

CSE Internet trading starts next week

System to enable cross border share transaction

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

The Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) is all set to launch stock trading on the Internet next week.

With the launching of Internet trading the country will enter the cross border trading, as the bourse will facilitate trading from anywhere in the world.

"The system is already in place and we are all set to launch mock Internet trading by next week," said CSE Chief Executive Officer Wali-ul-Maruf Matin. "An investor just needs a computer with Internet connection."

He said in order to trade on the net an investor will require to maintain an account with a CSE broker who will provide a log-in password to him or her. "Once the investor logs in, all his or her transactions will be routed through brokerage firm to

the CSE system."

"The investors will feel the real trading, as he or she will actually see traders' work station, which is currently available only to brokers," the CSE chief executive said.

The brokers will be accountable and liable to the CSE for the transactions, he said.

He said the brokers will set an on-line trading ceiling for the investors based on the amount of money one deposits with a broker. "Any amount beyond the limit will be rejected by the system."

In the case of selling shares, the investors will have to physically deposit the shares to the brokers who will set a parameter for selling the shares of the particular companies based on deposit money, he said.

"Once such shares are sold, the money will be deposited with the

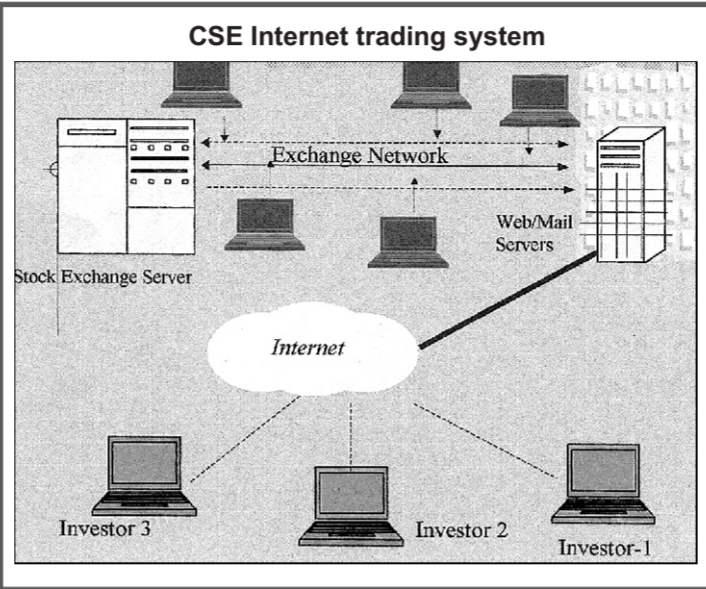
account of the investor who will accordingly get a higher limit for buying," he said.

These trades through the Internet will then be executed after validation. Every investor will get an auto-generated e-mail with the confirmation note of the trade.

The only challenge of the Internet trading is the settlement procedure for transaction from abroad, which is likely to be taken care of through custodian bank, he said.

CSE Chief Executive Wali-ul-Maruf Matin said the CSE is in talk with two commercial banks to provide necessary banking facility to the brokers and investors.

The CSE chief executive also said the bourse is trying to devise trading mechanism under present rules and regulations.



Bangladesh Festival in Myanmar from tomorrow

Bid to boost bilateral trade

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN from Yangon

Against the backdrop of worst ever crisis facing the country's export sector a weeklong Bangladesh Festival kicks off in Yangon tomorrow aiming to boost trade ties with Myanmar.

With the country's export missing the target by over US\$ 648 million in the first seven months of the current fiscal, some 60 Bangladeshi companies have arrived in Myanmar capital to showcase their products and explore the market here.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury along with over 150 business delegates arrived here yesterday to launch the festival.

Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury will jointly inaugurate the largest ever Bangladesh event in Yangon with his Myanmar counterpart Brigadier General Pyi Sone.

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Yussuf Abdullah Harun, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) President Motiur Rahman, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) President Farid

Ahmed Chowdhury, Women's Entrepreneurs Association President Nasreen Awal Mintoo, Women's Chamber President Selima Ahmed, Bangladesh-Myanmar Business Promotion Council President Rashed Maksud Khan, Bangladesh-Myanmar Business Promotion Council Vice President Syed Mahmudul Huq and Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Vice Chairman Abu Saleh, among other, are included in the Bangladesh delegation.

