



## EC cancels polls to Sherpur-3 after Jamaat pick dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday cancelled the election in Sherpur-3 (Jhenaigati-Sreebordi) constituency following the death of Jamaat-e-Islami's nominated candidate Mohammad Nuruzzaman Badal. "The election in Sherpur-3 will be cancelled or terminated for now. This is clearly stated in Article 17 of the Representation of the People Order [RPO]," said Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmand Masud while confirming the development to The Daily Star last afternoon.

According to Article 17(l) of the RPO, 1972, if a duly nominated candidate dies after the deadline for withdrawal of nomination papers but before polling, all election-related activities in the concerned constituency must be cancelled.

Asked about the next steps, EC Masud said a fresh election schedule would be announced later.

"The EC has not yet decided when the election will be held. However, I think it might take place after February 12," he said.

Nuruzzaman Badal, the Jamaat-e-Islami nominee for the Sherpur-3 (Sreebordi-Jhenaigati) constituency, passed away early yesterday.

The 51-year-old candidate died around 3:00am while being taken to a hospital in Mymensingh. He had been suffering from kidney problem for a long time.

In Sherpur-3 constituency, others contesting candidates are - BNP nominee Md Mahmudul Haque Rubel, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal-Basod (Marxist) nominee Md Mizanur Rahman, Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) nominee Abu Taleb Md Saifuddin, and independent candidate Md Aminul Islam.

Meanwhile, EC Masud said the election in Sherpur-3 cannot be held on February 12 following the death of a candidate, as the law requires at least 15 days after announcing a new schedule.

## The guptos have emerged

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from different areas, who started gathering at the spot from early morning.

Hinting at Jamaat, Tarique said, "How can those who start the voting process with unethical acts establish the rule of honest people? They cannot."

Referring to the alleged controversial comments on working women by Jamaat ameer, he said any person or any party that has not even a little respect for mothers and sisters of the country, that has no respect, cannot bring progress to Bangladesh. "From them, the people can never expect dignity or respectful behaviour."

Citing a statement by a leader of the "covert group, whose home is in Cumilla," Tarique said the leader recently remarked at a rally that, until February 12, they would beg at the people's feet, but after that, for the next five years, it would be the people begging at their leaders' feet.

"Brothers and sisters, think about it. Who can say such things? Does it mean that after the polls, the people will follow them everywhere and beg

at their feet? This proves their mentality. What kind of people are they, who can speak about the people in such a degrading way?" he said.

"If such people are elected, if such people are given responsibility, then it is already clear to us how miserable the fate of the people will be. What is in their minds is already coming out in their actions."

The BNP chief said, "Just as the leader of the covert group said they would beg at the people's feet until February 12, we say the opposite. I tell my leaders and activists that from February 13, and for the next five years, you must remain at the feet of the people."

He said the nation already saw what happens to those who do not have the strength and support of the people behind them, referring to events witnessed on August 5.

Calling on people to remain alert and vigilant against the covert, the BNP chief urged voters to deliver a fitting response to anyone who seeks to control or disrespect the people after the February 12 polls.

"If we look at history, at 1971 and 1986, we see that they [Jammata] were always with those who fled the country. So, the people of the country cannot expect anything good from them."

At the Barishal rally, Tarique also pledged to construct the Barishal-Bhola bridge, develop Sher-e-Bangla Medical College to improve healthcare services, establish a medical college in Bhola, take effective measures to prevent river erosion, and construct cold storage facilities for farmers.

Later at a rally at Faridpur's Rajendra College ground, Tarique said conspiracies are being hatched again against people's freedom, voting rights and right to speak.

"Who is carrying out this conspiracy? The people call those behind it by one name. Do you know what name the people have given them? Gupta."

"Because the people have seen that at one time they take one form, and at another time they take another form. They change their appearance depending on the situation."

Explaining why he believes they have no trust or faith in the people, Tarique cited two reasons, including that the main leader of the covert group had made offensive comments about women.

"Those who think in such a dirty way about mothers and sisters, we cannot expect anything good from them. We saw proof of this in 1971 as well."

"Because of their controversial role in 1971, millions of women and mothers and sisters in Bangladesh lost their honour."

Tarique added that members of the covert group say one thing and do another. "From February 13, they want to create a situation where people will be suffocating. This means they have no trust or faith in the people. They do not believe in the strength of the people."

If BNP comes to power, the BNP chief also promised to upgrade Faridpur to a division, build the Padma barrage, support the district's jute industry, and stand by maize farmers.

[Our Barishal and Faridpur correspondents contributed to this report.]