

Pandemonium in JS

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claimed in the house that the police had fired on the Nirmul Committee demonstrators at the Bangla Motors crossing, but it was clear Monday that no such incident had taken place.

The minister observed that the AL MPs had undermined the House by making a misleading statement and advised the opposition not to repeat this in future.

Earlier, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, clarifying a remark he made yesterday on the four-point understanding between the BNP and the AL, said, "It was not an agreement in the sense that it could not be implemented by the Jatiya Sangsad since it was not passed by the House".

Incidentally, although the four-point accord was read out in the House by the Deputy Leader Badruddoza Chowdhury, the JP, the Jamaat and a few others were not party to it.

Referring to this fact, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali observed that implementation of the agreement depended on the parties concerned.

Nasim, taking the floor, told the House that they did not say that the agreement should be implemented through the House, rather it was the government's obligation to implement the accord.

Moudud Ahmed of the JP, Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers Party, Shahjahan Straj of the JSD and AKM Jahangir of the AL spoke in support of Nasim.

But when the Works Minister accused the opposition of falsehood, Abdul Razzak of the AL took the floor to claim that he did not make any false statement relating to the police actions against the Nirmul Committee activists Sunday.

Razzak quoted reports of a section of newspapers published yesterday which claimed that the police had opened fire on the demonstrators the day before.

Razzak said, "Rather, it was Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury who had made an untrue statement by denying the police firing yesterday."

At this stage the State Minister for Communications, standing on a point of order, accused 'some AL MPs' of 'damaging the sanctity of Parliament' by giving distorted accounts of the incident at the Bangla Motors crossing Sunday.

Fazlur Rahman, amidst shouting from the AL bench, continued, "In fact they (clearly hinting at the AL MPs) were desperately looking for a corpse on Sunday to make a political issue out of it."

Quoting newspaper reports, Rahman also said, "Nasim, while addressing the Nirmul Committee gathering Sunday, went to the extent of saying that they would not recognise any court other than the Gana Adalat, which was an extra-constitutional court."

Mohammad Nasim who, like Fazlur Rahman of the BNP, addressed the House three times yesterday, stood for a second time to counter the governing party by saying, "The political of BNP is always based on falsehood."

A Pandemonium broke loose with shouts from both sides — AL members supporting Nasim and the BNP MPs protesting — his comments.

Nasim, in a bid to back his own remarks, went on: "The BNP leaders have dubbed a party worker killed by an explosion of a bomb he himself was making a martyr. This was characteristic of BNP politics," the AL MP added.

Making an oblique reference to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Nasim further said that when a top BNP leader went into hiding in 1989, other leaders of the party spread word that she was put behind bars by the then government.

The Awami League did not believe in the politics of falsehood, Nasim claimed.

Fazlur Rahman of the BNP, taking the floor once again, protested Nasim's remarks and said, "The AL is such a political party which does not even hesitate to kill its own workers just to make a point by shifting the responsibility to the shoulders of its political opponents."

Rahman also claimed that although the youths of the country fought the Liberation War, "The AL leaders neither allowed their children to be involved in the war, nor did they bear the pains of the armed struggle."

"A discussion should be held on the floor of the parliament to let the people know the facts behind the Liberation War", Rahman observed.

Mohammad Nasim welcomed Fazlur Rahman to a detailed discussion on the 'spirit of the Liberation War'.

As the House resumed after half an hour with the Speaker in the chair, a good number of opposition members rose on their feet on points of order.

Jatiya Party member Moudud Ahmed pleaded that as the guardian of the House, the Speaker should maintain order and discipline in the House.

The Speaker decided to look into the issue today.

The House was adjourned at 8-45 pm to resume at 4 pm today.

72-hr labour strike

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government signed with the SKOP and others on July 6 last year.

The MOUs provided for, among other things, fixation of national minimum wages both in the public and private sectors.

During the brief government-SKOP dialogue yesterday, Labour Minister Mannan Bhuyan, failing to convince the shutdown organisers, appealed to the SKOP to confine the programme within the country's industrial belt. But the SKOP leaders reiterated they would go all out and spread their programme all over the country.

Earlier, the minister told the meeting, "We tried our best to meet the labours' demands. But we cannot offer you a better one than a Taka 950 basic salary for the public sector workers since our industries are on the verge of collapse."

Replying to this, SKOP leader Abdus Salam Khan said, "We'll be ready to reconsider our programme only when the government comes up with a new proposal."

Abdullah Sarkar told the meeting that they could not go out of the signed MOU, while Tipu Biswas pointed out that the SKOP accepted the National Wages and Productivity Commission report despite its previous objection.

Protabuddin Ahmed, during the talks, warned that the government's negligence to the workers' causes would result in a grievous situation.

Meanwhile, the State Minister for Textiles Major Abdul Mannan (ret'd) did not hold his scheduled talks with the textile-cotton mills workers' federation yesterday. He had told the federation leaders, after meeting them Sunday at the BTMC office, that his dialogue with the labour leaders would resume Monday at 2 pm at the same venue.

The SKOP and five trade union federations yesterday also organised rallies and processions in the city and elsewhere in the country to make their final call for observing the three-day shutdown beginning this morning.

Members of the student front of the ruling BNP sat before the VC's office from 10 am to 11:30 am yesterday and reiterated their vow to unearth the 'malpractices' that have 'crippled the administration'.

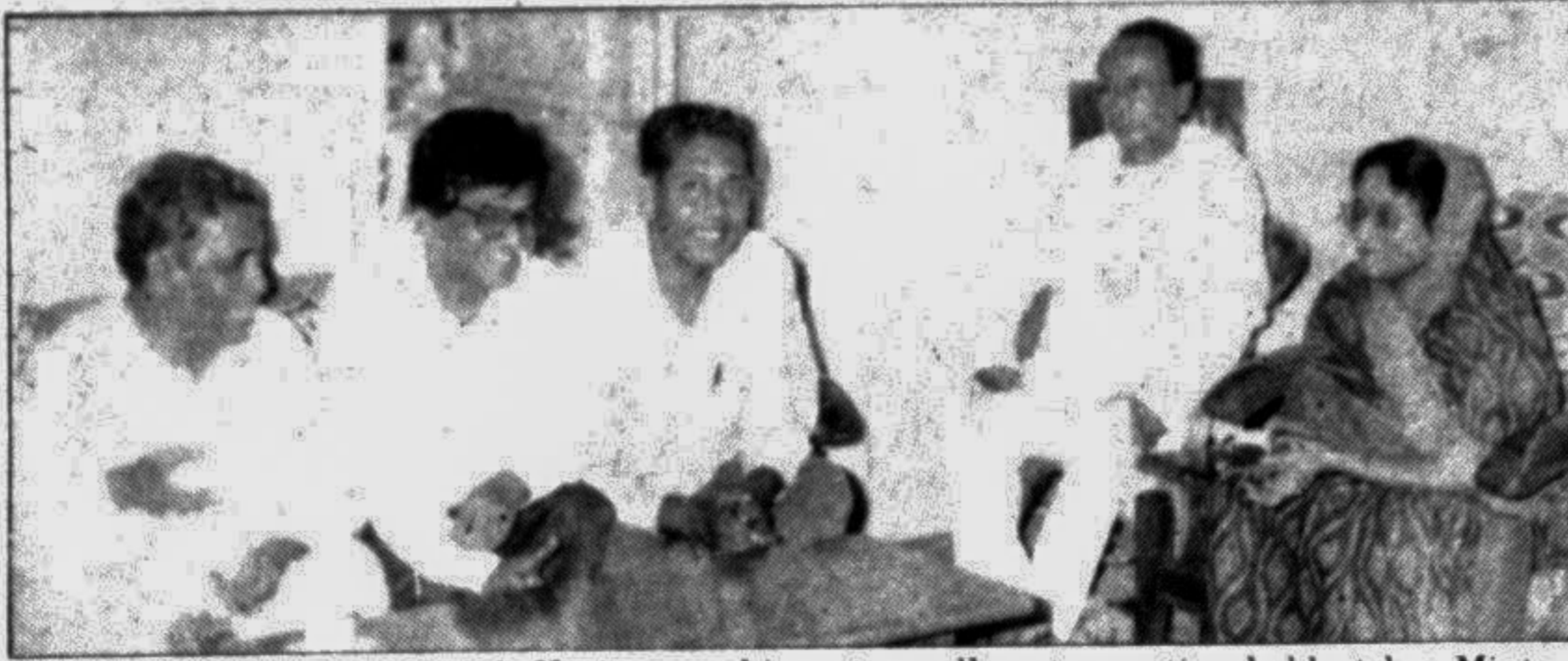
"Malpractices and corruption in the administration have caused the expulsion of two JCD leaders," the JCD leaders alleged.

Organising Secretary of the JCD, Moazzem Hossain and activist Abu Yusuf were expelled from the university for threatening a teacher on November 28 last year.

The JCD is planning a 72 hour students' strike as its next move a party insider said.

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Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina speaking at an all-party meeting held at her Minto Road residence yesterday. Zillur Rahman, Dilip Barua, Kazi Arif and Abdul Razzak MP are also seen. — Star photo

May 13 hartal

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Committee towards Parliament.

The meeting criticised the government for violating its agreement with the SKOP and demand its immediate implementation.

It expressed concern at the four-times rise in the prices of pesticides and demanded reduction of prices of agricultural inputs.

Chaired by Sheikh Hasina, the meeting was attended, among others, by Awami League leaders Abdul Mannan, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, MP, Zillur Rahman, Abdul Razzak, MP, Abdul Jalil, Moazzaf Hossain Paltu, Begum Matia Chowdhury, MP, Rahmat Ali, MP, CPB leader Nurul Islam Nahid, JSD leader Hasanul Huq Inu, Workers Party leaders Rashed Khan Menon and Bimal Biswas, Sammyabadi Dal leader Dilip Barua, BSD leader Mainuddin Khan Badal, Gana Azadi League leader Alhaj Abdus Samad, BSD (Khalq) leader Abdullah Sarker and JSD-Inu leader Kazi Aref Ahmed.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip would be considered a "single territorial unit" as part of an agreement on interim self rule before a final settlement on the territories based on United Nations resolutions.

The Israeli civil administration will transfer to the PEC, and the PEC will assume executive and judicial powers (by independent judicial organs) per the agreement, according to the Draft, received from a PLO official in Amman.

The PEC will be vested with legislative powers. It also proposes the PEC be established "through free, general and direct elections, by and from among the Palestinians of the territories, which will be held under agreed supervision."

Israel would retain responsibility for security and Israeli settlers in the occupied territories.

Faisal Hussein, head of the Palestinian negotiating team, said his delegation would deliver its response to the Israeli document later today when the negotiations resume in Washington.

Fazlur Rahman and Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim, verged on plain bad taste.

The two senior members also exchanged challenges and urged the Speaker to set aside a date for a more elaborate political mud-slinging match between the two sides.

The State Minister promised to reveal the real behind-the-scenes story during the Liberation War while Nasim pledged to disclose the true character of the ruling party.

The day's debate on the implementation of the 4-point accord reached last year between the Awami League-led opposition and the ruling party regarding the Gana Adalat and its organisers was unknowingly started by the Speaker when he made a clarification on the previous day's proceedings.

Referring to a newspaper report attributed to him out of context, Shaikh Razzak Ali clarified that as the 4-point accord between the two sides was not passed by the Parliament, it was not within the jurisdiction of the Jatiya Sangsad to implement the accord.

It was upto those who were party to the accord to implement it, he added.

This opened the flood-gates for the unscheduled debate which lasted for well over an hour. During which, the AL-led opposition said that as the accord was reached in the Speaker's chamber and was

Zia Parishad

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shad, the rally was addressed among others by Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Rajshahi University Prof M Anisur Rahman, former VC of Chittagong University Prof M Aziz Khan, VC of Islamic University Prof Abdul Hamid, RU Pro-VC Prof Azhar Uddin, Mahfuzur Rahman, Professor Mymensingh Agricultural University, Editor of The Telegraph Rezauddin Ahmed and journalist Gias Kamal Chowdhury.

The Zia Parishad declared that it would organise public rallies, discussion meetings and seminars in every district of the country from May 16 to make people aware of the effect of the Farakka Barrage.

"Due to the unbelievable dry-state of river Padma, salinity is engulfing lands around the southern coastal regions of the Khulna Division," the speakers said. "The salinity has reached the Jessore district presently."

The speakers blamed India for desertification of the northern region of the country, destroying agriculture and ecology and disregarding Bangladesh's right to natural water.

"We would not care if India had played with its own creation," the speakers said, "but River Ganges is God's gift and India can not deprive Bangladesh of its right over it."

read in Parliament by the Deputy Leader of the House, it was the property of Parliament and it has the authority to ask the government to implement the accord.

At this point of the debate, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah accused AL member Abdul Razzak of making untrue statements in Parliament the previous day regarding police attack on the Nirmul Committee rally.

After this all hell broke loose and the Opposition Chief Whip and the State Minister for Communications took over from there.

After the Maghrib break, Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni reluctantly allowed the debate to continue. When Fazlur Rahman was given the floor for the third time during the day's session a number of JP members jumped on their feet trying to attract the attention of the chair.

Led by Monirul Huq Chowdhury, the JP members continued to agitate as the State Minister took the floor. Treasury Bench member Azizur Rahman, who sits in the aisle in front of the JP Whip, asked Chowdhury to sit down which ended in heated exchange of words amid a melee before the JP members' seat.

Israel offers legislative power to Palestinians

AMMAN, May 10: Israel has offered at the Middle East peace talks to hand over legislative powers to Palestinians in the occupied territories, according to a copy of the proposals obtained from a PLO official today, reports AFP.

The offer came in a nine-point "informal draft" submitted by Israeli negotiators at the peace talks in Washington on the role of a Palestinian Executive Council (PEC).

Shaath, interviewed from Washington by the Bahraini Daily Al-Ayam, said Hussein would not return to the US capital today in protest at the Israeli position in the negotiations.

Husseini spent the weekend at PLO headquarters in Tunis to discuss the Israeli document.

In Damascus, the government Daily Tahrir on Monday urged the United States, "which has expressed its concern for the success of these negotiations and committed itself to play a balanced and effective role," to intervene.

But a senior Palestine Liberation Organisation official criticized the United States, the key sponsor of the peace process.

"There is a real US negligence of the commitments undertaken, notably concerning a speedy return of the Palestinian deportees," said Nabil Shaath, adviser to PLO chief Yasser Arafat.

The authorities are taking action against the teachers of the Dhaka University who are overstaying abroad, Parliament was told during question hour yesterday, reports UNB.

Replying to Munirul Haq Chowdhury (JP), Education Minister Jamuiruddin Sircar said 228 teachers of the Dhaka University were abroad on leave. Of them, 90 teachers are overstaying.

The Education Minister informed the House that 16 of the teachers have been relieved of their jobs and necessary actions are being taken against the remaining 74. The Dhaka University's current teacher strength is 1,189.

SUNAMGANJ, May 10: At least three people were killed in house collapse when a severe nor'wester lashed over four thanas of the district Sunday night. The dead were identified as Nurul Islam (40) and his wife Rangama (30) of Sripur village in Duarabazar thana and Bilkis (10) of Jagannathpur village in Sadar thana, reports UNB.

Morshed Khan supports govt stand

Former president of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BCCI) Morshed Khan last night strongly supported the government stand not to bow down to the unjustified demand of the so-called SKOP, reports BSS.

In a statement Mr Morshed Khan said "they are only one per cent of the total population and holding the whole nation as hostage."

He said the so-called SKOP not only scaring the foreign investors but also threatening the existing industrial sector of the country.

Employers Assoc

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tion arising out of SKOP programme.

Termed the SKOP demand as unjustified, he said that if the government yielded to the unjustified demand of SKOP it would have to subsidise the industrial sector.

He said that the government was a democratically elected one so it could not accept any unjustified demand of any section of the people. The government considering the people's interest should not bow down to the demand of the SKOP, he added.

Dowla said that employers want to cooperate with the government in linking wages with productivity.

He, however, said that they would meet today to consider the situation and give their reaction thereafter.

In a separate statement, President of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and exporters Association Mosharaf Hossain said all disputes should be resolved through tripartite committee and wages be linked with productivity.

Industrialisation of a country depends on linkage of wage with productivity, he added.

He said though the strike was not linked with garments industry but the sector would be hit if other sectors were affected. He said garments industry was now the country's number one export earning sector and it would be badly affected in maintaining its competition in the world market following the strike.

Hossain urged all the political parties irrespective of ideology to come forward in resolving the problem and arrive at a national consensus.

The situation worsened when AL member ASM Feroz intervened and pushed ruling party member Barkatullah Bulu in a visibly threatening manner.

Sylhet team to request PM to create divn

A meeting of prominent citizens from Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar and Habiganj districts was held in the parliament office of the Deputy Opposition Leader yesterday, reports UNB.

Abdus Samad Azad, who chaired the meeting, called for declaring Sylhet a division. The demand that was being raised much before the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947.

The meeting decided that a delegation would call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia soon and request her to create a Sylhet Division with the districts of Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar and Habiganj.

Most of the parliament members elected from greater Sylhet attended the meeting and expressed solidarity with the Committee for Realisation of Sylhet Division and Development of Greater Sylhet.

The Committee has declared that it will launch agitation if its demand is not met by May 15.

Besides the committee members, the meeting was attended, among others, by former Foreign Minister Humayun Rashed Chowdhury, former IGP EA Chowdhury, former State Minister Dewan Farid Gazi, Jatiya Press Club President Hasan Shahriar, Moulvibazar Municipality Chairman Syed Mohsin Ali, Habiganj Municipality Chairman Shahid Chowdhury, Nurur Rashed Chowdhury, Syed Abu Nasr, Strajur Rahman, Lutfar Rahman, Goleam Rabbani, Abdul Khalique, Abul Hossain and Abdul Matin.

