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## Big challenges before agriculture

### Minister backs suggestion for land reclamation in coastal belt

By Staff Correspondent

Fast depletion of croplands, steep fall in soil fertility, looming crisis of irrigation water and lesser resource for research are the big hurdles facing the country's agriculture today.

Identifying these challenges, experts and policy planners at a dialogue in the city yesterday called for public and private sectors to act immediately.

The dialogue on Bangladesh Agriculture at the Crossroads: Current Challenges was organised at a city hotel by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), an independent think-tank.

Dr. Mahabub Hossain, Head of the Social Science Division of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), made a keynote presentation at the dialogue presided over by CPD Chairman Prof. Rehman Sobhan.

Agriculture Minister Motia Chowdhury, former ministers M Majid-ul Haq, M Syeduzzaman, AMA Muhit and a host of experts, agriculturists, and representatives from private and NGO sectors also took part.

The agriculture minister strongly supported the keynote presenter's suggestion for land reclamation in the large coastal belt.

"We've to convince the donors to invest in land reclamation for if we want to survive in the future when we won't be able to grow enough food to feed the large population due to acute land shortage," said Motia.

She however differed with the keynote speaker on the point of providing subsidy to agriculture.

As Hossain argued in favour of channeling resources saved

from subsidy cuts to rural infrastructure development, Motia said the government's farm subsidy is already quite low.

Earlier, Dr. Hossain in his paper emphasised sustaining quality of the soil and water resources with the growing pressure for intensification of farming. He mentioned that cropping intensity has already exceeded 175 per cent, one of the highest in the world.

Hossain argued for more public sector investment in agricultural research. He also touched upon the issues of crop diversification, land reforms and preparation of an agricultural growth strategy containing strong elements to promote fish and livestock production.

Former agriculture minister M Majid-ul Haq expressed concern at the loss of soil fertility and blamed it on excessive use

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## Bullet-injured JSD leader dies in city

By Staff Correspondent

Mahmud Hossain Sachchu, 34, a leader of Kushiya district unit of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), succumbed to his injuries at the Intensive Care Unit of Bangabandhu Medical University Hospital at 11.30 pm on Friday, said a JSD press release.

The JSD leader was shot in his head and neck by unidentified assailants at the residence of his elder brother in Kushiya town at about 2:40 pm on July 11.

He was first admitted to Kushiya Sadar Hospital and later shifted to Bangabandhu Medical University Hospital, the press release said.

His first *namaz-e-janaza* was held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Zohr prayers yesterday.

The body was sent to Kushiya yesterday afternoon.

JSD president and Minister for Fisheries and Livestock A S M Abdur Rob and JSD general secretary Hasnat Hossain were at the funeral. The JSD yesterday strongly condemned the killing of Mahmud Hossain Sachchu.

Meanwhile, JSD will observe hartal in Kushiya district protesting the killing of Sachchu on Monday, the press release added.

## Bird hits another aircraft

By Staff Correspondent

Another aircraft of the Qatar Airways was hit by a bird while landing at Zia International Airport yesterday morning, aviation sources said.

Two fan blades of one of the two engines of the Airbus 320 which was on a flight from Doha to Dhaka were damaged. There was no injury to any passenger as the aircraft managed to land safely.

Earlier on Tuesday, a Pariah Kite hit a Qatar Airways Boeing 767 at ZIA, damaging one of its two engines. It was followed by a similar incident on Thursday when a bird hit an Airbus of the Gulf Air, damaging an engine of the aircraft.

Qatar Airways was expecting a relief aircraft to take passengers to Doha last night. The Civil Aviation Authorities tightened the vigilance at ZIA yesterday, asking the bird shooters to be on duty in two shifts.

## US urged again to deport killers of Bangabandhu

WASHINGTON, July 15: Bangladesh has urged the US government for speedy deportation of the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports BSS.

Three killers of Bangabandhu reported to have taken refuge in the USA. The request was made when Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States K M Shehabuddin had a meeting with Senator Sam Brownback at the Capitol Hill on July 13.

Brownback is Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near East and South Asia.

"As the land of democracy, freedom and justice, the US cannot be the safe haven of the killers," the Ambassador observed at the meeting.

In this regard, he referred to the assurances given by President Bill Clinton during his recent visit to Bangladesh to conclude an extradition treaty with Bangladesh.

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## Nine to contest Jhalakati-2 byelection

JHALAKATI, July 15: Advocate Anwar Hossain Talukdar (Independent) stepped aside on the last day of withdrawal of candidature from parliamentary by-election in Jhalakati-2 leaving nine in the fray, reports UNB.

