DHAKA TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 1998

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China, US sign \$2b deals

BEIJING, June 29: US Commerce Secretary William Daley clinked champagne glasses with top Chinese trade officials today as the witnessed the sign-ing of seven contracts and agreements worth two billion

dollars, reports AFP.

Top of the list was a 1.2 billion dollars Boeing Co. contract to sell to China 16 Boeing 737s and one Boeing 747 worth 800 million dollars and an option to sell 10 further Boeing 737s worth 400 million dollars.

"In key sectors of the economy, these deals will enhance quality of people's lives in China and at the same time create jobs and opportunities in the United States," Daley said from the cavernous Great Hall of the People on the edge of

Tiananmen Square.
US President Bill Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin held their pandmark summit on Saturday in the same building.

The other six contracts comprised a 161.7 million dollars deal or general electric to sell turbine power generators to the China Huaneng Group, and a 400 million dollar agreement for Phoschem Cargill Hydro Farmland to sell two million dollars of chemical fertilizer to Sinochem.

International Business Machines Corp. (IBM) and the China Great Wall computing group made a 76.85 million dollar capital increase on an existing project and a coal bed methane exploration contract between China's CBM Arco and Phillips Petroleum Co. that will reach 30 million dollars of investment was agreed.

Also signed were a letter of intent on urban air quality monitoring between China's State Environment Protection Administration (SEPA) and the US Environmental Protection Agency and a five million dollar deal between SEPA and the US-based Dasibi Co for the purchase of air monitoring equip-

More than two billion dollars worth of deals between Chinese and US companies have already been signed in the run-up to Clinton's China visit.

JB evaluates position of advances

Star Business Report Janata Bank has evaluated the position of classified ad-

The evaluation was made at a meeting held at the head office of the bank in the city recently, says a press release.

vances of its branches.

The meeting was attended by regional chiefs, corporate branch heads and branch man-

agers of Dhaka city. Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman of the bank,

Imam Uddin Ahmad Choudhury, advised all to gear up the recovery of overdue classified advances for the prosperity of the bank MA Hashem, Managing Di-

rector. Commodore MG Hossain, Debapriya Bhattacharya, Lutfor Rahman Khan and Shamsudduha Khan Majlish, directors of the bank, also spoke on the occasion. They urged all concerned to

gearup their efforts for recovery

London's 300-year tradition of tea auction goes

LONDON, June 29: In another illustration of the end of Britain's colonial power and its new place in the world economy, London's 300-year-old tradition of tea auctions is being put to rest today, reports

The curtain call on the institution created on the banks of the river Thames by the East

Company in 1679 comes after seeing the long erosion of its importance as tea's main trade

Brokers will pay tribute to the poignant moment with

champagne rather than tea. It also ends the tradition of having samples sent from plantations in Britain's former colonies for tastings in the back

rooms of the brokerages and the visits to the vast warehouses smelling of exotic varieties of The gentlemen running his most British of businesses have decided to give the auctions an

altruistic flavour for their farewell, before they in turn switch on the computers that have become the backbone of modern trading. One of the hammer-falls

Monday will go to child protection charities. The biggest plantations in India have sent their finest blends for the occasion.

"Of course, one is saddened in such a moment," says Tony Kane, who has spent 30 years with Wilson Smithett, one of the main tea-brokering houses, along with firms Thompson Lloyd and Ewart.

"It is the end of an era. But it marks the beginning of another one and London will remain one of the main-tea-trading

places in the world," he insists. The decision to pull the plug on the auctions had become inevitable, adds Robin Harrison a manager with the tea brokers' association.

Market may be lost to Myanmar

Bangladeshi fish runs far short of need in America

By Govinda Shil

Yakub Sheikh, head of a Toronto-based aqua products import firm, is now in Dhaka to find out why he is not getting regular supply of Bangladeshi fish in Canada and the United

For the last couple of months, supply of Bangladeshi fish, destined for some 500 grocery stores and more than 50 restaurants in the US, had been

disrupted. Yakub, a Canadian of Bangladesh origin, markets fishes and shrimp and hilsha in the US and Canada.

He imports 100 containers or 40 lakh pounds of aqua products a year from Bangladesh. "I became worried when I saw supply of fish halted suddenly two months ago," he

Talking to The Daily Star at Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association office yesterday, he said he would need 20 containers of fish for the next

six months but that he was not

sure if he was going to make it. He said there was a huge de-mand for Bangladeshi fish but supply remained inadequate. Being here, Yakub discovered that fish production had already gone down this year.

"If I do not get it from here, I have to go to Myanmar," he said adding ethnic Bangladeshis always liked their country's fish despite high prices. One pound of local fish is sold on an average for two US dollars while almost all kinds of fresh water Myanmar fish cost them slightly more than a dollar.

> "People of Bangladesh origin in the US and Canada buy from me because they feel they were not buying a product, but were buying a feeling, a flavour of their homeland," said Yakub, managing director of Bengal Seafood Inc. in Toronto.

> He said many groceries in the US had already placed advance orders while some of them were asking for regular

Bangladesh's frozen food exports to US stood at US \$ 119 million in 1996-97 financial year. During the first 10 months of 1997-98 fiscal, it reached US \$ 124 million.

"The revenue could have been doubled at the moment if you had enough supply," Yakub said and added that the demand for Bangladeshi fish in the US was in fact underestimated or "suppressed." Another US-based fish

trader, Asif Hossain, agreed with Yakub. Asif, based in New England, Connecticut, said Bangladeshi shrimp was popular among the Americans due to what he said "its unique taste." Asif is also here to look into

problems of increasing exportoriented fish production in the country. He said the US required more than 100,000 MT of

shrimp a year of which a big share is supplied by Thailand alone. "Bangladesh produces only 25,000 to 30,000 MT a



Yal:ub Sheikh

year," he said suggesting Bangladesh explore the opportunities more vigorously.

Asif said the nation could multiply its; export revenue from \$40 bil lion US fish market simply by increasing its production.

Learn the skills and make a big buck

By Govinda Shil

It is good time for Bangladeshis seeking jobs in Europe and the United States. All they need is an in-depth knowledge in computer programming.

It is also prime time for entrepreneurs ambitious to earn huge foreign currency by exporting software.

The US alone will need 600,000 programmers by 2000 while it will have a strength of only 275,000. So far, India has been the largest provider of programmers to the US computer companies. At the moment, the US needs some 350,000 professionals, according to information available.

Local computer professionals are looking at these statistics with a renewed vigour.

Many Bangladeshi youths are browsing on internet, international magazines, and web pages of different computer companies for lucrative jobs.

Development of a software and data processing industry is expected to get a momentum when the Jatiya Sangsad enacts a new law in the next session on the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), a long time demand from by the US government.

While they await implementation of government plan to build an exclusive park for computer software industry, in-

terested firms are now seeking a suitable building where they can start developing software and data processing for exports.

Computer dealers are hopeful that information technology would now be popularised within a short span of time after the proposed withdrawal of duty and VAT on computer and

One computer will now cost Tk 24,000 against its previous price of Tk 35,000, according to dealers.

"We can tap the huge opportunity by exporting software and trained manpower to the US and Europe," said Aftab-ul Islam, president of the Bangladesh Computer Samity.

He put emphasis on quality of computer education, aggressive marketing, "reasonable" knowledge about English language to get in to the US\$ 300 billion global market.

This year, he said, Bangladesh's private and public sector computer training schools would produce 1000 programmers. "If the young entrepreneurs learn computers and open export-oriented software houses, there will be a revolutionary change in the Bangladesh's economy," Aftab

The government is thinking in the same direction and seems committed to supporting them. "Information technology is

one of our thrust area for export earning ... and we will be taking all steps to boost the software industry," commerce and industries minister Tofail Ahmed told The Daily Star.

He said his ministry was actively working on how the industry could flourish quickly. An exclusive industrial park. said the minister, would be developed in next three years near the Zia International Airport for export-led data processing and software development.

Local computer professionals believe Bangladesh needs a good power and telecommunication system, high speed data transmission lines, a good number of programmers and forward looking entrepreneurs to exploit the huge international IT market.

Export Promotion Bureau Vice Chairman Faisal Ahmed Chowdhury said BTTB would be installing necessary transmitting equipment for data transmission when the Bureau finds a suitable building for the data

"We will install Packet Switched Public Data Network (PSPDN) as soon as the government asks for it," said BTTB chairman MA Mannan Choudhury.

He said ther e were 24 VSATs which were already in use for commercial internet service providers. These are low speed delivery lines but data processors need much more speed to minimise transmission costs. says Choudhury

M Azmat Khain, the 25 yearold managing director of SMART Systems, which sells hardware, software and other services, spoke of problems faced by new learners. "They do not know where to go for lessons.

Khan said the government should restructure: the computer training centress under the Youth Development Directorate. Teaching standard is very poor in these schools which do not have qualified trainers."

He suggests a reational policy for the training centres.

Many software: developers feel electronic money transfer still remains a problem for them. They said a lew web page designers were doing good business in the international market but said there was no formal system to get paid sitting in Bangladesh.

