Preparation of Electoral Rolls: An Overview

by Tarikul Ghani

In many democracies in Asia the electoral rolls have been computerized and entered in the database. There are

definite advantages of doing this: For instance, updating becomes easier and less costly - all one had to do is to

LECTION systems require riteria and mechanism for identifying eligible voters and preventing ineligible persons from voting. The mechanism is also used to guarantee the "one person one vote" principle by preventing people from voting more than once or from voting in wrong location.

An accurate voters' list or the electoral roll is the basic document on the basis of which vote is taken by the Presiding Officer at the polling booth. Therefore, fair election largely depends on the accuracy of the electoral rolls. In the absence of accurate electoral rolls, holding of fair elections is not possible.

It is indeed difficult to have hundred per cent accurate, voters' list but election administrators strive to make the electoral rolls cent percent accurate. There is no recognized or acceptable level of errors in case of a voters' list because a small error, say three per cent, may make a difference in the overall outcome of a constituency as well as a nationwide election. While underage voters may creep into the electoral roll it is unpardonable to disenfranchise any bonafide voter just by exclusion of his/her name from

The Bangladesh Election Commission has introduced a new system of individual registration instead of the old system of family based registration. The merits of the new system notwithstanding, the registration form is unnecessarily made complicated asking for eleven different information of every voter. Out of eleven only five different information are eventually used by the Commission in preparing the voters' list and voter's identity cards. Some of the information (column 7,8) sought from the voter are embarrassing to them and infor-

Tom and Jerry

AUDITIONS

IAN FLEMING'S Junevoir James Bond

SQUEAKY LITTLE

VOICE ...

THE PROTECTIVE AIR LOCK LEADING

TO THE BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AREA...

BOND ENTERS

mation sought under column 11 giving the voter a choice to vote at different places in different elections (national and lo-cal body) is misleading. Current electoral rolls ordinance do not permit a voter to enroll in different electoral areas. In other words, only the information sought in question No. 1,2,3,5 and 6 should be kept deleting the others. Some would argue about

making multi-purpose voter's identity card and database which may serve the purpose of a national identity card also. Here, it is pertinent to point out that it is not the job of the EC to produce or develop database for any national identity card it is probably the job of the Home Ministry. Having to handle the extra load of information would entail the risk (and reality) of increased errors in collecting, collating and entering the enormous amount of information in the database. Why should the EC take such responsibilities when it has not yet been able to streamline the basic voter information necessary for developing an accurate or near accurate or an acceptable electoral roll and producing and disseminating voter identity cards?

In the past, attempts at making voters list have almost always preceded an election and the EC and its large number of enumerators worked under pressure to complete the list within the short deadline. This has hampered the process of making an accurate voters' list. For the future, the EC should not relate the preparation of the electoral rolls with any election rather it should have its own work plan and time schedule to complete the rolls.

In many democracies in Asia the electoral rolls have been computerized and entered in the database. There are definite

YOU COULD'

exclude the dead and include the new voters attaining the voting age. Then it does not require to prepare a new advantages of doing this: For instance, updating becomes easier and less costly - all one had to do is to exclude the dead and include the new voters attaining the voting age. Then it does not require to prepare a

new voters' list every five or ten

years. Therefore, it is imperative to computerize the electoral The last initiative at computerization of the electoral roll was, to say the least, an unrealistic and raw deal for the EC. While the EC owned several copies of the voters' list the database belonged to the vendors and not to the EC. Therefore, there was no opportunity for the EC to continuously update the current voters' list. The EC will have to purchase the database from the vendors again. In the circumstances it may need closer examination on the question whether the voters' list and the identity cards prepared so far and under process will serve as a good starting

point or the entire exercise

snould begin airesh. While de-

ciding on the issue it will be

pertinent to consider the large

number of errors and omissions

in the voters' list and the voter's

identity cards distributed so far. To prepare the electoral rolls and produce the voter's identity cards, a cell was created in the Election Commission headed by an Additional Secretary of the Government. The other officers working in the cell have also been deputed by the Government at the request of the Commission. There is however, no officer of the Election Com-

voters' list every five or ten years. mission in the cell having knowledge of the mechanism involved in the preparation of electoral rolls, method of contacting voters, difficulties inherent in the contact by the registration staff and the ways and means that may provide solution to any problem associated with taking of photographs of the voters and preparation or distribution of identity cards

among the voters. Generally, the EC ought to have its own permanent personnel who would specialize in election related jobs and remain to serve the EC while top (Secretary, executives Additional Secretary, etc.) may be brought in from the civil bureaucracy. The EC should also hire consultants to work for the voters' list project from amongst former/retired officers of the EC who have handled these issues and problems before - experience has no substitute.

