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Poll preparations on right track, says UN team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The polls assessment team from the United Nations yesterday said the preparations for holding the ninth parliamentary election is on the right track and it would be better if the state of emergency is lifted.

"I am very confident about the upcoming elections. I think that the climate is good and positive," head of the panel Francesc Vendrell told

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

John McCain due Dec 2

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Senator John McCain, who was the Republican nominee for this year's presidential election, is scheduled to visit Bangladesh on December 2 as part of a broader regional trip.

Two other senators of his delegation are Joseph Lieberman, running mate of Democrat presidential candidate Al Gore, and Lindsey Graham. All three senators are members of the Senate Armed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Moudud, Aman get HC bail in their last cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted bail to former minister Moudud Ahmed and former state minister Amanullah Aman in two separate criminal cases.

Moudud was granted bail in Niko graft case while Aman in an extortion case.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

78 dead in Mumbai terror attacks

Terrorists target luxury hotels, tourist spot, train station; 200 hurt

AGENCIES, Mumbai

Teams of heavily armed gunmen stormed luxury hotels, a popular tourist attraction and a crowded train station in at least seven attacks in India's financial capital, killing at least 78 people and wounding at least 200, officials told AP last night.

The gunmen were specifically targeting Britons and Americans, media reports said, and may be holding hostages. The Times of India reports that unknown outfit Deccan Mujahideen claimed responsibility of the attacks.

The gunmen also attacked police headquarters in south Mumbai, the area where most of the attacks, which began

late Wednesday and continued into Thursday morning, took place.

"We are under fire, there is shooting at the gate," said constable A. Shetti by phone from police headquarters.

Hours after the first attacks, A.N. Roy, a senior police officer, said police continued to battle the gunmen.

"The terrorists have used automatic weapons and in some places grenades have been lobbed, the encounters are still going on and we are trying to overpower them," Roy said.

Johnny Joseph, chief secretary for Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital, said 78 people had been killed and 200 had been injured.

The motive for the attacks was not immediately clear but Mumbai has frequently been targeted in terror attacks, often blamed on Muslim militants, including a series of blasts in July 2007 that killed 187 people.

Gunmen opened fire on two of the city's best known luxury hotels, the Taj Mahal and the Oberoi. They also attacked the crowded Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus station in southern Mumbai and Leopold's restaurant, a Mumbai landmark.

A British restaurant-goer at the Oberoi told Sky News television that the attackers were singling out Britons and Americans.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

GDP growth may dip to 4.8pc

WB fears global meltdown shockwave likely to hit in 3 months; Mirza Aziz rejects the forecast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) yesterday said GDP growth in Bangladesh might come down to 4.8 per cent in the current fiscal year from the government projected 6.5 per cent as readymade garments export and remittance inflow suffered due to the global financial crisis.

Impact of the crisis will be much more clear after the next three months, the WB says. Contingency measures like providing government assistance need to be carefully thought out.

The WB expressed these views at a press briefing on Global Financial Crisis and its likely impact on Bangladesh at its Dhaka office. Country Director of the WB Xian Zhu

spoke at the briefing where lead economist of the bank Vinaya Swaroop made the keynote presentation.

Finance and Planning adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam however rejected the WB projection on GDP, saying it might cross six per cent.

In his presentation, Vinaya Swaroop said, "We don't know what will happen in Christmas season. Three months from now, the picture may look very different. Bangladesh has to remain watchful, particularly the government, civil society and the media."

Swaroop went on, "It is extremely important to ensure that the new elected government has

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

RELATED STORY IN STAR BUSINESS



BNP leaders and activists gather in front of the party's central office in the capital's Naya Paltan yesterday, the last day for collecting and submitting nomination forms.

Declare exact date for lifting emergency

AL asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led alliance yesterday asked the caretaker government to announce a specific date for withdrawal of the state of emergency.

The combine, now down to an alliance of nine parties from 14, demanded that the Election Commission repeal the 91(E) provision of the Representation of the People

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Talking polls and beyond

RPO 91 (E) Zahir sees little time to execute EC power

SHAMIM ASHRAF and NAJMUL ALAM NOBIN

Jurist Dr M Zahir said the Election Commission (EC) would not be able to exercise its power to cancel candidature as per section 91(E) of the RPO within the short period of time it is getting.

He said the other provisions of the Representation of the People Order (RPO) are enough to prevent undesirable people from contesting the election.

Asked if there is still any doubt about the election, Dr Zahir said he would have preferred the election to be held

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Find details of the interview on page 11

AL cautious about seat sharing

Won't nominate allies' candidates where winning possibility is bleak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) will not share seats with its grand alliance partners in the next national elections in constituencies where candidates of those parties do not have much possibility of winning.

Following directives of party President Sheikh Hasina, an AL

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Liakat held, alleges family

Rab denies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) allegedly picked up expelled Jubo League leader Liakat Hossain, one of the top 23 criminals, from his father-in-law's Dhanmondi residence early yesterday.

Liakat's wife Farhana Hossain told The Daily Star that six to

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Relatives of convicts too vie for BNP ticket

3,186 forms sold, 2,063 submitted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two-day time for collecting and submitting nomination papers to get BNP ticket for the December 29 parliamentary election ended yesterday amid huge enthusiasm of aspirant leaders and their supporters.

Around 3,186 forms were

sold from the party headquarters and city office at Naya Paltan in the last two days for 263 parliamentary constituencies in six divisions. Party sources said 2,063 nomination seekers have submitted their forms to the BNP central and city offices.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Jurisdiction of judicial magistrates ignored

Govt empowers executive magistrates to try poll offences

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry in a surprise move has amended the mobile court ordinance empowering executive magistrates to try electoral offences, ignoring the jurisdiction of judicial magistrates to do the job.

Legal experts have termed the amendment illegal and asked the law ministry to cancel it, saying executive magistrates, who are

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Ex-CEC Hena warns of crimes during polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief election commissioner Abu Hena has called upon all to stay alert to avert any untoward incidents during electioneering for the sake of free and fair polls and transition to stronger democracy.

"Three to four weeks before the national polls is a very critical time. There will be meetings, rallies, excitements and even rows. So, not only the government and the Election

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Ctg mayor goes to HC for contesting JS election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court (HC) seeking a stay order on the Election Commission's (EC) decision which bar him from running in the parliamentary polls.

In the writ petition Mohiuddin challenged the provisions of the Representation of People

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Bangladeshi cleared of Qaeda link

AFP, Tokyo

A Bangladeshi man expressed relief Wednesday after Japan's top court cleared him of links to the al-Qaeda terrorist network and ordered a newspaper to pay him 23,000 dollars in compensation.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected an appeal by the top-selling Yomiuri Shimbun and upheld lower court rulings that the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

আজ সাতারো

সোশ্যাল ইনভেস্টমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড -এর ২৮ তম শাখার শুভ উদ্বোধন

সাজুর শাখা

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