

Understanding with Opposition needed: Khaleda

Speaker belongs to the House: Hasina

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its session at 11-37 am Sunday after a day's break with the Speaker Abdul Rahman Biswas in the chair, reports BSS.

The proceedings of the day began with recitation from the Holy Quran. Then the Speaker read out the names of the martyrs of anti-autocracy movement mentioned in the obituary reference table on April 5. The names read out by the Speaker included those of Dr. Shamsul Islam Milon, Nur Hossain, Moyezuddin Ahmed, Tajul Islam, Delwar Hossain, Safar Ali, Abdul Rashid, Mofizul Islam, Akbar Ali, Abdul Aziz, Abdul Khalek, Joyal and Firoze.

The Speaker also dwelt on who the valiant sons of the soil laid down their lives in the anti-autocracy movement.

The Speaker, on behalf of the House, also prayed for the salvation of the departed souls and expressed sympathies with the members of the bereaved families.

The House observed one-minute silence to pay respect to the departed souls.

As soon as the Speaker finished the process of obituary reference, the leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina took the floor and drew the attention of the chair saying that a few members did not stand up to observe one minute silence.

She said it was an established parliamentary practice to show respect to the chair. She said it was up to the chair to decide how he would look at it and it was up to him also on whether he would take any measure against breach of discipline.

Sheikh Hasina said the Shaheeds included people from all communities of the country including Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists. She said 'we pay respect to the souls of the Muslims standing in solemn silence.'

Which those not a religious obligation is a universally accepted practice. She said 'we should also keep in mind about those Christian, Hindu and Buddhists who were killed.'

Adjournment
Speaker Abdul Rahman Biswas adjourned the House at 1 pm to meet again at 2 pm Sunday.

Sheikh Hasina said members belonging to her party had left the House in 1987 in protest against an anti-people bill brought before the House. She emphatically said, 'we have come back to the session of the present JATIYA Sangsad won through a long and bloody movement against an autocratic regime.'

The leader of the Opposition said after his election, the Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad no more belonged to any particular party. He was the property of the House.

She said it was the sacred duty of the Speaker to enforce the parliamentary practice and discipline and also to protect the rights and privileges of the members of the House.

Sheikh Hasina said it was an established practice to offer thanks to the Speaker after his election but she expressed her regret for not being able to express her thanks on behalf of the opposition including her own party.

She also posed a question to the Leader of the House Begum Khaleda Zia as to why it was not possible.



Hasina assures co-operation

Sheikh Hasina expressed her hope that the Speaker would see to it that the democratic and parliamentary practices are adhered to in the House.

She said the Jatiya Sangsad has been elected by the 12 crore people by exercising their rights of franchise. She said it would be a disrespect to the country's people if we failed to give democracy an institutional shape.

She said democracy was practised through tolerance and understanding and failure to set it on firm footing would be tantamount to dishonouring the will of the people.

She said, 'we belong to you and you belong to us in the House'. She assured the

Speaker of her and her party's cooperation in the conduct of the proceedings of the House



Afterwards, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia took the floor and in reply to the Leader of the Opposition said because of time constraints, the newly elected Speaker and the Deputy Speaker could not be felicitated on the inaugural day.

Speaker welcomed

Welcoming the new Speaker, the Leader of the House said that this Sangsad was the fruit of the long struggle of the people against autocracy. She recalled how the autocracy had fallen in the wake of a mass upheaval and said the new parliament came into existence through free and fair elections held under a caretaker and neutral government.

Describing Mr. Biswas, a seasoned politician and a veteran parliamentarian, Begum Zia said Mr. Biswas election to the office of the Speaker was a right decision.

Begum Zia said, although the Speaker was elected as a party candidate but it was her firm belief that Mr. Biswas would conduct the House without any fear or favour. 'Once you are sitting in the Speaker's chair, you are for all honourable members', she added.

Begum Zia hoped that the Speaker would conduct the House in a neutral manner and he would do everything to protect and uphold the rights of the members and heighten the prestige and dignity of the House.

Begum Zia hoped that the opposition would extend all-out cooperation to the Speaker for smooth running of the activities of the Sangsad. She hoped that a deep understanding between the members of both the Treasury Bench and the Opposition would help establish rule of law in the country.

