

Heavyweights start campaign in Sylhet-1

Saifur, Muhith may lock horns; mayor Kamran is also aspirant



Saifur Rahman



AMA Muhith



Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Sylhet-1, one of the 'most sought after' seats in country, is warming up with heavyweight candidates from rival parties campaigning for the coming election.

In 1996 polls, BNP's Saifur Rahman lost to Awami League stalwart Humayun Rashid Chowdhury with a narrow margin. In 2001, Saifur defeated AL's AMA Muhith by a margin of 40,000 votes.

Saifur and Muhith may lock horns in the coming election, party sources said.

Both are in the field now with their men and material, attending various programmes eyeing the 2007 election.

All political parties give top priority to this constituency because many leaders believe that the party which wins the seat forms the government. This happened since the independence.

BNP heavyweight Saifur, who has been enjoying power for long, kept a number of election pledges. But he has been facing serious rivalry from party men in the area for the last one and a half years. The matter created an issue in ruling BNP when Saifur got involved in mudslinging with a young lawmaker from the same district—M Ilyas Ali.

Although Ilyas lost the post of Sylhet district BNP convener and the party committee has been dissolved, the rivalry is still there. An annoyed Saifur even wanted to leave politics. He is back to politics again. In last few months, Saifur attended programmes in Sylhet almost every week.

A section of city dwellers said some major development activities in the divisional headquarters as well as in some other areas will give Saifur an extra benefit in the coming election. But he will face some trouble from a section of party men.

party insiders feel.

Former bureaucrat AMA Muhith, who joined Awami League from Ershad's Jatiya Party, contested the 2001 election and lost to Saifur with about 40,000 votes. He was also finance minister during jatiya Party rule.

Though he has his ancestral home in the city, Muhith was not well known to the commonman. Talking to this correspondent, some AL men claimed that Muhith lost in 2001 mainly due to intra-party feud in Sylhet Awami League.

He suffered a lot due to feud between Abdus Samad Azad and Suranjit Sen Gupta, who were backing two rival factions. Muhith belonged to Suranjit's camp, they said.

As AL advisory committee member, Muhith is attending party programmes regularly now.

There is a new aspirant for AL ticket in the next election. A strong faction in AL wants to fight the coming election by fielding Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, who is also chief of Sylhet unit of AL. They believe Muhith would not be the appropriate candidate against a giant like Saifur.

Kamran himself also expressed desire for party ticket.

Kamran began his political career as a ward commissioner of Sylhet pourashava in 1970s. He became chairman of Sylhet Pourashava. As the pourashava was upgraded to a city corporation, he became the first elected mayor in 2003. This gave him a boot to work on a wider scale.

"I am confident of winning the polls race, if nominated", Kamran told this correspondent. However, a faction in the party is still opposing him, sources said.

5X3

Saifur blasts Kamran for 'poor show' as Sylhet mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday blasted Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran alleging his failure to ensure civic amenities for city dwellers. Kamran is also president of Sylhet city Awami League.

The city dwellers are being deprived of civic facilities due the mayor's 'wrong steps', the BNP stalwart said.

Efforts by the alliance government for development of the city is hampered due to 'his controversial role', the minister alleged. "Even then we are trying to make it a dream city", Saifur said.

"But the Mayor has been blaming us saying there was no sanction for the city's development", Saifur, said.

The minister was addressing a gathering while laying foundation of the Surma River Bank Protection

Project Phase-II in the city.

Sylhet Deputy Commissioner, Water Development Board (WBD) officials and political leaders attended the function.

Mayor Kamran at a number of rallies and functions recently alleged that the government was not sanctioning funds for a number of development projects in the city because he belongs to a rival party.

Kamran was elected mayor of Sylhet City Corporation in March 2003. He defeated the then Sylhet district BNP president MA Haque.

Party sources claimed that former chairman of Sylhet Pourashava AFM Kamal was deprived of the BNP nomination that time as Haque was the most close person to the Finance minister that time. However, Kamal's candidature as an independent runner paved the way for Kamran's victory.

4X3

AL vows to wipe out corruption if voted to power

Suranjit tells Rangpur council

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Awami League Presidium member Suranjit Sengupta yesterday said the 14-party alliance would make a corruption free Bangladesh if voted to power in the coming election.

Addressing a council of Rangpur district Awami League, he said leaders of ruling four-party alliance could not resolve any of the national issues and problems as they themselves were involved in corruption.

Referring to violent agitation for power in different areas of the country, he said the crisis is deepening day by day as the government could not add one megawatt of electricity after departure of AL government.

The AL stalwart said Jamat-e-

Islami is unhappy over BNP's move for talks with AL because it has a plan to form the next government through election engineering. So, they do not agree to reforms of the caretaker system and the Election Commission, Suranjit said.

AL Presidium member Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir said, Awami League will be careful about mistakes if voted to power this time. Now is the time for people to take a correct decision to change their lot, he said.

After the council, there was a brawl between two rival factions over formation of committee, leaving at least ten activists injured.

TEACHERS' SECURITY AT RU VC, cops talk steps

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University Vice-chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain held a close-door meeting with high officials of police and intelligence agencies at his residence Friday night and discussed security of teachers on the campus.

The meeting was held against the backdrop of murder of Dhaka University teacher Prof. Aftab Ahmed at his campus residence and telephonic threat to about 100 RU teachers and staff for toll.

Some high officials of RU also attended the meeting that dis-

cussed possible steps to ensure security of teachers and officials, sources said.

When contacted yesterday, police declined to elaborate the steps they are going to take.

"We are afraid of moving freely even on the campus following the killing of Aftab, Taher and Yunus", said Prof Abdus Sobhan yesterday.

Talking to newsmen, RU VC Prof Altaf Hossain admitted that around 100 teachers and officials of the university received death threat from terrorists.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Chhatra League brought out a procession in Bogra town yesterday protesting murder of one of its leader, Rabiul Islam, on Friday.

5X3

11X3

6X3