

ROHINGYA REFUGEES

Repatriation after stability

Myanmar assures again

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Myanmar government has held out assurances of starting the repatriation process of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh as soon as the situation becomes stable in its Rakhine state.

The assurance came at the 7th round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) held at Nay Pyi Taw, the capital of Myanmar, on June 14-15.

The FOC reviewed the entire range of bilateral issues including political, economic and security cooperation between the two countries.

Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque, who led the 11-member Bangladesh delegation, stressed the importance of resolving the longstanding repatriation

issue of Myanmar refugees.

He called for early resumption of the repatriation of the already cleared Myanmar refugees, a process that was deferred due to an outbreak of communal violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Dhaka also proposed forming a Joint Committee to exclusively deal with issues of repatriation and undocumented Myanmar nationals in Bangladesh.

The Myanmar side took note of the proposal for its active consideration, said a Foreign Ministry press release.

About Bangladesh's willingness to import natural gas, Myanmar Deputy Foreign Minister U Thant Kyaw apprised the meeting of the ongoing process of

floating bids for offshore and onshore gas blocks.

Kyaw, who led the 20-member Myanmar delegation, also assured Bangladesh of giving priority to Dhaka's needs after meeting its domestic demand.

Both countries agreed to jointly and comprehensively address the entire range of trans-boundary crimes along the borders.

At the meeting, the delegations discussed Bangladesh's proposal for a 'security dialogue' within the FOC framework.

Both governments also promised to uphold their 'zero tolerance policy' against unauthorised use of their territories by any person or group for committing subversive activities.

Google tests balloons

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the potential to fast-forward developing nations into the digital age.

In pilot projects, African farmers solved disease outbreaks after searching the Web, while in Bangladesh "online schools" bring teachers

from Dhaka to children in remote classrooms through large screens and video conferencing.

Google's balloons fly free and out of eyesight, scavenging power from card table-sized solar panels as the balloons sail around the globe on the prevailing winds.

Far below, ground stations with internet capabilities about 100 kilometers apart bounce signals up to the balloons.

Anyone using Google Balloon Internet would need a receiver plugged into their computer in order to receive the signal.

Four-Zero

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leader and lawmaker Mujibur Rahman Sarwar was elected in 2003 as the first mayor of the city corporation.

In an instant reaction last night, Kamal said he would have won by a greater margin if the polls had been held in a completely free and fair manner.

In Sylhet, BNP favourite Ariful Haque Chowdhury has done exactly what AL-backed Khaleque did in Khulna in 2008. Arif's win ended the long rule of Badruddin Ahmed Kamran, who had served as mayor since the formation of Sylhet City Corporation in 2002. Before his election as city mayor in 2003, he had been elected chief of Sylhet municipality.

Liton, Khaleque, Hiron and Kamran resigned as mayors of the four city corporations to contest the polls. They were elected mayors in August 2008, a few months before the ninth parliamentary election. Their triumph had boosted the morale of the AL, which went on to secure a landslide victory at the 2008 parliamentary polls.

Yesterday's voting made it clear that people in the

four city corporations had opted for change at the helm in their cities.

Though non-partisan in nature, the polls appeared to be a battle of prestige for both the ruling and the opposition alliance ahead of the parliamentary election due in a few months' time.

Buoyed by the victory, the main opposition leaders yesterday claimed people had voted in favour of the opposition's demand for a non-partisan government to oversee the parliamentary elections.

Both the alliances' nerves were on edge throughout the day over the elections.

The main opposition monitored the polls from the capital, and rushed to the Election Commission office in Dhaka many a time to lodge complaints.

The results came as a major setback for the AL-led ruling alliance. Its leaders, however, claimed it had again been proved that free and fair elections were possible under the AL-led government.

Earlier in the day, Communications Minister Obaidul Quader, who is a presidium member of the AL, said, "The party that will face defeat in the city corpo-

ration polls will have a warning ahead of the next parliamentary elections."

Elections to eight city corporations have been held so far in the tenure of the present government. AL-backed mayoral aspirants were defeated in all these elections with the exception of the Rangpur City Corporation polls.

BNP-backed mayoral candidates won in six cities. AL leader Selina Hayat Ivy, who contested Narayanganj city corporation polls without her party's support, won the battle by defeating the AL-backed mayoral aspirant.

The turnout in yesterday's vote was reported high. It was around 73 percent in Barisal, around 69 percent in Khulna, around 76 percent in Rajshahi and around 73 percent in Sylhet. The presence of female voters in the polling centres was remarkable.

There were a few untoward incidents, but all mayoral candidates were satisfied with the election environment.

In Khulna, a jute mill worker died following law enforcers' action on Islami Andolan Bangladesh activists, who had brought out a procession in violation of election rules.

BNP inspired

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Buoyed by the victory, some senior BNP leaders echoed Khalede's view and said the polls results will contribute to intensifying the movement to force the government to install a non-partisan election-time government.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, they said people in the four cities rejected the ruling Awami League's appeal to elect its favourites because of the government's misuse, repression on people, and killing of Hefajat men.

"The election results clearly reflected the public sentiment against the government," said Moudud Ahmed, a member of the national standing committee of BNP.

He said they will translate this victory into victory in the next national election.

"People have given a befitting reply to the government for killing Hefajat men," said Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain.

Mosharraf, also a member of the standing commit-

tee, said the opposition will now realise its core demand for a non-partisan poll-time government.

Nazrul Islam Khan, another standing committee member of the main opposition party, said people voted against the government's misuse and politicisation of the administration.

Earlier in the day, some senior BNP leaders threatened the government with dire consequences if opposition-blessed mayoral aspirants were defeated through "unfair means" in the polls to four city corporations.

At a series of press conferences at the party central office at Naya Paltan in the city, the BNP leaders alleged that there were various "anomalies" in the polls.

The leaders included BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas, spokesperson of the party Shamsuzzaman Dudu and Joint Secretary General Rizvy Ahmed.

As the BNP leaders kept on briefing the media, security around the party office

was beefed up with deployment of additional police force. Plain clothes cops with arms were seen standing at the main entrance to the office from 1:00pm.

They did not prevent top or mid-level BNP leaders from entering the party office. But activists of the party and its front organisations were not allowed to enter the office.

Earlier, a BNP House team had lodged a written complaint with the EC about various irregularities, including intimidation and forcible ouster of polling agents at different places in the four city corporations.

Asked, DMP Assistant Commissioner of Motijheel Division Md Saifur Rahman said they did not prevent any BNP leaders from entering their office. Pointing at Abdus Salam, BNP city unit member-secretary, who was entering the party office, he said, "Now you see whether their [BNP] claim is true. We just want to ensure that no undesirable incident takes place centring the elections."

Happy birthday song causes legal discord

AFP, New York

A US film production firm has lodged a lawsuit arguing that the most popular song in the English language, "Happy Birthday to You," should be public property and not subject to copyright.

Good Morning to You Productions (GMTY), which is making a documentary on the tune, said it was forced to pay Warner/Chappell \$1,500 to use the song in order to avoid being fined \$150,000 for unauthorised use.

It has filed suit in a federal court in New York demanding that the government declare invalid the copyright over the song.

The 26-page lawsuit also demands the return of "millions of dollars of unlawful licensing fees collected by defendant Warner/Chappell pursuant to its wrongful assertion of copyright ownership of the song."

Defendant Warner/Chappell has collected and continues to collect at least \$2 million per year in licensing fees for

Happy Birthday to You," it added.

A spokesman for Warner/Chappell declined to comment.

According to GMTY, the tune comes from a song called "Good Morning to All," which was composed in 1893 by sisters Mildred and Patty Hill, who sold the rights to Clayton F Summy.

The song in its present form was released in 1924 by Robert Coleman, setting off a series of legal disputes.

"Irrefutable documentary evidence, some dating back to 1893, shows that the copyright to 'Happy Birthday to You,' if there ever was a valid copyright to any part of the song, expired no later than 1921," the lawsuit says.

If defendant Warner/Chappell owns any rights to Happy Birthday to You, those rights are limited to the extremely narrow right to reproduce and distribute a specific piano arrangement for the song published in 1935."

Rajshahi

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create chaos by taking advantage of the situation, but law enforcers immediately foiled their attempt.

The female voters quietened down when an executive magistrate went to the centre around 12:00noon and assured them that they would be able to cast their votes if they came three hours later. The missing page was recovered by the time and 16 of them returned to exercise their franchise.

Talking to The Daily Star after the voting ended at 4:00pm, Returning Office Shubhash Chandra Sarker said the turnout was around 73 percent and that election officials had not received any complaint during the voting.

The voting at all 137 centres in Rajshahi city began at 8:00am. Male and female voters started queuing up there an hour earlier amid a heavy presence of law enforcement agencies. Braving the scorching sun, they waited outside the centres and cast votes to elect a mayor and 40 councillors, including 10 in reserved seats for women.

Candidates, security personnel, election officials, polling agents and, most important, voters expressed satisfaction over the election environment.

"Voting is taking place in a congenial environment and in a disciplined manner," said Jannatul Ferdousi, who was voting for the first

time at Chandipur Govt Primary School.

Voters, however, said the temporary ban on motor-bikes and auto-rickshaws during election time had caused them much suffering. Many people, especially women and the elderly, could not vote due to the scarcity of vehicles.

Two major mayoral aspirants cast their votes at Satellite Town High School at Upshohor around 9:00am.

"I am fully confident that I will win," said Awami League-backed candidate and immediate past mayor Khairuzzaman Liton.

"If any kind of disaster takes place," investigations will be carried out, he added.

The 18-party-backed mayoral candidate, Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul, also spoke in the same vein. "I'm cent percent certain about my win. There is no possibility of any tragedy."

