

Kulna shrimp scene
 Plant owners do some work, need money to do the rest

From Staff Correspondent
 KHULNA, Oct 4: At least seven per cent of renovation work at thirty fish processing plants in Kulna district has been completed.

The renovation work is designed to meet the EU health and hygiene criteria by November 30 in order to restart exports of frozen foods to the European countries.

The rest thirty per cent of work is yet to start due to lack of funds.

According to sources at Kulna unit of BFPEA, only 15 plant owners have received full amount of the promised bank loans to renovate their plants.

But another source said a Janata Bank branch here has refused to disburse loans to 15 plant owners as they do not have any sort of business goodwill.

Work on the fish landing centres is also yet to begin for want of funds.

Myanmar, S'pore sign trade deals

SINGAPORE, Oct 4: Myanmar's intelligence chief and other top officials signed agreements with Singapore on Saturday to boost economic cooperation, says AP.

Gen. Khin Nyunt, who is Secretary One in the State Law and Order Restoration Council that rules Myanmar, also conferred with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

The two countries endorsed closer ties in trade development, fisheries, telecommunications and education under and Economic Cooperation Agreement originally signed in 1995. They also signed a separate agreement on shipping and maritime relations.

It was the second round of talks under a Joint Ministerial Working Committee that held its first meeting in Myanmar in January 1996. Periodic meetings review cooperative projects and to consult on economic policy issues that have an impact on trade and investments.

The shipping agreement was signed by Myanmar Transport Minister Lt. Gen. Thein Win.

Singapore is the second largest investor in Burma, after Britain, with 1.3 billion dollars in projects, said the Singapore Foreign Ministry. Singapore is also Burma's largest trading partner, with 854 million dollars in mutual trade conducted from January through September this year.

The visitors made no mention of the reported presence in Singapore of Burmese dictator Ne Win. Medical sources say he arrived on Sept 25 for a full physical examination. He was last in Singapore on another private visit for medical reasons in 1994.

NBL opens 66th branch in Kulna

The 66th branch of National Bank Limited was inaugurated at Kulna KDA Commercial Area on Tuesday by Prof S M Nazrul Islam, Vice-Chancellor of Kulna University, says a press release.

Al Haj Khalilur Rahman, Director of the bank presided over the inaugural function.

Md Sarwaruzzaman Khan, Managing Director (Current Charge) in his welcome speech said NBL always tries to fulfill the growing needs of the business community.

Ali Akbar Khan and Abdul Alim, Directors of the bank, were also present on the occasion.

Emirates offers mobile phone service to passengers

Emirates passengers traveling to the United Kingdom from any destination in the airline's network, can now enjoy complimentary rental of mobile phones for up to 28 days.

The airline is the first in the world to offer such a service to passengers in all three classes, including those in Economy, says a press release.

Emirates mobile phone service is offered in association with UK's Rent-a-Phone Ltd. It is another of the airline's value added benefits that will be especially useful to those passengers who need to keep in touch with families, friends or business associates while away from home.

Passengers who wish to use the complimentary mobile phone offer in the UK only need to inform their local Emirates office 24 hours ahead of departure. All they pay is a nominal insurance charge and the costs of their calls, which are deducted from their credit card authorisations.

On arrival in the UK, passengers can collect their mobile phones from the Budget Rent-a-Car counters in Heathrow, Gatwick or Manchester airports. Emirates' three gateways in

Pest control sans chemicals gets farmers' support

Pest management in natural way under a donor-aided project to contain the rampant use of harmful pesticide in farming is gaining momentum in the country, says UNB.

Officials said the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) project made progress with farmers' spontaneous involvement through proper training on crop cultivation without using chemicals.

The IPM has five components: adopting measures like biological prevention of pest through conserving beneficial insects and animals, introducing modern agriculture inputs such as fresh seeds, balanced fertilizer and maintaining weed-free cropland, introducing

pest-resistant variety of rice, mechanical prevention of insects and in the last stage chemical prevention after proper diagnosis of rice field if natural way is not sufficient to manage pests.

In Bangladesh, IPM activities started in 1981 on an experimental basis under the inter-country programme (ICP) funded by FAO. It covered other countries like India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

The analysis report of ICP showed that Bangladeshi farmers were able to reduce the pesticide use by 80 per cent and obtained 10 per cent more rice yield.

The IPM programme was launched elaborately for the

first time in Bangladesh in May 1996 after finding better achievement in the management of pest in rice cultivation, said an expert of the project, A K M Giasuddin Milki.

The expert said for indiscriminate spraying of pesticide in cropland the ecological balance was disrupted and as a result harmful insects increased rapidly than that of beneficial ones.

