

Landless line gets longer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of landless households rose to 32 per cent from 29 per cent and farm households dropped to 58 per cent from 66 per cent over the last 12 to 13 years, researchers said.

Presenting findings of a repeat survey at a city workshop yesterday, lead researcher and noted economist Dr Mahabub Hossain said the poorer 40 per cent of rural people had stake on 17.1 per cent of rural income in 1987,

but it slipped to 14.2 per cent in 2000.

At the same time, the income share of the top 10 per cent rural richer segment rose to 35.1 per cent in 2001, up from 31.8 per cent in 1987.

Attributing the worsening income distribution scenario to the growth of non-farm sector,

Dr Hossain, head of the Social Science Division of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), said non-farm income was more unequally distributed than rice income.

Those who could diversify their income sources from farm sector to non-farm sector became economically better off, he noted.

Dr Hossain, a former director general of leading economic and policy think tank BIDS,

said the farm sector was being taken over by non-farm sector in terms of rural income generation while farming still remained to be the mainstay of livelihood.

The non-farm sector is emerging as

a major income earner for the rural population in Bangladesh where increasingly fragmented land is failing to provide subsistence living for average rural households, the research findings suggested.

In 1990s, the farm sector registered an annual growth of 2.1 per cent whereas the non-farm sector marked a much higher growth rate of 5.4 per cent.

The surveys, however, noticed that the non-farm sector (trades, services, non-farm labour) grew with farm

sector acting as its springboard.

The surveys were carried out in 62 selected villages, firstly in 1987-88 and again in 2000-01.

Dr Hossain along with co-authors Dr Abdul Bayes, Dr Manik Lal Bose and Alamgir Chowdhury presented two separate papers at the workshop, "Rural Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction in the 1990s: Insights from Household Surveys."

Agriculture Minister Motiur
SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

What's the tiger truth?

PINAKI ROY, back from Sundarbans

Royal Bengal Tigers are on course for extinction but their numbers have remained the same on paper for the last ten years.

The government record states 350-400 tigers are roaming around Sundarbans quite peacefully. If that is the case, then not a single tiger was born or had died at the world's largest mangrove forest in the last one decade!

But villagers, rangers and other officials say the number had dipped to 200-250 since the last official survey took place.

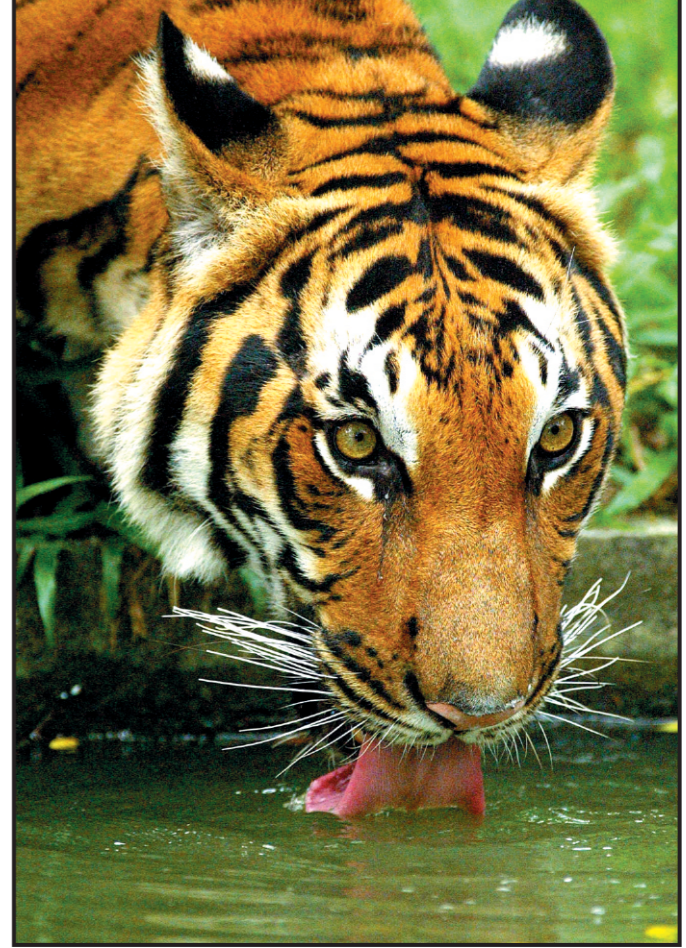
"Last scientific survey was conducted in 1993. Now the number of tigers would not exceed 250. We however can not say that officially without conducting any proper survey," said a forest ranger of Chandpai, preferring anonymity.

Villagers and forest traders also think that tigers are not being seen that much these days, but the forest department would not admit officially that the beautiful species are gradually decreasing.

Poaching, killing and the rise of salinity in the river water around Sundarbans have contributed to the gradual extinction of tigers.

Tigers are being frequently killed these days as they raid villages for cows or other domestic

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



BUET student's tendons severed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified miscreants cut the tendons of a student of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) at his room in Sher-e-Bangla Hall yesterday.

The victim, Ziaul Haque Masud, 20, is a student of Level-1, Term-2 of the Department of Industrial and Production Engineering. Ziaul is from Bogra and resides in room no-312 of the hall.

He was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later shifted to the Orthopedic Hospital when his condition deteriorated.

Tendons of both his legs and a hand were severed.

Farhad, the victim's roommate said he found Masud's hands and legs tied

behind and his mouth gagged, at around 4:45pm in the room.

There were signs that the attackers used pillows to suffocate Masud, he said.

Hall Provost Prof. Siddiqur Rahman and students took Masud to the hospital.

Reasons behind the attack could not be known immediately but police said it might be because of personal enmity.

Classmates of Masud said he took part in the last 'fast unto death' programme, sponsored by the left leaning student wings of BUET demanding the punishment of the killers of Sabequn Nahar Sony.

The vice-chancellor of BUET could not be reached. Additional police were deployed on the campus after the incident.

Prime accused in Rumi suicide case remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Rony, prime accused in the Rumi suicide case, was remanded in police custody for three days after he surrendered to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Khulna yesterday.

Rony's mother Jotsna Begum, 49, was taken into custody on Saturday night from Digholia upazila.

Earlier, Hasan, another accused in the case, surrendered to the court on Saturday and he was also remanded in police custody for three days. His mother was taken into custody on Tuesday for questioning.

Meanwhile, police said Rony's arrest was a breakthrough for the investigation of the case.

According to the case, tormented by the accused, Rumi committed suicide by hanging herself from a ceiling fan in her bedroom last week.

Computer engineer murdered after abduction in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A young computer engineer was killed after abduction in the city Saturday night.

Police recovered the beheaded body of Srikanta Rakshit, 27, from Tandrabil area of Shikarpur union under Hathazari Police Station yesterday morning.

Srikanta Rakshit, son of lawyer Mridul Rakshit, was kidnapped from his Hazarigoli residence as he was going to Agrabad commercial area with a friend on Saturday evening to buy computer accessories.

As Srikanta did not come home by 9:00pm, which he was supposed to, his family began looking for him. They also

informed police.

According to a family source, a man introducing himself as Bhola phoned Srikanta's residence early yesterday morning, and asked the family to recover Srikanta's body from the spot.

The family members immediately went to the Hathazari Police Station and from there they went to the spot at around 10:00am yesterday. They found a beheaded body lying in a pool of blood.

Srikanta's maternal uncle Shovon Sen identified the body of his nephew there by seeing the garment in presence of police. Later, victim's elder brother

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Kumaratunga, Hasina talk bilateral issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina met President of Sri Lanka Chandrika Kumaratunga yesterday at the latter's hotel suit in the city.

They hoped the bond of friendship and co-operation that exists between the two countries would strengthen in the coming days.

They discussed scope for further expansion of bilateral trade between the two nations, Awami League (AL) leaders told reporters.

"Sri Lanka invested around

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Revive business deals under SAARC

Kumaratunga tells trade bodies

BSS, Dhaka

Visiting Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga yesterday urged Bangladeshi business community to launch initiatives to reactivate business endeavours under the SAARC.

"Sri Lanka strongly believes in the SAARC process. The SAARC has a good future," she said exchanging views at an interactive session with leaders of business forums and leading Bangladeshi entrepreneurs at the Sonargaon Hotel.

Sri Lanka is 'seriously concerned' about the sad developments in Iraq, which is beyond the control of the United Nations (UN) system, said Kumaratunga. She aired concern that such developments may add to 'global recession.'

"We are passing days amid a phase of global recession which should be branded as a very crucial time for developing countries like Sri Lanka," she said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

While queues for CNG stretch at the few operational stations, left, the gas pump near Begun Bury, right, has been closed down reportedly because of long lines that create "problems" for the Prime Minister's Office.

SARS blows hot on exports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The economy may suffer yet another blow because of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that has caused a global alarm.

Buyers are staying away from the Southeast Asian countries, the hub for buyers, because of SARS. According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

"American and European buyers or their representatives usually come to Hong Kong, Singapore and some other Southeast Asian countries to settle new orders. But they are not coming because of the flu," BGMEA President Qazi Moniruzzaman told The Daily Star

yesterday.

Besides, buyers or their representatives also source raw materials from China, another SARS-hit country, he added.

And if buyers don't come to settle orders, Bangladesh would be hit.

Local manufacturers have so far not faced any major problem as they are still working on previous orders. But after a few weeks, the orders will run dry and many factories may have to shut down.

Exporters who have to travel to the EU and the US for contact with buyers are also facing hassles over visa.

"Buyers are unwilling to meet exporters right now. Most buyers from the US, Canada and the EU have cancelled their scheduled meetings in Hong Kong, Singapore and other regional countries and are maintaining correspondents over e-mail," said a leading exporter.

Excepting some big houses, majority of the local exporters does not have direct contacts with the main buyers in major markets. Local exporters and representatives of buying houses go to Hong Kong and Singapore to make business deals.

Bangladesh critically depends on readymade garments as 75 per cent of its export earnings in the first half of the current financial year came

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
April 21		6-22 pm
April 22	5-32 am	

Prayer Timings		
April 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-28	6-35
Esha	7-35	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation