

FOCUS

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT

Opportunity to Learn from Others' Experiences

THE UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is holding a World Food Summit in Rome, Italy from 13 to 17 November 1996. Heads of State from close to 200 countries are expected to gather at FAO Headquarters to agree on a blueprint for a co-ordinated campaign, in partnership with civil society and international organisations, to eradicate hunger.

The personal participation of national leaders is instrumental in mobilising all government ministries and agencies concerned with food security — from agriculture, fisheries, forestry and environment to foreign affairs, trade, economy and development co-operation. This wide involvement, along with the active participation of the NGOs, the private sector and other groups, is essential for developing a sound and realistic draft plan of action for the Summit and subsequently for ensuring achievement of the Summit goals.

The high visibility of the Summit and its preparatory process also serves to draw public attention to food security questions and to stimulate debate in all sectors of society and in the media.

As a world forum, the Summit will take a global perspective in dealing with all aspects of food security. At the same time it will address the specific challenges

faced by different regions of the world.

The agreements reached at the Summit will place food — the first and fundamental requirement for life — at the top of the global agenda alongside peace and stability.

Bangladesh with an area of 147,570 square kilometres and a population of 120 million is one of the most densely populated in the world over 750 persons per kilometre. With per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$ 224 Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest countries. It is also categorised as a low income food deficit one. Over 50 million of its population are considered below poverty line. At present, annual import requirements are in the range of 1.5 to 2.0 million tonnes of foodgrains representing an average of about 11 per cent of national consumption. Even with such heavy imports, it has not been possible to arrest the declining trend in food availability. The per capita intake is now roughly 1900 calories against the normal requirement of 2300. About one third of the population is severely malnourished. Since food grains provide roughly 85 per cent of the calories in Bangladeshi diet, the food deficits have resulted in large segments of the population suffering from protein-energy malnutrition and vitamin deficiency.

Dr. Saidur Rahman Lasker, a Commodity Specialist in the Commodities and Trade Division of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, based in Rome, writes that in view of the food situation in Bangladesh, the World Food Summit has a strong relevance for the country. Bangladesh can emulate the experience of other countries to tackle its food problem

In view of the crude facts described above about the food situation of the economy of Bangladesh, the Summit has a strong relevance for the country. The relevance arises from the fact that the Summit is likely to provide Bangladesh a unique opportunity to learn from the experiences of other countries as to how to tackle its chronic food shortages problems.

There are many countries which were in the similar situation as Bangladesh's but they have managed to overcome their problems. Bangladesh can emulate the experiences of these countries and tackle its food problem. Examples of such countries are India, Tunisia, Costa Rica, Indonesia and Burkina Faso. India has had, economic growth 5.2 per cent per annum since the early 1980s, three points above the average annual population growth for the same period. This vast and populous country has maintained a determined effort to develop domestic food production, reduce aid dependency and improve household food security over the past 35 years. The level of hunger and poverty is still high, but extensive use of targeted anti-poverty measures such as public works and infant nutrition programmes has reduced vulnerability to famines and preserved a minimum status of food security, defined as a situation where everyone has access at all times to food need for an active and healthy life.

Tunisia has undergone rapid food security improvements since the beginning of the 1960s,

thanks to a sound underlying economic and social process significantly influenced by public action. Increases in dietary energy supply — a widely available indicator of food consumption — from about 200 calories per person per day to nearly 3500 today, were achieved essentially through food imports. Extensive social safety nets at the household level have made sure that even the poorest get enough to eat.

Costa Rica has steadily improved its food security over the past 30 years, partly thanks to the strong government measures to reduce poverty. This central American country, after having financial and budgetary problems, had to apply measures to reduce the imbalances and adopt a more efficient production structure. Although less food is produced domestically now, export crop production has expanded, which allows more food to be available to consumers through imports.

Burkina Faso has pursued a mix of public policy measures, including macroeconomics policies such as the restructuring of public finance, soil conservation and water harvesting, new land settlement, household level income generation and transfer measures. Since the early 1990s this land locked West African nation can boast of a steadily improving record in the feeding of its people, though problems still arise due to its vulnerability to drought.