The leader of the opposition hoped that under the dynamic leadership of the Speaker, the Parliament would be able to translate into reality the hopes and aspirations of the nation.

Begum Zia also welcomed the Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali saying that under his able leadership, the House would be immensely benefited.

Begum Zia concluded her deliberations wishing long life and good health of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker.

Tofael

The Speaker then gave the floor to Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed. Mr. Ahmed welcomed the Speaker and said that it would have been more decent and proper to observe one minute silence on the inaugural session as mark of respect to the souls of those who made supreme sacrifices in the struggle against autocracy. He said the people had taken the lapse otherwise.

Mr. Ahmed recalled that today's situation was a reputation of what was done on the day after the inaugural session of 1979 and added that to maintain that tradition BNP being in the Treasury Bench did not propose for observing silence at the inaugural session again.

At this point, the Speaker drew the attention of Mr. Ahmed and said, since the issue was over, there should not be further debate on it. He requested Mr. Tofael Ahmed and all other members not to initiate further debate on a thing like obituary reference. 'To err is human', he said adding there might be some lapses.

Mr. Ahmed pointed out that there was some error in the obituary reference. The Speaker assured him that it would be properly corrected if there were any mistakes.

JP

When Rashed Khan Menon

(Wp-Baker) was given the floor, Jatiya Party members rose to their feet en masse and started shouting. Nothing could be heard in the uproar.

The Speaker told JP member and Deputy Speaker of the outgoing parliament Reazuddin Ahmed, to teach his party members the norms of the parliament. 'If you shout like this, others will do the same when you will speak,' he added.

However, when Mr. Menon said that nothing wrong was done by observing silence today instead of doing it in the inaugural session all the Awami League and Eight-party MPs protested by thumping the desk. Mr. Menon had to cut short his speech by felicitating the Speaker because of the Pandemonium.

Expunction

Amidst noisy scenes, the Speaker gave the floor to Mr. Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu (AL-Chittagong). Mr. Chowdhury's remarks on Mr. Rashed Khan Menon's statement felicitating the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker was expunged by the Speaker.

Speaker then gave the floor to Deputy Leader of Jatiya Party Mr. Reazuddin Ahmed Bhola Meah (JP-Lalmonirhat).

Felicitating Mr. Abdul Rahman Biswas on his election as the Speaker on his own behalf and on behalf of Jatiya Party and the people Mr. Reazuddin Ahmed expressed the hope that as a new Speaker he would maintain his neutrality in conducting the proceedings of the House. He hoped that the Speaker would maintain his neutrality for upholding the dignity of the Sangsad.

Mr. Reazuddin Ahmed said he and his party would give all cooperation to the Speaker in the interest of the welfare of the people.

Drawing the attention of the Speaker to a statement made by a member of the House that the Jatiya Party members had no right to speak in the Sangsad, Mr. Reazuddin Ahmed called for expunction of the statement. Because, he said, 'We all have come to this House as people's representatives.'

Suranjit Sen Gupta

While felicitating the Speaker Suranjit Sen Gupta said this august House is the product of mass upsurge. He said the Acting President is supposed to handover power to a sovereign Sangsad as per the understanding of the three alliances which had led the movement. As he mentioned the felicitation made to the Speaker and Deputy Speaker in 1979, the Speaker interrupted him and said Speaker and Deputy Speaker were felicitated on April 4 and April 7, 1979.

Sen Gupta urged the House to forget whether we had legalised or discarded the Martial Law. Let us forget that part of history and give democracy an institutional shape for showing respect to those who had made supreme sacrifices for it.

