

Voter Age : BNP criticises CA's proposal

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Online Desk : BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Saturday alleged that the Chief Adviser's suggestion to set the minimum age for becoming a voter at 17 has sparked controversy, as it could delay the election process. "Prof Yunus has proposed that the minimum age for becoming voters should be 17. This means a new voter list would have to be prepared," he told a discussion. The programme was organised by a faction of the Jatiya Gonotantrik Party (Jagpa) at the Jatiya Press Club. Fakhrul said Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus talked about a matter on which there is no consensus.

"Now, people will fear that even more time will be wasted, and further delays will occur to do it (in preparing the voter list). I don't know why there is an impression among the people that this government is deliberately trying to delay the election process, but that is not my perception," he said. The BNP leader said the Chief Adviser should not have raised the issue without first consulting the stakeholders. "You are the Chief Executive, and you said that 17 years is better. When you say this, it becomes binding on the Election Commission," he said.

Fakhrul said the government should have left the matter to the Election Commission, allowing it to make a decision. He claimed that the current minimum age of 18 for becoming a voter is acceptable to all. "If you want to reduce it by one year, then let the new Election Commission propose it and engage in discussions with the political parties. When he (the Chief Adviser) first said 17 years, it became binding and put pressure on the Commission," the BNP leader said.

He said it would have been better if the Chief Adviser had not raised the issue in this way. "He should have raised the matter after consulting with the stakeholders. Had he done so, there would have been no controversy." Earlier, on Friday, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus suggested that the minimum voter age should be lowered to 17 years. "To give their (youth) opinion on their own future, I think the voting age for them should be fixed at 17 years," he said in a video message played in an dialogue arranged by the Forum for Bangladesh Studies.