



Underprivileged working children perform at the annual cultural programme of UCEP-Bangladesh on the UCEP head office premises at Mirpur in the city recently.

# Climate change pushes 'African' diseases north: Expert

REUTERS, Nairobi

Global warming is pushing northwards diseases more commonly found in developing countries, posing a risk to the financial and physical health of rich nations, the head of a livestock herders' charity said.

Steve Sloan, chief executive of GALVmed, said yesterday that insect-borne diseases were increasingly moving north, such as the viral infection bluetongue that has hit cattle and sheep in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and

Germany.

If Kenya's Rift Valley Fever also reached Europe, the impact would be immense, he said.

"These 'African' diseases have become global issues because of climate change," Sloan told Reuters in an interview.

"Following the bluetongue outbreak in Germany, some meat markets in the country saw an annual drop of up to a third," he said. "Wait until something like Rift Valley Fever arrives, that brings death with it as well."

Bluetongue, which is not harmful to humans, has been present for several years in Spain and Italy.

The disease, transmitted by midges, was first discovered in South Africa and has been spreading north since the late 1990s. Experts say that is due to global warming.

"There is a very real threat that diseases like River Valley Fever will follow bluetongue into Europe," Brian Perry, senior scientist at the International Livestock Research Institute, told Reuters. "Climate change has a definite impact in the

establishment of these diseases."

Within a month of bluetongue being detected in the southern Netherlands last year, the number of Dutch farms affected by it had doubled to more than 400, despite measures to stop the spread of the virus.

"These are economic diseases that should frighten the hell out of Europe's meat business, not to mention the threat they pose to human lives," Sloan said.

"Climate change is bringing them to Europe."

## Rock scientists to make world's geological map

REUTERS, London

Rock scientists from across the world will start next week to put together the first geological map of earth in a bid to better understand the planet.

The OneGeology project, bringing together scientists from more than 55 countries, will pool national geological survey information and present it on the Internet for all to see rather like Google Earth already does with satellite images.

In doing so it will not only provide people with access to the first detailed images of the ground beneath their feet but also expose the yawning gaps that exist in knowledge.

"The geological data exists. What we are trying to do is unlock it and make it universally available," Ian Jackson of the British Geological Survey told a news conference on Thursday. "It is like piecing together a global jigsaw puzzle."

"We believe that increasing the availability of geological data will increase our knowledge of environmental factors that affect human health and welfare," he added.

One aim will be to start to identify deep geological structures that might be used for the safe long-term storage of the main greenhouse gas carbon dioxide produced from burning fossil fuels to generate electricity.

Many scientists and politicians believe that Carbon Capture and Storage is one of the key tools in the battle against global warming.

But Jackson said OneGeology could also help spot potential problems before they flared into conflict given that geology was no respecter of national boundaries.

"If someone is extracting water from one side of a geological structure that crosses a political boundary while on the other side someone is polluting it, that is a problem," he said. "Knowing the structure crosses that border can pre-empt that."

The project, which was not even a proposal a year ago, is due to start producing results by mid-2008 and grow steadily from there as more countries start to pool data that they already hold and start to fill in the gaps.

One of the troubles is that while the data exists nationally, much is held in formats that are not compatible, so the project will convert the information into the new GeoSciML universal geological language.

# UN urged to create single agency to empower women

REUTERS, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the world body on Thursday to create a single agency to empower women and girls and fight for their rights.

In an address to mark International Women's Day, Ban said the 192-member United Nations should take the lead in the global battle with a fully funded new agency that combines the work currently done by three different UN

bodies.

"Such a new body should be able to call on all of the UN system's resources in the work to empower women and realise gender equality worldwide," Ban said. "It should mobilise forces of change at the global level and inspire enhanced results at the country level."

A UN panel recommended in November that the UN Development Fund for Women, the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, and the Office of the

Special Adviser on Gender Issues be combined into one ambitiously funded agency.

The combined budgets of the three units is currently less than \$80 million annually.

Ban said much more needed to be done in the fight for women's rights, particularly in combating violence against women and girls around the world, which is the theme for this year's International Women's Day.

"Most societies proscribe such violence -- yet the reality is that too often, it is tolerated under the fallacious cover of cultural practices and norms, within the walls of the home," Ban told a UN International Women's Day event in New York.

"Or it is used as a weapon in armed conflict, condoned through tacit silence and passivity by the state and the law enforcement community," said Ban.

He also suggested that the UN General Assembly discuss the problem of violence against women and girls once a year and that the Security Council establish a formal monitoring of violence against women and girls.

Sheikha Haya Rashed al Khalifa, the president of the General Assembly, said the burden is "on our shoulders to guarantee peace and security for all women" and that urgent action is needed.

"We must demonstrate once and for all that there are no grounds for tolerance and no tolerable excuses," she said.



Masayuki Inoue, ambassador of Japan, exchanges a grant contract with Mostafa Nuruzzaman, executive director of Shushilan, a local NGO, after they signed it under the Japanese Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects in the city recently. Under the grant contract, Japan will provide about Tk 60 lakh for the construction of Shushilan Vocational Training Centre-cum-Cyclone Centre at Shyamnagar in Satkhira.

