

Voter list updating

FROM PAGE 1
ward commissioner's office [ward No 33] in Moflijeed area.

People who went to Assistant Registration Officer's (ARO) office to collect voters' forms lost their enthusiasm when they learned that a raft of documents is required to be registered as a voter.

"I don't feel like being listed as a voter after submitting so many weird documents," Nazrul Islam, maintenance technician of SQ Garments, told The Daily Star at ARO office at Sheorapara in Mirpur.

When Nazrul came to the office to collect the forms required to include his name in the voter roll yesterday, ARO Tofazzel Hossain asked him to submit a number of documents like receipt of municipal tax or house rent or payment to local guards, and an affidavit of proof of age or an attested copy of SSC certificate along with the application form.

Some district election officers said they could not begin the work at the office of the Commissioner of the ward No 14, blasted the EC for adopting 'such a lengthy and strict procedure' for updating the existing voter list. "Now even if they (EC staff) visit door to door, they won't get such a whole lot of documents. And the initiative is bound to fall flat," he told reporters at his office.

"I own a building where many people live. And I never give them any receipt for their house rent. Then how will they submit such documents," he questioned.

Mahfuzur Rahman, a garment worker, collected forms from the office of Abdul Quader, but declined to submit the forms with so many documents. "It's not possible for me to collect the documents," he told reporters.

DOCUMENTS AND AN EXCEPTION

As per the EC's decision, an eligible person, whose name is not on the existing voter list, will have to apply in form-7 with a raft of documents. He will be provided with form-2 for inclusion of his name in the voter list only if the RO and ARO are satisfied with the application.

The form-7 calls for the intending voter to submit a receipt of municipal tax or house rent or payment to local guards to prove his locality, and an affidavit of proof of age or an attested copy of the SSC certificate with the application.

Referring to the form-7, many ROs and AROs yesterday said they would not receive any application without supporting documents with the form prescribed.

"As I have to follow the procedure, I will not receive any form unless anyone submits the required documents with the form," said ARO Tofazzel Hossain, also the headmaster of Haji Asraf High School at Sheorapara in Mirpur.

Acting secretary to the EC Secretariat Mohammad Zakoria, however, yesterday allowed an ARO to receive applications without the required documents.

"Every one in this area is known to me. So, they don't need to submit any documents," ARO Sahidur Rahman, also assistant headmaster of Moflijeed Colony Government High School, told The Daily Star yesterday. Sahidur Rahman received an application form for inclusion of name in the existing voter list without any required documents.

Zakoria, who was present at the office of the commissioner of ward No 33 of Dhaka City Corporation to supervise the task, supported the ARO.

An ARO can receive the application form for inclusion of names in the voter list if he thinks the applicant is genuine, the acting secretary said.

Black money white

FROM PAGE 1
on June 30, stands at Tk 4,603 crore.

This is a record for the country where opportunities for whitening black money has been given time to time since 1976. The past opportunities saw whitening of a total of Tk 3,920 crore of black money.

According to NBR sources, the board received Tk 345 crore in taxes from the black money holders during the fiscal 2005-06.

The NBR said the largest of the black money owners, who are smugglers, crime syndicate bosses, bribe takers, etc however did not avail the opportunity.

"Those who whitened their money are mainly businessmen and professionals, who had evaded paying taxes in the past," said a high official of the NBR.

The NBR also secured a record amount of income tax collection in the fiscal that ended on June 30.

"Income tax collection grew by 28 percent and the NBR collected a total of Tk 7,140 crore, exceeding the target of Tk 6,960 crore," said the official. In 2004-05 fiscal, the NBR collected Tk 5,577 crore in taxes.

"It shows that the measures taken by the NBR against tax evasion are working. People are now paying more attention to paying taxes," he added.

According to NBR data, 7,254 persons whitened Tk 4,603 crore of black money during the recently closed fiscal. Among them, 5,151 are from Dhaka and 1,516 are from Chittagong.

"Most of those who whitened their money are basically previous tax evaders. They are mainly businessmen, industrialists and professionals. The professionals include doctors, engineers, lawyers, chartered accountants and others. Besides, there are defence officials and bureaucrats," said the NBR official.

"Most of the directors of private TV channels also availed the opportunity. A newspaper owner who is also a businessman legalised his money in three instalments," he added.

Banking sources said they suspect that many of these people do not actually have the amount of black money they paid taxes for.

"Many of them took this opportunity to legalise future black money — because they know from this fiscal year on they will not be able to just pay 7.5 percent tax and legalise their black money," said a managing director of a private bank.

NBR officials said with the end of this episode of whitening black money, they will ask the black money owners

people took the forms, but none came to collect forms for deleting name of any fake voters from the list.

Talking to the reporters, ARO MA Mannan, a teacher of Mirpur Bangla High School, said he went to the office of the ward [No 5] commissioner to distribute the voters' forms, but found the office closed.

