

# Salinas mirrors growing doubts about NAFTA

MEXICO CITY, Nov 2: President Carlos Salinas de Gortari said yesterday that the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) would not produce "spectacular results" and that even if it is not ratified, the course of the Mexican economy will not be greatly changed, reports Reuters.

In his annual state of the union address to a sometimes antagonistic Mexican Congress, Salinas played down the importance of the pact and, in so doing, mirrored the growing doubts here about its fate.

"It should be noted once again that its (NAFTA's) benefits will not be forthcoming in the short term, nor will they produce spectacular results," Salinas said.

"I reiterate that, with or without the agreement, the evolution of our economy will not be substantially altered in the immediate future," he said.

He talked several times about the need to develop diverse trade relationships with all parts of the world and stressed that Mexico's future did not rest in the hands of other nations.

The NAFTA, which would

phase out trade barriers between the United States, Canada and Mexico, faces stern opposition in the Washington and Ottawa. In earlier years, Salinas spoke of the agreement as the cornerstone to Mexico's economic reforms, but the tone of his recent NAFTA-related comments has been increasingly subdued.

A note of bitterness crept into his remarks in a thinly veiled reference to criticisms of Mexico now being leveled by anti-NAFTA forces in the US Congress.

"Today, when voices are being raised in other countries to single out our country's shortcomings — merely reflecting a profound ignorance of our innate vitality — it would be best to recall that we have no desire to be like others, nor to share their deficiencies," said Salinas, who wore the red, green and white Presidential sash across his chest.

Even though public opposition to the NAFTA has been minimal in Mexico, Salinas has interrupted a number of times during his lengthy address, once by legislators holding up a sign calling for renegotiation of the trade pact.



President Bill Clinton speaks to members and guests about the North American Free Trade Agreement at a town hall meeting in Washington on Monday sponsored by the US Chamber of Commerce. Clinton said Europe and Japan will be the big winners if the pact fails. — AFP photo

## Vietnam signs economic pact with Ukraine

BANGKOK, Nov 2: Vietnam is rebuilding cooperation with members of the former Soviet Union, but this time their mutual goal is economic profits instead of socialist fraternity, reports AP.

Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam visited Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation from Oct. 21 to 30 to discuss how to strengthen relations, the official Vietnam News Agency reported Tuesday.

Those countries supported the market-oriented reforms in Vietnam, said the report monitored in Bangkok.

The Soviet Union had been Vietnam's main ally until it began reducing political and economic assistance in the 1980s. The special relationship ended entirely with the breakup of the union. Vietnam is still Communist-controlled, but in late 1996 began market reforms including expansion of foreign markets.

Cam said that during his trip, Vietnam signed an agreement on aviation cooperation with Ukraine.

Cam said Russia wanted to cooperate with Vietnam in fields including natural oil and gas, energy, agricultural machinery and rubber planting and processing.

## Asian stock markets close higher

HONG KONG, Nov 2: Asian stock markets closed generally higher Tuesday, with Hong Kong's key index closing at an all-time high for the third consecutive session, reports AP.

The Hang Seng Index, the Hong Kong market's key indicator of blue chips, rose 13.72 points, or 0.1 per cent, closing at 9,642.91. On Monday, the index had gained 300 points.

Brokers said profit-taking late in the session eroded most early gains.

The record rallies in the last two sessions were triggered mainly by overseas buying because foreign investors remained confident in the market's future prospects, they added.

In Bangkok, share prices also rose on continued foreign buying, pushing the key index to a record high closing of the fifth consecutive session. The Stock Exchange of Thailand index rose 31.59 to 1,357.75.

Share prices on the Tokyo Stock Exchange closed mixed on the eve of a Japanese holiday.

The Nikkei Stock Average of 225 selected issues closed at 19,381.24 down 57.00 points, or 0.29 per cent. On Monday, the average had shed 284.73 points, or 1.34 per cent.

The Tokyo Stock Price Index of all shares listed on the first

section gained 2.12 points, or 0.13 per cent, to 1,621.87.

After edging upward as foreign investors hunted for bargains, the Nikkei index fell in the closing hours, due partly to gloomy market sentiment as newly listed East Japan Railway stock remained soft, traders said.

WELLINGTON: New Zealand share prices closed higher for the ninth consecutive session despite some profit-taking. The NZSE-40 capital index rose 3.59 points to 2,203.59.

TAIPEI: Share prices closed higher in hectic trading, boosted by better-than-expected third quarter earnings by many listed companies. The weighted index rose 96.17 points to 4,227.85.

SYDNEY: Australian share prices closed lower amid trading that was quiet because of the running of Australia's premier horse race, the Melbourne Cup. The All-Ordinaries Index fell 7.1 points to 2,125.3.

SEOUL: Share prices closed lower in active trading because of profit-taking. The Korea Composite Stock Price Index fell 2.34 points to 759.42.

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian share prices closed higher in active trading following Monday's profit-taking decline. The Composite Index rose 5.31 points to 972.36.

## Iran devalues rial against major currencies

TEHRAN, Nov 2: The Iranian central bank yesterday devalued the rial against major currencies following sharp rises in foreign currency rates on the open market, reports AFP.

The bank raised the official rate against the US dollar from 1,595 to 1,625 rial in a bid to narrow the gap with the open market, which has witnessed a steady rise in the rate of hard currency over the past week.

The dollar jumped seven per cent last week, with the Greenback changing hands on Friday.

The open market is an officially tolerated version of the black market, and reflects free-market exchange rates.

To stabilise the rial, the government on Sunday banned public organisations from obtaining their hard currency through the open market.

It also required importers to register their orders at the commerce ministry to enable the government to control goods entering the country.

The recent hikes in foreign currency rates came after the central bank failed to meet general demand for hard currency, prompting buyers to turn to the open market.

The government has been hit by a cash shortage in the past year following a fall in oil prices and rising interest payments on its short-term debts.

## Thai rice exports to Mexico may increase

BANGKOK, Nov 2: Mexico is considering importing more rice from Thailand after recently banning imports from China and Vietnam because they contained plant disease, the state-run Radio Thailand reported Tuesday, reports AP.

Mexico imported 400,000 tons of rice from Thailand last year, but only 10,000 tons from January to September this year, the report said.

Thailand is the world's largest rice exporter, followed by the United States and Vietnam. Last year Thailand exported 5.1 million tons of rice, according to the government's Department of Business Economics.

Up to October 27, Thailand has exported 3.8 million tons this year, compared with four million tons during the same period last year. This year's target is 4.5 million tons.

## Move to wind up Uruguay Round Tokyo to defend rice import ban

TOKYO, Nov 2: Japan's Farm Minister headed for Europe on Monday to defend the country's ban on foreign rice imports at talks aimed at concluding a long-delayed global trade pact by mid-December, reports Reuters.

As Farm Minister Eijiro Hata departed for Geneva and Brussels, members of the ruling coalition indicated that Japan was moving towards abandoning its rice import ban to help wind up the Uruguay Round of talks, held under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

"We have to prepare for the fact that it might not be possible to exempt rice from the GATT tariff plan, Motto Abe, a senior legislator in the coalition, said on Monday.

"Looking at it another way...

competition could help boost the domestic rice output," he said in a speech.

Another coalition lawmaker said Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa was likely to accept a GATT plan to replace Japan's ban on foreign rice with tariffs on imports.

"Hosokawa is considering accepting tariffication," he told reporters.

He said the Prime Minister would hold out on a final decision until December 15, when the GATT talks are due to wind up.

Japan is wary of conceding on rice in the event the six-year-old GATT talks falter because of differences between the European Community and United States over farm subsidies.

The Tokyo government,

treading a political minefield over calls for it to open its rice market, has sought without success to have the sensitive issue detached from the world trade talks.

Politically powerful farmers have long been cushioned by a total ban on commercial rice imports and by heavy state subsidies, forcing consumers in Japan to pay some of the highest rice prices in the world.

The new government headed by the reform-minded Hosokawa could change all that.

The prime minister has already announced plans to improve the situation of Japan's long neglected consumers by opening up closed markets.

Another factor is declining rice production, hit by its worst rice harvest since the end of World War Two.

