

# Aid for farmers

FROM PAGE 1  
 the Rangpur Foundry Ltd's (RFL) factory in Ghorashal late last year.  
 Ishrat Jahan, resident representative of the US-based organisation IFDC's Dhaka office, said unlike broadcast fertiliser, *Guti* urea is applied 7-10 inches deep in the soil. It ensures 70 percent of nitrogen, which is more than double that of regular urea.  
*Guti* urea was also invented by Bangladeshi scientists, and it cuts urea requirement by 40 percent, but increases 15 percent paddy yield, she added.  
 "But as the labour cost was high and farmers have to bend down to manually place the *Guti* briquettes, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury had been persistently asking us to develop an applicator to ease farmers' sufferings," Jahan said.  
 The IFDC, with funding

from USAID, then took research initiatives and gave grants to Bangladesh University of Engineering of Technology (Buett) and Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU). The government also asked Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) to develop the applicator.  
 BARI and BRRI developed push-type applicators, while BAU developed an injector-type one. Those, however, were not handy enough for the farmers.  
 The IFDC then hired Abdul Wahab, who along with some other RFL engineers made the plastic applicator in four months, Jahan said, adding: "Then we went for trial in the field and found it to be working fine."  
 Early this year, an African delegation on a visit to Bangladesh was very excited

to see the device and took along 10 applicators, which were on display at an exhibition in Senegal in late June.  
 "US President Barack Obama visited the exhibition and appreciated the tool," said Jahan.  
 Lokman Hakim, operations manager of RFL Plastic Ltd, said the firm was selling about 2,000 applicators a month locally. He expects sales to go up to 10,000 by the middle of next year.  
 "Now, we are selling the applicator at Tk 450 with no profit," he said, adding that the firm has already exported 100 pieces to Kenya, 20 pieces to South Africa and 10 pieces to Nigeria and India each.  
 "We hope for a large local and global market of the applicator in the near future," Hakim said, expecting further improvement of the applicator.



US President Barack Obama listens to USAID Administrator Rajib Shah briefing on GUTI applicators at an exhibition in Senegal late June. PHOTO COURTESY: IFDC

# Alien life?

FROM PAGE 16  
 "By all known information that science has, we know that they must be coming in from space," he said.  
 "There is no known mechanism by which these life forms can achieve that height. As far as we can tell from known physics, they must be incoming."  
 Some of the samples were captured covered with cosmic dust, adding further credence to the idea that they have originated from space.  
 "The organisms are not unusual," said Prof Wainwright, who works at the University of Sheffield's Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology.  
 "We're very, very confident that these are biological entities originating from space," he said, acknowledging that absolutely certainty is hard to achieve in science.  
 The team believes that the entities are coming from comets, which are big balls of ice shooting through space.  
 The samples were collected during a meteorite shower from a comet. As they hit the earth's atmosphere, the comets melt, releasing the organisms as they break down.  
 The organisms are probably not alive, but, excitingly, probably do contain DNA.  
 The fact that they contain DNA is probably one of the most exciting aspects to this discovery, as it is a big hint that life on earth may itself have extraterrestrial origins.  
 "If we're right, it means that there's life in space, and it's coming to earth. It means that life on earth probably originated in space," said Wainwright.  
 Prof Wainwright's team is hoping to extend and confirm their results by carrying out the test again in October to coincide with the upcoming Halley's Comet-associated meteorite shower when there will be large amounts of cosmic dust.

# Syria submits chemical details

FROM PAGE 16  
 Damascus had until today to supply details of its arsenal, in line with a US-Russian plan that helped prevent military action on regime targets following a chemical attack last month that killed hundreds of people.  
 The plan stipulates that Assad's regime hand over its chemical weapons and facilities, which would be destroyed by mid-2014.  
 But on Wednesday, Assad said in an interview that the task could take at least a year and cost a billion dollars.  
 On the ground, jihadist rebels fought fiercely for the town of Azaz on the Turkish border before seizing it Wednesday from mainstream Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebels.  
 The move by Al-Qaeda front group the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) triggered the ire of

the political opposition group the National Coalition.  
 It issued a rare condemnation of ISIS, accusing the jihadists of violating the principles of the revolution.  
 The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that the Northern Storm brigade, which is loyal to the FSA and was based in Azaz, has agreed to a truce with ISIS.  
 Tensions have spiralled between some mainstream rebel groups and ISIS in recent months, especially in northern Syria, where the opposition controls vast swathes of territory.  
 Deputy Prime Minister Qadri Jamil, meanwhile, said the war is now in stalemate and Damascus would call for a ceasefire if long-delayed peace talks in Geneva take place.  
 "Neither the armed opposition nor the regime

is capable of defeating the other side," Jamil told Britain's Guardian newspaper.  
 Asked what his government would propose at the stalled Geneva II summit, he replied: "An end to external intervention, a ceasefire and the launching of a peaceful political process."  
 The National Coalition's condemnation of ISIS highlighted the tensions within rebel ranks.  
 The deployment of jihadists on the battlefield has deterred Western governments from providing the rebels with more than non-lethal assistance for fear that any weapons supplied might fall into the hands of extremists.  
 President Francois Hollande said on Thursday that France was in favour of sending the FSA weapons, but only "in a controlled

