

# Tarique takes lead role from London

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Wishing anonymity, he said setting up of one or two offices would be completed within four to five days.

Another senior leader of the party also admitted Tarique's initiative to lead the agitation against the government.

For the time being, Khaleda's Gulshan office is coordinating communication between Tarique and the party.

Referring to Tarique's video message released Sunday on YouTube, a BNP leader yesterday said: "His speech indicates that Bhaiya [Tarique] is fed up with the senior lead-

ers, who had been leading the anti-government movement since 2011 to have the 10th parliamentary polls held under a non-party administration.

"He thinks the party high-ups have failed to put effective pressure on the government to have the January 5 election deferred and that the decision of going into hiding by some senior leaders, including BNP acting secretary general, has weakened and demoralised the opposition men."

In his 10-minute a press conference in London, Tarique said, "A government that has assumed power through a farcical election is

definitely not legal. I see no reason to have further talks with it."

Meanwhile, Tarique's speech totally contradicted with BNP leader Osman Faruk's statement at a press briefing the previous day.

There had called upon the government to immediately sit in a dialogue with the opposition to hold a free, fair and inclusive election.

BNP insiders said Tarique was closely monitoring the performance of the party senior leaders. He had recently expressed frustration with some top leaders for their decision to give breaks to the movement.

In an immediate reaction after Sunday's

general election in Bangladesh, he also said the opposition's movement would continue unless their demand was met.

Mentioning that more than 20 people had been killed on the election day, Tarique said, "The attacks on people has saddened me. But to make such sacrifice count, we will have to reach our goal at any cost."

Asked, he said he was unable to take part in the ongoing movement, as he was still undergoing treatment in London.

The BNP senior vice-chairman said due to the farcical polls, there was now no government; rather it was an "anti-people, autocratic

power against the people".

To the law enforcers and administrative officers who were on election duty, he said, "You saw the government's malpractice. Now ask your conscience who you are working for and against. Are you loyal to a government that lacks people's support or to the people oppressed?"

On the election eve of January 4, Tarique in another video message had urged the people to resist Sunday's election at any cost. He also asked the opposition men not to wait for instructions but unite and join the agitation against the government.

# Rebels rule over

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boycotted the polls alleging vote rigging.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of central leaders of the ruling party have admitted that the successes of the rebels proved that the AL could have faced a tough situation had the BNP and other opposition parties joined the polls.

They also have blamed the party high-ups for not taking a tough stand against the dissidents, saying that this may encourage party men to ignore party decisions in future.

However, sources in the AL said the inaction was part of the party's strategy to increase voter turnout. However, party high-ups were disappointed as the strategy hardly worked.

Despite efforts to bring more voters to the polling centres, the turnout was very low. Senior AL leaders think this proved party's organisational weakness, sources said.

Besides, the AL concentrated more on holding the polls amid threats by the opposition parties to "resist" the elections, rather than on increasing the turnout as the party was already sure of securing the majority.

The AL rebel candidates who have won are Salim Uddin Tarafder of Naogaon-3, Makbul Hossain of Meherpur-2, Tahajib Alam Siddique of Jhenidah-2, Rustom Ali Faraji of Pirojpur-3, Haji Mohammad Selim of Dhaka-7, Sirajul Islam Mollah of Narsingdi-3, Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury alias Nixon Chowdhury of Faridpur-4, Abdul Matin of Moulvibazar-2, Yusuf Abdullah Harun of Comilla-3, Raji Mohammad Fakhru of Comilla-4 and

Rahim Ullah of Feni-3. Apart from them, independent candidate Kamrul Ashraf Khan, younger brother of AL lawmaker Anawarul Ashraf Khan who failed to secure party ticket for the polls, won in Narasingdi-2 and PCJSS leader Usaton Talukder in Rangamati constituency.

AL top leaders Kazi Zafrullah, Abdul Mannan Khan, State Minister Dipankar Talukder and Mostofa Jalal Mohiuddin tasted defeat. Zafrullah and Mostofa Jalal were defeated by rebel candidates while Mannan Khan was beaten by Jatiya Party leader and State Minister Salma Islam and Dipankar by PCJSS leader Usaton Talukder.

Sources said not enough development in Faridpur-4 constituency during the current government's tenure and young voters' support to AL rebel candidate Nixon helped him beat Zafrullah, while the declining popularity of the government and popularity of Haji Selim was the reason behind Mostofa Jalal's defeat.

In Dhaka-1, party infighting and public disapproval of Mannan Khan made Salma the winner. Majority of the AL leaders and activists in the constituency directly supported Salma.

Local leaders of Rangamati claimed that organisational weakness and lack of development activities caused Dipankar's defeat.

The sitting MPs, who contested the polls despite failing to get the party nod and failed, are Meraj Uddin Mollah in Rajshahi-3, Shafiqul Azam Khan in Jhenidah-3, Sheikh Abdul Wahab in Jessore-4, Nani Gopal Mandal in Khulna-1 and Mostaque Ahmed Ruhi in Netrokona-1.



The house of a Hindu family in Malopara village in Jessore bears the signs of a post-polls attack. Inset, Mayarani, first from right, stands beside her tin hut destroyed by Jamaat-Shibir men. On her right are her two daughters, who came to visit her yesterday from their in-laws'.

PHOTO: STAR

# Strongest majority

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snap up.

AL or for that matter any other party has never got so many seats until now (the February 1996 case is ignored again for the same reason, its very short tenure).

On the other hand, the opposition, expected to be Jatiya Party, has got 33 seats, 20 of them unopposed. It will then certainly be the smallest opposition bench (the current parliament's opposition of BNP and its allies consists of 34 MPs, who were elected in the last general election.)

Jatiya Party will be weak in every sense because it was an ally of AL and only split from the alliance when BNP threatened to boycott the election. In its search for an opposition, AL invented JP as one.

There also appears a significant difference between BNP and Jatiya Party as opposition. BNP, although it had bagged only 30 seats in 2008 election, still enjoyed a huge voter support of 32.5 percent.

On the other hand, Jatiya Party's voter base is considered to be around 7 percent as was apparent in the fully contested 2008 election

With such a deadly combination, it can be anybody's guess how effectively a role parliament is going to play.

The EC officials' early analysis of the just concluded general election shows that around 40 percent voters cast their votes to elect 147 candidates. This figure is in sharp contrast with the observation of the Election Working Group (EWG) that says turnout was around 30 percent. This newspaper's own observation and also of multiple TV

PARLIAMENT	SIZE OF OPPOSITION BENCH
1991	147
1996	120
2001	77
2008	34

channels throughout the day also found a very thin turnout. So the 40 percent figure remains a mystery.

However, this is just a simplistic view of the election because not a single vote was cast in half the seats (153 to be exact) where candidates were elected unopposed.

So the new government that the AL is going to form soon is basically based on this 40 percent votes coming out of 147 seats.

But parliament is of 300 seats and so if one spreads this 40 percent votes among all the seats it fundamentally means the new government will have the mandate of only 20 percent of the total voters of 9.19 crore.

A government backed by only 20 percent of the total votes is poorly represented.

The turnout is also the second lowest for Bangladesh after the 1996 February 15 election when 26.5 percent votes were cast. The parliament that was born of this voting lasted only 11 days.

In many developed countries elections are held with around 40 percent votes cast. In that sense this election's turnout was not that bad in the wake of violence and boycott.

However, looking at Bangladesh voting is a festivity. And the normal turnout remains in the range of 70 percent with the highest 87 percent in the last election of 2008 and 55 percent in 1991.

In comparison, 40 percent turnout this time pales considerably. And so it is something to be pondered if a parliament with 20 percent representation carries the mandate of the people.

# 3 killed as losers attack winners

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were present and were inactive during the attack.

Musa's sister Bashirunnesa, who received head injuries in the attack, said the family was Awami League adherent but 15 days prior to the January 5 elections, they had joined Jatiya Party.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, she said their family, of Mollah kin, was attacked by the people of Chokdar kin. She said Chokdar kin, die-hard supporters of Mannan, were against her family switching sides.

