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The Daily Star BUSINESS

DHAKA FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 1997

**HYUNDAI**

CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

Turkmenistan keen to import Bangladeshi labourers

Turkmenistan, a central Asian republic of former Soviet Union, is keen to import a considerable number of skilled-unskilled labourers from Bangladesh, reports UNB.

This was stated by the newly appointed Turkmen Ambassador in Bangladesh, Ashir Ataev, when he called on State Minister for Jute and Textiles, AK Fazul Huq, at his office yesterday.

Ashir Ataev also discussed with the state minister the prospect of setting up joint venture textile industries in Bangladesh, said an official handout.

Referring to the high demand of Bangladeshi garments in his country, the Turkmenistan Ambassador requested the minister to arrange an exhibition of Bangladeshi garments and shoes there.

The State Minister stressed the need for taking realistic step to expand bilateral trade and particularly develop jute and textiles sectors of the country through exchange of delegations between the two Muslim countries.

DPRK halts US grain purchase

SEOUL, June 5: Though widespread famine is reported on its doorstep, North Korea has backed out of a rare deal to buy wheat from the United States, a contract that had been months in the making, reports AP.

As the grain was about to be delivered by freighter last week, the unpredictable communist government told commodity trading firm Cargill, Inc. that it wouldn't follow through with a contract to trade about 4,000 metric tons of zinc for 20,000 tons of wheat, a Cargill spokeswoman said Thursday.

"Regrettably, we will not deliver the wheat under these circumstances," Cargill's Lori Johnson said.

She declined comment on a South Korean report that the North had asked to delay its delivery of the zinc.

"We don't know why they chose not to proceed and won't speculate about their reasons," Ms Johnson said.

A collapsing post-Cold War economy and two consecutive years of flooding have aggravated chronic food shortages in North Korea. Relief officials have been warning of an oncoming famine for more than a year.

The UN World Food Programme said Wednesday in Rome that the system for rationing food from North Korea's specialist farms has now stopped working at half of the country's 10 distribution centres because they're out of food.

Govt planning to set up new urea factories

The government is planning to set up new urea fertiliser factories and other gas-based industries, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed said Wednesday reports UNB.

Talking to the newly appointed ambassador of Turkmenistan to Bangladesh, Ashir Ataev, the minister highlighted the prospects of the gas sector and industrial investment in Bangladesh.

"We have a huge reserve of natural gas and a good number of world-reputed companies are engaged in exploring the gas," he said and informed the envoy about government plan for fertiliser factories.

The country produces about 20 lakh metric tons of urea each year against the demand of 25 lakh tons estimated for the coming 1997-98 fiscal. It shows an import requirement of some 5 lakh tons.

Tofael also informed about other potential export sectors like tea, garments, frozen food, ceramics and handicraft.

He said Bangladesh is interested to find out areas where both the countries can work together for mutual benefit. He stressed exploring the potentials in the field of trade and investment.

Elaborating on the steps taken by the government to explore new markets for the exportables, he said country's businessmen are eager to expand their export market to the

Commonwealth of Independent Countries (CIS).

In this context, the minister stressed the need for exchange of trade delegations to explore resources and possibilities of both the countries for boosting mutual trade and investment.

The New Delhi-based Turkmenistan ambassador, who called on the minister at his office, showed his keen interest in establishing trade relationship with Bangladesh.

"We want to establish economic relations with Bangladesh for mutual benefit," he said.

Commerce Secretary Syed Alamgir Farouk Chowdhury was present during the meeting.

Bangladeshis in US urged to participate in nat'l development

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury has called for active participation of expatriate Bangladeshis to carry forward plans and programmes for national development, reports UNB.

He said the government was determined to build Bangladesh a happy and prosperous nation with joint efforts of people living in country and abroad.

The Speaker, who is now on an official visit to New York leading a seven-member parliamentary delegation, was addressing a reception arranged by greater Sylhet Gono Dabi Parishad in the US city on Wednesday, said a message received here yesterday.

Responding to various demands and problems raised by the parishad leaders, Chowdhury said the government was very much aware of those and remedial measures were being taken as such.

