

Voter listing

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prospective voters," EC Joint Secretary Mohammad Zakaria told journalists at his office yesterday.

Replies to a query on the EC Secretariat's decision to keep doing the work, former judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court Ghulam Rabbani said, "The Election Commission must take initial steps to stop the process of collecting information for fresh voter list until it receives the certified copy of the court's order."

Echoing the view, Kazi Ebadul Haque, another former judge of the Appellate Division, said, "The commission is obliged to obey the High Court's orders. Contempt proceedings may be brought if the orders are not complied with."

CEC MA Aziz yesterday declined to talk to the journalists about the issue while election commissioners AK Mohammad Ali and M Munsef Ali said the EC must abide by the court directives.

About the implications of the directives, Justice Rabbani said, "Continuing the process [collecting information about the prospective voters] is illegal after the High Court had asked the commission to revise the existing roll," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Justice Haque said as far as he knows from the newspapers, it is clear that the court has asked the EC to revise the existing one.

"The difference is clear between preparing a voter list afresh and revising the existing one," Haque told The Daily Star.

As the work of preparing a fresh list continued, the two election commissioners, who have all along been opposing the idea of having a fresh voter list and favouring instead a revised list, yesterday expressed fears for the fate of the ongoing task undertaken unilaterally by the CEC.

"One can understand with ease what might happen to the voter list not prepared in accordance with the High Court's order," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told journalists at his office, referring to continuing of the task for preparing the fresh voter list as decided by the CEC unilaterally.

Election Commissioner M Munsef Ali said going by the newspaper reports, he understands that the High Court's judgement has established their opinions.

"We never spoke for preparing a fresh voter list as the existing electoral rules do not allow to do so," the election commissioner added.

TASKCONTINUES
The CEC has neither initiated steps to hold an EC meeting nor consulted with the two election commissioners in the wake of the changed situation. The EC Secretariat yesterday directed the field-level election officials to continue collecting information on the would-be-voters.

The CEC and the EC Secretary yesterday declined to comment on the issue. Zakaria told journalists that they are continuing the task, as they have yet to have in hand any certified copy of the HC directives.

The EC Secretariat is not likely to get the copy before Sunday due to the weekend on Friday and Saturday. So it will continue the task and there is no possibility for the EC to issue any directive before Sunday.

Bar Council

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investigations into the attacks on court premises since August 17 following a writ petition filed by advocate Panna on November 30.

The police submitted two progress reports on December 13 and 26.

"I am greatly disappointed to find a simple chart giving some figures with reference to different police ranges, not district or police stations," advocate Panna yesterday said at a press briefing at Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) conference room.

In yesterday's supplementary affidavit to the HC, advocate Panna emphasised inclusion of police station-wise list of cases, particulars of offences, details of explosives and other weapons, remand duration of the arrested, information on how many arrested persons submitted statements under Section 164 and how many got bail, sources of supply of the weapons and explosives, financing of the terrorist activities, and many other relevant information in the progress report.

The progress report has mentioned nothing about the weapons seized after the recent militant attacks though these are frequently highlighted in the media, he added.

Any human rights organisation, even Human Rights Committee of Bangladesh Bar Council could give better progress reports, Panna said.

The hearing of the supplementary affidavit will take place after the 16-day winter vacation starting from tomorrow.

"A total of 504 bombs were blasted across the country on August 17, but according to the police report, only 154 cases have been filed in this regard and only ten cases have gone under trial," SCBA Secretary advocate Md Enayetur Rahim said.

The progress reports prove the government's failure as it mentions that only 42 cases have been filed after the August 17 bomb attacks and only seven of them are now under trial, he added.

Advocate Sahara Khatun and advocate Shahidul Islam were also present at the press briefing.

16 CPB men get bail in JP-filed case

BY NEWS, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted anticipatory bail to 16 leaders and workers of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), including its President Manjur Ahsan Khan, in an 'attempt to murder' case filed by the Jatiya Party (Ershad).

"When the court has asked to revise the current list why are you (enumerators) preparing a fresh one," he quoted a voter as asking.

"We are struggling to reply to their queries as the commission did not send us any further directives," said Sirajul Islam, an enumerator.

He said the EC had given us the training to prepare a fresh roll, not to revise the existing one. "We were told today that in a couple of days they will provide us with the existing list to carry out the task."

