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**HYUNDAI**  
CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

## SAARC ministers to discuss trade Nov 29-30

KATHMANDU, Nov 26: The council of ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), is to convene its 19th session in the Maldives on November 29-30, said a press release issued yesterday by the Kathmandu-based SAARC secretariat, reports Xinhua.

Foreign minister or their representatives from SAARC's seven member countries will attend the meeting, the press release said.

The forthcoming session will review progress achieved by SAARC in the area of trade and economic cooperation including the transition from the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) to the SAARC Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

The meeting will also examine the recommendations made by SAARC tourism ministers, environment ministers and experts, the press release said.

Participants will also review the progress made in implementing the decisions of a SAARC summit held in May in the Maldives, particularly the establishment of the group of eminent persons (GEP) and the SAARC year of participatory governance (1997), said the press release.

## ROK investment team due Dec 5

A high-level Korean investment delegation will pay a three-day visit to Bangladesh from December 5 to explore new investment opportunities here, reports BSS.

On an invitation of GHM Obaidul Hoque, Chairman of Small and Medium Industries Development Organisation (SMIDO), the delegation will be led by Small and Medium Industry Promotion Corporation (SMIPC), Korea.

The delegation will visit export processing zone in Chittagong and Korea-invested industries in Dhaka. They will visit SMIDO head office and meet with the executives to know the investment climate in Bangladesh.

The team will also meet the Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in one-on-one meeting for establishment of joint-venture industry here.

The visiting eight corporate chiefs, the members of this delegation have shown keen interest to establish joint venture industry in chemical, plastic and electronics sector with the collaboration of Bangladeshi entrepreneurs.

## Indian minister says Once political crisis goes, rupee will recover

NEW DELHI, Nov 26: Indian Commerce Minister Bala Ramalingam here said the rupee would rebound against the dollar soon after being dragged down by the country's ongoing political crisis, reports AFP.

"There has been an effect of the political situation on the rupee," Ramalingam told reporters here. "But once the political situation settles down, it will recover."

The rupee continued falling against the dollar Tuesday, a day after will swings caused by election fears saw it touched a record low of 38.52 against the greenback.

The currency, which has lost more than seven per cent during the last two months, opened Tuesday at 38.10 per dollar but fell within an hour to 38.30.

Ramalingam, however, argued the economic situation in India was much more stable than in other Asian countries.

"During the last six months, our currency has been much more stable than the yen or the won... the fluctuation has been between one and two per cent," he said.

When asked about the effect on exports, he said: "There is no reason to worry. In Japan, even when the yen went up to 84-85 against the dollar, nothing happened to exports, we will try for that."

## US opens telecom market to foreign competitors

WASHINGTON, Nov 26: Americans may pay less for overseas telephone calls under a government plan that opens the US telecommunications market to foreign competitors, reports AP.

In a 5-0 vote Tuesday, the Federal Communications Commission agreed to make it easier for some foreign companies to enter and invest in the US telecommunications market.

The FCC's plan, which takes effect by January 1, implements a historic telecommunications trade agreement reached in February.

Most of the additional foreign competition is expected to target international phone service, regulators say, but it also could involve other services.

# Shelving the EPZ plan Gazipur people take exception to rule

An export processing zone in Maona, Gazipur, appeared lucrative, but locals resisted the plan. They complained they would lose their homes and would not be properly compensated.

Last month, the government abandoned the project. Instead, the Board of Governors of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) decided to set up one in Comilla.

Local residents brought out processions and agitated against the plan because they thought the huge piece of land needed for an EPZ would engulf their ancestral homes and fertile paddy fields. The villagers had once even put up barricades to stop officials of the district administration and the BEPZA from visiting the area. The decision to establish an EPZ in Gazipur had been taken in July 1996.

Talking to this correspondent, the people at Mouna, about 60 kilometres off downtown Dhaka, said they would rather sacrifice their lives than

allow the establishment of such a project on their homesteads.

"Ours is already a developed area. We do not need any further development," said Wasimuddin (65), an inhabitant of the village Mulaid, which fall in the projected area. Wasimuddin has about five acres of land, which according to him, produce enough for him to sustain.

"I make more than Tk 40 thousand every year by selling jackfruits produced in the premises of my homestead," he said. So, he was not ready to "surrender his home at any cost".

"There are so many things which cannot be valued by money," Wasimuddin said. "My father and grandfather are lying in the home graveyard. So where would I go leaving them?"

