

Dhaka forms body on South Asian tourism project

National committee of the South Asian Integrated Tourism Human Resource Development Project (SA-ITHRDP) has been constituted for implementing local programmes, reports UNB.

Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation AKA Mubin has been elected Chairman and President of International Hotel Association of Bangladesh KM Hakim Ali Vice-President of the Bangladesh National Tourism Human Resource Development Committee (BNTHRDC).

A BPC press release said on Sunday a meeting on Saturday at the head office of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation adopted the constitution and elected the executives.

The SA-ITHRDP was launched in 1995 with the financial support from European Union with the objective of upgrading quality of human resources in tourism industry and thus providing better manpower service in a sustainable manner.

The meeting also agreed to launch Trainer Development Programme under which 600 people will be trained in Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Rajshahi.

Embezzlement of govt funds unearthed in Jamshedpur

JAMSHEDPUR, Jan 29: A multi-crore misappropriation of government funds by district animal husbandry and veterinary department was yesterday disclosed by the Deputy Commissioner of west Singhbhum district, Amit Khare at Chaibasa yesterday.

After the scam came to light, the district animal husbandry officer, the mobile veterinary officer and the assistant poultry officer — involved in the misappropriation of government fund were reported absconding while five other staff members were detained by the police for interrogation.

Khare told PTI that a enquiry has been ordered and several animal husbandry offices and firms involved in the incident were sealed yesterday.

Police and sales tax officials also conducted raids in the houses of the officials and seized false letter pads, bills and discriminatory documents.

Khare said that when the auditor general of Bihar demanded the monthly expenditure for the month of November and December, 1995. The district animal husbandry official produced a absurd figure of 10.12 crore dollars and 9.42 crore rupees for the month of November and December respectively. This led to a suspicion and the AG asked for the expenditure account from the month of April to December, 1995.

Meril lucky coupon draw held

Lucky coupon draw of Meril range of toiletries was held in front of Square Toiletries pavilion at the Dhaka International Trade Fair '96 at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar on Saturday evening, says a press release.

He held under the overall supervision of 'Jai Jai Din' authorities, model Sadia Islam Mou and Editor of 'Jai Jai Din' Shafiq Rehman picked the winners of the lucky coupon draw.

Executive Director of Square Toiletries Dr Ali Reza Qader Bakhsh, Senior Executives Sarwat Ahmed and Toufiq Ali, and senior officials of Export Promotion Bureau were present on the occasion.

The first prize: Square's 220 gram gold ornament went to Coupon No 69533, the second prize of 100cc Suzuki motorcycle to Coupon No 16910, third prize of 21-inch Sony colour television to Coupon No 67528, fourth prize of Singer refrigerator to Coupon No 65917, and fifth prize of Sony Deck Set to Coupon No 68311.

BKB disburses Tk 12 cr loan in Comilla

COMILLA, Jan 29: Bangladesh Krishibank disbursed Tk 12 crore 22 lakh as loan in Comilla district during the last six months, reports BSS.

According to bank sources 6439 farmers of this district were benefitted by the disbursement of the loan. The bank disbursed the loan through its 33 branches in 12 thanas of the district. It also realised outstanding loan of Tk 8 crore 64 lakh from 4801 farmers during the period.

The bank has allocated Tk 22 crore 51 lakh for distribution as loan in the district.

Minister comments on fertiliser distribution

Donor-prescribed system totally unaccountable

ASHUGANJ, Jan 29: The state minister for industries yesterday argued that the old system of fertiliser distribution was scrapped because it was totally an "unaccountable" mechanism, reports UNB.

"Such a free and unaccountable system cannot be continued," Lutfur Rahman Khan said, referring to the donor-prescribed distribution system under which the country faced a widespread crisis of the soil nutrient last year.

Talking to a group of reporters during a visit to the Zia Fertiliser Factory at Ashuganj in Brahmanbaria, Khan said his ministry, after the crisis, tried to trace the huge amount of fertiliser traded by traders, but failed in many cases.

He said the government had to evolve a new distribution system—the recently introduced dealership system—fixing up a minimum level of accountability.

"We have already seen good signs ... the price of fertiliser at least remains within the tolerable level," the state minister said. Prices rose in some areas of North Bengal recently, but came down after government intervention, he added.

The government backed out from a free distribution system of fertiliser and appointed officials for distribution after a crisis cropped up

during IRRI-Boro peak season of February-March period last year.

The distribution system based on "first come first served" was introduced in 1989, taking away the distribution responsibility from the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) to privatise the distribution mechanism.

Authorities introduced a dealership system controlled by the agriculture and industries ministries this month and appointed 2,226 dealers throughout the country for the distribution of fertiliser to avert any crisis.

