

Silted rivers keep fertiliser away from farmers

Short supply in peak *Rabi* season in northern districts

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, back from Baghabari ghat

Farmers in northern districts including Sirajganj are facing short supply of fertiliser and fuel in the peak season of Rabi cultivation mainly due to transportation hurdles created by navigation problem in different routes of Jamuna.

Water levels of Jamuna and its tributaries have fallen drastically.

Baghabari port sources said cargo vessels and barges with fertiliser and fuel can not reach Baghabari ghat as numerous underwater shoals have appeared in the waterways. At least 35 vessels and barges were stuck up between Nagorbari and Nakalia in last one

week, they said.

Small boats are used to unload fertilisers from stranded vessels and take those to riverbanks. Those are then transported to different destinations through trucks and other transports, which substantially increases the transportation costs, they said.

This correspondent during a visit saw fertilisers being unloaded from big vessels at Natuarpara with the help of small boats and stacked on the riverbank. About 20,000 tonnes of fertiliser were piled up there, awaiting dispatch to different destinations.

Taking the advantage, trucks have almost doubled fares, for which farmers will ultimately bear the brunt, they said.

Sources at Baghabari fuel depot said diesel and kerosene are being unloaded from their oil tankers at Kazirhat point through drums and then supplied to dealers. Even small tankers can not move as underwater shoals have appeared at least 100 points including Nakalia, Latifpur, Verakhola and Mohonganj on Jamuna river.

This has increased costs while supply of diesel, kerosene, petrol, octane and different kinds of fertiliser to 16 northern districts may be stopped any time, they said.

Authorities at Baghabari port and depots urged the BIWTA several times for dredging of the river channel during autumn, but nothing was

done, they said.

Oil company officials at Baghabari said fuel crisis in northern districts is created only due to navigation problem. If this can be resolved, smooth supplies can be maintained throughout the year, they observed.

Baghabari port was set up in 1982 at the confluence of Jamuna and Boral rivers, followed by installation of depots of Padma, Meghna and Jamuna oil companies mainly to ensure smooth supply of fuel to northern districts. But the purpose is being denied only due to lack of effective dredging of river channels in the region, they said.

Jamuna Fertiliser falls silent again

Supply interrupted four times in last two months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Production in Jamuna Fertiliser Factory (JFF) remained suspended since Friday night due to mechanical problem, creating short supply of urea in 20 districts in its command area in the peak Bari season.

Authorities detected a fault in its ammonia plant and immediately halted production at around 9:30pm, sources in the factory said.

Engineers started repair work on Saturday but could not say till yesterday when production will resume, they added.

Technical glitches twice earlier this year, on February and October 18, kept the factory idle for several days.

A team of foreign experts with the help of local engineers repaired the fault after the February 3 glitch.

The country's biggest urea factory at Tarakandi in Sarisabari upazila in Jamalpur district has a production capacity of 1,750 tonnes a day.

Its Managing Director Abul Kashem Joardar and General Manager (Technical) Nurul Islam could not be contacted over phone despite repeated attempts.

Urea supply from the factory was interrupted four times this year due to 14 party's blockade, technical glitches and porters' strike in October.

No charge sheet 2 years into murder of Prof Yunus

Protesters slate RU authorities for 'indifference, inaction'

RU CORRESPONDENT

The 2nd death anniversary of Rajshahi University teacher Prof Muhammad Yunus was observed on the campus yesterday with a call for speedy trial of the case and punishment of the killers.

Teachers, students, officials and employees of the university at different programmes also urged the university authorities to observe December 24 as a mourning day on the campus.

Prof Yunus, a teacher of Economics department and president of RU unit of Bangabandhu Parishad, was killed by unidentified terrorists on December 24 in 2004 when he was on a morning walk at Binodpur near his university campus residence.

Yesterday, Awami League-backed RU Teachers, Officials and Employees Welfare Association brought out a mourning procession on the campus and placed wreaths at the grave of Prof Yunus and the spot where he was killed.

At a condolence meeting in front of the Senate building, speakers bitterly criticised the government and Rajshahi police for not submitting the charge sheet in the case two years of the murder.

They expressed great anguish that the university authorities did not take programme to observe the death anniversary Prof Yunus, a noted economist.

They also declared that they would abstain from work on every December 24 to show respect to the memory of Yunus.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Mozaffer Hossain, Prof Chittaranjan Misra, Dr Mirza Wazed Hossain Beg.

Bangabandhu Parishad,



Prof Muhammad Yunus

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Economic department yesterday took out separate mourning processions on the campus and demanded immediate submission charge sheet.

BCL at its rally in front of Central Library criticised university authorities for not observing the day.

A mass prayer was also held for late Prof Yunus at the university central mosque after Asr prayer.

Prof Yunus joined RU as a lecturer in 1963. He became a Professor in 1997.

He was elected member of RU Syndicate twice and worked as Students' Adviser and Proctor in early '90s.

Prof Yunus was Registrar of the university for three years from 1997.

He was Ruta general secretary in 1987 and president in 1996.



As big cargo vessels cannot approach Baghabari Ghat, fertiliser bags unloaded from those by small boats being carried by labourers (left) and piled up on the bank of Jamuna.



PHOTO: GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON

BNP-BJP feud takes a new turn in Satkhira-4



Kazi Alauddin



Dr. Shahidul Alam

ABU AHMED, Satkhira

The feud between BNP and its ally Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP-Nazari) took a new turn yesterday as BNP leader Dr. Shahidul Alam filed nomination paper to contest the coming polls from Satkhira-4 (Kaligonj-Debhata), a seat also demanded by BJP.

Dr. Shahidul Alam submitted nomination papers to returning officers in Kaliganj and Debhata.

"I have resigned from government service to campaign. I submitted nomination paper on assurance from BNP high-ups", he told this correspondent after submitting nomination papers. Dr. Shahidul Alam was also a central leader of Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB).

He also sought nomination from the constituency in 2001 election but was denied.

Submission of Shahidul's nomination paper to fight former BJP lawmaker Kazi Alauddin has become a talk of the town.

Shahidul Alam said he submitted nomination paper due to great pressure from party rank and file in the area.

Earlier, BNP and its front organisations held several meetings in the area demanding a party candidate in Satkhira-4 and vowed to resist Kazi Alauddin, if nominated by the 4-party alliance. They alleged that the BJP lawmaker had ignored them during his tenure.

They also alleged that Kazi Alauddin joined Jamaat-e-Islami 'secretly' to confirm nomination. So he can not demand ticket from the area, they said.

Sources in BJP however claimed that alliance leaders assured Alauddin of nomination from Satkhira-4. Alauddin submitted nomination paper earlier to run in the constituency.

14-party co-ordination body in Rajshahi

RU CORRESPONDENT

A 17-member co-ordination committee of 14-party Combine was formed in Rajshahi at a meeting held at the city unit office of Awami League (AL) Saturday night, party sources said.

City unit AL general secretary AHM Khairuzaman Liton, also executive member of the party central committee, was made the co-coordinator of the committee, they said.

Other committee members are: Mujibul Haque Baku, Tajul Islam Muhammad Faruque, Masudul Haque Dulu, Omar Faruque Chowdhury, Liakat Ali Liku, Jinatunnesa Talukder, Pradip

Mridha, Rafiqul Islam Piarul, Abdullah-al-Masud Shibly, Mustafizur Rahman Khan, Dr Syed Shafiqul Islam, Mosharrar Hossain Akhunchi, Julfikar Mannan Jami, Sadrul Islam, Matir Rahman Tapan and Advocate Rafiqul Hasan.

The meeting also formed a four-member advisory committee to conduct the forthcoming election.

The advisory committee members are: former Rajshahi University vice-chancellors Prof Abdul Khalek, Prof Saidur Rahman Khan, Sarder Amzad Hossain and Fazley Hossain Badsha.

The meeting decided to take strategy for the next election.

Rumblings of discontent in Sylhet JP for tickets

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Jatiya Party (Ershad) leaders in Sylhet region may take a 'different stand' if they are not given seats they 'deserve' to contest in the coming election, a number of leaders told this correspondent yesterday.

Some of them may run as independent candidates if they are denied tickets after joining the Awami League-led 'grand alliance', they hinted.

They planned a press conference on Saturday at Sylhet Press Club to express their grievances and stance but postponed it to 'wait a day or two to get the last message' from Dhaka,

party sources said. "We will let you know tomorrow", a front ranking JP leader said yesterday afternoon seeking anonymity.

"There is a good number of party candidates in Sylhet. The commotion will take a serious turn if they are not given nomination", he said.

"They may run in the polls race as independent candidates ignoring possibility of disciplinary actions by the party", he said.

Some good candidates like Lt. Col (ret'd) Syed Ali Ahmed, who did well in byelection in 2005 in Sunamganj-3 may even resign, party sources claimed.

Grievances of JP leaders were apparent during Thursday's country-wide hartal. Leaders and activists left the field in Sylhet city after news spread that many JP aspirants were dropping from the nomination lists, party insiders said.

They did not join the post-hartal rally and held an emergency meeting Thursday night to discuss the nomination scenario in Sylhet region, they said.

Sylhet district JP chief Kunu Miah, Lt. Col. (ret'd) Syed Ali Ahmed, France JP unit chief Shabbir Ahmed, former Sylhet district JP general secretary Syed Abul Quasem Montu and others joined the meeting.

"We may quit the alliance if our men are not given the due importance in giving nomination", another front ranking leader said.

After the meeting, the leaders gave an ultimatum to the party chief to ensure seats for JP candidates in Sylhet.

"We will take a decision if a clear message is not available today", he

said. JP leaders said the party has 'good candidates' in at least eight constituencies in Sylhet region.

"We bagged eight seats out of 19 in Sylhet division in 1991 polls, just after fall of Ershad. Our position is better now", another leader said.

He claimed that JP has vote banks in these constituencies. He also mentioned names of some candidates in those areas.

JP central organising secretary Abdullah Siddiqui in Sylhet-2; JP Presidium member Atiqur Rahman in Sylhet-3; JP's France unit chief Shabbir Ahmed and MA Matin Chowdhury in Sylhet-5; former lawmaker Sharaf Uddin Khsoshr; central joint secretary general Selim Uddin and Kunu Miah in Sylhet-6; Lt. Col. Syed Ali Ahmed in Sunamganj-3; Begum Mumtaj Iqbal Chowdhury in Sunamganj-4, former lawmaker Nobab Ali Abbas Khan in Moulvibazar-2 and former lawmakers Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury in Habiganj-1 will surely win the polls, he claimed.

Besides, party chief HM Ershad expressed his desire to fight in Sylhet-6 and Habiganj-1 constituencies, the party leaders said.

Sylhet district JP president Kunu Miah told The Daily Star yesterday, "We demand the seats as we are confident about victory and our leaders are already working in the areas."

"It will be hard to manage party leaders and activists if the grand alliance fails to realise the situation."

"Though we pressed for eight seats, there should be six for us in Sylhet division", he said.

CHOWDHURY VS CHOWDHURY

Loyalists clash as rivals seek ticket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

At least 12 people were injured in Sylhet city yesterday in a clash between rival factions of BNP belonging to nomination aspirants Shafi Chowdhury and Quaiyum Chowdhury from Sylhet-3 constituency.

Two of the injured were admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital and another at North East Medical College Hospital. The three belonged to the faction led by BNP leader Shafi Chowdhury, his supporters claimed.

About 200 activists were returning from Returning Officer's office in a procession after submitting nomination paper of Abdul Quaiyum Chowdhury for Sylhet-3 (Dakshin

Surma and Fenchuganj) constituency.

The clash ensued in front of Zila Parishad Bhaban when they faced a motor cycle procession of activists loyal to Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury, who was going to Fenchuganj to file his second nomination paper. Earlier, he submitted nomination paper to the Returning Officer in the city on Thursday. Shafi is a former lawmaker from the constituency.

Six shops were also damaged by the unruly activists during the clash. The rival factions were preparing to file cases, sources said.

Talking to the Daily Star later, Shafi Chowdhury claimed that Quaiyum Chowdhury's men attacked his supporters and took away their loudspeakers.



PHOTO: STAR

Children at a painting contest at Shilpachariya Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala in Mymensingh.

Zainul's birthday programme

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A two-day programme marking the 92nd birth anniversary of artist Zainul Abedin began at the Shilpachariya Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala (art gallery) yesterday with a painting competition by school children.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Zobeyedur Rahman inaugurated the art competition. Some 100 children from 40 schools including 13 disabled child artists from the Community Centre for the Handicapped (CCH) took part in the competition.

Assistant Deputy Keeper of the art gallery Dulal Chandra Gain, officials and elite of the town were present at the inaugural function.



PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SKIDER

Some of the students injured in Shibir attacks yesterday being treated at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (above) and angry activists of Progotishil Chhatra Jiote barricade the Dhaka-Chittagong railway track at Sholashahar in protest (story on page 16).