The Daily Star

First with the news.

Best with the views

LGED takes up

Tk 3.26cr scheme

in Rajbari

vernment Engineering Direc-

torate (LGED) has taken up a

scheme to implement 127

uplift projects at a cost of Taka

3.26 crore under Village

Development Project-4 during

the current financial year, re-

ces, the projects include bric-

klaying on about ten km

road, construction of 58 metre

wide bridge, two water devel-

opment schemes and infras-

tructure of Nadua growth cen-

projects, rural communication

system with the district head-

quarters will be improved and

food production increased and

about 600 distressed women

will get job opportunities, the

gramme the LGED will con-

struct and repair school build-

ings and supply furniture in 69

government and registered

non-government primary scho-

ols at a cost of Taka 2.04 crore

eight new school buildings will

be constructed at the cost of

Taka 28.75 lakh, 34 schools

will be re-constructed at the

cost of Taka 1.34 crore and

furniture will be supplied at

pected to be completed during

June of this year, official

S'porean firms

recruit 6100

workers from

abroad last yr

pore companies recruited

more than 6,100 professionals

and skilled workers from abr-

oad last year, a 30 per cent

increase from 4,700 in 1992, a

government agency said

Lyou Soon Tian the Direc-

tor of the Economic Develop-

ment Board's (EDB) Interna-

tional Manpower Division, said

recruitment of skilled foreign

yesterday, reports AFP.

SINGAPORE, Jan 7: Singa-

The programme is ex-

the cost Taka 24 lakh.

source said.

Under the programme

in four thanas of the district.

Besides, in an another pro-

With the completion of the

Baliakandi-Pangsha-Nadhua

According to official sour-

ports UNB.

source added

RAJBARI, Jan 7: Local Go-

Arabs worrying about Israel's economic muscle

CAIRO, Jan 7: Arab nations. long fearful of Israel's military might, are now worrying about its economic muscle, accor ding to AP.

They, see Israel's peace accord with the PLO as possibly opening a door for the Jewish state into the lucrative Middle East market, a door that had been closed since Israel's founding 45 years ago.

A few Arab states, hoping for profit on both sides, are discussing economic cooperation with Israel. But most worry that technologically advanced Israel could swamp their economies with exports and lure away investors.

Israeli plans for more office towers and for highways to Arab capitals have only increased the fears. But so far the Arabs have responded mainly with hand-wringing and calls for ever-elusive Arab solidarity.

Dozens of editorials and columns in Egypt's press have warned of "an Israeli ear" and "economic hegemony." Libya and Syria have lobbied the 22member Arab League to main-

Filipino central

bank chief for

more foreign

banks

central bank Chief Gabriel

Singson called yesterday for

the passage of a new law allow-

ing more foreign banks to op-

erate in the country despite

opposition from the local fi-

that the deregulation of the

closed banking industry was

Singson told businessmen

Allowing foreign banks in

would significantly boost the

resources of the financial sys-

tem, he said, adding that he

had spoken to several large

foreign banks which had ex-

pressed "firm and clear de-

sires to move in once the law

Currently only four foreign

banks are allowed full com-

mercial operations here, and

are limited to three branches

pines was enjoying "much

noting that foreign reserves

stood at 56 billion dollars.

more than three month' worth

than 34 billion dollar but debt

servicing amounts to only 18.8

per cent of total export re-

ceipts, Singson said, a better

ratio than Brazil, Argentina,

India, Mexico, Indonesia,

year is "ensuring that price

stability is maintained," he

said, but said this would re-

quire action from other gov-

ernment agencies to tighten

ment would "allow market

forces to determine exchange

and interest rates." - pre-

sently over 16 per cent - but

said the central bank planned

to help ease interest rates by

NEC to supply

'PC-98' series to

Dell Computer

TOKYO, Jan 7: NEC Corp.

which controls more than half of Japan's personal computer

market, said Friday it is considering supplying its

popular "PC-98" series to Dell

Computer Corp of the United

for NEC, said the company is

considering a request to

supply the computers to Dell,

which would sell them in

Japan under its own brand

name. The deal would allow

Dell to sell computers that are

branch refused to comment.

compatible with Japan's most

Officials of Dell's Japan

Although NEC continues to

be the dominant force in

Japan's personal computer

market, competition among

computer makers has intensi-

fied since October 1992, when

Compaq Computer Corp of the

United States set off a price

war with a lineup of low-priced

. NEC uses a unique pro-

prietary system which is not

compatible with the IBM PC

design used by Dell, which has

become a de facto standard in

many countries outside of

Chris Shimizu, a spokesman

States, reports AP.

popular PC system.

computers.

cutting bank charges.

