

# Alliance debacle ‘major setback’ for Jamaat

Says analyst as Islami Andolan continues to allege ‘mistrust’

RASHIDUL HASAN

The split in the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance of mostly Islamist parties is likely to have a major impact on the electoral equation, analysts say, after Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) announced it would quit the coalition and contest the polls independently.

The alliance was formed ahead of the 13th parliamentary election primarily to counter the BNP-led bloc. Jamaat, a long-time BNP ally, was among its key architects, arguing that a united front of Islamist parties could project a stronger Islamic ideological alternative to BNP's nationalist narrative.

"IAB's exit is a major setback," said political analyst Mohiuddin Ahmad. "The alliance's core objective was to counter the BNP. In the present situation, I don't think the Jamaat-led bloc will perform well. The split will divide votes and ultimately give mileage to the BNP."

IAB Secretary General Yunus Ahmed said the party had been the chief proponent of the "one ballot box" strategy – bringing all Islamist forces under one umbrella and fielding single candidates in each constituency. Initially, five Islamist parties formed the alliance. Jomiat-e-Ulmae Islam later left to join the BNP, while Jamaat and six others subsequently joined,

expanding it into an 11 party coalition.

"But Jamaat did injustice to us," Yunus said. "They acted like a big brother, taking decisions without even consulting us."

An adviser to IAB Ameer Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the BNP had offered IAB a place in its alliance, which the party declined "for the sake of our alliance." He blamed the breakup on "divisions and mistrust," holding Jamaat responsible.

IAB Joint Secretary General and spokesperson Gazi Ataur Rahman said Jamaat unilaterally included three new parties and began allocating seats without discussion. "They were distributing seats as if they owned all 300 constituencies," he said, calling the behaviour humiliating and authoritarian. "We tried our best to stay, but there was no environment left for us."

Asked about the rupture, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General and head of its central publicity department Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair said such developments "can happen in politics."

Jamaat-e-Islami was banned along with other religion-based parties after independence in 1972, but returned to electoral politics in 1986 after the ban was lifted. Its best performance came in 1991, when it won 18 seats with 12.13 percent of the

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Confiscated battery-run rickshaws kept on the side of the road as authorities continue drives against the vehicles to ensure road safety and curb traffic congestion in Dhaka. The photo was taken in the capital's Shyamoli area yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Majlish, Bangladesh Andolon, Jatiya Ganatantrik (gpa), Nezami e-Islam Party, Bangladesh Development Party of the platform.

13th parliamentary election ser, discussions began on the platform into an electoral On the eve of the nomination NCP, LDP, and AB Party bloc.

Andolon and Bangladesh Majlish, among others, to NCP's inclusion. While Haque's Bangladesh Majlish was eventually d, the distance between and Islami Andolon widened. briefing, IAB leader Ataur e was also suspicion within y that "something else is g behind the scenes" despite unity. "For political gain, Islami is moving away from ogans and treating power as riority," he alleged.

## REACTION

Whether the alliance collapsed mi Andolon's exit, Ahsanul Zubair, Jamaat's assistant general and chief of central & media department, said, y would it collapse? We orm any formal alliance. It nderstanding. They [Islami could not reach that nding.

ave kept a respectable of seats for them. A liaison e sat and decisions were ntly by all parties. They did show up despite saying d. These things happen in

ponse to another query, the eader said that no decision made yet regarding the where no candidates were his will be decided within a 3".

## She saved others but could not save herself

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with grief. He and his brother Hares's family shared the same flat.

"They ran for the roof; we ran for the balcony," he said, breaking down as he recalled the terrifying moments inside.

"Rodela woke me up first, then she woke everyone else." The family, desperate to escape, split into two groups, Shahidul said.

"My brother Hares, his son Rahab, and my daughter Rodela opened the main door to try to reach the roof by stairs. But as soon as they opened it, thick black smoke rushed in. We couldn't see anything. They got lost right there."

Meanwhile, Shahidul, his wife, and their younger son took shelter on the balcony. "We screamed for help from the balcony. Firefighters rescued us about an hour later."

During evacuation, Shahidul saw the lifeless bodies of his brother, nephew, and daughter lying in the living room.

Authorities said the victims were likely overwhelmed by heavy smoke after opening the door, causing them to lose consciousness and later die of asphyxiation.

The death of Rodela's cousin Rahab added to the tragedy, as he was not supposed to be at the apartment that night.

Rifat Naznin, a cousin of Hares's wife, said there had been a family event at her father's house in Mirpur-10 on Thursday. Hares's two sons attended the event.

Afterward, Rahab was sent to the Uttara residence to drop off food for the family. "Rahab was only supposed

to drop off the food. He didn't return to his grandfather's house and stayed the night at his own home. Coming to deliver that food ended up costing him his life," Naznin said, holding

Afroza's cousin Abu Sayed said Rabbi's village home is in Nanuya Dighirpar, Cumilla Sadar upazila. He worked at Eskayef Pharmaceuticals, while Afroza was a senior executive at



PHOTO: STAR

Rodela's grieving father, centre, comforted by relatives yesterday.

back tears.

Hares's wife Rina, who was at her father's home in Mirpur, remained unaware of the loss of her husband and son until the afternoon, as relatives struggled to break the news to her.

Funeral prayers for the deceased were held around 3:30pm yesterday.

Besides Rodela, Hares, and Rahab, the blaze also killed Kazi Fazle Rabbi, 38, his wife Afroza Akter Suborna, 37, and their two-year-old son Kazi Faiyaz Rishan.

Square Pharmaceuticals.

They had two sons, Faiyaz and Rafsan. Family members said Rafsan, who was staying at his grandmother's house, was spared from the tragedy.

Afroza's sister, Afrin Jahan, said Afroza was declared dead upon arrival at the National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute, while the bodies of Rabbi and his son were taken to Kuwait Maitree Hospital.

Doctors confirmed all three died from asphyxiation, with no burn injuries found.

## Partial rollout of new pay scale likely from Jan

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the non-development budget has been increased by Tk 28,000 crore – mainly for the implementation of the new pay structure.

In the original budget for this fiscal year, Tk 84,114 crore was allocated for salaries and allowances. In the revised budget, the allocation is set to exceed Tk 100,000 crore.

At present, the number of government officials and employees stands at about 15 lakh.

In addition, the new pay structure will also apply to employees of various autonomous bodies and state-owned banks, although their salaries are not paid directly from the government budget.

The National Pay Commission may recommend a separate pay scale for the Bangladesh Bank and state-owned banks, distinct from the government pay structure. The move is aimed at making

state-owned banks more competitive with the private sector by allowing greater flexibility in compensation.

Separate pay structures are also expected for the judiciary and the armed forces, officials said.

The government formed the Ninth Pay Commission in July last year with former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan as its chairman. The commission was asked to submit its report within six months.

The last national pay scale was implemented in 2015, meaning nearly a decade has passed since the most recent revision.

The commission is considering the cumulative impact of inflation over the past decade while making its recommendations, The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

The aim is to ensure the real wages

under the new structure do not fall below the 2015 level.

At the same time, the government has advised the commission to frame its recommendations in line with the country's revenue collection capacity and the prevailing cost-of-living pressure.

The 2015 pay scale was implemented in two phases: the revised basic salary took effect from July 1, 2015, while revised allowances came into force a year later.

In fiscal 2014-15, the allocation for salaries and allowances stood at Tk 28,709 crore. Following the implementation of the new pay scale and allowances, the allocation rose sharply to Tk 50,775 crore the following year.

This fiscal year, Tk 35,657 crore has been earmarked for pensions and gratuities for retired government employees.