

Malaysia installs hot-line to receive workers' complaints

The Human Resources Ministry of Malaysia has introduced a telephone hot-line service 'Telekarja' to receive complaints from overseas employees and workers in that country, reports UNB.

Using this service, all foreign nationals working in Malaysia, including Bangladeshis, can inform the authorities of their problems over telephone, said a press release issued by the Labour and Manpower Ministry here yesterday.

The Labour and Manpower Minister of Bangladesh has congratulated the Malaysian Minister for Human Resources for introducing this service, expected to help the authorities ensure quick redress.

CIRDAP holds consultation on loan repayment

A mid-term consultation on loan repayment behaviour among rural people was organised by the Centre for Integrated Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) in Islamabad recently, reports BSS.

The project was initiated in five member countries, including Nepal and Pakistan in 1993 with financial assistance from Japan.

The project aims to help improve access to institutional credit by the rural people and make credit programmes more viable.

The research focused on analysing the loan repayment behaviour of the rural people under different credit programmes in the participating countries — identifying the factors governing timely repayment of the credit.

Country studies were reviewed at the meeting which particularly dwelt with some common problems like the low prices of agricultural produce, failure of the production plans due to natural calamities and inefficient credit monitoring.

The consultation meeting suggested several steps like group formation, training, income generating activities, technical services, saving mobilisation and seed money as a part of the action phase to improve the loan repayment behaviour among the rural poor.

There will also be two implementation bodies at the country level: advisory committee (IAC) and the project management committee (PMA). The consultation also suggested to involve the existing lending institution and NGOs, wherever applicable.

CIRDAP Director Dr Sompon Hangponpangdi and programme officers concerned attended the meeting.

Hanoi exports 2m tonnes rice this yr

HANOI, Nov 10: Vietnam exported two million tonnes of rice this year, 1.7 million tonnes officially and the rest through barter deals, with China, the agriculture ministry said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The figure, recorded at the end of October, meets Hanoi's 1994 objectives which had to be revised down after recent flooding in the Mekong Delta, the country's rice basket.

Earlier, officials had predicted 2.2 million tonnes of rice sales abroad but suspended exports in October to conserve stocks and prevent famine in some rural areas.

Cutbacks will stay in force till end November, while officials evaluate the extent of flood damage, restore production and curb speculation, an agriculture ministry spokesman explained.

Vietnam officially exported 1.7 million tonnes of rice during the first 10 months this year, nearly hitting the 1.8 million figure it recorded for the whole of last year, the spokesman noted.

Some 300,000 tonnes of rice were sold in semi-official border trade with China.

Natural disasters including typhoons and floods since late summer destroyed more than a million tonnes of rice, according to official estimates.

The Mekong Delta, the country's most fertile region, lost 300,000 tonnes of rice in the worst destruction in 30 years.

Vietnam, which became the third largest rice exporter in the world after Thailand and the United States in 1989, had hoped for record sales this year, after bagging big orders from Malaysia, Indonesia and the Middle East.

Exploration of gas, oil in Ctg region

Govt likely to initial contracts with 2 foreign cos Monday

By Staff Correspondent

The government is likely to initial a contract on Monday with two foreign companies — Holland Sea Search of the Netherlands and Cairn plc of Scotland — to explore gas and oil in the Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Feni regions.

Representatives of the two companies are expected to arrive in the capital on Saturday as part of a high-level British delegation, official sources said.

Two other British oil giants — British Gas Company which signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the government and Lasmo plc, a leading oil and gas exploration company, are also sending their representatives with the

delegation. Cairn plc and the Holland Sea Search are the only foreign companies to get government approval in the last two decades to explore gas and oil in the Bay off the coast of Cox's Bazar and Sandwip, identified as Block No 16. The approval was given on May 5 last.

Since then, the companies had been negotiating with Petrobangla on Block 15 — which covers the Hill Tracts, Chittagong and Feni regions.

The companies had submitted their production sharing contract (PSC) for Block 15 to Petrobangla. Sources said, the PSC was similar to the earlier PSC for Block 16 barring a few changes in some clauses.

As per the PSC for Block 15, Cairn plc and the Holland Sea Search would develop the Semutang gas field in the Hill Tracts and two gas fields in Feni.

For the Semutang gas field, the companies proposed to extract gas and supply the same to the Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (KAFCO) through a 25-km pipeline.

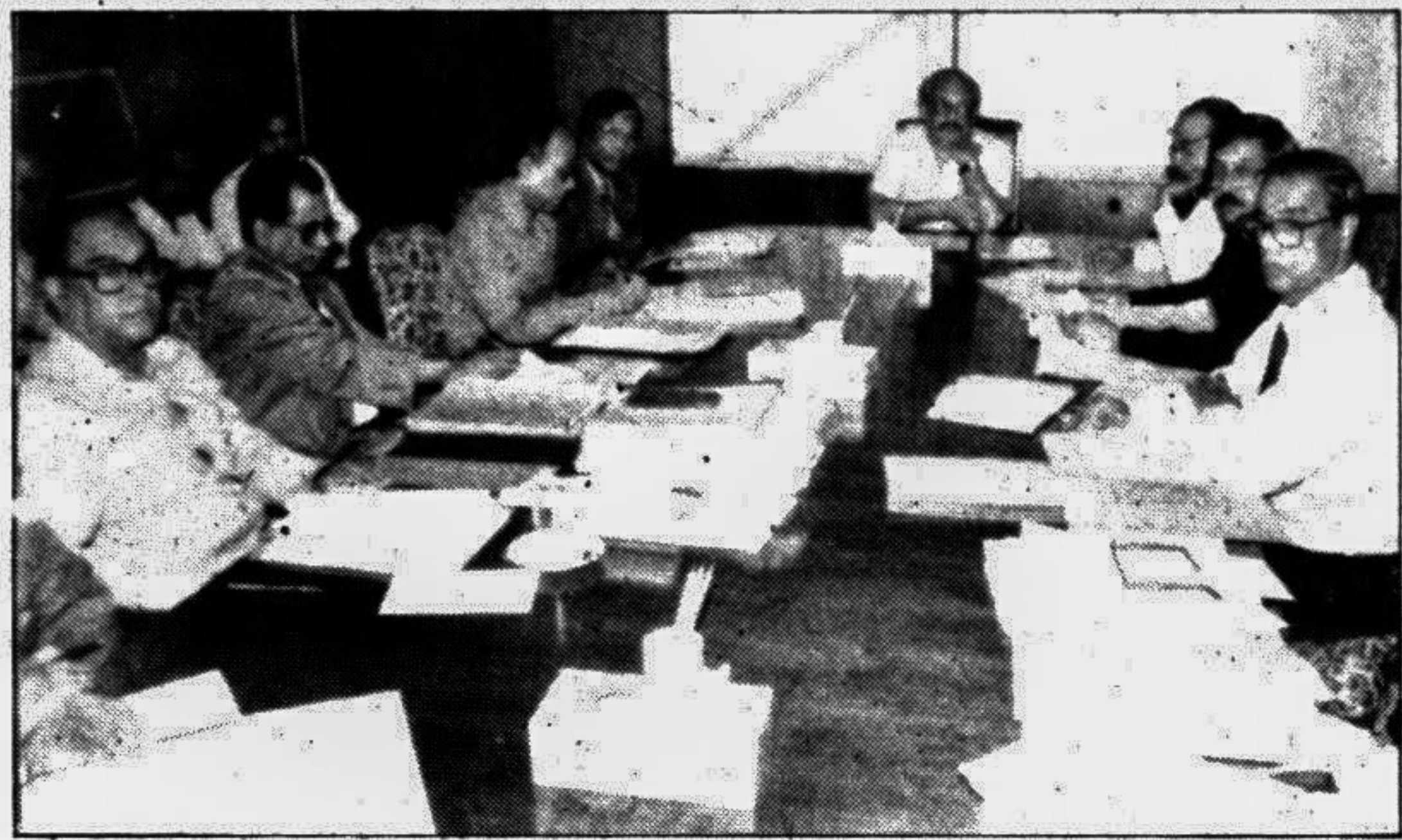
They further proposed to supply gas to the national grid through the Chittagong-Bakhrabad line.

The Semutang field has an estimated gas reserve of around one trillion cubic feet while Petrobangla is already developing the Feni-2 field to supply 20 to 25 million cubic feet to KAFCO.

The British Gas Company had submitted its PSC for Block Nos 9 and 10 covering the Noakhali and Comilla regions.

Lasmo plc is keen about exploration around the Cox's Bazar region beside Block 16, sources said adding, the company is yet to sign a MOU.

Ever since the Energy Ministry organised a round table meeting to attract international oil companies at Houston, Texas in the USA in September 1992 under the auspices of the World Bank, over two dozen companies from the United States, Canada, Britain, France and other European countries signed MOUs with the government.



A M Zahiruddin Khan, Minister for Industries, presiding over a review meeting at BCIC Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Zahir advises BCIC

Take specific steps to maximise cement output

Industries Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan has advised the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation to take specific steps to maximise cement production, says a BCIC press release.

He was reviewing the progress of various development projects of the corporation in a meeting at BCIC Bhaban in the city yesterday.

The minister put emphasis on timely implementation of new industrial projects within the approved project cost.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of procurement of seed jute for production of pulp and paper.

It also discussed the supply of jute seed and fertilizer to the farmers for raising jute cultivation in the country.

Industries Secretary A H M Abdul Hye, Syed Yusuf Hossain, Additional Secretary, K C Das, Joint Chief (Planning), Ministry of Industries, BCIC

Chairman, Waseq al Azad, directors and other senior officers of BCIC head office participated in the discussion.

China's rural income rises

BEIJING, Nov 10: China's rural residents are bringing home more money, but inflation is eating up a big portion of it, official reports said Thursday, reports AP.

Per capita cash income for rural residents totalled 838.4 yuan (98.4 dollars) in the January-September period, up 33.6 per cent from a year earlier, according to a sample survey conducted by the State Statistical Bureau, the China Business Times reported Thursday.

That represents a monthly per capita income of 93.16 yuan (10.93 dollars).

US dollar rises against yen in Tokyo

TOKYO, Nov 10: The US dollar finished higher against the Japanese yen Thursday, reports AP.

The dollar closed at 97.77 yen, up 0.53 yen from Wednesday's close but below its overnight level of 97.81 yen in New York.

After opening at 97.68 yen, it ranged between 97.65 yen and 97.80 yen.

"The dollar remains sandwiched for the time being," said Kazunobu Otsuka, Assistant General Manager of the Treasury Department with Sanwa Bank.

Japanese exporters are poised to sell dollars if the US currency exceeds 98 yen, while the prospect of rising US interest rates is sparking others to buy, players said.

"The market has it that inflationary pressure in the United States will be eased a bit, if the interest rates could be cut by a larger than widely expected percentage point," Otsuka said.

Tax collection employees call on Biswas

President Biswas said that proper collection of the government taxes and revenues is essential for meeting the expenditure for socio-economic development of the country, reports UNB.

President was exchanging views with a delegation of Bangladesh Registration Taxes Collection Employees Association of Barisal, Division yesterday when they called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban.

He advised them to discharge their responsibilities with utmost sincerity and honesty.

Earlier, in a memorandum, the members of the delegation apprised the President of some of their problems.

President gave them a patient hearing and assured to look into these matters.

Among others, Monsur Ali, KM Salahuddin, Abdul Jalil Miah, Giasuddin, Shahjahan Khan, Abul Basher Chowdhury, Nurul Islam and Krishna Lal Nath were present on the occasion.

