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Motorola wants to boost business in Bangladesh

Star Business Report

Regional Manager of Motorola Asia Pacific Ltd John J Jones is now in the city to explore potentials for boosting business in the country's telecommunication sector.

At a press briefing yesterday Jones said that Bangladesh should be careful while adopting telecom technology and should go for the ones which have the potentials to be developed into third generation technology. He mentioned that CDMA and GSM are those types of technologies which can be easily upgraded to meet the changes.

Subhendu Mohanty, Director (Operation) of Motorola India Ltd, Sabir Ahmed Khan, Project Manager of Motorola Bangladesh branch office and local Motorola official Taimur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Jones also said that Bangladesh's future in software development and its need for telephonic infrastructure with broadband capability would also depend on the choice of the right technology.

Motorola officials said that the company has been doing business in Bangladesh for the last 27 years and is confident about the future growth of this sector.

Regional Head of Corporate Banking of StanChart arrives today



Zahid Rahim, Regional Head of Corporate Banking, South Asia Region of Standard Chartered Bank, will arrive in Dhaka today on a two-day visit. During his visit, he will meet the regulators, corporate customers and executives of the bank, says a press release.

Zahid, who is also the Chief Executive, Levant Region (Lebanon, Jordan/Palestine Group of countries) of Standard Chartered Bank, joined the bank in 1969. He worked in various capacities in Europe before being transferred to Pakistan in 1974. In 1983, he went to Bahrain as Deputy Manager of the Offshore Banking Unit and returned to Pakistan in 1987 as Manager, Karachi. Prior to his appointment as Chief Executive Pakistan of Standard Chartered Bank in 1996, he worked in Kenya, as Executive Director, of the Corporate & Institutional Banking Division for East Africa covering Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

S'pore mobile operator partners Nokia in 3G network readiness

SINGAPORE, Nov 20: Singapore mobile operator MobileOne Asia (M1) announced Monday a partnership with Norwegian phonemaker Nokia to prepare for the rollout of third-generation (3G) telecommunications services, reports AFP.

The arrangement includes the development of a GSM network by the end of next year as well as the development of products and services for telecommunication systems of the future. M1 said in a statement.

M1 is to invest 500 million Singapore dollars (289 million US) over the next five years, covering equipment and services.

"The investment in broadband capacity will enable M1 to satisfy growing demand for non-voice mobile applications such as messaging, mobile commerce, wireless Internet access and imaging," the statement said.

Japanese trade surplus falls 40.8pc in Oct

TOKYO, Nov 20: Japan's trade surplus in October fell 40.8 percent from the previous year to 692.6 billion yen (6.4 billion dollars), the finance ministry said Monday, reports AFP.

Exports in the month rose 8.3 percent to 4,475.3 billion yen and imports jumped 27.6 percent to 3,782.7 billion yen, the ministry said.

BATEXPO 2000 starts today to boost RMG export

A 3-day apparel and textile show begins here today expecting a further boost to the country's main export products in the world markets, says UNB.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) is organizing the 11th Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition (BATEXPO) 2000, the biggest in Asia Pacific region, at Hotel Sonargaon.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the fair where BGMEA members, local and foreign fabric and accessories companies, computer and engineering firms and service organisations will display their products and services in 79 stalls.

"This is a unique opportunity for our buyers to secure the best-quality apparel products at most competitive prices," BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha told a press conference at the BGMEA office yesterday.

He said while visiting BATEXPO 2000, an annual event since 1989, the buyers could take the opportunity of taking a first-hand view of attractive investment incentives offered by the country.

"We earnestly hope that investors in the backward-linkage industry will evaluate the overall investment climate and take positive decision," Sinha said.

The fair will remain open from 9 am to 9 pm everyday until November 23 to show visitors the range, diversity, quality, fashion, style and price of locally made apparels under a single roof.

Special arrangements have been made to exhibit the ready-stock apparels for direct sale during the fair at the same venue.

