

Gazi Enterprises to import 300 tractors from Fiat Pakistan

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Gazi Enterprises will import 300 tractors from Fiat Pakistan Tractors in the next two years.

A \$ three million memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed to this effect at a city hotel yesterday.

Gazi Enterprises Owner Osman Gazi Chowdhury and Fiat Pakistan Tractors Chief Executive Sheikh Shaukat Ali signed the MoU on behalf of their organisations.

Pakistan Ambassador in Dhaka Iqbal Ahmed Khan, Pakistan Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Vice-chairman Ejaz Ahmed Quareshi and other visiting Pak trade delegation members were present at the signing ceremony.

Khosru urges Pak businessmen to invest in Bangladesh

BSS, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday called upon the Pakistani entrepreneurs to invest on 100 per cent ownership or joint venture basis in Bangladesh in different sectors like light engineering, leather, medicine and agriculture.

"Although there were enough potentials to increase bilateral trade and investment between Bangladesh and Pakistan, but those were not utilised for a long time," the minister told a 12-member Pakistani delegation who called on him at his office.

Vice-Chairman of Pakistan Export Promotion Bureau Ejaz Ahmed Koreli led the delegation. Khosru said the private sector leaders could contribute significantly to the development of trade and commerce between the two countries.

The members of the delegation expressed their keen interest to invest in Bangladesh.

State Minister for Commerce Barkatullah Bulu and Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Iqbal Ahmed Khan were present on the occasion.

New MD of UCBL



Hamidul Huq has been appointed managing director of United Commercial Bank Ltd, says a press release.

His appointment was confirmed at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the bank held in the city on Thursday.

Prior to his appointment, Huq was the additional managing director of the bank.

He joined UCBL since its inception and contributed significantly to the growth and development of the bank.

Huq started his banking career in 1969 and held many important positions before joining the services of UCBL.

Pragati Life signs group insurance deal with Roche

Pragati Life Insurance Limited has signed a group life insurance contract with Roche Bangladesh Ltd.

M Shefaque Ahmed, managing director and actuary of Pragati Life, and Nasser Shahrear Zahedee, managing director of Roche Bangladesh Ltd, signed the contract on behalf of the respective organisations in the city recently, says a press release.

Under the contract, Pragati Life will provide group life insurance coverage to the employees of Roche Bangladesh.

James Martin Das, asst manager of Finance, Mohammad Ismail Ahmed, sr. officer, Personnel of Roche Bangladesh Ltd, and Munshi Md. Monirul Alam, senior vice-president of Pragati Life Insurance Ltd, along with other senior officers of both the organisations were present on the occasion.

Local ship owners see no bar to preferential treatment

RAFIQ HASAN

The local ship owners do not see any obstacle to getting preferential treatment in loading and unloading goods as per Bangladesh Flag Vessel (protection) Ordinance 1982.

The observation came following the end of a stay order canceling the general waiver to the foreign ships last Friday.

"The sector can bring more foreign currency than the garment sector does," said Bangladesh Ocean Going Ship Owners Association (BOGSOA) President Syeed Hossain Chowdhury.

He said the local ships would get necessary protection if Bangladesh

Flag Vessel (protection) Ordinance 1982 is enforced strictly. The ordinance speaks of preference to Bangladeshi ships in loading and unloading cargoes.

Sources say that the ordinance remained ineffective for long due to lack of adequate number of local ships and a legal battle between the government and local ship owners.

Sayed Hossain claimed that the existing local shipping services are fully capable of carrying all the containers necessary for executing export-import business to and from the country.

He said there are three major local shipping services having container vessels and many others are planning to enter the business.

Under the ordinance, a foreign ship has to take permission from the Department of Shipping before loading and unloading goods at the Bangladesh ports.

The Department gives permission through a waiver certificate declaring that there was no local ship available for the job.

The government, particularly the department of shipping, observes that the ordinance should not continue because it would hamper export-import business.

The Department however applied for continuing the stay until disposal of the case.

In November 2001, a general waiver by the Department allowed all the ships to carry goods from the

ports without permission.

Protesting the move, local ship owners filed a case with the High Court. The court passed an order in favour of the local ship owners.

But the Department went to the Appellate Division and had the order stayed till January 31, 2003.

As the local ship owners accuse the Department of working in the interest of the foreign ship owners, the Department officials say full-enforcement of the ordinance would hamper over all trade of the country and disturb shipping businesses.

"There could be some advantages to the local ship owners but that has to be settled amicably through negotiation with foreign ship owners," said a high official at the Department of Shipping.



PHOTO: CRISL

Muzaffar Ahmed, president and CEO of Credit Rating Information and Services Ltd (CRISL), and Rashed Mowdud Khan, chairman and managing director of Bengal Fine Ceramics Limited (BFCL), exchange documents after signing a contract in the city on Monday. Under the deal, the CRISL will rate the BFCL's Tk 14 crore worth debenture and Tk 3.25 crore worth right share offer. Jamal Uddin Ahmed, chairman of CRISL, and Rashed Maksud Khan, vice-chairman and deputy managing director of BFCL, were also present. BFCL is a public limited company listed with Dhaka Stock Exchange and Chittagong Stock Exchange.

