



Intimidation of minority voters, rigging feared

Several Barisal candidates lodge complaint with RO office

EMRAN HOSSAIN AND
RAFIQUL ISLAM, from Barisal

The election atmosphere seems to have taken a turn as many candidates in different constituencies apprehend vote rigging in and intimidation of minority community following what they said return of some criminals.

Several candidates have already complained to Barisal district returning officer about return of outlaws in their areas.

Barisal Police Superintendent Taufique Mahbub Chowdhury, said, "We have taken into account the complaints submitted by contestants to the returning officer. We are working on it."

The administration did not identify any polling centre as risky but selected 302 centre out of total 447 as 'important'. There are 13,19,087 voters in the city, including 6,74,669 female voters.

Interestingly, the death of alleged outlaw Satia Union Parishad chairman Abu Zafar

Mollah in crossfire yesterday morning, Sardar Sarfuddin Ahmed Santu, contesting from Barisal-2, said it is a 'minus point' for him before the election.

"Zafar Mollah had returned to normal life. His death would be a minus point for me," Santu told reporters.

Zafar Mollah, caught with firearms on Friday night, used to support Santu, sources claimed.

Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal, an independent candidate from Barisal-2 constituency, said, "I am afraid that any untoward incident may take place any time as criminals have entered my constituency."

Zafar Mollah's death will be a plus point in maintaining law and order and ensuring security to minority voters, said grand alliance candidate Monirul Islam in the same constituency.

"My party men are vigilant about security of minority voters. I will ensure their security this time."

The alleged criminals who returned to Barisal-1 constituency in last several days include Sahedul Alam Sentu, president of Poura Jubo Dal; Shamim Khalifa, a Jubo Dal leader; and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader Mizanur Rahman Akbar. They allegedly prevented minority community people from casting vote in 2001 election.

"I apprehend any big incident may take place as many criminals and miscreants have returned to their fields," said Talukder Md Younus, who is contesting from Barisal-1 constituency.

Contestant Engineer Abdus Subhan in the same constituency also admitting that minority community voters were barred from going to polling centers in 2001 election. He said, "Last time Jahir Uddin Swapan, who contested from BNP, failed to ensure security of minority voters. This year none will be barred from voting. Why should I bar Hindu voters

when it is sure they will vote for me?"

Four-party alliance candidate Selima Rahman in Barisal-3 blamed grand alliance candidate Golam Kibriya Tipu and rival candidate Jaynul Abedin for sheltering outlaws and criminals.

Asked, Tipu said, "Selima Rahman can say anything as she is third among the three main contestants. There is nothing to be afraid of."

Grand alliance candidate Col. (ret) Jaheed Faruq complained against four-party alliance candidate Mojibur Rahman Sarwar that he was giving money to people in shanties in the city and intimidating them.

ABM Ruhul Amin Howlader, contesting from Barisal-6 with grand alliance ticket, told The Daily Star, "Five Union Parishad chairman are preventing his supporter from campaigning and he apprehends violence."

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Jamaat bid to stop function seeking war criminals' trial

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha

Gaibandha Nagaril Samanj and Sammilito Sangskritik Jote jointly held a cultural programme and brought out a procession at Doharhat in Sunderganj Upazila (Gaibandha-1 constituency) Saturday evening, calling upon the people to boycott war criminals and anti-liberation forces through ballot.

Jamaat-e-Islami leader and former lawmaker Mowana Abdul Aziz is contesting the election this time also from the area, known as a stronghold of Jamaat.

As the cultural programme was on, a group of Jamaat-Shibir activists came to the venue and tried to stop it forcibly. Amid exchange of words, local people gathered there and the Jamaat men fled away, sources said.

Speakers at the cultural programme said Abdul Aziz is a war criminal and demanded his trial.

The speakers included cultural activists Jaharul Kaiyum, Jaharul Islam Shwapan, Shah Nawas Tuku and civil society members Shaukat Ali, Fauk Shier Chinnu, Alamgir Kabir Badal, Al-Amin and Aminul Islam Khokan.

The BNP-led four-party alliance has nominated Jamaat leaders in three out of four constituencies in Gaibandha district.

Hired NGO observers in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A total of 3,034 observers engaged by 11 NGOs, will observe today's national election in Pabna.

All the 11 NGOs got permission from the local election office but many of them have hired non-registered NGOs for supplying the manpower who will work as observers, sources said.

