

Call to declare schedule for Mayors' election

'Budget to increase dependence on foreign aid'

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its sitting at 11-20 am Monday with Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas in the chair, reports BSS.

The proceedings of the day began with recitation from the holy Quran.

Abdus Samad Azad

Supporting the contention of Rashed Khan Menon the Deputy Leader of the House Abdus Samad Azad said unrest in the campus should not be overlooked. Mere discussions on the national budget would land us nowhere if we failed to contain and curb the holders of unlicensed arms. As elected representatives of the people all of us, belonging to any side, owed an explanation to the nation in this respect, he said.

Azad urged the Speaker to keep matter under his active consideration and not to give ruling on it forthwith.

The Speaker agreed with the contention of Azad and said the situation in the campus was a very important matter. He also agreed that lives of students were being lost in clashes. But quoting Rule 63 of rules of procedure, the Speaker said there was no provision to take up an adjournment motion by suspending budget discussion. He, however, pointed out that any member could speak on any issue during the general discussion on the national budget.

Suranjit Sengupta

Ganotantri Party leader Suranjit Sengupta maintained that with the permission of the Speaker the House could discuss any important matter at any time. He said unrest in the campus called for elaborate discussions in the House. He said he was not stressing that discussion on the situation in the campus should be held right on Monday. The Speaker may fix any day for holding discussion on the issue, he added.

Fazle Rabbi

Jatiya Party MP Fazle Rabbi said a delegation of his party wanted to meet him to submit a memorandum. The police would not allow the delegation to come toward the Sangsad Bhaban unless he gave permission, he said.

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas explained to Fazle Rabbi the procedure of submitting memorandum.

JSD leader Shahjahan Siraj said there was practice of submitting memorandum to the Speaker with his prior permission.

Abdus Samad Azad informed the Speaker that a delegation on behalf of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad wanted to submit a memorandum to him. He requested the Speaker to give a hearing to the delegation. The Speaker said he would give decision on it in his chamber after the House was adjourned.

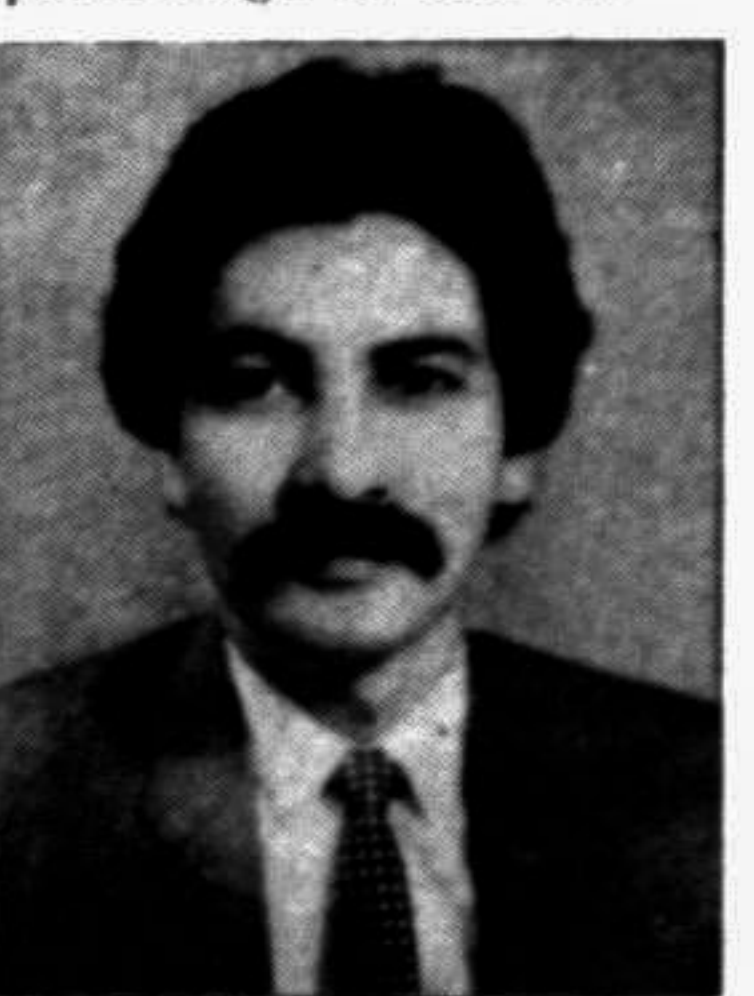
Azizur Rahman

The Speaker then asked Azizur Rahman (AL-Maulvi Bazar) to move his call attention notice on floods in Maulavi Bazar.

