



Spindles, also known as bobbins, made out of recycled paper being dried out in the sun. Jute mills purchase them for Tk 4 to Tk 8 per piece depending on the size to wind twine. This factory at Mujgunni Bus Stand in Khulna city has 16 workers who can manufacture nearly 60,000 spindles a month. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

FAO regional confce to focus on climate crisis in agriculture

Four-day event kicks off in Dhaka today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In a first for the country, Bangladesh is set to host the 36th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) from today.

The current challenges of climate change in agriculture, building climate-friendly agricultural systems, modernisation of value chains and expansion of agricultural exports will be discussed at the four-day event, Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque said yesterday.

Besides, discussions will also be held on ensuring food and nutrition security, protecting biodiversity, economic cooperation and joint investment in the region, he said at a press conference.

Razzaque also informed that 42 delegates, including agriculture ministers and secretaries from 43



Issues related to building climate-friendly agricultural systems, modernisation of value chains and expansion of agricultural exports will be discussed at the conference

member countries in the region, are expected to join the conference that ends on March 11.

In addition, 900 people from FAO member states, representatives of various UN bodies, development partners, non-government

organisations, and civil society have registered for the event.

This is the highest number of participants in history to attend the conference.

The agriculture minister went on to say that the conference will bring a rare honour to Bangladesh and play an important role in developing agriculture in the country.

The main session, or plenary session, of the conference will be held at InterContinental Dhaka while the opening ceremony, cultural programmes and country showcasing will be held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

The senior official- and agriculture secretary-level meetings will be held on March 8-9 while the minister-level meetings will take place on March 10-11.

The inaugural ceremony of the conference will be held on March 10 at the BICC, where Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina will act as chief guest, according to a statement from the agriculture ministry.

There will be 16 stalls of the agriculture ministry, food ministry and, fisheries and livestock ministry alongside the main event at the InterContinental Dhaka and BICC. A cultural programme will be organised on the evening of March 9.

In addition, the FAO director general is scheduled to meet Bangladesh's president on March 9 and the prime minister on March 13, it said.

Bangladesh became a member of the FAO in 1983. The Asia-Pacific regional conference is held every two years as an official forum of the FAO, where agriculture ministers and other senior officials of member countries discuss the challenges and solutions of food and agriculture.

The first conference was held in 1953 in Bangalore, India.

Farmers turn to sunflowers

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sunflowers, they have been left anxious over the fact that they do not know where and how to store the crop.

Sheikh Khokon, a farmer from Ghulkhari village in Akhaura upazila, cultivated sunflowers on his 50-decimal land for the first time this year.

He had to spend between Tk 35,000 and Tk 40,000 on irrigation, various fertilisers and other inputs for the past four months.

Still though, he does not know how to preserve the crop even though the ripe flowers have already started to fall at this point in time.

Ali Ahmad, the owner of a sunflower farm in Brahmanbaria's Kasha upazila, said he has not received any guidance or support on how to harvest sunflower plants and process their seeds till date.

"If we cannot harvest the crops in due time, we will have to face enormous losses," he added.

On the other hand, Robiul Haque Majumder, deputy director of the local DAE, said his organisation regularly provides free seeds, fertilisers and guidance for sunflower farmers in a bid to ensure bumper harvests.

Asked if any training would be provided on how to harvest the seeds and collect oil from sunflowers, Majumder said that the DAE's block supervisor will reach out to growers to train them.

"So, they have nothing to worry about in this regard," he added.

The DAE deputy director went on to say that sunflower oil is far more nutritious than the common soybean oil currently found in the market as it lacks harmful cholesterol which is detrimental to health.

"For this reason, we advise farmers to cultivate the crop. If they get good profits this time, then cultivation will increase a lot in the future," Majumder said.

Besides, sunflower cultivation is less costly than other crops as it requires less fertiliser, according to Mohammed Solaiman Talukder, deputy director of the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation in Brahmanbaria.

Mahbubur Rahman, a farmer of Jethagram of Nasirnagar upazila, said that since paddy cultivation in haor areas is not very profitable, sunflower cultivation is becoming popular in the region.

"I have grown sunflowers on two bighas of land in collaboration with the local agriculture office," he added.

Md Saiful Alam, deputy director of DAE in Kishoreganj, said sunflower seeds are currently selling for between Tk 50 to Tk 60 per kilogramme in the district.

