

**EARTH SUMMIT 2002**

## Rich nations get flak for fat farm subsidies

AFP, Johannesburg

Food experts warned at the Earth Summit yesterday that the billion-dollar-a-day subsidies that had transformed farmers in the rich world into behemoths were helping to cripple their counterparts in poor countries.

A father of the so-called Green Revolution, whose country has saved hundreds of millions of lives, MS Swaminathan, said the farming world was being dangerously polarised into two cultures.

The first, in North America and Western Europe, was "largely one of agribusness" with access to lavish subsidies, technology and capital; the other, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, was small-scale personal farms.

"One is production by the masses, the other is mass production," he said.

Swaminathan, an Indian who earned the first World Food Prize

for his work in high-yield crops, said that small-scale farmers in developing countries struggled with problems of access to credit and finding a secure market to sell their crops in addition to worsening soil erosion and looming climate change.

But helping them, he said, would be the smartest way to improve hundreds of millions of lives.

Payouts for food producers have been blamed for wrecking potential markets in North America, Europe and Japan for small farmers in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

And subsidies to export big grain crops such as wheat and corn can also destroy livelihoods in small countries, because they are sometimes sold at below the local cost price.

According to the World Bank, the subsidies total nearly a billion dollars a day, a situation it blasts as "untenable" both for rich and poor countries alike.

But curbing the subventions has

been a tremendous task, given the political firepower of the farming lobbies in the European Union and United States.

Both trade powers are fighting attempts by developing countries for a draft action plan being crafted at the Earth Summit to include detailed commitments for phasing out "trade-distorting" farm subsidies.

Pedro Sanchez, an agriculture professor at Berkeley University, San Francisco, and former director of the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry in Nairobi, said the Earth Summit failed "a paradox".

"We're subsidising farmers in the North to the tune of one billion dollars a day to preserve some very valid goals like their way of life, while we are not subsidising to any measurable extent the hungry and the poor farmers in the developing world," he said.

## Four BNP MPs guilty

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Chowdhury and Delwar Hossain Khan Dulu of Mymensingh.

Committee head civil aviation secretary in charge Shafiqul Islam submitted the report to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office at 3:00pm yesterday.

The secretariat committee was formed on August 10 at the directive of the prime minister. In its report, the committee mentioned direct involvement of some high food officials in Dhaka and regional food officials in the wheat purchase irregularities.

The report, sources said, categorically mentioned evidences of political intimidation in procuring wheat at a time when locally grown wheat was no more available in the growers' stock.

Earlier, a report submitted by a food ministry probe committee on August 18 also found involvement of at least one ruling party MP and 10 food officials in the wheat scam. The report was also submitted to the prime minister on August 20.

The secretariat probe body visited public granaries in Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra and Sathkira districts and collected wheat samples for tests. These samples were sent to the

Wheat Research Centre (WRC) at Nashipur, Dinajpur for tests.

After examining 38 wheat samples, a board comprising seven experts of the WRC concluded that most of the wheat varieties were foreign and did not match the genotype of homegrown ones.

Bangladeshi wheat growers generally grow 80 to 85 per cent Kanchan variety and 10 to 12 per cent Sonalika variety. The rest are Akbar and some other varieties. The WRC tests found most of the sample wheat did not match any of the local varieties.

The WRC also found dissimilarities in at least three areas - size, colour and texture, sources told The Daily Star.

Compared to locally grown slender-shaped wheat, the samples that the WRC tested were rather round in shape. Besides, the sample wheat was found to be less reddish in colour and less bright in texture.

The much publicised wheat purchase irregularities took place allegedly over buying of an extra one lakh metric tonne (MT) of wheat worth Tk 90 crore at the bag end of the extended procurement drive that ran from March

15 through July 31. The initial procurement target of three lakh MT of wheat was raised by another one lakh MT despite the fact that country grew two lakh MT less than the previous year.

Another committee headed by a food directorate director is still probing the wheat scam.

Instructed by the government to segregate the low-quality insect-infected wheat from good lots in all public granaries, district controllers of food (DCFs) of Pabna, Bogra, Mymensingh, Sathkira, Dinajpur, Tangail, Jamalpur, Netrokona, and Manikganj denied outright that there was any poor quality wheat in their disposal.

