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JANUARY 7 POLLS

Aspirants from minorities rise in number

102 to contest this election compared to 74 in 2018 polls

MOHIUDDIN 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.

MINORITY ASPIRANTS IN 2024 POLLS

Total number: <b>102</b>
Nominated by AL: <b>20</b>
Nominated by 3 Islamist parties: <b>8</b>
Nominated by 17 other parties: <b>49</b>
Independent: <b>25</b>



A group of elderly men were waiting since dawn for the TCB truck to arrive in Khulna city's Kalibari Kheyaghat area yesterday. With market prices of kitchen essentials on the rise, people from the low-income groups have no other alternative than to wait for hours every day to get them at subsidised prices from these trucks.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

11 vehicles torched on first day of blockade

STAR REPORT

At least 11 vehicles were torched in six districts, including the capital, yesterday -- the first day of BNP-Jamaat's two-day nationwide blockade.

BNP and its allies are enforcing the ninth round of 48-hour blockades that started Sunday morning, demanding the upcoming national election under a neutral interim government.

According to the Fire Service and Civil Defence, 11 vehicles -- six buses, three trucks, one lorry, and one pickup -- were set on fire yesterday in Dhaka, Gazipur, Dinajpur, Natore, Sirajganj, and Chattogram.

In Dhaka, criminals torched a bus near the capital's Phulbaria bus stand in Gulistan. While in Rampura, a pickup was set ablaze near Better Life Hospital.

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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

207 UNOs, 326 OCs to be transferred in 1st phase

Initial lists going through scrutiny

SHARIFUL ISLAM, BAHARAM KHAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Authorities have made primary lists of upazila nirbahi officers and officers-in-charge of police stations to transfer in the first phase of the Election Commission's move to reposition all UNOs and OCs ahead of the January 7 national election.

The lists made by officials in the districts contain the names of 207 UNOs and 326 OCs, said sources in the public administration ministry and police headquarters.

In a surprise move, the EC on November 30 asked two senior secretaries of the public administration ministry and home ministry to transfer all 495 UNOs and 636 OCs across the country in phases to ensure a free and fair national election.

In the first phase, UNOs working at a upazila for over a year will be transferred to other districts and OCs working at a station for over six months will be moved to a police station in another constituency, the EC said.

Of the 207 UNO's named in the list, 49 are in Dhaka division, 15 in Mymensingh, 12 in Barishal, 21 in Sylhet, 17 in Rangpur, 27 in Rajshahi, 48 in Chattogram, and 18 are in

Khulna divisions.

Officials will work on the list a little more before sending it to the EC, sources said.

Officials of the public administration ministry said the UNOs will be transferred to upazilas close to where they were working. Transferring all UNOs before the election is a huge challenge, they added.

Anwar Hossain, deputy inspector general at the Police Headquarters, said officials are still working on the list, and so far, they found 326 OCs who served over six months at their stations.

Of the OCs, 33 are in Dhaka Metropolitan Police, 60 in Dhaka range, 20 in Sylhet range, 28 in Rangpur range, 21 in Barishal range, 38 in Khulna range, three in Rangpur Metropolitan Police, 23 in Mymensingh range, four in Khulna Metropolitan Police, and five in Chattogram Metropolitan Police.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday told reporters that the OCs will be transferred as per the EC's instruction.

"The chief election commissioner thinks that those who have been the OC of a police station for a long time, may be influenced by someone. That is why they asked the OCs to be transferred."

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India agrees to withdraw soldiers from Maldives

Says President Muizzu

REUTERS, New Delhi

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's "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.



Mohamed Muizzu

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

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 Chandrababhan Naidu.

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A bus was stuck for hours as its wheels had sunken 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: PRABIR DAS

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 anthrobots.

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."

