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'Corporate Bazaar' receives good response

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

As a three-day exhibition of corporate houses began in Dhaka yesterday, several hundreds of corporate visitors crowded Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre to know about corporate solutions offered by local and multinational companies.

Some visitors expressed keen interest to get corporate services and products from the companies. The visitors said the exhibition, styled 'Corporate Bazaar', creates an opportunity to have knowledge about various corporate products and services.

A total of 40 leading organisations representing different industries are displaying their corporate packages, exhibitors said.

"I came here to search for IT services provided by different companies," said Shams A Tajbir, who has a computer firm on Elephant Road.

"Just within two hours on the first day of the exhibition, we met 10 to 12 potential customers who are eligible to get loans from our bank," said Mohd Emran Hossain, team leader (sales) of Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC).

Business leaders, executives, managers and entrepreneurs are also making business deals with participating companies in the fair.

Adil Mohammed, executive (corporate service) of Banglalink, said they are expecting over 200 business deals with potential customers during the show. "Within two hours after inauguration of the show, I alone made some 10 business deals with customers," he said.

Individuals will receive free entry pass upon presenting his or her business card at the entrance. The fair will remain open only to corporate visitors from 10am to 9pm until tomorrow.

Several exclusive events for selected professionals are also scheduled to be held to mark the fair. The events include a CFO (chief financial officer) gathering, a gathering for merchandisers, an IT managers' meet and a corporate leaders' meet.

DSE gets four new directors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Shahed Abdul Khaleque, Md Azizul Haque, Sharif Ataur Rahman and Abdullah Bukhari were elected directors of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday.

A total of 178 members out of 209 members cast their votes in the election that ran from 10am to 4pm.

Five candidates contested in the election.

The newly elected directors will replace the directors who are retiring after serving three-year term. The retiring directors are Feroz Khan, Rafiqul Islam, Saiful Islam and Mujibur Rahman.

The four will take over as directors at the annual general meeting of the DSE scheduled for February 9. The 12 elected directors including the newly elected four will then elect one president and one senior vice-president and one vice-president for the next one year on the same day at the first board meeting of board of directors.

There are 12 elected and 12 nominated directors on the board.

New ICMAB office bearers



President

Satipati Moitra and Mohammed Salim have been elected president and secretary of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB) for the year 2006.

They were elected at the 12th meeting of the ICMAB held on Saturday, says a press release.

Mamtaiz Uddin Ahmed and Md Anisur Rahman were elected vice presidents and Md Abdul Hannan Mia treasurer of the institute.

Moitra is the finance director of BASF Bangladesh Ltd while Salim is the company secretary of Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Ltd.

High lead time, fund cost stymie RMG

Study says

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

High lead time, exorbitant cost of fund, outdated production technology, low-price image and weak marketing are some of the weaknesses facing Bangladesh apparel sector.

Dearth of fund for assisting textile and apparel sector and lower labour productivity have resulted in low output and inconsistency in quality, according to a study carried out by a group of Sri Lankan researchers.

Bangladesh and other South Asian countries are faced with some common problems, including low-price image, high electric-

ity and fuel cost, dearth of trained manpower, infrastructure impediments, little exposure to high-tech machinery and poor compliance in environmental and social regulations, the study explained.

Weak marketing and selling techniques had made impossible for any companies in Bangladesh to develop a brand or have a new market emerged, said the study styled 'Global Apparel Industry and Major Asian Suppliers'.

Low-price image emerges as a major weakness for Bangladesh, it said adding that interest rate for long-term finance in Bangladesh is very high ranging between 9 and 12 percent compared to 5 to 6 percent

of its competitors.

Lead time in Bangladesh is relatively high, which is 90 to 120 days, the study said adding that machinery is mostly outdated. Then obsolete production technique, over-dependence on imports, especially on woven fabrics, poor compliance in environment and social issues are few other weak areas, according to the study.

The study also discussed the overall situation in the sector in Pakistan, China, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

Commenting on the study, Ahmed Sabur, a local manufacturer, said buyers always through those markets where they find low price.



Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan visits a stall after inaugurating a three-day exhibition of corporate houses styled 'Corporate Bazaar' that began at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

Businesses urged to help economy grow

Foreign minister inaugurates 'Corporate Bazaar'

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday urged business houses to make contribution to the country's sustainable economic development.

"In the era of globalisation, the country's new generation businesses should come up with changing global corporate practices, which will ultimately help the economy grow," Khan said.

The foreign minister was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the three-day exhibition of corporate houses styled 'Corporate Bazaar' at Bangladesh-China

Friendship Conference Center (BCFCC) in Dhaka.

The first-ever 'Corporate Bazaar', organised by Global Online Services Limited, a local corporate internet service provider, is showcasing all types of products and services necessary for running a business.

Khan also urged the organiser to make the fair a regular event for the growth of businesses.

Global Online Services Limited Chairman Syed Faruque Ahmed said 'Corporate Bazaar' offers exclusive products and services to business houses.

He said 'Corporate Bazaar' is a completely new idea initiated by Global Online Services.

The exhibitors cover a wide range of organisations such as telecommunications and IT companies, banks, airlines, office equipment manufacturers & distributors, advertising firms, security service providing companies, hospitals, electronics and power supply companies.

The Daily Star, the Prothom Alo, bangladeshinfo.com, Windmill, ntv and Protishabda Communications are the associated partners of the fair.

Bimstec FTA to facilitate Delhi's trade flow

Indian trade body says

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A leading Indian trade body yesterday said Free Trade Agreement among Bimstec countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal will enable India to inch closer to Asean and Saarc countries and enhance the country's trade to the two blocs.

"FTA among the Bimstec countries will facilitate India's trade flow without hindrances and bring it even closer to Asean and Saarc," the Associated Chambers of Commerce said in a statement.

India has no FTA with other Bimstec (Bay of Bengal Initiative for MultiSectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation) countries like Sri Lanka and Thailand, it said. Both the countries can be used by India as gateways to increasing its presence in Asean and Saarc markets as Thailand and Sri Lanka have emerged as major regional trading hubs in the region.

"Thailand will provide larger and wider access to Indian industry to western markets besides ASEAN region. Sri Lanka will help India make smoother movements of its

goods and services towards entire SAARC region including that of Pakistan because of its strategic location," the chamber said.

"The BIMST-EC region has a GDP of around 700 billion dollars and population of around 1,300 million. It has the potential to become a prominent regional grouping in the region and could further bring about a bridging of the two important regions of the

South Asia and South East Asia thereby enhancing closer economic cooperation in the region," Assocham president Anil K Agarwal said.

Asean and Saarc, are devoid of this advantage because of the conflict of interest among their member countries due to various economic and political considerations, he added.

Cooperation among the Bimstec countries will capture the market size of the developed and the developing economies in areas of textile and garments, pharmaceuticals, gems and jewelry, IT, communication etc, the chamber said.

For India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, the time frame for products under "fast track" is July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2009.

For Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan the time frame would be July 1 to June 30, 2011.

For products under the "normal track" the time frame for India, Sri Lanka and Thailand is July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2012 and for Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal, it is July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2017.

GP zeroes in on network quality in 2006

CEO talks to journalists

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's leading cellphone service provider GrameenPhone (GP) Ltd plans to invest more in 2006 to provide smooth network services for its subscribers.

GP's existing network covers over 95 percent area of the country and the company spent \$300 million on network expansion last year. It plans to invest almost the same amount this year in an effort to bring its capacity and quality on a par with each other.

"We have received a lot of complaints that sometimes GP subscribers fail to get desired network services due to overloading. Keeping this in mind, we announced 2006 as the 'year of quality', when we will strengthen our network and services in the entire country," Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GrameenPhone Erik Aas told journalists during an interview yesterday in Dhaka.

He also said GP will reduce more than 20 percent tariff on an average in response to growing competition in the market.

"We are still maintaining 62 percent market share in Bangladesh since 2004. So, we have to be available to our subscribers."

He however said market share is never more important than network coverage and customer services.

GrameenPhone reached six million subscribers a few days ago. It is now planning to install modern devices on the highways, some tall buildings and in super markets to ensure uninterrupted service.

Erik Aas said, "Our job is not only connecting people but also providing quality services for them."

"From the beginning of 2005, we realised that subscribers have not been fully satisfied with our services. Sometimes they had to pay money to middlemen to get mobile phone services because of the shortage of our own service centres."

"So, to ensure customer service GP already



Erik Aas

established 350 GP Service Desks all over the country. We are planning to establish this kind of service desks in each of the thanas in the country in 2006," he said.

Terminating the government's tax imposition on SIM (subscriber identity module) cards as a barrier, he said, "Only seven to eight percent of the people in Bangladesh are enjoying telecom services, which is not enough. This number could be 20 to 25 percent."

If the government reduces legal barriers, the number of mobile phone subscribers can grow by 3 to 4 million in 2006, he said.

He admitted that the growth of sales of GP SIM cards declined significantly in the first quarter of the current fiscal. But from the second quarter it has been growing as usual, he said.

Aas said the government should realise that many subscribers in Bangladesh have not the

ability to pay Tk 900 in tax to purchase a mobile phone connection.

Reduction of tax on mobile handsets failed to yield any benefit for the subscribers due to the imposition of tax on SIM cards, he said.

About the government's recent decision to impose a ban on free talk time after midnight, he said, "I don't believe free talk time during the overnight slot creates any kind of social nuisance among young subscribers."

