

5 of 6 Dinajpur seats may see fight of alliances

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Four out of six constituencies in Dinajpur today may see fight between alliances while several candidates, most of them rebels in Dinajpur-4 and 6 constituencies, may cause trouble to AL-led Grand Alliance and BNP-led four-party Alliance.

This year's election scenario is different to the voters as at least ten new faces of AL and BNP alliance are vying for entry into parliamentary seats. Five new faces from each alliance are contesting the polls in the district with their party symbols "Boat" and "Sheaf of Paddy". In Dinajpur-1 (Kaharole and Birganj) AL led grand alliance candidate former MP Monoranjan Shill Gopal has been taking on BNP-led four party alliance nominee Jamaat leader Muhammad Hanif.

Locals said that Gopal has huge popularity in the constituency. Gopal won the 2005 by-election.

In Dinajpur-2 (Biral and Bochaganj)

local people say a triangular fight among Grand Alliance nominee Md. Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, four party alliance candidate Lt General Mahubur Rahman and BNP rebel Jalal Uddin Ahmed who is running as an independent, is likely in this constituency.

In Dinajpur-3 (Dinajpur Sadar) people expect a tough fight between Grand Alliance candidate Iqbalur Rahim and four party alliance nominee Md. Shafiqul Alam Prodhan.

It has been learnt that many AL leaders of Dinajpur district committee are not working for Iqbalur Rahim while BNP and its alliance leaders are working together for Shafiqul Alam Prodhan. It may cause some problem for Iqbalur Rahim. In Dinajpur-4 (Chirirbandar and Khansama) Grand Alliance candidate AHM Mahmud Ali is campaigning tirelessly to ensure victory for boat but AL rebel candidate Mizanur Rahman Manu will give him much trouble. Manu won

three times from the constituency with the symbol boat.

Md. Hafizur Rahman Sirker a BNP rebel would make some problem for four party alliance nominee BNP's Md. Aktaruzzaman Miah.

In Dinajpur-5 (Phulbari and Parbatipur) a dual fight between Grand Alliance candidate Md. Mostafizur Rahman Fizar and AZM Rezwanaul Haque of four party alliance is expected. Fizar won the seat twice.

In Dinajpur-6 (Birampur, Nawabganj, Hakimpur and Ghoraghat) conflict between JP and AL candidates at the constituency are ushering hope for Jamaat candidate of BNP-led alliance Anwarul Islam though there was a prospect for AL to win the election if one candidate, either from AL or JP, was nominated.

According to the locals, the rebel candidates are now a great factor for the alliances.



Chittagong police have requisitioned a large number of vehicles for election purposes. The picture was taken at police lines ground in the port city yesterday.

Duel of alliances also in most Naogaon seats

SAIDUR RAHMAN, Naogaon

Direct duel between the candidates of AL-led Grand Alliance and BNP-led four party alliances is most likely in the five out of six constituencies in Naogaon.

There is no influential candidate other than nominees of the two major alliances in these five seats.

In Naogaon-4 (Manda) seat Awami League rebel and independent candidate Imajuddin Pramanik has become a major headache for both Grand Alliance candidate SM Abdul Latif and four party alliance nominee Shamsul Alam Pramanik.

On a spot visit local people said though at the primary stage the four party leaders

and workers were happy at the news of Imajuddin Pramanik's running as an independent candidate. But the situation is changing. Four party alliance partner Jamaat-e-Islami and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir are not working sincerely for the BNP candidate.

Awami League candidate is facing trouble due to the rebel candidate. Manda Upazila BNP is divided into some three factions for last two to three years. As a result all the BNP leaders and workers could not be involved in the campaign for the party candidate.

Upazila BNP member and four party alliance's election steering committee convener Saiful Islam Chowdhury said they are worried about the

outcome of the election as Jamaat is not involving its workers in the campaign. He, however said the main competition would be between the four party alliance nominee and the independent candidate.

