

Fresh move to deal with anti-dumping measures

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The government last week reshuffled a committee to deal with anti-dumping measures in the wake of growing concerns expressed by local manufacturers over possible dumping from competing countries, sources said.

The committee will identify the sectors that are facing challenges both in local and international markets for alleged dumping from foreign firms.

The government a year ago formed the committee but it failed to identify the private sectors faced with dumping problem and submit any report to the government in this regard within the stipulated timeframe.

The commerce ministry has asked the reshuffled committee to submit a report within shortest possible time identifying the sectors that are actually facing the problems.

The committee will also give suggestions to the government as to how private sectors can initiate measures to lodge

complaints at the WTO (World Trade Organisation) for the dumping.

The five-member committee comprising officials from Tariff Commission, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), WTO Cell at the commerce ministry and NBR has already started its work, sources said.

A high official of Bangladesh Tariff Commission on Monday said along with identifying the concerned sectors, the committee will examine the existing anti-dumping rules and then disseminate information to the businesspeople so they can take safeguard measures to protect their industries.

The country's ceramic, dry cell battery, razor blade, paints and yarn manufacturers have apprised the Tariff Commission and National Board of Revenue (NBR) of their problems stemming from dumping acts mainly by neighbouring countries.

The manufacturers expressed concerns over dump-

ing of products from such competing countries as China, Thailand and India.

The businesspeople said products from mainly those countries have flooded the local market, which, they assume, were exported at lower prices than those in their own countries.

As per WTO rules, export of any product may be termed dumping if a company sells the product at a price lower than the price it normally charges in its home market.

A high official of the commerce ministry said although a number of manufacturers expressed concerns over the issue, they never filed any formal complaints to the government to take action under anti-dumping rule. Bangladesh adopted an anti-dumping rule in 1995 following an agreement at the WTO.

As per the WTO deal, a company can lodge complaint to its government against dumping and the government can bring it to the notice of the anti-dumping body at WTO.

"Our manufacturers lack information. They have poor knowledge about products' prices in other countries and don't have adequate capacity to analyse the price gap," a high official of the Tariff Commission said.

Local manufacturers are also unaware of the process of filing anti-dumping complaints against any foreign competing company, the official added.

Meanwhile, filing of complaints at WTO is continuing and WTO data show 22 countries have initiated a total of 332 new investigations under anti-dumping agreement during December 2007-June 2008 period.

China, Argentina, India, European countries and United States are in top position among the countries reporting new initiations.

Bangladesh never filed any complaint at the WTO under the anti-dumping agreement despite it experienced anti-dumping duty from India. jasim@thedailystar.net

'Know Bangladesh' programme kicks off

STAR BUSINESS DESK

A programme styled 'Know Bangladesh' under the auspices of Biswa Shahitto Kendro (BSK), a centre for promoting readership, and mobile phone operator Grameenphone's youth brand djuce started yesterday.

The programme is a bicycle tour across Bangladesh by the youth to learn more about the lifestyle and the hardships of the rural and semi-urban people of the country, according to a press release.

To mark the occasion a press conference was organised in Dhaka yesterday where Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, BSK chairman, and Khaled Hasan, director, Corporate Affairs, and Rajeeb Bhattacharjee, head of Youth Segment, on behalf of Grameenphone and djuce were present.

Participants will comprise a three- to ten-member group, each with a group leader, who will also serve as the correspondent to BSK, and a captain, to lead from the front.

All trips will start from Dhaka by bicycles on specified routes. Different groups may travel to different places at the same time and the duration of each trip may vary from 5 to 15 days. However, the trip cannot exceed 300 miles.



Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, chairman of Biswa Shahitto Kendro (BSK), a centre for promoting readership, speaks at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday on the occasion of launching 'Know Bangladesh' programme jointly organised by BSK and Grameenphone. Senior officials of the mobile phone operator were also present.

Ericsson's 3G trial in Bangladesh in a month

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Ericsson Bangladesh Limited, a telecoms vendor, will introduce 3G technology for the first time in Bangladesh on a trial basis within a month.

The Sweden-based company already got permission from the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) for conducting a third generation (3G) network technology demonstration.

"We've brought all the equipment required for demonstrating 3G technology in Bangladesh. So in a sense we are ready to display the advantages of 3G technology in Bangladesh," said Arun Bansal, managing director of Ericsson Bangladesh Limited.

