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## Asia Energy's new London based CEO

UNB, Dhaka

Asia Energy PLC has appointed Steve Bywater, a top mining executive from Australia, its new London-based Chief Executive Officer with a brief to take its US\$ 2.5 billion Phulbari Coal Project through to production.

Bywater, 54, was previously Chief Operating Officer for Rio Tinto Coal Australia where he oversaw seven mining operations producing 60 million tonnes of coal a year. He has extensive experience in developing large mining operations.

Asia Energy's subsidiary, Asia Energy Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd has submitted a Scheme of Development for a 15-million tonnes per year open pit mine at Phulbari, in northwest Bangladesh, and is waiting for government approval to start operations.

The company plans to invest US dollar 2 billion in capital over the 30-year plus life of the mine and an additional US dollar 500 million in a 500 MW mine-site power plant.

"The Phulbari Coal Project is a landmark development for Bangladesh," said British-born Bywater. "I look forward to bringing this exciting project into production so that the full benefits can be realised for the people of Bangladesh and our shareholders," he added.

## Prime Bank to offer real-time online banking services

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Prime Bank Limited yesterday signed an agreement with Thakral Information System Pvt Limited, an IBM hardware solution provider, to ensure upgraded real-time online banking services and products for customers of the bank.

Thakral Information Systems Pvt Ltd will supply IBM hardware solution which will help the bank to provide its customers with all modern banking facilities including real-time status of their bank accounts, fund transfer, utility bill payments and ATM facilities.

M Shahjahan Bhuiyan, managing director of Prime Bank Limited, and Shahzaman Mazumder, chief executive officer of Thakral Information Systems Pvt Ltd, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations in Dhaka.

Qazi Saleemul Huq MP, chairman, and Nasiruddin Ahmed, managing director of Prime Bank Limited, among others, were present.

## Google case boosts furor over US privacy threats

AFP, New York

A legal standoff between the US Justice Department and internet search giant Google has added fuel to an already heated debate over the government's right of access to potentially personal data.

Google's decision to "vigorously" oppose a government subpoena to turn over records on millions of its users' search queries drew applause from privacy and legal watchdogs, although some also questioned the search engine's policy of retaining vast amounts of user data.

"This subpoena is really overreaching and outrageous," said Ari Schwartz, associate director of the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology.

"We are glad that Google is resisting and we hope others would in the situation as well," Schwartz said.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) also cheered Google's stand, in the wake of decisions by rival technology groups Yahoo and Microsoft to comply with similar government subpoenas.

## UNEVEN GROWTH OF SERVICES, REAL SECTORS Economy gets skewed

### Say economists

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The country's economy is experiencing an asymmetrical structural transformation with a falling share of the real economic sectors and increasing contribution of the service sector, said economists.

"In any transitional economy, the share of agricultural sector reduces relatively while the manufacturing sector's contribution increases. But the funny thing is that services sector's contribution is higher than that of the manufacturing sector here," Zaid Bakht, Research Director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), told the agency.

He said the contribution of the service sector in terms of value addition is relatively smaller compared to the manufacturing sector.

"We should concentrate on manufacturing sector instead of shopping mall-centered growth," he said adding, diversification of the industrial base, and access to technology and credit to the industrialists are needed to boost the

manufacturing sector.

"But the growth of service sector is not necessarily bad," he noted.

"The space left behind by the agricultural sector was not adequately picked up by the manufacturing sector in Bangladesh, which is needed for our economy now," said Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Research Fellow Khondokar Golam Moazzem.

"Instead, the share of construction and gas, water and electricity increased from 5.2 percent in FY 80 to 10.3 percent in FY05. As a result, the contribution of real economic sectors kept falling over the period," he commented.

He said the share of the real economic sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, mining and quarrying, was 38.1 percent in 2004-05, whereas a decade before the matching figure was 40.5 percent.

The employment generating by the service sector is not for unskilled labour. But manufacturing sector can create employment for unskilled labourer needed for reducing poverty, he said.

Moazzem said the government

should provide specific policy support to the potential industrial sector to enhance both import substitute and export oriented industries so that the goal of poverty reduction could be attained.

"The growth, which the economy is experiencing is not driven by the productive capacity growth," said Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir of the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka.

He said the growth would be viable once if employment is generated through industrialisation.

According to CPD, the annual growth of the real economic sector in FY05 was only 3.8 percent, while the service sector experienced a higher growth of 6 percent.

