

US Citibank to
open full
service branch
in Dhaka

Citibank, the largest US bank, will open a full-service branch in Dhaka shortly, reports UNB.

It announced here yesterday that it had received a license from Bangladesh Bank to open a full service branch in Dhaka. The branch is expected to be open by June.

The New York-based bank has been operating a representative office in Dhaka since April 1987. Citibank has been providing offshore correspondent banking services to the local banks and other advisory services to its commercial clientele.

Citibank's country corporate officer Sridhar said, "Branch status will enable us to provide on-the-spot assistance to corporate customers requiring the services of a major international bank."

"We look forward to working closely with local companies as well as international investors and meeting their financial needs," added Sridhar. The branch anticipates strong activity in its global finance business, including areas such as trade finance, foreign exchange, cash management, custodial services etc. where it has a tradition of expertise and innovation.

United Insurance
branch managers
confce held

The third annual branch managers' conference of the United Insurance Company Limited was held on January 26 and 27 at the head office of the company in the city, says a press release.

Presided over by the chairman of the company M. Moyeedul Islam the conference was attended by all branch managers and senior officers.

Dr. Hafiz G A Siddiqui, Academic Dean, North-South University, delivered a lecture on 'Strategic Management in Insurance Industry' in the conference as guest speaker.

The chairman in his speech urged all the branch managers and the development personnel to make vigorous efforts to bring more and more business for the company.

He said, the underwriting policy of the United Insurance Company was always very selective as company's aim was to build a firm economic base.

He said the company is giving every possible facilities to their development personnel and said such facilities will be further increased if they can bring more and more business for the company.

Saifur critical of donors'
policy on compensation

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman yesterday said donors' policy on compensation to project-affected people is too ambitious and requires to be tuned with the socio-economic realities of Bangladesh, reports UNB.

He was inaugurating a national workshop on Involuntary Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy in the conference room of the National Economic Council (NEC) in the morning.

Rahman, while admitting "ruthless" exploitation of people in different development projects in the past, cautioned that the projects would end up viable if the World Bank resettlement guidelines put too much burden on project costs.

He referred to resettlement costs in the Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge Project (JMBA) that shot up to 58 million US dollars from the initial estimates of 16 million.

The minister attributed the high cost to the donor-insisted compensation package for JMBA which, according to him, had not been reasonable as per the country's standard and encouraged local vested interests to manipulate government funds.

Citing above-the-market land price offered to affected people at the Jamuna Bridge site, he said land prices along side rivers were usually low in the country, as the erosion-scared people always prefer to shift to distant places.

Rahman also pointed out

that the World Bank's resettlement conditions had triggered government's recent 'no' to a proposed credit for a water treatment plant in the capital.

"Resettlement policy has to be country-specific it should consider socio-political and geographical features of a country... of course, we support adequate compensation but not excessive compensation."

Economic Relations Division (ERD) has organized the workshop as the World Bank donors have stepped up pressure on the borrowing governments for providing maximum compensation to those affected by any development projects.

The World Bank has decided not to finance projects involving large settlement operations unless the government concerned adopts policies and legal frameworks for resettlement with income restoration.

Officials directly involved in land acquisition and resettlement at the field level, academics, NGOs and donor representatives are participating in the three-day workshop sponsored by the JMBA authorities and the World Bank.

While criticising the World Bank's high-cost guidelines for resettlement, Saifur Rahman also blasted past incidents of painful displacement of people without due compensation in the name of development.

"In the past, plights of affected persons were not

looked into. It was a uncaring development, mindless development," he said.

Referring to Monu irrigation project, the minister said many land owners were yet to get compensation even after 30 years.

Saying that land acquisition policy is "extremely inequitable" in Bangladesh, Rahman said poor people had often been driven out of their lands with meagre compensation for land acquisition.

He cited land acquisition in Gulshan and Baridhara the capital's outskirts now turned into posh residential areas for the rich, and said "poor farmers were driven out up to Narasingdi with meagre compensation while some politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen became millionaires overnight."

Saifur Rahman also criticised some ministries and government departments for acquiring land far above the actual requirement.

Outlining the World Bank policy of resettlement, the bank's resident mission chief, Pierre Lendel Mills, told the workshop although the latest land acquisition policy of the government matched the bank policy, land registration and compensation payment often faced delay.

