

Shahabuddin

From Page 1 Col. 7
progress in this direction.

The Acting President observed that he was invited to occupy the seat of President on December 6 last year as he soon discovered that he was "invited to sit on a heap of powder-keg which can explode any time". He expressed his satisfaction that the parliamentary election could be held, with unstinted cooperation from all in a neutral and peaceful manner and earned the admiration of the whole world. "When future historians will judge the short administration of my interim government, they will see in hindsight that this administration was neutral and free of all flaws".

He said he accepted the responsibility as the interim President, as a national duty, at the call of all political alliances. He recalled that he was chosen for "this office" because he was the sitting Chief Justice of Bangladesh and hence a neutral man. He pointed out that he made it clear at the very beginning that he would like to go back to his post after holding parliamentary elections within three months.

The Acting President said, there is a constitutional problem about his reversion. "As per the constitutional provision, there is none now to whom I can submit my resignation. The responsibility and the tenure of the Acting President will terminate as soon as an elected President assumes office", he observed.

Explaining the constitutional problem, he said, election to the presidency will have to take place any time between April 23 and October 22, if there is the presidential form of government. In case of reversion to the parliamentary system, everything regarding the "change-over" may be com-

pleted within the next one and a half months, he noted.

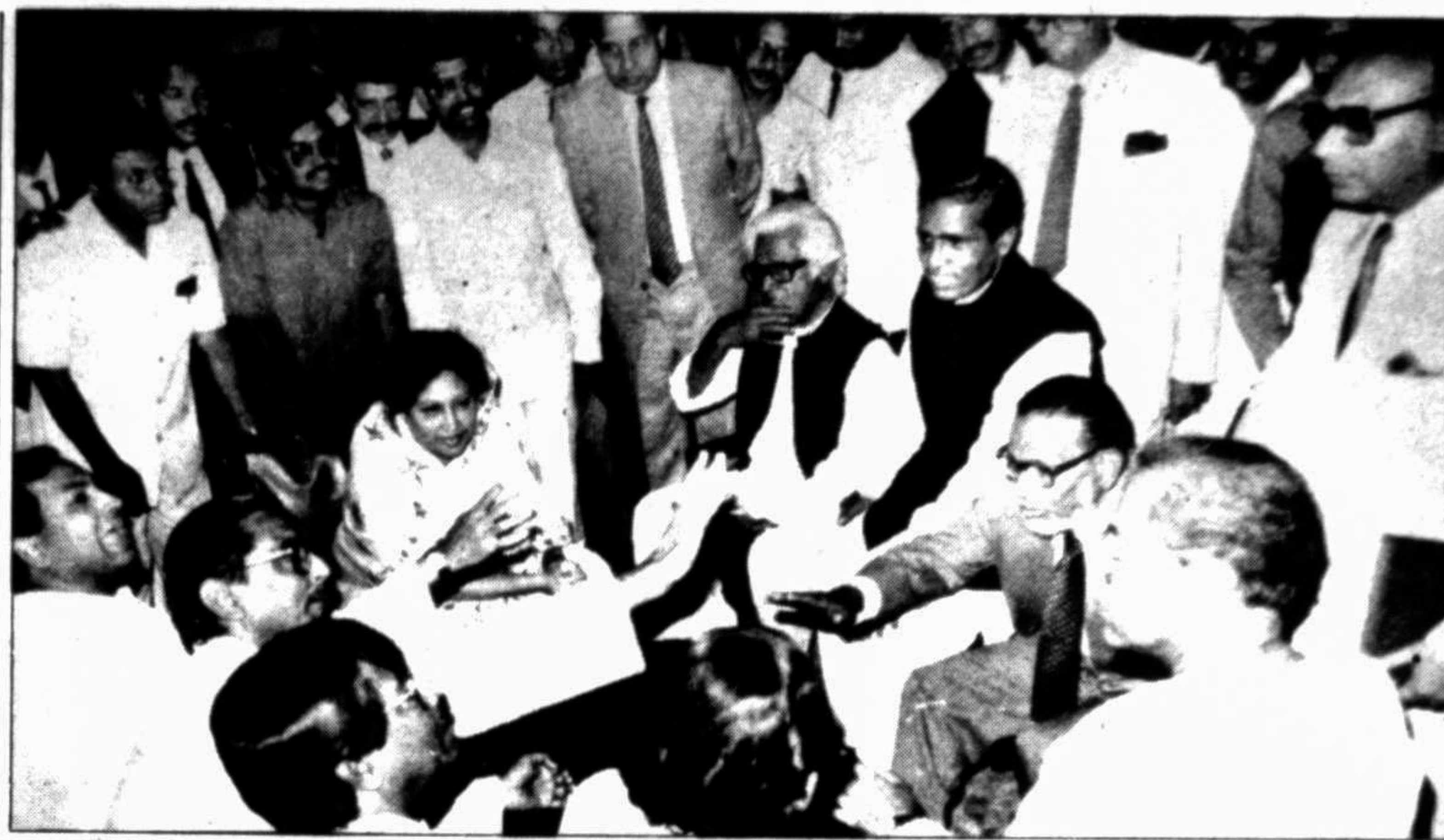
The Acting President said, it is not for him but for the fifth Jatiya Sangsad to decide the form of government. He said his "only wish" at this moment is to get rid of the responsibility of "running the government." He however noted that circumstances under which "the Speaker can assume the responsibility of the Acting President under Article 55(2) of the Constitution do not exist at present".

