

## Toshiba sues Samsung

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Toshiba Corp. said Tuesday it had filed suits against South Korean Samsung Electronics Co. for allegedly violating its memory chip patents.

Toshiba filed a total of 10 lawsuits on Monday with the Tokyo District Court, a federal court in the US state of New Jersey, and the United States International Trade Commission.

"The lawsuits concern the patents on circuit design and manufacturing of our flash memory and DRAM (dynamic random access memory) chips," said Kenichi Sugiyama, a spokesman for Toshiba.

The Japanese firm asked Samsung, the world's largest memory chipmaker, to discontinue manufacturing and selling of the chip items concerned in the United States and demanded Samsung pay damages, Sugiyama said.

Toshiba declined to say how much it was asking for.

In 1993, Toshiba and Samsung agreed to exchange their memory chip licenses, but the agreement expired in 2000, the business daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun said.

The two firms were negotiating an extension of the 1993 agreement but Samsung refused to sign, arguing payments to Toshiba were too high, the daily said.

The Toshiba spokesman declined to comment on the report.

## Nissho-SYF-Quest consortium team meets energy minister

A business delegation from Nissho-SYF-Quest Energy consortium, formed to develop and invest in Bangladesh's energy sector, called on the Energy Minister A K M Mosharrar Hossain on Monday, says a press release.

Led by M Osman Yousuf, President of the SYF Group, Inc (USA), the delegation also included Mahmud Ansari, Managing Director of Quest Energy Plc (UK), and Taku Imai of Nissho Iwai Europe Plc (UK).

The delegation expressed their keen interest in investing in various economically viable mid-down stream energy projects, including developing the gas export pipeline project on BOT basis, should Bangladesh decide to export its gas.

The consortium expressed their intent to introduce cost effective technology appropriate for Bangladesh, bring project finance and make equity investments.

The SYF Group acted as the Principal Advisor to Occidental Petroleum Corporation and assisted them to negotiate and implement the Production Sharing Contracts for blocks 12, 13 and 14.

Energy Secretary Khairuzzaman Chowdhury was present on the occasion.

## Tata launches fixed-line phones by Aug

AFP, Bangalore, India

India's Tata Teleservices Ltd. said Tuesday it will launch fixed-line telephones in the southern Indian state of Karnataka by August this year with an investment of 10 billion rupees (208 million dollars).

"Initially the services will be launched in Bangalore and five other cities, and then we will extend this to 30 cities and towns in the first phase by August 2003," said Y.V.L. Pandit, chief operating officer of the firm.

## 'Nepalese economy sound'

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepal's Finance Minister said Monday the country's economy was sound, despite being weighed down by a bloody insurgency, and would rebound as soon as the rebels were crushed.

"I think the fundamentals of the economy are still sound," Ram Sharan Mahat told Reuters. "Our deficit is under control, about five per cent (of GDP) even now; even after we have this problem it will not go beyond six per cent of GDP."

He said inflation was also under control, foreign reserves were "quite comfortable" and industrial capacity had been built up ready for a recovery.

"Once we have a normal situation, in terms of law and order, ... then the economy will revive immediately," he said.

# No decision to go against IT sector growth: PM

## Assurance of reconsidering steps standing in way

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the government would not implement any decision that stands in the way of the growth of information communication technology (ICT) sector in the country.

"The government would reconsider the decisions, which might hinder the growth of the country's information technology sector," the Prime Minister told reporters at International Conference Centre at the Prime Minister's Office.

She made the comment while responding to a query about some recent decisions like introduction of multi-metering system and charge for mobile SIM card replacement.

Telecom sector analysts observe that decisions like introduction of multi-metering system for fixed telephone, Tk 4,000 fees for replacement of SIM card and mobile phone set replacement

and a fixed tariff of Tk 4,000 on import of mobile handsets might hinder the growth of IT sector.

The Prime Minister said the government wants the country's IT industry, a thrust sector of the country, to grow unhindered.

Expressing surprise, the Prime Minister said she was unaware of the decision of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to enhance import duty on mobile handset and increased fees for replacement of SIM card and mobile phone set.

