

Minu's 'Jamaat affection' worries Rajshahi BNP

ANWAR ALI, *Rajshahi*

Mizanur Rahman Minu, former BNP lawmaker from Rajshahi-2 constituency, is facing criticism from his party men and a section of local people for what they called his 'loyalty' to alliance partner Jamaat-e-Islami.

Minu, also Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC), earlier claimed that he would get alliance ticket for the coming election from the constituency covering Rajshahi city and Paba upazila.

"He lost sympathy of many party leaders much earlier for his Jamaat affection. Now, he has no way but to support Jamaat", said a front

time in 33 years. But there may be a surprise in the polls scene if elderly charismatic BNP leader advocate Kabir Hossain decides to run.

Sources claimed that different intelligence agencies earlier reported to BNP chief and the then prime minister Khaleda Zia that nominating Kabir instead of Minu would be better for the alliance.

Kabir won the seat in 1991 and 1996 elections. He and his followers were unhappy when Minu was nominated in 2001 election from the seat.

Kabir was later nominated from Rajshahi-5 constituency. Party sources said Kabir will

large number of people in RU jobs allegedly in a controversial way. "Interestingly, Jamaat has a vote bank but it did not use it fully for Minu during 2001 elections", claimed a BNP leader.

Besides Jamaat affection, Minu's image was also tarnished for not fulfilling election pledges, particularly pipeline gas supply to Rajshahi city.

Former prime minister Khaleda Zia inaugurated the Gas Distribution Network Project by laying a foundation at Kharkhari on the outskirts of city though even land was not acquired for it. Moreover, nothing was done to lay gas pipeline. Many people now

leaders feel that Rajshahi BNP will lose its strength and image without Minu. In that case, there should be a compromise between Minu and Kabir, which is apparently difficult, they said.

Kabir would be a factor also for Badsha. AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, son of martyred Awami League stalwart LAHM Kamaruzzaman, said Badsha is not concentrating on campaigning in Rajshahi-2. "He (Badsha) is giving more time to national politics in Dhaka", he said.

Polls analysts claimed that Badsha might not get full support of AL leaders and workers in the coming election though he built his



Mizanur Rahman Minu



Kabir Hossain



Fazole Hossain Badsha



Khairuzzaman Liton

ranking BNP leader seeking anonymity.

BNP retained the parliamentary seat since the party captured it from Awami League in 1973. The constituency is considered important for politics in entire north region and so it is lucrative to all parties.

In 2001 election, Minu won the seat defeating Rajshahi Awami League (AL) general secretary AHM Khairuzzaman Liton with a big margin. Liton who also lost in 1996, left the field for Workers Party (WP) Politburo member Fazole Hossain Badsha. Liton is now eyeing another constituency, party sources said.

Badsha, claiming to have obtained assurance of 14-party alliance nomination from Rajshahi-2, has launched campaign for the coming polls. Some political circles claimed that Badsha may get a 'favorable polls climate' here for the first

have a great influence in the coming polls which may affect BNP this time. His close aides said he is 'pledge bound' not to leave Rajshahi-2 seat to any one in the coming polls. However, Kabir is suffering from illness for last few years.

To neutralise Kabir's influence, Minu will have to depend on Jamaat. Jamaat may press for alliance ticket either for Rajshahi Jamaat Ameer Aatur Rahman or Minu, party sources said.

They said Minu 'did a lot' for Jamaat. He is widely blamed for allegedly influencing law enforcing agencies and Rajshahi University (RU) authorities to protect RU Shibir president Mahub Alam Salehi, principal accused in RU teacher Prof. S Taher Ahmed murder case.

The 14-party combine blamed Minu and Rajshahi Jamaat Ameer Aatur Rahman for recruitment of a

term it a hoax.

Minu will have to face criticism for BNP government's failure in containing the price spiral and power crisis, they said.

Allegations have it that Minu certified Asadullah Al Galib in 2004 that he was not involved with militancy, but his government arrested him on this charge.

