

Asia to see strong growth in 2000, 2001: IMF

Bankers want fund to push reforms

WASHINGTON, Apr 4: Asian economies will record strong growth this year and next after a dismal showing during the crisis of 1997-99, according to International Monetary Fund data obtained by Reuters yesterday.

The figures, set to form a key part of the fund's World Economic Outlook when it is released April 12, project 2000 growth of 7.0 per cent in South Korea, 6.2 per cent in Taiwan, 6.0 per cent in Hong Kong and 5.9 per cent in Singapore.

But the performance will slacken off in most of these countries next year, the IMF added, projecting 6.5 per cent growth in South Korea, 6.0 per cent in Taiwan, 4.7 per cent in Hong Kong and 6.0 per cent in Singapore.

In China, which has administered Hong Kong since 1997, the economy would grow 7.0 per cent this year and 6.5 per cent in 2001.

Inflation would be muted in all five places this year, ranging from zero in Hong Kong to 3.0 per cent in South Korea.

The IMF forecast that Asia's emerging economies would expand 6.2 per cent this year and 5.9 per cent in 2001.

It projected Thai growth of 4.5 per cent this year and 5 per cent in 2001 and Indonesian growth of 3 per cent in 2000 and 3.5 per cent next year. The Malaysian economy would

grow 6.0 per cent this year and 5.8 per cent in 2001, it said.

Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea were the three big Asian recipients of multibillion dollar IMF-sponsored rescue deals as their economies teetered on the brink of economic collapse.

But all three countries are now recovering strongly from recession — South Korea's economy rose 10.7 per cent last year for the strongest performance recorded by the IMF anywhere in the world.

Moving further across the Pacific, the IMF forecast growth of 3.9 per cent in Australia this year, slowing to 3.5 per cent in 2001. It said the New Zealand economy would grow by 3.9 per cent in 2000 and 3.4 per cent in 2001.

Another report says, the world's recovery from the crisis-induced slump of 1997-99 should provide a window of opportunity for additional reforms to the world financial system, an influential bankers' group said yesterday.

The Institute for International Finance, in an open letter to ministers and central bankers meeting in Washington later this month, said emerging markets would grow some 5 per cent this year, after a slim 1 per cent last year.

But the IIF said it was worried about risks from the sizzling US economy, which is

growing at a pace which many economists believe to be unsustainable.

"Past experience has shown that periods of enthusiasm can be followed by sharp breaks in market sentiment if difficult reform measures are postponed," said IIF Managing Director Charles Dallara.

Dallara, reiterating a long-standing message from the bankers' group, said emerging market governments needed an "ongoing dialogue" with investors.

The International Monetary Fund needed to make its country surveillance more relevant to investors and lenders, releasing its detailed annual economic surveys for all economies with substantial access to world capital markets.

The IMF is carrying out a pilot project under which it releases detailed staff reports assessing economies as diverse as the Bahamas, Finland and the United States. But these reports, like a shorter summary of the board's discussions on a country's economy, are only released if the country approves.

Dallara also said countries needed to maintain sound economic policies, improve transparency and meet international standards on official data.

Meanwhile the International Monetary Fund sees Latin America recovering fast from last year's slump.

Brazil, rebounding from last year's devaluation, will grow 4 per cent this year and 4.5 per cent next year, according to the estimates due to be released on April 12 in the twice-yearly World Economic Outlook.

Mexico, the only major economy in the region not to suffer last year's recession, will plough ahead at 4.5 per cent in 2000 and speed up to 5.3 per cent in 2001, the IMF estimated.

Argentina, which contracted 3.1 per cent in 1999, will grow by 3.4 per cent this year and 3.7 per cent next year.

Chile will spring back from last year's 1 per cent decline in GDP to grow 6 per cent in 2000 and 6.5 per cent in 2001.

Venezuela will overcome the region's worst recession, a 7.2 per cent fall in 1999, to grow 3.2 per cent this year and 3.1 per cent next year, according to the IMF projections.

