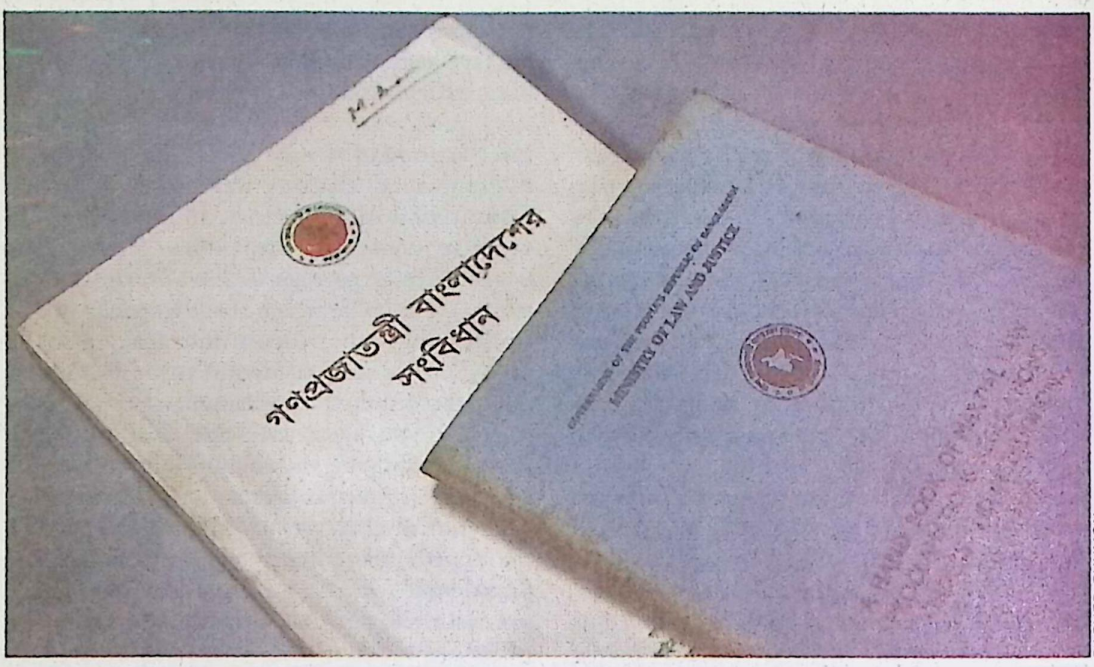


RASHED SHUMON

Ninth Amendment Act in 1989, introducing the office of vice-president. After the amendment, the then president HM Ershad appointed Moudud Ahmed as vice-president. It is said that the office of vice-president was introduced only for Moudud Ahmed.

Military ruler-turned-president HM Ershad resigned from the post on December 6, 1990, in the face of a tumultuous mass upheaval against his government, appointing Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, the then chief justice, as the vice-president, since the incumbent vice-president had resigned earlier. The newly appointed vice-president exercised the powers and performed the functions of the president, and a parliamentary election was held under his supervision in February 1991.

The fifth parliament, constituted through the 1991 elections, passed the Eleventh Amendment Act in August the same year, to ratify Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed's appointment as the vice-president, and the powers exercised and laws and ordinances made during the tenure. The amendment, which was made on consensus of both ruling and opposition parties, also allowed him to resume the duties and responsibilities of the chief justice after a new president would be elected under the Constitution.

The eighth parliament, dominated by the BNP-Jamaat alliance, passed the Fourteenth Amendment Act in 2004, increasing the number of women's reserved seats in parliament from 30 to 45. The amendment, however, generated controversy as it also increased the service age of Supreme Court judges by two years. The then opposition parties alleged that the government increased the service age of judges to make it legal for the then Chief Justice MA Hasan to lead the upcoming caretaker government that would assist the Election Commission to hold the ninth parliamentary elections.

The opposition camp vehemently refused to accept Justice Hasan as the caretaker chief. The political situation became volatile by the end of 2006. The latest constitutional misadventure took place when the then president, Iajuddin Ahmed, assumed the office of the chief adviser to the caretaker government in violation of the Constitution. A state of emergency was declared in January 2007, leading to suspension of the ninth parliamentary elections scheduled for January 22. The eventful and prolonged emergency regime ended through holding of the ninth parliamentary elections on December 29, 2008.

The loss of parliamentary power

The original Constitution of 1972 ensured the parliament's supremacy over the executive and judicial branches of the state. As the House was originally structured to serve as the core of the parliamentary system of government, it was allowed sweeping authority to effectively hold the executive branch accountable.

Some reasonable restrictions were however imposed on members of the parliament, to prevent floor crossing, for the stability