

for hassle free Share Trading

NCC BANK

Brokerage House
now at Chittagong

reach us @ 2516090-2, 01817 210358
www.nccbank.com.bd

The Daily Star

Plus Star Forum

TRANSCOM
DIGITAL

PHILIPS TRANSTEC

Customer Care Center:
8855386-8, 01712 685483

REGD. NO. DA 781 • VOL. XVIII No. 286 • DILAKA MONDAY NOVEMBER 3, 2008 • KARTIK 19, 1415 BS • ZILQAD 4, 1429 HIJRI • 28 PAGES PLUS STAR FORUM PRICE: Tk 10.00

EC declares polls fixture

Decides to hold upazila polls 10 days after Dec 18 JS elections

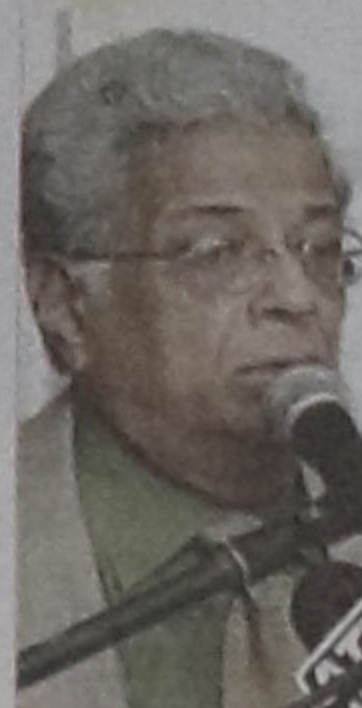
M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The Election Commission (EC) finally announced the detailed schedule for the ninth parliamentary election last night, ending all speculations about the fate of the long stalled poll now slated for December 18.

The commission also announced the detailed schedule for the third upazila elections declaring that those will be held only on December 28, instead of on two different dates which had been declared earlier.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed had announced earlier that the upazila parishad elections would be held in two phases on December 24 and 28.

Just hours earlier, the High Court had cleared the way for the EC's announcement by throwing away three separate writ petitions challenging the commission's gazette notification on the recent redemarcation of parliamentary



9th Parliamentary Elections	
• Last date for nomination paper submission	Nov 13
• Scrutiny of nomination papers	Nov 16-17
• Last date for withdrawing candidature	Nov 24
• Voting	Dec 18
3rd Upazila Parishad Elections	
• Last date for nomination paper submission	Nov 13
• Scrutiny of nomination papers	Nov 19-20
• Last date for withdrawing candidature	Nov 27
• Voting	Dec 28

constituencies.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda announced the detailed poll schedules in an address to the nation at 7:30pm.

The last date for filing nomination papers for the parliamentary election is November 13, and the deadline for withdrawing nominations is November 24, the CEC announced adding that the nomination papers will be scrutinised

on November 16 and 17.

The last date for submitting nominations for the upazila polls is also November 13, and the deadline for withdrawing nominations is November 27, while those will be scrutinised on November 19 and 20, according to the detailed schedule.

Announcing the schedules, the CEC assured the people of the country of free, fair and neutral elections.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

HC dismisses petitions against re-demarcation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday declared valid the Election Commission (EC)'s re-demarcation of the parliamentary constituencies.

The bench, comprised of Justice Mir Hasmat Ali and Justice Shamim Hasnain, also vacated an earlier stay on operation of the EC's gazette notification of the delimitation.

Later the same day an appeal was filed with the Supreme Court (SC) for a stay on the HC rulings that came in response to five writ petitions challenging the legality of the EC's gazette notification.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

AL, BNP differ on election atmosphere

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two major political parties -- Awami League (AL) and BNP -- yesterday expressed rather opposing feelings about the developing political scenario in the country vis-à-vis the December 18 parliamentary election.

But both parties however said it is imperative to lift the state of emergency to make the upcoming election credible.

After separate meetings with visiting UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a capital hotel, AL said it will contest in the election and hopes that a peaceful appropriate environment will be created through withdrawal of the state of emergency.

BNP on the other hand said as a pro-election party it wants to contest in the poll, but an atmosphere conducive to holding a credible election has not yet been created as the military backed caretaker government has not yet met any of its seven demands.

