Free Breakfast/Health Club/Swimming Pool

DHAKA, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1998

Indonesian central bank chief says IMF policies working

SINGAPORE, Oct 14: International Monetary Fund policies prescribed for Indonesia, although criticised by many in the region as bringing hardship to ordinary people in the name of national recovery, are working, the country's central bank governor said Wednesday, reports AP.

Bank Indonesia Governor Sjahril Sabirin said the delay in his country's revival from near collapse the result of noneconomic factors.

Speaking on a panel at the east Asia Economic Summit, sponsored by the Switzerlandbased World Economic Forum, Sjahril also said that Indonesian corporations are overexposed to short-term debt.

He agreed with other central bankers at the conference that "better monitoring is needed of short-term capital flows."

Sjahril also said he is confident that the rupiah, trading Wednesday at around 8,850 to the US dollar, will continue to improve. it has gained from 10,800 to

the dollar at the beginning of the month.

Janata Bank reviews post-flood field position

Star Business Report Janata Bank reviewed its

post-flood field position at a meeting held recently, says a press release.

Managing Director of the bank MA Hashem reviewed the progress and process of agri loan disbursement under the bank's post-flood rehabilitation programme.

The review was based on the experience of the bank executives who made an extensive field level visit during the last two weeks.

The field level visit added a positive momentum to agricultural credit disbursement at branch level. The meeting emphasised this type of visit for smooth and quicker disbursement of agricultural credit.

It also stressed the need for close supervision and monitoring from the head office to expedite proper implementation of crediescheme of the bank.

The managing director advised the executives to discharge their duties with sincerity and devotion in implementing the credit programme which is the major task under the government's post-flood rehabilitation programme.

Interbank trade Taka steady against

Taka remained steady against US dollar in the interbank trade yesterday although. demand for the greenback increased due to foodgrain imports, foreign bank dealers said, reports BSS.

dollar

Taka was quoted at 47.2350/ 47.25 per dollar against yesterday's closing level of 47.2350/47.25, they said.

The local currency remained steady as some state-owned bank dealers were reluctant to sell their reserves because of their own requirement, dealers observed.

They said that the interbank call money rates were down yesterday and ranged between 9 and 10 per cent against yesterday's closing range of 10.30 to 11 per cent.

The opening session of the money market yesterday was tight as liquidity supply was poor, but at the end of the session liquidity was available.

Following are interbank rates of taka against the major foreign currencies (computed based on dollar): In Tk per unit 81.588

Pound Mark 29.2881 Pak Rupee Indian Rupee 1.1220 12.5930 29.3552 S'pore dollar

Panama Canal revenue up by 10 pc

PANAMA CITY, Oct 14: Despite a drought that forced a lowering of water levels, toll revenues at the Panama Canal increased about 10 per cent in the fiscal year that ended September 30, reports AP.

The higher revenues were partly the result of a 7.5 per cent toll increase that took effect in January, said a report released Tuesday by the Canal Commission, the US agency that administers the canal.

The canal earned 545.7 million in the 1998 fiscal year, compared with 493.6 million the previous fiscal year, the report said.

It said the Asian economic crisis and this year's drought did not hurt shipments. The drought, blamed on the El Nino weather phenomenon prompted the commission to lower the canal level in March, forcing

ships to carry lighter loads. This year 192 million tons of merchandise passed through the canal, compared with 190 tons in the 1997 fiscal year.

Bid to win 30pc increase in US quota

Ministries, RMG exporters sit next week to evolve strategy

By Govinda Shil

The Commerce Ministry will sit with the garment exporters and Foreign Ministry officials next week to develop a strategy for placing a formal request before the US government to press for 30 per cent increase in textile quota, Commerce and Foreign Ministry sources said.

The government is yet to make a formal request to the United States government for the proposed quota hike in 21 broad garment categories.

Bangladesh enjoys quota lacilities in the American market for 20 million dozens of different types of wear (except underwear and towel). According to WTO regulation, Bangladesh will have a 10 per cent increase or two million dozen more quo-

tas next year. "This is not sufficient for a fast growing", said Colonel Azimur Rahman, Chairman of

Quota Monitoring Committee of the BGMEA. According to an estimate, the garment industry's sale was increasing at 20 per cent a year in recent times. A total of 2,700 export-oriented garment factories are currently operating in the country.

The US government has imposed quota on garment import from 24 countries around the world. Any country exporting more than 2.5 or 3 per cent of total import by American buyers, automatically faces a quota restriction, according to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Associa-

tion (BGMEA). "We will send to a letter to the Bangladesh mission in the US sometime after next week. We are now working on some technical issues," Abul Hasan Chowdhury, State Minister for

Foreign Affairs told The Daily Star yesterday. He said that the foreign ministry, garment manufacturers and Commerce Ministry would sit together next week to formulate an action plan in this regard.

In August the Foreign Ministry sent a letter of request to the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC asking it to submit the appeal before the State Department. "The embassy has returned

the letter with some recommendations," said Commerce Secretary Syed Alamgir Farouk Chowdhury. The secretary said that he was now studying the recommendations and would sit with the exporters and Foreign Ministry officials next

Bangladeshi exporters are enjoying 100 per cent quota for some popular garment items

and the average use of quota last year was more than 90 per cent. "We are expecting a 95 per cent use of the US quota allocated for this year," Colonel Azim said.

He said some of the Bangladeshi items like shirts, trousers, sorts, jackets and coats have won popularity among the Americans. "American users like our stitch," he said, adding that the US importers felt comfort to do business with Bangladeshis.

He explained that due to increase in demand for apparels in the US market, Bangladesh was receiving more export or ders from imports there.

"As a result, a 10 per cent annual increase in quota was not enough to keep pace with the increased US demand"

Corruption costing ailing Russia \$15b a year

LONDON, Oct 14: Corruption is costing Russia's ailing economy about 15 billion dollars a year and was at least partly responsible for its financial crisis this year, a British-based business consultancy said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

At the launch of a study on how businesses deal with corruption worldwide, control risks group said the prospects were poor for a clean-up of corrupt practices in Russia over the next four to five years.

"Corruption is amorphous and intangible at the best of times, but it's estimated to be costing Russia about 15 billion dollars a year," said Toby Latta, a specialist in the former Soviet Union at Control Risks. "When you compare this with its (Russia's) call for international bailout funds of similar magnitude, you get a picture of the

The report gave no specifics about how the 15 billion figure was reached but Latta said tax avoidance, domestic capital flight and the deterrent to inward investment from corrupt practices cost the economy

The report gave a number of case studies - including China, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan and Ukraine.

Tel: 815307-10, Fax: 813062

Its section on Russia said the lack of laws on corruption would hamper any meaningful change in business dealings there in the near future.

"The prospects for change are poor over the next four to five years," it said. "The existing law focuses on cases of straightforward cash bribery, tending to permit more complex cases of high-level corruption to go unpunished."

Control risks, which offers advice to companies dealing with political an security risks when investing abroad, said problems with dealing with corruption were of growing concern to clients and a more high profile problem in recent years.

John Bray, the group's principal research consultant said corruption concerns had recently become a development issue in a way not seen 10 to 15 years ago and they were now a major issue for institutions like the International Monetary Fund.

to interfere with a free media

conference with Howard

Wednesday that Australian

networks had been told they

will have to transmit footage of

their coverage of the APEC

meeting through Malaysia

layed television transmissions

of political riots in Kuala

Lumpur in September filmed by

crews there to cover the Com-

Most leaders to

attend meet

despite Anwar

case

concerns about the arrest and

police treatment of Malaysia's

former Deputy Prime Minister

Anwar Ibrahim, most leaders

will attend a meeting of the

Asia-Pacific Economic Coop-

eration (APEC) forum in Kuala

Lumpur next month, a US assis-

tant secretary of state said

The United States is "deeply

worried about... the horrifying

treatment of one of the most re-

spected of the new generation of

Asian leadership," Stanley Roth, in charge of East Asian

and Pacific affairs, told a news

Attending the East Asia

Economic Summit, which An-

war was to have addressed be-

fore his Sept. 2 firing and sub-

sequent arrest, Roth said that

the US government was worried

about the Malaysian politi-

cian's detention without access

to family or lawyers.

Wednesday, reports AP.

conference.

SINGAPORE, Oct 14: Despite

monwealth Games.

Malaysian authorities de-

Telecom.

TV reporters said at a news

coverage of the APEC meeting.

Russia writes off billion-dollar privatisation

MOSCOW, Oct 14: Russia scrapped Tuesday its last billion-dollar privatisation for 1998, admitting that another vital source of income was now inaccessible Ato a government desperately furnmaging around for fund to pay debts, wages and pensions, reports AFP.

Due to the prolonged economic turmoil in Russia, the government said it no longer made sense to sell off a 25 per cent stake in telecommunications giant Svyazinvest before

vear-end. With the International Monetary Fund reluctant to release loans to a government which has yet to define its economic course, the sell-off defeat leaves Moscow with even fewer funding alternatives as it seeks

to buy itself sometime. A cornered Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov sought help in his funding and banking predicament from foreign finance houses, offering to open the door further to foreign banks which he said were essential to Russia's recovery.

"We cannot get by without widening the activity of the foreign banks in Russia, without increasing the share of foreign capital in the assets of Russian banks," Primakov said.

Primakov's new government has since been trying to toe a fine line between offering foreign banks a more acceptable package and honouring commitments to make good on some 110 billion roubles in wage and pension arrears, and that out of shrinking tax receipts and dwindling options for financing spending.

BIBM course on bank accounting and finance ends

Star Business Report A 15-day course on accounting and finance in banks ended yesterday at the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM), says a press release issued on the day.

The concluding session of the course was chaired by Dr Muinul Islam, Director General of BIBM. He also distributed certificates among the participants drawn from different banks and financial institu-

While speaking, Dr Islam emphasised the importance of proper accounting in hanking operations.

He expressed the hope that this specially-designed course would help the participants develop their professional efficiency in performing, controlling and modernising banking operations.

The course contents, inter alia, included basic accounting concepts, preparation of financial statements, accounting procedures in banks, management accounting and financial control, bank financial man-

niques and loan accounting etc. Sharmin Morium, Md Saidur Rahman and Sarker Humayun Kabir, BIBM faculty members, jointly coordinated the course.

agement, cost accounting tech-

Pfizer profits up despite fall in Viagra sales

NEW YORK, Oct 14: Despite slowing sales of its impotencetreatment drug Viagra, Pfizer Inc more than doubled its profits in the third quarter the company said Tuesday, reports

Pfizer earned \$1.40 billion, or \$1.06 a diluted share, in the third quarter ended Sept 27, up 134 per cent from \$596 million, or 46 cents a share, in the same

period last year. Pfizer's sales rose 21 per cent

to \$3.3 billion. Results came in below analysts' expectations, however,

partly because it had a lower tax rate a year ago. In advance of the report, which was released after the close of trading on the New York Stock Exchange, Pfizer tumbled \$5.50 to close at \$87.50 a share. Sales of Viagra, the fastest-

selling new drug ever when it was launched in April, were \$141 million in the second quarter. That was down sharply from the \$411 million in the second quarter. Year-to-date Viagra sales

totaled \$551 million.

A group of "bromistas," or comedians place dollar bills on Maire Casadei, 24, who is chosen the "Muse of Money," in front of stock market la Bolsa de Valores, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Tuesday. The "bromistas," which are typical to Rio de Janeiro, celebrated the Money day by passing out dollar bills to pedestrians as means to raise awareness of the - AP/UNB photo financial crisis.

Asian crisis a challenge to S'pore social cohesion

HONG KONG, Oct 14: The Asian financial crisis now is threatening Singapore's social cohesion as well as its economy, the deputy prime minister said Tuesday, reports AP.

"This is not just an economic problem; it is also a challenge to our social cohesion and our resolve to survive and thrive as a nation," Lee Hsien Loong told a group of business people in

Hong Kong. The crisis and the relatively small depreciation of the Singapore dollar are forcing businesses to cut costs, especially wage costs, Lee said.

'Wages make up 40 per cent of costs," he said. "In the crisis, the exchange rates of many countries have fallen sharply, but their nominal wages have not gone up to compensate. We therefore need to reduce wage costs significantly."

Layoffs are approaching high levels not seen since the last recession in 1985-86, and the minority ethnic Malay population has suffered the brunt of the cuts. Unemployment has reached 3.2 per cent.

Many of Lee's comments on Singapore's situation in the Asian crisis struck a chord in Hong Kong, where many companies have cut wages by 10 per cent. Hong Kong's economy also has been dragged down by external factors and its strong currency.

"For us, the driving forces of the slowdown are largely external, and beyond our control, The government has intro-

duced a series of initiative to ensure economic recovery and is putting together a cost-cutting package, to be announced in November, that will enhance the country's competitiveness, he added.

Vietnam won't devalue dong HANOI, Oct 14: Vietnam will

not devalue further its foreign exchange rates, the Saigon Times daily reported today. says Xinhua

The English-language daily quoted Nguyen Doan Hung as saying that further adjustment of foreign exchange rates is not needed as the state can now control the foreign exchange mar-

"The state has sufficient tools to control and regulate the forex market through administrative and economic measures and especially newly adopted forex policies," said the official.

Asian currencies have begun to pick up, so Vietnam will not need to further devalue the dong if it does not experience any substantial (financial) turmoil Hung said.

The interbank foreign exchange market is playing an increasingly important role, the official said, adding that "through it, the state can maintain forex rates at the current The free forex market does

exist, but it cannot affect forex rates as unofficial dealers only account for a small share of the market, Hung noted. He said the regional finan-

cial crisis has indirectly re-

sulted in the appreciation of the

Emirates flies Dubai Shopping Festival across the globe

Under the instructions of HH General Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Defence Minister and Crown Prince of Dubai, Emirates Airline's entire fleet will feature decals of the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) logo, says a press release of the airlines issued in

city yesterday. This is the most visible and worldwide promotion of the annual festival, when Emirates aircraft will fly the event across its network of 45 destinations.

The colourful DSF decal is placed near the rear of the aircraft's fuselage, so that passengers boarding either by aerobridges or ramps can clearly see the distinctive logo. Emirates aircraft will feature the logo from now till April 14, 1999 the last day of the festival.

HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Emirates' chairman, who unveiled the DSF decal this week, said: "Emirates is a very keen supporter of the Dubai Shopping Festival and this is another way of promoting the event around our network. At the same time, we will be carrying out other promotions as well as including the DSF in our worldwide advertis-

ing campaigns. Emirates has been a major sponsor of the Dubai Shopping Festival since the inaugural event in 1996. Next year's festival takes place from March 18 to April 14.

Australia to press hard for progress on free trade

APEC meets next week in KL

CANBERRA, Oct 14: Australia will press hard for progress on free trade at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum meeting in Kuala Lumpur next month, Prime Minister John Howard said Wednesday, reports AP. Forecasting a strengthened

role for Australia in the region, he said would use the meeting to urge regional countries to implement trade and economic reform, and continue to pursue APEC's key goals of achieving free trade between developed countries in its membership by 2010, with developing member countries following suit by

"I will certainly be having a few things to say at APEC about the need to retain the reform process (and) the movement towards the trade liberalisation goals of APEC," Howard said. "That is what I have in

But Howard said he was "not going to run around the area giving people extensive domestic lectures," although he would not be reluctant to comment on issues of interest to Australia. He said Australia, the economy of which has so far been

of the Asian economic crisis, would have a stronger role in the region. "I'm very conscious of the fact that over the next few years, Australia will have to play an even stronger and more assertive regional role in both

able to hold off the worst effects

political and economic terms." Howard said. "It's very fractured, it's weakened, it is in large measure in recession. We will have to

pay a very strong regional role." Howard also said Australia would strongly oppose any attempt by Malaysian authorities



-Emirates photo on Emirates aircraft.

India agrees to two int'l patent treaties had long used tumeric to heal

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 14: India has agreed to abide by two key treaties protecting inventors' patents, a major move by a nation that for years had flouted international norms on intellectual property, reports

by patent lawyers, India's trading partners and the United Nations alike Tuesday.

significant coming amid the increasingly vocal debate over biopiracy - what many developing nations and indigenous groups consider the theft of their innovations by companies that use patent laws to gain exclusive rights over their re-

India has claimed biopiracy in a current case involving a patent granted to a US company for rice similar to India's fa-

on India as of Dec 7. The two treaties are considered the main accords regarding international protection of intellectual property. The Paris

Convention lays down the basic

principles governing protection

of patents, trademarks and in-

dustrial designs.

The Patent Cooperation Treaty makes it possible to fill out a single application for a patent that will be valid in several countries.

vious.

India had for years resisted the growing trend of worldwide patent protection that came along with the global economy, where a bottle of aspirin in a New Delhi drug store was as likely to be imported as it was to be locally made. India had a shortened patent exclusivity period, meaning Indian companies could sell generic drugs at an earlier date than what was specified in the away foreign investment.

apparently began to change its view toward the need for patent protection last year, when it successfully overturned a US patent obtained by American scientists for using tumeric as a wound healer. Indian scientists, armed

patent didn't meet the "novelty"

requirement because Indians

biopiracy, India has argued that the exclusive rights that the patent confers would hurt vital Indian rice exports. with ancient medicinal texts, There are now 151 countries argued to the US Patent and which adhere to the Paris Con-Trademark Office that the

wounds.

vention and 98 countries which have signed the Patent Cooperation Treaty.

Claiming a case of

India has also been faced

Savings vanish as co goes bust

1,200 Chinese workers stage protest

detained.

BEIJING, Oct 14: About 1,200 factory workers staged protest outside government offices in a central China city after a local company went bust, taking their savings with it, a human rights group said Wednesday. reports AP.

The demonstration Monday in Shiyan, in Hubei province about 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) southwest of Beijing. blocked a major thoroughfare in the city, paralysing traffic, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic

Movement in China said. The Hong Kong-based group

impossible that such a big protest had occurred. The Information Centre said the demonstrators were protesting about a local com-pany that applied for

bankruptcy in June after having collected 10 million yuan (\$1.2 million) in investments from factory workers in the

said hundreds of police were

called in to break up the protest

and that 10 demonstrators were

cial, Xiong Juguo, said it was

A Shiyan government offi-

with another patent issue that patent of the name-brand drug. surfaced earlier this year. An mous Basmati grain. Patents allow inventors to While enabling Indians to buy Alvin, Texas-based company, India agreed to abide by the exclude all others from making. cheaper drugs, the policy drove RiceTec Inc, received a patent to Paris Convention for the Prousing or selling their invention produce and market a longtection of Industrial Property for a specified period of time. The New Delhi government grain rice called Texmati, and the Patent Cooperation The decision was welcomed Inventors can get a patent if which is similar to Basmati, an Treaty, the UN patent agency, they can prove that their prodaromatic rice grown in parts of the World Intellectual Property uct is useful, new and isn't ob-India and Pakistan. Organisation said Tuesday. Both treaties will be binding The signing is particularly