

KURIGRAM-3 CONSTITUENCY

Ershad's announcement angers grassroots leaders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Most of the Jatiya Party (JP) leaders and activities at Ulipur upazila unit expressed dissatisfaction over party Chairman HM Ershad as he declared former minister Mydul Islam as a candidate for Kurigram-3 constituency in the next general election.

They said the decision Ershad had taken for the party candidate in Kurigram-3 constituency is undemocratic and disappointing. In August, Ershad declared that Mydul Islam would be the party candidate for Ulipur constituency. JP candidate Maulana Motiur Rahman was elected from the seat in the 2002 polls.

JP Ulipur upazila unit Organising Secretary Nuruzzaman strongly criticised the decision and

urged the party chairman to select a candidate as per the aspirations of the grassroots-level leaders and activists.

He said, "Only six leaders of Ulipur upazila unit of JP agreed Ershad for Mydul. The rest of the 52-member committee were against the decision."

President of JP Dharmchreni union unit and upazila unit Treasurer Noor Baker said, "Mydul Islam changed his political identity five times during his political career. In last two and half years, he joined AL from BNP and then joined JP from AL. A leader who can change political identity only for power cannot be truly patriotic."

Upazila unit Office Secretary Shazamul said ignoring the opinion of grassroots-level leaders and activists is violation of

Representation of People's Ordinance (RPO). As per RPO, each political party has to frame constitution with provision to nominate three candidates with the opinion of grassroots-level leaders for choosing one by its central committee, he explained.

When contacted, JP upazila unit President Gelap Uddin and Secretary Atiar Munshi said they had accepted Mydul as a candidate for Kurigram-3 constituency.

Vice President of JP Ulipur upazila unit Akhtarul Islam Harun declined to comment on the issue.

When contacted, Mydul Islam said, "A few leaders of the upazila unit influenced by another aspirant candidate are making propaganda against me."

Bogra BNP leader held with alcohol

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested former joint secretary of Bogra city BNP Noor Mohammad with 300 bottles of alcohol from his shop on Thursday night.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab-12 raided his shop on Bogra-Sherpur road and arrested him. He was handed over to police that night. He was sent to Bogra jail yesterday.

Global warming sending tropical species uphill: Study

AFP, Washington

Global warming is driving tropical plant and animal species to higher altitudes, potentially leaving lowland rainforest with nothing to take their place, ecologists argue in this week's issue of Science.

In a rare study on the impact of global warming in the tropics, University of Connecticut ecologist Robert Colwell and colleagues worked their way up the forested slope of a Costa Rican volcano to collect data on 2,000 types of plants and insects.

"Half of these species have such narrow altitudinal ranges that a 600-meter (2,000 feet) uphill shift would move these species into territory completely new to them," said a summary of their article released Thursday.

Many species would be unable to relocate at all, as most tropical mountainside forests have become "severely fragmented" by human activities.

Tropical lowland forests -- the warmest on Earth -- would meanwhile be challenged by the absence of replacement species. Flora and fauna unable to move uphill could also perish, unless it turns out they can bear higher temperatures.

"Only further research can estimate the risk," the summary said, "but Colwell's report indicates that the impact of global climate change on some tropical rainforest and mountain species could be significant."

In another article, Science reports this week on a similar uphill trek by squirrels, mice and other small mammals in Yosemite National Park in California, one of the oldest wilderness parks in the United States.

Comparing a landmark 1918 study against fresh data about Yosemite's wildlife numbers, it found that small mammals have moved to higher altitudes, or reduced their ranges, in response to warmer temperatures.

"We didn't set out to study the effects of climate change," said Craig Moritz, a zoologist and integrative biology professor at the University of California at Berkeley who led the study.

"But the most dramatic finding in the Yosemite transect was the upward elevational shift of species," he said. "When we asked ourselves what changed, it hit us between the eyes -- the climate."

While such population movements have not altered Yosemite's biodiversity, Moritz's research team felt that rapid changes to the climate in less than a century could be a problem, a summary of the article said.

While half of the small mammal species at Yosemite have shifted their ranges, the other half has not. That means wildlife communities -- and the way in which species interact -- have changed, the summary explained.

