

# WB experts caution against reintroduction of agri subsidy

By Staff Correspondent

World Bank experts yesterday cautioned against reintroduction of agricultural subsidy while strongly advocating continued market oriented reforms.

The Bank officials also reiterated the need for "neutral" government policies, complete abolition of subsidies, integrated resource management, comprehensive water resource management and providing autonomy to the research institutions, to accelerate agricultural growth.

Ridwan Ali, Chief of Agricultural and Natural Resources Division of South Asia Country Department-1 in the World Bank headquarters in Washington, and his colleague Rashid Faruque were exchanging on various issues on agriculture in Bangladesh with members of the Economic Reporters' Forum. World Bank local mission Chief Pierre Landell-Mills and Naimuddin Chowdhury of agriculture wing were also present during the discussion at the resident mission office.

Ridwan Ali strongly suggested that policymakers in Bangladesh must withstand growing pressure for subsidies and government interventions in agriculture.

Added Rashid Faruque: "Subsidy is not the solution... market should be allowed to run efficiently. Farmers should be ensured timely and adequate supply of inputs."

Landell-Mills said eco-

nomie impact of spendings on rural roads, health and education could be greater than return from providing subsidy.

The experts, here in connection with a World Bank workshop on agriculture, suggested intensive research in agriculture, crop diversification, drawing up water management strategy and, above all, market-driven production and marketing.

Dwelling on the role of the government in the agriculture sector, Ali said "There would be some provocation for reintroduction of subsidies. But the government should be limited to its regulatory role, get out of the productive activities and government should not do what the NGOs and productive enterprises could do."

In reply to a question on how to overcome the recent slowdown in the agricultural growth, Rashid Faruque said, "There is a need for integrated natural resource management. Farmers know what is best for them and the government should create the level playing ground."

On diversification, he said, "Diversification should not be seen as an end in itself but as a means to an end. Economic reasons will force the farmers to make their choices. Farmers do response to the demand."

Referring to the impact of Uruguay Round on Bangladesh's agricultural prospects, he said "May be, in the short

run the country will have problems. But with efficient production base, lower labour wage, the country may reap the benefit."

Pierre Landell-Mills, commenting on how decline on IDA finances would affect WB agricultural lending in Bangladesh, said "Bangladesh should have to prove its credit-worthiness in receiving the IDA finances."

He said limited absorbing capacity, slow project preparation and poor implementation might act as impediment to secure IDA credit in a competing aid climate.

Answering a question, Rashid Faruque warned against any dictated price of farm products. "Any dictated price on political consideration can bring disaster to production. Farmers will simply not produce if they do not get fair return. The market must operate its own way," he said.

On irrigation, Faruque said groundwater would continue to be the main source of irrigation in Bangladesh in the medium term. He, however, suggested a comprehensive national water management strategy in view of gradual drawing down of water table.

Ridwan Ali, to a question on research, said poor incentive package was prompting qualified Bangladesh experts to leave their homeland. He recommended a contract-based research as a solution to the problem.



The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) observed a token hunger strike in front of its office in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## Bid to capture halls

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On the roof. They ransacked the rooms of the activists of JCD and other student organisations, said eyewitness.

When the news spread, agitated general students brought out a procession and the armed activists of the ICS chased them. ICS activists also fired in the air while chasing the general students. The students took shelter at the Vice Chancellor's office. The Shibir activists opened fire aiming at the VC's office too, according to witnesses.

The ICS activists also exploded cocktails and challenged the police when they came from Savar thana at the call of the authorities, campus sources said.

A reinforcement of 200 police personnel was sent from Dhaka.

After an incident of campus violence in 1989, the ICS was barred by the All Party Students' Unity (APSU) from all their activities within the university. It made its first attempt yesterday to stage a comeback to the campus since that incident.

Meanwhile, the JU Teachers' Association (JUTA), JCD, Chhatra Union, Chhatra League (S-P) in separate statements, condemned yesterday's violence on the cam-

## BGMEA

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pus and demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible.

