

Ramos urges Congress  
Help reduce tax  
rates on jewelry

MANILA, Dec 27: Philippine President Fidel Ramos today urged Congress to pass a pending bill that would reduce tariff and tax rates on jewelry to boost the sagging fortunes of the mining and jewelry industry, the presidential palace said, reports AFP.

The bill has been filed by his sister, Senator Leticia Shahani, who said that despite the fact that the Philippines is Asia's top gold producer, it also has one of the lowest gold fabrication levels among other countries as of 1990.

Ramos wrote to the Senate and the House of Representatives to give the proposed legislation top priority, a Palace statement said.

Shahani said in the bill that Philippine tariff and taxation rates on jewelry remained the highest in the region, with the result that the country's gold fabrication in 1990 ranked second to last and was even bypassed by Vietnam, which went in the business only in 1987.

Railway workers  
end strike  
in Serbia

BELGRADE, Dec 27: Thousands of railway workers on Sunday ended a strike that brought passenger train service throughout Serbia to a halt for slightly more than a day, media reported, says AP.

About 16,000 dispatchers and drivers, members of the 40,000-strong railway workers unions, walked out at noon Saturday, causing the cancellation of all domestic rail service. International trains were stopped at noon on Sunday.

But by late afternoon, the strike was called off, the state news agency Tanjug reported, citing a press release from railway officials.

The strikers were demanding that their salaries be raised by one-fourth to the dinar equivalent of at least 35 German Mark (about 20 dollar). They also demanded immediate payment of about 100 German Mark (58 dollar), as well as food parcels.

On Saturday the Belgrade Railway Transport Enterprise offered workers compensation in the form of scarce necessities — three kilograms (6.6 pounds) of detergent, two soap bars and two tubes of toothpaste.

The strikers rejected the offer.

As negotiations continued Sunday, the management offered "certain quantities of food" as well, Tanjug reported.

Essential products that are transported by rail, including coal, oil derivatives and humanitarian aid, were not affected by the strike.

Had the strike continued Monday, thousands of commuters, more and more of whom depend on trains because of a shortage of gasoline, would have been unable to reach their work places.

The economy of Yugoslavia, now composed only of Serbia and Montenegro, is reeling from the effects of international sanctions imposed in May 1992 for fomenting warfare in Bosnia.

Fueled by the government's indiscriminate printing of money, the inflation rate for December is expected to be nearly 250,000 percent.

# US warns Japan to stimulate economy as promised

WASHINGTON, Dec 27: Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen has warned Japan to keep its commitment to take measures to stimulate its weak economy, reports USIS.

Bentsen's statement, read to reporters in the Treasury press room December 22, came just days after a report showing the US trade deficit with Japan reaching its highest level in seven years in October, and just one day after the foreign-exchange value of the yen hit a seven-month low against the dollar.

"Of course, it came as no surprise to us that Kumagai's statements met with a hostile reaction from Japan's elite bureaucrats, who continue to resist deregulation and liberalisation measures because they fear a loss of power," Kantor wrote.

Kantor said at a Washington press briefing he could report no progress in the US-Japan economic framework negotiations initiated in July by President Clinton and former Prime Minister Miyazawa. The two countries had agreed to establish "objective criteria," including market-share numbers, for evaluating progress in opening key Japanese sectors to foreign

competition.

