



ELECTIONEERING IN COUNTRYSIDE

# Voters to see three-way race in Gaibandha-4, Mymensingh-6

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Voters in Gaibandha-4 (Gobindaganj upazila) and Mymensingh-6 (Phulbaria upazila) constituencies are set to witness a three-way election race between the ruling Awami League (AL), BNP and Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) in the upcoming eleventh parliamentary elections.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: Although the major three candidates of AL, BNP and JP are seen running their electioneering in full swing in Gaibandha-4, the ruling party candidate is far ahead in the

Monwer Hossain Chowdhury, former LGED chief engineer, who won the ninth parliamentary elections, was defeated by AL rebel candidate Abul Kalam Azad in the 10th parliamentary elections.

Although Azad, president of Gobindaganj upazila unit AL, sought nomination, the party central committee nominated Monower from the constituency.

BNP-backed and resigned Gobindaganj Upazila Parishad chairman Faruk Kabir Ahmed, also general secretary of upazila unit



Muslem Uddin



Khandaker Rafiqul Islam



Shams Uddin Ahmed

during primary scrutiny.

Local people think JP candidate Kazi Mohammad Moshir Rahman, convener of upazila unit JP, can be a major factor in the election race.

Khandker Mohammad Rashed (National Peoples' Party), Abul Kalam (Jaker Party), Shamiul Alam (Bangladesher Biplobi Workers Party), Sanower Hossain, (Bangladesh Muslim League) and Syed Tauhidul Islam (Islami Andolon Bangladesh) are also contesting in the elections from the constituency.

Away in Mymensingh-6 constituency, voters are expecting a three-way election fight between AL, BNP and JP, reports our correspondent.

Muslem Uddin is contesting the election race with AL ticket, while Shams Uddin Ahmed is backed by BNP and Dr Khandaker Rafiqul Islam is nominated by JP.

Veteran AL leader Muslem Uddin

was elected lawmaker from the constituency five times since 1970.

BNP nominated Shams Uddin won the seat in the 2001 polls while JP-backed Dr Rafiqul failed to win the race in his previous attempts.

Locals witnessed a close contest in the 2001 general elections when BNP's Shams Uddin won the fight securing 56,570 votes. AL's Muslem Uddin and Jamaat were in the second and third positions with 52,627 and 47,375 votes.

Dr Rafiqul, hailing from Bakta union, Shams Uddin from Achhim Patuli union and Muslem Uddin from Kushmille union have their own vote banks in the areas, said several locals.

Two other aspirants in the constituency are Syed Shafiqul Islam (independent) and Nurul Alam Siddiquee (Islami Andolon Bangladesh).

## NILPHAMARI-1 AL, JP feud benefits 'paddy sheaf' candidate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Imprisoned Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia's brother-in-law with 'paddy sheaf' as symbol seems to be a beneficiary in the ensuing Jatiya Sangsad (JS) election in Nilphamari-1 constituency (Damar and Dimla upazilas) as the candidates of grand alliance partners Awami League (AL) and Jatiya Party (JP) are locked in a feud.

According to the district returning officer's office, eight candidates are contesting from the constituency, but locals said the main contestants are incumbent lawmaker

its candidate Jafar, who was elected lawmaker from here in the election in 2008, has a clean image and poses challenge to the AL candidate as he (Jafar) also focused on the same development by the grand alliance government.

In this situation, 'boat' and 'plough' supporters consider each other as rival and are locked in a feud. A number of clashes took place between them in the last few days.

The JP candidate, in a press conference on Sunday, alleged that 'boat' supporters occupied their meeting venue at Kalirdanga in Dimla on Saturday.

Jafar also alleged that, on December 17, 'boat' supporters led by AL candidate's nephew Ferdous Parvez attacked him while he (Jafar) was campaigning with supporters in petrol pump area in Dimla upazila town, injuring around 10 people.

Aftabuddin refuted the allegation and said the JP candidate's men often bring out motorcycle showdowns in Dimla town and elsewhere, violating electoral code of conduct.

The feud between 'boat' and 'plough' has put BNP candidate Rafiqul Islam, also ex-professor of Rajshahi University, in a good position as he can campaign without fear.



