



14-party leaders wave to the crowd (left) at Osmani Udyan in Sylhet city prior to starting their Sylhet divisional long march yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

SYLHET DIVISIONAL LONG MARCH

Make reforms if you have courage to test popularity

Jalil throws challenge to BNP chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Central leaders of 14-party alliance yesterday threw a challenge to the ruling coalition asking it to test its popularity by holding the coming election after reforms of the caretaker system and the Election Commission.

The ruling parties are not accepting the opposition-demanded reforms because they know for sure a fair poll will throw them out of power, the leaders said at a big rally at Osmani Udyan in the city prior to starting their Sylhet divisional road march.

The 6 kilometre road march started from the Osmani Udyan and paraded streets in Court point, Zindabazar, Chouhatta, Rikabibazar, Mirzajangal, Kean Bridge and Kodomtoli before terminating at Humayun Rashid Square.

The reforms are aimed at holding a fair poll they said and the opposition will not allow a 'farical election' without reforms, they said.

In response to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's remarks that the opposition has become crazy for power, the leaders said, it is not the opposition but the ruling alliance and Khaleda Zia, who have gone

'mad' to retain power through election engineering.

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP called upon people to compel the 'failed government' to resign immediately and accept the reform proposals. "We will announce a fresh programme from the September 18 grand rally in Dhaka o compel the government to step down", he said.

He also urged the people to observe 'repression resistance day' on September 6.

The opposition will lay a siege to the Election Commission on September 7 and the Prime minister's office on September 12.

Jalil said, "People are now united to realise their just demands under the leadership of 14-party alliance", he said.

Refuting the prime minister's allegation that Awami League want to foil the coming election, Jalil said AL is a pro-election party but will not allow any conspiracy to keep plunderers in power. People will resist their evil design of BNP-Jamaat alliance, he added.

AL Presidium member Abdur Razzak MP said, ruling alliance wants to make their man the chief of caretaker government to hold the

coming election. "We will not allow this".

"Jamaat and its leaders Nizami and Sayeedi took part in the mass killing in 1971. Now they are again out to create anarchy in the country. This is why bomb attacks took place at the shrine of Hajrat shahjalal (RA) in Sylhet and in at public rallies", he said.

"They are engaged in such heinous acts in the name of Islam. People would not allow these any more", Razzak said.

Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon said Shibir (Jamaat's student front) activists are spoiling academic atmosphere in different universities including the Shahjalal University of Science and technology to create an unstable situation but the government is not taking any action against them.

AL Presidium member Suranjit Sengupta said, sensing defeat, BNP is now taking Ershad in the alliance. But that will not help them retain power as people are conscious. "We will compel the ruling alliance accept reforms".

AL Presidium Member Matia Chowdhury said, the Jamaat men were involved with the bomb attacks including the August 17 serial bomb-

ing across the country. BD Foods owner Momin Ullah, who finances Jamaat, was involved in heroin smuggling to the UK but the government hushed up the issue, the alliance government can imagine the result if any fair election is held. This is why they are planning for election rigging. People will not allow so, he said. On the other hand the failed alliance was now seeking Ershad's inclusion with it.

Sensing people's anger, Khaleda Zia is now running behind Ershad, who had killed her husband, Matia Chowdhury said.

The meeting was also addressed by, among others, Gano Forum Presidium member Pankaj Bhattacharya, JSD leader Mainuddin Khan Badal, NAP central leader Shahabuddin, Ganotanry party leader Azizul Islam Khan, AL advisory committee member AMAMuhit, Sylhet city Corporation mayor and city AL chief Badar uddin Ahmed Kamran and AL central organizing secretary Sultan Mohammad Mansur. Sylhet district AL chief and co-ordinator of the 14-party alliance ANM Shafique chaired the rally.

Section 144 in Dashmina

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Dashmina upazila administration imposed Section 144 in and around Abdur Rashid Degree College yesterday as the college authorities and the college unit Chatra Dal, a student wing of ruling BNP, called for fresh receptions at the same place at the same time yesterday.

Successes at Upazila Nirbahi Officer's office said said, the college authorities arranged a reception for new students where lawmaker AKM Jahangir Hossain, president of the college governing body, was invited as chief guest.

