

British trade team due in Feb

Star Business Report

A British trade mission, focussing on Bangladesh's oil and gas sector, will visit Dhaka in February next year.

The mission, representing the British oil and gas industry's supply and service sector, is expected to contribute further to the development of the rich gas reserves in Bangladesh, says a press release.

The two-way partnership in trade and investment between Bangladesh and Britain remains very much in Bangladesh's favour.

British exports to Bangladesh continue to show a significant increase in recent months over the same period in 1996 despite the continuing strength of pound sterling.

In the first eight months of 1997 (the most recent available figures), British visible exports were standing at 57.5 million pound sterling a 33 per cent increase over the previous year.

Although Bangladesh exports to the United Kingdom for the same period were slightly down, partly due to the problems with the General System of Preference (GSP) certification earlier in the year, they still amount to a substantial 15.2 million pound sterling.

With the settlement of the GSP issue the Bangladesh garment industry is expected to quickly make up the lost ground.

British investment in Bangladesh continues to increase and covers a wide range of areas and interests.

Many of the companies investing in Bangladesh have already had many years of commitment here and are well known and respected household names. These include James Finlay, Duncan Brothers, Reckitt & Colman, Lever Brothers, Bangladesh Tobacco, Standard Chartered Bank, ANZ Grindlays, Hong Kong Bank, GEC and BOC Bangladesh.

Others, more recently arrived but as equally committed to the future of Bangladesh are fast becoming well known.

**BKB recovers Tk 176cr loan till Sept 30**

PATUAKHALI, Nov 20: Bangladesh Krishি Bank recovered the outstanding loan amounting to Tk 175.68 crore in the country till September 30 last, reports UNB.

A source of BKB here said the amount realised is 13 per cent of the total recovery target of Tk 1,350 crore set for the current fiscal year.

Of the total realised amount Tk 39.32 crore was recovered from Dhaka Division, Tk 42.79 crore from Chittagong Division, Tk 28.20 crore from Sylhet Division, Tk 17.75 crore from Barisal Division and Tk 47.62 crore from Khulna Division.

As on September 30 last, a total of Tk 3,432.70 crore of the bank have been lying outstanding in 50 districts under the country's five divisions of which Tk 1,945.10 crore stands overdue.

**Excelsior Shoes fetches Tk 841m orders from Germans**

Excelsior Shoes Limited, a local shoe manufacturing company, has fetched an order worth Tk 841.05 million from German buyers for the year 1998, reports UNB.

This was informed by the company's Deputy Managing Director Ruhul Ameen while German Charge d'Affaires Dr Ingo Karsten visited the Chittagong Export Processing Zone Wednesday.

A company press release said Dr Karsten expressed his satisfaction and showed keen interest to expand German business relationship with Bangladesh, which has got a promising prospect.

# Singapore dollar, ringgit, won plunge

SINGAPORE, Nov 20: The Malaysian ringgit and Singapore dollar slumped to new lows against the US dollar today, dragged down by a spillover of bearish sentiment on the escalating crisis in South Korea, dealers said, reports AFP.

"The overwhelming sentiment leading the currencies is still the attention on the won," said Alison Seng, a regional economist with Standard and Poor's MMS, adding that domestic concerns were also coming into play.

The Malaysian ringgit hit a record low of 3,5250 from 3,4680 the previous day, with negative regional sentiment compounded by domestic fears of more corporate bailouts.

"My near-term target for the ringgit is 3,6000 (to the US dollar) by the end of the year," said a Vice-President of an investment research house here.

Sani Hamid, emerging markets economist of Standard and Poor's MMS, said he was uncertain when confidence would be restored in the Malaysian stock

market, where even strong firms were being hounded by rumours of financial instability.

"There seems to be very little that can be done, short of bailing out the companies through other bailouts or taxpayers' money," Sani said.

The Singapore dollar was trading mid-afternoon at 1,6025 against the US dollar. Its lowest level since February 1994. It closed Wednesday at 1,5970.

The Bank Indonesia has been the most active among central banks in protecting the rupiah, as investors are more wary about taking the dollar-rupiah (to depreciate), Sani said.

"But there still seems to be a desire to see the dollar-rupiah (depreciate) in line with the other regionals," he added.

The rupiah had slid to 3,870 levels before joint intervention by Japanese, Singapore and Indonesian central banks in early November.

Speaking at parliament in Jakarta, Indonesian Finance Minister Marzie Muhammed warned that Indonesia must now watch the east Asian region as a whole, and not just Southeast Asia, for the effect it may have on the rupiah.

The Taiwan dollar managed to pull back from its earlier 33.28 level to 32.63 by mid-afternoon, but still lower than the previous day's 32.79 to the US dollar.

Trading in the South Korean won was suspended a half-hour after opening, as it plummeted to its new daily allowable 10 per cent limit of 1,139 won to the US dollar after closing Wednesday at 1,035.

The government announced Wednesday the widening of the trading band for the currency from 2.5 per cent as part of measures to hold off a financial meltdown.

But what's more critical now is the availability of foreign funds, be it from the IMF or other countries to tide Korea over the hefty short-term loans

due to mature before the end of the year; ANZ investment bank said.

Analysts said volatility in the currencies would only come to a stop once South Korea sought the help of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The IMF has led bailout packages for Indonesia and Thailand, where the Asian financial crisis started with the fall of the Thai baht in July.

The Thai baht rose slightly to 39.65 to the US dollar from 39.83 on Wednesday.

Thai premier Chuan Leekpai's affirmations to parliament Thursday that Thailand would stand by its commitments to the IMF, make economic policy decision-making transparent and extend private sector involvement in state-run telecommunication and energy firms and infrastructure projects had been discounted, analysts said.

The Philippine peso was off slightly at 34.80 to the greenback from Wednesday's 34.74.

# Indian exporters say rupee should fall further

BOMBAY, Nov 20: Indian exporters here said the plunging rupee should fall further if the country's exports were to compete with those of Southeast Asian countries, reports AFP.

The rupee on Tuesday fell 1.4 per cent to a 21-month low of 37.41 to a dollar after sliding for several days, mirroring the turbulence in the global stock and currency markets.

Exporters said the rupee had still not reached its correct level.

Ramu Deora, President of the state-run Federation of Indian Export Organisations, said the rupee should fall to 41 to a dollar, to meet the devaluation in the Southeast Asian, Japanese, Pakistani and European currencies.

"A 15 per cent devaluation of the rupee is a must to make exports competitive," he said.

However, the central Reserve Bank of India has taken the opposite view and has been selling dollars and warning of tough action in a bid to prop up the rupee.

In a statement issued Tuesday, the RBI said: "there is no ground for a further weakening

of the rupee in view of the strong fundamentals of the economy. The Reserve Bank of India will not hesitate to intervene to prevent any overshoot."

Deora said the RBI should stop intervening.

Let the rupee find its level at par with other currencies around the globe. The RBI should intervene only when the rupee falls to abnormal levels.

Exporter Nitayakrishna

Goyal said a falling rupee was necessary if Indian exports were to regain their market share lost to Southeast Asian countries after the currency deprecations in those countries.

Most regional currencies

have lost more than 30 per cent of their value against the dollar since the Thai baht's shock floatation on July 2.

"This has to be reflected in the value of the rupee. Already overseas buyers are bypassing India and going to our neighbours whose currencies have fallen more than ours," Goyal said.

He claimed a falling rupee

would not affect Indian conditions and curb speculation."



The President of Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association, Golam Mostofa, addressing a press conference at his office in the city yesterday. He disputed the government's claim that only six processing plants were up to the EU standard, saying the number is more than twenty.

— Star photo

## JB sanctions Tk 1371cr for industrial units

Star Business Report

Janata Bank sanctioned Tk 1371 crore as project and working capital loan for different industrial units of the country in the current year. It sanctioned Tk 113.94 crore as project and working capital loan for 20 industrial units of textile, engineering, cold storage, health services and tannery sectors, says a press release.

The bank also sanctioned Tk 17.43 crore as project loan for 17 agro-based industries and Tk 1239.99 crore as working capital for other industrial projects.

Janata Bank also formed an industrial credit monitoring cell at its head office to provide better service to the entrepreneurs.