Police raid was going on in Kamal Uddin Hall till the filing of this report last night.

All the examinations of Honours classes that were scheduled to be held yesterday were cancelled.

## AL protests

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was hartal, he said adding, "The difference is that they observed a 15-minute hartal and we go for 12, 24 hour hartal. There is no alternative to hartal in democratic movement," he said.

Zillur Rahman said the BNP is desperately trying to cling to power by any means as it realised that there was no public support for it. But it would not succeed and people would realise the demand for elections under a neutral caretaker government, he added.

Earlier, Sramik League held a rally at the same venue protesting Wednesday's 'police action.' Presided over by Niaz Mohammad Khan, the rally was addressed by, among others, Zillur Rahman and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Mafay.

Later, a procession was brought out which paraded different city streets.

## Writ challenging 11th, 12th amendments dismissed

By SC Correspondent

The High Court Division yesterday dismissed the writ petition filed by 'Field Marshal Shaitan' challenging the 11th and 12th amendment of the Constitution.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Bimalendu Bikash Roy Chowdhury and Justice Muhammad Abdul Mannan by an order dismissed the petition for default and also for misjoinder of respondents.

But the petitioner along with his lawyer later appeared before the court and verbally prayed for restoration of the petition and in response the court instructed the lawyer for the petitioner to file an application swearing affidavit.

The lawyer for the petitioner said that at the late hour he submitted the application for restoration of the petition in its original number and form in the chamber of the court and the court also fixed the matter to come up in the list on Sunday next.

Earlier, the court said in its order, "As the very name of the petitioner arose suspicion in our mind we asked the learned Advocate for the petitioner to produce the petitions today. Neither the petitioner nor his lawyer is present in the court. In the circumstances it seems to us that the petitioner is a fictitious person. None is, therefore, aggrieved."

# Tidal surge hits

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However, the severe cyclonic storm that formed in the Bay of Bengal lost its strength significantly after crossing the Orissa coast in India and was moving towards the coastal regions of Bangladesh till late last night.

Shah Alam, a meteorologist at the Dhaka Met Office, told The Daily Star that wind was blowing at 80 kilometre per hour at the peripheral coastal belts but the storm was gradually weakening till Thursday midnight.

Earlier, a bulletin of Storm Warning Centre said the severe cyclonic storm with a core of Hurricane wind over northwest Bay close to the Orissa coast moved northward and crossed the coast near Puri at three yesterday afternoon.

The Hurricane wind later weakened into a cyclonic storm and lay centered near Cuttack in India. It was likely to move in a north-north-easterly direction further inland and might weaken gradually weather forecasts said.

Under the influence of the storm, gusty or squally wind speeding up to 60 to 80 kilometre per hour (KPH) with heavy to very heavy rainfalls would continue to affect the coastal regions of Sathkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat, Peropur, Barguna, Barisal and Bhola, said the bulletin of the Storm Warning Centre.

The Khulna DC said that a strong breeze blew around 10 last night and some parts of the district's low-lying areas went under two to three feet

water. Quoting the Thana Nirbahl Officer (TNO) of Koira, Our Khulna Correspondent reports that a trawler with a bridal party on board capsized in river Chunkuri around 6 pm and 12 passengers were missing.

Low lying areas of the coastal districts of Sathkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat, Peropur, Barguna, Barisal, Patuakhali and Bhola and their off-shore islands and chars are likely to be inundated by a storm surge of between five to eight feet higher than the normal astronomical tide, said the special weather bulletin. The maximum astronomical tide is 10 feet in these areas above mean sea-level.

All fishing boats and trawlers over north Bay have been advised to remain in shelter till further notice.

Maritime port of Mongla has been advised to keep hoisted danger signal number seven while the maritime ports of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar have been advised to lower danger signal number six and hoist distant warning signal number two.

River ports of the coastal districts of Sathkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat, Peropur, Barguna, Barisal, Patuakhali and Bhola have been advised to keep hoisted riverine danger signal number three. River ports of the coastal districts of Noakhali, Feni, Laxmipur, Chandpur, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar have been advised to lower riverine warning signal number two and hoist cautionary signal number one.

# Manzur murder case

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Criminal Procedure and the statements of retraction.

Another division bench of the HC comprising Justice M M Hoque and Justice Mohammad Nurul Islam on August 30 last issued rule on the government and stayed all further proceedings of the case pending in the court below.

The government went to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the HC order, but later prayed for withdrawal of the petition and Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf of the Appellate Division in his chamber granted the government prayer with cost.

Barrister Abul Mansur, brother of late Major General M A Manzur lodged an FIR against Ershad, Major (ret'd) Kazi Emdadul Huq, Major Gen (Ret'd) Abdul Latif, Lt Col (ret'd) Shamsur Rahman and Lt Col Kamal Uddin Bhuiyan on February 28 last with the Panchlaish Police station, Chittagong.

Following the killing of late President Ziaur Rahman Manzur was allegedly murdered at Chittagong Cantonment on June 1, 1981.

After submission of the charge sheet the case was

transferred from Chittagong to Dhaka Sessions Judge Court by a notification on August 3 last.

The Dhaka Sessions Judge on August 16 took cognizance of the offence under Section 302/109/201/34 of the Penal Code against all the accused.

The sessions court also refused a defence prayer to supply copies of statements recorded under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and limited the number of lawyers for each of the accused.

Moreover, the Sessions Judge held his court outside the Dhaka Judge Court premises in a building opposite to Dhaka Central Jail at Nazimuddin Road, but the court was not established by a gazette notification as required.

But the government published a gazette notification on August 28 last.

Advocate Khondker Mahbub Hossain assisted by Advocate Golam Kibria moved for Ershad, while A F M Hassan Arif and Amirul Kabir Chowdhury, Deputy Attorney Generals and Syed Abu Kawsar, Assistant Attorney General, appeared on behalf of the state.

# Govt, Opposition urged to resolve crisis thru' dialogue

Participants at a national conference, of the professionals yesterday urged both government and opposition to resolve the nation's prolonged political crisis through dialogue and shun politics of hartal for greater interest of democracy and to protect the constitution of the country, reports BSS.

Held at the National Press Club auditorium in the afternoon, the conference, organised by the newly-floated 'Peshajibi Oikya Parishad' — Professionals' Unity Council — was presided over by former Vice Chancellor of the Chittagong University Dr Abdul Aziz.

A number of professional leaders participated in the discussion while Amanullah Kabir, a senior journalist and BFUJ Secretary General conducted it.

In his presidential speech, Dr Abdul Aziz observed that every government must protect the constitution of the country. He said the current crisis in politics should also be solved through the constitutional framework.

## Gaibandha

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and used lethal weapons. Police said Zahid Hasan Titu, 22, a degree student of the Gobindaganj Degree College, got splinter injuries during the fight and was chopped to death by the rivals. The BCL claimed Titu as its activist.

The BCL activists swung into rowdy protest in the thana headquarters, blocked the Dhaka-Dinajpur road and set fire to at least 13 shops at Jahanara Market.

The firefighters could not extinguish the flame as they were resisted by the local people. Traffic on the Dhaka-Dinajpur highway remained suspended till filing the report at about 10:30 pm.

Additional police have been deployed in the areas to fend off further trouble.

## Rhone Poulenc

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the dispute to the Labour Court.

The rule issued upon a writ petition by the management has been made returnable in two weeks.

The union went on a strike from August 21 after negotiations between the management and the union had broken down on the question of pay rise and period of agreement regarding pay rise.

It was stated in the petition that the 82-day strike caused scarcity of life saving medicine and caused serious concern amongst the foreign investors.

Sources present in yesterday's tripartite meeting said a consensus has been reached regarding pay rise. But the union leaders are yet to give their decision regarding period of pay rise.



