

EC scraps DC-UNO-led committees for polling centre setup

July 1, 2025

Online Desk The Election Commission (EC) has revoked the provision of forming committees headed by deputy commissioners (DCs) and upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) to establish polling centres for the national parliamentary elections. The revised Polling Centre Establishment and Management Guidelines-2025 has already been published as a gazette notification, restoring full authority to EC field-level officials in determining polling centre locations. Traditionally, EC officials have been responsible for setting up polling centres. However, ahead of the last national election, the then EC, led by Kazi Habibul Awal, amended the guidelines to involve administrative and police officials in the process. The move drew widespread criticism for potentially undermining the EC's independence.

Under the previous guidelines, five-member upazila-level committees, led by UNOs, were tasked with drafting preliminary polling centre lists. At the district level, seven-member committees led by DCs reviewed and provided feedback after site inspections. These committees also included police officers, education officials, and election officials as members, with upazila and district election officers serving as member secretaries. According to EC officials, the latest changes abolish those committees, reverting the responsibility for polling centre management solely to EC officials.

The updated guidelines specify that each polling centre should serve around 3,000 voters, with one room allocated per 500 male voters and 400 female voters. In cases where existing centres become unusable—due to river erosion or other causes—or if a growing voter population requires additional centres, new ones must be established in consultation with local dignitaries, elected representatives, or political parties. Polling centres must be located with voter accessibility and geographical considerations in mind. The distance between centres should not exceed three kilometers, and voters should not have to bypass nearby centres to reach another one. The guidelines also encourage retaining existing polling centres whenever possible.