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Forex flower fails to bloom

By Rafiq Hasan

Lack of logistic support and standardisation of products continue to deprive Bangladesh of millions of dollars worth export earnings from fresh flowers, particularly 'tube roses'.

Bangladesh produces a sizeable quantity of tube roses and it has a huge demand in the international markets but the country is yet to enter into the "billion dollar world flower market" in large scale, according to traders and government officials.

Flower traders and exporters said that among the local flowers only 'tube roses' have export potentials to the international market because of its good quality and longer sustainability. The quality and size of other local flowers are not up to the mark and are less durable.

Exporters said that the fragrance of Bangladeshi roses is good but it is non-durable. On the other hand, the quality of local gladioli is good compared to those of Iran, South Africa and Kenya, the major exporters to the international market. The production of it is, however, very limited.

They said that only a few traders tried to sell Bangladeshi flowers to the international markets but gave up quickly as they failed to maintain quality of the products and continuity of supply as per requirement of the buyers.

One company, Krishibeed Orchid and Cactus Nursery, tried to sell Bangladeshi flowers to Dubai market, while another company, Bandhan, participated at the auction market in the Netherlands. But none of the companies could continue to export flowers due to lack of adequate processing and catering facilities in the country. The flower gardens are also yet to develop systematically in the country. Those who are cultivating flower on a small scale, lack the technical know-how. The quality of flowers is a factor of the weather condition


Flowers and forex

Flowers can be made a dollar-spinner. Against the bleak backdrop of a poor export base, these may open up an avenue to a rosy future.

—Star photo: A K M Mohsin

during harvesting period. On the other hand, the flower market at home is also developed on the locally available old technology. Most of the people involved in the business do not have any knowledge of international standards and its requirements, exporters said.

The quality of the 'tube roses' produced in Jessore and Chuadanga districts is good at the field level but when somebody wants to supply it to the international market, he cannot maintain the quality because of lack of proper logistic supports. These include mainly the smooth transportation facilities and preservation, said Engineer Omar Faruk, managing director of Krishibeed

Orchid and Cactus Nursery. Fresh cut flowers are perishable and need proper care at every stage from harvesting to shipment within a certain time limit, which is very difficult to maintain in a country where transportation is in a bad shape, Faruk said.

The company exported only 500 kilogram of 'tube roses' to the Middle Eastern countries over three years, till 1998. It has almost abandoned the project now because of the aforesaid problems. It started flower export to Dubai during the year 1995 with only 40 kilograms of 'tube roses'.

Fluctuation in flower prices in the domestic market is seen as yet another hindrance for export promotion.

Officials of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) echoed him saying, "Flower exports from Bangladesh virtually came to a halt as the early indicators incurred huge losses." The EPB's monthly export bulletin also does not mention export earnings from this sector.

The amount is so meagre that the EPB does not feel it necessary to mention it in a separate clause, one senior EPB official said. The export figure is included under the 'miscellaneous' head.

The fresh flowers and horticultural plants have a big, multi-billion dollars international market. According to a recent study, the European Union alone has a big market for floriculture worth 14 billion dollars annually. Flower connoisseurs in the EU markets appreciate floriculture products of high quality.

The main buyers among the EU countries include, Germany, Italy, France UK, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Israel is the largest supplier of cut flowers to the Netherlands market. The second largest supplying country is Kenya. Among the other top 10 suppliers from developing countries are Colombia, Zimbabwe, Thailand and Ecuador.

Value, not volume, is down

Kibria tells newspaper editors

Although the macroeconomic situation looked fairly in good shape despite ups and downs, industrial production and export trade showed weak performance," reports UNB. "It is not in terms of quantity but because of the value factor," said Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria yesterday exchanging opinion with senior journalists on the country's latest economic scenario.