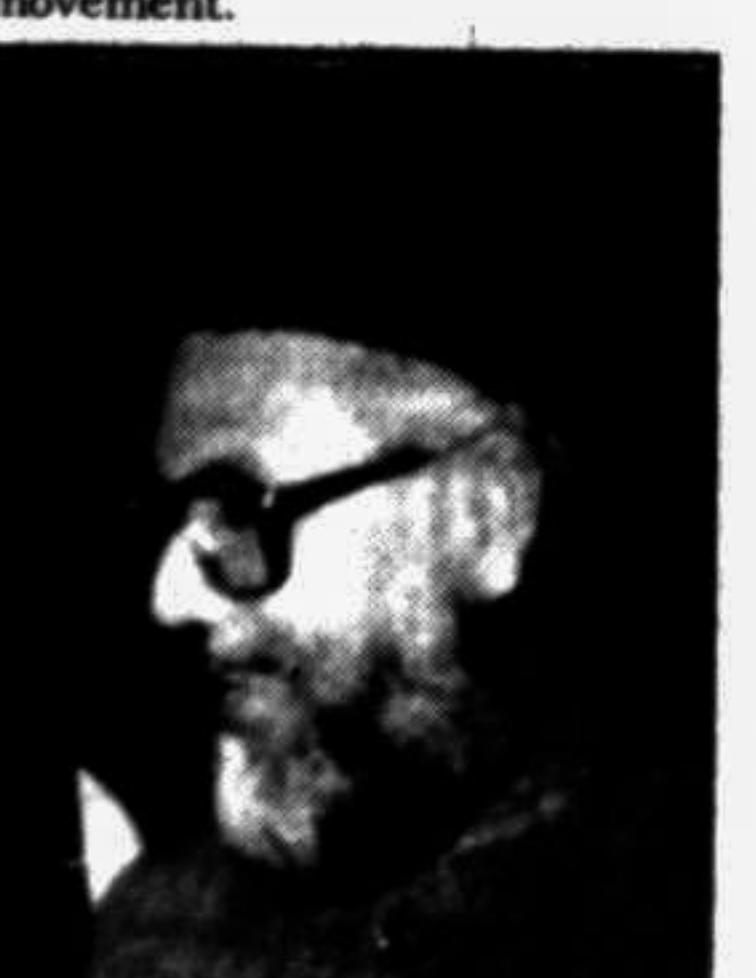
He called upon the ruling party to bring an amendment immediately to the Constitution for making the government an accountable one.

Sen said it was interesting that felicitation resolution for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker was moved by the Opposition instead of the Treasury Bench.

Referring to the constitutional provision, Nizami said all our activities are guided by the Almighty Allah, so we have to show full confidence in Allah. He drew the attention of the Speaker and demanded expunction of the statement of the Leader of the Opposition regarding showing respect to the martyrs in the democratic movement.

He said the present Parliament was established through the blood, tears and pains of the people of this country. The people of the country, he said, wanted the establishment of a sovereign Parliament to which the government would remain accountable. The three-alliances which issued the joint declaration, were pledged to establish a sovereign Parliament, he stressed.

The CPB leader said only parliamentary system could deliver the goods to the nation and the people. He said the country was plunged into anarchy under the one-man rule of the presidential system. Concentration of all powers in the hands of a single person created anarchy not only in the political field but its evil and



Matiur Rahman Nizami

Taking the floor, Moulana Matiur Rahman Nizami (Jamaat-Pabna) felicitated the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on his own and on behalf of his party. He sought the blessings of the Almighty Allah for giving the Speaker courage and strength to conduct the business of the House neutrally.

Leader of the Jamaat stressed the need for giving democracy an institutional structure.

Congratulating the newly-elected Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, Salaudhin Quader Chowdhury (NDP) said that the prime need of the hour was to establish the sovereignty of the Jatiya Sangsad and give democracy an institutional shape.

Describing the Speaker as the custodian of the House, the NDP leader hoped that the members of Sangsad would conduct themselves in upholding the image and tradition of



the Sangsad, and strengthening its power. All of us should refrain from committing any acts that would frustrate the hopes and aspirations of the people, he said.

He said no parliament in the past could complete its five-year tenure. He sought cooperation and contributions of all members of the Sangsad so that it could complete its full term.

Chowdhury urged the chair to see to it that the Sangsad met at its scheduled time every day.

Abdur Razzak

Abdur Razzak, General Secretary, BKSAL felicitated the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on behalf of the party and the people of the country.

He said now that a Sangsad had been established through a free and fair poll. It was the responsibility of all members of the Sangsad to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the people. In this connection, he pointed out that the people of the country had made immense sacrifices during the autocratic rule of the last nine years for the establishment of unalloyed democracy. He described how under a Presidential system of Government, the Head of the State becomes an autocrat by concentrating all powers in his hands.

