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The Daily Star DISINESS

HYUNDAI CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

G-7 meet today Step to strengthen emerging market financial systems likely

WASHINGTON, Apr. 26: The Group of Seven wealthy industrial countries is expected to explore measures to strengthen emerging market financial systems and fight entrenched corruption when they meet Sunday, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said Friday, reports Reuter.

"Promoting reform... to transform more developing countries into dynamic emerging markets is clearly in the interest of the United States,"

Rubin told reporters. Finance Ministers and central bank chiefs from the G-7 — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States - will gather Sunday on the fringes of the semi-annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

"We are moving toward consensus on a strategy to strengthen emerging market financial systems," Rubin said. "This is critically important to reduce the risks of future financial crises."

Telecom watchdog in India strikes down cellular tariff hike

NEW DELHI. Apr 26: India's telecommunications watchdog Friday struck down a government ordered big increase in cellular telephone tariffs, officials said, reports AFP.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) quashed the state-run Department of Telecommunications (DOT) order to increase tariffs of calls from standard telephones to cellular phones from 28 rupees (eight cents) to 57 rupees (1.6 dollars) per three minutes.

"At the time of revision of tariff, there was no material available with DOT to show that if such revision was not done, it would suffer a loss of revenue. Indeed, even at the time of hearing, no such material was forthcoming," the TRAI said in its order.

P Sangal, a spokesman for the Cellular Operators Association of India, said the number of telephone calls made from standard telephones to cellular phones plunged by 60 per cent due to the February tariff rise.

He said there was a 40 per cent fall in the number of new customers after the tariffs went up and more than 20 per cent of subscribers had either cancelled orders for new cellular telephones or ceased taking the

service. The TRAI in its order said the DOT was overcharging its subscribers and the private cellular operators were not consulted before the tariff increase.

"The DOT should have afforded an opportunity of hearing to the private operators while considering revision of tariff," said SS Sondhi, Chairman of the three-member TRAI.

India's telecommunications market was opened up three years ago in line with freemarket reforms launched in

Ban on beef exports EC raises serious objections to Britain

BRUSSELS, Apr 26: The European Commission has raised serious objections to Britain's proposals for a relaxation of the world wide ban on its beef exports, imposed last March because of fears of BSE, or mad cow disease, reports AFP.

The concerns, outlined in a confidential letter to British Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg, represent a major setback for British hopes for an early lifting of the ban for meat produced from herds with no history of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

They are also highly embarrassing for the British government ahead of next Thursday's general election. Prime Minister John Major predicted in June last year that the ban would begin to be eased within months.

The letter, a copy of which was obtained by AFP, was sent by EU Farm Commissioner Franz Fischler and Consumer Affairs Commissioner Emma Bonino to Hogg on April 11.

In it, they make it clear that Britain's proposed scheme for certifying herds as BSE-free were fundamentally flawed because of the absence of computerised records tracking cattle

movements over recent years. "The certification of these animals will depend on the declarations made by the farmer and it is hard to see how the relevant information can be given by the keeper of an animal for movements prior to the time at which he acquired it," the

commissioners wrote. In view of this, the scheme was only likely to be applicable to animals which had spent their entire lives on the same farm, they noted.

Tk 24cr jute project under implementation

KHULNA, Apr 26: The Directorate of Jute is implementing a Taka 24 crore project for production of improved jute seeds, quality jute and its marketing during the years 1997-2000 in fifty districts of the country, reports BSS.

Twenty thousand jute cultivators of 800 unions under 200 thanas have been included in the two projects.

Jute Directorate Director General AKM Nazmul Alam Siddiqui said this at the project orientation session held at Jessore Deputy Commissioner's conference room at Jessore on Thursday.

