

No practice of TV coverage of proceedings in the world

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its sitting at 3.04 pm Tuesday with the Deputy Speaker, Sheikh Razzak Ali in the chair, reports BSS.

After tilawat-e-Quran, the Deputy Speaker took up the question-answer session which dealt with the activities of the Ministries of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Agriculture, Environment and Forest, and Land.

Mohammad Nasim

Once the question-answer hour was over, the Chief Whip of Awami League Parliamentary Party, Mohammad Nasim (Sirajganj) took the floor on a Point of Privilege and told the House that the Television crews had been absent from the House for the last two days. Monday Nasim said, the Speaker had assured the House that the Television crew would work from Tuesday. He asked as to why the Television crew remained absent from the House in spite of the assurance given by the Speaker.

Secondly, Nasim said, there had been no discussion on the vote of thanks for President's speech during the past two days. He insisted that the House should continue its debate on President's speech regularly without fail.



Nurul Huda

Replying to the contention of Nasim, the Minister of State for Information, Nurul Huda said there was no practice of Television coverage of Parliament proceeding anywhere in the world including India.

Such practice of Television coverage was absent in 1973, 1979 and 1986 Parliaments in the country. However, the practice of Television coverage continued for some days during the 1988 Parliament. At that period, the Television used to give coverage to the President's address to the House, budget presentation and the proceedings of the concluding day.

The State Minister said as per the precedence set in the last session, the Television was allowed inside the House. But Television should not be allowed inside the House everyday.

He said none had stopped the Television coverage of the proceedings of the House but the Television acted according to their normal practice.

Abdul Hasan Chowdhury

As the State Minister for Information resumed his seat, Awami League member Abdul Hasan Chowdhury (Tangail) took the floor and said the State Minister had given wrong information in the House.

Chowdhury said the House of Commons in Britain had been allowing live Television coverage of their proceedings for the last ten years.

He demanded Television coverage of the proceedings of the House so that the people could watch them and understand the proceedings of the House which was established after a democratic movement.



Mirza Golam Hafiz

At this stage Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz took the floor and said as being the Speaker of the 1979 parliament, he for the first time allowed live Television coverage of the proceedings of the House. At that time, he recalled, many newspapers criticised his decision in editorial comments.

But since then, Mirza Hafiz said, the Australian Parliament, US Congress, House of Deputies in France, and British House of Commons started allowing live coverage of their proceedings.

Mirza Hafiz said there was no rule regarding the daily coverage of the proceedings by the television.

Mirza Golam Hafiz said: if we can make the deliberations in the House attractive, we can expect daily coverage. "We must be careful in improving our deliberations and only then we can help set up a convention, he added.



Suranjit

Participating next in the debate, Suranjit Sengupta referred to his experiences as a parliamentarian and said the proceedings of the current Parliament was far better and more congenial than the previous Parliaments. Moreover, he said, Parliamentary rules and conventions were being practised in the House. In this connection, Sengupta mentioned that the Treasury Bench had already withdrawn some of their bills at the demand of the opposition members.

Sengupta suggested that the Television should be allowed to function freely.

Previously, Sengupta said: "We were used to see the Shaheb-Bibi and Golams," now we can see only the Bibi and Golams."

Fazlul Huq

At this stage, the BNP Member, Fazlul Huq rose to his feet and demanded of the Speaker that some words used by Sengupta should be expunged.

Bhola Miah

Former Deputy Speaker and JP member Reazuddin Ahmed Bhola Miah also demanded that some words used by the Minister of State for Information in Television coverage of the House should be expunged.



Salauddin Kader

Salauddin Kader Chowdhury (NDP-Chittagong) pleaded that if the government wanted to make the Sangsad a focal point of all national activities, Television coverage of the proceedings should be allowed.

