

Investment in foreign farms

A window of opportunity opens

THE news that two Bangladeshi firms have leased in large chunks of farmlands in Africa to grow rice, wheat and other kinds of food grains is very heartening. First because, it is indicative of our local entrepreneurs' coming of age as they are now looking for overseas investments. Second, they have chosen agricultural farmlands as the area of investment. Third, their objective is to bring the lion's share of the produces back home with a view to reducing our growing dependence on food grains import. Above all, it is thinking out of box and looking for new pastures.

The government's support to facilitate those companies in signing lease deals with the African governments-Uganda and Tanzania is undoubtedly commendable. It is further reassuring to learn that more entrepreneurs from Bangladesh are looking for similar investment opportunities in Africa.

African countries hold out huge prospects for overseas investment in the farming sector. Many countries including China that have the necessary capital and expertise have taken hold of the opportunity earlier than others. Bangladeshi investors' entry into this area is evidently reflective of their growing capital that can be invested abroad as well as the attainment of the expertise that goes into such ventures.

The African countries like Uganda and Tanzania that are wooing foreign investment in the farm sector on easy and lucrative terms, definitely want to see their own manpower employed in agriculture. Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, on their part, will be able to make profits, help the country in addressing its growing demands for food grains as well as enrich their experience and knowledge profusely in food grain production in different other climes. This will no doubt go to add to Bangladesh's own wealth of research experience in agriculture.

To succeed, the companies that have pioneered in this kind of overseas investment, hopefully, will also learn to adapt and associate themselves well with the local people and their culture with due respect. Since it is a very potential sector meriting extensive exploration, the government needs to continue its encouragement and support to the willing entrepreneurs.

Pak scientist's irreverence

Highly condemnable

THE recent article by Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan carried in the Newsweek, excerpted in our paper yesterday on the basis of an AFP Washington dateline story has caught our attention. It says that if Pakistan had nukes in 1971 Bangladesh would not have won its independence. This is a rabid expression of insensitivity towards a people's war waged against a genocidal force in 1971.

His remarks demonstrate a very poor knowledge of history of the events that led to the war of liberation against Pakistan occupation forces in 1971.

His observation is not only far removed from the contextual reality but also echoes the views of the prejudiced segment of the Pakistani population.

To our knowledge, many among the intelligentsia in Pakistan have long since spurned any self-deceiving notion against Bangladesh's freedom struggle.

While emphasizing Pakistan's case for going nuke in a foreign weekly magazine, he had no business of undermining Bangladesh's liberation war.

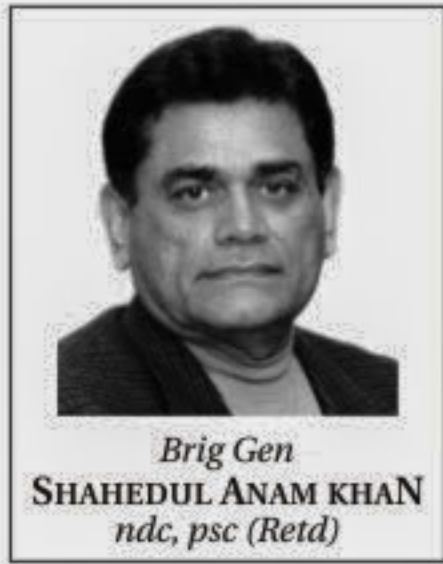
It is a crude attempt to denigrate not only the legitimate struggle of freedom loving people of Bangladesh but also a revelation of a convoluted mindset.

Besides, his pointer to Bangladesh is entirely misplaced because if

nuclear might could decide fate of freedom struggle or right to independence, Soviet Russia could still remain in Afghanistan and Vietnam should have been under US occupation forces till today.

A man who has been infamously involved in nuke-secrets black marketing cannot be credited with any high

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



cerned. Look back to the BNP led 4-Party alliance rule's midterm period. The machinations to appoint as chief of CTG a person of Alliance choice, from the list of retired chief justice, was already in place by having the retirement age of judges increased suitably to meet that particular requirement. And that was adequately supplemented by putting a serving judge of the High Court as the election commissioner, who spent Tk.60 crore of public money to update the electoral role, which, as it turned out, had more than a crore of false voters included in the process; and all this was done to ensure that the incumbent party did not lose the election.

And the predictable AL hullabaloo against the moves that they thought were designed to influence the election had heated up the political arena. The parliament was under boycott of the opposition led by the AL, exactly a mirror image of what is prevailing now in the country. And the BNP has already rejected the idea of the just retired chief justice assuming the charge of the next CTG, should there be one, as was done by the AL in the case of Justice K. M. Hassan.

However one must admit that there has been great deal less disruption

THE recent developments have all the makings of another uncertainty as far as the future political situation is concerned.

tion to public life, the country being spared the damaging cost of *hartal*, unlike in the past. One wonders whether it is good sense that has motivated the BNP to display temperance, having become more cognisant of the ill consequences of *hartal*, or is it because they have been beset with internal weakness after their debacle in the last general election.

