

Hartal clashes leave

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attacked 14-party leaders and workers when they tried to bring out processions in Mohakhali, Paltan, Sadarghat, Russell Square, Noor Hossain Square and Mirpur areas, Witnesses said.

A procession of Jubo Mahila League (JML) came under police action as it tried to move on despite the police barricade at Paltan intersection. At least eight workers were injured there and 10 were picked up by police.

The JML again tried to bring out a procession in Baitul Mukarram mosque area but police chased them away. Police also forced a JML bid to bring out a procession near the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) office and arrested three workers.

Police intercepted an AL procession at Paltan intersection at about 6:30am. The participants then sang patriotic songs protesting the police barricade. Motia Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Obaidul Quader, Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Mirza Azam were present there.

Later, police allowed the procession to go to Noor Hossain Square where they held a rally supporting the hartal.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil later joined the rally. Jalil, also coordinator of the 14-party combine, reiterated the demands for which the shutdown was enforced.

Other leaders including Tofail Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury, Hasanul Haque Inu, Obaidul Quader, Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, and Asaduzzaman Noor also spoke.

Jubo Mahila League Lalbagh thana unit President Asma fainted as a brickbat hit her. She was rushed to Samarita Hospital and then shifted to a trauma centre at Mohammadpur.

At about 10:30am, AL Parliamentary Party and different front organisations of the party brought out a joint procession and held a rally at Russel Square. Chaired by Mohammad Nasim, the rally was addressed by Abdur Razzak, Abdul Mannan, Abdus Shaheed, Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan, Dr Abdur Razzak, Prof Abu Sayeed and Dr Hasan Mahmud, among others.

They blasted the government for continued price hike of essentials, electricity, diesel and fuel, and killing of farmers at Kansat in Chapainawabganj recently.

Police dispersed an AL procession led by former AL lawmaker Rahmatullah at about 8:00am. Four BCL leaders of Titumir College unit were injured there.

Witnesses said police and pickets clashed in Mirpur section -10 at about 9:00am. At least 20 AL leaders and workers, including Kamal Ahmed Majumdar and Shahida Tareque Dipti were injured. Police picked up seven workers from the spot.

Three AL leaders were detained in Mirpur Section-1 in the morning.

At least five people were injured as police charged batons on an AL procession led by Asaduzzaman Noor at Dainik Bangla intersection. Police charged batons and detained at least 10 JSD leaders and workers from a party procession near its central office.

Besides, policepicket clash in

SaarcFinance

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newsmen after presiding over the concluding session of the daylong symposium.

He suggested bringing the large non-government microcredit organisations under a regulatory framework and allowing them to operate as banks to help reduce the interest rates.

Wahiduddin said in India specialised banks operate the microcredit programmes, while in Sri Lanka and Nepal public institutions run most of them. Resource wastage and low rate of loan recovery are two major weaknesses of the microcredit programmes of these countries, he explained.

In his inaugural speech as the chief guest of the conference, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman expressed 'discomfort' at the 'high interest rates' charged by the free-wheeling microcredit operators in the country. He emphasised introducing a regulatory framework considering the increasing microcredit operations in the region.

The current level of microcredits will not help reduce poverty, Saifur said, adding the quantum would have to be increased if "we have to make an impact on poverty reduction".

SaarcFinance, a forum of the central bank governors of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation member countries, organised the event at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. The governors and top executives of the Saarc central banks participating in the brain-storming exchanged views and discussed ways to take microcredit programmes another step forward.

In his keynote speech at the inaugural session, Grameen Bank Managing Director Prof Muhammad Yunus argued that the poor remain poor not because of any fault of their own but "because we have designed institutions and policies that keep them poor".

"No matter how hard they try or how hard they work, they remain trapped in poverty because of these institutions and policies," he maintained.

Referring to a Grameen Bank programme, Yunus said even beggars get special attention from the bank, which runs a campaign to persuade them to join the programme.

Reserve Bank of India Executive Director Das Vishwavar Saran said India is committed to the philosophy of financial inclusion of the poor and the disadvantaged. In the fast-

Sadarghat area left at least five people injured. Police action on an AL procession at Hazaribagh injured three.

