



ELECTION 2008

DHAKA FRIDAY DECEMBER 26, 2008



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 Charmalshapara 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 Ikbol Hasan Mahmud Tuku, is a nominee of four-

Roni, 25, son of Manir Hossain of Biaraghata 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 Cittagong 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 Khaleda Zia's commitment, she said the four-party alliance, if voted to power, will give priority to development of the CHT region.

They have endless problems. Their village does not have electricity. All of them became members of Palli Bidyut Samity over 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 Khub (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 them."

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

When contacted Inu said

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

with the local politics.

Inhu is a central leader of JP and a secretary of Jatiya Juba 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.

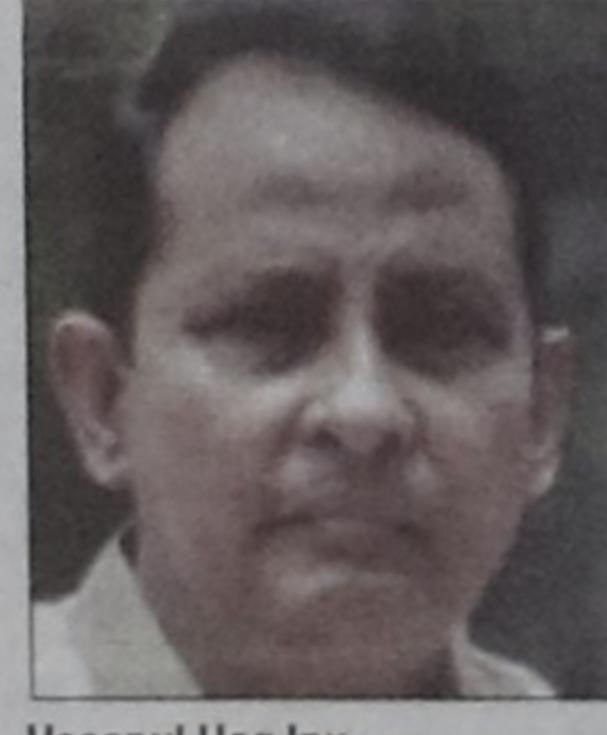
They said all AL leaders and activists are working for her in full swing and the possibility of her winning is almost certain.

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.



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

In 1991, he contested from Moulvibazar-3 and Moulvibazar-4 and was defeated to Awami League candidates. In Moulvibazar-4, he had also lost security money. However, he was made finance minister in 1991 when BNP led by Khaleda Zia formed the government. Saifur took massive development schemes for Moulvibazar.

In 1996, he was elected from Moulvibazar-3 although BNP became opposition party in parliament. In 2001, Saifur was elected from three seats—one from Moulvibazar district and two from Sylhet district. Later he retained Sylhet-1 seat and vacated other two seats including his home seat Moulvibazar-3.

CHITALMARI UPAZILA: Advocate 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.

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

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