The Speaker also assured the expatriates of all sorts of cooperation and support for their frequent visits to and private investment in Bangladesh. He urged them to think what they could contribute to social and economic welfare of the country.

Members of Parliament Dewan Farid Gazi, Syeda Zebunnesa, Mohibur Rahman Manik and MA Wahab were present on the occasion.

'Russian finance ministry funds improperly used'

MOSCOW, June 5: Russian finance ministry used, Interfax news agency quoted an official auditor as saying on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Eleonora Mitrofanova of the Audit Chamber Auditor said the ministry had repeatedly used bank loans to cover current expenses and paid off the interest using budgeted revenues.

According to Mitrofanova, such practices have cost the government four trillion rubles (700 million dollars) on finance ministry-guaranteed loans.

Transactions carried out by the finance ministry in order to attract bank loans at the expense of those who were supposed to be financed by the budget could be described as the improper use of budgetary funds," Mitrofanova said.

ADB launches \$1b bond

MANILA, June 5: The Asian Development Bank said Wednesday it has launched a one billion dollar bond, its largest dollar-denominated global bond ever, reports AP.

The bond, introduced Tuesday, has a coupon rate of 6.75 per cent payable semiannually, and a 10-year maturity, the Manila-based bank said.

The proceeds will be used for the bank's ordinary lending operations, not for its low-interest loans to the poorest countries, it said.

The lead managers of the bond issue are Goldman Sachs International, SBC Warburg and Tokyo-Mitsubishi International.

The bank originally had planned to launch the bond in early April but decided to postpone the offering because of volatile interest rates in the United States.

The 56-member bank was established in 1966 to promote economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region.



Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed distributed prizes at the annual prize-giving ceremony of Grameen Bima Project of Delta Life Insurance Company in the city on Wednesday. Kazi Fazul Rahman, Chairman, and Safat Ahmed Chowdhury, Managing Director of the company were also present.

Budget should match globalised economic atmosphere: BCI chief

By Rafiq Hasan and Govinda Shil

The President of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI), Sharif M Afzal Hossain, expects the government will formulate proper policy to face the challenges of 21st century to reflect it in the country's next budget.

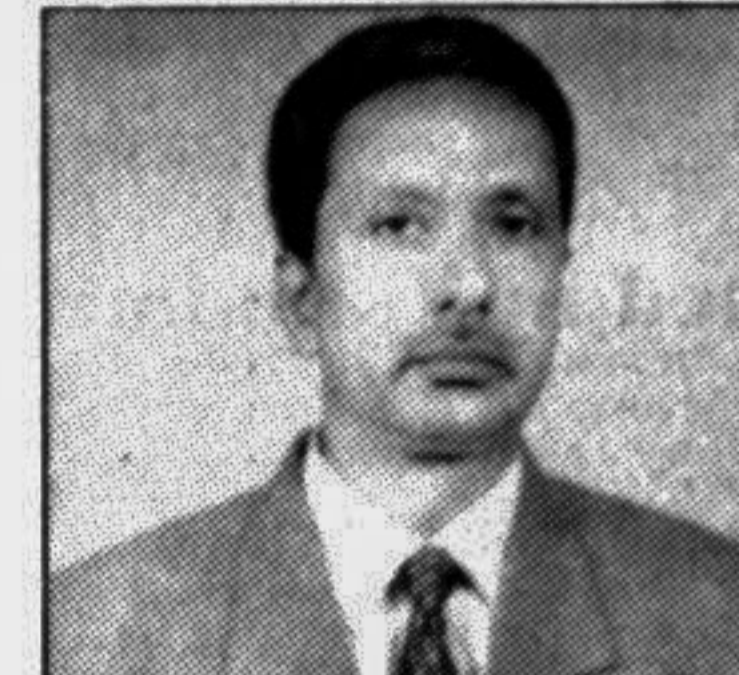
He said the budget for the year 1997-98 is very important because it will be a turning point for the country to enter into the globalised economic atmosphere without any protection for any country.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Afzal said as all kinds of tariff barriers will be withdrawn after the year 2005, the country's economy will have to be made viable before that period to survive that critical situation.

To achieve that goal, the next budget should give emphasis on infrastructural development, promotion of investment, employment generation, increase in productivity and poverty alleviation, he mentioned.

The BCI president said the next budget should fix some targets in different sectors to be achieved for development of the country's overall economy.

In this regard he said to face the economic challenges in the next millennium, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) has to be increased up to 12 per cent from the existing five per cent and the industrial sectors contribution to the GDP to at least 20 per cent.



Sharif M Afzal Hossain

"To create a broad industrial base, the industrial sector should grow at an annual rate of 25 per cent, Sharif observed.

On the question of government's on-going economic reform programmes like financial sector reforms and privatisation of the state-owned enterprises, he said the government should privatise all public sector companies suffering losses over the years.

"Why will the people bear the burden of Tk 2,500 crore every year for the losing concerns?" he asked.

If nobody wishes to buy any loss-making industry, the government can go for management contact with them who want to run the industry to make it profitable.

Following a privatisation programme, the authorities should extend support for technological improvement and

create fund for operating capital.

He said we need good export-base industries to penetrate into the protection free and competitive world market after the year 2005.

Urging all political parties to give priority to the economic activities, BCI president said economic development should be the focal point for all kinds of politics activities.

About the promotion of local and foreign investment, he spoke of political stability in the country and without it, nobody would come forward for investment.

He also urged the political leaders for reaching a consensus that no political programme — disturbing the economic activities — would be given in the future. In this regard he urged the ruling party for taking the initiative.

The BCI leader believes that any elected government like the present Awami League can carry out reform programmes with strong hands.

He felt that the government should take pragmatic decisions on sick industries. Every government forms a committee which arranges seasonal meeting but cannot bring any fruitful results to those industries.

BCI president suggested introduction of cooperative societies in rural agriculture to help increase farmer's income and raise farm productivity.

Paragon Leather gets \$22.86 m export order

Paragon Leather and Footwear Industries Ltd, a cent per cent export-oriented shoe manufacturer, has received export orders worth \$22.86 million US dollars from different countries, reports UNB.

Officials of the Bangladesh-German joint venture company on Wednesday said the orders were only for shoes while foreign buyers were also enquiring about leather hand bags, money bags, vanity bags and belts.

"The company has already taken steps to manufacture and export these items," said Iftekhharul Hasan, the Company Secretary.

Paragon, located at the Chittagong Export Processing Zone with a capacity of producing 1000 pair of shoes per day, fetched Tk eight crore by exporting shoes and earned a net profit of Tk 1.02 crore till September 1996 from its commercial operation in December 1995.

The company has already entered into the capital market offering shares worth Tk six crore in April. Trading of Paragon shares began in the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) floor on Wednesday.

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Managing Director of Transcom Ltd, Latifur Rahman, speaking at the launching ceremony of L'oreal Paris products at Sonargaon Hotel Wednesday. — Star photo

Global Deshi confce July 4,5 at BUET

The organising committee of the Global Deshi and Opportunities at Home Conference, is arranging a two-day conference and job fair to explore the opportunities for Bangladeshis living abroad and at home, especially recent graduates, to live and work in Bangladesh.

The conference will open on July 4 at BUET auditorium, says a press release.

There is a global demand for the best and brightest Bangladeshis. For these global deshis, career and lifestyle options are available worldwide. Yet, they have a lot to contribute to the development of Bangladesh, in terms of investment, cutting-edge technical know-how, and entrepreneurship. It is a common lament among local companies that the best trained Bangladeshis are lost to companies overseas.

This conference has been organised to explore opportunities for these here, and those returning from overseas, to live and work in Bangladesh. Participants will have direct contact with local companies and professionals who have succeeded here. For returning Bangladeshis, the conference will provide a forum to discuss the gender dimensions of living and working in Bangladesh, the challenges of re-entry, and the opportunity to meet peers to share common concerns and forge social and business networks, the press release said.

