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# Time for preparing voter roll ends today

EC undecided whether to continue unfinished task

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The time limit for the field level work of the controversial fresh voter list expires today while the Election Commission (EC) remains undecided whether to continue the unfinished task.

Instead of deciding on the next course of action in this regard, the EC prefers waiting for the outcome of the appeal it plans to file Wednesday against the January 4 High Court (HC) directives for revising the existing electoral roll.

Election Commissioner SM Zakaria last week told reporters that the commission would take a decision after it has the court's ruling on the appeal.

"Preparation for filing the appeal is going on. I hope it will be filed on the day after tomorrow [Wednesday]," counsel for the EC Khondakar Mahbubuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday.

About the commission's opting to wait till the appeal is disposed of, he said there is no relation between the ongoing voter-listing job and the appeal.

"The Election Commission can extend the time limit if the task is not completed on schedule," he added.

Zakaria and secretary in charge of the EC Secretariat Mohammad Zakaria declined to talk to the press on the issue.

Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz who left hospital yesterday has not joined the office or convened any meeting.

A source in the EC Secretariat yesterday said the secretariat might issue some directives for the field level staff today.

The field level work, which includes information collection on the prospective voters and scrutiny of those, has been scheduled for

completion by January 31.

A number of district election officers, who have already informed the EC that it will not be completed by that time, said they did not receive any directives from the EC Secretariat as of yesterday.

"I tried no less than 50 times to contact the Secretariat, but nobody picks up the phone," a district election officer told The Daily Star yesterday, wishing anonymity.

"We will start compiling the information gathered about the eligible voters on February 1 as timetable earlier," said the election officer adding that according to the schedule the draft voter list should be published on February 28.

"We won't enrol anyone new in the list after January 31 unless we receive a directive extending the time limit," he said.

The work of preparing a fresh

## Fuel station owners blame BPC for crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Petrol pump owners yesterday blamed Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) for its negligence and mismanagement in tackling the recent fuel crisis in the country.

The responsibility for the fuel crisis in North Bengal districts goes to the BPC, as it didn't take any measures, before the decline of navigability of the rivers, to ensure adequate fuel supply to meet the increasing demand during the dry season, they said at a press conference in the capital yesterday.

At the press conference, the pump owners under the banner of Bangladesh Petroleum Dealers, Distributors, Agents and Petrol Pump Owners Association claimed that none of them have stocked up fuel in petrol pumps.

"If the government investigation finds stocking up of fuel in underground reservoir that exceeds the approved quantity, the pump owner concerned should be punished," said Mohammad Nazmul Haq, president of the association of 7400 members



Environmentalists form a human chain in Dhanmondi yesterday, demanding an immediate end to chopping down of trees and allotment of abandoned property to build government staff quarters.

## Greens protest tree felling on abandoned property

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists yesterday protested against the government move to cut down a large number of trees and shrubs, some of which are rare species, on the land of an abandoned house to build staff quarters.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan (Bapa), Dhanmondi Abashik Malik Kalyan Samity (DAMKS) and

## US wants all to stop aid to Hamas govt

Israel freezes funding to Palestinian Authority

AGENCIES, London/ Jerusalem

The United States wants other nations to cut off aid to a Hamas-led Palestinian government, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said ahead of an international strategy session on Middle East peace prospects.

Rice ruled out any US financial assistance to a Hamas government. Humanitarian help to the Palestinians, many of whom are poor and unemployed, is likely on a "case-by-case basis," Rice said Sunday. She indicated that the administration would follow through on aid promised to the current, US-backed Palestinian government led by President Mahmoud Abbas.

"The United States is not prepared to fund an organisation that advocates the destruction of Israel, that advocates violence and that refuses its obligations," under an international framework for eventual Middle East peace, Rice said.

Rice was meeting other members of the so-called Quartet of would-be Middle East peacemakers yesterday. The group, which includes the United States, Russia, the European Union and the

United Nations, is already on record as saying "there is a fundamental contradiction between armed group and militia activities and the building of a democratic state."

Hamas urged the international community Monday not to stop its funding to the Palestinian Authority as key players in the stalled peace process debated the implications of the Islamist movement's election win.

Ismail Haniya's comments came as EU foreign ministers and representatives of the quartet were thrashing out a common response to the election victory for a group, which is committed to Israel's destruction and has carried out dozens of suicide attacks during a five-year uprising.

"We call for dialogue without preliminary conditions and in a spirit of neutrality," Haniya told a news conference in Gaza City, reading out a message addressed to the quartet made up of the EU, United States, Russia and the United Nations.

Earlier Israel has decided to freeze funds to the Palestinian Authority, fearing the money could

## FUND 'EMBEZZLEMENT' Hearing of Beximco case against Qader brothers today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Hearing of the case filed by Beximco Holdings against three brothers of Salauddin Qader Chowdhury, parliamentary affairs adviser to the prime minister, on charges of misappropriating Tk 95 crore of QC Container Lines Limited, will be held in the High Court today.

On December 15, 2005, Chairman of Beximco Holdings Sohail F Rahman and Deputy Chairman Salman F Rahman, also

## JHALAKATI JUDGES KILLING Charge framing date shifted for sixth time

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Charge framing against eight charge sheeted accused in the Jhalakati judges killing case was delayed again as the hearing date was shifted to February 5.

This is for the sixth time the date was shifted.

M A Matin, judge of the Barisal Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal, passed the order yesterday morning on the fifth scheduled date for charge framing against the accused.

Public Prosecutor (PP) of the

## Another 16 become deputy secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another 16 senior assistant secretaries (AS) who are currently on leave or in training abroad, have been promoted to the post of Deputy Secretary (DS) yesterday.

The establishment ministry sent letters to them to join their posts soon.

The promoted officials are -- Shariful Alam, Mostafa Rezoan, ASM Mamunur Rahman Khalil, Shahed Iqbal Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, Akbar Hossain, Ruhul Kuddus, Shah Nawaz, Afrin Ara Begum, Shamima



Workers put the final touches to decoration as the month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair begins tomorrow on the premises of Bangla Academy in the capital.

## Europe urges Iran to backtrack on nukes

US, EU try to convince Russia, China to back UN action

AFP, London

Europe urged Iran to backtrack on its nuclear ambitions yesterday as EU nations and the United States sought to convince Russia and China to back UN action and Tehran asked for more time for a compromise.

All five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany were to meet here later

Monday to hammer out a joint position ahead of an emergency meeting Thursday in Vienna of the UN nuclear watchdog.

In Brussels, top officials from Britain, France and Germany, the EU troika which have been negotiating with Iran, met an Iranian delegation.

"It's good to talk, but their position has to change... they know how to change, they know what

they have to change," EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said.

EU negotiations with Iran broke down this month after Tehran broke the UN seals on a key nuclear facility in breach of a November 2004 agreement.

"They have taken decisions that were absolutely incompatible with the commitments that they have made with the international

## Paltan OC, 4 cops sued for 'helping robbers'

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A person yesterday filed a criminal case against the officer-in-charge (OC) of Paltan Police Station and four sub-inspectors (SI) on charge of assisting robbers.

The accused are OC Abdur Razzak and Sis Shah Alam, Abdur

## Hili land port stalled as exporters, agents call strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The border trade at Hili land port in Dinajpur remained suspended from yesterday as local exporters and clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents called an indefinite strike

protesting new rules of export from India.

Meanwhile, exports and imports through Sonamasjid land port in Chapainawabganj have remained closed for seven days

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