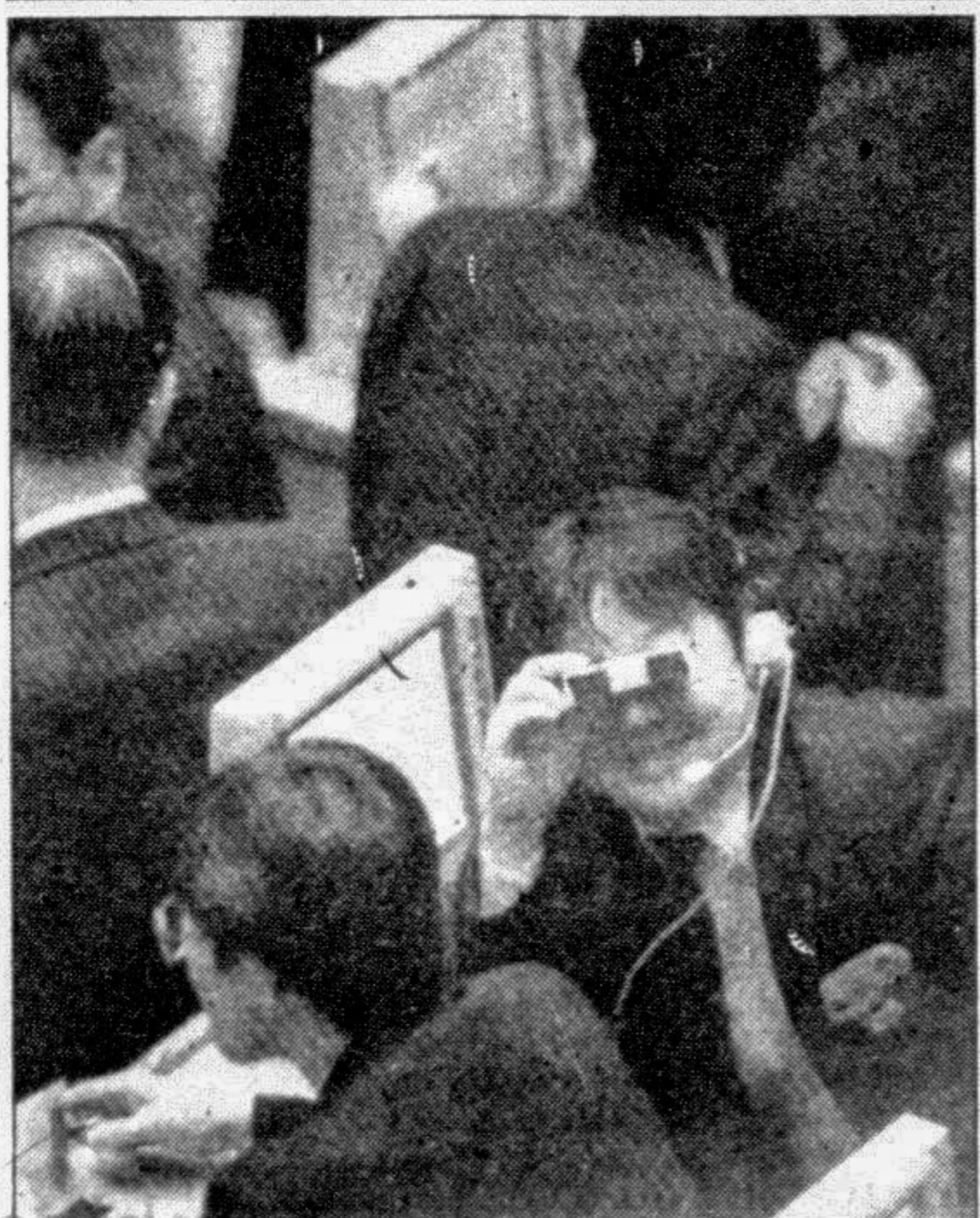
"Failure will only ensure that Japan's managed trade and managed markets persist," Kantor wrote in his letter.

Clinton and Hosokawa are scheduled to meet in February to review progress in the framework negotiations.

One part of the those negotiations concerns implementation of the 1992 agreement requiring expanded Japanese public-sector procurement of foreign-made computers and related services.

Kantor's office has reported that while foreign companies' share of Japanese quasi-governmental computer sales has increased, their share of Japanese national government sales, the largest and only rapidly growing segment of the Japanese market, decreased from four per cent in 1991 to 3.7 per cent in 1992.

"I am disappointed with the limited progress made under the 1992 computer agreement," Kantor said in December 20 written statement.



A stock trader looks through binoculars at a quotation board in the afternoon session of the Tokyo Stock Exchange yesterday. The Nikkei Stock Average ended down 321.23 points or 1.9 per cent at 16,819.88. — AFP photo

## Share prices in Tokyo plunge Asian stock markets close mostly higher

HONG KONG, Dec 27: Asian stock markets closed mostly higher Monday, but share prices plunged in Tokyo because of the Japanese government's failure to announce specific measures to bolster its economic stimulus plans.

The key indexes in Manila, Singapore, Malaysia and Bangkok closed at record highs. Tokyo's 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average fell 321.23 points, or 1.87 per cent, closing at 16,819.88. On Friday, the average had lost 364.63 points, or 1.75 per cent to 17,141.11.

It was the first time the Nikkei had closed below the psychologically significant 17,000-point level since its December 8 close of 16,507.95.

The Tokyo Stock Price Index of all issues listed on the first section was down 21.32 points, or 1.49 per cent, to 1,407.38.

Prices fell because of disappointment with the lack of specifics in Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's description Friday of the government's economic stimulus plans.

Trade remained largely unaffected by the political stalemate over suspicions that the Communist North is developing nuclear weapons, said the officials at the government's National Unification Board.

Most of trade between the two Koreas is through third countries, including China, Japan and Singapore, they said.

South Korea imported iron, steel and other raw materials from the North, while exporting soap, agricultural vinyl and other chemical goods.

The Koreas have been bitter rivals since the division of their peninsula into the Communist North and the capitalist South in 1945. Their border is the world's most heavily fortified in the world.

The Manila composite index of 31 selected issues rose 173.16 points to 3,170.62 following Thursday's 100-point surge. The market was closed on Friday.

The markets remained closed in Hong Kong, Sydney and Wellington because of the Christmas holidays.

SINGAPORE: Share prices rose on record volume, with the key index closing at an all-time high for the third straight day. The 30-share Straits Times Industrial Index rose 52.09 points to 2,378.43.

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian share prices closed higher in active trading following selective buying of blue chips. The Composite Index rose 26.82 points, closing at a record high of 1,205.28.

BANGKOK: Thai share prices closed sharply higher in active trading despite some profit-taking. The Stock Exchange of Thailand Index rose 43 points to 1,608.12 climbing above 1,600 points for the first time.

