Malaysian tin output falls

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 9: Malaysia's tin output shrank three per cent in August, widening the decline in production to 32 per cent for the first eight months o 1992 over the same period last year, the statistics department said. Malaysia, the world's largest producer until last year, produced 1,116 tonnes of tin in August compared to 1,153 tonnes in July, the department said in releasing its monthly tin statistics. Output has been steadily decreasing since late 1990 as the number of active tin mines decreased due to weak prices battered by high global excess stocks and dwindling demand, reports

Canadian oil company

pulls out of Yangon BANGKOK, Nov 9: The Canadian state oil company Petro-Canada has said it is pulling out of Myanmar because exploration there proved disappointing. In a statement received in Bangkok yesterday, Petro-Canada said it had informed its partners and the Yangon government of its decision. "Our three-year exploration programme, including two wildcat wells, was disappointing," it quoted chairman Bill Hopper as saying from Calgary, reports Reuter.

IBM to sell Sony devices in US

TOKYO, Nov 9: International Business Machines Corp of the United States plans to sell handheld multimedia devices produced by Japan's Sony Corp in a move analysts said would strengthen each company in new fields. The US computer maker plans to sell the compact-disc read only memory (CD-ROM) players as package with its own software. The Sony-brand units display text and graphics and also play high-quality sound. Makoto Araki, Sony spokesman, said Sony Corp of American announced an agreement for IBM to sell new multimedia CD-ROM players on Sept 30, in Boston, Mass, during an exhibition of the devices. At the time, the news drew little attention, reports AP.

Japan's lawmakers delay progress

TOKYO, Nov 9: Lawmakers' squabbling over alleged links between Japan's governing party and gangsters delayed progress on economic rescue measures Monday, and stock prices sank because of increasing fears of recession. Parliament's lower house was supposed to begin work Monday on a supplementary budget to finance a special package of measures announced in August to stimulate the sluggish economy.

But budget committee seats remained empty. Lawmakers of the opposition and the governing Liberal Democratic Party said they had failed to break an impasse over opposition demands that former Liberal Democratic power broker Shin Kanemaru and former Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita present sworn testimony in parliament over alleged ties with a mob-linked trucking firm, reports AP.

Riyadh won't raise oil output

DUBAI, Nov 9: Saudi Arabia denied Sunday it was raising its November oil output to 8.8 million barrels per day. An official source in the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources described a report in the oil market to this effect as "completely baseless." The source rejected suggestions that Saudi Arabia would keep export levels steady but increase production to meet the needs of refineries which were being returned to production after shutdown, reports Reuter.

China spending 20b yuan on environment

HONG KONG, Nov 9: Gu Geping, Director of China's State Environmental Protection Bureau, said the country is spending an estimated 20 billion yuan on environment protection a year, the Beijing-funded China News Service reported. Gu, who is on a Beijing-Hong Kong academic change speaking tour here, said China is spending 15 billion yuan a year on cleaning up pollution, while the total amount would reach 20 billion yuan if pollution prevention works are included, reports Reuter.

BRIEFS Yangon offers new incentive for off-shore drilling

YANGON, Myanmar has signed a multi-million dollar contract with the French company Total to develop a huge gas well in the Gulf of Martaban - the country's biggest ever single foreign investment. The deal follows the withdrawal of Broken Hill Proprietary(BHP) of

Australia. Like most foreign companies it had only dry wells to show after three years' drilling. Many who lost the bid to Total are naturally disappointed. With their three-year exploration contracts ending in December, many are deciding whether to stay or quit. Twelve foreign companies from Japan, South Korea, the United States, Britain, the Netherlands, Canada and France are left trying their luck.

Myanmar considered South East Asia's last area of uncharted oil. Some companies like Amoco want to re-negotiate the 80-20 crude production share, of which the government gets the majority. In the face of limited success in exploring for oil they now find these terms unattractive.

Premier, a British company, wants to farm out 50 per cent of its off-shore block to Texaco of the US. Petro-Canada(Canada) is the only one with firm plans to drill in the next dry

The Ministry of Energy has introduced a new incentive. It will allow the foreign companies a six months option before deciding to drill. Two US companies, Apache and Trend, were beneficiaries of this new rule when they signed contracts in June to re-activate suspended on-shore oilfields.

Deputy Energy Minister Tin Tun said: "This will allow technical studies to see if they want to continue to pursue (with drilling)." He refused to divulge the sum involved in the contract, pleading Total's request for confidenBy Abby Tan

French pull off biggest foreign deal in Burma

The minister said the project, consisting of well infrastructure, upstream and downstream development, could be below 500 million dollar. But construction of a pipeline to shore could be three times more than the 90 million ...

