

STOCKS		ASIAN MARKETS		CURRENCIES			
DGEN	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
1.07%	0.66%	\$1,495.00	\$106.85	0.16%	1.21%	0.60%	1.91%
6,249.99	11,342.74	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	19,121.83	9,441.03	3,125.37	2,999.04
BANGLADESH BANK							
				USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
				BUY TK	72.79	103.59	118.35
				SELL TK	72.88	103.73	118.51

City

# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA WEDNESDAY APRIL 20, 2011, e-mail: business@thedailystar.net

## Govt moves to stem agro brain-drain

SOHEL PARVEZ

The government plans to increase incentives for scientists to stem a 'brain drain' from agriculture research institutes.

The incentive is meant to help agriculture scientists work to introduce new seeds and farm technologies through research in an effort to ensure sufficient food for the growing population.

"We want to give our scientists a fair deal. So we are planning to increase benefits and facilities for them. We are doing it for the sake of the nation," said CQK Mustaq Ahmed, agriculture secretary.

The move comes after several hundred agriculture scientists have left the agriculture research institutes over the last two decades. They were frustrated by a lack of incentives and recognitions at home for innovations of new seeds and farm technology.

In 1997-1999, 137 scientists quit various research organisations under the National Agricultural Research System (NARS), which is comprised of 10 institutes and Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, according to the Agriculture Commission Report 1999.

Insiders, however, said the number of scientists who left the agriculture institutes such as BRRI (Bangladesh Rice Research Institute) and BARI (Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute) might be 400.

Many of them, including breeders, entomologists and soil experts, went abroad for higher studies but did not return from countries such as Canada, Australia and the USA.

A section of the scientists has also joined international organisations and private sector firms, according to officials at the agriculture ministry.

Insiders said such a massive brain drain has created a shortage of experienced and

skilled agriculture scientists in the public sector agencies at a time when there is a growing need for research to innovate and introduce new and improved seeds and farm technologies to combat climate-change fallout and help feed the ever-growing population of the country.

The swelling population along with the gradual depletion of croplands, especially accentuate the need for introducing improved and various stress-tolerant seed varieties with higher yield potentials urgently.

The scientists were frustrated by factors such



as retirement at the age of 57, vacant position-based promotion policy, lack of scope for higher studies in modern agriculture and an absence of recreation.

As to pension benefits, among the autonomous research bodies, scientists of BARI only enjoy such benefits. Scientists employed by agencies such as BRRI and Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) are not yet entitled to pension following retirement.

There is also no provision for awards for outstanding contributions of the scientists for such feats as introduction of improved seeds, the insiders said.

Scientists in countries like India retire at the age of 62. They get various special benefits including incentives for higher studies, awards for outstanding innovation and promotion on merit and performances.

Ahmed said the farm sector faces challenges of ensuring food security for the people against a backdrop of diminishing croplands. "We can address the challenges and boost production through scientific innovation. We are going to increase the benefits and incentives for the scientists."

The ministry has already developed a proposal for increasing incentives and benefits for around 1,800 scientists at NARS, he said. "The report with the recommendations is being carefully scrutinised. It will soon be placed before the higher authority for approval."

The ministry framed the proposal months after the prime minister vowed to increase benefits for the agriculture scientists.

The report also suggests retaining scientists till the completion of their research works.

It proposes that the service tenure of the scientists engaged in research into introduction of improved breeds be extended by 3-5 years from the current retirement age of 57, where necessary.

The extension may be based on evaluation by an independent body, Ahmed said, adding that they have also suggested giving pension and recreation benefits to the scientists.

The proposal also includes promotion of scientists to higher grades even if there are no vacant positions, increments for higher degrees and extraordinary performances.

Ahmed said it might take a couple of months to implement the increased benefits and incentives as a number of ministries are involved in the process. "I hope we will be able to make it happen this year. It has to be done. It is a commitment of the prime minister."

## Japan Solartech to make panels, batteries in Ctg

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Japan Solartech (Bangladesh) Ltd will start manufacturing solar panels and batteries in Bangladesh in December, eyeing the local market and exports to foreign countries.

The company is a joint venture between UING Corporation, a unit of Japan's U-TEC Group, and Trade Service International, a trading company and distributor of TOTAL Lubricants in Bangladesh. U-TEC is a manufacturer of solar products and energy-efficient home appliances.

