

BAPEX awards engineering, supervision deal to Pegasus Int'l

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration & Production Co. Ltd (BAPEX), a Petrobangla Company, has awarded Pegasus International (UK) Limited, the London-based arm of Pegasus International Inc, Houston, a contract to undertake the engineering design and construction supervision services for the Shahbazpur and Fenchugonj gas processing plants, says a press release of the foreign firm.

Faruque Alamgir, secretary of BAPEX, and J M McGovern, operation director of Pegasus International (UK) Ltd, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective companies in the city recently.

The work will commence immediately in Dhaka and in Pegasus International Regional Office in Kuala Lumpur.

Both the Shahbazpur and the Fenchugonj Gas Fields are being developed to increase the country's production capacity to meet the growing demand for natural gas.

The Shahbazpur Gas Plant, located in the south-east of the country will have a capacity to process 40MMCF of gas per day while the Fenchugonj Gas Plant, located in the north-east of the country, will have the capacity to process 60MMCF of gas per day plus 100 BBL of condensate per day.

Pegasus International, which has carried out other gas development projects in Bangladesh, expressed their pleasure at being awarded these two contracts and reconfirmed continuing commitment in providing high quality technical assistance to Petrobangla and their associated companies in the development of Bangladesh's oil and gas resources.

Pegasus International is a Front End Engineering Design, Engineering and Project Management Company in the upstream oil and gas industry, headquartered in Houston, Texas, with operational offices in Kuala Lumpur, Aberdeen, London and Lafayette.

ICAB workshop held in city

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) organised a 2-day workshop under the World Bank Financed Project titled "Development of Accounting and Auditing Standards in Bangladesh" at its office at Kawran Bazar in the city recently, says a press release.

On the first day, Rashed Uddin Ahmad and Nazrul Haider, an IT expert, presented the key-note paper.

Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, vice-chancellor of BRAC University, acted as session chairman.

On the second day, M Farhad Hussain presented the key-note paper on "ISA 302 Audit Materiality". Abbas Uddin Khan, member Council and past president-ICAB, acted as session chairman.

A large number of ICAB members and nominees from the Office of Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) participated in the workshop.

ROK industrial output rises by 7.7pc

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's industrial output rose 7.7 per cent in May from a year earlier as the economy continued to power ahead despite economic troubles in the United States and other key markets.

"All data measuring production, consumption and investments are sustaining an upward trend in anticipation of an economic recovery," the National Statistical Office (NSO) said in a statement Friday.

Analysts said the data showed the economy was on a solid recovery path, although the pace was held back by slower-than-expected export growth.

Gains in key industries including semiconductors and autos, were offset by reduced production of other products including telecom equipment and textiles, the NSO said.

In May semiconductor output grew 20.1 per cent year-on-year and 7.6 per cent from the previous month, while automobile output was up 17.3 per cent year-on-year and up 5.3 per cent from April.

Minister urges pvt sector to help grow ICT

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Science and Information and Communication Technology Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday urged the private sector to come forward for the rapid growth of ICT.

"It is the responsibility of the government to set up the basic infrastructure and create favourable environment. But the private sector has to play the main role to create skilled manpower by providing people with quality education and training," he said.

He said the government has taken up a programme to provide around 12 thousand secondary schools across the country with one computer each and Internet connections.

229 listed cos vanish after raising money in India

Watchdog to carry out investigations

AFP, New Delhi

India's securities watchdog announced Friday that 229 companies which had raised money through public issues and were listed on the country's main Bombay Stock Exchange had vanished by April 2002.

"At least 229 listed companies which collected funds through public issues are no longer available at their registered offices," the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said in a statement.

It added that SEBI would carry out investigations to track down "vanishing companies."

"Some promoters raise capital from the market and when business slumps they take the easy way out by simply shutting shop and disappearing lock, stock and barrel," a senior SEBI official told AFP.

"But we will do our best to track down the absconding promoters and restore investor confidence," he added.

SEBI also announced that 15,680 new companies had registered themselves with the department of company affairs in India between April to December 2001, while 72 foreign companies had set up shop in the country during the same period.

The minister also said that ICT sector can emerge as one of the main sources of our foreign currency.

Referring to the government's failure to connect the country with submarine cable in 1992, Dr. Moyeen Khan said, "We made a mistake. We should not do it again."

Among others, former adviser to caretaker government Syed Manzur Elahi, Advisor of Informatics Institute Bangladesh Mizanur Rahman Shelley, Chairman of Informatics Institute Bangladesh Abdul Mannan MP, Executive President of the Institute Faruk Aziz

Khan also spoke on the occasion.

