

## Electoral reforms

**FROM PAGE 1**  
election 2007". Among them around one hundred spontaneously participated in the discussion and vowed to take the campaign to the grassroots level.

They observed that democracy should not be hostage to a section of wealthy people who gathered money through illegal ways. They also demanded drug free Bangladesh, ban on religion-based politics, registration of the political parties and bar on participation in the general election by bill defaulters.

The speakers also suggested reform in the education system introducing uniform primary education for all. They pointed out that many social problems could be resolved through creating awareness among the people about their rights.

The dialogue was organised by the non governmental think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in cooperation with The Daily Star, the daily Prothom Alo and Channel 1.

As part of the third round of such regional dialogues the event at Bir Chandra auditorium located at the heart of the town was presided over by Prof Ameer Ali Chowdhury. The next round of the dialogue will be held in Barisal next Saturday.

President of Comilla Lawyers Association Syed Abdullah Pintu and former president of Bangladesh Medical Association Dr Mosleh Uddin were special guests.

Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury and Prof Mahmuda Islam spoke for Nagorki Committee while Mahfuz Anam, editor of the Daily Star, and Abdul Quayum, joint-editor of the daily Prothom Alo participated in the dialogue on behalf of the organisers.

Executive Director of CPD Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya conducted the lively dialogue. Speaking as special guest advocate Syed Abdullah Pintu called upon the people to bring a social revolution for bringing transparency in the electoral system.

"Social injustice should be resisted through social movements," he observed. Opposing the idea of selling natural resources to any foreign company Pintu said, "We should not bring another East India Company in the name of investment."

"Natural gas is our resource and nobody should be allowed to exploit it depriving our people."

Prof Ameer Ali suggested inclusion of a call for courageous persons in the slogan for honest and dedicated candidates. "We need courageous

people as well as honest and dedicated candidates", he said.

"On the other hand, there should be some sort of measures in our electoral process so that nobody can be elected through extra-mechanisms," he added.

Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said policy makers are bound to understand the people's need if pressure is maintained on them by the civil society. He noted that there are many examples where the government adopted a new policy after getting pressured by the civil society.

Successive governments were forced to accept a number of recommendations prepared by a taskforce led by Prof Rehman Sobhan, he noted.

Jamilur Reza observed that the country will face a serious environmental disaster as the rivers and water bodies are being filled up by encroachers. Although the government promulgated an act for preserving water bodies, most of the people are not abiding by the act.

Mahfuz Anam said the politicians failed to reflect the aspirations of the people. He called upon the people to speak out against misuse of governments applying their citizens' rights.

He observed that good governance will come when honest and dedicated leaders will be elected.

Participating in the discussion Prof Mahmuda Islam observed that the political parties should nominate candidates observing the aspirations of the people.

Advocate Salma Ali suggested bringing practice of democracy in the political parties. She said retired persons from government services should not be allowed to be candidates in the election.

Among the local civil society members who participated in the discussion were, AKM Mofizur Rahman, Shaiful Islam Sikder, Advocate Golam Faruq, Abdullah Baqi, Mofizuddin Ahmed, Advocate Afzal Khan, Liakat Ali, Zahidur Rahman Mamun, Bahaduruzzaman, Dr Ali Hossain Chowdhury, Nimal Chandra Das, Mahbubur Rahman, Hosne Ara Mina, Masuk Ahmed Chowdhury, Zamir Uddin Khan, Mominul Haque, Shah Alamgir, Jahanara Begum, Shah Mohammad Selim, Sharmeen Kader, and Zahurul Haque Dula.

## 3 robbers

**FROM PAGE 1**  
On Saturday morning, the locals found the three bodies at Samaj Kachukhary Beel and informed the police. Chatmohar police then recovered and sent the bodies to Pabna General Hospital for an autopsy.

Police and locals suspect that other members of the robber gang slaughtered Rafiq and Hassan Ali and strangled Golam Hossain over sharing of the looted goods sometime during the Friday night and dumped their bodies at the water-body.

Chatmohar police said that the dead were accused in several cases of robbery.

Bhangura upazila AL President Md Mokbul Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday that Rafiq was the president of Khan Monich union Jubo League and Hossain Ali was a ward AL president.

They will hold a rally today protesting the incident and demanding punishment of the culprits today, he added.

## 3 suspects held

**FROM PAGE 15**  
Condemning the killings, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said the government is trying to cling to power by resorting to murder, corruption and looting. He demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the killers.