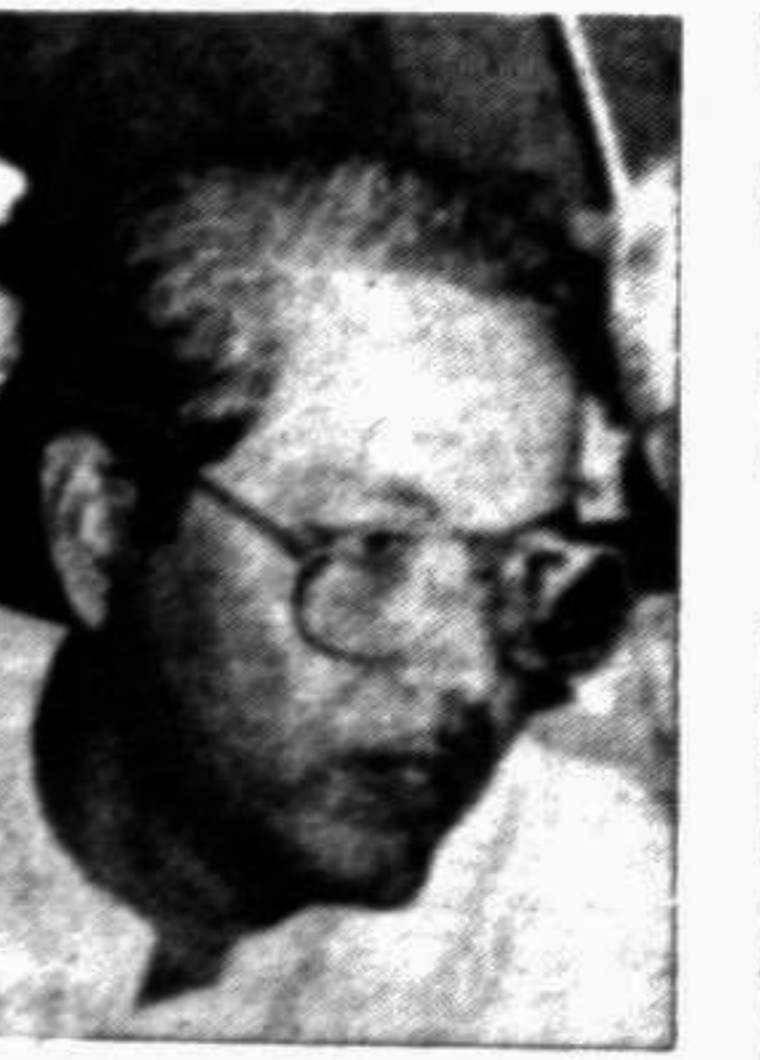
He said he had failed to understand for what particular reason the Television coverage of the proceedings had been stopped.

Refuting the contention of the State Minister for Information, Chowdhury said the House of Commons in Britain had been allowing live telecast of its proceedings.



Matir Rahman Nizami

The leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami Parliamentary Party Maulana Matir Rahman Nizami expressed his surprise over the sudden stoppage of Television coverage. He said considering the sentiments of the members, the Television coverage of the proceedings of the House should again be started.