In addition, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Ecuador and Zimbabwe have made impressive

progress in feeding their populations adequately. Their success can be duplicated in other countries including Bangladesh provided the emphasis is on efficiency, effectiveness and partnership involving governments, civil society, particularly non government organisations and the private sector. Rural development programmes should strive to improve employment opportunities, particularly for the poor, within a diversified rural economy.

Bangladesh is far behind the status of the above mentioned countries in terms of food availability. However it does not appear to be in a desperate situation. The economy has grown by more than 4 per cent annually since 1992. The rate of population growth has decreased to 2.17 per cent at present against 2.5 per cent in the mid-1970s. Total fertility has declined from 6.4 children per woman to 3.9. It has already achieved substantial gains in foodgrain production during the last two decades. Rice, the dominant crop, increased from 11.2 million tons in 1970 to an average of 18.2 million tons in the early 1990s. Wheat production increased from about 100,000 tons to 1.1 million tons over the same period.

However, the impact of these gross production gains has been seriously eroded by high rates of population growth. In 1970, gross rice production provided the equivalent of 463 grams per capita per day which is equivalent to 2000 calories per day. Despite relatively high production growth rates, by fiscal year 1989

the equivalent of about 400 grams per capita per day was produced. After a dramatic rise to 454 grams in fiscal year 1990, per capita level again showed signs of decline from 1993 as rice production levelled off. Wheat production has helped to supplement gross foodgrain production, contributing about 25 grams per capita per day in recent years.

There is some scope for expansion of wheat, production but with a current high population growth rate of over 2 per cent, if the per capita production decline is to be reversed, the further substantial increase in foodgrain production required will have to come from rice. The growth in rice yields in the 1980s was due to the introduction of high yielding varieties (HYV) of rice and the adoption of irrigation and fertiliser technologies which enabled intensive use of the dry-season (Boro) months. There is still a significant amount of land suitable for the replacement of local varieties with HYV for boro crop. However, since 1990 the right market signals did not seem to have been in place to encourage that process and maintain the rising rice production trend of the 1980s.

Apart from these longer term food production issues, for the foreseeable future Bangladesh continues to be particularly vulnerable to sudden floods, cyclones and even droughts, all of which can cause extensive damage to food crops and a temporary deterioration in the food security situation.

Commercial imports of

grains fell dramatically in 1991 and 1992, in part because of bumper rice harvests and overflowing of government stocks. There has been some increase in commercial imports since, but this was well below the amount needed to cover the gap between local production and that required to ensure a consumption level of 2200 calories per capita per day. Even at their highest levels in 1985 and 1988 (when imports were three to four times higher than at present), commercial imports accounted for no more than 10 per cent of domestic production, and added only marginally (about seven per cent) to per capita food requirements.

Despite nearly a million tonne higher projected food production for 1996/97 over that of the last season, the country had to import a bulk amount of food for the third consecutive year. This years food import requirement is projected to be 1.97 million tonnes which is only 490 thousand tonnes less than last year. Food aid to the country which is showing trend the past years, has been targeted at 648 thousand tonnes this year. In its continuous slide, the food aid to the country went down from 1.5 million tonnes in 1990/91 to 743 thousand tonnes in 1995/96.

The burden to feed its growing population with imported food is very heavy for a poor country like Bangladesh. The country therefore needs to make an all out effort to increase the level of production of its food crop to the maximum extent possible. There is a potential to do so as the current rate of yield for its major crops is much below the achievable rate. For example, the yield of Boro rice remains at 3.4 tonnes per hectare against the yield rate of 7-8 tonnes achieved in research stations. For this the country not only needs to in-

crease its investment in agriculture but also mobilise all kind of support to increase level of production in the sector.

