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**HYUNDAI**

CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

Country badly needs forward looking shrimp culture policy

By Rashed Mahmud Titumir

Absence of a forward-looking national shrimp culture policy, incorporating effective shrimp bed management, scientific culture, and quality fish processing stands in the way of increasing the export earnings of the country, from US \$ 20 crore to US \$ 125 crore only from Khulna zone a year, say the officials of the Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

Despite all these impediments, the shrimp sector, the second highest export earning segment of the country's economy, earned Taka 800 crore during the last fis-

hatcheries has started production."

When asked about the non-operation of the hatcheries, he said, "seven others are not yet operating because of fund constraint, lack of technical know-how and other reasons."

"The recent shortage of the shrimps was caused by the high tide on May 15 and 16 causing an estimated loss of Taka 315 crore in Khulna zone", says an office bearer of the Association.

According to an estimate compiled by the Association, at least 16,911 shrimp beds have been washed away by

not yet taken any step against those thus besmirching the goodwill of the industries as a whole.

The lack of quality control once forced the Japanese to leave the Bangladesh shrimp market. They had been till mid 80s the principal buyers of Bangladeshi shrimp."

Though they have resumed buying a small quantity of shrimp, they will not buy as in those days if we cannot ensure quality through effective government policy implementation", Ahmed added.

At present no fish feed unit is in operation in the region for producing feed,

Prime Bank opens branch at Moulvibazar

Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shawkat Ali yesterday called upon the banks and financial institutions to provide loans on priority basis to the unemployed youths, small traders and industrialists for smooth functioning of their self-income generation ventures, reports BSS.

He made this call while formally inaugurating the Moulvibazar branch of Prime Bank Limited here yesterday.

Pointing out the positive role of banks and financial agencies in accelerating the pace of country's economic advancement, Labour Minister reaffirmed that private banking sector is playing a laudable role in boosting trade and industrialisation.

Establishment of a branch of Prime Bank Limited, third of its kind in the country, since its inception in last April", Mir Shawkat emphatically hoped, "will go a long way to further flourishing the trade and commerce of this area, which is the key-point of country's internal trade and commerce".

He urged the bank authority to give top priority in providing loans to low-income earning section of people of old Dhaka.

The inaugural function was also addressed by Chairman of the board of directors of the bank Dr R A Ghani, Secretary, Banking Division, Ministry of Finance Dr A T M Shamsul Huda and Managing Director of the bank Lutfar Rahman Sarker.

BJMC to buy 20 lakh bales of raw jute

NETROKONA, July 18: Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) will purchase 20 lakh bales of raw jute (one crore maund) in the current jute season, reports BSS.

Disclosing this while inaugurating a jute purchase centre of Adami Jute Mills Ltd at Netrokona Sadar here today, Jute Minister ASM Hannan Shah said that BJMC purchased 18 lakh bales (90 lakh maund) of raw jute during last season. The price of per maund raw jute was Taka 351 on the opening day.

The corporation has targeted to purchase three lakh maund of jute from Netrokona this year. It purchased one lakh fifty thousand maund jute from this place last year.

BJMC will open 150 jute purchase centres in different areas of the country out of which 84 have started purchasing jute from today, the minister said.

Jute Minister Hannan Shah directed the concerned officials to purchase high quality dry jute from market. Local MP Bani Ashraf also spoke on the occasion.

"It is better to have a dialogue between the shrimp cultivators and environmentalists to find ways and means to resolve the question of abnormal salinity due to the cultivation and the loss of yield of other crops due to decreased soil alluviality", says a young cultivator.

"Otherwise the environmentalists may campaign for the boycott of Bangladeshi shrimp," apprehends the young cultivator.

Workshop on costing, pricing for export begins

A three-day workshop on Costing and Pricing for Export began yesterday to apprise local manufacturers and exporters of the techniques of fixing prices of products, reports UNB.

Export Promotion Bureau and the Geneva-based International Trade Centre have jointly organised the workshop at a local hotel.

Twentyfive representatives of different public and private establishments are attending it.