Visiting Hajrigha village, The Daily Star correspondent found that rivalry between the two families had begun two months prior to the national elections.

It began when Mannan formed the ruling party's voluntary organisation Swachhasebak League Dohar committee with Bashar Chokdar as its president and Mokbul Munshi as its vice-president.

On the election day, Musa and a supporter of Mannan had an altercation at a polling centre. "Mannan's supporters had then threatened to teach Musa a lesson once the polls results were out," Anwar Khandaker, Musa's brother and polling agent of JP candidate Salma, told The Daily Star.

Bashirunnesa said her son Sumon, 16, also a victim of the attack, and Mokbul Munshi got involved in another altercation with three of the Chokdar family around 8:00am yesterday.

Aftabuddin Mollah, an eyewitness, told The Daily Star that a team of policemen went to Mokbul's home around 8:30am and the attackers, led by local Swachhasebak League president Bashar Chokdar, followed the police team.

Within half an hour, about 200 people of the Chokdar family attacked Mokbul with machetes and other sharp weapons, Bashirunnesa said.

They dragged Mokbul out of his home and

stabbed and slashed him to death, Aftab said.

Later they attacked Musa's home, which was about 100 feet away. They slashed Musa's abdomen and stabbed him indiscriminately and killed Masud, who went to his father's rescue.

The attackers also cut off Anwar Khandaker's fingers, and attacked Bashirunnesa, Musa's brother Delwar Khandakar, Musa's nephews Shah Alam Khandakar, and Sumon, his cousin Riazul and Shah Jalal Khandakar and two others, said the eyewitness.

Aftab claimed that Musa's step-brother Ali Khandaker was among the attackers. Many of the attackers were hired goons.

Police later arrested four people, Anwar Chokdar, Khokan, Ali Khandakar and Tota Mia.

Superintendent of Police Habibur Rahman of Dhaka while visiting the spot told The Daily Star that police had gone to the spot on hearing of a clash. He said, "They [police] were not present during the murders."

Locals, however, alleged that police remained inactive during the attack since the attackers were supporters of ruling party candidate Mannan.

Meanwhile, Shibir activist Md Assadullah, 18, injured during a clash between Awami League men and 18-party alliance activists Sunday afternoon, died of his wounds early yesterday at Dinaipur Medical College Hospital.

In Sonaimuri of Noakhali, pro-ruling party Jubo League activist Mahfuz Alam, 24, died at a hospital yesterday. He had sustained injuries Sunday night during a clash between pro-ruling party and 18-party alliance activists.

In Kobirpur of Baniachar in Moulvibazar, at least 30 Awami League and Jatiya Party activists were injured in a clash around noon yesterday.

The Awami League men attacked the Jatiya Party activists after JP filed a complaint about vote rigging in Kobirpur, which led to the sus-

pension of the voting on Sunday, claimed JP candidate Sankar Paul.

In Meherpur's Gangi upazila, at least 20 Awami League activists were injured in the morning when the victory rally of winning candidate of Meherpur-1 constituency, Awami League's Mokbul Hossain, was attacked by defeated independent candidate Abdul Khaleque's men. Khaleque is a former Awami League. Police arrested eight people.

At least 20 people were hurt in two separate clashes in Barguna's Taltali and Amtali upazilas when the winning Awami League candidate's supporters clashed with the defeated independent candidate's supporters in Barguna-1 constituency. Police arrested seven people in this connection.

In Natore's Singra upazila, two Workers Party men were injured when Awami League activists attacked them on Sunday night.

Mizanur Rahman Mizan, the defeated candidate of Workers Party, claimed that the Awami Leaguers attacked his supporters because his men had prevented ruling party polling agents from rigging the polls.

In Tangail's Gopalpur, at least 10 Awami League and BNP men were hurt during a clash over Sunday's polls.

In Jhenidah's Kalikapur village, six supporters of an independent candidate were stabbed and beaten by supporters of a defeated Awami League candidate.

In Satkhira's Kolaroya, Shibir men hurled 10 crude bombs and fired shots at the victory procession of the Satkhira-1 winner. They also vandalised homes and shops of people who had voted.

In Manikchhari and Panchhari of Khagrachhari, at least 20 Awami League and BNP activists were injured during clashes over Sunday's polls.

# Post-polls JP drama unfolds

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One such meeting between Raushan and the six JP MPs-elect decided that Raushan would lead the party as leader of the opposition, Kazi Firoz Rashid, MP-elect from Dhaka-6, told The Daily Star yesterday.

After the meeting at Raushan's Gulshan residence, Firoz said: "As our chairman HM Ershad was against joining the polls race and did not participate in it, we will join parliament under the leadership of Raushan as she is the senior most leader in the Jatiya Party after sir [Ershad]."

He added that as the JP had bagged the second highest number of seats (33) in the election, it was natural that it would sit on the opposition benches and that Raushan would be the opposition leader.

Firoz said they were already communicating with the ruling party regarding the issue.

However, Ruhul Amin Howlader, another MP-elect from the JP, said he knew nothing about joining the House or about becoming the opposition in parliament.

"I don't know whether the JP lawmakers-elect will take oath or not because there hasn't been any decision to this end," he said, adding that they would follow party chief Ershad's instructions in this regard.

On winning from Patuakhali-1, he said he did

not campaign and that he just went to his village home to offer prayers at the graves of his parents.

Sixty-six JP leaders participated in the election despite Ershad's instructions to all party candidates to withdraw their candidacies. On December 3 last year, he announced that his party would not take part in the polls, citing lack of a conducive environment for an inclusive election.

Raushan, however, took part in the polls along with a section of party leaders, including Kazi Firoz, Anisul Islam Mahmud and Ziauddin Ahmed, who are known to have close ties with the government.

Thirteen JP leaders, including Ershad, won in the race. Twenty others were elected unopposed.

Ershad's JP is well-known for staging various dramas. The latest was its participation in the election despite Ershad's announcement of a boycott.

In early November, he said his party would not join the polls race if all parties did not participate in it. Then in mid-November, his party quit the AL-led grand alliance and joined the Sheikh Hasina-led polls-time government.

On the same day, he also announced that JP would independently take part in the polls for the sake of democracy. But he changed his mind again on December 3 to announce the boycott.

On the night of December 12, he was picked up by personnel of an intelligence agency and was taken to the Combined Military Hospital under Rab escort. He is still at the CMH.

Rab officials claimed Ershad was taken there for treatment, but Ershad in a statement later said the government had kept him confined for his refusal to take part in the election.

**JP MEN ANNOYED**

Party men in Lalmonirhat-1 are annoyed that Ershad has lost there due to "vote rigging" by the AL men.

They said they did not go to vote but the AL men cast fake votes for Ershad only to humiliate him.

Golam Mostafa, president of Hatibandha upazila JP, said: "AL men did it only to destroy our chief's image in the area. We didn't do any campaign in favour of Ershad before the election. There was no poster. But he still got 7,000 votes."

He added that all the party leaders visited different areas before the election and instructed party men not to vote and they ensured that they would not go to the polling centres as Ershad had boycotted the election.

"So it's certain that it was AL men who cast some votes in favour of Ershad to defame him," he added.

# Local observer group

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divisions, it said at a press conference at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

A detailed report on the findings will be revealed later, said Prof Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, chairman of Jatiya Nirbachon Porjebekkhon Parishad (Janipop), one of the member bodies.

"After analysing all our findings, we will come up with the final turnout percentage, which could be more or less than the preliminary one," he added.

Of particular focus were the issues of turnout and voters' safety, he mentioned, adding that people were concerned about those.

The EWG recorded the turnout in three phases this year -- at 10:00am, 12:30pm and 4:00pm. Although the turnout was very low up until 12:30pm, it increased considerably towards the end of voting, the forum observed.

The turnout was recorded at 5.9 percent in the first phase, 17.9 percent in the second phase and 30.1 percent in the third phase.

Gopalganj-1, the seat won by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, had the highest