



HYUNDAI

CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

Dhaka-Yangon accord soon to boost bilateral trade

Bangladesh and Myanmar will sign an agreement to boost bilateral trade during the coming visit of Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed to the neighbouring country later this month, reports UNB.

"I'm going to sign a border trade agreement with Myanmar," he told a function Monday, pledging that the government would do its best to increase trade and investment in the country for a robust national economy.

During his visit from October 28, the minister will hold talks with senior leaders of the Myanmar's State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in a bid to remove the existing bottlenecks in bilateral trade.

"Bangladesh will try to march towards progress and prosperity with its neighbours in a friendly atmosphere," Tofael said, stressing the need for maintaining close relationship with the neighbouring countries.

Paradise Cables Limited, a leading electric cables manufacturer of the country, arranged the function at a local hotel to discuss the prospect of the industry and to accord reception to its distributors.

Referring to his recent China and Vietnam visit, the minister

noted that Bangladesh has the potential to be a leading production base in the region if all concerned, including the opposition political parties, extend cooperation.

The secrets behind China and Vietnam becoming strong manufacturing bases were political stability and discipline, he said.

"But unfortunately, Bangladesh is lacking both... this is the main problem before us."

In this context, the minister called for changing the existing attitude and avoid a double standard among the political parties who, according to him, say one thing while in government, but act differently when in the opposition.

"People didn't just want to put Awami League in power removing the BNP. They wanted a change in attitude so that we do not politicise, so that we take steps to remove all the problems they faced," Tofael said.

Referring to the issues of transit and power purchase from India, the minister said the previous government had signed the SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement) agreement in which transit and power purchase issues were accommodated.

"We didn't initiate discus-

sion, we're only following up on the initiative," he said. "But what a pity that those who had signed the agreement are now making it an issue."

Tofael claimed that transit facilities were given to India when Bangladesh allowed Indian ship into its inland waters in 1980-81 period. "Why this double standard now," he asked, saying that the government would do what is good for the people.

Pointing at the government step to increase investment, mainly foreign, he said, the Board of Investment, the Privatisation Board and the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority were revitalised for the purpose.

He said that a private company, Youngone Corporation, was given permission on principle to set up a special export processing zone for the prospective Korean investors that would generate employment of some 150,000 Bangladeshis.

The government has also taken steps to build up domestic capacity of power generation, he said, adding that power plants would be set up at Bhoala, Dinajpur and Khulna while the Asian Development Bank would finance to set up a plant

at Meghnaghat.

About the export sector, the minister said the country is doing good in export trade as shown by the July-August performance. The export target has been fixed at 4.5 billion US dollars for fiscal 1996-97, up from 3.8 billion dollars in 1995-96.

Referring to the 250 million dollar Jute Sector Adjustment Credit, Tofael said the government would privatise the Hafiz Textile Mills soon, protecting the interest of workers, to get the rest 200 million dollars of the credit programme which remained stalled.

Export Promotion Bureau EPB director general M Akmal Hossain said the EPB has identified electric cables as a probable export item. The item was once on the export list, but later the manufacturers heavily concentrated to meet the local demand.

Paradise Cables chairman Mosharrif Hossain said the company got export orders from Myanmar, but was facing some impediments in exporting electric cables to the neighbouring country.

He urged the minister to resolve the problem to help the company export the item.

Govt takes up plan to develop tourism sector

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed has said there is enormous potential for flourishing of tourism industry in the country which has been endowed with bounteous blessings of natural beauty, reports UNB.

The present government has taken up elaborate programmes for the development of this prospective sector, he told a seminar on "Problems and Solutions for Development of Tourism Industry" yesterday.

Dhaka University vice chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury Presided over the seminar, organised by Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation at the National Museum auditorium.

DU professor of Marketing department Dr Syed Rashidul Hasan presented the key-note paper while economist Dr Attur Rahman and DU dean of Social Science Faculty Prof Asaduzzaman took part in the discussion.

Speaking as chief guest, Prof Abu Sayeed alleged that the post-75 governments had pushed back the country's tourism like they did in other sectors.

"For rapid expansion of tourism, we have to remove the negative impression that the foreigners have about this country," he said.

"And for creating a bright image for Bangladesh, we must make best use of the sophisticated information web which now pervades the world."

The state minister for information said the institutions under his Ministry would do everything possible for the flourishing of tourism in the country.

In his paper, Dr Syed Rashidul Hasan suggested to identify new tourist spots and examine their feasibility.

He also made several other recommendations that included building up of skilled and trained human resources and coordination among various institutions and ministries.

Dr Attur Rahman noted that the country's great War of Liberation could be an important aspect of tourism development. "Our National Anthem can be the most valuable asset for tourism in the country," he said.

