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'Top order has to take responsibility'



The British photographer who fell in love with Bangladesh



Ukraine shoots down Russian missiles, drones



Of rights violations and short-lived ventures

Frustrated but still in AL fold

The ruling party leaves 6 seats for 14-party allies, pulls out 25 candidates to allow JP easy win

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Despite a series of hectic meetings, repeated assurances, intense negotiations and nail-biting calculations, Awami League seems to have failed to satisfy its allies and electoral partners and, in many cases, even its own ranks.

To keep the allies in its fold, AL decided to share six seats with the 14-party alliance partners. It also withdrew 25 of its own nominees from the race to allow Jatiya Party an easy win there.

But both JP and 14-party allies vented frustration at the AL's tight-fistedness, as their demands were not fully met.

Besides them, many ruling party-sponsored candidates said they are unhappy over the party decision to keep the party "independents" in the race, many of whom are sitting MPs.

The six AL candidates, all sitting MPs, who had to "sacrifice" their election bid as part of the seat-searing deal with 14-party allies are disappointed too. They think their much-coveted candidacy has been "snatched" from them at the last minute.



Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team players celebrate with the trophy after winning their maiden ACC Under-19 Asia Cup with a whopping 195-run win over the hosts UAE in the final at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

Young Tigers attain Asian glory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly four years after ascending to the pinnacle of age-level cricket, the Bangladesh Under-19 team have scaled to another mountaintop when they thrashed the UAE by 195 runs in the final to clinch their maiden ACC Under-19 Asia Cup title at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Opener Ashiqur Rahman Shibly struck 129 off 149 balls, his second hundred in the tournament, while Chowdhury Mohammad Rizwan and Ariful Islam hit half-centuries as Bangladesh posted a challenging target of 283.

The bowlers then bundled out the hosts for just 87 runs to complete a thumping victory.

The aggression of the Bangladesh pace trio proved too much for the UAE batters, as Maruf Mridha

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

- AL now has candidates in 263 seats
- AL-sponsored candidates to face challenges from party colleagues in 231 seats
- EC scrapped candidacy of 5 AL nominees on different grounds

The six constituencies are -- Kurigram-1, Gaibandha-2, Patuakhali-1, Dhaka-18, Brahmanbaria-2 and Chhatogram 8.

With the six, AL has now dropped 77 sitting MPs from the January 7 election race. Seventy-one were excluded when the party declared its nominees for 298 constituencies.

In the last election, AL left 11 seats for its 14-party allies and 26 for JP. There were no AL candidates in those seats either, essentially giving them a walkover.

Apart from Jatiya Party and three of its 14-party coalition partners -- Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and Jatiya Party (Manju) -- AL did not share any seats with any other allies and partners this time, much to their frustration.

Even the parties with whom AL had an "understanding" over seat-sharing are dismayed as the ruling party did not meet their demand.

Jatiya Party, which agreed to join the polls at the eleventh hour after a lot of dramas, is upset with AL giving up fewer seats and disagreeing to pull out its independents from those seats.

JP demanded 70 seats as part of seat-sharing and withdrawal of AL candidates from 29 seats.

Allies in the 14-party also repeatedly requested AL to withdraw its "independents" from the seats to be shared with them, as they sought a guarantee for victory from the AL. The ruling party did not agree, upsetting the partners.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

40 noted citizens demand scrapping of polls schedule

Urge EC, govt to take steps to hold free, fair, competitive polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty eminent citizens have demanded cancellation of the polls schedule and dissolution of parliament in the third week of January to pave the way for a free, fair, and competitive election.

In a joint statement yesterday, they urged the government and the Election Commission to hold an election within 90 days after dissolving parliament. They also stressed the need for creating scope for all political parties to participate in the election.

"We are observing with grave concern that the government and the Election Commission have taken measures to arrange a one-sided election on January 7 as per the polls schedule," reads the statement.

It said the opposition leaders and activists have been forced to keep from the electoral race and politics by filing cases indiscriminately, mass arrests, torture and handing down jail sentences in a "controversial process".

The statement said the upcoming election is going to be contested by the ruling party nominees, their dummy candidates and the aspirants from their

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

SEAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH AL Pinned down, JP settles for 26

Gets one seat in capital for walkover win

RASHIDUL HASAN and MUNTAKIM SAAD

The Jatiya Party has failed to persuade the ruling Awami League to withdraw its nominees from more than 26 constituencies.

