

# Bengalis Seal Dacca's Bihari Areas

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DACCA, Pakistan, Jan. 30—Bengali soldiers and policemen cordoned off the two main non-Bengali neighborhoods in Dacca today and began a search for weapons. A 24-hour curfew was also imposed on the neighborhoods.

These moves followed an eruption of violence yesterday in which non-Bengalis, who are known as Biharis, opened fire on Bengali refugees who had fled the Pakistani repression and were now said to be returning to their homes in the predominantly Bihari neighborhood of Mohammedpur.

At least six Bengalis were wounded and one killed. No casualties were reported among the Biharis.

The Biharis again opened fire in Mohammedpur today—this time on Bengali policemen and troops of the Bengali Regiment. Exact casualty figures were not available, but Bengali residents said two Biharis and one Bengali soldier were wounded.

## Pitched Battle Reported

Tonight a pitched battle was reported to have broken out in the other principal Bihari area, Mirpur, between Biharis and Bengali forces. Few details were available, but one report said that the Biharis had surrounded about 150 Bengali soldier and policemen. No reports of casualties were available.

Newsmen were barred today from the area, where Bengali soldiers and police are reported to be continuing the search operation.

The police and Bengali soldiers arrested dozens of Biharis in Mohammedpur today for involvement in the morning shooting and for earlier crimes. Many weapons were seized, including light machine guns and Sten guns, according to Bengali officials. They said the Biharis had fired from roofs with these weapons as well as with rifles.

Tension in the area seems to be mounting, and both civilian and military officials have expressed fears of a bloodbath.

The Indian Army—whose victory last month ended Pakistani efforts to repress the Bengali autonomy movement—was pulled out of the Bihari neighborhoods today in order to remove a potential source of friction with the Bengali community. Some Bengalis, in their anger over the Bihari shootings and their desire for revenge for previous incidents, had accused the Indian troops of protecting the Biharis.

During the nine months of the Pakistani military occupation, many Biharis were armed by the Pakistanis and helped them kill several hundred thousand Bengalis.

Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the nation proclaimed by the

Bengali secessionists in what was formerly East Pakistan, made the decision to pull out the Indian troops. He is under heavy pressure from Bengali activists to do something about the Biharis. He has promised to bring all collaborators to trial, but many members of the Mukti Bahini, the Bengali guerrillas who fought against the Pakistanis, are demanding revenge now.

Hundreds of the armed guerrillas descended on the Prime Minister's official residence and on the Government Secretariat last night demanding punitive action against the Biharis.

Sheik Mujib said today that he had told the guerrillas to go back to their homes—that he would "take care of everything." He said they obeyed, but occasional shots could be heard throughout the night and this morning. Though the guerrillas were reportedly barred today from the Bihari neighborhoods, cars full of armed men roamed the edges of these areas.

Word of yesterday's shootings spread swiftly and the anger in the Bengali community over the casualties was almost tangible.

Small convoys of jeeps and cars full of armed Bengalis—members of the guerrilla force that fought against the Pakistanis—descended on Mohammedpur.

On the road leading from downtown Dacca three miles away, young Bengalis quickly set up checkpoints. They stopped all vehicles and dragged out any Biharis they found. "They're killing Bengalis, so we're going to kill them," said one Bengali.

One group of Bengalis pulled a Bihari out of a scooter ricksha, beat him with their fists and a stick, and—as he wept and begged for mercy—pushed him into a nearby house.

Bengali policemen and Indian Army officers who were told about this incident expressed an inability to deal with the situation.

Foreign residents here reported that five or six people were killed Friday night in the Dhanmondi residential area.