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MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 2015

Small parties eye big polls

Municipal polls see lukewarm response from them compared to JS elections

SHAKHAWAT LITON and RASHIDUL HASAN

Small political parties are more interested in contesting the national elections than the local government polls. This is evident in their lukewarm response to the upcoming municipality polls.

The municipality polls, for the first time, will be held on partisan lines. Political parties registered with the Election Commission can contest the polls by nominating their candidates.

All the 39 political parties registered with the EC are entitled to join the battle of ballots for 236 mayoral posts. But only 20 have so far written to the EC within the deadline, expressing their interest to join the battle, according to sources in the EC Secretariat.

However, the previous parliamentary polls saw participation of a much higher number of parties.

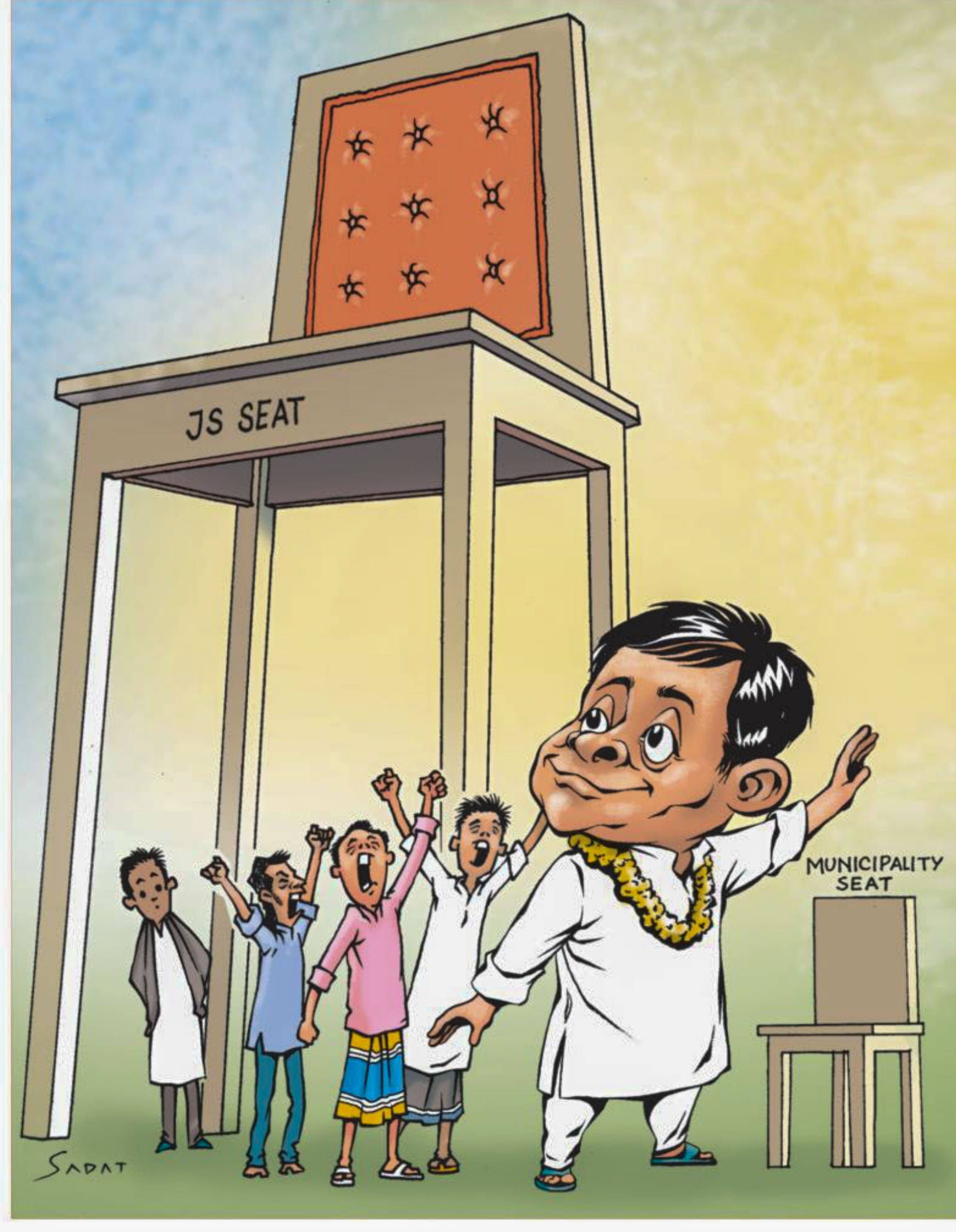
Thirty eight registered political parties contested the December 2008 parliamentary election. The number was 14 in the country's first parliamentary election in 1973. In the subsequent elections, their number kept on increasing -- 29 in 1979, 76 in 1991 and 81 in 1996. The number rose to 96 in 2001, according to the EC Secretariat.

Performances of the small parties in those polls were very poor with almost all of their candidates losing their security deposits.

Participation of a huge number of parties came as an obstacle to proper management of the national polls, prompting the EC to make registration mandatory before the 2008 parliamentary election.

