



## BNP, Jamaat cook up tales about militancy

*Bid to befool Rajshahi voters, civil society men say*

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami candidates during election campaigns in Rajshahi constituencies have given a 'false version' of the dreadful rise of so-called Islamist militancy in the country to befool voters, civil society members alleged.

Jamaat candidates once again brushed aside the dreadful events, saying there are no more. BNP candidates claimed that the four-party alliance government did not abet militancy, rather it brought militants under justice.

They said, the problem of militancy is no more now. Their election campaigns ended yesterday midnight.

BNP candidate Mizanur Rahman Minu in Rajshahi-2 constituency in an interview with a local newspaper in Rajshahi termed the allegation of his abetting militancy as 'pre-planned' to tarnish his image.

"During alliance rule, we brought militants under law, took them to court, and did not help them. BNP is a liberal party where there is no shelter for militants and extremists. We just hate them", Minu said in the interview.

"BNP government dealt with militancy issue very strictly. It would not have even arisen had the previous governments did like BNP", said Kabir Hossain, BNP contestant in Rajshahi-3 and also the party's Liberation War affairs secretary.

Kabir's rival and Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Ataur Rahman said, "There is no militancy in Rajshahi region. It was the incident of Bagmara

(an upazila in Rajshahi from where militants were exposed). They rose in Bagmara and they were buried in Bagmara".

BNP candidate in Rajshahi-1 Enamul Haque, brother of barrister Aminul Haque who is abroad after convicted for life in a militancy abetting case, and BNP runner in Natore-2 Sabina Yasmin Chhobi, also expressed similar views. Chhobi is wife of Ruhul Kuddus Talukhdar Dulu, charged as a militant patron.

Their versions of the militancy came as grand alliance candidates here spoke about the role of former BNP-Jamaat stalwarts in abetting militancy.

Rajshahi region, once infested with outlaws, saw the rise of Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants, led by JMB leader Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhain in 2004.

The JMB cadres in the name of action against underground operatives allegedly killed around 25 people and maimed over 500 in the region in only three months.

Former BNP minister Aminul Haque and former BNP deputy minister Ruhul Kuddus Talukhdar Dulu, with the help of former BNP lawmaker Nadim Mustofa, former RCC Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, and former state minister Alamgir Kabir reportedly patronised militants using police and the administration.

Allegedly backed by Minu, a large group of armed JMB militants marched through Rajshahi city on May 23, 2004.

They addressed a number of wayside meetings and

handed over memorandums to the then Rajshahi deputy commissioner, superintendent of police and deputy inspector general of police. Militant kingpin Asadullah Al Galib was provided with a certificate, signed by Minu in 2004, which said 'Galib has no link with militancy'. Galib is being tried for his militant roles.

As JMB's Rajshahi operations raised countrywide concern, the then government was forced to arrest Rajshahi University teacher and militant kingpin Asadullah Al Galib.

Then the JMB militants threatened a serial blast for freeing Galib. Finally they unmasked it on August 17, 2005 and ran terror strikes on courts and judges, drawing global concern.

Later, the then four-party government arrested them as JMB leaders threatened of revealing their links with government high-ups. The arrested militants were executed during the rule of present caretaker government.

Eminent litterateur Hasan Azizul Haque said it is no more a secret now that BNP-Jamaat leaders including former Rajshahi mayor patronised militants of Bangla Bhai. It would be better for them (four-party alliance candidates) to promise that they would never patronise militants, if elected, he told this correspondent.

"They are now talking false on militancy ahead of election. They can not avoid responsibility of abetting militancy", said Haque.

The truth is that the serial blasts and terror attacks on

courts and judges in 2005 occurred when the BNP-Jamaat government was forced to chase militants following local and international pressure, said Mahtab Uddin, a social worker.

Mahtab said voices of militants sank when they (militants) threatened of disclosing their links with BNP-Jamaat.

"Jamaat denial of Bangla Bhai's existence when local media were focusing on the issue proves their involvement".

Dr AHM Zehadul Karim, a Rajshahi resident, now vice chancellor of Comilla University, said the versions BNP-Jamaat candidates are totally false. "The fact is that militancy is still a threat today".

The militancy issue should have been in election manifestos of BNP and Jamaat as it rose during their rule, he said.

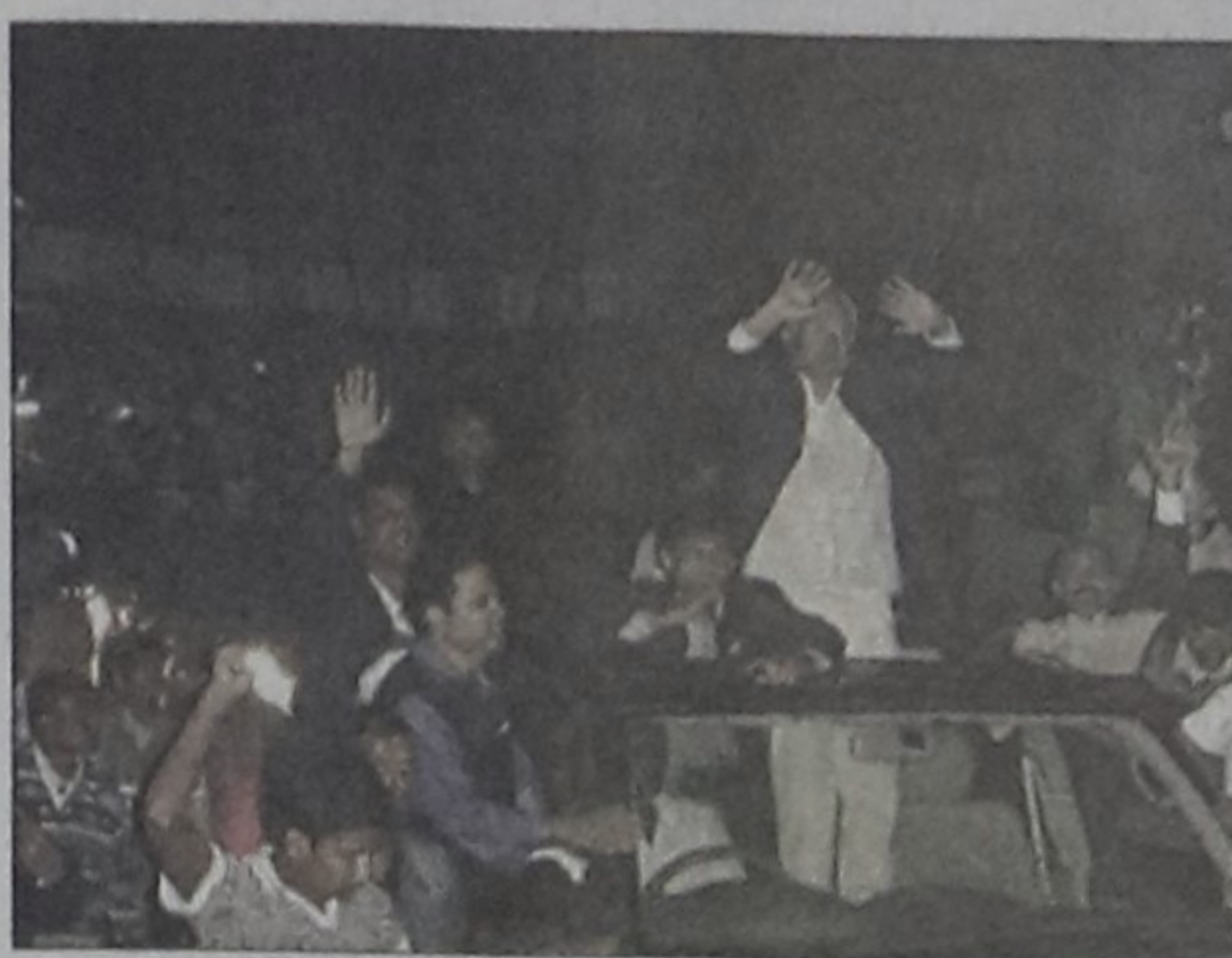
"Instead of commitment against militancy prior to elections, they have distorted facts", said Nurul Alam, president of Rajshahi district unit of Shujon (Shushasoner Jonno Nagorik).

