

New int'l jute body comes into being with pledge to promote pvt sector

BSS, Dhaka

Following the recent cessation of the International Jute Organisation (IJO), a new international organisation on jute emerged here this week with a pledge to strongly associate the private sector for promotion of jute and jute goods globally.

Established in Dhaka in 1984, the IJO had 24 members before it was completely liquidated on October 11 in 2001. Since then a trustee board has been responsible to expedite related functions till formation of the new organisation.

International Jute Study Group (IJS), the new UN affiliated organisation, was formally launched in Dhaka on Saturday at the four-day regular session of the International Jute Council (IJC), the highest policy-making body

of the Study Group.

Over 30 delegates from member countries, stake holders and the private sector are attending the session which ends today.

This is for the first time the private sector stakeholders in jute will be given status of associate member in the new organisation and a private sector consultative committee will be formed to guide the IJC regarding activities of the organisation.

Bangladesh Jute Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed, BB, gave the inaugural address at the four-day session on April 27. Officer in Charge of the Study Group Dr R Mandal is coordinating the whole session.

The home side was led by Jute Secretary Sarwar Kamal, who is also Vice Chairman of the IJC while the Indian team was headed by Textiles Secretary S B Mohapatra. The EC delegation was led by Engo Barattini while

Switzerland was represented in the session by Patrick Sehait. The session is being chaired by IJC chairman J V Ketelsen, a senior diplomat at the delegation of European Union in Bangladesh.

Established with the four founding members Bangladesh, India, European Community comprising 15-member states and Switzerland the IJS will be headquartered in Dhaka. The new organisation was set up initially for eight years with a provision of another four-year extension.

Sources close to the IJC told BSS yesterday, the new organisation will have an yearly administrative budget worth an estimated 500,000 US dollars, half of the defunct IJO budget.

The council has endorsed a 13-member secretariat, which will comprise the new Secretary General, an International profes-

sional and the local staff, the sources said.

A special IJC session some time in July next will confirm the election of the first Secretary General, the chief of the IJS, the sources said.

The new IJC chairman, delegation chiefs of the EC and Switzerland feel the new secretary general should have both sound professional knowledge on jute as well as administrative capabilities to carry forward the mission of the new organisation effectively.

Talking to BSS, Bangladesh delegation leader to the session Jute Secretary Sarwar Kamal said the outcome of the session was very positive.

He said inter-actions in the session was very friendly. Besides other members, the EC is in a position to help diversified use of jute in a bigger way in the coming days, he said.



PHOTO: BANK ASIA

Syed Anisul Huq, MD of Bank Asia, Ahmed Salahuddin, MD of Emirates Cement Bangladesh, Ataul Hoque, MD of IFIC Bank, A H Ziauddin Ahmed, DMD of Pubali Bank, A K M Nozmul Haque, MD of IIDFC, Mofizuddin Sarker, MD of IDFSL, Azadur Rahman Khan, MD of Bay Leasing, and Md. Khalilur Rahman, MD of BIFC, sign a Tk 555 million syndicated term loan for Emirates Cement on Sunday.

More incentives for agro-industries, no subsidy for abusers: Saifur

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman said the government intends to provide more incentives for the country's agro-based industries and discontinue subsidies in sectors, which have abused the assistance.

Saifur said the government would not mind spending money for the development of the prospective areas like agro-based industries and livestock sector.

"But we will not continue giving subsidies to the sectors, which have been abused by exporters running away with hundreds of crore of taka from the treasury against false claims," the minister said.

The Finance Minister was speaking at a seminar on Role of Micro Credit in Poverty Elimination by Increasing Production of Goat at the CIRDAP auditorium in the city yesterday.

Among others, Minister for Fisheries and Livestock and Mayor-elect of Dhaka City Corporation Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Fisheries and Livestock Secretary Dr Zahurul Karim attended the seminar, jointly organised by Janata Bank and Directorate of Livestock.

The Directorate of Livestock has taken up a five-year-project to eliminate poverty by increasing production of goat. Janata Bank along with some other banks will finance families having experience of rearing goats.