He is also facing allegations of influencing vote counting in last mayoral polls, for which Rajshahi Citizens' Committee nominee Fazole Hossain Badsha lost the polls. A case in this connection is still under trial.

Minu has also rivalry with Rajshahi BNP leaders Barrister Aminul Haque and Nadim Mustafa. Aminul Haque was minister-in-charge for Rajshahi district and Nadim Mustafa is a former lawmaker from Rajshahi-4 constituency.

Despite criticisms, many party

image depending on AL support.

"If he gets full support from Awami League, Badsha may have a comfortable situation to fight BNP in the coming election", said an AL leader.

Liton, after losing 1996 and 2001 elections, remained almost inactive during last five years, alleged his party leaders. But he became active again since the start of anti-government movement.

Talking to this correspondent earlier, Minu denied his Jamaat affection and allegations that he protected Salehi and Galib.

Jamaat is a coalition partner and we have to work together, he said. There is no question of favouring Jamaat, he said.

He also denied the allegation that he protected Salehi. It is a matter of the university, he said. He admitted certifying Galib, saying, "To my knowledge, he was a gentleman", Minu said.

Shibir leader threatens Khulna journo with death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

President of Phullata upazila unit of Islami Chatra Shibir Md Ajmol Hossain has threatened journalist Shamsul Alam Khokon with death.

The threat came at a rally of four-party alliance, held Saturday evening at Phullata upazila in Khulna district. Some leaders of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami were present at the rally when the Shibir leader made the threat in his speech but they did not protest it, sources said.

Shamsul Alam Khokon, Phullata upazila correspondent of Dainik Samakal, filed a general diary with Phullata police station yesterday seeking security of life.

The Shibir threatened the journalist for sending a report on alleged corruption and malpractice by Khulna city Jamaat Ameer and former lawmaker Mian Golam Parwar. The report was published in Samakal on Friday.

"I shall cut off your throat, break your legs and hands and slice you for writing against my leader Mian Golam Parwar", Shibir leader said in his speech, Shamsul Alam said.

The report published in the daily has described how the Jamaat leader has amassed wealth after becoming a lawmaker.

Trader killed by outlaws for toll

A CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

A businessman was killed by the outlawed Shabarhara Party cadres for failure to pay illegal toll amounting to Tk 1 lakh at Nadani village of Dulai union in Suzzanagar upazila Saturday night.

The dead is Osman Ali, 50, son of Ishaq Ali.

Police and locals said the outlaws brought Osman out of his room and chopped him to death by sharp weapons.

On information, police rescued the body early yesterday. They sent the body to Pabna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Earlier, the outlaws demanded Tk 1 lakh from Osman a few weeks ago, but he had denied to pay the same.

138 AL, BNP men sued by rival parties in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

Awami League (AL) and BNP on Friday sued each other's activists on charge of ransacking respective party offices on October 28.

At least, 190 AL activists were sued for ransacking the district BNP office and two houses of party leaders.

Patuakhali town Jubo Dal joint convener Akhtaruzzaman Nobel, also a pousasabha commissioner, sued 107 AL activists for ransacking the BNP office.

In another case, District BNP vice-president M A Rob sued 31 AL activists for ransacking his house while District Krishak Dal president ASM Abdur Rob sued 52 AL activists for ransacking his house.

Three separate cases were filed against them with Sadar Police Station.

Meanwhile, AL sued 95 BNP activists for ransacking their office and a Chhatra League (BCL) leader's house.

Sadar upazila AL organising secretary Shahjahan Pervaz sued 69 BNP men for ransacking the district AL office.

District BCL president Jahangir Sikder sued 26 BNP activists for ransacking his house in the town.

On contact, Sadar Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) Shahjaha Ali Khan said, "We shall take necessary action after proper investigation."

Roundtable on TB held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *B'baria*

A roundtable on 'Tuberculosis Control Programme: Assistance from Mass-Media', jointly organised by the Health and Family Planning Ministry, Brahmanbaria Press Club and BRAC, was held here yesterday.

