

PDB reallises Tk 15.59cr as outstanding bills in Khulna

KHULNA, Jan 14: Power Development Board realised over Tk 15.59 crore as outstanding bills from Khulna zone during the month of December, reports UNB.

PDB also disconnected 3735 electricity lines in the area for non-payment of the arrears. Of them, 835 lines were disconnected in Khulna circle, 489 in Jessore circle, 752 in Barisal circle and 1659 in Faridpur circle.

A defaulter was sent to court and 31 others were fined for consuming electricity illegally, official sources said.

New executive of MBA club

S M Kamal, Director of Beximco Limited and M Saidul Haq, President of Survey Research Group of Bangladesh (SRGB), have been made President and General Secretary respectively of the MBA Club, reports BSS.

Mesbah-ul Haque and Iqbal Hussain have been made senior Vice President and Vice President respectively while Mujibul Haque made Joint Secretary in the 15-member Executive Committee.

The other office bearers are: Treasurer — Abul Kalam Majumder, Sports and Cultural Secretary — Enamul Haque, Members — Nanda Dulal Shah, Tamizuddin Ahmed, Ratna Sen, Khalilur Rahman, Nurul Haq Majumder, Arifur Rahman, Zahidur Rahman and Abdullah Sardar.

Shortage of bamboo hampers house building at Madaripur

MADARIPUR, Jan 14: Shortage of bamboo has been hampering construction of new houses and repair of old ones in the district, reports UNB.

The traditional bamboo-based cottage industries are also facing a setback throwing hundreds of families into uncertainty. These families used to earn their livelihood by taking up the age-old occupation.

The scarcity has been attributed to the indiscriminate selling of bamboo clusters by the ignorant farmers to the brickfield owners.

Besides, local agriculture extension department took no attempt to motivate the growers not to sell the bamboo roots for the sake of bamboo production.

When asked the bamboo growers said with the selling of clusters new ones will grow automatically which is totally wrong.

Clinton promises to help Russia transform economy

MOSCOW, Jan 14: US President Bill Clinton promised Russian leader Boris Yeltsin substantial and speedy Western support to help Russia transform its economy and cushion the pain of its far-reaching reforms, reports Reuters.

"President Clinton promised that, as long as Russia keeps reforming, we'll work with the G-7, the IMF and the World Bank to get this support delivered as rapidly as possible," US Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen told reporters on the first day of a summit meeting between the two leaders.

US officials said Washington had talked with its group of seven allies — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan — and with Russia about using money from international financial institutions to help cushion the pain of the reforms.

"We have developed a number of ideas," one senior official, who declined to be identified, said.

He said the United States had yet to talk to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Bank for reconstruction and development about the proposals.

An IMF team is due here next week to try to reach agreement with Russia on a reform programme that would free up a 1.5 billion US dollars "structural transformation facility" credit for Moscow.

Bentsen said the World Bank has some 500 million dollars ready to lend Russia to help ease some of the economic disruption caused by privatisation of state-run companies that provide workers with cradle-

to-grave social benefits.

The US itself has allocated 100 million US dollars of a previously promised 125 million US dollars for privatisation to an equity fund that will invest in large-scale Russian companies to help make them more efficient, Bentsen said.

US officials were generally upbeat after Clinton's first session with Yeltsin, much of which concentrated on economic issues. They were confident Yeltsin will press ahead with the economic reforms, despite the poor showing by reformers in last month's parliamentary elections.

The officials also sought to clear up any misunderstanding there might be in Russia about US support for the reforms and the need to link international assistance to the pace at which they proceed.

US Vice-President Al Gore suggested here last month that the IMF and World Bank might have to ease the tough conditions they place on loans to Russia — a stance that was quickly disowned by Bentsen and ultimately rejected by Clinton.

But no matter how much aid Russia receives from Western governments, its ultimate economic success will depend on attracting private investment, Bentsen said.

According to a review by the East European Investment Magazine, US investors have put 4.1 billion US dollars into Russia over the past three years.

Bentsen voiced particularly high hopes for private sector involvement in the development of the energy sector, where Russia is rich in resources.

