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DHAKA, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1996

### Finance Minister tells workshop

# Productive activities of women should be related to economy

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday said the productive activities of the women in families, especially those in rural areas, should be related to the modern sector of economy, reports BSS.

He said traditionally the women in Bangladesh are doing a lot of economic work in the household including the hard job of processing the crops after harvesting, but their work is not recognised by society.

Speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of a workshop on 'poverty alleviation by homemaker women here', the finance minister said the contribution of these women to the national economy

is ignored as they do not earn cash and because of gender differentiation.

Emphasising the need for changing the attitude and perception of society, he said true gender equality should come in society spontaneously. He said our Constitution is very much liberal in this regard where both men and women have been given equal recognition in the eyes of law.

Organised by Bangladesh Homeworkers Women Association (BHW), the inaugural session was also addressed by State Minister for Labour and Manpower MA Mannan, ILO Director Paul J. Bailey, Managing Director of Sonali Bank AQ Siddique, ADAB Chairman Dr.

Kazi Farooq Ahmed, General Secretary of Textile Workers Association in the Asia Pacific Region Noriyuki Suzuki, General Secretary of International Textile Garment Labour Workers Federation Neil Kearney, President of BHW, Miss Dilruba Akhter and General Secretary Mrs Dilruba Anguri.

The Finance Minister said private entrepreneurs including the NGOs should come forward in integrating rural women with income generating activities like poultry farming and silk industry. He said that entrepreneurs had succeeded in this regard.

The State Minister assured full cooperation in fulfilling

the demands of the association and said the government was determined to ensure fair wages to all including the homemaker women.

Managing Director of Sonali Bank also assured cooperation in providing loans on easy terms to different groups and associations of homemaker women to expedite their income generating activities.

Different speakers observed that the homemaker women were being deprived of their fair wages and prices of their commodities.

ILO Director Bailey explained different aspects of ILO convention on homemaker women.

### Tourism trainers' programme held in Ctg

22 owners, managers and senior staff from leading hotels and restaurants completed five-day trainers programme at Hotel Agrabad in Chittagong on Thursday, says a press release.

The programme is part of the South Asia Integrated Tourism Human Resource Development, presently being implemented throughout the region.

A H M Karam Ali, Managing Director of Hotel Agrabad, Chittagong, participated at the closing ceremony. In his address he stressed the importance of tourism training and the vital role it plays in the upgrading and development of the labour force.

190 trainers' programmes in eight occupational areas are being implemented throughout South Asia, supported by the European Commission.

The course was conducted by David T Aitken, EEC project Co-ordinator — Bangladesh and Mesbahuddin Zahed, Training Specialist of the South Asia Integrated Tourism Human Resource Development Project.

Abdul Gafur Sagor, President of the Small Restaurants Association attended the programme along with 5 other owners.



Food and Beverage trainers' programme as part of the South Asia Integrated Tourism Human Resource Development concluded at Hotel Agrabad in Chittagong on Thursday with the Managing Director of the hotel participating.

### Bangladesh to receive Tk 130 cr Swedish grant

Bangladesh will receive a grant of Swedish kroner 210 million equivalent to approximately Taka 130 crore from Sweden for rural employment sector programme III during 1996-2000, reports UNB.

An agreement to this effect was signed between the Bangladesh government and the Swedish government at Economic Relations Division (ERD) of Finance Ministry yesterday.

ERD Joint Secretary of Finance Ministry AB Chowdhury and Charge d'Affairs of Sweden to Bangladesh signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments, says an official handout.

The programme will be implemented through five projects in greater Faridpur and Kurigram districts. The main objective of the programme in the development of physical infrastructure in the rural areas for increase of production and employment generation of the poorer community.

### Jute growers to get fair prices : Minister

State Minister for Jute and Textiles AK Faezul Huq said the jute growers would get fair prices for their products as Taka 150 crore had been released for procurement of jute.

In an interview with BSS at his Secretariat chamber yesterday the minister said if required more fund would be made available as the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wants to ensure fair prices for the agricultural products. He said the average prevailing price for jute was between Taka 340 and Taka 350 per mound. He, however, said that in isolated cases the prices might be lower. White tosha is, however, sold at Tk. 460 per mound, he said.

Referring to the release of funds, he said this time it was in September while there were examples when such fund was made available even in November and December in the past. The delay in the release of fund means investment in unproductive sectors, he said.

He was critical of the past BNP government for dissolving the Bangladesh Jute Corporation (BJC) without making alternative arrangement for the storage of jute. Refuting the opposition allegations that there were no required number of purchase centres, he said though the number had been reduced compared to that of the last year, there was no problem regarding procurement as the centres had been opened mostly on the basis of recommendations of parliament members of the respective areas.

The Jute Minister had words of praise for the agreement signed by the past government with the World Bank regarding jute sector adjustment credit of 250 million US dollars (about Taka 1000 crore) for reducing the number of employees in public sector jute mills under golden handshake.

The BNP government had given employment to about 3,000 workers in Adamjee Jute Mills at the lag end of its term.

He said Adamjee had a total of about 19,000 workers of whom 8,000 are excess. He said of those given employment included 600 earlier released under the golden handshake.

Asked whether those employed by the BNP government would be fired he said, "There are three options. The options are: retrenchment, transfer or making them irregular as casuals."

He said so far a total of 60 thousand workers had been reduced from the public sector jute mills under the golden handshake and the present government would honour the agreement with the World Bank provided the money was released timely.

He, however, said at present the government had no intention to retrench any worker from the public sector jute mills.

He said the government has inherited the accumulated liability in public sector jute mills.

### BA to axe 5000 jobs over next 18 months

LONDON, Sept 19: British Airways is to cut 5,000 staff over the next 18 months, as part of an efficiency drive to cut costs by one billion pounds (£1.55 billion dollars) by the year 2000, the company announced yesterday, reports AFP.

Chief Executive Bob Ayling said the job cuts were necessary to ensure the airline remains competitive. However, he said that BA would continue to recruit staff, and by the year 2000 it expected its British workforce to be around 49,000, the same number as at present.

Most of the 5,000 job losses will be at London's Heathrow and Gatwick Airports.

### World economic growth may continue to slow down in '96 : UNCTAD

GENEVA, Sept 19: United Nations economists said today that world growth had stalled and warned that anti-inflationary policies in richer countries could spark popular reaction against open trade and a return to protectionism, says Reuter.

The UN's Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in its annual survey of the global scene, also found that while leading emerging economies in Asia were still growing rapidly they faced a mounting challenge from lower-wage countries.

"The slowing down of growth in the world economy is likely to continue during the remainder of 1996," UNCTAD's trade and development report said.

The overall growth rate for the current year would not exceed the 2.4 per cent in 1995, already a drop from 1994's 2.8 per cent that was scored as the global economy was emerging from three years of recession.

UNCTAD also stated that policies pursued in the drive among major members of the European Union to meet conditions for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) were partly

responsible for the loss of steam.

The commitment to reach the targets for the launch of a single European currency in 1999, while fostering growth and employment, "Presents a daunting challenge," it said.

"The budget cuts undertaken to meet the EMU convergence conditions... are exerting downward pressure on the growth of output, and therefore on the very budget receipts needed to meet the fiscal targets."

There was, it added, "scope for further monetary relaxation on pursuit of the twin goals of convergence and growth."

While noting that the United States and Britain had been able to combine wage and price stability with falling unemployment, the report said there was a real risk of deflation in most developed economies if monetary policy continued to focus on fighting inflation and governments on cutting budgets.

The US experience of maintaining growth, in the face of assertions that the economy was overheating, "confirms that fears of inflation have been exaggerated," it declared.

In Europe, it said, there was a risk that job losses and lower real wages, especially in low-skill occupations, would be blamed on imports as well as on the drive towards EMU.

"High unemployment thus risks increasing resistance to policies directed toward achieving important objectives — monetary union in Europe and the full integration, through trade, of developing countries in the world economy," it added.

"The bright point in the short-term outlook is the continued resilience of developing countries to external shocks, including the stagnation in a number of industrialised economies, and their ability to maintain recent trends in the growth of both their output and their trade."

These economies were less dependent on trade with the north "because successful industrialisation in the south has opened up new opportunities for south-south investment and trade."

But, it added, "the current outlook is not all rosy," in several East and South-East Asian countries export growth seemed to be faltering, partly due to the

emergence of new competitors.

Serious balance of payments deficits difficulties could arise "if competition from low-wage countries draws foreign investment away from South-East Asia," UNCTAD warned.

