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AL's Khair prevails over own clan

After attack on mayor candidate in Barishal, Islami Andolan announces boycott of Sylhet, Rajshahi city polls

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, MD ABBAS and SUSHANTA GHOSH

Abul Khair Abdullah was little known in Barishal. He has neither any party portfolio in the city nor enough followers. He used to live in a rented house because he was not allowed at his family home in Barishal.

After the Awami League nominated him for mayor, Khair needed support from his mighty elder brother Abul Hasanat Abdullah and nephew Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah. But neither gave him genuine support. In fact, they acted like rivals.

Despite all these, Khair has won yesterday's election to Barishal City Corporation.

Abul Hasanat is a veteran politician who is the president of Barishal district AL, lawmaker from Barishal-1, and member of AL central working committee and AL parliamentary nomination board. His son Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah, the general secretary of Barishal City AL, is the incumbent mayor of Barishal.

The father and son had for years controlled AL politics in Barishal without giving rival groups any chance. Their noncooperation with Khair was all too evident.

In a recent visit to his constituency, Hasanat hugged his younger brother, but the rift between them over the mayor nomination remained.

Since hardly any leaders from Barishal city AL would join Khair on his campaign trail because of their loyalty to Hasanat, Khair had to rely on AL central committee leaders.

Sadiq, away from Barishal since May 26, did not cast his vote and his followers were not seen in the vicinity of the polling centres yesterday.

But Khair, also known as Kokhon Serniabat, had the last laugh, defeating Mufti Syed Faizul Karim of Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) by 53,980 votes, according to unofficial results.

However, some incidents of violence and irregularities took some shine off his win.

During polling, Faizul and his supporters were attacked when they were walking out of Sabera Khatun Girls' High School around 12:30pm in Choumatha area. Later in the day, police and BGB men used truncheons to disperse his followers at Beltala Bazar.

Police later said the activists were chased away for defying instructions. "Ruling party men were asking people to vote for a specific symbol. They attacked me because I was telling the presiding officer about it," Faizul said.

Correspondents of this newspaper saw eight to 10 men wearing badges of the ruling party's electoral symbol attack Faizul and his supporters.

Briefing reporters at the Election Commission office in the capital, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Ahsan Habib Khan said the attack on Faizul was "sudden", and it was an isolated incident. He added that the attackers would be punished.

Alzalul Karim, chief election coordinator of the AL camp, said IAB supporters, some of whom were not even from the city, had tried to create instability during the election. "We do not know who attacked them."

In the evening, Mufti Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, ameer of the Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB), announced that his party had boycotted the city corporation elections in Barishal and Khulna. He added that the party would shun the coming elections in Sylhet and Rajshahi cities.

Large numbers of AL activists wearing badges of the party were seen at most of the 126 polling centres.

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Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) supporters form a human shield around their mayor nominee Mufti Syed Faizul Karim while being attacked allegedly by ruling Awami League men at Choumatha in Barishal during yesterday's city corporation polls. Faizul and some of his supporters were injured in the attack. Top right, police and Border Guard Bangladesh members use truncheons against IAB supporters at Beltala Bazar. Bottom right, voters wait in queues at Rupatali Zagua College in the morning.

PHOTO: COLLECTED/PALASH KHAN

Development to be the focus for both mayors-elect



Abul Khair Abdullah



Talukder Abdul Khaleque

STAR REPORT

The mayors-elect of Barishal and Khulna have pledged to work for the development of their respective cities, as well as for all people, irrespective of their political affiliations.

They made the pledges while giving their immediate reactions after announcement of the polls results.

"I will fulfil all the pledges I made in my electoral manifesto in phases. I seek blessings from the almighty. I will build a new Barishal," said Barishal mayor-elect Abul Khair Abdullah.

He also expressed his gratitude to all, including voters, law enforcers and journalists.

Khair, who is the uncle of Barishal city's incumbent mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah, contested the city polls on an Awami League ticket for the first time.

He is the younger brother of Abul Hasanat Abdullah, a veteran

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BARISHAL CITY CORPORATION (Polling stations 126)
Abul Khair Abdullah (AL) 87,808
Mufti Syed M Faizul (IAB) 33,828
KHULNA CITY CORPORATION (Polling stations 289)
Talukder Abdul Khaleque (AL) 1,54,825
M Abdul Awal (IAB) 60,064

KHULNA CITY Voting thru EVM proved problematic for some Polling peaceful

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU, SAJJAD HOSSAIN and DIPANKAR ROY from Khulna

The voting in Khulna city polls went ahead peacefully yesterday with no incidents of violence or obstruction of voters from casting ballots reported.

Though the voting proceeded slowly in the morning, it picked up as the day progressed. Voters were seen waiting in long queues at the polling centres to exercise their franchise.

A large number of supporters of Awami League mayor candidate Talukder Abdul Khaleque gathered outside most of the polling centres. They stayed there during the polling hours.

Visiting at least 30 polling centres, The Daily Star found that the numbers of women

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Buildings have been built cutting the Rifles Club hill in Sylhet city's Nayabazar over the years. Several hills have been cut to make room for residential buildings in the area ignoring the risk of landslides. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

JAMAAT RALLY AFTER A DECADE Speculations run rife over govt strategy

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

Saturday's rally of Jamaat-e-Islami in the capital after a decade has raised many eyebrows and many believe that the new US visa policy might have led the government to allow the rally.

Although some Awami League leaders claimed that the BNP was behind Jamaat's rally, several of its top leaders defended the government's go-ahead for the rally, reasoning that the party is not banned.

The remarks backing the decision to allow the rally have raised suspicion among some BNP leaders who suspect Jamaat and the government might have had an understanding. The BNP recently restored its communication with its long-term ally to go for the one-point movement demanding elections under a non-partisan interim government.

Jamaat, however, denied the allegation of having made any deal with the government. Rather, it said that it would intensify its organisational activities in the coming days to realise its demand for the restoration of the caretaker government system.

However, many believe that holding the rally was a new Jamaat strategy to see first-hand the government's

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Home ministry getting job of issuing NIDs

Cabinet okays draft of National Identity Registration Act-2023

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday gave the final nod to the draft National Identity Registration Act-2023, which will allow the home ministry to issue national identity (NID) cards instead of the Election Commission, which has been doing it since 2006.

The cabinet had approved in principle the draft act on October 10 last year.

Cabinet Secretary Mahub Hossain briefed reporters at the Secretariat after a cabinet meeting yesterday, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Mahub said the EC would use the NID data of the home ministry's Security Services Division for preparing the voter ID cards of citizens aged 18 and above.

The initiative was taken to ease the people's suffering in getting NID cards, he said, adding that the proposed law would have a provision to correct the errors in the cards easily.

According to the draft law, a unique national identity number will be issued after the birth of a citizen which would remain the same for the entire life of the citizen. A citizen will not require any other number.

A registration authority, which will be called the registrar's office, under the Security Services Division will issue the NID cards.

Once the office begins its operation, citizens aged below 18 will be able to have NID cards.

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