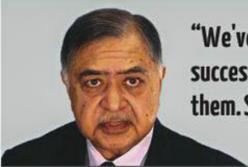




Crack in Oikya?

Gonoforum MPs-elect likely to take oath



"We've rejected the election, but the way our two candidates came out successful in such an election through competition is a big achievement for them. So, we're thinking positively about sending them to parliament."

DR KAMAL HOSSAIN

Two lawmakers-elect of the Gonoforum may take oath and join the 11th parliament, Dr Kamal Hossain said yesterday.

"We've rejected the election, but the way our two candidates came out successful in such an election through competition is their big achievement. So, we're thinking positively about sending them to parliament," said the Gonoforum chief.

He was addressing a press briefing at Bangladesh Shishu Kalyan Parishad after an extended meeting of the party.

Later, Gonoforum leader Sultan Mohammad

Munsur, who was elected from Moulvibazar-2, told this correspondent that he and his party colleague Mukabbir Khan, elected from Sylhet-2, will take oath as lawmakers of 11th parliament.

Gonoforum is a key component of the Jatiya Oikyafront, which earlier had termed the parliamentary polls a farce and demanded the Election Commission immediately hold a fresh election under a nonpartisan interim government.

"We reject this so-called result. At the same time, we demand fresh polls under a nonpartisan government," Dr Kamal, also convener of the Oikyafront, told the press hours after the polling was over at

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Rangpur Riders skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza engages in some friendly antics with his old friend and former Bangladesh teammate Mohammad Ashraful of Chittagong Vikings during the BPL opener in Mirpur yesterday. It was Ashraful's first BPL match since the end of a five-year ban for match and spot-fixing.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

AL, admin now enemy of people

Says Fakhru, alleges voting right snatched through Dec 30 polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that people's voting rights were snatched again during the December 30 parliamentary polls.

"And through snatching this voting rights, the Awami League and the administration have

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CABINET BERTHS

Hasina keeps AL ranks guessing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Who would become a minister? It was a discussion that dominated tea stalls, bazaars and even Awami League offices yesterday.

The newly elected AL lawmakers were guessing and speculating as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina alone knows who would get a chair at her table.

The MPs were talking to each other in person and over phone. They even asked journalists for hints and made statements about why they should be picked.

Supporters of some MPs, who see themselves fit to be ministers, organised human chains in districts to promote



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NOAKHALI GANG RAPE

Party expels the 'mastermind'

STAR REPORT

The Awami League yesterday expelled Ruhul Amin from the party for his alleged involvement in the gang-rape of a woman in Noakhali's Subarnachar upazila.

The decision came two days after police arrested Ruhul, the publicity affairs secretary of Subarnachar AL, on charge of ordering his accomplices to rape the mother of four for voting for the "sheaf of paddy" -- the BNP's electoral symbol -- in Sunday's election.

Golam Faruk, president of Subarnachar AL, confirmed the expulsion.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Jatiya

'YOU'RE NOT ALONE' -- PAGE 5 SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

'VOTING FOR SHEAF OF PADDY'

A village under siege

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

An entire village in Rajshahi's Tanore upazila has been paying a heavy price since Sunday's general elections, when majority of the villagers voted for the BNP candidate.

The village, Kolma, falls under Rajshahi-1 constituency and has 2,435 voters. Kolma Government Primary School was their voting centre.

In the election, the total vote cast at the centre was 1,914 -- five of which were cancelled. Of the 1,909 valid votes, 1,249 went to BNP candidate Aminul Haque and 653 to AL candidate Omor Faruk Chowdhury.

On Monday morning, stick-wielding Awami League men took position at the two entry points of the village -- at Billi and Dargadanga intersections

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Greetings continue to pour in for AL, Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Congratulatory messages have been pouring in for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her party Awami League.

The Communist Party of China (CPC), the Developing Eight Organisation for Economic Cooperation (D-8) and the prime minister of Sudan in separate messages have congratulated Hasina and her party for the win in the December 30 parliamentary polls.

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Beauty s-care

Mercury found way beyond limit in almost half of skin lightening creams available in market



The market is flooded with skin lightening products by often obscure manufacturers. But there is not any effective monitoring of the level of mercury present in the seemingly innocuous products.

PHOTO: STAR

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Sumi Akhter was on the lookout for a skin lightening cream as she wanted to appear fairer at her sister's wedding just two weeks away.

She found her desired product at a cosmetics shop in the capital's Hossainia Market. The Pakistan-made cream promised lighter skin tone in seven days.

The college student had no idea that the excessive amount of mercury usually found in such products can not only damage skin permanently but also cause fatal diseases.

A recent study found that the amount of mercury in 14 out of the 32 skin lightening cream samples collected from the market were 90 to 16,000 times higher than the 1ppm (parts per million) limit set by the 2013 Minamata Convention on Mercury.

convention, which aims to protect human health and environment from mercury emissions and ban its use above 1ppm in products after 2020. The convention ratified by 101 of 128 signatory countries has not been ratified by Bangladesh.

The Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG), a coalition of NGOs from over 50 countries, revealed the findings on November 15 last year.

Of the 14 creams with higher mercury, six were manufactured in Pakistan, three in Taiwan, one in China and one in Bangladesh. The report does not mention the origin of the three other products.

The Group selected 338 skin-lightening products from 22 countries and checked their mercury levels at the Biodiversity Research Institute in the US and the Quality Assurance and Control Systems Lab in Greece. The results revealed that the

amount of mercury in those 34 samples ranged from 93 to an astonishing 16,353ppm.

"It's like warming your body beside a fire during winter. Initially, you'll find it comfortable but when you continue to keep your hands in it, you get burns," said Prof Md Shahidullah Sikder of Department of Dermatology, BSMMU.

"Mercury initially lightens the skin tone but eventually damages the skin and leaves it darker than before."

He warned that long-term use of such products increases the risk of kidney complications.

Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute (BSTI) claims it cannot control the sale of such products as the government allows import, production, sale and distribution of whitening, acne, medicated and therapeutic creams.

MERCURY: ITS EFFECTS Mercury is often added to skin

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Congratulations

From Dhaka Bank family we congratulate **Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina** for being elected for the third consecutive term. We firmly believe, her leadership will lead the nation to emerge as a developed country by 2041.

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