Spend time with family instead of voting: Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday again urged the voters to boycott today's election to ensure the fall of the incumbent "fascist Awami Leagu government."



Speaking at a virtual press briefing, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi urged the country's people to peacefully observe their party's second-day hartal on the voting day by not going to the polling stations.

'The darkest chapter of another lopsided stage-managed election in the history of Bangladesh is going to be written tomorrow [January 7]. So, our call to every democracy-loving voter is to boycott those who have denied your rights for the last 15 years for a day," Rizvi said.

The BNP leader called upon the people to spend time with their families during voting hours instead of visiting the polling stations.

The darkest chapter of another lopsided stagemanaged election in the history of Bangladesh is going to be written tomorrow [today].

"Let's establish democracy and voting rights and make the two-day allout strike a success. Let's all boycott the January 7 voting and raise our voices in favour of boycotting the polls. Avoid going to polling stations," he said.

He also called upon the prodemocratic forces to encourage their family members, relatives, friends and neighbours to boycott the facade in the name of voting.

He alleged that a dangerous game has been arranged to retain power as it has been for the past 15 years through an inventory model of dummy election drama.

The BNP leader said AL along with their subservient and partisan state apparatus have once again laid the web of deception to snatch the voting

rights of people. Rizvi said Sheikh Hasina has been "shamelessly" indulging in the "farcical game" using all powers. He said the government is making efforts to show the democratic world a good voter turnout by force.

Bangladesh is set to hold the 12th parliamentary election today amid a

boycott by major opposition parties. Meanwhile, BNP and its allies enforced a 48-hour hartal to protest the national election. The hartal will end at 6:00am on Monday.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Following the fire incident in Benapole Express train on Friday night, railway police set up checkpoints in front of the terminal gate at Kamalapur station yesterday. They also seized flammable objects, mostly lighters, from passengers before allowing them entry.

BNP IN KHULNA

228 in jail, others on the run

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

As the nation heads to the polls today, the BNP continues its two-day hartal as part of a polls-boycott movement. The party has also called for a non-cooperation movement to remove the current regime and demanded elections under a neutral administration. However, a notable absence

of BNP leaders and activists observed the streets of Khulna, just many other regions

of the country. Many are on the run, and some even unavailable on the phone and

other social platforms.

According to BNP leaders, in-house programmes, in 10 cases were filed by Khulna Metropolitan Police against BNP men since October 28 and 228 have so far been arrested.

Despite this, a few leaders office opened on December 14 from the party's women, after being padlocked for 38 student, and vouth wings are quietly conducting limited not been going there fearing



While the country goes to polls today, BNP office in the capital's Navapaltan remains locked and guarded by police since October 28. The party is also observing a 48-hour hartal, which started yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Yesterday, while visiting the office on KD Ghosh Road around 11:30am, this correspondent found it locked from outside. Locals said the office now opens only for a few

days, but the party men have minutes occasionally. Hasibur Rahman, a BNP activities, he added.

activist in ward-21, said the office was open on December 14 and 16 to celebrate Victory Day and has remained closed since then.

 $Many\,BNP\,leaders, including$ convener of district unit Amir Ezaz Khan, are in jail, while others are absconding, said $\ensuremath{\mathrm{SM}}$ Monirul Hasan Bappi, member secretary of BNP's Khulna district unit.

Shafiqul Alam Tuhin, the member secretary of BNP's Khulna city unit, said all party members in Khulna are in touch. "We have established humanitarian and legal aid cells to support those in jail," he added.

Shafiqul Alam Mona, the city unit's convenor, said it is difficult to carry on the movement under the "current autocratic regime".

Officer-in-Contacted, Charge of Khanjahan Ali Police Station Md Momtajul Huq said they are only arresting individuals with criminal cases against them. There are no restrictions for BNP to conduct their regular

RAJSHAHI CONSTITUENCIES 'Allegation of intimidation, vote buying run rife'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The candidates of ruling Awami League continued electioneering in at least four constituencies of Rajshahi till yesterday night, although polls campaigns officially ended on Thursday.

The AL candidates have allegedly arranged feasts, distributed money, and threatened voters of removing their names from different government allowances, according to their independent rivals. Golam Rabbani, an independent candidate

from Rajshahi-1, alleged that AL candidate Omor Faruk Chowdhury arranged a feast for voters on Friday night in Bohera, Chowrak and Chandankotha villages.

Md Billal Hossain, assistant returning officer of Tanore upazila, said he sent a BGB team to the villages, but the feasts ended before they reached

> Actor Mahiya Mahi, another independent aspirant from the constituency, alleged the AL candidate distributed money among voters at several places.

> > "I asked my voters to take money from him, but to vote for me," she added. Shahnewaj Ayesha Akter

Jahan Dalia, another independent candidate from the seat, echoed Shafiqur Rahman Badsha, independent candidate from Rajshahi-2 said the AL-led

14-party candidate Fazle Hossain Badsha and his supporters were seen visiting door-to-door to voters from low-income groups till Saturday.

They threatened the people of depriving them of different government allowances," he added.

