

## AL finished with close margin BNP bagged highest number of Chairman posts in UP polls

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In the recently held over a month-long Union Parishad election in Bangladesh, the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) candidates bagged highest number of posts of Chairman all over the country, while main opposition Awami League finished with a very close margin in the polls results.

The Union Parishad (UP) elections are supposed to be held on

January till 16 March, experienced festivity among the voters, and exciting exchange of heat between the Chief Election Commissioner and the government on the issue of deployment of army to ensure security of the polling centres in 4,223 unions. The elections were also generated by armed clashes and violence that killed over 50 persons.

An independent media watch-

The chart shows party position of elected UP Chairmen:

DIVISION	BNP	AL	JP	JAM-AAT	IND	OTH ERS
DHAKA	539	511	32	4	43	12
KHULNA	259	174	8	43	43	9
BARISAL	196	87	4	4	18	20
CHITTAGONG	450	217	9	45	41	41
RAJSHAHI	364	375	85	43	33	57
SYLHET	88	210	-	-	17	-
Total	1896	1574	134	118	178	138

non-partisan basis but mainstream political parties extend discreet political support to candidates, usually to chairman candidates to achieve political agenda and gains in the local body elections.

The election held under the constitutional provision of Article 59 - 60 is supervised by Election Commission. During the 51 days of UP polls spreading from 25

dog organisation, after newspaper scanning and check-back by local correspondents has published a draft report on the UP election 2003 and the political status of the elected UP Chairmen. The final report will be published in next two months, the study coordinator said. The survey of 4,233 UP Chairman candidates was made

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## BNP bagged

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after the Election Commission published official results.

In a neck and neck contest with the mainstream political parties ruling BNP bagged 47.95 per cent of the elected UP Chairmen and Awami League scored 38.97 per cent. While Jatiya Party (Ershad) bagged 3.41 per cent, Jamaat-e-Islami 2.92 per cent, independent 4.40 per cent and others 3.41 per cent. They all are trailing far behind the BNP and Awami League. Few elected Chairmen have political affiliations with Workers Party, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Bangladesher Jatiya Party (BJP), Jatiya Party (Monju), Krishak-Sramik-Janata League, Parhatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and United Peoples Front (UPDF).

BNP and AL have 1,896 and 1,574 elected Chairmen respectively in six divisions. While JP - 134, JI - 118, Independent - 178 and others small and regional political parties - 138. BNP has overwhelming highest number of its party activists as elected chairmen in Dhaka (539), Chittagong (450), Khulna (259) and Barisal (196) divisions. Whereas Awami League has been able to win majority of the elected Chairmen in Rajshahi (375) and Sylhet (210). However it seems that the two main parties had the close fight pushing the other political parties to sidelines.

Observers of UP elections pointed out that a number of regional political parties made their presence felt in the polls. The regional parties are Krishak-Sramik-Janata League (KSJL) of expelled Awami League leader Kader Siddique, Parhatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) of Jatindra Bodi Priya Larma, United Peoples Front (UPDF) of Prasit Khisa in Chittagong Hill Tracts who were once known as insurgents.

Political observers predict that in the ensuing Upazila Parishad elections and even in the next parliamentary election, the regional parties would make a surprising dent in the national political scenario.

Kader Siddique (Bir Uttam), MP has been able to make reasonable dent in Tangail (4 unions), and Kishoreganj (2 unions) districts. While pro-PCJSS chairmen candidates were elected from Rangamati (17 unions), Bandarban (2 unions), Khagrachhari (5 unions) districts. While Prasit Khisa, a rebellion and rival of PCJSS has been able to get six UPDF chairman's elected from Rangamati district.

In another political development some outlawed left extremists have been elected in the UP election in south-west regions. Though insignificant but nearly in all the ten districts of Khulna division nearly 125 candidates belonging to outlawed left extremist parties have been elected as UP Chairmen either under a political banner or as independent candidates. Some even dared to boast of their affiliation with the outlawed parties, others changed their jersey and have been elected with tacit blessing of the BNP.