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Shortage of TSP acute in market

By Govinda Shil

The fertiliser market has an acute shortage of Triple Super Phosphate (TSP) and the government policy is found to be inconsistent to meet the entire demand through imports, officials and businessmen said.

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) sources said the country requires about four to 4.5 lakh metric tons of TSP annually while it can produce only 75,000 metric tons of TSP.

BCIC's lone Phosphate Factory in Chittagong produces another 75,000 metric tons of single Super Phosphate (SSP) while its annual demand is around 150,000 to 200,000 metric tons.

"Due to bureaucratic overhaul, importers feel discouraged to import TSP, though its demand is high in the country," said an importer, Syed A Mokarrum, an experienced TSP dealer said only 40,000 of TSP has been im-

ported so far during this season.

He said SSP has only 16 per cent phosphate contents while TSP has 46 per cent approximately.

"A consignment of 20,000 tons came from USA on January 3, but I failed to take delivery in time," said Mokarrum. He alleged that the National Board of Revenue (NBR) ignored the official order from the Ministry of Agriculture to release the fertiliser in propilin bags. NBR asked the importer to use jute bag to pack the fertiliser according to the Jute Ministry's directives.

"TSP is an acidic fertiliser which cannot be put into jute bags," the importer argued and requested the Ministry of Agriculture, NBR and the Ministry of Jute to let them allow propilin bag.

"NBR refused three times the Ministry's orders and I had to pay 80,000 US dollars

for delay in delivery," Mokarrum pointed out. This would lead TSP price at more than Taka 540 for per 50 kg bag at the consumer's level, he said. The price of TSP at the port level was around Taka 510 per bag.

Finally, the Jute Ministry agreed to unload the TSP in the propilin bags on Tuesday. It was too late for an importer to market the product at a comparatively low price, he said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA) thinks that the government policy was responsible for less use of TSP in the country.

"The government fixed price of TSP is much lower than the import price," said Abdul Baten, Executive Secretary of the BFA adding this leads to a price distortion between the home-produced and imported TSP in the market. "Naturally, the im-

porters do not want to involve themselves in business risks, importing TSP at higher prices," Baten pointed out.

The BFA leader said, finding no alternative, farmers use more urea and SSP fertiliser, though they should use it proportionately. He said the use of urea could be reduced to 15 lakh metric tons instead of present use at 19 lakh metric tons without harming the harvest.

Baten alleged that farmers were often cheated by some unscrupulous salers who sold SSP as TSP.

"To stop this practice, the government should ban import of granular SSP, and allow powder SSP," said an official of the BCIC.

He said that the field-level agricultural extension workers might teach the farmers about the nutrient contents of SSP and TSP.

MV Ravi starts voyage for Singapore

CHITTAGONG, Jan 26: The feeder ship, MV Ravi, Thursday started its voyage for Singapore after necessary repair, a press release of the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) said, reports BSS.

The ship's scheduled journey to Singapore on January 17 was suspended after a fire incident in its engine room.

The electric cable and motor of the ship were badly damaged due to the fire before the captain and crew members of the ship could extinguish it.

The engineers, officers and staff of the BSC after relentless efforts repaired the ship and it finally started its journey to Singapore at 3:15 pm yesterday, the press release added.

Boro crops in Bakerganj under pest attack

PATUAKHALI, Jan 26: As the standing boro crops in Bakerganj thana have been massively attacked by *pamri* pests, the local Agriculture Extension Department has announced cash award for killing the insects, reports UNB.

To eradicate the pest menace, the department has announced Tk 20 for per kg pest to be killed by the farmers.

Officials said some 450 hectares of lands in the *char* areas of the thana have been attacked by the insects.

Meanwhile, the local farmers have destroyed a huge quantity of the pests and deposited 855 kgs of them to the department during the current season.

Duchess of York offered \$1 m to host CBS show

LONDON, Jan 26: The Duchess of York has been offered 1 million dollars to host her own chat show for America's CBS television network, according to a report in a London newspaper Friday, says AP.

The Daily Mail quoted an unidentified CBS insider as saying she is in "delicate negotiations" with CBS executives.

Prince Andrew's separated wife was reported by London papers this month to have debts of more than a million pounds (1.5 million dollar) because of her lavish spending.

The Daily Mail said bosses at CBS believe she could massively boost their ratings and attract big-money advertisers and big-name celebrities eager to appear with a British royal.

It said the programme format is still under discussion. CBS executives are undecided on whether she would be filmed in Britain or the United States, it said.

The paper quoted the CBS source as saying: "It's very early days and all options are being thrown up in the air to see where they fall. All formats are being considered. She's good at promotion and in television that's half the battle."

