

**DAEWOO**  
ELECTRONICS

Automatic Washing Machine  
with Air Bubble Washing, Spin Rinse  
System & 3 Dimensional Water Flow

**TRINCO LIMITED** - Authorized Distributor of DAEWOO Electronics  
Dhaka: 8115307-10 CTG: 716353, 723578 Khulna: 720304 Bogra: 6215

# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 14, 2001

Let us finance the home of your dreams

We can help you

- Build your own home
- Purchase a home or an apartment
- Buy a housing plot in approved land developments

National Housing Finance And Investments Limited

Chamber Building (6th Floor), 122-124 Motpore, Dhaka-1000. Tel: 955 9311. Fax: 955 9312. Mobile: 017 682832, 017 682833, 019 357414. Fax: 006-2-9568087. E-mail: housing@nfhil.com

## DSE to open trading booth in Sylhet

UNB, Sylhet

Dhaka Stock Exchange will open a trading booth here to facilitate the transactions of local traders with its central office through satellite.

DSE is opening the booth with the help of its member Surma Securities Holding Company, officials said.

They said DSE members Atiqullah Haq and Company, Anvar Securities Ltd, Sar Securities Ltd, Desa Securities Ltd, and Jahangir Kabir Chowdhury would participate in transactions from the booth.

The initiators hope that transactions worth Tk 5 crore would be carried out from this booth every day.

## Indian footwear show begins in city tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

A two-day exhibition of Indian footwear components begins here at Hotel Purbani at 10 am tomorrow.

The exhibition, Buyer-Sellers Meet-cum Exhibition (BSM), is being organised by the Indian High Commission in Dhaka and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

The exhibition will showcase shoe components, accessories and allied products such as soles, heels, toe puffs, adhesives, and upper straps.

Benajir Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), will inaugurate the exhibition while M I Tripathi, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, and Stephen John Davies, managing director of Bata, Bangladesh, will be present.

## ExxonMobil's Indonesia arm announces big oil find

AFP, Irving, Texas

ExxonMobil Corporation on Thursday said its Indonesian affiliate had made a major oil discovery that could contain more than 250 million barrels of recoverable oil.

The company said Mobil Cepu Limited, after completing work on the Banyu Urip Number Three well in Java province, came up with "one of the most significant oil discoveries in Indonesia in the past decade."

"This major discovery for ExxonMobil confirms the company's view that Indonesia remains an area for potential business growth," said Jon Thompson, president of ExxonMobil Exploration Company.

"Although we have experienced recent security issues in North Aceh, we are pleased that our exploration drilling in Java has been successful."

He said initial production was expected from the Banyu Urip discovery by 2003.

ExxonMobil closed three of its five gas fields in Aceh on March 9 citing security concerns stemming from confrontations between the Indonesian army and the separatist Free Aceh Movement.

## China threatens to ban ROK goods in 'garlic' trade war

AFP, Seoul

China has threatened to ban imports of South Korean mobile phones and polyethylene goods in a trade dispute over garlic, South Korean officials said Friday.

The ban is pending as Beijing complains about Seoul's failure to fully honor a promise to import 32,000 tons of Chinese garlic last year. Up to now, 22,000 tons have been bought by Seoul.

"China has set next Wednesday for the deadline for Seoul to import the remaining 10,000 tons or face punitive actions," a trade official said.

The Seoul government has urged its importers to buy the 10,000 tons of garlic from China. But local businesses refuse to import the garlic as its price keeps falling on low demand at home.

The official, who requested anonymity, said Beijing had warned it would put a temporary ban on Seoul's two key export items to China, cellular phones and polyethylene goods, in retaliation.

# 8-month exports beat target by 3.28pc, post 17.65pc growth

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's exports during the first eight months of the current fiscal year fetched US\$ 4347.58 million, which exceeded the target by 3.28 per cent and posted a growth of 17.65 per cent.

The target for the eight months to February this financial year was set at 4209.33 million dollar, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

Exports showed satisfactory performance with the price index rising by 2.43 per cent while volume by 15.22 per cent during the period under review, said an EPB official.

