

Massive housing shortage in India

CALCUTTA, Mar 30: A colossal amount of Rupees 1,90,000 crore will be required for investment to meet the massive shortage of housing units in the country by the turn of the century, according to Ashish Kumar Sen, Managing Director of the Housing Promotion and Finance Corporation Ltd. reports PTI.

The shortage of housing had been estimated at 63.8 million units upto 2001 and a sum of Rupees 34,875 crores would be needed for such investment in the eastern and north eastern zone along, Sen told a Press conference yesterday.

He pointed out that the plan outlay on housing had been reduced from 34 per cent in the First Five-Year Plan to 10 per cent in the Seventh Plan, thus the question of investment was given a back-shear.

Sen said that the HPFC Ltd would change its name to SBI Home Finance Limited soon symbolising its closer links with the premier financial institution - State Bank of India.

Share prices decline further at DSE

Star Economic Report

The week began on Saturday at Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) with most traded shares declining further in prices. The depressed mood of the market persisted with no effective investors support. Trading, however, recorded a sharp rise in volume. DSE All Share Price Index declined to 353.8714 points compared with Thursday's 354.0782.

In all 13,845 shares changed hands compared with Thursday's 3136. Traded issues valued Taka 5,42,360.00 against last weekend day's Taka 1,81,730.00.

Thifty stocks were traded. Of them sixteen lost, six gained and eight remained unchanged at their previous quoted prices.

Among the decliners Rahim Textile lost Taka 6.00 to Taka 59.00.

Milon Tannery and Monospool Paper declined Taka 2.22 and Taka 2.00 to Taka 36.67 and Taka 98.00 respectively.

Bangladesh Autocars, Apex Tannery and Chittagong Cement lost Taka 1.65, Taka 1.40 and Taka 1.38 to Taka 115.00, Taka 143.00 and Taka 149.80.

Aftab Automobiles, Atlas Bangladesh, Quasem Drycells, Chittagong Vegetable, Beximco Pharma, Kohinor Chemical, Quasem Silk, Saiham Textile, Beximco and Savar Refractories declined within the range between Taka 0.03 and Taka 1.00.

On the gainers side, BGIC and Green Delta Insurance, National Tubes, Eagle Box moved up within the range between Taka 0.01 and Taka 1.27.

Quoted Prices of Traded Stocks

Table with columns: Investment, %V/ML, C/Closing, %Change, and various stock names like BIC, Green Delta, etc.

* FV = Face Value, ML = Market Lot. ** Changes: Plus signs mean gain and (-) signs losses.

Dhaka's trade deficit stands at Tk 1,344 cr with Thailand

Star Economic Report

The fourth meeting of Bangladesh-Thailand joint commission is likely to be held in the middle of this year. The meeting, scheduled to be held in the second week of December last year in Bangkok, was postponed mainly because of the changed political situation in Bangladesh.

The ministerial-level commission, which mainly deals with bilateral trade, was expected to meet again at the end of January or early February this year. But the commission could not sit as yet. According to sources, there is initiative from both sides to fix a new date for the meeting sometime at the middle of the year.

The third meeting of the commission was held in Dhaka in December, 1989.

Bangladesh has an adverse balance of trade with Thailand and in 10 years till last fiscal year 1989-90, the cumulative

trade deficit stood at Taka 13,44,219 crore. Since 1980-81, Bangladesh imported commodities worth Taka 14,44,841 crore from Thailand till May 1990. During this period, Bangladesh could export to Thailand commodities worth Taka 100,622 crore only.

Since 1980-81, the trade deficit of Bangladesh with Thailand was highest in the last fiscal year 1989-90. According to the statistics available from Bangladesh Bank, Bangladesh's export to Thailand in 1989-90 (upto May) was valued at Taka 4,938 crore, while the country imported commodities worth Taka 344,948 crore from Thailand during this period. The deficit was Taka 340,010 crore.

During the preceding fiscal year 1988-89, Bangladesh's trade deficit with Thailand was Taka 68,289 crore. Bangladesh

imported commodities worth Taka 81,520 crore from Thailand while some textile export earning was only Taka 13.23 crore from there.