This irked food ministry and food directorate and the authorities formed the committee for a probe. Meanwhile, the disaster management and relief ministry on Monday also warned food ministry against distribution of any low-grade foodgrains under its post-food relief programmes. Relief ministry also asked the food ministry to segregate the bad lots from the good ones.

## McKinnon lauds efforts to cut down poverty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Commonwealth has designed its aid programmes in Bangladesh to increase the capacity of reducing poverty, said Commonwealth Secretary General Donald C McKinnon at a press briefing yesterday in the city.

"We have been offering training to 170 Bangladesh nationals and hope that they will bring considerable contribution to the economy of the country as well as to the Commonwealth," he said.

However, he admitted that the Commonwealth has to conduct training on very limited funds.

He looks forward to multiplying the Commonwealth's efforts by initiating some pilot projects in the development sector.

The secretary valued the poverty alleviation programmes of Grameen Bank in the country. "Bangladesh has set an example to the world which is being followed by several countries around the globe."

The three-day visit to Bangladesh has helped him understand its relationship with the Commonwealth better, said the secretary-general.

He described his meetings with the prime minister, senior ministers and the leader of the opposition as fruitful. "It gave me the flavour of the aspiration of people of this country," he said.

Asked about democracy in Bangladesh, he said the country is practising democracy at all levels. "The commitment of the people to democracy is very profound."

## PM for nat'l consensus

**FROM PAGE 1**

Nuruddin Ahmed and former bureaucrat Azimuddin Ahmed - briefed the PM and other ministers on the reports and what methodology they had followed to reach conclusions.

The utilisation committee concluded that only limited gas export could be possible after incremental discoveries by the international oil companies (IOCs).

Also, the committee said, under any kind of export formula, the present production sharing contracts (PSCs) with foreign oil companies must be renegotiated and new deals involving the possible buyer should be signed.

The committee said, at a gas demand growth rate of seven per cent, the present gas reserve would exhaust by 2014-2015. If this growth rate is set at six per cent, the reserve will run dry some time before 2020. At a demand growth of five per cent, the reserve will hold till 2020.

During the 1980s, average gas demand growth was 15 per cent and in the 1990s, it was 10 per cent.

The utilisation committee made its assessments on the basis of a gas demand growth scenario up to 2020 and taking into account a proven gas reserve of 16 trillion cubic feet (TCF).

The reserve committee has, meanwhile, concluded, on the basis of a Petrobrangla/USGS resource assessment, that the country has undiscovered reserve of around 32 trillion cubic feet (TCF).

The net recoverable reserve as on May 2002 is between 12.04 TCF and 15.55 TCF, the committee said in its report.

At three per cent GDP growth rate the country will need 40 to 44 TCF of gas till 2050 and 141 to 154 TCF if the GDP growth is on the higher side of seven per cent, it said.

In the context of an impending energy crisis, the committee members yesterday told the PM and other ministers that huge investment was needed for gas exploration.

However, based on the findings that the PSCs with the IOCs had yielded negative result in terms of feasibility, the utilisation committee suggested allocation of all the remaining onshore blocks, namely block 8 and 11, be made to Petrobrangla.

The committee, however, in its report said, "In the event of adoption of a policy of 'limited export' on the basis of new discoveries, there should not logically be any reservations about fundings by the donor agencies nor investments by the IOCs."

Despite the utilisation committee's conclusion that there was no scope for export from the present reserve, one member of the committee yesterday at the PMO advocated for gas export from the present reserve.

This member, a BUET teacher, and another member signed the report a day after all other members and rebutted many observations of the committee, especially the one that said PSCs with IOCs had negative bearing on the country's financial health.

Also the committee observation that the cost of production of IOCs was five times higher than the Petrobrangla's disturbed him, according to sources.

He argued that as the country had consumed 4 TCF gas over the last 30 years, there was no harm if 5 TCF gas was earmarked for pipeline export.

But his views disturbed some ministers and one minister criticised him for his "irrational logic", according to sources.

The committees were formed in December 2001 and after eight months they prepared the reports on the basis of complex macroeconomic analyses and energy demand and consumption growth pattern.

Later in the afternoon, State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrif Hossain, Energy Secretary Khairuzaman Chowdhury, Petrobrangla Chairman Syed Sajedul Karim and member secretaries of two committees SR Osman and M Ismail addressed a press briefing.

Meanwhile, UNB adds: As the two committees on gas submitted their reports, US oil giant Unocal said it was now looking forward to a timely policy decision by the government on the export of surplus gas.

