

Atomic Energy Commission official says.

Country has vast potential sources of nuclear power

Bangladesh has vast potential for finding radioactive metal, uranium, in Daulki fault passing through Sylhet, Mymensingh and Joypurhat, which could be the best source of country's nuclear power.

Uranium has high energy value as one kg uranium produces energy equivalent to 20,000 tons of coal burning. It is very much cost-effective also," an expert at Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission told UNB.

Dr Munir Ahmed, Chief Geologist and Director of Nuclear Mineral Unit of BAEC, said along with uranium some other radioactive bodies like thorium and potassium could also be found.

In original form, uranium is found in stone form, and then it can be refined and transformed into powder, metallic or solid form.

Uranium is the main fuel of generating nuclear power. The government should gear up the abandoned Rooppur Nuclear Power Project in Paksey for generating cost-effective nuclear power, Dr Ahmed suggested.

"Country's uranium could be used as main fuel in Rooppur or, it needed, it should be imported for generating power which is more cost-effective than coal," he said.

Country's geological environment showed the signs of availability of the precious metal. In 1985, the BAEC geologist came across sources at Fultola, Moulvibazar, showing potential of high-grade uranium mineral.

According to, reliable

sources, a team of geologists of BAEC will conduct uranium search along the Sylhet-Joypurhat-Daulki fault belt under a recently approved project. This will in effect be resumption of the search which had been abandoned nine years ago at the behest of the then government who did not assign any reason for the action.

The three-year project under uranium exploration pro-

gramme of the Atomic Energy Commission involving a cost of Tk 1.38 crore was approved by the government in April this year and exploration would begin next winter.

As late as in 1970, Dr GW Gableman who was associated with the oil and gas exploration programme indicated Bangladesh as a uranium-potential zone in an article published in the International Atomic Energy Journal.

Speakers at seminar urge govt

Withdraw restrictions on fertilizer import

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar yesterday have urged the government to withdraw all restrictions on imports of different types of fertilizers to meet the demands of the farmers in the country.

Under the free-market economic policy, the consumers have right to choose one from different categories of a particular item. But, only three or four kinds of fertilizers are available in the market of our country. Whereas, there are many types of fertilizers in the world market which are more suitable for our soil but not permitted to import, they said.

Organised by the Rainbow Associates/Dhaka in collaboration with the Peakward Enterprises Ltd, Hong Kong, the seminar was addressed by Mohammad Abdel Karim, Chair-

man, holding company for mining and refractories of the government of Egypt, Yehia Mahmoud Koth, Chairman of a fertilizer producing company in Egypt, Tanveerul Haque, Managing director, Rainbow Associates, Fazel Azim, Chairman, Peakward Enterprise, AHM Obaidul Bari, a fertilizer marketing expert and Ershad Mojmud.

A number of traders concerned with the fertilizer trading were also present at the seminar.

Criticizing the government's contradictory policy on fertilizer, the speakers said, the recent fertilizer crisis in the country occurred only due to lack of sound distribution policy. They also suggested to take necessary steps as early as possible to meet the demand of fertilizer in future.

Dynamic textile's AGM tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The fifth Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Dynamic Textile Industries Ltd will be held tomorrow at the Ballroom of Sonargaon Hotel.

The fourth AGM of the company was held on 6 March 1994.

In the current fiscal year, the company has made substantial improvements regarding production, sales and profit in spite of frequent power failures and inadequate supply of electricity, it is learnt.

At the fifth AGM, Sultan Rashid, Chairman of the company is expected to present his report on the activities of the company during the period of October 94 to March 95.

Rakhmonov, Aga Khan sign accord

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan, May 27: President Elnomali Rakhmonov and The Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims, on Tuesday signed an agreement of cooperation between the government of Tajikistan and The Aga Khan Development Network, says a press release.

Seminar at BARC

A seminar on "Poverty alleviation through low-cost housing," organised by Rural Housing Forum, will be held here at the BARC Auditorium today (Sunday), reports UNB.

Housing and Public Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia will inaugurate the seminar as chief guest, said a press release yesterday.

