



Grabbers gradually filling the capital's Dholaiakhal (a canal) by dumping earth while the authorities seem to have turned a blind eye to the situation. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

VOTER LIST PRINTING FOR NEXT GENERAL POLLS EC to begin process this month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will begin the process of printing the voter list for the next parliamentary polls this month, said Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad yesterday.

"We will have to complete all sorts of necessary tasks immediately to hold the election. Printing of the voter list is one of the major tasks. We hope to start its printing by this month," he said.

However, it is yet to be decided whether the list will be printed using

government printing press, private printing press or if the army will do it, he added.

The CEC was talking to reporters after a meeting with other election commissioners at the EC Secretariat in the capital yesterday.

Claiming that ballot papers are wasted in the traditional system due to excessive use of ink, Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad said, "That is why we are thinking of using pen in voting."

"We are planning to introduce the new system experimentally in few

union parishad or municipal polls. After scrutinising its result, we will take further decision," he said.

However, the CEC did not specify in which union parishad or municipal election the system will be experimentally introduced.

Asked about the polls to the two city corporations in the capital, the CEC said the discussion on the issue will be held after Ramadan.

The gazette on the result of Gazipur City Corporation election will be published within a day or two.

Adolescent pregnancy a problem in country

Says health minister marking World Population Day

HELEMUL ALAM

Around 66 percent of Bangladeshi female adolescents are getting married before the age of 18, of which, 32.7 percent are becoming pregnant before reaching 19 years of age, said Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque yesterday.

This is putting both mother and child at risk of death, he told a press conference, adding that 23 percent of Bangladeshis were between 10 and 19 years of age.

The press conference marking World Population Day today was organised at the ministry's conference room. This year's theme is "Focus is on Adolescent Pregnancy".

The minister's account became all too apparent when this correspondent met an 18-year-old, Khadiza Begum, at the entrance of the children's ward of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Her five-day-old baby, suffering intermittent convulsions, was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. She got married at 16.

DMCH head of the obstetrics and gynaecology department Prof Ferdousi Islam told The Daily Star that the coupling of early marriage with adolescent pregnancy posed a heightened risk of maternal and foetal complications like obstetric fistula and convulsions, death and disability.

There is a much higher chance of obstructed labour after adolescent pregnancy as the mother's pelvis is not properly developed, she said.

Female adolescents coming from financially insolvent families are the main victims as they do not bother to go for obstetric care during pregnancy, delivery and post-

delivery, said Prof Ferdousi.

They can also face the second main cause of maternal death -- pre-eclampsia and eclampsia -- an illness sometimes occurring during the later stages of pregnancy and involving high blood pressure and convulsions, sometimes followed by a coma, she added.

Assistant Prof Dr Nasrin Akhtar of the department said there were two reasons for obstetric fistula -- neglected delivery and injury.

She said patients usually fail to take proper precaution during pregnancy and labour pains and come to the doctor when it is too late.

According to a 2011 statistics of Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 70 percent of deliveries in Bangladesh, including that of many adolescents, are conducted at home, putting mothers at risk of infertility and obstetric fistula.

A recently released statistics of United Nations Population Fund states that about 16 million under 18 adolescents give birth each year while another 3.2 million undergo unsafe abortions.

A vast majority, 90 percent, of pregnant adolescents in the developing world are married but pregnancy, for far too many of these girls, has little to do with informed choice, it says.

Often it is a consequence of discrimination, rights violations (including child marriage), inadequate education or sexual coercion, it adds.

It is very important to protect women's fundamental rights and ensure their empowerment to prevent adolescent pregnancy, suggested the health minister at the press conference.

Six-storey building sealed after discovery of crack in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A six-storey building in the capital's Darussalam road was vacated and sealed off by police yesterday after a pillar on the ground floor was found to have developed a crack.

The building would be allowed to open after experts of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and other authorised bodies give a safety clearance, Darussalam Police Station Officer-in-Charge Khalilur Rahman told The Daily Star.

The pillar is situated in the kitchen of a restaurant, ATN Party House. The building also houses a garment factory, show-rooms and shops.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina exchanges pleasantries with cabinet members and senior Awami League leaders at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital yesterday on her return from a visit to London and Belarus. PHOTO: BSS

Govt official threatens to kill lawyer before magistrate

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A government high official yesterday brandished his licensed pistol and threatened to kill a lawyer inside the chamber of an additional district magistrate (land) in Dhaka, as he was opposing the official's compensation appeal during hearing of a land acquisition case.

Abul Mosaddek Azad, additional secretary (official on special duty) to the public administration ministry, threatened advocate Syed Ahmed Mostafa Rana for appearing on behalf of Mainul Islam, a claimant of a piece of land in the capital's Mohammadpur.

Following the incident, Additional District Magistrate (Land) Md Iftekharuzzaman ordered duty police to arrest the secretary, but he fled the chamber.

Iftekharuzzaman told reporters that the incident took place in his presence. He also

said he would take an initiative to cancel the licence of the official's pistol.

The incident occurred around 11:30am yesterday when the lawyer opposed an appeal filed by Azad seeking Tk 12.94 lakh as compensation from the government for acquiring a land of 17 decimals at Katsur Mouza in Mohammadpur.

Both Kamal Uddin Abbasi and Mainul Islam claim the land's ownership.

On June 20, Azad, on behalf of Kamal Uddin Abbasi, filed the compensation appeal with the court, while Rana represented Mainul Islam to claim the same compensation.

The two claimants were called to place their arguments before the court yesterday.

Contacted, advocate Rana said he filed an application with the deputy commissioner for ensuring his security. Azad did not respond to phone calls.

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