

Agri-scientists urged to develop comprehensive plan on production

A N M Eusuf, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, yesterday urged the agri-scientists to develop a comprehensive programme on production, processing and marketing of farm-products, reports UNB.

Eusuf was addressing as chief guest at the inaugural session of the three-day workshop on "Post Harvest Processing and Preservation of Agricultural Products - Its Present Status and Future Strategy in Bangladesh" at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) auditorium here.

Agricultural production increased during the last couple of years. But processing and preservation however did not register corresponding improvement, he added.

Referring to price of the products particularly vegetables, the Principal Secretary said that the price of vegetables has not gone down in certain urban areas. Farmers are not getting fair price of their produce in most of the

markets, he added.

Chaired by the Executive Vice Chairman of BARC Dr M Sujat Ullah Chowdhury, the inaugural function was also addressed by Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture M Ahsan Ali Sarker, Peter J Myers of FAOR, Dhaka and Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University, Myrmensingh Prof S M Farooq.

Better marketing facilities should be evolved throughout the country to ensure fair price of agri-products to growers, he said. He hastened to add that due to lack of better marketing facilities peasants are being suffering losses.

Unfortunately a network of wholesale market have not yet been established. He said it is very important to have a wholesale market equipped with necessary facilities like processing, preservation and marketing of products as well as electricity.

Referring to the need of agri-marketing facility, Eusuf

said that our neighbouring country India has 7,000 regulated markets and West Bengal alone has 40 wholesale market with preservation, storage and standardisation facilities.

Suggesting to the Agricultural Ministry he said that the ministry should establish a network of wholesale markets with processing and preservation facilities.

For better preservation he said that it should evolve simple technology so that it can be easily accessible to the farmers across all over the country. "Preservation in larger quantity is very important also for export", he added.

He however said that much success was achieved in the Crop Diversification Programme.

Emphasising on the transfer of technology, Eusuf said that for adopting transfer of technology, we have to disseminate necessary knowledge to the farmers. We have to think ways and means how of bettering this technology and adapt-

ing to our need, he added.

We have not yet given enough information to growers as to how to preserve their products, he said.

He said consumers are being more and more attracted to departmental stores and hence processing is very much important also for urban as well as export markets.

Expressing optimism on rice production Eusuf said that "we hope to have surplus rice production but unless we have good processing facilities, we cannot export rice at a better price."

On the role of private sector, he said that the private sector can also play an important role in procession and preservation of farm products. And organisations like BCSIR can take a lead in this respect.

Stressing the need for promotion of horticulture products, the Principal Secretary said that Horticulture Export Foundation (HORTEX) should be set up immediately.

BTC to review investment plans

Bangladesh Tobacco Co Ltd has announced an increase in the retail selling price of its premium international brand, State Express 555 from Tk 46.00 to Tk 52.00 per packet of 20 sticks, says a press release.

The price increase effective from June 26, '94 is a necessary action taken to bring down the loss arising out of the recent increase in rates of duties applicable on locally manufactured premium brands of cigarettes, namely State Express 555 and John Player Gold Leaf which are produced by BTC. These two brands represent 70 per cent of BTC's business and also account for 60 per cent of the government revenue earned from the entire cigarette industry. The price of John Player Gold Leaf, however, remains unchanged at pre-budget level although it will mean significant loss of earnings for BTC.

The increase in rates of duties comes at a time when BTC has just recovered from the effect of duties imposed in the 1989-90 budget which led to the closure of BTC's Chittagong Factory in 1991.

The revised price will put SE 555 at the same level as that of smuggled cigarettes. It may be even higher as the prices of smuggled cigarettes fluctuate depending on supplies. Unless the government takes effective measures against smuggled cigarettes the revised price may affect sales of SE 555. Evidences from other countries indicate that once smuggled cigarettes capture the market it is difficult to eradicate them.

Following the increase in the rates of duties and the consequent price increase BTC may encounter uncertainties in sales volume, profits and cash flow. It is estimated that during the remaining six months of 1994 BTC's net earnings will be down by Tk 5 crore. The annualised effect of Tk 10 crore is forecast to continue into 1995. The investment plan of Tk 66 crore in modernization and diversification announced in the last Annual General Meeting will have to be reviewed and adjusted on the basis of changed financial results.

It should be mentioned here that excise revenue earned through BTC products in the last three years were: 1991-92—Tk 580 crore, 1992-93—Tk 660 crore and in 1993-94 — Tk 660 crore.

Runway overlay project of ZIA signed

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh has signed a contract with a Korean and Bangladesh joint venture company (M/s Hanjin Engineering and Construction Co Ltd and M/s Neptune Commercial Ltd) for the construction of Runway Overlay Project of Zia International Airport, says a press release.

The contract was signed at the head office of the authority yesterday.

The estimated cost of the project is Tk 35 crore.

Under the contract, preliminary work will begin very shortly and is expected to be completed within one year.



Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman exchanging views with the members of the Economic Reporters Forum (ERF) on 'Microeconomy in the context of 1994-95 Budget' at the VIP lounge of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. (Story on Page 1). —Star photo

Country's garment export rises by 11.24 pc in 93-94 fiscal

By Rafiq Hasan

The country's garments and frozen food exports have increased during the first ten months of the current fiscal year, 1993-94.

The increase is 11.24 per cent in garment and 35.92 per cent in frozen food sectors compared to the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

Frozen food export crossed the target by 16.05 per cent this year while garments exports fell short of the target by 17.91 per cent.

According to the Export Promotion Bureau, the country earned 169.23 million dollars by exporting 46.02 million pounds of frozen food from July 1993 to April 1994. During the same period, the earnings from garments export stood at 1228.72 million dollars.

Meanwhile the country's total export during the first ten months of this year stood at 2155.06 million dollars. This is 9.95 per cent more than that of the corresponding period of last fiscal year and 10.83 per cent less than 2416.67 million dollar target.

Utilisation of ADP allocations better

The utilisation of allocations under the current financial year's (1993-94) Annual Development Programme (ADP) of various ministries has picked up significantly during recent months, reports BSS.

This was revealed at an inter-ministerial meeting in Dhaka yesterday to review the progress of ADP implementation of various ministries with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair.

Latest figures from Education, Roads and Highways, Energy and Health ministries show that they have utilised around 80-85 per cent of their respective allocations under current year's ADP upto May 1994. The Education, Roads

and Highways, Energy and Health ministries utilised Taka 870 crore, 675 crore, 963 crore and 293 crore upto May 31, 1994 against their total allocations of Taka 948 crore, 888 crore, 1210 crore and 311 crore respectively. The performance of these ministries shows a significant improvement over the corresponding period of the last year in this regard.

The overall ADP performance up to May 31 of 16 ministries reviewed yesterday also showed a six per cent improvement over the corresponding period of the last year.

In the communications sec-

It was also observed that the export target was not achieved in raw jute, jute goods, agricultural products, petroleum-products, engineering goods and other primary commodities during the period.

Target was, however, achieved in frozen foods, knitwear, and tea.

US is still the main importer of Bangladeshi commodities. Its import amount is 28.50 per cent of our total export. During the period Bangladesh exported various items to the US worth 614.26 million dollars. The main exportables are: Frozen shrimp, jute yarns, garments knitwear and terry towels.

The second major importer of Bangladeshi commodities is Germany. It imported 239.78 million dollars worth of various items from Bangladesh during the period. This is 11.13 per cent of our total export earnings.

The other major countries which import from Bangladesh are: Italy, United Kingdom, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Iran, Japan, Singapore, India and Pakistan.

Vietnamese cement production rises

HANOI, June 26: Vietnamese cement production is 12 per cent up on the first half of 1993, according to statistics published Saturday, with 2.378 million tonnes made, reports AFP.

But the industry will still not meet targets to keep up with a construction boom. The Compagnie Generale Du Ciment surpassed production targets for the first half of the year by 3.57 per cent,

for scarcity of modern construction equipment was identified as the main impediment to the smooth implementation of the projects.

The Finance Minister said import duties on construction equipment have been reduced to 7.5 per cent and urged the concerned executing agencies to utilise the opportunity for proper implementation of the development projects.

He directed the railway division to improve their performance and properly maintain the railway coaches, locomotives to make railway a comfortable means of communications for the general passengers.

Dhaka reaffirms support to G-77

Bangladesh has reaffirmed its commitment and support to the "Group of 77" in the conviction that it remains a credible and viable instrument to attain the common goals of the developing and least developed nations, reports BSS.

Addressing the special ministerial meeting of the "Group of 77" at the United Nations, New York, Friday, Bangladesh's permanent representative to the UN, Reza Rahman said Dhaka believes that the Group can play meaningful role ameliorating the multi-faceted economic problems of the majority of world's population, according to a message received in Dhaka.

The meeting was convened to mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of the "Group of 77".

The Bangladesh permanent representative spoke at the meeting in the absence of Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman.

The Foreign Minister is unable to be at the meeting due to unavoidable domestic pre-occupations but he has sent his warm greetings and best wishes for the success of the meeting. Reza Rahman told the ministerial meeting.



New financial controller of Sonargaon Hotel

Pan Pacific Hotels and Resorts recently announced the promotion of Sadique Ahsan as financial controller of Sonargaon Pan Pacific Hotel, Dhaka, says a press release.

Ahsan joined Hotels International Limited (owning company of Sonargaon Pan Pacific Hotel) and was working as the chief accountant prior to his joining as credit manager. He was subsequently promoted to the position of assistant financial controller.

Ahsan got extensive training in the computerised accounting systems at home and abroad.

Biman earns Tk 70 cr profit

Biman has earned an estimated net profit of Tk 70 crore in the outgoing 1993-94 fiscal year, reports UNB.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan yesterday disclosed this while addressing the inaugural session of a three-day System Marketing Conference as chief guest at Biman Bhawan.

Organised by Marketing and Sales Directorate of Biman, the conference is being attended by all station heads of the airlines from home and abroad.

Expressing his satisfaction over the performance of station heads, the State Minister hoped this trend of profitability would be maintained in years to come.

In the review period, Biman earned a revenue of Tk 968.42 crore, carried 11,50,370 passengers and 25,922 tons of cargoes — 8.5 per cent up in revenue earning, 6 per cent in passenger carriage and 8.7 per cent up in cargo carriage from last year's.

Mannan urged all to come forward with a positive marketing approach so that Biman could make the most of the highly competitive airline business.

He gave emphasis on gearing up the marketing drive and

boosting sales earnings by the field managers with a renewed pledge to keep pace with the trend of market potentials.

The conference was also addressed, among others, by Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Nooruddin Al Masud, Managing Director of Biman Ahsan Ahmed and Director of Marketing and Sales A H Salahuddin, said a Biman press release.

New GM of Dhaka Sheraton

Ross M Larsen, a national of New Zealand, has been appointed the new general manager of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, says a press release.

He succeeded John L Eaton. Prior to his appointment at the hotel, he served as the general manager of Sheraton Resort in the Cook Islands.

Larsen brings with him 23 years of experience in the field of hospitality industry.

A C H A from the American Hotel and Motel Association, Larsen has attended Cornell University.

Apart from working with several reputed hotel chains around the world, Larsen joined ITT Sheraton Corporation in 1983.



State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan addressing the inaugural session of the three-day 14th System Marketing Conference at Biman Bhawan in the city yesterday. Station heads of Biman's international and domestic stations are participating in the conference.

Commodity markets: Prices of tea, gold, platinum rise while coffee, sugar fall

LONDON, June 26: Gold and other precious metals benefited this week from the weakness of the dollar, which reached a low point on Tuesday, dealers said on Friday, reports AFP.

The yellow metal this week resumed playing its role as a "refuge", reaching its highest level since last January.

On the London Metal Market, aluminium took the spotlight away from copper, moving up to its highest level since March 1991 thanks to a continued drop in stocks. Copper rose, but more moderately than in the previous few weeks.

North Sea Brent crude oil continued to surprise some analysts, remaining above the level of 17 dollars a barrel thanks to continuing good demand in the West. The same applies to rubber, which has stayed at a high level.

But such agricultural commodities as coffee, cocoa and sugar fell this week due particularly to profit-taking in the wake of sharp price rises the previous week.

GOLD: Higher. Gold prices moved up this week to their highest level since January with quotations hitting around 390 dollars an ounce. A peak was reached Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning at more than 393 dollars.

The good health enjoyed by the yellow metal and other precious metals is due mainly to the extreme weakness marking the dollar, which hit a record post-war against the yen on Tuesday.

Jewellers and manufacturers consider gold prices too high now to buy. "This is the zero point for physical demand", said one operator.

SILVER: So-so. Silver is the precious metal that benefited the least from the dollar's drop. Prices were high early in the week at 5.66 dollars an ounce (three-months), but then eased to finish at around 5.40 dollars.

Andy Smith said the silver market generally reacts less than gold to monetary fluctuations, varying more depending on "specific speculative movements," he said.

PLATINUM: Expensive. Prices rose along with gold. "For several weeks, platinum has kept a lead of around 15 dollars over gold," said Smith.

That remained true this week, as prices rose to more than 405 dollars an ounce, ever moving above 408 briefly.

COPPER: Higher all the same, though the rise was less than the previous week. Still, prices gained perceptibly this week after a weak start. The Thursday close was a 23-

month high.

Traders said Chinese and Japanese buying was behind the price uptrend.

LONDON METALS EXCHANGE (LME) stocks were down 3,950 tonnes to 356,900. LEAD: Marking time. Lead prices changed little, staying at around 557 dollars a tonne. A small surprise decline late in the week of LME reserves took the metal up to 559 dollars on Friday.

A drop of 35,000 to 50,000 tonnes in output of France's metal Europe had no impact on the market, dealers said. For the week as a whole, market stocks rose by 775 tonnes to a record high of 360,350 tonnes.

ZINC: Lower. Prices started the week off a high 1,021 dollars a tonne, but prices slipped during the week to end at around 1,005 dollars in light trading.

Prices were affected by LME stocks, which rose 4,975 tonnes to a record high of 1,197,125 tonnes.