Addressing a press conference at a city hotel Khosru said the idea of the festival is to bring business community of both the countries together for boosting trade between the two countries.

"Through the fair we will also reach common people of Myanmar apart from making business propositions," Amir Khosru said.

He said both the countries have a lot to share among themselves but failed even to scratch the surface. "And with that in mind, Bangladesh this time has taken a different approach, as we hold food festival, cultural shows, fashion shows, seminars and even golf tournament throughout the week."

Speaking on the occasion

FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun said Myanmar is very important being the meeting point of SAARC and ASEAN countries. He said the trade figures between the two countries do not reflect healthy trade relations and so should explore more avenues to the ties.

Bangladesh-Myanmar Business Promotion Council President Rashed Maksud Khan said there had been exchange of delegations between the two countries which failed to yield expected results. "But after our visit we hope to see better trade figures."

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) President Motiur Rahman said there are few problems that stand in way of improving trade between the two countries and these should be addressed.

CCCI President Farid Ahmed Chowdhury stressed the need for setting up of a visa office in Chittagong so that businessmen from Chittagong can frequently visit Myanmar. He also called for opening of a direct flight from Myanmar to Chittagong, besides facilities for opening direct letters of credit with Myanmar, which is currently routed from Singapore.



Free sampling activity of Mirinda Apple started in Dhaka and Chittagong on the 14th of this month. The apple-flavoured soft drink, the new member of Pepsi family, is being distributed in several spots in the capital and the port city as part of the sampling activity. People especially students in the capital have shown great enthusiasm about the country's first apple-flavoured soft drink. This sampling activity will start in other divisional cities in next phase.

New trade row erupts

US slaps 29pc duty on Canadian timber

AFP, Washington

Just weeks after a US decision to curb steel imports, a new trade row erupted Friday as Washington slapped an average 29 per cent duty on Canadian softwood timber in a dispute over dumping.

The move provoked a harsh reaction from Washington's northern neighbour and from companies affected by the decision, which called the action protectionist.

The final figure -- which represents anti-dumping duties as well as compensatory tariffs -- is only slightly modified from the provisional rate of 32 per cent announced last year for many softwood products.

"We found that producers/exporters of certain softwood

lumber products from Canada have benefited from subsidies," the US Commerce Department said.

"We also found that Canadian producers/exporters of softwood lumber have sold their product below fair market value."

The tariff includes a 19.34 per cent compensatory duty, increased slightly from the initial rate of 19.31 per cent. It also includes an average "dumping margin" of 9.67 per cent -- from an initial proposed 12.58 per cent -- but the rate for different firms will vary from 2.26 per cent to 15.83 per cent, the agency said.

The countervailing duty was imposed on a provisional basis last year but expired in December, when a temporary compensatory duty was imposed. The tariffs must still be confirmed by the quasi-judicial

International Trade Commission in May.

Friday's action was swiftly denounced by Ottawa, which was involved in last-ditch talks to avert the duties.

"I honestly find the final determination of 29 per cent obscene," Canadian International Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew said.

"I am sorry that the American administration did not find the nerve to confront its protectionist softwood lumber producers. I am sorry for Canadian workers and the communities who will have to live (with) these punitive measures."

Pettigrew reaffirmed that Ottawa would be taking its fight against the US duties before a North American Free Trade Agreement panel as well as the World Trade Organization.

NCC Bank recommends 35pc dividend

The Board of Directors of National Credit and Commerce Bank Ltd has recommended a 35 per cent dividend for the shareholders for the year 2001, says a press release.

The dividend was recommended at a meeting of the bank held in the city on Sunday.

Of the total dividend, 30 per cent will be cash while the rest 5 per cent in bonus share.

The recommended dividend will be considered in the annual general meeting of the board to be held on May 7, 2002 subject to the approval of Bangladesh Bank.

