

The six-point movement:

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After the formation of Pakistan, the people of East zone were suppressed in every Sector. They were even not secured in severe national disarray, which became visible during the India-Pakistan war in 1965. When the Bengalis were looking for a new formula to express their national pride a desire for a substantial measure for independence from the centralized political structure Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, as Awami League leader, proposed the " Six Point" demand in February, 1966. The six-point demand is a remarkable document. The points are given below —

- i. The establishment of federation on the basis of labor resolution and a Parliamentary govt. with supremacy of legislature to be directly elected by adult franchise.
- ii. The federation will deal with defense and foreign affair, and all other subject rest in the federating state.
- iii. Introduction of either two separate but freely convertible currencies for the two wings or one currency for the whole country, provided that effective constitutional provision should be made to stop the flight of capital from East to west zone. There should be separate banking reserve, fiscal and monetary policy for East Pakistan.
- iv. Right of taxation will be in the hands of federation state, with center receiving a fixed portion.
- v. Establishment of two separate accounts for foreign exchange earning of the two wings, foreign exchange requirement of the federal govt. Shall be met either by equally or in a ratio to be fixed; indigenous product shall move free of duty between the two wings; the constitution shall empower unit govt. to establish trade and commercial relation with setup trade mission and enter into agreement with foreign countries.
- vi. Setting up of militia or paramilitary force for East Pakistan.

The Six-point movement started by the Awami League in 1966, though short-lived, marked a significant radicalization of Bengali

politics and played a crucial role in shaping later political movements. The Six-point demand was a remarkable document. Unlike previous Bengali demands, it did not call upon the central government to do more for East Pakistan, but asked the central government to let East Pakistan do more for it. The Movement which launched the Six-Point demand adopted more radical tactics than had been used before in East Pakistan. In the past the student-literati alliance had played the leading role in political movements. Now workers and “ street mobs” for the first time had a significant part, and the burnt was borne not by the students, though they also participated, but by the workers. Worker and mob participation naturally meant a more “ violent movement”. In the previous student-dominated movements the strategy had included the staging of mass meeting and peaceful processions, both of which often resulted in mild clashes with the police. But the Six-Point Movement for the first time involved raids on police stations, looting of arms, and violent confrontations with the police. While the students’ wrath was directed against one or two pro-government newspaper offices, the workers’ and the mob wrath was directed at local symbols of authority — police stations, banks and government administration buildings. The workers radical methods soon led to the radicalization of the students. The regime’s policy toward the Six-Point Movement revealed, once again, its inability to respond politically to political demands. When Sheikh Mujibur Rahman first launched the movement, he hinted that the demands were negotiable, but the regime, instead of trying to reach some settlement with him, embarked on a course of head on confrontation. While Mujib was touring West Pakistan trying to galvanize mass support for the movement Ayub made a similar

east-wing tour, during which he engaged in a running verbal battle with Mujib, branding the latter's demands as "secessionist", "disruptions", "a demand for greater Bengal", etc. But such accusations were hardly heeded in East Pakistan, where for the past nineteen years any demand for autonomy or political freedom had been branded as secessionist. Ayub's threats of force and "civil war" only enraged the Bengalis more and evoked further support for the Six Points. The Six-Point Movement: