

Frauds cream off \$12b from Indian govt banks since '47

NEW DELHI, Oct 29: Financial frauds have creamed off more than 12 billion dollars from state-run banks since Indian independence in 1947, a top anti-corruption official said yesterday, reports AFP.

Nagaraj Vittal, chief of the Central Vigilance Commission, said continuing corruption in the banking system was mainly due to the lack of computerisation.

"Only 5,000 of about 65,000 bank branches have been computerised so far. I will soon direct all banks to fully computerise their operations by January 1, 2000, to check financial frauds," Vittal told the Press Trust of India.

A 1.5-billion dollar scandal in 1991, the largest in India's financial history, involved a group of brokers and corrupt bankers who used public money to play the stock markets, sending the share prices of even dud companies soaring.

After the scam was unearthed the stock market crashed, wiping out the savings of millions of investors.

Vittal said 45 per cent of about 5,000 cases reaching the

SAIC workshop on agri technology transfer begins

The inaugural ceremony of the four-day SAIC regional workshop of experts in SAARC countries on "Transfer of technology in agriculture" begins at BARC auditorium on Monday, says APB.

Minister for Agriculture and Food Matia Chowdhury will inaugurate the workshop organised by the SAARC Agriculture Information Centre (SAIC).

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, will attend the programme as special guest.

commission yearly pertained to financial fraud or bank scams and handwritten accounts were mainly responsible for the scandals.

"This (manual operations) is a major cause of frauds and was used by Harshad Mehta" who used the time lag in making entries to his advantage, Vittal said.

He said the commission had directed junior officers handling corruption cases in government departments to report to the commission directly.

"This is to break the culture of the corrupt protecting the corrupt and encourage the young officers to remain honest."

Corruption is endemic in India where bribes are regularly demanded, and given, for every service from speeding up electricity and gas connections to obtaining driving licenses and getting children admitted in schools.



Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger holds a hammer during the groundbreaking of Universal Studio Japan theme park at its construction site in Konohana Ward in Osaka Wednesday. From left to right: Takafumi Isomura, mayor of Osaka city, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Toshio Dozaki, President of USJ Co Ltd. The theme park is set to open in the spring of 2001.

Exchange Rates

American Express Bank Ltd foreign exchange rates (indicative) against the Taka on October 29, 1998 to clients.

Currency	Selling TT & OD	Buying TT Clean	Selling BC	Buying OD Sight	Buying TT & OD
USD	48.7050	48.3100	48.7450	48.1570	48.0850
GBP	81.8244	80.6294	81.8016	80.3740	80.2539
DEM	29.5307	29.1024	29.5550	29.0102	28.9669
JPY	0.4166	0.4093	0.4169	0.4080	0.4074
FRF	8.8713	8.6088	8.8785	8.5815	8.5687
SAR	13.0332	12.8416	13.0439	12.8009	12.7818
MYR	12.8188	12.7148	12.8293	12.6746	12.6556
AED	13.2976	13.1163	13.3085	13.0748	13.0552
KWD	169.4087	154.5920	169.5478	154.5920	153.8720
QAR	13.4211	13.2320	13.4321	13.1901	13.1704
SFR	36.3064	35.7190	36.3362	35.6059	35.5527
CAD	31.9629	31.0715	31.9891	30.9731	30.9268
ITL	0.0317	0.0278	0.0319	0.0277	0.0277
AUD	30.6306	29.3918	30.6557	29.2987	29.2549
BEF	1.4279	1.4126	1.4291	1.4081	1.4060
HKD	6.2293	6.2223	6.3035	6.2026	6.1933
SGD	30.4064	29.4071	30.4314	29.3140	29.2701

Bill buying rates:

TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
48.2112	47.9074	47.5048	47.1023	46.6997	45.8945

US dollar London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR)

	Buying	Selling	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months
Cash	48.0850	48.7050	USD	522	522	497	484	475
T C	48.0850	48.7050	GBP	743	718	691	669	665

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollars

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
42.28/42.29	55.52/55.57	36.80/36.84	3.7995/3.8005	7500/7650	1313/1315.5

High expenses forcing foreign cos to quit 'S'pore needs to cut business cost to stay competitive'

SINGAPORE, Oct 29: The cost of doing business in Singapore should be cut by up to 30 per cent for it to remain competitive, a survey published yesterday showed, as another top foreign firm decided to leave the city-state due to high business costs, reports AFP.

Between 100 and EPP companies surveyed by the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) indicated that they needed to slash business costs by between 15 and 30 per cent to stay competitive.

Singapore has become twice to four times as costly as Malaysia, China and Thailand to do business employers said in the survey, the findings of which were published in The Straits Times daily.

Cost cuts should come from both wage and non-wage expenses, including government levies and charges as well as rentals, SNEF President Stephen Lee told the newspaper.