To invest more in agriculture Bangladesh needs to campaign for more aid for investment in agriculture. Mere availability of aid may not be a sufficient condition to increase agricultural production in the country. There is a need for sound government policies to utilise the available aid for investment in agriculture. Although increase in production of agricultural crops in Bangladesh is the first condition to meet its food deficit situation, it may not be sufficient to make food available to all those who need it. To achieve such a goal there are needs for —

• dialogue between governments and civil society in determining national targets, policy formulation and design of practical action to achieve food for all;

• public awareness campaigns on the implications of hunger on development and lessons for successful assurance of food for all;

• mobilising civil society to take action in pursuit of food for all, in particular the human resources and communication opportunities; provided by educational institutions, religious groups NGOs;

• people to people fund raising activities for support of projects aiming at reducing food insecurity at the household level.

As the main purpose of the World Food Summit is to develop awareness about the above mentioned actions, participation of Bangladesh in the Summit is therefore adequately justified. The real benefit to its participation will however be justified on the day when Bangladesh is able to pronounce that it has been able to provide food in adequate amount to all of its population.

No EXCUSE...

Demand for food and water rises with population growth. Over pumping can dry up rivers and destroy aquifers. Conserving water preserves ecological balance.

DEPTNews

Female Circumcisers Defend 'Sacred Practice'

FEMALE circumcision is sacred and life without it would be meaningless, according to the Bundo Society, which represents the *Sowets* who carry out the operation in Sierra Leone.

About 100 *Sowets* held a three-day workshop in Freetown to establish guidelines for the practice, involving the removal of some or all of the female genitalia and known to critics as female genital mutilation.

"We have taken the lead to discuss a very sacred institution affecting the lives of our youth and adult population," said Haja Isha Sasso, president of the National Council of Muslim Women.

"It is a form of school where the initiates are taught useful acts of behaviour, social values and meaningful life patterns," she commented.

One of the key workshop recommendations was an end to media discussion of the issue, with fines of between \$200,000 and \$500,000 for anyone breaking the silence.

Another is that female circumcision should not be performed on a child under 10. A third, said Council

The death of a 14-year-old Egyptian girl after a circumcision operation has increased calls for a government ban on the practice. But in Sierra Leone, *Sowets* who do the job have held a three-day workshop and are calling for legislation to protect the ritual.

spokesperson and broadcaster Haja Kadi Johnson, is that any *Sowets* carrying out the operation during holy days and religious periods — such as Fridays and Sundays, and the months of Ramadan or Lent — should be fined \$500,000.

Lawyer Eithleen Kamara, who said she had been subjected to painful genital mutilation when she was 10, stormed out of the workshop as the proposals were read out.

The proposals are outrageous and smack of attempts to take us to the Dark Ages," she said angrily.

She was not alone. Women's groups denounced the proposals, and accused the Society of "trying to twist the arms of Parliament to enact an unpopular proposal into law."

They found the Society's stand particularly disappointing because it follows a recent decision by 21 *Sowets* in Mali to abandon the practice.

Said a spokesman of Sierra Leone's Medical and Dental Association: "Mutilators are hid-

Desmond King writes from Freetown

Under the knife



- Number of women who suffer female genital mutilation
- Nigeria 33m
- Ethiopia 24m
- Egypt 24m
- Sudan 10m
- Kenya 7m
- Somalia 4.5m
- Mutilation is not required by any religion
- It is designed to preserve virginity, ensure marriageability and contain sexuality
- 2m girls a year have all or some of their genitalia cut away

ing behind the cloak of culture to bring death or permanent disability to our young ones.

We shall fight these proposals to ensure they do not see the light of day."

The Association also warned against allowing hospitals to perform female circumcision in the hope of improving the safety of the operation, on the grounds that their "we would have little hope of eradicating the practice."

Statistics on deaths and injuries arising from the operation are impossible to obtain, says Stella Sosay of the Births and Deaths Office, "because families are sworn to secrecy and will not disclose details."

Police representative Yabu Kamara says "the police, too, are frustrated because nobody will give them any leads."

"People see it as a secret society," says a Christian priest, the Reverend Timothy Mends, who has received dozens of threatening letters as a result of his public stand against the practice, and those who are

members are afraid to tell you what goes on behind the bush."

MPs who were asked whether they would support the Society's proposals were all against, even those from rural areas where the practice is most rooted.

Many rural men would not want to marry uncircumcised women, who are then likely to be ostracised.

They would probably agree with the Bundo Society members at the workshop who said that the aim of the ritual "is to cut down on the sexual desires of girls who go into marriage immediately after initiation."

"It is an easy way to reduce their sexual promiscuity that would normally lead to friction in the home between husbands and wives."

Sowets also support the practice because it gives them status and considerable payments, not only in money but through gifts such as rice palm oil and clothes.

Yoshio Koiko of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Sierra Leone describes female genital mutilation as an issue of great concern to the organisation.

— GEMINI NEWS

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Tuesday 12th October
(All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programmes.)

BTB

3:00 Opening Announcement
4:00 Quran Programme Summary
4:10 Recitation from the Gesta
4:20 Europe 6:00 News in Bangla 4:15
4:30 Para Shikha 4:45 Cartoon
Series: The Animals of
Partingwood 5:00 News in
Bangla 5:20 Sangeeta: Modern
Songs 6:00pm News in Bangla
6:05 National Television Debate
Competition 7:00 The News 7:05
Open University 7:25 Comedy
Series: Seinfeld 8:00 News in
Bangla 8:40 Drama Serial 10:00
News in English 10:30 Apan
Priya 10:55 Mini Series 11:30
News in Bangla 11:35
Wednesday's programme 11:40
Close down

BBC

6:00am BBC World News 6:30
Newsnight 7:00 BBC Newsroom
inc. World Business Report/Asia
Today/24 Hours 10:00 BBC
World Headlines 10:05 World
Focus: Panorama 11:00 BBC
Newsday 2:00 BBC World News
2:15 World Focus: Panorama
3:00 BBC World News 3:30
Time Out: Tomorrow's World
4:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00pm
BBC World News 6:15 World
Focus: The Money Programme
7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World
Business Report 7:30 BBC
Newsnight Asia & Pacific 8:30
Time Out: The Travel Show
9:00 BBC World News 9:15
World Focus: Panorama 10:00
BBC World News 10:30 Time
Out: Jeremy Clarkson's
Motorworld 11:00 BBC World
News 11:30 Time Out Film 36
12:00 The World Today 2:00
BBC World Headlines 2:05 World
Focus: Panorama 2:45 The
Panel 3:00 BBC World News
3:30 Time Out: The Clothes
Show 4:00 BBC World Report
inc. World Business Report/24
Hours

CHANNEL V

6:30am The Ticket 7:00 Rewind
VJ Sophiya 8:00 Frame by
Frame 9:00 Big Bang VJ
Alessandra 10:30 Frame by

Frame 11:00 The Vibe VJ Luke
12:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 1:00
By Demand VJ Trey 2:00
Frame by Frame 2:30 First Day
First Show 3:00 The Indian Top
10 4:00 Planet Ruby 4:30 By
Demand VJ Trey 5:30 Rewind
VJ Sophiya 7:00pm Big Bang
VJ Alessandra 8:00 Planet Ruby
9:00 The Vibe 10:00 First Day
First Show 10:30 Soul Curry
11:00 Speak Easy 11:30 The
Ride 12:00m Over The Edge VJ
Sophiya 12:30 Big Bang VJ
Alessandra 1:00 Haysan 2:00 By
Demand VJ Trey 3:00 Big Bang
VJ Alessandra 4:30 Bill Board
US Countdown

