

The chiefs in the fray in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

CHIEFS of two main political parties Awami League and BNP are contesting from two constituencies in Khulna division. The president of Bangladesh Awami League Sheikh Hasina is contesting from Narail-1 and 2, while chairperson of BNP Begum Khaleda Zia from Khulna-2. Sheikh Hasina has six others contenders in Narail-1 and seven in Narail-2, while Khaleda Zia will face six contenders in Khulna-2 polls battle. Sheikh Hasina's main contenders in Narail-1 and 2 are four-party candidates Dharendra Nath Shaha and M Shahidul Islam, respectively, while Khaleda Zia's main contender is Advocate Manjurul Islam, city president of

Awami League. Both the party chiefs had to file nomination papers from these three constituencies to check mounting intra-party rifts. Both of them have completed their first visit to their respective constituencies. Their candidature has been taken as prestige issue and the party workers are straining their every nerve in their effort to 'ensure' victory of their party leaders. Awami League won 25 out of 37 seats in 1996 parliament election, BNP won 11 seats and Jamaat one seat in Khulna division. Sheikh Hasina won Khulna-1 seat in last national election but did not retain it. But this time she is doubtful of her victory in Khulna-1 because of division in the vote bank of minority community created due to murder of

Kalidas Boral and sharp intra-party rift. Awami League is trying to defeat Begum Khaleda Zia in Khulna-2 at any cost. BNP, on the other hand, also has hit upon all plans to win this seat. Both the party chiefs are claiming the credit for laying foundation stone of Rupsha Bridge and establishment of Khulna Medical College during their reign and for that reason they are appealing voters to present Khulna-2 seat of parliament as reward to (each of) them. Sheikh Hasina had no other alternative but to field herself as party candidate in Narail-1 and 2 constituencies in order to 'inactivate' rebel leaders and retain the seats which were never won by BNP or any

other party in any national election in the past, political circles believe. None of the party chiefs is at all taking here the main rival into account. They are almost sanguine of their victory as reported to them by party leaders and activists. Both of them drew large number of men and women in their meetings in their constituencies during their hectic election tours. Yet, the Awami League chief may not be able to 'sail her boat' effortlessly in Narail-1 where Dharendra Nath Shaha of four-party is her main contender. But Khaleda Zia has no such problem in Khulna-2 other than being a non-local, analysts said.

Not a cakewalk this time for SQC in Ctg

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Chittagong

AN acid-test is awaitings for two offspring of one of the most controversial family, always being under criticism for its role during the most crucial juncture of the nation, 1971, in Chittagong in the October 01 election. The two are: Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury, sons of late Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, former influential Muslim League leader and a minister in the then East Pakistan. The two brothers are contesting on BNP tickets from Chittagong-6 (Raozan) and Chittagong-7 (Rangunia), their home constituency thought to be an impenetrable stronghold of QC (Quader Chowdhury) family. Politically conscious non-partisan people of the two constituencies, this time, tend to predict that people's verdict through ballot on October 01 will decide the fate of QC-dynasty as well as the political future of QC

brothers, especially that of SQ Chowdhury. "Gone are the days that he (SQ Chowdhury) dictate everything in Raozan and Rangunia. The so-called QC era is beginning to fade".... commented some voters of Noapara, Binajuri, Dabua, Pahartali, Guzra, Razanagar and Sarafbhata unions seeking anonymity. Sharp fall in acceptability and popularity of QC family in their own areas were seen in most of the unions of both Upazilas. "This happened mainly because of SQ Chowdhury's nature of 'somersaulting' in politics"...they added. Besides, SQC's cousin brother-cum-the real challenger of QC family Fazle Karim Chowdhury, defeated in 1996 poll to GQ Chowdhury, has been able to established his acceptability through extensive development works in Raozan during the five-year tenure of Awami League. This might prove as instrumental for him in the election against GQ

Chowdhury, conscious people of the constituency feel. Nurul Alam, the rebel BNP candidate and an influential local leader in Rangunia (Chittagong-7), alongwith the AL nominee Sadeq Chowdhury might also pose a real threat to the candidate of BNP-led four party alliance SQ Chowdhury. Before the dramatic re-entry of SQ Chowdhury into the party fold, Nurul Alam himself was almost certain to get the party ticket for contesting the election from Chittagong-7 seat. But he was frustrated by the high command, thanks to the strong and untiring lobbying of party high-ups, believed to be very sympathetic to SQ Chowdhury. This eventually

angered Nurul Alam and his considerably 'huge' supporters. As a result, Alam decided to keep his candidature alive and contest as an independent candidate against SQ Chowdhury. He is now busy in full swing electioneering and campaigning door-to-door. By taking advantage of this rebellion and widespread discontent among the rank and file in local BNP in Rangunia, Sadeq Chowdhury, a political 'minnow' compared to his opponent (SQ Chy) and who conceded defeat in 1996, seems to have a bright chance this time.



Door to door campaign by BNP candidate Sadek Hossain Khoka (left) and his contender AL candidate Al-haj Sayeed Khokan in old Dhaka localities.



