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Delwar hopes govt will meet 7-pt demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday hoped that the government and the Election Commission (EC) would fulfil four-party alliance's seven-point demand to facilitate its participation in the elections.

Talking to reporters at the BNP head office, Delwar said it is the responsibility of the government and the EC to bring the four-party to polls.

"We want to participate in the elections. But does the government want us to?" the BNP leaders said.

Meanwhile, talking to reporters at his Dilkusha office in the city,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Rohingya repatriation in the doldrums

Myanmar not interested; UNHCR against sending them back fearing persecution

PINAKI ROY, back from Cox's Bazar

The long-standing Rohingya issue is unlikely to be resolved in near future as Myanmar is not responding to Bangladesh's appeal to take the refugees back and they also don't want to go home.

The entire repatriation process is stalled for over three years and the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR) is urging the Bangladesh government not to send the Myanmar citizens back.

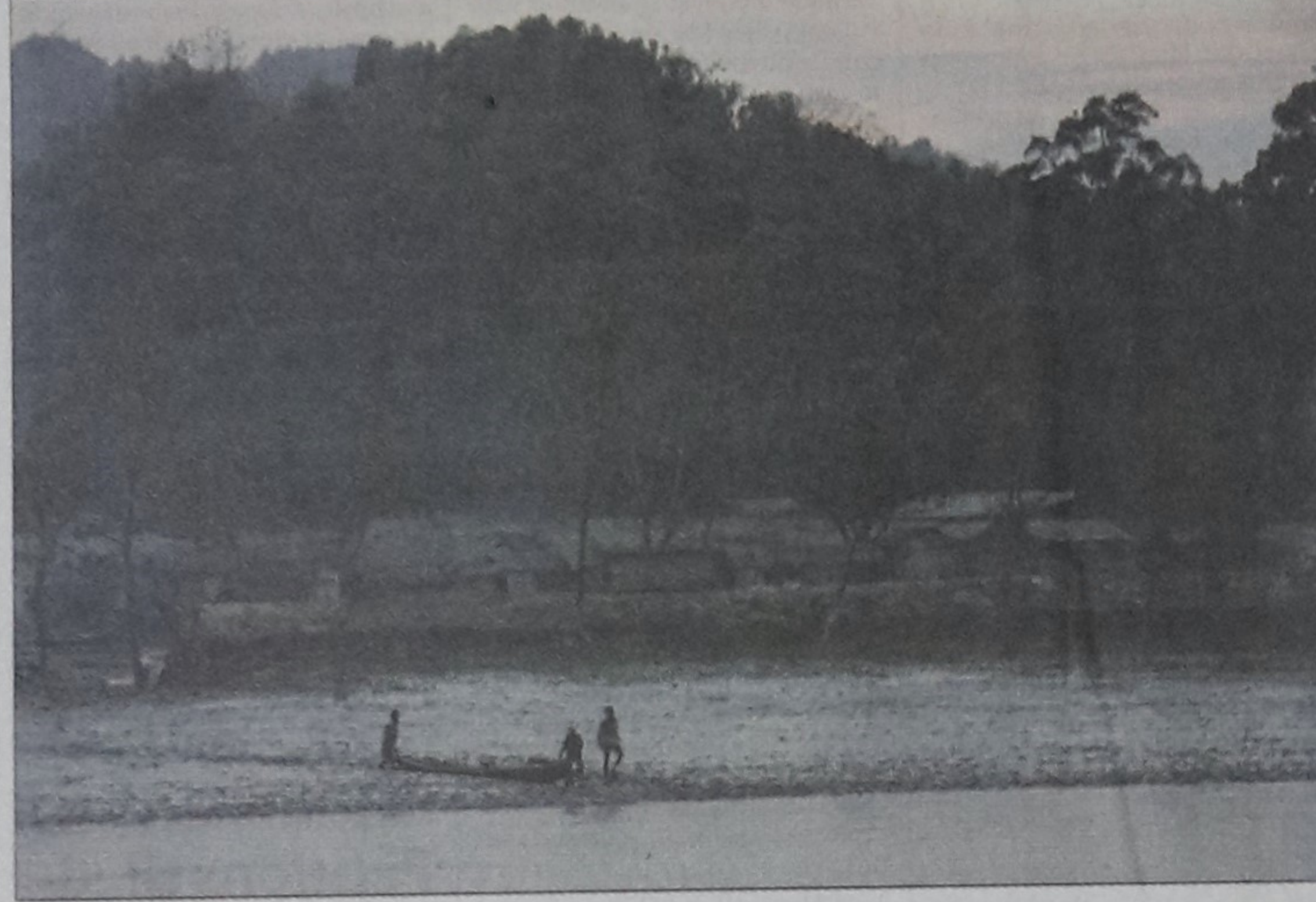
"They had fled from Myanmar due to persecution related matters. So now they don't want to go back. The UNCHR also doesn't want to force them," says a high UNHCR official.

