

## Formalities completed for construction of Saidabad Water Treatment Plant

Formalities have been completed for constructing the long-awaited Saidabad Water Treatment Plant as a permanent solution to the city's water-crisis is not possible through the supply based on deep-tubewell technology, reports UNB.

This was stated Wednesday by the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority following press reports on a serious water crisis in the capital city.

Contract for taking up construction of the surface water treatment plant is expected to be signed by June, said the WASA disclosing its short and long-term plans to tackle the problem.

"On completion of this treatment plant, some 22.50 crore litres of water shall be

procured per day, and water crisis in the city would be resolved," said the Authority.

Explaining the current situation, the WASA said it had been supplying 76 crore litres of water daily through 190 deep-tubewells, but this year, during the dry season, water level went down due to short age of rainfall in the last two years.

Ground water level has gone down about 10 ft, causing serious water production crisis. The use of water increases during the dry season while production decreases. "As a result, uninterrupted water supply is difficult to maintain."

In order to solve the water crisis in the city, two emergency interim projects have

been taken up. Under these projects, 50 deep-tubewells are going to be installed, which will augment the water production by 16 crore litres daily.

In the meantime, said WASA, 11 deep-tubewells have already been installed in the deficit-areas and in the rest of the deficit-areas, specially Mugdaphara, installation of deep-tubewells shall be completed by June 30.

Besides, an emergency project of 40 more deep-tubewells is under active consideration to develop the present water-supply situation.

The production capacity of the old treatment plant at Chadnighat is being enhanced by 2.30 crore litres per day.

The work is fast progressing.

On completion of these projects, assures the WASA, the deficiency in water supply would be fulfilled in near future and water supply situation greatly developed.

To meet the present crisis, Dhaka WASA's mobile water carriers are supplying water in the deficit-areas and in the rest of the deficit-areas, specially Mugdaphara. Installation of deep-tubewells shall be continued with the help of fire brigade carriers.

The authority further assured the subscribers that it presently has no plans to increase water and sewerage tax, and was taking sincere efforts to implement these short and long-term projects in order to mitigate sufferings of the people.

'Mcnamara Line' to be restored as tourist spot!

HANOI, May 13: The Vietnamese Government plans to restore the remains of the "Mcnamara Line," an electronic "wall" set up by the Americans during the Vietnam War, and turn it into a tourist site, local officials said yesterday, reports AFP.

"Mcnamara Line" runs through the province of Quang Tri, below the 17th parallel which divided North and South Vietnam during the war.

"Magic eye," as it was called then, was meant to keep communist fighters from infiltrating into South Vietnam via the demilitarized zone.

It is named after the then US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, who ordered it built. The electronic wall, built over a three-year period from 1966, with half a kilometre (mile) of mined area, never grew to the planned length because of the fighting. It was to have extended over hundreds of kilometres (miles).

The Vietnamese Defence Ministry, which will oversee the restoration work, plans to reconstruct the installations, block houses and bunkers, observation towers, barbed wire and, above all, the electronic alarm systems (complete with odour detectors) which were then considered state of the art.

Literature on its history and technology will be supplied by the Americans, a provincial official said.

Local authorities also plan to build an exhibition hall to explain the electronic wall's functioning, as well as a victory arch at the entrance to the site, the official said.

The project would cost 20 billion dong (nearly two million dollars) at present prices.

Vietnam on April 30 commemorated the 20th anniversary of the fall of Saigon.

## Inflow of foreign funds propels Asian stock markets higher

HONG KONG, May 13: The return of overseas funds to Asia propelled most stock markets in the region higher, with Hong Kong and Malaysian shares closing at new year highs, reports Reuter.

Markets in Singapore, The Philippines and Thailand also rose on foreign buying strong enough to absorb profit-taking.

The Indonesian market closed mixed as the inflow of funds was matched by profit-taking brokers said.

Tokyo shares ended marginally down despite an early spike on the overnight jump in the dollar, while the Sydney market closed slightly higher in what was seen as a return of last week's bullishness.

The dollar remained

sharply stronger against the mark and the yen at the end of Asian trading, but was off earlier highs posted in a sudden mid-afternoon surge. But brokers said sentiment seemed to have changed and players were looking for chances to buy the dollar on dips.

