

Business briefs

TOKYO, Aug 2: Chiyoda Corp, a leading Japanese plant engineer specializing in oil refining and petrochemical factories, said Wednesday it will build an oil lubricant plant in Singapore for Chevron Chemical Co.

The Chiyoda spokesman declined, however, to give financial details on the agreement. He also said he couldn't comment on the plant's potential production capacity.

Construction of the lubricant plant is scheduled to begin in early 1997, and should be completed some time in 1998.

The Chiyoda spokesman said the Chevron plant will supply lubricants not only to the Asia-Pacific region, but also to France and the United States.

Chiyoda will be responsible from the designing to the actual construction of the plant, he said. He added that this was Chiyoda's first order received from Chevron Chemical.

SINGAPORE: For the first time in years, the number of credit cards in circulation in Singapore fell in the second quarter of 1996 as customers surrendered some of their cards ahead of new credit limitations that take effect Thursday.

The MAS figures showed that which growth of card debt had eased, it remained at a high level, the Straits Times newspaper said.

CANBERRA: Australia's major defense and engineering firm, ADI Ltd., has sold the lighting division of the company Stanlite to Canadian firm Kaufel, allowing it to establish a presence in Australia and Southeast Asia.

The decision means the profitable lighting business will be maintained as it is, although under a new owner.

ADI bought Stanlite in July. ADI Managing Director Ken Harris said Montreal-based Kaufel approached ADI about breaking off the lighting division soon afterwards.

"ADI had been attracted to Stanlite because of its defense, aerospace and telecommunications capabilities," he said in a statement.

"Those capabilities will add value to our systems projects and increase our competitiveness. Lighting is not a core ADI business activity."

AUCKLAND: Brierley Investment has resurrected a consortium with Fletcher Challenge and CITTIC, an investment arm of the Chinese government, to bid for Forestry Corp., a report said Wednesday.

Seven years ago, the unlikely trio formed part of a consortium that competed unsuccessfully for New Zealand Steel.

However, the group is now one of the leading contenders to snare the forestry asset.

At a delicate stage in the sales process, the government has called for bids to be resubmitted by next Tuesday.

This suggested that the bids for cutting rights to the 464,500-acre (188,000-hectare) Kaitangaroa Forest in the central North Island had fallen below the 1.38 billion US dollar (two billion NZ) price tag touted by commentators as the government's selling price.

Source close to one of the bidding parties said the government's action was simply part of the auction process as the sale reached its final stage, the New Zealand Herald said.

FCL and a group headed by Carter Hold Harvey are thought to have resubmitted bids.

The other main contender, United States-based Weyerhaeuser, is believed to have topped the bidding process but its offer was highly conditional.

It apparently wanted guarantees from the government for unfettered access to the trees if Maori claims saw the ownership of the forest land split between a number of parties.

Citic was linked to FCL and Brierley in 1989 when another state-owned Chinese company, Minmetals Corp, pulled out of the purchase of New Zealand Steel at the last minute.

SYDNEY: The Australian Stock Exchange is confident its push to attract large Chinese companies will result in the right type of firms listing and avoid the problems other exchanges had with Chinese listings.

The ASX has become the fourth exchange to sign an agreement with the China Securities Regulatory Commission, securing its approval for direct listings by Chinese firms.

It paves the way for large China-incorporated companies, including state-owned enterprises, to list on the ASX.

ASX international business director Ray Schoer said while New York and Hong Kong has experienced problems with their early Chinese listings, Australia could expect to attract suitable firms to the ASX's Asia index.

"With early privatizations (on other foreign stock exchanges), not as much work had been done in making them suitable," Schoer said.

For example, some of the previous companies had people entitled to various social services ... or who lived on the company's premises when they returned. This was not suitable for a Western type market.

Companies preparing to list in Australia would have to go through rigorous review procedures and meet all requirements of releasing a prospectus in Australia, Schoer said.

— Source AP

US-Japan trade talks resume

Market.

VANCOUVER, Aug 2: Crucial trade talks between the United States and Japan resumed Thursday after a tense delay during which the United States accused Japan of dragging its feet, reports AFP.

The talks, over a new agreement between the two countries on foreign access to the Japanese semiconductor market, went through the night before halting for a break.

The last-ditch talks were aimed at averting a possible trade war with the United States, which is demanding continued guaranteed access to the Japanese semiconductor market and increased access to the lucrative insurance market and increased access to the lucrative insurance

market.

Talks began again at 8:45 am (1545 GMT), indicating that the two sides plan to push for an agreement. They broke again at 11:30 am (1830 GMT) but were to return to work at 12:00 (1900 GMT), said Yashiro Sakamoto, Vice Minister for International Trade.

