



Bangladesh Educational Institution Employees' Federation stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding nationalisation of their jobs.

Plants helped ants evolve: Study

REUTERS, Washington

Ants evolved far earlier than previously believed, as far back as 140 million to 168 million years ago -- and they have plants to thank for their diversity, US researchers reported on Thursday.

A team at Harvard University who used a genetic clock to reconstruct the history of ants found the ant family first arose more than 40 million years earlier than previously thought, but did not diversify into different genera and species until flowering plants came onto the scene.

The study sheds light on one of the most important and numerous animals, which includes hundreds of different species.

"We estimate that ant diversification took off approximately 100 million years ago, along with the rise

of flowering plants, the angiosperms," Naomi Pierce, a professor of biology who led the study, said in a statement.

"These plants provided ants with new habitats both in the forest canopy and in the more complex leaf litter on the forest floor, and the herbivorous insects that evolved alongside flowering plants provided food for ants."

Writing in the journal *Science*, the researchers said they reconstructed the ant family tree using DNA sequencing of six genes from 139 ant genera, encompassing 19 of 20 ant subfamilies around the world.

Such "molecular clocks" are widely used, alongside fossil and other evidence, to determine how old species are. They work on the basis that DNA mutates at a steady and calculable rate.