The dollar was at 86.75/85 yen and 1.4463/68 marks at on Friday.

Brokers said the surge in the Southeast Asian stock markets and Hong Kong looked set to continue.

"It had a terrific rise. So it could start to run out of steam. But I don't see it coming off very much because once the money tap turns on, it doesn't just turn off," said Howard Gorges, Managing Director of South China brokerage, of the

Hong Kong market.

"With the possible drop in bond yields, further money may leave the US bond market for Asia's equity markets, adding a second leg to the bull-run," said the Sales Director of a brokerage in Hong Kong.

Taiwan shares, however, bucked the regional trend and closed lower as the market consolidated on previous gains, while in Seoul, shares gained marginally in a technical rebound after several sessions of losses.

Bombay shares closed lower as nervousness prevailed over trouble in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir.

June Brent was bid around Thursday's close of 18.40 dollars traders said.

First quarter French auto revenue up 13 pc

## Dollar surges again this week

LONDON, May 13: The dollar, reinvigorated after hitting record lows this year, surged again on Friday — to the surprise of traders who had feared heightened trade tensions would damage the US currency, reports Reuter.

The dollar, which has fallen this year about 20 per cent against the yen and 11 per cent against the mark, started rebounding this week and jumped more than three pence and 1.5 yen on Friday.

The week's gain stunned many traders — not just because of their size but also because they came after heightened trade tensions that many expected would hurt the dollar.

"Suddenly there has been this change in sentiment toward the dollar," said John Rothfield, International Economist at Nationsbank, in New York.

The US administration said on Wednesday it would slap punitive tariffs on Japanese imports and challenge Tokyo's trade practices in the world trade organisation in an attempt to open Japan's automotive market.

Many traders feared that such an escalation of the dispute would hurt the dollar. They said the Clinton administration

might encourage a weak dollar as a weapon to combat Japan's mammoth trade surplus.

But others saw the trade row as a positive turning point for the dollar, which has fallen to post-world-war-two lows this year dragged down by haemorrhaging of capital from the United States because of massive trade and budget deficits.

The turn in sentiment came with the imposition of the sanctions when people realised that talking down the dollar was not the only weapon the US had in its armoury (to try to force Japan to open its domestic car market)," said David Cocker, Currencies Strategist at Chemical Bank in London.

The sanctions represent a change of tack by the US and theoretically they could mean a lower demand for yen," he said.

Cocker said while he expected the dollar to move higher over the next few weeks, it would have to show a consistent break above 1.50 marks "before we could suggest it was completely out of the woods" with a long term reversal of its 16-month decline.

In Paris, French shares continued a three-day rally cheered by conservative Jacques Chirac's presidential election victory and underpinned by firmer Wall Street prices.

Currencies:

The dollar stood at 1.4469 marks and 86.75 yen compared to 1.4129 and 85.35 late on Thursday.

Gold was fixed at 384.10 dollars an ounce compared to Thursday's close of 384.15 dollars.

domestic market as confidence returns with this week's rally on the US stock and bond markets.

While the dollar's surge can no longer be brushed away as a minor correction, analysts said it remained to be seen whether the negative US fundamental had changed.

Stocks on continental Europe pressed on with rallies in the wake of the dollar's resurgence, but shares in London, Europe's biggest stock market, fell as interest rate concerns resurfaced.

German shares notched up another one per cent rise in one state, building on gains seen in the past three days.

The market moved towards the key psychological level of 2,100 on the dax index after the dollar soared above 1.44 marks.

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BEIJING, May 13: Chinese customs last year seized more than 25.5 million cartons of contraband cigarettes valued at 1.12 billion yuan (135 million dollars), the head of the customs service said, reports AFP.

But Duan Muju, quoted Friday by the semi-official China News Service (CNS), said the seizures represented only about one fifth of the total number of cigarettes smuggled into China in 1994.

Duan said smuggling was continuing with 6.4 million cartons seized in the first four months of this year alone, CNS reported.

Also Friday the State Tobacco Monopoly Bureau said most foreign cigarettes sold by shops and street vendors last year entered the country illegally.

To deal with this "very serious" situation Duan said the customs department and the Bureau signed a cooperation agreement Thursday, mainly dealing with the exchange of information, CNS said.

The bureau will also auction off the contraband cigarettes with part of the proceeds to go to the customs department.

