3 Dhaka firms working in Iraq seek fund

Star Economic Report

Addressing a press confer-

ence in a local hotel, Mr.

Nasiruddin Choudhury, Mana-

ging Director, Technocons

Limited, told newsmen that

the three companies were

engaged in construction work

in Iraq and approximately

12,000 workers and em-

ployees were recruited from

Bangladesh for the purpose.

The Technocons Limited and

Bangladesh Consortium Ltd

(BCL) were awarded the work

contracts in Iraq from 1979

under the auspices of the

Ministry of Works. The other

company, Bengal Development

Corporation (BDC) has been

three companies carned Tk.

100 crore in foreign exchange

did not get any assistance from

the government in procuring

foreign currency, rather they

had procured at their own ini-

He said Iraq paid the Dinar

portion of the contract within

two months but delayed the

payment of dollar portion. The

protracted war with Iran re-

sulted in delayed payment of

the foreign currency compo-

nent. The workers were get-

ting their regular payment in

Dinar but payments of the for-

cign currency (FC) portion

were being sent to Bangladesh

nies faced a serious problems

after Iraqi operations in

Kuwait. Nearly 3500 workers,

engaged in different projects

by the companies faced uncer-

tainty following scarcity of

essential commodities and

escalation of tension. The

workers returned home almost

empty handed in October last

The returnee workers put

pressure on the companies to

pay their arrear salaries which

amounted to Taka 25 crore. An

amount of Taka 36 crore is ly-

ing outstanding with the Iraqi

government. Given the situa-

tion, the recruiting agents are

in a tight corner and unable to

pay arrear salaries to the

Price Barometer.

Essentials

February 5

(Taka per Kg)

17.00-18.00

14.00-15.00

13.00-14.00

11.50-12.50

year, he said.

Aman Very fine)

Aman(fine)

Choudhury said the compa-

in FC accounts, he added.

from 1981.

for Bangladesh.

carrying out contractors job

Through their services,

Choudhury said these firms

Three Bangladeshi construction firms working in Iraq on Tuesday urged the Government to provide them with financial assistance from the crisis management fund. Following Gulf war, their outstanding bill with Iraqi gov-

Moderate rise in share trading

Star Economic Report

Dhaka Stock Exchange witnessed on Tuesday a moderate rise in trading but most of the traded stocks lost in prices selling pressures were strong.

Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) All Share Price Index declined by 1.2460 points to 335.1573 compared with Monday's 336:4033 points. With that, the uptrend in Index witnessed in previous two days' was reversed. The Index is the indicator of price movements of all the listed stocks with the exchange.

Twentytwo listed stocks were traded. Of them tirteen declined, five gained and four remained unchanged their previous quoted prices.

In all 3361 shares changed hands, against 2656 the previous day. Transactions valued Taka 252160.00 compared with Taka 104500.00 the day before.

On the losers side UCBL Bank and National Bank got the major slash. They lost Taka 8.00 and Taka 6.82 to Taka 130.00 and Taka 103.81 respectively at closing.

N.T.C in Food and Allied sector and Rupali Bank declined by Taka 5.00 each to Taka 250.00 and Taka 80.00.

Aftab Automobile and Third ICB Mutual Fund lost Taka 4.00 and Taka 3.00 to Taka 195.00

and Taka 143.00 respectively. Beximeo Pharma and Fourth ICB Mutual Fund declined by Taka 2.80 and Taka 2.22 to

Taka 150.00 and Taka 133.50. Dhaka Vegetable, G.Q. Ball Pen, Bangladesh Thai Aluminium. United Insurance and Sixth ICB Mutual Fund lost between the range of Taka 0.40 and Taka 1.00.

Among the gainers Islami Bank advanced by Taka 8.75 to Taka 1020.00.

National Tubex and Bangal Food gained Taka 5.00 and Taka 3.21 to Taka 115.00 and Taka 175.00.

Howlader PVC and Eastern Cables advanced Taka 2.00 and Taka 0.95 to Taka 105.00 and Taka 80.95.

Quoted Prices of Tunded Ctooks

| | 75.74 | | | UISHI | 11.30-12.30 |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Tra | ded ! | Stocks | | VEGETABLES | (Taka per kg) |
| | | | 1.0 | Potato(White) | 4.50-5.00 |
| F | ebrua | iry 5 | - 1 | Brinjal 7.00-10 | |
| 19 | *FV/ML | Closing Cl | nanges** | Lady's finger | 16.00-18.00 |
| | a700.0000000 | (Taka) | (Take) | Cauliflower piece | 6.00-10.00 |
| Banks | | POTTINE PIL | AND | Karolla | 15.00-16.00 |
| slami Bank | 1000/1 | 1020.00 | (+8.75) | Lalshak | 6.00-8.00 |
| National Bank | 100/5 | 103.18 | (-6.82) | Green Banana (Four Pi | eces) 5.00-8.00 |
| Rupalt Bank | 100/10 | 80:00 | (-5.00) | OTHER FOODGRAIN | (Taka per Kg) |
| LCBL | 100/5 | 130.00 | (,-8.00) | Floor | 12.00-1400 |
| nvestment | OFFICE | | | Atta | 11.00-12.00 |
| 3rd ICB M. | 100/5 | 143.00 | (-3.00) | Wheat | 9.50-10.00 |
| Pund | | | 1 | FISH | (Taka per kg) |
| 4th ICB M. | 100/10 | 133.50 | (-2.22) | Ruhi(big) | 130.00-140.00 |
| Fund | | * | 45434724070 | Katla(big) | 85.00-95.00 |
| | | | | Hilsha | 70.00-75.00 |
| 6th ICB M. | 100/10 | 87.60 | (-0.40) | Shrimp(big) | 80.00-100.00 |
| Pund | 1007.11 | 00000000 | (4.77)(2222) | Singi | 60.00-65.00 |
| inaurance | | | 1 | Koi | 70.00-75.00 |
| United | 100/10 | 107.00 | (-0.50) | PULSES | (Taka per Kg) |
| O)III.UO | 100/10 | | 10000000 | Mashur | 36.00-40.00 |
| | | | ** | Moogh | 34.00-36.00 |
| Engineering | 0 | | | Chhola | 26.00-28.00 |
| Aftab Auto- | | | | Mator | 27.00-28.00 |
| mobiles | 100/5 | 195.00 | (-4.00) | Khesari | 18.00-20.00 |
| Atlas Bangladeh | | 37.00 | unchanged | MEAT | (Taka per Kg) |
| B. That Alumi | 0.000.000 | 2500000 | MANUFACTURE L | Beef | 50.00-55.00 |
| -rdum | 100/10 | 76.38 | (-0.62) | Mutton | 75.00-80.00 |
| Eastern Cables | 100/5 | 80.95 | (+0.95) | OIL | Taka per Litre) |
| Howlader Pvc | 100/10 | 105.00 | (+2 00) | Mustard | 48.00-54.00 |
| National Tubes | | 115.00 | (+5.00) | Soyabean | 33.00-33.50 |
| Quasem Dry- or | 17.0 | 7.50 | unchanged | Coconut(Colombo) | 60.00-64.00 |
| Samuel, c | | | | Vegetable Ghee | 44.00-52.00 |
| Food & Allted | | | | SPICES | (Taka Per kg) |
| Bengal Food | 100/5 | 175.00 | (+3.21) | Onion((new) | 23.00-26.00 |
| Dhaka Vege- | | 1000000 | | Garlic | 56.00-60.00 |
| table | 100/5 | 154.00 | (-1.00) | Chillies | 65.00-70.00 |
| N.T.C. | 100/5 | 250.00 | (-5.00) | Turmeric(Round) | 42.00-46.00 |
| Pharma & Che | 200 | 200 | 8 | " (Long) | 48.00-50.00 |
| Beximeo Phar- | Chi | | | Green chillies | 18.00-20.00 |
| tre . | 100/5 | 150.00 | (-2.80) | Ginger | 16.00-20.00 |
| Kohinoor | | | | Cinnamon* (10gms) | 3.00-3.50 |
| Chemical | 100/5 | 70.00 | unchanged | Cardamom* (large) | 8.00-8.50 |
| The Ibnatna | 100/10 | | unchanged | Jhira (50gms) | 7.00-7.50 |
| | | | 8 | MISCELLANEOU | S (Taka) |
| Miscellaneous | 3 | | | Ghee | 220.00-230.00 |
| G. Q. Ball Pen | 10/50 | 52.00 | (-0.98) | Sugar | 31.00-32.00 |
| | | | A | Molasses | 16.00-18.00- |
| DED DETERMINENT TO THE RESERVE | | | CONTRACTOR D | | |

