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Energy Minister tells ADB officials in Manila System loss in power sector reduced to 34.06 pc in '95

Energy Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, now on a visit to the Philippines, told the Asian Development Bank that power sector in Bangladesh had achieved a "remarkable" improvement in system loss and power tariff collection, reports UNB.

Appraising the ADB officials at the bank's headquarters in Manila yesterday, according to a message received here, Hossain said system loss in the power sector had been reduced to 34.06 per cent in 1995 from 41.33 per cent in 1992.

Revenue collection ratio has been increased to 70.31

per cent this year against 58.30 per cent in 1992, the minister added.

Providing a break-up of progress of Bangladesh Power Development Board and the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority, Dr Mosharraf said system loss of BPDB in 1995 stood at 22.51 per cent as against 32.30 per cent in 1992. As for DESA, the loss has been reduced to 30 per cent from 35.55 per cent during the period.

The meeting discussed in detail the progress of the ongoing projects in power and gas sectors funded by the ADB and possibilities of some

new projects.

The Energy Minister thanked the ADB for resumption of lending to power sector of Bangladesh and for extending assistance in setting up of 60 Megawatt Gas Turbine Power Plant at Mymensingh through formation of Rural Power Company (RPC) with private-sector involvement.

Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary Mohammad Faizur Razzak and Vice President of ADB Mr Sullivan were present at the meeting. Earlier, the Energy Minister had a meeting with Bangladeshi officials working in ADB.

Tk 27 cr earned in Barisal circle

BARISAL, Aug 28: The Customs, Excise and VAT Department of Barisal circle earned Tk 27,80,88,828/- from different business establishments in 1994-95 fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to an official source, this money was earned from bidi, medicine, construction firms, clinics, hotels and restaurants, cinema, house glass and glass products, etc.

Of the total, Tk 9,67,78,940/- was earned from bidi, Tk 10,33,44,000/- from medicine, Tk 6,05,31,149/- from construction firms, Tk 46,12,492/- from biscuits, Tk 39,50,000/- from glass and glass products, Tk 18,20,875/- from brick and Tk 49,52,863/- from other items.

Of the total Tk 9,79,35,682 were earned as excise duties and Tk 18,01,53,146/- as VAT, the source said.



Bangladesh Express Co Ltd, Licensee of FedEx (Federal Express) in Bangladesh, arranged a 3-Day training course on "Customer Service CARE Orientation", conducted by Sharon L Grinspan, Senior Training Specialist and Margaret Rowe, International Operation Analyst of Federal Express Corp, Memphis, USA, at the DCCI Auditorium recently.

Fisheries institute will be set up in Jessore

JESSORE, Aug 28: A fisheries research institute will be established in the district soon to boost fish production, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman said, reports UNB.

He was addressing a seminar arranged on the occasion of Fisheries Fortnight-95 at the District Council auditorium on Sunday.

The Fisheries and Livestock Minister further said that fish production had increased due to the pragmatic steps taken by the government.

"Present government has implemented massive programmes to bring the water-bodies under pisciculture," the minister said.

The district would be treated as a model in pisciculture, the Minister said referring to the success of the district in pisciculture, production of fish-fry and establishment of hatchery.

Earlier, the minister led a procession in the city on the occasion, said an official handout.

Russia sells diamond worth \$ 628m in six months

MOSCOW, Aug 28: Russia's main diamond producer reported sales of 628 million dollars in the first half of the year on Monday and said it was in good financial shape, reports AP.

AK Almaz Rossii-Sakha, vice president Semyon Zelberg, told the ITAR-Tass news agency that the company's sales were \$28 million over projections.

Russia exports 95 per cent of its uncut diamonds, most of which are mined in Siberia by Almaz Rossii-Sakha, through the South African company De Beers.

Almaz-Rossii Sakha sold 1.14 billion dollars worth of diamonds in 1994, mostly through the De Beers-run cartel.

US dollar lower in Euro trading

LONDON, Aug 28: The US dollar was lower against other major currencies in European trading Monday morning. Gold was steady, reports AP.

Trading was quiet as the main currency and metals markets in London were closed for a holiday.

Dollar rates compared with late Friday: — 1.4694 German marks, down from 1.4786. — 96.42 Japanese yen, down from 96.63. — 1.2097 Swiss francs, down from 1.2182. — 5.0680 French francs, down from 5.0843. — 1.6456 Dutch guilders, down from 1.6555. — 1.622.00 Italian lire, up from 1.617.00. — 1.3440 Canadian dollars, down from 1.3462.

The British pound was quoted at 1.5510 dollars up from 1.5420 dollars late Friday.

Russian banks face new test after credit crunch

MOSCOW, Aug 28: Russian banks face a new test this week after the Central Bank injected cash into the economy to ease a severe credit crunch, reports Reuter.

The Central Bank and government said their actions would be enough to calm the crisis, which sparked fears of bank closures or mergers, but Russian markets, still slow to react to events, reserved judgement.

Some economists and officials said such problems were common in economies in transition and were partly a result of Russia's success in achieving a measure of stabilisation.

The non-payments crisis arose after some banks stopped lending, fearing they would not get their money back. On Thursday, overnight interest rates soared to 1,000 per cent from Wednesday's 300 per cent. The interbank credit market froze.

The Central Bank made 300 billion roubles (68 million dollars) of short-term

credits available to the banks; it also bought treasury bills worth one trillion roubles (227 million dollars) on Friday to pump extra cash into the market.

Despite this, the credit market remained comatose but acting Central Bank head Tatyana Paramonov told a news conference the situation should be back to normal by Monday or Tuesday.

However, the respected Sevodnya Daily said on Saturday that doubts remained about whether the action would be enough to revive the market and that further cash injections could mean higher inflation and a weakening of financial policy.

Russia has cut monthly inflation from 17.8 per cent in January to 5.4 per cent in July and expects further falls.

First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais said on Friday the credits would not be inflationary or derail economic reform. Moscow agreed strict targets for credit issue with the International Monetary Fund as a

condition for the release of a 6.4 billion dollars standby loan earlier this year.

"We have not, once, not for one month, not for one day, broken the terms of the standby... for us these are principal limits from which we will not depart," Chubais said.

The Kommersant Daily financial newspaper commented on Saturday that the government could not have ignored the crisis with parliamentary elections due in December.

"To allow the collapse of fairly large banks on the eve of elections would have meant practically giving away a most votes to the left wing opposition," it said.

Some bankers said the crisis, however it was resolved, heralded a shake-out of the system. The time is ripe for a restructuring of the banking system, one told Sevodnya.

Chubais said on Friday the government would set up a working group to look at the restructuring of the banking

KL plans \$ 8b city for federal govt

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 28: A new 8 billion dollar city to house the federal government will be built on the banks of a lake fed by two rivers in the most ambitious civil works project in Malaysia, reports AP.

At a ceremony Tuesday, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad will bury a time capsule to launch the construction of the state-of-the-art city, Putrajaya, named for Malaysia's first prime minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra.

It will be located on the site of five former rubber plantations on the southern outskirts of the capital, Kuala Lumpur, said Ahmad Bakri Sabdin, a senior official in the prime minister's department.

He said Putrajaya will be strategically located between Kuala Lumpur and the new 4.5 billion-dollar international airport under construction.

The city will be developed in two phases. The first costing 8.5 billion ringgit (3.4 billion dollars) is scheduled to be completed by 2000 and the second costing 11.5 billion ringgit (4.6 bil-

lion dollar) by 2008.

Putrajaya, planned as a garden city with 40 per cent greenery, is designed by a consortium of six Malaysian companies, the Public Works Department and the Town and Country Planning Department.

When ready, it will be the principal seat of the government and its 76,000 staff. Besides, it will also have a

Seminar on stock in Ctg Friday

A day-long seminar on 'Scope of Investment in Shares, Problems of Investors and Solution, and Role of Chittagong Stock Exchange' will be held at Chittagong Club Hall in the port city on Friday, reports UNB.

Chittagong Stock Exchange, Securities and Exchange Commission and Chittagong Stock Investors Forum, have jointly organised the seminar, said a press release yesterday.

Members of the public and investors forum and Chittagong Stock Exchange will take part in the seminar.

resident population of 250,000 in 52,000 homes.

Ahmad Bakri said 2,000 people from 875 families in the rubber plantations would be relocated.

"The federal and state governments have formed a committee to look into this. We are looking into either compensation or relocating these families. Most of them have already found jobs outside the plantations," he said.

The time capsule that Mahathir will bury will contain the original documents that led to the creation of the city.

It will be buried in the direction facing Mecca, the holy Muslim city in Saudi Arabia, at the foot of a gleaming 20-metre (66-foot) steel landmark designed by local architect Hijias Kasturi.

Among the documents in the time capsule will be the agreement between the federal government and the Selangor state government on the development of Putrajaya.

The conical steel monument, draped by the Malaysian flag, will stand within an oval garden.

World's 1st wave-powered generator sinks

LONDON, Aug 28: The world's first commercial wave-powered electric generator sank Monday, less than a month after it was towed into place off the north coast of Scotland, reports AP.

The generator vessel Osprey developed leaks on two of its nine ballast tanks about 10 days ago, said Alan Thomson, managing director of Applied Research and Technology Ltd.

He said it was not certain whether Osprey could be raised and repaired, or would have to be replaced. Only the yellow funnel of the vessel was visible above the choppy waters off Dounreay, 700 miles (1,100 kms) north of London.

