

EC now to list voters till February 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday extended the time limit for the voter-listing job until February 20 amid opposition of the two election commissioners, who have all along been opposed to preparing a fresh voter list.

With support from the two newly appointed election commissioners, the chief election commissioner (CEC) had the majority in his favour to take the decision yesterday. The commission however did not come to a decision about matters such as the dates for publishing the draft and final rolls.

The commission will decide what to do after February 20 only on knowing the outcome of the appeal it plans to file against the High Court's (HC) January 4 directives that asked for revision of the existing roll, sources said.

Sources said the EC Secretariat yesterday afternoon communicated to the district election offi-

cers the EC's decision and asked them to continue the field level work, which includes collection of information about prospective voters and scrutiny of those.

"Directions regarding the methods and schedule for preparation and publication of the draft and final rolls will be issued later as per the Election Commission decision and the court's ruling [on the appeal being planned to be filed against the HC verdict]," a district election officer told The Daily Star, quoting from the circular issued by the EC Secretariat yesterday.

In accordance with the schedule declared on December 6, the deadline for completion of the field level task was January 31. The draft voter list was timetable to be published on February 28 while the final list on June 1.

"We will decide later on the next steps about the voter-listing work," CEC MA Aziz yesterday told reporters at his office in presence of two new election commissioners,

Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria.

In the file forwarded to them for their opinion, election commissioners M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali opposed the extension of time as, they said, the work is not being done in line with the HC January 4 directives.

CEC MA Aziz yesterday for the first time talked about non-compliance with the January 4 HC observations. He said, "Observations cannot be made without issuing any rule."

MA Aziz, also a sitting judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, was speaking to the reporters at his office after taking the decision on time extension for the field level task.

MA Aziz, who joined the office yesterday after a week of absence for illness, said, "I have never witnessed any such observations neither in my 24 years' career as a practising lawyer nor in the 10 years as a judge of the Supreme

Court."

The HC has neither issued a rule nor asked the EC to stop the ongoing task for a fresh voter list. It has only taken cognisance of the petitioners' prayers for a court ruling or stay on the task, he observed.

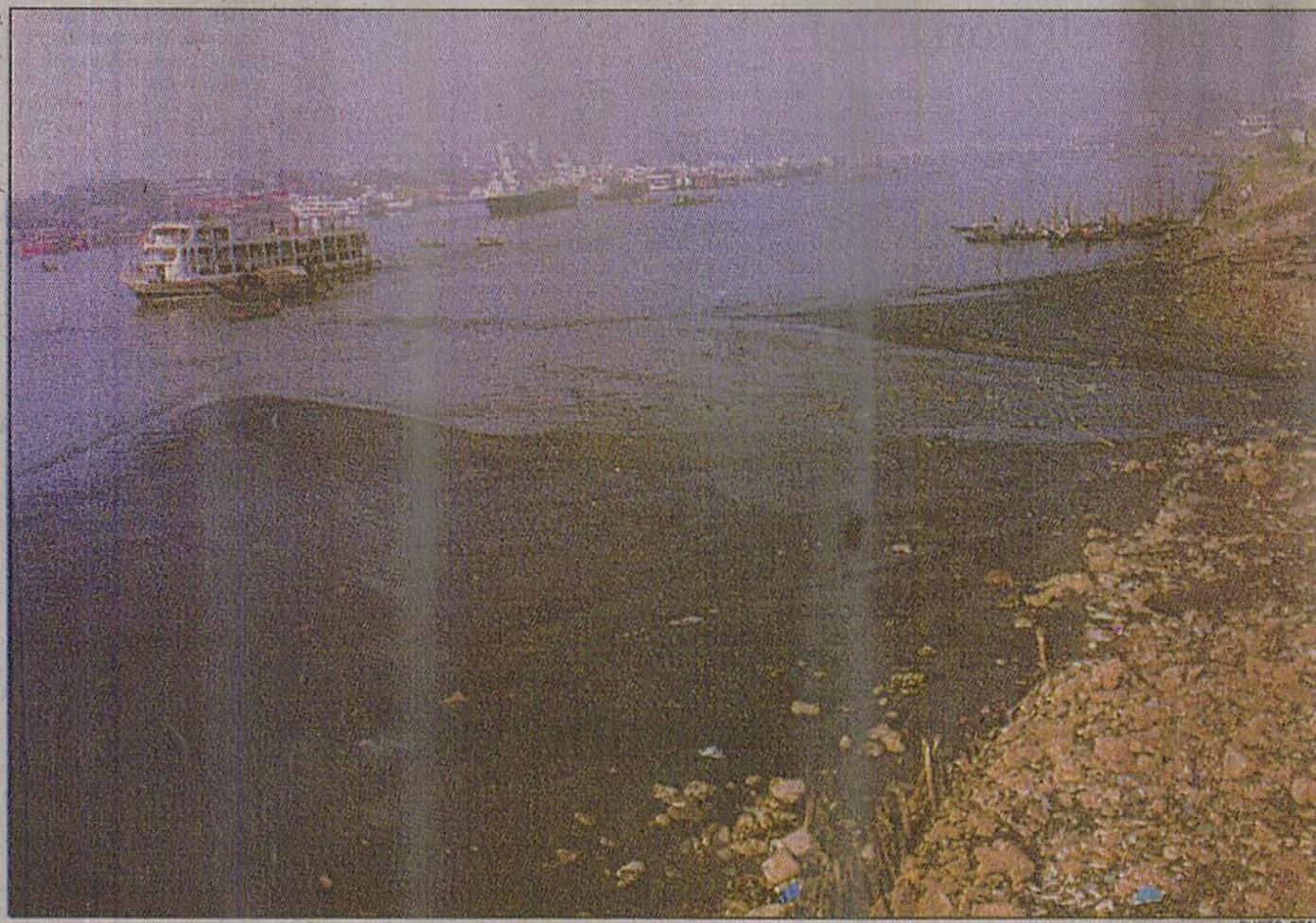
Asked about the rationale for filing an appeal against the HC's observations, the CEC said the EC does not agree with the observations and that is why it needs to file the appeal.

