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Pak central bank decides to allow refinance facility

KARACHI, Sept 16: State Bank of Pakistan Friday decided to allow refinance facility under the Export Finance Scheme to 'Brown Rice' and 'Par boiled rice' in retail packing of 1-25kg, says PPI.

A SBP circular said the above instructions will come into force with immediate effect.

Under a circular of the central bank of December 17, 1998, containing a negative list of commodities which are not eligible for concessional export finance under the Export Finance Scheme, 'brown rice' and 'Par boiled rice' in retail packing of 1-25kg were included.

Russia's foreign trade up 37pc

MOSCOW, Sept 16: Russia saw its foreign trade turnover jumping 37 per cent to 74.4 billion US dollars in the first seven months this year over the same period of 1999, the Russian State Customs Committee said in a latest report, reports Xinhua.

The foreign trade surplus hit 37.8 billion dollars, surging 88 per cent, compared to 20.1 billion dollars in the corresponding period of last year, the customs said.

The trade with countries outside the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) reached 60.4 billion dollars, and with CIS states 14 billion dollars, up 35.8 per cent and 42.8 per cent respectively from last year.

The total exports during the period amounted to 56.1 billion dollars, up 50.9 per cent, of which, sales to CIS countries yielded 7.8 billion dollars and the exports to other countries up to 48.3 billion dollars, jumping 41.9 per cent and 52.4 per cent respectively.

The imports totalled 18.3 billion dollars, up 7.0 per cent. Among them, purchases from CIS states upsurged 44 per cent to 6.2 billion dollars, while those from other countries went down 5.4 per cent to 12.1 billion dollars.

Thus, exports to CIS members exceeded imports from them by 1.6 billion dollars, against 1.2 billion dollars in January-July of 1999.

The trade surplus to non-CIS countries topped 36.2 billion dollars, compared to 18.9 billion dollars in one year earlier, according to the committee.

WB helps China save money, energy

BEIJING, Sept 16: China is joining hands with the World Bank to develop a project of the energy saving industry, says Xinhua.

The project, which will use funds and technology from the World Bank and Global Environment Fund, is aimed at introducing a new way of financing energy-saving projects in China, and demonstrating and popularizing their effects, today's China Daily reports.

The programme is expected to help establish a new energy saving market-oriented mechanism, improving the efficiency of greenhouse gases and protecting the global environment, according to sources with the State Economic and Trade Commission which reached a consensus with World Bank.

Under such a programme a variety of Energy Management Companies (EMC) that use expenses they save from energy-efficient projects to pay for the cost of new projects, are expected to boom throughout China.

The EMC model is designed to provide various services to enable enterprises to adopt energy-saving technologies and corresponding management.

China has, since 1996, set up three joint-stock EMCs for energy-saving projects in Beijing, Liaoning and Shandong provinces.

US stocks sag as cos get cautious over earnings

NEW YORK, Sept 16: US stock markets took a beating this week as some US companies began prepping investors for disappointing earnings, blaming the euro too weak and oil too expensive for the shortfalls, says AFP.

The screen-based Nasdaq electronic index shed 3.73 per cent to 3,835.23 points this week, bringing its losses since the start of September to ten per cent. The Nasdaq gained 11.67 per cent in August.

The slide was more measured on the Dow, the principal indicator of Wall Street, which fell 2.69 per cent to 10,927.00 points this week, after shedding 0.16 per cent the week before.

In August the Dow advanced 6.59 per cent over four consecutive weeks of gains.

More nations join European fuel price protests

BARCELONA, Spain, Sept 16: Truckers in Spain, Ireland and Poland joined Europe-wide protests against high petrol prices yesterday while Britain and Belgium struggled to recover from the paralyzing effects of days of fuel blockades, says Reuters.

Convoys of Spanish truckers and farmers joined forces to slow traffic on the main ring road around Barcelona, Spain's second-largest city, and farmers began similar action in Merida, in the western Extremadura agricultural region.

Others planned to picket the site of this weekend's Spanish-German summit in the city of Segovia, in central Spain.

In Ireland, thousands of truckers clogged major roads around five cities including the capital, Dublin with a 24-hour go-slow protest after the government rejected their demand that it cut diesel fuel tax by a third.

In Poland, columns of trucks driving below 30 kph (18 mph) snarled traffic in several larger cities but police said the action was limited and failed to clog traffic.

Across Europe, government taxes make up the bulk of what drivers pay at the pump and add to the pain of crude oil prices, still at their highest in a decade.

