

# W A N

## PROTEST

### Transfer power to AL now

Only solution of  
crisis, says Asghar

By Our Staff Correspondent

Air Marshal (Retd.) Asghar Khan yesterday advocated "immediate" transfer of power to the majority party in the country in order to retrieve the present "close-to-disaster" situation.

Addressing a hurriedly called Press Conference at the Karachi Press Club he said President Yahya Khan should invite Shaikh Mujibur Rahman and hand over power—"real power"—to him in line with the democratic processes and in the interest of preserving national integrity and solidarity.

He told a correspondent that the constitution-making job could wait. What now took precedence was the transfer of power to where it belonged, namely the single largest party in the National Assembly.

Mr Asghar Khan flew into Karachi yesterday from Rawalpindi on way to Dacca. He had an appointment with Mr Z. A. Bhutto in the City but the meeting, according to the Air Marshal (Retd.) could not take place due to Mr Bhutto's preoccupations. Mr Asghar Khan will fly out to Dacca this (Friday) morning to meet Shaikh Mujibur Rahman.

He said a hysteria had been deliberately built on Six Points and he considered it his duty not as a leader of men or head of a political organisation but as a citizen, to diffuse it. In his view, the hysteria needed radical, surgical treatment as it was a classical method of delaying the process of ushering in democracy.

He expressed his sense of shock at the happenings in East Pakistan and said: "Our heart bleeds for our brethren there

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# Asghar Khan

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just as it would if the same happened to the people in West Pakistan.

He again emphasised that Shaikh Mujibur Rahman should be immediately called upon to form the Government with all the requisite power and authority. "We cannot see our East Pakistani brethren being treated like this. Nor can we brook our dear country disintegrated", he declared.

The people in West Pakistan, he pointed out, must understand that their counterparts in the Eastern Wing had for long been smarting with a sense of deprivation and frustration. They must be allowed to enjoy and exercise power which after all is their

he said. Mr Asghar Khan told a questioner that while Shaikh Mujib's position on constitution-making was fixed, that of Mr Bhutto had been flexible in view of the latter's own admission that the People's Party had fought the elections on the basis of foreign policy and economic programme. Therefore, while magnanimity as a majority leader was expected of Shaikh Mujibur Rahman, Mr Bhutto on his part should have shown greater understanding and harmony, he observed.

The Air Marshal (Retd.), however, made it clear he was opposed to the philosophy behind Six Points and thought that such a rigid stand by the Awami League was not necessary. Nevertheless, an understanding was still possible in the larger national interests.

Asked what he would talk to with Shaikh Mujib, Mr Asghar Khan said he would try to read his (Shaikh's) mind in view of the latest critical situation and see what best could be done to tide over the crisis.

## WEST WING'S CONCERN

During his stay in Dacca he would also convey to the people in East Pakistan of the great concern of the people in West Pakistan over the latest developments and would impress upon the need for greater harmony, brotherly love and mutual forbearance.

Mr Asghar Khan was highly critical of the way in which the political situation in the country was allowed to deteriorate progressively during the last three months.

In this, he noted, the responsibility lay on bureaucracy, vested interests, businessmen, and "some" politicians who all combined to thwart democracy in the country.

He said in reply to a question that it was in the global interests of the USA to have Pakistan divided. An effort was being made whereby it is West Pakistan which is pushing East Pakistan to fall apart, and go in the lap of international conspirators.

Mr Asghar Khan, however, made it clear that in that eventuality West Pakistan itself would not remain united and integrated, if one half of Pakistan was "finished".

He said he refused to believe there had been any threat of aggression from India. No grave emergency of this nature exists, he added.

Reiterating his plea for the transfer of power, the Air Marshal (Retd.) said that West Pakistan had ruled for 23 years and East Pakistan had immensely suffered. So if East Pakistan were now to rule to Pakistan and exercise its democratic right, what if West Pakistan were to suffer a little.

However, he believed that in the transfer of power lay the good of the entire nation—both of East and West Pakistan.

armed forces should go to the barracks.

He said he had thought it to leave the national and constitutional problems to the elected representatives for solution, but "the events had moved so fast and so rapidly" that he could not keep aloof and considered it necessary at this stage to come forward and contribute his bit to the solidarity and integrity of the country.

Retired Air Marshal Asghar Khan said he proposed to meet the leaders of the majority parties and discuss national problems and it was in this background that he was leaving for Dacca to meet the East Pakistani brethren there.

## REGRETTABLE ATTITUDE

He regretted the attitude of "certain leaders in West Pakistan" towards the problems of the East Pakistani people and deplored that some of them were saying openly that "the military regime was preferable to them than the power being transferred to East Pakistani leaders". He observed that this attitude was undemocratic and harmful.

He expressed himself against the postponement of the National Assembly session and said "it seems that the proposed round table conference of the leaders of parliamentary groups called by President Yahya Khan is also not taking place."

## BHUTTO AND ETC.

He pointed out the similarity in the round table conference called by former President Ayub Khan and the proposed meeting called by President Yahya Khan and said like the previous RTC this meeting had also been called on March 10.

He remarked that the only difference between the then and the proposed RTC was that Mr Bhutto had refused to attend the previous RTC while the PPP chief was the first now to announce that he would attend the proposed RTC.

He expressed surprise at the handling of the national affairs and said Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was recently acknowledged as the "Prime Minister" of Pakistan and nothing wrong was seen in the Six-Point programme of the Awami League.

Asked if he agreed with the PPP chief Mr Bhutto that there were three forces, i.e. Awami League, PPP and military forces, Asghar Khan said "it is an unfortunate remark."

Stressing the need for maintaining the solidarity of the country, he said for the survival of West Pakistan itself, it was necessary to maintain the territorial integrity of the country.

## Bhashani leaves for Santosh

DACCA, March 8: NAP chief Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani left here for Santosh this evening by car after a day's stay in Dacca.

The NAP chief who arrived here from Santosh yesterday afternoon met PNL chief Mr Ataur Rahman Khan, PNL General Secretary, Shah Asisur Rahman and other leaders and workers of NAP here.

He had the second round of talks with Mr Ataur Rahman Khan immediately before his departure for Santosh this evening.

They are understood to have discussed the present political situation in the country particularly in view of the postponement of the National Assembly session.

The Maulana who is scheduled to address a public meeting here on March 9, is expected to be here on Sunday next.—PPI.

PPI adds: while strongly opposing the action taken in the Eastern Wing against the movement for restoration of democracy, he said, "our hearts bleed when East Pakistani brethren are being killed with bullets".

Air Marshal Asghar Khan said the people in the Western Wing were strongly against the killings in the Eastern Wing and he for himself would not hesitate to give any sacrifice for the restoration of democracy in the country.

The retired Air Marshal said "Things have gone too far" and if power was not transferred forthwith by the present regime he would launch a movement in support of the East Pakistani people who were really 'frustrated' and 'disillusioned'. He clarified that this was not a threat but 'a statement of fact'.

He told newsmen that he was leaving for Dacca today to acquaint himself with the existing conditions and "the sufferings of the people".

"The only way left to safeguard the integrity and solidarity of the country is to restore democracy in the country", he said emphatically. Retired Air Marshal Asghar Khan pointed out that he was the first person to have himself against the imposition of Martial Law in the country two years back. He said today and demanded that the