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# The Daily Star BUSINESS

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## Anti-smuggling drive in abeyance at outer anchorage of Ctg Port

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Oct 29: Drive at the outer anchorage of Chittagong Port by the anti-smuggling team of sea custom here remained suspended for about three months as the two patrol boats used in the operation had gone out of order, reliable sources said.

When contacted over telephone a senior custom official said that the anti-smuggling drive at the outer anchorage by his team could not resume until the patrol boats were repaired. But efforts are underway to get the patrol boats repaired, he added.

Meanwhile, following the suspension of anti-smuggling drive by the sea custom here,

the outer anchorage has turned into a haven of smugglers as some liner vessels operating between Chittagong Port and Singapore Port and their shipping agents and were keeping surveillance on them at the port area, sources said adding that those ships mostly drop the contraband at the outer anchorage.

These contraband items include electronics, cigarettes, wines, toiletries, and crockeries which are unloaded at the outer anchorage and sold to the clients waiting there on board high-powered engine boats, trawlers and sampans, it is learnt.

Recently, different government agencies reportedly lis-

ted up some identified feeder vessels operating regularly between Chittagong Port and Singapore Port and their shipping agents and were keeping surveillance on them at the port area, sources said adding that those ships mostly drop the contraband at the outer anchorage.

Informed circle said, the smuggled goods which reached the shore from outer anchorage through coastal areas, already flooded the city markets here. Some traffickers are also taking those smuggled goods mainly cigarettes to Dhaka both by train and other transports. BDR personnel in a raid last week into a Dhaka

bound coach from Chittagong recovered smuggled cigarettes while the traffickers fled.

The traders here who mostly deal in smuggled goods reportedly maintain clandestine links with some high-ups in the administration by giving them monthly basis big amount of tolls to get relief from any crack-down, sources also informed. As a result, anti-smuggling task force hardly go for raids in the city markets, it is alleged.

Consequently, though foreign cigarettes like 555 and Benson & Hedges are not at all imported due to higher tax rates, but these brands of cigarettes are abundant in the markets.

### Emirates voted best airline by Italian tourists

Emirates, the international airline of the UAE, has been voted the Best Airline to the Middle East and Airline with the Best First Class Service by Italy's business travellers, says a press release.

Both awards are part of Icarus '94, Italy's first and only competition for the airline industry, which is organised by Italian travel trade magazine, *Turismo D'Afari*. The awards are also Emirates' first received in Italy and bring the airline's total award tally to 62.

Icarus '94 resulted from a year-long readership poll conducted among Italy's frequent flyers and business travellers, which focused on business travel. Areas polled included airlines' on-board and ground services, tailor-made programmes and other incentives specially designed for discerning business travellers.

Emirates topped two of the 14 award categories of Icarus '94.

Nigel Page, Emirates' Senior General Manager Commercial Operations (Europe & North America), said: "The recognition from Italy's discriminating business travellers is especially significant for Emirates, which started operations to Rome only two years ago. This will spur us to perform even better, offering our clients only the best on every route we operate."

Emirates' range of innovative services to business travellers included inflight telephones and fax machine — the first ever introduced in airbus aircraft. The airline was also the first in the world to have a personal video system on every seat in the First, Business and Economy cabins of its wide-bodied fleet.

Vincenzo Betti, Icarus Manager Italy, received the Icarus '94 Best Airline to the Middle East and Airline with the Best First Class Service awards from Marco Bramonti, Managing Director of *Turismo D'Afari*, during a gala dinner and presentation ceremony at Rome's Palazzo delle Esposizioni, on September 29.

Leading banker says Robust growth in agriculture vital for Nepal

MANILA, Oct 29: Robust agriculture is vital if Nepal's economy is to post modest growth over the next three years, a leading banker said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Satyendra Shrestha of the Nepal Rastra Bank said in a written report at an Asian Development Bank forum the country's gross domestic product (GDP) would expand 4.2-4.8 per cent from 1994-1996. Nepal's GDP will grow 7.7 per cent in 1994.

"Economic growth of the country is possible only through a respectable and sustained growth in the country's dominant agricultural sector," Shrestha said.

New HK law barring trade in endangered animals soon

HONG KONG, Oct 29: Hong Kong proposed new laws on Friday to raise the maximum fine for trading in highly endangered animals and plants to five million HK dollars (640,000 US dollars), reports Reuter.

The maximum prison sentence for such offences would also be raised to two years.

At present, the maximum penalty for a first-time offender is a 3,200 US dollar fine rising to a fine of 6,400 US dollars and six months' imprisonment for a subsequent offence.

Hong Kong is both a consumer of and a trading centre for many rare species, some of which are in demand for traditional medicine, others as highly-prized pets or as exotic food for the dinner table.

Eric Johnson, a principal assistant secretary for economic services in the Hong Kong government, said rhinoceroses and tigers and most species of bear were now threatened with extinction because of the demand for parts of these animals for use in traditional medicine in East Asia.

Tiger bone, bear bile and powdered rhinoceros horn are considered by some to be capable of restoring male virility.

The Hong Kong government expects the proposals to be passed into law early next year.

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Dr Richard M Brown, USAID Mission Director in Bangladesh, spoke as the chief guest on the occasion of the foundation laying ceremony of the Social Marketing Company corporate building at Banani in the city recently. Also seen in the picture from right to left are: Robert L Ciszewski, Director of Population Services International, Washington, USA, C M Murshed, Chairman of SMC Board, and Walir Rahman, Managing Director, SMC.

## Structural adjustment in conformity with workers' condition suggested

Speakers at a discussion in Dhaka, Friday, warned that trade unionism would be endangered if structural adjustment is enforced in the industrial sector in an unplanned manner, reports UNB.

They said structural adjustment is necessary for economic development, but it will have a negative impact if it is done without forming a new structure for trade unions.

The Bangladeshi Jatiya Sramik League organised the open discussion on "Structural Adjustment and Trade Union" at the National Press Club auditorium in the afternoon.

The participants suggested that structural adjustment be pursued taking into consideration the socio-economic conditions of the workers, their mentality and overall needs of this sector.

Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed MP, President of Combined Workers' Federation Mokhlesur Rahman, Labour

leader Nasim Ali, Dr Durgadas Bhattacharya and Mamanur Rashid Chowdhury were among those who took part in the discussion. General Secretary of the Sramik League Mohammad Mojibul Rahman Bhuiyan presided.

Tofael said structural adjustment or any other adjustment will be meaningless unless there is political stability in the country.

Blaming the government for failure to ensure political stability, he said opposition Members of Parliament are boycotting the House for a long time and the country's economy is deteriorating because of the government failure.

The Awami League leader said the condition of the general public will not be ameliorated unless a people-oriented economic system is established. He stressed the need for consensus on national issues and a stable economic policy which would not be

changed with the change of governments.

The government cannot do anything without the prescription of the World Bank and IMF, they do it without thinking about the interest of the people," Tofael said and called upon the workers to be united to protect their own interests.

Dr Durgadas Bhattacharya said structural adjustment should be done on the basis of the economic condition of the country as 89 per cent of the population are now below the poverty line.

Nasim Ali said denationalisation means an unlimited unemployment process and "we have to come on the same platform to resist the destruction of trade unions."

Mokhlesur Rahman said structural adjustment or open market is not possible without eliminating trade unions and urged the workers to unitedly resist any move that goes against their interest.

AIT Director visits IUB today

Jyoti Gupta, Professor of Finance and Director, School of Management, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok will visit Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). During his visit he will meet Dr A Majeed Khan, President, IUB and Faculty members of IUB Business School to exchange views and explore possibilities of collaboration between AIT and IUB, says a press release.

## Lawsuit charging major cigarette makers in US expanded

MIAMI, Oct 29: A lawsuit charging major cigarette makers concealed the addictive nature of nicotine in their products was expanded Friday to cover all US smokers who couldn't quit smoking, reports AP.

The legal action seeks a stunning 200 billion US dollars in compensatory and punitive damages from tobacco companies.

A Florida Judge, Harold Solomon, ruled that he would certify the lawsuit by six smokers as a class-action covering people who have died or been ill from smoking-related diseases.

The lawsuit hinges on addiction claims, rather than physical harm, the avenue pursued in past cases.

Edward Moss, lead attorney for the tobacco companies, argued that expanding the lawsuit would make it unwieldy and would be "an invitation to the road to disaster."

Attorney David Rash, whose firm filed the lawsuit, called the ruling "a major hurdle."

The defendants include R J Reynolds, Philip Morris, Lorillard, American Tobacco Co, Brown and Williamson and Liggett Group.

Philip Morris said it was confident the judge's decision would be overturned on appeal. The company noted that previous lawsuits against tobacco companies have failed.

Juries have demonstrated an overwhelming acceptance of the commonsense view that people who choose and continue to smoke given the well-known claimed health risks should not recover damages," the company said in a statement.

The State Minister for Industries Lutfur Rahman Khan, yesterday said nearly 50 lakh people depended on sugar industry directly or indirectly for their livelihood, reports BSS.

