

# DThe Paily Star DUSINESS

HYUNDAI

CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

## Formulation of consumers' protection law suggested

By SSMCH Correspondent

A day-long national workshop on "Consumer Rights" government, commodity and organized by Health for All employers and the consumers should actively participate to was held yesterday for the ensure the consumers' right. first time in the city. Dr Abdul Mayeen Khan, He also urged the media and State Minister for Planning, non-government organizations to come forward to motivate opened the national workshop. Dr Khan said irrespecand aware the consumers' tive of party and group affiliright. He proposed to conation, every politician and vene an international workprofessional should take part shop on Asian Consumers to formulate a pro-people Law and a few others similar

consumers protection law in

the country. He also ex-

isting in the country.

pressed his deep concern re-Moniur Ahmed, represengarding the grave situation extative of FBCCI, informed the gathering that they are going Sk Sazedur Rahman, Exto introduce a self-regulation

the country.

topics in different districts in

cial body to dissolve the con-All, said three partners as sumers disputes

Presided over by Dr Syeda Kudsia Akhter, the workshop was also addressed by Amin Lashkar, acting president of FBCCI, Farhad Mazhar, Prof Anwar Hossain, Taher Sobhan, Barrister Fida M Kamal, Md Jahangir, Dr Nazmul Ahsan, Additional Secretary of Health Md Fazlur Rahman and others.

About 70 participants from various organizations and institutions participated the workshop. Sk Sazedur Rahman, executive director of Health for All, presented the key-note paper.



Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, State Minister for Planning, addressing the workshop on Consumer Rights' in the city yesterday. Also seen in the picture are: (L to R) Farhad Mazhar, Dr Syeda — Star photo Kudsia Akhter and Amin Laskar.

## Plan for Pan American free trade zone by 2005

DENVER, Colorado, June 30: Trade ministers from 34 countries stretching from Canada to Chile were set to meet Thursday on pushing forward their countries pledge to negotiate by 2005 a pan-American free trade zone, reports AFP.

Leaders from the 34 countries agreed at December's summit of the Americas in Miami, Florida - the first such post-cold war regional conference — to hammer out a plan for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) within a decade.

They did not, however, agree on how long putting the FTAA into effect might take.

. "The region was dealt a serious blow by the Mexican (monetary) crisis, which got worse with the Peru-Ecuador border conflict," said Argentina's Ambassador to Washington, Raul Granillo Ocampo. "The fact of being able to follow through with the outline of follow-up meetings is very important to restoring confidence in Latin America."

The trade ministers are due to sign on Friday a declaration ratifying their commitment to wrapping up the FTAA negotiation process by 2005, as well as a working plan to take immediate steps

toward that ambitious goal. The vast Alaska-to-Argentina trade area currently groups more than 700 million consumers and has a combined GDP toping eight tril-

· lion dollars.

But the North American

Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) alone. Grouping Canada, the United States and Mexico, accounts for 74 per cent of all inter-American trade, and has combined GDP of almost seven trillion dol-

Chile currently is negotiating NAFTA membership.

In addition to NAFTA, the Americas already have one other major free trade bloc, the southern common market (MERCOSUR), in addition to several bilateral arrangements. MERCOSUR, which took

Sonali Bank to give Tk 6.45cr

as agri loan JHENIDAH, June 30: Sonali Bank will disburse Tk 6.45 crore as agri loan among the farmers of 10 south-western districts for the ongoing

transplanted aman farming, reports UNB. Official sources said, of the total, Tk 75 lakh will be disbursed among the farmers in Jhenidah district, Tk 1.05

crore in Jessore, Tk 40 lakh in Magura, Tk 70 lakh in Khulna, Tk 90 lakh in Kushtia, Tk 45 lakh in Meherpur and Tk 55 lakh each in Narail, Bagerhat, Chuadanga and Satkhira.

Disbursement of the loans will start soon and will continue till next September, the sources added.

effect this year, groups Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay in a tree trade megamarket of more than 190 million people.

