

Hold ruling party accountable

New Speaker Abdul Hamid urges opposition; Shawkat Ali made dy speaker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Advocate Abdul Hamid and Col (retd) Shawkat Ali were unanimously elected speaker and deputy speaker of the ninth parliament respectively in the inaugural session of the House yesterday.

Sworn into the office for a second term, Hamid, also a veteran parliamentarian, urged all members of the House to work towards the



Abdul Hamid Shawkat Ali
country's economic development, 'staying above all political interests'.

"Let our aim be to free this country from poverty,"

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Hamid, who is the 11th speaker of the national parliament, said in his inaugural speech.

The newly elected speaker invited opposition lawmakers to hold the ruling party accountable with 'strong criticisms'.

He also urged the opposition lawmakers not to oppose just for the sake of opposing.

"We will push the country forward shunning the path of violence and anarchy," said the new speaker, who is expected to play a pivotal role in making the parliament effective.

The inaugural session began with immediate past speaker Jamiruddin Sircar presiding over it to elect the new speaker and deputy speaker.

After delivering his inaugural speech, Sircar began the process of electing the new speaker and deputy speaker.

He separately announced the nominations of Hamid and Shawkat for the two posts and invited the chief whip of parliament to propose the name of Hamid for the post of speaker.

Within a few moments, Hamid was elected the speaker unanimously, on a proposal from Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and supported by Whip Segupta Yasmin.

The main opposition lawmakers including Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia also did not oppose Hamid's election, rather they welcomed him by thumping on the desks.

Then, the speaker began the procedure of electing the deputy speaker. Shawkat Ali was elected the deputy speaker uncontested too, on a proposal of Whip ASM Firoz which was seconded by Whip Mujibul Haque.

With completion of the election, the session was adjourned for half an hour. President Iajuddin Ahmed administered the oaths to the speaker and deputy speaker in his chamber in the parliament building.

Before adjourning the House, Jamiruddin Sircar, who was presiding the session, hoped that all lawmakers will extend their cooperation to the

newly elected speaker and deputy speaker for running the parliament effectively.

After the induction, Hamid went to the speaker's office where Sircar was waiting for him. As soon as Hamid entered the office, Sircar stood up from the speaker's chair and requested Hamid to take over, making the transition.

When Hamid returned to the House, senior AL lawmakers Tofail Ahmed and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Workers Party chief Rashed Khan Menon, and BNP lawmaker ZIM Mostafa Ali took the floor on behalf of other lawmakers to congratulate the new speaker.

They hoped that Hamid's dynamic leadership will make the parliament the centre of all government activities creating a new example in the history of the country's parliament.

Hamid, who was the deputy leader of the opposition in the last parliament, had also been the deputy speaker through most of the tenure of the seventh parliament, when Awami League (AL) was last in power.

By the very end of the seventh parliament's tenure, he was elected the speaker following the death of the then speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury.

A lawyer by profession, Hamid has been involved in AL politics since the 1960s.

He was elected the youngest ever member of the Pakistan National Assembly in 1970 at the age of 25.

Hamid was also elected a member of parliament (MP) in 1973, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008 general elections on his party ticket.

Shawkat, who will work as the deputy of Hamid, also has a long political career with experience of being the chairman and a member of many parliamentary committees.

Shawkat, a freedom fighter, was first elected lawmaker of the second parliament in 1979 from Shariatpur-2 constituency, followed by his election as an MP in 1991, 1996, 2000 and 2008. He is also a listed Supreme Court lawyer.