

GlaxoSmithKline declares 40pc dividend

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Bangladesh Limited yesterday declared a 40 per cent dividend for its shareholders for the year 2002.

The declaration came at the 30th annual general meeting (AGM) of the company held in Chittagong. Chairman of the company V Thyagarajan presided over the meeting.

The meeting was informed that net sales of the company for the year 2002 rose to Tk.120.88 crores showing a net growth of 9.4 per cent over the previous year. The net sale was Tk110.52cr in 2001.

Thyagarajan said the company contributed a total of Tk.23.1 crores to the national exchequer in the form of duties and taxes.

Managing Director M Azizul Haq, Finance Director and Company Secretary Sarwar A Khan and Technical Director AHM Zaker addressed the meeting. A number of shareholders attended the meeting.

Square Textiles declares 32pc cash dividend

Square Textiles Limited has declared a 32 per cent cash dividend for the shareholders for the year ending December 31, 2002.

The dividend was announced at the eighth annual general meeting of the company held in Dhaka on Sunday, says a press release.

Samson H Chowdhury, chairman of Square Textiles Limited, presided over the meeting.

Tapan Chowdhury, managing director, Samuel S Chowdhury, director, Anjan Chowdhury, director, Charles C R Patra, director, Kazi Iqbal Harun, director, Mostaque Ahmed Siddique, director of Operations, and Md Kabir Reza, company secretary, also attended the meeting.

It was disclosed in the meeting that despite adverse situation, the unit is running with profit and the total production increased year-on-year basis at the rates of 4.15 and 0.43 per cent during the years 2001 and 2002.

The gross profit, net profit (BT) and net profit (AT) were Tk 289 million, Tk 87 million and Tk 81 million.

The company contributed an amount of Tk 27 million to the national exchequer.

A large number of shareholders attended the meeting.

Shahjalal Bank holds workshop

Shahjalal Bank Limited (SBL) organised a workshop on "Arthro Rin Adalat Ain-2003 and responsibilities of the bankers" held at its Foreign Exchange Branch in Dhaka on Friday, says a press release.

The managing director of the bank Matin Uddin Ahmed presided over the workshop.

The Additional Secretary of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Kazi Habibul Awal was the chief guest.

Eminent lawyers, Barrister Nazrul Islam and Advocate Jamal Uddin Ahmed were present as resource persons.

Speaking at the workshop, the chief guest explained the clauses-sub clauses and the objectives of the act in detail.

Later the managing director of the bank distributed certificates among the participants.

GMG Holidays to introduce medical packages to Thailand

GMG Holidays, a leading destination management company, has signed agreements with Bangkok-based Ramkhamna Hospital and Chiang Mai-based Chiang Mai Ram Hospital to provide medical packages to Thailand, says a press release.

Both the hospitals have state of the art bone, brain, cancer, child, diabetes, dental, gynaecology, heart, infertile, respiratory tract and skin clinics besides all other medical treatments.

GMG Holidays will shortly be introducing attractive health packages offering complete medical checkup including blood, chest X-ray, cholesterol, diabetes, electrocardiogram, kidney tests, liver tests, sugar, urine examination, ultrasounds and vital signs and physical examination.

Gas block 11 handed over to Petrobangla

PSC with Tullow, Petronus scrapped

BSS, Dhaka

The Energy Ministry yesterday formally handed over gas block 11 covering greater Mymensingh area to Petrobangla authorising it to take up exploratory work for new gas fields in the area.

Petrobangla, the government agency responsible for the country's hydrocarbon sector, will now take the block under BAPEX, its subsidiary having skills and equipment to take up seismic survey and other exploratory works.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain yesterday confirmed this while talking to the news agency.

He said that the government had scrapped the production

sharing contract (PSC) on this block with Tullow and Petronus, signed three years ago, to clear the way for handing it over to Petrobangla.

He said BAPEX would start seismic survey immediately on the gas block to make way for new discovery. The agency has full capacity and the government would buy more drilling rigs to facilitate the work.

He said international tender has already been invited for procurement of a rig and work procurement of a second rig may be undertaken at an appropriate moment.

Gas block 11 covers Sherpur district, Phulpur, East Dhula of Netrokona extending further to areas of Kishoreganj district.

Referring to handing over of gas block 11 to Petrobangla, he said, it has been done in keeping with the national committee reports on gas reserves and its utilisation.

