

25-day Ctg int'l trade fair begins tomorrow

Entrepreneurs from seven countries taking part

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The largest annual international trade fair under private sector initiative begins in the port city tomorrow.

The fair will be held at Polo-ground field on December 27 and continue for 24 days. This year the fair has been named as "The Millennium Fair".

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), organiser of the event, said all preparations are afoot to hold the 10th Chittagong International Trade Fair (CITF).

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is scheduled to inaugurate the fair formally at 1:00 pm on the day, CCCI President Farid Ahmed Chowdhury at a press conference at the CCCI auditorium disclosed Monday.

He said despite the current global recession coupled with the September 11 terrorist attack on

the USA, the fair has received tremendous responses from home and abroad.

The fair premises will have 30 pavilions and 242 booths to home, among others, 15 entrepreneurs from seven countries—India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Thailand, South Korea and the USA.

CCCI leaders in the conference informed like the previous occasions a good number of women entrepreneurs will be participating in the fair. Their participation will give publicity to the initiatives and efforts of the entrepreneur, the CCCI president said.

An amphitheatre for holding fashion and cultural shows and a Children World, an amusement park for children, will also feature this year's fair for the first time this year.

The goods and items to be put on display in the fair include computers, handicrafts, shell jewellery, garments, leather goods, khadi (a kind of indigenous fabrics), tribal garments, electric

cables, electronic goods, ceramic, aluminium and melamine products, carpets and other jute products, medicine, silk products, building materials, industrial machinery, wooden and steel furniture, plastic products, mobile phone sets, TV sets, music systems, toiletries and soft drinks.

A web site, www.cccibd.com/citf2001, has also launched to provide necessary information about the fair.

Entry fee has been fixed at Tk 10 for an adult and Tk five for a minor.

To ensure safety of both the participants and visitors around 200 private guards will be deployed in addition to police force in and around the fair premises.

Around 11 lakh visitors are expected this year against 10 lakh in the previous year. However, the CCCI leaders apprehended that the turnout of foreign entrepreneurs this year may go down due to the September 11 attack.

6th AGM of CSE held

The sixth annual general meeting of Chittagong Stock Exchange was held on Monday at the CSE building, says a press release.

CSE President Mirza Salman Ispahani presided over the meeting. The meeting approved the audited accounts of 2000 of CSE and re-appointed Rahman Rahman Huq as the auditor for the next year.

AK Chowdhury, Syed Mahmudul Huq, M o h a m m e d Mohiuddin, Nasiruddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Al Maruf Khan, were elected Directors unopposed of the CSE Board.

The new board elected Mirza Salman Ispahani President and Habib Ullah Khan, Syed Mahmudul Huq and ORA Rasul Nizam, Vice Presidents for the year 2002.

Russia's inflation seen falling

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia's consumer price inflation will be 18.5 per cent in 2001, slightly lower than last year, Interfax news agency quoted First Deputy Finance Minister Alexei Ulyukayev as saying yesterday.

"This is a bit higher than we have forecast, but 1.7 percentage points less than last year," Ulyukayev said, adding that producer price inflation was slower this year than in 2000.

He also said that December CPI would be 1.5-1.6 per cent month-on-month, compared with 1.4 per cent in November.

Inflation is one of Russia's most acute economic problems as the country restructures its economy.

The government had set a 12-14 per cent inflation target in the 2001 budget, well below the 20.2 per cent Russia posted last year. However, it later revised the forecast upwards to 17-18 per cent.

Dollar rises in thin trading

AFP, London

The dollar strengthened on Monday in thin holiday trading, as a Christmas lull and events in Argentina over the weekend left few investors with an appetite for foreign exchange market dabbling.

Thin holiday volumes accentuated movements, and the euro fell back to 0.8794 dollars from 0.8883 in New York on Friday, while the dollar edged up closer to the 130-yen mark, at 129.93.

With Christmas trading slowing to a trickle, the main talking point rippling through the market was a decision by Argentina over the weekend to stop paying down its 132-billion-dollar debt — the biggest debt default in history.

Analysts noted that the Argentine financial implosion had been months coming, and had largely been priced into the market.

But they added that it could ultimately bear down on the dollar because of US trade exposure to the region, and could also sap the euro in the short-term because of Spanish exposure to the Argentine financial system.

"The feeling is that there are a list of positives and negative for euro-dollar which broadly speaking balance each other out," said Nick Parsons, a currency economist with Commerzbank in London.

"In the short term the focus is on the Spanish banks which have enormous exposure to Latin America," Parsons told AFP.

"But over the medium term any devaluation will make the US less competitive within the Americas," he said.

"It's very difficult in a thin and illiquid market to decide which of the two major themes is going to prevail — competitive pressure on the US or financial pressures on the euro," he said.

Argentina has yet to formally devalue its currency, but economists believe the move will not be long in coming, particularly if it presses ahead with plans to introduce a 'parallel currency'.



The sixth annual general meeting of Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) was held on Monday at the CSE building with Mirza Salman Ispahani, President of CSE, in the chair.