Colombia shrank 5 per cent last year, but will rebound and grow 3 per cent this year and 4.8 per cent next year, while Peru will grow 4 per cent in 2000 and 6 per cent in 2001, the IMF forecast.

Ecuador, which has begun to adopt the dollar as its currency after a 7 per cent economic contraction last year, is expected to grow 1.5 per cent in 2000 and 4 per cent in 2001.

World trade fair begins in Germany on June 1

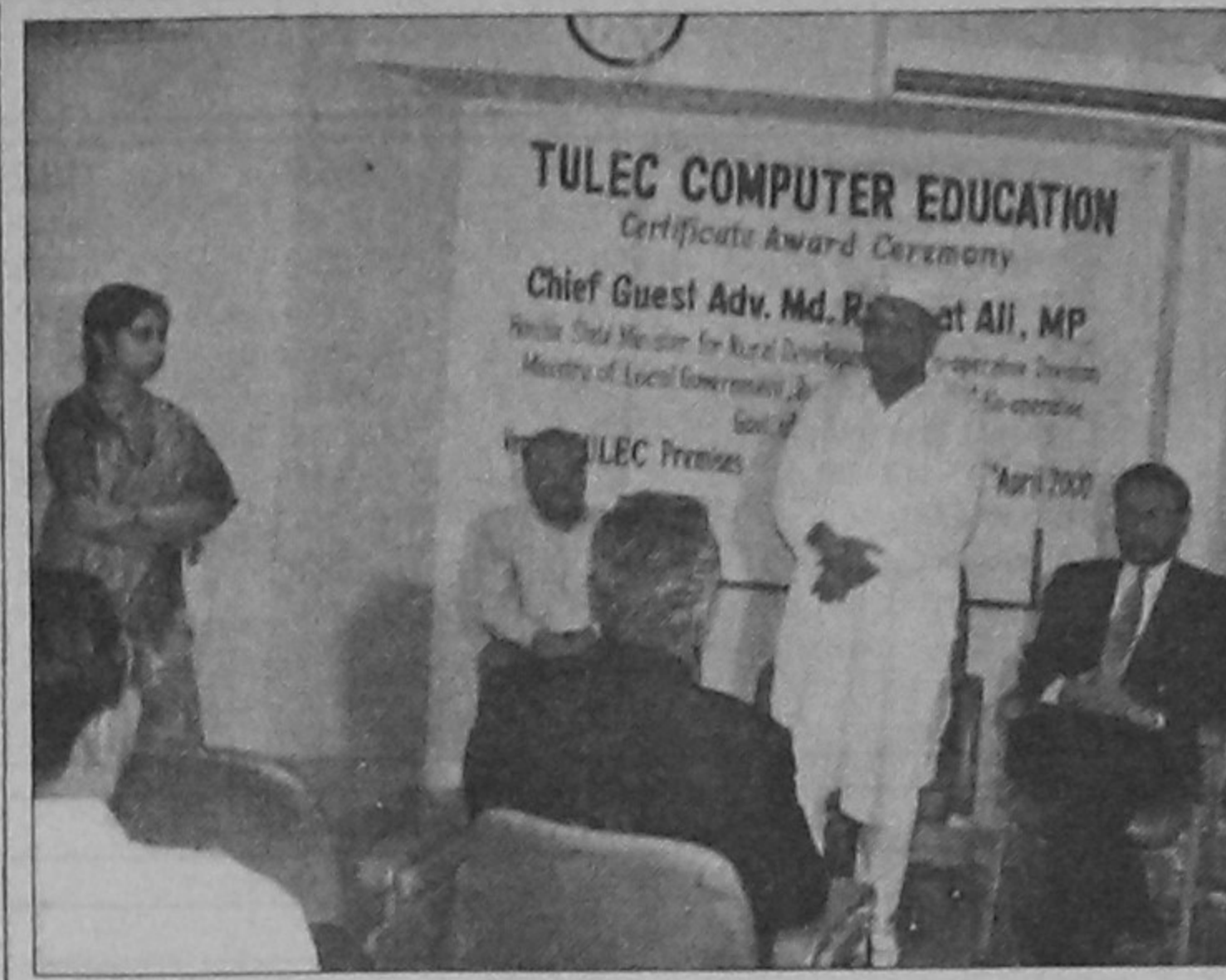
The 5-month world trade fair, EXPO 2000, will begin in Germany on June 1, says a press release.

