

**UK trade team to visit Bangladesh soon**

Star Business Report

A British Trade Mission, focusing on Bangladesh gas sector will pay a six-day visit to Bangladesh from February 21. This is the first trade mission from British to Bangladesh this year.

The main purpose of the 10-member Mission, organised by the Society of British Gas Industries and representing the British gas industry's supply and service sector is to introduce British expertise and suppliers to the exciting new developments taking place in the gas sector in Bangladesh, says a press release.

The Trade Mission demonstrates Britain's commitment to further developing the strong British-Bangladesh partnership, which, through the substantial gas findings made by Cairn Energy, already exists in this sector.

During the visit, the mission members will hold a society of gas industries seminar at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on February 22.

They will have the opportunity to meet a wide range of senior Bangladesh government officials.

**ICC chief's visit to Bangladesh cancelled**

Helmut O Maucher, President, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Chairman of the Nestle S.A., Switzerland, who was due to pay a visit to Bangladesh today has cancelled his visit due to sudden illness, says a press release.

ICC Bangladesh sincerely regrets the inconveniences caused to the invitees to Maucher's programmes more particularly members of the government, business community, media and the members of ICC National Committee for this unforeseen situation.

Accordingly, all his public programmes including the luncheon meeting of ICC Bangladesh due to be held at Sonargaon Hotel and joint reception of Nestle Bangladesh and ICC Bangladesh due to be held at Hotel Sheraton on the same day have been cancelled.

**Pakistan will stick to privatisation programme**

HONG KONG, Feb 16: Pakistan will press ahead with its privatisation programme despite slower-than-expected economic growth, Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif said Monday, reports AP.

"The private sector is the flag bearer of growth and development," Sharif told a conference aimed at promoting investment in his country. The government should only help make economic activity easier, he said.

"Our economic reforms are built around the concepts of deregulation, decontrol and decentralisation," said Sharif, who is on a three-day visit to Hong Kong.

Sharif said Pakistan will maintain recent structural reforms to revive the economy. The Central Bank has been empowered to manage the banking sector, and taxes have been reduced to stimulate the economy.

He said a recent agreement by the Japanese and US governments to provide insurance to their citizens investing in Pakistan "signifies international confidence in our economic policies."

Pakistan recently lowered its estimate of gross domestic product growth from 6 per cent to between 5 per cent and 5.5 per cent because of poor cotton crop and political uncertainties.

Sharif earlier visited Beijing with his wife and Cabinet members. He met with Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, principal officials, businessmen and Hong Kong's Pakistani community on Monday. He will leave on Tuesday.

**Jordan, Iraq sign trade accord**

AMMAN, Feb 16: Jordan and Iraq on Sunday agreed to extend their seven-year-old economic accord for an extra year, Jordanian officials said, reports AFP.

The accord in force since 1991 allow Iraq to trade 225 million dollars of its oil in return for the equivalent value of Jordanian goods.

The new accord, an exemption to UN sanctions against Iraq, was signed by Hani Al-Mulki, Jordan's Trade and Industry Minister, and Iraqi trade Minister Mohammed Mahdi Salah.

In addition to the Jordan-Iraq trade protocol, Iraq is authorised to export two billion dollars of oil every six months to pay for humanitarian supplies under the "oil-for-food" agreement.

**DSE revalidates contract with Tandem**

Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) council at a meeting yesterday revaluated its contract with Tandem overcoming a stalemate in the process of introduction of automated trading system in the bourse, reports BSS.

DSE sources said that the development took place following negotiations with Tandem under which the DSE would get more powerful computers from the suppliers at the same time saving substantial amount of money.

Under the arrangement, a new agreement would be signed soon between the DSE and Tandem to amend the original con-

tracts as well as the letter of credit.

The total cost of automation has been set at Taka 10 crore 57 lakh and 34 thousands.

Tandem would supply and install the hardware for which it would receive over Taka six crore in addition to Taka two crore 25 lakh and 85 thousand it already received in payments.

The remaining amount would go to wide area networking suppliers, and to meet the costs of training, interior designing, site visits and other specified work.

Automated trading system would be installed in three months from signing a new

agreement revalidating the original contract with clearly stipulated amendments.

The DSE council also appointed an eight-member automation task force with Ahsanul Islam as the convenor for implementation of the automation project.

The task force would require to inform the council of the progress to be achieved in its task every seven-day.

The task force would include as members: Hasan Farukh Khan, Abbasuddin Khan, Nurul Amin Patwari, Miss Runa Alam, Rizwan Bin Farukh, Al Maruf Khan and Rezaul Karim.

**Kibria tells seminar**

**SEA crisis will have no adverse effect on country's economy**

and a half.

