



ELECTIONEERING IN COUNTRYSIDE

# 18 fresh contestants in six Rangpur constituencies

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, JP chief Ershad also candidates in the area

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A group of fresh contestants from different political parties are contesting the upcoming eleventh national election against several heavyweight candidates in six constituencies of Rangpur.

According to district election office, as many as 43 aspirants are vying for six MP posts from Rangpur and of them, 18 are contesting for the first time in the general election.

Among the heavyweight candidates, Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad, its Secretary General Moshir Rahman Ranga, Speaker of the Parliament Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and Lawmaker AHM Ashequr Rahman are vying for the MP posts.

Rangpur-1 (Gangachara upazila): This constituency has been a stronghold of JP for long, although Abdur Rouf of Awami League (AL) and BNP's Shafiqul Gani Swapan were elected MPs in the 1973 and 1979 elections respectively, while JP has retained the seat since 1986.

JP candidate Ranga was elected MP from the constituency in 2001 for the first time and again elected unopposed in the 2014 polls.

AL leader Asaduzzaman Bablu, also former chairman of Gangachara Upazila Parishad, is one of the fresh MP candidates in the constituency.

Rangpur-2 (Badarganj and Taraganj upazilas): The constituency has been a fortress of AL and JP as candidates of both the parties were elected lawmakers for five times each since 1973.



Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury



HM Ershad



Ashequr Rahman



Rita Rahman



Asaduzzaman Bablu

Though 10 contenders from different parties, including sitting AL MP Abul Kalam Ahsanul Haque Chowdhury, are competing in the electoral race from the constituency, most of them are fresh faces.

Rangpur-3 (Sadar upazila): Jatiya Oikyafront candidate Rita Rahman, contesting the polls with the symbol 'sheaf of paddy', appeared as a fresh candidate from Rangpur-3 constituency, which has been considered as a stronghold of JP since 1986. Rita's main opponent is JP Chairman Hossain Mohammad Ershad.

Rangpur-4 (Pirgachha and Kaunia upazilas): This constituency is also considered as a stronghold for both JP and AL.

Tipu Munshi, who was elected as lawmaker for the second consecutive time, will contest the polls against new faces like BNP's Emdadul Haque Bhorsha and JP's Mostafa Selim.

Rangpur-5 (Mithapukur upazila): AL sitting MP NH Ashequr Rahman is to take on new face Jatiya Oikyafront nominated candidate Prof Golam

Rabbani (Jamaat), who is competing in the electoral race with the symbol 'sheaf of paddy'.

AL MP Ashequr was elected lawmaker from the constituency in 1986, 1996, 2008 and 2014 general elections.

Rangpur-6 (Pirganj upazila): AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina contested the electoral race from this constituency in 2008 and 2014 and later left the seat for the by-elections in which Abul Kalam Azad and Speaker of the Parliament Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury were elected lawmakers respectively.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin is set to take on several new faces, including BNP district unit President Saiful Islam, in the upcoming elections.

HM Ershad, Shirin Sharmin, Moshir Rahman and Ashequr Rahman are familiar faces in the general elections, a voter in Rangpur city Nazmin Khatun said, adding that it will not be an easy task for the freshers to contest the polls against such heavyweight candidates.

## FARIDPUR-4

# AL, independent candidates dominate campaign

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

An independent candidate appears to be the main challenger among four contestants for the Awami League (AL) candidate in Faridpur-4 constituency (Bhanga, Charbhadrans and Sadarpur upazilas, except Krishnapur union).

AL's Kazi Zafar Ullah, BNP's Khandakar Iqbal Hossain Selim, Communist Party of Bangladesh's (CPB) Ataur Rahman, Islami Andalon Bangladesh's (IAB) Abdul Hamid Mia and independent candidate Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury are contesting from Faridpur-4.

Zafar, Selim, Ataur and Mujibur hail from Bhanga upazila and Hamid is from Sadarpur upazila.

Zafar, presidium member of AL and also former lawmaker, is looking to regain this constituency as his uncle and his (Zafar's) wife are former MPs from the constituency. He lost the seat in the 10th parliamentary election as Mujibur won as an independent candidate in 2014.

Mujibur is looking for a second successive win from this constituency. He was elected MP as an independent candidate in the national election in 2014, defeating AL nominated candidate Zafar.

