

Restore Ctg to its past glory

Chittagong needs appropriate government policy for local entrepreneurs to flourish: Well Group chairman

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chittagong

THE past heritage of Chittagong should be brought back with the help of government policies and the relentless efforts of local entrepreneurs, said Well Group Chairman Abdus Salam.

Much before the Liberation War, Chittagong was referred to as the 'land of business'. After the Liberation War, Dhaka became the capital and Chittagong started lagging behind, according to Salam. He has business in different sectors, including food, textiles, readymade apparel, garment accessories and hotels.

"Almost 95 percent of our business is in Chittagong, and by doing business, we want to bring back that old pride. In addition to creating employment, we want to attract foreign investment and bring focus on Chittagong," said Salam, also the chairman of Chittagong Development Authority (CDA).

Salam said the dependence on Dhaka for every important decision hampers business activities and expansion in Chittagong.

"All policy support provided by the government for business activities are approved in Dhaka. Even bank loan needs to be approved from the central offices in Dhaka. If we got the decisions from Chittagong itself, it would have been easier for us."

The long-term demand for setting up a full-fledged Bond Commissionerate has recently been fulfilled. Exporters, especially readymade garments exporters, have long been facing obstacles in exporting items.

A lack of required infrastructural facilities in the port city is another problem that businesses face.

"It takes three to four hours to send goods to the jetty at Chittagong Port from the city's Kalurghat Industrial Area due to road congestion," Salam said. "It takes two to three hours to transport export items to the port from the industrial units in Fouzderhat, which should take no more than half an hour."

The steps needed to turn Chittagong into a commercial capital



Abdus Salam

in the true sense have been identified much earlier, but those are yet to be implemented, the CDA chairman said. He emphasised immediate implementation of those steps for the sake of the city as well for the country's economy.

He said the production of electricity should be a continuous process. Production could not be ensured against an increase in demand for electricity, which resulted in the present energy crisis; without improving the energy and power sector, no economic development is possible, he added.

Salam said the government has taken many steps to increase power generation and the process should continue. The government might change in future, but the development process should continue, he added.

Connectivity between Chittagong and other parts of the world is also very weak. The international airport

in Chittagong could not be properly utilised for its limitations, Salam said.

"An increase in connectivity between this city and different countries in both the east and the west is a must to boost business here. If we can properly use Emirates Airlines and Thai Airways, connectivity would increase a lot."

At present, expatriates are using this airport but the business community is not much benefited. The airport in Dhaka can only handle air cargo. He said, "Chittagong is called the commercial capital, but we have to use the airport in Dhaka to export goods."

He emphasised setting up of cargo sheds and launching auto-refuelling systems in Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport as part of increasing connectivity.

Salam also stressed the need for boosting the efficiency and capacity of the country's premier sea port in Chittagong. "Full-automation systems

should be introduced in the port so that services would be improved and corruption would decline."

He criticised the delivery and customs process for about 17 types of imported items in the inland container depots (ICDs) outside the ports. "According to the Customs Act, customs activities should be done at the entry point. These cargoes should be checked in the secured areas of Chittagong Port instead of the ICDs in Dhaka or elsewhere."

Salam, the former president of Chittagong Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, said the two local chambers place proposals with different government organisations and ministries, but do not get much response.

"It is not expected that all those proposals should be accepted by the government, but there should be answers on why those were not approved or rejected. For example, senior ministry officials usually sit

with the chambers before the annual budget, but the meetings are not always fruitful. It frustrates the business community," he said.

Salam believes a congenial environment, necessary support as well job satisfaction is very important for the workforce. "Machines are important for the industries but the man behind the machine is much more important."

Salam takes his business ventures as part of playing a role for the development of his dream city Chittagong as well as the country.

"Before I started my bakery business with Well Food Chittagong, people were deprived of good quality eateries. Foreigners suffered a lot and they usually brought along good quality food items from Dhaka. I just tried to improve the food sector here through my business."

Salam has established 16 different types of factories where over 16,000 people are working; he wants to continue playing a role in the country's economy.

Even with its limitations, Chittagong has potential due to its geological location, he said. The port was established over a hundred years back for this geological benefit. And this was not established only for use by the local people, rather, it was established with a vision for being used by neighbouring countries like Myanmar, Eastern India, China and others, Salam added.

"But the aim was diverted and the country lost a big chance of huge development. It is a matter of happiness that the present government has taken initiatives of materialise that vision."

He hoped that with proper utilisation of the Chittagong Port, the total scenario of the country's economy will change.

Salam said people were not aware of climate change and environmental degradation previously, so many factories are running with many limitations in this regard.

"There is nothing to be worried about anymore, as a process has already started. It would take some time to make all the factories environment-friendly, but continuous efforts should be taken."