He said, "Everything is going on and we hope officially we will make the demo by the beginning of August."

The company officials said they got the frequency from the BTRC for six months to operate the trial programme in the Dhaka region.

Usually, 3G is a technology that enables to services include wide-area wireless voice telephony, video calls, and broadband wireless data all in a

mobile environment.

Ericsson Bangladesh is conducting the trial sharing sites with leading mobile phone operators Grameenphone, Telecom Malaysia International Bangladesh (AKTEL) and Warid Telecom International Ltd.

The company's managing director at its Dhaka office yesterday demonstrated one feature of 3G by making video calls within the trial network.

Bansal said in terms of high broadband technology, 3G can help the nation rather than any other upcoming technology.

Ericsson officials said 3G would be the perfect technology for commercial mobile broadband services as the technology offers the best way in terms of economics and spectrum efficiency.

3G technology-enabled network offers the users a wider range of more advanced services while achieving greater network capacity through improved spectral efficiency.

Ericsson completed a high length detail survey in 17 districts across the country among respondents of 15 to 60 years of age and found them

highly interested in different features of the 3G technology.

The Swedish based telecom equipment supplier holds more than 70 percent market share in the Bangladesh market.

Malaysia's Petronas posts \$18.1b profit

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian state energy firm Petronas on Tuesday announced a record 18.1 billion dollars in net profit for 2007/2008 and said it was still keen on pursuing Iran's Pars liquefied natural gas project.

"We have performed quite well. It is another historic set of numbers for Petronas Group," president and chief executive Mohamad Hassan Marican told reporters.

The profit compared to 12.9 billion dollars the previous year.

Petronas, under intense criticism with allegations of mismanagement and secrecy, also announced a special dividend payout of 6.0 billion ringgit (1.9 billion dollars) to the government.

BoJ leaves rates unchanged, downgrades outlook

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's central bank on Tuesday left its super-low interest rates unchanged as it cut its growth forecast for Asia's largest economy for the second time in less than three months.

Japan's central bank on Tuesday left its super-low interest rates unchanged as it cut its growth forecast for Asia's largest economy for the second time in less than three months.

The Bank of Japan's policy board decided unanimously to leave interest rates at 0.5 percent, where they have been since February last year, the central bank said in a statement.

The BoJ trimmed its growth forecast for the current fiscal

year to March to 1.2 percent from 1.5 percent.

It also lowered its forecast for gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the next fiscal year to 1.5 percent from 1.7 percent.

"The downside risks to growth mean that no policy change is likely for the remainder of the year," said Macquarie Securities economist Richard Jerram.

The central bank also revised upward its estimate for core consumer price inflation to 1.8 percent this fiscal year from 1.1 percent.

Inflation is expected to gradually moderate, the BoJ said, predicting core consumer prices would rise by 1.1 percent in the next fiscal year.

BoJ governor Masaaki Shirakawa said the Japanese economy did not appear to have entered a phase of stagnation -- a mix of slowing growth and growing inflationary pressures.

He said economic growth was slowing amid sluggish business investment and private consumption, as well as rising prices for energy and raw materials.

"But we also think that the economy is expected to gradually return to a moderate growth path thereafter," he told a news conference.

The timing of the revisions was a surprise as the Bank of Japan had already lowered its growth forecasts at the end of April in a twice-yearly report.

Saudi Fund may provide soft loan for fertiliser: Iftekhar

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Affairs Adviser Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said there is a possibility that the Saudi Development Fund may be in a position to provide Bangladesh soft loan for the procurement of fertiliser from Saudi Arabia.

He stated this to the media after a meeting with Mohammad Al-Arifi of the Saudi Fund for Development, the head of the Saudi delegation to a conference being held in Jakarta on Afro-Asian strategy for Capacity Building in Palestine.

"My understanding is that

this is a soft loan window of the Saudi fund that provides resources on easy terms for non-petroleum purchases from Saudi Arabia," Iftekhar said, according to a message received from Bangladesh mission in Jakarta.

He added: "I was told, if approached, such funds may be made available to Bangladesh, which would be most helpful given our needs for inputs for the next aman and boro crop seasons."

The foreign adviser informed that he also had a useful conversation with Dr. Yousef Al-Saadon, Saudi deputy minister for economy.

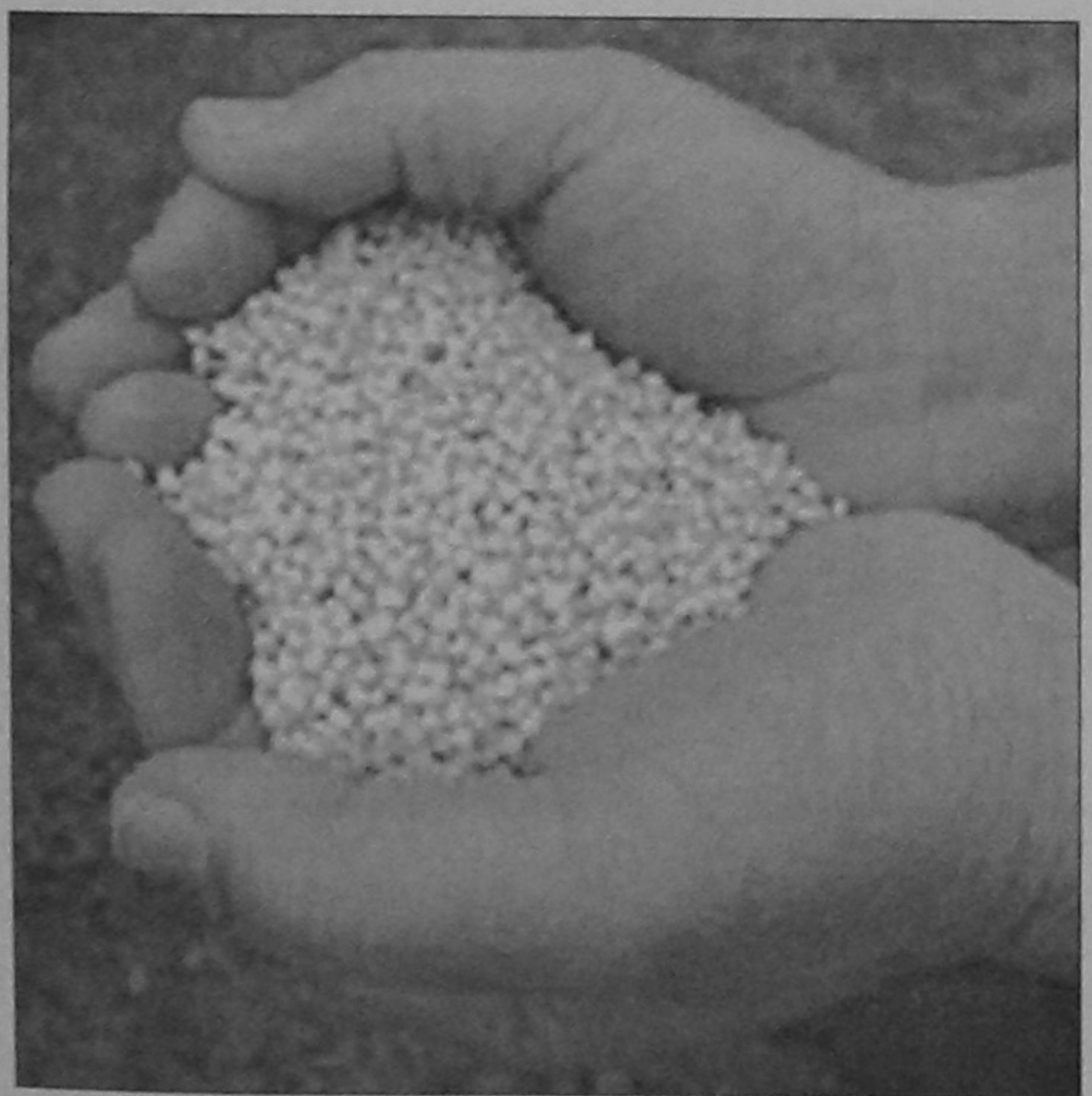


Biz Letters, Star Business, The Daily Star, 19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215

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The price hike of fertiliser and its impact on farmers

The price hike of all main essential commodities is a common phenomenon in the market. It is said that the rise in the prices of all commodities is due to the increasing oil prices in the international market. Only four months ago oil was sold at \$ 100 per bar-



rel, but at present it is sold at \$ 135 per barrel. It is expected that by the end of the year, oil prices may be \$ 200 a barrel. Oil prices always dominate our markets and they mainly affect transport, goods, daily essential food items, electricity, and growing crops.

