

NGOs playing key role in Asian development

COLOMBO, July 4: Asia's drift towards democracy in recent years had raised hopes for a more responsive, welfare-oriented state apparatus, but most governments in the region are so preoccupied with getting re-elected that they seem to have lost sight of the common good, reports IPS.

Development experts say democracy has become an excuse for the business and political elite to shuffle the cards every four or five years and cling to power without really devolving decision making to communities in the country-side.

Free elections and multi-party politics have thus legitimised the elite without really addressing the roots of problems like rural poverty, environmental degradation and the population crisis, he added.

Even in large countries with a long tradition of democracy like India, there are doubts whether 50 years of elections and heavy government involvement have really made a dent in resolving chronic problems like extreme inequality and landlessness.

Rhone Poulenc declares 20 pc dividend

Rhone Poulenc Rorer Bangladesh Ltd has approved a 20 per cent dividend for its shareholders, says a press release.

The dividend was declared at the Annual General Meeting of the company in the city on Saturday.

The meeting was presided over by Waseq al Azad, Chairman of the Company who is also the Chairman of BCIC.

Rhone Poulenc Bangladesh Ltd is a joint venture company with Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC).

The Company's performance in 1993 was reviewed in the meeting and the shareholders expressed satisfaction over its activities.

In his speech the Chairman said the company has an unbroken record of paying dividend.

Lauding the performance of the company, he said Phone Poulenc has diversified its product range adding agrochemicals animal health products.

Siddique Rahman, Director (Planning) of BCIC, D D Chopra, Managing Director of the company and representative of the parent organisation and A K M Shamsuddin, Managing Director of the Rhone Poulenc Bangladesh Ltd were present in the meeting.

Mitterrand in S Africa to boost trade ties

CAPE TOWN, July 4: French President Francois Mitterrand arrived Monday for an unprecedented South African visit intended to boost trade and increase the status of both countries, reports AP.

President Nelson Mandela greeted Mitterrand and a large entourage of Cabinet ministers and business leaders on the tarmac at DF Malan Airport in a red-carpet welcome complete with a 21-gun salute by 88 mm artillery guns.

A long-standing opponent of apartheid, Mitterrand is the first French president to visit South Africa and the first major Western leader to visit since Mandela's African National Congress won the nation's first all-race election in April, making him the first black president.

But Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad called the timing of the trip "a matter of chance" rather than any intended reward for Mitterrand for his anti-apartheid history.

Mitterrand, 77, reviewed military honour guards before a motorcade whisked them to a full day of activities, including a speech by Mitterrand to a

joint sitting of parliament, the first by a foreign leader.

Mandela's government has much to gain from Mitterrand's trip, including firming up trade ties with France and increasing trade links in Europe.

Despite past economic sanctions, France is the fifth-largest investor in South Africa. Last year, French sales to South Africa were estimated worth 3.3 billion francs (600 million dollars) and South Africa exported goods worth 2.6 billion francs (470 million dollars) to France, a gap of 70 million francs (127 million dollars).

Strengthening South Africa's ties with France, the most influential European country in much of Africa, also would help Mandela's government build stronger bonds with other Francophone members of the Organization of African Unity, Pahad said.

France is looking to renew military trade with South Africa, which wants to replace 100 aging Alouette helicopters bought from France in the 1960s and 1970s and has expressed interest in buying four French Corvette warships.

On Friday, the dollar fell to a record intraday low of 97.68 yen in Tokyo, but then moved higher because of rumours of possible intervention by Germany's central bank. That intraday low was the dollar's lowest since modern exchange rates were introduced in Japan in the late 1940s.

Dealers said that the Bank of Japan appeared to be remaining on the sidelines as the dollar rates were little changed.

The dollar opened lower in Tokyo Monday because speculators tested the determination of central banks around the world to coordinate their dollar-boosting market intervention efforts, they said.

On the stock market, the 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average gained 88.52 points, or 0.43 per cent, closing the day at 20,631.93. On Friday, the average shed 110.52 points, or 0.49 per cent, closing at 20,543.41.

