

AL-BNP neck to neck contest in Sylhet presumed

IQBAL SIDIQUEE, Sylhet

WITH the date of election getting nearer, contest between the candidates of major political parties is assuming neck to neck proposition in most of the constituencies of Sylhet district. Latest situation in five constituencies shows that, there will be direct contest between the Awami League and 4-party alliance candidates while it may be a triangular one.

In Sylhet-1 constituency comprising Sylhet Sadar and Companyganj, the fight will be between two giants M Saifur Rahman of BNP and AMA Muhit of Awami League. In 1996 elections, Saifur contested for 3 seats of Sylhet and Moulvibazar district and won two. In Sylhet-1, he lost to Awami League's Humayun Rashid Chowdhury by a margin of 720 votes. This time also he is being considered a strong fighter here. He is not suffering any inner conflict, rather enjoying the 4-party alliance support. Saifur is seeking votes on the basis of his role in launching a number of development projects during the BNP regimes.

On the other hand, the Awami League nominee AMA Muhit is getting all out support from his party men, as both the rival groups of the party promised to work together after the party chief's instruction to sink all differences. Muhit is seeking people's support on the plea of continuing the development activities initiated by the late JS Speaker Humayun Rashid

and every possibility that, it would turn into a direct contest between the AL and BNP candidates, a number of people of the constituency said. AL has its immediate past MP Shah Azizur Rahman, JP has Muhibur Rahman and BNP has Ilyas Ali in the fray.

In Sylhet-3 constituency comprising South Surma and Fenchuganj upazila there was a keenly contested fight between the nominees of JP, AL and BNP in the

Majumder to face Jamaat's Moulana Farid Uddin Chowdhury who is enjoying the 4-party alliance support. Farid Chowdhury lost to Majumder in 1996 by about 1500 votes. According to a cross section of people of the constituency, Farid Chowdhury is comparatively in a better position while Majumder is suffering problems from the Chhatra League activists due to his attitude in respect of students politics. However, the fight will be a

who is also the advisor to the BNP chairperson was dropped due to the alliance adjustment. After a few days of campaign, Hasib went on hiding mysteriously. A rumour was there that he had left the constituency without giving any information to the activists being 'bribed' by the independent candidate Syed Mokbul, who earlier failed to manage a BNP ticket. The 'missing' of Hasib put the alliance leaders and activists in a serious trouble. After



AL nominee for Sylhet-4 Imran Ahmed and for Sylhet-1 AMA Muhit addressing meeting at Gowainghat recently.



BNP nominee for Sylhet-1 M Saifur Rahman addressing meeting at Companyganj recently.

Chowdhury. He is also claiming that, he should get a preference as he hails from the Sylhet town while Saifur Rahman hails from Moulvibazar district.

In Sylhet-2 constituency comprising Biswanath and Balaganj upazilas, there are reports of a triangular fight between the AL, BNP and JP (E). However, there

1996. JP's Abdul Mukit Khan won by defeating AL's Mahmud Samad Chowdhury by about 400 votes while BNP's Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury was in the third position with 300 votes behind Samad.

This time also the same persons are the contestants. But, it has already been evident that neck to neck fight would be between the AL

tough contest from the BNP's Dildor Hossain Selim, Ex-upazila chairman, who fought as an independent candidate in the 1996. Besides, the JP (E) has Kazi Kamal Ahmed in the contest.

The Sylhet-5 constituency is comprised of Jakiganj and Kanaighat upazilas, where AL has its immediate past MP Hafij Ahmed

hard one, it is almost clear.

The 4-party alliance is facing a peculiar situation in Sylhet-6 constituency comprising Golapganj and Beinabazar upazilas. The alliance first announced the name of Barrister MA Hasib of JP (Nazir) to fight against AL's Nurul Islam Nahid. The name of ex-ERD Secretary Inam Ahmed Chowdhury

few days, Hasib sent press release stating that, he had been suffering from hypertension and other health problems. He even told about his admission to a Bangkok clinic. Meantime, the alliance leaders locally decided to support Principal Maswood Khan of IOJ as a nominee of alliance, due to the undeclared absence of Hasib.

Interestingly, Hasib then returned again and told that, he was fit to run the campaign as a 4-party nominee.

It has created a critical problem for the alliance. There are rumours that, the independent candidate who has reportedly spent several crores of taka in the name of developing institutions, had influenced Hasib to compel the alliance activists to support him. All these made the way easy for the independent candidate rather giving a prospect of easy run for AL candidate Nahid, a number of people opined.

However, IOJ candidate Principal Maswood Khan addressed the 4-party alliance public meeting held at the Sylhet Alia Madrasah Maidan on Monday in which Begum Khaleda Zia was the chief guest while Barrister Hasib was not seen there.

Last of all, the real contest here may be between the AL candidate Nahid and Independent candidate Mokbul, maintained a number of people.

Triangular fight likely in Barisal

AROOP TALUKDAR, Barisal

SEEMINGLY, Abul Hasanat Abdullah, the former chief whip and the AL stalwart is facing tough contest with the BNP candidate in Barisal 1 (Gournadi-Agailjhara) and BNP and other party candidates in Barisal-2 (Babuganj-Uzirpur) constituencies in the coming general election of October 1.

