

TANGAIL-3, 6
AL, BNP men
hope to sail
thru' as rebels
back out

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Withdrawal of nomination papers of two rebel Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) candidates in Tangail-3 (Ghatail) and Tangail-6 (Nagarpur-Delduar) constituencies have brightened the prospects of AL-led grand alliance and BNP-led four-party candidates in the upcoming national parliament election.

This time, AL-led grand alliance nominated cardiologist Dr Motiur Rahman Chowdhury for Tangail-3 (Ghatail) constituency to contest against 'strong' BNP-led four-party candidate former state minister Lutfar Rahman Khan Azad.

Deprived of party ticket, Tangail district AL president Shamsur Rahman Khan Shajahan, who lost the last three elections to Azad, submitted his nomination paper in the constituency as an independent candidate.

However, veteran leader Shamsur Rahman Khan Shajahan has withdrawn his nomination paper in the last date for withdrawal after getting request from the AL high command.

As a result, new face Dr Motiur Rahman Chowdhury may win the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) seat this time after 22 years as an AL candidate as people of the constituency tired of old faces, party sources claimed.

In Tangail-6 (Nagarpur-Delduar), BNP-led four-party alliance nominated former state minister Gautam Chakraborty to contest against AL-led grand alliance candidate Ahsanul Islam Titu, commerce and industries secretary of Tangail district AL.

Deprived of party ticket, former international affairs secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Rabul Awal Lavlu submitted his nomination paper in the constituency as an independent candidate.

However, Rabul Awal Lavlu has withdrawn his nomination paper in the last date for withdrawal after getting request from the BNP high command.

BNP candidate Gautam won from the constituency in the 1996 and 2001 elections defeating AL candidate Khandakar Abdul Baten.

Deprived of AL-led grand alliance ticket Baten will contest from the constituency as an independent candidate in the upcoming election and Gautam will take advantage of it, party sources claimed.

PBCP man held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

The police arrested an outlaw at Boroberakharia village in Belkuchi upazila of Sirajganj district yesterday.

The arrestee, Kamal Bakhsh, 27, is an active member of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) and an accused in a case filed in connection with the attack on Randhuni Bari police camp, looting of arms and killing of four policemen.

On receiving information that Kamal returned to the area ahead of parliamentary polls, a team of police raided his house at around 2:00pm and arrested him.



BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia addresses a huge public meeting at Lalabazar at South Surma upazila in Sylhet on the first day of her election campaign yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

KHULNA-3

20,000 jute workers a concern for vote seekers

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

All the six candidates of Khulna-3 (Khalishpur, Daulatpur and Khanjahan Ali thanas) seat are concerned about wooing the votes of over 20 thousand jute mill workers in the constituency.

Economically handicapped and frustrated voters of the six limping jute mills, two state-owned and four private-owned ones, are cautious about voting for the 'right person' in the constituency where the number of voters stands at 1,82,919.

The six candidates already in polls race from this seat are Kazi Sikandar Ali Dalim of BNP, Mannujan Sufiar of Awami League, Abdul Gaffar Biswas of Jatiya Party, SM Jahangir Mian of Bangladesh Khelafat Anadalon, Gazi Noor Ahmed of Islami Andolon Bangladesh and Sheikh Zahidul Islam of

Muslim League. Political observers said triangular fight is expected in this constituency among three former lawmakers -- Mannujan Sufian, Kazi Sikandar Ali Dalim and Abdul Gaffar Biswas.

Frustrated and economically handicapped voters of these limping jute mills made it clear that they would no more be tempted by deceptive commitments of candidates as they made in previous national elections.

None of the candidates of BNP, Awami League and Jatiya Party redeemed their pledges made during campaigns in previous elections, said Gazi Masum Ahmed, convener of Khulna Jute Workers Development Committee.

"This time we won't give any chance to any candidate to capitalise us as vote bank. This

is high time for us to show through polls result that jute mill workers are a big factor for politicians in the industrial belt," he said.

Khulna-3 seat has been left open for AL candidate Mannujan Sufian and JP candidate Abdul Gaffar Biswas as they were locked in squabbles over nomination on behalf of 14-party grand alliance.

The three local political bigwigs are in a fix about what to do for persuade the poverty-stricken hopeless workers of decaying jute mills.

"I am deeply concerned about mentality of the distressed workers of jute mills as all previous governments failed to take any positive move to develop the industrial belt," said AL candidate Mannujan Sufian.

Lalpur Free Day today

A CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Today is Lalpur Free Day. On this day in 1971, Lalpur was liberated from the occupation of Pakistani forces.

Earlier on the night of March 25, the occupation forces killed many people including Najmul Haque Sarkar MNA, Beeren Sarkar Ukil and Sayedur Rahman, manager of Shilpa Bank, in Lalpur.

In protest, the local leaders at an emergency meeting formed a defence force comprising ex-soldiers, ansars and general people on March 27.

They were provided with arms recovered from the local police station, Sardah Police Training Centre and North Bengal Sugar Mills.

The meeting was attended by Omar Faruk Sarkar, Dr Khalilur Rahman, Chairman Hajir Uddin Sarkar, Dr Abul Kashem and Babu Bolai Chandra.

The defence force took over the control of Ishwardi airport on March 28 and destroyed the 25 regiment of Pakistan Army in a frontline battle on March 30.

A total of 80 freedom fighters were killed and 32 others injured in that operation.

Besides, three villagers of Chamba village were killed as the Pakistani soldiers threw a bombshell to that village.

