



HECTIC CAMPAIGN IN CHITTAGONG-8

AL counts on minority vote as BNP eyes 'stronghold' Bakalia

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Chittagong

All eyes are riveted to the prestigious Chittagong-8 (Kotwali) constituency, where two business magnates Nurul Islam B.Sc and Md Shamsul Alam have locked horns in the polls battle.

Nurul Islam, an industrialist, writer and social worker, has long been associated with politics too; and currently holds the post of vice-president of Chittagong city Awami League.

His rival Shamsul Alam is a new face in the politics. He hails from a traditional and respected business family.

Sources said, Shamsul actually wanted to contest the poll on Awami League (AL) ticket and he persuaded City Mayor and Chittagong AL President ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury by using his good offices.

The mayor also was wanted to see Shamsul as an AL candidate in Chittagong-8 instead of Nurul Islam, sources close to them said. Shamsul visited the residence of Mohiuddin



Nurul Islam



Shamsul Alam

many a times prior to finalisation of nomination.

As things did not go as per his expectation, a desperate Shamsul took no time to knock the door of BNP leader Abdullah Al Noman, who is believed to be instrumental in paving the way for Shamsul in his own seat.

To accommodate Shamsul in Chittagong-8, Noman also shifted his candidature to a new seat -- Chittagong-9 (Doublemooring-Pahartali).

AL's Nurul Islam is vying from Chittagong-8 seat for the

first time. He earlier had contested twice from Chittagong-10, which is now Chittagong-7 (Boalkhali-Chandgaon), and in both occasions (1991 and 1996) conceded defeat to BNP candidates Sirajul Islam and M Morshed Khan respectively.

It is believed that strong lobbying with party high command brought him nomination despite stiff opposition from the mayor.

The two candidates are in hectic campaign now, utilising every moment, to touch every corner of the 14 wards in

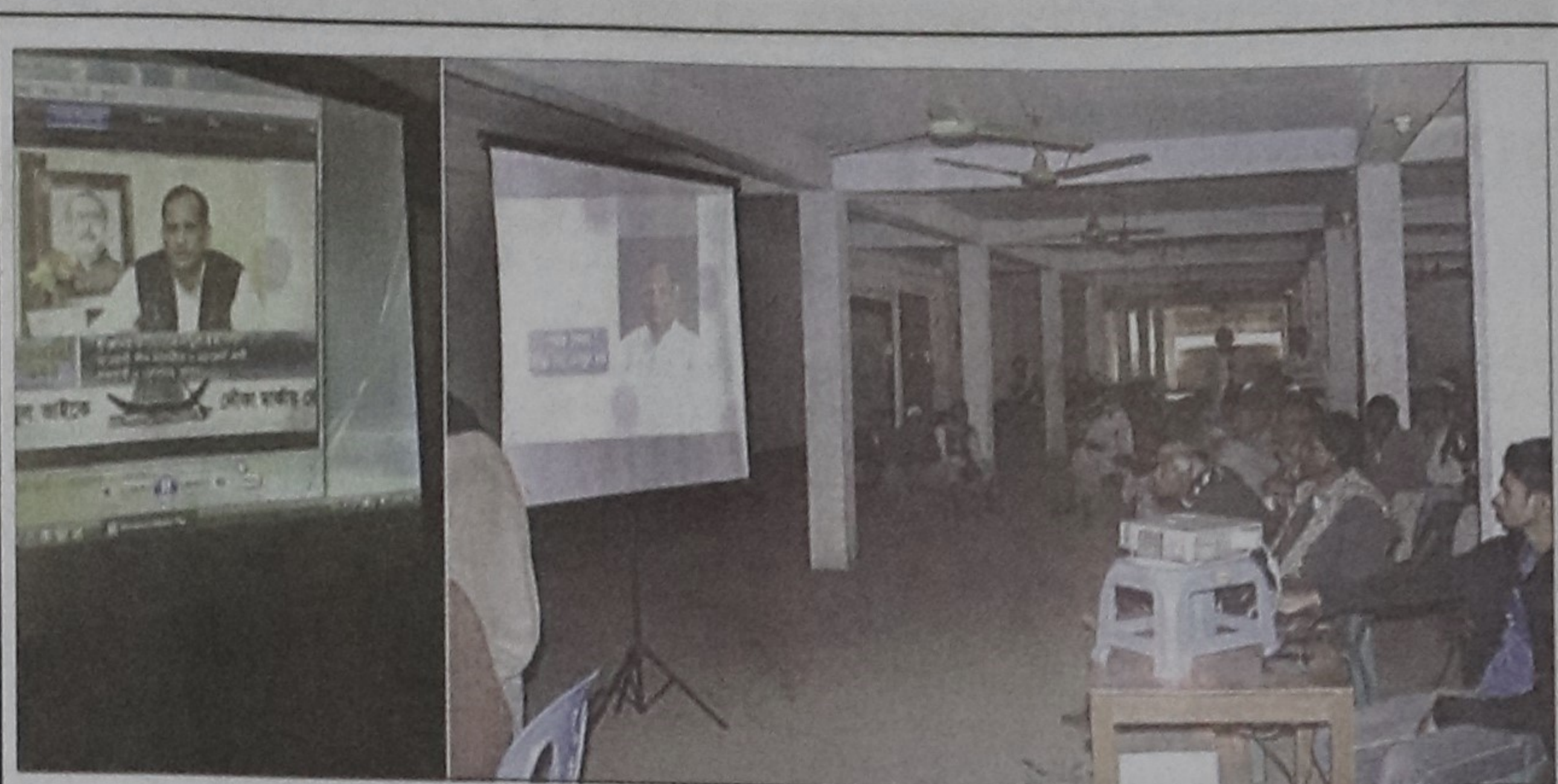
Chittagong-8 and woo 3,21,752 voters. There are 41 wards in the city.

