

# JAMAAT MEN CONTESTING UNDER THE 'SHEAF OF PADDY'

 Abdul Hakim THAKURGAON-2	 MD. Abu Hanif DINAJPUR-1	 Anwarul Islam DINAJPUR-6	 Moniruzzaman Montu NILPHAMARI-2	 MD. Azizul Islam NILPHAMARI-3	 Prof Golam Rabbani RANGPUR-5	 Majedur Rahman Sarker GAIBANDHA-1
 Rafiqul Islam Khan SIRAJGANJ-4	 Iqbal Hossain PABNA-5	 Prof Motiur Rahman JHENIDAH-3	 Abu Sayed Mohammad Sahadat Hossain JASHORE-2	 Abdul Wadud BAGERHAT-3	 Prof Abdul Alim BAGERHAT-4	 Prof Mia Golam Parwar KHULNA-5
 Abul Kalam Azad KHULNA-6	 Abdul Khaleque SATKHIRA-2	 Gazi Nazrul Islam SATKHIRA-4 (ARRESTED)	 Shamim Sayedee PIROJPUR-1	 Syed Abdullah Md Taher CUMILLA-11	 ANM Shamsul Islam CHATTOGRAM-15	 Shafiqur Rahman Dhaka-15

RESEARCH BY: NILIMA JAHAN

## JAMAAT MEN CONTESTING AS INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES



Hamidur Rahman  
Azad  
COX'S BAZAR-2



Nurul Islam Bulbul  
CHAPAINAWABGANJ-3



Barister Nazib Momen  
PABNA 1

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### 2018 Elections and Islamists

As the BNP joined the newly emerged Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF) under the leadership of Kamal Hossain, some expected that it will abandon its long time Islamist ally, the JI. However, the BNP has decided to maintain a twin-track of its allies—the JOF on the one hand and with the 20-party alliance which

include the JI, on the other. Because JI cannot field candidates, the BNP has allocated 22 nominations to the JI-linked candidates.

The AL's recent penchant for Islamists, particularly closeness with the HI, has become an issue of intense discussion. The AL-led alliance has nominated only two Islamist candidates, but it has failed to assuage its critics. Considering the current political environment, the argument that befriending conservative Islamists is an electoral strategy does not offer an adequate explanation.

The AL's bonhomie with the Islamists can be explained as a combination of three changes. Firstly, the gradual shift in the AL's ideological stance. Since 2014, various steps of the government, including meeting the HI's demands to bring changes in the textbooks (2017), and the removal of the statue from the supreme court premises, exemplify the change. The AL, in 2006, before the cancelled election also signed an MOU with an orthodox religious party accepting some of its retrogressive demands.

Secondly, the massive Islamisation of Bangladeshi society, due to the Islamic social organisations and influence of global changes. The members of the newly emerged middle-class claim to be more religious and take pride in

displaying their religiosity. The changes in public rhetoric and dresses exemplify these changes. The growing intimacy with the Islamists, particularly the orthodox Islamists, provides the Islamic credentials to the AL.

Thirdly, the lack of moral legitimacy since the one-sided election of 2014. The party needed to demonstrate that it has its command over a large majority of people. The Qawmi-madrasah based political and social actors readily offered this legitimacy. Besides, the HI and similar organisations which have now allied with the AL has the capacity of grassroots mobilisation during election day, if needed.

### The future?

In the past decade, socio-political discourses have been greatly influenced by conservative Islamists such as the Hefazat-e-Islam. The incumbent's decision to accommodate their demands and appease them politically have enhanced their profile. The Islamists are already exercising influence disproportionate to their electoral strengths. If the next election delivers a government with a questionable moral legitimacy, the influence and the strength of the Islamists are likely to grow further.

Ali Riaz is a Distinguished Professor at Illinois State University.

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