

## Disproportionate use of fertilisers may result in 60 pc fall of output

By Govinda Shil

Disproportionate use of different fertilisers due to lack of proper knowledge and non-availability of the soil nutrients might affect the yields severely, experts and officials said.

Farmers are gradually leaning towards more use of urea fertiliser instead of a proportionate use of other chemical and non-chemical fertilisers which is rather harmful for harvests, they added.

Due to disproportionate application of fertilisers, the yields may fall to even 60 to 70 per cent, said an expert of International Fertiliser Development Center (IFDC).

He said, during the last 5 to 10 years the country's cultivable lands lacked some major soil nutrients like potassium, nitrogen and phosphorus which should be recovered immediately for a high yield harvest.

According to the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), the imports of Triple Super Phosphate (TSP), a major nutrient for root development and flower and seed formation, is open to private sector traders.

BCIC sources said the country could not produce sufficient TSP and other Phosphorus fertiliser to meet the farmers' demand. The country needs some six lakh metric tons of TSP annually but during this year only 40,000 tons of TSP have been imported. Country's lone TSP factory at Chittagong produce about 150,000 tons of Single Super Phosphate (SSP) and TSP.

"We do not feel encouraged from trading point of view to import TSP because there is a large price distortion between the imported and domestic fertiliser," said Mokarram Hossain, a TSP importer.

He said, in the international market, a 50 kilogram TSP bag cost at least 500 take while public sector produced TSP is sold at some 343 taka at the mill gate.

Hossain said, due to government policy inconsistency and subsidisation on different fertilisers, importers felt reluctant to import TSP.

"After the introduction of various High Yielding Varieties (HYVs) in our soil, we started intensive use of our lands without considering its fertility," said a soil scientist of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI).

He said, soil tests have not been carried out in our country for a long time which was essential to calculate a well-composed and proportionate use of various fertilisers.

The country has 28 soil regions and each region has a specific character. "There is an urgent need to take appropriate measures to keep the lands fertile," said the BARI scientist.

Due to intensive cultivation, some micro nutrients, like sulphur and boron have become major nutrients. IFDC and BARI experts said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shykh Seraj a Bangladesh Television Compare of 'Mati-O-Manush' said, the country's farmers could only use 40 per cent of their requirement of fertiliser on an average.

He said, farmers, on the other hand, could afford only 20 per cent pesticides in their lands due to economic constraint. He also mentioned that the soil tests of most of the cultivable lands have not been carried out.

Abdul Baten, Executive Secretary of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA) told The Daily Star that the present demand of urea could be limited to 15,00,000 tons instead of 19,00,000 tons.

"Due to comparatively low price coupled with non-availability of other soil nutrients, the farmers use more urea, wrongly thinking more urea could compensate other fertilisers functions," Baten said.

However, talking over the present fertiliser crisis, the BFA leader said, the crisis might be normal after the non-cooperation programme of the Opposition parties end.

He said, a large quantity of fertiliser could not be carried although transportation of fertiliser was kept out of political agitation programmes.

"No carrier is willing to transport urea and several rail wagons are stranded at different places," said another fertiliser dealer.

He said, traders were afraid of being looted their fertilisers and that is why they were not trying to carry it to their respective areas.

## 3000 handloom factories in Rajbari on verge of closure

RAJBARI, Mar 14: About 3,000 handloom factories of the district are going to face closure due to price-hike of yarn and other essential raw materials, competition with Indian products and lack of government patronisation, reports UNB.

According to the local people, about 25,000 workers of handloom factories in four thanas - Sadar, Fangsha, Balaikandi and Goalonda - will face unemployment in near future if the situation continues.

These factories are mainly producing lungi, gamchha, towels which are facing tough uneven competition with the Indian smuggled clothes. Finding no other way out, the producers are forced to sell their products at low prices sustaining financial loss.

Moreover, the factory owners are allegedly not taking the advantage for bank loan on soft term due to complex procedures. They also said, so far no government efforts have been taken to protect their industry from ruination.

The workers have urged the government to take immediate steps to provide them with soft term bank loan and other facilities to save their age-old cottage industry.

## Relaxation of non-cooperation programme Chamber leaders thank Opposition parties

Following is the full text of the statement issued by Samsun H Chowdhury, President, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Dhaka, Ali Hossain, President, The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Mahubul Jamil, President, Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Laila Rahman Kabir, President, Bangladesh Employers Association (BEA) and Imtiaz Hussain, Chairman, Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

While welcoming the recent initiatives of the President for resolving the national crisis through a caretaker government the business community is also thankful to the opposition political parties and expresses its appreciation for having made some relaxations from their non-cooperation programme in respect of export-oriented industries, particularly garment factories, banks and shops. It is indeed a welcome move and will go a long way to re-assure the business community.

"We fervently expect that this gesture will mark the beginning of the process of more relaxations. As mentioned earlier, relaxations in respect of ports, financial institutions and public transports carrying export cargo to and from the ports, were known that an export business missed, is lost for a long time, if not forever. It is thus nationally essential that our exporters are saved from such a predicament.

"Similar relaxations for domestic market-oriented industries, shops and other establishments are equally pressing. It is our earnest submission and appeal to the opposition political parties to also allow such enterprises to start normal operations so that millions of people who have to earn their livelihood directly or indirectly can survive.

## Fuel prices shoot up in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 14: The prices of fuel have shot up in the district due to the opposition's non-stop non-cooperation programme since March 9, reports UNB.

Per litre petrol is now being sold at Tk 35 against the government rate Tk 13.75 and diesel at Tk 30 as against Tk 14.

Police sources said about 150 tank lorries loaded with petrol and diesel awaiting at Baghabarighat of the district are yet to move for their destinations in 16 northern districts.

Tank Lorry Owners Samity, meanwhile, refused to ply these lorries due to security purposes as their five lorries came under attack by the opposition activists in Rajganj thana during the March-6 hartal.

Agricultural Extension Department said for want of fuel about 21,000 tubewells of the region remained in operative and the target of production might not be achieved this year.

The price of kerosene has also increased and is now being sold at Tk 32 against the normal rate Tk 16 per litre.

## New \$100 note in US from Mar 25

WASHINGTON, Mar 14: US Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin and Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan recently announced that the redesigned 100 US dollars note will be issued by the Federal Reserve System to depository institutions beginning on March 25, '96, says a USIS press release.

On that day, the Federal System's 37 offices and branches around the United States will begin to ship 1996 series 100 dollars notes to depository institutions in different regions of the country. In addition, the Federal Reserve Banks will issue currency to US banks that have ordered new notes on behalf of depository institutions abroad.

After making the initial shipments, the Federal Reserve will fulfill orders for 100 dollars notes with only the new notes, with the new notes replacing the older series notes deposited with the Fed by depository institutions. The new notes will begin to appear at some depository institutions on March 25, and be available to most customers by the end of March or early April. Consequently, not all depository institutions and not all depository institution customers will see the new 100 dollars notes immediately.

Old notes will not be recalled or devalued. The older series notes will co-circulate with the new notes and will always be legal tender.

"Depository institutions have helped us develop a strategy to ensure an orderly introduction of the new notes," Chairman Greenspan said. "We have worked hard to educate cash handlers, both domestically and abroad, about the new features and the introduction process, and I fully anticipate a smooth transition."

**GM strike's impact spreads beyond auto plan**

DAYTON, Mar 14: The 8-day strike at two General Motors Corp. brake factories has shut down more than half the giant automaker's assembly plants, slowed or closed 15 per cent of most customers by the end of March or early April. Consequently, not all depository institutions and not all depository institution customers will see the new 100 dollars notes immediately.

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## Court accepts injunction to seize assets of Roh

SEOUL, Mar 14: South Korean prosecutors yesterday said Seoul district criminal court had accepted their injunction to seize the assets of jailed ex-president Roh Tae-woo, reports AFP.

The prosecution said the court, currently trying Roh for graft, accepted, its request for a writ of attachment to seize property and collect 358 million dollars Roh allegedly received as bribes during his 1988-1993 presidency.

It was the prosecution's first move to seize the property of a former government official under a new law enacted last year as part of President Kim Young-Sam's anti-corruption drive.

With court's approval, prosecutors immediately ordered local registry offices, banks and stock brokerage houses to freeze transactions on Roh's property, including real estate, bank holdings and shares with an estimated value of 358 million dollars.

Roh 64, was arrested in 1995 after admitting to raising a 650-million-dollar slush fund from dozens of business tycoons. Seven businessmen have already been indicted on bribery charges.

Prosecutors charged that Roh received bribes from businesses in return for awarding favours or state projects. The ex-president has denied the charge, saying he was simply following the accepted practice of receiving political donations from businesses.

**'Cuba won't crumble under new US pressure'**

HAVANA, Mar 14: Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina acknowledged Saturday that stricter US sanctions could scare off foreign investors, but said Cuba has endured a 34-year embargo and won't crumble under new pressure, reports AP.

