

CPA-Ctg Sea Customs rift over unclaimed cargo persists

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Feb 11: A tug of war between the Chittagong Port Authority and the Chittagong Sea Customs here over the disposal of a huge volume of unclaimed imported cargo still continues, sources said.

Consequently, CPA has been deprived of revenue earnings amounting to several crores of taka over the past years.

Besides, delay in the disposal of those goods has caused congestion at the Chittagong port jetty sheds.

Port officials estimated that around 10,000 tons of unclaimed goods, some of them

10 years old, were now awaiting disposal at different jetties and sheds occupying almost 10 per cent of the port space.

Most of those imported goods reportedly became unfit for use and for this reason the concerned importers abstained from clearing the same from the port.

Port officials say "We have given repeated reminders to the Customs authorities here to dispose off those goods through auctions, but to no avail."

Port officials said that slow and cumbersome auction procedures and lack of coordination between port and customs

were the main reasons for the delay in disposing those.

However, when contacted, Joint Collector of the Chittagong Customs Masrur Ahmed said "Efforts are underway to dispose off those unclaimed goods."

"But the delay is also due to pending court cases against some of the consignments while some lots need destruction," Masrur said.

Last week the Chairman of CPA reportedly tried to sort out the existing differences between port and the customs at a meeting here, but the discussion could not be held due to the absence of the Collector

of Chittagong Customs, sources said.

Even a senior official next to the Collector reportedly did not agree to attend the meeting when requested by the port officials, sources said adding that only one Customs Superintendent was however, sent to the meeting which was not accepted by the port authorities.

Talking to this correspondent over telephone, Dr. Azizur Rahman collector-in-charge of Chittagong Customs House, said "I could not attend the meeting as I was not in Chittagong at that time".

Review meet on NPO held

A review meeting on National Productivity Organisation (NPO) was held yesterday at the conference room of the Ministry of Industries with Industries Minister A M Zahuruddin Khan in the chair, reports BSS.

The meeting reviewed the overall activities of NPO. Industries Minister stressed the need for increasing productivity of different sectors of national economy particularly in the industrial sectors, according to an official source.

The meeting took decision to ensure regular participation of different industrial enterprises at the Productivity Council constituted at national level.

It was informed in the meeting that NPO would extend its training facilities and other activities with an aim to increase productivity for the interested industrial enterprises. The meeting took decision to organise a workshop in which complete survey made by NPO would be presented.

Among others, Industries Secretary A H M Abdul Hye, Chairman of different corporations under Ministry of Industries, senior officials of ministry and officials of NPO were present in the meeting.

British agency entering legal battle over smoking

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky, Feb 11: A British organization is entering the legal battle over smoking, a decision that eventually might involve controversial Brown and Williamson Crop documents on smoking and health, reports AP.

The Legal aid Board for London agreed last week to help pay the legal fees for 200 low-income people with lung cancer and other smoking-related illnesses who are seeking to sue cigarette companies for damages.

Anti-smoking activists in England say the 4,000 pages of leaked Brown and Williamson documents will be instrumental in future cases against the cigarette companies. The Courier-Journal of Louisville reported Friday.

Brown and Williamson said the documents were stolen from its Louisville offices by a former legal-firm employee and has been fighting to keep the documents from being used against them in lawsuits.

Several US news organizations obtained copies of the documents, which they said showed Brown and Williamson executives knew at least 30 years ago nicotine was addictive and hid potentially damaging information from the public.



Sonargaon Pan Pacific Hotel has arranged a number of Iftar delicacies for the month of Ramadan. There are several items including Arabian dishes, fruit juices, fresh jilapies either for eating at Cafe Bazar or for taking home.

Toyota's profits surge 74 pc in six months

TOKYO, Feb 11: Toyota Motor Corp's net profits soared 74 per cent in the half year ending in December from a year earlier as a result of cost-cutting efforts and revived domestic demand in Japan, the company said Friday, reports AP.

Toyota, Japan's largest car maker, said its unconsolidated, or parent company, net profits rose to 65.53 billion yen (693.7 million dollars) from 39.44 billion yen (399.2 million dollars).

Japanese car makers are trying hard to cut costs inflated by the high yen by designing easier-to-make vehicles, procuring lower-cost parts and shifting production to cheaper countries.

Separately, a senior executive of Japan's Toyota Motor

Corp refuted a report the company was thinking of building a truck plant in the mid-west of the United States.

The Wall Street Journal quoted Toyota officials in the United States as saying Toyota was considering the plant to meet rising US demand for trucks.

But Toyota vice chairman Masami Iwasaki, in an interview with the AP-Dow Jones news service, said Toyota planned to increase truck production at the New United Motor Manufacturing Inc. plant, a joint venture with General Motors Corp. in Fremont, Calif.

In the report on its earnings Friday, Toyota said its operating income surged a whopping 834 per cent to 87.15 billion yen (dls 882.2 million).

Bank accused of insider trading in Tokyo

TOKYO, Feb 11: For the first time ever, Japan's securities watchdog agency has accused a bank of possible insider trading, reports AP.

