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Macron makes French history

Beats Le Pen in presidential run-off, speaks of uniting France; sigh of relief for EU

AFP, Paris



Emmanuel Macron

Pro-European centrist Emmanuel Macron promised yesterday to heal France's divisions after crushing far-right leader Marine Le Pen in a pivotal presidential election that has given him a large but fragile mandate for change.

At 39, the pro-EU former investment banker will become France's youngest-ever leader but will face a huge challenge to enact his programme while trying to unite a fractured and demoralised country.

"I will fight with all my strength against the divisions that are undermining us," Macron

said in a solemn address at his campaign headquarters, adding that he had seen the "anger, anxiety and doubts" of many voters.

The vicious election campaign exposed deep economic and social divisions in France, as well as tensions provoked by identity and immigration.

Initial estimates showed Macron winning between 65 percent and 66.1 percent of the ballots in the first ever election he has contested, far ahead of Le Pen on 33.9 percent and 35 percent.

Vast crowds of jubilant Macron supporters celebrated outside the Louvre Museum

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While the ruling Awami League prepares for the next parliamentary election, the Jatiya Party has formed the largest-ever electoral alliance of 58 parties to perform better in the polls. If the BNP boycotts the election for the second time in a row, the JP-led alliance may become the main opposition again. However, the BNP is willing to contest the polls, as it will unveil on Wednesday "Vision 2030", a forerunner of its election manifesto.



Ershad pulls off 'largest' polls alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party chief H M Ershad yesterday came up with the country's biggest-ever electoral alliance, comprised of 58 political parties, counting mainly on name-only Islamist parties.

Titled United National Alliance, the coalition has only two parties registered with the Election Commission -- Jatiya Party and Bangladesh Islami Front.

While announcing the formation of the alliance through a press conference

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2 'militants' killed in Jhenidah den

STAR REPORT

A police officer "narrowly escaped" from a suicide attacker at a "Neo JMB" hideout in Jhenidah's Maheshpur upazila, as two suspected militants were killed and two policemen wounded during an operation there yesterday.

"As I entered a room of the one-storey house where militants were holed up, one of them grabbed me. Soon I realised that a bomb was attached to his body," Ahmed Kabir, officer-in-charge of Maheshpur Police Station, told The Daily Star.

The police officer said he tried desperately "for a few seconds" to break free of the clutch of the militant who was wearing a suicide belt.

Ahmed said that at one stage he kicked the militant suspect

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RAPE IN BANANI Culprits not held yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police could not arrest any of the five accused in a case filed over raping two university students in a posh hotel in the capital's Banani.

Physicians at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday collected samples for DNA tests and conducted radiology and microbiology tests on the victims for evidence of rape.

Sohel Mahmud, head of forensic medicine at DMCH,

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AL to warm up BNP for clipping PM's wings

Nat'l election will be tough this time, Hasina warns party MPs Party also outlines more freedom for MPs in its Vision 2030

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League has taken the polls to seven city corporations quite seriously as, by winning those, it wants to boost the morale of party activists ahead of the 11th national polls.

Its archival BNP, which participated in all the local government polls earlier under the AL rule since 2008, too contemplates contesting the city polls to prove its popularity.

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MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP could curtail the power of the prime minister and strengthen the roles of lawmakers in parliament if voted to power in the next general election, party insiders claimed.

The party thinks that the prime minister's executive authority has given rise to a "form of autocratic practices within the democratic system", and, hence, the premier's power should be curtailed.



If the BNP wins, it might amend article 70 of the constitution so that lawmakers would be allowed to cast votes against their party lines, except in the case of no-confidence motion against the government and state budget, the sources added.

Article 70 imposes restriction on MPs to cast votes in parliament against the party. If any MP violated the article, the MP would lose parliament membership.

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