

British-Dutch co signs accord with Petrobangla

A British-Dutch joint venture company yesterday initiated a production-sharing contract with Petrobangla for exploring oil and gas in the country, reports UNB.

Under the contract, Cairns Energy PLC of Britain and Holland Sea Search of the Netherlands will conduct a joint search for oil and gas in block no 15, an area comprising parts of Chittagong, Feni and Khagrachhari districts, and adjoining maritime areas.

The contract, second with the joint explorers, will be finalised and signed following approval by the government.

according to an announcement of Petrobangla.

The companies will spend at least 12.1 million US dollars, in phases, for exploration works which may take 7 years.

Earlier in last May, the government and the Petrobangla signed another PSC agreement with the same joint venture company for exploring oil and gas in block 16 covering 8,621 sq kilometre coastal areas of Kutubdia and Maheshkhali.

Survey on block 16 is scheduled to begin this month. The explorers will spend 28 million US dollars for the exploration work that may last 7

years. In case of any discovery, they will go for development and production.

Besides, two PSCs were initiated with a US company on August 9 for exploration of oil and gas in block no 12, 13 and 14 in greater Sylhet. The contracts are awaiting government endorsement.

Occidental will spend at least 40 million US dollars in the projects.

Petrobangla claims it expects more offers from foreign mining companies for mineral exploration in the country in near future.

BSB makes Tk 13.58 cr profit

Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) made a net profit of Taka 13.58 crore in 1993-94 fiscal year, a bank press release said yesterday, reports BSS.

This was disclosed at the 222nd meeting of the Managing Board of the BSB at its principal office here with chairman of the bank A T M Alamgir MP, in the chair.

The meeting reviewed and approved the audited 1993-94 annual accounts of the bank and also decided to place it at the 8th general meeting of the shareholders to be held on November 27 next.

Malaysia won't rely on British funds

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 14: Malaysia will quit relying on British funds for infrastructure projects after the deep embarrassment caused by a London loan for a power dam, officials said yesterday, reports AFP.

"We'll not consider taking loans from Britain anymore for future projects," said Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, quoted in local news reports.

He was commenting in the wake of a British court ruling last week that Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd overstepped his legal powers in granting a 234 million pound (350 million dollar) loan for Malaysia's Pergau dam.

The British High Commission said London would fulfil its obligations to Malaysia, despite the high court ruling.

Britain has already extended about 55 million pounds of the loan which Hurd said was briefly linked to a one-billion-pound (1.5-billion-dollar) contract for the sales of British fighter jets to Malaysia in 1988.

Mahathir said yesterday there would no longer be links between sales proposed by Britain and possible loans.

"Any tenders made by the British will be evaluated on merit without any consideration for loans," he said.

Bilateral ties were severely strained this year following the Pergau affair and claims by the British Media of Corruption in Anglo-Malaysian trade, resulting in a seven-month ban on the award of contracts to British firms. The ban ended in September.

Global protocol to revolutionise TV programming announced

SINGAPORE, Nov 14: A new global protocol was announced Monday, standardising the transmission of high-quality digital signals, and its developers say it will revolutionise television programming and communications worldwide, reports AP.

Known as MPEG-2, the protocol received "international standard" status Friday at the end of a five-day meeting of the Geneva-based International Standards Organisation and the International Electrotechnical Commission.

MPEG, which stands for Moving Picture Coding Experts Group, provides for uniform delivery around the world of high-quality, low-cost digital TV signals for home entertainment, computer messages, teleconferencing and multimedia.

"We are opening a new gateway on the information highway by breaking national barriers," Craig Lim of Singapore's National Computer Board, which was host to the meeting, told reporters.

Users will attach an MPEG device, essentially a semiconductor chip, to their computers or televisions to link up with a network served either by satellite or land telephone lines.

China's economy shows no signs of fatigue

BEIJING, Nov 14: China's economy should show no signs of fatigue in the fourth of this year with robust industrial production, sustained fixed assets investment and rising retail sales, according to a forecast issue by the State Information Centre, reports AP.

Quoting the centre's forecast, the China Daily's Business Weekly reported Sunday that a small trade deficit was foreseen, with strong import growth expected in the last three months of the year.

The forecast said rising retail prices would continue to be the biggest headache in the economic development during the last quarter of this year.

Industrial output during the fourth quarter of this year was expected to reach 1,185.94 billion yuan (139.5 billion), up 22.6 per cent over the same period of last year, the forecast said.