By now over 190 nations and international organisations have announced their participation in the fair which will end on October 31.

The Federal Republic of Germany has taken steps to ensure that the countries with limited financial means can also take part in the show.

Bangladesh has confirmed its participation and has 324 sqm space for its pavilion, and construction of the pavilion is now under way. A picture of the pavilion can be seen on the Internet at <http://www.expo2000.de/english/telnehmer/tinindex.html>.

Several non-government development projects from Bangladesh like Anando and Grameen Bank have been selected for participation.



TULEC Computer Education certified the students of its fourth executive batch at a function held Monday. Picture shows chief guest Advocate Md Rahmat Ali, (middle), State Minister for Rural Development & Co-operative Division, addressing the audience. Md Ali Akbar Khan, MD, Tulec Computer Education Dhaka (on his right), and Sujay Nag, Country Manager, Tata International Ltd, Bangladesh (on his left), were also present.

— TULEC photo

Nasdaq suffers record loss Microsoft leads dip in European stocks

LONDON, Apr 4: Investors' shaky confidence in telecom, media and technology stocks, coupled with a steep drop in Microsoft shares, caused European stocks to close mostly lower Monday, reports AP.

The Dow Jones Stoxx Index of shares in European companies fell 6.98 points, or 1.8 per cent, to 387.12, while the London-based TechMARK 100 index fell 5.4 per cent and the telecom subindex 5.7 per cent.

Microsoft shares fell 10 per cent in London trading and a further 13 per cent in New York, hours ahead of the expected verdict from the judge overseeing the Microsoft antitrust trial. Settlement talks between the software company and the government collapsed over the weekend.

The Dow Jones Euro Stoxx Index, which tracks companies in countries that joined the single currency, ended down 11.72 points at 429.35. The Dow Jones Euro Stoxx 50 Index was down 126.8 points at 5,122.7, while the Dow Jones Stoxx 50 Index fell 93.1 points to 4,966.0.

Lehman stocks shrugged off the Austrian National Bank's decision Monday to sell gold, while European oil stocks were unaffected by a statement by the OPEC president that another oil output hike by members will probably be needed.

Meanwhile an AFP report from New York says, the Nasdaq composite, dragged down by plunging Microsoft stock, suf-

fered its worst point drop in history yesterday, closing 349.15 points, or 7.63 per cent, down at 4,223.68 points.

The technology heavy index was tugged down by Microsoft, which ended the day nearly 15 per cent down in anticipation of a federal judge's ruling in the Microsoft antitrust case.

Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson released his finding of law in the government's case against Microsoft at 5:00 pm (1700 GMT), one hour after the markets closed.

The plunge in the Nasdaq, however, did not affect the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which ended up 300.01 points, or 2.75 per cent, at 11,221.93.

Microsoft went into free-fall and ended the day 14.5 per cent, or 15.3/8 dollars down at 90.7/8 dollars, wiping 80 billion dollars off its market capitalisation.

Investors were fearing the worst after the failure Saturday of mediation talks aimed at seeking a settlement between the government and Microsoft lawyers.

Jackson's verdict, as the market expected, went against the company founded by Bill Gates, with the federal judge ruling that Microsoft attempted to quash competition in breach of antitrust laws.

The Dow appeared immune to Microsoft's woes, however, with traditional blue chips faring well, notably financial issues.