Badruddoza Chowdhury

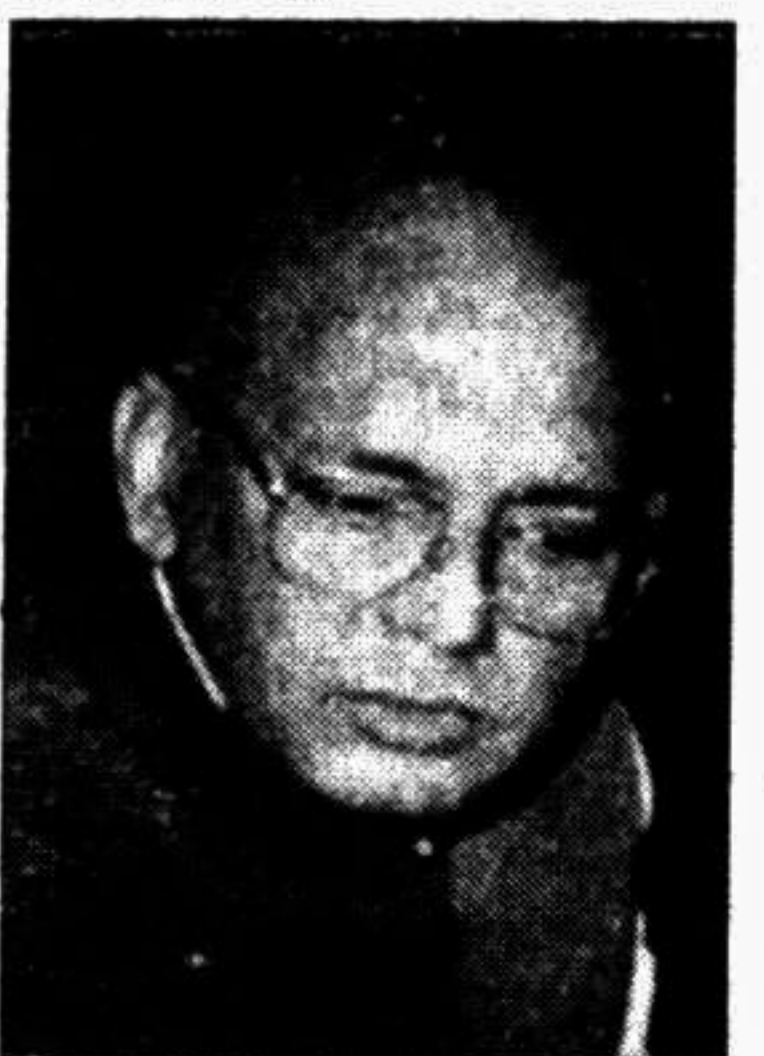
Participating in the debate next, the Deputy Leader of House and Education Minister, Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury said that the BNP Government was the first government which had introduced Television coverage of the pro-

ceedings of the House.

He said if the members wanted, the proceedings of the House could be covered in Television news bulletins.

He pointed out that Television is a highly expensive medium and said Television coverage of the proceedings was not possible everyday.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker expunged some words used by the Minister of State for Information as demanded by Reazuddin Ahmed (JP-Lalmanirhat).



Tofael Ahmed

Tofael Ahmed took the floor again and said that the contentions of Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury were not correct. Ahmed said it was the Awami League Government which had introduced the practice of Television coverage of the proceedings of the House in 1972 and 1973.

As per the convention set in the 1972 and 1973 Parliament, the BNP Government had allowed Television coverage of the proceedings of the House.

As Ahmed resumed his seat, the State Minister for Information, Nurul Huda said the news media including Radio and Television had been giving free, fair and objective coverage of the activities of all the political parties.

He said the Radio and Television had been enjoying total freedom in news coverage. Refuting the contention of Tofael Ahmed, the State Minister said Television had been giving coverage of news items according to their importance.

He said the news items on the Prime Minister's activities were being given treatment according to the priority.

The Deputy Speaker dispose of the notices for adjournment motions and call attention notices. He said he had received six adjournment motions and 23 call attention notices on Tuesday of them, he accepted one call attention notice from Shamsul Huq (AL-Mymensingh-2) demanding the supply of furniture for all schools and madrasahs.

He then took up the next agenda of the day and gave the floor to Farida Rahman (BNP-Jessor-Satkhira) to move her call attention notice.

Farida Rahman

Moving her call attention notice, Farida Rahman drew the attention of the Agriculture Minister to the salinity problem, affecting 50,000 acres of cultivable land in Satkhira.

Majedul Huq

The Agriculture Minister M. Majedul Huq said the government was preparing a guideline for shrimp culture in the country.

The Minister held the farmers, cultivating shrimps in the coastal areas illegally, responsible for salinity.

He said though the government had earmarked areas for shrimp cultivation, a section of farmers had cut embankments in areas beyond them for cultivating shrimps.

The Agriculture Minister said the government had already filed cases against those who had cut the embankments allowing saline water in farmland.

The Deputy Speaker adjourned the House at 5.06 pm for Asr prayer.

As the House resumed its sitting after Asr prayer with Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali

Salauddin Yusuf

In the chair, Salauddin Yusuf (AL-Khulna) stood up and requested the chair to fix the time for discussion on Tuesdays adjournment motion for two hours. He said he is number two mover of the adjournment motion and had urged the chair to give him an opportunity to speak on the motion.

The Deputy Speaker told Salauddin Yusuf that he would discuss the matter with him after Magreb prayer.

The Deputy Speaker told the House that since the Leader of the House and Prime Minister had gone to the Diarrhoea affected areas on

Tuesday she would announce the House committee today (Wednesday).

Switching over to the day's legislative business, the Deputy Speaker gave the floor to Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz for introducing the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 1991. As soon as the Law

Nurul Islam Moni

Minister sought the permission of the chair to introduce the bill. Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Borguna) got up from his seat to object to its introduction saying that it would not be proper to give sweeping power to the police to arrest any offender without any warrant of arrest.

To drive his points home, Moni said an ordinance to this effect was promulgated by the Acting President to deal with the situation that developed after the fall of the autocratic rule. Incidents like extortion of subscription from people became rampant at that period, he said, adding: such a situation does not exist now.

Moni requested the Law Minister to replace the bill with an updated one. He warned that situation in the country would deteriorate if the police were given power to arrest money extorters without any warrant of arrest.

Replying to Moni, the Law Minister said it was a procedural bill in which new provisions have been incorporated. The members of Parliament could raise objection to the bill during the second and third readings.

The Law Minister introduced the bill after Moni's objection was rejected by voice vote.

Suranjit Sengupta (Ganatantri Party-Sunamganj) raised his objection when the Law Minister, Mirza Golam Hafiz, sought the chair's permission to introduce the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 1991.

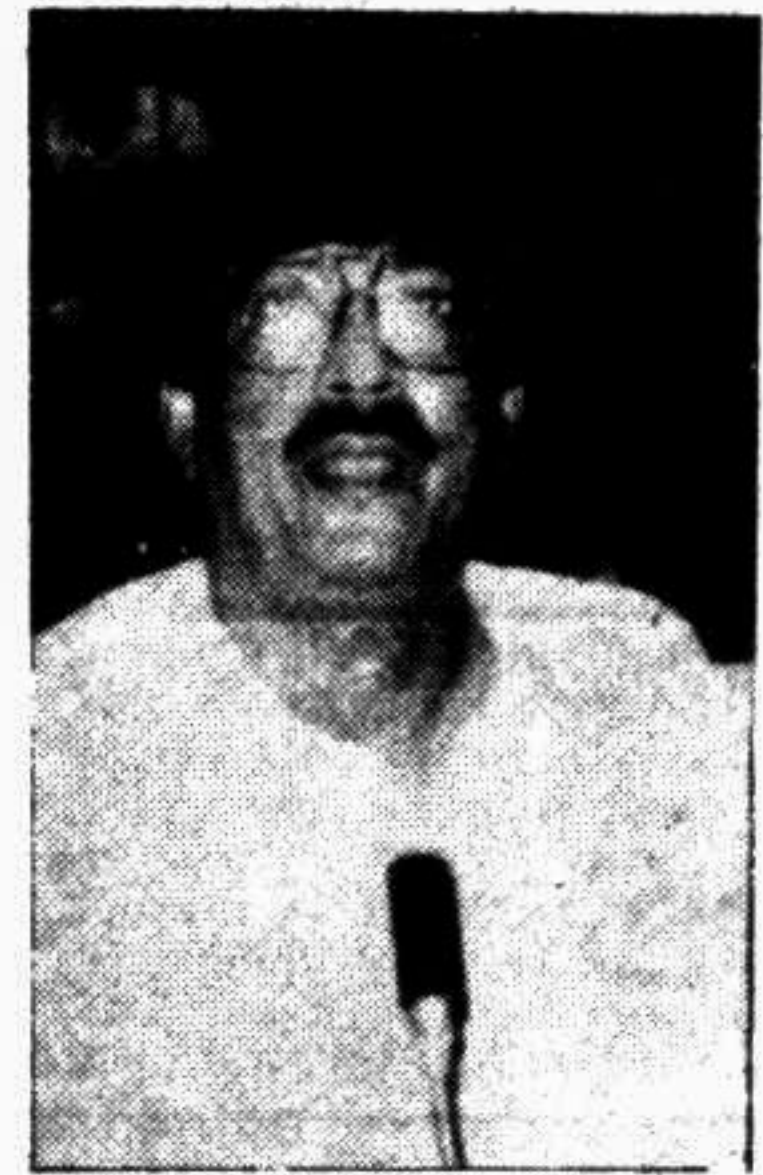
Sengupta said the bill in question is more serious than the Special Powers Act. Fundamental rights of the people would be violated if the bill, which seeks to extend the period of sentence from two years to seven years, was passed by the House, he added.