The visiting World Bank Director for South Asia, Paul Isenman, also spoke at the inaugural session. ERD secretary Lufullah Majid and Additional Secretary Mahbub Kabir were other speakers.

Fowler says
Dhaka-UK trade
ties growing
rapidly

British High Commissioner Peter J. Fowler said here yesterday the bilateral trade between his country and Bangladesh is growing rapidly and there exists tremendous scope for further growth of the same for the benefit of the two countries, reports BSS.

Fowler gave the assurance that British investment would come to Bangladesh and said "we are making efforts to get people here. We want to see the country prosper."

He was exchanging views with the members of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry on British-Bangladesh trade relations.

The British High Commissioner suggested further improvement in the infrastructure, reforms in legal framework and the structure of civil service and change in attitude together with raising the quality of education with a view to creating better enabling environment for attracting foreign investment in Bangladesh.

He also underlined the need for institutional upgrading to realise the great potentials of the country.

President of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry M Anisuddulha welcomed the British High Commissioner.

British Deputy High Commissioner J R Nichols and Director of South Asia Group of the UK Department of Trade and Industry, London, Adrian Hockney also spoke on the occasion.

Fowler referred to the image problem of the country and said there are lot to do about to improve the reality and thereby get rid of the bad image.

Describing the relations between great Britain and Bangladesh as 'very good', he referred to the recent visit of foreign secretary Douglas Hurd, British trade delegation in November last and participation of a big delegation in the just concluded Euromoney conference.

He said the proposal for setting up a British-Bangladesh business forum put forward by the Metropolitan chamber could be explored.

WEA meenabazar
tomorrow

A day-long exhibition and meenabazar organised by Women Entrepreneurs Association (WEA) will be held tomorrow (Monday) at Eskaton Ladies Club in the city, reports UNB.

A wide collection of WEA-produced handicraft, fashion wear, jewellery, poultry products, processed foods and embroidered goods will be on display and sale from 10 am to 5pm, said a WEA press release yesterday.

Bangladesh Oxygen
holds AGM

The 22nd annual general meeting (AGM) of Bangladesh Oxygen Limited was held at a local hotel yesterday, says a BQL press release.

At the meeting, a final dividend of Taka 3.75 per share (37.5 per cent), involving a payout of about Tk 48 million, was declared. Together with the interim dividend of Tk 6.00 per share (60 per cent) already declared and paid, the total dividend for the last fiscal year stands at Tk 9.75 per share (97.5 per cent). The total dividend payout for the year will be nearly Tk 124 million.

The Chairman, M Syeduzzaman, observed that the company again grew last year in spite of a generally unspectacular economic environment and expressed optimism about the future.

Shareholders were informed that implementation of the industrial gases expansion programme is progressing satisfactorily and that the new plant is expected to be in production by the end of June this year. Modernisation of the welding electrode manufacturing facilities is also progressing well and a modern plant is expected to be installed and operational in May of this year.

Shareholders voted at the meeting to change the name of the company from "Bangladesh Oxygen Limited" to "BOC Bangladesh Limited", in line with the BOC Group practice worldwide. Members also voted to amend the Articles of Association of the Company in order to comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 1994 and to fulfil other administrative imperatives.



Peter J. Fowler, British High Commissioner in Bangladesh, seen exchanging views with the members of MCCI at the Chamber Bhaban yesterday. M Anis Ud Dowla, MCCI President sitting next to him.

Major oil cos flex muscles to
salvage profit margins

LONDON, Jan 28: Major oil companies flexed their muscles to salvage profit margins from oil refining this week, supporting oil product prices and depressing crude oil, reports Reuter.

World benchmark Brent Blend crude futures for March delivery trade 31 cents softer at 16.36 US dollars per barrel by 1714 GMT yesterday, having fallen over 70 cents in the last two days.

By limiting the amount of crude oil running through their refineries, oil companies are hoping to eat away at burgeoning stocks of unused heating fuel and at the same time boost demand and prices for crude oil.

"By announcing run cuts, crude oil has suffered while oil

products have held steady," said Ahmed Al-Awa, a broker at Prudential Bache Futures in London.

Stocks of heating fuel in the 12 European Union countries at the end of December were a mammoth 25.17 million barrels, above December 1993 levels at 304.28 million.

