

Myanmar building

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In 1991, Myanmar had driven more than 250,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh creating a war-like situation between the two countries. Bangladesh gave shelter to the Rohingyas and through diplomatic moves made Myanmar agree to take them back. The repatriation remains slow and Bangladesh still has several thousand refugees on its soil.

Our Bandarban correspondent quoting Naikhangchhari UNO Nowab Aslam Habib reports: Tension built up as Myanmar forces mobilised along the border. No untoward incident in Naikhangchhari was reported, he said.

A defence source said BDR is unable to keep a close watch on 173km-long remote and hilly border area. BDR has only five watchtowers in that long stretch of border. Following the 1991 incident with Myanmar, BDR recommended increasing the number of towers there but there was no followup.

Locals alleged that the Nasaka, border force of Myanmar, shot four Bangladeshis dead near the border last Sunday. Agitated people on Friday captured two Myanmar citizens, Mohammad and Azizul Haq, at Rezu-Amtali border areas. They are now under BDR's custody.

To review the situation, an eight-member high-level BDR team led by Chittagong Sector Commander Colonel Akhtar visited Lembuchhari and Chakdaha border areas of Naikhangchhari. Meanwhile, sources said the situation in the Bay of Bengal remains unchanged. There was no exploration activities for the second day yesterday but the Myanmar ships remain anchored 55km southwest at 227 degrees from St Martin's Island.

AL to accept

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political parties, adding that decision on forming a grand electoral alliance will be made soon.

He said the AL would initially filed party candidates in all 300 constituencies, but added that they will withdraw a few candidates once a grand alliance is formed.

Ashrafur demanded withdrawal of 'false' cases against AL leaders including Hasina.

Melamine just harmful

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their standards for acceptable daily intake of melamine considering the ground reality, as individual farmers all over the world adulterate milk with cheap elements," Quality Analyst Manager of Nestle Bangladesh Ltd Charanjev Singh Kohli told The Daily Star on behalf of the company's managing director.

He also said, "In China, individual farmers adulterate milk with melamine as there milk is sold on the basis of its protein value. And giant producers of powdered milk collect milk from individual farmers. The United States Food and Drug Administration guideline set the acceptable level at 10 milligrams per kilogram."

Earlier, the managing director of Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute (BSTI) also made a similar statement without mentioning the source of this data.

Experts however do not agree with such claims.

According to Prof ABM Faroque, a teacher of the department of pharmaceutical technology at Dhaka University, it takes at least a couple of years for an acceptable toxicological study to come up with an acceptable daily intake.

"But, melamine in milk is a very recent issue, then how come we have already set an acceptable level of daily intake of melamine for humans?" he questioned.

Prof Nilufar Nahar, under whose leadership the chemistry department of Dhaka University detected melamine in eight brands of powdered milk, told The Daily Star, "Melamine is not a part of milk, nor a preserving agent, nor it is a testing agent, not even a flavouring agent. There is no chance of amorphous toxic melamine getting mixed in natural milk. So there can't be any permissible limit for such toxic element."

"There can be an acceptable daily intake of it in case of food that is in contact with its container, as there is a possibility of melamine getting mixed with it through leaching. In case of leaching, melamine gets mixed with food as melamine formaldehyde resin, which is used in melamine industries. On the other hand amorphous melamine powder is deliberately mixed with milk to give a false impression that the milk contains high protein. It's adulteration and deception," she added.

Accusing multinational companies of deceiving consumers regarding the acceptable level of melamine intake for humans, Prof Faroque said, "Rich countries fix these types of minimum levels in the interest of their businesses. In fact, developed countries disclose such studies to sell their substandard products to poor countries."

"I remember after the nuclear reactor disaster in Chernobyl, they came up with an acceptable level of 0.1 becquerel (Bq) radiation in a litre of milk," he added.

Prof Nahar said, "Let alone toxic

The Myanmar ships started exploration activities on November 1 ignoring Bangladesh Navy warnings of trespassing on Bangladesh waters. The area is well within Bangladesh's territory and marked as deep-sea blocks 8-13. Bangladesh officially lodged protest before Myanmar ambassador last Sunday. Myanmar also protested before the Bangladeshi ambassador in Myanmar the same day.

