

Farmers clash for fertiliser, chase dealers, officials

Urea price nearly doubles; hoarders, black marketeers active in Rajshahi

ANWAR ALI HIMU, Rajshahi

Fertiliser crisis during peak Rabi season is severely affecting farming in Rajshahi and surrounding districts, triggering demonstrations by farmers and clashes at places.

Irri-Boro and cash crops like potato and vegetables are being affected in fields because this is the prime time to apply fertiliser, farmers said.

The crisis, allegedly created by a section of unscrupulous dealers and traders, have pushed up prices. A 50-kg bag of urea now sells at between Tk 450 and Tk 500 against the official rate of Tk 299, TSP at between Tk 800 and Tk 900 against Tk 680 and DAP at Tk 1200 against Tk 950, farmers said.

The Directorate of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rajshahi informed the National Fertiliser Monitoring Committee in Dhaka of the crisis and sought immediate steps to ease the problem, Rajshahi DAE deputy director Rabindra Kumar Majumder told this correspondent.

He also said all field level DAE officials were alerted to check black marketing of fertiliser but this helped little to ease the situation.

But dealers at a press conference at Rajshahi Press Club on Saturday shifted the blame on 'illegally employed' dealers by Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC). Most of the illegally employed dealers are not traditional businessman and they



Farmers scramble for fertiliser at a dealer's shop in Durgapur upazila headquarters in Rajshahi on Monday.

PHOTO: STAR

are engaged in black marketing of fertiliser, they alleged.

Most of the 89 BCIC dealers in Rajshahi were employed under political influence by the immediate past government, they alleged.

Untoward incidents took place in many areas in Rajshahi in last one week over fertiliser crisis.

On Friday, DAE official Alamgir Hossain in charge of fertiliser supervision in Durgapur upazila escaped farmers' wrath taking shelter at the local police station when several hundred farmers chased him failing to procure fertiliser.

Later in afternoon, Durgapur

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Zebunnesa Sultana seized three rickshaw vans loaded with some 50 bags of urea in Shinga Beel area.

On Thursday, about 50 people were injured in Kesarhat in Mohonpur upazila in clashes as police were trying to control farmers scrambling for fertiliser.

On Sunday, dealer Anwar Hossain in Mohonpur took shelter at the UNO office when farmers laid a siege to his godown, hearing that he had stored fertiliser.

When farmers swooped on the UNO office, the UNO calmed them down by compelling the dealer to sell fertiliser at official rates.

After the incident most of the dealers and retailers disappeared closing their shops in Mohonpur upazila headquarters, locals said.

On the same day, several hundred farmers staged a demonstration at neighbouring Tanore and Durgapur upazila headquarters for fertiliser.

They submitted memorandums to the local UNOs.

However, BCIC officials in Rajshahi claimed that the crisis resulted following no supply of urea from Ghorasal Fertiliser Factory for last two months.

Fertiliser dealer Shafiq Haq in Kesarhat said many dealers like him paid money in advance but BCIC failed to supply urea.

Potato grower Shantu Mia of Durgapur said, he managed only three bags of urea against a need for 30 for cultivating potato on 17 bighas of land.

Farmer Afaz Uddin of Mohonpur alleged that dealers and retailers demand higher prices on plea of crisis. "Most of the godowns of dealers are full of fertilisers but whenever we go they say they do not have fertiliser. They sell those in black market", he alleged.



PHOTO: STAR

A festive mood prevailed in front of Chittagong Divisional Commissioner's office all day long yesterday as candidates of different parties came in colourful processions to submit nomination papers.

BNP in big trouble as Minu, Kabir clash for Rajshahi-2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

BNP in Rajshahi is facing a crisis once again centring nomination as two bigwigs filed nomination papers from Rajshahi-2, threatening to split the party.

Elderly politician and central BNP's Liberation War Affairs Secretary Kabir Hossain and Mayor and central BNP organising secretary Mizanur Rahman Minu filed nomination papers for the prime constituency comprising the city and Paba upazila.

Both told The Daily Star that they filed nomination paper after getting 'green signal' from party high command.

