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Bangla Academy Book Fair begins today
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NEWS BRIEFS

JS adjourned till Sunday

The House was adjourned at 10 pm Thursday to meet again at 3 pm Sunday, reports BSS.

Ayubur Rahman made Cabinet Secy

Mohammad Ayubur Rahman, Secretary, Election Commission Secretariat, has been appointed Cabinet Secretary, an official announcement said Thursday, reports BSS.

Trawler workers go on strike from today

About 2,000 deepsea fishing trawler workers will begin an indefinite strike today demanding enhanced wages, their union sources said. Deepsea Fishing Trawler Workers Union has called for the strike to press home its 10-point demand which includes 50 per cent rise in wages and enhancement of on board allowance from Tk 800 to Tk 1,500. It also demands free medical treatment, and increase of risk allowance from Tk 20 to 50, export bonus from Tk 65 to 200 per ton and non-exportable fish bonus from Tk 15 to 60 per ton, reports UNB.

Tongri rly signal system restored

The automatic signalling system of Tongri railway station damaged seriously by an unruly mob on January 20 was restored on Thursday, reports BSS.

Govt ready to allow investment of black money in industries

The government would provide "all sorts of facilities" to those who would invest 'black money' in setting up industries, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury said Thursday, reports BSS.

The Minister was speaking at an open discussion with the representatives of different chambers of commerce and industries held at the Chamber Building in the capital.

Allegation by the market associations that prices of some local products had been increased with the effectiveness of countrywide anti-smuggling drive was the subject of the discussion.

Chowdhury said many people were investing crores of Taka in smuggling and added that reinvestment of the money in setting up industries would help speedy industrialisation of the country. He urged the black money holders to come forward with proposals for setting up industries and said the government would give permission and provide facilities in this regard.

Presided over by the President of Bangladesh Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) Akram Hossain the meeting was also attended by Abdul Mannan Talukder MP, M. Akbar Ali MP, Home Secretary Lutfulahil Majid, National Board of Revenue

Chairman (NBR) Nurul Hossain Khan, Inspector General of Police Enamul Haq, high officials of the ministers of Finance and Industries and the Managing Director of Shilpa Bank.

Referring to the government's intention for speedy industrialisation of the country the Home Minister said about 300 textile mills were needed to set up to meet the requirements of the garment industries and all these industries would be in the private sector. He said at present fabrics worth Taka 2000 crore are imported annually for the garment sector alone.

Reiterating government's commitment to establish rule of law at any cost Chowdhury suggested recasting the existing labour laws after consultation with the workers and the employers to bring discipline in the mills and factories as well as in the financial institutions.

He lauded the cooperation of the members of the business community in making the anti-smuggling drive a success and urged them to be careful so that this was not lost due to price increase by some greedy people to make money overnight. He urged them to be careful, especially during the month of Ramzan so that the prices do not affect the consumers.

Responding to the suggestions of the chamber representatives the Minister said discussion would be made with the concerned ministries to ensure proper standard of the home products and stop adulteration of foods.

He said measures would also be taken to improve law and order situation in the shrimp cultivation area to ensure steady production.