Wasimuddin only reflected the mood of many others in the village. "We are happy with the productivity of our land; so we do not need anything more," shot Abdul Ali when he was told about the benefits an EPZ would

have offered them.

Samiruddin, another villager, alleged that the EPZ officials had created a lot of problems in the name of land acquisition. "Last year, we could not cultivate our land during boro season as the officials had told that the land would be taken away very soon," he said.

Samiruddin also alleged that a BEPZA engineer also took money from the villagers in return for assurance of higher prices for land.

Meanwhile, some people erected makeshift structures overnight as soon as the word spread that the area was chosen for an EPZ. According to local residents, some people coming from Dhaka, Tongi and Gazipur made those structures only to make money in collaboration with government officials. They built pucca houses, set up poultry farms and established godowns on their lands to qualify for the government compensation.

This correspondent also saw dozens of tin-shed semi-pucca houses, unoccupied, in the villages of Molaid and Tepirbari, which fell in 500 acres of planned EPZ area. M B Poultry Farm, one of such ventures, has never been doing any business since establishment in 1995, said Sharafat, a neighbour. The only purpose of these houses built with low quality construction materials was to raise the price of the land, he said.

Their opposition to the plan had deeper reasons. Gazipur district officials said the local people were angry because they were being offered a price lower than the actual price. According to rule, the price should be 50 per cent higher than the average obtained in the previous 12 months. But the Gazipur people, while registering their land transfers, showed a low price in order to avoid paying high fees. "That created the problem as

the government average was made on the basis of the land selling records," one district official said.

According to the local people, the government offer was about one fifth of the actual price. "So nobody showed interest in sacrificing their land," said Mohammad Ali, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur.

"We cannot give more money than the government rule allows us to," BEPZA executive chairman Moazzem Hossain Khan said.

He said it was quite natural that the villagers in the project area would not agree to surrender their homesteads but that the people from outside the area would very much interested in it. All said both groups of people had come to the district officials to pursue their respective demands.

The district officials were helpless because the final decision depended on BEPZA, not on the local administration. It was the BEPZA engineers and

experts who had visited the area and selected the spot after conducting a survey.

The villagers' reluctance surprised the BEPZA officials. In other cases, people and local leaders were lobbying for setting up EPZ in their localities. One of the main benefits for the local people has been that such a project creates employment opportunities, the officials say.

The officials said when a proposal had been made for setting up of an EPZ in the northern part of the country, people from most districts including Bogra, Sirajganj, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Ishwardi and Pubna demanded the project be located in their district. They brought out processions, organised rallies and submitted memorandums to the government.

The BEPZA chairman said some of these people were even ready to give up their lands in the greater interest of the locality.

Only Gazipur became an exception.

## BRTC to open new route soon

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) will open a new route in the capital under City Circular Service with effect from December 1, Chairman of the corporation M. Ajmal Chowdhury said here yesterday, reports BSS.

Talking to newsmen at the BRTC headquarters Chowdhury said the City Circular Service would start with six double decker buses and more buses would be commissioned in future.

He said the new service would cover the route from Motijheel Shapla Chatter to Kamalapur Railway Station, Mudgopara, Khaligaon Raigate, Malibagh Raigate, Mouchak, Malibagh Crossing, Kakrail, Topkhana, Gulistan, Cinema Hall and back to Shapla Chatter.

He said to travel any distance on this route a passenger shall have to pay Tk 3 only. Disabled freedom fighters and physically disabled persons could travel free of cost in their reserve seats, he added.

The BRTC chairman said the circular service would start at 6 am and continue till 11 pm to facilitate travel of the early morning and late night passengers.

He said the buses would be available every 15 minutes and expected to carry initially about 7000 passengers daily.

He said about 100 BRTC buses including 47 double deckers are plying on Gulistan-Mirpur, Motijheel-Tongi, Dhaka-Aricha and Dhaka-Narsingdi routes.

Chowdhury said within four months 35 new double decker buses would be commissioned to the BRTC fleet and seven of them would be available by January, 1998.

He said 29 buses are now plying on the Motijheel-Tongi route and 20 more is expected to be added by January next.

Referring to future plan he said BRTC would open new routes from Mohammadpur to Motijheel via Jigatala and Newmarket and from Kuril to Sadarghat.

BRTC directors A Mattin Akhand and Dr Salahuddin were present on the occasion.

## Gold prices fall to 12-year low in HK

HONG KONG, Nov 26: Gold closed at a 12-year low here today to break through the critical 300.00 US dollars an ounce level, reports AFP.

