

RBI may face tough choice on inflation, interest rates

BOMBAY, Sept 9: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to face a tough choice over how to bring down interest rates while keeping inflation under control, a Bombay-based independent research group said, reports Reuter.

The RBI faces the unenviable task of easing liquidity or containing inflation," the independent Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) said in its latest report.

The Indian government, facing elections next year, has committed to keeping inflation under control but faces a dilemma on how to keep its own expenditure in check.

The government has the option of either borrowing from the RBI at cheap rates and increasing money supply or borrowing from commercial banks and pushing up interest rates.

"Bringing both interest rates and inflation down through monetary policies seems improbable," the CMIE said.

Bankers expect the dilemma to determine the direction of the RBI's six-monthly credit policy expected to be announced in the first week of October.

The CMIE said expansion in bank credit to industry and higher government borrowing in the second half of 1995-96 (April/March) is expected to push up M3 money supply growth.

India's M3 money supply growth has been a cause of concern to the central bank as the government wants to keep inflation below 7.0 per cent. Inflation has been hovering at around 8.9 per cent for the past few months.

The year-on-year M3 money supply growth in August was 16.89 per cent, compared with the previous

fortnight's 16.09 per cent and 18.05 per cent in the year-ago period.

If the RBI continues to finance government it may ease the pressure on interest rates but it will fuel inflation through expansion of money supply," the CMIE said.

The government has an access to funds from the RBI through the issue of short-term and hoc treasury bills at 4.65 per cent.

But under an agreement it signed with the RBI last year, the government has agreed to keep its concessional borrowings to less than 90 billion rupees.

Whenever the limit is breached the government has to convert these bills into bonds and thereby increases its cost of funds.

The government last week said it will sell on top 10-year bonds at 14 per cent from September 11.



Khorshed Alam, Governor, Bangladesh Bank, inaugurating the three-day workshop on 'Developing Islamic financial instruments' at the Bangladesh Bank conference room yesterday.

3-day workshop on Islamic financial instruments opens

Governor of Bangladesh Bank Khorshed Alam yesterday stressed the need for developing and introducing more financial instruments based on shariah principles for broadening the scope for Islamic banks and also for accessing the globally available surplus funds of the member countries of the Islamic ummah, reports BSS.

He was addressing as the chief guest the inaugural function of a 3-day workshop on 'Developing Islamic financial instruments' jointly sponsored by Bangladesh Bank and Islamic Research and Training Institute, Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in the Bangladesh Bank conference room.

The inaugural function was presided over by Mahabubur Rahman Khan, Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank. It was also addressed by Dr Muhammed Anas-el-Zarqa, Professor, Centre for Research in Islamic Economics of the King Abdul Aziz University of Saudi Arabia, Abdur Raheem, Executive Director of Bangladesh Bank.

Although the aid figure is small, the People's Daily stressed that Tokyo's decision meant cutting off support China feels is its due for the suffering that Japanese soldiers inflicted on Chinese civilians during their 1937-45 occupation.

"It is only natural that China, being the largest victim of the Japanese invasion, should receive aid from Japan," it said.

While recognising that the wartime dropping of atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had made Japanese people especially sensitive to the nuclear issue, the commentary pointed out that the bombings were the result of Japan having embarked on war in the Pacific in the first place.

MONTREAL Sept 9: Police uncovered 120 million dollars in counterfeit money after a pre-dawn raid at a warehouse on Friday in what they said was one of the largest such seizures ever made in North America, reports Exxon.

The 2.4 billion barrels in new petroleum finds were discovered by 16 companies. But since Malaysia offered its first production-sharing contracts to foreign companies in the mid-1970s, only the original two contractors have actually gone into production, Royal Dutch Shell and Esso Production Malaysia, a division of Exxon.

Of the 16 companies, ten have closed their offices in Malaysia, in most cases relinquishing their blocks to Petronas, oil industry sources say.

Those who have left include Enron of the United States, France's ELF Aquitaine, Italy's AGIP, Japan's Idemitsu, Australia's Western Mining, Britain's Sasol, Sun of the United States and Japan's Jtoe.

The sources say the 10 companies left either because the contract terms that Petronas gives foreign oil were too harsh to make commercialising the fields worthwhile or because of the long wait for approvals.