The fight in the July 31 polls will be mainly between Amir Hossain Amu of Awami League and Independent candidate Elen Bhutto, wife of the deceased JP MP. None of the major opposition parties, officially fielded any candidate.

Others in the fray are Prof Raja Rafiqul Islam and Alamgir Kabir of Jatiya Party (Ershad), Krishak Mohammad Sadeq of Jatiya Krishak Mukti Andolan, Advocate Jaliluddin Howladar of JP (Mizan-Manjul), Maulana A K M Nurul Islam Netaje of Jatiyabadi Palli Dal, S M Rafiqul Islam of Liberal Party and M A Mannan Sardar (Independent).

The Election Commission will allocate symbol among the candidates tomorrow (Sunday). The voting will be held on the basis of existing voter list. The number of voters in the constituency is 1,70,787.

The Shibir gunmen let loose

## Hanging of 12 army officers: Documents to be examined today

The parliamentary subcommittee on defence will meet today to examine the documents relating to the court martial of 12 army officers hanged on charge of killing President Zia, reports UNB.

The meeting will be held at the Sangad Bhaban at 10 am. The 3-member subcommittee, headed by Col (rtd) Shawkat Ali, includes Col (rtd) Feroz Ahmed and Major (rtd) Akbaruzzaman as members.

Amid serious criticism by allies, labour fronts of ruling Awami League and opposition BNP yesterday pledged to "work together" to uphold workers' cause, reports UNB.

They pledged to actively take part in SKOP activities as central committees of its components in a joint meeting reviewed their past successes and failures and take preparations for August 5 convention where fresh programmes, including strike, will be announced.

Jatiya Sramik League was the main target of criticism as their allies in the SKOP said the ruling party workers' front is not sincere in strengthening the movement. Specially, they accused the Sramik League of remaining aloof during the June 20 countrywide strike.

Jatiyabadi Sramik Dal also faced criticism as their SKOP allies alleged that the labour front of the opposition BNP failed to prove their sincerity in the movement specially when its general secretary Nazrul Islam Khan was abroad for meetings and treatment.

Sources said leaders coming from various districts pressed the central leadership of the SKOP to build up a vigorous movement to implement the agreement signed earlier mainly for announcement of minimum wage.

Mesbahuddin Ahmed presided over the meeting where SKOP coordinator Dr Waheedul Islam presented a report. It was attended by M Nurul Islam, Abdullah Al Noman, Ahsanullah Master MP, Shah M Abu Zafar, Abdullah Sarkar, Ashikul Alam Patal, Shafigur Rahman Majumdar, Abdus Salam Khan, Nazrul Islam Khan, Shahidullah Chowdhury and Khalilur Rahman.

They also called upon the people to launch a vigorous movement against the "subversive and autocratic" government to dislodge it from power.

They were speaking at a discussion meeting on "Zila Parishad Law 2000".

Chaired by former Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, the

discussion was participated by, among others, BNP leader Moudud Ahmen, Prof Asaduzzaman and Prof. Aftab Ahmed of DU, Prof. Khondakar Sirajul Islam of Agriculture University, Prof. Mahabub Ullah, Salaudin Kader Chowdhury MP, Rajshahi City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minto and journalist Sadek Khan. It was organised by Satagarik Committee.

Moudud Ahmed said a campaign should be launched to inform people the undemocratic provisions of the law.

It also violates constitutional provisions, he said. Under the law, there is no scope for effective participation of people in the administration, he said and demanded its immediate scrapping.

He also called upon the people to unite under the four-party opposition alliance and intensify its out-governments movement.

Prof. Asaduzzaman, Dean of Social Science Faculty of DU compared the law with the controversial "Basic Democracy" of Ayub Khan. It has been enacted to manipulate the next parliamentary election, he said.

To make democracy effective, its necessary to decentralise the administration, but the AL government is centralising power to cling to power."

Prof. Sirajul Islam said the law is "undemocratic" and "controversial".

## Resist Shibir forces

### Killers won't be spared, says PM

a reign of terror in the port city. They will have to be punished, she warned.

She lamented that despite being a freedom fighter, General Zia betrayed with the liberation war and its spirit rehabilitating the killers and rajakars in politics.

She also lashed out at the alliance of BNP with JP and Jamaat that she observed encouraged the evil forces. "Autocrat Ershad, vote thief BNP and killers and collaborators of 1971" have joined hands and started conspiracy against the people of the country.

The Prime Minister said they are plotting against the sovereignty and the independence of the country because they do not believe in independence.

Pointing to BNP and Jatiya Party, she said while in power, they had plundered public money and now trying to resist a government that is working for the welfare of commonman.