Syed Manzur Elahi observed the government should make attempt to get the country connected with submarine cable as early as possible. According to him, the development of this sector depends on the connection to a great extent.

Abdul Mannan MP said I urge the government through the minister to reconsider the proposal for imposing 7.5 per cent customs duty on computer and its accessories.

Full-fledged Aktel service in Jessore soon

Aktel will launch its full-fledged services in Jessore very soon, says a press release.

Aktel currently covers 10 districts in Bangladesh including Sylhet. Aktel plans to offer all their product lines in Jessore such as Standard, Mobile Plus, Mobile to Mobile and also Pre-Paid connections, just like the ones the existing subscribers are enjoying.

Aktel aims to continue their efforts in giving the best mobile phone service to the people of Bangladesh, while covering more and more areas in the days to come.

It also plans to provide more and more innovative services to its mobile phone users, such as the SMS service and Data Fax service, keeping in touch with the latest developments in mobile phone technology the world over, and making sure that these benefits are also enjoyed by their subscribers.

Aktel hopes to be able to provide all their subscribers with "International Roaming" service by this year.

RAKUB opens branch at Maugachi

Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank has opened a new branch at Maugachi Union of Mohanpur Upazila under Rajshahi district, says a press release.

With this, the total number of branches of the bank stands at 349.

Abu Hena, MP, inaugurated the branch as chief guest at a function held at Maugachi on Saturday.

In the opening ceremony, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, chairman of the bank and Dr Mujibur Rahman Khan, Managing Director of the bank were present as special guests.

Hazrat Ali, DGM Rajshahi Zone, presided over the meeting.

New NTT chief aims to cut costs

AFP, Tokyo

The newly appointed president of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp. (NTT), Japan's leading telecoms group, said Thursday he hopes to cut costs and review the structure of the company.

Norio Wada told reporters following the company's annual shareholders' meeting he would try to cut costs and would review NTT group's structure to fit the changing business environment.

Wada was officially named president after winning approval from NTT shareholders and the NTT board.

He replaced Junichiro Miyazu, who now is an NTT corporate adviser.

"The business environment remains tough, needless to say. In this situation, we will do our best to satisfy stakeholders," he said.

Japan economy still fragile

Unemployment rising, prices falling

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's jobless rate rose to 5.4 per cent in May and nationwide consumer prices fell for the 33rd consecutive month, underlining the fragility of a recovery in the world's second largest economy.

The May unemployment rate was up from 5.2 per cent in April, edging closer to a record 5.5 per cent seen in December last year, the Ministry of Public Management,

Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications said Friday.

"The employment situation remains severe," State Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy Heizo Takenaka told a news conference.

The unemployment rate for men was at 5.5 per cent, up from 5.4 per cent, and that for women grew to a record 5.3 per cent, up from 4.9 per cent, the ministry said.

The number of people out of work rose to 3.75 million in May, up 270,000 from a year earlier, increas-

ing for the 14th consecutive month, it said.

Economists argued Japan's jobless rate was likely to remain at the current level as companies continued to downsize in efforts to improve their efficiency.

"The employment environment remains tough as companies have been adjusting their human resources and cutting personnel costs," said Hideki Matsumura, economist at Japan Research Institute.

"Even in the long run, I think it is difficult to expect the unemployment rate to fall sharply."

Credit Suisse First Boston economist Satoru Ogasawara agreed.

"Corporate restructuring continues to affect many companies and the unemployment rate could rise higher amid a deflation-plagued economy," Ogasawara said.

Japan industrial output rises 3.9 per cent

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's industrial output in May rose 3.9 per cent from the previous month, the trade ministry said in a preliminary report on Friday.

The May figure followed a 0.2-per cent increase in April, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said.

The ministry forecast June industrial output would be flat month-on-month and July output was seen down 0.3 per cent.

Weekly Currency Roundup

June 22-27, 2002

Local foreign exchange market operated in full swing. Demand for dollar was high.

In the weekly Treasury bill auction held on Sunday, Bangladesh Bank accepted treasury bills worth of BDT 31,445 billion. The government accepted BDT 30,215 million at 4.57 per cent for 28-day t-bills, BDT 300 million at 5.1 per cent for 91-day t-bills, BDT 100 million at 5.75 per cent for 364-day t-bills, BDT 420 million at 6.86 per cent for 2-year t-bills, and BDT 410 million at 8.6 per cent for 91-day t-bills. Demand for BDT for overnight borrowing at call was steady throughout the week and the call money ranged between 3.5 and 4.5 per cent.

Euro continued its bullish trend in the beginning of the week and rose to a two-year high against the dollar. Against the yen, dollar reached a 7-month low. The greenback could not sustain the temporary gains made against yen after Bank of Japan's yen-selling intervention.

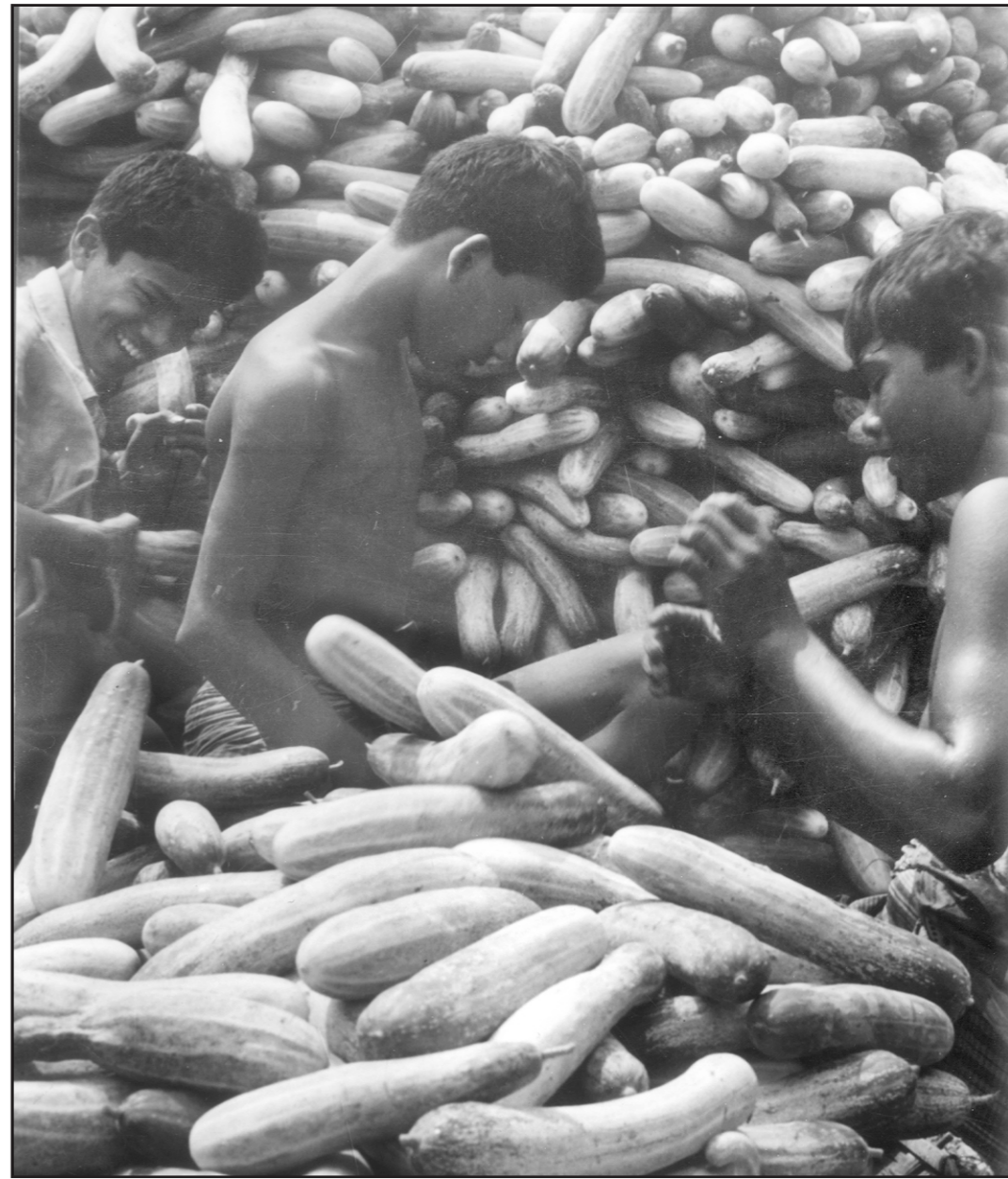
In the middle of the week, USD remained vulnerable but held above the two-year low against euro as a mild bounce on Wall Street gave investors temporary relief. Disappointing German data also aided the dollar. US stocks that have been closely tied to dollar's future in the recent weeks ended modestly on Monday. Dollar was also steady against the yen, as investors remained wary about Japan's intervention to weaken its currency.

