

Nooruddin says
Gas, power
situation to
improve soon

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Nooruddin Khan said that the government was working ceaselessly to overcome the current shortage of power and energy, reports BSS.

He expressed the hope that the gas and power situation would improve remarkably soon, according to an official handbook.

The minister was speaking at the introductory meeting of newly appointed State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Prof Rafiqul Islam with the officials of the ministry at its conference room.

Speaking on the occasion, the state minister sought cooperation of the officials and employees of the ministry through their hard work and sincerity.

Secretary of the Ministry Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury speaking on the occasion assured the state minister full cooperation of the officials.

Target set to earn Tk 22cr through dredging

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 11: The government has set a target to earn a revenue of Taka 22 crore through dredging during the current financial year 1997-98 against Taka 21 crore last year, it was officially learnt, says BSS.

Dredger Directorate sources said, higher earnings are possible in this sector if the present fleet of dredgers are renovated and modernized to cater to the growing demand of dredging to maintain the navigability and to regulate the motion of the silted rivers in the country.

Referring to the rate of siltation, Superintending Engineer Motiur Rahman told BSS that about 24,000 million tons of silt is being deposited on the river bed every year, posing a serious dislocation in the riverine communication.

The Dredger Directorate, a concern of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), has 27 dredges in its fleet.

The total dredging power capacity is about 39 lakh cubic meter of earth in the year, the sources said.

Only one dredger 'Sangu' is lying idle for major repair works at dredger base workshop for the last four years due to non-availability of spare parts and financial constraint.

The sources said that the dredgers, which are now in operation in different parts of the country including Aricha, Chittagong Port, Khulna, Kachpur, Ghorasal, Chandpur, Shariatpur, Bheramara, and Paksey often suffer from mechanical breakdown due to its worn-out and dilapidated condition.

These dredgers were procured during the year 1950, 60,70 and 80 under foreign assistance.

The source said the directorate can not cope with the growing requirement of dredging during the dry season, sought by different government organisations and agencies including Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), Chittagong Port Authority and other foreign firms.

Car sales in Japan decline

TOKYO, Jan 11: Sales of new cars, buses and trucks in Japan fell almost five per cent in 1997, the first decline in four years, the Japan Automobile Dealers' Association said Monday, reports AP.

Sluggishness in the broader economy has chilled demand for cars and other big-ticket items, and buying was further discouraged by an April increase in Japan's national sales tax to five per cent from three per cent.

Sales surged in 1996 ahead of the sales tax increase and then plummeted.

A total of 5.11 million vehicles were sold in Japan last year, down 4.9 per cent from the previous year, the association said.

Sales by Toyota Motor Corp, Japan's leading automaker, fell 5.4 per cent in 1997 to 1.99 million vehicles. Nissan Motor Co's sales declined 5.9 per cent to 1.03 million, while sales at Mitsubishi Motors Corp. shrunk 11.8 per cent to 420,544.

But sales rose 3 per cent at Honda Motor Co., to 555,581, and 2.9 per cent at Mazda Motor Corp., to 293,534.

Sales of imported cars fell 14.7 per cent to 364,882.

December marked the ninth straight month that vehicle sales fell from year-earlier levels. Sales sank 9.4 per cent last month to 392,150 vehicles. In November, sales had fallen 23.5 per cent from the same month in 1996 — the sharpest drop in 23 years.

GOLD: Meltdown. Gold

DSE sets out agenda to finish automation

By M Shamsur Rahman

Faced with the SEC deadline to go on-line by March, the DSE authorities are hurrying up to finish the automation work, but the contractor doing the job says it could be a difficult task.

A six-member DSE task force, headed by councillor Yusuf Abdullah Harun who is also BFCI president, will meet Tandem officials later this week to sort out issues hindering the process.

The task force, formed December 29 to deal with the already-delayed automation process, came up with a set of recommendations, approved by the new DSE Council which is desperately trying to revive the bearish market.

The automation work is done in phases and we are al-

ready behind schedule. The DSE officials have changed their minds very often," one source said.

The previous Council, which acted as an interim one after its chairman had been removed in May last year, formed a committee to study the details. "Now there is a new Council which will go its own way," the source pointed out. "However, we are looking forward to working with this Council which has a very positive attitude."

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) gave DSE a deadline to finish automation process and go on line by March 31, failing which the bourse will face legal action.



A Czech-built 18 seater aeroplane of the Air Parabat, the second private airline, standing on its bay at Tejgaon airport before taking off in a special flight. The airline officials, Juglal Karim, Director, and Air Vice Marshal (rtd) AK Khandaker, Chairman, (fourth and fifth from left), are seen before the aircraft.

— Star photo

Korea's crisis won't hit its business in Bangladesh

South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Toe Kyu Han yesterday said the present economic crisis in his country would not affect the Korean investment in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

His assurance came from a meeting with Executive Chairman of Board of Investment (BOI) Farooq Sobhan.

Frequent interaction with foreign investors in general and the South Korean investors in particular will make their lives more comfortable and easier here," Kyu Han said expressing satisfaction over the services rendered by the BOI to his country's investors.

Toe Kyu pointed out that the prevailing friendly investment climate of Bangladesh will easily attract more Korean investors in near future. "Relocation of South Korean industries to Bangladesh is under active consideration of the Korean entrepreneurs."

BOI Executive Chairman appraised the Ambassador of shifting of BOI to a new premises and future investment promotion programmes.

Social Investment Bank Ltd (SIBL) is going to introduce the Cash Waqf Certificate Scheme in the process of organizing what it calls Voluntary Sector Capital Market operation for the first time in the history of banking.

