

13 presiding officers removed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

At least 13 teachers were removed from the list of presiding officers for Rajshahi-6 (Charghat-Bagha) on Friday night.

They were removed after they were found campaigning for the Awami League candidate Mohammad Shahriar Alam in the constituency, said Shamim Ahmed, the returning officer of Rajshahi.

Shahriar is also the state minister for foreign affairs.

Of the removed, eight are teachers of different educational institutions in Charghat upazila while five are in Bagha upazila.

The action came after Md Rahenul Haque, the independent candidate from the constituency complained to the returning officer.

In two separate complaints made on January 1 and 4, Haque mentioned the names of 34 teachers – 16 from Charghat and 18 from Bagha – and alleged that they were engaged in campaigning for “boat.”

Haque also provided photographs of their electioneering.

‘Election environment will tell us what’s next’ SAYS GM QUADER

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Jatiyo Party will closely monitor the election and will take further decisions depending on the situation surrounding the polls today, said party chairman GM Quader yesterday.



Even though there were speculations that JP might not stay in the polls till the end, they have managed to sustain their stay till the voting day.

“The environment of the voting day will tell us what to do next,” said GM Quader.

The JP chairman made the remarks while talking to journalists in Rangpur.

Regarding BNP’s haltal on election day, he said, “BNP called the haltal as per their constitutional rights. But the people of Rangpur are focused on the polls and eagerly waiting to cast their votes.”

Voters in Rangpur believe JP is capable of fulfilling their expectations, said GM Quader.

Meanwhile, being a voter in Dhaka, GM Quader himself won’t be able to cast his vote on the election day, said party insiders.

700 Rab patrol teams to be on election duty

UNB, Dhaka

In preparation for the upcoming 12th national election today, the Rapid Action Battalion has deployed 700 patrol teams across the country to ensure security.

Rab Director General M Khurshid Hossain said coordinated efforts with other law enforcement agencies, including police and intelligence services, have been undertaken to implement sufficient security measures.

“We have worked as a striking force throughout the country. Tomorrow [today], 700 Rab patrol teams will be working on election duty,” said the DG after overseeing security arrangements in Dhaka’s Mirpur yesterday.

He emphasised that comprehensive security measures have been put in place to ensure a fair and



Ballot materials being assembled at the gymnasium beside MA Aziz stadium to be sent to polling centres across Chattogram.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Violence casts shadow over Ctg polls

AL split in many places, clashes spark concerns for voter turnout

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

The culmination of campaigning for the upcoming 12th parliamentary polls in Chattogram has been marked by violence, particularly clashes between Awami League candidates and their independent counterparts.

In Shantir Hat and Kusumpura areas of Chattogram-12, 20 including the siblings of independent candidate Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, were injured and three campaign vehicles were vandalised on Saturday.

Allegations point to the involvement of AL candidate Motaheerul Islam Chowdhury’s supporters, leading to arrests of five individuals by police.

Violence occurred in many other constituencies including Chattogram-1 (Mirsarai), Chattogram-3 (Sandwip), Chattogram-II (Bandar-Patenga), Chattogram-15 (Satkania-Lohagara) and Chattogram-16 (Banshkhal) during the campaign period.

The tense situation has prompted concerns about the potential impact on voter turnout in the upcoming January 7 polls in Chattogram, where the ruling party finds itself divided between AL nominees and party independents in many places.

“When activists of rival candidates lock in clashes, general people end up bearing the brunt,” said Mohammad Ibrahim, a farmer of Dhalghat union in Patiya upazila. “Such violence tarnishes polls festivity,” he added.

This newspaper also spoke to many voters, who expressed similar concerns due to the sporadic violence.