US Commerce Secretary Ron Brown opened business development meetings Thursday with officials from Argentina and Brazil, South America's leading industrial and agricultural powerhouses.

Argentine President Carlos Menem has maintained a policy of close alignment in trade and other policies with Clinton's administration as well as that of former US President George Bush.

But Brazil has been a bit more hesitant about the pace of economic integration.

"Brazil, for example, continues to believe the best thing would be to consolidate Mercosur, gradually enlarge it with the other Latin American countries, and then negotiate with the north, Granillo Ocampo said.

In fact, US sources said, it was Brazil that led opposition to US efforts to create 14 working groups at the Denver conference, one for every negotiation area outlined in Miami. Seven working groups are to created here, with four more expected at a March 1996 meeting in Colombia.

Officials have been paving the way for the Denver meeting for months, with help coming from the inter-American development bank, the Organization of American States and the UN Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean.

### Tk 70.26 cr Barisal poura budget

BARISAL, June 30: The annual budget of Barisal pourashabha for the fiscal 1995-96 amounting to Taka 70.26 crore was announced here yesterday, reports BSS.

The newly elected pourashabha chairman Md Ahsan Habib Kamal announced the budget at a meeting at the pourashabha office premises attended by the ward commissioners and officials.

It showed an opening balance of Taka 1.33 crore of which Tk 13.29 crore as revenue income while Taka 55.63 crore will come from the development fund of the government.

No fresh tax was imposed in the budget for the fiscal year. Terming the budget as pro-people and development oriented, Ahsan Habib Kamal, sought co-operation from all sections of people in the development activities of this pourashabha.

The budget of the paurashabha for the fiscal 1994-95 was Tk 40.26 crore.

#### Gopalganj poura budget announced

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANI, June 30: The Gopalgani Pourasava has approved a Tk 3,6,10,999.41 budget with estimated expenditure 3,5,12,603.85 and surplus Tk 98,395.56 for the fiscal 1995-

Hasmat Ali Sikdar Chunnu, Chairman of the Pourashava announced the budget this noon at the Pourashava auditorium.

#### Motin urges people to be self-reliant

RUPCANI (Narayangani) June 30 Home Minister Abdul Motin Chowdhury urged the people particularly the unemployed youths to be selfreliant by involving themselves in income-generating projects like pisciculture availing the opportunity given by the government, reports UNB.

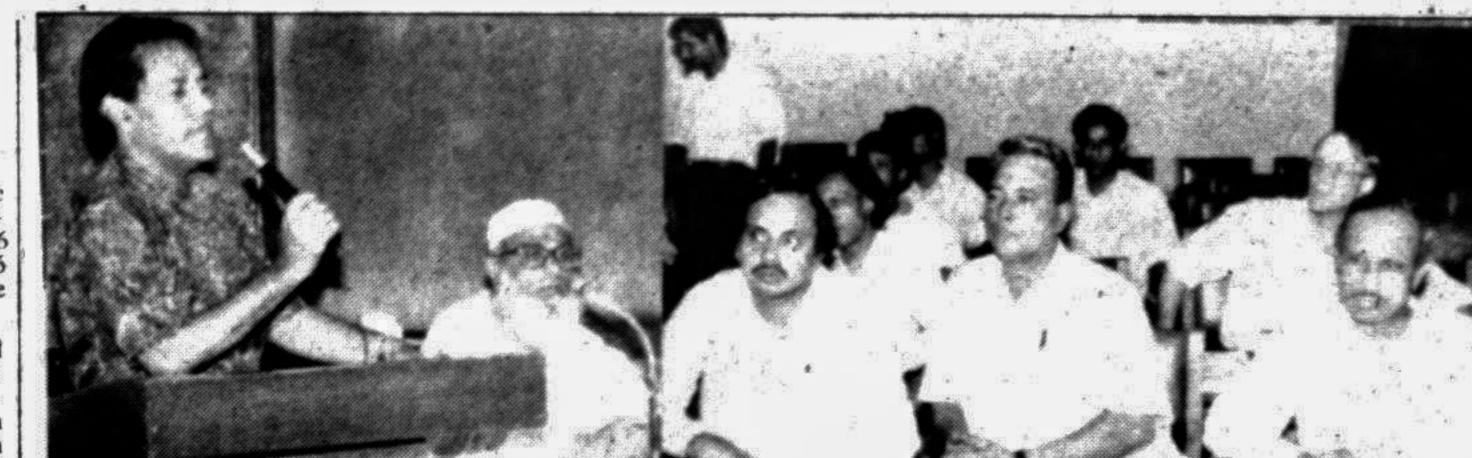
The minister was addressing as chief guest at a function on the occasion of releasing fish fry in Golaikanda-Shimultala Baropit waterbody of Rupgani on Wednesday, said an official handout.