The register of the shareholders and share transfer book of the company shall remain closed from April 18, 2002 to May 7, 2002 (both days inclusive).

New sales manager of Kuwait Airways in Bangladesh

Kuwait Airways Corporation has recently appointed Nasimul Hasan Sufi Sales Manager in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Before joining Kuwait Airways, Sufi served in Gulf Air, Emirates International Airlines and Pan American Airlines in Marketing and Sales department.

Sufi has undergone many training on Airlines marketing and sales at home and abroad.

Kuwait Airways is one of the leading and pioneer Airlines of Middle East covering more than 40 destinations in Asia, Europe, Africa and North America.

BOI, FICCI sign MOU

BSS, Dhaka

The Board of Investment (BOI) and Foreign Investors Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) signed here yesterday a memorandum of understanding (MOU) aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation and exchange of update information on investment.

Mahmudur Rahman, Executive Chairman of BOI, and Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan, President of FICCI, signed the MOU on behalf of their respective sides.

The MOU covered the exchange of information on investment at home and abroad and updating of wave page of BOI.

REHAB president, GS re-elected



Dr Toufiq M Seraj and Mahmudul Hasan have been re-elected president and general secretary of REHAB for the tenure of 2002-'3, says a press release.

They were re-elected at the annual general meeting of Real Estate & Housing Association of Bangladesh on Thursday.

Other office bearers include Nasrul Hamid senior vice president, Abdul Awal vice president, and M Saiful Islam treasurer.

Executive committee members of the association are Md Akramuzzaman, Abu Sufian, Lt Col Mahtabuddin Ahmed (ret), S M Anwar Hossain, Iftekhar A Khan Pintu, Mahfuzar Rahman, Ashrafur Islam, Rabiul Haq, Chowdhury Zaki Reza, Enamul Haq, Mokarram Hossain Khan and Nasid Islam.

National Tubes declares 35pc dividend

National Tubes Limited has declared a 35 per cent dividend for its shareholders for the year 2000-01, says a press release.

The dividend was announced at the 21st annual general meeting of the company held at the IEB auditorium in the city on Sunday.

M N Nabi, Addl. Secretary and Chairman of the BSEC & National Tubes Company Board, presided over the meeting.

S M Shahjahan, Joint Secretary immediate past Chairman of the Board, conducted the meeting.

All other directors, Md Khalequzzaman, S R Osmani, Md Saifur Rahman, Md Majibur Rahman Khan, Md Saiful Islam, Pirjada Torab Hossain and Mamun Akber were present in the meeting.

The company, a BSEC unit, earned a net profit of Tk 4.52 crore during the year 2000-01.

IBA-DeltaSoft seminar ends

A seminar on 'Tools and Techniques of Data Mining & Business Intelligence' has ended at the IBA auditorium in the city, says a press release.

The seminar was jointly organised by the Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University, and DeltaSoft Limited.

Dr Anwar Hossain, Director of IBA, presided over the seminar while Zakir Ahmed Khan, Secretary of Finance was the chief guest.

The inaugural session of the seminar was also addressed among others by Dr Jawad R Zahid of IBA, Azam J Chowdhury, Chairman, and Ashrafur H Chowdhury, Managing Director of DeltaSoft Limited.

Brian Lacey, President of Abiskar International Inc., USA, made a keynote speech on the tools and techniques of data mining & business intelligence.

Speakers underscored the need for application of data mining in business and organization environment.

24 senior and mid-level executives from the banks, insurance and leasing companies, telecommunications and energy sector participated in the seminar.

Physical construction of Ashuganj-Habiganj gas pipeline complete

Summit-Daqing Joint Venture completed the physical construction of the 54-km Ashuganj-Habiganj Gas Pipeline Project with a 480-metre long pipe string pulled down through the river bed of Titaz recently, says a press release.

A team of about 50 technicians and workers from China, Bangladesh, Australia and India worked to complete the river crossing, which was one of the crucial and most difficult tasks of Summit-Daqing Joint Venture in completing the gas pipeline project.

Senior officials of Petrobangla and its Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTCL) inspected the work.

