



SAIFUR-MUHITH DUEL IN SYLHET-1

The crux of the play is young voters

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Over 65,000 young voters, who got enrolled in the voters list for the first time may play the vital role in deciding the polls result in Sylhet-1, one of the constituencies considered important nationally.

BNP stalwart former finance minister M Saifur Rahman and AL advisory committee member AMA Muhith, also a former finance minister, are again on the field to face each other. Saifur defeated his classmate Muhith in 2001 polls by over 40,000 votes. The giants are busy in their election campaign through different strategies at the end stage.

BNP-led alliance while seeking vote for Saifur has been stressing on the development works implemented in the region especially in Sylhet.

On the other hand, the grand alliance men point at corruption of BNP leaders in Sylhet region during the alliance rule. Muhith also alleged Saifur had plundered people's money and named a number of government establishments after himself. Muhith has pledged for making Sylhet an enlightened city, if voted to power.

Saifur is also contesting in his home seat-Moulvibazar-3



Saifur Rahman

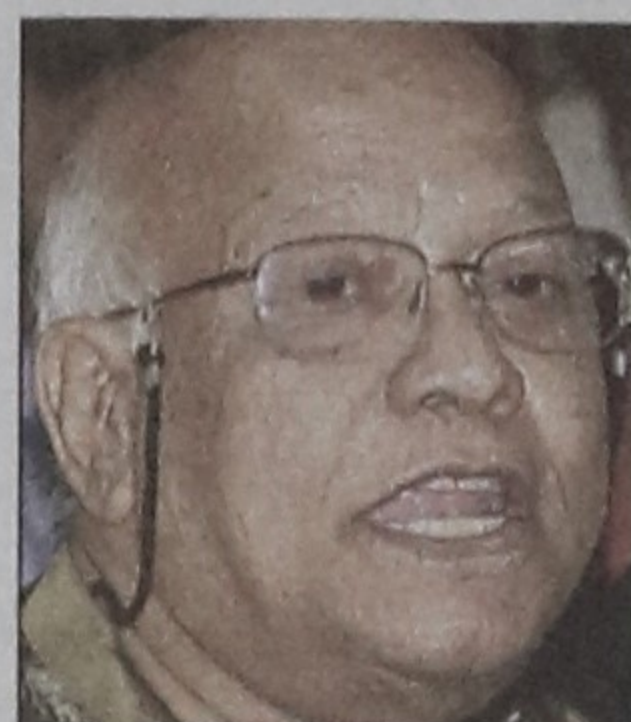
(Moulvibazar sadar and Rajnagar)

Besides, the importance of Sylhet-1 constituency goes high as people discuss, the winning party in the constituency goes to power. It happened since after the liberation.

Those who were elected from this seat include, Dewan Farid Gazi of AL, Khondaker Abdul Malik of BNP, Humayun Rashid Chowdhury of AL and Saifur Rahman of BNP.

The constituency has a total of 4,23,278 voters. It has got at least over 65,000 new voters in the delimitation this time, said the district election officer yesterday.

Anwar Hossain, a student of MC College in the city got enrolled as a voter for the first time. "We have two seasoned



AMA Muhith

candidates-Saifur and Muhith. I will have to choose between them considering their past, quality as well as experiences," he observed.

Trader Abdul Hasib of Bandarbar in the city feels Sylhet lacks a lot of facilities for long. None had yet been able to resolve the water stagnancy problem in the city even during the last decades. He said, the city people would have to consider the commitments as well as the capacity of the candidates, Hasib added.

Schoolteacher Sanjana Khanam of the city's Chowkedeki area said, "Choosing right person from two VIP candidates is tough. I will prefer the man who would stress on law and order and development."

Samiron violates poll code: AL

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Khagrachhari District Awami League (AL) yesterday brought an allegation of violating election code of conduct against four-party alliance candidate Samiron Dewan.

AL alleged this at a press conference held at their district election campaign office here yesterday.

Samiron is violating poll code of conduct by using cars of Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC) and Chittagong Hill Tracts taskforce in his election campaign, AL said.

KHDC chairman and his four members are also involved in BNP-Jamaat politics, the allegation said. They are working to influence voters in favour of Samiron, it said.

It also demanded their immediate removal from KHDC.

District Chhatra League president Mong Shuprue Apu read out statement at the conference.

AL's 18 leaders and activists were killed by BNP-Jamaat cadres in last seven years while thousands others fled outside the district due to their repression.

AL Election Committee members Supto Barua, Babita Barua, team leader Gayana Chakma, district AL acting president Kujendra Lal Tripura were present.



ELECTION FEVER: Loudspeakers set in a line of rickshaws relaying polls campaign message near Doel Chattar on Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Elect grand alliance to root out corruption

Ershad tells rallies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said there is no alternative to vote to power Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance to root out corruption from the country.

The country was made a 'heaven of corruption' during the tenure of BNP-led government, he said.

At several public meetings in different areas in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts, the former president said he will create job opportunities by developing mills and factories to mitigate munga, a near famine situation, that prevails in the area for months every year.

In the meetings, Ershad made quite a few pledges including gas supply to Kurigram district and Rangpur region if voted to power.

Minority voters do not belong to any party

None can solely bank on them, community leaders say

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

None of the candidates of 14-party and four-party alliances in Khulna-1, 2, 3 and 5 constituencies has any reason to be confident of banking on minority community votes in the upcoming national election.

A prominent leader of Khulna chapter of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Ojikko Parishad (BHBCOP), Shyamol Kumar Halder, said, "Our each and every vote is a sacred trust which should be cast in favour of a right man whom we always got in our difficult days". Minority community people would cast their vote judiciously, he added.

Leader of Khulna Puja Udayon Parishad Amiyu Sarker Gora said there is no reason to believe that members of minority community belong to any particular political party.

"We will pay the price according to the quality of the candidate". He however refused to comment who are better candidates in the four constituencies in Khulna city and district.

Seeking anonymity, a candidate of 14-party alliance in one of the four constituencies said voters of minority community are X-raying their bitter experiences during rule of all past governments. The results would be reported through ballots in the upcoming national election. Votes may be divided, which is apparent in campaign, he said.

According to BHBCOP leader Shyamol Halder, there are over 70,000 minority community voters in Khulna-2 (Sadar and Sonadanga)

and Khulna-3 (Khalishpur-Daulatpur-Khanjahan Ali) constituencies. The total number of voters in the two constituencies are 4,21,309.

In Khulna-1 (Dacope-Batiaghata), there are over 95,000 minority community voters out of 2,17,730 after adding 10,852 voters delimited from Deluti union of Khulna-6 (Paikgacha and Koira) constituency.

According to 14-party candidate Narayan Chandra Chanda, there are over 95,000 minority community voters out of 2,79,704 in his Khulna-5 (Dumuria-Phultala) constituency.

"All voters are now very important as days are gone when people of minority community were a winning factor in election".

"So, we are not so silly to bank on them any more as they have become politically conscious in choosing their candidate more consciously than before", said Nani Gopal Mandal of Khulna-1.

Nani Gopal and Narayan Chandra Chanda are 14-party grand alliance candidates.

BNP leaders and four-party candidate Amir Ejaz Khan in Khulna-1 said, "All voters-minority or majority-are equal to me".

"It is very difficult to feel the pulse of minority community people. It is up to them to choose their candidate", said AL leader and grand alliance nominee Begum Mannujan Sufian in Khulna-3.

This seat has been kept open for both Awami League and Jatiya Party candidates due to feud in the grand alliance there.

Uncle, nephew lock horns in Sherpur-3

DEBASHISH SAHA ROY, Sherpur

All eyes are now riveted on Sherpur-3 (Sreebardi-Jhenagati) seat as two members of the same family have been contesting with tickets of the two major alliances.

Awami League nominee AKM Fazul Haq alias Chan Engineer is facing his nephew BNP candidate former MP Mahmudul Haq Rubel.

"Local people think fight between the uncle and nephew would make a chance for independent candidate Khandker Khurram.

Awami League could not win the seat for 21 years from 1975. AL candidate MA Bari won the seat in June 12, 1996 election. In 2001 BNP candidate former lawmaker Dr Serajul Haq's son young Mahmudul Haq Rubel defeated MA Bari.

Anticorruption Commission listed former lawmaker Mahmudul Haq Rubel as a top corrupt person in Sherpur district. Joint forces arrested him from his residence in Dhaka's Kafur area on March 18, 2007. He spent about one and a half year in Sherpur district jail and got released on bail through High Court order in September this year.

In his affidavit submitted with the nomination paper Rubel said proceedings of the three cases filed against him have been suspended by the High Court.

Local people say as both the AL and BNP candidates are from same family and Sreebardi upazila, the votes of the upazila would get divided. As a result the voters of Jhenagati upazila would be a factor in deciding the winner in the seat. In this regard independent candidate Khurram has an advantage.

Grand Alliance candidate Fazul Haq Chan Engineer told The Daily Star that he took voluntary retirement from government job and have been involved with Awami League politics for more than one decade. He expressed his firm determination of winning.

BNP-led four party alliance nominee Mahmudul Haq Rubel said, as an MP he did lots of development work and created jobs for unemployed youths.

Independent candidate Khandker Mohammad Khurram said, he has been involved with politics since student life and has been serving the people. He hopes that the people of his constituency will evaluate it and vote for him.



A scene during clashes between supporters of BNP leaders Abdullah al Noman and Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin at Laldighi ground in Chittagong yesterday, left, Mir Nasir leaving the area following the row.