At the weekend, European Single Currency rallied against dollar, euro has gained almost 11 per cent on a year-to-date basis. Euro's plight could be attributed mostly to the recent addition in corporate accounting practice scandal in USA, the WorldCom. The company has recently admitted of inflating its profits; confirming the irregularities in Corporate affairs in USA after the Enron scam. Meanwhile, traders were expecting the euro to reach the parity after the currency rallied to 0.9941 against dollar. Yen was strong against dollar in spite of Bank of Japan's yen selling intervention.

At 1545 hours on Thursday, euro traded at 0.9846/49 against dollar, pound sterling at 1.5209/14 and yen traded at 119.75/80 against US dollar.

Chartered Bank

Standard



Cucumber is in abundant supply at Karwan Bazar wholesale market in the city. The popular summer vegetable now sells between Tk 30-35 per five-kg.

US economy grows at 6.1pc pace but experts see risks

AFP, Washington

The US economy grew at a sizzling 6.1 per cent pace in the first quarter - but economists said the current rate of growth is much weaker and subject to a number of risks.

The final revision to GDP growth was above market expectations, with Wall Street economists expecting the rate to remain unrevised at 5.6 per cent. The economy grew at a 1.7 per cent rate in the fourth quarter of 2001.

"The recovery had a stronger momentum earlier this year than initially thought," said Anthony Karydakis of Banc One Capital Markets

"This figure will likely restore some optimism in the stock market where investor confidence has been shaken by accounting scandals," said Sung Won Sohn of Wells Fargo

Bank.

But the report did not change the fundamental picture of the January-March quarter, in which the consumer and housing sectors were solid, but business investment remained weak.

And analysts said that the report was "old history" and did not reflect the current state of the economy, which is being affected by waning consumer and investor confidence in the wake of corporate scandals and new security fears.

Bruce Steinberg of Merrill Lynch noted that "the first quarter is now history and the revision has no implications for second-quarter growth."

But he said that the strong nine per cent productivity growth "makes us optimistic about the US recovery ... The economy temporarily slowed in the second quarter."

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ing for the 14th consecutive month, it said.

Economists argued Japan's jobless rate was likely to remain at the current level as companies continued to downsize in efforts to improve their efficiency.

"The employment environment remains tough as companies have been adjusting their human resources and cutting personnel costs," said Hideki Matsumura, economist at Japan Research Institute.

"Even in the long run, I think it is difficult to expect the unemployment rate to fall sharply."

Credit Suisse First Boston economist Satoru Ogasawara agreed.

"Corporate restructuring continues to affect many companies and the unemployment rate could rise higher amid a deflation-plagued economy," Ogasawara said.

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African nations to evolve common strategy to protect cotton sector

AFP, Abidjan

Central and west African countries are developing a common strategy on cotton to protect the interests of some 10 million people in the sector threatened by subsidies developed nations pay to their own producers.

"We must fight to save our cotton sector to ensure that the new international economic order plays according to equal rules," Ivorian Agriculture Minister Sebastien Dano Djedje told a conference here recently.

He stressed that some 20 countries in the region were cotton producers with about 10 million people dependent on the sector.

Earnings from cotton touched 700 billion CFA francs, or more than one billion dollars, last year.

On Wednesday, central and west African states adopted a strategy outlined in a six-page memorandum to protect their interests in the face of mounting competition from western producers.

Agriculture ministers said at the end of a two-day meeting in Abidjan on Wednesday that they would begin the process for presenting a complaint at the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) dispute settlement body.

Among the 20 African countries supporting the Abidjan memorandum were Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and Senegal. Many of the 20 also belong to the 144-member Geneva-based WTO.

A WTO official in Geneva on Wednesday said they had yet to be notified of the dispute.

"We've received nothing yet," a World Trade Organisation official said.

Ahead of the summit's opening, President George W. Bush used a bilateral meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair to highlight his concern about the WorldCom accounting scandal, which he called "outrageous."

"We have had too many cases of people abusing their responsibilities. And people just need to know that the (Securities and Exchange Commission) is on it," Bush told reporters. "When we find egregious practices, such as the one revealed today, we will go after them."

A former US representative to the G8 said the leaders certainly wanted to let it be known that corporate responsibility was on their radar screen.

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