



Money game rolled out in Sirajganj-2

Poor people, Jamuna erosion victims lured to join rallies, processions by offering money

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, Sirajganj

Ignoring the election code, money is allegedly being distributed among poor and distressed people by two influential candidates in Sirajganj-2 constituency (Sirajganj Sadar-Kamarkhanda).

They are handing out money targeting the poor and distressed people, especially victims of river erosion and recurring floods in areas close to the Jamuna to influence them.

A good number of local elite, talking to this correspondent, also said they apprehend that money would also be used on the eve of the election to buy votes.

The Daily Star correspondent talked to a number of voters sheltered on different embankments of Jamuna River and shoals in Sirajganj-2 constituency.

It was revealed that the same man or woman is taking part in separate processions of rival candidates. Asked, they said they are doing this for

money as they have no work and no means for survival.

The two influential contestants—Dr M A Matin and Rumana Mahmud—hire them to run their campaign including holding rallies and procession, taking advantage of their poverty. The poor and distressed people from different shoals and Jamauna embankments are joining the rallies and processions of the two contestants every day in exchange of money.

"I joined several processions at different times in the town on behalf of Dr. M A Matin who is contesting with 'jackfruit' symbol as a candidate of Bangladesh Jatiya Party", said forty-five year old widow Hira Begum sheltered on Charnalshapara embankment.

"They gave me Tk 40 each time".

"I also joined the procession brought out in favour of Rumana Mahmud in exchange of Tk 20", she said.

Rumana, wife of BNP leader and former state minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, is a nominee of four-

party alliance.

She said she took shelter on Charnalshapara embankment as Jamuna River eroded her homesteads six month ago.

Shahida Khatun, 30, wife of Farukh Hossain, also sheltered on Charnalshapara embankment, said she joined several processions in favour of Dr. M A Matin and Rumana Mahmud several times.

She got at Tk 40 each time from Matin's men and Tk 20 from Rumana's men, she said.

Some local headmen of the area call them for processions and rallies in exchange of money, they said.

They said they join several processions and rallies every day in exchange of money as they do not have any source of income.

Bahaton Bewa, 55, wife of late Iman Mondal and Bakul, 28, wife of Mobarak of the area also told similar stories.

They said hundreds of poor and jobless people like them are being hired for processions and rallies in favour of the two contestants in exchange of money.

Roni, 25, son of Manir Hossain of Biaraghat said, said he joined processions of Dr. Matin several times and got Tk 40 each time. But, he did not get the promised Tk 50 after joining Rumana's processions and rallies. He attended several processions but the local 'headmen' misappropriated the money.

While contacted, district election commissioner Nitish Chandra Dey said, distribution of money to run campaign is violation of election code of conduct. But, he is yet to get any complaint. Action will be taken against the candidates if any complaint is lodged, he said.

Vast areas of Sirajganj district are affected by river erosion and recurring floods, displacing thousands of people. Sirajganj-2 constituency has a large number of such voters.

Contacted, both Dr M A Matin and Rumana Mahmud denied the allegation and said they are not distributing money for election procession and rally.



Better communal harmony, if voted

Moitree Chakma tells Rangamati rally

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Moitree Chakma, the lone indigenous woman contestant in Gcittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) during campaign yesterday said, if voted, she will do her best to maintain communal harmony and for women's development.

"By keeping myself above all racial and religious considerations, I will work for every body irrespective of their party affiliations", she said while addressing a public meeting on Rangamati Pourasabha office premises.

She said most areas of CHT is deprived of facilities like power supply, medicare and education. "My first duty would be to reach power to houses of hill people and develop road communication".

Referring BNP chief Khaledia Zia's commitment, she said the four-party alliance, if voted to power, will give priority to development of the CHT region.

JAMALPUR

Indigenous people to vote against militancy

MOSTOFA MANJU, Jamalpur

Ronika Marak who lives in Dhengargorh village under Sharifpur union of Jamalpur Sadar upazila will vote the person who can bring peace in the area.

She said this to this correspondent when he visited their village Wednesday to know their thoughts relating to the ensuing parliament election.

Indigenous Garo, Koch communities have been living by the bank of Banarasshakali canal in Dhengargorh village for long. At present 26 indigenous families live in the village known as 'Garo Para'.

Talking with this correspondent they said though the election was knocking on the door no candidate has yet come to them to seek vote.

They have endless problems. Their village does not have electricity. All of them became members of Palli Bidyut Samity about 10 years back by paying subscription. There is not a single mud road for communication with the village. Once the election is over none come to enquire about their condition.

Asked whom they would vote for many remained silent. Some others expressed their indignation. Pronali Sangma (3) said, "We are evaluating who is good and who is not. We will vote the person who is good, simple, would help the poor, build roads and would not embezzle poor people's money would get our vote."

Sumon Khuby (28) said, "We will vote for him who will work for this village. We will not vote bad people".

New voter Jewel Sangma

(20) said, "We want to vote the person who will help poor and look after all."

Housewife Bhakti Chakma (28) said, "Voting is on the 29th. None has yet come to us to seek vote. We have not yet seen any candidate."

Teritus Tarsius A Sangma (71) is the leader of the indigenous people of the village. He is a war-wounded freedom fighter. He was a bodyguard of Sector No 11 commander Col Abu Taher during the liberation war. About election this time he is clear in expressing his thoughts.

He said, "We will not vote militants, corrupt people, terrorists, extortionist and their patrons. We will evaluate and discuss among ourselves before casting our ballots. If I do not like any of the candidates I will cast 'No' vote."

KUSHTIA-2

JP, BNP contestants withdraw for Inu

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The entire election scenario in Kushtia-2 constituency (Mirpur-Bheramara) has taken a new turn after two independent candidates have extended their support to Hasanul Haq Inu.

They are Jatiya Party president member and former MP Ahsan Habib Lincoln and Mokarimpur Union Parishad chairman and former vice president of Mirpur upazila BNP Benazir Ahmed Benu.

The political analysts say the prospect of winning the seat by the grand alliance candidate Inu has brightened now.

Yesterday evening Lincoln and Benu joined meetings of Inu held at different places in Mirpur and Bheramara upazilas and expressed their support for him. They also urged the people to vote for Inu for the greater interest of the area.

Earlier on Tuesday, Benu met with Hasanul Haq Inu at his residence in Golapnagar, while Lincoln phoned Inu over the issue.

Different sources said that this incident might hit a big blow to the prospects of the 4-party alliance candidate



Hasanul Haq Inu

Sahidul Islam as strength of grand alliance nominee increased in a great extent.

The main contenders in the seat are Grand Alliance's Hasanul Haq Inu and four-party alliance nominee Sahidul Islam.

Statistics wise, after Lincoln and Benu's expressing support to Inu the Grand Alliance candidate's strength has increased substantially.

According to sources, after being denied nomination Hanif is still absent from working for Inu. Even the AL leader ordered his followers not to work for Inu.

When contacted Inu said he is still optimistic that AL leader Hanif will join with him for the betterment of AL led grand alliance.

BAGERHAT-1

Hasina to have landslide victory, AL men claim

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Bagerhat-1 has been a prestige issue for Awami League as Sheikh Hasina is running from there in December 29 Parliamentary elections.

Leaders and workers of the party and its front organisations are toiling hard in all nook and corners of Bagerhat-1 to seek votes for Sheikh Hasina.

Sheikh Hasina's victory in the upcoming election from Bagerhat-1 is matter of prestige, said its district president Dr Mozammel Hossain.

Sheikh Hasina's main rival here is Advocate Sheikh Wahiduzzaman Dipu, Joint Secretary of Bagerhat district BNP.

Her cousin Sheikh Helal won this seat in 2001 Parliamentary elections defeating his BNP rival Sheikh Mujibar Rahman.

The former Prime Minister filed nomination paper from this constituency to run in the upcoming Parliamentary elections in place of Sheikh Helal as he has been absconding since 1/11 political changeover in the country.

She will win a landslide victory polling highest number of votes from all the three upazilas under Bagerhat-1 constituency, said General Secretary of Bagerhat district Awami League Kamruzzaman Tuku.



"We do not believe in politics of revenge but want to give a befitting reply to four-party candidate in December 29 elections through democratic means," he further said.

Chitalmari upazila Awami League leader Happy Boral who is also a leader of the women's wing of Bagerhat AL said that Sheikh Hasina would poll highest number of female votes.

According to Bagerhat District Election office, women voters outnumber male voters in this constituency.



Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Satkhira unit forms a human chain at Pucca Pole in the town yesterday urging people not to vote for Jamaat candidates in three constituencies in the district.

15 injured in Tanore poll clashes

Attack by BNP men, alleges AL

RU CORRESPONDENT

A group of BNP activists yesterday attacked an Awami League (AL) election campaign rally at Adadighi area under Tanore upazila in Rajshahi-1 constituency that left 15 people including women injured seriously.

The clash erupted when BNP activists attacked AL leaders and activists who brought out an election campaign rally led by Talond union Chairman Abul Kashem in support of grand alliance candidate Omar Faruk Chowdhury.

Locals said a large number of BNP cadres led by Talond UP member Shamsuddin attacked the supporters of Omar Faruk without any provocation.

They clubbed AL leaders and activists including women with iron rods and bamboo sticks.

