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# The Daily Star BUSINESS

DHAKA, MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2000

## New budget may okay 25pc freight subsidy for vegetable exporters

Star Business Report

The government is likely to announce a 25 per cent air freight subsidy for fresh fruit and vegetable exporters in the next fiscal budget to be placed in the parliament this week, sources said.

Earlier, the government formed a six-member committee headed by Vice-Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) seeking suggestions for boosting fresh fruits and vegetables exports from the country.

The committee comprises representatives from the National Board of Revenue (NBR), Biman, Civil Aviation Authority and Bangladesh Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Exporters' Association (BFFVEA).

According to sources, the committee submitted its report to the Commerce Ministry last month, in which, among other things, it recommended 25 per cent air freight subsidy for the exporters and increase in reserved cargo spaces.

Later at a meeting with the leaders of BFFVEA late last month, Finance Minister Shah Aman Kibria said that he was very keen to see substantial rise in the export of fresh fruits and vegetables as the sector had tremendous potential said a member of the committee. "We are very much hopeful that the exporters would be given 25 per cent air freight subsidy," he added.

For the two major fruits and vegetable destinations -- UK and the Middle East -- the present air freight rates are Tk 62 and Tk 45.

An earlier Planning Commission report, which was also sent to the Commerce Ministry, suggested 25 per cent air freight subsidy and increase in reserved cargo spaces for perishable goods like fruits and vegetables in the national flag carrier Biman to make horticultural products competitive in the export markets.

India provides air freight subsidy to its horticulture sector and this practice is in line with the Uruguay Round Agricultural Agreement (URAA).

rules, according to the report drafted for making the National Policy for Vegetables, Fruits and Flowers Export.

Following a decision by the National Committee for Exports in 1998, the Planning Commission commissioned the Hortex Foundation to prepare the report for promoting horticultural export from the country, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables.

The report also called for improved packaging standards and duty drawback facilities for the exporters. It also said that import of air-conditioned trucks and containers should be made completely duty-free.

"Bangladesh's chances for

emerging as one of the successful horticultural exporting countries is very bright, provided the sub-sector is given proper policy support," the report said, adding that the growth potential of the sub-sector still remained unexplored and the exporters were operating at a low efficiency level.

Export earnings from fruits and vegetables stood at US\$ 3 million in 1983-84, US\$ 9 million in 1992-93 and US\$ 32 million in 1997-98, indicating a growth of 185 per cent over a period of 5 years. The sub-sector has become the 10th largest export sector of Bangladesh, contributing about 1 per cent to the country's total export earnings.

## CPD now on the Net

Star Business Report

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a leading local think tank, launched its website yesterday with the hope to use it as an effective medium to extend its outreach and disseminate information.

The most important objective which motivated CPD into launching its own website, according to its Chairman Prof. Rehman Sobhan, is to connect itself with a wider circle of people and give them the widest possible access to information, knowledge about the state of development and process of policy-making in the country, so that would be able to obtain a real sense of inclusiveness in policy discourse.

Prof. Sobhan also thinks that loss of ownership over national policy agenda to the donors is the most important factor for deterioration in the quality of governance and it is hardly possible to promote effective governance without establishing domestic ownership.

"Effective governance, thus, calls for democratically sus-

tainable policies, which originate from a process of domestic dialogue, designed through participation of the stakeholders," he said.

The website will provide a unique opportunity to access a wealth of information and analyses from CPD publications, which will be available online, and also allow CPD to engage itself in interactive dialogues with a wider audience. The address of the website is [www.cpd-bangladesh.org](http://www.cpd-bangladesh.org).

CPD's Executive Director Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya said that through the website the Centre seeks to closely involve the young generation, including those living abroad, who are destined to lead Bangladesh to a prosperous future in the new millennium.

"I believe our website will give the users an opportunity to better appreciate the efforts and contributions of Bangladesh's civil society towards shaping the future of a country at a crossroads," Bhattacharya said.

## Bangladesh at Expo-2000 Hanover

Bangladesh is participating in the five-month "Expo-2000 Hanover" in Germany which began on May 31 to enhance the country's exposure to the outside world, reports BSS.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder inaugurated the colourful Expo-2000 with the presence of presidents, prime ministers, ministers, prince and high officials from 170 countries.

A Bangladesh delegation comprising Commerce Secretary Golam Rahim, Bangladesh Ambassador in Germany Kazi Anwarul Masud, Prof Anisuzzaman of Dhaka University, Vice-Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau A B Chowdhury and high officials attended it.

Bangladesh set up a pavilion in cooperation with Germany along with other Asian countries in hall number 26 with the theme "Living in Bangladesh — yesterday, today and tomorrow."

BUTU Professor Shamsul Wares and a German architect jointly designed the pavilion, depicting life and achievements of Bangladesh.

The Economic Cooperation Development Minister of Germany praised the Bangladesh pavilion on the very first day of inauguration.

## BA offices move to Gulshan

Star Business Report

British Airways offices in the city have moved to the Diplomatic Enclave at Gulshan.

Terry Daly, Area General Manager for Middle East and South Asia of the Airways, inaugurated the new premises yesterday, says a press release.

The move from the congested business centre of Motijheel to Gulshan will provide customers with easy access to British Airways.

The new offices, situated on the first floor of the Star Centre, are designed to meet a wide range of modern business activities in a working environment that matches British Airways' high standards maintained worldwide. They are equipped with state-of-the-art training and conference facilities.

A city check-in facility on the ground floor of the Star Centre will offer customers a convenient option of checking-in on their luggage during the day.

This facility is available for all passengers travelling out of Dhaka enables them to have their seats pre-allocated, collect their boarding cards and be free of their luggage well before flight departure.

The service will be available from 1100-1500 hours on all flight days with effect from Sunday.

All baggages will be security screened and 100 per cent hand-searched. Proxy check-in of baggages will not be permitted in the interest of the passenger's security.

Jill Errington, Manager Bangladesh said: "As a growing business we need additional working space which is of a high quality. The new offices in Gulshan bring us closer to our customers and the travel trade. It also provides an improved working environment and better training facilities for our staff."

## Korea Merchandise Exhibition 2000

Star Business Report

Korea Trade Centre (KOTRA) Dhaka will hold a 4-day "Korea Merchandise Exhibition 2000" at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel from tomorrow.

The trade show, first of its kind in the country, will continue till the 9th of this month from 9 am to 8 pm everyday, says a press release.

This was announced at a press conference held at a local hotel yesterday.

A total of 38 Korean companies and their local agents will exhibit high-quality products. These include automobiles and auto parts, construction materials, consumer electronics, home and kitchenware appliances, stationery, textile products, machinery, electronic goods, computer and accessories.

The purpose of the event is to showcase world-class Korean products, services and technology for Bangladeshi businesses and consumers alike to explore various possibilities of cooperation in the field of trade and investment.

The show will display some of the best-selling products all over the world from world class Korean manufacturers. LG and Samsung will introduce high-definition digital 64-inch concept television, Daewoo and Hyundai will show the latest car models.

Some very attractive gift items like crystal glassware, photo frame and writing instruments will also be on display.

Construction materials, textile products like thread, yarn, fabrics and capital machinery and equipment will also be put on display in the exhibition.

## Mobile Net technology to star in Asia telecom show in S'pore

SINGAPORE, June 4: Internet access via cellular telephones and the next generation of mobile technology are expected to grab the limelight when world players converge on Singapore this week for Asia's premier telecommunications event, says AFP.

Up to 2,000 exhibitors have spent an estimated 50 million Singapore dollars (29 million US) at the four-day CommunicAsia 2000 show starting Tuesday to stamp their mark on the region as Asian economies rebound from the 1997 financial meltdown.

It's a show for international telecommunications companies to establish their presence in this industry," says Jean Khoo, spokeswoman for Singapore Exhibition Services (SES), the organiser of the event which starts Tuesday.

Mobile technology — specifically wireless technology — is

the dominant theme as telecom players prepare to tout the convenience that comes with adoption of going wireless to an estimated 30,000 trade visitors.

Asian countries have begun rolling out Internet services via mobile phones using the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) standard, which is touted to be the next catalyst for the Internet despite the limited models now available.

WAP marries the two most dramatic breakthroughs in modern communications — cellular phones and the Internet — in a region where sales of cellular phones are exploding.

Using WAP, consumers will be able to do their email and banking, surf websites, make purchases and do other transactions from anywhere.

"Convenience is going to be the key to unlocking the potential of wireless technology," said Richard Chiam, technology

analyst at Vickers Ballas, a Singapore-based research house.

According to industry estimates, the number of mobile phone users is expected to reach 500 million globally by 2003, with 75 per cent of those phones Internet-enabled.

Using the theme "a mobile society in the wireless era," a spokesman for Finnish phone company Nokia told AFP it would be unveiling an initiative aimed at raising the quality of Internet content for access from mobile phones.

Rival Swedish phone giant Ericsson will showcase its first demonstration in Asia of its third-generation (3G) mobile phone technology, said Birgitta Petterson, marketing communications director for Asia Pacific.

Ericsson claims its 3G technology enables transmission speeds over networks to be 50

times faster than current mobile phones.

Then there's Bluetooth, the wireless technology tipped to be one of the buzz words of CommunicAsia 2000.

"A highlight which is likely to attract most attraction is the Bluetooth Pavilion, featuring the latest on Bluetooth wireless technology from Ericsson, Intel IBM and others," said Shaun Goh, SES executive director.

Bluetooth, pioneered by Ericsson, allows wireless interconnection among a diverse range of mobile electronic devices, and CommunicAsia will include a Bluetooth seminar and a Bluetooth solutions conference.

Lucent Technologies, heavily involved in the Bluetooth feature, takes up the biggest show space, saying it wants to share its perspective on the development of the Asian telecommunications sector.

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