The metal traded at 296.50-297.00 an ounce, against the previous day's closing rate of 302.20-302.50.

The market opened today at 298.80-299.20. Dealers said the sharp fall was due to dumping in New York and Sydney.

"The fall is triggered by reports of dumping by gold producers," said a dealer with the Republic National Bank of New York here adding "it is the lowest in 12 years."

Dealers also blamed the fall on comments by the governor of the Bank of England that when a new European central bank is created it would not need to hold large deposits of gold.

## SIA, Lufthansa form alliance

Singapore Airlines and Lufthansa announced the formation of a strategic alliance on Monday, says a press release issued from Singapore.

A memorandum of understanding confirming the alliance was signed in Singapore by Dr. Cheong Choong Kong, Deputy Chairman & Chief Executive of Singapore Airlines (SIA) and Juergen Weber, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Lufthansa.

It covers a wide area of including code-sharing, network and schedule development, frequent flyer programmes, product development, ground-handling, customer service, information technology and cargo operations.

## Exchange Rates

The following are the Janata Bank's dealing rates (BD Tk for one unit of Foreign Currency) to public as on 26/11/97.

Name of Currency	Buying		Name of Currency	Selling	
	T.T. Clean	OD Sight		T.T. & O.D.	B.C.
US Dlr	45.2850	45.0991	US Dollar	45.6615	45.7010
GB Pound	75.6197	75.3005	GB Pound	76.8402	76.9074
D. Mark	25.7928	25.6839	D. Mark	26.2582	26.2811
Fr Franc	7.7055	7.6729	Fr Franc	7.8463	7.8531
JP Yen	0.3530	0.3515	JP Yen	0.3616	0.3619
C. Dlr	31.7212	31.5873	C. Dollar	32.2958	32.3239
S. Franc	31.9574	31.8226	S. Franc	32.5710	32.5994

Name of Currency	Buying		Name of Currency	Selling	
	T.T. & O.D.	B.C.		T.T. & O.D.	B.C.
US Dollar	46.1500	45.5500	US DLR	46.1500	45.5500
GB Pound	75.8400	73.8400	G B P	75.8400	73.8400
S. Riyal	12.4000	12.1500	S Riyal	12.4000	12.1500
UAE DH	12.3000	11.8500	UAE DH	12.3000	11.8500
KW Dinar	149.0000	144.0000	KW Dinar	149.0000	144.0000

## Dhaka steps towards modern customs procedures

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday said the government was working to link up with international system to facilitate trade along with improvement of quality of the people, reports BSS.

"Bangladesh is working to accept the Istanbul convention with a view to inducting our country into the system to facilitate trade in the economic interests of Bangladesh and improvement of the quality of life and businesses," Azad told a seminar on introduction of "ATA carnet system in Bangladesh."

The seminar was held in the conference room of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the aegis of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)-Bangladesh, the inaugural function was also addressed by Abul Hasan Chowdhury, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Shah Abdul Hannan, Chairman, National Board of Revenue (NBR) and Mrs. Lee Ju Song, consultant, IBCC (International Bureau of Chambers of Commerce), Singapore.

ATA carnet is an international pass accepted by WCC (World Customs Organization), which facilitates cross-border temporary export/import of goods for trade fairs and exhibitions, commercial samples and professional equipment to foster exports and facilitate investment both local and foreign free of customs duty/taxes. ATA carnet came into full force in 1963 following a convention in Istanbul.

The Foreign Minister said ATA carnet system, will not

only help the business community in terms of saving time, money and hassles but also the customs authority from undertaking lengthy administrative and time consuming procedures. The step, the minister hoped, will give fillip to the booming of our exports as well as imports.

Referring to the steps taken by the present government to boost economic activities, Samad said privatisation, trade liberalisation and free market are the priority areas of the administration. He mentioned that efforts of the government of Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina in last 16 months had been directed towards expansion of the private sector.

State minister for foreign affairs supported the logic of introducing ATA carnet system for the good of the economy in general and to the benefit of the entrepreneurs in particular.

Lee Ju Sung said many countries were benefited by ATA carnet and hoped that Bangladesh too would be benefited once the system was introduced here.

ATA system now operates in 51 countries including two in the region (India and Sri Lanka).



