



DCCI chief urges Dutch traders to invest in Bangladesh

DCCI business and investment promotion delegation now on a visit to EU countries held a fruitful discussion with the members of the Groningen Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands, says a press release.

The DCCI President R Maksud Khan who led the delegation informed them of the present congenial atmosphere in Bangladesh and urged them to invest their capital and avail themselves of the incentives and the facilities now offered by the government to the foreign investors.

There are 23 thousands companies in Groningen city which are registered with the Chambers of Commerce.

The visit of the DCCI delegation to Groningen has created great enthusiasm amongst the members of the business community. Many of them have shown interest to establish business relationship with Bangladesh.

US-Vietnam trade talks put off

HANOI, Sept 18: Preliminary talks on a US-Vietnam trade agreement, expected to have been held here this month, have been put off at the request of the US side and could take place in October or November, an informed source said Friday, reports AFP.

During the individual business talks held between the members of the DCCI delegation and the members of the Groningen Chamber of Commerce the sectors like, power generation, shipping, telecom, dairy farming, food processing etc were identified as the most suitable for investment in Bangladesh.

It was revealed from the discussion that they did not know much of Bangladesh as such they could not establish business relation with Bangladesh so far. Many of them disclosed that if the investment situation is found a favourable, they would consider investment in Bangladesh.

A number of local non-

resident Bangladeshis have also shown interest in both trading and investment business with Bangladesh. On an invitation by the leader of the delegation, the Groningen chamber functionaries agreed to organise a delegation to Bangladesh in near future.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between DCCI and Groningen Chamber of Commerce in 1993 with a view to helping each other's members to promote trade and investment between Bangladesh and the province of Groningen.

The delegation also went round the shipyard and held discussion with the shipyard officials.

BB governor visits ASA projects

"ASA-Agrani Bank bilateral collaboration is a realistic step for poverty alleviation," said Khorshed Alam, Governor of Bangladesh Bank recently during his visit to ASA-Raipura sub-region, says a press release.

He also said that there should be such kind of collaboration among NGOs and other commercial banks. He emphasized the need for a forum to serve the purpose.

Alam said if NGOs of Bangladesh work under the rules and regulations of the government, it would be possible for the government to create an alternative stream in the field of poverty alleviation. He expressed his opinion that the development activities of NGOs in Bangladesh are widely acclaimed by other countries also.

Alam visited four landless women groups and some projects under implementation by the group members. He also went through the accounts of the unit office and lauded the accounts keeping system and the Self-reliant Development Model of ASA.

He was accompanied by Renendra Choudhury 'Runu', Senior Associate Coordinator of ASA. Senior officials of various commercial banks were also present there.



Khorshed Alam, Governor of Bangladesh Bank, visited some projects under Self-reliant Development Model of ASA.

Directive to shift ferry ghats

Shipping Minister M K Anwar yesterday directed the concerned officials to take immediate measures for shifting the Nagarbari ferry ghat to Notakhola and setting up of another ferry ghat at 'Baruria' at the Aricha portion of Aricha-Daulatdia route, reports BSS.

An official handout said the minister was presiding over a meeting of the officials of the shipping ministry and its subordinate departments at the Secretariat here.

With the shifting of the ferry ghats to Notakhola and Baruria, distances of Aricha-Nagarbari and Aricha-Daulatdia routes would be shortened and large number of vehicles would get quick ferry service in these routes.

The meeting was informed that attendance of officials and employees of the shipping ministry was satisfactory. Different uplift programmes of the ministry also came up for discussion.

The minister directed the concerned officials to take appropriate measures for filling-up vacant posts of different departments under the ministry. He also directed them to dispose of the abandoned vessels of BIWTC.

Jakarta's 3 state cement factories consolidate

JAKARTA, Sept 18: Three state cement factories, Pt Semen Gresik, Pt Semen Padang and Pt Semen Tonasa, have consolidated to become Indonesia's largest cement producer, press reports said here yesterday, says AFP.

"Under the agreement, the management of Semen Padang and Semen Tonasa will be overseen by Semen Gresik," said Director General for State Enterprises, Martiono Hadiano, as quoted by the Jakarta Post daily.

Floods refrain workers from attending duties in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 18: Work at Malaysia's biggest electronics manufacturing centre in Penang came to a near standstill today after heavy floods kept thousands of workers at home, officials said.

Continuous rain over the weekend covered parts of Penang with water up to three metres (nine feet) deep, forcing the closure of many schools, government and businesses, the officials said.

The northern island, filled with computer-related factories of companies such as Hewlett-Packard, Intel and Texas Instruments, is dubbed Malaysia's 'Silicon Valley' for its likeness to the Californian original.

