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JANUARY 7 POLLS Aspirants from minorities rise in number

102 to contest this election compared to 74 in 2018 polls

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

The number of aspirants from minority communities for the upcoming national election is higher compared to the previous polls.

Apart from the ruling Awami League and opposition Jatiya Party, three new political parties and three Islamist parties have nominated members of religious and ethnic minorities to run for the polls.

According to the Election Commission data, 102 aspirants from minority communities have submitted their nomination papers for the January 7 parliamentary polls.

Of them, 77 are on party tickets, and 25 are independent candidates.

In the 2018 polls, 74 minority candidates contested, of whom only two were independent.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Jubo Dal man dies 'while being chased by Rab'

Claims BNP; brother contradicts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A Jubo Dal leader, who had a heart condition, died while a team of Rab was chasing him in Shajahanpur upazila of Bogura yesterday morning, the BNP claims. But his brother said he died of a heart attack, and he was not chased by law enforcers.

Forkan Ali, 42, was the convener of a union parishad unit of the pro-BNP organisation.

Witnesses said a group of BNP men was marching on Dhaka-Bogura highway in the Fatki Bridge area around 7:00am.

The men started running away when a Rab team appeared, they added.

"While fleeing, a man fell sick. We later heard he died," said a local, seeking anonymity.

BNP leaders said Forkan died while being chased by Rab.

Enamul Haque Shaheen, president of Shajahanpur upazila BNP, said, "A Rab team chased us in the Fatki Bridge area. We were running. At one stage, Forkan fell to the ground. He was taken to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead."



Forkan Ali

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

BJP wins 3 of 4 key India state polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party yesterday stormed to power in three key heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the poll outcome would resonate in upcoming parliamentary elections.

Capping a campaign helmed by Modi, BJP managed to overcome anti-incumbency in Madhya Pradesh retaining power there and defeated its main political challenger Congress which rules Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

However, Congress returned to power in the southern state of Telangana with a convincing win against its nearest rival and regional party Bharat Rashtra Samiti led by chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



A bus was stuck for hours as its wheels had sunk into a sand-filled trench in the capital's Mohammadpur area. Dhaka Wasa, which had dug up the hole for development work, covered it only with some sand on Saturday, rendering this part of the road unfit for vehicular movement. The photo was taken yesterday morning.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

BUSINESS

**\$681m
installment
proposal at
IMF's board**

Bangladesh's proposal to get the second tranche of the International Monetary Fund's \$4.7 billion loan has been placed for approval at the multilateral lender's board meeting slated for next week.

The meeting will take place on December 12 where about \$681 million in the second tranche is likely to be approved although Bangladesh did not meet two of the conditions.

The IMF approved the loan on January 30 and released \$447.8 million on February 2 as the first installment.

STORY ON B1

India agrees to withdraw soldiers from Maldives

Says President Muizzu

REUTERS, New Delhi



Mohamed Muizzu

India's government has agreed to withdraw its soldiers from the Maldives, the Indian Ocean archipelago's President Mohamed Muizzu said yesterday.

Muizzu won the presidential election in September, having campaigned to alter the Maldives' "India first" policy and promising removal of a small Indian military presence of some 75 personnel.

"In the discussions we had, the Indian government has agreed to remove Indian soldiers," Muizzu told reporters. "We also agreed to set up a high level committee to solve issues related to development projects."

Muizzu made the remarks following engagements on the sidelines of the COP28 climate summit with Indian officials.

India's ministry of foreign affairs did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday.

India and China have been vying for influence in the region, with the coalition that supports Muizzu considered to have a leaning more towards China.

Most of the Indian military personnel were in the Maldives to operate and manage two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft given to the Maldives by India.

India provides certain military equipment to the Maldives, assists in disaster response and has been helping build a naval dockyard there.

At his inauguration last month, Muizzu said he would ensure that his country has no foreign military presence.

He had made the request of Indian troop withdrawal to Kiren Rijiju, India's minister for earth sciences, who represented India at the president's inauguration.

Scientists create tiny living robots from human cells

CNN ONLINE

Scientists have created tiny living robots from human cells that can move around in a lab dish and may one day be able to help heal wounds or damaged tissue, according to a new study.

A team at Tufts University and Harvard University's Wyss Institute have dubbed these creations "xenobots".

The research builds on earlier work from some of the same scientists, who made the first living robots, or "xenobots", from stem cells sourced from embryos of the African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis*).

"Some people thought that the features of the xenobots relied a lot on the fact that they are embryonic and amphibian," said study author Michael Levin, Vannevar Bush professor of biology at Tufts' School of Arts & Sciences.

"I don't think this has anything to do with being an embryo. This has nothing to do with being a frog. I think this is a much more general property of living things," he said. "We don't realize all the competencies that our own body cells have."

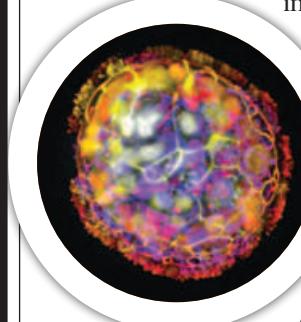


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS