

# Matia backs farming by surface water

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury yesterday encouraged rain-fed aman cultivation, which is less costly than boro farming that requires underground water irrigation.

But Matia emphasised the need to shift boro cultivation to the southern coastal region and use surface water for irrigation.

"Let's try to move away from boro cultivation through underground water irrigation and pay more attention to aman," said Matia.

"If we can give farmers better seed varieties, inputs and transfer knowledge of agriculture management practices, aman outputs will soar," the minister told a workshop on updating Agro Ecological Zone (AEZ), for effective land resource planning.

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) organised the programme at its office.

Taking advantage of the monsoon season, Matia said farmers would be able to grow aman at lower costs than boro cultivation.

"We should extend aman on uplands, provide better varieties and extend services to farmers. In the case of reduced monsoon water in any area, a provision for supplementary irrigation can be put in place."

She observed that increased production of rice during monsoon will help reduce dependence on boro rice, which will allow

farmers to grow various other crops, such as wheat, pulses and oil seeds.

"Initially, we should motivate farmers."

Matia's emphasis on aman and increased use of surface water came amid allegations of underground water mining for irrigation and other purposes that led to drops in the water level, causing arsenic contamination and an ecological imbalance.

"My question is whether we want to use three to four litres of underground water to produce a kilogram of rice," said the minister.

Matia blamed policies that favoured the use of underground water for irrigation instead of focusing on surface water, despite being a riverine country.

"It is sad that our rivers and canals are not used for irrigation. Rather, we allowed the rivers to slowly die," she said. "It was an anti-agriculture policy."

She said the government focuses on developing surface water based irrigation.

As per the scheme, about Tk 400 crore has been allocated to Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation to develop a surface water conservation system in the southern region.

"If we can preserve water in our canals during the rainy season, rivers and other water reservoirs and use that water for irrigation, we can gradually divert boro crop cultivation to the south," she said.

Bangladesh FAO Representative Ad Spijkers also spoke.

## Farmers to get cash subsidy

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government plans to provide cash subsidy to farmers, mainly to small and marginal ones, for diesel-based irrigation during the current boro season, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said yesterday.

"We will offer cash subsidy. But we are yet to decide on the ratio of subsidy to land," the minister said, emerging from a workshop at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council.

She however did not disclose details about the total amount of cash subsidy the government plans to offer boro farmers.

The agriculture ministry is set to offer special cards, called "agricultural input cards" to about 1.82 crore farmers by the end of this month.

A final decision will be taken on cash subsidy after handover of these cards, said Matia.

Experts said around 12 lakh tonnes of diesel are used for irrigation in boro season and small and marginal farmers will have to pay around 20 percent more than the amount the large farmers pay for irrigation.

The immediate-past caretaker government introduced the direct cash subsidy system for small farmers.

In fiscal 2007-08, the caretaker government disbursed about Tk 250 crore in cash subsidy for diesel to 65.93 lakh farmers.

## Jet Airways to fly direct to Mumbai

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Jet Airways introduces new flights to connect Dhaka to Mumbai from today, the Indian airline said in a statement.

The new direct flights to Mumbai will initially operate six days a week, with no flights on Tuesdays. It will run daily flights from March 29. The airline currently flies daily from Dhaka to Delhi and Kolkata.

Nikos Kardassis, acting chief executive officer of Jet Airways, said: "The launch of our new Mumbai-Dhaka service will connect Dhaka to the world, via Mumbai, and further enhance air connectivity on the busy India-Bangladesh route."

Jet Airways currently operates a fleet of 88 aircraft, which includes 10 Boeing 777-300 ER aircraft, 12 Airbus A330-200s, 52 next generation Boeing 737-700/800/900 aircraft and 14 modern ATR 72-500 turboprop aircraft.

## Summit gets NTTN licence

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Summit Communications Ltd (SCL) was granted a licence for the Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network (NTTN) yesterday.

SCL is an ancillary of Summit Group, known for its contributions in development of the power and port sectors.

The licence gives SCL an opportunity to expand its mission to strengthen the telecommunications backbone of Bangladesh by contributing to the development of the fibre optic network across the country.

It authorises SCL to develop, build, own, operate, maintain and provide fibre optic-based NTTN services to Access Network Service (ANS), licensed Telecommunication Operators and other authorised users.

BTRC Chairman Zia Ahmed said Summit's entry to the telecom industry would help the government ensure proper telecom services and implement its pledge to make a Digital Bangladesh.

The Tk 3 crore licence fee paid by SCL comes with an obligation to provide 100 percent NTTN coverage to all the upazila headquarters in 10 years.

Summit Group Chairman Muhammed Aziz Khan said historically Bangladesh could not participate in the industrial revolution and has fallen behind only to be an underdeveloped country.

The communication revolution, currently underway in the world, provides immense opportunity to rectify the historical wealth divide," he added.

## Annual Conference 2009

SKF

Eskayef Bangladesh Limited

UK MHRA APPROVED

Bangabandhu International Conference Center, Dhaka

December 22, 2009



AM Faruque (3-L), managing director of Eskayef Bangladesh Ltd, attends the company's annual conference 2009 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday. Directors Arshad Walir Rahman (extreme left), Simeen Hossain (2-L), Saifur Rahman (4-L), Atiqur Rahman (5-L), and Head of Business Operations Quamrul Hassan (6-L), are also seen.

## Stocks gain significantly

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks significantly gained yesterday, driven by sharp rise in mutual fund and telecom sector share prices.

DSE General Index, the benchmark index of Dhaka Stock Exchange, went up 79.46 points, or 1.83 percent to 4,408.95.

The telecom sector, which comprises only Grameenphone (GP) shares, advanced 3.45 percent pulling up the market.

Each GP share was traded between Tk 171 and Tk 178, before closing at Tk 176.70 on the premier bourse.

The mutual fund sector fuelled the rising trend. The sector gained 7.18 percent with investors' expec-

tation that the SEC would reconsider the new criteria for margin loans against mutual funds, market operators say.

The investors were also anticipating that the SEC would not go for appeal against the High Court verdict on the mutual fund case.

Besides, the banking sector gained 1.63 percent.

Among the biggest gainers, Jamuna Bank and Dutch-Bangla Bank advanced more than 4 percent each.

Shares in other sectors such as non-bank financial institutions, fuel and power, pharmaceuticals, insurance and cement also increased.

The broader DSE All Share Price Index rose 65.14 points, or 1.81

percent to 3,656.54.

The advancers outnumbered the losers 199 to 35 with one security remained unchanged. A total of 2,42,94,044 shares and mutual fund units worth Tk 633.33 crore were traded on the DSE.

Chittagong stocks also posted a sharp gain. The CSE Selective Categories Index went up 143.35

points, or 1.79 percent to 8,291.3. The CSE All Share Price Index shot up 217.71 points or 1.72 percent to 12,822.77.

A total of 46,33,993 shares and mutual fund units worth Tk 51.14 crore changed hands on the Chittagong Stock Exchange. Of the traded issues on the port city bourse, 136 advanced and 18 declined.

## BRAC Bank to open exchange houses abroad

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

BRAC Bank, a fast growing bank, plans to open exchange houses in Malaysia, Singapore and Italy, aiming to attract more remittance through its own channel.

The board of directors of the bank at a meeting on Monday took the decision in principle to set up the exchange houses, subject to regulatory approval.

The bank will apply to concerned authorities soon for the green light, BRAC Bank Chairman Rumi Ali told The Daily Star yesterday.

With a strong marketing policy, the bank can bring more remittance in through its own channel from these countries, where a large number of Bangladeshis live, he said.

"Besides, if we have our own exchange houses, we can offer attractive exchange rates, as transfer costs will be lower," he said.

The bank also decided in principle to set up an asset management company to manage funds, including mutual funds.

