



## Voters' number to fall by 1cr

Up to 62pc fake voters were found in upazilas

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Only 10 upazilas and one city corporation saw increase in the number of voters in fresh electoral roll with photographs while the others recorded staggering decrease compared to the number of voters in the 2006 list.

A progress report by the project for preparing electoral roll with photographs and facilitating issuance of national identity cards indicated that the number of voters in the country will stand at around eight crore, over one crore less than that in the previous list.

Till May 27, field level tasks of voter registration were completed in 410 places that include upazilas and city corporations. About 7.27 crore voters were listed, which is around 91 percent of the total. The process now continues in 75 places, the report said.

Earlier, the Election

Commission (EC) had said the number of voters would not exceed eight crore.

The progress report indicated none of the upazilas where the field level tasks still continue would see increase in the number of voters.

All the 482 upazilas and six city corporations are supposed to have more voters now than in the previous list since a large number of people have become eligible to be on the list during this period, sources pointed out.

But the number of voters in Sylhet Sadar upazila has now decreased to 1,66,574 from 4,31,609 in the 2006 list, showing 61 percent fake voters in it (previous list).

Similarly, 1,79,293 voters are on the new list for Barisal City Corporation area as against 1,37,599 in the previous list, showing 52 percent fake voters.

In Ramgati upazila of Laxmipur

district, 1,24,084 voters were listed this time compared to 2,92,703 previously, showing 58 percent fake voters, according to the report. The Daily Star got a copy of it.

The 2006 electoral roll prepared for the ninth parliamentary election, which was scheduled for January 22, 2007, had 9.33 crore voters. It showed at least 1.31 crore fake voters, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) census report, 2001.

The BBS report shows the number of people aged 18 years (minimum age of a voter) and above, should be 8.02 crore at best.

The previous voter list triggered widespread protests contributing to cancellation of the parliamentary polls.

Twelve districts that now see over 80 lakh voters less than in the previous list include Sirajganj, Comilla, Noakhali, Mymensingh, Brahmanbaria, Gazipur, Pabna,

Kishoreganj, Tangail, Barisal, Dinajpur and Gaibandha.

About the decrease in number of voters, the EC says the way the voter list is being prepared leaves no room for inclusion of fake voters as physical appearance of a prospective voter at registration centres is a must to have his or her photographs and fingerprints taken.

**UPAZILAS WITH INCREASED VOTERS**

The number of voters registered this time in Chatmohar upazila of Pabna has risen to 1,73,657 from 84,401, in Sujnagr upazila of the district to 1,65,542 from 91,174, Savar of Dhaka to 6,88,581 from 5,47,664, Kallikoir of Gazipur to 2,65,815 from 2,32,633, Kamalganj of Moulvibazar to 1,63,752 from 1,55,338, Sadar upazila of Naraynganj to 6,79,835 from 5,91,609, Nangolkot of

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## AL, BNP slate arrest drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) and BNP yesterday strongly criticised the arrest of political leaders in the recent crackdown across the country.

In a statement, AL acting President Zillur Rahman and acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam said the caretaker government is arresting AL leaders to foil the party's 6-point movement for realising several demands including the release of party chief Sheikh Hasina.

The government has launched the operation to take revenge on party activists, the AL leaders said, adding that such action reflects the government's intolerant and autocratic attitude, which will intensify the present political crisis.

If the government continues arresting political activists, restoration of democracy would be uncertain.

They said the government launched crackdown on activists of AL and its front organisations in a

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## Sudden crackdown on political activists

STAR REPORT

Over 200 people including 33 district and upazila level top leaders of Awami League, BNP and their front organisations, municipality and union parishad chairmen and transport leaders were arrested as of yesterday during a sudden crackdown by the joint forces starting Friday midnight.

Of the arrestees, 140 were held in the capital alone as the joint drive coincided with a special drive by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to recover illegal firearms and arrest professional killers, criminals, drug peddlers and robbers.

Forty-one persons including the 33 political leaders and activists were arrested outside Dhaka. The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) also arrested 23 persons during the

drive across the country.

The political leaders and workers were arrested under section 16(2) of the Emergency Power Rules (EPR), police said.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Mohammad said the drive is aimed at arresting only those against whom there are specific allegations of criminal activities, those who are on the police list of criminals and those against whom there are arrest warrants.

"None other than these people have been arrested and there is no question of arresting and harassing any political person," the IGP said.

He said they have already ordered the authorities concerned to mount vigil at all land and airports so that no criminal can flee the country.

The crackdown began days after

the Awami League (AL) threatened with disobeying the law and BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain with street movements if their chiefs are not released soon.

Sources close to the police high-ups gave hints that more arrests are in the offing to ward off any sort of violence.

