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Historic 12th Amendment Bill passed unanimously amidst unprecedented jubilation

Parliamentary system triumphs

By Mostafa Kamal Majumder

The Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Bill, providing for switchover to a parliamentary system was unanimously passed by the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) Tuesday mid-night.

A total of 306 members present voted in favour and none against. Two amendments moved by Mohammad Nasim of Awami League and another amendment moved by JSD member Shahjahan Straj were accepted by the House.

Earlier, the Constitution (Eleventh Amendment) Bill was passed validating the government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and all its actions and making Justice Ahmed eligible to return to the office of the Chief Justice after the election of a new President.

As many as 278 members voted in favour of the 11th Amendment Bill. None voted against. However, 27 members belonging to Jatiya Party, and National Democratic Party member Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury abstained. JP leader Moudud Ahmed had earlier recorded his note of dissent against the use of the word 'illegal' to qualify the government of former President Ershad.

The 11th Amendment Bill will be effective on the day the Acting President gives his assent. The 12th Amendment Bill, however, will be effective only after it is okayed by a referendum which is expected to

be organised soon.

The Constitution 11th and 12th Amendment Bills owe their origin to the November 19 joint declaration of the eight, seven, and five party alliance which called for establishment of parliamentary democracy.

It was on the basis of the joint declaration that the government of H M Ershad in the face of a mass upsurge handed over power to a person (Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed) nominated by the three alliances to form a caretaker government to hold elections of sovereign Parliament. The elections held on February 27 created the present parliament.

The Constitution 11th and 12th Amendment Bills were introduced in the Parliament by Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on July 2. Abdus Samad Azad of AL introduced another comprehensive bill, and Workers Party member Rashed Khan Menon moved four single-clause bills on July 4.

These seven Constitution Amendment Bills were scrutinised by a 15-member Parliamentary Select Committee headed by Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz. The committee submitted an unanimous report to the House along with the 11th and 12th Constitution Amendment Bills as modified by it on July 28.

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MAKING HISTORY: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina with other leading members of parliament in the Sangsad Bhavan moments before the passage of the two Constitution amendment bills on Tuesday night. — Star photo

Analysis
A turning point in our national life

By Reazuddin Ahmed

It was a memorable day and a turning point in our national life on Tuesday when the Jatiya Sangsad unanimously changed the country's constitution opting for a parliamentary form of government. In a rare demonstration of unity Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina walked together thundersome applause to the lobby to vote for the historic change.

Never before had our politicians demonstrated such rare unity on such a fundamental political issue. Disunity among our politicians had in the past invited the extra-constitutional forces to time and again intervene in our national life even since 1974.

Democracy was never allowed to take root in our country and the politicians were blamed for the failure.

On Tuesday it was a different scene, a new history was created by our politicians. They fulfilled the aspirations of the people unitedly, amidst unprecedented amity and coop-

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Legal cover given to all acts of the Acting President

Shahabuddin's return to the Bench approved



Seen from the Gallery

By Mahfuz Anam

The Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina stood their closest since the victory of the anti-Ershad struggle — both politically and physically — when they walked together towards their designated voting lobby in the Division Vote on the Constitution 11th Amendment

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The Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) Tuesday night passed a Constitution Amendment Bill providing for the eligibility of Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed to return to his original post of Chief Justice, after the new President, elected under the Constitution, enters upon his office, reports BSS.

Piloted by Law and Justice Minister, Mirza Gholam Hafiz, the bill called the Constitution (11th Amendment) Bill, 1991 — as amended by the Select Committee — was brought in and passed by the House for amending the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution giving legal cover to all acts of the government since December 6 last year till commencement of this act.

With the passage of the bill a new provision will be added

to the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution ratifying the appointment of the Chief Justice as Vice-President by former President (H M Ershad), latter's resignation tendered to him, all actions taken, powers exercised and laws made by the Acting President and his return to the office of Chief Justice, in accordance with the 'positive assurance' given by three main political alliances and parties.

After final counting of votes on the bill by division, Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali announced that 278 votes were cast in favour of the 11th Amendment Bill and none against.