About launching of BTTB mobile phone, she said, "Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) has been given directive to take necessary steps to start the project."

The BTTB has placed a proposal before the Ministry of Planning for launching of 100,000 cellular phones. The cost for the project was estimated at Tk 2,500 crore.

"A fresh tender for the BTTB mobile project would be launched after getting nod from the

Planning Commission," Minister for Post and Telecommunications Barrister Aminul Haque told The Daily Star recently.

Sources yesterday said the NBR is considering the withdrawal of Tk 4,000 fees for replacement of SIM card and mobile sets.

The Prime Minister said the Bangladesh Television (BTV), would start satellite transmission side by side its terrestrial band.

"We are thinking of transmitting BTV programmes through satellite channel for broader audience," the PM said.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the present standard of BTV, a government-controlled electronic media, she said, "It cannot run like this ... we don't want to see only government news."

There is a lack of skilled manpower in the BTV and fresh skilled manpower will be recruited and some people have to go, she said without elaborating.

# Rural poverty declines, income inequality increases in 10 years

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Rural poverty situation in Bangladesh improved substantially over the last decade but the increase in income was not distributed fairly.

An internationally reputed Bangladeshi social scientist, Dr Mahabub Hossain, said this while presenting the keynote paper at a two-day workshop on 'Rural Poverty Mapping in Bangladesh' which began in the city yesterday.

The Ministry of Planning organised the workshop in cooperation with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) at the LGED Bhavan.

Presenting his paper titled 'Recent Changes in Bangladesh Rural Economy: Implications for Rural Development Strategies', Dr Hossain said the average household income in rural areas increased from 927 US dollars in 1987-88 to 1348 US dollars in 1999-2000, showing a growth rate of 3.2 per cent per year.

Dr Mahabub Hossain, who heads the Social Science Division of IRRI,

however, noted that, "The distribution of rural income was fairly unequal in 1987-88 and (the situation) worsened further by 1999-2000."

Explaining the inequality, he said while rural income grew from the sources of remittance, trade and business and non-rice agriculture, the income from rice farming and agricultural wage declined in absolute terms.

"It appears that it is the better off sections in rural community with access to education and financial capital who have been availing themselves of the new income earning opportunities in the rural non-farm sector," noted Hossain.

His paper revealed that poverty remained concentrated among households owning land below 0.4 hectare, and among those who are primarily labourers.

Dr Mahabub Hossain, who is a former director general of leading local think-tank Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), saw enormous prospect of agriculture-based industries in Bangladesh.

He urged the public sector to

encourage private sector so that new entrepreneur increasingly get involved in profitable agro-processing businesses.

"The supply of rural credit needs to be redirected from financing working capital needs for crop production to promoting agricultural mechanisation and agro-business," opined Hossain.

Another paper titled, 'Poverty Mapping in Bangladesh, Integrating Household and National Level Special Data, Using a GIS Framework' was also presented at the workshop.

The second paper, co-authored by Dr Suang Pheng Kam, Dr Mahabub Hossain and Manik Lal Bose of IRRI and presented by Dr Kam, noted that standard of living in Bangladesh is not geographically uniform.

Planning Division Secretary Badiur Rahman chaired the first day session of the two-day workshop.

## Aventis CropScience declares 25pc dividend

Aventis CropScience Bangladesh Limited has declared a 25 per cent dividend for the shareholders for the year 2001.

The dividend was announced at the 23rd meeting of the Board of Directors and the 7th annual general meeting of the company held in the city on Sunday, says a press release.

Aventis CropScience Bangladesh Ltd is a joint venture company with the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation and Aventis CropScience SA in France.

Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director Russell Brown said the company had recorded another very satisfactory sales and profit result for its business for the year 2001 in spite of a static market and difficult trading conditions. Turnover for the year 2001 was increased by 11 per cent compared to 2000.

He said the year 2001 was a milestone in the company's continuing evolution as this was the first full year of trading as a pure Agrochemicals company, having divested its Animal Health & Animal Nutrition business in 2000.

Brown said during the year, the Board approved the investment of a Granular Manufacturing Plant for the local production of its key product Regent 3GR.

