#### Ceramicware manufacturers urge govt to check smuggling

UNB, Dhaka

The country's export earning from ceramicware may exceed Tk 500 crore annually within next five years if the sector gets proper assistance from the government, manufacturers said on Wednesday.

Ceramic manufacturers and exporters aired this hope in a meeting with the Home Minister. revenue officials and law enforcers, seeking steps to check smuggling of low quality foreign ceramic goods that flooded local market.

Bangladesh Ceramic Wares Manufacturers Association leaders told the meeting that export earning from the sector was Tk 103 crore in 2000-2001 fiscal. The earning could grow five times in next five years if necessary supports from the government were available, they said.

They expressed their worry at the smuggling of inferior quality ceramic goods from abroad, depriving the government of huge revenues and hampering local industry. They sought measures for protect ing the booming ceramic industry and ensuring its smooth growth.

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, who chaired the meeting, gave some instant instructions to the officials concerned to take steps for protecting the growth of local ceramic industry

National Board of Revenue Chairman Dr Shoeb Ahmed, BDR Director General Major General Abu Ishaq Ibrahim, senior officials of Home Ministry, and customs intelligence attend the meeting

### Japan industrial output down 0.3pc in Oct

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's industrial output in October fell 0.3 percent from the previous month, the trade ministry said in a preliminary report on Thursday.

The October figure followed a 2.9-percent drop in September, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said

The government forecast that November output would fall 1.0 percent from October but expected December output to rise 0.8 percent from November

Industrial shipments slipped 0.4 percent in October after dropping 3.2 percent in September and inventories declined 1.1 percent after falling 1.3 percent, the ministry

#### ROK industrial output falls by 1.3pc

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's industrial output fell 1.3 percent in October from a year earlier due to weakness in its textile. machinery, petrochemical and automobile sectors, officials said Thursday.

Fewer working days were a key factor behind the contraction, the National Statistical Office (NSO) said. In September, industrial output rose 5.1 percent year-on-year.

Industrial output in October, seasonally adjusted, fell 1.5 percent month-on-month

"Despite negative growth in October, the pace of contraction has been easing in recent months, NSO director M.K. Kim said

Many economists are still cautious about South Korea's economic recovery.

Daishin Economic Research Institute's analyst H.B. Kwon, however, said the output fall in October would not destroy hopes of a recovery, citing a faster inventory correction and solid consumption.

"Despite negative output numbers, the quality of the data is largely positive," he said.

The index of leading indicators rose to 136.8 in October from 136.2

in September

Kwon said the index is pointing to an economic recovery in the second quarter of next year.

"Consumption and construction will remain engines for growth at

least until the first half of next year, Meritz Securities economist Go You-Sun said output data was

better than expected in October "when the numbers were supposed to be the worst.

"I think one big hurdle on the way to recovery was cleared".

She agreed the economy should start recovering in the second quarter of next year, adding the US-led war against terrorism appears no longer to be a major

drag on recovery. The government has raised its official target of next year's economic growth from below three percent to higher than four percent with rising consumer confidence expected to lead the recovery.

# Bangladesh has staggering trade deficit of \$1b with India: Khasru

Standard & Chartered Grindlays

Photo shows officials of Standard Chartered Bank at the opening ceremony of an ATM at the bank's branch at Uttara

India, Thailand eye free trade

The agreement on IT covers

"This will strengthen our coop-

electronic governance, electronic

commerce, IT security, joint

research and developemnt and

exploring exports to third countries.

eration in this area," Thaksin said

"Thailand has a strong electronics

and computer hardware sector.

believe that there are considerable

opportunities for economic syner-

vast experience of India in this key

area (IT) ... We must begin now," he

offer its expertise in the infrastruc-

ture sector and urged the country's

industry to invest in areas such as

Vaipavee proposed the establish-

ment of an institutional mechanism

to discuss "mutual security con-

cerns" such as terrorism, drug

roads, ports, telecom and power.

"We are keen to learn from the

Vajpayee urged Thailand to

Besides economic areas.

gies and partnerships

IT sector cooperation deal signed

Bangladesh has a staggering trade deficit of more than one billion US dollar with India, Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury informed parliament vesterday.

The country's export earning from India in fiscal 2000-2001 was only Tk 336.1 crore against import bill of Tk 6388.6 crore, he said replying to a question from Sarwar Jamal Nizam (BNP).

The Minister said a good number of items were imported from India against export of only a few Bangladeshi items.

The imported items are cotton, cotton fabrics and cloths, sulphur, stone, plaster materials, lime and cement, food grains, machinery, mineral fuel, crude oil and refined oil, bitumen, mineral wax, transport machinery and parts, iron and steel, bio-chemicals, electrical machinery and parts, knit fabrics, poultry and livestock feed, coffee and spices, rubber and rubber goods, aluminum and aluminum products.