"The industry has voted with its feet," said one manager with years of experience in dealing with Petronas, "they have gone to greener pastures."

Under the standard production sharing contract, Petronas is entitled to 85 per cent of all the oil produced once the foreign partner recovers costs. The terms are considered among the most unfavourable to foreign partners in the world.

It is not exactly clear why Petronas appears to hold up approvals for developing new finds. According to some estimates, Malaysia will have to import oil by 2002 at current production rates if new discoveries are not developed.

Petronas declined to answer written queries.

They will also increase the number of items to be reduced to zero per cent tariff level by 200 as part of the grouping's programme to establish an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

This would then pave the way for a more liberal AFTA even before the target date of January 1, 2003," said Brunel's Minister of Industry and Primary Resources Abdul Rahaman Taib at the end of an annual two-day meeting.

ASEAN groups Brunel, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Socialist Vietnam which joined ASEAN in July, has been given until 2006 to implement the phased tariff reductions leading up to the creation of AFTA.

Member states also decided to usher in a more liberal trade regime in the services sector, including banking and financial services, communications and aviation, with negotiations on specific commitments to be launched next year.

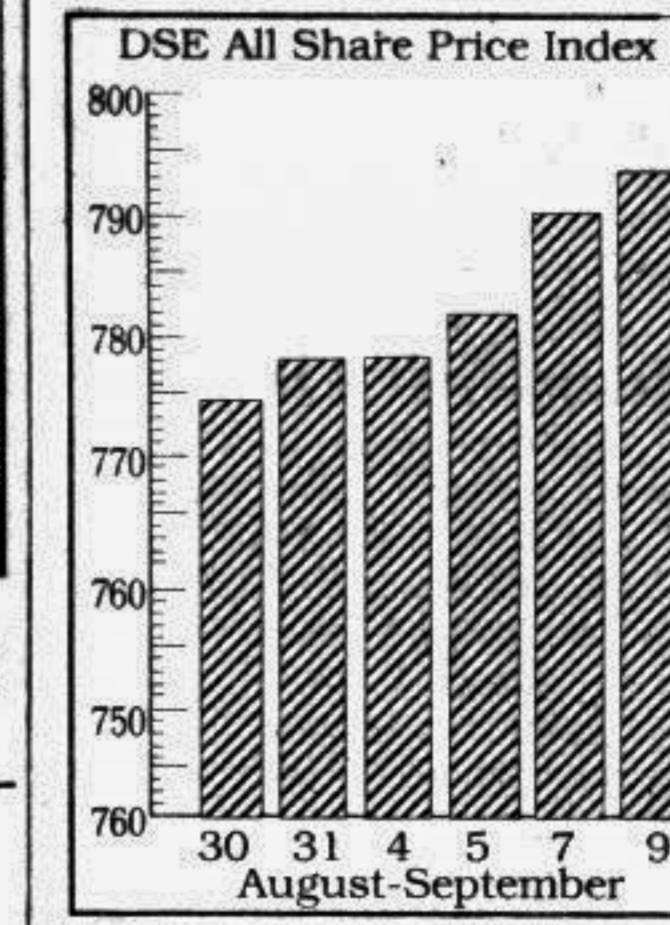
Dhaka Stock Prices

At the close of trading on September 9, 1995

Index continues to leap

Star Report

Dhaka Stock Exchange All Share Price Index reached



793.72 from Thursday's 790.44, posting another sharp rise of 3.29 points.

The total market capital rose to Tk 49.24 billion from Tk 49.04 billion.

The transactions in volume decreased by four per cent, dropping to 247697 from Thursdays 259078, while the value increased by one per cent reaching Tk 33.25 million from Tk 32.78 million.

The leading gainer of the day was Apex Food with a gain of Tk 235.29 per share while IDLC headed the losers with a loss of Tk 41.56 per share.

