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# The Daily Star BUSINESS

DHAKA, FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2000

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## Tk 5,000cr haor development project next yr

A meeting of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources Ministry was informed yesterday that a Tk 5,000 crore project for haor development was included in the next year's ADP, says UNB.

The initiative for an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan of the coastal areas of greater Chittagong, Noakhali, Barisal, Patuakhali and Khulna districts was discussed in the meeting, said a Parliament Secretariat press release.

It was told that instructions had already been given to start work to save Rajshahi, Faridpur and Rangpur town protection dams.

Chaired by committee chairman Abdul Momin the meeting was attended by Water Resources Minister Abbar Razaq, M Anowul Islam, Kazi Sekandar Ali, MA Bari, Sharfuddin Ahmed, Alhaj Oli Ahmed, Harun-al-Rashid and Dr Habibur Rahman.

Secretary of the ministry Dr ATM Shamsul Huda and concerned officials were present.

## E-commerce bank to be launched in city May 2

World Wide Web Institute will run an e-commerce bank web site in the city to equip Bangladesh with the skills for new century's web-based global trade and banking, says UNB.

Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil will formally launch the virtual e-commerce bank at National Press Club's VIP Lounge on May 2 at 11 am.

Former advisor to the caretaker government and Professor of BUET Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury and T&T Chairman Khondkar Abdul Matin will also attend the function.

E-commerce expert and country manager of the firm Debashish Kundu will illustrate various aspects of the digital economy.

World Wide Web Institute Bangladesh will also launch an e-commerce course on the day aiming to rear professionals for the emerging electronic trade, the organisers said.

## New chairman of BSEC

Sultan Ahmed Sikder took over as Chairman of the Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) yesterday, the BSEC press release said, reports BSS.

Prior to his new assignment, he was Director (P&D) of the organisation.

He joined BSEC in 1974 and held many important positions including chiefs of different enterprises of the corporation.

After obtaining the degree in mechanical engineering from BUET in 1964, he went to the United Kingdom for higher studies.

## Creative selling workshop for Vanik personnel held in city

A customised training course on "Creative Selling" for the personnel of Vanik Bangladesh was recently organised by the Business Advisory Services Centre in association with Oracle Management Services Pvt. Ltd. of India, says a press release.

Renowned resource person from India, Gopal Sehpal, Managing Director of Oracle Management Services Pvt. Ltd., facilitated the three-day course.

In the workshop Sehpal discussed the importance of applying creative selling techniques, especially in the context of increasing market competition. The workshop dwelt upon how a sales person should follow a proper step by step approach in sales and how one should focus on the benefits and actions for a successful sales call.

The certificate-awarding ceremony was presided over by the Executive Director of BASC, Engr. Lutful Kabir.

Seventeen participants from the cards, leasing and Deposit Mobilization Department of Vanik Bangladesh Limited attended the workshop.

## ATAB team off to Malaysia

A business delegation comprising 125 leaders of the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) has left for Kuala Lumpur on a 4-day visit to Malaysia, says a press release.

The delegation is being led by Dr H B M Iqbal, MP, president of ATAB and Bangladesh-Malaysia Friendship Society.

The team will explore the possibilities of joint venture business and exchange views with Malaysian business centres.

The team is expected to hold talks with the interested quarters in Malaysia on the investment opportunities being offered by the government of Bangladesh.

# JS body on finance moves to streamline NBR

## Decision to form joint committee with body on establishment

By M Shamsur Rahman

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Finance yesterday decided to form a joint committee with the Standing Committee on the Ministry of Establishment for recommending ways to streamline the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The NBR officials, yesterday, came under severe criticism for failing to achieve the revenue target, which fell short by Tk 1641.99 crore till March this year. The collection was Tk 10286.57 crore as against the target of Tk 11928.56 crore.

At the previous meeting of the standing committee, Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria said that the financial situation of the country was good and the economy was performing well.

