



**HYUNDAI**  
CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

**Govt to build 12 fish landing centres in Khulna**

By Govinda Shil

Sitting on the plan for more than 12 months, the government has now decided to build 12 primary fish processing centres in greater Khulna region to comply with the European Union regulations.

Called "fish landing centres", they are a part of a government project that in fact began in 1993-94 and was revived more than a year ago when the European Union wanted them to meet its health and hygiene criteria, officials said.

The nine-crore-taka project was stopped after seven such centres were constructed in greater Chittagong in 1996. The government at that time wanted the private sector, may be the fish processors themselves, to build the landing centres.

According to fisheries and livestock ministry officials, the directive to revive the project came from the Prime Minister's Office because, they said, the EU had earlier asked the government that exportable fish be placed in well-equipped landing centres for primary care, such as washing, beheading etc.

"We will begin physical works at Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat soon," said a fisheries official.

The official said the exporters would be using the Bangladesh Fish Development Corporation's landing centre until those 12 centres are built. The centres will be handed over to the private operators after completion.

But exporters said the BFDC centre is used for mainly non-shrimp fish caught from the country's estuaries and inland open water bodies. It is situated in the city, far away from the shrimp farms.

"We are happy that the government has revived the very important project," said Dr Afabuzzaman, general secretary of the Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association.

He said both the government and the exporters should work together to modernise and get better results from those centres.

Aftabuzzaman, who hails from Khulna, said the exporters would use installed refrigerated vans to carry fish from farmlands to the processing plants until these centres are constructed.

Meanwhile, the government has sent a list of six processing plants -- three from greater Khulna and three from greater Chittagong -- to the EU Headquarters in Brussels last Thursday.

Director general of fisheries Md. Liaquat Ali said he was expecting a response from the EU soon about a fresh inspection.

EU inspectors are to see the approved plants upon request from the government. The officials in Brussels had set November 30 as the deadline to develop Bangladesh's processing plants in line with the EU standards.

A total of 35 plant owners had sent proposals to fisheries officials for inspection. A team of experts prepared a short list after visiting the factories recently.

Exporters said the government list was too short because of low capacity of the two food testing laboratories in the fisheries department has. These labs are capable of testing only few samples every day.

"The list is not exhaustive rather it is indicative," said another official. He said a good number of factories were still developing their plants. The names of upgraded and acceptable plants will be sent later to the EU authorities if they lift the ban soon.

**Reforms in ROK**

Dozens of protesters detained

SEOUL, Nov 17: Police detained dozens of white-collar protesters here today as employees of the South Korea's central bank braced themselves for a strike in protest against controversial bills aimed at reforming the country's ailing financial system, reports AFP.

Some 40 employees of the central bank of Korea (BOK) were hauled away by police near the national assembly building where ruling and opposition parties were locked in a stormy debate over the passage of the bills, witnesses said.

A separate group of BOK staff staged a sit-in at the nearby building of the main opposition National Congress for New Politics (NCNP), shouting "Down with Finance and Economy Minister Kang Kyong-Shik."

Kang was greeted with a thunder of calls for his resignation as he walked into the NCNP building to appeal to them to drop their opposition to the legislation.

The bills contain a controversial clause creating a new super agency under government control which would absorb three existing watchdog bodies for banks, securities houses and insurance firms.

In his appeal, Kang said passage of the bills would be the ultimate answer to South Korea's deepening financial woes.

**All laws, rules will be reformed to spur industrial growth: Fifth Plan**

All laws, regulations and procedures related to industries, trade and investment would be reformed and simplified to ensure a balanced industrial growth, according to the draft of the Fifth Five Year Plan, reports BSS.

The specific objective of the industrial sector during the plan period will be to bring about a structural change in the economy to make it conducive to accelerate the growth of overall GDP and face boldly the challenge of a free market economy in the 21st century," it said.

The draft plan also defines the government's industrialisation objectives and strategies to ensure development with emphasis on optimum utilisation of indigenous endowments, promote employment and catalyse the growth of production and exports.

The draft said this would be brought about within the overall context of poverty alleviation through maximisation of its contribution to gross domestic product, balance of payments, strengthening of technological base and generation of productive employment.

According to the objectives and strategies of the present government, necessary steps will be taken to gear up production and distribution system for supplying required inputs to the industrial sector for its modernisation and expansion.

"Practical steps will be taken for skill development for the people engaged in various vocations," the draft said adding that the principles of free market economy would be pursued and all assistance and encouragement would be given to the private sector.

"Appropriate policies would be designed and implemented for establishing industries at district and thana levels," it said.

The draft said employment opportunities would be created for unemployed youths through the establishment of labour-intensive medium, small and cottage industries in the country.

Besides, efficiency and productivity of the industrial sector would be improved by bringing about a radical change in the operation and management enabling it to be competitive and commercially viable.

In pursuance of the free-trade policy, the government will take adequate measures to remedy the imbalance between import and export trade. Necessary reforms of the economy will be implemented at a faster pace, the draft said.

The Fifth Five-Year Plan as per the specific strategies to achieve the overall objective would promote private sector as the main agent for industrial development while public investment would be undertaken at the same time in some strategic industries and the areas where private sector is not forthcoming.

"Public-private joint ventures will be encouraged in all areas as may be expedient for industrial growth," the draft said, adding that particular attention would be given to improve the efficiency of the public sector to undertake massive efforts to develop efficiency culture in all areas, especially in the industrial premises.

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The present government has already started pursuing and accelerating the process of privatisation of state-owned enterprises in an efficient manner encouraging domestic and foreign investment and developing export-oriented, export-linkage and efficient import substitution industries.

The draft also include promotion of market and products, adequate dissemination of technological information, exploiting the opportunities opened up by the General Agreement on Trade during the WTO meeting and developing entrepreneurship in general, particularly in rural areas.

Workshop on ISO 9000 held

Star Business Report

A day-long workshop on ISO 9000 was held at a city hotel Friday under the aegis of Rapport Bangladesh Limited, says a press release.

The workshop was formally inaugurated by Lutfor Rahman, Member, Executive Committee of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMSEA).

The workshop conducted by an eminent auditor of India, S K Bhattachary, was also addressed by M Mosharrar Hossain, Managing Director, Rapport Bangladesh Limited, Zahid Hussain, former marketing director, Bangladesh Tobacco Co Ltd and Taybur Rahman, Chairman, Nova Apparels Ltd.

The workshop was participated by 20 chief executives and senior managers from different organisations.



**BOEING PAINTS 100TH 777 AIRPLANE:** The 100th 777 built by Boeing rolled out of the company's paint hangar in Washington in Thai Airways' festive colours. The airplane, a-200 model, is the seventh of 14 777s ordered by the airline. This airplane required about 200 gallons of paint, which weighed approximately 600 pounds.

**Chidambaram attacks industry, rules out rupee devaluation**

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: India's Finance Minister yesterday hit out at domestic industry, saying despite a string of pro-reform incentives it failed to achieve growth, reports AFP.

Palaniappan Chidambaram, an advocate of free-market policies launched in India in 1991, also rejected speculation the national currency would be devalued against the dollar.

Chidambaram, in an interview with a state-run television station, also attacked businesses for demanding greater protection against overseas corporates.

He blamed the manufacturing sector for leading the slump and said the agriculture and services sectors had registered a growth.

The Finance Minister can only do things like bringing down the interest rates, provide more funds to banks by cutting reserve ratios, provide enough foreign exchange for imports and bring inflation down, which is now at four per cent.

"Normally all this should spur growth... it's a puzzle," he said in the interview.

Industrial growth has slowed since the end of the last fiscal year March 30 because of high interest rates, low demand and shrinking exports.

Interest rates of up to 22 per cent have strangled consumer demand while export growth has dipped from 20 per cent in the first quarter last year to eight per cent in the current fiscal year.

Chidambaram said he was also concerned about the continued demand for protection by industry.

"The Indian economy must become a more open economy and one of the ways to make it is to bring tariffs to Asian levels if not world levels and encourage competition between imports and domestic production."

Indian businesses have called for tighter controls on foreign firms, who began entering the market here in the early 1980s.

The businesses argued they faced hostile takeovers by foreign firms, alleging multinational firms have taken over their Indian partners using their financial clout after first holding minority or equal stakes.

The Finance Minister, meanwhile, allayed fears of a slowdown in foreign fund inflows.

"I am really on course towards the 10-billion-dollar

goal," he said, adding inflows stood at 3.7 billion dollars last fiscal year, ending March 30, and were expected to rise to five billion dollars by March 1998.

Chidambaram said the rupee would not be devalued. "I think our policy is correct. We have allowed the market to determine the value of the rupee."

"Exchange rate is a price. Let that price be determined by the forces of supply and demand."

The national currency began tumbling against the dollar in August when a government statement was interpreted as a signal it was to be devalued.

The rupee, which held steady to the greenback for over a year despite the US currency's growing strength elsewhere, crashed to a 12-month low Wednesday of 36.77 to the dollar and analysts say it is expected to slide further to 37.50 by the middle of December.

Chidambaram attributed the industrial slump partly to India's political situation.

"Perhaps there is some undercurrent about the instability of the present government," he said of growing bickering within his centrist-left minority coalition which is dependent on the Congress (I) for survival.

PRN opens its London office

LONDON, Nov 17: PRN International, the first global electronic full-text distribution service designed specially for corporate news, has opened an office in London, says UNB.

PRN is a business unit of PR newswire, the world leader in news release distribution to the media and financial community, which has served US companies, institutions and agencies since 1954, said PRNI president Shari Ford.

He said the goal of PRN International is two-fold: First, while "we have been transmitting news on behalf of our US-based companies for decades, new expanded distributions and targeted reach make the newswire an even more potent communications tool."

Second, "in conjunction with our news affiliates around the world we will pioneer the transmission of news release from global corporations into North America."

"Our presence in international markets will also allow us to provide more market intelligence to our US customers," said Ford.

The London office is headed by Mary Hunter who worked on Wall Street at Schafer Capital Management before spending three years developing the online and new media business at Morningstar, the prominent fund rating service.

PRN International was established earlier this year to provide companies worldwide with the service quality and extensive reach which PR Newswire has been providing for its thousands of US-based customers.

In this effort, PRNI will be working closely with its partners throughout Europe, Asia, South America and the Far East and their corporate customers to provide the benefits of getting their news to the North American media and market place.

**Japanese yen dives to six-month low**

HONG KONG, Nov 17: The Japanese yen dove to a six-month low against the dollar on renewed fears over the stalled domestic economy, while sentiment in the South Korean and Taiwanese currencies remained weak, reports AFP.

**JAPANESE YEN:** The yen plunged to its lowest levels in six months against the dollar in Tokyo during the week as worries over the domestic economy deepened, dealers said.

The Japanese yen traded at 125.74 to the dollar late Friday, compared with 123.72-74 a week earlier.

The yen came under strong selling pressure on Wednesday in a contagion effect with bond and share plunges amid weak sentiment on the Japanese economy, dealers said.

It fell past 126 to the dollar on Thursday, but recouped some ground on rumours of intervention by the Bank of Japan.

**HONG KONG DOLLAR:** The Hong Kong dollar closed Friday at 7.7300-7.7330 to the US dollar from 7.7310-7.7315 a week ago. The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the greenback around 7.80.

**INDONESIAN RUPIAH:** The Indonesian rupiah closed trading on Friday at 3.401-3.469 compared to 3.262-3.328 on Friday the previous week.

**MALAYSIAN RINGGIT:** The Malaysian ringgit weakened slightly to 3.3150 against the greenback from 3.2980 the previous week but remained relatively stable.

The expected visit of US officials here next Tuesday to probe state-owned oil company Petroleum Nasional BHD's gas investment in Iran may dampen sentiment, said a dealer.

**PHILIPPINE PESO:** The Philippine currency gained 2.5 per cent against the US dollar this week, closing at 33.98 pesos to the greenback on Friday from 34.85 pesos on November 7.

Monetary officials said the supply of dollars in the market has been bolstered by remittances from Filipino overseas workers which traditionally peak during the Christmas holidays.

**SINGAPORE DOLLAR:** The Singapore dollar fell against the US dollar over the week to 1.5815 from 1.5675 previously.

**SOUTH KOREAN WON:** The won weakened from 979.70 won per dollar a week ago to 987.40 on Saturday amid the ongoing foreign exchange crunch aggravated by a spate of corporate insolvencies.

**TAIWAN DOLLAR:** The Taiwan dollar dropped in tandem with a weak South Korean won to close at 31.240 against the greenback Saturday from 31.050 a week earlier, despite official warnings it has over depreciated.

The central bank, warning that the currency was undervalued at the 31 range, said Friday it would take appropriate intervention.

**THAI BAHT:** The Thai baht was relatively stable over the week, drifting down from 38.00-10 to the dollar at the previous week's close to finish Friday at 38.80-90.

Analysts said Friday's level still reflected greater confidence in the new government and highly-regarded economic team of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai.

**Matia spells out strategy to fight malnutrition in South Asia**

Agriculture and Food Minister Matia Chowdhury said micronutrient malnutrition prevailing in the SAARC region can be solved through mutual cooperation and technology transfer, reports AP.

The minister was inaugurating a four-day international workshop on "Prevention and Control of Micronutrient Malnutrition through Food-Based Actions in SAARC Countries" at BARC auditorium here yesterday.

South Asia is the poorest region in the world with poverty incidence of more than 40 per cent and an income of less than a dollar a day, Matia said adding that rates of illiteracy, infant and under-five mortality are very high in this region.

And on the contrary, life expectancy at birth is the lowest, only around 55 per cent, malnutrition and hunger are a common feature in the vast majority of about 1.2 billion people inhabiting in the region, she added.

Referring to efforts of the present government in checking malnutrition, the minister said the government has completed the formulation of an integrated National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN).

A National Food and Nutrition Policy and a food-based dietary guidelines have also been formulated to ensure good health and nutritional status of our poor people, she added.

Matia said a massive project named Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Project, funded by the World Bank, and for effective coordination of nutritional activities, Bangladesh National Nutrition Council have been strengthened.

The government cannot alone take the challenge of solving the problem of micronutrient deficiency of the people and so the society including the NGOs should face the challenge, the minister said.

The minister said micronutrient malnutrition is widespread in Bangladesh, as elsewhere in the low income and food deficit countries, side by side with macronutrient malnutrition, more commonly known as protein energy malnutrition, she added.

Matia said about 70 per cent of the women and children, nearly 80 per cent of the pregnant women and 40-50 per cent of men in Bangladesh have iron deficiency anaemia.

The extent of the impairment of brain development of the foetus due to mother's anaemia during pregnancy is not known. Nearly 70 per cent of our population have psychological iodine deficiency, 47 per cent already have goitre and about five lakh people are cretins (brain damaged due to fatal iodine deficiency).

About one million children suffer from vitamin A deficiency causing night blindness and about 20,000-30,000 children become totally blind every year.

Jointly organised by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council and FAO, the opening session of the workshop was addressed, among others, by FAO Representative in Bangladesh Hiroyuki Konuma and BARC executive chairman Dr Z Karim.

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The workshop was participated by 20 chief executives and senior managers from different organisations.

**Japanese investors keen to import jute**

The visiting Japanese high-powered investors delegation has expressed keen interest in importing jute and jute goods from Bangladesh, reports UNB.

The interest was shown when the delegation called on State Minister for Jute and Textiles AK Faezul Huq at his office here yesterday.

Headed by leading industrialist and president of Why Management Consultant Company limited Shinomiya Shigeyuki, the delegation members expressed their desire to invest in jute, textiles, sericulture, livestock and fisheries sectors to help in building a hunger and poverty-free Bangladesh.

**Businessmen call for delay**

**Nepal introduces VAT**

KATHMANDU, Nov 17: Nepal yesterday introduced Value Added Tax (VAT) for the first time. But business groups said they wanted a delay and would stage protests if the government did not agree, a business source said, reports AFP.

"If our proposals are not accepted by the government, we are going to move to the streets in protest and demand the postponement of the VAT," a spokesman of the Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) said.

Petrol stations in Kathmandu have already stopped selling products from Sunday in protest, the Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC) said.

Of a total 10,000 firms, including industrialists, hoteliers, restaurateurs, movie-theaters and others.

Only 25 per cent had converted their sales tax registration into VAT registration, the FNCCI spokesman said.

The government has given a 90-day probation period for business or industrial firms from Sunday to get their VAT number registered, he said.

"But at the same time we are negotiating with the government to postpone its implementation until July 16 next year when the new fiscal year will start," the spokesman added.

The NCC and the FNCCI have formed a joint working group to negotiate with the finance ministry for a postponement as they have yet to arrange infrastructure for the VAT system, he said.

"We are still waiting for the final answer from the finance ministry to our demands," the FNCCI spokesman said.

The FNCCI fears the VAT system may encourage a leakage in customs duties and encourage smugglers to bring in goods from India, Nepal's southern neighbour.

"The government has not been successful in educating the general public and traders about the VAT system and it has been implemented abruptly which has puzzled both traders and the common people," he said.

A finance ministry official said the system would benefit the common people and help the public exchequer collect the sales tax revenue scientifically.

"We have been instructing the people about the importance of the VAT and help group discussions and seminars within and outside Kathmandu districts for over two years," the official added.

"We are confident of successful implementation of VAT from today," the official said.