EPB Vice-chairman Anisul Haq Chowdhury was the chief guest at the inaugural session of the workshop, presided over by Redwan Ahmed, President of Bangladesh Exporters Association (BEA) and BGMEA.

Senior Adviser of ITC Talat Orfall, Coordinator of the EPB/ITC/UNDP project RA Majumder and EPB Director General M Akmal Hossain also addressed the function.

Member of the Parliamentary Committee on Export Farida Hasan, members of different chambers and trade associations, and representatives of banks, public and private organisations were present.

Speaking on the occasion, the EPB Vice-chairman stressed that the producers should be informed of different export-related matters, including pricing of the exportables, in a competitive world market.

Women Entrepreneurs

Rokia A Rahman : Cold Storage owner

Women more serious about work

By Rashda Khan

In a country where women are traditionally held to be isolated and overlooked, Rokia A Rahman has proved that the other side of the coin is possible too. She has stepped forward and opened which ever door she chose to open.

It all started in 1964 when she became the first female bank manager in Bangladesh. "When I was first taking up the banking job in 1962, my brother said 'We don't want a career-minded female in this family'. But my father was very supportive of me. He was very religious and found that most of the taboos were social constructs rather than religious," recalls Rokia.

Our Prophet's (SM) wife was a successful business woman and in our religion it is said that people (both men and women) should even go to China in pursuit of knowledge. Thus, our religion doesn't expect women to sit at home, it's the society that does.

Mrs Rahman later left the job when she had a family. "I never perceived a conflict between family and work. My family always came first."

Nevertheless, it was not such an easy decision. She felt she had wasted the opportunity she had been given. But she was unsure that it was possible to raise good children and have a hectic career at the same time.

"I felt guilty because I thought I was setting a bad example for all the future women. But I couldn't take the risk." However, she quickly pointed out that the woman who replaced her took the risk and proved that it could be done.

This guilty conscience mingled with the fact that everybody who knew her kept asking what she was doing that led her to consider starting her own business.

"My own business would allow me to dictate my own time," she said. She established R. R. Cold Storage Limited in Munshiganj.

She chose the cold storage business, because Bangladesh is an agriculture intensive country and because she thought the work would be seasonal. She soon discovered otherwise.

However, her children were still her main priority. "If a child was sick, I would work from home and during their exams I would bring them to the office with me. I worked and monitored their studies simultaneously."

What did her husband think about all these? "He was always very supportive. He married a working woman, and I continued working till the children came along. Thus it never became an issue," she said. Though he was worried that she was taking on such a big responsibility, "but I believe

in thinking big. If I plan to put in so much work, it will be better for something big," Mrs Rahman observed.

As the Managing Director of RR Cold Storage, Rokia does everything — from looking after finance, doing administrative job and ensuring the quality of the potatoes.

She is always looking out for women. Agents, who bring in potatoes from different areas, are traditionally men. She employs a woman agent and hopes to employ

with the sponsored women twice every month in order to keep them up to date with their repayments. But the meetings achieve much more.

"It's more like a solidarity group, we discuss problems and solutions. And the issues are not just related to business, but all issues that affect women (from legal right to diversification to buying of property)," she said. This time is her personal commitment to the women. She

tween career and family. But Mrs Rahman believes that Bangladeshi women have much more responsibility. "People expect more from women in our culture. She is committed to two families — the nuclear family and her in-laws."

However, she feels that there definitely is a big improvement that has taken place in Bangladesh. Due to economic reasons more and more women are coming out to work. "In fact, now many men are asking for working wives."

Rokia considers the garments sector as a real breakthrough for women. It gave women earning capacity, buying power and a supportive role. "It has shown the benefits and made having a job 'the thing,'" she said. She also admits that the average salary is still rather low, but "the breakdown of a major social taboo is no small step."

However, most men are still not sensitized to the needs of the women. Stereotypes, like women's work being inconsequential, still persist. "Many banks refuse women's loan application because the interviewing officer thinks 'What can a woman do?'," she lamented.