Africa, the report said, was expected to return growth of 3.1 per cent this year, its highest of the decade — partly due to a boom in export earnings from higher commodity prices and partly to greater political stability in many countries.

But the region would need to sustain faster growth for sometime to bring per capita income to their level of 20 years ago.

Latin America, slowly recovering from the effects of the Mexican financial crisis at the end of 1994, appeared set for some recovery in 1996 with output likely to be up 2.4 per cent after a fall of 0.7 per cent in 1995.

"For most countries in the region, the challenge in the period ahead is to sustain rapid growth while consolidating recent significant progress in the fight against inflation and limiting external balances," UNCTAD said.



### New jt MD of Reliance Insurance

Anwarul Huq has been redesignated as Joint Managing Director of Reliance Insurance Limited, says a press release.

He was given the redesignation in pursuance of a resolution adopted at the 8th Annual General Meeting of the company held at its head office in the city on August 26.

A senior man in the profession, Huq carries a vast experience in insurance business and is widely known in the industry and business circles.

He started his career in 1960 with Sinclair Murray (Pakistan) Ltd, a company of insurance loss assessor, adjuster and surveyors.

He was trained with Munich Reinsurance Company, Munich, and Mund Und Fester & Co, Hamburg, Germany, on underwriting, claims and reinsurance.

### NGOs in KL urge ASEAN govts to delay Myanmar's entry

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19: Malaysian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) yesterday called on ASEAN governments to delay Myanmar's entry into the regional grouping until it makes more acceptable political changes, says AFP.

Thirty three NGOs in a memorandum to Malaysia's foreign ministry, urged Malaysia to reconsider its support for Myanmar's application to be a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"We are convinced that (Myanmar's) State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) has no intention of implementing genuine changes in Myanmar after eight bloody years of power," said a spokesman of the NGOs, Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman.

"We did not join ASEAN to take cover for our internal affairs, Myanmar Ambassador to Jakarta Ny Nyi Than said Wednesday."

Ny Nyi Than made the comment during a one-day seminar on Southeast Asia's held by a private think tank group in Jakarta.

Myanmar's ruling junta

marked its eight anniversary in power Wednesday with little fanfare, but vowed to maintain peace and prosperity.

The protest came after Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi confirmed Tuesday that Malaysia had received Myanmar's formal application to become an ASEAN member.

The application was made at the end of last month's visit of Myanmar's junta leader Than Shwe to Malaysia, Abdullah said.

ASEAN which groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam wants to include Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia into its fold by the turn of the century.

Ahmad accused the SLORC of using its ASEAN membership to legitimize its "heinous crimes."

"Since the regime gained both ASEAN observer status in July and our government's endorsement for membership the SLORC has increased its harassment of the people of Myanmar...", Ahmad said.

"Clearly, the notorious SLORC is using the guarantee of ASEAN membership as a li-

cence to further perpetrate violations and abuses against our 47 million neighbours in Myanmar, he added.

The must correct its human rights record and pave the way for a new democratic rule before being allowed to join ASEAN, said Fan Yew Teng, another NGO spokesman.

"ASEAN governments must not give the impression that it is condoning the practice of a military rule," Fan said.

"He said the NGOs were alarmed by continuing reports of forced labour, arbitrary killings state endorsed rape, torture, forced recruitment of children into SLORC's army and illegal incursions into Thailand and neighbouring country."

The NGOs also criticised the junta's denial of rights for the ethnic Muslim Rohingyas in Arakan state.

Debbie Stothard another NGO spokesman described the junta's violations as a "slap in the face for proponents of the constructive engagement" policy, and warned that the policy may turn out as a disaster for the region.

### BSRS sets recovery target

Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) has set the recovery target of Taka 43.45 crore for the 1996-97 fiscal which is about Taka four crore higher than the recovery target of the preceding financial year.

BSRS press release said here Wednesday, says BSS.

To achieve the recovery target, BSRS has invigorated the recovery efforts during the current financial year by forming three high powered recovery task force under the leadership of three BSRS general managers.

The task force will also suggest appropriate legal measures for the willful defaulters.

Each task force will formulate elaborate action plan to realise the current dues and overdues from the projects under each group and make all out efforts to improve the overall recovery situation.

This was told at a meeting of the BSRS Board of Directors held here Wednesday with Secretary of Local Government Division Hsanat Abdul Hye in the chair, the press release said.

It further said that BSRS has become a member of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) and will soon start operating directly at the DSE floor. The BSRS will float its first mutual fund in October next, the press release added.



M A Yussouf Khan, President and Managing Director of United Commercial Bank Ltd, delivering speech as chief guest at the Dhaka Division Branch Managers' Conference held at the bank head office on Monday. K C Rezaul Huq, Hamidul Huq, N H Chowdhury, deputy managing directors, and Khandaker Habibur Rahman, Sr Vice President, are also seen in the picture.

### US pharmaceutical co to give away experimental AIDS drug

NEW YORK, Sept 19: Agouron Pharmaceuticals Inc. will give away its experimental AIDS drug, Viracept, to patients in the United States and Europe who are in an advance stage of the disease who have exhausted other treatments, the firm said Monday, reports AP.

Viracept is a so-called protease inhibitor and will be offered to people who have stopped using three commercially available protease inhibitors because of adverse reactions, intolerable side effects or because they haven't worked, Agouron said.

The drug has not been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. But the "expanded access programme" announced Monday is an effort by the FDA to make experimental drugs available "at the earliest opportunity to people for whom no other comparable or satisfactory therapy exists," the La Jolla, California-based company said in a statement.

Protease inhibitors target an enzyme called protease needed in the reproduction of HIV, the virus causing AIDS. By hindering the virus' reproduction, the drugs can sharply reduce the

amount of HIV circulating in the blood.

Agouron will begin an expanded access programme in several European countries later this year or early 1997, spokeswoman Joy Schmitt said.

"Our clinical programme has always included Europe, and we currently have trials over there," Ms. Schmitt said by telephone from a chemotherapy conference in New Orleans.

Agouron has not decided in which European countries it will carry out the expanded access programme.

### Russia may pay Y'slav debt with MiG-29s

MOSCOW, Sept 19: Russia may clear part of its debt to Yugoslavia by giving it a squadron on MiG-29 fighter planes, a Russian official said Wednesday, reports AP.

The idea of obtaining 20 MiG fighters was proposed by Yugoslav military leaders, said Viktor Sokol of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations.

"The Yugoslav government would have accepted it without doubt if Yugoslavia had not experienced a dire shortage of energy," he told the Interfax news agency.

Russia's debt to Serbia and Montenegro — the two republics left in Yugoslavia — is about 547 million dollars and the jet fighters would clear about 400 million dollars of that, according to Interfax.

Whatever the final decision, military-technical cooperation between Moscow and Belgrade is broadening, Sokol was quoted as saying.

The United Nations imposed economic sanctions against Yugoslavia in 1992 as punishment for supporting rebel Serbs in the secessionist republics of Croatia and Bosnia.

### Petrol price rises sharply in Jamalpur

JAMALPUR, Sept 19: The price of petrol marked a sharp rise in the district following a rumour that the government was contemplating to enhance the fuel price, reports UNB.

As the rumour spread in the district headquarters a section of traders started hoarding petrol without proper safety measures, local people said.

### Jakarta approaches Canberra on possible uranium purchase

SYDNEY, Sept 19: Indonesia is exploring the possibility of buying Australian uranium to fuel its proposed nuclear power industry, Australian officials said Thursday, says AP.

The officials, on an Asian tour with Australian Prime Minister John Howard, told reporters that Indonesia's influential Research and Technology Minister BJ Habibie raised the

possibility of buying Australian uranium during talks in Jakarta earlier this week.

They said the minister told Howard that electricity demand in Indonesia is growing by 15 per cent a year, and will outstrip available and planned conventional power sources by 2006 or earlier.

Indonesia plans to build its first commercial nuclear power plant near Mt. Merapi, a dormant volcano, 440 kilometers (275 miles) east of Jakarta. If the project is successful, the government plans several more nuclear plants.



M Akhtar Ali, Secretary, Ministry of Industries, speaking as chief guest at the inaugural function of the two-day annual conference of Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme organised by the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation at its headquarters in the city on Wednesday.

Environmental groups are opposed to Indonesia adopting nuclear power.

The officials said Howard did not provide an official response to Habibie, but instead suggested Indonesia approach Australian uranium suppliers as an initial step.

Indonesia is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to international atomic energy safeguards standards.

As such it would qualify as an export source for uranium, the Australian officials said on condition of anonymity.

Habibie also raised the possibility of forming joint ventures with Australia in mining and agriculture in underdeveloped parts of Indonesia, they said.