Press Club president Mansur Kamal chaired the roundtable while it was attended by Brahmanbaria Civil Surgeon Dr Md Shahid Uddin as the chief guest.

Participants said that at least 30 TB patients were completely cured by giving six months treatment at Birashar BRAC Office.

Among others, Brahmanbaria Government College vice-principal Md Gulam Mastufa Sarker, BRAC regional manager Md Abul Kashem Bhuiyan, TB specialist Dr Md Asif Anwar, Chest Diseases Clinic junior specialist Dr Bashir Ahmaed, Bangladesh Medical Association president Dr Bazul Rahman and Brahmanbaria Civil Surgeon Office medical officer Dr Md Shawkat Hossain addressed.



Farmers harvesting Amon paddy at Gayabari village in Dimla in Nilphamari district.

PHOTO: STAR

Amon harvest begins in Rangpur, Dinajpur

DAE says production will exceed target

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

Amon harvest has started in some areas of greater Rangpur and Dinajpur, much to the relief of monga affected people who spent hard days without work for about three months.

Sources at Rangpur zonal office of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) said they are expecting a good harvest despite less rain during the season.

A total of 10.5 lakh hectares were brought under Amon cultivation in Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Dinajpur, Rangpur and Nilphamari districts this year with a production target of 25 lakh tonnes of rice.

The DAE sources said cultivation target was 1,08,845 hectares in Nilphamari, which was exceeded by around 2000 hectares.

The production may reach 2,82,095 tonnes in Nilphamari, slightly higher than the target, according to DAE Deputy Director in Nilphamari Shakhawat Hossain.

Early variety of BRRI-33 and BRRI-32 paddy are being harvested now, DAE sources said. These varieties were cultivated on 20 per cent of lands in the region. Harvest of BR-11 variety, covering about 55 per cent of lands, will begin in 10-15 days, followed by those on the rest 25 per cent lands, they said.

Farmers Rafiul Islam and Babor Ali of Chhhatnai village of Dimla upazila; and Baten Ali and Abed Shaikh of Ruhia village in

Thakurgaon said the percentage of chita (paddy having no rice inside) is negligible this year.

The DAE deputy director said the yield was good because of adequate rain during flowering stage, which also prevented pest attack.

This correspondent saw bulk quantities of paddy were being transacted in big wholesale markets in Ruhia in Thakurgaon, Sakoa in Panchagarh and Mirganj in Nilphamari. The price varied between Tk 350 and Tk 375 per mound (about 40kg). Farmers said the price is reasonable.

There was less rain during preparation of land and transplantation of Amon seedlings this year though it was a rainy season. In many areas, farmers had to irrigate their lands.

BRAHMANBARIA-1 CONSTITUENCY

Renegade BNP leader to pose threat to party candidate

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, *B'baria*

Defiant and ambitious SM Safi Mahmud, who joined Jatiya Party (Ershad) from BNP, may pose a threat to his former party in Brahmanbaria-1 (Nasirnager upazila) the coming electoral battle, political analysts said.

A former secretary of Nasirnager upazila BNP, Safi was suspended from the party twice earlier for violating party decisions and running in polls race as an independent candidate. He contested in election four times.

"This time I have at least 1500 BNP deserters with me who are working seriously for the coming polls", he said while talking to this correspondent.

In last three days, Safi held at least 18 meetings including a big congregation of several thousand local clerics gathered from different areas of the constituency.

He claimed that he will get ticket from JP and throw a big challenge to local BNP as many diehard workers and supporters of the party are now with him. He claimed that Awami League will be his major rival, not BNP, in the coming election.

"Most people in Balakut, Khagla, Kaitura and Gualnagar unions in my area are happy with my joining JP and they are working for me", he said.

In 1991, he vied in parliamentary election with BNP ticket but was defeated by the then JP candidate Sayed Murshed Kamal (now in BNP).



S M Safi Mahmud



Ekramuzzaman



Sayed Morshed Kamal

Safi contested in the February 15 controversial polls in 1996 as an independent candidate ignoring party decision and won the election by defeating the BNP candidate. He was suspended after the polls. Later, BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia called him to Dhaka and withdrew the suspension.

