'Opposition MPs not included in relief committees'

The following is the remaining part of Thursday's JS proceedings -

Moudud Ahmed said the rules of procedure of the House was prepared for a Parliamentary form of government. It was not amended adequately suiting the need of the House under Presidential form of government.

Referring to the remarks made by State Minister for Land Barrister Zamiruddin Sircar. Moudud suggested it would be an act of gentleman on the part of the minister if he withdraw his remarks.

Mohammad Nasim Participating next on the debate. Mohammad Nasim pointed out that they were discussing the situation in the cyclone affected areas. He said the discussion could be continued provided the minister concerned withdraw his remarks.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury

Abul Hasan Chowdhury (AL-Tangail) said Treasury and Opposition benches were the two hands of the House. He said the minister concerned should resign immediately.



Zamiruddin Sircar

At this stage, the State Minister for Land, Barrister Azmiruddin Sircar took the floor and as he started to reply to the opposition members. the opposition members rose to their feet en masse object

ing to his (Sircar) to speaking. The Deputy Speaker asked the opposition members to resume their seats allowing the minister to speak. The minister concern might speak something about his comments. But the opposition members said in corus that they would not allow the minister to speak in the House if he did not withdraw his

derogatory remarks. The Deputy Speaker said he would give his ruling on the issue after examining the recorded proceedings whether the minister had uttered any unparliamentary word.

But apparently being satisfied with the words from the Deputy Speaker, the opposition members agreed to allow Sircar to speak.

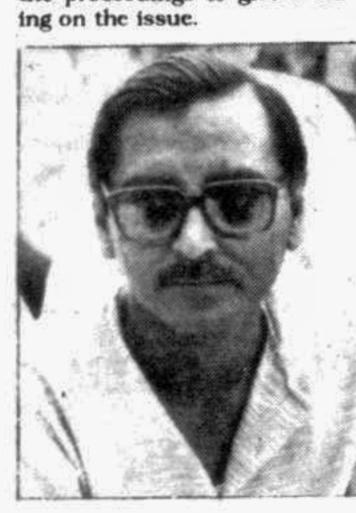
Zamiruddin Sircar continuing said. He wanted to reply to the comments made by Awami League member. Tofael Ahmed, against his party BNP. Moreover, he said he had not uttered any unparliamentary word. The word credibility is not unparliamentary, he said.

Barrister Sircar countered the arguments of Barrister Moudud Ahmed and quoting relevant article of the constitution and relevant rules of the procedure, he said. There was no bar for him as a non-member to speak in the House.

"It can't be a fault where there I am a member or not since we have accepted the presidential form of government," he said.

The Deputy Speaker, then specifically asked. Sircar if he would withdraw his comments

Sircar replied in the negative and said that he was not going to withdraw his remarks. The Deputy Speaker said that he would have to examine the proceedings to give a rul-



Rashed Khan Menon

Rashed Khan Menon said that quoting rules of procedure, the State Minister for Land was trying to mislead the House.

Asaduzzaman

Asaduzzaman (AL-Magura) referred to the Rule 270 (IX) of the rules of procedure and said that a member while speaking shall not refer to another member discourteously in a debate nor shall he be permitted to use expressions which are unparliamentary. He

demanded the expunction of the derogatory words used by

Taking the floor again. Moudud Ahmed said that the observations of the State Minister for Land was seriously objectionable. He said a nonmember in the House had undermined the spirit of the Sangsad by making such remarks, he added.

Sudangshu Shekhar

Speaking next, Sudangshu Shekhar Halder (AL-Pirojpur) quoted Rule 270 of the rules of procedure and said no mem ber could make any offensive or defamatory words in the House. Referring to the comments made by Strear, Haldar demanded expunction of the derogatory words by Strear.



Suranjit Sengupta

Suranjit Sengupta (Ganatantree Party-Sunamganj) pointed out that the House was consist of 330 members. The non-member ministers had a limited role in the House. He can speak in the House only to defend himself.

