

# DAWN

Friday, March 5, 1971

## On the brink

THE situation as it now stands after President Yahya Khan proposed a meeting of 12 leaders of Parliamentary groups to solve the constitutional crisis and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman expressed his inability to attend it is one which will fill all patriots with deep anxiety. Never in its history has the country faced a moment of danger like the one it does now, and the sense of peril is made more acute by the fact that primarily the threat has its origins within the country and cannot be conveniently ascribed to an external enemy. The postponement of the National Assembly session without those who lack patience and those who are probably too young and politically too inexperienced to realise fully what the stakes are. There is no time to lose, for the danger of the present situation getting out of hand increases hourly. Already many valuable lives have been lost. These deaths will be deeply mourned by all Pakistanis no matter to what region they belong and what their political convictions may be. No one should be under an illusion regarding the effect this tragic loss of life will have on the general state of feeling in East Pakistan.

B  
VE  
but  
she  
and  
from  
uni  
wor  
own  
each  
qu  
ter  
tha  
wit  
cia  
and  
me  
T  
Kh  
ziq  
tan  
and  
just

ponement of the National Assembly session without the fixation of a new date has created a grave crisis of confidence in the Eastern Wing of the country. Rightly or wrongly the people in East Pakistan have interpreted the move as an attempt to prevent them from asserting their democratic rights as citizens of Pakistan and from securing a constitutional dispensation that satisfies their aspirations. An acute sense of desperation has led to a widespread movement of protest and defiance. A general strike has paralysed all economic life in the province. Demonstrators and protesters have clashed with the forces of law and order on a number of occasions. Several precious lives have been lost. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, though naturally identifying himself with the sentiment that prevails, has repeatedly called for avoiding violence, resisting all provocation and keeping the protest movement within the bounds of order and discipline. He has also repeatedly warned against those who may use the opportunity to resort to looting and incendiarism or to precipitate clashes between different sections of the people. Though this courageous attempt is laudable, the dangers inherent in the situation are there for all to see. Those stemming from anti-social elements are obvious enough. A mass movement of protest and civil defiance is always in danger of passing into the hands of a well-organised minority of militant activists who may force their own strategy on the movement or of changing its character and initial purpose on account of the infiltration of radical elements. How far the Awami League organisation will be able to exercise control over the movement and prevent it from being diverted into a destructive channel remains to be seen. There is no doubt that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is under mounting pressure from

The very first task is to prevent the crisis from getting worse and to create a climate of opinion in which a meaningful attempt can be made to produce a constitution which will satisfy a majority of the people and attract the commitment of the federating units. And such a constitution has to embody the essence of the Six-Point formula. We are firmly convinced that no initiative in this direction will have any chance of bearing fruit in today's context without an immediate announcement setting a very early date for summoning the National Assembly. This alone will clear the air and make it possible to resume the endeavour to overcome obstacles to constitution-making. Once a fresh date is set for the Assembly session and the necessary steps taken to remove tension and distrust, including the disengagement of the army, the President can straightaway start a round of informal talks in Dacca with the leaders of the parties that are represented in the National Assembly. We are sure that an initiative of this kind on the part of the President will create favourable conditions for the National Assembly to begin to address itself to the business of evolving a constitutional scheme which can enjoy the widest possible support and create institutions which, when put to work in the affairs of the nation, can prove a blessing to the regions as well as the country as a whole. We have every hope that such an initiative will draw a fitting response from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — whose steadfastness in upholding national integrity at this critical juncture will prove a source of inspiration to all patriots — and from all other political leaders to whom history has assigned the task of giving Pakistan its first democratic constitution.

and  
just  
qua  
den  
pro  
trib  
as  
fun  
reg  
per  
syst  
fun  
one  
Wh  
rec  
tur  
but  
ma  
the  
pur  
me  
art  
Cre  
rea  
Not  
it  
ma  
ran  
etc  
Qui  
mo  
obl  
gar  
trit  
ma  
pla  
wei  
ma  
in  
yet  
me  
pol  
tril  
F  
Th  
pai  
Ma  
Ma  
tur  
ag  
dis  
an  
tal  
th  
fav  
wo  
th  
th  
pr  
ar  
th  
di  
pl  
th  
ev  
Le  
so  
de  
at  
tl  
ce  
w  
tl  
fe  
cl  
A  
D  
a  
sl  
a  
e  
u  
v  
r  
t  
u  
a  
h