An important issue is to extend the franchise to the expatriate Bangladeshis. Many of them are registered in current voters list but the facility of postal ballot is not extended to them which has deprived them of their right to vote. Expatriate Bangladeshis for all their contributions and inherent, inalienable right ought to be registered as voters and allowed to cast their votes. Relevant laws need to be amended for the purpose. Recently, the Filipinos are in the process of extending. their overseas citizens the right

to vote in national elections. The process of public con-

WELL AT LEAST GIVE

ME A TRY AS POOR YORKK.

By Hanna-Barbera

can be undertaken by the EC about the ways and means of include : preparing an accurate and acceptable voters' list. Public con-

sultation through seminars, workshops and soliciting public opinion will make electors fell involved in the process. Political parties, civic organizations. NGOs and professional groups can be involved in such public consultations. This exercise will also lessen the responsibility of failures and inadequacies from the shoulders of the authorities while reducing such possibili-

sultation is one exercise that

In addition to public consultations, the registration period offers an excellent opportunity to involve the people in the electoral process as volunteers with specific responsibilities. These responsibilities may include initiating voter education campaign encouraging the population to register as voters, monitoring the conduct of the government officials and political parties, and implementing a system to process complaints regarding preparation of the

ties because of broad involve-

ment of the public.

voters' list.

The probable problems may

a) procedures that cause reasonable difficulty for certain sectors to register or obtain identification card necessary for voting, including : limiting hours or days for registration; placing registration sites at inconvenient locations; or subjecting registrants to burdensome unfairly procedures such as presenting identificamultiple tions/documents, photographs, making multiple visits to registration sites etc.;

b) inappropriate conduct of registration officials, committed either intentionally or accidentally, including: intimidating registrants; rejecting or deleting eligible voters; accepting ineligible registrants; fraudulently altering or improperly maintaining the list; failing to distribute voter identity cards; etc.: c) inaccurate lists, such as

lists that include the names of individuals who have died or have left the constituency, fictitious individuals, or registrants

A: I don't know.

A: Yes.

A: No.

Q: Did you carry out all the

Q: You were standing in front

Q: Did you carry out the or-

orders given you from August 14

night upto August 15 afternoon?

of the main gate of Bangaband-

hu's residence at about 7 to 7:15

ders or refused to do so on that

A: I carried out the orders.

walking on the Road-32 on that

Q: Did you fire anyone while

who are listed more than once or are otherwise ineligible; that fail to include the names of eligible individuals who have properly applied to register; or that record registrants names in ways that making it impractical to locate them on the lists;

d) failure to assure transparency in the registration process, as evidenced by restrictive regulations or recalcitrant officials who prevent monitors from analyzing the process in a timely manner.

There are good reasons to open the voter registration process for public scrutiny by civic groups and Election Monitoring Organizations (EMOs). In addition to causing problems on the election day, inaccurate voters' list may also adversely affect other aspects of the election process. For example, constituency boundaries and seats assigned to each district/division are determined by census/voter registration information. The location of polling stations are also determined by information collected during voter registration process. These factors may influence the outcome of an election.

Following are some suggested techniques the EC may allow EMOs to apply to evaluate the registration process

1. Encourage and allow volunteers to monitor the registration process throughout the country, particularly in areas where there are high probability of problems such as Homna thana and Keraniganj;

2. Verify the accuracy of the information on the voters' lists (e.g. by selecting statistically significant samples of the names and then determining. through interviews or other research, if the information is

correct); 3. Compare voters' list from previous elections with the current list to identify statistical anomalies (e.g. extreme changes in the number of registrants in

a region); 4. Review the list, visually or by computer, to determine duplicate registrations and the registration of ineligible voters;

5. Provide civic education and training to conduct the aforementioned techniques.

The first, second and fifth techniques require considerable time and personnel, but they also afford the best opportunity to detect flaws in the registration process. The third and fourth techniques can be accomplished at the central or district headquarters, without deploying any personnel to the

The writer is Member-Secretary, FEMA

BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Verbatim Text of Cross Examination of Twenty-second and Twenty-third Prosecution Witnesses

Continued from yesterday Following are the excerpts of PW-22 sepoy Habilder (retd) Abdul Aziz by Adv TM Akbar, defence counsel for Lt Col (LPR) Muhiuddin:

Q: Did you give any statement to CID? A: Yes.

Q: Was the statement read before you and did you sign it? A: It was read before me, but I

Q: Did you meet PW-21 Khaleque? A: Yes, I met him on Monday

didn't sign it.

cantonment?

at the verandah of the court. Q: Where did you report when you came to Dhaka to make your statement before the court?