Deputy Commissioner Habibur Rahman presided over the function organised by the District Fisheries Of fice. It was also addressed by UP chairmen of Bholta and Golakandail and fisheries offi-

The minister said, pisciculture is one of the important programme of the present government to alleviate poverty. The income-generating projects like pisciculture, afforestation, small and cottage industries, poultry and dairy faming will contribute highly to alleviate poverty of the people of rural areas, he

Referring to the presentation of tax free budget for the fiscal 1995-96 as the outcome of the continued successes in economic and other sectors, Motin said, the present BNP government have undertaken various pragmatic steps for socio-economic development of the common people.

He said government have achieved a remarkable success in fulfilling the basic needs of the people like food, clothing, education, housing and health.



Dr M A Razzak, chief of Wheat Research Centre, spoke at the four-day long Internal Wheat Review Workshop at BARI in Joydevpur on Thursday. Dr Craig A Meisner, CIMMYT agronomist for Bangladesh, is also seen in the picture (right from back rows.

## China pushing ahead with reforms, not privatisation of state firms

BEIJING, June 30: China is pushing ahead with reform of its debt-ridden state-owned enterprises, but the reforms will never lead to privatization, senior officials said Friday, reports AP.

Reform of small and medium-sized state-owned companies has made progress in Guangdong, Shandong, Sichuan and Hubei provinces, said Zhang Haoruo, vice minister of the State Commission for Restructuring the Econ-

The smaller companies that are losing money will be encouraged to form alliances with larger state-owned enterprises or to restructure through leasing, auction or share offerings. But the original state capital will not be transferred to individuals, Zhang said.

The government's goal "is

Alhaj Khalilur Rahman, Director, National Bank Limited,

inaugurated the 60th branch of National Bank Limited at

Sheikh Mujib Road in Chittagong on Wednesday. M Nurul

Islam, Ali Akbar Khan, Abdul Alim, and Mohammed A

Awwal, directors, and Kazi Abdul Mazid, Managing

20,104 bundles of CI sheets

sanctioned for 59 districts

By Staff Correspondent

Director of the bank, are also seen in the picture.

The government sanc-

tioned 20,104 bundles of cor-

rugated iron (CI) sheets for

during the outgoing fiscal

tribution of CI sheets placed

by State Minister for Relief

and Disaster Management

Harun-Al-Rashid in the Jatiya

Sangsad yesterday showed

that 5702 bundles of CI

sheets were distributed in

Dhaka, Munshigani, Madar-

ipur and Moulvibazar districts

ments were 4,000 bundles in

Munshigani, 1200 bundles in

Madaripur, 250 bundles in

Moulvibazar, 200 bundles in

Dinajpur and 52 bundles in

The unexplained allot-

tor unspecified thanas.

different thanas of 59 districts

The list of thana-wise dis-

to prevent the loss of stateowned assets so that they will not end up in the pockets of a few individuals," Zhang said at a news conference.

Another vice minister of the reform commission, Hong Hu, earlier was quoted by the Xinhua News Agency as saying that some foreigners had mistakenly concluded that China's reforms of the stateowned sector would result in privatization.

Some small enterprises may be sold, but the state will use the proceeds to invest in the state-owned sector, and the state owned sector will grow, he said.

China has about 100,000 large state-owned enterprises. The state sector accounts for more than 40 per cent of industrial output. Many pertorm poorly and have required large subsidies from

the central government. The latest government figures show 31 per cent are losing money

Reform so fat has focused on 100 large state-owned enterprises that will be pilot projects. But officials on Friday said much of this work remains in the planning stage. The government is reluc-

tant so far to let many hopelessly debt-ridden enterprises go bankrupt because it does not yet have a system in place to provide for unemployed

China expects that millions of workers will be laid off as state-owned enterprises are made efficient, about 20 million people in the state sector now go to work but have nothing to do, according to official estimates.

China will be able to provide jobs for many of these workers as it develops its service industry, Zhang said. He said progress in state-

owned enterprise reform so

far this year included: Verification of assets of state enterprises is continuing and will be completed by the

end of the year. Improvements are being made in management and accounting.

A pilot programme of debt reorganization has been started in the cities of Xian and Ningbo.

The overall economic situation is good, Zhang said.

The overheated economy slowed somewhat, inflation has started to drop, supply and demand of most goods are in balance, and foreign trade and China's foreign exchange reserves have been growing rapidly.

## Arab joblessness, poverty may grow worse: WB

AMMAN, June 30: Arab unemployment and poverty will grow worse unless countries become fully integrated in the world economy, the World Bank warned in a report published here Thursday, reports AFP.

The 30-page report on the future of the Arab labour market said unemployment. had soared in several countries since 1980 and stood close to 20 per cent in Algeria, Jordan, Labanon, the Palestinian self-rule areas. Tunisia and Yemen.

The figure was 15-per cent in Egypt and Morocco, it

Ishace Diwan, a World Bank expert who presented the report at Jordan University, said: "the world of work is facing a very difficult situation" in Arab countries.

The report said rising unemployment was accompanied by a fall in salaries in the 1980s, and that wages had since stagnated. As a result poverty had in-

creased in some countries, depriving a growing proportion of the population of education, training and jobs.

In Egypt, the proportion of people earning less than 30 dollars a month rose by 30 per cent between 1985 and 1990 and is continuing to climb, the reports said.

In Jordan, the number of poor people increased threefold to stand at 13 per cent of the population, it added. The increase was due to the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis which saw many Jordanian workers returning from jobs in oil-rich Gulf Arab states.

However Tunisia and

Morocco had produced an "exceptional performance" to halve the incidence of poverty by introducing economic reforms, liberalising trade and cutting public

spending, the bank said. Arab countries have no other choice than to integrate more fully in the world economy if they want to create more jobs, the report con-"Immobility will lead to

greater poverty and increase the risk of social conflict," it said. Instead countries had to attract capital and channel its labour force into productive sectors.

## Govt opens 641 rice purchase centres

By Staff Correspondent

The government has opened 641 rice purchasing centres in the country during the current Irri-Boro season, Food and Agriculture Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told the Jatiya Sangsad on Thursday. At these centres, 19,957

metric tons of rice had been purchased until June 19, he said replying to a question by Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul of the BNP. Besides, another 76,481 MT of rice had also been collected during the period, he added. The Minister replied in the

affirmative when Begum Farida Rahman asked if the price of rice increased recently.

#### Meet on BSTI projects held

State Minister for Industries Lutfor Rahman Khan asked the BSTI authorities to form vigilance teams to visit the markets for checking the access of below standard and adulterated products, reports

The State Minister was addressing a meeting on progress of different development projects and activities of Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute (BSTI) here

on Thursday. "We will not be able to compete the international market if we fail to maintain quality of our products as the whole world has turned into a single market", the State Minister told the meeting.

Among others, BSTI Director General Mohiuddin Azad and concerned officials were present.

## US-Japan auto deal a relief to world trade body

 GENEVA, June 30: Settlement of the auto dispute between the United States and Japan deprives the World Trade Organization of an important test case, but also comes as a relief to the fledgling body, reports AP.

Disputes in the pipeline over Korean shelf-life laws and Japanese taxes on European booze — have distinctly less crowd appeal. They will do little to raise the public profile of the new WTO as an authoritative trade judge.

