



Civil society members, joined by professionals and NGOs, formed human chains in (from left) Satkhira, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Khagrachhari yesterday demanding nomination of honest candidates by political parties in the next parliamentary election.

PHOTO STAR

Quest for 'Mr Clean' in politics

Human chains, rallies in dists call for nominating honest, efficient candidates in next polls

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The slogan raised by Prof Muhammad Yunus at a Daily Star function in the capital for nomination of honest people by political parties in next general election is gaining ground.

Civil societies, NGOs and professional groups yesterday held programmes in districts, urging parties to nominate honest, patriotic and dedicated candidates and to create awareness among people to elect such people.

Bangladesh is bestowed with tremendous natural and human resources but electing honest people is the key to their utilisation for development of the country and consolidation of democracy, micro credit guru Yunus said at the Daily Star's 15th anniversary function on February 4.

Civil society members including women formed a human chain and held a rally yesterday in front of the

Satkhira Deputy Commissioner's office demanding nomination of 'clean and efficient' candidates and compulsory registration of political parties, reports our correspondent.

Satkhira district unit of Sujana, a body comprising local NGOs and civil society members organised the programme, first of its kind in the district that drew spontaneous response from people.

They said nomination of 'clean' candidates in the next general election has now become a demand of the people. Unless such candidates are elected, there will not be any development and wellbeing of people, they said.

Honest and patriotic people do not come to politics now as parties, in most cases, nominate corrupt and inefficient people. Once elected, plunder resources without caring for people's welfare. This trend can be changed only if parties nominate good people, they said.

Development of the country will get a big boost if honest and dedicated people are elected, they said and urged the people to resist nomination of dishonest people in the next election.

They also stressed the need for transparency in parties. Growth of democracy in the country will depend on transparency in parties and how fair the political process is, they added.

They urged professionals and people of all classes to unite to launch a movement and create pressure on parties to nominate honest and dedicated people.

Our Rangpur Correspondent reports: Sushashaner Janyo Nagorik (Citizens for good governance), an NGO, yesterday organised a human chain in front of Rangpur Press Club demanding nomination of honest candidates to ensure good governance, development and peace.

It was followed by a discussion

meeting at the club.

Speakers at the meeting said political parties determine the destiny of a country and its people. If they nominate good people, there will be good governance and rapid development amid peace. If they nominate dishonest and corrupt people, development will stop and there will be chaos in society.

Mere reforms of caretaker system and Election Commission will not bring any good to people unless corruption stopped, they said. Electoral reforms and democracy will be a futile exercise if hoodlums are nominated and voted to power, they said.

They also urged the Election Commission for effective steps to stop use of black money in election. People who earn money illegally will retreat and honest and dedicated people will come to politics if this is done, they said.

Our Khagrachhari Correspondent

reports: Civil society members, joined by NGOs and professionals yesterday held a rally and formed a human chain in the town urging political parties to nominate honest people in the next election and free the organisations from musclemen and corrupt people to ensure smooth functioning of democracy and development.

The programmes were organised by Sushashaner Janyo Nagorik.

Speakers at the rally said there is no dearth of honest, qualified and dedicated people to come to politics. But they keep away as corrupt people with the help of musclemen dominate party units in most districts. Central leaders of the parties should change the trend.

Agitation for reforms to continue

Nasim tells rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Central Awami League (AL) leader Mohammed Nasim MP yesterday said people who have taken to streets will not return home without realising their demands for holding a free and fair election.

"Our movement will continue till reforms to the caretaker system and the Election Commission are done", he said while addressing a public meeting held at Mymensingh Town Hall ground.

The meeting was organised by the Four National Leaders Smriti Parishad marking the Mujib Nagar Day.

Nasim alleged that BNP's dilly-dally tactics proves that they do not want the proposed reforms and a solution to present political crisis.

Nasim also criticised the BNP-led coalition government for price hike of essentials and its failure to provide uninterrupted supply of power and fuel and adequate fertilisers to farmers during the current Boro season.

Nominate BNP man, not Jamaat leader from Shyamnagar

Human chain demands terming incumbent MP as corrupt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Over 1000 leaders and activists of BNP in Shyamnagar formed a human chain on Friday demanding nomination of BNP leader Syed Iftekhar Ali as a candidate

of four-party alliance in the next general election and opposing incumbent Jamaat lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam.

They also held a rally in front of Shyamnagar BNP office with upazila BNP convenor Abdul Wahed in the chair.

Leaders and activists of the ruling coalition in Shyamnagar have fallen apart over nomination in the next polls, sources in the parties said.

Speakers at the rally said they will boycott the polls if the alli-

ance nominates a Jamaat leader instead of Syed Iftekhar Ali.

