

Bangladesh's municipal election candidates start campaign

The Election Commission yesterday allocated electoral symbols to municipality mayor and ward councillor candidates, paving the way for launching campaign with symbols.

Soon after the allocation of symbols, contenders started visiting door-to-door with leaflets and other campaign materials to seek blessings from voters. Many aspirants used loudspeakers and hung posters in their localities.

Meanwhile, violating the electoral code of conduct, Awami League lawmaker from Pabna-5 Golam Faruk Khandaker along with AL mayor aspirant Rakib Hasan Tipu yesterday joined a programme in the town.

In Golapganj of Sylhet, a government official took part in the electioneering of AL mayor candidate Zakaria Ahmed.

In another development, the EC yesterday asked the police authorities to withdraw the OC of Uttar Matlab Police Station in Chandpur for allegedly working in favour of an AL mayor candidate, said EC sources.

The commission also formed an enquiry committee to probe the complaint of the BNP mayor aspirant in Chatkhil of Noakhali that he was forced by some ruling AL men to affix sign to a paper for withdrawing his candidature.

Mayor elections will be held in 228 municipalities on December 30 as six AL mayor hopefuls are going to be elected uncontested in Pirojpur Sadar, Tungipara of Gopalganj, Feni Sadar, Parshuram of Feni, Chatkhil of Noakhali and Madarganj of Jamalpur municipalities.

Voters in Parshuram municipality of Feni will be totally deprived of exercising their franchise as all the 10 councillors of the pourashava are also going to be elected unopposed.

Besides, 64 general and reserved women ward councillors are likely to be elected uncontested in different municipalities, including 44 in pourashavas of Feni.

According to EC statistics, 923 mayor, around 8,500 general and 2,533 women reserved councillor aspirants will take part in the polls.

LAWMAKER 'FLOUTS' LAW

In Pabna, AL lawmaker Golam Faruk Khandaker joined the opening ceremony of Rana Shopping Complex and Evening Touch Hotel on Press Club Road in the town. AL mayoral nominee Rakib Hasan Tipu was present.

As per the electoral code of conduct, ministers and lawmakers cannot go to an electoral area other than joining state functions, EC's Deputy Secretary Shamsul Alam told The Daily Star.

Faruk, however, claimed that it was not an electoral programme.

OFFICIAL IN CAMPAIGN

Several candidates complained that Borhan Ahmed of Kailashtilla Gas Field took part in the electioneering of AL mayor nominee Zakaria Ahmed.

Returning Officer Saidur Rahman said he would take action against the official if anybody lodged a complaint with his office.

'WITHDRAW OC'

The EC yesterday asked the police authorities to withdraw the officer-in-charge of Uttar Matlab Police Station in Chandpur.

The OC was allegedly working in favour of Rafiqul Alam George, AL mayor candidate in Changerchar Municipality under Uttar Matlab Upazila.

"We made the decision after we had found evidence to support the allegation," an election commissioner told this newspaper seeking anonymity.

The commission will also look into some similar allegations against the OCs of Kulaura Police Station in Moulvibazar and Habiganj Sadar Police Station in Habiganj.

CHATKHIL MUNICIPALITY

Mostafa Kamal, BNP's mayor candidate in Chatkhil Municipality of Noakhali, yesterday alleged that he was kidnapped and forced by some ruling AL men to affix sign to a paper for withdrawing his candidature.

In a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad, he appealed the EC to allow him to take part in the polls.

BNP Joint Secretary General Mahbub Uddin Khokon submitted the application to the EC in favour of the party candidate. The EC later formed an enquiry committee to look into the matter.

BNP NOMINEE FINED

In Faridganj Municipality of Chandpur, the returning officer fined BNP mayor hopeful Harunur Rashid Tk 5,000 for conducting electioneering with a motorcade.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to allow Oliur Rahman to contest as a mayoral candidate in Moulvibazar Poursava polls on December 30.

The HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam passed the order after hearing a writ petition filed by Oliur, a BNP candidate, challenging the returning officer's decision of canceling his nomination.

The court pronounced the order as it found no anomalies in his income tax documents.

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