ALUMINIUM: On an uptrend. Aluminium came back on center-stage having been eclipsed by copper and moved up this week to its highest level since March 1991, up more than 50 dollars in a week.

On Friday, it flirted with the

1,500-dollar mark, as a logical result of an impressive fall in LME stocks — down 19,475 tonnes in just a week to end at 2,634,750 tonnes.

The majority of operators think the plan for reducing production developed in January by the main world producers is starting to make its effects felt, cutting over-production.

A threat of a strike at two aluminium plants of Norway's Elkem, Lista and Mosjoen also contributed to the price rise.

NICKEL: Weak. Prices did not benefit from higher copper and aluminium, dropping after a high start at 6,585 dollars a tonne. The metal ended at less than 6,450 dollars in light trading, affected by a new rise in LME stocks, up 138 tonnes to 132,072 tonnes.

An anticipated rise in Australian output also weakened prices.

TIN: Also weak. Tin prices moved slightly down, ending the week at around 5,600 dollars against an initial 5,680. The market was weakened by higher supply. But operators said prices should rally in the next few weeks.

Market reserves rose by 665 tonnes to 30,805.

OIL: Firmly variable, from a firm base established the previous week when prices had

risen. The price of Brent North Sea quality began the week on a strong note, being quoted at about 17.40 dollars per barrel for three days.

A meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the previous week, at which ministers had extended a production ceiling of 24.5 million barrels per day, continued to put strength behind the market.

Figures for US stocks supported this trend, they showed that stocks of crude had fallen by 2,017 million barrels, this was seen as confirming that demand for energy in the United States was rising.

But from Wednesday prices declined and again fell to nearly 17 dollars.

A commitment by Turkey and Iraq to discuss the emptying of an unused pipeline between the two countries also undermined prices, clearing of the pipe might result in an additional supply of 150,000 barrels per day.

At the end of the week, prices began to rally, a US official had said that the United Nations Embargo against Iraq would not be removed immediately.

RUBBER: Persistently strong. Prices remained high, ending at 782.5 pounds per tonne, weak Thai output owing

to recent heavy rainfall continued to push prices upwards.

SUGAR: Decline. Prices slipped slightly even though Czarnikow analyst Chris Pack held that the market was expecting Russia and possibly China to purchase.

White sugar was being traded at 320 dollars per tonne compared with a price of more than 330 dollars a week previously. Purchasing by India, which had triggered a big upward movement, declined markedly. Pack said that India had brought its stocks up to the required amount.

He said that the Cuban crop was unlikely to exceed four million tonnes for the year from November 1993 to October 1994. This would mean that Cuba was the ninth-biggest producer in the world. He said that some analysts held that the Cuban crop would amount to 3.5 million tonnes. In 1989-90 Cuba had harvested eight million tonnes and had been the biggest exporter.

Prices rallied at the end of the week, advancing by a few dollars per tonne in response to a purchase by Belarus of 81,000 tonnes.

VEGETABLE OILS: Uneven. There was no clear trend for vegetable oils in contrast to

the situation in recent weeks. Soya tended to decline in response to weakness in prices in Chicago owing to favourable weather in the US growing areas.

Palm oil rose sharply on anticipation that Malaysian production would fall. Malaysia is the biggest producer. The oil world review said that its output might amount to 7.2 million tonnes in 1994. This would be 0.3 million tonnes less than had been estimated and 0.2 million less than production in 1993.

CEREALS: Slightly weak. The prices of wheat and barley slipped owing to a lack of trading in Europe. Currency instability complicated pricing. On the London futures market, the price of a tonne of wheat fell to less than 115 pounds from nearly 116 pounds at the end of the previous week, for June delivery. Prices suffered from weakness on the market in Chicago, which is the biggest in the world.

US prices fell despite announcements by the US Department of Agriculture that wheat was being exported to Russia, Algeria and Pakistan. Persistently good weather in US growing areas was said to be behind the decline. The International Wheat

Council said that world production of wheat was expected to amount to 545 million tonnes in the year to June 1995. This would be 12 million tonnes less than the figure for this year.

World production of secondary grains was expected to amount to 838 million tonnes in 1994-95 compared with 790 million tonnes this year. The food and Agriculture Organization estimated that the next harvest of wheat would amount to 550 million tonnes and that of secondary grains to 857 million tonnes.

TEA: Strong. The price of tea continued to benefit from strong demand at the London auction market. On average, high-quality teas were traded at 260 pence per kilo from 250 pence the previous week. Those of average quality rose by two pence to 120 pence per kilo and those of poor quality rose by five pence to 88 pence.

COTTON: Weak. The price of a pound of cotton fell again to less than 0.86 dollars on a lack of interest by buyers. But the market remained well orientated owing to a fall of production in several Asian countries. WOOL: Steady. The reference price remained steady at 4.22 pounds per kilo.