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City Corp polls S M Rab AL candidate for KCC mayor

KHULNA, Dec 9: S M Rab, who joined Awami League barely two months back deserting Jatiya Party, has been nominated as the ruling party candidate for mayor of Khulna in the upcoming City Corporation elections, reports UNB.

Party sources said, Khulna city Awami League today nominated him at its extended meeting held at the Circuit House with party leader Adv Monjurul Imam in the chair.

State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukder Abdul Khaleque and ruling party MP Sheikh Helauddin were also present in the meeting.

Vandals

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sleepy villages in Bera and Suganagar thanas. The ministers promised a gravy train if their candidate wins, and the Leader of the Opposition warned of "serious consequences" if her nominee lost "due to manipulations".

What would have otherwise been one of the lacklustre by-elections following the death of AL legislator Tafizuddin Ahmed who won the June 12, 1996 general elections by a margin of 1500 ballots, the voting for the vacant seat brought eyes across the nation riveted on its outcome.

Over 100 MPs from the two parties backed by their big guns took on their respective campaign trails, rumbling fire and spewing venom against each other that left everyone wondering on the outcome and watching the next move by the opponents.

Khaleda Zia, who joined the campaign on Monday, renewed her warnings, saying, "it would be the last of this government's elections if they try to tailor the results. We shall launch such an agitation that it (government) would not be able to find its way for the retreat."

Awami League heavyweights — Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Public Works and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim, State Minister for Information Abu Sayeed, State Minister for Sports Obaidul Quader — promised that the two thanas would receive all the attention they deserve if their candidate wins.

"It's a reality that the Awami League is in power. So our candidate A K Khandaker would have access to the Prime Minister to get the development programmes approved," a minister told rallyists soliciting support for the diminutive Liberation War hero and former Air Chief.

"Before he (Tafizuddin) expired, a cheque for Tk 2.50 lakh was ready for sports development. But our leader (Prime Minister) forbade me to give it before the polls. It would be given the day after the polls," Youth and Sports Minister Obaidul Quader said a campaign meeting at Suganagar thana sadar Tuesday evening.

"Why could A K Khandaker be the best bet? Because he can access the Telecommunications Minister for telephones, the Industries Minister for setting up industries, LGRD Minister for bridges and culverts etc," Mohammad Nasim said.

Tofail Ahmed dismissed BNPs allegations of terror by his party and dubbed the opposition party as one of terrorists and plunderers and sought vote for taking the development process ahead.

Hours earlier, Khaleda Zia followed by dozens of vehicles of supporters drove past the meeting site after finishing her speech at Dulai school ground, not far from the AL rally earlier in the afternoon where she explained why people should not vote for the ruling party.

As her motorcade rumbled down the dusty road, winding through the flood plain, dotted with summer rice seedlings and vegetables, the partisan mood frayed.

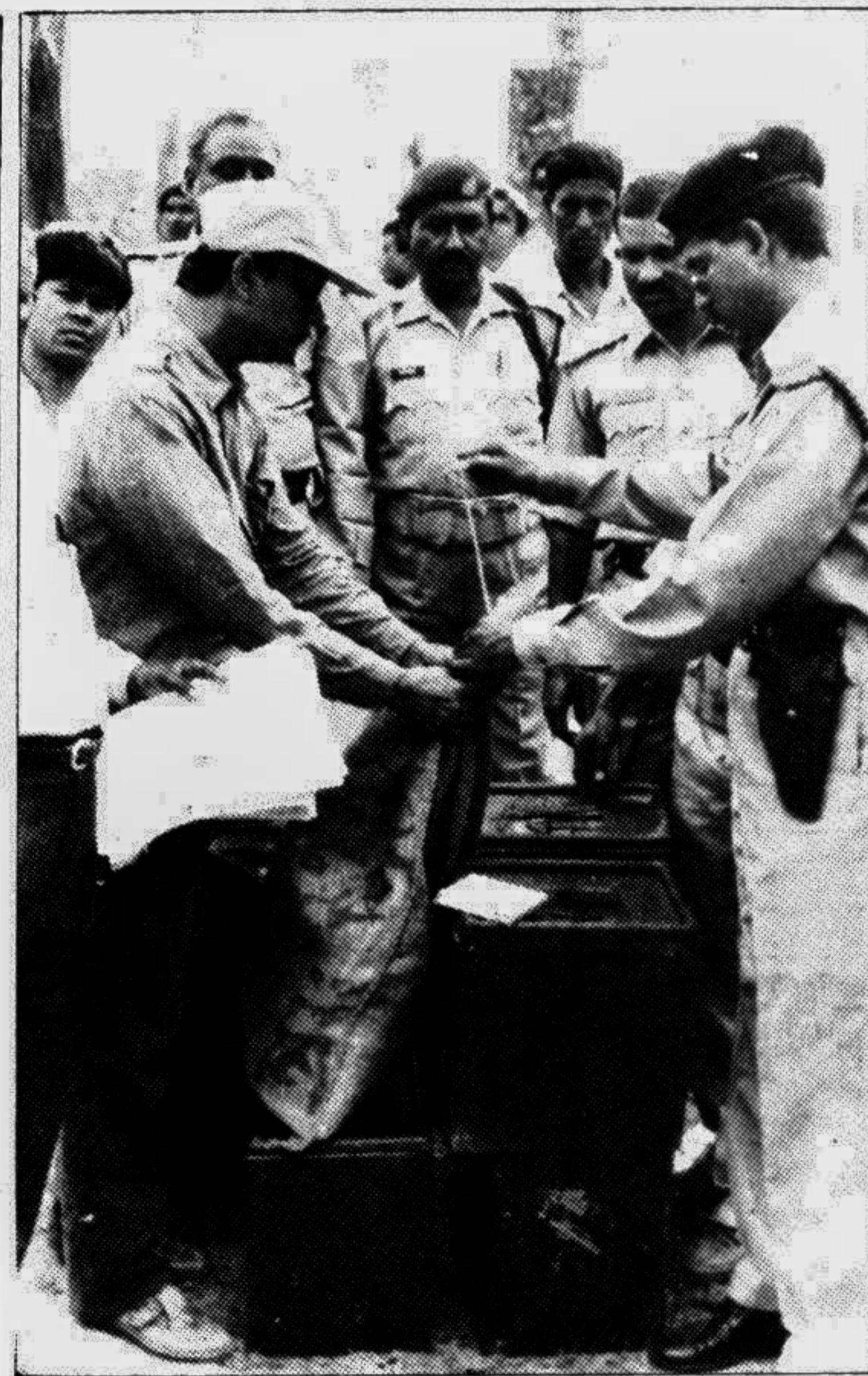
But supporters of the two rival parties — one cheering BNP leader and the other joining the AL rally — crossed each other, chanting slogans. But they didn't lock their horns. They simply kept going, perhaps the numbers on the two sides were equal, keeping a mutual respect for each other.