The two committees appeared critical on many issues and suggested, among others, to hand over block 11, if possible to BAPEX.

"The government decision in fact implemented the national committee reports," he said pointing out that the two international oil companies (IOCs) which signed the initial production sharing contract (PSC) on this block also failed in the meantime to meet their obligation.

"They failed to clear things and reach understanding on substantive issues even between them-

selves within the stipulated time," he said.

On gas block No 11, Mosharraf said the present government is determined to expand activities of BAPEX for the development of the country's hydrocarbon sector.

Referring to government energy policy framed in 1995 and published in January 1996, he said it had required BAPEX to drill at least four gas wells annually to continue the country's overall hold on the gas sector.

Explaining some of the recent drilling activities by BAPEX, he said they are now drilling the Srikaal gas well to bring it back to production.

They are also carrying drilling activities at Fenchuganj and Shahjibazar gas wells.

EPB restructuring plan gets PM's nod

25pc officials to come from private sector

NAZMUL AHSAN

The proposal to recruit 25 per cent officials in the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) from private sector has received prime minister's nod.

Professionals having good track record in business and well-versed in export related issues will be recruited in the EPB to bring dynamism in the export front, official sources said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on May 20 approved the EPB restructuring plan prepared by a high-powered committee, headed by the Establishment Secretary AB Chowdhury.

According to new plan, the present volume of EPB's manpower will be downsized to 265

from 286. Only lower-level employees numbering 21 will be retrenched.

A number of 66 high officials will be recruited from the private sector with total monthly salary of Tk 35 lakh.

Earlier, the World Bank had suggested recruiting skilled manpower from private sector to streamline the activities of the government's lone export wing.

The World Bank suggestion was given through a study conducted under the 'Export Diversification Project' of the Ministry of Commerce.

A three-member secretary committee headed by Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmad Khan will finalise the recruitment policy

within the next one month, sources said.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star the present manpower of the EPB has been failing to cope with the demand. Skilled people from private sector will help boost the exports, he hoped.

The restructuring plan, however, has not addressed the discontentment of the EPB officials, who have long been serving in same posts without promotion, sources said.

Meanwhile, the shifting of the EPB office is on as the government earlier decided to shift EPB from Motijheel to Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) building at Karwan Bazar.



PHOTO: ICC-B

Mahbubur Rahman (2nd-L), president of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)-Bangladesh, speaks at the inaugural session of a two-day workshop on "International Standard Banking Practice & Documentary Credit Management" at MCC auditorium in Dhaka yesterday. Latifur Rahman (L), vice president of ICC-B, Vincent O'Brien (2nd-R), international trade finance examiner from Ireland, and Mamun Rashid (R), chairman of ICC Bangladesh Standing Committee on Banking Techniques and Practice and CEO of Citibank NA Bangladesh, were present.

LC default by local banks to affect int'l trade

Leading bankers tell ICC-B workshop

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In the face of increasing LC (letters of credit) default by local banks, leading Bangladeshi bankers warned yesterday such breach of international trade payment will adversely affect international trade.

Such non-payments against documentary agreements tarnish the image of Bangladesh in foreign countries, they added.

They said Bangladesh may lose for good its credibility among foreign clients if such breaching of international trade payment rules continue.

Bangladesh may lose its international trade privileges and overseas clients which will surely hamper import and export, they said at the opening session of a workshop on 'International Standard Banking Practice (ISBP) and Documentary Credit Management'.

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)-Bangladesh organised the two-day workshop at Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) auditorium in Dhaka to help banking professionals get updated about developments taking place in international trade transactions.

They urged all banks to strictly adhere to international banking

rules so that such breaching incidents do not repeat again.

Addressing the workshop, ICC-B President Mahbubur Rahman said letters of credit are classic means for import and export payments so international rules must be followed in this regard to keep the trade going.

For uniformity and clarity, banks and traders should rely on Uniform Customs and Practices (UCP 500) enshrined in ICC rules, said Mahbubur Rahman, former chairman and incumbent director of National Bank Ltd.

ICC's international commercial, legal and banking standards are widely applied throughout the world by bankers, insurers, importers, exporters and carriers. Because of ingenuity of these standards they have become an integral part of global trade fabric, he said.

CEO of Citibank NA Bangladesh Mamun Rashid said local banks must adopt International Standard Banking Practices to earn confidence of foreign traders.

He urged banks to maintain ethical standard in banking transactions.

Mamun Rashid, who is also chairman of ICC-B standing committee on banking, said banks must comply with international

rules to keep abreast with changing global banking services.

"We must speak in the same language in the modern world of banking so that clients in any place in the world get the same service and do not fall victim to unethical banking practice," he noted.

Addressing the workshop, Latifur Rahman, vice-president of ICC Bangladesh, said bank officials should engage extra efforts to reduce non-performing assets.

Citing example of Thailand, he said banks may hand over non-performing assets to asset management companies to save time and energy.

Terming the prevailing interest rate so high, he said high interest is impeding industrialisation in Bangladesh.

Welcoming the ongoing financial sector reforms, he said it should not be limited only to banking sector. Reforms should be spread up to other key sectors such as insurance, non-banking financial institutions and capital market, he added.

Vincent O'Brien, international trade finance examiner of Institute of International Trade, Ireland, is conducting the workshop, participated by 74 officials from different banks.

Southeast Bank launches on-line service

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Southeast Bank Ltd launched 'real-time on-line any branch banking service' yesterday.

Ragib Ali, chairman of the bank, formally inaugurated the service by making transactions between Gulshan and Principal branches.

With the introduction of the service customers of one branch will be able to make transactions ranging from cash withdrawals and deposits to electronic fund transfer and account statements from any branch of the bank across the country.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, President and Managing Director of the bank Syed Abu Naser Bukhtear Ahmed said Southeast bank is the first bank in the country to use the modern VSAT at all its branches for providing real-time on-line any branch banking to its customers.

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Tapan Chowdhury, Square Informatix Ltd Managing Director Charles CR Patra, software provider company Leads Corporation Ltd General Manager Nurul Huda Choudhury and senior executives of the bank were also present.

RMG unit to be set up in Comilla EPZ

UNB, Dhaka

A garment accessories manufacturing industry will be set up in Comilla Export Processing Zone.

An agreement to this effect was signed between Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) and the accessories industry, Green Star International Ltd, Sunday.

Joint Secretary and Member (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA Nazrul Islam and Managing Director of Green Star Siddiqur Rahman Bhuiyan signed the agreement.

A cent per cent Bangladeshi company, Green Star will be established at a cost of US \$7.24 lakh hoping to create job opportunities for 60 Bangladeshi nationals.

It will produce various accessories including button, gum tape, interlining, scotch tape, neck board, elastic, drawing, sewing thread and collar stands.

Sandhani Life holds Dhaka conference

The Dhaka Conference-2003 of Sandhani Life Insurance Company Ltd was held on Wednesday at BCIC auditorium in Dhaka, says a press release.

Chairman of Sandhani Life Insurance Company Md Mosharraf Hossain and Vice-president of the Shariah Board Mohammad Salahuddin were present as chief guest and special guest respectively in the conference. Managing Director of the company MA Karim presided over the conference.

For remarkable success in marketing, the company awarded the Chairman Gold Medals to its executive vice-presidents Idris Miah Talukder and Goutom Kumar Chakravarti and other officials at the conference.

Two-day CA confce begins today

UNB, Dhaka

A two-day national conference of chartered accountants begins today in Dhaka to take a pledge for improving professional skills in minimising financial frauds in Bangladesh, organisers said.

The conference will also demand legal reforms in the profession to punish black sheep firms to stop corruption.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the conference at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre at 11 am. State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain will be the special guest.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) has organised the conference with the theme titled "Financial Sector Reform" marking the 30th founding anniversary of the 750-member professional body.

Three technical sessions on Banking Sector Reform, Tax Administration Reform and Foreign Direct Investment in Bangladesh will be held at CA Bhaban in Kawran Bazar on the second and concluding day of the

conference.

"Our commitment is to take measure so that irregularities in professional activities can be stopped," former ICAB president Jamal Uddin Ahmed said at a press conference at the National Press Club in Dhaka yesterday.

He said some 400 local professionals have so far registered their names to participate in the conference while some foreign professionals would also join.

Professional accountants, academics, economists, columnists, diplomats, senior bankers and high government officials from home and abroad are expected to participate in the conference.

He said ICAB's achievements in last 30 years would be projected in the two-day conference with a future outlook of the professional development.

ICAB president AK Golam Kibria made a presentation on 30 years of achievement of the professional body established in 1972 with around 80 members. ICAB former presidents Joyal Abedin and Mohammad Yunus were present at the press conference.



