

The broadcast, monitored by Indian sources, said a Major Zia Khan had been appointed temporary head of the new government of Bengali Desh (Bengali nation) "under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

...

It broadcast a statement by Major Zia who announced that he is the commander-in-chief of the liberation army.

The radio did not give the first name of Zia nor any details about him.

Zia declared over the radio: "I hereby assume powers of the provisional head of the liberation army of Swadhin Bangla Desh (Independent Bengal Homeland)."

He said: "I order the freedom fighters to continue the struggle till the ultimate victory, which will soon be ours."

The Free Bengal Radio asked all young people possessing arms to report to Major Zia or to his two top aides, whose names were given as Capt. Nasir and Capt. Phuian, at the Lal Digi (Red Lake) boulevard in Chittagong.

The New York Times, USA, March 29, 1971

[*Both sides claim gains in Pakistan; all news banned*](#)

Reports from India quoted the clandestine nationalist radio as having said that a provisional government headed by Maj. Zia Khan, who was described as Commander in Chief of the forces of Bangla Desh, had been installed. Bangla Desh is Bengali for Bengal Nation.

The radio said the government would function under the direction of Sheik Mujibur Rahman, whose Awami League was in effective charge of the administration of East Pakistan until the military began to take control Friday.

The Philadelphia Inquirer, USA, March 29, 1971

[*W. Pakistan controls Dacca; Death toll may reach 7000*](#)

Colombo, Ceylon (AP)

A broadcast, monitored in New Delhi, said a Maj. Zia Khan had been named temporary head of a provisional government of Bangla Desh "under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib Rahman." Bangla Desh mean Bengalli Nation.

Clandestine broadcasts have identified Zia as the head of the "Liberation Army" of the Awami League.

The Pretoria News, South Africa, March 29, 1971

[*Rebellion is over, says Pakistan*](#)

New Delhi

But "Free Bangla Radio," monitored in Calcutta, announced the establishment of a provisional government of Bangla Desh (Bengali Nation) under Major Jia Khan, described as the head of the liberation.

The clandestine station said Sheikh Mujibur would guide the Government from Chittagong from where he was directing the "liberation struggle."

San Francisco Chronicle, USA, March 29, 1971

[Confusing war reports in Pakistan](#)

New Delhi

Another radio message monitored in Calcutta, reported that a provisional Bangla Desh (Bengali nation) government had been set up in the east. Earlier reports, often confused and contradictory, claimed thousands of people had died in fighting which was said to include planes bombing towns and tanks used against civilians.

...

The secret radio said the provisional government in East Pakistan would be guided by Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur who, it said, was directing "the liberation struggle" from Chittagong, the main port in East Pakistan.

According to the radio, quoted by PTI, several thousand troops of the "liberation army" were marching from Chittagong to Dacca. The radio said that Major Jia Khan, in command of the "liberation army," had appealed for recognition of the provisional government.

There were fewer reports yesterday from the clandestine radio, said to be manned by supporters of Sheikh Mujib, but PTI carried reports saying that air force helicopters were used to fire on the towns of Comilla and Chittagong yesterday.

The Straits Times, Singapore, March 29, 1971

[Provisional government formed](#)

New Delhi, Sun.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's supporters today formed a provisional government in East Pakistan and appealed to other countries to extend immediate recognition, a clandestine radio broadcast reported.

The broadcast, monitored by Indian sources, said a Major Jia Khan had been appointed temporary head of the new Government of Bangla Desh (Bengali nation) under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib.

Major Jia had been identified in clandestine radio reports last night as the head of the liberation army of the Sheikh's Awami League.

The radio did not give an explanation why Major Jia had been appointed the de facto leader of the provisional government instead of Sheikh Mujib.

The Sydney Morning Herald, Australia, March 29, 1971

[*Major leads Dacca Govt*](#)

New Delhi, Sunday

Supporters of Sheik Mujibur Rehman tonight announced in a clandestine radio broadcast that they had formed a provisional government of East Pakistan under Major Zia Khan as temporary head.

They did not explain why Major Khan, head of the Awami League's "liberation army," was de facto leader and not Sheik Mujibur.

The Pakistan Government radio has insisted the 51-year-old Sheik has been arrested.

The Washington Post, USA, March 29, 1971

[*Pakistan in control of Dacca*](#)

However, Mujibur's supporters announced yesterday the formation of a provisional government headed by Maj. Zia Khan who appealed to other countries to extend immediate recognition, according to a clandestine broadcast monitored in India.

One broadcast said the provisional government would be guided by Mujibur, leader of the Awami League, who it said was directing "the liberation struggle" from Chittagong, the main port in East Pakistan.