In this context, he requested the Sangsad to "add a Transitional and Temporary Provision to Part IV of the Constitution". "If this is so done, only then I can get relieved of the present assignment at the earliest", he said.

The Acting President said the Joint Declaration or outline of the three alliances stated that he should transfer power to a sovereign parliament. "This outline may not have any constitutional validity but it has sufficient political significance", he observed. He called upon the members of the Jatiya Sangsad to arrive at a decision on the issue promptly through mutual consultation.

He said, differences of opinion and modes of action are natural in a democracy but sharp differences of opinion on the basic issues render democracy "non-functional".

Justice Shahabuddin termed the country's fifth parliament as "markedly different from the previous ones" because its members, elected in a completely free, fair and neutral way, "are public representatives in the truest sense of the term". "The people are the sources of all power and you are their elected representatives", he said.



A FUTILE EXERCISE: (Top) Leading opposition MPs in an attempt to reach a consensus on election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker are conferring with Begum Zia in her Sangsad chamber and (bottom) BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder trying to persuade Sheikh Hasina to come to an agreement on Friday. —Star photo

Development budget

From Page 1 Col. 5

ture of Taka 73 billion, leaving a revenue surplus of Taka 7.5 billion for the development budget. But the collection till now shows that the revenue deficit in the year may decline by four to five per cent. The revenue expenditure will go up by Taka 1.25 billion on account of 10 per cent dearness allowance allowed for employees of government, semi-government and autonomous organisations, he said.

Meanwhile, the National Pay Commission, constituted in 1989, submitted its report barely 15 to 20 days back, he added.

He added that the entire budget for the projected development expenditure of Taka 56 billion in 1990-91 would have to come as foreign aid. About the state of the economy, he noted that only 3.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or total national income was saved and 10 per cent of the national income was invested with bulk of the funds for the same coming from foreign assistance. The rate of national savings and that of investment in the neighbouring countries are three to four times larger than those in Bangladesh, he added.

The annual per capita income in Bangladesh, he said, is 170 US Dollars while it is 400 Dollars in India and 450 Dollars in Pakistan. The same income in advanced countries ranges between 15 to 20 thousand Dollars.

He said Bangladesh's balance of trade was always adverse with imports being about three times larger than exports in value. The average annual import bill is Taka 120 billion against export receipts of Taka 45 billion.

The Acting President stated that not even 10 per cent of whatever money was pumped out from the nationalised banks as industrial loan could be recovered. The grand total of outstanding industrial loans stand at Taka 100 billion and many persons who received industrial loans from the Industrial Bank, the Investment Corporation and the state-owned financial institutions in different names

had neither set up industries nor were repaying loans. "In the event of our failure to realise this outstanding loan, the implementation of our development programmes, which is dependent on foreign aid, may come to a halt", he observed.

He noted that the pace of industrialisation did not pick up to the mark though emphasis was laid on the private sector involvement in industrialisation. Smuggling which now takes place through land, sea and air routes must be checked with firm hands, he said. He pointed out that the country's textile mills faced closure because the local market was flooded with smuggled textiles.

Justice Shahabuddin said the country's total foreign loans stand at Taka 400 billion at current prices and the interest payable against the loan Taka five billion a year.

About the five-year development plans, he noted that not a single plan attained its targets, though four five-year plans were adopted since independence. The rate of growth was projected at five to seven per cent but, in reality, what was attained was 3.5 per cent, he added. Most of the successive governments which had come and gone since the partition of India in 1947 failed to effect economic advancement of the country. No worthwhile effort was made to reduce population growth rate and attain self-sufficiency in food, he noted.

The Acting President observed that the new government would have to take effective measures to address itself to the major problems like population explosion, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

He stressed the need for reducing unproductive expenditures and practising austerity in all sectors "to help save the country and nation". In this context, he pointed out that all ministries, organisations, offices and establishments were directed at the beginning of the current financial year to reduce expenses by 10 per cent. "All but one or two have defied the instruction", he added.

PSC report

From Page 1 Col. 5

PSC report however, recommended reduction of the reserved seats for the Freedom Fighters from 30 per cent to five per cent. The report said the number of successful Freedom Fighters was being reduced every year. Latest statistics suggested that the number was reduced to only 1.1 per cent in place of 30 per cent in 1989-90. In this respect, the PSC recommended, 25 per cent posts of the Freedom Fighters quota can be reallocated by distributing 10 per cent to women quota and 15 per cent to merit quota.

The Commission said the quota for the women should be raised as they were doing well in all sectors.

The PSC report noted with concern that some irregularities were persisting in cases of

promotion of the officers and employees. It was witnessed that promotions of many candidates were held up in spite of good remarks in their Annual Confidential Reports (ACR's) on the other hand, many officers and employees were promoted though their cases were not genuine or properly recommended.

The PSC suggested that there was necessity of imparting training to the persons who responsible for writing annual confidential reports of their juniors. The PSC report cited that the commission recommended promotion cases of 908 persons against 2251 posts in 1990.

The report also said a rule was formulated to regularise the ad-hoc appointments which remained pending from April, 1972.

Nasim made Chief Whip of ALPP

By Staff Correspondent

Mohammed Nasim, the Publicity Secretary of Awami League has been appointed Chief Whip of the party's Parliamentary Party (ALPP). His appointment was announced by party chief Sheikh Hasina Friday morning at the ALPP meeting which was held at the committee room of Sangsad Bhaban.

Azizur Rahman and Abul Hasan Chowdhury have been appointed Whips of ALPP. Earlier, Abdus Samad Azad, a president member of AL was named Deputy Leader of Opposition.

JP MPs

From Page 1 Col. 2

members were walking out. While most JP members remained depressed inside the house, Monirul Haque Choudhury and Advocate Fazle Rabbi were shouting at the top of their voice. Amidst noise Fazle Rabbi was the first to rise on a point of order immediately after the beginning of the session in the morning.

In his point of order Fazle Rabbi drew attention of the Speaker to Rule 172 of the Rules of Procedure, which refers to the detention of a parliament member.

The JP members came back to the house when the session resumed at 10-20 a.m. after an adjournment for 55 minutes.

JP members walked out for the second time when Acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed entered the house to address the newly elected parliament. Before staging the walkout, some JP members shouted demanding release of Ershad and other JP leaders.

Newcomers

From Page 1 Col. 3

MPs belonging to the Communist Party of Bangladesh have been elected for the first time. In Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BKSAL), tow of the four MPs are new.