Alongside party leaders, activists and supporters, they have engaged family members including wife, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, friends and kith-and-kin in electoral campaign.

Nurul Islam tries to woo voters by telling them to consider his 'extensive' social works especially in establishing over 20 educational and charitable institutions in Boalkhali, Chandgaon and Bakalia areas.

Another advantage that he is looking forward to cash in is the number of minority voters in the constituency. Of the 3.21 lakh voters, around 38 per cent belong to the community and he hopes to cast all.

His rival Shamsul is also eyeing his 'vote-bank' in Bakalia, from where he hails and where he resides. There are about one lakh voters in Bakalia, traditionally known as a BNP-dominant area.



A slide show being screened for a crowd on the premises of a cold storage in Bagmara as part of the costly election campaign for Enamul Haque in Rajshahi-4.

An AL candidate's spending spree

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Exorbitant spending by Awami League candidate millionaire Enamul Haque during his election campaign in Rajshahi-4 (Bagmara) has become a much-talked matter in the constituency.

"Enamul is violating the election code of conduct as he is crossing the limit of election expenditure," said several supporters of Sardar Amjad Hossain, who is contesting as independent candidate after failing to get nomination from Awami League.

"I am worried about whether I would be able to survive before Enamul's money," BNP candidate Abdul Gafur said.

Enamul, who stated in his nomination papers that he has wealth worth over Tk 10 crore, employed several hundred workers on daily payment and set up two dozen election offices with multimedia facilities.

His speeches are being

circulated among people through multimedia projectors and CD players at the election offices.

Enamul announced that he would personally arrange Tk 500 monthly allowance for freedom fighters in the constituency, if he is elected.

According to his workers, more than one cow is being sacrificed daily for entertaining thousands of visitors to his election offices and money is being distributed quite openly at his meetings.

T-shirts with labels of his business institutions are also being distributed among voters.

"Haven't you taken your money yet? Go and take it... I came in the morning leaving my work in the field; I got Tk 200 and a packet of food. I took another packet for my family," said Hasan Ali, a farmer of Bagmara.