Lanka to go for large scale economic reforms: PM

REUTERS, New Delhi

Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said Monday the country's economic crisis was expected to end after the launch of a large scale economic reform process.

"We will bring (n) a package of economic reforms. The situation is bad but the positive factor is that it has nowhere to go but up," he told reporters in New Delhi.

"There will be a mix of deep reforms to accelerate growth," Economic Reform, Science and Technology Minister Asoka Milinda Moragoda said.

Sri Lanka's economy has been

ravaged by the global slowdown, its worst drought in 50 years, a prolonged power crisis and an 18-year war with Tamil rebels.

Sri Lanka was set to begin its first full ceasefire in nearly seven years at midnight on Monday, renewing hopes than peace talks with the Tamil Tiger separatists were around the corner.

Wickremesinghe met his Indian counterpart, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha and other senior ministers during his three-day visit, his first since winning power this month.

Officials say the island nation's economy was expected to shrink 0.6 per cent in 2001-its first negative

growth since records began in 1950.

"The most optimistic forecast at the moment puts the growth at three per cent next year," Moragoda said.

He said the budget deficit, likely to be close to 11 per cent in the current year, could go up to 13 to 14 per cent "if we go along the same trajectory."

"We hope the peace process will give us space to bring back confidence into the economy. We have to create a positive sentiment to create investment," he said.

He said Sri Lanka's economy had much in common with India despite being smaller.

"For reforms, we have to look at some of the key issues (at) which India has looked the financial sector reforms and the economic reforms," he said.

"Most of our corporations are making heavy losses, we will have to either restructure or privatise those corporations."

India started sweeping economic reforms in 1991 and the process has entered its second phase with privatisations and the reform of the energy sector and outdated labour laws.

India will supply 300,000 tonnes of wheat to Sri Lanka over the next 12 months on mutually agreed terms, a joint statement by the two nations said.

"India will provide 25,000 tonnes of wheat per month for the next 12 months to Sri Lanka at terms agreed by both sides," it said.

New chairman, vice chairman of City Bank



Chairman



Vice Chairman

Deen Mohammad and Aziz Al-Kaiser have been elected Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively of The City Bank Limited for the year 2001-2002, says a press release.

They were elected at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on Thursday.

Deen Mohammad, a sponsor director, has been elected Chairman of the bank for the eighth time. He is also the Chairman of the Phoenix Group of Industries and Apollo Group comprising various industrial and commercial undertakings in different sectors including textile, spinning, weaving, dyeing, printing and finishing, export oriented readymade garments, GCI sheets and CR Coil.

Aziz Al-Kaiser is also Vice Chairman of Partex Group.

ISL, TISL sign deal to market IBM server

Thakral Information Systems Private Ltd (TISL), the strategic alliance partner of IBM, and Information Solutions Ltd (ISL) have recently signed a business partnership agreement to market IBM's most powerful and robust 64 bit Unix server, the "IBM RS/6000" and "IBM e-Server p series", says a press release.

The agreement signing ceremony took place at a city hotel. K Ravi Lakshman, Chief Financial Officer of TISL, and Shah Zaman Majumder, Bir Protick, Chief Operating Officer of ISL, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective companies.

Under this agreement, ISL will market IBM mid-range Unix servers as an authorised IBM business partner and will also offer solutions for Unix platforms.

Kokusai, Deutsche Bank group firm to dissolve jt venture

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Kokusai Securities Co. Ltd. said Tuesday it had agreed to dissolve by next year its joint venture with a Deutsche Bank Group company after forming alliances elsewhere.

The plan is to dissolve Apollon Asset Management (Japan) Ltd., an investment advisory firm capitalized at 440 million yen (3.4 million dollars) that began in June 2000, and which was 60 per cent owned by Kokusai and 40 per cent by Deutsche Asia Pacific Holdings Pte. Ltd.

"Our management business environment has changed significantly, so on the agreement of both our companies, and with an eye to reorganizing our asset management businesses, we decided to dissolve the Apollon business," said Kokusai spokesman Hisayasu Hayashi.

Hayashi said the securities firm has agreed on a management tie-up with Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi and is to merge next July with Mitsubishi-Tokyo Financial Group securities firms, which has changed its strategic focus in the asset management business.

Indonesia to ban tin ore exports

AFP, Jakarta

The Indonesian government plans to ban exports of tin ore next year to reduce oversupply and help the survival of ailing state tin mining concern PT Timah Tbk., a report said Monday.

Energy and resources ministry secretary general Djoko Darmono said that trade and industry minister Rini Suwandi has already agreed to revise a ministerial decree of 2000 which allowed ore exports, the Pikiran Rakyat daily reported.

"The trade and industry ministerial decree number 249 of 2000 on tin export arrangements will be revised so that starting next year, no more tin ore can be exported," Darmono said.

PT Timah, laboring under the pressure of low prices, high production costs and the flood of illegally mined ore, has said that it may be forced to cut its workforce by almost three-quarters from next year, a company executive said Wednesday.

