

Power sector achieves ADP implementation target

More than 98 per cent of the targets of annual development programme in the power and natural resources sector were achieved in the last financial year, putting the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry in the frontline in ADP implementation, reports UNB.

This was stated in a high-level review meeting on annual development programme under the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry yesterday. Representatives of donor agencies were present in the meeting, chaired by Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandker Mosharraf Hossain.

The meeting was informed that Tk 1662.89 crore, including project aid amounting to Tk 767.8 crore, would be spent for implementing 74 projects on power and natural

resources in the current fiscal year.

In the last fiscal (1993-94), Tk 1601.90 crore was spent in the sector. Of the amount, Tk 696.95 crore came in project aid.

Tk 1305.30 crore, including project aid of Tk 578.70 crore, will be spent on 44 projects of power sector this year. Last fiscal's spending stood at Tk 1209.99 crore, including Tk 593.25 crore in project aid.

In the natural resources sub-sector, Tk 357.59 crore, including project aid of Tk 188.38 crore, will be spent to implement 30 projects this year. Last year, Tk 391.91 crore, including project aid of Tk 103.70 crore, was invested.

Of the under-implementation projects in natural resources sub-sector in the current fiscal four are new in-

vestment projects and five new technical assistance ones.

In the last fiscal, five investment projects were completed in the natural resources sub-sector. The projects are North-South Gas Pipeline Project, Brahmaputra Basin Gas Transmission and Distribution Project, Gas Supply Project at Raozan power station, and setting up of Secondary Conversion Plant and Petrocentre at Eastern Refinery.

Three new projects under implementation in the power sub-sector are Development of Power Supply System in Greater Dhaka and two projects titled Fourth Phase in rural electrification.

The minister expressed satisfaction over the progress in implementation of the projects in power and natural resources

sector last year.

He called for reviewing and monitoring monthly progress from the beginning of the year in implementation of projects to score 100 per cent success.

The meeting was attended by Energy Secretary M Faisal Razzak, Petrobangla Chairman S K M Abdullah, Chairman of the Power Development Board Kazi Golam Rahman, Petroleum Corporation Chairman M Fazul Haq, DESA Chairman Amanul Islam, Chairman of the Rural Electrification Board Brig Enamul Haq, Director General of Geological Survey Directorate Dr Mojibar Rahman, the representatives of World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Planning Commission and IMED and concerned agencies and project chiefs.

Yeltsin signs decree on privatisation

MOSCOW, July 23: President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree Friday putting into effect the government's plan for selling off state industries, a key element of the country's market reform programme, the presidential press service said, reports AP.

Yeltsin issued the decree after lawmakers in the State Duma, the lower house of parliament on Thursday rejected the plan for the second stage of privatisation.

The so-called "second-stage privatisation plan" envisages selling stakes in state-owned companies to investors for cash. In the first, 20-month phase of privatisation shares were distributed in exchange for state-issued vouchers and 44 million Russians became shareholders, according to government figures.

The voucher programme ended July 1, but Yeltsin extended it for three months starting again September 1 to give the 4 million Russians who didn't invest their vouchers the opportunity to do so.

So far, the voucher programme has turned 100,000 state-owned enterprises, almost 70 per cent of Russia's industrial potential, into joint-stock companies.

Hard-line lawmakers in the Duma Thursday blocked adoption of a draft law on the second stage of privatisation and did not put it on the agenda for Friday, the last plenary meeting of the summer session. It was the second time that the Duma rejected the law.

Sergei Filatov, a presidential aide, said after the vote that Yeltsin would initiate the second stage plan by decree. "The privatisation process has already become irreversible, and will go on under any circumstances," he said.

Questions, answers about IMF

WASHINGTON, July 23: There are some questions and answers about the International Monetary Fund. It celebrated its 50th anniversary along with the World Bank yesterday, reports Xinhua.

— What's IMF then and now?

IMF was founded as a cooperative institution to oversee the international monetary system with fixed, but adjustable, exchange rates. When the fixed rate collapsed in the 1970s, its role has been mainly that of surveillance and consultation.