Within hours of submission of the

reports to the prime minister, Unocal said export from surplus gas would allow the country to take advantage of this limited opportunity to market gas in the region.

"We believe that gas exports will help Bangladesh achieve its economic, social and energy goals and promote countrywide exploration activities," said a Unocal release that proposed pipeline gas export to India.

"We are encouraged that the reserve committee has confirmed that Bangladesh has significant existing gas resources; and, endorses Petrobrangla/USGS resource assessments, which concluded that the country has huge undiscovered gas resources of over 32 trillion cubic feet (TCF).

"Also, we have noted that the Utilisation Committee has concluded that exporting gas by pipeline is a viable option to efficiently utilise the country's gas supplies."

"For a viable pipeline project to proceed, and the country to realise the substantial benefits, we believe it is critical to move forward immediately with export from existing discoveries."

## Forex haul

**FROM PAGE 1**

The customs officials suspected two persons - Mohammad Ali and S Ahmed to be involved in the racket. But Ali managed to leave the country on the same Biman flight (BG-025) and Ahmed (passport No. Q0282421) escaped from the holding lounge.

"Leaving the holding lounge without the help of security personnel is impossible," a senior customs official said. Another source said they were just carriers.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) is involved in maintaining security at the ZIA.

The currencies have been stored at the customs warehouse. A departmental case has been filed and a general diary lodged with the Airport police station.

Currency smuggling through ZIA takes place often but there is hardly any instance of smugglers being punished as a section of Biman and CAAB employees are involved in the rackets, sources said.

On Sunday night, foreign currencies equivalent to Tk 47 lakh were recovered from Biman flight BG-041.

A Biman employee - Bahul Haqm - was arrested with foreign currencies equivalent to Tk 2.32 crore at Biman Flight Catering Centre on April 3, 2002. Foreign currencies equivalent to Tk 10 crore were recovered in another haul earlier.

## BUET clash

**FROM PAGE 1**

ers ordered the employees to break the lock.

The PSU activists then held a sit-in demonstration before the main gate. Few general students came to attend classes but left fearing outward incidents.

At around 11.30 p.m. some teachers, allegedly flanked by JCD activists, accosted the striking students led by PSU leader Sharifuzzaman Sharif and Khokon Das, and asked them to hand over their hand mice and leave the campus saying that they were disturbing the students who were in the class. Police also made a similar request. This resulted in a scuffle between students and police. At one stage, police resorted to baton charging, witnesses said.

The agitated student then gathered in front of the Ashanullah Hall and demonstrated against the police attack.

Campus sources said, despite thin attendance, all classes of BUET were held yesterday. Meanwhile Bangladesh Students' Union (BSU) in a press release yesterday congratulated the students for making the strike a success, but condemned the joint attack of JCD- Shibir and police on PSU activists at BUET campus.

BUET unit BSU in a press release flayed some teachers for "kicking" the striking students and also the police brutality at BUET main gate.

Meanwhile, student strike was observed peacefully in other institutions of the country.

## Local enterprises lose

**FROM PAGE 12**

and Honduras. India ranked 57th and Sri Lanka 61st. Finland ranked the first, while Nigeria, one of the poorest countries, ranked 74th.

The study was carried out in collaboration with the Centre for International Development (CID) of the Harvard University.

Bhattacharya said the competitiveness rank is very important because a foreign investor would look into the position before taking decision on investment.

He said the continuation of reforms in the economic sector is needed to improve the situation. He also underscored the control over crimes to harvest the benefits of reforms.

Quoting the survey report-2002, the CPD executive director said 78 per cent companies stated that organised crimes like racketeering and extortion led to a significant loss to business.

Reliance on legal framework and reliability on police service for protection of business is decreasing, according to 79 per

cent respondents.

On the other hand, 95 per cent companies have stated that public trust in politicians is very low. The percentage of such companies in 2001 survey was 91.

About 70 per cent of the companies said unfair or corrupt activities of other firms imposed high costs on them.

On infrastructure development, more than 90 per cent respondents have said the country's general infrastructure is poorly developed and inefficient.

The respondents were most critical of the quality of electricity supply, accessibility to new telephone lines and relative cost of cellular phones.

More than three-fourths of respondents said business is concentrated into a few hands.

Of the 71 surveyed companies, 45 per cent were fully domestic market-oriented and 23 per cent fully export-oriented.

