

# AL intensifies campaign to regain two out of 4 Kushtia seats

ROVING CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

With nine days left for the October 1 parliamentary elections, Awami League (AL) has intensified its campaign here to regain "at least two" of the four seats in the district.

According to local people, AL now wants to strike at sadar and Doulatpur, Kushtia-3 and 1, widely known as "BNP fortresses."

Barrister Ameerul Islam, the AL candidate is now campaigning hard for Kushtia-3. His opponent, Principal Shorabuddin, was nominated by BNP replacing former BNP MP Abdul Khaleque Chontu from the same constituency.

Barrister Ameerul, who had contested in 1979 and 1991 as independent candidate securing 'very few votes', is hopeful of a good result under AL banner.

In Kushtia town, amid usual business, campaigning starts in the afternoon and continued till late night. Small processions, loud speakers and rallies are rampant during the day.

Here is rumour that Islam might become a minister if AL comes to power, is helping to win voters. Another reason why AL has an edge in the area is the law and order situation. A large number of notorious criminals were neutralised in 1999 when the government announced a general amnesty for armed hoodlums.

In Kushtia-1, former BNP MP Ahsanul Haq Mollah is contesting against Afazuddin, the AL candidate Kushtia-1 has been a den of terrorists, known as the most crime-prone area of Kushtia district. It was in this area that Kazi Aref, a JSD leader and his four associates were gunned down at a public meeting in 1999. Mollah, who had been elected twice before under BNP banner, was often held responsible for deterioration of law and order in Doulatpur area. Following Aref's murder, AL government launched a massive security operation in

the area and locked up hundreds of criminals. Villagers in Kushtia-1 are now able to keep their businesses open even in the evenings. And this development is now working as a trump card for AL campaign in the area.

In Kushtia-4, comprising Khoksa-Kumarkhali, AL's biggest setback is the party rift. AL nominated Sultana Torun, wife of former MP Abul Hossain. Torun died in 1997. Nomination of Sultana instantly upset the remaining AL camp. Sultana now faces another AL leader, Abdur Rouf besides the former MP of the area BNP's Syed Mehdi Ahmed Rumi. Local people said that the AL's internal feud might cost the party dearly in this constituency.

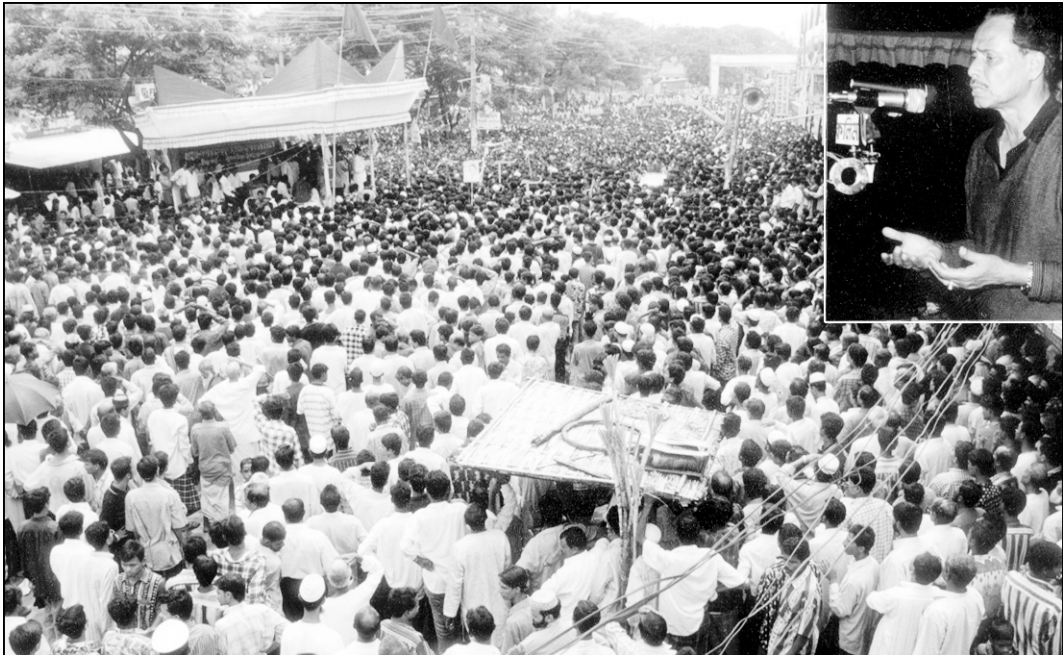
In Kushtia-2, former BNP MP Prof Shahidul Islam faces a tough competition from AL's Mahbubul Alam Hanif, JSD's Hashanul Haq Enu and JP's (Ershad) Ahsan Habib Lincon. Lincon had secured second highest number of votes after BNP's Shahidul Islam in 1996 election.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Fakhru Islam, the Deputy Commissioner of Kushtia said that all preparation for the election has been completed.

