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## VOTER LIST CONTROVERSY

# Fortified CEC now calls meet today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Being absolutely sanguine that his two new colleagues are all for him, the CEC yesterday called a meeting of the Election Commission today to decide its future course of action on voter listing in light of the High Court directive given 15 days ago.

The meeting scheduled at 3pm will also be the first one of the EC after a more than five-month blank since August 6.

Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz, who joins the office today after an 11-day absence, will chair the meet. With support of the hastily recruited new EC members, the meeting with a majority is likely to

justify the ongoing work of preparing a fresh voter list.

The meeting with the HC directive high on its agenda comes only two days after one of the new commissioners, Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, termed the directive contradictory and unlawful.

Observing the situation, many expressed the fear that the meeting is likely to further stoke up the intra-EC crisis, as the five members of it are sharply divided on the issue.

Election commissioners M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, who have all along been speaking for revising the existing roll, yesterday reiterated that they will pro-

pose are argue in the EC meeting to implement the HC directive to revise the existing electoral roll.

In a file sent by the EC Secretariat Monday seeking their instructions about the next course of action in light of the HC directive, they had asked for a halt of all on-going activities for a fresh voter roll.

On the other hand, the two new election commissioners Justice Mahfuz and SM Zakaria on the very first day in office demonstrated a clear bias to the CEC by avoiding the customary courtesy calls on Munsef and Mohammad.

Mahfuz yesterday declined to

## Zakaria now finds media fault

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Election Commissioner SM Zakaria yesterday blasted the media for being "harmful" for the image of the Election Commission (EC) by putting the election commissioners against each other.

"You [reporters] are putting the election commissioners face to face which is not good for us. It is harmful for the image of the Election Commission," Zakaria told newsmen, who went to his office for his opinion on the prevailing situation in the EC following the High Court (HC) directives on voter list.

Zakaria said the EC is a constitutional institution and the post of the election commissioner is also constitutional. "It is not fair to hassle a constitutional post," he said.

Referring to Tuesday's incident, SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## NEW EC MEN Bar demands rescinding appointments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday demanded immediate cancellation of the appointment of two new election commissioners and urged the president to form a supreme judicial council for removing the chief election commissioner (CEC).

"Appointment of the new election commissioners -- SM Zakaria and Justice Mahfuzur Rahman -- is politically motivated and non-transparent," the SCBA said in a declaration at a protest rally at its auditorium.

The apex body of the lawyers also declared CEC Justice MA Aziz and Mahfuz 'undesirable persons' SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers fight protesters in Ivory Coast

AFP, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

Two contingents of Bangladeshi UN troops yesterday pulled out of two towns in western Ivory Coast after clashes with protesters there claimed four lives in the morning, military sources said.

"The soldiers of the UN mission in Ivory Coast (ONUCI) have left Guiglo and Duekoue under escort of the Defence and Security Forces (FDS)," an FDS staff officer told AFP, asking not to be named.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

AIRCRAFT TURNS EATERY: The F28 that crash-landed in Sylhet on October 8, 2004 is being made an 80-seat restaurant at Wonderland amusement park in the capital.

## PM blasts AL for resorting to hartal

UNB, Titas, Comilla

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday blamed the main opposition party for trying to avoid elections under caretaker government by not accepting the Election Commission, which is independent and neutral.

They (opposition) have taken the stand when the country is going well on all fronts, she observed, castigating her political rivals for taking recourse to hartal.

"The party is enforcing hartal without any reason or issue only to create unrest and halt development as well as foreign investment in the country," she told a big public meeting at the planned upazila parishad complex ground.

"Caretaker government is acceptable to the people. Three elections have taken place under the caretaker system and people have cast their votes," she said. SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## No more 'guns' found in trucks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Law enforcers yesterday completed a thorough search of the 20 trucks seized following the recovery of 11 'replica guns' at Chittagong Port on Monday.

However, no replica guns or harmful elements were found in the trucks, sources said.

Driver Md. Liton, helper Md. Kabir and Mostafa Kamal of a truck seized with five 'replica guns' were remanded for three days yesterday.

Six other similar 'replicas' were found in a container that carried telephone accessories of Dhaka Telephone Company Limited. SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## Huge arms hauled from Bandarban rebel den

Machinegun, AK47, M16 rifles, TNT in seized cache; 3 foreign militants held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Army and border guards yesterday arrested three foreign militants at a remote forest den and seized a huge cache of explosives, state-of-the-art firearms and ammunition in Naikkhongchhari Upazila here.

Yesterday's haul includes 7kg TNT (trinitrotoluene used as explo-

sives), a M1A1 machinegun and an AK47, one .303 and four M16 rifles. A long-range rocket shell, 3,500 bullets and a 500-yard coil of wire used in explosive devices were also in the cache.

Though the authorities concerned did not disclose the identities of the arrestees, but a local source said all the three arrestees

are Rakhains from Myanmar, while an army source said the busted rebel camp belonged to Rohingya Solidarity Organisation.

On a tip-off, a joint contingent of Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Rifles launched a surprise raid on the den hidden on a hillside in remote Bhaginar SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

A tangle of wires on an electric pole close to a resident building in Shankharibazar in Old Dhaka. A nest has made the situation even worse.

## Galib denied bail in 'jatra' blast case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A court yesterday denied bail to Ahle Hadith Andolan, Bangladesh (Ahab) chief Asadullah Al Galib in connection with the Takier Bazar bomb blast case.

Galib was hauled before the Judge's Court for examination of evidence in the case, in which he and five others were charged.

Defence lawyer Sirajul Islam Babu pleaded Galib's bail, but the court rejected the prayer and fixed next date of hearing on March 8. SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## Burial of Ahmadiyya woman obstructed

B'baria bigots force authorities to set up separate graveyard

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Bigots yesterday forced authorities to set up a separate graveyard for Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim for long, and the sect delayed burial of the sect in Nabiganur upazila.

A brawl between the bigots, who are agitating for declaring Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim for long, and the sect delayed burial of Mortuzan Nesa, 70, for 22 hours. Central leaders of Ahmadiyya

Muslim Jamaat Bangladesh protested against the obstruction to the burial, saying the authorities surrendered to the anti-Ahmadiyya elements.

Earlier on Tuesday, tension gripped Shahbazpur village when the Ahmadiyya community was preparing interment of Mortuzan, a domestic help who died at 4:30pm of old age complications. SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## Opposition kicks off agitation series today

Presses for electoral reforms with rally, hartal, long march

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) led 14-party opposition kicks off a series of agitation programmes through demonstrations across the country today to protest the recent appointment of two election commissioners and strengthen the demands for reforms in the electoral rules and caretaker government.

The mainstream opposition will hold a rally at Paltan Maidan on January 23 from where the opposition leader is expected to declare whether they will return to parliament.

The opposition block has announced a daylong hartal across the country on January 22 against the appointment of Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria as election commissioners what they termed a "bid to manipulate the next parliamentary elections".

The alliance will also hold a rally in Sylhet on February 1. The announced agitation programmes will end with a long march to Dhaka on February 5, demanding an end to the BNP-Jamaat regime.

The opposition parties will gather at Muktangan in the capital SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

**Bangladesh Shines in Colors**  
398 Thanas of 61 Districts

**NEW THANAS**

- Shalika, Magura
- Nakla, Sherpur
- Kalkini, Madaripur
- Fulpur, Mymensingh
- Fulbaria, Mymensingh
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Nokia- 3100,3200,3300,3510,3520,3530,3560,3595,6100, 6200, 6800,7210,7250,6610,3108,8310,6610i, 8910i,3120	40wap	40mms
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