Int'l trade fair in India from Nov 14

7 Bangladesh firms to participate

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh will take part in an international trade fair in India from the 14th of this month.

The 14-day fair will be held at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi from November 14 to 27.

Seven leading exporting firms of Bangladesh will participate in the show under the auspices of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) of Bangladesh.

The firms which are expected to participate in the fair are: Nipun Shari, Pallab Shari, Asma Silk Industries, Uttama Handicrafts, Shell Craft, Uttaran-Enterprises and Jamdani Kuthir.

A senior official of the EPB told The Daily Star that the main objective of the country's participation in the fair was to minimise the trade gap with India.

The existing trade between Bangladesh and India is about five times more in favour of India.

Bangladesh exports few goods to India while it spends a big amount for importing many items from that country.

Bangladesh earned 98,48,000 US dollar by exporting to India in 1992-93 fiscal year while in 1991-92, the export earning was only 20,74,000 US dollars.

Mojibor for realisation of outstanding loans

The Minister of State for Finance Mojibor Rahman yesterday called for continued endeavours for realisation of outstanding industrial and bank loans from the defaulters through understanding, reports BSS.

Inaugurating a two-day annual conference of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank in the city the State Minister for Finance, however, said that there was no scope to linger the outstanding loan cases for a long time in the name of discussion.

Mojibor Rahman asked the bank officials to make sure that the loan money for industrial purposes are not diverted to any other sectors.

He referred to the reform programmes undertaken by the present democratic government and said we shall have to wait for some time to enjoy the fruits of these reforms. He appreciated the Shilpa Bank authorities for their devoted efforts in implementing the reform measures.

