

Gachihata — a farm with a difference

By Masud Hasan Khan

KOTIADI (Kishoreganj): A 100-acre farm in Gachihata union here stands proudly as testimony to what magic private initiatives can work in the country's agriculture sector.

Some 100 kilometers from the capital, the Gachihata Aqua-Culture Farms Ltd. is now a household name to the fishermen of Kishoreganj — where integrated fisheries is still a foreign word, and fishing means just hauling from the 'haors' (huge natural waterbodies) and selling in the market.

The Gachihata Farm accommodates 53 fish ponds along with 12,000 poultry and 89 livestock and earns about Taka 40 thousand a day.

Now, a pick-up truck loaded with some 500 kilograms of fish, about 2500 eggs and 120 litres of milk speeds through the unmetalled rural roads to catch the early morning train to Dhaka where the 'farm-fresh' products sell quickly in the morning.

"This all happened when I went for integrated farming instead of our traditional fisheries practice," said Md. Akhtaruzzaman MP, the owner of the farm.

Briefing a group of visiting journalists Saturday, he pointed out that it was a little planning, innovation and lots of hard work that yielded 'gold' in his plot.

The whole farm area is divided into 53 ponds of different sizes. These waist-deep waterbodies are embanked high above the usual flood water level so that no water, except rain, could enter or spill over the ponds.

The poultry sheds are built in the ponds on long bamboo poles while cattle paddocks are raised on the embankments.

Besides, 15,000 mahogany saplings have been planted all

over the farm area.

"It was not easy to start the farm... and everyone thought I had gone nuts," recalled Akhtaruzzaman.

The office building of the Gachihata Farm looked like a western ranch house and a Bangladeshi 'khamar bar'. In a spacious veranda, there were two autographed portraits of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia with a slogan below: "People are the source of all power."

Around the office building, there were blocks of ponds stretching towards the little villages near the horizon.

The BNP MP said that he started the venture in 1987 with only eight bighas of low-lying land in Kalandahara beel (marsh) which he purchased from the local farmers.

Part of the land used to get inundated during the rainy season and produced only one crop annually while the farmers remained unemployed for 11 months.

Akhtaruzzaman excavated the land further, raised mud walls around the ponds and released carp fingerlings — Rohit, Katla, Mrigel and Grass Carp.

However, two successive productions suffered serious blows during the 1988 and 1989 floods which submerged one third of the country.

"I almost broke down and I knew it was my last opportunity to prove what I believe in," said the soldier-turned-farmer. "I thought over the situation time and again, planned alternatives and those worked."

The Gachihata Aqua-Culture Farm has so far invested Taka five crore and the present rate of return is plus 30 per cent per day, he said.

Akhtaruzzaman said that he took two credits — Taka 33

lakh from MIDAS and Taka 70 lakh from SABINCO — which he had paid back in due time.

The fish-milk-egg-chicken farm now permanently employs 150 people from the locality, he informed.

Explaining the secrets of his success in integrated farming, the MP pointed out that there was no alternative to increased production in a land-hungry and over-populated Bangladesh.

He said that a typical one acre plot, which produces rise worth Taka 25,000, could yield fish, milk, egg and chicken worth Taka four lakh a year.

Besides, the rice producers had no jobs for most of the year and they have to live on money from the rest of the employed population, he said. Again, crops failed because of frequent flooding, pest attacks and other natural disasters.

Integrated farming, on the other hand, employs people round the year, produces more and generates money among the poor, he added.

Akhtaruzzaman suggested that the seven lakh acres of floodplains in the country, most of which remained uncultivated most of the year, could be brought under integrated farming for higher production.

However, the system works better when individuals form cooperatives, he pointed out.

The MP, representing Kishoreganj, said he wants to switch over from sweet water fisheries to inland shrimp cultivation for exports.

"Our land really yields gold... think about the new markets in Asia and your products being exported there," an optimistic Akhtaruzzaman commented.

"Of course, that will depend on how we face the challenges of the future," he added.



Visiting British MP Keith Vaz called on Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Minto Road residence yesterday. — Star photo

Dhaka can be centre: British MP

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the country to project not only its traditional heritage but also the formidable strides it has made in trade, business and industry.

Vaz said the negative image of Bangladesh will be vastly corrected before the British public through the London Festival.

Vaz also expressed the hope that by the year 2000 Bangladesh will not only become a strong country, but also a strong economic power.

He suggested that to strengthen the economic interests of Bangladesh, a joint British-Bangladesh Trade Mission should be set up. He said a similar mission had been set up between India and Britain which had contributed to boosting trade of both the countries.

The British MP said the Asian community, including Bangladeshis, were contributing a lot to the British economy. He disclosed that every year 1.7 billion pound sterling of the British GNP was contributed by the Asian business community.

Vaz said that he was quite concerned about the way the immigration laws in Britain have been tightened. "It is a matter of worry that the right of appeal against a visa refusal ended last year," he said.

He promised that if the Labour Party was voted back to power it would revive the appeal law and try to make immigration laws 'less discriminatory'.

natory. He was critical of the fact that the immigration laws were not "generally fair" towards people in the subcontinent and other Asian countries. He also agreed that there was racial discrimination in Britain which needed to be changed through legislation.

Speaking about the politics of his own country, he said that public opinion polls indicated the Labour Party was 25 per cent ahead in the popularity ratings.

"Our leader John Smith is a very effective man, and we believe we will be able to win the next elections, due in 1997."

Within the next several months, there will be six by-elections and the Conservative would lose of all them, Vaz predicted.

His wife Maria Fernandes, who is a social worker, is also an exponent of fair and more equitable immigration laws for Asians. She is herself an immigration lawyer. Her parents, also of Goanese stock, lived in Kenya.

Vaz, who is also one of the patrons of the London Festival, being promoted by Bangladesh restaurant Amin Ali, is making a quick trip to Sylhet today and hopes to visit Bangladesh at the end of the year again.

Concluding the interview, Vaz said: "I will have to be back in London on Tuesday to vote against the government. The opposition will not win, but I will perform my duty."

Call to make Apr 26 hartal a success

Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the people to make the dawn-to-dusk hartal on April 26 an all-out success to realise the demand for resignation of the BNP government and general elections under a caretaker administration, reports UNB.

Banglabazar editor granted bail

By Staff Correspondent

Editor of The Banglabazar Patrika Matiar Rahman Chowdhury and Publisher Mohammad Zakaria were granted bail yesterday by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court.

Hearing of the case will be held on May 20, 1994.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Shahid Uddin had issued a warrant of arrest against the editor and publisher of the newspaper Thursday following a defamation suit filed by Special Envoy of the Prime Minister, M. Morshed Khan.

Wanted criminal arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Detective police yesterday arrested Gazi Kamrul Islam Sajal, wanted for the murders of two students — Mirza Ghalib and Liton — who were gunned down on the Dhaka University campus last year. Sajal was picked up from the Dhaniala Market under Demra thana at about 7-30 pm.

Sajal, 28, is also accused of being involved in a dozen other crimes, including an attempted murder of a student leader and the harassment of a resident student of the Shamsunahar Hall of Dhaka University.

UNB adds: Sajal is a central leader of Awami League-backed Chhatra League.

Sajal, a close associate of former JCD leader Golam Faruk Ovi, was wanted for a long time, police said.

Chhatra League activists brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus after getting the news of Sajal's arrest. They also damaged some vehicles in the campus area, witnesses said.

Meanwhile, at least 10 gunshots were heard near the VC's residence and Mohsin Hall yesterday evening.

Biswas, Khaleda condole Nixon's death

The President and the Prime Minister have sent messages of condolence to US President William J. Clinton expressing deep sorrow at the sad demise of former US President Richard M. Nixon, reports UNB.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia conveyed their sincere condolences to the members of the bereaved family and the American nation.

Foreign trade

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the major problem for the peoples of the South Asian region.

All statesmen of the seven South Asian countries in the summit had attached special importance to poverty alleviation by the year 2002.

Addressing the Cabinet sub-committee meeting, the Prime Minister said poverty alleviation programmes would be made successful through economic growth and creation of employment opportunities and self-employment projects.

Begum Zia underlined the need for taking up separate employment generation programmes for the educated and uneducated youths and women.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Agriculture Minister M. Majidul Haq, Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman, Industries Minister AM Zahiruddin Khan, Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam and State Minister for Planning Dr A. Moyeen Khan attended the meeting.

Media coverage

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The BNP, too, had supported 24-hour, 48-hour and 72-hour hartals during the anti-Ershad agitation, but after assuming power they are now propagating against hartals.

"Hartal is a major mode of democratic struggle," Hasina said. "We do not like calling hartals against this government. During the past three years, we did not organise any agitations through hartals and sieges. We gave the government enough time but this inefficient government has pushed the country to the verge of a disaster."

"There had been no foreign investment in the country (during the past three years). The government politicised the educational institutions, the administration as well as the bus terminals," she told the NPS.