— Does IMF lend money?

It lends money only to member countries with payments problems, that is, to countries that do not take in enough foreign currency to pay for what they buy from other countries. When this happens, the countries must face some unpleasant realities: they will be required to adopt austerity measures such as inflation control.

— What's the use of SDR?

Special Drawing Right, or SDR, was artificial money created by IMF to help members and to their holdings of foreign currencies and gold held in their banks. By supplying convertible money or SDRs to a member country, the IMF helps to cover a few months' worth of payments and stabilize the exchange value of the member's currency.

— What's the recent activity of IMF?

The IMF is now busy assisting the former Soviet Republics and Eastern European countries in their transition from centrally planned to market economies. It provides money, but also expertise concerning central banks, tax systems, tariff regimes and currency convertibility.

Efforts on to increase buying capacity of farmers: Mannan

Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said only enactment of a new law is not enough to protect the rights of the rural workers, reports UNB.

"If we can neither apply the law properly nor make the rural workers aware of their rights than a law will not be able to protect them," said the minister while addressing a workshop at the BIDS auditorium this morning.

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) organised the two-day workshop on "ILO Convention Ratification for the Rural Workers" to place a recommendation for the ratification of ILO Convention 141.

Inaugural session of the workshop was addressed, among others, by the State Minister for Land Kabir Hossain, ILO Representative DPA Nidu, labour leaders Nazrul Islam Khan, Nurur

Rahman and Shamsul Huda while ADAB Chairperson Khushi Kabir presided over the session.

Labour Minister said the government will consider to ratify the law but before enforcing any law a favourable situation is needed for its proper application.

"It needs to increase production, ensure the fair price of their products and create alternative jobs for them before ratifying the ILO Convention," Mannan Bhuiyan added.

He said the economy of the country was mainly based on agriculture, so farmers' problem was the main concern of the government.

"No industry will flourish here if the government can not solve the farmers problems who are major consumers of the industrial products," he said adding "so the government is trying to increase the buying capacity of the farmers."

"We should consider all the related factors before enacting any law" said the minister.

State Minister for Land Kabir Hossain said there were many laws for the landless and rural people but those could not do any good to them due to lack of proper application. The law can not protect their rights if there is no regulation over the production and distribution system, he added.

ILO representative DPA Nidu said ILO Convention 141, can really help in establishing the rights of the rural workers by organising them in the organisation of their own choice.

The Convention said: "It shall be an objective of national policy concerning rural development to facilitate the establishment and growth, on voluntary basis, of strong and independent organisations of rural workers as an effective means of ensuring the participation of rural workers."

'SIA donates Tk one lakh to orphanage

Singapore Airlines has donated Tk one lakh to Dhaka Ahsania Mohila Mission Girls' Orphanage, says a press release.

The money will be spent to construct a dormitory for the orphanage.

Singapore Airlines has given the donation as part of its commitment to community service.

The cheque for the amount was handed over to the President of the Mission Raisunnessa Huq by the General Manager of the Airlines Thia Hui Juat at a simple ceremony in the city recently.

He said he is impressed with various social activities undertaken by the Mission.

During his short visit to the Mission, Juat was taken round different projects of the Mission. He was also pleased to note that the Mission also has income generating activities that would assist them to fund their own projects. "Singapore Airlines would be glad to assist further to the cause of the Mission" he said hoping this would set example for other private companies, both local and foreign, to come forward and contribute to the Mission.

China's external debt rises to \$ 83.5b in '93

BEIJING, July 23: China's external debt increased by 14.28 billion US dollars last year, bringing the outstanding amount to 83.5 billion US dollars by the end of 1993, reports Xinhua.

According to a report published by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange Control (SAFE) here Friday, last year's growth of the foreign debt was up by 20.61 per cent.

Of the total amount, 83.79 per cent or 70.027 billion US dollars, was middle and long-term debt, 16.21 per cent or 13.54 billion US dollars, was short term debt.