An Islami Oikya Jote member and a NAP (M) member are also in the Sangsad for the first time.

The MPs Club of the Jatiya Sangsad organised an orientation course for new MPs to acquaint them with the Rules of Procedure of the house. The course supported by the Parliament Secretariat was the first of its kind in Bangladesh.

An overwhelming majority of the 30 women members elected against reserved seats have also been in the parliament for the first time. Their exact number, however, was not immediately available.

Seen from the gallery

From Page 1 Col. 5

nated the decision making in the House as regards elections of Speaker. Treasury bench failed in their duties to mobilise the support of the opposition in time. The normal dialogue between the Treasury bench and the opposition to deal with issues such as election of Speaker was mostly missing.

It was strange that nobody greeted the newly elected Speaker and the Deputy Speaker. Traditionally the newly elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker are felicitated by the Treasury bench and the opposition. The new Speaker entered the House and resumed the business even without thanking the members for electing him. The Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas performed well on the day.

Although there are only 34 women MPs in the 330-member Parliament, the house is dominated by women. The Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition are women, probably unique in a male dominated society.

The two Jamaat lady MPs attracted the attention of the House - though not by their performance but by their sheer presence. In burqas with hoods appearing more than veils or wimples with only eyes visible they scheduled themselves from other women MPs normally but elegantly dressed.

The House was moved by the emotion of the Acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed. In choked voice, he recalled the working of his interim administration at one stage he almost broke down. In soft but scathing words he laid the bare facts before the House starting from the state of the economy, population boom, food problem, to the problem of national consensus. He gave the House a clear picture of the economy which shows that for development budget the nation is dependent on foreign aid almost to the extent of hundred per cent. Country's debt burden is Taka 40 thousand crore and debt servicing amounts to Taka 500 crore annually. Members heard him with rapt attention and he got tremendous ovation from the opposition when he said, "The joint declaration may not have constitutional validity but it has political significance." It visibly annoyed the Treasury bench.

But the Treasury and the opposition benches were not altogether inimical. At least on two occasions Friday the Treasury bench and the opposition joined hands to celebrate the walkout of Jatiya Party MPs by thumping the table. The members were jubilant when JP MPs staged walkouts twice demanding release of Ershad. JP MPs proved

to be good listeners. They were listening to the speeches dealing with the nine years autocratic rule of Ershad. The JP MPs from the very beginning started shouting to mark their presence felt in the House. But even Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury, a JP man, did not give them much importance.

The outgoing Speaker, tried to conduct the business with his usual touch of humour. But happened to be not as lively as he was on earlier occasions. Maybe he was conscious that he was presiding over a hostile House and clock was ticking by reminding him of time to take leave. Even then he made some witty remarks which made the proceedings livelier.

State Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah was ill-at-ease when both the Speaker and the opposition members squared up to him for taking the floor and proposing the name of the speaker candidate even when the Speaker had not asked for it. "You have slaughtered the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker," came the retort from Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury. Rafiqul, however, corrected him later. But in moving the motion Rafiqul identified himself as 'I barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah.' This too sparked a lively retort from the opposition. Opposition asked for a ruling if 'barrister' could be the part of any one's name. Another member of the Lincoln's Inn protested Rafiqul's using the word - barrister calling it unethical. Rafiqul was dumb and a little nervous as he was the first man to move a motion in the house. The man did not even press the button of his microphone. Leader of House Khaleida Zia came to his aid.

One opposition member suggested that if Rafiqul Islam Miah could use 'barrister' prefixed to his name, why Shamsul Huda Chowdhury should not use 'speaker' with his name for the rest of his life. Shamsul Huda Chowdhury quipped, "I will remain a speaker until I lose my power of speech."

