

N.A. SESSION

MUJIB DEPLORES POSTPONEMENT

Calls for hartal in country on March 3

DACCA, March 1: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, President of the Awami League, today deplored the postponement of the National Assembly session, which was to begin here from March 3.

Addressing a hurriedly called Press conference, the Awami League chief said "we cannot allow this to go unchallenged."

Sheikh Mujib gave a call for the observance of complete strike tomorrow in Dacca and country-wide hartal on March 3, the day

the session was to be held. The strike would be followed by a public meeting at Ramina Race Course Maidan here on March 7.

When asked whether he would seek the co-operation of other political parties, the Awami League chief said that he had decided to discuss with Maulana Bhashani, Mr. Nurul Amin, Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan, Prof. Muzaffar Ahmed and other leaders, as soon as possible, the problems caused by the postponement of the session.

To a question as to what he would tell the people standing outside the hotel, Sheikh Mujib said that he would ask the Bengalis to be united and they must be ready for any sacrifice.

Thousands of people with sticks and rods in their hands were raising slogans outside the hotel, where the Sheikh was holding the Press conference.

DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

While asking the people to be ready for making any sacrifice, he advised them not to resort to violence. "We are a democratic party and believe in democratic process and shall go for peaceful constitutional movement," he added.

Sheikh Mujib replied in the negative when asked whether he was consulted before the postponement.

To another question whether he had prior information, he said, "I got the information. I had told you time and again, conspiracy is going on. I get some information."

He replied "no comment" when his attention was drawn to the burning of Pakistani flag outside the hotel.

To a question whether he would seek co-operation of West Pakistan, the Awami League chief said that he would ask the people of the Punjab, Sind, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan to rise and protest against this conspiracy. It is upto them.

When asked whether he apprehended the arrests of Party members, Sheikh Mujib said that they were ready for any consequences. "My people are with me. Let us hope for the best and prepare for the worst."

The Awami League chief said that he had given a programme upto March 7. My party, he said, had authorised me to take any decision. In the parliamentary party meeting, he said, the members renewed their oath which they had taken at the mass rally at the Race Course Maidan on Jan 3.

When asked as to what will be the fate of non-Bengalis living in Bengal, the Awami League chief said, "They are the sons of the soil. They must join with the people here."

Replying to another question on the posting of forces in certain institutions, he said "you people are a colony."

While making the statement, Sheikh Mujib said that all members of Bengal were here for the session. The members from West Pakistan, except of the parties of

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Yahya's conditional offer to settle outstanding issues

BEIRUT, March 1: President Yahya Khan of Pakistan offered today to settle his country's outstanding disputes with India through direct negotiations, mediation or arbitration.

But he said India should first express its willingness to settle the disputes in a good neighbourly spirit.

President Yahya Khan said in an interview with the independent Beirut magazine 'Usbu el Arabi (Arab Week)'. He listed Kashmir, the Farakka Dam, affairs of Muslims in India as among the major outstanding disputes between the two countries.

But he made no reference to the recent hijacking of an Indian Airliner to Pakistan which brought about the current India-Pakistan strain.

He said Pakistan's military trainers and advisers in Jordan will not take a direct or active part in the Arab-Israeli conflict if a new war breaks out in the Middle East.

He said Pakistan will continue to reduce its participation in CENTO and SEATO two Western alliances for the Middle East and South-East Asia. Pakistan's membership in both alliances became pointless since neither alliance took an active stand during the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, he said.

President Yahya Khan reiterated he would resign the Presidency and return to his original post of Commander-in-Chief of the Army when his country's politicians make a proper transfer of the reins of government to them possible.—APA.

LATE NEWS

JEDDAH, March 1: Lebanon and Saudi Arabia are convinced that peace is possible in the Middle East so long as the consequences of the Israeli aggression against the Arab countries are not wiped out and the usurped rights of the Palestinian people restored. A joint communique said here today at the end of an official visit of the Lebanese Foreign Minister here.