"We have taken the joint responsibilities because, as producer of fertiliser, we think we should have the responsibility of marketing," said the state minister.

Asked if they have any plan to fix a maximum retail price of fertiliser, Khan said they are thinking in that line. But it would require additional logistic support to evolve a new control mechanism, he added.

Informing that his ministry has been monitoring closely the prices of fertiliser in different areas, the state minister claimed that fertiliser prices remained within the range of Tk 220 to Tk 250 a bag of 50 kilogram against ex-factory rate of Tk 186.25.

He dismissed a possible reason of fertiliser in the current IRRI-Boro peak season.

saying they have enough stocks and exports remain stopped while all the six fertiliser factories are in full swing production.

"We hope there will be no crisis of fertiliser during this season according to the agronomic demand," he said.

Managing Director of the Zia Fertiliser Factory Ali Afzal Khan said his factory produced 314,869 metric tons of urea fertiliser upto January 26 from July 1, 1995 and supplied 306,354 tons during the period.

He expected a total production of 523,000 tons against the target of 505,000 tons fixed by the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) for 1995-96 fiscal.

All the six factories have produced 1,225,693 tons from July 1995 to January 26 this year against 1,181,733 tons during the same period of last year, showing an increase of 34,960 tons.

Supply during the period was 1,160,156 tons against the requirement projected by the Agriculture Ministry of 1,110,000 tons during the period.

Stock in the factories is 106,026 tons while the buffer stocks are 95,759 tons.

BCIC Chairman AIM Nazmul Alam and senior officials of the Industries Ministry, BCIC and Zia Fertiliser Factory were present during the briefing.

He attended a seminar on "Farm Credit" in Tokyo in 1987.

Japan departs 3427 foreigners in Nov, Dec

TOKYO, Jan 29: The Japanese justice ministry deported 3,427 foreigners in November and December last year, nearly 90 per cent of whom were working illegally in Japan, Kyodo news service said Monday, reports AFP.

South Koreans constituted the largest single group at 745 followed by Philippine nationals 535, and Thais 427.

The deportees were 2,144 men and 1,283 women.

New MD of RAKUB

 Md. Yesin Ali has recently taken over the current charge of the office of the Managing Director of Rajshahi Bank, says a press release.

Prior to this assignment, he was working as General Manager (Operation) of the same bank.

Ali is a professional banker and started his career with erstwhile Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan as Manager Grade-II.

During his last 25 years of banking service, he held the charge of different departments of head office of both BRB and RAKUB.

He visited Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia for obtaining higher professional training.

He attended a seminar on "Farm Credit" in Tokyo in 1987.

The sticky liquid is now being loaded in "Bangla Kiron" of the Shipping Corporation at port Abbas in Iran.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandar Mosharraf Hossain told

Japan keen to boost trade ties with Bangladesh

Japan has expressed its keen interest in further developing the bilateral trade with Bangladesh, an official handout said on Sunday, reports BSS.

The Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yoshikazu Anko said this during a meeting with Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam at the latter's office.

The Commerce Minister mentioned the multi-faceted assistance of Japan in the economic development of Bangladesh and expressed the hope that bilateral cooperation will be further expanded following many a step including reforms initiated by the Bangladesh government.

Ship with bitumen emulsion from Iran due soon

A ship carrying 70,000 tons of bitumen emulsion from Iran is due to reach Bangladesh shortly to meet the growing demand of the road-construction material, according to UNB.

The petroleum byproduct is being imported from Iran under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the two countries during President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's visit to Dhaka last October.

The sticky liquid is now being loaded in "Bangla Kiron" of the Shipping Corporation at port Abbas in Iran.

A joint committee, comprising officials of the two countries, formed to negotiate on the planned refinery, had a meeting here recently when the Iranian Deputy Minister visited Dhaka.

Janata Bank achieves rural credit, recovery target in '95

Janata Bank has successfully achieved its target for rural credit disbursement and loan recovery in 1995, says a bank press release.

The bank has disbursed Tk 136 crore as rural credit which is 126 per cent of the target. Similarly, Tk 105 crore has been disbursed against the loan recovery target of Tk 100 crore.

In addition to crop production loan the other sectors where Janata Bank gave substantial amount of loan under its rural credit programme are agriculture-based projects and multipurpose SFDP projects for self-employment.

Till now Tk 35 crore have been sanctioned for a total of 164 dairy farms, poultry farms and fish hatcheries the release added.

Furthermore, 52 such projects are under consideration. Tk 43 crore have been disbursed — for poverty alleviation through self-employment. Loan disbursement under the above-mentioned projects has created employment opportunities for about three lakh people.

StanChart one of largest forex dealers in Asia, Pacific

Standard Chartered Bank (StanChart) is one of the largest foreign exchange franchisees in the Asia-Pacific region.