STAR PLUS

6:00am Home and Away 6:30
The Sultans 7:00 Aerobics Oz
Style 7:30 Star News 8:00 Sky
News 8:30 Star News 9:00 Sky
News 9:30 Aerobics Oz Style
10:00 Yan Can Cook 10:30 For
Your Entertainment 11:00 Kate
& Allie 11:30 The Oprah Winfrey
Show 12:30 The X Files 1:30
Santa Barbara 2:00 The Bold
& The Beautiful 3:00 Khandaan
3:30 Imithan 4:00 Home and
Away 4:30 Lost in Space 5:30
Adventures Of Black Stallion
6:00pm Kate & Allie 6:30 Yan
Can Cook 7:00 Mastering The
Internet 7:30 Star News (Hindi)
8:00 Small Wonder 8:30 The Bold
& The Beautiful 9:00 Men Awaz
Suno 9:30 Star News 10:00
Some Mothers Do Awe 10:30 The
Beverly Hills 90210 11:30 The
Bold & The Beautiful 12:00m
Santa Barbara 1:00 Baywatch
2:00 Dynasty 3:00 Quincy 4:00
The Oprah Winfrey Show 5:00
Barbary Jones

STAR SPORTS

6:00am Gillette World Sport
Special 6:30 History of the
Macau Grand Prix 7:30 Gulf
Cup Match 3 Bahrain vs Qatar
9:00 International Motorsports
News 10:00 Trans World Sport
11:00 Live Singer Champions
Trophy 1996 Pakistan v Sri
Lanka 2:30 Asia Sport Show
3:00 Lunch 3:30 Live Singer
Champions Trophy 1996
Pakistan v Sri Lanka 7:00 Gulf
Cup Match 3 Teams TBC 8:30
History of the Macau Grand
Prix 9:30 Asian Classic
Snooker Hits 10:30 Trans World
Sport 12:00m Prime Boxing

2:30 Thai Kickboxing Highlights
2:30 Int'l Motorsports News —
4:00 3:30 World Windsurfing H/L
4:00 Inside PGA Tour 4:30
Sports India 5:00 The Asian

Football Show

STAR MOVIES

7:30am Western: Django Strikes

Forthcoming attractions on BTB

CTTech Vision Limited's, the
Bangladesh Representative of
Warner Bros (a Time Warner
Entertainment Company of
USA) forthcoming blockbuster
releases on BTB are:

Julius Verne's Mysterious
Island — This timeless well
known classic from Julius Verne
centres around a group of es-
capees of the American civil
war in a hot air balloon and
land on an island and their ad-
ventures begin. Each episode is
so gripping being full of adven-
ture that a viewer cannot miss it
for a moment. There are 44
episodes and all have been
dubbed in Bangla which the
viewers will thoroughly enjoy
with their family.

Requiem for Granada —
This 10 episode Bangla
dubbed mini-series is set in the
7th century Spanish back-
ground when the glory of Mus-
lim Ottoman empire was at its
peak. The story starts from
Boadbill-the grandson of the
Emir of Granada leaves his
kingdom and enters into a
flashback to the period of his
grandfather. The richness of
the set, the identification of the
story line, the superb quality of

35mm camera work and the di-
rection will surely make this se-
ries a block buster hit.

Queen — Another classic
from Alex Haley (Roots fame)
— Queen completes the story
where Roots finished. This
touching 8 episode mini-series
of an Alabam plantation
owner and a slave — Cau-
sian in appearance she must
walk the boundaries of pre-
judice and fear as she searches
for a home between her two
cultures of her heritage. The
sequences are emotional
charged and bound to bring
tears in our eyes. A sure short
hit.

Robocop — This ever
popular action adventure
Bangla dubbed series in 23
episodes is already well known
the world over. The central
character 'Robocop' part hu-
man and part machine is the
centre piece of law enforce-
ment. Each episode is thrilling
as the one earlier and is sure
to be enjoyed by BTB viewers.

CTTech Vision is finalising ar-
rangements for launching these
programs from January 1997.

Again 16 (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30
Family Four Junior Detectives
12 (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30
Adventure: Eat My Dust 15
(Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Classic: A
Farewell To Arms 12 (Hindi
Subtitles) 4:00 Film Club: Malice
in Wonderland PG (Hindi
Subtitles) 5:30 Comedy Kiss
Shot 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30
Family: Falsely Accused 12
(Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 Hollywood
1 On 9:30 Action: Firehawk 18
(Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Music
Movies: Twist 18 1:30 Comedy
The Super 18 (Arabic
Subtitles) 3:30 Thriller: The
Falcon and The Snowman 18
(Arabic Subtitles) 5:30 Film Club
Sunrise: A Song Of Two
Humans

ZEE TV

6:00 The News 6:30 Jagran 7:00
A to Z Computer 8:30 Hum
Honge Kaamyab 9:00 Insight
9:30 Gaane Anjaane 10:00
Namaste India 10:30 Umeed
11:00 Close Up Antakshri 11:30
Nirma Aaha 12:00 Tol Moi Ke
Bol 12:30 Mr Minto 1:00 A to Z
Computer 1:30 Asian Sky Shop
2:30 Tara 3:00 Kurukshetra
3:30 Zaike Ka Salar 4:00
Nirali: Aashiana 4:30 Ek
Minute 5:00 A to Z Computer
5:30 Cartoons 6:00 Positive
Health Show 6:30 Through The
Gears 7:00 Shaah Dawat 7:30
Gaane Anjaane 8:00 Aap Ki
Pasand 8:30 Hum Saath Saath
Sailaab 9:30 Tara 10:00
Hasrat 10:30 The News 11:00
Jagran 11:30 Dastaan 12:00
Dastak 12:30 TVS Sa Re Ga
Ma 1:15 Jhalak 1:30 Siyaram's
Cine Magic 2:00 Zee Arabic
Programme 2:30 Zee Arabic
Infotainment-TMM

EL TV

6:30 Music Time 7:30 Ched
Chad 8:30 Jazzbaat 9:30 Best
Of The Best 10:30 Anabi 11:30
Newsline 12:00 Meri Marzi 12:30
Young Buzz 1:00 Humraah 1:30
Sargam 2:00 Music Time 3:00
Kart 3:30 Yeh Duniya 4:00 Kai
Bhi Aai 4:30 Upanyas 5:00
It's My Choice 5:30 Dil Dekhe
Dekho 6:30 Manoranjan 7:00
Peoples Club 7:30 Nukkad 8:00
Filmi Chait 8:30 Casper
Number One 9:00 Hit The Hit
Hai 10:00 Purokshetra 10:30

Talaash 11:00 Moov Usha Uthup
Show 11:30 Chalo Cinema 12:00
Akanksha 12:30 Jhumo Nacho
1:30 Devotional 2:30 Taranne
3:30 Hurste Hurste

PTV

8:00 am Tilawat Aur Tarjuma-
Hamd Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30
Khabran 8:45 Beauty Care 8:50
Fun Kadha 9:10 Dinarak &
Health Tips 10:05 Har Taan
Heli Deepak 10:30 English Film
Home Improvement 10:55 Milli

DD 7

10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Classical
Music 11:00 Ghar Baare 12:30
Monorama Cabin (Serial) 1:00
Janani (Serial) 1:30 Trishna 2:00
Baltayan 2:30 Prachin (Serial)
3:00 Bhangan (Serial) 3:30
Bigap 5:05 Science Prog-Bigpan
Prasange 5:30 News 6:00 Palli
Katha 6:30 Teen Kanya 7:00

SONY ET

8:00am Gaane Jaane Maane
9:30 The Three Stooges 9:30
Dennis The Menace 9:30
Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Sur-
Wheel Of Fortune 11:00
Penchan 12:30 Kismet 1:00

Zamin Asman 1:30 Jai Bir
Hanuman 2:30 Cine Matinee-
Hindi Feature Film 4:30 Jai Bir
Hanuman 5:00 10 Civil Lines
5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00
Mere Message Men Geet 6:30
Dennis The Menace 7:00 Premier
7:30 I Dream Of Jeannie 8:00
Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 8:30 Cine
Prime-Hindi Feature Film 11:00
The Young And The Restless
12:00 Taj Mahal Tak Dina Din
12:30 Jeevan Murti 1:00 Sunday
K' Sunday 1:30 Surf-Wheel Of
Fortune 2:00 Premier 2:30
Closed

Garfield®

by Jim Davis