Weekly tea sale in Ctg sees improved export demand

By Staff Correspondent

Weekly tea sale in Chittagong on Tuesday witnessed an improved export demand that led most rates to move above the last levels, market sources said.

According to the Unity Brokers Ltd's report, withdrawals stood at 24 per cent as against 15 per cent last week. Offerings consisted of 17,429 packages along with 151 packages of supplement teas.

Poland, Jordan and Sudan picked up higher brokers at dealer rates while Pakistan was active for the well-made small broken. Local traders were fairly active.

"Ramadan had no adverse effect on price. It is expected

that the strengthening tendency will continue," the report added.

The next sale is expected to be held on January 30, 1996 at 8:30 am with total offerings comprising 17,000 packages leaf and 3,300 packages dust.

Category-wise tea sale performance follows:

CTC: Bolder Brokers were in better demand and these prices were dealer by Taka 1/2, generally selling between Taka 44.50 - Taka 46.50 following quality. Medium brokers were fully firm to often dealer. Small types often inclined over last rates. Selective best lines sold between Taka 53.00 -

Taka 54.80.

Fannings were a firm market with the better liquoring and cleaner types often gaining on last. Medium and plainer types were firm to dealer. Demand however slackened towards close with some withdrawal. Selective best lines realised between Taka 53.20 - Taka 57.80.

GREEN TEA: 218 packages were on offer. FYH's sold between Taka 50.00 - Taka 54.00 YH's between Taka 39.80 - Taka 40.00 and the Hysons at Taka 43.00.

DUST: 2,790 packages along with 182 packages of supplement were on offer. Prices were generally firm to dealer.

Norway's daily oil production nears 3m barrels

OSLO, Norway, Jan 26: Norway's offshore fields pumped 2.99 million barrels of oil per day in December, to set a new record for the third consecutive month, the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate said Wednesday, reports AP.

Daily oil production in November was 2.97 million barrels, the state-owned company said. Total oil production last year increased 1.3 per cent to 989 million barrel, up from 976 million barrels pumped in 1994.

Measured in oil equivalents, the fields produced 27.8 million cubic meters (973 million cubic feet) of natural gas last year, up 3.7 per cent from 26.8 million cubic meters (938 million cubic feet) in 1994.

Russia launches communications satellite

MOSCOW, Jan 26: Russia's military space forces launched a communications satellite from the Baikonur cosmodrome on Thursday afternoon, reports AP.

The Gorizont communication satellite rode into space aboard a Proton-K heavy booster rocket, the Interfax news agency said.

It replaces an aging satellite that relays television broadcasts to about 72 million people in central Russia, the report said.

Russia now has 10 such satellites in orbit, it said.

Ontario plans to cut 27,000 jobs in two years

TORONTO, Jan 26: The government of Ontario, Canada's richest province, plans to cut 27,000 jobs or one-third of the government workforce over two years, the Toronto Star newspaper said yesterday, reports AP.

Ontario Premier Mike Harris, who campaigned on a pledge to cut half that number of jobs, will make the announcement in April in his budget speech, the report said.

White House, Republicans reach accord on stop-gap spending bill

WASHINGTON, Jan 26: The House of Representatives took up a stop-gap spending measure yesterday after Republicans and the White House reached agreement on the bill that will avert another government shutdown, reports AP.

"We have a bargain. The White House has signed off on it," said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston as he headed to the floor of the House.

White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta confirmed it, saying "we have reached agreement on a bill that the President can sign if it comes to his desk."

The President hopes that the Congress will now work with the administration so that we can reach agreement not only on the remaining 1996 appropriations bills but also on a balanced budget," he said.

The bill, which funds government operations until March 1, will replace a temporary spending bill that expires on January 26. If an agreement wasn't reached, the government would have to shut down for a third time since November.

Representatives were deliberating on the bill which includes a provision for funding foreign operations through the end of fiscal 1996.

It also funds the commerce, justice, state and judiciary departments and the veteran's administration at full spending levels approved for 1996.

Labour, health and human services, education, and the interior departments will only receive funding at 75 per cent of the level of fiscal 1995.

The bill also retains all of the Clinton administration's favourite education and crime-prevention programmes.

The bill also cuts 18 spending programmes, such as the office of technology assessment and the interstate commerce commission. It also prohibits spending on embryo research.

The agreement on the funding measure came amid sudden turn in the mood between the Republican-controlled Congress and the White House, who have been battling for months over a plan to balance the budget in seven years.

The way was opened Tuesday night by Clinton's conciliatory and well-received state of the union speech, in which he called for the two sides to agree now on what they could and set aside unresolved issues.

House speaker Newt Gingrich followed up Wednesday by proposing a partial budget agreement that would keep the government open, raise the debt ceiling and make a "down payment" on a balanced budget in seven years.

