

US troops to carry out relief operations: Speaker

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its sitting at 3.14 pm Tuesday with Speaker, Abdul Rahman Biswas, in the chair, reports BSS.

After Tilawat-e-Quran, the Speaker took up the order of the day and said the questions and answers would be deemed to have been tabled in the House.

Wazed Chowdhury

At this stage, Awami League member Mohammad Abdul Wazed Chowdhury (Rajbari) drew the attention of the chair to the loss of life and damage to property in the recent cyclone, and tornadoes that had swept over Daulatdia, Rajbari and other areas and said that the House should offer a special prayer seeking divine blessing for the peace of the departed souls.

The Speaker with Wazed Chowdhury led the prayer seeking divine blessings to save the people of the country from natural calamities.

Tabbar Rahman

Tabbar Rahman Sardar (Al-Jessore) took the floor on a point of order and said he had participated in the discussion Monday on the vote of thanks

to the Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed for his speech. But the Daily Inqilab published his name as a BNP member. He said he was a member of Awami League and was elected to the House on Awami League tickets.

The Speaker requested the Daily Inqilab to publish a corrigendum.

The Speaker then disposed of a notice of breach of privilege by Mohammad Shamsul Huq (AL-Mymensingh) for non-acceptance of his starred question.

The Speaker said Huq's starred question was rejected because it was not clear, and as such his privilege as a member was not breached.

The Speaker said he had received two adjournment notices Tuesday from Musharraf Hussain (AL-Mymensingh with Netrokona) and Mohammad Shamsul Huq (AL-Mymensingh). He expressed his regret that he could not accept them.

The Speaker told the House that Musharraf Hussain in his adjournment notice, had said the sovereignty of the country was undermined at the arrival of US troops in the country.

Rejecting his notice, the Speaker said many national and international relief agencies and foreign governments had responded positively to the call of the government to come in aid of the cyclone victims. Some of them were coming forward to helping the cyclone victims with cash and kind while others with skilled persons.

He said the US troops led by the Commander of the Pacific Task Force had arrived here to carry a relief operation in the cyclone affected areas and as such he (Speaker) did not think that it had undermined the sovereignty of the country.

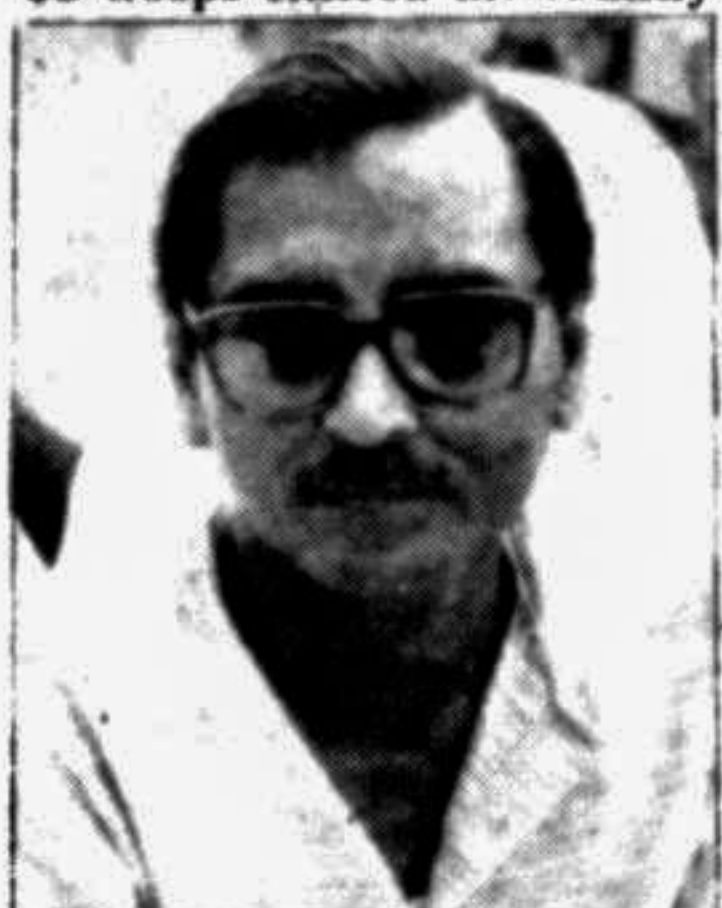
He, however, requested the State Minister for Relief or in his absence the Deputy Leader of the House to make a statement on the issue.