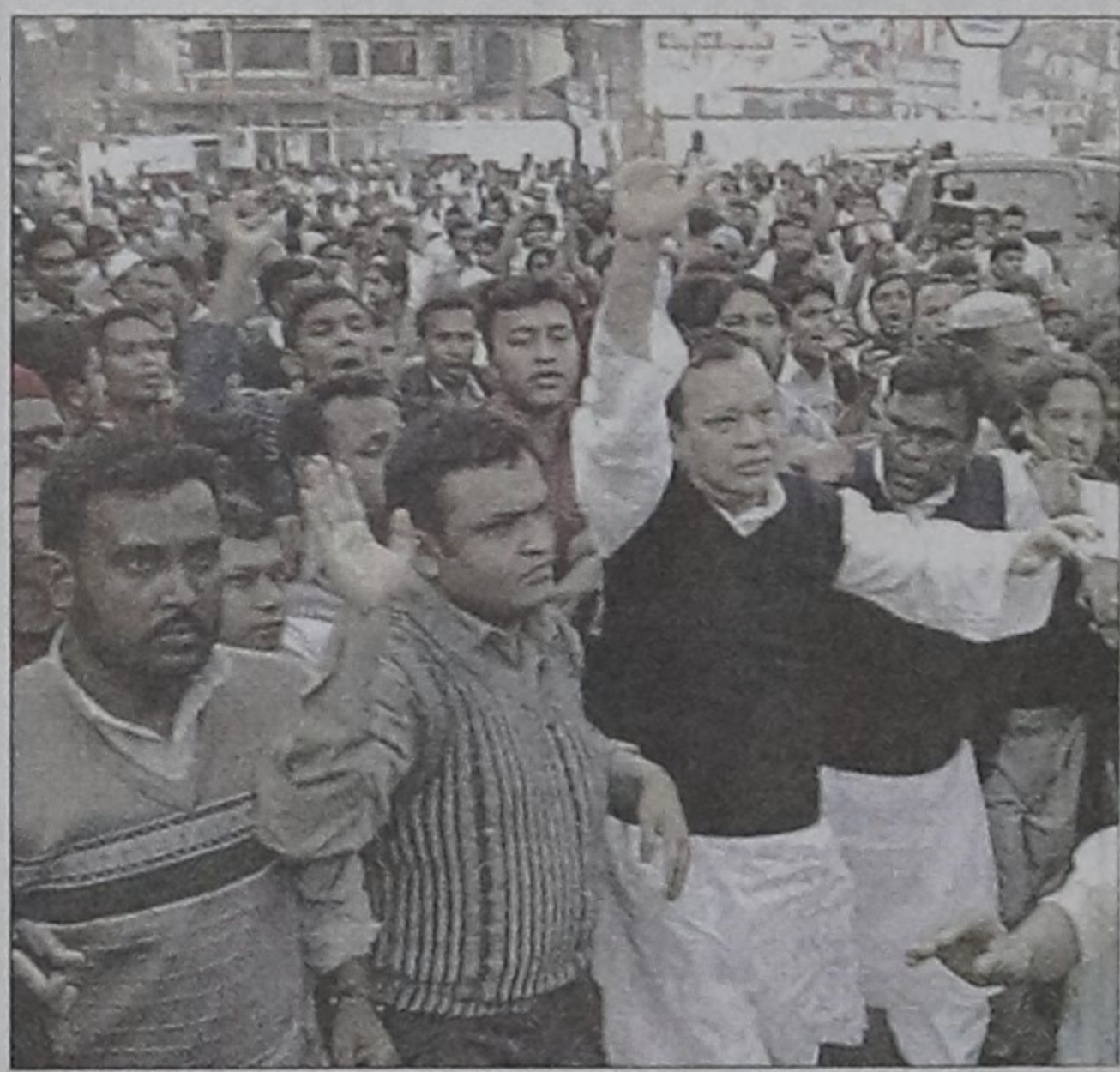


PHOTO: STAR

3 MADARIPUR SEATS

Grand alliance has fair chance to sail through

NITYANANDA HALDER, Madaripur

Campaign has got momentum in all the three constituencies of Madaripur district.

Activists of Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance and BNP-led four-party alliance are busy with door-to-door campaign, holding meetings and processions to ensure victory of their respective candidates.

Out of three seats, two will see two-pronged contest while the other one is expected to see a triangular fight.

According to political observers and analysts, the grand alliance candidates are fighting to ensure victory with a big margin this time while the four-party alliance candidates are fighting for 'prestigious defeat'.

Awami League International Affairs Secretary and former state minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Alhaj Syed Abul Hossain is contesting from Madaripur-3 seat for the fourth consecutive parliamentary elections.

He has made this seat a stronghold for AL by carrying out huge development activities including establishing schools, colleges and constructing roads, culverts and bridges. He won the elections in 1991, 1996 and 2001.

His main rival is Habibur Rahman Azad of four-party alliance.

There is internal feud within AL in Madaripur-2 seat. A veteran leader of labour front of Awami League Shahjahan Khan who won from this seat in the bye-election in 1991 and in the

elections in 1996 and 2001 will fight against four-party alliance candidate Helen Jerin Khan, a former BNP lawmaker and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader. Helen Jerin Khan is going door-to-door to get benefit from the internal feud of Awami League.

In Madaripur-1, grand alliance candidate and former Awami League lawmaker Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury Liton, son of Bangabandhu's relative Ilias Ahmed Chowdhury, will face four-party alliance candidate and Islami Oikya Jote leader Abdullah Mohammad Hasan, and independent candidates Kamal Jamal Mollah, Md Habibur Rahman and Nasir Ahmed Chowdhury. He also won the elections in 1996 and 2001. There will be three-pronged contest in this seat.

FACE TO FACE PROGRAMME IN PABNA-5

Voters protest Jamaat nominee's claim

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

All the three candidates in Pabna-5 (Sadar) constituency at a face-to-face programme with voters yesterday said they will try to root out corruption, if elected.

The programme, held at Pabna Town Hall, was organised jointly by Sujon (Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik) and the anti corruption committee.

After a question-answer session, grand alliance nominee and Awami League leader Golam Faruk Prince, four-party alliance nominee and central Jamaat leader Moulana Abdus Subhan and Islami Andolon nominee Arif Billah also signed a paper to build a corruption-free society.

With local anti-graft body president Prof AR Samsul Islam in the chair, all the three poll runners also expressed their future plans for development of the area.