Kajal's father Ashrafal Haque Montu filed a case with Shyampur Police Station yesterday evening accusing some 7-8 unnamed people.

Meanwhile, local AL leaders and workers staged a demonstration at Shyampur area carrying bodies of two slain workers. They chanted slogans against the government and blamed local BNP lawmaker Salahuddin Ahmed for the double murder.

## Human chain

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Hundreds of locals, including women and children, took to the streets and chanted slogans against the police and the killers in the morning. Later, they marched to Nawabpur Government High School of which Jisan, 11, was a class-V student, and formed a human chain there at noon.

A second post-mortem of Jisan was conducted yesterday by a three-member team led by Akhteruzzaman, head of forensic medicine department of Dhaka Medical College.

The first post-mortem was carried out on Thursday at Sir Salimullah Medical College.

## Submarine link

**FROM PAGE 1**  
decided when this network will be set up or completed.

Akhteruzzaman Manju, president of the association, said the country may be deprived of the benefits of having this cable system because till date the government has not fixed a "bandwidth policy", or fixed a price for availing the bandwidth to the Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

The BTBB has not set up collocation facility in all of its exchanges. The country has not also determined any backup for the submarine cable system.

## Under-age

**FROM PAGE 1**  
madrassa Mohammad Zobayer told journalists yesterday that all the students were registered as voters.

The profession of three of these voters—Mohammad Kamal, Shahadat and Siddique—was mentioned on the list as business. But Zobayer said no businessman lives there.

The officials at the district election office could not explain the reasons for such inclusions. "If any one complains, we will verify and drop the names if the allegations are correct," Dhaka District Election Officer Shamsul Alam told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, ruling BNP activists were found correcting the draft roll at the residence of BNP leader and ward-64 Commissioner Anwar Parvez Badal. They filled up some hundreds of forms in this ward under the Laibagh Police Station and claimed to have listed eligible voters who were not on the draft.

Besides inclusion of ghost voters, media reports have also disclosed that a good number of Indians, stranded Pakistanis and Myanmar nationals and untraceable people were included in the list.

The ruling BNP leaders rejected outright the allegation from the beginning.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said on Friday that some 400 people in Noakhali-6 constituency have been listed as voters at three different places simultaneously.

A report in The Daily Star May 12 issue, however, showed that Noakhali, which has six parliamentary constituencies, witnessed 22.89 per cent more voters than its eligible population.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics census report, 2001, the district has 15,11,839 people eligible for being registered as voters, while the draft roll listed 19,60,746 voters.

Moudud, who came to know about the anomalies from the grassroots level BNP activists, said he himself had detected the irregularities while visiting the constituency last week.

## EC unperturbed despite proofs

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The sudden allegation by the law minister triggered speculations about the fate of the voter list and the credibility of the present EC. Many BNP leaders have also been surprised by the law minister's allegation against the draft voter list. The Awami League-led 14 party opposition coalition has been demanding cancellation of the list.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Communication Minister Nazmul Huda said punitive action could be taken against those who are involved with committing irregularities. "Preparation of a fair voter list is not possible through the existing system. The only way to prepare a fair voter list is by following my proposal," he claimed.

A number of ministers, ruling BNP lawmakers and leaders yesterday said the fate of the voter list have become more uncertain after the law minister's allegation. "His (law minister) allegation also apparently shows the ineptitude of the present election commission," a senior BNP leader told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

Election experts, who have already questioned the ability of the present EC to conduct the next parliamentary election scheduled in January next, fear that it is unlikely to be possible to prepare a fair voter list ahead of the election due to time constraint.

"The next election might face difficulties due to a faulty voter list," former adviser to a caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan told The Daily Star. In the wake of the revelations of a huge number of anomalies in the draft electoral rolls, experts observed that a fair election is not possible using this list being prepared ignoring the January 4 High Court directives that asked the EC to revise the existing electoral rolls.

Some eminent legal experts of the country including the vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council and former president of Supreme Court Bar Association have already expressed to the media that they would like to see the

chief election commissioner and two election commissioners punished for the 'crime of enlisting fake voters'.

Moreover, it was revealed in the media on Wednesday that there are allegations of having fake names and addresses on many of the 899 voter registration forms filled at ward No 41 at Agargaon in the capital.