Massive boro farming scheme undertaken in northern dists

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 14: A massive scheme has been undertaken to bring 8.28 lakh hectares of land under high yielding boro cultivation in 16 northern districts in the current season, reports UNB.

According to official sources here, the districts are Sirajganj, Bogra, Joypurhat, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Natore, Chapainawabganj, Pabna, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation supplied seeds and insecticides to the growers of the region and the different banks have also disbursed loans to make the scheme a success.

The high yielding variety paddy IRR1 and boro are mainly cultivated in the region during this season.

Usually farmers cultivate IR-8 (IRRI-8) and about 26 varieties of BRRI in 53.54 per cent of the total.

India to lift curbs on coffee marketing

BOMBAY, Jan 14: India, moving ahead with its economic reforms, has decided to lift curbs on coffee marketing by allowing growers a free sale quota and to export their crop directly, officials said, reports Reuters.

"Under a free sale quota, coffee growers have the freedom to sell or export their produce directly," said a senior official in the Commerce Ministry.

The official, seeking anonymity, said the Ministry had accepted a proposal by the state-run Coffee Board, to introduce a free sale quota.

The details of how much quota will be allowed for free sale are being worked out," he said, declining to say when the free sale quota would be introduced.

He said the decision to introduce a free sale quota had been taken after planters' representatives from southern

India met Commerce Ministry officials last week.

Planters in the southern city of Bangalore said a free sale quota would boost coffee exports especially at a time when the country was heading for a bumper crop.

At present, coffee growers are allowed an internal sale quota under which they can sell up to 30 per cent of their produce in the domestic market. The remainder is collected by the board for auctioning locally and for exports. Officials said the government would have to issue an ordinance or executive order for introducing the free sale quota, pending an amendment to the coffee act in parliament in due course.

Coffee growers and their associations have been demanding freedom to sell and export their produce after India launched a series of economic reforms beginning July 1991.



The two-day French jewellery and perfume auction organised by Myrium Lacombe, wife of the French Ambassador in Bangladesh, concluded in the city yesterday. — Star photo.

4 L American states to urge EC for better banana deal

SAN JOSE, Jan 14: Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia and Nicaragua agreed Thursday to urge the European Community to sweeten the deal on Latin American banana imports it offered last month, reports AFP.

Representatives of the four banana exporting countries met in Costa Rica's capital and agreed to push for better EC import terms before a special General agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) panel rules on the issue in a matter of days.

EC countries are trying to limit banana imports from Latin America to protect EC banana producers in outlying territories, such as Spain's Canary Islands and the French Caribbean.

The EC offer was to grant Latin American producers an overall 2.2 million metric tonnes banana import quota, and to grant Latin American exporters 70 per cent of all EC banana import licenses.

The four Latin American countries agreed to press for a higher percentage of EC import licenses, and to be named as exclusive EC foreign suppliers of the fruit, excepting the 800,000 tonnes in imports reserved for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) producers. ACP countries are mainly former colonies of EC member states.

OPINION Ban on plastic bags : A short-sighted decision

By Jalal Alamgir

Though the Prime Minister has deferred the decision to ban production of plastic bags, it was out of the blue that the government had thought of banning the production of plastic bags.

It was decided that production had been directed to stop by January 18, a decision which has now been deferred. Such a stipulation had less to do with environmentalism than merely reflect the myopia that handicapped the government decision-making process. The myopic streak started with the creation of a void in local administration by an arbitrary overturn of the Upazila System right after BNP's assumption of power. It still continues unabated.

Certainly there are environmental arguments against plastic bags. Plastic is not easily degradable, it therefore, accumulates solid waste, clogs up drains, blocks air passage, and places additional burden on garbage collection. As we will be at risk, so the environment will be at risk. It is therefore, justified to ban plastic bags altogether.

On the economic side, what facts should be considered? First, plastic or not, products

have to be packaged for durability, security and advertisement. Plastic bags are the best for packaging everyday products. They are easy to carry, easy to wrap and cheap to produce. They are used as packing material in the strongest sectors of the economy (for instance, the garments industry). In addition to causing everyday inconvenience, the ban will destroy plastic's linkages among different industrial sectors. Needless to say, this will be injurious to our economy. Had the government been really sincere about plastic's negative effects on the environment, it would have simultaneously banned the import of plastic bags. But no such measure has been taken.