But thanks to last-minute efforts, it managed one constituency in the capital where its candidate would run without having to compete against an AL pick.

During intense negotiations between the two parties over the last two weeks, the AL maintained that it would not withdraw any of its picks from Dhaka's 20 constituencies.

At the last moment, the AL yesterday withdrew its Dhaka-18 nominee Mohammad Habib Hasan from the race, so that JP leader Sherifa Quader has a greater chance of winning.

In recent days, JP leaders have said several times that they would not settle for only 26 seats in parliament. Some party insiders said the JP may not even participate in the January 7 election unless the ruling AL gave it more constituencies to vie for without competition.

The JP, which is known for dramatic shifts in stances, put an end to the speculations as its Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnun announced around 3:40pm yesterday that his party had overcome all barriers and would participate in the election.

AL leaders participating in the election as independents in over 260 constituencies have further complicated the situation for the JP because even if the AL withdraws its nominee in a constituency, the person running on JP ticket will still have to compete against an AL leader.

This is happening in 24 of the 26

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constituencies.

The only way JP could secure the easy victory it desired was if the AL nominees and the so-called AL independents retired from the race. But as the AL said before, it did not "interfere" with those running as independents.

In 2021, JP leader Sherifa, wife of JP Chairman GM Quader, became a member of parliament for a woman's reserved seat after the demise of JP MP Masuda M Rashid Chowdhury.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

1,896 candidates to contest election

390 of them independents; 27 parties join it; 347 aspirants withdraw candidacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 1,896 candidates will run in the January 7 polls amid boycott by major opposition BNP, its allies and some other likeminded parties.

Of them, 1,506 are nominees of 27 registered political parties while the rest are independents, said Election Commission Secretary Jahangir Alam at a press briefing last night.

He said as many as 347 aspirants, including at least 61 independents, pulled out until yesterday, the last day for withdrawal.

Campaigning for the polls will begin today after the allocation of electoral symbols to the candidates by returning officers.

In line with the EC's directive, the government has asked the authorities concerned to take measures so that political programmes cannot take place across the country from today till the polling day except electioneering.

Meanwhile, Awami League Office Secretary Biplob Barua yesterday said his party left six seats for its 14-party alliance partners and 26 for Jatiya Party, the main opposition in parliament.

Speaking to reporters at the EC secretariat, he said AL nominees for those 32 seats have withdrawn their candidature.

He said the ruling party candidates will vie for 263 seats.

Biplob said all JP candidates will run with its electoral symbol "plough". The candidates of the alliance partners will participate in the election with the AL's polls symbol "boat".

He said the AL has shared Bogura-4, Rajshahi-2, Kushtia-2, Barishal-2, Pirojpur-2 and Lakshmipur-4 with its alliance partners -- three of them with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, two with Workers Party of Bangladesh, and one with Jatiya Party (Manju).

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



After waiting since 10:00am for the TCB truck to arrive at the capital's Karwan Bazar yesterday, elderly Delwara could not stand in queue anymore and had to sit and lean on a car for some rest. With an ailing son and three daughters to feed at home, she has no option but to wait longer so she can get her hands on some subsidised kitchen essentials, as prices at the markets have long spiraled out of her reach. The truck had still not arrived when this photo was taken at 1:00pm.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Another 64 BNP men jailed over political violence

They were sued in 2013, 2018

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Another 64 leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations were sentenced to different prison terms yesterday in four cases filed in 2013 and 2018 over political violence in the capital.

With this, at least 1,013 BNP-Jamaat men have been jailed since November 7 this year in 57 cases lodged between June 2011 and November 2018 on charges of illegal gathering on the streets, rioting, damaging properties, arson attacks on vehicles, vandalism, and assaulting police and obstructing them from discharging duties.

In a case filed with Kotwali Police Station in September 2018, eight leaders and activists of the BNP and its front organisations were given six years' rigorous imprisonment by a Dhaka court yesterday.

None of the convicts was present at the courtroom when the court delivered the verdict.

Reaz Ahmed, organising secretary of BNP's Kotwali unit, and Razzab Ali Pintu, assistant organising secretary of JCD central committee, are among the convicts.

During the trial, eight prosecution witnesses testified before the court.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4