She said if the Opposition is allowed to project its programmes over Radio and TV, there would be no need to call any hartal.

"Many problems will be solved if we are allowed coverage in Radio and Television," she said.

Christians

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and said that was why we were equally respectful to all religions. She said Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman was the first president who was present the pre-X-Mas festival in 1979 and also met Pope John Paul in Vatican City in 1978.

Begum Zia mentioned that she, too, called on the Pope last year and described the relationship between Bangladesh and world Christian as very close.

She also described the Christian community as an inseparable part of the culture and heritage of Bangladesh and wished they would continue to put in their efforts to develop the country.

She said her government was also eager for the overall welfare of the Christians in this country and announced that Taka one crore would be earmarked for the development of the community. She also announced a grant from her personal fund for the Bangladesh Christian Association.

Earlier, on her arrival at the venue, the Prime Minister was given a hearty welcome and standing ovation by thousands of Christians. Later, the Prime Minister enjoyed a cultural function participated by renowned artists of the country.

Sylhet blockade

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gramme a success. The people of Sylhet have been agitating for establishing a division for quite a long time and their campaign geared up immediately after the announcement of the Barisal division last year.

The Action Council would also organise a day-long sit-in near the airport. There has been a long-standing demand for the airport to be upgraded into an international standard aerodrome.

"Resist attacks on NGOs"

By Staff Correspondent

Seventy two noted persons representing the various professions, in a joint statement yesterday, called upon the people to take a united stand against those issuing so-called religious pronouncements on various matters.

In this connection they referred to the pronouncement of a death sentence against one Noorjahan by an unauthorised village court (Shalish) in Sylhet and which was executed last year.

Such activities have spread to other parts of the country, including Faridpur, Mymensingh, Jessore, Sirajganj, Rangpur, Brahmanbaria and Bogra, they said, adding that the so-called religious leaders did not even hesitate to humiliate a college girl in Munshiganj for working for an NGO.

The statement said although these attacks initially started against the women, some men were also not spared.

The latest targets of such attacks are the various NGOs of the country, the statement

said, adding that the so-called religious leaders were involved in attacks on the educational institutions even on the trees planted by the voluntary development organisations.

They have taken the law in their own hands by ignoring the legal system of the country, but surprisingly the government has been silent on the issue, the signatories to the statement alleged. The political parties, too, were not raising their voice, they added.

The statement was signed by, among others, Begum Sufia Kamal, Dr Nilima Ibrahim, Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, Justice Kemaluddin Hossain, K. M. Sohan, Prof. Ziaur Rahman Siddiqi, Poet Shamsur Rahman, Quayyum Chowdhury, Rehman Sobhan, Sayeed Atiqullah, Mozaffar Ahmed, Dr Attur Rahman, Towab Khan, Wahidul Haq, Kazi Shahed Ahmed, Rahat Khan, K. G. Mustafa, Maleka Begum, Muhammad Jahangir, Rafiqun Nabi, Subir Nandi, Khushi Kabir, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Asad Chowdhury, Naren Biswas, Santosh Gupta.

Teachers' strike continues

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committee sources said. The liaison committee had rejected a similar offer of the Education Minister last week because the meeting was for all the associations of the private teachers. This time, the meeting is likely to be confined between the minister and the liaison committee of six different organisations of the non-government school and college teachers, it is learnt.

In the proposed meeting, the government is expected to accept the major demand of the striking teachers — equal benefits as enjoyed by the nationalised schools and colleges, sources said.

The liaison committee is, however, preferring the Prime Minister's intervention into their affairs arguing that the Education Minister had failed several times to resolve the crisis.

Meanwhile, the committee at a meeting yesterday decided to stage demonstrations at all the thana headquarters, and the gherao the offices of the Thana Nirbahi Officers on April 28 and hold agitations at the district headquarters and gherao the offices of the Deputy Commissioners on April 30.

The meeting, held at the

New Model High School in the capital with Kamruzzaman in the chair, also called upon the striking teachers to attend today's rally at the central Shaheed Minar in the city.

The meeting strongly protested and termed unfounded the Education Minister's comment with the UNB that on additional amount of Tk 3000 crore would be required for increasing 30 per cent government assistance for the private sector teachers. "For the current 70 per cent assistance that include salary, house rent, medical allowance and one increment, Taka 526 crore is required annually," a resolution of the meeting said adding, "for the extra 30 per cent, the additional money will be Taka 176 crore 68 lakh only."

Principal Kazi Faruk Ahmed, Dr M. Akhteruzzaman, Sheikh Amanullah, Prof. Ansurur Rahman, Prof. Asadul Haq, Hazera Khatun, Prof. A. N. Rasheda were present in the meeting.

Thirty-two university teachers, writers, artists, lawyers and architects in a joint statement yesterday urged the government to accept the demands of the striking teachers for the greater interest of the country's education.

The Midnight File

7 Islamic FMs meet in NY Apr 27

ISLAMABAD, Apr 23: Pakistan has convened seven Islamic foreign ministers in New York next week to discuss the desperate situation in the Bosnian Muslim enclave of Gorazde, the Foreign Ministry said today. Besides Pakistan, foreign ministers from Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Senegal, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia are to attend the conference, which was convened in consultation with Hamid Algabid, Secretary General of the 51-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), a senior official said. The conference will be held on April 27 in New York, reports AFP.

Serbs shell Gorazde

SARAJEVO, Apr 23: Bosnian Serbs shelled the town of Gorazde Saturday in defiance of a NATO warning the day before to immediately stop their attacks or face air strikes. Aid workers in the Muslim enclave 35 miles southeast of Sarajevo reported shelling before and after the noon (1000 GMT) deadline for a cease-fire that Bosnian Serb leaders had agreed to Friday, reports AP.

Richard Nixon dead

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Clinton said, "Our relationship continued to be warm and constructive... He went out of his way to give me his best advice."

Hanif to enjoy rank and status of a minister

The government has decided that Mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mohammad Hanif would enjoy the rank and status and other related facilities of a minister during his tenure in the office of Mayor of the DCC, an official handout said in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

The mayors of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), Khulna City Corporation (KCC) and Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Sheikh Tayebur Rahman, and Mizanur Rahman Minu respectively will enjoy the rank and status and other facilities of a state minister during their tenure in the offices of mayor of those cities.

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ইষ্টার্ন হাউজিং লিমিটেড এর আবাসিক প্রকল্প

- বনগ্রী — রামপুরা টিডি ভবন সংলগ্ন ৩.০, ৩.৫০ ও ৫.০ কাঠার প্লট।
- গোড়ান — শহর কেন্দ্র মতিঝিল থেকে মাত্র ৩.০ কিঃ মিঃ দূরে ২.৫০ কাঠার প্লট।
- পল্লবী ২য় পর — মিরপুর ১১ই বাস স্ট্যান্ড থেকে ৫০ ফুট প্রসঙ্গ সংযোগ সড়ক দিয়ে ১ কিঃমিঃ দূরে বোটানিকাল গার্ডেন সংলগ্ন ২.৫০ কাঠার প্লট।

ইষ্টার্ন হাউজিং লিমিটেড (ল্যাপ্ত প্রজেক্ট)

ইসলাম চেম্বার (৪র্থ তলা),
১২৫/এ মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা
ফোন : ২৪১২২৭, ২৪৩৫৬৮, ৮৬২৫২৯-৩

বাংলাদেশ তার ও টেলিফোন বোর্ড

টেলিযোগাযোগ সার্ভিসের বিল পরিশোধ সংক্রান্ত

বিশেষ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

টেলিযোগাযোগ সার্ভিস সংক্রান্ত বিলসমূহ সময়মত পরিশোধযোগ্য। নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে বিল পরিশোধিত না হলে সার্ভিস বিচ্ছিন্ন করে দেয়া হয়। সমানিত গ্রাহকগণকে নিম্নোক্ত বিষয়গুলো গুরুত্বসহকারে খরচ রাখার জন্য অনুরোধ জানানো যাচ্ছে।

কোন টেলিযোগাযোগ গ্রাহক বকেয়া পাওনা পরিশোধ না করলে টি এন্ড টি বোর্ড টেলিগ্রাফ এন্ডের ক্ষমতা বলে আইন প্রয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আরোপিত জরিমানার ন্যায় বকেয়া আদায় করতে পারে।

★ গ্রাহকের কোন একটি টেলিফোন, টেলিগ্রাফ ও ফ্যাক্স-এর বিল বকেয়ার কারণে ঐ গ্রাহকের সমুদয় টেলিযোগাযোগ সার্ভিস/সংযোগ বকেয়া পরিশোধ না করা পর্যন্ত বিচ্ছিন্ন রাখার বিধান রয়েছে।

★ যত দিন খেলাপি গ্রাহক তার সমুদয় বকেয়া পরিশোধ না করবেন ততদিন পর্যন্ত ঐ গ্রাহকের ডাক সার্ভিসও স্থগিত রাখার ব্যবস্থা বিদ্যমান আছে।

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