In essence, ridiculous as it sounds, the present policy puts native enterprises in jeopardy, while benefitting foreign plastic manufacturers. Is this a responsible act for a government working towards industrial progress? In the absence of indigenous production, bags will still have to be imported for packing of certain goods. A country striving to be self-sufficient should not waste money on import of plastic packets where enough native plants exist and when the same money can be better utilised for importing technology and efficient recycling. Furthermore, there are costs on the consumer side. A modern economy is driven by consumer demand. Production of plastic bags started gaining ground against other bags because there was great demand for them. By the same token, it has outcompeted paper bags here years ago. Truly, it is quite absurd for the government to uproot production for which there is a strong demand, while heavily channeling resources to keep alive the crippled and sick factories of the public sector. The fragile demand structure of a poor country will be better assisted by advocating the use of paper or jute bags, and creating additional demand, not by banning plastic. In a dynamic economy, alternative packaging should compete against existing plastic factories, not in an empty field. And on top of all, Bangladesh cannot afford to bear the deleterious effects of sudden employment loss in the plastic industry, along with a great blow to incentives for industrialisation altogether.

What remains for dispute is the environmental aspect. Ecological consciousness in our government circles has sprung anew. It is in its infancy, still grappling about, and so has come up with the idea of banning plastic bags. By contrast, environmentalism has matured much in the industrialised world, and they have long realised that human existence depends on both ecological and economic life and that a logical balance needs to be struck out between the two. Even West European countries, where "Green" political parties based on environmental platforms have gained wide popularity, have not moved to putting an embargo on the robust plastic industry. Why not? Because they have taken into account the environmental costs of banning plastic. For one, plastic production is very energy efficient (California

Futures (an environmental research organisation) reports that of primary or nonrecycled container production, plastic takes the least energy to manufacture. The government here has failed to notice that the main basis of environmentalism is efficiency in energy consumption. That is why solar panels, windmills, or nuclear power plants (with proper toxic waste disposal) are environmentally sound, whereas conventional fuel-based factories are less so. What use will environmentalism in Bangladesh be, if, by replacing plastic with other forms of packaging, we consume more energy per unit of production? Besides, forms of alternative packaging also end up as solid waste. Garbage management might even worsen with the removal of plastic bags. In this line, the findings of Verpacken Ohne Kunststoff, a German research firm, are well worth considering. It reported that by eliminating all plastic packaging in Germany, energy consumption will almost double, and the amount of solid waste will increase by over 400 per cent. Our planners should also consider post-production benefits of plastic. Plastic is lighter than most other packaging material, and requires less in transportation costs. By switching to other packaging, we might be consuming less non-degradable wrapping, but will be contributing more by way of air and water pollution. A comprehensive and visionary ecological policy should not only consider solid waste (plastic) management, but also preserve the purity of our water and air.

Plastic bags are not the beginning of an environmental crisis, nor is their withdrawal the end. Our ecological system is tremendously encumbered by an ever-growing population, the sweeping majority of which lacks environmental discipline, just as our factories do. Our rivers are used as industrial sewers (and on a lesser side, human sewers as well). There is virtually no check on toxic smoke emission from vehicles in Dhaka and other cities (Why not ban vehicles and factories?). The City Corporations are extremely lacking in timely garbage collection and management, even with the election at hand. Our policy-makers seem blind to major ecological acts within the government itself. The Power Development Board, for example, is guilty of environmental crime. Its outrageous 40 per cent system loss is not only unethical and uneconomical but unecological as well, since this amount of power uses the same costly energy, but goes unaccounted for. In this scenario of gross environmental mismanagement by itself the government finds a very convenient to place the blame of environmental degradation on private entrepreneurs, and moves to ban the production of plastic bags. A government committed to development cannot act so irresponsibly.

So the first step towards environmental preservation in Bangladesh should be to shape up related government activities. Second, policy makers should inform themselves of the basis of environmentalism and economics.

US consumer prices rise 2.7 pc in '93

WASHINGTON, Jan 14: US consumer prices rose a mere 2.7 per cent in 1993, the best performance on the inflation front in seven years, the government said yesterday, reports AFP.

The labour department's consumer price index edged up 0.2 percent in December as a steep drop in energy prices offset surging food prices.

The 1993 results, which had been expected, followed a 2.9 per cent inflation rate in 1992 and 3.1 per cent rate in 1991, the best three-year performance since the mid-1960s.

Experts had anticipated the good inflation results.

In other reports Wednesday, the government said retail sales rose 6.2 per cent in 1993, the best showing in four years.

December retail sales rose 0.8 percent — the ninth straight monthly increase — thanks to strong automobile sales. Analysts expected a 0.3 per cent rise in December.

The unemployment picture was less bright. New claims for jobless benefits fell by 1,000 to 354,000 for the week ending January 8. Experts had predicted a decline of 35,000.

The unemployment rate stands at a three-year low of 6.4 per cent.

In the inflation report, the government said the year's increase was restrained by falling energy and tobacco prices and a relatively weak advance in medical costs.

Overall energy costs dropped 1.7 percent. Consumers paid 5.9 per cent less for gasoline, despite an increase in federal gasoline taxes.

2,663 MT of wheat distributed among distressed women in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, Jan 14: A total of 2,663 metric tons of wheat have so far been distributed among 14,204 distressed women of nine thanas and city corporation of the district during the first six months of the current fiscal year under Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme, an official source said, reports BSS.

Under the programme each of the 14,204 distressed women were given 31.25 kgs of wheat per month to make them self-reliant.

Meanwhile, work on 668 development projects with an allocation of 957 metric tons of wheat under relief programme is nearing completion throughout the district.

Japan's economy remains stagnant: Govt report

TOKYO, Jan 14: A government report on Friday said Japan's giant economy remains stagnant and an official commented that it was still "crawling along the bottom", reports Reuters.

"There's no major shift away from our economic assessment of a month earlier," an Economic Planning Agency (EPA) official said in releasing the agency's monthly report.

"We simply confirmed that the recent (sluggish) trend has been prolonged," he said.

The EPA said both personal spending and corporate capital

investment, key engines of growth, remained sluggish and the prolonged economic slump was dampening industrial production and corporate business confidence.

Japan's economy has remained stalled despite three government stimulative packages since August 1992.

Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's ruling coalition is now working on a fourth package, expected to be unveiled in a week or two and to include income tax cuts worth about six trillion yen (54 billion US dollars).

A success story of confident cotton cultivator

JESSORE, Jan 14: The plausible and honest beginning of a job with firm determination, self-confidence and innovative ideas is sure to change the lot of a poor farmer.

Mohammad Anwar Hossain of village Taherpur under Monirampur thana of the district has proved it both in letters and spirit by his long 12 years of relentless efforts in cotton production.

The success story started with a piece of 15-Katha land taken from his uncle on share basis in 1981 when he had no land of his own. The district Cotton Development Board provided him interest-free loan and all expertise support to give a panache in his initiative to grow cotton.

"Since then, I never looked back," the natty and intrepid farmer with education up to class seven said while describing his success story to a BSS correspondent Shamsul Alam Belal who visited the cotton fields there recently.

Anwar's long march towards becoming self-reliant through cotton production earned an unexpected laurel for him when he got the prestigious Presidential Award (Silver Medal) for 1992-93 fiscal year (1398 Bengali year) for growing record level of cotton up to 35 maunds an acre. The normal average production is 15 to 20 maunds.

He found cotton production more profitable than other crops as the cost is comparatively lower and the harvest can be picked three times during the six-month period from Srabon to Poush.

"Cotton has brought a blessing

for me," Anwar said with a smile on his sun-burnt face and added that he was now the owner of six acres of lands as well as local dealership of insecticides.

His five acres of cotton fields during the current season are expected to yield a good harvest which will enable him to expand the acreage up to eight acres next season (1994-95).

