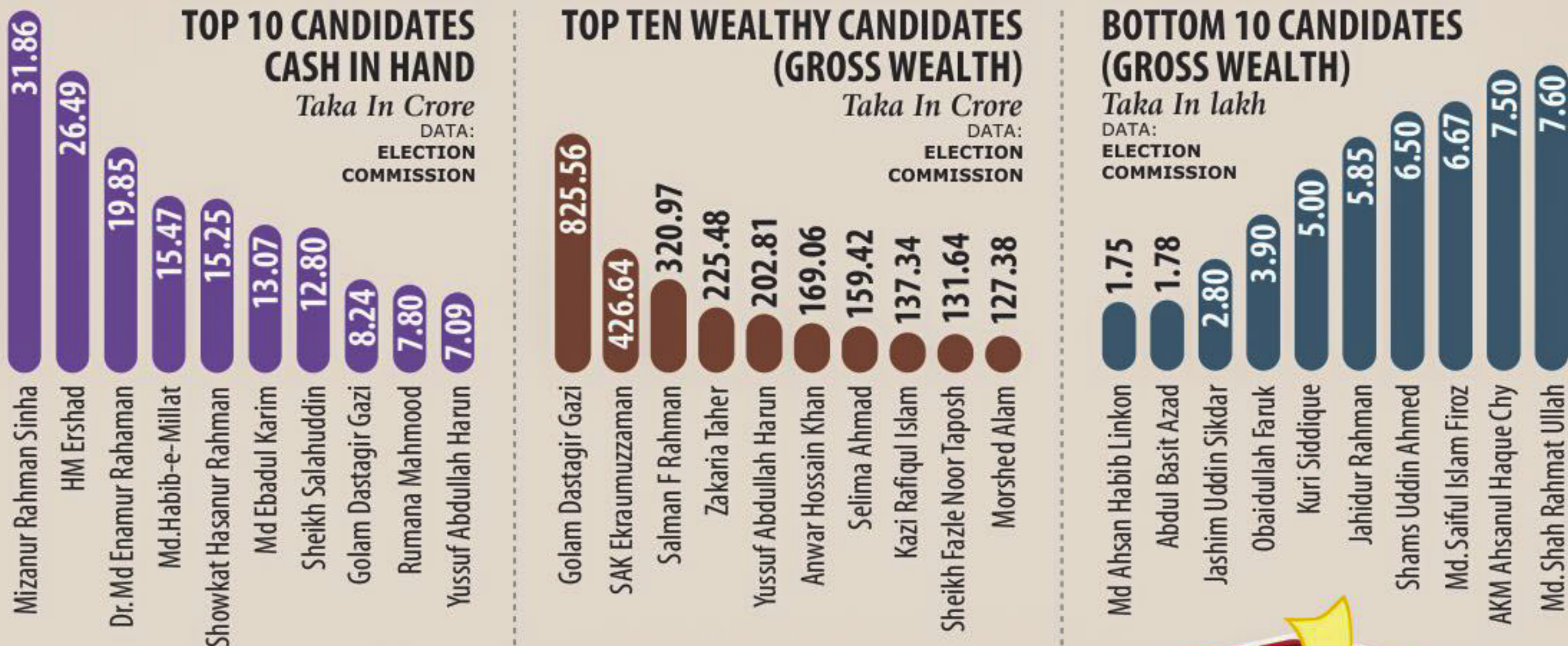
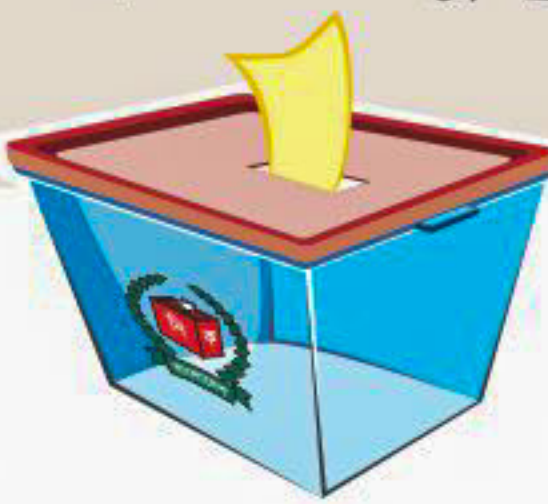


THE RICHEST AND THE POOREST OF THEM

Not many are familiar with the nuances of complex accounting jargons. It is quite challenging to decipher the income and wealth statements each candidate, running in the 11th parliamentary polls, submitted to the Election Commission. The Daily Star's Sohel Parvez and Jahurul Islam Sojol with the help of a few others have made an effort to crunch the data and analyse those to help readers in this regard. The affidavits of over 550 candidates of AL, BNP and their allies were analysed based on the value of their moveable and immovable properties. During the exercise, The Daily Star found some interesting facts. Some candidates did not provide any information about their and their dependents' moveable and immovable assets. Some made disclosures like having 10 tola of gold and other precious metals and ornaments without mentioning their prices, some claimed ownership of farms and non-farm land, buildings, and flats without mentioning their market value. One candidate in his affidavit said he has 20 tola of gold and other precious metals and ornaments but claimed their value to be Tk 35,000, much less than the market value. A former minister did not provide any wealth information in his affidavit. Despite the lack of uniformity and incomplete data in the affidavits of many, The Daily Star calculated the gross wealth of the candidates and their dependents based on the value of properties provided in the affidavits.



- Nearly 60 percent of candidates are businessmen
- Nine out of 10 candidates with the highest amount of gross wealth are businessmen
- Each of 33 candidates and their dependents have over Tk 50 crore gross wealth
- Two of the top wealthiest -- Golam Dastagir Gazi and Fazle Noor Taposh -- were honoured with Tax Cards for paying the highest tax in 2017-18
- 6 of the top 10 candidates with the highest gross wealth are running on AL tickets, three on BNP and one on Tarikat Federation



Election in global media

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Major international media outlets closely watching the national election yesterday highlighted the deployment of troops and members of other security forces, and mounting tension and concerns over transparency.

Several of them in their reports predicted that Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League would win by a wide margin.

They reported that Bangladesh had performed well on most human development index indicators by controlling its population growth and drastically reducing infant mortality rate. These caused higher life expectancy, which is at 72 years, surpassing that of India and Pakistan.

CNN in its report headlined "Tensions mount as Bangladesh gears up for general election" said Bangladeshis vote today on whether to give Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina a record third consecutive term in an election marred by allegations of human rights abuses by her government.

The CNN specifically highlighted

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Jamuna TV unavailable in many places

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamuna TV was not available in many places of the country last night.

"Our transmission is going on as usual. But we have received information from different areas that our channel was not available there," Fahim Ahmed, chief news editor of the private TV station, told The Daily Star.

He said they contacted several cable operators but they declined to say anything about the issue.

"We are trying to find out the reason," he said adding that viewers living abroad and on social media platforms, including YouTube and Facebook, were being able to watch the channel as usual.

Jamuna Group, the mother organisation of Jamuna TV, is owned by businessman Nurul Islam Babul. His wife Salma Islam is contesting today's election as an independent candidate from Dhaka-1.

On Friday, BNP extended its support

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All measures taken to keep voters safe

EC tells visiting foreign polls observers, journos

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday said the authorities concerned have taken all necessary measures to ensure the security of voters by appointing a sufficient number of polling officials, judicial and executive magistrates and law enforcers.

The number of voters expected to cast their votes for today's polls is 10.42 crore.

"All necessary efforts have been taken so that voters can safely exercise their voting rights and safely go back home," said EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed, adding, "Voters are going to give their mandate tomorrow [today]."

While briefing foreign election observers and journalists, who came to Bangladesh to cover the polls, he said there were still a few stray incidents that had taken place in some

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Oikyafront will win if polls fair

FROM PAGE 1

"If you talk to people, they will tell you that they want a change. We hope and believe that people will vote in our favour."

In a statement distributed at the briefing, the Gonoforum president called upon the young first-time voters to exercise their franchise.

"Keep in mind that if you are afraid, you are done; if you turn around, you are Bangladesh."

Dr Kamal claimed that there are

apprehension and confusion among people over the polls, and said this needs to be removed immediately.

"The polls will be held as the day breaks. There should have been a festive atmosphere now across the country. Instead, there are worries and confusion in people's mind."

Dr Kamal, an architect of the country's constitution, called upon members of the army, the navy, police, Rab, Border Guard Bangladesh, Ansar, the VDP and Coast Guard to play a glori-

ous role in the election like in the past.

"Your role in peacekeeping is being praised worldwide, and this has increased your scopes across the globe. You will remain careful so that it is not hampered in any way."

The Oikyafront convener also urged Election Commission officials, returning officers and assistant returning officers to ensure people's voting rights.

"If you violate anyone's rights, remember that someone else is violating the rights of your mother, father, wife and children. If you do that, people, history and the law will not forgive you."

Pointing to government employees, he said they do not belong to any party, and they serve people. "People are the owners of the country. Don't deprive them of the joy of casting votes."

He also urged public officials not to abide by "any unlawful order".

Responding to a query, the jurist said there is no division among the components of the Oikyafront. "Rather, our unity has been strengthened."

About recent attacks on a number of Oikyafront candidates, he said, "I never saw or heard about such attacks and oppression in my life."



