METROPOLITAN/NEWS

Cultivation of dry season rice gets less economic

International agri meet told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultivation of dry season rice is getting less economic for farmers in the country given the reality of fast rising cost of irrigation and fertiliser.

Dr Mahabub Hossain, head of the Social Science Division of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), came up with the observation at an international agricultural meeting that began in the city yesterday.

"Investment in boro is very high. Cultivating boro now is becoming less economic if one compares the current investment with that of 2004 due to rising prices of fertiliser and diesel," said Dr Mahabub, also the coordinator for an IRRI flagship project Consortium for Unfavourable Rice Environment (Cure).

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar. IRRI Director General Dr Robert S and industrialisation

Zeigler and Cure Steering Committee Chairman Dr Suyamto also spoke at the inaugural session of the two-day 5th annual meeting of Cure at the Brac Centre. IRRI Liaison Scientist in

Bangladesh Dr MA Hamid Miah conducted the programme chaired by Director General of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) Dr M Mahiul Haque.

Giving an overview of Cure initiatives, Dr Mahabub noted that while farmers in Bangladesh get only 3.5 tonnes of rice per acre in rain-fed aman season, they get 5.1 tonnes in irrigated boro. "But for this, farmers have to

make a heavy investment," he added Both Mahabub and Anwar spoke dwindling arable land in the of country because of high demands for land for urbanisation, habitation

The agriculture minister mentioned four unfavourable ecoagricultural conditions submergence, drought, salinity and arsenic to say, "We can ill-afford to neglect theses factors" and called for developing verities suitable for unfavour-

> able conditions. Anwar laid emphasis on agricultural research, as he saw no possibilities of increasing croplands which are fast depleting for other purposes.

Theoretically speaking there would be no tillable land left in Bangladesh in 50 years if the arable lands are taken away for non-farm purposes at current annual rate," he added

Later BRRI Director Dr B A A Mustafi gave a special presentation on rice economy of Bangladesh at a session presided over by IRRI Deputy Director General Dr Ren Wang.

BUILDING COLLAPSE Probe body finds structural flaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Phoenix building, which collapsed on February 25 killing 21 and injuring over 50 people, had serious structural flaws, said an inquiry report compiled by the joint inquiry team comprising officials of Rajuk and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

The building at Tejgaon in the capital was constructed after filling up a pond and the owners did not follow proper technical measures while taking up the construction on a wetland. Moreover, the owners recently took up extensive modification works in the building to convert it from a garment factory into a hospital without proper planning. In the process of the modification works, several columns were either knocked down or tampered with officials of the inquiry committee said.

The members of the inquiry team have blamed the owners and technical partners of the construction site for the collapse. Sources in the inquiry team said they could not trace any plan of the building and therefore it was not possible to ascertain whether the building plan was faulty or not. They said only after interrogating the owners and the professionals involved, more information on the cause of the collapse will emerge

The report has been submitted to the housing and public works minis-

Condition of Mir Nasir improves, daughter still in critical state

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Condition of the injured ex-state minister, Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin, slightly improved yesterday but his daughter Nusrat Nazneen is still in critical state a day after the fatal accident in Saudi Arabia.

Family sources said Nasir's youngest daughter's, Israt Nazneen, 14, condition has slightly improved at the King Fahd Hospital in Saudi Arabia.

Nasir's son, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law and a nephew left for Saudi Arabia yesterday to attend to the injured.

Nasir went to Saudi Arabia on a Umrah trip on February 26 and was supposed to return on March 9. His wife, eldest sister and two daughters were accompanying him on the trip. Nasir's wife Dalia, 45, and sister

Shasunnahar, 50, were killed in the accident as they were going to

CHITTAGONG FIRE



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses a huge public meeting at the General Osmani Cricket Outer Stadium in Narayanganj yesterday.