The Securities and Exchange Surveillance Commission on Friday asked the Tokyo District Prosecutor's office to investigate Shinjuzo Bank and two executives of the bank.

It also asked for investigation of Marubeni Construction Machinery Sales Inc, a subsidiary of the large Marubeni trading company, and an executive of the subsidiary.

Shinjuzo Bank is alleged to have sold 40,000 shares of construction company Shin-Nihon Kokudo Kogyo after learning March 1 last year that the company's checks were bouncing. The Marubeni subsidiary allegedly sold 5,000 Shin-Nihon shares under similar circumstances.

Shin-Nihon Kokudo Kogyo, based near in Yokohama near Tokyo, went bankrupt the same afternoon. The next day the company announced its checks were not being honoured, and trading in the company's shares stopped after fluctuating between 250 yen (2.50 dollars) and 270 yen (2.70 dollars).

When trading resumed March 10, the stock plummeted to 20 yen (20 cents) a share. Shimizu Bank, based in central Japan 140 kilometers (85 miles) west of Tokyo, and Tokyo based Marubeni Construction Machinery Sales Inc, were in the position to learn of the bouncing checks ahead of any others, the watchdog agency contends.

Shimizu had provided Shin Nihon a total of 380 million yen (3.8 million dollars) in loans. The machinery sales company was supplying Shin Nihon with construction machinery.

Nation-wide fuel austerity begins in Singapore

SINGAPORE Feb 11: It's not exactly war and enemy troops aren't likely to land on its golden beaches, but Singapore began a nationwide fuel rationing simulation Saturday, just in case, reports AP.

In Singapore's biggest such exercise, more than 610,000 vehicle owners, six major shipping companies and 66 airlines will learn by February 22 how to get their quota of gasoline and fuel in an emergency.

There will be no actual rationing of fuel this time, the Communications Ministry said Friday.

Although, Singapore faces little military threat from neighbours, the tiny city-state places much importance on self-defence, and has one of the highest ratios in the world of military spending to gross domestic product.

In the previous four fuel rationing programmes, which began in 1987, only motorists have taken part, and not all vehicles were involved.

On Saturday and Sunday, ship owners will receive notices by post, which they will have to exchange for ration coupons at designated centers. Vehicle owners will get the notices on February 13, 14 and 15, and will be asked to pick up the coupons from post offices February 17-21.

As an incentive to participate in the drill, coupon holders will be given special discounts or free gifts when buying other products from gasoline station shops.

Owners of the 1,869 participating ships will get a discount of one Singapore dollar (US 60 cents) when buying bunkering fuel.

At the airport, the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore will notify airlines and oil companies on the quota of fuel allocated to each airline.

China may emerge as world's no 3 car market by 2010

BEIJING, Feb 11: China could emerge as the world's number three car market by 2010 after the United States and Japan, the China transport news said yesterday, reports Reuters.

Official estimates say automobile ownership in China will exceed 10 million vehicles by the end of 1995, up from eight million at the end of 1993.

Demand for cars by 2000 will reach 2.5 million to three million a year, ranking China seventh in the world, with expected annual economic growth of about nine per cent for the rest of this decade, the newspaper said.

With annual economic growth predicted at about eight per cent during the decade from 2000 to 2010 and official encouragement for citizens to

buy family cars, annual demand could reach 6.5 million vehicles by 2010, ranking China third in the world, it said.

Car ownership will reach 18 million to 21 million by 2000 and 44 million to 50 million by 2010, ranking China fourth in the world, the newspaper added.

It is projections like these that have prompted major US, Japanese, European and South Korean manufacturers to compete for the chance to produce cars in new joint ventures after a ban on such projects is lifted at the end of 1995.

China's domestic production in 1994 was 1.4 million vehicles, up 7.05 per cent over 1993. Legal imports were 281,421 in 1994, down from 310,096 in 1993, thousands more were smuggled in.

China's domestic produc-

tion in 2000 will reach three million, half of them passenger cars, with 400,000 of the output exported, the Xinhua news agency reported on Friday.

Production will double by 2010 to six million, of which 70 per cent will be passenger cars, it quoted Guoyanguan, Minister of Machine-Building Industry, as telling a national conference in Shanghai.

To reach these goals, China will invest 180 billion yuan (21.3 billion dollars) to set up large-scale plants and develop Chinese-made cars, he added.

Some experts question the government's wisdom in encouraging individuals to buy cars, arguing that China does not have sufficient roads, petrol, parking spaces and other infrastructure for mass automobile ownership.



The prototype of a new solarmobile (Solar Nord GmbH, Wismar) from eastern Germany. The solar cells on the roof generate a 300-watt output for feeding the on-board batteries. The vehicle has a range of 40km (25 miles) with a top speed of 50 kph (31.25 mph). — IN photo

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার. চারি ওভার কর কমিশন. জাতীয় স্বাস্থ্য সন্ধান বিভাগ. দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি. কার্যক্রমের পরিমাণ. শর্তসমূহ.

Rich-poor gap widest in UK

LONDON, Feb 11: The gap between Britain's rich and poor is the widest in a half-century, according to a blue-ribbon study released Friday amid a furor over huge salaries paid to executives of recently privatized utilities, reports AP.