## Computer replies to queries in plain language

WASHINGTON, Nov 2: A computer programme has been devised that will reply to requests put in regular English sentences, its sponsors say, reports AP.

The new feature called Freestyle will be available this month to 1,000 users of Mead Data Central, Inc's LEXIS-MEXIS databanks, the company announced Monday at a conference in Washington.

Instead of using the traditional Boolean search language, individuals seeking information can simply ask the computer questions. If the questions do not contain enough information for the programme to work on, it asks for more.

## Arabs still placing more funds outside their region

DUBAI, Nov 2: Inter-Arab investment is on the rise but Arabs still place more funds outside the Arab world, speakers at an investment conference in Dubai said, reports Reuters.

Mamoun Ibrahim Hassan, Director General of the Kuwait-based Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation, said private Arab investors are currently placing vastly more money outside the Arab world than within it.

"Presently 56 dollar are invested by Arabs outside the Arab countries against each dollar invested in the Arab countries," he told the conference.

The corporation had said in July that private inter-Arab investment rose to 483 million dollar in 1992 from 227 mil-

lion dollar in 1987. It said total private Arab investment outside the Arab world between 1950 to 1992 amounted to 670 billion dollar against 11.9 billion dollar within the Arab world.

"The majority of the Arab countries nowadays are witnessing structural economic reforms. These reforms include many sectors, production, trade, financial, monetary and capital markets," Hassan said.

"Great hope are attached to these reforms to create a better investment climate in the Arab region," he said.

The three-day conference, organised by the corporation, is being attended by Arab investment officials as well as officials from the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO).



## SB Chaudhuri joins as City Bank Adviser

SB Chaudhuri has joined the City Bank Ltd as its Adviser recently, says a press release.

Earlier, he held important government positions including the posts of Governor of Bangladesh Bank and Chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), the press release added.

# Star Special Computer

**Editor's Note**

The Daily Star's launching of the Star Computer Special in July '93, created a stir among the computer enthusiasts in the country. There has been a stream of requests for expanding our coverage of the subject. The Computer Forum Members have also felt that time has come for us to expand our coverage from once a month to once a week.

We are gratified by the enthusiastic response of our readers, computer specialists and Forum Members, and are delighted to announce the introduction of a weekly half page (in addition to the monthly Computer Special), devoted to computer matters, to be published every Wednesday.

We are also happy to announce that Zakaria Swapan, Executive Editor of monthly Computing, has joined us, and will be responsible for the weekly pages on computer and the monthly Computer Special. A hearty welcome to Swapan.

We request our Forum Members to take full advantage of the weekly section to publicize their company and product news.

**Computer Exhibition in Dhaka**

A Computer Exhibition will be held at Hotel Sonargaon on November 26 and 27, 1993, organized by Bangladesh Computer Society, Dhaka, says a Society press release.

There are about 18 vendors participating in the exhibition, where they will be exhibiting their latest products in the computer world. For any further inquiry about the exhibition, the convener of the exhibition committee Abdullah H Kafi may be contacted with him at telephone 861444.

Another report adds: In Hotel Agrabad, Chittagong, a Computer exhibition will be held on November 11 and 12, organized by Bangladesh Computer Society (Chittagong). Leading computer organizations from all over the country will be participating in the exhibition.

**LOGI in Bangladesh**

Multilink International, a new dynamic computer organization is going to market the world's quality computer LOGI with their several years experience in computer business. Mr Shahiduzzaman, the executive director of Multilink International informed our correspondent that they are also marketing OKI printers and Sendon UPS. They are also going to market NEC product in Bangladesh.

Multilink has a high quality software dept that is serving customized software also.

We congratulate to the step of Multilink. The address is 71, Motijheel, Dhaka. Tel: 244469, 263303.

**IBM plans System/36 update to keep users**

IBM plans to update its proprietary System/36 minicomputer family because a significant minority of users have refused to move to its successor, the AS/400.

IBM AS/400 marketing manager, said one option was the launch in April 1994 of an S/36 based on the PowerPC chip developed by IBM, Apple and Motorola. The other was to produce an enhanced S/36 environment within the OS/400 operating system.