TAIPEI: Share prices closed sharply higher, boosted by heavy local buying because of optimism about the market's future prospects. The Weighted Index rose 171.30 points closing at 5,491.68, its highest level since July 5, 1991.

SEOUL: Share prices closed higher in active trading. The Korean Composite Stock Price Index rose 12.46 points to 873.86.

JAKARTA: The exchange's Composite Index rose 5.347 points, closing at 565.945.

# The Daily Star BUSINESS

## Clinton set to propose '95 deficit cut budget

WASHINGTON, Dec 27: The Clinton Administration is set to propose a fiscal year 1995 budget that contemplates a deficit falling sharply to about 190,000 million dollar, reports USIS.

Leon Panetta, Director of the Office of Management and Budget

briefing reporters at the White House. Panetta said the budget plan will include cutbacks in most government programmes and outright elimination of some. Spending will be increased by an average of 18 per cent on a small number of high priority programmes, notably in health, anti-crime efforts, employment and training, the environment, new technology and children's well-being, he said.

Panetta stressed clear of giving any specific numbers, which he noted must still be refined before the package is sent to the Senate and House of Representatives for their consideration. Thus it was unclear how much of the anticipated deficit cut can be attributed to spending reductions and tax rate increases and how much to such factors as the low inflation rate and a generally improving economy.

## Exchange Rates

The following are the Sonali Bank's dealing rates to public for some selected foreign currencies effective as on Dec 27. (Figures in Taka)

Currency	Selling		Buying	
	TT & OD	IC	TT Clean	OD SIGHT Ex. Bills.
US Dollar	39.9275	39.9550	39.7150	39.6105
Pound Sterling	60.0110	60.0524	59.2045	59.0488
DM	23.6348	23.6511	23.2614	23.1299
F Franc	6.9394	6.9441	6.8279	6.8099
C Dollar	30.2276	30.2484	29.7116	29.6334
S Franc	27.9107	27.9299	27.4668	27.3944
Yen	0.3625	0.3627	0.3531	0.3522
Indian Rupee (AMU)	1.2744	1.2773	1.2662	1.2537
Pak Rupee (AMU)	1.3241	1.3270	1.3154	1.3024
Iranian Rial (AMU)	0.0229	0.0230	0.0228	0.0226
AI T. T. (DOC) US Dollar Spot Buying Tk 39.6627				
AI Usance Rates:				
30 Days DA	60 Days DA	90 Days DA	120 Days DA	180 Days DA
39.2680	38.9367	38.6034	38.2741	37.6615
CI US Dollar sight export bill 3 months forward purchase			Tk. 39.4605	
DI US Dollar 3 months forward sale			Tk. 40.2050	

Currency	Indicative Rates		
	Selling T.T. & O.D.		Buying O. D. Transfer
S Riyal	10.6422		10.5235
AIR Dirham	10.8720		10.7521
Kuwaiti Dinar	133.8950		131.9936
Singapore Dollar	25.0681		24.7804
D Guilder	20.8990		20.6637
S Krone	4.7922		4.7357

Note : AMU—Asian Monetary Union.

## Shipping Intelligence

### CHITTAGONG PORT

Berth position and performance of vessels as on 27.12.1993

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	Last port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving
J/1	Alkyonida	TSP(I)	Slax	SSST	20/12	29/12
J/5	Samudra					
J/6	Rani	Repair	Kara	SSL	16/12	30/12
J/7	Golden Lake	GL	Kauc	Prog	23/12	27/12
J/8	Gourab	GL	Male	BSC	24/12	5/12
J/9	Buarque	Gl	Sugarc(I)	Col	16/12	29/12
J/10	Qing He	GI	S. Hal	Bdship	21/12	29/12
J/11	Knud Jespersen	Cont	Sing	CT	26/12	29/12
J/12	Petrel	M Seed	Vanc	Royal	21/12	30/12
J/13	Fong Yun	Cont	Sing	Bdship	26/12	28/12
J/14	Optima	Cont	Sing	RSL	24/12	28/12
MPB/1	Banglar Moni	Cont	Sing	BSC	24/12	28/12
MPB/2	Imke Wehr CCJ	Cont	Sing	APL(B)	23/12	27/12
GSJ	Madhuri	Idle	Viza	SSL	R/A	30/12
TSP	Dolores	Idle	Seacom	R/A	31/12	
RM/6	Sao Byol	Cement	Namp	Litmond	9/12	27/12
Asian producer	producer	HSB/JD	Sing	Msply	24/12	27/12
DOJ:	Banglar Shourab	Repair		BSC	R/A	28/12
DDJ/1	Banglar Sampad	Repair	Kara	BSC	14/12	8/1
RM/9	Banglar Asha	Repair		BSC	R/A	30/12
CUF/J:	Vishva Bikram	Urea	Cal	SSL	10/12	31/12

### VESSELS DUE AT OUTER ANCHORAGE

Name of vessels	Date of Arrival	Last port Cal	Cargo	Loading Port
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