Rashed Khan Menon

At this stage, Workers Party member, Mr Rashed Khan Menon (Bakerganj) said since it was a matter involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Minister should make a statement the House whether his ministry had approved the arrival of the US troops in Bangladesh.

Mr. Menon said the issue was very serious in view of the fact that the US government had made several pleas to enter Bangladesh and to set up a base at St Martin Island in the past.

Mr. Menon said, today the US troops entered the country



taking advantage of the cyclone situation.

He regretted that though the US troops had arrived in Dhaka two days ago, the government had not informed the House of it.

He said when the House was going to be prorogued, the Leader of the House or the

concerned Minister should inform Parliament all about the arrival of the US troops in the country.

The Speaker said, even if he would have accepted the adjournment motions, there would be no time to discuss them since the House was going to be prorogued. So, the Speaker said, he had requested the Deputy Leader of the House to make a statement in this connection.

The second notice of adjournment from Mohammad Shamsul Huq (AL-Mymensingh) was about the problems involving relief distribution in the cyclone affected areas including Chittagong.

At this stage, Mr. Nizamuddin Ahmed (BNP-Manikganj) took the floor on a point of order and drew the attention of the Leader of the House and Ministers. He said he wanted to know whether the government was aware of the fact that a cyclonic storm had swept over Manikganj district claiming life and damaging property. Maulana Abdus Sobhan (Jamaat-Pabna) also told the House that cyclone had caused damage to property in Pabna.

Nurul Islam Moni

The House then took up discussions on the speech of the Acting President.

Participating in the discussion, Mr. Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Barguna) urged the Treasury Bench to give due impor-



tance to the speech of the Acting President wherein he (Acting President) had requested the Parliament to add a transitional and temporary provision to Part IV of the Constitution.

The independent member said if the request was honoured then (Acting Presi-

dent) could be relieved of his present assignment at the earliest.

Mr. Moni referred to a constitutional provision under which a person holding any office of profit is not eligible for the post of Presidency.

In this context, he reminded the House that the Acting President had been the Chief Justice of Bangladesh when he assumed the country's highest office. He said it would create another constitutional problem if necessary amendments were not brought to give legal cover to the Acting President's assumption to the highest office.

Mr. Moni pleaded restoration of Parliamentary form of government in favour of which, he said, 51 per cent of voters had given their verdict.

Syed Shahidul Huq

Speaking next, Syed Shahidul Huq (BNP-Bakerganj with Pirojpur) urged both Leader of the House and of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina to sit together to decide how to materialise the hopes and aspiration of the masses.

He said the people had participated in the last election

with a hope to achieve economic emancipation.

Mr. Jamal said tributes to the late President Ziaur Rahman who, he said, had led the nation during the critical juncture after the political changeover in 1975.

He alleged that deposed President Ershad had "hijacked power" through deception.

The BNP member regretted that nothing was mentioned by the Acting President with regard to the trial of former President Ershad.

Promod Mankhil

Participating in the discussion, Mr Promod Mankhil (AL-Mymensingh) thanked the Acting President for his candid speech in which the existing socio-economic and political situation in the country was portrayed.

He said it was for the first time that a Christian member like him was elected to Parliament because of the free elections held under the neutral government of the Acting President.

Mr Mankhil thanked the Awami League for providing opportunity for members

Incomplete

The following is the remaining part of Monday's JS proceeding

'Acting President sitting on a heap of explosives'

Asaduzzaman

Asaduzzaman said now the question was whether the Parliament was sovereign or not. He said the members of the Treasury Bench claimed that the present Parliament could enact laws and have it as sovereign. He said some people also used to describe the Parliament under the basic democracy system as sovereign. He pointed out some of those basic democrats were now sitting in the Treasury Bench.

He spoused a question how this Parliament could be sovereign when it did not know that foreign troops were on the soil of Bangladesh. He said the presence of foreign troops on the soil of Bangladesh was an affront on the sovereignty of the country.

He said "we don't know how many soldiers and on the basis of what agreement they have come here" but still, he said they (the Treasury Bench) would insist that this Parliament was sovereign. He said "we even don't know under the supervision of which government we are running this Parliament".

Asaduzzaman disagreed with the suggestion of the Treasury Bench that they had got the mandate on the question of the form of government after winning the majority seat in the Parliament. He firmly said the Awami League which had polled 38 per cent of the votes cast received the mandate on the Parliament form of government.

Asaduzzaman said the Acting President had mentioned that there were impediments on the way to transfer of power. He said "I think, the Acting President had expressed his feelings as he does not consider this Parliament as a sovereign one".

He said the government did not repeat the Special Powers Act although they were committed to do so. Rather he said the government passed the amendments to the Special Powers Act in this House. He said the government also passed amendments to the Penal Code Bill which contained some provisions to gag the freedom of the press.

He said that some provisions of the Penal Code were so dangerous that it could be used as a tool against the newspapers for criticising the ministers of the government and even the bureaucrats.

He called for making the Parliament meaningful in fulfillment of the commitment made prior to the unseating of the autocratic government.

He said "we want to make this Parliament sovereign even with the repeal of the fourth and the subsequent amendments".

Hafez Asma Khatun

Invited to speak, Hafez Asma Khatun (Jamaat-Gopalganj-Madaripur and Shariatpur) thanked the Acting President for his realistic inaugural speech.

She also prayed for the peace of the departed souls of those who had made supreme sacrifices in ousting autocracy and paving the way for establishing a sovereign Jatiya Sangsad.

She said people would also remember the Acting President for holding a free and fair election.

The Jamaat member said the government was formed with the elected representatives of the people and if they failed to perform their responsibilities properly, they would have to heavily pay for it. Referring to the problems faced by the women in the country, Asma Khatun said

they constitute 50 per cent of the population and without their participation in development work all national efforts were bound to fail. She said continuous negligence towards women would dishearten them.

She said the women were being humiliated everywhere in the country and this should be stopped forthwith. She said steps should also be taken for ensuring their security as well as to providing them with livelihood.

Asma Khatun called for separate educational institutions for women.

She also pleaded for establishment of the parliamentary system of democracy and making the Sangsad sovereign.

Mansur Ali

Taking the floor, Meah Mohammad Mansur Ali (BNP-Chuadanga) thanked the Acting President for emphasising the need for accelerating the efforts for the country's industrialisation.

Criticising the nationalisation of industries including those belonged to Bangladesh nationals immediately after the independence of the country, Mansur Ali said it had pushed the economy of the country to the brink of destruction. He said when the industries were returned to their Bangladeshi owners, they were found in deplorable conditions over and above he said, labour unrests had hampered production in every mill and factory.

Pointing to the President's speech on industrial loans to the tune of Taka 10,000 crore, Mansur Ali said the industries had lost the capacity even to pay Taka ten crore.

The Treasury Bench member said the Ministry of Commerce had become a den of corruption. Because of this, he said, our import bill was triple that of our export earnings.

Referring to jute, Mansur Ali said earnings from this vital sector were reducing day by day due to government control.

He said he had lost the international market because our jute trade was not competitive as it was controlled by the government. He called for taking steps on an emergency basis to save this sector.

The BNP member alleged during the past regional millions of Taka was given as loans in the name of setting up industries. He said in some cases it was found that funds were allocated for before the industries were set up.

Mansur Ali called for the establishment of a university and medical college in Khulna to reduce pressure on the institutes in Dhaka.

Criticising the autocratic regime of Ershad, the BNP member said Ershad had cancelled allocations for hospitals, colleges and other development projects of Kushtia because he himself faced anti-government demonstrations there.

Advocate Fazle Rabbi

Advocate Fazle Rabbi (JP-Gaibandha) said the last Sangsad elections were held under a neutral government headed by the Acting President, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed. But he said the fairness of the election was questioned by one of the three major parties which had proposed his name as Acting President.

The JP member said he had participated the Liberation War at the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and fought along with former President Ziaur Rahman in the same sector. He said he might differ in politics with Zia but he supported the action taken by him during the Liberation

War. He regretted that Zia also had to bear the allegation of being an autocrat.

Drawing the attention of the Speaker, Rabbi said he wanted to know from the chair why former President Ershad's seat in the House was vacant when he had been elected by the people from five constituencies.

The House resumed its sitting after the break for Asar prayer with the Deputy Speaker in the chair.

Obaidul Huq

Taking the floor, Maulana Obaidul Huq (Islami Oikya Jote-Sylhet) drew the attention of the chair to the worsening flood situation in Sylhet.

Quoting the daily 'Ittefaq', he said ten lakh people were marooned in Sylhet and it was with a heavy heart that he was drawing the urgent attention of the House to the plight of the affected people of the district.

Turning to the discussion on the thanks giving motion, Maulana Obaidul Huq thanked the Acting President for holding a fair and free election for the first time in the country.

He, however, said there were certain lapses in the voters' lists resulting the deprivation of many voters from their rights of franchise. This lapse must be remedied in future so that the polls were more meaningful, he said.

About the controversy on the form of government, the Islami Oikya Jote member said a balance could be struck between the presidential and parliamentary forms for a desirable system.

Abu Taher

Speaking next, Abu Taher (BNP-Tangail) thanked the Acting President for conducting the elections which were admired at home and abroad for their fairness.

He said the Acting President had touched upon several problems facing the nation and it was necessary to take effective measures to tackle those problems.

The Treasury Bench member said, a peoples' government had now been installed in the country and it was the bounden duty of all to extend all out cooperation to this administration in dealing with the problems of the country.

Taher particularly mentioned the food shortage in the country and said it was a key area which deserved attention with highest priority. He said supply of improved inputs to the farmers could help improve production. Taher mentioned local problems and sought their solution.

Humayun Khan

The chair then gave the floor to Humayun Khan Panni, saying that the member had already spoken but he could not mention the problems of his area due to time constraints.

Taking the floor, Panni said communication was the biggest handicap in his constituency, where no direct communications existed between two upazilas—Sakhapur and Dashed.

He also referred to the electrification network in the area and said it had to be further extended so that its benefits reached to more and more people in the villages.

Mozahar Hossain

Speaking next, Mozahar Hossain (CPB-Panchagarh) stressed the need for changing the present presidential system to the parliamentary one and drew the attention of all to the joint declaration of the three alliances in this regard during the anti-Ershad movement.

The Opposition member opined that the presidential system tended to encourage dictatorial traits and it was high time that the Constitution was amended for the necessary changes.

Hossain said 265 of the 300 members elected in the last elections were voted on the issue of restoring parliamentary system. As such, he felt, there should be no delay in introducing parliamentary form.

The CPB member referred to the problems in his district and made a fervent appeal for construction of a bridge over river Korotoya.

MA Karim

Participating next, MA Karim Advocate (BNP-Netrokona) paid tributes to Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, describing him as an honest and great patriot who declared the country's independence.

The BNP member recalled the heroic role of the three political alliances in the anti-autocracy movement. He particularly appreciated the leadership of BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia for establishing democracy ending nine years of autocratic rule in the country. He also praised the contributions of the students in the democratic movement.

Referring to the Acting President's speech to the Jatiya Sangsad, Karim said he could have been more glad if the Acting President would have mentioned the names of the national leaders including Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazul Huq, Hussain Shahid Suhrawardi, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his speech.

The BNP member said 85 per cent of the population in the country was dependent on agriculture. It was President Ziaur Rahman who had taken pragmatic measures for the improvement of the lot of the peasants and development of the agriculture sector.

But, he regretted that all those programmes taken by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman were dropped during the last nine years autocratic rule of Ershad.

Referring to the canal digging programme initiated by President Zia, the BNP member said the programme had paid dividend and the country almost achieved self-sufficiency in food production.

Dwelling on local issues, Karim demanded immediate steps for the development of road communications in Netrokona district and also pleaded for construction of the Shushan-Durgapur-Netrokona Road.

The Deputy Speaker adjourned the House at 6.28 pm for Magreb prayer.

Disinvested units won't be nationalised

The government has no plan to nationalise the disinvested industrial units, Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan told the Parliament on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Replying to a question from Nurul Islam Moni (Ind), he said the present government would encourage the private sector side by side with the public sector for rapid industrialisation in the country.

In reply to a question from Kazi Abdul Rashid of Awami League, the Minister said that government has no plan to set up any new industrial unit during the current financial year.

Replying to another question from Shah Haduzzaman

Tabbar Rahman

As the House reassembled after the Magreb prayer, the Deputy Speaker gave the floor to Tabbar Rahman Sardar (Al-Jessore).

Initiating his speech, Sardar thanked the Acting President for his speech to the Sangsad on April 5.

The Awami League member particularly appreciated the Acting President for holding the elections in a free and fair atmosphere.

Dwelling on the situations obtaining in the country, the Awami League member suggested setting up of more industrial units for creating job opportunities to the millions of unemployed youths, besides increasing the country's industrial output.

He pleaded for immediate steps for the eradication of illiteracy from the society.

About the agriculture sector, he demanded exemption of interest on agriculture loans upto Taka 10,000 and provision of subsidies on fertilizers, seeds and other inputs.

The Awami League member also demanded that the Vested Property Act should be repealed, because the landed properties of many Muslims had been included in the list of the vested property.

Referring to the joint declaration of the three alliances for establishing a sovereign Parliament, he said if the parliamentary form of government were introduced, the Leader of the House would be able to exercise more power than what she was enjoying now.

Khurshid Jahan

Participating next, Mrs. Khurshid Jahan Huq (BNP-Panchagarh-Thakurgaon-Dinajpur) thanked the Acting President for holding the general elections in a free and fair atmosphere. This had fulfilled the hopes of the people coveting for democracy the country, she added.

Mrs. Huq said since the present Sangsad was the outcome of a mass-movement, people's expectation from it was also very high.

Pleading for the unity of the people in settling the national issues, the BNP member said: "We must be united for fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people. We may have difference of opinions on many issues but there must not be any difference of opinion on the question of the protection of independence and sovereignty of the country and the welfare of the masses."

Mr. Khurshid Jahan urged the Opposition not to oppose the government for the sake of Opposition and said "if we continue to oppose each other for the sake of Opposition, we shall have to pay for it in future."

Nationalised textile mills lose Tk 280 cr

Nationalised textile mills incurred a loss of Taka 280 crore due to power disruption during 1980-90. State Minister for Textiles Maj (Retd) Abdul Mannan told Parliament Tuesday, reports UNB.

Replying to a question from Nizamuddin Khan of BNP, he said the government had taken certain measures to minimise power disruption in the textile mills.

The measures include, ensuring power supply in the new mills through express feeder connection from PDB sub-stations, improving power supply through "back feed source system" of PDB sub-stations.

Mannan said, a total of Taka 44963.52 lakh was invested in the nationalised textiles mills.

He said that the government had taken measures including ensuring maximum capacity utilisation of the industrial units, modernisation of old ones and improvement of the standard of products to check losses in the textiles sector.

He demanded that the Kushtia-Rajbari road should be completed without further delay.

The Awami League member demanded steps for realising the industrial loans from different banks, amounting to Taka 610,000 crore.

Referring the outline of the joint declaration of the three alliances, Awal suggested making the Sangsad sovereign by fulfilling the commitments to the people, so that none could grab power through the back door and no more Presidents of the country were killed.