They are also less politically explosive, however, and probably a safer bet for the WTO's untested dispute settlement mechanisms.

Trade negotiators in

Geneva were divided Thurs-

day on whether the settle-

ment of the US-Japan auto

dispute was a victory for the WTO, formed in January. The United States had

threatened to impose punishing sanctions on Japanese luxury cars unless Japan opened its markets to US autos and auto parts. The two sides reached agreement Wednesday, just hours before the sanctions were to take effect.

Some argued the conflict's resolution sent a signal to Washington that the threat of sanctions would help bring reluctant trading partners to their knees.

Others said the near certainty of a WTO ruling that the proposed sanctions were illegal helped persuade Washington to compromise and accept voluntary plans by Japanese companies to boost American auto sales rather

than push for iron-clad government commitments. None of the diplomats questioned wanted to be

identified. WTO chief Renato Ruggiero, who was not actually involved in talks between the

United States and Japan, had no doubt the settlement was a WTO victory. "The WTO's dispute settlement system has done its job as a deterrent against conflict and promoter of agreement," the former Italian

ment late Wednesday. "The WTO was virtually bypassed," disagreed Edward M Graham, a senior fellow at the Institute for International Economics, a Washingtonbased think tank. Japanese Trade Minister

trade minister said in a state-

Ryutaro Hashimoto on Thursday visited Ruggiero with the official news that Tokyo would not haul the Clinton administration before the WTO to judge the legality of threatened US actions.

AT a press conference Wednesday, Hashimoto described the settlement as a victory for the WTO.

US Trade Representative Mickey Kantor studiously avoided reference to the WTO in describing the settlement and made it clear the United States would not drop its Section 301 trade law that provides for the use of sanctions to open markets.

The United States was expected to drop its threats to bring a wider complaint against Japanese auto market restrictions before the WTO.

"What we missed was an opportunity to test the system out," Graham said.

Dhaka. The list of its remark

column said that 250 bundles

of CI sheets in Moulvibazar

were sanctioned to the

Deputy Commissioner for Fi-

nance Minister M Saifur

Rahman and 200 bundles in

greater Dinajpur district for

Khurshid Jahan Haq of women

seat-301 of the IS. However

in case of other unspecified al

location, the list simply read

placed in response to a ques-

tion by Md Sirajul Islam of

Pabna-4, Dhaka division go

the highest allocation (8610

bundles) followed by Chit

tagong division (5727)

Khulna, (3664), Rajshah

(2006) and Barisal (97).

According to the list

"Thanas are not mentioned."

But some WTO insiders were relieved. Any WTO ruling against the United States would have seriously soured relations between the organisation and its most powerful member.

The WTO is meant to have tougher powers to settle disputes than its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Governments cannot simply ignore or block WTO rulings.

Simmering disputes in clude a Venezuelan complaint that US environmental rules on gasoline keep out Venezuelan exports. That is still in the early stages and neutral arbitration panel has been set up.

Washington has started WTO.

South Korea in the so-called hot dog dispute. It claims Korean rules on shelf-life, the length of time from manufacture of goods to their sale, are too stringent and designed to keep out foreign imports. The European Union has

asked for WTO-sponsored talks with Japan, complaining about Japanese taxation of Scotch whisky, Swedish vodka and other European liquors. The other big US-Japan

dispute, which involves access for Federal Express cargo planes in the Far East, will not come before the WTO. Air services, like routes and landing rights, are not in cluded in the international accord which set up the

#### US House passes radical budget blueprint WASHINGTON, June 30:

The US House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a radical budget blueprint that would chop government spending to eliminate the federal deficit in 2002 and cut taxes over seven years by 245 billion dollars, reports Reuter.

The 238-194 vote- mostly along party lines - was a victory for Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich who pushed for a balanced budget from early this year when few others believed it could be achieved. Eight Democrats voted for the measure and one Republican Representative Michael Flanagan of Illinois voted against it.

The senate was expected to join the House within hours and pass identical language.