The asset management company, subject to regulatory approval, will be set up with participation from four institutions -- BRAC Bank, BRAC, BRAC EPL Investments and BRAC EPL Brokerage.

BRAC Bank will hold a 25 percent share of the asset management company, while BRAC will hold 26 percent, BRAC EPL Investments 25 percent and BRAC EPL Brokerage 24 percent.

## Global crisis fallout to linger

### Central bank chief tells business conference

STAR BUSINESS DESK

department, presided over the function.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Atiur Rahman has feared effects of the global crisis will linger for some time to come.

"The global economy is recovering, supported by government bailouts on a truly massive scale. But effects of the crisis on businesses and other economic activities worldwide will quite probably linger," the central bank chief said in his keynote paper presented at the inaugural of an international conference at Dhaka University yesterday.

Organised by the university's finance department, the two-day conference on World Financial Crisis and Global Business Challenges was opened by Vice Chancellor Prof Amin Arefin Siddique.

This is the 2nd International Conference of Global Business and Management Forum (GBMF), USA, according to a press release.

Prof Mahmood Osman Imam, chairman of the finance

department, presided over the function.

"We live in time of paradox, contradiction, conspiracy, turbulence and above all change. Change acts as a stimuli or development agent. There is a conviction that one person can make a difference in this world if he so desires. We must remember the future of our nation will not be found in our corporate boardrooms but in our academic classrooms and research laboratories. We must prioritise educational planning and spending," said the vice-chancellor.

Prof Siddique further said, We must overcome widespread economic illiteracy and should rapidly upgrade literacy in various sectors such as social literacy and cultural literacy etc.

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Prof Mahmood Osman Imam, chairman of the finance



Jerry Mobbs, chief executive officer of Augere Wireless Broadband Bangladesh Ltd, and Fahad Karim, chief executive officer of Masthead PR, exchange documents after signing an agreement in Dhaka on Monday. Under the deal, Augere Wireless Broadband Bangladesh Ltd will receive PR support from Masthead PR for their operations in Bangladesh.

Directorate of Planning and Development		Invitation for International Tender	
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology		Date: 21/12/09	
No. P&D/FP/1793/09-10/02(P-1)/DR-287(2)			
1 Ministry/Division		Ministry of Education.	
2 Agency		Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET)/UGC.	
3 Procuring entity name		Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) represented by Director, P&D.	
4 Procuring entity district		Dhaka, Bangladesh.	
5 Invitation for		Mentioned in identification of packages (SI No-17).	
6 Invitation Ref No.		P&D/FP/1793/09-10/02(P-1)	
7 Procurement method		Open tendering method.	
8 Budget and source of funds		Recurring/development budget of BUET.	
9 Tender package No.		Mentioned in SI No. 17	
10 Tender publication date		24-12-09	
11 Tender last selling date		04-02-10 (during office hours).	
12 Tender closing date and time		05-02-10 at 11:00am (BST).	
13 Tender opening date and time		05-02-10 at 11:30am (BST), tender shall be opened in presence of tenders/founder's authorised representative (if any).	
14 Name & address of the office(s)		- Selling and opening tender document	
- Receiving tender document		Directorate of Planning and Development (P&D), BUET, Office of Head of Civil Engg. Department, Civil Building, BUET, Office of Head of Mechanical Engg. Department, EME Building, BUET.	
15 Eligibility of tenderer		Tenderer must have experience in supply of similar goods and related services as specified in the tender documents. Tenderer will have legal, financial, professional and technical capacity to deliver the requirements of this tender and have fulfilled the obligations of all tax requirements.	
16 Price of tender document (Tk)		GD-01: Civil Engineering [CE/09-10/APP/D/ITEM-1/FP/1793/S-2]	
17 Package No.		Identification of package(s)	
18 Brief description of goods		Supply, Installation/Testing and Commissioning of Scientific Instrument, Apparatus, Materials/ Chemicals and Office Equipments for the Department of Civil Engineering, BUET, Dhaka	
19 Name of official inviting tender			