ground attacks all along West Pakistan border.

At 1330 GMT, Delhi radio quotes an Indian official spokesman as stating Indian airfields at Amritsar, Srinagar, and Pathankot were under air attack between 1210 GMT and 1230 GMT.

At 1409 GMT, Karachi radio reports that Pakistani Air Force aircraft returned safely from attacking four forward Indian air bases at Amritsar, Pathankot, Avantipur, and Srinagar "this afternoon."

At 1600 GMT Karachi radio accuses Indian Air Force of having attacked 30 to 40 miles deep into West Pakistan "for past few days," and reports that Indian ground troops attacked Pakistani territory in the Sialkot and Chhamb sectors between 1030 and 1100 GMT. Other Indian attacks reported in Rajasthan, Punch, and Uri sectors.

Mrs. Gandhi returned to New Delhi late on December 3 and convened a Cabinet session, which resulted in the proclamation at 1739 GMT by President Giri of a National Emergency.

At 1850 GMT, Mrs. Gandhi in a radio broadcast to the nation stated that Pakistani Air Force planes at 1200 GMT had launched full-scale war on India by attacking Indian airfields at Amritsar, Pathankot, Srinagar, Avantipur, Uttarlai, Jodhpur, Ambala, and Agra. She stated that Pakistani artillery had also opened fire on Indian positions at Sulemanki, Khemkaran, Punch, and other sectors on the western front.

December 4

Indian Defense Minister Jagjivan Ram tells Indian Parliament that Indian Air Force has responded to Pakistani air attacks with air strikes beginning at 1820 GMT the previous day against targets inside West Pakistan.

Pakistan issues Gazette Extraordinary, stating that a state of war exists with India.

December 5

USSR vetoes US-sponsored Security Council resolution calling for ceasefire and military withdrawal.

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Later on same day, USSR vetoes second US-backed resolution in Security Council calling for ceasefire and Indo-Pakistani negotiations.

- December 6 India recognizes Bangladesh.
Pakistan severs diplomatic relations with India.
- December 7 UN General Assembly votes 104 to 11, with ten abstentions, for UNGA resolution calling for ceasefire and withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani forces to their own territories.
- December 9 Pakistan accepts UNGA resolution.
- December 11 Over 800 foreign nationals, including Americans, evacuate Dacca by RAF aircraft.
- December 12 Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov arrives in New Delhi with 5-member delegation for talks "within the ambit of the Indo-Soviet Treaty."
- December 13 United States sponsors another UN Security Council resolution calling on India to accept ceasefire and withdrawal of forces. Soviet Union vetoes.
- December 16 Pakistani Army in Bangladesh surrenders.
India announces ceasefire in west, to take effect from December 17.
- December 17 Ceasefire in west takes effect.
Kuznetsov leaves India.
- December 20 Z.A. Bhutto replaces Yahya Khan as President of Pakistan.