He further said nobody would be able to criticise the President, Prime Minister or the government if it was passed in its present form. "It is not at all safe in the hands of a party government," he added.

The Law Minister introduced the bill after Sengupta's objection was rejected by voice vote.

Introduction of the Printing

Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration-Amendment) Bill, 1991 by State Minister for Information Md Nurul Huda was met with objection from Shahjahan Siraj (JSD-Tangail).



Shahjahan Siraj

Opposing the introduction of the bill, Siraj said he expected that the bill would be presented in the House after deleting all black provisions in it. All the political parties including BNP have criticised the Printing Presses and Publications Act in severe terms in the past. He called for withdrawing the bill and introducing a new one in its place.

State Minister for Information Md Nurul Huda told the House that the Acting President had constituted a committee in late December last year, headed by Justice A. M. Mahmudur Rahman to identify the black provisions in the act. On the recommendations of the committee, the Acting President promulgated an ordinance amending the Printing Presses and Publications Act to ensure freedom of newspapers and their healthy growth. All back provisions have been struck out from the bill in question and it can be described as a new one, he added.

Siraj withdrew his objection to the introduction of the bill, expressing the hope that his suggestions to amend it further would be accommodated by the Treasury Bench. The bill was then introduced in the House.

When the State Minister for Information Md. Nurul Huda would to introduce the Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Services) (Amendment) Bill, 1991 Leader of the Opposition of Jamaat-e-Islami Matir Rahman Nizami raised objection against the introduction of the bill. Interests of journalists were involved with the bill, he said and called for withdrawal of the bill for a review after a dialogue with journalists.

Giving his view on the proposed amendment in the bill, the State Minister said it was no major amendment. He said the bill sought to extend time frame from one month to three months for the publication of the decision of Wage Board in the official gazette from the date of its (decision) receipt and examination by the government.

Huda said the ordinance providing the amendment in the existing Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Services) Act 1974 was necessitated as the decision of the Wage Board had come to the notice of the caretaker government only four days before the expiry of the one month's time.

The State Minister for Information, Md. Nurul Huda withdrew the bill for having discussion with the leaders of the journalists community amidst thumping of desks by the members.

The State Minister for Information Md Nurul Huda then introduced the Press Council (Amendment) Bill, 1991 in the House without encountering any objection.

Participating in the deliberations on the Eastern Railway Servants Group Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 1991 Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Barguna) urged the chair to elicit public opinion on the bill.

Fertiliser price not enhanced

By Staff Correspondent

The prices of chemical fertilizer were not increased at the government level during the last few years, Agriculture Minister told the House on Tuesday.

Replying to a question of Advocate Mostafizur Rahman (AL-Dinajpur), the Minister said the prices of seeds excepting those of wheat had not been increased. He told the House that the distribution of insecticides was still under the control of the government but the shallow machines were distributed at private level.

The Minister, however, said stocks of shallow machines with BADC were being sold at 30 per cent subsidy from February 18, 1991.

The Agriculture Minister informed the House that the government had no plan to reduce the prices by giving subsidy.

Raising a supplementary question, Mostafizur Rahman said the political parties which had launched anti-autocratic movement made commitment to the people that they would provide subsidy. He wanted to know whether the ruling party had shifted from that commitment.

The Minister said the government did not shift its stand from the commitment given to the people. He said providing subsidy only would not be enough for farmers. Rather, he said, the government had already exempted the farmers from paying agricultural loan upto Taka 5,000/- including interests on it.

Besides, the Minister said, the government had exempted them from paying land revenue.

Only 17 pc area of country under forest

By Staff Correspondent

Nearly 17 per cent area of the country is forest land. This amounts to 5.92 million acres of land which accounts for country's total forestry, Land and Forestry Minister Abdullah Al-Noman told the House on Tuesday.

Replying to a written question of Sheikh Harunur Rashid Miah (Khulna), the Minister said the Sunderbans is the largest forest in the country from where revenue amounting to Tk. 4,18,34,313/- was realised till March, 1991.