He added that the govern-

Another prierity for the

Venezuela or Chile.

Foreign debt stood at more

enhanced growth prospects.'

Singson said the Philip-

nancial cartel, reports AFP.

Congress.

... is enacted."

of imports.

deficits.

MANILA, Jan 7: Philippine

Israel until it surrenders all occupied Arab land Billions of dollar in trade

and tourism are at stake

Arab nations export 130 billion dollar worth of goods each year, much of it oil, and import more than 105 billion dollar according to Arab League figures.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has made it clear Israel wants a share. He suggested the 12 nation European Union can serve as a model for economic cooperation in the Middle East, with Israel part of the game.

Hasan Ibrahim, a Jordanian who is Secretary-General of the Arab League's Council of Arab Economic Unity, says the Arabs must deal from a posi tion of strength. He advocates finally activating the Arab Common Market, which has been under discussion since 1964

"We have in the Gulf wealth in oil and energy, in Egypt and other countries the people, in Sudan, Iraq and Morocco much land," Ibrahim said. "We

(a) man and a second

BASIC CARGO COLINGE FOR

RGO AGENTS

AND BURE TRANSPORT COUNTY

CEPTIFICATING AWARD

have mines agriculture ever ything Technology we can learn, and we can cooperate with other regions.

But even more limited effort# to get regional Arab trade groups going - like the Magreb Union in North Africa - have been blocked by different economic systems. political rivalries and market

Farouk el Hitani, chairman of the Management Department of the American University in Cairo, believes Arab concerns about Israel are overbl-

controls

"It's a phobia," he said. "The perception is that Israel is a superpower - this is what is implied in all the fears about

He argued the Jewish state has limited natural resources. expensive labour and a socialized economy - not the best basis for competing with Western and Asian nations already trading with the Arabs.

But Israel - which exports more than 12 billion dollar in goods a year and imports

goods worth 18 billion dollar growing commercial opportunities in the Arab world, with which it now has only a few clandestine links.

It plans to quadruple the size of Ben Gurion Airport in hopes of becoming a regional hub, and has secured a European Union pledge of funds for new highway links to Jordan and Egypt.

How quickly Israeli-Arab cooperation grows remains to

Egypt, the first Arab nation to sign a treaty with Israel in 1979, maintains a "cold peace" with limited economic trade and tourism.

Only a few Arab nations are taking tentative steps.

Kuwait announced after the 1991 Gulf War that it eased its boycott of firms trading with Israel. Morocco is reported close to an agreement on air phone and mail links to Israel. Although Qatar denies it reports persist that the gasrich Gulf state has discussed building a gas pipeline to

one of the central bank's main priorities for 1994 and that he Lt Col (Retd) Shariar Ahmed Chowdhury, Director (Administration) of Biman, addressing was hopeful that the pending as chief guest the certificate awarding ceremony of first basic cargo course for the cargo laws would be passed soon by agents at the Bangladesh Airlines Training Centre (BATC) in the city on Thursday.

China's move to protect workers from private employers

BEIJING, Jan 7: Chinese cities and provinces have been ordered to set minimum wages to protect workers from exploitation by private and foreign employers, the official China Daily newspaper said

Friday, reports AP. · The move reflects growing concern over the working conditions of tens of thousands of Chinese, mainly youths from poor villages, who have flocked to coastal towns for factory

The official media has recently carried numerous reports about long hours, low pay, harsh discipline and unsafe conditions in foreign joint-venture factories, prompted in part by two recent fires in Hong Kong and Taiwanesefunded factories that killed a total of 148 workers.

Officials said the factories were firetraps.

The China Daily said the Labour Ministry has given city and provincial governments until July to publish their minimum wages, which cannot be less than half the local average

Shanghai has already set its minimum wage at 210 yuan -(24 dollar) a month. Shenzhen and Zhuhai, special economic zones in South China near llong Kong, where the cost of living is higher, have set their minimums at 280 yuan (32)

dollar) and 326 yuan (38 dollar) respectively, the paper

Though cheap labour helps to lure foreign and overseas investments that create em-

India will be world's biggest milk producer by century-end

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: India would be the biggest milk producer in the world by the end of the century, the National Dairy Development Board Chairman V Kurien said in a meeting here Wednesday, reports Xinhua.

The country's present annual milk production, which stands at 58 million tons, is growing at an annual rate of five per cent and by the end of the century will reach 70 million tons, he said.

America, ranking the first in the world, produces 67 million tons of milk products per year and wants to cut output,

At present, India is exporting seven million US dollar worth of milk products and within five years it could export 100 million US dollar worth of such products, he

ployment opportunities, the new system will ensure that workers are treated fairly in overseas-funded enterprises that sometimes neglect the welfare of their labourers." the paper said.

Companies that delay paying wages will be penalized, the paper quoted Su Hainan of the Labour Ministry as saying. One overseas-funded toy factory in Zhuhai owed more than 1.6 million yuan (184,000 dollar) in back wages to its workers dating to 1989, it said.

The new wage floors appar ently will apply to the "basic wage", which in China is generally only part of the monthly pay packet. Companies also give bonuses that may be linked to performance as well as government-mandated subsidies for transportation and

A worker with a basic wage of 200 yuan (23 dollar) might actually take home 250 yuan (29 dollar) a month.

China did not need minimum wage rules in the past because all factories followed a uniform government-set wage scale. The past decade, however, has seen the emergence of private and foreign-funded companies that set their own wages. Some state companies also have been given permis sion to set their own wages.

RAKUB disburses Tk 65.21cr loan in six months

Rajshahi Krishi Unrayan Bank (RAKUB) has distributed Taka 65 crore 21 lakh 81 thousand as loan among the farmers during the first six months of the current fiscal year, a bank press release said in Dhaka yesterday, reports

The amount of loan distributed the same period of last year was Taka 32 crore.

The loan has mainly distributed for crop production. buying of ploughing bulls. milking cows, setting up irrigation pumps and other self employment projects. Seventyfive per cent of the recipient clients are small and marginal farmers.

During the same period the bank has realised Taka 52.42 crore loan which is Taka 18 crore more than the same period of the previous year.

The target of loan distribution has been fixed at Taka 150 crore for the current fis-

Beijing to raise steel prices, limit imports

BEIJING, Jan 7: China plans to raise iron and steel prices closer to world levels this year but will tighten restrictions on imports, the official China Daily said Friday, reports AP.

The newspaper said Liu Qi the Minister for Metallurgical Industry, told a national conference that excessive steel imports in 1993 hurt domestic companies and that import controls would be tightened this year.

He did not specify what controls would be put in place. Just last week, the government announced it had abolished a set of quotas and import license requirements, including some affecting iron and steel products.

HK best travel destination in Asia

HONG KONG, January 7: Hong Kong has become the best travel destination in Asia, according to an overall survey conducted by an established international tourist company on all scenic places in the Hong Kong played host to

5.92 million tourists from all over the world by the end of October 1993. The figure will swell to 7.36 million if the number of tourists from the Chinese mainland were included, Suzanna Leung, spokesman for the Hong Kong Tourist Association, told Xinhua in an exclusive interview

Visitors to Hong Kong for the entire 1993 are expected to reach the record number of nine million, a jump of 13 to 15 per cent compared with the same period of the previous year, she added.

Tourism has become the second-largest earner of foreigh exchange in Hong Kong, after the textile and garment industry. Tourism receipts in the

first three quarters of last year totalled 37.5 billion HK dollar (4.8 billion US dollar), 10 per cent higher over the same period of 1992. Leung attributed the record

number of tourist arrivals in 1993 to the big influx from the Chinese mainland. Up to date, the Chinese

mainland has become the second largest market of Hong

DSE chairman says

Enhanced tax rebates can attract new companies to share market

Fiscal incentives like enhanced tax rebates can attract new companies to come into the country's share market and help strengthen the supply side of the trading on the floor of stock exchange. Khurshid Alam, Chairman of Dhaka Stock Exchange, has said.

In an interview with BSS yesterday Alam suggested that the ing the last year at DSE. government could consider to give 10 to 15 per cent tax rebate to the listed companies to increase the supply of shares and boost the number of transactions in the stock market. He said the present 40 per cent corporate tax was not attractive enough to bringing in new companies to the stock market while non listed companies had to pay 45 per cent tax. "Only a five per cent difference is not enough to lure a company to go to public." he said.