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

5 Gains

workers, Choudhury said. ernment amounted to Tk. 36

Government was requested on several occasions to pay heed to their problems and arrange an interim fund.

Choudhury said the government provided financial assistance to jute and fish exporting companies but the construction agencies failed to get assistance although the problem is of greater magni-Over the few months, they

have approached Crisis Management Committee (Task Force), Labour and Manpower Ministry, Works Ministry, Finance Ministry and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he said.

Citing examples of other countries, Choudhury said, most of the contractors working in Iraq got financial help from their respective countries after the Gulf crisis. He said even the Exim Bank of India gave 90 per cent of pending bills in cash to Indian Construction Companies work

Choudhury suggested that soft-term loans should be arranged from the commercial banks through Bangladesh Bank against the pending bills.

Replying to a question, Choudhury said if government help was not forthcoming, hundreds of families will fall into great distress. He urged the government to take immediate steps to solve the cri-

The press conference was also addressed, among others, by Mr. S.R. Khan of Bangladesh Consortium Limited, Mr. Monzur Hossain of the Engineers Limited, Mr. M.U. Ahmed, Director, Bengal Development Corporation.

Company News Star Economic Report

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of this shareholders

of Oxygen Limited will be held today (Wednesday) at 10 a.m. at a city hotel. The company declared its book closure from January 8 to February 6, for transfer of shares.

The company announced a 20 per cent final dividend for 1990 and 27.5 per cent for 1989. It has not announced any dividend for 1991.

Islami Bank AGM

The AGM of Islami Bank will be held on Wednesday at 10 a.m at the Sishu Academy. The bank announced its

book closure for share transfer from January 25 to February 7. It declared 10 per cent interim dividend for 1989.

Exchange Rates

February 5 SELLING AND BUYING RATES, offered by Commercials Banks, for Bank Cheques, (BCs) and Overseas Drafts (ODs) One Unit of Foreign Currencies

| One Unit of F | ACT TO SELECT THE SECURITY OF SECURITY | rencies |
|-----------------------|--|----------|
| (FCs) for Taka | | 782: 137 |
| FCs . | Selling | Buying |
| US Dollar | 35.9226 | 35.4432 |
| UK Pound Sterlin | g70.8845 | 70.0628 |
| Gennan Deutsche | 24.4754 | 24.1326 |
| Mark | | |
| French Franc | 7.1924 | 7.0922 |
| Saudi Riyal | 9.6101 | 9.4819 |
| Dutch Guilders | 21.7318 | 21.4223 |
| Pakistan Rupee | 1.6160 | 1.6006 |
| (AMU*) | | |
| Singapore Dollar | 20.8247 | 20.5313 |
| UAE Dirbam | 9.8141 | 9.6831 |
| Kuwait Dinar | Not availab | ole |
| Indian Rupee (A) | MU)1.9305 | 1.9119 |
| S. Kroner | 6.5054 | 6.4098 |
| *AMU-Asian Mo | netary Union | 1 |
| | | |