Ironically, the same bank may have special policies and funds for facilitating loans to women. "The gap between high policy makers and mid-management is another problem," she pointed out. Policies created are often not implemented because the management level people are not even aware of them. Similarly, the government policy implementation is also too slow, she added.

She also talked about the positive aspects of the Bangladeshi business atmosphere. "One thing I have noticed is that when Bangladeshi men see a capable woman they don't make fun of her or try to put her down," she said. "When I first started, I would go to the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association meetings and sit in the back. But others (men) did their best to include me and asked for my opinion."

The first barrier is taking the step and getting involved, she opined. "But once you show you are on the same level (knowledge, capability, willingness to work) there is a lot of appreciation."

As more women are entering the work force, they need more economic outlets. Thus, women require increased opportunities of skill development and entry into non-traditional sectors. "Traditionally, women know more about food and clothing. So, initially they go into related businesses. But I think any door can be opened for them, Rokia A Rahman concluded.



Rokia A Rahman

60 more in the coming year.

She is a member of the executive committee of the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association as well as Bangladesh Employers Association.

Her involvement with various organisations makes her an important link for other women entrepreneurs. She is a Zonta member, she chairs the Bangladesh Handicraft Corporation — Karika and is the president of the Women Entrepreneurs Association (WEA). She is also a member of the Board of directors of MIDAS (Micro Industries Development Assistance & Services), where she chairs the Women In Development Cell.

Working capital is of utmost importance to the women. She suggested that MIDAS provide loans to women without collateral. Then she arranged to meet

also regularly provides free financial counsel to women at WFA. Even beyond this allotted time her door is always open to any woman seeking her advice or help.

"Because of all the opportunities that I had and because I have experience in business, I think I should help more women getting involved in business. It's a matter of personal satisfaction," she observed.

"One thing I learnt very early is that women are much more serious and alert about their work, perhaps reason being they have to prove themselves. Also, men are more competitive and individualistic. But women tend to do networking and help each other whenever they can," she added.

In the West, there is much discussion about the dual role that women have to play be-



Picture of a gher in Khulna Zone

— Star photo

cal compared to Taka 450 crore in 1990-91 showing a growth rate of 12 per cent per year from this region, according to the official figures of the Khulna Frozen Foods Association.

The president of the Chamber, Nazrul Islam, asserted that this growth has been possible by utilising only a meagre 13 per cent of the total capacity.

Meanwhile, a good number of leading factories out of 45 fish frozen and processing plants are about to stop their production due to non availability of shrimp fries, says a Board of Investment (BOI) official. The price hike of the fries, together with the lack of institutional credit facilities, has forced the closure of 12 plants, said an Association's official.

"To meet the need for 350 metric tonnes of shrimp fries, it is necessary to establish 393 shrimp hatcheries.

But only two necessary hatcheries have been set up in the public sectors though they are yet to start commercial production using their full capacity", the BOI official said adding "only one out of eight private sector

the high tide and the storm that lashed the region recently.

"To improve the supply of shrimps and exploit the full potentials, it is necessary to set up more shrimp hatcheries. Otherwise, smuggled fries, now reportedly available in the market, will affect the local investors", says A U Ahmed, a pioneer and leading exporter of the sector.

Although the potentials for fisheries development in the region are enormous, the shrimp exporters say that lack of long and short term policies and effective coordination among the ministries concerned have affected the sector adversely making it difficult for the country to earn foreign exchange to the tune of US \$ 1,000 million.

It is learnt that due to lack of effective quality control, the price of shrimp has been lowered to one dollar per kilogram in the international market.

Complaints supported by specific proofs of not maintaining the grade as per the contract have been lodged with the authorities. A leading plant owner alleged, "The concerned departments have

which ensures healthy growth of the fry and shrimp.

"Investment in the fish feed industry should be encouraged through financial back-up also because of the easy availability of required raw materials," a BOI official points out.

Weak shrimp bed management policy of the government often leads to dispute resulting even in killing like that of Zabbar Sheikh in Batiaghata near Khulna last month over shrimp cultivation, opine the experts.

