

## Discussion on imports of essentials today at FBCCI

BSS, Dhaka

A day-long discussion titled "Imports, supply, distribution of essentials, prices of commodities in the country on present global context" will be held at FBCCI conference room today.

FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun Organised will preside over the discussion meeting at 3pm.

Vice-president and directors of FBCCI, chief of the FBCCI member organisations and business leaders are expected to attend the function.

## ONE Bank ups authorised capital by Tk 20cr

An extra-ordinary general meeting of ONE Bank Limited has approved an increase in the authorised capital of the bank to Tk 120 crore from existing Tk 100 crore, says a press release.

Sayed Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of the bank, presided over the meeting held at the bank's head office on Saturday.

The shareholders also decided to raise the bank's capital in line with the increase in authorised capital to strengthen bank's net worth and meet capital adequacy requirement determined by Bangladesh Bank.

## Holcim reaches operation target

Holcim, a leading supplier of cement in the world, achieved its operation targets in 2002, says a press release.

Internal growth of the firm reached 6.8 per cent.

The group's Africa, Middle East and Asia-Pacific operations exerted a favourable impact on the operating result. Latin America again made a significant contribution to the operating target.

Despite some special factors including the completion of large projects leading to a little decline in the group's net income, the operating profit increased by 6.8 per cent.

The sales trend and financial results show that the cement and clinker deliveries increased to 90.5 million tons and sales of aggregates to 92.1 million tons.

The Board of Directors will propose an unchanged dividend at the annual general meeting on June 4, 2003.

## Long war may curtail Asia's prospects

AFP, Singapore

A long war in Iraq would hurt Asia's economic prospects this year, particularly for the export-oriented countries which depend on the United States to drive growth, economists said Monday.

Even the sizzling performance of China, the region's economic star, will not be a sufficient buffer should the US economy -- the locomotive of global growth -- sputter from a prolonged military campaign to oust Saddam Hussein, they said.

"The Chinese growth engine can pull some of the regional economies for a while but even that may be dragged down if global growth slows down," said Song Seng Wun, a regional economist at G.K. Goh brokerage.

"Asia is still dependent on the US consumers for growth... if the war isn't going as well as what (President George W.) Bush and his team suggest, then I suppose we have to be worried as the US household sector may not be able to hold up the US economy," Song said.

"That of course will be (a) problem for us," he said.

The US-led campaign suffered its biggest blow when film of dead and captured American soldiers were shown by Iraq, which claimed 25 US and British troops were killed in fighting around the southern city of Nasiriyah on Sunday.

Asian governments have in recent years taken measures to boost domestic demand in a bid to curb their countries' reliance on exports to the United States.

South Korea and Thailand have made notable progress in promoting domestic demand but both, along with their neighbours, still remain significantly dependent on the US economy, two-thirds of which depends on consumer spending.

## NCBs asked to follow new loan court law

### BB governor reviews bank performances

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed advised the nationalised commercial banks to take steps in line with the newly-enacted loan-court law to expedite the settlement of pending loan suits.

While reviewing the performance of four NCBs in a meeting yesterday,

the governor also inquired about the implementation of the new loan write-off provision.

He further directed the NCBs to adjust their entries of Nostro accounts (accounts of local banks in overseas banks) by May 30 this year.

The governor noted that such entries of NCBs remained unadjusted for long, creating anomalies in

the balance sheets of cross-country transactions in foreign currency.

The NCBs have decided to issue two-way quotations in transacting foreign currencies.

Managing directors of four NCBs -- Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali -- and relevant senior executives of the central bank attended the meeting.



PHOTO: ONE BANK LTD.

Sayed Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of ONE Bank Limited, presides over an extra-ordinary general meeting of the bank on Saturday.

## New CNG filling station goes into operation

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Another private compressed natural gas (CNG) filling station went into operation yesterday in Dhaka, raising the number of stations to 15.