After the member moved the notice, State Minister for Relief Lutfur Rahman Khan assured the House of government's all out efforts to face the situation caused by floods in Maulavi Bazar.

As the notice was disposed of the chair adjourned the House at 1 pm till 3 pm.

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its afternoon sitting at 3-25pm with Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas in the chair. The Speaker asked independent member Nurul Islam Moni to initiate discussion on the proposed budget for 1991-92.



Nurul Islam Moni

Moni expressed his inability to discuss the budget as the Finance Minister was absent in the House. He reminded the chair that a ruling was given Sunday by the Deputy Speaker that the Finance Minister would be present during budget discussion.

Awami League member Salahuddin Yusuf supported the contention of Moni. At this stage the Finance Minister entered the House.

Moni, who was the first speaker to participate in the discussion on the budget, alleged that it lacked direction.

He said there was hardly any difference between the proposed budget and the budgets of the last few years.

He said although rural population constituted 90 per cent of the total population, the allocations for the rural areas were not commensurate with that position.

The independent member said the tax relief proposed in the budget would not benefit of the majority of the population. He questioned how the Finance Minister contemplated to establish just society by adding hardships to the poorer section.

Moni said while tariff value for air conditioner and tissue paper generally used by the rich, had been reduced, commodities like soyabean oil and ball point pen would be costlier because of tax measures. He wanted to know why tax on imitation jewellery and certain categories of motor vehicles had been reduced.

He contested the claim of the Finance Minister that expenditure on education had been increased. He said in reality the expenditure on defence was raised. He questioned the justification of the government in allocating thousands of crores of Taka for the industrial sector when most of the loans given to this sector was lying unpaid. He said agriculture, which contributed fifty per cent of the GDP, had been given a little over 3 per cent in the budget allocation. Industries which contributed 10 per cent to GDP, received a disproportionate allocation, he pointed out.

Moni said the Finance Minister suffered from contradiction, because in his budget speech he emphasised rural development, but allocated more fund to defence and other sectors.

Niamatullah

Niamatullah (BNP-Dhaka) said compared to last fiscal increased expenditure on unproductive sectors and reliance on external assistance, the proposed budget has attempted to revert that process by giving emphasis on mobilisation of domestic resources.

He said because of lack of necessary counterpart fund, a large amount of foreign currency remained unutilised.

Niamatullah, welcomed the increase in the ceiling of wealth tax for Houses where the owner reside themselves from Taka 25 lakh to Taka 50 lakh. He said this increase is realistic.

The BNP member while hailing reduction in travel tax, however, demanded that incoming passengers be allowed to import upto 500 grams of gold. He said tax should be reduced on automobile parts and that there should be no increase in the registration fee of motor vehicles.

Referring to some problems in his Savar constituency Niamatullah demanded greater allocation for the educational institutions in the area including Jahangirnagar University.

Salahuddin Yusuf

The Speaker then gave the floor to Salahuddin Yusuf (AL-Khulna). The Opposition member said the proposed budget had failed to reflect the hopes and aspirations of the people who had struggled against autocracy and oppression for long years.

He said the budget would increase dependence of the country on foreign aid, and had neglected the causes of the working forces.

Yusuf was critical of increased duty on soyabean oil and said it would be a burden on the common people. He said the increase in route permit fee would cause sufferings to the bus passengers as the bus fare would now go up.

Yusuf suggested the government to intensify the drive for recovery of industrial loan from the defaulters and take exemplary measures against them.

He called for increasing subsidy in the agricultural sector to help the farmers to increase production.

Yusuf stressed the need for declaring a national fisheries policy to end injustice and malpractice in the sector.

He also called upon the Education Minister for taking measures against the irregularities in the appointment of primary school teachers.

He urged the government to chalk out a well planned scheme, for ending the water stagnancy problems in Beel Dakatia areas.