The deadlock in budget negotiations between White House experts and Republican leaders drew a warning from Monday's investors services, which threatened Wednesday to lower its quality rating on 377 billion of federal debt.

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Sonali Bank's Deputy Managing Director, Mosharrif Hossain inaugurating a tree-plantation programme at the bank's staff quarter at Motijheel in the city Thursday. The bank's general managers, A J Masudul Haque Ahmed and Yousuf Ali Hawlader, CBA President Aminul Haque Faruque and General Secretary Jamaluddin Ahmed and other officers were present on the occasion.

Balancing of the US federal budget

By Md Matul Islam

The US budget deficit has become a recurrent phenomenon — more of a rule than an exception. In this century from 1901 through 1995, US budget has been in deficit for 66 years, surplus for 26 years and balanced for only 3 years when the annual deficit recorded was less than 500,000 dollars. From 1970 through 1995, it has been continuously in deficit. With the federal debt crossing the 5.3 trillion dollar mark and the annual deficit still running as high as 200 billion dollars, there is urgent need for a national consensus on a broad framework for balancing the budget.

President Clinton's proposal for gradual reduction of the federal deficit, actually practised by him during the last three years, and the demand of the Republican-led Congress for a balanced budget under a strict time-frame have basic compatibility. The incompatibility, however, stems not so much from the rigidity of the 7-year time-frame as from the ideological differences of the two parties over the social welfare goals of the federal government.

The Republicans are proposing deep cuts into numerous social welfare programmes which subsidises America's oldest and poorest citizens as being too costly for rectifying social and economic

inequalities to which the Democrats' emphatic response is that social spending is still needed in a winner-take-all society in which rich grows richer and the poor grows increasingly poor.

President Clinton has sent to the Congress the 1996 budget with a deficit of 196.7 billion dollars. It must go to the credit of the President that from a deficit level of 290 billion dollars in 1992, there has been three straight years of deficit reduction. The President wishes to follow this course through FY 2000. Under this plan, the deficit will continue to fall as a percentage of GDP to 2.1 per cent in FY 2000 from a level of 2.7 per cent in FY 1996. Nevertheless, the budget will still remain far from balanced. The deficit remains as high as 195 billion dollars.

President Clinton recognises that the social welfare programmes have a destabilising effect on the budget. The Medicare, Medicaid, housing subsidies, food stamp programmes etc. cost 48 per cent of the total proposed outlay of 1.6 trillion dollars for 1996. The estimated annual growth of 9.1 per cent for Medicare and 9.3 per cent for Medicaid during the next five years are nearly three times the projected general inflation rate of 3.2 per cent and

will double Medicare and Medicaid spending every 8 years. These programmes are among the main reason why deficit stay as high as they do in the President's budget projection.

Ideological differences apart, sheer size and magnitude of growth make the social sector projects prime targets in any budget balancing exercise. Canada, USA's next door neighbour, and the most deficit ridden and indebted nation among the developed world, has finally acknowledged that its expensive social safety nets must be trimmed and in the latest budget proposals for reducing unemployment benefits, health care and welfare outlay.

It is highly doubtful if the President can save and fully protect his social welfare and investment programmes, even if the Congress accepts his administration's higher growth projection. His task is further complicated by the demand that budget balancing package should include a tax cut of 245 billion dollars. The President's Education and Training programme also is under attack.

A realistic and practical approach directed towards balancing the budget would call for moderation on both sides and compromise, not on the basic goal of balancing the

budget, but on an extended time-frame to cushion the impact of deeper tax cuts as well as sudden cut back on social welfare spending. A compromise package for soft landing of the balanced budget regime should also explore:

Closer collaboration and cost sharing of basic and applied research with the private sector on civilian and military R&D projects for which 72 billion dollars has been proposed in 1996.

Increased reliance on private sector institutions and industry for Education, Training and Re-training for which the proposed outlay is 47b dollars.

Scaling down on federal investment proposal of 58 billion dollars for non-defence physical infrastructure.

Debt service reduction through better and more efficient utilization of the Treasury operating cash balance.

A countervailing export surcharge to trigger when the dollar falls below pre-determined exchange parity level vis-a-vis the currency of the importing country.

Gasoline surcharge and VAT on hotel/motel tariffs.

Negotiating a budget balancing package is a national priority. Fortunately, controversy is on the means and not on the goal which is undisputed.

'UNDP attaches great importance to G-77 work'

Boosting the capacity of countries to make development more sustainable through "national execution" of programmes, coordinating follow-up to major United Nations conferences, and engaging in "preventive development" in potential conflict areas are three ways that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is working to support the goals of the Group of 77, reports BSS.

Refueuddin Ahmed, the UNDP Associate Administrator, made the comment while addressing the G-77 ceremony in which the chairmanship of the G-77 passed from the Philippines to Costa Rica in New York recently, a UNDP press release said here.

Ahmed told Ambassador Fernando Berrocal Soto, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations and the new chairman of the G-77 that UNDP had always attached great importance to the work of the G-77 since UNDP-supported programmes were essentially designed to promote the development objectives of the developing countries. The chairman succeeded ambassador Felipe Mabilangan, Permanent Representative of the Philippines.

Ahmed drew attention to the work of UNDP with the G-77 "to launch initiatives designed to intensify cooperation among the developing countries themselves."

He cited several noteworthy award for technical cooperation among developing countries, the implementation of the recommendations of new directions for TCDC adopted by the 50th session of the UN General Assembly financial support for TCDC meetings in Guyana and

British film industry short of funds

LONDON, Jan 26: The British film industry is short of funds and needs a radical rethink to survive, a survey published today said, reports Reuter.

The survey's respondents — mostly senior film industry figures — highlighted a lack of finance as the British film industry's core weakness.

The survey agreed that cuts in government funding and a lack of tax incentives were to blame for some of the industry's problems. But it said bad business planning was also at fault.

"A fundamental shift in thinking is necessary to bring about structural change within the British film industry and, ultimately, encourage a more favourable investment environment," the film 2000 survey said.

Britain's film industry seemed set for a revival after the surprise success in 1994 of the film "Four Weddings and a Funeral" and "Another Country" that year when brothers Ridley and Thomas Scott bought Shepperton studios.

But the industry remains a poor cousin not just to Hollywood but to countries like Ireland, which offers tax relief to producers, said the survey by media accountants Casson Beckman.

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New DG of BRRI

GAZIPUR, Jan 26: Dr Zahur Karim has joined the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) as Director General, says a press release.

Before joining BRRI, he served for about ten years as Member-Director (Soil and Irrigation) of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council.

Earlier, he served at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute and the Bangladesh Agricultural University. He is one of the country's leading agricultural scientists.

Dr Karim has made significant contributions to agricultural development in Bangladesh through basic and applied research and development of national data base.

He has eighty publications to his credit.

At present, he is the elected Vice-Chairman of the International Society of Soil Science. He is a fellow of the Climate Change Unit of the Oxford University and a fellow of the Bangladesh Academy of Science.

Eastern Cables earns Tk 16 cr profit in '93-'95

CHITTAGONG, Jan 26: Eastern Cables Ltd, a manufacturing unit of Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC), earned a profit of Taka 16 crore the last two fiscal years (1993-94 and 1994-95), says UNB.

The institution made a profit of Taka 83 crore in last 20 years as it did not incur any loss during the period.

The company also deposited an amount of Taka 201 crore to the government exchequer as tax and VAT during the period.

This was informed when State Minister for Industries Lutfor Rahman Khan visited the eastern Cables Ltd at Patenga on Thursday.

It was also informed that the institution has surpassed

BARI evolves new tech to grow more potatoes

TUNGIBARI (Munshiganj), Jan 26: At a rally here this week, some 200 farmers learnt from experts how they can apply improved technology to grow more potatoes at low cost, preserves and market the crop more efficiently, reports UNB.

The rally for farmers of the potato-growing Tungibari area was sponsored by three cold storages — Ekota, Riverview and Sobhan — in cooperation with the Agricultural Marketing Directorate.

Experts from Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Agricultural Extension Department, BADC (Seeds), Agricultural Marketing and CDP as well as cold storage businessmen explained to the farmers new researches on potato and the advanced technology in this field.

Jahangir Hossain of BARI said Munshiganj district accounts for one fifth of the land available for potato cultivation and contributes one third of the total national production.

BARI has developed new techniques to grow more potatoes in shorter period inexpensively, he informed.

One of the organisers, Fazle Rabbi of Riverview Cold Storage, told the farmers that more such "workshops" will be held. He said next year's field level workshop will be held before the potato season begins in November.

Oli opens Shubhapur Bridge

FENI, Jan 26: Communications Minister Oli Ahmed inaugurated the Shubhapur Bridge, including the construction works of its link road, on Chittagong-trunk road Thursday, reports UNB.

The 153 metre-long bridge over the Feni river was constructed in 1957, but the bridge from the very beginning of its construction had been threatened due to the river erosion.

Later, in 1969, the bridge was enlarged to 374 metre by linking 221 metre at the end of Feni.

Meanwhile, the government has taken up a preventive measure and river management programme in order to protect the bridge from further erosion as the river, after changing its passage by 1993, has been overflowing the trunk road.

The works of the project included construction of 110 metre-long link road, 155 metre closure, 300 metre guide dam, and 356 metre-long defensive works