## SCB for declaring all services at Ctg Port essential

Star Business Report

Shippers' Council of Bangladesh (SCB) yesterday called for declaring all services at Chittagong Port 'essential' in order to free the port from stalemate.

Expressing concern over the suspension of cargo handling at the port, the SCB Chairman MR Ali in a press release said, "If the stalemate continues, it is likely that congestion surcharge on the import and export cargoes will be imposed again by the shipping lines."

Loading and unloading of

cargoes at the port remained suspended as the Bangladesh Master Stevedore Association (BMMSA) stopped gang booking of dock workers at 8 pm on Wednesday. BMMSA took the decision in protest against the 'go slow' policy of the workers and employees of dock, port and stevedoring firms, the release said.

The SCB Chairman sought personal intervention of the Prime Minister in resolving the crisis.

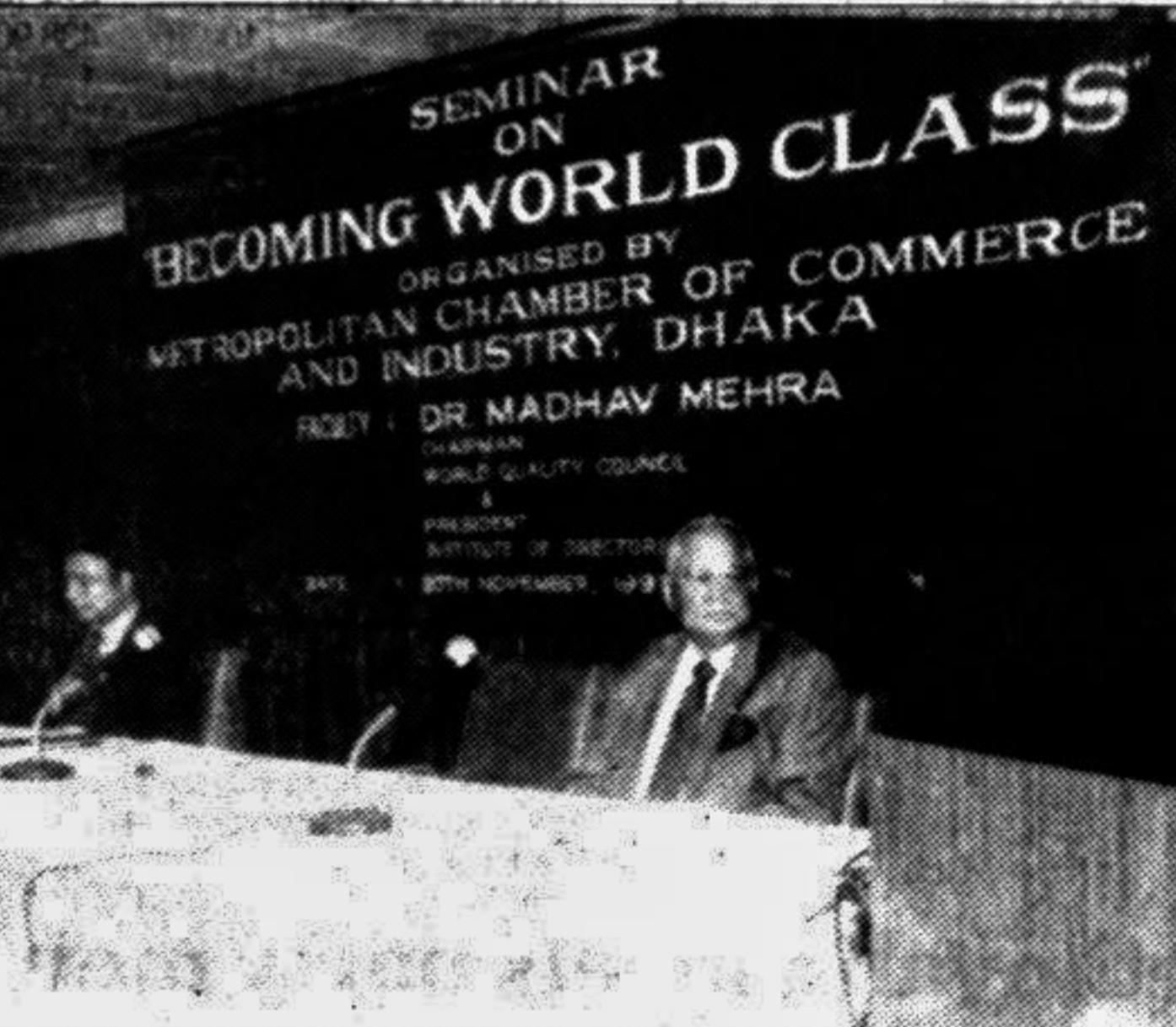
## চাকা বিদ্যুৎ বিতরণ কর্তৃপক্ষ বিদ্যুৎ বক্ষের বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পরিচালন ও সরকারী বিভাগ, মিরপুর, ঢেকা-এর শীতকালীন সরকারী কাজের জন্য নির্বাচিত তারিখে উত্তোলিত হানসমূহ বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ বন্ধ থাকিবে।