Contradicting the view, Election Commissioner Mohammad Ali said the EC should implement the HC's judgement.

"The work of preparing the voter list is not being done in accordance with the judgement. And that's why Election Commissioner Munsef Ali and I did not approve of the proposal for time extension," he told reporters at his office.

The voter-listing job undertaken by unilateral decision of the CEC began on January 1. The HC in

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One of the numerous drains at Ultiganj in Sutrapur of Old Dhaka dumps toxic wastes in the Buriganga polluting the water as well as silting up almost half of the riverbed.

JMB's Tongi-Uttara chief held with huge explosives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) organiser in Ashulia on Monday and recovered explosive materials and four guns from a den in Tongi yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off that JMB organiser and regional commander of Tongi-Uttara area Abdullah al Sohail al Maruf alias Akash would stay in the toll plaza area of Ashulia bazar, some Rab-3 members in plainclothes took position there and caught him at 7:45pm.

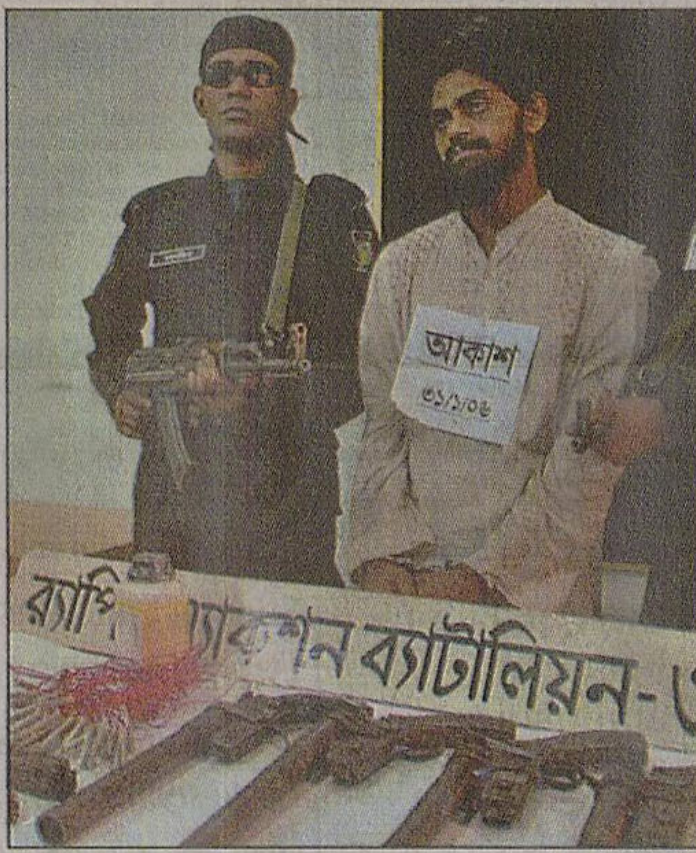
During interrogation Akash confessed to his involvement in the August 17 bomb attack. He distributed bombs and leaflets among more than 10 JMB operatives and taught them how to detonate the bombs in Tongi and Uttara police station areas, said a Rab press release.

Later, upon his information

that they had kept some explosives and other bomb-making materials near their abandoned den in Gazipura village in Tongi, the Rab team raided one Tangail mess in Gazipura and adjacent areas at 1:30am yesterday. They recovered four locally made guns, 48 detonators, one packet power gel, two packets of water gel, one packet lead nitrate, an electric switch and an electric valve during the raid.

Meantime, our Nilphamari correspondent reports that the Rab-5 members arrested district-level JMB leader Amzad Hossain at Titpara of Dimla upazila on Monday afternoon.

A high official of police in Nilphamari acknowledged the arrest although Assistant Superintendent of Police Tanvir Ahmed of Rab's Rangpur regional office told newsmen that he is unaware of the arrest of any Amzad.



Akash, right, JMB regional commander for Tongi and Uttara, after his arrest yesterday by Rapid Action Battalion.