Bangladesh later on requested North Korean government to ask Daewoo, which is conducting the exploration for Myanmar, to stop its activities in the Bay. Bangladesh also requested Myanmar's closest ally China to ask Myanmar to quit Bangladesh waters till the maritime boundary is marked as per the UN guideline.

On Thursday, China suggested that Bangladesh and Myanmar settle their dispute through friendly negotiations, apparently stepping back from taking any measure.

"We hope the countries will settle it through equal and friendly negotiations and maintain a stable bilateral relationship. As their friend, China will contribute in an appropriate manner," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang at a press conference, reports Xinhua.

Voter list

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But the candidates will be able to spend Tk 10 lakh each for campaigning if the number of voters in the upazila is over two lakh.

As per the voter roll for upazila polls, a total of 125 upazilas have less than 1 lakh voters while 260 upazilas have voters from 1 lakh to 2 lakh and 101 upazilas have over two lakh voters.

The voter list shows that only three upazilas -- Savar (690,421 voters) in Dhaka, Narayanganj sadar upazila (683,609) and Gazipur sadar upazila (610,520) -- have more than six lakh voters.

Thanchi upazila of Bandarban has the lowest number of voters (12,221).

About 7,433,099 of six city corporations, 17 cantonment boards and 17 unions of capital's Tejaon circle will not be able to cast votes in the upazila elections as they are residing in special zones.

80 hurt

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extended meeting of district Awami League was going on at Noakhali Ainjibi Samity auditorium with district unit president Prof Mohammad Hamid in the chair. The meeting was later postponed.

Witnesses said the supporters of AL nomination seekers from Hatia Prof Wali Ullah and Mohammad Ali brought out separate processions outside the meeting venue and chased each other.

Ekrumul Karim, general secretary of district Awami League, said they postponed the meeting due to the clash. He said the district unit will take action against the persons involved in the clash.

In Comilla, Awami League nomination seeker and former FBCCI president Yusuf Abdullah Harun was among 10 people injured in an attack by his rival group at Companiganj under Muradnagar upazila, according to UNB.

It was alleged that Muradnagar AL Secretary Jahangir Alam Sarkar, also an aspirant for party ticket for the upcoming parliamentary election, launched the attack on the extended meeting of AL upazila committee.

Later at a press conference, Yousuf Abdullah Harun blamed Jahangir faction for the attack.

Partnership in war

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In a statement issued here, she said the influence of the United States on shaping global ideas on politics and economics is a testament of the American leadership and its vision.

"President-elect Obama's campaign slogan for 'change' has created a new set of global expectations about the US, which will be a major challenge for its new administration," she said.

Rehman pointed out that vice president-elect Joe Biden is the architect of the Biden-Lugar legislation that commits development assistance of \$15 billion for Pakistan over the next 10 years.

"This non-military aid signals a major shift in the focus of US assistance for Pakistan," the minister said, adding that this "reflects the newly elected US administration's support for our country's civilian democratic order, and an understanding of the necessity of building solid foundations for social and economic development of Pakistan."

Hafizuddin Khan

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He pointed out that no party except BNP has demanded scrapping of the amendments to Representation of the People Order (RPO).

When the government and the Election Commission (EC) were in a dominant position, they did not amend laws and rules to ensure a qualitative change in politics and electoral behaviours. Instead, they kept distancing themselves from the political parties, he noted.

"Now advisers are rushing to leaders' houses and meeting them in secret to bring them to the election. Since their subjects and outcomes are not being disclosed, such meetings have created doubt in the public mind over the government's role."

He said this government has made no effort to address its inefficiency in dealing with the political crises. Neither has it showed sensitivity to the suggestions that came from public discussions, he said.

Expressing disappointment at the pace of reforms, he said a big question mark hangs over the EC's ability to implement the electoral rules during the parliamentary election. It failed to do so during the local polls in August.

Hafizuddin said withdrawal of the emergency rules would allow convicts to contest the election.

He said the culture of political violence might return. "Signs are already there. Remember how violence spread at the news of Tarique Rahman's slipping on the floor in prison cell."

Bimstec meet

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Bimstec leaders will also review progress made towards a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) among the member countries.

A framework agreement for the FTA, which covers goods, services and investment, was signed at the first summit in 2004.

Adviser Zillur

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"We do not have to react, we just need to develop the culture of being able to listen to each other. We must feel and understand what people want," Zillur said referring to the fact that the government is open to what all the political parties are saying.

