

Ivy meets Shakhawat

Says she'll take positive things from the BNP leader's manifesto

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

In a gesture of goodwill, mayor-elect Selina Hayat Ivy called on BNP's defeated candidate Shakhawat Hossain Khan at his Chashara residence with sweets yesterday morning. Shakhawat greeted and shook hands with Ivy, the Awami League's mayoral nominee, who outpaced him by nearly 80,000 votes.

Ivy's brother Ali Reza Ripon, among several others, accompanied her during her 20-minute visit to the house.

Shakhawat's wife Shamima Hossain also greeted the mayor-elect. They embraced cordially before exchanging sweets with each other.

All the guests, including a few local BNP leaders present there, were entertained with sweets and snacks.

"We're all residents in this neighbourhood. I earlier had said that I would visit Shakhawat bhai's house regardless of who wins or loses. I have kept my word," said Ivy.

"I will work on implementing the positives mentioned in his manifesto. I want a harmonious atmosphere for all," she added.

Shakhawat in response said he

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Narayanganj mayor-elect Selina Hayat Ivy meets Shakhawat Hossain, her rival candidate in the NCC polls, at the latter's house in Chashara yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Elected

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Although Iqbal's name was dropped from the charge sheet in the seven-murder case, he is now accused in another criminal case.

Shajalal Badal, a local leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and nephew of Nur Hossain, the prime accused in the seven-murder case, has been elected councillor of ward-3. He is accused in nine criminal cases.

"These councillors-elect may try to continue their criminal activities by influencing the administration," said Abdul Alim, director of Election Working Group (EWG), a platform of 29 civil society organisations that works for promoting fair election and good governance.

In the elections, grassroots leaders and activists of the ruling AL bagged 13 general wards, BNP 12 wards and Jatiya Party (JP) and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) got one each.

AL men won ward-1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 23. BNP men got ward-2, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26 and 26.

JP won ward-24 while left political party BSD ward-15, reports a correspondent from Narayanganj.

Of the winner of nine women reserved seats, four councillors-elect belong to AL and two to BNP. The rest do not have any political affiliation.

No Christmas

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occasion last year, and they arranged special food for the day. But this year, they will not be able to afford those as they have no money, she added.

However, the Santals would offer prayers at Madarpur church.

Virgilas Hembram, 38, said they had no job as they could not go outside Madarpur and Joypur in fear of being attacked. Besides, many villagers were not interested in employing the Santal men after the November 6 incident.

After their eviction, many non-government organisations distributed clothes and food among the victims. But supply of relief is now inadequate, said Virgilas.

The indigenous people are living in makeshift tents.

Claiming the ownership of the land of Joykrishnapur of Durgapur upazila and her roommate went out of town three days back to visit her village home.

Other residents of the dormitory reported the incident to the authorities after finding Nazma hanging inside the room, as the door to it was not locked from inside, he said, adding that the body was handed over to her father following autopsy at Rajshahi Medical College in the afternoon.

College Principal Prof Hobibur Rahman said Nazma was from Joykrishnapur of Durgapur upazila and her roommate went out of town three days back to visit her village home.

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Rajshahi college

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read the note addressing her grandmother.

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N'ganj win boosts AL's confidence

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elections are possible under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina-led administration and that the ruling party is still popular.

Party insiders said the AL would continue with the campaign until the next national polls in 2019. They would continue to do so to reject the BNP's demand for a neutral polls-time government to oversee the next general election.

Senior AL leader Tofail Ahmed yesterday asked the BNP to contest the next national polls without making any further demands.

"An example has been set by Narayanganj City Corporation polls that elections future elections would also be held in a free and fair manner under Sheikh Hasina," he said at a programme at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

Speaking at a programme, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader termed the NCC polls a model elec-

tion. "We want to hold future elections in a similar manner," he said.

AL presidium member Mohammed Nasim said nobody could raise a question about the Narayanganj polls and it proved that national elections in 2019 would be held under Sheikh Hasina in free and fair manner.

