



BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman offers prayers at the grave of slain Inqilab Moncho leader Sharif Osman Bin Hadi near Dhaka University Central Mosque yesterday.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

Seat-sharing math grows complex

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finalised within a day or two."

Zubair added that in constituencies where consensus cannot be reached, multiple candidates may initially submit nomination papers, with withdrawals to follow later once agreements are finalised.

Jamaat sources said the party is holding seat-sharing talks not only with its ideological allies but also with the NCP, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Bangladesh Labour Party.

The NCP emerged in the post-mass uprising period, while the LDP, JSD and Labour Party had long been partners in the BNP-led simultaneous movement.

Following failed negotiations with the BNP, these parties are now recalibrating their political strategies.

As talks with like-minded parties stalled, Jamaat's parallel discussions with new partners further fuelled tensions within the eight-party bloc, sources said.

At the heart of the dispute lies a single question: how many seats each party will receive.

In the aftermath of the mass uprising, Jamaat initiated talks with Islam Andolan Bangladesh, Khelafat Majlis, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan, Bangladesh Nezame-e-Islam Party and Jatiya Ganatantrik Party to field single candidates in all constituencies through seat-sharing. The Bangladesh Development Party later joined the alliance.

Together, the eight parties carried out joint street programmes around shared demands.

An initial understanding was reached, and talks progressed gradually. Each party conducted internal surveys to assess candidate strength.

But disputes soon surfaced, particularly in constituencies where IAB, Khelafat Majlis and others argued their candidates were as viable as Jamaat's.

There were proposals to send neutral joint delegations to disputed constituencies to decide candidates based on surveys and local opinion, but those discussions made little headway.

Meanwhile, Jamaat's talks with the NCP moved to the forefront. After these discussions became public, unease grew within the eight-party alliance over whether the NCP's demands could be accommodated, IAB sources said.

Some parties also recalled past experiences with the NCP, noting that although the NCP had once attended a meeting at the residence of its Convener Nahid Islam to discuss a joint movement, it later declined to join the eight-party programmes.

Jamaat sources said talks are also ongoing, both formally and informally, with other parties including the LDP and the Labour Party.

According to NCP sources, its alliance talks with the BNP collapsed after the BNP reduced a promised allocation of 30 seats to four.

A Jamaat source said the JSD, led by ASM Abdur Rob, has also expressed interest in seat-sharing talks after failing to reach an agreement with the BNP.

On December 24, the LDP, led by Oli Ahmed, formally announced it was severing ties with the BNP over unresolved seat-sharing disputes. LDP Secretary General Redwan Ahmed later joined the BNP and received assurances of contesting with the sheaf of paddy symbol.

The Labour Party, meanwhile, ended its two-decade-long relationship with the BNP after failing

to secure a deal.

Labour Party chief Mustafizur Rahman Iran told The Daily Star that his party has agreed in principle to contest the election under a Jamaat alliance. "We have held unofficial discussions with Jamaat, but nothing has yet been finalised," he said.

There is also discussion that the LDP is seeking an understanding with Jamaat. Regarding the LDP, a Jamaat leader said an understanding may still be possible, partly to have a prominent freedom fighter aligned with the alliance.

IAB sources said the party remains firm in its demand for 100 seats to contest under an alliance with Jamaat, while Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, led by Mamunul Haque, is seeking at least 25. Several parties have warned they may withdraw from the alliance if their expectations are not met.

Jamaat leaders believe that if the eight like-minded parties, most of them Islamists, remain united, they can strengthen an Islamic ideological political narrative to counter the BNP's nationalist platform.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad, who oversees coordination with like-minded parties, said disagreements would be resolved through pragmatism. "We will give nominations to those who have the best ability to win in the polls," he said.

Jamaat sources said the party plans to field candidates in more than 200 constituencies. Including allocations to the NCP, AB Party and other allies, Jamaat is expected to give up around 80 seats.

Last month, the NCP, AB Party and Rashtra Songsar Andolan formed the Democratic Reform Alliance, but Rashtra Songsar said they would quit the alliance after news about NCP's talks with Jamaat emerged.

member of the party.

Although the party leadership initially did not acknowledge the alliance, NCP central committee sources confirm that after multiple meetings, discussions on a Jamaat-NCP alliance or seat-sharing arrangements have been finalised. Only an official announcement remains pending.