He said the opposition was ready to extend all-out cooperation the government if steps were taken for the welfare of the masses.

Salahuddin Yusuf made a suggestion for maintaining a balance in imports and exports in the greater national interest. He said if necessary the volume of imports should be

cut to keep it at par with the quantum of exports.

He said smuggling was continuing unabated although BDR was there. He said sugar was available at Taka 18 per seer in the border areas while its price elsewhere in the country was much higher.

Yusuf assured the government of cooperation if it ran the country properly. But he said, "You have stepped into the shoes of autocratic Ershad." For example, he said, the Mayors of the Metropolitan cities had been nominated instead of being elected.

He called upon the members of the Treasury Bench to declare the schedule for the election of Mayors in the metropolitan cities.

The elderly member of parliament from Awami League said, "We will resist any move to select people for other places, including district councils, through nominations instead of elections."

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas adjourned the House at 4-55 PM for Asr prayer.

Lutfunnesa Hossain

After Asar prayer Mrs. Lutfunnesa Hossain (BNP-Nawabganj-Rajshahi), participating in the discussion termed the prosed budget as realistic and said the total economic picture of the country had been reflected in it. She said the Finance Minister had suggested a number of measures for checking corruption and given the highest priority to education. Demand of the student community for higher allocation in the education sector had also been reflected in the proposed budget, she added.

Mrs Hossain said the Finance Minister deserved praise for proposing reduction of customs duty on construction and reconstruction materials to be used in the cyclone and tidal surge and flood battered areas of the country.

She said the budget could be more people-oriented if taxes on items like gas and other essentials generally used by the poor were withdrawn.

Mrs. Hossain thanked the Finance Minister for inclusion

of Mahananda Bridge in the proposed budget.

She demanded of the government to construct more hostels for the students of Rajshahi University particularly the female students. She also called for implementation of the Barendra Project and re-publication of Dainik Barta from Rajshahi.

Moulana Sattar Akan

Moulana Abdus Sattar Akan (Jamaat-Bagerhat) thanked Finance Minister Saifur Rahman for presenting a budget with beautiful language." He, however, said there should be some principle in framing the budget and it should have some direction.

Moulana Sattar said economic emancipation of the people was essential along with political independence for maintaining the fruits of independence.

He said establishment of democracy through a mass movement ousting the autocracy had not been reflected in the proposed budget. He said it was not clear whether the budget is a capitalistic or socialist or Islamic. He said we should first decide what pattern of economy we want to have for the nation.

Criticizing the proposed budget, the Jamaat member said it lacked any direction. It has failed to give any solutions for the two crore unemployed people of the country. There was also no assurance for the basic necessities of life like shelter and food.

He said 60 to 70 per cent of our revenue come from agriculture sector but subsidy on the inputs had been gradually withdraw whereas industrial loans to the tune of Taka 10,000 crore are lying unrealised.

He said, encouraging facilities had been provided to the farmers in the neighbouring India, like interest-free loans for the development of agricultural sector. He said the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had provided some facilities to the farmers including subsidy for the development of agriculture of the country.

Referring to the housing,

Moulana Sattar said the farmers were not benefited from the House Building Finance Corporation. Houses in the cluster village were like those of cattle sheds of rich people. He said interest on House Building loans should be withdrawn and in its place establishment cost should be introduced.

He said Taka 1300 crore could be collected in the Zakat Fund if it was properly managed and the fund could be used for the welfare of the poor. He also demanded more fund for education and health sectors.

Abu Yusuf Khalilur Rahman

Participating in the discussion, Advocate Abu Yusuf Khalilur Rahman (BNP-Joypurhat) congratulate the Finance Minister for preparing a people-oriented budget upon the ruin of an economy plundered by the autocrat ruler Ershad for the last nine years.

He said the opposition should shun the path of traditional criticism on budget and come forward with constructive suggestions.

He said the opposition had failed to appreciate the highest allocation in the education sector.

Rahman, however, pleaded for finding ways, if any, to reduce duty on gas and ball point ink.

He alleged that thousands of head of cattle had been smuggled into the country from across the border.

This he said, should be stopped and measures taken for their legal import so that the government got taxes.