Industrial output was predicted to total 4,212.73 billion yuan (495.6 billion dollars) in 1994, up 20.1 per cent from the year earlier period.

During the fourth quarter, investment in infrastructure and technology renovation was forecast to be 368.49 billion yuan (43.34 billion dollars) and 167.39 billion yuan (19.7 billion dollars) respectively, up 52.8 per cent and 38.0 per cent from the corresponding period of last year.

Information Centre official Qi Jingmei said fast growth in consumption demand will push retail price growth in the fourth quarter.

Retail sales will rise by 34.5 per cent to 479.96 billion yuan (56.5 billion dollars) in the fourth quarter. Retail sales are expected to rise 30.1 per cent to reach 1,592.2 billion yuan (187.3 billion dollars) in 1994 from the year earlier period.

The retail price index is expected to rise by 21.0 per cent in the last quarter of this year from the year earlier period. It went up 24.6 per cent in the third quarter.

Qi said the money supply was expected to increase marginally in the fourth quarter, because the government will allocate more to purchase grain and cotton from farmers.

About 100 billion yuan (11.76 billion dollars) was expected to flow into circulation in the fourth quarter this year, which would bring the total money in circulation to 734.02 billion yuan at the end of this year, up 25.5 per cent from last year.

Outstanding loans in the fourth quarter should be 3,165.91 billion yuan (372.5 billion dollars), up 19.7 per cent from the same period a year earlier. Qi said that total credits and money supply were basically under control this year.



Iain L Dale OBE, business leader of the visiting British Trade and Investment Mission, speaking at a meeting with members of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) in the city yesterday. Sitting from right are: British Deputy High Commissioner in Dhaka J R Nichols, FBCCI President Salman F Rahman and Vice-President Kazi Rokonzaman. — Star photo

Uruguay Round key to prosperous world, says US president

WASHINGTON, Nov 14: President Clinton said that the Uruguay Round of trade liberalization measures is "the key link" to prosperous, more open societies around the world, says USIS.

Speaking at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Clinton asserted that liberalising the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) "will produce the biggest tax cut in history, and in the long run, help tie together a global economy and usher in a new era of prosperity. It is the key link to free trade, more open societies and economic growth all around this world."

As one of its last acts, the outgoing 103rd Congress will consider legislation implementing the Uruguay Round in a special session late this month. That will qualify, Clinton contended, as one of a handful of key votes in this century that show the national character of Americans while shaping the world their children will inhabit. "We should not delay GATT," Clinton warned. "That would jeopardise our leadership and our prosperity."

Clinton contrasted the US decisions on engagement in the world following World War

One — when Congress rejected membership in the League of Nations — and World War Two — when Congress signed on to an array of international cooperative arrangements including the United Nations and the Marshall Plan. The president suggested that GATT liberalization will be seen as a similar landmark.

Congressional consideration of GATT, Clinton noted, will fall midway between two of his key initiatives to broaden world trade and the US share of international markets. In early December, Clinton will host the Summit of the Americas, a gathering in Miami of 33 democratically elected Western Hemisphere leaders who will discuss — among other items — increasing hemispheric prosperity through sustainable development.

For the United States, the president said, implementing GATT will mean both "free trade and fair trade," explaining that for the past 40 years, US markets "have been more open than those of other major economies." The changes in GATT, he said, "will require" US trading partners "to finally do what we have already done: cut tariffs, eliminate non-tariff barriers, protect copyrights

and patents." The president claimed the agreement "will create hundreds of thousands" of new American jobs, most of them paying above-average wages, and "will level the playing field for our companies, our workers, our farmers. It will make our exports more competitive, exactly when our ability to send more American products and services overseas is expanding."

Clinton pointed out that the trade agreement has wide bipartisan support in Congress, in the business community and in the US generally. "I am confident that Congress will ratify the GATT this month," he said, but he nevertheless urged Congressmen "to put aside our partisan differences and do what's right for all Americans." Explaining his drive to diversify US trade links, Clinton said Asia and Latin America are two of the fastest-growing regions in the global economy, but he noted that for decades, Washington's trade sights "have been set on traditional economic relationships, the large, mature economies of Europe and Japan."

Both Japan and Europe will continue to remain "close allies, key competitors and critical markets" for the United

States, Clinton said, but he added that the pressure of the global economy and the onset of a new century dictate "a new strategy. It is clear that the young, vigorous economies of Asia and the Western Hemisphere offer enormous untapped potential for our people to prosper."

Clinton argued that Asia already accounts for 40 per cent of world trade, and he asserted "almost one-third of our own exports go now to the Pacific Rim. Markets in Asia have already created more than two million American jobs."

Next month's Summit of the Americas, he said, will "celebrate the spread of freedom and democracy" in the Western Hemisphere and will work "to strengthen the roots of those democracies through sustainable development."

He said the 33 leaders would be able "to take crucial steps to increase trade, to maintain growth in the region, to lay concrete plans to open markets to expand trade. We'll have a partnership for prosperity that stretches from Canada to the tip of South America. It means more jobs and higher income, but it also means more peace, more freedom and more security."



Southern Asia Trade Advisory Group of the Department of Trade and Industry, London, accorded a reception to the visiting British trade delegation at Sheraton Winter Garden Marquee in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Cairo-Tel Aviv non-oil product trade doubles

CAIRO, Nov 14: Trade in non-oil products doubled between Israel and Egypt in the first three-quarters of 1994 compared to the same period last year, the Egyptian Economy Ministry said yesterday, reports AFP.

Trade rose to 30 million dollars for the first three-quarters of 1994, including 21 million in Egyptian exports, said Hoda Naguib, Trade Official at the Ministry.

During the same period of 1993 trade stood at 13 million dollars, with eight million dollars' worth of Egyptian exports.

Naguib said the figures did not include Egyptian oil exports. Egypt is the main supplier of crude oil to Israel.

Egypt's other principal exports to Israel are agricultural and food products, while it imports machinery, chemicals and plastics from the Jewish state, she said.

In 1993 Egyptian-Israeli trade including oil fell to 270 million dollars from 334 million in 1992. Cairo blamed the fall on a reduction in crude oil prices on international markets.

Asian stock markets close mixed

HONG KONG, Nov 14: Asian stock markets closed generally mixed Monday, but share prices slumped in Australia, with the key index closing at a 14-month low, reports AP.

The Australian market was pushed down by heavy selling in gold and other mining stocks. The Sydney's All Ordinaries Index fell 25.5 points to 1,926.5.

The Tokyo Stock Price Index of all issues listed on the first section, which had lost 2.36 points Friday, edged up 0.15 point, or 0.01 per cent, to 1,517.82.

Traders said the Nikkei declined in the morning because of index-linked arbitrage selling of cash equities. But the benchmark managed to stay

above its fiscal year close of 19,111.92, a psychological support level, as players were encouraged by the US dollar's rebound above 98 yen, traders added.

The dollar closed at 98.09 yen, up 0.31 yen from Friday's finish and also above its late Friday rate of 97.68 yen in New York.

HONG KONG: Share prices closed generally higher on bargain-hunting after five straight days of declines. The Hang Seng Index, the market's key indicator of blue chips, rose 11.07 points, or 0.1 per cent, closing at 9,378.92.

TAIPEI: Share prices closed lower in light trading because

there were no indications that the government plans to takes measures to boost the market, contrary to investors' expectations. The market's Weighted Index fell 89.41 points to 6,393.27.

WELLINGTON: New Zealand share prices closed lower in light trading, with brokers expecting the market to drift over the next few days. The NZSE-40 Capital Index fell 22.62 points to 2,054.61.

MANILA: Share prices closed lower on profit-taking. The Philippines' PSE index of 43 selected issues fell 17.21 points to 2,907.643.

SEOUL: Share prices closed higher in moderate trading after four days of declines. The Korea Composite Stock Price Index gained 12.34 points to 1,128.57.

SINGAPORE: Share prices closed higher in directionless trading. The 30-share Straits Times Industrial Index rose 4.35 points to 2,326.94.

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian share prices closed higher in thin trading. The KLSX Composite Index rose 14.44 points to 1,044.31.

BANGKOK: Thai share prices closed slightly higher after two days of losses. The Stock Exchange of Thailand index rose 11.62 points to 1,477.84.

UK trade team briefed on investment climate

A group of members of the visiting British trade mission yesterday attended a presentation on "investment opportunities in Bangladesh" organised by the Board of Investment (BOI), reports BSS.

Executive Chairman of the BOI Mokammel Huq briefed the members of the British team on the great economic potentials and the congenial investment climate that exist in Bangladesh during the presentation, held here at the International Conference Centre (ICC).

While giving a comprehensive resume of the package of incentives, offered to foreign investors, the BOI Executive Chairman referred to stable macro economic indicators of the country, the annual GDP growth rate, lending rates of the banks and financial institutions, export earnings, infrastructure, policies and laws for promoting foreign investment, policies of deregulation, market turn-over and capitalisation and the potentials sectors of investment.

