

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 Rabhi season is severely affecting farming in Rajshahi and surrounding districts, triggering demonstrations by farmers and clashes at places.

Irr-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 from non-supply of urea from Ghorasol 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



Mizanur Rahman Minu



Kabir Hossain

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 Charchhat 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-e-Islami leader Fazlur 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

dissident leaders Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury and Col (rtd) 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 winning 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

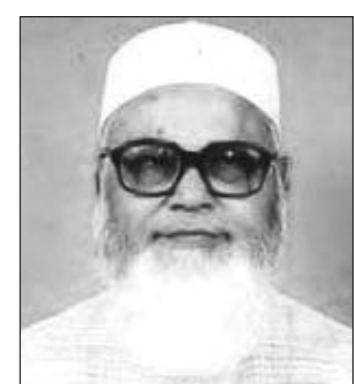
'grand alliance' candidate Fazle Hossain Badsha, a Politbureau member of Workers' Party. Badsha submitted nomination paper yesterday and his nomination was announced in Dhaka Monday night.

New faces, ticket for JP frustrate Tangail AL

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail



Shamsur Rahman Khan Shahjahan



Ataur Rahman Khan

Nominations by Awami League-led 'grand alliance' in the district have created great discontent in AL rank and file in four constituencies.

AL has fielded new faces in three out of the eight seats and left one for its alliance partner Jatiya Party (Ershad).

Among the dropped four senior AL leaders, three lost the 2001 election with small margins, party sources said.

Tangail district AL president Shamsur Rahman Khan Shahjahan and upazila AL convener Azmal Hossen yesterday submitted nomination papers from Tangail-3 (Ghatali) constituency, ignoring decisions of the party high command, which nominated Dr Motiur Rahman from the seat.

Shamsur Rahman told this correspondent yesterday that he would contest as an independent candidate if the party high command does not change its decision. "This will be my last battle to win the seat as an independent candidate", he said.

At a press conference on Monday night, Shamsur Rahman said he would resist Motiur Rahman in Tangail-3. Azmal Hossen and Ghatali upazila AL joint convener Shahidul Islam Lebu also attended the press conference.

Motiur submitted nomination paper yesterday.

Party sources however said AL fielded fresh candidate in Tangail-3 as Shamsur Rahman lost to BNP leader and former minister Lutfar Rahman Khan Azad in last three parliamentary elections with small margins.

In Tangail-5 (Sadar-Delduar), AL leaders and workers said they were shocked as the high command did not nominate Ataur Rahman Khan and left the seat for JP (Ershad) leader Abul Kashem, who ran fourth in 2001 election.

They said Baten has reputation as an honest leader and he was defeated in the last election with only 1,878, when rebel AL candidate Golam Mohammad Khan Tareque sliced away 16,462 votes as an independent candidate.

This time Baten has a fair chance to win, they claimed.



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 Obaidul Sultan Bablu of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) submitted nomination papers yesterday from Satkhira-1 (Tala-Kalaroa) constituency.

Former lawmaker Dr. Mokhlesur 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 (Kalogonj-Debhabata) 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.

JP leader Abdul Jabbar also submitted nomination paper.

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

'competent candidates' to face opponents.



PHOTO: STAR

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

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 a 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 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.

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 Mukhlesur Rahman and Prof Moazzaf Hossain.



PHOTO: STAR

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