

Saifur exhorts Bangladesh expatriates in US

Take part in country's uplift

NEW YORK, Dec 13: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has called upon the expatriate Bangladeshis living in the United States to participate in the economic growth of their homeland with their remittances, reports BSS.

The Sonali Exchange Company, a subsidiary of the Sonali Bank, was inaugurated here Monday at the 15th floor of a busy Manhattan office block at 43rd street, the ceremony was attended among others by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Ambassador Riaz Rahman, Consul General of the Bangladesh Consulate, MAK Talukdar, Managing Director of Sonali Bank, Ahsanul Haque and high officials of the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC.

Speaking on the occasion amid cheers and applause by the Bangladeshi Community

leaders and other invited guests, the Finance Minister said that the BNP government was trying to keep its commitments to the people at home and abroad by its actions. This government had proved that it was responsive to their needs and aspirations, he added.

This government has taken all steps to institutionalise democracy at home, accelerate development to reach its fruits to the poor and create employment in the rural areas, he said adding that the remittance by the expatriate Bangladeshis had been substantially contributing to development of the country.

Rahman said the government had so far met two demands of the Bangladeshi community in the United States — one through extension of Biman's services and the other by opening of the

Sonali Exchange Company. He said that the Sonali Exchange would be operated in a manner that its facilities can be availed by the Bangladeshis living across the United States. He assured them that the company would be turned into a full-fledged banking operation in the near future.

The Finance Minister called upon the officers of the Sonali Exchange to ensure the expatriates of expeditious service so that the purpose of remitting money through a government agency properly served. He also asked them to be careful that complaints of poor services were not raised by the expatriate Bangladeshis.

He said that it was a long felt demand of the Bangladeshi community and henceforth they would not have to face problem of remitting their hard earned money to their dependants at home.

Turning to the political situation in Bangladesh, he said that the government was sincerely striving hard to solve all problems. He said that the people of the country had fought the war of independence sinking their differences.

Saifur Rahman said that an excellent investment climate existed in Bangladesh due to liberalisation of its policies and the investors were always welcome and provided with all facilities. "No investor has ever suffered under any circumstances as the people of Bangladesh are traditionally hospitable", he said.

The Finance Minister also visited the office of the Biman, Bangladesh Airlines, at the same building later. He also met the members of the Bangladeshi media council in the United States.

'Women better credit repayer'

Women if they receive credit are better repayer than men and use it more fruitful for the purpose it is intended. Banks should give credit to women even if they are not able to give collateral requirement, says a press release.

This was felt at a three-day workshop on 'Credit for Women', concluded yesterday at the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM). The BIBM organised this workshop mainly to discuss the need and importance of women participation in economic activities.

The workshop strongly felt that there was sufficient reason to give attention to the economic activities of women and to accelerate their economic activities through expanded credit programme for them. The lack of capital was one of the main barriers to women employment which ultimately hindering our economic progress. So women should have easy access to credit facilities for generating self-employment, speakers added.

The concluding session of the workshop was presided over by A H M Nurul Islam Choudhuri, Director General, BIBM. Choudhuri opined that unless we could provide loan to our female traders, the poverty alleviation programme would not be successful, because our women consisted half of our total population. Dr Bandaha Saha, Faculty Member and Workshop coordinator remarked that banks, financial institutions and NGOs should come forward to provide female trade with necessary credit to help them become self-reliant.

Bangladesh to get Tk 8cr additional Norwegian grant

Bangladesh will receive an additional amount of Norwegian Kroner 12.8 million equivalent to Tk 8.00 crore as grant under two agreements signed here yesterday, said an official announcement, reports UNB.

Khandaker Khaliquzaman, Deputy Chief, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance and Tore H Toreng, Charge d'affaires, Royal Norwegian Embassy, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments.

Under one addenda to the agreements Tk 4.00 crores will be utilised for procurement of wooden poles of Rural Electrification Board (REB) in addition to Tk 26 crores provided earlier under the Norwegian grant.

The remaining amount of Tk 4.00 crores will be utilised for the repair of 20 pontoons of the inland water transport sector in Bangladesh, the announcement added.



Mahmoud Bayat (R), Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Bangladesh, addressing a press conference at the DCCI office in the city yesterday on the occasion of the ensuing single country fair in Dhaka. DCCI President Abdur Rob (M) and Counsellor of Iranian embassy are also seen in the picture. — Star photo

Saudi economy faces lean time for Gulf War debts

RIYAD, Dec 13: Saudi Arabia, used to fabulous wealth because of its oil revenues, faces lean times because of Gulf War debts and a period of weak oil prices and analysts are urging significant structural changes to its economy, reports Reuter.