Chinese customs seized contraband worth a total 3.6 billion yuan (434 million dollars) in 1994, an increase of 53 per cent over the previous year.

Smugglers, who mainly operate in the southwest coastal provinces, bring in items like cigarettes, cars, computer hard-and-software, audio-visual equipment and airconditioners.

Customs intercepted 35,000 vessels last year.

Seoul gives \$100m loan to Colombo

COLOMBO, May 13: The South Korean government will lend 100 million dollars for developing infrastructure in Sri Lanka, the foreign ministry said Tuesday, reports AP.

The loan is to be repaid over 25 years with an annual interest rate of three per cent. The Sri Lankan government has been asked to identify projects to be financed by the South Korean loan.

Last month, a visiting South Korean trade delegation promised to invest 804 million dollars in Sri Lanka.

South Korean projects are mostly in garments, soft toys, electronic equipment, footwear, ceramic and rubber products and employ more than 60,000 people.

## Star invites readers' views on next budget

and tariff duties?

If there are any sick industries in your sector did the situation improve. If not, why?

What are your views on the on-going economic reforms and what particular impact did it have on your sector?

Have you any suggestions for any major policy changes to bolster the economy?

What is your opinion about the current political situation. How is it affecting the economy?

The questions are:

What is your sector's expectation from the next budget?

Do you think the priorities in the last budget were implemented properly?

Do trends in your sector show a growth or decline?

What kind of problems did your sector face with the fiscal policies adopted in the last budget like VAT, tax structure and duties?

What was the estimated annual turnover of your sector in the last fiscal and the projection for the next year. What was the estimated contribution of your sector in the form of taxes and duties?

Russian oil spill clean-up moves from containment to collection

MOSCOW, May 13: Satisfied that they have successfully contained the huge Komi oil spill in the Russian arctic, directors of the spill cleanup said Friday they have moved on to collecting the oil, reports AP.

AES-Hartec JV Limited, an American-Australian joint venture, has built four dams since its cleanup work began on March 9, to keep oil out of salmon-rich rivers draining into the Barents Sea.

A spill from a series of leaks last summer and fall on an aging pipeline spewed oil into streams and fragile Tundra near the city of Ustinsk, 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) northeast of Moscow, in the mostly arctic Komi republic.

"With these new dams, I give us a 95 per cent chance to withstand new floods," said A.E. "Bert" Hartley, who is directing the project, said in a statement released Friday.

**AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR:** The Australian dollar closed the week more than one US cent firmer as dealers welcomed better-than-expected March current account data and awaited the government May 9 budget.

**SINGAPORE DOLLAR:** The Singapore unit closed just short of the record high of 1.3890 it reached on Tuesday.

**HONG KONG DOLLAR:** The British colony's currency, pegged to the US dollar, closed at 7.7341-7.7351, up from last week's 7.741 to 7.743.

**INDONESIAN RUPIAH:** The Indonesian currency closed the week at 2.229 ruipiah to the dollar, or two ruipiah weaker than at the closing previous Friday.

**MALAYSIAN RINGGIT:** The ringgit firmed against the US dollar to close at 2.4649 this week from 2.4670 a week earlier on heightened demand from Hong Kong and Singapore, dealers said. But the ringgit eased against the yen and the Singapore dollar to 2.9427 and 1.7736 respectively.

**NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR:** The New Zealand dollar closed Friday worth 67.76 US cents, up from the previous week's closing of 67.28 cents, but there was light trading.

