

38 mills, factories declare lay-off in N-districts violating govt rules

NATORE, Dec 12: Thirty eight mills and factories in 16 north-western districts have been declared lay-off violating government rules and regulations that left more than 10,000 people jobless, reports UNB.

Rajshahi divisional labour office sources said, lay-offs in most of the mills and factories were being prolonged violating the time limit.

Owners and authorities of the lay-off mills and factories identified the causes of closing as fund crisis, lack of raw materials and declining demand of their products.

Employees of 30 factories were sacked for no apparent reason so far. According to the sources, the lay-off was declared by Jamil Groups of Industries in Bogra on Jan-

uary 1, 1984, rendering 116 regular and about 200 part timer employees jobless.

Virginia Tobacco Co Ltd of Bogra and Jamil Soap Works were closed on January 11, 1984 and November 19, of the same year respectively leaving about 400 people jobless.

Lay-offs were declared in Zahid Metal and Engineering Bogra, on September 5, 1992 and Nurali Food Industries on May 15, 1993 leaving 300 people unemployed.

Durga Ride and Flower mills at Joypurhat were closed on December 30, 1992, Rupom Oil Industries of Rangpur on August 18, 1993, rendering about 500 people unemployed.

Northern Beverage and Baby Logence Factory were

declared lay-off on May 18, 1992 and August 15, 1988 respectively leaving 1000 people jobless.

Gokul Textiles declared lay off on September 8, 1989. Ananya Textiles on August 19, 1977, Mondal Textiles on August 29, 1987, Zaman Textiles on April 15, 1992, Popular Engineering Workshop on August 29, 1988. These lay-offs left about 600 regular and 1000 parttimer employees jobless.

Of the mills and factories in Rajshahi, Uttara Silk Mills Limited declared lay-off on August 1, 1980, Aroma Food Industries on June 30, 1988, Shikha Industries on March 20, 1987 and Alco Bangladesh Ltd on December 22, 1988, leaving more than 1000 people unemployed.

Lorence Textiles declared lay-off on October 1, 1986. Cosmos Textiles on January 1, 1988. Pew Tek Textiles on August 1, 1986 and Dimber Bread and Biscuit Factory on July 15, 1988 leaving 1200 people unemployed.

Kolhar Oil Mills in Naogaon, Calico Cotton Mills in Pabna and Judge Distillery in Panchagarh were declared lay-off on January 1 and 27, 1995, and December 29, 1993 respectively. More than 2000 people lost their jobs.

The affected employees urged the concerned authorities to take immediate steps to restore functioning of the lay-off mills and factories to redress their sufferings.

Tk 15 cr remitted thru' FMOs from abroad in Nov

During the month of November '95 Bangladeshi nationals living abroad remitted, through foreign money orders (FMOs), a sum of 264282.28 pound sterling and US dollars 3279519.65 against 17484 foreign money orders, a press release said yesterday.

The exchange value of those FMOs is Taka 149489264.00 in local currency which was paid to the payees dependents of remitters living in different parts of the country, the press release said.

Total remittances received during the current financial year (till November 95) stood at pound sterling 1219027.64 and US dollar 13412078.93 against 87434 FMOs. The exchange value of those foreign money orders is Taka 71,93,99,869.98 in local currency.

Agha Yusuf addresses AGM Of Alpha Tobacco Co

Trust, confidence of shareholders help boost profit, image

Addressing the 28th Annual General Meeting of Alpha Tobacco Manufacturing Co. Ltd. A. M. Agha Yusuf, Chairman of the Company, expressed thanks to the shareholders for their trust and confidence in him and in the company as a whole. He said the trust and confidence helped the Company to achieve success despite turbulent political situation, unrelenting anti-smoking campaign of news and/or electronic media and a number of other organisations, severe flood that inundated one third of the country and its adverse effect in national economy. These factors hindered the company's Marketing and Distributing plans but could not stop the march to success that enabled the Directors to recommend 35 per cent Dividend along with Bonus Share issue of 1 for every 5 shares held by the Shareholders. He said this is a sheer testimony that vouches for a sound state of the Company and gives us enormous strength and volition to protect your interest and build a bright future for all of us.