It is therefore imperative to make the sugar mills profitable in the interests of the people, the minister said while inaugurating the 1994-95 crushing season of Kushtia Sugar Mills at Kushtia.

Mohammad Abdul Ghani MP and officials of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) also spoke.

The minister said that following the pragmatic and people-oriented policies of the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, the country's industrial sector was steadily emerging from the in-

ertia and sluggishness of nine years of autocratic rule.

The country's industrial sector, he said, was gaining in vigour and tempo of productivity.

The minister later addressed a public meeting at Azampur.

The crushing programme began with a target to produce 15 thousand tons of sugar by crushing one lakh 76 thousand 500 tons of sugarcane.

Sugar production also simultaneously began yesterday in Faridpur, Natore and North Bengal Sugar Mills raising the number of mills already in production to seven.

Remaining mills will go into production in phases by the eighteenth of November, BSFIC said.

COLOMBO, Oct 29: The Asian Development Bank expressed concern Friday over Sri Lanka's new government introducing subsidies that could adversely affect growth and underlined the need for peace in the embattled country, reports AFP.

Increased privatisation and peace were needed to achieve Sri Lanka's target of eight per cent growth in gross domestic product (GDP), ADB's regional programme Manager Frank Polman told reporters here.

After 10 days of talks with local officials, the ADB's country programme mission stressed the need to strengthen fiscal management to arrest inflation and ensure peace in the island's strife-torn northern and eastern regions.

The government's battle against separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas accounts for 20 per cent of the national budget.

Polman said the mission noted with concern the government's actions to reintroduce subsidies and increase market interventions in a number of areas, notably in agriculture.

The mission believed that these interventions, by intro-

"ADB warns Lanka of introducing subsidies

ducing further distortions in the market causing misallocation of resources and impacting adversely on the budget, will constrain the government's ability to achieve its goal of accelerated economic growth," he said.

Sri Lanka recorded a growth of 6.7 per cent last year, compared with 5.6 per cent in 1992, central bank figures showed.

The ADB's loan portfolio in Sri Lanka amounted to 930 million dollars for 29 projects.

The new socialist government of Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga has introduced fertiliser and fuel subsidies that were taken away by the previous right-wing United National Party (UNP) administration.

China plans no further wheat purchase this yr

BRUSSELS, Oct 29: The head of China's national grain import and export agency said yesterday that China planned no further wheat purchases this year, reports Reuter.

"This year we have a bumper harvest and the international price is too high at the moment, so at present we have no need to import," Cerial Food President Zhou Mingchen told reporters.

The mission believed that these interventions, by intro-

"He added that China had fulfilled its requirements for this calendar year.

## New EU chief names 21 officials to help shape trade policies

LUXEMBOURG, Oct 29: The new chief executive of the European Union picks 21 men and women to positions that will allow them to help shape the policies of the giant trade bloc for the next five years, reports AP.

It is never out of fashion," asserted Ian Strachan, spokesman for carmaker Rover which plans production of 22,000 Minis this year at its plant here, the only one still making the car.

The aim is to make them as long as they sell, with new models brought out to maintain interest. The Mini 35 was at view at this week's British car show.

The survival of the Mini depends essentially on Japan, which somewhat surprisingly is the leading market with 11,000 sold there this year. Strachan explained that the Mini was "appealing and very easy to drive in the overcrowded cities."

The Mini is in the record books at 5.25 million manufactured, though that pales before the awesome 21 million of the Volkswagen beetle.

Yet when it came out in 1959, people were suspicious and surprised by the revolutionary designs of Sir Alec Issigonis.

The British Motor Corporation, nationalised precursor of Rover, had asked him for a "people's car" without any connotations of social class distinctions.

Many of the new commissioners get to name their commissioners. But Santer will tell them which positions they get. Without enough prime positions to go round, Santer will have to cut the ambitions of some down to size.

The EU's current trade czar, Sir Leon Brittan of Britain, and foreign affairs chief Hans van den Broek of the Netherlands are staying on in the new commission — and are resisting any attempt to dilute their powers.

Many of those problems will be his. The bigger nations will try to bully the Luxembourg-based EU into giving their nominees the most influential posts, such as foreign affairs, trade or finance.

Santer could try to keep overall control of the EU's trade and foreign policies for himself, giving new colleagues only a subordinate role in charge of particular regions.

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He thinks it's more important to keep cohesion, than to split the jobs up so everybody gets one," said an aide to Brittan.

Van den Broek may be considered with relations with Eastern Europe, a potentially important position as the former communist nations seek closer links to the Union.

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