Saifur also said there should be more pro-employment activities like providing micro credit for increasing production of goats. "We cannot employ all people in our formal



PHOTO: STAR

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Minister for Fisheries and Livestock and Mayor-elect of Dhaka City Corporation Sadeque Hossain Khoka and Janata Bank Managing Director Mushid Kuli Khan (extreme right) share a light moment yesterday at a seminar on Role of Micro Credit in Poverty Elimination by Increasing Production of Goat at the CIRDAP auditorium in the city.

industries," he said.

He also said the government would develop a strong rural based banking system for ensuring equitable development of the country.

The finance minister stressed the need for achieving economic growth by mobilising country's domestic resources rather than depending on mercy of donors.

"We cannot sacrifice our self-respect for the sake of a few million

dollars," Saifur said.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka said the attempt of industrialisation in the country failed due to loan defaulters of the country.

He observed that steps should be taken to provide more credit to the poor villagers who were exploited by the rural mahajans.

Director General of Directorate (DG) of Livestock Mohammad

Abdur Razzak Mia presented the keynote paper of the seminar. The Livestock DG informed initially the project would be implemented at 50 upazillas of 25 districts.

Mushid Kuli Khan, the Managing Director of Janata Bank, in his well come speech said ten per cent interest rate would be applied initially which would be gradually brought down.

Bajaj launches cosmetics in Bangladesh today

UNB, Dhaka

Bajaj Company is going to start marketing its cosmetics, mostly herbal products, in Bangladesh today.

Bajaj has been producing cosmetics for the last 80 years and marketing those in 38 countries across the world.

Local distributor of Bajaj cosmetics Shifat Limited, a sister concern of Beximco, at press briefing here yesterday said Bajaj cosmetics are mainly herbal products.

Managing Director of Shifat Limited Sharif Hossain said initially, only 13 items will be marketed here. Bajaj cosmetics are quality products but their prices would be affordable, he said.

The products which will be marketed initially include Brahmi Amla hair oil, Almond Drops hair oil, Bajaj Amla hair oil, Coco Herbal hair oil, Jasmine hair oil, Bajaj Pure Coconut Oil, Bajaj Kali Mehendi, Bajaj Herbal shampoo, Bajaj Honey and Boro Herbal cream.

Khosru off to Bangkok

UNB, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury left for Bangkok Monday to attend a five-day interim review meeting of UNCTAD.

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was to inaugurate the meeting Monday.

The minister will deliver a speech on policy dialogue at the meeting where Trade and Development Report-2002 will be placed formally.

Developing nations increasing exports but not profits: UN

AP, Geneva

Developing countries are increasing their share in the export of manufactured goods but they are reaping little benefit, according to a United Nations report released Monday.

High-tech goods may look like they're coming from poorer countries, but in fact those nations only provided the low-skill labour needed to assemble items produced elsewhere, said the 178-page Trade and Development Report 2002.

"Goods travel across several locations before reaching final consumers, and the total value of recorded trade far exceeds the value added," said the report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development.

UNCTAD said up to 30 per cent of world exports are produced in this manner by large international corporations, almost all based in developed countries.

"Although the industrial countries have seen their share in global manufacturing exports reduced from 80 per cent to 70 per cent in recent

years, the developed countries were able to increase their value added and their participation in manufacturing income. The opposite happens in developing countries," said UNCTAD Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero.

The report also said that developing countries have been hit hard by the global economic slowdown. International trade has transmitted the situation in richer countries to developing nations, with a number of poorer countries going into recession.

"After growing by 14 per cent in 2000, export volumes for developing countries grew by less than 1 per cent in 2001. For developing countries as whole, growth was 2.1 per cent, down from 5.4 per cent the previous year," it said.

Ricupero said that the success stories of a few countries, mostly in Asia, are skewing figures that suggest improvement across all poorer nations.

"Many of the developing countries still remain highly dependent on the export of products that are based

either on natural resources or on labour," he told reporters.

Real improvements will depend on an increase in the market for labour-intensive products in developed countries, and in a move away from such production in middle-income countries to allow the poorest nations to take a larger share, UNCTAD said.

Large developing countries such as China and India also need to expand their domestic markets in order to overcome deep-seated problems of unemployment and poverty, the report said.

In a chapter devoted to China, UNCTAD said the country might not benefit as much from its membership in the World Trade Organisation as had been expected.