SECONDARY EXCHANGE MARKET Wage Famers Fund/ Export

| wage namers | | a |
|---------------|----------------------------|---------|
| Periormance B | enefit (XPB) Fur Buying | Selling |
| US Dollar | 36.48 | 36.53 |
| UK Pound | 70.90 | 70.95 |
| 221 (222) | | |

* The rates of Pound Sterling are decided every day, based on the cross-rates of New York market

Source: Sonali Bank

(Gold & Silver)

February 5

(Taka for 11.66 grams) 7200.00 7000.00

200.00 Source: Department of Agricultural Marketing

(FIDES & SKIN

(Wet/Salted)

February 5

Taka per 100 pieces)

| 1. CA | na per ro | o pre- | |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------|-----------------------|
| Cow | ELV-1913 | | 0 FE 15 C C C S F 2 C |
| Calf | 12,000.00 | - | 15,000.00 |
| Light | 25,000.00 | - | 30,000,00 |
| Medium | 35,000.00 | - | 40,000.00 |
| Heavy | 50,000.00 | - | 55,000,00 |
| Very heavy | 65,000.00 | - | 70,000.00 |
| Rejected Goat | 25,000.00 | - | 30,000.00 |
| Big & heavy Light & | 12,000.00 | - | 12,500.00 |
| Medium | 7,000.00 | 1500 | 7,500.00 |
| Rejected | 3,000,00 | | 3,500.00 |
| Sheep | 9,000.00 | 500 | 10,000.00 |
| BUFFALO | 55,000.00 | 1.555 | 60,000.00 |
| Source: Dep | surtment of A | gricultu | ral Marketing |



Pabda fish at the New Market kutcha bazar. Short supply makes this delicious variety a costly proposition. Star photo

Sharp fall in Saudi oil revenues

War costs hit economy

DHAHRAN, Feb 5: Mushrooming war costs and falling oil revenues will badly hit Saudi Arabia's 1991 budget. which has already been delayed because of difficulties in predicting cash flow, economists in the Kingdom said on Monday, reports

Nobody knows how much the world's biggest oil exporter will end up spending on the war with Iraq. Riyadh postponed announcing its 1991 budget last December mainly for that reason.

But economists estimate Saudi Arabia spent or pledged more than 30 billion Dollars to cover Gulf crisis costs even before the war broke out on January 17. This easily dwarfed extra

income generated by higher oil prices and production during the last five months of 1990. "It's a very grim scene," one

economist said. "They accumulated some revenues from added crude production but it didn't measure against addi- economies have been hurt

WASHINGTON, Feb 5: Pres-

ident George Bush's new bud-

get all but ignores the Gulf war

and portrays the recession in

the rosiest light, two factors

that could make the spending

plan utterly irrelevant as

Congress begins drafting its

often hurls the epithet "dead

on arrival" at a budget submit-

ted by a Republican President.

Democrats were unhappy be-

cause the President chose to

emphasize his huge defense

A Democratic Congress

During the Reagan years.

own budget, reports AP.

tional commitments."

"Costs now are much greater than projected. To find that money now while oil prices are dropping will be difficult. Its going to hit them really bad," he said.

Emergency spending devoured 15 to 20 per cent of the Kingdom's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1990 and more than doubled its projected budget deficit of 6.7 billion Dollars, the economists

Saudi Arabia is covering fuel, food and housing costs for nearly three quarters of a million foreign soldiers on its soil

This commitment added to its own defence costs and new arms deals with the United States totalled 18.2 billion Dollars in 1990, one economist said. Part of the arms deal. worth around seven billion Dollars, was delayed at Washington's request.

Riyadh also gave six billion Dollars to countries like Egypt Turkey and Syria whose

Recession can make

US budget irrelevant

recession in the most benign

light possible, forecasting that

it would be mild and over in

OPEC chief calls for truce

Oil plays central role in war

Algiers, Feb 5 : OPEC President Sadek Boussena called on Monday for a ceasefire in the Gulf war, saying the sooner it was over the quicker the organisation could get back on its feet, reports Reuter.