Following the minister's comment, the meeting decided to ask the NBR officials for the reasons of revenue shortfall.

"If the minister's statement was correct then why there were such huge revenue shortfall and why the government borrowing from banks was up," a committee member posed the question before the NBR officials present at the meeting yesterday.

The NBR officials, replying to the JS body question, attributed revenue shortfall to shortage of manpower, proper logistics and decline in im-

ports.

"With the present strength of NBR, it is not possible for us to go door to door to collect taxes," a meeting source quoted one NBR official as telling the meeting.

The NBR chairman, however, said that following the implementation of pre-shipment inspection (PSI) the collection increased to over Tk 100 crore.

But other committee members present at the meeting opined that due mainly to harassment by tax collectors and lack of transparency, the revenue collection was falling short of target.

The entire 13 crore population could be brought under the tax net, if there were no corruption and if it did not lack transparency," another meeting member quoted Ali Ashraf, Chairman of the standing committee as saying.

Another member criticised the NBR for setting over-ambitious target which could not be achieved.

The committee chairman also said that the revenue expenditure was higher than the tax collection leaving nothing for development. He also asked the NBR officials to place details of the revenue expenses before the body's next meeting.

## State of country's macroeconomy seen hanging in balance

### Kibria holds pre-budget meet with economists

Economists in a pre-budget meeting in the city Wednesday observed that the present state of the country's macro economy was hanging in balance as only the crop sector and foreign remittances propped it up, reports UNB.

It could result in a dangerous consequence if the bumper output from agriculture like the previous two years falls, they warned at the meeting of the consultative committee on macro economy.

The economists came up with the note of caution as Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria took their opinions for formulating the coming budget in the meeting held at his ministry.

Meeting sources said that they suggested the government should not increase the price of urea fertiliser in the forthcoming budget for the sake of revenue increase.

Instead, they recommended, it should consider subsidies for

fertilisers, like phosphate to provide more supports to the agri sector.

They also called for considering the issue of justice to give cash incentives to some under-privileged areas like agro-processing and agriculture where in the majority of the masses is involved. The export sector should not alone be given every importance, they said.

Committee members Prof Rehman Sobhan, Prof Wahiduddin Mahmood, Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Mohammad Farashuddin, Dr Kazi Kholluzqaman Ahmed, Syed Ali Kabir, Dr Al Aminul Islam, Dr Binayak Sen, Dr Sazzad Jahir and Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya were present.

The members recommended maintaining transparency in budget projections to avoid public borrowings required for meeting budgetary deficits.

The government had to borrow much beyond the safe lim-

its to meet the huge deficits of the previous budget, one of the panel members was quoted to have said.

They laid thrust on projecting realistic target of revenue collection and expenditure in the budget and clearly showing the way of meeting the deficit.

The deficit should not exceed one per cent of GDP, the finance experts said, adding that it was around two per cent in the previous year, leading the government to borrow beyond the safe limits.

The 1999-2000 budget was estimated by projecting about 23 per cent increase in the revenue collection and the expenditure was also estimated on that basis, the committee members noted.

"The biggest stagnancy prevailed in investment," the committee noted, blaming huge public borrowings as one of the main causes.

## FBCCI team leaves for Uzbekistan

A 28-member FBCCI business team will leave for Uzbekistan today to explore the prospects of export there, says a press release.

The president of FBCCI, Abdul Awal Mintoo, who is already in the Kazakh capital to attend the World Economic Forum meeting, will lead the delegation.

The team will visit Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent till the third of next month.

During its stay, the delegation will see a tea factory in Samarkand and a Textile Mill in Bukhara. It will also visit an aircraft manufacturing plant in Tashkent.

Bangladesh may export tea, ceramic, leather goods, medicine and consumer items to Uzbekistan.

The delegation will leave Tashkent on May 3, for Iran where it will hold meetings with government and chamber leaders.

A memorandum of understanding is likely to be signed with the Iranian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The visit to Iran will be followed by a trip to Qatar.

