

## **Annexure 'B'**

Lahore, the 1st June, 1974

### **PRESS RELEASE**

The War Inquiry Commission which has been asked by the government of Pakistan to resume its deliberations and submit a final report was appointed by the then President of Pakistan, Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, on the 26th December, 1971 to enquire into the circumstances in which the Commander, Eastern Command surrendered and the members of the armed forces of Pakistan under his command laid down their arms and a ceasefire was ordered along the borders of West Pakistan and India and along the ceasefire line in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Commission is headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Justice Hamoodur Rahman. The other two members of the Commission are Mr. Justice S. Anwarul Haq, Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan and Mr. Justice Tufaif Ali Abdur Rahman, Chief Justice of Sid and Baluchistan High Court. Lt. Gen (Rtd) Altaf Qadir and Mr. M.A Latif, Assistant Registrar of the Supreme Court of Pakistan are Military Adviser and Secretary of the Commission, respectively.

The Commission, which had started its proceedings in camera in Rawalpindi on the 1st of February, 1972 recorded evidence of 213 witnesses. It had submitted its report to the then President of Pakistan on the 12th July, 1972. In the Report the Commission had observed that its findings with regard to the causes of surrender in East Pakistan were only tentative. It, therefore, recommended that as and when the Commander, Eastern Command and other senior officers who were in India at that time were available, a further inquiry should be held into the circumstances which led to the surrender in East Pakistan. Now that all the prisoners of war and civil internees have returned to Pakistan, the Government has asked the Commission to complete this part of its inquiry.

A temporary office of the Commission has been set up for the present in the Supreme Court building at Lahore and the Commission has decided that before commencing its proceeding a place to be announced, later on the members of the public civil services and the armed forces who were either prisoners of war in India or were otherwise repatriated from East Pakistan should be given an opportunity to furnish to the commission such relevant information as may be within their knowledge relating to the causes of surrender in East Pakistan. This information should be submitted in writing, preferably 5 copies, as briefly as possible by the 30th June, 1974 at the latest to the Secretary of the Inquiry Commission care of Supreme Court of Pakistan, Lahore. The informant should also state whether he would be willing to appear before the Commission.

All such information and particulars of the persons giving the information will be strictly confidential. It may be mentioned that according to a public announcement of the Government of Pakistan, published in newspapers on the 11th of January, 1972, all proceedings before the Commission would be in camera and the statements made before and addressed to it would be absolutely privileged and would not render a person making any such statement liable to any civil or criminal proceedings except when such statement is false. The Commission is empowered to call before it any citizen of Pakistan to seek information. The Commission can, if necessary, even issue warrants to secure the attendance of any person unless he is otherwise exempted by law from personal appearance before a Court. The serving personnel of defence services who are willing to give evidence before the Commission should have no apprehension of victimisation for assisting the Commission in its task.