Australia lifts ban on new uranium sale to France

CANBERRA, Oct 22: Australia is to lift its longstanding ban on new sales of uranium to France, imposed in the early eighties in protest French nuclear testing in the South Pacific, reports AP.

The French government announced a definitive end to such tests Jan 29 after a final series of six tests between Sept 5, 1995, and Jan 27, 1996.

Sales of Australian uranium to France continued throughout the period of the ban on contracts signed before it came into force.

The new conservative government of Prime Minister John Howard had promised before its election on March 2 that it would lift the ban, which was imposed by the labor government of former prime minister Bob Hawke.

Acting Foreign Minister Tim Fischer confirmed the decision Monday.

He said France had now demonstrated a commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

"France's support for the treaty outlawing nuclear testing for all time reinforces other actions it has taken, since its announcement of a definitive end to nuclear testing on January 29," Fischer said.

He said the decision would be good news for Australia's uranium producers.

But he insisted that Australian uranium could only be used for peaceful purposes.

"Australia's long Standing policy on the export of uranium requires that uranium be exported solely for peaceful, non-explosive purposes," Fischer said.

ABB regional chief tells The Daily Star Investment in power can quicken economic growth

By Sharier Khan

Bangladesh can speed up its growth at an amazing pace by developing its gas and power sector, observes KN Shenoy, Regional President of South Asia, Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) Ltd.

Power sector is the most important element for the growth of a nation," Shenoy told The Daily Star in an interview yesterday. He is now in the city to assess the potential of investment in the country's energy sector.

"One kilowatt of energy generated can increase the GDP of a country by one dollar," he said, quoting a study of an international consultant company.

Bangladesh emphasises a GDP growth rate of five per cent and projects a power demand growth of 100 per cent in the next 10 years. Definitely, the growth in the energy sector can help the government attain its objective," he noted.

The ABB, a multinational company has been involved in developing power plants in Bangladesh since the 1960's. ABB power plants and equipment generate around 25 to 28 per cent of the total power produced in Bangladesh.

ABB is also among the five companies which pre-qualified last month for private sector power generation of the 300 MW Meghnaghat power plant.

The government has opened up doors for private sector participation in power generation through solicited bidding for developing the Meghnaghat power plant, which is also partially financed by the Asian Development Bank.

"We have plans to invest US 1 billion dollar in the power sector of India by 2000, and now I am here to assess how much we can invest in Bangladesh," he told The Daily Star.

ABB is looking towards the emerging markets in the globe. Because we have the most efficient expertise, and emerging countries have power crisis," he added.

Based in Switzerland and Sweden, ABB has over 1000 offices in 140 countries having 217,000 employees and an annual turnover of 34 billion US dollars. ABB is also a leading developer of gas fired, combined cycle, coal fired and other types of power technologies as well as electrical and other technologies through its extensive researches. The ABB activities also cover chemicals, oil and gas, mining, and project financing.



KN Shenoy

Asea Brown Boveri Ltd is a one point reference for any Independent Power Project. We have our own investment unit to devise most cost effective projects taking into consideration the need of the local customer," Shenoy pointed out.

Regarding Meghnaghat gas fired power plant, he said, "ABB can install the plant within 18 months if it is awarded the project by the government."

"We highly value environmental safety in our projects. The ABB plants, be it gas fired or coal fired, emit the least pollution in the world," he claimed.

The South Asia ABB, based in India, also manufactures plants in 12 locations employing 10,000 people. It was associated as a co-promoter of the first private power plant in India which is now in operation.

"So we can share our experience here," he added.

"I have the impression that the Bangladesh government has developed the expertise to deal with private sector participation in the power sector," he noted.

To improve the condition of the power sector of Bangladesh immediately, he suggested that the country should rehabilitate the old plants. "It costs less and takes a small time to do that," he added.

The ABB South Asia chief further pointed out that his company looks forward to invest in all types of power plants in the future.

BAMA to take part in int'l trade fair in Dhaka in Feb

Bangladesh Automobile Assemblers and Manufacturers Association (BAMA) will participate in the International Trade Fair to be held in the capital city in February next, reports UNB.

The decision to this effect was taken at the second annual general meeting of the association at a local hotel here Sunday night.

The meeting, presided over by BAMA chief Abdul Matlub Ahmed, decided to hold a parade of the BAMA vehicles to popularise them among the public.

The BAMA in a resolution urged the World Bank to help the third world countries produce environment friendly vehicles.

In another unanimous resolution the association decided to re-elect the existing office-bearers for yet another term.

Headed by Abdul Matlub, the nine-member committee, includes A S Helaluddin and Abdul Mannan Ahmed as vice-presidents and Lutfar Rahman as general secretary.

