

CTG-12 BY-ELECTION

Four from AL may seek nomination

BNP's participation uncertain

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With the announcement of the schedule for Chittagong-12 by-election slated for January 17, there is widespread speculation among the people of Anwara and Paschim Patiya as to who are to vie for the parliamentary seat.

The names of at least four persons within the ruling Awami League (AL) have come up, who are likely to seek party nomination. AL insiders said the prospective candidates already started to lobby with the party high command.

The Chittagong-12 constituency (Anwara-Paschim Patiya) fell vacant after AL lawmaker Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu died on November 4.

Akhtaruzzaman's eldest son Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed is one among the four prospective candidates. Credible sources inside the AL said Javed was most likely to win nomination.

Javed, who was a former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), told The Daily Star that AL President Sheikh Hasina, also the prime minister, asked him to get ready for the by-election.

"We are still recovering from the loss of my father, but as the people of the area want me to vie in the election, I am getting ready for it," he said.

Wasika Kaiser, daughter of late AL president member Aaur Rahman Khan Kaiser, is another election aspirant alongside Chittagong district (south) unit AL Joint Secretary Abul Kalam Chowdhury and former Chhatra League leader Shahajada Mohiuddin.

Abul Kalam Chowdhury said he was confident about winning party nomination as he was the most senior leader of Anwara after late Akhtaruzzaman.

"If the nomination is given in consideration of political career and contribution, I am the most eligible candidate," he told The Daily Star. "I have been holding the post of either general secretary or president of the upazila AL for 17 years."

Asked about Javed's getting "green signal" from the party high-ups, Kalam said

the high command had not yet given their consent to any candidate.

"I have talked to the party high command and have got positive response from them." The parliamentary board will decide who will be nominated, he said.

General Secretary of Chittagong district (south) unit AL Moslem Uddin Ahmed, however, said the people of the constituency wanted a family member of late Akhtaruzzaman to be nominated.

Javed and Kalam apart, former Chhatra League leader Shahajada Mohiuddin and Wasika Kaiser are also trying to get party blessings.

Shahajada Mohiuddin said he was interested to vie in this election. "I have not yet got any clear idea from the party high command about who is to be nominated. If the party nominates me, I am ready to contest in this poll," he said.

Wasika Kaiser, who is a banker, said she was interested to run in this by-election and that she would seek nomination from the party.

Meanwhile, the main opposition BNP is yet to decide whether it will take part in this by-election. Party sources said BNP had a central decision not to take part in any election under the present election commission.

Moreover, the party is now in a movement demanding restoration of the caretaker government system. There is a very little chance that BNP would participate in this by-election amid the present situation, said party insiders.

BNP Vice Chairman Abdullah Al Noman told The Daily Star that although the party had not yet declared to boycott the election formally, it was almost sure that BNP was not taking part in it.

Former BNP lawmaker from the constituency Sarwar Jamal Nizam said if the party decided to take part in the election, he was mentally prepared to run the race.

Nizam was defeated in the 2008 national election.

According to the election schedule announced on Sunday, the last dates for submission and withdrawal of nomination papers are December 20 and December 31 respectively.



Dense fog blankets the Karnaphuli river at Chittagong city yesterday. The picture was taken from Firingi Bazar Ghat area.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

MONEY LAUNDERING CASE Hafiz Ibrahim, wife get bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to former BNP lawmaker Hafiz Ibrahim and his wife Mafruz Sultana in a money laundering case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Judge Fozila Begum of the Special Judge Court-6 passed the order after they surrendered before it and sought bail in the case.

The court also fixed December 17 for hearing on charge framing against the accused.

On June 13 this year, Md Ibrahim, ACC assistant director, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka.

Earlier, on August 16 last year, the ACC filed the case against Hafiz, brother of controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun, and his wife for laundering \$1.75 lakh to Singapore.

According to FIR (First Information Report) of the case, the money was paid to their joint account at Standard Chartered Bank in Singapore to help Siemens Bangladesh Ltd win a deal of supplying core telecommunication equipments to Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL).

Dhaka presses for talks on resuming direct flights to USA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has urged the United States to initiate talks on a bilateral air services agreement, which would pave the way for Biman Bangladesh Airlines to resume operating direct flights to America.

In response, Washington has assured Dhaka of sitting together within the shortest time possible to finalise the text of the bilateral agreement, officials at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) said yesterday.

They said as the number of people of Bangladeshi origin living in the USA is gradually increasing, the resumption of the direct air link has become a need of the time because of their growing movement.

Bangladesh strongly felt and

requested the favourable consideration of the USA to finalise the draft bilateral air services agreement, the CAAB said in a statement.

The direct air link between Bangladesh and the USA by Biman Bangladesh Airlines has been suspended since 2006, in the wake of aircraft shortage and huge financial losses.

The issue surfaced when delegations from both the countries met in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Monday on the sidelines of International Civil Aviation Organisation's Air Services Negotiation Conference.

Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain and US Transportations Department Senior Negotiator Brian J Hedberg signed the draft bilateral air services agreement at Jeddah, said the statement.



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

A metal plate at a joint of Kanchpur bridge in the capital is coming apart again despite being repaired just two months back. The photo was taken yesterday.

HC summons Rajuk chief for unauthorised construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summoned Rajuk Chairman Nurul Huda and two others before it on January 8 on charge of not executing its order that asked them to stop unauthorised construction of a structure in the capital's Mohammadpur.

The two others summoned are Rajuk's authorised officer Aminur Rahman and Theme Engineers Limited's Managing Director Mostafizur Rahman.

In response to a contempt of court petition, a HC bench also issued a rule upon the trio to explain why contempt of court proceedings should not be brought against them for not complying with its order.



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- Other conditions apply.



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