The college unit of Chatra Dal also declared another programme where Shahjahan Khan, president of Galachipa upazila BNP was invited as chief guest.

One missing as boat capsizes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

One person is missing and two others were injured when a fishing boat capsized after being hit by a launch on Gazaria river in Darir Char Khajuria area of Mehendiganj upazila in Barisal Friday night.

Chandu Bepari, 35, is missing while Khorshed Bepari, 35 and Yusuf Bepari, 16 were injured when Suravi-7, a triple-decker launch hit their fishing boat. The launch was plying without searchlight, the victims alleged.

Fishermen on other fishing boats rescued Khorshed and Yusuf and took them to the local health complex.

FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY

25 hurt as Patuakhali BNP factions clash

Party offices ransacked, house attacked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 25 people including the Patuakhali district Jubo Dal president were injured as rival factions of BNP were locked in intermittent clashes in the town yesterday, ransacking each other's office and some houses.

In the evening, police said the situation was under control. A large number of policemen were deployed in the town.

Witnesses and administration sources said the faction led by minister without portfolio and local lawmaker Altaf Hossain Chowdhury peacefully observed the party's founding day on Friday through different programmes including processions and rallies. It also staged a showdown.

At about 10-30 Friday night, a group of party men attacked the

house of Mashur Rahman Khan, district Jubo Dal president, a follower of Altaf Hossain, in Charpara area of the town. The faction blamed their rivals for the attack and called a half-day hartal in the town for yesterday (Saturday), protesting it.

On other hand, the rival BNP faction led by district BNP secretary Snehangshu Sarkar Kutty and Patuakhali municipality chairman Mustak Ahmed Pinu planned to observe party's the founding day Saturday.

Pro-hartal Altaf faction stopped roads in the morning yesterday.

At about 10: 30 am yesterday, processions of Kutty-Pinu faction came under attack allegedly by activists of rival Altaf-led faction in front of BNP office and Kaler Pukur Par areas of the town.

Clashes there spilled over to different areas in the town.

A party office was ransacked and

at least 13 people including Sumon, belonging to Pinu-Kutty faction and Mashur Khan, district Jubo Dal president belonging to Altaf group were injured.

As police intercepted the procession of Pinu-Kutty group near the Children Park, they changed the route and gathered in front of Pourasva premises at about 1 pm.

Activists of the Pinu-Kutty faction also alleged that after blocking the road, Altaf loyalists attacked them at different points in the town including the launch terminal to bar them from joining party programmes.

Police are trying their best to maintain law and order and the situation is still under control, Patuakhali Police Superintendent Shafiqur Rahman said.

DISPUTE OVER GAIBANDHA AL BODY

Hasina's intervention sought to end crisis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Disgruntled leaders of Awami League here yesterday sought intervention of party chief Shiekh Hasina to end the crisis in the party created after formation of the new 71-member Gaibandha district committee, allegedly by dropping dedicated leaders.

Protests against the newly formed committee continued even at grassroots level yesterday as many of their 'favourite' leaders were dropped from the committee, speakers at a press conference said. It was held at Gaibandha Press Club.

"The agitation will intensify and incidents of violence may take place if an immediate solution to the crisis is not found", Saiful Alam Saka, one of the unhappy leaders told the press conference.

Advocate Ahsanul Huq read out a written statement at the press conference.

"Some vested quarters prevailed upon some central leaders and

made them include 14 newcomers in the district committee, depriving dedicated leaders", he said.

"It is beyond our imagination how 14 people could be included in the new committee by dropping party leaders mentioned in the two panels submitted by local leaders", he said.

The newcomers in the district committee had no link with Awami League. Even many of them were never seen earlier, the statement said.

There is no reflection of hopes and aspirations of leaders, workers and supporters of district Awami League in the newly formed committee. So, the workers at grassroots level have rejected it, AL leaders said.

At the press conference, they named some persons who have no contribution to the party. The names mentioned included those of Moksuder Rahman Shahan, Faruk Ahmed, Easin Akhter, Fazlul Huq, Samar Chaki, Ashraf Arefin, Wahidur Rahman, Mahub Alam and Johurul Hoq.

They claimed that Johurul Huq,

chairman of Belka Union Parishad, who has been made a member of district committee had close links with Jamaat-e-Islami.

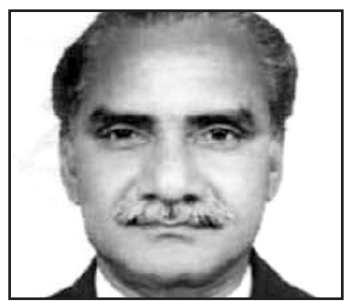
Another new member--Easin Akhterresigned from district Awami League five years ago but made a member of district committee, they said. The leaders demanded cancellation of the district committee. Otherwise the party will suffer a setback in the coming election, they said.

They also threatened of tougher agitation if the demand is not fulfilled immediately.

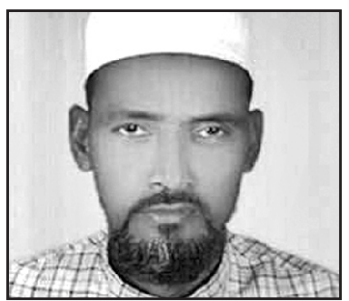
Those who addressed in the conference included Anower Hossain Choudhury, GM Parvez Salim, municipal commissioner Abdul Hye, Mizanur Rahman, Nurullah Jahangir, Tanjimul Islam Jamil, Abu Abdullah Kanok, Ranjan Kumar Saha, Shahidul Islam, Joynal Abedin, Jakaria Islam, Ataur Rahman and Moinul Huq.



Mozammel Haque



Abdul Latif Biswas



Ali Alam



Akbor Ali



Abdul Latif Mirza



Rafiqul Islam Khan

SIRAJGANJ 4, 5 CONSTITUENCIES

BNP-Jamaat discord over ticket triggers tension

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, Sirajganj

BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, two main partners in the ruling 4-party alliances, are in a face-off situation over nomination in Sirajganj-4 and Sirajganj-5 constituencies in the coming election.

Sirajganj-5 comprises Belkuchi and Kamarkhanda upazilas while Sirajganj-4 covers Ullahpara upazila.

Nomination seekers from the two parties in the two constituencies have started pre-polls campaign, raising tension among local leaders and activists of the parties.

Sirajganj-5 is predominantly a weavers' area, from where Awami League's Abdul Latif Biswas was elected in 1996 election.

In 2001 election, 4-party alliance candidate Justice Mozammel Haque was elected from there with BNP ticket. He secured 1,18,342 votes against 54,830 of Abdul Latif Biswas.

Sources close to Justice Haque

said he started campaign after assurance of nomination by prime minister and party chief Khaleda Zia while Sirajganj district jamaat Ameer Ali Alam is also in the field, holding meetings and meeting people. He also held party workers meetings, urging them to launch an all out campaign, party sources said. The two candidates are moving door to door.

This correspondent visited different areas in Sirajganj-5 constituency and talked to local leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat.

Some BNP leaders seeking anonymity said BNP is divided into three groups, allegedly because of lack of activities by Justice Haque since the last election.

Of the groups, one is led by senior joint secretary of Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) central committee Amrui Islam Khan and another by local BNP leader Golam Mowla Bablu, who are also nomination aspirants, they said.

In Sirajganj-4, BNP's Akbor Ali was elected in 1991 election. AL's

Abdul Latif Mirza bagged the seat in 2001, getting 130241 votes against Akbar Ali's 100692. Local political circles said AL is in a better position there now because of in-fighting in BNP.

Abdul Latif Mirza and Akbor Ali are seeking nomination from the area now.

But Dhaka city Jamaat Ameer Rafiqul Alam Khan has launched campaign in the area.

Feud between BNP and Jamaat has intensified over nomination from Sirajganj-4 as well. Both are lobbying in Dhaka with their party activists have already launched campaign.

When contacted, Jamaat Ali Alam said, he will win the election if nominated. He claimed that he worked for the people in the area in the last four and a half years.

Justice Mozammel Haque also said he will seek nomination and hopes for victory again.

Abdul Latif Mirza said he does politics for people's welfare and people will vote him.

Death threats by outlaws for toll in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Telephone callers identifying themselves as cadres of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) demanded toll from at least 35 people including professionals and businessmen in Sirajganj town in last two weeks and threatened them with death or abduction of wards for non-compliance.

The people who received the calls are businessmen, lawyers, doctors, bankers, service holders and teachers. Calls for toll and death threats to such a large number of people have created a panic in the town.

They included Aminul Islam, Manager of Karmosongsthan Bank; Dr. Bahar Alam; Rafikul Islam, businessman Sunil, Shyamol, Abdul Wahab, owner of A Wahab Traders; Sherab Ali, Owner of Shathi Enterprise and Ashrafuul Islam Asha, Distributor of Bajaj Motors in Sirajganj.

Aminul Islam told this correspondent that he got a call over cellphone Tuesday evening. The caller introduced himself as PBCP 'regional leader' Harun-or-Rashid Dada Bhai demanded Tk 2 lakh for his party and treatment of four party men injured in an encounter with Rapid Aaction Battalion (Rab) recently. Two injured party men are now at a hospital in Madras, the caller said.

Money is also needed to reorganise the party for the coming election as it suffered a setback due to anti-crime drives by law enforcers, he said. "I feel insecure and do not move alone", Aminul said.

This correspondent also talked to some other people who received the calls. They said the calls were made from two cellphones.

Some of them have filed general diary with Sadar police station.

A businessman said he has stopped going to his office in the town after receiving the call.

When contacted, Sadar police station Officer-in-Charge Abdul Jabbar said some people have filed GD and the matter is under investigation.



Irrigation of about 15,000 hectares of land have become uncertain as repair of the damaged portion of Dinajpur Canal embankment of Teesta Irrigation Project at Kamalpara village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila was suspended yesterday as labourers refused to work alleging payment of lower wage. Irrigation is needed for Amon cultivation because of less rainfall this year.

NOMINATION FROM SATKHIRA-1

JP wants Ershad, BNP sees conspiracy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Criticising the incumbent BNP lawmaker in Satkhira-1, Jatiya Party (JP) leaders and activists are demanding party chief Eshad's candidature from the constituency (Tala- Kalaroa) in the coming election.

JP's possibility of joining the ruling four-party alliance has rejuvenated the party workers there, sources said.

The BNP lawmaker Habibul Islam Habib has become 'unpopular' and the four-party alliance will lose the seat if he is nominated, they said at a rally held in front of the party office in Kalaroa recently.

They also brought out a procession in the town chanting slogans against Habib.

Habib is sheltering criminals which has detached him from people, they alleged at the rally. He is also involved in 'widespread corruption and nepotism' and did not do any development work in the area, they said.

With Kalaroa upazila JP convenor Md Monsur Ali in the chair, the speakers alleged that an organised gang of goons under the shelter of the lawmaker has turned the area into a den of miscreants who are now engaged in grabbing lands of others, toll collection, tender manipulation and other crimes.

Gangs identifying themselves as 'MP's men' even grabbed a portion of the land of Betrabati High School while the administration remained an onlooker, they said.

They alleged that the lawmaker

and his men have amassed huge property and crores of taka during the tenure of the government.

They appealed to JP chief Ershad to contest the next election from the constituency as people of the area witnessed 'massive development work' during JP rule earlier.

Monsur Ali alleged that lawmaker Habib defamed the four-party alliance and urged BNP chief Khaleda Zia not to nominate him in the coming election.

"We will not accept such a corrupt candidate to contest from the constituency", he added.

The JP programme publicly criticising the BNP lawmaker has made local BNP leaders unhappy.

On contact, Satkhira district BNP leader Samsuzzoha Bablu said, "This is a conspiracy against

'popular' BNP lawmaker Habibul Islam Habib who is also the convenor of the district BNP.

"He (Habib) is the fittest person to get nomination from Satkhira-1", Bablu said.

"We will not 'surrender' the seat to JP at any cost. We want to see Habib as 4-party alliance nominee as he has done a lot of development works in the area. We will not accept anybody else", he said.

Habib, when contacted, refuted the allegations. "It is conspiracy against him by a former JP leader who joined BNP on the eve of last election to get alliance ticket but was denied."

"He is now trying to undermine me in getting alliance ticket", Habib said.