Another 10 people were killed in a face-to-face battle near the Dhanaidaha Bridge on April 12.

The Pakistan army let loose a reign of terror and committed genocide at different places of Natore.

In collaboration with the Rajakars, they killed around 200 workers, employees and officials of North Bengal Sugar Mills on May 5.

The occupation forces also killed hundreds of innocent villagers at Gopalpur, Poytarpura and Ramkrishnapur during the month of July.

They also committed rapes and looted properties of the common people

as of December 10 when the freedom fighters drove them from the area and occupied the police station.

To mark the occasion, a discussion meeting will be held at Lalpur Press club today.

CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF IN RAJSHAHI-2

Local AL's support for Badsha still in doubt

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Awami League-led grand alliance candidate Fazle Hossain Badsha yesterday began election campaign in Rajshahi-2 constituency.

However, amid doubt about full support of local Awami League, BNP candidate former Rajshahi City Corporation mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, who is accused in five cases including three for graft, is eyeing an easy sail in the election race from the constituency.

During the press conference organized on the occasion of Badsha's campaign launching at Rajshahi City AL office yesterday noon, Badsha, remained silent when asked about the doubt about local AL's support for him.

"If we get full support from Awami League, there will be chance to answer the rigging in 2002 Rajshahi city polls when Minu defeated Badsha," said Debashis Pramanik, a follower

of Badsha. "But we are still in doubt about the support," he added.

But Shafiqur Rahman, Rajshahi city AL acting general secretary and the district coordinator of grand alliance, assured full support for Fazle Hossain Badsha, saying, "We all will work together for Badsha as we consider the upcoming election as war against war criminals, militancy, terrorism and corruption."

The doubt about local AL's support for Badsha gripped his supporters as Rajshahi Mayor Khairuzzaman Liton had cordial interactions with Minu during Eid vacation.

RCC authorities in a press release on Thursday said RCC Mayor Liton and former RCC mayor Minu during an Eid reunion programme promised to work together for the city's development.

Several anxious party men have questioned Liton's election

promise to making public Minu's corruptions.

"How can an opposite party candidate with allegation of corruption meet Mayor Liton just ahead of election, when Liton stays away from Badsha's meeting?" said an AL man requesting anonymity.

Badsha and Minu contested in Rajshahi mayoral election in 2002 when Minu secured 87,700 votes and won the election by over 14,000 votes. Badsha later lodged a case of poll rigging at some 20 polling centres.

Badsha will now need support of Liton who won the August 4 Rajshahi mayor election defeating BNP candidate Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul by some 24,000 votes.

Badsha-Liton rivalry started before the August 4 RCC polls this year when both of them demanded candidature.

Badsha later withdrew paving way for Liton and he now seeks his return, said party men.

BNP to win nat'l polls if held in free, fair manner
Says Delwar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

BNP Secretary General Khondakar Delwar yesterday said the BNP-led four-party alliance would win the upcoming national election if it is held in a free and fair manner.

He said the government lifted the emergency amid protests of the four-party alliance and although there is uncertainty about the election, BNP led four-party alliance would win it.

He was talking to newsmen after holding an election preparatory meeting with the party leaders and activists at Aricha Belayet Hossain High School at Shivalaya upazila, which is under his constituency, in Manikganj.

Shivalaya upazila BNP Convener Sayed Mezbah Uddin presided over the meeting while senior leaders Advocate Jamilur Rashid Khan and Dr Jalal Ahmed also spoke.

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VOTERS IN SIRAJGANJ-2, 4 IN DILEMMA

Grand alliance, 4-party both have two runners

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, Sirajganj

Two candidates of Awami League-led grand alliance are contesting from Sirajganj-2 (Sadar) constituency while two other candidates of BNP-led four-party alliance are on the polls race in Sirajganj-4 (Ullapara) constituency, as the high ups of the two alliances failed in negotiation.

The nominees, hopeful of their win, have separately started campaign and mass contact in the areas, giving rise to indecision among the supporters and general voters over selecting their 'right' candidate.

Jannat Ara Henry alias Henry Talukder is conducting election campaign including procession, meeting and mass contact in full swing from yesterday morning for the Sirajganj-2 constituency, as Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina nominated her as the party candidate.

Jatiya Party (Ershad) candidate Aminul Islam Jhantu has also started campaign in the constituency after his nomination as Jatiya Party candidate has been accepted by the local Election Commission office.

The Election Commission has sanctioned

'nouka' (boat) for Jannat Ara Henry as AL candidate while 'langal' (plough) has been sanctioned to Aminul Islam Jhantu as Jatiya Party candidate.

The situation, posing difficulty for both Henry and Jhantu due to division among the supporters of AL-led grand alliance, will benefit their main competitor BNP.

Four-party alliance is also facing a similar situation in Sirajganj-4 (Ullapara) constituency as former BNP lawmaker M Akbar Ali and Dhaka Mohanagar Jamaat Amir Rafiqul Islam Khan are running election campaign following approval from their respective party high ups.

The Election Commission has sanctioned 'dhaner shis' (paddy sheaf) symbol for M Akbar Ali and 'daripalla' (balance scale) for Rafiqul Islam Khan.

Both the contestants are hopeful to win although the supporters of four-party alliance in the area have started dawdling over selecting the 'right' candidate.

Awami League candidate Gazi Shafiqul Islam Shafi will be surely benefited due to the rift between BNP and Jamaat, two partners of the four-party alliance, observers said.

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