The attitude to influence the system, rather than leave the verdict to the people and allow them to choose the next government in a free and fair manner, has always been a preferred option for our political parties. Faith

Without going into the technicalities, people like us, who would like to see a peaceful political process terminating in peaceful election, are worried at the uncertain prospects of the prevailing differences between the two major parties.



And this is the focus of political discussions in the country. The party that had opposed the idea of holding elections under a CTG has now rejected the idea of holding the next election under any other arrangement but a caretaker system. And although the AL has not exposed its hand yet, to even the layman it is quite clear where its preference lies, having moved heaven and earth in between 1994-96 for a caretaker system for conducting the parliamentary election.

It seems that the AL is keeping its

declaring a marriage illegal, and the three offspring too, yet allowing the couple to produce two more illegal children should the illegally married couple wish to. This is carrying us from the zenith of the sublime to the nadir of the ridiculous.

And that brings us to the next issue of amendment to the constitution. There are rafts of legal and constitutional matters that inform the current debate on constitutional amendments. But the worrisome aspect is the opposition's rejection of the way the government has gone about, and is likely to go about, in bringing in the changes. The general conclusion is that the recent decisions of the apex court will go in favour of the ruling party and facilitate it to incorporate changes in the constitution that are likely to put it in an advantageous position over its political rivals.

Without going into the technicalities, people like us, who would like to see a peaceful political process terminating in peaceful election, are worried at the uncertain prospects of the prevailing differences between the two major parties. The last time the military played the part of the arbiter. Given the strictures of the SC against military interventions, there is not even the most remote possibility of even the most innocuous influence being exerted by the military. And the AL has been the most vocal against this. However, history shows us that except for in 1975, it has been the AL that had come out better of the two parties from military interventions, the latest being the 1/11.

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Climate finance: The UK's commitment

STEPHEN EVANS and CHRIS AUSTIN

BRITISH Foreign Secretary William Hague has described climate change as "perhaps the twenty-first century's biggest foreign policy challenge."

It requires, in the words of the UN Charter, international cooperation "in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character." Climate change is just such a problem and its impacts and costs fall disproportionately on developing countries such as Bangladesh. That is deeply unfair.

In her address at the Copenhagen climate summit in December 2009, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stressed the urgency for a "common commitment" to meet the emergency needs of "millions of households" whose lives are endangered "by increasing natural disasters, erosion of riverbanks and salinisation of rivers."

So it is only right that in Cancun last December, the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change reaffirmed the commitment from developed countries to mobilise \$100 billion of climate finance a year by 2020, to address the adaptation needs of developing countries and help them to limit their carbon emissions.

In Bangladesh, UK has been supporting local efforts to tackle climate change for some time. We are a major funder of the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) -- a multi-donor fund that supports the implementation of the Bangladesh government's own Climate Change

Strategy and Action Plan. The BCCRF is now open for business.

The Governing Council, which will approve projects under the fund, is meeting for the first time this week -- an important milestone in Bangladesh's climate change effort. If the fund can demonstrate results by making the lives of poor people more resilient to climate change, we are



Along with other donors, the UK also supports the government of Bangladesh's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP).

ready to increase our support over the next four years.

Along with other donors, UK also supports the government of Bangladesh's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP). CDMP helps ensure that communities and individuals throughout the country are better

protected from events like floods and cyclones, and that Bangladesh is better able to manage the impacts of such disasters when they occur.

These commitments are part of a broader UK commitment to helping the poorest countries manage better the impacts of climate change. This is something we take very seriously. That is why the British government

has allocated £2.9 billion to international climate finance for the period 2011/12 to 2014/15, to be administered through our recently established International Climate Fund (ICF). We have three overall priorities for ICF funding, which we will deliver through both bilateral and multilateral channels in a way which maximises its impact and value for money:

- To show that building low carbon, climate resilient growth at scale is both feasible and desirable;
- To support adaptation in poor countries and help build an effective international framework on climate change;
- To drive innovation, creating new partnerships with the private sector to support low carbon climate resilient growth;

The ICF will also fund the climate element of an Advocacy Fund to support the poorest countries to take part more effectively in international negotiations. This will be formally established later this year.

This UK funding will play an important role in helping to mobilise ambitious global action on climate change. But the UK is the only major donor so far to have made specific finance commitments up to 2015. More is needed to meet the Copenhagen commitment of \$100 billion a year by 2020. We look to other donors too to make significant and ambitious financial pledges, and we look to business to play an important role, since we expect the target to be reached through a mix of public and private finance.

As the Stern Review in 2006 made it clear, the clock is ticking. With every passing year, the global cost of effective action to tackle climate change grows greater. The time to act is now.

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THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- May 19**
- 1649**
An Act of Parliament declaring England a Commonwealth is passed by the Long Parliament. England would be a republic for the next eleven years.
- 1897**
Oscar Wilde is released from Reading Gaol.
- 1919**
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk lands at Samsun on the Anatolian Black Sea coast, initiating what is later termed the Turkish War of Independence.
- 1974**
Giscard d'Estaing voted French president.
- Births**
- 1881**
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 1st President of Turkey
- 1925**
Malcolm X, American civil rights activist
- Deaths**
- 2009**
Velupillai Prabhakaran, Sri Lankan founder and leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam