

Shaheerhat businessmen call on Biswas

President Abdur Rahman Biswas said discipline in personal, family and social life is essential for the uninterrupted peace and progress of the society, reports UNB.

President Biswas was talking to a delegation of the local elites and members of business community of Shaheerhat, Barisal who called on him at Bangabhaban yesterday.

Referring to the Islamic injunctions on family bond and observing discipline in every sphere of life, the President said indiscipline leads to uncertainty and social disorder.

He called upon the people to maintain social harmony with a view to furthering the development efforts in the country.

President Biswas gave stress on personal initiative for taking any local development programme and said overall beneficial aspect of the programme should be considered so that the people in general are benefitted.

Talks begin today

Nepal to seek Indian help in reducing trade gap

KATHMANDU, Aug 11: Nepal will ask India to take steps to reduce the Himalayan kingdom's trade deficit with its southern neighbour during talks starting on Monday, Foreign Minister Prakash Chandra Lohani said.

The agenda basically is trade and we would like to give concrete shape to some of the concepts, Lohani told Reuters.

Lohani was scheduled to arrive in New Delhi on Monday for a three-day visit. Nepali officials said Lohani would discuss the kingdom's growing trade deficit with Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.

In the Nepali fiscal year ending in mid-July 1995, the kingdom exported 58.9 million US dollar worth of goods to India but imports amounted to 363.1 million dollar a gap of 304.2 million dollar.

In June India agreed to offer Nepal concessions by allowing duty free entry to a range of Nepali products. But Nepali officials said their nation could not reap the benefits of the concessions until they were incorporated into a 1991 bilateral trade treaty.

Lohani was expected to ask that the treaty be amended to reflect India commitment, officials said.

These agreements need to be formally incorporated into the trade treaty Commerce Secretary Mohan Dev Pant said.

Lohani said he would discuss the prickly subject of repatriating 90,000 Bhutanese refugees of Nepali origin who have fled the neighbouring Himalayan state since 1990 demanding a ethnic equality and human rights.

The problem has soured relations between the Himalayan kingdoms for five years.

We would like to know the views of the government of India and expect their help to solve the issue Lohani said.

New Delhi has balked at being drawn into the matter and asked Kathmandu and Thimpu to settle the dispute themselves.

Lohani said a controversial water sharing treaty with India was not on his agenda with Gujral.

The treaty signed six months ago would settle a five-year dispute with India giving more water and electricity to Nepal from the Tanakpur dam on the Mahakali river on the kingdom's western border with India.

Seminar on Islamic financial mechanism Experts to provide wider avenues for investment, hopes Kibria

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria hoped that the experts will be able to find a way out of the "trap" of financial system in the Muslim world, reports UNB.

The financial system of the Muslim world is still generally shaped and operated on Western ideas, principles and values," he said inaugurating a three-day international seminar at a local hotel yesterday morning.

Hence, the elements of interest, which is believed to be repugnant in Islam according to the Holy Quran, has become strongly entrenched in every form of financial relationship," Kibria said.

He hoped that the scholars and the experts, attending the seminar, would be able to find a way out of "this trap."

The seminar on "Mechanism and Development of Islamic Financial Instruments" has been organised jointly by Bangladesh Bank and

the Islamic Development Bank. Bangladesh Bank Governor Khorshed Alam, Deputy of Research Division of IRTI, Dr Sami Homoud and Bangladesh Bank Executive Director Abdur Raquib also addressed the opening session, chaired by Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor Mahbubur Rahman Khan.

The finance minister said financial instruments, the basis of the money and capital market, play a positive role in mobilising savings and attracting capital for investment.

"Unfortunately, in Muslim countries, there is virtually no developed capital market in spite of vast resources that the Muslim people own and invest," he said.

Muslim investors are still dependent on the Western countries for the management of their investable funds, he said adding if proper financial instruments were developed in line with the belief and spirit of Islam, the gap between sav-

ings and investment could be narrowed down.

"I sincerely hope that the experts in this seminar will be able to devise suitable Islamic financial instruments for our system and thereby provide wider avenues for investments in social and public utility projects."

Kibria said the financial instruments devised accordingly would help Islamic banks to invest their excess liquidity and mobilise increased resources.

The Finance Minister urged the scholars to undertake further in-depth study and research to evolve comprehensive and sustainable mechanism for helping the poor and unprivileged sections of the society.

He said: "We are all aware of the pressing need to alleviate poverty and to attain expected development targets within the framework of two major objectives - growth with

equity. We've emphasised tremendously on increasing investment, both local and foreign."

The government, he said, was also aware of the need to restore and build up confidence of the business community and the people in banks and financial institutions.

"We are pledge-bound to promote development and welfare for each and every citizen, the objective of which has clearly been outlined in our great religion," the finance minister added.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Khorshed Alam said the seminar would help to gain deeper understanding of matters relating to the Islamic financial markets and instruments already in operation throughout the Muslim world.

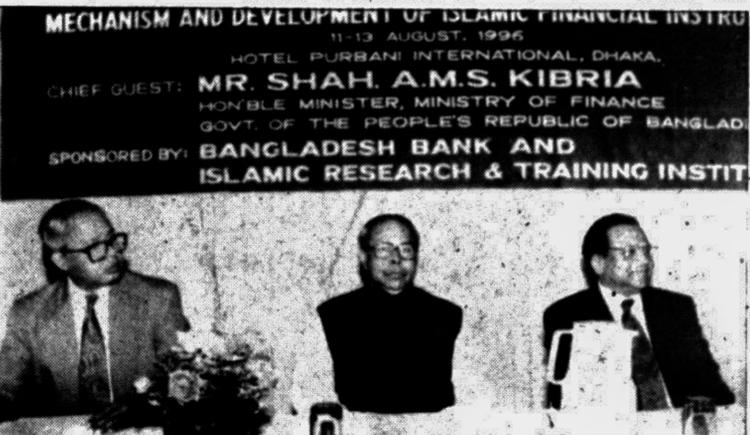
The Islamic banks operate on the principle of profit-sharing so that the savers as well as the investors do have a stake in the outcome of any business or investment, he said adding this should minimise the speculative element in the operational financial system.

Four Islamic banks are now in operation in Bangladesh, Alam said adding that the development of Islamic banking in the country has been encouraging indeed. "Nevertheless, this achievement also created new challenges."

He mentioned that in their operations, the Islamic banks were faced with specific problems due to lack of financial instruments for investing surplus resources.

It would be helpful to hear from the experts about the probable financial instruments that could be introduced to help the Islamic banks to invest their resources as per Shariah principle, the Bangladesh Bank governor said.

Some 67 participants from home and abroad are attending the 3-day international seminar. They include scholars and experts from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia and USA.



Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria attended as chief guest the seminar on Mechanism and development of Islamic financial instruments jointly sponsored by Bangladesh Bank and Islamic Research and Training Institute at a city hotel yesterday. — Star photo

Minister tells Jatiya Sangsad Steps taken to continue foodgrain procurement drive

Food and Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that the government had already taken measures to continue foodgrain procurement drive from the surplus areas including Netrakona and Gaibandha for protecting the interests of the paddy growers, reports BSS.

Replying to a call attention notice moved by Md Jalal Uddin Talukder (AL-Netrakona) the Food and Agriculture Minister said since the Awami League came to power, the government had taken steps to continue the procurement of rice and paddy at different places to ensure fair price to the growers.

Though unscientific to procure foodgrains in the rainy season, the government is doing it out of Awami League's deep feelings and love for the peasants, she said and recalled her party's election slogan "to save the peasants to save the country".

She said the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would do everything possible for the benefit of the peasants.

Earlier, moving his notice, Jalal Uddin Talukder said that paddy was being sold at Taka 180 to Taka 225 in different places of Durgapur, Kamalokanda and Puradhala un-

der Netrakona district, a surplus area.

He said that the farmers had used high priced seeds, fertilisers and insecticides for the cultivation of paddy but now they were not getting even the cost price.

Earnings from Ctg Port increase: Rab

Shipping Minister ASM Abdur Rab yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that the earnings from Chittagong Port had increased from Taka 260.40 crore in 1994-95 to Taka 314.88 crore in 1995-96.

He was replying to a starred question from opposition BNP member Md Shahjahan.

Responding to another question from BNP member Zafrul Islam Chowdhury, he said that Chittagong Port had unloaded 1.3 crore metric tons of goods in 1995-96 compared with 0.70 crore metric tons in 1991-92.

Replying to a supplementary question from BNP member Fazul Azim the Minister assured the House that henceforth no goods or export items would be stolen from the Chittagong Port.

The Shipping Minister, replying to another supplementary question from BNP member Sarwar Jamal Nizam, said equipment and machinery already imported by private sector firms

to help remove jams in unloading goods in the Chittagong Port, would be utilised.

He also informed the House that shed problem in the port would be removed soon.

Call attention notice on insurance policies

State Minister for Labour and Manpower MA Mannan told the House that investigation will be undertaken to find out any irregularities regarding the insurance policies of the Bangladeshis working outside the country.

Replying to a call attention notice by Al-Haj Mokbul Hossain (AL-Dhaka), the minister said as per the provisions of the agreement performance of the Delta Insurance Company appointed on March 18, 1995 is being reviewed by a committee after completion of one year on March 17, 1996.

He said the government has introduced the system purely on an experimental basis and the insurance company has realised premium worth Taka 14 crore 52 lakh during this one year period.

Earlier, moving the call attention notice Al-Haj Mokbul Hossain called for instituting an investigation into the allegations of grabbing crores of Taka by a particular insurance company from those employed abroad.

Conflict in SMC resolved

The long-standing conflict between the Social Marketing Company and Social Marketing Company Employees & Workers Union (SMCEW) has been resolved in a mutual understanding, says a press release.

An agreement has been signed between the union leaders and company's representatives on Saturday. The step of the settlement was initiated by Labour Director Golam Sorwar.

The agreement assures the workers, due to purchase of cars for managers, under Company's loan scheme, no drivers would be sacked.

The Workers' Union suspected earlier that the drivers might be sacked because of purchasing cars for high officials who might recruit personal drivers for those.

Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik League leaders were also present on the occasion.

Arab countries eyeing free trade zone

ABU DHABI, Aug 11: Arab States are trying to remove customs barriers among them for the first time in line with a summit decision that could turn them into one of the largest economic blocs in the world, reports AFP.

Arab League officials said the nucleus of the region's first free trade zone would materialise in 1997 and the project would come into fruition in 10 years as recommended by Arab leaders during their June 21 summit in Cairo.

The free trade zone will be established within 10 years. Procedures for such a zone will be implemented in 1997," said Abdur Rahman al-Suhailani, Arab League Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs.

"A timetable will be drawn up for the gradual removal of customs tariffs on all goods. We expect all goods to be liberalised in 10 years," he told the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Economic Weekly Emirates today.

Arab states have considered setting up a free trade zone over the past two decades but the project faltered because of political differences and a tendency by most members to protect their burgeoning industries.

Most of the Arab League's 22 members signed an agreement in early 1970s to facilitate internal trade, but only a few of them have complied.

Political rifts have combined with customs barriers and other factors to keep trade among Arab Nations below 10 per cent of their total trade.

Official figures showed inter-Arab exports stood at 12.7 billion dollars in 1994 compared with their total exports of around 134.1 billion dollars. Internal imports of nearly 10.1 billion dollars were also a fraction of the total Arab Imports of around 115.3 billion dollars.

Branch managers' conference of Janata Bank held

Branch managers' conference of Janata Bank Tangail Area Office was held recently, says a press release.

Dr. A K Md. Habibullah, General Manager and Saifuddin Ahmad, Deputy General Manager from head office, were present at the conference.

Dr. Habibullah in the opening address emphasised importance of the role of banks in socio-economic development of the country. He advised managers to discharge their duties sincerely, honestly for the expansion of banking business and national development.

Two-day workshop at BCSIR held Formulate clear import policy for cosmetics

The two-day workshop on "Development of the production of quality grade cosmetics and toiletries in Bangladesh" ended Saturday with a call for formulating a clear import policy for stringent quality control of the imported cosmetic and toiletry products, says a press release.

Held at the Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST), Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), the workshop was organised by the Institute of Chemists and Chemical Technologists (ICCT), an organ of Bangladesh Chemical Society (BCS).

Besides the inaugural session, the workshop comprised two technical sessions in which eight keynote papers on cosmetics and toiletries were presented by experts in their fields.

The workshop observed that Bangladesh produces substantial quantity of high quality cosmetics, and toiletry products. There is a great potential for export of these

items. Some products are also being exported. So the workshop recommended that incentives be given to potential entrepreneurs for establishing industries. BCSIR may provide technology and advisory services. With a view to maintaining quality standards related acts/laws be updated and enforced. BSTI may play a key role in this regard.

The workshop also recommended that a comprehensive survey of plants of Bangladesh be undertaken and efforts be made for their preservation and propagation for use in various cosmetic and toiletry industries, the press release added.

An exhibition of cosmetics and toiletries was also held in the BCSIR auditorium. Lever Brothers Bangladesh Ltd. and Moushumi Industries Ltd. Dhaka put their products on display.

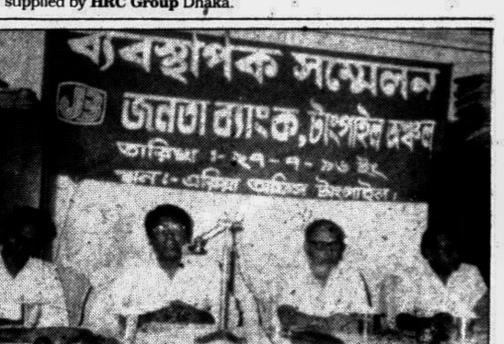
Shipping Intelligence

CHITTAGONG PORT									
Berth Position and Performance of Vessels as on 11-8-96.									
Berth No.	Name of Vessels	Cargo	Call Agent	Last Port	Local Agent	Discharge	Leaving	Arrival	Leaving
J/1	Capitaine Frea	Oil/Copra	Sing	Seacom	7/8		12/8		
J/2	Trans Auto (Roro/24)	Vehi	Oil	10/8			11/8		
J/3	Ocean-1	GI	Vita	Cross	10/8		14/8		
J/4	Rudra	SSP	Yang	Rainbow	1/8		11/8		
J/5	H-Star	M. Seed	Sing	Delmas	8/8		12/8		
J/6	Potamos	Cement	Sing	PHIB	9/8		15/8		
J/8	Tiger sun	GI	Sing	Prog	9/8		12/8		
J/9	Dansong	GI/Rice	Cal	BBA	4/8		12/8		
J/10	Banglar Kiron	GI(BH/8)	RABD	BSC	22/7		16/8		
J/11	Meru Kiat	Cont	Sing	AML	9/8		13/8		
J/12	Consistence	Cont	Sing	RSL	10/8		13/8		
J/13	Banglar Robi	Cont	Sing	BSC	8/8		11/8		
OCT/1	Fong Yun	Cont	Sing	Behp	6/8		12/8		
OCT/2	Kota Berjays	Cont	Sing	PHIB	5/8		13/8		
OCT/3	Ge. Pissail	Cont	Sing	Geal	9/8		11/8		
RM/14	Banglar Gourab	Cont	Sing	BSC	25/7		18/8		
TSP	K.L. Bortenko	R.F. Phos	Nanj	Oba	31/7		15/8		
RM/5	Saint Nicholas	Cont	Sing	Seacom	4/8		13/8		
RM/6	Mutan Vision	Halo	Sing	Eol	8/8		13/8		
DD	Fong Shing (Cont-6/7)	Cement	Sing	Matpl	12/7		17/8		
DD/1	Tanary Star	Repair	Nanj	Idahp	30/6		15/8		
		Idir	Ena	Psid	7/8		12/8		

VESSELS DUE AT OUTER ANCHORAGE						
Name of vessels	Date of arrival	Last port	Local Agent	Cargo	Leaving	Port
Saim Hero	11/8	Sing	BBA	GI(Vehi)		
Banglar Doot	13/8	Yang	BSC	BSC		
Litang	12/8	Sing	Pal	C. Clink/Comment		
An Shun Jin	12/8	Cont	Ancl	Urea		
Banglar Moni 30/7	12/8	Sing	BSC	Cont		Mong
Meng Yang 31/7	12/8	Cont	Ancl	Cont		Sing
AL Hamzah	12/8	Cont	SW	Lentils		
Susak 31/7	13/8	CCL	Banldi	Cont		Col
Xour Ina 8/8	13/8	Sing	RSL	Cont		Sing
Tong Chuan	14/8	Dall	Prog	GI		
Orange Wave (Roro/24)3/8	15/8	Sing	BBA	Vehi		
Kaveri	17/8	Repair	Mong	BSC		Sing
(K) Tcal 10/8	17/8	Sing	Qestl	Cont		Sing
Padma 10/8	17/8	Sing	Rsl	Cont		Sing

VESSELS AT KUTUBDIA				
Name of vessels	Cargo	Last port	Local Agent	Date of Arrival
Setia Abadi		Sing	BBA	6/8
Coral Reef Explorer		Sing	BBA	6/8
Aman Abadi		Sing	BBA	7/8

The above are the shipping position and performance of vessels of Chittagong Port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by HRC Group Dhaka.



Branch managers' conference of Janata Bank Tangail Area office was held recently.

Commodity markets : Tea up, sugar, silver down, rubber stable over the week

LONDON, Aug 11: The oil market was unmoved by the prospect of imminent exports of Iraqi crude and average prices held on to their highest levels for more than two years on the London market, reports AFP.

An easing of US intransigence with regard to limited sales of crude to finance humanitarian aid in Iraq did not dent sentiment on the market, which enjoyed growing demand from refineries seeking to replenish their stocks.

Among the other commodities, coffee and cocoa prices rose as supply of the tropical beans was expected to tighten in the coming months.

Twitchy grain markets received fresh cause for concern with the prospect of a smaller-than-expected crop in the United States.

GOLD: Selling. After surging last week, gold was unable to burst through the 390 dollar mark and settled at about 388 dollars per ounce.

The lack of sustained buying at what is traditionally a slow period for gold sales caused the rise in gold to fizzle out. Some analysts had said that

the previous surge in prices was because one Australian producer had bought back gold on the market. Others said that the slump in the dollar and uncertainty in bond markets had helped gold prices. While others put the rise down to increased jewellery sales in India and Pakistan.

In recent years, economic growth in Southeast Asia has fuelled an increase of gold purchases by private investors.

A gold analyst at M and G Investments, David Hutchins, explained that "gold moves in mysterious ways" and that movements on the market could not be explained by any one simple factor.

SILVER: Weak. Silver prices could not muster enough momentum to follow gold upwards and prices fell by 10 cents to about \$05 dollars per ounce.

But at the week's end, a wave of speculative purchases lifted prices back to 5.12 dollars per ounce.

PLATINUM: Tumble. The platinum market was unruined by industrial action at key platinum mines in the world's

leading producer country, South Africa, and prices fell by three dollars to 401 dollars per ounce.

But the GNI trading house said that stoppages at Anglo-Americans' Rustenburg mine last month would seriously cut the quantity of metal on the market and as a result the market would be "in better shape".

COPPER: Subdued. Copper prices on the London Metal Exchange (LME) hung around 1,940 dollars per tonne, amid extremely quiet trading, dealers said.

Analysts at the economist intelligence unit (EIU) said that the slump in copper prices which followed the Sumitomo affair in June and July had been grossly exaggerated and they predicted that prices would pick up again soon.

The EIU predicted that cash prices would settle at an average 2,166 dollars per tonne at the end of the year.

Thereafter, it said that prices would fall again as increased world copper production would hit the market.

It said that prices would fall back to an average 1,888 dollars per tonne in 1997 and would dip further in 1998.

The EIU said that production is now rising much more rapidly than consumption, so the market balance will move more and more decisively into surplus.

ALUMINIUM: Frozen. Aluminium prices changed little this week and hovered around 1,515 dollars per tonne GNI said that the market was torn between strong demand on the one hand and bumper sales by producer's on the other.

LME stocks rose by 18,300 tonnes to 922,875 tonnes.

NICKEL: Rise. Nickel prices rose to about 7,200 dollars per tonne on the wings of speculative buying. Despite this rise, dealers were worried by the lack of demand from stainless steel producers and by the threat of hefty exports from Russia.

LME stocks fell by 2,314 tonnes to 35,016 tonnes.

TIN: Lift. Tin prices rose by 25 dollars to about 6,175 dollars per tonne, on the back of a

fall in tin reserves, which fell by 195 tonnes to 10,335 tonnes.

GNI said that Thailand might quit the Association of Tin-producing countries.

OIL: Bubbling. Removal of the main hurdle to renewed oil exports from Iraq seemed not to trouble the market and average prices clung on to their highest levels for about three years.

In the aftermath of Washington's decision to allow sales of Iraqi crude for the first time since Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, the reference price for Brent North Sea oil rose by about 80 cents to 19.80 dollars per barrel.

Dealers had previously feared that a sudden glut of oil would depress prices on the market.

An analyst at the centre for global energy studies (CGES) research body, Julian Lee, said that the market had not reacted to the US announcement.