

Experts at Kyoto forum suggest Better irrigation and rainwater harvesting

AFP, Kyoto

Better irrigation and more efficient rainwater harvesting could double crop yields while also reducing the amount of fresh water used in agriculture, experts at the Third World Water Forum said.

As global farming uses some 70 per cent of the world's developed fresh water supplies, improved productivity could reduce the amount of supplementary water required to serve an ever-expanding population.

The need for efficiency is becoming more pressing as expanding urbanisation and industrialisation mean the amount of land under cultivation is expected to shrink, reducing the size of annual global harvests after 2025 by about 350 million metric tonnes.

"A farmer drinks five liters of water a day but he needs 5,000 liters a day to produce crops," said Olivier George Covers, a program manager of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

"The idea is to try to stabilise our use of water and use it in a more efficient way in order to produce more food, not to use less water."

Topping the list of agricultural techniques promoted at the forum, which has gathered some 10,000 participants from 165 countries to address the needs of 1.4 billion people without access to fresh water and 2.4 billion without access to sanitation, was drip irrigation.

Some 60 per cent of water used in irrigation is wasted, due to runoff or overwatering of crops.

Using drip irrigation to water staples such as root vegetables can

reduce the amount of water used by more than one half and still yield highly productive crops, said David Molden of the International Water Management Institute.

Mediterranean agriculture has seen the greatest benefits of drip irrigation as the low-cost localised plastic tubing system that provides water, drop by drop, to the base of the plant is particularly suited to arid regions.

Drip irrigation has also taken root in Africa, where an Israeli-exported, low-cost and small-scale program has helped to create African Market Gardens in Niger, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, said Suhas Wani of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid tropics.

Barisal, Sylhet polls Movement of vehicles to be banned from tonight

BSS, Dhaka

Movement of motor cycle, microbus, pick-up and baby taxi will be banned for 30 hours from midnight tonight for smooth holding of Barisal and Sylhet city corporation polls on Thursday.

The deputy commissioners of Barisal and Sylhet have been empowered to impose the ban, a press release of the Election Commission Secretariat here said yesterday.

However, vehicles of election observers from home and abroad (identity card holders), journalists, officials and employees engaged in elections duty, members of law enforcement agencies, observers of Election Commission and those engaged in emergency work (ambulance, fire service, electricity, gas and post and telecommunications) will be out of the purview of the ban.

UCBL

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cheque encashed with the help of the three officials.

The Anti-corruption Bureau filed a case against Joyal Hazari and the three bank officials in the first week of this month.

Hazari had left the country on August 14, 2001 following expiry of the AL government's tenure.

Blair

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prime minister said that regime change had never been his goal, but that the need to remove Saddam was a reason why Britain could go to war with "a clear conscience and a good heart."

Despite the failure to gain international support and UN backing for action, Blair said that the UN should pass a resolution, after the conflict was over, to provide for Iraq's proper governance.

He added that money from Iraqi oil should be put in a "trust fund for the Iraqi people, administered by the UN".

Critics of the decision to back the US in taking military action against President Saddam unless he leaves Iraq are hoping to muster an even bigger rebellion than last month, when 122 Labour MPs defied the whips.

Blair's plea for support came after the resignations of Home Office minister John Denham and junior health minister Lord Hunt of Kings Heath over the government's hard-line stance on Iraq.

The Leader of the Commons, Robin Cook, quit the cabinet on Monday, insisting that he would join the rebels in voting against military action in last night's vote.

However, Blair was offered some comfort by the decision of the international development secretary, Clare Short, not to join the list of ministerial resignations.

Basra first

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American officials say they are not certain whether Hussein appointed Majid, a close relative, to ensure that the restive Shiites of southern Iraq remained loyal to Baghdad, or whether Majid has been entrusted with executing a military strategy devised to blunt or undermine the American-British invasion.

"We fully recognise his image and his track record," a military official was quoted as saying.