Japan Solartech has selected Chittagong as the production centre.

"Japan Solartech will be a hub for manufacturing solar products and energy-efficient home appliances in this region," said Masayuki Uchiyama, chairman of U-TEC Group.

Uchiyama spoke at a seminar, "Total solar solutions: A road to sustainable energy" organised by Japan Solartech at Dhaka Hotel Sheraton on Monday.

"We will sell the products not only in Bangladesh; we will expand our sales to countries around Bangladesh very soon and gradually move to the developed countries."

Speaking as the chief guest, Industries Minister Dilip Barua welcomed the U-TEC Group for investing in the solar systems sector in Bangladesh.

The minister said the venture would help transfer the state-of-the-art tech-

nology to Bangladesh, and its solar solutions would not only generate power but also ensure long-term efficient storage of it.

"The solutions will not only help mitigate the existing power problems but also ease government's efforts to further improve education, information and communication technology and health infrastructures," said Barua.

Hospitals, clinics, and education institutions can be run through solar-powered appliances to make those services available to a wider population, he added.

The company has recently installed its first hybrid (5KW) solar system at the Gulshan branch office of EXIM Bank.

U-TEC is producing over 8 million solar modules equivalent to around 200MW every year in its factories operating in Japan and China with an annual turnover of \$1.7 billion.

Rafiqul Islam, deputy managing director of Japan Solartech, made a presentation on Solar Solution: A road to sustainable energy, and Mike Kataoka, director of SANYO Asia Pte Ltd, made presentation on Solar Evolution: Introduction of high efficiency modules in the seminar.

Abul Kalam Azad, secretary for the ministry of energy, power and mineral resources and Takanori Uehara, chargé d'affaires of Japan embassy to Bangladesh, also spoke.

## Common action plan for migrant workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior official-level meeting of the Asian labour-sending countries yesterday agreed on taking a "common action programme" in case of any emergency situation in the hiring countries.

The migrant issue came in the wake of unrest in the Arab World, mainly in Libya, which displaced thousands of Asian and African migrants.

Asian governments struggled to evacuate those fleeing the North African country, while the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is still facing a fund crisis. Some 800 Bangladeshis are still awaiting repatriation out of Egypt.

"The meeting reached a consensus that Asian countries will take a common action programme, but it has not been detailed yet," said Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Zafar Ahmed Khan, who chaired the day-long meeting.

Yesterday was the first day of the Colombo Process dialogue when around 40 officials of different Asian countries discussed labour migration issues at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in the capital. The countries include Afghanistan,

Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China, Vietnam and Thailand and the Philippines.

Ministers of these countries meet today to finalise the recommendations made at the official-level meeting and adopt a Dhaka Declaration. Bangladesh is hosting the meet with secretarial support from IOM.

Khan said the officials agreed to hold a biennial meeting of Colombo Process aimed at better management of labour migration and protecting labour rights.

Colombo Process, a ministerial consultation among the countries of labour origin, started in 2003, and after that only two meetings were held in the next two years. No meeting has since been held, which hampered advancement of the process.

Apart from that, the meeting also agreed to hold an official-level meeting annually, Khan told The Daily Star. "We want to continue the dialogue in a semi-structured way. Gradually, it could be more structured."

He said yesterday's meeting discussed a whole range of issues, including high costs of migration, changing original job contracts of migrants in the destination countries.

## Rejoinder and our reply

MI Cement Factory Ltd has responded to a report headlined "Question marks on MI Cement", which was published in Star Business on Sunday. The cement maker claimed that the report was wrong and misleading.

Following is the text of MI Cement's rejoinder:

1. It is reported that the proposed capital to be raised from capital market amounts to Tk 335.05 crore for 3,000 tonnes capacity a day, which is Tk 11.1 lakh per tonnes.

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## India's exports surge to record growth

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's exports surged to record high growth in fiscal year 2010/11, but uncertainty over the global economy and a ballooning import bill mean concerns persist over the trade deficit of one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

India's merchandise exports rose an annual 37.5 percent to \$246 billion in the last fiscal year, Trade Minister Anand Sharma said, as demand soared for engineering goods, oil products and gems. The government's target was

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