Although China is a strong competitor in some traditional labour-intensive goods such as clothing and footwear, and in assembly of high-tech goods, it is facing a surge of imports of goods such as textiles, electrical items and motor vehicles.

Bank Asia arranges Tk 555m term loan for Emirates Cement

An agreement on a Tk 555 million syndicated term loan for Emirates Cement Bangladesh Ltd was signed on Sunday, says a press release.

Bank Asia is the lead arranger of the loan and the other participants are Pubali Bank, IFIC Bank, Bay Leasing & Investment, Industrial & Infrastructure Development Finance Company (IIDFC), International Leasing & Financial Services (ILFSL) and Bangladesh Industrial Finance Company (BIFC).

Syed Anisul Huq, Managing Director of Bank Asia, Ataul Hoque, Managing Director of IFIC Bank, A.H. Ziauddin Ahmed, DMD of Pubali Bank, AKM Nozmul Haque, Managing Director of IIDFC, Mofizuddin Sarker, Managing Director of (ILFSL), Azadur Rahman Khan, Managing Director of Bay Leasing & Investment, and Md. Khalilur Rahman, Managing Director of BIFC, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective institutions.

Khondaker Ibrahim Khaled, Managing Director of Pubali Bank and other important dignitaries including foreign investors were present on the occasion.

Emirates Cement Bangladesh, a subsidiary of Dubai-based ETA-Ascon Group, envisages to set up a 0.55 million-ton capacity modern cement grinding unit at Munshiganj at a cost of Tk 1363.0 million.

ETA-Ascon Group, established in 1973 as a joint venture between Al Ghurair Group of UAE and Amana Investments of Hong Kong, is a large conglomerate with world-wide operations in the areas of trade, manufacturing, construction, shipping, information technology, etc.

The investment friendly environment, attractive policy packages and the economic potentiality of the country prompted them to select Bangladesh as their investment destination, the release said.

Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling gets ISO 9002

Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills (BSRM) Ltd, an enterprise of H Akberali Group, Sunday received ISO 9002 certificate, says a press release.

Dr RJ Murphy, Director of United Registrar of Systems Ltd of the UK, handed over the certificate to Chairman and MD of the BSRM Alihussain Akberali in the city. Among others, Kazi Anwar Ahmed, GM of the BSRM, Shahriyar Masud Khan, Assistant Vice President of QIA, and other senior officials of the BSRM attended the certificate awarding ceremony.

The BSRM is the first company in the country's steel sector to receive the certificate for its quality, according to the release.

In his speech, Murphy appreciated the sincere and relentless efforts made by the management and staff of the BSRM for obtaining the recognition.

BSRM Chairman and MD briefly described the company's long journey that started in 1952. He also thanked the company staff for the success.

The consulting service for awarding the ISO 9002 to the BSRM was rendered by Quality Institute of America (QIA).

Hynix creditors okay sale accord

AFP, Seoul

SEOUL, & Hynix Semiconductor Inc. creditors on Monday approved an accord to sell the ailing South Korean company's memory chip operations to US chip giant Micron Technology Inc, the Korea Exchange Bank announced.