Except for jute goods, export of all major items including ready-made garments (RMG), knitwear, frozen foods, leather, chemical products, raw jute, tea and handi-

crafts registered significant growths during the July-February period of the 2000-2001 fiscal.

RMG exports fetched \$2303.40 million, posting a 4.70 per cent rise from the target and 13.54 per cent over the same period of the last fiscal.

Knitwear worth 972.15 million dollar was exported, which was 1.47 per cent less than the goal but 23.82 per cent higher than that of last fiscal year's same period.

Frozen foods performed pretty well and earned \$270.93 million, surpassing the target by 16.11 per cent and posting a 28.70 per cent growth over the corresponding period the previous fiscal.

Jute goods worth US\$ 154.43 million were exported against the 200-million dollar target. The earnings were 22.79 per cent less

than the target and 19.49 per cent than that of the same period of the last fiscal.

During the time under review, the country exported \$155.60 million worth of leather, showing an increase of 8.56 per cent from the target and 21.94 per cent from the figure recorded during the last fiscal's same period.

During the period, chemical products worth \$60.93 million were exported against a target of \$66.67 million, showing a fall of 8.61 per cent from the target while registering a 18.56 per cent rise over the last fiscal year's corresponding period.

Raw jute worth \$43.95 million was exported during the July-February period against the target of \$50 million. This is 12.10 per cent less than the goal while 5.28

per cent higher than that of the last fiscal's same period.

During the first eight months of the current fiscal year, tea export from Bangladesh rose to 14.43 million kg from 8.41 million kg of the last fiscal's same period. The earnings stood at \$19.33 million, which was 3.35 per cent less than the target but 58.57 per cent higher than that of the same period of FY1999-2000.

Export earnings from handicrafts amounted to \$4.82 million against the \$4.67 million target, beating the target by 3.21 per cent and registering a growth of 43.88 per cent.

The United States remained the major market for Bangladesh exports, accounting for \$1706.05 million or 39.24 per cent of the country's total exports,



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is seen at the unveiling ceremony of Fantasy Kingdom, a park and entertainment complex of Concord Entertainment Company Ltd., at a city hotel yesterday. Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, Minister for Housing and Public Works, Civil Aviation & Tourism, and S M Kamal Uddin, Chairman of Concord Group, were also present.



Dr Mashur Rahman, Secretary of Economic Relations Division, and Mary Ann Peters, US Ambassador in Bangladesh, sign an agreement on the supply of 80,000 metric tons of soyabean oil worth \$36 million in the city on Tuesday. The soyabean oil will be delivered in four 20,000 metric ton shipments and will be sold in the local market. The sale proceeds will be used to finance programmes in support of agriculture and rural development in Bangladesh.

## BJMC units incur Tk 1,309.13cr loss in five years

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Jute A K Fayeziul Huq Thursday said the present government had stepped up measures to overcome the losses being incurred by the jute mills under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC).

The steps include regular power supply and container services in the port, he said while replying to a question from Kazi Sekander Ali of Awami League from Khulna in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The BJMC jute mills incurred a total net loss of Taka 1,309.13 crore from July 1996 to February 2001, he also said.

The state minister said the government was also actively considering BMRE of state-owned jute mills side by side providing proper

training to the workers and avoiding expenditure on unproductive heads. "All these measures have been undertaken to make the jute mills productive and develop a skilled workforce in the greater interest of national economy," he said.

Replying to another question from Zainal Abedin Hazari of Awami League from Feni, A K Fayeziul Huq said that the public sector jute mills had suffered a total loss of Taka 326.82 crore from January, 2000 to February 2001.

He also told another questioner Shah Hadiuzzaman of Awami League from Jessore that the target for jute export during the current fiscal could not be fulfilled.

## GM's decision on Daewoo takeover soon

AP, Seoul

General Motors Corp, the world's largest automaker, said it is still interested in buying Daewoo Motor Co and plans to decide "as soon as possible" whether to take over the troubled South Korean automaker.