Ignoring all allegations, the EC however is continuing to prepare the final list based on the draft list published on May 3 enlisting 9.13 crore voters. A sharp rise in the number of voters triggered enormous controversy as the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) census report, 2001 shows a maximum of 8.2 crore people as eligible to be voters.

Since the publication of the draft list, the media kept on disclosing anomalies in it.

As an appeal against the HC directives is still pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court the EC has yet to fix the date for publication of the final voter list.

### EC KEEPS MUM

Since the task for preparing the fresh voter list has been legally challenged and the High Court (HC) on January 4 asked the EC to revise the existing electoral rolls, the EC Secretariat mysteriously has dropped the word 'fresh' from its documents. The circulars issued by the EC Secretariat before the HC directives mentioned the nature of the task as 'preparation of fresh voter list'. But after the HC directives, the secretariat started to avoid using the word 'fresh' in its documents.

It has yet not clarified whether the published draft voter list is a part of preparing a 'fresh' voter list or it is revising the existing one.

The secretariat has not disclosed yet how many forms have been printed to prepare the voter list and has not disclosed its detail budget for the task.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and two other election commissioners, Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria, has been keeping mum since publi-

cation of the draft list and the EC did not initiate any step to probe the allegations.

Fake voters, who have already been enlisted, are likely to remain on the final list, as there is no initiative to identify them, said EC officials.

"But in previous times, the Election Commission did not remain silent when an allegation was raised," a senior EC official told The Daily Star.

In accordance with the schedule, today is the last day to file any objection and claim about the draft voter list, but a very little number of complaints regarding inclusion of fake voters have been officially filed.

### SCANDAL SURROUNDING 899 FORMS

Dhaka District Election Officer Shamsul Alam yesterday said they could not still retrieve the controversial 899 voter registration forms from the assistant registration officer (ARO) of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ward No 41 (Agargaon) Aminul Huq Bhuiyan.

Shamsul however claimed that they are trying to find out whether the ARO or the enumerator is responsible for the incident. "We are examining whether enumerator Atiqul Islam submitted fake documents to get appointment as an enumerator," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He claimed another ARO of DCC ward No 41 Abdul Majid recruited Atiqul as an enumerator. But Atiqul collected information about prospective voters in the area of Aminul Haque Bhuiyan.

About his letter to Bhuiyan, he said he wrote the letter asking Bhuiyan to examine whether any eligible people were left out of the list. "I asked the ARO to legalise the task," he claimed.

## Shopping malls

**FROM PAGE 16**  
land and conduct proper soil tests before planning for any construction.

"Otherwise, the whole city will collapse like the Spectrum building," Hasan Ahmed said, adding that some buildings are already under threat.

In his presentation on safety condition in garment factories of Bangladesh, Wares UI Ambia said about 70 per cent garment factories in the country do not have adequate safety measures that is risky for the lives of the workers in case of any fire or collapse incident.

Most factories keep the exit points and collapsible gates locked during working hours, stairs and spaces between the machine rows remain congested while fire fighting equipment is not available in many buildings, noted Ambia who visited a number of garment factories in the city.

"The casualties are likely to be much more in case of any accident," he said, adding that many factories even do not have medical check up system or awareness programme for the workers on how to behave during an emergency.

Presenting her paper on fire hazard in shopping centres of Dhaka city, Ajmeri Nusrat Shoma said over population, occupancy of open spaces at the peripheries by the hawkers, faulty and too many wires in the market places are high risk factors for fire and suffocation.

Nusrat Shoma, who presented case studies of a few shopping complexes and market places, said many market places like Gausia are totally unplanned and have no fire extinguishing means.

Citing fire at Bangabazar a few years back, she said there is high possibility of fires in such places and once kindled, it can cause huge loss of both lives and materials.

Some shopping complexes, such as the Eastern Plaza, have some safety measures, but in many cases the collapsible gates remain locked, which is a threat for the shoppers in case of fires, she said.

Sharmin Sultana who presented her paper on safety and security in office buildings said most office buildings even in the most posh areas of the city do not have enough security and safety measures.

"Sena Kalyan Bhaban, for example, is rich in security equipment, but the alternative stair went through the toilets, which is slippery and risky to run during any accident," she noted.

Even in Brac Inn Centre the main lift

## Turkish road crash

**FROM PAGE 16**  
officials told the Anatolia news agency yesterday.

The accident occurred Friday when a truck packed with illegal immigrants rammed a trailer truck from behind near a toll booth on a highway near the town of Osmaniye.

