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# Unutilised WB aid for rural electrification to be returned

By A Special Correspondent

Next April around 24 million dollars worth of assistance for rural electrification will stand returned to the World Bank (WB). This is the balance amount of a credit for rural electrification sanctioned by the World Bank (WB) in December 1985. The full credit amount at current exchange rate was 104 million dollars.

The WB credit was originally provided for electrification of seven new Palli Bidyut Samities (PBSs), expansion of distribution facilities in four existing PBSs and rehabilitation of lines in ten other PBSs under the Second Rural Electrification Project. In all, the project was expected to reach electricity to around 140,000 consumers in 1,058 villages.

World Bank credits are denominated in SDR (Special Drawing Rights), which is a composite currency made up of five major currencies including the US dollar by the IMF. Depreciation of the US dollar against most of the major currencies since 1986 helped the dollar value of the World Bank credit of SDR 76.4 million for the Second Rural Electrification Project to soar and reach 104 million dollars at current exchange rate. This helped to enlarge the project scope by taking up additional ten PBSs for rehabilitation.

The project was scheduled for completion in 1991. But, by that time only a little over half of the 104 million dollar credit had been used. The credit has been officially closed by the World Bank last December. By that time the credit closing date had been extended twice and project implementation delay had crossed 30 months.

Strangely, this is one of the projects where physical investment targets have been achieved, albeit after long delays. All the seven PBSs have been established and construction work of the PBSs headquarters buildings completed. Twenty-five sub-stations have been constructed and energised. All these have helped to bring 1309 villages under electrification against a target of 1,058.

But, energisation of REB power stations and bringing more than target numbers of villages under electrification only mean that electricity is at the doorsteps of more village people than before. It does not mean that the target number of additional electricity connections have been made.

Last October a mission from the WB visited Bangladesh to measure the actual progress achieved under the project. The mission estimated that less than half of the target number of new rural electricity connections had been made till then. The mission concluded that the REB would not be able to use the balance amount of the credit within a reasonable period of time to further expand rural electrification. Accordingly, the mission recommended against extension of the credit closing date beyond December 31, 1993. This will mean that Bangladesh will have to return 24 million dollars to the WB in

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# JS body faces legal problems in dealing with NCB issues

By Sohail Manzur

The Public Undertaking Committee (PUC) of the Jatiya Sangsad has been facing difficulties in dealing with the matters of the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) because of a loophole in law.

Although a proposal for amending the law to remove the loophole is under the consideration of the Amendment Committee of Parliament, serious questions about the jurisdiction of the PUC are being raised by the Finance Ministry and the banking sector following a move to charge the Sonali Bank with undermining the authority of the Jatiya Sangsad.

The State Minister for Finance, Mujibur Rahman, in an interview with an English Daily, categorically said the NCBs are beyond the jurisdiction of the Public Undertaking Committee as per existing Rules of Procedure of the Jatiya Sangsad.

The minister argued that as per Schedule 4 of the Rules of Procedure, the NCBs are not public undertakings. He, however, observed that the matters of the banking sector should be dealt with by the Parliamentary Committee on Finance, which has been doing so presently.

According to the said Schedule of the Rules of Procedure, the corporations or autonomous institutions which were set up before the independence of the country and continued to operate afterwards, would be considered as public undertakings and thus would come under the jurisdiction of the

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# Khaleda to tour SAARC countries

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, as Chairperson of the SAARC, will undertake a visit of the six other member countries. The itinerary of the visits will be finalised shortly.

This was disclosed by Foreign Secretary Mufleh Rahman Osmany at a routine press briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the city yesterday.

Osmany said the visits to the member countries by the sitting Chairperson of the SAARC are normally undertaken as part of a tradition and that it was not an obligation.

The Foreign Secretary, however, did not elaborate on the schedule of the visits.

Osmany also said Bangladesh will shortly establish diplomatic ties with Ireland. The initial links will be at the consular level. Ireland was one of the first four countries to

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Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina handing over a fish — the symbol of her party's mayor candidate — to Mohammad Hanif at a public meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. — Star photo

# Hanif introduced as mayor candidate Foil plan to rig polls: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

fresh tax in the next five years."

Handing over a dummy fish to Hanif, Hasina said, "The Bengalees, fish and rice are synonymous. If you prefer this traditional Bengalee menu, vote for Hanif and his poll symbol — the fish."

Negating Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's slogan, "Daal-Bhaat for everybody," the AL chief remarked, "We want fish-rice for everybody."

Hasina also sought votes for the AL-backed commissioner candidates in the 90 wards of the DCC.

The meeting, organised to mark the homecoming day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on this day in 1972 after nine months of captivity in Pakistani jails during the country's Liberation War, eventually turned into a projection rally for Hanif as the speakers mostly dwelt on the city corporation polls and sought votes for the party nominee.