Bangladesh exports to India include raw jute and jute goods, chemicals, rozen foods, leather, tea and battery.

Replying to another question from Prof Joynal Abedin (BNP), the

five years, stood at US\$12,807 million.

The five-year breakup of trade deficit: 1996-97 \$2,734 million, 1997-98 \$2,359 million, 1998-99 \$2,693 million, 1999-2000 \$2,063 million and 2000-2001 \$2,958 million

Responding to another question from Alamgir Haidar Khan (BNP). Khasru also gave the breakup of Bangladesh's trade deficit with different

Country-wise breakup: India \$1,109 million, Japan \$256.23 million, China \$650.53 million, Singapore \$783.39 million, Thailand \$171.98 million, Indonesia \$184.54 million, Malaysia \$174.82 million, Australia \$185.38 million, South Korea \$367.29 million, Hong Kong \$379.61 million and Taiwan \$398.84 million.

The government is active in reducing the yawning trade deficit with different countries, the Commerce Minister said.

He added that the government is considering cash incentives to the garments and frozen food exporters and also trying to diversify the export

StanChart opens

Standard Chartered opened an ATM

at the Uttara branch of Standard

Chartered Grindlays on Wednesday,

Chowdhury Matiur Rahman, a

The ATM was inaugurated by

A host of customers and bank

Standard Chartered Group,

which comprises of Standard

Chartered Bank and Standard

Chartered Grindlays Bank in

Bangladesh, has a network of 21

offices and 25 ATMs in Dhaka,

Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, Bogra

Alcatel foresees

French telecommunications equip-

ment manufacturer Alcatel pre-

dicted Thursday that its sales this

year would dip slightly from 2000 but

expressed optimism about long-

term prospects for the telecom

cations will probably be a persistent

growth sector in the economy,"

Alcatel chairman Serge Tchuruk told

expand between 10 and 15 percent

in the next few years, he added,

'inferior by only a few percent"

compared with last year, when the

company reported record revenues

of 31.408 billion euros (27.9 billion

Alcatel sales came to 18.587 billion

euros, but the end of the year is

been hit hard recently, bounced

back in early trading Thursday on

reports that the company planned to

reduce its working capital by a

greater than expected 1.5 billion

Chinese leaders

conclude 3-day

euros next year, dealers said.

traditionally a robust sales period.

In the first nine months of 2001,

Shares of Alcatel, which have

without providing specific dates.

a meeting of analysts here.

dollars, 206 billion francs).

"In the long term, telecommuni-

The global market would likely

Alcatel sales in 2001 will be

slight sales dip

this year

AFP, Paris

sector.

officials were also present on the

ATM at Uttara

branch

says a press release.

customer of the bank.

occasion



Desmond Quiah, Country Manager, DHL Worldwide Express, and Faruque Hassan, Managing Director of Giant Distribution Ltd, recently sign an agreement which made Giant Group a partner in DHL's Import Express Sales Promotion campaign.

# Rana Talwar quits **StanChart**

AFP, Hong Kong

British-based Standard Chartered said Thursday chief executive Rana Talwar had resigned and his successor quickly denied speculation of a possible takeover of the emerging markets bank

The new head, Mervyn Davies, who led Standard Chartered's Hong Kong operations, told a press conference here the bank intended to remain independent and there would be no change of strategy.

A London analyst with a major international brokerage, who declined to be named, said Talwar had been considered more open to the possibility of a takeover or merger than chairman Sir Patrick

Davies declined to comment on whether there had been any disagreement between the former head and the bank's board of direc-He also refused to make any

other comment about Talwar's departure, except to say he resigned of his own accord.

Standard Chartered had no intention of merging with another

bank, the new chief executive told reporters

"We are absolutely committed remain independent," he said after being asked about speculation British banks Lloyds TSB and Barclays were possible suitors. Davies said Standard

Chartered's strength lay in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and that strategies would remain unchanged under his leadership. The bank's business would continue to be based on consumer

banking, mortgages and the credit card business. One of his top priorities as the new head would be growing the

bank's business in China. While the bank would be interested in taking a majority stake in a

Chinese bank, he said no talks were currently underway with any poten-On Standard Chartered's

proposed listing on the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong, Davies said the proposed listing would go ahead "as soon as possible" next year when market conditions



PHOTO: STAR

An iftar party was hosted for journalists by mobile phone company GrameenPhone at a city restaurant yesterday

# Poor countries to gain from WTO, says Moore

REUTERS, Geneva

cuts in tariffs on industrial goods.

Anti-globalisation activists have

accused richer countries of using

the WTO for their benefit at the

prime minister, said suggestions

that the interests of poorer WTO

members were trampled under foot

in Doha amounted to "a truly spec-

tacular misreading of what hap-

is no conceivable text or process

that would not be represented as a

conspiracy against developing

countries and the poor," the WTO

director-general told the Pacific

Economic Cooperation Council,

according to a text issued by his

office in Geneva.

"For some of these critics, there

Moore, a former New Zealand

expense of developing states.

China's top leaders Thursday World Trade Organisation chief concluded three days of talks on Mike Moore said Wednesday a how to manage the world's fastest WTO campaign for freer global commerce would benefit poor countries, dismissing the protests of President Jiang Zemin delivanti-globalisation activists.

In a speech in Hong Kong, Moore said poor countries would gain if the development and stability, Xinhua new round of trade liberalisation news agency said without elaboratnegotiations agreed by ministers of the 142-member WTO in Doha, Other powerful politicians Qatar on November 14 ended with

attending the meeting included Premier Zhu Rongji and Li Peng, the chairman of parliament, according The Central Economic Work

Conference is an annual event taking place towards the end of the year, gathering key decision makers from the communist party and the Observers believe key deci-

sions are taken at the secretive conferences, such as the economic growth target for the following year.

This year's meeting is likely to be more important than usual, since it takes place while China is on the brink of entering the World Trade Organization and as its economy is under threat from slowing exports.

Government economists predict the economy will grow by 7.3 percent this year, down from eigh percent growth last year.

The common theme running through the Doha conference was the "fuller integration of developing countries into the trading system,

> Moore said "provision is made in almost every area.... to help developing countries participate in and profit from the work" of the trade liberalisation negotiations, due to start from next January.

to be wrapped up within three years. If the round succeeded in cutting most existing barriers to trade, "it

The "Doha Round" talks are set

would be like adding two more Chinas to the world economy, Moore said. "Three quarters of all the benefits

from cutting industrial tariffs would go to developing countries," he said.

There is enough in the Doha package for everyone. Trade is not the only development factor, but it is an important motor for growth. Other issues such as good governance, debt relief, technology and investment matter.'

At the insistence of developing countries, which make up nearly three quarters of the WTO's membership, the questions of debt and technology transfer and their link to trade had been included in the agenda. Moore said.

## Vietnam to step up WTO entry talks

AFP, Hanoi

Communist Vietnam prepared to launch intensive talks on World Trade Organization (WTO) membership Thursday, buoyed by the final ratification of an historic trade deal with the US.

WTO director general Mike Moore was due to arrive here around 7:00 pm (1200 GMT) for evening talks with Trade Minister Vu Khoan, ahead of meetings with Prime Minister Phan Van Khai. Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien and Finance Minister Nguyen Sinh Hung on Friday.

"It's not a coincidence that Mr. Moore is visiting Vietnam at this time," Khoan told reporters

"It's a very important visit. We expect to get a breakthrough."

Khoan said Vietnam's four rounds of talks with the WTO so far had been limited to questions of transparency.

"Now, we're going to begin a new round of talks on the core issues of Vietnam's admission to the WTO," he said

Vietnam has so far declined to give a target date for its admission to the world trading club.

But the communist authorities have come under mounting pressure to press ahead before the WTO gets bogged down in talks on the new world trade round launched in the Gulf state of Qatar earlier this

Vietnam should aim to follow its communist neighbour China into the WTO within two to four years, European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy said earlier this year.

## **GMG** Holidays introduces Hajj packages

GMG Holidays, a subsidiary of GMG Airlines, has introduced 4 attractive packages for Hajj for the year 2002, says a press release.

Named as 'Barkat', 'Rahmat', 'Shukrana' and 'Nazrana' the packages offer a perfect blend of ultimate peace, privacy and comfort at an economical price.

The 4 packages vary from 15 Days/14 Nights to 35 Days/34

The 14 options of these 4 packages are specifically designed to cater to all individual needs and

#### preferences India to invite bids for state-run

telecom giant

by end of Dec

AFP, New Delhi

Indian privatisation minister Arun Shourie Wednesday said suitors for state-run telecoms giant VSNL and petroleum products marketing firm IBP would likely be asked to put in their bids by the end of December.

"I expect that the financial bids will be called towards the last week of December," Shourie told reporters at the end of a cabinet meeting.

Shourie said government officials were working on a plan to distribute VSNL's cash reserves worth 40 billion rupees (848 million dollars) through a special dividend to shareholders before its

The government, which holds 52.97 percent of the New York Stock Exchange-listed VSNL, plans to reduce its holding to 26 percent by selling a 25 percent stake along with management control to a strategic partner and another 1.97 percent to VSNL's employees.

The government, which holds 57 percent stake in IBP, plans to sell a controlling 33.58 percent to a strategic partner.

