

20 BCIC units produce goods worth Tk 1384.68 cr in '95-96

20 industrial units under the administrative control of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) produced different goods worth Tk 1384.68 crore during just concluded 95-96 as against Tk 1311.71 crore during previous year 94-95, indicating an increase of Tk 72.97 crore and reflecting 105 per cent attainment of the proportionate target set for 95-96, says a press release.

During the last financial year 95-96, 41,915 MT writing & printing paper was produced at Karnaphuli Paper Mills and North Bengal Paper Mills as against 39,733 MT during previous year. Like-wise

21,34,055 MT urea fertilizer were produced during 95-96 as compared to 19,81,485 MT during the year before indicating an increase of 1,52,570 MT.

Karnaphuli Rayon and Chemical Company produced 1136 MT Rayon Staple Fibre during 95-96 as compared to 737 MT Rayon Staple Fibre during the preceding year. Khulna Hardboard Mills produced 184,57 lac sft hardboard during 1995-96 as against 161,26 lac sft of last year. Chhatak Cement Factory, the lone cement factory in the public sector of Bangladesh produced 1,53,275 MT ce-

ment in comparison to 1,47,020 MT of previous year. Usmania Glass Sheet Factory, the only one of its kind in Bangladesh, produced 200.69 lac sft sheet glass as compared to 86.90 lac sft during the same period of previous year. Chittagong Chemical Complex produced 2,945 MT hydrochloric acid and 1,833 MT liquid chlorine during 1995/96 as against 2,866 MT hydrochloric acid and 1,337 MT liquid chlorine during the preceding year. Sylhet Pulp and Paper Mills produced 20,051 MT pulp as against 17,561 MT of previous year. Bangladesh Insulator and

Sanitaryware Factory at Mirpur produced 3,118 MT Sanitaryware and 1,02,493 Sqm. Tiles during the 1995-96 as against 2,958 MT and 84,162 Sqm. respectively during 94-95.

Zia Fertilizer Factory, located at Ashuganj has set a new record of production during the 95-96 by producing 5,34,200 MT of urea fertilizer representing the highest yearly production since the inception of the factory and exceeding the installed production capacity (5,28,000 MT). The factory produced 4,71,771 MT urea during 94-95.

N-region disadvantaged women engaged in construction work

By Inam Ahmed

Squads of landless and disadvantaged women in northern Bangladesh are taking contracts from the government to build culverts and roads all by themselves.

The women, grouped into societies under the government's Rangpur Region Rural Development Programme (RRRDP) of Bangladesh Rural Develop-

"This culvert is vital for connection to the market in Domar," says Ayub Ali. "But this was washed away in the last year's floods. We had to go through an alternative route that is six kilometers longer than this one. But then these women came forward and took contract of the culvert construction and did it. They have

their work initially. The culvert contract was for Taka 51000, and the group made a profit of Taka 10460. Marium Begum, 30, chairperson of the Pravat group, says the group members had first observed a male group of BRDB to construct culverts, and got the confidence that if the males could do it, they also

through about 2500 groups. "We supervise the works of the groups to see whether they are using the construction materials in correct proportion," said Abdul Motalib Akand, Project Director of RD-9. The result is very encouraging. The roads built by our groups are better in quality than those built by outside contractors."

In fact, building roads and culverts for earning is a miles departure from the conventional methods used under the RD-9 component for poverty alleviation. Usually, the groups take on poultry, pisciculture or small trades as means of income generation.

But we had been thinking what else could be done that is innovative," said Akand, "the RRRDP had two components, RD-8 for infrastructure building and RD-9 for poverty alleviation. We felt that under the RD-8, outside contractors take the benefit by using their capital and managerial capability. So, we decided that if the groups under RD-9 could be supplied with fund and training, they could manage to build these infrastructures and make some earning."

Today, 29 per cent of the groups which are engaged in construction works have earned the ability to compete for works outside the RD-8, according to BRDP's internal assessment.

The smooth bitumen carpeted road running between Niphamari-Jaldhaka road and Ramnagar Hat road is another example of the contracting groups' achievement in construction works.

Farida Begum, chairperson of Ramnagar-Dangpara Pravat Dal that built half a kilometer of the total five kilometers long road said her group had made a profit of 28,000 by doing the road in four months.

"We bought all materials from Syedpur, hired road-rollers from LGED, we worked day and night disregarding local people's teases at us," said Farida. "We overcame all odds, and here is our dream road." She waved her hands at the black road that winded out of sight.



Box culvert under construction by an RD-9 contracting group

ment Board (BRDB), are learning this innovative way of earning their bread to break the net of poverty.