An official with Penang's flood operations centre told Reuters that rain was expected to last another three days, according to weather forecasts.

The water level is already higher than neck level in some places," he said.

The national Bernama News Agency said 800 people had been evacuated and factories were being manned by a skeleton staff.

Telephone lines were reported to be out of order and traffic jammed in many places. No casualties were reported.

US preparing to take on South Korean auto industry

WASHINGTON, Sept 18: US automakers, fresh from a bruising battle to boost sales opportunities in Japan, now have their sights set on another foreign competitor — South Korea, reports AP.

The fight to lower South Korea's automotive barriers promises a replay of many of the contentious issues raised in the fracas with Japan with likely the same results, according to trade experts.

As with Japan, US negotiators may end up with a hazy deal subject to dispute by both sides and universal condemnation by other countries of America's bullying tactics, these experts suggested.

"US negotiators are facing trade fatigue right now," said Greg Mastel of the Economic Strategy Institute, a Washington think tank. "They had a long and bitter campaign to open Japan's auto market and even though it took a lot of resources and time, it wasn't entirely successful."

But auto industry officials insist that the administration has no choice but to take up

the battle against South Korea, which by most accounts has more formidable barriers than Japan. While foreign cars account for just 4.6 per cent of Japan's market, they account for an even more minuscule 0.2 per cent of the South Korean market.

"The South Korean market, one of the fastest-growing auto markets in the world, is closed. It is significantly more closed than the Japanese market," says Andrew Card, president of the American Automobile Manufacturers Association, the industry's lobbying arm.

The auto companies want the United States to haul out the most formidable weapon in its trade arsenal, a super 301 investigation. Under this process, both sides would have a year to negotiate, but the United States also could slap punitive tariffs of up to 100 per cent on Korean products if the talks fail.

US Trade Representative Mickey Kantor has until September 27 to decide whether to target South Ko-

rea, which is sending a high-level negotiating team to Washington for two days of talks Tuesday and Wednesday in an attempt to reduce tensions.

But Korea's barriers are so substantial, trade experts see little likelihood the dispute can be resolved quickly. They contend that Korea uses a variety of tools from import tariffs to penalty taxes on larger engines to more than double the price of many imports.

In 1994, US automakers sold just 1,897 cars in Korea out of 1.5 million total sales while South Korea automakers shipped 206,625 cars to the United States.

Korea's penetration of the US market still is tiny compared to the 40.1 billion dollars in cars and parts Japan sold here last year.

But what worries Detroit is that South Korea is following the Japanese model, building up a protected market at home that allows its auto companies reap huge profits it can use.

Tk 1.41 lakh hilsa fish seized: 15 arrested

Bangladesh Rifles seized some 1410 kg hilsa fish worth Tk 1.41 lakh and arrested 15 people in this connection from Koitak area on Sylhet-Sunamganj road on Tuesday late night, reports UNB.

The arrested were handed over to police as they could not show any valid paper for fish business.

The fish, seized from a border-bound truck No Sylhet-Ta-6732, were handed over to the local Customs authorities, said a BDR press release.

1st Chinese wrist watch goes to auction Sunday

SHANGHAI, Sept 18: The first Chinese-made wrist watch, made 40 years ago in Shanghai, will be put on sale at an auction here next Sunday, a newspaper reported Monday, reports AFP.

The watch was constructed with umbrella spokes, bicycle wire, sewing needles and brass pieces from a harmonica, the Shanghai Youth Daily reported.

The Shanghai No 2 Light Industry Administrative Bureau gathered 58 watch repairers and clock makers in June 1955 to make the first Chinese-made watch. Within three months, they had a domestic model on the market, which was then dominated by imports.

Asia business briefs

National Bank, company officials said Monday.

The takeover, which will be officially signed Tuesday, is to cost the South Korean bank 12 million dollars, they said. Shinhan is buying 100 per cent of the US bank's stock in cash.

Shinhan became the first South Korean bank to buy a foreign bank. Marine National bank has its head office in Irvine, California and has three branch offices in Orange County. Its total as-

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sets are 105 million dollars.

The current management and most of the Marine National workers will retain their jobs, Shinhan officials said. A small group of supervisors will be dispatched from Seoul, they said.

JAKARTA: Indonesia's export of crude oil and condensate jumped 14 per cent in 1994 from a year ago to an average of 887,500 barrels a day (b/d), a US government report said.

The August report, obtained Monday, stated that production in 1994 rose by 7 per cent to an average of 1.61 million b/d. Domestic consumption of petroleum fuel fell one per cent to 259 million barrels, the first decline

Will the dollar go up or down?

TOKYO, Sept 18: Will the dollar go up or down? Even the experts can't agree.