Anthony Png Choo Ling (L), who is leading a 31-member Singapore trade and investment delegation to Bangladesh and Ridwan Dzafir (2nd-L), mission adviser and Singapore high commissioner to Bangladesh met A S M Quasem (2nd-R), President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry at the DCCI office yesterday. DCCI Vice-President Manzur Hossain is also seen in the picture.

## Nasim tells S'pore team Telecom sector very prospective

Post, Telecommunications, Housing and Public Works Minister Mohammad Nasim Tuesday said the government has created an atmosphere conducive to investment and providing attractive incentives in the private sectors, reports UNB.

Talking with the visiting Singaporean trade and investment delegation, he said, telecommunications is a very prospective sector in Bangladesh.

Nasim said the government has so far provided 5.30 lakh telephones to meet the gradual demand of telephone in the country and has undertaken plan to increase the number to 13 lakh by the year 2000.

He also said the private sector is also working in the telecommunications sector side by side with the public sector.

Led by Anthony Png Ling, the delegation members told the minister that Singapore is eager to invest in telecommunications and housing sectors under joint venture initiative.

Post and Telecommunications Secretary Mahbub Kabir and Housing and Public Works Secretary MAM Ziauddin were present during the meeting.

Meanwhile, the chief of World Bank Mission in Dhaka, Pierre Landell Mills, paid a courtesy call on Mohammad Nasim at his office Tuesday.

Mills discussed matters relating to formation of World-bank financed Regulatory Board in Telecommunication sector, formulation of Telecommunications Policy and building of low-cost houses.

## Food crisis in 20 African states persists

NAIROBI, Nov 26: Exceptional food emergencies persist in 20 African countries, the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation reported yesterday, says AFP.

The emergencies are due to drought, floods and in some cases continuing civil strife, the agency said in a statement released in Nairobi.

It said the problems were particularly acute in the Great Lakes region and Sierra Leone.

Severe drought at the beginning of the year substantially reduced second-season food production in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia and large parts of southern Ethiopia, it said, while late or erratic rainfall later in the year reduced the main-season harvest in a number of countries, particularly Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

## Tokuyo City Bank facing closure

TOKYO, Nov 26: Tokuyo City Bank Ltd, a medium-size bank in northern Japan, is preparing to close because of financial problems, a bank official said Wednesday, reports AP.

Masaaki Shirado, spokesman for Tokuyo City Bank, said the bank has agreed to transfer some of its assets and deposits to Seventy-Seven Bank Ltd while Tokuyo's operations will be transferred to Sendai Bank Ltd. Both Seventy-Seven Bank and Sendai Bank operate in the same region as Tokuyo.

"The recent spate of failures accelerated withdrawals from our bank, making it difficult to procure funds" Shirado said.

Tokuyo said in a release that it has abandoned efforts to rehabilitate itself and would close.

Bank of Japan Governor Yasuo Mitsuhashi and Finance Minister Hiroshi Mitsuhashi, in separate press conferences, assured Tokuyo depositors that their money is safe, saying the central bank will provide emergency to the bank.

## APEC summit decides quick action on financial crisis

VANCOUVER, Nov 26: Leaders of the 18-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum ended their annual summit here Tuesday after agreeing on a final statement calling for quick action on Asia's financial crisis, report agencies.

The leaders called in a final statement for quick action to respond to Asia's burgeoning financial crisis but stressed that prospects for growth in the region remained "exceptionally strong."

## Japan won't take lead

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto promised on Tuesday to help the economic recovery of Asia but denied Japan had any special responsibility to lead nations out of their financial crisis.

"We are not arrogant enough to see ourselves as a power in Asia that can pull others up," Hashimoto said. "Having said that, we are interested in other nations' economies and naturally will carry out our role."

Throughout the APEC forum, Washington urged Japan to take the lead in boosting demand at home, not only to reduce its surging trade surplus with the United States but also to help bring about economic stability in Asia.

## US to hold meet of finance ministers

The United States will organize a meeting of finance ministers to discuss a response to Asia's financial crisis at an unspecified date, the White House announced here Tuesday.

President Bill Clinton made the proposal at APEC summit, his International Economic Adviser Dan Tarulo said.

## Three new members

Leaders of the 18-nation Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum decided Tuesday to accept Russia, Peru and Vietnam as new members but de-

## 2001 meet in Shanghai

Shanghai will be the site of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' meeting in 2001, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen announced Tuesday.

Annual meetings of leaders of presidents and prime ministers of the 18-government trade group before then are to be held in Malaysia, New Zealand and Brunei.

