

Women's participation in dairy farming rises

UNB, Dhaka

Women's participation in income-generating activities like dairy farming in rural areas is growing in the country, ensuring countrywide supply of milk, a primary source of nutrition.

However, their roles apparently remain behind the scene as men usually deal with clients in most cases.

For example, Pran Dairy maintains a network of 31,000 dairy farmers, solely designated for dairy farming, and they have 78,000 cows. Most of the farmers change their livelihood by dairy farming.

Though men are doing the financial transactions, female members of those farming families play the key role in dairy farming.

A correspondent while visiting dairy hubs of Pran in Chatmohor of Pabna, Shahzadpur and Baghabari of Sirajganj, found this scenario while talking to stakeholders.

Lily Khatun was one of the offstage players who send milk to the collection centres established by Pran in

Barshalikha village of Chatmohar.

Lily, a 35-year-old registered farmer of Pran, started her journey with only one cow. Now she owns 10 cows.

"Three of them give 35 litres of milk a day," she said, adding that she makes profit of Tk 10,000 to Tk 12,000 a week by selling milk to collection centres.

Pran Dairy Ltd aims to increase its capacity of collecting milk to 1 million litres a day within the next five years from 0.15 million litres a day at present.

The company collects nearly 0.15 million litres of milk from 31,000 contract farmers spreading across 12 districts, mostly in the country's north region.

Rakibur Rahman, chief dairy (extension) of Pran Dairy, told the news agency that some locals are only farming cows to meet the demand for milk of their own families and the marginalised farmers did not consider dairy farming as their main source of income.

"As a result, Bangladesh has to import a huge amount of powdered

milk to meet the demand," he said.

To meet the huge demand, Pran had started the milk collection process in 2001.

Rahman said Pran had developed a new concept—Dairy Hub—in the industry. "The concept later got a positive response."

He said milk is currently being collected from 12 districts. "So far, five milk production regions (Dairy Hub) have been set up. Besides, some agents are also providing milk to Pran."

"We're giving support to the dairy farmers to inspire them," said Jakirul Islam, manager of Pran Dairy Hub in Chatmohor of Pabna.

He said modern knowledge helped them increase milk production. "We provide free vaccines, treatments and medicines from dairy hub at production cost."

Rakibur Rahman said Pran has 124 milk collection centres and the centres have been set up at the doorstep of dairy farmers. The collected milk is then brought to the Narsingdi factory, he said.

IMF chief foresees 'prompt' start of Egypt lending

AFP, Washington

Egypt may soon receive the first tranche of a crucial \$12 billion aid package, the head of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde said Saturday.

Officials in Cairo reached an agreement in principle with the IMF in August for the aid package but it was conditioned on a series of reforms and remains subject to approval by the Fund's executive board.

"To my knowledge, these prior actions are almost completed," Lagarde told reporters during the annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Washington. "I very much hope that the board can meet promptly."

To meet the Fund's requirements, Egypt has in particular adopted a value-added tax in the hopes of raising fresh revenue to offset the recent collapse of tourism and foreign investment.



Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, prime minister's media affairs adviser, attends the nutrition science fair organised by Nestle Nutrition Institute, on the premises of Shahjahanpur Railway Colony High School in the capital.

Australian-Chinese bid for massive cattle estate

AFP, Sydney

Australia's richest woman and a Chinese property developer joined forces Sunday to bid for one of the world's largest cattle estates, despite Canberra's rejection of previous foreign offers.

Australia's biggest private landowner, cattle firm S. Kidman and Co, has attracted keen interest from Chinese firms wanting to secure the sprawling pastoral empire.

But the government has previously rejected two Chinese-led bids, citing the national interest.

Under the new offer announced late Sunday, mining magnate Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting will acquire 67 percent of Kidman and Chinese property developer Shanghai CRED 33 percent for some Aus\$365 million (US\$277 million).

Shanghai CRED was part of a Chinese consortium involved in the previous bids. The Chinese stake in the current bid would be significantly smaller than previously.

Kidman chairman John Crosby welcomed the "significant investment proposed in addition to the purchase price and (we) are confident that the Kidman business will be in good hands".



Chairman of GPH Group Mohammed Jahangir Alam, CEO of Primetal Technologies Austria GmbH Heinrich Maximilian Rohrl and Additional Managing Director of GPH Ispat Almas Shimul attend the foundation laying ceremony of GPH's administration and dormitory building, at Kumira in Chittagong.



Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, speaker of national parliament; Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT; Marcia Bernicat, US ambassador to Bangladesh, and Nasir A Choudhury, adviser and founder managing director of Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd (GDIC), attend the launch of Nibedita app. The mobile application of GDIC will give women access to various value added services in the field of security, health, finance, capacity building and lifestyle.

S Africa basks in continent's first solar-powered airport

AFP, George, South Africa

At first glance there's nothing out of the ordinary about the regional airport in George, a town of just 150,000 residents on South Africa's south coast.

In fact though, the small site is Africa's first "green" airport to be powered by the sun.

The control tower, escalators, check-in desks, baggage carousels, restaurants and ATMs -- every service here depends on a small solar power station, located a few hundred metres away in a field of dandelions next to a runway.

Its 2,000 solar panels produce up to 750 kW every day, easily surpassing the 400 kW needed to run the airport.

The excess is fed back into the municipal power grid, and a computer screen in the terminal informs passengers: "Within this month (September), 274 households were supplied through this system with green electricity."

For environmentally-conscious travellers keen to reduce their carbon footprint, it's a welcome development.

"Planes have such a big carbon print," said passenger Brent Petersen, 33, in George. "If we compensate, that's cool."

George Airport was originally built in

apartheid-era South Africa in 1977 to make getting home easier for PW Botha, a government minister at the time and later president.

It now serves as a transit hub for shipments of homegrown flowers and oysters, as well as golfers visiting one of the region's many courses. Some 700,000 passengers pass through its doors each year.

The solar plant, launched in September 2015, is the second solar-run airport in the world after Cochin airport in southern India.

Nestled between the Indian Ocean on one side and the majestic Outeniqua Mountains on the other, George was a surprising location for the first attempt at a solar-powered airport in South Africa.

The town's weather is unpredictable: in the space of half an hour, the temperature can plummet by 10 degrees celsius, the blue skies quickly replaced by a steady drizzle.

But so far, so good: even on overcast days, the plant still produces some power.

At night or when necessary, the system automatically switches over to the traditional power grid.

"The thinking was if we put (the solar system) in the worst unpredictable weather, it will absolutely work in any other airport

in the country," the airport's maintenance director Marclen Stellenberg told AFP.

The environmental value of the ambitious project is already evident.

Since solar became the airport's main source of power, the hub has reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by 1,229 tonnes -- the equivalent of 103,934 litres of fuel.

The electricity bill has been cut by 40 percent in the space of a year, "which is a plus for me on the budget," said airport manager Brenda Voster.

Voster says it will take another five to 10 years to pay off the initial 16-million rand (\$1.2 million) cost.

Meanwhile, regular power cuts, which in recent years have plagued Africa's most developed economy, are a thing of the past, she adds.

Heavily dependent on coal, which is the source of 90 percent of the country's electricity, South Africa is looking to diversify its options to avoid power cuts.

Robyn Spence, who works at Dollar car hire company at the airport, said they "had to replace quite a few computers" fried by electricity surges caused by power cuts last year -- no longer an issue with the solar system.

But not all the retailers at the airport are

feeling the benefits yet.

Lelona Madlingozi, a kitchen manager at Illy restaurant in the main terminal, said they had two power cuts lasting about three hours each just a month earlier. "We could not sell anything in the shop," she said.

Restaurants, said the airport, are not one of the essential services prioritised during power cuts.

Expanding the use of renewable energy is a key focus for management firm, Airports Company South Africa, said its president Skhumbuzo Macozoma.