Citing some satellite TV programmes, he said a number of TV channels are showcasing adult programmes targeting young people in their midnight slots. "Why doesn't the government take initiative to ban those programmes?" he asked.

He said the new legislation in addition to already existing obstacles put up by the government hampers the growth rate of cellphone subscribers.

"It will take a lot of resources and finance to create a register of subscribers. I don't know yet, how we will register all the subscribers in two months," he said about the recent rule imposed by the government, which makes it mandatory for mobile phone service providers to create a database of its subscribers to be handed over to the government.

Aas however said GrameenPhone will follow the laws of the land.

Meanwhile, Dubai based Warid Telecom is about to launch its operation by the end of the year.

About growing competition in the sector, GP's CEO said, "I have no idea, how six mobile phone operators will sustain in the same market. I personally guess, after three or four years two or three companies will merge with each other."

Replying to a question he said submarine cable connectivity will give Bangladesh the fastest telecommunication connectivity and hoped that because of its low cost Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board will reduce its international call charges.

Lanka plans to import more drugs from Beximco Pharma

Sri Lanka plans to import more drug items from Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited.

Visiting Sri Lankan Health Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva announced this during his visit to the Beximco Pharma plant at Tongi in Gazipur on Friday, says a press release.

Sri Lanka is currently importing six products from Beximco Pharma.

The Sri Lankan minister showed special interest for the company's high-tech specialised products such as inhalers, nasal sprays, suppositories, injectables and IV fluids (saline). Seeing different production lines and installations of Beximco Pharma plant, the minister also appreciated the quality, absolutely sterile environment and minimum human contact in producing drug in the plant.

He was accompanied by State Minister for Health and Family Welfare of Bangladesh Mizanur Rahman Sinha, Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Dhaka Gamin S. Munasinghe, and President of Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industry (Bapi) SM Shafiquzzaman.

Beximco Pharma now exports its products to Germany, Singapore, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Iran, Pakistan, Kenya, Mozambique, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan.

New office bearers of JCI Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

S Rumi Saifullah has been elected national president of JCI Bangladesh for the year 2006.

He took over the charge from former president Safina Rahman at a function in Dhaka Sunday.

JCI Bangladesh chapter's President (West) Anika Ali, President (North) Muntasir Bhuiyan, President (East) Asif Touhid and President (South) Rashel Khan also took charge from their predecessors.

JCI Bangladesh is the national affiliate of JCI in Bangladesh. JCI is a worldwide federation of young professionals and entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 40.

National organisations federated to JCI are active in more than 8,000 chapters in 123 nations and territories.

Chittagong Port gets four gantry cranes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain yesterday inaugurated the commissioning of four gantry cranes at Chittagong Port.

Inaugurating the cranes, the minister said the government has taken all necessary steps for the modernisation of the port.

"If all the projects are implemented, around 10 lakh TEUs containers can be handled in Chittagong Port by 2007," the minister hoped.

Japanese industrial giant Mitsubishi supplied the cranes and also trained 21 local technicians to operate those.

The minister also came down heavily on the role of World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other international donors, saying no country in the world has made progress with financial assistance from these agencies.

"The foreigners give us to keep us alive so that we can be customers of their products," Akbar said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh

Shipping Agents' Association (BSAA) yesterday announced to refrain from taking berthing at Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) equipped with newly commissioned rail-mounted gantry cranes for gearless feeders.

BSAA leaders at a press conference said the gantry cranes service will charge every container vessel an additional amount of around Tk 8 lakh to Tk 10 lakh. Besides the cranes will not bring any benefit until the back facilities are developed, they added.



British Council organises Workshop for Principals of English Medium schools in Bangladesh

British Council in partnership with Edexcel International organised a management workshop for Principals of English medium schools in Bangladesh which follow the Edexcel curriculum on 30th January 2006. The workshop entitled 'Managing Schools for Quality: Staff management & Deployment' was also organised in Sylhet and Chittagong.

The purpose of these workshops on managing schools for quality with equity was to improve performance and remedy underachievement. These workshops focussed on how Principals can support their teaching staff in raising their performance by encouraging them to improve their skills in the classroom and ultimately their students' success.

The workshops were conducted by Professor Stephen Martin who was sponsored by Edexcel International UK. Professor Stephen Martin is an Educational Consultant with rich experience in secondary and tertiary education in UK. Previously he worked for Her Majesty's Inspectorate (Department of Education, England) and he is an Honorary Professor, University of Worcester, UK and Visiting Professor, Open University, UK.

In his opening address to the workshop, Richard Sunderland, Deputy Director, British Council thanked Edexcel International for their ongoing support for schools in Bangladesh and hoped that the participants benefited from the day. Saidur Rahman, Country Manager Edexcel International, Mirza Taher Regional Academic Manager Edexcel International and British Council representatives were also present during the workshops.