

## Bank holiday on October 1

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank and all scheduled banks will remain closed on October 1 on the occasion of the 8th parliamentary election, said a press release Thursday.

## NCB branches to remain open Saturday

BSS, Dhaka

The branches of nationalised commercial banks (NCB) handling election fund will remain open on September 29, a Bangladesh Bank press release said Thursday.

The press release said the branches will remain open so that he Returning Officers or Assistant Returning Officers can withdraw money from banks for election purpose.

## ECNEC approves Tk 114.24cr four projects

UNB, Dhaka

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) Thursday approved four projects involving Tk 114.24 crore, including Tk 35.60 crore in project aid.

The approval was given at an ECNEC meeting at the conference room of NEC with Vice Chairman of the committee and Finance, Jute and Textiles Advisor M Hafizuddin Khan in the chair.

The projects include installation of seven 132/33 KV grid sub-centre capacitor banks, reinstallation of Jessore-Benapole branch line, a flood rehabilitation project under damaged RRMP-3 and strengthening the Shipping Ministry for developing internal naval security and maritime environment management.

Besides, reports were submitted in the meeting on rural development projects, extension of the agreement of advisory organisation in implementing the Madhyapara Hard Rock Project and irregularities in construction of veterinary hospitals at the district-level.

ECNEC members and advisors of different ministries Sayed Monjur Elahi, Major Gen Moinul Hossain Chowdhury, Abdul Mueed Chowdhury and AKM Amanul Islam Chowdhury attended the meeting.

Secretaries of different ministries and departments and members of Planning Commission were also present.

## 2nd AGM of First Security Bank held

The 2nd annual general meeting of the First Security Bank Limited was held at a city hotel recently, says a press release.

Sarwar Jahan Maleque, Vice-Chairperson of the bank presided over the meeting.

The bank earned a profit of Tk 16.6 million and achieved deposit of Tk 1539.6 million as on December 31, 2000.

Up to 31st August 2001, the bank's profit figure stood at Tk 48 million while its deposit reached at Tk 2444.4 million.

All the sponsor-shareholders, directors, advisor RA Howlader and managing director Md Sarwaruzzaman Khan were present in the meeting.

## Malaysia aims to find new export markets

AP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia will try to find new export markets in the United States and Southeast Asia to offset the worsening economic downturn following the terrorist attacks in the United States, a top trade official said.

The Malaysian government this week slashed its growth forecast for 2001 to around 2 per cent in anticipation of a global slowdown made worse by the attacks. Electrical goods and components are Malaysia's main export and the United States its biggest customer.

International Trade and Industry Minister Rafidah Aziz said Malaysia would try to develop new US markets away from the east and west coasts, and aimed to double its exports to Southeast Asian countries. She did not give a timeframe.

Speaking to reporters late Wednesday, Rafidah said that 25 per cent of Malaysia's total exports currently went to Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, countries.

# National poultry policy needed for proper sectoral growth

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A national poultry sector development policy should be formulated immediately to fulfill the need of private entrepreneurs and non-government organisations and increase the present growth of the industry, experts said.

"Frequent outbreaks of diseases in rural areas are one main constraint for poultry development in the country. The annual economic loss due to diseases is tremendous which is around 60 per cent of the total value of poultry," said Professor MA Latif, former head of Poultry Science Department of Bangladesh Agricultural University and President of World's Poultry Science Association-Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.

In the early stage of poultry sector development in the country, the main emphasis was given to direct technology transfer in various forms including introduction of exotic, high production breeds, he said. Livestock development strategies were designed mainly to maximise production without any consideration to long-term socio-cultural and environmental implications. As a result, poultry sector development was not satisfactory.

Formulation of a national policy and forming a regulatory body for implementing the policy may help the industry sustain as well as increase the growth rate and turn the poultry industry into an export-oriented business, said Quazi M Embadul Huque, Director General of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI).

To develop the sector export-oriented, hygienic factors are most important ones in broiler processing, he said, adding that due to lack of a national policy, the poultry industry is running in an unorganised way and there is no control on various poultry related activities. On the other hand, poultry insurance system should be introduced.

Poultry breeding is a prospective avenue to reduce unemployment, poverty and malnutrition and needs a special and comprehensive approach.

The emerging poultry sector has received attention of the investors in the last decade and is undergoing remarkable changes. But it is yet to gain the industrial scale of operation.

Specialised poultry disease investigation centres need to be established at Savar, Gazipur, Chittagong, Bogra and Faridpur. The present disease investigation centre of the Department of

Livestock needs to be modernised for specialised disease investigation.

Besides, annual growth of the poultry sub-sector is around 20 per cent and the demand for poultry feed is going up with the increase of commercial poultry production. There should a regulatory body to look after feed standardisation and quality control, he said. A feed testing facility is required in and around poultry farming zones.

Currently there are about 80 hatcheries in the country with 0.625 million parent stocks, producing 72.80 million commercial day-old chicks in 1999.

The local hatcheries produced about 11.80 million layers and 61 million broiler day-old chicks in 1999-2000, about half of the present demand for commercial farming. About 70,000 different-size farms have been established in the country. Of them, 20 per cent has been rearing 1,000 to 50,000 birds and the rest are small-scale having 100 to 1,000 birds each.

Most of the poultry farmers in Bangladesh do not have enough technical know-how to obtain maximum output from their investment.

The country's annual per capita egg consumption is 0.8 kg while and poultry meat consumption is 1 kg.

## Manila may allow carriers to charge higher airfares

AFP, Manila

Philippine aviation regulators are likely to temporarily allow local carriers to charge higher airfares to pay for higher insurance costs following the terrorist attacks in the US, an official said Thursday.

The board may sit immediately to discuss the granting of the provisional authority for the increase, Civil Aeronautics Board executive director Carmelo Arcilla told reporters.

The permit would apply until October 20, when the board would convene to discuss granting formal authority, he added.

Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific Airways, and Air Philippines have all filed petitions to raise fares by six dollars, Arcilla said.

PAL president Avelino Zapanta said on Wednesday that the flag carrier intends to pass on passengers the higher insurance costs following the suicide hijacking of US jets, which were used to attack the World Trade Center and the Pentagon with the feared loss of nearly 7,000 lives.

## Up to 18,000 new jobs for S'pore this year

AP, Singapore

Billions of dollars worth of investments coming in this year could create up to 18,000 jobs in the recession-hit city-state of Singapore, officials say.

Companies in the electronics and services sectors are each expected to generate about one-third of the new jobs, Economic Development Board spokesman Koh Buck Song said on Thursday.

The rest of the new jobs will likely be split between the chemical, engineering and biomedical industries, Koh said.

The new jobs are expected to materialise over the next two to three years as the investment projects get underway, Koh said.

Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong recently revealed that Singapore, a wealthy island nation of 4 million people, attracted 6.9 billion Singapore dollars (dls 3.9 billion) three-quarters of it from overseas in direct investment in the first eight months of this year.

Singapore's unemployment rate was 2.6 per cent in June, according to the latest available figures.

Officials have said the figure could hit 4 per cent by the end of this year.

## Karnaphuli Ins declares 15 pc dividend

Karnaphuli Insurance Company Limited has declared a 15 per cent dividend for its shareholders.

The dividend was announced at the 14th annual general meeting of the company held at BCIC Auditorium in the city recently.

Nizam Uddin Ahmed, Chairman of the company, presided over the meeting, says a press release.

Vice-Chairperson Ummu Kawser Salsabil, Director Hasina Nizam, Md Shah Alam, Fazlul Hoque Khan, Zobaidee Parveen, Mafizur Rahman, Executive Director Nasir Uddin Ahmed, Managing Director Md Aliuzzaman Khan and a large number of shareholders of the company attend the meeting.



President Shahabuddin Ahmed speaks at the inauguration of the new plant of Square Pharmaceuticals Limited at Kaliakair in Gazipur on Thursday. Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, Advisor of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs and Civil Aviation & Tourism, Brig. (Retd) Professor Abdul Malik, Advisor of Health, Family Welfare and Religious Affairs, Tapan Chowdhury, Managing Director of Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd, and Samson H Chowdhury, Chairman of Square Group, are also seen in the picture.

# Square Pharma's new plant to enhance country's image

## President tells inauguration function

BSS, Gazipur

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed has described the new factory of the Square Pharmaceuticals as a unique addition to Bangladesh's pharmaceutical sector and operation of this manufacturing plant would help expand its export bases to the developed countries including the United States.

"It is needless to say that this factory will greatly enhance the image of Bangladesh in the world market as an exporter of highly sophisticated and technical products like pharmaceuticals," he said while inaugurating the Square's new plant at Kaliakoir under Gazipur

district on Thursday.

Adviser Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmad and Adviser Brig (ret'd) Abdul Malik also addressed the inaugural function with chairman of the Square Pharmaceutical Ltd Samson H Chowdhury presiding.

Adviser Rokia A Rahman was, among others, present on the occasion.

The president appreciated the initiative for setting up this plant and expressed his firm hope that Square in Bangladesh would be able to provide pharmaceuticals of international standard along with creating employment for the bright younger generations. "Square has been contributing a lot to the growth of national economy," he said.

Earlier, he was informed that Square by now well on its way to becoming a high performance global competitor, starting its first export to United Kingdom and Singapore in 1987 and at present to several countries in Asia and Europe.

In near future, Square's exports will be expanded to more countries in Asia, Europe and Africa.

With the completion of this factory, the President said, Square has achieved the global standard in manufacturing pharmaceutical products through its modern facilities conforming USFDA and EU pharmaceutical requirements.

Later, the President inaugurated the plant by unveiling the plaque.

# US airlines to cut fares to get passengers back

REUTERS, Chicago

With the American public still fearful of flying, US airlines are planning major new fare cuts that will not make them money but will at least get people back in the air, industry experts said Wednesday.