One fear is that Hussein, by appearing to expose Basra to easy occupation, is preparing to surprise American and British forces by attacking them with chemical or biological weapons, American officials said.

The fate of Basra is viewed as critical. "The first image of this war will define the conflict," said Maj. Chris Hughes, a Marine Corps spokesman.

Young man shot dead in Fatikchhari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A young man was gunned down near his home at Uttar Pinegod under Fatikchhari upazila yesterday afternoon.

The victim was identified as Ismail, 27, son of late Ehsanul Haque Haroon.

Fatikchhari police quoting local people said Ismail was a supporter of Jamaat-e-Islami. He was a garment factory worker.

Police said a gang of armed miscreants intercepted the auto-rickshaw by which Ismail was returning to the city at about 12.30 pm and pulled him down at gun-point.

Ismail died instantly as the gunmen shot him at point blank.

Police said members of a notorious gang known as 'Shamim Bahini' killed him.

The reason for the killing could not be known immediately, police said.

The body was sent to CMCH for autopsy.

Guard dies

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the ground floor of the five-story garments factory. The fire engulfed the first floor and gutted everything.

Local people informed the Gulshan police. Four units of fire brigade rushed to the spot eventually extinguishing the fire.

Later Noor Amin's body was recovered from the gutted clothes. The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Mizanur Rahman, manager of the garments factory, filed a case with the Gulshan Police Station. He said fire could have originated from a burning cigarette.

The fire brigade, however, could neither confirm the cause of the fire nor figure out exact amount of loss due to it.

Police picked up four persons from the factory area in the morning.

BNP to revamp

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a dampening effect on organisational matters as most of the party leaders and activists went on hiding fearing arrest.

Highly placed sources said most ministers visit their respective parliamentary constituencies only, while the ministers in-charge of different districts rarely go there (districts).

"It seems the majority of ministers represent their own constituencies only, not the country," said a BNP policymaker.

Sources said the BNP secretary general in his circular instructed all cabinet ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers, chief whip and whips of Jatiya Sangsad to attend the party office regularly.

A six-day week roster for this purpose will be prepared in a day or two and it will be sent to all concerned.

The ministers have been asked to be in touch with the party secretary general to resolve problems of the party and of the leaders and activists. They have also been instructed to attend at least one party programme when they go outside the capital.

Ministers have been further advised to visit party offices, hold party and public meetings and exchange views with party's grass-roots level leaders during their tours outside Dhaka.

Sources said the ministers have also been asked to inform the party secretary general in writing if they fail to attend the party office for some reason or the other. The programme is expected to start next week.

Tight security at Hollywood

AFP, Hollywood

Hollywood on Monday launched an unprecedented security clamp-down ahead of next week's Oscars ceremony as the United States appeared poised for war with Iraq.

A battery of streets around the venue of the 75th annual Academy Awards was to be shut down for six days starting Monday, as Oscar officials vowed that Sunday's show would go on even if conflict erupted this week.

"The Academy Awards are scheduled to proceed Sunday the 23rd at 5:30 pm (0130 GMT)," said Gil Cates, the producer of the show, dismissing reports that the show would be delayed in the event of war.

Tremor shakes Ctg city

BSS, Chittagong

A mild earthquake shook Chittagong city and its adjoining areas yesterday afternoon, sources in the Geophysical Observatory Centre here said yesterday.

The intensity of the tremor measuring 3.45 on the Richter scale lasted 14 seconds.

The epicentre of the tremor was some 124 kilometres off the port city.

There was no report of casualty or damage.

Troops

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dates -- Ebaidul Haq Chand and Ahsan Habib Kamal -- face expulsion from the party.

Ministers, state ministers, MPs and senior ruling party leaders have been campaigning in favour of Sarwar.

The main opposition Awami League (AL), which threw its weight behind the Citizens' Committee candidate Enayet Pir, has warned that any attempt to create irregularities would result in downfall of the government.

Pir also obtained support from the other opposition parties and members of civil society.

Nine candidates are running the mayoral race in Barisal while 260 are vying for 60 posts of ward commissioner. Fifty candidates of the 260 are vying for reserved seats for women.

The Sylhet City Corporation witnessed almost similar electioneering over the last couple of weeks. The ruling alliance nominated BNP leader MA Haq for the post of mayor. Fourteen candidates are fighting for the mayor's office.

The AL has supported incumbent Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran. Senior AL leaders took part election campaign in favour of him. Prof. Kamal Ahmed of Jatiya Party, AFM Kamal of Sammilito Nagorik Parisad and Independent candidate Shamsuzzaman Zaman are the notable candidates.

Over 3.49 lakh voters, 1.64 lakh in Barisal and 1.85 lakh, are to vote at 169 polling centres -- 90 in Barisal and 79 in Sylhet.

The authorities will also deploy police, BDR, Ansar along with magistrates at the polling centres.

Home minister

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have expressed their fear that the presence of the ministers will hamper smooth holding of elections.

Meanwhile, a 150-strong army contingent has arrived from Jessore to strengthen the team of 150 army personnel already stationed in Barisal.

According to the letter of the home ministry, which was sent to the DC and SP of Barisal, BDR men will be placed under the command of the SP. But this might complicate matters as the SP will be working under the returning officer. The SP said that he would sit in a meeting with the BDR and army personnel to chalk out the plan for maintaining law and order on the election day.

Iraq crisis Dhaka for peaceful solution, says FM

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday reiterated its stand for a peaceful resolution to the Iraq issue.

"We have always been promoting the cause of peace anywhere in the world and would continue to pursue it," Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told a group of newsmen at his office.

Asked how Bangladesh see the 48-hour ultimatum given by US President George W Bush to Iraqi President Saddam Hossain and their sons to quit Iraq to avoid military action, Morshed evaded a direct reply saying, "Everybody should play his role for a peaceful solution of the situation."

Responding to a question on the contents of his discussion with US ambassador Mary Ann Peters at a meeting earlier on the day, the minister said the meeting was to keep each others informed of the situation.

"We have expressed our sentiment to the ambassador," he added.

Shazneen case Ready to cross

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place at the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka. Judge Kazi Rahamal Ullah then adjourned the hearing till March 24.

During the cross-examination, Masum told the court that Hasan used to come to Latifur Rahman's (Shazneen's father) Gulshan residence everyday as he was doing renovation work at the house. But he stopped coming to that house after the tragic incident involving shazneen on April 23, 1998. So, he was called to that house on April 30.

The witness further said he had told the investigation officer (IO) that three guests -- Ahmad Shafi Chowdhury, Enam Ahmed Chowdhury and Anisuzzaman Khan -- were interrogating the house maids -- Minu and Parvin shortly after the incident.

Parvin first said she saw Shahid fleeing Shazneen's room with a knife in his hand. Then she said she saw a man sitting on Shazneen's body and again said she did not see anything. Masum told the court.

About 2:30 am on April 24, a police team including some women police came to the house and made an inquest report.

Masum further said that on September 27, police took Shahid (now principal accused) to

Latifur Rahman's residence. Shahid narrated how Hasan and his employee Badal hired Humayun, Parvin, Minu, Shaniram and him to rape and kill Shazneen.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

All the six accused now in Jail custody Hasan, Shahid, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- were present in the court during the hearing.

Special public prosecutors (PPs) Arfan Uddin Khan, Saima Khanam and Assistant PP Anisur Rahman appeared for the state. Advocates Mosharrar Hossain Kazal and Mizanur Rahman represented the accused.

A different war

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special significance as remittance supports about 30 per cent of imports. And if petroleum price shoots, this will have a bearing on product costs.

Many may still see a silver lining, though elusive may be. Once the war is over, peacekeeping will be a major concern and there Bangladesh will matter. It has already earned a good name for peacekeeping and fresh demand will only make it happier.

Ruthless Australia

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Lee mopped up Hashan Tillekeratne (three) and Avishka Gunawardene (one) to have them reeling at 43-4.

When Aravinda de Silva was run-out by a direct hit from Andy Bichel for just 11, it was all over even though Kumar Sangakkara, 39, and Chaminda Vaas, 21, tried to mount a rearguard action and were unbeaten when the rains came.

Earlier, Andrew Symonds hit an unbeaten 91 after his team won the toss and elected to bat on another slow pitch.

Sri Lankan left-arm swing bowler Chaminda Vaas took three for 34 to set a new World Cup tournament record of 23 wickets.

"I bowled very well in my first spell," said Vaas, who gave his team a flying start by dismissing Matthew Hayden and Australian skipper Ricky Ponting.

"I managed to find the right spot and then the spinners took over. Between us, we kept it very tight in the first fifteen overs."

Australia's problems began when Adam Gilchrist 'walked' in the sixth over when Jayasuriya turned to the off-spin of Aravinda de Silva after the Australians made a fast start.

Gilchrist hit 22 as Australia raced to 34 for no wicket before the Australian wicketkeeper tried to sweep de Silva's second ball.

The ball looped off his pad and glove and was caught by wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara. The Sri Lankans appealed but umpire Rudi Koertzen appeared to

turn them down, only for Gilchrist to head back to the dressing room.

Ponting and opener Hayden soon followed before Symonds and Darren Lehmann (36) put on 93 for the fourth wicket before Lehmann was bowled when he shaped to cut Jayasuriya.

De Silva finished with two for 36, Jayasuriya claimed two for 42 and Muttiah Muralitharan conceded only 29 runs in his 10-over spell.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first semifinal of the World Cup between Australia and Sri Lanka at St George's Park in Port Elizabeth on Tuesday:

AUSTRALIA

Gilchrist c Sangakkara b de Silva	22
Hayden c Tillakaratne b Vaas	20
Ponting c Jayasuriya b Vaas	2
Lehmann b Jayasuriya	36
Symonds not out	91
Bevan c Sangakkara b Jayasuriya	0
Hoggst Sangakkara b de Silva	8
Harvey c Sangakkara b Vaas	7
Bichel not out	19
Extras: (lb-3, w-3, nb-1)	7
Total: (For 7 wickets in 50 overs)	212

Full of wickets: 1-34, 2-37, 3-51, 4-144, 5-144, 6-158, 7-175

Did not bat: B Lee, G McGrath				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Vaas	10	1	34	3
Gunaratne	8	0	60	0
De Silva	10	0	36	2
Muralitharan	10	0	29	0

Target locked on Baghdad

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failed diplomacy. French and Greek envoys also pulled out leaving few diplomats in Baghdad.

Bush defies UN critics

Defying many UN allies and dividing public opinion, Bush defended his right to wage what he portrayed as a pre-emptive war against September 11-style terrorism. He promised to bring prosperity and democracy to the Iraqi people.

"We're sad that we're leaving. We know that we could have stayed longer to finish our job," one of them said.

In Baghdad, Iraqis were fearful but resigned to their third war in just over two decades. Impoverished by UN sanctions since 1990, people stocked up on food and other essentials.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said war meant "certain trade to thousands of innocent men, women and children."

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao called for peace and in Moscow parliament delayed a vote on a US-Russian arms control treaty in irritation at Washington ignoring Russia's views on Iraq.

Bush supporters like Britain, Spain, Italy accuse doubters like France, Germany and Canada of repeating the mistakes of those who appeased Adolf Hitler in the 1930s.

Some Muslim states said war would inflame just the sort of violence that Bush said he was seeking to prevent.

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, a moderate Islamic leader called Bush and Blair "war criminals."

Japan expressed support. Australia offered troops, in spite of popular opposition that saw "No War" daubed in blood red letters on the landmark roof of the Sydney Opera House.

Turkey, a NATO ally, appeared to be softening its resistance to helping US forces, though possibly only by offering airspace to planes and missiles rather than grant requests for US troops to invade northern Iraq from Turkish bases.

Five soldiers expect the Iraqis to put up much of a fight. But they are ready for bitter guerrilla warfare from Saddam loyalists with little to lose -- and for chemical attacks.

Israelis, targeted by Iraqi Scud missiles in the 1991 Gulf War, began sealing rooms against chemical or biological warfare.

Terrified of reprisals, thousands of Iraqi Kurds fled the city of Arbil in their northern region beyond Saddam's control.

World opinion divided

Many Western leaders share

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region, ready to inflict a massive, high-tech bombardment on Iraq's largely ill-equipped forces and to drive deep into the country in a rapid helicopter and tank assault.

The desert camps buzzed with an air of anticipation as news spread of Bush's announcement that he was giving Saddam 48 hours to leave Iraq or face war.

The mood among the troops was confident and eager after weeks of uncomfortable waiting under canvas amid the rising temperatures and sandstorms of the inhospitable Kuwaiti desert.

"As a marine, this is what we train for. This is what we look forward to," 19-year-old Joseph McCarthy from St. Johns, Arizona, said at Camp Viking in northern Kuwait.

"I myself -- and I'm pretty sure all the other marines around me -- are ready to go, ready to get this thing kicked off and taken care of and finally get Saddam out of where he's at."

Many soldiers said they were worried they may be attacked with chemical or biological weapons.

"Anything could happen -- suicide attacks, them setting up bombs within housing for when you clear it," said Sergeant Anthony Boswell, 24, a marine from Salem, Oregon.

Following is a rough breakdown of the forces in the region, based on US defence sources:

KUWAIT

About 149,000 troops, mostly US army and marines, many of whom have been training in the desert near the Iraqi border. About 25,000 British troops are also based in Kuwait.

The army's 3rd Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force is the anchor for the US ground forces massing for a possible southern invasion of Iraq. The Army's 82nd Airborne Division also has a brigade combat team here.

Two air bases are used by US and British forces in the region, Al-Jaber and Ali Salem.

SAUDI ARABIA

More than 100,000 US troops, mostly air force are based at Prince Sultan Air Base in the desert south of Riyadh. Small numbers of US forces are at a Saudi airfield at Arar near the border with Iraq, evidence of growing US-Saudi cooperation.

The Afghan air campaign was directed from a combined air operations centre that opened at Prince Sultan Air Base in 2001. The base is also a hub for US fighter aircraft, F-3 AWACS radar planes, other surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, and air refuelling planes.

NAVY
Some 48,000 sailors and marines are aboard a growing armada of US warships in the Gulf region, including the aircraft carriers USS Kitty Hawk, USS Abraham Lincoln and USS Constellation. The USS Nimitz is on the way from the US west coast.

There are 26 surface combatant ships, 20 amphibious assault ships, and 12 support ships in the Gulf. A three ship amphibious assault group led by the USS Toi Jima is on the way from the US east coast.

The carriers USS Harry S Truman and the USS Theodore Roosevelt are in the eastern Mediterranean with their battle groups. The sailors and marines aboard those ships account for most of the 20,000 US forces deployed in the European Command's area of operations for possible action against Iraq.

Eight warships that shoot Tomahawk cruise missiles are in the Red Sea and as many as seven others were due to follow from the Mediterranean.

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said he had told the diplomats to depart no later than midnight on Sunday, adding that the expulsion would contribute to the security of Australia and its forces fighting in Iraq.

"This course of action is clearly a logical and prudent step in a situation where Australia is engaged in military action against Iraq," Downer said.

PM: Myanmar

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Council of Myanmar Senior General Than Shwe.

Apart from strengthening economic cooperation, repatriation of Rohingya refugees will also come up during the talks.

"We expect Myanmar to take its nationals (Rohingyas) as soon as possible and this is also necessary to keep peace on the border," Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said yesterday.

He is hopeful that the issue would be resolved as the two nations vowed to strengthen bilateral relations. Earlier, Myanmar said the