Addressing the meeting, Mohammad Hanif described his long association with pro-people agitations in the city and sought the city dwellers' mandate for him to serve them better.

Referring to an alleged threat by some ruling party leaders to drive him out from the city, an emotion-charged Hanif told his audience, "you please tell me, what's my crime? I was born and brought up in this city and I shared the joys and sorrows of the city people. I did nothing that harmed the citizens here."

Hanif pledged that, if elected, he would free the DCC from partisan politics, turn it into a centre of hopes and aspirations of the 70 lakh Dhaka people and run the local government body only for the welfare of the citizens.

He also promised to solve all the problems relating to taxation, water-loggng, sewerage, sanitation, electricity and transportation and rid the city

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# Drug stores keep shutters down

By Staff Correspondent

"Some 22,000 licensed drug stores in the country remained shut yesterday on the first day of the two-day strike called by the Bangladesh Chemists and Druggists Society to press home its five-point charter of demands.

The samity, despite a verbal assurance of the Health Minister yesterday to implement the demands, decided to continue its agitation unless the government issued an order accepting the demands.

The main demand is withdrawal of the government's decision to enhance the drug licence renewal fees by 50 per cent.

The leaders of the samity, including its president Sadekur Rahman, Abdul Hal, Mokhesur Rahman and Mozammel Haq yesterday met Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf.

President of the samity Sadekur Rahman told The Daily Star last night, "The Health Minister informed us that he

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# Professionals go on strike from today

By Staff Correspondent

The country's non-administrative civil servants and professionals including doctors, engineers and agriculturists are scheduled to strike work from today in support of their various demands.

While the professionals including agriculturists and engineers have planned a three-day work stoppage, the doctors — the other component of Prokrihi — are set to embark upon an indefinite abstention from duty in support of their own 21-point set of demands.

The three-day strike of the professionals is also in protest against the forced retirement of several officials, including Muhammad Abu Hena, Secretary General of the professionals' coordination council.

Meanwhile, the Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister and secretary general of the ruling party Barrister Salam Talukdar,

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# BMA begins indefinite strike today

By Staff Correspondent

Some 8000 doctors will begin an indefinite strike in all government hospitals and medicare centres across the country from today at the call of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) to press home their 21-point charter of demands.

However, the private practitioners, clinics and hospitals will be functioning as usual since they are not affiliated with the BMA.

During the strike, the doctors will work only in the emergency departments at the eight government hospitals while BMA voluntary doctors will run substitute outdoor units in the hospital premises.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, a top BMA leader said the BMA central leaders held talks with the Health Minister but nothing positive came out of the meetings.

"We held 18 rounds of talks. See Page 12 Col 8

# Govt orders removal of BSRS MD

Star Report

In an apparent bid to reorganise the dormant Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS), the government has ordered removal of its Managing Director Mamunur Rashid from the corporation, according to official sources.

It is, however, yet to be ascertained if the order has been implemented, because similar orders issued earlier in 1992 were not carried out.

If the order issued Sunday is implemented, Al Amin Chowdhury, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, will take over as the Managing Director of the BSRS and Mamunur Rashid will join the Ministry of Establishment as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD).

The first order of transfer of the BSRS Managing Director was issued in March '92 and Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Finance Shamsuzzaman Chowdhury was supposed to replace him. The second order of transfer was issued in June

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# Fahd invited to visit Bangladesh

New Saudi Ambassador to Dhaka Abdullah Omar Barri yesterday called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the Prime Minister's office terming the relationship between the two Muslim countries as an excellent and very cordial one, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister, through the ambassador, extended a cordial invitation to Saudi King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz to visit Bangladesh.

Begum Zia assured the Saudi Ambassador of every co-operation in his tenure in Dhaka and said the ties between the two very friendly countries had reached its peak during Shaeed President Ziaur Rahman's time.

Begum Zia regretted Muslims in different parts of the world had now been fallen victims of atrocities and said the Bosnian Muslims were being cleansed.

The Prime Minister asked the Saudi envoy to help expand the economic cooperation and raise the number of Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi ambassador expressed his optimism that the ties between the two friendly countries would be strengthened.

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Morshed Khan goes to Japan today

Special Envoy of the Prime Minister M Morshed Khan leaves for Japan today on his first mission as an emissary of the government. During his week-long tour at the invitation of the Japanese government, Khan will have talks with the government of Japan regarding the visit of the Prime Minister to Tokyo in the last week of March, an official announcement said yesterday, reports UNB.