Petroleum Authority of Thailand to sell part of its gas. Production is estimated at 400 million cubic feet per day.

Shell, the Anglo-Dutch concern, found gas in three wells in Apayauk, 50 km north of Yangon in January. Industry sources said the

Foreign businesses in Myanmar were nationalised in 1962. But the government is now wooing multinational oil and gas companies to explore the country's resources. It has signed a multi-million dollar deal with the French company Total to develop a huge gas well in the Gulf of Martaban. Myanmar is seen as having South East Asia's last uncharted oil fields, but exploration, reports Gemini News Service, is showing erratic results.

dollar industry sources had estimated.

The managing director of the state Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), Pe Kyi said: "The final cost of the pipeline will depend on results of the delineation wells that will confirm the reservoir reserves and the route it will take.

There routes for the pipeline are being studied. One commonly mentioned is through the Three Pagodas Pass in southern Myanmar near the Thai border

He said Total will need two to three more tears of assessment and development before the gas well starts producing. The MOGE which discovered the gas estimated the recoverable reserves in the Total block at six to seven trillion cubic feet of gas, but industry sources put it at 3.5 trillion cubic feet or half of MOGE's estimates.

About 25 per cent of the gas will be for Myanmar's domestic consumption and 75 per cent will be sold. The Yangon government has reached tentative agreement with the

government was so anxious to get at the gas because of a severe shortage of fuel that it was drawn up much faster than technically advisable, causing water seepage by April. Tin Tun described it as a "normal case but admitted daily production declined recently from 14 million cubic feet to 12 million cubic feet.

The foreign companies have found gas but not oil in Myanmar. In June the government opened new onshore and off-shore blocks to foreign bidders. In the offshore area, 25 blocks were opened, of which seven are in the Bay of Bengal off the Arakan coast. Of the 21 blocks in the Gulf of Martaban, Total and Premier have got two blocks each.

In the on-shore area, nine blocks in the central plans of Myanmar were previously awarded in 1989. Two new blocks in Arakan state have been opened. One Australian company is negotiating for a contract, Tin Tun said

He said existing wells managed by the MOGE where production had fallen due to lack of capital and technology are opened for bid-

ding. One such well is in Prome, south of Yangon. Production declined from 10,000 barrels per day(BPD) to 300 BPD. "We need the capital," he said. "We believe there are many reservoirs underneath."

Myanmar's oil exploration has now gone fullscale after years of fits and starts. Foreign businesses were nationalised in 1962. The government allowed four foreign oil companies between 1974-76, including Total, but they | Shin Kanemaru offered 25 milwere not successful

Another attempt in 1985 was abandoned when oil prices tumbled. Officials say they know their country has large reserves of oil. Tin Tun pointed out that 500 million barrels had been extracted over 100 years and

Myanmar had been an oil exporter. Now they are also complaining of high dock handling charges and difficult logistics in insurgency areas. Add the nightmare of poor communication facilities, say the companies, and they are paying more than anticipated in having to build roads and bridges in remote parts. Oil companies have spent more than 400 million dollar boosting Myanmar scarce foreign

exchange reserves. Tin Tun insists that Myanmar offers better incentives than neighbouring Malaysia, or Indonesia. Dutyfree imports of equipment and foreign personnel are not restricted. "We've been very, very fair compared to Indonesia or Malaysia," he said.

He suspected that the foreign companies are complaining because the recession in industrial countries is forcing them to re-assess their prospects in Myanmar. He said: "The recession has all sorts of repercussions, so there are all sorts of excuses.

Abby Tan is a Singaporean journalist based which has continuously govin Manila. She recently visited Burma.

Japan's ruling party suffers another blow by new revelation over corruption

TOKYO, Nov 9: Japan's polittical scandal took a critical turn yesterday as prosecutors said disgraced "kingmaker" lion dollar to extreme rightists in 1987 to help Noboru Takeshita become Premier. reports AFP.

In another blow to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the prosecutors said other members of the LDP old guard joined in asking the Japan Kominto group to stopharassing Takeshita and offered 16 million dollar sepa-

The rightist group was allegedly harassing Takeshita in front of his office by berating him through loudspeakers, an action seen as a stumbling block to his bid for the LDP presidency which would automatically bring him the post of Prime Minister.

The revelation proved rumors of corruption and undemocratic factors in the process of selecting prime ministers in the conservative party erned Japan since 1955.