Khondokar Delwar

The Chief Whip of the BNP Parliamentary Party, Khondkar Delwar Hossain quoted Article 73 of the constitution and said every minister shall have the right to speak or otherwise to take part in the proceedings of

Rashed Khan Menon taking the floor again said that the constitution and the rules of procedure had clearly distinguished a member from a nonmember. He said in the 1979 Parliament, the non-member ministers were not allowed to participate in debate like this.

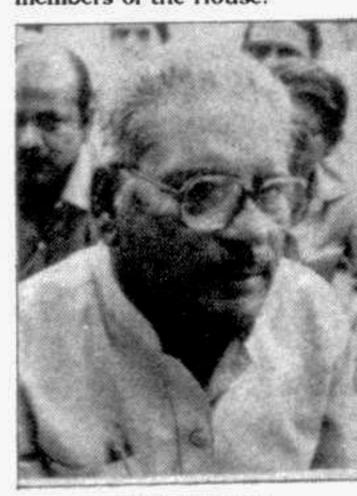
At this stage, the Deputy Speaker adjourned the House at 5.05 pm for 20 minutes for Asr prayer.

Shawkat Ali

Taking the floor immediately after the break for Asr prayer, Colonel (Retd) Shawkat Ali (AL-Shariatpur), said the House was engaged in discussions on so vital an issue like the national calamity. Unfortunately, he said, there was an unexpected departure from the discussions because of a remark made by a State Minister, who is not the member of the House.

The opposition member said the State Minister was trying to catch a straw like a drowning man but he would not succeed in his efforts to salvage himself. He said technocrat ministers like Professor Shamsul Huq and Kazi Anwarul Hug in the House earlier never took part in debatable issues and rightly restricted themselves within the parameters of what they were expected to

The proceedings of the House could move on the expected line if. Sircar would withdraw his comments and there would be nothing wrong if he did so. Because, Ali said, his remarks certainly amounted to aspersion for the members of the House.



M K Anwar

Speaking next, Shipping Minister M.K. Anwar said the House agreed to devote itself to the discussions on the disaster because the issue was of supreme importance. We did it unanimously because all members - cutting across political lines - wanted to express their opinion on different aspects of the cyclones and the relief operations, he said.

The Minister said the opposition members in course of their deliberations, had made certain remarks which were redundant and deplorable. The debate now on the comment of State Minister Mr. Sircar should be seen in its entire

perspective, he added. Mr. Anwar said a minister, when taking part in the deliberations of the House, should

be able to enjoy all rights like others and there should be no discrimination. If he made any faux pas like passing any objectionable comment, that should be taken care of by the chair as per practice, he ob-

speak on the subject but the Deputy Speaker said enough discussions had already taken place on that issue.

The chair gave the floor to Mr. A.S.M. Feroz (AL-Patuakhali) said late Prime Minister and Leader of the House Shah Azizur Rahman had once withdrawn his comments on requests and demands from the opposition and he found nothing wrong if

Speaking next, Mr. Suranjit Sengupta (Ganatantri-Sunamgant) said if the executive held such opinion about the dignity of the members of the House, it was most unfor-

But the Deputy Speaker intervened to say that the opinion and remark of the State

Continuing, Mr. Sengupta said the comments made by Mr. Sircar were clearly derogatory to the dignity of all the members of the House and more so when coming from a non-member. He must withdraw his comments, he said adding that the proceedings of the House would not continue unless he did.

Redwan Ahmed

Mr. Redwan Ahmed [Indand echoed the sentiment of marks of the State Minister must be withdrawn.

The Deputy Speaker said he would give a ruling on the matter but certainly he needed time for that.

Some opposition members raised a hue and cry on the issue and urged the chair to give a ruling on the subject so that the proceedings of the House could move smoothly.



Sheikh Hasina

At this stage, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina took the floor and said a nominated minister could not make any comment which was a big blow to the dignity of the members of the House. "He has no right to do so and he has to withdraw his comment for the sake of the dignity of all the members of the House," she said adding that the opposition would be compelled to stage a walk-out even if briefly unless the State Minister came out comments he had made were expunged.

The Deputy Speaker told the Leader of the Opposition that she and other members of the opposition must appreciate that such an issue needed examination before a ruling was given. He said he would give the ruling on Saturday.

Sheikh Hasina again took the floor and said he could examine the legal aspects of the issue later but the opposition would stage a walkout unless the minister withdrew his re-

Participating in the discussion, Awami League member Sudhansu Shekar Halder said the chair could expunge the remark, and indecorous remarks of any member from the proceedings of the House.

The Deputy Speaker assured Halder that he would took into the matter.

of the Opposition. Sheikh Hasina, drew the attention of the Deputy Speaker and said that he himself could expunge the objectionable remarks in his own discretion. Her certain remarks at this stage about the Treasury Bench members in the manner of distribution of relief materials among the cyclone-battered people of the coastal areas evoked sharp protest from the ruling party members. Many of the Treasury Bench members: stood up at a time to protest

her remarks. Akbar Hossain (BNP-Comilla) sharply criticised the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and recalled how relief materials were misused

and misappropriated during the Awami League rule in the past. He called for expunging the remarks of Shetkh Hasina saying "she must have to with-

draw it." In the midst of pandemonium, the Deputy Speaker said that he would scrutinise the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition. Amanullah Aman (BNP-

Dhaka) also took serious objec-

tion to certain remarks of Shetkh Hastna and called upon the chair to expunge them. Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Alt then expunged certain remarks of the Leader of



No sooner the Deputy Speaker expunged certain remarks of the Leader of the Opposition than the Awami League leader, Tofael Ahmed, stood up and submitted that the Deputy Speaker had promptly expunged the remarks of Sheikh Hasina, but did not do so about the remarks made by State Minister Jamiruddin Sircar who was not a member of the Sangsad. He demanded that Strear must beg apology for his remarks and withdraw them.

Deputy Leader of the House Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury said there had been hot exchange of words from both sides. He requested the Deputy Speaker to expunge certain remarks of Barrister Sircar and those of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Deputy Speaker informed the House that he would give his ruling on these issues after Magreb prayer.

He then adjourned the House at 6-20 p. m. for Magreb prayer.

When the House resumed after the Magreb prayer Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali said due to shortage of time he could not examine the portion of the speech of State Minister for Land, Jamiruddin Sircar, in which the members of the opposition said Sircar made oblique reference about the opposition. He also expressed his regret for not being able to give his ruling as he could not go through the pros and cons of the relevant aspect.

The Deputy Speaker, how ever, said the part of Sircar's speech which raised controversy in the House would be expunged from the proceedings of the House. He also said the portion of the speech of the Opposition Leader using unparliamentary words would also stand expunged. Taking the floor Begum

high tide turning the process an endless one.

She said the lush green Chittagong which once hummed with business was now a lifeless entity under rubbles. She said "corpses and corpses were all around and a bizarre melancholy pervaded the whole surroundings"

She said the Awami League Chittagong from Akhteruzzaman Babu, was doing this best to help perform the religious rites of the bodies before burial.

Sajeda Chowdhury

Begum Sajeda Chowdhury said the government had no control on the price situation and as a result the prices of the essentials were increasing every moment. She said lifesaving drugs were not at all available.

Basantis were rotting but there was no arrangement for their burial Referring to airdropping of

relief goods she said a survivor in the affected area had his ribs broken when hit by a packet of relief from the air. She said some of the relief goods were also falling into ponds.

She said the loss of life and property in the cyclone-battered areas was not being properly shown in the television. She said it was not at al proper to take the television within the fold of a party under

by them for their welfare." an elected government. She said the affected people

demanded reconstruction of the embankments for their protection from cyclone and tidal surge.

M A Karim

Advocate M. A. Karim (BNP-Netrokona) said the loss of life and property was less due to early and timely warning given at the direction of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

He said any call from any quarter was not necessary to stand by the side of the people during any national disaster. He said "people participate in it at the call of their conscience.

Mr Karim expressed his reservations about the comment made by Mr Tofael Ahmed on the offer of munatat in the House.