A: At the CID office. Q: Does the night programme of Artiflery take place outside

The cantonment? Q: Was the Artillery firingrange was situated inside the

A: I can't remember. Q: How long did you hear the sounds of firing? A: Five to six minutes.

Q: Did you get your food ready when you went back to the barrack after your duty? A: Yes.

A: Did you go to the armoury to deposit your arms before

Q: Was it necessary to take the ammunition for the arms?

PW-23 Following are the excerpts of PW-23 Risaldar (retd) Abdul Halim Mollah by Adv TM Akbar, defence counsel for Lt Col (LPR) Muhiuddin:

Q: How many soldiers were there at your B Squadron in August, 1975? A: I can't recall.

Q: Records are kept if anyone takes charge in absence of oth-A: Yes.

squadron and how long he remained there? A: I don't remember.

Q: How long were you in the service? A: Till 1983.

From Page 1

A Narayanganj-based well-

known businessman and his

brother were failing to move the

managing director to their ad-

on the Boards of three state-

owned banks on nomination by

the past two governments, is a

generous gift-giver. Much to his

dismay, costly gifts sent to the

MD and other directors have

defaulted with different banks

is difficult to calculate. But the

amount of interests against

overdue loans he managed to get

written off recently is a stagger-

ing Tk 4.03 crore, according to

he owes about Tk 107 crore to

the banking system in

imports of palm oil, soda ash

and coconut oil and now owns

businessman after failing to get

his loan application approved

abused Khaled in his office and

threatened to remove him. "

will see how you can stay here."

Khan Mohammad Amir of the

Padma Group reportedly told

crore BMRE loan for Padma

project loan had been given

Amir was seeking a Tk 8.71

at least 20 enterprises.

According to one estimate,

He began his business with

In April this year, a young

The total amount of loans he

been rejected several times.

The businessman, who sat

proposal.

vantage.

an inquiry.

Bangladesh.

Q: Do you know that Major Feroz finally became brigadier?

Q: Can you say when did Major Feroz joined your

PW-23 Risaldar (retd) Abdul Halim Mollah by Khan Saifur

Q: Every tank has its num-

A: Yes. Q: Tank garages are kept under lock and key.

Q: Guards are there for the garages. A: Yes. Q: What is the location of the

A: About five to six hundred km south from the Tank garage. Q: Did the tanks go out through the signal gate on that

Q: But, one will have to go through the signal gate if he

wants to go towards south. A: There is another gate.

morning.

any tank exercise during your service life? A: Yes, when I was in Pakistan and on August 18, 1975

under the Army Headquarters.

Q: A commissioned officer should be in a tank if it comes

A: It depends on the CO. If he wishes he can depute a junior

Metropolitan

Biswa Ijtema ground at Tongi

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday visited the Biswa Ijtema ground at Tongi where at least 19 people were killed and a thousand others injured in a tornado, reports UNB On her arrival at the litema

ground in the afternoon, Begum Zia was received by "Jimmader" of Biswa Ijtema committee Abdul Quddus and Haji Abdul Fat-

Abdul Quddus told Begum Zia how the deadly tornado struck the devotees when they were in a prayer session and that of a horrible scene on Sunday evening. Later, Begum Zia visited the

50-bed Tongi Hospital where at least 62 injured devotees are now undergoing treatment. Dr Habibur Rahman of the hospital informed her that the

admitted devotees hailed from Rajshahi, Bhola, Chapainwabganj, Cox's Bazar, Jamalpur, Noakhali and Satkhira dis-

tricts. The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament enquired about the condition of the injured devotees and their treatment.

3 minor girls released from safe custody By Court Correspondent

CAPTAIN MACBETH-MINOTAURS-REPORTING

FOR ANTI-VIRAL INOCULATION!

Three minor girls got re-

leased from the safe custody of Dhaka Central Jail and reunited with their families Tuesday at the initiative of the Ain-O-Salish Kendra (ASK) A highly placed source in the

Ministry of Home Affairs said Tuesday that a total of about 50 females were in the safe custody of the Central Jail for several months. Some of them were kept there even for years together, he added. Metropolitan Magistrate,

Shawkat Nabi ordered release of the three girls on three petitions moved on behalf of the guardians of Hashi Khushi, 8, Fatema, 12, and Rina, 12. Hashi, a maid fled her em-

ployer's house in June last fearing torture. She was arrested by Ramna police and forwarded to court.