The correct answer could mean huge profits or losses for everyone from large electronics companies that depend on export earnings to institutional investors trying to make money for mom-and-pop pensioners, reports AP.

As the US currency has risen in recent weeks to 15-month highs against the Japanese yen, currency traders, financial analysts and company executives have increasingly argued over whether the rise will continue.

"A lot of movement depends on factors that are very hard to predict, like what the central banks are going to do, or what monthly reports are going to say," Dan O'Keefe, a market analyst at Merrill Lynch, said Monday.

Traders' time frame is "days, if not hours, so it's really hard to say how they are going to push the currency," he added.

The dollar Monday was hovering near 104 yen, with traders saying they were unsure whether to believe fi-

ancial officials of Germany, Japan and the United States who say they want the dollar to keep rising.

A survey by the Japan Center for International Finance, a market analysis company, showed that experts at 43 stock brokerages, financial firms and manufacturing companies were split on where the dollar would be six months from now, according to reports Monday.

The survey, conducted last week as the dollar rose, found that some believed the dollar would fall to 90 yen by December, while others were predicting a rise to 110.

That 20-yen gap, equivalent to less than 20 cents at Monday's exchange rates, may not sound like much. But on currency markets, the dollar is said to "soar" or "plunge" when it moves just one yen.

And, perhaps even more important for Japan's economy, the difference between a dollar worth 90 and 110 yen is the difference between profit and loss for a large number of Japanese companies.

A recent survey by the

Nihon Keizai Shimbun, the most widely read economic daily, showed Japan's export industries — which often determine the health of the economy — could break even with the dollar at just over 95 yen.

When the dollar sank below 80 yen in April, a historic low, virtually every Japanese exporter said it could not make a profit, because sales made overseas would be worth so few yen.

The exporters try to protect themselves against fluctuations by buying currency futures, but buying those futures is an exercise in trying to predict where the currencies will go.

With the experts disagreeing, those predictions get very difficult.

"Everyone is wavering," said Tomohiro Aoki of the finance center, who generally confirmed the reports about the survey.

"The market sentiment is for the dollar to keep rising... but the structural issues, such as the US savings rate and Japan's current account surplus, haven't changed," he said.

Venezuela keen to raise oil production

CARACAS, Sept 18: Venezuela intends to increase oil production to back a 1.5 billion dollar bond issue needed to make up a budget shortfall and meet its foreign debt obligations, reports AFP.

Finance Minister Luis Raul Matos Azocar said after a cabinet meeting Saturday that the government would begin talks next week on the bond issue.

Matos Azocar said oil production would be increased to back the bond offering, but did not say by how much. Venezuela currently exports 2.36 million barrels a day of oil, its main source of hard currency.

The government faces a crunch because of a budget deficit estimated at 18 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and payments on a

38 billion dollar foreign debt that will account for between 30 and 40 per cent of the budget over the next three years.

Four inter-city trains to run today

CHITTAGONG, Sept 18: Bangladesh Railway will run four inter-city express trains on different routes tomorrow in view of the difficulties faced by the people on account of 72-hour Opposition-called hartal, a railway source said here today, says BSS.

These inter-city express trains usually do not run on Tuesday but on special consideration they will carry passengers tomorrow, the source said.

Pak MCB to remain shut on Monday

KARACHI, Sept 18: Pakistan's Muslim Commercial Bank (MCB) will remain shut on Monday to mourn the death of its Labour Union president among six people killed in violence in Karachi on Sunday, a union spokesman said, reports Reuter.

Police said union leader Usman Ghani a member of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's ruling Pakistan People's Party, was killed in an ambush on the busy Share-Faisal avenue at noon. A bodyguard and a pedestrian were also killed.

Four gunmen in a car raked Ghani's vehicle with bullets after intercepting it near an intersection a police spokesman said. They then abandoned their car and escaped by seizing another vehicle at gunpoint.

Anti-tobacco ad campaign costs Guangzhou \$ 1.2m

BEIJING, Sept 18: A campaign by the south China city of Guangzhou to remove tobacco advertisements from public places has cost the city more than 10 million yuan (1.2 million dollars) in revenue, the China Daily said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The crackdown in August led to the removal of 71 large cigarette advertisements, 1,300 cigarette sun-umbrellas and 5,000 promotional flags from the airport, railway stations, major roads and other public places, it said.

The crackdown follows the state advertising law that came into effect on February 1 and puts curbs on tobacco advertising and ahead of a national hygiene inspection in October, it said.

Guangzhou is capital of Guangdong province, next to Hong Kong, which has the highest per-capita income of any Chinese province and a growing market for foreign cigarette makers, the principal buyers of outdoor advertisements.

Outdoor advertisements account for more than 10 per cent of Guangzhou's total advertising income, the paper said.