Sequence of a dance presented at a cultural function at a city hotel yesterday, organised by the Thai Airways to celebrate its 30 years in Dhaka. — Star photo

# Cost of political impasse

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support from the government," the ambassador said, adding that supply of electricity, port capacity and customs handling should be improved.

"A very large portion of tax goes to support the state enterprises. This subsidy should go for sectors like education and health."

Merrill also stressed diversification of exports and reforms to improve loan recovery.

The ambassador said although the US assistance to Bangladesh was decreasing, trade was growing rapidly. He mentioned that since there would be no quotas in garment exports to the US in the future, "Bangladesh would have to compete on efficiency." By eliminating child labour from garment industry, the country could increase its competitiveness, he added.

Earlier, MCCI President M Anis Ud Dowla, in his address, said that with the

adoption of free market system, economic relations between the two countries would "depend on the USA, providing the necessary support in the same manner as it has worked together with many countries."

He said the political stalemate has also stagnated the economy and added that "The politicians in exercising their political rights have generally tended to ignore the needs of the economy."

"Neither the government nor the Opposition has played the roles expected of them in a democratic set-up," he maintained.

"The government has not done well in bringing about a consensus on critical socio-economic issues and also in mobilising public opinion behind its economic reform policies," the MCCI president remarked.

"The Opposition failed in ensuring transparency in government's actions and policies," he added.

"In this situation, it is natural that bad politics will scare away good economic opportunities," he said.

He sought US help in resolving the impasse as "any further deterioration will limit our chances to avail of the excellent business opportunities."

The MCCI president also suggested that the PL-480 fund be provided to trade bodies to help increase industrial productivity.

He sought US help to develop the research cell of the MCCI into a 'fully-fledged think tank' to enable the private sector to compete in the global market.

The ambassador assured evaluation of the projects through exchange of views.

Later, the Ambassador replied to questions from the members of the MCCI.

In response to Faisal Siddiqui's suggestion, who is also a member of the MCCI, about easing the visa system for businessmen, Merrill said, "We are looking what can be done for this."

# The Midnight File

## Ukraine, Macedonia join Council of Europe

STRASBOURG, Nov 9: Ukraine and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia today became the 37th and 38th countries to join the council of Europe. Macedonia, which two months ago resolved a bitter conflict with neighbouring Greece over both its official name and its flag, becomes the second former Yugoslav Republic to join the body, the first being Slovenia, reports AFP.

## HC stays proceedings of Radar Case

A High Court division bench yesterday issued rule upon the government to show cause why the proceedings in Special Case No. 155 of 1994 better known as the Radar Case now pending before the special tribunal of sixth additional sessions judge, Dhaka, should not be quashed, reports BSS.

The bench comprising Justice Mohammad Mozammel Huq and Justice Mahfuzur Rahman also stayed all further proceedings of the Radar Case against accused HM Ershad.

Ershad filed a petition before the High Court division bench to quash the proceedings of the Radar Case pleading that the case against him is not sustainable in law and the court below erred in law by framing the charge and prejudicing the matter of malafide as alleged and without hearing the petitioner.

The case in brief is that Md Ali Haider, an officer of

the Bureau of Anti-Corruption, lodged a case with enforcement police on May 4, 1994 against deposed President HM Ershad, former air chief Sultan Mahmud, former air chief Momtaz Uddin Ahmed, Shazad Ali, director of United Traders Limited and director AKM MUSA alleging that for personal pecuniary interest of the accused persons they recommended and accordingly purchased inferior looking radars for Bangladesh Air Force from the USA by cancelling the order to purchase the radar from France by which the government has suffered loss of 20.48 million dollars equivalent to Taka 64,04,42,918.10.

## Father, son killed in Lalmonirhat

LALMONIRHAT, Nov 9: Unidentified miscreants killed the night guard of the Government Vocational Institute and his son at the institute premises early today, reports UNB.

Police said Shamsul Haq, 50, and his son Rafiqul Islam Shimu, 15, were found dead in their room on the campus. The victims hailed from Chithulia village in Dunot thana of Bogra district Rafiqul was the candidate of vocational final year examination under the institute.

## Strike at RU

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Shameem Ahmed, a third year student of Marketing, and Hasazumman Mehedi, a second year student of Management were stabbed in front of central library of the university.

The victims were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. The reason behind the incident could not be known immediately.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) was holding an emergency meeting at Jubert Guest house at the time of filing of this report at 10:30 pm. The teachers at the meeting urged the politicians to help eliminate terrorism from the campus.

## Military plane

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which local residents said could only be reached on foot, said Daniel Lujan, the police chief in the town of Villa Dolores.

The aircraft, a twin-turboprop fokker 27, was carrying 55 people, including 37 air force cadets and 13 children, a military spokesman said.

He said an inquiry was underway to find out why the children were on the plane.

Police chief Daniel Lujan had earlier put the number of passengers at 57, with 25 cadets and eight children.

About an hour before the accident, the airplane's crew sent two distress signals, saying they were having problems in a violent storm over rugged terrain, the spokesman said.

## Medical board for Ershad

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The government yesterday constituted a five-member medical board to examine the health condition of deposed president HM Ershad, who is now reported to have been suffering from jaundice, reports BSS.

Headed by Prof Abu Taher, Director of PG Hospital, the board's other members are Prof CH Kabir, Head of the Department of Surgery, PG Hospital, Dr Mobin Khan, liver specialist, PG Hospital, Prof Niseruddin of Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Civil Surgeon of Dhaka.

Ershad, who is now in the Dhaka central jail, has so far been convicted in four cases.

## Open University

From Page 1

Syed Lutf Ali, Director of the media centre, located at the Teachers Training College (TTC) premises at Dhanmondi, alleged that the students of the TTC started pelting stones and blasting cocktails from around 9:30 in the morning which lasted for about an hour and a half.

On a visit to the spot, this correspondent saw broken windows, burnt equipment, disconnected telephone lines, drops of blood on floor and met the panic stricken staff members of the centre.

Of the burnt equipment there were two audio editing panels, out of the six such panels imported from Japan. Besides, production vans and air conditioners were also damaged.

When contacted, the VC of BOU, Shamsur Ali, said, "some vested quarters were working behind the scene to sabotage the project." The issue will be taken up with the law enforcing agencies, he added.

Dhanmondi Police, when contacted, acknowledged the incident but could not give any detail. However, a complaint has been lodged by BOU, the police added.

## PM: Dialogue

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Our Staff Correspondent adds: Begum Zia discussed with her senior party colleagues last night the draft of her third letter to Sheikh Hasina. She had a three-hour meeting with them, until midnight.

Meanwhile, a source close to the citizens' group said, "They will again seek Hasina's appointment today (Friday) to discuss the PM's message and other issues relating to the proposed dialogue between the two national leaders."

## Noor Hossain

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Noor Hossain and other martyrs to anti-autocracy movement through making the movement for elections under a neutral caretaker government a success.

Many political and socio-cultural organisations have taken up elaborate programmes to mark the day.

Awami League will hold a rally at 3 pm today at Bangabandhu Avenue where Sheikh Hasina will preside.

## Auranga

From Page 1

shot dead. The petition said that at present Auranga is very ill due that unremoved bullet and he is under treatment in the Post Graduate Hospital.

Auranga was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Additional Session Judge, 2nd Court, Dhaka in 1993 in the Ali Azam murder case.

The convict preferred an appeal before the HC against the judgment and order of conviction and sentence which is pending for disposal.

Auranga was arrested in 1992 from Hotel Purbani in connection with a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act in which he got acquitted and later he was charged in the present case.

Advocate Sirajul Huq moved for Auranga while Assistant Attorney General Syed Abu Kawsar represented the state.

## Ctg: Workers

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when they were assured by the authorities of resolving their problems by November 18, sources said.

The workers and employees were agitating for reopening as well as payment of arrears since the lay-off of the mills on October 28.