This has been cited in a recent independent survey by Greenwich associates, says a StanChart press release here yesterday.

Specifically, a higher proportion of its customers classify the bank as a "very important" or "Top 3" dealer than any other. Top 3 is the key here as the typical customer executes 75 per cent of its business with just three dealers.

In its first comprehensive survey of Asia, Greenwich conducted 243 interviews with foreign exchange customers from 11 countries in Asia-Pacific, namely Australia, New Zealand, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea, and came up with some very encouraging results for StanChart.

StanChart ranks as the largest/second largest foreign exchange dealer in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand.

New BB economic adviser

 Faruquddin Ahmed, General Manager (Research) of Bangladesh Bank has been promoted to the post of Economic Adviser of the Bank, says a BB press release.

Ahmed joined as an officer in the Research Department of the State Bank of Pakistan in 1963. Since then he has held many important positions including that of Faculty Member in the Bankers' Staff College at Karachi and Bankers' Training Institute, Dhaka.

He attended the IMF course on Financial Programming and Policy in Washington in 1993. Besides, he attended a number of official meetings, seminars in different countries including USA, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

BIBM course on frauds in banks concludes

A three-week training course titled "Frauds, Forgeries and Malpractices in Banks and Financial Institutions," conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) concluded yesterday, says a press release.

The course was designed to impart exposure to the participants with the nature and causes of frauds, forgeries and malpractices in banks and financial institutions and to develop their knowledge and skills in preventing such incidents.

A H M Nurul Islam Choudhury, Director General of BIBM, presided over the concluding session of the course and gave away certificates to the participants.

A total of 33 participants from banks, government commercial audit department and Bangladesh police department participated in the course.

Speaking on the occasion, Choudhury underscored the importance of preventing possibilities of frauds, forgeries and malpractices for developing a sound and efficient banking and financial system in the country.

Trade minister addresses symposium

Economic ties with other states will boost Myanmar's economy

YANGON, Jan 29: Myanmar's Trade Minister Tun Kyi said today that economic cooperation with other nations would not only boost his country's economy but would also promote democracy, reports AFP.

Addressing a symposium in fostering interdependency with neighbouring countries and Japan, Lieutenant General Tun Kyi said Myanmar had managed to achieve an average annual growth rate of 7.5 per cent with assistance from only a few friendly countries.

"If we could get financial and technical cooperation substantially from abroad, I firmly believe that the economy of Myanmar would be skyrocketed within a few years time," he said.

Myanmar is the official name of Burma, preferred by the ruling junta, known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

He added that the junta did not intend to hold power

indefinitely and that once a new constitution had been promulgated, a constitutional government will emerge to lead the country.

He made no mention of elections, or of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi or of her National League for Democracy (NLD) which won general election in 1990. The SLORC declined to recognize the results of that vote.

On the economy, Tun Kyi said that with more than three billion US dollars already on the books in investment commitments, he believed the figure could be boosted to four billion in the near future.

He noted that since the time of Myanmar's kings, through the colonial period and until today, Asian nations accounted for 80 per cent of Myanmar's foreign trade.

"We believe in trade liberalization, we want free and fair trade in the world."

S'pore warns against attempts to link labour standards to trade

SINGAPORE, Jan 29: Singapore warned yesterday against Western attempts to include labour standards in international trading rules and urged fellow members of ASEAN to continue resisting such a linkage, reports AFP.

Lee Yik Seng, Singapore's senior Parliamentary Secretary for Labour, told a meeting of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) labour officials that imposing such a "social clause" would have adverse effects on world trade.

The concern of ASEAN and the developing countries is that such a linkage could lead to protectionism, in that the developed countries could impose trade sanctions against countries which are accused of failing to comply with the conventions on minimum labour standards and workers' rights, he said.

Model Sadia Islam Mou picking the winners at the lucky coupon draw held at the Square Toiletries pavilion of the Dhaka International Trade Fair on Saturday. Editor of Jai Jai Din Shafiq Rehman, Executive Director of Square Toiletries Ltd. Dr Ali Reza Qader Bakhsh and Senior Executive Mrs Sarwat Ahmed are also seen in the picture.

that the United States is already losing credibility by backing UN initiatives but refusing to put up the necessary funds.

The US mission here blames the situation on the Republican-dominated US Congress which is refusing to set aside more money until far-reaching cost-cutting measures are decided.

The cash crunch "is at the back of everybody's mind," in the General Assembly group discussing finances, said the Japanese diplomat.

But may be there is no point in discussing these issues unless we get a good commitment that they will be applied," he added, in an implicit reference to the Americans.

But diplomats point out

that the United States is already losing credibility by backing UN initiatives but refusing to put up the necessary funds.