

Plea to give MPs Tk 5 lakh each for uplift projects

AL to table Amendment Bill Thursday

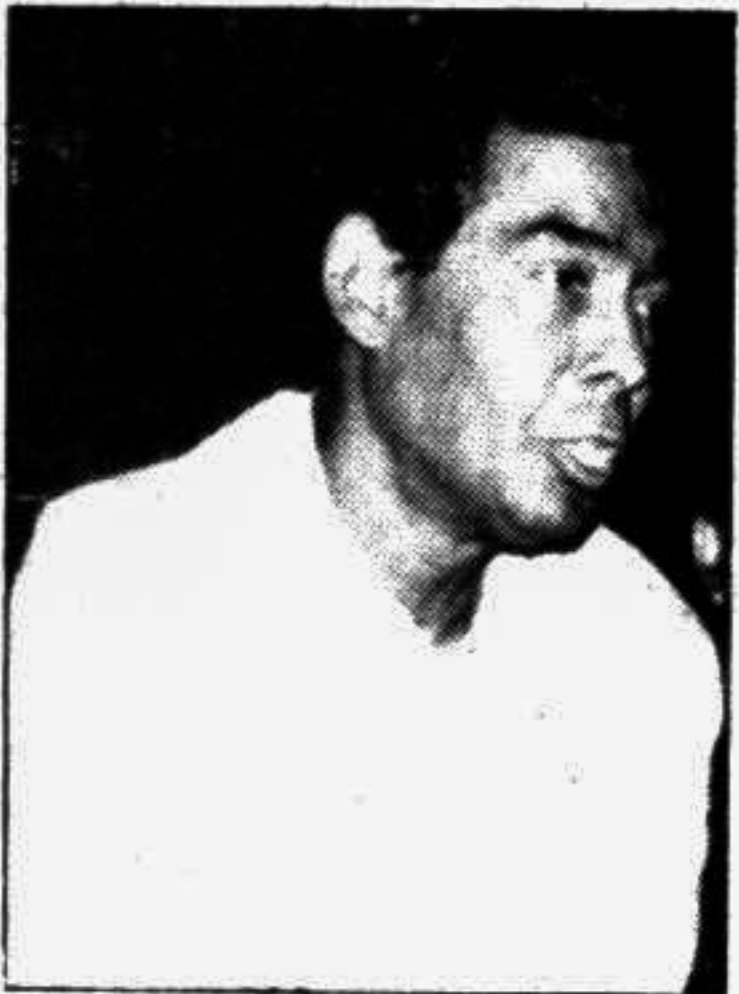
The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its sitting at 10:42 AM on Sunday with the Speaker, Abdur Rahman Biswas, in the chair, reports BSS.

The proceedings of the House began after the tilawat-e-Quran. The House witnessed a noisy scene that started following an answer to a supplementary question on the purchase of ATP aircraft by the then Ershad government.



M A Mannan

The trouble erupted when Civil Aviation Minister M A Mannan replying to a supplementary question from Awami League member Tofael Ahmed said the Shipping Minister M K Anwar the then Finance Secretary, was the only person who had opposed the purchase of ATP aircraft.