"It will be difficult to squeeze us much more," Robaina told foreign correspondents at a news conference. "We have lived through laws like this before."

President Clinton has promised to sign the Cuba Liberty Act, which Congress revived after Cuba shot down two American civilian planes off the Cuban coast Feb 24.

The bill was approved last week in both houses of the US Congress.

Clinton, who originally opposed the bill, is now expected to sign it.

The act would give Americans who have lost property in Cuba since Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 the right to sue foreign companies that benefit from that property.

Foreign investors dealing with confiscated property are barred entry into the United States.

The legislation has been severely criticised by US allies, especially those with heavy investment in Cuba — Canada, Mexico, and the European Union — who argue the bill is anti-free trade.

## Budgetary position of ministries reviewed

A meeting of the Budget Monitoring and Resource Committee was held at Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair, reports UNB.

The meeting reviewed the budgetary positions and performance of the Agriculture, Education, Food, Railway, T and T Health, LGRD, Communication, Foreign Affairs and other line ministries and divisions in terms of ADP implementation.

The Finance Minister urged the line ministries and executive agencies to undertake severe expenditure control measures and reduce wastages in the wake of resource constraints due to poor mobilisation of internal resources.

The meeting was informed that till January of the 1995-96 financial year, 36 per cent of the ADP was implemented as against 40 per cent during the corresponding period of the last year.

The decrease in the ADP implementation and revenue collection was principally attributable to the political unrest prevailing in the country.

The Finance Minister also directed the executive agencies to step up the ADP implementation in the remaining months of this financial year.

Referring to the preparation of budget for the next financial year, Saifur Rahman said it was essential to prepare a budget of interim character for the next government keeping in view the financial preprint and sound budgetary and revenue practices.

He said, healthy and sound budgetary practices cannot be sacrificed for short term benefits for the sake of maintaining macro stability in the country.

Regarding agricultural production in the country, the Finance Minister underscored the need for increasing agricultural outputs and said the sector which constitutes 40 per cent of the total GDP, should also contribute its due share to the overall ADP growth of the country.

He said increased farm output particularly food production could also help ease pressure on the hard earned foreign exchange of the country by slashing food import bill.

The industry has been hit hard due to the continued turmoil and uncertainty. Foreign buyers are gradually losing interest in importing from Bangladesh and diverting their orders to neighbouring countries," said Dr Aftabuzaman, President of the Association, in a statement.

Dr Zaman cautioned the markets were lost, it would be difficult to regain.

Political unrest, he said, has added to the crisis arising from the dwindling international prices of frozen foods and lingering banking problem.

Frozen food, the fastest growing export item after the readymade garment, has targeted to fetch Tk 1,500 crore during the current 1995-96 fiscal year. But Dr Zaman said it would be difficult to attain the target in case of a lingering political crisis.

He said quick and uninterrupted post-catch transportation of raw materials is a must for the perishable item. Hindrance in timely shipment is also causing problem in maintaining the export quality of the item.

## Political crisis shying away foreign buyers of frozen food

Country's persisting political instability is shying away foreign buyers of frozen food, posing a threat to the thriving sector that attained a 50 per cent export growth last fiscal year, reports UNB.

The frozen food industry is on the verge of ruination as a result of continued political crisis, shutdown and blockade, said Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association yesterday.

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**Hanoi to spend \$ 30m by 2000 to fight drugs**

HANOI, Mar 14: The government has earmarked 30 million dollars to be spent until 2000 on the fight against drug addiction and trafficking, both sharply on the rise in Vietnam, an anti-drug official said Monday, reports AFP.

More than half the sum will come from state coffers and the remainder will be channelled from abroad through the United Nations drug control programme, the official added.

awarded a 20-year concession in 1992 to supply treated water to Johore Bahru.

The Institute would conduct diploma courses and would be financed by fee-paying students.

"The realization of such a centre of excellence would contribute to the lifting of the overall level of the water industry skills in Johore and the country, and ultimately provide customers with better service," he said.

WELLINGTON: New Zealand is famous for cool, green forests, icy alpine lakes and snowy glaciers, so even Kiwis were surprised when their spicy sauces were judged hot spiff at an international competition.

An entry from the Far North hot sauce company Kaitiaki Fire has triumphed over 250 hopefuls from around the world in the fiery Foods Challenge in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

## Production normal

Production in different enterprises of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) and Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) was normal yesterday, an official handout said, reports BSS.

Presence of officials, employees and workers there was also normal and no report of any untoward incident was received, the handout said.

## 2nd round of SAARC meet on liberalisation of trade begins

COLOMBO, Mar 14: The second round of meeting of the SAARC Inter-Governmental Group (IGG) on trade liberalisation began here today with Sri Lankan Trade Minister calling for removal of all existing non-tariff barriers that impeded movement of trade in goods among the member countries, reports PTI.

The minister stressed that SAARC countries should move in the fast track of trade liberalisation. "If we do not seriously shift into this fast track, the momentous events now taking place in the global economy will, no doubt, overtake our endeavours in this regard," the Lankan minister said.

The Inter-Governmental Group meeting will discuss further expansion of the lists identified for tariff reduction. As many as 226 items have been identified by the SAARC countries under the SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) which came into force in December last year.

Trade among SAARC countries accounts for a mere 3.2 per cent of their trade with the outside world. The concessions agreed during the first round cover only about one per cent of the regional trade in South Asia which is home for 1200 million people out of whom 425 million are consumers.

The IGG meeting is being attended by two officials of the commerce and one official of the external affairs ministry of India. The meeting concludes tomorrow.

from Kiwi fruit, manuka honey and habanero peppers — the world's hottest chili — all produced in Kaitiaki, on the North Island.

It took the hot fruit sauce section and was the only winner made outside the United States.

Kaitiaki Fire director Carry Sommerville said the eight judges were not aware that the sauce came from New Zealand because all labels were removed.

The company has hired more workers at its Adelaide production facilities as part of its 385 million US dollars (500 million Australian dollars) investment programme, which included the development of the Magna and the upgrading of its engine plant.

The investment was confirmed last year when the Japanese parent company announced that Mitsubishi Australia was gearing itself for a major push into world markets with the launch of the new Magna sedan less than a month away.

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## BCIC fertiliser units supply 139874 MT urea

Six urea fertiliser factories under Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) supplied a total of 1,39,874 metric tons of urea fertiliser to different districts in the first 11 days of this month, a BCIC press release said on Wednesday, reports BSS.

Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Factory supplied 33,218 tonnes, Jamuna Fertiliser Factory 43,446 tonnes, Zia Fertiliser Factory 44,645 tonnes, Ghorasal Urea Fertiliser Factory 8,076 tonnes, Polash Urea Fertiliser Factory 5,983 tonnes, and Fenchuganj Fertiliser supplied 4,506 tonnes.

According to the press release 11,593 tonnes were supplied to Bogra district, 2,220 tonnes to Chapainawabganj, 3,308 tonnes to Dinajpur, 3,498 tonnes to Gaibandha, 2,424 tonnes to Joypurhat, 2,541 tonnes to Kurigram, 7,246 tonnes to Noaaganj, 3,955 tonnes to Natore, 4,534 tonnes to Rajshahi, 2,535 tonnes to Rangpur, 3,820 tonnes to Serajganj and the rest to

other district of the country.

All the six urea fertiliser factories have now ready stock of 60,771 tonnes. 2,304 dealers are now engaged in taking delivery of urea from the factory godowns and buffer reserves at Bogra, Shantahar, Rangpur, Barbatipur, Gaibandha, Bagbari, Khulna, Thakurgaon, Jaypurhat, Mahendranagar and Rajshahi, Kaligonj, Brahmanbaria and Faridpur.

**Bangladeshi items attract fashion lovers in Japan**

Bangladeshi apparels and jewellery items attracted fashion lovers in Japan during a fashion fair held in Tokyo March 5-7, reports UNB.

Three garment companies and a jewellery firm participated at the three-day fair, jointly organised by the Export Promotion Bureau and the Bangladesh embassy in Tokyo.

Mitsubishi sold just 3,482 vehicles in January, almost 2,000 units down on the 5,358 it sold in the same month of 1994.

By comparison, Hyundai sold 3,585 units as its fortunes in the Australian market continued to improve.

In February Mitsubishi regained its place as the fourth top selling car company in Australia behind Holden, Ford and Toyota with 5,543 units taking its two-month sales total to 9,025.

However, more than 800 units on its performance over the same period last year.

The decision will provide a major boost to the company's export programme with the first shipments of cars expected to leave South Australia in the middle of the year.

As well as the export business, the new Magna should provide a much-needed boost to Mitsubishi's Australian sales, which have been less than impressive in recent months.

Despite being in run-out mode with the current model Magna in January this year the company was outsold by Hyundai that month, the first time it had been beaten by the Korean producer.



Sandhani Prokashani was awarded first prize for the best decorated stall in the Bangla Academy Book Fair '96.

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