



Army starts polls duty

Troops to stay in 389 upazilas until Jan 2 to help maintain law and order during election

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and WASIM BIN HABIB

Army personnel start election duties today to help ensure a peaceful atmosphere and maintain law and order across the country for the December 30 polls.

The troops, who will perform the duties till January 2 alongside law enforcers, will "extend all-out support" to the Election Commission for the holding of a free and fair election.

Members of the army will be deployed in 389 upazilas and navy personnel in 18 coastal upazilas, said an Inter Services Public Relations statement yesterday.

Border Guard Bangladesh personnel, who have been deployed since December 18, will carry out duties in 87 bordering upazilas, it mentioned.

Our correspondents from Natore, Pabna, Pirojpur and Barishal report that army men already started setting up camps in the four districts.

Members of the armed forces will be stationed at different "nodal points" and convenient places in every district, upazila and metropolitan area, according to a home ministry circular issued on December 19.

Besides, members of the Rapid Action Battalion and the Armed Police Battalion will be deployed as mobile and striking forces from December 26 to January 2.

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Wielding sticks, alleged Awami League men swoop on BNP's Dhaka-9 candidate Afroza Abbas and her supporters while she was campaigning in the city's Mugda area. She later claimed that the attack left over 100 people, including a photo journalist, injured.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

INT'L POLLS OBSERVERS

US statement 'disheartens' Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has expressed its disappointment over the US statement concerning Dhaka's inability to allow international election observers ahead of the December 30 polls and expected constructive statements from its friends and partners.

"Bangladesh is disheartened to see a press statement issued by the United States Department of State on the upcoming National Parliamentary Elections," read a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

The release also read the elections scheduled for December 30 are to be held in a festive atmosphere with the participation of all the registered political parties in the country.

The US Department of State on Sunday expressed disappointment after ANFREL, a regional network of civil society organisations funded by the US, had

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No place for arson attackers in Bangladesh

Hasina says as she takes a swipe at BNP, Jamaat

UNB, Rangpur

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday criticised the BNP for allowing Jamaat candidates to contest the December 30 election with its symbol "sheaf of paddy".

She said there was no place for the BNP-Jamaat men in Bangladesh as they were involved in killing people through arson attacks.

"There'll be no place for them on Bangladeshi soil as the smell of charred human bodies still comes out from the symbol of 'sheaf of paddy'. Please be aware of them!" Hasina told an election rally arranged by Pirojpur upazila AL at Pirojpur Government High School ground.

The PM joined the rally after offering feteha at the grave of her husband Dr MA Wazed Miah, an eminent nuclear scientist.

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25 Jamaat men stay in the race

EC says no scope now to scrap their candidacy; 22 running on BNP ticket, three as independents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday said there is no scope now for scrapping the candidacy of 25 Jamaat-e-Islami leaders who are contesting the parliamentary election despite cancellation of the party's registration.

Of them, 22 are in the race with BNP's electoral symbol "sheaf of paddy" and three as independent candidates.

After a meeting of the commission, EC Secretary Helaluddin Ahmed yesterday said they have examined the related law and "there is no scope for rejecting the Jamaat leaders' candidacy at this moment".

Helaluddin said returning officers accepted and finalised the Jamaat leaders' nomination papers. But no objections were filed with the election tribunal against the ROs' decisions.

Besides, the ROs also allocated electoral symbol to the Jamaat leaders, he added.

The EC scrapped Jamaat's registration following an HC verdict in 2013.

On Tuesday, the HC directed the EC to dispose of in three working days the application filed for cancellation of the Jamaat men's candidacy.

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Allow only 'boat voters' at centres

AL candidate asks the party men

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Natore-2 Awami League candidate and lawmaker Shafiqul Islam Shimul said no one other than the voters of the "boat" symbol would go to the polling centres on December 30 and instructed his party to ensure victory of the boat symbol by only letting boat voters into the vote centres.

Shimul was seen making the statements in a video footage taken while he was electioneering at Chhatni village on December 17.

"Those who will vote for boat can go to voting centres. Those who won't cannot go to voting centres. It is as simple as that," Shimul was seen saying in

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Shutting down mobile internet or social media?

BTRC places 4 options to EC over the election day

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

A complete shutdown of mobile internet services or a block on all social media sites for the December 30 election day are two of the four options that the telecom regulator will place before the Election Commission today.

BTRC will place the options in a meeting with the EC in Agargaon, where representatives of different law enforcement agencies will also be present.

Md Jahurul Haque, acting chairman of the telecom regulator, said BTRC would inform the EC about its capabilities regarding the time it would take them to execute the options and the final decision would be taken by the EC.

Earlier, law enforcement agencies had suggested that the EC make a decision on downgrading mobile internet speed to 2G level on voting day.

EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed had also confirmed to journalists that they would seriously consider entirely

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Polls violence continues

STAR REPORT

Election violence continues to show no signs of ceasing as at least five candidates of the December 30 polls came under attack allegedly by AL men in different districts since yesterday.

In Dhaka, BNP's candidate for Dhaka-9, Afroza Abbas, and her supporters came under attack again yesterday allegedly by AL men while conducting electioneering in the capital's Maniknagar area, reports UNB.

This was the third time her campaign came under the attack.

Elsewhere in Chattogram, BNP candidate for Chattogram-2, Azim Ullah Bahar, and 14 others were injured in an attack allegedly by AL men at Tokirhat area under Fatikchhari upazila

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina smiles brightly while holding up a decorative replica of "boat" -- the party's election symbol -- before a rally at the grounds of Pirojpur Govt High School in Rangpur.



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