Mirpur Thana Election Officer Jasimuddin who was present at the office of the commissioner of ward No 14 told The Daily Star that they have launched a campaign urging those who are not registered as voters yet to collect the forms.

Abdul Quader, commissioner of ward No 14, blasted the EC for adopting 'such a lengthy and strict procedure' for updating the existing voter list. "Now even if they (EC staff) visit door to door, they won't get such a whole lot of documents. And the initiative is bound to fall flat," he told reporters at his office.

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Lankan navy

FROM PAGE 16

navy spokesman said.

"We first made some warning shots, but the boat continued and then we fired and the boat caught fire and sank," Commander D.K.P. Dassanayake said.

It was not immediately known how many people were on the boat, or if there were any rebel casualties. "Our men had to fire because the boat was advancing toward Kankasantural harbour."

No non-navy boats are allowed in the waters because it is designated a "high security zone," Dassanayake said. The harbour is a main point of entry for supplies to an estimated 40,000 troops stationed in the region.

A pro-rebel Web site, TamilNet, called the incident a "sea fight," and reported that two boats were seen burning, although it did not identify the vessels.

Dassanayake said no navy vessels were damaged.

On Saturday, the army killed a suspected Tamil guerrilla as he tried to attack a checkpoint with a hand grenade in northern Mannar district, 135 miles north of the capital, Colombo, said Brig. Prasad Samarasinghe, an army spokesman.

The army suffered no casualties, he told The Associated Press.

Separately, suspected Tamil Tigers using small arms and mortars attacked an army road clearing patrol in Muttur, a small town in eastern Sri Lanka, Samarasinghe said.

"We also retaliated using mortars," he said, adding that no soldiers were wounded in the clash near the port city of Trincomalee, about 135 miles northeast of Colombo.

The rebels did not immediately comment on Saturday's attacks.

More than 700 people have been killed in violence since April, despite a 2002 cease-fire agreement between the government and the rebel group.

The Tigers have been fighting since 1983 to carve out a separate homeland for Sri Lanka's 3.2 million minority Tamils.

Palestinian PM's

FROM PAGE 16
It said freed prisoners would have to include all Palestinian faction leaders as well as humanitarian cases.

The crisis has piled more pressure on the Hamas Islamist government, already straining under a US-led aid embargo to get it to renounce violence and drop its vow to destroy Israel.

The armed wing of Hamas was one of the three militant groups that claimed responsibility for the soldier's abduction, sparking the worst Israeli-Palestinian crisis since the Hamas government took office in March.

Israel this week arrested scores of Hamas members including ministers and lawmakers and threatened to take further action if 19-year-old corporal Gilad Shalit was not released.

"We view the threats against Haniya as serious," said Mohammed Dahlan, the Gaza strongman of Abbas's mainstream Fatah movement.

"We hope that nothing serious will happen to our brother Haniya or any other Palestinian official," he told AFP.

Israel has launched a vast military operation against the Gaza Strip in retaliation for the June 25 abduction of the soldier during a Palestinian attack on the Israel-Gaza border.

Since the start of the Palestinian uprising in September 2000, Israel has assassinated several top Hamas leaders, including spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Gaza's former political chief Abdelaziz Rantissi.

SC bar

FROM PAGE 1

In a resolution, the meeting strongly condemned the filing of the contempt of court case against 11 lawyers including SCBA Secretary AM Amin Uddin.

It said the alliance government is hatching a conspiracy to make the highest judiciary controversial and create division among the lawyers.

Reaffirming the lawyers' long-standing struggle for establishing democracy, the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, proper implementation of the Supreme Court directives on separation of the judiciary and upholding the image of the apex court, the meeting noted that the case was filed to impede the ongoing lawyers' movement.

The meeting urged people to remain alert about the "conspiracy" of the alliance government.

Senior Bar member Yousuf Hossain Humayun presided over the meeting. Most of the lawyers facing the contempt charge, which is likely come up for hearing today before a High Court division bench, were present at the meeting.

The petition for drawing contempt proceedings against the lawyers for "violating court orders" was filed on Thursday by a lawyer who had secured the ban on the June 11 Dhaka siege programme enforced by the Awami League-led 14-party opposition combine, hours before it kicked off.

CEC, 2 commissioners

FROM PAGE 1
month-long revision process that the Election Commission (EC) started yesterday is inconsistent with both the laws and the Appellate Division's judgment. The EC's present way of revising the existing voter list prepared in 2000 will not yield a fair voter roll, they said.

The past EC decisions and personal behaviour of its commissioners only created new controversies deepening the doubts. Thus, the commission appears to have lost the trust and confidence of a large portion of the population, they said.

The speakers also emphasised separation of the EC Secretariat from the Prime Minister's Office, state funding for election, introduction of voter ID card, transparent ballot box and electronic voting system to ensure free and fair elections.

"The CEC is a constitutional post and his neutrality should be beyond doubt, but his actions have proved just the opposite," eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain told the roundtable on complications over voter list and the role of those concerned.