The company's goal is to achieve "carbon neutrality", or net zero carbon emissions, by 2030.

In a country with an estimated average of 8.5 hours of sunshine a day throughout the year, solar's untapped potential looks huge.

After the success in George, the airports in Kimberley -- South Africa's diamond capital -- and Upington near the Namibian border have also gone green, with three other regional airports next in line.

George Airport now plans on increasing the capacity of the small power station by an extra 250 kW and will soon install batteries capable of conserving energy generated during the day for use at night.

RMG workers to get Tk 5 lakh for accidents

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The training for workers covers seven priority areas for the garment sector -- fire safety; electrical safety; trips, slips, falls and good housekeeping; dangerous substances; ergonomics; personal protective equipment; and first aid.

In addition to the EOSH training, the initiative will also see 585 company representatives be oriented to the formation of safety committees at the factory level. The goal is to establish 110 functioning safety committees at the company level by January 2017. Safe work environment is a priority for the BEE, said its Vice-president Golam Mainuddin.

All parties should work together to implement occupational health and safety measures at the workplace in accordance with the related laws and provisions of the country, he added.

ILO Country Director Srinivas Reddy re-emphasised the recent comments of ILO Director General Guy Ryder, who in the aftermath of the recent Tampaco Foils fire highlighted that there could be no room for complacency and the need to create a stronger culture of preventative safety in all industrial sectors.

Benoit-Pierre Laramée, Canadian high commissioner, and Siddiqur Rahman, BGMEA president, also spoke.



M Shahidul Islam, additional managing director of United Commercial Bank, and Mir Moshir Rahman, managing director of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, exchange the signed papers of a deal at a programme on the premises of Titas in Dhaka. The bank will help Titas in collecting all kinds of gas bills and payments through its branch network.

Business leaders urge London against 'hard' Brexit

AFP, London

British business leaders on Saturday urged the government to rule out a hard break with the European Union, saying the uncertainty over the terms of Brexit was impacting investment decisions.

"What we would like is the ruling out of the really worst options," Carolyn Fairbairn, the director general of CBI, Britain's biggest business lobby group, told BBC radio.

She outlined her case in an open letter to the government which was also signed by the heads of the EEF manufacturers' association, the International Chamber of Commerce UK and the techUK technology industry body.

They warned against a situation where Britain leaves the EU single market without having a new trade deal in place, meaning it would revert to trading under World Trade Organization rules.

"Falling into WTO rules in only 29 months from now, which is the prospective timetable, would mean up to 90 percent of goods could potentially have tariffs on them," Fairbairn said.

She said ruling out "some of these really negative options would help to reassure investors that the UK was still a really good place to invest".

Ceramic exporters in a tight corner

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But it is tableware that accounts for 95 percent of Bangladesh's ceramics export.

"The US is a big market for ceramics tableware. The cancellation of the GSP is the main reason for falling exports," said MA Jabbar, managing director of DBL Ceramics that will start commercial production in December.

A falling exchange rate is also making the local exporters noncompetitive, he added.

Industry players also criticised the government's discrimination in giving incentives to exports.

"Incentives are given to garments and some other sectors, but not ceramics. Also, garment makers can import raw materials with a zero-duty benefit, but we have to pay duties and advance income tax for import of raw materials," said Kabir of Shinepukur Ceramics.

The government has given garment exporters a 2 percent currency value adjustment benefit for exports to the European market, he added. "The government policy should be for all exporters, not sector-specific."

These challenges have forced many manufacturers to concentrate on the domestic market for their business, he said. "It is tough for us to compete with China in the international market as it has raw materials for ceramics," said Mamunur Rashid, managing director of Monalisa Ceramics.

He said local consumption, even in rural areas, is rising fast with an increase in the purchasing power of the growing middleclass. An estimate by Bangladesh Ceramic Manufacturers and Exporters Association shows despite tremendous growth of the local industry, the country still imports products to meet 10-20 percent of its demand.