They also alleged that the incumbent MP from the area is involved in corruption and facing image crisis.

The rally was addressed by, among others, upazila BNP secretary DM Abdus Samad, Ishwaripur UP chairman Amjadul Islam, Bhurulia UP chairman Shajahan Siraj.

They alleged that Jamaat lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam was responsible for splitting the four party alliance in the district and BNP will not accept his nomination.

He has tarnished the image of the alliance government by resorting to corruption and nepotism, they alleged.

'Punish attackers'

Culprits still threaten Nanda Rani, her family in Shaghata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Shaghata Bhumihien Samity, an association of landless people, yesterday demanded punishment to the land grabbers who swooped on fishermen belonging to minority community at Jharabarsha village to grab lands.

At least 12 people including women were injured in the April 18 attack. The injured included Nanda Rani Das who was among 20 people nominated from Bangladesh for the Nobel Peace Prize for her role in organising landless people.

Leaders of the Samity at a press conference at Gaibandha Press Club alleged that the attackers are

now threatening the poor fishermen families because of filing a case and moving freely in the area.

They alleged that the attack by goons was led by Badsha Mia of the Jharabarsha village. They beat the fishermen families indiscriminately.

The attackers are now threatening Nanda Rani and others at hospital for withdrawing the case or to face dire consequences, they claimed at the press conference.

They said about 120 fishermen families have been living in the village for long. Some vested quarters are eyeing their lands and homesteads.

None of the attackers have been arrested.



PHOTO STAR

Police intercepting a procession by 14-party opposition alliance brought out in in Netrakona town yesterday as part of its countywide protests against police action in Dhaka on Wednesday and to drum up support for its today's hartal.

AL faces rift over Kaliganj-Debhata candidature

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Rift in Awami League (AL) in Kaliganj and Debhata upazilas has surfaced over nomination of candidate in the next general elections.

The rift became apparent when a section of party leaders at a meeting there opposed candidature of renowned orthopedics Dr. AFM Ruhul Haque, Satkhira district AL senior vice-president and president of Bangladesh Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad from the 14-party opposition alliance, party sources said.

Dr. Ruhul Haque lost to the four-party coalition candidate in Kaliganj-Debhata constituency in the last election.

Other aspirants for AL ticket from the constituency in the next election are Kaliganj upazila AL president Sheikh Wahiduzzaman, Kazi Abdul Hakim and Abdul Gani. They are lobbying with party high-ups and have started mass contact in the area.

AL leaders and activists in the area are virtually divided into two groups, one supporting Haque and the other seeking nomination for district AL vice president and former lawmaker Monsur Ahmed.

The group supporting Monsur Ahmed held a meeting convened by district AL religious affairs secretary Abdul Gani on Monday at Noapara Union Parishad auditorium in Debhata upazila with Abdul Gani in the chair.

It was addressed by, among others, Monsur Ahmed, Sheikh Wahiduzzaman, Kazi Abdul Hakim, Sheikh Haroon-ur-Rashid, Sheikh Abdur Rouf, Akbar Ali and Altaf Hossain.

They said they will resist if AL nominates any candidate other than Monsur.

Division in AL started after the party nominated Dr. Ruhul Haque in the last general elections held on October 1 in 2001.

Fomer MP Monsur Ahmed was elected from the constituency in

1886 and 1991 general elections as an AL candidate but defeated by Jatiya Party candidate Shahdat Hossain in 1996 election.

Monsur was blamed for backing some people who evicted about 1000 landless families to grab government lands in Debhata and Kaliganj upazilas during the AL rule.

On July 27 in 1998, landless woman Zaheda Khatun was killed and over 300 people including women and children were injured in a series of clashes with goons hired by the land grabbers.

The incident sparked public protests across the district.

In the wake of protests, AL president and the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina dissolved the district AL committee headed by late Syed Kamal Bakht and Monsur Ahmed for their 'anti-people role' on August 8 in 1998.

Kaliganj upazila AL general secretary Asadur Rahman Khan, when contacted, said Monsur Ahmed did not get party nomination in 2001 because of his anti-people role in 1998.

This correspondent also talked to Kaliganj upazila AL vice president and former Union Parishad chairman Matur Rahman, Bishnupur AL president Samir Kumar Mondal and some other local party leaders including Gobinda Lal Sarkar, Abdul Jabbar, Siddiqur Rahman and Abdul Wahed. They said they would support nomination of Dr. Ruhul Haque because he is honest and a popular leader.

He will win the election, if nominated, they said.

On contact, district AL president Engineer Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman and general secretary Nazrul Islam said that the meeting was held in violation of party constitution and action will be taken against them after consulting party high-ups.

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