

## Portugal to boost trade with Bangladesh

BSS, Dhaka

Portuguese President Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio has assured that his country would work towards further enhancing the existing close and friendly bilateral relations with Bangladesh.

This assurance came when the newly appointed Bangladesh Ambassador to Portugal Jahangir Saadat held an exclusive audience with the Portuguese President at the Palacio de Bolom in Lisbon on Tuesday, an official message received here yesterday said.

## Nestlé holds nutritional awareness programme

Nestlé organised a campaign to create awareness about nutrition among kids and mothers in different schools in the city recently, says a press release.

The campaign was part of Nestlé's commitment to sharing its knowledge and expertise with all concerned groups.

During the campaign, a seminar was held on the school premises for the mothers of 2 to 4 years old children.

Two eminent doctors spoke on the importance of nutritional requirement for the children.

The campaign continued for one week with the cooperation from Ananda Niketon School, Happy Times, Step By Step, Harvard Int'l School, Greenwich Int'l School, Radiant Int'l School, Lyceum Int'l School, London Grace, Foundation School, Junior Laboratory School (Branch-1), European Standard School, Cephalon Int'l School, Tiny Tots and North South School.

## Allocate Tk 300cr in next budget for ICT: BASIS

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) yesterday urged the government to earmark Tk 300 crore in the next budget for the development of information and communications technology (ICT).

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity office in the city BASIS President Habibullah N. Karim also called for expansion of tax holiday for software industry till 2010. The existing tenure of tax holiday for the sector is to expire by the end of this year.

He said positive and realistic government support for the software and information technology service industry can ensure significant economic development country through creation of substantial employment opportunity.

Karim said the government should provide soft loan for ICT firms at the rate of seven per cent

instead of the present 15-16 per cent.

Highlighting the achievements of Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in software sector, he said some 83 firms in this sector are exporting knowledge-based products to 13 countries including USA, UK, Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Vietnam and Sudan.

BASIS will arrange Basis Soft Expo Bangladesh-2002, an international software fair, in the city from October 24 to 27, the press conference was told. Software giants like Microsoft and Oracle will attend the fair and software tycoon Bill Gates will be invited in the fair.

Meanwhile, BASIS, Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) and ISP Association of Bangladesh (ISPA-B) jointly have prepared a draft ICT policy in association with the government soon, BASIS leaders said.

Software exporters of Bangladesh are optimistic of earning \$2 billion in foreign exchange by 2006 provided the government extends necessary assistance, they said.

BASIS President also requested the authorities to establish two software promotion and liaison offices in London and New York under the joint control of the Ministry of Commerce and BASIS for exploring West European and North American ICT markets.

The BASIS leaders also said the government should immediately take steps to join the submarine optical fibre consortium of SE-ME-WE-4, besides implementing the phase-1 of the proposed hi-tech park at Kaliakoir in Gazipur.

BASIS Secretary General Mustafa Rafiqul Islam, Vice President Shafiqul Haider, Treasurer Nurul Kabir and Director Mustafa Jabbar also attended the press conference.

## Rajshahi Textiles Mills plans 'forced golden handshake' for 70

ANWAR ALI from Rajshahi

Authorities of Rajshahi Textiles Mills (RTM) have selected 70 regular labourers, who have completed 15 years of services, for a 'forced golden handshake'.

The list prepared by the RTM authorities identified only five labourers as 'sick' and the rest as 'aged'.

Meanwhile, 11-Party leader Fazle Hossain Badsha, who was defeated in the just held Rajshahi City Corporation mayoral polls, told local journalists Tuesday night here that the authorities are trying to axe the workers on political ground.

"As most labourers of the factory campaigned for me during the polls, the ruling party is now forcing them to face golden handshake in retaliation", he alleged.

Talking to The Daily Star, Abdul Hannan, General Manager of the RTM, denying the allegation said the list was prepared on April 27 following an order of BTMC (Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation) to slash the mill's manpower by at least 30 per cent.

Earlier in January this year, the BTMC had asked the mill to offer golden handshake to workers who were willing to go on retirement, Hannan said.

"Accordingly we served notices on the labourers, but only one of the 537 labourers of the mill responded positively", he said. The BTMC in a reminder on April 23 sought an explanation for such a poor response. And we prepared the list of 70 people, he added.

The authorities also formed a four-member committee headed by the mill's Assistant Manager Emran Ali to examine the ability to work of the 70 labourers. The committee was asked to submit its report by May 4.

Tahera, a 45-year-old labourer who is on the list, said, "They (authorities) told me you are no more fit for work as you are now old."

When asked what would be the mill's course of action if any of the selected labourers refuses to go by golden handshake decision, the RTM GM Abdul Hannan said, "We will try to convince them."



Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury (L) met Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on Thursday in Bangkok during his tour of Thailand to attend the mid-term review meeting of UNCTAD.

## CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank.

Selling		Currency	Buying		
TT/OD	BC		TT Clean	OD Sight Doc	OD Transfer
58.5500	58.5800	USD	57.4000	57.2314	57.1629
54.5297	54.6166	EUR	51.9518	51.7684	51.6918
86.8777	86.9197	GBP	83.6285	83.3620	83.3074
32.4395	32.4641	AUD	30.2712	30.1787	30.0986
0.4638	0.4640	JPY	0.4482	0.4480	0.4470
37.1598	37.1843	CHF	35.8990	35.8045	35.7200
5.8367	5.8419	SEK	5.6233	5.6057	5.6897
37.6338	37.6583	CAD	36.4908	36.3972	36.3140
7.5150	7.5163	HKD	7.3551	7.3374	7.3200
32.586	32.6077	SGD	31.6713	31.6275	31.5129
16.0710	16.0886	AED	15.4925	15.4706	15.4521
15.7373	15.7557	SAR	15.1905	15.1538	15.1356

Exchange rates of some currencies against US dollar

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Lankan Rupee	Thai Baht	Nor Kroner	NZ Dollar	AUD
48.95	59.975	96.1	43.065	8.2558	0.44905	0.5398

The Local interbank foreign-exchange market was subdued on Saturday. Demand for dollar was sluggish. Demand for BDT for overnight borrowing at call was steady and the call rate ranged between 10 and 11 per cent for the day.

The international markets were closed for the weekend. At New York closing on Friday, euro traded at 0.9172/76 against dollar, pound sterling at 1.4688/94 and yen traded at 126.9501 against US dollar.

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A K M Sajedur Rahman, Managing Director of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, speaks at the 22nd review meeting of general managers of the bank held at its board room in the city on Thursday.

## Bush restores Afghanistan's trade privileges

AFP, Washington

President George W Bush restored Afghanistan's Normal Trade Relations Privileges Friday giving imports from the war-torn nation the same low tariff access to US markets as goods from all but a handful of countries.

"I have determined that it is appropriate to restore NTR treatment to the products of Afghanistan," Bush said in a message to the US Congress that the White House released to reporters.

Bush's action was to take effect 30 days after its publication in the Federal Register, where new US government regulations are announced.



Doctors apprise mothers of school-going children of importance of nutritional requirement for their kids during a campaign organised by Nestlé in the city recently.

## STOCK