The conference will include the following themes:

Career services workshops on opportunities for entrepreneurs, business professionals, development practitioners, careers in science & technology, and vocations in Arts & Culture; Small group discussions on social and business networking in Bangladesh; A workshop exploring (a) gender dimensions of re-entry and (b) general re-entry; A Career Fair, profiling employment opportunities in Bangladesh. The Job Fair is open to recent graduates returning to Bangladesh, and students and graduates of BUET, Business Schools and Science Faculties of local universities.

The organising committee consists of Gemini Wahhaj, Sonia Ahmed and Elora Halim Chowdhury. The organisers believe that a large number of talented Bangladeshis may be motivated to stay or return to contribute to Bangladesh's development, if they have access to information about opportunities at home. In addition to the organising committee, there is a small but dedicated staff and many volunteers working for the conference, the press release added.

The advisors are Mahfuz Anan and Yee Woo Guo. This conference is being sponsored by Apex Footwear, Bangladesh Tobacco Co., Bexco Chemical Division, Delta Life Insurance, IPDC, and Rahimafrooz. Collaborating agencies are BUET, The Daily Star, and Teenage Awareness Group (TAG).

Foreign investment may rise on Indian stocks

BOMBAY, June 5: Foreign investors are expected to increase their investments on Indian stock markets in the fiscal year to March 31, analysts and stock brokers said on Thursday, reports AFP.

Investors were showing renewed interest in India's recovering economy and their disenchantment with depressed interest rates in the United States, they said.

Analyst Devesh Kumar at Daewoo Finance said overseas investments on the Indian stock exchanges were likely to rise 26 per cent from the previous year to three billion dollars in the current fiscal year.

Investments in May, the second month of the current fiscal year, were up 37 per cent in 204 million dollars over the previous month.

This indicated investors' growing confidence in India, despite an economic slowdown and political uncertainty through most of last year, Kumar said.

Foreign institutional investors put in 2.37 billion dollars on Indian bourses in fiscal to March 31, marking a 20 per cent rise over the previous year.

The fiscal year ended March 31 saw an economic slowdown brought on by a cash-crunch, high interest rates and general elections that produced a frac-

Dollar weakens against yen

TOKYO, June 5: The US dollars weakened further against the yen by midday Thursday, reports AP.

The dollar was traded at 116.04 yen at midday, down 0.34 yen from late Wednesday in Tokyo and also below its late New York trading of 116.25 yen overnight.

The dollar has faced selling pressure in overseas markets Wednesday after German central bank President Hans Tietmeyer said he doesn't want a weak mark.

Integrated homestead farming in 6 N-dists

An integrated homestead farming model has been introduced in six northern districts of the country, says a press release.

Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service, Bangladesh has developed the model and included it in the two-year pilot project backed by the Agriculture Support Service Project (ASSP).

The pilot project will be implemented in 29 thanas with 145 farmers (5 farmers per thana) in Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts.

In accordance with the new National Agriculture Extension Policy (NAEP), seven workshops were organised in different places with grassroots farmers and agriculturists from the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and RDRS, recently.

In the workshop, some common problems were identified, related to technical training, vaccines, quality seeds, and supply of fertiliser.

Problems were prioritised and translated into development programme both short and long-term.

Participants at the workshop identified and assessed available resources, needs and priorities of the landless and marginal farmers through a

Exchange Rates

The following are the Janata Bank's dealing rate (BD Tk for one unit of Foreign Currency) to public as on 05/06/97:

	Buying		
	TT Clean	OD Sight	OD Transfer
US Dir	43.5200	43.3522	43.2386
GB Pnd	70.6386	70.3498	70.1653
D Mark	25.0508	24.9583	24.8928
F Franc	7.4275	7.3972	7.3778
JP Yen	0.3729	0.3714	0.3704
C.Dir	31.4661	31.3375	31.2553
S Franc	29.9620	29.8394	29.7612

Name of Currency	Selling	
	T.T. & O.D.	B.C.
US Dollar	43.8120	43.8650
GB Pound	71.6774	71.7590
D.Mark	25.4819	25.5109
F. Franc	7.5519	7.5605
JP Yen	0.3817	0.3822
C.Dollar	31.9936	32.0299
Franc	30.4742	30.5088

Janata Bank's selling and buying rates in cash currency for public:

	Selling	Buying
US Dir	43.8500	43.3500
GBP	70.6800	68.6800
S Riyal	11.8000	11.4000
UAE Dh	11.8500	11.3500
Ku Dinar	143.5000	138.0000

Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong Port
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 5.6.97

Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving
J/1	Pioneer Rossi	GI	Sing	ANCL	18/5	10/6
J/2	Xing Ye	RSeed	Adut	AASS	22/5	10/6
J/5	Socres/Khanak	Sugar(G)	Derb	Litmond	27/5	7/6
J/6	Penguin	GI	Mumd	Cross	31/5	6/6
J/7	Yin Chuan	GI	Kali	Prog	30/5	10/6
J/8	Nei Jiang	GI	Sing	Prog	24/5	10/6
J/9	Sukarawan					
	Narek	GI	Pusa	Oil	31/5	10/6
J/10	George	Cement	Sing	PSAL	10/5	6/6
J/11	Prudent					
	Challenger	Sugar(G)	P. Suda	Seacom	2/6	12/6
J/12	Freesia	Cont	Sing	RSL	1/6	5/6
J/13	Kota Alam	Cont	Sing	PH(BD)	2/6	5/6
CCT/1	Proteus	Cont	Sing	RSL	2/6	5/6
CCT/2	Lian Sha	Cont	Sing	BDShip	2/6	5/6
CCT/3	QC Teal	Cont	Sing	QCSD	2/6	6/6
CCJ	Banglar Shobha	C Clink	Mong	Lams	29/4	6/6
RM/3	Aniva	Cpo/Rbpd	TSL	4/6	7/6	
RM/4	San Giorgio	CDSO	Kaki	Seacom	2/6	7/6
RM/5	Freja Nordic	L. Oil	Leix	Litmond	3/6	6/6
RM/6	Taechon	Cement	Cal	Cosmos	R/A	6/6
DOJ	Techmat Pioneer	Cement	Sing	PSAL	R/A	9/6
DD	Banglar Maya	Repair	Cal	BSC	23/5	12/6
DDJ/1	Tanay Star	IDLE	Para	PSAL	8/6	-
DDJ/2	Banglar Kiron	Repair	Mong	BSC	29/5	11/6
RM/8	Manitis	Repair	Mumb	Cross	5/4	9/6
RM/9	Mecca-1	IDLE	Kara	BSC	29/5	5/6
CUFL	LT J Pompei		Chand	Karna	R/A	6/6
CUFLJ	Blue North	Cement	Qing	PSAL	3/6	-

Vessels due at outer anchorage

Name of vessels	Date of arrival	Last port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
Elbe Star 1/6	5/6	Mong	BDShip	Cont	Col
Kota Bintang 27/5	5/6	Sing	PH(BD)	Cont	Sing
Kota Selamat 28/5	6/6	Sing	PH(BD)	Cont	Sing
Vientiane	8/6	Cal	Fairmax	GI(Pulses)	-
QC Pintal 26/5	6/6	Sing	QCSD	Cont	Sing
Overseas Valdez	6/6	Beira	Ancient	Wheat(G)	-
Boan San	7/6	-	Seacom	Sugar(G)	-
Meng Kiat 1/6	8/6	Col	AML	Cont	CEO
Ultima 1/6	9/6	-	Baridhi	Cont	Col
Al Salma	10/6	Yang	ASLL	GI/GL	Kara
Myohyang-3	12/6	-	BMA	R Seed	-
Fong Yun 28/5	9/6	Sing	BDShip	Cont	Sing
Stefanos	8/6	Chen	RSA	GI(St. Colls)	-
Diligence Container 1/6	8/6	Sing	QCSD	Cont	Sing
Chosun Hope	10/6	Lian	OWSL	Soda, Ash	-
Sokol	10/6	Tutu	Seacom	M Seed	-
Da Fu 3/6	12/6	Sing	Ap(B)	Cont	Sing
Fong Shin 2/6	12/6	Sing	BDShip	Cont	Sing
Steamers Future 3/6	12/6	CEO	BDShip	Cont	Col
Meng Yang 24/5	17/6	Sing	AML	Cont	