While talking to several shrimp cultivators, they told this correspondent that lack of policy directives and unplanned shrimp cultivation cause hazards to environment.

"It is better to have a dialogue between the shrimp cultivators and environmentalists to find ways and means to resolve the question of abnormal salinity due to the cultivation and the loss of yield of other crops due to decreased soil alluviality", says a young cultivator.

"Otherwise the environmentalists may campaign for the boycott of Bangladeshi shrimp," apprehends the young cultivator.

Iran keen to strengthen trade ties with Bangladesh

Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani has expressed Iran's keen interest to further consolidate and diversify bilateral relations with Bangladesh particularly in the field of trade and economic cooperation, says BSS.

President Rafsanjani said this when the visiting 14-member Bangladesh trade delegation headed by the Special Envoy to Prime Minister, M Morshed Khan,

Iran earns \$850m more than budget forecast

TEHRAN, July 18: Iran earned 850 million dollars more than the amount forecast in the country's budget in the past four months, Oil Minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh said yesterday, reports AFP.

Aghazadeh said on state television that the country's crude export during the same period was 2.6 million barrels per day, against 2.4 million BPD expected.

He said a barrel of crude had been sold at a little over 17 dollars between March and June, but gave no indication of the present price.

The minister said last month Iranian exports had reached a record 2.7 million BPD in the period between May 22 to June 21.

called on him in Teheran Monday, according to a message received here.

The Iranian President welcomed the visit of the Bangladesh delegation and hoped that their discussion with their counterparts in Bonyad, various governmental bodies as well as with private traders would lead to greater bilateral cooperation.

Morshed Khan conveyed greetings and felicitations of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and handed over a message from her to the Iranian president.

Rafsanjani requested the special envoy to convey his sincere greetings to Begum Khaleda Zia and renewed his invitation to her to visit Iran.

The special envoy apprised the Iranian President of the economic progress that Bangladesh has made during the last four and a half years under the present government headed by Begum Zia.

Khan also identified vast potentials which existed for further allround cooperation between the two brotherly Muslim countries. He also renewed Begum Zia's invitation to the Iranian President to pay a visit to Bangladesh.

The special envoy also met and had an extensive session with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati Monday when they discussed

the entire gamut of bilateral relations. Morshed Khan also had a separate meeting with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, Alaaddin, Brujerdi Monday.

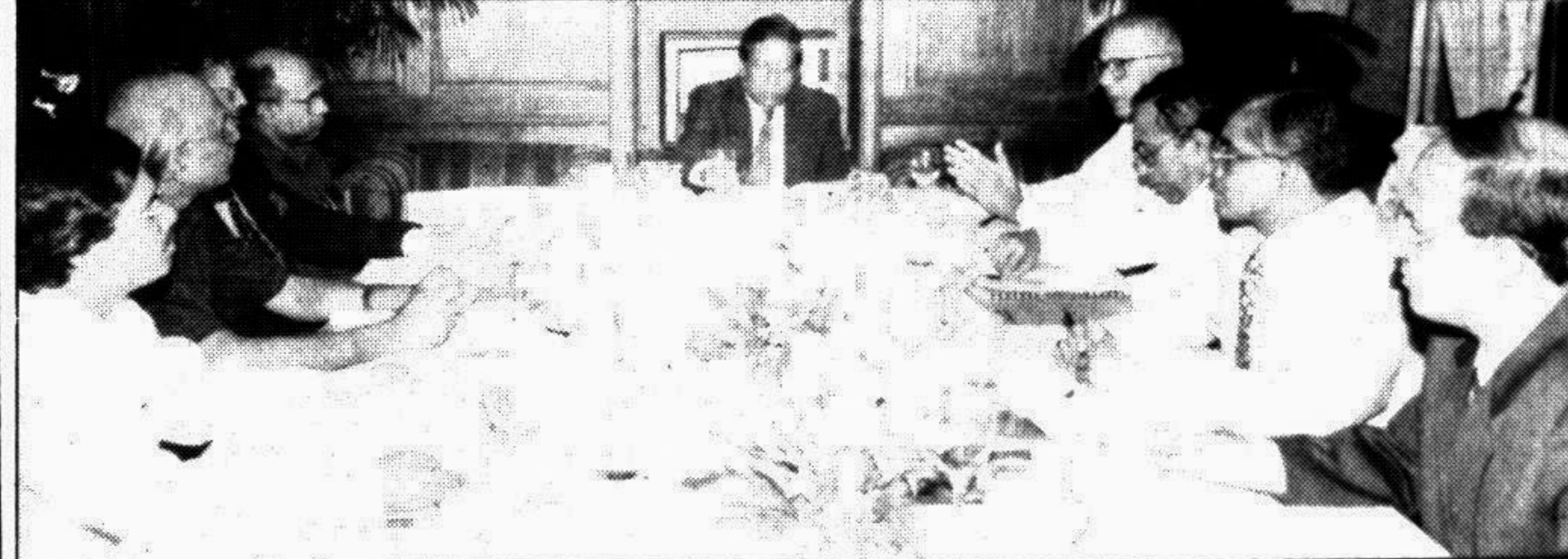
Later the envoy met the Chief of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), Dr. Ali Larijani in Teheran. The IRIB chief hosted a luncheon in honour of the Special Envoy.

