

## Bihari votes

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National Congress.

During the historic election of 1970, he was settled in Dhaka two years after his migration to the then East Pakistan. Like many who moved here from India since the partition, he backed Jamaat-e-Islami, the party that worked against the independence movement.

The Biharis were stripped of their right to vote after Bangladesh was liberated from Pakistani occupation in 1971. Since then, they had been stranded here as successive Pakistan governments showed little interest in taking them back.

Mohammad Parvez, a 28-year-old resident of Geneva Camp, said, "We are happy that we have a national identity and we can say we are the citizens of Bangladesh."

In Mohammadpur, Pallabi and Mirpur, many Biharis mingling with different party workers are busy canvassing.

Interestingly, a group supporting Ilias Uddin Mollah, AL-led grand alliance candidate for Mirpur-Pallabi (Dhaka-16), has published leaflets in Urdu to seek attention of fellow Biharis.

Mohammad Abbas, 74, and Shahzada Selim, 43, were distributing the leaflets when this correspondent got to speak to them. They said they have published these on their own as many in their community can read only Urdu.

"We did this because we want them to rally behind our candidate of choice," added Shahzada.

Rafiqul Islam Mia, BNP-led four-party alliance candidate for Dhaka-16, yesterday told The Daily Star, "My supporters in Bihari community too have decided to publish leaflets for me."

Similarly, Biharis of Geneva Camp in Mohammadpur have published Urdu leaflets for Jahangir Kabir Nanak, grand alliance candidate for Dhaka-13.

Showing a leaflet to this correspondent, 53-year-old Mansur Alam said, "Who doesn't want to see his mother tongue in print."

Sixty-year-old Sheikh Abdul Gafur finds it pretty amazing that both Nanak and four-party alliance candidate Moazzem Hossain Alal are canvassing vigorously for their support.

"This is the first time that politicians are coming to our doorsteps for vote. It feels like we have grown to be worthy citizens from being a bunch of losers. Till this month, there was none to look after us. Even if it's for the sake of vote, the political leaders are now asking how we do."

The candidates have made a lot of promises in the leaflets for the Biharis. The pledges range from improving the living standards to ensuring fundamental rights.

With pledges aplenty, the Biharis have resolved to vote for the candidate they think

**3 Indian ships**

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contacted the Indian warships and alerted them that they have entered Bangladeshi maritime economic zone.

The Indian ships then retreated five degrees westward, towards the Indian coast, but they are still within Bangladeshi's zone.

Bangladesh is yet to finish marking its maritime boundary to avert disputes with its neighbours especially in dealing with deep-sea oil and gas exploration.

**Report on poll**

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contesting candidates submit their election expenditure reports, it issued the circular asking the ROs to inform the contesting candidates and their agents about the legal provision for submission of election expenditure reports, said EC officials.

In previous elections, many candidates did not submit their expenditure reports and those who filed reports did not follow laws to do so, the officials said.

But the EC did not take any actions against the candidates for failure to submit their election expenditure reports and those who filed false reports, they said.

"You [ROs] will take legal action against a candidate if he/she does not submit the expenditure report," the circular said the ROs will file criminal cases with competent courts against the candidates who fail to abide by the law. The ROs do not require taking prior permission from the EC to file the cases.

The EC officials said the political parties contesting the election must submit their poll expenditure report in next 90 days after the election. The commission may issue another circular in this regard.

## Home rush

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day short of the polls. Election Day is a public holiday.

Nazmul Hasan, a teacher of St Joseph High School, is all set to leave Dhaka a day before the elections to cast his vote in his constituency. For sure, he will be with his loved ones in Chandpur.

"We are going to the polls after so long and I don't want to miss out on the chance to vote. And I'll have a chance to see my family. It's like an Eid reunion," he says.

But Nazmul does not want to stay apart from the post-polls excitement in Dhaka either.

"I'll be back in town late Monday. Keeping tabs on the election results is exciting, really," Nazmul told The Daily Star.

For the first-time voters, elections are far more exciting.

Habibur Rahman Habib, a final-year honours student of political science at Habibullah Bahar College, will travel back to Narayanganj with his brother on Sunday. Both are first-time voters.

"Vote matters much to me."

With a pause, Habib says: "I'm proud of being part of the voting population."

As the election campaign is nearing its final lap, hundreds of thousands of people are now bound for their constituencies.

"If we consider 60 percent of them eligible to be voters, the number should be 95-96 thousand."

Ahmed thinks there would be some 12 thousand Bihari voters in six camps and other places in Mohammadpur.

**Shortage of men marks Christmas in Baghdad**

AFP, Baghdad

**Khaleda**

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and Netrakona and introduced the alliance candidates to the people.

She came down heavily on Awami League (AL) at yesterday's election rallies and urged people to vote for the four-party alliance to protect the country's independence and sovereignty.

Pointing finger at the AL, the BNP chief said, "They (AL) had repeatedly deceived people. Every time the party went to power, it did not fulfil its commitments to the people."

Earlier, the BNP chief on her way to Jamalpur made a stopover near a paddy field in Tangail to enquire the farmers about their problems.

Khaleda got down from her car at Ramkrishnapur of Dhombari upazila and asked the farmers about the problems they face in producing rice.

The BNP chairperson, who began her campaign trip from her cantonment residence at about 11:35am, addressed rallies at Maona in Gazipur and Tongi before returning to the capital.

**Kibria killing**

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Harunur Rashid, owner of Harun Traders, is elder brother of Mizan, they added.