Moreover, at least five BCL leaders including Hemayet Hossain, Abdul Alim and Delwar were wounded in police-picket clash at Sahabagh intersection and Jagannath University (JU) unit BCL President Qamrul Hasan Ripon and nine others were injured in such a clash on tye campus.

About 8,000 law enforcers were deployed at different points in the capital to maintain law and order during the hartal hours.

In Narayanganj, District AL Convenor SM Akram, town unit AL President Anwar Hossain and eight others were injured during chase and counter-chase between 14-party leaders and activists, and police, our correspondent reports.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY
Our Sirajganj correspondent reports: At least 17 hartal supporters were injured in a clash between supporters of the AL and the BNP at Meghabazar in Kaziur upazila.

Of them, four with critical injuries were rushed to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital and others were admitted to Kaziur Health Complex.

Police took to baton charge to bring the situation under control.

AL activists ransacked three shops and damaged six buses at Hatikumrul of Solonga.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: More than 25 people, including five cops, were injured in a clash between hartal supporters and police at Bonarpara.

Police picked up six pickets and filed a case against 22.

Russia

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"I don't see anything extraordinary in this delay," Moshkalo said. "There was a lot of fuss about nothing."

In Moscow, Russia's Foreign Ministry said it could not immediately confirm the date for the talks.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, in Vienna for talks with senior EU officials, reiterated Moscow's opposition to sanctions against Iran, saying Wednesday that he did not believe that "in the case of Iran sanctions will achieve something," Interfax reported.

A leading Russian lawmaker, Konstantin Kosachev, warned Tuesday that time was running out for Iran to respond to the offer, which is meant to establish international oversight of Iran's nuclear fuel production and ensure it can't be misused to make weapons.

Sergei Kiriyenko, head of Russia's Atomic Energy Agency, will travel to Iran next week to visit the Bushehr nuclear power plant Russia is building, Interfax reported, citing his office.

Last year, Iran and Russia signed a nuclear fuel agreement that paved the way for the 1,000-megawatt power plant to go online by mid-2006. The contract is valued at more than \$800 million.

Russia, a traditional ally of Iran, backed referral to the U.N. Security Council only on condition that the council take up the issue no earlier than March, and it opposed the U.S. push for international sanctions against Iran.

changing socio-economic scenario, care is being taken to shape policies and adopt options based on continuous learning and feedback, which is critical to equitable development, he noted.

State Bank of Pakistan Deputy Governor Tawfiq A Husain said the sector faces many challenges ahead. The fact is, even in a conducive policy environment, the outreach remains low, he noted.

He said there is still a need for the existing retail microfinance institutions, both regulated and self-regulated, to rigorously work for capacity building.

"They have to improve efficiency and utilise better management information systems, which can help them increase the outreach and quality of service, Husain said, adding they also need to innovate poor-poor financial products to address the needs of the target population.

Nepal Rastra Bank Deputy Governor Bir Bikram Rayamajhi said poor governance and management are two major issues of concern in most of the microfinance institutions.

"They lack professionalism in their approaches. Most of their boards or executive committees comprise family members and relatives, and they are not clearly aware of their roles and responsibilities," Rayamajhi said, adding the chief executive officers formulate all policies and guidelines alone, using the committees or the boards as mere rubber stamps.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed said the specialised banks and nationalised commercial banks in Bangladesh with large branch networks have lent extensively even in rural areas, but yet a sizeable number of the poor do not have access to their services.

"The microfinance industry in Bangladesh has the potential of further expansion by increasing the outreach, by expanding areas of services and types of products. Time has come for scaling up the microfinance into micro and small enterprises," he added.

Salehuddin said he expects that in future a new law for the semifinancial microfinance sector will change the scenario of rural financial market in Bangladesh.

Maid found dead in bathroom

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a teenage domestic help was recovered from the Cantonment house of a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) official on Tuesday night while aggrieved family members of the deceased, right activists and locals termed the incident as a 'murder after violation'.

Agitated people yesterday demonstrated in front of the Rab official's house protesting the girl's death.

The dead, Rehana Akhtar, 15, daughter of boatman Hossain Miah of Sancharampur upazila in Brahmanbaria had been working at the house of Rab Captain Jaimul Abedin for the last eight months.

"Failing to get her [Rehana] response, we broke into the toilet and found her hanging with her scarf from the shower on Tuesday evening," her employer told police.

She was rushed to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) where doctors declared her dead, said police. Rehana's elder sister Jahanara Akhtar alleged that Rehana was raped and murdered.

Police inquest report said the body had bruises in the neck, and reddish marks on the jaw, right elbow and back.

Captain Jainul, however, denied the allegations against his family saying that the girl committed suicide in any time of Tuesday in the bathroom of his house. "We did our best to save the girl after finding her in the toilet and rushed her to the CMH," the captain told The Daily Star over phone last evening.

"We do not know anything about the reason behind her committing suicide," he said.

Some Rab members also held Rehana's cousin Mamun from Bhasantek slum Tuesday night and released him later, said Jahanara Akhtar.

Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. Morgue authorities have sent her limbs for viscera report.

Bangladesh Mohila Parishad city unit will hold protest programme at Bhasantek Bazar today afternoon.

Dhaka-Islamabad

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Pakistani government also agreed to increase scholarships for Bangladesh students from 75 to 100 annually for higher studies in Pakistan.

Asked about the possibility of signing bilateral FTA with India, he said Bangladesh will sign such a deal with any country wherever the country's business interests will be protected.

The foreign minister said both the countries have agreed to take necessary steps to expand the bilateral trade to one \$ 1 billion in next two to three years.

About fighting terrorism, the foreign minister said the leaders of both the countries have agreed not to allow the rise of militancy in the name of Islam and also to face the vile campaign against Islam, a religion of peace and tolerance. The two sides agreed to strengthen OIC to achieve this end.

On Saarc, Morshed said the two sides agreed to implement the decisions so far taken by the Saarc leaders. He mentioned that the standing committee comprising foreign secretaries of the member states will meet in Dhaka in April to make recommendations on how to strengthen the Saarc secretariat and evolve modalities to raise fund for implementation of the Saarc projects.

The Saarc foreign ministers will sit for an interim meeting to take decision on the recommendations of the standing committee.

Terming the prime minister's visit fruitful, the foreign minister said the two sides had constructive and productive discussions that would help strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in every field.

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin and senior officials of the foreign ministry were present at the briefing.

ADP

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extension of BDR Hospital are ready for approval.

Criticising the delay in procurement process in his ministry, the state minister directed the officials concerned to quicken the process to attain the goal by the end of the current FY.

He instructed immediate completion of procurement process of different instruments, machinery, police vehicles, speedboats and ships.

Babar came down heavily on the PWD officials for their non-cooperative attitude to implement the ADP projects in due time and causing excessive expenditure.

The prison officials told the minister that the PWD demanded Tk 66 lakh for repair works of a Dhaka Central Jail wall, which should not require more than Tk 5 to 7 lakh.

They also alleged that the PWD officials were not working in compliance with the priority set by the department concerned.

Babar told the PWD officials to stop the 'unacceptable practice'.

PM

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leader of the House does not attend the House regularly. This parliament has no deputy leader who can act in her absence," Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina told a briefing on Tuesday, after a walkout.

SITTING TO CONTINUE
The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of parliament sits today to take a decision about extension of the current session. As per the previous decision of the BAC, the House is scheduled to be prorogued today.

The treasury bench had requested the speaker to call the BAC meeting as the main opposition party returned to the House ending their 17-month boycott and demanded extension of the session's duration.

Diesel price increase

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addition to the diesel's scarcity and high price that left the fuel-run pumps inoperative, the farmers could neither run the electric pumps due to an acute shortage of power supply.

Against a required 450MW for 18 northern districts, a record low of 136MW electricity was available on Tuesday while the daily average supply remains as low as 225MW. This has forced many boro-growers in these districts to convert their power-run pumps into diesel-run ones, bearing the extra cost of high diesel price.

Meanwhile, things have gone worse at field levels in different northern districts.

Our Rajshahi correspondent reported of alleged smuggling of diesel in the bordering districts. Boats loaded with a large number of 500-litre drums of diesel were seen sailing across the Padma towards India on Tuesday night. Although traders said those were for cultivation on the shoals, sources claimed that the number of oil-filled drums is thrice higher than the local demand.