"We're very keen to replace this structure, put it on the seabed again in the same location — it's a wonderful location," Thomson said in an interview with Sky Television.

"In the brief time it was there it actually behaved better than we had anticipated."

The 8,000-ton vessel, which cost 5 million pounds (dls 7.8 million) to develop, was designed to generate two megawatts of electricity, or enough to supply 2,000 homes.

65th auction of BB Bill held

Seventeen bids for a total amount of Tk 375 crore were received at the 65th auction of the 91-day Bangladesh Bank Bill held yesterday, says a press release.

Eight bids were accepted. Face value of the bids accepted was Tk 310 crore. The weighted average price of the accepted bids was Tk 98.78 per 100 Taka. The corresponding yield is 4.96 per cent per annum.

Dollar edges lower in Tokyo

TOKYO, Aug 28: The US dollar edged lower against the Japanese yen in light trading in Tokyo on Monday, while share prices on the Tokyo Stock Exchange reversed directions in the last hour and ended the day higher, reports AP.

The dollar was changing hands at 96.46 yen at late afternoon, down 0.22 yen from late Friday and below its 96.70 yen level late Friday in New York.

Speculative Japanese selling early in the day pushed the dollar lower, but a dealer at Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank said trading was likely to remain in a narrow range

in the absence of major market-moving news.

Traders said the market was waiting for the release Friday of US unemployment data for August, which they said would help determine the US central bank's interest rate policy and thus the dollar's direction.

Recent US data have painted a conflicting picture of US economic growth, traders said, and the central bank there is seen at a crossroads on interest rate policy.

Trading was dampened by market holidays in both Britain and Hong Kong. The dollar ranged during the day between 96.27 yen and 96.70 yen.

BIBM blood donation

Participants of the Course on Credit Management arranged a voluntary blood donation programme at the Seminar Hall of Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) on Sunday and donated blood to the Red Crescent Blood Bank, says a press release.

The Director General, BIBM, A H M Nurul Islam Choudhuri formally inaugurated the programme. He, in his speech, praised such activities of the bank officials for the benefit of the suffering people.

The Director of the Red Crescent Society, K Zakaria also spoke on the occasion and encouraged people to come forward to such humanitarian activities.

Pathogens — threat to country's expanding shrimp export

By AZM Sajedur Rahman

There is a huge scope to expand the export of frozen shrimp. But many hazards are there in doing so. The processors should keep in mind that shrimp is the most perishable item which requires careful handling like nursing a baby.

To avoid any disaster, we should take care from post harvesting to end processing and storing. Bacteria is the greatest enemy of shrimp's quality. In food processing industry, we are concerned with two types of Bacteria: one is spoilage and another is Pathogenic like: Salmonella, Coliform, E. Coli, Staphylococcus Aureus, Vibrio Cholera, Shigella etc. which constitute public health hazard.

Spoilage Bacteria thrive on available nutrients and water presents in food products. As the bacteria, use the nutrients they produce waste products often resulting in off odours and flavours which is called decomposition. The Bacteria that cause human illness are mostly contaminants from personnel or equipment. The Bacteria are naturally present on the external surface and in the intestines of shrimp, as they are on all living creatures. In living shrimp, they are present in modest numbers — a few thousand per gram. When the shrimp dies, certain nat-

ural body defenses cease to operate and the Bacteria increase greatly in number and eventually begin to invade the muscle tissue.

The head (cephalothorax) of shrimp contains about 50 to 80 per cent of the Bacterial population. Failure to remove the head and to wash the digestive enzymes from the abdomen may result in rapid spoilage. The Bacteria found on and in shrimp represents a mixture and includes those making up the "Normal flora" of the animal as well as contaminants from the environment and any surface the shrimp as may have touched during harvest and handling. This is quite alarming that at the post harvesting level producers or supplying agents take least care in handling the shrimp.

Most of the people engaged in post harvesting handling of shrimp lacks proper training to manage or handle shrimp from harvesting to transport the same up to processing plants. Mentionably, there is lack of infrastructure facilities like potable water supply, road communication, electricity at many of the culture areas. After harvesting it is quite essential to remove the shrimps head as soon as possible and wash with chlorinated chill water. But in most

of the cases, after harvesting, beheading job is delayed and after beheading the raw materials are washed with contaminated dirty water. Due to lack of water the same water is reused to wash huge quantity of shrimp. The quality of ice is also bad because it is produced from non-potable contaminated water. Moreover, during beheading and packing shrimps are kept directly on the floor which is full of Pathogens; we carry them with our feet.

Due to mishandling at post harvesting level, the shrimp becomes contaminated and reaches in processing plants with huge load of Pathogenic and Spoilage Bacteria; 5 to 10 per cent shrimps are rejected at processing plants, 10 per cent become 2nd grade quality and the rest 80 per cent contain huge load of Bacteria. Out of that another 50 to 60 per cent shrimps convert to 2nd grade quality due to lack of proper chill room facility and mishandling at processing plants.