Aussie dollar rises to 4-year high against yen

SYDNEY, Oct 22: The Australian dollar closed at a four year-high against the Japanese yen on Monday as keen Japanese buying interest boosted an already bullish market tone pushing the local unit close to 80 US cents, reports AFP.

The Australian dollar finished trade here at 79.75 US cents, up from 79.42 at Friday's close, and at a four-year high of 89.92-90.01 Japanese yen from 89.11-89.19.

Traders said Japanese investor interest had returned as talk of a cut in official Australian interest rates had subsided following a report by the central Reserve Bank of Australia last week.

The Australian dollar also benefited early in trade from investor interest in dollar bloc currencies and by a stronger US dollar.

The local currency broke through key resistance at 79.60 US cents in early afternoon trade, touching an intra-day high of 79.76.

However, SBC warburg foreign exchange executive director John Radinoff said the market would find it difficult to push through 80 US cents.

WTO urged to start work on competition rules

GENEVA, Oct 22: The main global consumers grouping called on Monday the World Trade Organisation to start work as soon as possible on a pact on competition rules to ensure big companies cannot carve up world markets and dictate prices, reports Reuters.

The call was included in a list of recommendations issued by the London based Consumers International (CI) for the WTO's first ministerial conference in Singapore in December and handed to the trade watchdog's Director-General Renato Ruggiero.

"Consumers are already facing less choice and higher prices as transnational corporations (INCs) dominate an ever-growing segment of national and regional economies, declared CI, a federation of over 200 bodies in 90 countries.

Without stricter legislation and enforcement of competition regulation, consumers and national economies suffer. With cross-border mergers and international cartels, competi-

tion on a global level is in jeopardy in many industries.

Then is a need for an international competition policy that ensures both healthy competition between many players and benefits for consumers and domestic economies, a CI agenda, for the Singapore meeting declared.

Representatives from CI member bodies in India, Argentina, Kenya and Britain told a news conference before meeting Ruggiero that any WTO discussion on global investment rules should also envisage tough regulations on business practices.

"Without strong and binding rules on corporation practice, competition and consumer protection, a WTO agreement on investment rules could only increase the power of the INCs," said Pradeep Mehta of India's Consumer Unity and Trust Society.

Major industrialised powers are pushing hard at the WTO, where the programme for Singapore is currently being dis-

cussed, for agreement by the ministers on setting up a working group to look at a possible investment accord.

The European Union is also arguing for a WTO agreement on competition rules which could be enforced through the trade body's dispute settlement procedure under which neutral panels review complaints and return their findings.

Several developing countries — including India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Tanzania — are strongly opposed to WTO discussions on investment rules, saying a binding accord could limit their ability to follow national industrial policies.

They are also wary of the EU framework for discussions on competition, arguing that it appears aimed at dismantling their national monopolies to clear the way for penetration by big global corporations.

Consumers International also indicated it felt the time had not yet come for investment negotiations in the WTO.



Colombian President Ernesto Samper (C), Chinese President Jiang Zemin (R) and Colombian Foreign Minister Maria Emma Mejia toast after the signing of seven trade and bilateral relations agreements in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Monday. Samper arrived in Beijing at the start of a three-nation trip on Sunday.

— AFP/UNB photo

All barriers to exports to be removed: Tofael

The government is ready to provide effective support to promote exports of the country and all barriers relating to it would be removed, reports BSS.

This was stated by the Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed at a discussion on "export possibility of electrical cables" at a local hotel here on Monday, reports BSS.

Organised by Paradise Group the function was also addressed by Vice President of FBCCI Rasiduzzaman Dulu, Director General of Export Promotion Bureau Akmal Hossain, Chairman of Paradise Cable Mobarak Hossain.

The minister said, the present government wants to run the government on the basis of national consensus. He said, previous government had taken a number of epoch-making programmes but they could not implement those due to lack of their efficiency.

Iraq agrees to buy 300 trucks from Turkey

BAGHDAD, Oct 22: Iraq agreed to buy 300 trucks from Turkey to transport food and medicine to its capital Baghdad in accordance with an oil-for-food deal signed with the United Nations in May this year, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported yesterday, says Xinhua.

IBM reports slight drop in profits

NEW YORK, Oct 22: IBM Corp on Monday reported that its profit edged lower in the third quarter amid stagnant revenues from its software products and higher company expenses, reports AP.

IBM said it earned 1.29 billion dollars, or 2.45 dollars a share, in the three months ended Sept 30. The company earned 1.30 billion dollars, or 2.30 dollars a share, in the third quarter a year ago, excluding the impact of a one-time charge to help pay for IBM's acquisition of Lotus Development Corp.

IBM took a 1.8 billion dollars charge related to its 3.5 billion dollars deal for Lotus, which closed last July and was the largest acquisition ever in the software industry.