Agha Yusuf appraised the meeting that the year ending on 30th June, 1995, has been another year of the record profits, turn-over and earning per share. Operating profits grew by 72 per cent that is exceptional by the industry's standard, while turn-over increased to Taka 70 crore giving a rise of Taka 30 crore compared to last year. He said, the overall market demand is steadily increasing and to cope with the demand we have planned to import modern machinery and upgraded attachment to ensure better performance from the existing machinery. To ensure smooth supply of our product, distribution vehicles are being bought. Besides, the quality of our products and the attention paid have earned words of appreciation from the trade channel and consumer, which strengthen our confidence to combat the formidable multinational competitor by manufacturing distinctly superior product.

According to Yusuf, most of the installation, rectification, conversion and remodelling of machinery have been done by our team of Engineers who under every situation completed the above job and kept the machines ready to cope with the ever-changing marketing scenario of the country. They did not always depend on imported materials rather they fabricated the indigenous materials to make spares and sub-assemblies for our machineries. I must thank them for their relentless efforts and contribution. He said, having observed the positive outcome in all sections of the company the prospect of the Company seemed bright. After successful grooming of our brand in mid-range level, we are heading towards the higher segment and in the meantime we have launched two brands in selected areas for test

\$ 1 lakh Japanese grant to two Bangladeshi NGOs

Japan and two Bangladeshi NGOs signed two grant contracts of Japanese assistance for grass-roots project totaling 99564.00 US dollar here yesterday, reports BSS.

Shuhei Takahashi, Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of Japan and Salahuddin Ahmed on behalf of Swanirvar Bangladesh and Dr Abu Jamil Faisal on behalf of AVSC International signed the grant contracts.

Under the contracts, the Swanirvar Bangladesh will receive 49,575 US dollar for purchasing training equipment for its rural based swanirvar family planning service projects.

The AVSC International will receive 49,989,000 US dollar to purchase medical equipment and essential drugs for its city based strengthening urban reproductive healthcare service delivery projects which promote mother and child health care targeted to poor class in urban area.

Japan and USA launched the 'common agenda for cooperation in global perspective (Common Agenda)' in 1993. After two years of cooperation, the Common Agenda projects have set the pace in exploring ways to tackle the challenges of the 21st century including the global health, overpopulation, environmental degradation and in reducing the damage from natural disasters. Japanese mission in Bangladesh said.

French govt urged to ban imports of UK cattle, sheep

PARIS, Dec 12: One of France's most militant farm unions urged the French government yesterday to ban all imports of cattle and sheep from Britain to prevent an outbreak of mad cow disease, reports Reuters.

The rural coordination union dismissed British government assurances that the country's beef was safe to eat and said the ban should apply equally to live animals and carcases.

Above all do not have any scruples towards the English because if they were in our place you can be sure they would have already shut their frontiers, the union said in an open letter released on Monday to French Farm Minister Philippe Vasseur.



The 31st Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Eastern Housing Ltd, the 1st after its conversion into a Public Limited Company was held on December 6. It was presided over by Manzurul Islam, son of late Al-Haj Jahurul Islam. The meeting commenced with the recitation from the holy Quran and a monajat was offered for the salvation of the departed soul of Jahurul Islam, Founder Chairman of the Company.

17,215 hectares of land brought under rabi crop farming

JHALAKATHI, Dec 12: A total of 17,215 hectares of land have been brought under rabi crops cultivation in the current season, fixing the target of production at 44,307 metric tons in the four thanas of the district, reports UNB.