Khulna Divisional Commissioner, S M Shamsul Alam, Director of the Jute Directorate M Abdur Rahim and Jute Research Institute Senior Scientific Officer Ramendra Chowdhury also spoke at the orienta-

TEHRAN, Apr 26: Food and

Agriculture Minister, Motia

Chowdhury, said here Friday

that Bangladesh would be

highly benefitted by joining the

international community in

evolving effective rainwater

catchment systems, reports

water catchment systems to ef-

fectively utilize our monsoon

water", Motia Chowdhury said

making a statement at the clos-

ing session of the eighth inter-

national conference on rainwa-

Bangladesh has a sub-regional

monsoon climate with an an-

nual rainfall varying from

1400mm in the dry north-west-

ern regions to over 500mm in

the north-eastern region, about

80 to 90 per cent of the precipi-

tation generally occurs during

May to October of the year while

direct use of rainwater for

rainfed agriculture, use of

rainwater collected in water

bodies, man-made canals, and

water reservoirs made in the

small farmer's fields are the

existing rainwater catchment

are a under this rainwater

catchement system, she said,

crop-water relationship re-

sponse studies must be contin-

ued to fit in high yielding vari-

eties to the hydro-climate con-

The Agriculture Minister

dition specific to Bangladesh.

Considering the substantial

systems in Bangladesh.

Motia Chowdhury said the

the rest of the period is dry.

although

ter catchment systems here.

She said

"We need appropriate rain-

tion session which was attended by divisional and district level jute directorate officers.

Nazmul Alam Siddiqui said that the projects now under implementation would cover production of improved jute seeds, quality jute and its marketing through well-coordinated efforts of all concerned agencies.

He said that at least three crore people were involved in production of jute and its export. He said that of the total amount, Taka 20 crore 63 lakh would be spent for production of jute while Taka three crore 38 lakh for production of high yielding variety of jute seeds. and quality jute fibre.

He pointed out that Bangladesh jute faced some unfavourable situations in world market in the past years because of deteriorating quality of