Hasan Ali is one of over one thousand people who gathered on the premises of Enamul's cold storage on



One of the giant posters displayed by Enamul Haque at a road intersection in Bagmara.

Saturday and yesterday, knowing well that none of them will go empty handed, locals said.

"I must vote for Enamul as he is feeding us daily," said Biswa, a

poor resident of Bagmara.

Unlike Biswa, there was Mahmud who said, "It is true that I am now taking Enamul's money. But I will consider later whom to vote."

Big boost for Badsha

Freedom fighters, mayor and professional bodies seek vote for him

RU CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighters, professional bodies and cultural activists at different meetings yesterday in Rajshahi city sought vote for grand alliance candidate Fazle Hossain Badsha in Rajshahi-2 constituency in the upcoming parliamentary election.

On the other hand, Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton and grand alliance candidate Badsha jointly launched election campaign in the city and sought vote for Badsha.

They also went from door to door, business centres, houses and different areas in Rajshahi city and appealed for vote in favour of Badsha.

Freedom fighters of Rajshahi yesterday held a meeting at Public Library auditorium and extended their support to grand alliance candidate Badsha.

Badsha was present as the chief guest while freedom fighter Boduzzaman Tunu Bir Protik presided over the meeting.

The freedom fighters alleged that former four party alliance government patronised war criminals, did not bring them to trial and rehabilitated them.

A huge number of freedom fighters and progressive minded people were tortured and attacked during the BNP-Jamaat government's tenure, they also alleged.

"It is high time to establish spirit of the liberation war in the country by electing pro-liberation candidate in the upcoming election", the freedom fighters said.

The freedom fighters urged people from all strata to work together for the grand alliance candidate and sought vote for Badsha.

Badsha called upon the common people in Rajshahi to

boycott war criminals, black money holders and terrorists to establish real democracy in the country.

Sammilito Sangskritik Jote (SSJ), Rajshahi unit yesterday held another meeting at Muktiyodha Pathagar and extended their support to Badsha.

Eminent litterateur Prof Hassan Azizul Haque, former Rajshahi University vice-chancellor Prof Abdul Khaleque, former Kushtia University VC Prof Kayes Uddin, language movement veteran Golam Arif Tipu, Mosharraf Hossain, economist Prof Sanat Kumar Saha, advocate Zillur Rahman, engineer Tajul Islam, SSJ president Abul Hossain and general secretary Dr Sayed Shafiqul Alam also addressed the meeting.

Earlier, SSJ brought out a condolence procession led by RCC Mayor Khairuzzaman Liton in the city.

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GRAND ALLIANCE

Fielding of JP men puzzles Nilphamari AL

E A M ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Nomination of Jatiya Party (JP) candidates by Grand Alliance in three out of four Jatiya Sangsad (JS) constituencies here has puzzled Awami League (AL) leaders and activists here.

In Nilphamari-1 (Domardimla) constituency, Hamida Banu Shova of AL won the eighth JS elections in 2001. Shova deserved to get nomination of Grand Alliance. But to appease JP chief HM Ershad, AL dropped Shova and nominated JP candidate Jafar Siddiki as a candidate of Grand Alliance, AL leaders said. Jafar is a wealthy person and a new comer in JP.

In Nilphamari-3 (Jaldhaka and part of Kishoreganj) constituency, AL accepted Kazi Farque Kader of JP as a candidate of Grand Alliance. Farque, son of Kazi Abdul Kader is a war criminal of 1971 as was declared by Sector Commanders' Forum.

It is really embarrassing for us to work for a son of a killer and a declared war criminal, Jaldhaka Upazila AL president Ansarul Islam Mintoo said.

In Nilphamari-4 (Saidpur and part of Kishoreganj) constituency, JP's Sawakat Chowdhury won the Grand Alliance nomination.