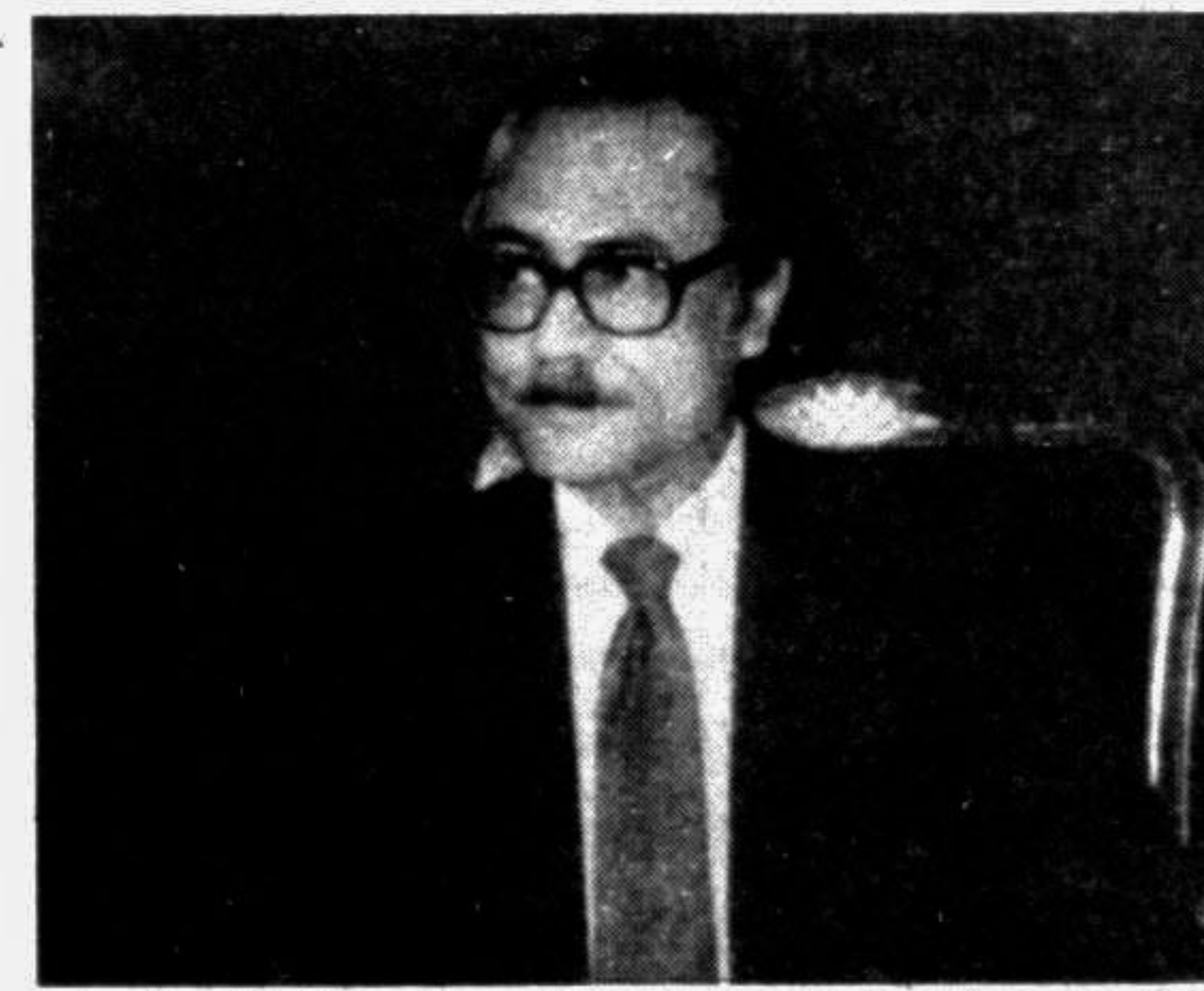
The opposition Jatiya Party members abstained from voting in protest against terming the former government of Ershad as illegal in the

preamble of the bill. Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury of NDP also abstained. The results were announced at 12.40 past mid-night.

The preamble of the 11th Constitution Amendment Bill said the then President (Hussain Mohammad Ershad) was compelled to tender resignation in the face of the countrywide popular upsurge aimed at overthrowing the 'illegal and undemocratic government' and giving democracy an institutional shape.

After the historic success of the students, peasants, workers, employees, the people in general, the main political alliances and parties and all professional organisations, regardless of their political affiliations, belief and leanings, the three main political alliances

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Justice Shahabuddin: Promise-bound to return to the Supreme Court bench. — Star photo

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Narasimha Rao's minority government suffers first defeat in parliament Page 5

Article

The upcoming by-elections offer a priceless chance to tackle some highly important tasks that should have been looked into immediately after the parliamentary polls, but have inexpressibly been left on the shelf Page 5

Sport



Soviet phenomenon Sergei Bubka soars to world pole vault record of 6.10 metres Page 10

NEWS BRIEFS

Public holiday tomorrow

The government Tuesday night declared Thursday (August 8) public holiday to mark the passage of the 12th Constitution Amendment Bill restoring parliamentary democracy in the country, reports BSS.

AL rally today

The city unit of Bangladesh Awami League will hold a public meeting at 4 pm today at Bangabandhu Avenue demanding repeal of Indemnity Act, withdrawal of VAT, introduction of true parliamentary democracy and protesting malicious campaign against the statement of Sheikh Hasina, deterioration of law and order and price spiral of essentials, reports BSS.

Campus violence is a political issue

Limited powers make Dhaka University authorities helpless

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Dhaka University authorities seem unable to check growing acts of violence, a big threat to academic functioning, with their limited powers.

This has become quite true since the crisis is purely political, as felt by the DU authorities and others concerned.

Meantime, the Vice-Chancellor and different bodies of the University including the Syndicate, the chief executive body, have identified the crisis as a political one.

They have also urged the political parties to help eliminate terrorism from the campus.

The failure of the University authorities has come to the surface by the actions and steps they had taken in the wake of violent activities let loose by the student activists of various political parties in the recent past.

Press reports on the past three months' incidents that occurred on the DU campus, show that the authorities were forced to shut down the institution in order to stop violence on campus for the time being after other steps failed.

Incidents of violence published national dailies in the last three months' say that be-

fore closing down the University indefinitely, the DU authorities' steps against violence varied from calls for peace to orders for vacation of residential halls.

According to the press reports on the incidents, the recent trouble in the DU campus originated from the split of the All-Party Students Unity (APSU) which played a vital role in the 1990 mass upsurge against autocracy.

Sheltering of the alleged killers of Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milton, a mass upsurge martyr, by the Awami League-

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Anniversary of Rabindranath's death today.

The 50th death anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore will be observed here today, reports BSS.

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Khaleda tells trade, industries leader Govt firm to enforce financial discipline

Star Economic Report

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Tuesday called for concerted national efforts for industrialisation and creation of more employment opportunities to solve the massive unemployment problem.

She said, the government was aware of the problems facing the existing industries and would take every efforts in consultation with the leaders of trade and industry to help overcome the same.

The Prime Minister was addressing the 40th annual general meeting of Bangladesh Employers Association (BEA) at a city hotel.

Cabinet ministers, senior

government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of various international agencies and leading personalities in trade and industry attended the meeting.

State Minister for Labour and Manpower Rafiqul Islam Mia was the special guest at the function.

Outgoing President of BEA Latifur Rahman in his address reviewed the industrial, labour and overall economic situation, now obtaining in the country.

President-elect of BEA Anisudowla offered the vote of thanks.

In her speech, the Prime Minister said:

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'Mischievous, false and baseless'

The President Secretariat Tuesday described as "completely baseless and unfounded", a report published in a section of the press that the Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, may be a candidate for the presidential election as a nominee of a political party.

An official press release said, "The attention of the President's Secretariat has been drawn to a news item published in a section of the press August 6 stating that the Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed may be a candidate for the presidential election as a nominee of a political party.

The report is completely baseless and unfounded as the Acting President time and

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Massive LTTE arms depot unearthed in Tamil Nadu

NEW DELHI, Aug 6: Indian police pursuing a crackdown on Sri Lankan Tamil militants have unearthed a massive arms depot in southern India and were searching for a secret rebel radio station in the coastal region, reports said today, reports AFP.

Police seized 100,000 detonators, several pistols, explosives and three wireless sets from a physician's house in the district of Tiruchi in Tamil Nadu, the coastal state where detectives are hunting Tamil rebels.

The Hindu newspaper reported the arrest of the Indian physician Monday and said the man had links with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and that his house was a hideout for rebels evading the security dragnet.

The daily said rebels used the doctor's house not only as an ordnance depot, but also to store medicines, equipment and clothes for the LTTE.

Stocks were regularly ferried from the site across the sea to Sri Lanka, it added.

Tamil Nadu, where the

group has an extensive network is separated from Sri Lanka by a narrow strip of sea called the Palk Strait, which LTTE guerrillas frequently cross to smuggle men and material.

Police, however, have ruled out any connection between Gandhi's murder and the Indian doctor, identified as Gopalakrishnan, the daily said.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu police have launched a hunt for an LTTE radio centre in the southern state following reports from an Indian naval

ship off the town of Madurai that it recently intercepted strange messages, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

The messages were from a caller in Madurai and was in code, PTI said, adding that police have sounded an alert in Tamil Nadu and neighbouring states for the secret telecommunication centre.

Federal detectives have arrested more than a dozen people in connection with Gandhi's death and are still looking for an LTTE leader who allegedly masterminded

the assassination.

Indian investigators are still puzzled by the poisoning death of an airhostess instrumental in the arrest of two Sri Lankan Tamils for smuggling gold, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Monday.

Investigators, however, appear to rule out the hand of the (LTTE) in the July 29 death by cyanide poisoning of Kalpana Rajan in Madras, capital of southern Tamil Nadu state, PTI said.

Through clues currently available, it could be said that

no militants were involved, official sources in the city were quoted as saying.

The airhostess had helped police locate a parcel containing contraband gold from inside the toilet of a plane a few weeks ago, leading to the arrest of two Sri Lankan Tamils.

But, while discounting the LTTE's involvement, investigators also appeared to rule out the possibility of Rajan committing suicide in the absence of any motive.

Fasting BCCI depositors seek PM's intervention

Star Economic Report

The depositors of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) started an eight-hour daily hunger strike on Tuesday to press home their demands for the bank's reopening and operations of their deposit accounts.

The hunger strike is also aimed at pressing the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to pay a visit to the United Arab Emirates for resolving the crisis.

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