Victims find some solace, at last

Hearing the news, hundreds of

people at Bagmara yesterday took

Fazlur Rahman of Hasanpur

"Bangla Bhai himself beat up me

with an iron rod at my school gate

after JMJB cadres dragged me out

of the classroom. I could count 30

hits before I got fainted. My father

sold land to bear the cost of my

treatment," said Abdul Malek, a

class nine student at Hamirkutsa

Mahabur Rahman, a former

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal general

secretary, was offering sweetmeats

to reporters. He said he demands

death sentence of Rahman and

Bangla Bhai and its execution in a

"I am yet to know what my faults

were. They pierced my hands and

legs with nails for nothing," he said.

The so-called operations against outlaws by JMJB started with the

FROM PAGE 1

Jugipara. "The yells of my son still haunt to the streets and marched in a me. I want a similar death to Bangla Bhai. He is a devil," said 65-year-old Khodeza Begum, mother of Golam Rabbani Mukul. Mukul was tortured at an open

of his injuries on April 16, Jagrata him in public." Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) men even amplified Mukul's cries village termed Bangla Bhai a devil, using a loudhailer. saying he should be tried in such a want Bangla Bhai to be tried way that tortured people feel vindi-

before us like they killed and tortured people in open torture cells, said Ismail Hossain. father of Yasin Ali of Kunapara Maria in Bagmara. Yasin was kidnapped, hung

upside down in a tree in front of Kodapara Madrasa and was beaten to death on June 29, 2004. "How they dare kill people openly? Who helped them? We

want the state to award them under punishment," his father said in tears. Rabeya Khatun, mother of Abu

Taleb Bhutto, said, "I always prayed to Allah for justice as the government was reluctant to capture him. He has been arrested now and I want a speedy trial and death sentence for him.

Bhutto was abducted on April 7, 2004 by Bangla Bhai's men and went missing since then.

upazila in Rajshahi on April 13 the

same year, he claimed, "My organi-

sation has started working to

cleanse the area of outlaws in

association with some ruling party

said the JMJB would work in public

in the southern region besides

On May 17, the JMJB activists

Sitting next to Abdur Rahman, he

leaders and police officers."

working in the north.

FROM PAGE 1

Rise and fall of a dreaded militant leader

"I don't know what was dis-(JMJB) started killing people in the cussed at that meeting, but many in northern region in the name of antithe organisation openly started antioutlaw operation from April 1, 2004. outlaw activities after the meeting, While talking to journalists at a he added. government office in Bagmara

The JMJB men received a vehicle from a directorate under the agriculture ministry for outlaw cleansing. Bangla Bhai used the vehicle for two months.

Sources said the then superinendents of police of Rajshahi and Naogaon used to give advice to him over mobile phone.

A day after the August 17 countrywide bomb blasts, Bangla Bhai's father Nazir Hossain severed rela-

Bhai spread militant network in the entire greater Chittagong region, especially in the three hill districts

in Khulna

For his contribution to expanding Ahle Hadith as well as the militant network in this region, the JMB chief took Bangla Bhai back to Bagmara in 2004 and promoted him as operations commander of his organisation to root out leftist extremists in Rajshahi region, the sources men-

Brig. Gen. SM Golam Rabbani.

chairman valid UNB. Dhaka The High Court (HC) yesterday declared valid the appointment of Justice Sultan Hossain Khan as chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). Justice MA Matin and Justice ATM Fazle Kabir passed the order discharging the rule issued earlier

upon a writ filed by a lawyer of the Supreme Court challenging the egality of the appointment. On November 21, 2004, The government appointed the retired udge of the High Court, also former

The Daily Star

Justice Sultan's

appointment

as ACC

chief election commissioner, as chairman of the newly constituted

broad daylight murder of Wasim

According to a list prepared by

beaten to death with bamboo poles

and hockey sticks. JMJB men

hanged him in a roadside tree in

Nandigram in Bogra. Khejur Ali's

Badsha and Khejur were mur-

dered after daylong announcement

in loudspeakers and people were

asked to witness the killings.

Other victims include Afzal Hossain.

Mosharraf Hossain, Ziaul Haque Zia

Sources said two police officers on

May 23, 2004 went to a Raninagar

house where Bangla Bhai was

staying. Shortly afterwards, a

microbus without a registration

number took him away, they added.

Natore

body was found cut into pieces.

Osman Babu on April 1, 2004.

ACC. Validating the appointment of Justice Sultan as ACC chairman, the court held that although the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is a public office, but the post of the ACC chairman is 'not a post of service of the Republic'.

Besides, the ACC is a statutory public authority that exercises its power and function independently. As such, the constitutional restrictions imposed by Articles 99 and 118 on a retired High Court judge and former chief election commissioner to be appointed chairman of the ACC is 'not tenable'

Emerging from the court, the writ petitioner. Advocate Aminul Haque Helal, told the news agency that he would move the Supreme Court against the HC verdict.

Dr Kamal Hossain. Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud and M Asadullah appeared for the writ petitioner, while two former attorneys general--Mahmudul Islam and AF Hassan Ariff--and Barrister Ajmalul Hossain stood for the ACC chairman.

of Raninagar upazila and Sheikh Additional Attorney-General Farid, Diponkor Roy of Atrai in Barrister Fida M Kamal represented Naogaon, Ali Akbar of Taherpur in the aovernment. Bagmara and Saifur of Peergachha

The government was compelled to enact a law constituting the independent watchdog body to combat pervasive corruption under pressure from foreign donors and country's civil society, abolishing the Bureau of Anti-Corruption.

BDR-BSF confce begins and Cox's Bazar, and established some militant training centres.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna A three-day border conference between the BDR and the Indian BSF began at the conference room of Hotel Royal International in

Khulna city yesterday morning. deputy director general of BDR, is leading the nine-member delega-

tion while SR Tewari, IG of BSF

North Bengal frontier, is leading the

According to a BDR press

release, sector commanders of

Rangpur, Dinajpur, Khulna,

Kushtia and Raishahi and high

officials from BDR headquarters

On the first day, the two sides

discussed various issues such as

incidents of killing of Bangladeshi

nationals by BSF and Indians,

smuggling of arms and ammuni-

tion, explosives and drugs from

India to Bangladesh and push-in

attempts. Confidence building

measures were also discussed.

PM optimistic

are taking part in the conference.

14-member BSF delegation.



PHOTO: STAR 14-party stages a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding uninterrupted power supply during peak boro season and SSC examinations.

Villagers throng **Bangla Bhai's** in-law's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Hundreds of people thronged the house of Bangla Bhai's in-laws at Akanderpara in Shaghata upazila yesterday after the news of the militant kingpin's arrest broke.

Second-in-command of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen of IMR

14-party submits memo

The 14-party opposition alliance led by Awami League (AL) submitted a memorandum to Desa officials in

AUG 17 BLASTS

to Desa officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

the city yesterday demanding

Top JMB man

randum.

Secretariat

examinations

jailed for life

uninterrupted power supply during

"We must go for tougher move-

submitting the memorandum.

gas and diesel, he added.

the market," Maya said.

the programme

Thundershowers likely

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is

likely at one or two places over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet

divisions and the regions of Comilla and Noakhali in the next 12 hours

over the country, Met office said, predicting nearly unchanged day

at Raishahi and lowest 15.4 degree Celsius at Dinaipur.

major cities and towns yesterday were:

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere

Highest temperature 34.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday

The sun sets in the capital at 6:04pm today and rises at

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some

Min

20.5

21.0

18.2

20.0

20.2

21.0

20.8

Temperature

in Celsius

Max

32.7

32.0

34.5

32.7

32.2

31.7

32.5

the SSC examinees cannot even

light a lantern during power outages

as kerosene is also not available in

Al leaders Haji Selim, HBM Iqbal

Humidity in

percentage

Evening

49

67

44

68

65

71

Morning

75

82

84

85

85 72

75

and Sahara Khatun also took part in

peak boro season and during SSC

Earlier in the day, police obstructed the procession of 14party opposition alliance, which was moving forward from the High Court gate to besiege Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa), the main

electricity supply office of the city, at Abdul Goni road near the

Madina from Makkah on Sunday.

ocession to hail the arrest of Ain O Salish Kendro, 22 murders Banola Bhai and several hundred incidents of Several loudspeakers announced the news in Bangla: tortures were reported in the news-'Good news, good news. Bangla papers from April 1 to July 31, 2004. meeting on April 11 in 2004 and died Bhai is held. Hang him to death. Try Abdul Quayum Badshah was

cated.

High School.

firing squad.

alias Bangla Bhai of Bogra married Fahima Khatun, daughter of Ibrahim Ali of Shaghata in 2002 when she was a student of class ten.

After the marriage, Bangla Bhai turned Shaghata as a den of JMB activities. Several hundred youths of the area were trained up in the 'jihadi' spirit and were assigned to carry out bomb attacks in other parts of the country

The militant leader went into hiding with his family after the law enforcement agencies became active to nab him and his cohorts. His in-laws were interrogated about

his whereabouts several times. Being frustrated, Ibrahim Ali snapped all relations with his daughter and son-in-law through an affidavit in March 2005.

"We never supported his (Bangla Bhai) evil activities and suffered much for four long years," said Faruk Hasan, brother-in-law of Bangla Bhai.

Mother-in-law of the militant leader Farida Yasmin said. 'I am upset for our daughter Fahima, but satisfied that my son-in-law has been arrested.'

People of Shaghata expressed their satisfaction over the arrest of Bangla Bhai and demanded exemplary punishment of the man who masterminded terror attacks and killed innocent people.

Police have been put on alert in all stations in the district suspecting possible JMB attacks.

Valuables worth Tk 5 lakh looted at Keraniganj

BDNEWS, Keraniganj

A gang of robbers early yesterday looted valuables worth Tk five lakh from a house at Shuvadda Purbapara under Keraniganj upazila in Dhaka.

Police said a gang of robbers entered the house of Mofiz Mia breaking lattices of the windows and tied the family members, including his wife and sons.

They looted valuables, including cash, gold ornaments, cellphones and a gun from the house. A case was filed with Keraniganj

Police Station in this connection

UNB, Pirojpur

A court here yesterday awarded life imprisonment to a top JMB leader for his involvement in August 17 serial bombings across the country. Faruq alias Baset Saifullah alias Amjad, a member of the Majlis-e-Shura and chief of Dhaka and Barisal divisions of the outlawed militant

outfit, was tried in absentia. Saifullah, hails from Kaukhali upazila of the district, was also fined Tk 50,000. In default, he will have to serve five years more in jail. According to the prosecution, the

convict exploded bombs at separate places, including Pirojpur Bar Association building, with the help of his associates.' After examining the records and

witnesses. Additional District and Sessions Judge Md Sadigul Islam Talukdar pronounced the verdict. The convict also carries 40 years

imprisonment along with JMB chief Shaekh Abdur Rahman, operations commander of JMJB Siddigul Islam alias Bangla Bhai.

UNB, Dhaka

until 6:00pm today.

6:15am tomorrow.

temperature.

City/Town

Chittagong

Rajshahi

Khulna

Barisal

Sylhet

Cox's Bazar

Dhaka

While being barred by the police barricade, the 14-party activists Another RMG chanted anti-government slogans protesting frequent power outages worker dies ahead of the SSC examinations.

However, police later allowed **CU CORRESPONDENT** some leaders of 14-party to go to the DESA office for submitting memo-

One more worker of KTS Textile and Garments Factory, who sustained severe burns, died yesterday mornment soon if the crises of power, gas and diesel in the peak boro season ing raising the death toll in the worstever factory fire in the country to 59.

as well as during the SSC examina-tions persist, " Dhaka City AL The dead was identified as Nasima Akter, 28, of Lal Mohan in General Secretary Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya said Bhola.

while talking to journalists after She was undergoing treatment with 70 % burn injury at the surgery The need for alliance governward of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), but was shifted to ment is now over as it totally failed to fulfil the minimum need for power, the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) later as her condition deteriorated. "The situation is so worse that

At present, 20 KTS workers are undergoing treatments at the CMCH. Of them, four are at the ICU and the rest at the surgery ward.

Among the 49 KTS fire victims admitted to the CMCH, five -- Moni, Hannan, Monir, Kamrun Nahar and Nasima -- died so far, hospital sources said.

Another six -- Noor Jahan (with 50% burn injury), Abdus Salam (32%), Farzana (30%), Sima Barua (27%), Lovely (30%) and Marzina (25%) -- were shifted to Dhaka for better treatment.

were injured at the devastating fire at the KTS garment factory at Kalurghat industrial belt in Chittagong on the night of February 23.

Death anniversary



young businessman, writer and died in a road accident.

On the occasion, a Qurankhwani distributed among the poor.

caught Idris Ali alias Khejur Ali Bashar and Abdul Qaivum Badsha at different villages of Raninagar upazila in Naogaon.

Bangla Bhai killed Badsha and hanged his body in a tree three days later in Bamangram village of Nandigram upazila, Bogra and became the talk of the country.

Police recovered the body of Ali, sliced in seven pieces, digging into soil in Bhitigram in Naogaon on May 28

Before killing them, the JMJB men announced through loudspeakers on May 19 that some people including Ali will be killed in board daylight the next day.

As the matter came to the government's attention, the bigots could not kill them openly. Bangla Bhai set up five camps in

Raishahi and Naogaon in a bid to cleanse the region of outlaws'.

Saying that policemen in plainclothes and sometimes in uniform used to guard the camps, a regional JMJB commander told reporters Bangla Bhai held a meeting with a deputy minister on April 10, 2004 in front of him.

tions with his son through an affida vit. A few days later, the militant kingpin's father-in-law did the same with his daughter.

Although the JMJB men killed 22 people including a former army person in Rajshahi and Naogaon, Bangla Bhai was not accused in any of the cases filed for the murders. But arrest warrants in some cases filed against him in Bogra, Khulna and Kushtia were sent to his Karnipara house.

The militant linchpin spent two years at a mosque and madrasa at Ihautala under Khulshi Police Station in the port city before emeraing as Bangla Bhai, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

Detective police sources said Ameer of Ahle Hadith Movement and former professor of Arabic department at Rajshahi University Dr Asadullah-Al Galib established Ahle Hadith Jame Mosque and Darul Hadith Salafia Madrasa at Jhautala in South Khulshi area back in the eighties with financial assistance of foreign donors.

when some men of Bangla Bhai got

Rahman out of the house and asked

had already heard of JMJB and its

activities. He recalled Ataur

Rahman Sunny, Prof Lutfar, a

teacher of Atrai College, and some

cadres including Afzal, Akram,

Amzad, Nazrul, Khokan, Mostak,

Monzu, Siddique, Jahangir, Jalil and

Where is your arms and ammuni

supporter of Awami League. I never

worked for any underground party,

Sarbohara and you must admit it to

us." As Rahman continued denying

the allegation and begging for life

Bangla Bhai demanded a ransom of

"I said I did not have such an

amount. Then Bangla Bhai first hit

me on my head and shoulder by a

hockey stick," Rahman continued

his horrors with tears in his eyes

tion?" Bangla Bhai asked him.

"You are a Sarbohara [outlaw]

"I am just a poor farmer and a

'Ňo, we know you are a

He replied in the affirmative as he

Sources said during his two-year assignment in the port city, Bangla

A great relief for Fazlur

him if he knew them.

Saiful were around him.

he replied.

Tk 2 lakh.

him even after 22 months.

"They tied my legs with a rope, hanged me upside down in a tree and started hitting me. They beat me until my legs and hands were broken," Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday at Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma (BRCT) in Dhaka.

Fazlur Rahman has become almost handicapped with nine bolts and one steel rod in his leas. All the fingers of his hands were broken and have been bent permanently. He cannot do any work and sold all his farmland to bear the expenses of treatment. He needs a lot of money more to be cured.

Armed with machetes, iron rods, bamboos and hockey sticks, 20 JMB thugs led by Siddiqul Islam Bangla Bhai picked him up at Hasanpur on April 20, 2004.

Just three weeks earlier. Bangla Bhai started his operation publicly and set up a camp in Bagmara under the banner of Jagrata Muslim

Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). "I was going to Union Health Centre in my village along with my wife and three daughters. They

used to supervise militants' training at different centres and do the brainwash of fresh trainees or recruits at Darul Hadith Salafia Madrasa

tioned.

Some Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) leaders and activists of the city often came to the madrasa to see the militants' training and other activities, sources said

While in Chittagong, Bangla Bhai

JMB chief Abdur Rahman also came to the madrasa several times to monitor the militants' activities. A large number of militants used to gather there every Friday to review heir activities.

Bangla Bhai, detective police sources said, also supervised militant training centres in Sitakunda and Hathazari

When Bangla Bhai went back to Bagmara in early 2004, militant leaders Ariful Islam alias Bomb Nasir, Abul Kalam Azad alias Ahmad Miah and Javed lobal alias Mohammad successively took charge of the madrasa.

As other armed zealots joined

the beating, Rahman soon fainted.

He regained consciousness at the

balcony of the house in the morning

when one of the fanatics shook him

with a bamboo tripod and again

started beating up me."

Bagmara Police Station.

"They hanged me upside down

Hearing his cries, people from

neighbouring houses rushed to the

scene but did not dare raise a pro-

Sunny, brother of JMB chief

Abdur Rahman, and Shahidul,

nephew of Bangla Bhai hit him the

most. Finally, they left him by

police station, rescued him and sent

him to the upazila health complex.

them walked out of jail on bail

family to withdraw the case.

Ruhul Amin, an official of the

The police held some of the

bigots after filing a case but all of

"Still I don't dare return to my village.

I'm staying at the house of my

hard

FROM PAGE 1 for any kind of terrorism or conflicts in Bangladesh," she said in a statement within hours of the arrest of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) chief Siddigul Islam alias Bangla Bhai in Muktagachha of Mymensingh.

Khaleda said, "I am hopeful that all terrorist networks will be destroyed very soon and the remaining terrorists will be captured."

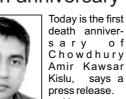
Felicitating the members of the law-enforcement agencies involved in the operation, the prime minister praised the intelligence success in tracking down the most wanted fugitive. She also greeted the people who helped the law-enforcers in this regard.

Expressing profound sympathy for those who were injured by the operatives during the raid, Khaleda said, "I firmly believe the people of the country will remember with appreciation the role they played for the welfare of the country and peacekeeping.'

The prime minister mentioned that after the recent arrest of militant kingpin Shaekh Abdur Rahman she had urged people to keep faith in her government. "We have lived up to the faith."

She vowed to continue her government's firm stance in maintaining peace and stability in the country as well as security of the people

maternal uncle in Rajshahi City. The The prime minister urged people JMJB has been banned, but its to keep faith in the government and members are still threatening my allow it more time to solve all the problems



He was a promising

painter. On this day last year, he

and milad mahfil will be held at his house in Faridpur and food will be

WEATHER TODAY

The rest with fractures or minor injuries were released, hospital sources added. 54 people died and hundreds

FROM PAGE 1 showed up by motorbikes and took who were tortured by Bangla Bhai me to the house of Ramzan Kaya at and his men. The tortures of Bangla Hamir Kechchha and confined me in Bhai left him maimed and still haunt a room." Rahman said, It was around 9:00 in the night