

# East Pakistan Leader Stops Short of Declaring Independence

By Ronald Koven Washington Post Staff Writer

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In a tough speech which was short of demanding independence for his province, Pakistani political leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman demanded that the national army be withdrawn from East and that President Yahya Khan immediately end martial law under which he has ruled since early 1969.

It had been widely predicted in rumors spread by his followers that Mujibur would declare East Pakistan's independence.

Seasoned observers defuse those demands as unacceptable to the president. These observers expressed deep skepticism about the prospects for compromise and said that the next week to 10 days would probably be decisive.

Sheikh Mujibur told a

...that he would not set a constitutional convention for March 25 unless his demands were met.

He set two other conditions that an inquiry should be made into the killings of which he holds the army responsible in riot-torn East Pakistan last week, and that power should be transferred to the elected representatives of the people.

On Saturday Yahya set the March 25 date in an effort to defuse the situation bordering on civil war that had followed his indefinite postponement of the constituent assembly, originally scheduled to begin March 2.

Yahya postponed the assembly after West Pakistani political leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced that he would boycott it.

Ali Bhutto apparently feared that the East Pakistani majority elected in December would carry out its announced intention of voting broad autonomy bordering on sovereignty for their province.

Mujibur's demand yesterday for power to elected representatives was the reverse side of

...that he should organize his followers before coming into the open against the army.

However, these observers interpreted Mujibur's demands as offering a short breathing spell in the country's constitutional crisis. In his speech, Mujibur told his followers they must be prepared to continue their struggle for emancipation from West Pakistani exploitation "at any cost."

A source who is close to him said Mujibur needs time to or-

...in the military regime was taken to mean that the army would not vacate repressive measures.

Some well-placed observers interpreted Yahya's appointment Saturday of Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan as military governor of East Pakistan as a sign that the army hard-liners are gaining the upper hand in Yahya's entourage. Tikka was described by one qualified source as "bloodthirsty."

Mujibur's demand of power for elected representatives after the national constituent assembly in December, should be allowed to function immediately.

It was not supposed to be convened until after the promulgation of a new constitution. Mujibur's Awami League holds more than 90 per cent of the seats in the provincial assembly and a comfortable ma-

U.S. concern over the East Pakistani situation is understood to have reached the point that the U.S. consulate general in Dacca was prepared on Thursday and Friday to put into effect contingency plans for the evacuation of Americans in the province. But the consulate is now said to be adopting a wait-and-see attitude.

