

BA introduces
flat-flying
baby beds

British Airways has introduced another flat flying bed for babies. A new luxury carrycot took off recently, says a press release.

Globetrotting tots will now be able to fly completely flat in the carry-cots securely attached to bulkheads in the aircraft. For infants aged 0-6 months, the cots have been developed by Coronet of Blackpool.

The airline has ordered nearly 1,000 to be fitted to its long-haul fleet of aircraft including Boeing 747s, 767s and 777s. The cot has been rigorously tested on the ground and in-flight and has been cleared for take-off.

Martin George, British Airways Director of Marketing, said: 'We are committed to the comfort of our passengers, whatever their age. The new flying carry cot complements the infant seat introduced last year so our youngest passengers can now fly completely flat or in a range of positions from horizontal to upright.'

The new carry cot follows the introduction of the first fully flat bed for business travellers in Club World on the airline's long-haul services.

CDF holds seminar
on microinsurance

Credit and Development Forum (CDF) organised a seminar to share the study findings on 'Prospects and constraints of insurance services in microcredit industry in Bangladesh' at IDB Bhaban on Tuesday, says a press release.

The study was conducted by a consultant of CDF, Mortaza Ali, Director of Bangladesh Insurance Academy (BIA).

About 50 participants from different NGOs and insurance companies attended the seminar.

S K Sarker, Chairman of CDF, presided over the seminar while Safat Ahmed Choudhury, former Managing Director of Delta Life Insurance Company Ltd, was the chief guest on the occasion.

Mosleh Uddin Ahmed, Deputy Managing Director, Delta Life Insurance Co Ltd, and Dewan A H Alamgir, General Manager of Gramene Shakti, were the main discussants at the seminar.

Speaking as chief guest, Choudhury opined that insurance is not only a scientific method of handling risk but also plays an important role in mobilising people's savings.

In his concluding remarks, Sarker mentioned that poor people needed security for their life and properties.

Diet eggs now
in India

BANGALORE, India, Apr 21: "Diet eggs" that claim to lower the risk of coronary heart attacks, enhance immunity and block the ageing of skin, reached the sub-continent today with their lunch in the southern Indian city of Bangalore, reports AFP.

The eggs will eventually be sold throughout India, as well as Pakistan and Sri Lanka, by Kool Komestibles Ltd, a local company that has invested 100 million rupees (two million dollars) in marketing the product.

This city's daily consumption of eggs is about three million, but we will target a niche market of 30,000 to 100,000 eggs, Kool Komestibles managing partner Syed Fathauddin Naved told reporters.

EU okays Taxotere
as new treatment
for lung cancer

The European Union (EU) has okayed Taxotere as a new treatment for lung cancer, says a press release.

The EU approval follows the okaying nod of FDA (USA). The approval of the EU and FDA was based on the results of two landmark multicentre studies involving over 500 patients, and the first Phase III clinical studies ever conducted in advanced lung cancer patients whose disease had progressed on prior cisplatin based chemotherapy.

Taxotere is a new treatment for advanced lung cancer after the failure of prior chemotherapy.

"Taxotere is the first chemotherapeutic agent approved by EU and FDA for lung cancer patients, in whose cases chemotherapy has failed," said Frank L Douglas, MD, PhD, head of drug innovation at Aventis Pharma, a new pharmaceutical giant emerged after unification of Rhone-Poulenc and Hoechst. "We are pleased to make Taxotere available worldwide to extend the lives of patients who previously had limited treatment options once their disease had progressed."

"We found that patients treated with Taxotere in second line setting had a significant improvement in their survival and Taxotere should be considered the standard for these patients," said Frank V Fossella, Medical Director Anderson Cancer centre USA, and T Le Chevalier, Director, Gustav Rossy Institute, France, who conducted the clinical studies.

Ensure 500-700 cr dollar from
software, IT services a year

Tofail calls on computer-related instts at BCS seminar

Unveiling a set of policy measures, the industries minister yesterday urged all computer-related institutions to make a concerted effort to ensure 500-700 crore dollar worth of software and services annually by 2010, reports UNB.

Tofail Ahmed made the suggestion while addressing a seminar titled "Present and future trends of computer industry in Bangladesh" at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

Bangladesh Computer Society (BCS) organised the seminar in the BUET conference room with Dr Aminul Huq in the chair.

President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh Forest E Cookson and Col Aziz took part in discussion on the paper. Computer expert Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Acting Secretary of the Industries Ministry Golam Rahaman addressed the func-

tion, among others.

The minister said that the government was advancing the country forward through developing two emerging sectors — computer and natural gas.

"Multiple steps and some urgent measures have been taken for flourishing the software industry, which is undergoing speedy expansion globally," he told the meet.

The minister stressed the need for creating local market for software industry that would help attract foreign investment.

At the seminar Pro-VC of Bangladesh Open University Dr RI Sharif presented the keynote paper depicting some obstacles to the growth of the IT industry in Bangladesh. The hurdles include lack of skilled manpower, limited local market, insufficient infrastructure and absence of information technology policy.

Tofail said despite some limitations, the government is working hard for the development of this prospective sector. It formed a task force in 1997 and most of the 45 recommendations placed by it had been implemented, he said.

As part of these recommendations, some 18 acres of land has been acquired at Gazipur for an IT village there.

The T&T Board has been opened up with an aim to reduce Internet usage expenses and computer sector has been incorporated in industrial policy, the minister apprised the seminar. It, he hoped, would help attract foreign investment in this sector.

"A number of computer training firms has been set up here and our motto is to create programmers, not typists, as we want the brilliant new generation to export software abroad," the minister said.

As the IT scenario has been changing day by day, Tofail called for regular changes in its curriculum to maintain quality of this sector.

He informed the seminar that the government was working fast for formulating IT education policy and copyright act on software would be framed soon.

Explaining different aspects of the software industry development in India, the minister said at the outset the Indian government provided less cooperation in this sector compared to the Bangladesh government.

"But private investment, especially by the younger section of the entrepreneurs, helped this industry witness a boom," Tofail said.

The minister also underscored the need for encouraging the youth as well as local entrepreneurs to invest in this sector alongside government moves.

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Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, President of CSE and Chairman of South Asian Federation of Exchanges (SAFE), gives his speech at the two-day SAFE Conference in Mumbai on Tuesday. On his left is Chairman of the Securities Exchange of India (SEBI) D R Mehta. Also seen in the picture are Vice-President of BSE Deena Mehta and Colombo Stock Exchange DG Hiran Mendis.

— CSE photo

China to deepen financial
reforms to ward off risks

BEIJING, April 21: China's Prime Minister Zhu Rongji has pledged to deepen financial reforms to help ward off risks, the Financial News reported today, reports Reuters.

"It's still an important and urgent task to continue to deepen financial reform and rectification to effectively dissolve financial risks," he was quoted as saying.

The reformist premier, on an inspection tour to the eastern province of Jiangsu, said reforms of state banks must go ahead to help maintain financial stability.

"Reforms of state banks must be pushed forward to maintain our country's financial security and promote the healthy development of the financial industry," he said.

China has set up four debt-clearing companies to tackle mounting bad loans of the state banks — the Bank of China, the Industrial and Commercial

Bank of China, the China Construction Bank and the Agricultural Bank of China.

Modelled on the US Resolution Trust Corp, the debt-clearing firms — Cinda, Orient, Great Wall and Huarong, have moved to swap debts for equity in state firms to recover loans and cut the debt burdens of state firms.

China would continue to consolidate trust firms, urban cooperative banks and rural cooperative funds through closures and mergers, Zhu said.

The key to avoiding new losses at financial institutions is to have correct lending directions and reduce redundant staff," he said.

The central bank would continue to support rural credit cooperatives by extending loans.

A central bank official said on Thursday China had suspended eight credit cooperatives in the southeastern province of Fujian for three months as some of them had liquidity problems.

Financial institutions must "establish modern financial systems, improve management and enhance their capacity to withstand risks," Zhu said.

He urged local governments to intensify a crackdown on financial irregularities and crimes, such as illegal fundraising activities and official corruption.

Zhu also called on local authorities to "protect the legitimate

8 new members okayed
SAFE conference ends in Mumbai

The two-day conference of the South Asian Federation of Exchanges (SAFE) concluded successfully at the BSE Convention Hall in Mumbai yesterday, says a press release.

