


SANYO
FAMILY SIZE MICROWAVE OVEN
35.9 x 27.1 LITRE OVEN CAPACITY



Free Recipe Book

Transfin Trading Ltd.
Tel: 815306-9, 819625-9



HYUNDAI
CARS THAT MAKE SENSE

EU lifts ban on Indian fish

NEW DELHI, Dec 18: Indian Commerce Minister State B B Ramiah announced today that the European Union (EU) has decided to lift its ban on the import of Indian fish and fishery products, reports Xinhua.

A formal notification by the EU will be issued shortly, he told reporters here.

The EU banned the import of Indian marine products in August this year on grounds of certain deficiencies in hygiene in some of the fishery units in the country. A team of EU experts visited India in June this year and proposed the ban for alleged lack of hygiene and low standard of production.

India exported one billion US dollars worth of sea food in 1996-97, of which 20 per cent went to the EU.

Following the ban, the Indian government has revamped export inspection procedures and systems and strengthened the Export Inspection Council and its agencies. Detailed additional guidelines have also been prescribed for the marine exporting units wishing to export to the EU.

UN approves Iraq-UAE sea link for passengers

BAGHDAD, Dec 18: The United Nations has approved a sea link to ferry passengers between sanctions-hit Iraq and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), official newspapers here said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Ah-Thawra said the green light came from the UN committee overseeing the sanctions in force against Baghdad for the last seven years since its invasion of Kuwait.

The UAE, which has repeatedly called for the sanctions to be lifted, made the request, it said.

Freight traffic between the two Gulf states has been on the rise since the UN "oil-for-food" was launched in December 1996 allowing Iraq to export limited amounts of crude to finance imports of food and medicine.

34 states sign deal to fight bribery in int'l business

PARIS, Dec 18: Member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and five other countries on Wednesday signed a convention to help eradicate bribery in international business, reports AP.

Even some of those signing the accord admit to its shortcomings, but praised it as a first effort to put an end to the widespread practice of kickbacks to win contracts.

"It is a first step, an important first step," said French Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn. "There is still work to be done."

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, speaking at the signing ceremony, called the accord "a victory for good government, fair competition and open trade."

The United States has been a driving force behind several years of tough negotiations that led to the agreement. France and Germany later insisted upon the accord's binding character.

The accord makes bribery a criminal offense in some cases, but not all, depending upon national laws, and does not apply to foreign political parties or private individuals.

But it makes bribery of foreign public officials an extraditable offense.

The agreement is to take effect by the end of 1998. Signing countries — 34 in all — must first get it ratified by their national parliaments.

We are taking this step because we recognize that supplier nations have a special responsibility to stop this destructive practice," Albright said. "A practice that punishes honest people, undermines economic development and destroys confidence in the law."

China to tighten fiscal policy

BEIJING, Dec 18: China will hold to a generally tight credit policy in guiding government spending in 1998, the minister of finance was quoted as saying by state media on Thursday, reports AP.

Liu Zhongli said the policy would be "appropriately tight." The government uses the term to mean allowing for government flexibility in funding key projects amid a generally tight credit environment.

Implementation of China's budget in 1997 was satisfactory, said Liu. Fiscal revenue grew 23 per cent in the first 11 months over the same period a year ago.

Spending increased 16 per cent in the period, slower than the growth in revenue. But Liu urged China's financial authorities to cut unnecessary spending, strengthen supervision over government funds and overhaul the nation's tax and auditing system, the Financial News reported.

EU inspectors satisfied with plants Ban on Bangladeshi fish may go soon

Star Business Report

European Union inspectors, now in Dhaka, have indicated that the six-month-long ban on Bangladeshi fish exports may be lifted early next year, officials said.

The hint came at a fact-finding meeting between the government officials and the EU team at the Fisheries Ministry.

The EU team members spoke of their experience after inspecting Bangladeshi factories at the meeting attended among

others by the Fisheries Secretary.

"We are satisfied with the improvements in the factories and quality control laboratories," one of the EU inspectors was quoted by the director general of fisheries Liaquat Ali as saying. Ali said there was no reason for which the ban would continue.

The three-member EU team had earlier visited six private sector fish processing plants

and two government-owned quality control laboratories in Chittagong and Khulna.

President of Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association (BFFEA) Gelam Mostafa is also optimistic about the withdrawal of the ban. "I am hopeful," he said. "We have left no stone unturned to comply with the EU health manual," Mostafa added.