A more optimistic AL Acting

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

CG assures UN chief of credible polls

Military leadership promises him not to intervene, interfere in political process; Ban leaves Dhaka last night

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon yesterday said the caretaker government gave assurance that it would do its best to hold a credible election in an atmosphere conducive to polls and ensure voters' security.

"I was also assured by the military leadership that they will ensure that the forthcoming election will be free, fair and credible and there will be no intervention and interference in any political process," he said referring to his meeting with the army chief.

Ban Ki-moon was speaking at a press conference at Sonargaon Hotel, ending his two-day visit to Bangladesh.

It is very important that the election is held in December, Ban said, adding, "It should be held in the most fair, credible and transparent manner."

He said, "I told the political parties that they should play a responsible role and there should be fair competition and that they should respect the poll results and have full cooperation based on democratic rules among themselves."

Asked about the UN position on lifting of the state of emergency as being demanded by the country's political parties, the UN chief said he is well aware of the concern and urged the parties to resolve the matter through discussion with the government.

"As a matter of principle we want an atmosphere where people can cast their votes freely without fear," he said, adding that there should be guarantee of free assembly and free movement, which are basic principles to ensuring fair elections.

Ban said, "I saw clearly that democracy belongs in Bangladesh; there is no insurmountable obsta-

cle to ushering in a better, brighter, more sustainable democracy after the elections in December.

"The December ballot is a historic opportunity. Now is the moment to stand against the polarisation and violence that have characterised past elections," he added.

The UN chief said during his meetings with BNP and Awami League leaders he stressed that holding of the election is very important for democracy.

He said, "The government must ensure that the fundamental rights and freedoms necessary for a free,

fair and credible election are guaranteed. And it must ensure that the elections take place in a peaceful and secure environment."

He said the incoming government would need to reach out to the opposition in parliament while the latter must engage constructively with the new government to consolidate the reforms begun by the current caretaker government, particularly those dedicated to fighting corruption.

Ban said the UN would dispatch a small team of highly capable and prominent individuals who will

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks to the press at Hotel Sonargaon in the capital before leaving for Dubai concluding his tour in Bangladesh.

Hasina wishes more gap before UZ polls

AL kick-starts polls race today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina welcomed the Election Commission (EC) for unveiling the detailed timetable for the ninth parliamentary polls last night.

She however observed that the upazila polls should have been deferred.

The former prime minister, now in Washington, expressed doubts whether the EC would be able to ensure successful conduct of the two major elections with such a little space in between.

According to schedules, the

national election will be held on December 18 and upazila polls on December 28.

Hasina urged the commission to have a logical time gap, her Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told The Daily Star last night.

She said her party's preparations for the election are on the final stage. "We are ready to distribute nomination forms," she told her press secretary over phone shortly after the Chief Election Commissioner's (CEC) announcement.

The AL chief also criticised the option of 'no-vote'. She said it

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Political activities to be allowed immediately

Says Adviser Zillur; govt order likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday said restrictions on political activities will go immediately after announcement of election schedule, but no official decision came after the schedule was laid out later in the day.

A home ministry source however said a draft on lifting the curbs is ready, adding that a gazette notification detailing the government decision will be issued today.

Adviser Zillur said political parties in their dialogues with the government had demanded com-

plete freedom and start of political activities along the election process.

"We understand it's important to fulfil their demands. They will be fulfilled through a gazette notification on announcement of the election schedule," he told a press briefing at the communications ministry.

He talked to the reporters after holding a meeting with three other advisers - Communications Adviser Ghulam Quader, Local Government Adviser Anwarul Iqbal and Law Adviser AF Hassan

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Polls to be held on schedule

Army chief tells UN chief BSS, Dhaka

Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday told visiting UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that general election in Bangladesh will be held as scheduled, on December 18.

"I told him (UN chief) that the general election would be held on time on December 18," he told reporters after talks with the UN chief at Sonargaon hotel in the city.

Gen Moeen said all political parties should help the government to hold a free, fair and credible election through their active participation.

The meeting discussed Bangladesh's increased role in UN

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Myanmar brings warships to explore Bangladesh waters

3 naval ships challenge oil and gas exploration inside Bangladesh territory; Myanmar envoy summoned to hand Dhaka's stern warning

STAR REPORT

Escorted by two naval warships, Myanmar has arbitrarily deployed four ships for exploring oil and gas in Bangladesh maritime territory Saturday ignoring Bangladesh Navy warnings. Bangladesh Navy has also positioned three ships at the spot.