Most of the people hired by the non-registered NGOs are from different professions, including some from Islami Bank, the sources said.

The NGOs include, Rida Bangladesh, GKS, Amwab, Initiative for Peace, Ananya Samaj Kalyan Shangshtha, Nongor, Odhikar, BAKAM and SSAF. Among them, Initiative for Peace, BAKAM and Nongor will work as mobile observers.

The number of observers is still far less than required, election officials said. At least two observers from two NGOs are to be deployed in each booth, other sources said.

They said hiring people other than NGO workers as election observers is unlawful.

Asked about this, Additional Deputy Commissioner Md. Sajahan said the NGOs in their reports said all the observers on their lists are their officials. It is difficult to verify whether they are NGO officials or hired people, he said.

Over 600 polling centers have been readied for the election, to be conducted by 600 presiding officers, 2914 assistant presiding officers and 5824 polling officers.

16 CHITTAGONG CONSTITUENCIES

Heavyweights worried as tough fight awaits them

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Ctg

Most of the 12 heavyweight candidates of Awami League, BNP and Jatiya Party (JP) could not afford to a relaxed mood this time as none of them have clear edge over their challengers in the 16 constituencies of Chittagong.

The heavyweights are BNP Joint Secretary General and former fisheries minister Abdullah Al Noman, BNP leader and former commerce minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, AL Chittagong (North) district unit President and former civil aviation minister Mosharraf Hossain, former

adviser to Khaleda Zia and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, JP acting Chairman and former foreign minister Anisul Islam Mahmud, BNP leader and former Whip Syed Wahidul Alam, Executive President of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) Moinuddin Khan Badal, Chittagong City AL Vice President Nurul Islam BSC, BNP leader and two-time lawmaker Gazi Shahjahan Jewel, AL Chittagong (South) district unit President and former lawmaker Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, BNP leader and former lawmaker Sarwar Jamal Nizam, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) chief and former minister Col (ret) Oli Ahmad,

and BNP leader and former state minister Jafrul Islam Chowdhury.

In last three polls, Abdullah Al Noman won two and lost one from city's most 'prestigious' seat Chittagong-8 (Kotwali). This time he has shifted to Chittagong-9 (Doublemooring-Pahartali) to fight against city AL's Joint Secretary Dr Afsarul Amin, JP's Morshed Murad Ibrahim and independent M Monjur Alam. Noman's prospect here is seemingly brighter since two grand alliance-backed candidates Dr Afsarul and Morshed remain in the race.

However, Noman remained in the electoral campaign for 12 days from December 16 due to his illness.

Amir Khosru never conceded defeat in parliamentary polls and this time too he expects easy win against his AL-backed challenger MA Latif, also president of Chittagong Chamber, in Chittagong-10 (Bandar-Patenga) seat.

Noted businessman and fresh BNP candidate MDM Kamaluddin Chowdhury, also chairman of Clifton Group, had made his presence deep in Chittagong-1 (Mirsari), much to the headache of Mosharraf Hossain, who had won only a by-election in 1996 after BNP chief Khaleda Zia relinquished the seat. Kamaluddin's clean image

and Mosharraf's intra-party feud with Glasuddin may bring last laugh for the former.

Salauddin Quader Chowdhury is contesting from Chittagong-2 (Fatikchhari) and Chittagong-6 (Rangunia) against AL's ATM Payerul Islam (former Fatikchhari upazila chairman) and Dr Hasan Mahmud (former PS to AL chief Sheikh Hasina) respectively.

The controversial political career of SQ Chowdhury may risk his chance in at least one seat, political observers said.

Similar fate has been predicted by many quarters for Col Oli in Chittagong-13 (Chandanaish) and Chittagong-14 (Lohagara-Satkania) seat. AL's Afsaruddin Ahmad and Jamaat-e-Islami's Chittagong City Ameer ANM Shamsul Islam may appear as great challenges for Oli.

Close fight is expected between Anis and Wahid in Chittagong-4 (Hathazari), Badal and BNP's fresh candidate Md Ershadullah in Chittagong-7 (Boalkhali-Chandgaon), Jewel and AL's Shamsul Haque Chowdhury in Chittagong-11 (Patiya), Babu and Sarwar Jamal in Chittagong-12 (Anwara) and Jafrul and AL's Sultanul Kabir Chowdhury in Chittagong-15 (Banskhali) seats.

SIX RAJSHAHI SEATS

Fate of 5 talk of town as alliances lock horns

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Fates of five senior politicians in Rajshahi have become topic of lively discussion as 28 candidates are contesting with clear signs for major fight between candidates from Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance and BNP-led four-party alliance in six constituencies in the district.

The senior politicians are Mizanur Rahman Minu, Kabir Hossain, Azizur Rahman of BNP, Fazle Hossain Badsha of Workers Party and Sardar Amjad Hossain of Awami League.

As elsewhere in the country, voting will continue non-stop from 8:00am to 4:00pm at 3921 booths of 551 polling centres in Rajshahi city and nine upazilas of the district that has 15,70,798 voters including 7,70,552 male and 8,00,246 female.

Four-party alliance won all the seats in Rajshahi district in 2001 election.

In Rajshahi-1, AL candidate Omar Faruk Chowdhury will take on BNP's newcomer Enamul Haque, a former law commissioner member and former inspector general of police.

In 2001 election, BNP's barrister Aminul Haque, now fleeing abroad being convicted in a militancy abetting case, won with 21 percent more votes than Chowdhury's. However, internal feud in BNP may work in favour of Chowdhury this time.

M Salauddin Biswas of Bangladesh Kalyan Party is also contesting from this seat. The main focus of Rajshahi's elections will be in

Rajshahi-2 constituency that comprises all the 30 wards of Rajshahi City Corporation. Grand alliance nominee Fazle Hossain Badsha is once again getting locked into battle with BNP bigwig Mizanur Rahman Minu who enjoys support from Jamaat-e-Islami.

Badsha, also a politburo member of Workers Party, was defeated to Minu in 2002 RCC poll. Authorities are yet to decide Badsha's complaint of polls rigging at many centres during that election.

Minu, who served as Rajshahi mayor for 17 years, also became a lawmaker winning the 2001 election.

Enamul Haque of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Akhtaruzzaman Bablu of Bikalpadhara Bangladesh and Sayeed Mahmud Ilyas are also contesting from the constituency.

Rajshahi-3 will see the main fight between BNP's Liberation War Affairs Secretary Kabir Hossain and AL's Miraj Uddin Mollah, although there is Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Ataur Rahman to weaken BNP's position in the seat.

Earlier Kabir was a BNP lawmaker from Rajshahi-2 seat.

M Abdul Hye of Progotishil Gonotantrik Dal is also a candidate for the seat.

Sardar Amjad Hossain is likely to remain as a factor for both grand alliance and four-party alliance nominees in Rajshahi-4 constituency comprising Bagmara that saw rise of religious militancy a couple of years back. Amjad developed a vote

bank in the region winning the elections of 1970, '73, and '86 from Awami League and '88 and '91 with Jatiya Party ticket. In 2006, he returned to Awami League, but was denied nomination allegedly for his role as a 'reformist' during the state of emergency.

This time Amjad is an independent candidate for the seat.

AL nominee Enamul Haque is an industrialist and newcomer to AL. BNP candidate Abdul Gafur, former president of the upazila BNP, is also a first time contestant in parliament election.

Zinnatul Islam Zinnah of National People's Party, Atikur Rahman of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal and Mohammad Mohsin Pramanik of CPB are also in the race.

In Rajshahi-5 (Puthia and Durgapur upazilas), the main battle will be between AL candidate Kazi Abdul Wadud Dara and BNP contestant Nazrul Islam. Both the candidates are new in the electoral race.

SM Shafiqul Azam of Liberal Democratic Party, Abul Kalam Azad of CPB, Moktar Hossain of Bangladesh Tarikat Federation, Shawkat Hossain Khan of National People's Party are also contesting for the seat.

Rajshahi BNP President Azizur Rahman, a former lawmaker will confront AL's new face Shahriar Alam in Rajshahi-6 constituency.

Maskawat Ahsan of Bikalpadhara and Nurul Islam of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal are other contestants in the seat.



Leaflets carrying derogatory comments against Awami League and its chief Sheikh Hasina were distributed at different mosques in Chapinawabganj town yesterday evening.

Jamaat spreads rumour about rival's death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Rajshahi

In Rajshahi-3 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Ataur Rahman and his supporters made frantic efforts in their election campaigns to prove that his rival BNP candidate Kabir Hossain is an unfit candidate, and on the last day of the campaign on Saturday, some Jamaat-Shibir activists circulated a rumour that Kabir has passed away.

Protesting the Jamaat propaganda, Kabir yesterday gave a statement to local media that he is still alive and was engaged in election activities till the end of official period of campaign.

He also submitted a complaint in this regard with the Election Commission claiming that it is a violation of electoral code of conduct.

Kabir said a Rajshahi University teacher belonging to Jamaat at a mosque at Shyampur of Katakhal municipal area circulated the rumour of his death.

None likely to win by a mile in B'baria

SHEIKH MD SHAHIDUL
ISLAM, B'baria

Election result in Brahmanbaria district, where BNP-led four-party alliance won five of the six seats in 2001 elections, may show something different this time in view of new delimitation and rift between BNP and its alliance partner Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ).

Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance sees its bright prospect in two constituencies, BNP-led four-party has better chances in two seats while tough contests are expected in two other seats here.

In 1996, AL got three seats while BNP and its alliance got the three others.

In Brahmanbaria-1 (Nasirganj upazila and three unions of Sadar upazila), BNP 'new face' SAK Ekramuzzaman will contest with AL's advocate Saidul Haque who won the seat in 2001.

This time a tough contest is expected between the two

candidates. However, newly included three unions of Sadar upazila are the strongholds of BNP according to the previous polls result and so prospect for BNP's win is bright in the seat.

In Brahmanbaria-2 (Sarail and Ashuganj upazilas and three unions of Brahmanbaria Sadar), the main poll fight will be held between AL-led grand alliance candidate advocate Ziaul Haque Mridha of JP and BNP-led alliance candidate former lawmaker Mufi Fazul Haque Amini of IOJ. Although there will be a tough contest between them, AL is hopeful to win this seat as five unions of Ashuganj considered as AL strongholds have been included here and two unions known as vote bank of BNP were excluded. Besides, there is rift among the leaders of BNP and Amini.

In Brahmanbaria-3 (comprising 15 unions and a pourasabha of Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila), the main poll fight will be held between AL

candidate former lawmaker advocate Lutfur Hossain, and BNP candidate advocate Haroon AL Rashid, who won the seat five times earlier. AL is hopeful to win the seat as three unions known as vote bank of Haroon have been shifted from this seat.

Brahmanbaria-4 (Akhaura and Kasba upazilas) is set to see a tough contest between two former lawmakers advocate Md Shah Alam of AL and Mushfiqur Rahman of BNP.

In Brahmanbaria-5 (18 unions of Nabiganj upazila), BNP expects easy win for Kazi Md Anwar Hossain, four times former lawmaker from the seat. Shah Jikrul Ahmed is the AL-led grand alliance candidate here.

In Brahmanbaria-6 (Banchharampur and two unions of Nabiganj upazila), AL candidate former lawmaker Captain (ret) AB Tajul Islam and BNP candidate former lawmaker Abdul Kaleque will get locked in tough contest.

Battle of alliances in 5 Chandpur seats likely

ALAM PALASH, Chandpur

Direct dual between the candidates of AL-led Grand Alliance and BNP-led four party nominees in five seats of Chandpur is likely this time also.

In Chandpur-1 (Kachua and Narayanpur union of Matlab upazila) constituency four party alliance candidate ANM Ehsanul Haque is trying to hold on the seat while Grand Alliance nominee Dr Mohiddin Khan Alamgir will fight to regain the seat.

In Chandpur-2 (Matlab North and South) seat three

candidates are most active-Grand Alliance candidate former air chief air vice marshal (ret) Rafiqul Islam, four party nominee Md Nurul Huda and BNP rebel and independent candidate Dr Jalal Uddin. A triangular fight is expected here.

In Chandpur-3 (Chandpur Sadar and Haimchar) constituency Grand Alliance candidate Dr Dipu Moni is in the field from the very beginning. Four party alliance nominee GM Fazul Haque is trying to consolidate his position by uniting the BNP leaders and workers.

In Chandpur-4 (Faridganj) Grand Alliance candidate journalist Shafiqur Rahman is working hard uniting all the leaders and workers of the alliance to ensure victory of his election symbol "boat". Four party alliance's lion Harun-or-Rashid is trying to build up a tough fight.

In Chandpur-5 (Hajiganj-Shahrasti) seat a direct dual between Grand Alliance candidate Major (ret) Rafiqul Islam Bir uttam and four party alliance nominee Engineer Monimul Haque is most likely.



Ballot boxes being despatched to polling centres from Rajshahi district election office, left, and MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR