



## Majid tells engineers

Plans underway to separate  
irrigation wing from BADC

Agriculture and Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister Major General (Retd) M Majid-ul-Haq yesterday said the government has planned to entrust BADC with the all-out responsibilities of seed management in the country, reports BSS.

Addressing the annual conference of Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) engineers association here, he said plans are also underway to separate the irrigation wing from BADC and establish a new irrigation set-up to rearrange the country's agriculture management system in view of the present day demand.

State Minister for Irrigation Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan, Agriculture Secretary M Akhtar Ali, Vice Chancellor of Agricultural University Prof Shah Mohammad Faruq attended the function as the special guests.

Held at the Engineers Institution here, BADC Chairman Mohammad Shahidul Islam, Member (Irrigation) of the corporation engineer M A Kalam and General Secretary of the Association Mohammad

Abul Kashem Mia spoke on the occasion while president of the Association Mohammad Rafizul Haq Khan was in the chair.

Majid-ul-Haq said, the government has taken up several steps so that the BADC engineers and experts, who will retire after rearrangement of the corporation, might use their skills for the promotion of agriculture through private enterprises.

The BADC engineers may buy the BADC workshops at a fair price on cooperative basis and thus initiate their own agricultural enterprises, he said.

"We have also put conditions on private irrigation projects so that the former BADC experts might get opportunities to work there on priority basis," he said.

Haq said besides all these, the government is ready to exchange views with the engineers, experts to facilitate the BADC experts, whose services would be redundant after the reform, to find out more avenues to use their skill for agricultural promotion in the

country. Haq, himself an engineer, also drew attention of the agriculture engineers towards the issue of agricultural mechanisation in the country.

"Today no more we can depend on draught power for cultivation and therefore you must put in your efforts to develop the ploughing technology consistent with our socio-economic backdrop side by side the irrigation technology," he said.

Haq said barring some exceptions, the contribution of BADC for attaining self sufficiency in food has been lauded at home and abroad.

But to keep pace with the changing world order we have to reform our infrastructures too, he said and added, no government particularly in a country like Bangladesh can go against the world course and neither it is desired to take stand against the progress.

Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan called upon the BADC engineers not to be frustrated in view of the reform activities.

"Your contribution in attain-

ing self-sufficiency in food is well recognised by all and avenues will be opened up to utilise your expertise for further agricultural development in the country", he said.

Agriculture Secretary Akhtar Ali observed that the government should have an important role in agricultural management even after the privatisation of the sector.

He observed that the private sector is yet to develop its efficiency to manage the whole sector.

BAU Vice-Chancellor Prof Faruq stressed the need for ensuring the standard of agricultural products for exporting abroad to make the open market policy beneficial to the country.

He said we must decide how the open market policy should be implemented in agricultural sector in view of the country's own socio-economic backdrop. In this connection, he cited the example of the USA and said that even in that country, the private sector alone is not enough to deal with the whole sector and government has much jobs to do there in this regard.

Call to withdraw  
VAT from  
manufacturing  
sector

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Association for Promotion and Rehabilitation of Industries (BAPRI) has demanded withdrawal of value added tax (VAT) from the manufacturing sector.

The demand was made at a press conference Saturday. Senior vice president of the association Alauddin Ahmed, who addressed the press conference, also demanded fixation of VAT rate on import of raw materials at five per cent and of finished goods at 25 per cent to help develop local industries.

Held at the National Press Club, the press conference was attended, among others, by Manzur Ahmed, Abdur Rashid Lebu, Abdul Malek Chowdhury and Col (Retd) Kazi Selimuddin.

Describing VAT as something that contradicts concept of market economy, Alauddin Ahmed said the VAT officials have been charging tax on the manufacturing units by fixing the prices of products on their own. But in a free market system prices of products would have to be determined by the market forces, he observed.

Chinese firms  
dumping paper  
clips on  
US market

WASHINGTON, May 15: Chinese companies are dumping paper clips on the US market, according to a preliminary determination from the department of commerce, reports USIS.

A spokesman said May 12 the department estimated the dumping margins ranged from 82 per cent to nearly 127 per cent. US imports of paper clips from China amounted to \$3.8 million in 1993.

Direct air links  
between  
Myanmar,  
Vietnam soon

HANOI, May 15: Myanmar and Vietnam have agreed to establish direct air links as soon as possible and to cooperate in fighting illicit narcotics, reports Reuters.

The news came in a joint communique issued on Saturday night at the end of a four-day official visit to Myanmar by Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet, the official Vietnam news agency reported.

Government ministers signed agreements on economic cooperation, trade and tourism and discussed possible cooperation in industry, agriculture, forestry, sports and other areas, the communique said, details were not disclosed.

Kiet, the first Vietnamese government chief to visit Myanmar, starts a four-day visit to Singapore on Monday.



British Airways recently held a party for the top agents for the year '93-94. Dan Brewin, Area General Manager for South Asia especially flew in for the occasion to thank the agents and give away the awards. Picture shows Dan Brewin and Mrs Dan Brewin presenting the award to S Haque and M Gomes of Skyride Travel, one of the top agent from Dhaka.

25,000 MT of pulp from jute  
likely to be produced in '95

The State of jute in the world market is not happy due to severe competition with other substitutes, a press conference was told in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Addressing the newsmen at Hotel Sonargaon following the 21st sessions of the Committee on Projects (COP) of the International Jute Organisations (IJO) and the International Jute Council (IJC), the IJO Executive Director K M Rabbani said that the global market for jute was in decline while that in Europe was, more or less, in a stable condition.

Rabbani referred to production of pulp from green jute and said Bangladesh would produce 25,000 metric tons of pulp from jute next year in three pulp and paper mills of BCC.

He said it was now being considered as a potential means for earning foreign currencies because many countries of the world were now working on it.

"Pulp from green jute will produce quality paper which is expected to get a market in

the international arena," he said.

Khaled Rob, who chaired the IJC meeting, told the press conference that Africa as a whole was a large market for jute and promotional activities were being pursued to capture it.

Reading out a brief statement circulated among the newsmen, Rob said that the IJC had expressed satisfaction on IJO's activities on the progress of on-going projects.

The IJC also noted with satisfaction that the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) has approved for financing IJO's project on technical survey and market study for jute geo-textile and three other projects currently under consideration of the CFC, the statement said.

The press conference was told that four project ideas presented at the session by the IJO Secretariat were approved in principle and the IJO Secretariat was requested to develop project proposals for consideration in the next session in autumn this year.

The IJC session also ap-

proved proposal for IJO's participation in the forthcoming international conference and exhibition on geo-textiles to be held in Singapore in September this year.

Besides, the statement said, the IJC decided to allocate 50,000 US dollars for the proposed market promotion programme in Western Europe.

According to the statement, Japan has announced an additional contribution of 90,000 US dollar for the third year of on-going market promotion project of jute goods in Japan and 35,000 US dollars for the project for varietal improvement of jute and Kenaf fibre.

The Netherlands will contribute 20,000 US dollar for a study on environmental aspect of jute arising out of life cycle analysis of jute done by the Free University, Amsterdam, the statement said.

The IJC has decided to allocate 18,000 US dollar for IJO's participation in the international geo-textile conference and exhibition to be held in Singapore and 12,000 US dollar for market promotion project in Japan.

Phoenix earns  
Tk 1.95 cr as  
pre-tax profit

The 8th annual general meeting (AGM) of Phoenix Insurance Company Limited was held at head office of the company with its Chairman Maj General Abdul Mannan Siddiqui (ret'd) in the chair, says a press release.

The annual report and the audit accounts for the year 1993 were approved in the meeting. The company earned a pre-tax profit of Tk 1.95 crore, during its operational year in 1993. The company also declared 20 per cent dividend to the share-holders for the year 1993.

During the year, an amount of Tk 7.02 crore was paid as claim and provision for income tax amounting to Tk 78 lakh was made by the company.



The 8th Annual General Meeting of Phoenix Insurance Company Ltd. was held yesterday at the company's head office. It was presided over by the Chairman of the Company Major General Abdul Mannan Siddiqui (ret'd).

Bentsen urges trade leaders  
to support Uruguay accord

WASHINGTON, May 15: US Secretary of the Treasury Lloyd Bentsen has asked the nation's top business leaders for their support in getting congressional approval of the Uruguay Round global trade accord, according to USIS press release.

"There is a great deal at stake here. Think about what you stand to gain, what you stand to lose," Bentsen said to the Business Council, a small group of the nation's leading business leaders that meets twice annually. "If we don't close this deal by ratifying the

treaty, we'll be shut out of the best opportunity to expand trade and business that's come along."

The Uruguay Round, signed by over 120 countries April 15 after more than seven years of negotiations, still must be ratified by the legislatures of many of these countries.

President Clinton has promised to send Congress implementing legislation for the Round soon, but the accord faces some opposition because its near-term revenue losses will require offsetting

spending cuts or tax increases under budget law.

"The studies that have been done so far don't tell us if defeat of the Uruguay Round will mean trade wars, or just an end to the current era of liberalization," Bentsen said. "But they do suggest that GDP (gross domestic product) could slow over the next decade. They suggest that a decline in the prospects for profits and growth might have an impact on our stock markets. They suggest that interest rates could be affected."

2 Japanese ministers  
suspected of  
pressuring central  
bank for loan

TOKYO, May 15: Two Japanese ministers are suspected of pressuring the Bank of Japan, the central bank, to lend huge sums to a financial institution of farmers, it was reported today, reports AFP.

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries exchanged a secret memorandum in February last year urging the Bank of Japan loans to the Central Cooperative Bank for Agriculture and Forestry, the Asahi Shimbun said.

## Commodity markets : Prices of copper, gold rise, cotton fall, tea, oil stable

LONDON, May 15: Copper soared during the week to reach its highest point for 13 months, lifting above the 2,100-dollar-per-tonne level on expected increased demand in Europe and the US, and significantly lower stocks, reports AFP.

But other metals on the London Metals Exchange (LME) moved little, except nickel, which rose strongly after Inco Union voted to allow a strike, if necessary, at the firm's Sudbury plant in Ontario, Canada.

The precious metals were generally higher, along with Brent crude North Sea oil which remained above 16 dollars per barrel.

The price of coffee continued to climb, breaking through the key 1,900-dollars-per-barrel level despite some profit taking later.

Cocoa was also in better health, lifting to its highest level since the end of March. White sugar lifted as news of mass imports by India hit the market.

Wool reached its highest level since December 1992, after a cut in Australian production and on stronger demand.

Gold: Higher but irregular. Gold lifted above last week's prices, but fluctuated around 380 dollars per ounce, during the week.

Trading was generally calm as several markets were closed for the ascension holiday.

A strike by 9,500 miners in the Kloof mine in South Africa

had little impact, although the company was said to have lost 5.7 million dollars in the space of a week.

**Silver:** Higher. Prices lifted after last week's weakness, reaching 5.46 dollars per ounce, as investment funds showed renewed interest.

The metal gained after the silver institute, made up of producers and consumers, reported the annual production deficit would reach 248.4 million ounces this year — a deficit for the fourth consecutive year.

**Platinum:** Higher. Prices lifted after their low level last week, fluctuating between 393 and 397 dollars per ounce.

The market was firmer after the nomination of Nelson Mandela as the first black prime minister went off peacefully in South Africa — the world's premier producer.

**Copper:** Soaring. Copper jumped a massive 192 dollars during the week, lifting to its highest point for 13 months at 2,119 dollars per tonne at the close on Thursday. It continued to rise Friday on encouraging stocks figures.

Dealers said the prospects of increased demand in Europe and the US, combined with significantly lower stocks, were pushing the metal up significantly.

"There is a lot of short covering in the market," said analyst William Adams from Rudolf Wolff, adding that there were supply problems in Central Africa.

**Lead:** Slightly lower. Lead moved little throughout the week, sinking around five dollars from the previous Friday close at 484.5 dollars per tonne.

The economist intelligence unit said the lead market was generally better oriented in 1994, compared to previous years with a rise in consumption and a deficit of production of around 160,000 tonnes.

Weekly stocks on the LME rose 2,725 tonnes to a record 345,725 tonnes.

**Zinc:** Slightly lower. Zinc fell around the same levels as lead, dipping five dollars during the week from the previous Friday close of 977 dollars per tonne.

Traders at GNI said current prices were at the top of their expectations and predicted Zinc could fall further in the short term.

Weekly zinc stocks on the LME rose 8,590 tonnes to a record 1,157,350 tonnes.

**Aluminium:** Stable. Aluminium dropped around three dollars during the week from the previous Friday close of 1,332 dollars per tonne.

Aluminium moved little during the week, largely on lack of news and as the record rise of copper scooped a 14 per cent fall in US primarily aluminium output in April to 269,450 tonnes from 313,250 tonnes a year ago. On an annualised basis this is an output cut of 525,600 tonnes.

Stocks on the LME rose a further 17,625 tonnes to a record 2,646,675 tonnes.

**Nickel:** Sharply higher. Nickel soared higher to a three month high since February 24, lifting 165 dollars over the week to the Thursday close of 5,940 dollars per tonne.

During the day on Thursday, the metal soared a massive 115 dollars on expectations that workers at Canadian producer Inco's Sudbury, Ontario division, would vote later to give their union a strike mandate in current labour talks.

Weekly stocks on the LME fell 432 tonnes to 132,516 tonnes.

**Tin:** Lower. Tin fell around 60 dollars during the week, from the previous Friday close of 5,505 dollars per tonne.

The member nations of the Association of Tin Producing Countries (ATPC) exported a total of 14,258 tonnes of tin from January to March — a volume 26.9 per cent below the permitted export tonnage, the association said.

A Bolivian delegate to the ATPC told a meeting of the association that global tin stocks were "slightly high" but should "fall slightly" later this year. The ATPC, which groups the world's major tin producers, is limiting supply in a bid to trim global stocks.

Weekly stocks on the LME rose 945 tonnes to a record 27,950 tonnes.

**Cocoa:** Higher, after a mixed beginning, prices lifted sharply on Thursday to around 995 pounds per tonne at the close — their highest level since the end of March.

Dealers said the return of investment funds into the market boosted prices, which had fallen over the past few weeks on temporary lack of interest.