Five critically injured were admitted to Tanore health complex immediately.

Later, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Following the clash, Talond Jubo League President Nazrul Islam filed a case with Tanore Police Station accusing 15 BNP leaders and activists in this connection.

When contacted, BNP leader Shamsuddin alleged that the supporters of grand alliance candidate Omar Faruk first damaged BNP posters and banners in the area.

As tension was prevailing, a huge number of police were deployed to avert any further clash.

Reject anti-liberation forces through ballot

Freedom fighters hold rally at Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Freedom fighters and members of pro-liberation forces yesterday formed a human chain and held a rally urging people not to vote for Maulana Abdul Khaleque Mondal in Satkhira-2 (Sadar), Maulana Riasat Ali in Satkhira-3 (Assassuni and Debbata upazila including four unions of Kaliganj upazila) and Gazi Nazrul Islam in Satkhira-4 (Shyamnagar and eight unions of Kaliganj upazila) constituencies alleging them as war criminals.

"Bringing war criminals to trial is now a demand of the people. They must be punished

as they committed heinous crimes during the liberation war. Their crimes are unpardonable as they betrayed the nation," they said.

The human chain was formed at Pucca pole intersection in the town while the rally was organised by Satkhira unit of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad vowing to reject the war criminals in the coming election.

Chaired by its Convener Enamul Haque Biswas, the rally was addressed by freedom fighters Prof Abu Ahmed, Sheikh Abu Nasim Moyna, Abu Bakar Siddique and Kazi Riaz, Syed Kamal Bakht, Abu Syeed, Mahmud Ali Suman and Farida Akhtar Banu.

The speakers alleged that a political party (pointing obliquely to BNP) has formed an alliance with anti-liberation forces Jamaat, and nominated the war criminals to contest in three out of four constituencies of the district in the coming polls.

They said the pro-liberation forces and socio-cultural organisations are campaigning for grand alliance candidates to defeat the Jamaat candidates.

"It is our moral duty to defeat Jamaat candidates as they are war criminals and killed many innocent people during the War of Liberation in 1971," said Enamul.

Rice at Tk 40 a kg result of AL movement: Nizami

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chuadanga

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami yesterday said the country will become dependent on a neighbouring country if the power goes to the section who are trying to brand Bangladesh as Afghanistan.

The Jamaat leader was speaking at an election rally at Horimohon Government High School ground in Chapainawabganj town.

Making an oblique refer-

ence to Awami League-led 14-party alliance, he said, "People have to give reply through ballot against those who are responsible for logi-boitha attack, bombing and such other incidents."

"Rice at Tk 40 a kg and soybean oil at Tk 120 a kg is the result of Awami League-led grand alliance's logi-boitha movement in October, 2006."

"Democracy is not safe in the hands of Awami League."

"Fearing four-party alliance's coming to power again, Awami League launched

movement to foil the election scheduled for January 22 in 2007," Nizami said.

Introducing Jamaat candidate Latifur Rahman in Chapainawabganj-3 constituency, he urged people to cast vote for party symbol 'daripalla' (balance scale) to 'save education, culture, independence and sovereignty of the country'.

Former BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid is also contesting from the constituency.

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Withdraw JP's Jhantu from Sirajganj-2

AL urges grand alliance

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Sirajganj district Awami League (AL) yesterday urged the grand alliance high-ups to withdraw the nomination of Jatiya Party (JP) candidate Aminul Islam Jhantu from Sirajganj-2 constituency (Sirajganj Sadar-Kamarkhanda).

They said Jhantu, who is introducing himself as a grand alliance candidate with plough symbol, is unknown to the dwellers of Sirajganj town as he was not directly involved with the local politics.

Jhantu is a central leader of JP and a secretary of Jatiya Jubo Sanghati central committee.

Voters of Sirajganj-2 don't want him as grand alliance candidate and AL will never accept him as their candidate, said local sources.

At an electoral rally at Khokshabari hospital ground in the town, the district AL leaders said Jannat Ara Henry has been nominated by AL chief Sheikh Hasina as the party candidate in this constituency.

They said all AL leaders and activists are working for her in full swing and the possibility of her winning is almost certain.

Under this situation, they would not accept any conspiracy to withdraw the candidature of Henry, they added.

The rally was presided over by acting president of district AL Mostafizur Rahman.

Speakers at the rally revealed that JP candidate got only 2644 votes in 2001 election from Sirajganj-2 constituency, while AL candidate got 109482 votes.

This time also, there is an overwhelming support for boat symbol in this seat, they said, alleging that some dishonest politicians are spreading rumours against Henry finding her good position.



Four-party alliance candidate in Chandpur-3 GM Fazlul Huq addresses an election rally at Baburhat College ground yesterday.