As of previous years, the organisers will also hold seminars on each of the fair days to share experiences and ideas on issues related to mutual benefit in the international textile and clothing arena. A fashion show will also be staged on the concluding day.

At the last BATEXPO, some 110 foreign buyers, including 20 new ones and 450 local representatives of foreign buyers, took first-hand idea about the garment products generating business worth \$43.52 million from spot orders and \$3.12 million from stock lots.

Buyers, buying houses and their representatives from USA, Canada, UK, Germany, Italy, Austria, Finland, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Japan, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Syria and UAE visited the clothing bazaar in 1999.

Replying to a question, Sinha said despite post-2005 challenges, entrepreneurs are coming up with new units and expansion of their existing units considering the export growth of the sector.

Some 3,100 garment factories are now in operation in the country, up from over 2,000 three years back. Average RMG export growth is over 15 percent per year, which the BGMEA president predicted to grow at a rate of 10 percent up to 2005 despite recession and tough competition in the world market.

"The growth would continue even after the year 2005 if the infrastructure problem is solved."

"We need a permanent fair venue with large space," Sinha said, adding that the work of BGMEA complex starts January next. As per plan, the complex would have an exhibition centre.

Organizer Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)



BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha yesterday speaking at a press conference arranged to mark the BATEXPO 2000 that begins today. —Star photo



Shubhendu Mohanty of Motorola India Ltd makes a point at a press briefing in the city yesterday. Also seen in the picture are John J Jones (2nd from left), Regional Manager of Motorola Asia Pacific Ltd, Sabir A Khan (extreme right), and local Motorola official Taimur Rahman. —Star Photo

Global child labour report damns West, Asia

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: There are an estimated 250 million child workers globally and although the scourge is rampant in Asia, Western countries too witness the worst forms of child exploitation, a survey said Monday, reports AFP.

Noted Indian anti-child labour activist Kailash Satyarthi, chairman of the international committee of the Global March Against Child Labour, told a news conference here that the physical, emotional and sexual exploitation of the young was a worldwide phenomenon.

Satyarthi confessed to "mixed feelings" while releasing the report, which tabulates child labour, child prostitution and pornography, slavery and children forced to take up arms.

"On the one hand, we live in

the age of the information technology revolution, globalisation and overwhelming advances.

"But this goes side by side with slavery, prostitution, children being bought and sold like animals ... and creating wealth under appalling conditions not for themselves but for others."

Satyarthi said India, with about 120 million child labourers was the world's worst-affected country, followed by Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Brazil.

"But it's existence has been widely noted in Europe, the United States and Canada," he said.

Satyarthi cited the report to prove his claim.

"Of the 25 prostitutes known to be plying their trade in Sudbury, a town in Canada,

half are under 15 and some as young as 11," he said.

The report says the estimated average age of girls who enter street prostitution in San Francisco is 14.

Satyarthi said an estimated 400,000 children under 15 were working as full-time domestic servants in the Indonesian capital Jakarta, while in Uganda, some 4,000 children had been abducted from a single district to fight as child soldiers in the Lord's Resistance Army.

"About 3,000 Albanian children have been trafficked to Italy and Greece for begging and for cleaning windows and cars without pay," he said. "And 5,000 children were found working in hazardous industries such as fireworks units in Guatemala City."

Aussie truck drivers protest fuel price rise

MELBOURNE, Nov 20: Truck drivers angry at soaring diesel prices blockaded fuel depots in the southern state of Victoria on Monday, reports AP.

Trucks blocked wharves and all but one of the state's major fuel terminals in the state capital, Melbourne.

"We are not only doing this for ourselves, it is a campaign for everyone who uses petrol," said protest organiser Jerry Brown-Sarre.

"Whether you use it for work, for recreation, for whatever, you are paying too much and this is a chance to let the companies know you are not happy."