"There are risks to OPEC (from the Gulf war) , but at the same time I have not heard anyone say the Organisation should not exist afterwards." Boussena. Algeria's Mines and Industry Minister, told Algerian Radio.

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries plunged into the worst crisis of its 30-year history after funding member Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait last August, leading to war against a US-led coalition including key OPEC member Saudi Arabia.

A July 1990 price and production pact has been suspended and members allowed to pump oil at will. OPEC ministers are next due to meet in Vienna on March 11.

Boussena said oil played a central role in the motivations of the alliance now fighting

Foreign.

India slump

"The United States has be-

million Rupees in 1990.

Rupees in 1990.

50 million Rupees.

from 1,200 million Rupees in

1989 to a mere 195 million

investments coming down

from 334 Rpt 334 million Ru-

emerged as the world's largest

creditor-nation rapidly ex-

panding its investments

abroad, India's share was only

In the 1982s the highest

investment by Japan was 250

million Rupees in 1982 fol-

lowed by 170 million Rupees

Dollar national debt at the rate

tion is projecting the imbal

ance between revenues and

spending will total 280.9 bil

back to the Reagan years."

The administration, criti-

cized by Congress for failing to

extract enough in commit-

ments from rich allies such as

Japan and Germany, has been

stepping up its fund-raising ef-

Treasury Secretary Nicholas

forts since the war broke out.

For 1992, the administra

of nearly 1 billion a day.

pees to 90 million Rupees.

So was the case with British

production. Maybe they consider they need to be reassured about access to these resources that are strategic and vital for decades to come," he Boussena declined to pre-

tween 10 and 12 years of oil

diet the future of world oil prices, saying supply and demand had become trrelevant and psychological factors related top the war had taken

We are still in a situation of uncertainty. It is enough for the (oil) installations of one country in the region to be hit or destroyed for a new increase in prices ... I do not exclude other factors leading to a reduction in prices."

World oil prices have plunged to around 20 dollars a barrel, below OPEC's benchmark of 21 dollars a barrel. from pre-war highs of up to 40 dollars a barrel.

Boussena has previously accused the International Energy Agency, the Paris-based energy watchdog, of helping to engineer the fall by releasing

Pak textile exports likely to investments in fall by 35 pc

NEW DELHI, Feb 4 : Foreign ISLAMABAD, Feb 5 : Pakinvestment approvals by the istan's textile sector is likely to Indian government declined suffer a loss of about 35 per sharply to 1.283 million Rucent till March this year due to pees (73.3 million U.S. Dollars) the ongoing Gulf war while its in 1990 from 3,166 million exports of fresh vegetables and Rupees (180.9 million U.S. fruits have almost come to Dollars) in 1989, local press halt, sources of Pakistan busireported today, reports Xin ness circles said here Tuesday reports Xinhua. The US investment ap

Leading exporters and busi provals came down sharply nessmen in the country said at from 970 million Rupees in a recent meeting that the state 1988, the highest, to 620 mil of economy in Pakistan is lion Rupees in 1989 and 345 alarming due to the Gulf war They called upon the Prime Germany, the second Minister to introduce fruitful largest investor in India in remeasures on war footing. cent years, also recorded a fall

Otherwise, Pakistan will face irreparable loss in terms of foreign exchange earnings through low exports and low industrial activities, the sources said, noting that Pakistan's exports to the Middle East and Gulf countries consti-Although Japan has tuted about 10 per cent of the

> country's aggregate exports. There is an urgent need for diversification of products and markets due to the Gulf war. Delegations should be sent abroad to brief European and Far Eastern importers that Pakistan is not directly in the war zone, production and industrial activities are normal

EC discusses farm subsidy policies

Brussels, Feb 5: Proposals from the European Community (EC)'s Executive Commission to reform the EC's controver sial farm subsidy policies met with a cool reception at a meeting of EC Agriculture Ministers here Monday, reports AFP.