Referring to his district he demanded immediate establishment of a 150-bed modern hospital in Joypurhat and nationalization of Akkelpur College and three old high schools.

Dr. Kazi Abu Yusuf

Speaking next, Dr Kazi Abu Yusuf (AL-Faridpur) said after the political changeover in the country in the past a changed concept of nationalism was propagated.

He said Bengalee nationalism was replaced by

Bangladeshi nationalism.

Strongly advocating the cause of Bengalee nationalism, the Awami League member recalled various democratic movements in this country in the past and said the people had fought in the liberation war inspired by the ideals of Bengalee nationalism.

Dr Yusuf said misleading efforts were made to change the concept of nationalism by the propagation of Bangladeshi nationalism.

Referring to the Peer Saheb of Atroshi, he demanded realisation of tax from him as the Peer Saheb had amassed huge wealth without any investment. He said the Peer Saheb had established a textile industry and floated a political party-Zaker Party.

Dr Yusuf demanded an investigation into the wealth of the Peer Saheb who, he said, was patronized by former President Ershad.

As the time for Maghreb prayer, came the Speaker asked the member to continue his speech later and adjourned the House at 6-52.

Mostaque Ahmed said Bangladesh had to import two to three million tons of food-grains every year to meet the deficit. The greater Chittagong district could be self-sufficient in food if the supply of water was ensured during the winter season by constructing dams and cross dams.

He informed the House that the salt growers of Cox's Bazar district suffered terribly in the recent cyclonic storm and tidal surge. He called upon the government to write off loans of the salt growers and take adequate measures for their rehabilitation.

The salt growers of this district produced salt worth Taka 200 crore. The government would have to import salt by spending this sum in foreign exchange had not the growers of this district produced salt, he added.

Ahmed urged the government to construct a modern highway between Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, develop the Cox's Bazar Airport and establish a national hospital in Cox's Bazar district. All out steps should be taken for the devel-

opment of Cox's Bazar with a view to attracting tourists both from home and abroad, he said.

He said restaurants located at Cox's Bazar, a centre of tourist attraction, are very costly and the standard of food supplied by them is poor. He called for setting up restaurants, motels and hotels keeping in view the paying capacity of middle class people.

He regretted that in his budget speech Ziaul Huq (BNP-Lakshipur) who was once a Student League member, referred to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by calling him only Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Dignity of a person goes up in the estimation of the people if he honours an honourable man, he felt.

Shamsuddin Ahmed

Shamsuddin Ahmed (BNP-Naogaon) said increase of foreign assistance from 180 crore dollars to 230 crore dollars had reflected the confidence of our development partners and donors in the democratically elected government of Bangladesh. He said all democratic forces of the country deserved credit for this.

Defending the budgetary provisions proposed by the Finance Minister, Ahmed said adjustment of tax structure would benefit the local industries.

He said the Finance Minister had proposed tax increases on non-essential items like milk power used for preparing sweets whereas he suggested duty reduction on baby food.

Ahmed said proposal for imposing five per cent sales tax on land instead of collecting certificate for selling land in municipal areas would save the people from unnecessary harassment.

Terming the huge manpower as a blessing in disguise, the BNP member said, we could earn a lot in foreign exchange through export of manpower.

Ahmed called upon the government to immediately implement the Barendra project for the development of northern region of the country. Supporting the government

decision to dispose of the public sector enterprises, Ahmed said the people could not bear the loss to the tune of Taka 700 to 8000 crore annually for maintaining their operation.

Referring to the system loss in PDB, he wondered why the public sector enterprise, PDB should incur such huge loss when the loss in Palli Biddu was negligible.

He also alleged pilferage of bills in telephone department. He said some unscrupulous subscribers in collaboration with the officials of the telephone department were involved in this type of corruption.

He, however, urged the Finance Minister to make clear the mid-term review proposal in case of balance of trade. He also pleaded for taking steps to stop frequent strikes by the road transport workers which make life of the people miserable.

Ahmed demanded of the government to upgrade the present Naogaon vocational institute into a polytechnic institute.

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas adjourned the House at 9.05 am to meet at 11 am today (Tuesday).

Rajshahi Mayor hails budget

RAJSHAH, June 17: Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mitanur Rahman Minu has hailed the proposed budget for the fiscal 1991-92 terming it a practical, dynamic, productive and mass oriented one, reports BSS.

