

SEAT RESERVE FOR JAMAAT LEADER

Disgruntled Sherpur-1 BNP may field rebel candidate

MIRZA SHAKIL, back from Sherpur

Most of the BNP leaders and workers are opposed to nomination of Jamaat-e-Islami central leader Mohammad Kamruzzaman as four-party alliance candidate in Sherpur-1 (Sadar) in the coming election, party sources said.

Sherpur district BNP president advocate Saiful Islam Kalam went to Dhaka for nomination form but he was denied. BNP leaders there told him that the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) seat was kept for Jamaat, he told this correspondent yesterday.

"I was very shocked. Leaders did not evaluate our contribution to the party in the district", he said.

"Party men love me as I have been working for them and the party for long. I shall do so whatever they suggest," he said.

Some other front ranking BNP leaders in Sherpur said the decision to keep Sherpur-1 for Jamaat have angered and frustrated the party rank and file in the district because the constituency is very important in the district.

"Most of them reacted sharply when I told them that I was denied nomination paper", he said.

BNP kept 45 JS seats for its allies countrywide.

After Saiful Islam's return from Dhaka, senior BNP leaders in Sherpur held an urgent meeting at the residence of former lawmaker and party's district secretary Mahmudul Haque Rubel Friday night.

The meeting was attended by, among others, former lawmaker and whip Zahed Ali and Saiful Islam Kalam.

As per a decision of the meeting, Zahed Ali was sent to Dhaka yesterday to meet BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and request him to change the decision of the party high command and nominate a BNP man considering sentiment of local party men, sources said.

If he returns empty handed, a team of senior leaders will go to Dhaka soon.

Earlier, an urgent meeting was scheduled on Monday (December 4) at the residence of Saiful Alam Kalam to discuss possible steps if Jamaat is given ticket from the constituency but the meeting was postponed, sources said.

Sherpur district BNP office Shafiqul Alam Chand while talking to

this correspondent on Friday said most party men in Sherpur-1 (Sadar) constituency want change of four-party alliance candidate in the coming election.

"If required, we will hold programmes including press conference, protest meeting and sit-in in front of BNP central office against the decision of the party high command and demanding nomination for dedicated BNP leader and Sherpur district BNP president Saiful Islam Kalam," Shafiqul Alam said.

Talking to this correspondent some BNP leaders and activists alleged that Jamaat leader Kamaruzzaman did not maintain contact with local BNP in last five years. He has no acceptability among party men and voters in the constituency, they claimed.

Moreover, as Jamaat candidate, he (Kamaruzzaman) was defeated in 1986, 1991, and 1996 elections. He lost to Awami League candidate Atiur Rahman Atique in 2001 election as a four-party alliance candidate, they added.

A senior BNP leader seeking anonymity said, "We have already informed some party high-ups about

the sentiment here".

Some other leaders expressed surprise, saying the alliance will lose the seat in coming election also if a Jamaat man is nominated.

"We will field a rebel BNP leader as an independent candidate or join LDP if central leaders not change their unwise decision immediately", a leader said expressing his disappointment.

When contacted over cell phone yesterday, Kamruzzaman refuted the BNP leaders' claim that he does not have acceptability among people.

When this correspondent drew his attention that he lost from Sherpur-1 constituency in last four elections, he said losing election does not prove that I have no acceptability in the area.

He claimed that he is sure about getting alliance ticket and of winning the coming election from the constituency.

Some BNP leaders are dishing out such propaganda ahead of nomination to create confusion and mislead grassroots level BNP workers, he claimed.

Trade through Tamabil resumes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet.

Border trade through Tamabil land customs station resumed yesterday after four days' suspension due to a row between Indian Border Security Force and their exporters, officials said.

The customs department incurred a loss of around Tk 1.25 crore due to suspension of imports including coal, they said.

The suspension created a crisis of coal for brick kilns in the region.

The trouble erupted as Indian BSF became tough and started through checking of coal loaded trucks last week to stop alleged stealing in weight. As this caused delay at the customs station, importers and exporters of both the countries protested, saying they were harassed in the name of checking.

As BSF did not pay heed to the protests, exporters on Tuesday stopped sending coal in trucks.

On an average, 300 to 400 loaded trucks cross the border every day.

Kolondar Ali, former general secretary of Bangladesh Coal Importers Association said yesterday that the matter was resolved Friday at a meeting of BSF and Indian exporters, held in Shillong, Meghalaya.



The National Girl Child Advocacy Forum and The Daily Star Readers Forum jointly formed a human chain in Kurigram town yesterday marking Begum Rokeya Day.

AL besieges Mirpur thana whole night for 'safety' of two party men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Awami League (AL) and its front organisations brought out processions in Kushtia town and kept the police station in Mirpur upazila under siege for a whole night for 'safety' of two arrested party men.

According to sources, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-4 arrested AL Mirpur upazila organising secretary Kamarul Arefin and Kushtia district Jubo League leader Zahid Hossain from Dhanmondi in Dhaka Wednesday night.

They were handed over to Rab-12 in Kushtia on Thursday.

Rab took them to its office and interrogated them.

Being informed, a large number of AL leaders and activists went to the Rab office and asked the law enforcers to release them, claiming that they were innocent.

Rab handed them over to Mirpur

police Thursday evening.