## Informatics to introduce ICT programme in Bangladesh

Informatics Institute Bangladesh will introduce a comprehensive Information and Communication Technology (ICT) programme in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Informatics has a tradition of developing curriculum and training programme of the highest standards.

The company's research and development wing, located at its headquarters at International Business Park in Singapore, is comprised dedicated experts. They continuously interact with reputed academics, professionals and industry leaders to keep pace with the ever-changing global IT scenario.

Industry giants such as CISCO, ORACLE, Sun have contractual agreements to include their vendor programmes as a part of coursework or degree requirements at Informatics.

Many top universities worldwide and academic bodies such as NCC, University of Cambridge (LES) have their seal of approval on most Informatics programmes, thus setting standards of highest reputation.

The company is yet again playing a pioneering role in developing and training people in Information and Communication Technology, or more popularly known as Info-Comm, which is already showing signs of widespread influence.

The Info-Comm wave is already making heads turn in Bangladesh. At the recently concluded BCS Computer Show, the country's largest IT fair, Info-Comm or ICT, was the main theme for the future.

Informatics provides a complete educational pathway, from certification course to diploma and advanced diploma, certified by NCC, UK.

Informatics is affiliated with RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology), among the most renowned university for IT, in Australia to provide Bachelor of Applied Science (Information Technology).



Photo shows (from left to right) A H Chowdhury of Rahman Rahman Huq (Auditors), M A Khair, Company Secretary, Managing Director Russell Brown, Chairman Hansanul Morshed, and directors A B M Shamsuddin and A K M Shamsuddin attending the 23rd meeting of the board of directors of Aventis CropScience Bangladesh Ltd in the city on Sunday.

## WTO figures show

# India takes over from US as most active anti-dumper

REUTERS, Geneva

India has taken over from the United States as the most active user in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of anti-dumping actions against foreign imports, according to figures released Monday.

The figures, issued by the WTO, showed both countries well ahead of the third placed Argentina and the European Union, in fourth place, in applying the often-controversial measures against goods deemed to be priced at below production cost.

According to the WTO, whose statistics were based on the second half of last year, China was easily the main target of anti-dumping actions -- which normally lead to the imposition of extra tariffs on products deemed to be dumped.

India launched 51 investigations from July to December last year, 30 more than it had during the same period in 2000. Of these, 20 led to mandated duty increases on the targeted goods.

The United States, for long the champion of anti-dumping actions and criticised by other WTO members on the issue, launched 35 in the second half of last year against 38 from July to December 2000.

Argentina launched 16 actions and the EU 15.

A total of 25 actions were started against Chinese goods. Brazil, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States were next, facing nine such actions each.

WTO rules allow the body's currently 144 member countries to impose anti-dumping tariffs -- and so break normal free trading regulations -- after they have carried out detailed investigations on whether dumping is taking place.

These investigations look into whether the export price of a targeted product is lower than that at which it is sold in its domestic market.

Although not all investigations lead to extra tariffs, trade analysts say the launch of an action usually immediately inhibits imports of the targeted item because importers have to post bonds against eventual additional duties.

Traditionally, genuine dumping is used when exporters want to break into a new foreign market and undercut local producers, sometimes with the hope of driving them out of business.

In this scenario, the foreign producer can then raise his prices to make a profit -- and even a super-profit if he has managed to carve out a monopoly niche in the importing country.

Under WTO rules, investigations by national authorities into alleged dumping have to show that it is actually causing injury to domestic producers -- either of manufactured items or agricultural goods.

But the anti-dumping actions can be challenged through the WTO's dispute settlement system and if found unjustified by independent panels the country that has applied them is asked by its fellow WTO members to withdraw them.

Several anti-dumping actions by the United States, as well as some other WTO members, have been found unjustified, and developing countries have often accused Washington of abusing them to keep out goods competing with domestic products.

At last November's WTO ministerial conference in Qatar, US negotiators agreed under heavy pressure to include a review of anti-dumping rules in a new round of global trade liberalisation talks now under way.

The WTO said the United States still headed the league of countries actually imposing duties after investigations, taking such action 21 times during the last six months of last year -- a sharp rise from eight in the same period of 2000.

