

Gaping hole in voter list

Analysis of 20 sample districts shows more voters than possible on roll

ZAYADUL AHSAN and SHAKHAWAT LITON

The draft electoral rolls show the number of voters in 20 districts each with more than 15 lakh electorate largely exceeds their highest possible population of eligible voters even if deaths and drop-outs are ignored.

Of these districts, Brahmanbaria comes up with 23.76 per cent, Sirajganj 21.38 and Kishoreganj 20.49 per cent more voters than their eligible populations.

Even if the eligibility for voting is reduced to 15 years from 18, the number of voters in 11 districts exceeds the number of population aged 15 years and above.

Interestingly, Dhaka and Khulna witness fewer voters compared to their number of eligible voters. Dhaka has a total 60,55,211 voters against an eligible population of 63,13,416, while the number of voters in Khulna stands at 15,35,578 against 16,28,380 eligible people.

However, considering the number of deaths in the last five years and people who did not get listed, the total voters in these two districts might exceed the number of

their eligible populations.

These 22 districts have 158 of the 300 parliamentary constituencies. The BNP-led 4-party alliance won 123 of these 158 seats in the October 1, 2001 election while the Awami League won 24 seats, Jatiya Party 9, Krishak Samik Janata League 1 and an independent candidate won 1 seat.

Ahead of the next parliamentary elections scheduled for January 2007, the EC's 9.13 crore voters in the draft list, but the BBS census prepared in 2001 shows the number could be at best 8.02 crore. This deduction can be arrived as the BBS report showed the number of people in the age bracket of 13 years and above at 8.02 crore in 2001. Those who were 13 years in 2001 reached the voter age in 2006 five years down the line, provided there were zero deaths during the last five years.

Demographers and election experts questioned the inexplicable rise in the number of voters while the media keep on running reports about the anomalies in the draft list.

The Daily Star analysed the 2001 BBS district-wise population est-

Districts	Voters on 2006 list	Eligible voters*	Unaccounted for voters	
			Number	Percentage
Sirajganj	21,99,141	17,28,917	4,70,224	21.38
Comilla	34,57,156	27,78,633	6,78,523	19.62
Noakhali	19,60,746	15,11,839	4,48,907	22.89
Mymensingh	33,18,000	27,38,730	5,79,270	17.45
Gazipur	17,60,470	14,12,132	3,48,338	19.78
B'Baria	18,17,851	13,85,927	4,31,924	23.76
Pabna	17,17,944	14,31,880	2,86,064	16.65
Kishoreganj	18,86,086	15,59,570	3,26,516	20.49
Tangail	25,20,715	21,96,749	3,23,966	12.85
Barisal	17,51,906	14,83,226	2,68,680	15.34
Rangpur	18,83,668	16,64,237	2,19,431	11.64
Dinajpur	18,51,482	17,38,996	1,12,486	6.07
Gaibandha	16,72,415	13,74,356	2,98,059	17.82
Naogaon	16,90,326	16,19,446	70,880	4.19
Rajshahi	16,00,292	15,65,413	34,879	2.17
Jessore	17,77,384	16,84,787	92,597	5.20
Chittagong	48,12,926	43,23,281	4,89,645	10.17
N'Ganj	15,94,304	14,61,019	1,33,285	8.36
Sylhet	18,16,734	15,62,548	2,54,186	13.99
Bogra	22,54,566	20,58,600	1,95,966	8.69
Dhaka	60,55,211	63,13,416	-2,58,205	-4.26
Khulna	15,35,578	16,28,380	-92,802	-6.04

*Calculated applying methodology mentioned in report

2 criminals killed in 'crossfire'

STAR REPORT

Two criminals were killed in 'crossfire' in separate incidents of shootouts between the law enforcers and their cohorts in the capital and Bagerhat yesterday.

In Dhaka, Abul Kashem alias Hadi, 30, of Kulal Mahal in Hazaribagh, died during a gunfight between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his gang at Boubazar. He was accused in eight cases, including three for murder.