Financial institutions including banks are the biggest debtors, their external borrowing account for 49.9 per cent of the total. Governmental establishments, domestic enterprises and foreign-funded enterprises rank second, third and fourth, with their borrowing being 25.59 per cent, 13.4 per cent, 11.51 per cent of the total, respectively.

The report noted that China's foreign debt service ratio stood at 9.7 per cent and debt ratio at 94.62 per cent in 1993.



Thia Hui Juat, General Manager Singapore Airlines in Bangladesh, is seen with Orphan girls of the Dhaka Ahsania Mohila Mission Orphanage at Mirpur, Dhaka after presenting a cheque for Taka one lakh recently towards the cost for building a dormitory for the orphans. Ihtesham B Shahjahan, Sales & Marketing Manager of SIA and members of the Mission are also seen in the picture.

Dollar's revival gathers pace

LONDON, July 23: The dollar's revival strengthened on Friday as it racked up further gains after unambiguous Washington assurances that the Clinton administration wants a stronger US currency, reports Reuters.

Although few were willing to say the dollar's troubles were over, the steady swing back towards 1.60 marks showed a week is a longtime in foreign exchange markets, as

it is in politics. Last Friday the dollar closed in Europe at 1.5529 marks and 97.78 yen. On Wednesday of that week the US unit hit a closing low of 1.5180 and 96.72.

Its gains against the yen were less pronounced as it frayed around the 99 yen level from Thursday's 98.55.

The dollar has strengthened all week as the market began to adjust to the view that

the fundamentals of the major world economies may not justify further falls and the currency's likely next move might be upward.

On Thursday, the Clinton administration took advantage of the changing mood by stressing that it wants the dollar to strengthen against the Japanese yen and the German mark to boost the US economy and to encourage skittish investors.

US Treasury Under Secretary Lawrence Summers said other industrialised nations felt that a further dollar decline was a threat to global economic recovery.

"I believe in a strong dollar. I believe that very strongly," said Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen after speaking to a conference celebrating 50 years of global cooperation through the World Bank and IMF.

President Bill Clinton and Bentsen have come under past suspicion because of earlier comments they made that market forces should set the dollar's value and that a cheaper dollar might help lower the US trade gap with Japan.

Thursday's verbal support fell well short of the 1985 plaza agreement by the US and other leading nations that they would work to weaken the then-overstrong dollar.

At the Group of Seven summit in Naples early this month, Clinton and other leaders passed up the chance to firmly back the dollar, and this largely contributed to the currency's mid-month plunge.

Creation of IMT-GT now a reality

MANILA, July 23: The creation of a growth triangle comprising the contiguous areas of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand can now be realised with the completion of an Asian Development Bank (ADB)-led study. ADB officials said here Friday, reports AFP.

The study is completed, the next stage is implementation," ADB economist Myo Thant told reporters after a three-day conference at the Manila-based bank, to finalise the report, which will be submitted to representatives of all three countries at a special meeting in Penang in September.

The report, which is more than 700 pages long, is aimed at integrating the economies in north Sumatra and Aceh, southern Thailand and northern Malaysia in a manner sim-

ilar to the China-Taiwan-Hong Kong growth triangle.

Noritada Morita, ADB Programmes Director, said the programme was intended to bring the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth to an annual 7.2 per cent in the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) over 10 years.

He could not estimate how high the GDP growth in the area was at present but said areas included in the triangle generally suffered lower economic growth than other parts of their respective countries.

John Newton, a team leader of the study, said trade and investment liberalisation was "the centre of our policy," but admitted that not all of the recommendations were likely to be adopted by the three countries.

Asian ministers slate Western linkage of labour conditions, trade

BANGKOK, July 23: In an obvious slap at the United States and its Western partners, six Asian ministers Saturday criticised the insertion of social and environmental "clauses" into international trade agreements, reports AP.

The foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations expressed "serious concern that the linkage of workers' rights, labour standards and environmental issues could become a new pretext for protectionism."