Dr Mahbuba Kaniz Keya, a Rajshahi University teacher, said there is no need to have a proof that the BNP-Jamaat version is false as the militancy issue is as clear as water.

"We are still under threat. The militants will come out whenever they find a suitable ground".

Manoranjan Nandi, a prominent playwright, said, "By distorting the facts, political leaders tried to fool voters. We want tough words against those who are engaged with militancy."

## LAST DAY OF POLL CAMPAIGN



Clockwise: Four-party candidate Saifur Rahman leading a campaign in Moulvibazar town, grand alliance's Fazle Hossain Badsha waves to people in Rajshahi, four-party's Shafiqul Alam Proddhan at a campaign in Dinajpur-3, Col Zahid faruq Shamim in Barisal, Henry cheers at supporters in Sirajganj-3, and Ershad addresses a rally at Birampur in Dinajpur.

## FF, war criminal to fight in Sherpur-1

DEBASHISH SAHA ROY, Sherpur

Sherpur-1 (Sherpur Sadar upazila) is one of the most important constituencies in Greater Mymensingh area in the ensuing Jatiya Sangsad election as a freedom fighter and an anti-liberation candidate are contesting from this seat.

Awami League-led Grand Alliance has nominated two time lawmaker from the seat, district AL president and freedom fighter Atiur Rahman Atique. BNP-led four-party alliance has nominated anti-liberation Jamaat-e-Islami's central senior assistant secretary general Muhammad Qamaruzzaman here.

Though six candidates are contesting from the seat the main fight will be between the candidates of Grand Alliance and the four-party alliance, observers said.

Sherpur-1 seat is most talked about among the three

seats in Sherpur district. Since former autocrat HM Ershad captured power Jatiya Party leader Shah Rafiqul Bari Chowdhury captured the seat till 1995. JP presidium member Rawshan Ershad contested from the seat in 1996 and was defeated by AL candidate Atiur Rahman Atique with a big margin of 16,000 votes. In 2001 election Awami League candidate Atique defeated Jamaat leader Qamaruzzaman with a huge margin of 21,000 votes.

A big faction of BNP severely opposed nomination of Qamaruzzaman as a Grand Alliance candidate in Sherpur-1 seat due to his controversial and negative role during the 1971 liberation war. Though the progressive faction of BNP opposed Qamaruzzaman at the beginning now they participating in the Jamaat leader's campaign following directives of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Small trader Mosharrar Hossain of Sherpur town said, "It is a shame that an anti-liberation element is participating in the national election in the month of victory. AL Badar Bahini led by him killed my brother college student Golam Mostafa on August 24, 1971. This is war criminal Qamaruzzaman."

Sector Commanders Forum at a rally at Sherpur district Shilpakala Academy auditorium on November 13 declared Muhammad Qamaruzzaman as a top war criminal.

Atique said, "Not only the people of Sherpur, the whole country know that Qamaruzzaman is a war criminal."

However, four party candidate Qamaruzzaman denied these allegations and said, he was not in Sherpur in 1971. He said his name is linked with AL Badar Bahini killer Kamran with ill motive.

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### NETRAKONA-2 Fakir Ashraf withdraws from race

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Jatiya Party leader Fakir Ashraf, grand alliance candidate for Netrakona-2 (Netrakona Sadar-Barhatta) constituency, at a press conference in Netrakona town yesterday declared withdrawal of his candidacy, paving way for district AL General Secretary Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru, another candidate from the alliance.

"I took the decision for withdrawal for the greater interest of the grand alliance," Fakir Ashraf said at the conference.

The grand alliance high command earlier declared his name as candidate for the constituency but due to allegation of bank loan default, Netrakona returning officer cancelled his nomination paper.

After getting clearance from the Supreme Court, Ashraf came to the election field but AL leader Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru had already started election campaign as grand alliance candidate.

Candidacy of two persons, who claimed themselves as grand alliance nominees, had created problem for the alliance in the constituency.