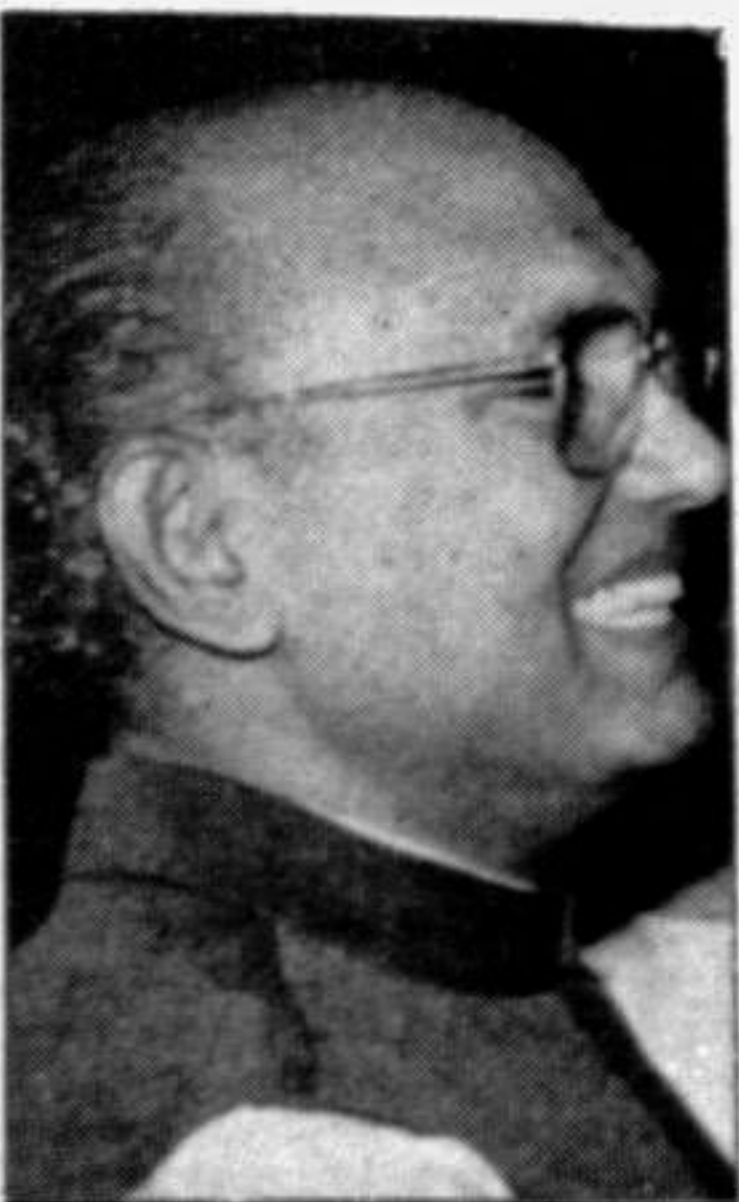
Suranjit

Raising objection to the answer, Ganatantrik Party leader Suranjit Sengupta told the chair that the question was whether Anwar was a member of the then Cabinet-sub Committee that had authorised the purchase of ATP aircraft.

Replying again, the Civil Aviation Minister said that Anwar was a member of that sub-committee but he had vehemently opposed the purchase of the ATP aircraft.

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas then announced the end of the question hour but the Shipping Minister rose to give his personal clarification.

The opposition members also rose to tell the chair that the minister could not make any personal clarification as the question hour was over.



Tofael Ahmed

Tofael Ahmed argued with the chair that Anwar could not make his point now.

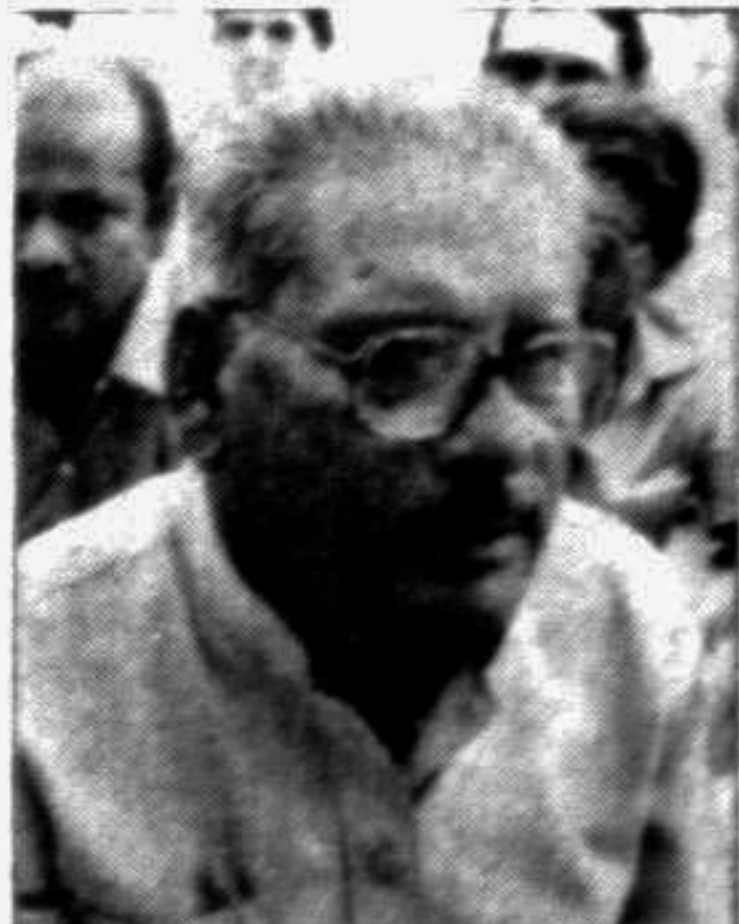
The Speaker told the member that the minister had sought his permission under rule 274 of the rules of procedure and he had allowed him to speak.

However, as Anwar began to make his point, Tofael Ahmed drew the attention of the chair and said the minister could not make a speech on his point of personal clarification.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad and Ganatantrik Party leader Suranjit Sengupta supported the contention of Tofael.

The House then witnessed a complete noisy scene with both the opposition and treasury bench members making shouts and counter shouts.

The Speaker used his gavel repeatedly to restore order in the House but the disorder continued. The Speaker said he would adjourn the House if the noise was not stopped.



M K Anwar

However, amid noise Anwar took the floor and said although a member of the sub-committee, he was the only person who had vehemently opposed the purchase of ATP aircraft.

Shudhansu Shekhar Halder tried to make a point but his voice drowned in the noise.

As the opposition members failed to make their point, they staged a walk out. The Jamaat-e-Islami members, however, remained sitting in the House.

The Jatiya Party members remained absent from the House for the third day Sunday.

The Speaker then disposed of four notices on privileges and 11 call on attention. He said one notice received from Moulana Ansar Ali (Jamaat-Sathkha) on erosion of a hat in Sathkha has been admitted for discussion.

The House resumed discussion on the supplementary budget.

Sakhawat Hossain

Initiating the discussion Moulana Sakhawat Hossain (Jamaat-Jessore) said present government had presented a body it inherited from the past autocratic regime.

He said the House should make a postmortem before it passed the supplementary allocation on various heads.

Referring to an additional head of expenditure under miscellaneous, the Jamaat member said a 10 per cent cut was proposed in this account but in fact Taka 1.94 crore more was spent.

At this stage the opposition members entered the House.

Moulana Sakhawat said Taka 14.10 crore had been spent on rural development of the greater Rangpur district and Taka 19 crore had been proposed in the 1991-92 financial budget for the same district. He wanted to know why no money was allocated for any other district of the country.

Sakhawat alleged that not even one per cent of the revenue collected from Jessore was spent on the development of the district.

He called for forming a parliamentary committee for examining the expenditures under different heads.

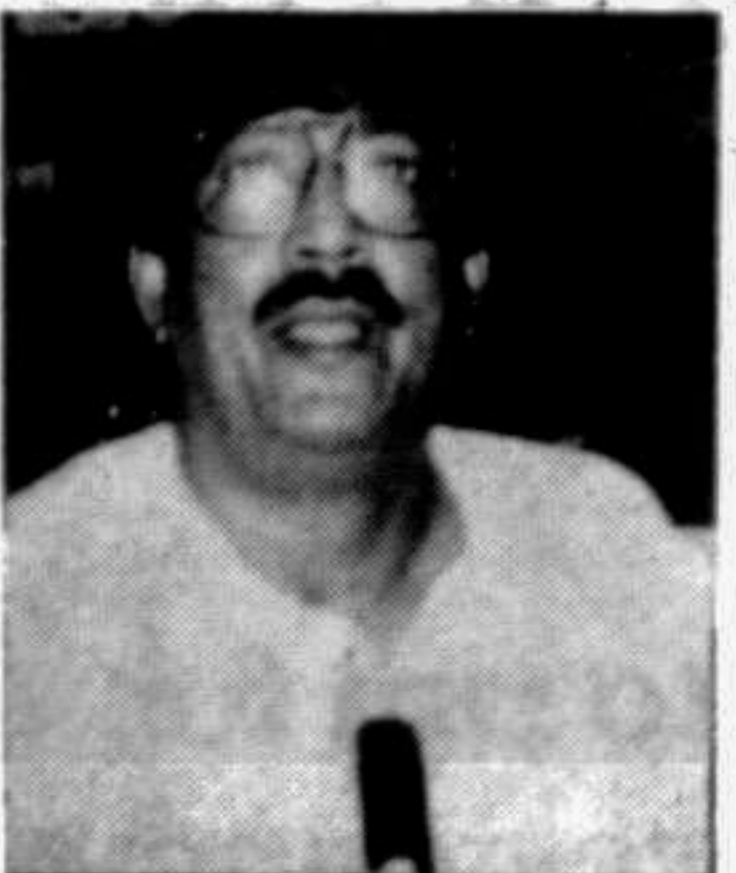
Abdul Gani

Mohammad Abdul Gani (BNP-Meherpur) said the present government was compelled to take the burden of excess expenditure made by the past autocratic Ershad government. But at the same time the present government was taking steps against corrupt practices of the government of Ershad.