Electricity generation should be a continuous process. Production could not be ensured against an increase in demand for electricity, which resulted in the present energy crisis; without improving the energy and power sector, no economic development is possible

Food prices may ease: FAO chief

REUTERS, Rome

FOOD prices may ease in 2012 due to a slowing global economy, though no drastic drop from high levels is expected, the new director-general of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation said on Tuesday.

Jose Graziano da Silva, the Brazilian who replaced Senegal's Jacques Diouf at the helm of the FAO at the start of 2012, said volatility in food markets was likely to continue and that more people would be at risk of hunger due to economic instability.

"Prices will not be going up as in the sense of the last two to three years but will also not drop down. There may be some reductions but not drastic," Graziano da Silva told a news conference in Rome.

Global food prices measured by the FAO hit a peak in February but have been falling since June as crops have improved and concerns about global economic turmoil have reined in demand growth.

High food prices have helped fuel inflation and contributed to civil unrest and the Arab Spring earlier this year.

Graziano da Silva said he did not expect the economic slowdown in Europe to impact funding for FAO projects, because the amount countries donated was such a small proportion of gross domestic product that they were unlikely to cut it.

But he said the slowdown was likely to increase the number of people at risk of hunger in the world.

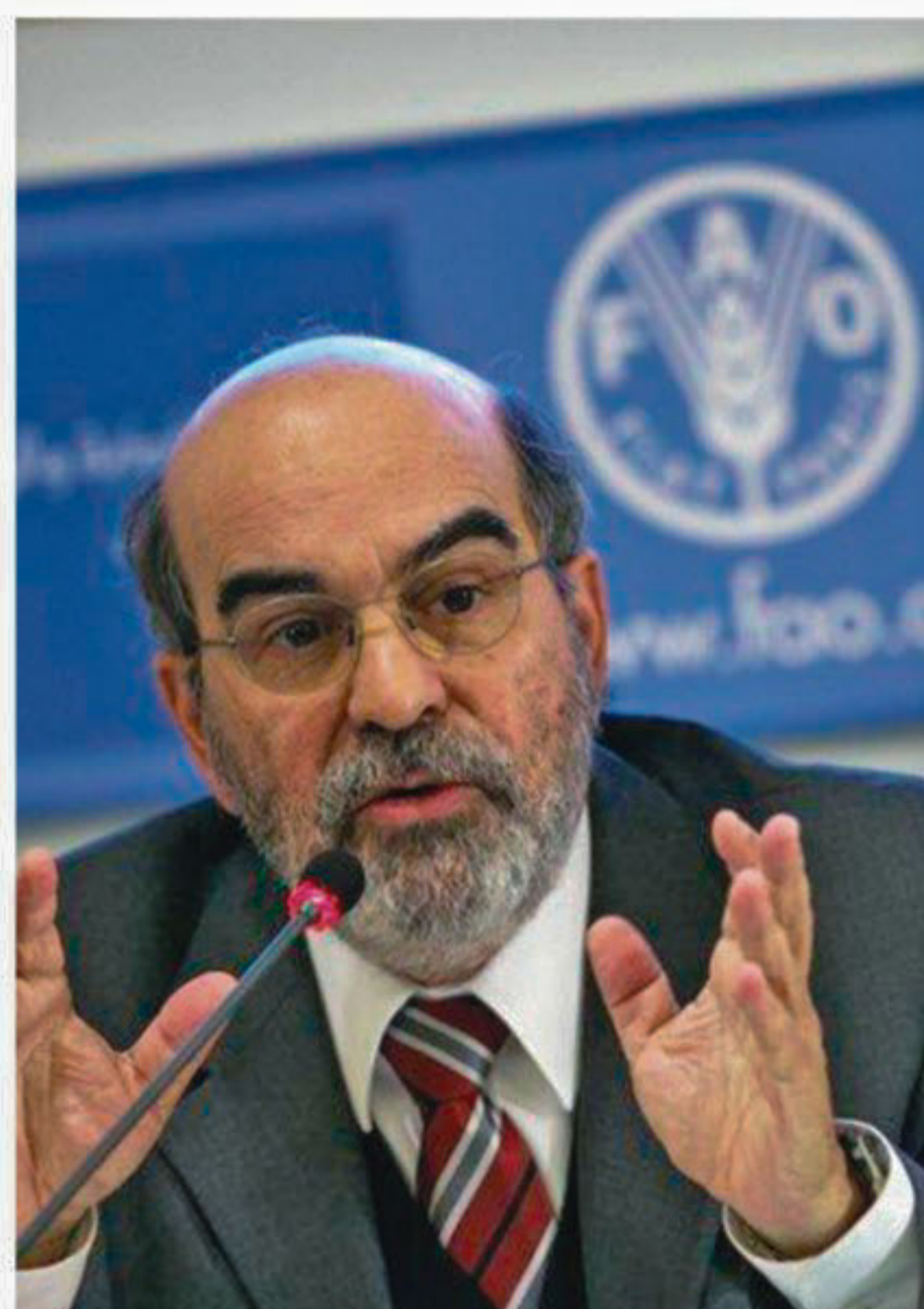
"We will have more work to do, with more people hungry, more people unemployed, and we will need new ways to assist them," he said, as he began a term of three and a half years.