#### Mexico offers to host next WTO confce AFP, Geneva

Mexico has offered to host the next World Trade Organisation conference of commerce ministers, which is due to be held in 2003, a WTO spokesman said Wednesday.

The offer, sent to WTO director general Mike Moore, makes Mexico the first country to officially ask for the high-profile forum since a new trade round was agreed two weeks ago in a meeting in Qatar

China and South Africa, however, have expressed interest at an unofficial level

WTO conferences, like those of World Bank or the World Economic Forum, have been dogged in the past three years by massive anti-globalisation protests some of them violent.

# Bank strike called in France during euro cash launch

**REUTERS,** Paris

in the city on Wednesday

India and Thailand on Wednesday

signed an agreement for coopera-

tion in information technology and

pledged to work towards a free trade

agreement between the two coun-

Thaksin Shinawatra also extended

an invitation to Indian Premier Atal

Behari Vajpayee to participate in the

first ASEAN plus India summit in

Asian Nations (ASEAN) groups

Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos,

Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines,

spokeswoman said Thaksin and

Vajpayee had a "friendly and fruitful"

exchange during which they pro-

posed to strengthen economic ties

in several other areas apart from IT

including tourism and mutual sup-

port on World Trade Organisation

Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Cambodia next year

Visiting Thai Prime Minister

The Association of Southeast

An Indian foreign ministry

French banking sector trade unions Wednesday called a national strike for January2, raising the risk of chaos on the first bank trading day after the introduction of euro notes

The strike, in protest at pay, work conditions and security arrangements for the introduction of the euro, was backed by the five major unions representing banking sector

"We hope that in the meantime the banks will agree to open negotiations but until now there has been a complete block," Pierre Gendre, secretary general of the Force Ouvriere union, told a news confer-

Asked how long the strike would last, Gendre said the unions would review the situation on the evening of January 2.

The euro is due to go into circulation in France and 11 other European countries on January 1. With New Year's Day, a public holiday in France. January 2 is the first day banks are due to be open with the euro in circulation.

The action could also spread to the security guards who transport money. They share the bank workers' concerns about security arrangements for the introduction of

"There could be a union of discontent with the security guards,"

While cash machines throughout the euro zone are due to be stocked with the new currency from January 1, the banking sector strike threatens access to euro coins and the facility to make cash deposits at

If the security guards also strike, the supply of euro notes and coins around France could face bottle-

Finance Minister Laurent Fabius was quarded when asked by reporters whether the planned banking sector strike could disrupt the introduction of the euro. "I think there will be talks

between the banks and the unions. But the introduction of the euro is a historic act," Fabius said, speaking at a prize ceremony in Paris. The run up to the "E-day" arrival

of notes and coins has also been troubled by a strike since November 15 by workers at France's only production site for euro coins, in Pessac, near the southwestern city of Bordeaux. The workers ended their strike on Friday after coming up against

the hardline stance of the Finance

Ministry, which is responsible for the

mint two days ago to prevent picket lines from halting delivery trucks taking coins to and from the Pessac

trafficking and smuggling.

four-day official visit.

Thaksin, who is heading an 86-

Bilateral trade between the

India imports electronic goods

Thaksin on Tuesday visited

"This forum will comprise our

member business delegation, is the

first Thai premier to visit India in 12

years. He is on the third day of a

countries was 847 million dollars in

machinery, transport equipment and

precious stones while exporting

gems and jewellery, marine prod-

ucts and pharmaceuticals to

India's IT hub Bangalore and pro-

posed an Asian Cooperation

Dialogue forum he said would

extended neighbourhood with

countries from East, Southeast,

South and West Asia. Asia must

learn to interact more actively ... for

the mutuality of our common needs,'

promote greater intra-Asian trade.

the fiscal year to March 2001.

the CGT union, told Reuters.

other forms. Fabius told reporters on Wednesday: "The euro will be on

time". Asked if there were sufficient

numbers of euro coins, he replied:

from the Pessac mint on Wednesday, plant officials said Workers and personnel were again able to enter the mint. French newspaper La Tribune reported this week that deliveries of

euros to retail stores could be delayed by two weeks or more from were defective.

our means to be on time," she said.

## key economic conference AFP, Beijing

"We voted to end the action because we are faced with a very hard position being taken by the ministry and our management," Michel Mano, a representative of

But Mano added that the mint workers had not given up their demand for better working hours and that their campaign could take

'Yes, we have enough. The riot police were withdrawn

the target date of December 1 as some of the first batches produced A spokeswoman for the Finance Ministry played down the report. "We are going to do everything in

#### growing major economy next year state media said ered a speech at the meeting, outlining economic challenges in 2002 and tasks related to reform,