Alam, who has more than three decades of experience with the capital market and became chairman of Dhaka Stock Exchange for the sev enth time last October, said the faster implementation of the amended company law was now necessary to attract more foreign investment in the country's capital market as the present 80-year old law did not attract foreign investment

He said the market was opened to foreign capital for the first time last year when the government allowed for eigners to invest in the country's capital market and repa-

triate capital gains without re-, strictions. Foreign firms since invested about 15 million US dollar in the country's securities, and their investment is growing fast, he said.

Alam said colossal improvement was witnessed in the transaction of shares and prices remained buoyant dur-

Alam said market capitalisation rose to 392 million dollar in the last fiscal year ending in June from 337.2 million dollar in the previous years. but it grew to 451.8 million dollar by December 12.

The DSE chairman said the investors response remained excellent and "the market is hungry for new issues. The supply side of the share market must grow faster to meet the increasing demand of the investors both local and foreign." Alam said expressing his concern that foreign firms might divert their funds for investment if their demand for new issues were not fulfilled

Referring to the ICB's role in making the share market more dependable he said ICB as the largest local trader representing government body should play more effective role in market making. Alam said, "I am hopeful

the market is growing as the government seemed to be very keen to develop the capital market which is the integral part in the process of economic development."

Beijing issues warnings to secure reforms

BEIJING, Jan 7: China has issued strong warnings to individuals or enterprises who seek to exploit the implementation of sweeping economic reforms by hiking prices, news reports said today, reports

"Those who seek exorbitant profits through driving up prices will be punished severely. the official People's Daily quoted state Planning Committee Deputy Director Luo Zhiling as

Luo also called on state-run enterprises to set an example by keeping prices firmly in

During the past week. Chinese leaders have taken pains to reassure people that a

tion, finance and investment systems - some of which have already been implemented will not lead to any drastic price fluctuations. "The government will take

series of reforms of the taxa

effective measures to soften the negative impact of these plans on society," Luo stressed.

As China continues its drive towards a market economy, rollercoaster price swings have become a prime source of concern for the central authorities who fear the effect of inflation on social stability.

Despite an abundant supply of meat and vegetables, the Farmers' daily reported price rises on such products in some major cities in recent months.

4 lakh HK Chinese can lose right to live

HONG KONG, Jan 7: Some 400,000 Hong Kong Chinese could lose the right to live here after the British colony reverts to China in 1997 because they have obtained foreign citizenship, the government said Wednesday.

The figure was given to legislators by Principal Assistant Secretary for Security Simon Vickers, who said another 20,000 non-Chinese residents with foreign right of abode faced the same uncertain fu-

By way of example, Vickers said China could well declare after 1997 that a Hong Kong Chinese holding a Canadian passport can no longer have "automatic permanent residency in Hong Kong."

administration was proposing to China that such emigrants be able to keep their right to live in Hong Kong by way of a "simple declaration" after 1997.

"What we want to achieve is that they don't really lose anything in effect," he said.

It was unclear how open the Chinese government would be to such a suggestion given the poor state of Sino-British relations over Governor Chris Patten's democratic reform proposals.

Some 60,000 Hong Kong Chinese emigrated in 1993, continuing an exodus that began after Britain and China agreed 10 years ago on the colony's return to Chinese

sectors including architecture, town planning, product design, software engineering and radio frequency technology. The EDB also set up a foreign researchers recruitment programme last year to

reimburse companies for part

seven recruitment missions for

over 110 participating com-

panies and organisations last

United States, Britain, Canada,

Australia, India and Russia and

recruited workers for jobs in

The missions visited the

of the cost of hiring, relocating and salaries for foreign research and development staff. The board's future thrust includes organising more focused recruitment missions to the United States, Britain, Australia and India and

attracting more entrepreneurs

permanent residence status.

with schemes granting them

'Japan will have oldest society of top economic powers by 2025'

TOKYO, Jan 7: Japan will have the oldest society of all the world's top economic powers by the year 2025, according to a government report issued on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

It said 25.8 per cent of the population would be aged 65 or over. On a comparative scale using United Nations statistics, Germany would rank second with 23 per cent, followed by the United States with 20 per cent and Britain 19 per cent.

Japan already ranks top in terms of life expectancy, the report said, with an average life span for women of 82 years and 76 years for men.

Public concern is growing about how the social welfare, system will cope, according to the study In a recent survey of 2,300

people, 70 per cent said they leared the government would not be able to provide adequate pensions or enough nursing homes in the next century.