However, AL candidate Maruf Saqlain has been permitted to fight with boat symbol in Nilphamari-4 constituency although he was deprived of the Grand Alliance nomination. JP's Showkat Chowdhury will also contest here with plough symbol.

In Nilphamari-2 (Sadar) constituency, Ershad accepted AL candidate Asaduzzaman Noor as the lone candidate of Grand Alliance.

Qamaruzzaman claims to be journalist in his affidavit

DEBASHISH SAHA ROY, Sherpur

SHERPUR-1

Awami League candidate in Sherpur-1 (Sadar) constituency Atiur Rahman Atique who once introduced himself to voters as the son of a poor mother is no more poor.

After being elected lawmaker for two consecutive terms Atique is now wealthy. In the upcoming parliament election he will spend Tk 10 lakh from his own fund.

Four party alliance candidate in the seat Jamaat-e-Islami senior assistant secretary general Muhammad Qamaruzzaman's annual income and expenses are almost equal. Besides, he has a big amount of bank loan. As a result most part of his election expense would be met by donations from his relatives.

These were found in the affidavits submitted by the two candidates attached with their nomination papers.

Awami League sources said during election campaigns in 1996 and 2001 polls Sherpur district AL president and former MP Atiur Rahman Atique would project his simple lifestyle saying he is a man of modest wealth. But the scenario changed after 2001 elections. Atique earned huge wealth by selling two duty free vehicles he got in parliament members' quota and from other sources.

In the affidavit submitted to the returning officer the former MP Atique said he would meet Tk 10 lakh of his election expenditure from own source. His wife, brother and local well wishers will give the rest Tk 4 lakh.

In the affidavit Atique said he earns Tk 2.01 lakh from his

profession. He got Tk two lakh by selling his cars.

The anticorruption commission filed a case with Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on charges of concealing information regarding his wealth beyond income under Emergency Powers Rule 2007. In the affidavit he mentioned that the case is now under investigation.



Muhammad Qamaruzzaman

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Four party alliance candidate in Sherpur-1 constituency Muhammad Qamaruzzaman in his affidavit mentioned that his annual income from different sources is about Tk 8.97 lakh and his annual expenditure is Tk 8.25 lakh. He mentioned journalism as his profession.

In the affidavit Qamaruzzaman said his estimated cost of election would be Tk 14 lakh. He will spend Tk 2.50 lakh from his earnings (deposit and salary). He expects to get Tk 1.50 lakh from Jamaat-e-Islami.

There is a case against the Jamaat central senior assistant secretary general Muhammad Qamaruzzaman with Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court. The High Court has stayed the proceedings of the case.

THAKURGAON-3

AL men lose heart as JP eyes victory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

With Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance ticket for Jatiya Party candidate, JP leaders and activists are eyeing an almost sure win in Thakurgaon-3 constituency as organisational foundation BNP-led four party alliance is very weak in the area.

On the other hand, Awami League leaders and activists in the constituency are frustrated over the decision that deprived their party candidate of nomination.

Jatiya Party Presidium Member Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, who got grand alliance nomination from Thakurgaon-3 constituency, was elected parliament member in 2001.

In 2001 election, Hafiz Uddin Ahmed of JP got 89,468 votes, Imdadul Haque of AL got 78,998 while Jahidur Rahman of BNP-led four-party alliance got only 8,359 votes.

"Awami League grassroots leaders and activists are disappointed as the seat is considered as a stronghold of Awami



Hafiz Uddin Ahmed

League that won this seat in 1970, 1973, 1979 and 1996. In 1986 AL-led fifteen-party combine candidate Workers Party leader Shahidullah Shahid was elected lawmaker from this constituency with boat symbol. Pirganj upazila unit President of Awami League Wazed Ali Sarcar said.

When contacted, AL leader Imdadul Haque said, "I withdrew my nomination paper from this constituency as per decision from the high-ups."

"We will decide what to do next after sitting with party men," he said replying to a query.