CPD Research Director Dr. Mostafizur Rahman was present during the presentation of the survey report at the CPD office.

## Torture on Chhabi

**FROM PAGE 12**

Mostafa Kamal over mobile phone and inquired about Chhabi Rani's condition.

The home minister was told by the KMCH superintendent that she is quite well as nothing serious has been found in the medical tests done several times so far.

Bagerhat district BNP president MAH Selim MP and Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman also visited Chhabi Rani this morning.

Selim, while donating Tk 20,000, assured her of "full security anywhere in Bagerhat district".

He told her, "You are my sister and I fervently appeal to you not to exaggerate the incident and give scope to others to politicise the issue". Later talking to newsmen, he said there is no question of pardoning the BNP activists who took her to the party office at Rampal.

The DC of Bagerhat, Peus Costa, has submitted a report to the government after inquiry into the incident.

Meanwhile the civil society including a faction of BNP leaders in Bagerhat has reacted to the issuance of show-cause notices by the government on the acting deputy commissioner and the police superintendent.

Talking to this correspondent over phone, Senior Vice President of district BNP Jahangir Ali and the

district Jamaat-e-Islami secretary Babu Moulana Rezaul Karim expressed sharp reaction at issuance of the show-cause notice on the police superintendent. The opposition political parties are trying to politicise the incident involving Chhabi Rani, they said.

## BCL, PSU enforce strike at CU

CU CORRESPONDENT

Classes at the Chittagong University (CU) were not held yesterday due to a strike called simultaneously by the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and central committee of Progressive Student Unity (PSU).

The central Progressive Student Unity (PSU) enforced the strike in all educational institutions across the country demanding withdrawal of the ban on political activities at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and immediate reopening of Dhaka University (DU).

BCL CU unit also enforced a strike at the university protesting the attack on its female leader on Monday and demanding the immediate execution of the verdict in Bangabandhu Murder case.

The shuttle train service and bus communication were disrupted due to the strike.

## House shifting

**FROM PAGE 10**

husband, I also developed an arcane sense for danger. Living or dead buried under the debris of an earthquake that might never happen became a living image for my wife and me.

My search now for a four-bedroom house almost ended in disappointment. Because most of such houses had carved out the fourth room from a space originally meant for three rooms, and thus this extended room was an apology for a room. I didn't like this super practicality of the house lords.

One of my relatives lives in Chandgaon. She is very fond of my wife and hearing that we were planning to shift she induced my wife into choosing a house at Chandgaon. She and my wife were successful in finding a reasonably good four-bed room house there and we're shifting today.

The disadvantages: no telephone connection for the time being. I went to see the GM of T & T about this, and he politely discouraged me to go to Chandgaon as the exchange box there is fully saturated. The second disadvantage is the horrible traffic

jam both at Bahaddarhat and at Muradpur intersections. The third disadvantage is its distance.

The advantages are that houses are relatively cheap there, the area is peaceful, and the supply of water twenty-four hours guaranteed, as the WASA has planted a pump there.

As courtesy, I went to see my old landlord in his garment office to tell him that I was shifting. He is a nice gentleman. I always praised his talent in making houses. Actually, besides our building he owns two more such buildings and two are under construction nearby our house. But I found him rather unusually nervous.

What he told me can become the subject of another article. He has been receiving threat calls from a group of extortionists who are asking for a phenomenal amount as donation against the two houses he's building. He found out the name of the leader of the gang. He told me that the guy is now keeping the whole of Chittagong at his feet. And, on top of it, the mastaan happens to hail from the same area as he does, and a distant relative of his.

## DHAKA TODAY

### Film show

As part of Elvis Presley Retrospective, Zahir Raihan Film Society will screen a film titled 'Gail Happy' (1965). Venue: High Commission of India Cultural Centre, 754 Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.30pm.

### Seminar

A seminar on 'Separation of Judiciary: Problems of its Implementation and Solutions', organised by Ainjibi Front, will be held with Law, Justice and Parliament Affairs Minister Barister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium. Time: 4.00pm.

### Workshop

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry organises a workshop on 'Integration of Women in National Decision Making Process: Industrial Development Perspective' with Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque as chief guest. Venue: DCCI auditorium, 65-66 Motijheel. Time: 3.00pm.

### Memorial meeting

A meeting will be held in memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the occasion of his death anniversary. Venue: Institution of Engineers' auditorium. Time: 4.00pm.

