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REGD. NO. DA 781 • VOL. XVIII No. 299 • DHAKA SUNDAY NOVEMBER 16, 2008 • AGRAHAYAN 2, 1415 BS • ZILQAD 17, 1429 HIJRI • 28 PAGES PLUS STAR CAMPUS PRICE: TK 10.00 • www.thedailystar.net

Maritime talks with Myanmar begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The technical committee-level talks between Bangladesh and Myanmar on maritime delimitation begins today with a view to adopt a method of demarcation.

Sources said during the talks Bangladesh will press for demarcating maritime boundary between the two nations on the basis of equity. Myanmar however had earlier argued for an 'equal-distance method' of delimitation.

Tension between the two neighbouring nations mounted early this month after Myanmarese warships and oil and gas exploration rigs intruded into Bangladesh waters in the Bay of Bengal.

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Emergency may go after nomination

Govt also mulls total lifting if poll environment right

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering further relaxation of the Emergency Power Rules after finalisation of the election seekers' nomination, said Commerce and Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday.

"If the environment for election emerges, a total withdrawal of emergency rules is also being considered," said Zillur while reading out a written statement at the Chief Adviser's Office around 12:45pm.

As per the Election Commission (EC) schedule, the last date for filing of nomination papers for the next general elections is November 20, scrutiny of those on November 23 and 24 and the last date of withdrawal of nomination is November 29.

The caretaker government's spokesman said, "During discussions with different political parties including the BNP and Awami League, we reached a consensus that the emergency rule cannot continue perpetually. To end emergency rule in phases, several restrictions on political activities have been withdrawn from November 3."

"The whole nation is ready for a political transition through a meaningful election on December 18--with the participation of all parties," Zillur stated at the briefing that was also attended by three other advisers--Maj Gen (ret'd) Ghulam Quader, Anwarul Iqbal and Hassan Arif.

Zillur apparently explained the government's position in the context of BNP's repeated complaint that despite the assurance of meeting six of their seven-point demand, the government had not implemented anything.

He said the journey for the democratic transition was long as the government considered all logical demands and resolved them through effective discussions to create a continuation of progress. The main responsibility now lied with the political parties to maintain this continuation.

"A reality of economic and social rise has been created in Bangladesh amid many uncertainties. This phase will gain further momentum through everyone's responsible and visionary roles," Zillur pointed out.

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4-party rejects govt's plan on emergency

Says 7-pt demand still unfulfilled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four-party alliance last night dismissed the government statement on the state of emergency and their seven-point demand as confusing and unacceptable.

"It is not clear what he [Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman] wanted to mean," BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said while talking to reporters at a press briefing held between two sessions of a close-door meeting of four-party alliance leaders. The meeting was held at the BNP chairperson's office in Gulshan.

Delwar termed Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman's statement "an irresponsible statement made by one holding a responsible post."

With BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair, the meeting started around 8:00pm and went on for

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Mayors not eligible to contest JS polls

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission is finally sure that mayors of city corporations and municipalities are not eligible to contest parliamentary polls as they hold office of profit, said EC sources.

For long, it was confused about the definition of 'office of profit' in the Representation of the People Order.

That confusion has gone on legal experts' opinion that mayors are not qualified to compete in the national election since they enjoy financial and other benefits from statutory authorities like city corporations and municipalities.

According to the RPO, a person shall be disqualified for election as a member of parliament if he is holding an office of profit in the service of the republic or a statutory body.

Councillors of city corporations and municipalities, however, qualify for election to parliament

since theirs are not deemed office of profit.

The issue came up following reports that mayors of Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna are preparing to stand in the December 18 parliamentary polls.

If they still want to vie for a place in the ninth parliament, they must resign their positions before filing nominations, said sources at the EC Secretariat.

The EC does not have plans to issue any circular or clarification at this moment. It will however oblige if anyone seeks clarification of electoral provisions.

Before scrutiny of nominations, the commission will direct the returning officers (RO) to reject applications filed by incumbent mayors, they added.

Meanwhile, municipality mayors and union parishad chairmen are contacting the EC officials to know if they can run in the upazila election scheduled for December 28.

