

President lays emphasis on proper statistics in planning

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday laid due importance on proper statistics in planning as well as development efforts and said one could not survive without statistics in the modern society, reports BSS.

The importance of statistics in modern world is evident from the fact that no planning or development effort is effective without it, he said adding, it is not possible to understand the event occurring in the world without the basic knowledge of statistics.

The President was inaugurating the 5th national conference on "poverty, environment, destitute women and human resources development" organised by Bangladesh Statistical Association at the NEC auditorium in the capital.

With the association president and former vice-chancellor of Jahangir Nagar University Prof Kazi Saleh Ahmad in the chair, the inaugural function was also addressed by Shipping Minister M K Anwar as the special guest and General Secretary of the

Association Mohammad Hamidul Haque Bhuiyan.

The president said, statistics is the eyes and ears of planners and it is vital for planning and implementation of programmes undertaken for development purposes. "It is statistics which substantiate whatever and whenever an activity takes place", he added.

Describing present government's 'dal-bhat' programme as a herculean task towards removing illiteracy and social injustice, President Biswas said the new development perspective of the government gave top priority to sustainable economic development of the country with focus on poverty alleviation through generation of productive employment as well as raising savings, investment and purchasing power of the people.

"Human resources development, participatory planning and women's participation in the development are also in the new development perspective of the government", he said adding that a structural change

in the planning process had been envisaged to gear up national economy to a take-off stage.

President Biswas referred to present government's view to development and said it had recognised that economic emancipation of the people was only possible if development programmes were implemented by the beneficiaries, that is the people at the grassroot level.

"Now the government has taken decision to replace top-down planning by the bottom-up planning which means local level participatory planning, he said.

He also said that the State Minister for Planning had been mobilising all resources as an effort towards decentralising the planning process for minimising poverty in the country. "I believe that the availability of detailed and accurate statistics on various aspects upto local level is the essence of achieving the objectives", he added.

The President said the statistical machinery both outside

and inside the government was working hard with the adoption of modern computer technology to satisfy the issues of data needs.

He said the importance of statistics in the modern world was well recognised and efforts were being directed towards development of this subject. "Unfortunately, statistics as an academic subject did not receive due attention in the past", he added.

The president also referred to the recent recommendations of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and said Bangladesh government had been studying the recommendations of the United Nations for implementation without delay.

Shipping Minister M K Anwar described statistics as a basic need of the society and said development was not possible without statistical method.

"Statistics has to be more strengthened in all the best possible ways", he said and assured of his cooperation to the association.

No change likely in Japanese growth

TOKYO, Jan 27: Japan's top economic planner said Friday that last week's quake in western Japan will not change the government's forecast of a 2.8 per cent growth in the Gross National Product in the coming fiscal year, reports AP.

Masahiko Komura, director of the Economic Planning Agency, conceded during testimony before the budget committee of the upper house of the Japanese Diet that the January 17 tremor damaged a portion of the nation's infrastructure and will impact negatively on some sectors of the economy.

But he said positive effects from the reconstruction effort will balance the immediate negative impact on production capacity in the stricken Kobe region.

Komura suggested that the damage to production facilities, while substantial, only affected a small part of Japan's economy. He pointed to the size of the nation's economy as one reason economic growth is likely to proceed following the quake.

Japanese, Gulf officials to discuss econ cooperation

ABU DHABI, Jan 27: Officials from Japan and its main Gulf oil suppliers are to meet in Riyadh this week to discuss economic cooperation and joint ventures to transfer technology to the region, officials said yesterday, reports AP.

The meeting, opening Saturday, is to be attended by foreign ministry Under Secretaries and other officials from Japan and the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), according to Abdullah Al-Quwaiz, GCC Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs.

The talks will cover cooperation between the two sides in economy, investment, energy, training and transfer of technology to the region, Quwaiz told the official Gulf press.

"We are trying to form specialised working teams to support and follow up this cooperation,"

Officials said the meeting was in line with an agreement between the two sides to hold regular talks to discuss stronger economic and trade links.

GCC states want Japan to help them acquire technology through setting up joint industrial projects to support attempts to diversify their economies and lessen reliance on highly volatile oil earnings.

Despite their diversification drive, non-oil exports by the six members have remained a fraction of their oil exports, not exceeding 10 per cent.

Experts attributed this to the absence of heavy industries in the region and the limited agricultural potential given their desert nature.

GCC states have turned to Japan and China for technology after years of negotiations with the European Union and other western industrial powers produced no results.