Diplomats said that France, Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark were hostile, that countries such as Germany were sceptical and that only Portugal and Greece, with their many poor small farmers were favourable.

The commission's plan involves mainly cutting expensive price supports by phasing down volume-related subsidies, but at the same time at trying to keep small farmers on the land by giving them di-The proposal involves sub-

stantial indirect cuts in export subsidies paid to farmers. The EC's refusal to commit itself to specific subsidy cuts was largely responsible for the col lapse of important world trade talks here in December. Diplomats say that efforts to

revive the talks, held under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) depend on a goodwill gesture from the EC indicating its willingness to cut subsidies by adopting radical farm reforms

German Economic Minister Jurgen Moellemann said that such a signal was badly needed.

Workshop on oil potential today

A workshop on "oil potential of eastern part of Bengal basin" will be held in Dhaka today (Wednesday) at a hotel, reports BSS.

Energy Secretary Azimud din Ahmed will inaugurate the one-day workshop, jointly sponsored by the Bangladesh Petroleum Institute (BPI) and Norad, a PID handout said.

Geologists and geo-physicists working in BPI. Petro Bangla and the Geological Survey and university teachers will participate in the workshop.

Snippets

US to up spending on education

WASHINGTON, Feb 5: The Bush Administration is planning to increase spending on education by 2.6 billion dollars to a total of 27.5 billion dollars for fiscal year 1992, reports Xinhua

The budget proposal, submitted by President George Bush to the Congress this morning, emphasizes programmes that allow 'greater choice in improving academic

Limited effect on world economy

DAVOS(Switzerland), Feb 5: World government officials meeting here since Thursday believe that the Gulf war will have only a limited effect on the world conomy, a French spokesman has said, reports

Although the war has led many regular participants to stay away from this year's World Economic Forum, held at this Swiss Alpine resort, those who did show up appeared sanguine about international economie prospects, despite the threat to oil prices and the ongoing US recession.

32 smugglers held in China

HONG KONG, Feb 5 Shanghai police have smashed China's biggest gold smuggling syndicate since the communists took over in 1949, a Hong Kong newspaper said on Monday, reports Reuter. Police in Shanghai arrested

32 people and seized about 500,000 dollars in gold, the pro-Beijing Ta Kung Pao said.

It said the syndicate smuggled more than 1,000 kgs (2,200 lbs) of gold worth 25 million US dollars into China over the past two years.

Food prices rise in USSR

MOSCOW. Feb 5: A variety of foods which vanished from the Soviet capital in recent years has reappeared in state stores at increased prices, spurring consumers to empty their pockets and cart away loads of goods, reports Reuter.

While Soviet officials hinted last week that steep food price increases were imminent as part of the country's sweeing reform toward a market economy, the cost of many goods in Moscow has already risen.

No market for Prague products

PRAGUE, Fcb 5: Czechoslovakia has found no market for its products worth four m billion US dollars this year, local newspapers quoted Premier Marian Calfa as saying yesterday, reports Xinhua.

Czechoslovakia had originally intended to export most of its machinery products to some of Soviet Republics, but the plan was called off later due to the worsening situation in Lithuania and other Republics, Calfa said.

Indonesia's oil output rises

JAKARTA, Feb 5: Indonesia is projecting an increase in production, exports and imports of crude oil and related products, the head of the state oil company Pertamina said, reports AFP. Newspapers here quoted

Pertamina chief Faisal Abda'Oe as telling a parliamentary hearing Monday that crude production would increase from 1.36 million barrels per day (BPD) in fiscal 1990-91, ending March 31, to 1.54 million BPD in 1991-92.

