

Electioneering gaining momentum in Sylhet

From Iqbal Siddique

SYLHET, May 8: Electioneering has started gaining momentum in this region after the Eid vacation with more and more people talking about the June 12 parliament elections. Though the major political parties, except Jamaat, are yet to announce their nominations, people in general have begun speculating on the prospects of likely candidates of different parties as well as of individuals who may join the race. Though not yet announced, Humayun Rashid Chowdhury is a probable AL candidate for Sylhet-1 (Comprising Sylhet Sadar and Companyganj thanas). He joined AL last year. Khondaker Abdul Malik, a BNP central leader, who was elected in 1979 and 1991 may not be in the race this time. It is learnt former finance minister M Saifur Rahman or ex-chairman of Sylhet Poursabha AFM Kamal may be nominated by BNP to face Humayun Rashid. Babur Hossain Babui, former upazila chairman, has reportedly confirmed his ticket for Jatiya Party. Babui is, however, facing resistance from his party fellows, on the ground of his absence during the recent movement. In Sylhet-2 (Balaganj and Biswanath thanas), district BNP President M A Haq is an aspirant for party nomination. Ilyas Ahl, former JCD leader, was elected in the February 15 elections. It may be recalled, Shah Azizur Rahman, ex-upazila chairman of Balaganj, District AL Secretary ANM Shaifur Rahman and Lutfur Rahman are lobbying for AL nomination, sources said. JP may nominate ex-MP Moksud Idris Aziz Lama in this seat. According to speculations, in Sylhet-3 (South Surma and Fenchuganj), ex-UP MP Abdul Mukit Khan may contest against Awami League and BNP candidates. Mahmud Samad Chowdhury or Dewan Farid Gazi, ex-state minister, may get AL ticket for this seat. Shahid Ahmed Chowdhury, a industrialist and director, Pubali Bank Ltd. is reportedly getting BNP ticket. He was defeated by JP candidate in 1991 but was elected to the 6th parliament. In Sylhet-4 (Jaintapur and Gowainghat thanas) Imran Ahmed, who was elected several times, is reportedly getting AL ticket. Dildar Hossain Selim, Secretary, district sports association, is also another nomination seeker from the party. Former finance minister Saifur Rahman may be the BNP nominee from the seat. JP's Abdul Hanjan may be in the race there. In Sylhet-5 (Kanaighat and Jakiganj thanas), Moulana Obaidul Haque, lone MP from Islami Oikya Jote in the 5th parliament, may face trouble from two other candidates from two major parties this time. It is learnt BNP may nominate Abdul Kader Chowdhury, who was elected in the February 15 elections and Awami League may in nominate Hafiz Ahmed Majumder, industrialist and Director, Pubali Bank or Mashuk Uddin Ahmed, local people speculate. Jatiya Party may nominate Rezaul Haque, son of ex-minister MA Haque, MA Matin Chowdhury is also an aspirant for JP ticket. Khelafat Majlish and Jamiat e-Olama-e-Islam may also put up candidates against Moulana Obaidul Haque, sources say. In Sylhet-6 (Golapganj and Beanibazar), Nurul Islam Nahid, who was defeated by Sharfuddin Khasru of JP in 1991, may get AL ticket. Khasru joined BNP last year and was elected to the 6th Parliament. But this time, Syed Mokbul Hossain, who joined BNP last year and was elected as an independent candidate in 1986, is also vying for BNP ticket. Ex-upazila chairman Mujammil Ali or Alhaj Kunu Miah may get JP ticket. It is speculated.

Khaleda visits Sylhet today, Hasina from May 14

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 8: BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to reach Sylhet by the first flight of Biman at 11:10 tomorrow. She will offer feteiha at the shrine of the great saint Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) and talk to the local leaders of BNP and its front organizations. However, she will not address any public meeting on the day and return to the capital by the second flight of Biman at 2:10. Meanwhile, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will begin a three-day visit to the greater Sylhet region on May 14. She will visit the shrine of the saint Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) and address the first election meeting in Sylhet on the day. She will address a public meeting at Sunamganj the next day and two other meetings at Habiganj and Moulvibazar on May 16.

GDP growth static

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to go for successful supply management along with demand management so that consumer price indices do not increase. Exports during fiscal 1994-95 increased by 37.1 per cent compared to 6.3 per cent in the previous year and stood at 3473 million dollars. But this was offset by a huge import of food grains. Imports grew by 39.2 per cent in the year and stood at 5834 million dollars. Growth of imports was 2.9 per cent in the previous year. The report said that domestic investment in the industrial sector increased significantly during 1994-95. Term loans for industries by the banking system posted a 57.8 per cent growth to Tk 3490.67 crore. Disbursement of term loans for industries also increased by 59.5 per cent to Tk 2214.03 crore. The Bangladesh Bank report said the huge increase in investment had either helped setting up or rehabilitation of 15667 industrial units that would generate employment for 114163 workers. Trade deficit in 1994-95 increased significantly to 2361 million US dollars from the previous year's 704 million US dollars. But the share of retention of foreign currency by the exporters increased to 25 per cent during the year from the previous years' ten per cent. The report noted with optimism that if the supply management of food grains could be strengthened by increased food production and import activities and if this could be matched by a pragmatic demand management, the country would achieve a desired growth rate by curbing inflationary pressure. It pointed out that bank rate has been raised three to 6.5 per cent and 91 day bills have been introduced to arrest monetary expansion and Taka has also been devalued twice to make exports competitive.

Cyclone weakens

The cyclone over north Bay moved east northwards and crossed Chittagong-Teknaf coast near Cox's Bazar at 9 am yesterday and weakened into a land depression over Cox's Bazar and Chittagong regions, reports UNB. A met office special bulletin said that the cyclone was likely to move further inland and weaken gradually. Under its influence, coastal districts of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Feni and their offshore islands and chars are likely to experience gusty or squally wind at the speed of 45-60 kilometres per hour with rain or thundershowers wherein river ports shall hoist cautionary signal number one. Maritime port of Cox's Bazar has been advised to lower danger signal number seven and to hoist local cautionary signal number three. Maritime port of Mongla has been advised to lower signal. All fishing boats and trawlers over north Bay have been advised to remain in shelter till evening yesterday and afterwards may proceed with caution.

Divisional EC office yet to be set up at Sylhet

By Staff Correspondent  
Divisional Election Commission office is yet to be set up in Sylhet and the Election Commission (EC) is still to take any initiative in this regard, EC officials said. At present the Chittagong divisional EC office is also covering Sylhet region, they said adding that the five other divisions have Election Commission offices. When the matter was brought to the notice of the EC officials, one of them pointed out that offices of many other departments were also not set up in Sylhet because it is a new division. The Election Commission Office, at the divisional level, works as the head office of the districts under its jurisdiction, sources said. "The EC has never requested the government to set up such an office in Sylhet although Sylhet became a division more than a year ago with five districts under it," an EC official said.

DU Senate rules allow formation of probe body, says DUTA secy

By DU Correspondent  
A committee to probe the allegations of corruption against the Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University and his administration could be formed as per provisions of the DU Senate Regulations, Dr. AAM's Arefin Siddique, a Blue panel senator and general secretary of the DUTA, claimed here yesterday. Prof Emaujuddin Ahmed, the Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of the senate, at a requisition meeting of the DU Senate on Tuesday rejected a proposal for setting up of such a committee saying it could not be formed without any specific allegation. The special session was adjourned till May 28 following a walkout by 39 senators amid a pandemonium protesting what they said reluctance of the VC to form the proposed committee. Dr Siddique told The Daily Star that the Senate Regulations empowered the Senate to form any committee without any specific allegations. He referred to articles 57 and 58 of the regulations in this connection. Article 57 reads: "A motion for appointing of a committee on a subject under debate or for the resolution of the meeting into a committee may be made by the member at any time, and without the notice required by regulation 9." Article 58 said, "A motion for the appointment of a committee must define the purpose for which the committee is to serve and the number of the members to compose it."

Tagore's birthday

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people, a social reformer. Rabindranath has no parallel, the elderly poet said adding that the great poet had also taken initiatives to make the youth more aware about social injustice. Publication of textbooks in open market allowed. The government has decided to allow the publication of textbooks in open market to solve the problem of availability of textbooks for Class Six and Class Nine in view of the breach of promise by Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association, reports BSS. According to an official handout, the Education Ministry had taken in hand the work of revision and improvement of textbooks from Class Six to twelfth class in 1994. Though the Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association was supplied with books on main subjects from the month of November last year to February this year and positive of some books in March it failed to market the relevant books on time, it said. Persons or agencies interested in printing and publishing books have been requested to contact the National Curriculum and Textbook Board. Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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UNDP resident representative Eimi Watanabe launching the UNAIDS programme in Bangladesh at a press conference at the Jatiya Press club yesterday. — Star photo

UNAIDS launched in Bangladesh

By Staff Correspondent  
AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) is a worldwide emergency, which is now threatening Bangladesh, said Eimi Watanabe, UNDP representative, at the launching of UNAIDS in Bangladesh yesterday. UNAIDS is a worldwide joint programme of UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and World Bank, which became officially operational on January 1, 1996, to combat the HIV/AIDS through global cooperation. Speaking at the National Press Club, Ms Watanabe, who is also UN resident coordinator, stressed the need for immediate action as over 6000 people are becoming infected by HIV every day worldwide. In Asia alone, the number of AIDS cases increased more than eight-fold from 30,000 to 250,000 during 1994-95, and the number of people with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, could reach over 10 million in Asia by the end of the decade, according to WHO. As there is no cure or vaccination for HIV/AIDS to date, the only form of protection was awareness and modification of risky behaviour, said Ms Watanabe. "Accurate information can save lives. There must be clear communication about the disease." HIV was first reported in Bangladesh in 1989. Though limited statistics show that prevalence is relatively low at present, the country has nearly all the conditions for an explosive outbreak, particularly lack of awareness or knowledge about transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS, the high rate of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), cross-border prostitution and neighbouring countries with a high prevalence of the disease, experts say. "There is difficulty in speaking in explicit terms about sex, and also for young people to admit to being sexually active," said a spokesperson for the National AIDS Committee (NAC). The NAC, established in 1985, and over 72 NGOs already working in the area of STDs/HIV/AIDS, will collaborate with UNAIDS in an effort to coordinate national, policy, organise advocacy activities and address key issues including education and information about the disease, safe blood transfusions, cultural attitudes, and promotion of safe sex. UNAIDS marks the first ever joint venture of six organisations of the UN system. Though UNAIDS is a non-funding agency, its global programme aims to aid government departments, NGOs and communities to respond to the epidemic.

College student murdered in city

BY DMCH Correspondent  
A college student was murdered at Shahjahanpur in the city yesterday. Aminul Islam Babul, 19, a first year HSC student of Khilgaon Model College, was shot dead by a gang of about five terrorists near Shahjahanpur Railway colony at about 11 am, police and medical sources said. Babul, son of late Abdur Razzak of Khilgaon area, was kidnapped by the gang on Biswa road at about 10 am, family sources said. The armed gang took Babul to a club near the colony, tied him with a palm tree and fired in his belly. They also stabbed him in his head. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he breathed his last at 1:30 pm. The killing was reportedly the result of previous enmity.

Flash floods in greater Barisal

From Staff Correspondent  
BARISAL, May 8: Lowlying areas in the southern region of Barisal division continue to be inundated by flood waters. Several thousand acres of land with standing Iri crops have already been submerged in Barisal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Barguna, Jhalakathi and Perupur districts. Low lying areas of Palashpur and other charland along the Kirtonkhola river near the Barisal town area have also been inundated. In Bhola, flashflood has engulfed a huge tract of cropland in Chechra union under Tajuddin Thana.

NAP (Muzaffar) 21-pt polls manifesto

Chairman of Bangladesh National Awami Party (NAP-Muzaffar) Professor Muzaffar Ahmed yesterday announced a 21-point election manifesto pledging the voters restoration of the 1972 Constitution. Releasing the manifesto at a press conference in a hotel here Prof Ahmed said if voted to power his party would salvage democracy and shun those political activities which obstruct industrial production and export trade. Prof Muzaffar said his party would strengthen the local government institutions through decentralisation, stop terrorism, recover illegal arms, strengthen social security and create congenial atmosphere on the campus. The manifesto also includes introduction of firing squad to stop corruption, ensuring free primary education at the earliest, reduction of gap between rich and poor, and introduction of unemployment allowance.



