

Bus workers

FROM PAGE 1
Around 20 minutes later, some transport workers attempted to block the Rokeya Sarani at Agargaon by parking their buses on the street. At one stage, a police officer allegedly beat up a bus driver, said witnesses and BRTA officials.

Transport workers then suspended bus operation in most of the routes inside the city for around 6 hours.

The agitating workers also vandalised windows of a few buses when those tried to operate during the suspension.

In Pallabi and Phulbaria, transport workers staged demonstrations blocking streets.

Visiting different bus stops, many passengers were seen waiting for hours. Some giving up hope for a bus, started to walk.

"I have been waiting here for around two hours. During this time only two buses came, but those were fully packed," said Kamruzzaman, a shop owner, who was waiting at Sheorapara yesterday around noon.

Sujan Mandal, a university student, said, "I waited for a bus for over an hour. Finding no transport, I have come to Jigatala from Mohammadpur on foot."

The elderly people and the sick suffered the most.

"My sick father and I have been waiting for around one hour here. I could neither get a bus nor an auto-rickshaw. My father is becoming more sick," said Shahidullah, who wanted to go to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, while talking to this correspondent at Shahbagh.

Around 5:00pm bus services resumed following assurance from the authorities concerned that transport operators would not be "harassed".

"We have talked to the minister, BRTA chairman and other top level officials concerned. They have assured us not to harass or physically assault any transport workers further," said Ismail Hossain Bacchu, general secretary, Dhaka Zilla Sarak Paribahan Sramik Union.

However, BRTA Director (enforcement) Bijoy Bhushan Paul said they would continue their drives against charging passengers extra fare, unfit vehicles on roads and fake licences.

Sub-Inspector Sohel Rana of Kafrul Police Station was withdrawn in connection with the beating up of the driver, said Syed Kaiumuzzaman Khan, deputy commission (Mirpur division) of Dhaka Metropolitan

Police.

The Road Transport and Bridges Ministry on October 1 increased bus fares in the capital by 10 paisa per km. Taking advantage of this, many bus operators had been charging a lot more than the official fare.

The BRTA had been conducting drives for the last couple of days to stop overcharging of passengers.

VDP member

FROM PAGE 1
Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) said.

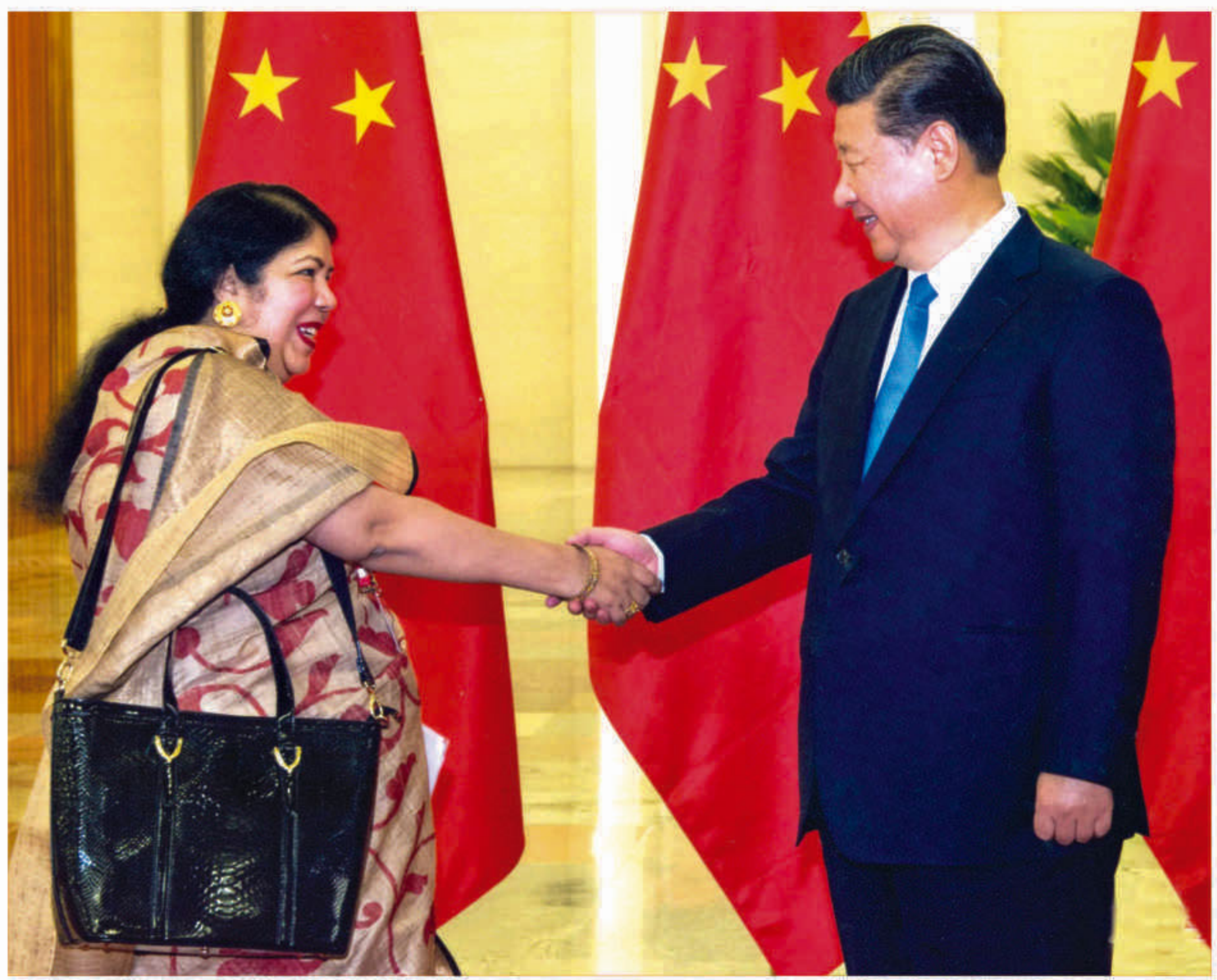
The joint forces members were patrolling as part of their ongoing anti-terrorist operation.