Corruption also deepened centring the makeshift fuel depot at Kazhat in Paba, sources alleged.

Our Bogra correspondent reported that some dealers obtained diesel from the government depot at Tk 5,836 per barrel and sold at black market at Tk 6,836.

Demanding adequate fuel supply, several hundred farmers in Thakurgaon laid siege to eight fuel stations on Tuesday night, reports our correspondent in Dinajpur.

"We are ready to pay the additional price but ensure us adequate fuel to maintain smooth irrigation," pleaded farmer Kamal of Biral upazila in Dinajpur.

The acute shortage of power supply has meantime increased the daily demand of diesel to irrigate boro fields in greater Dinajpur from 2,000 litres to 2,700 litres.

Farmers in Bogra and Naogaon districts, already in trouble due to low power supply, are fearing further cut in power supply as the government decided to host the two Bangladesh-Sri Lanka one-day cricket matches on

February 19 and 20 at the Bogra stadium under floodlights.

Superintendent Engineer of Barind Development Authority Khalequzzaman feared that four lakh hectares of land would remain out of cultivation in the northern region because of the diesel and power crises.

One-third boro crops on over 10.5 lakh hectare land might be damaged as farmers failed to irrigate the fields, he told our Rajshahi reporter yesterday. Nearly 700 deep tube wells also went out of order due to voltage fluctuation, he said.

The diesel was selling at around Tk 40 at the outskirts of Rajshahi city and in all its nine upazilas yesterday. Rafiqul, a farmer of Paba upazila, said he bought diesel at Tk 38 from a petrol pump in Nawhata.

Pump official Mizan said they were charging higher as they had to spend higher to collect the fuel from the depots.

After withdrawing the price hike decision, Energy Adviser Mahmud Rahman yesterday expressed annoyance for not maintaining proper navigability of the rivers that hampered the smooth supply from Baghabari. Had the navigability been maintained, the question of additional transport cost would not come, he said.

Meanwhile, the problem of fertiliser distribution also added to the farmers' worry in some areas. Our Jessore correspondent reports: Several hundred farmers from different villages under Isali union in Jessore sadar upazila yesterday confined Union Chairman Motaleb Biswas for an hour demanding fertiliser.

The district administration and Jessore district General Secretary of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association Zahid Hasan Tukun rushed to the spot with police and brought the situation under control. They freed the chairman and assured the farmers of smooth supply of fertiliser.

Govt firm to maintain

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no scope for backtracking on this responsibility," she told the function, first of its kind in Bangladesh.

The prime minister urged country's religious leaders to play an ever-vigilant role in maintaining communal harmony in the country, saying that the government will remain beside them in any noble endeavour.

She hoped that the Council for Interfaith Harmony would soon become a platform for all religious communities of Bangladesh. "Please use this organisation as an excellent opportunity for knowing and understanding yourselves and for coming closer to each other," she noted.

The function began with recitation from holy books of four major religions: the Quran, the Geeta, the Tripitak and the Bible--with their translations.

CIH, BD has formed its national committee while its district and upazila committees will also be formed in the future, it was informed. The forum was formed aiming to maintain communal harmony and peace among people of all faiths in Bangladesh.

Ministers, MPs, diplomats, followers of four major religions: Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism from various parts of the country and distinguished personalities were present at the function.

Expressing satisfaction for holding such union and conference, the religious leaders of the four faiths in their deliberations called for maintaining peace and harmony, ensuring welfare of people belonging to all castes and creeds.

Rejecting false propaganda abroad by vested quarters against

communal harmony, they unanimously said communal harmony is prevailing in Bangladesh with people of all faiths living together peacefully as well as performing their respective religious rituals and festivals.

Chaired by CIH, BD Chairman Shah Abdul Hannan. State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharref Hossain Shajahan, Khatib of Baitul Mokarram National Mosque Maulana Obaidul Huq, Sangharaj Dharma Sen Mohathore, Kantiobandhu Brammachari, Arch Bishop Paulaninus Costa, Sudhananada Mohathore, president of Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prochar Sangha, presidium members of CIH, BD Prof Paresh Chandra Mandal, Prof Sukomal Barua, Dr Tapan De Rojario and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad also spoke at the function.