Leeson fights to avoid S'Pore extradition

LONDON, July 18: Nick Leeson, the financial trader blamed for the collapse of Barings Bank, has failed in a latest attempt to avoid extradition to Singapore, but will keep trying to get sent to Britain instead, his lawyer said yesterday, reports Reuter.

The lawyer, Stephen Pollard, told Reuters Leeson had made it clear he would plead guilty to certain potential charges in Britain to avoid facing trial in Singapore, where he is accused of fraud, forgery and illegal transfer of funds.

But Pollard said British authorities turned down the offer.



The 6th annual general meeting of Bank of Small Industries and Commerce Bangladesh Limited (BASIC) was held with Dr A M M Shawkat Ali, Chairman of BASIC and Secretary, Ministry of Industries, in the chair at a city hotel on Monday.

Week-long mango festival begins at Sonargaon

By Staff Correspondent

Different kinds of delicious and tasty food items can be prepared from mango, our most traditional fruit, as the guests are being entertained with a number of mango-related menu at the Sonargaon Pan Pacific Hotel.

Sonargaon, the most prestigious hotel in the city, has started a week-long Mango festival Saturday last.

After attending the occasion, foreign guests are appreciating the "Mango menu" as "excellent". They are also highly satisfied with entertainment.

To make different items,

mangoes were mixed with vegetable, chicken, shrimp, seafood, chocolate, coconut, potato, sauce, cake and even roasted duck.

As part of its promotional activities, the hotel occasionally arrange seasonal food festival to give a different taste to its foreign guests.

Cafe Bazar, the venue of the festival, was decorated with pictures of mango and some mango plants of different sizes inside the room.

The restaurant has presented a festive look and one would smell, on arrival, a

sharp essence of different food items made of mango.

Foreign guests are very happy to have a taste of mango related items because mango is not much familiar in their countries, said a waitress of the hotel.

In addition to other items, the hotel is now serving a good number of items made by mangoes on the occasion.

The name of the items are: smoked chicken and mango fan with pistachio vinaigrette and apple, nut salad, seafood and mango salad in cucumber ring with tomato and mango chutney.

The price of the item varies from Taka 180 to Taka 1675.

mango and mixed fruit and nut compot, pan seared king prawns on mango and fruit salsa with saki rice, roast Bengali duck with medley of vegetables and napoleon potato, emince of pork in mango, coconutcurry, baby venison tenderloin "en chemise" with shrimp and mango, mango inpancake with vanilla and chocolate sauce, mango meringue cake, mango and sweet yoghurt terrine on blueberry coulis.

The price of the item varies from Taka 180 to Taka 1675.