## Taliban blamed for fomenting violence on territory Afghanistan excluded from ECO meet in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Apr 27: Afghanistan was excluded Thursday from an economic cooperation meeting of regional countries, many of whom accuse the ruling Taliban of fomenting violence on their territory, reports AP.

The Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), a 10-nation group which includes Afghanistan, held a meeting of transportation and communications ministers in Pakistan to forge closer economic ties and open new markets.

"Your participation is a manifestation of our common endeavour to strengthen economic relations among ECO countries," Pakistan's military ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf said in his speech to open the meeting.

Although ECO officials refused to explain Afghanistan's exclusion, previous ECO meetings have been attended by the country's ousted government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Pakistan does not recognise Rabbani's government-in-exile and is one of only three countries to recognise the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Rabbani's government still holds the Afghan seat at the United Nations.

The Taliban rule roughly 90 per cent of Afghanistan where they have imposed a harsh brand of Islamic law. Rabbani's northern-based anti-Taliban alliance rules the remaining 10 per cent.

The Taliban have a troubled relationship with many of the countries which make up the ECO, which includes Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Iran and several central Asian nations accuse the hard-line Islamic Taliban of allowing rebel movements to be headquartered on their territory.

Iran and the Taliban were on the brink of a war in 1998 after

seven Iranian diplomats and a journalist were killed in Afghanistan's northern Mazare-Sharif, when it was captured by the Taliban.

Iranian officials, speaking on condition they not be identified, said they opposed the Taliban's presence at the ECO meeting.

The Taliban accuse Iran of arming and financing its opponents, led by both Rabbani and his military chief Ahmed Shah Massoud. Iran is believed to support the opposition because it includes the Hezb-e-Wahadat group which represents Afghanistan's minority Shiite Muslims.

Most Taliban soldiers belong to Afghanistan's majority Sunni sect of Islam.

The ECO Secretary General Omer Ozar refused to be drawn into the controversy. "Afghanistan is a very important member and after peace is restored it can play its part in economic development of the region," he told reporters.

## Clinton admn lacks votes to pass China trade bill

### Florida lawmaker to oppose pact

WASHINGTON, Apr 27: The Clinton administration still lacks sufficient support in Congress to win approval for expanded trade with China just a month ahead of a crucial vote, Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky said yesterday, reports AFP.

"We don't have the votes yet," she told a CNBC television interviewer. "But we believe we will have the votes to pass permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) status with China."

The major hurdle is the House of Representatives, where members are due to vote on a measure that would accord normal trade status to China in the week of May 22.

The legislation would give China the same trading privileges with the United States —

on a permanent basis — that are currently enjoyed by all but a handful of countries.

At present, China's trade status must be reviewed annually by Congress. Many House members, mostly from President Bill Clinton's own Democratic Party and from the ranks of organised labor, want to retain the annual review as a means of pressuring China to respect human rights and core labor standards.

The administration has gone to great lengths to mobilise support for the bill, describing it as among the most important issues before the current Congress.

Granting PNTR to Beijing, according to the White House, will open up the huge Chinese domestic market to US ex-

porters, create thousands of new jobs at home and bolster democratic reforms in China.

"This is a very critical vote for members of Congress and it is for many members the most historic, important vote they will take in their time in Congress," Barshefsky maintained.

"And for that reason a number of members are withholding judgment, considering the implications — and that gives us quite a large number of members to work with."

House Democratic whip David Bonior, a leading opponent of PNTR for China, late last month said that roughly 140 of the 211 House Democrats were either committed to defeating the legislation or were leaning in that direction.



Picture shows the participants of a training on the forthcoming revision of ISO 9000 — year 2000 update; understanding ISO 9000: 2000 organised by the Management System and Services (MSS) in association with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) at a city hotel Tuesday.

## Training on ISO 9000 revision held

A day-long training on the forthcoming revision of ISO 9000 — year 2000 update; Understanding ISO 9000: 2000 was held at a city hotel Tuesday, says a press statement.

Management System and Services a leading ISO 9000 Quality Management System consulting firm in the country, in Association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) — India's apex chamber body-organised the training.

Sanjib Kumar Dutta, Counsellor, TQM CII, conducted the training. SM Wasliuddin of MSS made the inaugural speech and Md. Shahidul Islam of MSS gave the concluding speech.

32 officials from Opsonin Chemical Industries, Square Textiles, Square Pharma, ACME Laboratories, Taehung Packaging, Padma Caps, Mast Packaging, Berger Paints, Padma Cans, Standard Chartered Bank, ComEx, Padma Glass, Kazi Fashion, Leads Corporation, Farooq & Associates, SofSys and Youth Consultants participated in the training.

# Use of frogs in killing insects can arrest ecological damage

## Experts say move enough to boost soil fertility

As chemical fertilisers and insecticides are largely blamed for extensive ecological damage, experts came up with a traditional approach — releasing frogs on croplands to kill insects and boost soil fertility, reports UNB.

"Sona frog or Rana Tigrina (bullfrog) eats up most omnivorous insects, helps boost farm output and maintains biodiversity," said Dr Susanta Kumar Pal, Member-Director of Fisheries of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC).

"But these are disappearing due to rampant use of chemical fertilisers and insecticides," he said.

Frogs on croplands effectively increase phosphorus, sulfur and potassium in soil and reduce dependency on Agricultural inputs in addition to maintaining a sound biodiversity.

Department of Dhaka University, adding, "its excreta increases soil fertility as bio-fertiliser in a decomposed manner."

Experts say frog excreta contains four times more phosphorus and potassium than chemical fertilisers that helps increase soil fertility and boost production.

During their survey on frog farming in croplands, researchers of Integrated Pest Management System (IPM) found that frogs kill 90 per cent of sinister insects, which is apparently impossible on the part of any other species."

According to a study, a frog kills around 10,000 insects a month add 5-6 lakh in its whole lifecycle (4-5 years). Frogs effectively help control caterpillars, grasshoppers, snails, mosquitoes and other insects. There are about 20 species of frogs in Bangladesh, including Kuno, Kola (Sona) and Gecho. Most of these species are now on the verge of extinction due to

rampant exploitation and adverse effects of poisonous chemicals.

Bangladesh imports chemical fertilisers and pesticides worth Tk 200 crore every year to combat pest attacks and increase soil's nutrition.

As most of the omnivorous insects grow up in poisonous and unfriendly habitat, a special protective capacity generates in their bodies. So, pesticides help degrade the quality of soil instead of killing the pests.

Every year pest attacks cause crop yields to fall by 10-15 per cent, resulting in a colossal loss of Tk 2000 crore, according to an IPM official.

SK Pal said that although pesticides protect crops from pest attacks, they cause extensive damage to the environment. "The breeding process of frogs is hampered due to adverse effects of pesticides reducing the presence of environment-friendly species in nature," he observed.

## Kibria says Govt gives top priority to agro-industries

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria has said the present government attaches top priority to agro-based industries and exports of agro-products for the desired development of the agriculture sector and farmers as well, says BSS.

"The government, as part of its total commitment to the agriculture sector as well as the farmers, has been maintaining fair prices of all agro-products," he said at a meeting with a delegation of Bangladesh Krishak League at his office in the city yesterday.

The delegation, led by State Minister for Land and President of Bangladesh Krishak League Alhaj Rashid Mosharraf, included Harun-ar-Rasheed Hawlader, Md Glasuddin, Motahar Hussain Mollah and M A Wadud.

The delegation placed some proposals for incorporating in the next budget for the development of the agriculture sector.

The proposals sought continuation of subsidy in the agriculture sector, stability in diesel prices, ensuring fair prices for agro-products and encouraging agro-based industries in the country.

**Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology, Dhaka**  
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