

Manzur fled sensing collapse of mutiny

By A Staff Correspondent

The fifth instalment of the White Paper on Chittagong mutiny and the killing of President Ziaur Rahman issued on Saturday dealt with fleeing of the mutiny leader Major General M.A. Manzur along with his family and other accomplices. This part of the White Paper also dealt with the arrest of General Manzur and his killing by some agitated troops.

The White Paper said that General Manzur fled from the Cantonment at around 2 a.m. on June 1, 1981 in a jeep presumably to take shelter at Chittagong Hill Tractor across. There were four persons in the jeep—the mutiny leader Major Gen. Manzur, Major Reza, Major Muzaffar and the driver of the jeep. The jeep stopped near Chittagong University where after half an hour the family of Major General Manzur and Lt. Col. Dilwar joined him.

Along with other officers two jeeps and one pick up proceeded towards north of Chittagong Cantonment. As they drove along the first jeep soon outdistanced the other vehicles and was not within sight of each other. Early in the morning of June 1 the passengers of the rear jeeps heard the sounds of firing in front. These were sounds of firing the White Paper said when the mutineers of the first jeep were confronted by the troops of 12 Engineer Battalion led by an officer who were on their way to safety and surrender. In the exchange of fires

encounter Lt. Col. Motiur Rahman and Lt. Col. Mah. Boob from the mutineers were killed and one Naib Subedar Shamsul Alam of 12 Engineer Battalion was also killed.

After this incident Major General Manzur along with others drove back towards Chittagong and after some time he made halt. Here Major General Manzur begged forgiveness from wounded Lt. Col. Fazle Hussain by saying that it was all his fault and no one else to be blamed for it. Thereafter Major General Manzur and his family and children and wife of Col. Dilwar, Major Gias and Major Reza started walking across the countryside leaving the other mutineers to their fate. After walking a considerable distance with the help of local guides tired and worn out finally the General along with his party took shelter in the house of a tea garden employee at the Kulipara of Ashia Tea Garden. He reached there at about 2.30 p.m. There he sent a local man to bring some food and food was arranged. At about 4 p.m. when Major General Manzur and

Major Gias were having food they found themselves encircled by police and immediately went into hiding. But ultimately he surrendered and was brought to Hathazari Police Station. From there they were handed over to the Escort Officer who went from Chittagong Cantonment. But there were thousands of agitated people in and around the police station and in three jeeps Major General Manzur his family and other officers escorted by police jeep were brought to Chittagong Cantonment. The police left the convoy when the jeep of Major General Manzur entered the Cantonment through No 2 military gate. The pick up carrying the family went straight to the Flag House and jeep carrying Major Reza went straight to the Regimental Centre.

The White Paper said that when the jeep carrying Major General Manzur entered the Cantonment the Escort Officer found troops with arms who were moving around. This made him cautious and as the vehicle neared the VIP house he found more troops. This compelled him to turn the

vehicle and move towards the Artillery Unit Lines and entered the VIP house from East Bengal Regimental Centre Officers Mess gate via Canteen Store Department shop. As soon as the jeep reached near the tri-junction a group of about 20 to 30 armed troops stopped the vehicle and asked the officer to allow them to search the vehicle. Before he could say anything they opened the back door of the jeep where General Manzur was sitting. They started shouting "Khunikey Payeachhi" and dragged him out of the vehicle. In the meantime the Escort Officer got down from the vehicle and pleaded that due justice would be done by the competent authority and they should not do any harm to the General on the spur of the moment. But it was in vain. The Escort Officer left the place in fear and reported it to the command-in-chief. But after coming they found his body lying in a drain on chest. His body was removed to the Combined Military Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

COLLAPSE OF THE MUTINY AND DEATH

OF THE REBEL LEADER LEAVING THE HEADQUARTERS

It was apparent from the statements of many witnesses that on the night 31 May at Headquarters 24 Infantry Division the mutineers got very desperate as their strength started weakening with the news of surrender of large number of forces and as Brigadier Hannan Shah was negotiating and Army Headquarters turning down the terms and

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ter at Chittagong Hill Tractor across. As such he left the Division Headquarters saying that he would be back from his residence. However he took along Major Muzaffar and Major (his personal security officer). At the residence Major Reza kept sitting in side the jeep. Major General Manzur and Major Muzaffar went in side the residence. What transpired in side the house is not known but apparently it is understood that Major General Manzur probably talked to his wife to get prepared for leaving the Cantonment with the children and probably gave her an RV where they would be meeting. After 30/40 minutes i.e. probably around 2 a.m. on 1 June 81 Major Muzaffar and Major General Manzur got out of the house and embarked the jeep waiting outside. The General Officer Commanding's flag was removed from the jeep. There were four persons in the jeep: driver of the jeep Major General Manzur, Major Muzaffar and Major Reza. The jeep got out of the Cantonment with full speed and followed the road leading to Hathazari. Near the Chittagong University the jeep stopped and Major General Manzur told the driver to park the jeep in a camouflaged area. They all disembarked from the jeep. When Major Reza asked Major Muzaffar why they had stopped Major Muzaffar replied that the General Officer Commanding's family would be coming. After about half an hour they saw two vehicles crossing them one jeep and then the General Officer Commanding's staff car. All of them then got into the jeep and the jeep followed and caught up with the staff car. In side the staff car were General Officer Commanding's wife with children and Lieutenant Colonel Dilwar's wife with children. After going a long distance they all stopped. A pickup also joined them. In the pick up were Lieutenant Colonel Fazle Hussain and Captain Jamil who were wounded and the vehicle was driven by Major Khaled. In the meantime few more officers joined them in other jeep. Those who gathered there were General Officer Commanding and his family, Lieutenant Colonel Mehboob, Lieutenant Colonel Motiur Rahman, Major Gias, Major Reza, Lieutenant Colonel Fazle Hussain, Captain Muzir, Captain Jamil and Lieutenant Colonel Dilwar's family. From there General Officer Commanding told the staff car driver to go back with the car to the Cantonment along with the General Officer Commanding's jeep driver. Other vehicles were then marched as follows:—

(1) 1st Jeep (a) Lieutenant Colonel Moti (Driving) (b) Lieutenant Colonel Mahboob (Co-driver's seat) (c) Major Muzaffar (d) Captain Munir.

(2) 2nd Jeep (a) Major General Manzur (co-driver's seat) (b) Major Gias (Driving) (c) Major Reza (d) Major General Manzur's children.

(3) 3rd Jeep (a) Major Iazdani (Driving) (b) Major General Manzur's wife (c) Lieutenant Colonel Dilwar's family (wife and children).

(4) Pick up (a) Major Khaled (Driving) (b) Lieutenant Colonel Fazle Hussain (wounded) (c) Captain Jamil (wounded).

The Encounter. As they drove along, the first jeep soon outdistanced the other vehicles and was not within sight of each other. Early in the morning of 01 June 81 the passengers of the second jeep heard sounds of firing in front. Those were the sounds of firing when the mutineers of the first jeep were confronted by the troops of 12 Engineer Battalion led by an officer who were on their way to safety and surrender. In the exchange of fires encounter which followed Lieutenant Colonel Motiur Rahman and Lieutenant Colonel Mahboob from the mutineers were killed and one Naib Subedar BJO-4744 Shamsul Alam of 12 Engineers Battalion

was also killed. On hearing the sounds of firing Major General Manzur stopped his vehicle and asked everyone to get down. Meanwhile the remaining two vehicles from behind joined them. They decided to turn back towards Chittagong but finding Major Manzur's jeep out of order the passengers Major General Manzur and his children transferred themselves to third jeep driven by Major Iazdani, Major Gias and Major Reza embarked the pick up which Major Khaled was driving.

The Cross-Country March. After journeying some distance towards Chittagong Major General Manzur made a halt. Here Major General Manzur begged forgiveness from wounded Lieutenant Colonel Fazle Hussain by saying that it was all his fault and no one else to be blamed for it. Thereafter Major General Manzur his family and children, Lieutenant Colonel Dilwar's wife and children, Major Gias and Major Reza started walking across the country side leaving the other mutineers to their fate. Major Iazdani and Major Khaled along with remaining mutineers kept on driving their vehicles towards Chittagong. After walking a considerable distance with the help of local guides and taking rest at intervals from place to place the party of Major General Manzur tired and worn out finally reached the Kulipara of Ashia Tea Garden and took refuge in the house of a tea garden employee at about 2.30 p.m. Here he sent a local to fetch some eatables for the family and the children. The local returned soon from the bazar and reported that he found an Army vehicle in the bazar in which two Army personnel were arrested with their eyes and hands tied.

The Surrender. Meanwhile food was arranged for the family and children. At about 4 p.m. when Major General Manzur and Major Gias were having food they found themselves encircled by the police party of Hathazari Police Station. Major General Manzur and the other two officers immediately went into hiding in the tea garden. The police took charge of the ladies and the children and gave a call for the surrender of Major General Manzur and his two accomplices. Finding no alternative Major General Manzur and Major Reza came out of their hiding and surrendered. The Police searched for Major Gias for sometime and being unable to apprehend him finally left for the Police Station along with the party of Major General Manzur. It was about 5 p.m. when they reached the police station. As soon as the news spread that Major General Manzur had been apprehended a large number of agitated people collected around the Hathazari Police Station.

The Taking Over. At about 5.30 p.m. one officer of East Bengal Regimental Centre along with the escort party reached the police station to take over Major General Manzur and others from the police custody. The officer had three vehicles 2 x jeeps and 1 x pickup with him. Major General Manzur was handed over to the escort officer by the police and he was put at the back seat of the jeep while the escort officer put himself in the front seat. Major Reza was put in the other jeep and the families were placed in the pickup. The crowd grew unmanageable (several thousands as stated by the escort officer and Mr. Maruf Superintendent of Police Chittagong). The convoy finally started moving towards Chittagong Cantonment at about 8-30 P.M. on 01 June 81 with police assistance. One police truck led the convoy, followed by the jeep carrying Major Reza, the pickup with the families, one police truck then the jeep with the escort officer and Major General Manzur followed by other police transport.

The Epilogue. During the move of the convoy, there were large number of agitated people standing besides the road

as such the convoy had to move very cautiously and slowly to avoid any mishap. The convoy entered the Cantonment through number 2 Military Police Check Post where the police convoy got separated from the military convoy and left for the city. As briefed earlier by the escort officer, the pickup carrying the families went straight to the flag staff house and the jeep carrying Major Reza went straight to East Bengal Regimental Centre. When the jeep carrying Major General Manzur entered the Cantonment the escort officer found troops with arms who were moving around in small groups along the road. This made him more cautious. As the vehicle neared the VIP house the escort officer saw more troops patrolling near the VIP house and East Bengal Regimental Centre officers mess premise. This compelled him to turn the vehicle and move toward the Artillery unit lines and enter the VIP house from East Bengal Regimental Centre Officer Mess gate via Canteen Store Department Shop. As soon as the jeep reached near the tri-junction in front of the Canteen Store Department Shop a group of about 20 to 30 armed troops stopped the vehicle and asked the officer to allow them to search the vehicle. Before he could say anything they opened the back door of the vehicle and found the General. They started shouting "Khunikey Payeachhi" and dragged him out of the vehicle. In the meantime the officer got down from the vehicle and pleaded that due justice would be done by the competent authority and they should not do any harm to the General on the spur of the moment. But it was in vain. The agitated troops instead of listening to the escort officer pushed him inside the vehicle and threatened him to leave the place at once otherwise they would kill him. All the troops were shouting so loudly that the escort officer's voice went unheard. Being overtaken with fear the escort officer left the place at once along with the escorts in the jeep and went straight to East Bengal Regimental Centre to report the matter to Brigadier Aziz and Brigadier Latif who were given the responsibility to command and control the mutinous garrison. On hearing the incident both Brigadier Aziz and Brigadier Latif told the escort officer to go back immediately to the spot with another senior officer with the instructions to make an appeal to the agitated troops not to harm the General and hand him over to them. Once they reached near the Canteen Store Department shop they found some armed troops standing near the western side of the road and were looking towards something. On the arrival of the officers the troops left the place quietly. The officers got down from the vehicle and found that the General was lying in a drain on the chest. They immediately brought Major General Manzur to Combined Military Hospital where the doctors on examination declared him already dead.

It may be mentioned in passing that the late President was kept informed from time to time about the undesirable activities of Major General M.A. Manzur. Major General Manzur was called by the late President number of times and admonished to the effect that he must refrain from such activities and mend his ways. At some stage the late President was also cautioned by the head of some concerned agency that the life of the Hon'ble President was apprehended to be under danger due to the sinister activities of Major General Manzur. "If Major General Manzur kill me, he will also be killed by the people" commented the late President Ziaur Rahman. Who then knew that the comment of the late President would turn to be so true.

(To be continued)