Arab bankers to meet in Oman

ABU DHABI, Jan 26: Arab bankers will meet in Oman next month to discuss safer investment and mergers and ways to avoid collapse by up grading their financial analytical techniques. The February 13-16 conference, organised by the Betrut-based Union of Arab Banks (UAB) and the Omani Banking Institute, follows a rash of bank crises in several Arab capitals. "The seminar will cover financial analysis for the purpose of better and safer investment in stock markets, says an AFP report.

Anglo-Indian co-op in gas sector

NEW DELHI, Jan 26: British Gas and the Gas Authority of India Ltd an nounced the establishment of a joint venture Monday to supply natural gas to customers in the western port city of Bombay. The two companies will each have a 35 per cent stake in the venture, which will involve in vestment of about 100 million pound [155 million dol larl over the next 10 years. The government of Maharshtra state will hold the remaining equity, says an AFP report.

IBM withdraws from research project

EAU CLAIRE (Wisconsin), Jan 26: IBM has withdrawn from a research project aimed at building the world's most powerful computer, forcing the group to terminate operations. IBM said its five-year contract with the Eau Claire, Wisconsin-based Supercomputer Systems Inc (SSI) expired in December and would not be renewed. SSI founder Steven Chen said Monday that without IBM funding and with no new investors willing to step in," we were left with no alternative but to terminate our project at this point, says an AFP re-

UAE needs billions to expand oil output

NOCOSIA, Jan 26: The United Arab Emirates will need to invest eight billion dollar to nine billion dollar to reach a sustainable oil production capacity of 2.6 million barrels a day by the year 2000, according to an industry report cited Monday in the Middle East Economic Survey. A new study published recently by the London-based Centre for Global Energy Studies concluded that without major investment, the UAE's sustainable capacity could be expected to decline from the current 2.3 million barrels daily to 1.8 million or less by the end of the century, MEES said, reports Al?.

Japanese traders leave for Mid-East

TOKYO, Jan 26: A group of Japanese businessmen is due to leave here on an 11-day tour of Egypt and Syria to explore the climate for investment there, it was announced Monday. The group will represent 19 companies, including steelmakers, electric appliance makers and trading houses, and will be led by Yohtaro lida, Chairman of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd, the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) said, reports AFP.

Singapore's CPI rises by 0.1 pc

SINGAPORE, Jan 26: Singapore's consumer price index (CPI) rose 0.1 per cent in December giving an overall increase of 2.3 per cent for 1992, the Department of Statistics said. A statement by the department Tuesday said the increase in December from the previous month was largely due to food prices climbing half a per cent. For 1992 transport and communications, as well as miscellaneous items, including health, education and other services, saw the greatest increases, with miscellaneous items and transport climbing 3.5 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively, reports AFP.

British business confidence jumps

LONDON, Jan 26: British business confidence has jumped to its highest level for almost five years, with manufacturers expecting to pull out of recession in the spring, according to a survey published on Monday. More than 1,000 firms questioned in the Confederation of British Industry quarterly Industrial Trends survey believe they will emerge over the next four months from the longest recession-since the 1930s, reports Reuter.

Clinton appears to opt for 'fair trade' policy

WASHINGTON, Jan 26: President Bill Clinton seems to be opting, for a policy of "fair trade" rather than the "free trade" espoused by his prodecessor George Bush, reports Reuter.

Political analysts say the new President has left most of his trade policy options open but they note his administration is inclined towards what they call "fair trade" - using the leverage of the big US market to open closed foreign markets

They say that in choosing Mickey Kantor as US trade representative Clinton has picked the right man for the job- a skilled negotiator.

That is what Kantor is, he is a lawyer, a negotiator," said Jeff Faux, President of the Liberal Economic Policy

Faux said Clinton and his economic council would probably set out trade policies and Kantor, who was confirmed by the Schate last Thursday, would carry them out.

He said this would represent a different approach to trade issues from the previous administration, when Bush set "free trade" as his philosophy and trade representative Carla Hills established policy within that remit. Kantor, who lacks trade ex-

perience but has close personal and political ties to Clinton, sketched a broad outline of his trade philosophy at his confirmation hearing but did not committee the new administration to any specific decisions

Willard Workman, the US Chamber of Commerce's Vice

President for international trade, said Kantor's statements indicated he would try to expand government efforts to

open foreign markets. He said Kantor had done his homework for the Senatehearing, adding: "We're encouraged by his statements."

Workman said Kantor had given few details of trade polictes. "I think he's being very smart. I think he is keeping his and President Clinton's options open as much as possible." Workman said. One of the first trade deci-

sions for the Clinton adminis tration is how to deal with a European community directive requiring its 12 members states to give preference to EC firms when public utility equipment, such as electric

generators.

market forces.

Hills had said the United States would move to take punitive trade action against

, the EC if the directive was not lifted by the end of January. quire quick action. The EC has so far resisted lifting the directive.

The Clinton administration will also need to make a decision soon on Japan's apparent failure to honour a 1989 promise that its industry and government would increase the share of foreign semiconductors purchased to 20 per cent of the market by the end

The figure for the third quarter of 1992 was 15.9 per cent, and the indications are that Japan will have fallen short of its pledge when the year end figures are issued in

Hills, pressed by US indus-

try, had raised the threat of sanctions against Japanese exports to the United States.

Two major issues also re-

One is the six-year-old 108nation GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Tradel negotiations to reform the global trading system.

Many American businesses are critical of the draft agreement that is being negotiated saying the United States is not being tough enough in protecting their interests.

But Clinton must act soon to press for an accord because the authority to negotiate trade agreements that Congress granted to the President expires in March.

The second issue is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), linking

the United States, Mexico and Canada, which has to be sent

to Congress for ratification. Clinton faces stiff opposition form some key supporters, including trade unions and conservationists, who fear US plants would move south to Mexico because of its cheap wages and alleged lax enforcement of environmental

Kantor told the Senate committee the Clinton administration would negotiate side agreements to answer these concerns, as well as one that would reimpose tariffs if a surge of a particular Mexican import threatened a US indus-

Clinton has said he wants the accord completed "in prompt fashion," calling it critical to US-Mexican ties.

Miyazawa will try to present NAM's views at G7 summit

TOKYO, Jan 26: Japanese Prime Minister Klichi Miyazawa said Monday he would try to present views of the Non-Aligned Movement at a Group of Seven (O-7) summit to be held in Tokyo in July, reports Xinhua.

Addressing the parliament, he said it would be difficult to have direct dialogue between Indonesian President Suharto and leaders of the seven industrialised nations.

Suharto, chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, had asked Japan, host of this years summit to do so during Miyazawa's visit to Indonesia earlier this month.

India's reforms a clarion call to the future: Major

NEW DELIII, Jan 26: British Prime Minister John Major said Tuesday India's radical economic reforms were "a clarion call to the future" and he dismissed reported threats to his security during a five-day visit, reports Reuter.

Major, speaking at a news conference after a day of talks with Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and other leaders, also denied suggestions Britain might mediate between India and Pakistan over the divided state of Kashmir.

The British leader said relations between India and its former colonial power had "never been closer since independence" in 1947. This was symbolised by his invitation to be the chief guest at Tuesday's Republic Day celebrations.

"Doi Moi") back in 1986, but

its economy did not really take

off until the National Assembly

cnacted a new constitution last

year to safeguard foreign

poured in 3.5 billion US dollar.

In the first nine months of

1992 alone, investors brought

in one billion US dollar, ac-

Investment (SCCI), the

government office in charge of

International Monetary Fund

(IMF) are still barred form

lending to Vietnam because of

US sanctions, but this has not

stopped them from giving

Vietnamese planners a lot of

free advice. And they seem de-

lighted with the result, said

IMF chief Michel Camdessue

carlier this year. "We may have

another tiger in Asia, I feel

statistics, Vietnam's gross na-

tional product (GNP) is ex-

pected to grow by 5.3 per cent

in 1992. Inflation is down form

70 per cent in 1991 to 15 per

cent this year. Radical reforms

in land tenancy laws have

transformed Vietnam's agricul-

world's third largest exporter

of rice after the United States

and Thailand. Grain production

topped 23 million tonnes in

the first nine month of 1992 -

10 per cent more than in the

same period last year.

The country is now the

According to recent official

pretty confident of that."

The World Bank and the

approving foreign investment.

Foreign firms have since

Investment



British Prime Minister, Major with Indian PM in New - Star TV photo

poised to join the exclusive cording to the State Commi-

pack of East Asian tiger tice for Cooperation and

HANOI, Jan 26: Going by

patterns of economic collapse

in other ex-Soviet bloc coun-

tries, Vietnam should have by

now been crippled by hyper-

inflation, food shortages and

But the communist South

East Asian nation has not only

managed to save itself from

ruin, it is prospering and

In late 1990, Vietnam and

Cuba were in the same boat.

Moscow propped the eco-

nomics of both countries with

heavy subsidies, over 80 per

cent of trade of the two states

was with the Soviet bloc, and

a US- led economic embargo

had squelched prospects of a

moved quicker to diversify

trade. It has successfully im-

plemented strict measures to

curb inflation, unshackled a

moribund centrally-planned

economy and vigorously pur-

sued foreign Investment to

make up for the loss of the an-

nual one billion dollar aid from

Vietnamese officials say pri-

vately that their old mentors in

Moscow have to things back-

wards. Lifting the lid on full-

scale political freedom first

has brought instability which

in turn has hurt investments

and made economic reforms

Inspired by Moscow,

Vietnam lunched its own

brand of Perestroika (called

the Soviet Union.

ineffective.

Unlike Havana, Hanoi has

Cuban or Vietnamese take-off.

cconomics, writes IPS.

social unrest.

He offered his full backing for the 18-month-old reforms, aimed at breaking down state domination of the economy, opening it up to outside forces, cutting bureaucracy and making it more dependent on

Indian officials said the decision to accord him the honour of being chief guest, the first time for a British Prime Minister, reflected the shift in India's strategic priorities after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Indian's biggest

They said there had been discussion about whether Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, who begins a visit on Wednesday, should be invited. "Yeltsin represents the past, major represents the Ature," one senior official said privately.

Major and Howard Davies. the Director-General of the confederation of British Industry who was one of 17 top businessmen who came on the trip, reported on a number of deals agreed during the visit and others under discus-Vietnam poised to become another Asian tiger

Now, the government of

reformist Prime Minister Vo

Van Kiet is trying to further

relax foreign investment rules

and offer tax incentives to en-

courage foreign companies in-

terested in upgrading

Vietnam's run-down roads,

aid agencies like the United

Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) are help-

ing Vietnam in its transition to

a market economy to develop

the country's legal system, re-

form financial and banking

they still face a cash shortage

of fund development projects,

and are eagerly awaiting the

scrapping of US sanctions. US

President Geroge Bush re-

newed the embargo for an-

November on the issue of US

servicemen missing in action

in the Vietnam war brightened

prospects for a normalisation

of relations between the two

countries. The next month,

Washington rewarded Hanoi by

allowing some US firms to sign

contracts with Vietnamese

the US-led embargo is croding

Japan has resumed aid to

Victnam with a 370 million US

dollar soft loan. In fact,

Japanese firms have been qui-

etly making contacts here to

have a headstart on US firms

Vietnam's headlong rush

once sanctions are lifted.

There are further signs that

A breakthrough in

other year in September.

Vietnamese officials say

Foreign governments and

bridges and railways.

regulations.

companies.

money.

New Russia sheds Lenin from new roubles

MOSCOW, Jan 26: The increasingly worthless rouble soon will lose something that may have even less value these days: a picture of Vladimir Lenin, writes

Officials decided Monday to print new banknotes without the once-ubiquitous face of the Soviet founder, part of a plan to boost the currency's value and fight counterfeiting, news agencies reported.

Rouble notes have borne Lenin's chiscled profile for decades. Even new banknotes introduced last year carried the Bolshevik leader's stern countenance, because the plates had been ordered before the Soviet collapse.