**Coffee:** Sharp rises then technical fall. The price of robusta lifted above 1,900 dollars per tonne on Tuesday, its highest level for five years.

The extremely high prices for delivery in May and June were due to a severe restriction in the supply of robusta and the short-term availability of Colombian coffee.

Large-scale buying by investment funds on the London and New York markets magnified the swift rise in prices, dealers said.

From Wednesday onwards, prices began to fall as speculators took profits, but then rose again on Friday.

**Sugar:** Sharply higher, the price of white sugar jumped above 320 dollars per tonne after India announced it would import at least 500,000 tonnes of sugar to cover its production deficit. India is the world's premier producer and consumer.

The Indian government said that 112,000 tonnes of sugar should be delivered to Indian refineries between now and mid-May to stop prices internal prices rises as the shortage hits the market.

Elsewhere, the world production was an estimated four cent higher at 116.3 million tonnes in 1994-95 (September-August) from 112.2 million tonnes in the

previous season.

**Vegetable oils:** Higher, the falls during the previous week were only temporary and the majority of vegetable oils lifted higher on the Rotterdam market in subdued trading due to the ascension holiday.

Soya prices lifted, while the US department of agriculture (USDA) predicted a 16.11 per cent rise in US production in 1994-1995 (October-September) after a fall in 1993-1994 harvests on account of bad weather.

The price of palm oil continued to lift on strong demand, as did sunflower and rapeseed oil.

The journal oil world predicted a 7.6 per cent rise to 238.62 million tonnes next year in the harvest of the seeds and fruits needed to make the 10 main vegetable oils.

**Oil:** Steady, then higher, after breaking through the 16-dollars-per-barrel level last week for the first time since November 1993, the price of Brent crude North Sea fluctuated in technical trading before rising towards the end of the week.

Figures from the American Petroleum Institute (API) pushed price slightly lower during the week, as they showed US stocks had lifted 4.72 million barrels last week compared with the previous week, while domestic fuel and gas-oil had lifted 1.39 million barrels.

A rise in US reserves on the nymex on Thursday, however, lifted prices again above the

16-dollars-per-tonne mark.

**Rubber:** Higher. Prices continued to rise, reaching 720 pounds per tonne on a cut in world production and a rise in demand.

The international rubber study group said the surplus in production would only be around 10,000 tonnes in 1993, compared with 120,000 tonnes the previous year.

World production is estimated to be around 5.43 million tonnes in 1993, compared to 5.6 million tonnes in 1992, while consumption is expected to be 5.42 million tonnes from 5.48 million tonnes.

The production of the world's three premier producers, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, has dropped respectively 1.5 million tonnes, 1.353 million tonnes and 1.074 million tonnes.

**Grains:** Lower. The price of wheat fell steadily lower, dropping over four dollars to finish the week at around 113 pounds per tonne after the US refused to sell Russia 400,000 tonnes of subsidised wheat.

Prices were also lower on expectations of a strong US winter wheat harvest.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) predicted a 9.34 per cent cut in wheat production from the former Soviet Union to 76.3 million tonnes in 1994-1995. Imports were estimated to fall to 13.5 million tonnes from 14.02 million tonnes in 1993-1994.

The price of barley remained stable at around 109 pounds per tonne, although

European markets were calm on account of the ascension holiday.

**Tea:** Stable. The average auction price of tea remained stable at around 127 pence per kilo, although demand was described as reasonably good.

The price of high quality tea from Africa rose on the continued civil conflict in Rwanda, leading dealers to fear the worst for production from the country.

The auction price for African medium quality tea dipped four pence to eight pence. Teas from Ceylon followed the same trend.

**Cotton:** Slightly lower. Prices suffered from a lack of activity and slipped through the barrier at 0.86 dollars per pound, as the ascension holiday weighed on the market.

Austria and Switzerland were the main buyers during the week, while cotton from central Asia was the most in demand.

**Wool:** Higher. The reference price of Australian wool on the Bradford market was higher, reaching above 4.22 pounds per kilo, on firm demand and a cut in Australian production.

Recent statistics show that exports from New Zealand, which is the world's second producer after Australia, lifted above production during the first nine months in the 1993-1994 season (July-June), resulting in a cut in stocks.

Production rose 13 per cent, while exports lifted 21 per cent, totalling 760 million dollars for the period.

Hafiz Ibrahim  
new director  
of Rupali Bank

Md Hafiz Ibrahim has been elected as the new director of Rupali Bank Ltd. at the adjourned seventh annual general meeting of the bank held on May 9, says a press release.

He did his graduation from the University of Dhaka in 1973 and took practical training on industrial administration and management from the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka.



The visiting Myanmar Trade Minister Lt General Tun Kyi called on Industries Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan at latter's office in the city yesterday.

— PID photo