Home Minister Rafiqul Islam inaugurating the Rangs Ltd Showroom for new Mitsubishi cars at Tejgaon in the city yesterday. A Rouf Chowdhury, MD of Rangs Ltd, is also seen. — Star photo

Rangs opens showroom for new Mitsubishi cars

Star Business Report

Rangs Limited has opened a grand showroom for new cars supplied by Mitsubishi Corporation of Japan at Old Airport Road in Tejgaon.

Various types of new cars in latest model manufactured by the company and directly imported from Japan will be kept at the showroom for display and sale.

Inaugurating the showroom Home Minister Major (Retd) Rafiqul Islam Bir Uttam hoped that the company would develop its service and provide better opportunities to the consumers. He expected that the company's business would be expanded and increased significantly after opening the showroom.

He underscored the need for development of good infrastructure in the country to make the communication smooth and easy.

After commissioning of Jamuna Multi-Purpose Bridge the communication network would be expanded manifold and we will have to be careful from now to meet the increasing demand of the people and resolve the problems," Rafiq said.

He said lot of industries are expected to be set up in the northern area and their productions and raw materials will be carried through land routes. "So better road communication is one of the key factors for the overall development of the country," he noted.

The function was also addressed by Toshio Kawachi, president of Kinsho-Mataichi Corporation (KMC) an affiliated organisation of the Mitsubishi corporation. Hiroo Ito, general manager, Asia Department, Office of International Business of Mitsubishi Motor Corporation,

managing director of Rangs Limited A Rouf Chowdhury member of parliament Kamal Majumder and Gelam Kader.

Rouf Chowdhury termed the occasion as very significant for the company and said that a number of high officials of the corporation came to Dhaka from Japan only for this occasion. He said though the showroom started earlier but could not be opened officially because of their busy schedule.

He said Rangs Limited had been importing passenger vehicles from Mitsubishi Corporation for last 17 years when the company was not famous in the country. "Within a few years the name of the company was spread among the people and Rangs played a vital role to popularise Mitsubishi company in the country."

Rouf said the company with collaboration of Progati Industries Limited is now supplying almost 54 per cent of the new passenger vehicles imported in the country. He hoped the relation between Rangs and Mitsubishi would last long and be consolidated further.

Talking to the journalist the officials of the Mitsubishi Corporation termed the car market in Bangladesh as very small where only 800 new cars are sold per year said KMC general manager Kochaka. But he hoped that the market would be expanded in the future.

Rouf Chowdhury spoke against import of reconditioned old car in the country which caused pollution and health hazard to the people. "Our neighbouring countries like India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have already banned import of reconditioned car. It is only Bangladesh which still allow

import of reconditioned car without any valid reason, he mentioned. "Though the price of re-conditioned cars is cheaper than the new one, but its maintenance cost is much higher," he observed.

He further said that no car assembling plant was set up in the country due to lack of stability in governments import policy. As the government is frequently changing its policy the entrepreneurs were not encouraged to invest huge money which is needed for such big project, he said.

The Rangs Limited has already bought land for setting up an assembling unit and if gets proper support from the government side it would be able to establish a car assembling factory in near future. Detailing the future plan of his company Rouf said that it will float shares certificate among the people and raise required money for the project.

In another function at the Rangs workshop in Tejgaon the company yesterday officially launched Mitsubishi BM bus and canter truck in the country.

Presenting different advantage of the canter truck H Ito said that the canter model was one of Mitsubishi Motors' most successful vehicles in the world. It enjoys a very high reputation in small model truck category throughout the world, he said.

He expressed confidence that its high level specifications and cost efficient performance would prove successful in Bangladesh.

He thanked the Rangs Limited for providing modern and high tech truck and bus service facility in Bangladesh.

Finance minister assures all-out support for software industry

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday assured all-out support from the government for the development of software industry in the country, reports UNB.

"The coming years of information highway will be very crucial for us," he said while inaugurating a seminar as chief guest at a local hotel in the morning.

Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed was the special guest at the function.

The seminar on "Export of computer software and data processing services from Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects" was jointly organised by the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and Bangladesh Computer Society (BCS).

Kibria said the nation must make transition from the era of typewriters to computer age and assured that the government would take necessary measures to tackle the problems of transition.

"We should sit down together and decide specific steps on each and every recommendation of the seminar," he said.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed underscored the need for development of the software as one of the thrust sectors to boost the country's export.

