

## 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 per cent 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 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.

In such a situation, BNP is in a bad shape to field candidate for the mayoral post as none from the Saifur-Hafiz faction is coming forward openly with any opinion.

The then district BNP chief MA Haque, known as a Saifur loyalist,



Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran

was also expelled from the party. Kamal, who was elected Sylhet pourashava chairman twice earlier, may join Awami League this time, sources claimed.

Some senior AL leaders met Kamal days ago and offered him to



Babrul Hossain Babul

"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



AFA Kamal

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.

"I am looking into the possibilities and have not taken any decision", Kamal said.

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 Misbah uddin Ahmed Siraj said, if Kamran 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.

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 Kamran is in the jail facing graft charges.

Former chairman of Sylhet Pourashava 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 Ashfaq 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 outlawed has brought back peace and a sense of security in minds of people in greater Cholon Beel area in Sirajganj and Natore districts.

Last week, 104 outlaws belonging to Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) surrendered to police at remote Katagari 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 Jahurul 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 Bamihail 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 as 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.

Surman Ali of Talam village in Tarash upazila, who also left PBCP, said he was absconding for long in fear of police action but decided to surrender when he heard about the

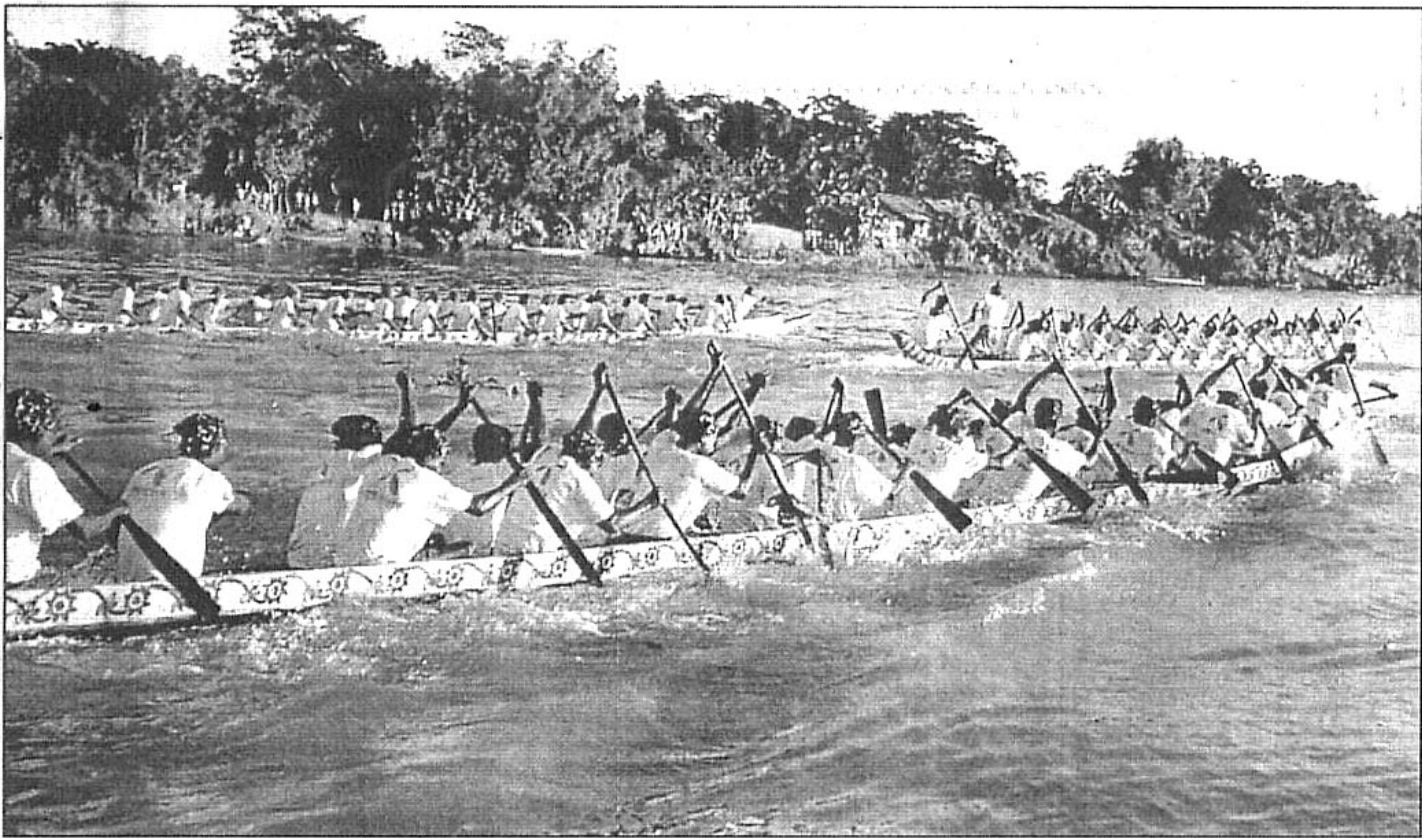
assurance from authorities. Now he is planning to set up a grocery shop at the local market to lead a normal life, he added.

