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Hasina discloses her priority list at first briefing after poll triumph; seeks Khaleda's help in running country; asks party loyalists to show forgiveness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government's first tasks would be to bring down the prices of essentials within people's reach and alleviate poverty. And in this mission, she sought cooperation of her political archrival Khaleda Zia.

"Poverty is our lone enemy and we will have to eradicate it, reduce price hike and improve people's living standard," Hasina said at her first news conference after winning a landslide victory in the ninth parliamentary election on December 29.

A smiling and confident Hasina sought cooperation of all, including the opposition and other political parties, in establishing a new political culture to build a developed, modern and poverty-free Bangladesh.

She urged BNP Chairperson Khaleda



Zia to accept the polls results. "I think she [Khaleda] should accept the people's verdict reflected in the free, fair and transparent election," the AL chief told

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

JS to decide on caretaker govt's legality

Hasina tells CA

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the legality of the present caretaker government will be finally decided in the ninth parliament.

After making a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office, Hasina made the remark responding to a reporter's question regarding her stance over the legality of the caretaker government installed through 1/11 changeover.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

GREETINGS

The Daily Star
Wishes its valued readers, patrons, well-wishers and advertisers a happy New Year.

Ex-BNP MP Munshi jailed for violating electoral code

A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A magistrate court here yesterday sentenced seven and a half years' imprisonment to former BNP lawmaker Manjurul Ahsan Munshi for violating code of electoral conduct during the polling on December 29.

Judicial magistrate Md Zahir Uddin also fined Munshi Tk

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

POPULAR VOTES

AL 25pc up, BNP 20pc down

SHAKHAWAT LITON and SHARIFUL ISLAM

A calculation of the votes cast in Monday's election showed that Awami League (AL) bagged about 25 percent more votes in this election than it had in 2001.

It secured 40.13 percent of popular votes in 2001, which got jacked up to 49.02 percent this time around.

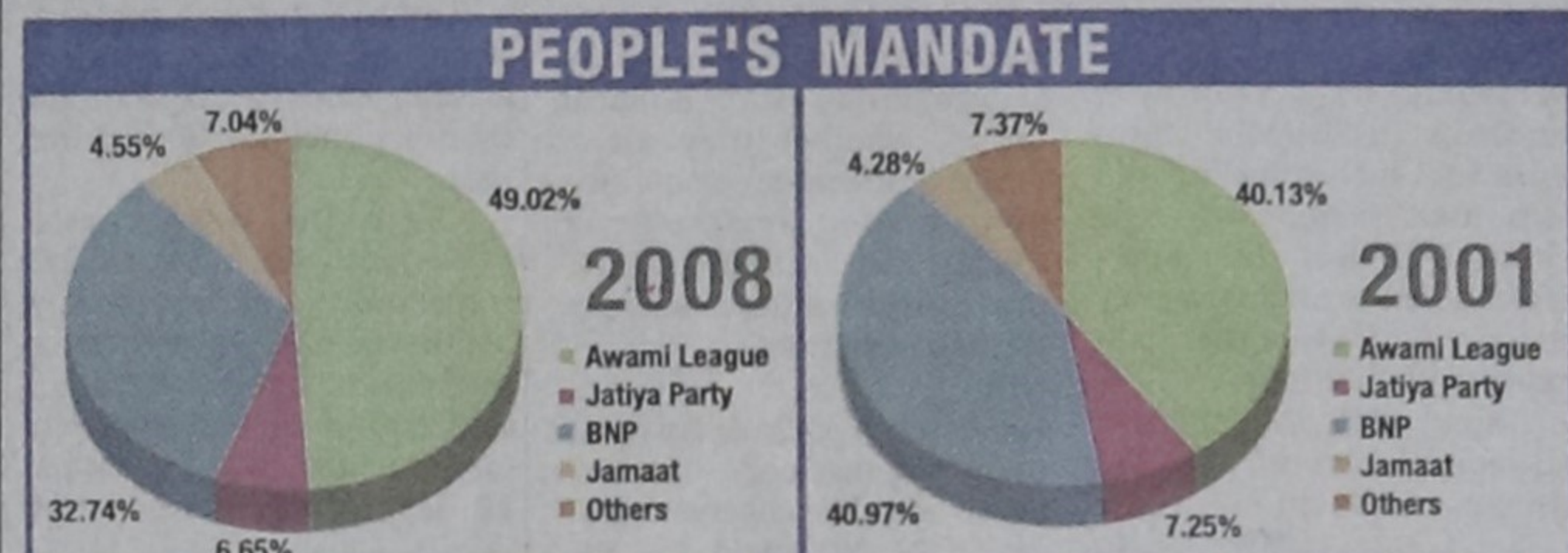
On the other hand, the number of popular

votes cast for BNP in the just concluded 9th parliamentary election got reduced by 20 percent compared to its gain in 2001 election.

In 2001 it had got 40.97 percent of the votes cast which got reduced to 32.74 percent on December 29, 2008.

These numbers clearly indicate a swing from BNP to AL among voters, at least by 20 percent.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Win over abuse of religion

Civil society observes about Jamaat downfall; the party tightlipped

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Corruption, alleged links to militancy and campaigns about the role in genocide of 1971 led to voters' humiliating rejection of Jamaat's religion-based politics in the parliamentary polls, say political analysts and civil society leaders.

"The voters have rejected misuse of religion in politics through their ballots," political analyst Prof Imtiaz Ahmed told The Daily Star. The people didn't like distortion of religion for political gains, he added.

Human rights activist and former adviser to caretaker government Sultana Kamal said, "This result is the reflection of peoples' secular mind. They have proved again through ballots that they don't like communalism, chauvinism and fascism."

Veteran freedom fighter and former army chief Lt Gen (ret) M Harun-ur-Rashid believes the new generation rejected Jamaat when they learned for the first time about the party's role in 1971.

However, Jamaat's top leaders are sceptical about the factors behind their election debacle. One top leader of the party declined to say anything and a defeated candidate ruled out the possibility of war crime and militancy issues behind their defeat.

Speaking anonymously, a Jamaat leader said the election results came as huge frustration to the party with grassroots leaders and workers enquiring about the failure of the top brass.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Observers find no irregularities

Say polls were held in a fair, transparent manner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign election observers yesterday said they did not find any instance of 'election manipulation' in the December 29 parliamentary polls as alleged by the BNP.

The observers at separate press conferences in the capital said the election was free, fair and transparent and held in a peaceful atmosphere with high turnout.

They also urged all political parties including BNP to accept the election results for the sake of strengthening democracy in Bangladesh.

The winners should be generous and help the opposition parties play a constructive role in the parliament, they said, adding that the polls marked an important step towards re-establishing democratic governance in Bangladesh.

Disclosing the preliminary findings, European Union Election Observation Mission's (EUEOM) Chief Observer Graf Lambsdorff said apart from minor technical difficulties, professionalism, transparency and credibility were the hallmarks of the ninth parliamentary elections.

Referring to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's claims, Lambsdorff said the results were accurate and they did not find any instance of fraud in the election process and vote counting.

He said there was allegation of irregularities in a few polling centres but it did not have any impact on the election results.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8
RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2

Happy New Year 2009

May your each day of New Year be blessed with peace, prosperity & happiness

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