"I shall never be involved in corruption and will resist the vice. I will try for develop-

ment of the area", Golam Faruk Prince said.

"I was not involved in corruption before and will never be involved", said Jamaat leader Moulana Abdus Subhan.

Promising to fight corruption, Islami Andolon nominee Arif Billah said there will not be any crime in society if the country is as per the Koran and Sunnah.

Moulana Abdus Subhan was asked about the case filed by Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) for alleged misappropriation of government relief CI sheets. He replied that he had sanctioned the CI sheets to AL Amana Foundation and he was relieved of the charge after ACC gave the final report.

Many from among the audience protested when Moulana Subhan said he upgraded Pabna Sadar Hospital during his tenure.

Replying to questions, Golam Faruk Prince said he will try for development of people living in Jamuna char areas and harijans.

10 runners in 3 Thakurgaon constituencies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

There are 10 poll runners in three constituencies in the district.

In Thakurgaon-1 constituency, there is likely to be a dual fight between Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance candidate Ramesh Chandra Sen and BNP-led four party alliance candidate Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

There are 3,27,677 voters in Thakurgaon-1 constituency. Of them, 83,000 are minority voters.

In Thakurgaon-2 constituency, grand alliance candidate Dabirul Islam of AL may face a tough fight with four-party alliance candidate Jamaat leader Maolana Abul Hakim.

However, Shirin Akhter Banu is another lone candidate here. But she does not pose a challenge to them.

The total number of voters in the constituency is 2,18,338. Of them minority voters are 53,500 while 28,000 are migrated voters, who migrated from Maldaha in India after partition of the sub-continent in 1947.

In Thakurgaon-3 constituency, AL-led grand alliance candidate Jatiya Party (JP) leader Hafiz Uddin Ahmed will contest with BNP-led four party alliance candidate Jahedur Rahman. Organisational foundation of JP is comparatively stronger here than that of BNP.

Other contestants are CPB leader Monsurul Alam, Workers Party leader Shahidullah Shahid, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leader Advocate Habibullah and Islami Andolon Bangladesh leader Mufti Abul Kashem Hashemi.

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INTERNAL FEUD IN PATUAKHALI-1

Kutti faction keeps away from Altaf

Allegedly backing AL runner

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

In Patuakhali-1 (Sadar, Mirzagonj and Dumki) constituency, a section of BNP district unit is still not taking part in the campaign for Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, former lawmaker and president of district BNP due to internal feud.

A faction led by district BNP Secretary Snehansu Sarker Kutti is not participating in the campaign for Altaf who is contesting with the party ticket.

Most of the party men who are loyal to Kutti are campaigning privately for Awami League (AL) candidate Advocate Shahjahan Mia, said sources.

The district BNP was united in 2001 when Altaf was elected lawmaker from this constituency by defeating Shahjahan.

But now the party is divided into two parts, one is led by its President Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and the other by its Secretary Snehansu Sarker Kutti.

Altaf suspended Kutti from his post for alleged anti-party role on November 7, 2005 as per the decision of a party meeting.

At the same time, Mostaq Ahmed Pinu, an influential leader and Patuakhali municipality chairman, was also suspended from the party.

Although the suspension resolution of the meeting is yet to be approved by the central body, both Kutti and Pinu remained inactive from party activities after that incident.



Altaf Chowdhury

date contesting from Patuakhali-3 (Galachipa and Dashmina) constituency. Altaf tried to get support of Kutti and Pinu and he requested them to join his campaign but in vain.

AL-BNP tough fight likely in Tangail-7

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Voters of Tangail-7 (Mirzapur) constituency may witness a neck-to-neck fight between Awami League (AL) nominee Ekabbar Hossain and BNP nominee Abul Kalam Azad Siddiqui in the upcoming election.

Construction of Mirzapur-Warshi road and a bridge on the River Bonshai are the main demands of local people, voters said.

In the last two elections, candidates of both AL and BNP promised for construction of the road and the bridge before election but they forgot their promises after election, said Saiful Islam, a voter in the constituency.