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) report last year spotlighted the kingdom's deficit problems and western media gave prominence to the troubles of its economy. Since then the kingdom has cut spending by 20 per cent.

"We were living on 20 per cent fat," Abdul Rahman Al-Zamil, Deputy Commerce Minister told Reuters. "In the long run I believe the cuts are healthy for the Saudi economy and show that money does not come from the sky automatically."

Saudi Arabia in the last two decades spent about 1 trillion dollar on industrial, farm, health, education and building projects as the discovery of oil transformed it from medieval poverty to an industrialised state with fabulous wealth.

It can now see the bottom of its coffers and is examining ways of prospering under more normal circumstances through borrowing programmes, scaling down its welfare system and the disposal or "privatisation" of loss-making state industries.

Economists spoke of "new realism" in Saudi, but said much needs to be done and they will be closely watching the 1995 budget. Finance Ministry officials said the six five-year development plan starting in January would be

realistic. "The Gulf War affected our fifth plan, but not seriously," Deputy Planning Minister Hussein Sajini said. "We construct our plans with built-in flexibility to protect against crises and the vagaries of the oil price," he said.

"Some subsidies have to be reviewed," Sajini said of the next plan which has not been officially unveiled yet, adding that the strong private sector

would play a leading role. "Since the war there has been a fundamental change in mind set from boom year psychology to the psychology of realism and managed fiscal prudence," Kevin Taecser, Chief Economist at Saudi American Bank in Riyadh said.

"In the plan they aim to cut subsidies, privatise, reduce the budget deficit and emphasise the private sector," said one banker but he reserved judgement. "These are promises. We have to see what happens and if they have the political will."

So far planners have refrained from clamping down on social subsidies. The welfare programme includes free education and health care. Saudis pay virtually no tax and enjoy such perks as extra-cheap petrol and free local telephone calls.

"Spending has been out of control, an economist with one of the major banks said. There is no question about it." Economists did not expect radical policy overhauls in Saudi Arabia where cash would only be tight for a few years.

The government was likely in stead to put pressure on the corporate sector through payment delays knowing that banks would take the strain of increased loan demands. "Merchants and groups did well in boom years, now it's time for them to give something back," one prince said. "We saw them through good times now they must see us through bad times."

"We can't hide the fact that we have economic difficulties," Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said.

"Bangkok Bank had also helped in training Vietnamese staff, he added.

It won approval for the second branch because of Vietnam's policy of encouraging investment in the north and the good ties between the two countries, an official of the central state bank said.

"We chose Bangkok Bank firstly to encourage foreign banks to come to develop Hanoi, secondly because Bangkok Bank is the biggest Thai bank and Vietnamese-Thai relations are developing firmly," he said.

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Shyampur-Kadamtali Electronics Village remains in the doldrums

By Staff Correspondent

The construction work of the proposed 'Electronics Village' at Shyampur-Kadamtali area could not be completed due to lack of timely arrangements for providing power, gas and sewerage facilities by the Rajshahi Unnayan Katrripakha (Rajuk).

The village, after completion, would be the first of its kind in the private sector industrial estate in the country.

The initiative to establish such an estate was taken by the Bangladesh Electrical Merchandise Manufacturers Association (BEMMA) in 1987 but due to lack of cooperation by the concerned government authorities the implementation of the project has been delayed.

Enayet Hossain Choudhuri, President of the Association said, because of the fact that the land on which the proposed village would be set up is under the industrial area of Rajuk, the responsibility of making arrangements for pro-

viding utility services like gas, power and water etc devolves on it.

In spite of repeated requests by the Association to provide logistic support to the area, Rajuk is allegedly practising dilly-dally for long.

The main purpose of the project is to localise the electrical assembling and manufacturing units spread in and outside Dhaka for better production and marketing of electrical produces in a rather competitive environment.

Although, the Industries Minister in a meeting recently ordered the concerned authorities to take immediate steps for supplying water, gas and electricity facilities to the es-

tate area, Rajuk is yet to take action in this regard, sources said.

"We have been vigorously trying for the last 5 years, but still we don't know when our members will be able to set up their units in the electrical village," a leader of the BEMMA told The Daily Star.