Parties winning only one seat each were not also lagging behind in the House and even tried to outshine the big parties. Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta, Rashed Khan Menon, Shahjahan Straj, took the floor several times and tried to play the role of mediators in major issues. Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury even tried to raise a constitutional debate which turned out to be a damp squib after creating a little movement. Suranjit Sengupta was visibly shocked when his for a consensus on the election of speaker fell on deaf ears. He gave surprise to all by abstaining himself from voting in

speaker election. Rashed Khan Menon is lucky that he has a sister in the house and the speaker is his relations. But he was found depressed as he along with Abdur Razzak got the seat in the second row.

During the division in the House three persons did not stand up. They are: Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, State Minister for Land Zamruddin Sircar and State Minister for Social Welfare Tariqul Alam. None of them are members of Parliament.

Awami League member Akhtaruzzaman Babu who was MP in 1986 raised a rather silly question. He wanted to know how Saifur Rahman could be inside the House probably he has missed the constitutional provision which says technocrat ministers can take part in the proceedings of the House but cannot vote. He was given chastised by Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury.

This was the first day, in Parliament for Leader of the House Khaleida Zia. But she was found confident and was attending the business seriously. Dr. Badruddoza Choudhury spoke on behalf of the Treasury bench most of the time. Treasury spoke very little on the first day.

Sheikh Hasina was very free in her seat which she adorned in 1986. She was looking a little depressed in the morning session. But in the afternoon she was quite herself although did not speak.

This is for the first time the Awami League members listened to the president's speech since 1975. The Awami League always walked out when a president came to the House to address. This time Jatiya Party boycotted president's speech by staging a walkout.

The front row in the opposition had a vacant seat. The seat has been given to the once-a-strongman-ousted-president Ershad, who is the leader of the Jatiya Party's Parliamentary Party comprising 31 members.

All the galleries of Parliament including two VIP galleries were full during the inaugural session Friday. Diplomats from the foreign missions in Dhaka were present at one of the VIP galleries to witness the proceedings of the inaugural session. At another VIP gallery, three chiefs of the Armed Forces and other high officials of the government were seated. All other galleries of Parliament remained packed with enthusiastic visitors till the end of first day's session.

The Midnight File

ANC threatens to break off talks

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 5: The African National Congress (ANC) today threatened to break off talks with the South African government unless it put a halt to violence sweeping black townships by May 9. Nelson Mandela, the ANC Deputy President, listed seven demands which he said the government had to meet by that date, including the firing of Defence Minister Magnus Malan and Law and Order Minister Adrian Vlok, reports AFP.

Tamil rebels kill 13 troops

COLOMBO, Apr 5: Tamil separatist guerrillas killed at least 13 soldiers and four civilians in attacks in Sri Lanka's eastern province today, military sources said. They said Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam ambushed an army patrol in Batticaloa district killing 11 soldiers and wounding 10, reports Reuter.

Speaker elected

From Page 1 Col. 8

After a long debate mostly participated by the opposition members for nearly three hours including two short adjournments of the House - one for half an hour and another for ten minutes - the Speaker called for the division in the house.

Abdur Rahman Biswas and Sheikh Razzak Ali proposed by the Treasury bench polled 187 votes each while 97 members voted against them.

During the division members belonging to the Jamaat-e-Islami, Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers Party, Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury of the National Democratic Party, Shahjahan Straj of the JSD and the three independent members supported the BNP candidates.

On the other hand, the five members of the CPB, five members of the BAKSAL and one member of the NAP supported the proposal of the Awami League.

Mr Suranjit Sengupta of Ganotantri Party, Mouliana Obaidul Haq of Islami Otkkya Jote and Jatiya Party members abstained from voting.

Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury told the House that he received the first proposal from the BNP at 7.30 am and the second from the Awami League at 7.50 am yesterday.

Accordingly the Speaker called for placing the proposals.

When the Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury read the proposal of the Awami League, Leader of the House Begum Khaleida Zia took the floor and proposed for adjournment of the House for half an hour to discuss this issue.

The leaders of the smaller parties, Suranjit Sengupta, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, Shahjahan Straj, and Rashed Khan Menon tried for a con-

sensus. But, ultimately, their exercises proved to be futile.

From the very beginning Awami League President Sheikh Hasina insisted on a division of the House under rule 8 clause 4 of the rules of procedure.