The criminals retreated in the face of the joint forces action, the ISPR said, adding that it had no immediate information about the casualty of the terrorist group.

The dead is Meng Pong Mro, 42, said Sayeed Tarikul Hasan, superintendent of Rangamati police.

The injured army member was rushed to the Combined Military Hospital (CMCH) in Chittagong by helicopter, he told The Daily Star.

The ISPR release said the joint forces would continue their operation in the Bandarban region.



Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, also chairperson of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive Committee, shakes hands with China President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: JATIYA SANGSAD

Marriage age to remain 18

FROM PAGE 1
discussion titled "Child Marriage: Review of the Situation".

"I request you not to say this even once. If [the minimum age] was 18 years and it will remain 18," she said.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), observed that laws are not enacted to accommodate exceptions.

She pointed out that the Children Act 2013 defined all Bangladeshis aged below 18 as children. "Therefore, marriage of anyone below the age of 18 would be a child marriage."

Referring to Section 18(4) of the 2014 draft of the upcoming law, which states boys aged above 18 and girls above 16 can marry with the consent of parents and court, human rights activ-

ist Sultana Kamal said, "We humbly request the government not to keep any such sub-clause in this law."

Though law alone cannot stop a crime or practice, it provides a protection against such incidents, said Sultana Kamal, also chairperson of We Can.

"We expect the state to save us from a more dangerous situation by performing its duty of legal protection," she added.

Abul Hossain, project director of Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women, said a government survey found that besides Imams and Kazis (marriage registrars), other people conduct marriages in the country.

"They are mostly Madrasa teachers." The government plans to run an awareness campaign for these groups of people for preventing child mar-

riage, said the head of the project under the women and children affairs ministry.

In reply to a query from Argentina P Metavel, country representative of the United Nations Population Fund, on the status of National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, he said the plan would be finalised this year no matter whether the proposed law is passed or not.

Tariqul Islam, secretary to the social welfare ministry, said the draft of the law has been lying with the law ministry for the last two years.

The draft should be sent to the cabinet as quickly as possible for approval so that it can be placed before parliament, he said.

Once it is tabled in the House, civil society and rights organisations will

have the opportunity to give their opinions on the law, said Tariqul, also former secretary to the women and children affairs ministry.

UNFPA Country Representative Metavel said child marriage cannot be a way to protect girls from sexual harassment, as many parents often reason.

"We don't want to see them abused on the streets, so we marry them off to be abused behind the walls!" she exclaimed.

An analysis of the 2014 draft of the proposed law by advocate Farida Yeasmin and a MJF study on perception of early marriage by Banasree Mitra Neogi were presented at the discussion.

A documentary by Shabnam Ferdousi on bad effects of child marriage was also screened.

Fish delight

FROM PAGE 1
water sources. Only 0.6 million tonnes were from the sea.

In 2001-02, the total fish production stood at 1.9 million tonnes and most of it came from various inland water sources.

This rise in fish culture is due to high quality fish feed and fry production, and widespread induced breeding technology, the department says. Another reason that boosted fish production is the Jatka Conservation Project that imposed a ban on hilsa fishing.

One of the key sources of fresh water fish in the country is the numerous ponds in our villages, comprising of about 0.4 million hectare area that produce half the inland fresh water fish.

Approximately 4.7 million hectares across the country are used for inland fisheries. Dhaka division delivers 28 percent of the total inland fish production; followed by Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi ranging between 13 percent and 20 percent. Rangpur contributes the least with just 5 percent.

As per the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), global fish production was 158 million tonnes in 2012 and per capita fish consumption was 19.2kg.

Annual consumption of fish and fish products in Bangladesh was 12kg per person in 2010, with Chittagong having highest annual consumption of about

17kg per person. In Bangladesh, about three quarters of consumed fish are fresh water fish, among which Pangas, Rui, and Tilapia top the chart.

Pangas farming has become an established agro-processing industry in the country over the last decade. Pangas is most easy to produce due to its short culture-cycle, high growth rate and unselective feeding habit. It also has good resistance to diseases. These characteristics are somewhat present in Tilapia.

Export of fish and fish products increased by 86 percent from 2001-02 and reached 77,000 tonnes in 2013-14.

Although, the country's exports reached its peak of about 96,000 tonnes in the fiscal year 2010-11, it declined in recent years. One of the reasons behind the decline could be the ban on hilsa export, set to ensure the country was not deprived of the delicacy.

According to the latest FAO report, the state of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2014, Bangladesh continues to be the fourth largest fish producer in the world in terms of capturing fish from inland waters.

FAO predicts that Bangladesh would be the first of four countries, Thailand, India, and China, to experience the highest growth rate in terms of fish production by 2022.



Meher Afroze Chumki, state minister for women and children affairs, addresses a discussion, titled "Child Marriage: Review of the Situation", organised jointly by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and We Can at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday. MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam, on her right, and We Can Chairperson Sultana Kamal, on her left, were among other discussants.

PHOTO: STAR

Blueprint

FROM PAGE 1
The DMP commissioner was briefing reporters at the DMP media centre on security measures centering on Durga Puja and Ashura.

He added law enforcers were working to collect evidence against the suspects.

"The mystery of Tavella murder will not only be unveiled, we will present the mastermind behind the killing before the nation," he said.

Tavella, a project manager of Netherlands-based NGO, was gunned down in the high-security diplomatic zone in Gulshan on September 28.

Two men actively took part in the killing, while a third waited on a bike ready to flee, witnesses said.

No one has been arrested in this connection.

Asked about media reports that mentioned names of three suspects,

the DMP boss declined to comment for the sake of investigation.

US-based SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors militant activities, uploaded a post where IS purportedly claimed responsibility for Tavella's murder, but Asaduzzaman reiterated that investigators did not find even the "slightest link" of militant outfits in it.

Asked if police were harassing any "particular quarter," he said there was no question of harassing anyone and insisted that they would do everything on the basis of evidence.

Replying to another query, the commissioner said, "The travel alert issued by the US for its citizen is part of their routine work... They do it regularly in several countries. It is nothing new."

He added police were working on the reported security threats and trying their best to ensure security for all.

Beyond national borders

FROM PAGE 1
have mainly reached the African countries i.e. Uganda, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Liberia and South Sudan.

In Bangladesh, one in every five hybrid rice farmers and one in every three hybrid maize growers now depend on Brac Seed and Agro Enterprise for quality seeds.

About 1.5 million farmers have purchased seeds from Brac till date this year, meeting 23 percent of the hybrid rice seed demand and 31 percent of hybrid maize seed demand nationally.