Diesel prices have risen from 68 Australian cents per litre (US \$ 1.44 per gallon) a year ago to more than 1 Australian dollar per litre (US \$ 2.12 per gallon).

Brown-Sarre said the blockades would stay in place until the drivers demands for cheaper prices or higher payments for carrying loads were met.

Caltex called police late Sunday to clear the entrance to one of its depots and Shell said it also planned action to ensure fuel could still be distributed.

"We are taking advice and will be taking what action we can to maintain operations," Shell spokesman Vincent Cosgrove said. "Caltex had success last night and we want to resume normal operations."

Victorian motorists' group, the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, said the state government should step in to preserve fuel supplies.

"Petrol must flow through, the government should invoke emergency legislation if it can't solve this politically by Wednesday," RACV spokesman David Cunningham said.

Rephco opts for GP mobiles

GrameenPhone Limited has recently signed an agreement with Rephco Laboratories Limited under its Corporate Sales Package initiative, says a press release.

Under the agreement Rephco has been provided with GrameenPhone's GP-GP mobile phone connections. Rephco is using the GP mobiles to maintain efficient communication with its factory at Barisal and its countrywide distribution system.

Ferdousur Rahman, Head of Corporate Sales of GrameenPhone, and Didarul Alam, Managing Director of Rephco Laboratories, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations. Senior officials of the two organisations were also present on the occasion.

RMG exports may cross \$5b this year

Star Business Report

The country is expected to export garments worth more than five billion US dollars this year, said Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) officials.

They said that in the last four months exports from the woven sector alone increased by over 22 percent from the usual annual seven to eight percent growth. The knitwear export continued at over 25 percent.

The BGMEA officials were speaking at a pre-BATEXPO (Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition) press conference at the city yesterday.

The BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha said that the knitwear sub-sector generally contributes the significant portion of earnings from the garments sector. With such robust growth, it would significantly help the total garments sector.

"So if this trend continues, then the total garments exports from the country may cross 5.5 billion US dollar," Sinha said.

He said that the quick growth would help local apparel producers tap new markets.

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Taiwan reports first balance of payments deficit in 2 yrs

TAIPEI, Nov 20: Taiwan reported a balance of payments deficit of 437 million US dollars in its third quarter, marking its first deficit in two years, the central bank said Monday, reports AFP.

The bank attributed the deficit to a sharp surge in demand for US dollars and a fall of foreign equity investment amid a bearish stock market.

The Taiwan Stock Exchange weighted price index has plunged 45.1 percent to 4,845.21 on Monday since President Chen Shui-bian from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party took office on May 20.

Net outflow of foreign equity investment in the third quarter stood at 131 million US dollars, down from a net inflow of 3.57 billion US dollars year-on-year.

In the meantime, Taiwan posted a current account surplus of 2.87 billion dollars in the third quarter, up from 1.63 billion a year earlier, the bank said.

The current account measures trade in goods and services plus specific financial transfers such as gifts and grants.

The bank recorded a capital account deficit of 42 million dollars in the quarter, narrower than the 58 million deficit a year earlier, on reduced outward remittances by immigrants.