Rice is the main import item of Bangladesh from Thailand, while some textile fibres, clothings, oil seeds are also imported.

Bangladesh exports fresh or processed fish, shrimps, prawns, hides and skins, jute good and some other items to Thailand.



Consignments of jute goods are being loaded into a truck for export. —Star Photo

First Islamic Bank in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Mar 30: The Indonesian Government has approved the establishment here of the first Islamic Bank that will waive interest charges on loans and deposits, the official Antara news agency reported Saturday, reports AFP.

The new bank, Bank Muamalat Islam Indonesia (BMMI), launched a training program for its first batch of 29 staff at the government-owned banking institute witnessed by several cabinet ministers. Antara said.

Officials of the Ulema Council (MUI), the chief sponsor, said the bank would open before the end of the year mainly to cater to small businessmen.

Junior Finance Minister Nasrudin Sumitapura said BMMI would have to observe conventional banking practices although it would not charge interest rates, according to Antara.

He said the opening of the bank tallied with a recent gov-

ernment decision to coordinate the collection of the potentially huge fund from Islamic taxes and aims from the Muslim community under one body.

Muslims are required to pay at least 2.5 per cent of their income in Islamic taxes and aims, but in the past this has been paid direct to poor relatives and neighbours or channelled through mosques.

The government last week sponsored the creation of the Agency for Islamic Tax and Alms (Bazis) to monitor the collection of such taxes and put the fund to more productive use.

Nearly 90 pct of Indonesia's 180 million population are Muslims. Indonesian Muslim scholars are still divided on the question of whether or not interest charges are prohibited in Islam, with many contending that a reasonable level of interest was acceptable.

Pak economy demonstrates resilience despite crisis

ISLAMABAD, Mar 30: Pakistan Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz has said that during the current year the Pakistan economy came under severe pressures emanating from the Gulf crisis, but despite these pressures as a whole demonstrated resilience, reports Xinhua.

According to local daily the "Business Recorder" today, the Finance Minister made the remarks here on Thursday when addressing a meeting of the Advisory Council of the Ministry of Finance.

He told the council members that during the first eight months of 1990-91 (July-February) Pakistan's exports registered an increase of 20.7 per cent and imports increased by eight per cent respectively over the same period of the previous fiscal year.

Sartaj Aziz said the domestic production of crude oil during July-January 1990-91 increased by 26 per cent and gas by four per cent respectively

over the same period of 1989-90, while the production of cotton during the whole year is expected to reach 9.5 million bales.

Manufacturing sector, he said, has also shown positive growth, in particular cotton yarn, cement, sugar, caustic soda, paper and board.

Sheep outnumber New Zealanders

WELLINGTON, Mar 30: New Zealand's best known statistics—its ratio of sheep to people—fell again in the year to last June, the Statistics Department said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Sheep now outnumber New Zealanders by a mere 17.5:1, down from 18.3:1 in 1989 and more than 21:1 in 1982.

Droughts and tough economic times on farms cut the sheep population to 57.9 million last year from 60.6 million the year before, the department said in a statement.

The Minister said the Government had set a GDP growth target of 5.5 per cent for 1990-91 (ending June 30) to be achieved through 4.8 per cent growth in Agriculture, 7.7 per cent growth in manufacturing and 4.9 per cent growth in services.

The Government expects that the current account deficit during the year will be contained at least at last year's level of 1.7 billion US dollars even after absorbing an adverse impact of one billion US dollar emanating from the Gulf crisis, he said.

Sartaj Aziz noted that the Government is committed to bringing the fiscal deficit down by increasing revenues and controlling expenditure through economic reforms.

He said the major reason behind the slow movement of national economic activity is the slow proceedings by the Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs) in dealing with financial matters.

Price Barmeter Essentials

Table with columns: Item, Price per Kg, and various agricultural products like Aman, Pajam, Ushi, etc.

Malaysian economy booming

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 30: Malaysia's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 10 per cent in 1990 against 8.8 per cent growth in 1989 to outperform its south-east Asian neighbours, Central Bank Governor Jaffar Hussein said, reports Reuter.

"Malaysia outperformed all ASEAN countries in terms of real output growth last year," Jaffar told a news conference to release Bank Negara's 1990 report.

"This ability of the economy to grow despite the more adverse external environment was largely due to the effective restructuring of the domestic production base," he said.

Malaysia is the world's top producer of palm oil and rubber and a major producer of petroleum, tin and cocoa.

However, it has successfully weaned its economy away from depending on the primary commodity sector to spur its economy by diversifying heavily into manufacturing.

Malaysia last hit double-digit growth in 1976 when the economy expanded by 11.6 pct, Bank Negara said.

It said GDP for 1991 is expected at 8.3 pct if crude oil prices average 20 dlr a barrel and 8.6 pct if prices fall to 15 dlr a barrel. Lower oil prices will help the economies of OECD countries and boost Malaysian exports, Bank Negara said.

"Again this will exceed the rates of growth anticipated for other countries in the ASIA Pacific region," Jaffar said.

Bank Negara reported that GDP growth in member countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)—Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore—averaged 7.5 pct in 1990 but will fall to 6.2 in 1991.

Jaffar cited rising inflation, weaknesses in the balance of payments, labour shortages and infrastructural bottlenecks as key issues that

need to be addressed.

Malaysia's Consumer Price Index (CPI) is expected to rise 4.5 pct in 1991 from 3.1 in 1990, and Jaffar said the central bank's 1991 monetary priority will be to keep prices stable.

"As a trade-off for five successive years of strong economic expansion, the balance of payments current account will continue to be strained by sharply higher growth in imports in relations to exports," Jaffar said.

Bank Negara said that Malaysia's overall balance of payments will run into a deficit of 279 million ringgit in 1991, a sharp reversal of the 5.4 billion ringgit surplus in 1990.

Imports, mainly of capital goods, have outpaced exports rising 30 pct in 1990 compared to export growth of 16.4 pct. This trend will widen the current account deficit to 8.0 billion ringgit in 1991 compared to 4.7 billion ringgit deficit in 1990.

"While large capital inflows are likely to more than compensate for the deficit in the current account, this line of financing will eventually slow down."

Jaffar said adding that the solution was to boost export earnings.

Raw Jute

March-30

Table with columns: White, Tossa, Meshta and various jute varieties with prices per 100 kg.

White Rejection (WRS)/Tossa Rejection (TRS): Habtjabi, Cut Ropes

Table with columns: BWR, BWH, BTR, BTH, BCR and various jute products with prices.

Gold & Silver

March-30

Table with columns: Gold, Tejbati, India, Silver and prices.

Exchange Rates

March-30

Table with columns: Selling, Buying and various currencies like US Dollar, UK Pound, etc.

SELLING AND BUYING RATES, offered by Commercial Banks, for Bank Cheques (BC) and Overseas Drafts (OD) One Unit of Foreign Currency (FC) for Taka

Performance Benefit (KPB) Fund Selling

The rates of Pound Sterling are decided every day, based on the cross-rate of New York market Source: Sontali Bank

\$101b US trade deficit last year

WASHINGTON, Mar 30: The United States on Friday, cited China and Japan as among 37 nations with major barriers to US goods, contributing to the 101-billion Dollar US trade deficit last year, reports Reuter.

It said in its annual report on foreign trade barriers that China's economic turn inward resulted in a 17 per cent drop in imports from the United States last year. At the same time, US imports from China rose 27 per cent.

Joshua Bolten, General Counsel at the trade office, said however, that "the most significant trade barriers that the United States faces continue to be in the Japanese market."

He told in a news conference that many Japanese markets had been opened the past year including those in superconductors, sound recordings, wood products and satellites, but others remained closed — in addition, business practices there continued to make it hard for US firms to break into Japanese markets.