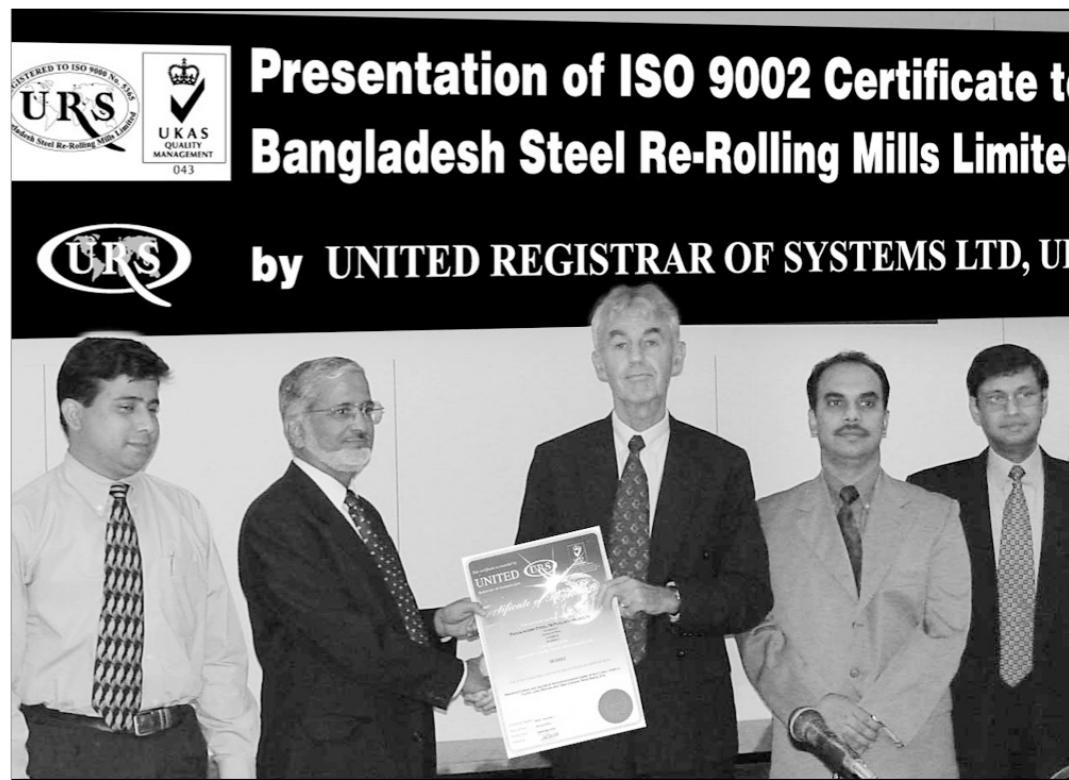


PHOTO: BSRM

Dr. R J Murphy, Director of United Registrar of Systems Ltd-UK, presents ISO 9002 certificate to Alihussain Akberali, Chairman and MD of Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills Ltd. Among others, the ceremony was attended by Kazi Anwar Ahmed, GM of BSRM, Shahriyar Masud Khan, AVP of Quality Institute of America, and other senior officials of the BSRM.

Oman investors invited to take part in SOE privatisation

Visiting trade delegation meets Industries Minister

UNB, Dhaka

Industries Minister MK Anwar has urged the investors of Oman to participate in Bangladesh's ongoing privatisation programme as it encourages foreign investors to buy listed state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

"We are encouraging foreign investors to buy listed state-owned enterprises either to continue the existing line of production or convert those for other prospective production," the minister said at a meeting with a trade delegation of Oman.

The three-member trade delegation, led by President of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry Abdulla Bin Salem bin Amir Al-Rawas, met the Industries Minister at his office here yesterday.

The minister said a large number of potential SOEs, including steel, sugar and paper mills, are on the list of privatisation where foreign investors could invest for better return.

"Investors from Oman could also invest in prospective industrial

sectors," he said adding that Bangladesh allows foreign investment with 100 per cent equity and offers tax holiday for 5-7 years.

He said private investors are not allowed to set up private EPZs in Bangladesh but investors of Oman could enjoy the facility as the government ensures land and other infrastructure facilities.

Identifying Oman as a big market for Bangladesh's manpower, the minister said, "apart from unskilled manpower, Bangladesh has a pool of semiskilled and skilled manpower who can contribute largely to the industrialisation of Bangladesh."

He requested the President of Oman Chamber to pursue the import of more skilled manpower by Oman's business magnates.

In response, the Oman Chamber President said Bangladesh is the third largest manpower exporters of Asia with 114,000 people now working in Oman.

He said Oman is a good market for fresh fruits and vegetables and Bangladesh could export those

commodities.

The minister requested the Oman authorities to establish direct air link between the two countries for mutual benefits.

Elaborating their mission of the two-day visit to Bangladesh, the Oman Chamber President said the apex chambers of the two countries would sign a MOU Tuesday to further strengthen the bilateral trade and investment links.

"This MOU would bring better, results and widen the horizon of bilateral trade and investment," he hoped.

Welcoming the new era of bilateral relationship, the minister said frequent exchange of trade delegations would be the effective ways to identify the areas of cooperation and sectors for investment.

Urging Bangladesh entrepreneurs to invest in Oman, the Chamber President said Oman initially allows 49 per cent foreign investment and subsequently it raises to 100 per cent foreign equity with satisfaction of the government.