

Committee to be constituted soon

## Next import policy to be framed for five instead of two years

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed has announced that the country's next import policy would be formulated for five years instead of two years, reports UNB.

He made the announcement while inaugurating a meeting of the import consultative committee, arranged by the Ministry of Commerce at the city hotel yesterday.

The minister said a committee would be constituted soon to make recommendations in this regard and submit its report to the government by three weeks or maximum one month.

"All policies are for the people... and the main target is to ensure welfare of the country," he said adding that the policies are always forwarded by the business community.

Tofael said after the signing of Uruguay Round Agreement in 1994, Bangladesh had rapidly been advancing toward liberalisation to keep pace with the world trade.

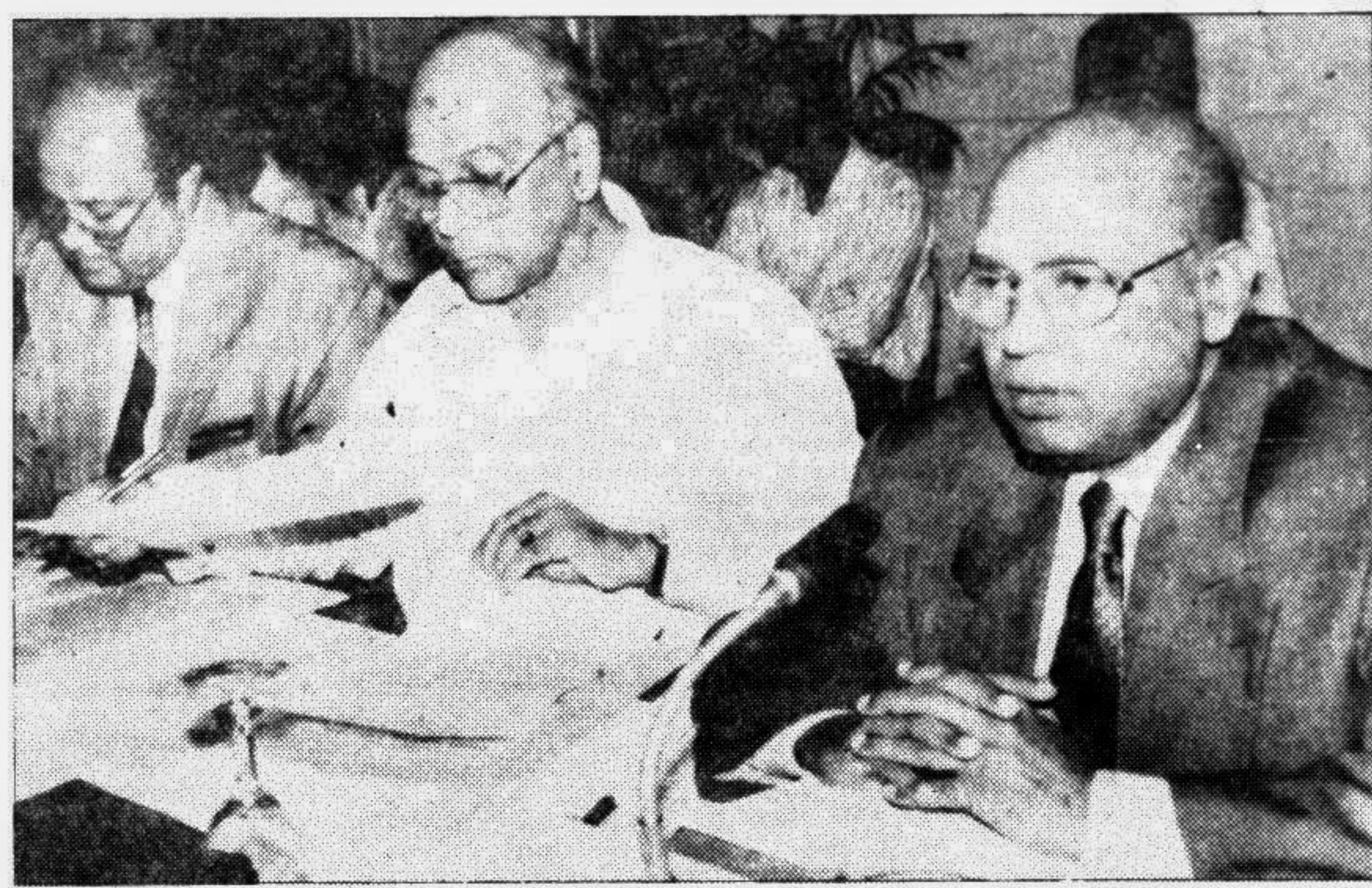
But, he said, sudden liberalisation had some adverse impact on local industries due to withdrawal of non-tariff barriers and quantitative restrictions from certain commodities.

"We have to cope with the situation with proper policies because we'll have to go for total liberalisation sooner or later," he remarked.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun, MCCI President Samson H Chowdhury, Dhaka Chamber (DCCI) President A S M Quasem, Chittagong Chamber (CCC) President Jafrul Islam Chowdhury MP, Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) President Sharif M Afzal Hossain and Commerce Secretary Alamgir Farrouk Chowdhury.

FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun emphasised the need for coordination among the ministries and follow up action in implementing any government policy.

"Businessmen are facing problems due to lack of coordination between ministries," he said.



Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed addressing a meeting of the import consultative committee arranged by the Ministry of Commerce at a city hotel yesterday.

— Star photo

## Pak trade team arrives in city

A seven-member delegation of Pakistani traders led by Mian Sultan Mahmood Noorani, a prominent businessman, arrived in the city yesterday on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, says a press release.

During its stay, the team will hold talks on enhancing trade between the two countries.

The delegation consists of manufacturers of textile processing machinery, powerlooms, agriculture implements and cast iron pickles, fittings for sanitary building, autoparts and chemicals plants from Faisalabad.

They are: Mohammad Ishaq, Haji Bashir Ahmid, Haji Mohammad Saeed (Agriculture Machinery and Implements), Mohammad Saeed Mughal, Talib Hussain (Powerlooms), and Mian Magsood Ahmad (Textile Machinery).

The team will hold meetings with Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry besides negotiating with individual businessmen.

## China admits severe job crisis

BEIJING, May 8: China today admitted of a severe jobless problem in cities but warned it would not be resolved by restricting the flow of migrant labourers, reports AFP.

"China is facing a severe unemployment problem... but those who advocate closing the cities to rural labourers have ignored the principle of fair competition," Zhou Giren, professor at the China Research Centre for Economic Research told The China Daily.

The only way to deal with urban unemployment is to carry on reform in state-owned sectors in order to form a highly competitive labour market," he added.

According to Vice Labour Minister Lin Yongsan, the official number of urban unemployed hit 5.53 million people by the end of 1996, with another 22 million surplus state workers on a minimum retainer waiting to be re-employed.

In addition to the employment pressures in the cities, an estimated 130 million rural

workers are surplus.

But the state sector, which has hit overwhelming economic difficulties in dealing with competition from private companies, is in no position to hire new employees.

Losses in the sector reached 7.4 billion dollars by the end of 1996, and although the state sector employs two-thirds of the workforce, it produced only 30.9 per cent of the nation's industrial output in 1995.

"Reforms might lower salary and welfare standards (in state companies) that are artificially high compared to low productivity," Zhou said.

"But reduced salaries that reflect the true productivity of state-owned enterprises will discourage rural labourers from entering the cities and put the growth of the economy back on a sound track," he added.

He also called for an end to policies which gave preferential bank loans to state companies at the expense of their private competitors.

## MCCI seeks income tax exemption on donations to sports federations

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In justifying its request, the MCCI has mentioned the role of sports as a means of national solidarity and unification, of which the recent example was the winning of the ICC Trophy by the Bangladesh Cricket Team.

The Bangladesh Cricket Team's feat, the MCCI pointed out, is a glorious and most encouraging event for the nation. Nothing unites the nation more than sports, the Chamber commented.

The MCCI feels that income tax exemption will encourage private financial patronage to the sports federations and thereby enable them to organise themselves in a manner required for international level.

The MCCI has expressed the hope that in view of the national need for promoting sports in the country, the government will take a sympathetic view of its request and announce a decision at the earliest.

## Emirates launches flights to Baku

Emirates, the international airline of the UAE, has unveiled its latest expansion plans announcing the launch of its new thrice-weekly service on June 2 to the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, the 42nd city to be added to the airline's network, says a press release.

## Coca-Cola celebrates 111 years

A soft drink that has been the favourite drink of all generations and has seen through the world wars, cultural revolutions to the satellite breakthrough and man walking on the moon. Coca-Cola, the world's favourite soft drink has the secret of being the eternal youth. It has been quenching thirst for 111 years and is still world's number one soft drink, says a press release.

Created by pharmacist Dr. John Styth Pemberton in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 8, 1886, Coca-Cola sold 50 glasses in its first year of production. Today the company's products are enjoyed by consumers in nearly 200 countries.

"Coca-Cola is the world's most recognised brand name," says Khalid Raja of Coca-Cola Far East Limited (Bangladesh Branch). "Since Coca-Cola's last birthday it has taken leadership in Russia, Venezuela and Vietnam. We have introduced a contour can in test markets within the US. These are specific examples of how a 111-year-old brand remains new and relevant to consumers around the world — the secret to a long life!"

The first Coca-Cola bottling plant was established in this country in the port city of Chittagong during early 60's. Today products of The Coca-Cola Company lead the carbonated soft drink market in Bangladesh.

## Bill slashing customs duties moved in Indian parliament

NEW DELHI, May 8: Indian Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram yesterday introduced legislation to cut excise and customs duties on a range of items, adding the 31-million-dollar shortfall would be made up by higher tax revenues, reported AFP.

Moving the finance bill in parliament for the federal budget to March 1998, Chidambaram said concessions on customs duties would cost the exchequer 15 million dollars.