Islami Bank opens new branch

The Uttara Branch of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited has been inaugurated yesterday as 105th branch, says a press re-

Mohammad Mosharrof Hossain, Director of the bank and member of Jatiya Sangsad at-tended the function as chief

Prime Bank opens Agrabad branch

Star Business Report Prime Bank Limited opened its 17th branch at Agrabad in

Chittagong recently.

The Chairman of the bank, Engineer Nurul Haque Sikder, presided over the inaugural function.

Engr Mosharraf Hossain, Minister of Civil Aviation & Tourism, was present as the chief guest while Alhaj ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Mayor, of Chittagong City Corporation and Kamaluddin Ahmed president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce & Industry, were present as special guests, said the bank in a press statement. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said banking sector is playing pioneer role in economic activities and develop-

ment of the country. The chairman of the bank said Prime Bank has created a difference in the banking field through its customer-friendly deposit and loan products.

The Managing Director of the bank Kazi Abdul Mazid explained the three dimensional customer friendly products of the bank in fields of Islamic banking, conventional banking and investment banking. Director of the bank and lo-

Pakistani share prices tumble

cal clients were also present.

KARACHI, June 29: Pakistani share prices tumbled today on selling pressure in leading scrips following government action against private power producers, dealers said, reports AFP.

The KSE 100-index plunged by 44.44 points, or five per cent to a new low at 843.28 points.

Pakistan last week terminated power purchase contracts with Southern Electric Power Co. (SEPCO) and issued cancellation notice to eight others alleging they had obtained contracts through malpractices including kickbacks.

Ambareen Shaukat said losers led gainers 22 to one as the index touched new low pulling down prices of leading

She said the government's move seriously hit the market and prices were expected to fall further during the day because of panic selling.

Prime Textile declares 5 pc dividend

Prime Textile Spinning Mills Ltd at its ninth annual general meeting declared a five per cent dividend for the year 1996-97.

The AGM was held at its factory premises on Sunday, said the firm in a press statement. The meeting was presided over by MA Awal, Chairman and Managing Director of the company.

KPCL's 'Goodwill Programme' From Stuff Corespondent

KHULNA, June 29: Khulna Power Company Limited (KPCL) launched a two-month long 'Social Goodwill Programme' on Sunday to develop technological, especially electrical outlook among primary school students.

A total of 22,000 children from 40 schools will be served with Igloo ice-cream, stickers and pens during the programme for explaining the operation of the company's barge mounted power plant and distribution system of electricity.

Exchange Rates

The following are the Janata Bank's dealing rate (BD Tk for one unit of Foreign Currency) to public as on Buying

Name of Cu- rrency	TT Clean	OD Sight Export Bills	OD Transfer
US Dir	46 1500	45.9612	45.8484
GB Pou.	76 3988	76 0777	75 8908
D Mark	25 3815	25.2748	25 2127
FR Franc	7 5713	7.5395	7.5209
JP Yen	0.3243	0.3230	0.3222
C.Dlr	31.2483	31.1169	31.0405
S Franc	30.0753	29.9489	29.8753
	Sel	ling	
Name o Currenc	SECTION AND ADDRESS OF THE PARTY OF THE PART	k O.D.	ВС
US Dollar	4(5.5104	46.5488
GB Poun	d 77	7 6103	77 6769

Name of Currency	T.T.& O.D.	ВС
US Dollar	46.5104	46.5488
GB Pound	77.6103	77 6769
D.Mark	25.8309	25.8530
Fr. Franc	7.7045	7.7111
JP Yen	0.3321	0.3324
C.Dollar	31.8036	31 8309
S Franc	30.6195	30 6457
	's selling and bo y for public:	uying rates i
1005000000000	Selling	Buying

Tofael tells JS Garment exports fetch Tk 2749m in 9 months

Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed has informed the Jatiya Sangsad that Bangladesh earned a sum of 2748.67 million US dollar during the first nine months of the current financial year by exporting readymade garments including knitwear against the projected target of 2612.25 million dollars, reports BSS.

In replay to a question from Mohammad Fazlul Karim (BNP-Noakhali), he said it was 568.59 million dollars higher than the export in the garment sector in the corresponding period of the previous year.

He said the government has taken a number of steps to encourage export of garments which include facility of a back to back LC, use of 40 per cent of FOB exporting earnings for import of industrial raw materials and foreign tour regarding export promotion, identification of readymade garment as a thrust sector and making 50 per cent of export income tax free.