"We are expecting a very good prospect of this sector like readymade garments, frozen food and leather products, he said adding that the government has decided to proceed in a planned way to explore the possibility.

He mentioned that the government had formed a committee earlier this year to identify problems of the software sector and put forward recommendations to solve them. The commerce ministry is maintaining liaison with the concerned authorities, he added.

The 14-member committee comprising experts from various government and private organisations placed a report at the seminar identifying problems and suggesting recommendations for development of the sector.

The report said a substantial number of the educated unemployed youth force, with ability to read and write English, exists in the country who can be trained in the required skills, particularly in data processing services, within a short time.

Asian crisis may hit California economy

LOS ANGELES, Dec 18: The financial crisis that has spread through Asia is expected to hit California next year and slow growth in the state's rebounding economy, with export businesses and the tourism industry bearing the brunt of it, reports AP.

"It's going to be a foot on the brake," said Jack Kyser, chief economist for the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp. "The longer Asia's problems go on, the heavier the foot."

Kyser sharply revised his forecast for California exports, among other economic indicators, after watching South Korea fall into turmoil in recent weeks. In his upcoming annual report, Kyser now writes that California exports will slow markedly next year, from a growth rate of nine per cent this year to just one per cent.

In several reports to be released this week, economists at UCLA and other universities, the economic development panel and other private and public organizations agree California will be hit on the export side. Tourism, transportation, agriculture and engineering services are all expected to feel the pinch from Asia's troubles.

He also mentioned Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's participation in the Micro-Credit Summit as Co-Chairperson, the 51st session of UNGA, the World Food Summit, SAARC Summit, Commonwealth meeting, special OIC summit in Pakistan and recently held OIC summit in Tehran.

Azad also referred to the Prime Minister's visits to China, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Turkey and the visits to

it said the user base of computer is extremely low because of high cost of computers and peripherals due mainly to high incidence of import duty and value added tax (VAT).

Besides taking fiscal measures, the committee recommended development of human resources, infrastructure and marketing system for the growth of export-oriented software and data processing services industry.

The committee report suggested a coordinated action plan involving Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC), educational institutions, development partners, venture capital, non-resident Bangladeshis and software associations.

The committee pointed out

that there is a great potential for development of software industry in Bangladesh.

Implementation of the recommendations report will enable the country to emerge as one of the leading software exporting countries in the world, it said.

"This sector has the potential to generate the highest revenue for the country," it added.

Commerce Secretary Sayed Alamgir Farooq Chowdhury, EPB vice-chairman Faisal Ahmed Choudhury, executive director of National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) of India Dewang Mehta and Bangladesh Computer Society president Mostafa Jabbar also addressed the seminar.

BOI gives registration to \$ 187m projects

The Board of Investment (BOI) has given registration to four joint venture investment projects with an investment outlay of 187 million US dollars, equivalent to Tk 841.4 crore, reports UNB.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Executive Council of the BOI with its Executive Chairman Farooq Sobhan in the chair yesterday, a press release of the Board said.

The projects include setting up of mobile telephone service and SSP fertilizer plant, modernisation and expansion of a garment industry, and introducing aviation services.

With the implementation of the projects, the demand gap for fertilizer and cellular tele-

phone would be reduced to a certain extent and cargo handling services will be expanded.

The projects would also create new job opportunities for 1,000 people of different categories, the release added.

Vietnam's exports increase

HANOI, Vietnam, Dec 18: Industrial exports from Vietnam so far this year have increased by more than 1.3 billion dollars compared with 1996, official media reported Thursday, according to AP.

Heavy and light industry exports amounted to 5.5 billion dollars through the end of November.

Foreign minister says Economic diplomacy begins bearing fruits

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday said the "economic diplomacy" pursued by the present government has started yielding results by increasing exports and foreign investment in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

This diplomacy also created more employment opportunities for Bangladeshis in labour-importing countries, he told a training course for BCS Foreign Affairs cadres at the Foreign Service Academy here this morning.

Azad said "the positive and encouraging results of our initiatives and efforts in the sphere of foreign policy have been reflected in the signing of historic water sharing treaty between Bangladesh and India and the signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord."

The Foreign Minister said Bangladesh's contribution to wards formation of a "Growth Triangle" in South and South-East Asia, D-8 Group of Islamic countries and the seven-point proposal placed at the OIC summit in Tehran for economic development of the Muslim Ummah have been welcomed by all.