On way to Proshadpur Bazar local rickshaw van driver Khokan of Balo Singh Jonglipara said traditionally his family members used to vote for Jamaat candidate. This time Jamaat workers have not been seen working for "Sheaf of Paddy." In such a situation the members of his family have decided to vote for "Pitcher" of the independent candidate.

From the prevailing situation it seems a three-prong fight will take place here.

12,000 election observers in Sylhet divn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

About 12,000 observers including representatives of foreign missions and embassies will observe Jatiya Sangsad (JS) election in Sylhet division.

Besides US embassy and EU, organisations like Odhikar, Bangladesh Manobadhikar Bastobayon Sangstha, Janipop, RDRE, Democracywatch, Khan Foundation and Manobadhikar Foundation have enrolled themselves as polls observer in greater Sylhet district, officials said.

About 4,000 observers have enlisted themselves to oversee polls in 822 polling centres of six constituencies in Sylhet district while 2,500 observers will observe election in 502 polling centres in four Moulvibazar constituencies.

BNP-led alliance faces tough challenge in Sylhet division

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

BNP is in the face of serious challenge in Sylhet region this time. They are in trouble in most of the seats, which they bagged in the 2001 while the AL led alliance is trying to get back those they lost in the last elections.

Jamaat-e-Islami is adamant to retain their old one out of 19 seats in the division while the JP is on hard fight to retain existence in the region.

Out of 19 constituencies in Sylhet division, Jamaat has been given 2 seats by

the 4-party alliance. Although JP got 3 seats from the grand alliance, the AL men did not quit race except in one seat in Sylhet division. However, many people apprehend, this time JP may not be able to retain their position under the AL umbrella.

The AL got 7 seats in 1991 polls, 14 in 1996 while the figure went down to 7 in 2001.

In 1991, BNP got only one in the division. Saifur Rahman lost in both seats he contested in Moulvibazar that time. Although BNP fielded 19 candidates that time, they

were on third positions in 4 seats.

Although BNP was in power, they failed to have a good result after 5 years. AL got 9 while JP had 8 and IOJ managed one in the 1991 polls. In the June 15, 1996 elections, BNP got only 3 seats including 2 by Saifur Rahman. AL managed 13 while JP got 3 seats.

The BNP led alliance advanced much bagging 10 out of 19 in 2001 in the division, which was once a stronghold of AL. Of them, 9 were of BNP while Jamaat got one. AL got 7 and JP had none.

With the death of AL

stalwarts Abdus Samad Azad and SAMS Kibria, the seats went to BNP led alliance in the by election putting their figure to 14 in the division till their end in late 2001. However, BNP failed to get any of the 4 seats in Habiganj district in 2001.

The 4-party alliance is trying their best to retain the old seats, as half of them may be lost, it is widely apprehended. The alliance has fielded 9 of the 10 winners of 2001. Besides 5 among the 6 others, who were close to victory in 2001 polls has been fielded again.



Last minute campaign at the election camps of grand alliance candidate Nurul Islam BSc, left, and four-party alliance candidate Samsul Alam in Bakalia area in Chittagong city. The picture was snapped at about 11 Saturday night.



PHOTO STAR

2 ALLIANCES LOCK HORN FOR 4 SATKHIRA SEATS 4-party for retaining them, grand alliance for victory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

All the four constituencies in the district are likely to see today a major contest between the nominees of Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance and BNP-led four-party alliance.

The grand alliance fielded candidates two each from AL and Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) while the BNP-led alliance fielded three candidates from Jamaat and one candidate from BNP.

Four-party alliance that won all the four seats in 2001 election is desperate to retain them while the grand alliance is also trying to win the seats this time.

Satkhira-1 (Tala-Kalaroa) constituency will see a duel fight between the candidates of grand alliance and four-party alliance.

BNP leader Habibul Islam Habib was elected lawmaker, defeating district AL President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the seat in 2001.

The opponent alliances have fielded the same persons to contest from the seat this time too.

However, Habibul Islam

Habib, facing several cases including Tala upazila BNP president ABM Altaf Hossain murder case, is in an awkward position.

In Satkhira-2 (Sadar) constituency, the grand alliance has nominated JP central Vice-President MA Jabbar against four-party alliance candidate former Jamaat lawmaker Maulana Abdul Khaleque who was elected from the seat in 2001.

Although the constituency is a stronghold of Jamaat, a tough fight is likely between the two major candidates as Jamaat leader Abdul Khaleque, accused in two cases, is facing 'image crisis'.

So, there is a bright chance, to capture the seat from Jamaat by the grand alliance candidate in the coming election.

In Satkhira-3 (Assassuni, Debhata and four unions in Kaliganj upazila), four-party alliance has nominated former Jamaat lawmaker Maulana Riasat Ali while AL-led grand alliance fielded Bangladesh Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad president Prof AFM Ruhul Haque.

Maulana Riasat Ali is

facing trouble as local BNP leader advocate Barun Kumar Biswas is also in the polls race while grand alliance leaders and activists are working to win the seat.

In Satkhira-4 (Shyamnagar and eight unions in Kaliganj upazila) constituency, four-party nominated former Jamaat lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam while JP presidium member Golam Reza was fielded by grand alliance.

Gazi Nazrul is now facing image crisis as he is a charge-sheeted accused in a case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission for amassing wealth beyond his legal income. Gazi Nazrul Islam was elected from the seat in 2001 election.

Golam Reza was convicted to eight months rigorous imprisonment in a case filed with Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate's Court and he was released on bail by the court.

Despite the charge, the two candidates are major contestants in the seat as other candidates -- Sheikh Hasan Ali of Zaker Party and Abdul Hai of NAP (Bhasani) do not seem to be any match for them.

Expatriates call to reject war criminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Non-resident Bangladeshi community leaders from the UK have urged people to vote for pro-liberation candidates in upcoming election since it is very important for the future of the country.

Addressing a press conference in Sylhet city yesterday, they called for rejecting the candidates having links with war criminals and those who had plundered public money in the past.

The press conference was organised by UK-based charity organisation Bangladesh Welfare Association.

Acting president of the association Mohammad Harmuj Ali read out a written statement at the press conference which was also addressed by its General Secretary Nurul Islam, Councillor of Westminster London Borough Moshtaque Qureshi, Md Ilyas and Shah Azizur Rahman.

"We want a democratically elected government which will take steps to punish the war criminals. The political quarters, which had patronised militancy and fanatic fundamentalists should not be allowed to return to power," said the speakers.

They also called for voting in favour of the grand alliance candidate Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury, president of the association, in Sylhet-2 where he is facing BNP's M Ilyas Ali.

The speakers said non-resident Bangladeshis including those staying in the UK have been playing a laudable role for the economy of the UK as well as for Bangladesh in different ways.

"Yet we are ready to contribute more for the country, and as such we need an investment-friendly atmosphere here," they said, adding that there should be an export processing zone (EPZ) in Sylhet region.

INTERNAL FEUD IN LOCAL BNP

Saifur may find it tough to retain Sylhet-1 seat

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

With long-standing internal feuds unresolved in local BNP during the election campaign, four-party alliance candidate former finance minister M Saifur Rahman may find it difficult to retain Sylhet-1 seat.

With 4,23,278 registered voters, the constituency comprising Sylhet City Corporation and Sadar upazila sees Saifur Rahman and grand alliance candidate Awami League leader AMA Muhith as the front-runner contestants.

During her Sylhet visit on December 12, BNP chief Khaleida Zia asked all concerned to bury the old hatchets but the move failed, a number of party insiders said.

The internal feud went open after the BNP-led four-party alliance came to power in 2001.

Three other BNP lawmakers in the region, including M Ilyas Ali, went against Saifur and his son former lawmaker Naser Rahman. This time Saifur put more emphasis on Sylhet-1 than his home seat Moulvibazar-3 but a strong faction with many of his trusted people including former district BNP president MA Haque refrained from taking part in his election campaign.

On the other hand, grand alliance nominee AMA Muhith and his party men seem somewhat satisfied as they managed an organised campaign with the partners. Sylhet city mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran also joined Muhith's campaign. They focused on the low-income people and slum dwellers, considered as supporters of AL in the area.

As this correspondent talked to a number of voters in Sylhet-1 constituency, most of them said

they are optimistic about a qualitative change in December 29 election.

At least there would not be any fake vote as there is voter list with photos and strict arrangement, they said, adding that they are hopeful about electing a capable candidate to make the area developed and violence-free.

The women and the new voters are also very keen to cast their votes to elect a 'capable' person who would be able to contain crimes and give a patient hearing to their words.

"We prefer a good candidate who will be able to provide us with social security and solve our problems," said Anwara Begum, a housewife of Shahjalal Upashahar.

"Some youngsters backed by party leaders had tortured the Upashahar area a crime zone through extortion and vandalism before the 1/11 change-over. Nothing could be done against the few gangs backed by political leaders," said the 60-year-old woman.

"We are happy to get listed as voters and we will exercise our right to franchise for a suitable candidate who will come forward to solving our problems," said Abdul Hannan Rubel, a new voter staying at the city's Mirer Maidan.

Talking to the newsmen, BNP leader Saifur Rahman said, "I had done a lot in Sylhet region. I need another term to finish the incomplete task."

Grand alliance candidate AL stalwart AMA Muhith told the reporters, "I will work to eliminate violence and make the city a clean one, if elected. We have a plan to introduce facilities for the low-income people. We will also develop the educational institutions and health establishments in the constituency."

GAZIPUR-5 CONSTITUENCY

Milon's alleged corruption a boon for Chumki

MASUDUL HAQUE, Gazipur

Grand Alliance candidate Meher Afroze Chumki's chance has brighten in Gaipur-5 constituency thanks to four-party alliance candidate former lawmaker AKM Fazlul Haque Milon's alleged corruption and irregularities in last five years of the alliance rule.

Father late Moyezuddin's image is also a plus point for Chumki. Moyezuddin was elected MP from this seat in 1970 and 1973. He was shot dead by miscreants while he was leading an anti-autocracy procession in Kaliganj in 1984.

Talking to the voters of this area Tuesday it was gathered that though seven candidates are contesting in the seat the main fight will remain confined between Grand Alliance candidate Chumki and four party

alliance's Milon.

As no mentionable development took place in the area during the alliance rule people are frustrated. They said, "This time we will vote somebody who can ensure development of the area and will not indulge in corruption."

Local people alleged that though no development took place during the five-year rule of BNP Dhaka Bypass road, construction of bridge without link road and lifting and selling of sand from the Shitalakkhya River are glaring examples of corruption during the period. Some 10 cases have been filed against Milon on different charges including for corruption, extortion and embezzlement of relief sheets.

On her rival Grand Alliance candidate Meher Afroze Chumki told this correspondent, "The four party alliance candidate

won this seat last time. He did not do any development work in the area. He has set a record of terrorism, extortion and looting using his musclemen."

Claiming himself as an honest and competent candidate Chumki said, "During the Awami League rule as a women MP elected from reserved seat I did many development work in the area. She mentioned Shahid Moyezuddin Bridge on the Shitalakkhya River as an example."

AKM Fazlul Haque Milon said, "I did development work when I was a lawmaker from this constituency. I hope people will evaluate my work and elect me again."

He said all the nine cases against him are conspiratorial.

Milon said, "When I was a member of the parliamentary committee on communications ministry I constructed Moyezuddin Bridge."