The minister said the steps also include reduction of tax of the export oriented industries from 0.50 per cent to 0.25 per cent, providing 25 per cent alternate financial facility for backyard textile industries, tax

free import of up to 100 piece readymade garments per category per year instead of the existing 20 pieces, reduction of value addition rate for sweater export from 40 per cent to 25 per cent and cooperation in getting

Workshop on safe use of pesticides held in Faridpur

From Our Correspondent FARIDPUR, June 29: A workshop on the safe use of pesticides organised jointly by Pesticide Association of Bangladesh (PAB) and BADC (Seed) was held at Kaderdi Primary School under Boalmari thana recently.

A total of 60 trainees took part in the day long workshop. Nity Gopal Das and Salauddin Ahmed of PAB imparted training as to how pesticides are to be used without affecting health and environment.

Md Abdus Salam, Deputy Director, BADC (Potato Seed) presided over the workshop which was attended by Jagadish Chandra Ghose, district correspondent of the Bangladesh observer as chief guest.

Credit problem for SMEs Comprehensive reform package needed

Star Business Report

Speakers at a meeting reached consensus on the gen eral nature of the credit problem for small and medium enterprises in Bangladesh and the need for a comprehensive reform package in the near

The meeting on secured financing for SMEs was organised by Job Opportunities and Business Support (JOBS) in the city recently, says a press re-

Invitees included member of

the JOBS working group along with guests from the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector, financial institutions, NGOs, business associations, legal profession and representatives of the government of Bangladesh.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the findings of a team that had concluded a study of SME finance issues, to comment on the draft report, to discuss possible ways of achieving necessary reforms in this area and to chart a strategy and plan of action for the JOBS programme in this field.

The discussion touched on such issues as reformed legislation to expand and simplify lending against moveable and intangible security more efficient systems for registration, credit information and financial contract enforcement greater transparency and know-how in SME financial transactions, specific areas where improved secured finance systems can increase the flow of SME credit, such as onlending of commercial bank funds by NGOs and associations and strategies for coalitionbuilding and cooperative work among JOBS partners to achieve reform.

· Patrick Meagher of the IRIS Center. University of Maryland, led a lively discussion of these issues.

Asian financial crisis hits

China's coffers BEIJING, June 29: The Asian financial crisis is adding to the already heavy burdens of the China's overstrained state coffers, the state-run newspaper China Daily reported Thursday, says AP.

Between January and May, state tax revenues grew by 7.7 per cent, while expenditures rose 12.8 per cent, it quoted Finance Minister Xiang Huaicheng as saying.

Most Asian currencies fall over the week

HONG KONG, June 29: Regional currencies generally kept pace with the falling yen over the week after a Group of Seven (G7) and Asian finance leaders meeting failed to bolster the Japanese unit, reports AFP.

Analysts said there could be some respite in the week ahead following reports on Friday that the troubled long-term Credit Bank of Japan Ltd and Sumitomo Trust and Banking Corp could merge.

The possible merge would be a first step in cleaning up Japan's ailing banking sector plagued with bad loans.

JAPANESE YEN: The yen plunged against the dollar during the week on investor disappointment over an emergency meeting last weekend of Group of Seven and Asian deputy finance ministers to prevent a further currency crisis.

The Japanese currency was quoted at 141,27-30 to the dollar late Friday, compared with 134.97-135.00 a week earlier.

The yen lost ground Monday as Japan failed to offer specific measures to bolster its currency and economy at the crisis meet-The currency eased past 140

yen later in the week on skepticism about Japan's commitment to solve bad loan problems in its banking sector, hitting a low of 143.00 yen Friday. But it recovered from the low late Friday, boosted by the news of a proposed merger between the troubled long-term Credit Bank of Japan Ltd and Sumit-

AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR: The Australian dollar will again be tied to the Japanese yen in the week ahead, with improving commodity prices its only hope of breaking the stranglehold. At the week's end, the local

omo Trust and Banking Corp.

currency closed at 60.68 US cents from 61.26 US cents last HONG KONG DOLLAR The Hong Kong dollar ended the week at 7.748-7.749 against the

greenback from 7.7415-7.7425 a

INDONESIAN RUPIAH: The rupiah slumped to close at 14.725 against the US dollar Friday on the slide of the yen compared to its close at 14.350 a MALAYSIAN RINGGIT:

The ringgit breached its psychological level of 4.00 to the dollar to end the week at 4.0750, down from 3.9230 previously on the back of the yen's slump against the greenback, dealers said. The ringgit is likely to remain weak depending on the yen's movement but may see

some respite from the central

bank's plan to cut banks' re-

serve requirement from 10 per

cent to eight per cent next month, they added. PHILIPPINE PESO: The Philippine currency fell 3.2 per cent in the past week to 41.97 pesos to the dollar Friday from 40.64 pesos to the greenback on

SINGAPORE DOLLAR: The Singapore dollar ended the week lower against the US dollar to 1.6729 from 1.6480 the

previous week. SOUTH KOREAN WON: The won strengthened to 1,386 won on Saturday from 1,394

won the previous week. TAIWAN DOLLAR: The Taiwan dollar dropped 1.2 per cent over the past week to close at 34.552 against the US dollar on Friday on the back of the Japanese yen's slide.

