

WASHINGTON, Apr 27: The World Bank should examine how much a Third World nation spends on arms when considering making a loan to that country, the head of the multilateral bank says, reports AP.

3rd world gets \$23b WB loan a year

Arms spending to be examined

is a tremendous diversion of resources in unconstructive ways into military spending," World Bank President Barber Conable told a news conference Friday.

"It is, I believe, an essential part of the solution to the waste represented by excessive military spending in poor countries," he said in a speech.

McNamara was US Secretary of Defense under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

McNamara suggested that countries get special consideration if they spend less than 2 dollars a year on security out of every 100 dollars of their total production.

The US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency lists 18 countries that spent 10 dollars or more out of every 100 dollars on security in 1988. They include Iraq, Libya, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Yemen and Vietnam.

Dozens of others spent more than 2 dollars. A few spent less than 1 dollar, including Brazil, Costa Rica, Nigeria, Gambia and Zaire.

The Washington-based World Bank is a sister lending institution of the International Monetary Fund. It provides development-oriented loans to around 40 of the world's poorest nations at favorable terms.



WASHINGTON: World Bank President Barber Conable speaks to reporters April 26. Conable said the Bank will continue to fund the resettlement of refugees and he answered questions on his final term at the World Bank. — AFP photo

Poor states' debt to rise sharply

WASHINGTON, Apr 27: The total external debt of developing countries climbed nearly six per cent in 1990 and is expected to rise by more than four per cent this year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) says, reports UNB.

However, the ability of these countries to service the debt has actually improved, the IMF said in its semi-annual World Economic Outlook report released April 24, according to a USIS report.

Following two years of little increase, the total debt of some 130 developing countries rose to 1,306,000 million dollars in 1990 and is projected to climb to 1,362,000 million dollars this year and to \$1,388,000 million in 1992.

The debt, measured as a percentage of exports of goods and services — one of several key ways to gauge a country's ability to service its debt — actually fell from 174 per cent in 1986 to 125 per cent in 1990 and is expected to fall to 118 per cent in 1992, the IMF said. This is partially due to recent debt and debt servicing reductions by commercial banks and forgiveness of debt by some official creditors.

Debt as a percentage of gross domestic product of 15 heavily indebted countries, on average, is projected to fall by 7.5 percentage points to 30 per cent in 1992, the report

said. "Only in sub-Saharan Africa — where the debt to gross domestic product ratio at around 77 per cent remains the highest of any developing country region — is no significant improvement expected during 1991-92," the IMF said.

The increase in the aggregate debt resulted from net new borrowings by developing countries of some \$60,000 million last year — the highest level since 1983 — and valuation adjustments reflecting depreciation of the US dollar in terms of other major currencies, partly offsetting some \$29,000 million in debt reduction operations and forgiveness by official bilateral creditors, the USIS report added.

The increase in net external borrowing largely reflected increased borrowing by creditworthy countries in Asia and the accumulation of arrears in Latin America.

Though the number of countries experiencing payment arrears declined from 59 in 1987 to 53 in 1990, new payments arrears were accumulated when creditors agreed to delays in debt servicing pending renegotiation of agreements to regularize payments, the IMF said.

The share of total debt that is owed to official creditors by countries experiencing debt-servicing difficulties is projected to 52 per cent in 1992.

Snippets

Global economy likely to grow

WASHINGTON, Apr 27: The global economy, still recovering from a series of shocks in 1990, is likely to grow at a slower pace in 1991, according to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) semi-annual World Economic Outlook reports, reports UNB.

But the elements for faster growth are in place and the primary emphasis of nations should be on containing inflation, J. Frenkel, Director of the IMF's research department, told reporters April 24, according to USIS report.

The IMF staff expects world economic growth to slow from 2 per cent in 1989 to 1.25 per cent this year, the IMF report said. The global economy grew at a 3.25 per cent pace in 1988. The 1991 forecast is 1.5 percentage points less than the IMF prediction last October.