Digital camera sales boost Olympus profit by 146pc

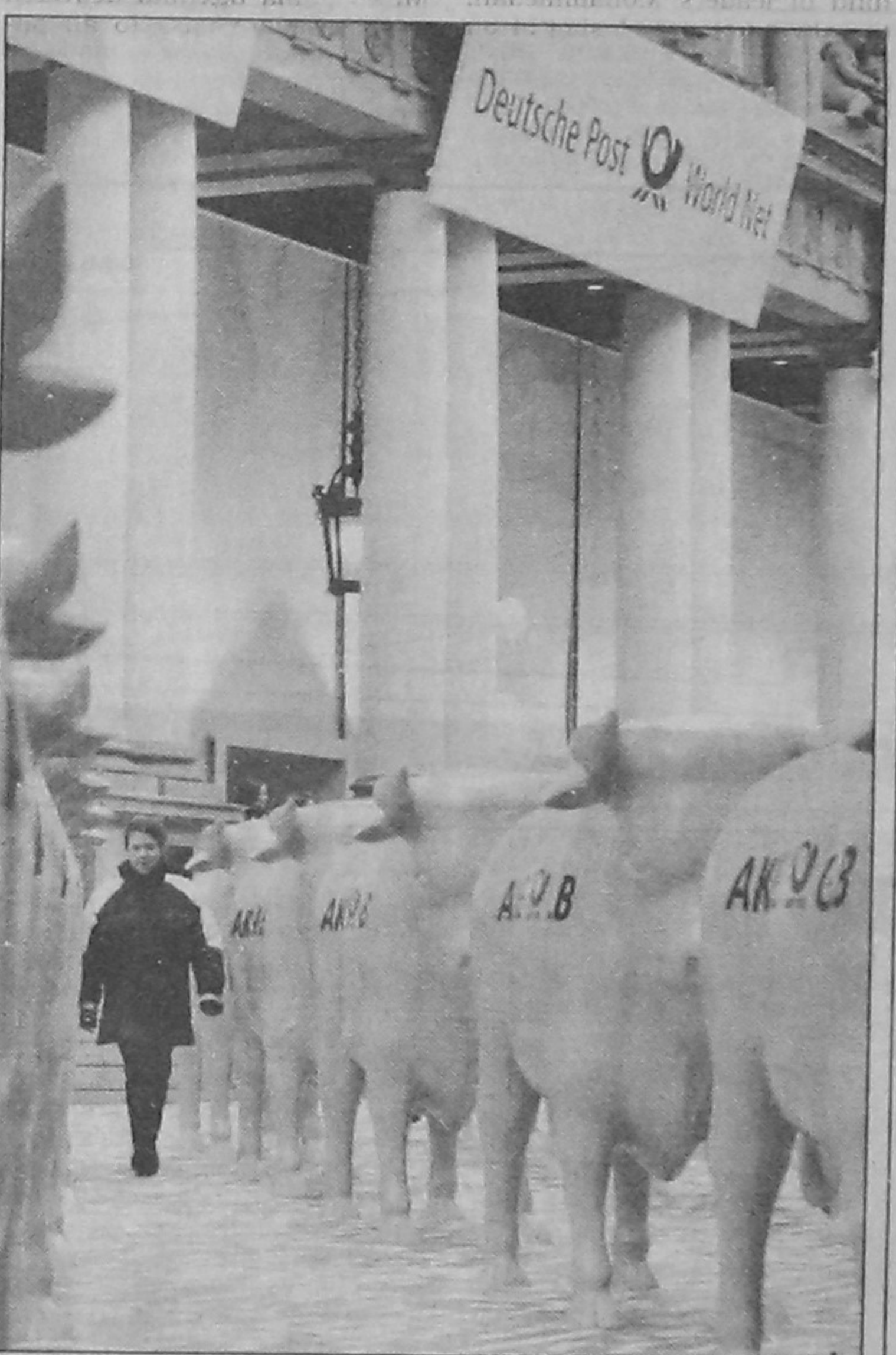
TOKYO, Nov 20: Japan's Olympus Optical Co Ltd. said Monday its group net profit surged 146 percent in the six months to September amid soaring sales of digital cameras at home and abroad, reports AFP.

Olympus said in a statement its interim group net profit stood at 5.3 billion yen (48.6 million dollars), surging 146 percent from a year earlier.

Group revenue rose 5.3 percent to 217.7 billion yen while pre-tax profit rose 11.6 percent to 10.7 billion yen.

During this first half of fiscal 2000, the Asian economy recovered, led by exports, while the US economy has continued expanding. The European economy has been generally steady," the company said.

"Meanwhile the Japanese economy, mainly manufacturers, has shown signs of gradual recovery, led by IT (information technology)-related investment."



A German Post worker makes her way through dozens of yellow model bulls positioned outside the Frankfurt Stock Exchange yesterday, the first day of trading of shares in the German post office. The bulls, symbol of the exchange, are in the corporate identity colour of the Deutsche Post. The shares were being quoted at 21.40 euros, an increase of 1.9 percent from the issue price of 21 euros. —AFP photo

Daewoo Motor faces long shutdown despite ROK president's vow

SEOUL, Nov 20: Daewoo Motor Co. said Monday that its biggest factory faced an indefinite shutdown, but President Kim Dae-jung vowed to revive the bankrupt carmaker if it carries out restructuring and job cuts, reports AFP.

Officials of South Korea's second largest car maker said there was no plan to reopen the giant Buypung plant in Incheon, west of Seoul.

The plant, with a 500,000-car-a-year capacity, has been closed for eight days as parts makers have refused to make deliveries since Daewoo Motor was declared bankrupt.

However President Kim said during a visit to Incheon that he

"would resurrect Daewoo Motor without fail if it conducts a thorough restructuring."

The president stressed though that Daewoo Motor's workers will have to share the pain.

"We should keep whoever they are as long as they are needed, otherwise we must lay them off to make the ends meet," Kim said.

"All would become jobless if a business collapses, but jobs would be created if the business survives with a 10-percent job cut."

Daewoo Motor's problems have mounted since it was declared bankrupt on November 8. More than 250 of the 17,000

production workers have quit since and many suppliers are expected to follow the car maker into bankruptcy.

The number of people taking early retirement has risen amid uncertainty over the firm since bankruptcy," a spokesman Kim Sang-Won said.

About 500 contractors and 3,000 sub-contractors fear they will be the next victims of the collapse.

"Many parts suppliers will collapse after Saturday despite the government's assistance measures," one parts manufacturer based in Incheon told Yonhap News Agency. One Incheon firm making brake pipes for Daewoo Motor, closed last Friday.

Daewoo Motor filed for court receivership on November 10 after creditors refused to give more cash when unions would not agree to drastic job cuts.

Creditors and unions have since waged a war of words over the proposed lay-off of 3,500 employees with no compromise in sight.

"It is up to the unions whether Daewoo Motor gets fresh loans," said a spokesman for Korea Development Bank.

Kim Il-Seob, head of Dewoo Motor unions, said during a street rally on Saturday management, creditors and the government should take responsibility.

Malaysia set for two more yrs of 'credible' growth

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20: Malaysia can expect at least two more years of "credible" growth of around six percent but will face a serious challenge in competing for foreign investment, researchers said Monday, reports AFP.

The Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) said in a report it expects gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 8.4 percent this year, 6.3 percent in 2001 and around six percent in 2002.

The government forecast is 7.5 percent this year and 7.0 percent in 2001.

The report, released at an MIER conference on the national economic outlook, said

the export-led recovery this year spilled over to other sectors. This enabled growth to become broader-based and better entrenched.

Institute executive director Mohamed Ariff told reporters the economy is expected to see a slowdown after Chinese New Year next January, with lower domestic demand coupled with an expected slowdown in the US economy and less demand for electronics.

"The possible moderation in the demand for personal computers and the tendency of the ringgit to approach its fair value relative to other regional currencies will reduce Malaysia's export growth somewhat,"

the report said.

"Furthermore, if oil prices remain persistently high, there may well be adverse impact on the global economy."

Most analysts say the ringgit peg at 3.8 to the dollar under-values the local currency. But the currencies of other regional countries have been falling sharply in recent months, making their exports more competitive.

Mohamed Ariff said the slow pace of Japan's economy was also expected to have an impact on the domestic economy.

Nevertheless, Malaysia's growth rates are "still creditable" between 6.5 percent to 7.0 percent.