The statement was contained in a communique ending the 27th ASEAN foreign ministers meeting. For the

first time the annual session was also attended by the other four nations of Southeast Asia. The booming economies of the region are fighting what they regard as trade protectionism in the form of demands - chiefly by the United States and the European Union - for improved working and environmental conditions.

The 32-point communique also said ASEAN was ready to accept Vietnam as a member, but did not specify a date by which the Communist country would be included.

After the conference, Thai Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri said a committee had

been formed to pave the way for Vietnam's admission but noted the Hanoi government had not yet formally applied to join.

ASEAN currently includes Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines. One focus of the two-day meeting was the possible expansion of the bloc.

Alleged Western protectionism is likely to resurface next week when the ASEAN ministers meet here with their seven traditional dialogue partners, including the United States, the European Union and Australia.

The communique called on

these seven to respond positively to "ASEAN's needs to foster a more meaningful partnership" and expressed concern over measures restricting market access of ASEAN exports.

Human rights was a major issue during the ASEAN conference even though the ministers, following an ASEAN policy that human rights issues are internal issues, did not discuss human rights issues.

The United States and Australia, which will meet with ASEAN ministers next week, criticized ASEAN for inviting Burma to the Bangkok conference, citing that nation's

widely condemned human rights record.

In deference to Indonesia, the Thai government on Thursday deported three pro-East Timor independence activists who were attending a private human rights conference in East Timor was annexed by Indonesia in 1976.

The communique omitted all references to Burma or the question of human rights and Prasong told a press conference that the ministers discussed human rights in only general terms.

Prasong said ASEAN's "constructive engagement" with military-ruled Burma

would lead to reform. He conceded that the grouping did not agree with everything happening in that country.

"Burma is not standing still. I believe it understands the changes that the international community would like to see happen in Burma. These are changes that Burma understands and there will implement," he said.

Commenting on perhaps the most turbulent country in the region, the communique said "peace and stability in Cambodia had not been fully realized."

The ministers condemned a recent coup attempt against

the Cambodian government and deplored the setting up of a "provisional government" by the radical Khmer Rouge guerrillas.