Sources said dissatisfaction with discussions over a potential alliance with BNP led senior leaders to hold several rounds of discussions with Jamaat.

Considering electoral realities, top NCP leaders, including Convener Nahid Islam and Member-Secretary Akhter Hossen, also met Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman at his residence to prioritise strategic alliances and seat-sharing.

On December 19, the issue was revealed in a WhatsApp group of the NCP's central committee, and a screenshot was later leaked on Facebook, prompting the party to dissolve the 208-member group.

Last week, multiple EC committee meetings were held to discuss the alliance. The party convener, secretary, and five top leaders, along with a large section of the committee, agreed to ally with Jamaat and finalise seat-sharing. However, five female leaders and around thirty other members openly opposed the alliance.

Confirming the matter, NCP Joint Secretary Akhter Hossen, in a press statement last night, outlined the party's stance on forming an electoral alliance.

He said that while BNP often differed with other parties on reform issues during talks with the consensus commission, NCP, Jamaat, and others found natural agreement on key points.

As a result, the party is prioritising commitment to reform and politics aimed at rebuilding the nation and restructuring the state in evaluating any alliance.

They claim that NCP's political

activities over the past two months focused on reform-oriented politics, positioning the party as an independent force. As part of this, the party had announced plans to contest independently and formed the "Gonotantrik Shongsar Jote".

The rift has also affected recently formed members of this alliance.

AB Party Chairman and former Shibir leader Mojibur Rahman Bhuiyan Monju is reportedly willing to ally with Jamaat, but the Rashtra Shangskar Andolan Chairman Hasnat Kaiyum opposes any alliance with Jamaat, BNP, or any other party.

On Friday, at a press conference at the headquarters on Topkhana Road in Dhaka, Hasnat Kaiyum said the alliance with NCP and AB Party was not officially communicated.

Pointing to the "Democratic" in the alliance's name, he said Jamaat represents an "undemocratic and religiously fascist force".

He emphasised that the Gonotantrik Shongsar Jote was established to stand independently of Jamaat and BNP.

Meanwhile, a senior Jamaat leader clarified, "This is not an alliance. We are discussing seat-by-seat arrangements with parties individually. There is no formal alliance discussion with NCP."

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Jamaat question deepens rift within NCP

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well-organised party workers. They also have opportunities to raise concerns or seek support from the government and administration regarding security or other issues. However, since I am not affiliated with any political party, I will not have access to any of those advantages. You are my only source of strength.

"As your daughter, if you extend affection and support in recognition of my honesty, dedication, and unwavering determination to pursue a new kind of politics, only then will I have the opportunity to serve you."

In her post, Jara also mentioned that she needs to collect signatures from 4,693 voters in Dhaka 9 as part of a requirement to validate her candidacy.

She said the signature collection will begin today and appealed for help from local residents and volunteers.

Before she decided to resign, Jara had raised Tk 47 lakh in less than 30 hours through crowdfunding for election expenses. Following her resignation from NCP, she also announced her decision to return the money.

She held the position of senior joint member secretary and general secretary of the Election Steering Committee.

While several others are planning to follow suit, Jara's exit was solely an individual decision, confirmed party insiders.

Senior Joint Secretary Ariful Islam Adeeb told The Daily Star, "The committee was informed of Jara's decision when she messaged our WhatsApp group. Within a few minutes, she publicly posted about it on Facebook before the party could provide any response."

Earlier on Thursday, Mir Arshadul Haque resigned from his posts as joint secretary and executive council

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Tarique's security under review amid huge crowds

BAHARAM KHAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Law enforcement agencies are reassessing Tarique Rahman's security citing unexpectedly large crowds at programmes attended by the BNP acting chairman, officials said.

The agencies, after reviewing the situation on Friday and Saturday, said turnout exceeded expectations even at smaller events, posing challenges.

A meeting was held at the Home Ministry yesterday with chiefs of law enforcement agencies to review security arrangements, according to multiple sources.

The head of an intelligence agency has been tasked with engaging the BNP to convey government concerns and discourage leaders and activists from crowding events other than public rallies, the sources said.

The assessments did not cite any specific threat from any group or individual, they added. Agencies noted that if Tarique begins attending rallies outside Dhaka, security challenge might increase.

Asked about the meeting's decisions, Special Branch chief and Additional Inspector General Golam Rasul told The Daily Star: "We are coordinating with all other agencies, providing and ensuring security for Tarique Rahman. As an intelligence agency, we are

conducting analysis of his possible threats to provide necessary security arrangements."

Tarique returned to Bangladesh on Thursday after 17 years in self-imposed exile, drawing tens of thousands to a rally in Purbachal. A law enforcement source said such crowds were expected on his return day, but the large turnouts on Friday and Saturday, particularly at Ziaur Rahman's mausoleum, prompted the reassessment.

The source said the BNP has not formally applied for Special Security Force (SSF) protection. While the government believes such protection may be necessary, it could raise questions about maintaining a level playing field ahead of the election. Any decision would require Election Commission approval, the source added.

"Overall, the government is in a dilemma over the issue."

The government began providing security to key political leaders after Osman Sharif Hadi, an independent candidate from Dhaka-8 and a prominent July uprising youth leader, was shot dead on December 12, a day after the election schedule was announced.

More than two dozen leaders have already been assigned gunmen, while Jamaat's ameer has sought round-the-clock security, including at his residence.

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Tarique, Zaima finish process

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to be on the voter roll, he said.

According to Article 12(1) of the Representation of the People Order, 1972, however, a person is disqualified from election if their name is not on the voter list.

Alongside completing his voter enrolment process, Tarique spent a busy day yesterday with events of both personal resonance and political significance. Wherever he went, crowds followed him.

Tarique left his Gulshan Avenue residence at around 10:40am in a white bulletproof SUV and reached the Dhaka University campus at around 11:15am under tight security to visit the grave of Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesman of Inqilab Moncho.

Inqilab Moncho, which has been staging a sit-in at Shahbagh

intersection since Friday afternoon demanding the arrest of Hadi's killers, temporarily moved to Aziz Super Market to allow Tarique's motorcade to go to the DU campus.

At around 11:30am, Tarique along with senior BNP leaders placed a wreath at Hadi's grave, which is located next to the mausoleum of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam near the Dhaka University Central Mosque. He later offered prayers seeking the salvation of Hadi's departed soul. Leaders of the Dhaka University Central Students' Union and DU Vice Chancellor Niaz Ahmed Khan joined in.

Tarique also placed a wreath at Kazi Nazrul Islam's grave.

From there, he headed to the EC office to complete his voter registration process.

He then visited at the grave of his

younger brother Arifat Rahman at Banani graveyard for the first time.

Arafat died of cardiac arrest in Malaysia on January 24, 2015 and Tarique missed his funeral three days later due to being in exile in London.

He offered prayers seeking the salvation of Arafat's departed soul.

From there, he headed to the Banani Military Cemetery to pay homage to the slain army officers of the 2009 Pilkhan tragedy and his father-in-law, former navy chief Mahbub Ali Khan.

Tarique offered prayers seeking the salvation of the departed souls.

In the evening, he went to his in-laws' house in Dhanmondi, where he visited a cat shelter of the Bangladesh Animal Welfare Association. Tarique is the chief adviser and main sponsor of the animal welfare organisation.

BNP looks to take it to ballot box

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visit his home district, Thakurgaon, while standing committee members will go to their respective districts to submit nomination papers.

Several grassroots leaders said party activists across the country had been waiting for Tarique's physical presence ahead of the polls, after years of receiving guidance from him virtually.

Manikganj 1 nominee SA Jinnah Kabir said, "BNP has remained out of power for the last 17 years. Tarique Rahman's arrival has removed all internal divisions. Now our only goal is to win the upcoming election by following his guidance."

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Last month, the NCP, AB Party and Rashtra Songsar Andolan formed the Democratic Reform Alliance, but Rashtra Songsar said they would quit the alliance after news about NCP's talks with Jamaat emerged.

Activists, mainly from Inqilab Moncho, yesterday blocked roads and staged sit-ins in Dhaka, Sylhet, Chattogram and Kushtia, demanding justice for Hadi.

In Dhaka, protesters who had occupied Shahbagh since Friday afternoon and stayed overnight briefly moved to the front of Aziz Supermarket around noon to allow BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman to visit Hadi's grave in the Dhaka University area. They returned to Shahbagh around 12:40pm, bringing vehicular movement to a complete halt.

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