The five-year project, conceived at a cost of 3.5 million US dollar funded by UNDP with technical assistance from FAO and support in kind by Bangladesh government, is being carried out by the Department of Agricultural Extension.

Its prime objective is to de-

velop the capacity within the DAE to take effective IPM training in 1200 thanas and develop a national policy to promote and coordinate all of its activities in the country.

Under the project about 700 DAE and 120 NGO field-workers will be trained in season-long IPM training.

DAE-trained staffs will set up 3360 Farmers Field Schools (FFS) by the year 2001 where farmers will be trained 50 hours in 15 weeks about the natural pest management of rice covering one crop season from sowing to harvesting in 135 to 145 days.

Each thana of the project districts will be covered by two FFS, the expert said.

in each FFS 25 farmer students will take direct training of how to manage pest and maintain proper environment by observing rice field once a week.

Some 84,000 farmers are to be directly trained and 640,000 to be exposed to rice IPM.

Under the project, 80 DAE staffs have completed season-long IPM while currently 80 DAE staffs are being trained and 80 have been given orientation training.

On the other hand, 200 farmers completed the training course and 2000 are currently being trained in 84 FFS in 42 thanas.

The training programme of DAE is going on at Central Ex-

tension Resource Development Institute (CERDI) at Gazipur and Cotton Development Board at Sripur in Dhaka.

The training is given to the DAE thana-level personnel — Subject Matter Officer (SMO), Plant Protection Inspector (PPI), Junior Agricultural Extension Officer (JAEO) and Block Supervisor (BS).

Future plan of the project is to continue training of DAE staff and NGOs to become full-time IPM field trainers, establish FFS and train farmers, establish a monitoring system to follow up IPM activities and help in expanding the technology in Bangladesh on a sustainable basis.

NSU holds seminar on micro-credit

Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, State Minister for Planning, Civil Aviation and Tourism has said the government believes in the basic philosophy of micro-credit, reports BSS.

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's call for greater attention to micro-credit in the world summit has drawn attention of the world community.

Dr. Alamgir was addressing a seminar titled "Micro-credit: From Micro source" organised by the North-South University (NSU) at its campus in Banani here, yesterday.

The seminar was addressed by President of North-South University (NSU) Muslehuddin Ahmed, Managing Director of Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Dr. Syed Hashem of Grameen Trust, Dr. Sheikh Maqsud Ali and NSU Faculty Member Dr. Salauddin Ahmed.

Dr. Alamgir said micro-credit plays a significant role in improving the living standards of the common people.

"We should expand the network of micro-credit for the welfare of all financially disadvantaged persons," he said adding that the resources from micro-credit should be utilised in association with the sustainable technologies.

Dr. Alamgir said the big technologies unfortunately never brought "big development" in the Third World countries.

He urged the scientists and technologists to innovate proper and sustainable technologies for the country.

Desktop Computer courses held

Desktop Computer Connection Ltd, authorized distributor of Microsoft Corporation organized a three-day long two training courses in a city hotel recently, says a press release.

The courses were on Fundamentals of Microsoft Windows NT Server 4.0 (Course # 687) and Administering of Microsoft Windows NT Server 4.0 (Course # 803).

More than one hundred participants including the top management people of various multinational companies banks, NGOs, embassy and IT professionals took part in course.

Microsoft certified professional trainer, VS Harikrishna from Microsoft Corporation of India, conducted it.

Gas deal with Iran US sanctions against Total not imminent

WASHINGTON, Oct 4: The United States has decided for the time being not to impose sanctions against a French oil company that signed a two billion dollar deal to help Iran develop its natural gas reserves, The Washington Post reported, says AP.

Quoting administration officials who were not further identified, the newspaper said in the Saturday editions that the United States will instead try to get members of the European Union to put more pressure on Iran to curb terrorism.

A senior State Department official acknowledged in a phone interview Friday with The Associated Press that actually imposing any sanctions against the French company, Total Oil Group, is not imminent.

We have been saying since the contract was signed that we're now only at the beginning of the process," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "We are assessing the facts, weighing options and we're not anywhere close to a decision."

Total has a 40 per cent stake in a deal with Gazprom, a Russian petroleum company, and Petronas, a Malaysian company, to help Iran develop its natural gas reserves, which are estimated at 700 trillion cubic feet (20 trillion cubic meters), the second largest in the world after Russia's.

The deal was signed last Thursday despite vehement protests from the United States.

A 1996 US law mandates punitive trade measures against any company that invests more than 40 million dollars a year in either Iran's or Libya's energy sectors. But EU members have threatened to file a complaint with the World Trade Organisation if the United States tries to impose them against total.