তারিখ	বিস্তৃত জান
২১/১/৯৭	আহমেদনগর এলাকা
২২/১/৯৭	পূর্ব মিল্লু, মধ্যমিল্লু, দক্ষিণ মিল্লু উভয় দীরের বাগ ও আহমেদনগর এলাকা
২৩/১/৯৭	পূর্ব মিল্লু এলাকা
২৪/১/৯৭	টাট্টি আর্থিক হাসপাতাল, চিড়িয়াখালী, বোটিনিক্যাল গার্ডেন, পেশাদার কার্ম ও বিদ্যুৎ রাডার
৩০/১/৯৭	নির্বাচিত প্রকৌশলী

পরিচালন ও সরকারী বিভাগ, মিরপুর

GD-343



Mahbubur Rahman, President of International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh, inaugurating the seminar on "Becoming World Class" organised by Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, at its conference hall yesterday. Conducted by Dr Madhav Mehra, President, Institute of Directors, India, and Chairman, World Quality Council, the seminar was attended by 42 leading entrepreneurs of major enterprises.

## Euro nations declare battle for jobs their top priority

BRUSSELS, Nov 20: European leaders are under pressure from business and labour to pare their high 10.6 per cent unemployment rate and help 18 million jobless find work, says AP.

Prof Hashemi said group interactions, especially the discipline in the meetings and the sixteen social decision that Grameen members pledge to follow, contribute to increased confidence and assertiveness of the women.

He said Grameen Bank workers ensure that even defaulting members continue to attend meetings. Members are requested to continue making weekly repayments even if the amount is a token payment and fraction of the actual installment.

The micro-credit lessen the gravity of poverty related problems by generating gainful employment for millions but we should not expect to much from this system which acts as an instrument of economy," Prof Abu Abdullah said.

Executive director of CDF, Khandker Zakir Hossain said there are very few initiatives to extend the outreach of MFIs to

business leaders by bowing to union demands for a government-imposed 35-hour work-week as a way to create more jobs.

The nations, though, are at odds over for to go in introducing more flexibility into their rigid labour markets, hesitating to weaken generous social benefit programs.

Some, like Britain and the Netherlands, have already adopted measures freeing up labour markets, with impressive results. The EU forecasts Dutch unemployment this year at 5.5 per cent, and British at 6.4 per cent.

France and Italy have recently provoked dismay among

statutory, across-the-board reductions of working hours of the imposition of new rigidities...will not create jobs but destroy them," UNICE, the European employers confederation, said this week.

EU governments have played down expectations the summit will have any immediate impact on jobless rates. Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi said the conference would be "only the starting point of a long process lasting decades."

2. Name of works : Annual essential repairs to the vacant 2-roomed, 3-roomed, 4-roomed flats & Bungalows of Dhaka University.

3. Earnest money : Tk. 2000/- in the form of Bank Draft or Pay Order from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh.

Tender forms, schedule of items of work, special terms and conditions may also had from the office of the undersigned on all working days except on the date fixed for submitting the tender on payment of Tk. 100/- (non refundable) to the Janata Bank, TSC Branch, Dhaka University area after showing the necessary enlistment papers endorse by the undersigned. Contractors should write the name of the works and their firms name on the envelope clearly.

Md. Muklesur Rahman

Executive Engineer  
 University of Dhaka.