Sporadic clashes worry Gafargaon voters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gafargaon

FREQUENT clashes between the supporters of Awami League (AL) and BNP have caused a serious concern among the voters in Mymensingh-10 (Gafargaon) constituency. According to sources, recently a clash ensued as AL activists ransacked two BNP offices and houses of BNP leaders protesting the attack on Advocate Kaiser Ahmed who along with his followers joined the Awami League from BNP on September 14. In the clash, one person was killed and 25 others were injured at

village Nama Logair in Gafargaon upazila. The dead was identified as Abdul Majid, 32. AL claimed that the victim was its activist. Of the injured, 11 reportedly received bullet injuries. Police fired blank shots and teargas shells to disperse the clashing groups. Section 144 was also imposed from 5 pm to 12 midnight on September 14 to avert further clashes. In another incident on September 15, one person was killed and 25 eight of them bullet hit were injured following clashes between Awami League and BNP activists. The victim was identified as

Emran, 34 whom the AL claimed to be its activist. Locals said Emran was out from his house at about 11 pm on Friday night but he did not return. On the following morning his body was recovered from a 'beef' at Patrosi Shaheed Bari area in Gafargaon area. Being informed, police recovered the body which bore marks of injuries. But police could not confirm the reason behind his killing. In yet another incident of clashes between the supporters of AL and BNP one was shot dead. The victim was identified as Akkas Ali, 26, a rickshawpuller. Local BNP alleged that Akkas

was shot when AL activists opened fire to establish supremacy in the area. He was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries. But local AL denied the charge and said that Akkas was killed in a gun fight between BNP and police. AL also said that BNP was trying to deny their involvement in the incident. Earlier in a consensus meeting both AL and BNP assured the police super to help keep peaceful atmosphere in Gafargaon. The situation is tense though police said that the situation is under control.

700 polling centres 'risky' in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

OUT of total 1027 polling centres in 11 constituencies of Mymensingh district, 700 have been detected as 'most vulnerable' or vulnerable. According to sources, a total 344 polling centres have been detected as 'most vulnerable' while 356 as vulnerable. The rest 327 polling centres have been reported as 'general'. According to District Election Office sources, the training session of presiding officers, assistant presiding officers and polling officers started from September 18 and continued till September 25. A

total of 17722 officials are trained up in the eight day-long training course on election. Of them, 1027 are presiding officers, 5565 are assistant presiding officers and 11,130 are polling officers. When asked, the District Election Officer-1, Md Zahid Hossain told The Daily Star that all out preparations for the ensuing election on October-1 are on according to the instructions of the authorities concerned and they are now at the final stage to hold the coming election in a free and fair manner.



Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet conducting district level election workshop.



Victims of violence in Koilgati, Sirajganj: BNP blames AL activists of torching the houses of poor day-labourers, the AL denies.

Women of a Gopalganj village to cast vote after lapse of 30 years

ALIMUZZAMAN, Gopalganj

THREE thousand female voters of Chandradighalia village in Gopalganj Sadar Upazila will apply their rights of votes in the election this time after long 30 years. They failed to apply their right of vote since the liberation of the country. In a local election after the liberation of the country one female voter was caught red-handed when she cast a false vote. One policeman insulted her openly in the Madrasa centre. After this incident the gaurdians of the locality took a

decision that Muslim female voters had no necessity to attend the election booths, only the male voters would apply their right of vote. Since then, to follow the decision of the 'gaurdians' no female Muslim voter attended the election centres and cast their votes. No to cast votes by female had become an unwritten system of law in this union. A number of Hindu female voters also refrained themselves from casting votes. Recently as soon as a report regarding the matter had been published in a newspaper, the election commission took a rapid

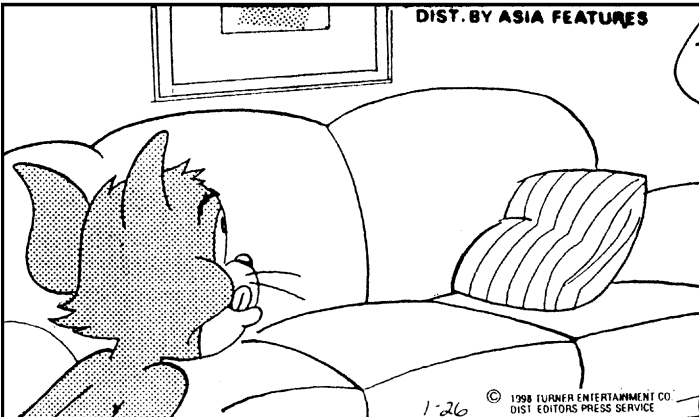
step. A directive was passed to the district administration to send a report regarding the matter after proper enquiry. A report regarding the fact of the matter after enquiry was sent to the election commission and the election commission passed an order to take necessary steps to facilitate the female voters of this union for casting their votes in the election without hesitation. Subsequently, the Sadar TNO visited that union and exchanged opinion on casting votes by the female voters. He talked to the present chairman, ex-chairman, the representatives of NGOs, the

elite of the locality and senior citizens. Besides two encouraging meetings were held at the efforts of the district information directorate. In these meetings held at the premise of Chandradighalia School the female voters who were present expressed their desire to apply their right of vote in the ensuing assembly election. Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner had expressed his hope that female voters of that union will cast their voters in this election. It is reported that the union has been kept under observation by the district administration.

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