In Barisal-1 four party alliance candidate Zahiruddin Swapan, a former left leaning student leader, now a BNP leader who is confident about winning the coming election defeating AL candidate Abul Hasanat Abdullah. Abul Hasanat Abdullah also is fighting hard to win the election as former MP with his full force and efforts. In this situation, workers and supporters of both AL and BNP and its alliance are

strongly facing each other in election campaign everyday. As a result clashes between the workers and supporters of both sides are taking place in different places in the constituency which had left mean while many electoral camps of both AL and BNP, houses and shops of the supporters of both the parties damaged and over one hundred of local people injured.

According to local sources,

people of Gournadi, Torky, Mahilara, Agailjhara, Batajore, Barthi and some other places are passing their days and nights in a very tense situation. Hasanat, it may be recalled, won this seat defeating BNP candidate Kazi Golam Mahabub in 1991 and 1996 general elections. In 1991 Zahiruddin Swapan contested the parliamentary election as Workers Party candidate. Later he joined

BNP and became a central leader. Swapan now alleged that members of minority community including the common people in this constituency were tortured and victimised by the AL and BCL armed cadres during last five years in different ways.

Besides, Abul Hasanat Abdullah also alleged that the BNP and JCD armed cadres unleashed a reign of terror in different places here after taking over power by the caretaker government. The other party candidate in this constituency are Sarder Harun Rana (I Front-JP), Advocate Siddiqur Rahman (JP-M), Nihar Biswas (Independent) and Ranjan Baidya (Independent). Abul Hasanat Abdullah is also contesting from Barisal-2 (Babuganj-Uzirpur) constituency where he is facing hard contest with BNP central leader Moazzem Hossain Alal (4 party alliance candidate), former JP MP Golam Faruk Avi (JP-M) and former MP Rashed Khan Menon (Workers Party) including Golam Kibria Tipu (I-Front-JP).

For the first time Hasanat is contesting from this seat. According to local people, Avi has a good number of supporters as BNP candidate Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal and they don't count Hasanat as a formidable rival. But some people think that Hasanat's has a bright chance if he gets 23 per cent minority votes including others here in the polls, though he is not a resident of this constituency, they said. Side by side, Golam Kibria Tipu and Rashed Khan Menon also have supporters of their own in different areas, informed sources said. They will also pull a sizable number voters though Menon had lost his security money in the parliamentary election of 1996. Observers said this time there will be a triangular fight among Hasanat, Alal and Avi. None can say, who will win the race.

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by Jim Davis



Stalwarts face hard fight in Sirajganj

AKHTERUZZAMAN BABLU, Sirajganj

WITH only a few days left for the JS polls the electioneering has got a momentum in Sirajganj district. The overall situation remained almost peaceful except some stray incidents in Sirajganj and Kazipur and Raygon-Tarash where four stalwarts are in the fray. They are Alhaj Mohammad Nasim, his elder brother Dr Mohammad Selim, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku and Abdul Mannan Talukder.

Thirty-seven candidates are in the race in seven constituencies. The people of Kazipur, Sirajganj sadar and Raygan-Tarash are expecting a neck to neck fight between AL and BNP. Alhaj Mohammad Nasim is hoping to be elected from Sirajganj-1 (Kazipur), Sirajganj-2 (Sadar) and Sirajganj-3 (Raygan-Tarash) constituencies as he has done a lot of development work during the AL reign. On the other hand his elder brother Dr Selim is contending Alhaj Mohammad Nasim as Director of an NGO where thousands of voters of Sirajganj-1 (Kazipur) now serve under him and are obliged to him. Due to this Dr Selim may snatch many votes, and Nasim will face in hardship contesting 4-party nominated candidate Abdul Mojid Minu in the constituency. Nasim is also hoping to be elected for the second time from the Sirajganj-2 (Sadar) constituency as he has done a lot of development work during AL reign. But 4-party nominated candidate central BNP leader and former Zila Parisad chairman Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku who also the son of Late Abdullah Al Mahmud the then Pakistan central Industry Minister and a social worker showing many

development work done in the period of his father.

In the 1991 election BNP got the seat but in 1996 AL candidate Alhaj Mohammad Nasim won the seat with 68,598 votes while BNP got 52,704 votes, Dr M A Matin got 32,515 and Jamaat got 22,795 votes. At present BNP, JP and Jamaat are now working jointly this year which is a plus point for the 4-party candidate.

In Sirajganj-3 constituency, Raygan-Tarash (Chalan Beel) area is generally known as BNP castle. Four-party nominated candidate

BNP leader Abdul Mannan Talukder was elected MP in 1991 and 1996. He is now getting the support of 4-party alliance which can be helpful for him. It may be mentioned Jamaat candidate Abdus Satter got 17,878 votes in 1996. Abdul Mannan Talukder is hopeful to get these votes this year.

On the other hand Alhaj Mohammad Nasim who has been an important political leader and powerful minister and son of Shahid M Mansur Ali, is also trying heart and soul.