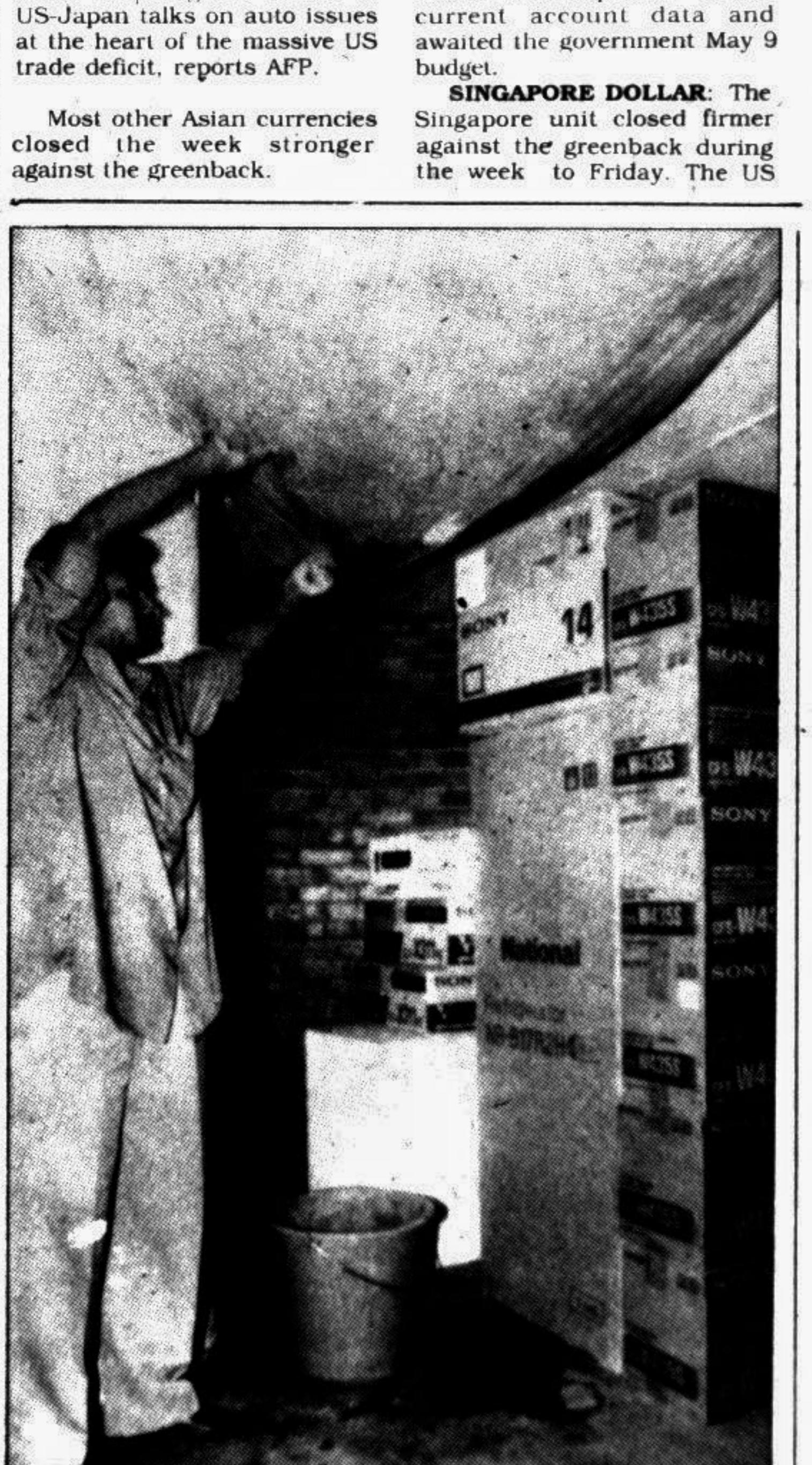
"The KIWI was pretty dead, it just drifted by about ten points, but trade was very quiet — we should be testing 68 cents again next week," one trader said.

**PHILIPPINE PESO:** The Philippine currency gained 13.2 centavos on the dollar, closing at 25.885 to the Greenback from last week's close of 26.017.

**SOUTH KOREAN WON:** The won weakened against the US dollar this week, closing at 762.50 won per dollar on Saturday, from last week's 760.90 won.

**TAIWAN DOLLAR:** The Taiwan unit rose slightly to 25.397 to the greenback at the close of weekly trading from the previous week's finish of 25.399.

**THAI BAHT:** The Bank of Thailand's Exchange Equalization Fund (EEF) Thursday fixed the official mid rate at 24.57 baht to one US dollar from the previous Friday's close of 24.58 baht. Last Friday was a national holiday.



The faulty construction of the roof of the duty-free shop at the ground floor of the Zia International Airport causing a great hardship to the incoming passengers at the time of purchasing items of their choices. It is alleged that leakage of rain and toilet water damages electronic goods and foreign brand cigarettes at the shop. Despite repeated appeals made by the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, the Civil Aviation Authority is yet to take steps to start the repair work.

Star photo

**Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority</**