Khalilur Rahman, chairman of Deshigram Union Parishad (UP); Amirul Islam Grahoo, chairman of Naogaon Union Parishad; former UP chairman Jamshir Ali, Fakir Abul 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.

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.



Participants striving to outdo competitors at Grameenphone-sponsored boat race on Halda river in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Errors in voter ID cards in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Errors have been found in many of the voter ID cards being delivered among eligible voters in Rangpur municipality area.

The errors have been found in names, addresses, age and father's names.

Sources in district election office said ward commissioners are distributing the national ID cards in phases among 1, 59,190 eligible voters in the municipal area.

Commissioner Ajmol Hosen Lebu of ward no. 4 said, the name of his wife has been written as Akmol Begum instead of Ajmol Begum in her ID card no: 85249049044331.

Akmol said his younger brother's name is Arkan Hosen but it has been written as Arfan Hosen.

Abdur Razzak of Radhavollve area said, his wife's name is Masuma Khatun but it has been written as Mira Begum in her ID card No. 8524904044327.

Hafiz Md. Mahub Hasan said, his name has been written as Md. Mahub Hasan Hafiz and his father's name has been written as

Late Yahea instead of late AKM Yahea in his card no: 8524906069445.

The erroneous name of his father has also been put in ID card no. 8524906069444 of his younger brother Hafiz Md. Mahmud Hasan.

Mousumi Yasmeen said her husband's name is Hafiz Md. Mehedi Hasan but it has been written as Md. Mehedi Hasan in her card no: 8524906069446.

Nirmol Chandra Mohanta of Boiragipara said, he was born in November 11, 1977 but his date of birth has been put as February 2, 1982 in his ID card no: 8524909116235.

There are similar mistakes in the date of birth of his father and mother, he said.

When contacted, Rangpur Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Momotaj said, he has been informed of the errors and steps are being taken to correct those.

District Election Officer Subash Chandra Sarker said there is nothing to be worried for the errors. Ward commissioners have been asked to correct the errors, he said.

## Introduce rationing in Sidr-hit areas

Former BNP MP Manzur demands

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Former BNP lawmaker Nurul Islam Manzur yesterday suggested introduction of rationing system in Sidr affected areas to help the distressed, specially the middle class and lower middle classes people.

Exchanging views with journalists at Barisal Reporters Unity, Manjur also called for implementing sustainable programs and pro-

jects in disaster management to face natural calamities in future.

He stressed immediate supply of seed, saplings and fertiliser to farmers, and interest free long-term loan for fishery and poultry sectors.

Describing his experience during visits to Sidr affected areas of Kawkhali, Kathalia and Bhandaria upazilas, Manjur said disaster management in Bangladesh has proved successful in preventing loss of human lives.