environment" and "with a number of countries".  
 Washington has also repeatedly expressed concern about the risks of weaponry reaching groups loyal to al-Qaeda.  
 On the diplomatic front, UN envoys were set to resume talks on a draft Security Council resolution that would enshrine a joint US-Russian plan to secure and neutralise Assad's chemical weapons.  
 On Thursday, Iran's president said Tehran was ready to help facilitate dialogue between the Syrian government and its opponents.  
 "We must join hands to constructively work toward national dialogue, whether in Syria or Bahrain. We must create an atmosphere where peoples of the region can decide their own fates," Rohani wrote in The Washington Post.

# Changed RPO must ensure

FROM PAGE 1  
 Abdul Alim, director of the platform, presented the keynote on the Review of the Amendments to the RPO.  
 He recommended the EC hold dialogues with the election stakeholders and keep the provision of 'no' vote in ballot papers.  
 Former adviser to a caretaker government Akbar Ali Khan said, "Any amendment to the RPO would not be effective if we failed to agree on polls-time government."  
 Though the government has been saying that it would strengthen the Election Commission and not reinstate the caretaker government system to the constitution, it did not put forward any proposal to strengthen the

commission as yet, he complained.  
 On the other hand, the opposition have been demanding the government restore the caretaker government. But it is true that the Supreme Court has delivered a verdict against the system. So, it is not possible to restore the system. The opposition is yet to offer any formula on the polls-time government, added Akbar.  
 He also suggested forming a "search committee" comprised of retired government officials to pick up returning officers, assistant returning officers and polling centres to ensure a free and fair election.  
 Another former caretaker government adviser M Hafiz Uddin Khan alleged that the incum-

bent EC forwarded a draft of the amended RPO to the law ministry without talking to election stakeholders.  
 Badiul Alam Mazumder, secretary of Shujan, said some people have already started electioneering although the EC did not declare the polls schedule. The commission said they had nothing to do with the electioneering ahead of the schedule, but the EC has enough power to check it, he added.  
 ASM Abdur Rob, president of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, blasted the EC for proposing a hike in campaign expenditures from Tk15 lakh to Tk25 lakh.  
 He thought that it would disturb the level playing field during the polls.



A honey trader at Mongla taking a nap as hardly any customer comes by. During the tourist season beginning in November, the honey shops in Mongla remain crowded. The photo was taken last week. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# Moscow asks for 'planet hacking'

FROM PAGE 16  
 show Russia is asking for a conclusion of the report to say that a "possible solution of this [climate change] problem can be found in using of [sic] geoeengineering methods to stabilise current climate." Russia also highlighted that its scientists are developing geoeengineering technologies.  
 Geoengineering aims to cool the Earth by methods including spraying sulphate aerosols into the stratosphere to reflect sunlight, or fertilising the oceans with iron to create carbon-capturing algal blooms.  
 Such ideas are increasingly being discussed by western scientists and governments as a plan B for addressing climate change, with the new astronomer royal, Professor Sir Martin Rees, calling last week for such methods to buy time to

develop sources of clean energy. But the techniques have been criticised as a way for powerful, industrialised nations to dodge their commitments to reduce carbon emissions.  
 Some modelling has shown geoeengineering could be effective at reducing the Earth's temperature, but manipulation of sensitive planetary systems in one area of the world could also result in drastic unintended consequences globally, such as radically disrupted rainfall.  
 Responding to efforts to discredit the climate science with a spoiler campaign in advance of the report, the chairman of the IPCC, Rajendra K Pachauri, said he was confident the high standards of the science in the report would make the case for climate action. He said: "There will be enough information provided so that rational

people across the globe will see that action is needed on climate change."  
 The Russian scientist Yuri Izrael, who has participated in IPCC geoeengineering expert groups and was an adviser to the former Russian president Vladimir Putin, conducted an experiment in 2009 that sprayed particles from a helicopter to assess how much sunlight was blocked by the aerosol plume. A planned test in Britain that would have used a balloon attached to a 1km hose to develop equipment for spraying was prevented after a public outcry.  
 Observers have suggested that Russia's admission that it is developing geoeengineering may put it in violation of the UN moratorium on geoeengineering projects established at the Biodiversity Convention in 2010 and should be dis-

cussed on an emergency basis when the convention's scientific subcommittee meets in Montreal in October.  
 Nearly 160 civil society, indigenous and environmental organisations signed a letter in 2011 urging caution and calling on the IPCC not to legitimise geoeengineering.  
 While the IPCC is intended to be a scientific advisory panel, government delegates have been reviewing the summary report and make final decisions about it in Stockholm at the end of the month.  
 Sweden, Norway and Germany expressed more scepticism about geoeengineering and asked that the report underline its potential dangers.  
 Russia's climate negotiators did not respond to a request for comment.