## Sarbaharaman killed

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Jan 10: Sarbahara activist, Rashid, arrested in an injured condition last night from Kathiladaha of Mirpur thana succumbed to his injuries today. He was absconding for the last 10 years. The body has been sent for post mortem.

## Change in Ctg train schedule

CHITTAGONG, Jan 10: The inter-city train Mahanagar Purabi-703 up will leave the Chittagong station at 4 pm instead of 2:50 pm from January 15, a Railway press release said here tonight. It will reach Dhaka at 9:05 pm, reports BSS.

## Council of Editors concerned

The Bangladesh Council of Editors yesterday expressed concern over the shortage of newspapers in the city market. In a statement Sanaullah Noori, president and A Q M Zaimul Abedin, secretary general of the Council of Editors called for making newsprint available in the market. They criticised the newspaper agents and traders for creating artificial shortage of newsprints and enhancing its price, reports BSS.

# Interview with CCC mayoral candidate Ctg to look like Bombay: Mahmud

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Jan 10: The Jatiya Party nominee for the January 30 mayoral election here, Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury, wants to develop Chittagong like the port cities of Bombay and Karachi in a bid to raise its image abroad.

Islam, who served the Chittagong City Corporation as the first appointed mayor during the regime of deposed president Ershad, said, "If I win, I will make efforts to build up all infrastructures of the port city."

"Besides, I will initiate all the development works which remained incomplete during my tenure as the mayor of Chittagong," Islam pledged.

The ex-mayor claimed that it was only during his tenure that the people of the port city witnessed large scale development works.

The present government

work was carried out by the present government."

Islam vowed to realise the due rights of this port city for its development.

"I will urge the city people here to extend their support to me to spearhead the agitation."

The JP candidate also said, "I will try to provide relief to the city dwellers from the burden of taxes by formulating a logical tax structure."

"When election time comes, everybody indulges in rhetoric and makes new pledges, but after the elections they forget everything," he said.

Islam said he would also take measures to maintain law and order in the city.

He expressed concern that crimes like hijackings, robberies and thefts had alarmingly increased in the city.

Mahmudul I. Chowdhury

has no development work for Chittagong, he also alleged.

When asked, Islam said, "The Chittagong City Corporation areas were only brought under some maintenance works but no real development

# NATO plans air strikes in Bosnia

BRUSSELS, Jan 10: NATO leaders are ready to order air strikes in Bosnia under UN authority to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo or to protect other areas, according to a draft of an alliance summit statement, reports Reuter.

A copy of the statement, which NATO sources said had been agreed by all 16 leaders and will be issued on Tuesday, was obtained by Reuters.

"We reaffirm our readiness, under the authority of the United Nations Security Council ... to carry out air strikes in order to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo, the safe areas and other threatened areas in 'Bosnia-Herzegovina,'" the draft said.

NATO, which already has warplanes patrolling over Bosnia, threatened last August to bomb Serb artillery shelling Sarajevo but has so far held back. Final approval is needed for any strike from UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The statement made clear Western impatience with continued obstruction of UN aid deliveries.

PARIS, Jan 10: UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali reacted cautiously today after US President Bill Clinton at the NATO summit in Brussels threw his weight behind NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serbs. "A statement by President Clinton is not enough ... we must wait and see what resolutions are adopted in Brussels and on that basis which decisions will be adopted by the Security Council," he told a news conference here, reports AFP.

US President Bill Clinton said today the credibility of NATO was at stake in Bosnia and warned fellow alliance leaders that they should only make a new threat of air strikes if they intended to carry it out.

"What is at stake is not just the safety of the people in Sarajevo and any possibility of bringing this terrible conflict to an end, but the credibility of the alliance itself," Clinton said in a speech to the opening session of a NATO summit.

Clinton said he welcomed a draft summit statement to be issued on Tuesday.

"I welcome the reassertion by the alliance ... of our warning against the strangulation of Sarajevo and the safe areas. But if we are going to reassert this warning, it cannot be seen as mere rhetoric," Clinton said.

"Those who attack Sarajevo must understand that we are serious. If we leave the sentence in the declaration, we have to mean it," he said.

Clinton added that if NATO voted for this warning he expected it "to take action when necessary ... And I think if anyone here doesn't agree with that, you shouldn't vote for the language."

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# Streamlining of some govt deptts underway

By Staff Correspondent

The Administrative Reorganisation Committee, at a meeting yesterday, identified some government departments which needed immediate reforms.

The meeting was chaired by Finance Minister Salfur Rahman.

The committee, according to sources, suggested streamlining some departments in the light of the government's stress on private sector initiative.

The meeting reviewed the preliminary findings of different departments and proposed further study of the recommendations.

The committee is learnt to have decided to reorganise and further strengthen the offices of the Comptroller of Insurance, the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, the Patents Office

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