He said it was true that vacancies for some third and fourth class employees exist in the Sunderbans forest and the government was taking necessary steps to fill up those vacancies soon.

Replying to another question of Shaifuddin Ahmed, (Habiganj), the Minister said it was not true that there was widespread pilferage of forestry resources in the country.

He said occasionally there are reports of pilferage of wood from the forests.

The government has taken a number of steps to stop pilferage of forest resources. These include amendment of the forest law, of 1927 providing for more punishment to the violators of the law maximum penalty has been raised to seven years jail term and Taka 50,000/- as fines in place of six months jail term and a fine of Taka 500/- only.

The Minister said the minimum penalty in some cases has been fixed to six months in jail and a fine of Taka 5,000/-. Besides, important critical offences have been declared non-bailable.

The Forest Department, with the help of police, BDR and district administration, is confiscating the stolen trees. Special patrol parties and check-posts have been set up, the Minister said.

\$49.4 m spent for buying 3 ATP aircraft, JS told

About 49.4 million US dollars were spent for buying three ATP aircraft including spare parts, which were more than the market price, by the Ershad government, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Abdul Mannan told parliament on Tuesday, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Barguna), the Minister said the market price of an ATP aircraft was 10.5 million US dollars when then government had bought it at 14.50 million US dollars.

To a supplementary he said two ATP aircraft were pressed into service but were grounded later and added that one of the engines of an aircraft had been

sent to Canada to check whether it was faulty.

He told a questioner that the Biman authority had taken delivery of two ATP aircraft out of the three it had ordered to buy. He said no local or foreign agent was appointed by Biman for purchasing the aircraft.

Answering another question from Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim (AL-Gopalganj) the Minister said that so far four DC-10 aircraft had been bought for Bangladesh Biman. Out of four three DC-10 aircraft were bought in 1983 from Singapore Airlines Limited while the fourth aircraft was bought from the Macdonald Douglas Corporation of the United States in 1989, he added.

The Minister said each of the two DC-10 aircraft was bought at US dollars 2,30,00,000 (two crore and thirty lakh US dollars), the third one at US dollars 2,10,00,000 (two crore and ten lakh US dollar) and the fourth one at US dollars 6,71,84,871.04 (six crore seventyone lakh eightyfour thousand eight hundred and seventyone US dollar).

He said the price of the fourth DC-10 was comparatively high as it was a new aircraft and the price of the third DC-10 aircraft was less since it was negotiated and it was the last DC-10 aircraft that the Singapore Airlines had sold out to Biman.

Nazrul Islam

Principal M M Nazrul Islam (AL-Bhola) said there was a need for increasing the facilities of the Railway employees but he added the employees should also be more responsible in discharging their duties.

He said train accidents were taking place due to the negligence of a section of Railway employees, resulting in the death of many passengers. He also pleaded for eliciting public opinion on the bill.

Asaduzzaman

Taking the floor, Asaduzzaman (AL-Magura) described the plight of the Railway passengers and said they were also deprived of their due facilities. He said even at times, there remained no provision of compensation for the victims of the train accidents.

He called for increasing the facilities of the Railway passengers along with the enhancement of facilities of the Railway employees. He said eliciting public opinion was necessary as the facilities were raised with the money of the tax payers.

The House was then adjourned for Magreb prayer for 30 minutes.

Col Oli Ahmed strongly refuted the allegation made by an opposition member that he had reopened the Railway station near his home in Chittagong which was closed down earlier.

He said in fact the previous government had closed down a number of Railway stations causing inconvenience to the people and added a number of such stations had been reopened considering the interest of the people.

Col. Oli referred to a news item published in a daily newspaper owned by an opposition member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim where the Minister said it was wrongly mentioned that he went to the site of Railway accident in Chittagong after eight hours although he was present in the Chittagong city.

The Communications Minister said he was not in Chittagong at the time of accident and pointed out that two Ministers had immediately rushed to the place of accident.

He said the government had given Taka five thousands to each of the families of those killed in the accident and also arranged treatment for the injured.

The Minister said the BNP Government under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia would stop corruption at any cost and engage itself in the service of the people.