Later Leader of the House Khaleida Zia gave a call to the opposition leader to withdraw their proposal, but that too fell on deaf ears.

At this stage Rashed Khan Menon tried to arrange a meeting between Leader of the House and Leader of the Opposition. But that also failed when none of the two leaders agreed to approach the other.

Speaker retires

From Page 1 Col. 8

one' as he rose from the chair to attend the oath taking of the new Speaker.

Shamsul Huda Chowdhury was elected Speaker of the third Parliament in July 1988. Before that he had conducted oath of members of the third Parliament as Acting Speaker. Chowdhury was re-elected Speaker of the fourth Parliament in April 1988.

The longest serving Speaker in Bangladesh Shamsul Huda Chowdhury in his concluding remarks requested the MP to accept his best wishes at 'this hour of rising of a new sun in a new horizon'.

Later using his humour Chowdhury greeted newly-elected Speaker Abdur Rahman Chowdhury by saying, "You have deceived your wife by becoming a Speaker. Was it not better for you to earn six to seven lakh taka a year by working as a lawyer?"

Shamsul Huda Chowdhury remained present at the oath taking ceremony of the new Speaker and the new Deputy Speaker. He departed after welcoming them to office.

Division, walkout

From Page 1 Col. 6

and State Minister for Labour and Manpower, proposed the name of Abdur Rahman Biswas for the post of Speaker. Abdul Matin Chowdhury seconded the proposal.

Within moments it became obvious that the opposition also had a name to propose for the post and Tofael Ahmed of AL stood up to say something. Speaker Chowdhury adjourned the House at the advice of the leader of the House Begum Khaleida Zia to allow both the sides to come to an understanding.

A patch-up move for long 45 minutes proved futile as the house resumed its business. Tofael Ahmed proposed the name of Salahuddin Yusuf for the post of Speaker. Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition, had earlier sought permission to propose a name from the opposition bench.

Subsequently, the names of Sheikh Razzak Ali and Asaduzzaman were proposed for the post of deputy speaker from the Treasury Bench and the Opposition respectively. Meanwhile Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury, Minister of Education, requested the Speaker to allow some time for a unanimous decision on the election of speaker and deputy speaker.

Speaker Shamsul Huda Chowdhury placed before the house the name of Abdur Rahman Biswas as Speaker which Sheikh Hasina protested vehemently saying her party was in favour of a division. The Speaker said division could be allowed even after taking 'yes' - 'no' vote.

Following this Abdus Samad Azad and Suranjit Sen Gupta of the Opposition Bench made a plea that such an election would create a bad precedent since the Speaker is supposed to be non-partisan. Sheikh Hasina said she stood for division.

When the speaker sought advice of Begum Zia she said unanimous election was possible if the Leader of the Opposition was ready to withdraw the names.

BKSAL leader Mohiuddin Ahmed, Tofael Ahmed, Shahjahan Straj and Rashed Khan Menon delivered emotional speeches calling for the need to create an example of 'give and take'.

When the house met again at 11-40 am the Speaker allowed division. Abdur Rahman Biswas and Sheikh Razzak Ali were elected, with 187 votes in their favour and 97 votes against them.

BISMILLAIR RAHAMAN-IR-RAHIM
QUL KHAWANI OF JANAB A.K. KHAN

THE QUL KHAWANI OF OUR FATHER
JANAB AL HAJ A.K. KHAN WHO PASSED AWAY
ON 31ST MARCH, 91 IN DHAKA WILL BE
HELD ON 7TH APRIL/91 AT THE GULSHAN
RESIDENCE, HOUSE NO. 6, ROAD NO. 62,
GULSHAN, DHAKA AT 4.00 P.M.

ALL RELATIVES, FRIENDS AND WELL
WISHERS ARE CORDIALLY REQUESTED TO
ATTEND THE QUL KHAWANI AND PRAY FOR
THE DEPARTED SOUL.

SONS AND DAUGHTERS.

Editor : S. M. Ali

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