Thirty nine political parties have so far qualified to get registered with the EC and 38 of them contested the 2008 parliamentary polls. In the one-sided last parliamentary election last year, only 12 registered parties took part.

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Stay out of polls or face action

AL, BNP take similar strategies to avert rebel trouble

RASHIDUL HASAN and PANKAG KARMAKAR

The ruling Awami League and its archrival BNP have adopted almost similar strategies to deal with their rebel candidates for mayoral posts in the upcoming municipal polls.

Senior leaders of both parties will try to convince their rebel candidates to quit the electoral race. If the rebels remain rigid on contesting the polls, the parties will expel them or take disciplinary actions, according to AL and BNP insiders.

The two major parties have attached great importance to the December 30 election, as it will be a test of popularity for both.

The election to 235 municipalities will be the country's first local government polls on partisan lines.

Leaders of both parties think that rebel candidates may act as a barrier to the success of their party favourites.

AL insiders say the party has rebel candidates in 71 municipalities, while sources in the BNP claim it has rebels in 56 places.

The Daily Star yesterday contacted AL and BNP leaders in around 200 municipalities, and found that the ruling party has 116 rebel candidates in those while the BNP has 54.

"We hope to convince them to quit the race within the date of nomination withdrawal," said AL central leader Abdur Razzaque, also a member of AL nomination board for municipal elections.

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NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	
Mayor	1,223
General councillors	9,798
Women councillors (reserved seats)	2,668
Total	13,689

TOP QUOTE

The way the Pakistan government sided with war criminals Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Mojaheed, and reacted over their executions is heinous. It's tantamount to interfering in the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

INFORMATION MINISTER HASANUL HAQ INU AT SHERPUR CIRCUIT HOUSE YESTERDAY

PAKISTAN LYING, STILL

A living proof of Pak army's atrocities

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

She is a living witness of innumerable atrocities by the Pakistan army against unarmed, innocent Bangalee civilians during the nine-month Liberation War.

Not only that, she herself is one of the rape victims of the Pakistani occupational forces which, together with their local collaborators, violated almost a quarter of a million Bangalee women.

But Ferdousi Priyobhashinee, then 23, would not be silenced. Years after being freed from the clutch of her tormentors towards the end of the war, she would go on to stand by the women abused like her and speak of her ordeal in public, unlike most others who buried their agonies deep inside them because of the social stigma associated with it.

And she is furious when Pakistan, after all these years, denies that it had committed any atrocities in 1971.

Following the hangings of war criminals Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Pakistan on November 30 summoned the acting high commissioner of Bangladesh Maushumi Rahman to its foreign ministry and denied committing any war crimes or atrocities

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Whip, his supporters swoop on cops

Police say they came to police station to get 2 arrestees freed; the MP denies allegations

AMANUR AMAN, from Kushtia

Police yesterday filed a case against 30 people over an attack on Chuadanga Sadar Police Station.

Though local lawmaker Solaiman Haque Joarder Selun, also a parliament Whip, allegedly led the attack, his name was not on the list of the accused.

The charges brought against the accused include attacking police with the intention to kill, obstructing the police from discharging their duties, vandalising government properties, creating panic by firing gunshots and exploding bombs.

Earlier on Thursday night, Awami League MP Selun along with his supporters allegedly swooped on the police station and physically assaulted the district police chief and two of his deputies.

While the senior police officials were being roughed up inside the police station, some 60-70 ruling party men went violent outside.

They hurled crude bombs, fired gunshots, vandalised a police van and threw brickbats at the law enforcers on duty, police said.

And all these happened because police refused to release two activists of pro-AL Bangladesh Chhatra League arrested earlier in the day.

Additional Superintendent of Chuadanga Police Belayat Hossain, one of those assaulted by the MP, told this correspondent that police arrested BCL activities

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Mothers of three victims of "enforced disappearance" hold out photos of their sons at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. The programme was organised by families of 19 victims who went missing between November 28 and December 11 of 2013. PHOTO: STAR

DISAPPEARANCE Families ask govt to bring them back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The aggrieved families of 19 people, who were allegedly picked up by law enforcers about two years ago and never returned, have demanded that the government take necessary steps to bring them back.

They made the demand at a press briefing at the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

The 19 people were picked up between November 28 and December 11 in 2013 from different places in the capital and Narayanganj, said family members.

In addition to writing to the home ministry, the families of the missing formed human chains and held press conferences several times over the last two years, seeking help from the government to know whether the victims were detained or dead or alive.

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Ensure rights of minorities

Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad leaders urge govt at rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday demanded the government protect rights of the religious and ethnic minorities, and ensure their proper representation in all strata of society including politics, business, administration and the armed forces.

The Parishad leaders gave the government a six-month ultimatum to implement their seven-point demand, which includes setting up of a minority affairs ministry in line with India.

Speaking at a grand rally of minority and indigenous communities at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital, they said land and other properties of the minority people were being grabbed, in many cases, "even by ruling party leaders and lawmakers". They said they had been subjected to torture and repression since the independence of the country.

The grand rally, first of its kind since independence, was organised to protect the existence of minority people and to establish their rights and equal status in society, the organizers said.

The rally was held at a time when a secular government has been in power for seven years now with commitment to ensure equality for people of all religious beliefs, they said.

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