

Ship owners' tussle delays jute export

10,000 tonne stockpiled at Mongla

RAFIQ HASAN

Over 10,000 tonnes of raw jute have been stockpiled at Mongla port over the last two months as exporters could not send those due to non availability of ships resulting from continued tussle between local and foreign ship owners.

Raw jute was supposed to be exported to Pakistan and some African countries.

Sources said although local owners fail to provide required number of ships to carry all export items, they object to foreign vessels carrying such cargo under Bangladesh Flag Vessel (Protection) Ordinance, 1982, which pro-

vides that local vessels will get priority in carrying export cargo from the country.

This causes piling up of goods at the port. The quantity of stockpiled raw jute rose to 21,000 tonnes recently.

The Department of Shipping in the last week of January granted waiver to a foreign flag carrier vessel to carry export cargo. This was done as Bangladesh Shipping Corporation's (BSC) ship Banglar Mukh which was supposed to call at Mongla port in the latter part of November last year failed to reach there in time because of engine trouble.

But hearing about granting of

waiver to foreign flag carrier-- M V Khaleda --local HRC Shipping sent one of their vessels to Mongla and objected to loading of cargo by the foreign ship. It immediately left the port with around 6,800 tonnes of jute.

Banga Lanka left Mongla carrying about 7,000 tonnes of jute last week, leaving 7,000 tonnes still to be sent.

Meanwhile, another 3,000 tonnes of jute reached the port but there is no ship to carry those, sources pointed out.

The BSC however told jute exporters that its ship Banglar Mukh is likely to call at Mongla very

PROF TAHER MURDER Accused teacher barred from joining RU

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University (RU) Syndicate in a meeting on Thursday night rejected the joining appeal of Mia Muhammad Mahiuddin, a prime accused in the murder case of his colleague professor S Taher Ahmed of geology and mining department of RU.

Following the gruesome killing of RU professor Taher Ahmed at his campus residence on February 1, 2006, Mahiuddin and five others were arrested in connection with the murder and the university authorities suspended him in February 2006.

After getting bail from the court, Mahiuddin appealed to the university authorities for joining in the department, campus sources said.

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BDR, BSF trade fire on Satkhira border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) exchanged around 60 rounds of bullet on Padmashakhra border in Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

The BSF troops of Panitar camp under Basirhat Police Station of 24 Parganas district fired 10 bullets, targeting the Padmashakhra BDR camp at about 9:30pm, forcing the paramilitary Bangladesh troops to retaliate when they fired 50 shots.

BDR sources said the BSF men of the same camp fired six bullets, targeting the Padmashakhra camp on the night of February 20.

When contacted, Lt Col Mohammad Asif Abdur Rouf, commanding officer (CO) of 41 Rifles Battalion, confirmed the border skirmish.

A tense situation is prevailing in the border area



PHOTO: STAR

Rapid Action Battalion seizes gambling materials from Dipali Jubo Sangha at Segunbagicha in the capital yesterday. Earlier arrested Ward Commissioner Chowdhury Alam used to run the organisation.

Military options open against Iran: Cheney

US will attack Iran, fear British officials

AFP, Washington/ London

US Vice President Dick Cheney vowed the United States would "do everything" it can to deprive Iran of nuclear weapons, and refused to rule out military action in a US television interview Friday.

"We haven't taken any options off the table," Cheney said in an interview with ABC News from Australia, where he is travelling.

"A nuclear-armed Iran is not a very pleasant prospect for anybody to think about," Cheney said, "We need to continue to do everything we can to make sure they don't achieve that objective."

"We hope we can solve the

problem diplomatically," Cheney said. President George W Bush "has indicated he wants to do everything he can to resolve it diplomatically. That's why we're working with the (European Union) and going through the United Nations with sanctions."

"But the president has also made it clear that we haven't taken any options off the table," he said.

When pressed about what he meant, Cheney said: "I'm not going beyond where I am. As we've said, we're doing everything we can do resolve it diplomatically. We haven't taken any options off the table."

Two US aircraft carrier groups are currently in the Gulf region, the

highest concentration of US naval firepower there since the US-led invasion of neighbouring Iraq in 2003.

US officials have also said that Iranian forces are behind some attacks on US troops in Iraq, but have not openly accused the Iranian government of ordering the activity.

However US officials, including Bush and Defence Secretary Robert Gates, have said that the United States is not planning to go to war with Iran.

Cheney's comments follow Thursday's report by a UN nuclear watchdog that found Iran in breach

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Academics question Prof Yunus' entry into politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criticising Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus' micro-credit institution Grameen Bank and his decision to enter politics, a section of academicians yesterday said Prof Yunus has to clarify his ideological position before entering politics.

The micro-credit system cannot be a means of poverty alleviation, rather it is deeply linked to capitalism that finally helps poverty continue, they said at the publication ceremony of a book at the Jatiya Press Club.

The book titled "Grameen Bank and Dr Yunus: In the View of a Witness" by former Grameen Bank official Sardar Amin was published by Jatiya Shahitya Prokashani.

"Dr Yunus' declaration of entering politics proves that poverty alleviation is not possible through micro-credit, rather it requires structural and legal reforms," said Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University.

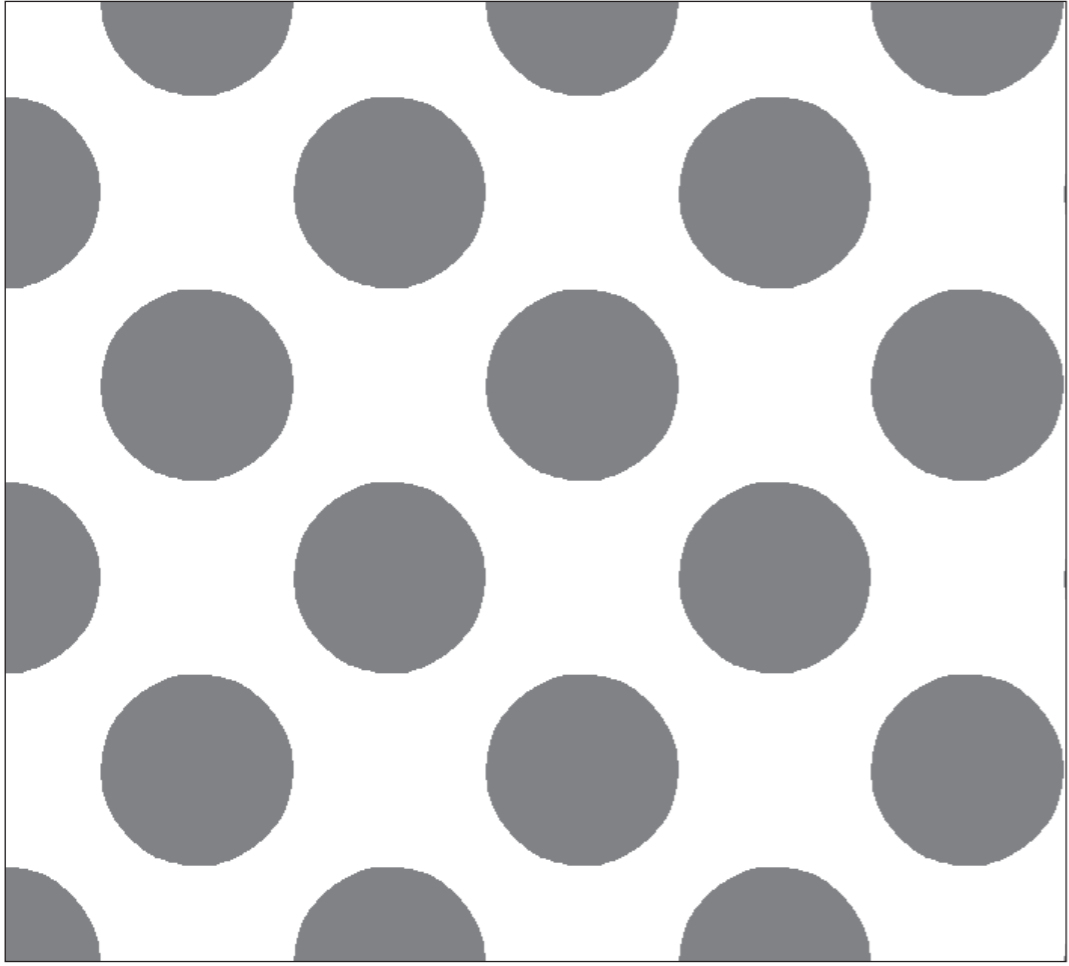
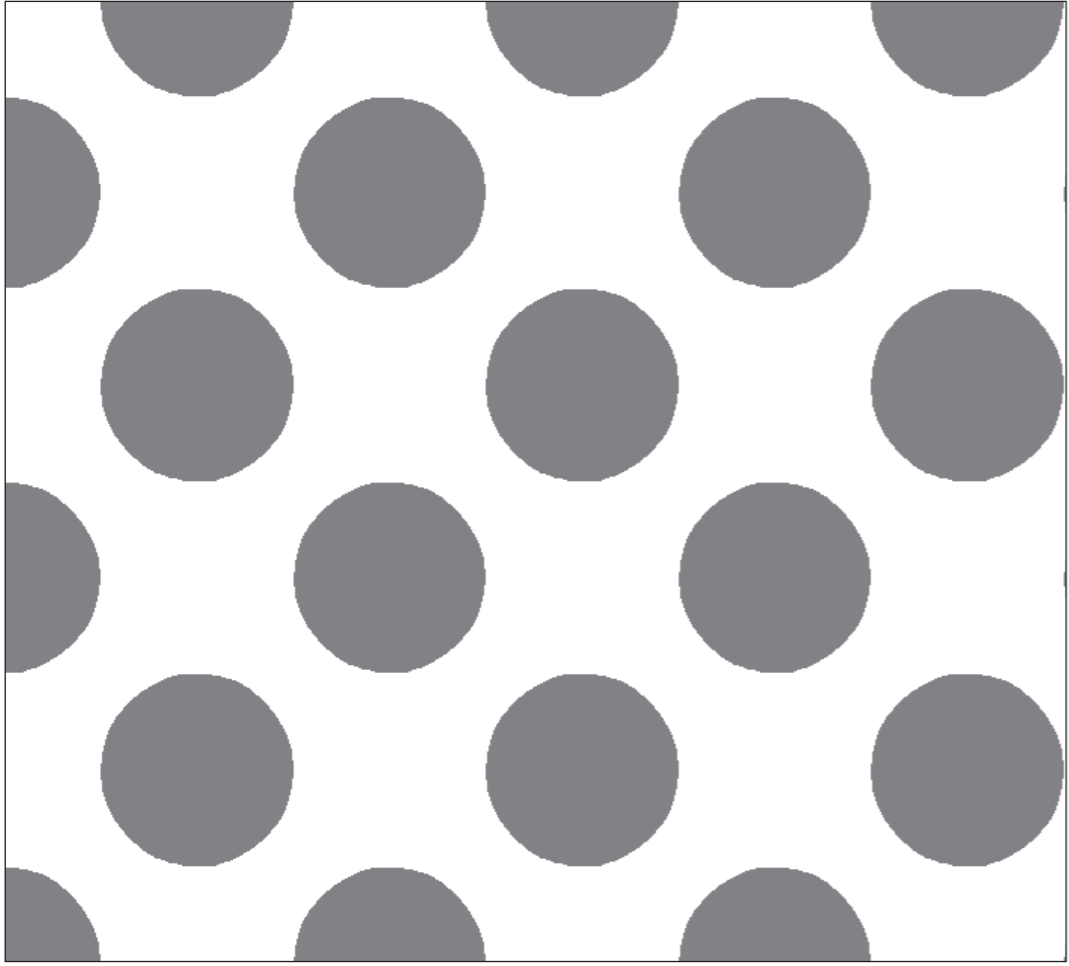
Only poor people with other resources can be successful through micro-credit, not the ultra poor, he said, adding that studies found only 5-10 percent micro-credit receivers succeeded to change their fates while others have suffered debt.

This micro-credit has rather created institutional opportunities for global capital financing, Anu said.

The Nobel Peace Prize has given Prof Yunus more power when he is out to open the Chittagong Port

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Prayer Timing		
February 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		



Lone burn unit at DMCH burdened with patients

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Fazila, a three-year-old girl, was lying on a hospital bed with burn injury on her right cheek caused by the flame of a lamp. The burn will leave a mark on the beautiful face of the little girl.

It took three days for Fazila to get specialised treatment although burn injury has to be treated within six hours.

Hailing from Shilaidaha of Kushtia, Fazila was taken to Kumarkhali hospital immediately after the accident. Two days later she was referred to Kushtia Sadar hospital from where she was finally shifted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

Another child victim, five-year-old Rahi Aksar of Meherpur, came to DMCH Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit (BPSU) after four days of the accident and by that time her injuries got infected.

Fazila and Rahi are only two instances of how burn victims face

delay in getting proper treatment.

Burn victims' sufferings increase and many of them die as the burn management is yet to be decentralised in the country with the lone government institution at DMCH to provide treatment to burn victims from across the country.

"If there were a little space for a burn unit at the district general hospitals, we could at least get proper treatment immediately," said Rahi's grandmother. The doctors at DMCH scolded her for bringing the child so late but she had nothing to do, she said.

According to experts, one percent people across the country fall victim to burn injury every year, 1.4 lakh of them with major injuries, and the 50-bed burn unit of DMCH is the only government centre to provide treatment to this huge number of patients.

Only 10-12 Dhaka-based plastic surgeons are struggling to take care

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Pakistan test-fires long-range missile

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan successfully test-fired a new version of its long-range nuclear-capable missile Friday, two days after Pakistani and Indian officials signed an agreement in New Delhi to reduce the risk of an accidental nuclear war between them.

The Shaheen II ballistic missile, launched from an undisclosed location, has a range of 1,245 miles.

"The missile test was part of a continuous process of validation and technical improvement which Pakistan follows to consolidate and verify its various land-based strategic missile systems," the military said.

The Shaheen II is Pakistan's longest-range ballistic missile

system, and has the capability to hit major cities in neighbouring India.

The missile "can carry nuclear and conventional warheads with high accuracy," the military said in a statement. An earlier version of the missile was tested in April 2006, and officials said they could not release details of how it had been upgraded.

Nuclear-armed rivals Pakistan and India have a history of bitter relations, and have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

The two sides often test-fire missiles. Pakistan's test came days after bomb blasts sparked a fire on a train in India that was headed for Pakistan, killing 68 people, mostly Pakistanis.

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