A video of a ward councillor making threats went viral, he said. Fazle Hossain Badsha, also general secretary of

Workers' Party, made similar counter allegations against the independent candidate.

He said he submitted complaints against four ward councillors of Rajshahi City Corporation who threatened voters to deprive them of different government allowances if they did not vote for the independent candidate.

In Rajshahi-5, independent aspirant Obaidur Rahman alleged AL candidate Kazi Abdul Wadud Dara has been distributing money among voters.

In Rajshahi-6, similar allegations have been raised on behalf of independent candidate Md Rahenul Haque against AL candidate Mohammad Shahriar Alam, also state minister for foreign affairs.

In Rajshahi-4, the AL candidate Abul Kalam Azad's election agents alleged independent candidate and incumbent lawmaker Enamul Haque distributed money among voters at his cold storage in Bagmara upazila on Friday.

Contacted, returning officer Shamim Ahmed said they responded to every allegation made by the candidates. "Most allegations were not based

on truth," he said. At Bagmara, BGB personnel were sent to

Enamul Haque's cold storage and no one was found distributing money, he added.

Also, no candidate was found continuing the campaign as executive magistrates and other teams are patrolling the constituencies, the RO added.

CEC vows a free

ensure that it becomes CEC. acceptable at home and abroad," he said.

without Awal. mentioning BNP's name, to resist the polls. So, it may cause problems for peacefully."

"We will face challenges among the voters through vandalism or other means."

The CEC said they have taken precautionary measures to face the situation, as around 8 lakh members of law enforcement agencies will maintain law and order.

Pointing at parties that are campaigning against the polls, he said, "You may peacefully campaign to form a public opinion as well," he said. regarding not going to stations, but it will be an offence if you physically resist the if the media highlights the election or prevent voters from going to the polling the credibility of elections stations.'

He said if violence continues, negatively impact voter turnout. He, however, did not estimate what the voter sake of a fair election. turnout could be in today's

though it may face a said CEC Awal.

legitimacy crisis," said the

Regarding the incident of setting trains on fire ahead of the election, he said, "If any party has said, "A large party is trying done this, I think it is an unforgivable crime."

When asked whether us to conduct the election there will be any impact of US visa policy, he said the policy will be applied if they try to create fear to those who will obstruct the election; the EC is not obstructing the polls..."

"So, we are not bothered about it," he added. "If there is any sort of rigging in the election, some of the responsibility will fall on us," the CEC also said.

"Presiding officers have all the power at the centres. They have been repeatedly reminded of their responsibilities, so they have to take responsibility

The media will have free rights in the polling centres, said CEC Awal, adding that transparency of the polls,

can increase. The CEC also called might upon candidates to put are creating obstacles their polling agents in everywhere." every polling booth for the

"Had BNP participated in supporters the election, it would have "If the voter turnout is been more competitive, less than even one percent, it could be legally correct, festive. This is a reality,"

internal conflicts widened in the last few years," Delwar said.

Asif Sams also became president of upazila AL unit by removing Tuku's younger brother Abdul Baten, also former municipality mayor. Baten is now the campaign chief for Prof Saveed.

"I am not against 'boat'; I am against the man who is representing 'boat'. He is not fit for the post," said Baten.

Contacted, said, "Due to his [Baten] wrongdoings, he was removed from the party. I have no problem sharing inherited property with him, but I have no political relation with him."

Refuting the allegations, Tuku claimed those who love AL are united in his support.

Prof Sayeed said, "Due to Tuku and his family members' muscle power, corruption and nepotism, people are united to vote for me but his [Tuku] men

With several clashes happening of both

candidates in the last few has allegedly days, locals are worried of

further violence. PABNA-3 In Pabna-3 (Bhangura-

accordance with the central

city and district unit BNP

Meanwhile, the Khulna

committee's directives.

incumbent lawmaker Mokbul Hosain Md got AL-nomination for fourth consecutive time while veteran district AL leader Abdul Hamid Master is contesting as independent candidate after resigning from the post of Chatmohar upazila parishad chairman.

Contacted, Abdul Hamid alleged he has faced obstacles everywhere while carrying out election

campaigns. polls due to pressure from locals who want to see changes here, including respite from MP Mokbul and his son's influence,"

he said. Dr Golzar Hossain, a district AL unit leader, depriving alleged competent people, the lawmaker supported his loyal ones. So, local AL men have distanced themselves from him.

Mokbul's son Golam between Hasnayen Russel, mayor of Bhangura municipality,

influencing local politics for last few years.

"Recruitments school, colleges, and Chatmohar-Faridpur), all social safety net programme allotments go through the lawmaker's son," Golzar said.

Contacted, refuted the allegations. "I tried my best to work with all people from my constituency. I want to finish my incomplete works," he said.

All AL activists and supporters will unite for the "boat" symbol in the polls, Mokbul added.

"I am contesting the A crime against

FROM PAGE 3 "This

reprehensible incident, undoubtedly orchestrated by those with malicious intent, strikes at the very heart of our democratic values,' Momen said.

"The timing of this tragedy, just before the election scheduled for January 7, 2024, shows an absolute intention to hinder the festivity, safety and security of the democratic processes of the country," he said.

700 Rab patrol teams

FROM PAGE 5

peaceful election. Khurshid

expressed confidence in added. the preparedness of the election centres and urged citizens to exercise their Rab, democratic rights. "People enforcement

to ensure that they can exercise their voting rights further without hindrance," he

Highlighting the collaboration between other law agencies, have the opportunity to and the Cyber Team, vote. We are prepared the Rab DG detailed the

deployment of specialised units, including the dog squad, bomb disposal unit, and, if necessary, Rab helicopters.

He also mentioned a device named OIVS, which will help identify intruders in the area.

AL picks lose grassroots support Of unanswered calls

He rushed to Dhaka from Rajbari, and has been looking for his son ever since.

The man was holding a photo of Talha close to his chest as he kept looking.

Meanwhile, relatives of 28-year-old Chandrima Dibakar sifted through Chowdhury are desperately searching Dhaka hospitals Eager for her inaugural

train journey and to

witness the Padma Bridge, Chandrima embarked on the train from Rajbari on Friday afternoon. Instead of being greeted by her brother Dibakar

Station that night, she and police stations. remains untraceable. Having recently

completed her postgraduation in pharmacy from a private university, Chandrima lived with her brother in Farmgate. Yesterday morning,

the morgue at DMC, one of several hospitals where anguished relatives are holding onto hope.

A hope of getting back whatever remains of them.

After losing track of his wife, Elina Yasmin, Sajjad Hossain Chapol has Chowdhury at Kamalapur morgues, railway stations, condition.

The family, still reeling from Elina's father's recent passing, boarded the train in Rajbari after attending family gatherings. "I'm not sure where my wife is right now..." said Sajjad.

Dhaka Railway Sub-inspector Setafur Rahman said they received missing person reports from three families, of whom, two could not identify bodies kept at the DMCH morgue their missed ones. Or as those were burned beyond recognition.

At the national burn institute, doctors said eight passengers who suffered tirelessly searched hospital burns remain in a critical

Minister's relatives serve as polls

Iman Ali, Lipika Chowdhury, and Asaduzzaman; and Kaliganj Tushbhandar Mahila Degree College's assistant professor Santosh Kumar Roy, Tapan Kumar Roy; and lecturers Abdul Latif, Pabitra Kumar Roy, and Noor Islam.

Among them, Ershadul Haque is the brother-inlaw of the social welfare minister, while Lipika Chowdhury is the wife of the minister's brother and Golam Farooq is also his close relative.

Talking to The Daily Sirajul alleged Nuruzzaman controls both Karim Uddin Public College and Kaliganj Tushbhandar Mahila Degree College centres.

"Teachers at these two institutions are loval to the minister. They have been appointed as presiding the vote," claimed Sirajul.

necessary appoint new presiding officers in the centres concerned to keep the FROM PAGE 3 night. I have been assured that necessary actions will

be taken," he said. Returning District and Deputy Officer Commissioner Mohammad Ullah said preparations have been made to take necessary measures regarding this matter after

looking into it seriously. The minister or his relatives could not be

contacted for comments. The number of polling centres in Lalmonirhat-2 behind."

officers across various constituency is 144. The polling centres. These number of voters in this presiding officers will act on constituency is 4,02,029, the minister's behalf and rig while five candidates are vying for this seat.

Curiosity

polling environment in to the bomb disposal order. I made a written unit, it was a timer IED. complaint to the returning It contained a watch, officer concerned on Friday batteries, gun powder, and bottles of petrol," the police official added.

> A case has been filed with Siddhirganj Police Station under the anti-terrorism act, accusing unknown persons.

The SP also said, "We are trying to identify the passenger who left the bag in the bus. The staff informed us that possibly someone got on the bus with the bomb in Gabtoli and then got off at Sayedabad, leaving the bag

রাজউক পূর্বাচলে এবং গাজীপুরে প্লট বিক্রয়

সেষ্টরে ৫ কঠিবে একটি প্রট ৫ কোটি টাকা এবং পূর্বচল নতুন শহর প্রকল্পের ২৯ নদর সেষ্টরের নিকটে লক্ষা মনোহরপুর এবং বড় আমনিয়া মৌজার প্রসন্থ পাকা রাজা সংখ্যা আবাদিক/বানিজ্ঞাক/ইডান্ট্রিজ স্থাপন করার উপযোগী ৩ তলা তবনদত্র ৩০ বিষা প্রট ৫ নক্ষ টাকা শতক এবং গজিপুর সিটি কর্মোরেশনের দক্ষিণ শালনা মৌজাস্থ কৃষি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় সংখ্যা হাইওয়ে রাজার পাশে গামেনিস, বৈশ্ববিদ্যালয়, হাসপাতাল, শিল্প-কারখানা, বড়ি তৈরী করার উপযোগী উঠু নিষ্কণ্টক ৬৯ শতাংশ জমি ২০ লাখ টাকা শতকমূলে বিক্রি হবে। বােশাবােশঃ ৩১৯৯২-৩৭৭৩৩৪,৩১৬২৪-৬৫৯৩৫৫, Email: founder.digital.co@gmail.com