Referring to the Acting President's speech that he (Acting President) was sitting in a heap of explosives, the Awami League member demanded a bill before the next budget session for amending the Constitution to switch over to the parliamentary form of government.

A parliamentary form of government could ensure the completion of full-term of the Sangsad, he said. He concluded his speech with the slogans, "Joy Bangla".

Azizur Rahman

Azizur Rahman (BNP-Rajshahi) thanked the Acting President for holding the general elections in a free and fair atmosphere.

Dwelling on local issues, the BNP member said Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman had established the 'Dainik Barta', the only newspaper from Rajshahi in 1976. But, it was a matter of great regret that a section of elements during the autocratic rule of President Ershad had closed down the paper. He demanded steps to resume the publication of the paper.

The BNP member suggested the introduction of test relief programme to save the rural masses. He also demanded construction of an embankment along Rajshahi town for the protection of different establishments including the Rajshahi Cadet College from river erosion.

Mobin Chowdhury

Participating next, Abu Lais Mohammad Mobin Chowdhury (JP-Habiganj) dwelt on the local issues and said standing IRRIs crops on 14,000 acres in Habiganj were damaged by the floods of the river Khout.

Chowdhury said though everyone described ex-President Ershad as an autocrat, they were enjoying the fruits of many steps initiated by president Ershad.

He said the people of the country would soon judge as to who was an autocrat who was or not.

He said there was no such word in the Constitution as Acting President. He said under the present system of government, the President is all powerful, but now the Prime Minister is exercising absolute power.

Aminul Huq

At this stage, Aminul Huq (BNP-Rajshahi) took the floor on a point of order and referred to the Article 55(1) of the Constitution and said the word Acting President was there.

Resuming his speech, the JP member demanded measures for giving fresh agriculture loans to the affected farmers of Habiganj.

Mansur Ahmed

Mansur Ahmed (AL-Satkhira) said the enthusiasm marked in the February 27 polls was unprecedented in the history of the country. He said there was a record turnout in the polls because people expected that autocracy could be eliminated from the soil once for all after this historic

election.

He said the spilling of blood in the movement against autocracy would have been meaningful if a bill for switching over to parliamentary form of government would have been tabled in the house by the government. He said the members of the Treasury Bench blamed us for the 1974 famine in the country. "We never said that there was no famine in the country in 1974." But he said it was known to all why the famine took place.

He said a severe flood engulfed 14 northern districts of the country. Prior to the famine he said some American ships carrying foodgrains for Bangladesh went back when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman rejected their proposal for a military base at the St Martin's Island.

Mansur Ahmed said Bangabandhu also took up a master plan for constructing 2,498 cyclone shelters in the coastal districts of the country but he could not complete the task as he was killed by the anti-liberation forces in August 1975. President Ziaur Rahman kept the plan in abeyance instead of implementing it, he stated.

Mansur Ahmed also drew the attention of the concerned authorities to the problems being faced by the people of his home district.

Abdus Salam

Taking part in the discussion, Abdus Salam Pintu (BNP-Tangail) said the Acting President deserved commendation for the recent parliamentary elections which he conducted in a most free and orderly manner.

The Treasury Bench member, turning to the controversy over the system of government, said those clamouring for a change to the parliamentary form today were themselves responsible for doing away with the parliamentary system and introduction of one-party presidential system in 1975. These people even did not allow any discussion on such an issue and the entire procedure took only five minutes, he said.

Azharul Islam

Taking the floor, Azharul Islam (AL-Nilphamari) said it was unfortunate that the Sangsad could not amend the Constitution till today to switch over to the parliamentary system.

The people of the country in the last elections gave verdict in favour of the parliamentary system, he said adding only the Jatiya Party was in favour of continuation of the presidential system.

The Opposition member opined that 265 of the 300 members elected in last polls were chosen by the people to restore the parliamentary form of government.

Islam referred to a recent incident in his constituency and said communal tensions were whipped up by interested quarters there.

He alleged that the police did not take any action during the incident and demanded punishment for the dereliction of their duties.

The Deputy Speaker then adjourned the house till 3pm today (Tuesday).