The minister halved customs duty on ferro-nickel, a raw material for steel, to 10 per cent, reduced duty on glass shells used to make colour picture television tubes and announced concessions for an array of other items.

Slashed excise rates on consumer goods and raw materials would cost another 16 million dollars, he said, adding that the loss would be made up by an increase in tax revenues.

"I will ensure that anybody

who should be in the tax net does not remain out of it," Chidambaram said, of India's predominantly non-tax-paying population. Only about 16 million out of some 950 million pay taxes.

Chidambaram, however, did not make any changes in direct taxes in his budget announced in February for the fiscal year to March 1998.

He said a controversial service tax, imposed on travel firms, caterers, recruitment agencies and truckers, would not immediately become law.

The tax is expected to raise in 342 million dollars in the current fiscal year.

"An opportunity will be given to the industries concerned to make their representations about the manner in which the tax will be collected and exemptions if any deserve to be granted," Chidambaram said.

The finance minister also increased government funds for

state-run power companies by 257 million dollars to beef up the inadequate infrastructure sector — a major impediment to foreign investment.

"Several other measures will be taken to speed up the commissioning of an additional 6,000 megawatts of power over the next two years," he said.

"All efforts will also be taken to revive the sick public sector companies. Money will not be found wanting for the same."

Chidambaram said the government has invested about 18 billion dollars in state-run companies and "these companies should now perform and show good returns as it was the hard-earned money of the Indian tax payer."

He said India's foreign exchange reserves had increased from 19.7 billion dollars on February 29, 1997 to 22.7 billion dollars on May 6.

## Exchange Rates

The following are the Janata Bank's dealing rate (BD Tk for one unit of Foreign Currency) to public as on 08/05/97:

|         | Buying   |          |             |
|---------|----------|----------|-------------|
|         | TT Clean | OD Sight | OD Transfer |
| US Dir  | 43.5200  | 43.3522  | 43.2386     |
| GB Pnd  | 69.9023  | 69.6165  | 69.4340     |
| D Mark  | 25.1802  | 25.0773  | 25.0115     |
| F Franc | 7.4679   | 7.4373   | 7.4178      |
| JP Yen  | 0.3466   | 0.3452   | 0.3443      |
| C Dir   | 31.3432  | 31.2150  | 31.1332     |
| S Franc | 29.6847  | 29.5633  | 29.4858     |

|                  | Selling     |         |
|------------------|-------------|---------|
| Name of Currency | T.T. & O.D. | B.C.    |
| US Dollar        | 43.8120     | 43.8650 |
| GB Pnd           | 70.9308     | 71.0116 |
| D Mark           | 25.6079     | 25.6370 |
| F Franc          | 7.5916      | 7.6002  |
| JP Yen           | 0.3547      | 0.3551  |
| C Dollar         | 31.8685     | 31.9047 |
| S Franc          | 30.1920     | 30.2263 |

| Janata Bank's selling and buying rates in cash currency for public: |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
|   | Selling  | Buying   |
| US Dir  | 43.8500  | 43.3500  |
| GBP   | 69.9300  | 67.9300  |
| S Riyal   | 11.8000  | 11.4000  |
| UAE Dh  | 11.8500  | 11.3500  |
| Ku Dinar  | 143.5000 | 138.0000 |

| Coming AGMs    |                   |         |          |                                 |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|---------|----------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Company        | Book Closure      | AGM/EGM | Date     | Venue & Time                    | Dividend Proposed |
| Recil & Colmen | 19/04/97-08/05/97 | AGM     | 08/05/97 | Hotel Portia, 3.30pm            | 35                |
| Modem Ind      | 22/04/97-04/05/97 | AGM     | 04/05/97 | Hotel Portia, 10am              | —                 |
| Delta Life Ins |                   | EGM     | 24/05/97 | Hotel Sonargaon, 4pm            | —                 |
| United Ins     | 23/04/97-13/05/97 | AGM     | 13/05/97 | Hotel Sonargaon, 4pm            | —                 |
| Phoenix Ins    | 24/04/97-07/05/97 | AGM     | 07/05/97 | Factory Compound Dhaka, 8am     | 30                |
| Monro Ceramic  | 23/05/97-29/05/97 | AGM     | 29/05/97 | Factory Compound Dhaka, 8am     | 30                |
| Alpha Ceramic  | 03/05/97-07/05/97 | AGM     | 07/05/97 | Factory Compound Dhaka, 8am     | 20 (I par)        |
| Arbae Textile  | 04/05/97-09/05/97 | AGM     | 09/05/97 | Factory Premises Dhaka, 10.30am | 20 (A par)        |
| Bata Shoe      | 04/05/97-09/05/97 | AGM     | 09/05/97 | Factory Premises Dhaka, 10.30am | 220               |
| Reliance Ins   |                   | AGM     | 18/05/97 | Bal Room Hotel Sonargaon        | 10/5              |

## Shipping Intelligence

### CHITTAGONG PORT

| Berth position and performance of vessels as on 8-5-97 | | | | | |
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