Deal to set up catering institute in Ctg today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

With a view to setting up a catering institute in Chittagong, British-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce (BBCC) and Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) are going to sign an agreement today.

BBCC Director General Wali Tasar Uddin disclosed this at a meeting between the BBCC and the CCCI at CCCI auditorium on Monday. Wali Tasar Uddin is leading a 15-member BBCC delegation.

Tasar Uddin told the meeting that the catering institute will be set up to produce skilled manpower through training for the highly potential

catering industry of the United Kingdom. Presently around 20,000 posts of chefs and waiters lay vacant due to lack of such work force.

Tasar Uddin said a large number of Bangladeshi people are engaged in the catering industry. "There is still room for more such skilled work force for this industry there."

He said that Britain has relaxed its visa system for such skilled workers.

Earlier, CCCI President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury spoke on existing friendly relationship between the two countries.

He urged Bangladeshi expatriates to play more affective role in

strengthening this bilateral ties and socio-economic development of the country.

CCCI Vice-president Monzoor-Ul-Amin Chowdhury, Director Mahabub Ali, former Bangladeshi ambassador to the UK AFM Yusuf, Director of British Council, Chittagong Julia Crockett and Mahtab Mia of BBCC also spoke at the meeting.

Former CCCI Vice-president MA Latif, Directors Anwar Shawkat Afser, Hasanuzzaman Chowdhury and Pana Ullah Ahmed also attended the meeting.

Business needs strong media support

Speakers observe at discussion

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a discussion yesterday stressed the need for strong media support for the business community to ensure private sector led economic growth in the country.

They were also of the opinion that media and private sector both require capacity building exercise to enhance their performance in their respective fields.

The speakers, both business leaders and media experts, made these observations at a consultative meeting on "Business Community and Media: Expectations and Challenges." It was organised by the Manusher Jonno (MJ), MJ supports civil society organisations, NGOs and state institutions, which are working in the fields of human rights and good governance issues.

Chaired by MJ Fund Team Leader Shaheen Anam, the discus-

sion was initiated by MH Rahman, former president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) and Moazzem Hossain, editor of The Financial Express. It was also addressed by MJ Communication Specialist Emamul Haque.

The discussants included private sector entrepreneurs, business professionals, representatives from trade bodies, donors and journalists community. The management support for the discussion was given by Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI).

MH Rahman said media support for the private sector was necessary not only for the business community, but also for the whole nation. The country requires huge revenue and employment generations, which the government alone cannot manage, he said with emphasis upon a neutral role of the media to

portray all issues impartially. Moazzem Hossain said media always remains supportive for the private sector. He said promotion of good governance and human rights cannot be a responsibility of the government only, while the private sector also has a role to play in those areas.

He said the private sector should play their due role for strong corporate governance and corporate social responsibility. He also said that private sector cannot grow by seeking favour only.

Participants from the floor described the role of both the private sector and the media as complementary with each other. The country needs a pro-poor economic growth and to ensure that both the media and the private sector should come forward to cooperate with each other towards that direction, they also said.

Janata Bank executives confce held

An annual conference of the executives of Janata Bank was held at IDB Bhaban in the city yesterday, says a press release.

M Ayubur Rahman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the bank, presided over the conference.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Fakruddin Ahmed said investment by NCBs may induce growth of the banking sector. It will also help increase GDP and reduce poverty level of the country.

Managing Director of Janata Bank Murshid Kuli Khan spoke of the successful achievements in all activities of bank like deposits, advance, increasing trend of remittance business, profits, classified advance etc.

Phuket Air offers Eid package

Phuket Air, the private sector airline of Thailand, has offered special travel packages ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, says a press release.

The airline has reduced its Chittagong-Bangkok-Chittagong air fare to \$240 from \$285. The offer will remain valid until March 31, 2003.

Phuket Air has also offered attractive package for tourists to visit its own island resort Andaman Club in Myanmar. Three nights and four days package to Andaman Club is fixed at \$550.

Besides, packages of 3 nights 4 days in Bangkok with airfare costing \$299 and 4 nights 5 days costing \$329 are also on offer.

Phuket Air has also made an arrangement with bus company Silk Line, which will carry all Phuket Air passengers between Dhaka-Chittagong-Dhaka with a cost of Tk 276 a person. The bus will take the passengers from Dhaka to Shah Amanat International Airport, Chittagong.

S'pore, India plan talks on free-trade pact

THE STRAITS TIMES / ANN

India and Singapore are likely to start formal talks on a comprehensive free-trade agreement within the next few months, visiting Indian Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani said yesterday.

