

Karnaphuli Paper Mills polluting Ctg lifeline

MINHAJ UDDIN, Ctg

The country's largest and state-owned paper manufacturer, Karnaphuli Paper Mills (KPM), is massively polluting the Karnaphuli River, the lifeline of Chittagong, by discharging thousands of tonnes of untreated toxic effluent into it every day.

In a recent visit to Chandraghona where the mill is situated, this correspondent found thick black water with foams floating in the river all around near the mill. The factory, which lies some 60km upstream of the Karnaphuli estuary, releases the waste through two huge pipes. A strong smell of chemicals could be felt even from boats and the river bank.

Locals say the water of more than five kilometres downstream of KPM has lost its properties. "You can even see the blackish, frothing water up to 10 km downstream," said Mohammed Jahangir, a boatman of Chandraghona ferry ghat.

Anowarul Islam Talukder, managing director of the paper mill, said the factory discharged around 300 tonnes of effluent per hour but claimed that all of that was not hazardous.

The pollution is already having its impacts.

"Before the mill was set up, the river water was crystal clear," said Abdul Monaf, a 70-year-old boatman of the mill area. "Back then,

fishes could be found aplenty."

"Even when we were young, we could get dead fishes and fish fries floating in the river near the mill but now no fish can be found here," said the fisherman-turned-boatman. Monaf said hundreds of fishermen of the locality had left their inherited job due to scarcity of fish.

However, no government or non-government organisations have tested the level of toxicity of the river water.

Muhammad Edris Ali, vice president of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), Chittagong, said the untreated waste could alter the water temperature and reduce the oxygen concentration, killing planktons, the food of the fish, and destroying the fish habitats.

KPM MD Anowarul said they had sent a proposal to authorities concerned around two years ago, asking for an effluent treatment plant (ETP). He said he did not know how long it would take to put the ETP in place.

Chittagong Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWASA) has set up Karnaphuli Water Supply Project to use the Karnaphuli water to meet one-fourth of the demand of the city by treating around 125 million litres of water per day. The plant may start in a year.

CWASA Managing Director AKM Fazlullah said before they started, the KPM pollution must be stopped.

Otherwise, CWASA will have to treat the polluted water itself, which will cost more than Tk 1 crore a month, he added. He said, "Still the risk is always there, as toxic chemical compounds could not be removed from the water fully."

Department of Environment (Chittagong) Director Zafar Alam said punishment for pollution by toxic effluent can be both fine and jail sentence. The DoE can even seal the factory, he said.

The DoE fined three private paper mills Tk 14.50 lakh for discharging untreated effluent into the Karnaphuli in March 2012. "The government factory is of no exception. None would get exemption from the law," Zafar said.

His comments, however, contradict in the case of KPM, as the DoE remains silent though the extent of pollution the mill causes is much higher than that of any other private mill.

Zafar Alam said, "We have sent them notice and warned them many times to no avail. We will soon take enforcement drives against KPM."

Karnaphuli Paper Mills has been releasing hazardous effluent for 60 years since its inception in 1953. But authorities seem to turn a blind eye to it. Experts warn if the toxic pollution by KPM goes unaddressed, the consequences will be very costly.



The water of the Karnaphuli River has turned frothy and black due to thousands of tonnes of untreated toxic effluent being discharged from the country's largest and state-owned paper manufacturer Karnaphuli Paper Mills every day. The photo was taken recently from near the mill.

FILE PHOTO

Universities should be made ICT hubs

Says UGC chairman

DU CORRESPONDENT

The country's universities should be developed as ICT hubs for the economic development of the country, said University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof AK Azad Chowdhury yesterday.

He was speaking at the inaugural session of a workshop on "Role of IT in the Field of Growth, Employment and Good Governance" in UGC auditorium jointly organised by the UGC and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, said a press release. ICT Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan said, "Bangladesh can gain a strong position in the global ICT field as our students have the ability, the government has the heartfelt intention and there is no lack of resources".

Naming of Buet dorm after gunfight victim sought

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) students yesterday demanded that the lone female dormitory of the university be named after Sabequunnahar Sony.

Sony, a student of Buet, was killed in a gunfight between two factions of pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal on the campus in 2002.

The students also demanded the capital punishment for the killers.

The demands were raised at a human chain formed in front of Sony memorial on the campus to mark her eleventh death anniversary.

Several student organisations placed wreaths at the memorial while Samajtantrik Chhatra Front held a photography exhibition to mark the day.