Locals believe that the election race will take place between Zafar and Mujibur as the

other candidates are not as active as they are.

Conflicts between supporters of Zafar and Mujibur started from December 10. At least 33 supporters of the two candidates were injured in separate clashes during election campaigns and six election campaign offices of both the parties were vandalised.

"We are not involved in any kind of clash with others. Supporters of the AL candidate attacked us and vandalised our election campaign offices. Our leader told us to be patient," said Bhanga Upazila Parishad Chariman Sahadat Hossain, a supporter of Mujibur.

"Supporters of Mujibur attacked us first and we protested. All the people of this constituency are working for 'boat' and we will win the polls," said Organising Secretary of AL Bhanga unit Soban Munshi.

"Both Zafar and Mujibur are running their election campaigns very actively and the main fight will take place between them," said Ajoy Das, a lecturer at Bhanga Mohila College.

"I shall vote for the first time in an election. Here, the fight will take place between AL candidate and the independent candidate," said Sumaya Mahamud of Dowra village under Bhanga upazila.



Kazi Zafar Ullah



Mujibur Rahman

## MANIKGANJ-2

# AL-backed Momtaz Begum faces odds

2 more grand alliance candidates taking part in the polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Awami League (AL)-backed candidate, also the incumbent lawmaker, for Manikganj-2 constituency (Singair, Harirampur and three unions of Sadar upazilas) Momtaz Begum has been facing an odd situation as two more AL-led grand alliance aspirants are also vying for the MP post in the December 30 general elections.

Alongside AL, Jatiya Party and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh nominated two important candidates there.

Meanwhile, the grand alliance activists and supporters are witnessing a weird situation as the alliance has three candidates this time with JP's SM Abdul Mannan and Bikalpa Dhara's Golam Sarwar Milon.

Local voters think BNP-backed Engineer Mainul Islam Khan Shanta is



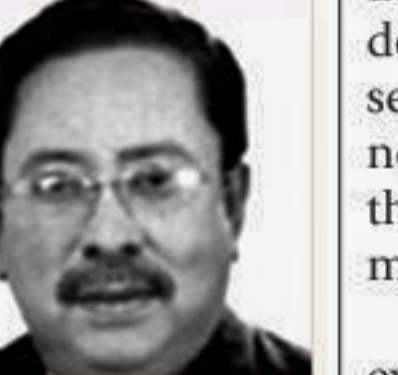
Momtaz Begum



Mainul Islam Khan



SM Abdul Mannan



Golam Sarwar Milon

in a good position now as he is the lone candidate of Jatiya Oikyafront.

Election officials said the constituency, comprising Singair, Harirampur and three unions of Sadar upazilas, has four lakh six thousand and 161 voters.

JP Presidium member, also district unit president, SM Abdul Mannan was elected MP with the grand alliance ticket in the 2008 election while renowned singer Mamtaz was selected

MP from the reserved seats for women. Momtaz was later elected unopposed as the lawmaker from the constituency in the 2014 elections.

Jatiya Oikyafront nominated BNP-backed candidate Mainul Islam, also general secretary of district unit BNP, was elected lawmaker in the 2003 by-elections, following the death of his father Shamsul Islam Khan Naya Mia.

# 'Reserve JS seats for ethnic people'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Leaders of indigenous communities demanded steps for creating reserved seats in the Jatiya Sangsad for indigenous people from plain land to ensure their rights and political empowerment.

The demand was made at a views exchange meeting on 'Rights of plain land's adivasi and dalits and rights based development (samataler adivasi o dalit jonogoshthir odhikar o odhikar vittik unnayan shirshak motobinimoy) at the auditorium of Thakurgaon Press Club yesterday.

Eco Social Development Organisation and District Advocacy Platform jointly organised the programme with the initiative of Promoting Inclusion Of Discriminated Groups Through Institutional Mechanism.

Representation of adivasi people of

plain land is still absent in parliament, said the speakers at the programme, adding that if their representation is ensured in the highest policy level, their problems will be submitted properly, which will help to promote their basic rights.

Until conducting an independent census on adivasi of plain land it is not possible to pay attention on the community to resolve their problems and realise their rights, they said.

The leaders mentioned that no census has yet been conducted in the country on their communities.