### Award ceremony

The Diploma awarding ceremony of Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) will be held with Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: BIBM Bhaban, Mirpur. Time: 3.00pm.

### General meeting

A general meeting of Dhaka Medical College Alumni Trust will be held. Venue: Conference room of Dhaka Medical College. Time: 12.00pm.

### Rotary meeting

Regular weekly meeting of Rotary Club of Dhanmondi Dhaka will be held. Rtn Prof Dr Golam Rahman will speak on 'Urbanisation in Bangladesh'. Venue: CIRDAP Cafeteria, 17 Tophkhana Road. Time: 5.30pm.

### Samity meeting

The 10th meeting of the executive committee of Chattagram Samity-Dhaka, will be held. Venue: Chattagram Bhaban, 32 Tophkhana Road. Time: 7.00pm.

### Exhibition

An exhibition of Motor Cycle Spare Parts, organised by Nitel Group, will be held. Venue: Nitel Centre, 71 Mohakhali. Time: 12.30pm.

## Double murder

**FROM PAGE 12**

ter poly got a message over telephone that jewel's dead body was at Mohamadpur Police Station. Immediately, poly and our neighbours Shishir, Kayyum, Helal, babu and some others went to the police station and identified the body," he added.

"Poly also came to know that another dead body was found near Minara mosque at lqbal Road and it was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue. Then, my daughter and I went to the morgue and identified the body as Ribel's. Later, we learnt that Jewel's body was recovered from Kazi Nazrul Road," the witness told the court.

Amzad Hossain identified the prime accused, pasha, in the dock and sought justice.

## Notification

**FROM PAGE 12**

Many of them were not even on the list provided by Bangladesh during the trade talks in April.

According to the business leaders of the country, the list of items also includes products that the country produces insufficiently to meet the domestic demand. Under the agreement Bangladesh could at best be able to export five to six items now, they said.

In 1999, Bangladesh sought zero-tariff access to 191 products under 25 categories in its bid to narrow down the bilateral trade deficit, which stands at US\$ 1.1 billion in 2000-01, up from US\$ 150 million in 1990-91.

The items that India agreed to import from Bangladesh free of duty have been picked from categories of prepared foods, glands and vaccines, pharmaceutical products, cosmetics, toiletries, soaps, leather products, artificial flowers, electrical wires, aluminum products, transformers, dry-cell batteries, electrical appliances, carbon rods, voltage stabilisers and furniture.

In the free-export basket, there are items like sweet biscuits and toasted bread, vaccines for human and veterinary medicines, antibiotics, dental cements and fillings, bone reconstruction cements, lips makeup, nail polish, hair lacquers, toilet soaps, artificial flowers and fruits, aluminium doors and windows, electric conductors, static converter-UPS, dry-cell batteries, plastic cabinet for TV sets, carbon rod UM-1, 2 and 3, automatic voltage regulating or controlling instruments and wooden furniture for office, kitchen and bedroom.

## Epidemic claim

**FROM PAGE 12**

to other what recommendations were put forward in 2000. We have to think about the existing situation... I don't think the recommendations by entomologists in 2000 reflect today's reality."

Information Minister Tariqul Islam and State Minister for Health Amanullah Aman, among others, addressed the briefing.

Dr Mohammad Ashraf Uddin, chief health officer of the DCC and Dr Kanak Ranjan Talukder, director (disease control) of the health directorate also attended the press briefing.

## C'wealth teams

**FROM PAGE 12**

becomes difficult to establish good governance in the country, she said adding that for a good government, a proper and fair election is also essential.

Saber told the newsmen that both the leaders agreed that democracy, parliament and poverty alleviation should be the main emphasis for overall development of a country.

Democracy is the prerequisite for development and a fair election is the base of democratic advancement, the two leaders said and observed that for a fair election entire electoral process should be observed.

When McKinnon said if democracy exists in a country, it would not face a famine. Hasina told the Secretary General that during her rule, it was proved and none died from starvation even during the devastating flood in 1998.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Advocate Abdul Hamid, Opposition Chief Whip Vice-Principal Abdus Shahid, Kazi Jafarullah, MP, and Opposition Leader's Press Advisor Jawadul Karim were present during the meeting.

## JCD cadres

**FROM PAGE 12**

Moreover, the JCD cadres exploded crackers in different parts of the town, creating panic among the dwellers