Talks on European free trade

BRUSSELS, Apr 27: Western Europe's two trading blocs, still diametrically opposed on key issues in their attempt to form a massive single market, need a political rescue operation to save their talks from deadlock, reports Reuter.

"We are faced now with the fact that political decisions have to be taken.... There are very heavy hurdles (to be cleared) and we have to do it before the end of June," the European Community's chief negotiator Horst Krenzler said this week.

EC studying aid plan for textile

BRUSSELS, Apr 27: The European Community's (EC) Executive Commission is drawing up plans for a possible aid programme to modernise the EC textile industry to help it meet strong international competition, EC sources said on Friday, reports Reuter.

They said Commission officials and outside consultants were working on a possible 400 million European Currency Unit (470 million Dollar) programme spread over four years, mainly to help Portugal, Spain and Greece.

US economy shrank at 2.8 pc rate

WASHINGTON, Apr 27: The US economy shrank at a 2.8 per cent annual rate in the first three months of 1991 as recessionary weakness penetrated nearly every sector of business activity, the government said Friday, reports Reuter.

The first-quarter contraction of Gross National Product (GNP) — the country's total output of goods and services — was at a slightly greater rate than expected and followed a 1.6 per cent rate of decline the final quarter of 1990. It was the first time in nine years that GNP declined over two consecutive quarters.

China to buy 2 USSR planes

BEIJING, Apr 27: China will buy two TU 154 airliners from the Soviet Union next month, the official China Daily said today, reports Reuter.

The military-run China United Airlines signed an agreement on Thursday for a bank loan of 160 million Yuan (30.4 million Dollars) to finance the purchase, it said. It did not say how much of the cost this would cover.

The 180-passenger Turbo jets will be used to expand domestic passenger service and will join four other Tupolevs already in its fleet.

27m face famine in Africa

LONDON, Apr 27: Twenty-seven million people in Africa — half of them children — now face starvation, the British-based charity Save the Children said on Friday, reports Reuter.

It said it feared the African famine might be neglected because world attention was focused on the plight of Kurdish refugees.

Save the Children said people were at risk in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Mozambique, Malawi, Angola and Liberia.

GATT praises Indonesia for market opening

GENEVA, Apr 27: GATT has praised Indonesia for its trade reforms and market opening measures since 1985, but with some reservations on agriculture, a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) spokesman said here Friday, reports AFP.

Various members of the GATT council who spoke as a special report on Indonesia was presented here Thursday and Friday praised the packages of deregulation measures Jakarta has introduced in recent years.

Strong surge in share trading

Star Economic Report

The week began Saturday at Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) with a strong surge in trading. Trading in volume terms went up by about 200 per cent. In all, 10,794 shares and debentures changed hands compared with Thursday's 3,730.

But, decliners dominated trading, leading to a fall in DSE All Share Price Index to 355.3443 points from Thursday's 356.6542.

Trading valued Taka 7,75,082.25 against Taka 2,41,065.00 on the closing day last week.

Forty-two stocks were traded. Of them twentyone lost, eleven gained and ten remained unchanged at their previous quoted prices.

Among the decliners Al Baraka Bank got the major slash. It lost Taka 45.00 to Taka 95.00.

National Tubes and Ist ICB Mutual Fund declined Taka 7.00 and Taka 5.00 to Taka 130.00 and Taka 430.00.

Karim Pipe and Monno Ceramic lost Taka 4.00 and Taka 3.40 to Taka 124.00 and Taka 144.60.

Pharma Aids, 2nd ICB Mutual Fund, Sonali Paper and the debenture of Beximco Pharma declined Taka 3.00 each to Taka 195.00, Taka 195.00, Taka 55.00 and Taka 172.00.

Jute Spinners and Progressive Plastic lost Taka 2.00 each to Taka 98.00 and Taka 48.00.

Bata Shoe, Bangladesh Thai Aluminium and Eastern Cables declined Taka 1.76, Taka 1.50 and Taka 1.26 to Taka 39.94, Taka 102.50 and Taka 103.00. Oxygen, Ambee Pharma, Kohinor Chemical, Ashraf Textile, Tallu Spinning, Apex Tannery and Usmania Glass lost within the range between Taka 0.20 and Taka 1.00.

Aziz Pipes and United Insurance advanced Taka 3.12 and Taka 2.40 to Taka 235.00 and Taka 119.40 respectively.

Renwick Jaineswar, 3rd ICB Mutual Fund, 4th ICB Mutual Fund, 5th ICB Mutual Fund, Beximco Pharma, Petro Synthetic, Saiham Textile, Beximco and G.Q. Ball Pen moved up within the range between Taka 0.03 and Taka 1.10.

Quoted Prices of Traded Stocks

Table with columns for Stock Name, Price, Change, and Volume. Includes entries for Al Baraka Bank, City Bank, IFIC, UCB, etc.

The Banking Company Bill, 1991 has come under strong criticism from private banking and business circles.

The criticism of the Bill which seeks to provide a new legal framework for operations of the commercial banks is centred on, at least, half a dozen provisions proposed under it.

The banking circles resented the restrictions on payment of dividends to the shareholders. The Bill proposed that the paid-up capital, together with the reserve funds, must not be lower than six per cent of total deposits, both demand and time, of a commercial bank in any given year before payment of dividend to the shareholders.

Such a provision will make it

difficult for the commercial banks, particularly those in the private sector, to announce any dividend for the shareholders. This will adversely affect the objective of broadbasing the share ownership because the ordinary investors will hardly get any return on their capital invested in the equity of the banks, a key functionary of a private commercial bank said on condition of anonymity.

The banking circles pointed that the normal deposit growth of a private sector bank was within the range of Taka 100 crore and Taka 300 crore a year. Under the proposals in the new bill, such banks will have to keep an additional amount, varying between Taka six crore to Taka 18 crore, against this normal deposit

growth before announcing any dividend for their shareholders, they noted. Such a provisioning is difficult in the prevailing economic condition in the country, they said.

Some bankers suggested that the provisions for additional reserves against normal annual deposit growth should not exceed five per cent of the total deposits in the given circumstances.

The business circles, meanwhile, objected to the provisions under the Bill, fixing the tenure for the members of the Board of Directors for any bank, to six years. This provision is contrary to the terms and conditions laid down for public limited companies under the Company Act of 1913, they

observed. President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mahbubur Rahman said that the provision about the tenure of the Directors was also in conflict with the fundamental rights, guaranteed by the Constitution. If any Director takes any undue advantages by abuse of authority, Bangladesh Bank under normal rules can at ease take disciplinary actions, he added while stating that the provision fixing the tenure of Directors for the banks as "an uncalled-for move."

Another source in trade and industry circles felt that the provision about the tenure of the Directors would act as disincentive to new private investments. The banks will

also be deprived of "experienced services, advice and counselling of Directors" in many cases, the source said.

The sponsors of some private sector banks also criticised the Bill for its provision relating to the submission of report by the Managing Director of any bank about the decision of its Board of Directors when he would consider any such decision not in the interests of the bank. This is a redundant move and will only create distrust and misunderstanding between the Board of Directors of any bank and its chief executive, the same source observed.

He pointed out, each commercial bank submits normally detailed reports about the decisions of their

Board of Directors from time to time to Bangladesh Bank. The central bank can at ease take actions on the basis of such reports, he added.

The key management personnel in banking circles resented the provisions under the new Bill, limiting the sanction of any credits or funds for any individual firm or concern up to 15 per cent of the total capital of any bank.

The capital base of any small bank in the private sector is within the range of Taka three crore to Taka 30 crore. The new provision under the Bill will make it difficult for the banks to cater to the needs of their "good and big clients", they felt. Such a restrictive provision, they said, will deprive the banks of good business opportunities.

Price Barometer Essentials

Table listing various commodities like Rice, Vegetables, Fish, etc. with their prices and changes.