"We'd have liked S/36 users to go to the AS/400 but, since many have decided to stay with it, it is right we look at improving the hardware, otherwise users will move to a RISC platform," said Haines.

There are more than 170,000 S/36 users worldwide. Ian Bartrum, an independent consultant and acting DP manager at two S/36 sites, said his clients — electronic composition distributor Circuit and book-subscription firm WH Everett — would prefer a new machine, rather than an AS/400 version of the system.

The S/36 needs a boost, not a rewrite. A move towards the AS/400 would make system management more complex. S/36 users are mainly companies with a £10 million turnover and 40 or so employees. They do not want to employ IT staff, he said.

**COMTEQ '93**

A exhibition "COMTEQ '93" of Computers, Office Equipments, PABX and other electronics goods will be held at Hotel Sheraton, Ball room on November 12, 13 and 14, 1993.

The exhibition will be organized by Conference and Exhibition Management Services, 127, Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka. More than 20 organisations will be demonstrating their products.

**Dell calls in notebook PCs amid fire fear**

Dell Computer is recalling 17,000 notebook PCs because of a fault which could cause them to overheat.

The problem affects Dell's 320SLI and 325SLI notebook models and has been traced to a faulty capacitor on the motherboard.

According to Dell, the capacitor could crack under extreme physical stress — for example, if a power cable were plugged in after the unit had been dropped. Should a crack occur, the capacitor might overheat, creating a potential fire hazard.

A Dell spokeswoman said: The problem has affected only three machines worldwide and we have not been able to recreate it in the lab. Due to the nature of the problem and our commitment to customer satisfaction we are recalling all machines.

Users should contact Dell's customer services division to arrange to send the unit back for modification. This will be done free of charge.

**Mips-based PCs get top marks in NT tests**

Mips-based PCs have knocked spots off rival systems running Microsoft Windows NT applications in performance benchmark results released last month.

A Mips-based NEC desk-top machine ran a suite of NT applications on average twice as fast as a PC with the most powerful Intel Pentium chip, and 34% faster than a comparable Digital Alpha system costing \$ 695 more.

Mips, which conducted the tests in the US last month, acknowledged that the Compaq Pentium cost \$ 145 less than the NECPC but claimed the latter won hands down in terms of price/performance.

Tom Whiteside, president of Mips Technologies, said: "Because the benchmarks are based on real applications, they can be the basis for practical comparisons of Windows NT platforms."

The benchmarks involved a final release of Windows NT and late beta versions of four 32-bit NT applications performing management, administration, scientific and engineering tasks.

A US spokesman said: "We tested the machines ourselves and coordinated the results with Microsoft. We went but of our way to be fair and would challenge anyone who says we have played games."

**Intel Turns Down Heat on Pentium**

Problems with Pentium-based systems overheating may soon be a thing of the past as Intel prepares to introduce a new low-power version of the high-end processor.

The P54C is a 3.0 V version of the Pentium and consumes about 50 per cent of the chip's current 15W power requirement.

Pentium's high power consumption has led to major PC design problems, with some firms failing to provide enough cooling for the hot chips.

The P54C is also faster, running at 80MHz internally with a 50MHz or 66MHz external bus. Intel declined to comment on the product, but sources close to the supplier said it had extra circuitry to allow the chip to be run in parallel with another Pentium microprocessor.

But in order to make use of the dual-processor capability, users will have to switch to an operating system that supports symmetrical multiprocessing. Currently, this means using Unix or Windows NT.

Intel plans to begin sampling the new Pentium by the end of the year, with prototypes on show at Comdex/Fall in mid-November.

**Apple extends language computing**

Apple recently announced a pair of system software products that allow users to include Chinese or Japanese text in letters, presentations and reports and run applications in Chinese or Japanese. The Chinese Language Kit and the Japanese Language Kit operate as extensions to version 7.1 of Apple's System 7 operating system software, and include TrueType fonts and a choice of popular input methods.

Both the Chinese Language Kit and Japanese Language Kit come with bilingual documentation and allow users to incorporate Chinese or Japanese text into English language documents, or vice versa.