Delta Air Lines Chief Executive Leo Mullin said the No. 3 US carrier will "absolutely" be announcing major fare cuts in the days and weeks ahead. "Business has got to get back to being in business," Mullin said.

"We intend to have a major ticket promotion that we will be announcing within the next couple of days. That ticket promotion will be heavily focused on New York. It will be oriented towards, in our attempt, not only to get passengers back on Delta airplanes but also to help New York get back up and running."

Mullin told reporters at a press conference at Delta's Atlanta headquarters that planes are still only about one-third full. Revenue passengers miles, or the number of paying passengers times the distance flown, are only 60 per cent of expectations, he said.

So far, US airlines have held off

from any fare initiatives as the public remains traumatised by the Sept. 11 attacks by hijacked airliners on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which left nearly 7,000 dead or missing.

The aviation industry has been reeling ever since, slashing capacity and 122,800 jobs, but so far, not fares.

One other reason passengers are not flying has to do with what Terry Trippler of online travel agency OneTravel.com calls the "hassle factor".

"They're (the airlines) going to have to do something about the perception that you have to go out to the airport on Tuesday for a Friday flight," Trippler said. That is because of increased security measures ordered by the Federal Aviation Administration including no curbside check-in, which many people use as a way to avoid lines within airport terminals.

Although Southwest Airlines announced a fare sale on Tuesday, Trippler said it was really just an extension of an earlier one. "I have seen nothing that we would call a clearance sale."

ABN Amro airline analyst Ray

Neidl said he believes it could be several weeks before carriers start slashing fares as they wait to assess the mood of the public. Once travelers are reassured that security has been tightened enough, "at that point you can expect to see massive, massive fare-cutting."

Even though the fares won't make the airlines any money, they will help fill planes, he said. "You can't make money until you get people flying."

Following a period of several months or quarters, which Neidl believes will be needed to stabilise the industry, higher fares will then be in store as fewer seats will be available. Most major airlines have cut back on their schedules by around 20 per cent.

Tom Parsons, airline expert at bestfares.com, said right now there are some pockets of airfare deals around the country, like \$110 roundtrip from many East Coast cities down to Florida. Another example is Seattle and San Diego to Orlando for \$158 roundtrip, he said.

"You're talking 3 cents a mile," Parsons said. "The airlines need 10 to 12 cents a mile to make any money."

# Oil climbs, OPEC set to keep output unchanged

REUTERS, London,

Volatile oil prices rebounded from their lowest level for nearly two years Wednesday as OPEC was set to leave production quotas unchanged.

OPEC ministers meeting in Vienna agreed to leave oil output steady at 23.2 million barrels per day (bpd) but will delay a formal announcement until Thursday, a senior delegate said.

Rising oil inventories in the United States and reduced refinery processing rates in Asia underlined a tailing off in petroleum demand, but a two-week slump of over \$6 a barrel was finally met by a wave of buying interest just above \$20.

In London, Brent crude futures ended 67 cents higher at \$23.05 a barrel having earlier hit an intra-day low of \$20.70 -- the lowest level since October 1999, when prices were clambering back up from sub-\$10 levels seen the winter before.

That compares to a peak of \$31.05 traded in the immediate aftermath of the suicide plane attacks on the United States on 11 September, but few traders

expected an extended recovery with the global economic condition still grave.

"It's really too early to say if this is the end of the downward trend, the market needs to stabilise for a few days to bring in a bit of confidence," said one IPE trader.

Profit-taking on short positions and trade buying helped lift the market in the last few hours of activity, traders said.

Oil markets have been in a steep decline for two weeks as concerns over economic weakness have replaced fears that US military retaliation for the September 11 attacks would cause disruption to Middle East crude supplies.

Policy makers for the world's leading economies were battling to bolster confidence in the global outlook on Wednesday as consumer sentiment slid and a global ratings agency warned of recession in the US.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder joined a cluster of European officials who said the recent attacks on the US would fail to undermine world economic

growth.

But ratings agency Standard & Poor's said the attacks would push the United States into recession in the latter half of this year and grind global economic growth to a near standstill.

OPEC ministers have agreed to keep output at 23.2 million bpd but will delay a formal announcement until Thursday, a senior OPEC delegates confirmed.

"The deal is that there is no increase or decrease production. We have an agreement to keep the quotas as is until they meet again, perhaps in November," the delegate said.

Ministers will meet again on Thursday morning at 0700 GMT in Vienna, a spokesman said. Wednesday evening delegates held talks with observers from non-OPEC countries.

Influential Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi said the cartel's best option was to allow time for existing output curbs to be felt in a world oil market where crude prices have slumped under the threat of an impending economic downturn.



Nizamuddin Ahmed, Chairman of Karnaphuli Insurance Company Limited, addresses the fourteenth Annual General Meeting of the company in the city on Monday. Vice Chairperson Ummu Kawser Salsabil, Directors Hasina Nizam, Fazlul Hoque Khan, Executive Director Nasir Uddin Ahmed, Managing Director Md. Aliuzzaman Khan are also seen in the picture.