Step to explore oil in India

NEW DELIII, Feb. 5: India is likely to invite bids from international petroleum companics shortly to explore oil in as many as 72 blocks in the country, local press quoted oil industry sources as reporting, reports Xinhua. Areas for exploration both

on land and offshore have already been identified and the state-owned oil companies are now preparing the detailed information dockets, which will be put for sale to the prospective bidders during the fourth round of bids.

Chinese spring festival

BEIJING, Feb 5 : The Chinese spring festival, a traditional holiday which falls on February 15 this year, will see a sufficient supply of commodities on the markets to celebrate China's Lunar New Year according to today's 'People's Daily', reports Xinhua.

Statistics from the Ministry of Commerce have shown that 15 provinces and municipalities' Commercial Departments have prepared about 21.2 billion yuan (about 4.2 billion US dollars) worth of foodstuffs

Dhaka Stock Exchange **Market Profile** February -5 133 Listed stocks

Marketing

Source: Department of Agricultural

115 Unchanged

* 115 unchanged stocks include four traded on the day at the previous day's quoted prices. DSE All Share Price Index = 335.1573

13 Losers

Issued Capital-Taka 4,602,377,190.00 Market Capitalisation=Taka 9,577,205,037.00 Turnover = Taka 252, 160.00(Value) 3361 (Volume).

buildup and opposition to tax increases at the expense of domestic programmes and a spiraling national debt.

But in unveiling his own spending priorities Monday, Bush has left himself open to the same charge of being irrelevant, not so much for his priorities, but for his decision to ignore certain cold realities.

the April-June quarter of this year. He also low-balled cost of the war against Iraq, projecting the impact on the US Treasury for this year of just 15 billion Dollars for a conflict some have estimated could total 86 billion. House Speaker Thomas Fo-

ley questioned the 15 billion-Dollar estimate saying it "places a great expectation"on significant contributions by the

the red ink could turn out to

lion Dollars, still well above the previous record of 221.1 bil lion in 1986. "It's pretty much what we expected," said Rep. Leon Panetta, a California Democrat." They basically repeat a list of the same things that go

allies and "a fairly short war." In fashioning the budget. the administration already was facing the largest federal deficits in history and therefore was loathe to admit that

be even worse. For the current fiscal year, the administration predicted a deficit of 318.1 billion Dollars. meaning that the government

Brady said that for the first three months of this year, the United States has pledges of 41.5 billion Dollars from Saudi

Arabia, kuwait, Japan and is adding to the 3.2 trillion-Bush decided to cast the Germany. Japan's ban on rice imports unchanged

TOKYO, Feb 5: Japan will stick with its position that it must ban all rice imports on national security grounds when multilateral trade talks resume and has no plans to change its argument supporting the restriction. Agriculture Ministry officials said on Monday, reports Reuter.

They denied a report by Japan's Kyodo news service that the government would stop citing the need for selfsufficiency in the staple and would call for a revision of a rule set by the world trade body GATT that would allow it to continue the rice ban le-

"We have never thrown away

our primary idea of security in

the staple food (as a defence of

Okuma, Director of the Ministry's International Economic Affairs Division, said in a telephone interview. Japan has told the GATT

the ban on imports)," Michiru

(General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) that rules are needed to ensure adequate domestic production of basic foodstuff.especially for food importing countries. Ministry officials said. Such rules would effectively

allow Tokyo to maintain its rice ban. The Kyodo report on

Saturday said Tokyo would call for a review of a GATT provision allowing import curbs in certain products under government control to prevent oversupply.

that this rule be strengthened, the officials said. restrict imports of 13 prod-

ucts other than rice, including dairy products and straches. after it ends quotas on its beef and orange imports in April this year and on orange juice imports a year later. Another report from

Switzerland adds: Trade talks to shape international com merce past the year 2000 were regaining momentum after becoming deadlocked over farm subsidies in December, the head of the world trade body GATT said on Monday.

Japan and the European Community have already urged Such rules allow Japan to