At this stage Mr Tofael Ahmed stood up and clarified his position that he said nothing objectionable about munajat. He said he mentioned in his speech earlier that since the country was being affected by different kinds of calamities including cyclone, tornado, train accident, diarrhoea and drought, a munatat was neces sary for seeking divine bless ings to get rid of these disas-



Taking the floor Mr Moudud Ahmed expressed his doubt about the precautionary measures taken by the government to save the life and property from the cyclonic

He said the cyclone shelters built in 1972 and during the time of the previous government were inadequate to make room for about two crore people in the coastal areas. He said the cyclone shelters could only accommodate a maximum of six lakh people keeping the lives of one crore and 94 lakh people in sheer uncertainty.

He also thanked the Leader of the Opposition for mentioning the damage caused to the fighter planes of the air force and naval ships earlier.

He said even during the storm some factories in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone were working. He said bodies found later trapped with machines bore testimony to this. He also said this gave indication how effective was the warning given prior to the

Mr Moudud Ahmed called for facing the situation unitedly in the interests of the nation

and the people. Quoting reports from the issues of May 3-8 published in the International Herald Tribune he said the survivors were gradually proceeding to the jaws of death. He said the remarks in the foreign newspapers would not be good for

Mr. Moudud said although it was a government of the Acting President, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party was linked with its success and failure.

He said the donors had already raised the question as to who was running the govern-

He called for coordination of relief work under all-party relief committee. He also demanded publication of a white paper giving actual figure of death and projecting the true picture of the loss of property. Mr. Moudud stressed the

need for involving the members of parliament in the postcyclone gigantic task of relief operation.

Harun Al-Rashid

Brahmanbaria) said it was unprecedented that the warning signal was given so early. He claimed that the present government had set an example of quick relief operation in the history of a democratic system. The BNP member said loss

heart and we will always stand

and Luxmipur districts had been entrusted with a committo life and property was less than expected due to timely tee headed by a joint secretary warning given to the people in the affected areas The democratically elected

and taking up programmes of relief distribution in the affected areas. and the people are relations of

caused to property. Major (Retd) Mannan said 50 to 60 per cent houses in Noakhali.

Fent and Luxmipur were damaged by the cyclone. Since the tidal surge could not enter into these three distriets excepting Hattya tsland, the loss to lives and damage to property was comparatively

less than other affected areas. He said a total of 3,238 people who were in the Nithum Dwip near Hatiya island at the time of cyclone were reported missing. Corpses of 1200 people were recovered and rest were believed to have been washed away by the tidal surge, he

He said that all corpses were buried properly in the three districts.

Taking the floor next. Moulana Matiur Rahman About the government's measures to prevent the diar Nizami (Jamaat-Pabna) exrhoeal diseases, the State pressed his indignation saying that after ten days of the disas-Minister said, they had dis tributed adequate quantities of ter "we do not know the exact water purifying tablets and oral figure of damage and loss due to the eyclone and the tidal salines among the affected The Jamaat group leader in

Matiur Rahman Nizami

the Jattya Sangsad lauded the

efforts of giving prior warning.

He, however, said "we do not

know how far it had suc-

quick action was taken for res-

cuing the distressed people.

He said we also do not know

the role played by the navy in

rescue operation. He, however,

said it was presumed that navy

had lost 90 per cent of its

strength in the catastrophe re-

sulting in its failure to partici-

pate properly in the rescue

astonishment as how more

than 40 aircraft and heli-

copters were damaged though

early warnings were issued re-

should have made known to

the people about these losses.

wanted to know from the gov-

ernment whether it had faced

any non-cooperation from the

local administration in reach-

ing relief goods to the affected

people. And if anything hap-

pened like that had the gov-

ernment taken any action

against those officials? he

coordination in relief opera-

tion. He expressed the hope

that if coordinated efforts were

made relief materials would

reach the needy people on

time. He called for reaching

food, water and medicine to

the affected people. He also

called for providing them

Mr. Nizami suggested re-

Refuting the criticism of

shelter on an emergency basis.