Aftabuddin Sarker



Rafiqul Islam



Jafar Iqbal

AL's Md Aftabuddin Sarker, JP's Jafar Iqbal Siddiquee and BNP's Rafiqul Islam.

Locals said AL has a strong organisation and a big vote bank, putting freedom fighter Aftabuddin in a good position.

His supporters are seeking votes by citing the widespread development done by the AL government with Sheikh Hasina as prime minister.

JP's organisation is not so strong here but

# Campaign barred by AL

Four candidates with 'paddy sheaf' symbol allege at press conferences in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Four candidates of the BNP-led 20-party alliance and Jatiya Oikyafront in the district have alleged that they cannot conduct election campaigns in their constituency amid attacks and filing of false cases.

Situation has not improved despite army deployment, they said.

They came up with the allegation in separate press conferences at Tangail Press Club in the last two days.

They are BNP candidates Maj Gen (retd) Mahmudul Hasan from Tangail-5 (Sadar upazila), Lutfar Rahman Khan Azad from Tangail-3 (Ghatail upazila) and Shahidul Islam Sarkar from Tangail-1 (Madhupur-Dhanbari) and Krishak Sramik Janata League contender engineer Liakat Ali from Tangail-4 (Kalihati upazila) constituencies.

Mahmudul Hasan at a conference yesterday alleged that supporters of the Awami League candidate are becoming more desperate with voting day approach.

They continued carrying out attacks on his supporters and filing false cases against them to keep them away from the election, he said.

They have been showing such attitude as they are

sure of losing in the election, said Mahmudul.

Lutfar Rahman Khan Azad described the same situation in his constituency.

Murder case accused as well as outsider muscle-men are now dominating the constituency, he said, adding that they informed the authorities concerned about the matter several times but to no effect.

Engineer Liakat Ali at a press conference on Monday brought the same allegations against the ruling party candidate's supporters.

"Local AL men declared barring of voters of 'Sheaf of Paddy' in the centers, creating panic among them," he said.

Shahidul Islam Sarkar alleged that local AL candidate's supporters have already attacked his house and vandalised the upazila BNP office as well.

Such intolerable situation is prevailing also in the four other constituencies of the district, alleged advocate Farhad Iqbal, general secretary of Tangail district unit of BNP.

Candidates of the major alliances will win in all eight constituencies in the district if the administrations, including the patriotic army, perform their duties properly till the election day, he added.

BHOLA-2

# BNP candidate self-confined to home amid safety concerns

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

BNP candidate Hafeez Ibrahim from Bhola-2 (Borhanuddin-Doulatkhan) constituency has confined himself to his house in Borhanuddin upazila headquarters from December 17 as Awami League men are keeping watch on him round the clock.

Hafeez, elder brother of convicted businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun, returned to his area on December 16, 10 years after staying in Dhaka.

If anyone entered or left the house, he or she was beaten by the supporters of AL candidate Md Ali Azom Mukul, alleged Hafeez, also the former lawmaker from the constituency, adding that his house is 20 metres from Mukul's.

"I don't go outside to avoid any clash with my opponent group so that they cannot file any new case against me," he said.

On Friday, this correspondent stood in

front of Hafeez's house for four hours, but none was seen entering or leaving there. Some men were seen inside the house guarding the BNP candidate.

Hafeez said he has to collect food and medicine in different ways due to the situation.

Recently, AL men tortured his five personal staff and handed them over to police when they left the house, said Hafeez.

Ashim Kumar Saha, officer-in-charge of Borhanuddin Police Station, said they did not get any complaint of torturing any staff of Hafeez.

"I cannot go outside fearing attack," said Hafeez, adding that he filed several written complaints to the returning officer but to no effect.

Refuting the allegation of keeping watch on the house, AL candidate Mukul said Hafeez confined himself.

"We never attacked Hafeez or his men;

rather his men attacked us and vandalised our motorbikes recently," said Mukul.

This self confinement is his technique to earn people's sympathy, said Mukul.

"My house was vandalised and torched and I along with my parents was severely tortured by Hafeez's men after the national election in 2001," said Abdul Khaleque, AL supporter of Kutba village in Borhanuddin upazila.

Hafeez's men severed his hand after the election, said Bablu, a resident of Manika village in the upazila.

"I never tortured anyone in my constituency," said Hafeez.

Md Masud Alam Siddique, returning officer of Bhola, said they told Hafeez several times to come out from his house as they have deployed some police personnel at his house. If he conducts campaign in the area, police will ensure his security.

## Arson attack on Hindu house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Unknown criminals set on fire a straw heap and three rooms full of straw of a Hindu family at Madhyo Jhargaoon village in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The incident occurred around 2:00am when family members were asleep, said Jatru Barman, 52, one of the victims.

"As the three rooms for keeping straw are around 15 yards from our houses the fire did not spread to our homesteads," he said. After becoming aware of the fire, family members informed Baliadangi Fire Station and the fire-fighters brought the blaze under control with the help of locals.

OC of Ruhea Police Station Prodip Kumar Roy told this correspondent over cell phone that in primary investigation it was speculated that criminals set the straw on fire to create panic.

Arunangshu Datta Tito, district unit president of Bangladesh Puja Uddjan Parishad, said the arson attacks were carried out at different villages for creating panic among the local Hindu community ahead of December 30 polls.

Earlier on Friday, criminals set eight houses of a Hindu family on fire at Singia Shahapara village in Sadar upazila



A field full of blooming mustard at Goldangi village in North Channel Union under Sadar upazila of Faridpur.

PHOTO: STAR

# Farmers eye bumper mustard yield

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Farmers and agricultural officials in the district are expecting a bumper production of mustard in the current season due to favourable weather and coming of honey bees.

"Bumper yield of mustard is expected due to favourable weather this season. Besides, arrival of more honey bees in mustard fields during the pollination period helped healthy fertilisation and pod formation of the crop," said Faridpur Department of Agriculture Extension

(DAE) Deputy Director (DD) Kartik Chandra Chakraborty.

"Easy cultivation process and lower production cost compared to other Robi crops is also a reason behind popularity of mustard cultivation among the farmers in this district. October to mid-November is the suitable time for mustard cultivation and it takes 65 to 70 days to get the yield," the DD added.

According to DAE, a total of 8,040 hectares of land in nine upazilas of the district have been brought under mustard cultivation this year, compared to

7,510 hectares last year.

During this correspondent's recent visit to different areas of Sadar upazila, farmers said they are hopeful of getting bumper production of mustard and harvest will begin in the third or fourth week of next month.

"I cultivated mustard on three bighas of land this year spending Tk 15,000 and I expect to get at least 20 maunds of the produce. I will sell each maund for Tk 1,800 to Tk 2,000," said Jalal Khan, 52, a farmer of Goldangi village under North Channel union of Sadar upazila.

"Cultivation of mustard is easier and less costly compared to other crops and we get good profit from it. I cultivated mustard on my five bighas of land this season and I am expecting to get six to seven maunds of produce from each bigha," said Yunus Khan, 45, of the same area.

"A total of 250 hectares of land in this union have been brought under mustard cultivation this year. Around 2,000 farmers are engaged in mustard cultivation as it is easier and less costly," said North Channel Union Parishad Chairman Mostakuzzaman.

## Bees count

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In lab experiments, bees can count upwards of five and can be trained to select the smaller or larger of two values.

Bees can even choose the value of zero, when trained to select the lesser of two quantities.

The research suggests bees don't need to understand complex mathematics to achieve these feats of quantitative comparison.

"Our model shows that even though counting is generally thought to require high intelligence and large brains, it can be easily done with the smallest of nerve cell circuits connected in the right manner," says Vera Vasas, a researcher at Queen Mary University of London.

"We suggest that using specific flight movements to scan targets, rather than numerical concepts, explains the bees' ability to count."

Scientists think their findings, published in the journal iScience, prove animal intelligence doesn't always have to rely on a larger number of neurons.

"Instead, a small number of nerve cells simply need to be arranged in the right way."

An improved understanding of the intelligence of insects could be used to design more efficient artificial intelligence algorithms.

"Careful examination of the actual inspection strategies used by animals might reveal that they often employ active scanning behaviours as shortcuts to simplify complex visual pattern discrimination tasks," Dr Vasas said.

"Hopefully, our work will inspire others to look more closely not just at what cognitive tasks animals can solve, but also at how they are solving them."