The existing CNG-refueling facility has not been able to meet the ongoing crisis, as the CNG-run vehicles are increasing. At present, the number is estimated at 9,000.

Inaugurating the new refuelling station, Denso, at Darussalam in Kalyanpur area, State Minister for

Energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain admitted the crisis of compressed natural gas for the new-generation transport, particularly the three-wheelers.

While addressing as chief guest, the state minister said at the end of this month four more and within next June 19 more CNG filling stations will start operation in the capital.

The 'Denso' has been introduced by Navana Limited. Earlier it had introduced the CNG conver-

sion station in city's Tejgaon area.

Navana Chairman Shafiqul Islam Kamal said that their second refuelling station would go into operation in the capital's business-hub Motijheel.

Italian ambassador Mario Fillipo Pini and Navana director Anwarul Islam Tarek also addressed the function. Petrobangla directors Major (Rtd) Raihanul Abedin and Major (Rtd) Mukhtar Ali were also present at the function.

## IMF borrowers must show self-help: US official

REUTERS, Milan

Struggling countries need to prove they can help themselves in order to qualify for loans from the IMF, US Treasury Assistant Secretary Randal Quarles said Sunday.

In a sign that newly-appointed Treasury Secretary John Snow may adopt a similarly tough approach toward the International Monetary Fund to his predecessor Paul O'Neill, Quarles said countries should be expected to "make their own bed."

Governments should have long-term growth policies, undertake "whatever adjustments are necessary and have a history of following through," the assistant secretary

for international affairs said.

"We do believe official resources ought to be limited," he said in a speech on the sidelines of an Inter-American Development Bank assembly.

Quarles also said the United States did not favour offering bilateral assistance to countries mired in economic crisis. "We need to consider the IMF as the principle instrument for preserving financial stability," he said.

Snow, who took over at the Treasury in February, had been due to give testimony on his views on the IMF last week to a committee in the US Congress. But the session was postponed.

O'Neill was frequently critical of

the IMF.

In his speech on Sunday, Quarles also reiterated Washington's support for economic policies undertaken by recently elected leaders of Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador despite perceptions of populist leanings.

"New leaders have been elected in a number of countries and they are bringing with them what we think is a positive reform agenda, perhaps to the surprise of some people, indeed a little bit to our surprise," he said.

Quarles noted recovery in economic growth in Argentina that he said would have positive effects for the rest of the region.

## Booming China to keep Asia humming

AFP, Beijing

China would help Asian countries to prosperity in the years ahead just like the US consumer kept the world economy humming in the 1990s, state media reported Monday.

China's fiscal planners have made massive infrastructure investments to keep the economy afloat, and in turn, the thriving Chinese market is stepping up its imports from Asian neighbors, the reports said.

"It will not only create huge opportunities for businesspeople in all countries and regions around the world," Commerce Minister Lu Fuyuan was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency.

The paper also quoted research from investment bank Morgan Stanley saying China is now only

economy," he said.

China consolidated its position as the world's fastest-growing major economy last year, with an economy expanding by eight per cent despite a global slowdown.

Lu told a seminar meeting over the weekend that China would import a trillion dollars worth of goods over the next three years.

If the figure materializes -- as appears likely since China's imports last year grew 21.2 per cent to 295.2 billion dollars -- Asian countries could benefit hugely.

The China Daily reported Monday that China ran a 13 billion dollar deficit with South Korea last year, a five billion dollar deficit with Japan, and an eight billion dollar deficit with Southeast Asia.

The paper also quoted research from investment bank Morgan Stanley saying China is now only

behind the United States in terms of the impact it has on global growth.

Last year, China accounted for 17.5 per cent of global economic growth, even though its economy amounted to just four per cent of the world economy, according to Morgan Stanley.

Asian companies will also profit from a growing China because of the opportunities for Asian companies that decide to set up shop inside the country, local media said.

"The growth of China's domestic market will inevitably create opportunities for regional investors to tap a growing demand for goods and services," Tadao Chino, president of the Asian Development Bank, said according to the China Daily.

