

## Integrated strategy suggested to avail of WTO aid packages

### Development partners blasted for repatriating assistance

#### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Formulation of an integrated strategy is urgent to gain need-based and practical assistance from developed countries under the proposed WTO Aid for Trade packages, suggested trade experts and businesspeople yesterday at a roundtable in Dhaka.

They also recommended for constituting a national Aid-for-Trade committee immediately.

The suggestions came at the roundtable on 'Preference Erosion: Aid For Trade under WTO: The Roadmap for Bangladesh' held at the Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute (BFTI) conference room.

The speakers blasted the devel-

opment partners for repatriating a major part of their assistance in the name of consultancy and supply of equipment.

"The so-called World Bank prescriptions helped increase the number of least developed countries (LDCs) from 23 to 50 in the last 50 years. And I guess the number will be raised to around 100 in the coming years," Sohel Ahmed Chowdhury, a former commerce secretary, said.

Mostafa Abid Khan, deputy chief of Bangladesh Tariff Commission and negotiation expert, felt it urgent that a strategy should be formulated so that the aid for trade can be used for infrastructure development, including port, telecommunication

and power, to enhance country's competitiveness in the world trade.

The businesspeople stressed the need for a guideline so that the country can assess its needs to the developed countries. They, however, asked for estimating the country's preference erosion in trade, which might be resulted from the WTO trade liberalisation regime.

They said the country should be conscious whether the rich nations use the Aid for Trade package as a tool to deceive the poor nations or not.

They opined that there should be two separate windows for Aid for Trade and Preference Erosion deals. The two issues cannot be linked with each other as both are

the separate solutions of the WTO trade liberalisation process, they added.

"The rich nations promised a huge amount of packages for Aid for Trade but no fund they had released during the last eight months," Alamgir Farouk Chowdhury, also a former commerce secretary, said.

Yussuf Abdullah Harun, former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), Shishir K Dev, chief executive officer of BFTI, Manzur Ahmed, adviser to the FBCCI, also spoke on the occasion.

## GPWorld re-launched

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

GrameenPhone Ltd, country's leading cell phone company, yesterday re-launched one of its value added services named GPWorld, a WAP portal adding huge contents through upgradation to provide more information and entertainment services to the customers.

Subscribers with GP's EDGE (enhanced data rates for global evolution) connectivity and WAP (wireless application protocol) enabled handset can browse the upgraded portal - <http://wap.gpworld.com.bd> and experience a huge range of infotainment options available to them.

Rubaba Dawla Matin, head of marketing of GrameenPhone, formally announced yesterday the upgradation of the portal at a press conference held at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.

Through the GPWORLD, the subscribers can download exclusive content like themes, wallpapers, logos, tones to customise their mobile handsets as well as download various types of useful mobile-based applications web browsers, instant messaging and e-mailing.

For web and WAP browsing GP offers two packages. One of them will charge no monthly fees. But browsing charge is applicable on usage volume. Additionally, a charge is also applicable when ring tones, wallpapers, logo and other contents are downloaded from the portal.

Another package is only applicable for GP post-paid subscribers. A fixed monthly fee is charged for unlimited browsing and a download charge is also applicable for contents like ring tones, wallpapers, logo from the portal.

GPWORLD is a source of exclusive content and services for the subscribers under the mobile phone operator's value added services. The contents and services available will add a new dimension to lifestyle of the GP subscribers, said Rubaba Dawla Matin.

She said, "GPWORLD is the most advanced WAP portal having biggest huge collection of value added services".

She said, "All the contents of the portal have been created by our local artists, which may also help enhance our technology over the world."

According to the GP officials, the GP users have to open their mobile phone browser and type <http://wap.gpworld.com.bd> to access the GPWORLD home page.

In different categories, there are lots of contents in the portal. Each category has different sub-categories, where users have to select the desired content and click to download, they said.

Before downloading begins, the user will be informed of the total charges payable for the contents. Once downloading begins, the contents will be downloaded and saved on the mobile set.

Ghalib Ahmed Ansari, head of market communication, and Mir Nawbut Ali, head of brand management of GP, were also present at the press conference.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia unveils the plaque of the Sadharan Bima Tower at the city's Dilkhusha Commercial Area yesterday.

## Developers urged to consider clients' affordability

### Housing fair begins in Ctg

#### CU CORRESPONDENT

A three-day real estate fair titled 'Abasan Mela (BD-Red Fair) -2006' began here in Chittagong yesterday with a view to providing opportunity for the customers to choose their desired homes from a large varieties of options.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman inaugurated the fair as the chief guest at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), Chittagong in the afternoon.

Bangladesh Real Estate Directory is organising the fair here for the fifth time.

BD-Red Fair Chairman AKM Golam Mostafa presided over the ceremony while Coordinator of Earthquake Engineering Research Council Professor Dr Mohammed Jahangir Alam, satellite television channel RTV Director Lutfar Rahman Badal and Lions Club of Chittagong Centre President MN Karim were present as special guests.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the minister called upon the

participants of the fair to develop real estate and properties considering the affordability of the prospective clients.

He also urged the real estate developers to follow the construction code as well as the master plan of Chittagong Development Authority (CDA).

Lion MN Karim expressed his hope that the fair would help customers gather information about different offers and firms from under one roof and evaluate the offers to make a choice.

A total 46 firms of real estate development, construction materials and house finance organisations were participating in 60 stalls at the fair.

The fair will remain open for all from 11.00am to 8.00pm everyday where there are attractive prizes and gifts for the visitors, according to the organisers.

Yeasin Khan, chief executive officer of Bangladesh Real Estate Directory, also spoke on the occasion.

## UCB dual mode credit cards hit market

### NAFID IMRAN AHMED

Using credit card to buy something online is something close to impossible in Bangladesh as most of such cards are only valid here and not acceptable internationally. United Commercial Bank Limited (UCB) has introduced a dual mode card to make things easier.

One of the major advantages of UCB's credit cards is that they are truly global - local and overseas transactions can be made with the same card, which makes them a dual product. They also have a high coverage of acceptance globally in POS (point of sales) terminals and ATMs.

The UCB introduced these cards in April this year and Shahadat Hossain Shohag, first vice president and head of cards, spearheaded the project. The City Bank, however, was the first bank to introduce such card in the country.

"These cards are of better quality and have a lower price (annual fee) in the market," Shahadat said, adding "other features include reward point for spending, which leads to winning attractive prizes and the user also has a choice of colours in Classic (silver) products. The UCB also has a special pink coloured card, especially for the ladies."

One does not need to have an account in order to get a credit card from the UCB, all he or she needs is a TIN certificate, salary certificate, bank statement for the past six months and for international transaction activation purpose the person concerned is required to provide a copy of his or her passport.

The UCB has also a plan to make its cards popular among lower and middle class people, specially the ones who have a monthly income of more than Taka 10,000 and spread the usage of credit cards across the country. This bank has also been working with many leading corporations in the country to introduce corporate services. Co-branding of their products with other big names is also underway.

At present, the UCB has a Malaysian based software system implemented for the card system maintenance and has a third party processor, who provides them with technical support and supervision.

## RanksTel launches Swadeshi Phone

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Ranks Telecom Limited (RanksTel) yesterday launched a new package Swadeshi Phone for the public call office (PCO) service providers.

"PCO is a fixed phone service. But it is very unfortunate that the mobile phone operators are doing this business, which cannot be done in terms of legal perspective," Zakaria Swapan, chief operating officer of Ranks Telecom Limited, told a news briefing at National Press Club in Dhaka.

RanksTel has already lodged complaints with Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) several times but no action has yet been taken in this regard, he lamented.

Explaining key features of the RanksTel service, A Rouf Chowdhury, president and chief executive officer of the company, said as the company provides services through wireless local loop (WLL), it does not require any cable connection.

The main goal of his company is to reach land phone service the doorstep of the common people of the country, he said.

Zakaria Swapan explained RanksTel is the first private land phone company in the country which is using the latest wireless CDMA2000 1X technology.

People in the areas deemed not suitable for cable connection can get this phone service easily, he mentioned.

Connection fee of the newly launched PCO phone service including a terminal is Tk 4,995 while a person needs to pay for a handset or can use any other set available in the market.

Rate for a local or zonal call is Tk 0.50 per minute while the charge is Tk 1.50 per minute in case of calling from one zone to another one against BTTB's nationwide dialing (NWD) charge of Tk3 per minute. In case of talking to the mobile phone, the subscribers will have to pay Tk 1.80 per minute in peak hours and Tk 1.45 per minute in off-peak with 30 seconds pulse.

"Besides, PCO phone will have

the access to ISD and economy ISD and the subscribers will also be able to make phone calls abroad using 012 code at Tk 7.5 per minute in 25 countries," Swapan said further.

The company having around 40,000 clients across the country is now operating in four other zones excepting Dhaka and its service is now available at 71 upazilas in 24 districts.

Swapan urged the people to use RanksTel phone, as it is a local company. All the mobile phone operators are foreign companies and they are repatriating their profits every year, he observed.

"A substantial amount of foreign currency is going out of the country every year," he said, adding it is possible to save a substantial amount of foreign currency if people use RanksTel phone.

Other senior officials of RanksTel were present at the briefing.

## Bangladesh takes part in German handicraft show

In a bid to let foreign buyers know about the diversity and latest developments in Bangladesh handicrafts and gift items, nine local companies are participating in a five-day handicraft fair that begins in Germany today.

The companies representing Bangladesh will showcase jute goods, leather products, silk items and recycled glass products at the fair titled 'Tendence-2006' in Frankfurt, says a press release issued by Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

By attending this fair, the participants will be able to bag foreign orders and understand the trend of world market and make themselves prepare, the release added.

Handicraft sector plays a significant role in employment generation in rural areas and also helps the country earn a handsome amount of foreign currency.