Local Agriculture Extension Department sources said, Boro paddy will be cultivated on 5300 hectares of land, potato on 150 hectares, sweet potato on 300 hectares, vegetable on 400 hectares, different pulses on 2875 hectares, wheat on 20 hectares and mustard on 3,220 hectares.

The department has taken measures to distribute different agri-inputs including quality seeds, fertilizers and pesticides among the farmers at fair prices to make the scheme a success.

Besides, local branches of different banks including Krishi Bank will disburse agricultural loans to help the farmers.

Germany, Italy agree to hold talks on Euro currency in '98

BONN, Dec 12: Germany and Italy agree that the European Union must decide in early 1998 which members qualify to take part in a single currency, Italian Prime Minister Lamberto Dini said during a visit to Bonn yesterday, reports Reuters.

"We think that the date of spring 1998 is the time when a decision has to be taken," he told reporters after meeting Chancellor Helmut Kohl. "We have no intention to delay and no intention to procrastinate," he added.

The single currency is supposed to start in 1999 for members who can meet strict financial criteria on budget deficits, inflation and debt levels.

Dini dismissed suggestions that Germany and France, key partners whose ties drive the 15-nation bloc, had reached any other conclusion when Kohl and French President Jacques Chirac met last week in the German Spa town of Baden-Baden.

"Information that has been provided about that meeting does not indicate at all a change of attitude in this regard either from Germany or from France," Dini said.

The technocrat prime minister said the EU's inter-governmental conference on institutional reforms would start in Turin on March 29 and 30 and run until June 1997.

Dini, installed to pick up the pieces after Silvio Berlusconi's conservative coalition collapsed, gave no clues about his personal future in Italian politics.

Workshop on jobless youths held

JHALAKATHI, Dec 12: A three-day workshop on self-employment for unemployed educated youths concluded at Nalchhiti thana headquarters here on Monday, reports UNB.

A total of 50 unemployed youths took part in the workshop, organised by Directorate of Youth Development of the government, which imparted training on poultry, dairy farm, pisciculture, animal husbandry and cottage industry.

It has been decided that the trained youths will be provided with loans and other facilities to start self-reliance schemes as per their choice.

Increased trade between ASEAN, EU offers benefit to both sides

BANGKOK, Dec 12: Increased trade between Europe and Southeast Asia offers more jobs and increased prosperity to both sides, senior officials from the regions said yesterday, reports Reuters.

In a joint news conference after meeting economic ministers of the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN), European Commission Vice President Leon Brittan said more European exports would help cut European unemployment while greater investment in Asia would raise living standards here.

"I believe that opening our doors to trade is not a favour to others, but a favour to ourselves as it helps our own economy. That is true for us all," Brittan said.

Thai Deputy Prime Minister Amnuay Virawan agreed: "it will be mutually beneficial to us to promote inter-regional trade and investment."

Some Asian officials also see closer ties with Europe as a way of balancing the perceived domination of the Asia-Pacific region by the United States.

"It's always desirable to have a counter weight, to have a balance in our relationships whether on a global basis or on a regional basis," Amnuay said.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Britain, who is responsible for trade and commercial matters at the European Union's (EU) executive arm, said Monday's meeting with ASEAN, the first of its kind, marked a significant step towards free trade between the regions and in the world.

"It has set the stage for the further liberalisation of trade in Europe... and in Asia," he said.

"We believe it is necessary to open trade on a world level. We have cleared the air and we have cleared the decks for action."

Emirates' campus network installed in Dubai

The Emirates Group has completed the installation of the Middle East's first fully integrated campus network for airport operations at the Dubai International Airport and commenced a process of linking the entire Group's departments in Dubai and overseas stations to a 'live' communications system, says a press release.

The project, undertaken by the Group's Information Technology and Engineering departments, has its basis in a fibre optic cable network capable of split second transmission of information to a multitude of recipients, resulting in much faster and more accurate delivery of the various corporate processes.