Analysts here have said the

central bank would step in to prevent the local unit falling through the 35.00 to the green-THAI BAHT: The Thai baht depreciated slightly against the dollar over the week, closing

Friday at 41.50-55, against

41.00-10 baht the previous

The stability was a result of local exporters selling the dollar against the baht in anticipation of the Thai currency strengthening on a government global bond issue next month. analysts said.

classified advances of its branches.

Janata Bank holds a meeting to evaluate position of Janata photo



The ninth AGM of Prime Textile Spinning Mills Ltd. - Prince photo

Asia's financial crisis: Poorest countries also feeling the pinch

BANGKOK, Jun 29: While the spotlight is firmly on Asia's crippled tiger economies, the region's poorest countries are also feeling the pinch as their already weak currencies slump and trade with wealthier neigh-

bours takes a dive, reports AFP. The long-isolated currencies of Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia have taken a hammering. serving only to reinforce the dominance of the US dollar's in many circles in the povertystricken countries and drive up prices for basic as well as luxury goods.

The crisis, which began with last July's float of the Thai baht and has since spread across Asia, has dragged land-locked Laos into the era of globalisation, with its KP currency trading at record lows of about 3,400 units to the dollar, down nearly 75 per cent from a year ago.

Cambodia's riel rallied from a record low of about 4,800 to the dollar just before historic UN-backed elections in 1993 to around 2,700 before the crisis and domestic upheaval last year sent it plunging. Earlier this month, the riel slumped as low as 4,300 to the

dollar but has since steadied to about 4,000.

Myanmar, one of the most closed countries in the world. has also been forced to reluctantly face up to the crisis Although the official ex-

change rate of about six kyat to

the dollar persists, traders say

authorities have abandoned at-

tempts to crackdown on the

black-market whenever it starts selling dollars for more than 300 kyat. "It used to be that every time the rate gets to the bench-mark of 300 kyat to the dollar, you could expect intelligence personnel to move in," one businessman involved in black-

market currency dealing said. Beside the impact of the Asian economic crisis, Myanmar's junta contributed to the currency's decline through its "tendency to mint more of the stuff in an effort to balance the budget," a Yangon analyst

"Even if present import re-

strictions were removed, most

of us would hesitate to import

simply because it is not practi-

cal to do so at this time when

the free-market value of the kyat is so low. The turmoil has forced up

prices across the board in Myanmar and the costs of basic items such as beans, pulses and onions have soared by about 100 per cent on Yangon's markets in the last two weeks alone. In Cambodia, the economic woes have been compounded by seasonal rice shortages.

ahead of the country's scheduled July 26 elections. Finance ministry figures show rice prices surging from 400 dollars a tonne in April to the current rate of about 430 dollars. Cambodia's economy was

drought-affected harvests and

hoarding of some commodities

dealt a double blow last July when the start of the regional crisis coincided with second Prime Minister Hun Sen's violent ouster of rival co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Foreign investors took flight, sending asset values div-

ing and smothering the slow but steady growth the economy had made since 1993. In neighbouring Laos, efforts by authorities to stabilise the

ure and the country has little hope of emerging unscathed from the regional crisis, according to a recent report by the Bangkok-based That Farmers Bank Research Centre. The report said dwindling overseas investment, love for-

eign reserves, a sharp dec line in

KP currency are doomed to fail-

border trade with neighbouring Thailand, and a heavy rei lance on loans and aid meant Laos could not isolate itself fro in regional woes. As the KP has declined, the government has introduced range of measures to stab llise the unit, including halting the

sale of foreign currencies by

banks and imprisoning black-

market dealers.

remains widespread.

in early June, authorities announced that foreign currencies could only be purchased by businesses registered in Laos in an effort to control speculation and currency flows. The move followed a ban on the use of foreign currencies in

US DLR 46.9000 46.6000 trade last June, but the use of GBP 77.1100 75.1100 the Thai baht and the dollar in 12 2500 11.9500 S Riyal everyday business transactio as 12.3500 12.0000 UAE Dh 145 0000 150 0000 KUW DI