Iran calls for tighter oil output control

LONDON, Nov 9: Iran, expressing concern over the weak level of world oil prices. called on Sunday for tighter output control and said it would agree to emergency OPEC talks if all members wanted them, reports Reuter.

A statement from the Iran's Oil Ministry, sent to Reuters in London, said Tehran hoped the next OPEC conference, scheduled for Vienna on November 25, "would take an appropriate decision to realise the 21 US dollar per barrel price in the first quarter of

"Iran will agree to an earlier meeting if all members request it," the statement said.

Iran also criticised as "vague" the agreement reached at the September OPEC meeting saying it did not define the duties of member states towards the market.

Iran dissented from the final agreement in September on the grounds that it did not impose strict enough controls on output.

December futures for North Sea Brent blend were at 19.25 US dollar in late trading on

Pak Suzuki suffers loss, relies on Central Asian market

KARACHI, Nov 9: Pak Suzuki Motor Company Ltd, 40 per cent owned by Suzuki Motor Corporation of Japan, suffered huge losses in 1991-92 but hopes to boost profitability with sales to Central Asia, officials said, reports

Operating results at Pakistan's only car plant presented a gloomy picture despite improvements in production and turnover, said Automobile Pakistan Corporation (PACO) Chairman Javed Burki in the company's 1991-92 (July/June) annual report issued at the weekend. "The company incurred

gross loss of 480.36 million rupee (19.2 million) as against gross profit of 132.41 million rupee (5.2 million) achieved during the previous year (1990/91)," the report said.

Pak Suzuki blamed the 32.9 per cent appreciation in the yen against the rupee since July 1990, combined with a consequent increase in customs duties.

Only 25 per cent of components sourced in Pakistan. The rest, including engines, come from Japan a company official



Heseltine sure of EC-US deal body trying to exacerbate the production is resolved.

LONDON. Nov 9: British Trade Minister Michael Heseltine said on Sunday the clock was ticking towards what would be a disastrous world trade war, reports Reuter.

But Heseltine said he was sure the European Community could reach a deal with the United States and said tempers must now be cooled in the search for a solution.

"The clock is ticking and it is a very dangerous situation. There as a deal that can be done. What we have to do is do it." Heseltine said in a BBC television interview.

Washington announced on Thursday it would impose 200 per cent tariffs on 300 million dollar worth of EC white wines and other products from December 5 unless a dispute over subsidised EC oilseed

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS,

Nov 9: President-elect Bill

Clinton, who insists he will not

be rushed into making key de-

cisions on the economy, will

soon hold a summit of busi-

nessmen and economists to

discuss the country's economic

woes, transition aides said on

"I am going to work hard

but not rush decisions,

Clinton told reporters when he

was asked about pressing trade

planned to make his first cabi-

net appointments, saying, "it is

not anything I am ready to say."

said they expected more ap-

pointments to the transition

waiting for the release of US

unemployment data

Clinton's transition aides

He would not say when he

Sunday, reports Reuter.

and economic issues.

France is pressing for the

EC to decide on retaliation measures but Heseltine said attention should be focused on finding a political solution. "All our energies must be

fixed on getting a deal, not

looking into the abyss if we do

not get a deal," he said. Heseltine last week openly accused EC commission President Jacques Delors for the breakdown of talks with Washington, saying he had di-

vided lovalties. But on Sunday he firmly declined to repeat his criticism, saying it had been a "contribution to the debate yesterday. It is not a contribu-

tion to the debate today." "What we now want is to cool the temperature, to get the dialogue going. There is nothing to be gained by any-

team this week, but they did

not expect any cabinet posts to

planning to hold a summit

soon with business leaders,

economists and others to dis-

cuss the country's economic

woes and how best to address

"I think it's fair to say that

some time very soon, that the

governor will convene in Little

Rock business leaders,

economists, a variety of people

with expertise in the economy

and international economy, to

come and have a conversation,'

transition chairman Vernon

Jordan said on NBC television's

"It will be an attempt to

"Meet the Press."

They also said Clinton is

situation," Heseltine added. Another report from Paris

adds: French President Francois Mitterrand is torn by conflicting domestic and European pressures as he contemplates his next move in a trans-Atlantic tug-of-war over trade negotiations with the United States.

Five months before a general election, Mitterrand faces powerful pressure at home from the right-wing opposition and a militant farmers' lobby to refuse any more concessions on subsidised French cereals

The conservative Gaullists have served notice they will pounce on any hint of a "sell-

Mitterrand is also under pressure from European Community partners.

make an audit of where we

Warren Christopher said on

Christopher said Clinton

plans to make room at the

White House for a new council

to coordinate international

economic policy and help the

new president deal with the

council will coordinate the

administration's economic pol-

icy but will not supersede the

traditional role of the Treasury

Secretary and other economic

the centre of his successful bid

Clinton made the economy

advisers, Jordan said.