Kabir also submitted nomination paper from Rajshahi-5 (Bagha and Charghat upazilas) in addition to Rajshahi-2.

BNP insiders claimed that Minu has made nomination for the seat 'almost secure' by using influence of Jamaat-e-Islami, a component of BNP led four-party alliance.

They said Rajshahi Jamaat Ameer Ataur Rahman also filed nomination paper from Rajshahi-2 but would withdraw his claim if Minu gets the ticket.

Kabir had joined Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) floated by



Mizanur Rahman Minu



Kabir Hossain

dissident leaders Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury and Col (rt'd) Oli Ahmed few months ago but returned to BNP following a green signal about nomination from Rajshahi-2, his close aides said.

Kabir won the seat in 1991 and 1996 election. He and his followers became unhappy when Minu was nominated in 2001 election.

After Minu was nominated in 2001, Kabir had revolted, showed BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia black flags during a visit and tilted towards Awami League.

To calm him down, Khaleda Zia nominated him from Rajshahi-5

constituency to keep the party united.

And after wining from Rajshahi-5, Kabir somehow distanced himself from party men and the electorate in Rajshahi-2, which made him 'controversial' in the area.

However, political observers said the four-party alliance candidate, whoever he may be, will face a tough fight from Awami League-led 'grand alliance' candidate Fazle Hossain Badsha, a Politbureau member of Workers' Party. Badsha submitted nomination paper yesterday and his nomination was announced in Dhaka Monday night.

Discord in grand alliance over tickets in Satkhira

Several contestants in all five seats, AL men block road protesting JP ticket in Satkhira-2

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Difference among partners in Awami League-led 'grand alliance' intensified yesterday as several contestants from the component parties filed nomination papers from each of the five constituencies in the district.

The constituencies are Satkhira-1 (Tala-Kalaroa), Satkhira-2 (Sadar), Satkhira-3 (Assassuni), Satkhira-4 (Kaligoni-Debhata) and Satkhira-5 (Shyamnagar).

Awami League and all its front organisations brought out a big procession in the town, put up barricade on Satkhira-Khulna road in front of the deputy commissioner's office and held a rally protesting nomination of Jatiya Party (JP) leader Abdul Jabbar from Satkhira-2 constituency as a candidate of the 'grand alliance' and demanding ticket for district AL secretary Nazrul Islam from there.

Over 5000 party men gathered at the Shaheed Abdur Razzak Park brought out a procession. They paraded main thoroughfares of the town raising slogans demanding nomination for Nazrul Islam, instead of Abdul Jabbar.

The demonstrators squatted on the Satkhira-Khulna road disrupting traffic on at least 8 routes.

The rally was addressed by Sheikh Abu Nasim Moyna, Firoz



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League men blocked the Satkhira-Khulna road in Satkhira town yesterday protesting 'grand alliance' nomination to Jatiya Party leader Abdul Jabbar in Satkhira-2 constituency.

Ahmed, Saiful Karim Sabu, advocate Farida Akhtar Banu, Syed Firoz Kamal Shuvra, Firoz Ahmed, Azibar Rahman, SM Shawkat Hossain, Sheikh Nurul Haque, Shahadat Hossain, Shahjahan Ali, Abdul Mannan, Mahmud Ali Suman, Kazi Akhtar Hossain and Rashiduzzaman Rashi.

They urged AL chief Sheikh Hasina to nominate Nazrul Islam in Satkhira-2 constituency, saying he is an efficient man, popular and

honest leader and will win the seat.

They said they will not accept any candidate other than a party man and vowed to resist Abdul Jabbar as an alliance candidate.

After the showdown, Nazrul Islam submitted nomination paper from Satkhira-2.

JP leader Abdul Jabbar also submitted nomination paper.

Rift among 'grand alliance' partners has also surfaced in four other constituencies over tickets as

aspirants submitted nomination papers yesterday ignoring 'official' nominees.

Engineer Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and BM Nazrul Islam of AL, Syed Didar Bakht of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Mustafa Lutfullah of Workers Party and Obaidus Sultan Bablu of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) submitted nomination papers yesterday from Satkhira-1 (Tala-Kalaroa) constituency.

Former lawmaker Dr. Mokhesur Rahman and ABM Mustakim of AL and JP leader advocate Salah Uddin submitted nomination papers from Satkhira-3 (Assassuni).

Dr. AFM Ruhul Haque of AL and former MP Shahadat Hossain of JP submitted nomination papers from Satkhira-4 (Kaligoni-Debhata) and Golam Reza of JP and AK Fazlul Haque of AL from Satkhira-5 (Shyamnagar).

Political analysts said the difference among 'grand alliance' partners has shattered hopes of regaining the seats in the coming election.

This has also frustrated their grassroots level leaders and activists ahead of the election, the analysts said.

While talking to this correspondent, a senior AL leader seeking anonymity said 'grand alliance' high-ups failed to choose 'competent candidates' to face opponents.

5 AL men vie for ticket in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Intra-party feud in Awami League (AL) has intensified here following submission of nomination papers by its five leaders yesterday to vie for Khagrachhari seat in the forthcoming election.

They are district AL president Zatindra Lal Tripura, senior vice president Kujendra Lal Tripura, secretary Zahedul Alam, press secretary Samir Datta Chakma and former CHT Affairs Minister AL leader Kalpa Ranjan Chakma.

District AL has lended support to Zahedul Alam while party senior vice president Kujendra Lal Tripura is being backed by AL coalition partner Pabatyia Chattagram Jano Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

Another AL leader Kalpa Ranjan declared to resist other candidates if party does not give him final nomination. In such a situation, he expressed his determination to contest as an independent candidate.



PHOTO: STAR

Barisal Awami League general secretary and former AL chief whip in parliament Abul Hasnat Abdullah (cross marked) was given a tumultuous reception by party men when he arrived in the city yesterday after five years.

Hunger strike for BNP ticket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

BNP nomination seeker from Kishoreganj-5 (Itna-Methamoin-Astogram) constituency Principal Habibur Rahman Bhuiyan began a hunger strike at Kishoreganj Press Cat at 9 am yesterday protesting nomination of Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL) leader Fazlur Rahman as four-party alliance candidate from Kishoreganj-constituency.

Habibur rahman said he would continue hunger strike till the nomination is cancelled and a BNP man is given ticket.

Asked by newsmen, Fazlur Rahman did not clarify his party position. He was secretary of KSJL. He did not join BNP, he told newsmen yesterday.

Habibur Rahman also criticised the BNP parliamentary board headed by party chief Khaleda Zia for what he called its 'farical' interview of nomination seekers.

"What was the justification of taking interview of candidates while an outsider was given nomination?" he posed the question.

Habibur claimed that local BNP leaders and workers will resist Fazlur Rahman in the constituency.

He said four BNP men sought nomination for the seat but the party high command gave the ticket to as man from other party.

Fazlur Rahman was defeated by Awami League leader and former deputy speaker Advocate Abdul Hamid in 1996 and 2001 elections. In 2001 election, Fazlur got 63,656 votes with KSJL ticket while Hamid got 83,915 votes.

Besides Habibur Rahman, two other BNP leaders- Forhad Ahmed Kanchan and Kazi Monsurul Kader Tutufiled nomination papers from Kishoreganj-5.

Advocate Abdul Hamid also filed nomination paper from the constituency.

Party sources said the two other BNP nomination seekers will hold press conference to express their grievances.

Try killers of Prof Yunus

RU teachers demand

RU CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred teachers of Rajshahi University under the banner of Progressive Teachers Society (PTS) yesterday brought out mourning procession on the campus and demanded immediate submission of charge sheet and punishment of the killers of Prof Mohammed Yunus.

The processionists paraded different streets on the campus and placed wreaths at the spot where Prof Yunus was killed and at his grave.

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

At the rally held in front of Senate building, speakers urged the university authorities to observe December 24 as a mourning day and to build a memorial for Prof Yunus on the campus.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Prof Abdus Sobhan, PTS members Prof Mukhesur Rahman and Prof Mozaffar Hossain.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League candidate Asaduzzaman Noor submitting nomination paper to the Returning Officer yesterday to contest from Nilphamari-2 constituency.