

## Khaleda Zia willing to join a delayed election

Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia Thursday night announced that her party and allies would join the December election if the poll was deferred by 10 days.

'We will definitely join the elections if they take place on Dec 28,' Zia, who leads the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led four-party alliance, told a press conference.

She also asked the country's military-backed government to launch fresh round of talks to ensure participation of all the parties in the election to return the South Asian nation to democracy.

The interim administration Tuesday reaffirmed that it would hold parliamentary and local government elections according to schedule on Dec 18 and 28 respectively.

Zia, who gave the government a 48-hour deadline ending Wednesday night to meet her demands, asked for an atmosphere conducive for free and credible elections.

She has also called for a complete lifting of the state of emergency, the scrapping of a provision that allows elections officials to cancel candidature at any stage of the election.

Government spokesman Hossain Zillur Rahman, declined to comment on Khaleda's announcement.

The government launched into frantic discussions with the Awami League of Sheikh Hasina Wajed and BNP-led alliances Tuesday, but the stakeholders failed to reach consensus over delaying the polls.

The Election Commission Thursday extended the deadline for filing candidature by three more days and moved the deadline for the withdrawal of nomination papers to Dec 3.

The government has relaxed provisions of its emergency rule to allow limited electioneering by the parties and candidates for the general election.

The Awami League alliance has almost finalised its preparation to file candidates for the 300-strong parliament.

On Tuesday the European Union announced that it will send observers to monitor Bangladesh's general election, after concluding that an atmosphere for 'a free, fair and credible election' had been created in the country.'

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