He argued that crisis in these economies began when these countries embarked on rapid liberalisation that, amongst other things, encouraged massive inflows of cheap foreign capital, which led to large increase in investment in the unproductive sectors.

Kibria praised the hard working nature of the people of these countries.

The Finance Minister hoped that the crisis in the East and South-East Asia would not last very long and should be over within a maximum period of a year and a half.

He, however, stated that the countries of East and South East Asia will gain some competitiveness because of the large depreciation of their currencies.

As a result while Bangla-

deshi exports will face stiffer competition in the world market. Bangladeshi producers will face competition at home from cheaper import of these countries, he added.

Bangladesh will, in its national interest, maintain vigilance over the development and take corrective actions, including anti-dumping actions, if necessary, the Finance Minister assured.

He expressed the hope that foreign investments from these countries into Bangladesh would not be very seriously affected, as these countries are expected to recover soon.

The inaugural session was chaired by Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan while welcoming address was made by Director Programmes Department (West) of ADB Geert Van der Linden.

**Most Asian currencies firm against US dollar**

HONG KONG, Feb 16: The yen dipped slightly following moves by Moody's to review the ratings of leading Japanese banks but most Asian currencies firmed against the greenback during the past week, reports AFP.

**JAPANESE YEN:** The yen recency closed at 46.10 to the dollar. The Thai baht was lowered from 45.50 bath against the dollar this week at 40.69 on Friday.

**INDONESIAN RUPIAH:** The Indonesian rupiah closed trading Friday at 8,706-8, 794 to the dollar compared to 9,400/9,600

dollar late Friday, compared with 124.05-08 a week earlier.

The yen firmed Tuesday on continued hopes for the government's economic measures, ending the day's trade around 123 yen, dealers said.

**THAI BAHT:** The Thai currency closed at 46.10 to the dollar. The Thai baht was lowered from 45.50 bath against the dollar this week at 40.69 on Friday.

**SINGAPORE DOLLAR:** The Singapore dollar closed higher at 1.6500 to the US unit, from 1.6523 the week before, but off highs amid regional volatility stemming from Indonesia's controversial plans to peg its currency.

Dealers said the monetary authority of Singapore was rumoured to be in the market to moderate the local dollar's rapid ascent earlier in the week.

**HONG KONG DOLLAR:** The Hong Kong dollar closed the week at 7.738 to 7.74 against the greenback compared to 7.73 the week before.

**TAIWAN DOLLAR:** The Taiwan dollar was relatively stable over the week to settle at 32.820 against the greenback compared to 32.855 the previous week.

The currency moved up Monday as banks raised interest rates for depositors and rose further to 32.710 Wednesday fuelled by a rally in the Taiwan stock market, before sliding to 32.855 on strong US currency demand Thursday.

Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, Governor of Bangladesh Bank, handing over a cheque for Taka 10 lakh to Professor Mohammed Harunur Rashid, President of the Asiatic Society, for the National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh in a ceremony at his office in the city yesterday.

**Hashimoto promises bold action to shore up economy**

TOKYO, Feb 16: Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on Monday promised bold action to shore up Japan's ailing economy and said that 1998 was the "last hurdle" before economic good times return, reports AP.

In a policy speech to Parliament, Hashimoto put a speedy economic recovery at the top of the nation's agenda and pledged to restore stability to the financial system.

We should take timely and appropriate measures to respond to changes in the economic and financial situation as we plan the economy's recovery," Hashimoto said.

Earlier in the day, the Parliament's upper house gave final approvals to a proposal to inject some 30 trillion yen (240 billion dollars) into the financial system to restore confidence in the country's banking sector.

Hashimoto also vowed to tighten controls on the activities of civil servants after a string of bribery scandals involving Finance Ministry officials severely tarnished the reputation of Japan's most powerful bureaucracy.

"It is important to drop the fixed idea that men should work while women should engage in housework and child-rearing," Hashimoto said.

Replenishing the country's coffers has been one of the main policy objectives of the Hashimoto administration, but critics say that fiscal restraint amid Japan's current economic troubles could spell disaster for the economy.

Japan has been suffering from a protracted economic slowdown that set in seven years ago after the collapse of the "bubble" economy of rampant speculation and easy credit.

On foreign policy objectives, Hashimoto said Japan-US relations are essential for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, and that bilateral ties should be deepened.

he said Baghdad must grant UN inspectors unrestricted access to possible weapons sites and that Tokyo will deal with the situation in cooperation with the US and other nations.

Hashimoto also said he would strive to improve relations with Russia, with which Japan has territorial dispute stemming from the end of World War II.

On social issues, Hashimoto announced the Cabinet will present a bill next year to promote equal rights and opportunities for women in society.