## 'Empower local govt for development'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Speakers at a seminar yesterday urged the members of civil society and media men to play a strong advocacy role so that the government takes immediate step for strengthening local government.

It is a high time for taking step as there is a neutral government, which has no 'political intention', they said, adding that the previous democratic and non-democratic governments used local government system with a political motive and to establish vested power from central to periphery.

Siksha O Shangkriti Charcha Kendra (SSCK) of Gono Sahajya Sangstha (GSS) organised the semi-

nar titled "Role of Civil Society and Media in Effective Local Government" at its conference room.

The speakers emphasised the need to strengthen local government so that it can mobilise local resources and use it for the development at the local level as per demand and desire of local people.

No democracy would be fruitful without existence of strong local government as it works as a 'training ground' for local people to learn democracy, they said.

Amirul Islam, general secretary of Kushtia Shilpakala Academy, also member of SSCK, presided over the seminar.

## Farmers besiege UNO office for fertiliser

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Several hundred farmers of Pirgachha upazila in the district yesterday besieged Upazila Nirbahi Officer demanding fertiliser.

Farmers from Tambulpur union gathered on the premises of UNO office from 10:00am and asked the UNO for MoP and other necessary fertilisers. Kept besieged for about half an hour, the UNO assured them of distributing fertilizers and the farmers withdrew.

The farmers said they did not get MoP when they need it badly to cultivate potato.

As there was no list of farmers of the villages, the fertiliser dealer did not sell it to them, UNO Goutom Kumar said.

## BSF returns cattle trader's body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Border Security Force (BSF) of India yesterday returned the body of Bangladeshi cattle trader who was gunned down on Bazruk border under Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon on Saturday morning.

The return of the body followed a flag meeting between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and BSF. BDR sources said.

The deceased, Md Rezaul Islam, 45, of village Bagra under Baliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon, was shot as he along with another cattle trader illegally intruded into about 200 metres inside the Indian territory, BDR sources quoted the villagers as saying. His companion was also injured during the incident.

On Sunday, another Bangladeshi cattle trader, Md Shahidul Islam 42, of village Patuapara under Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon received serious bullet injuries as BSF shot him about 300 metres inside Indian territory near Fakirganj border in Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon.

## RAPE OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED GIRL

# Family threatened to withdraw case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

The criminal who violated 13 year-old physically challenged Swapna is threatening her family members with death and abduction as they demanded his trial.

"It has become very difficult for me to move out of house as some assailants hired by the rapist and his accomplices have been deployed to kill me", Swapna's father Panna Shaikh told this correspondent during a visit to their house at Dhukuria village in Sirajganj Sadar Upazila recently.

"I lodged a general dairy again with Sirajganj Sadar police station, but to no effect", he lamented.

"They (rapist and his associates)

are creating pressure to withdraw the case", he said.

The minor girl was allegedly violated on April 4 last year. Swapna, with the assistance of Action on Disability and Development (ADD), an NGO, lodged a case with Sadar police station the next day accusing Rafiqul Islam, 25, of the same village.

Police nabbed the alleged rapist around eight months after the incident but he was released on bail three days after arrest.

Getting bail, Rafiqul and his accomplices started to press the victim's family to withdraw the case and threatened with death or abduction for noncompliance.

Panna went to police again to seek security of life, but police did

nothing except recording a general dairy. Some local influential tried to arbitrate by offering him money, claimed Panna Shaikh.

Arefa Pervin, Program Associate of ADD, said, "We moved to police station and are ready to fight in court for trial. The culprits are threatening the victim's family for withdrawal of the case".

Swapna is the eldest of Panna Shaikh's two disabled children. His son Bayazit, 7, is also physically challenged. The girl and the boy can not move without wheelchairs or help by another person.

Panna, can not afford better treatment for his two disabled children due to poverty.



Marking International Human Rights Day, employees of Pallishree, a local NGO, in black skirts stage a silent sit-in on the premises of Dinajpur Press Club yesterday as part of campaign to prevent domestic violence against women.

PHOTO: STAR