PHOTO: MERCANTILE BANK

M Taheruddin, managing director of Mercantile Bank Limited, and A Quadir Chowdhury, managing director of Phoenix Leasing Company Ltd, sign a credit agreement on behalf of their organisations in Dhaka recently. Under this deal, Mercantile Bank will extend a credit line of Tk 5 crore to Phoenix Leasing Company.

Factory output fall fuels Singapore recession fears

AFP, Singapore

A surprise 5.0 per cent fall in Singapore's industrial output fuelled fears on Monday that the city-state's SARS-hit economy could slip into recession.

Factory production in April fell 5.0 per cent from a year earlier, reversing the 6.6 per cent growth posted the previous month, the Economic Development Board (EDB) said.

On a seasonally adjusted month-on-month basis, April factory output shrank 7.2 per cent, it said in a statement.

Economists polled by financial news wire AFX-Asia had projected industrial output would grow 3.5-4.6 per cent after the expansion in March.

The manufacturing sector was hurt by declines in electronics, transport, precision engineering and general manufacturing industries, the EDB said, without mentioning the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak.

Economists said the April figures highlighted the fragility of the local economy, which has suffered since SARS struck here in March.

"We are on a razor edge if you like. We are in a situation where we are either barely positive or barely negative," Sailesh Jha, DBS Bank's senior regional economist for Asia, told AFP.

"It is just a question of how soft things will get in the second quarter."

Jha said the impact of SARS on manufacturing would be more apparent in the May production figures and predicted Singapore's economy would grow just 0.3 per cent in the June quarter.

The SARS outbreak has particularly hurt Singapore's tourism and transport-related sectors, and forced the government to lower this year's growth targets to 0.5-2.5 per cent.

GK Goh Securities regional economist Song Seng Wun was also pessimistic following the release of the manufacturing figures.

Islami Bank AGM now on Aug 28

The 20th annual general meeting (AGM) of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited will now be held on August 28 this year, says a press release.

The AGM was scheduled to be held on June 19.

The new date was fixed at an emergency meeting of the Board of Directors of the bank on Saturday in Dhaka.

Presided over by Shah Abdul Hannan, chairman of the bank, the meeting was attended by local and foreign directors including Professor Korkut Ozal, representative of Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

Mercantile Bank to lend Phoenix Leasing Tk 5cr

Mercantile Bank Limited will extend a credit line of Tk 5 crore to Phoenix Leasing Co Ltd, says a press release.

An agreement to this effect was signed between Mercantile Bank and Phoenix Leasing in Dhaka recently.

M Taheruddin, managing director of Mercantile Bank, and A Quadir Chowdhury, managing director of Phoenix Leasing, initialled the agreement on behalf of their organisations.

Among the others, Deen Mohammad, chairman, and Emdadul Haque, executive vice-president of Phoenix Leasing Co Ltd, and M Nurul Islam, deputy managing director, AKM Shahidul Haque, executive vice-president, MA Shahjahan, executive vice-president, Md Abdul Jalil Chowdhury, senior vice-president, and Abdus Salam, senior assistant vice-president of Mercantile Bank Limited, were also present on the occasion.

S'pore Tourism Board to make \$2m investment

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) will invest \$2 million over the next two months to stimulate domestic tourism, says a press release.

The STB investment programme titled 'Step Out! Singapore' comprises attractive offers, value-addition, exciting events and activities in May and June.

Emirates wins world's best airline lounge vote

Emirates Airline's focus on superior customer service which has consistently won international accolades, has been applauded once again, says a press release.

The airline's First and Business Class lounges at Dubai International Airport have been voted the World's Best Airline lounge for 2003.

The Airport Lounge of the Year, the world's largest survey of airline lounges organised by Skytrax, this year attracted more than 918,336 eligible nominations over a six-month period.

The award is a direct result of the extensive refurbishment and upgrades that were implemented last year, which now offer Emirates' business and premium travellers lounges that are oases of unique luxury and comfort.



PHOTO: SQUARE TEXTILES

From left: Charles CR Patra, director of Square Textiles Limited, Mostaque Ahmed Siddique, director (Operations), Anjan Chowdhury, director, Tapan Chowdhury, managing director, Samson H. Chowdhury, chairman, Md Kabir Reza, company secretary, Samuel S Chowdhury, director, and Kazi Iqbal Harun, director, pose for a photograph at the company's 8th annual general meeting held in Dhaka on Sunday.