The airport campus network is routed through the airport complex, including the Emirates Operations Centre, Emirates Technical Centre and the Dubai Cargo Village. The entire project, from inception to implementation, was completed in 12 months.

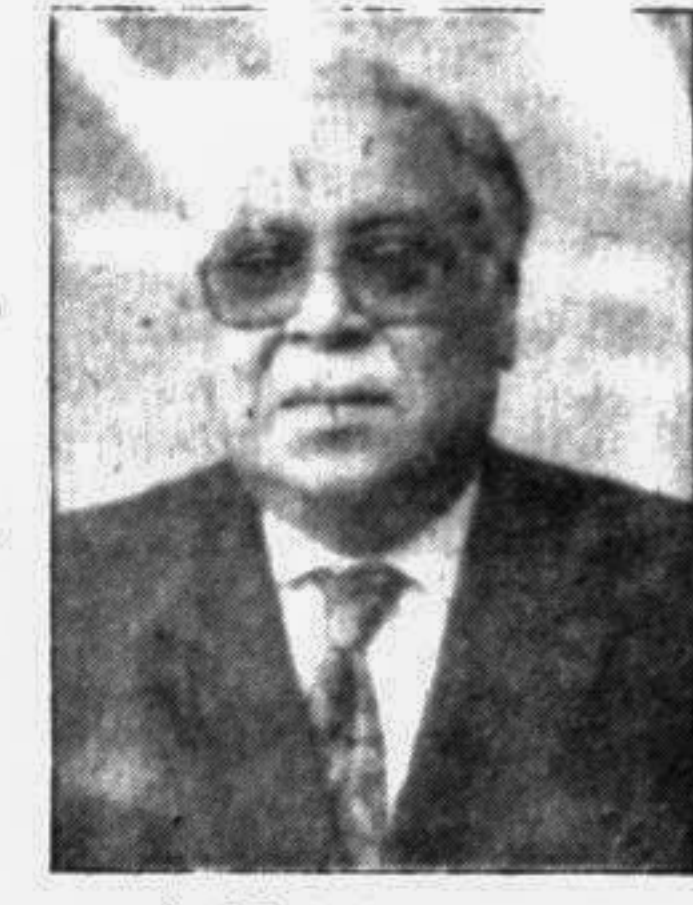
By the end of 1996, most of Emirates' overseas stations will also be linked.

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A M Agha Yusuf



Bangladesh Bank Governor Khorshed Alam seen addressing the 22nd Annual General Meeting of the Institute of Bankers, Bangladesh, at the auditorium of Pubali Bank Limited in the city on Tuesday.

Transparency, accountability, public expenditure management in Bangladesh

Anu Mahmud

The Finance Minister has criticised the government functionaries and public leaders for recklessly wasting public money and also mentioned that — "I feel pity for this poor country in which public money is misused so lavishly. Even parliament members don't pay telephone bills. I am unhappy during my eight years in the Finance Ministry and ten years in the government.... All the talks of democracy and accountability mostly remained unreal because the officials and politicians are not always honest about it. The mere setting up of a Parliament or an election mandate does not necessarily mean the government is fully democratic and accountable. If the attitude of the people in the government is not democratic, there will hardly be any democracy and accountability."

He also urged the political leaders and government functionaries to enforce accountability in the use of public money to strengthen the

country's transition to a democratic culture. Public money was misused in the country regularly because government functionaries were not committed to 'effective, efficient and economic' management of public funds. There is a lack of rational and scientific method of auditing and accounting in our country. It was creating the scope for corruption and misuse of hard-earned public funds. The country is currently using an out-dated accounting system while in other parts of the world, the method of book-keeping is constantly changing. The mere presence of a democratic system is not enough. It is a must to change our attitude, practice and functional orientation to attain it and also by creating a correct and proper atmosphere for promoting accountability in the use of public money and expenditure audits.