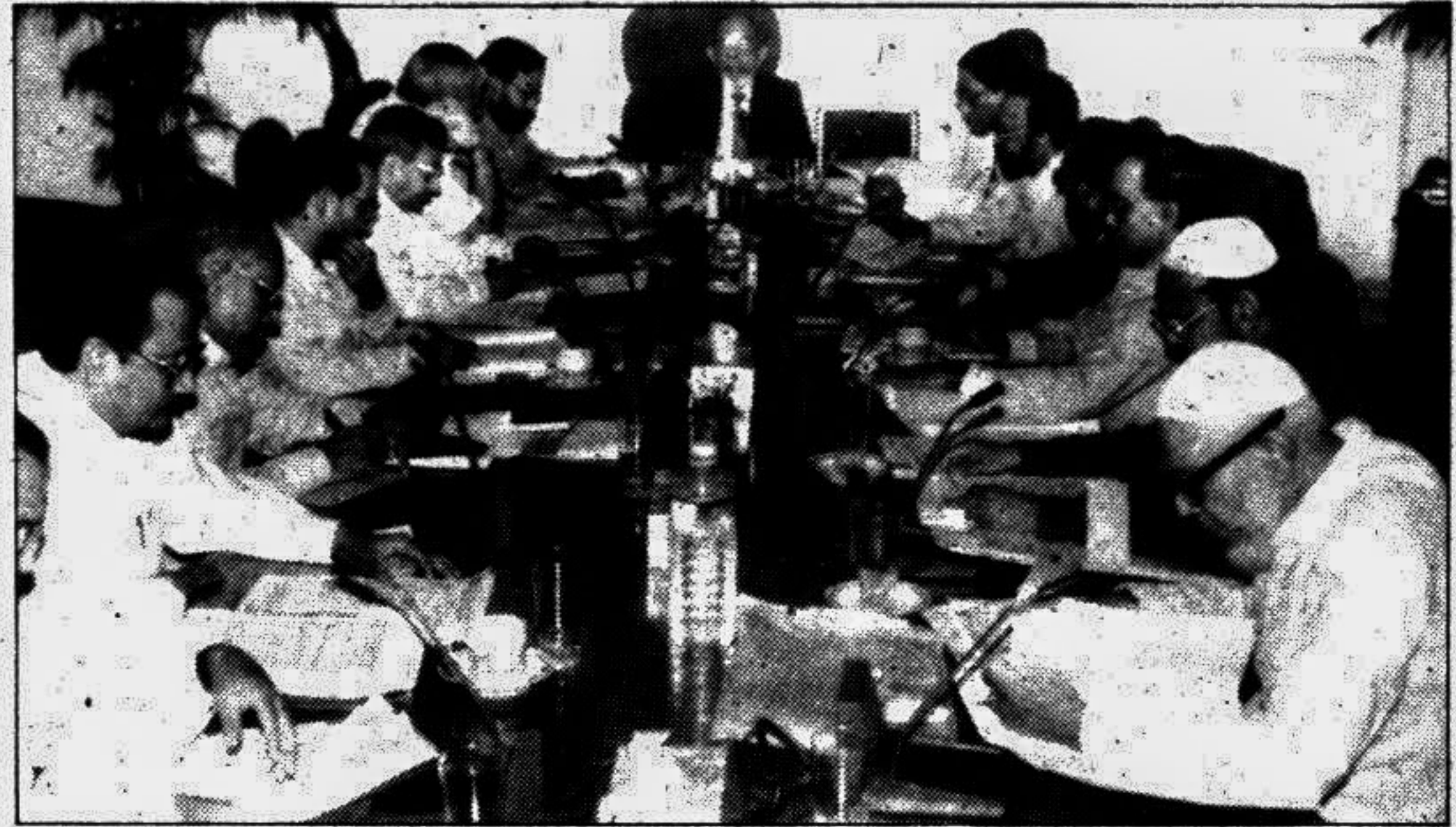
Presided over by the Mana-

ging Director of the Shilpa Bank Akmal Hossain, the inaugural session of the conference was addressed, among others, by Chairman of the Board of Directors ATM Alamgir, MP and General Manager (Administration) Mahmudul Karim.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Bank, in his speech, said that the activities of the Shilpa Bank got an impetus following the implementation of reform measures. But such efforts are being disturbed due to unstable political situation in the country, he said.

He pointed out that the Shilpa Bank sanctioned Taka 1288 million including a foreign exchange component of Taka 27 million during 1993-94 financial year as against Taka 413 million in the preceding year. This has represented a rise of 212 per cent.

The bank during the same period realised Taka 694 million as arrear loan against Taka 576 million fulfilling the target by 93.41 per cent.



Commodore Mohammad Aatur Rahman (Retd), Chairman of the Islami Bank Bangladesh, presiding over a meeting of Board of Directors of the bank in the city on Wednesday.

Training course on customer services ends at BIBM

A nine-day training course on 'human relations and customer services development' ended at the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

The BIBM conducted the course with a view to developing efficiency of the participants for improving human relations and customer services in banks and financial institutions.

A H M Nurul Islam Choudhury, Director General, BIBM, preside over the concluding session of the course and gave away the certificates to the trainees.

Choudhury in his speech, underscored the importance of human relations for improvement of banking services and said that without good human relations and satisfactory customer services banks cannot flourish.

Md Abu Bakar and Rasheda Huda, BIBM faculty members, were the coordinators of the course.

SBSI official in Indonesia sentenced

Jakarta, Nov 10: An Indonesian court sentenced an official of an independent labour union to nine months in prison for his involvement in labour unrest in April, Antara said here Wednesday, reports AFP.

Soniman Lafau, 27, the deputy chairman of the Medan chapter of Sejahtera (Prosperous) labour union (SBSI), was found guilty of inciting workers to join a strike, Antara said.

The court found that Lafau had distributed letters calling on workers to join protests seeking wage increases, freedom of association, and a probe into the death of a union activist.