The broadcast gave no explanation why Maj. Zia Khan had been appointed the de facto leader of the provisional government instead of Mujibur.

...

A clandestine East Pakistani broadcast said the provisional government had announced a series of directives to civilian population, including orders that all airports in the province should be made unserviceable to prevent arrival of airborne troops.

The broadcast claimed that Mujibur's supporters were in control of the towns of Rangpur, Jessore and Comilla. It did not mention any other cities.

March 30, 1971

The Manila Times, Philippines, March 30, 1971

[*Where is Sheikh Mujib?*](#)

New Delhi, India, March 29 (Reuter)

"Free Bangla Radio," monitored in Calcutta, announced the establishment of a provisional government of Bangla Desh (Bengali nation) under Maj. Jia Khan, described as the head of the liberation army.

The clandestine station said Sheikh Mujib would guide the government from Chittagong where he was directing the "liberation struggle."

Observers here were puzzled as to why he had not been named to head the provisional government if he were free.

The Sydney Morning Herald, Australia, March 30, 1971

[Rebels claim successes](#)

New Delhi, Monday

"Free Bangla Radio" said Sheik Mujibur would guide from Chittagong the provisional government of Bangla Desch (Bengali Nation), headed by Major Jia Khan.

March 31, 1971

The Statesman (New Delhi), India, March 31, 1971

[Jia Khan's appeal for recognition](#)

Calcutta, Mar 30

The Government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the sovereign legal Government of Bangla Desh and is entitled to recognition by all democratic countries of the world, Maj Jia Khan, provisional Commander-in-Chief of the Liberation Army, declared this morning, reports UNI.

In a broadcast over Free Bangla Radio on behalf of the Sheikh, Maj Jia Khan said: "The new democratic Government is committed to a policy of non-alignment in international relations. It will seek friendship with all nations and strive for international peace.

"We have already formed a sovereign legal Government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which pledges to function as per law and the constitution.

"We therefore appeal to all democratic and peace-loving countries of the world to immediately recognize the legal democratic Government of Bangla Desh."

He appealed to all Governments to mobilize public opinion in their respective countries against the "brutal genocide" in Bangla Desh.

Maj Jia Khan said the Pakistan Government was trying to confuse and deceive the people of the world through contradictory statements.

"But nobody will be deceived by Yahya Khan and his followers," he said.

The Times of India (Bombay), India, March 31, 1971

Bangla Desh Govt is sovereign and legal

Calcutta, March 30

The Government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the sovereign, legal Government of Bangla Desh and is entitled to "recognition from all democratic countries of the world." Major Zia Khan, Provisional Commander-in-Chief of the Liberation Army, declared this morning.

In a broadcast over Free Bangla Radio on behalf of the Sheikh, Maj. Zia Khan said: "The new democratic Government is committed to a policy of non-alignment in international relations. It will seek friendship with all nations and strive for international peace."

Maj. Zia Khan began the broadcast with these words: "I, Major Zia, Provisional Commander-in-Chief of the Bangla Liberation Army, hereby proclaim on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the independence of Bangla Desh.

"I also declare," he continued, "we have already formed a sovereign legal government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which pledges to function as per law and the Constitution."

The Times of London, United Kingdom, March 31, 1971

President Yahya was advised against force

Calcutta, March 30

Free Bengal Radio came on the air again today and announced that the new sovereign state of Bangla Desh will pursue a foreign policy of non-alignment. The clandestine radio

station continued to claim that the "Liberation Army", headed by a Major Zia Khan, had overrun the West Pakistan Army in most areas, including the port of Khulna, Jessore, and the Sylhet Comilla belt.

...

The 350 people of Jainagar have little to fight with but they have heard that Shaikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League leader, has declared their province a sovereign republic and say they are prepared to die for it.

The Bangkok Post, Thailand, March 31, 1971

[‘War of the words’ rages in P’stan](#)

New Delhi, Tues

Major Zia Khan, identified as the head of the provisional government of Bangla Desh, broadcast an appeal for recognition from other countries, Indian monitors reported.

"The new democratic government is committed to a policy of non-alignment in international relations," Major Zia was quoted as saying.