LESSON FOR BNP

Most of the central BNP leaders refused to make any comment on the Narayanganj city polls saying that they wanted to examine the results first.

The party is likely to form a commission to find out the reasons behind Shakhawat's defeat. Steps would be taken on the basis of the commission's findings, said a senior BNP leader.

"The election has just ended. We will sit together and analyse the results and come up with a concrete decision about the polls," Goyeswar Chandra Roy, BNP's standing committee member, told The Daily Star. He was the in-

charge of the party's coordinating committee on the NCC polls.

Pro-BNP intellectual and Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Zafarullah Chowdhury said the NCC polls proved that holding polls in a free and fair manner depends on the intention of the government.

"The government knew that Ivy had a good prospect of winning the election and that is why it wanted to hold a fair election. Would they do the same in the national elections?" he questioned.

He said the NCC polls also proved that people preferred Ivy to other mayoral nominees because of her clean image and strong stance against the "criminal activities of ruling party lawmaker Shamim Osman".

Zafarullah also said although Shakhawat was defeated in the election, BNP won it because people had a common perception that his party had boycotted some polls, but he was in the polls race till the end.

"Voter turnout was around 60 percent which means that around 40 percent people did not cast their votes. In any local government elections, the usual rate of vote casting is around 80 percent. That means BNP's claim that people have lost their confidence in elections has been proved to be true to some extent."

The BNP should take a lesson from this election that fielding a good candidate is essential for winning an election, he mentioned, adding that the party should go for forming a bigger platform of opposition parties.

Abdus Salam, BNP chairperson's adviser, said: "It was a local government election. So it should not be compared with national elections. We want to contest a free and fair election. If the government is confident about its popularity, it should make an announcement of holding polls under a neutral polls-time government."

Berlin attack suspect Amri killed in Italy

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they approached him at around 3:00 am outside a station in Sesto San Giovanni, a suburb of the northern city of Milan.

Amri is suspected of driving a truck that smashed through a Berlin market on Monday killing 12 people, and security forces across Europe have been trying to track him down.

The truck mowed through a crowd of people and bulldozed wooden huts selling Christmas gifts and snacks beside a famous church in west Berlin.

Militant group Islamic State acknowledged Amri's death and his suspected role in the German attack - for which it has claimed responsibility - through its Amaq news agency.

"The executor of the Berlin attacks carries out another attack on Italian police in Milan and is killed in a shoot-out," it said.

Milan police chief Antonio De Iesu told reporters that Amri had arrived in Milan's main railway station from France at around 1:00 am and had then travelled to Sesto San Giovanni, where

two young policemen approached him because he looked suspicious.

"We had no intelligence that he could be in Milan," De Iesu said. "They had no perception that it could be him otherwise they would have been much more cautious."

He failed to produce any identification so the police requested he empty his pockets and his small backpack. He pulled a loaded gun from his bag and shot at one of the men, lightly wounding him in the shoulder.

Amri then hid behind a nearby car but the other police officer managed to shoot him once or twice, killing him on the spot. Amri was identified by his finger prints.

ITALIAN JAIL

De Iesu said that besides the gun, Amri had been carrying a small pocket knife. He also had a few hundred euros on him but no cell phone. Amri once spent four years in jail in Italy and police were trying to work out if he knew someone in Sesto.

A judicial source had earlier told

Reuters that police had a tip off that Amri might be in the Milan area and that additional patrols had been sent out to look for him. De Iesu denied that, saying only that the authorities had recently ordered tighter security and more identification checks across the country.

"The two policemen simply decided to check up on a foreigner," De Iesu said. Leading eurosceptics were quick to blame the Schengen open pact for allowing the fugitive to travel easily.

"This escapade in at least two or three countries is symptomatic of the total security catastrophe that is the Schengen agreement," said Marine Le Pen, who leads France's far-right, anti-immigrant National Front party and is running for president.

"I reiterate my pledge to give back France full control of its sovereignty, its national borders and to put an end to the consequences of the Schengen agreement," she said.

Amri had been caught on camera by German police on a regular stake-out at a mosque in Berlin's Moabit district

early on Tuesday, Germany's rbb public broadcaster reported. His movements thereafter are not clear.

He had originally come to Europe in 2011, reaching the Italian island of Lampedusa by boat. He told authorities he was a minor, though documents now indicate he was not, and he was transferred to Catania, Sicily, where he was enrolled in school.

Just months later he was arrested by police after he attempted to set fire to the school, a senior police source said. He was later convicted of vandalism, threats, and theft.

He spent almost four years in Italian prisons before being ordered out of the country after Tunisia refused to accept him back because he did not have ID papers linking him to the north African country.

He moved to Germany and applied for asylum there, but this was rejected after he was identified by security agencies as a potential threat. Once again he could not be deported because of a lack of identification documentation.

Malta plane hijack ends peacefully

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The Airbus A320 had been on an internal flight in Libya yesterday morning when it was diverted to Malta, 500 km (300 miles) north of the Libyan coast, after one man told crew he had a hand grenade.

Initial reports said one of the men had told crew he was "pro-Gaddafi" and that he was willing to free all passengers if his demands were met. It was unclear what the demands were.

A Libyan television channel reported it had spoken by phone with a hijacker who described himself as head of a pro-Gaddafi party. Gaddafi was killed in an uprising in 2011, and Libya has been racked by factional violence since.

Buses were driven onto the tarmac at Malta International Airport to carry away passengers, as well as some of the crew. Television footage showed no signs of struggle or alarm, Reuters reports.

After passengers had left the plane, a man briefly appeared at the top of the steps with a plain green flag resembling that of Gaddafi's now-defunct state.

Libya's Channel TV station said one hijacker, who gave his name as

Moussa Shaha, had said by phone he was the head of Al-Fateh Al-Jadid, or The New Al-Fateh. Al-Fateh is the name that Gaddafi gave to September, the month he staged a coup in 1969, and the word came to signify his coming to power.

In a tweet, the TV station later quoted the hijacker as saying: "We took this measure to declare and promote our new party."

AFP reports that the two hijackers have asked for political asylum in Malta, Libya's foreign minister said. Taher Siala, the foreign minister of Libya's internationally backed Government of National Accord, also said that the hijackers have said they want to set up a pro-Gaddafi political party.

The plane landed at 11:32 am (1032 GMT) in Malta.

After more than an hour on the tarmac, the door of the Airbus A320 opened and a first group of women and children were seen descending a mobile staircase.

Dozens more passengers were released minutes later following negotiations that Maltese government sources said were led by the head of Malta's military.

In all there were 111 passengers,

including 28 women and a baby, on board, as well as seven crew members.

STANDOFF ON TARMAC

MP Hadi al-Saghir told Reuters that Abdusalam Mrabit, a fellow member of Libya's House of Representatives on the plane, had told him the two hijackers were in their mid-20s and were from the Tebu ethnic group in southern Libya.

Troops were positioned a few hundred metres (yards) from the plane as it stood on the tarmac. Several other flights at the airport were cancelled or diverted.

A senior Libyan security official told Reuters that when the plane was still in flight yesterday morning the pilot told the control tower at Tripoli's Mitiga airport it had been hijacked.

"Then they lost communication with him," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "The pilot tried very hard to have them land at the correct destination but they refused."

The aircraft had been flying from Sebha in southwest Libya to Tripoli for state-owned Afriqiyah Airways, a trip that would usually take a little over two hours.

The government of Malta said Prime Minister Muscat had discussed the hijack with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj by phone, and a negotiating team was formed at the airport. Britain offered Malta help with dealing with the incident.

Malta lies only 350km north of Tripoli, and even closer to Tunisia, and has been a destination for hijackers before, The Guardian writes.

In 1985 an EgyptAir flight from Athens to Cairo was forced to land in Malta, where a 24-hour ordeal ended with the death of 60 hostages, many killed when Egyptian commandos stormed the plane in what was considered a botched operation.

A decade earlier the then prime minister Dom Mintoff negotiated a happier conclusion to another hijacking. A KLM flight from Amsterdam to Tokyo was hijacked over Iraqi airspace, then flew to Malta after being refused landing permission anywhere else.

Mintoff secured the release of 247 passengers and 8 crew in return for fuel, and the plane headed to Dubai where the remaining hostages were released, wrote the newspaper.

What led

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candidate. They instead sent names of three district leaders.

But the central AL picked Ivy as party candidate and party chief Sheikh Hasina held a meeting with the district leaders to resolve the longstanding conflict between Ivy and Shamim Osman.

Although Narayanganj, once dubbed as Dundee of east, had once earned a bad name for abuse of power and poor law and order, Thursday's election saw no violence or polls irregularities, according to officials and political analysts.

The river port city of about 5 lakh voters grappled with crime and corruption for a long time, for which local and law enforcers point the finger at an influential family there.

But this has changed since Ivy took office in 2011, when the first NCC election was held.

This, in addition to the development works and her bold stance against Shamim Osman, played a key role in her win for a second time. Also, her campaign plan was well thought out.

Rafiur Rabbi, a close aide to Ivy, said, "Ivy is popular among people of all political parties because she took a firm stance against an evil force in Narayanganj. Not only Awami League voters, but voters from all political parties voted her."

Some major development works under her watch in the last term include eradication of the city's chronic waterlogging problem; construction of roads throughout the city, including the four-lane road in Bandar; and building of parks. She is also credited with the recovery of all the grabbed land from illegal occupiers.

Asked about the law and order in the city, Additional Superintendent of Narayanganj police Faruk Hossain yesterday said, "In the last five years, law and order improved significantly. In the past, drugs used to be sold openly. It's a rare scene now."

He added that Ivy never interfered with their work or asked them to go soft on any criminals. "She played a good role as mayor."

Ivy took office in 2011, defeating Selim Osman, who was backed by the AL in that election, by more than one lakh votes.

This time, she got 1,75, 611 votes, beating Shakhawat by 79,567 votes. Shakhawat bagged 96,044 votes in NCC polls in which about 63 percent voters cast ballots.

"By electing her again, people of Narayanganj have sent a clear message that they do not want criminals in power," Mahbubur Rahman, president of Narayanganj Press Club, told The Daily Star.

For voters, someone from the party in power means more development.

"The Awami League is in power and being an AL candidate Ivy can work better. If elected, Shakhawat could not do much as he is a BNP candidate," said Shadullah, a voter in Chashara.

WHY SHAKHAWAT LOST?

The BNP has three groups in Narayanganj. Taimur Alam Khandakar leads the faction in city area, Md Giasuddin in Siddhirganj and Abul Kalam Azad in Bandar area.

Taimur is president of Narayanganj district BNP and Giasuddin and Azad are former MPs.

Because of the grouping, there was little coordination among local leaders, sources said.

Also, Shakhawat is a stranger in politics. He got BNP's nomination after senior district leaders declined to join the race.

But after getting nomination, he did not sit with the district leaders to unite them to work for him, a senior local BNP leader said.

During the campaign, Taimur, Giasuddin and Abul Kalam were seen active only when the central leaders went to the city to campaign for Shakhawat.

These three were busy with ward councillor candidates. Taimur's brother Khorshed Alam Khandakar and Giasuddin's son Sadril won councillor posts.

"BNP-backed candidates bagged 15 ward councillor posts [out of 27]. But our mayor candidate lost. District leaders were busy campaigning for their relatives [councillor candidates], not for the mayoral candidate," said Shahed Alam, joint convener of city unit Chhatra Dal, a pro-BNP student body.

On the election day, presence of BNP leaders and activists on the street or outside the polling stations was thin.

Asked about this, Shakhawat said BNP voters were scared and that's why they did not turn up at the voting centres.

City BNP General Secretary ATM Kamal said many people abstained from voting as they lost confidence in the polls process.

But Shaheen, a local BNP activist, said, "Shakhawat lost because he failed to bridge the gap with local BNP leaders. Intra-party feud and lack of coordination among leaders cost him the election."