He said BNP government is democratically elected and it had some commitment to the people, which were being implemented.

Gani said the present Jatiya Sangsad was formed through an election and it aimed at improving the lot of the people.

He called upon the members belonging to both the treasury and opposition benches to show tolerance and respect democratic rights of every member. He said if we show respect to each other, we could serve the people better.



Shahjahan Siraj

Taking part in discussions on the supplementary budget, Shahjahan Siraj (JSD-Tangail) said the 1990-91 supplementary budget was peculiar in character since three governments — Ershad regime, the interim government and the present government were involved in this.

He said that governments had gone for additional expenditures beyond the budget and later sought approval of such expenditures in the name of supplementary budget. This, the opposition member said, was not desirable since the parliament must be taken into confidence before the additional expenditures were incurred.

Seraj said allocations on different heads, shown in the budget, were often misnomer since the actual expenditures seldom had relevance with what had been shown in the budget and actual expenditures subsequently seen in the supplementary budget.

The JSD member pointed out that allocation in the education sector was being told as

the highest in the budget but in reality the defence would surpass the allocation in this sector.

The amount in last year's budget in the education sector could not be spent while the allocation in the defence had exceeded what was originally earmarked for the sector.

Besides, he said, expenditures like that of the cadet colleges were met from the education head but these colleges were not under the education ministry. Seraj said, it was misleading to say that highest allocation had been given to the education sector.

The member said it was a pity that the money earmarked for education could not be spent and wondered why such a situation existed when the need in this sector was so high.

Speaking about the education sector, Seraj said a perilous condition now existed in this vital area of national life with no clear direction for the future generation. The situation in Chittagong University was a clear manifestation in this regard, he added.

He said in the railway sector even minimum facilities for the passengers were now non-existent in the trains. He said recently he and 14 other Members of Parliament had gone to Chittagong by train. Our journey was tortuous because of the bad sitting condition and lack of water.

He also mentioned the Jamuna Bridge Project and said it was not certain whether railway tracks would finally be there in the bridge. "We are only hearing about provisions for railway lines but so far it has not been made clear, he said.

Turning to the agricultural sector, Seraj said little attention had always been given to this sector despite the fact that the fate of the people was inseparably linked with the betterment of the farmers. He demanded reduction in the prices of kerosene and diesel for the greater benefits of the farmers and others.

About the law and order situation, Seraj said it was disappointing that no government since 1972 could perform well in this area. Murders and other crimes in broad day light were a common feature in the capital today, he said stressing the supreme need to improve the situation.

Seraj said Members of Parliament had a lot of responsibility but there was virtually no scope for them to contribute to developmental activities. He demanded that

Members of Parliament be given at least Taka five lakh under their disposal for carrying out development work in their constituencies since people expected some work from them. He also called for an office for the MPs in their respective areas so that they could have a base there and involve themselves more seriously.

Seraj deplored that former MP in this country had no importance and demanded that ex-MPs who served more than two terms should be given some facilities.

The Speaker then adjourned the House till 3 PM.

Azizur Rahman

As soon as the House resumed Sunday afternoon with the Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas in the chair, Azizur Rahman (AL-Moulvibazar) stood up promptly and urged the chair to allow discussion on his call attention notice on emergency rehabilitation of the flood-affected people in Moulvibazar. He said it was a great fortune to get call attention notice through for discussion on matters of urgent public importance under Rule 71 of the rules of procedure. He said he could not avail himself of the opportunity to hold the discussion on his motion as he said they (Awami League members) were not in the House at that time.

The Speaker told the member that it was not possible now to hold discussion on his call attention notice as the concerned minister was not in the House. He however said his motion could be discussed today (Monday).

Mian Wazed

The Speaker then asked Mian Abdul Wazed (BNP-Brahmanbaria) to start discussion on supplementary budget.

Taking the floor Wazed said corruption had crept into all levels of the administration during the nine years of the autocratic rule.

Wazed expressed the hope that things would definitely change under the government of BNP. He said the budget would now be formulated on the basis of the politics and the 19-point programme of BNP.

He called for giving more facilities to the peasants in the border areas. He said instead of making the development programme Dhaka-Chittagong oriented it should be spread to every village of Bangladesh.

M M Nazrul Islam

Speaking next, Principal M

M Nazrul Islam (AL-Bhola) referred to the additional expenditures for the foreign missions and said "we should be careful in spending more in this sector as we are poor."