Around 1,160 farmers in Kishoreganj are cultivating sunflowers under a government

programme that provides them with hybrid seeds and fertilisers.

The government initiated the programme to make sunflower cultivation popular in the district's haor areas, where this is huge potential to grow the crop instead of vegetables or paddy.

Alal Uddin, a sunflower farmer of Hossainpur village in Mithamoin upazila, said he and four other farmers have been cultivating sunflowers since last year as the profit is reasonable.

Haor farmers traditionally depend on a single crop, namely boro paddy, but they are now enjoying the scope to produce another crop in the gap between harvests, said Md Rafiul Islam, agriculture officer of Mithamoin upazila.

The cultivation of sunflowers also makes the land fertile, facilitating good production for the next crops, he added.

Gold above \$2,000

REUTERS, Singapore

Gold climbed to its highest in one-and-a-half years on Monday and palladium hit an all-time high on safe-haven asset appeal, while nickel soared over 20 per cent on fears of supply disruptions tied to sanctions on Russia and continued fighting in Ukraine.

Gold prices rose above \$2,000 per ounce, palladium hit a record, LME 3-month nickel posted its largest ever one-day gain, and oil and wheat jumped to 14-year highs as Russia's escalating invasion of Ukraine continued to roil global commodities.

The searing rally in raw material prices has sparked concerns over economic growth in countries still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The saying goes that the best cure for high prices is high prices," said OANDA senior analyst Jeffrey Halley in a report.



Md Omar Faruk Khan, additional managing director of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd (IBBL), inaugurated an agent banking business development conference and workshop on "Prevention of Money Laundering & Terrorist Financing" at Brac Learning Centre in Mymensingh on Saturday. Md Maksudur Rahman, senior executive vice-president, Md Mahboob Alam and ASM Rezaul Karim, executive vice-presidents, and Bashir Ahamed, head of Mymensingh zone, were present.

PHOTO: IBBL



M Kamal Hossain, managing director of Southeast Bank, virtually inaugurated an "Utshob" campaign yesterday marking the first anniversary of its agent banking services.

PHOTO: SOUTHEAST BANK

GP launches 4G modem, routers

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Grameenphone recently launched one 4G modem and two routers with prices ranging from Tk 2,650 to Tk 4,499 through a ceremony at GP House in Dhaka.

"...these affordable devices enable customers to have the best 4G experience with ease and on the go," said Chief Marketing Officer Sajjad Hasib in a press release.

"53.5 per cent of Grameenphone users obtain internet data, meaning 44.6 million users now enjoy the immense accessibilities of internet connectivity," said Chief Technology Officer Rade Kovacevic.

The devices -- GP 4G Modem ZTE MF833V, GP 4G Pocket Router ZTE MF937 and GP 4G Portable WiFi Router ZTE MF283U can be availed from official outlets.

Uniqlo stays put in Russia; Netflix, Amex sever ties

REUTERS

Uniqlo owner Fast Retailing will keep its stores in Russia open, joining a small group of international firms that have stayed put even as dozens of big brands pause operations or exit the country over its invasion of Ukraine.

"Clothing is a necessity of life. The people of Russia have the same right to live as we do," the Japanese apparel retailer's CEO Tadashi Yanai said, according to emailed remarks first published by Nikkei and reported by Bloomberg News.

Political pressure is building on companies to halt business in Russia while sweeping sanctions affecting everything from global payments systems to a range of high-tech products have complicated operations. Large shippers have suspended container routes to and from Russia and many Western companies including Nike Inc, Swedish home furnishing retailer Ikea and British energy giants BP and Shell have closed shops or announced plans to exit Russia.

On Sunday, streaming giant Netflix, two of the Big Four accounting firms KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) and credit card company American Express cut ties with Russia. French yoghurt maker Danone, which makes around 6 per cent of its sales in Russia and Ukraine, said on Sunday it was suspending investment in Russia and that one of its two factories had closed in Ukraine.

McDonald's Corp and PepsiCo Inc are among companies continuing to operate in Russia, prompting New York state's pension fund - a shareholder in the pair - to urge them to consider pausing their operations there.

Russia said on Monday it will hold fire and open humanitarian corridors in several Ukrainian cities, after fighting halted weekend evacuation efforts and civilian casualties mounted. Russia calls the campaign it launched on February 24 a "special military operation". It has denied attacking civilian areas and says it has no plans to occupy Ukraine.