Meanwhile, constituencies such as Chattogram-2 (Fatikchhari), Chattogram-4 (Sitakunda), Chattogram-5 (Hathazari), Chattogram-6 (Raozan), Chattogram-7 (Rangunia), Chattogram-8 (Boalkhali-Chandgaon), Chattogram-9 (Kotwali-Bakalia), Chattogram-10 (Doublemooring-Panchlaish), Chattogram-13 (Anwara-Karnaphuli) and Chattogram-14 (Chandanaish) experienced less violence during electioneering.

The primary electoral contests in Chattogram will be between AL nominees and AL independents. However, in Chattogram-5 and Chattogram-8, the face-off will be between JP candidates and AL independents.

The ruling party did not field anyone with the “boat” symbol in these two places as part of an understanding between the two parties.

**CONSTITUENCIES TO WATCH**  
In Chattogram-1, the electoral contest will mainly be between AL candidate Mahubur-Rahman and independent Gias Uddin, who is an executive member of AL in Chattogram north district and a former Mirsarai upazila chairman.

Chattogram-2 was set for a face-off between AL candidate Khadizatul Anwar Sony, Bangladesh Tariqat Federation candidate Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari, Bangladesh Supreme Party candidate Syed Saifuddin Ahmed Maizbhandari, and independent candidate Hossain Md Abu Tayab.



A campaign agent helping a voter find his polling centre.

Nazibul, the incumbent lawmaker, withdrew from the race, pledging support to Khadizatul, who is the incumbent lawmaker from the reserved women’s seat.

Meanwhile, Saifuddin chairs Bangladesh Supreme Party, and Tayab is a former Chhatra League leader and Fatikchhari upazila chairman.

In Chattogram-3, the vote battle will be between AL’s Mahfuzur Rahman and independent Jamal Uddin Chowdhury.

Chattogram-10 sees a tripartite contest with AL’s Mohiuddin Bachchu against independent candidates Manjur Alam and Farid Mahmud while Chattogram-II’s battle is mainly between AL’s MA Latif and independent Ziaul Haque Suman.

In Chattogram-14, AL’s Nazrul Islam

Chowdhury faces independent Abdul Jabbar Chowdhury. Chattogram-15 braces for a contest between AL’s Abu Reza Muhammad Nezamuddin Nadvi and independent Abdul Motaheb while Chattogram-16 will see battle between AL’s Mustafizur Rahman Chowdhury and independent Mujibur Rahman.

**SMOOTH SAILING FOR MINISTERS?**  
Land Minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud and Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury seem to be in a favourable position.

Contesting in Chattogram-13, Chattogram-7, and Chattogram-9 respectively, they face no strong independent candidates from the party.

Saifuzzaman and Hasan, having been elected lawmakers for three terms, seek re-election for the fourth time, while Mohibul, elected in 2018, aims for his second parliamentary term, and is the son of late CCC mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

**WHO WILL CHALLENGE AL IN CTG-4, 6?**  
In Chattogram-4, where seven candidates from six parties are contesting, locals believe AL candidate SM Al Mamun is in a favourable position due to the absence of a strong rival.

Mamun, also the general secretary of Sitakunda upazila unit AL, is a former chairman of the upazila and is contesting in parliamentary polls for the first time with party nomination. However, some believe independent candidate Mohammad Imran may pose a challenge.

In Chattogram-6, AL has nominated ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury, who served as the elected lawmaker for four consecutive terms from 2001 to 2018. Despite four other candidates from three parties and an independent contestant vying in the constituency, locals say they might not stand a chance.

Similar situations are observed in Chattogram-7, 9 and 13, where voters indicate the absence of strong rivals for AL candidates.

In the 16 constituencies of Chattogram, there are a total of 63,14,397 voters, comprising 32,89,590 male and 30,24,751 female voters, and 56 voters from the third gender.

There are 2,023 polling centres in 16 constituencies while the number of polling booths is 13,732.

Candidates from 19 parties are contesting in Chattogram.

Minister’s relatives serve as polls officers He is also AL candidate in Lalmonirhat-2

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

At least three relatives of Awami League candidate and Social Welfare Minister Nuruzzaman Ahmed are serving as presiding officers in the Lalmonirhat-2 constituency.