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AL nominations not yet finalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fates of some prominent Awami League (AL) leaders, who have not yet been on the party's ticket for the general election, will be decided at the final stage of the nomination process, in a couple of days.

The party was supposed to finalise its list of picks by yesterday, but the AL's parliamentary board which gives out nominations is still

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Politicians urged to avoid hartal

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Business leaders yesterday urged political parties to avoid the politics of hartal and strike in the greater interest of the economy.

They have also set a 21-point recommendation in the macroeconomic agenda to submit to two former prime ministers.

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Former minister Moudud Ahmed's prison cell at BSMMU has been put under lock and key following allegation that he along with a few other VIP inmates held party meetings in the cell.

Moudud, Huda, Abbas deny meeting party men

Jail authorities say they have evidence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former ministers Moudud Ahmed, Nazmul Huda and Mirza Abbas and former lawmaker Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan yesterday denied holding meetings with party men in their BSMMU prison cells.

Sources said their replies to the show-cause notices issued on them did not satisfy the jail author-

ities that have evidence against the claims of these four VIP prisoners. Punitive measures like cancellation of their division status would be taken against them.

The jail authorities have already locked the doors of the cabins of Moudud, Huda, Mirza Abbas and former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar.

Authorities of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University

(BSMMU) would also take decisions today about discharging VIP prisoners who do not require staying in the hospital any longer.

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons Major Shamsul Haider Siddique said Wadud was taken back to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday evening while former BNP lawmaker Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu was shifted to Kashimpur Jail

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Talking polls and beyond

No scope for delaying polls

Says Prof Zafar Iqbal

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Celebrated author and scientist Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal finds no logic for delaying the December 18 parliamentary election.

"There is no scope for delaying the election anymore, it must be held on schedule and if the government fails, it will be held responsible," he said in an interview with The Daily Star on Friday.

He also said the military backed caretaker government 'might have reasons for wanting to hold the poll under the state of emergency', but it should lift the emergency completely because, "If a major irregularity occurs during the election with the emergency in place, there will be no chance of protesting that."

The noted writer believes 'nothing worth the effort' will come out of a talk between Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda, because 'if they sit together that will be something imposed on them against their will'.

"The two leaders are not sitting willingly, and you can't get anything good out of an imposed dialogue. It will be better if the two political parties sit and talk," he said.

He also said the changeover of

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Find details of the interview on page 11

Rohingyas still flock to refugee camp

PINAKI ROY back from Cox's Bazar

Nurbanu still wears the traditional Myanmar attire of a thami and a kameez, she has not yet learnt to manage a long sari Bangladeshi women wear.

She has been living in a rented hut in a slum of Samitipara in a suburb of Cox's Bazar, since she entered Bangladesh seven months ago crossing the border near Teknaf.

She is one of the illegal Rohingya immigrants in Bangladesh, the number of whom already reached 3 lakh according to unofficial estimates.

When this correspondent requested Mizanur, a local young Bangalee man, for an introduction to a recently migrated Rohingya family, he showed the hut where Nurbanu lives.

Nurbanu came from Koinnyong village of Bhuchidong district of Myanmar. Her son, Mohammed Zaber, a rickshaw puller in Cox's Bazar town, had come to Bangladesh about five years ago, and managed to bring her mother and siblings over just seven months ago.

The Rohingyas living in Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Chittagong districts claim they fled persecution in Myanmar.

"Nasaka used to torture us. They used to force us into free labour, and used to collect tolls from us," said Nurbanu in her mother tongue while Mizanur interpreted for this correspondent.

Some of them had come twenty years ago, like Aziz Sardar of Samity Para who already became a voter too, while some others came only recently, with many others still pouring in searching for safety.

"They keep coming. Many were repatriated from the refugee camps earlier just to bounce back, some of them are now living here in the communities," said an official from the office of Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC).

Monzur Alam Bhuiyan, deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, said

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High Court withdraws restrictions on Sale, Distribution and Display of DANO milk powder

According to the order of the honourable High Court all restrictions on sale, distribution and display of DANO milk powder have been withdrawn from November 10, 2008. We take the privilege to inform our valued customers, traders, distributors and all concerned that your favourite and trusted DANO is now available all over the country. We would like to convey our gratitude for your sincere co-operation and dedication towards DANO.

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