Hasina told the audience

that BNP leader Khaleda Zia was spreading lies against the ruling party to confuse the people. "The liars will get natural justice."

The meeting, presided over by Langakot Upazila Awami League president Ruhul Amin Mollah, was also addressed by Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru, State Minister for Planning Dr Mohtashim Khan Alamgir, Whip Mujibur Huq Mujib, Jomal Abedin Bhuiyan MP, Tajul Islam MP, Shamsuddin Kalu and Rafiqul Hossain.

Earlier, the Prime Minister laid the foundation of Comilla EPZ on the outskirts of the district town and then came to Langakot to address the public meeting.

She announced that in near future she would again come to the district to lay the foundation of Comilla Science and Technology University.

## Repeal Zila Parishad Act

### Speakers at a discussion demand

By DU Correspondent

Speakers at a discussion meeting in the city yesterday urged the government to repeal the recently passed Zila Parishad Act.

Termed it "illegal, anti-people and unconstitutional", they also condemned the ruling Awami League for passing such an important law in parliament without the Oppositions.

They also called upon the people to launch a vigorous movement against the "subversive and autocratic" government to dislodge it from power.

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## Liaison committee leaders to meet Khaleda today

To strengthen four-party alliance, its central liaison committee leaders will meet separately with the chiefs of the allied parties.

The step is being taken in view of doubts arose if the allied parties would go for the next general election together or separately.

The liaison committee leaders will first meet with BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia at her official residence at 29 Minto Road at 7:30 pm today. Jamaat assistant secretary general Mohammad Quamruzzaman told UNB yesterday evening.

Quamruzzaman said they would also meet JP chief H M Ershad, Jamaat chief Golam Azam and IOJ chairman Shaikhul Hadit Azizul Huq subsequently.

Before meeting Khaleda, he said, the liaison committee will hold a meeting today to discuss latest political developments as well as alliance's July 25 mass procession programme in the capital.

## Former Pak minister jailed for corruption

ATTOCK, Pakistan, July 15: A Pakistani anti-corruption court today sentenced Feroz Sattar, former minister and ex-mayor of Karachi, to 14 years jail on charges of corruption, officials said, reports AFP.

Judge Farrukh Latif also ordered Sattar to pay a fine of 50 million rupees over a rail and road contract in 1997-98.

Sattar, a key leader of the ethnic-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), was accused by the army-led National Accountability Bureau (NAB) of losing the national exchequer about 35 million rupees in the deal.

The court also sentenced a co-accused, Anzar Zaidi, former administrator of the Karachi Municipal Corporation, to 10 years jail and a fine of five million rupees.

## BNP calls hartal in Cox's Bazar today

COX'S BAZAR, July 15: BNP and its front organisations called hartal in the town tomorrow demanding release of 23 JCD activists, reports UNB.

The JCD activists were arrested following a clash on July 8 with police, reports AFP.

The JCD activists were arrested following a clash on July 8 with police, reports AFP.



**Livelihood:** For 15 years Asma Begum has been selling artificial flower to support bare subsistence of her family of four. She carries flowers all the way from her home at Mirpur-12 to Chawkabazar in the old city thrice a week. A single trade earns her Tk 500.

—Star photo by Amran Hossain

## 2 shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

Two persons were shot dead and another was bullet-hit in separate incidents in the city since Friday night. Shah Alam, 15, was shot dead by unidentified assailants near the Gopibag Bazar crossing yesterday afternoon, police and hospital sources said.

Shah Alam, an employee of electronic goods repairing shop in North Mugdapara, was shot in his head when he was returning home to take his lunch at about 2:30 pm.

As soon as he arrived at the Bazar crossing, the miscreants fired on him and he escaped the scene. Fatally injured Shah Alam was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries.

Demra police said no case was filed or none was arrested in this connection till filing of this report.

In another incident, Swapon, 28, was shot dead while his relative Ali Hossain was seriously injured when a

gang of local hoodlums fired on them at Gaudaria area under Sutrapur thana on Friday night, police and hospital sources said.

Ali Hossain, 30, a transport worker, was undergoing treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital with bullet injury in his head.

The incident occurred when a gang of about five local hoodlums led by one Parvez entered the residence of Ali Hossain and shot him in his head at about 10:30 pm at Dhalkanagar in Gaudaria.

Swapon was shot allegedly by Parvez when he protested attack on Ali Hossain. Parvez shot Swapon in his head from a point blank range.

Nurjahan, mother of injured Ali Hossain, was suspecting that a local influential person had a role behind the attack on Swapon, son of Mohammad Nayajan, and Ali Hossain. The local influential person has long been after the land property of Nurjahan, she alleged.

