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The Daily Star BUSINESS

DHAKA, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2000

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BASC seminar on business development services held

Star Business Report

A seminar on 'Business Development Services (BDS): Past, Present and Future - Implications for Bangladesh' was held at IDB Bhawan in the city yesterday.

Business Advisory Services Center (BASC), which is engaged in the development of business enterprises by providing training, technology transfers, market information and consulting services, organised the seminar.

In his presentation, Deepak Adhikary, Programme Director of Business Development Services Program (BDS), Swisscontact, who was the facilitator of the seminar, highlighted the new trends of business development services.

Individual consultants, professionals, business facilitators, service providers, senior and mid-level managers, officers and NGO decision-makers who are involved in business development services (BDS), participated in the seminar.

Bank holiday on Nov 12

Bangladesh Bank and all the scheduled banks will remain closed on November 12 (Sunday), on the occasion of Holy Shab-e-Barat, said a BB press release, yesterday, reports UNB.

350 DRU members take Sheba mobile phones

Three hundred and fifty members of the Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) have taken Sheba mobile phones under a special package, says a press release of the Unity.

Sheba Telecom offered the all-purpose phones with BTB connectivity at a discounted rate to assist the reporters in discharging their professional duties.

DRU organised a programme at its office yesterday marking the commencement of the service.

Present on the occasion were Managing Director of Sheba Telecom Jafar Ahmed Tanbi, Chief Financial Officer Jalaluddin Abu Hasan, Head of Business Operation Zinnia A Latif and Abu SM Sayem of Marketing and Customer Services.

DRU President M Anwarul Haq, Vice-president Mahfuzur Rahman and General Secretary Monwarul Islam were present on the occasion.

AEG Engineering director due in city today



Dieter Lockl, Director of AEG Engineering Ltd., arrives in the city today from Germany on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, says a Press release.

During his visit, D Lockl will attend the company's annual general meeting and exchange views with the employees. He will also review the activities of the company and socio-economic and business situation.

The German executive of the company will leave the city on November 9.

China starts new round of entry meets with WTO members

GENEVA, Nov 6: China and World Trade Organisation members Monday opened their latest round of consultations aimed at securing Beijing's admission to the body that sets rules governing global trade, reports AP.

The informal meetings, aimed at settling outstanding differences on China's bid to join, are expected to last about a week. The WTO working group on China has not yet decided when to hold a formal meeting, trade officials said.

It remains unclear exactly when China will become a member of the 138-member WTO, which it has been working to join for 14 years.

EU to support SAARC region's integration

The European Union (EU) will assist the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to achieve regional integration, a senior EU diplomat said here yesterday, reports AFP.

Regional integration is essential for the South Asian nations to develop. The EU will support integration in the region through signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SAARC, Antonio de Souza Menezes, EU ambassador to Bangladesh, said during talks with the Dhaka-based Economic Reporters' Forum.

He said regional integration is part of the globalisation process and that without this, development cannot be achieved.

Under the proposed MOU, the EU will finance studies and capacity building schemes to facilitate regional integration.

The EU diplomat's comments came against the backdrop of the failure of SAARC to hold its scheduled summit last year after relations between two key members - India and Pakistan - worsened following their tit-for-tat nuclear tests and a military takeover in Pakistan.

Menezes said economic co-operation should get priority

over politics in regional co-operation, but in South Asia this is not happening.

"Political will is a must to overcome the situation, which is now lacking in South Asia," he added.

Former SAARC secretary general Ibrahim Hussain Zaki said in Dhaka earlier last month that nations in South Asia are engaged in a "mental cold war" and this was affecting regional co-operation.

The SAARC, formed in 1985, also comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.



Top agents of Sylhet are seen with Majid Al Mualla, Manager-Bangladesh, Emirates, Syed Ali Murad, Director, Operations, ABC Air Ltd., GSA of Emirates in Bangladesh, and Kazi Zahurul Qyym, Sales Manager of Emirates, at the award-giving ceremony in the city on November 2.

- Emirates photo

Norwegians keen to invest in Bangladesh

Ambassador tells BOI chief

Encouraged by the country's favourable investment climate, Norwegian investors have expressed their keen interest to invest in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Norwegian Ambassador to Bangladesh, Gerd Wahlstrom said this when she called on BOI chief M Mokammel Haque at his office in the city yesterday.

She hoped that the investment ties between Bangladesh and Norway would continue to widen.

Welcoming the Norwegian envoy, the BOI executive chairman focused on the friendly relations between the two countries and discussed matters of mutual interests.

He informed the envoy that at present Norwegian investment outlay stands at 193 million US dollars in Bangladesh, said a press release.

Mokammel said the total investment registered with the Board of Investment during 1996-2000 stands at 13.29 billion US dollars compared to 5.78 billion US dollars in the previous five years. "And this has been possible due to pragmatic measures taken by the government."

The BOI chief also informed the ambassador about the government policy to give priority on boosting local investment in SMEs and foreign investment in capital-intensive areas.

Mentioning Bangladesh's geopolitical location, Haque said Bangladesh, with a private sector-led export-oriented economy, can be a service centre like Singapore for serving a potential market consisting of Bhutan, Nepal and the north-eastern states of India and northern Myanmar.

Emirates awards top agents of Sylhet

Emirates presented awards to its top agents of Sylhet at a luncheon held at a local hotel on November 2, says a press release of the airlines.

Majid Al Mualla, Manager-Bangladesh, Emirates thanked the agents for their support and hoped the cooperation will be forthcoming in the future.

Present on the occasion were Syed Ali Murad, Director of Operations of ABC Air Ltd., GSA of Emirates in Bangladesh and Kazi Zahurul Qyym, Sales Manager of Emirates.

The Top Agents who received the awards are: Al-Mansur Air Service, Akaba Trading Corp., Shipper Air Services, Jatirik, Asha Travels, Surma Travels, Nesar Air International, Shimon Overseas Express and Mahfuz Travels.

An attractive raffle draw was held on the occasion, where the winners were given away Dhaka-Dubai-Dhaka and Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur-Dhaka air tickets.

conomic Reporters Forum(ERF) November 6, 2000 VIP Lounge, National Press Club



Antonio de Souza Menezes, EU Ambassador in Bangladesh, exchanges views with the members of Economic Reporters' Forum at the National Press Club yesterday.

-Star photo

Pakistan seen posting slower economic growth rate Poorer prospects in agri sector; high oil

KARACHI, Nov 6: Pakistan's economic growth rate is likely to slow to 4.5 per cent in the year ending June from 4.8 in 1999/2000 mainly because of poorer prospects in the agricultural sector and high oil prices, the central bank said today, reports Reuters.

"Agriculture prospects may be dampened due to lower supply of irrigated water," the State Bank of Pakistan said in its annual report for 1999/2000.

The bank noted that growth in the latest fiscal year was helped by good wheat and cotton crops.

The depreciation of the rupee against the dollar and an expected rise in utility prices due to costly oil also threatened the country's fiscal position, the bank said.

"These factors may reduce private consumption, which can

lower aggregate demand through a multiplier effect," it said.

The bank urged the government to effectively implement its three-year economic programme.

The government will have to monitor this situation and take corrective and timely measures to mitigate the above risks, failing which, the goals set for (fiscal year) 01 may be difficult to achieve," the report said.

The government has projected to cut its fiscal deficit to 4.6 per cent of GDP this year from 6.5 per cent in the previous year. The original projection for last year was 6.1 per cent.

The central bank, giving its annual assessment of the economy, said the possible approval of a one-year lending programme with the International Monetary Fund was crucial for

the government's economic plans.

It said the agreement would pave the way for further rescheduling of Pakistan's external debt with official and commercial creditors for the period beginning January 1.

Pakistan, whose external debt stood at \$32.73 billion in the last fiscal year, will end a 30-month rescheduling period on that debt in December.

The central bank said Pakistan spent \$3.7 billion in debt servicing in the last fiscal year, while \$4.08 billion was rescheduled.

"Successful implementation of the IMF stand-by arrangement will lead to a three-year poverty reduction and growth facility, which may consolidate macroeconomic stability and accelerate economic revival," the bank said.



The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) hosted a dinner in honour of the visiting delegation from Bengal National Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BNCCI) at a local hotel on Saturday. Picture shows DCCI President Aftab ul Islam presenting a DCCI crest to the leader of the delegation and BNCCI President, BN Kumar.

- DCCI photo

ROK unions warn of labour unrest over mass layoffs

Bankrupt firms' closure may cause huge job losses

SEOUL, Nov 6: South Korean unions warned Monday of a wave of protests and strikes against the forced closure of bankrupt firms expected to cause tens of thousands of job losses, reports AFP.

The country's two main labour federations, which count 1.6 million members, said they would stage anti-government protests this week and strikes in early December.

Unions are most worried about the feared collapse of Hyundai Engineering and Construction Co., South Korea's largest building firm, and bankrupt Daewoo Motor Co, the country's second largest car-maker.

The government has formed a task force to minimize the impact of its corporate restructuring. But workers are opposing demands for mass job losses, especially in the depressed construction industry.

"We will fight back to protect our rights against massive job losses caused by the government's unilateral action," said Shin Un-Jik of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU).

The group said protests would start with a rally Tuesday outside the Financial Supervisory Commission, a government financial watchdog which has led economic reforms. It pre-

dicted 30,000 people would turn out for a mass rally in Seoul on Sunday.

The bigger Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) promised separate protests, including a strike tentatively set for December 8.

South Korean banks last week unveiled a list of 52 debt-stricken firms which will be liquidated, placed under court receivership, sold or merged.

Hyundai Engineering, which employs about 100,000 people through staff and subcontractors, was kept alive temporarily but the list included other construction firms such as Don-Ah Construction.

The private Dongwon Economic Research Institute said the closure of non-viable firms would leave some 200,000 more workers jobless on top of 800,000 already unemployed.

As a result, the jobless rate will rise by one percentage point from the current 3.65 per cent, it said.

"We do not oppose the restructuring of ailing firms. We are angry because just workers have been forced to make sacrifices," Shin said, adding the labour campaign would be led by Daewoo Motor workers.

at home and reduced production abroad.

The programme is aimed at helping the ailing company take a new bailout and speed up its sale to US giant General Motors Corp. (GM).

But the company's 17,500 production workers in South Korea have warned of strong protests.

On Monday, Daewoo Motor's union reaffirmed its "strong opposition" to the restructuring plan.

Union spokesman Choi Jon-Hak said: "We have delivered our firm position to the creditors. We won't agree to their unilateral ideas, which are too vague and unrealistic, unless other urgent issues are first settled."

The union is demanding creditors and management first pay wage arrears worth some 110 billion won (100 million dollars) before there can be job and wage cuts.

Daewoo Motor's key creditor Korea Development Bank said Saturday creditors would not extend fresh loans for additional working capital unless unions agree to layoffs and wage cuts.

Hundreds of workers at Samsung Commercial Vehicle Co. in the southeastern city of Taegu burned several trucks in violent protests last week.

Top Filipino business group wants Estrada to quit

Looming crisis over corruption allegation

MANILA, Nov 6: The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the country's biggest business organisation, said Monday a majority of its members want President Joseph Estrada to step down to prevent a crisis over corruption allegations from further hurting the economy, reports AP.

"The developments of the last few days... require us to re-evaluate our position," PCCI Chairman and President Miguel Varela said.

The PCCI was one of the few large business groups that supported Estrada during his 1998 election campaign and did not join a number of other business groups, including the influential Makati Business Club, that called on Estrada to resign last month.

"The majority of the PCCI leadership believes that the best way to resolve the present crisis gripping the nation is for President Joseph Estrada to resign," Varela said.

He said that in making its decision, the group took into consideration the "lack of confidence in the leadership" of Estrada and the further economic deterioration.

PCCI Vice President Sergio Ortiz-Luiz, who is also chairman of the Philippine Exporters

Confederation, said the chamber believes that resignation by the president is constitutional as long as it is voluntary.

Estrada's resignation "should calm the market place," he added.

Filipino exports fall for first time since '94

MANILA, Nov 6: Philippine exports declined in September for the first time in nearly six years, dragged down by a large drop in shipments of electronics and components, the government said Monday, reports AP.

Economists fear an extended period of weak exports will lower growth in an already faltering economy.