As Myanmar ignored the warnings, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Towhid Hossain yesterday handed over a protest letter to Myanmar's ambassador in Dhaka Yu Fae Than U demanding withdrawal of the ships from the area until the maritime boundary is clearly demarcated through mutual understanding as per the UN guideline.

According to a press note, the Myanmar ambassador was requested to convey the protest note to his government. Bangladesh requested Myanmar to stop all its activities there as per Bangladesh Government's 1974 Territorial Water and Maritimes Zones Act and added that the government has the right to protect its interest.

Sources said Myanmar's ships started the exploration 50 nautical miles southwest of St Martin's Island. A South Korean company was awarded the oil and gas exploration contract there.

Three naval ships of Bangladesh--BNS Abu Bakar, BNS Madhumati and BNS Nirvoy--went to the spot challenging the

Myanmarese ships but the Myanmar Navy responded by alleging that the Bangladesh Navy ships are trespassing.

The commanding officer of BNS Abu Bakar is currently in a dialogue with the officers of Myanmar's naval ships there, sources said.

"The Myanmar Navy told Bangladesh Navy that they have instructions from their government to come to these waters and they suggested that our navy should talk to our high-ups," said a source quoting Bangladesh Navy.

At least 50 people were working in the four exploration ships, two of which are registered in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Sea border issue fails to grab govt focus

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh made negligible progress in delimiting its maritime boundary even though it took the initiative in 2004.

While the Bay of Bengal became the focus for oil and gas exploration by India and Myanmar, Bangladesh's move to mark its maritime boundary has so far been limited to "plans" to take expert help from the US, the UK and Australia for the job.

In 2004, the foreign ministry formed a committee with members from Petrobangla, Geological Survey of Bangladesh, the Navy, Sparrow, Inland Water Transport Authority and Surveyor of Bangladesh.

The purpose of this committee was to recommend how to mark the deep-sea territory

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Moved by the powerful speech of Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama, one of his supporters cries during a rally at JFK Stadium in Springfield, Missouri Saturday.

US electoral system flaws come to fore

SHAKHAWAT LITON, from Iowa, USA

As Republicans and Democrats are expecting record turnout in the November 4 US presidential election, experts fear loopholes in the electoral system may bring into question the fairness of the historic race.

The US which claims to have most successful democracy in human history has not yet been able to put in place a common electoral law across the country.

Each state regulates the electoral process with its own laws, which on many issues contradict those of other states. Legal experts term it discriminatory.

Dilemma over electoral roll database, misdesigned forms and possible malfunctioning of voting machines might cause serious problems in properly conducting the historic presidential election, experts observed.



"I'm expecting some serious problems," said Ken Warren,

professor of political science at St Louis University in Missouri.

Time magazine in a recent report said the problems threaten to take the election to the courts again.

In Wisconsin, an August check of a new voter-registration database against other state records turned up a 22% match-failure rate, the Time report said. In Florida, the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Obama to heal political divisions

McCain pledges to score an upset

AP, Washington

In the final weekend of a long race for the White House, Barack Obama promised to heal America's political divisions while rival John McCain fought to hold on to Republican-leaning states and pledged to score an upset.

For Obama, buoyed by record campaign donations and encouraging poll numbers, it was a time for soaring rhetoric and forays into Republican territory. "We have a righteous wind at our back," the Democrat said Saturday.

McCain saw the weekend as a final opportunity to persuade voters to prove the polls and pundits wrong and sweep him into office.

"We're a few points down but we're coming back," he told supporters in Virginia.

Obama campaigned Saturday

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Talking polls and beyond People totally left out by this govt

SHAMIM ASHRAF

Former caretaker government adviser Sultana Kamal has said the government, which came as a caretaker of the nation, has never communicated with the people who supported its passage hoping it would bring qualitative changes in different spheres.

"After this government came to power there was a clear division: the government was on one side with the army--sometimes the army separated, and the political parties (on the other) as their opponent. People were totally left out," she said in an



interview with The Daily Star.

The government only sits with businessmen and political parties for talks, the rights activist said, adding, "How many times has the government sat to consult with the people and sought their advice since coming to power?"

Noting that this government has not done proper things in many cases, Sultana Kamal said it has kept huge power in its hand through the state of emergency and used that power recklessly and selectively, failing to show adequate signs of judgement,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Find details of the interview on page 11