

Sony Hi-Fi
Promotion
Campaign
launched

The Sony Hi-Fi Promotion 2000 Campaign was launched at the Rangs Electronics' Airport Road sales centre yesterday, says a press release.

Kirk Lim, Senior Manager of Market Development Division of Sony Singapore, inaugurated the campaign as chief guest.

Lim Kian Huat Eddy of Market Development Division of Sony Singapore, Akbar Hussain, Managing Director, Sabur Ahmed, General Manager, and other senior officers of Rangs Electronics Ltd were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Kirk Lim hoped that Sony Hi-Fi Promotion 2000 Campaign will be able to popularise various new models of Sony Hi-Fi which are considered matchless in many ways specially for the listening pleasure they provide.

Kirk Lim along with Kim Kian Huat Eddy is currently visiting Bangladesh to study the electronics market here.

Akbar Hussain, Managing Director of Rangs Electronics Ltd, spoke about the special features of the 8 new models of Sony Hi-Fi which include super high output 6000W PMPO.

The 8 new models are Video CD Hi-Fi VX 99, VX 88, VX 77, VX 55, VX 33 and LBT-V-60 and Audio CD Hi-Fi DX 3 and DX 5.

All these models are now available at special prices in all the 44 of Rangs Electronics own outlets and also with its more than 150 dealers covering the entire country.

India's MTNL
cuts Internet
access charges

NEW DELHI, June 10: Indian state-owned telephone company Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL) yesterday cut its Internet access charges by up to 80 per cent, its chairman and managing director said, reports AFP.

"Our new rates are very competitive. We decided to reduce the rates at a MTNL board meeting. It will give domestic Internet usage a big boost and MTNL increase its customer base," Srinivas Rajagopal told reporters.

MTNL had earlier said it would follow a strategy of lowering tariffs every three months to eventually reduce the tariffs to a level comparable to what consumers pay for cable television.

MTNL, which offers phone and Internet services in Bombay and New Delhi, reduced its Internet access rates to 500 rupees (11.49 dollars) from 1600 for a 100-hour usage plan, and to 1,500 rupees from 5,500 for a 500-hour slab.

The reduction was greater for unlimited-usage plans, Rajagopal said.

"For a month's unlimited usage plan, we have dropped rates from 1,000 rupees to 200 rupees for a month and to 2,000 rupees from 6,000 in the case of a year's package," Rajagopal said.

On June 5, India's oldest and biggest Internet service provider, the state telecom company Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd (VSNL), halved its rates from 1,500 rupees (39 dollars) for 100 hours to fight increasing competition.

MTNL said the price cutting was not in reaction to the VSNL package and that it had been drawing up a fresh package for some time.

It said it was looking at "coming out strongly with high bandwidth Internet access packages that could be provided and supported through leased lines."

WB okays central
African oil
pipeline despite
warnings

WASHINGTON, June 10: The World Bank defied warnings from environmental and human rights groups and approved nearly 200 million dollars for an oil pipeline in Chad and Cameroon that critics says threatens the local population, reports AFP.

The bank said in a statement that its board of directors agreed "overwhelmingly" to lend 39.5 million dollars to Chad and 53.4 million dollars to Cameroon to help build a 1,070 kilometre (670 mile) pipeline to carry oil from the Doba field in southern Chad to loading facilities off Cameroon's Atlantic Coast.

The International Finance Corporation, the bank unit making loans to the private sector, will lend 100 million dollars to the joint venture pipeline and mobilise up to 300 million dollars from commercial banks.

Participating oil companies, banks and export credit agencies would provide the remaining 3.2 billion dollars.

The total cost of the project has been estimated at 3.7 billion dollars to develop the Doba fields and build the pipeline. US firms ExxonMobil and Chevron are participating with respective stakes of 40 and 25 per cent, as is Malaysia's Petronas, with 35 per cent.

Incentives seen restoring investor confidence: DSE

Budget to help revive
ailing capital market

Star Business Report

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) has hailed the proposed budget for 2000-2001 fiscal year.

In a press statement issued in the yesterday, DSE said the proposed budget has suggested tax incentives for both the primary as well as the secondary markets which will help channel unutilised funds to the country's stock market.

To boost the ailing capital market, the finance minister

has proposed four sorts of tax incentives.

The proposed budget offers tax rebate at a rate of 10 per cent to listed companies, which will declare dividends of at least 25 per cent.

The exemption ceiling for dividend income has been proposed to be raised to Tk 40,000 from the current Tk 30,000.

In the budget, the minister also made investment in secondary market shares eligible

for tax discount and raised the investment allowance to Tk 225,000 from the existing Tk 200,000 for investment in initial public offerings (IPOs).

The bourse also hoped that the budget offerings for the country's capital market would create a positive impact on the investment scenario, energise the private sector and encourage more domestic and foreign investors to come in a bigger way.



Kirk Lim, Senior Manager-Market Development Division of Sony Singapore, inaugurates the Sony Hi-Fi Promotion 2000 Campaign at Rangs Electronics' Airport Road sales centre in the city yesterday.

— Sony photo

Plan to rein in WB, IMF
to damage US interests

WASHINGTON, June 10: Radical plans by a Congressional commission to rein in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund would damage US interests and rob the global lenders of their ability to respond to crises, the United States said yesterday, reports Reuters.

Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, presenting Treasury's formal response to the report, criticised the commission's plans to limit the number of countries which could borrow from the two lenders.

While we have sympathy with a number of the broad aspirations, we believe that the core recommendations would, if implemented, weaken the IMF, the World Bank and the other regional development banks to the point where vital US interests would be compromised," Summers told reporters.

The plan, signed by a majority of a bipartisan commission headed by conservative economist Allan Meltzer, won a hostile reception from the IMF and from many of its member states.

But it won some backing in

Congress, where many lawmakers dislike the IMF intensely. Some of them want to make additional US funding for debt relief for poor countries conditional on the IMF adopting Meltzer-style reforms, although Summers said he hoped the extra debt relief cash would be approved soon.

The IMF says the Meltzer report suggestions would make it harder for the fund to set conditions to ensure that its money is used correctly. Developing countries are angry at the report's proposals that the IMF stop lending to poor countries and that the World Bank stop lending to middle-income countries which can tap world capital markets.

These institutions played an important role in our country," Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo said on Friday at a meeting attended by the heads of the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. "This role has been a positive and constructive one."

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Asia and then new deals in Russia and in Brazil in 1997 and 1998.

The message I got from developing countries in Latin America and in Asia is that the fund is an important institution which should be strengthened not weakened," IMF Managing Director Horst Koehler told the meeting with Zedillo.

Koehler toured countries in the two regions as part of a get-to-know you start to his term in office. He has already put forward a subtly different agenda to that of his predecessor, Michel Camdessus, and Summers said he welcomed Koehler's emphasis on transparency and crisis prevention.

The IMF, under pressure from the United States and other major member countries, is already making much more information available about its policies and its loans.

Summers also made clear he thought the IMF, which currently provides low-interest loans to poor countries, should remain involved in assisting these nations. But the main focus of this work should be on macroeconomic issues like inflation or monetary policy, he said.

A lower level of short-term debt is said to be desirable because it reduces volatility on the external account.

Commodity: Weekly Roundup

Oil surges on OPEC indecision on opening up taps

LONDON, June 10: Crude oil prices continued to rise, briefly topping 29 dollars in London and 30 dollars in New York, as OPEC failed to deliver on promises that it would open up the taps if prices rose substantially, reports AFP.

Brent North Sea crude on the International Petroleum Exchange (for July delivery) rose to 29.03 dollars a barrel from 28.88 dollars.

Prices have not been this high for three months, since before OPEC members and other countries agreed to increase output to cool overheated international markets.

On Monday, the Saudi oil minister Ali ben Ibrahim al-Noua mi said that the current price rise was due to limited refining capacity in the United States, not a lack of crude supplies.

However, later this week he said that the price rise was because of strong demand in Asia and a fall in US reserves, which might indeed merit a rise in production.

Rubber: Soft, Rubber prices fell slightly amid light demand.

In Kuala Lumpur, the RSSI

index slipped to 2.61 ringgit per barrel.

By Wednesday, composite crude prices had been trading at an average 28.08 dollars for the previous 20 days.

Some OPEC officials hinted that the cartel would take no decision on output levels ahead of its next ministerial meeting on June 21.

Saudi officials have given conflicting signals on future output pretensions in recent days.

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Rubber: Soft, Rubber prices fell slightly amid light demand.

In New York, Arabica (for September delivery) fell to 95.85 cents a pound from 97.75 cents.

kilo from 2.69 ringgit.

The SMR20 index, for rubber used in tyre manufacture, stood at 2.23 ringgit.

Cocoa: Cool. Cocoa prices slipped on technical factors.

In London, September contracts fell to 648 pounds a tonne from 659 pounds.

Dealers continued to pay close attention to developments in Cote d'Ivoire, the world's leading producer country.

Coffee: Cool. Coffee prices fell as clement weather continued to bear down on plantations in Brazil, raising expectations of a bumper crop to add to the global supply surplus.

In London, Robusta prices fell to 947 dollars a tonne from 966 dollars.

Prices slipped to 915 dollars mid-week, not far from the seven-year lows of 911 dollars seen in May.

Rubber: Soft, Rubber prices fell slightly amid light demand.

In New York, Arabica (for September delivery) fell to 8.23 cents a pound from 8.29 cents.

Tea: Strong. High quality



Maan Bangladesh Ltd and LG-OTIS jointly arranged a function at Sonargaon Hotel Thursday to introduce the LG-OTIS elevator and escalator. Photo shows, among others, K Jinnah, Manager LG-OTIS (first from left), Habibur Rahman, Chairman, Maan Bangladesh (second from left) and A B M Sirajuddoula, Chairman, Shell (Bd) Ltd (third from left), at the function.

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Novartis launches
Ovaltine in
Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, June 10: Novartis (Bangladesh) Ltd., a multinational company, organised an 'Ovaltine' launch meeting at a local hotel today to mark the introduction of the product in Chittagong.

President of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), Chittagong unit, Prof Dr Shahadat Hossain attended the function as the chief guest.

The launching ceremony was also addressed by Managing Director of Novartis (Bangladesh) Ltd, Gerhard G. Doege, and other company officials including M. Khairul Anam, Business Development Manager, and Shariful Islam, Brand Manager.

Speaking on the occasion the chief guest stressed the need for nutrition for the normal growth of children.

He also spoke of breast feeding to help the children grow properly.

The managing director of Novartis said that with the launching of Ovaltine, the company has further strengthened its business operation in Bangladesh.

China records
strong growth
in industrial
production

BEIJING, June 10: China's industrial output grew 11.5 per cent year-on-year in May, a report said Saturday, indicating the economy continues to recover despite the drag of persistent structural problems, says Reuters.

The better-than-expected growth curbed fears that ongoing economic reforms will create major disruptions in the near term.

"It's a very strong number," Huang Yiping, an economist with Salomon Smith Barney in Hong Kong, told Dow Jones Newswires. "It basically confirms our prediction of a strong economy."

The State Statistical Bureau said value-added industrial output, China's benchmark production figure, rose 11 per cent in the first five months of 2000 to 890.4 billion yuan (\$107.5 billion), according to the official People's Daily. Output in May totalled 196.3 billion yuan (\$23.7 billion).

China's economy has outperformed most expectations so far this year. Gross domestic product rose 8.1 per cent in the first quarter, compared with a 7.1 per cent rise last year.

Many Chinese economists expect deflation to ease this year and the economy to surpass last year's overall 7.1 per cent expansion, halting seven years of declining growth.

China has reported strong economic figures so far. Exports surged 39 per cent in the first four months of 2000, leaving a trade surplus of \$7.4 billion. Along with the growth in output, investment has risen strongly and corporate profits more than doubled.

Accelerated growth in production of steel and cement helped boost the overall figure, while output of colour televisions, refrigerators and air conditioners also maintained breakneck growth in May, the report quoted the bureau as saying.

Accord on greater
protection for
Working mothers

GENEVA, June 10: Steps to improve an international convention on greater protection for working mothers were agreed here yesterday by employers, trade unions and governments from the International Labour Office's 175 members, reports AFP.

The text, which revises a 1952 ILO convention on maternity protection, will be voted on by ILO members at next Thursday's plenary session of the International Labour Conference.

Among its provisions are extending maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks, a reinforced guarantee that mothers can return to the same job or its equivalent after the leave and the continuation of an obligation post-natal leave of six weeks.

Improved conditions to allow working mothers to breast feed are also included in the drafted convention.

While generally welcoming the new text, the workers' group at the ILO complained Friday that it did not include the maintenance of an absolute ban on the dismissal of expectant mothers.

Such dismissals will remain possible if employers can prove they are unrelated to maternity.

"We think that it is an excellent text that will reconcile the workers' concerns for strong prescriptive provisions with employers' concerns for very realistic and implementable provisions," said ILO spokesman John Doohan.

Some trade unions and non-governmental organisations had feared a revision of the convention, so far ratified by 37 of the 175 ILO member states, would lead to a reduction in the level of maternity protection.

BPI (Broken Pekoe) leaves rose by up to 12 cents a pound, and PDust leaves, used in tea bags, rose by up to seven cents.

Sugar: Shine. Sugar prices continued to rise as dealers anticipated a fall in supplies as the Brazilian harvest is expected to be lower than last year's crop.

In London, October contracts rose to 230 dollars a tonne from 2