

Dacca breaks with Pakistan

From Australian Associated Press

DACCA, March 26. — East Pakistan today declared itself independent of the central Government in Karachi.

The declaration followed a broadcast by President Yahya Khan outlawing East Pakistan's dominant political party, the Awami League, and accusing its leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, of treason.

Indian radio monitors reported that Sheikh Mujib made the independence proclamation from a radio station believed captured by his supporters from army authorities.

The radio station called itself "Swadhin Bangla Betar Ketar Kendra (Free Bengal Radio Station)."

Earlier, the Pakistan army had taken control in the east and banned all political activity in the province.

Political activity was also banned in West Pakistan.

Within hours, fierce street

fighting, with heavy casualties, was reported in Dacca, capital of the eastern wing.

The big clamp-down by the West Pakistan-dominated army came less than 24 hours after Dacca Radio had announced that President Yahya had agreed in principle to the four major demands of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League, the all-powerful eastern political party seeking autonomy for East Pakistan.

These demands included the lifting of martial law, the return of all troops to barracks and the transfer of power to the elected representatives.

Central Government troops, led mainly by West Pakistani officers, clamped a curfew throughout the East this morning and were given orders to shoot violators on sight.

Troop reinforcements were reported pouring into the eastern wing by air and sea following bitter clashes between the military and civilians yesterday.

Pakistan Radio reported that workers who had been refusing to report for duty as part of a 24-day long paign had been ordered to return to their jobs within 24 hours or face court-martial.

Any violation of orders from the martial law forces would involve a minimum penalty of 10 years imprisonment, the radio said.

According to the United News of India, quoting "authentic sources" across the India-Pakistan border, heavy fighting broke out today in several places in East Pakistan, the worst in Dacca.

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Yahya's

army

clamps

down on

Dacca

The army took over Dacca Radio and all press, radio and television were placed under censorship.

Educational institutions and banks were ordered closed indefinitely and bank accounts were frozen.

Wireless monitors in Calcutta said Sheik Mujib, in a special message, appealed to East Pakistanis "to resist the enemy forces at all costs."

The monitors said the message was believed to have originated from a wireless transmission in either the port city of Chittagong or Chalna.

The message quoted Sheik Mujib as saying:

"Pakistani armed forces suddenly attacked the East Pakistan Rifles base at Bilkhana and Rajarbagh, at zero hours today, March 26, killing a lot of unarmed people.

"Bitter fighting is going on with the EPR in Dacca and the police force. The people are fighting the enemy gallantly for the cause of the freedom of Bangla Desh (Bengali nation).

"Every section of the people of Bangla Desh must resist the enemy forces at all costs in every corner of Bangla Desh.

"May Allah bless you and help you in the struggle for freedom from the enemy."

The Press Trust of India, quoting a "highly reliable source," said today that six shiploads of troops had landed at Chittagong and Chalna and were on their way to three major towns in East Pakistan.

Troops were also landed at Dacca by air.

Over China

The report said the troops landing at Dacca appeared to have flown via China and Burma.

All Bengalis in the East Bengal Regiment, East Pakistan Rifles, the armed reserve police and the civil police had pledged loyalty to Sheik Mujib, the report said.

According to the Press Trust of India, fighting had started between West and East Pakistan forces in what amounted to civil war.

Students have raided arms shops in Dacca and Chittagong and carried away weapons and ammunition.

All citizens possessing arms have been asked to surrender them immediately, and the army has been authorised to enter and search all buildings.