The European Union (EU), is funding the RRRDP under two projects — Rural Development (RD)-8, executed by Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and RD-9 implemented through the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB).

Ayub Ali, 35, a farmer, crosses the culvert on the muddy road of Harinchara under Domar thana on a creaking oxen cart loaded with five big sacks of paddy on a misty water colour noon. The rain had just stopped, but fine specs of water still hangs in the air.

done a wonderful job."

Sabitree Rapi, 40, is the leader of the Balar Danga Pravat Dal, the group that built the culvert. All the group members were housewives before they started the enterprise.

"We bought all construction materials by ourselves from Domar bazar, we worked ourselves as masons, we raised the scaffolding and did the concreting, we did everything by ourselves," said Rani confidently.

But before taking the job, the women had a short training by BRDB officials on masonry. For the first few days they also took help of a professional mason who supervised

can do the same.

"And we proved to be right," says a beaming Marium. "We have kept the profit from the contract in a bank. May be we will use that fund for more traditional enterprises like poultry."

Like the Pravat group, some 700 other contracting groups of both males and females are engaged in construction works under the RD-9 project. Since 1989, they have done works worth Taka 11 crore that had earned them Taka 1.5 crore profit. The RRRDP project covers four districts — Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, and Niphamari where about 42,000 members are involved in different projects

British labour party to introduce minimum wages if returns to power

BIRMINGHAM, July 4: Labour leader Tony Blair yesterday pledged to sign up to the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty and introduce a minimum wage if his party wins a general election which must be held by May 1997, reports AFP.

He told business leaders at the British Chambers of Commerce that the precise level for the minimum wage would not be "plucked out of the air."

Instead, "it will be done sensibly and in consultation with business, including small firms, taking account of the economic situation."

The labour party is far ahead of the governing conservatives in opinion polls.

Blair said that the European social chapter would promote fairness, not inflexibility.

He stressed that labour would scrutinise rigorously each individual proposal under the directive to make sure that Britain's competitiveness was not damaged.

The conservative government, which is split by in-fighting over Britain's role in the European Union (EU) and participation in a single currency, has refused to sign up to the social chapter, which includes laws to protect workers' rights.

Blair said that during the past 17 years of Tory government, the British economy had developed fundamental structural weaknesses as the manufacturing sector ground to a standstill and investment in industry began to falter.

"The cycle of boom and

FBCCI team calls on Samad Azad

A four-member delegation of the Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) called on Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad here yesterday (Thursday), reports UNB.

During the meeting, the delegation members expressed their gratitude for creation of Trade and Investment Promotion wing at the Foreign Ministry.

They hoped that it would help the business community to get into the foreign market.

The members included in the delegation were vice-president of FBCCI Khandaker Rashiduzzaman, General Secretary of FBCCI S M At-Husainy and vice-president of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry A K M Shamsuddoha.

bust over the past 17 years has left a legacy of failed businesses and unprofitable investments. "We have made it clear there can be no question of a short-term dash for growth — we want sustainable, non-inflationary growth and we will set and hold to a tough target for low and stable inflation," Blair said.

He added that one of the labour party's prime economic aims would be to achieve economic stability. Blair grouped his economic policies under the banner of save and invest rather than the tax and spend regime of previous administrations.

He also pledged that there would be no return to the penal tax rates of the 1970s. He told his audience of businessmen that labour, which used to have close ties with the trade union movement, would maintain key planks of the conservatives' laws which restrict union powers.

He pledged to uphold legislation on employee votes before industrial action and on picketing restrictions.

During the past 12-month, Blair has met more than 10,000 businessmen and women and has addressed key business groups at home and abroad, notably in Germany and Japan.

Tk 2.5 cr modern laundry opens at Hotel Sonargaon

By Staff Correspondent

The Sonargaon Pan Pacific Hotel has opened a new modern laundry facility on the hotel premises.

Taka 2.5 crore laundry complex was formally inaugurated by Mohammad Ismail Hossain, Additional Secretary in charge of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism and the chairman of its owning company hotels international limited yesterday.

With its commissioning guests of the hotel and within the next month residents of Dhaka will be able to enjoy the high quality laundry and dry cleaning services.

Members of Hotels International Limited Board of Directors, Sonargaon Pan Pacific Hotel management and union executives, representatives from the laundry plants contractors attended the inaugural function.

The new facility was envisioned and planned to replace outdated equipment.

A commemorative banner containing a special voucher for free laundry services was released via helium balloons, entitling the finder to Taka two thousands worth of free laundry and dry cleaning services on this occasion.