SAVAR TRAGEDY VICTIMS JBFH, AMDA provide follow-up treatment

CITY DESK

Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital (JBFH) and Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA) Bangladesh yesterday organised a follow-up medical treatment for the victims of the nine-storey Rana Plaza collapse in Savar.

A medical team comprising thirty specialist doctors, nurses, paramedics and hospital personnel was present at Savar Adhar Chandra Model High School providing complimentary medical treatment, group psychotherapy and free medicine supplies.

The team also distributed 800kg of rice and 200kg of lentil among the victims to ensure food security.

Prof Md Jonaid Shafiq, chairman of JBFH, and Prof Sarder A Nayeem, managing director of JBFH, headed the medical team.

Draft food safety law has some loopholes

Roundtable told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Resisting food adulteration will be a difficult task as there are some loopholes in the draft food safety law, said speakers at a programme in the capital yesterday.

"The draft of the food safety act ensures legal actions against only the people who produce lethal food items," said Supreme Court lawyer Abu Raihan M Khalid.

"Won't any actions be taken against those producing unhygienic food items unless these cause death to people?" he said.

In the act, there is no guideline about setting up of new laboratories for examining nutritional value of food items, he added.

Khalid was speaking at a roundtable discussion on "Food Safety Act-2013" jointly organised by the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) and ActionAid at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik Jote President Shirin Akhter said, "The food safety act lacks a clear definition of food and nutrition."

The act should clearly state legal actions against the people who sell adulterated and unhygienic items in local, international and corporate markets, said ActionAid Country Director Farah Kabir.

Apart from curbing adulteration, emphasis should also be given on accessibility and affordability of food, she said.

The food ministry has prepared the draft law which is awaiting approval in the parliament.

ASSAULT ON JU TEACHER

Syndicate meeting postponed amid protest

JU CORRESPONDENT

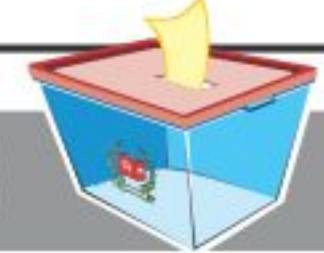
A regular syndicate meeting of Jahangirnagar University was postponed yesterday amid pro-BNP teachers' protest.

The teachers laid siege to the vice chancellors' office protesting a decision of the authorities to give only a warning to a student instead of suspending him for allegedly assaulting a teacher.

The university authorities have decided to give a warning to Rajib Ahmed Rasel, general secretary of BCL, JU unit for allegedly assaulting lecturer Nurul Haque on April 6. He received a warning of three-month long suspension if he creates any further anarchy on the campus.

JU Teachers Association in its executive meeting yesterday rejected the decision regarding Rajib.

CITY CORPORATION ELECTIONS 2013



Election officials receive training on the use of electronic voting machines, to be used in ward 16 during the June 15 Barisal City Corporation polls. The training was held in Barisal Zila School Center yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



KHULNA

Two mayor candidates pledge to honour results

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Mayoral candidates Talukder Abdul Khaleque and Shafiqul Islam Modhu of the June 15 Khulna City Corporation polls yesterday pledged to accept and honour the election results, irrespective of who wins, and work with the elected mayor.

They were addressing a dialogue with voters organised by Sacheton Nagorik Committee, a wing of Transparency International Bangladesh, in Khulna Press Club in Khulna city.

The remaining mayoral candidate, Moniruzzaman Mony, being backed by the BNP-led 18-party alliance, was not present as he was busy electioneering in Daulatpur area, said an organiser of the committee, AK Hiru.

Khaleque and Modhu affirmed their position against drug abuse and assured to create employment for youths, develop health, sanitation and modern solid waste management facilities and establish formalin and adulteration free kitchen markets.

The candidates also said they, if elected, would try to turn KCC into a "city government" by bringing utility services and law enforcement under it.

Khaleque, Khulna city unit Awami League president, is being backed by the ruling 14-party alliance while Modhu, Jatiya Party district unit president, is being backed by Jatiya Party.

Khulna Unnayan Sangram Samannay Committee, Nagorik Forum, Sujon and Rupantor supported the programme.

KCC MAYORAL POLLS Mony's camp accuses Khaleque of 'buying votes'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Oikyoboddho Nagorik Forum, a pro-BNP citizens' body backing mayoral candidate Moniruzzaman Mony in the June 15 Khulna City Corporation (KCC) polls, yesterday accused another candidate, Talukder Abdul Khaleque, of distributing "black money to buy voters".

The forum Coordinator Nazrul Islam Monzu AMP also accused central Awami League leaders of threatening financially insolvent voters of reprisals if votes were not cast in Khaleque's favour.

Nazrul also demanded that the Anti-Corruption Commission conduct a probe into KCC's irregularities in the past five years.

The allegations were yet to be placed before the regional Election Commission, he told a press briefing in one of Mony's campaign centres in Khulna city's Udayan Club.

The claims were baseless, said outgoing mayor Khaleque, the Khulna city unit Awami League president being backed by the ruling 14-party alliance and Sammilita Nagorik Committee.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, he urged the forum to prove the claims.

Nazrul also accused the regional EC of not paying heed to their three previous demands.

Returning Officer Mostofa Faruque said they were going through the demands.

BARISAL Training on EVM ends, mock voting today, tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A two-day training on the use of electronic voting machines (EVM) and on electoral rules ended yesterday in Barisal city's Barisal Zila School Center, attended by 1,942 election officials including the presiding, assistant presiding and polling officers.

Mock voting in ward 16, one of Barisal City Corporation's (BCC) 30 wards, will be held today and tomorrow to get voters acquainted with EVM, which will be used only in this ward during the June 15 BCC polls.

The officials hoped that the use of EVM would ensure free and fair polls.

Ward 16 has two polling centres and 4,181 voters. Of the voters, 2,447 males will vote in six polling booths in the Zila School center and 1,734 female will vote in five polling booths in the Commercial College center.

The centers were chosen based on their accessibility and the number of voters and their educational qualification and professional status.

RCC MAYORAL POLLS All runners vow to tackle drug abuse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Rajshahi city voters on Friday night reviewed the three mayoral candidates' proposed strategies on resolving the key problems, including unemployment and drug abuse.

Around 200 voters made their queries at BBC Bangla's electoral dialogue in Rajshahi city where the three also presented their thoughts on the drainage system, land grabbing, traffic congestion, and city bus service.

The BBC Bangla and the Election Commission organised the dialogue, which was aired live on BTV, Bangladesh Betar and the BBC Bangla website. BBC's Akbar Hossain moderated the programme, produced by Waliur Rahman Miraz.

Awami League-backed contender AHM Khairuzzaman Liton said he would establish a commercial zone, garment factories, and agro-based industries to create 50,000 jobs, as gas and 100MW of electricity had been added to Rajshahi city.

His rival Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul, backed by the BNP, proposed to set up an EPZ (export processing zone) and re-open the closed government factories. About drug abuse, all the three, including independent candidate Habibur Rahman, said they would arrange sporting events, aware parents, and try to ensure strict enforcement of law.

Both Liton and Bulbul opined for introducing city bus service, but the former said he would train auto-rickshaw drivers at first to reduce traffic jam.

SCC MAYORAL POLLS

Kamran, Arif sign charter of promises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The two key mayoral candidates signed a 13-point charter of promises placed on behalf of the Sylhet city people at an electoral dialogue yesterday.

In the statement, Awami League-backed contestant Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran and BNP-backed Arifur Haque Chowdhury committed themselves to transparency and accountability and pledged to accept the June 15 election results and not to buy votes.

The list of the pledges was prepared by Transparency International Bangladesh and Sushashoner Janney Nagorik (SHUJAN), which organised the dialogue in Sylhet Auditorium.

Independent candidate Salah Uddin Ahmed did not attend the programme.

Kamran and Arif also promised to keep the city corporation free from corruption and terror, disclose their statements of wealth every year, cooperate with the elected mayor, and meet the people at least once a year.

Apart from making promises, the two answered queries of some 300 students, educationists, professionals and cultural activists, including women, who attended

the dialogue moderated by SHUJAN Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumder.

Outgoing mayor Kamran said he would continue the development processes he initiated and build Sylhet as a tourism-friendly city.

"In consultation with city planners, I will design short-, mid-, and long-term programmes for development under the city master plan," said Arif.

CAMPAIGN

With less than a week to go before the election, central AL and BNP leaders have been stumping for the two candidates in the city areas.

Addressing rallies yesterday, BNP chairperson's adviser Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury called on the people to give a just reply to the government's misrule.

At another gathering, BNP Vice-chairman Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury urged the city dwellers to vote for a change, accusing the outgoing mayor of failure.

AL adviser Amir Hossain Amu electioneered in Kazitola, saying Kamran had served three terms, and he should be elected again for having his unfinished jobs done.

Kamran is committed to the people, said Tofail Ahmed, another AL adviser.