Fertiliser is an important element for crop growers because their produce directly depends on it. Year after year, fertilisers are the cheapest item in Bangladesh and yet the farmers had no ability to afford it. A section of dishonest businessmen, brokers, political partymen, musclemen and other middlemen handle the distribution of fertiliser. No government could control the overall distribution system before.

In 1994/95, 18 farmers were even killed while demonstrating for smooth supply of fertilisers. The government should have taken command over the situation for the greater interests of the farmers. Due to this reason, the fertiliser sector is facing set backs every year.

The fertiliser sector is one of the most sophisticated industrial sectors in the world. This sector incurs high maintenance costs and most of the accessories are foreign made.

The present care taker government's proper distribution and administrative controls over the fertiliser dealers has ensured that the farmers receive the fertilisers at their doorsteps and this has led to this year's bumper paddy production.

The farmers sell paddy below the cost of production, leading them to lose their interest to produce paddy. Even though this year for the first time farmers are earning some profits after selling rice, they are still not able to meet up the simple demands of their families.

All in all, we hope that the present caretaker government's dynamic and tremendous decisions regarding the fertiliser sector will bring a healthy situation for creating a balanced economy for the country in the future.

M.Z. HAIDER, Narsingdi

Petroleum price hike

The talk of the city is the fuel price hike, some are happy some are not, this means that the fuel price hike and its impact upon the economy is serious in our country. The income level of the general people is not on the rise, and in the meantime, the inflation rate is already very high. To top that, every household food item price is rising and it is like the ratio of earth to the moon.

The government has tried hard to tackle the situation, but what is the impact? That's the big question to all of us. At this moment, we are facing a petroleum price hike again, only after a duration of one year and three months. We have to look at the economical impact and the concern should not be the wealthy class of the society, but rather the upper middle, middle and lower class in the society.

The government gives subsidy to the farmers for diesel prices but what about the other classes of people in the society. I understand the reasons behind the price hike. The government should try to take affective steps to overcome the bad impact upon the society before it becomes more serious.

First and foremost, it should try to increase the salaries of the affected people and then it should supervise the petroleum related issues, such as an effective measure of transportation cost, the price of the daily necessary goods must be in limit and other related issues.

Instead of focusing on single issues, such as the stopping the illegal trafficking of fuel to Indian, it has to look at the bigger picture. There are many renowned economists in our country and our government must try to take their advice and work on goal congruence issues and strategically solve it.

Md Shahrar Parvez, Dhaka

DSE's moves

I am in complete concurrence with Mr Sal Y Jamal for his letter pertaining to the subject matter, 'SEC's Thursday Syndrome', printed in the letters section of Star Business on July 9, 2008. The frequent price fluctuation is having serious repercussions on the market and the worst sufferers are the small investors, for which the authorities should take up the challenge.

The stock market is one of the most significant and sacred institutions of our country and it must be safe guarded at any cost. On the other hand, Chittagong and a few other cities of Bangladesh are reaping the benefits of dealing in stocks and shares. The embargo imposed by the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) authorities on further expansions of their brokerage offices in other cities I personally feel is unfair. When thousands of banks and insurance companies can open their branch offices all over Bangladesh, why discourage the brokerage houses from opening their branches as well?

Gopal Das, Chittagong

Alternate sources of electricity

The solution to the shortage of electricity is obvious; we have to generate more electricity.

However this is not the real problem. The real problem is the money that is required to create something of this magnitude. The other problem is, with existing energy producers, the industry is saturated with corruption. So how do we create more power using the money we have, without losing it to corruption?

We can learn from other countries that have privatised organisations where corruption existed. It greatly reduced corruption and made the company more accountable. The Bangladesh government is already doing this. But unfortunately, our energy infrastructure needs much more investment to serve the whole of Bangladesh properly.

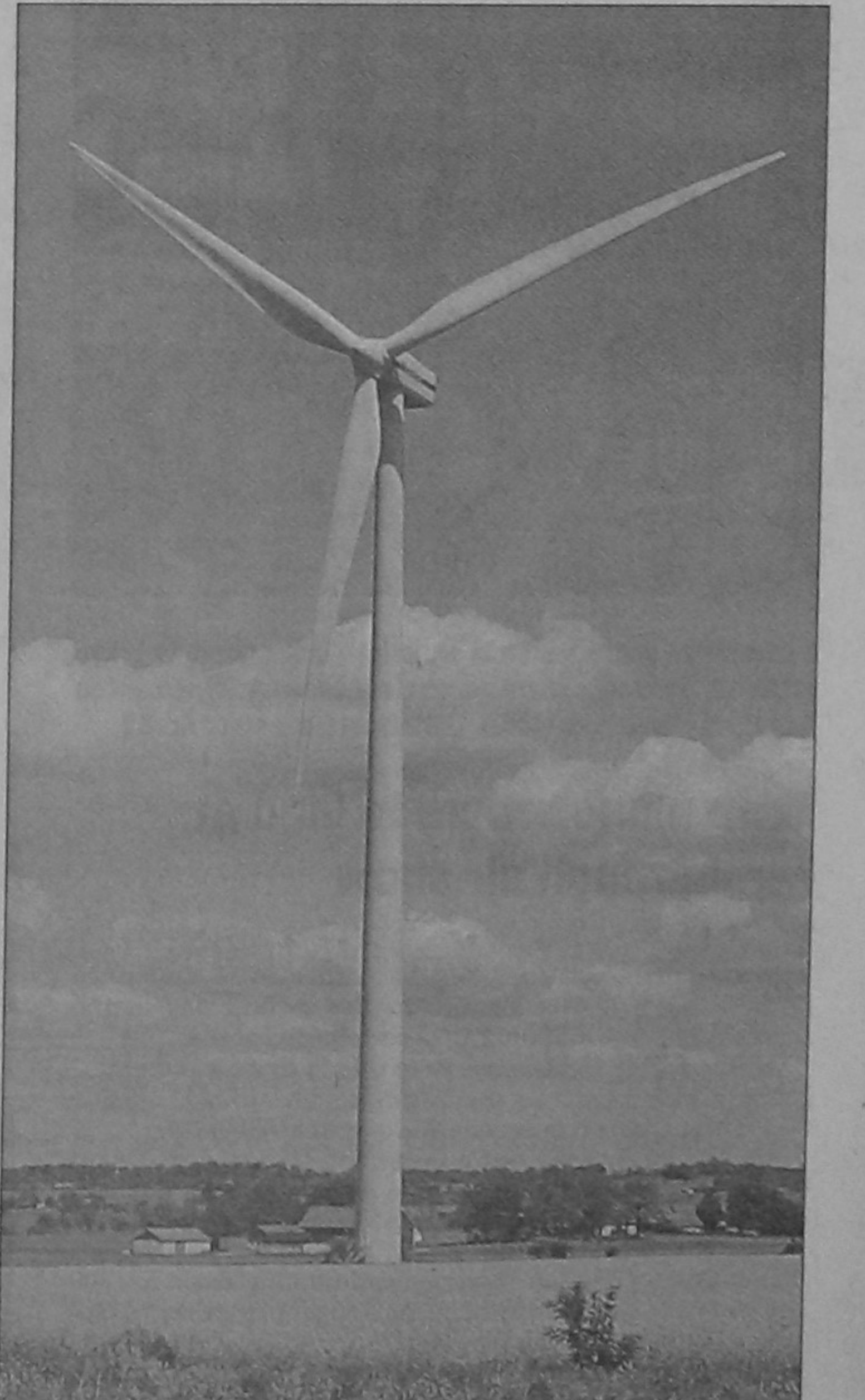
The Bangladesh Board of Investment (BOI) is already working on encouraging foreign investments by giving certain assurances to foreign investors. We must work closely with the BOI to set up organisations abroad to promote investments into Bangladesh. I have already suggested an umbrella investment bureau whose job will be to raise funds from abroad.

The budget allocation for energy is not nearly enough to embark on an energy programme. However if we invest what we have in sustainable energy such as wind power then we can start off small, relative to what we can afford with the budget money and grow without any physical hindrance. We shall make this a public domain company, where Bangladeshi and expatriates will

be welcome to invest. We will also need to allocate some of this money to promote it abroad.

Once we have the foreign investments, we will be able to slowly expand to serve energy to the public more effectively.

Minhaj Ahmed, Dhaka



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