In a statement, the Mayor said the present democratic government had given a budget acceptable to all despite resource and time constraint. He said tax infrastructure had been changed without additional tax burden on the people.

The Mayor thanked the Finance Minister and hoped that the budget would help rebuild the national economy which was destroyed during the last nine years of autocratic rule.

Ministers' absence in House deplored

Following is the remaining part of Sunday's Jatiya Sangsad proceedings.

Participating in the discussion on supplementary budget the Awami League member said they opposed every part of the supplementary budget because the deposed President Ershad had spent the money shown in it to perpetuate his autocracy.

He said now in the BNP the person who had served Ershad as a bureaucrat till his last day in power also claimed himself a champion of the ideals of Shaheed Zia.

Nasim's comment evoked reaction in the Treasury Bench but he said he meant only those who had been black listed after the fall of Ershad regime.

The Awami League member referred to a speech made by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at a meeting in Pabna on January 23 where she was quoted as saying that the nation had suffered natural disaster like cyclone and flood because of the sins of the autocratic regime of Ershad.

"For whose sins lakhs of people had died in the recent devastating cyclone, he asked.

M-hammad Nasim

Nasim said the Prime Minister also said in a recent public meeting that her BNP was not the one that existed in the past.

He said such comment was made without knowing its reaction in the future.

The Awami League member was asked by the chair to confine his speech to the supplementary budget.

Nasim said the people had been frustrated for not seeing any move to restore parliamentary form of government in the first session of the Sangsad.

At this the Treasury Bench members shouted saying it would come on time.

Pointing at the Treasury Bench, Nasim said despite the fact that the BNP got more seats in the election Awami League polled more votes than the BNP.

Saifur Rahman

Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman giving his winding up speech on supplementary budget in the Jatiya Sangsad on Sunday urged all to decide how national development would be financed by external fund or from domestic resources.

He said this dilemma had to be brought to an end, because on the one hand we wanted self-reliance but on the other

hand we were reluctant to raise tax and mobilise resources, again when we sought increased external assistance for development we were criticised for selling out the country, he opined.

The Finance Minister said if we wanted to really make our country self-reliant we had to be ready for a short-term sacrifice. He said there could not be any short cut to development.

While agreeing with the contentions of the opposition the Finance Minister said despite our reservations we had brought the supplementary budget as we believed in "democracy" and wanted to "maintain continuity" of the administration. He cited the example of the first government after the liberation of the country in 1971 when the commitments of the Pakistanis were also honoured because certain rules of conduct had to be followed.

Saifur Rahman said despite many transaction of the Ershad government being repulsive, we had no option but to get it passed. The reality had to be accepted he maintained.

Referring to the lowering down of the period of tax holiday the Finance Minister said the period was irrationally extended upto 2000 by the autocratic ruler. He said usually such extensions were made on the basis of performance. He said Ershad had no right to make such long extension.

Referring to opposition accusation that the budget lacked direction, the Finance Minister stressed that it certainly had direction. He said more spending on development, reduction of unproductive expenditure, establishment of democracy and justice and eradication of corruption from the society clearly indicated the direction of the budget.

The Finance Minister said despite restraints the present government, which had inherited the legacy of a tyrannical rule, had been subjected to a number of difficult situation like the devastating cyclone, flood in Sylhet and the Middle East war. He said this was for the first time that he spending had been kept within limit. He said the members from the opposition bench should give credit to the government as most of the spendings were on development purposes.

Saifur Rahman assured the House that there would be ample chance for members to discuss the general budget. He

also held an assurance that if the implementation capacity could be raised, there would be greater allocation for education and rural development from block allocation.

Emphasising the paramount importance of education, the Finance Minister said without educating the masses there could be no proper manpower for development. He said real development would be possible only when the rate of literacy reached 80 per cent.

Reiterating the BNP governments determination to bring an end of rent seeking, Saifur Rahman said we also wanted to establish accountability and transparency in expenditure, a demand which the opposition members were making. He was happy to note that the objectives of the opposition and the Treasury Bench were almost identical on major issues like accountability and proper utilisation of public money.