**LaserWriter Select 360 and Pro 810**

The LaserWriter Select 360 and the LaserWriter Pro 810 have introduced Apple's first 10 page-per-minute and 20 page-per-minute printer, respectively addressing the needs of small and large workgroups. The LaserWriter Select 360, designed for small workgroups of three to six networked Macintosh and Windows/DOS computers, provides 600 dpi (dots per inch) print resolution and support for PostScript Level 2 and PCL 5.

The LaserWriter Pro 810 is designed for large workgroups with mixed computing environments and prints up to 20 pages per minute from three universal cassettes holding which can be configured for letter, legal, tabloid, A3, A4, A5, B4, and B5 paper sizes.

**Schools fail pupils on IT skills**

procurring the wrong equipment because Acorn, with an 80 per cent share, is the biggest player in the market.

John Blyzinskyj, director of marketing at RM, said: "We are concerned that the perception among teachers is that Acorn products are the most appropriate for education, whereas in fact the requirements of business and further and higher education are completely different."

"We are not saying that teachers are doing a bad job. We believe there is a general lack of understanding among school governors and teachers as to the longer term requirements in IT skills," he added.

Teenagers may be damaging their career prospects by leaving school with the wrong IT skills.

A report published last month suggests that many pupils in primary and secondary schools are using proprietary IT equipment which will be of little benefit to them in later life. It found that 86% of IT managers in business and higher education felt it was important for pupils to have computer experience. Of those, 83% said a knowledge of industry-standard IBM-compatibles was desirable, with just 32% stating Apple Macintosh and 11 per cent Acorn. Research Machines, the UK PC maker which commissioned the report and whose core business is in the education market, claims the findings suggest many schools are

**Market Price Computer**

Brand	Processor/Speed	RAM	HDD	Monitor	Avg. Price
1. Compaq	80386Sx/25	2MB	84MB	Color	80,000.00
2. Dec	80386 Sx/33	2MB	85MB	Mono	68,000.00
3. Compro	80386 Sx/33	1MB	40MB	Color	49,000.00
4. Auva	80386 Sx/40	4MB	120MB	Color	55,000.00
5. Macintosh	68030/Classic 16	4MB	80MB	Color	55,000.00
6. Macintosh	68030/LCII-25	4MB	160MB	Color	75,000.00
7. Compaq	80486 Sx/25	4MB	120MB	Color	98,000.00
8. Compaq	80486 Dx/33	4MB	120MB	Color	1,18,000.00
9. Compaq	80486 Dx/266	4MB	120MB	Color	1,48,000.00
10. MegaPlus	80486 Sx/25	4MB	170MB	Color	81,000.00
11. Aztech	386 Dx/40	4MB	170MB	Color	67,000.00

**Accessories**

Mouse	1000-2500.00
101 Key board	1,600.00
<b>Disk (10pcs)</b>	
360KB	300.00
1.2 MB	450.00
720KB	500.00
1.44 MB	700.00
<b>Ribbon</b>	
Epson	300.00
OKI 9/24 Pin	325.00
Disk Cleaner	100.00
Monitor Filter	300-500.00
Dust Cover	350.00
Disk Bank	350.00
Post Mouse	7,000.00
<b>Modem</b>	
External	9,000.00
Internal	7,500.00
Fax/Modem Card	9,000.00
<b>Tape Drive</b>	
250MB	25,000.00
120MB	20,000.00
Data Switch	1,200-2,500.00

\* Prices may vary. These are the average prices.

**Teach yourself Computer**

"Star Computer" is going to start a new section soon to help our reader learn how to use computers.

We can start with programming language like 'C', Pascal, dBase, Foxpro or Clipper. We can also start with Word processing like Wordperfect or Microsoft Word.

But which one to start at first?

Have you any choice? Please inform us about your preference.

Write to .....

**Star Computer Special**

C/O, The Daily Star  
House # 11, Road # 3  
Dhanmondi R/A Dhaka.

**Your Questions?**

Write to this section if you have any problem with your computer system. You can also express your views and ideas through this section.

You will get your answer every week.

Write to .....

**Star Computer Special**

C/O, The Daily Star  
House # 11, Road # 3  
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka

Please mention the word "Your Questions" on the envelop.