# Jatrabari flyover

FROM PAGE 1  
 were going on in full swing with the construction workers laying the surface asphalt.  
 They were also dismantling heavy equipments from the site to make the flyover ready for use by the end of this month.  
 Of the eleven climbing and landing ramps, two at the Gulistan end would be ready for traffic by the time the flyover opens.  
 The rest of the ramps would become operational within three months, said project officials.  
 The flyover, named after former Dhaka city mayor Mohammad Hanif, is expected to make the road connectivity between 32 southeastern districts and the capital faster.  
 It would also help ease the perennial traffic gridlock in Saydabad, Jatrabari,

Tikatuli, Gulistan and Fulbaria areas.  
 "To know exactly how much the flyover does ease traffic, we have to wait until it opens (for public)," said Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, an eminent civil engineer.  
 "But definitely it would bring some benefits for locals in the heavily jam-packed areas," he said.  
 Karim, MD of Belhasa Accom and Associates Ltd, said: "We are now laying bituminous membrane before putting the asphalt surface."  
 "We are also fixing the expansion joints between two spans as part of a final touch to complete the project."  
 A British engineer, who has experience in supervising elevated expressway, would be hired for overall monitoring and operation

of the flyover, he said.  
 The installation of sophisticated French equipments at seven toll plazas of the flyover is underway. A control room has already been built at Janapath near the Jatrabari bus terminal.  
 Five of the toll plazas will be set up on the ground while the rest on the flyover, Karim said, adding that toll would be collected by using both manual and digitised systems.  
 The flyover now terminates at Nimtali otherwise it would require heavy demolition of the existing structures on Buet campus, he said.  
 It was to be get integrated with the proposed elevated expressway at Palashi for greater communication benefit, said Jamilur Reza Chowdhury.

The Tk 2300 crore flyover -- the country's first-ever Public Private Partnership scheme -- is being constructed on a build, own, operate and transfer basis.  
 The concessionaire is to hand it over to the government after 24 years of concession period.  
 Even though the cost of the project has doubled, it would not bring any changes to the toll charges, said LGD Secretary Shahid Khan.  
 For a single trip, Tk 5 will be collected as toll from a motorbike, Tk 10 for an auto-rickshaw, Tk 35 for a car, Tk 40 for a jeep, Tk 50 for a microbus, Tk 75 for a pickup van, Tk 100 for a minibus, Tk 150 for a bus, Tk 100 for a four-wheeler truck, Tk 150 for a six-wheeler truck and Tk 200 for a trailer.

# Illegal arms: worries

FROM PAGE 16  
 border and 169-km Bangladesh-Myanmar border in the south-eastern Bangladesh helps the illegal practice to go unchecked.  
 Taking advantage of the situation, the armed wings of the UPDF, which opposed the CHT Peace Accord, and PCJSS MN Larma faction use various secret routes of Khagrachhari whereas the PCJSS Santu Larma faction mostly uses the routes of Rangamati to buy arms from Mizoram, sources said.  
 On March 7 and 8 this year, Indian police in two raids seized 31 AK-47 assault rifles, a Singapore-made light machine gun, a US-made Browning Automatic Rifle, 800 live bullets from a farmhouse near Lengpui Airport of

Aizawl in Mizoram, which neighbours Sajek union in Rangamati.  
 According to superintendent of police offices in three hilly districts, law enforcers recovered about 60 firearms and 717 bullets in Rangamati, 133 firearms and 1,260 bullets in Bandarban, 36 firearms and 283 bullets in Khagrachhari in the last five years, mostly from the members of the regional groups.  
 Contacted, Mangal Kumar Chakma, press and information secretary of PCJSS Shantu Larma faction, said PCJSS men had surrendered their arms when the CHT Accord was signed in 1998, and had since been working for the full implementation of the accord.  
 He blamed the UPDF

and MN Larma faction of PCJSS for arms smuggling into the CHT.  
 UPDF Press and Information Secretary Niran Chakma brushed aside the allegations brought against his organisation.  
 He said, "The UPDF is working for full autonomy of the CHT."  
 Kakoli Khisha, press and information secretary of PCJSS MN Larma faction, declined to make any comment on the issue.  
 Lt Col Towhid of BGB Southeast Region in Chittagong said a process was underway to increase the number of BGB outposts in the CHT to ensure the security of the country's unguarded bordering areas.

# Sumon sings

FROM PAGE 16  
 Felani, the BSF knows it right, it's only the bullet that chose to head your way," goes the song, which Suman uploaded on his website yesterday.  
 Felani, 15, was shot on January 7, 2011, when she was crossing over to Bangladesh at Chaudharihat checkpoint in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal.  
 This August, a BSF court tried constable Amiya Ghosh on charges of shooting dead Felani. On September 6, the court found him "not guilty", causing uproar on either side of the border.  
 However, the higher authority of the force did not agree with the court's findings and has ordered a fresh trial.  
 Known for rebelling against his party, Suman, whose original name is Suman Chattopadhyay, has composed several songs and parodies criticising various steps of the Mamata Banerjee-led government in West Bengal.