Acting out of ceonomic rather than political reasons, Russian legislative officials on Monday approved a new set of banknotes in denominations of 100, 200, 500, 1.000 and 5,000 rouble, the Itar-Tass news agency said. The new bills will be printed

Thailand

Population:

Currency:

M 1535

Area: 330,363 sq km

with designs and on paper that will be harder to copy in compliance with recommendations of the Ru sstan Interior Ministry and Int crpol, Itar-Tass repor-

ounterfeiting has worsened dramatically in the former Soviet Union with the introduction of color copiers and other Western equipment. The news agency did not detail the safeguards in the new bills, other than saying they will have "updated elements of counterfeit protection."

more cosmette element will be the elimination of Lenin's visage, a bank official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The new design will include the white, blue and red Russian flag. The new banknotes also will be smaller. said Alexander Pochinok, chief of the legislative commission on budget, taxes and prices, Itar-Tass reported.

China

Haiphong

Ho Chi Minh

Da Nang

Laos

66.1m

Dong

Cambodia

into a free market is not with. "market as imperialist and re-

out its domestic detracts. actionary conspiracy to bring

Military hardliners see the free spies and aids into the country.



Sears Roebuck and Co announced that it will cut about 50,000 full and part-time jobs, close 113 stores. It will stop publishing its catalogue which came to be known as the big book in 1896. The company had sales of 3.3 billion US dollar in 1992. -Star TV photo

OPEC will ask all members to cut output

KUWAIT, Jan 26: OPEC will ask all its members to cut oil output at the organisation's ministerial meeting on February 13 to shore up prices, Kuwaiti Oil Minister Ali al-Baghli said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Baghli said after talks with OPEC President Alirio Parra that all OPEC members, including Kuwait, would be asked to reduce production to defend world oil prices.

states, and adherence (is necessary) from all states without exception," he said.

The benchmark North Sea Brent crude for March delivery gained 26 cent on Monday, quoted at 17.57 by 1107 GMT. But oil prices remain 20 per cent below their level in October.

had focused on overall output by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Parra said his discussions

for Qatar.

"Cuts are necessary from all

Parra, Venezuela's Energy and Mines Minister, is visiting Middle East oil producers to solicit accord on production

"What was discussed was the overall cut in OPEC production," he told reporters at Kuwait airport before leaving

He declined to comment on details. I cannot say anything at the moment because it is all the countries themselves that must decide which is the best course.

Parra, preparing for the crucial OPEC talks in Vienna next month, flew to Kuwait on Sunday from Tehran where he held talks with Iranian officials after meeting Saudi Oil

Paris on Friday. He said he thought there was a broad consensus for the type of measures which should be taken at the Vienna meeting.

Minister Ilisham Nazer in

China playing vital role in Taiwan's economy

TAIPEI, Jan '26: When Taiwan's Nationalist government sanctioned trade with China five years ago, it retained many restrictions to prevent an exodus of capital from this prosperous island to help its Communist rival, reports AP.

But trade and investment links have grown so rapidly that China now plays a vital role in Taiwan's economy and the Nationalists have little choice but to put politics aside and relax controls — for now.

"We're trying to map out a forward-looking and correct economic policy toward the mainland," Vice Economics Minister Chiang Ping-kun told a recent business gathering.

"Taiwan created an economic miracle in the 1980s with our massive exports to the United States and other Western countries. Cement, steel, petrochemical and other

heavy industries in China as long as they invest more on this island. Officials say the government

may allow local banks to provide loans to Taiwanese investors in China through their overseas subsidiaries. They now borrow from foreign banks in China. Economists say relaxing

trade controls will prepare Taiwan for entry in to the Geneva-based General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which has begun talks on admitting both Taiwan and

If both are admitted to the international trade organisation, analysts say, Taiwan may be asked to remove its trade barriers against China. But officials don't want to

succumb completely to "the China fever" and have urged Taiwanese to look at other markets as well.

Russian journalists work with new ethics in new system MOSCOW, Jan 26: Every couple of weeks, Mikhail Berger,

economics editor of Russia's most influential newspaper, turns down a bribe offered by a businessman eager to see his' company name in print, reports AP.

