

Thai trade fair begins in city

UNB, Dhaka

A diverse basket of Thai products and services was on display at the Thailand Exhibition 2002 that began here yesterday to promote business in Bangladesh.

Department of Export Promotion under the Thai Ministry of Commerce has organised the three-day exhibition at Sonargaon Hotel.

Inaugurating the show, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said Thailand could play an immense role as a bridge between ASEAN and SAARC countries.

Stressing the need for enhancing regional trade, the minister said the countries of this region could easily have at least 50 per cent trade within themselves. "We looked too much towards the West, but neglected the East," he said.

Khosru referred to the bilateral trade, which is largely in favour of Thailand, and said Bangladesh's trade deficit is nothing unusual since Thailand is a big economy.

He said the trade volume should grow more and the growth must be equitable to benefit both the peoples in terms of employment generation, purchasing power and economic development.

New Thai Ambassador in Dhaka Pithak Phrombuttha also spoke at the function.

Some 80 stalls, mostly of Thai consumer goods, kitchenware, and a few of electronics and services, have been opened in the exhibition.

DHL ranks 'Above World Class' in Insead '02 report

DHL Worldwide Express has announced that it has been awarded the highest possible ranking of 'Above World Class' in the latest INSEAD report 'Measuring Competitive Fitness of Global Firms 2002', says a press release.

The award marks the fifth consecutive year DHL has achieved the accolade. In addition, it is once again ranked highest among transport companies. DHL's 'Overall Market Effectiveness Capability' (OMEC) rating rose three points to 69.3 points higher than in 2001.

INSEAD's report provides independent evaluation of the business capabilities that are the fundamental assets of a firm, including mission and vision, organisation and systems, innovation, performance corporate culture, and customer orientation. Marks are awarded for each criterion, giving a total possible OMEC of 100.

DHL achieved particular recognition for its strength in corporate culture, customer orientation, and performance.

Other companies to be ranked 'above world class' include Nokia, BMW, Pfizer, and DHL shareholder, Lufthansa.

Dutch-Bangla Bank holds 6th AGM

The sixth annual general meeting of Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited was held at the Pan Pacific Hotel Sonargaon on Thursday, says a press release.

Mohammed Sahabuddin Ahmed, Chairman of the bank, presided over the meeting which was the bank's first AGM participated by the public shareholders since the company's floatation of shares for public issue in January 2001.

The meeting was attended by directors Abedur Rashid Khan, Nizamuddin Mahmood Selim, Abdus Salam and Gerrit M. Van Kampen, representative of the Netherlands Development Company (FMO). K.S. Tabrez, President and Managing Director in-charge of the bank, was also present.

The chairman in his speech highlighted the bank's financial performance and its roles in industrial development and societal progression in Bangladesh, and answered queries raised by the shareholders present.

Ena Properties opens agro-based project in Rajshahi

Ena Properties Limited inaugurated an agro-based project, Saleha-Emarat Cold Storage Limited, at Shankoa, Bagmara in Rajshahi recently, says a press release.

Saleha Begum, mother of Engr Enamul Haque, formally opened the project. This project has been planned and designed by Mycom, a renowned agro-technological firm of Japan. All machinery and equipment was supplied and installed by Japan, UK and German.

Engr Enamul Haque, Chairman and Managing Director of Ena Group, said this project would contribute to the socio-economic development of the region.

Khosru seeks regional policy support to lift non-tariff caps

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said efforts should be made at the policymaking levels of South Asian nations to remove non-tariff barriers to increase trade among the countries of the region.

He said non-tariff barriers have appeared as harder obstacle than the tariff barriers to increasing trade in the region. The commerce minister identified 'protectionist mindset' of the policy makers of the region as the reason behind such non-tariff barriers.

The minister was speaking at a session on "Trade related issues" on the second day of a two-day long dialogue on South Asian Co-operation.

The South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS), an institutional collaboration of leading think-tanks and academic institutions of South Asia, organised the dialogue in association with the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Professor Muchkund Dubey, President of Council for Social Development, New Delhi,

chaired the session. Dr Saman Kelegama, Executive Director of Institute of Policy Studies Colombo, and Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Research Director of the CPD, made separate presentations of the task force reports on SAFTA and WTO.

Referring to Indian market, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said the volume of export from Bangladesh would have been higher had it market access to the biggest economy of the region.

Pro-Vice Chancellor of North South University Dr. Hafiz GA Siddiqui said protectionist policy of India and small export base of Bangladesh have been remaining as the major factors for which the volume of export from Bangladesh to India is not increasing.

He also said countries like Bangladesh and Nepal will not be able to increase their export volumes unless the tariff barriers are removed from the bigger regional markets.

CK Hyder, Secretary General of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, observed

non-tariff as well as para-tariff barriers have been limiting the scope of increasing regional co-operation.

Dr Saman Kelegama, in his paper titled "The Implications of Building a South Asian Free Trade Area: Challenges and Constrains to Regionalism in South Asia"

observed introduction of bilateral free trade agreements among SAARC countries is likely to lead to further fragmentation of a common South Asian goal towards regional integration.

The paper presented by Professor Mustafizur Rahman on "Post-Doha Negotiations in the WTO: Advancing the Interests of South Asian Countries" said Asian countries must give priority attention to the task of identifying appropriate modalities towards more effective cooperation to deal with their interests and concerns in the WTO.

Professor Muchkund Dubey observed the WTO will not play any significant role in changing the structure of economy of the countries of this region. Rather, he said, it can be changed through domestic efforts.



Thai products are on display at the three-day Thailand Exhibition 2002 that began yesterday at Sonargaon Hotel.

PHOTO: STAR

BB T-bill auction held

UNB, Dhaka

The 186th auction of the 28-day, 91-day, 182-day, 364-day, 2-year and 5-year treasury bills were held here yesterday.

A total of Tk 3886.80, Tk 30.20 crore, Tk 26.50 crore, Tk 17.00 crore and Tk 595.00 crore were offered for the 28-day, 91-day, 364-day, 2-year and 5-year bills respectively.

Of these, Tk 3610.20 crore, Tk 10.00 crore, Tk 15.00 crore and Tk 80.00 crore in total of Tk 3715.20 crore of the 28-day, 91-day, 364-day, 2-year and 5-year bills were accepted respectively.

The ranges of the implicit yields were 3.50-4.25 per cent, 5.20 per cent, 5.75-5.80 per cent and 9.10-9.15 per cent per annum respectively. No bid was offered for the 182-day bill and the bids offered for the 2-year bill were not accepted.

Bangladesh's IT firms earn global appreciation at Hannover fair

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh's IT firms this year attained global appreciation on ICT at a world fair in Hannover of Germany, although the exhibition experienced a visitors' downturn amidst economic recession.

The CeBIT fair draws nearly a million visitors and trade professionals together on a platform every year with the aim of 'getting the spirit of tomorrow' on information technology, telecommunications and office automation.

This year, about 8,000 IT firms from 56 countries participated in the eight-day hit-tech bazaar, CeBIT-2002, which was inaugurated by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder on March 12.

Six Bangladeshi IT firms under the banner of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Service (BASIS) participated in the fair offering offshore

software development. Besides, four firms were also present in the fair as visitors.

The Export Promotion Bureau and the Bangladesh Embassy in Berlin assisted the participants.

"With this year's participation, Bangladesh has so far attended the fair four times and gained experiences about global IT as well as got the opportunity to expose the country's IT sectors," said BASIS Treasurer and Bangladesh team leader TIM Nurul Kabir on return from the exhibition.

Following the recent recession in the global economy, the organisers apprehended lower turnout both in terms of participants and visitors or buyers.

"But, we (Bangladeshi IT firms) have got a good response during the fair from all of the firms which were contacted earlier. On completion of the fair we have also had fruitful follow-up meetings with

them," Kabir said.

This year BASIS stressed promotional activities for the Bangladeshi IT works by distributing brochures and gift items. BASIS also offered Bangladesh night on March 19 to attract the visitors and other participants.