The economic security

ing similar voice-recognition technology to IBM Tival Clinton to hold summit with businessmen, economists soon

stand now," transition director CBS television's "Face the is limited.

For example, a user can say "close file" and the computer would perform that command, which normally would be done by moving a hand-operated control device called a mouse, or typing the command on the keyboard.

systems also can read back words or numbers that were typed into a computer, using a synthesised voice. For example, the computer can read numbers that were punched to oust president George Bush, into a spreadsheet programme.

IBM's computer will respond to spoken commands

NEW YORK, Nov 9 : IBM next week will announce products that allow computers to respond to spoken commands, including a system it believes is among the most sophisticated voice-recognition technologies commercially available, industry executives said, reports AP.

Two of the new products will run on IBM-type personal computers. The third is designed for IBM's workstation computers, the powerful desktop machines traditionally favoured by scientists and engineers.

IBM previously demonstrated the workstation product at a computer show, and said it would be available by the end of the year. The workstation technol-

ogy, developed in IBM's research labs, is sophisticated enough to recognise the difference between words that sound alike, such as "I" and "eye", based on how they are used in sentences, the executives said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

It also can distinguish different voices, which could allow it to limit computers running IBM's OS-2 software so they all could use the voice technology, the executives

The products are scheduled to be unveiled next Monday at the Comdex computer show in Las Vegas, the executives said. IBM does not comment on unannounced products. The PC products are li-

censed from a small Massachusetts company called Dragon Systems, the executives said. They consist of special software and a circuit board that is installed inside the PC. Dragon Systems is provid-

Microsoft Corp, which incorporates it into a product called the Windows Sound System that was announced in September. All the products allow computer users to control their

machines by speaking to them, though the number of words that can be recognized by the Microsoft and IBM PC systems

The Microsoft and IBM

Labour Party criticises Major's role on EC

LONDON, Nov 9: Europe is running into "real crisis" because British Prime Minister John Major is paralysed by divisions in his own party over Europe, the opposition Labour Party charged Sunday, reports Labour's European Commu-

nity Presidency - due to finish at the end of December - had been a "monumentally wasted opportunity." Speaking at a Labour con-

ference on Europe in the south coast town of Brighton, Robertson said: "John Major is impotent, with his own twisting and turning, complicating and worsening all the stresses and tensions which threaten Europe's ability to solve its deep troubles.

"He has turned his back on

the presidency, paralysed by his own party troubles, leaving Europe to run into real crisis. he said. "It has been a miserable,

confused, discordant presidency, unworthy of our country which needed so much but has seen so little," he added. As EC President Britain should have taken a grip on

the "runaway emotions" that had afflicted the community over the Maastricht Treaty on closer European union, and the row between the 12 and the United States over world trade, Robertson said. Despite professing its pro-

European credentials, Labour last Wednesday voted against a government motion paving the way for the Maastricht Treaty ratification.

Mexican traders plan to invest \$ 50m in Cuba's textile industry

MEXICO CITY, Nov 9: A group of Mexican businessmen plans to invest 50 million dollar in Cuba's textile industry, one of the investors said Sunday, reports AFP.

Mauricio Fernandez said that Cuba will contribute more than 500 million dollar in assets, including 15 factories with a production capacity of 370 million square meters of cloth that employ some 33,000 people.

The Mexican group, for its part, will provide the capital needed to run the plants, currently operating at 10 per cent capacity because of a spare parts shortage due to the US

trade embargo, against Cuba, Fernandez said.

Under the agreement, the factories will use Mexican raw materials and part of their profits will be set aside to pay off Cuba's foreign debt with Mexico, he said.

The textile factories will produce basic cloth at first, then eventually turn out printed fabrics.

Fernandez said Cuba could be a goldmine for Mexican investors. If Cuba changed "its economic philosophy, as it is already doing, it would have a substantial head start over any other Latin American country,

Colombo's budget gap to rise next year

COLOMBO, Nov 9: Sri Lanka's budget deficit will increase next year to 91.5 billion rupee from a revised 71.4 billion this year, Prime Minister and Finance Minister Digiri Banda Wijetunga said, reports Reuter.

The estimated 1992 deficit was 66.9 billion rupee.

Wijetunga, presenting the ruling United National Party's 1993 budget in parliament, said expenditure increase were due to the cost of restructuring the two state banks and to a 30 per cent salary increase for government em-

Expenditure for 1993 is expected to be 196.7 billion rupee and revenue 105.2 billion rupee, he said.

He also announced a 300 rupee increase for pensioners. Wijetunga said he would bridge the deficit gap from increased taxes on certain products, foreign grants, loans and domestic borrowing.

Wijetunga said he expected economic growth in 1993 to be 5.3 per cent up from 4.5 per cent in 1992. Tea production was expected to increase by 21 per cent, rubber by 15 per cent and coconut by nine per cent.

The government, which has been fighting a nine-year war with Tamil rebels who want their own homeland, would cut defence expenditure to 18 billion rupee from 24 billion rupee in 1992.

Waigel sets

Most Asia-Pacific units weakens after Clinton's victory Indonesian rupiah: The

1.3154.

Nation.

HONG KONG, Nov 9: Most Asian currencies lost ground against the US dollar in line with the worldwide trend following the election of Bill Clinton in Tuesday's US presi-

However, the US election did not have a major impact on all Asian currency markets, with the Japanese yen, New Zealand dollar, Philippine peso and South Korean won gaining against the Greenback.

Japanese yen: The Japanese yen gained ground moderately to close at 122.95 yen to the dollar Friday, up 0.40 yen from 123.35 a week earlier. Dealers played down the

importance of the US presi-

dential election on the Tokyo

market, adding that they were

After opening at 123.60 yen Monday, the Japanese currency moved between 122.15 and 123.77 yen during the dential election, reports AFP. week.

October.

South Korean won: The South Korean won marginally strengthened against the US dollar, closing Saturday at 782.0 won per dollar compared to 782.40 a week ear-

Dealers said despite a usual surge in dollar demand for paying import bills at the beginning of the month, the won stood firm against the dollar.

Taiwan dollar: The Taiwan dollar fell against the US dollar

to close Friday at 25.4, down 7.9 Taiwan cent from the previous week's finish of 25.321. However, the local unit ad-

vanced against major European currencies finishing at 39.04 to the British pound against 39.65 the previous week, at 4.75 to French franc against 4.87, and at 16.07 to German mark against 16.52.

Hong Kong dollar: The Hong Kong dollar closed Friday marginally weaker against the US dollar at 7.7325-7.7335 against 7.7323-7.7335 the previous week. The effective exchange rate was 112.7,

against 112 the previous week. Singapore dollar: The Singapore dollar weakened to close at 1.6315 against the US

dollar from 1.6225 the previous week. Dealers said demand for the US dollar was stable through-

out the week and the Greenback was expected to vise in the week ahead. The local unit was firmer against the British pound at 2.5133 against 2.5384 the previous week, but eased

against the yen to 1.3264 from

New Zealand dollar: The New Zealand dollar closed the week worth 52.75 US cent, up on the previous close of 52.67

Dealers said they were influenced less by the Kiwi's domestic background, than by its link with the Australian dol-

of the Victorian debt crisis. Australian dollar: The Australian dollar finished Friday down slightly at 69.60

lar, still suffering in the wake

US cent compared to 69.75 US cent the previous week. On Thursday it sank to a five-year low of 68.64 cent after rumours of an early election, before being lifted by Asian buying and Prime Minister Paul Keating dismiss-

ing reports of a snap poll. The Reserve Bank's tradeweighted index ended at 52.2 compared to 51.9 the previous

mid-rate of 25.37.

Thai baht: The Thai baht closed on Friday at a mid-rate of 25.41 baht to the US dollar, down on the previous week's

Indonesian rupiah closed the week marginally weaker at 2.052 ruptah to the dollar on Friday, compared with 2,050 a week earlier. Philippine peso: The

Philippine peso continued to appreciate against the Greenback ending the week Friday at 24.571 peso to the dollar, from the previous week's close of 24.629.

Malaysian ringgit: The Malaysian ringgit ended weaker against the US dollar, finishing at 2.5165 this week from 2.5120 previously.

The ringgit also fell against the yen at 2.0452 from 2.0325 previously, but firmed against the British pound at 3.876 from 3.962 last week.

Bonn's borrowing limit to \$28b BONN, Nov 9: German

Finance Minister Theo Waigel said on Sunday that government borrowing must not exceed 45 billion mark (28.37 billion) in 1993, reports Reuter. Until recently, the govern-

1993 budget deficit of 38 billion mark (23.96 billion dollar) compared with a projected 40 billion (25.22 billion dollar) this year. There must be no increase

ment has been forecasting at

in net borrowing above 45 billion mark," Waigel said in an article published in Berlin's Sonntagspost newspaper.