The Fake Opposition

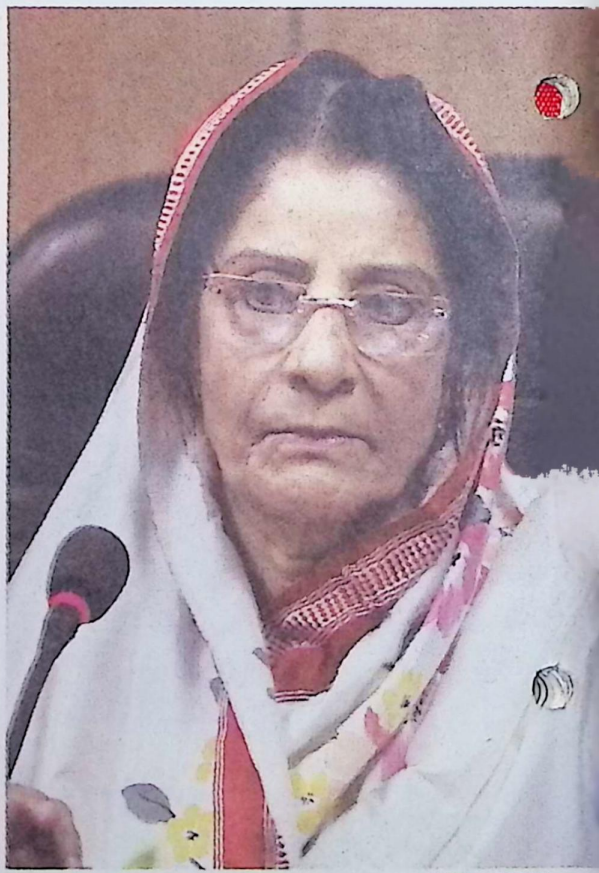
SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Jatiya Party (JP), the handmaiden main opposition in parliament, keeps twisting its record. On August 31, its MPs had decided that they would oppose the constitutional amendment bill seeking to restore the Jatiya Sangsad's power to impeach Supreme Court judges for misbehaviour or incapacity. The opposition Chief Whip Tajul Islam Chowdhury and JP MP Moshiur Rahman Ranga, who is also a state minister in the cabinet, informed journalists about their decision. The meeting also decided in principle that the three JP ministers would resign to turn the party into a "real opposition". Their decision has made it plain that they have finally acknowledged that people do no consider them as a "real opposition" as they are in the government and also in the 'opposition'.

According to media reports, Raushan Ershad, the leader of the opposition in parliament, raised the issue of resignation, saying if the JP quits the government, it can play an effective role as the main opposition in the parliament. The party, however, didn't decide on when it would quit the cabinet. Since then Ershad has been talking about the resignation of his party's MPs from the government.

But the things already took a different turn. It didn't take the JP MPs long to flip-flop. It was visible within a week. They wholeheartedly supported the constitutional amendment bill when it was placed in the parliament last week. What prompted them to change the decision? A senior leader of the party told this correspondent that the government assured them of "bringing the necessary changes to make the constitutional bill even better ".

However, there is another story behind it. The JP would have faced a peculiar situation if it had opposed the constitutional bill when it was placed in the parliament. The three JP MPs who are now in the council of ministers would found it difficult to stand by the JP's parliamentary party's decision. They are constitutionally bound to defend the cabinet's decision. There is only way for them to resign from the cabinet to oppose the constitutional amendment bill. On the other hand, they will face the risk of loosing their parliament membership if they defy the party's parliamentary party decision. As long as the JP MPs want to retain their ministerial portfolio, they must defend the cabinet's decision in the parliament.



Raushan Ershad PHOTO: STAR FILE

The constitutional amendment bill may also get passed "unanimously" without a single vote against it. If it happens, will this project a "national consensus" about the constitutional amendment bill? In an ideal situation, one may call it national consensus if the ruling and main opposition parties show such an act of solidarity. But the main opposition JP does not