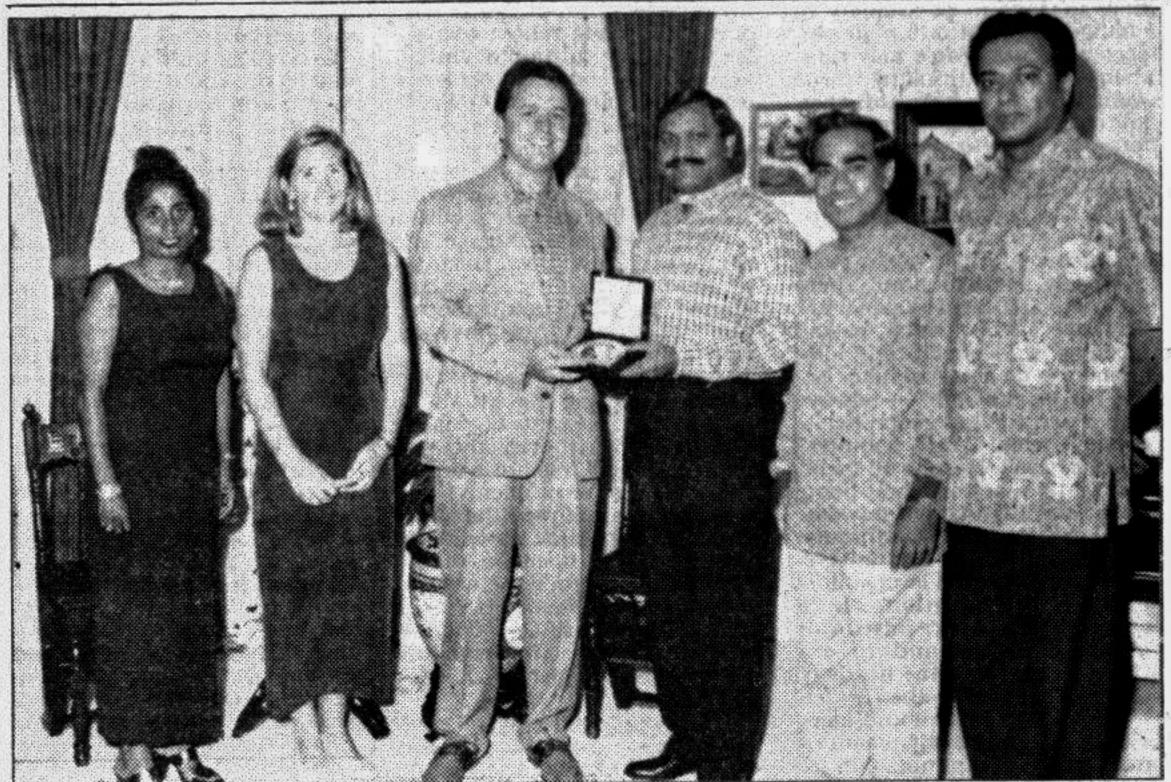
jute, inefficient management

and corruptions. He said that this was for the first time that the government had taken up well-thought out and coordinated projects to restore the past glory of Bangladesh jute.

The set-back in jute sector was because of mismanagement, corruption and deteriorating condition of jute and inefficiency, he added.

Abdur Rahim, a director, said that the objective of the Taka 24 crore project was not to expand jute cultivation but to produce improved seeds, jute and fibre on the existing jute growing lands.

Senior Scientific Officer Ramendra Chowdhury gave details of jute cultivation, research and improvement of



San Amalan, General Manager of Dhaka Sheraton, hosted a farewell reception in honour of outgoing Manager of British Airways Richard Engelmann during which a silver coaster was presented to the latter.

rainwater catchment system

Bangladesh between the huge

surplus of water in the mon-

soon season and acute shortage

third of the land area is sub-

merged by monsoon floods in a

ter and other surface water

evaporate at a high rate during

shortage of water during the

November-March period", she

Kowser floodwater speeding and

aquatic management research

training and extension station

programmes in FASA of Shi-

help Bangladesh gain further

insight into the mechanics of

dent Akbar Hashemi Rafsan-

jani for his illuminating inau-

gural speech and said the speech

had set the tone for the confer-

Vice-President Meerzadeh, the

closing session was addressed

by Chairman of the Conference

Iranian Minister for Jehad

Sazandegi Gholam Reza

Furouzesh and ministers from

the conference read out the

conference report and an-

nounced that the ninth session

of the international conference

Earlier, Secretary General of

Sudan and Syria.

Presided over by Iranian

She thanked Iranian Presi-

raz, Motia said the visit would

Referring to her visit to

Chowdhury said about one-

She said huge monsoon wa-

"As a result we face acute

striking contrast

in the season.

normal year.

the dry months.

added.

the system.

ence.

Motia tells conference in Tehran

said very few countries face the would be held in Brasilia.

Brazil in 1999.

The Iranian Vice President

also distributed prizes among

China's economic

growth will reach

10pc in '97

economic growth will reach 10

per cent in 1997, outpacing the

government's stated target by

two percentage points, the offi-

cial Xinhua news agency re-

report, says AFP.

tics Bureau.

ported Friday, citing an official

tail prices rising five percent

and consumer prices seven per

cent, said the report, issued by

the Chinese Academy of Social

Sciences and the State Statis-

cially 6.1 per cent in 1996.

Retail inflation was offi-

China has kept a tight lid on

The growth forecast was up

money supply in recent years to

tame inflation rates that

peaked at 21.7 per cent in 1994.

slightly over last year's 9.7 per

cent gross domestic product rise

to 6.78 trillion yuan (816.8 bil-

lion dollars). Premier Li Peng

last month announced a state

target of eight per cent for 1007.

this year would be 5.3 per cent

in the countryside and 4.9 per

cent in the cities, the report

Per-capita income growth

Inflation would ease with re-

BEIJING, Apr 26: China's

the successful participants.

MOU to eliminate child labour lauded Harkin to visit Bangladesh soon: Merrill

By Staff Correspondent

US Ambassador David N. Merrill yesterday said the memorandum of understanding (MOU) aiming to eliminate child labour from the country's readymade garments has improved Bangladesh's image abroad.