He said in the past, facilities for the officers were increased but not for the general employees.

Thereafter, the House passed the Eastern Railway Servants Group Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 1991 rejecting the amendments moved by the opposition for eliciting public opinion.

After the passage of the bill, the chair proposed before the House to make a change in the order of the day to facilitate discussion on the adjournment set for the day.



Hasina

Taking the floor, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina said the issue to be discussed on the adjournment motion was very serious in nature.

She said since the concerned minister was not present in the House, the discussion could be deferred till today (Wednesday).

The chair then sought the opinion of NDP Member Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury who had tabled the adjournment motion on the incident at Meherpur border in which four Bangladeshis including BDR jawans were killed in BSF firing.

Replying to the chair Chowdhury said there was no such provision in parliamentary practice that the motion could not be discussed in the absence of the concerned Minister.

Rising again the Leader of the Opposition said, she wanted the presence of the concerned Minister as the issue involved country's sovereignty and people's safety. The Deputy Leader of the House, Prof. A.Q.M. Badruddoza

Chowdhury said that the Leader of the House and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who is in charge of the concerned ministry, went to diarrhoea affected areas of the country and she had asked the Treasury Bench to take down notes on the discussion.

The House then took up the adjournment motion for discussion.

The Deputy Speaker then gave the floor to Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury to move his adjournment motion on the killing of four Bangladeshis including BDR personnel in BSF firing at Meherpur.

Chowdhury said BSF personnel had intruded into Bangladesh and killed four Bangladeshis including BDR personnel and damaged properties of the people on April 19.



Salam Talukdar

He said Secretary General of BNP Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar had already made a statement calling on the Indian authorities to stop recurrence of such incident and demanded adequate compensation. He also mentioned the statement of the Foreign Minister and the Foreign Secretary regarding the Indian intrusion into Bangladesh.

Chowdhury demanded of the government to take measures so that the national border could be defended and the sovereignty upheld.

He expressed his indignation at a news item in which the BDR through a press release had advised the government to take the issue at political level. He was critical of the statement of BDR Chief on Kazipur incident.

Thanking Sheikh Hasina for expressing her concern on the incident, Chowdhury said it was amply proved that there was no permanent friend or foe in politics.

He said Bangladesh had ratified the border agreement, signed in 1973 by the then Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through third amendment of the constitution. But, he said it was regrettable that India did not ratify the agreement till date.

Quoting Noon-Nehru agreement of 1958, Chowdhury said Berubari was given to the then East Pakistan on the basis of that agreement. He said under Mujib-Indira agreement, India had agreed to provide corridor to Angorpota and Dahagram in exchange of the Barubari.

Citing Indian intransigent attitude towards Bangladesh, the NDP leader said Indian security forces had violated border 259 times since 1975 and killed 72 Bangladeshis people.

Giving a breakup of Indian violations and killings of Bangladeshis in the current calendar year, Chowdhury said on March 21 four Bangladeshis were killed by Indian security forces at Chhagalnaya, one injured at Sirhagal on April 2, one kidnapped from Tetulia on April 13, two Bangladeshis including a BDR personnel were killed at Meherpur on April 15 and the last incident took place on April 19 at Kazipur under Meherpur.

Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury said India has a unique constitution in the world where there is a provision for annexation of other's state or states Goa, Daman, Diu and the Sikkim are the examples of such annexation, he said.

Expressing his anxiety at the rate of expansion of Indian defence might, the NDP Member from Chittagong said India had increased its defence budget from nine billion dollars to 13 billion dollars during last two years.

While quoting attitude of the Indian press on Bangladesh, Chowdhury said the Anandabazar Patrika in its news item on the results of recent election had said Bangladesh cannot live by antagonising India. It pleaded that the people of that country (Bangladesh) should demand merger with India. Quoting the statesman, he said the paper thought the defeat of Dr Kamil Hossain and Zohra Tasuddin as an anti-Indian feeling of the people in Bangladesh.

Chowdhury said in Bangladesh Islam is the state religion. But in the so-called secular India, the Muslims felt deprived and it was the feeling of the 83 per cent Indian Muslims.

Incomplete