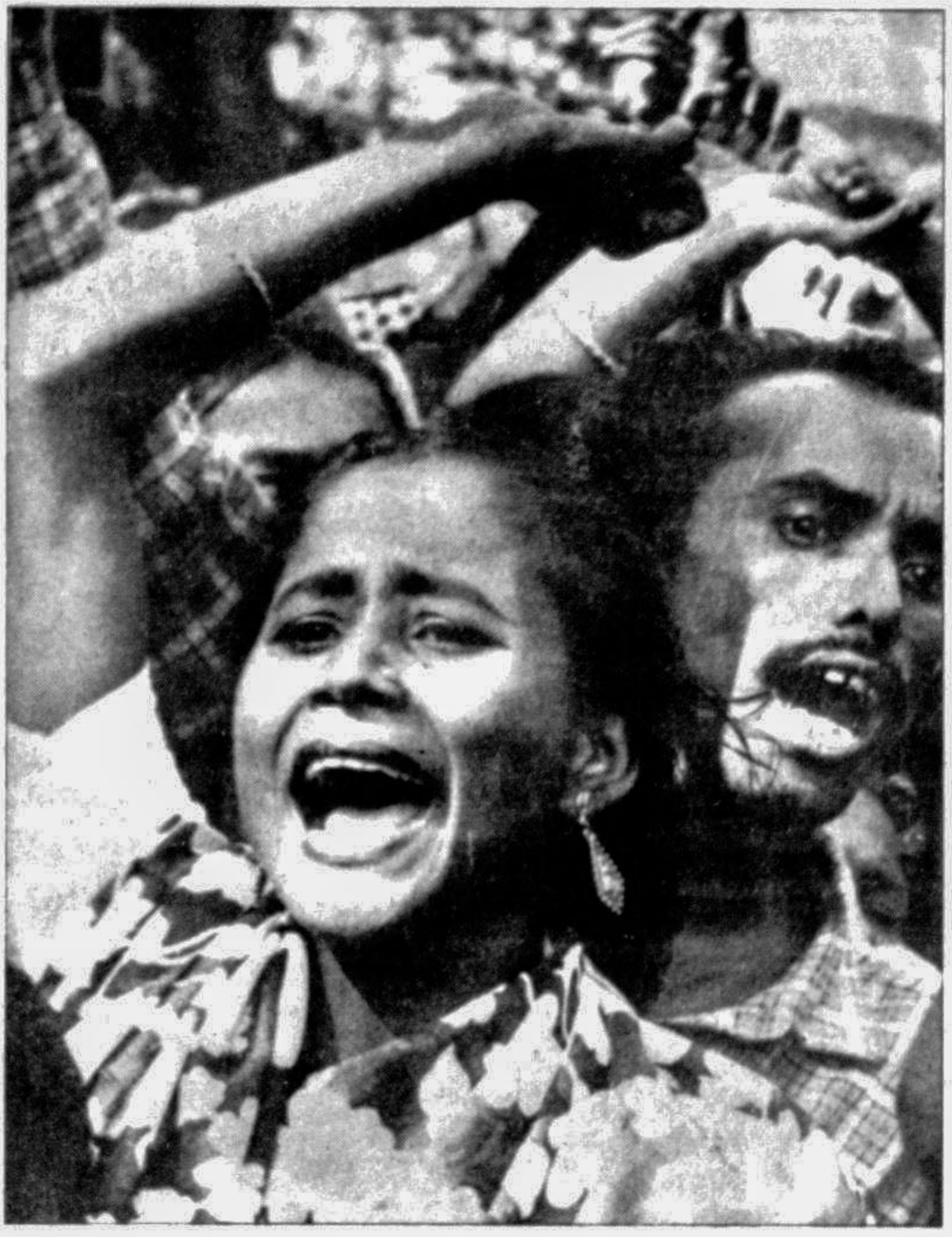
Some of the chamber representatives suggested stopping technical smuggling through under invoice, over invoice and wrong declaration. The Minister sought their co-operation in stopping such smuggling.

A chamber member said that labour problem was a big impediment in industrial investment and was influenced by the groups like politicians, journalists and the teachers. He alleged that these influential groups were not talking about increase of production in the mills and factories.

Some of the members observed that price increase in some items was not an alarming sign. They said market competition with more production would bring down the price.

Former FBCCI President MA Wahab said black money could come for investment in priority industrial sectors if the

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Retrenched garments workers demonstrating in the city yesterday for reinstatement. — Photo Mohsin

UP polls end: 15 killed, 2000 hurt

At least 15 people were killed and as many as 2,000 injured during the 16-day staggering polls for the country's 3,899 union parishads which concluded yesterday, reports UNB.

The polls began on January 22 and had two days recess on Fridays.

The hustings, marred by scattered violence here and there, also saw the abduction of two chairman candidates in Chittagong Hills Tracts by outlawed Shantibahini members.

A total of 17,444 candidates contested for 3,899 posts of chairman while 1,06, 9643 ran for 34,801 seats of members in the 5th election for union parishads. Some 46 chairman and 290 members were elected unopposed.

Violence around the polling booths forced the authorities to postpone votings at least 202 centres of 148 unions till February 5, according to official sources.

Police had to resort to firing blank shots at many places to disperse unruly supporters of different candidates who clashed and tried to snatch ballot boxes and papers.

A report says about 7,000 female voters of a union at Kishoreganj district were barred from voting by the village matabbar.

The Election Commission is likely to take decision on fixing dates for re-polling by Saturday. Re-polling may be held simultaneously at all centres on same day.

BSS adds: The Union Parishad elections ended yesterday with the holding of polls in the remaining 329 unions.

Polls were adjourned in two centres of two unions under Raipura upazila of Narsingdi district and one centre under Sadar upazila of Khagrachhari district due to reasons beyond

the control of the concerned presiding officers, official sources said.

The Chief Election Commissioner, Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf yesterday visited some polling stations of different unions under Garagaon upazila.

The Chief Election Commissioner talked to the voters and exchanged views with them on various aspects of election.

UNB adds: A UP Chairman candidate, Faqir Tara Chand of Raipura union in Barhatta upazila along with his workers snatched away ballot boxes from Challish Kahonia Primary School polling centre a short while after the election was over on Wednesday.

During the incident police on duty fired six round of bullets as the miscreants chased the police, who were compelled to take shelter in a local police camp.



By Mahfuz Ullah

It could be staging Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. But timely confession of inabilities by the State Minister for Finance Mujibur Rahman and reciprocation of cooperation from the Treasury Bench saved the situation.

