



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday received over Tk 315 crore as the fifth and sixth instalments of loan repayment taken for the construction of the Padma Bridge. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader handed over a cheque of Tk 315,07,53,442 to the premier at an event at Gono Bhaban. With the latest instalments, the bridges division has so far paid a total of Tk 948,01,19,585 to the government, reports BSS. PHOTO: PTD

And so it begins
Candidates kick off
electioneering

STAR REPORT

Candidates across the country began their electoral campaign right after being allocated symbols by returning officers yesterday.

In Mymensingh-4, AL candidate Muhit Ur Rahman organised a rally at the city's Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Park area yesterday afternoon.

Supporters of independent candidate Aminul Haque Shamim, also the Mymensingh district unit AL vice president, along with Jatiya Party's candidate Abu Musa Sarker, also started their campaigns for the same constituency.

In Gazipur, the city's former mayor Jahangir Alam staged a showdown with three independent candidates from three constituencies -- Md Rezaul Karim of Gazipur-1, Kazi Alimuddin of Gazipur-2, and Akhtaruzzaman of Gazipur-5.

Right after getting their symbols, the three independents went to the Rajbari field adjacent to the RO's office, where Jahangir was already present

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INDEPENDENTS IN DHAKA
'Eagle' their
symbol of choice

DIPAN NANDY

The allocation of symbols for the upcoming national polls started yesterday, with eagle being the most preferred one for independent candidates. Ten out of 16 independent contenders from 15 constituencies in Dhaka metropolitan wanted it for their electoral battle. Five of them were ultimately allocated the eagle symbol.

Meanwhile, four candidates will campaign with the second most desired symbol- 'truck'.

Returning Officer Sabirul Islam oversaw the allocation of election symbols for 122 candidates from Dhaka metropolitan. Notably, one independent candidate

was absent during yesterday's proceedings, meaning he would get a symbol later.

Symbol allocation operated on a straightforward principle: if a candidate applied for a symbol unclaimed by others, they secured it. However, when multiple candidates vied for the same symbol, a lottery determined the allocation.

An exciting competition unfolded for the coveted eagle symbol.

Take the case of Dhaka-14 constituency for example, independent candidates ZI Russel and Sabina Akhter Tuhin both sought the Eagle symbol; ultimately, Russel secured it, and Tuhin received the "truck"

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'Ill-attempts
on to foil polls'
154 noted citizens
urge EC, govt to
take steps to hold
free, fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One hundred and fifty-four eminent citizens yesterday expressed concern over an "ill-attempt to thwart" the January 7 parliamentary election in the country.

In a statement, they said vested groups both inside the country and from abroad want to "fish in troubled waters" by creating a constitutional crisis in Bangladesh.

They called the people to be united and prevent such ill-attempts.

The eminent citizens said the vested group that was involved in arson attacks between 2014 and

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The distribution of electoral symbols yesterday injected newfound momentum into printing presses. It has sparked a festive atmosphere within the industry, where workers are engaged in the production of campaign materials. This photo was taken in Anderkilla area of the port city. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

AL election
manifesto
on Dec 27
Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League will announce its election manifesto on December 27.

"Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will announce the election manifesto," said the party General Secretary Obaidul Quader at a press briefing at the party president's political office in Dhanmondi yesterday.

Quader urged the party activists to abide by the code of conduct and maintain a peaceful environment ahead of the election. He also said the first public rally of AL to kick off the electioneering will be held in Sylhet on December 20.

MD ABBAS

As the nation gears up for the upcoming national election, the printing press industry anticipates a familiar surge in activity, traditionally marked by a boom preceding every electoral contest.

However, concerns loom over potential reduced sales compared to the 2018 polls, as BNP and some other political parties are boycotting the upcoming election.

Industry insiders express worries, yet find a glimmer of hope in the increased participation of independent candidates, particularly those aligned with the ruling AL party.