A Rouf Chowdhury (C), president and chief executive officer of Ranks Telecom Limited, addresses a press briefing at the National Press Club in Dhaka yesterday.

## Tata Tea to buy 30pc stake in US firm

### PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

In the biggest overseas acquisition by an Indian company in non-oil commodity sector, Tata Tea, India's second largest branded tea manufacturer, has announced buy-out of a 30 per cent stake for \$ 677 million in US-based Energy Brands Inc.

Tata Tea Vice Chairman RK Krishna Kumar said in a statement here on Wednesday night that the acquisition was endorsed by the boards of Tata Sons and Tata Tea, two of the companies of the Tata Group, which will jointly go for the buy-out.

The decision is aimed at expanding Tata Tea's presence in the \$ 10 billion American bottled water market, which is growing at more than 10 per cent compared to \$ 68 billion carbonated soft drinks market.

Tata Tea had in the year 2000 had acquired Tetley Tea of the United Kingdom for 271 million pounds that gave the Indian company a major foothold in Great Britain and the

United States. In 2006, the Indian company bought the US herbal tea company Good Earth and Eight O'Clock Coffee for \$220 million.

Energy Brands Inc, which sells a range of nutrient-rich and flavoured water brands, makes Glaceu brand of bottled water in three variants - Vitaminwater, Fruitwater and Smartwater.

Tata Tea, industry sources said, hopes to cash in on a fast growth of health-based non-carbonated beverage market in the US in the wake of mounting concerns over the effect of carbonated drinks on health.

The compounded growth of flavoured water and sport or energy drinks market is expected to be 30 per cent in the region in the next three years.

The \$ 677 million deal to acquire 30 per cent stake in Energy Brands Inc will be funded through Tata Tea Great Britain, a subsidiary of Tata Tea, which was set up to acquire Tetley. Tata Tea GB will fund the investment through an equity contribution of \$ 255 million and will raise debt for the remaining portion with Tata Tea contributing \$ 192 million and Tata Sons \$ 58 million.

The deal surpasses the \$ 570 million buy-out by leading Indian pharmaceutical company Dr Reddy's of Germany's Betapharm a few years ago.

## Citibank opens transaction processing centre in Ctg

Citibank, NA recently opened its refurbished transaction processing centre in Chittagong to better serve its customers in the port city.

Akbar Ali Khan, former finance and cabinet secretary of Bangladesh government and alternate executive director of World Bank, inaugurated the processing center at Citibank Chittagong branch, says a press release.

Mamun Rashid, Citigroup country officer (Bangladesh), and senior officials of Citibank were also present at the inauguration.

The centre aims to better suit its customers' needs more efficiently with the full range of world-class corporate banking services, the release added.

## Agora's 5th founding anniversary celebrated

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

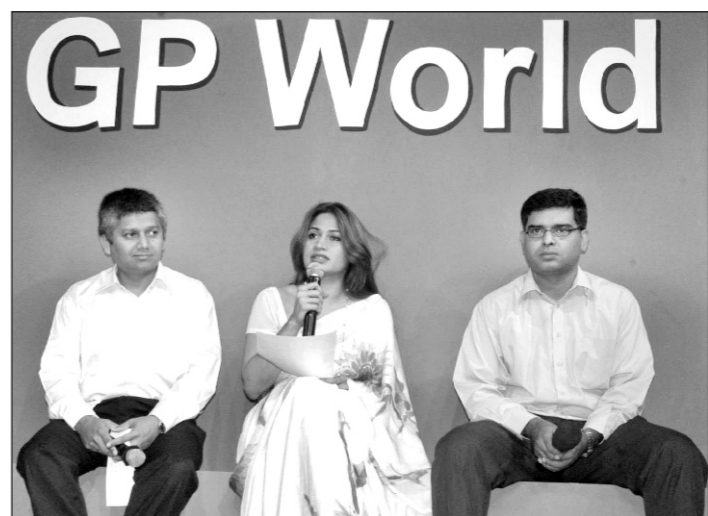
Agora, a leading chain supermarket in the country and a concern of Rahimafrooz Superstores Ltd, celebrated its fifth founding anniversary yesterday with the theme - 'beautifying lifestyles'.

Afroz Rahim, chairman of Rahimafrooz Group, formally inaugurated the 25-day celebration programme to mark the occasion. Niaz Rahim, managing director of the company, Samir Asaf, chief executive officer, and actress Kabari Sarwar, among others, were present at the function.

To mark the founding anniversary, the chain supermarket launched a promotional campaign under which customers will be offered an instant gift on every Tk 600 shopping with some conditions applicable.

The campaign will run until September 17.

Aiming to build customers' confidence by offering better range of quality goods at reasonable prices, Agora is working hard to remain committed to its oath of beautifying lifestyle, said Rassel Iqbal, marketing officer of the company.



Rubaba Dawla Matin (C), head of Marketing of GrameenPhone Ltd, speaks at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday. Ghalib Ahmed Ansari (L), head of Market Communication, and Mir Nawbut Ali, head of Brand Management of the company, are also seen.