The adviser, however, told reporters that the government was working towards holding the national election on the scheduled date.

"It is the duty of this government to create an election-friendly environment in the country and win the trust of all political parties. At the same time, it is the duty of every political party to win the trust of the people before taking part in that election," Zillur said.

He said that every political party in the country must remember that people want to see a better future for the country.

TT colleges

Declining enrolment trend at public TT colleges	
Years	The Number of enrolment
2004-05	5,079
2005-06	3,457
2006-07	2,774
2007-08	1,720

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TT College, the main public TT college in the country.

She adds that in spite of having large and well-maintained classrooms and quality practical training, students and teachers are reluctant to come to them.

Top officials of the education ministry also admit that trainees go to private institutions to avoid hard work and get some unfair advantages.

A committee of the education ministry conducted an investigation last year and identified several causes behind this situation. Mushrooming private colleges, easier scope of admission, flexibility in modes of class work, use of guide books and opening of outer campuses of some private universities are the main reasons, the committee observed.

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said quality education cannot be ensured without qualified teachers and qualified teachers will not come without modern training.

"We have taken this issue seriously. The ministry will take stern action against the private colleges, which got affiliation from National University illegally or without fulfilling all criteria," he said.

He added that stern action will be taken against those public TT college teachers, who take classes in private institutions.

The teachers say BEd is a full-time course in public TT colleges and in-service trainees need to get leave or deputation from their schools.

"But the School Management Committees (SMC) don't grant the teachers leave. So they cannot come

to us and go to the private institutions for certificates," said Swapan Kumar Dhali, a teacher of Dhaka TT College.

Education Joint Secretary Shafiullah said the government issued a gazette in July this year formulating a policy that all MPO (Monthly Pay Order)-enlisted but untrained teachers must receive training from nearby public TT college.

"The trainees have to write and submit assignments in public colleges, while the private institutions don't require any such activities," said Abdur Razzaque, training specialist of National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM).

He said the public colleges hold class regularly from 8:30am to 4:30pm, whereas private colleges take classes only on Fridays and occasionally on other week days.

"Regular attendance is compulsory in public colleges, while the private TT colleges don't bother about it," said Kabirul Hasan, another training specialist of NAEM.

According to a survey by the education ministry, 19 TT colleges -- all public and five private -- are suitable to offer teachers' training courses, while the rest 95 institutions -- 89 colleges and six private universities -- have been branded unfit.

The education ministry committee recommended forming a "National Accreditation Council" for standardised teachers' training.

TQI Project Director Nazmul Islam said they have taken several initiatives so that teachers are encouraged to receive BEd training from public TTCS.

"Under TQI project, a teacher who will receive one-year BEd training will get Tk 10,000 per month and his or her mother institution will also get Tk 10,000 so that they can hire a part-time teacher," Nazmul told The Daily Star.

He also said minimum 1,200 hours class time should be followed in private colleges and universities.

Moeen urges

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they are also partners of the production units. "If the workers are aware of their partnership of the factories, they will not destroy those," said the army chief who was the chief guest at the function.

Moeen stressed united efforts to help the garment sector thrive, which fetched foreign currency worth \$10.7 billion in fiscal 2007-08.

Terming the garment sector 'lifecycle' of the national economy, Moeen also said turn around time of ships at Chittagong port shortened to 2.9 days where efficiency increased by more than 40 percent since the caretaker government took over. "We have helped save 30 percent cost in Chittagong port through enhancing efficiency," he said.

Suggesting that garment exporters should prepare to absorb the probable shock due to the global financial recession, Moeen said the government, workers, entrepreneurs and exporters have to work together to achieve RMG export target.

He called for turning the country's huge population into human resources so that it is no longer viewed as a curse.

The closing ceremony of BATEXPO (Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition) was also addressed by Stefan Frowein, head of Delegation of the European Commission, and US Ambassador James F Moriarty as special guests.

Frowein gave assurance of continued EU support to Bangladesh RMG exporters even in a changed situation. "Any change in GSP (Generalised System of Preference) in EU will be development friendly," he said.

Moriarty said two factors helped thriving of Bangladesh garment products. The factors are export of high quality products with cheaper prices, and Bangladeshi exporters' eagerness to take higher risks. He said 30 percent of Bangladesh's total garment items is exported to USA.