The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society organised a rally in the city yesterday on the occasion of the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. — Star photo

The Midnight File

18 killed in Delhi fire  
NEW DELHI, May 8: A major fire in a market in the Indian capital killed at least 18 people and injured one person, police said. The fire started in a faulty electric transformer and quickly spread to two adjacent shops that stock and sell engine oil, eyewitnesses and police said, reports AP.

7 killed, 34 hurt in road accidents

By Staff Correspondent  
Seven people, including a minor girl were killed and 34 others injured in separate road accident in Rangpur, Sirajganj and C/Nawabganj yesterday. UNB reports: Four people including a woman, were killed and 20 injured when a bus fell into a ditch on the Rangpur-Bogra highway yesterday. Police and witnesses said the Madarganj-bound bus from Rangpur skidded off the road fell into the ditch at about noon at Islampur in Mithapukur thana, about 20 kilometres from here. Passengers said the bus met with the accident while trying to make way for a rickshaw van. Two of the dead were identified as Abul Mia, 65, and Mofazzal Hossain, 55. The other two, including a middle-aged woman, were not identified immediately. The injured were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital. Condition of three of them was said to be critical. The driver of the bus managed to escape. A case was filed with Mithapukur thana. A Sirajganj report adds: Two people were killed and 13 others critically injured when a bus plunged into a road side ditch at Subarnapara in Belkuchi thana yesterday. Police said Hossain Ali, helper of the bus, died on the spot while passenger Sakhawat Hossain, 22, succumbed to his injuries at Sirajganj General Hospital.

DU admission tests begin today

Admission tests of Dhaka University for the first year honours courses of the session 1995-96 begins today, university sources said, reports BSS. This year, a total of 58,966 students will compete for 3750 seats under four units, of the university, the sources said. Test of 'Ga' Unit will be held at 10 am today 'Gha' Unit tomorrow, 'Kha' Unit on May 17 and 'Ka' Unit on May 24. Faculty sources said 20546 students will fight for 1010 seats in 'Ka' Unit, 13768 for about 1600 under 'Kha' Unit, 9980 for 580 under 'Ga' unit and 14672 for 600 seats under 'Gha' Unit.

Khaleda

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along with several hundred workers and supporters joined the BNP expressing their confidence in the leadership of Begum Zia. JP Trishna thana president Abdur Rashid and secretary Abdur Razzak also joined the BNP yesterday, party sources said. Begum Zia asked the people, particularly the new-comers to her party to realise the "evil designs of those who played with the lives of crores of people by waging a non-cooperation movement." She referred to the shut-down of the Chittagong port, setting of fire to vehicles on the roads, destruction of the garment industry as a result of the noncooperation movement. The BNP chairperson told the crowd to find out reasons that worked behind those "acts of anarchy." She criticised the Awami League's election manifesto that called for repeal of the Vested Property Act. Welcoming the new-comers, the BNP chairperson called upon all nationalist forces to rally round the banner of the BNP.

Money power

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leaders of the party, but the BNP would spend a lot of money with a view to getting at least a simple majority in the Jatiya Sangsad," an AL leader said. "We cannot just sit idle under such circumstances." A top JP leader said: "During the interviews of the nomination seekers, the question relating to the aspirants' ability to meet the election expenses in the highly competitive poll race would be vital."

JP interview

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together have 78 seats. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, the JP acting chairman talking to a group of journalists at the Banani office yesterday evening complained that they did not yet receive permission from the Home Ministry to meet their jailed leader H M Ershad. He also informed the newsmen that the Chief Adviser had not replied to their request for a meeting with Ershad. The JP will announce its manifesto at a press conference at its Banani office today. The party is also scheduled to announce its list of nominees for all the 300 parliamentary constituencies of the JS tomorrow.

Foreign observers

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The members of the European Union, according to sources concerned. The Commonwealth Secretariat is learnt to have requested member countries to send a possible list of election monitors for the June 12 elections. A delegation of three ambassadors of the European Union during a recent courtesy call on Chief Adviser Habibur Rahman proposed to send a group of observers to monitor the polls. It was also learnt that the Australian government would send at least one official observer. Poll monitors from the UK are also expected to come. However, the largest number of poll monitors is expected to come from Europe and the Commonwealth countries at the non-government level. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Election Commission are coordinating matters relating to the foreign observers.