The 62-year-old agronomist, who is the first Latin American at the helm of the U.N. agency, said he would focus efforts on poor countries that are most in need of outside help and that his priority would be Africa, particularly northern Africa.

He plans a visit to the Horn of Africa early this year.

The FAO is the largest UN agency with an annual budget of some \$1 billion and 3,600 workers.

Graziano da Silva, the former head of the FAO in



Jose Graziano da Silva

Latin America and the Caribbean and a former minister for food security in Brazil, will need to bridge a divide between donor countries and developing countries to foster consensus and avoid paralysis in the organisation.

He plans to cut bureaucracy and reduce perks for top management and he also wants to decentralise operations and give more authority to local outposts, he said.

The FAO adopted reforms after an assessment funded by its members in 2007, which said it risked "terminal decline" due to its weak governance and lack of transparency and accountability.

But last year Britain threatened to pull out of the organisation unless it improved its performance, and some donors such as the United States have initiated agricultural development projects of their own.

SOLAR POWER

Building a better suntrap

A novel approach to solar power may help to improve its efficiency

THE ECONOMIST

TO make electricity from sunlight you can convert it directly, using a photovoltaic cell. Or you can use the heat of that sunlight to boil water, and then drive a turbine with the resulting steam. These are both established technologies. But there is, in principle, a third way: use heat directly, without steam or turbines. In this case, unlike a standard solar cell (which is sensitive to some frequencies of light, but not others), almost all of the incident energy is available for conversion. Yet unlike the boiling-water method, no messy mechanical processes are involved. Once set up, such a system could run with the minimum of attention.

Unfortunately, devices that turn sunlight into heat and then into electricity in this way do not get much warmer than boiling water when they are exposed to direct, unconcentrated sunlight. The reason is that at temperatures significantly higher than this the laws of thermodynamics dictate that they shed heat as fast as they absorb it. That has proved problematic, because a direct converter of this sort needs to reach 700°C to become properly efficient, and that is impossible without using special (and expensive) parabolic mirrors to concentrate the incident light.

Peter Bermel of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his colleagues, however, think they have found a way round this difficulty. As

they describe in *Nanoscale Research Letters*, they have invented a way of concentrating the energy in the sun's rays without the need for mirrors. It is, quite literally, a suntrap.

Dr Bermel's proposed trap is a thin sheet of tungsten (a heat-resistant metal) that has been processed in quite a complicated way. One surface, which faces the sun, is covered in microscopic pits. The other, which faces a specialised type of solar cell made of a material called indium gallium arsenide, is sculpted into a structure called a photonic crystal that causes it to emit infrared radiation selectively at the frequency best absorbed by the cell. Both of these surfaces would be created by photolithography, the process used to make computer chips.

It is the pits, which are three-quarters of a micron in diameter, three microns deep and arranged in a grid four-fifths of a micron apart, that do the trapping. When the device is aligned so that its pits are pointing straight at the sun, most of the incident radiation goes down them to their bottoms. Here, it is absorbed by the tungsten. As the laws of thermodynamics demand, it is then rapidly reradiated.

Heat radiation coming from inside a pit, however, is more likely than not to encounter the pit's wall before it escapes into the outside world. If that happens, the whole process of absorption and reradiation starts again. The result is that the pitted tungsten becomes much hotter than a plain

sheet of the metal could manage.

To turn that heat into electricity, it is directed towards the solar cell by the photonic crystal. This is a regular geometric pattern etched onto the surface of the tungsten. It acts to amplify infra-red emissions at some frequencies and suppress them at others.

The trick is to tune the crystal, by modifying the details of pattern, so that as much of the emitted energy as possible is at the frequency most efficiently captured by indium gallium arsenide. The process of capture knocks electrons free inside the material and creates a current.

The result, according to Dr Bermel's calculations, would be a system that converts 37 percent of sunlight into electricity. This compares with a maximum of 28 percent by standard silicon-based solar cells that have not had the incident light concentrated by parabolic mirrors, and 31 percent by those that have -- a significant enhancement. The next step, of course, is to try it for real, but Dr Bermel is pretty confident his sums are correct.

Tungsten, as a material, was much used in the filaments of incandescent electric light bulbs. These are going out of fashion because they convert too much of the electricity passing through them into heat, rather than light. A nice irony, then, that running the process backwards may not only give tungsten a new lease of life, but might also help solve the world's shortage of renewable energy.