

AL, BNP aspirants gear up campaign

Both parties may face problems with rebels in Ctg division

STAR REPORT

Over 200 Awami League and 125 BNP aspirants are campaigning and lobbying for party tickets in the 58 constituencies of Chattogram division, suggesting a potential rebel problem for the parties in the days to come.

In Chattogram district alone, around 75 AL candidates and 35 BNP men are in the race for tickets in the 16 constituencies there.

AL's notable candidates include State Minister for Environment and Forest Hasan Mahmud in Chattogram-7, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Nurul Islam BSC and former CCC mayor ABM

Mohiuddin Chowdhury's son Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel in Chattogram-8, and AL senior leader Eng Mosharraf Hossain in Chattogram-1.

BNP's senior leaders M Morshed Khan, Abdullah Al Noman, and Ameer Khasru Mahmud Chowdhur may run in Chattogram-8, Chattogram-10, and Chattogram-11.

JP presidium member and Forest Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud and JP senior leader Ziauddin Ahmed (Bablu) may contest from Chattogram-5 and Chattogram-9.

JSD leader Moin Uddin Khan Badal wants nomination from Chattogram-8.

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Campaign by Awami League and BNP aspirants going on in full swing in Chattogram city. Most parts of the port city now wear a different look with posters and banners all around. The pictures were taken last week.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

AL aiming high in BNP bastion

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ruling party ones may lead someone to conclude that the AL has established dominance in the region.

Like other areas of the country, parliamentary aspirants of the AL and their supporters are vigorously campaigning in all constituencies in the region. They have pasted posters, placed placards, and are using billboards to highlight the successes of the AL-led government.

"Chattogram division is no more a stronghold of the BNP-Jamaat as the incumbent government have completed a lot of development work here," said Enamul Haq Shamim, AL's organising secretary for Chattogram division.

"I have data of 16 districts in the division which shows that 92 percent representatives of local government bodies have been elected with the symbol of boat. So, there is no scope to say that Chattogram division is a stronghold of the BNP-Jamaat," claims Shamim.

The BNP boycotting the last election and cases filed against its leaders and

activists in connection with violence during the street agitation against the government put the party's grassroots in an awkward situation.

"At least 20 cases were filed against over 200 leaders and activists in the last 15 days and most of them are ghost cases. Even I am facing 46 cases," Shahadat Hossain, president of BNP Chattogram city unit, told The Daily Star on the second week of October.

He said at least 100 cases were filed with each of the 15 police stations in the city over the last five years and 200 or more BNP leaders and activists were accused in each of the cases.

Moreover, the party has yet to formally announce whether it will run.

Yet, its parliamentary aspirants in all constituencies are carrying out campaigns but not on a large scale.

The BNP wants to reassert its dominance in region.

"People will deliver their judgement against enforced disappearances, murders, lootings of public money,

and unplanned development misusing public money through the ballot," said BNP assistant organising secretary for Chattogram division Harunur Rashid.

"The BNP will get more seats than before in this division if the polls are held on a level-playing field," he told The Daily Star.

In Chattogram and Cox's Bazar districts, a number of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders are preparing to run. Jamaat, a major component of the BNP-led alliance, cannot participate in the polls as it lost its registration with the Election Commission.

Jamaat leaders may either contest as independents or use the electoral symbol of the BNP, party insiders said.

In the region, the Jatiya Party performed well in 1991 when it obtained 12 seats. But the party's performance kept declining in the three subsequent elections until it won seven seats in 2014. A couple of senior leaders of JP are preparing to contest the upcoming polls.

Chattogram division had 78 seats in

the 1991 election and in 1995 Sylhet division was carved out reducing Chattogram's seats to 59. The division lost yet another seat ahead of the 2008 parliamentary election when constituencies were redrawn.

In three hill districts -- Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachhari -- the Parbatya Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS), a CHT-based political party led by Santu Larma, has emerged as a concern for the AL and the BNP. The three districts have one seat each.

"We must contest the elections of course, but we are waiting for the final word from our leader," said KS Mong Marma, former president of the PCJSS Bandarban unit.

PCJSS Vice President Ushatan Talukder had beaten AL's Dipankar Talukder, the former state minister of CHT affairs, as an independent in Rangamati in 2014.

No other indigenous political parties are campaigning.

If the PCJSS backs candidates, they

could haunt the candidates of the two major political parties. On top of the PCJSS worry, the AL and the BNP has potential rebels to deal with. Multiple aspirants in each of the constituencies are campaigning.

More than 200 AL leaders, in addition to the party's incumbent MPs in the region, are campaigning for AL nominations.

