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### Bangladesh trade fair in Riyadh

A single country trade fair of Bangladesh exportable goods was inaugurated by Mashari F Al-Moammar, Chairman of Riyadh Chamber of Commerce, at Riyadh Palace Hotel Tuesday last, reports BSS.

Among others, the Charge d'Affaires of Bangladesh Embassy Mohammad Kamal Uddin was present on the occasion, an official handout said on Thursday.

In all 41 stalls were erected for the pavilion, of which, 11 have been reserved for prominent companies of Bangladesh. The fair generated a lot of enthusiasm and interest among the expatriate Bangladeshis in all parts of the kingdom.

About 1000 visitors, both Saudi and non-Saudis, visited the pavilion during the inaugural day. Representatives of various diplomatic missions and important functionaries of ministries of commerce, foreign affairs, different chambers and the business houses were present at the inaugural session.

Among the important items displayed in the fair were leather products, handicrafts, melamine products, ceramic products, tea, textiles, brass, garments, spices, cooking oil, handloom products and traditional Bangladesh pitha.

National flag carrier Bangladesh Biman opened a separate stall while Islamic Bank Bangladesh Ltd also booked a separate stall and distributing leaflets and booklets relating to banking facilities being rendered by Islamic Bank to expatriate Bangladeshis.

On the concluding day on November 23, a seminar on 'Investment opportunities in Bangladesh' will be held there and a senior director from board of investment will deliver key-note speech.

### 'Govt firm to provide improved telecom services'

Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim said here Thursday that the government was determined to provide improved telecommunications services to the subscribers by updating system through infusion of modern technology, says BSS.

The minister was speaking at a seminar on Spectrum management organised by Motorola Corporate government office at a city hotel.

Mohammad Nasim said telecommunications were essential for building a happy and prosperous future for the people. The standard of living of our people would have to be brought at par with that of the developed nations during the next century. That is why, the government has laid utmost importance on the development of telecommunications system, he added.

He expressed the hope that the realistic recommendations at the seminar for our telecommunications management would be of immense help for the development of this sector.

M M Reza, Secretary, Posts and Telecommunications Ministry and Andy Cobham, Director of Motorola government relations office were, among others, who spoke at the seminar.

Senior engineers of the Posts and Telecommunications Ministry and Bangladesh T and B Board participated in the seminar.

### India backs down over plan to raise petrol prices again

NEW DELHI, Nov 22: India has backed down over plans to raise petrol prices for the second time in four months following communist protest within the coalition government, officials said Thursday, reports AFP.

The decision was taken at a four-hour meeting of the steering committee, the government's highest decision-making body, late Wednesday, a government spokesman said.

"The agreement not to hike the prices of petroleum products was reached after the communist parties raised objection," he said.

The finance minister has agreed to take all parties into confidence before enforcing a price hike.

The prices were proposed after a world crude oil prices rose, a depreciation of the rupee and a sharp rise in imports.

State-run oil companies are expected to owe 4.4 billion dollars to the exchequer by the end of the fiscal year.

Prices of petroleum products, including petrol and diesel, were increased by 25 per cent four months ago, but the government scaled down the hike in diesel by 15 per cent following nation-wide protests.

The United Front members agreed that efforts will be made to bridge the high deficit due to the rising cost of oil by reducing consumption and adopting austerity measures," the spokesman said.

Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda put off a proposal by the ministry a month ago to raise the price of crude oil by 14 per cent to 56 dollars, saying it would have to be discussed among the coalition partners.

### Lockheed Martin to cut 1600 jobs

BETHESDA, Maryland, Nov 22: Leading US Defence contractor Lockheed Martin announced Monday it would close eight plants and cut, 1,600 jobs as part of a restructuring plan, reports AFP.

In a statement released here at the company's headquarters, it said the restructuring would generate annual savings of 300 million dollars by 1999.

The eight plant closure, together with previously announced savings from consolidations within the company's local division, will yield total annual savings of 2.6 billion dollars by 1999, according to Norman Augustine, Lockheed Martin's Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer.

The plant closures will mean 1,600 job cuts, although the reduction will be offset by the creation of new positions at other Lockheed Martin sites, the company said.