The matter will be taken up at the highest level in New Delhi in April when Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong visits India at the invitation of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, he told The Straits Times in an exclusive interview.

"India appreciates what Singapore has done to strengthen bilateral ties and to promote our relations with Asean nations," said Advani, who is also Home Minister.

A journalist in his younger days, the 75-year-old Indian leader is in town on a four-day visit at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Advani said his country would like the proposal for a free-trade zone between the two countries "to be expedited" to further cement bilateral relations.

A joint study group of senior Singapore and Indian officials is now looking into the feasibility of the two countries entering into a comprehensive economic cooperation pact.

The officials will be holding their next meeting in Singapore later this month, and hopefully their final meeting in India next month.



PHOTO: JANATA BANK

Dr Fakruddin Ahmed, governor of Bangladesh Bank, speaks at the annual conference of the executives of Janata Bank held at IDB Bhaban in the city yesterday. M Ayubur Rahman, chairman, and Murshid Kuli Khan, managing director of the bank, were also present.

Frozen food export growth hinges on safety standards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at a workshop strongly emphasised the need for maintaining international safety standards of the frozen foods to meet the requirements of the importers and fetch maximum prices.

They also called for carrying out precise quality control measures of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), a mandatory regulation for the frozen food exporters.

They said effective implementation of HACCP would surely bring in more reliability of the exported aqua products.

The observations came at a daylong regional workshop on "HACCP based Quality Assurance" held at a city hotel in Chittagong Monday.

Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters' Association (BFFEA) organised the workshop.

Exporters at the workshop said HACCP is a system to overcome probable hazards of frozen food products from the production stage

up to the destinations.

The implementation of HACCP is not sufficient enough to maintain the quality and attract importers. There should be adequate measures for ensuring hygienic atmosphere through development of fish landing centres and drains and sanitation system around the processing factory, they added.

Speakers also sought cooperation from the government and other concerned bodies to help upgrade the safety standards of frozen foods.

Addressing the workshop Md Akhter Ali, former principal scientific officer (PSO) of the Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), discussed the stringent measures taken up by the government for effective implementation of HACCP system in the last couple of years.

The measures include amendment of fish and fish products inspection and quality control rules, training for quality control officers and microbiologists of the fish processing establishments,

strengthening field level aquaculture monitoring and ensuring quality of the raw materials, he added.

Chaired by Mahmudul Hasan, president of the Quality Control Sub-committee of BFFEA, the workshop was also addressed among others by Md. Nurul Alam, deputy director of the Fish Inspection and Quality Control (FIQC), and Shahedul Alam Quaderi, member of BFFEA Executive Committee.

Mahmudul Hasan said that safety and quality of products are the prime requirements of the importing countries.

About frozen foods he said volatile market, consumers preference and seasonal demand make the fish industry more sensitive than the other industries.

FIQC deputy director Md. Nurul Alam stressed on the need to develop solid and cordial linkage between processors and other segments of the shrimp industry for ensuring the quality of products.

SMEs to get free info from GTN

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Global Trade and Technology Network (GTN), a USAID funded programme, will provide necessary business related information to Bangladeshi small and medium enterprises (SMEs) free of cost.

This was announced at a press conference held at the National Press Club yesterday.

GTN Country Director M Saidul Haq and Bangladesh Programme Co-ordinator Kazi Shahed Hasan Ferdous were present at the press briefing.

Kazi Shahed Hasan Ferdous said, "Most SMEs of the country do not have the information of how to purchase cost-effective technologies and raw materials for their production. They also lack proper marketing knowledge of their products. Many of them even do not know where they can export their products profitably."

He said GTN will help those

Bangladeshi enterprises free of cost. Entrepreneurs will have to register with GTN to get those facilities.

Registered firms may enter at www.usgtn.com to get necessary information.

"Anyone who has problems using Internet might come to our office at new Eskaton road in the city and we will extend all kind of support to them," said Shahed Hasan.

GTN will also recommend local banks, which provide facilities for SMEs, to finance its registered enterprises. "If necessary, they will also help the local entrepreneurs to execute the total business process," he said.

After getting the registration order from an entrepreneur, GTN staff in Bangladesh will make an inquiry in that applicant company to ensure the programme's quality and then send the registration in its Washington office.

Survey Research Group Bangladesh (srgb), a research and consulting firm will run the programme in the country.

GTN, a Washington based programme, started its operation from October 2002 in the country. The formal inauguration of the programme will be held tomorrow at Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FCCI) auditorium.

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters and FCCI President Youssuf Abdullah Harun will be present at the inaugural ceremony.

Started in 1994, GTN has already expanded its services in 40 countries throughout the world. At present, 7,238 enterprises-- 50 per cent US companies-- are the members of GTN.



PHOTO: SOUTHEAST BANK

Yusuf Harun Abedi, general manager of Bangladesh Bank, Sylhet Division, speaks at a discussion on "money laundering prevention law 2002" organised by Southeast Bank Limited in Sylhet recently.