The 45-year old cotton cultivator said the average production cost per acre is less than Taka six thousand while the return comes more than double. "That is why, I do not take loan from the Cotton Development Board any more," he said adding that the private buyers had already given him Taka 60,000 as advance for buying cotton seeds from him this year.

Abdur Rahim and Haripada Das of the same village got encouraged by Anwar's success and both of them are expecting 50 maunds and seven maunds of cotton respectively from their fields this year.

The farmers said they are getting Taka 880 to 890 per matind (40 kgs) from private buyers while the government purchase rate is Taka 771. "We are grateful to the cotton board for their utmost care about us but we cannot sell our produce to them because of the lower price," they said.

Meanwhile, Nikhil Kumar Das of neighbouring Majhali village sowed about 2600 transplanted plants, developed by the district cotton board, on his one big land and expects to reap a good harvest from it. "I have already spent Taka 3500 for it but I expect a very good

return as the field is showing a good sign," he said.

Cotton, by nature, is an up-land and a sick crop which is being sown in Bangladesh during the Srabon-Bhadra period during which the plants suffer from heavy rain.

Director of the Integrated Cotton Development project Nazrul Islam Talukder said these plants were sown in polybags in their faras in Jagadishpur under the neighbouring Chougacha thana. "We are also carrying out such research in other farms," he said adding it was designed only to avoid wastage of baby plants during the sowing season.

The Cotton Development Board was established in 1977-78 period which, by now, made a considerable progress both in plantation and research in several areas of the country.

The board which started with only 3000 acres of land in Jessore, Kushtia and Dhaka has now been expanded to 90,000 acres during the 1993-94 period. Next year's production areas would be expanded up to 1,30,000 acres in the existing four regions — Jessore, Dhaka, Rangpur and Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Nazrul Islam Talukder said the prospect of cotton production in Bangladesh was very bright with its present high yielding variety of CB-1 (Cotton Board-1).

Referring to farmers' response to return of loan, Talukder said the Board's loan recovery was cent per cent as the cotton growers were getting swift return of their produce.

The present share of local cotton in textile sector is

65,000 bales out of the total needs of four lakh bales a year. It may increase to 80,000 bales next year with the expansion of acreage of cotton field.

He said, Jessore region alone contributes half of the total local supply to the textile sector. The production area in the region is now 26,011 acres in its four zones — Jessore, Chuadanga, Kushtia and Jhenidha.

The district cotton board officials called for more administrative patronisation on cotton production through posting officials at field levels, supply of high-yielding variety seeds, proper marketing of seed cotton, increase of sale price and providing motor cycle to officials for easy contact with farmers.

Deputy Director of the Jessore region Abu Taher called for establishing "contact growers zones" for direct purchasing of seed cotton and "special credit scheme" for farmers which together would help further increase in cotton production.

"Contact growers zone will help maintain purity of seed cotton as well as seeds and the special credit scheme will invite more farmers to grow cotton," he observed.

Cotton production in the region also helped growth of back-up industries which are employing poor labourers to earn their bread. By now, as many as 34 spinning mills including two government spinning mills, four seed crushing mills and several soap factories have been established around the cotton growing areas there.



পুনঃ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিদ্যুৎ বিল নিয়মিত
পরিশোধ করুন

কাজের নামঃ (১) গোপালগঞ্জ শহরে
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জায়গায় ২৫৬ বর্গফুট আবাসিক ভবন
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৯০৬/০০, (৩) ৪,৯৮,৮০০/০০ টাকা।
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প্রকৌশলী, পরিচালন ও সঞ্চালক সার্কেল,
কিটবো, যশোর/করিমপুর/ম্যানেকার,
জনতা ব্যাংক, চাচড়া শাখা, যশোর
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অবশ্যই পালন করিতে হইবে।

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী

১৬ শহর বিদ্যুৎ বিতরণ প্রকল্প বিভাগ-১

কিটবো, চাচড়া যশোর।

বিদ্যুৎ/জনস্বাস্থ্য (৪১)/৯৩-৯৪

জিএফপি (৬) ১০৪-৪/১

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