Snippets

Japan to reschedule Poland's debt

TOKYO, Mar 30: Japan and Poland exchanged an agreement to reschedule Poland's debt to Japan for the fifth time, the Foreign Ministry announced here, reports Reuter.

The agreement was based on an accord reached at a meeting of Poland's major creditor countries in Paris in February.

It covers at least 51.68 million dollars and 43.67 billion yen in capital and interest owed by the Commercial Bank of Warsaw to Japanese state and commercial banks and commercial debt owed by Polish debtors to Japanese creditors and insured by the Japanese government.

Bid to promote US exports to Japan

TOKYO, Mar 30: Export-Import Bank of Japan said it was signing a cooperation agreement Friday with the Los Angeles-based Union Bank to promote export from the United States to Japan, reports AFP.

The Bank said the agreement would enable it to publicise a financing programme launched a year ago to extend long-term loans to foreign companies to boost exports of manufactured goods to Japan.

Union Bank, a unit of Bank of Tokyo Ltd, is one of California's biggest banks with about 180 branches.

Japan gives another loan to Syria

TOKYO, Mar 30: The Japanese government has pledged to provide Syria with a loan of up to 51.6 billion yen (370 million dollars) to help build a thermal power plant, the Foreign Ministry said Friday, reports AFP.

The loan along with a 100-million dollar commodity loan to Syria announced earlier this month is part of Japan's assistance to the countries most affected by the Gulf crisis. Terms of the loan were not disclosed.

Cuba to take part in trade fair

HAVANA, Mar 30: Cuba will take part for the first time in Venezuela's international trade fair in April as part of a drive by the Communist-ruled island to open new trade outlets in Latin America, a Cuban trade official said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Osilia Travieso of Cuba's Chamber of Commerce told a news conference in Havana the exhibit by 30 Cuban companies at the April 8-17 fair in the city of Valencia would be the biggest trade promotion initiative of its kind by Cuba in 1991.

We're focusing our efforts on Latin America, Travieso said.

China tightens control on money supply

BEIJING, Mar 30: China will tighten controls on its money supply, the official Xinhua Agency quoted People's Bank of China Deputy Governor Zhou Zhenqiang as saying Friday, reports AFP.

The Central Bank will strengthen its control over the issuing of money and the use of credit funds as well as using interest rates, exchange rates and China's reserves in a bid to fight inflation, the banker said.

The official inflation rate was 2.1 per cent in 1990 but the government has warned that prices are set to rise again this year. The authorities monitor inflation closely, fearing soaring prices threaten China's social stability.

Indonesia plans to send mission to S. Arabia, Gulf

JAKARTA, Mar 30: Indonesia plans to send a mission to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries to clinch a piece of the action in the multi-billion Dollar post-war economic reconstruction. Trade Minister Arifin Sitregard said, reports AFP.

The mission in May will mainly seek to supply goods to US and European firms that have already won the large contracts, Sitregard told journalists today.

Fiji miners on hunger strike

SUVA, Mar 30: Some 700 striking miners at an Australian-run gold mine have begun a hunger strike to press for better work and housing conditions, a union official said Saturday, reports AFP.

Kavekini Navuso, Secretary of the Fiji Mine Workers Union, said the three-day hunger strike, which began Friday, was to demonstrate "solidarity with our demands".

Dhaka Stock Exchange Market Profile

Table showing market profile for March-30: 134 Listed stocks, 6 Gains, 16 Losers, 112 Unchanged.

120 Unchanged stocks include eight traded on the day at the previous day's quoted prices. DSE All Share Price Index = 353.8714 Issued Capital-Taka 4,620,377,180.00 Market Capitalisation = 10,111,965,486.00 Turnover = Taka 5,42,360.00 (Value) 13,845 (Volume).

Hides & Skin

(Wet/Salted) March-30

Table with columns: Cow, Light, Medium, Heavy, Very heavy, Rejected and prices per 100 pieces.

Table with columns: Goat, Pig & Heavy, Light & Medium, Rejected, Sheep, Buffalo and prices per 100 pieces.

Source: Department of Agricultural Marketing