

People on the horns of dilemma

Whom shall I elect?

By Govinda Shil and Rafiq Hasan back from Dinajpur

"Whom shall I elect?" said more than 10 per cent. "People are generally enthusiastic about elections, but this time it has become quite discouraging to them."

There is no instance of such an uncontested election in the country," Islam said adding "this has overshadowed Ershad's 1986 election." Rafiq said Awami League was organising people at the grass-roots level against the "farcical election".

"BNP is a city-based party which has no grass-roots level committees to organise the election," said S M Azizul Haque, acting president of the Jatiya Party in Thakurgaon district. He said that JP was holding regular meetings at the union and village levels to convince the people not to go to the polling centres. "In Pirojganj thana, I can say, less than 10 per cent vote will be cast," he said.

President of Thakurgaon Press Club, Akhter Hossain Raja said that people of Thakurgaon were disappointed with the activities of the ruling party. The BNP has nominated fertilizer dealers in the election, he alleged.

Khurshid Zahan, popularly known as "chocolate apa" hopes 40 to 45 per cent vote cast in Dinajpur. In an optimistic tone she said "I will not be surprised if 60 per cent people cast their votes because sometimes village people become desperate if they are resisted," she added.

Abdur Rahman, a former Awami League MP from Dinajpur said the opposition parties would resist the election at any cost. A district liaison committee has been formed comprising Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat and JSD (Rab) to resist the election. The opposition parties are bringing processions, holding meetings and rallies against this one-party election. Rahim said.

Reazul Huq, president, Dinajpur Bar Association and a Jatiya Party leader said, people in Dinajpur are not showing much interest in the coming election.

Advocate M A Kasem, Dinajpur district Naib-e-Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami said that his party was organising meetings and rallies at thana and union levels to mobilise the people against this "farcical" polls and that the candidates will face "strong resistance". According to him, not more than 15 per cent voters will cast votes.

"I hope 40 to 50 per cent voters will exercise their voting rights," said Doctor Malek, a BNP candidate from Thakurgaon-3.

Malek, 60, who joined BNP recently, while talking to The Daily Star claimed that people of his constituency were enthusiastic about the election.

Mirza Rafiqul Islam, an Awami League leader and president of Thakurgaon Bar Association claimed that the voters turnout would not be

"I don't expect even 20 per cent," said Ahsan Habib Bulbul who withdrew as an independent candidate from Thakurgaon-3 constituency.

Bulbul told these correspondents that he withdrew because he thought the February 15 election would be meaningless for the country and for democracy as well.

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SIB introduces series of new schemes

By Staff Correspondent

Social Investment Bank (SIB) will introduce a number of new schemes including concessional financing of consumer durables for newly married couples and fixed income groups and shelter finance for the first home owners.

Chairman of the joint-venture Islamic Shariah-based Bank Prof M A Mannan announced introduction of the new schemes of the SIB at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

The management of the Bank, which started operation in November last, also plans to open four branches by the next month at Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet.

The newly introduced schemes are: Scheme for concessional financing of consumer durables for newly married couples, rotating family savings and credit net and group instalment credit scheme, shelter finance scheme, A to Z investment services for Bangladeshis living abroad, new local entrepreneur and foreigners; and Hajji management scheme.

"Many youths cannot enter into married life owing to financial constraints. Unwanted pressure is given on parents of bride for dowry. Through our scheme, we want to facilitate procure-

ment on easy terms ornaments and consumer durables to be used at the beginning of married life," said Prof Mannan, who is also a senior economist of the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank.

Under the rotating savings scheme, SIB intends to support the formation of social groups to mobilise informal finance on voluntary basis in a bid to assist in investing their funds in various "socially desirable profitable" ways, Prof Mannan said.

About the shelter finance scheme, he said finance would be made available for "first home owners" only and the intending owners would have the opportunity of gradually building their equity.

The A to Z investment services will assist the persons concerned in finding places for their accommodation, extend credit facilities and also provide them with services at relatively low cost, the SIB Chairman said.

Under the Hajji management scheme, pilgrims will be provided with services like accommodation, encashment of travellers cheque, guide etc to facilitate easy performance of Hajji.

The press conference was also attended by Managing Director of the Bank Md Azizul Haque and some of its directors.

Rajshahi: One killed

From Page 1

Thursday, died at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital at about 5 am today.

Today's clashes ensued when police intercepted an Opposition *laihi* procession at Shaheed Bazar at about 5 pm.

Police fired bullets, rubber bullets and fired tear gas shells to disperse the processionists who also threw handmade bombs at police. The clashes spread to Gonakpara, Malopara, Battar, More and Kumarpara, Old Bus Stand areas. At about 5.30 pm, police and BDR controlled the situation.

Mintu, 26, a worker of a decorator shop at Gonakpara was hit with a bullet at about 5.15 pm and died on the

12 killed as trains collide with trucks in Egypt

CAIRO, Feb 9: Twelve people were killed and 15 injured when two trains rammed into passenger-filled pick-up trucks in identical accidents at level crossings in Egypt. Egyptian newspapers reported today, reports Reuters.

Both truck drivers had ignored warning signals at the crossings and the trains were unable to stop, the papers said.

They said nine people were killed and at least eight injured when the first train travelling from Alexandria to Cairo hit a truck speeding through the Markaz Kaif el-Zayat level crossing on Thursday afternoon.

The train's locomotive overturned and burst into flames on impact and several cars were derailed disrupting traffic for many hours, they added.

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Hanif

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of Alim. He, however, said the regional offices of DCC and its anti-mosquito drive and cleanliness activities will go ahead as usual.

The Mayor was highly critical of the police action at the Lalbagh area yesterday and alleged that the police lobbed teargas shells and dispersed the mourning processionists carrying the body of Alim towards the graveyard despite his presence.

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