He already faces charges of accepting entertainment worth 2.27 million yen (18,160 dollars) from Sanwa Bank and Hokkaido-Takushoku Bank between 1994 and 1997.

The Finance Ministry fired both Miyagawa and Taniguchi on Monday. A ministry spokesman said the two and other officials in the inspections department will be punished.

Hashimoto also promised tough action to crack down on juvenile delinquency in the wake of a series of knife attacks in recent weeks by minors.

**Get Group 4 to guard you, and sleep in peace**

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Tax payers are no longer supposed to pay for security of individuals and private businesses. They have to do it by themselves. That's the key plank on which security has grown as an industry, according to Jorgen Phillip Sorensen, chairman and chief executive of Group 4, the world leader in the business.

Group 4

Securitas (International) BV, headquartered in The Hague, is in Bangladesh now with its joint venture partner and hopes to add international flavour to security business here.

With a two-billion-dollar turnover in 45 countries worldwide, the company's activity ranges from prison management in Australia and the UK to traffic control in Austria. In Kazakhstan, it leads the way in the oil, gas and gold rush.

Name any function that relates to security: Group 4 is into it: static guarding and mobile patrol, local and international transport of cash and jewellery, installation and maintenance of technical security systems, research and production of security equipment, training to operating companies on security skills and management, consultancy services on risk management and loss prevention.

And he was in a mood of celebration when he spoke to journalists immediately after his arrival. His personal plane got stuck in New Delhi, forcing him to fly by a commercial airliner into the Dhaka airport and then by a helicopter to Tejgaon. Escorted by his company's security guards, he drove to Sonargaon hotel, changed in a few minutes and met with journalists. The old man was vivacious with life and telling his story with a touch of humour.

In those good old days, in the

early years of the century, when his grandfather began in Denmark, guarding meant guarding the wife of the man out on business trips.

Sorensen, who travels by his private jet, is a visionary: he is one who has taken the lead in transforming it into a career for security professionals.

"Integrity is the most important point," the Dane says of his philosophy when his company picks up its guards. "Just think of handing the keys to your home to somebody," he says.

More than 40 years into the business himself, the Dane who inherited it from his grandfather, now finds pleasure in finding a partner even if it is as small as the one in Bangladesh.

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In Bangladesh, they would like to see such challenges as traffic control, airport security. But for the moment, as Sorensen told The Daily Star, local industrial enterprises and foreign companies would be the primary targets.

**Former directors allege Fu-Wang concealed more**

By M Shamsur Rahman Iftekhar Uddin, former managing director of tiles manufacturer Fu-Wang, yesterday alleged that the company had imported 12-year old plants and machinery instead of new ones as planned, one of which exploded during trial production and had not been repaired till date.

Iftekhar Uddin claimed that he along with other local partners walked out of the company, following this "act of cheating" by their then foreign partners having 87 per cent stake in the company. He claimed the dispute over import of old machinery led to their exit.

He also charged the company with concealing information other than the one on tax.

In a written statement distributed among journalists who went to attend a press conference they convened but later called off, the former directors of Fu-Wang gave the reporters documents and photocopies of cheques which they said were enough to prove that the company furnished false information in the prospectus to raise money by cheating investors.

The press conference was called off as police intervened based on a complaint lodged by the company.

Attracting foreign investment and giving opportunity to cheat public are two different things, Iftekhar Uddin said in the statement.

He also accused the company's Taiwanese partners of overvoicing imports of raw materials, which benefited the present managing director's own company in Taiwan. Iftekhar Uddin said the allegation could be easily proved through verification of international market prices of certain materials.

Fu-Wang's company secretary, when contacted, refuted all charges.

The valuation of the machinery as shown in the prospectus is accurate, and if there is any false valuation then the custom officials are there to inspect and stop us from clearing the shipment," the company secretary said.

There were problems with one of the machines and a fire broke out and it had been repaired, he said.

**Tea, rubber workers in Lanka return to work**

COLOMBO, Feb 16: A deal brokered by the Sri Lankan president last week saw thousands of plantation employees end a nine-day old strike Monday, despite sporadic protests by workers of one union government officials and unions said, reports AP.

"Nearly 90 per cent of the workers are back at work... except for a few places where one of the unions had orchestrated protests," said Chandramohan, a key official of the Joint Plantation Trade Union Center, which includes 13 unions and represents nearly 600,000 tea and rubber plantation workers.

The new protests are being organised by the Upcountry Workers' union which represents about three per cent of the workers and which objected to the coalition's deal.

The unions stopped work on Feb 5 demanding that wages be raised from 83 rupees (1.34 dollars) to rupees 105 (1.69 dollars).

