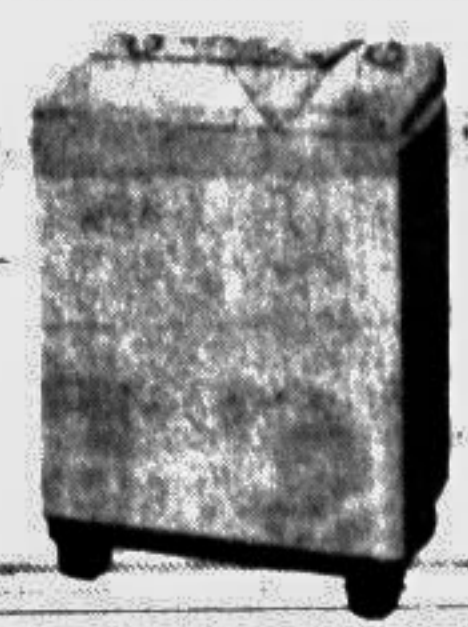



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The Daily Star BUSINESS



HYUNDAI
CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

DHAKA THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1996

EU investigates force labour in Myanmar

BRUSSELS, Jan 17: The European Commission said yesterday it had begun an investigation into allegations that forced labour is being used in Myanmar, reports Reuters.

If the investigation upholds complaints from the European Trade Union Confederation and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the commission can propose withdrawing special trade preferences from Myanmar, a spokesman said.

The complaints allege that forced labour is being used in the country by the Burmese authorities or with their express approval.

"These practices include forced civilian portering to assist military offensives, military labour, major development and infrastructure projects, tourist development projects and army-owned commercial ventures," the commission said in a statement.

It added that the allegations had been supported by witnesses.

A spokesman said it was the first time the commission had undertaken such an investigation.

Lottery changes their lot

PERTH, AUSTRALIA, Jan 17: A retired bus driver and his wife have won 1.25 million Australian dollars (930,000 US dollar) in a national lottery draw, just six months after collecting 700,000 dollars in the game, reports AFP.

And another lucky punter, also from western Australia state, picked up nearly 600,000 dollars in the same draw last month after winning 280,000 dollars in 1994.

The millionaire couple, who were identified only as Alec and Vivienne, told the west Australian newspaper they were in London enjoying their first win when they discovered they would come home to another massive cheque after the December draw.

They defied odds of about 64 million to one to win the first division poll twice in the national lotto game.

The big winners said their first win came with numbers from their five children's birthdays but losing bingo numbers proved luckier for their latest win.

The couple said they had to work hard to survive before their luck burned.

Alec, 61, a bus driver for 18 years, quit on the spot with the first win but asked for his job back the next day, before retiring against late last year.

He now says he will probably do some sort of volunteer work: "You have to find something to do between getting up and going back to bed."

Peru exports 1.28 m quintals coffee in '95

LIMA, Jan 17: Peru exported 1.28 million quintals (46 kilograms each) of coffee last year for total sales of 200 million dollars, said Walter Alvarez, President of the National Coffee Group yesterday, reports AFP.

Production of the year was 1.6 million quintals, with 2.5 million dollars worth of sales domestically, said Alvarez.

Revenues are expected to decline again this year because of the rainy season has been late in starting and because of a decline in the world price of coffee.

Tea prices, demand up at auction in Chittagong

Weekly tea auction in Chittagong on Tuesday witnessed better prices as demand for most types strengthened excepting the bolder broken which eased by up to a Taka, market sources said.

According to Unity Brokers Ltd's report, 20,640 packages leaf along with 187 packages of supplement were on offer. Withdrawals were less and stood 15 per cent as against 23 per cent last week.

"Demand was better than last week with improved levels except for the bold broken which eased. These, however, improved towards close," it added.

It forecast with the election ahead, the month of Ramadan might not have any

By Staff Correspondent

adverse effect on tea prices. The major buyers on Tuesday's sale were: Poland, Sudan and Jordan. Pakistan operated with improved strength. Local traders were active for their types, market operators said.

The next sale is expected to be held on January 23 at 8:30 am with total offerings of 17,000 packages leaf and 3,000 packages dust.

Performance of different categories in the sale follows:

CTC: Bolder broken were easier by about a taka selling between Tk 43.50 and Tk 44.50. Towards close, these prices had improved to Tk 45.50. Medium and small broken were fully firm to often dearer by about a taka, particularly the well made grainy types. Selective best

lines sold between Tk 52.50 and Tk 55.10.

Most fannings were about a firm market with the better sorts occasionally gaining on last. Prices, however, eased towards close. Selective best lines sold between Tk 53.00 and Tk 57.00.

GREEN TEA: A total of 270 packages were on offer. YH's sold between Tk 41.00 and Tk 42.00 whilst the Hysons varied between Tk 41.00 and Tk 49.50 following quality. There were some withdrawals.

DUST: A total of 3,334 packages along with 144 packages of supplement were on offer. Strong demand led to generally firm to dearer rates. Powdery sorts often inclined.

No increase in prices of essentials during Ramadan'

The representatives of different chambers of commerce and industries and leading businessmen yesterday gave assurance of keeping prices of essentials within the purchasing capacity of the commonman during the holy month of Ramadan, reports BSS.

They gave the assurance at a meeting with Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam in the chair to review the supply and price situation of essentials.

The meeting was informed that there was no possibility of the price hike of consumer goods like rice, pulses, edible oil, pepper, onion, sugar and ginger due to sufficient stock.

The meeting was told that the Food Directorate would sell rice under open market sale (OMS) in the nine flood-affected northern districts of the country and the four divisional cities of Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Khulna from the beginning of Ramadan. The price has been fixed at Taka 10.50 per kg at district towns and Taka 11.00 per kg at the divisional cities.

The Commerce Minister said under the open market policy, import and supply of goods was done by the private sector.

Co-ordinated efforts of both the public and the private sectors were essential to check any unreasonable price hike, he said and sought the cooperation of all quarters to check any attempt to raise the prices.

The meeting was attended by Ali Hussain, president, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce, Samson H Chowdhury, president, Dhaka Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, a Gafur, general secretary, Bangladesh Bus and Truck Owners' Association, MA Rouf Chowdhury, co-chairman, Vegetable Oil Refiners' Association, Hajj Md Shah Jalal, general secretary, Badamtoli-Babu Bazar Rice Stockist Samity, Borhan Ahmed, president, Consumers' Association of Bangladesh and Jamsed Ahmed Khandker, adviser, Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity.

OECD reclassifies Singapore as more advanced dev country

SINGAPORE, Jan 17: Singapore said yesterday that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had reclassified it as a more advanced developing country, not a developed country as earlier announced, reports AFP.

Trade and Industry Minister Yeoh Koon Seng said that the Paris-based OECD gave the new definition following a clarification sought by Singapore, which felt that it was not mature enough to carry the developed-nation tag.

Word of the classification came as a surprise following weeks of official speeches lauding the city-state's coming of age, and the setting of a new goal: joining the first league of developed nations by 2000.

Yeoh said Singapore would need another five to 10 years to achieve an overall structure that was more in line with that of a developed

country.

We are not truly a developed country yet, he told the television corporation of Singapore.

If we are a developed country, we will be the first to shout hurra but the point is that we are not there yet, he added.

The new definition was a more accurate description, Yeoh said, adding that Singapore still lacked the depth and breadth of a developed economy although it had a fairly high per capita gross domestic product (GDP).

Singapore's per capita GDP has reached 24,000 US dollars, higher than those of Britain and other European nations.

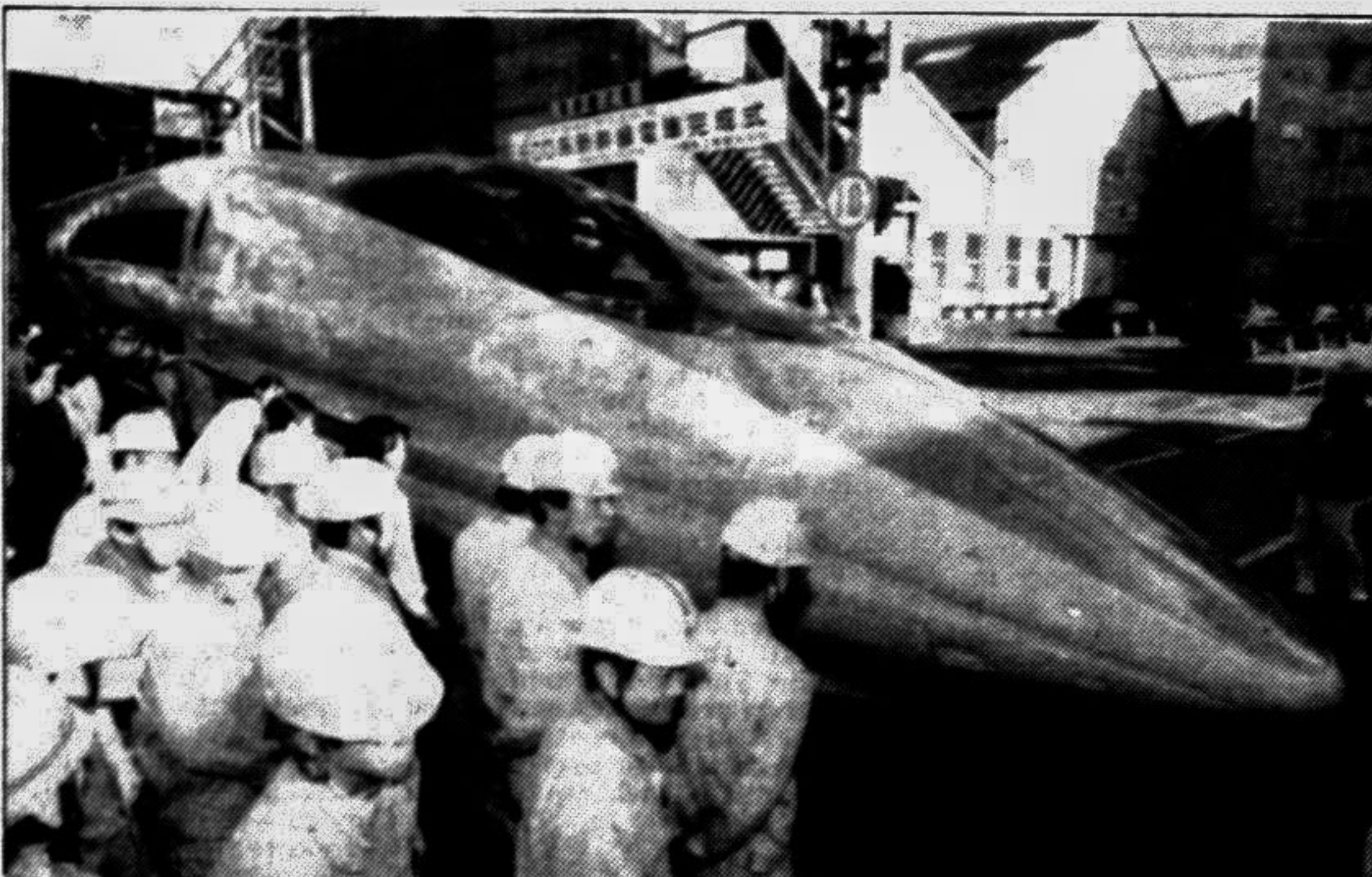
The OECD decided in May that Singapore would lose its status as a developing country from January 1, 1996, earlier than fellow dragons Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said last month that Singapore was at par with the other developed nations in terms of per capita income only.

We have yet to achieve an economic structure resembling that of a developed country. We also lag in terms of educational level, skills and the capability to generate ideas and technology, Goh said.

Goh said that Singapore could also face increasing competition from the low-cost, rapidly industrialising economies like Malaysia and Thailand.

Yeoh said Tuesday that by the end of 1998, Singapore would no longer qualify for reduced tariffs under the General System of Preference (GSP) scheme for exports to Europe.



Workers gather around the newly completed model of Shinkansen bullet train at a factory in Kobe, western Japan recently. — AFP/UNB photo

Vietnam's '95 trade figures reveal \$ 2.2b deficit

HANOI, Jan 17: Vietnam, which regularly reports a glowing picture of economic success, revised its 1995 trade figures yesterday to reveal its biggest ever peacetime deficit of 2.2 billion dollars, reports Reuters.

Figures issued by the general statistics office in Hanoi showed Vietnam exported 5.3 billion dollar worth of goods last year, but imported 7.5 billion dollars, resulting in a deficit 400 million bigger than officially anticipated.

A government official said the previous biggest deficit of 1.7 billion dollars was recorded in 1988.

Cement imports were up 227 per cent at 1.3 million tonnes, while clinker imports were up 146.8 per cent at 1.1 million tonnes, the figures showed.

Imports of oil products were up by 14.8 per cent at 5.2 million tonnes against exports of crude at 7.7 million tonnes.

Demand for what local surveys have shown is Viet-

nam's most popular consumer item — the motorbike — resulted in imports rising by 23.4 per cent to 350,000 units against 284,600 in 1994.

Vietnam's Soviet-style economy lifted off in 1990 after the introduction of capitalist-style reforms and an open-door-policy a few years earlier.

Hanoi is due to hold an important Communist Party meeting this June at which it is expected to reaffirm its commitment to the reform policy and call for efforts to further increase industrialisation over the next five years.

But the country's leadership is also aware the successes of the reforms have not come without a price.

Vietnam has indicated it will tighten security controls in the coming months and has launched a blitz against a range of social evils seen as the downside to economic progress.

Impressive levels of growth — 9.5 per cent in

1995 — and foreign investment pledges exceeding 18 billion dollars also belie some of the difficulties.

Inflation in 1995 stood at 12.7 per cent, according to government figures released in December.

But while the figure was lower than Hanoi's worst-case forecasts, economists say keeping it under control still remains a major battle.

A fiscal deficit which stood at 10.3 per cent of gross domestic product in 1989 but was reduced to 1.8 per cent of GDP in 1992 also came largely as a result of cuts in capital expenditure, hitting needs for improvement in revenues.

A government official told Reuters the 1995 deficit was expected to be below 3.0 per cent.

Civil servant and government workers were told earlier this month they would not get their standard new year bonus, equivalent to losing a month's salary, because of a shortage of funds.

Allocations to fast-moving ADP projects increased

The government increased allocations to various fast-moving preferential ADP projects of tremendous public importance to the tune of Tk 270 crore, reports UNB.

The additional fund will be diverted from the slow-going projects, according to the decision of a high-level meeting held yesterday with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair.

An official announcement said the review meeting on the performance of the ministries and agencies executing the Annual Development Programme 1995-96 was held at the NEC Bhaban.

The projects where allocations have been enhanced are some power plant construction projects, Rural Maintenance Project (RMP), rural road and culvert construction project, thana linkroad construction projects, Dhaka water supply projects, Rupsa Bridge project, portable steel seed development project, and hill districts development project.

Reviewing the sector-wise rate of implementation of various ADP projects, the meeting expressed satisfaction at the overall performance.

State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, members of the Planning Commission and concerned secretaries attended the meeting.



Lock repairing and key making is the only job of Abdus Salam. Finding no other employment he thought this would ideally suit him earn the bread of life. His work place is opposite to the Court Building premises. A skilled hand in repairing foreign and local locks, Salam is now planning to go abroad in expectation of better earning. — Star photo by AKM Mohsin

Boeing, McDonnell halt exploratory merger talks

WASHINGTON, Jan 17: Boeing Co. and McDonnell Douglas Corp have halted their exploratory merger talks after failing to reach agreement on Monday, and who would hold the top jobs in the new giant, according to the Wall Street Journal yesterday, reports Xinhua.

The talks between Boeing, the world's largest commercial aircraft-producer and McDonnell Douglas Corp, which were first reported in mid-November, would produce what would have been a global leader in military and commercial aircraft production.

If Boeing — valued at about 27 billion US dollars — had taken over McDonnell Douglas — valued at about 10.2 billion dollars — the combined company was projected to have more than 37 billion dollars in sales and 185,000 employees.

The talks did not narrow gaps between the two giants because Boeing was unwilling to pay the 'big premium' sought by McDonnell Douglas executives, including the company's chief executive officer, Harry Stonecipher, reported the newspaper.

Missions abroad to function as BOI's field offices

The Bangladesh missions abroad will henceforth function as "field offices" of the Board of Investment (BOI) for promoting and mobilising foreign investment in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan stated this at a meeting with the officials of the BOI, Securities and Exchange Commission and different chambers of commerce of industry at the BOI office.

Sobhan stressed the need for some immediate institutional arrangements for attracting the Bangladeshis living abroad to invest their savings for economic development at home.

Different issues relating to the investment policies and allied matters were discussed at the meeting chaired by BOI Executive Chairman Dr Tawfiq-E-Elahi Chowdhury.

Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN Reaz Rahman, FBCCI President Salman F Rahman, Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan Rashed Ahmed, former ambassador to Germany Mahmud Ali, Bangladesh Ambassador to UAE Zia-U-Shams Chowdhury, Bangladesh Ambassador to USA Humayun Kabir and Ambassador designated to Russia Mostafa Faruque Mohammad participated in the discussion.

The BOI Chairman focussed on the programmes undertaken by the government for attracting foreign investors and made a graphic presentation of the present foreign investment position in Bangladesh.

The FBCCI President hoped that the joint efforts of the BOI, the Foreign Ministry and the chambers would yield positive results in attracting direct foreign investment in the country.

EU okays \$10m for research projects

BRUSSELS, Jan 17: The European Union said Tuesday it approved 110 million dollars (85 million European currency units) for research projects in agriculture, forestry and rural development, reports AP.

The money will go toward funding 44 research projects involving over 300 research institutes, universities and industrial companies from the 15 EU nations.

Budget '96 \$ 650m allocated for Israel's intelligence services

JERUSALEM, Jan 17: Shin Beth and Mossad, Israel's domestic and foreign intelligence services, will receive 650 million dollars under the government's 1996 budget, the daily Haaretz reported yesterday, reports AFP.

The newspaper said it calculated the secret budgets of the two agencies by studying the 1996 spending plan of Prime Minister Shimon Peres' office, which has authority over the intelligence services.

Ran Cohen, Chairman of the parliamentary oversight committee for the intelligence services declined to confirm or deny the Haaretz report, saying, "In this area, it is better to respect the law of silence."

Sunday the government for the first time acknowledged publicly the identity of the Shin Beth chief, Admiral Ami Ayalon, breaking with a tradition of secrecy enforced by military censors.

Ayalon was formally appointed to head the agency Sunday after its previous chief, now identified as Karmi Gilon, resigned over the November 4 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Efforts should be made for mobilisation of domestic resources

By Jerome Sarkar

Ever since the independence of Bangladesh, billions of dollars have poured into the country as donation. At the beginning, the objectives were to rehabilitate the war-torn country and mitigate the sufferings of the dislodged millions. Later, the international agencies and the national activists took up the task of alleviating the persistent poverty and jump started the development activities.

The external donations have always appeared as blessing particularly in the wake of natural calamities. For economic emancipation and development as it is always branded, foreign assistances are continuing to come in. However, one can effortlessly note that the sustainable progress boosted by the foreign donations is yet to claim proportionately significant results. The country is still languishing to feed the teeming poor majority.

In the light of the experiences, the economic and social experts have been stressing the need for mobilisation of domestic resources.

This has been contemplated to revolutionise the mental make-up of the countrymen to become self-reliant, support one another to stand on own feet, forgo a short-lived comforts to bring in sustainable development and to be creative and flourishing.

One large commercial company of high performance created a fund by deducting very negligible amounts proportionately from the monthly salaries of the employees through understanding for the staff recreation club. Initially the fund was utilised towards organising annual picnics, cricket matches, indoor games competitions etc. On request, once in a while, certain amounts were released towards urgent medical treatment of the staff abroad or members of the families of the staff. The poor staff was often provided relief after they had fallen victim to natural catastrophe. Such efforts are not very uncommon but this is nothing sustainable.

Conceptually the idea evolved that the people involved in poverty alleviation work should share the burden of the poor and identify and contribute to their sustainable development. However meagre, the efforts

Again, we have a class of local donors who are interested in putting their names in golden letters on the list of donors/sponsors alone without any concern for the proper utilisation of the fund. These donations are not often given at the cost of their luxury or comfort, or without personal benefits.

The spirit of sacrifice is absent. As a result, there is another group of people who through simple eye-washes divert funds thus collected for their personal gains.

Despite many a drawback, there has been efforts for mobilisation of internal resources. The spirit is gradually growing stronger. In this context, I wish to share with the readers a humble endeavour pursued by the employees of an NGO.

Conceptually the idea evolved that the people involved in poverty alleviation work should share the burden of the poor and identify and contribute to their sustainable development. However meagre, the efforts

should be made to initiate mobilisation of resources from internal sources aiming at eventual self-reliance.

Members of RDRS Staff working in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur regions for the poor and landless encounter daily the depressing poverty and substandard living condition of their customers. They endure a despairing vicious circle where lack of education and economic opportunity continue to deprive them of a decent living.

To arrive at a solution, the first realisation was that what is not possible individually, may be possible collectively. Next came the question, "Where to get the resources?" The noble idea occurred to collect financial contribution from the members of the RDRS family. All welcomed the idea widely and voluntarily and readily contributed to constitute a fund.

Subsequently, a policy was evolved to collect personal subscriptions from all members and the agreed amounts were put aside from

the monthly emoluments regularly. Thus the fund started growing from May 1991 and it took a shape within months and emerged as "Staff Voluntary Fund". Later on, it has been named "Swa-bolombon" meaning 'self-reliance'. Since then, all levels of staff members have been happily participating in building up the fund.

Within a few months, the fund had grown into a considerable figure and big enough to take up the small ventures by the end of 1991.

Development activists have always advocated that spread of education could help open the flood-gates to overcome the problems like poverty, under-development, injustice etc. Primary education is a pressing need of the poor in Bangladesh and more so in the working areas of the organisation. Thousands of children of the poor cannot attend school. They remain illiterate and disadvantaged.

With this in mind, it was unanimously decided to help the poor children get education.

The most needy areas were earmarked. Hearing the background of the initiative, the villagers became enthusiastic to share their mite in the venture. They constructed schools on their own with thatched roof and bamboo fences and thus 13 schools were built within a month and the Children Education Centres (CECs) were established in January 1992.

The children were very cheerful. Never before did they have the chance to attend school and they were all eager to come. Since girls are the most neglected, they were given preference in enrolment into these schools.

Subsequently, the CECs were named Shishu Niloy connoting 'home for the infants'. Each school is run by a Managing Committee formed by the local community who provides teaching materials and teachers are paid from the Swabolombon fund. The teachers are trained by the staff. They further receive regular advice and guidance.

At present 13 (thirteen) Shishu Nilays are supported by this programme. One Shishu Niloy obtained registration from the Government early this year. Over 2,000 children are enrolled in these private schools and the female learners always get preference. 39 Voluntary Teachers are running the Shishu Nilays, paid from the fund. As the fund grows over the passage of time, more activities are being contemplated.

Swabolombon also supported its poorest families of staff members for promotion of education on a temporary basis. It granted stipends to the meritorious students of the low-paid staff families, preferably girl students. The fund supported the promotion of female education from Class VI and up to SSC and onward. Each stipend sanctioned for one year at a time. 326 received stipends (Protiva Bikash) amounting Taka 1,00,305 up to end of 1994.

Swabolombon is a symbol of self-reliance. It is entirely

contributory and is managed by a democratically elected Managing Committee from among the RDRS staff members. It is gradually growing stronger and has a plan to expand its activities whenever fund and scope permits.

Through the Voluntary Fund, the staff members of the organisation demonstrate their own awareness and commitment to the poor. It started in a humble way and is still small in size but worthwhile. It is a pride of the employees. Members are being encouraged to enhance their contributions so that it can reach out to more needy people.

The Staff Voluntary Fund having established its own identity and role, is now taking initiative to get registration with the Government to strengthen its foundation further.

People are hopeful that such small efforts will grow in spirits and quantum and we shall have a Bangladesh of mutual co-operation and fraternity.