Under the US law, the government can prohibit American banks from lending more than 10 million dollars to Total or the Russian and Malaysian companies in the venture, exclude their exports to the United States and deny them export license to use American-made goods.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright griped about the deal earlier this week and complained the US allies in Europe just don't get it" when it comes to Iran's support of terrorism.

But she also acknowledged that the United States has little leverage, even as the White House was saying the administration would fully enforce the law.



Former prime minister Khaleda Zia, much to the delight of business leaders who made up most her audience at the BATEXPO '97 closing ceremony yesterday, came up with a statement to partially exempt export-oriented businesses from strikes. The Leader of the Opposition, who is currently agitating against the government and has called a series of hartals much to the dismay of factory owners, has recently been criticised by the trade bodies and chambers.

— Star photo by A K M Mohsin

WB, IMF hail Lanka's econ buoyancy

COLOMBO, Oct 4: The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have hailed Sri Lanka's economic buoyancy, saying the nation's economic recovery and growth in 1997 were very promising and commendable, says Xinhua.

Minister of Justice and Deputy Minister of Finance G L Peiris told the Sri Lanka-Korea economic committee meeting here on Tuesday that his country's economic performance has caught the attention of the two leading money-lending institutions.

He went on to say that Sri Lanka's budget deficit this year will be maintained at the targeted figure of 7 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 1996, the GDP was 696 billion rupees (12.9 billion US dollars) and the budget deficit, 7.8 per cent of the GDP.

Fund crisis

Tk 610cr railway project limping

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Oct 4: The Tk 610 crore Main Line Rehabilitation Project of Bangladesh Railway is limping for want of fund.

Shortage of fund is seriously hampering implementation of the project, sources said, adding the quality of work is also being affected.

The five-year project, started in 1995-96 fiscal year to ensure safety and efficiency of trains, was scheduled to be completed by the year 1999-2000.

But, so far, only Tk 55.69 crore has been released to the project and Tk 41.55 crore spent.

In the current fiscal year, only Tk 22.5 crore has been allocated for the project as against the requirement of Tk

75 crore, sources said.

The project splits into two regions — Eastern Zone with an allocation of Tk 220 crore and Western Zone with Tk 390 crore.

A Western Zone source said, a tender for supplying sleepers was held a few months ago, but the work order could not be issued for want of money.

The project cannot be completed in scheduled time if such a slow pace of work continues and, consequently, the implementation cost of the project will increase manifold," the sources apprehended.

The country's main railway tracks comprising about 1000 kilometres have been in bad condition at most places for long.

Weak baht spurs Thai chicken exports

BANGKOK, Oct 4: Spurred by the weak Thai baht, the country's chicken exports are expected to increase to 190,000 tons by the year's end compared with 145,000 tons in 1996, a local paper reported Saturday.

Thailand's chicken export volume saw a 16 to 17 per cent climb in the first seven months of the year, the English-language Bangkok Post reported.

The rise, according to the chairman of the Poultry Promotion Association of Thailand, can be attributed to the depreciation of the Thai baht which has fallen by about 30 per cent since it was floated on July 2.

"Lower price has importer worldwide shifting their orders to Thailand," said Sa-nguan Jantanarakul, forecasting a chicken export value of 17 billion baht to 18 billion baht (467 million dollars to 495 million dollars) by the end of the year.

The composite index closed down 21.447 points at 515.477 points.

BANGKOK: Thai share prices declined 0.5 per cent in thin trading following a downgrade of Thailand's foreign currency ceiling by Moody's Investor Service the previous day, analysts said.

The focus was on financial stocks after the Moody's announcement on Thursday amid an absence of positive leads, dealers said.

The Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) broad-based index was off 2.49 points at 548.37 points, while the SET-50 selected index dropped 0.24 points to 415.56 points.

AUCKLAND: The New Zealand Stock Exchange 40 index rose 18.32 points, or 0.7 per cent, Friday to 2592.58.

Turnover was a slim 43.9 million NZ dollars (28.1 million US dollars) with Telecom Corp. rising 11 cents to 8.10 dollars.

"It's really just a continuation of a recent trend where New Zealand equities have been well sought after," Merrill Lynch's Tim Koller said.

TAIPEI: The Taiwan stock market rose 0.4 per cent Friday as investors sought electrical shares, the mainstream of the market, brokers said.

"Late buying in electrical issue chalked up the benchmark index which had once dropped below the 8,400-point level in early trading," said Vincent Lo of Masterlink Securities Investment and Trust Co Ltd.

The Taiwan Stock Exchange weighted price index advanced 32.52 points to 8,537.18.

SYDNEY: Australian share prices dropped 0.6 per cent Friday.

JAKARTA: Share prices at the Jakarta Stock Exchange closed 4.0 per cent lower in panic selling Friday as the ru-