Bhutto examining situation

Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, said in Karachi yesterday that he was carefully examining the situation following the Presidential announcement about the postponement of the National Assembly session which was earlier fixed for March 3.

On his arrival at the Karachi Airport from Lahore, Mr. Bhutto was asked to give his reaction to the announcement about the NA session. He said he did not know what was the nature of the announcement, and as such it would be out of context if he made any hurried statement.

He said he would study the whole situation, consult his party-men, friends and colleagues, on the latest development and then make a "considered statement."

Mr. Bhutto said that his statement given at the Lahore airport on the eve of his departure for Karachi, might be considered as cancelled and not relevant to this situation.

He said that some questions were put to him by newsmen at the Lahore airport before he took off for Karachi. In view of the latest situation that statement (made at Lahore) should be treated as cancelled.—APP

Ata meets Mujib

DACCA, March 1: Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan, President of Pakistan National League, met Shaukh Mujibur Rahman, Awami League chief, at the latter's residence here tonight.

They discussed the situation created following the postponement of the National Assembly session, it was learnt.—APP.

Scrutiny of AL draft constitution

DACCA, March 1: Scrutiny of the Awami League draft Constitution was resumed here this morning by the 30 member committee of the Central Parliamentary Party of the organisation.

The committee sat for about 10 hours yesterday to examine the document clause by clause.

The morning session of the committee ended after three hours deliberation on the party's draft constitution.—APP

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Mujib's call

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Mr Bhutto and Mr. Qayyum Khan had agreed to come to Dacca for the session. He said that democratic process had almost failed. The Assembly session had been postponed only for the sentiment of the minority party. He said that "this was the product of deep rooted conspiracy and we cannot allow this to go unchallenged."

The Sheikh said "We are a democratic party. We will follow the democratic rule of non-violence."

He said it was the chain of the long-time conspiracy. "I have in my previous speeches time and again stated that conspiracy is

going on in this country, even after the general elections on the basis of adult franchise. We have been elected by the people and we are responsible to them for framing a constitution, he added.

He referred to Mr Bhutto's statement and said that Mr Bhutto had threatened to take the law and order in his hands. "We wanted co-operation from everybody. We offered to explain the six-point programme. Democracy says majority opinion must be accepted. We are the majority."

While analysing the gradual developments, Sheikh Mujib said that he had suggested for convening the session on Feb 15, while Mr Bhutto suggested the first week of March. This was opposed by him. He said that then again Mr Bhutto suggested for the postponement of the session, which he again opposed. "Is it not a fact that the Administration has violated the democratic principles?" he asked.

He said that the same old game was going on how to exploit 70,000,000 Bengalis and how to keep Bengal as a colony and market. But he said with a firm voice that "Bengal cannot be allowed to remain a colony and market. Nobody can suppress the Bengalis any more. We are fighting for justice and fairplay and shall continue our struggle until we achieve our goal."

When asked whether he would oppose censorship if imposed, Sheikh Mujib said "I oppose everything."

Question: "Sir, people have come out on the streets in angry demonstration."

Sheikh Mujib: "People are always ready. If they would not have been ever-ready, I would not have come out of jail."

Top Awami League leaders and members of the parliamentary party were present at the Press conference.—APP.

NURUL AMIN STUNNED

DACCA, March 1. Mr Nurul Amin, President of Pakistan Democratic Party, tonight said with postponement of the National Assembly session "receded the prospect" of framing the country's constitution and transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people as scheduled.

Mr Nurul Amin, in a statement, said he was "stunned" at the sudden announcement of postponement of the sitting of the National Assembly indefinitely.

He urged the President to call the Assembly without delay and reiterated his appeal to the members elected from different parts of West Pakistan irrespective of their party affiliations to attend the Assembly when called and frame a constitution of "our beloved country."

Mr Nurul Amin said: "I am stunned at the sudden announcement of postponement of the sitting of the National Assembly indefinitely. This step has receded the prospect of framing the country's constitution and transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people as scheduled.

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