The results of the most intensive such study in two decades showed income disparity had grown wider and faster in Britain in recent years than in any other industrialized nation with the exception of New Zealand.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's year-long study of income and wealth showed millions of British families straddling the poverty line, disenfranchised from any stake in future prosperity.

The heads of the confederation of British industry (CBI) and the Trades Union Council (TUC), the largest representative bodies of industry and labour respectively, participated in the study.

It called for economic and social reform, but warned that lasting benefits could accrue only through tax cuts targeted specifically at the lowest income groups.

"Failure to reintegrate this excluded minority into the mainstream of society will leave the well-to-do majority with a heavy price to pay in terms of increased public spending, wasted economic resources and social dislocation," said the report.

Peter Barclay, chairman of the study and former head of the government's social security advisory committee, described the widening income rift as the "gravest public concern."

The study was released as unions and other employee organizations issued almost daily attacks on huge pay increases granted this year for the chief executive officers (CEOs) of recently privatized public utilities.

At a time when teachers, doctors, and civil servants were getting average pay hikes of 25 per cent, British Gas CEO Cedric Brown, for example, saw his salary raised 75 per cent to 475,000 pounds (800,000 dollars).

O'Leary expected to sign deals with China

BEIJING, Feb 11: US Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary can expect to see at least one agreement signed during her visit to Beijing next week despite a brewing trade war between the two countries, an official report said Saturday, reports AP.

O'Leary, who will head an 85-member delegation that includes 65 corporate executives, is to arrive in Beijing next Saturday, several days after the start of last-ditch talks on intellectual property rights protection.

The lingering dispute over measures to stop rampant Chinese piracy of US movies, software and recordings has triggered threats of a trade war.

Other utility CEOs got commensurately high increases.

British Telecom CEO Iain Vallance infuriated the medical profession when, defending his 630,000 pound (one million dollar) salary, he said he would find it "relaxing" to do the work of a junior doctor.

Controversy has also erupted over the granting of millions of pounds worth of share options to top executives in the country's privatized power generating firms.

The Rowntree study is highly critical of the so-called "trickle-down" principle of wealth, saying essentially that when the rich grow richer, virtually none of the new wealth, finds its way into the pockets of the poor.

In contrast to any other period since World War II, it says, as much as the lowest 30 per cent of earners have failed to derive any benefit from national economic growth.

"Everyone knows the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer," said TUC General Secretary John Monks. "It cannot be allowed to continue."

He said more training and education was the key to "helping employees get fairer rewards and enabling those with no jobs stand a better chance of getting out of unemployment."

CBI Director-General Howard Davies called for a "strategy which goes with the grain of these global changes." "At present, far too much of our public spending is devoted to compensating for the effects of failure, rather than investing in the ingredients of success."

US wholesale prices up 0.3 pc in January

WASHINGTON, Feb 11: Inflation at the wholesale level rose 0.3 per cent in January, led by the biggest jump in energy prices in five months, reports AP.

But the increase in the producer Price Index reported Friday by the Labour Department was smaller than analysts predicted. And the core inflation rate — excluding volatile energy and food costs — rose a mere 0.2 per cent.

Despite the strength of the economy, analysts are predicting that inflation will remain under control in 1995 — although it is likely to exceed last year's levels.

The latest figures are reassuring on the surface, economists said. But they stressed that higher prices at earlier stages of production below the wholesale level are warning signs to the Federal Reserve.

"These statistics clearly keep the Fed on guard," said Marilyn Schaja of Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette Securities Corp. "The threat of inflation would still exist" even without further increases for raw materials and intermediate goods, she said.

The stock market rallied, with the Dow Jones industrial average up about 10 points in early trading. Bond prices initially rose but fell back after traders digested the report.

The Labour Department revised the PPI for December to show a 0.4 per cent rise instead of the previous estimate of 0.2 per cent. But the index, which measures inflation pressures before they reach the consumer, remained unchanged at up 1.7 per cent for

S African civil servants to start 26-day strike next week

PRETORIA, Feb 11: Around 68,000 South African civil servants will next week start a 26-day wage-related strike and whites will be taken hostage at hospitals, a union warned yesterday, reports AP.

The South African Health and Public Service Workers' Union (SAHPSWU), covering the lower wage scales, said the strike was to press the government for a 15 per cent raise and a 1,500 rand (423 dollar) minimum monthly wage.

A four-day strike called by SAHPSWU early in January was observed by only a few hundred civil servants, despite union claims that it represents 68,000 people.

SAHPSWU spokesman Themba Ncalo told a press conference here that talks with the government had produced nothing and the union had decided to embark on the second phase of its strike.

"For tactical reasons we are not going to say on which day the strike will begin," Ncalo said. "We want to take the police by surprise this time."

During the January strike, 113 SAHPSWU members were arrested after clashing with police in the city centre here.

Ncalo said only whites will be taken hostage "because the government in the country is appeasing whites and is paying attention to white problems."

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The group also expects that, after a robust start, the nation's economy will slow throughout 1995 and end the year growing about half as rapidly as at the start.