On the statement of Mizan, police also recovered a motorcycle from a shop beside Pourasava road in the town on Monday.

Police said two assailants fled the scene on the motor-bike shortly after the grenade attack on the AL rally.

**Gas bidding**

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invited the third-round international gas-block bidding in February this year with a plan to award the contract by September or October. The main thrust of the plan was to utilise this year's dry season for exploration work under the contract.

Hasina also pledged that they will take steps to resolve problems of all sections of people including farmers, weavers, blacksmiths and potters.

The AL chief warned people about their party's political rivals saying, "They will try to buy your vote, but don't sell your 'iman'."

At the rallies, the former premier reiterated her pledge to provide job for at least one male or female member of each family, give bank loan to unemployed youths without any collateral, bring down prices of essentials and make education up to degree level free, and set up community health clinic for every 6,000 people.

On her way back to the capital, Hasina addressed a street rally at Keraniganj for Dhaka-2 constituency candidate Kamrul Islam. Later, she conducted a few electoral campaigns through video conferencing from her residence Sudha Sadan at Dharmundi.

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## Woman aspirants

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thrown a challenge in Chandpur-3 to strong BNP candidate GM Fazul Haque who won the last two parliamentary polls from here.

Former student leader Shirin Sultana is contesting as the BNP candidate in Dhaka-9 against influential AL leader Saber Hossain Chowdhury. Saber won the 1996 election in the constituency while Shirin is in an electoral race for the first time.

Also in her first time fight in parliamentary poll is legendary actress Sara Begum Kobori. She has already come into discussion by creating a good image in her constituency, Narayanganj-4, Sagunta Yamin (Munshiganj-2), Sanjida Khanam (Dhaka-4), Meher Afroze Chumki (Gazipur-5) and Lutfunnah Begum (Noakhali-3).

Sagunta Yamin and Meher Afroze Chumki were elected members of parliament from reserve seats in 1996. Sagunta contested the last parliamentary polls but was defeated.

Sanjida Khanam came into limelight by playing a vital role as Hasina's lawyer after promulgation of the state of emergency.

A L candidate Habibunnahar is the wife of Khulna Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque and Rebeqa Momin is the wife of late AL leader Abdul Momin Begum. Monnujan Sufian is a veteran labourer.

The AL also endorses independent candidate Ayesha Ferdous of Noakhali-6 as her husband Mohammad Ali was declared unfit by the returning officer.

JP leader Roushan Ershad is running in the election from Gaibandha-5 and Mymensingh-4 while Momotaj Iqbal from Sunamganj-4.



## 8 JMB men

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ammunition proves their preparation to commit a serious crime."

Of the JMB operatives, Rejaul Karim Reji alias Hasan alias Shihab, 25, Manjurul Islam Manju, 20, and Al Amin, 27, were arrested in Gobindaganj upazila during the drive that continued till early hours yesterday.

Following their statements, police arrested Mostafizur Rahman, 32, and Nannu Miah, 32, in Gobindaganj and Rowshan Ali, 30, Amzad, 35, and Mohammad Obaidur Rahman of Pashchim Komarno village in Sadar upazila.

SM Moniruzzaman, superintendent of Gaibandha police, said among the eight JMB men, Obaidur is a teacher of Chapadaha Dimukhi Dakhil Madrasa and Amzad Hossain of Afroza Khanan Dakhil Madrasa. Besides, Amzad is also the imam of Arigashpur Jam-e Mosque, he said.

Rejaul Karim Reji is the JMB's regional commander. He is a student of Gobindaganj Shamim and Shakil Technical College and also the member of JMB's policymaking body Ehsar.

"All the eight militants are senior JMB leaders," the Gaibandha SP said. "Following their confessions, we believe there are many JMB men active in the country."

He said all the JMB men were arrested in their own houses and the explosives were seized from Manju Al Amin.

Gaibandha police chief SM Moniruzzaman said the explosives might have been collected for any big attack ahead of the national election.

Col Ahsan, commander of Gaibandha army camp, and Rab-5 Commander Major Shah Al Amin said the arrestees have given important information.

## Business of Babar

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team

led by a sub-inspector at each general centre. In addition, 12 ansar personnel will be deployed at each of the polling centres, he said.

Badiul said since a large number of businessmen are contesting the polls it could be assumed that the bulk of the members of the next parliament will be from the business community like the earlier parliament where two-thirds lawmakers were businessmen.

Such a trend will hamper implementation of representative democracy," said Badiul.

Since many criminals and corrupt people have been given nomination for contesting the elections, there is a possibility that if elected they would engage in criminal activities and corruption, he added.

Shujan President Prof Muzaffar Ahmad said it is essential to get good people elected as parliamentarians in order to have a 'good parliament'.

Stressing the need for an effective parliament, he suggested introducing a system to review the lawmakers' presence in parliament sessions and their performance in the parliament.

Former advisers to caretaker government ASM Shahjahan and M Hafizuddin Khan were also present.

Of the nominees, 214 from AL and 198 from BNP competed for election. The survey said 21 war criminals are contesting the elections.

According to the survey, of the 2,500 parliamentary aspirants, who submitted nomination papers, 865 had no Tax Identification Number (TIN) while 493 candidates have no TIN numbers.

Citing several reports published in newspapers, the survey said 21 war criminals are contesting the elections.

The survey also revealed that of the candidates, 130 have no educational qualification while 305 passed SSC or HSC, 555 completed graduation and 557 have post-graduation degree but 32 candidates did not mention their educational qualification.

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