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PHILIPS

AIDS-tainted blood in transfusions Three former French ministers including PM stand trial

PARIS, Feb 9: Former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius appeared before a French court today on the opening day of the trial of three ex-ministers linked to a scandal involving the use of AIDS-tainted blood in transfusions, reports AP.

The trial of Fabius, former Health Minister Edmond Hervé and former Social Affairs Minister Georgina Dufoix culminates the worst public health scandal in modern day France.

But it ran into hitches moments after getting underway, with numerous people who have been charged in a related case refusing to come forward as witnesses.

The three defendants sat studiously at small tables before the Court of Justice of the Republic, convening in a austere makeshift courtroom at the International Conference Center near the Arc de Triomphe.

1998 goes without success

PB draws up new list of 68 SOEs

By Rafiq Hassan

The Privatisation Board (PB) has revised the list of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) for privatisation as none of the 56 companies listed for 1998 could be sold off to private entrepreneurs.

The new list of 68 companies includes six from the textile sector, 17 from jute, 12 from food and sugar, 14 from steel and engineering, seven from chemical industries and four from forestry. The rest eight are from different other sectors.

The previous list entailed 15 companies from the textile sector, seven from jute, nine from steel and engineering, nine from sugar and food, 10 from chemical industries, four from the forestry and two from other sectors.

None of the listed companies could be privatised since the flag end of 1997, prompting the Board to revise the list. Another reason for the revision was that the government had later made some changes in its decision about some SOEs, according to the PB officials.

The last privatisation took place in late 1997 when the board formally handed over the Royal Textile Mills in Bandarban to a private company. Since then the board could not sell off any more, the officials said.

The names of nine textile mills were dropped from the list after the government decided to hand those over to the workers and employees of the mills, they added.

On the other hand, two enterprises-Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory (BMTF) in Gazipur and Khulna Shipyard in Khulna- which had earlier been in the list under steel and engineering sector, were handed over to the army and navy respectively.

Twenty-three new mills and factories have been included in the revised list for privatisation-- ten from the jute sector, three from sugar and food, two from steel and engineering, two from chemical industries and

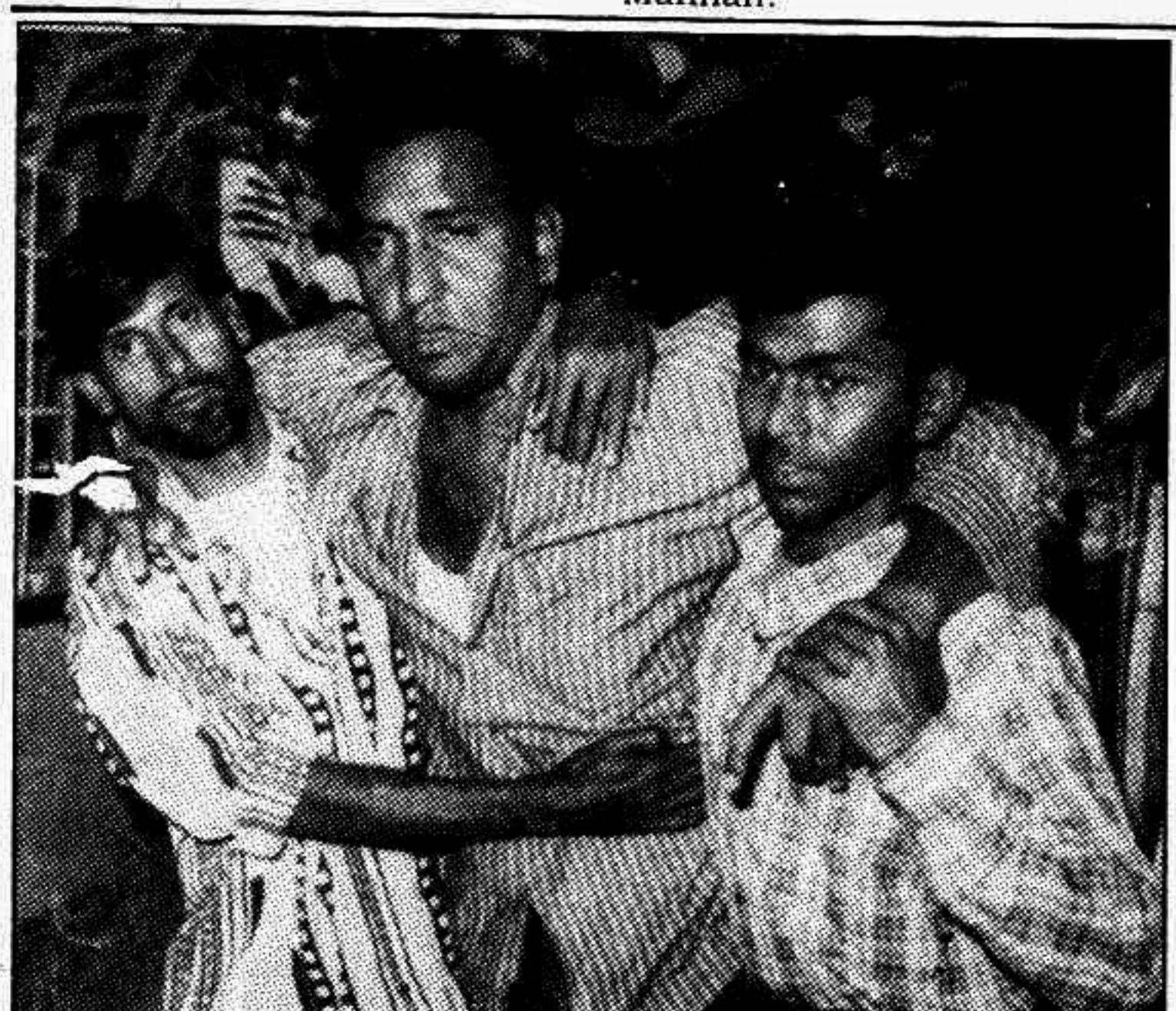
Makbul

From page 1

procession from the road besides Science Laboratory and BNP activists from both sides opened fire on police on Mirpur Road.

"Possibly, bullet struck Saif during the firing by BNP men on police," he added.

"BNP needed a body and they made it," Makbul said.



JCD president Habibunnabi Sohel being taken to hospital after bullet hit his leg during hartal hours in the city yesterday
—Star photo

Book fair

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of book enthusiasts went to visit the book fair yesterday evening. But they were disappointed finding the stalls closed.

"It is very painful that the Ekushey Book Fair has been halted due to hartal," said Lila, a student of Dhaka University, adding the fair should be spared from political programmes.

The authorities later took the initiative to open the fair as state minister for sports, youth and culture Obaidul Quader went to the Academy at about 5pm and asked them to open the fair, sources said.

The Academy authorities, at a press briefing in the evening, urged the political parties to keep the fair out of the purview of hartal.

Replies to a question, the Academy officials said that the fair could not be opened in time due to 'unavoidable reasons'.

Stalemate

From page 1

have any fresh dialogue with the opposition, while the latter remains determined to go ahead with its agitation campaign.

Amir Hossain Arnu, leader of the governing Awami League who was assigned to open dialogue with the BNP, admitted that there had been no communication with the opposition for the last couple of days. "We communicated to the BNP a few days back that we were ready to have a dialogue with them, but the party is yet to respond. Our door is still open."

The AL leader also told the Daily Star that municipal elections would be held according to the schedule announced earlier.

On the other hand, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters yesterday evening that the party had so far received 'no specific proposal' for a dialogue. He said that the opposition was determined to resist the ensuing polls.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has reiterated its decision to hold the municipal polls in accordance with the schedule announced earlier.

"We are going ahead with the preparation for holding the polls on 23-25 this month," Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena told The Daily Star last night. "I have already asked the government to make sure that adequate security measures are taken for the purpose."

Cairn

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basically an exploration company and therefore it wants to limit its activities to exploration only," said the official.

"Such deals are common all over the world," he added.

Due to global economic recession and a chronic slide in world oil prices, oil companies all over the world were undergoing reforms to reduce overhead costs. Cairn was also doing that. "There will be job cuts in Cairn's headquarters in Edinburgh," he pointed out.

The Cairn official noted that the decision would also lead to more autonomy for the local office of Cairn.

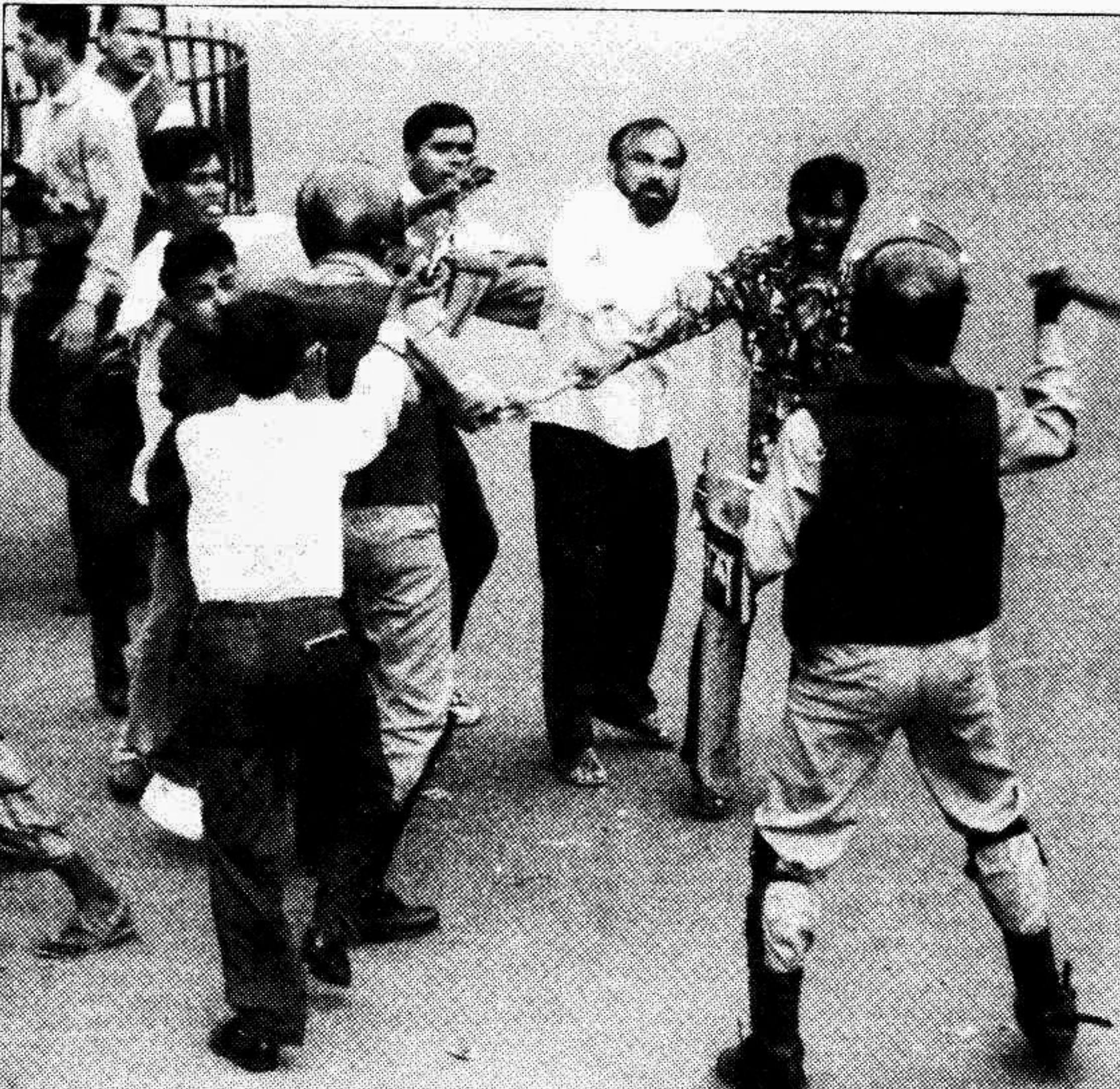
"We think, for Bangladesh, this deal would be beneficial. Shell will play a much better role than Cairn in investment in the oil and gas sector," he said.

Cairn's local Adviser, MR Islam, said the real reason for transfer was Shell's greater expertise in the energy sector and Cairn's switching on to exploration activities only.

Cairn signed two PSCs with Petrobangla for blocks 16 and 15 in May 1994 and early 1995 respectively. It discovered the Sangu gas field in early 1996 and started supplying Sangu gas from mid-1997.

Under these PSCs, Cairn had agreed to invest in Bangladesh over a 25-year period in a series of conditional short phases.

Petrobangla sources pointed out Cairn's deal with Shell over full transfer of operatorship was done without any government approval or knowledge and the British company was yet to inform anything about the deal officially.



No respect shown to member of parliament

Supporters try to protect their leader as policemen come charging towards BNP city chief Sadek Hossain Khoka near the Purana Paltan police box during hartal hours yesterday.

— Star photo by Amran Hossain

Hartal: One killed, 200 hurt

From page 1

riots head injuries after a bomb exploded and blew away one of his ears at Rai Shaheb Bazar crossing at 8:30 a.m.

Seventeen people were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, mostly with bomb injuries they sustained in different city areas during the hartal.

BNP leaders alleged that police used batons even on women activists of the party who had taken shelter in an under-construction building.

At Bijoynagar, police boxed in the BNP activists led Major (rttd) Abdul Hafiz MP at one stage. But no untoward incident took place as the activists retreated.

Purana Paltan reverberated again with opposition activists demonstrating denouncing death of Sajal. Former home minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury and Khoka led them. But they moved away without a clash.

In another incident at Rai

Jamaat leader in a procession.

JCD president Habibunnabi Sohel was injured with rubber bullet, JCD leaders said.

BNP leaders alleged that police used batons even on women activists of the party who had taken shelter in an under-construction building.

Some 15 people also suffered injuries in the area earlier in the morning.

Police and witnesses reported sporadic incidents of violence, clashes, chases and counter-chases between pro- and anti-hartal activists in the city late in the evening.

As people were hurrying home along deserted streets, many of which were without lights. By 7:30pm, an eerie silence descended on many parts of the city, with only policemen guarding the street corners and the homeless preparing for the night.

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Jamaat Bazar, police constable Tajuddin suffered critical injuries when he was hit by a homemade bomb hurled by pro-hartal activists from a rooftop. Doctors at CMH said he was in a critical condition.

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As people were hurrying home along deserted streets, many of which were without lights. By 7:30pm, an eerie silence descended on many parts of the city, with only policemen guarding the street corners and the homeless preparing for the night.

Police kept the two sides at bay for sometime, with Khoka stubbornly refusing to go away from the Paltan crossing, squatting there with his supporters despite push and pull from policemen.

Tension mounted again when BNP supporters tried to gather around their leader. But unidentified elements from an under-construction market nearby hurled several bombs at the BNP pickets as dusk fell. Some people were seen being hurried away in an ambulance.

Khoka, his shirt stained with blood from a head injury of supporter who tried to protect his leader, still refused to move and stayed back at the Paltan crossing until evening.

Desperate police officials urged Khoka to move away as evening approached, fearing more trouble. He left the area eventually, but trouble broke out soon when his supporters were involved in another clash with police at Bijoynagar where an auto-rickshaw and two rickshaws were torched.

Police fired plastic bullets and used batons. A number of people were injured there including a press photographer, Masud Parvez Anis of Bhoror Kagoj, who received pellets from rubber bullet as police came charging through the dark streets and alleys.

Earlier in the noon, opposition activists, Awami League supporters and police fought running battles at beehive-like alleys in the Paltan area.

The first sparks of trouble flared up when a Jatiya Party procession was marching down the Paltan crossing.

Describing such attacks in the city, in Narayanganj, Chittagong, Jamalpur and Joypurhat, Bhuiyan said, "the hartal was by large peaceful in other parts of the country."

"More than 100 opposition workers were injured during

yesterday's hartal," he told a questioner.

Referring to the February 23-25 municipal polls, the BNP leader claimed the authorities had accepted all nominations without any scrutiny after opposition parties, representing 70 to 75 per cent of the votes, had boycotted them.

The opposition candidates did not file nominations for any major municipalities, he said. "This is going to be a farcical election and we demand cancellation of its present schedule."

Jatiya Party president Kazi Firoz Rashid blamed the government for pushing the country towards a civil war. He claimed that the prime minister had declared award for occupying the streets during hartal.

Jamaat leader Quamruzzaman alleged the government was resorting to repression to cling to power. "It will be counter-productive for the government."

A R M Matin of IOJ city BNP convener Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP and Saifur Rahman of JP also spoke on the occasion.

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