Despite promises of higher output from the OPEC cartel, relief seemed a long way off amid a new surge driven by tension between Iraq and Kuwait and comments by President Bill Clinton that he did not see high prices hurting the US economy.

"I would be surprised to see a price decrease in the first half of winter, but after that anything can happen," Jeroen van der Veer, president of the Dutch arm of the Royal Dutch/Shell group, told reporters.

In the Netherlands, the government promised concrete measures as

the largest protests to date stopped traffic across the country. Hundreds of trucks poured into The Hague as truckers took their anger to the heart of government.

German truckers caused traffic chaos for the fourth day running, jamming the northern city of Bremen, while opposition politicians launched a parliamentary bid to cut fuel taxes.

But in Italy, the government bowed to truckers' demands for new fuel discounts, averting the threat of protests. Transport Minister Pierluigi Bersani and representatives of truckers' unions signed an accord in the early hours of the morning.

Another report from Berlin says: Dialogue between oil producers and consumers over high fuel prices is being hampered because some exporting states have not joined the World Trade Organisation, WTO Director General Mike Moore said yesterday.

Moore, here to attend a conference on globalisation, told Reuters the WTO could not act as a forum to help stabilise oil markets because key members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), like Saudi Arabia, had not yet joined the 138-member trade club.

He also said that oil was not yet subject to the rules based system governing trade disputes among WTO members and it could take some time before that will change.

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producer, has put joining the WTO at the centre of its development strategy and diplomats at the organisation's Geneva headquarters say entry is possible next year.

But OPEC states Algeria, Iran, Libya and Iraq which has been cut off by a United Nations oil embargo since the 1990 Gulf War are not in the WTO and are unlikely to join soon.



Dutch truck drivers block the Van Brienenoord Bridge in Rotterdam on Friday. More than 250 Dutch truck drivers became the latest to join Europe-wide protests over high fuel prices on the day. Dozens of taxi drivers also took part in the protests in the Hague as part of a national day of action called for by Dutch transport unions.

— AFP photo



Mohammad Faiz, Managing Director of The City Bank Limited, and Sayeed Hossain Jamal, Managing Director of Uttara Finance and Investment Limited, sign a Tk 160 million credit agreement in the city on Friday.

Uttara Finance gets Tk 160m from City Bank

The City Bank Limited has sanctioned a credit of Tk 160 million to Uttara Finance and Investment Limited, says a press release.

A credit agreement to this effect was signed by Managing Director of The City Bank Mohammad Faiz and Managing Director of Uttara Finance and Investment Limited Sayeed Hossain Jamal at the board room of the City Bank on Friday.

Till date, Uttara Finance has availed itself of Tk 490 million credit from City Bank.

By MDs of the bank Satya Gopal Podder and Md Habibur Rahman, Executive Vice-President Nurul Akbar Khan, Secretary Manish Kumar Ghosh and Executive Vice-President and Company Secretary of Uttara Finance Santanu Saha and Vice-President SM Shamsul Arefin were present on the occasion.

BKB defends criticism of Ghare Fera programme

190 more families get loans

Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) continued to disburse loan among slum-dwellers under the government's 'Ghare Fera Karmasuchi', defending criticism of the programme, reports UNB.

The bank at a ceremony in the city yesterday disbursed loans amounting to Tk 35.57 lakh among 190 slum families as part of its 8th phase of the home return programme.

The latest phase would facilitate 1,000 slum families to go back to their village and earn livelihood, the function was told.

Earlier, 10,450 people of 1,746 families were rehabilitated from the city slums with a loan of Tk 3.11 crore since May 1999, the bank sources said.

"It's a humanitarian project" as part of the government's welfare programme for the poor, Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria told the function.

He said the slum-dwellers came to Dhaka to earn their livelihood, but experienced miserable life in the slums within a very short period of time. "We're not sending all of them back. Only those who are interested but cannot do so for want of money, are being rehabilitated under the programme."

The finance minister said many oppose the project simply for two reasons. They think that they can only better the life of the people and others cannot.

On the other hand, they disburse loan at different slums taking money from foreign donors, he said, adding "If the slum-dwellers go back to their village, how will their business run?"

He instructed BKB to invite the NGOs for negotiation to reach a coordinated approach for the betterment of the slum people's lot. "We don't have any conflict with the NGOs," he said.

IMF overhauls loan rules, wants early repayments

WASHINGTON, Sept 16: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced yesterday a major overhaul of the way it lends, cutting countries' costs on a never-used Contingency Credit Line and encouraging members to repay IMF debts ahead of time, says Reuters.

The changes, introduced after prolonged discussion at the IMF's executive board, will make large loans more expensive than small ones and encourage more active monitoring of countries which no longer borrow from the fund. These measures should ensure a more efficient use of the fund's resources," media chief Tom Dawson said in a statement.

Taken together, the agreed measures represent an important step forward in the modernisation of IMF lending facilities.

The review of lending facilities was almost the last item on the IMF board's agenda before its staff and management depart to the Czech capital Prague for the fund's annual meeting.

They are in line with demands from the Group of Seven industrialised countries and of the IMF's largest shareholder, G7 member the United States.

Borrowing countries, who have fewer votes in the IMF than the G7, had lobbied against higher interest rates and shorter loan maturities, before a consensus was finally reached.

"We believe that these steps go a long way toward creating a more modern IMF, and a more selective IMF in its financing, and one that is better focused on responding to financial emergencies," US Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers told reporters in a conference call.

He added: "There will be stronger incentives to repay the IMF and there will be stronger incentives to repay them earlier."

Summers also welcomed the changes to the as-yet-unused CCL, which was created last year to provide a sort of insurance policy for countries which had strong economic policies, but which might nevertheless suffer from contagion.

No country has yet applied for this credit line because the interest rate matches that on emergency lending and because they felt they had to jump through too many hoops to actually get some cash.

Under the new rules, countries using the credit line would pay a smaller interest rate premium and a lower commitment fee, and Summers said they could win CCL cash more easily than was the case before.

"I think it will be attractive to potential victims of contagion," he said. "I would certainly expect that over the next several years there would be occasions in which the CCL would be used."

Summers said the IMF was also reducing the repayment period for most IMF lending, obliging members to repay regular standby loans which in four years instead of five at present and medium-term EFF loans within seven years instead of within 10.

The report said the IMF's pay structure for management will be subject to a combination of periodic structural reviews by the executive board and annual revisions.

"It will be autonomous and not formally linked to remuneration in other international organisations."

It added that in recognition of the need for greater transparency, the IMF executive board decided to include details of managerial salaries, beginning with this year's annual report.

IMF chief gets \$363,660 a year

WASHINGTON, Sept 16: International Monetary Fund (IMF) managing director Horst Koehler earns \$363,660 dollars a year, the same as his predecessor Michel Camdessus, according to the IMF's annual report released here yesterday, says AFP.

Koehler assumed the top job at the IMF on May 1 following Camdessus' retirement.

The managing director's compensation is comprised of 308,460 dollars in salary and 55,200 dollars in allowances. The amount is not taxed in the United States.

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MH Rahman, Immediate Ex-President of DCCI, addresses the final session of a course on 'How to create an effective business communication' held at DCCI Business Instt Thursday. DCCI Secy Mirza A Matin (extreme right), Hasanur Rahman Chowdhury, Dy Secy (2nd right), and Shahazada Basunia, Dy Secy (Training) and course coordinator (extreme left), were also present. —DCCI photo

Weekly ReadyCash Prize Winners

The latest draw of the fortunate ReadyCash prize winners took place yesterday at its Dhammondi office. M E Islam, Secretary of American International Bangladesh Ltd. (ReadyCash), announced the names of the lucky prize winners.

Prizes	Winners	Card No
Hertz Rent-a-Car	Tasneem Rashid	4927
FedEx-Federal Express	Rehana Begum Nelu	4859
Lunch for two at China Junction Restaurant	AKM Mahmudul Hossain	4879
Lunch for two at Jolly Vee	SR Shumon	4910

ReadyCash encourages its cardholders to read The Daily Star on every Sunday for a new listing of prize winners.

DCCI course on effective business communication concludes

The 5-day training course on 'How to create an effective business communication' ended at the DCCI Business Institute (DBI) on Thursday, says a press release.

The course was organised by the DCCI Business Institute in cooperation with Business Advisory Service (BAS) Project of DCCI-GTZ Partnership Programme.

The course aimed at familiarising the following topics: Communication in business and its types, written and oral communication, how to make communication more effective? written communication, its importance in business, banking correspondence in good business, correspondence with customers for different kinds of accounts; correspondence with customers for loans and advances, correspondence with customers for handling complaints; oral communication: how to make a successful and good art of presentation? Using the telephone, effective telephonic procedure, internal business communication; role of meeting in business; technique of conducting a successful meeting; effectiveness of different media; communication processes of trade inquiry, quotation, order, invoice, and correctness in writing.

Immediate past president of DCCI, MH Rahman, distributed certificates among the participants on the concluding day.