Ordering safe custody for the girl, the court also asked police to trace her guardian. Hashi, who hails from

Gazipur, was in safe custody for about four months, as police on several occasions reported that her guardians could not be ASK traced Hashi's

guardians when it came to know about the incident. They and filed a petition in court for her custody on behalf of her father. On her release Tuesday Hashi was handed over to her father Khurshed Alam.

Similar was the case with Rina who hails from Sirajganj. Her father was also traced by ASK and on her release from the safe custody, she was handed over to him. The case of Fatema, who

hails from Narsingdi, was however, different. She lost her way Matijheel police in July last handed over to her sister. The petitions from the ASK

M Asaduzzaman and Abu

Obaidur Rahman.

to Kapashia and was arrested by and the court placed her in safe custody. At the initiative of ASK, she got released and was on behalf of the girls were moved by advocates Ila Chanda,

. DESTRUCTOR DRAWN BY JOHN MCLUSKY

DISPENSARY— LAST DOOR ON YOUR LEFT!

Dry weather likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi. Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the region of Comilla in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB

across the country with partly cloudy sky. Day temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged throughout the country.

Country's highest temperature 33.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Jessore and Satkhira and the lowest 20.2 degrees at

The sun sets today at 5:31 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:57 am.

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.1	21.4	69	75
Chittagong	32.6	23.4	80	73
Rajshahi	32.0	21.7	76	77
Khulna	32.8	22.8	70	83
Barisal	31.5	22.0	7 5	84
Sylhet	31.4	21.6	77	78
Cox's Bazar	32.0	23.5	74	70

of directors

The government yesterday reconstituted the board of directors of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) for a three year term under the BSS ordinance, reports BSS.

Dr A A M S Arefin Siddiqui. associate professor of Mass Communication and Journalism Department of Dhaka University has been made chairman of the board.

The directors are: Bazlur Rahman, executive editor of the Sangbad, Kazi Shahed Ahmed, editor of the Ajker Kagoj, Moazzem Hossain, editor of The Financial Express, M A Malek, editor of the Chittagong-based Daily Azadi, Humayun Kabir Balu, editor of the Khulna-based daily Janmabhumi, Hamiduzzaman, chief reporter of the

Chief Editor of BSS, joint secretary (press), ministry of information and joint secretaries of the ministries of finance and the post and telecommunications will be ex-officio directors of the board.

tor cancer research held

rium of National Museum yesterday evening, reports UNB.

The concert, participated by try, highlighted the incredible ing against cancer.

posed by the DG of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Azad Rahman, who is also a renowned artiste, was a highlight of the evening.

with the Academy's renowned performance. The concert is part of a month-long drive which will culminate in the Terry Fox Run

on October 31.

(retd) Sultan Shahriyar Rashid Khan: Q: You once talked to the soldiers in front of Bangabandhu's

residence on that day.

A: I don't know.

August 15 incident.

A: Yes.

Q: They were in your unit

about whom you said that they

were not seen in the unit after

PW-22

PW-22 sepoy Havilder (retd) Ab-

dul Aziz by Adv Abdur Razzak

Khan, defence counsel for Lt Col

Following are the excerpts of

A: Yes. Q: Were those the people of your unit?

A: No, I don't even know from where they came. Q: Were they on duty there?

A: I can't say. Q: How long it took to come Bangabandhu's residence?

A: Three to four minutes. Q: Were you frightened at the sounds of firing?

A: Yes. Q: Did you go on ambush after hearing the sound of firing?

A: No, we lay down alongside a drain in a queue. PW-23 Following are the excerpts of

Rahman, defence counsel for Lt Col (dis) Syed Faruqur Rahman:

A: The frontside of a tank garage remains open.

signal gate?

A: I can't say.

Q: Did you ever take part in

Q: The CO of the regiment is

out of the cantonment.

officer (JCO) as well. Earlier, the state defence counsels for the absconding accused cross-examined the PW

Further texts of cross examination will be published as and when received.

- UNB

Weather

Met Office says weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere

Srimangal.

