

Railway to rehabilitate 55 stations

Bangladesh Railway has taken up rehabilitation of 55 rail stations in western and eastern zones at a cost of about Tk 4 crore, reports UNB.

Vietnam overcomes language problem to join ASEAN

HANOI, Dec 11: Vietnam has overcome its language barrier to joining ASEAN and now has enough English-speaking civil servants to cope with preparations for admission next July.

A shortage of diplomats who speak English — the official language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — was one of the obstacles Hanoi has had to overcome to join the group.

Singapore and Canada are among the countries helping out with language and technical lessons for Vietnamese officials while a first batch of foreign-educated diplomats is now ready for more senior positions.

We are today able to join but still we will have to prepare more staff after being recognised," Cam told the Vietnam investment review.

Cam himself speaks some English but is more comfortable in French or Russian while the Vice Foreign Minister in charge of Southeast Asia, Vu Khoan, is a fluent English speaker.

Foreign Ministry officials have privately admitted that preparations for joining ASEAN have been more difficult than expected as few senior civil servants are up to speed on some of the complex trade and legal issues involved.

US jobless claims up

WASHINGTON, Dec 11: The number of first-time claims for state unemployment benefits was up 6,000 last week as the hiring indicator continued its weekly roller coaster ride, reports AP.

The Labour Department reported on Thursday that initial jobless claims totalled a seasonally adjusted 322,000 in the week ended Dec 3, up from a revised 316,000 the previous week.

Most economists expected an increase because the previous week included the Thanksgiving holiday and there were fewer days to file.

Inter-district bus owners charging exorbitant fare

By Rafiq Hasan

The inter-district bus owners are allegedly charging more fare than the government's fixed rate in different routes of the country.

According to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) the government's fixed rates, set in the early 80s, are still 35 paise per passenger per kilometer in mini-buses and 32 paise in big buses. The rates are same in all routes across the country.

But in the backdrop of the government's negligence and in the name of free economy, the Bus Owners' Associations are fixing the fare according to their wishes. Virtually they are the sole authority in the fixation of bus fare in some inter-district routes.

Sources in the BRTA said if any bus owner in any route of the country charges more than the fixed rate of fare, it will be quite illegal. But the bus owners are saying, as one owner puts it, that "we charge more fare because we provide extra facilities to the passengers."

The government can not interfere with it as per open market economy," he said.

The leaders of the Dhaka-Chittagong Luxurious Bus and Chair Coach Owners Association said, "We have been operating luxury buses and chair coaches in this route since 1990, but the government is not saying anything yet." They claim that the Communications Minister has given verbal approval of the operation of luxurious buses.

The fare in the luxurious buses and chair coaches in this route is between Taka 125 and 230, which is much more than the government fixed rate. However, the local buses, which start from Saidabad Bus Terminal, Taka 70 to 80 is normally charged for a single ticket for Dhaka-Chittagong journey.

Alhaj Alauddin, General Secretary of the Association, said "We fix fare of the luxurious buses and chair coaches on the basis of the cost of the car and facilities provided to the passengers."

A Gafur, General Secretary of the Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' Association, said "This is the transit period for the overall development of the country's transport sector. As

we have introduced better services in Dhaka-Chittagong route we have also the right to consider the fare," he added.

Replying to a question whether they have got any approval of the government, he said, if the passengers could afford the fare preferring to travel by their buses, government approval was not necessary. They have also route permits from the BRTA, he mentioned.

"Because a luxurious bus starts from its own bounter, I always prefer to travel by it, Aminul Islam, a businessman of Chittagong told The Daily Star. Travelling from the city bus terminals, particularly from Saidabad, is not always safe for a gentleman," he said.

When asked about the government rate of the bus fare, he said, "I do not know the rate fixed by the government."

According to the BRTA, about 3,788 buses and mini-buses are plying on 152 routes across the country on commercial basis. The number of total registered buses and mini-buses in the country is 28,584 up to 1993, it is learnt.



Madame H Lechner (R), Director, Goethe Institut Dhaka, seen addressing a workshop on 'Resource Waste-Source of Income' organised by the Alumni Association of German University in Bangladesh and Carlduisberg Samity at the German Cultural Centre auditorium in the city yesterday.

Japanese expert speaks on sericulture cultivation

Bangladesh far from int'l standard in producing quality silk yarn, fabrics

Bangladesh has the potential to be one of the major silk producers, provided integrated institutional efforts are taken to rejuvenate this sector, a Japanese expert has said, reports BSS.

The expert, Horoshi Satoh, said despite a large potential market Bangladesh is still far from the international standard in producing quality silk yarn and silk fabrics.

For this, he suggested adoption of sophisticated techniques like cross-breeding of Bangladesh silkworms which produce short length thread with high yielding varieties (HYV) of silkworm eggs from other countries. HYV species are needed to develop the local ones, he said adding locally bred eggs (like family marriage) are also prone to diseases.

The Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) has organised the visit of Satoh, an expert on silk and man-made textile materials of Itochu Corporation, Tokyo, to assess the problems on the way to flourishing silk industry in

Bangladesh and suggest their remedies.

Talking to BSS here yesterday Satoh said success of the silk industry largely depended on the united endeavours of the concerned officials, mulberry growers, silkworm rearers, cocoon reeliners, weavers, traders, researchers and exploration of newer avenues for marketing.

Satho who visited Rajshahi silk factory and a number of private silk industries in Rajshahi and Dinajpur from November 28 to December 5, said Bangladeshi cocoons are yellow in colour and are very poor in quality, while cocoons produced by the countries like Japan and China are of international standard.

The expert suggested guarantee of operational fund for the private silk growers and factories and opined that lack of this would be a major impediment to the development of sericulture in Bangladesh.

Earlier, Satoh conducted a day-long seminar on sericulture at Rajshahi Sericulture Board (RSB) on November 30

where 40 officials and persons involved in sericulture cultivation and weaving participated.

Another Japanese expert Hitoshi Chihara, who is now working as an adviser of Joy Silk Industries Limited at Dinajpur, also gave lecture at the seminar on silk cultivation and weaving.

Satoh said Bangladeshi students in this field should receive training from those countries who had developed this technology. In this connection, he mentioned that there is a university in China which teaches on silk technology.

He also stressed the need for proper training of the workers and artisans to develop their skill. People at the managerial capacity should also have thorough idea how to develop the quality of products for export.

Later Satoh visited Joy Silk Industries Ltd at Dinajpur which is using Japanese machinery and exporting its entire production to Japan. Since there is a quota restriction in

Japan for short width silk fabrics for manufacturing kimono, the mill could not go for hundred per cent production capacity.

Satoh said through cooperative system like Japan silk production in Bangladesh could be improved, to a great extent. He also suggested immediate replacement of old and obsolete machinery with the latest ones.

Bangladesh at present produces 1.5 million metres of silk fabrics annually as against its total demand for 4.3 million. The rest are met through imports. There are about 180 silk units and 1000 silk looms in the country. But only 31 per cent of the installed capacity is being used due to shortage of yarn.

The expert also suggested massive promotional programmes by the agencies like BSR, Bangladesh Sericulture Research and Training Institute (BSRTI) and the non-government organisations to overcome the existing problems.



Bangladesh Innovative Technology Group (BITEK) signed an agreement with the Agriculture Engineering Management Consultant at the AEMC office in the city yesterday for marketing an electronic product called volt-guard.

Accord on marketing volt-guard signed

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Innovative Technology Group (BITEK) has signed an agreement with the Agricultural Engineering Management Consultant (AEMC) for marketing an electronic product called volt-guard.

The accord was signed between the two sides at the AEMC office in the city yesterday.

Major Gen (Retd) M A Munim and other officials of both the organisations were present at the signing ceremony.

The product was initiated by Professor Siddique-e-Rabani of the Dhaka University.

The new product, volt-guard, is an item for protection of electrical appliances from power line abnormalities, particularly from high voltage approaching 400 volts on the 220 volt line.

In a brief interview with The Daily Star after signing the agreement, Professor Rabani said the complete technology of the product has been developed locally by the BITEK team without any foreign help and has proved successful in limited manufacture and marketing efforts over the last couple of years.

Terming the occasion as a milestone in the electronic arena, he said this is possibly the first arrangement of having separate manufacturing and marketing organisations for locally developed electronic product.

Dwelling on advantages of the product, Professor Siddique said, the volt-guard system also includes optional functional units such as anti-fluctuation delay device, voltage stabilizer, surge suppressor and RF filter necessary for specific applications.

Philippine economy likely to post gains in '95

MANILA, Dec 11: The Philippine economy is expected to post gains in 1995 after robust performance in 1994, a prominent business group said Monday, reports AFP.

"Economic growth will come mainly on the strength of increased investments, exports and strong domestic sales," the Makati Business Club (MBC) said in a statement.

It forecast 6.4 per cent growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and seven per cent growth in Gross National Product (GNP), up from respectively projected five per cent and 5.6 per cent for 1994.

In 1993, GNP growth registered 2.2 per cent in 1993, while GDP was at 1.69 per cent.

BCIC-BTMA jt meet held

A joint meeting of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) and Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) was held at Seminar Hall of BCIC Bhaban yesterday for expanded sale of Rayon Staple Fibre produced by Karnaphuli Rayon & Company (KRC), Chandraghona, an enterprise of BCIC, says a press release.

The representatives of BCIC and BTMA had frank exchange of views and explored the possibility of augmenting volume sale of Rayon Staple Fibre.

Waseq Al Azad, Chairman of BCIC, Dr Azizur Rahman, Director (Production & Research) and Mohammad Masudur Rahman, Director (Commercial) briefed the members of BTMA about the steps taken by BCIC for production of Rayon Staple Fibre of international standard at KRC, Chandraghona.

This industrial unit has the capacity of producing 4500 MT RSF annually. Recently Karnaphuli Paper Mills has taken steps to produce Rayon Grade (RG) Pulp from green juice. This RG pulp will be used at KRC for production of Rayon Staple Fibre.

M Shamsur Rahman and other members of BTMA put forward a series of suggestions for promoting sale of RSF manufactured by Karnaphuli Rayon & Company. K M R Islam Abu Wahed, Managing Director, KRC, outlined the measures already taken for producing high quality RSF at the enterprise.



Waseq Al Azad, Chairman of BCIC, speaking at a meeting held at BCIC Bhaban in the city yesterday. Directors of BCIC are also seen in the picture.

Congress targets Manmohan's reforms for poll debacle

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: The knives were out for Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday after his Congress Party colleagues blamed his economic reforms for an electoral rout in two important southern states, reports Reuter.

Congress deputies said a Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, summoned for late on Saturday by Prime Minister P V Narashima Rao to review the party's debacle in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, targeted Singh.

In a front-page article, Delhi's Asian Age newspaper said the consensus within Congress was that Singh was the villain.

"If reforms begun to hurt the people they become useless," a government minister due to attend the CWC meeting told Reuters. "Naturally, we have to respect the people's verdict. That's always more important than any individual."

Congress was trounced in the two states, regarded as Rao's power base, over an opposition campaign against Singh's three-year-old economic reforms, mainly over food subsidies.

The regional Telugu Desam Party swept the Andhra Pradesh polls with a promise of subsidised rice for the poor. The state's Congress leaders are reportedly livid that Rao

did not allow them to match the populist offer.

In Karnataka, where farmers have attacked offices of the US-based Cargill multinational group, the opposition carried out an open campaign against Rao's policy of free entry to foreign investors.

Rao's colleagues say his main election plank — the three-year-old economic reforms — was a disastrous choice.

There were those who blamed the reforms for the poll defeat, but accused Rao rather than Singh for the rout.

Former congress parliamentary affairs minister Rangarajan Kumaramangalam said Singh was being made a scapegoat to save Rao.

"In fact, in my years as a colleague of the Finance Minister I got a distinct impression that he was more cautious about the speed of the reforms. It was the Prime Minister who pushed him hard into making errors."

"Manmohan Singh is being blamed for what is clearly the Prime Minister's baby," said Kumaramangalam, who resigned from Rao's cabinet last year over differences on reforms among other issues.

Singh, due to present the budget in February, has also been the victim of Congress Party rivalries.

Newspapers have identified Commerce Minister Pranab

Mukherjee as a contender for Singh's high-profile job.

Mukherjee on Friday deflected criticism of Singh's reforms, saying the election debacle will not change the government's economic policies.

But Mukherjee has been highly critical Singh several key issues, including the Finance Minister's opposition to cash incentives for exporters.

Singh has also been blamed by the opposition for not acting against ministers and officials named by a parliamentary report into India's worst financial scandal.

Singh last year offered his resignation over the standoff.



Khaled takes over as new MD of Krishi Bank

Kh Ibrahim Khaled has taken over the current charge of the Managing Director of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, says a press release. He took up the new assignment yesterday.

Prior to this assignment, he was the Deputy Managing Director of Agrani Bank.

Notice Inviting Tenders

No. 41 of 1994-95

01. Tender in sealed cover in the BD Form No. 2911 are hereby invited from Special Class-I, Class-I Bldg. contractors of PWD, Class-III Bldg. contractors of PWD Dhaka Zone, Dhaka and Class-III Bldg. contractors of PWD, Savar Circle, Dhaka for the undermentioned work. Tender will be received up to 12.00 Noon on 20-12-94 by the undersigned as well as, by the Executive Engineer of all PWD Division under Savar PWD Circle, Dhaka and will be opened on the same day at 12.15 PM in presence of the intending contractors who may like to be remain present. Tender schedule and other related papers can be purchased during office hours up to 19-12-94 from the offices of the Executive Engineer of the above mentioned Circle and the Office of the Sub-Divisional Engineer-I/II under this Division. Other information can be obtained from the office of the undersigned.

- 02. Name of work: Construction of '44' new district headquarters in Bangladesh one at Manikganj. Construction of Garage and MLSS Barrack attached to Circuit House at Manikganj (GF Garage & F.F. M.L.S.S. Barrack).
S. H.
03. Estimated cost: Tk 7,08,819/-
04. Earnest money: Tk 14,177/-
05. Time allowed: 120 (One hundred twenty) days.

Md Mokaddesh Hossain Executive Engineer Manikganj PWD Division Phone No-401

DFP-12350-5/12 G-1962

Table with 2 columns: Description of services and corresponding rates/terms. Includes items like 'গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার', 'দরপত্র আহবানের বিজ্ঞপ্তি', and various construction-related services.