

Jamaat worried as Haris eyes its lone seat in Sylhet divn

IOBAL SIDDIQUEE, *Sylhet*

Difference between BNP and Jamaat is widening in Sylhet over nomination in Sylhet-5 constituency, now represented by Farid Uddin Chowdhury, the lone Jamaat lawmaker from the division.

Farid Uddin's alliance nomination has become uncertain as BNP leader and prime minister's political secretary Haris Chowdhury is vying for ticket for the constituency



Haris Chowdhury

(Zakiganj and Kanaighat upazilas), political circles said.

However, Farid Uddin claimed that there is no reason to 'drop' him, since the alliance is still in force.

"Moreover, this is the only Jamaat seat in Sylhet region. I think Haris will not vie for nomination", Farid Uddin said while talking to this correspondent. He declined to comment any more.

Jamaat leaders here said if Farid is dropped, there will be a big crisis between the Jamaat and BNP in Sylhet as this will also affect other constituencies in the region.

But political circles and local BNP leaders claim that Haris Chowdhury's nomination in the Jatiya Sangsad seat is almost certain after Friday's foundation laying of a bridge over Surma river at the Kanaighat upazila headquarters by him, followed by a big public

venue before it ended.

The Tk 52 crore bridge is a long-felt demand of local people.

Other BNP leaders at the rally publicly demanded nomination

for Haris for 'development in the region', alleging that the Jamaat lawmaker did nothing for the area and sidelined BNP workers in all activities.

They said BNP has strong bases in the constituency and party men were elected in most of the

Rift among the coalition partners is widening in the area as other component parties including Isami Oikya Jote (IJO) are also in the field with their prospective candidates.

Possibility of Ershad's joining the alliance has also posed a big challenge to coalition partners in the constituency, where Jatiya Party's Shabbir Ahmed is the possible candidate, according to JP sources.

Political observers said, besides Haris, Jamaat will have another big hurdle—Moulana Abdul Latif Chowdhury Fultail, chief of Al-Islah, a religious forum in greater Sylhet.

Abdul Latif, with a large number of followers, had supported the alliance candidate in last election. It may be a different scene in the coming election as difference between Abdul Latif and Jamaat has widened over Islamic issues, they said.

Awami League's Hafiz Ahmed Majumder defeated Jamaat's Moulana Farid Chowdhury in 1996 election but was defeated by the Jamaat man in 2001. Although Majumder is widely accepted by the masses for his efforts in spreading education, internal feud in Awami League is his main problem. Internal feud has taken a serious shape in the party in both the upazilas, AL sources said.



Farid Uddin Chowdhury

meeting.

But Haris was tactical, not to make any public announcement about nomination at the meeting.

"Things will be decided by the party high command. I will place your demand (for my nomination) at appropriate level", he later told his followers.

Farid Uddin also addressed the rally briefly at the beginning and left

Hafiz Ahmed Majumder

union parshads in last UP elections. It also swept the recent Zakiganj pourashava elections.

Jamaat is also trying to consolidate its position, allegedly with the backing of BNP stalwart and finance minister Saifur Rahman.

"Saifur always favours Farid Uddin", a local BNP leader said seeking anonymity.



Farmer Abdus Samad of Ichapur village in Kalihati upazila in Tangail district carrying harvested jute to Aloga in a hackney carriage to rot those in Sholakura river as there is no wetland in his village for this due to poor rainfall this year.

RIVALRY CLASH ON PARTY FOUNDING DAY

Kushtia BNP leader calls party MP a godfather

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

BNP leader and industrialist Nasir Uddin Biswas has urged party high command not to nominate incumbent lawmaker Reza Ahmed Bachchu Mollah from Kushtia-1 constituency (Daulatpur) in the coming parliamentary election.

He termed Bachchu Mollah a 'godfather of criminals'.

Nasir made the appeal at a press conference, held on Saturday shortly after he was attacked allegedly by the lawmaker and his 'musclemen' at a function marking BNP's founding day at Daulatpur. Held at Daulatpur Shilpokala Academy, the programme was organised by local BNP. Nasir Biswas was

chief speaker while Bachchu Mollah was the chief guest.

At least 30 BNP activists loyal to Nasir Biswas were also injured in the attack.

According to sources, the incident took place when Nasir Biswas was addressing the function. Some activists loyal to Bachchu Mollah appeared on the stage and asked Nasir to stop when he raised allegation against Bachchu Mollah that he failed to satisfy local people.

At one stage, Bachchu Mollah snatched the microphone from Nasir Biswas and asked him to leave the stage. His men then started beating supporters of Nasir.

They snatched the ntv camera and beat its photographer Sarfu when he

was snapping the incident.

After the incident, Nasir brought a procession at Allahdarga Bazar and his supporters barricaded the Kushiakhalishakuri road, halting traffic for about two hours.

At a hurriedly called press conference, Nasir accused Bachchu Mollah of patronising hoodlums in Daulatpur and being involved in smuggling.

"Bachchu Mollah is an incompetent man who can not implement Ziaur Rahman's 19-point programme", he said.

He has defamed BNP in Kushtia, Nasir alleged.

When contacted by this correspondent yesterday, Bachchu Mollah said he will not make any comment to journalists.

THREAT TO PROF HASSAN

RU teachers demand arrest of Shibir cadre

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Progressive Teachers Association of Rajshahi University yesterday brought out a silent procession on the campus and held a rally protesting the death threat to eminent litterateur Prof Hassan Azizul Haque by Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadres on August 24.

At a rally, held in front of the Senate building, speaker expressed concern that the culprits are yet to be arrested.

The threat against Prof Hassan is a threat to all free thinking people, they said and demanded security of all on the campus including Prof Hassan and his family.

The rally was addressed by, among others, the association's convener Prof Abdus Shobhan, former RU VC Prof Saidur Rahman Khan, Prof Mukhlesur Rahman and Prof Ananda Kumar Saha.

After the rally, they met with RU Vice-chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain at his office and submitted a memorandum pressing for arrest of Shibir cadres who gave death threat to Prof Hassan and security on the campus.

JMB cadre held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

A cadre of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen, Bangladesh (JMB) was arrested in Islampur upazila in Jamalpur district Saturday evening.

The arrestee was identified as Abdus Sattar, 35, son of Abdus Sobahan of Tarailard village in Melandaha upazila.

Police said, acting on a tip-off, Melandaha and Islampur thana police in a joint drive arrested him from Lawrapara Ulla Bazar when he was returning from Kallar Char in the upazila.

Police said the JMB cadre is being interrogated at Islampur Police Station. Jamalpur Additional Police Superintendent visited the police station after the arrest.

Quoting Abdus Sattar, police said he was an 'ehsar' member of JMB and was involved in the August 17 serial bomb blasts in Jamalpur town.



Negotiating neck-deep water, women returning home in Benekhali village in Satkhira Sadar upazila with drinking water procured from a far away place as all tube wells in their village are submerged.

No move to remove a persisting problem

50,000 virtually marooned in 21 Satkhira villages as water-logging turns 9,000 acres uncultivable

ABU AHMED, *Satkhira*

Water-logging has imperiled livelihood of about 50,000 people in 21 villages in Satkhira Sadar upazila.

The villagers are virtually marooned and their croplands on about 9,000 acres turned uncultivable due to siltation in Marichchap river and an inoperative sluice gate at Balitha that stopped flow of water from five beels (big water bodies) in the area covering three upazilas.

The long-drawn problem has taken a serious turn with silt being deposited on lands due to stagnant water.

At least 300 houses have been damaged as numerous homesteads are under water since June.

The water bodies are Chelar Beel in Brahmarajpur union, Dheur Beel in Dhulihar union and Palichand Beel, Buramara Beel and Khairil Beel in Fingir union.

Water-logging in the vast swath of land poses a serious threat to

livelihood and environment because the problem persists at least for eight months a year since the 80s, local people told this correspondent during a visit. The greens are disappearing as the ecology is being affected, they said. Raising livestock is also a difficult job now.

The problem began as the bed of Marichchap river became silted.

A moderate flood turns the whole area into a vast sheet of water, totally halting life as water can not be drained out, they said.

The sluice gate at Balitha was built in early 70s to drain out rainwater from the areas into Marichchap river, the only natural outlet. But it has been silted, they said.

The only solution is dredging of the river but the Water Development Board (WDB) did not take any effective step, said Abul Khair, a freedom fighter.

"Our croplands are under water and we do not have any alternative source of income", said farmer

Swapan Kumar Mondal of Balitha village.

"We can not grow Amon paddy now and are also set to lose winter crops including wheat and vegetables in the coming because of the water-logging", he said.

Belayet Hossain, deputy director of Agricultural Extension Department (AED) in Satkhira also admitted that the situation is grave. He said he submitted a report to higher authorities to take measures but to no effect. Dredging of the river is a gigantic project but there is no alternative, he said.

Samsur Rahman, a member of Fingir Union Parishad said they drew the attention of local Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker, but to no effect.

On contact, lawmaker Maulana Abdul Khaleque refuted the allegation. He said he is trying to remove the problem.

Poor rain hits life of haor people in Kishoreganj

MUKLESUR RAHMAN LITON, *Kishoreganj*

It is an awesome sight in Kishoreganj haor (water body) areas this monsoon.

Vast sheets of water dotted with boats negotiating turbulent waves is not seen. There is ankle to knee deep water in most areas now where the water level used to be 15 to 20 feet during this time of the year. This was not experienced in at least 25 years, elders said.

Poor rainfall is affecting life of about 10,000 people in Itna, Methamoin, Astrogram, Niklee, Bajitpore and Koliarchor. Most areas are neither navigable nor cultivable.

Fishing, a traditional occupation is virtually absent this year as natural breeding of sweet water fishes dwindled because of lack of sufficient water.

"I could catch 5 to 7 kilograms of shrimps a day during monsoon last

year but I can hardly get shrimps now due to lack of water", said Monzil Mia of Gazipur village in Itna upazila.

During monsoon, people in the area usually catch fish with nets and bamboo made traps locally known as Chai. A fisherman buys 100 to 150 Chais, which cost him Tk 5000 to 7500 and use a small boat to catch shrimps in haor. A fisherman could earn Tk 1000 to Tk 1500 a day by selling shrimp and other fishes. They are now hard hit.

Shawkat Mia of Chilnee village in Itna said, "We are ruined this year as we bought fishing traps with loans from money lenders."

"We use to maintain families till the next harvest with the earnings from fishing. But I am worried I can not repay the loan", he said.

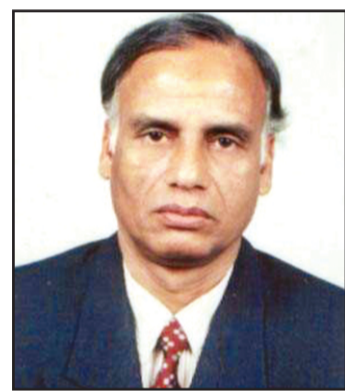
Farmers said, there will be less deposit of silt because of less water and this will affect soil fertility and the next IRRI-Boro crop.

Fishermen in the haor areas

said, as monsoon water stayed for only one and half months this year, most of the small fishes could not complete their breeding period, which has drastically decreased fish supply this year.

The adverse climatic condition has also affected nearly 5000 seasonal boatmen, who used to carry passengers from different haor areas to Chandra river port, the gateway to road network. Most of the boatmen have no work now as haors are not navigable.

Unbelievable though, academic institutions in haor areas have also been affected. Chowdhury Kamrul Hasan, principal of Itna College in haor area said, students' attendance has become thin because of communication problem. Students who can avail boats plying small rivers and canals only come to college. Others can not come as most haor areas are neither navigable nor can be waded through because of shallow water, he said.



Prof Musharrif new BAU VC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Prof Dr M Musharrif Hossain Mia has been appointed new vice-chancellor (VC) of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) here.

He took over his charge on August 31.

A valiant freedom fighter, Prof Musharrif was also the founder VC of Hajee Mohammad Danesh University of Science and Technology, Dinajpur. He is the second graduate of the university who was appointed VC since its establishment 45 years ago.

Hailing from Kazaikata village of Nakla upazila in Sherpur, Prof Musharrif stood first class first in both BSc (Ag) honours and MSc (Ag) in 1971 and '72. He started his career as a lecturer of BAU Soil Science Department in 1975.

None can declare me unwanted in Khulna

Whip Ashraf tells rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

BNP Whip Ashraf Hossain yesterday said none has the right to expel him or declare him unwanted in Khulna as he is an elected member of parliament.

Addressing a public meeting at Khalishpur Peoples Jute Mill square, he said he will not oppose any decision of the party high command as regards nomination for contesting from Khulna-3 constituency in the coming election. The meeting was presided over by acting president of Khalishpur thana unit of BNP SM Abdur Rahman.

Whip Ashraf said, "I have failures in serving people of my constituency (Khulna-3) in last five years. But that does not mean my inefficiency".

He called upon the people to remain alert against any conspiracy to malign him by rivals in BNP.

He however claimed that if nominated, he will win in Khulna-3 constituency again. Hundreds of his supporters chanted slogans demanding his nomination from Khulna-3 seat.

BNP leader held with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Sunday night arrested two people including a BNP leader for possessing arms with them at Hadipur in Debhata upazila.

The arrested are Debhata upazila BNP leader Rezaul Islam, also chairman of Noapara Union Parishad and Nazir Hossain of Noapara in Debhata upazila.

Rezaul and Nazir were arrested with two guns as they opened fire at the Rab personnel Sunday night. However, Rezaul's relatives claimed that he had opened fire apprehending them bandits.

Later, they were taken to Rab's divisional office in Khulna. On contact, Kaliganj Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) Anwar Uddin confirmed the report.

Zia Fertiliser resumes operation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *B'baria*

Ashuganj Zia Fertiliser Factory resumed operation Saturday night after two days of disruption in production.

The factory stopped operation following detection of a leakage in its boiler pipe on August 31. Local engineers and technicians took two days to repair the fault.

Meanwhile, a major overhauling was done in the factory for 35 days in the month of July. But even after its overhauling, the authorities could not run the factory due to detection of some other faults. After 11 days, the fault was repaired and the plant was brought into operation. Again it stopped functioning on August 31. It resumed functioning after two days of repair work.

However, an engineer, on condition of anonymity, said although the factory started operation, it might stop any moment.

Summer tomato opens door to fortune for farmers

JAHANGIR ALAM, *Netrakona*

Farmers Manzurul Haque and Aminul Islam are rejuvenated and all smiles. They relish tasty tomatos grown on their fields in the off-season and sell it at Tk 70 to 80 per kilogram, thanks to the innovation by Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI).

Profit from the non-traditional crop was much beyond the expectation of the two poor farmers. They have already sold over five maunds each, which earned them more than Tk 12,000 from only three decimal plots.

Unbelievable though, the plants will bear fruit till the end of February, Netrakona Sadar upazila Assistant Agriculture Officer Rahima Khatun told them.

The BARI tomatoes grown on their fields are more tasty than the

ones imported from a neighbouring country. So their price is higher, the farmers told this correspondent during a recent visit to the fields at Barshikura village in Netrakona Sadar upazila.

"Rahima Khatun advised us to go to BARI at Joydebpur for a day's training and cultivate summer variety tomato. We did so with a lukewarm attitude", Manzurul said.

"After a day's raining, we were given Tk 6,000 each to raise sheds and BARI-3 and BARI-4 varieties of tomato seeds", he said. The plants need to be protected from rain with a polythene shed.

"We grew the crop under supervision of Rahima Khatun", he said. Manzurul and Aminul were plucking tomatos and nursing plants in their lands adjoining their homesteads.

Other than the cost of sheds, the

expenditure and nursing is similar to seasonal tomato plants, they said.

They used six maunds of cow dung, six kilograms of urea, five kilograms of TSP and about three kilograms of potash fertiliser in each of the plots. One-month-old seedlings were transplanted in fields in the first week of June. When flowering began in late July, they used a hormone named Tomaton, given by BARI.

Harvest started in the second week of August, they said.

Rahima Khatun told this correspondent that BARI-3 and BARI-4 are 'indeterminate varieties', which will bear fruit till February if plants are nursed and fertiliser given in appropriate proportion. Each plant will yield at least three kilograms of tomato, she said.



Farmer Manzurul Haque harvesting summer tomato from his field in at Barshikura village in Netrakona Sadar upazila.