Power crisis

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crisis in the ongoing season of boro that needs irrigation.

The BNP lawmaker in his notice said the government should take immediate steps to avert any further violence and protests against power shortage in the area, otherwise the authorities concerned will be responsible for any untoward incident.

The district needs at least 60 MW of power per day while the supply is only 15-20 MW. Manzur said adding that the deputy commissioner has already sent a letter to the power secretary demanding an increase in the supply.

Near HIV epidemic

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needles and a decline in condom use in sexual encounters between the IDUs and female sex workers as well as when males have sex with males.

Apart from the IDUs, the survey found heroin addicts, female and male sex workers, Hijras (hermaphrodites), transport and port workers, and poor day labourers as most exposed to HIV infection.

The increasing number of female IDUs is also a disturbing fact, as it heightens the risk of spread of HIV, the reports says.

A recent Rapid Situation Assessment (RSA) survey of CARE Bangladesh also found the situation becoming gradually critical due to rising HIV prevalence among the vulnerable groups like the IDUs.

Besides needle sharing, the IDUs in most cases also sell blood to raise money to feed their addiction, posing another threat of spreading HIV. According to the sixth surveillance, approximately 82 percent IDUs shared needles in the previous six months.

While passing by the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, it is common to see a number of ashen skinned, unhealthy people in tattered dirty rags sitting around in scattered groups sharing a syringe or two to get their daily 'fix'. This correspondent somehow managed to talk to some of these people, who admitted to sharing needles now and then for taking drugs.

"Most of the time, we use separate syringes provided by NGO workers. But, we also use the same syringe sometimes," said Islam. He also admitted to selling blood in the past to get money for drugs but said he gave up the practice.

Islam said sometimes they use a large syringe to inject drug very quickly to avoid police hassles. He however refused to tell from where they collect the stuffs.

Since the first case of HIV infection detected in 1989, only 465 cases

US-INDIA AGREEMENT

New Delhi allowed to expand nuclear arms

REUTERS, Washington

A landmark new US-India nuclear agreement would enable New Delhi to expand atomic weapons production and encourage Pakistan and China to do likewise, according to critics of the controversial deal.

In analyses to be made public on Wednesday, non-proliferation experts expressed grave concerns about a proposed "separation" plan that would open India's civil nuclear facilities to UN inspections, while permitting military facilities to remain off-limits.

The plan is central to whether the US-India nuclear deal, agreed last July, goes forward. US business leaders say the deal could open the door to billions of dollars in non-nuclear and civilian nuclear-related contracts while government officials say the agreement commits India to play a larger role in halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

But the two governments are at odds over details, and it is unclear if they can reach agreement before President George W. Bush visits New Delhi in early March.

But even if the Bush administration deemed the plan credible and all civilian facilities were placed under permanent international monitoring, the sale of US and other foreign fuel to India "would still free-up India's existing capacity to produce plutonium and highly enriched uranium for weapons and allow for the rapid expansion of India's nuclear arsenal," the

Govt decides

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He stressed the need for considering the socio-economic aspects in preparing audit reports. "If I prepare a report overlooking the socio-economic condition of the country, it will not serve any purpose."

The finance minister said that only the cases involving substantial amount of money should be put forward to the finance minister and the prime minister.

"We've asked the auditors and departments or ministries concerned to settle the minor objections on their own," he said.

Saifur informed that the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has already started scrutinising the objections to categorise them as minor and major.

Hasina

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commissioner for rigging vote in the next elections.

"We want to make Bangladesh a non-communal, democratic, hunger-free, developed and safe country... for this, we have to remove the corrupt government, as it came to power through conspiracy and vote rigging," she said.

The opposition leader alleged that the number of Islamist militants has risen alarmingly in the country after the BNP formed the government with the anti-liberation Jamaat-e-Islami.

These militants turned Bangladesh into a terrorist state by grenade and bomb attacks, he said.

The former prime minister vowed to restore democracy, rule of law and human rights in the country "forcing the coalition government to resign by mass movement."

She condemned "unprovoked police attack" on peaceful processions brought out by AL activists during hartal hours at Dhaka University, Mirpur, Paltan and Russel Square.

Hasina demanded immediate and unconditional release of those arrested during the hartal and withdrawal of the 'false cases' filed against them.

Diesel supply

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this year, the BPC could not maintain the continuity of import.

Burdened with hundreds of crores taka loss, the BPC has been facing difficulties in securing large finances to import oil for the last few years. It had to rely heavily on loans from the NCBs.

Since November last year, the BPC could not even avail loans from the NCBs as its outstanding credits neared Tk 8,000 crores with the Sonali and Janata banks.

These banks asked the BPC to pay back first before taking new loans. Besides, the banks said they could not provide the BPC with enough dollars because of a short supply.

The only way to get a few hundred million dollars as loan was to ask the Bangladesh Bank for help. But the central bank turned down the request fearing that such release would destabilise the foreign currency reserve.

At this stage, two foreign banks -- the Standard Chartered and the HSBC -- have offered the BPC a loan of \$500 million at commercial interest rate. The prime minister has recently approved the \$250-million loan proposal from the Standard Chartered Bank, sources said.

Moreover, the NCBs last week also agreed to provide the BPC with some loans due to the prime minister's recent intervention.

"This should have happened long ago. Then there would not have been any uncertainty or crisis about the oil supplies," a BPC source commented.

experts said in a memo to the US Congress obtained by Reuters.

"A sober analysis reveals the non-proliferation benefits of the original proposal are overstated and the damage to the non-proliferation regime is potentially high," said the memo, prepared by Daryl Kimball of the Arms Control Association and five others.

For 30 years, the United States led the effort to deny India nuclear technology because it tested and developed nuclear weapons in contravention of international norms. Both India and its neighbor and nuclear-armed rival Pakistan have refused to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

But Bush now views India, a rising democratic and economic power on China's border, as an evolving US ally and the new

nuclear deal -- allowing India to purchase nuclear reactors and fuel -- is central to that vision.

Kimball told Reuters on Tuesday he believed the deal may "fall apart" over the separation plan because India wants to exclude a large number of civilian facilities and spent fuel from international inspections.

The plan aims to ensure US nuclear technology is never used for military purposes and in theory would make civilian facilities less susceptible to proliferation.

But if India buys US and other foreign nuclear fuel and continues to expand its nuclear arsenal, this would force Pakistan to increase its arsenal and encourage China to continue modernizing, Kimball said.

Hawa Bhaban

FROM PAGE 1
Kamal and Sheikh Moni.

"The Hawa Bhaban men are not involved in bank robbery, as Sheikh Kamal and Sheikh Moni did," Pintu said in retaliation to an accusation frequently made by the main opposition against the Hawa Bhaban men.

Amid noisy protests rising from the opposition bench, Pintu also wondered how the AL general secretary has become the owner of a private bank and also pointed out that AL lawmaker Mirza Azam is a close relative of the most wanted militant kingpin Shaekh Abdur Rahman.

Former home minister Mohammad Nasim of the AL then took the floor and said, "Those whom Nasir Uddin Pintu has accused were brutally murdered in 1975 and their [BNP politicians] leader Zia was directly involved in the killing."

At Nasim's statement, the BNP lawmakers burst into protests, drowning the House under an utter cacophony.

At the fat end of the war of words, BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said it is known to all that it was Ziaur Rahman who proclaimed the country's independence.

"Awami League will not loose anything if it accepts the truth," he said.

Countering the opposition's criticism of the then chief of army staff Ziaur Rahman for grabbing power, Mannan Bhuiyan said, "Ziaur Rahman had no intention to grab power. He came to power through a revolution of the people and the soldiers."

Hitting back at another attack by the main opposition terming the February 1996 parliamentary elections controversial, the minister said the elections were aimed at amending the constitution for introducing the caretaker government system.

Taking part in the debate twice, opposition leader Sheikh Hasina said, "Ziaur Rahman had involvement in the Bangabandhu killing and was a beneficiary of it." Following the killing, Zia took power at gunpoint proclaiming martial law and awarded indemnity as well as jobs at