Asked about progress, he said, "It depends on the US side."

A US official, speaking privately early Thursday, seemed unhappy with how the talks were going.

"It's been very frustrating.

Every time that we seem to make progress, that progress suddenly evaporates," he said.

The official said the talks had been interrupted at 7 am

local time (1400 GMT) to allow acting US trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky to take a telephone call from president Bill Clinton.

After the call said the official, Barshefsky had difficulty contacting Japanese International Trade and Industry Minister Shunpei Tsukahara to fix a time for another meeting.

The Japanese delegation earlier told reporters the talks would resume at 10 am (1700 GMT) but the US official said that time would be too late if there were to be an agreement today.

The official said Barshefsky, who would be returning in any case to Washington in the early afternoon.

Farmers' training programme ends in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH: Aug 2: A three-day farmers' training programme on "producing disease free seeds, its collection, testing and preservation" concluded at the Bangladesh Agricultural University on Saturday, reports UNB.

Addressing the closing function Director of Bangladesh Agricultural University Research System Prof Mohammad Shamsul Haq said that germ-free seeds was the precondition for ensuring higher production.

Head of the department of Plant Pathology Prof Mohammad Bahadur Miah presided over the training programme held at Seed Pathology Laboratory in the campus.

It was addressed by Project Director Prof Abdul Momin, course coordinator Dr Mohammad Ayub Ali, Prof Majeen Uddin Ahmed, Molla Mohammad Hamiduzzaman and trainee Majeda Khatun.

Fifty women farmers from sadaq thana participated in the training programme, said a press release.

ROK to boost investment in Russia

SEOUL: Aug 2: South Korea will increase investment in Russia despite Moscow's failure to repay its 1.47 billion dollars debt to Seoul, government officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

South Korea has strengthened economic ties with its former communist enemies in recent years. But its trade with and investment in Russia has been slow-paced largely because of Moscow's failure to repay the debt.

Considering the size and potential of the Russian market, we should be more active in increasing investment there," a Foreign Ministry official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The loan issue should not be a major stumbling block any more," he said.

The official said that the same issue was discussed at a meeting Wednesday of senior officials from the Foreign, Trade and Finance Ministries.

In a 1990 deal linked with establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, South Korea agreed to lend Moscow three billion dollars in cash and goods. After giving Russia 1.47 billion dollars Seoul halted further disbursement in 1992 after Moscow failed to meet interest payments.

Saudi Aramco to take control of oil sale under arms deal with UK

LONDON: Aug 2: The state-owned oil giant Saudi Aramco plans to take control of oil sales under a three billion dollar a year arms-for-oil deal the Gulf kingdom has agreed with Britain, a press report said Wednesday, according to AFP.

The Financial Times reported that since the so-called Al-Yamamah contract began two years ago, most of the sales have been handled by British Petroleum (BP), the country's leading oil producer, and the Shell oil giant.

The two companies now stand to lose more than 19 million pounds (28 million dollars) a year in commission, according to the FT.

The paper said the move is designed to consolidate Aramco's grip on the market of Saudi crude oil.

It noted that while the British government had lobbied to keep the business in the oil major's hands, the marketing is likely to move to Aramco at the end of the year once contracts taken by Shell and BP are expired.



Participants of the training workshop on 'profitable dairy farming'.

Defence spending eating up 6.5pc of Lankan GDP

COLOMBO: Aug 2: Deputy

Finance Minister Gamini Lakshman Peiris said Wednesday the Sri Lankan economy was in trouble but not yet out of control because of burgeoning defence spending in the ethnic war with Tamil separatists, reports Reuter.

He told reporters defence spending was one third over budget in little more than seven months of the financial year ending December 31 and was eating up 6.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Sri Lankans "realise that a country like Sri Lanka cannot spend 50 billion rupees in part of the year alone, 6.5 per cent of GDP... without their economic circumstances being hurt," he said.

The government had allocated 38 billion rupees (690 million dollars) for defence spending, but Peiris said the figure would reach 50 billion

by the second week of August.

"There will be a downward trend. You can expect a deteriorating economy," he said, but added that Sri Lanka was not facing immediate disasters.

It is not as though we are being buffeted by forces beyond our control. We are still very much the masters of our destiny," he said.

"There were plenty of resources in the treasury. It's a question of the priorities you allocate to spending."

He said the top political priority of the government of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, who is also Finance Minister, was agreement on a new constitution that would give minority Tamils a large measure of autonomy.

The government proposals have been rebuffed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which has been fighting

for 13 years for an independent Tamil homeland in the north and east.

The political opposition in Colombo, whose support is needed for a two-thirds majority in parliament to approve a new constitution, is still debating the proposals.

Peiris suggested that defence spending would be the government's top budget priority, saying there would be "no guillotine" on money for the military.

"This high level of military expenditure inevitably will have grave repercussions on the economy," he said.

The longer you sustain this level of expenditure, the greater is the damage inflicted on the economy. Obviously, you are doing so at the expense of the things and you have to cut out things required for economic development."

Florida to penalize employers who hire illegal aliens

TALLAHASSEE: Florida, Aug 2: Under new measures announced Thursday, Florida police will have computer software allowing them to check the immigration status of job applicants.

"Within 30 seconds, the answer comes back," Meissner said.

But the programme is voluntary, so hotels and motels that turn a blind eye to the immigration status of employees, or knowingly hire illegals and pay them less than minimum wage, will not come under any greater scrutiny.

"It's a nice, feel-good sort of administrative decision" that won't have much real effect, said Peter Coats, special assistant to Catholic Charities of South Florida.

Under one programme, the INS announced a simi-

ilar pilot programme in May that allows four of the nation's largest meat-packing companies to check the immigration status of workers by dialing into a computer.

Coats also worries that police who have access to the same software will start arresting Black and Hispanic people simply on the suspicion that they are in the country illegally, as happened in California after voters passed proposition 187, which limited services to undocumented immigrants.

But Commissioner Tim Moore of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement said police won't be allowed to arrest people just for the way they look.



Professor Muzaffer Ahmad of the Institute of Business Administration presenting a paper on "Customer Handling" at the fourth annual conference of the branches of United Insurance Company Limited at the company's head office in the capital last week. On his left are M. Moayedul Islam, Chairman of the company, M. Harun Rashid, Executive Director, while Syed Aziz Ahmed, Director is on his right.

Building democracy — or neo-colonial bullying?

Daniel Nelson writes from London

Western hypocrisy claims the Zambian government over aid donors' criticisms of the presidential election ban on former President Kenneth Kaunda.

Governments, of course, always react badly to criticism particularly from foreigners. And it was undoubtedly heavy-handed to pass a constitutional amendment aimed at stopping the 72-year-old Kaunda from standing for re-election as president in the polls due in October.

After agreeing to end one-party rule, Kaunda's 27 years in power ended in 1991 when he was swept from office by the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

He won plaudits for the graciousness with which he accepted defeat and stepped down. At first, it looked as though he would be content with the role of elder statesman, remaining apart from local politics and mingling with the Great and the Good on the international stage. But the lure of politics proved irresistible, and he returned to the fray.

In an attempt to pre-empt a Kaunda candidacy President Frederick Chiluba engineered the resolution barring candidates of foreign parentage (Kaunda's parents were born in Malawi) and those who have al-

ready served two terms. The move is controversial, but it was taken by a democratically elected Parliament after extensive discussion.

Isn't that what Western

governments claim they want?

So why should some of them feel they have the right to cut back aid as a punishment?

In the past, Western donors' have said they are prepared to use their economic clout to help end dicta-

tions and bring about multiparty systems.

It sounds good, but is often sanctimonious clap-trap because their interventions are selective and self-interested. If

the easier it is to impose conditions.

And Zambia is very vulnerable. Aid accounts for more than 22 per cent of gross national product and dependency is growing — the figure

favours in the name of "good governance" are linked with the economic changes they also favour and which favour them: free trade and the right to compete for local contracts

in favour of a package — which is what string is for — it is damaging the package itself.

Even if foreign pressure for Western style democracy is considered acceptable, pressure produces favourable answers surely is not.

Where will it stop? Are Western governments now going to dictate to poorer countries which laws and amendments are acceptable? Are Washington, London, Bonn and Paris to be the arbiters of what constitutes politically correct decisions?

President Frederick Chiluba told an MMD rally in June that "in donor countries laws are passed even when those in opposition are beaten by only one person. Whereas the Zambian constitutional amendment was approved by a parliamentary majority of more than two-thirds."

"Shame! Shame!" roared his supporters when Chiluba alleged hypocrisy. They are partisan, of course, and the decision they were supporting with their cheers was probably ill-judged.

But their party has, at the very least, a good case for putting donors in the dock instead of President Frederick Chiluba — Gemini News

(Daniel Nelson is Editor of Gemini News Service.)

Greenpeace's worldwide income rises

AMSTERDAM, Aug 2: Greenpeace's worldwide income climbed by 11 per cent to nearly 153 million dollars last year, according to the environmental organisation's first consolidated annual report released Wednesday, says AFP.

Income rose from 137.4 million dollars to 152.8 million dollars last year, a statement from the organisation added.

It said that supporter figures had dropped from 3.1 to 2.