

## SYLHET CITY CORPORATION POLLS

## Gap in BNP widens; AL still undecided

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Political circles in Sylhet city is getting warmer as the Election Commission is planning to hold city corporation elections in March next year. But the scenario in Sylhet city is different this time.

With about 90 percent of voter listing having been done in the city, front ranking leaders in both Awami League (AL) and BNP are talking about mayoral polls but things are not getting clear as indoor politics is not still allowed, said a number of leaders in both the camps.

BNP in Sylhet is in not in a comfortable position mainly due to division in the central leadership, political circles said.

Though a big group of front ranking party leaders in Sylhet was under the 'control' of party stalwart Saifur Rahman, now they are in a trouble as their stance is being a questioned by party insiders.

A number of front ranking Saifur loyalists are in trouble while their rivals led by former lawmaker M Ilyas Ali are with newly appointed secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

Almost all the leading party men in Ilyas-led faction were dropped from important positions in the district unit by their rivals backed by Saifur in 2004. Ilyas also lost the post of district BNP convener during BNP rule as he along with two other lawmakers dissented with Saifur.

Party sources said Saifur-backed leaders in Sylhet went to the capital to meet Delwar last 'week but failed. The gap is widening as pro-Ilyas leaders are avoiding them. Even, they termed their rivals' betrayers, the sources said.



Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran



Babrul Hossain Babul



AFA Kamal

for the mayoral post in the first Sylhet city corporation polls held in 2003. Saifur fielded him ignoring protests by party men in Sylhet and Dhaka, the sources claimed. This in-fighting ensured victory of AL's Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran.

Since the 2003 polls, Haque remained almost silent in politics. He went to the capital to meet Khondker Delwar, but failed.

He is again interested to run in the coming mayoral race, sources claimed.

Rebel BNP leader and former chairman of Sylhet pourashava AFM Kamal fought as an independent candidate in the 2003 polls as he failed earn Saifur's confidence. He had to pay for this. He lost the post of director of Agrani Bank and

be a party candidate in the mayoral polls. Kamal is weighing the offer, the sources claimed.

When contacted, Kamal told this correspondent on Sunday, "I have got a call from Awami League. It is still there, he said.

SCC mayor and city AL chief Kamal is in the jail facing graft charges.

It will take time for things to be clear as restriction on indoor politics is still there, he said.

But, Kamal's stance was not well received by all AL leaders in the city. City AL general secretary Misbahuddin Ahmed Siraj said, if Kamal fails to run in the polls race this time, the party will look for a 'suitable alternative'. He said he may also seek party's approval to run in the polls race...

"The party does not need to bring some one from outside as there are a good number of people in the party", he added.

When contacted, AL Presidium member Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star, "There is no doubt

that Awami League will field its own man in the polls".

He however said it is not the time to choose a candidate. Things will be decided in time, he added.

SCC mayor and city AL chief Kamal is in the jail facing graft charges.

Former chairman of Sylhet Pourasava and Sadar Upazila Parishad Babrul Hossain Babul is also aspirant to run in the mayoral race as an AL man, sources said. If refused by AL, he may run as an independent candidate, Babul said.

City AL joint secretary Ashfaque Ahmed is also another aspirant.

Kamran's wife Asma Kamran may join the race if her husband remains behind the bar, some party insiders say.



Left helpless by the recent Sidr, women doing the arduous task of road repair for living at Pakhimara village in Kalapara upazila in Patuakhali. The photo was taken yesterday.

## Sigh of relief in Cholon Beel as outlaws surrender 6 to face trial for 'serious crimes'

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, Sirajganj

Back from Cholon Beel

Surrender of 105 outlaws belonging to outlaws has brought back peace and a sense of security in minds of people in greater Cholon Beel area in Sirajganj and Natore districts.

Former chairman of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) surrendered to police at remote Katagarai Hat in Tarash upazila. Another surrendered on the following day.

Six of the outlaws -- Rejaul Karim, convener of Krishak Sramik Mukti Front, Bishu, Gobinda, Dabaria, Jamal Uddin and Jahanur Islam -- were sent to jail as they were wanted in cases for murder, robbery and abduction, police said.

The six will face legal process while the others got 'general amnesty' upon their promise to lead normal life.

With the help of local administration, the surrendered extremists have started normal life in their

own areas and got involved in different professions like farming, fishery and small businesses, said Ayub Ali, Assistant Superintendent of Police of Raiganj Circle.

He however said police teams are monitoring their activities so that they do not go back to the underworld, he said.

Earlier, in absence of proper vigilance by law enforcers, greater Cholon Beel area covering Tarah, Raiganj and Ullapara upazila in Sirajganj; Sherpur upazila in Bogra; and Singra and Gurudashpur upazila in Natore became safe dens for outlaws who realised toll and were involved in robbery, abduction and murder. Several incidents of killing over establishing supremacy among rival groups also took place in last one year.

The extremists used to target local Union Parishad leaders, rich farmers and traders for extortion and would even commit murder in case of failure to get their demand fulfilled.

They killed four policemen and looted firearms and ammunition in

their attack on Randhunibari and Bamihal police outposts on September 17, 2002 and December 19, 2005.

During the present caretaker government, law enforcement agencies started tough action against the extremists in the area.

While visiting areas in greater Cholon Beel in Sirajganj and Natore districts yesterday, this correspondent saw 'forgiven' extremists working as householders at the administration assured them of government lands and ponds for fish cultivation and low-interest loans.

"I got inspiration to surrender when ASP Ayub Ali advised me to lead normal life. He also assured me all assistance on condition of leaving anti-social activities," said former PBCP member Tazir Uddin of Boldipara village in Tarash upazila.

The outlaws may try to reorganise and cause problem for those who surrendered as well as for people.

The surrendered outlaws have urged the law enforcers to take immediate steps to nab these who are yet to be netted, police sources said.

assurance from authorities. Now he is planning to set up a grocery shop at the local market to lead a normal life, he added.

Khalilur Rahman, chairman of Deshigram Union Parishad (UP); Amirul Islam Grahro, chairman of Naogaon Union Parishad; former UP chairman Jamshed Ali, Fakir Abdul Khayer and Rahmat Ali said people in the area can now move freely and sleep peacefully after surrender of the extremists.

But a number of PBCP leaders and activists including woman 'area commander' Nurzahan Begum, Abu Sayed, Shahjahan Ali, Bablu, Poresh, Kana Rashid and Huzur Ali are yet to surrender or be arrested, sources said.

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## RAPE OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED GIRL Family threatened to withdraw case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Several hundred farmers of

Pirgachha upazila in the

district

yesterday

besieze

Uno

Office

for

fertiliser

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

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OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Border Security Force (BSF) of

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