

Nepalese govt approves \$185m private sector water project

KATHMANDU, Dec 23: The Nepalese government has approved a \$185 million US dollar private sector project to ease an acute drinking water shortage in the Himalayan kingdom's Kathmandu valley, officials said yesterday, reports Reuters.

The government will soon create a public limited company called Melamchi Water Ltd and float the shares. Nepali Minister for Housing and Physical Planning, Balam Ghartimagar, said. It hoped the project would be fully paid by the private sector but expected investors may want some government contribution as a guarantee, officials said. The Kathmandu valley is a fast growing population centre as people migrate to the capital from the hills in search of jobs.

Burgeoning suburban communities are straining limited drinking water and electricity supplies, they said. 857,000 people in Kathmandu face acute water shortages, with the daily demand of 140 million litres outstripping supply of only 110 million. In the dry season the supply shrinks to almost 55 million litres. Many residents are forced to buy water from private tankers for basic irrigation, cooking and bathing. There is no alternative for us to Melamchi, Ghartimagar said.

The water project involved construction of a 27-km (12-mile) tunnel to divert the Melamchi river into the Kathmandu valley, official said. The state-owned Nepal drinking water corp would purchase water from the company, while the Nepal electricity authority would buy electricity generated by the facility. The project was expected to meet area water needs until 2010 when the second phase would need to be undertaken, they said.

India's external debt stands at \$100 b

NEW DELHI, Dec 23: India's external debt increased by more than six billion dollars during the last fiscal year to nearly 100 billion dollars, a government report said today, reports AFP. In a 23-page report, the Finance Ministry said the current debt position was a "cause of concern" but dismissed fears that the country was in danger of falling into a debt trap. The report presented to parliament said India's external debt was more than 99 billion dollars at the end of March 1995, an increase of 6.34 billion dollars from a year earlier largely due to exchange rate fluctuations. It said a total of 94.78 billion dollars was long-term debt. The report said if the exchange rate between the US dollar and other currencies had remained unchanged, India's external debt would have increased by only 794 million dollars. The strategy for external debt management followed by the government would ensure that India's debt obligations do not exceed "reasonable levels," it said. "In a country where there is a gap between domestic savings and investment and where foreign direct investments are still not significant some reliance on external

borrowings restrained to a prudent limit is unavoidable," it added. External debt as a percentage of gross domestic product amounted to 34.2 per cent as of March 1995 with total debt service payments at 10.94 billion dollars. India's external debt, which was about 20 billion dollars in 1980, shot up to 82 billion dollars by 1990. The current figure of over 99 billion dollars ranks India as the third highest debtor in the developing world.

Romanian commerce minister resigns

BUCHAREST, Romania, Dec 23: The Romanian minister of commerce resigned Friday following media allegations that he may have used his influence to favour his own businesses, reports AP.

The government has not confirmed or denied the allegations against Petru Crisan in the independent newspaper Adevarul and other media.

Crisan, 56, who was appointed minister last May, was reportedly a manager and shareholder of private and state-owned companies at the same time.

His successor will be appointed next month, the government said in a statement.

Dhaka Stock Prices Index falls

The Dhaka Stock Exchange All Share Price Index marked a slight fall on Saturday. The index fell by 0.30 point from 840.60 to 840.30. The transaction in volume dropped by 47 per cent to 144510 from 274516 and the value declined by 48 per cent from Tk 5.17 cr to Tk 2.70 cr. The market capital dropped to Tk 5385.92 from Tk 5387.84 cr. The leading gainer of the day was Amman Sea Food with a rise of Tk 105.00 per share while the losers were led by Bangladesh Leaf Tobacco suffering a fall of Tk 21.15 per share. The volume leaders of the day were: Beximco Pharma (25560), Apex Weaving (25500) and Pubali Insurance (10550).

Trading at a glance

Table with columns: Company Name, Change (per share), Number of shares traded. Lists various companies like Mithun Corporation, Mita Textiles, etc.

US temporary spending bill passed

WASHINGTON, Dec 23: Congress passed and sent President Clinton a temporary spending bill yesterday that will permit 3.3 million veterans and 8 million poor children to get their regular benefits, reports Reuters.

After the measure passed by unanimous consent, Senate majority leader Bob Dole also said he was looking for a way to send the 260,000 out-of-work government employees back to work.

He said that the federal employees wanted to work.



Dr ATM Shamsul Huda, Secretary, Banking Division, Ministry of Finance, speaking as chief guest at a two-day workshop on "Foreign trade and foreign exchange" organized by Standard Chartered Bank for its corporate and institutional banking clients at a city hotel yesterday.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh External Publicity Section Ministry of Information. Tender Notice. Comparative tenders are invited for the following items on emergency basis of External Publicity Section.

Palestinian Authority plans to create own currency. JERUSALEM, Dec 23: The autonomous Palestinian Authority plans to create its own currency within two years for use in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a spokesman said Thursday, reports AFP.

Slow population growth worries Japan. TOKYO, Dec 23: Japan's population increased only 1.6 per cent over the five years ending in October, continuing 20 years of record-low growth, reports AP.

Bangladesh Small & Cottage Industries Corporation. Re-Tender Notice for Printing Work. Tenders are re-invited from the enlisted presses of BSCIC for offset printing of the Annual Report of 1993-94.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Sub: 2nd Show Cause Notice. Whereas, you Mr Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman, Administrative Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka was accused under Clause 3(B) of Govt Employees (Special Order) Ordinance, 1977.

Shipping Intelligence CHITTAGONG PORT. Berth Position and Performance of Vessels as on 23.12.95. Table with columns: Berth No, Name of Vessels, Cargo, I. Port, Local Agent, Date of Arrival, Leaving.

Metalex Corporation Limited (BSEC) International Re-Tender Notice. International sealed tenders are hereby invited by Metalex Corporation Ltd (BSEC), 99, Tongi Industrial Area, Tongi, Gazipur for Import of the following Raw Materials.