



**Ansar member Yunus and a voter named Ameer Hossain lie on beds at DMCH with injuries they suffered in a bomb attack at a polling station in the capital's Dhania yesterday.**



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Foreign missions

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country's democracy, peace, and stability, they added.

"The statement will be very well thought, and may not be congratulatory to the new government," said the second man of an influential country's embassy.

Another diplomat of an important country said: "I expect we will issue a statement on January 6-7."

According to diplomatic sources, most of the countries would write letters to the prime minister urging her to hold a constructive dialogue with the opposition parties to find a way forward for holding a free, fair and inclusive election.

In the letters and statements, the sources said, the international community might not recognise the election, rather call for a fresh election under an agreeable solution acceptable to all.

The foreign missions and their capitals are monitoring the situation in Bangladesh, the sources added.

## Not a vote in 41 centres

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Locals of Mohendranagar village of Lalmonirhat sadar upazila said about 90 per cent people of the four unions were BNP supporters. So there was no chance for the AL candidate to bag votes there.

District BNP president Asadul Habib Dulu said his party would go for a tougher programme in Lalmonirhat if the administration changed the vote results.

District Returning Officer and Deputy Commissioner Habibur Rahman, and Assistant Returning Officer Nazmul Huda, also the upazila nirbahi officer of Lalmonirhat sadar, declined to comment on the zero turnouts when contacted last evening.

Like the 27 in Lalmonirhat-3, nobody showed up at the polling centre in the village of the missing BNP leader Ilias Ali, Ramdhana Govt Primary School polling centre in Biswanath upazila of Sylhet-2.

People from four centres under Jhenidah-3 constituency -- Puranandapur Primary School,

Khalispur Dakhil Madrasa, Bojrapur Primary School and Garabaria Primary School centres -- did not dare to cast their votes either.

The situation at Purbo Maheshchar centre of Char Chandia union under Feni-3, a constituency from where Opposition Leader and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia contests, also saw no voters yesterday.

Due to the massive Jamaat atrocities and attacks on Hindu and Awami League men in villages under Shibpur union following the execution of war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah, nobody from Godaghat village in Satkhira-2 turned up at Godaghat Primary school centre.

Locals said Jamaat men had threatened to kill the villagers if they went to cast their votes. On top of that, anti-polls activists had torched the polling centre there on election eve.

Meanwhile, two polling centres -- Saodagorhat Mahmudia Madrasa in Feni-3 and Shialdanga Primary School in Satkhira-2, saw one voter each.

## New govt by Jan 11?

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form the government before the current parliament expires, without violating its provisions.

According to Article 123 of the constitution, candidates elected through a general election cannot assume office before the immediate past parliament's tenure expires. Thus, the new government cannot take oath before January 25.

AL advisory council member Suranjit Sengupta, however, told The Daily Star the government would do nothing that would be a violation of constitutional provisions.

"Everything will be done following the

constitution," he said yesterday.

Meanwhile, some top leaders of the party met AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Gono Bhaban last night to discuss the issue. There, Hasina hinted that the new government would be formed as early as possible, sources said.

However, on December 19, at a meeting of the AL's election steering committee, Sheikh Hasina suggested that the newly elected lawmakers would take the oath on January 25 and the cabinet would be sworn in on January 27.

## Hard to find voting info

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Ahead of the contested elections in the past, candidates used to give the constituents voter slips with voter numbers and the names of the polling centres while conducting door-to-door campaigns.

"I looked for my number for three hours but no one could help," said Abul Hossain while leaving the Shahjadpur Najar Mahmud Alim Madrasa polling centre in Dhaka-17, which has a total of 5,761 voters.

Ramzan Ali faced a similar problem. He too could not vote as he did not know his number. "Despite the shivering cold, I came here around 8:30am, but it's now almost 12 noon and I could not cast my vote."

At this centre, many voters took their national ID cards, mistakenly assuming that the number printed on the card would be the voter number. Finding no way, some talked to the presiding officer who asked them to collect their voters' numbers from the polling agents.

"But the polling agents got frustrated and said it was not possible to find a name from a list of more than 5,500 people," Ramzan added.

Some voters, however, alleged that the activists of the candidates gave wrong voter numbers.

Fulomala Bala was among them. After wandering from one booth to another at Monipur High School, Fulomala along with her daughter finally got the number from the party activists outside. But unfortunately it was a wrong number.

"As I went inside the booth with the num-

ber, the polling officials rejected it. I will go home now as I am fed up," said Fulomala.

New voters too had to go through huge sufferings. Many such voters at Gendaria High School, the polling centre for Dhaka-6 constituency, did not know where their polling centre would be. And they could not find it out because the lists provided by the Election Commission were haphazardly organised.

Rubina, a new voter, left the centre downcast after not being able to cast her vote despite looking for her voter serial number for two hours.

Presiding Officer Anwarul Rashid said, "The only way a voter could find out his or her voter serial number was by going through the lists of names and addresses. Even the addresses were not organised according to the holding numbers, making it impossible for many to find their serial numbers."

The voter ID card proved to be useless as well, since it had no correlation with the voter number.

Party activists of contending candidates voluntarily helped some voters find their serial numbers, but many more went back disappointed as their numbers could not be found.

The lists given out by the EC are not updated with the details of the voters who registered late, party activists said.

"I've volunteered in several other elections before. But never have I seen such a mess on the voters lists," said Musaddi Hossain Khan, an election worker for independent candidate Saidur Rahman Shahid, who contested in Dhaka-6.

## No festivity, low turnout

*Brotee's observation about polls*  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 10th parliamentary election has witnessed a lack of festivity, a usual spectacle in Bangladesh polls, among the voters.

Brotee, a non-governmental organisation, yesterday came up with the observation in its statement based on the reports of the organisation's mobile observers across the country.

The opposition's boycott of the election, strike, blockade, anti-election campaign, and intimidation of voters by the opposition activists had contributed to a very low turnout in the election, the statement said.

Brotee also blamed the low promotional activities and lack of preparedness of the candidates as reasons for the poor turnout.

The organisation said voters complained to its observers that candidates did not visit their homes with voter slips like the previous elections.

As a result, many voters could not find their polling booths, the statement said.

It mentioned that the voter turnout was relatively high in Comilla, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Barisal and Rangamati.

The statement also highlighted the violence that took place in polling centres across the country.

## Voters, lawmen

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Constable Inamuddin came from Laxmipur with 30 percent burns; miscreants hurled petrol bombs at him too while on guard duty.

The incident took place around 7.30pm at Komoltola Government Primary School in Ramganjupazila.

Officer in charge Rezaul Karim Bhuiyan of Ramganj police station said the perpetrators could not be identified, but they may have been opposition members.

Burnt trucker Nuruzzaman, 25, who came in from Gazipur on Friday night, succumbed to his burns early yesterday morning. Forty-eight percent of his body was burnt.

"A group of people suddenly appeared and hurled five or six petrol bombs at Nuruzzaman's truck. He lost control and overturned the vehicle. He was trapped inside a cage of fire," cried the victim's brother, Abdul Quader.

"The government said it would ensure safety, then why did it fail? Why is my brother dead today?" he said.

Ali Akbar, another voter, also fell victim to the blasts along with his daughter Jannatul Ferdous and an Ansar member Yunus Ali.

Another voter, Nargis Akhter Parul also sustained splinter injuries in a cocktail blast yesterday at Sirajuddin Primary School at Chawkbazaar. She was on her way to cast her vote at 10.30am.

## CEC assumes

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About the allegations of using muscle power by many AL candidates and rigging votes, the CEC said, "We are looking into all the allegations submitted to the commission. We have strictly directed law enforcers and election officials to take stern action against those involved in any anomaly. There is no scope for vote rigging."

On the damage to polling stations and election materials, Rakibuddin said voting at many polling stations across the country had been suspended due to extensive damage to those by criminals.

Voting will be held at the same stations where it had been postponed by January 24, he added.

Before briefing reporters, Rakibuddin visited a voting centre in old Dhaka.

Replying to a question that many voters could not find their names on the voter list, the EC boss said if the person is a voter of a particular voting centre, he or she would surely get their names on the voter list of that centre.

## Eusebio no more

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after suffering cardio-pulmonary arrest early on Sunday morning.

He had been hospitalised several times in recent years with various health problems and had suffered a stroke in June 2012.

Eusebio, the 1965 European Footballer of the Year, is considered one of the best footballers of all time and best ever from Portugal.

During his career with Benfica the Lisbon side won the European Cup in 1962. He scored 733 times in 745 professional matches.

The Mozambique born striker also helped Portugal take third place in the 1966 World Cup, where he was top scorer with nine goals.

He won 10 league titles and five Portuguese cups in his 15 years at Benfica and was Portugal's top league scorer between 1964 and 1973.

## Low in the day, high at night

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were cast. The number finally stood at 1,807, showing that 1,096 votes were cast in last two hours.

The number of voters of the centre is 4,298, all of whom are male. In the first six hours, the average rate of votes cast at the seven booths was 118.5 per hour, while in the last two hours it was 548.

Asked about the unusual rise in the figures, Presiding Officer Nurul Islam said, "Pray to Allah so that we can go home safe when we are done."

Some activists of the ruling Awami League said on condition of anonymity that they tried to increase voter turnout on instruction of the party high-ups. "We have to show at least 50 percent of the votes cast," said one of them.

AL candidate Habibur Rahman Mollah, however, claimed that people came to cast their ballots spontaneously. "There is no evidence of irregularities at the centre," he said.

Meanwhile, the presiding officer at Shahjhadpur Najar Mahmud Alim Madrasa centre in Dhaka-17 constituency foiled rigging attempts.

A man identifying himself as a local Awami League activist asked the officer at least twice to allow some voters to cast votes without scrutiny, as his party high-command had instructed him to do so.

Idris Ali, the presiding officer, declined to listen to him. "I told him that I could not do him any favour without permission from the returning officer."

In some centres in capital's Uttara, a group of Awami League activists allegedly rigged the vote in favour of AL candidate Shahara Khatun in a bid to show high voter turnout.

At Uttara Girls School and College in Dhaka-18, some men of Shahara threatened the presiding officers to allow them to cast false votes.

The AL activists also talked with the returning officer of Dhaka over the phone and urged him to direct the presiding officers to help them in the rigging, a presiding officer, who asked not to be named, told The Daily Star.

He also said the AL men warned the officers of consequences if they did not cooperate in vote-rigging to make the turnout 51 percent.

A polling officer said he became exhausted after putting black marks on the finger of an AL leader who voted more than 20 times.

To Syed Md Asad, Shahara's chief election coordinator at the school, another AL man was saying he and his wife had cast 10 votes each.

Two correspondents and a photographer of The Daily Star, who were constantly present at the school from 8:00am to 4:00pm, witnessed incidents of electoral fraud.

The rigging took place after 3:00pm when some AL men brought many boys below 18 years of age on the school premises and directed them to go inside polling booths and cast votes.

Many polling officers seemed helpless as the activists went inside the polling rooms carrying voting slips of other people. They collected ballots from the officers and voted for Shahara.

As soon as journalists entered the booths, they went to another booth to cover

it up. The centre saw less than three percent voter turnout from 8:00am to 11:00am.

From 11:00am to 3:00pm, the turnout went up to 7.28 percent at another centre there, while it rose to 12.45 percent in just one hour from 3:00pm.

The alleged vote rigging also prompted 31 candidates, including several leaders from two alliance partners of the ruling Awami League, boycotted yesterday's polls.

Among the candidates, four were from AL, nine from Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu), one from Workers Party, three from Jatiya Party (Ershad), AL's former ally in the grand alliance, two from JP (Manju) while the rest were independent candidates.

Workers Party nominated candidate in Natore-3 Mizanur Rahman was narrating how his opponent AL candidate rigged the votes at a press briefing at his election office at Shingra Bazar in Natore.

But he suddenly got a phone call and abandoned the press conference without speaking further. Party sources said party chief Rashed Khan Menon phoned him.

Another notable case is Lalmonirhat-1. A total of 1,93,575 voters cast their votes in 131 polling centres of this seat, taking the turnout to 70 percent, according to unofficial results.

This is the first time Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad suffered a defeat here. He lost it to Awami League candidate Motahar Hossain.

Let's see how the turnout in Lalmonirhat-1 got the quantum leap.

There were 1,607 voters at Ketkibari Govt Primary School polling centre in the northern district. Only 120 votes were cast at the centre till 2:00pm, but the figure jumped to 1,580 by 4:00pm.