Meanwhile, many of the other presiding officers in the constituency are loyal to Nuruzzaman, alleged Sirajul Haque, an AL independent candidate from the constituency.

Sirajul, senior vice president of district AL, has made a written complaint against 18 presiding officers in this regard to the district returning officer.

The presiding officers are Kaliganj Karim Uddin Public College’s assistant professor Taimur Rahman; lecturers Ershadul Haque, Mahbubur Rahman, Golam Farooq, Mofazzal Hossain, Lutfar Rahman, Zakir Hossain, Mahbulul Alam, Trilochan Chandra Sarkar, Khadimul Bashar,

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‘Stay home on Jan 7’ Urge some DU students

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of Dhaka University students formed a human chain yesterday and urged voters to refrain from casting votes and stay home on January 7, calling it a “one sided” election.

The programme was held at the base of Raju Memorial sculpture. Protestors demanded that the national election be held under a non-partisan government, after reforming the constitution.



They also urged the Election Commission to cancel the January 7 election.

“We urge all voters to stay home on January 7. We demand a fair election, under a caretaker government,” they said.

The programme was led by Armanul Haque, DU president of Student Federation, and Asif Mahmud, DU convener of Democratic Students Force.

About 50 students participated in the human chain.

ATTACK ON AL OFFICE Lodge complaint against MP Ratan EC directs officials

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Election Commission has ordered the upazila election officer to lodge a complaint against Moazzem Hossain Ratan, incumbent lawmaker and independent aspirant from Sunamganj-1, in connection with an attack on a local Awami League office in Dharmapasha upazila.

The order, signed by EC’s deputy secretary Abdus Salam, directed the official to immediately lodge a complaint with the police station concerned against Ratan and his five associates – Nur Alam Nuru, Abul Kashem, Hashem, Mojahid and Tofail.

It also directed the superintendent of police in Sunamganj to accept the complaint and report to the EC within 24 hours.

In the order, the EC mentioned that on December 27, Ratan and his five associates attacked AL activists sitting in the party office in Jayshree union of the upazila, smashed their smartphones, tore down banners and posters of “boat” symbol, vandalised the office furniture, and verbally abused the AL activists including death threats.

“We will accept the complaint and take necessary action once it is lodged by the election office,” said Dharmapasha OC Md Shamsuddhoha.



Workers setting up bamboo markers for voter queues at Nobo Adorsho Girls’ Govt Primary School in Barishal city. The photo was taken around 4:30pm yesterday after ballots and other election equipment reached the centre in Bottola area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

PABNA 1 AND 3 CONSTITUENCIES

AL picks lose grassroots support over nepotism

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

With the country going to polls today, Awami League candidates in Pabna-1 and 3 are finding it hard to keep up with their independent counterparts.

AL grassroots have distanced themselves from the party’s contestants due to internal feud and allegations of nepotism against them, said many local party leaders.

**PABNA-1**  
In Pabna-1 (Shanthia-Bera), AL’s candidate Shamsul Haque Tuku has not been able to garner the party’s grassroots’ support as many local AL leaders and even his family members are working for independent aspirant Professor Abu Sayeed, former state minister and AL leader.

Reportedly, the local AL men left Tuku, also deputy speaker of parliament and three-time lawmaker, for his son Asif Sams Ranjan’s involvement and influence in local politics as mayor of Bera municipality.

“The MP [Tuku] and his son Asif Sams Ranjan are all powerful in the area. In absence of a full-fledged AL committee in the area, they have been controlling everything, denying party men,” alleged Abdur Rashid Dulal, acting secretary of Bera upazila unit AL.

Shanthia upazila parishad chairman and veteran AL leader Abdulla Al Mahamud Delwar echoed the same.

“Those who are working for him [Tuku] and his son get different benefits from them while others remain deprived, so