If such change happens too fast, said James Patton, a member of the study, "elements of the (ecosystem) may start to collapse because a keystone element gets pulled out too quickly."

The study used as its starting point a detailed 1918 survey of Sierra Nevada wildlife by a Berkeley professor, when the snow-capped mountain range was under threat from gold mining and overgrazing.



An open boat market has sprouted in Bhatia area at Sitakunda. Such type of business has developed alongside ship breaking industry in the port city. The boats have been made with the lifeboats of large ship.

PHOTO: STAR

Fund crisis, inherited debts

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running, according to a BJMC official.

This year the government has allocated only Tk 125 crore for the 15 mills to purchase raw materials when Tk 464 crore is needed to feed them, former BJMC chairman Ataharul Islam said.

The funds were released in the second week of September, way past the jute harvest. Then it may take a few months for the mills to complete purchasing jute.

The delay will add to the losses as the middlemen who are hoarding the jute harvest will sell their stockpiles at higher prices, experts and officials concerned said.

"Releasing the funds pretty late and in small amounts has been the norm for a long time. The government must change such bureaucratic snafu," said an official at the jute and textile ministry.

The government has got to allocate required funds on time, set a target for each mill and make the mill authorities accountable, he said.

"The BJMC mills would not recover otherwise," he added.

Khandker Golam Moazzem, a research fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) who studied the jute industry, suggested gradual write-off of debts.

He said introducing private management at the state-owned jute mills will revitalise them by injecting efficiency.

The country grows about 55 lakh bales of jute on average, 40 percent of which are exported.

The mills produced 5.84 lakh tonnes of jute products in the past fiscal year. Experts said the industry could churn out around 8 lakh tonnes if all the mills were running and uninterrupted supply of power

and raw materials could be ensured.

Export earnings from manufactured products and raw jute stood at \$318.34 million and \$165.06 million in the last fiscal, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

The figures were \$320.78 million and \$147.15 million in 2006-07.

"There are much global demand for jute products, but we cannot meet it fully," BJMA Chairman Najmul Huq said. "Unlike the garment sector, the jute industry adds 100 percent value to their products because you don't need to import any raw materials."

Former BJMA chairman Kamran T Rahman said the government gave more money to the state-owned mills than the privatised ones under the World Bank's Jute Sector Reform Programme in the early '90s.

Private-sector mills got government funds equivalent to 16 percent of their export earnings to recover from losses. The margin for state-owned mills was 31-67 percent and they got the cash for longer period, he said.

"This created a very uneven playing field," he said.

Jute was once called the golden fibre; now it has become the diamond fibre because worldwide demand is on the rise, said jute expert Shah Alam.

But power cuts and unavailability of raw jute on time contribute to 50 percent and 40 percent of the losses for the state-owned mills in the Khulna region, he said.

Pointing to corruption, he said bureaucrats and politicians have long been on the make in the jute sector. If the stolen assets were recovered, the financial constraints could largely be overcome.



Dr. Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury speaks at a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday on the occasion of World Mental Health Day. On his left is Farah Kabir and on his right are MM Nasir Uddin, Jawaharul Islam Mamun and Rabeya Sultana. (Story on Page 3)

3 killed in road accidents

METRO DESK

Three people were killed and 14 others injured in separate road accidents in Chandpur and Habiganj in the last two days.

Our correspondent in Chandpur reports: Two people were killed and four others injured in a road accident in the district on Thursday afternoon.

The accident occurred when a three-wheeler collided head-on with a microbus on Hajiganj-Ramganj road at Sheikhpara under Hajiganj upazila.

The dead were identified as Md Shahadat, 25, and the driver of the three-wheeler Noor-e-Alam, 27.

The injured were admitted to a private clinic in Hajiganj Sadar but later referred to Pangu Hospital in Dhaka.

In another accident, ten people were injured in a road accident on Chandpur-Cumilla regional highway near Aliganj under Hajiganj upazila yesterday.

The accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound bus from Chandpur and a Chandpur-bound covered van collided head-on and the bus

fell into a roadside ditch.

The injured were rushed to Aliganj Health Complex.

BSS adds: A motorcyclist was run over by a Dhaka-bound passenger bus on Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Titarkona under Bahubal upazila in Hajiganj yesterday.

The accident took place when Alhaj Shamim Ahmed, a businessman of Pura Bazar of Shayestaganj, was hit by the bus while he was going to his business place on a motorcycle from Mirpur.

Police arrested the driver at Laskarpur and seized the bus.

125 MW coal-fired power plant

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power plant since 2006. At that time, the proposal was put aside because of a staggering cost of Tk 1,000 crore, and also because the mine was not producing enough coal.

Petrobangla sources say under a better management and favourable mining condition, the coal mine is now producing coal more than the 250 MW plant can consume.

"Given the present trend of this plant where the two units do not operate all the time, the mine's coal production may support a new 125 MW unit. But, if any one thinks that the present coal production can support continuous operation of 375 MW (250 MW existing plus 125 MW new) power plant, it is wrong," said a Petrobangla official.

The existing plant is supposed to consume 6.6 lakh tonnes of coal annually, which is approximately 66 percent of the mine's annual production target of one million tonnes (presently the target is eight lakh tonnes). A third unit mathematically demands another 3.3 lakh tonnes, which the mine cannot guarantee.

In reality, this plant cannot perform optimally, and the two units can consume up to five lakh tonnes. Sources noted that this low

quality plant would never be able to perform optimally.

Since the plant is unable to consume the mine's present level of coal production, the mine's coal yard has been filled up with surplus coal. By December, the mining authorities fear that the coal yard's 2.35 lakh tonne capacity will be exceeded by two lakh tonnes of coal, which must be sold to other buyers. "We have floated a tender and found offers of \$116 a tonne for 34,000 tonnes from brick kiln owners and others," said a mine source.

In such a situation in July, the CMC wrote to the power secretary that Bangladesh may find more coal mines in its northern region, and can therefore plan for more coal-based power plants. It said even with the present coal production at Barapukuria--4,000 tonnes a day--it is possible to add a 125 MW plant within a maximum of 18 months.

The CMC is ready to negotiate for that project which, the Chinese company says, would be cheap to implement as much of the infrastructure is already there at the existing plant site. The existing plant consumes 2,200 tonnes of coal a day, and adding the new unit will raise the total to 3,300 tonnes. The CMC is flexible about financing this project, and it is even open

about a joint venture.

The PDB reviewed and seconded this proposal. It even suggested yet another Supplier's Credit from China, which the government's procurement policy discourages. The PDB also suggested that CMC should implement the project in line with the existing units as that would eliminate any problems relating to "interfacing" of the three 125 units.

"They are trying to say that this unsolicited deal will be cheap. But when we reviewed the investment for a third unit in 2006, the cost came to Tk 1,000 crore. This cost does not justify building such a plant on the basis of an unsolicited negotiation," said an official. "An open tender will ensure cheaper, yet modern and efficient power plant."

The existing plant was built at a total cost of \$260 million in 2001 whereas engineering, procurement and construction cost of the 450 MW Meghnaghat power plant was \$180 million in 1998.

Contract for the Meghnaghat project was awarded through an open tender, followed by open negotiation. Barapukuria plant was built on the basis of an unsolicited and secretive negotiation with a supplier's credit, which primarily benefited Hosaf as representative of all the Chinese companies concerned.



Visitors admire a portrait at a photography exhibition titled 'Shotoborsher Pathik' by Photojournalist Shahadat Parvez at Zainul Gallery at Institute of Fine Art at Dhaka University yesterday. Dhaka Heritage organised the seven-day event.

PHOTO: STAR

12 injured as fishermen clash in Bhola

UNB, Bhola

At least 12 fishermen were injured in an attack by their rival group in the river Meghna yesterday.

Witnesses said fishermen of Babul group of Daulatkhana attacked and hacked 12 fishermen of Sayed group in the morning when they went there for fishing.

The attackers also threw some 10/12 fishermen into the river who were, later, rescued by the fellow fishermen, said the injured.

The injured fishermen were admitted to Bhola Sadar Hospital.

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