## Bank holiday March 26

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank and all scheduled banks will remain closed on Wednesday on the occasion of Independence and National Day, said a press release of Bangladesh Bank.

## Medexpo-2003 in Dhaka in October

The first-ever international Medical Equipment and Services Exposition under the style MEDEXPO-2003 is likely to be held in Dhaka in October, says a press release.

Organised by Triune Exhibition and Event Management Services, the exposition is expected to be participated among others by various medical devices manufacturers and suppliers, pharmaceutical companies, manufacturers and suppliers of surgical and laboratory equipments, hospitals and clinics, diagnostic and rehabilitation centres, medical and health insurance companies, medical NGOs, medical tourism companies, medical institutions and air ambulance companies.

The objectives of the exhibition are to understand the need to excel in healthcare facilities in the present day world; to see how other organisations developing cost-effective healthcare delivery systems without sacrificing quality; assess the new models of consumer driven health plans and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses; showcase equipment, devices, products, packages and services available in the medical and healthcare sector at home and abroad; and to anticipate trends, understand the opportunities of technology and develop a strategic plan to remain competitive in the evolving market place.

## SIA's 'Chalo Jai Bali' package extended till June 30

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Singapore Airlines (SIA) has extended its 'Chalo Jai Bali' package until June 30, says a press release.

This travel package started on January 15 and was supposed to conclude on March 31. But the airline has extended the offer for another three months after a considerable number of Bangladeshis expressed their interest to visit the tourist spot, Bali.

However, the hotels in Bali have increased their rates of hotel surcharge by \$ 20 as peak season has started in Bali. The weekly lucky draw to win free tickets will not be extended and will end by March 31.

The visa process at the Indonesian embassy will continue with full cooperation through application process taking only two days. Singapore Airlines will continue to issue introduction letters for their passengers for their visa application.

The package consists of 4 days and 3 nights hotel accommodation on twin sharing basis, including daily breakfasts and airport transfers.

## Japan industrial activity records rise in 5 months

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's industrial activity in January grew 1.7 per cent from a month earlier to post the first rise in five months, official data showed Monday, but economists doubt the growth will last long.

The all-industries index rose to a seasonally-adjusted 101.9 in January, matching the level seen last September, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said.

The rise in the index, which monitors growth in a range of agricultural, manufacturing and service industries, came after a 0.6 per cent drop in December.

"We had been expecting an upturn for January, but the index proved to be stronger than we expected," UFI Institute Ltd. economist Teruo Ikeda said, noting the wholesale/retail sector had fared well.

"But the wholesale industry contributed to the rise thanks largely to demand for exports," he said.

"I do not think this uptrend (in Japan's industrial activity) will continue... as services to individual customers are unlikely to grow given slacking wages," he said.

## Amusement park in Savar by June

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A leading business house is planning to set up an amusement park at Savar in Dhaka.

Officials of the company said it will be the only amusement park in South Asia to have a dry park and a water park simultaneously.

The officials of Nandan Group were speaking at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday detailing the features and facilities of the amusement park.

Masrur Choudhury, chairman of Nandan Group, said as per their own estimate some 1.5 million people are expected to visit the park each year.

The company has completed 75 per cent construction work of the park and the dry park will be

opened to the public in June while the water park will be opened in September, he added.

Choudhury said Nandan has made a survey with non-governmental organisation Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) for assessing the viability of the proposed amusement park.

Choudhury said Dhaka has a per capita income of US\$ 500 and its middle-class population is growing fast. "So, this amusement park should be able to cater to the amusement needs of Dhaka's middle class."

Choudhury also said the amusement park will in no way hamper the social and religious values of Bangladesh. "At the water park, there will be separate facilities for men and women."

Nandan Group has three ventures -- Nandan Mega Shop, Nandan Tea Company Ltd and Nandan Park Ltd.

He said the majority of Nandan Group sponsors live abroad and 95 per cent of the total investment of the company is contributed by the non-resident Bangladeshis.