"The government must visibly demonstrate that they are working on bringing down the non-wage costs," Lee said.

Singapore authorities are at present working on measures, including a cut in employers' contribution to a pension fund for workers, to reduce business costs to make the island state more competitive in the region.

A government-backed committee on competitiveness, charged with studying measures to cut business costs, is expected to make recommendations including a corporate income tax cut by next month.

Analysts here said the rate may be cut by one percentage point to 25 per cent.

The SNEF survey was released as Japan's publicly-listed Toppan Printing Co, one of the world's largest printing companies, announced it would bow out after 30 years of operations in Singapore due to higher business costs.

Toppan Printing Company (Singapore), its wholly-owned subsidiary located at Jurong, west of the island, would cease operations at the end of March next year, said Kohel Mochizuki, Managing Director of the Singapore unit, in a letter

to employees. The Business Times newspaper reported.

Toppan Singapore, one of the top printing companies here, has about 230 staff.

Toppan's decision to leave Singapore had been prompted by a government redevelopment project under which the company had to relocate from its present premises by 2003.

"We investigated many plans and ideas with top priority given to moving to another area in Singapore. However, the growth of Singapore has resulted in higher costs and lower competitiveness," Mochizuki said.

"We finally reached the conclusion that it is not viable for us to relocate our plant in Singapore and to continue with our book and magazine production for export from here," he said.

Toppan is among many foreign companies which have left Singapore and relocated to cheaper neighbouring countries, or cut back on staff and production output in recent years due to the relatively high cost of doing business here.

China a rare exception Downturn sharply downs investment in Asia

LONDON, Oct 29: The collapse of economic growth in Asia has sharply reduced foreign investment in the region and also curtailed the activities of Asian companies elsewhere in the world, KPMG accountants said yesterday, reports AFP.

The KPMG survey said that China is a rare exception of the downward trend, seeing an increase in the value of inward transactions to 1.32 billion dollars in the third quarter from 725 million dollars in the second quarter.

However, even China's total for the year so far is only just over half the level of the same period last year, KPMG said.

Elsewhere in the region, inward transactions have plummeted in the first nine months of 1998.

Overall, investments were 26.9 billion dollars, compared to 30.4 billion dollars in the same period a year ago. The decline has been especially steep since the last few months, with Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Thailand seeing sharp falls in third-quarter inward deals.

Likewise, Asian companies that used to invest across the world have severely curtailed their expansion in the first nine months of the year, with spending down to 10.7 billion dollars from 34.85 billion dol-

lars in the same period last year.

"It may be years before their overseas acquisitions return to the levels of the mid-1990's," KPMG said.

However, in the Group of Seven industrial powers — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — cross border acquisitions by companies grew in the third quarter of this year to represent a record 77 per cent of all international transactions.

The United States strengthened its position as the most active buyer, its share rising from 22 per cent to 29 per cent, a total of 109.8 billion dollars' worth of deals, double last year's figure.

The survey showed that for the first time, Germany is now the top target for US acquisitions abroad, with 18.4 billion dollars in third-quarter investments, bumping Britain into second place, with 14.8 billion dollars worth of deals.

"The focus of international expansion has shifted decisively from emerging markets this year to the developed world, and in particular Europe, and we expect that to remain the case in the year ahead," said UK head of mergers and acquisitions at KPMG corporate finance Stephen Barrett.

Workshop on ISO 14000 environmental management held

A day-long workshop on "Introduction to ISO 14000 Environmental Management System" was organised by Human Resource Development Programme (HRDP) in association with Business Advisory Service (BAS) Project of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) at its auditorium in the city yesterday, says a press release.

DCCI President R Maksud Khan inaugurated the workshop as the Chief Guest.

In his speech Khan said the DCCI has been organising need-based training courses to meet the demand of the business community of the country.

GrameenPhone in bill payment deal with StanChart

Standard Chartered Bank in Bangladesh has signed an agreement with GrameenPhone Ltd. for bill payment by Grameen mobile phone users through Standard Chartered ATMs in the country.

The accord was signed by Majedur Rahman, Head of Consumer Banking of Standard Chartered, and Arvid Knutsen, Director of Finance of GrameenPhone in the city on Wednesday, says a press release.

Standard Chartered has also signed a similar agreement with CityCell.



Majedur Rahman, head of Consumer Banking of Standard Chartered, and Arvid Knutsen, Director of Finance of GrameenPhone, exchange documents after signing an agreement on bill payment by Grameen mobile phone users in the city on Wednesday. — StanChart photo

Uttara recommends Mobil for Isuzu, Suzuki, Maruti and Kawasaki Bajaj

Drive Group recommends Mobil for Land Rover, Daihatsu and Volkswagen

DHS Motors uses Mobil lubricants for Honda

Atlas Honda recommends Mobil for Honda

people came to one agreement ?

Bangladesh it's the one that's most recommended for cars and two-wheelers.

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