### Uzzal Chakma's promises

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Independent candidate Uzzal Smriti Chakma, also a leader of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), said here yesterday he will fight against evil forces and Bengali people who grabbed indigenous people's land at Gamaridala, Keyanghat, Sajek, Latibul, Lama, Alikadam and other places in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Uzzal said this while addressing an election campaign at Naranheeya village in Sadar upazila.

"Outsiders are trying to drive out indigenous people capturing their lands, languages and tradition while army men are grabbing their lands in name of extension of camps or training centres, he said, if voted to power, he will stop their activities, he declared.

## 15 injured as rivals attack procession of AK Khandaker

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Alleged BNP cadres attacked upon an Awami League procession at 'Fakir More' point of Sujanagar upazila under Pabna-2 constituency injuring at least 15 to 20 activists.

Activists of AL and its wings including Chhatra League were coming to Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) AK Khandaker's rally at Sujanagar Pilot school premises.

According to the sources, Sujanagar upazila unit AL organized a grand rally in support of Air Vice Marshal AK Khandaker, AL-led Grand Alliance nominee for Pabna-2 (Sujanagar and partly of Bera upazila) constituency yesterday.

The rally was held at Sujanagar pilot high school premises at about 5 P.M. At least 25000 people from different areas of the constituency came to the rally. Pro-Khandaker men were coming to the rally with several processions.

According to the sources, the BNP cadres attacked the AL procession on way to Khandaker's rally at 'Fakir More' point. Locals claimed that the leaders and activists of AL and its wings of Satbaria

and Bonkola villages were coming to the rally. When the procession reached the Fakir More point the BNP cadres attacked the AL men. The BNP cadres beat the AL workers on the spot. At least 10 to 15 people were injured.

Of them 5 Chhatra League activists received serious injuries. They were identified as Maruf (25), Rejaul Karim (30), Sohail Rana (25), Saiful Islam (23) and Rubel (20). They were admitted to Sujanagar Hospital, sources informed.

Air Vice Marshall (ret'd) AK Khandaker claimed that it was a planned attack by the BNP cadres. "The BNP cadres attacked our procession as per an earlier plan. The BNP cadres torture people at different times. We hardly protested such attack," AK Khandaker told this correspondent yesterday.

Speaking at the rally AK Khandaker said "Vote for the symbol boat so that AL can remove all the oppression occurred by the four party alliance government. People's patience has exhausted. So give vote for peace and democracy." He also urged the people to elect pro-liberation forces in December 29 election.

## Election campaign peaks in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet.

The election campaign in Sylhet reached the peak as the candidates geared up their electioneering to give a finishing touch yesterday.

A total of 32 candidates of different parties and independent runners are on the race in 6 seats of the district. Sylhet division has 50,81,487 voters in 19 constituencies this time.

The activists and supporters of the candidates held public meetings, brought out processions and made publicity using loud speakers in favour of their candidates starting from morning and continuing till late at night yesterday.

The candidates were going house to house to seek votes making promises of meeting their demands, if elected. Local political analysts said there would be direct fight between AL and BNP candidates in almost all the seats of the division. Jamaat candidates are on 2 seats against the grand alliance men. BNP-led alliance got 9 out of 19 in 4 districts of the division in 2001 polls. However, later they got 2 others in by elections.

With only a day to the much-awaited elections, candidates including the stalwarts of both the alliances joined their last campaign yesterday. There had been no report of any untoward incident from anywhere of the district while preparations are almost final.

However, the well-experienced pre-election scenario is absent this time, a number of citizens said yesterday. All it happened due to the restrictions imposed by the EC, they opined, such things should be continued for the greater interest of the commoners.

A big procession was taken out in the city yesterday afternoon in support of the 4-party nominee M Saifur Rahman. Starting from the government Alia madrasah maidan the procession paraded the main streets and ended at the court point area. Saifur, along with some alliance leaders later joined mass contact programmes.

Grand alliance's AMA Muhith joined the grand rally at the Registry maidan at night. After the rally a big procession was also taken out in the city.

Muhith said he would re-establish the Haor development Board for ensuring the best utilisation of the vast and resourceful low-lying region of the country. Besides, immediate measures would be taken to resolve the crisis of pure drinking water, transportation problem and water logging in the city. City mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran and leaders of the grand alliance also spoke on.