"There is no rivalry or rift in the party over nomination. Rather, there is a healthy competition among the leaders which is very natural in a large party like the AL," Enamul Haq Shamim told The Daily Star.

"Sheikh Hasina is watching and she is concerned with the image of the leaders in the areas and she would decide who would be nominated," he added.

The number of parliamentary aspirants seems fewer in the BNP camp as 125 leaders are preparing to run. The number may increase if the party announces that it would contest the polls.

Govt working to establish peace

PM tells EU team

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the aim of her government was to ensure a peaceful situation in the country where people would live in happiness.

"Our government's aim is to ensure a better life for the people so that they can live in peace and happiness," she said when a delegation of the European Union Parliament met her at the Gono Bhaban.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

During the meeting, the delegation members said Hasina is "an example for women empowerment".

The PM in response said the country's women were now participating in every field along with their male counterparts as the government took numerous programmes for their empowerment.

The government has made it mandatory for the authorities concerned to recruit 60 percent women as primary school teachers, she mentioned.

About the excellent communal harmony in the country, Hasina said people of all religions have been living in Bangladesh in peaceful coexistence.

A section of people had tried to create disturbance to hamper communal harmony in the country, she said. "But those could not succeed due to the government's 'zero-tolerance' policy."

The PM said the 1.1 million Rohingya is a great burden for Bangladesh as the country has already got 160 million in its small piece of land.

About the election process, Hasina said the government has ensured transparent ballot boxes and a voter list with photographs.

Regarding relations with neighbouring countries, the premier said Bangladesh has good ties with its neighbours, including India, China and Pakistan, as the government follows Bangabandhu's foreign policy principle -- "friendship to all, malice to none".

She said the EU is the biggest destination of Bangladeshi readymade garments. Many EU countries were investing in Bangladesh now, the PM added.

She appreciated the EU for its continuous support towards Bangladesh for continuing the democratic process.

Ryszard Czarnecki, Eleni Theocharous, Christelle Letard, Nikolay Berekov, Agnieszka Scigaj, Henri Malosse, Madhu Sharma, Guillaume Pradoura and Hazel Lincy Ebenezer were the members of the EU delegation.

'Drug dealer'

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pistol, 200 pieces Yaba and 27 bottles phensidyl from the spot, he said.

There are nine cases, including four for drugs and three for robbery, filed against Ratan with Bheramara police station," the OC said.

In another incident a suspected drug dealer was injured after police shot rubber bullets at him.

Local people said a team of police, led by Sub Inspector SI Badal Kumar Mandol, raided Tetultala village while chasing drug peddlers transporting contraband drugs. As one suspected trader Shafiqul Islam Shafu tried to run away, police fired two rounds of rubber bullets and he was shot in both legs. The others fled the area.

Kaliganj Police Station OC Maqbul Hossain said another case was filed against the arrested Shafu who already has 19 drug cases filed against him with Kaliganj Police Station over the last two years.

Politics shows positive signs

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The ruling party rejected the demand and the BNP along with some other parties boycotted the national polls in 2014.

This year, both the ruling and opposition parties seem willing to reach a solution to the political crisis as talks are being held over the demands of Jatiya Oikyafront, an alliance comprised of BNP and several other parties.

The demands include dissolution of parliament before the polls, restoration of a non-partisan polls-time government and release of Khaleda Zia, who is in jail since February 8 upon being sentenced in a graft case.

The Oikyafront will sit again tomorrow with the ruling alliance led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for a second round of talks to discuss some contentious issues over the national election.

After the first round of talks on November 1, which was held a day after the 90-day countdown to election began, the opposition alliance again wrote to the PM on Sunday expressing willingness to sit again.

On Sunday morning, Dr Kamal Hossain, on behalf of the Oikyafront, sent a letter to Hasina urging a second round of talks with her.

He wrote that a limited-scale discussion involving experts from both sides is necessary for analysing the constitutional and legal aspects of Oikyafront's demands.

The prime minister responded positively and agreed to sit with them tomorrow. Without delay, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader on Sunday night disclosed the date for the second round of talks.

Now the Oikyafront leaders want to focus on its core demands like dissolution of parliament, the mode of the election-time government and release of Khaleda.

In consultation with legal experts,

the alliance is preparing an outline for realising their demands without going beyond the constitution. At a meeting with the legal experts on Sunday night, they discussed the issue.

In tomorrow's discussion, the alliance may place a proposal for dissolution of parliament in line with article 123 (2) (b) of the constitution.

According to the article, if a parliament is dissolved before expiry of its tenure, the parliamentary election will be held within 90 days after such dissolution.

On the most contentious issue, the mode of election time government, the Oikyafront may make a dramatic shift from its current stance.

Instead of insisting on restoration of the non-partisan election-time government, it may offer the prime minister to downsize the current cabinet to 20 to 22 and include two leaders of the alliance in the cabinet as technocrat ministers, sources in the alliance said.

In the outline, the alliance may also propose limiting the jurisdiction of the election-time cabinet through amending the rules of business of the government.

The election-time cabinet will only carry out routine works and cannot take any policy decision, according to the draft proposal, added the sources.

Even if the government agrees with the Oikyafront's demand to recast the EC, it is possible without going beyond the constitution, said a legal expert who joined the meeting on Sunday night.

"Resignation of the chief election commissioner will pave the way for recasting the EC," he said.

Former law minister Moudud Ahmed, a member of BNP's standing committee, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We are reviewing several

options to find out ways to form an election-time government within the current constitutional provision. We are preparing a draft in this regard. We will place it during our talks on Wednesday."

On Khaleda Zia's release, the Oikyafront may urge the government not to oppose her bail petition in court, allowing her to come out of the jail on bails, said sources in the Oikyafront.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said that if Oikyafront's issues are logical and relevant, they will be resolved in constitutional way.

"There is no scope for solving anything going beyond the constitution," he said in a press briefing at his secretariat office.

About the progress of the dialogue, Quader said, "Absolutely, there's huge progress. The positive thing is that the prime minister is holding talks."

"We were against the dialogue. After hearing the prime minister's positive opinion about it, we got surprised first We will, however, do everything following the prime minister's directives."

Hasina will brief the media about the outcomes of the ongoing dialogue with political parties either on November 8 or 9, said Quader.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, former bureaucrat Akbar Ali Khan said: "Yes, the situation is different this time. But I think the success of the dialogue will depend on the behind-the-scene discussions."

Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, a teacher of government and politics department at Jahangirnagar University, said, "There is a wind of change is blowing in the country's politics. It seems that some positive outcomes will come out through further talks."

Quiet but deadly, Taijul lends hope

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In the absence of Bangladesh cricket's biggest name and most feted spinner Shakib Al Hasan, the 26-year-old led from the front after picking up six wickets in the first innings. His five in the second dig gave the unassuming Natore man his first 10-wicket haul in Tests, becoming only the fourth Bangladeshi bowler to do so.

His match haul of 11 wickets for 170 runs is also the third-best bowling figures by a Bangladeshi bowler. Off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz has the best figures with 12 for 159 in his second Test against England in 2016,

while another left-arm spinner in Enamul Haque Jr comes in second with 12 for 200 against Zimbabwe back in 2005.

Shakib is the only Bangladeshi bowler to pick 10 wickets in a Test match twice.

Taijul, however stands quietly and unnoticed on another summit -- his 80 wickets in 20 Tests since his debut is the most by a Bangladeshi bowler during that period. Shakib is behind him with 74 wickets in 19 Tests while Mehedi has taken 61 wickets in 15 Tests.

With a good understanding of the game and his limitations, Taijul tried

to draw the batsmen forward regularly, which opened up the possibility for close catches or the chance to sneak through with his arm ball. His intelligence also came to the fore as although the wicket was not a difficult one or overly helpful to spinners, he got the most out of it in both innings with a consistent line and length allied with subtle variations.

Bangladesh head coach Steve Rhodes was all praise for the spinner. "Let's pay a huge compliment to Taijul for taking 11 wickets on a pitch that isn't turning big, it is a great effort. He is really stepping up as an international bowler."

Taijul started where he left off in the first innings, dismissing the dangerous Brendon Taylor -- who started positively -- to start the proceedings.

He then went on to remove three Zimbabwean wickets in the form of Sean Williams, Peter Moor and Sikandar Raza in the space of just 11 deliveries, picking up his 10th wicket of the game and bringing down Zimbabwe from 121 for three to 130 for six.

Taijul then dismissed last batsman Tendai Chatara to bag his fifth five-wicket haul.

More importantly, with just one seamer in the line up in the form of

Abu Jayed, Taijul took the responsibility of bowling the bulk of Bangladesh's overs -- running in for 28.4 overs in the second innings, which followed a marathon 39.3 overs in the first innings.

With the daunting task of chasing a Bangladesh record 321 runs to win the Test match, Imrul Kayes and Liton Das made a good start and ended the day on 26 without loss. Having more than done his job -- quietly taking the mantle of a superstar -- everything now depends on the batsmen to win the Test and give Taijul his richly deserved reward.