Oil weak as market awaits OPEC crude

LONDON, Apr 4: Oil fell back yesterday as dealers expected extra crude from OPEC producers after their decision to boost output and cool an overheated market, reports Reuters.

Benchmark Brent blend for May ended 24 cents lower at \$24.53 a barrel, well above its 1999 average of \$18.03 but down from its average so far this year of \$26.53.

May New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) crude futures finished 45 cents down at \$26.45 a barrel, about 23 per cent down from a nine-year high of \$34.37 in early March.

"There could still be further downside ahead for crude, but we are not talking about a dramatic collapse — there should be plenty of buyers in the wings," broker GNI said in London.

In some cases new crude will take two months to reach end-users like motorists, but some

OPEC producers can rapidly supply extra volumes to US customers from storage in the Caribbean.

OPEC last Wednesday agreed an output rise of 1.45 million barrels per day (bpd) for nine of its members following a determined US campaign to wrestle prices lower and prevent a looming gasoline shortage in the thirsty American market.

Iran opted out of the OPEC deal but said it would still increase output by its allocated amount, in effect taking the output hike on paper to 1.7 million bpd.

The Centre for Global Energy Studies, a London-based think tank, estimated actual new flows would amount to 1.1 million bpd. It said this would be insufficient to push prices sharply lower but enough to prevent them returning to nine-year peaks above \$30.

Exchange Rates

Following are yesterday's Standard Chartered Bank rates of major currencies against Taka									
Central bank USD/BDT rate: Buying-BDT 50.85/Selling-BDT 51.15									
Selling		Currency		Buying		TT Clean		OD Sight	
TT/OD	BC								
51.2500	51.2600	USD	50.8200	50.8516	50.5631				
0.4965	0.4968	JPY	0.4755	0.4739	0.4731				
31.2538	31.2752	CHF	30.4439	30.3430	30.2267				
30.3700	30.3907	SGD	29.0792	28.9919	28.9312				
35.8167	35.8411	CAD	34.5432	34.4288	34.2987				
5.9207	5.9247	SEK	5.8134	5.7941	5.7820				
32.0412	32.0631	AUD	29.2215	29.1247	28.9921				
13.6255	13.6348	MYR	13.2327	13.1988	13.1555				
6.6130	6.6175	HKD	6.4928	6.4713	6.4575				
13.7688	13.7792	SAR	13.4430	13.3965	13.3645				
14.0620	14.0716	AED	13.7210	13.6756	13.6406				
0.0483	0.0483	KRW	0.0455	0.0454	0.0453				
82.3647	82.4210	GBP	80.6463	80.3790	80.0969				
49.7139	49.7478	EUR	47.8470	47.6885	47.6052				

Usance export bills									
TT Doc	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days				
50.7152	50.4023	49.9646	49.5042	48.9921	47.8126				

Exchange rates of some Asian currencies against US dollar									
Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Mal Ringit	Indo Rupiah	Sing Dollar				
43.54/43.64	51.89/51.90	37.89/37.93	3.7995/05	7430/7445	4.872/82				

US dollar									
Buying		Selling		1 Month		3 Months		6 Months	
Cash rates	50/55	51/25	USD	6.13125	629	6.52375	6.945		
T.C	50/5	51/2	GBP	6.05686	6.2625	6.47478	6.81219		

Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong port									
Berth position and performance of vessels as on 4.4.2000									
Berth No	Name of vessels	Cargo	L port call	Local agent	Date of arrival	Leaving			
J/2	Kengtung	Gr	Yang	Everett	1/4	7/4			
J/2	Ocean Line-2	Rice/P	Kara	OWSL	16/3	-			
J/3	Marina	Rice/P/GI	Yang	SMSL	30/3	8/4			
J/4	Hual Yang	Gr	Chin	Prog	18/3	6/4			
J/5	AL Shams	C Clink	Krabi	RML	25/3	5/4			
J/6	ASEAN Express	Gr	Sing	Prog	25/3	5/4			
J/7	AL Shams	C Clink	Krabi	RML	25/3	4/4			
J/10	Freedom-K	C Clink	Koshi	NWSL	23/3	4/4			
J/11	Lima-1	R seed	Lapa	Seagley	20/3	4/4			
J/12	Kota beriya	Cont	Sing	Pili(B)	1/4	5/4			
J/13	Kota Naga	Cont	Sing	Pili (Bd)	30/3	4/4			
CCT/1	Bangla Birol	Cont	P Kel	Bdship	1/4	5/4			
CCT/2	Bangla Shikha	Cont	Sing	BSC	2/4	5/4			
CCT/3	Osg Alpha	Cont	Sing	RSL	29/3	4/4			
RM/4	Thank GOD	C Clink	Pada	PSAL	24/2	-			
RM/15	Al Muztubq	GI(BTT)	B Abb	Cia	21/2	10/4			
GCJ	Banann	C Clink	Pada	Delmure	1/4	12/4			
GSJ	Kithira	Idle	Darb	Rainbow	9/3	5/4			
TSP	Hyok Sin	R Phos	Jhej	Atlantic	21/3	5/4			
MR/4	Australia-II	Qdso	Toama	Seacom	15/3	6/4			
RM/6	Nol Aries	Hsd	Kuwa	ECSL	31/3	5/4			
DOJ	Bangla Shourabh	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	4/4			
DD	Sarah-1	Repair	-	SMSL	R/A	7/4			
DDJ/1	Bangla Mookh	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	7/4			
RM/8	Bangla Yakoli	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	8/4			
RM/9	Bangla Robi	Repair	-	BSC	R/A	15/4			

Vessels due at outer anchorage					
Name of vessels	Date of arrival	L port call	Local agent	Cargo	Loading port
huan An (48/22/3)	4/4	Mong	RML	GI (CR Col & P Equip)	
Triumph Hongkong (48/22/3)	4/4	Yang	Everett	GI (St. Coll)	
Ocean Prayer	4/4	-	SBS	GI (Bit In Drum)	
Tac Dong Gang	4/4	Laem	CCNL	Sugar	
Sadan Kaptanoglu	4/4	-	Rainbow	Wheat	
Norbuk Namir	5/4	-	Sentrans	Cement	
Bangla Bjoy (Cont) 2/3	5/4	-	BD Ship	Cont	
Kota Cahaya (Cont) 2/3	5/4	Sing	Pil (BD)	Cont	Sing
XPress Padma (Cont) 2/3	5/4	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Wou Sau	5/4	-	Total	GI	
Du Mou Gang	5/4	-	Total	Long Grain with	
Pacific Taiwan	6/4	Sing	Arafee	P Mat	
Jaya Mats	6/4	Cbo	Baridhi	Cont	Col
Apress Muzh, (Cont) 2/3	6/4	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Alpine	8/4	Yang	SMSL	GI	
Jaami	7/4	Yang	Cross	Log/Pulses	
Chu Hong (Cont) 30/3	7/4	-	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Achlevar (Cont) 29/3	7/4	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Orient Independence (Cont) 29/3	7/4	-	BD Ship	Cont	Sing
Ever Brisk (Cont) 27/3	9/4	-	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Tiger River (Com) 30/2	8/4	-	Nol	Cont	Sing
Marine Express	9/4	-	Total	Wheat(P)	
Mary Nour	9/4	-	RSL	Cement	
Gotze Delchev (48)	10/4	-	BBA	GI (St. Col)	
Qc Mallard	10/4	-	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Qc Teal	10/4	-	QCSL	Cont	Sing
Kota Singa(Cont) 3/4	11/4	Sing	Pil(BD)	Cont	Sing
Banga Bira(Cont) 30/2	12/4	-	Bdship	Cont	Sing
Xpress Resolve	13/4	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
Da Fai(Cont) 3/4	15/4	Sing	RSL	Cont	Sing
San Pablo (Roro) 24/30/3	21/4	-	Jf	Vehi	