World Bank to promote private sector

WASHINGTON, Apr 27: World Bank President Barber Conable promised on Friday the Bank would do more to promote development of private businesses. But it was uncertain whether the move was enough to head off criticism by the United States that the lending institution was not doing enough to foster market economies, reports Reuter.

US officials have said they would like to see the Bank earmark 50 per cent of all its lending to help governments promote private sector development by the year 1995.

The United States has said that unless the Bank and its affiliates did more for the private sector, it might not support more money for the International Finance Corp, its affiliate which promotes private development. The IFC has sought an increase of 1.3 billion dollars from its 140 member countries.

Attitudes on interest rates hardened on Friday among the leading industrial nations before Sunday's meeting of Finance Ministers, with the United States pressing its case for lower rates and Germany resisting any cuts. US President George Bush will have an opportunity to argue for lower rates when the Ministers attend a White House reception before their scheduled meeting.

The Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the

Group of Seven, comprising the United States, Canada, Japan, France, Britain, Germany and Italy, will meet on Sunday.

Bush has called for lower interest rates worldwide to stimulate world economies and create more money to invest in

Eastern Europe. He also wants cheaper credit at home to help bring a quick end to the US recession.

But German Bundes Bank President Karl Otto Poehl made it clear on Friday that Germany, worried about inflation taking off after unification,

would resist. He told a private conference held in conjunction with the International Monetary Fund/World Bank meeting this week that cheap money was not answer to the global capital shortage.

The global demand for investment money is staggering, Lawrence Summers, Chief Economist at the World Bank, estimated that new demands for capital will exceed one trillion dollars in the 1990s, or more than 100 billion dollars a year.

The industrial world will have to "accept for a long period of time relatively high real rates of interest" as a logical consequence of the capital shortage, Poehl said.

"We cannot solve this problem by simply printing more money," Poehl said. The IMF has sided with Germany, saying in its semi-annual World Economic Outlook that pushing interest rates too low would undermine efforts to control inflation.

The US Central Bank, the Federal Reserve, also has resisted administration calls for lower interest rates.

FED officials believe the US recession is near the bottom and have expressed concern that pushing rates too far will set the stage for an inflationary spiral once recovery begins.

Jute goods export to US decline

Export of jute products to the United States declined sharply over the past few years, officials said in Dhaka on Saturday, reports UNB.

Executive Director of the International Jute Council (IJC), the highest body of the Organisation, Shamsul Haque Kai, at a press conference was highlighting the outcome of its 15th session which concluded in Dhaka Friday.

The IJC official said worldwide export of the golden fibre for the current year is also estimated to be lower than that of the previous year despite substantial increase in production.

Many agricultural, industrial and market promotion projects of jute remained unfulfilled due to fund constraints, Chisty said expecting better results with the availability of common funds for commodities for development of jute and jute goods.

Two jute industrial and two marketing projects costing nearly 1.97 million US dollars have been approved at the four-day session of the Council. The Council in the session, first under the new International Agreement on Jute and Jute Products 1989, elected L.V. Satharishi of India as its Chairman and Inger Marie Myhre as the Vice Chairman for the year 1991-92.

Next sessions of the IJC and Committee on Projects will be held in the Indian Capital New Delhi in the last week of October this year.

Gold & Silver

Table showing prices for Gold and Silver in April 1991.

Hides & Skin

Table showing prices for various types of Hides and Skin in April 1991.



Pragati General Insurance Co Ltd settled a marine hull claim of Continental Liner Agencies for Tk 47,66,914.00 for damage to their vessel MV Continent-I. AKM Rafiqul Islam, Managing Director handed over the claim cheque to Shah Alam, Managing Director of Continental Liners. MA Awwal, Chairman, was present on the occasion.

Exchange Rates

Table showing exchange rates for various currencies in April 1991.

Dhaka Stock Exchange Market Profile

Summary table for Dhaka Stock Exchange Market Profile for April 27, including listed stocks, gains, losers, and unchanged.