

Minority group obstructing transfer of power

Conspiracy with vested interests alleged

Mujib analyses situation, reiterates determination



Mujib asks people to obey his companions during his absence

Special prayers held for martyrs

DACCA, March 7: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, President of Awami League, said here today that he had never conveyed any impression that an RTC-type of conference should be held.

In a statement issued here today after a two-day closed-door meeting of the Working Committee of the party, the Sheikh also 'repudiated' that the Awami League in any way obstructed the transfer of power and added that the majority party certainly would not gain by obstruction.

The Sheikh said, 'I had only conveyed to the President that he should come to Dacca, in order to see the grave situation prevailing in Bangla Desh.'

It was pointed out, he added, that constitutional issues were best resolved within the National Assembly and its Committees rather than by secret negotiations and that once a National Assembly had been brought into being there was no justification for any RTC or secret parleys.

Sheikh Mujib said, 'It is only too clear to the people of the country and indeed the world that it is a minority group of Western Wing which has obstructed and is continuing to obstruct the transfer of power.'

Reacting to the President's assertion in his address yesterday that the postponement of the Assembly had been 'misunderstood', the Sheikh asked whether or not this was effected solely in response to the machinations of a single party — constituting a minority of the total members against the declared wishes of the majority party and also those of numerous West Pakistani members.

Recounting the measures taken during the last few days, Sheikh Mujib said that it now appeared that the 'political confrontation was soon to be followed by 'military confrontation' if the major-

ity did not submit to the dictation of the minority group.

He said neither democratic way of life could be established nor power could be transferred to the people if a minority group conspired with the vested interests to frustrate the democratic process.

He warned that if democracy was the ultimate casualty or the proposed transfer of power aborted, the responsibility would lie with the minority group and those who colluded with it.

He, therefore, suggested a seven-point formula for immediate adoption if the President sincerely desired that the National Assembly, as the sovereign body of the elected representatives of the people, should function.

The points are:

(a) Immediate withdrawal of Martial Law.

(b) Transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people.

(c) Immediate withdrawal of all military personnel to the barracks.

(d) Immediate cessation of the military build-up and the heavy inflow of military personnel from the Western Wing.

(e) Immediate cessation of firing upon civilians so that not a single bullet is fired with immediate effect.

(f) Non-interference by the military authorities in the different branches of the Government functioning in Bangla Desh and direction to desist from victimisation of Government officers and employees.

(g) Maintenance of law and order to be left exclusively to the police and Bengal EPE, assisted, wherever necessary, by Awami League volunteers.

BACKGROUND

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, 'between the first of March when there was a sudden announcement of the postponement of the sitting of the National Assembly and the sixth of March, the people of Bangla Desh have been subjected to military confrontation. There has been widespread firing upon unarmed civilians (workers, peasants and students) who had stood up to protest against the sudden and unwarranted postponement of the National Assembly. Those who have lost their lives during the last week are martyrs who, died protecting the

DACCA, March 7: Special prayer was offered at the historic Ramna Race Course today for the peace of the souls of the martyrs who laid down their lives in the current movement for the realisation of their rights.

The prayer was led by Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish, MNA-elect and former President of East Pakistan Awami League, before Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had announced the action programme on the struggle of seven crore Bengalis for their economic, political and social rights.

Sheikh Sahib arrived at the meeting wearing his usual dress—Punjabi pajama and Bangla bandhu coat.

The proceedings of the meeting began with the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran. Student leaders, a few prominent party MNAs of both East Pakistan Student League and the Dacca University Central Students Union and two sons of Sheikh Sahib (Mustafa Jamal and Mustafa Kamal) sat on the dais. Sheikh Sahib looked very grave and in his 18-minute speech his voice was choked with emotion.

A hush fell as soon as Sheikh Sahib stood up to deliver his speech. The vast gathering listened to his speech in pin-drop silence, with great expectation to know what he would ask them to do. The silence of the meeting was broken frequently by slogans.

The vast gathering raised their hands in unison to signify their support and approval when the Sheikh wanted to know whether they were ready to make sacrifice for the achievement of their rights.

Sheikh Sahib appealed to Bengalis to obey the directive of his companions if they did not find him (Sheikh Mujib) in their midst during the movement.

His 18-minute speech began exactly at 3.2 p.m.—PPT.

Tikka Khan in Dacca

DACCA, March 7: Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, Governor-designate, East Pakistan arrived here this afternoon.

He was received at the airport by Lt. Gen. Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, Martial Law Administrator, Zone B, and other senior military officers.

—AFP

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HOLIDAY NOTICE

The offices of 'Dawn' will remain closed today on account of 'Ashura'. There will therefore be no paper tomorrow (Tuesday).

AL chief's statement

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democratic rights of the people against arbitrary and unwarranted action of postponement since die of the National Assembly."

P.P.P.'s ROLE

He said: "It is said that the postponement of the National Assembly has been 'misunderstood'. I would like to ask the President whether or not this postponement was effected solely in response to the machinations of a single party—constituting a minority of the total members—against the declared wishes of the majority party and also those of numerous members from the Western Wing?"

"We had suggested the 15th February as the date for the first sitting, while the minority group in question had indicated a preference for the first week of March. It was the minority group's view which was accepted and the Assembly was summoned on the 3rd of March. But then the same minority group raised objections to participation in the National Assembly. First, it took up the highly objectionable position that its members would be in 'jeopardy' if they came to Dacca and that they would be double hostages'. Thereafter, this party took up the position that it would only attend the National Assembly on the terms dictated by it. It then went on to strike another posture when its members recorded a decision to resign from the National Assembly. What was particularly surprising was that almost simultaneously an amendment appeared in the LFO enabling Members to resign before the first sitting. But then they decided not to resign. This party's intransigence reached its climax when on 27th February it declared that it would launch a mass movement if the National Assembly was to meet without its participation. It went so far as to say that the people would take full 'revenge on those who chose to attend the National Assembly session and that if the people failed to take revenge' then that party 'would take action against them'. It further threatened that if any member of its own attended the session the workers would liquidate him

AL STAND

By this time, our Parliamentary Party had assembled at Dacca and Members had already begun to arrive from the different provinces of the Western Wing.

The Chief Election Commissioner had reached Dacca and announced that the election of the women Members was to be held on the second of March. The President himself was expected to arrive on the 1st March for the inaugural session.

"Our own position on constitution-making had been clearly stated in our Press statement of the 24th February when we reiterated our invitation to each and every member of the National Assembly from all parts of Pakistan to cooperate with us in this historic task. On the 27th February he went to the extent of affirming that if any Member presents before the Assembly anything just and reasonable we would accept it. But even this was ignored. It would appear deliberately and with motive."

POSTPONEMENT REACTION
"On the 1st March by a Radio-statement there was sudden and unwarranted postponement of the National Assembly sitting since die. The reason given was that

with our Working Committee and Parliamentary Party meetings which had been fixed several weeks in advance would not enable us to travel to Rawalpindi at that time. Furthermore, we had pointed out that constitutional issues were best resolved with in the National Assembly and its Committees rather than by secret negotiations, and that once a National Assembly had been brought into being, there was no justification for any RTC or secret parleys.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said he had recounted "all these facts" in detail to "repudiate the charge that the Awami League had in any way obstructed the transfer of power. "The majority party is certainly not the party which would stand to gain by such obstruction. It is only too clear to the people of the country and indeed the world that it is a minority group of the Western Wing which has obstructed and is continuing to obstruct the transfer of power."

He said the democratic way of life could not be established nor could power be transferred to the people if a minority group conspired with the vested interests to frustrate the democratic process. "If the democratic way of life be the ultimate casualty and if the proposed transfer of power is aborted, this minority group and those who colluded with it shall not escape responsibility."

He said: "Are these very elements not the 'handful of people' whose actions have struck grievous blows to the efforts of the elected representatives of the people to evolve a basis for living together."

ONLY AUTHORITY

He said today after the elections the only legitimate source of authority in the country are the elected representatives of the people. No individual can claim authority superior to that of the elected representatives. We as the representatives of the overwhelming majority of the people of Bangla Desh assert that we are the only legitimate source of authority for Bangla Desh. Indeed, by virtue of our majority position, we are the legitimate source of authority for the whole country.

The events of the last seven days have shown that all branches of government functioning throughout Bangla Desh have accepted us as the source of legitimate authority and have carried out our directives.

"Today, the President and the Government at Islamabad should acknowledge this basic fact. It would, therefore, be in consonance with the declared wishes of the people of Bangla Desh that no one should interfere with the exercise of authority by the elected representatives of the people."

NO N.A. AT GUNPOINT

This brings us to the question of the sitting of the National Assembly announced for the 25th March. The Awami League President said: "We had ourselves time and again asserted the urgency in respect of an early sitting but today a grave and abnormal situation has been created. A virtual reign of terror has been created in pursuance of the policy of military confrontation of the civilian population of Bangla Desh."

He said the Members of the National Assembly could not be expected to discharge their duties in 'an atmosphere of terror'.

"So long as this state of confrontation as also the inflow of army personnel and arms from the Western Wing continues, so long as an atmosphere of repression is maintained, so long as there are daily reports of military firing upon civilians in different parts of Bangla Desh, the members from Bangla Desh could hardly be expected to contemplate participating in the National Assembly at gunpoint," he said.

MEASURES SUGGESTED

and religious groups and between Bengalis and so-called 'non-Bengalis'

I once again reaffirm that every person living in Bangla Desh is a Bengali and that his person, property and honour are our sacred trust and that at any cost be protected. We are proud to note that since our volunteers have undertaken the task of vigilance and patrol, there have been no untoward incidents.

"Our struggle must continue. The objective of the present phase of the struggle is the immediate termination of Martial Law and the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. Till this objective is attained, our non-violent, non-co-operation movement must continue."

The statement then gave the 10-point programme action for the week commencing March 8, 1971.—APP.

Military Court convictions

LAHORE, March 7: Ten persons were tried under different MLR by a Military Court of Sector-3, Zone "C" and were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

Foot Constable No. 1447 Mohammad-Anwar s/o Ali Mohammad of District Police Lines, Lahore, was tried under MLR 22 on the charge of accepting illegal gratification and was sentenced to six months' R.I.

Mehraj Din of Misri Shah, and Ayub of Delhi Gate, Lahore, who were tried under MLR 14 and 414. PFC were not found guilty and acquitted.

Mohammad Hafeez of Misri Shah, Lahore, who was tried under 414 PPC and MLR 14 and 15 also acquitted.

Noor Ahmed of Mohni Road, Lahore, was tried under MLR 14/5 and 41 PFC. He was found in possession of stolen copper wire belonging to Telegraph Department and was sentenced to three months' R.I. and a fine of Rs. 1,000.

Mohammad Akram s/o Boota, Anwar s/o Suleman, Yousof s/o Khusi Mohammad and Muzaffar s/o Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Asghar s/o Fazal Mohammad, all residents of Kahna district, Lahore, were tried under MLR 14 and 379 PFC on the charge of stealing copper wire by cutting it from poles No. 4/23 to 5/9 belonging to Telephone/Telegraph Department. All the accused were sentenced to undergo three months' R.I. each.—APP.

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change of fire".

However, he continued "This does not mean that political action will stop and leave the talking only to cannons. We will watch and decide what is our duty at the proper time and chosen place."

Discussing his trip to Moscow, he said: "I had the occasion of meeting the Soviet leaders last week. They had contacted me and told me that the time was propitious for a meeting between us. I then decided to go secretly to Moscow on Monday (March 1) at dawn. The following day, I was back in Cairo. During my visit, I had talks with Party's First Secretary Leonid Brezhnev (President Podgorny and Premier Kosygin on all the eventualities arising from the situation.

I am fully satisfied with the talks and I am convinced that the USSR unconditionally and positively supports our just

post-ponement of the National Assembly sitting sine die. The reason given was that there should be more time for "understanding" and it was said that there was political confrontation between the leaders of East Pakistan and those of the West. Did the people of Bangla Desh not have sufficient reason to feel that their democratic rights had been grossly interfered with at the behest of an undemocratic minority? Were there not enough grounds for them to feel that a minority group had aligned itself with certain forces to obstruct the constitutional process and to deprive the majority of the people of their rights? Indeed, these apprehensions were further fortified by the steady military build-up which became evident. This showed that political confrontation was soon to be followed by 'military confrontation', if the majority did not submit to the dictation of the minority.

CONSPIRACY HISTORY

"Indeed, we had warned in our statement of the 24th February that dark conspiratorial forces had always intervened in our country whenever the people were to take over power through the democratic process. The microscopic minority, which represented the vested interests of the Western Wing, had by sabotaging democracy deprived the 75 million people of Bangla Desh, as they did the oppressed masses of the Western Wing of their basic rights. In 1953 the Bengali Prime Minister was dismissed by a conspiracy of the Punjabi ruling clique. In 1954, the elected Government in East Bengal was dismissed and the Constituent Assembly itself was dismissed by the same clique. When general elections were to be held in early 1959, the vested interests of the Punjab once again struck and usurped power. Today the Punjabi ruling coterie is attempting to repeat this disgraceful history. But they should know that the awakened masses of Bangla Desh as also the oppressed masses of the Western Wing shall resist their foul conspiracies by every means possible.

To set the record straight, I should make it clear that I had never conveyed any impression that an R/C-type of conference should be held. I had only conveyed to the President that he should come to Dacca in order to see the grave situation prevailing in Bangla Desh. As for the earlier meeting proposed by the President, we had made it clear that our pre-occupation

sembly at gunpoint," he said.
MEASURES SUGGESTED
 Sheikh Mujibur Rehman said: "If the President sincerely desired that the National Assembly, as the sovereign body of the elected representatives of the people, should function then the following measures must immediately be adopted:

- (a) Immediate withdrawal of all military personnel to their barracks;
- (b) Immediate cessation of firing upon civilians, so that not a single bullet is fired with immediate effect;
- (c) Immediate cessation of the military build-up and the heavy inflow of military personnel from the Western Wing;
- (d) Non-interference by the military authorities in the different branches of the Government functioning in Bangla Desh and direction to desist from victimisation of Government officers and employees;
- (e) Maintenance of law and order to be left exclusively to the police and Bengali EPR assisted, wherever necessary, by Awami League volunteers;
- (f) Immediate withdrawal of Martial Law and
- (g) Immediate transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people'.

He said if the 'military confrontation' is continued: 'let there be no doubt that no National Assembly can ever function'.

PEOPLE'S DETERMINATION

The Awami League President said: "Our people have already proclaimed to the world that they shall no longer allow themselves to be exploited as a colony or a market. They have expressed their determination to be the free citizens of a free country. Our economy must be saved from ruination. Our tolling masses are to be saved from starvation, disease and unemployment. The millions in the cyclone-ravaged areas are yet to be rehabilitated.

If the ruling coteries seek to frustrate these aspirations, the people are ready for a long and sustained struggle for their emancipation. We pledge to lead this struggle and ultimately to attain for the people their cherished goal of emancipation, for which so many martyrs have shed their blood and made the supreme sacrifice of their lives. The blood of these martyrs shall not go in vain.

The first phase of our struggle has been launched. Our heroic masses have displayed indomitable courage and determination. They have braved bullets and violated curfews in a planned manner. I also congratulate our people, and our Awami League volunteers, who have frustrated the designs of agent provocateurs and anti-social elements to create communal-tension between differ-