

G20 targets

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The G20 nations, which include the major industrialised powers as well as emerging giants Brazil, China, India and Russia, have been locked in debate about what caused the crisis, let alone how to escape from it.

While Bush wants a limited tinkering with global financial rules, and no new trade barriers, Sarkozy has declared that "laissez-faire capitalism is over" as banks crippled by toxic mortgage assets are forced to turn to government aid.

The deputy chairman of India's Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, had said late Friday he was "reasonably hopeful" that the leaders would endorse a "coordinated signal for a fiscal stimulus."

But the final communiqué stopped short of that, even as the global economic climate worsened as the leaders convened.

Friday brought news that the 15 eurozone nations were now gripped by recession after two quarters of economic contraction, and US retail sales tumbled a record 2.8 percent in October as worried consumers hunkered down.

The International Monetary Fund and the Financial Stability Forum said Friday they would cooperate to provide an "early-warning system" in an effort to prevent new financial crises.

In the Democratic Party's weekly radio address, Obama said the US economy was already in "recession" and welcomed Bush's convening the summit "because our global economic crisis requires a coordinated global response."

"And yet, as we act in concert with other nations, we must also act immediately here at home to address America's own economic crisis," he said, calling for new stimulus spending following a package adopted by China.

ABSENT OBAMA STILL A PRESENCE IN THE CAPITAL
President-elect Barack Obama is an invisible force as foreign leaders and Congress convene separately in Washington, the economy at centre stage, reports AP.

One sentiment runs below the crosscurrents as a summit of world leaders wrestles with a global crisis this weekend and Congress in the week ahead struggles with rising unemployment and an ailing auto industry: What would Obama do?

Obama is staying away, ensconced in Chicago, unwilling to make any public show of political influence before he is sworn in to office Jan. 20. Indeed, his break with Congress will be complete on Sunday when he officially resigns his Illinois Senate seat.

Obama is being especially cautious about the economic summit, letting President George W. Bush represent the nation. But in the Democratic radio address Saturday, Obama subtly made the point that the summit was only a beginning. "I'm glad President Bush has initiated this process because our global economic crisis requires a coordinated global response," he said.

Obama was more direct with Congress. He urged lawmakers to "pass at least a down-payment on a rescue plan that will create jobs, relieve the squeeze on families, and help get the economy growing again."

"If Congress does not pass an immediate plan that gives the economy the boost it needs, I will make it my first order of business as president," Obama said.

No major economic breakthroughs are expected and, for Obama, the challenges he faces upon becoming president might seem a bit clearer after the foreign leaders and Congress pack up and go home.

"You can imagine the difficulty from the perspective of the participants," said David Lewis, an expert on the presidency at Vanderbilt University. "You don't want to put a lot of effort into doing something when you know that the arrival of a new administration might undo all the work you have done or might undercut an administration that you want to see what they have to offer."

While Obama has laid out an agenda for tackling the economic gloom, the question facing Congress and the international community is whether his prescriptions will be enough.

Obama has proposed a \$175 billion economic recovery plan that includes tax cuts, help for states and spending on public works nationwide. But already, economists, labour leaders and some members of Congress are tossing around figures of \$300 billion or more. Obama aides are signalling flexibility.

ASSAULT OF TRADERS Strike paralyses business at city's Moulavibazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of wholesalers took to the streets shutting down their businesses yesterday to protest assaults on seven businessmen, at Moulavibazar in the city's old quarter.

The seven came under attacks at Masullah Ghat in Keraniganj Thursday as they went there to take payment of Tk 2.5 crore that 13 Moulavibazar businessmen had loaned to a local businessman two years back.

Thousands of traders from adjoining districts returned without business because of the strikes. The wholesalers said they hit the streets as police did not arrest till Friday any of the five men they say were behind the attacks.

They brought out processions and held a rally in front of the Moulavibazar Traders Association office.

Keraniganj police however said they arrested three people in connection with the assaults.

"That was proposed in mid-October," a senior Obama adviser said of the president-elect's plan. "We'll look at it in mid-January and see where the economy is." The adviser spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss internal policy thinking publicly.

Congressional leaders are making it clear that any massive recovery plan will have to wait until next year. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, in letter to Republican leader Mitch McConnell on Friday, indicated the Senate's work this coming week will be limited to proposals to increase unemployment benefits and to the more complicated task of rescuing Detroit's automakers with a \$25 billion emergency loan.

On the global front, Obama has acknowledged the need for a coordinated international response to the crisis. But some foreign allies have their own detailed plans. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, for instance, has made a case for beefed up role for the International Monetary Fund and has called for global regulators to be watchdogs over the world's largest financial institutions.

AL nominations

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in a dither about candidates in the capital.

The last date for filing nominations with the Election Commission is November 20.

Moreover, disputes among local leaders in more than 50 constituencies made the process longer.

"We'll try our best to wrap up the nomination process by tomorrow (today)," one parliamentary-board member told The Daily Star last night.

The board will sit today in the evening to finalise nominations after holding a meeting with their 14-party alliance partners in the morning.

The fates of pro-reformist AL leaders still hang in the balance.

Though recommended by grassroots leaders, the party's organising secretaries Mahmudul Rahman Manna and Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed and central leader Prof. Abu Sayeed have not yet been included on the AL ticket.

Another parliamentary board member however said every important leader will get nominations in the event.

Party insiders said the 14-party combine will take a few more parties, including the Jatiya Party and the Liberal Democratic Party, in their fold to forge a grand alliance in case the BNP agrees to go to the polls.

They however said the Jatiya Party and the Liberal Democratic Party would contest the BNP shy away from the elections.

4-party rejects

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about an hour and a half with a brief recess. After briefing reporters the four-party leaders resumed their meeting.

The four-party alliance leaders talked about not contesting the December 18 elections with their seven-point demand unfulfilled, meetings sources told The Daily Star.

"We think the elections will be a stage-managed election and we cannot participate in this," Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) Chairman Andaleeb Rahman Partho told The Daily Star after the meeting.

"It does not make any sense," said a source quoting Khaleda Zia as saying in the four-party meeting about Zillur's statement.

"She, however, directed alliance leaders to prepare for the elections," said another source who attended the meeting.

"We want complete withdrawal of the emergency without any delay but the government is not acting accordingly to our demands," Delwar said at the briefing.

"It is totally unacceptable. He [Hossain Zillur] had talked about meeting our demands earlier but as of now they (the government) have not fulfilled any of our demands," Delwar said.

The BNP secretary general said they would have announced right then their decision to participate in the polls if the government fulfilled their seven-point demand.

Earlier, at a hurriedly called press briefing at the Chief Adviser's Office, Hossain Zillur read out a statement saying the government is considering further relaxation of the Emergency Power Rules, 2007 after finalisation of the candidates' nomination.

"If the environment for election emerges, a total withdrawal of the emergency rules is also being considered," he stated.

"All components of the four-party alliance are keen on contesting the elections but the elections have to be free and fair," Delwar said.

"Many of our prospective candidates are still behind bars. We demand that the government allow people who have been convicted by the special courts to contest the election," Delwar said.

"Necessary changes were not brought to the RPO... cases against our leaders were not withdrawn, which are our demands," he said.

"The provision of announcing poll results by presiding officers have been withdrawn which we think is aimed at manipulating the election results," he claimed.

MATIA-REACTION
Awami League (AL) presidium member Matia Chowdhury yesterday declined to comment on the government statement, saying the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) would take a decision in this regard.

Contacted, she noted that the ALCWC at its latest meeting took a resolution demanding complete withdrawal of the state of emergency before the national election.

The meeting also demanded holding of the election on December 18 as scheduled and deferral of upazila election by a 'logical' period of time.

Ex-MP Rafiqul Anwar freed on HC bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Convicted former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Rafiqul Anwar was released here on bail in an arms case yesterday.

Chittagong Jail sources said he was freed from a cabin of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) at about 1:00pm on receipt of the High Court bail order.

Senior Superintendent of Chittagong Jail Md Ataur Rahman said Rafiqul was shifted to the hospital from the jail 15 days ago as he was suffering from severe chest pain and other diseases, including diabetes.

Earlier, the High Court granted six months' interim bail to Rafiqul, a former lawmaker from Fatukchhari constituency, in the arms case filed with Gulshan Police Station in Dhaka on April 28, 2007.

A Metropolitan Special Tribunal in Dhaka sentenced Rafiqul to 10 years' imprisonment in the case on November 11 last year.

He also got bails in four other cases in Chittagong, jail sources said.

Interpol

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criminal charge.

Fugitive other Bangladeshis wanted criminals include Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan's son Safiat Sobhan Sanvir, detained former BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu's brother Maolana Tajuddin of Tangail, top terror Subrata Bain of Moghbazar, who was recently arrested by Indian police, his accomplice Shahidul Islam of Munshiganj, top terrorists Prokash Biswas of Mirpur, Jahangir Ferdouse alias Kala Jahangir of Bogra, his associate Robin, top terror Mollah Masud of Jhalakati, his associate Shameem Ahmed, gold smuggler and top terror Amin Rasul Sagor of Chittagong, top terror Haris Ahmed of Mohamadpur, listed terror Shahadat of Mirpur, top terror Omar Faruque Kochi of Mirpur, listed criminal Mokbul Hossain, top terror Zeesun, listed terrorists Golam Rasul Sikder, Tofazzal Hossain Sikder, Shahar Ali, Feroz Ali, Towfiq Alam, Abdul Khaleq, Hashem, Kamrul Hasan, Abdul Gani, Shilendra Nath, Manotosh Bashak, Shamim Kabir, Mintu Salauddin, Selim Miah, Chan Miah, AHM Biplab, Swapam Malakar, Tushar Mahmud, Nasiruddin Khan, Zafar Ahmed, Abdul Zabbir, Rafiqul Islam, Ataur Rahman Nurul Amin, Abdul Alim Amur, Rahman, Habibur Rahman, Motiur Rahman, Zahid Rahman, Nasiruddin Ratan, Proshanta Sarder, Golam Sarwar, Mahrab Uddin, Harun Sheikh and Kutub Uddin Hazari.

A journalist from Teknaf said if a person is willing to spend Tk 100, he or she will be able to cross the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. The rate is fixed, he added.

"If anybody wants to cross the border, he or she on an average has to pay 50 taka to BDR, 40 taka to police and 10 taka to local goons," said the journalist requesting anonymity.

Once in Bangladesh territory, freshly migrated Rohingyas generally go to their relatives or companions for shelter.

In 'Pradhaner Dali 50 Colony', a community of unregistered Rohingyas in Pradhaner Dali slum where 50 Rohingyas families live, all came from Bhuchidong district of Myanmar.

"The Rohingyas living outside

the official refugee camps create more problems than those who live in the camps," said Md Abdur Shukur, a resident of Cox's Bazar.

"It is really a burning issue for the residents of this region," he added.

In 2005 the government took an initiative to find out the actual number of Rohingyas living outside the camps.

A source in the district administration office said, with the help of local administrations they found around 98,000 Rohingyas living outside the camps.

But other sources including the RRRC office said, the real number of unregistered Rohingyas is no less than 3 lakh, around 2 lakh of whom are living in Cox's Bazar.

For the 23 lakh original residents of Cox's Bazar, two lakh Rohingyas guests who are showing no sign of leaving, are fast becoming 'unwanted'.

Talking to local politicians, RRRC officials, journalists, lawyers, businessmen and also working class people, The Daily Star came to understand that Rohingyas amount for around 10 to 12 percent of the current Cox's Bazar population.

Prof Zafar Iqbal

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1/11 and its aftermath 'surely brought some changes among politicians and in the political culture'.

"People will now think of the consequences of misdeeds. They will think twice before getting involved in any irregularity."

The science fiction writer hoped, although many arrested in the caretaker governments' anti-corruption drive could not be tried yet and are being released instead, they will nonetheless learn some lessons from the experience.

"They should know, we the people are aware of what they did," he said.

One of the big parties has started choosing its electoral candidates with inputs from its grassroots level units, he said hoping that other parties will also follow suit.

"If the process is followed, many of our political problems will be resolved."

Zafar is vehemently opposed to allowing businessmen, former bureaucrats, and ex-army officers to contest in elections.

He also believes many problems will be solved if the Election Commission (EC) is made more powerful and effective.

He said the present caretaker government assumed office with immense public support but it failed to retain that for many reasons.

"Failure to curb the price hike of office, arresting university teachers, and demolishing slums and bazars are some of the big mistakes the government made."

He however thanked the government for putting in correct information about the history of the country's liberation war in textbooks, but lamented that it did nothing more in the education sector.

He criticised the government for not removing 'politically appointed vice-chancellors' from the universities.

He also criticised the government for starting the election preparations too late.

Dr Zafar Iqbal said he is yet to understand the role of the current caretaker government, "which sometimes acts like fundamentalists". "Many of its activities really worry me," he said.

Students ransack

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chairman's room for one hour.

Some of the angry students ransacked the windowpanes of the room and damaged its office furniture during the unrest.

On information, RU assistant proctor Ariful Islam along with police rushed in and tried to bring the situation under control.

But the students assaulted the proctor and the police officials.

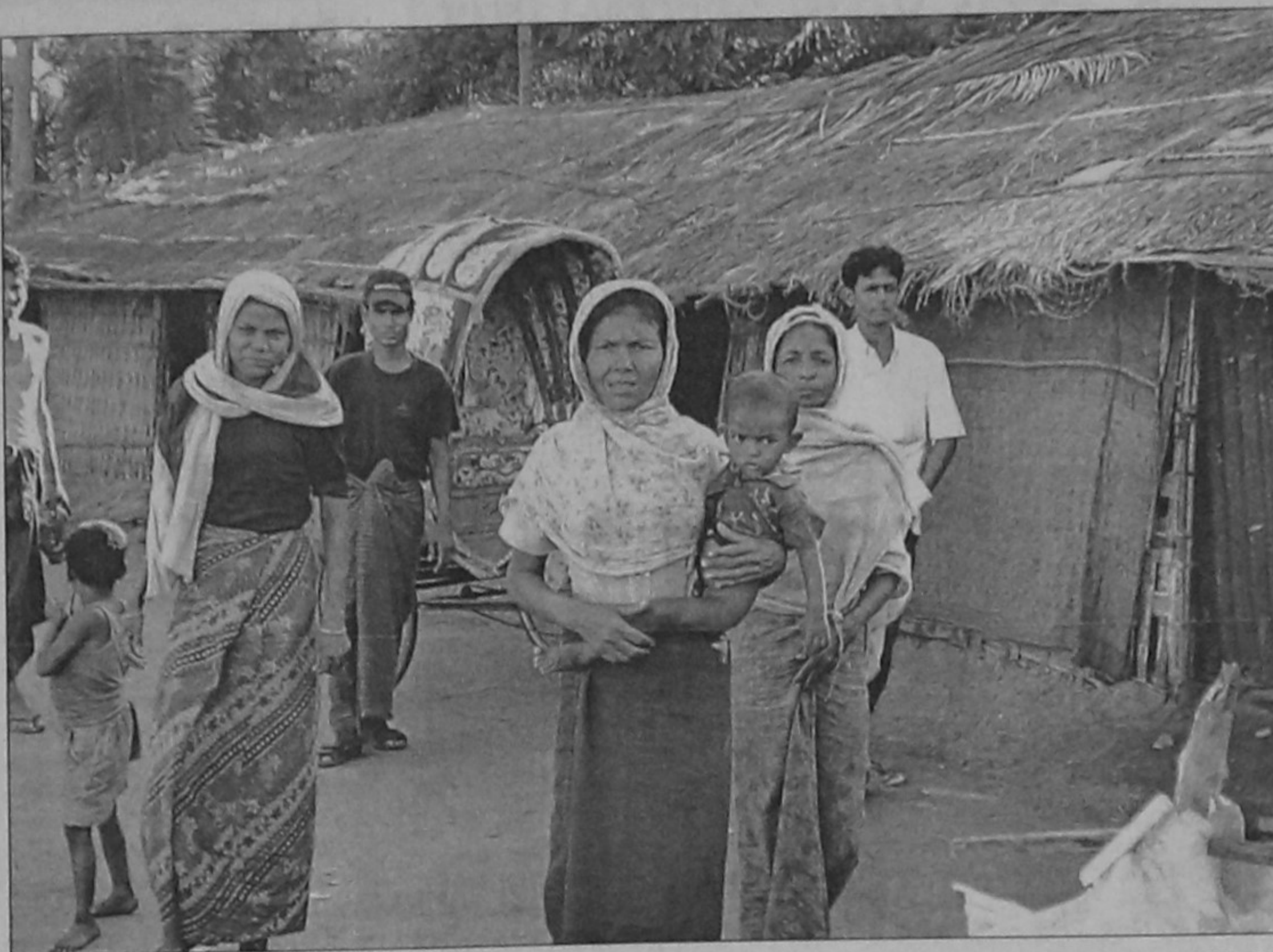
The students later were calmed down when the chairman and teachers of the department assured them of placing their demand before RU Vice-chancellor Prof Mamnunul Keramatsoon.

But the students threatened to go on a hunger strike if their demand is not met immediately.

When contacted, department's chairman Dr Shahidur Rahman said they instantly met the RU Vice-chancellor and informed the matter and added that a committee was also formed to look into the student's demand.

They said the students under the Arts Faculty get fewer opportunities in the job market compared to the students of the Social Science Faculty.

Earlier, the students boycotted their scheduled classes and examinations to realise the demand.



Nurbanu, centre, and her daughter, left, came to Bangladesh from Bhuchidong district of Myanmar seven months ago increasing the number of illegal Rohingyas staying in the country. The photo was taken at Samitipara of Cox's Bazar.

Rohingyas still flock

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they do not have an exact number of Rohingyas living outside the official refugee camps in small communities scattered through the region.

"We don't deal with them," he told The Daily Star, when asked about unregistered Rohingyas.

Local residents said Rohingyas come mainly through the Teknaf border.

A journalist from Teknaf said if a person is willing to spend Tk 100, he or she will be able to cross the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. The rate is fixed, he added.

"If anybody wants to cross the border, he or she on an average has to pay 50 taka to BDR, 40 taka to police and 10 taka to local goons," said the journalist requesting anonymity.

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Talking to local politicians, RRRC officials, journalists, lawyers, businessmen and also working class people, The Daily Star came to understand that Rohingyas amount for around 10 to 12 percent of the current Cox's Bazar population.

Most of them work on fishing trawlers and in wholesale fish markets, while some others also work as rickshaw pullers, plumbers, masons and as day labourers.

Earlier, people of North Bengal used to migrate to Cox's Bazar in search of work in the fishing sector, lately the Rohingyas have replaced them.

"They are much cheaper, so everybody wants to employ them," said a local businessman.

But they also have a tradition of working as foot soldiers of Islamist politicians during elections.

Islamist parties and politicians pay the hapless rootless immigrant Rohingyas, who are overwhelmingly Muslims, to join Islamist election rallies and processions.

"The Rohingyas get support from Islamist politicians as they are considered a vote bank by those politicians," said a left leaning political leader of Cox's Bazar.

Besides, many Rohingyas immigrants get involved in petty crimes, sources in Cox's bazaar police station said.

"Right now there are around 3,000 inmates in Cox's Bazar jail, 600 of whom are Rohingyas including seven women."

NDI team

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member, will stay here until November 19, said a press release.

The other members of the team are Saumura Tioulong, member of the national assembly of Cambodia, Peter Manikas, senior associate and regional director for NDI's Asia programmes, and Jacqueline Corcoran, NDI/Bangladesh senior resident director.

They will be assisted by Dileepan Siva, NDI Washington DC programme manager, and Najia Hashemee, NDI/Bangladesh senior programme manager.

The delegation is likely to meet the representatives of the caretaker government and the Election Commission, leaders of political parties, representatives of domestic monitoring groups and other civic organisations, journalists and members of the diplomatic community.

The purpose of its assessment of the pre-election atmosphere is to demonstrate the interest and support of the international community for a peaceful and democratic election process in Bangladesh, and to provide an impartial report on the environment surrounding the upcoming elections and the state of electoral preparations.

NDI is an independent non-governmental organisation that has conducted more than 1000 pre-election, election day and post-election monitoring around the world.

Iraq car bomb

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"An Antonov-12 cargo plane belonging to British Gulf International Company crashed near Fallujah to the west of Baghdad on November 13," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"Six crew members and a passenger were killed, including three Russian nationals. A Belarusian, two Ukrainians and one Indian were also among the crew members killed," it added.

British Gulf International is based in the United Arab Emirates.

On Thursday, a US army spokesman said the cargo plane was chartered by Fedex and belonged to a German company. The plane was flying to Baghdad from an airport in the former rebel strong hold province of Al-Anbar, he said.

The US army spokesman suggested the crash was due to technical reasons.

Buet student

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injured are still admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and seven of them are in a critical condition.

When Faysal was brought to the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of DMCH the doctors said his condition was critical. He was moved to City Hospital in Lalmeta since the burn unit had no intensive care facilities.

"Sister, you can write whatever you like but please do not mention anything about my physical condition. My father is quite upset hearing the news of my accident. If he comes to know about my condition, he will not be able to handle it," Faysal requested this correspondent a week ago.

With his body wrapped in bandages and a distorted face, the young man was shedding tears worrying that he would not be able to sit for his final exams scheduled for November 24.

Kader died yesterday afternoon at the burn unit of DMCH.

"What type of country is this where innocent people have to pay in such a way," said frustrated Shamantlal Sen, project director of Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of DMCH.

Assistant Registrar of the unit Kishore Kumar Das told The Daily Star, "Seven out of the eight acid-burnt patients are in a critical condition."

"It is very bizarre nobody and no organisations are talking about this issue. Nobody is questioning who were carrying the drums of acid so callously... where was it going? We do not know what investigation the police have done," he said.

If unregulated, this kind of

CPB launches

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moving freely in the country taking opportunity of their "understanding" with fundamentalists and failure of the previous governments, the CPB leaders said.

"These forces now dare to carry out simultaneous bomb attacks in 63 districts, declare openly to establish Taliban rule denying the Liberation War, damage Baul sculptures and Liberation War memorials, threaten to put out the Shikha Anirban and even assault freedom fighters," they said in a press release.

The CPB stressed on the need for reinstatement of the constitution of 1972 with its four fundamental statutes to resist these forces and bring the country back to the spirit of the Liberation War.

CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan presided over the rally. Ruhin Hossain Prince, Sajjad Zahir Chandan, Ahsan Habib Lavlu also spoke at the event.

Earlier on Thursday and Friday, jail authorities suspended 28 jail guards posted at the BSMU prison cells for negligence of duty and issued show-cause notices on them.

BSMU Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nazrul Islam admitted the incident. He said, "We would take steps so that prisoners cannot meet party men and hold such meetings anymore."

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Maritime talks

FROM PAGE 1
Mahmud who will lead the Bangladesh team.

He also said the equal-distance method is applicable for two countries facing each other. But it is not applicable for adjoining countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Bangladesh claims its maritime boundary at 92 degrees 17 minutes 30 seconds East longitude as per the Territorial and Maritime Zones Act 1974. Bangladesh Navy warned the Myanmar warships and exploration rig earlier this month when they crossed the line.

"That is our maritime boundary and will remain so until something new comes up," said a member of Bangladesh delegation.

An 11-member expert team led by Myanmar Deputy Foreign Minister Maung Myintar from Myanmar arrived in the capital yesterday.

The technical committee-level talks between the two countries on maritime boundary, which remained stalled for 22 years, began on March 30 this year in Dhaka.

Later, Bangladesh technical committee went to Yangon in September for holding second round talks. This is the third time the technical committees of the two countries will sit today for talks at the conference hall of the foreign ministry.

The maritime boundary between Bangladesh and its two neighbouring nations India and Myanmar is yet to be demarcated resulting in disputes between the three countries over oil and gas exploration in the Bay of Bengal.

However, none of the three countries has approached the United Nations to settle the issue. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Bangladesh has to file its claim

Cyclonic storm

FROM PAGE 16
further notice.

Meanwhile, our correspondent from Cox's Bazar reported that around 2,500 fishing trawlers were still inside the Bay with at least 42,000 fishermen. Around 3,000 trawlers returned to the coast.

Sabbir Ahmed, a fisherman who came back to the shore, told The Daily Star that the fishermen were still catching hilsa around 100 to 200 kms off the coast and they need at least 10 hours to back.

Major political parties have to join hands with the government to ensure a credible election, through their participation in the polls, said the former caretaker government adviser.