He also mentioned the share of direct foreign investment, facilities offered under the joint venture projects and the facilities for expatriates living in Bangladesh.

Huq informed the group that BOI in cooperation with Euro-money will organise a seminar on Bangladesh's investment opportunities in London in January next.

The leader of the group Ian Dale said he and members of his delegation were "impressed" by the investment friendly regime, offered by Bangladesh to attract foreign investment.

US dollar rises in Tokyo

TOKYO, Nov 14: The dollar strengthened against the Japanese yen Monday as the market looked for higher US interest rates, reports AP.

The dollar closed at 98.09 yen, up 0.31 yen from Friday's finish and also above its late Friday rate of 97.68 yen in New York. After opening at 97.77 yen, it ranged between 97.77 yen and 98.19 yen.

First train service under English Channel opens

PARIS, Nov 14: Hundreds of passengers left Paris, London and Brussels Monday morning, racing to each other cities on the inaugural public run of high-speed trains through the channel tunnel, reports AP.

A Eurostar passenger train left for its three-hour, six-minute rides from Paris to downtown London on schedule at 8:07 am (0707 GMT), a relief to rail officials after a series of embarrassing delays during test runs for invited guests.

Other trains left London for Paris and for the three-hour fifteen-minute trip to Brussels through the 16 billion dollar tunnel, the world's largest engineering project.

The 794 passengers left the Gare du Nord station on Paris' Right Bank for London's Waterloo station, which French and British railway officials hope will eat into the heavy air traffic between the two capitals.

Cabin attendants in yellow and blue uniforms designed by Pierre Balmain staffed the trains, each with four telephone cabins, two nursery areas for infants and a snack car in second class. Meals are served in first class, with Monday morning's fare a Franco-British mix of croissants, bread, ham, cheese and orange marmalade.

Ten minutes after leaving Paris the 18-car train hit its top speed of 300 kilometers per hour (187 mph). It slowed to 160 kph (100 mph) for the 20 minutes it took to pass through the twin 50.5-kilometer (31.4-mile) tunnels, one for each direction, from near Calais to Folkestone, England. A third tunnel is for maintenance and emergencies.

"I'm afraid to fly, so this is great," said Mara Roth, 34, of New York. Like other passengers, she said she found the ride pleasantly smooth.

The first train to leave Brussels departed at 8:28 am (0728GMT) for London with about 500 aboard, and from London at 8:23 am (0823 GMT) for Paris with close to 800 passengers.

Passengers were given special commemorative certificates and handed glasses of champagne before boarding the train at Waterloo's new international station.

London property developer John Prince, one of the first to board the train, said he was looking forward to the three-hour journey "with a mixture of interest and excitement."

Sixty-year-old Joan Devenerne of London, who was first in line to buy a ticket for Monday's service when they first went on sale three weeks ago, planned to spend the day shopping in Paris.

First-class passengers pay 1,620 francs (311 dollars) for round-trip passage, while

those in second class pay 1,290 francs (248 dollars) or if they reserve 14 days or more in advance, 790 francs (152 dollars). Children young than 12 go for half price, and children younger than four for free.

The prices are comparable to air fare between Paris and London, with the advantage of avoiding travel to one of London's airports.

With a flight time of little more than an hour between the two cities, however, air travel is probably faster overall. But passengers on Eurostar can spend most of their time relaxing, reading or working in their seats, and don't have to worry about factors such as fog or rain cancelling their journey.

Commercial service is beginning with two round trips a day on each route. Departures are expected about every hour when traffic reaches its capacity of eight passages per hour in the second half of 1995.

"Le Shuttle," which ferries cars and trucks through the tunnel, has already been in service for several weeks.

The Chunnel, as it is called, was originally scheduled to open in March 1993 but was repeatedly delayed because of operating disputes and technical problems with Le Shuttle.

Three test runs last month met with embarrassing technical problems Eurostar trains between Paris and London died on the tracks on October 14 and 21, and on October 20 Eurostar had to summon a replacement train to take a group of journalists from London to Paris because of electrical problems.

The Eurostar is a modified version of the successful French TGV high-speed train, but built with a complex power system to adapt to French, British and Belgian electrical currents.

Eleven giant boring machines, guided by satellites, dug the passages from December 1987 to mid-1991, laying concrete lining behind them. The machines could not exit and were dismantled or left alongside the tunnels.