Rezaul Islam, 50, a voter in this polling centre alleged that about 10 to 12 Jubo League and BCL men rushed in the polling centre at around 3:10pm.

"They entered the booths and left the centre around 3:50pm. The BCL and Jubo League men cast forged ballots, resulting in such a high figure," he alleged.

Another voter of the same centre Shamsul Islam said he found his vote already cast as he entered the polling booth around 3:25pm.

"Like me, many voters returned home disappointed as their votes had already been cast by somebody else," he said.

A total of 1,701 out of 1,750 votes were cast in Ketkibari Madrasa centre in Hatibandha upazila. "AL men cast our votes," said Hamza Bapari, a voter of Ketkibari area.

Over a hundred voters at Hatibandha Patgram and Lalmonirhat sadar upazilas told The Daily Star that the election was rigged by AL men. But neither the polling officials nor law enforcers took any action, they alleged.

However, Motahar Hossain and Abu Sayeed Dulal denied the votes rigging allegations.

Interestingly, in adjacent Lalmonirhat-2 constituency, only 27 percent votes were cast. Ershad's brother GM Quader was defeated by AL aspirant Abu Sayeed Dulal.

Surprisingly, JP presidium member Quader got only 895 votes while Dulal bagged 57,918 votes and his nearest rival JSD's Khorshed Alam got 1,432.

Both Sayeed and Motahar denied the allegations of anomalies.

## A vote for war crimes trial

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free will, arrived in Dhaka a day before the election despite requests and entreaties from his well-wishers in the United States not to travel to Bangladesh at this time.

"My main purpose in coming here and casting my vote in the elections is to demonstrate hatred for the Jamaat-e-Islami and extend my support for the trial of the war criminals," he said while talking to The Daily Star at the city's Uttara Girls School and College, where AL nominated Shahara Khatun won the battle of the ballot.

"I have fought in the War of Liberation and taken part in bringing freedom to the country. I have my right to vote," he said when asked to explain the reason why he had come to vote at a time when some major political parties, including the main opposition BNP, were boycotting the polls.

Samad came to the polling center at 2:00pm with his wife, who is also a voter at the school under Dhaka-18 constituency.

Expressing his support for the war crimes trials, the freedom fighter said the government was doing fine in running the country.

It was not only Abdus Samad but a few other elderly people as well who said they had voted in the polls only to extend their support for the war crimes trials.

"I am voting neither for Sheikh Hasina nor Shahara Khatun. I'm just voting for the trial of the war criminals," said Shakhawat Hossain, aged around 60 years.

Sarafat Ahmed, a retired government official, who came to the polling centre with the help of his son since he has difficulty walking on his own, said, "I have come here to show my hatred for the Jamaat and to say 'no' to those political parties which take the side of the war criminals."

Another elderly man, preferring not to be named, said he had voted to prevent the rise of the Jamaat and to see the trial of war criminals reach a satisfactory conclusion.

"A little more than 600 votes out of a total of 3,221 were cast at this centre as of 1:50pm."

The correspondents left around 2:00pm, with the presiding officer getting ready to get back to work.

## Rebels stun AL bigwigs

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by State Minister Salma Islam, also a presidium member of the Jatiya Party.

Zafarullah lost to AL dissident Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury alias Nixon Chowdhury, nephew of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, while Dr Mostafa Jalal to rebel Haji Selim, a joint secretary of Dhaka city unit AL.

AL dissidents contested the polls in many constituencies that the party gave up to its allies and like-minded parties.

In Narsingdi-2, independent candidate Kamrul Ashraf Khan defeated Jatiya

Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) aspirant Zayedul Kabir, while in Narasingdi-3, AL rebel Sirajul Islam Mollah defeated sitting AL lawmaker Jahirul Haque Bhuiyan Mohon.

In Pirojpur-3, the AL nominee lost to rebel Rustom Ali Faraji, while AL candidate MA Malek was defeated by party dissident Makbul Hossain in Meherpur-2. Independent candidate Rahim Ullah won against Jatiya Party aspirant Anwarul Karim in Feni-3.

In Jhenidah-2, AL candidate Shafiqul Islam lost to party dissident Tahajib Alam Siddique.