In a statement dated Thursday and faxed to news media on Friday, GM called "incorrect" a local report that quoted its Asia-Pacific chief, Rudolph A Schlais, as saying that it may not be able to decide on the Daewoo deal before the end of the year.

The report by the Korean Federation of Industries, a business lobby, touched off a wave of media speculation that GM might back away from takeover talks with Daewoo's creditor banks.

Our position is that GM continues to be interested in Daewoo and although we are unable to be specific about a date, GM is committed to making a decision as soon as possible," GM said.

## IBBL service week starts tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

The "Service Week" of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited will be observed from tomorrow.

A function to inaugurate the week will be held on Sunday at 10 am in the conference room of Islami Bank Tower.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Mohammad Farashuddin will attend the function as the chief guest.

## New York Times plans staff cuts

AFP, New York

The New York Times Company, citing advertising cutbacks, announced Thursday plans to reduce its workforce at all of its business units.

"Given the slowdown in advertising and the cloudy economic outlook for the remainder of the year, we believe that it is prudent to accelerate our ongoing cost control efforts, including a reduction in staffing levels," said New York Times president and chief executive Russell Lewis.

"The reduction will be accomplished, where possible through a voluntary buyout program, but it will also include layoffs in certain areas where the size of a business unit or other factors make the buyout program impractical."

Lewis said the ng of our daily operations or our ability to achieve our long-term strategic goals."

A Times statement said because the buyout programme is voluntary, the company cannot predict how many employees would be affected.

The Newspaper Guild criticised the manner by which the Times disclosed its cutback plans.

"To make such an important announcement at 10 a.m. without first informing the Guild or a prior advisory to the staff, when half of The Times Guild-represented employees are not at work and when at least 30 per cent of the staff still does not have Internet access, is disturbing and unfair to our members," the union said in a statement.

# Indian rupee hits new low, more falls feared

## FDI inflows seen drying up

REUTERS, Bombay

The Indian rupee slid to a lifetime low against the dollar Thursday, dragged down by concerns that foreign investment inflows could dry up, and traders said the move could be the start of a sharp slide.

"There is room for some more weakness on the rupee, both on account of its intrinsic value as well as flows," said Aashish Pitale, head of research at JP Morgan.

"The move so far has been relatively minor and the central bank should not be averse to another one per cent fall," he said.

After trading steadily for weeks, the rupee slipped on Wednesday

on reports that offshore investors were buying dollars in reaction to a slumping stock market and an earnings warning from blue-chip software firm Infosys Technologies.

The currency hit a new low of 46.97 per dollar in afternoon deals, having dropped over 40 paise (0.4 rupee) over two days, before recovering on suspected central bank intervention.

By the close, it had retraced to 46.81/84 but was still weaker than Wednesday's close of 46.6850/6900.

The possibility of a turnaround in foreign capital flows seemed to

be the trigger the market had been waiting for.

"So the tide finally seems to be changing for the rupee. The weak bourse and earnings warnings ahead could lead to an abatement in foreign institutional investment supplies," V. Srinivasan, dealer at Chase Manhattan Bank, said in a commentary.

Supported by foreign portfolio investment flows of more than \$1.8 billion so far in 2001, the rupee had held its ground this year despite an arms bribery scandal, a scam in the stock market, weakening regional currencies and signs of slowing exports.



Newly-appointed Director General of Russia's NTV television channel Boris Jordan gestures while answering questions during his press conference in Moscow yesterday. He declared that the new management of the NTV company will start normal work in four-five days.

# Wearied by foot-and-mouth, Britons eye foreign lands for Easter

## Blow to govt bid to bolster a domestic tourist industry

AFP, London

A record number of Britons are expected to travel abroad for Easter, dealing a blow to government efforts to bolster a domestic tourist industry left reeling by the devastating foot-and-mouth epidemic.

Prime Minister Tony Blair and deputy John Prescott were both out and about in the countryside Thursday driving home the message that, even in areas worst hit by the outbreak, Britain remained "open for business."

But the message has been stymied by continued warnings over the dangers of spreading the livestock virus, general reluctance to open footpaths and rural attractions and the traditional Easter urge to escape.