The death toll rose after four illegal immigrants died from their injuries -- one on the way to hospital after the crash and three others on Saturday, Anatolia reported.

## JCD men vandalise

**FROM PAGE 1**  
non-vacant posts against 53 circulated vacant posts. Sources said the authorities had advertised for three vacant posts of section officers at different offices but appointed six, while 82 people were appointed against 50 circulated posts of third and fourth class employees.

Twenty including the three section officers have been appointed from the list of JCD Islamic University unit, 10 from ICS, 10 from Jatiyatabadi group of Kushtia district Freedom Fighters' Command Council while the rest are favourites of the ruling party lawmakers of Kushtia, syndicate members and the vice-chancellor himself, said a source.

A large amount of money was also exchanged for the appointments, a source involved with appointment process said.

No university transport plied yesterday. Most of the students of the university are non-residents who go to the campus from Kushtia town by university buses.

Different organisations including Bangabandhu Parishad, Shapla forum (a forum of progressive teachers) have criticised such recruitment.

Earlier 126 teachers, officials and employees of the university requested the vice-chancellor not to make such a large-scale recruitment while the university is having a deficient budget of about Tk 9 crore.

On March 27 last year, the same vice-chancellor appointed 40 teachers, officers and employees -- all leaders and cadres of JCD and ICS with alleged criminal records including murder cases.

On several occasions, he also appointed some 35 teachers at different departments although the departments concerned did not ask for it.

Meanwhile, two members of the university syndicate, who were present at the syndicate meeting, said the meeting unanimously approved appointment of 54 persons but they knew nothing about the additional 34 appointments.

The vice-chancellor secretly did it on his own, they said.

"We approved appointment orders of total 54 persons in the syndicate meeting. But I don't know how the number rose to 88," Kushtia Government College Principal Prof Ataur Rahman, who is also a syndicate member, told The Daily Star.

and the main stair are together while people do not have easy access to the alternative stair and its width is also not sufficient, she added. Almost 90 per cent office buildings in the city have been wrongly planned and lack awareness of safety rules.

In his closing remarks Prof Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed of the Architecture Department of Buet said risks in buildings are increasing day-by-day, as no punitive measures are taken against the people responsible.

Once the responsible people are punished, all will be careful and abide by rules and regulations during building construction, he said.

Architecture students Iftekhar Rahman, Azmiree Sultana, Nusrat Wahid, Falguni Mallick, Ashik R Joarder also presented their papers.

The Daily Star Managing Editor Syed Fahim Munayem said his paper would always support promotion of such programmes in creating mass awareness while roundtable can also be organised for creation of opinion on a broader scale.

## Ahmadiyyas

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Khatme Nabuwat, an outfit of religious bigots, has been agitating against the Ahmadiyyas' religious practices in the country for long and demanding declaration of the community as non-Muslim.

Reading out a written statement, Ahmadiyya Ameer Mohammad Monjur Hossain demanded that the government ensure constitutional rights to the Ahmadiyya people, give them back five mosques and help them in holding Salana Jalsha in the district.

"Salana Jalsha was scheduled to be held in the district town after 20 years but the religious bigots at a meeting chaired by the Mufti of Brahmanbaria Yunisia Madrasa vowed to resist the festival and announced a three-day Tafsir Mahfil at the Masjid-e-Fateha, which was captured by the fundamentalists in 1987, around 60 feet from the place where the Ahmadiyyas used to hold their festival.

Even after giving the Ahmadiyyas permission to hold the Jalsha, the district administration imposed Section 144 apparently to avert clashes.

Due to the Section 144, Tafsir Mahfil of the religious bigots could not be held too.

Huge contingents of armed police have been deployed in the tense town.

Local leaders of Workers Party of Bangladesh, Communist Party of Bangladesh and Jubo Maitree in separate statements protested trouble-making by the religious bigots and the imposition of Section 144.

Another syndicate member said he would submit a written complaint asking the vice-chancellor how the extra appointments were made and under whose authority.

The vice-chancellor could not be contacted, as he has remained absent from the campus since Thursday.

## Pakistan

**FROM PAGE 16**  
countries, establishing direct railway communications, joint investment, marketing and sales promotion plan, and developing religious and ecotourism.

If the proposal is approved, visas for a country will be given against a certain number of names recommended by the tour operator upon their arrival in that country, Nilofar said, adding that this will be on reciprocal basis.