Our correspondent in Khulna reports: The joint forces held six persons in the city, one in Bagerhat, seven in Jessore and six in Narail during the pre-dawn raids.

The persons arrested in Khulna city are AL ward-23 President Biren Ghosh, AL ward-16 Secretary Bulu Biswas, Jatiya Party (JP) leaders Moniruzzaman Elu, Zahidur Rahman, Rafiqul Islam and Imran Khan.

They were sent to Khulna

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## FREE HASINA, KHALEDA Demand under consideration for success of dialogue: Zillur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The demands for the release of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia are being seriously considered for the success of the ongoing dialogue between the government and political parties, said Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday.

"The issue is being considered with utmost importance," Zillur said when newsmen asked him about the government's plan in the wake of political parties' demand for the release of the Awami League (AL) and BNP chiefs.

He said the caretaker government is making highest efforts to ensure participation of all political parties in the dialogue.

"A good number of demands have been raised by the political parties. We are considering those with importance. We are trying the best to make the process of the ongoing dialogue successful,"

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PHOTO: SHAFIQUL ALAM

A signboard being hung yesterday at Shaheedbagh in Dhaka to occupy land for a mosque in a water body which was once the river Buriganga.

## Govt service delivery improved, but its accountability dipped

Governance report by IGS says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A study has found that the government delivery of services to the people improved last year while living standards, business confidence, and investment dropped compared to the records of 2006.

The government's accountability also saw a decline while the executive branch wielded greater power.

The study report titled 'The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2007', and released by the Institute of Governance Studies (IGS) yesterday, also revealed that politicians were the least trusted professionals in the country last year, with the police and local government representatives making up the bottom three.

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## Khaleda loyalists at odds over unification

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

BNP's pro-Khaleda camp appears to be headed for a conflict as two of its top leaders are at loggerheads over issues pertaining to unification and organisational decisions.

The Khaleda-loyalists are now split into two groups due to differences of opinion of the two leaders -- Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the BNP secretary general appointed by party chief Khaleda Zia, and Brig Gen (ret'd) Hannan Shah, an adviser to the chairperson, said party insiders.

The differences of the two leaders widened when Delwar recently took a number of organisational steps to ensure his domination in the party across the country, said BNP leaders adding that Hannan Shah differed with Delwar as the

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## Party stand on talks final, says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Detained former prime minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday told her lawyers that the decision taken by her party's grassroots leaders as well as the central working committee on political dialogue with the caretaker government is final.

The Awami League Central Working Committee, following an extended meeting with grassroots leaders, has decided not to take part in dialogue without party chief Sheikh Hasina.

Hasina's top counsel Barrister Shafique Ahmed, who met her at a sub-jail in the morning, told the news agency that the Awami League chief wants dialogue and quick holding of the parliamentary

elections for transfer of power to elected representatives.

"A prolonged rule by a non-elected government aggravates sufferings of the people. Such rule cannot bring welfare for the people," Shafique quoted Hasina as saying.

Barrister Shafique along with Advocate Yusuf Hossain Humayun discussed matters related to the Niko scam case filed against the former premier during the meeting that lasted for two hours and 45 minutes.

A special court set up in the parliament complex resumes today for hearing on charge-framing in the Niko case.

Earlier, the court had granted a defence petition for consultation

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## Use 2.5b tonne coal for energy security

Recommends UNDP-Bangladesh report

SHARIER KHAN

A UNDP-Bangladesh report recommends increasing the use of coal resources to avert a deep energy crisis that would affect economic growth in near future.

The estimated resources of 2.5 billion tonnes of coal in Bangladesh are equivalent to 65 trillion cubic feet of gas which could assure energy security in the medium and long-term, says the report titled 'Sustainable Energy Development in Bangladesh -- Coal as an alternative energy resource.'

"More extensive exploration in northwest Bangladesh could aug-

ment the coal resource base significantly," it adds, urging the government to approve both the draft coal policy and investment for exploration of coal through geophysical surveys and 3-D modelling.

But the way forward with coal has to deal with both technical geological issues as well as resistance from the civil society, says the report prepared by Ajoy K Ghose and Chowdhury Quamruzzaman.

The nation has to overcome its inaction and the "not-in-my-backyard" attitude regarding coal, it observes.

"With access to world best practices in environmental technology for reducing ecological

footprint and supported by political will, the road blocks should not be insurmountable and coal could provide the much-needed energy security for the nation," says the report finalised last month.

"Where coal cannot be physically extracted, recovery of coal bed methane and underground coal gasification deserve to be considered as energy options," the report recommends.

The report briefly reviews the five coal deposits of Jamalganj, Barapukuria, Phulbari, Dighipara and Khalaspir and observes that in all cases, there are some common issues -- high population density,

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