The team leader said to get any result it is necessary to develop things gradually and then give big jump. "We are trying to uplift the IT sector from a common platform."

CSL Software Resources Ltd, LEADS Corporation Ltd, Satcom Computers Ltd, TCL IT Services Ltd, the Decode Ltd and TechoVista Ltd were the participants while Business Automation Ltd, DataSoft Systems Bangladesh Ltd, Flora Systems Ltd and Structured Data System Ltd were the visitor firms in the fair.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Berlin Ashfaqur Rahman visited the Bangladesh stalls. He assured his

highest possible cooperation with the Bangladeshi IT professionals in Germany to promote the country's information technology sector there as front office.

Talking to UNB correspondent at his Berlin office, the Ambassador stressed the need for a big push by the private sector to get access to the competitive market. "The embassy here works as post office and the people are the message senders to their respective destination," he said.

Appreciating the CeBIT fair, he said participants need yearlong preparations to attend the mega-event in IT. There is no scope for instant preparation there, he said welcoming more Bangladeshi participants.

The CeBIT fair ground comprises 27 halls on a vast tract of land for showcasing products of the present day's fastest-growing sector from around the globe.



A partial view of the sixth annual general meeting of Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd held at Sonargaon Hotel on Thursday.

PHOTO: DUTCH-BANGLA BANK

Bangladesh receives huge response at Dubai festival

The month-long Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) concluded yesterday with Bangladeshi participants receiving huge response from international community, says a press release.

Products of Partex Group, Pran, Bombay Sweet's, Bangas, Arab Super Tea, Ashirbad Boutique, Warda Textile, besides Tangail saree, Zamdani saree, Rajshahi silk sarees, readymade garments, leather items and handicrafts, among others, from Bangladesh were put on display at the largest retail fair and consumer festival in the Middle East.

Bangladesh pavilion at the fair was organised by Bangladesh Pavilion Organising Committee

(BPOC), a Dubai-based organisation of non-resident Bangladeshi professionals.

"We received excellent response from the UAE people, Arabs and other foreigners," said Aziz Al Kaiser Tito, Vice Chairman of Partex Group. "This is Partex's second time participation at the fair. After first year's participation, we started exporting our products to the UAE market. We also appointed a local distributor to expand our market," said Tito.

Warda Textiles took part this year for the first time. "We witnessed wonderful sales here," said Russel Hassan Kadir, owner of Warda Textiles.

Sanmar Properties, a

Chittagong-based real estate firm, received good response from non-resident Bangladeshis who are keen to have own apartments and commercial premises at prime locations in Chittagong. We sold many apartments during the fair," said M.I. Khasru, Director of Sanmar Properties.

"Through our participation at the fair, we have managed to create awareness about Bangladeshi commodity, culture and heritage among the cosmopolitan society of the UAE as well as the 2.5 million tourists who visited Bangladesh pavilion throughout the month," said Saifur Rahman, Chief Co-ordinator of the BPOC.

Powdered milk smuggling doubles in five months

400-gm Dano Instant launched

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Smuggling of powdered milk has doubled in the last five months after the government considered it a luxury item and imposed regulatory duty on this essential consumer product.

"Earlier, powdered milk smuggling was around five to seven thousand tons a year. But the present government considered it a luxury item after coming to power and imposed 10 per cent regulatory duty on it like cigarette and alcohol. Because of the decision, smuggling has become almost double within a short span of time," said Azim Uddin Ahmed, Chairman of Mutual Trading Company Limited, the local distributor of Arla Foods, a Danish milk producing company.

Azim Uddin Ahmed was speaking at a press briefing organised at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday in connection with the launching of

Dano Instant 400-gm bag-in-box. Ahmed Kabir, Country Manager of Arla Foods Ingredients Milco, Bangladesh, and Iftekhar Azim Ahmed, Director of Mutual Group, were also present at the briefing.

Azim Uddin Ahmed said low quality and cheap smuggled milk is being used in producing the bakery items and different types of sweets and causing serious health hazard.