Al-Awa added that through-out reduction at European refineries was ultimately a bearish signal for all oil prices products and crude.

There may well be less output from refineries, but if demand is weak, that's still bearish for prices, he said.

Traders on New York's futures trading pits sold gasoline futures heavily on news that New Jersey may not enforce the use of a new cleaner grade

of gasoline in its sales at the pump.

State officials in New Jersey argued that they have almost attained their pollution targets and are unwilling to enforce expensive winter regulations controlling fuel quality.

"We feel we've done a lot to improve our air quality. If we're not in attainment, we're very close," said may collings of the New Jersey department of environmental protection.

Traders said that if New Jersey does not enforce clean gasoline regulations, demand for the grade will fall.

On the New York mercantile exchange, unleaded gasoline futures for February delivery traded 1.24 cents down at 56.40 cents per gallon by 1711 GMT.

US, China make slow progress in
talks on copyright piracy

BEIJING, Jan 28: US and Chinese negotiators made slow progress in last-ditch talks on copyright piracy in China and pledged to work through the weekend in an effort to avert a trade war looming just one week away, reports Reuter.

"Discussions between the US and China on intellectual property rights continue," the US Embassy said.

The talks to-date have been constructive and hardworking. Negotiations are expected to continue through the weekend.

China's seven-day lunar new year holiday begins on Monday, with nearly all public servants enjoying time off the celebrate their year of the pig. But the Chinese negotiators in the talks may have to sacrifice their holiday.

Washington in pushing Beijing to improve protection of US copyrights, trademarks and patents, which are breached at a cost estimated by US industry at nearly one billion dollars a year.

US trade representative Mickey Kantor has threatened to impose crippling tariffs on 2.8 billion US dollars worth of Chinese exports after February 4 if Beijing fails to show that it is working effectively to combat piracy.

Washington, also is pressing Beijing to open up a potentially huge market by removing barriers that US movie and music industries have found virtually impenetrable.

China rejects the punitive tariffs as patronising bullying and has vowed to retaliate with the trade sanctions of its own raising the prospect of a damaging Pacific trade war.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said on Thursday that the gap between the two sides was "not very big and could be overcome through calm earnest negotiations."

Negotiators returned to the bargaining table on Tuesday after taking three days to consult senior trade officials over their latest compromise proposals.

US business sources close to the talks say the two sides appeared to be moving towards a final round of talks in Washington in the final days before the sanctions deadline.

They said China hoped to raise the talks to a higher diplomatic level — between Kantor and Foreign Trade Minister Wu Yi.

Leading the US team now is Deputy Assistant Trade representative Lee Sands, branded by the officials China Daily in December as a progress inhibiting "bogyman."

The US movie, music and software industries have called China the world's worst intellectual-property thief.

US officials and industry lobbyists who visited last week said Beijing has taken only cosmetic steps to end piracy while ignoring about 30 plants, some state-owned, making millions of take laser and compact discs a year for export. They allege that whole ministries are run on pirated software and that poor enforcement against CD plants indicates that local governments are growing stronger than Beijing.

The Chinese government says it has made great progress in legal protection of copy-

rights and is improving enforcement of a raft of new intellectual-property laws.

SIA's eventful
year '94

SINGAPORE, Jan 28: The Singapore Airline's biggest aircraft order worth 15.7 billion dollars, the arrival of the first MegaArk B747-400 freighter, the award from Air Transport World magazine as best airline for the past 20 years; the signing of a new profit-sharing agreement; the partnership with India's TATA Industries; the SIA Group's various overseas joint ventures — these were some of the milestones of an eventful year, says a press release.

The year began with the announcement in the summer schedule of five new destinations for SIA and SilkAir — Manado (from 21, March) Cape Town (25 March), Hangzhou (30 April), Chiang Mai (31 May) and Abu Dhabi (1 June).

BIBM course on
lending risk
analysis ends

A 12-day course on "Lending Risk Analysis" conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) ended in the city yesterday, says a press release.

The course highlighted the various aspects of lending risk analysis.

The Director General of BIBM A H M Nurul Islam Choudhury presided over the concluding session of the course.