SIBL chairman Prof. Dr. MA Manman will unfold the 'Cash Waqf Certificate Scheme' at a ceremony today at 4.00 pm at Jalsaghar, Hotel Purbani International, Dhaka.

Rural credit programme of Janata Bank

Star Business Report

Janata Bank has geared up disbursement of rural credit to achieve the target of Tk 250 crore during the current fiscal year.

The bank has allocated Tk 110 crore as crop loan, Tk 50 crore for establishing dairy, poultry, fisheries farms and preservation and processing of products.

In addition to these, Tk 15 crore has been allocated for pond fisheries and other agricultural equipment.

Meanwhile, Tk 40 crore have been disbursed as crop loan, according to a press release of the bank.

An amount of Tk 75 crore has been earmarked for on-going potato, wheat, borro, pulses and other crops.

The bank has allocated an amount of Tk 75 crore for poverty alleviation programme.

In addition to its own rural poor programme, the bank is extending credit to the rural poor in association with the non-government organisations.

So far, the bank has disbursed Tk 15 crore under poverty alleviation programme.

Asian crisis may have little impact on Euro firms

LONDON, Jan 11: Many European exporters have been hit as Asian currencies have nose-dived, decimating the region's purchasing power, but most are confident that both market calm and Far East buyers will return, reports Reuter.

Among the hardest hit have been companies selling into Asia's need to build up its fledgling infrastructure and those that have found a niche catering to the demand of Asia's new rich for brand-name luxuries.

But most European firms are sanguine about the long-term prospects for exports to the region, although some say profits will suffer in the near-term and growth targets may have to be scaled back.

In Norway, one of the biggest companies vulnerable to the Asia crunch is Engineering Giant Kvaerner (Kvion, OL), which had a goal of achieving 50 per cent of its turnover in Asia by the year 2000. Kvaerner has said the figure may now be closer to 40 per cent.

Norwegian explosives maker Dyno Industrier (Dy 10.0), which earned 23 per cent of 1996 operating revenues from the Asia-Pacific region, predicted last month that Asia's economies could rebound once reforms were in place.

French industries most likely to be hit by tightening credit lines to Far East buyers were mainly large project exporters, such as nuclear power plant manufacturers.

But these are not the only vulnerable firms. Some anticipation of the impact of the crisis has focused on luxury goods exporters such as Lvmh (Lvmh, PA). The firm said it still saw more expansion in Asia.

Metals producers such as Nickel Group Eramet (Ermit, PA) and Steelmaker Usinor (Usin, PA) were expected to be affected, along with retail group Carrefour (Carr, PA), which broad international exposure.

Microchip group SGS Thomson (STM, PA) has suffered from fears currency devaluation for Asian chipmakers would damage its competitive position.

If the situation remains unstable, analysts said the next targets could be in auto industry supplies. Valeo (Vlo, PA) has already sounded a cautious note.

With Asia-linked worries eating away at European sugar markets on Wednesday, French sugar suppliers, including Eridania Beghin (Fbsp, PA), may come under pressure.

Swiss companies have generally played down the impact

of Asia troubles, although the stock market has punished many companies that do a significant amount of business there.

Cable producer Nokia-Mailefe (Maif, S) warned last month the Asia crisis would weigh on 1998 sales, triggering down grades by some analysts and a slide in its share price.

However, trading company Hagemeyer (Hafn, AS) said this week it anticipated a negative effect of "some percent" on turnover and profit growth, with 25 per cent of turnover from Asia.

ABN Amro saw little impact, estimating only 4.5 per cent of Dutch exports were Asia-bound. However, direct investment at five per cent of total outward flows — based on 1994 figures — was high by European standards.

Some firms were even looking for cheap acquisitions.

This week, retailer Ahold (Ahl, AS) said it was acquiring 22 supermarkets in Shanghai from Japan's ailing Yaohan Group (8198, T).

Exchange Rates

Effective on January 11
Central Bank USD/BDT Rate: Buying-BDT 45.30/
Selling-BDT 45.60

Selling		Buying	
TT/OD	FC	Currency	TT Clean
45.6600	45.7000	USD	45.2600
74.2168	74.2168	GBP	72.5518
25.1518	25.2208	DEM	24.7052
0.3485	0.3489	JPY	0.3403
31.1247	31.1520	CHF	30.4371
22.3386	22.3581	NLG	21.9288
25.8697	25.8924	SGD	25.3557
7.5086	7.5152	FRF	7.3942
32.1549	32.1831	CAD	31.4300
5.7290	5.7340	SEK	5.6364
29.8616	29.8878	AUD	28.6948
9.9261	9.9348	MYR	9.7333
5.9038	5.9090	HKD	5.8370
12.2413	12.2520	SAR	12.0053

Usance Export Bills

TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
45.1654	44.8828	44.5057	44.0719	43.6005	42.5444

US Dollar

Buying	Selling	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
Cash Notes	45.20	45.75	59766	65625	66250
TC	45.05	45.65	43359	55859	56250

Exchange Rates of Some Asian Currencies Against US Dollars

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Philippine Peso
39.60/36.90	44.006	54.05/54.40	4.6205/4.6300	930/9400	43.90/44.90

Market Commentary

Today, in the local foreign exchange market demand for US dollar is expected to remain steady. The corporate clients may book some foreign currency forward cover contracts, mainly in USD, to hedge their exchange risks against import payments. In the interbank market USD is expected to range between BDT 45.31 and BDT 45.34. The call money market is expected to remain steady and range between 6 pc and 7 pc.

The international foreign exchange markets are closed today on weekend.