Referring to increased pledges of foreign assistance received recently, the Finance Minister said in fact we do not want such increase. He said we had no alternative, but to seek increased assistance to finance development. We must decide nationally how national development would be carried out, he said. He said contradiction between self-reliance and reliance on outside help for national development must be brought to an end.

The Finance Minister made a fervent appeal to all the members to help passage of the supplementary budget for the continuation of the process.

The Deputy Leader of the House, Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury, took the floor to request the members for the passage of the supplementary budget.

Responding to the request of the Finance Minister and the Deputy Leader of the House, the Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali said there are certain procedures to be followed for the passage of the supplementary budget. He said rule was that demands for grants for each ministry be made separately and added that even the order the day did not mention the passage of supplementary budget.

At this Finance Minister stood up and said that the procedures that the Speaker was mentioning was applicable for general budget and not for the supplementary budget. He stressed that the passage of supplementary budget in the present form had been prac-

tised since 1981. He mentioned the Speaker had been wrongly advised.

The Speaker remarked that besides not being included in the order of the day, it would be illegal if the budget was passed without following the necessary procedures. He assured the house that he would give a ruling on the matter after examining all aspects and announced the adjournment of the House for Magreb prayer.

Soon as the House reassembled after the Magreb prayer Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali in the chair, A S M Firoz (AL-Patuakhali), quickly stood up and drew the attention of the chair to what the then Finance Minister Saifur Rahman stated in the House in regard to the 1980-81 supplementary budget.

Firoz who himself was a member in the then parliament read out the relevant portion of the proceedings which read "I propose that the application of Rule 114 of the Rules of Procedure should be kept suspended on the basis of the provisions of the Rule 315 of the Rules of Procedures for accommodating the following subjects for discussion in the Sangsad on the 1980-81 supplementary budget, namely: Discussion on the demand for grants and appropriation in respect of charged expenditure in the 1980-81 supplementary budget and voting on the demands for grants relating to other expenditures as proposed in the 1980-81 supplementary budget.

Agreeing with the suggestion of Firoz, Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali said that as per Rule 123 of the rules of procedures and constitutional provisions, the supplementary budget had to be placed separately for its passage in the House.

He said he supplementary budget for the year 1989-90 and the one in the previous year were also adopted in the House the same way. He then ruled that Rule 114 of the rules of procedure is being kept suspended.

The Deputy Speaker then proposed to initiate general discussion on the proposed budget for 1991-92 financial year and asked both the treasury and opposition benches to place the names of their members who would participate in the discussion.

Taking the floor Chief Whip of the Opposition Mohammad Nasim said he would submit a list. Meanwhile, he proposed the name of Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Barguna) to initiate dis-

cussion on the budget for 1991-92 financial year.

Nurul Islam Moni

Initiating discussion, Nurul Islam Moni thanked Finance Minister Saifur Rahman for placing the first budget after the mass upsurge in a House whose members had been elected in a free and fair election.

Moni said the Finance Minister deserved thanks for adopting a measure that if an assessee submitted a false statement on his income he would have to pay two and a half times more tax than usual.

The independent member said the Finance Minister through his wit placed a budget with all his wisdom in financial matters.

He said he had sought SR book from the government for the members of this House so that they could understand what things were going to happen after the passage of the budget.

Moni said though the Finance Minister claimed that items like C.I. sheet, cement, aluminium, M.S. rods and paper would rise by some thousand taka per ton. He said these items were being used by the common man and for development work.

The Finance Minister, he said, had proposed to bring 300 to 400 new items under tariff structure which would hit the poor people.

On the other hand, he said, the Finance Minister had proposed reduction of tariff on luxury items like air conditioner. He expressed his surprise how a democratically elected government could propose to raise taxes on the items used by the poor while reducing taxes on items used by the rich.

Salauddin Yusuf

At this stage Salahuddin Yusuf (AL-Khulna) took the floor on a point of order and said the entire front row of the Treasury Bench is vacant.

He said we were going to discuss the budget for the nation. In a parliament, members would discuss various financial measures of the government while the ministers were supposed to take note of them and make their replies.

At this stage, some members from the Treasury Bench rose on their feet and said the opposition member could not see the minister sitting in the second row. This infuriated Salahuddin and he said let me clear my point of view.

Taking the floor, State