



StanChart's global head of Development Organisations arrives today

Mizinga Melu, global head of Development Organisations of Standard Chartered Bank, is arriving in Dhaka today on a 3-day official visit, says a press release.

During her brief stay, she is expected to meet clients, stakeholders and staff of the bank.

Before taking up the present assignment, she was the regional head of Financial Institutions Business for Standard Chartered Bank, Africa. She has worked in various markets including Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, New York and Johannesburg.

Tata to double its non-Indian workforce by 2009

PTI, Mumbai

India's top software company Tata Consultancy Services plans to increase its headcount in its facilities in eastern Europe, Latin America and China and double its non-Indian workforce over a period of three years.

TCS employs 71,190 people, 7.3 percent of whom are non-Indians, thanks to the global acquisitions made by the company during the last six months.

"We aim to reach a stage in the next two-three years, whereby around 15 percent of our employees will be non-Indians. We have begun hiring around 4,000 people in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Australia and China," TCS executive vice-president (global human resources) SPadmanabhan told PTI here.

Presently, the IT major that reported a low attrition rate of 10.6 percent for last 12 months, has nationalities of 53 countries as employees.

India's IT and ITES sector, which contributes 4.8 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product, is facing a manpower crunch and has been demanding raising the quality of engineering education to meet the shortfall.

Exports from EPZs grow 15.89pc in 11 months

KAWSAR KHAN

Enterprises in the country's export processing zones (EPZs) exported goods worth around \$1,645 million in 11 months of the 2005-06 fiscal year, posting a 15.89 percent growth over the corresponding period of the previous year.

During the period, the EPZ units also employed 21,260 people, official statistics said.

The enterprises in EPZs exported goods worth \$1,548.68 million in FY 2004-05, the Bepza (Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority) statistics said.

The eight EPZs in the country also contributed to nearly 17.90 percent of the total export earning during the 11 months of FY 2005-

06, Prasanta Bhushan Barua, member (investment promotion) of Bepza told the newspaper.

However, the monthly foreign investment rate in the EPZs has declined. The EPZs attracted \$ 91.27 million in the 11 months at a monthly rate of \$ 8.29 million. In FY 2004-05, \$118.52 million was invested at a rate of \$9.87 million investment per month.

Adamjee EPZ, after starting operation in March this year with an aim of receiving \$400 million investment in the first 18 months, witnessed investment of \$ 4 million up to May, 2006. The seventh EPZ of the country also created 1,570 jobs as ten enterprises were set up during the period.

Statistics said the eight EPZs --

Dhaka, Chittagong, Mongla, Comilla, Ultrara in Nilphamari, Ishwardi, Adamjee and Karnaphuli EPZs across the country have a total of 370 industrial units with a cumulative investment of \$ 958.28 million.

Foreign investors from 31 countries have invested in EPZs with South Korea topping the list followed by Japan, China and the US.

South Koreans have 59 industrial units while Japanese have 24, Chinese 25 and Americans 12 in the EPZs. Local investors have set up 57 industrial units in the EPZs.

The total number of employment in the EPZs up to May 2006 stood at 1,75,948, of which 60 percent are females.

Software fair to begin Nov 21

UNB, Dhaka

The five-day mega exposition of "BASIS SOFTEXPO 2006" will begin here from November 21.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) will organise the country's biggest showcase for software products, ICT enabled service (ITES) and ICT system solutions at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, said a press release.

For small and medium enterprises, multinational companies, government, development organisations and large corporate bodies, SOFTEXPO is the show to find what technologies and products are hot today and the exciting things that are coming tomorrow.

According to organisers, more than 200 exhibitors and 100,000 visitors and delegates from at least 10 countries are expected to attend the fair.

Asean hails partnership deal with US

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Southeast Asia's regional grouping on Monday hailed a five-year action plan to boost trade, investment and political ties with the United States.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and US officials will Thursday sign the framework for the "Asean-US Enhanced Partnership", which they had agreed to work towards last November.

"I think it (the action plan) is good. The US is an important player in the world. It is the sole superpower," Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar told reporters in Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia is the current chair of the 10-member bloc.

"It is a broad framework. Among the areas it hopes to promote are economic and technical cooperation, to combat terrorism and the fight against HIV/AIDS," a Malaysian foreign ministry official added on condition of anonymity.

Under the plan, both sides will work towards an Asean-US Trade and Investment Framework Agreement that will serve as a mechanism to ease trade and investment flows.

Asean groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. It offers a combined market of more than 500 million people.

Officials have said the plan could lay the groundwork for a US-Asean free trade pact, pointing out that Asean is already in talks for a region-wide free trade agreement with China and Japan to be completed by 2010.

Dollar rallies against major rivals

AFP, London

The dollar rebounded against the euro and yen on Monday as dealers prepared for a raft of US economic data later in the week.

The euro fell to 1.2616 dollars in early European trade, compared with 1.2696 dollars late in New York on Friday.

The dollar increased to 116.83 yen on 116.14 yen late on Friday.

"The dollar has recovered some lost ground against the euro and the yen after last week's sell-off due to increased speculation that the Federal Reserve will refrain from tightening monetary policy at its next FOMC meeting on 8th August," said Derek Halpenny, senior currency economist at The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi.

Dealers said the dollar fell towards the end of last week in the wake of two dovish testimonies by US Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke.

Bernanke had expressed concern about economic growth moderating and said inflation remains contained, causing market players to scale back US interest rate expectations.

Market watchers were to pore over a series of US data this week for further clues over the outlook for American borrowing costs.

US consumer confidence numbers are due on Tuesday while the Fed's Beige Book economic report is expected Wednesday. Second-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) figures are slated for release on Friday.

The US housing market will also come under scrutiny with figures on existing home sales due on Tuesday and new homes sales on Thursday.

Bangla-Iran preferential trade pact likely

BSS, Dhaka

A draft agreement on preferential trade between Bangladesh and Iran is likely to be finalised at the fourth meeting of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) that began in Tehran yesterday. Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman is already in the Iranian capital to lead the Bangladesh delegation at the meeting.

The JEC is meeting after a long gap of eight years to review the whole gamut of economic and commercial relations between the two countries, according to a message received here.

Bangladesh and Iran instituted JEC in 1989 and over the years have signed a number of agreements and MOUs that included the areas of energy, illicit drug control,

promotion of investment, culture and scientific exchange, agriculture, post and telecommunication and road and rail transport.

Apart from reviewing the progress in implementation of some of these agreements, the two sides are also likely to discuss a number of new proposals.

The 3-day meeting that is scheduled to conclude on July 26 will be co-chaired by the Bangladesh finance minister and Mohammed Saiedi Kia, Minister for Housing and Urban Development of Iran.

On his arrival at the Tehran airport Sunday, Saifur Rahman was received by the Iranian minister for housing and urban development. Bangladesh Ambassador to Tehran M Shameem Ahsan as well as other officials of the Embassy were present.

Shippers demand solution to port congestion

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Country's shippers yesterday demanded immediate resolution of the prevailing congestions of ships and containers at Chittagong Port for smooth running of their business.

They voiced their demand when a delegation of the Shippers' Council of Bangladesh (SCB) had a meeting with State Minister for Shipping Quamrul Islam at the conference room of the Ministry of Shipping at the Bangladesh Secretariate, according to a press release of the council.

The delegation was led by the council chairman, Mahabub Ali. The council apprised the minister of the problems they are faced with and put forward a number of recommendations for reducing the port congestion.

Shipping Secretary Rafiqul Islam was also present at the meeting.

Members of the delegation, among others, were Mozibur Rahman Mridha, SCB senior vice chairman, Faruque Ahmed, secretary general, and directors Md Shahjahan Khan, Ariful Ahsan, S M Mahfuzul Huq, Syed Mostafizur Rahman, Syed Md Anisuzzaman, Md Rezaul Karim and Abdul Halim Akon.

The minister assured the delegation of taking measures to resolve port congestions as early as possible.

Dhaka Bank posts Tk 21.82cr net profit in 6 months

Dhaka Bank Limited has earned an unaudited post-tax net profit of Tk 21.82 crore (Tk 218.16 million) during the first-half of the current year.

The bank has also earned an operating profit of Tk 551.60 million as against Tk 422.47 million during the corresponding period of the previous year, registering a growth rate of about 31 percent, according to a press release.