The outgoing ambassador said: "US Secretary of Labour and State Secretary have praised the MOU. Senator Harkin will be visiting Bangladesh soon to see its success."

Merrill was speaking at a farewell reception hosted by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) at Hotel Sonar-

The US diplomat who is going to retire from his job in mid May, said Pakistan was going to replicate the model in the near future to eliminate child labour from its soccer industry.

Merrill said a US foundation based in San Francisco (Levi Strauss Foundation) felt so encouraged that it made a 60,000 US dollar donation to the MOU's implementing agencies. He also said that BEXIMCO donated 50,000 dollars and Islami Bank 20,000 dollars.

Merrill said he would remain a good friend of the people of Bangladesh and visit the country whenever he finds time and opportunity.

Merrill's farewell ceremony was also addressed by Mostafa Golam Quddus, President of BGMEA, Paul J. Baily, ILO Chief in Dhaka, Monika Sharma of UNICEF, Redwan Ahmed, former BGMEA President and Nurul Huq Sikder, Second Vice President of the Association.

The much-talked about MOU, signed by BGMEA, ILO and the UNICEF on July 4, 1995, attempted to replace child workers aged below 14 from the RMG factories and place them into schooling programmes.

are now studying at about 300 schools and each student is receiving Tk 300 as stipend per month. The BGMEA President ex-

pressed his gratitude to Merrill

About 8,000 child workers

preparing the MOU and its implementation. He also sought Merrill's help to increase Bangladesh's RMG exports to In his speech, Paul J. Baily

for his untiring efforts in

said: "I am quite happy that Bangladesh's model of replacing child workers in the schools, has encouraged Pakistan's soccer industry.

He said that efforts from all segments were needed to make a 'child-labour free' country.

Redwan Ahmed said US might help to address the child labour problems in agricultural and other sectors. "There are sectors where children are doing really odd and risky jobs.

Bangladesh's garment exports to USA faced serious difficulties following the introduction of a 'Child Labour Deterrence Act' placed by Senator Harkin in the US Congress in the early 90s. Child Labour Coalition, a consumer pressure group and other NGOs in the USA began a propaganda campaign against the sweatshops and threatened boycott of Bangladesh's apparels and garments.

Indian stocks may rally next week

NEW DELHI, Apr 26 : India : share prices are expected to rally next week with the entry of foreign institutional investors onto the market, stock brokers said, reports AFP.

"It has been a dull week," said broker Ajit Ambani. He said foreign institutional investors were expected to adopt a cautious approach and get active in the week beginning Monday.

Other brokers said corpora'e results would also boost the stock prices.

On the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the country's largest, the barometer 30 share sensitive index closed at 3,825.57 points Friday.

6-day workshop for Islami Bank officials opens

The inaugural ceremony of a 6-day workshop on 'Accounting Principles & Practices' for senior officials of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited was held on Tuesday, at the auditorium of Islami Bank Training and Research Academy (IBTRA).

Prof Mohammad Fazle Azim, Director of the Bank attended the function as chief

guest, says a press release. The function was presided over by ASM Fakhrul Ahsan, Director General of IBTRA.

Closing ceremony of two courses held

Certificate awarding ceremony of two 15-day courses on "Banking Laws & Practices" for officials of different levels and on Foreign Exchange & Foreign Trade' for Probationary Officers was held recently.

ANMA Zaher, Director of the bank gave away certificates among the participants.

The function was presided

over by ASM Fakhrul Ahsan, Director General of the Academy.

Exchange Rates The following are the Janata

Bank's dealing rate (BD Tk for one unit of Foreign Currency) to public as on 26/04/97 Buying

	c	lean	Expor Bills	The County	OD	
US Dir	43	.5200	43.352	2 4	3.2386	
GB Pnd	70	.2965	70.009	0 6	9.8254	
D Mark	25	.0637	24.961	2 2	4.8957	
F Franc	7	4171	7.386	8	7.3674	
JP Yen	. 0	3429	0.341	5 0	.3406*	
C.Dlr	31	.9911	30.864	3 3	0.7834	
S Franc	29	4726	29.352	1 2	9.2751	
		Sel	ling	- 200	SHURSONE S	
Name Curren	8400000	T.T.	& O.D.	I	3.C.	
US Dolla	аг	4	3.8120	4	3.8650	
GB Pour	ıd	7	1.3173	7	1.3985	
		170		200		

TT Of Ciebel Of

Franc 29	.4726 29.3521	29.2751
	Selling	
Name of Currency	T.T.& O.D.	B.C.
S Dollar	43.8120	43.8650
B Pound	71.3173	71.3985
.Mark	25.4893	25.5182
Franc	7.5415	7.5501
Yen	0.3509	0.3513
.Dollar	31.5104	31.5462
ranc	29.9762	30.0102
	's selling and be ency for public	uying rates
	Galling	Descripe

Committee of the Commit	and the second s	
US Dlr	43.9000	43,4000
GBP	70.0700	68.0700
S Riyal	11.8000	11.4500
UAE Dh	11.8500	11.3500
Ku Dinar	143,5000	138.0000

Company	Book Closure	AGWEGM	Date	Venue & Time Divider	d Proposed
BTC	03/04/97-28/04/97	AGM:	(7 0000	Y-1-11-1	30
ULC	02/04/97-29/04/97	AGM	29/04/97	Hotel Sonargaon, 3 pm	22
Reckit & Colman	19/04/97-08/05/97	AGM	08/05/97		35
Bexi Infu (Deb)	10/04/97-30/04/97	_	(Interest for	6th instalment)	
Modern Ind	22/04/97-04/05/97	AGM	04/05/97	Hotel Purbani, 3.30pm	7 (F)
Detta Life Ins	SAGGE STREET	EGM	24/05/97	Hotel Purbani, 10am	
United Ins	23/04/97-13/05/97	AGM	13/05/97	Hotel Sonargaon, 4pm	1934
Al Baraka Bank	15/04/97-28/04/97	AGM	28/04/97	Hotel Sheraton, 3.30pm	4000
Phoenix Ins	207,000,000,000,000	(Sacrata)			30
NTC	16/04/97-07/05/97	AGM	03/05/97	Hotel Sheraton, 3pm	14
Monno Ceramic	24/04/97-07/05/97	AGM	07/05/97	Factory Compound Dhamrai, Dhaka, 9ai	m 30
Alpha Tobacco	23/05/97-29/05/97	AGM			20 (1)
Arbee Textile	03/05/97-07/05/97	AGM		2	R:5 (At par)
Bata Shoe	04/05/97-03/06/97	AGM	03/06/97	Factory Premises Dhamrai, 10.30am	220
Alhaj Textile		EGM	30/-04/97	Registered Office 19, Dilkusha, 11.30am	_
Reliance Ins	9099 5556 8095 6044	AGM	18/06/97	Ball Room Hotel Sonargaon	80