Rab sources said Rab-2 arrested him at Hazaribagh on Wednesday noon. Following his confession, they took him to Boubazar to nab his accomplices and recover arms. Sensing the presence of the Rab, Hadi's cohorts opened fire on them prompting the law enforcers to fire



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia speaks at the first meeting of the Saarc home ministers at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Indians, stranded Pakistanis, Myanmar on voter list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A good number of Indians, stranded Pakistanis and Myanmar nationals and untraceable people were included in the Election Commission's much hyped draft voter list while many eligible Bangladeshi voters were left out.

This has contributed to the already controversial rise in the number of voters on the draft roll and put into question the competence of the Election Commission (EC) for the voter listing job conferred on it by the constitution.

Media reports have revealed that 100 Indian citizens in Kasba upazila of Comilla district and one lakh Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar were listed in the draft roll while over 4,000 stranded Pakistanis in Khulna and over 1,500 of them in Bogra were listed.

Over 15,000 people of 17 villages long devoured by the Jamuna also found their way into the draft list.

The number of voters has exceeded even the total population of Bhandaria union under Dhunat upazila of Bogra district. The total population in the area is 18,719 while the draft roll has listed 19,933 voters.

"The next election might face difficulties due to the faulty voter list," former adviser to the caretaker

Terrorists can never use our soil: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said Bangladesh remains committed not to allow her soil to be used by any terrorist group for carrying out subversive activities in other countries.

"We, at the same time, oppose the use of foreign soil for terrorist and subversive activities against Bangladesh as we believe that collective prosperity and well-being cannot be ensured unless each member state in South Asia

enjoys peace and stability," the prime minister said

while inaugurating the first Saarc home ministers' conference at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Expressing her concern over the growing terrorism worldwide, she said: "We need to ensure understanding and cooperation in South Asia in the area of counter-terrorism for our mutual benefit."

Khaleda, also the current chairperson Saarc, said the peoples and governments in South Asia are now

deeply engaged in ensuring economic and social progress though often challenged by basic development problems of poverty, malnutrition and hunger.

"As we concentrate on ensuring a better life for our peoples, of late, we are also confronted by another menace, namely terrorism. This causes widespread damage to the lives and livelihoods of the ordinary citizens. It also adversely affects economic stability and social development," she added.

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India's exploration bid 'overlaps' block 21 in Bay

Bangladesh yet to act

SHARIEF KHAN

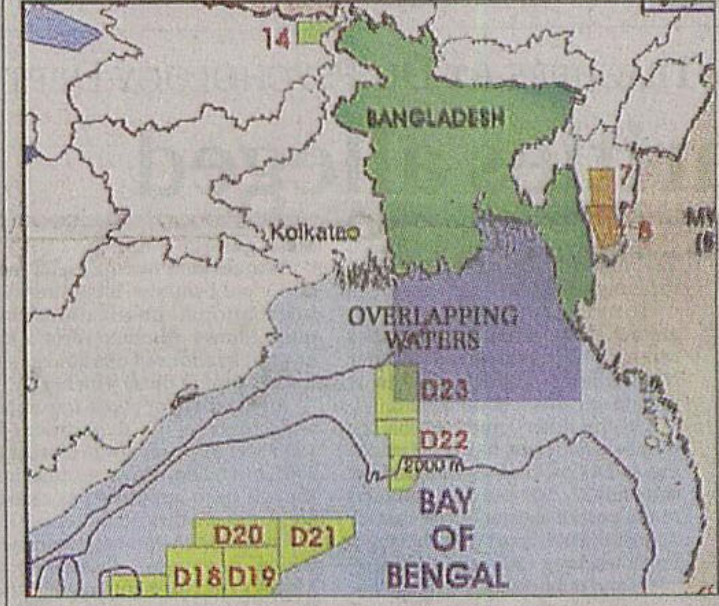
With an inter-ministerial technical committee failing to demarcate Bangladesh's deep sea boundary in

two years, India presses on with its aggressive bidding for oil and gas in which at least two blocks are visibly located within its closest neighbour's waters.

According to the block acreage map published by the Indian government, larger parts of blocks D-23 (8,706 sq km) and D-22 (7,790 sq km) appear to have overlapped Bangladesh's block 21 in the Bay of Bengal, deep down from the coast of the Sundarbans.

