

Potato surplus puts farmers in misery

By Shahiduzzaman Khan

The price of potatoes has dropped to Tk. two per kilogram at the growers' level compelling farmers to incur huge losses as the production cost for a kilogram of potatoes is around Tk 2.50.

Cold storage owners, short of cash, are not buying adequate quantities of potatoes this year.

Potatoes are being dumped, farmers complain and this is leading to an alarming fall in prices.

Bumper harvests have been recorded in the potato-growing areas of Munshiganj, Comilla and other places and according to estimates, production has increased to 500 maunds from 350 maunds on an average in one 'kan' (1.5 acres) of land.

Increase in the prices of fertilizer (TSP), seeds and other inputs by about 25 per cent this year is one of the reasons for the increase in production cost of potatoes, the farmers said.

There are at present 180 cold storages in the country, 27 of which were being regularly financed by Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKBS).

The BKBS has however imposed rigid conditions this year on sanctioning of Current Capital (CC) loans to the owners of these cold storages.

Other commercial banks are also maintaining a similar position in an effort to recover loans taken in 1990 and this attitude of the banks has compounded the miseries of the farmers and the cold storage owners.

The BKBS's policy this year suggests that loans taken by cold storage owners in 1990 should be repaid in full before

applications for fresh loans are submitted. Twenty-five per cent of loans taken in previous years should also be paid.

The BKBS has also instructed its branches in the potato-growing areas not to accept loan applications if conditions for taking loans are not met.

A cold storage owner said that he was unable to buy potatoes because of not receiving bank loan in time.

A BKBS source said that similar measures in 1990 to recover loans taken the previous year had proved very successful.

Bangladesh Bank loan procedures suggest that an applicant is entitled to get loans if 80 per cent of the previous year's loans are repaid.

However the BKBS follows a different policy.

The BKBS head office sanctioned only three loans this year.

Many applications are lying with the bank's branches in potato-growing areas but no decisions have been taken about sanctioning loans.

Loan applications involving over Tk one crore are sent to the BKBS's head office.

Agricultural experts say that the credit policy of the BKBS and other banks should be more flexible as such stringent measures will put the cold storage owners in trouble rendering them incapable of purchasing large quantities of potatoes for storage.

The farmers, experts say, should also be given incentives so that they can get a fair price for their products, otherwise they will be dissuaded from growing potatoes next year.

Khaleda seeks help

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and factories to attain self reliance.

Khaleda Zia assured the people of all help in the development of Chittagong and congratulated the residents of Double Mooring for electing her from that constituency.

Turning to the communications sector, Begum Zia said that efforts would be made to further develop the railway service and the standard of its employees.

BSS adds: Begum Zia said, after the victory of the people against the autocratic rule concerted efforts were now needed to restore peace, stability, law and order in the society.

She said, your whole-hearted cooperation is essential in forming the government and steering the country to prosperity.

Addressing students of Chittagong Medical College at Prabartak Sanga crossing near the College she stressed the need for national unity in developing the country. She called upon the students to strengthen her hands in rebuilding the nation shattered by the misrule of now fallen

Ershad regime. During her day-long visit to the Port City Begum Zia addressed meetings at Pahartali Shahjahan Maidan, Hazrat Jalaalabad Oxygen Mooring, Prabartak Sanga and Alanker Cinema Hall premises.

Earlier, tens of thousands of people thronged the airport to welcome Begum Zia and thousands of enthusiastic party supporters and workers riding motor-cycles and other vehicles waved colourful banners and posters and chanted slogans congratulating her on her election victory.

Four vehicles of the motorcade of Begum Zia were partly damaged and ten persons received minor injuries during her journey from Patenga to Fatikchhari in Chittagong.

The vehicles were damaged in rash driving when a number of them failed to keep track with her motorcade. Five persons were injured.

Five other persons, mostly workers of BNP were injured when some miscreants threw stones at them while they were travelling on the roof of a bus at Katirhat of Hathazari upazila.

Sheikh Hasina

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dent's mane to form a cabinet comprising MPs from a single party Sheikh Hasina posed a question: 'If he does so then who joins whom?' — The Acting President to the party the MPs to be taken from or the MPs to the neutral, caretaker government, disowning their party'.

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According to Foreign Ministry sources, there was no bar from any foreign country on the trial of ex-president Ershad.

About the hearing on Ershad by some Congressmen in the United States, the Foreign Ministry sources said any personal friend of Ershad might enquire about the procedure of his trial in Bangladesh. But there was no question from the US government in this regard.

