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Bangladesh

BKF/BKS and Sub-District Council Elections in Bangladesh

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The local government election is an important factor in Bangladesh. It takes place every five years. However, it does not take place at the same time.

In the country, there are different types of local governments. The union council is the lowest tier of the local government and then Sub-district councils (Upazila Pariashad).

On the top of them, there are District Councils (Zila Parishad). District Council is not elected by the people directly. They are elected by the elected members of the Sub-district Councils. So, it has less importance than the sub-district election. Nevertheless, it is the office of profit. People run for this post.

Next month is the month of Sub-District Council Elections. As it is in the middle of District Council and Union Council, it creates lots of enthusiasm among the people. The Sub-District Council consists of one chairman, one female vice-chairman and one vice-chairman. For the post of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, anybody, male or female, can contest, but for the post of female Vice-Chairman only women can contest. However, both men and female voters will vote for the post.

For the post of Chairman any political party can nominate the candidate and run the election with the symbol of the party. But the independent candidate can also take part in the election for the post of chairmanship. For the posts of two Vice-Chairmen, including female one, there is no partisan policy. Party can select their candidates non-officially. The candidates cannot use the party symbol. They have to use the symbol allotted by the Election Commission.

The election commission decides nomination fees, the expenditure of the election that one candidate can spend, size of posters and its color, campaign cost, etc.

According to the election commission one candidate can spend Tk.500,000/- for the above-mentioned sectors.

Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF) always emphasizes local government elections where it has its organizational stronghold. This year it has decided to encourage two candidates to run the election. Among them one is already elected for the last two consecutive terms as Female Vice-Chairman. Her name is Shamsunnhar Khan Doli, who is the President of Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (BKS), an associate organization of Bangladesh Krishok Federation. She is actually founding president of Bangladesh Krishok Federation which was established in 1990 through a big grand conference held in Dhaka sponsored by Bangladesh Krishok Federation. Since then she has been playing a key role in the Khasland (fallow land) movement in the country.

Doli Khan will compete in the election in Dashmina sub-district under Patukahli district where BKF has its massive Khasland occupation. She is also the daughter of late veteran peasant leader Abdus Satter Khan who was also the founding president of Bangladesh Krishok Federation. As Abdus Satter Khan has a huge contribution to the land movement in the Southern District of Bangladesh, Doli Khan has inherently plus points. Moreover, majority people, especially the landless people in the area, are direct beneficiaries of the land movement of Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF) and Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (BKS).

Despite all the benefits they enjoyed still they have lots of problems to be solved as, for instance, the question of education and health care for the landless people in the occupied islands. Four occupied islands, out of 22, are situated in Dashmina sub-district. This landless people are majority voters in the area. Among them BKF has its

strong political hegemony which brings landslide victory for Doli Khan previous two elections.

Apart from that, the organization has its regular activities which concern Doli in different ways. As Doli is based in that area she seeks well-being of the island people in regular basis. So, she is part and parcel of the local people. She is rushing here and there when she hears any death incidents or danger facing landless people. She should win the election, although there is a possibility to have 6-7 rival contestants.

The second candidate Asrafuzzana Roni, is based in Bhurungamari sub-district under Kurigram district. He joined Bangladesh Krishok Federation in 2004 when BKF operated a massive occupation. In fact, he was initially against the land occupation and opposed it as a young local person. But he was convicted later to join it and since then worked with the organization.

He is now president of Bangladesh Krishok Federation Bhurungamari sub-district Unit. He has a very close connection with the landless people. In behalf of organization he attended a 7-day workshop on Zero-Budget Natural Farming which is Subas Palaker, a method of sustainable agriculture in India. Moreover, he actively worked for the climate caravan in 2011. This is the first time for him to run for elections. Landless people like him very much as he is with them in their difficult times. Hopefully the landless people will vote for him and he wins the election.

Because Doli was Female Vice-president for two terms, she received some salary from the government. Besides this salary, she did not have any income. Unlike some politician, especially from the ruling party, she never made money from the government project implementation in the locality.

Roni occasionally does some contractor job from which he gets fixed commission by which he makes his living.

Both candidates need financial support for their elections.

The election date for Roni is on 10 March 2019 and for Doli on 31 March 2019.

Therefore, both need the election expenditure declared by the election commission. It stands at Tk 500000+500000=1000000/-

As discussed with them, they will be able to collect 25% from the local sympathizers. So they need the actual support of Tk.750000/-. In Euro it would be: 8152. In word: Eight Thousand One Hundred Fifty-Two Only.

Bangladesh Krishok Federation is trying to raise the funding for them from different sources so that they can conduct their election activities in smooth manner.

We ask all sympathizers and well-wishers to stand by them in this crucial time. Having being elected, they will be able to help the poor people better than before.

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