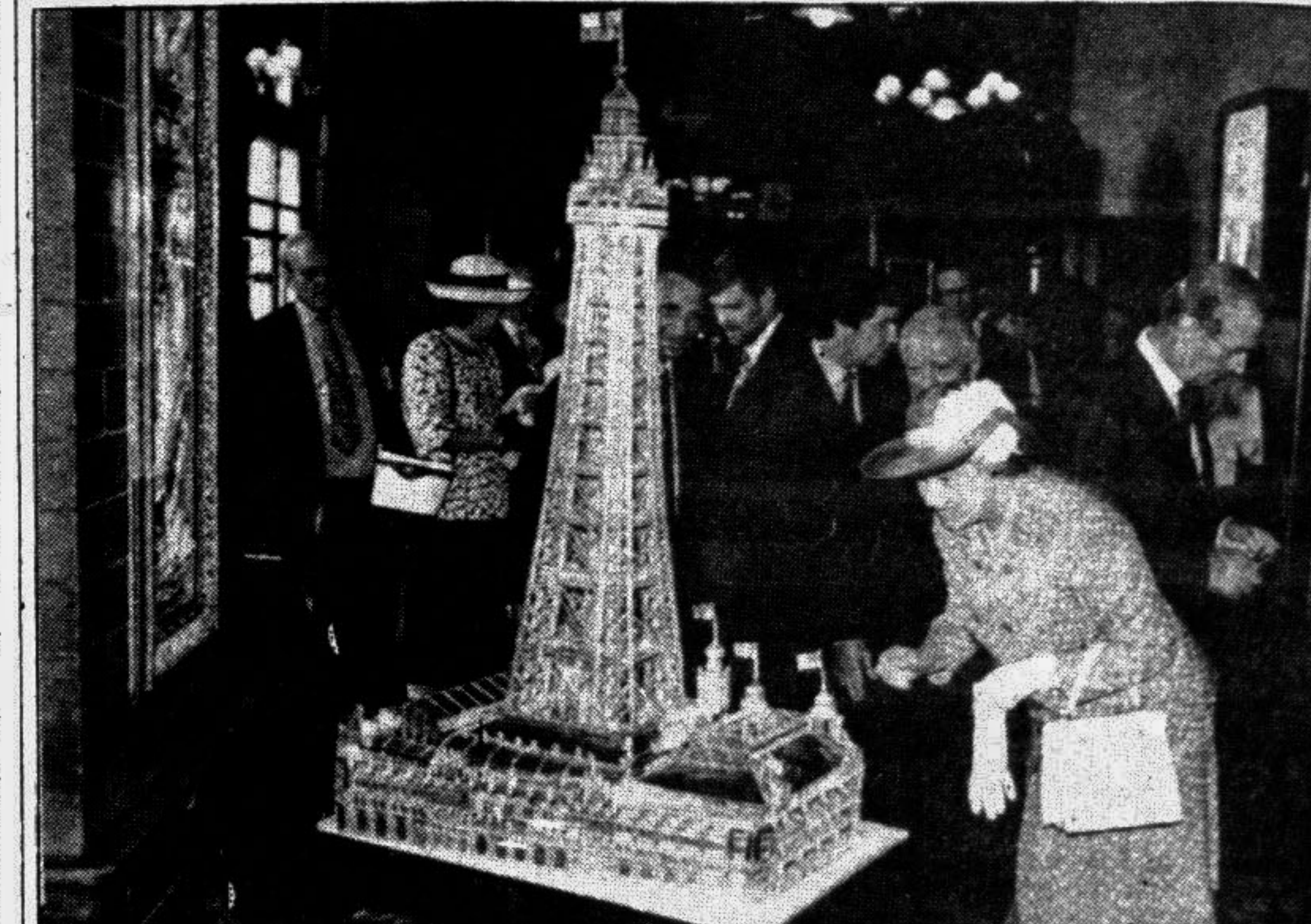
Asked about ASEAN providing military aid to the Cambodian government, Prasong said this was not allowed under the Paris Peace Accords which led to last year's UN-supervised elections and the current regime. But he said non-lethal military aid, like training, could be provided.

Reports from Phnom Penh Saturday said an Indonesian company had clinched a deal to sell large quantities of assault rifle ammunition to the

Cambodian government.

The communique gave virtually no specifics on how the region's economic and political issues should be tackled, or how ASEAN's key goal of greater economic integration would be realized.

On Monday, the six ministers will inaugurate an ASEAN regional forum, designed as a platform for "preventive diplomacy" in heading off potentially serious regional problems. Also taking part will be officials from Australia, Canada, China, the United States, New Zealand, South Korea, the European Union, Vietnam, Laos, Russia and Papua Guinea.



Queen Elizabeth II of England takes a close look at a model of Blackpool Tower on Friday as she visited the resort and its famous tower. — AFP photo

No US-Canada salmon treaty this year

WASHINGTON, July 23: Canada and the United States have abandoned efforts to divide the salmon catch and conserve threatened fish species with a new treaty in the North Pacific Ocean this year, reports AP.

Instead, the countries will continue operating under the existing treaty and leave each other's fisheries alone, with no new sanctions, while continuing talks for along term agreement next year, Assistant Commerce Secretary Douglas Hall said Friday.

The two countries "remain far apart on many key issues" said Hall, the Chief US negotiator in the talks.

"Some of the fisheries (seasons) have already started. We've just run out of time," he said during a news conference.

The long-running dispute centres on Canadian demands for a larger share of the catch of Pacific salmon, which spawn in both the United States and Canada.

Promotion

Mohammad Altaf Ali, M A Salam and M A Rashid have been promoted to the post of Members of Bangladesh Water Development Board, says a press release.

Prior to his elevation as Member O & M of the Board, Altaf Ali was the Chief Engineer, Water Investigation of the Board and Member of the Joint River Commission.

Before his promotion Salam was the Chief Engineer, central zone of the Board while Rashid was Chief Engineer of System Rehabilitation Project of the Board.

M A Rashid