A total of 20 participants from different business organisations attended the training course. Shahazada Basunia, Deputy Secretary (Training), along with Hasanur Rahman Chowdhury, Deputy Secretary (Training), acted as course coordinators.

Pakistan will export 50,000 ton apples

SIALKOT, Sept 16: Pakistan will export 50,000 ton apples to Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka during the year 2000 to 2001, says PPI.

Official sources told that the Government of Pakistan is keenly concerned with the object to increase its exports and to extend its level of foreign exchange income.

In this regard, the government has decided to export a good quality of apples. This quantity of the said fruit will be taken from Balochistan province, which is highly admired through out the country as well as internationally, added the sources.

Commodity: Weekly Roundup

Oil reaches Gulf War levels

Prices rebound on OPEC pledges, supply threats

invasion of Kuwait in 1990 that caused the last great oil price shock.

Data from the American Petroleum Institute published on Wednesday showing another 1.9-million-barrel fall in US crude oil stocks put further pressure on prices.

Industrialised countries swept by anger over the knock-on effect of prices on the cost of fuel watched the US government with bated breath in the hope that it would release some of the country's strategic oil reserves.

But the only fresh news to emerge by Friday was of a tropical storm that promised to escalate into a hurricane, threatening US oil production in the Gulf of Mexico and pushing the benchmark North Sea Brent crude oil November contract back up above 33 dollars a barrel.

Rubber: Soft. The price of rubber fell on the markets of London and Malaysia with no sign of a return to levels of before

the 1997 Asian economic crisis, which took rubber to historic lows.

In Kuala Lumpur, the RSS1 index dropped to 2.55 ringgit from 2.59 ringgit per kilo last week.

The London rubber index for October delivery also slipped to 53.75 pence per kilo from 54.00 pence the previous week.

Cocoa: Frothy. Cocoa prices bubbled up this week as dealers expressed concern that delayed harvests in west African producer nations could interrupt supplies to chocolate manufacturers.

In London, December contracts jumped to 650 pounds a tonne, up more than five per cent from 618 pounds last week.

Traders are anticipating world number-one producer Ivory Coast to put back the start of its harvesting season by a month to November because of an early start to the dry season.

The market also sat up and took notice of an announcement

by Agriculture Minister Ahmed Timiteu who unveiled plans to reform the cocoa industry to boost the revenues garnered by peasants.

The action comes after the record low prices experienced during the 1999-2000 season, when Ivory Ct players balked at prices that have reached their highest point since August, despite a build-up in stockpiles.

In London, Robusta coffee for November delivery fell to 809 dollars a tonne on Thursday, from 835 dollars seven days earlier.

In New York, Arabica (for December delivery) slipped back to 82.10 cents a pound from 82.70 cents.

Sugar: Beat. Sugar prices fell in London and New York this week despite a European Union cut in output quotas for the 2000-2001 season.

On the London market, December contracts fell to 265.6 dollars a tonne from 268.8 dol-

lars. In New York, a pound of white sugar (for March delivery) shed half a dollar to 10.26 cents a pound from 10.73 cents.

The European Union announced Thursday it would cut output by almost 500,000 tonnes next year in order to comply with its commitments under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Vegetable Oils: Mixed. US soy prices fell towards the weekend after rising sharply earlier in the week amid worries about adverse weather that could undermine the harvest.

On the Chicago Board of Trade, September contracts rose to 4.91 dollars a bushel from 4.80 dollars last week.

Grains: Ceding ground. US wheat prices fell this week after the publication of weekly sales figures that disappointed the market.

In Chicago, a bushel of wheat (27.2 kg, for September delivery)

fell to 242 cents from 249.50 cents one week earlier.

Maize slipped to 179.25 cents a bushel (25.4 kg, for September delivery) from 181.75 cents.

In London, wheat for September delivery fell to 63.20 pounds a tonne from 63.40 pounds a tonne the previous week.

The United States sold 349,000 tonnes of wheat and 540,000 tonnes of maize last week.

The weather in the US south-west remains a worry because of a shortage of rainfall which has delayed winter sowing, dealers said.

Cotton: Threadbare. US cotton prices fell this week.

In New York, October contracts slipped to 62.95 cents a pound from 64.14 cents the previous week.

Cash prices covered by the Cotton Outlook index dipped slightly to 61.80 cents from 62.20 cents.

Wool: Worth. Wool prices rose this week amid strong demand at auction houses.

The Eastern index gained 17 cents to 720 cents a kilo. The British Woottops index stood at 323 pence, while the Marketing Board's index rose to 73 pence a kilo on the strength of perky demand at the Bradford auction houses.