## Maoists kill 4 cops in Nepal

KATHMANDU, July 15: At least four policemen were killed and five others injured early today after a three-hour gun battle with Maoist rebels in central Nepal, a police official said, reports Reuters.

The incident took place at Thokpara village, in Sindhupalchowk district, about 180 km northeast of Kathmandu.

"There was a firefight with the Maoists who attacked a police post," police inspector Ragu Khadka told Reuters.

## Iran test-fires medium-range missile

TEHRAN, July 15: Iran said today it had successfully test-fired an upgraded version of its medium-range Shahab missile, which has raised concern in Israel and the United States, reports Reuters.

The ballistic missile has a range of 1,300 km making it capable of hitting Israel, Iran's arch foe.

An Iranian defence ministry source was quoted by state media as saying that the missile was test-fired to ensure it conforms to the latest technological standards. It was first tested in 1998.

"This missile is part of our programme for the defence industry and it would in no way threaten other countries," he said.

Shahab-3 is modelled mainly on North Korea's Nodong-1, but has been improved with Russian technology.

## Kashmir gives deadline for autonomy

SRINAGAR, July 15: Kashmir's ruling National Conference (NC) party today threatened to pull out of India's ruling coalition if New Delhi did not grant more autonomy to the troubled state within six months, reports AFP.

"We will continue honest efforts to a solution but the bottomline is autonomy. The deadline for this is less than six months," said Kashmir Law Minister Pyare Lal Handoo.

"There is no question of a compromise. As and when needed we will pull out of the federal coalition government."

Briefing reporters after a meeting of the NC's policy-making body, he said: "Today's meeting was inconclusive but the next meeting to be held after Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah meets Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Monday will reveal the state of negotiations."

"Everything now depends upon the kind and quality of the dialogue... all matters which touch the autonomy issue will be discussed. We are committed to the implementation of the autonomy resolution," Handoo said.

Abdullah on Friday appeared to backtrack from the controversial autonomy plan, rejected by India's Hindu nationalist-led ruling alliance headed by Vajpayee.

The Kashmiri leader told reporters that he was going to New Delhi on Monday with an open mind to discuss the autonomy proposal with Vajpayee.

"We should not suspect the intentions of New Delhi. I am going to New Delhi for discussions with sincerity... nothing is rejected... in politics doors

are neither shut nor open," he said.

The Kashmir assembly, in which the NC enjoys a two-thirds majority, adopted a resolution on June 26 calling for complete autonomy for the Muslim-majority state, except in matters related to finance, defence and communications.

Vajpayee's cabinet rejected the autonomy proposal on July 4, saying it was a first step towards secession from India.

The NC is a minor members of Vajpayee's ruling coalition and the chief minister has come under heavy pressure from within the party to withdraw from the alliance following the cabinet decision.

Although the coalition can cope without the four NC MPs in the federal parliament, analysts say it has no wish to further alienate the ruling party of a sensitive state.

## '92 riots, Babri Mosque demolition Bal Thackeray will be prosecuted

BOMBAY, July 15: Bal Thackeray, India's most feared militant Hindu leader, will be prosecuted over the anti-Muslim riots which followed the razing of a mosque by Hindu zealots in 1992, an official told AFP today.

Chhagan Bhujbal, deputy chief minister of western Maharashtra state, said his government gave the green light to the police late Saturday to prosecute Thackeray, whose Shiv Sena party was widely blamed for the carnage.

More than 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in countrywide rioting that erupted following the December 6, 1992 destruction of the 16th-century Babri Mosque in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya.

"I had sent the file (for Thackeray's prosecution) to (Maharashtra) Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and he has just given his sanction to prosecute Thackeray," Bhujbal told AFP.

"This is in line with my statement in the state assembly that I will do justice to the persons who had sought Thackeray's prosecution," the deputy chief minister, who also holds the home portfolio, said.

Bhujbal said the police had sought his permission to prosecute Thackeray for provocative anti-Muslim editorials published in Saamna (Encounter), the Shiv Sena's official journal, during the rioting.

Sena is a hardline subsidiary of Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's relatively-moderate Hindu nationalist BJP party.

The bloodletting that raged under January 1993 was most intense in Bombay, the capital of Maharashtra state, and forced more than 250,000 Muslims to flee the city as their homes and businesses were looted.

Despite accusations, no action was taken against Thackeray's Shiv Sena or the party's enormous clout because of his renoumous clout with the government then.

Although he held no official post, 73-year-old Thackeray was the uncrowned king of a BJP-Sena government in Maharashtra, which was routed in assembly elections by India's main opposition Congress party in October last year.

The Sena has no written constitution except that of a blind loyalty to its fiery chief.

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