But while growth in electronics exports has been declining in recent months, analysts attributed much of September's drop to unusually high exports late last year caused by Taiwanese companies shifting production to the Philippines after a severe earthquake in Taiwan.

Philippine financial markets have suffered a terrible beating because of the political crisis spurred by allegations from a provincial governor that Estrada took millions of dollars in bribes from operators of an illegal numbers game.

But on Monday, the main index of the stock exchange rocketed 16 per cent to 1,500.10 and the peso also surged, sending the dollar plunging below the key level of 49 pesos from a record high of 51.95 pesos hit last week, as Congress began deliberating an impeachment complaint against Estrada.

Finance Secretary Jose Pardo also said he is willing to act as a go-between to broker talks between Estrada and former President Corason Aquino, a leader of the loose coalition seeking Estrada's resignation, to resolve the political crisis.

Varela said PCCI made its final decision after a special board meeting at which the chamber's leadership, including representatives of its local chambers nationwide, were present.

PCCI has 1,200 members representing 107 chambers of commerce and 115 industry associations.

Germany needs at least 250,000 immigrants per year

BERLIN, Nov 6: Germany needs between 200,000 and 250,000 immigrants annually in order to cope with the labour shortage arising from declining population, according to a leading economist, says Xinhua.

Klaus Zimmermann, president of the German Institute for Economic Research, made his proposal in an article published on Monday's 'Berliner Zeitung' daily.

He said that 200,000 is the least requirement because even with this level of immigration, the number of labour force in Germany will still decline by 3 million by 2020.

In order to shore up the working force, the retirement year should be postponed, the education period should be shortened and there should be more training for the less qualified, he said.

As a "second pillar" of a policy to solve bottlenecking of labour force, the economist suggested that an auction procedure of time-limited visas be set up, which will enable enterprises to enlist a certain number of workers from abroad for a given period.

Proceeds from the auction can be invested in the education system of the country, he added.

Vietnam rice exports down amid fall in world demand

HANOI, Nov 6: International demand for Vietnamese rice has fallen sharply this year, threatening the country's position as the world's second biggest supplier in the longer term, trade ministry officials said today, reports AFP.

In the first 10 months of this year Vietnam exported 3.135 million tonnes of rice, a 22 per cent fall on the same period of 1999, an official in the ministry's planning department told AFP, asking not to be named.

The deliveries earned Vietnam just 593 million dollars, down 35 per cent on last year, he said.

The official blamed good harvests in Vietnam's main Asian markets for the fall in demand for its rice.

Indonesia had stopped its imports altogether in February, while the Philippines had cut back sharply and both Nepal and Pakistan had enjoyed good harvests.

Nicole Int'l seminar for dealers held

Nicole International Ltd organised a seminar on 'National Panasonic 2000' for its dealers and franchisees at a city hotel on Monday, says a press release.

Guests and experts from Singapore, Japan and Malaysia presented the latest technology of National Panasonic audiovisual and home products.

In his inaugural speech, TA Hasan, General Manager of Nicole International Ltd, informed that as the authorised reseller and promoter, Nicole International Ltd is the only company in Bangladesh who organised this type of seminar for the third consecutive year.

Every year dealers and consumers are exposed to the latest development in audiovisual and home appliances technology that Matsushita Electric, Japan, offering for the consumers of this region.

The participants were shown 'Plasma technology 100 Htz, 42" Panasonic monitor which is only 3.5 inch in depth, portable World Space satellite digital receiver that tunes directly to the satellite to download audio broadcast and data transmission signals to computers with its 'go anywhere' type 3.5" antenna, latest technology 100 Htz digital flat TV and many other recently developed latest technology products.

The seminar was followed by a two-day general exhibition at the same venue which ends at 8 pm today.

UK manufacturing output slumps in Sept

LONDON, Nov 6: Output from Britain's factories tumbled by more than expected in September although the fuel crisis was not to blame, National Statistics said today, reports Reuters.

NS said manufacturing output fell 0.4 per cent in August, its worst performance since April and a considerably weaker figure than economists had expected. Output was just 0.6 per cent higher than a year earlier, the worst annual figure since August last year.

NS also revised down its monthly growth figure for August to 0.6 per cent from an originally reported 0.8 per cent.