As the question-answer session began yesterday in a thinly attended House it was the turn of the Finance Ministry. But the Finance Minister was not there and his deputy, the State Minister, was not prepared to answer questions.

The State Minister made a very frank confession that without files, which were somewhere in the Ministry, he could not answer questions.

The presiding Deputy Speaker asked him to read out only the prepared answers and requested members not to raise supplementary questions.

And as usual Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul of the Treasury Bench was the first person to ask the question. Apprehending Bakul might raise supplementary questions the Whip of the ruling party Mahubul Alam Tara was seen silently whipping Bakul not to raise supplementary questions. By the time the State Minister finished answering the first question opposition member Shawkat Ali raised the question of privilege.

He was joined by Rashed Mosharraf and Abdur Razzaque of Awami League and Shamsuddoha of CPB.

Intervening, Abdus Salam Talukder of BNP said the Deputy Speaker could allow

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1,42,786 applications for telephone lines pending

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 1,42,786 applications for telephone connection are now pending, according to the Telecommunications Minister M Keramat Ali.

Of the applications, 22,404 were received only in 1991 and 5,855 connections were given in the year, the Minister told the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) Thursday.

Telephone lines for all the applicants would be possible by the end of the current Fourth-Five Year Plan.

During the question hour on the Private Members' Day, Keramat Ali informed the House that Taka 1,37,25,215.20 telephone bills from the EX-MPs remained unpaid until June 19 of 1991. However, he said, of the arrears bills, Taka 1,72,295.23

was realised from the former MPs till September 10, 1991.

Telephone bill is received through seven commercial banks Janata Bank, Agrani Bank, Sonali Bank, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Rupali Bank Ltd, United Commercial Bank Ltd, and the City Bank Ltd, he said replying to a question.

Keramat Ali said that no cordless telephone set was produced in the country. Such sets are imported, he added.

The Telecommunications Minister, admitted that complaints of irregularities and corruptions regarding telephone bill were sometimes received and the government had taken steps to check such occurrences.

He said all the rooms of the

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'Germany to encourage democracy'

By Afzal H. Khan

German Deputy Foreign Minister Helmut Schafer, who left Dhaka yesterday ending a three-day visit, described relations between his country and Bangladesh as excellent.

Addressing a press conference in the morning prior to his departure, Schafer also expressed the satisfaction of his government at the current democratization process in Bangladesh and assured that Germany would do all it could to encourage this process and stand by the people of Bangladesh.

Describing the overthrow of an autocratic regime in Bangladesh as an "extraordinary achievement an outstanding example of courage" worth emulating by

other countries of the world. Schafer congratulated the people of Bangladesh and hoped the transition to a democratic polity would be achieved through the will and participation of the people.

The German Deputy Foreign Minister's visit, part of his four-nation South Asian sojourn that has taken him to Nepal and Bhutan and to Pakistan from here, was the first by a high level German minister since the unification of that country in 1990.

Explaining the importance of his trip, Schafer said the visit signifies the importance Germany attaches not only to its relations with Bangladesh but also to the commitment of

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Schafer —Star photo

Commentary

Rohingya issue: Not as easy as it appears

By Farid Hossain

Myanmar's military government says it has deployed soldiers along its border with Bangladesh to chase Rohingya Muslim insurgents. Rohingyas, fleeing in thousands into Bangladesh, say they are escaping ill-treatment by the military junta.

But the issue is not as simple as it may appear.

Though Myanmar, the new name of Burma, insists it has no intention to go into a war with Bangladesh, the deployment of more than 55,000 troops is a big threat. Bangladesh has reason to

question the deployment because the only known action the Burmese have so far taken was not against the insurgents but against a Bangladesh BDR outpost, killing two persons and wounding 22.

Besides, the troops build up occurred following modernisation of Myanmar's armed forces, reportedly getting modern weapons from China under the 1.4 billion dollar deal the two countries signed in 1989.

In chasing the insurgents the Myanmar troops are pun-

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Countdown to Shaheed Day

Star Report

With the success of the province-wide strike at schools and colleges on February 4, the momentum of the Language Movement, and the government reaction to it, began to increase.

In the world of the media, although the Morning News was by far the most vocal champion of the forces of reaction, the role of the Bengali-language Sangbad left a lot to be desired, as far as the student community and the non-Muslim League political parties and groups were concerned.

Perhaps Sangbad's misfortune was to be sold to the All-Pakistan Muslim League as a result of acute financial problems around 1949-50. Founder-editor of Sangbad, Khairul Kabir arranged the sale in order to save the paper and ended up having East Bengal Chief Minister Nurul Amin as the main director, who continued to run Sangbad until the 1954 general elections.

According to M R Akhter Mukul in his 'Ekushyer Dalil', the paper quite naturally played a reactionary and anti-Bengali role during the formative days of the Language Movement, despite having a number of free-thinking and progressive people on its staff.

"At the time, the Sangbad did not carry much of the news about the initial phases of the Language Movement, and it came out as an opponent of the movement of 1952", M R Akhter Mukul wrote. "The paper's office came under attack from angry crowds on February 22. At the same time, two of the paper's founder-assistant editors, the late Fazle Lohant

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Work for speedy implementation of uplift projects, PM tells officials

BOGRA, Feb 6: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today called upon the district officials to be more vigilant and work in unison with the people for speedy implementation of the development programmes, reports UNB.

"You have to build a bridge between the administration and the people," she told the officials at Zila Parishad office this morning.

State Minister for Finance Majibur Rahman, local MPs, the Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner and the Red Crescent Society Chairman were present.

They apprised the Prime Minister of various on-going developmental programmes of the government in Bogra district.

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BDR, BSF flag meeting today

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 6: The commanders of Bangladesh Rifles and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) will sit at a flag meeting today (Friday) to discuss return of the 59 Bangladeshi fishermen who were abducted by BSF last month. They also seized 8 trawlers.

Official sources said that the flag meeting would be held at 11.30 am at the Kalutali BSF camp, opposite Devhata of Bagerhat district.

The Bangladesh team at the meeting will be led by Major Liaquat of the 25 BDR Battalion, they said.

The agenda of the discussion would also include dis-

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Pakistan asks Myanmar to respect rights of Rohingyas

ISLAMABAD, Feb 6: Pakistan called today on Myanmar to respect the rights of its minority Muslim population, reports AFP.

"Pakistan has always urged that rights of minorities, particularly Muslim minorities, should be respected, a Foreign Office spokesman told reporters.

He was commenting on reports of an influx of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar into Bangladesh.

The refugees accuse the Myanmar military of committing atrocities against the minority group in Myanmar's Arakan province.

Myanmar has denied the allegations, saying its forces target only insurgents in the border province.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, speaking in the parliament in Dhaka on Monday, put the number of refugees in Bangladesh at around 40,000.

Reuter from Thailand adds: Myanmar troops overran a big Karen guerrilla camp after a costly assault, bringing them closer to their goal of the main rebel headquarters on the Thai border, Myanmar and Thai officials said today.

Rebel fighters retreated north through the jungle hills

and civilians fled across the Mote river to seek refuge in Thailand after a three-hour battle beginning with a mortar barrage at dawn on Tuesday.

Myanmar soldiers clashed with Thai security forces after crossing the border in hot pursuit of the rebels on Wednesday, Thai sources said.

The military government in Yangon has vowed to flatten the 43-year Karen insurgency once and for all this dry season and has deployed at least 10,000 men, bolstered by weapons supplies from China, to seize the Karen National Union (KNU) headquarters on the riverbank at Manerplaw.

The parallel National coalition government of the Union of Myanmar set up by opposition politicians driven into exile by the ruling generals, is also based there along with dissident students who have taken up arms.

Meanwhile, Myanmar dissidents driven into the jungle by their country's generals say pop superstar Michael Jackson should begin his 'heal the world' tour by getting his Pepsi-Cola sponsors to stop supporting the junta.

"Pepsi-Cola investing in Myanmar is directly supporting the military regime and indirectly supporting more

and more oppression, arrest, torture and killing of the Myanmar people," said Maung Maung Aye, trade minister in the opposition's jungle-based national coalition government of the Union of Myanmar.

"If Pepsi-Cola really intend to help world peace and health for the children why are they still investing in Myanmar?" Jackson, whose multimillion-selling albums include 'Thriller', 'Bad' and 'Dangerous', announced in New York on Monday that he was embarking on an 18-month world tour to raise money for his Heal the World Foundation. "The tour is aimed at

spreading a message of global love," with a share of the proceeds going to children's, environmental and other charities.

Pepsico opened a production plant on the outskirts of Yangon last year in a joint venture with a private Myanmar concern.

Barry Shea, Pepsi-Cola International's President for Southeast Asia, said he saw no contradiction in Pepsico's position.

"Our investment is not with the government but with the people. It's helping the economy. I'm surprised they should react like this," he said.

MR Siddiqi dead

Former Commerce Minister MR Siddiqi died of a heart attack at 8.25 pm Thursday at his Gulshan residence, according to family sources here. He was 66, reports BSS.

Siddiqi left behind his wife, five sons, friends and admirers to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at 11 pm Thursday at the premises of his Gulshan residence.

The body of Siddiqi will be taken to Chittagong Friday morning. His second namaz-e-janaza will be held at Laldighi Maidan after Juma prayers. He will be buried at his family graveyard at village Rahmatnagar under Sitakunda upazila.