Supporting Documentation

- [Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra: The Story of March 26, 1971](#), *Bangladesh Observer*, April 23, 1972
- [Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s Declaration of Independence](#), *Bangladesh Swadhinata Juddho: Dalil Potro, Volume 3*, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 1982
- [Ziaur Rahman’s Declaration of Independence](#), *Bangladesh Swadhinata Juddho: Dalil Potro, Volume 3*, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 1982
- [Mujibnagar Proclamation of Independence, April 10, 1971](#), *Bangladesh Swadhinata Juddho: Dalil Potro, Volume 3*, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 1982
- [Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro Transcripts \(fragments\), March 26-30, 1971](#), *Bangladesh Swadhinata Juddho: Dalil Potro, Volume 5*, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 1982
- [Article on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro by Atikur Rahman published in Purbodesh, December 15, 1972](#), *Bangladesh Swadhinata Juddho: Dalil Potro, Volume 5*, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 1982
- [Article on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro by Belal Mohammad](#), *Bangladesh Swadhinata Juddho: Dalil Potro, Volume 5*, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 1982
- [Printout of Telex from March 26, 1971](#)

[Pre-paid phone card.](#) [Pre-paid calling card.](#)

14 Responses to “Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro And Bangladesh’s Declaration Of Independence”

1. [omi rahman pial](#) Says:
[January 9th, 2008 at 12:58 pm](#)

Well written and well documented. some who like to put zia as the declarer of freedom of bangladesh should have a look in this footage:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtAUbEfi58E>

zia himself clarifies the timing of declaration

will be glad if u have time to look at the post

:<http://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/omipialblog/28750850>

2. [ZaFa](#) Says:
[January 10th, 2008 at 2:26 pm](#)

Thanks for the thorough research Mash. Now, nobody - our historians, the politicians or the journalists can claim that we do not have documents to backup the historical facts. 😊 >-

How humiliating is it for as Bangladeshi when AFP writes something like this:

“Since 1991, textbooks have been subject to alterations by governments led alternately by Sheikh Mujib’s daughter, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, and Ziaur’s widow, Khaleda Zia.”

Interesting that Zia himself never claimed to have made any Bangla announcement that started with “Ami major Zia bolchhi...”

BTW, wiki is not a widely accepted source. Some academics don’t give credits to students for referencing the wiki as a source of credible info. But since wiki has become a convenient tool for quick referencing, we need to write to the wiki editors to correct the entires.

3. [Sushanta](#) Says:
[January 14th, 2008 at 8:06 am](#)

A lot of thnx to Jalal Bhai and Mash Bhai, I am transletting the whole piece into Bangla. Pls allow me few days to do so.

Just excellent.

4. [*Unheard Voices » Say no to bosta pocha controversy and check the history yourself*](#) Says:
[January 21st, 2008 at 4:37 pm](#)

[...] <http://www.docstrangelove.com/2008/01/09/swadhin-bangla-betar-kendro-and-bangladeshs-declaration-of-independence/> [...]

5. *Shahed I* Says:
[January 22nd, 2008 at 5:19 pm](#)

Mash,

According to the interview in # 1:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtAUbEfi58E>

Major Zia is saying that he made the declaration on the 27th evening. Is it the one he clarified later on the 30th (as you had mentioned in our UV thread)? Just curious to know.

ps: Posting it here to avoid any silly arguments.

6. *Mash* Says:
[January 22nd, 2008 at 8:47 pm](#)

Shahed, the reports from the foreign press only show what was **reported**. That however does not necessarily mean that Zia did not make a declaration of independence on March 27 - it just means it was not reported and I have found no documentary evidence yet establishing that date. In the video Zia says he made a "declaration". Its not clear, without seeing the rest of the video, whether he was referring to his speech on the 27th (see below) when he declared himself the head of the liberation army. He was clearly on the air on the 27th as some Indian newspapers reported. Unfortunately they did not report that he made a declaration of independence then, so if he did we need to find other sources for confirmation. The fragment of this speech in the Dalil Patro also makes no mention of a declaration of independence (see below).

His speech on the 28th, the one I was referring to in the other thread, was widely reported. Even if you did not hear it directly from Kalurghat, if you were listening to All India Radio, BBC or VOA, you would have heard about that speech. But even in that speech, there is no mention of a declaration of independence by Zia.

To put some more context around Zia's announcements on the 27th and 28th, we can match what was reported in the foreign press with the fragments of the transcripts we have from the Dalil Patro (see [here](#) for the fragments). Unfortunately the Dalil Patro does not attach any dates to the fragments (we can

only thank the editors for propagating the confusion). But we can use the newspaper reports to date the speeches.

If you look at pages 2 and 3 in the Dalil patro link I provided above, you will see a declaration by Zia that matches what the Indian papers reported (on the 28th) he said on the 27th. It also happens to match what Zia says in the video about telling people about what was going on. Here's an excerpt:

This is Major Zia, leader of the Bengal Liberation Army, speaking on the support of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's liberation movement.

