



‘Independents’ will stay in race

Says Hasina in face of 14-party allies’ demand for ‘cakewalk’ in shared seats

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has ruled out the possibility of its leaders running as independents withdrawing from the race.

She expressed her determination in this regard when the top leaders of the 14-party alliance requested her to give them an easy run in seats the ruling party would share with its allies, said sources.

Hasina had a meeting with the partners of the AL-led alliance at the Gono Bhaban last night to discuss seat-sharing for the January 7 national election.

The PM assured the partners that her party will contest the election under the banner of the 14-party combine.

She questioned the alliance leaders why they could not make their parties stronger even though they have been elected lawmakers several times and were ministers, said meeting sources.

She said the independents would run to make the election participatory and improve turnout.

Last night the PM almost confirmed sharing five seats. The five seats are Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon in Barishal-3 and General Secretary Fazley Hossain Badsha in Rajshahi-2, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haq Inu in Kushtia-2, Jatiya Party (Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju in Pirojpur-2, and Bangladesh Tarikat Federation Chairman Syed Najibul Bashar Maizbhandari in Chattogram-2, said sources.

The meeting, however, did not make any final decision regarding the partners’ demand for more seats. Further

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- AL ‘confirms’ it will share 5 seats with partners
- Discussion to go on for further seat-sharing
- Hasina says there could be more sanctions ahead
- Partners vowed to be with AL come what may



‘DELIVER US’ ... With hands outstretched and desperation etched on their faces, these women are trying to get tokens, using which they can buy kitchen essentials at subsidised prices from a TCB truck. They had been waiting on the capital’s Satmasjid Road since 8:00am for the truck, which came four long hours later. The soaring prices of basic commodities have left thousands across the country in dire straits. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Labour bill put on the shelf

President sends it back to parliament for reconsidering provision that allows stern punishment of workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an almost unheard-of move, President Mohammed Shahabuddin has sent a labour law amendment back to parliament for reconsideration, expressing concern over the proposed punishment of workers for wrongdoings.

The president objected to a provision in the Bangladesh Labour

(amendment) Bill, 2023, that increased four times the penalty for workers involved in “unfair labour practices”. The president’s consent is mandatory for a bill to become a law.

The move comes right after garment workers staged protests for weeks demanding better minimum pay and a new US

presidential memorandum threatening sanctions for labour

rights violations.

According to the law, unfair labour practices include conducting trade union activities during work hours, forcing workers to join trade unions, destruction of factory property, holding “illegal” strikes or coercing employers to accept demands by intimidation.

Section 54 of the bill proposed increasing the fine for the above to

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Election code breakers go unpunished

EC confines itself to serving show-cause notices on them

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Election code violations are rampant ahead of the January 7 election, but the Election Commission has yet to take any punitive action against the rule breakers.

Under section 18 of the electoral code of conduct, violation of election rules by aspiring candidates is punishable by six months’ jail or Tk 50,000 in fine or both. Under the section, the EC can also slap a fine of Tk 50,000 on political parties.

On November 30, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Ahsan Habib Khan warned against election code violations. But as of yesterday, the EC did not bring anyone to book.

But so far, the commission’s actions have been confined only to serving show-cause notices to over 60 candidates, mostly Awami League’s incumbent lawmakers or its leaders contesting as independent candidates.

Having enjoyed such impunity, aspiring candidates, including sitting MPs and ministers, are violating the electoral code of conducts at will, with little or no regard for the rules.

Until Sunday evening, the election enquiry committees served notice to 62 aspirants for code violations, said Ashok Kumar Debnath, an additional secretary to the EC.

The Daily Star has names of 38 of them – 31 of whom are AL picks while the rest seven are either independents or from other parties.

Of the 38 aspirants, 25 are sitting AL lawmakers, three Jatiya Party MPs and one independent lawmaker.

Those who have been served notice include Golum Dastagir Gazi, minister for textiles; Enamur Rahman, state minister for disaster management; Zunaid Ahmed

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