Charge couldn't be framed against Sunny, six others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court could not frame charges against the military commander of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Aatur Rahman Sunny and six others in two cases as the jail authorities did not produce Sunny before the court.

Meantime, the Detective Branch (DB) of police accompanied by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members produced Sunny before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka on Monday.

The DB police also took him on a seven-day remand in a case filed after an explosion near Jatrabari over-bridge on August 17 last year.

AMM Afsar Uddin, additional deputy commissioner (prosecution) of the CMM's Court, on Monday directed the investigation

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Tougher action if govt disrupts long march

Warns 14-party meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14-party opposition combine yesterday directed its leaders and workers to take up tough anti-government programmes if the ruling alliance bars them anywhere from participating in its February 5 long march towards Dhaka.

The opposition leaders at a high-level meeting of the 14-party at the Awami League (AL) office in Dhanmondi accused that the BNP-Jamaat coalition government has already begun harassing their leaders and workers in different parts of the country ahead of the

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ENGINE TROUBLE

Biman's NY plane stuck at Brussels for 50 hours

REAZ AHMAD

More than 50 hours after getting stranded at Brussels airport due to serious engine troubles, the DC10 aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines' Dhaka-New York flight could not be repaired till last night and its 237 passengers are being put on different European airlines to reach New York.

Latest reports said a replacement engine for the troubled aircraft of the national flag carrier, stranded since Sunday night, was being flown from Amsterdam and engineers from Dhaka also started for Brussels last night.

The passengers including 13 infants, who were left in complete uncertainty at Brussels airport from 10 Sunday night to 10 Monday morning, were later lodged in expensive Marriott Hotel at Biman's expenses.

The national airlines' loss-making NY flight faced such troubles for the second time in four months.

In late September last year, a Biman flight on this route was forced to remain stranded at John F Kennedy Airport in New York for three days as the US Federal Aviation Authorities (FAA) stopped it from taking off without repairing at least 17 mechanical faults it had detected in the aircraft.

This time the Dhaka-Dubai-Brussels-NY flight rescheduled its departure thrice since Friday, took off from Zia International Airport Sunday morning and reached Brussels at night. But in the last leg of the flight to NY from the Belgian capital, the aircraft flew for one and a half hours and returned to Brussels airport due to serious engine faults.

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LAND DISPUTE

2 kids among 3 killed in gunfight

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Three people, including two children, were killed and 28 others injured during a gunfight at Moheshkhali upazila in Cox's Bazar yesterday noon.

The dead were identified as Ayesha Khatun 55, wife of Aftabun and Faruk Ahmed, 10, son of Saleh Ahmed. The identity of another child, aged about 7, could not be known immediately.

Police and locals said the gunfight ensued over a land dispute between the people of Chikripara and Zapura villages of Kalamarchora union of the upazila.

The critically injured were identified as Pakhi Khatun, 25, Nasima Khatun, 50, Rokeya Begum, 18, Kohinor Akhtar, 24, Nesar Ahmed, 9, Cheno Ara Begum, 14, Chabot Ara Begum, 22, Minu Ara, 21, Nozir Hossain, 30, Zainal Abedin, 38, Mujib Hossain, 21, Mozammel Haque, 35 and Monzor Alam, 28.

They were admitted to the Cox's Bazar Health Complex and Moheshkhali Upazila Health Complex.

KHALEDA, HASINA TALK ELECTIONS

Next polls crucial for nation's sovereignty

UNB, Ullapara, Sirajganj

Terming the next parliamentary polls very important for democracy, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the destiny of Bangladesh and its people will be determined through the elections.

"The upcoming elections will

decide whether independence and sovereignty of the nation will be protected and the pace of development maintained," she said urging the people to take a correct decision in the elections in 2007.

Addressing a public meeting at Akbar Ali Government College

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Forget internal feuds, work for boat: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed her party leaders and activists to work for the party nominated candidates in the next parliamentary election.

"You must forget about internal feuds. The party will nominate candidates to contest the elections

and you will have to vote for the symbol of boat even if a useless person gets the nomination," Hasina said.

The opposition leader was addressing a programme at her Dhanmondi office where former navy chief Rear Admiral (ret'd) M Abu Taher, former Jatiya Party general secretary of Faridpur

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SEPARATION OF JUDICIARY Govt seeks 4 months more in 22nd appeal SC hears petition today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday filed an application with the Supreme Court (SC), seeking four more months' time to separate the judiciary from the executive.

The Appellate Division of the SC today will hear the petition filed on behalf of the government by the Attorney General's (AG) Office.

It was the 22nd appeal by the government for extension of the deadline for separation of the judiciary.

The SC on October 20, 2005 had

refused to entertain a government petition seeking four months' time for separation of the judiciary as per the 12-point directive.

The Appellate division on October 20, 2005 had fixed February 1, 2006, as the date for hearing the contempt rule issued by the apex court against nine bureaucrats on charge of distorting the judgement in Masdar Hossain versus Bangladesh case popularly known as judiciary separation case.

The SC had issued the contempt rule upon the nine officials on November 29, 2004.

The accused officials are joint secretaries of the establishment

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At Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, Dhaka

Motor Show 2006

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