"Tourism is the fastest moving and growing industry. We need to have tourism to create job opportunities for people...to improve relation between the countries. We're already talking about relaxing visa regime," she said, adding that the issue will top the list of agenda at today's meet.

On visa-free movement among the Saarc countries, Nilofar said the Saarc countries are primarily thinking about making the process more relaxed.

She said she will also talk for journalists' visa-free travelling in the Saarc countries and raise the issues of fixing a general fee for people and reducing airfare to visit different places of the Saarc countries.

Underscoring the need for raising the number of travellers among the Saarc countries, Nilofar said, "Although there is a 5.5 per cent rise in world tourists and 4 per cent to South Asia, not even 6,000 Bangladeshis visited Pakistan in 2005."

She also stressed the need for sharing experience and expertise among the Saarc nations to utilise the immense potential of tourism in the region.

She said Pakistan will celebrate 2007 as the "Visit Pakistan Year" and hold exclusive programmes round the year. The country will host an exclusive meeting of the Saarc tourism ministers on October 8.

Acting High Commissioner of Pakistan Ayaz Mohammad Khan and Press Minister Sajida Iqbal Syed were present at the press briefing.

## 1 killed in cop firing

**FROM PAGE 1**  
hike, release of two co-workers now detained by police and withdrawal of what they alleged a false case against some 80 others.

As the management rejected their demands, the striking workers launched a demonstration inside the factory compound at about 8 in the morning, witnesses said.

The management called in police, who locked the factory's main gate.

Furious, the demonstrators came out of the factory compound scaling the boundary wall. They gathered on the nearby Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway and tried to block it, leading to a skirmishing between the workers and police. The two sides chased and counter-chased each other for a while.

During the clash, police fired several rubber bullets and tear gas shells.

Some 200 workers including Mahtab, 22, Asad, 25, Abul Hossain, 23, Habibur Rahman, 26, Manjurul, 23, Maruf, 25, Razzak, 19, Nazimuddin, 20, Suruj, 20, Amzad, 22, and Harun, 23, were injured. They were later admitted to local hospitals and clinics.

On the other side, Nayek Bashudev and constables Harun Ur Rashid, Rajib Kumar, Abul Hossain and Abul Kashem were wounded as the agitated workers pelted bricks on them. They were undergoing treatment at Gazipur Sadar Hospital last night.

With tension mounting rapidly, the garment workers at about 1pm went on a rampage, damaging vehicles and ransacking the factory building, besides continuing with pelting bricks at police, witnesses said.

It was when police opened fire, hitting one of the workers standing near the factory entrance. Witnesses said police dragged away the body, put it in a sack, and hid it in a second-floor warehouse of the factory.

## Iraq forms govt

**FROM PAGE 16**  
critical because of Iraq's raging insurgency and sectarian violence and President Jalal Talabani has said he would not support the formation of a government without security posts.

A handful of Sunni deputies walked out of parliament upon hearing that permanent security ministers would not be selected at the session.

Among other key posts, parliament approved former deputy parliament speaker, the Shiite independent Hussein Shahrastani, to be oil minister.

In a surprise move, former interior minister Bayan Jabr Solagh, who has faced criticism over Shiite-led militias linked to the ministry, was given the finance portfolio.

Although Malki is a conservative Shiite and the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) swept the December elections, his government contains ministers from across the ethnic and confessional spectrum in a bid to bring unity to the country.

## EU offers

**FROM PAGE 16**  
discussed among the EU-3, plus China, Russia and the United States in London next Wednesday, lists 15 targeted sanctions for the UN Security Council to choose from, doing them out as graduated "proportionate measures," if Iran does not comply.

The sanctions are divided into "measures targeted against Iran's nuclear and missiles programmes" and "political and economic measures" and include the arms embargo, a "visa/travel ban on selected high-ranking officials and personalities" and a "freeze of assets of individuals and organizations connected to or close to the regime."

But the benefits include Russia enriching uranium for Iran, with Tehran as a partner "in an international fuel cycle centre in Russia," the text said.

A senior European diplomat noted that the text also "talks about security but the word 'security guarantees' does not figure," as Washington is against giving Iran assurances that it will not be attacked.

The United States, which charges that Iran is using a civilian nuclear programme to hide the development of atomic weapons, backs the text "on certain conditions," a Western diplomat said, without elaborating.

The European diplomat said Washington needs to join any future negotiations with Iran, something it now refuses to do, as this would be the only way to convince Tehran that it will get benefits.