The group has started its venture through Nandan Mega Shop in Dhaka comprising a floor area of 10,620 square feet. It is the largest shop in the country, said Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, general manager of Nandan Mega Shop.

The company is planning to set up more shopping malls in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet, he said. It will also establish one mall in the United Kingdom, he added.

## Accent on home, online banking

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banks can contribute significantly to economic development if they zero in on home and online banking and using plastic money, said Science and Information and Communication Technology Minister Abdul Moyeen Khan.

Addressing the Masters in Bank Management (MBM) Alumni Association inauguration ceremony on Sunday, the minister said such banking facilities are present

in a limited scale in the banks but absent in the overall system.

The minister said due to lack of modern banking system rural people are deprived of due services. "The private banks are establishing their branches only in the towns."

Eminent economist Prof Muzaffar Ahmed and Sohrab Uddin, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM), also addressed the function.

## Nova imports Swiss apparel machinery

Nova International Corporation, a local indenting company, has started importing garment machinery from Switzerland, says a press release.

Authorised dealer of Freudenburg Gygli AG, Switzerland, Nova International imports automatic fusing press for shirt and clothing production.

The new Gygli PR4 DH, the brand name of fusing press, improves interlining and sewing and finishing of shirts. It offers fusing solutions for armholes as well as side and back yoke seams producing non-iron shirt.

The new machine increases production speed and adhesion especially fusion of outer fabrics.

## DHL wins 'Best Express Operator' award

DHL Worldwide Express (DHL) won the "Best Express Operator" award at the Asian Freight & Supply Chain Awards (AFSCA) 2003 ceremony held in Hong Kong recently, says a press release.

John Pearson, commercial director of DHL Asia Pacific, received the award.

The Asian Freight & Supply Chain Awards was organised by Cargonews Asia. More than 13,000 readers of Cargonews Asia, the leading freight industry newspaper in the region, voted to select the best service providers in Asia's cargo industry.



PHOTO: DHL

John Pearson, commercial director of DHL Asia Pacific, receives the 'Best Express Operator' award from Leong Kok Hong, senior vice-president, Sats-cargo, in Hong Kong recently.

## \$200m Indian exports to Iraq caught up in war

AFP, New Delhi

India said Monday about 200 million dollars worth of its exports to Iraq have been caught up in the US-led war against the country.

The Indian goods -- mainly wheat and electrical goods -- were part of the United Nations' oil-for-food programme, said Amit Mitra, secretary general of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and India.

"Goods worth approximately 10 billion rupees are under shipment as part of this programme, and Indian exporters are unsure about the fate of these consignments," he said.

"With the withdrawal of all UN personnel from Iraq, including

those implementing the oil-for-food programme, all UN activities have been suspended. This has created serious problems for Indian corporates."

He said a large quantity of goods was lying at Iraq's Umm Qasr port and was waiting to be officially handed over to port officials as UN personnel had left the country.

"Latest reports indicate that the US has taken over the new Iraqi port at Umm Qasr and is also likely to take control of the old port at Umm Qasr shortly. It is not clear whether the UN officials would return now," he added.

Mitra said that a large number of consignments were in transit and were lying at Khorfkan port at Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.

Others were still lying at Indian warehouses waiting to be shipped to Iraq.

Compounding the uncertainty, he added, the higher security risk for ships sailing into the Middle East region was likely to lead to higher insurance rate on Iraq-bound freight from India.

India has been trading with Iraq in recent years under the UN programme, which is overseen by an international sanctions committee under the UN which ensures that no supply of military equipment takes place.

Under this programme, India has been buying millions of tonnes of much-needed crude oil in exchange for wheat and electrical equipment.



PHOTO: TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

Bert-Jan Van Cooten, project manager of Philips Holland, speaks at a dinner hosted in honour of him by Transcom Electronics Ltd, official licensee of Philips Electronics NV for lighting products, recently at a hotel in Dhaka.