The daily Prothom Alo, Shushashoner Janney Nagarik (Shujan) and The Daily Star jointly organised the roundtable at the latter's conference room in the city.

Kamal Hossain, also president of Gono Forum, observed that the country is now facing a serious challenge in preparing a reliable electoral roll that has become a stumbling block for holding parliamentary elections on time.

He said the stalemate was created when CEC MA Aziz unilaterally appointed enumerators on political considerations. "His actions show that the youth wing of the BNP has been entrusted to do the job of the enumerators," he said.

The EC appears to be incapable of carrying out its constitutional mandate of holding free, fair and timely elections, he said, adding, "We should send an appeal urging the CEC to resign from his post to be replaced by an honest and neutral person to restore public trust and confidence in the commission."

Prof Muzaffer Ahmed, Justice Naem Uddin Ahmed, former advisers to caretaker government ASM Shahjahan and M Hafizuddin Khan, veteran journalist and columnist ABM Musa, columnist Syed Abul Maksud, Muhammad Jahangir of Maktub for Development

the Communication, Zafarullah Chowdhury of Gono Swasthya Kendra, Advocate Sultana Kamal of Airo O Salikh Kendea, Munira Khan of Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (Fema), Prof Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University, former law minister

Secretary Prof Asadul Huq, and Bangladesh Technical College Teachers Association President SMA Jaill were present at the conference.

Another organisation of non-government teachers and staff under the banner of Shikkhak-Karmachari Oikya Jote led by Selim Bhuiyan who announced indefinite strike from July 6 to realise their ten-point demand observed one-hour work abstention yesterday.

Prof M Shariful Islam-led Shikkhak-Karmachari Oikya Jote, another organisation of non-government teachers and staff, yesterday decided to observe two-hour work abstention on July 8 and indefinite strike from July 9 to press home their demand for providing 100 per cent salary and other allowances from the government.

Among others, Bangladesh Teachers Association President Muhammad Azizul Islam, General

Non-govt school

FROM PAGE 16
meeting their demands.

They will seek opinion from the legislators regarding their demands within seven days from July 7-10, make correspondence with the teachers' organisations of other countries and bring the matter of 'repression' on teachers to the notice of International Labour Organisation and Unesco from July 9 to 15.

Their programmes include demonstration in upazila and district headquarters on July 12, laying siege to the offices of upazila nirbahi officers and deputy commissioners on July 18 and 20, one-hour sit-in at district towns on July 24 and holding a 'national rally' in Dhaka between July 27 to 30.

Degree of agitation on the streets will cross all the previous records if the government does not meet our demands before July 8, Kazi Faruk Ahmed said.

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Shujan

FROM PAGE 1
Talking to The Daily Star, Shujan Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar said the website will be an important tool for the voters in the wake of the voter list controversy, to check if their names are there or not so that they can contact the election officials if there is any error.

"The candidates can also check the names and number of the voters from their respective constituencies," he noted.

Following the Supreme Court's judgment, the voter roll for the next general elections will be formulated on the basis of existing voter list.

Workers of the factory suspect a few corrupt high officials of the factory embezzle the workers' money and benefits keeping the owner in the dark.

Abdur Rahman

FROM PAGE 1
The Court of Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Mizanur Rahman at 3:30pm.

In the forwarding report, Hassan said the JMB men were directly involved in the August 17 bomb blasts and the information they gave during the remand period are being verified. So, they need to be kept in jail custody until the investigation completes, the IO added.

When the magistrate asked the two whether they would want to appoint any lawyers or submit any bail petition as the IO did not pray for remand, Rahman and Bangla Bhai told the court they would not submit any bail petition to the 'worldly court'. The magistrate ordered them to be sent to Dhaka Central Jail.

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Columnist Syed Abul Maksud said upazila parishad (UP) chairmen and members in villages have lost interest in the voter list and do not actually know how the task of its preparation is being done.

Imams have been entrusted with the work ignoring the representatives of the local government, he said, adding that the UP chairmen and members should be assigned for the job.

He said there is still enough time and so, a resolution of the civil society should be made and sent to the prime minister, main opposition parties and the CEC for a solution to the voter list controversy.

Muhammad Jahangir suggested publication of a well-written statement represented by the largest possible number of civil society members and professionals in newspapers to create pressure on the CEC and the two election commissioners for resignation.

Zafarullah Chowdhury said all candidates of the parliamentary elections should submit accounts of their assets. Public awareness should also be created so that people get more interested in including their names in the voter list, he added.

Referring to the recent speech of the PM, ABM Musa said the PM did not mention anything about the CEC in her speech. "It proves the source of the strength of the CEC," Musa said, adding that CEC Aziz will not resign despite opposition movements and demands from the civil society members.

"This is a political issue and should be solved politically," he commented.

Former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru said non-compliance of the HC orders and spending a huge amount of public money for no use constitute criminal misconduct for which the CEC should resign.

The Awami League leader said his party would not take part in the next general elections if the CEC and election commissioners do not resign or are not removed.

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