Industrial countries have been reluctant to commit themselves to major projects in the region on the grounds the market is relatively small and there are restrictions on full ownership of enterprises.

More than 400 officials and businessmen from Japan and the GCC discussed joint ventures at a conference in Tokyo late last year. The conference

produced no accord but the two sides agreed to pursue contacts.

GCC states — Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — have offered Japan stable, long-term crude supplies at reasonable prices in return for its technical assistance.

"We expect our economic relations with Japan to strengthen in future as it will depend more on our oil, a Gulf official said.

GCC states supply Japan with nearly 60 per cent of its total crude oil imports of more than four million barrels per day (BPD).

The level will likely exceed 70 per cent by the year 2000 as other supply sources are gradually receding and Gulf nations are boosting their oil output capacity.

The six members currently produce around 13 million BPD, nearly 20 per cent of the total world oil supplies. Their crude reserves also account for around 45 per cent of the world's proven reserves of more than one trillion barrels.

CDC office in city shortly

The Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) opens an office in Dhaka shortly to gear up its activity in Bangladesh's development projects, reports UNB.

The CDC has already invested 30 million pound sterling in Bangladesh and is expected to invest more funds to finance development industrial projects.

This was disclosed in a meeting between the British Executive Service Overseas (BESO) and the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) here on Thursday.

BESO provides various voluntary services to small and medium-size public and private enterprises and organisations who cannot afford commercial consultations.

Derek Roll, Regional Director of BESO for Bangladesh, told the meeting that his organisation extends advice in anything from finance to farming, banking to book-keeping, taxation to technology.

Without mentioning the name, he said a Bangladeshi



Anwar Hossain, Chairman of the City Bank Ltd, addressing the managers conference 95 in the city on Friday. S. B. Chaudhury, Adviser, and Quazi Baharul Islam, Managing Director of the bank are also seen in the picture.

US durable goods orders up 1.4 pc

WASHINGTON, Jan 27: Factory orders for "big-ticket" durable goods such as cars and computers rose 1.4 per cent in December, capping the biggest annual increase in 16 years, reports AP.

But analysts noted the strength at the end of the year came from military and transportation orders and that, excluding those components, demand was weaker than it appeared.

The Commerce Department said Thursday that orders for durable goods — products expected to last three years or longer — totaled a seasonally adjusted 161.4 billion dollars in December. It was the sec-

ond straight advance, including a 3.2 per cent gain to 159.1 billion dollars in November. Orders dropped 0.8 per cent in October.

The December increase helped push orders for 1994 up 13.9 per cent, the biggest advance since an 18.3 per cent surge in 1978. Orders 8.6 per cent increase in 1993.

Overall, the report still shows strength in the manufacturing sector, but there are a few signs of softness emerging, said Lynn Reaser, an economist at First Interstate Bancorp in Los Angeles.

These signs, she said, include a drop in retail sales during the December

shopping seasons and a recent buildup of inventories at the wholesale level that could mean fewer orders as businesses clear excess stocks from their shelves.

Still, she is among the many economists who expect the Federal Reserve to boost short-term interest rates next week for the seventh time in a year to cool the economy further and keep inflation from boiling over.

Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, testifying on Capitol Hill for the second straight day, said there are signs the buoyant economy is "simmering down".

The very torrid rate of in-

crease is slowing down," Greenspan told the Senate Budget Committee. "It's no longer flat out. Fairly good moderate growth is occurring."

New jobless claims had risen to 354,000 during the week ended January 7, highest since 390,000 during the week ended last July 16. But analysts said the gain was due to seasonal adjustment problems and predicted claims would drop back into the low 300,000 range.

In its report, the Commerce Department said military orders shot up 65 per cent last month, led by large increase for ships and tanks.

US House okays balanced budget amendment

WASHINGTON, Jan 27: The US House of Representatives yesterday endorsed the first major constitutional change in American history directing the way congress operates, approving an amendment that would require the federal budget to be balanced each year.

increase the margin needed to authorise deficit spending beyond majority rule, which has governed the passage of legislation since the constitution was ratified in 1789.

The victory on Thursday was only the first step on a long journey. If the senate

US dollars debt on actions in the 1980s, which he labeled "a decade of fiscal irresponsibility" led by (former president) Ronald Reagan and joined in by both democrats and republicans.

Hoyer spoke in favour of the amendment, but warned that

the elderly and interest paid on the national debt.

Opponents say huge cuts in social security and medicare would be the price of a balance budget.

"It will strike directly at middle-income families and senior citizens," said repre-