He said the British colonial sovereignty. New US vehicles troubles for Japanese automakers

DETROIT, Jan 7: Japanese automakers know what "Japanbashing" feels like at auto shows in the Motor City. But this year, their biggest troubles are new US vehicles on the floor of Detroit's Cobo Centre, where the North American International Auto Show opens to the public Saturday, reports

The comeback of America's Big Three Automakers has tamed the anti-Japanese rhetoric of past shows. No parades of Ford Tauruses decked with American flags this time, and US executives aren't badmouthing Japan about unfair trade practices.

The Japanese had no complaints about being saddled with unpopular news conference slots during press days at the show, nor about unfavourable placement of their

displays. But angst was apparent as early as Monday afternoon, when Honda North America official Shigeaki Kato mingled with reporters and nervously waited for Chrysler Corp. to announce the price of its new Neon subcompact. The Neon is one of many

new US products taking the fight to showroom with lower prices, better performance and more attractive styling than the Japanese. "At least, it wasn't 7,000

dollar," Kato said with relief when Neon's 8,975 dollar price was illuminated on its stand at the show.

Kato had reason to be worried. Neon will compete directly with the Honda Civic. Honda reported 6.5 per cent lower US sales last year compared with 1992, when its vaunted Accord's three-year run as best-selling car in the United States was ended by the Ford Taurus.

Overall, Japanese makers' share of the US market slipped 1.2 percentage points to 23.1 per cent last year from 24.3 per cent in 1992.

The reversal of the price advantage that had been a source of strength for the Japanese is a big reason for the trouble. The surge in value of the

Japanese yen — from about 125 yen to the dollar early last year to a post-World War II record low of near 101 yen last summer — eroded profits, forcing the Japanese to repeatedly raise prices for cars sold in the United States.

"The yen situation was totally absurd . . . it's starting to finally settle down," said Toyota Motor Sales USA President Shinji Sakai. "Last year was a really tough year for

Japanese small cars, which used to be about 2,000 dollar cheaper than their American counterparts are now, on average, about 2,000 dollar more expensive. At the luxury end of the

market the gap is even greater.

A 1993 Lexus LS400 sold for

47,000 dollar while the 1994 version, which is barely changed, costs 51,200 dollar. But the three top Japanese companies - Toyota, Nissan

- and Honda - are still formidable players, analysts caution. Their products have higher resale values than US vehicles, and Japanese makers have aggressively used subsidized leasing to keep monthly payments down — and customers interested

But Japanese nameplates in recent years have tended to compete head on, eating into each other's share of the US market. That has imperiled ' some of the smaller Japanese . companies. Isuzu, for example, has abandoned the passenger car market to concentrate on trucks.

Nissan USA President Robert J Thomas says there's no overlap between customers loyal to Japanese cars and those who prefer to buy American. Nissan was the only

market share last year and sales of its Tennessee-built Altima grew largely at the expense of the Accord, he said. The slowing sales of Japanese cars in the United

weakened by recession.

Japanese maker to gain US

Atsushi Honda of the daily Chunichi Shimbun was one of the many Japanese reporters who flocked to the Detroit show to see whether the much-ballyhooed Big Three comeback was for real.

"The new Big Three

States come at a time when

the Japanese economy is

products are Japan killers," he said after a first hand look. "Japanese makers grew arrogant and began to think they could sell higher-priced cars. But now they've utterly lost their confidence.

faction surveys, such as those conducted by market research firm J D Power and Associates, still put Japanese cars ahead of

pany executives are counting on that to help them recapture lost market share. "We're not going to sit back

US cars. Some Japanese com-

and let other manufacturers say their car is the same or better than the Accord or the Civic," said Honda senior Vice President Dick Colliver. "Just look under the skin: safety, fuel economy, driving comfort. the price and, most of all, resale value. It's not even close.

But others doubt that the Japanese edge in quality will yield any sales growth in coming years.

Joseph Phillippi, an auto industry analyst for Lehman Brothers, predicts that the Japanese will lose another one to two percentage points of market share this year.

Quality and customer satis-"That's strictly and purely driven by pricing," he said People are going to say. 'I can live with switches that aren't as perfect for 3,000 dollar

workers was important for Singapore's economic growth because of the small pool of local workers. Lyou told reporters that while the government's emphasis was for local enterprises to expand globally and improve their base of expertise, he expected the recruitment figure for 1994 to remain more or less the same The EDB's international manpower division organised