## Excerpts of APEC communique

VANCOUVER, Nov 26: Excerpts of the final communique prepared for the consideration of APEC leaders:

**Asian financial crisis:** "On a global level, the role of the IMF remains central. Therefore, we welcome and strongly endorse the framework agreed to in Manila as a constructive step to enhance cooperation to promote financial stability. ... We urge rapid implementation of this framework."

**Market liberalization:** "We endorse the agreement of our ministers that action should be taken with respect to early voluntary liberalization in 15 sectors, with nine to be advanced throughout 1998 with a view to implementation beginning in 1999. ... We instruct ministers responsible for trade to finalize detailed targets and time lines by their next meeting in June 1998."

**Trade in financial services:** "We undertake to work in a determined fashion to achieve a successful conclusion to WTO negotiations on financial services by the agreed deadline of Dec. 12, 1997. As agreed by our finance and trade ministers, a successful conclusion would include an MFN (Most Favored Nation) agreement based on significantly improved commitments."

**Electronic commerce:** "We direct ministers to undertake a work program on electronic commerce in the region, taking into account relevant activities of other international fora, and to report to us in Kuala Lumpur. This initiative should recognize the leading role of the business sector and promote a predictable and consistent legal and regulatory framework that enables all APEC economies to reap the benefits of electronic commerce."

**Global warming:** "We recognize the importance of accelerating action on a global level to deal with emissions of greenhouse gases. We affirm that this issue is of vital significance, and that it requires cooperative efforts by the international community. ... We affirm the importance of flexible and cost-effective cooperative approaches to reducing greenhouse emissions, including by promoting the development and diffusion of beneficial technologies."

**Women:** We believe APEC should take specific steps to reinforce the important role of women in economic development. We welcome the offer of the Philippines to host a Ministerial Meeting on Women in 1998 in Manila. — AP

## Lifting of EU fish ban will be delayed

By Govinda Shil

The European Union's temporary fish ban on Bangladesh frozen food exports will not be reviewed until January next year because the Brussels veterinary team has deferred its visit to Dhaka to next month, sources said.

A two-member European Union team will now be visiting Bangladesh from December 13 to 18 to see whether the country's shrimp processing plants have been upgraded to maintain EU health standards. The review will be based on the team's report.

The EU enforced the ban on July 30 saying Bangladesh's fish processing plants and

## Weekly sale in Ctg Tea demand improves

CHITTAGONG, Nov 26: There was an overall improvement in demand of tea from both export and internal buyers in the weekly tea sale held here yesterday, reports BSS.

According to market sources today, Polish buyers operated very strongly while Pakistan and Afghanistan also resumed buying in this sale.

Bold brokers were a stronger market selling at higher rates often up to Tk 5 per Kg. Large brokers were initially Tk 2 dealer but with the progress of sale prices moved up sharply by Tk 5 to Tk 7 per kg. All other brokers were about steady with the better liquoring types being firm to slightly dearer.

There was improved demand. Good liquoring types

were about firm to occasionally dearer while others were slightly easier.

Some 120 chests of green tea were on offer met with a strong demand. Fine yong hyson was sold between Tk 140 and Tk 145 and hyson between Tk 150/50 and Tk 151.

Yong hyson 2,193 chests and 1,377 gunny sacks 40 chests old season were on offer once again met with a fair demand at mostly easier rate.

Better liquoring types were generally easier by Tk 1 to Tk 2 others eased by up to Tk 5.

A total of 17,793 chests, 4,982 gunny sacks, 600 paper sacks and 530 chests old season which were on offer met with a fairly strong demand.

## Dollar rises against major units

NEW YORK, Nov 26: The dollar jumped to a five-year high against the Japanese yen before retreating somewhat Tuesday as Japanese stocks plunged on the collapse of a major Tokyo brokerage, reports AP.

The US currency also rose sharply to a one-month high against the German mark as Wall Street rebounded from Monday's losses.

The dollar peaked at 127.96 yen — its highest level since August 1992 — as Tokyo's main stock index plummeted 5.1 per cent after traders returning from a three-day weekend reacted to Monday's collapse of Yamaichi Securities.

The general trend is for a weaker yen over the course of the next few months," said Robert Katz, a foreign exchange dealer at MTB Bank Corp.

But the US currency gave back much of its early gains as traders locked in profits from the dollar's recent rise and some worried that Japan's central bank would intervene in the market to support the yen.

In late New York trading, the dollar settled at 127.07 yen, up