Trading at a glance

Company's name	Change (per share) of shares traded	Number traded
IFIC	.00	5
Rupali Bank	.00	40
Uttara Bank	.00	11
IDLC	41.56 (L)	1040
Eastern Bank	.00	40
United Leasing	21.08 (L)	620
4th ICB Mutual Fund	.00	10
5th ICB Mutual Fund	.00	200
Aftab Automobiles	.54 (L)	275
Aziz Pipes	1.48 (G)	430
Bengal Carbide	40.46 (G)	297
Bengal Lamps	1.49 (L)	190
Eastern Cables	2.10 (G)	1620
Karim Pipe	2.20 (G)	1680
Monia Jute	53.40 (G)	5
Singer Bangladesh	1.05 (G)	2180
Bangladesh Autocars	1.22 (G)	500
Quasem Drycells	1.01 (G)	1650
Metalex Corporation	.08 (G)	15
Howlader PVC	.44 (G)	150
National Tubes	5.00 (G)	190
Thai Aluminium	.38 (G)	590
BD Electricity	.71 (L)	50
Alpha Tobacco	2.53 (G)	900
Amara Sea Food	85.33 (G)	15
ApeX Foods	23.59 (G)	20
Bengal Food	1.01 (L)	1230
Froglets Export	.47 (G)	300
Dhaka Vegetable	2.57 (G)	35
Zeal Bangla Sugar	.00	3500
Rupon Oil	.11 (G)	3800
Tulip Dairy	6.50 (G)	7000
Chittagong Vegetable	.00	310
Beximco Fisheries	.03 (L)	1260
Bengal Biscuits	.60 (G)	500
Meghna Shrimp	.21 (G)	1720
BOC Bangladesh	9.07 (G)	350
Padma Oil	3.45 (G)	550
Northgate Jute	.00	1400
Sakhi Pakur	.18 (G)	2825
Saleh Carpet	.00	1000
Ashraf Textile	1.38 (G)	12550
GMG Industrial	.25 (G)	200
Swan Textile	2.00 (G)	10

Issues unchanged 20

Company's name

Change (per share) of shares traded

Number traded

Tk

30 31 4 5 7 9

August-September

2.4b barrels of oil, gas found in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9: Over the past 10 years, foreign oil prospectors have found the equivalent of 2.4 billion barrels of oil and natural gas in Malaysia, more than one fifth of the country's remaining recoverable petroleum reserves, reports Reuters.

Malaysia produces 650,000 barrels a day (BPD), of which 400,000 BPD is exported. Petroleum exports earned 2.6 billion dollar in 1994. 4.2 per cent of Malaysia's total exports, central bank statistics show.

"Bottom line? they don't need the oil and they don't need the income from oil," said one foreign contractor whose company provides oil field services for Petronas. "They can afford to keep these finds off the market."

The country's economy can boast of one of the fastest growth rates in the world, expanding at an annual rate of eight per cent for the past eight years on the back of manufactured exports.

USDA okays new type of toxin for crops

WASHINGTON, Sept 9: The US Department of Agriculture has approved the commercial growing of a new type of insecticide-producing corn, harmless to humans and cattle, reports AFP.

The corn, developed by the US Monsanto Group, will produce toxins from a natural bacteria regularly used as a pesticide, the bacillus thuringiensis.

The environmental protection agency must also grant approval.

A first variety of corn, created by Mycogen Corp., has already been approved for commercial use.

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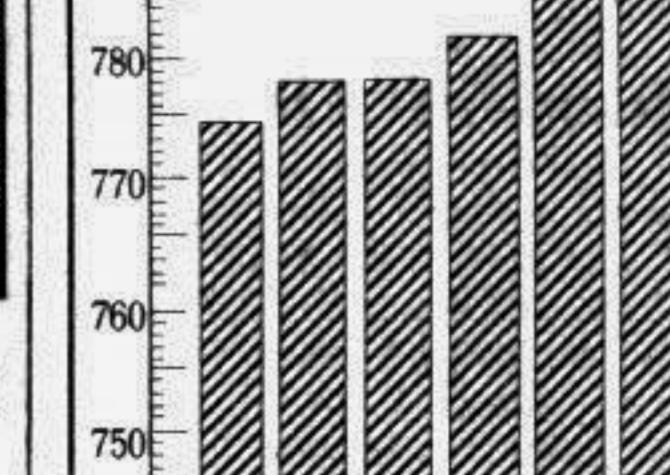
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