Sir Abed, who was knighted by the British Crown in 2009, founded Brac, the organisation originally known as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, as a temporary relief organisation to help the country recover from the 1970 typhoon that killed about 500,000 people and the subsequent war in 1971 to win independence from Pakistan.

Brac has grown into the world's largest non-governmental organisation focused on alleviating poverty - estimated to have helped more than

150 million people out of poverty in Africa and Asia.

On Thursday night, Sir Abed was awarded the 2015 World Food Prize for his outstanding contribution to enhancing the world's production and distribution of food to those most in need.

The prestigious prize, known as Nobel Prize for food and agriculture, was conferred on him at an event at the Iowa State Capitol Building in Iowa, USA. The award includes a cash prize of \$250,000.

"I must acknowledge that the award does not belong to me alone, it is the recognition of Brac's work over the last 43 years in providing pathways out of poverty for millions of people in Bangladesh and other countries in Africa and Asia," said Abed, receiving the award.

The global reach of Brac, is unprecedented, with more than 110,000 employees around the world, and a further 150,000 BRAC-trained entrepreneurs providing low-cost goods and services (such as seeds, medicine and training) to their rural neighbours.

In Bangladesh, Brac-developed agri-

cultural and food security programmes (AFSP) have helped over half a million farmers gain access to efficient farming techniques, proven technologies and financial support services.

Through farmers' participation in field demonstrations and training, these programmes have helped increase yields through crop intensification, research and development on new seed varieties and provision of quality seeds at fair prices.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Brac Executive Director Muhammad Musa said, "At Brac we work with the farmers, we work for the farmers. We try to link them up with the market. We operate farmers' field school."

In 2001, Brac initiated an agricultural credit programme through the north-west crop diversification project. Coordinating all activities on agricultural research, development, agricultural credit and marketing, a new agriculture and food security programme (AFSP) was launched in 2009.

The goal of the programme is to contribute to achieving food security

and the reduction of hunger and malnutrition through increased environmentally sustainable agricultural production.

In the present phase, Brac has made significant impact on improving the livelihood status of more than 88,000 farm households in areas vulnerable to climate change.

Brac carries out participatory experiments with farmers to test the validity of using certain technology and to efficiently deliver cutting-edge agriculture and aquaculture practices to ecologically adverse regions. Brac seeks to convert single-crop areas to double or triple-crop by introducing stress-tolerant and high value crop varieties.

To help achieve food security, Brac has also initiated three agricultural microfinance projects: Borgachashi Unnoyon Prokolpo (BCUP) for tenant farmers, the north-west diversification project (NCDP), and the secondary-crop diversification project (SCDP), each offering a combination of credit, savings, access to productive assets, and training.

In 2014, Brac added over 70,000 members to the projects. Brac provided loans to 402,000 borrowers, and agricultural training to 309,000 men and women. The project takes a 'credit plus' approach that combines access to customised loans of USD 200 - 1500, savings products, and technical training. It supports ventures ranging from vegetable cultivation, livestock, duck and poultry farming, aquaculture, as well as investments in land, and agricultural machinery.

Brac has initiated research and development activities on hybrid rice and maize since the inception of hybrid rice research and development activities in Bangladesh. It introduced parent materials from China and evaluated it under Bangladesh conditions. Brac released over a dozen of hybrid rice, maize and vegetable varieties.

Brac is credited for pioneering and promoting maize cultivation in Bangladesh, thereby establishing the poultry feed industry, which has previously been fully dependent on imported maize.

Members of the Brac family told The Daily Star that Sir Abed's winning the food prize is also an honour for Bangladesh and it should encourage all working for the cause of food security and nutrition.

The World Food Prize was conceived by Dr Norman E Borlaug, recipient of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize. Since 1986, The World Food Prize has honoured outstanding individuals who have made vital contributions to improving the quality, quantity or availability of food throughout the world.

Other past prize winners include Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr Muhammad Yunus, pioneer of Indian green revolution Prof MS Swaminathan, pioneer of hybrid rice Professor Yuan Longping of China, former president of Brazil Luis Inácio Lula Da Silva, ex-President of Ghana John Kufour, US Senators Bob Dole and George McGovern, and former Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme Catherine Bertini.