Unlike many of his colleagues, Berger can afford to be ethical. "Recently, I rejected 150,000 rouble," he said. "To be quite honest, it wasn't just because of my principles, but also

because I make good money." Many Russian journalists and their employers are too worried about surviving in the new market economy to spurn such offers. The bribe Berger rejected, equal to about 300 dollar, is 15 times the monthly pay of most reporters. For decades, Soviet journalists did not have to worry about

how to write their stories or pay their bills. The Communist Party and state took care of both. The end of Communist rule left them with no party line to follow or party to pay their expenses, and led to the birth of the Russian advertising industry.

Billboards selling cigarettes and Western cars have replaced red banners urging the masses to fulfill the latest fiveyear plan. Street cars are painted pink and plastered with ads for Barbie dolls.

Television blares ads for Russian stock traders, US cosmetics and Wrigley chewing gum. Newspapers carry ads for dating services, travel agents, French champagne, Swiss chocolate and computers. One even promoted an anti-tank missile. In the new free-market free-for-all, Russian media have discovered they can sell more than just ads. They can sell sto-

"Many editorial offices faced with the question of life and

death resort to compromises," said Berger, who oversees economic coverage for the daily Izvestia.

The compromise is called indirect or hidden advertising, in which companies pay for flattering articles. Because the stories are not labeled as advertising, most readers think they are legitimate.

"Not a single newspaper or television station has avoided this process," said Vladislav Surkov, President of the Russian Advertisers Association. "This is what I call the piratic privatisation of the mass media."

The fact is that every one of these Russian publications and broadcasters is desperate for hard currency," said Peter Necarsulmer, president of the PBN Company, a San Francisco public relations firm that advises Western clients operating in the former Soviet Union.

Necarsulmer said he knew of a major Western company that paid one million rouble (2,000 dollar) for a one-minute television news story in an effort to break into the Russian market.

He said he advises clients to stick to legitimate advertising. "It you're going to pay for it anyway, why not pay for it and have total control?" he said. Surkov said companies commonly pay a reporter 30,000

rouble (60 dollar) for a story, and "there are many enterprises

willing to pay." One suspect article praised a Russian company that had collected advance payment for future sugar deliveries. Pavel Gutionov, a leader of the Journalists' Union, complained in an article in the magazine Novoye Vremya (New Times) that the company neither supplied the product nor returned the

Another extolled a vacation resort and gave the telephone number for readers who might want to make a reservation. "Is it true that our profession is the second most ancient?" Gutionov fretted. "Or can it be the first and the second oldest at the same time?"

Berger traces the willingness to accept money, gifts and free trips to the Communist legacy.

"Practically all of Soviet journalism ... was paid for by the party Central Com-mittee," he said. "So a journalist realised he was paid and kept in work because he advertised the bad system, bad production and so on.

"So people who want to use the same kind of mentality in

the new situation find no sin in taking advantage of the old Another Russian journalist says he occasionally writes to order because he needs to feed his family.

"My salary is not that high and I welcome any opportunity to make some money on the side," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "As to my journalistic integrity, writing about businesses

and being paid for this by them is better than writing what the government has to say and not being paid." Stopping the practice is difficult.

Izvestia rejects hidden advertising and tries to prevent reporters from taking bribes, Berger said, but "I can't rule out that this may be present in our newspaper." Newspapers threaten to discipline bribe-takers, he said,

but "I know of no case of any action taken against a journalist. It's hard to prove. Added Berger: "And I don't think the situation, to my regret, will change for the better soon."

India to get additional British aid of \$138m

giving India an additional 90 million pound (138 million dollar) for three projects, the Overseas Deve-lopment Administration said Monday, says an AP report.

Baroness Lynda Chalker said 21 million pound (32 million dollar) hydroelectric plant at Hirakud in the state of Orissa. Lady Chalker said six mil-

lion pound (nine million dollar) will go to modernising eight regional engineering colleges, to raise the quality of technical education in India.

Another 63 million pound (97 million dollar) will go to an electricity transmission plant at Chandrapur once it has passed the appraisal and approval procedures, the Overseas Development Administration said in a statement.

LONDON, Jan 26 : Britain is