More time mulled

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Suranjit Sengupta said they had no intention to readjust the present poll schedule if the polling date remains unchanged. "This is also our demand," he added.

The BNP and its allies have been very vocal about re-fixing the poll schedule, saying they would not take part in the December 18 election if their demands that include fresh poll schedule are met.

At a public meeting in Chittagong on Friday BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia also announced that her party would take part in the election but the government must fulfil their demands.

Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Progressive Democratic Party and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal also yesterday demanded deferment of the nomination paper submission date by at least five days.

Asked about Khaleda's seven-point demand, Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday said all problems arising out of BNP's recent demands, including the one for fresh poll schedule, could be resolved through discussion.

22 parties

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allowed to contest in the December 18 parliamentary poll.

Before the January 22, 2007 election was stalled, 76 parties had submitted about 2,000 nominations.

But this time around, the registered political parties will select one person as a candidate for each constituency from a panel of five suggested by their grassroots level units.

The remaining four of the panel will not even be able to contest as independent candidates, according to the amended Representation of the People Order (RPO).

In past parliamentary elections, numerous political party members contested as independent candidates or became dummy competitors to the main party ticket holders after failing to get party nominations.

The five-member technical committee of the EC headed by its Joint Secretary Nurul Islam Khan, is however giving a final look at 22 other parties, a few of which might be picked for registration.

"We are going to wrap the registration process of political parties on November 10," NI Khan told reporters in his office yesterday afternoon, adding they will deliver all the certificates of registration to the parties before the deadline.

Asked how many parties might get registrations from the 22 parties whose applications are still being processed, he replied, "There might be a few."

He said a total of 47 parties were denied registration as those failed to fulfill the criteria for registration.

"The total number of political parties to get EC registration might not cross 25," NI Khan informed the journalists.

The 15 parties which already received certificates of registration are Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Jatiya Party (JP-Monju), Bangladesh Sammyabadi Dal (ML), Krishak Sramik Janata League, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Bangladesh National Awami Party (NAP--Mozaffar), Awami League (AL), Ganotantri Party, Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Dal (BNP), the Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bikalpo Dhara Bangladesh, Jatiya Party (Ershad), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD--Inu), Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD--Rab).

The seven parties to get certificates soon are Tarikat Federation, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Khalequzzaman), Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, Zaker Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP--Andaleeb), Islami Kijata Jote (IOJ), and Bangladesh NAP (Enamul Haq).

The commission earlier had set October 15 as the last date for applying for registration with the EC as parliamentary parties, but however extended the deadline by five days in the face of demand from BNP and its allies.

Tigers look

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Steyn swinging delivery.

Ashrafur also said that they might play with the same side despite the fact that they did not get the opportunity to see Benoni pitch.

Bangladesh played their first match here in 2002 against the hosts and suffered a humiliating ten-wicket defeat while in the 2003 World Cup the match against West Indies was rained off.

Meanwhile, South Africa captain Graeme Smith, who missed the first one-dayer and the lone Twenty20 match due to a tennis elbow, has a good chance to play the second match.

South Africa kept themselves away from any practice yesterday but most of the Bangladeshis play except Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak and Syed Rassel practised at the Senwes Park ground.

TEAMS
BANGLADESH (from): Mohammad Ashrafur (captain), Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Zunaed Siddiqui, Shakib Al Hasan, Rukibul Hasan, Nayeem Islam, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak, Syed Rassel. Shahadat Hossain, Nazmul Hossain, Mahbubul Alam and Mehrab Hossain.

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Hashim Amla, AB de Villiers, Jacques Kallis, JP Duminy, Mark Boucher, Loots Bosman, Justin Ontong, Johan Botha, Albie Morkel, Morne Morkel, Dale Steyn, Ryan McLaren and Monde Zondeki.

JU teachers

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association to call off the class boycott saying that a proctorial body is investigating the incident.

A group of JU students beat up Ahmed Sunny on October 21 after the university syndicate cleared him of the sexual harassment charges.

The syndicate suspended six university students after the incident.

However, classes were held in many departments yesterday.

University students launched a movement demanding Sanowar Hossain's dismissal about four months back.

Income disparity

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fragmented initiatives for a sustainable development and economy.

They observed that real development would not take place unless the poor are made owners of land and other factors of production which propel development and also unless a uniform quality education is ensured.

"The only way to ensure real development is to get poor people to participate in the growth process. We cannot create a sustainable democratic society either without democratisation of all the processes to ensure people's participation at all levels," said Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue, while presiding over the function.

Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said, "The government's focus in the education sector has been on primary education. But primary education is not complete education."

"The process of social change should be driven by policy rather than initiatives because the latter cannot take us much far," he said, adding, "From fragmented activity we must develop to a holistic ambition."

An overview of the study mentions that the recent economic growth is concentrated mainly in service sector in urban areas benefiting the urban middle class while rural poverty has increased in many South Asian countries and income inequality is on the rise.

As many are still poor and facing food insecurity in Bangladesh, poverty reduction does not necessarily translate into less hunger and proper nutrition, according to the study.

It says of the 2 million unemployed persons 1.2 million are youths, most of them educated and deprived because of the mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market.

"Slow growth in agriculture has affected food security in many countries in the region while the employment scenario is complicated," said Dr MK Mujeri, adding

Taliban

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Wardak government spokesman Adam Khan Sirat said the two had been kidnapped by the "enemies of Afghanistan", a term often used to refer to Taliban.

Growing insurgent attacks pose a threat to the Western-backed government of President Hamid Karzai, who depends on international allies for military and financial support.

UK revokes visas

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his way from China to the Philippines yesterday. It was understood that the cancellation had to do with the recent court rulings that found Pojama guilty of tax evasion and Thaksin guilty of breaking the conflict of interest law in the Ratchadapisek land purchase scandal.

Their children's British visas are still valid.

A senior People Power Party politician who has been in China this week answered The Nation's phone contact but replied to the inquiry about Thaksin's visa situation with only "I don't know. I don't know."

Thaksin has always described England as a "democratically mature" country as compared to Thailand. But he always denied having applied for asylum although he said England would be the country where he wanted to live in exile.

Last Saturday, in a controversial long-distance phone-in from Hong Kong, Thaksin accused his political opponents of breaking his family apart. In the same address, he also begged for royal pardon or a popular show of force to bring him back to Thailand.

"Nobody can bring me back to Thailand, except royal kindness of HM the King or the power of the people," Thaksin said. He also claimed that many countries have offered him "honorary citizenship", "which made me a bit sad because I could do many things for anybody else in the world, but nothing now for my country."

The statement triggered a major controversy in Thailand, with Thaksin being accused of trying to drag HM the King into politics. The UK visa move, however, gave Thaksin's statement a whole new perspective, making him sound more like someone desperate to find refuge rather than trying to provoke a political reaction.

It is not immediately known, however, whether Thaksin was aware of the impending visa cancellation before he left England the last time.

A source familiar with the UK legal and diplomatic thinking said the cancellation could have been based on "the different statuses" of Thaksin between the time he was issued the visa and now.

The Supreme Court only found Thaksin guilty in the Ratchadapisek land case late last month, weeks after he fled Thailand during the Beijing

that the unemployment index jumped to 8.5 in 2005 from 2.8 in 1995 in the region.

Brac Executive Director Mahabub Hossain said, "The manufacturing sector is not growing at a rate it does outside the region. Agriculture productivity is not also growing. Coverage of education has increased but the quality of education is a matter of concern."

The speakers also stressed that appointment of teachers at public universities be made on the basis of merit and quality.

Brac Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed said, "We have not been able to provide quality education. A uniform system, its management and development is necessary to ensure education."

The overview mentions that despite improvement in overall literacy rate, the region with around 379 million illiterate adults continues to be the most illiterate region on the globe. India and Pakistan have the highest number of out-of-school children in the world.

The study found decrease in mortality rate of infant and under-five children while life expectancy has improved. But rising incidence of non-communicable diseases, malnourishment, low sanitation coverage, and emerging threat of HIV/AIDS remain areas of concern in the region.

Dr Syed Hashemi, director of BRAC Development Institute, Dr Khadiza Haq, director of Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, Prof A Sattar Mandal of Bangladesh Agriculture University, its board member M Syeduzzaman, and economics Professor MM Akash of Dhaka University participated in the discussion.

Hunger strike

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2:00pm in the city's Central Shaheed Minar where