Senior newsmen A B M Musa, Independent Editor Mahbubul Alam, Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, Financial Express Editor Moazzem Hossain, Ittefaq's Acting Editor Rahat Khan and Daily Matribhumi Acting Editor Bibhuranjan Sarkar and columnist Abed Khan were amongst others to talk economics in the meeting with the Finance Minister. Giving example of decrease

in export value, the Finance Minister said that the price of leather and leather goods declined by 30 to 40 per cent in the world market.

However, an opinion came that the performance of the industrial sector was weak because of the sickness of its two major sub-sectors like jute and textiles.

Discussing the entire economic spectrum, most of the participants viewed that less cash flow and law-and-order situation were the major factors for a sluggish growth of the industrial sector.

The Finance Minister, however, said the disbursement level of term loans remained steady over the last few years. The banks are injecting over Tk 1200 crore every year in the industrial sector.

Regarding the revenue collection, the Finance Minister said that the situation was satisfactory.

NBR Chairman Abdul Mueed Chowdhury said that in July-September period the collection was Tk 500 crore less than the target. "But, the growth is more than last year's actual turnover. The collection rate is 85.84 per cent."

However, he agreed with Financial Express Editor Moazzem Hossain that the growth was only because of devaluation of the Taka.

The NBR Chairman claimed that the revenue collection would pace up shortly after placement of the PSI system in January.

On the question of inflation, the Finance Minister said that the point-to-point inflation in September was 4.6 per cent.

However, in the generalised system, the inflation was 8 per cent.

"It is in a downtrend. Unless the economy is vibrant, I am not going to beat the drum," said the government's economic pointsman.

On the question of forex reserves he said although the level was stable, it should be much higher.

The present level is on average 1.7 billion US dollars. He attributed the not-so-sunny situation to the impact of huge food imports after the 1998 floods. The country spent an additional amount of over 800 million US dollars for grain import after the floods to leapfrog possible food crisis as the deluge washed away paddy crops.

Durga Puja begins today

Durga Puja, the greatest religious festival of the Hindus, begins all over the country today, reports UNB.

On the first day today, the goddess will be welcomed by offering Shasthi puja beginning at 6 am.

The Kumari Puja will be celebrated on Monday. The celebration will be ended on October 19 with immersion of the idol of goddess Durga.

Members of the Hindu community, including women and children, will visit the puja mandaps in different parts of the country.

The government has declared general holiday on October 19 on the occasion of Durga Puja.

In a message on the eve of Durga Puja, BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia greeted the Hindu community. She expressed the hope that the Hindu community will celebrate the festival peacefully.

Pakistan cut West Indies to half

SHARJAH, Oct 14: Wasim Akram's Pakistan showed off their awesome firepower during a 130-run romp over the West Indies in the Sharjah Cup here today, reports AFP.

Saeed Anwar and Inzamam-ul Haq hit sparkling half-centuries as Pakistan piled up 260 for five and then bowled out the lethargic West Indians for 130 in the day-night international. It was Pakistan's fifth successive one-day victory over Brian Lara's team, having beaten them in the preliminary league of the World Cup in May and thrice in Canada last month.

The West Indians showed none of the flair that won them Wednesday's opener against Sri Lanka, allowing Pakistan to

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Opposition observes 'protest day'

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday vowed to carry out the one-point movement 'until the fall of the Awami League government.'

In observance of the 'Protest Day,' the BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote organised separate rallies and brought out processions in the city and other parts of the country to protest the killing of a BNP leader at Dewanganj in Jamalpur during observance of the alliance's 'anti-aggression day' on Monday.

Advocate Abdur Razzak, president of Dewanganj thana unit of BNP was killed allegedly by the activists of ruling Awami League.

Main opposition BNP organised a public rally at Muktangan, JP at Kalabagen, Jamaat at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram, Mosque and IOJ at Purana Paltan mosque compound. Besides, Jagpa, Democratic League, PNP and NDA also held separate rallies and brought out processions in the city.