Summit-Daqing J V is a joint venture of Daqing Petroleum Administrative Bureau DPAB, the largest petroleum company of China, and counterpart Summit Group of Companies of Bangladesh. They are implementing the project under GTCL of Petrobangla.



Deen Mohammad, Chairman of The City Bank Limited, speaks at the 19th annual general meeting of the bank in the city on Saturday. Vice Chairman of the bank Aziz Al-Kaiser, Directors Anwar Hossain, Azizul Haque Chowdhury and Managing Director Abbas Uddin Ahmed are also seen in the picture.

Was it a recession after all in US economy?

AFP, Washington

The US economy slipped into recession a year ago -- or did it?

With the downturn now apparently over -- and seen as one of the mildest on record -- some economists are starting to question whether the economy was in fact in recession in 2001.

The official arbiter of US economic cycles, the National Bureau of Economic Research, announced in November that the recession began in March 2001, ending a record 10-year expansion.

But now the recession appears to have failed to qualify under a classic definition -- two consecutive quarters of decline in gross domestic product.

The economy, after contracting at a 1.3 per cent pace in the third quarter, staged a surprise rebound in the fourth quarter, growing at a 1.4 per cent rate, according to a preliminary calculation by the government. Most economists see a stronger rate of growth in 2002.

The NBER, a private research group, does not use the classic definition, contending that a recession is "a significant decline in activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, visible in industrial production, employment, real income, and wholesale-retail sales.

These determinations often are

made after the fact, and some economists and US officials have said the recession, if it existed, was over by the time it was declared.

"It seems quite clear now that our economy maybe never suffered a recession," US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said recently.

Referring to the trend over the past year, Diane Swonk, chief economist at Bank One observed, "Do you call that a recession? I don't. I call that a slowdown."

But Swonk and others said last year's unusual trend could force a re-evaluation of how a recession is defined.

"I think we have to call into question how to define a recession," she said. Catherine Mann, an analyst at the Institute for International Economics, said that the US economy did not go into a classic recession but that "to my mind the issue the most important for the US economy for the whole of last year was the very dramatic slowdown in growth from the peak of the growth to what was ultimately a negative quarter."

Mann said that slowdown "was almost unprecedented in the magnitude of the decline -- from six per cent growth to a negative one, as well as the quickness with which it occurred, and that is much more important ... than a definition of a recession."

ICI Shariah Council meet held

A Shariah Council meeting of Islamic Commercial Insurance Co. Ltd. was held at the company's board room in the city recently, says a press release.

The meeting was presided over by prominent Islamic Scholar of the country and Vice Chancellor of Islamic University, Dr Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman.

The meeting was also attended among others by Shariah Council member & Advisor of the company and Associate Professor of Law, International Islamic University Malaysia, Dr Mohd. Ma'sum Billah, Council member and prominent Islamic Philosopher, Chairman of Al-Arafah Islamic Bank Ltd. A Z M Shamsul Alam, and Council member & Chairman of the Board of Directors M Kamaluddin Chowdhury, A K Momtaz Khan, Managing Director (CC), and Md Afzalur Rahman, Company Secretary, were also present.

The Council discussed different operational aspects of the company and appreciated the 3-year perspective plan taken by the Board of Directors in this regard. The Council advised the management to run all the operations of the company on the principles of Shariah.

Later, a Munajat was offered seeking blessings of the Almighty Allah to run the operation of the company on the principles of Shariah.

Thailand cements its status as 'Detroit of Southeast Asia'

AFP, Bangkok

With Asia's auto market in full expansion mode, Thailand is cementing its status as the "Detroit of Southeast Asia" an export-focused manufacturing platform for the world's top carmakers.

This week the Thai capital will host the 23rd Bangkok International Motor Show, Asia's second-largest auto fair after the Tokyo show.

Organisers are expecting some 1.5 million people to flood through the doors of Bangkok's International Trade and Exhibition centre for the March 25-April 7 event which will involve 130 companies from 11 countries.

Despite the after-effects of the 1997 economic crisis, car sales are showing impressive growth in Southeast Asia, rising eight per cent in 2001 in its four main markets Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

Some 1.07 million units were sold in the four countries last year, according to the Bangkok-based Automotive Resources Asia Institute.

In Thailand, domestic sales leapt

an astonishing 40 per cent over the first two months of 2002 compared to the same period in 2001.

With 297,000 units sold last year, the industry is tipping a 15 per cent increase in 2002, with Japanese manufacturers' models continuing to maintain their stranglehold and a 90-plus per cent market share.

But despite its healthy domestic sales figures, Thailand's real significance lies in its status as a production platform aimed at supplying regional markets.

Japanese automakers Toyota and Nissan pioneered the industry in the 1960s and 70s, helping establish an auto-making industrial belt in the provinces around Bangkok.

They were joined in the 1990s by American firms General Motors and Ford, with BMW heralding the European presence.

Among the factors that lured them were Thailand's central geographical position, good infrastructure, generous tax and legal incentives, and a plentiful supply of equipment and spare parts.

It was a winning combination that has given the kingdom the competitive edge over its neigh-

bours in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as the group moves to establish a common market.

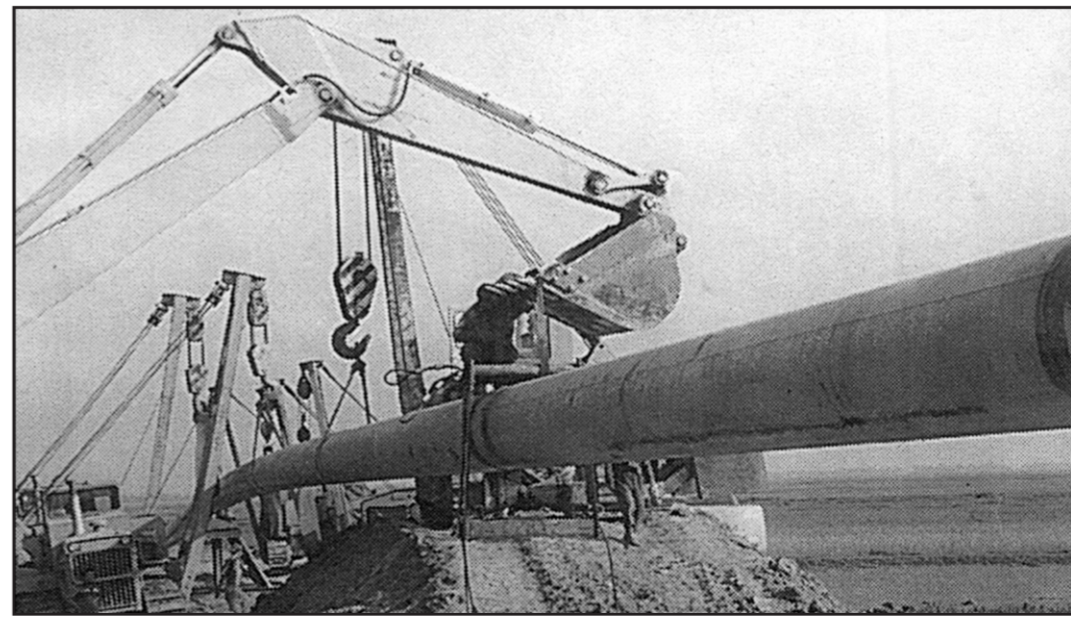
The ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) which came into force on January 1 envisages a tax reduction from five to zero per cent on 85 per cent of goods traded between Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Malaysia, anxious to protect its Proton national car, secured an extension that exempts it from the new tax structure until 2005.

Industry sources say Toyota will shortly announce a colossal 27 billion baht (627 million dollar) investment to establish one of its major worldwide production centres for pick-up trucks in the Bangkok region.

Some 140,000 units could be assembled there annually.

The decision is in line with a trend started in 2000 by Ford and its partner Mazda, as well as Mitsubishi, which have all shifted to Thailand production of the pick-up, an extremely popular model in Southeast Asia.



A partial view of the physical construction work of 54-km Ashuganj-Habiganj Gas Pipeline Project.

PHOTO: SUMMIT