Besides, the contribution of the real economic sectors to incremental growth declined from 33.6 percent in FY04 to 27.3 percent in FY05 while the incremental contribution of service sector in real GDP growth increased from 44.6 percent to 60.9 percent during the same period, CPD observed.

## GP launches 'Business Solutions'

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

GrameenPhone Limited, the country's leading cellphone operator, yesterday launched a new service called 'Business Solutions' for corporate houses.

The new service will offer specialised products and services covering different communication needs of small and medium-sized enterprises and large companies.

This offer includes voice, text messaging and mobile data and internet services. Also on the offer will be a complete mobile-office solution, including mobile email, mobile high speed data access over EDGE, internet access, mobile fax and more, providing the freedom to work from anywhere, officials said at a press conference in Dhaka.

Termining the new services a milestone for GrameenPhone, Erik Aas, managing director of the company, said, "The changing nature of working styles and businesses has prompted us to introduce a complete communication solution."

Corporate organisations will get the new service after special agreements with the phone operator, Rubaba Dowla Matin, market division head of GP, said adding that the service is not meant for individual users.

The tariff plans are specially designed for business users. The 'Business Solutions' offers business hours from 9am to 6pm enabling businesses to make calls at lower rates during day time. Subscribers will enjoy savings while calling numbers within the company.

Mahboob Hossain, general manager of Corporate Sale, and Syed Yamin Bakht, general manager of information, were also present at the press conference.

## US waives import certificate requirement for India

PTI, Washington

The US Department of Commerce has announced the removal of import certificate requirement with respect to India and six other nations in eastern Europe.

The decision, announced by the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) of the Commerce Department and notified in the Federal Register recently, means that India is now exempt from the requirement of submitting an import certificate in support of an export or re-export licence.

The East European countries which were also extended the facility are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

The removal of the requirement for India was on account of the actions taken by New Delhi under the Next Steps in the Strategic Partnership (NSSP) with the United States.

"In light of the actions taken by the government of India with regard to controlled goods or technologies it imports from the United States pursuant to the US-India Next Steps in Strategic Partnership, this rule removed the Import Certificate requirement for exports to Indian government entities..." the BIS has stated.

## S'pore sees more investment opportunities in Indonesia

ANTARA, Batam, Riau

Singapore after placing Indonesia as its fifth biggest trade partner in 2005, believed there are still many investment opportunities in Indonesia.

"Traditionally, Singapore has concentrated its investment in Jakarta and Riau Islands, however, Singapore's businessmen realise that they are other investment opportunities in other parts of Indonesia including West Java," Singapore's Finance and Trade Minister Lim Hwee Hua said.

He made the remarks when attending a cultural performance at the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore, which was also attended by West Java Governor Danny Setiawan.

Singapore for the first time since 1974 published data on its trade with Indonesia early this month which has caused a controversy.

According to data from chairman of Singapore International Enterprises Lee Yi Shyan on January 18, Singapore's international trade (exports and imports) grew by 14 percent last year to 716 billion Singapore dollars.



Moazzem Hossain (C), editor of The Financial Express, speaks at a workshop on 'Bridging Corporate Sector and Media' organised by Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) with support from Manusher Jonno in Dhaka yesterday. Hasibur Rahman (L), MRDI executive director, and M Emamul Haque, head of Advocacy Unit of the World Food Programme, are also seen.

## Corporate-media ties key to responsible news coverage

### Workshop told

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Corporate houses at a workshop yesterday stressed the need for responsible media coverage of corporate affairs while journalists said news coverage is often influenced by the interest of the advertisers.

Speaking at the workshop organised by Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) with support from Manusher Jonno in Dhaka, the speakers also called for setting up strong public relations wings in corporate houses as lack of access to information hampers proper news coverage.

Representatives from RMG, leather and pharmaceuticals sectors, association leaders and newspaper gatekeepers participated in the workshop who called for responsible media and corporate role for free flow of information for better country images.

Editor of The Financial Express Moazzem Hossain moderated the workshop.

Addressing the workshop, Editor of the Boishakhi TV Shawkat Mahmood said commercial interest of the owners control media coverage. He also said media have the responsibility to write for workers' minimum wages and labour standards. He said both media and corporate houses lack quality manpower.

Editor of bilingual news agency BDNEWS Rashed Chowdhury said advertisements control newspaper

coverage.

Rashed-ul-Nabi Babu, executive editor of the Daily Amar Desh, said as media are accountable to people, journalists should practise professionalism.