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The Midnight File

Mazari to respect court verdict

ISLAMABAD, May 10: Pakistan's three-week old interim government said today it would respect a Supreme Court verdict on the dissolution of the national assembly. Caretaker Prime Minister Bal Kh Sher Mazari gave the assurance during a meeting with newspaper editors from all over the country. The official Associated Press of Pakistan reported, says AFP.

Alija, Boban sign ceasefire

ZAGREB, May 10: Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic and Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban agreed to a ceasefire today in fighting between their forces in southern Bosnia. UN officials said here. The ceasefire was due to come into effect at 6:00 pm (1600 GMT), the Zagreb office of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) said, reports AFP.

Hindus revive campaign against Sonjay Dutt

BOMBAY, May 10: Militant Hindus have revived a campaign against top Indian actor Sonjay Dutt, forcing theatres not to screen movies of the star who illegally bought an AK-56 rifle, a spokesman said today. About a dozen of students stormed a movie theatre here overnight Sunday and forced the cancellation of "Kashatriya" (warrior), in which Dutt stars, calling him a "traitor", police and witnesses said. The protesters, members of the All India Students Association, known by its acronym ABVP, raised anti-Dutt slogans as they barged into the Naaz Theatre and ordered the shocked audience to leave, the witnesses said, reports AFP.

Jamuna Bridge

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technical training. The press release said that the Indian side agreed to favourably examine a proposal from Bangladesh to construct the planned 132 kms of the second railway track between Chin-Ki-Astana and Akhaura Section of the Chittagong-Dhaka railway line for which India may be required to spend about Taka 1,381 million, the total cost being Taka 2279.30 million.

The joint press release said that the Indian government agreed to favourably consider and expeditiously process a Bangladesh proposal, to be presented shortly, for availing part of the Indian government credit estimated at approximately Taka 130.13 million for replacing the existing wooden sleepers with concrete ones on the Dhaka-Chittagong main line section to revamp the track.

The Indian Railway Minister conveyed his government's agreement to provide training to 10 personnel of Bangladesh Railways in planning, designing, manufacturing and handling five-ton capacity containers that the Bangladesh Railways was planning to introduce.

The joint press release said that Bangladesh will shortly present a proposal for availing part of the Indian government credit to meet the foreign exchange requirement for the planned relay interlocking signalling system being planned for installation in six railway stations on the Jamalpur-Mymensingh section to replace the existing outdated system. The foreign exchange component is estimated at Taka 63 million out of the total project cost of Taka 87.20 million.

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armed with lethal weapons at the Damdama Camp-1.

The refugees were fighting each other on the question of repatriation. One group wanted to return to their homes in Myanmar while the other opposed, witnesses said.

When the Ansars intervened in an attempt to stop the fight, the feuding refugee factions closed their ranks and instead attacked the security men.

Witnesses said that thousands of Rohingya refugees from a nearby camp joined the fray and attacked the Ansars and a group of police men who opened fire in self-defence.

A tense situation was prevailing at the two camps, according to the witnesses.

Additional Rohingya Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Nazrul Islam and the Additional Police Super in-charge of the Rohingya camps visited the spot.

A case has been filed with Teknaf thana in this connection but none was arrested.

When contacted from Dhaka over telephone, the Deputy Commissioner, Cox's bazar and the Superintendent of Police were not available for comments.

At least 20 Rohingya refugees have been killed so far either in police firing or in clashes among themselves at different camps of the district.

Chakma

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live in dignity and security. The two sides also exchanged views on broad parameters to be established, including the time-frame envisaged, logistics, transit camps and other practical modalities for repatriation of the refugees.

Dhaka has agreed to accept all genuine Bangladeshi refugees from the CHT on the basis of available records and information furnished by village headmen and ensure return of land and homestead belonging to a refugee.

Bangladesh also agreed to sustain, with ration, a refugee during his stay at a reception camp and also give him cash grant for house construction and other necessities for his rehabilitation.

Both sides agreed that one or more teams of concerned officials, as considered necessary, could meet immediately on May 9 to firm up all the details so that the repatriation process can be expeditiously implemented.

The visit took place in pursuance of the understanding reached between the two countries during Prime Minister Begum Zia's visit to India in May last year.

The government, afterwards, opened talks with the representatives of the outlawed Shantibahini for ending armed insurgency in the hill districts through a political solution of the staggering CHT problem.

The UNHCR has so far provided Bangladesh with 14 million US dollars to help tackle the refugee problem and has offered another more 17 million dollars for this v