

Sunamganj-3 vibrant with last-minute rallies

Campaign for Wednesday's by-polls ends midnight today

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Hectic campaign in Sunamganj-3, joined by national level leaders of all political parties except from Awami League, stops at midnight today.

The bypolls will be held on Wednesday. The Jatiya Sangsad seat fell vacant following the death of Awami League stalwart Abdus Samad Azad on April 27.

Remote villages in low-lying Jagannathpur and South Sunamganj upazilas are now vibrant with rallies, microphones blaring on roads and posters hung across streets and pasted on walls.

Rural markets are experiencing a rare phenomenon in monsoon. Shops remain open beyond midnight as campaigners draw crowds.

But boat is the only means of communication now, which makes campaign a bit costly for candidates and their men.

Campaigners are spending money lavishly. Jagannathpur upazila is considered a rich area with a good number of expatriates in the UK and USA.

Shops selling cell phone cards are doing a brisk business as cell phones play an important role in the campaign, some shop owners told this correspondent.

Though there are nine candidates, four are front runners, local people and political circles say. They are four-party alliance candidate Moulana Shahinur Pasha Chowdhury who lost to AL stalwart Abdus Samad Azad in 2001 polls by

5636 votes, former Additional Secretary of Election Commission MA

Mannan enjoying backing by an AL faction in the district, Nazrul Islam having blessings from the other faction of AL and Lt. Col. (ret'd) Syed Ali Ahmed of Jatiya Party (Ershad). Pasha is a leader of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), a component of the alliance.

Although AL, having a stronghold in the constituency, is boycotting the polls, two party men are front runners in the race. No national level AL leader came from Dhaka for campaign but all party leaders are involved in the hustings.

Shahinur Pasha drew the highest number of alliance bigwigs in the campaign. Prime Minister's Advisor

for Parliamentary Affairs Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury addressed two rallies at Paglabazar in Sunamganj and at Jagannathpur upazila headquarters yesterday.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, along with several lawmakers and a Whip addressed several rallies on Wednesday.

Central Juba Dal President and Commerce Advisor Barkatullah Bulu also addressed a number of rallies on Thursday.

Moulana Fazlul Haque Aminee, Chairman of a faction of alliance component IOJ, will address rallies today. The alliance leaders are campaigning for Pasha on the back of what they continuation of development activities in the area.



A portion of the gutted Feroz Mia Degree College in Ashugonj (left) and its students in a procession demanding arrest and punishment of the culprits.



PHOTO: STAR

RALLY AT ASHUGANJ 'Nab culprits behind setting college afire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Thousands of people, joined by political leaders, journalists, teachers and Union Parishad leaders at a grand rally at Ashugonj yesterday demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the culprits who set ablaze the Ashugonj Feroz Mia Degree College on the night of July 12.

The grand rally followed five-days' protests marked with meetings, processions, human chains and submission of a memorandum to the Prime Minister through the local administration seeking her personal intervention in the matter.

Twelve rooms of the tin shed college were burnt as unidentified miscreants torched it at about 10 pm on that night.

Brahmanbaria Deputy Commission Md Sayedur Rahman, who is also Chairman of the College Governing Body, presided over the rally held on the college ground.

Police Superintendent ATM Tareque, ADC (Education and Development) Md Fayekuzzaman Chowdhury, Ashugonj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Khalilur Rahman were also present at the rally.

It was addressed by, among others, Ashugonj Firoz Mia Degree College Principal Md Shahjahn Saju, Ashugonj Press Club President Md Akteruzzaman, Ashugonj Upazila Awami League leader Kamal Ahmed, Jatiya Party President Md Shahjahan and founder of the college Md Firoz Mia.

The speakers demanded immediate arrest of the miscreants and their exemplary punishment for torching an educational institution.

A case has been filed with Ashugonj thana. The case will be transferred to Detective Branch (DB), SPATM Tareque said.

Rift widens in Rajshahi AL over Sardar Amjad issue

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

The rift in Rajshahi Awami League over joining of veteran politician Sardar Amjad Hossain in the party surfaced yesterday as the two factions held separate meetings of party's 'executive committee'.

The meeting held at Mianpara Public Library with its Acting President Meraj Mollah in the chair decided to "oust" its General Secretary Tajul Islam Md Faruk if he "continues to violate central instructions".

On the other hand, Faruk's meeting held at Rajshahi Engineers' Institute with self-declared Acting President Ataur Rahman in the chair

demanding "intervention by party high command" to take action against his opponents.

They are divided over joining of Sardar Amjad Hossain in AL from Jatiya Party, who is being seen as a contestant in the next general elections from Bagmara-Mohonpur constituency against Faruk.

Leaders in Meraj Mollah's group yesterday said they decided to offer a "conditional consensus" to Faruk, alleging that he was repeatedly violating party high command's instruction not to create division.