Dr Kamal Hossain flanked by other leaders of the Jatiya Oikyafront addresses a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

Test case for polls under a political govt

FROM PAGE 1

party, was not credible as its members also joined the government. The decision by the Jatiya Oikyafront, where the BNP is a significant partner, to participate in the election opened a pathway for a competitive election. After ten years, it appeared the voters would be able to choose a candidate from multiple nominees put forward by all major parties.

Second, this election is a test case to demonstrate that in Bangladesh it is possible to organise a free, fair and competitive election under an elected political government. After the overthrow of military rule in 1990, we had several credible elections which were generally perceived as free and fair (except by the losing side) and power was transferred from one party to another. But all these elections were organised by non-party caretaker governments. The two elections held under party governments in February 1996 and in 2014 were hardly credible. We are now all looking forward to seeing whether a political government is able to organise a credible contested election under its watch.

DS: Why is a free and fair election needed?

RJ: A free and fair election is needed to establish the legitimacy of the winners to govern the country. Since an election means a competition and there are always winners and losers, it is important to ensure that the competition is perceived as a fair process by all contestants. This implies that the rules of the competition are agreed to by all contestants, the referee is acceptable to all, and there is a transparent process to adjudicate any contestations over violation of rules and results. Unfortunately for Bangladesh even after 47 years of independence, the two major contestants in elections, the AL and the BNP, are not in agreement about the rules of the competition. In the last 25 years the two parties reversed their positions on polls-time government. The referee, i.e. the Election Commission is not able to gain the confidence of all contestants. Violation of electoral rules and complaints have never been properly addressed prior to, during and after the election.

When the rules of the game are not

accepted by all the contestants, it is difficult to organise credible elections. And when there is no agreement about the rules of the contest as is the case in the current election, it is even more important to ensure that the whole election process is perceived by the contestants, voters and the citizens at large as free and fair. The purpose of the election is for the winners to gain legitimacy for their victory but if the election is not perceived as free and fair then that purpose will not be served.

DS: How do you evaluate the "development versus democracy debate"?

RJ: This is a false and unnecessary debate. We had heard this argument in the 1950s and 1960s when military dictators in Asia, Africa, and Latin America used this argument to justify their autocratic rule. We heard this from Ayub Khan and rejected this argument. In fact, people want both democracy and development. It is not an either or situation. I would argue that democracy is an important component of development. Rule of law, fundamental freedoms, citizen's voice, accountability these should all be regarded as goals of development. They cannot be treated as instrumental values or secondary and subordinate goals. In fact, several surveys on the state of democracy in South Asia have shown that the income of poor people put high importance on development as well as protection of their rights.

DS: How do you evaluate the atmosphere that prevailed during electioneering?

RJ: I must say that I was saddened to read and watch TV reports on violence against workers of both ruling and opposition parties, arrests of leaders and workers of opposition parties, and even physical attacks on candidates. These reports have created doubts about the fairness of the electioneering process and the voters are getting concerned as to whether they would be able to vote in a violence-free atmosphere. After ten years citizens, are getting a chance to cast their vote in a competitive election. All stake holders concerned -- Election Commission, polls-time government and contesting parties, particularly the ruling party -- should have taken strong measures to ensure that the campaign season is

kept violence free and fair so that the contestants and voters gain confidence about the fairness of the election process.

DS: Around 2.5 crore new voters will exercise their franchise in this election. What's your message to them?

RJ: New voters must be eager to exercise their voting right. Some of them may already be supporters of different mainstream parties but some may be non-partisan and may feel disheartened by the pre-poll atmosphere. But whether they are eager or disinterested, they must all vote. It is their right. This right was secured through a lot of sacrifice of people from previous generations and this right must be sustained through intelligent exercise of this right by the new generation. The young generation may not be happy with the candidates or their messages. They may find none of the choices meet their expectations. But in a real world, we have to choose between what we are given as options. And if we are not happy with our choices we have to engage with the political processes in a sustained way to bring about changes and help create choices that meet our hopes and dreams.

[Rounaq Jahan received her PhD in Political Science from Harvard University, USA in 1970. Her thesis which was later published by Columbia University Press in 1972 titled "Pakistan: Failure in national integration is still regarded as the most definitive study of the birth of Bangladesh." She started her academic career as an associate professor and later full professor of Political Science at Dhaka University (1970-1982). She worked for the United Nations first as the Coordinator of the Women in Development Programme at UN Asia-Pacific Development Center, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (1982-84), and later as the Head of the Programme on Rural Women at the International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland (1985-89). She was an adjunct professor of international affairs at Columbia University (1990-2010). Currently, she is a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh and a visiting scholar of Columbia University. She is the author of several internationally-acclaimed books and numerous articles, primarily focused on issues of politics, governance, gender and health.]

He also reiterated that they would not quit the polls under any circumstances.

Speaking at the briefing, BNP Standing Committee Member Nazrul Islam Khan claimed that till Friday, 11,506 Oikyafront leaders and activists were arrested since the announcement of the election schedule on November 8.