BSB recovers Tk 92 cr loan in '95-96 fiscal

Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) recovered loans of about Tk 92 crore in the just concluded fiscal year (1995-96), reports UNB.

This is the highest ever loan recovery by the bank and the amount is 4 per cent higher than that of the previous fiscal, said a press release yesterday.

In 1995-96, the BSB also disbursed the highest ever loan of Tk 126 crore against its approved projects. This amount is Tk 42.28 crore higher than of the previous year.

The Counselling Counter, established by the bank to provide necessary advice and information including "One Stop Service" to grant loan among the entrepreneurs, has already begun its function.

The bank has also taken measures to curtail its administrative and management expenditures, said the release.

Small traders at Putia Bazar facing problems

NARSINGDI, July 4: Tue buyers and sellers at the age old Putia Bazar of Shibpur thana of the district have been facing manifold problems for long time, reports UNB.

Local people said the small traders from remote areas of the district become hostage at the hands of the toll collectors. They are being harassed by a section of mastans in the bazar area. Even a businessman was assaulted recently by them after the protested their misdeeds.

The local businessmen alleged that the lease holders are taking tolls almost double, triple more than the government-fixed rate. They further alleged that the farmers cannot sell their products including vegetables, fruits etc. as a section of local mastans buy their products at half the market price in collaboration with the lease holders.

The lease holders are taking tolls at their whims but they give no receipts in exchange. The general traders are compelled to desert the market, increasing the suffering of the common people.

Local traders said that the business would be seriously hampered in the bazar if the hoodlums and mastans are not brought to book immediately.

They urged the authorities concerned to take immediate measures to this regard and help flourish trading in the bazar.

US marines use computer game 'Doom' as training exercises

QUANTICO, Virginia, July 4: The US Marines are using the computer-generated terrain of the popular video game "Doom" as part of their basic training to simulate a battle exercise, reports AP.

"We were playing 'Doom' over lunch for a while last year when we got the idea that it could be adapted" as a training aid, Lt. Scott Barnett said.

Over the past several months, Barnett and other war game experts transformed "Doom" with its mazes, puzzles and monsters, into hundreds of scenarios Marines might actually face in combat.

"The futuristic elements of 'Doom' — one of the best-selling computer games ever — were replaced by digital images of armed Marines and enemy soldiers."

"Speaking as a 'Doom' aficionado, I find 'Marine Doom' very boring," said Col. Paul E. Hanover, chief of the Marines' modeling and simulation branch.

However, playing computer games, even boring ones, beats slogging through mud for training exercises, Hanover and other Marines said.

The Mesquite, Texas, firm called id Software Inc, that developed "Doom" was not involved in the Marine adaptation but has no objections, company spokeswoman Audrey Mann said.

The Marine version works only on computers in which commercially available versions of "Doom 11" already are installed.

Sitting at individual terminals, a four-person Marine "fire

team" can use the computer game to learn to cooperate, listen and make decisions quickly, Sgt. Dan Snyder said.

"We are going to destroy the enemy and... or his will to fight," Snyder announced, to three crew-cut Marines before leading them through a 15-minute demonstration of "Marine Doom" recently.

If the computerized assault on an enemy villa had been the real thing, Snyder would not have survived. His computerized image fell to an enemy sniper minutes into the exercise.

"This is a valuable lesson," Snyder said. "This brings home to a young Marine that when the fire team leader falls, someone else has to take over."

Each soldier in the exercise has a different view of the battlefield on his screen and a separate responsibility.

"We're not just shooting for the sake of shooting. We have a

stated training objective," Snyder said.

The Marines hope that computer simulations will save lives and save money, too. In this case, the only real cost is the approximately \$100 price of each commercial version of "Doom II" used, Hanover said.

The approach can also help the Pentagon save money down the road, since time spent in a computer lab is less expensive than training soldiers in the field.

"Computer modeling is not a replacement for field training by any means, but it will help us make field training more efficient, Hanover said.

Marines use everything from a low-tech board game called "combat checkers" to the whiz-bang technology of virtual-reality goggles and gloves in war games.

Marines have also participated in a novel exchange programme with Wall Street traders and bankers. Soldiers tried their hand in the trading pit last year, and earlier this spring the pinstripe crowd put on fatigues for a day in the trenches.

One drawback to military use of entertainment-oriented games such as Doom is that the games lack subtlety, Hanover said.