The Pakistan Army consisting mainly of Punjabi traitors are killing the Bengalee civilians of all ages, and they acted in most ruthless manner. They have not spared the unarmed Bengalees - those are chiefly - those unarmed Bengali officers and men of the army, navy and air force, some of whose families have not been killed. The massacre started on the night of last Thursday when they attacked and started killing the unarmed soldiers, navy, airmen and civilian population all over Swadhin Bangladesh.

...

Voice of America has announced that Baluchistan and Pakhtunistan with North West Frontier Province have seceded from Pakistan to support the cause of Swadhin Bangladesh. At this moment we have to fight united. By the grace of God, we will capture all Punjabi traitors in a matter of one or two days and free Bangladesh of these menaces. Joy Bangla.

If you look at page 7 in the Dalil Patro link, you will see text of the speech Zia gave on the 28th (reported widely on the 29th) Here are some key excerpts:

I therefore on behalf of the people of Bangladesh request all the peace loving countries of the world to give immediate recognition to Swadhin Bangladesh and extend physical assistance of all types to liberate the democratic minded people of Bangladesh. Under the circumstances however I hereby declare myself as a Provisional Head of the Swadhin Bangla Liberation Government under the guidance of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I urge upon the people of Bangladesh to continue this freedom movement.

You can see why the 28th speech would raise question about where Sheikh Mujib was. That is why, I surmise, he made the clarifying speech on the 30th.

Also notice on page 12, the English declaration from March 26th that matches what was reported in the foreign press on March 27th:

Here is an announcement from Radio Free Bangladesh. Our leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had declared the independence of Bangladesh. Now Bangladesh is an independent and sovereign state...

Notice that this comes from “Radio Free Bangladesh” as a number of foreign newspapers reported.

The Bangla version of a declaration is on page 8 of the Dalil Patro link. It says:

Swadhin Bangla Betar theke procharitho onushtan shunchen...

Mohan jononayak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Banglar swadhinata ghoshona koresen...

Some foreign reports on March 27th obviously reported off the Bangla version because they used the phrase “Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro” instead of “Radio Free Bangladesh”.

One final bit of trivia in on page 3 when a speech by Zia is announced. This is the Bangla version of the first March 27th speech. It followed the English version given by Zia earlier on the 27th. The speech is announced in Bangla as follows and begins:

Ebar apnader mukti-Bangali mukti shena bahinir nayak Major Zia apnaderke Banglai bhashon dhissen.

Ami Sheikh Mujibur Rahmaner ghoshito swadhin Bangla proshonge bolchi...

Here again Zia does not declare independence but cites Mujib’s declaration.

As an aside, when I started researching this I had expected to find plenty of reports of Zia’s March 27th declaration of independence. Instead I was surprised, and completely taken aback, by where the research led me.

7. *yasmeen* Says:

[January 22nd, 2008 at 11:34 pm](#)

Guys, the following link is the essential reading for debaters on Sheik vs. Zia’s role in the Declaration of Independence.

<http://www.bangladesh-web.com/view.php?hidRecord=157482>

Thanks

8. *Mash* Says:

[January 23rd, 2008 at 12:56 am](#)

yasmeen, the link you provided does not add anything to the substance of the post. It only propagates the food fight. That article is an example of exactly what has been wrong with the food fight.

9. *Darkcrunk* Says:
[January 23rd, 2008 at 5:52 am](#)

I wish I was alive back then -)

Don't know if our country will ever get back that patriotism, that love, it had back then.

People just go around do their things.

We should have more wars. Today's generation would then know the meaning of struggle. Meaning of "country" and most importantly, the meaning of independence.

10. *Shahed I* Says:
[January 23rd, 2008 at 1:08 pm](#)

Thanks, Mash.

11. *People Power Granny* Says:
[January 27th, 2008 at 9:23 pm](#)

Check out my recent post on *People Power Granny*. I have lots of questions about what you think of us Americans, and what I think of us. You can also vote in my poll and let me know what you think of us who live in the USA.

12. *Taniya* Says:
[February 24th, 2008 at 4:25 pm](#)

This is genius. I'm doing a group presentation on religious persecution, and of course i decided on Bangladesh 1971 Liberation war. I'm using you as a source. Thanks! 😊

13. *sadequr rahman* Says:
[March 18th, 2008 at 2:00 am](#)

Dear Mashuq,

We plan to use some of the soundbites in our programmes (with attribution) on Bangla Radio, Canberra. Please let me know immediately if you have any objections.

Thank you.

Sadeq

14. [Mash](#) Says:
[March 18th, 2008 at 9:09 pm](#)

Hi Sadequr, please feel free to use the soundbites. They are important historical artifacts and should be shared.

CBGR1971.org