Painting a grim picture of the country's dairy sub-sector, he said although there were a significant development of poultry and fisheries sub-sectors in the past 10 years, the situation was opposite in the dairy sub-sector.

"Dairy units met 17 per cent of the country's total demand in 1990-91 but they produced only 14 per cent of the demand during 1997-98. Per capita intake of milk in Bangladesh is only 15 litre per annum, the lowest among the SAARC countries. It is 125 litre in Pakistan, 75 litre in India,"

the chairman mentioned.

Besides, duty on this essential item in Bangladesh is the highest in the region. It is 82 per cent in case of packed import while 62 per cent in case of bulk import. The duty on powdered milk is 15 per cent in India, 10 per cent in Sri Lanka, 5 per cent in Thailand and Malaysia, he went on.

Azim Uddin Ahmed said dairy sub-sector did not develop mainly due to lack of integrated approach. Sufficient land and cattle feed are essential for developing the sub-sector, which the country does not have, he observed.

Speaking at the press briefing, Ahmed Kabir, Country Manager of Arla Foods, said around 22 thousand tons of milk worth around Tk 350 crore is imported every year.

Because of high quality, the price of Dano is comparatively higher - Tk 260 per kg. The market share of Dano is 14 per cent in Bangladesh, Kabir added.



Azim Uddin Ahmed, Chairman of Mutual Trading Company Limited, the local distributor of Arla Foods, speaks at a press conference organised at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday in connection with the launching of 400gm-pack Dano Instant powdered milk.

PHOTO: STAR

Emirates changes flight numbers

Emirates, the Dubai based international airline, with the expansion of its network, has changed some flight numbers of its summer schedule, including those flying to and from Dhaka, effective March 31, 2002 to October 26, 2002, says a press release.

The new range of flight numbers that have been allocated to each geographical area are: EK001-EK199 for Europe; EK200-EK299 for Americas; EK300-EK399 for Far East and South East Asia; EK400-EK499 for South West Pacific; EK500-EK699 for South Asian Subcontinent; EK700-EK799 for Africa and Indian Ocean Islands; EK800-EK899 for GCC Countries and EK900-EK999 for Middle East and C.I.S.

Flight EK580 will depart Dubai on Saturdays at 0115 hours arriving in Karachi at 0415 hours, departing Karachi at 0515 hours, arriving in Dhaka at 0930 hours while Flight EK583 will depart Dhaka at 1115 hours, arriving in Dubai at 1405 hours.

Flight EK336 will depart Dubai on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays at 0255 hours arriving in Dhaka at 0940 hours, departing Dhaka at 1050 hours and arriving in Kuala Lumpur at 1630 hours while Flight EK337 will depart Kuala Lumpur on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays at 1800 hours arriving in Dhaka at 1940 hours departing Dhaka at 2050 hours and arriving in Dubai at 2340 hours.

Flight EK582 will depart Dubai on Mondays at 0115 hours arriving in Dhaka at 0800 hours while Flight EK581 will depart Dhaka on Mondays at 0930 hours arriving in Karachi at 1200 hours, departing Karachi at 1300 hours and arriving in Dubai at 1400 hours.

Flight EK580 will depart Dubai on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 0115 hours arriving in Dhaka at 0800 hours while Flight EK583 will depart Dhaka on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 0955 hours arriving in Dubai at 1235 hours.

Flight EK580 will depart Dubai on Fridays at 0115 hours arriving in Karachi at 0415 hours, departing Karachi at 0515 hours arriving in Dhaka at 0930 hours while Flight EK581 will depart Dhaka on Fridays at 1045 hours arriving in Karachi at 1315 hours departing Karachi at 1415 hours arriving in Dubai at 1515 hours.

Flights on Saturdays will come via Karachi and depart direct to Dubai while flights on Mondays will come direct from Dubai and depart via Karachi to Dubai.

33/11 KV power substation opens at Mirpur

State Minister of Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud inaugurated a 33/11 KV power substation in Mirpur, says a press release.

Siemens supplied equipment and expertise to Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO) for building the power substation.

AB Siddique, Chairman of DESCO, Harminder Singh, Director of Siemens India, and Dr Peter E. Albrich, MD & CEO of Siemens Bangladesh Limited, A.K. Dixit, GM, High Voltage, D.P. Khandekar, GM, Export, U Sengupta, Senior Manager, Commercial, Gopal Gosh, Site Manager from Siemens, India, and S M Nooruddin, GM, Siemens Bangladesh Limited, were present on the occasion.

This newly established power substation will provide power supply for commercial use in over 50 square kilometer of Mirpur area under its service territory.

Siemens India and Siemens Bangladesh Limited have jointly worked as technical partners to build the substation. Asian Development Bank (ADB) financed the project.

SIA starts direct flight on Ctg-S'pore route

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Singapore Airlines (SIA) yesterday formally started its direct flight operation on Chittagong - Singapore route.

An SIA Airbus with 46 passengers, who included some guests and pressmen, from Singapore landed at MA Hannan International Airport in Chittagong at 2-05 pm marking the inauguration of the direct flight operation between Chittagong and Singapore.

Talking to journalists at the airport, Chief executive of Silk Air Ltd, a subsidiary of Singapore Airlines, Subash Menon said direct flight between Chittagong and Singapore will be operated three

times a week.

"We hope that direct flight operation on this route will be viable," Subash said.

Meanwhile, Silk Air Ltd organised a function in the airport premises on the occasion of inauguration of the flight operation.

State Minister for Civil aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin attended the function as chief guest.

Addressing the function, the state minister said efforts are on to connect Chittagong with all important places of the world.

The function was also addressed by the Chairman of Civil Aviation Lutfur Rahman.



(From left) State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, S A Khaleq MP, Harminder Singh, Director-Siemens India, and Dr Peter E Albrich, MD and CEO-Siemens Bangladesh, are seen at the inaugural function of Mirpur 33/11 kv substation held in the city.

PHOTO: SIEMENS

Citibank seminar on banking for professional women ends

A two-day seminar on 'comprehensive banking for professional women' organised by Citibank N.A. Bangladesh concluded in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin, former Governor of Bangladesh Bank, was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony. He also distributed certificates among the participants.

The seminar was inaugurated by Rokia Rahman, advisor to the former caretaker government and director of Bangladesh Bank, on Saturday.

A total of 50 female executives/senior officials from ministry of finance, ministry of commerce, economic relations division, board of investment, national board of revenue, NGO Affairs Bureau, Bangladesh Bank, electronic media, various commercial banks & NGOs attended the seminar.

Leading female bankers and lawyers were present as facilitators in the seminar.

Christopher Webster, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, Dhaka and David E. Rees, CEO of Citibank NA, Bangladesh, also spoke on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Farashuddin emphasized the need to exchange of knowledge and best practices from successful economies and organisations to countries like Bangladesh.

Workshop calls for optimum use of local resources

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at a workshop have called for ensuring optimum use of local resources and the strategic advantages to help the country survive tough competition in international trade in the present world of economic globalisation.

They made this call at a three-day training workshop on "Commercial Broiler Firm Management" that started at Chittagong Chamber auditorium here on Saturday. The workshop has been organised by Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) in cooperation with Agro-based Industries and Technology Development Project-II (ATDP-II). CCCI CCCI Director Iqbal Dada presided over the inaugural session of the workshop.

In his address of welcome CCCI director Md. Amirul Haq called for

identifying the sectors enjoying competitive edges and utmost utilisation of them through introduction of proper policies. ATDP-II Poultry Consultant Dr. Golam Ahmed Morshed said the agro-based industries have greater prospects as far as the net export income is concerned.

To increase the export income through expansion of agro-based industries there is no alternative to acquiring knowledge of modern technology and management skills.

Dr. SMFB Abdus Sabur and Fanindra Nath Saha conducted the workshop participated by 21 entrepreneurs.

ATDP-II is a joint venture project run by the Ministry of Agriculture with the assistance of the USAID. The project is being implemented in country through three private companies -- Luis Berger Group, Kargil WW Grains and Land O Lakes.