He also mentioned Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's participation in the Micro-Credit Summit as Co-Chairperson, the 51st session of UNGA, the World Food Summit, SAARC Summit, Commonwealth meeting, special OIC summit in Pakistan and recently held OIC summit in Tehran.

Azad also referred to the Prime Minister's visits to China, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Turkey and the visits to

Bangladesh by a large number of foreign dignitaries during last one and a half years.

"... our success in creating a positive image for Bangladesh and securing a place of honour for her in the comity of nations has been the outcome of the combined efforts of our political and diplomats," he said.

Expressing satisfaction over the performance of Bangladesh diplomats at home and abroad, Azad said "even so, there is hardly any scope for complacency."

He pointed out to the objective realities of the world at the threshold of the 21st century and said "we have witnessed significant and unprecedented changes in the global political and economic arena in recent years."

Fundamental shifts in the ideological perceptions, progress in the communication sector and ongoing process of globalisation will have far reaching impacts on inter-state, inter-regional and international relations.

It will have also impact on North-South relations, poverty alleviation, political violence, ethnic conflicts, environmental degradation, empowerment of women, migration, drug abuse and organised economic crimes.

Against this backdrop, the Foreign Minister said Bangladesh can neither afford to be indifferent nor remain outside the process of transformation.

Rather, he said Bangladesh has to continue involving and fine-tuning her foreign policy and strengthening its implementation mechanism, institutional capacity in particular.

ADB okays \$ 50m loan, equity investment

MANILA, Dec 18: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) said today that it had approved a 40-million-dollar loan and a 10-million-dollar equity investment to set up a new cement plant in Bangladesh, reports AFP.

The plant will be set up mainly by the Lafarge Group of France and the Islam Group of Bangladesh in Sunamganj district near the Indian border, a statement by the ADB headquarters here said.

The plant, due to begin commercial operation in 2000, will cost a total of 225 million dollars and will be the largest cement plant in Bangladesh.

The investment will go into the Lafarge Summa Cement Ltd the joint venture which will set up the plant.

Bangladesh imports 70 per cent of its cement needs and must deal with high prices and transportation costs.

The ADB assistance will help reduce dependence on imported cement, save foreign exchange and support vital infrastructure projects in the country, the ADB said.

IDB to organise joint forum with BOI

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) will organise a joint investment forum with Board of Investment (BOI) in Bangladesh to be participated by IDB member states, reports UNB.

This was conveyed by the visiting six-member IDB mission at a meeting with BOI Executive Chairman Farooq Sobhan here Monday, said a press release.

BOI Executive Chairman explained the delegation the various investment incentives and facilities now available in Bangladesh for the foreign investors.

Director, Operations and Project Department-1 of IDB Dr Mohammad Ahmad, who is leading the mission, expressed his satisfaction at the existing investment friendly environment in Bangladesh.

He assured the BOI Chairman that the bank would extend all possible help and cooperation in speeding up industrialisation of the country, especially for poverty alleviation and employment generation.

Stocks down, dollar up in Tokyo

TOKYO, Dec 18: Tokyo stock prices finished sharply lower Thursday as investors took profits after the previous day's sharp gains. The US dollar edged higher against the yen, reports AP.

The benchmark 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average lost 379.42 points, or 2.29 per cent, closing the day's session at 16,161.64 points. On Wednesday, the average rose 555.85 points, or 3.48 per cent.

Share prices started lower following an overnight fall on Wall Street and slightly stronger Nikkei futures on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange.

Profit-taking came one day after stocks soared following Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's surprise announcement of a special two trillion yen (15.38 billion dollars) income tax cut to bolster the economy.

Analysts expressed skepticism, though, that the tax break was large enough to generate a genuine economic recovery.

A two trillion yen special income tax cut is good news and a surprise, but it is not enough to have a big effect on the economy," said Masaaki Higashida, a deputy general manager of the investment department at Nomura Securities Co.

The broader Tokyo Stock Price Index of all issues listed on the first section was down 15.02 points, or 1.22 per cent, to 1,212.93. The TOPIX closed up 28.53 points, or 2.38 per cent, the day before.

At midafternoon, the dollar was quoted at 127.44 yen, up 0.36 yen from late Wednesday in Tokyo and also higher than its late New York level of 127.08 yen overnight.

Traders said Japan's central bank carried out dollar-selling intervention Thursday for the second consecutive day, but the US currency maintained its strength.