## Khulna City 5,000 security men to be on poll duty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A security net has been thrown in the entire metropolitan city centring Monday's parliamentary election.

Over 5,000 security forces comprising army, Rapid Action Battalion, BDR, Armed Police Battalion (APBN) and Ansars will be deployed to ensure peaceful holding of elections in 260 polling centres in the metropolitan city.

Special Branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) has identified 170 out of 260 polling centres as risky where about three thousand police and Ansars will be engaged on election day to maintain law and order.

Each of these 170 risky centres will have five policemen, and twelve Ansars while 90 others will get three policemen and twelve Ansars for round-the-clock duty from Sunday midnight.

Besides, 26 mobile teams each comprising ten security forces will patrol all the 260 polling centres.

## Rebel's men attack Ershad's convoy in Rangpur: 20 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Campaigners of independent candidate in Rangpur-2 constituency Mohammad Ali Sarker allegedly damaged five vehicles in the motorcade of Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad at Badarganj Bazar yesterday.

Agitated campaigners of Mohammad Ali also threw shoes on the jeep carrying HM Ershad and hurled abusive words, witnesses said.

At least 20 people of both sides were injured as police charged batons to quell the violence.

The incident took place at around 11:00 am as Ershad concluded his speech at an election meeting at Badarganj Bazar. Later, Ershad with police escort entered the house of AL former state minister Anisul Haque Choudhry.

Grand alliance candidate Anisul Islam Mondol, a JP

leader, alleged that supporters of independent candidate former JP MP Mohammad Ali Sarker attacked the motorcade without any provocation and damaged five cars and jeeps.

Mondol said, "As Ershad did not nominate him in Rangpur-2 constituency, he influenced his men to attack the party chief and party leaders."

Eyewitnesses said, Sarker's men became agitated as Ershad in his speech used slang for him. As he concluded his speech, they pelted brick bats at the vehicles.

Mondol alleged that the officer-in-charge of Badarganj police station did not take preventive measure though he was warned earlier.

Rangpur Returning Officer Abdul Ahad said, "A probe body has been formed and action will be taken after investigation."

## 40 hurt in poll clashes in 3 dists

STAR REPORT

Forty people were injured, several of them seriously, in clashes between opponent election activists at places in Patuakhali, Magura and Rajshahi districts in two days.

In Patuakhali, 15 Awami League supporters including a woman were injured as BNP activists attacked them at Chatia village in Rangabali under Patuakhali-4 (Kalapara) constituency yesterday morning, reports our correspondent.

Some 10/12 unidentified BNP cadres attacked them for joining an AL rally at Kalapara upazila town the previous day, police and locals said.

At least five BNP men were injured at Daspara village in Baupali upazila under Patuakhali-2 constituency as AL cadres attacked them at about 9:30pm of Friday. Attackers also set fire to two motorcycles and damaged another.

Seven or eight AL cadres led by Jahangir Hossain attacked BNP activists during their meeting at the campaign office at Daspara village, locals and police said.

In Magura, 15 people were injured, seven of them seriously, in a clash between the supporters of Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance and BNP-led four-party alliance at village Ramchandrapur in

Magura Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

At least 22 houses including that of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal district unit Secretary ATM Mohabbat Ali were also damaged during the clash.

The clash that followed chanting 'indecent' slogans against the grand alliance candidate and tearing some posters at around 8:00am spread to two nearby villages, police and witnesses said.

In Rajshahi, four BNP men were injured as Awami League activists attacked their election campaign procession for four-party alliance candidate Dr Enamul Haque in Rajshahi-1 constituency at

Charasadiaha in Godagari upazila in Rajshahi on Friday night.

The BNP leaders and activists came under the attack after they chanted slogans against AL chief Sheikh Hasina and the grand alliance candidate in the seat, locals said.

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

A large number of police were deployed at Charasadiaha as a tense situation is prevailing in the area.

BNP activists attacked Bikalpo Dhara election campaign rally at Arani in Charghat upazila in the district, leaving one injured on Friday evening.