The result is a surge toward airports and ports, and in Britain, away from the countryside and into cities, seaside resorts and theme parks.

More than one million passengers are scheduled to jet off for Easter, with Spain one of the most

popular destinations, and more than 500,000 to cross the Channel.

Operators reported a "late rush" abroad. At Luton airport, north of London, managers said they were expecting a 19 per cent increase on last year.

One traveller to Majorca said he was going because of cancellations at the hotel where he works due to the foot-and-mouth crisis.

"Business at the hotel has definitely been affected. Everyone knows about the crisis and people are worried to travel," said Taalla Hamed, 34, catering manager at a hotel in Bournemouth, southern England.

Cautious optimism that foot-and-mouth could have peaked -- the government's chief scientific officer has reported a "flattening-out" -- may have come too late.

By noon (1100 GMT) Thursday, the number of outbreaks had risen to 1,242.

The four-day Easter holiday period is traditionally the first busy weekend of the holiday year. Steady progress is being made

in easing restrictions, helped by government grants.

English Heritage has reopened more than 200 properties, the National Trust will have done likewise by this weekend, and forestry, water and nature bodies are following suit.

In Cumbria, northwest England, the county worst hit by foot-and-mouth, more than 100 footpaths will open for Easter, and another 60 are being assessed.

But the picture varies hugely around the country.

A government survey showed that, out of 119 local authorities and national parks, 83 said some or all rural routes were closed. In 28 of them, all paths, including in urban areas, remained shut.

The British Resorts Association has complained of "misunderstanding" about what is closed.

Blair was to visit a seaside resort and pub in Devon, in southwest England, to stress that 60 per cent of Easter tourism is made up of short trips by local people within their home region. Prescott meanwhile announced the reopening of walkers of about 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometres) of canal towpaths, two-thirds of the national total.

# EU aspirants blast EC plan to limit workers' rights

AFP, Prague

EU candidate nations expressed dismay Thursday at a Brussels proposal to limit their workers' rights to seek jobs in the EU for up to seven years, some blasting it as "hypocritical" and discriminatory.

The harshest criticism to the plan, announced by the European Commission Wednesday, came from Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, likely to join the European Union (EU) within the next few years.

The transition period has been demanded notably by frontline states Germany and Austria, which fear an influx of cheap labour across their borders when the first new EU member states join, expected by 2004.

"This decision appears to be discriminatory and hypocritical," said Lubomir Zaoral, head of the foreign affairs committee in Prague's parliament.

"I am convinced that if our position in the EU is to be equal and honest it is not possible to limit a right as fundamental as freedom of movement," he added. EU Enlargement Commissioner Guenter Verheugen pro-

posed Wednesday a "general transition period" of five years from the date of accession, with an option to apply labour restrictions for a further two years after that.

The proposal, which will be presented to EU ministers in the next few weeks, gives EU states the right to block workers from eastern Europe, although they can also decide to open their labour markets completely.

But candidates were not impressed.

"Of course we cannot agree with the remarks by Verheugen. They correspond almost exactly to the German and Austrian proposals, with a few modifications," said Poland's chief EU negotiator Jan Kulakowski.

"Naturally, this position does not suit us," said the official, whose country is by far the biggest EU candidate state, and which tends to be more aggressive in its dealings with Brussels.

In Budapest politicians were more circumspect, but made their opposition clear. "We cannot say that we agree," Hungarian foreign ministry secretary Peter Gottfried told AFP, saying that Brussels' proposed blanket restrictions were the wrong approach.

## Progressive Credit declares 16 pc dividend

Progressive Credit Co-Operative Society Ltd has declared a 16 per cent dividend for the shareholders for the period ending June 30, 2000.

The dividend was announced at the 9<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting of the Society held in the city on Thursday, says a press release. Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, Chairman of the Society, presided over the meeting.

"Liberalization (of the labour market) should be the starting point ... from there it would be appropriate to study which countries should be subject to restrictive measures," he said. Analysts mostly dismiss suggestions that EU states will be flooded by cheap labour when ex-communist countries begin joining.