He said the whole administration was concerned about the law and order situation in the region. He said law enforcers compressing BDR and police have already been sent to different areas of the district where communications are difficult. Moreover, army has been mobilised as a strike force to maintain law and order during the election period.

The DC said that everyday they were evaluating the situation in the district. So far 100 polling centres, out of 457 in the district have been classified as violence prone. Out of this number 32 centres are classified as 'most vulnerable'.

"We have taken all precaution and hopefully the election would be smooth," Islam said.1



Jatiya Party (E) chairman H M Ershad addressing an election meeting at Kulaura in Sylhet on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Electioneering creates crisis of labourers in Thakurgaon

UNB, *Thakurgaon*

Big farmers in Thakurgaon are facing an acute crisis of farm workers as they are increasingly getting involved in electioneering.

Abdus Salam, an elderly man in sadar upazila said, this is the time when day labourers usually do not get job as transplantation of paddy is already over while harvesting lies ahead.

"But the election has not only brought smile on their faces with temporary employment opportunities, but also created a labour crisis in the district," he said.

Thousands of rural people are joining election processions and meetings for Tk 30 to 100 each day. They enjoy it, no matter how much they get, as they do not need to exert physical labour.

In some cases, they are given

flattened rice, molasses and fried rice after procession in addition to money.

As the election inches closer, all political parties are bringing out processions at district and upazila headquarters more than once a day and local political leaders have been assigned by their parties to collect a specific number of people for processions.

## NEWS SNAPS

### Peace agreement between AL, BNP

BSS, *Barisal*

In a laudable move, leaders of Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) at a meeting held at Gournadi upazila parishad signed a 'peace agreement' for holding the election of the Gourandi-Agailjhara constituency in a complete peaceful manner on October 1.

The news of the peace agreement was announced on Wednesday throughout the day by loudspeakers. General people highly appreciated the move. Among others, AL coordinator K Guha, municipality Chairman Golam Sarwar Farook, central BCL leader Balaram Podder, AL leader Akbar Hossain and BNP president of Gournadi unit Noor Alam Hawlader, BNP leaders Abul Kalam Khan and Syed Sarwar Khan spoke on the occasion. The meeting was presided over by the Md Ramzan Ali.

### 25 hurt in pre-poll clash in Rajshahi

UNB, *Rajshahi*

Some 25 people were injured in a pre-election clash between the supporters of Awami League and BNP at Dargadanga Hat of Tanor upazila Thursday night.

Police and witnesses said the clash took place when two processions brought out by the Awami League and BNP workers came face to face at the village market. Nine of the injured were admitted to local health complex. They are Fazlur Rahman, Joynal, Kalimuddin, Mostafa Kamal, Rustam, Koifil, Mahbub, Razzak and Jamal.

### Pre-polls violence in Barisal:16 injured

UNB, *Barisal*

Some 16 people were injured in pre-election violence in the district on Friday. Supporters of AL allegedly attacked the activists of BNP at Nazirpur Bazaar in Muladi when they were returning from a public meeting in the evening leaving 16 people injured. Six were admitted to Sadar Hospital.

Also in the morning, armed terrorists attacked an Awami League office at Mohabaz in the outskirts of the town and chopped Gazi Nuruzzaman, an activist of Jubo League, indiscriminately. They also damaged the office. Nuruzzaman was admitted to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in a critical condition. AL blamed BNP for the attack.

### 26 centres in C'nawabganj vulnerable

UNB, *Chapainawabganj*

Police have identified 26 polling centres, out of 396, in three constituencies of the district as vulnerable.

Of the centres, 11 are situated in C'nawabganj-1 (Shibganj), 6 in C'nawabganj-2 (Gomostapur-Bholahat-Nachole) and 9 in C'nawabganj-3 (Sadar). Six of the centres in Bholahat upazila were said to be most vulnerable.

### 133 centres in Manikganj risky

UNB, *Manikganj*

One hundred thirty-three centres out of 363 in four constituencies of the district have been identified as risky.

Of the centres, 57 are in Manikganj-1, 17 in Manikganj-2, 28 in Manikganj-3 and 31 in Manikganj-4. In Kishoreganj, 265 out of 584 polling centres in the district have been identified as most vulnerable. Among the centres, 53 are in Kishoreganj-1, nine in Kishoreganj-2, 19 in Kishoreganj-3, 60 in Kishoreganj-4, 40 in Kishoreganj-5, 25 in Kishoreganj-6 and 59 in Kishoreganj-7.

### Correspondents denied press cards

UNB, *Bogra*

A number of district correspondents of national dailies and news agencies were denied special press cards to visit election centres on the polling day.

Local correspondents of the UNB, Janakantha, Manojamin, Inqilab, Dinkal, and Jugantor along with other journalists applied for the special press cards to the district administration on September 9. But the administration has given press cards to 38 of the newsmen, axing the above six from the list. The aggrieved pressmen even could not reach the newly appointed Deputy Commissioner of the district despite repeated attempts to pursue their case.

### UP chairmen's poll campaign in Gazipur

UNB, *Gazipur*

Tanzeem Ahmed Sohel, son of Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed, has got rousing support from the union parishad chairmen of his constituency, Gazipur-4.

Nine out of 11 UP chairmen of Kapasia have already started poll campaign in favour of Sohel, who is contesting the October 1 election with Awami league ticket. BNP leader Brigadier (retd)ASM Hannan Shah is contesting the polls as the four-party nominee.

### Seven Comilla BCL workers expelled

UNB, *Comilla*

Seven local leaders and workers of pro-Awami League Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) have been expelled for taking a stand against party candidate former Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru in Comilla-5 constituency.

They are Burichar thana BCL president Mizanur Rahman, former general secretary Rezaul Karim Khokon, general secretary of local college unit Sayeeduddin Manik, Burichar thana BCL members Mizanur Rahman, Sultan Ahmed, Shamimul Islam Shamim and Abdus Salam. District unit Chhatra League issued the expulsion order.

### 7,000 tribal children given polio vaccines

BSS, *Bandarban*

About 7,000 tribal children were given polio vaccines in 300 remote and inaccessible villages of Thanchi, Ruma, Ruangachhari and Alikadam upazilas of Bandarban hill district during the last three special immunisation programmes, arranged by District Health Department.

According to official sources, helicopters of Bangladesh Air Force were used by Army Regional Headquarter for successful implementation of the programme. Civil Surgeon of the district Dr Sarfaraj Khan Chowdhury said 2,000 tribal children in Thanchi, 2,500 in Ruma, 1,500 in Ruangachari and 1,000 in Alikadam upazilas were given polio vaccine under special programme from 7th to 9th National Immunisation Programmes (NID). The programme has been continuing till now.

### Clash over land leaves 5 injured

UNB, *Natore*

Five people, including a woman, were injured in a clash over land dispute at Riaghat of Gurudashpur upazila here on Sunday. Locals said the clash ensued between Moksed Mollah and his nephew Raiful Mollah at 10 am. With critical injuries Relifa Begum, 38, was admitted to Sadar Hospital while others were admitted to Gurudashpur Health Complex.

### Terrorists, villagers clash: 20 injured

UNB, *Munshiganj*

A clash between terrorists and villagers left 20 people, including a policeman, injured at Baghaiakandi village of Gazaria Upazila Saturday.

Police and witnesses said members of the notorious terrorists group named 'Typhun Bahini' swooped on the village at noon. They ransacked many houses and looted valuables. As the villagers tried to resist the hoodlums, they indiscriminately beat up the people. Police rushed to the spot and caught seven members of the gang after exchanging gunfire. They also recovered a cut-gun along with bullets from their possession. The injured cop was admitted to local Health Complex while two critically injured villagers Din Islam, 40, and Mohammad Gazi, 36, were sent to Dhaka for treatment.