He also ran in 1996 national election as a BNP candidate but was defeated by Awami League candidate Md. Sayedul Haque.

Non-cooperation by some BNP leaders was behind the defeat, he claimed.

Violating a party decision again, Safi contested the 2001 national election as an independent candidate against a BNP candidate. He lost to AL candidate Md. Sayedul Haque. He was suspended from BNP again.

After a long wait, he joined JP. According to local political analysts, Safi Mahmud may pool

more votes this time than earlier if BNP fails to field an 'appropriate candidate' against him.

There are two BNP aspirants for alliance ticket in the coming election. They are former lawmaker Sayed Morshed Kamal and industrialist Sayed AK Ekramuzzaman, both campaigning now. This has virtually divided the party into two factions in Nasirnager upazila, sources said.

Sayed Morshed Kamal was elected in 1991 with JP (Ershad) ticket and joined BNP in 1995.

According to party sources, Ekramuzzaman is being supported by one group of party men led by Nasirnager Upazila BNP secretary Md. Kamruzzaman.

Backed by local BNP president Md. Iqbal Chowdhury, Morshed Kamal is lobbying with party high-ups for alliance ticket.

Talking to this correspondent, Morshed Kamal claimed that being a former lawmaker, he has a large

number of party supporters led by Iqbal Chowdhury who are seriously working for him. He said he is sure to get the alliance ticket.

Ekramuzzaman was not available for comments but his close aide SM Shahed claimed that he (Ekramuzzaman) is supported by a large number of party men led by Kamruzzaman.

Rivalry in BNP is not uncommon in election in Brahmanbaria-1 constituency, for which Awami League (AL) candidate Md. Sayedul Haque won the seat in 1996 and 2001. He also won the seat in 1974. In 1979, it went to advocate Abdus Satter Bhuiyan, who ran as an independent candidate. Bhuiya is now a BNP leader.

Rivalry between Sayed Murshed Kamal and Ekramuzzaman has already surfaced and spilled over to grassroots party workers, the analysts claimed.

4 BCL leaders 'tortured' by Rab in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

Four local Chhatra League (BCL) leaders who were tortured by members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) after their arrest are now fighting for life in two local clinics.

BCL general secretary Jihad-Al-Islam said this at a press conference held at Sirajganj Press Club yesterday.

District BCL publicity secretary Shazu Ahmed Dulal, Sadar thana BCL joint convener Kamrul Hasan Liton, Sirajganj College BCL joint convener Humayon Kabir Palash and activist Alal Shaikh were picked up by Rab from Liton's Thana Road

house here early Saturday. All were released yesterday morning.

The press conference demanded immediate arrest and trial of the Rab members for torturing their leaders. The conference also said there had been no specific case against the BCL leaders.

AL leaders K M Hasan, Ali Hasan, Eshak Ali and other leaders attended the conference.

On contact, Major Shohel Ahmed, In-Charge of Rab-12, Battalion denied the allegations saying the BCL men were arrested for interrogation with specific complaints against them.

Arms sent to Jubo League leader thru courier service

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

Two pipe guns was sent to the address of an Awami Jubo League leader here through courier service yesterday.

Police said Moulvibazar office of the Continental Courier Service received the packet to deliver it to Syed Selim Haque, organising secretary of Moulvibazar district unit of Awami Jubo League.

Syed Selim Haque, an employee of the courier office, called Selim

over cell phone to receive the packet sent by one Ajay Das of Sylhet had sent the packet. Selim declined to receive it saying he does not want to receive it.

Police also called Selim to receive the packet but he declined. Police then opened the packet and found two pipe guns.

Police seized the packet and took it to the police station.

Nasirul Islam, Assistant Police Superintendent, later said the matter is being investigated.



The 14-party brought out a procession in Hatikumrul on the Dhaka-Sirajganj highway carrying sticks (top) and its activists squatting on the Dhaka-Mawa road at Nimtoli during yesterday's blockade.

PHOTO: STAR