A district election officer in Sylhet division yesterday said enumerators, supervisors and assistant registration officers have been querying about the fate of their assignments following the HC directives.

According to the electoral rules, the forms to be used to revise a voter list should be different from those for preparing a fresh list, he observed.

"In this situation, alongside the voters, we too are confused and worried about our job," the election officer told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

Minsef Ali however said there is nothing to get confused about.

He said, "The existing voter list will have to be corrected by revision. Then a draft of it will be published in accordance with the procedure."

Mohammad Ali said he has asked the law officers of the EC Secretariat to collect immediately the certified copy. "On receiving the copy, we will sit to decide the next course of actions."

He also said they gave the baby to Jharna, 43, whose husband lives abroad and who does not have any child, as they believed that she will bring up their son well.

Police on Tuesday rescued the baby boy along with a girl aged about 10 days from Jharna.

The police later arrested Jharna and Shila's husband Manik who are on three-day remand at present.

Jharna claimed to police that she bought the boy for Tk 12,000 and the girl for Tk 10,000, the police said.

A number of DMCH staff said Jharna had been looking for a baby for adoption for the last few months.

The law enforcers raided several places in Dhaka and Fatullah, where the handover took place, to arrest Shila, believing that she might reveal the story behind the two infants.

The police on Wednesday night handed over the infants to a woman residing near the Sabujbagh Police Station and appointed a woman following a Dhaka court directive. They are also supplying food for the two infants, said the officer-in-charge of Sabujbagh PS.

The court did not say anything about issuing directives for the newspapers, but assured the counsel that it will try to finalise the certified copy as soon as possible.

The HC on Wednesday asked the EC to prepare a voter list based on the existing one amid an intense debate for and against preparing a fresh electoral roll for the next parliamentary elections.

Explaining the HC's observations that asked incorporating the names of people aged 18 or above in the new electoral roll and insane voters from the existing list, experts on law and electoral affairs said it means revising the existing voter list.

Shahidul also warned journalists not to make any news of the incident.

Abdul Haq Mia, acting principal of the college, refused to say anything on the matter.

The MP also could not be reached for comments.

Last year, Shahidul beat daily Jugantar correspondent Monjur Morshed.

23 hajj pilgrims

BY NEWS

The worst hajj-related tragedy occurred in 1990 when 1,426 pilgrims were killed during a stampede in an overcrowded pedestrian tunnel leading to holy sites in Mecca.

In 2004, on the final day of the ceremonies, 251 people were trampled to death when the crowd panicked during the ritual stoning of the devil. Three years earlier, 35 hajj pilgrims were killed in a stampede during the same ceremony.

In 1998, about 180 pilgrims were trampled to death when panic erupted after several fell off an overpass during the ritual.

About 12 policemen, including the officer-in-charge of Shibganj Police Station, were among those injured.

An uneasy situation still prevails at Kansat in Shibganj upazila. They are Kajal, 35, son of Manjur Ali of Abbas Bazar, and Nayan, 23, son of Biswajit of Chakkirti village in Shibganj upazila.

Bangladesh ranks

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Hong Kong, which scored 1.28 points, was ranked first in the index, followed by Singapore with 1.56 points and Ireland with 1.58 points. They are among the 19 countries dubbed as free and placed in the first category.

Bangladesh's ranking was the worst among five of the seven South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc).

Sri Lanka was in a better position and shared the 92nd position with Romania with a score of 3.19, followed by Pakistan with 110th position and 3.33 points, India with 121st position and 3.49 points, and Nepal with 125th position and 3.53 points. Bhutan and the Maldives were not included in the list.

The anticipatory bail order will remain valid until submission of the police report.

On January 2, Jatiya Party Office Secretary Reazul Islam Bhuiyan filed the case with Paltan Police Station, accusing the CPB leaders and workers.

In the case, he stated that the CPB men launched an attack in a pre-planned way on January 1 to kill Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad and Vice-Chairman Rowshan Ershad.

The activists of the two political parties clashed in Paltan area on January 1, leaving 50 injured. The CPB also filed a case against the JP leaders.

According to the report, the CPB has launched an attack in a pre-planned way on January 1 to kill Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad and Vice-Chairman Rowshan Ershad.

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