The distribution of electoral symbols yesterday injected newfound momentum into printing presses across Nayapaltan,

Purana Paltan, Fakirapool, Bijoynagar, Kataban, and Nilkhet. It has sparked a festive atmosphere within the industry, where workers are engaged in the production of campaign materials.



According to the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), there are currently 5,500 printing factories in the country. Of them, 1,000 are large, 2,000 are medium, and 2,500 small.

Dhaka alone boasts over 3,000 printing factories, spread across various locations such as Arambagh, Nayapaltan, Purana Paltan, Bijoynagar, Fakirapool, Kataban, Nilkhet, Sutrapur, Babubazar, Banglabazar, Islampur, Lalbagh, and other areas of Old Dhaka.

PAY MORE FOR POSTERS

While talking to The Daily Star, printing press traders said candidates are required to pay additional fees this year, attributing the rise to increased prices of paper, ink, and ink plates.

Bangladesh Printing Industries Association President Shahid Sernibat explained that the surge in the US dollar's value has substantially elevated the costs of raw materials, including paper, ink, and related products.

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21,835 BNP
men detained
since Oct 28
Allege pro-BNP
lawyers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Ainjibi Forum (BJAF), a body of pro-BNP lawyers, yesterday alleged that the "unelected" government has illegally detained 21,835 BNP men since October 28 to foil the party's movement for restoring democracy and people's right to vote.

A total of 1,249 BNP leaders and activists have been sentenced to different terms of imprisonment in connection with 79 cases over the last 14 weeks, BJAF Secretary General Kayser Kamal said in a written statement during a press conference.

The press conference was arranged at Supreme Court Bar Association to protest a statement made by

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Training of 9
lakh polling
officials starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission will start training over 9 lakh polling officials across the country from today.

In Dhaka, presiding officers, assistant presiding officers, polling officers will be given a one-day training at Dania College, said Electoral Training Institute (ETI) Director General SM Asaduzzaman Arzu.

Similar trainings will take place at upazila and district level till January 4.

As many as 46,364 presiding officers, 2,87,722 assistant presiding officers and 5,75,443 polling officers will be trained this year.

In Chattogram,
legacy matters
Children of 6 AL leaders
contesting national polls

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The Awami League has chosen to entrust children of veteran party leaders in six constituencies of Chattogram for the upcoming national polls. Reflecting a pattern seen in Bangladesh and across South Asian politics, these nominees, now the torchbearers of their political dynasties, include four re-nominees and two newcomers vying for victory under the "boat" symbol.

In Chattogram-1 (Mirsarai), Mahbubur Rahman Ruhel, son of incumbent MP and former minister Mosharraf Hossain, got AL nomination for the first time.

In Chattogram-4 (Sitakunda), SM Al Mamun, son of former lawmaker from the constituency late Abul Kashem Master, also got debut nomination.

In Chattogram-2 (Fatikchhari), Khadizatul Anwar Sony, daughter of Rafiqul Anwar, former MP from the constituency, got nominated by AL. Earlier, she was a member of the Jatiya Sangsad from reserved seat.

Legacy in politics has emerged as a culture, with wife or children getting nominated after a leader's death. But political parties in a democratic country should nominate candidates in a democratic way.

MUHAMMAD YEAHIA AKHTER
Former professor of political science department at CU

In Chattogram-9 (Kotwali-Bakalia), Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, the son of three-time mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury, has been re-nominated.

In Chattogram-13 (Anwara), Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, incumbent lawmaker from the seat and son of the former AL leader Aktaruzzaman Chowdhury, got re-nominated.

In Chattogram-3 (Sandwip), AL has nominated incumbent lawmaker Mahfuzur Rahman Mita, whose father Mostafizur Rahman served as a two-time MP from the same constituency.

Local politicians and analysts have mixed reactions over these children of AL leaders.

"Dynasty politics frustrates grassroots activists and promotes factionalism. It also breaks the chain of command in local politics," said Sheikh Ataur Rahman Ata, general secretary of Chattogram north AL. He, however, said some legacy politicians are seen to perform better as they gather political knowledge from the family.

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