construction of the coastal

embankments for which donor

countries and the agencies

the Acting President, the

(Acting President) did the

right thing by handing over the

eration to the democratically

elected Prime Minister. He

said this was in conformity

with giving the democracy a

Major (Retd) Mannan

discussion, the Minister of

State for Textiles. Major

(Retd) M. A. Mannan said, im-

mediately after the cyclone hit

the coastal areas, he visited

the southern parts of the

country on April 30. He held

there a meeting of relief coor-

dination committee with the

members of the local adminis-

tration and representatives of

fected areas, the State

Minister said, he attended a

meeting held at Bangabhaban

with the Acting President in

the chair and he submitted a

report on the loss of life and

the extent of damage wrought

by the devastating cyclone and

that in that meeting he was

given the charge of three cy-

Noakhali, Feni and Luxmipur

for conducting relief and res-

clone-affected districts

Major (Retd) Mannan said

On his return from the af-

Participating next in the

executive power of relief op-

Jamaat member said

could be involved.

structural shape.

the public.

tidal surge.

He said there was a lack of

He said the government

Mr. Mattur Rahman Nizami

operation. He expressed his

Mr. Nizami alleged that no

ceeded.

peatedly.

Referring to the mediumterm relief programme, the State Minister said arrangements were being made to repair the washed away cross dams, embankments, roads and reconstruction of houses for the uprooted people.

Besides, arrangements were being made to buy animals for the peasants for ploughing lands, to supply fertilizers and other inputs.

Programmes of reconstruction of the educational institu tions were also being taken up.

The government would soon take long-term programmes in the cyclone affected areas, he said.

Dismissing the opposition criticism, the State Minister

Nurul Islam Moni

Participating next. Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Borguna) nar rated his experience of visiting different affected areas of Cox's Bazar including Banshkhali. Chakoria and Anwara.

He said that he wanted to know from the government whether it was capable of handling the post cyclone situation in the country.

Moni said during his visit to these affected places he had found no boat for conducting relief operations there where as over 200 imported boats were lying idle at Mongla Port. He said if the present gov-

ernment failed to handle the situation the blame would directly come to a government which was formed as the outcome of a democratic movement. If it happened so people aspirating for democracy will find no firm footing, he added.

The Independent member said that the opposition members wanted to help the gov ernment in the gigantic task of relief operation. But referring the constitution of relief committees, he said that the opposition and Awami League members "had not been included in the committee at Chittagong

He said the government instead depended on the bu-

reaucracy and the army. The Independent Member. however, appreciated the BNP government for giving warning to the people about the impending cyclone and tidal surge through radio and television. But the role of the government in tackling the post cyclone situation was not satisfactory, he added.

Reading out a report by Ittefag reporter Nazimuddin Mostan from a weekly. Moni said the infamous President Ershad was the most successful man in handling the 1988 disaster situation in the coun-

He said that the Chittagong Port, which was the life line of the national economy was to tally damaged by the cyclone, Eastern Refinery at Chittagong was also damaged, he pointed He expressed his surprise as to how 41 aircraft of

Bangladesh Air Force could be

damaged in Chittagong inspite of warning of the cyclone five days earlier. Moreover, the shrimp cultivation projects and salt producing zone were completely washed away by the cyclone.

He concluded his speech with a call to the government to take the people along with it in handling such a gigantic post cyclone situation through coordinated programmes of relief and rehabilitation.

Farida Rahman Taking part in the discus-

sions, Farida Rahman(BNP) said there was no reason to conceal facts on the devastation but it would be highly improper to play politics out of this situation. She said the BNP in the op-

position till the other day and during the natural disasters in the previous years the party made all efforts to provide reliefs to the affected people but it had no helicopters in those The Treasury Bench mem-

ber said even today, the BNP was playing its role as a politi-

cal party and its leaders Wing Commander (Retd) Hamidullah Khan MP and Lt General (Retd) Meer Shawkat Alt MP left for the affected areas with non-government relief teams

and materials. She said BNP was the only political party in the country which was returned to power through elections twice in last 20 years and this spoke of

party's links with the people. Rahman said 1974 famine was man made but those who were in power in those days have turned into greatest crittes of today's handling of relief work among survivors of the cyclone which was a grave nat-

ural disaster. Speaking next, Rashed Khan Menon(Workers Party Bartsall said the past was being packed up during the discussions on the cyclones and added that one could take lesson from the past and not use it to excuse present failures.

He said the government failed at the national level to face the situation caused by the cyclones and also turned down opposition offer of cooperation in this regard. The opposition' member

said warnings were there about the impending danger for five days and questioned the preparedness of the government in dealing with the situation. How could so many aircraft

of the Air Force suffer damage and the Navy remained unpro tected ? He asked and ob served that if politician or civil persons were responsible for this situation, they would have been taken to task. He demanded dismissal of the chiefs of Air Force and Navy for dereliction of duty.

Memon said he did not want failure of an elected gov ernment which had taken over the responsibility barely two month ago. While the government was also not showing efficiency in dealing with the situation, there were also conspiracies to discredit and elected authority, he said.

The Opposition member said there should be clear supremacy of the political leadership over everything

Memon demanded assis tances to farmers, salt growers and others affected by the cy-

Najibul Basher

Syed Najibul Basher (AL-Chittagong) said it was unfortunate that the BNP member had pointed out that cyclonic storm struck only those areas where Awami League candidates were elected members of the Sangsad. In fact, the cyclonic storm played havoc with the lives and properties of the people in many coastal areas where they have MPs from the

ruling BNP. he added. He regretted that although Chittagong played an important role in the economy of the country this district was being neglected and overlooked in the distribution of relief materiels and alleviation of the sufferings of the people.

He complained that BNP MPs from outside the Chittagong district were being engaged in supervising the relief operation in different upazilas of this district, he described it as unfair and unfortunate and said that the people of this district would not accept such practices. .

Mosharraf Hossain

Participating in the discussion State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Dr. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain today called upon all irrespective of party affiliations to put in concerted efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the people caused by the history's worst cyclonic storm.

He said the present government headed by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had been conducting relief op cration in every part of the cyclone battered areas to the best of its capacity. All our endeavors are now directed to ward mitigating the sufferings of the people, he said and hoped that the opposition would refrain from criticizing the government for criticism's sake only

He, however, pointed out that the government was ready to accept the constructive criticism of the opposition. Please show us the gaps and lapses in conducting relief op eration and we shall surely fill up the gaps and overcome the lapses," he added.

Dr. Hossain informed the House that electricity had been restored in 80 per cent areas in the Chittagong Port city. A large number of electric poles and towers had been damaged very badly in different areas in and outside Chittagong city and many thought that it would take at least one month to restore electricity. But ceaseless and tireless efforts of the officials and workers of the electricity department resulted in restoring electricity in most of the areas of the port city only eight days after the cyclone storm hit the region, he

The Deputy Speaker adjourned the House at 9.35 pm to meet at 11 am on May 11.

After Mr. Anwar, several opposition members sought to

the State Minister did so.

Minister were that of an individual and not of the govern-

Comilla) took the floor briefly Mr. Sengupta and said the re-



with the withdrawal and the

But a determined opposition insisted that the Speaker give a ruling immediately.

marks and the remarks expunged from the proceedings.

Taking the floor, the Leader

Sheikh Razzak

Saleda Chowdhury (AL-Faridpur) narrated her own experience of the visits to the affected areas. She said corpses were being removed relentlessly in the coastal areas but new bodies were now floating back to shore by the

Mr Harun Al-Rashid (BNP-She said bodies of the

> ministers and Sangsad members belonging to the BNP were dedicated and rushed to the cyclone- battered areas to stand by the people to ameliorate their sufferings and share their sorrows. He said "relations of BNP

cue operations there. Giving an account of statement of the relief goods allocated for the three districts. the State Minister rejected the opposition allegations that the government had been distributing relief goods on partisan basis. He said that the government had divided the cyclonestricken areas into two zones. Each of the zones was given under the responsibility of two senior secretaries. The responsibility of relief operation in Noakhali, Feni

Representative of the Armed Forces and the local members of parliament had been included in the committee, he The State Minister pointed out that the relief committee was holding regular meeting

Dwelling on the loss of life and the extent of damage