BUDGET '95-96: Business leaders speak out

BRMS chief urges govt to waive VAT from restaurant sector

Bangladesh Restaurant Malik Samity (BRMS) president Khondaker Ruhul Amin has said the restaurant owners have become the worst victims of Value Added Tax (VAT).

In an interview with The Daily Star, he urged the government to waive VAT from this sector saying the restaurant owners are burdened with it.

He was interviewed by Rafiq Hasan.

The text of his interview follows:

The Daily Star (DS): What is your sector's expectation from the next budget? Were the priorities in the last budget properly implemented?

Khondaker Ruhul Amin (KRA): We have already placed a proposal to the government on behalf of our sector to abolish VAT.

DS: What is the recent trend in your sector? Is it growing or declining? Why?

KRA: The restaurant owners are burdened with the imposition of VAT and as such, they are no longer willing to invest more capital. If this situation continues, there will be no development of this sector.

DS: What kind of problems did your sector face with the fiscal policies adopted in the last budget? VAT, tax structure and tariff duties?

KRA: Not only the last budget, the very adoption of VAT has left a negative effect to this sector. I have earlier said that the effect of the adoption of VAT has apprehensively declined the monetary circulation as the capital investment declines day by day in this sector.

After the proclamation of VAT in 1991, the restaurant owners have become the worst victims of it.

The consumers are directly the payers of VAT. But, to the context of restaurants, the picture is quite different, ignorant, illiterate and day labourers are the main customers. These people are reluctant of paying VAT and not only that, they hesitate to take receipt of Cash Memo. On the other hand, the restaurants earlier, pay the VAT when they purchase the commodities in order to manufacture foods. So the restaurant owners have to pay double tax. This is unquestionably a great injustice to us.

DS: What is your opinion on the ongoing economic reforms? What has been the impact of the reforms on your sector?

KRA: The adoption of new fiscal policy (Value Added Tax) set a new era in the economic sector of the country. But the traditional system of collecting the revenues should be re-arranged. The on-going system of revenue collection is not far from technical faults and dishonesty as well.

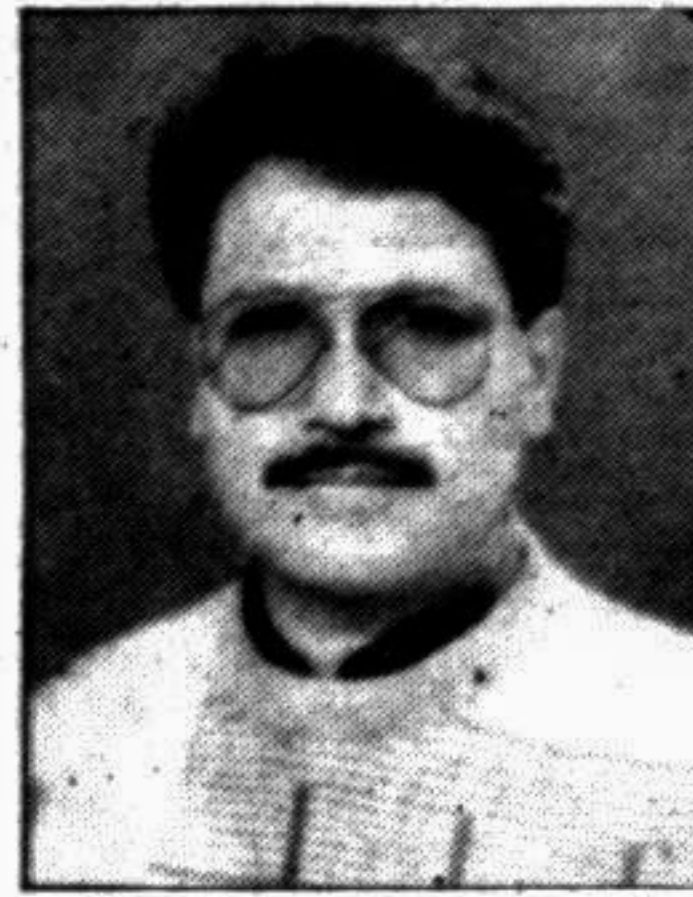
So, the government is deprived of due revenue. Revenue collection, according to my opinion, should be pressed by a guardian for respective sector appointed by the government. In this sector, the system is in operation and the revenue increased much higher than before. The association is solely playing the role of pressing for the payment of revenues and main-

tains co-operation with the authority of revenue.

DS: Would you like to suggest any major policy changes to gear up the economy?

KRA: The existing economic situation may be overcome by (1) massive irrigation and adoption of major plan (say 5 years) (2) technical education (compulsory).

DS: What is your opinion about the current political situation?



Khondaker Ruhul Amin

uation? How is it affecting your sector?

KRA: "Politics for state and state for politics" must be the fundamental ethics of a sovereign and independent country. Political instability never brings any positive output. In the business sector, political harmony and stability is a pre-requisite condition failing which economic emancipation could never be achieved. The current political situation is a great threat to the business sector as well as the economic security.

DS: How do you look at the overall economic scenario of the country and what are your suggestions to improve it?

KRA: The overall economic scenario of the country is far from expectation. Drought and natural calamity create havoc every year. In addition, the regional climate has been changed due to green house effect and the Farakka Barrage. To my opinion, these adversities which are held responsible for the hindrance of economic progress could be solved by: (a) Massive afforestation (b) Co-operative agro-farming (c) Modernisation of agricultural equipment (d) Communication development and (e) Agro-based massive training programme.

DS: How many members are there in your association? When was it formed?

KRA: Bangladesh Restaurant Malik Samity is an infant child. After proclamation of VAT in 1991, the restaurant owners found it necessary to assemble under a common flag and as a symbol of unity, it came into being. The number of its registered members is above 6000.

DS: What was the estimated annual turnover of your sector last fiscal and how much is it likely to be in 1994-95?

KRA: The estimated figure of the annual turnover from this sector in the last fiscal year was below Tk one crore. It may be increased to above Tk 2 crore in 1994-95.

(Readers are invited to send their views on the next budget along with passport size photographs.)



M A Abdel Karim Sabek, Chairman, Holding Company for Mining and Refractories of the govt of Egypt, delivering his keynote address on fertilizer to media representatives, fertilizer importers and Bangladesh Fertilizer Association leaders at a meeting organized by Peakward Enterprises (HK) Ltd, Hong Kong and Rainbow Associates Ltd at a local hotel yesterday.

Chief of govt watchdog body on environment says

80 pc diseases in Dhaka water-borne

The chief of a government watchdog body on environment yesterday said they found the water supplied by WASA in Dhaka city "very alarming" in case of human consumption, reports UNB.

"Eighty per cent of total diseases in Dhaka are water-borne," said Syed A T M Wahed, Director General of the

Department of Environment which regularly monitors waters of WASA and rivers.

He said many rivers of the country contained industrial wastes polluting water and the situation became also very alarming.

Since is the case for air, Wahed pointed out, as, according to a study done by the de-

partment, air in most localities in Dhaka, excluding some residential areas, is polluted.

He attributed the air pollution to motor vehicles, particularly auto-tempo and auto-rickshaw, which emit unburnt carbon.

"I don't know why the authorities give them permission," Wahed questioned, venting serious anxiety over the situation. "We're heading towards a terrible situation," he said, adding that various lung disease are on the increase.

The official viewed that a policy framework be formulated suggesting which vehicles should ply the city streets

without much degradation of the environment.

Bangladesh Health Education Society (BHES), a voluntary organisation, arranged the day-long conference on "Environmental Health Promotion and Educational Initiatives" in the NEC auditorium.

Chief guest of the inaugural session Dr Abdullah Al-Muti Sharfuddin said mass awareness be raised to fight environmental degradation as well as health complications.

He suggested better coordination among the government agencies like health, local government, communications and environment ministries in implementing various measures to check pollution.

Observing a said state in health situation, he said life expectancy in the country is much below the world average. Only six per cent children are supposed to be nutritionally normal while the vast 70 per cent are anemic, he informed.

While some success achieved in oral rehydration therapy and in contraceptive prevalence, statistics showed very few people deriving benefits from the country's health infrastructure, said Dr Sharfuddin, an eminent scientist and Director of Campaign for Popular Education.

Chaired by BHES president Prof Khurshida Khanom, the inaugural function was also addressed by NIPSOM Director Prof Sadeka Tahera Khanam, Diabetic Association Treasurer Major Gen (retd) A R Khan, Professor Emeritus A K M Kafiluddin, and Mahbubuzzaman, Dr M Asaduzzaman, Minati Prabha Chowdhury and Sitara Musa of BHES.

Gachihata Acquaculture Farm booming

As the rural rubicund rays of the falling sun was pulling the nature towards twilight, a man successful in his mission was then offering a winning smile beaming as an autumn dawn, reports BSS.

The dream of a soldier-turned-fish culturist is a reality now after nine years of tireless efforts and unflinching will power of the 43 years old entrepreneur who has been fighting protein deficiency in his area.

His fish project of two ponds on six acres of sandy land with an humble investment of Taka 3.5 lakh has now turned into a vast multipurpose farm of around Taka 12 crore.

Titled as "Gachihata Acquaculture Farm", the project is situated on an area of 110 acres with a good sized livestock and dairy farm, poultry farm and 56 fish ponds with common banks.

Besides, 20,000 mehogany and hundreds of ipilipil trees in' and around the project lends it a picturesque beauty.

"I must do something constructive and this spirit has fully worked in my mind after retirement from Bangladesh Army as a major in 1986," Major (retd) Akhtaruzzaman said in his usual solemn voice as he was sitting on an arm-chair in the project office in Gachihata under Katiadi thana, only 15 kms away from Kishoreganj town.

The present production from the farm is: 300 to 500 kgs of fish and 500 litres of milk a day and 6,000 to 8,000 one-day chicks a week besides a large number of eggs.

The milk production will be around 2,000 litres a day after import of 200 cows in the near future. The latest inclusion in the farm is 25 Frisian cows from Australia in January this year.

Major (Retd) Akhter said improved variety of cows would be sold from the farm to local buyers and dairy farms from the second half of next year.

The project, which had its debut in 1986, was expanded to eight ponds on an area of 22 acres and capital rising to Taka

15 lakh in 1994. Unfortunately, the project suffered a serious damage in flood that year.

Major (Retd) Akhter did not stop there but started the project with renewed enthusiasm to build up it again. He borrowed Taka 33 lakh from Midas, a lending organisation for private entrepreneurs, and further expanded it up to 19 ponds with USAID expertise in 1989.

"This time, I started the project in a more organised way with a sort of practical knowledge gained from 'new economic trend'," he said. A small scale dairy farm with 40 local cows was launched with the project for producing cowdung as fish feed. Besides, poultry farm was included to make it a multipurpose project.

According to him, under the new economic trend where Taka 15,000 can be earned from one acre of land by traditional farming with a total 35 workdays a year, but a one-acre pond with grass on banks, a shed for hens in its midst and a cowshed in any corner can produce 21,000 kgs of fish, 1,20,000 eggs from 400 hens and 9000 litres of milk from five cows a year.

All these together will bring Taka around 3.5 lakh a year with employment of eight to ten persons, he said.

After knowing this fact, he paid off the Midas loans in 1991 and took Taka 70 lakh as loans from Saudi-Bangladesh Industrial and Agricultural Investment Company (SABINCO) to expand the project further in 1992. In only two years, he got the result from the new

economic trend and soon he paid off the SABINCO loans in 1994.

Meanwhile, he has become a household name in his area which helped him a lot to be elected as a member of parliament with BNP ticket in 1991. He played a constructive role as an MP both in parliament and outside which was acclaimed by the press as well as politicians.

He received further loans of Taka eight crore from Agrani Bank in late last year. Taka four crore has already been disbursed by the bank.

This money was spent for import of 25 Frisian cows from Australia, construction of new sheds for cows and hens and import of fish feed.

"Inshallah, I will be able to pay off the Agrani Bank loans in the next five to six years," he said but regretted that he did not get the subsidy as announced by the government for import of cows due to some bureaucratic tangle.

This year, Major (retd) Akhter has come to the final stage of signing an agreement with two Taiwanese and Thai farms for introducing a shrimp culture project in his farm. "It is going to be launched very soon under joint collaboration of Bangladesh, Taiwan and Thailand," he said.

Being the Chairman and Managing Director of the farm, Major (retd) Akhtaruzzaman manages all sides except maintenance and procurement which are being looked after by his wife as the director. "She is no less dynamic than I am," he said with a smile.

Referring to present serious scarcity of fish all over Bang-

ladesh, he said such havoc was caused due to withdrawal of water from common rivers by India, use of pesticide in an unbalanced way in the agricultural land and man-made causes. He also mentioned random catch of small fish as responsible for fast depletion of fish varieties.

According to his opinion, entrepreneurs should come forward with such projects taking advantage of facilities being provided by the government. This will help a lot to fulfil the national demand for protein, he observed.

Referring to country's 2.3 crore acres of arable land, he said over three crore tonnes of paddy could be produced from at least two crore acres by applying scientific method. He said there could be a surplus of 60 lakh tonnes after meeting the domestic demand for food.

In another 30 lakh acres, he said, livestock rearing, fish farming and poultry rearing can easily be pursued through the same formulae which will meet the national demand and leave a certain amount for export.

"I am sure we will no more be poor if our lands are used in scientific way for production," he said.

Speaking about country's 1.3 million ponds in rural areas, he said these ponds could be used for fish farming under cooperative system through single management.

"It is time to do something rather than spending time in rhetoric," he said as he was getting out of the pick-up car in front of his office in Baridhara here after driving all the way from Gachihata to Dhaka.

Pena defends proposed US-UK aviation deal

WASHINGTON, May 27: The controversial proposed mini-deal for giving US airlines slightly more access to United Kingdom airports was the best the Clinton administration could get now, Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena says, according to USIS.

In another aviation development, the United States and Japan have failed to agree on reopening talks in their long-standing dispute, leaving the administration to decide whether to impose sanctions.

In May 24 testimony before the Senate Commerce aviation subcommittee, a clearly frustrated Pena told equally frustrated senators that the 1978 bilateral US-UK aviation agreement, condemned by subsequent US administrations as unfairly restrictive, leaves the United States with no negotiation leverage.

"Frankly, they don't anything," Pena said. "They are in a wonderful position now because of an agreement signed years ago."

He said the two sides have tentatively scheduled talks June 1-2 to agree formally on

the first-phase limited agreement, or mini-deal, but only on the US condition that the British agree to a second-phase round of talks with a timetable for opening the UK market further.

The first phase mini deal would include UK approval for a Chicago-London flight by second US airline and US approval of more frequent British Airways flights between Philadelphia and London.

Pena insisted the second round of talks must bring about limited additional access for US airlines at London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

His position, for approving the mini-deal with the promise of more talks, invited criticism from senators as well as US airlines.

"We do not place much stock in the vague commitment to negotiate phase two at a later date," American Airlines Chairman Robert Crandall said in his testimony. "On several occasions in the past, UK promises for subsequent negotiation have evaporated once it has secured what it seeks."



FICCI Secretary off to Manila

Jahangir Bin Alam, Secretary of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, left Dhaka for Manila yesterday on an invitation from the Asian Development Bank, says a press release.

He will attend a Conference on "Emerging Global Trading Environment and Developing Asia" scheduled for 29-30 May 1995 at the ADB Headquarters in Manila.

Russia's gold reserve rises

MOSCOW, May 27: Russia's gold reserve presently stands at 309 tons, five tons above the early-1995 level, Evgeny Bychkov, Chairman of the State Commission for Precious Metals, told reporters yesterday.

One hundred and twenty tons of the reserve are held by the commission, the rest by the central bank of the Russian Federation, Bychkov added.



Begum Sarwari Rahman, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs, gave away Agrani Bank Shishu Natto Prizes in the city recently. Mustafa Aminur Rashid, Managing Director of Agrani Bank, Golam Kibria, Director of Shishu Academy, and Sirajuddin Ahmed, Joint Secretary of concerned ministry, are also seen in the picture.