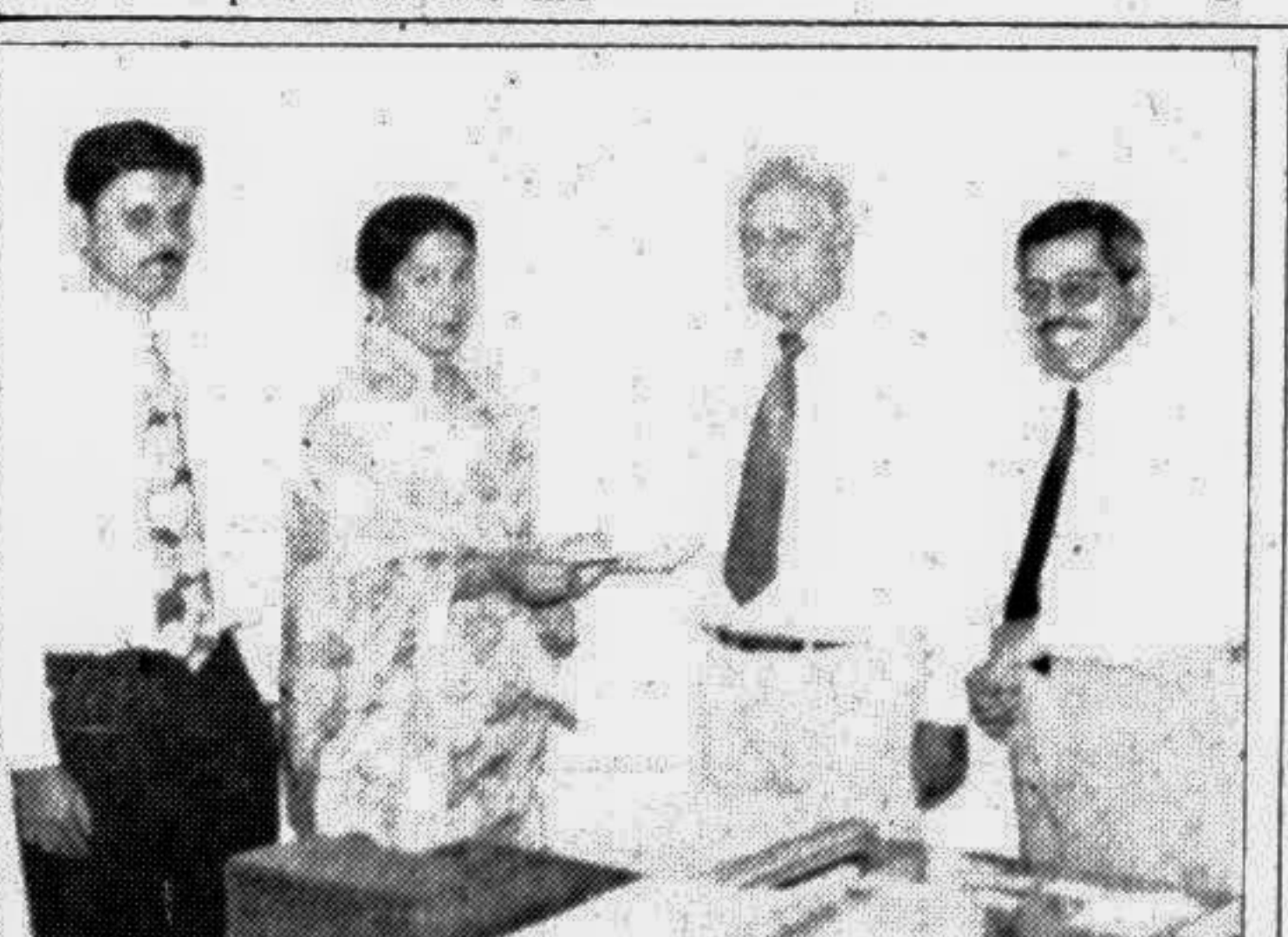
"The object of Doom is to maim, to kill, to rout, to ravage. You succeed by obliteration, and the greatest concentration of violence yields the best result," Hanover said. "That is a bad lesson."

Food situation reviewed

The overall food situation has been reviewed at a high-level meeting in the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday, reports BSS.

Agriculture, Food, Disaster Management and Relief Minister Begum Molla Chowdhury presided over the meeting.

The food stock and supply situation price of foodgrains, internal procurement of food, import of food and other aspects of food management were reviewed in the meeting.



M Harunur Rashid (R), Executive Director, United Insurance Company Limited, recently handed over a cheque for Tk 20 lakh to Mrs. Kohinoor Ansar, Executive Director, Tanin Electrical Appliances Limited, at the company's head office in settlement of a Marine Insurance Claim.

US regulators examining Daiwa Securities for false profits

NEW YORK, July 4: US regulators reportedly are looking into whether the Los Angeles branch of Daiwa Securities faked trading profits for more than three years, the latest such allegations to hit a big Japanese firm, reports AP.

The review comes after Daiwa Securities America informed the authorities in June that a vice president booked excessive profits from stocks and bonds sold to two large US customers. The Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper reported in Thursday's editions.

The phony profits amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars between September 1988 and December 1991, but other false profits alleged prior to 1988 added up to considerably more, the newspaper said.

The newspaper cited an internal Daiwa memo dated Aug. 1992 that it obtained. The document was purportedly written by the vice president, a Japanese national who was not identified and is now based in Tokyo.

The incident is the latest for Tokyo-based Daiwa Securities, one of Japan's largest financial institutions, and the third such scandal in less than a year to hit a major Japanese company.

Last month, Sumitomo Corp. disclosed that its head copper trader had covered up losses that could cost the major commodity company at least \$1.8 billion. And Daiwa Bank Ltd., a large Tokyo-based bank unrelated to Daiwa Securities, paid 340 million dollars in fines and pleaded guilty in February for hiding

1.1 billion dollars in losses at its New York branch over a 12-year period.

Daiwa Securities voluntarily informed the Securities and Exchange Commission about the allegations. The Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

The National Association of Securities Dealers, an industry group that also oversees securities firms operating in the United States, was asked to investigate the matter by a Daiwa client.

A NASD spokesman said he was not aware of the report

Thailand to use new rules against money laundering

BANGKOK, Thailand, July 4: Thailand will use new rules against money laundering to track down and prosecute drug traffickers who have hitherto escaped prosecution due to lack of evidence, a senior government official said Wednesday, says AP.

Chatchai Barsakul, a special minister in Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa's office dealing with drug issues, said a proposal approved Tuesday by the Cabinet will bring Thailand into accordance with a 1988 United Nations convention against drugs.

Sometimes we know who is dealing with drugs and money laundering in our society, but due to lack of evidence, we can do nothing with them," Chatchai said. "This act could help narrow the gap in the law."

UN drug-control officials have called adherence to the convention crucial to countering the drugs trade by bringing laws in member countries into rough conformity, preventing global traffickers from finding loopholes in lax nations.

Combating money laundering — where money earned through the drug trade is passed through financial institutions or investments until its dirty origins are lost — especially taxes the resources of developing countries.

Thailand has been plagued both by narcotics production and money laundering. The country shares the notorious Golden Triangle heroin producing area with Burma and Laos and has a booming economy flowing with often unchecked investment.

BLRI scientist awarded

Dr M A Majid, a Senior Scientist of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI), has been selected as recipient of the "1996 NAST Outstanding Published Paper" award. Manila based National Academy of Science and Technology offers the award, says a press release.

The topic of his writup was "Genetic Variations in Different Populations of Philippine Carabao (Buffalo)."

The award is a rare achievement for both the institute as well as the country.

The work was done during conducting his Ph. D in the Philippines.

China records \$7.99b budget deficit in '95

BEIJING, July 4: China recorded a 1995 budget deficit of 66.28 billion yuan (7.99 billion dollars) lower than the predicted 66.68 billion yuan, Finance Minister Liu Zhongli was quoted as saying today, reports AFP.

State income came to 386.66 billion yuan (46.6 billion dollars) last year — 3.9 billion yuan (0.47 billion US dollars) higher (than forecast) — while expenditure increased to 452.94 billion yuan (54.6 billion dollars). According to figures given by the minister to the National People's Congress.

The figures are above the first estimates of a 1995 deficit of 62.12 billion yuan (7.49 billion US dollars), given by Liu during the annual session of the assembly in March.

For 1996, Beijing predicts a budget deficit of 61.44 billion yuan (7.41 billion US dollars).

The "good news" would bring the 1995 budget deficit to 1.14 per cent of gross domestic product, Liu said. The deficit does not take into account extra-budgetary expenses, such as funding of loss-making state enterprises by the central bank.

Tube stoppage in London disrupts commuter network

LONDON, July 4: A one-day strike by underground train drivers disrupted much of the capital's municipal commuter network Wednesday as London transport and train unions clashed in an ongoing dispute over work hours, reports AFP.

The strike resulted in traffic jams throughout the city as buses and taxis tried to take up the slack.

It was the second single-day tube stoppage after a similar one a week ago, with two more planned, in the unions' demand for a one-hour cut in the work week.

London transport services were running at about 34 per cent of normal with some lines at full strength, others totally out.

A company spokeswoman accused the striking drivers of blackmail.