Revenue was 18.06 billion dollars, up 7.8 per cent from 16.75 billion dollars in the third quarter of 1994.

The earnings were in the high range of expectations, slightly beating the average 2.42 dollars per share predicted by analysts surveyed by I/B/S International Inc.

Dhaka WASA Tender Notice

(পানির অপচয় বন্ধ করণ। ম্যানহোলের ঢাকনা চুরি রোধ করণ)

Tenders are invited from Dhaka WASA enlisted 1st, 2nd & 3rd class civil contractors for the undermentioned works.

Name of work	Estimated cost	Date & time of receiving tender
1. Installation of 100 m dia water main line in South Sayedabad area.	Taka 1,18,067.34	4-11-96 up to 12 Noon
2. Installation of 4" dia water line at R K Mission Road (Gopibag) by-lane	Taka 87,738.39	-do-
3. Construction of an intermediate manhole at Kabi Jasimuddin Road	Taka 18,098.77	-do-

Tenders will be opened on the same day of receiving tender at 2-00 PM in presence (if any) of the tenderers or their representatives.

Schedule of tender will be available at the office of the Chief Accounts Officer of Dhaka WASA, WASA Bhaban, 98 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka & all MODS Zone offices of Dhaka WASA. Other detailed descriptions will be available at the office of the undersigned.

Address: Fakirapool Water Tank compound, Dhaka

WASA-P.1-345/96
DFP-23513-16/10
G-1307

Executive Engineer
MODS Zone-1
Dhaka WASA.

Child labour remains pervasive in Asia: US

WASHINGTON, Oct 22: American clothing companies are responding to pressure to reduce child labour in foreign plants, but need to enforce their requirements more strictly, Labour Secretary Robert B Reich said Monday, reports AP.

A Labour Department survey showed that child labour remains pervasive, particularly in Asia, but is "not now prevalent" in the Latin American countries checked.

With more than 200 million children being exploited, Reich said, there is no easy way to eliminate the problem of youngsters working in dismal conditions at substandard wages.

"We can keep the pressure on companies in a variety of ways and simply alerting the public to steps they are taking is important," Reich said. "The good news is that companies are responding."

Concern over child labour has mounted after a spate of bad publicity over conditions of foreign workers who produce

the mounting imports of apparel. The department said more than half the 178 billion dollars worth of garments sold in the United States in 1995 were imported, compared with 30 per cent in 1980.

The bad publicity has involved such celebrities as television personality Kathie Lee Gifford, whose name was used in a line of clothing manufactured in Honduras.

Reich said even though celebrities do not have any management control in the companies they work with, they have an obligation to find out what system is used to ensure that workers making such clothing are humanely treated.

The department examined the American companies' codes and visited 70 plants in six countries that make clothing for US firms — the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India and the Philippines.

According to a recent study by Human Rights Watch-Asia, as many as 115 million chil-

dren are at work in India alone. The department said that the codes of conduct on child labour that US companies have developed are only as effective as the monitoring policies the companies use to enforce them.

"Codes are not a panacea," Reich said. (They) are not worth the paper they are printed on without strict enforcement of the requirements."

The department sent a voluntary questionnaire to 48 companies, among them the Gap, JC Penney, Levi Strauss, Liz Claiborne and Nike. Thirty-six of the 45 companies that responded said they have adopted standards against child labour.

While the companies distributed codes of conduct to their suppliers, only 22 of 70 plant managers said they told their workers about them. Only 21 posted the codes in work areas and there also was no training of managers in the new codes.

The survey said the codes must be enforced and proposed site visits and talks with plant

workers to be sure the codes are honored.

The most frequent and thorough monitoring is among suppliers that are owned or contract directly with US corporations. In contrast, Indian and Filipino children work for small subcontractors or in their homes, where there is no monitoring at all.

Larry K. Martin, president of the American Apparel Manufacturer's Association, commented that his members "take their responsibilities very seriously, both domestically and abroad, and try to meet or exceed the standards in the countries in which they do business."

He said child labour is declining in Latin America because most of the facilities in the Caribbean basin are US-owned or operated. I am not surprised to see problems in Asia because there is not much US ownership so we don't have the same influence."

Sen. Tom Harkin, ranking member of a Senate committee

that appropriates funds for labour, health and human services, said passing his bill on voluntarily labeling every garment as a "child-labour free" product would help in implementing stronger standards.

"The best way to stop child labour is to deny markets to those who exploit children as a cheap labour source," he said in a statement.

46 pc US firms may create jobs over 12 months

WASHINGTON, Oct 22: Nearly half the large and mid-sized firms in the United States plan to create jobs over the next 12 months, the American Management Association reported yesterday in a study highlighting the end of corporate "downsizing," reports AFP.

Over the next 12 months, it said 46 per cent of the firms surveyed intend to add jobs.