Special scholarship for adivasi students from primary level to university level was emphasised to enhance their education for mainstreaming them, said the speakers.

Formation of land commission for plain land adivasi people was also recommended to protect their lands

and save them from harassment by influential vested quarters.

The adivasi leaders also demanded implementation of adivasi quota in each sector.

Expressing their dissatisfaction, they said though the political parties always vow to establish indigenous people's rights in the election manifesto, none gives importance to preserve culture, tradition and rights of the indigenous communities.

As the chief guest Abul Hasnat manager (Finance and Admin) of donor organisation HEKS/ EPER Bangladesh, attended the programme with Abu Torab Manik in the chair.

Among others, Bisu Ram Marmu, district unit general secretary of Adivasi Chhatra Parishad and Raju Baspor, general secretary of Upazila Advocacy Platform, addressed the meeting.

# BNP website blocked

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and said if they would comply with any EC directive.

Officials related with the process said following the EC letter, the telecom regulator contacted a very high powered committee which didn't give the green signal to unblock the site.

Earlier on December 12, BNP sent a letter, signed by its standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan, informing the EC about the blocking and requesting them to take action to unblock it.

FACEBOOK TAKES DOWN 9 PAGES, 6 ACCOUNTS

Facebook removed nine Facebook pages and six Facebook accounts for "engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior" from their platform, they said in a blog post yesterday.

The social media giant's local communication agent said they were not sure about moderators of the pages but all of them contained political contents.

"Through our investigation, which began in part based on a tip from Graphika, a threat intelligence company that we work with, we discovered that these Pages were designed to look like independent news outlets and posted pro-government and anti-opposition content," reads the post.

"Our investigation indicates that this activity is linked to individuals associated with the Bangladesh government. This kind of behavior is not allowed on Facebook under our misrepresentation policy because we don't want people or organizations creating networks of accounts to mislead others about who they are, or what they're doing."

# 182 poor families get new house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

As many as 182 ultra-poor families in different areas under Dumki upazila have got new houses as they had no shelter.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Rayhan Ahmed on Wednesday handed over keys of the houses among the families. He also handed over Tk 2.91 lakh to the families.

Each family gets Tk 1,600 from the UNO.

The houses were built under a special project 'House for ultra-poor people who have land but no house' implemented by the Prime Minister's Office and Tk one lakh was allocated for building each tin-shed house.

Shahnaj Begum of Pashchim Angaria village in Dumki upazila said "I am very happy getting a new house having concrete floor from the government."



Dumki Upazila Nirbahi Officer Rayhan Ahmed hands over the keys of a newly built house to a beneficiary in the upazila under Patuakhali district on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

# BNP, Jamaat planning

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The 15 former IGP's are AT Ahammedul Haque Chowdhury, Kutubur Rahman, Shamsher Alam, AKM Enayet Ullah Dewan, Abdur Rouf, Awlad Hossain Mia, Kazi Bazlur Rahman, Abul Kashem Hawlader, Abdul Hannan, Ruhul Amin, M Sanaul Haque, Nurul Anwar and AKM Shahidul Haq, Mominullah Patwari (ex-police officer and former secretary) and Mohammad Abdul Hannan Khan (coordinator with status of IGP).

The 19 former additional IGP's include Sarwar Hossain, Mohammad Abdus Sattar, Abdur Rahim Khan, Nurul Alam, Ali Imam Chowdhury, Fazlul Haque, Abdur Rahim, Khandakar Mozammel Haq, Golam Mostafa, Lutfor Rahman Mia, Matur Rahman, Abdul Mannan, Abdul Mabud, Amulya Bhushan Barua, Nazmul Haque, Fatema Begum, Binoy Krinshna Bala, Nowsher Ali and Abu Hanif.

The 24 retired deputy IGP's include Dewan Habibullah, Shafiq Ullah, Khandakar Saheb Ali, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Mokhlesur Rahman, Shah Alam Sikder, PR Barua, Md Tofazzal Hossain, Waliur

Rahman, Nibaran Kumar Chanda, Mostafa Zamal Uddin al Azad, Kazi Anwar Hossain, Altaf Hossain Mollah, Chowdhury Ahsanul Kabir, Sazzad Hossain, Mostaq Hossain Khan, Shafiqur Rahman, Moqbul Hossain Bhuiyan, Obaidullah, Muhammad Abdur Rahim, SM Mahfuzul Haq Nuruzzamn and Moniruzzaman.

The three former additional DIG's are Golam Kibria Bhuiyan, Syed Monirul Islam and Sattya Ranjan Baroi.

The 11 ex-AIGs and ex-SPs are Syed Bazlul Karim, Chowdhury AAG Kabir, Malik Khasru, Rahmat Jahan Sikder, Rafiqul Islam, Imamul Hossain Firoz, Khan Akramuzzaman, Abdul Khaleq, Mia Lutfor Rahman Chowdhury, Faruk Ahmed and Motiur Rahman.

The former 15 Additional SPs include Borhanuddin Chowdhury, Abdul Jalil Sheikh, Niyamat Ali, Khandakar Abdur Razzak, AKM Aminul Haque, Nur Ahmed, Khorshed Ali, Giasuddin, Golam Mostafa, Mir Nowsher Ali, Sirajul Islam, Awrangzeb Khan Lenin and Nur Mohammad.

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The clash began when the two groups of people came close to each other during campaigning for their respective party candidates, said witnesses and locals.

Police said they rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

In Natore, two local BNP leaders were beaten up allegedly by AL men in Dighapatia area in the morning.

Besides, a local AL leader filed a case accusing 350 BNP men and around 130 unnamed people of setting fire to a campaign office of the AL.

In Chattogram, several vehicles were vandalised during a factional clash between two groups of supporters of the AL candidate Afsarul Amin (Chattogram-10) in the city's Sulokbohor area.

According to media reports, campaigns and motorcades of at least 32 BNP and Jatiya Oikyafront candidates have come under attack allegedly from ruling AL men across the country since December 10.

More than 350 BNP-Jamaat men have been arrested and over 920 activists wounded in attacks allegedly by ruling party men during the same period.

ARREST CONTINUES

In Meherpur, police on Wednesday night arrested 22 people and recovered "10 molotov cocktails and four lethal weapons" in Sadar, Gangni and

Mujibnagar upazilas.

Locals said the arrestees were BNP men. Police, however, didn't disclose their identities.

On the same night, law enforcers picked up seven BNP-Jamaat men from Faridpur and Jashore's Benapole.

In Cox's Bazar, police in the last two days arrested around 12 BNP men on charges of sabotage.

In Tangail, four cases were filed against 734 BNP-Jamaat and Krishak Sramik Janata League men over different criminal activities in the last four days.

Yesterday, police arrested a local BNP leader in Gopalpur upazila in several criminal cases.

In Moulvibazar, BNP men allegedly vandalised a campaign office of AL candidate MM Shahin (Moulvibazar-2) in Kulaura's Bhuksimoil area on Wednesday night. The incident left six AL men injured.

The AL blamed BNP-Jamaat men for the attack, but the BNP denied the allegation.

In Pabna, at least three molotov cocktails exploded when a group of AL men were campaigning for the party candidate (Pabna-3) in Chatmohar town on Wednesday night.

Incensed, AL men vandalised a campaign office of BNP candidate Anwarul Islam in Chatmohar.

In Bagerhat and Patuakhali, criminals set fire to two

AL campaign offices early yesterday. No one was injured in the incidents.

In Jhalakathi, police detained district BNP General Secretary Munirul Islam Nupur for interrogating him over the attack on the motorcade of his party candidate Jiba Amin Khan (Jhalakathi-2).

The convoy of the BNP candidate came under attack on December 15. Later, Jiba filed a case accusing some AL men.

"The BNP has five factions here. We have been investigating which group had carried out the attack," said Shantit Kumar Gayen, OC of Jhalakathi Sadar Police Station.

In Narayanganj, Jatiya Oikyafront candidate for Narayanganj-5 SM Akram yesterday alleged that supporters of his rival Jatiya Party candidate Selim Osman were conspiring to foil a campaign rally of the alliance scheduled for 2:00pm today at the playground of Sirajuddaula Club in Bandar upazila.

Selim's supporters were announcing over loudspeakers that they would hold a football match at the venue at the same time.

Sultan Ahmed Bhuiyan, a supporter of Selim and also a local ward councillor, denied the allegation saying that they had fixed the match schedule long before.

Our district correspondents contributed to this report.