# Putin backs land sale, mulls ban on foreign ownership

AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin called Monday for swift approval of a law allowing the sale of Russian farmland for the first time since the 1917 revolution, but conceded it may be necessary to ban foreign ownership.

Putin told the leaders of Russia's 89 provinces that the constitutional right to private ownership in post-Soviet Russia depended on the legislation which the Communists have blocked for a decade.

"We need an effective legal mechanism for use of the land, clear rules for regulating the market in land and protection of owners' rights," the Russian leader added.

"While we are arguing about who owns the land, weeds are taking over. During the last 10 years, around 18 million hectares have gone out of agricultural production. That's equivalent to the whole of France," he said.

But Putin said he understood the "concerns of those who think that at this stage Russia should have a legislative ban on the purchase of land by foreign nationals," in comments addressed to the State Council of regional bosses.

Observing that many other countries had similar bans, Putin said: "I believe that until we regulate the market, until we find out how it works, there is no need to hurry in selling land to foreigners."

"In any case, a national consensus has to be obtained on this question," Putin added, stressing that a final "balanced" decision must be "understandable to everybody and backed by the agricultural population itself."

The Russian government on March 14 approved a bill allowing for the sale of farmland for agricultural use, with Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov at the time arguing for its swift passage through parliament.

A decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, land ownership remains an emotive issue in Russia where many consider that land should not be traded as a commodity, though a number of Russian regions have already permitted private sale of farmland.

Russia passed last year a land code that authorises the private ownership and sale of non-agricultural land, including foreign ownership.

The Russian government on March 14 approved a bill allowing for the sale of farmland for agricultural use, although some 12 million Russians already own agricultural land obtained through the privatisation of Soviet-era collective farms.

Putin said the new law would contain measures to combat monopolies and unfair competition as well as corrupt practices.

# US tells EU to abide by world trade rules

AFP, Washington

The United States urged the European Union on Monday to abandon plans to retaliate against US steel import tariffs, saying such action would flout world trade rules.

"Our position on the EU's retaliation is they should not take any unilateral action," US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick told reporters at a meeting in the Senate.

Europeans should rely instead on the World Trade Organization, he said.

"They should do what they have argued in case after case, which is to let the WTO decide. That is why we created the WTO," Zoellick said.

"I think there was an EU brief in an import measures case that said the United States should not act as judge and jury. Well, I just urge the EU not to act as litigator, judge and jury."

EU officials said a retaliation

proposal -- 100 per cent import tariffs on some US goods, including grapefruit and rice -- had been made on Friday to trade experts from the 15 EU member states.

The proposal was in response to an announcement by US President George W. Bush in March that he was applying tariffs of up to 30 per cent on most steel imports to protect the ailing US steel industry -- drawing protests from the EU, Japan and other trading partners.

Zoellick said he had spoken with European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy, a personal friend, and the two sides remained committed to pursuing free trade through WTO negotiations.

Trade ministers from the 142-member World Trade Organization agreed in November last year at a meeting in Doha, Qatar, to launch a new round of negotiations to dismantle trade barriers.

The new negotiations are known

as the Doha Development Agenda because of the benefits they are expected to produce for developing countries.

"I just had about a two-hour conversation with Commissioner Lamy on Friday and while we had differences on steel we were committed to try to move ahead the Doha Development Agenda," Zoellick said.

Lamy has warned EU retaliation may come within days. The EU, which has taken the issue to the Geneva-based WTO, has estimated the damage from the tariffs at 2.5 billion euros (2.2 billion dollars).

In order to apply the retaliatory measures, Brussels would also have to send a list of products to the WTO by mid-June and apply the sanctions by mid-June.

Under the European Commission plan, the punitive tariffs would come into effect by June 18.



Energy Minister A K M Mosharrar Hossain (2nd from right) talks to Osman Yousuf, President of the SYF Group, Inc (USA), Mahmud Ansari, Managing Director of Quest Energy Plc (UK), and Taku Imai of Nissho Iwai Europe Plc (UK) of NISSHO-SYF Quest Energy Consortium, during their meeting with the minister in the city on Monday.