In order to expedite the construction work, a Task Force was set up in February 1994, he said. It has already submitted the report recommending creation of infrastructure facilities in the said area, he added.

According to a Rajuk source, approximately 277 plots have already been allotted in the first phase of the project

out of which 85 plots occupy more than 10 kathas of land, 129 are on 10 kathas and 63 plots occupy 5 kathas.

The second phase of the allotment is now going on, it is learnt.

Tenders have already been invited for the electrification work of the area. The other development works like construction of link-road and supply of water, gas and sewerage will be taken up immediately, a high-ranking official of the Rajuk said.

A combined action is urgently needed by the Rajuk, WASA and DESA to complete the implementation work of the village, a competent source said.



State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan seen addressing post Tourism Month 94 review meeting at the head office of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation in the city yesterday.

China's foreign trade up 22 pc

BEIJING, Dec 13: China's foreign trade rose 22 per cent on the previous year to 200.28 billion dollars in the 11 months to November, the Chinese press reported today, says AFP.

This marks the first time foreign trade passed the 200 billion dollar level, the reports said.

Exports increased 31 per cent to 102.53 billion dollars, while imports rose 13.8 per cent to 97.75 billion dollars.

Notice of RHD Inviting Sealed Quotation

1. Quotation Notice No	Kushia 09 of 1994-95 Eng
2. Name of work	Supplying Chemical articles (Capping compound) for road reachers for field quality Central Laboratory, Jessore under Jessore Road Circle, during 1994-95.
3. Security earnest money	10% Security (E/M) based on quoted rate
4. Time allowed for completion	10(ten) days
5. Category of contractor	"A" to "B" class under general category enlisted contractors of RHD, Dept/Bonafide supplier.
6. Name of offices of availability of quotations documents	Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Kushtia/Jessore/Jhenaidah/Magura/Planning, Roads & Bridge Divn Sharak Bhaban, Ramna, Dhaka/Planning & Design Division, Bogra, Khulna and all Sub-Divisional Engineer under Road Division, Kushtia.
7. Name of officer by whom quotation will be received	Addl Chief Engineer, RHD, Khulna Zone, Boyra, Khulna/Superintending Engineer, RHD, Road Circle, Jessore/Monitoring & Evaluation Circle, Sharak, Bhaban, Ramna, Dhaka/Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Divn Kushtia/Jhenaidah/Magura/Sub-Divisional Engineer, RHD, Road Sub-Division, Chuadanga.
8. Last date & time of receiving quotation	Upto 12.30 PM on 22.12.94 Eng/08.09.1401 Beng
9. Date and time of opening quotation	At 12.45 PM on 22.12.94 Eng/08.09.1401 Beng
Md Mostaque Hossain Executive Engineer, RHD, (Current Charge) Road Division, Kushtia	

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Prices of gold, oil down, cotton up, tea mixed over the week

LONDON, Dec 13: Silver lost its sparkle this week, slumping 10 per cent to its lowest level this year at 4.64 dollars per ounce as US investment funds withdrew from the market, reports AFP.

New York investment funds were apparently extremely disappointed that the metal failed to touch six dollars an ounce all year. Gold and platinum eased in silver's wake.

The price of Brent crude North Sea oil also fell, dipping below 16 dollars a barrel, after US stocks rose significantly.

The base metals all eased slightly in a technical consolidation, but remained at an extremely high level generally, boosted by rumours of a serious cut in production at Russian nickel producer Norilsk.

Sugar and coffee were also under a falling star, but cocoa, vegetable oils and grains rose. **GOLD:** Lower. Gold fell around five dollars to 376.1 dollars per ounce — its lowest level since May — slumping in the wake of silver.

"When a precious metal like silver crashes, investors tend to liquidate positions in gold and platinum, pushing prices lower," said Charles Kermot, an analyst at Credit Lyonnais Laing. A stronger dollar also hit gold.

SILVER: Slump. Silver prices fell to their lowest level this year at 4.64 dollars an ounce as US investment funds withdrew from the market on disappointment the metal failed to reach six dollars an ounce this year.

Silver crashed half a dollar during the week, or around 10 per cent of its value after US funds withdrew, said Ted

Arnold, an analyst with Merrill Lynch.

"At the beginning of the year, New York investors believed prices would rise to six dollars and several bought at this point," said Arnold.

Many of the studies around this time also "optimistically" suggested that the market would be in deficit by the end of the year, he added.

But before the end of 1994, dealers realised the metal's performance had been generally extremely weak, rising to a maximum of 5.70 dollars per ounce.

The slump was magnified by the prospects of an increase in the production of lead, copper and zinc, of which silver is secondary product.

PLATINUM: Falling. In the wake of silver and gold, platinum fell several dollars to around 403 dollars per ounce. Fears of reduced production at the Russian nickel producer Norilsk, where platinum is a secondary product, stopped prices from falling lower.

COPPER: Lower. Copper fell 30 dollars during the week to 2.914 dollars per tonne, declining from last week's September 1990 highs as the market focused on nickel.

It was also hit by disappointing warehouse stock figures midweek, showing a 125-tonne increase in inventories.

Elsewhere, Neil Buxton of metal bulletin research predicted continued high growth in base metal demand in Asia (excluding Japan), as witnessed over the last 15 years.

This view coincides with IMF forecasts for a seven per cent growth per year in Asia

for 1996-1999.

Weekly stocks fell 14,000 tonnes to 304,275.

LEAD: Down. Lead slipped 19 dollars during the week to 648 dollars per tonne, as the market had little news and nickel grabbed the attention.

Weekly stocks fell 850 tonnes to 356,925.

ZINC: Falling. Zinc eased 22 dollars to around 1,153 dollars per tonne, again in little news.

Dealers told the metal bulletin review that China's zinc production would increase sharply over the next five years, with the major smelters increasing output.

Production at Huladiao will increase by 100,000 tonnes per year with Zhu-zhou rising by 120,000 tonnes per year. Shaoguan 120,000 tonnes per year and the Baiyin northwest smelter increasing capacity by 70,000 tonnes per year.

The extra 420,000 tonnes per year of new capacity is expected to come on stream in the next few years and will lift China's zinc production to around 1.5 million tonnes per year by the year 2000, analysts said.

Stocks fell 4,875 tonnes to 1,198,700.

ALUMINIUM: Lower. Aluminium fell around 48 dollars during the week to 1,897 dollars per tonne as the metal consolidated in "lackluster" trading.

"People are trying to get square for the end of the year and there's not a lot of new business going through," said one trader.

Coca Cola said it was aggressively exploring a shift from aluminium to steel in Europe and Asia, indicating

that the product packaging mix in some countries had already been altered in favour of steel.

"While these are important words from the number one drinks maker, we would still only view this as a warning shot across the bows of the aluminium industry," said GNI, adding that no details of quantity and time-scale had been given for the move.

Weekly stocks fell 28,500 tonnes to 1,799,300.

NICKEL: Easing. Nickel declined around 35 dollars during the week to 8,920 dollars per tonne after rising a high since May 1991 on Monday at 8,965 dollars per tonne.

Nickel continues to reflect concern about production at Russian producer Norilsk nickel, which dealers believe has been much more seriously affected by power problems in November than officially conceded.

Talk that Norilsk's main Talnak mines, which supply the bulk of the concentrates used by Norilsk, have been idled since the end of November and rumours of force majeure at Norilsk pushed the metal up to may 1991 highs. But as the market became saturated with Norilsk news, the metal declined.

TIN: Falling. Tin dipped 160 dollars to 6,080, easing in the wake of nickel. Industry sources said the Chinese government's success in controlling illegal tin exports since joining the Association of Tin Producing Countries (ATPC) could mean

reducing latest production.

GRANIS: Firm. The prices of wheat and barley remained firm at around 106 and 102 pounds per tonne respectively, rising as European dealers anticipated large-scale exports to China and North Africa.

"It is a question of time," said one dealer in Geneva. "We know that China and Egypt are going to buy, but we don't know when." Algeria, Tunisia and Cuba are also expected to import in the near future.

In Chicago, prices ended the week higher on speculative buying as the market anticipates a poor world harvest this year.

TEA: Mixed. The price of top quality tea fell by 15 pence to 160 pence per kilo, while medium quality rose by five pence to 125 pence per kilo and lower quality tea eased two pence to 78 pence.

Top quality Kenyan teas were in demand on the London auction market, dealers said.

COTTON: Higher. The cotton outlook price indicator rose five cents to 85 cents a pound as US dealers said export prospects were good. Estimates of the Pakistan harvest were revised down to 1.42 million tonnes, helping US producers. Pakistan is the world's third-ranking exporter.

WOOL: Slight decline. The Bradford (Northern England) reference price eased slightly to 462 pence a kilo, although the market remained supported by lower stocks and a cut in world production. Weaker demand for Australian fine wool also weighed on world prices.