**Profit of Bangkok Bank drops**

BANGKOK, Nov 17: Hard hit by Thailand's financial crisis, the country's biggest bank said Monday its net profit dropped 42.8 per cent year-on-year to 2.93 billion baht (75.12 million dollars) in the third quarter of 1997, reports AP.

In a statement to the Stock Exchange of Thailand, the bank gave no explanation for the decline. A company spokesman wasn't immediately available for comment.

Analysts said the company's performance was worse than expected. According to a consensus forecast published by The Estimate Directory, Bangkok Bank had been expected to generate a net profit of 17.5 billion baht (448 million dollars), down 16 per cent from a year ago.

Saddled with bad debt, banks have been among the most serious casualties of the country's economic slump. To cope with mounting bad loans, the government has ordered all financial institutions to strengthen capital-adequacy ratios and boost loan-loss provisions.

**Exchange Rates**

The following are the Sonali Bank's dealing rates (BD Tk for one unit of Foreign Currency) to public as on 17th, 14th & 15th Nov. '97.

Name of Currency	Buying		
	TT Clean	OD Sight Export	OD Transfer
US Dlr	44.8400	44.6605	44.5660
GB Pound	75.2668	74.9655	74.8069
D Mark	25.7300	25.6270	25.5728
F Franc	7.6856	7.6548	7.6386
C Dlr	31.5752	31.4488	31.3823
S Franc	31.6514	31.5247	31.4580
JP Yen	0.3571	0.3557	0.3549

  

Name of Currency	Selling	
	T.T. & O.D.	B.C.
US Dollar	45.2090	45.2485
GB Pound	76.5489	76.6158
D Mark	26.2176	26.2405
F Franc	7.8308	7.8376
C Dollar	32.1664	32.1945
S Franc	32.3243	32.3525
JP Yen	0.3675	0.3678

  

A) TT (DOC) US Dollar Spot Buying Tk. 44.7502

B) Usage Rate

30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
44.3791	44.0055	43.8919	43.2881	42.9100

  

The following are the Janata Bank's dealing rates (BD Tk for one unit of Foreign Currency) to public as on 17/11/97.

Name of Currency	Buying		
	TT Clean	OD Sight Export	OD Transfer
US Dlr	44.8350	44.6506	44.5410
GB Pound	75.2437	74.9254	74.7416
D Mark	25.7237	25.6149	25.5520
FR Franc	7.6846	7.6521	7.6333
JP Yen	0.3586	0.3570	0.3562
C Dlr	31.5711	31.4376	31.3604
S Franc	31.6271	31.4933	31.4160

  

Name of Currency	Selling	
	T.T. & O.D.	B.C.
US Dollar	45.2115	45.2510
GB Pound	76.4470	76.5145
D Mark	26.2001	26.2232
Fr. France	7.8265	7.8334
JP Yen	0.3675	0.3678
C Dollar	32.1487	32.1770
S Franc	32.2629	32.2913

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

Name of Currency	Selling		Buying	
	T.T. & O.D.	B.C.	T.T. & O.D.	B.C.
US DLR	45.7000	45.1000	45.7000	45.1000
GBP	75.4500	73.4500	75.4500	73.4500

**Doha economic confce ends today**

**Kuwait sees no outcome**

CAIRO, Nov 17: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said here he expected "nothing but failure" to emerge from the Middle-East and North Africa economic conference in Qatar, says AFP.

"We do not expect anything but failure" from the conference, Sheikh Sabah told reporters here hours after the opening of the fourth regional economic conference in Doha.

Kuwait is attending the forum, but most Arab states are boycotting the conference, which runs until Tuesday, to protest Israeli policies.

"Our participation is the fruit of a political decision there was never a decision not to go. There was no US pressure or any other pressure on Kuwait," Sheikh Sabah said.

"The level of our participation did not please Qatar," he added, Kuwait has sent a low-level cabinet minister to Doha. Sheikh Sabah visited Cairo to discuss the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations over disarmament, amid US and British military preparations for an eventual attack on Iraq.

**US, Qatari firms sign \$825m deal**

Another report says: State-owned Qatar General Petroleum Corporation (QGPC) signed yesterday a multi-million dollar joint venture agreement with a US firm to build a petrochemical complex here.

The \$25-million-dollar deal, the first corporate deal signed on the sidelines of a regional economic conference, gives Phillips Petroleum of the United States a 49 per cent stake in the venture. Qatar Chemical Complex (Q-Chem) strengthened.

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