In our relatively poor resource-based country, we must be responsive to the people's need and the na-

tion's expenditure priorities must be sorted out accordingly. Accountability meant discipline and the attitude that — "Public money is nobody's money". But by audit and accounts functionaries a widespread corruption and the abuse of power is exercised. The extra budgetary expenditures were routinely made by ministries. It has virtually made the budget exercise of the government meaningless. Accountability means keeping expenditures within set limits of the budget passed by parliament. The current audit and accounting system paid too much attention to small things while potential issues were ignored.

Since the liberation of Bangladesh, the authorities have talked about accountability of the officials dealing with public expenditures. There is substantial provision regarding this in the constitution, which inter alia, incorporated the provision of an office of the Comptroller and Auditor General and also

created a constitutional position for the same office. The intention behind this is the creating of institutions through which day-to-day expenditure on public accounts were to be recorded and monitored.

Accountability is fundamental to good governance in modern societies. Public accountability consists of the 'sum total of the constitutional, statutory, administrative and precedents and the established practices by means of which public officials may be held accountable for their official action (LD White). Accountability in public expenditure management is supposed to be achieved through statutory audit and parliamentary control and supervision. The need for an effectiveness of these control mechanisms - audit and parliamentary supervision — are determined to a great extent by the adequacy or otherwise of the system of public expenditure management that prevails in a country.

Though the demand on

public expenditure has expended many times in diversity and volume since early British rule, the system governing this has not changed much in our country. "Weak control over expenditure flows, weakness in recording and reporting of expenditure, absence or inadequacy of information regarding public sector enterprises in the national budget, absence of procedures and information in the budget and accounting data which would enable assessment of public expenditure" are some of the weakness of the system of public expenditure in Bangladesh.

Accountability is basically an executive responsibility and therefore the executive authorities in all countries are required to prescribe detailed mechanisms and procedures to ensure accountability. Accountability in public expenditures management in modern days extends far beyond the proscribed and regulatory aspects of expenditures. It now cov-

ers efficiency and effectiveness aspects which require existence of performance criteria and standards as benchmark for performance evaluation. We have not yet been able to develop such system in a perfect manner for ensuring executive accountability across the entire public administration.

The question of accountability remains largely unattended and thousands of cases of audit objections remain pending with different ministries, departments and subordinate offices. The report on such cases has also been placed before the Public Accounts Committee of the Jatiya Sangsad, which noted with concern the prevailing malaise. Many of the lapses arose from undue exercise of authority, mainly by political elements including members of the cabinet, who insist on getting the job done and paying the dues to all. In the process, they seem to bypass the rules or procedures and keep the job of accounts office in a mess.

The system of accounting introduced during the colonial rule may have become outdated. More input may be needed to establish as to who was responsible for a given expenditure and how the same person may have failed to update the recording or paying more or less for a given job done. The task is assigned to the Principal Accounts Officer, who is the administrative head of a ministry. In practice, the routine recording is done by subordinate staff, without much of direct supervision. Some element of lapses sometimes creep into the system of accounting.

According to the provision of law, the work is delegated to his subordinates. In practice, the same person, being head of a ministry, has to do many more jobs and attend many meetings that are held from time to time. Thus, the head often remains busy with other jobs and fails to ensure accounting of public expenditures. His dependence on others is often misused by

motivated people and thereby creates cases of uncertainties, recording expenditures and assigning the same to relevant officials. Beyond this, the sheer volume of expenditure has gone up so much that it cannot be kept under constant watch. The involvement of contractors has made the job all the more difficult.

The subject is drawing attention of all concerned, also due to the involvement of multilateral agencies in financing large number of so-called development projects. They have often insisted on proper accounting and feedback on use of resources obtained from them. They have also to report back to the public accounts authorities of participating countries and that to the satisfaction of all concern. The cry for clarity in public expenditure has drawn attention of all including parties in power and those in opposition.

(The writer is an occasional contributor to this newspaper.) (To be continued)