Chairman of the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI), D R Mehta, attended the conference as the chief guest while SAFE chairman, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, presided over the conference.

In the conference, decision has been taken on the members' subscription rate, conducting a comparative study on the rules and regulations of the member markets, development of a website and publishing a monthly newsletter.

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During the conference, CSE signed a memorandum of co-operation (MoC) with the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) with a view to fostering a closer relationship between the two exchanges.

SIA Bangladesh organises travel agents' tour

Singapore Airlines Bangladesh has organised a five-day travel agents' familiarisation and educational tour of Singapore from the 19th of this month, says a press release.

A total of 13 top supporting agents have qualified for the FAM, based on a promotion offered for three months (December 1999 to February 2000).

These agents have supported SIA in selling Singapore Holiday Packages and Singapore as stopover destination.

In 1999 Singapore Tourism Board and SQ Bangladesh jointly organised a similar familiarisation trip, which was based on a promotion, and few agents who qualified last year re-qualified for this year's trip.

On the trip, the agents will be exposed to many attractions of Singapore such as Sentosa Island tour, Jurong Bird Park and Night Safari, which are offered by SIA's holiday packages. There will be a briefing at Singapore Tourism Board. Also, the agents will have the opportunity to inspect one of the vessels of Star Cruises. Currently Singapore Airlines is promoting holiday cruise packages at an attractive price. Ahsan Sharif, Senior Marketing Officer of Singapore Airlines Dhaka office, leads the educational tour.

China announces creation of new phone cos

BEIJING, Apr 21: China has officially completed the creation of two phone companies split off from the former state monopoly in an attempt to increase competition, state media said Friday, reports AP.

China Telecommunications (Group) Corp. will take over fixed-line service. China Mobile Telecommunications Corp. gets the former monopoly's mobile phone business.

The two companies have operated separately since last year, but the formal announcement was an important symbol of efforts to speed development in one of China's most promising industries.

China Telecom's monopoly had kept prices high and slowed growth.

Spl cells for RMG sector safety from next week

Move to ensure safe highway movement, shipments

Police, in cooperation with the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), will beef up steps to ensure safe movement of shipments and workers of the garment sector through two monitoring cells from next week.

Inspector General of Police AYB Siddiqui told BSS yesterday that his force, under the programme, will intensify patrolling the highway between Savar Export Processing Zone and Chittagong Port to frustrate dacoity and extortion.

Besides strengthening vigil on spots vulnerable to the security of female workers, the force will immediately respond to emergencies of the garment sector received through four telephone hotlines to be installed at the monitoring cells in

Dhaka and Chittagong, he said.

The exclusive cells, headed each by an Additional Police Commissioner with a BGMEA representative, will be set up in Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) control rooms.

Besides bearing the cost of installation of the telephones, the BGMEA will provide four pickup vans for reinforcing the police patrolling, the IGP said.

The BGMEA will hand over the vehicles and telephones to Home Minister Mohammad Nasim at a launching ceremony of the cells at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on Sunday.

Siddiqui said a new chapter of partnership of cooperation between the police and the business community will begin with the launching of the cells.

BGMEA President Anisur

Rahman Sinha told BSS yesterday that his association floated the idea of the monitoring cells keeping in mind interest of both the entrepreneurs and the workers, mainly the female ones.

He thanked the government for accepting the proposal of the BGMEA and said the association is planning to have more safety measures for the sector in future.

The BGMEA leadership side by side protecting the interest of the exporters, is planning to do more for the garment workers in addition to a number of ongoing labour welfare programmes, Sinha said.

"We will shortly have a free and frank exchange of views with the workers' representatives of the sector for this purpose," the BGMEA chief said.

Japan to propose multi-billion dollar Asian currency pact

Step to guard against future crises

TOKYO, Apr 21: Japan plans to propose a multilateral currency swap pact worth tens of billions of dollars with its Asian partners to guard against future currency crises, a newspaper said today, reports AFP.

Japan will make the proposal at an annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Chiang Mai, Thailand, opening on May 6, the Sankai Shimbun said.

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