He expressed the hope that a sovereign Parliament would be established in accordance with the outline of the joint declaration of the three alliances. The essence of the joint declaration was the establishment of a parliamentary system and a sovereign parliament to which the government would remain accountable, he added.

Without mentioning name but meaning the MPs of Jatiya Party, Razzak hoped that those who had tried to retain autocracy by supporting presidential system would extend their cooperation in the House for the restoration of the Parliamentary system of Government.

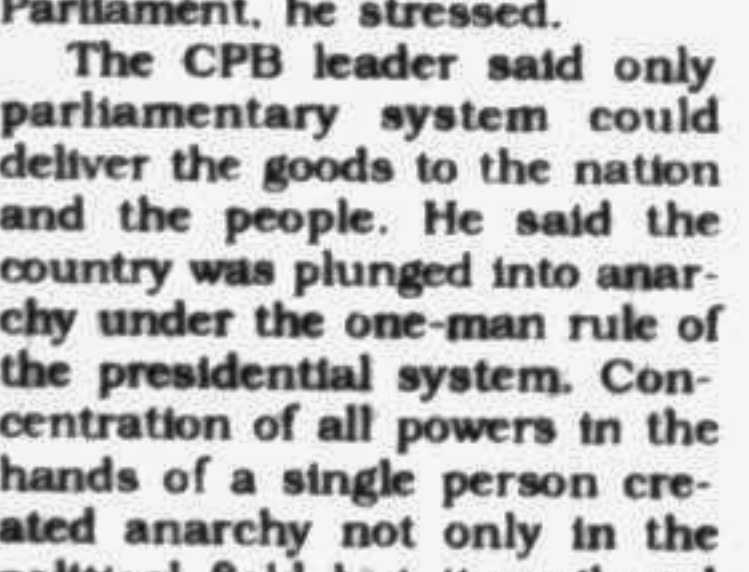
The BKSAL leader urged the Speaker to include two names in the obituary reference and the Speaker assured him that he would do it.

Shamsuddoha

Shamsuddoha of CPB congratulated the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker and said the whole nation was looking forward to the Jatiya Sangsad which is a parliament with a difference.

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Shamsuddoha

baneful effects were evident in education, culture and administrative sectors. He expressed the hope that the Speaker would treat all Members of the Sangsad irrespective of party affiliations equally.

Shahjahan Siraj

When the House resumed at 2 pm after one hour break for prayer, the floor was given to JSD Leader Shahjahan Siraj (Tangail). Taking the Floor, Siraj felicitated the Speaker and termed him as a veteran parliamentarian.

Recalling the country's War of Liberation, Siraj said that although 30 lakh heroic sons of this soil made their supreme sacrifices the fruits of liberation were yet to reach to the common people. He said the long cherished dream of the people for consolidating democracy and ensuring the basic need of the people were yet to be met.

Siraj alleged that since the liberation of the country no Parliament could ensure rights of its members. He said in the past Parliament the Treasury Bench enjoyed the absolute majority and they never showed respect to the verdict of the people. He said the present Sangsad was a bit different since no single party enjoyed absolute majority and as such nothing could be done whimsically.

He said, a new hope appeared before the nation with the election of this Parliament under a caretaker government in a free and fair atmosphere and hoped that under the able guidance of the Speaker the new Parliament could be able to translate into reality the dreams of the nation.

Siraj said that the people voted for establishing a sovereign parliament and hoped that present Jatiya Sangsad would reflect that desire of the people.

He also paid tributes to both the Leader of the House Begum Khaleda Zia and the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and said that with their distinguished backgrounds of providing leadership on various occasion they would be able to play their role in the Sangsad.

Urging the Speaker to maintain neutrality Siraj said, your name is Mr Biswas which in English meant faith and as such nobody would disbelieve you.



Mohiuddin Ahmed

The Speaker then gave the floor of BKSAL chief Mohiuddin Ahmed (Bakerganj). Ahmed congratulated the Speaker and recalled his acquaintance with him since his school days. I voted against your candidature and now you allowed me to speak, he said adding this demonstrated that you are really neutral.

Ahmed drew the attention of the Speaker regarding some lapses which he said was tantamount to curtailing of the rights of the members of parliament. In this connection, he mentioned that the MPs were not invited to the oath taking ceremony of the Council of Ministers. Besides, the BKSAL leader said, despite written requests the members were not given adequate number of cards for their guests to attend the inaugural session of the Parliament.

Ahmed said that the Jamaat-e-Islami had lost the right to seat in Opposition Bench and they should now seat in the Treasury Bench as they were a part and parcel of the government. At this point the Jamaat members in a body protested the observation of Ahmed. Jamaat MP Moulana Sobhan (Pabna) attempted to raise a point of order which was, however, turned down by the Speaker.

Ahmed said, Jamaati friends had become agitated as their

real character was unveiled. Ahmed also requested the Speaker to ensure that no outsiders other than the MPs could enter into the Floor of the Parliament.



At this point the Deputy Leader of the House Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury raised a point of order and drew the attention of the Speaker that the point being mentioned by Ahmed was a digression.

Leader of the Opposition intervened and urged the Speaker to allow Ahmed to continue his deliberations without unnecessary interruption.

Referring to the new Council of Ministers, Ahmed said that the Cabinet was not answerable to the Parliament since it is a cabinet of the Acting President. Mohiuddin called upon the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to make the Parliament sovereign as desired by the people.

Nurul Islam Moni

The Speaker next gave the floor to Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Borguna). Congratulating the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker for assuming their new responsibilities, Moni hoped under their leadership the Jatiya Sangsad would play its due role in the life of the nation.

Moni regretted that instead of 9-00 am the House began at 9-07 am on the first day. Today it began its business after more than half an hour of its scheduled time. He suggested that this kind of irregularities should be avoided.

Abdus Samad Azad

Abdus Samad Azad, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, said the parliament had come as a product of a mass movement and two main leaders of the movement were in the House. But it was unexpected that the name to the Leader of the Opposition should find a place at the sixth position in order, he said adding Sheikh Hasina's name must be after the Leader of the House.

Azad expressed the hope that this error in the names of members of the committee would be recast to the sentiment of the House.

Matiur Rahman Nazami, the leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami parliamentary party, observed that it was appropriate that the name of the Leader of the Opposition should be upgraded because it would give respect to the House.

Salaudhin Quader Chowdhury said there could be some unintentional error in the committee and this could be rectified.

Awami League Member Shudhangshu Shekhar Haldar quoting rules of procedure said in the Business Advisory Committee the name of the Leader of the Opposition should be included just after the Leader of the House.

Salaudhin Quader Chowdhury (NDP) urged the Speaker to review the list and pleaded for including the name of the Leader of the Opposition just after that of the Leader of the House. This would help enhance the dignity of the House and facilitate the functioning of the committee more efficiently, he added.

When his name was called by the Speaker, Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Maj Gen (ret'd) Majedul Huq said in the Warrant of Precedence the name of the Leader of the House is followed by Deputy Leader of the House and



Cabinet Ministers. When viewed in this context the names in the list of the Business Advisory Committee are quite consistent with the warrant of precedence, he said.

He, however, said if any amendment was to be brought to the list it could be done by those who had prepared it.

Tofael Ahmed (Awami League-Bhola) said in the Warrant of Precedence prepared during the autocratic regime the Members of Parliament were given no dignity. He strongly insisted on placing the name of the Leader of the Opposition just after the Leader of the House saying cooperation and understanding among four persons — the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition — was essential for the smooth functioning of the Sangsad.

He said the present Parliament was quite different from that of 1986 — though the name of Sheikh Hasina was incorporated in the Business Advisory Committee in 1986 as Leader of the Opposition she had never sat in any of its meetings during that period.

Abdul Hafiz

Felicitating the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on their election, Abdul Hafiz, (NAP-Nilphamari) emphasised on the realisation of the basic rights of the people who had been deprived of those over the ages. He said during the past years many people secured fortunes and benefits without caring for the welfare of the people.

Moulana Sobhan

Moulana Abdus Sobhan (Jamaat-Islami-Pabna) congratulated the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on their election and recalled his (Sobhan) long association with the Speaker as legislator over the last few decades and said the long-experience of Abdur Rahman Biswas would go a long way in enriching the proceedings of the House.

Moulana Sobhan also recalled the enduring struggle the Speaker and himself had shared through the last anti-autocracy movement which has aimed at the realisation of the rights of the people. The basic minimum needs of the people must be achieved. In this regard the Jamaat member reminded that his party was the first to propose holding the election under a caretaker government. He urged that a parliamentary form of government be established and that the Speaker would help to achieve the goal through his sagacious leadership.

Jahanara Begum

Treasury Bench member Prof Jahanara Begum in her congratulatory speech said though the Speaker was supposed to conduct the House neutrally, he was providing the floor mostly to the members of the Opposition. Whereas, she said, the members of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) also lent full support to his election. She, however, expressed the hope that the Speaker would conduct the House neutrally so that the growth of democracy was ensured.

Major (Rtd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, an Independent member from Bhola, said he heartily sought to congratulate the Speaker for his election and hoped that because of his long experience as a legislator he would contribute to the development of democracy. He called for establishing a sovereign Parliament for which he hoped the Leader of the House as well the Leader of the Opposition would bring in a bill for achieving the goal.

Taking floor on a Point of Order Independent member from Comilla Mohammad Redwan Ahmed said Mohiuddin Ahmed has made some indecent remarks about some honourable members of the BNP. He called for withdrawal of the remarks or for their expunction from the proceedings.

Referring to the relevant clause of the rules of procedure, Abdur Razzak, BKSAL, said Redwan could not raise any question on the statement of Mohiuddin.

Ansar Ali

Felicitating the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, Ansar Ali (Jamaat Sathkira) said no issue should be allowed to be discussed at this stage excepting congratulatory statements.

Ansar Ali said his party along with the democratic parties and alliances carried on the movement during the last nine years against the autocratic regime. If necessary, he said, they would take the same course in future for establishing an accountable Sangsad.

Speaker's thanks

Winding up the resolution on felicitation, Speaker Abdul Rahman Biswas thanked the Leader of the House Begum Khaleda Zia Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina group leaders and members of the House for their tributes to him and to the Deputy Speaker.



Referring to the contention of the members that the fifth Jatiya Sangsad is a Parliament with a difference the Speaker said this is for the first time in the history of Bangladesh that free and fair elections were held.

He said people's expectation in this House is enormous. They wish that their hopes and aspirations would be fulfilled. He himself also expect that members both from Treasury and Opposition Benches would behave in a manner that would bring glory to this House. He sought cooperation of all in conducting the business of the House.

2 committees

The Speaker then announced the setting up of two committees — the Business Advisory Committee and the House Committee — to help efficient functioning of the House.

The Business Advisory Committee comprises 15 members with the Speaker as Chairman and the House Committee with Abdul Matin Chowdhury as its Chairman.

The Business Advisory Committee includes Prime Minister and Leader of the House Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina. The name of the Leader of the Opposition is mentioned at the sixth place after Cabinet Ministers.

As soon as the Speaker announced the two committees, several Opposition members sought to take the floor to raise their objections about the placement of names in the Business Advisory Committee.

Suranjit Sen Gupta (Ganatantri Party) said the mentioning of the name of the Leaders of the Opposition in the sixth position had relegated the status of the Opposition Leader. This was not in conformity with the parliamentary practice, he said.

Shahjahan Siraj (JSD) echoed the sentiment and said name of the Leader of the Opposition should be after the Leader of the House.

APSU to submit memorandum to Speaker

The All-Party Student Unity (APSU) will submit a memorandum containing the 10-point demand of students to the Speaker of Jatiya Sangsad today (Monday), reports UNB.

A delegation of APSU, after a rally on the Dhaka University campus at 10 am, will go to the Sangsad Bhaban and submit the memorandum as per a decision taken on April 2.

The 10-point charter of demand was the basis of united anti-autocracy student movement of 1990 that played a vital role in toppling Ershad on December 6 in a mass upsurge was later modified.

It now includes rapid trial of deposed President Ershad and his associates, cancellation of all black and anti-people laws including the Special Powers Act and the Presses and Publications Act, filling 1.36 lakh vacant posts in government services and supply of educational material at reduced price.

The student delegation will also meet with Leader of the House and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the Jatiya Sangsad.

Earlier, the programme was scheduled for the opening day of Parliament, April 5, but was postponed as it was taken up without the consent of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).