The Tokyo Stock Price Index of all issues listed on the first section was up 10.57 points, or 0.64 per cent, to 1,672.73. The TOPIX fell 11.16 points, or 0.67 per cent, to 1,662.16 on Friday.

According to a circular issued last month and effective July 1, local officials responsible for gold trading will be charged and punished if black marketeers are found to be operating in their area.

Seizures of more than 50 grams (1.75 ounces) of gold will be considered serious cases, the circular said.



A K M Shamsuddin Ahmed, Managing Director of Rhone-Poulenc Bangladesh Ltd, handing over a cheque for Taka 18,36,002 representing 20 per cent dividend to Waseq Al Azad, Chairman of BCIC in the city on Saturday.

Beijing's gold production grows by 10 pc

BELJING, July 4: China's gold output grew by 10 per cent in the first half of this year compared to the same 1993 period, but illegal black market trading continued to plague the sector, the China Daily said Monday, reports AFP.

Sixty-two per cent of gold production was sold to the People's Bank of China in the first five months of 1994, the newspaper said.

According to Ai Dacheng, Vice President of the Ministry of Metallurgical Industry's Gold Bureau, the rest of the gold was trade illegally on the black market, which has mushroomed in the past year as the central bank's purchase price has remained lower than the international market level.

In September, the bank raised its purchasing price from 51.2 yuan (8.80 dollars) to 96 yuan (16.70 dollars) a gram — around 90 per cent of the price on the London market — and pledged to maintain a peg with the international market.

However, when the value in London subsequently climbed, the central bank's price failed to move, forcing sellers back to the black market.

In a further bid to promote production, the government decided last month to exempt gold mines from value-added tax payments for two years.

If the mines fail to sell 100 per cent of their output to the central bank, such preferential treatment will be cancelled, Ai said, adding that banks would also be directed to cease providing loans.

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Mahbub Jamil, Chairman and Managing Director of Singer Bangladesh Limited, opening the 48th show room-cum-sales centre at Kalabagan in the city yesterday. The company's high officials and local elites were present on the occasion.

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Across Asia, other NGOs have found themselves performing their task of stepping in to fill in the gaps left by government neglect or disappointment.

Indeed, NGOs say the inability of the state to act in the collective interest of the community has made the role of civil society more relevant than ever before.

"Governments in top down democracies have lost the political will to change anything," says Dr A T Ariyaratne, founder of the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka. "We cannot leave development to them anymore — it has only prolonged suffering, conflict and disharmony."

Over the past 30 years, Sarvodaya has grown into one of the world's largest national NGOs, with a budget larger than those of some Sri Lankan government agencies.

With its Gandhian roots, it has tried to revive traditional Buddhist and Hindu values and build a grassroots democracy so people can help themselves using local resources and ini-

tiate.

The free-for-all market is destroying everything — values, expectations, resources people are getting spiritually and economically pauperised," he says.

Some NGOs think that in an effort to maximise reach, groups like Sarvodaya may have spread out too thin. They feel activities of local communities should be based on natural ecosystems (river-basins, mountain ranges or valleys) so resources can be locally and sustainably managed for the good of the community.

Experts like Serrano say this kind of development is more manageable and will give indigenous people more sovereignty over their ancestral domains and amplify local concerns over large national-scale development projects.

With help from activists from outside championing their cause, local communities in the Philippines, Indonesia, India and Thailand have not only mobilised opposition to large projects but also worked to rescue damaged ecosystems on their own.

China publishes new policy on automobile

BEIJING, July 4: The government on Monday published its policy to take China's automobile industry into the 21st century, including plans for more Chinese-made, less environmentally damaging cars for private owners, reports AP.

The policy focuses on developing China's domestic automobile industry and protecting it from foreign competitors. A major aim is to build up three or four main auto companies by the year 2010 to compete internationally.

China's State Planning Commission formulated the 13-chapter policy paper in February, but the Communist Party newspaper People's Daily published it only Monday.

For years, China's automotive industry focused on producing trucks, buses, tractors and other heavy vehicles. The industry has diversified since economic reforms were launched in the 1980s, but quality is often poor and production of passenger cars especially has lagged behind demand, forcing China to import. Last year, China imported 300,000 foreign vehicles, and another 100,000 were smuggled in.

Under the new policy, China will aim to produce more than 90 per cent of its automotive needs by the year 2000, including more passenger vehicles to meet China's growing demand for family cars. China now produces 1.3 million vehicles annually, but it aims to raise annual production to five million by the 21st century.

Under the policy, leading manufacturers will be given tax breaks and help in acquiring loans and issuing stock to raise capital. They are also encouraged to use foreign investment. The government will also encourage the development of electric-powered vehicles and the use of unleaded gasoline and cleaner fuels.

But the government will limit the number of joint-venture companies that foreign manufacturers can set up in China. It will also encourage manufacturers to use Chinese parts and discourage importing cars in parts for assembly in China. The government already limits imports with tariffs and licences.

The paper says the government encourages private car ownership, which was frowned upon as an extravagance in the past. Government officials are also forbidden from attempting to stop individuals from owning cars, it says.

Dhaka Stock Prices

At the close of trading on July 4, 1994 Gainers' domination continues

Star Report

Gainers continued to dominate the floor of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) under the leadership of Quasem Drycells on Monday.

The traded issues totalled 50, in which 26 gained, 12 incurred losses and 12 others remained unchanged.

Quasem Drycells led the gainers in terms of volume with 4450 shares traded.

In terms of value, Singer Bangladesh dominated the gainers' list with an increase of Taka 31.76 per share.

Ambee Pharma led the losers in terms of volume. The company's 2300 shares were traded.

National Tea Company incurred a loss of Taka 10.00 per share, leading the losers on the floor.

The turnover in volume on the DSE rose by 10.66 per cent while the turnover in value showed a decline of 8.68 per cent.

A total of 30740.00 shares worth Taka 3834455.00 changed hands on the floor as against Sunday's 27776.50 shares valued at Taka 419903.50.

The DSE All Share Price Index trend. It reached 668.46241 from 667.03527, a rise of 0.2140 per cent.

DSE All Share Price Index

670
660
650
640
630
620
610
600

27 28 29 2 3 4
June-July

Exchange Rates

Following are the Sonali Bank's dealing rates to public for some selected foreign currencies effective as on July 4. (Figures in Taka)

Currency	Selling		Buying	
	TT & OD	EC	TT	OD
US Dollar	40.4075	40.4375	40.1700	40.0950
Pound Sterling	62.0457	62.0910	61.0244	60.9105
DM	25.3762	25.3950	24.9604	24.9138
F Franc	7.4078	7.4133	7.2883	7.2747
C Dollar	29.4272	29.4490	23.9422	23.8881
S Franc	30.2717	30.2942	29.7722	29.7166
JPY	0.4144	0.4148	0.4034	0.4027
Indian Rupee (AMU)	1.2908	1.2973	1.2754	—
Pak Rupee (AMU)	1.3196	1.3262	1.3037	1.2874
Iranian Rial (AMU)	0.0230	0.0231	0.0227	—

A) T.T.(DOC) US Dollar Spot Buying Tk 40.1325

B) Usance Rates:

30 Days DA 60 Days DA 90 Days DA 120 Days DA 180 Days DA

39.8191 39.5345 39.2500 38.9655 38.3964

C) US Dollar spot export bill 3 months forward purchase: Tk. 40.0950

D) US Dollar 3 months forward sale: Tk. 40.6375

Indicative Rates

Currency	Selling		Buying	
	T.T. & O.D.	O. D. Transfer	T.T. & O.D.	O. D. Transfer
S Riyal	10.8010	—	10.6854	—
UAE Dirham	11.0273	—		