It is gathered that the brother-in-law of Ershad HG Mohiuddin, who was the representative of Bangladesh at the UN, before being suspended from the job, has sought the cooperation of a section of US Congressmen, to secure Ershad's release.

ment. 'Awami League was committed to honour the agreement, and any breach of this commitment by anybody would be considered as betrayal with the blood of the martyrs of the mass movement', she said.

Sheikh Hasina demanded repeal of all constitutional amendments starting from the Fourth and said that the Fifth Amendment could be repealed keeping 'Bismillah' Rahman Rahman intact in the Constitution.

She said that there was no conflict between 'Bismillah' and scrapping of the amendment. She said that secularism does not negate 'Bismillah' Rahman Rahman' and pointed out that PLO leader Yasser Arafat also incorporated secularism as well as 'Bismillah' Rahman Rahman in the Constitution of the State of Palestine.

The AL chief demanded of the government to telecast within this month the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. 'Otherwise, the Awami League would be compelled to launch a movement to materialise its demand', she said.

Hasina elected AL PP leader

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has been elected leader of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (AL PP).

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Women and children demonstrate in front of US embassy in Kuwait City Saturday asking for the return of people taken hostage by retreating Iraqi occupation forces. — AFP photo

Formidable challenges

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of the previous government", he commented.

Elaborating BNP's policy goals on the economic front particularly in the context of budget-making exercises for 1991-92, Saifur Rahman said his party would go for public intervention in social sectors like education, health, family planning and infrastructural development. Development projects with local cost component will be avoided as far as possible. Priority will be given to proper management of public sector units. They should not remain a drag on the public exchequer, he added.

He emphasised the need for a greater thrust on "market-oriented" operations in economic management. Private investments should be actively encouraged and the allocation of resources should be made according to the market forces, he added while stressing the case for running the public sector enterprises and bodies on commercial lines.

About domestic resources mobilisation, Saifur Rahman felt that improved and better management of tax collecting departments could lead to much higher revenue receipts than the present levels even under the existing fiscal arrangements.

About the difficulties of economic management by any incoming representative government, he said the donors had been insisting on politically difficult conditionalities under some aid programmes in areas like energy and financial and agricultural sectors. He also mentioned about the conditionality under the proposed Gulf war compensation aid proposals. "These are politically uncomfortable conditions for any representative government", he said.

About the financial sector credit programme, he observed, "certain conditionality relating to easy credits in areas like agriculture and exports appears to be frowned upon by the donor agencies on the plea that the conditionality about adherence to market-determined forces must not be violated".

In the agricultural sector, the conditionality includes raising of fertilizer prices, abolition of departments like extension services and loss of

employment of thousands of people, he pointed out.

Saifur Rahman stated that the incoming administration would be encountered with a tough situation. He however felt that the donor community could be persuaded for accommodation and understanding to deal with the situation in conformity with the political compulsions that no representative government could afford to ignore.

He hastened to add that his party was fully aware of the compelling need for bringing about budgetary and financial discipline in the management of the economy and for augmenting local resources to utilise the committed aid in the pipeline. "The stabilisation of democracy will make it easier to enforce this", he noted.

About BNP's commitments on waiving agricultural loans up to Taka 5000, he said such loans would be written off in a phased manner so that there was no immediate adverse impact on the government budget. "We will be true to our electoral commitments and pledges", he added.



JP Acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman addressing a public meeting in the capital Sunday. —Star photo

Don't transfer power

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cember was also attended by a good number of women.

The JP acting chief demanded immediate repeal of the Special Powers Act under which Ershad and other JP leaders were arrested. He urged the Acting President to refrain from taking any step violating the Constitution. If done so, he (Acting President) would become controversial and the public would decide the fate of the Acting President who is also a justice, he added. Former prime minister of the Ershad government, Choudhury accused the interim government of losing its neutrality and of being partisan.

The JP polls results, Choudhury said, would have been far better if the party had been allowed to propagate its views on state-owned television and the radio.

JP Acting General Secretary AMB Shahjahan, ex-minister Sirajul Hossain Khan, Srani Party chief Shah Md Abu Zafar and Jubo Sanghati chief Saifur Rahman also addressed the meeting.

UNB adds: Jatiya Party will observe "Ershad Release Day" throughout the country tomorrow (Tuesday) by holding rallies and bringing out processions in all district headquarters, a party press release said Sunday.

Acting Chairman of the party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and Secretary General A.B.M. Shahjahan will participate in the programme at Rangpur.

JCD office at Mohammadpur ransacked

Unidentified armed men attacked the Mohammadpur thana office of Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Sunday evening, reports UNB.

JCD leaders said a group of 30 to 35 armed miscreants attacked the office and ransacked it.

They alleged these persons had been creating terror in the area for the last few days. The administration, they complained, was indifferent towards bringing them to book despite having specific cases against them.

Anisur Rahman, General Secretary of JCD Mohammadpur thana unit, in a statement condemned the attack and demanded punishment of those involved.

Jamaat call to show sense of responsibility

The Central Majlis-e-Sura of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh on Sunday called upon all concerned to show their sense of responsibility for continuing journey towards democracy and make the result of the elections meaningful, reports BSS.

The Jamaat Majlis-e-Sura, in a meeting with Acting Ameer of the party Abbas Ali Khan in the chair, said any kind of conspiracy against materialising the expectations and aspirations of the peace-loving people would have to be resisted unitedly.

After reviewing the elections held during the rule of autocratic regime and under the caretaker government, the Majlis-e-Sura expressed the opinion that free and fair elections could be held only under a caretaker government in the country.

If faulty voter's list, false vote and use of black-money were avoided, the elections would be more fair, the meeting opined.

The Majlis-e-Sura said that despite some irregularities people's verdict has been reflected through the election.

The Jamaat expressed satisfaction at the free and peaceful holding of the parliamentary elections under the caretaker government and congratulated Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, Election Commission, administration, members of the armed forces, BDR, Police and Ansar and the participating political parties and candidates.

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Task force

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achieve greater self-sufficiency in the development process and attaining sustainable economic growth.

Terming the reports as valuable documents Justice Shahabuddin thanked Prof Sobhan and the conveners and members of the task forces for preparing the reports within the shortest possible time. He hoped the documents would greatly help the democratic government in shaping their future plans and programmes for the welfare of the people, and help strengthen the socio-economic infrastructure.

Presenting the reports, Prof. Rehman Sobhan hoped that if the reports of the task forces are placed before the members of all political parties in the Jatiya Sangsad and the people in general they would create greater awareness about basic problems of the society.

Prof Sobhan pointed out the reports of the task forces had once again proved the economic problems faced by Bangladesh were not beyond solution. Prof Sobhan said a strong political leadership and national commitment were required to build a prosperous nation.

Prof Sobhan said the reports of the task forces were not alternatives to country's Fourth Five-year Plan and they have suggested minimum steps to be taken in different sectors of the economy.

Representatives of eight Arab nations said Sunday they welcomed a new US diplomatic initiative to protect the Gulf region and to promote Mideast peace talks.

The Midnight File

S African death toll now 28

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 10: Police erected razor wire around a workers' hostel in tense Alexandra township Sunday to keep warring black groups apart after weekend battles killed 28 people. Most of the bodies were recovered Sunday after clashes that began Saturday morning. Police spokesman Col. Johan Mostert said it was not clear when all the deaths occurred, reports AP.

Three killed in US plane crash

KEY WEST (Florida), Mar 10: A small plane crashed nose-first into a shopping-center parking lot after takeoff from Key West International Airport Saturday night, killing at least three people, authorities said. "The pilot declared an emergency and was trying to return to the airport but he didn't make it," said John White side, a spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration in Atlanta, reports AP.

Quake hits Khuzestan

NICOSIA, Mar 10: An earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter Scale jolted Iran's main oil-producing province of Khuzestan early today but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, the Iranian news agency IRNA said. The geophysics centre of Tehran University said the quake struck at 12.54 am (2114 GMT on Saturday) and was centred near the town of Izeh about 500 km (310 miles) southwest of the Iranian capital, reports Reuter.

Soviet ministers in China

BEIJING, Mar 10: Soviet Deputy Premier Yuri Masludov and Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Rogachev arrived today for a week-long visit, a spokesman for the Soviet Embassy said. The spokesman refused to say which Chinese officials would meet Masludov and Rogachev or give the reason for their visit, reports AFP.

Mitra, Estrada top poll survey

MANILA, Mar 10: House of representatives speaker Ramon Mitra and actor-turned-senator Joseph Estrada topped a Manila newspaper's survey on Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates, the Daily said Sunday. With 99.9 per cent of The Daily Globe "ballots" canvassed, Mitra polled 122,538 votes for President, or 41.6 per cent, almost twice as many as Vice-President Salvador Laurel, who had 63,209 or 21.5 per cent, reports AFP.

Pakistan to implement INES

ISLAMABAD, Mar 10: Pakistan has agreed to the implementation of an International Nuclear Events Scale (INES), for a trial period of one year, according to local press today. The government has promulgated the Pakistan Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection regulations to carry out and regulate matters relating to Nuclear Safety, reports Xinhua.

Nizami

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leader of the Jamaat parliamentary party, the delegation indicated their cooperation with other parties with regard to the election of women members.

Meanwhile, Shahjahan Siraj, MP-elect and chief of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-S), called on the Acting President, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, at the President Secretariat in Dhaka on Sunday.

Siraj highly appreciated the Acting President's success in holding the Jatiya Sangsad elections in a free, fair and neutral manner.

Oath

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Election Commissioner, Justice Abdur Rouf to administer oath. When contacted over telephone, Justice Rouf said he is not aware of any such request. He said the official election results of the four constituencies where repolling was held on Saturday are likely to be announced within a couple of days.

The Parliament Secretariat could not say when the oath will be administered adding that the officials will know the latest decision by this morning.

Clashes at CU
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mission seekers to draw them to their respective organisations.

Chhatra Shibir claimed seven of the injured were their party workers.

In separate statements both the organisations blamed each other for the incident.

Promotions

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a large number of officials as the elected government will soon be installed.

Another high official said the present promotions will benefit a particular section in the administration. Officials in other cadres of civil service have been deprived of their legitimate rights of promotion. This will definitely affect the overall administration and make it difficult for the incoming government to function smoothly, he added. The official suggested an immediate halt to further promotions and review the cases of those already promoted during the last few days.

Appointment of officials by the present government for overseas assignments has also raised controversy. Particularly, selection of officers for World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) assignments during this interim period has dismayed some other aspirants for the positions.

Observers say the caretaker government has put to test its predominant character of neutrality by indulging in administrative actions only benefiting for an elected government.

DU Senate registered graduate polls today

By DU Correspondent

The election of 25 representatives from the registered graduates to the Dhaka University Senate will be held today (Monday).

A total of 119 candidates are in the fray.

Fifty candidates will contest from two panels of backed by Dhaka University teachers: One panel is backed by the 'White' group and the other by the 'Blue' and 'Pink' combined under the banner 'Gonatantrik Oikya Parishad'.

The rest of the candidates are contesting as independents.

This is the first election of the registered graduates through direct ballots. Earlier the elections were held through postal ballot. Polling starts at 8 am and will continue till 2 pm.

2.1 lakh men

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nounced within two months. It will take over two years to complete the publication of detailed census documents, the Secretary, Statistical Division, said.

The 4-day population census will be followed by a sample survey within two to three weeks for testing its quality. Another sample survey covering roughly one per cent of the population will be conducted during the next dry season to extract reliable data on the socio-economic condition of the people.

For the purpose of the population census, Bangladesh has been divided into 2.1 lakh enumeration areas each comprising 100 households. There will be one enumerator — an unemployed youth or a school teacher — in each enumeration area.

A total of 45 thousand supervisors will look after the works of the enumerators. The country has been divided into 29 census regions, 95 census districts, 483 upazilas/thanas and 2200 zones to conduct the census.

Census officials, supervisors and enumerators have been trained to get the work done efficiently.

The first population census in Bangladesh was held in 1974 and the second census in 1981. The population was stated to be 7.14 crore in 1974 and 8.7 crore in 1981.

Salam said the counting of heads would be done on a household basis and data would be processed by optical mark readers and micro computers.

The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), World Bank and the Dutch Government have granted 2.78 million, 1.92 million and 1.8 million dollars for conducting the census. The government of Bangladesh will spend Taka 3.56 for the census under development head, Salam said.

Rafsanjani repeats call for deal

NICOSIA, Mar 10: Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, saying Iraq could face all-out civil war today repeated a call for a deal between the Baghdad government and rebel groups, reports Agencies.

"We are concerned the situation in Iraq may lead to extensive rebellion and war inside Iraq," Tehran Radio quoted Rafsanjani as saying.

"It is necessary the government and all groups inside Iraq cooperate to calm down Iraq's internal situation," the

President told visiting Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier.

Even before the outbreak of the Gulf war two months ago, Rafsanjani said Iran believed the key to Iraq's future was "to think up a sound plan to ensure its territorial integrity".

Kurdish rebels on northern Iraq said today they had captured several towns around the oil centre of Kirkuk and were poised to take the city.

A spokesman for the Iraqi Kurdistan Front said guerrillas had seized the towns of Kifri

and the districts of Aggler, Bazyan and Hanjir in the area around Kirkuk centre of Iraq's northern oil fields north of Baghdad.

Kurdish rebels were now only 20 to 30 km from the centre of Kirkuk, he said.

Open revolt has swept the Kurdish north and the Shiite south since the Gulf allies defeated Saddam Hussein's army 10 days ago.

The Kurds said on Saturday they had consolidated their hold over the major town of Sulaimaniya in the northeast

and captured several other towns in the same district and in nearby Arbil.

US Secretary of State James A. Baker III outlined the proposal, which includes a US call for Israel to give up territory in return for recognition.

Representatives of eight Arab nations said Sunday they welcomed a new US diplomatic initiative to protect the Gulf region and to promote Mideast peace talks.