Visits to different polling centres revealed that some political figures were carrying journalist identity cards and press stickers to visit the centres. Nachol Upazila Vice-chairman Abu Taher Khokon and Rajshahi Rakkha Sangram Parishad general secretary Jamat Khan were among them.

During the day, some Shibir activists tried to create chaos in Dasmari, Mirzapur, Budpara and Binodpur areas but were thwarted by the strict vigilance of the law enforcers.

AL shocked

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formation of a polls-time government.

"It is obvious that the BNP will be in a better position in the four city corporation areas in the next parliamentary election," AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif told this correspondent last night.

Khaled Mahmud Chowdhury, one of the organising secretaries of AL, echoed Hanif's view.

Both of them said they would search for the reasons behind their defeat.

"We should now fix the loopholes in our activities, if any, in the next five months before the parliamentary polls," AL MP Abdul Mannan said.

"The defeat is a lesson for us."

Before the election results started to emerge, AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader, said: "The party that will face defeat in the city polls will get a warning ahead of the parliamentary elections."

Quader, also communications minister, was talking to reporters after inaugurating a rail-crossing flyover in Comilla.

Veteran AL leader Amir Hossain Amu said, "The elections were held in a very free and fair manner without the administration's interference. The fair elec-

tion has also proved that the opposition's apprehension of polls rigging was totally baseless."

Anisul Islam Mahmud, a presidium member of the Jatiya Party, a component of the AL-led grand alliance, said the alliance now needed to think afresh in the light of the polls results.

AL MP Habibun Nahar, wife of Talukder Abdul Khaleque, said propaganda against her husband had caused his defeat in the polls in Khulna. "We will have to pay for the defeat in the next national polls."

PM'S REMARKS Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said voters in the four city corporations cast their ballots in a free and peaceful manner, something that had rarely happened in the past.

She made the comment while addressing the 27th founding anniversary of the Special Security Force at her office, reports UNB.

"Now people can cast their votes freely," said Hasina, who is also AL chief.

When she returned to Bangladesh in 1981, "the situation was not like this," she said. "At that time, elections meant vandalism by hooligans."

Obama stresses kids' needs for dads'

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama is reflecting on the hole left in his life by the absence of his father, calling for reforms of child support laws for dads to be more present for their kids.

"There will never be a substitute for the love and support and, most importantly, the presence of a parent in a child's life. And in many ways, that's uniquely true for fathers," Obama said in his weekly address released Saturday.

He spoke ahead of Father's Day, celebrated Sunday in the United States, and used the occasion to rekindle the national conversation on fatherhood he launched during his first term in 2009 that especially took aim at minority youths and men.

Children who grow up with an absent father -- a particular problem in minority communities in inner cities -- are said to be

more likely to go to prison, drop out of school, have substance abuse problems or become teenage parents themselves.

"I want to do what I can as president to encourage marriage and strong families," Obama said.

"We should reform our child support laws to get more men working and engaged with their children. And my administration will continue to work with the faith and other community organizations, as well as businesses, on a campaign to encourage strong parenting and fatherhood."

Obama endured a childhood mostly with an absent Kenyan Dad, and in many ways launched his political career through his memoir "Dreams from My Father," in which he traced his own ancestry and described his upbringing.

He often credits his mother -- who died of cancer in 2008 -- and his late

grandmother and grandfather with key roles in his meteoric rise to the pinnacle of political life.

"I still wish I had a dad who was not only around, but involved; another role model to teach me what my mom did her best to instill -- values like hard work and integrity, responsibility and delayed gratification -- all the things that give a child the foundation to envision a brighter future for themselves," Obamasaid.

He acknowledged that being a good parent isn't easy, regardless of the circumstances.

"To this day, I'm still figuring out how to be a better husband to my wife and father to my kids," the president said.

"If we can do our best to be a source of comfort and encouragement to our kids, if we can show them unconditional love and help them grow into the people they were meant to be, then we will have succeeded."

Polls fair

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"Every election, including the small ones, is a challenge for us," he told reporters at the EC secretariat in the capital.

"Some sporadic incidents took place in the election areas. These things may happen in a big event like this."

Based on an allegation by the BNP, the commission stopped voting at one centre in Barisal for a while following a clash in the area.

A group of BNP leaders headed by Barkatullah Bulu went to the EC around 12:00noon to lodge complaints about various irregularities in the four cities.

The CEC came to his office around 2:00pm and met the BNP leaders. He told them he was late as he was having some problems with his eyes.

Explaining his delay to reporters, the CEC said although he was not in the office, he was in constant touch with the polls officials and other stakeholders on the phone.

On not deploying the army for the elections, he said, "We examined the demand and deployed law enforcers in the election areas accordingly."



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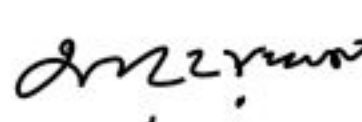
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Last Date for Application	: July 16, 2013
Admission Test	: July 19, 2013 (Time: 10am-11am)
Class Starts	: August 29, 2013

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Dean,
Faculty of Business Administration & Management Studies, Comilla University