"If Faruk denies the consensus proposal, we will oust Faruk from his post and replace him with First Joint Secretary KM Shafiqul Islam Nofel",

Meraj Mollah told this correspondent after their meeting.

Their conditions include giving the post of party president to Meraj Mollah and scrapping 'pocket committees' formed without the signature of Meraj Mollah.

They claimed that out of 51 members of the Executive Committee, 25 including three vice-presidents and two joint secretaries were present at their meeting while five were out of Rajshahi.

Among others, the meeting was addressed by party vice-presidents Abdus Samad, Mizanur Rahman, Quazi Abdul Awal and saiful Islam Dulal; joint secretaries KM Shafiqul Islam Nofel and Amanul Hasan Duda.

Mollah, along with a large number of party leaders and workers recently called on party chief Sheikh Hasina and demanded Faruk's removal.

"The AL chief called me the acting president. As per her directives, I asked Faruk on July 11 to call an Executive Committee meeting on July 17. But he called an 'extended general meeting' and invited me as a vice-president. So I called the EC meeting separately", said Meraj Mollah.

Faruk told The Daily Star that their meeting drew 32 members of the Executive Committee. The meeting decided that the central party high command "should take action against those who are opposing Faruk."

General Secretary Tajul Islam Md Faruk, science and technology affairs secretary Shafiqul Islam, Bagmara AL secretary Zakirul Islam Santu and law affairs secretary Motiur Rahman address Faruk's meeting.

The meeting continued when the report was filed in the evening.

2 child traffickers get life in Dinajpur

A CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A court here yesterday sentenced two child traffickers to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI).

The convicts are Saleha Khatun and Siddique alias Reaz Uddin of Sadar upazila.

The convicts lured Shahid, 10, and Sumon, 11, by promising lucrative job on July 16, 1996. Since then the boys went missing from their houses.

Later, Hakimpur police recovered them from Hill Land Port while the two were trafficking the boys to India.

After examining the records and witnesses, the judge of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, Shamim Mohammad Afzal, pronounced the verdict.



PHOTO: STAR

Flood has gripped about a dozen districts. Photo shows a village at Kaiyerbazar under Fulchhari upazila in Gaibandha.

Yes to more EC funds, no to reforms



Saifur Rahman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has said if the opposition wants, more funds can be allocated for the Election Commission so that it can prepare its budget independently to strengthen its activities.

But he rejected the Awami League-led opposition's demands for caretaker and electoral reforms.

The head of the caretaker government is appointed as per Constitutional provisions, agreed upon by the then opposition.

There are so many political

parties in the country and a consensus of all on appointment of the head of a caretaker government is an impossible proposition. So, the Constitution should be followed in this regard, he said.

He claimed that many of the reform proposals put forward by the AL-led opposition, if implemented, will only create deadlock and confusion.

Saifur was inaugurating a week-long tree fair, organised on the ground of Kashinath Alauddin High School in Moulvibazar town on Saturday.

The Finance Minister said they

have made these demands only to hinder development programmes being implemented by the BNP led 4-party alliance government.

He also rejected the demand for direct election of women members of parliament.

He urged the opposition to sit on national issues to resolve those and develop the country instead of creating issues out of nothing.

The tree fair has been organised jointly by district administration, Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and the Forest Department.

Resist Jamaat politics Charmonai Pir takes a swipe at rival party in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Islami Shashntantra Andolon Ameer Maulana Syed Fazlul Karim (Pir of Charmonai) has called upon the people to unite to resist the politics of Jamaat-e-Islami, saying it is "the main enemy of Islam today".

Jamaat is not an Islamic party and does not want to establish Islam in the country. It misguides people in the name of Islam only to go to power, he told a public meeting at Shahid Abdur Razzak Park in the town on Saturday. Its activists are also engaged in violence, he alleged.

Being partner in the ruling coalition, it is now consolidating its position in the administration under the shelter of BNP. BNP will be responsible for all "misdeeds" of Jamaat, he said.

Karim also accused ruling BNP of flouting its election pledge to take steps to establish Islamic values in

the society. It is now helping Jamaat to spread misinterpreted and its own version Islam among the people.

The alliance came to power with the support of pro-Islamic forces he claimed. The people will reject it if it continues to shelter Jamaat, he said.

Karim also reiterating his demand to declare Ahmadiyyas non Muslim and to establish an Islamic university in the country.

Satkhira unit of Islami Shashntantra Andolon organised the meeting with its district president Prof Shafiqur Rahman in the chair. Senior Nayeb-e-Ameer of International Khatme Nabuat Movement, Bangladesh (IKNM,B), Mufti Noor Hossain Nurani, was the special guest. It was addressed by, among others, Maulana Asadul Haq, Syed Nesar Uddin Ahmed Babla, Maulana Afsar Uddin and Sheikh Mizanur Rahman.



PHOTO: STAR

Student of Millennium Scholastic School in Bogra explaining to visitors their projects at a science fair held on the school compound recently.

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