The company said there will be no charge to 1996 earnings as a result of the closure, which it expects to complete in 1998.

## 1st phase of Tk 34cr project completed

# CHT will step into new era of development soon

CHITTAGONG, Nov 22: Chittagong Hill Tracts will step into a new chapter of development when an integrated community development project undertaken by Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) and UNICEF at a cost of Taka 34 crore is completed.

UNICEF and CHTDB sources told BSS that the aim of the five-year term (1996-2000) project is to improve the socio-economic condition of the vast disadvantaged rural people of the regions through ensuring basic services like health, education, sanitation, safe water, smokeless furnace kitchen and income generating programmes.

Of the total expenditure of the project, UNICEF is providing about Taka 22 crore while the rest will be spent from the annual development programme fund of CHTDB, the sources said. The first phase of the project which began in January '96 was completed successfully and the second phase, the major work on the project is going on in full swing, the sources added.

The hill tract regions consist of three hill districts - Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachhari with a total area of 13,294 square kilometers inhabited by about one million

people of non-tribal and 14 tribal communities. Of whom the literacy rate is the lowest, potable water is inadequate, approximately 70 per cent of the families have no sanitary latrin and there is high prevalence of diarrhoeal diseases and worm infestation.

In view of the situation the government has given top priority to the economic and social development of the region through ensuring basic services to the people. The CHT integrated community development project would cover around seven lakh people who are living scattered in hilly remote areas.

The sources further said Special Affairs Division is the sponsoring agency of the project and three broad-based committees have been formed to implement the project in phases by the year 2000. The committees are central coordination committee, headed by Secretary, Special Affairs Division, district coordination committee headed by chairman of the Local Government Council and thana coordination committee.

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Philippine President Fidel Ramos addressed the opening of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) ministers' meeting yesterday.

### China probing irregularities in Shenzhen stock market

SHENZHEN, Nov 22: Central government regulators are in the southern boomtown of Shenzhen investigating trading irregularities on its stock exchange, local officials said Friday, reports AP.

The inspections by the China Securities Regulatory Commission were aimed at transactions involving shares issued to domestic investors, not those sold to foreigners, said an official at the Shenzhen Securities and Exchange Commission.

Manipulation of the market was also under scrutiny, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Staff at several securities firms in Shenzhen also confirmed this.

In recent weeks, trying to clean up the unruly market, the market watchdog has penalised several securities firms and banks for making or using illegal loans to buy shares on credit.

An official at the Shenzhen Stock Exchange declined to comment on the specifics of the investigation, but said an announcement of the results of the investigation could be expected over the weekend.

News of the inspections in Shenzhen come after a year of explosive trading, with the benchmark subindex for domestically issued Class A shares climbing nearly 300 per cent in record daily trading volumes of up to 18 billion yuan (2.17 billion dollars).

### APEC conference Monday: US fears attack

## 3-point plan adopted to liberalise trade

MANILA, Nov 22: Ministers of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum have adopted a three-point plan to liberalise trade, Philippine Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rodolfo Severino said today, reports AFP.

The Manila Action Plan for APEC, or MAPA, which outlines individual commitments to free trade, a collective action plan and economic and technical cooperation, did not require further approval from APEC leaders, he said.

"The leaders will be talking about the broader things, the loftier things, the vision," Severino told reporters.

Leaders and representatives of the 18 APEC members are to meet Monday in the northern free port of Subic Bay.

AFP report says: The United States has received information about possible threats to American diplomats during the APEC conference in Manila.

State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

He told reporters the Philippines government had taken steps to assure the security of Americans as well as other delegates but the United States felt compelled to alert the public to the warning.

"The US Embassy in Manila has received information about possible threats to American diplomats during this conference," Burns told a news briefing.

"We're particularly concerned about alerting the press corps travelling with us because it may be that potential terrorists... may not distinguish between journalists and government officials," he said.

Burns refused to provide any details about the nature of the threat or to say whether US officials believed it came from Filipinos or some outside group.

## China calls for expanded trade ties with India

BEIJING, Nov 22: China has called for expanded trade ties with India, ahead of a state visit by President Jiang Zemin to the Sub-continent later this month, reports AFP.

Although Sino-Indian trade has shown a 20 per cent jump this year, it is still far from recognising its true potential, a foreign trade expert was quoted as saying by the China Daily on Friday.

"The trade turnover does not match up with the status of the two countries as giants among developing countries," said Anbaojun, from the foreign trade ministry's International Trade Research Institute.

Jiang is scheduled to pay a three-day official visit to India beginning Thursday as part of an Asian tour that will take him to the Philippines, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

China's trade with India in the first nine months of 1996 totalled 1.01 billion dollars — up 20 per cent from the same period last year.

Chinese imports from India surged 88.5 per cent to 523.9 million dollars, while exports were down 13.7 per cent at 485.4 million dollars.

Proportionally, however, India constitutes only 0.4 per cent of China's total foreign trade.

An attributed the low figure to India's inadequate foreign reserves and its large foreign debt, which last year stood at 17.5 billion dollars and 102.4 billion dollars respectively.

## Gas prices post new highs in New York

NEW YORK, Nov 22: Natural gas futures prices posted record highs for a second day Thursday on the New York Mercantile Exchange on concerns about winter shortages as inventories continue to fall at a time they should be rising, reports AP.

Surging heating oil futures boosted crude and unleaded gasoline futures prices. On other markets, wheat futures retreated, while corn advanced.

Weather persistently colder than normal in the Northeast and Midwest has frustrated efforts to build natural gas inventories. The expiration of the December contract on Thursday forced many companies that need supplies to pay significantly more for it now because there were few sellers. Futures prices have jumped 42 per cent in just six trading sessions.

"It's a combination of strong fundamentals — cold weather, low inventories and strong inventory pulls — that keeps this market going," said Tom Knight, manager of products trading at FINA Oil and Chemical Co. "The underlying concern is 'Do we have enough inventory to last through the winter?'"

However, Jiang's upcoming visit will give new incentives for further promotion of economic and trade cooperation.

The financial markets had been expecting this issue, which marks Russia's return to the international capital markets, since the beginning of this year.

But the issue was twice the size expected by financial brokers who had anticipated a 500-million-dollar Eurobond.

The huge size of Russia's external debt had prevented the bond issue until now, but the country has resolved its obligations towards both commercial and state creditors.

Bonds issued before the revolution and held by French investors have not been redeemed and an association representing these investors continues to agitate strongly against the return of Russian issues.

Russia's total foreign debt is about 120 billion dollars of which 103 billion dollars was inherited from the former Soviet Union.

The Russian sovereign bond issue was lead managed by Swiss-owned SBC Warburg and US investment bank, JP Morgan, which concluded a global roadshow aimed at international investors in New York on Wednesday.

The issue, which comes to maturity on November 27, 2001, offered a spread of 345 basis points over the five-year US treasury bond.

Russia in February had already considered launching a Eurobond issue, which had been expected to raise between 300 and 500 million dollars.

### Abul Hasan off to Seoul on 3-day visit

## Move to woo Korean billionnaires

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury has gone to Singapore en-route to Seoul to woo Korean billionnaires for investment in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Before leaving for a three-day visit to South Korea beginning November 25, Chowdhury said he would discuss with Korean leaders, top industrialists and businessmen more areas of their investment in Bangladesh.

On way to Seoul, the State Minister will attend a seminar on 'Investment in Bangladesh' in Singapore today.

Chowdhury said the Koreans, who are now investing in shoe making, garments and textile sectors, had shown their interest in investing in car manufacturing and power generating sectors.

In Seoul, the State Minister is scheduled to call on South Korean Prime Minister Lee Soo Sung. He is also due to meet with the Foreign Minister, the Trade Minister and the Manpower Minister of the peninsula.

Besides, he will address a seminar on 'Investment Opportunity in Bangladesh' in Seoul on November 27, to be organised by KOICA, an organisation of Korean overseas investors.

Chief executives of Korean industrial giants, like Dawoo, Hyundai and Samsung, will meet the State Minister who will be accompanied by a delegation comprising leading businessmen and manufacturers from Bangladesh.

## Japanese cos observing development in economy

The Resident Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Morimasa Kanamura said here Thursday that Bangladesh was proceeding towards promotion of foreign investment especially from Japanese companies to raise the number of export oriented industries, reports BSS.

Under the given circumstances, the Japanese companies are observing carefully the recent development in private and other sectors, here. Kanamura told a seminar on 'The Japanese employment system and its role in economic development'.

Kanamura observed that the interested Japanese companies are happy on the measures taken by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for foreign investment promotion and expressed the hope that the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Japanese companies will be closer and fruitful for better understanding in developing joint ventures here.

The JICA representative explained the pattern of trade unions in Japan and the harmonious relations between the management and trade unions.

Organised by the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDREB) the seminar was presided over by its chairman and noted scholar Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley.

Prof Moutazuddin Ahmed of the Department of Economics of Dhaka University presented the keynote paper.

Prof Shaukat Ali Ferdousi, Prof Ataur Rahman, Barrister A K H Morshed, Kazi Mahmud Hossain, Siddiq Ali Miah, Prof A B A Mahmud and Mohammad Enayet Karim participated in the seminar.

Professor Moutazuddin Ahmed pointed out that harmonious industrial relations has contributed significantly to Japan's astonishing success in post-war decades.

In his presidential address Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley called for re-orientation of not only the labour force in the country but also a change in the outlook and attitude of the workers leadership.

The seminar was largely attended by university teachers, researchers, intellectuals, representatives of various foreign diplomatic missions and NGOs and newsmen.

## Asian stock markets end week higher

HONG KONG, Nov 22: Asian stock markets ended the week generally higher Friday, with share prices rising both in Tokyo and Hong Kong, reports AP.

Tokyo's 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average gained 72.77 points, or 0.34 per cent, to close at 21,216.11 points. On Thursday, the average fell 46.62 points, or 0.22 per cent.

The Tokyo Stock Price Index of all issues listed on the first section was up 2.95 points, or 0.19 per cent, to 1,573.56 at the end of afternoon trading. The TOPIX closed down 2.17 points, or 0.14 per cent, the day before.

Share prices moved in a narrow range ahead of the weekend amid a lack of fresh news to drive aggressive buying or selling, traders said, but continued strength of selective blue-chip issues provided a moderate boost.

Meanwhile, the US dollar was quoted at 111.24 yen in late trading, down 0.36 yen from late Thursday, and slightly below 111.29 yen overnight in New York.

In Hong Kong, share prices closed generally higher in choppy trading Friday.

The Hang Seng Index, the Hong Kong market's key indicator of blue chips, rose 17.23 points, or 0.1 per cent, closing at 13,116.79. On Friday, the index had lost 67.60 points.

Brokers said there was selective bargain-hunting following Thursday's fall in share prices.

"It's kind of choppy trading today," said Samuel Lau, director of research at Pacific Challenge Securities Ltd.

(The index) needs to have some consolidation before getting to higher levels," he said.

TAIPEI: Share prices closed higher in active trading, pushing the key index to a 22-month high. The market's Weighted Stock Price Index rose 68.90 points to 6,761.39.

WELLINGTON: New Zealand share prices closed lower. The NZSE-40 Capital Index fell 11.27 points to 2,352.13.

MANILA: Share prices closed slightly higher in thin trading. The Philippine Stock Index of 34 selected issues rose 3.25 points to 3,102.36.

SYDNEY: Australian share prices closed lower, with across the board weaknesses and quiet trading damping the market. The All Ordinaries index fell 9.1 points to 2,383.4.

SEOUL: Share prices closed lower, pushed down by news that prosecutors have launched an investigation into a bribery scandal involving the head of Seoul Bank. The Korea Composite Stock Price Index fell 13.47 points to 731.44.

SINGAPORE: Share prices closed mixed in moderate trading. The 30-share Straits Times Industrial (STI) Index fell 2.94 points to 2,194.75.

KUALA LUMPUR: Share prices closed mixed, but the key index rose to a new 1996 high on the back of US funds flowing into Malaysian blue-chip stocks. The Composite Index closed at 1217.96 points, up 12.24 points.

BANGKOK: Thai share prices closed higher. The Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) index rose 14.95 points to 970.30.

JAKARTA: The stock exchange's Composite Index rose 9.874 points, closing at 612.861.

## Stocks lower in New York

NEW YORK, Nov 22: Stocks edged lower with bonds Thursday amid some light profit-taking on this month's powerful rally in big technology names and other blue-chip shares, reports AP.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial average dropped 11.55 points to close at 6,418.47, marking only the second time in 14 sessions that the blue-chip barometer has fallen. On Wednesday, the Dow crossed the 6,400 mark for the first time en route to its 10th record close in 11 sessions since Election Day (Nov 5).

Broad-market indexes were mostly lower, with the technology-laden Nasdaq market showing the widest loss.

Computer-related shares stumbled through the session following Wednesday's late bid of profit-taking. IBM, a driving force behind the Dow's advance since Friday, shook off the morning's weakness to post a small gain. But Compaq fell on the NYSE, while Intel and Microsoft fell in active Nasdaq trading.

The Dow's biggest decliners were General Electric and Alcoa, while Caterpillar gave back part of Wednesday's big 3/4-point rally on a brokerage upgrade.

Stocks continued to take their lead from the bond market, which meandered through the session before turning lower in the afternoon and lifting interest rates from late Wednesday's eight-month low.



Charles Munn (M), Regional Sales Manager for South Asia of British Airways World Cargo, poses with the airline's freight forwarding agents after distributing awards to them for sales promotion at a hotel in the city. M S Shafique (2nd-L), BA World Cargo Manager in Bangladesh, is also seen in the picture.

### BOJ injects funds into Hanwa Bank

TOKYO, Nov 22: The Bank of Japan (BOJ) injected about 50 billion yen (450 million dollars) into Hanwa Bank Ltd Thursday to help meet withdrawals after the bank was suspended from carrying out business. JJI press reported, says AFP.

A spokesman for the central bank confirmed that the Bank of Japan had injected funds into the failed bank but refused to specify the amount.

"It is true that we carried out special loans," the central bank spokesman said. "But as a matter of policy, we never disclose specific figures when we extend special loans to specific banks."

Bank of Japan Governor Yasuo Mitsuhashi and Finance Minister Hiroshi Mitsuhashi announced Hanwa's suspension from business earlier Thursday, marking the first time Japan has moved to shut down a bank since World War II.

At a hastily arranged news conference, Mitsuhashi said special financing under article 25 of the Bank of Japan act would be extended "if a shortage of funds for repaying borrowers at Hanwa Bank should arise before the transfer of its business to the new bank."

Asked if the bank of Japan might inject capital directly into the new bank, he said the central bank would "respond, if there is a request."

The response would be based on "the existence of systemic risk, the inevitability of a capital injection by the central bank, the protection of moral hazard and to address the central bank's asset quality," he said.

## Palestinian GDP likely to fall 11pc in '95

BEIRUT, Nov 22: Palestinian real gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to fall 11 per cent to about 1.9 billion dollars in 1996 from 2.161 billion dollars in 1995 due to the closure imposed by Israel, a senior Palestinian official said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Fouad Beiso, Head of the Palestine Monetary Authority (central bank Governor) said that according to IMF estimates, real gross national product in the self-rule areas would fall even more sharply, by 17 per cent to about 2.38 billion dollars from 2.869 billion dollars in 1995.

Beiso told Reuters in an interview that unemployment, estimated at 60 per cent in Gaza Strip and 40 per cent in the West Bank, was threatening to cause a new explosion of violence.

Beiso was attending a two-day Arab banking conference in Beirut organised by the Union of Arab Banks.

"We have an army of unemployed people in the Palestinian territories and the hardship has touched the red line which no Palestinian is ready to go beyond. Palestinians are growing impatient and threaten an explosion," he said.

"The Israeli policies are choking the Palestinian economy and unless drastic changes are introduced the situation will explode, bringing down with it the achievements of the peace process," Beiso said.

The closures imposed by Israel on the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1994 had pulled down real per capita income of Palestinians by 20 per cent in 1996 to 600 dollars.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said on Wednesday the autonomous Palestinian areas were losing seven million dollars day because of the closure.

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