Notice of RHD Inviting
Tender

1. Tender Notice No: 98 BRD of 1994-95.
2. Name of work: Construction of repairing by WBM and seal coat from 34th (P), 35th, 36th (P), 37th (P), 38th, 39th (P) and 40th KM of Barisal-Jhalakathi-Bhandaria-Pirojpur Road under Barisal Road Division during 1994-95. (Ch. to: Barisal-Jhalakathi-Bhandaria-Pirojpur Road).
3. Estimated cost: Tk 30,71,921/00
4. Earnest money: Tk 61,439/00
5. Time allowed: 50 (Fifty) days.
6. Eligibility of contractor: "A" to "C" class enlisted contractors under general category of the Roads and Highways Department.
7. Name of offices where tender documents will be available: Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Barisal/Patuakhali/Bhola/Pirojpur/Planning & Division (P&D), Sarak Bhaban, Dhaka/Planning and Design Division, Barisal/Sub-Divisional Engineer, RHD, Road Sub-Division, Barisal/Jhalakathi/1st Line Workshop Sub-Division, Barisal during office hours on all working days. No tender form will be sold on the opening date of tender.
8. Name of offices where tender bids will be received: Additional Chief Engineer, RHD, Barisal Zone, Barisal/Superintending Engineer, RHD, Barisal Road Circle, Barisal/Superintending Engineer, RHD, Monitoring Evaluation Circle (P&D), Sarak Bhaban, Ramna, Dhaka/Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Barisal/Patuakhali/Bhola/Pirojpur.
9. Last date & time of receipt of tender: Up to 12-30 PM on 27-10-1401B/92-95E.
10. Date and time of opening of bids: At 12-45 PM on 27-10-1401B/92-95E.

Munsi Mostafizur Rahman
Executive Engineer, RHD
Barisal Road Division

China issues ban on
exorbitant profits

BEIJING, Jan 28: China has issued a new regulation that bans unreasonably high prices and excessive profits, news reports said Saturday, reports AP.

The new regulation, which took effect immediately, applies to producers, wholesalers, retailers and suppliers of services, the official Xinhua News Agency and major Chinese newspapers reported.

Some businessmen have taken advantage of loopholes in China's newly emerging market system to gain huge profits by fraud, price manipulation and monopolizing the market, said Luo Zhiling, deputy minister of the State Planning Commission.

The new regulations, together with previous laws on unfair competition and price labeling, are intended to close the loopholes, Luo said.

Price fraud is a major factor in China's more than 20 per

cent rate of inflation, he said.

Those who are found in violation of the new regulations will be fined up to five times the amount they would have obtained. In serious cases of profiteering, they will be reported.

Many people are angry about exorbitant prices, the People's Daily said in a front-page commentary.

The new law is meant to help hold down inflation, protect the rights of consumers, and "reassure the public," and promote the healthy development of the socialist-market economy, the commentary said.

In one example of high prices, the Guangming Daily reported a Canton hair salon recently was charging 1,338 (157 dollars) for a haircut, about the average monthly wage in the city.

Uphold professional skills,
Majid tells engineers

Agriculture, Irrigation, Water Resources and Flood Control Minister M Majid Ul Haq yesterday called upon the water and power engineers to develop their professional skills and efficiency for sustainable development of the country, reports BSS.

"Uphold your standard of works so that the nation might get the long-term benefits," he said while addressing the 28th annual conference of Bangladesh Water and Power Engineers' Association, the forum of the water development board and power development board engineers.

Water Resources Division Secretary Nazrul Islam, Chairman of Power Development Board Kazi Golam Rahman, Chairman of Water Develop-

ment Board Engr. M Majidul Islam, Chairman of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority Engr A K M Amanul Islam Chowdhury and general secretary of the association Shahid Ahmed also spoke at the function held at the Institution of Engineers here.

President of the association Liakat Hossain chaired the function.

The minister said the policy of the government is to adjudicate and evaluate everyone in government service on the basis of his professional skill and efficiency. He urged all concerned to look into the government service structure with an open mind and wider perspective to remove all misunderstandings between different government services.



Bangladesh Oxygen Limited held its 22nd annual general meeting in the city yesterday. Seen in the picture are (from left to right) Company Secretary A M Chaudhury, Managing Director A Hasanat Khan, Chairman M Syeduzzaman, directors D W Parr, Zeaul Huq and A H M Kamaluddin.