The BNP rally was addressed by the BNP leader Mannan Bhuiyan, Tariqul Islam, Mirza Abbas, Nazrul Islam Khan, Amanullah Aman, MP, Joyntul Abedin Faruq, MP, Washimul Bari Rajib, Kazi Abul Bashir and Fazlul Haq Milon. City BNP joint convenor Abdus Salam presided.

Speaking at the rally, BNP secretary general Abdul

Bomb planting: Another held in city

By Staff Correspondent

Another person was arrested yesterday in connection with planting of explosives in two city mosques and an anti-tank mine in the Janakantha office recently.

Police identified the arrested as Afsar Uddin Mollah, son of Haji Abdul Karim Mollah, a resident of Mollapara in the city's Madhya Badda area.

Police said that they would continue interrogating the accused for his alleged involvement in bomb planting.

Prayer Timings

October 15		
Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr	4:30	5:00
Juma	12:15	1:20
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:45	5:55
Esha	7:45	8:15

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Upazila hopefuls queue up for AL tickets

By Nazimul Ashraf

Aspirants are fighting each other to get Awami League tickets for the upcoming Upazila elections even before the schedule of the crucial local polls is announced, insiders said.

The party hierarchy has meantime planned to authorise the district and Upazila chapters to select candidates for the elections likely to be held late next month.

Reports reaching from different parts of the country have it that the election hopefuls are now locked in conflicts over nominations. At some places, supporters of the aspirants have also clashed.

Officially, polls to local government bodies including Upazila are held on a non-party basis. But the political parties unofficially nominate their people in such elections and put their weight behind them.

As decided by the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), party units at the Upazilas and the districts are supposed to decide on the party nominations and let it know about their decisions.

If the local units fail to nominate the candidates, the party high command will take up the matter to find out the suitable nominees. If someone defies the party high command decision he or she will face disciplinary action, the ALCWC warned at a

recent meeting.

According to insiders, some top leaders of the party are not supporting the idea of empowering the local branches to pick up candidates for such a crucial election. Mistakes in the nomination process may prove disastrous for the party ahead of the next general elections.

They, therefore, are of the view that the local chapters should propose names of the candidates subject to scrutiny by the central committee. The process is more important in the case of candidates for the office of Upazila chairman, who are seen to be playing vital role in the next general elections.

AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reportedly had a list of prospective candidates for the office of Upazila chairman. The list is based on intelligence reports from all the 460 Upazilas, sources in her office said.

They said the final list will most likely be prepared on the intelligence report as well as the proposals from the party's local units.

Besides, party central leaders are also expected to visit the districts once the election schedule is announced to help the local committees find out the right candidates and settle intra-party feuds at the local level, party sources said.


Reaching for the stars

He is short, may be the shortest in the country, but his dreams aren't. Manzoor, the two-foot two-inch tall man from Mymensingh, has come to the capital for a break in the tinsel town.

—Star photo: Anisur Rahman

Republicans torpedo CTBT

Senate hands Clinton a huge foreign policy defeat

WASHINGTON, Oct 14: The US Senate on Wednesday rejected the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), dealing President Bill Clinton a severe foreign policy defeat and potentially crippling global efforts to curtail the spread of nuclear

arms, reports AFP.

Three years after Clinton became the first world leader to sign the accord, senators rejected ratification in a largely party-line vote of 48-51-1.

It was the first rejection by the Senate of a treaty since the

early 1900s.

After the vote, Clinton said he was "very disappointed," but vowed to keep on fighting for CTBT ratification.

Shrugging off both international pressure and an intense

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Khaleda condemns attack on DU students

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has condemned and protested attacks on students on the Dhaka University campus by police and ruling party backed Chhatra League activists yesterday and the day before.

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JOBS bid to reward pro-SME work

By Staff Correspondent

The Job Opportunities Business Support (JOBS) programme, a USAID-funded initiative working with micro, small and medium enterprises (SME), yesterday launched a study and travel grants for writers and journalists to encourage them in creating awareness about SME sector.

The contest will offer three prizes totalling US\$ 10,000 (Tk 500,000) for writers and journalists who publish cutting edge

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