The protest touched off a week of violent strikes in Medan, North Sumatra, last April and degenerated into anti-Chinese rioting which led to the death of a factory owner, and ethnic Chinese businessman.

Shanghai Stock Exchange has 200 listed cos

BEIJING, Nov 10: The number of companies listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange reached 200 Thursday with the listing of Shuxian Electronic, the official Xinhua News Agency reported, reports AP.

The dispatch did not give any details of the new listing, except to say that it was a B-share, which are for foreign investors only.

Currently, the bourse has 31-B-shares and 169 A-shares, which are for Chinese investors.

The exchange, the first of two in China, opened four years ago and now has 600 members, 1,500 business counters and six million registered investors.

Seoul posts \$170m surplus in semiconductor trade with Tokyo

SEOUL, Nov 10: South Korea posted a surplus of 170 million dollars in its semiconductor trade with Japan in the first eight months to August due to the strong yen, a government think-tank said Wednesday, reports AFP.

During the eight-month period, exports of South Korean Integrated Circuits (ICS) to Japan outpaced imports for the first time, the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade (KIET) said.

The figures excluded diodes and opto-electronic products, but the institute predicted that South Korea would see a continued surplus next year in its semiconductor trade with Japan.

South Korea could emerge as the world's largest maker of 16 megabyte DRAM chips by 1996, when Japan is expected to produce 339 million units, it said.

The KIET based its optimistic prediction on active investments to expand production lines for 16-megabyte DRAM chips and better production efficiency.

Benazir hopes US investment to help bring power to people

Tariq Butt writes from Islamabad

Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is giving priority to overcoming the country's chronic energy shortage — and is hoping previously reticent United-States investment will help her do the job.

There are 20,000 villages without electricity — almost one-third of the total — and she aims to bring electricity to 4,000 every year, an ambitious target which, if successful, would be a powerful vote-getter.

Even where it is available, supply is erratic. There are longer power cuts in the summer for all users but those in villages are especially hard hit.

Power shortages in the cities are an even more immediate concern to the government, because they are holding back industrial growth.

Overall, demand at 12 per cent a year is outstripping supply, which is growing at seven per cent.

The government is hoping that private capital will come to the aid of the ailing sector and takes heart from the response of the team of United States industrialists who accompanied US Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary on her recent visit. They signed 16 agreements worth 3.7 billion dollars, which, if all come to

fruition, would produce an additional 3,507 MW.

The deals are regarded as a major breakthrough because four years ago Washington suspended official economic and military aid to Islamabad as a result of fears that Pakistan was engaged in the manufacture of atomic bombs.

Unless the US President can certify to Congress that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear bomb, aid cannot be restored.

Initially, Pakistan's position was that its nuclear programme was for energy purposes only. Now Islamabad's stand is that it has the capability of manufacturing a bomb

but has not and will not do so.

Stalemate continues over the nuclear issue as Pakistan has refused to open its nuclear programme for international inspection. It argues that it will not sign the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty unless its neighbour and adversary India does the same.

The aid freeze sends a

strong signal to US companies not to invest. They were already reticent: though Pakistan was an ally of Washington during the Cold War, the US private sector has invested a negligible 450 million dollars here since independence in 1947.

The prospects of greater US private investment has angered the fundamentalists. Kazi Hussain Ahmad, head of the Jamaat-e-Islami party, dubbed it "a high-level conspiracy to enslave the nation and capture political power as well as resources. The United States wants to impose her political system and culture to damage the moral values of Muslims."

But aware of the potential of bringing electricity to rural areas, where she has most support, Prime Minister Bhutto said: "This is a success story for the villagers of Pakistan." And she stressed: "Pakistan would like to develop a multi-dimensional relationship with the United States."

However, the new investment focuses on oil-fired power stations, which critics say will considerably increase the country's one billion dollars a year oil import bill. Oil provides 40 per cent of the country's commercial energy mix (gas contributes another 38 per cent), with local production accounting for about