He also alleged that Oikyafront men faced at least 2,896 attacks that left nine people dead and 13,252 others injured.

Later, Dr Kamal and other top Oikyafront leaders held a view-exchange meeting with foreign journalists at the DRU.

He briefed them about the attacks, cases and arrests of Oikyafront leaders and activists from November 8 to December 25.

The Oikyafront leader alleged that 2,833 attacks were made on the opposition men by Awami League men and police. At least, 12,923 people, including 49 Oikyafront contenders, were injured.

"Instead of being a time of festive competition, the campaign trail turned into a nightmare. The election road is pitted with serious obstacles, threats, intimidation and violent attacks against the opposition men," he said.

Cast ballots without fear

FROM PAGE 1

while talking to reporters after visiting a temporary army camp at Azimpur in the capital.

"We want a good election. We have over 50,000 army personnel deployed across the country. They are conducting patrols.

"We will be alert so that no one can spread fear."

Speaking about the prevailing election atmosphere in the country, he said it was more peaceful than ever before.

"We haven't seen such a calm and peaceful [voting] atmosphere in 47 years," he said.

Violence had erupted before every past election, but this time the number of such incidents was low, he said, adding the army, police, Rab, BGB and civil administration would work as a team to ensure there are no untoward incidents or intimidation of voters.

He said during his daylong visits in

Khaleda Zia not voting

Hasina to cast ballot at Dhaka City College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, now in jail, is not casting her vote though her party is taking part in today's polls.

It is as she had not sought any postal ballot from the election authorities.

According to the Representation of the People Order, 1972 and the Electoral Rolls Act 2009, a jailed person is entitled to vote through a postal ballot and for that to happen, he or she has to apply to the returning officer concerned within 15 days of the announcement of the polls schedule.

Election Commission Secretary Helal Uddin yesterday said he was not aware of Khaleda applying for the postal ballot. "The returning office concerned will be able to speak about it."

KM Ali Azam, returning officer for the constituencies in Dhaka city corporation areas, said he had not received any application from the BNP chief.

Khaleda has been behind bars since February 8 when a special court sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in a corruption case.

She filed nominations for Bogura-6, 7 and Feni-1. But during scrutiny, the ROs concerned rejected all of her nominations.

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the last five days to different districts and divisions, he had found a wonderful atmosphere with officials assuring him that the election would be held in an amicable atmosphere.

He said they had enough forces on stand-by in every cantonment across the country so reinforcements could be sent anywhere if needed.

Mentioning that the military men were conducting regular patrols to ensure a peaceful atmosphere, General Aziz said, "Our main goal is to ensure that no untoward incident takes place after the vote."

He said he had instructed army patrols to be increased in the bordering areas, adding that it was beefed up in areas with minority communities to ensure security.

"We've seen from previous experiences that those who lose the election attack minorities. We'll be very careful about it."

Two BNP candidates

FROM PAGE 16

car twice yesterday -- first near Ghior Upazila Parishad Complex and then in Shivalaya upazila. But they missed his car.

Contacted, Rifat Rahman Shamim, superintendent of police in Manikganj, said police found that the allegation was untrue.

M Naser Rahman, BNP candidate in Moulvibazar-3, was attacked in the town on Friday night around 11:00pm by alleged ruling party men.

Contacted, Fazlur Rahman, joint secretary general of the district Awami League, refuted the allegation.

Sohel Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Moulvibazar Sadar Police Station, said Naser was attacked by some unidentified young men.

POLICE HARASSMENT

In the eight districts of Rangpur division, at least 116 BNP-Jamaat activists and leaders had been arrested yesterday.

BNP candidates in Cumilla-3 and -10 alleged that at least 50 potential polling agents had been arrested since Thursday.

Police in the district said they only arrested the people accused in cases.

In Pabna, BNP leaders alleged that police had been raiding the homes of potential BNP polling agents.

Rafikul Islam, superintendent of police in the district, said they were raiding to catch suspects.

Shama Obayed Islam, BNP candidate in Faridpur-2, said ruling party activists were asking BNP activists to stay away from the polling stations.

However, Belayet Hossain, general secretary of Nagarkanda upazila AL, refuted the allegation.

In Sherpur, police said they arrested a man for allegedly handing out money among constituents on behalf of a BNP candidate in Sreebordi upazila's Gosaipur union on Friday night.

In Thakurgaon town, a group of BNP men allegedly torched seven motorcycles of AL supporters at Baragaoon Chowdhuryhat area.

Contacted, BNP president in the district Taimur Rahman refuted the allegation.

REPORTERS BEAT UP

In Jashore, ATN Bangla correspondent Ahammad Shahin was beaten up around 8:30pm in front of his home in Navaran area.