As on June 2006, Dhaka Bank's total deposit stood at over Tk 36.12 billion (Tk 3612.55 crore) as against the corresponding figure of over Tk 29.01 billion of the previous year, marking a 25 percent growth.

The bank's loans and advances stood at over Tk 28.13 billion as against over Tk 23.37 billion of the same period of the previous year with a 20 percent growth.

On the other hand, Dhaka Bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) as on June 30, 2006 stood at 10.53 percent against the Bangladesh Bank's minimum requirement of 9 percent.

Taiwan June export orders continue higher

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan's export orders in June rose 20.61 percent from a year earlier to 24.92 billion US dollars on increased demand from the US, Europe and Asia and rising international raw material prices, the government said Monday.

The June figure was flat with May, however, the Ministry of Economic Affairs said.

In the first six months of the year, export orders amounted to 141.50 billion dollars, up 21.46 percent.

Meanwhile, the ministry said industrial output in June was down 2.53 percent from May but up 5.54 percent year-on-year.



Commerce Minister Hafizuddin Ahmad speaks at a meeting with the garment units owners at the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) office in Dhaka yesterday. (story on page 1)

39 firms join CDS in FY06

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

Some 39 companies joined the central depository system (CDS) in the last fiscal year for scripless trading and many are in the pipeline to convert their paper shares into electronic ones.

After the end of FY 2005-06, the total number of companies under CDS stood at 100 and the market capitalisation share of these companies is more than 85 per cent, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) sources said.

The electronic trading settlement system, which eliminates risk

of fake or soiled shares, made its debut in the country's capital market on January 24, 2004 with the shares of Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Under the CDS, which is operated by Central Depository Bangladesh Ltd (CDBL), all paper-based share certificates are turned into electronic ones and transactions are held electronically. Listed companies do not need to maintain a full-fledged shares department at their offices as the CDBL performs all the depository and transfer-related jobs.

Sources said a total of 719,265 depository or beneficiary owner (BO) accounts were opened for electronic trading settlement up to June 30 this year while the figure was 360,908 up to June 30, 2005. The rate of BO accounts opening was 99.29 per cent higher last fiscal than that of the previous year.

During the period, 73,575 BO accounts were closed.

In FY 2005-06, 12.52 crore

shares, excluding primary shares, rights shares and bonus shares, were demutualised raising the total number to 24.54 crore up to June 30 this year. The rate of share demutualisation was 104.16 per cent higher in the last fiscal year than that of the previous year.

The capital market watchdog up to June 30 this year has issued certificates to 223 companies as depository participants, of which 204 are active now.

Talking to The Daily Star, Farhad Ahmed, executive director (Supervision and Regulation of Markets Intermediaries Department) of SEC, said in the last fiscal year the commission witnessed a more consolidation of companies under the CDS than previous years.

He said the commission is not pressurising the listed companies to come under the CDS, they are willingly joining the CDS, which is a good sign.

Energy prices pose inflation threat

French central banker says

AFP, Paris

Central bankers around the world are worried that high energy and raw materials prices might feed into overall inflation, the head of the French central bank Christian Noyer said on Monday.

He also signalled that the ECB was likely to increase its key rates soon, as is widely expected.

Noyer, who as governor of the French bank sits on the monetary policy committee of the European Central Bank, told the Le Figaro newspaper that the rising price of oil "is bad for the world economy".

He said that globalisation had had a favourable effect on prices for industrial products.

He continued: "But all central banks in the world fear that the rise (in the price of) energy and of raw materials will end up by spreading into overall prices for goods and services".

The balance between the supply of energy and of demand "does not justify this level of price which can be explained by geopolitical tensions".

It was "very difficult" to say

whether or not these price levels would last.

So far, oil prices "have had moderate effects on world growth, which has remained dynamic, and on inflation", he said.

He also commented on a surge of property prices in France, saying that "the rise cannot continue at this rate because it would lead to households becoming over-indebted and to a reversal of the market".

Noyer said that the ECB was "going in the direction of a very progressive normalisation of monetary policy", thereby indicating that the European Central Bank was likely to raise its key interest rates when it next meets at the beginning of August.

The ECB is widely expected to continue tweaking up its rates and Noyer said that most leading central banks were doing likewise.

"As most economies are working flat out, an adjustment of monetary policies which were extremely accommodating is considered necessary everywhere, including in Japan."