But on earlier occasions, it was not the same story. Clashes soured the mood last week and on Saturday. When Khaleda's motorcade reached Kachori, the BNP supporters were boiling in anger as she visited the residence of Samad Khan, whose home with some others were ransacked allegedly by rivals after brawl on Saturday.

BNP has blamed the AL for the attack that the party denied, accusing instead the BNP supporters of attacking its men.

Chief Election Commissioner Abu Hena is set to visit the area on the polling day, with troops and para military BDR and police constabulary fanning around the constituency, whose all 81 centres have been red marked.

But Fazlur Rahman Patal, MP, campaign co-ordinator for A K M Selim Reza, said after removal of DC from the job of returning officer the police remains to be sorted out.



Ballot boxes are being readied for the Pabna-2 by-election. —Star photo

Battle of ballots

From Page 1

male — will also be there. Besides, a large number of BDR personnel, members of the armed police and police constables would be on mobile duties.

Even two companies — each 157-strong — have already been deployed in the two thana headquarters under two lieutenant colonels. Some magistrates will be with them.

For the vote, 81 presiding officers, 402 assistant presiding officers and 804 polling officers and 81 magistrates will be on duty. "They would finish duties only when the counting ends," said the returning officer.

However, the field level officials, especially TNOs of the two thanas do not apprehend any big trouble during the polls. They also believe that there has not been much tension among

the voters, despite such claims by the political parties.

"I do not think there is any tension among the voters now. I am confident that the polls will eventually be held in a peaceful atmosphere," Mohokesh Rahman, TNO of Suganagar thana and an assistant returning officer for the by-elections, told The Daily Star.

Mridul Kanti Ghosh, TNO of Bera and another assistant returning officer, echoed him. "There had been no trouble in my thana since announcement of the election schedule, and I am optimistic that the polling would eventually end with a happy note."

However, the BNP and AL are still suspicious of each other that the other side would try to manipulate the election results.

Uproar in Lok Sabha over Rabri's remark

NEW DELHI, Dec 9: Lok Sabha today witnessed uproar as angry members from BJP and Samata Party clashed with those from RJD and Samajwadi Party over the reported derogatory remarks made yesterday by Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi against the government at a rally in Patna, the report said.

Objecting to raising of an issue related to a state by the BJP, members from Rashtriya Janata Dal and its ally Samajwadi Party trooped into the well.

As they were protesting and arguing with Speaker G M C Balayogi, a few BJP and Samata Party members also rushed to the well and were seen trading charges and counter charges.

Responding to the concern expressed over the 'abusive' language used by Rabri Devi against governor Sunder Singh Bhandari, parliamentary affairs minister Madan Lal Khurana said he would request the home minister to verify the veracity of the speech and inform the members.

Raising the issue during zero hour, Rita Verma (BJP) said that Rabri Devi had crossed all limits of constitutional dignity

by openly abusing the governor at yesterday's rally and it was highly unbecoming of a chief minister to have used derogatory language.

Verma said Rabri Devi had also made derogatory remarks against prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and home minister K L Advani at the rally.

President and governors should not be made targets of attack in a democratic set-up, she said.

While BJP member C P Thakur demanded dismissal of Rabri Devi government, Samajwadi Party member Mohan Singh sought recall of the governor, who he alleged, was openly issuing public statements against the RJD government.