The Indian government floated its sixth licensing round under the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP-6) February 24, offering 55 blocks (25 onshore, 6 shallow water and 24 deepwater blocks beyond 400m bathymetry) for exploration. The bid closes on September 15, according to the Indian Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas website.

Both Indian blocks are located right below Bangladesh's block 21, floated way back in 1990 during the second round block bidding. "Bangladesh opened exploration bid there about 16 years back and we did not receive any objection from India as yet," a member of the inter-ministerial committee, headed by the foreign ministry, told The Daily Star opting not to be named.



Based on original map by Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, India.

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DUTY-FREE CARS

11 women MPs get import permission in breach of rules

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

With less than six months left in the tenure of current parliament, 11 women lawmakers from reserved seats have been permitted to import duty-free cars, bypassing a circular of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), sources said.

On August 22 last year, the NBR issued the circular saying that a lawmaker cannot import a duty-

free car unless at least two years' time remains to go for a parliament since their election.

For the 45 women lawmakers elected to reserved seats in September last year, the circular meant a restriction on importing duty-free cars as the current parliament then had only 13 months to go before expiring on October 28 this year.

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HEROIN SMUGGLING

Two expatriates in UK found involved

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The CID-led team investigating the smuggling of 75.5 kg heroin to the UK has found involvement of two expatriate Bangladeshis in that country in the drug running.

"Two Bangladeshi citizens residing in the UK worked for the international drug cartel in the UK," a member of the team told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity. He however declined to disclose the names of the two for the sake of

investigation. He said they have already requested the British authorities concerned through the Bangladesh home ministry for all information about the persons and relevant documents.

Sources said though the investigators have found sufficient information about the link of BD Foods Ltd, Emdad Traders, Jamil International, MM Enterprise, and Green Heaven Enterprise of trafficking 75.5kg heroin to the UK.

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WATER, POWER CRISIS Demra people vow fresh agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demra-Shyampur Water-Power Sangram Parishad once again vowed to go for agitations yesterday as the mayor's deadline to meet their demands ends today.

They however extended the time to May 19 to meet their 10-point demand.

BNP and its different wings at a rally in Shanir Akhra yesterday blamed the main opposition party for attacking local lawmaker Salahuddin Ahmed and tarnishing his image.

The Sangram Parishad termed the BNP rally a 'showdown' and

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MACROECONOMIC STABILITY

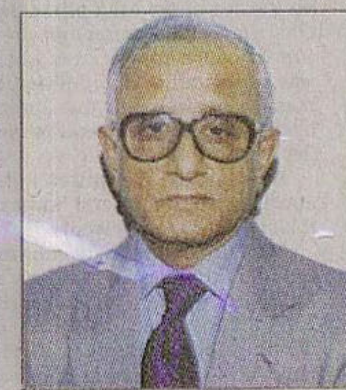
Stop spending govt funds on polls

Ex-finance minister Syeduzzaman also stresses swift decision on fuel, power pricing in interview to The Daily Star

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Former finance minister M Syeduzzaman emphasised a prompt decision on energy pricing, scrutiny and cropping of revenue and development spending, and switching off expending budgetary resources through political party apparatus to keep the macroeconomy stable.

In an interview with The Daily Star this week, Syeduzzaman attested the typical inclination of elected governments to go for populist, and often irrational, decisions that weaken the macro-



economic framework. As examples, he named "populist public expenditure to benefit party apparatus" and "reluctance to make adjustments in prices of publicly produced/procured goods and services", which he said impair the budget balance and put pressure on the balance of payments.

On the existing crisis in the petroleum sector, exacerbating by the day, Syeduzzaman suggested a wide spectrum of measures including instituting "a gradual and realistic system of price changes

linked to production and procurement costs."

The main focuses of the interview were the current economic status and in what situation the caretaker government may find itself when it comes to office.

"It'll be a problem for the next caretaker government if too many issues are left unresolved by the outgoing government," the veteran economist told The Daily Star.

He also apprehended that "An ambitious budget, without the backing of a realistic revenue flow

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