After their handover to Mirpur police, some unidentified callers informed relatives of Kamarul and Zahid that they might be killed in 'crossfire' at night. The caller said Kamarul and Zahid were held for their alleged links with an outlawed party.

As the news spread, activists of AL and its front organisations brought out processions in Kushtia town and in Mirpur upazila headquarters.

At Mirpur, the AL men kept the police station besieged from 8:30pm Thursday till about 10 am Friday, till the two were sent to court. They continued the siege programme apprehending that the two party men might be taken out of the police station to kill them in crossfire in the name of encounter, party men later said.

During the siege, AL leaders

arranged cooking in front of the police station to feed party activists at night.

The siege was withdrawn after police sent them to Kushtia court at about 10 am Friday. The court sent them to jail.

According to sources, Kamarul was a diehard AL worker in Mirpur. He was general secretary of Mirpur upazila Jubo League, youth front of AL, during 1996-1999. Kamarul left the area after police included his name in several murder cases allegedly at the instruction of an immediate past BNP lawmaker after BNP-Jamaat took power. He lived in Dhaka since 2002.

Police said Kamarul was accused in three murder cases. All the cases were filed when Kamarul was not in the upazila.

District AL demanded immediate release of the two party men.

RIB INITIATIVE

Poor children learn while playing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Research Initiative Bangladesh (RIB) arranged a unique 'Children Fair' at the Shilpakala Academy here yesterday.

A large number of children up to 5 from 35 'Kajali Model Children Development Centres in Rangpur, Panchagarh, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Joypurhat and Nilphamari participated in the programme.

The centres, initiated by local people under RIB guidance, provide pre-school education to children from poor families in an atmosphere different from traditional primary schools. Children at the centres learn while playing and making fun. They do not have to read books. Instead, they use pocket board, pictures, digit and other articles.

Kajali Model Children Development Centre was first set up at Kajali village in Jessore after research by RIB.

At yesterday's fair, RIB chairman Dr Shamsul Bari explained to guests and other participants different aspects and methods followed in those centres. He said local initiators take steps to run such centres and local people contribute to teachers' salaries as well.



PHOTO: STAR

RIB Chairman Dr. Shamsul Bari exchanging views with participants at the Children's Fair at Nilphamari yesterday.

RIB provides training to teachers and the initiators. It also supplies educational materials for children and teaching manual for teachers.

Md Golam Mortuza, an initiator of one such school at Pantha Para in Jaldhaka, said the aim of such centres is to make poor children

interested in education in their own way. Use of other attractive articles instead of books make children interested in learning, he said.

At the fair, children also performed song, dance, recitation, acting and participated in other activities. RIB chairman Dr Shamsul Bari also joined the children.

Some of teachers and initiators expressed their experiences and put forward suggestions to further develop the system of education at the centres.

A large number of teachers from different educational institutions, journalists and other professionals enjoyed the programme.

Boat seized with 3000 fertiliser bags

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

About 3000 bags of fertiliser were seized by police and local officials from a Bay-bound engine boats at Sonadiya in Cox's Bazar Friday night. Six people were arrested.

Police said the seized the fertiliser suspecting that those were being smuggled to Myanmar.

When contacted, Moheshkhali Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) AH M Lokman also confirmed the incident.

The six arrested are Mohammed Kawsar, Jasim Uddin, Anwar Hossain, Nurul Islam, Liton, Mohammed Monir, Noyakhali. Police took the trawlers into custody.

SOA to besiege CHTRC office today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Somo Odhikar Andolan (SOA), an organisation of Bengali settlers in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), will lay a siege to the CHT Regional Council (CHTRC) office today demanding removal of Juotiindriya Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma from the post of its chairman and punishment of the killers of SOA activist Kina Mohon Chakma.

Kina Mohon Chakma, also chief advisor of Sachetan Nagorik Committee (SNC) was killed on December 5 when he was going to attend a SOA rally in Rangamati.

The programme was declared at a press conference here on December 4. The siege will begin at 10 am.

Show of strength by Rangamati LDP tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will stage a show of strength in Rangamati tomorrow.

At least 20,000 men will take part in the showdown and a rally to be held at Reserve Bazar old court complex compound, LDP Presidium member and former deputy minister for CHT affairs Moni Swapan has said.

LDP central leaders Col. Oli Ahmed, Maj (retd.) MA Mannan and Mahi B Chowdhury are expected to address the rally, he told newsmen here on Thursday.

Moni said a process to form a full-fledged committee of LDP is going

on and it may be announced after the showdown.

He did not give any direct reply when asked whether he will contest from Rangamati constituency as an LDP candidate in the coming election. "Time will decide that".

Moni left BNP and joined LDP last month, protesting what he called corruption by BNP-Jamaat government and its indifference to issues in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

He earlier alleged that he was the deputy minister for CHT affairs but he was never called to attend any policy meeting on CHT.

The former deputy minister said all communities living in CHT want

peace but sustainable peace can not be established in the hills due to vested quarters who destabilise the situation for their personal or party benefit.

Every man and woman in CHT should remain alert against those evil forces who always try to create chaos and disrupt peace by raising communal issues, he said at the press conference held at Rangamati Press Club.

Referring to the situation in CHT in last five years, he said law and order was maintained during his tenure. Some communal forces are trying to disrupt peace after takeover by the caretaker government, he added.

3.5X3

2.5X2

4X3

5X2

7X3