Maximum	and mir	umum ter	nperatures and	humidity
recorded in son			owns yesterday we	
City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
E. D. CHILIPPON SERVICES CONTROL CONTROL CONTROL				
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.1	21.4	69	75
Chittagong	32.6	23.4	80	73
Rajshahi	32.0	21.7	76	77
Khulna	32.8	22.8	70	83
Barisal	31.5	22.0	75	84
Sylhet	31.4	21.6	77	78
CANED AND AND AND ADDRESS OF THE PARTY OF TH	19100000000	NECTORIES	(6,5),52	1000

New BSS board

Managing Director and

Charity concert

An exciting charity concert to raise funds for cancer research was held at the audito-

Polycotton Knit Fabrics Ltd. a leading performers of the counone-year-old project, when he had been refused a Tk one-crore loan for the same purpose less story of Terry Fox, a Canadian than five months ago. Khaled who had inspired millions around the world to keep fightsaid in a letter to the Banking Secretary. The managing direc-The "Terry Fox Story", comtor also pointed out that the

only a year ago. The lobbyists sought to convince the prime minister by branding him a "negative It was followed by the wellbanker" and a "bureaucrat by character", according to PMO known dance drama, "Nakshi Kanthar Maatth" performed by sources. "He is enough to ruin the process of industrialisatop artistes Shamim Ara Nipa and Sohail Rahman together tion," they were learnt to have told the prime minister.

Khaled's response to the criticism was plain and simple. "If the proposals are not viable. then I am negative," he told this correspondent at his office

Tuesday as he unfolded his transfer order late afternoon after a lengthy Board meeting. likely to be his last as manag-

ing rector. As they came out of the Sonali Bank building, at least two members of the Board also confirmed that it was the work of

the loan defaulters. Inside the boardroom, the directors expressed regret at Khaled's removal. "We feel offended because of two reasons: first, we were not consulted and second, he is being asked to leave only after eight months in office when we were just beginning to grow as a good team." the directors were quoted to have said at the meeting.

Said a top civil servant, who had knowledge of the events that led to Khaled's exit from the Sonali Bank: "They are the same group which has played foul with the system for many vears.

Khaled was facing similar problems way back in 1990 when the then President H M Ershad sought to "teach him a lesson". An inquiry failed to frame charges against him, but before another inquiry could finish its task, Ershad was

Then a general manager at Agrani Bank and acting president of Bangladesh Economic Association, he told a seminar that industrial growth in the 80's did not match the growth of bank loans and that the situation had been better in the 70's.

The lobbyists' task however remained unfinished as far as their agenda were concerned. The man, who is replacing

Khaled, is no less reputed for what Khaled is known in the business circles -- equally tough in dealing with those going the wrong way. Mahbubur Rahman Khan, a former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, was unceremoniously removed from office 14 months ago and made an officer on special duty at the finance ministry. Four months later, he was forced into retirement, but was restored to job as OSD in February after a High Court order.

The authorities had charged him with being involved in

Sonali Bank MD removed "irregularities" in the approval of some non-banking financial institutions. An angry finance minister then had accused Khan of acting against the interest of the country.

However, his rating was

much better with the prime

minister. In fact, Khan's emergence as an option changed her The Banking Division had sent the file to the PMO with proposals to transfer Khaled and replace him with someone

who the Prime minister did not endorse as Sonali Bank MD. She agreed when Khan's name was proposed. The finance minister was learnt to have argued unsuccessfully with the prime minister against Khan's appointment saying it would be embarrass-

ing for him. The prime minis-

ter ignored his advice, accord-

ing to PMO sources. Asked, the finance minister said Tuesday the government decision to put him at the helm of the Sonali Bank came after a review of his circumstances. We reviewed his position and then we decided to make use of his experiences and banking ability," he said.

Khaled will probably continue to head the so-called task force, assigned to suggest steps to deal with the notorious trade unions in state-owned banks. CBA leaders are alleged to have often been involved even in loan approval process.

Sonali's CBA and the Bank Employees Federation had protested the formation of the task force, which is supposed to finish its task soon.

Khaled said he hoped to

submit the report by this month. Kalidas' art

show opens

A 12-day solo retrospective art exhibition of Kalidas Karmakar, titled "Love-Lyries-Lamentation," began at the gallery of National Museum in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia yesterday visited the Biswa Ijtema site hit by a tornado recently. - Star photo Khaleda visits New chief of USIS information

section takes over

taken over as (USIS) the Chief

of Information Section of the

US Information Service in

He replaced Syed Asaduzza

Ali has been working with

Before joining USIS in the

man Bachchu who retired in

USIS for the last 15 years and

served as the Deputy Chief for

late 1970s, Ali worked as an as-

sistant editor in the English

Daily "Morning News". He is a

Commonwealth Press Union

(CPU) Fellow. He also worked in

the Press Information Depart-

ment (PID) as an Assistant In-

Tanti Dal

meet Friday

committee of Jatiyatabadi

Tanti Dal will be held on Friday

at 4 pm at the BNP central of-

A meeting of the central

Dhaka, reports UNB.

late May.

over 12 years.

formation Officer.

fice, reports UNB.

Abul Ahsan Ahmed Ali has