The Bank of Japan sold dollars around 127.70 yen, said a Japanese monetary official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The official said the volume of the dollar-selling intervention was about 100 million. Tuesday's central bank intervention totaled 1.3 billion, according to the major Japanese economic newspaper Nihon Keizai.

Mot Japanese institutional investors continued to sell dollars for yen, while Japanese importers actively bought the US currency on dips, traders said.

The yield on the benchmark No 182 10-year Japanese government bond fell to 1.635 per cent from 1.690 per cent Wednesday, driving its price up to 109.37 yen from 108.97.

A technology that promises warmth and worth

By Ramendra Choudhury

How about getting a new blanket in the price range of Tk 350-400 only? Yes, at very low price though, NOVOTEX BLANKETS combine desirable qualities like warmth, durability and comfort. NOVOTEX is the name given to blankets made from all jute or jute-blends. The technology devised by the Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI) has been waiting in the laboratory for more than a decade.

The technology, if put to commercial exploitation, has the proven potential to profit the entrepreneurs and benefit the less affluent millions in the country. This would open up a wide avenue to diversifying jute

usage. The last but not the least, commercial production of NOVOTEX blankets may prove enterprising for the idle capacity of some jute mills.

The BJRI has devised technologies for making three categories of NOVOTEX blankets. These are: 100 per cent jute, 80 per cent jute with 20 per cent acrylic, and 70 per cent jute with 30 per cent acrylic.

The quality aspects of different types of blankets may be the matter of first consideration. (See Table 1)

Table-1: Quality Parameters of NOVOTEX and other Common Blankets.

Types of Blankets	Weight in gms per sq. m	Thickness in mm	Friction tolerance (no of Revs.)	Thermal Conductivity (mw/m/oc)
A. NOVOTEX				
100% Jute	800	5.00	1100	125
80% Jute+20% Acrylic	750	4.96	2200	97
70% Jute+30% Acrylic	750	5.00	3000	70
B. 100% Cotton	576	4.00	1000	160
C. 100% Wool	736	3.00	4000	54

* Source: BJRI

Table-2: Users' Positive Response as Reflected in the Demand. *

Establishments	Nos distributed by BJRI in 1985	Demand expressed in 1986
Army	100	5000
BDR	50	15000
Police	50	
Jail	50	10000
Health Directorate	100	
Ansars & VDP		10,000
Air Force		10,000
Others	78	
Total	428	50,000

* Source: NOVOTEX Study Team Report, 1988

more is the durability expected. On the other hand, the lower the value for thermal conductivity the warmer the blanket will feel. As such, by all considerations the NOVOTEX is better than cotton blankets and slightly lower in quality than 100 per cent woolen blankets.

But it may be said safely that for the intensity of cold felt during winter in Bangladesh, NOVOTEX blankets would more than just serve the purpose. Moreover, it would have a better edge in price as compared to cotton or woolen blankets.

If users' response could be taken as a testimony to the technology or the product it had

been highly positive. Table-2 provides a brilliant reflection in this regard.

BJRI, being a research organisation and having no commercial production facility, could not afford to meet up the demand. It may, however, be anticipated that there exists a good institutional market in the country.

How big may the size be of the domestic market for NOVOTEX? In absence of directly citable data a round about assessment may be of interest. On an average, about one lakh pieces of blankets are imported annually for the army, BDR, po-

lice, prisons and hospitals etc. Import for the general market sale, few years back, was assessed to be one lakh pieces per year. Import of old blankets per annum varies between one to one and a half lakh pieces. Beyond these, the annual sale of cotton-stuffed quilts is estimated to be around 30 lakh pieces. So the possible market size for NOVOTEX may be anybody's guess.

The prospective entrepreneurs and users may like to know about the cost of NOVOTEX blankets. The NOVOTEX Study Team, in 1988, provided some useful information in this connection (Table-3).

The study found that very high cost of dyes and other processing chemicals doubled the production cost of NOVOCOL

Yarn (grade of jute) as compared to normal gray yarn. The team also pointed out that there was no facility in the country for manufacturing NOVOTEX under the same roof or even by the same management. That too accelerated the cost. These facts indicate that under planned entrepreneurship there is much scope to reduce the cost.

All the positive factors like proven technology, prospective market and competitive pricing are there in the country. Would it be too much to hope that both private and public sector entrepreneurs would come forward enterprisingly with NOVOTEX? This is expected to resolve two very important issues like import substitution and diversification of jute usage