The whole matter is very critical, the official adds asking not to be identified.

Earlier in 2005, the government sent a list of 14,077 Rohingyas to Myanmar authorities, who denied the list, saying they are not Myanmar citizens, according to sources in the government's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) office in Cox's Bazar.

The RRRRC officials say UNHCR is also not helping the government

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Refugee camps of Rohingyas on the bank of Naf river in Cox's Bazar. Around 24,000 people live here and their repatriation has been stalled for three and a half years.

Acid-burnt baby dies as parents fight for life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two-month-old Ahnaf Imtiaz lost the battle for survival at the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) early yesterday. He was one of the unlucky ones who were burnt when an acid-laden truck collided with a bus on Dhaka-Chittagong

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Prayer Timing		
November 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-05	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-21	5-24
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

WB aid beyond FY08 uncertain

Says finance adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said yesterday the inflow of World Bank assistance beyond 2008-09 has become uncertain as the country is not prepared with project proposals for seeking fund support.

"The World Bank assured that there will be no problem in financing the approved projects and those awaiting approval this fiscal year," he told reporters after a meeting with a World Bank team at the planning ministry.

"What is going to happen after this fiscal year is an uncertainty," the adviser said, adding that it could be taken care of later.

The 4-member World Bank team led by John Roome, the bank's operations director for South Asia, met the adviser to discuss the issues Bangladesh has been facing in the financial sector and identify possible areas of support the country needs.

During the discussion, the team

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Kashmir votes today amid boycott call

AFP, Srinagar

Revolt-hit Indian Kashmir begins voting in state elections today amid appeals for a poll boycott by Muslim separatists who have spearheaded a wave of massive pro-freedom protests.

Both rebels and separatist politicians argue elections only strengthen India's sway over the disputed Muslim-majority region and have been urging voters not to turn out at the polls.

"Elections can never be a substitute for our right to self-determination," says Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a leading separatist and Muslim cleric in Srinagar, summer capital of Indian Kashmir where the insurgency has raged since 1989, claiming 43,000 lives.

Nearly 44 percent of eligible voters -- considered a healthy level -- took part in the 2002 state elections despite militant violence that left 850 people dead, mostly pro-India political workers and leaders.

This time around there has been no pre-poll violence with guerrillas for the first time in nearly 20 years vowing not to use guns to keep voters away.

But anti-India anger is still bubbling in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley since the eruption of vast demonstrations over a government decision to provide land to a Hindu shrine, a decision that was subsequently reversed.

The protests -- reminiscent of the early 1990s when the insurgency had just begun -- have left nearly 50 Muslims dead since June.

"I won't vote as a mark of protest against the killing of my fellow Muslims," says mason Khurshid Ahmed, 43. "I'll ensure no one in my family votes either."

Indian Kashmir was put under direct federal rule in July following the collapse of the state government over the land row.

Separatists are not contesting the elections, while pro-India parties have been trying to persuade people that voting will only provide a government for the state and will have no bearing on resolving Kashmir's future.

Kashmir is held in part by nuclear-armed India and Pakistan but claimed in full by both nations, which have fought two wars over the region.

The countries began talks to settle Kashmir's future in 2004 but there have been no breakthroughs, further frustrating the mood in Kashmir.

"The elections are in no way linked to resolution of the Kashmir dispute. They're only to elect a

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

2 sued for milk adulteration in Sirajganj

STAR REPORT

Sirajganj District Health Department yesterday lodged two separate cases with Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Court against two officials of a milk collection centre and a 'chhana' (curdled milk) production centre on charge of their involvement with milk adulteration.

The accused officials are Moazzel Hossain, manager of Abdul Monayem Limited at Baghabarighat and Bachhu Sheikh, manager of a 'chhana' production centre at Charachithulia village in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Stay off disputed waters

Bangladesh asks Myanmar during talks to outline sea border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh wants Myanmar to stay off the disputed waters while conducting oil and gas explorations until a maritime delimitation agreement is signed between the two countries.

Dhaka made the statement on the first day of talks with its neighbour on the southeast yesterday.

According to meeting sources, no progress was made in the opening day's expert-level negotiations at the foreign ministry.

The two sides remained rigid on their stance on the methodology to be used in delimitation. While Myanmar argues for equal-distance method, Bangladesh prefers the maritime boundaries to be drawn on the basis of equity.

The talks follow a stand-off between Dhaka-Yangon only a week back over Myanmar's exploration day's expert-level negotiations at the foreign ministry.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Harassed, girl takes her life

A CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Teasing and harassment by local degenerates led yet another girl to take her own life on Friday.

SSC examinee Sanjida Islam Lima of Rajpat Paschimpara village in Kashiani upazila committed suicide failing to bear the regular embarrassment, said her mother Sheuli Begum.

Sheuli Begum held Mehedi Hasan, Sohel Mollah, Mithun Mollah, Kayes, Sagor and

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