Comine

Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong Port

		JIII MANGE			125	- V			
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 26.4.97									
Berth	Name of vessel	s Cargo	L. port	Local	Date of	Lea-			
No			call	agent	arrival	ving			
J/1	Ritz	CI	Tuti	Cross	24/4	1/5			
J/2	Solomon	CI CI	Cal	Ancient	28/4	26/4			
J/3	Al Swamruz	CI.	Kauz	ASLL	14/4	26/4			
J/5	IB Everett		Sing	Everett	R/A	27/4			
J/6	Samuda	Cement	AT A SECURITY OF CONTRACT VALUE	PSAL	10/4	30/4			
J/7		H(D. Peas)		Rainbow	6/4	28/4			
J/8	Western Progress	Cement	Lans	PSAL	12/4	2/5			
J/9	Jian Chuan	GI .	Xuan	Prog	11/4	28/4			
J/11	Da Fu	Cont	Sing	APL (B)	22/4	27/4			
J/12	Banglar Maya	CI	Male	BSC	12/4	27/4			
J/13	QC Pintail	Cont	Sing	OC2T	23/4	26/4			
CCT/1	Ultima	Cont	Mong	Baridhi	24/4	26/4			
CCT/2	Kota Berjaya	Cont	Sing	Pill (BD)	22/4	28/4			
~~~	Padma	Cont	Sing	RSL	25/4	28/4			
RM/14	Hong Gu Cheng	Cement	Lans	USTC	14/4	29/4			
CCJ	Wan Ru	C. Clink	Chin	Seacom	17/4	28/4			
GSJ	Al Wuamar	IDLE		BSL	R/A	28/4			
TSP	Yan Qing *	R. Phos	Xemg	Cosmos	17/4	29/4			
RM/4	Georgiy Dimitrov	Cement	Sing	Delmure	20/3	29/4			
RM/6	Dignity	SKO	Aljuba	ECSL	24/4	27/4			
DOJ	Banglar Jyoti	Repair	(2)	BSC	R/A	8/5			
DDJ/1	Tanary Star	IDLE	Para	PSAL					
RM/8	Mantis	Repair	Mumb	Cross		3/5			

Vessels due at outer anchorage							
Name of vessels		Last port	Local	Cargo	Loading		
	arrival	call	agent		port		
Oriental Way	26/4	Mong	OTBL	NO.	Abs 9 As		
Susak 15/4	28/4	Col	Baridhi	Cont	Col		
Elbe Star 13/4	26/4	Mong	BDship	Cont	102		
Meng Yang 30/3	28/4	Sing	AML	Cont	Sing		
Jenny-D	27/4	Sing	PSAL	Cement			
Arcadia	28/4	UK	RSA	Wheat(G)			
Fong Shin 10/4	29/4	Sing	BDship	Cont	Sing		
Fong Lee 13/4	30/4	Col	BDship	Cont	Col		
City of Lome	29/4	Hald	RSA	GI (Cont)	-		
Mighty Tide	28/4	1753	B. Bay		<del>-</del>		
Meng Kiat 22/4	20/4	Sing	AML	Cont	Sing		
Banglar Robi 23/4	28/4	Mong	BSC	Cont	Sing		
Lian Sha 16/3	29/4	Sing	BDship	Cont	Cal		
M. Regina 20/4	20/4	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont	Sing		
Feng Qing	20/4	S. Hai	BDship	Ci	China		
Banglar Moni 16/4	1/5	Sing	BSC	Cont	Sing		
Freesia 24/4	1/5	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing		
QC Teal 22/4	2/5	Sing	<b>QCAL</b>	Cont	Sing		
Kota Bintang 22/4	2/5	Sing	Pil (D)	Cont	Sing		
Ravidas (48) 23/4	6/5		BSL	CI.	UK Cont		
Banglar Gourab	6/5	Nago	BSC	CI	2505		
QC Pintail 26/4	7/5	Sing	QCSL	Cont	Sing		
Magister (48) 21/4	7/5	Bela	BDship	CI CI			

Tanker due:

Mesa

Sing

26/4

26/4

ECSL

ECSL

TSL

HSD

HSD

CPO/CDSO

	Vessels	at Kutubdia		
Name of vessels	Cargo	Last port call	Local agent	Date of arrival
Iamaya			B. Bay	9/1
Orizont	F 8 <del>*</del> 8	Sing	B. Bay	25/2
Brunei Eagle		Sing	B. Bay	9/4
	Vessels at o	uter anchor	age:	
	Re	ady on		The
Asean Carrier	Urea	Cal	ANCL	22/4
Sea World	Urea	Mong	Saffron	25/4
Nicolas IK	CI	Visa	Oil	25/4
	Vessel	s not ready:		
Vanessa 20/4	Cont	Sing	RSL	24/4
Sea Concert	Cement	Sing	Bright	21/4
THE RESERVE THE PARTY OF THE PA	essels awa	iting instruc	tion:	
Vanessa 20/4	Cont	Sing	RSL	24/4
Sea Concert	Cement	Sing	Bright	21/4
	essels awa	iting instruc	tion:	
Banglar Sampad		Normalian de la composition della composition de	BSC	R/A(17/1)

Banglar Sampad		vien memotooninelle	BSC	R/A(17/1)
Banglar Shourabh	7.5°	325	BSC	R/A (22/4)
Mare	5 <del>5</del> 5		Lams	R/A(17/4)
Ping Shun	5*	978	Delmure	R/A(17/4)
	Vessels no	ot entering	ß	
Hydroussa	Ballast	Monr	OTL	21/12
Pilefs	Scraping	Hoan	Gel	3/3
Tonghae	Scraping	Jian	Simni	2/4
Nisi	Scraping	Tema	MTA	15/4
Lustdorf	Scraping	Maxi	RSA	20/4
Sakhalin-5	Scraping	Sing	JF	25/4
Julia-III	Mop (P)	Coac	Litmond	20/4

Shifting Outgoing Incoming Elbe Star RM/4 Georoy to J/5 IB Everett Hong Gu Cheng to J/10 J/11 Vanessa RM/4 RM/6 Dignity RM/6 MD Alesio J/10 Al Swamruz to RM/4 RM/4 Aniva The above are the shipping position and performance of vessels of

Chittagong Port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by HRC Group,

#### J&J adult toiletries now in local markets maintaining a hygienic lifes-Johnson's brand name has been synonymous with high tyle. These liners are now

Bangladesh needs appropriate Johnson & Johnson's product hygiene everyday. range now extends to adult toiletries and feminine hygiene

> items as well. UniHealth Services has started marketing J&J products in this country since last November. Already, Johnson's pH 5.5 adult toiletries range has become sought after items due to its unique product characteristics, says a press release. Johnson's pH 5.5 products can be divided into three cate-

> gories namely the hair care, facial care and body care range. All Johnson's pH 5.5 are dermatologically tested and balanced to pH 5.5 to match your skin's healthy pH level. This ensures that the user's skin gets the utmost benefit from using the products without causing any harmful allergic reaction. The whole yange is 100 per cent soap free which means that the user will not have a dry or irritating feeling afterwards.

The feminine hygiene products consists of sanitary napkins called Silhouettes, ob Tampons and Carefree panty liners.

Sithouettes sanitary napkins (four variants) are relatively higher priced than ordinary napkins because of its superior absorption capacity, the unique top dry cover and side wings for extra protection. All these features combined together have revolutionised the sanitary napkin market.

Carefree panty liners have become essential all over the world to women of all ages for

quality baby care toiletries in . available here for women who Bangladesh for many years. are conscious about personal

O B Tampon is a totally new concept in menstruation management in Bangladesh. According to Gynae specialist Dr Naseem Rahman, the convenience of using tampons far outweighs any pre-conceived notions or fears that women might have before using them. Dr Naseem Rahman was speaking at a programme for professional beauticians held at a local restaurant in Dhaka recently.

France, Cuba sign trade agreement

PARIS, Apr 26: France and Cuba on Friday signed a trade agreement over the objections of the United States which has imposed an embargo against the Communist island nation, says AP.

French officials announced the accord Thursday, saying it allows for investment guarantees, repatriation of profits, guarantees against nationalisations and arbitration procedures. The accord was signed by

French Industry Minister Franck Borotra and Ibrahim Ferradaz, the Cuban minister for foreign investment and economic cooperation. The United States Thursday

Tinashevsk

Mauro D.Alesio

criticised the pact saying France was taking the wrong course.

## Foreign investors more critical of Asia: Survey

SINGAPORE, Apr 26: Expatriate business executives in Asia have become more critical of the region in the past year, with Vietnam seen as the riskiest place and South Korea suffering the worst decline in image, according to a survey, reports AFP.

Indonesia was perceived as the most corrupt country, Thailand's woes were seen as cyclical and the Philippines stood out for optimism, said a Political and Économic Risk Consultancy Ltd. (PERC) report received here Tuesday.

"Expatriate businessmen in Asia are, in general, more critical of Asia this year than they were a year ago," the report said. "This could be because the economies of most Asian countries have slowed, making businessmen more conscious of the region's socio-political shortcomings."

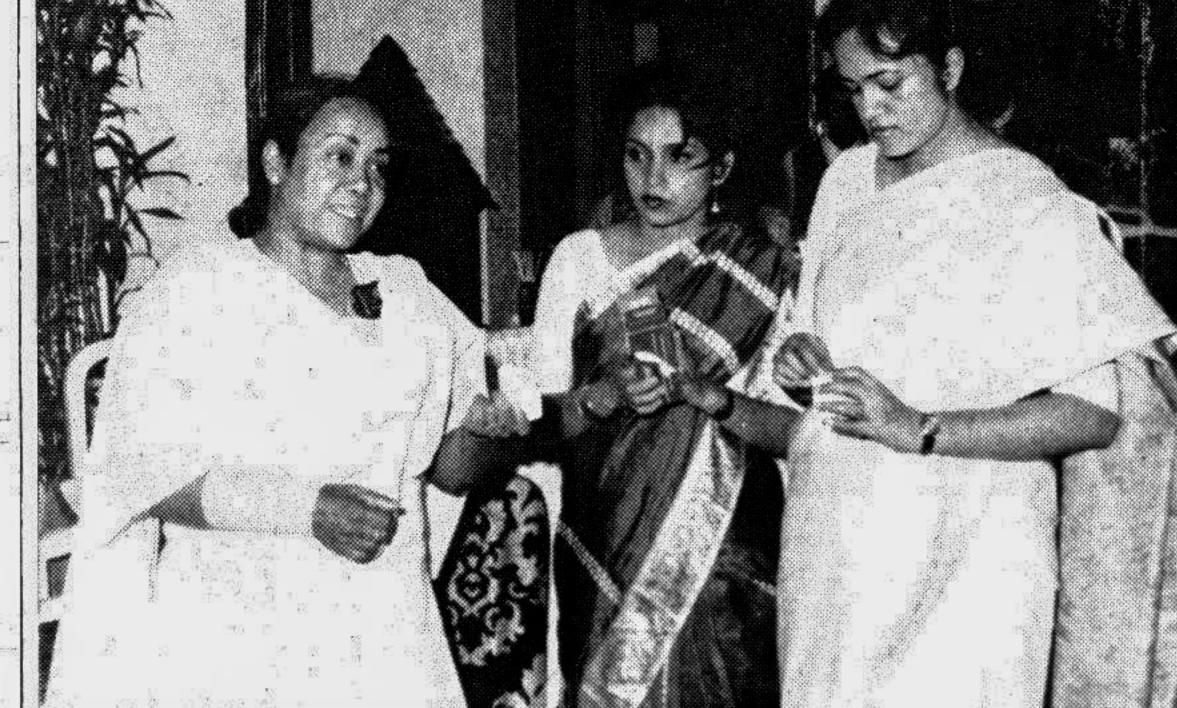
PERC's 1997 comparative country risk report graded Sin-

gapore as the nation with lowest economic and socio-political risks among 12 countries where business executives were polled, with Vietnam at the other end of the scale.

The Hong Kong-based PERC said perception of socio-political risks among foreign investors rose the highest in South Korea in the past year, reflecting the sharpest deterioration in sentiment among countries surveyed.

Although Thailand's economy, currently hit by a prop-erty-led financial crisis, suffered a similar image setback, the perception among foreign businesses was that many of its problems were cyclical in nature, PERC said.

Hong Kong received positive scores despite its impending July 1 transition to Chinese rule, with most investors impressed with the quality of the business environment, it added.



Johnson & Johnson's product range now extends to adult toiletries and feminine hygiene items in Bangladesh.