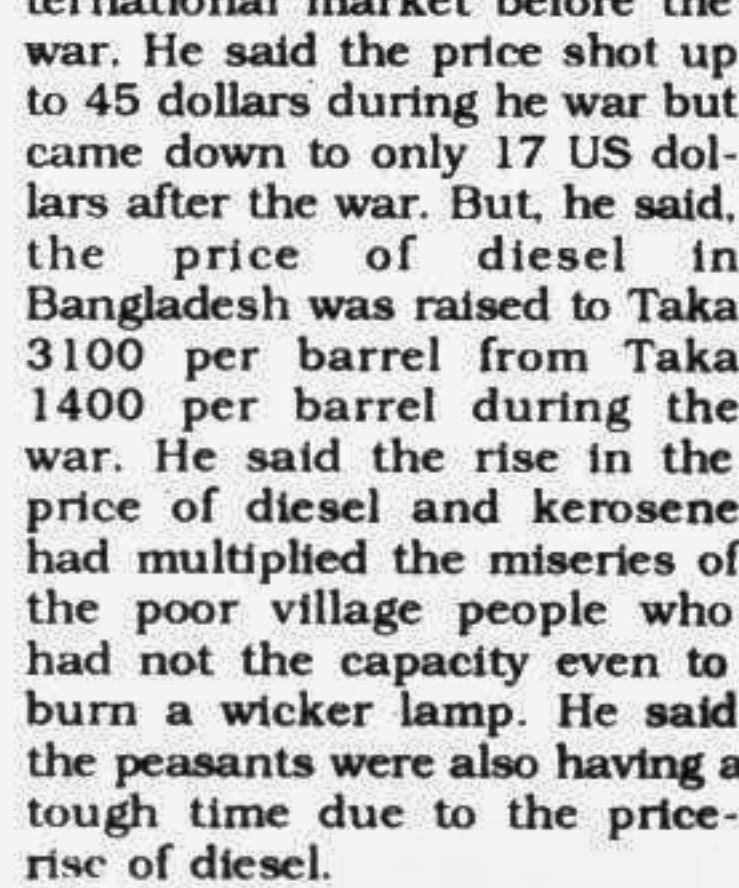
He said the extra expenditures for the police was not also justified as he said they (police) had failed to discharge their duties. He urged the Prime Minister, in charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs, to keep an eye on the matter.

He also said the border areas were heaven for smugglers and added that Indian Border Security men beat us and we swallow the beating." He said the spending of Taka eight crore more than the budgetary allocation for the BDR had no justification in the circumstances.

Nazrul Islam also expressed his reservation about spending of Taka 67 crore for the defence sector.

He said it was a misfortune for us that in the education sector 263 crore remained unutilised while crores of Taka were spent in other sectors in addition to their original allocations.

Referring to the Gulf War, he said the price of oil was 21 US dollars a barrel in the international market before the war. He said the price shot up to 45 dollars during the war but came down to only 17 US dollars after the war. But, he said, the price of diesel in Bangladesh was raised to Taka 3100 per barrel from Taka 1400 per barrel during the war. He said the rise in the price of diesel and kerosene had multiplied the miseries of the poor village people who had not the capacity even to burn a wicker lamp. He said the peasants were also having a tough time due to the price-rise of diesel.



Jamiruddin Sircar

Taking the floor, State Minister for Land Jamiruddin Sircar said there was hardly any scope of discussion on the supplementary budget. Citing

constitutional obligation and practices in the past. He said since expenditure was a necessity, we had to pass the supplementary budget where the spending had already been made. He said despite higher spending, we had to pass the supplementary budget for the continuity of parliament. He also mentioned that the budget had been duly scrutinised by the Acting President before he assented to the budget.

Referring to the issue of high unemployment in the country raised by Awami League member Salauddin Yusuf, the State Minister said the age limit for government service had been lifted to solve the problem. He said he shared the worries on unemployment with Awami League member. Sircar described the supplementary budget as "satisfactory" and said that it should be passed without hesitation and dissension.

Abdur Rouf

Abdur Rouf (AL-Nilphamari), said they were morally bound to pass the bill for the expenditure as it had already been made. He said what "we are trying" was to enquire whether the axed money were properly utilised.

Rouf said although huge sums were spent for the railway and the police, people were not getting due service. He alleged that corruption had spread into the administration. There should not be any further allocation to those areas where people were not getting service, he opined.

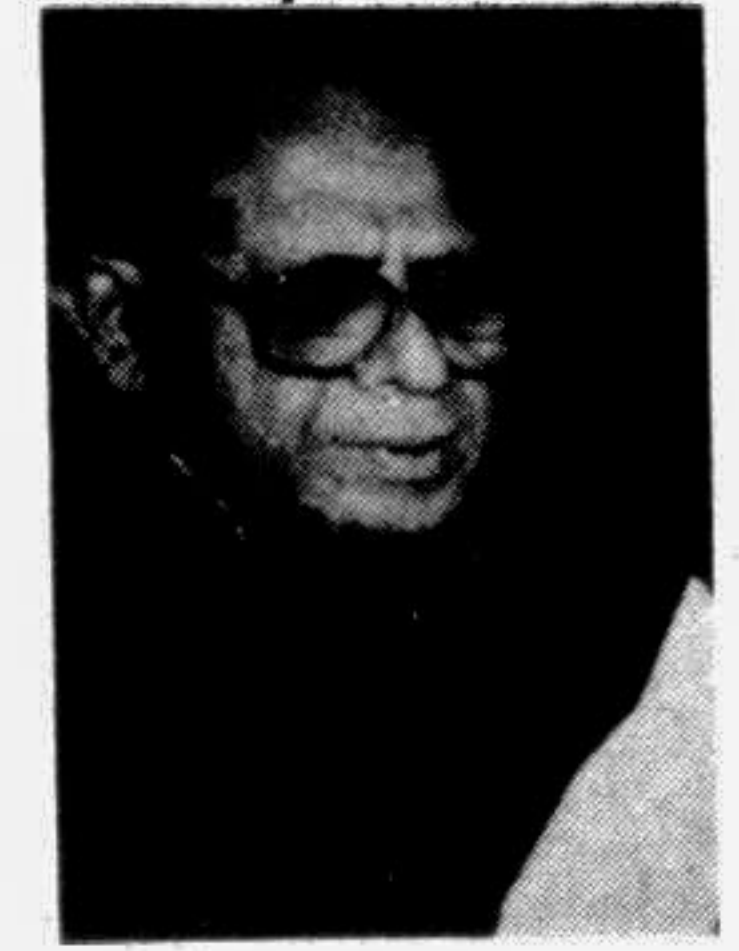
Earlier, Rouf called for bringing an end to the present constitutional dilemma by amending the constitution in accordance with the joint declaration of the three alliances making parliament sovereign. He said Awami League planned to bring the constitutional amendment next Thursday, the private members day.

Samad Azad

Taking the floor Deputy Leader of Opposition Abdus Samad Azad said a student was killed in a clash at the Jagannath University College late last night. The police intervened at Nawabpur Road when the body of the victim was being brought toward Press Club Sunday.

Azad urged the Deputy Leader of the House to issue necessary directive to the police to allow the body to be brought to the Press Club. He requested both the Deputy Leader of the House and the LGRD Minister, who is also

Secretary General of BNP to go to the Press Club along with them to express their condolence for the victim. This would defuse tension and help maintaining law and order, he added.



Badruddoza Chowdhury

Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said so far he knew two persons one each from two sides, were killed in the clash. He said he had no knowledge that the police had prevented taking the body toward Press Club. He, however, said he would look into the matter and inform the House of the latest position after Asr prayer.

Jahanara Begum

Jahanara Begum (BNP) praised the Finance Minister for presenting a balanced budget for the fiscal 1991-92. She regretted that the opposition members failed to thank the Finance Minister for his fine budget.

She also criticised those who made very critical comment about the whole police administration at random. There were many honest police personnel who lived a hard life because of their honesty. It would be unfortunate if all the members of police department were charged with corruption, she added.

Referring to the declining deposit of the general people in the banks she urged the concerned authorities to encourage a savings by taking suitable steps.

Jahanara Begum particularly praised the Education Minister and the Finance Minister for allocating the highest amount in the education sector. She alleged that Anti-Corruption Bureau had now become the den of corruption. She urged the government to rid this bureau of corruption and corrupt personnel.

Shamsuddoha

Shamsuddoha (CPB-Nilphamari) said though the present government came to power after a long drawn struggle against autocracy it has presented a supplementary budget which was a legacy of the past autocratic government.

He said the government gave blanket coverage to all the misdeeds of the autocratic regime by presenting the supplementary budget in its present form. The past autocratic regime of deposed President Ershad followed "plunder capitalism" to loot and plunder money through dishonest and corrupt practices.

The country could never expect to make any stride if the present government followed the policy of the autocratic regime. The country would plunge into still deeper crisis if the government looked at the problems in different spheres lightly and half-heartedly, he added.

Quoting newspaper report the CPB member said nearly five lakh people had left Bangladesh to seek Indian citizenship. Many of the leaders of Muhajir Sangha representing the Bangladeshis refugees in India are Muslims, he said adding the exodus of the Bangladeshis pointed to the sorry state of economy of this country.

He called upon the government to take realistic steps for the alleviation of poverty and elimination of corruption from the society. He expressed his concern at the deterioration of law and order situation and rise in the incidents of hijacking and said the elected members of the Sangsad irrespective of party affiliation should give a serious thought to it. Autocracy had gone but evil practices of the fallen regime were still continuing unabated, he said.

When Shamsuddoha was in the midst of his speech, Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas said, "nemesis does not stop all on a sudden: it takes time."

The CPB member expressed the hope that the government would present the supplementary budget next time making a departure from the past practice and in keeping with the aspirations of the people and need of the country.

The Speaker urged members to suggest steps for presenting supplementary budget in a new way in future.

(Incomplete)

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Aminul Huq

Speaking next, Aminul Huq (BNP-Rajshahi) said the supplementary budget had to be passed for the sake of maintaining continuity.

He said during the last nine years Bangladesh had witnessed an autocratic rule and money had been spent at the whims of the then president.

The BNP member said additional expenses were made on account of allowances, honorarium and in other unproductive sectors. Huq proposed for constitution of a parliamentary committee to examine as to how the additional amount as shown in the supplementary budget had been spent.

The Treasury Bench member referred to the country's northern region and said it continued to remain neglected for long in the past.

He said a partial implementation of the "Barendra Project" in the northern region had enhanced food production by five lakh tons.

Huq urged the government to implement the Barendra Project which, he said, would help solve the country's food deficit problem.

As the member completed his speech, the Speaker adjourned the house at 5:07 PM for the Asr prayer.

The House reassembled at 5:47 PM with the Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali, in the chair.

Motia Chowdhury

Participating in the discussion on the supplementary budget Awami League member Mrs Motia Chowdhury said the BNP had three months' responsibility on the supplementary budget of the fiscal 1991-92 six months of which passed during Ershad regime and three months under the Acting President.

She referred to the expenditure in the defence sector and said despite such a huge expenditure the Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Air Staff had failed to demonstrate their sense of responsibilities during the last devastating cyclone and tidal surge.

Motia, however, said that the two chiefs were relieved of their respective posts.

She said the members of the US Task Force irrespective of their posts were seen carrying goods on their back but such kind of demonstration was not noticed among the members of the country's Armed Forces.

The Awami League member said a Treasury Bench member had also stated in the House that the senior officers of Bangladesh Armed Forces maintained luxurious life.

Motia Chowdhury criticised the government for not informing the House about the arrival of the Task Force. She said usually Task Force went to different countries but the Parliament should have been duly informed.

Referring to the expenditure on Bangladesh missions abroad the Awami League member said the members of Bangladesh Army had been sent to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War and they worked there defying all odds.

But she pointed out that Saudi Arabia had bought one lakh gunny bags from India which had not supported the Saudis on the Gulf War issue.

Mrs Chowdhury said what kind of diplomacy was pursued that India got the order and wanted to know why the nation spent Taka six crore for such diplomacy.

As the Awami League member concluded her speech Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury took the floor to make a statement on the incident of Jagannath University College as he had committed earlier in the day.

Prof Chowdhury said two student organisations, one belonging to Jatiyatabadi Dal and the other belonging to opposition clashed on the campus of the Jagannath University College late last night.

He said two students from the two sides were killed during the clash. The body of the student belonging to Chhatra Dal had already been sent to his village home while a procession was brought out with the body of the student belonging to opposition.

He said the processionists were staying at Rayshaheb Bazar. Prof Chowdhury said it would not be wise to go there, to express sympathy as there was only one body.

(Incomplete)

'Pay-hike not responsible for inflation'

Following is the remaining part of Saturday's Jatiya Sangsad proceedings

Quoting the economic survey report, Tofael Ahmed said the growth rate in the agricultural sector had decreased while the per capita income had registered a nominal rise. On the other hand, inflation had increased by 9 per cent and population by 3 per cent. All these proved that performances and achievements of the BNP government in the economic sector during the last three months were practically nil, he maintained.

The Awami League leader said while the expenditures in the education sector during the current year was less than what was allocated, expenditures on defence, BDR and police had outstripped the original allocation. The people of the country would not question the additional expenditures on the police head if they saw a clean and fair police administration, he added.

Rouf Chowdhury

Abdur Rouf Chowdhury (BNP-Kushtia) said the past autocratic regime had totally destroyed the economy of the country. During the past regime corruption was all pervasive and it had eaten into the vitals of the nation accentuating the sufferings of the people, he said.

Chowdhury said the National Budget for 1991-92 gave a sense of direction for building self-reliant country. Proper implementation of different budgetary provisions would help generate internal resources of the country and reduce dependence on foreign aid gradually, he added.

He laid stress on stamping out corruption for building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh.

SS Halder

SS Halder (Perojpur) said this House could not approve the supplementary budget because the expenditures were incurred during the Ershad

regime. He said the additional expenditures during the time to Ershad government could in no way be the responsibility of the present government and urged the Finance Minister not to come "rescue Ershad administration."

Halder sarcastically wanted to know whether the Finance Minister wanted to "supplement or complement the previous regime."

Quoting from the constitution and rules of procedure, he said the supplementary budget had not been brought before the House in a constitutional manner and urged the government not to resort to inconsistencies in dealing with such issues.

Nazmul Huda

At this stage, State Minister for Food Nazmul Huda briefly took the floor and said Halder was performing well and the performance could be better if he could get a stage.

Treasury Bench members also drew the attention of the Speaker repeatedly to the fact that the opposition member was making his speech looking at the Treasury Bench instead of addressing the chair.

This prompted Halder to cut a witty remark that he could not help himself but look at the Treasury Bench members because so many "notable economists" were sitting in the other side.

Mohiuddin Ahmed

As the House resumed after the Maghreb prayer, Mohiuddin Ahmed (BAKSL-Pirojpur) stood up and said the Finance Minister being a renowned chartered accountant could say many things on the economic aspects of the budget. But the legal interpretations on it could have been more befitting if those would have come from legal stalwarts of the Treasury Bench, he said.

Abdul Latif

The Deputy Speaker gave the floor to Dr Abdul Latif Bhuiyan (BNP-Kishoreganj).

Latif stressed on the survey of the country's sea and fish resources and said the budgetary allocation in this sector should at least be doubled.

He also emphasised the need for reexcavation of the ponds and swamps for achieving self-sufficiency in fish resources.

Rashed Khan Menon

Speaking next, Rashed Khan Menon (Workers Party-Bakerganj) said all the political parties including BNP, had protested against the budget formulated by the autocratic government last year. So, he said, the budget of the past regime should be discussed threadbare. He said the Sangsad which had been elected to bring to light every misdeed of the past government could not accept the supplementary budget.

He said the question of the ten per cent dearness allowance given to the different categories of employees in the public sector had been shown as an additional expenditure in the supplementary budget but the Pay Commission had been kept hanging. He said the wages commission for the workers had also been kept in abeyance.

He said the argument that pay-hike helped increase the prices of essential commodities had no basis. He said the prices of commodities increased even without raising the pay and allowances.

He also expressed his resentment at the formulation of a separate pay commission for the members of the Armed Forces.

Referring to the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Menon said the struggle of the hill people for protecting their own tradition and culture was an established fact in our democratic system. He said "I don't believe that the people of Chittagong are beyond our sovereign entity."

He also posed a question as to what the country had achieved after siding with the

American imperialism during the Gulf War in the name of Islamic Ummah. He said even the expatriates from Kuwait had not got back their money although they had deposited their necessary documents in the banks.

Menon proposed formation of a House committee to examine all the expenditures made by the last regime. He said the supplementary budget could only be passed after being examined by the committee.

Niamatullah

Mohammad Niamatullah (BNP-Dhaka) termed the proposed budget for 1991-92 financial year as "epoch making."

He said the budget for 1990-91 financial year was prepared by the autocratic government of Ershad. The additional expenditures shown in the livestock sector were made during the autocratic regime. He said in fact the amount was not spent for the dairy farm at Savar because officials of the farm were not getting their salaries for the last four months.

Supporting the contention of Workers Party member Rashed Khan Menon, Niamatullah said the repatriated Bangladeshis from the Gulf should be paid their dues and the plane fares of those people who did not use their tickets should be paid.

Mr. Niamatullah said students of Jahangir Nagar University were facing accommodation and transport problems. He said the present halls and transports were provided by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman after which no addition was made to these.

The BNP member called upon the government for allocating more fund for the overall development of Savar area where many important national organisations are located.

The Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali adjourned the House at 8:18 pm to meet Sunday at 10:30 am.