## Gold hits new 25-year high

LONDON, Reuters

Gold strode to fresh 25-year highs in Europe on Friday as heightened geo-political concerns, firm oil prices and instability in currency markets sucked more money into the precious metal.

Prices raced up to a new peak of \$567.60 an ounce, while platinum came within \$1 of this week's record high of \$1,049.

"We are in a bull market that shows bubble-like characteristics, not just for gold but for all metals, but that isn't to say it is about to burst," said Stephen Briggs, economist at SG Corporate and Investment Banking.

"There is huge appetite for risk, great liquidity in the market and desperate search for yields."

Spot gold was last at \$564.00/564.80 by 1531 GMT, off its earlier peak but up from \$557.70/558.50 late in New York on Thursday. Gold has not visited such lofty levels since 1981.

Trade Officer of the Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh Zillul Hye Razi said the primary responsibility goes to the corporate houses to provide information and facts to clarify their positions for objective media coverage. He also lauded media role to help European countries to lift ban on frozen food export from Bangladesh.

M Abu Taher, managing director of Fortuna Group, urged media to encourage and promote entrepreneurs.

Jenifa Jabbar, compliance consultant of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), said media's depiction of negative sides of an event will definitely hurt Bangladesh's interest in the post-MFA era. She urged media to consult respective houses before running a story.

Mohammad Hatem, proprietor of MB Knit fashion, said media often run one-sided story while covering any labor unrest or violence.

M Azizul Huq, managing director of GlaxoSmithKline Bangladesh Ltd, said media should have credibility when it comes to news coverage.

M Emamul Haque, head of Advocacy Unit of World Food Programme (WFP), said corporate houses should appoint efficient spokespersons to provide media with information to avoid any confusion.



GrameenPhone Managing Director Erik Aas (right) speaks at a press conference to announce the launch of a new service styled 'Business Solution' in Dhaka yesterday. GP General Manager (corporate sales) Mahboob Hossain (left) and Head of Marketing Division Rubaba Dowla Matin are also seen.

## Motorola's global market share up 3pc

ABU SAEED KHAN

Motorola, the world's second largest cellular mobile handset maker, posted a record US\$4.7 billion operating earnings in 2005 and 47 percent (\$2.2 billion) of this cash flow came from mobile handsets sales. Motorola shipped a record 146 million units of handsets in 2005, a 40 percent annual increase while it sold 44.7 million handsets in Q4 alone.

Handsets inject 47 percent revenue and it has elevated Motorola's worldwide market share to 19 percent, a three percent annual increase. It is expected to strengthen Motorola's second position in the global handset market despite remaining far behind than the Finnish Nokia.

Motorola's market share gain came despite shortage of component, which has affected its handset sales. "We further distanced ourselves from number three, four and

five," said Motorola's CEO Ed Zander and he added, "We are now the clear number two and gaining."

"It's not like we've been selling (just) black Razrs here for the last year," Zander told the media when asked how the company handles the competitors' similar new models. "We've got 26 new products and I think you're going to see more this year. I think the year of 2005 was the RAZR and the year of 2006 is more RAZRs," he added.

These 26 new releases include six CDMA phones, 13 GSM phones, three phones for the third generation mobile and four phones for its proprietary iDEN network. Many of them are the variations of the RAZR brand that "has revitalized the once-slumping company since 2004," says Dave Carpenter of The Associate Press.

Motorola's other business units have, however, sent mixed signals. Its government communications gear making unit, which contributes 19 percent to the revenue, saw 41 per-

cent operating earnings rise on an eight percent sales increase to \$1.8 billion.

The 21 percent revenue contributing GSM and CDMA mobile network infrastructure making unit has faced an 18 percent drop in earnings on a four percent drop in sales to \$1.5 billion. Its connected home division had \$60 million in earnings on a 1 percent rise in sales.

"Despite the strong results, Motorola's stock fell almost six percent at the start of trading in New York on Friday to \$22.92, perhaps reflecting investors' disappointment that the company did not raise its first-quarter financial forecast," wrote the Financial Times of London.

Motorola's CEO Zander has, however, said that he was pleased but never satisfied with the results. "We never take anything for granted," he said. "To grow a \$40bn-a-year company by 18 percent is pretty good."



M Shahjahan Bhuiyan, managing director of Prime Bank Limited, and Shahzaman Mazumder, chief executive officer of Thakral Information Systems Pvt Ltd, exchange documents after signing a hardware procurement and hardware service agreement on behalf of their companies in Dhaka yesterday. Under the accord, Thakral Information will provide and implement IBM hardware solution for the core banking system of Prime Bank.

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