Timah president Erry Riyana Harjapamekas said that the company's cashflow this year was expected to be in the red by 194 billion rupiah (19 million dollars), and next year by 217 billion rupiah.



Annual general meeting for the year 2000-2001 of Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company (Bapex), a company of Petrobangla, was held in the city on Monday. Syed Sajedul Karim, Chairman of Petrobangla and Bapex, presided over the meeting.

Global slump dashing Vietnam hopes for export-led growth

AFP, Hanoi

Vietnam's exports are expected to rise just 4.5 per cent this year, well below the government's 2001 target of 16 per cent, official figures showed Tuesday.

A collapse in world prices for Vietnam's key agricultural commodity exports was the main factor in the lower than expected export total of 15,100 billion dollars, the preliminary figures from the General Department of Statistics showed.

Despite increasing volumes, falling world prices of oil and of agricultural commodities have cut export earnings from these products, which comprise nearly 40 per cent of Vietnam's total exports.

Key rice and crude oil exports dropped 0.3 per cent and 11.8 per cent year-on-year respectively.

Coffee exports by the world's number two supplier rose 24 per cent by volume but fell 23.2 per cent by value.

Cashew and pepper exports showed the same story, growing 20.3 and 51.6 per cent by volume but falling 13.9 and 38.5 per cent by value.

Meanwhile, electronics exports fell 22.7 per cent and handicraft were stagnant year-on-year.

Increases in other exports and the late ratification of a Vietnam-US bilateral trade agreement this November failed to keep Vietnam on track for export growth.

The figures showed fruit and vegetable export earnings grew 42.9 per cent—seafood up 21.7 per cent, coal 15.3 per cent, clothing and textiles 5.7 per cent and footwear 3.8 per cent.

An import bill of 16 billion dollars, up just 2.3 per cent year on year and the trade deficit just widened at 900 million dollars in 2001 from 892 millions dollars in 2000.

Motorcycle imports were down 26.8 per cent and computers and electronic goods 24.3 per cent, although auto imports rose a whopping 84.4 per cent, steel 33 per cent, cotton 31 per cent and other chemicals 19.9 per cent.

However, in the future, the US and China will provide Vietnam good opportunities for expanding exports, despite the global slowdown, according to the World Bank.

Communist authorities have been counting on a major boost in exports to the US to help them achieve an ambitious annual growth target of 7.5 per cent for the next decade.



The 12th annual general meeting of Bangladesh Zipper Industries Limited, a unit of Doel Group of Industries, was held at Savar in Dhaka recently with Deokinandan Kejriwal, Managing Director of the company, in the chair. A five per cent dividend for the year ending June 30, 2001 was declared at the meeting.

Economic gloom dampens global Xmas cheer

AFP, Bethlehem, West Bank

Deserted streets in the birthplace of Jesus as a new crisis rocks the bloodied Middle East, world governments on edge for fear of a repeat of September 11, and a deadly cold snap sweeping Europe: the world is facing a bleak Christmas in 2001.

Despite twinkling lights and tinsel, New York's Christmas celebrations were dimmed by memories of the September 11 attacks and in Argentina, economic collapse under a mountain of debt has also put paid to festive cheer.

In Afghanistan, Christmas was making a

modest comeback after five years of harsh Taliban rule as the new government set to the task of rebuilding the war-ravaged nation.

But the United States still has no idea of the fate of Osama bin Laden, the chief suspect for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon wanted "dead or alive".

Once a magnet for tourists and pilgrims as the cradle of Christianity, Bethlehem was preparing for another joyless holiday after 15 months of bloodletting between Israelis and Palestinians that has cost more than 1,100 lives.

"It's sad and grim, it's not normal," lamented Bethlehem mayor Hanna Nasser, with memories of a deadly 10-day Israeli invasion still fresh in the minds of Palestinian residents.

Photographs of "martyrs" adorned shop windows full of unsold Co veners in a town that only two years ago was given a full face lift for Pope John Paul II's jubilee visit.

Israel is banning Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat from making his traditional visit to Bethlehem for midnight mass, saying he must first arrest suspected killers of a far-right Israeli cabinet minister.

But a defiant Arafat, marooned in the

West Bank town of Ramallah since earlier this month, said he would make the mass even if he had to walk.

Around the world, jittery governments remained on high alert for Christmas terror attacks after an apparent suicide bomber was arrested on a US airliner.

The man was caught Saturday on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami as he was apparently trying to set alight explosives in his shoes.

"The message is that terrorists are going to hit us again," said Republican senator Richard Shelby.

New Yorkers were still coming to grips

with the death of nearly 3,000 people on September 11 and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in one of the world's most expensive cities.

"People don't forget, not for one second, that this is going to be a very sad Christmas for many families," said one.

The people of Argentina were preparing for Christmas facing economic meltdown that sparked a deadly uprising and new president Adolfo Rodriguez Saa's decision to suspend payment on its towering 132-billion-dollar debt.

China has said it expects foreign investment to set a record this year, after it rose 15.6 per cent in the first 11 months of the year to 41.9 billion dollars.