RJD member Raghuvansh Prasad Singh said there was no justification for raising the issue in the House.

Samata Party member Prabhunath Singh said the chief minister had openly abused the governor and the government must make a statement on the issue.

Police said the residents of Chasnagar and Gagrakhal villages clashed at around noon as a sequel to a previous incident in which a youth of Gagrakhal came under attack while he was going to enjoy a jatra in the neighbouring village.

During the three-hour long trouble the feuding groups fought each other with lethal weapons leaving about 100 injured.

Four critically injured were sent to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital while some others were admitted to Pabna General Hospital, Santhia and Bera thana health complexes.

Two separate cases were filed with Santhia police in this connection.

SC rejects Sayedi's petition seeking stay against HC verdict

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday rejected the provisional application of Delwar Hossain Sayedi seeking stay against the High Court verdict which upheld the judgement of the election tribunal, Pirojpur, reports APB.

The tribunal declared void the election of Pirojpur-1 constituency from which Sayedi was elected in June 1996 parliamentary elections.

The petition was moved in the chamber of Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf of the Appellate Division.

On December 7, a High Court Division Bench upon hearing the appeal filed by Sayedi upheld the judgement of the tribunal with additional directive to hold fresh election in Baral Bhunia polling centre in the constituency.

Earlier, on May 19, 1997, the tribunal upon hearing the case filed by Awami League candidate Shudhangshu Shekhar Halder, ordered that the poll was to be held in Garghatia Government Primary School centre after which the results of all the centres would be recounted.

Senior Advocate Khandker Mahabbuddin Ahmed and Barrister Abdur Razzaque moved the application for Sayedi. Barrister Amir-ul Islam appeared for Shudhangshu Shekhar Halder.

BNP Protests
arrest of
JCD leaders

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has strongly protested yesterday's arrest of two more JCD leaders in Pabna-2 constituency where by-election is scheduled to be held today.

The government has created a tense situation in the constituency by arresting Sheikh Tuhin and Modasser Hossain Sanjui on the eve of the polls, he said in a statement here yesterday.

Bhuiyan alleged that the government continued arrests, harassment, filing of false cases and repression on leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations after the polls schedule was announced.

A tense situation has been created in the entire Bera-Suganagar constituency due to "frequent police raid" on the houses of BNP supporters, he alleged.

The BNP secretary general alleged that the government was using the administration with a motive to influence the polls results because it has become unbalanced sensing defeat. As a result, the Election Commission was compelled to remove the Returning Officer, he said. "The latest arrest of two JCD leaders has unmasked their blue print."

Bhuiyan demanded immediate release of all arrested leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations, including Tuhin and Sanjui, and urged the government to refrain from harassing opposition activists.

The government must allow the administration and police to work freely and without any political interference.

Radio and Television must highlight the views of the opposition political parties in the same way they broadcast the government's viewpoints on different issues.

All opposition political parties must make formal announcements that they will avoid hartals for all times to come.

While these were common points, the statement by the 10 added that the Betar and BTV should be made autonomous institutions "at the earliest".

The FBCCI statement added that the political parties must sever links with terrorists and extortions. "Not only that, they have to take realistic steps in this regard."

The statements expressed concern that the economy was not getting any respite from confrontational politics although challenges of globalisation and market economy were putting increasing pressure on business.

They said confrontational politics had become a threat to the development potential of the country and inexplicable damage had already been caused to the economy by hartals, imposed indiscriminately to press political demands.

The 10 signatures to the other statement (not of FBCCI) were: DCCI President R Maksud Khan, MCCI President Laila Rahman Kabir, FICCI President AKM Shamsuddin, BGMEA president Mostafa Golam Qudus, Bangladesh Employers Association president Rokeya Rahman Kabir, BTMA president M Shahjahan, Bangladesh Cha Sangsad chairman Aqi Chowdhury, Jute Spinners Association chairman Nazmul Haq, BKMEA president Manjurul Haq, BJMA president Mirza Ali Behrouze Ispahani and Frozen Foods Exporters Association president Golam Mostafa.

Business sources said delays in holding the FBCCI executive committee meeting, which approved the statement, resulted in two statements, instead of the planned one. The 10 released their statement ahead of the FBCCI's as the national chamber office-bearers sat for the meeting in the evening.

Both groups worked on the same draft, which remained almost same.

He denied any wrongdoing and has repeatedly scoffed at accusations that he has stashed billions of dollars in overseas bank accounts.

Suharto was questioned today after the government bowed to demands for a new inquiry. Students staged continuous protests for weeks demanding that he be put on trial for corruption and human rights abuses.

Riot police clashed with about 200 students near President BJ Habibullah's house today.

Police said 31 students were arrested outside the headquarters of a charitable foundation formerly controlled by Suharto.

Some of the students, who want Suharto put on trial, threw rocks at officers, witnesses said.

The building is about 500 meters away from Habibullah's home, which was heavily guarded.

He was accompanied by eight lawyers.

Suharto's opponents and student protesters accuse him of abusing his power and plunder-

ing Indonesia's national resources to amass fortunes for himself, his family and a clique of cronies.

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