In processing and freezing plants, we can only reduce surface Bacteria by washing the raw materials with chlorinated chill water but Pathogens once invaded

in the deep tissue can not be removed. Every year USDA Blocklists ABCD company for decomposition, pathogens, filth etc. which is really a threat for the industry. So, it is the utmost duty of a processor to take immediate steps in pulling down the bacterial load and thus protect product from pathogens.

To carry out these jobs, the processors must have a standard processing flow-chart. For ready reference to the processors, I would furnish the following model processing flow-chart of raw shrimp product which may help to reduce the bacterial load.

Flow-chart for processing of raw shell-on shrimp: Raw shrimp --> Dipping in 50 ppm (parts per million) chlorinated chill water for about 1 minute --> Dipping in 10 ppm chlorinated chill water and cleaning hanging meat, membrane, vein etc. --> Size grading --> Dipping in 20 ppm chlorinated chill water for about 1 minute --> washing of raw materials with 20 ppm pressurized chlorinated chill water --> Draining product for at least 3 minutes, sorting out decomposed and bad quality shrimp, correction of size

grading and weighing of raw materials for individual freezing pan --> Washing of raw materials at least 3 times with about 5 ppm chlorinated chill water before panning --> Washing of freezing trays with 200 ppm chlorinated water and polythene sheets with 20 ppm chlorinated water, then arranging raw materials in freezing pan --> Keeping freezing trays in chill condition until loading into contact freezer by putting of 3 ppm chlorinated chill water in each pan or keeping in chill store --> putting 3 ppm chlorinated chill water in each pan at just edge level of pan before loading into contact freezer --> Folding of polythene sheet properly and pressing each pan with both palms to remove excess water and air bubbles --> Loading into contact freezer with individual tray cover --> Unloading from contact freezer after proper freezing (core temperature of product should be 18 C Glazing with 3 ppm chlorinated chill water just after dispanning, putting into poly bag and heat sealing --> Packing into waxed duplex board carton (paper) --> Immediate packing into waxed corrugated master

carton --> stacking of finished products in cold store keeping provision for proper air circulation. Besides this the processors must take care of personnel's hygiene. During processing everybody in the processing-hall must wear apron and head cover. Every time workers go to toilet must wash their hands properly with detergent and chlorinated water.

After taking the above all precautionary measures, a relatively new technology called food irradiation can be used to eliminate or reduce pathogenic bacteria and improve the hygienic quality of the products.

The irradiation facility is now available in Bangladesh. The name of the irradiation plant is "Gammatech Limited", situated in the BSCIC industrial estate, Faujdarhat, Chittagong. It is a private limited company formed as a joint venture between the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and the Beximco group.

Irradiation is a physical method of processing foods which is comparable to methods such as heat treatment or freezing. It consists of exposing foods to Gamma rays, X-rays or electrons over

a limited period of time.

In "Gammatech Limited" Gamma ray is used for irradiation. Gamma rays are generated by the Radionuclides Cobalt-60 and Caesium-137. The irradiation technique has some distinct advantages over conventional food processing methods: foods can be treated after packaging. Food irradiation is not a miracle process which can convert spoiled food into high quality food. A dose of 2 kilo-Gray lowers the bacterial load sufficiently and extends the refrigerated shelf life of shrimp and fish product. Based on the findings of a Joint Expert Committee on Food Irradiation (JECFI) convened by the FAO, WHO and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) conclusion is drawn that the irradiation of any food commodity up to an overall average dose of 10 kilo-Gray presents no toxicological hazard and requires no further testing. The capacity of Gammatech Limited is not sufficient to cover the entire shrimp product of the country. There is no such plant in Khulna Zone. There should be more such plants in both Chittagong and Khulna to fight-out Pathogens — the greatest enemy of shrimp and fish product.

Above all, to tackle pathogens, the government regulatory control on shrimp processing plants, producers and post harvesting is undoubtedly very important. Bangladesh's export of shrimp rose to Taka 1000 crore (approx) per year.

The shrimp culture of the country is rapidly expanding both horizontally and vertically (i.e. expansion of culture area and increase of per hectare production).

The government is stepping up measures to increase per hectare production of shrimp 1000 kg in which case the total culture based production of sea water shrimp may exceed 100,000 tons (per year) within a few years.

Even if the export value of shrimp could reach Taka 1500 crore per year and spoilage is 10 per cent due to mishandling and lack of transport at post harvesting level, the total drainage per year would stand Taka 150 crore.

The government can easily save this money by extending massive extension work to train up people and building infrastructure at the grassroots level of shrimp production. I would like to conclude this article with a well known saying "Prevention is better than cure."

The author is a quality control expert in a local seafood export company.