CONFLICT RIFE IN BNP STRONGHOLD

Grand alliance hopes to bag 3 Bogra seats

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Awami League-led grand alliance is expecting three seats out of a total seven seats in Bogra district, traditionally a BNP stronghold, as internal conflict is prevailing among the BNP leaders and activists in Bogra-1 (Shariakandi-Sonatala), Bogra-2 (Shibganj) and Bogra-5 (Sherpur-Dhanu) constituencies.

Contesting as four-party alliance candidates, BNP leaders including former prime minister Khelada Zia won all seven seats in last parliamentary election defeating all of Awami League (AL) central and local leaders in Bogra, considered as BNP stronghold.

AL candidate for Bogra-5, retired superintendent of police Habibur Rahman has already created an election atmosphere in his favour, AL district secretary Md Mazibur Rahman Majnu and several other leaders told over cell phone on Saturday.

Several local BNP leaders and activists preferring anonymity said preliminary selection of three candidates for Bogra-5 constituency created

internal feud in the local BNP.

Submission of nomination papers by Jamaat leader Principal Rostom Ali also created confusion among the BNP-led four-party alliance activists.

Ranju Kazi, former secretary of Sariakandi upazila BNP, told over cell phone that he started election campaign openly in favour of AL candidate central leader Abdul Mannan along with other four-party alliance activists for Bogra-1 constituency.

Grand alliance candidate Shariful Islam Zinnah in Bogra-2 is getting hidden support of three fractions of local BNP who are dissatisfied due to selection of controversial person BNP leader advocate AKM Hafizur Rahman as alliance candidate.

Talking to The Daily Star over cell phone, Hafizur Rahman said a group of BNP activists are working against him.

In reply to a question about his alleged involvement in human trafficking, he said, "The allegation of human trafficking against me was not true. Now the issue has been forgotten by local people."



Grand alliance candidate Workers Party leader Fazle Hossain Badsha campaigning at Shaheb Bazar in Rajshahi city yesterday. Awami League leader and RCC Mayor Khairuzzaman is also with him.

Grand alliance's grand dilemma

All 4 in Dinajpur-6 claim themselves as candidates

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Voters are confused in Dinajpur-6 constituency as four grand alliance leaders are campaigning in their respective areas, still claiming themselves to be candidates. Voters are yet to be sure who is the ticketholder.

Contacted, Election Commission sources confirmed that they allotted polls symbols to Jatiya Party leader Md. Delwar Hossain Miah. JP is a component of grand alliance.

Besides Delwar, three Awami League leaders are in the field.

'Deprived' AL candidate Dr. Azizur Haque Chowdhury brought out a big procession on Saturday in his area Ghoraghat--carrying banners, festoons and a large 'boat', polls symbol of AL.

Indigenous community leader Rabindra Nath Soren, who claims to be a Workers Party 'nominee', is also campaigning in the area, having about 50 per cent indigenous population.

Dinajpur EC sources said Dr. Azizur Haque Chowdhury and Rabindra Nath Soren withdrew their nomination papers by November 30.

The AL-led grand alliance

changed its candidate four times, they said.

Days earlier, the grand alliance asked Kazi AZM Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury of National Awami Party and Abu Hanif Sarker of AL to withdraw their nomination papers and gave ticket to Dr. Azizur Rahman Chowdhury.

Accordingly, Dr. Azizul Haque Chowdhury filed nomination paper. But at the last moment, when Jatiya Party chief Hussain Muahmmad Ershad decided to remain with the grand alliance, JP candidate Md. Delwar Hossain Miah was given the JP ticket.

The frequent change of nomination created resentment in the AL camp while BNP-Jamaat workers distributed sweets, sources said.

Insiders in AL said party leaders and workers will not work for Delwar.

They said Dr. Azizul Haque Chowdhury had already spent a huge amount of money for printing posters, leaflets and banners but the nomination finally went to JP.

Contacted, Hakimpur AL president Akhtar Hossain Munshi also expressed his confusion, saying he is as yet to be sure who is grand alliance candidate from Dinajpur-6.