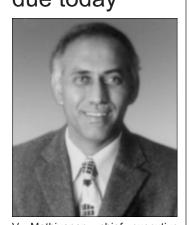
DHAKA TUESDAY JULY 23, 2002

S'pore Network Services CEO due today



V. Mathivanan, chief executive officer (CEO) of Singapore Network Services (SNS), is due to arrive in the city today on a day's visit to Bangladesh.

During his stay, he will conduct a national seminar on eGovernment and eCommerce at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel on Wednesday.

Organised by International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) --Bangladesh, The World Business Organisation, the seminar will deliberate on a policy framework and roadmap for introduction of eGovernment and eCommerce in Bangladesh for enhancing national efficiency and external competitiveness to survive in a globalised market

The seminar will be attended by the policy makers, business leaders, corporate professionals, senior lawyers and CEOs of different banks and insurance companies.

Professor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor of BRAC University, will also speak from the Bangladesh perspective.

SNS Singapore is the system operator of eCommerce and eGovernment in Singapore.

National Life Ins declares 35pc cash dividend

National Life Insurance Co Ltd has declared a 35 per cent cash dividend for the shareholders for the year 2001

The dividend was announced at the 17th annual general meeting of the company held in the city on

Thursday, says a press release. M Haider Chowdhury, chairman of the Board of Directors, presided

over the meeting. The premium collection of the was about Tk 1200

which was 41.76 per cent higher than last year. The growth of Life fund and assets were 39.33 and 37.71 per

cent respectively higher than that of the previous year.

The meeting unanimously approved the company's accounts. auditors report, directors report.

Construction industry assoc AGM held

The 7th annual general meeting of Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry (BACI) was held in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

The meeting discussed the role of construction industry for infrastructure development of Bangladesh and the problems being faced by them.

A large number of members including the Association President Engr Aminul Islam of Project Builders Ltd, Vice President Engr Zahir Hossain of Mir Akhter Hossain Ltd, Engr Amirul Islam of Associated Builders Corporation Ltd, A Malek Mollah of The Mollah Trading Ltd, Engr Rafigul Islam of GBB Ltd. Shafic Mahmud Pintu of Agro International & Consultants Ltd, and Bazlur Rahman of Foundation Engineers Shatu Ltd participated in the discussion

A twelve-member new executive committee of the Association for the term 2002-2004 was also announced in the meeting

Novartis first half profits up by 3pc

AFP, Basel, Switzerland

The Swiss pharmaceuticals giant Novartis on Monday posted a threepercent rise in profits for the first half of the year, beating analysts' expectations while sticking by its full-year

outlook. The group reported a first-half net profit of 3.85 billion Swiss francs (2.64 billion euros, 2.67 billion dollars) which was above a range of analysts' forecasts from 3.5 billion to

Rid ATAB of 'irregularities'

Associate members' forum urges authorities

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A forum of ATAB associate members has urged the authorities to hold an extra-ordinary general meeting (EGM) for changing the association's 'unfair rules' and wiping out its 'irregularities'.

"It is necessary to ensure the rights of all members of an organisation. Some articles of memorandum of ATAB are undemocratic that need to be changed. But ATAB (Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh) authorities have ignored our demand," Abdus Sobhan Bhuiyan, convenor of ATAB Associate Member Sangram Forum (AAMSF), told a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

AAMSF has long been demanding the change and it informed the ATAB president and the election

A probe into US-based Xerox Corp's

Indian subsidiary, Xerox Modicorp,

has revealed it made sizeable

payments to fictitious firms and

evaded taxes to the tune of 250

million rupees (5.2 million dollars),

The Press Trust of India (PTI)

quoted tax officials as saying they

had recovered over 10 million

rupees in "unaccounted cash"

during their July 17 raid on 23 offices

department found tax evasion to the

tune of 250 million rupees -- 50

million rupees for each year -- by the

copier business," said the news

PricewaterhouseCoopers, which

concluded an investigation into

Xerox Modicorp's accounts, submit-

Meanwhile, US accounting firm

"Besides these recoveries, the

of Xerox Modicorp in India.

agency.

reports said Monday.

steps, he added. "As they did not pay attention to our demand, we found no other alternative but to informing the commerce ministry and requesting it to interfere in the matter," Bhuiyan said.

As Ali Asgar Lobi MP supports the views of associate members, he has announced that he would not participate in the election, Bhuiyan mentioned

Md Siraj Mia, joint convenor, and other members of the AAMSF were present at the press conference.

As per ATAB memorandum, the mber of ATAB associate members is 307 who have only four posts in the Executive Committee. On the other hand, the number of general members is 207 who have 23 EC

The Democratic Front, a forum of travel agents general members, earlier alleged the Ministry of

Xerox India made payments

ted its own report before India's

companies which may not have

existed at all were paid certain

charges apparently styled as com-

missions, discounts and handling

charges in cash and in bank drafts.

"Five percent of each such

Indian Finance Minister Jaswant

payment was deducted by these

fictitious companies and the bal-

Singh had declared on July 4 that

the government would launch an

investigation into Xerox Modicorp

after the US parent firm disclosed its

local arm had paid bribes to govern-

latest accounting scandal to hit

corporate America, had made the

disclosure in its annual report in July

which restated equipment sales

NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD

17 TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 18TH JULY 2002

M Haider Chowdhury, chairman of the Board of Directors of National Life Insurance Company Limited, presides over

the company's 17th annual general meeting held in the city on Thursday. Managing Director Rezaul Hakim and

tion of pumping stations by local

women demanding jobs and invest-

duction of around 400,000 barrels a

day, the vast majority of Chevron's

Nigeria output and almost a fifth of

been brought under control after

raging overnight Saturday to

Sunday, no-one had been hurt and

the local communities were unaf-

Agunbiade said that the fire had

the country's daily exports.

The dual blow has halted pro-

Chevron halts Nigerian oil

production amid protests

ment for the villages.

Company Secretary ATM Shafigul Islam are seen in the picture.

Xerox, which is embroiled in the

ance returned to Xerox Modicorp."

said PTI.

ment officials.

"As per the report, fictitious

Department of Company Affairs.

to fictitious cos, evaded tax

Commerce was influenced by ruling party men including some junior ministers to postpone ATAB election scheduled to be held on August 20 after seven years.

Influential ruling party lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi and former ATAB president Dr HBM Iqbal influenced the ministry to postpone the election and the junior ministers backed them, MA Mohaimen, a presidential candidate of Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) polls and also convenor of the front, said at a press conference in the city on

The forum leaders said Dr Iqbal made ATAB a family organisation and election of the association could not be held in the last seven years because of his reluctance. Besides. a fund amounting to around Tk 25 crore has now been missing and no

from 1997 to 2001 by 6.4 billion

dollars, more than twice as much

than the company had acknowl-

"In India, we have learned of

certain improper payments made

over a period of years in connection

with sales to government customers

by employees of our majority-

owned subsidiary in that country,"

payments in 2000, the year the

activity was stopped, to be approxi-

mately 600,000 to 700,000 dollars

based company's annual report,

100 to 200 dollars at a time were

paid to Indian government officials

According to the Connecticut-

"We estimate the amount of such

the company said in the report.

(28.8-33.6 million rupees)."

edged in April

Although there are around 1700 travel agents, many of them had not been made ATAB members, they

Following an instruction of the commerce ministry, ATAB took all preparations to hold the election, the forum members mentioned. The commerce ministry recently asked the ATAB to postpone the election for an indefinite period.

Associate members of ATAB have applied to the ministry to participate in the polls as general members. The ministry took their appeal into consideration and subsequently asked ATAB to postpone its election

United Insurance earns Tk 5.96m

United Insurance Company Ltd made a pre-tax profit of Tk 5.96

in 6 months

In the corresponding period of the

This was disclosed at the 125th Board meeting of the company held on Sunday

The Board, among other matters, approved the accounts (unau-

M Moyeedul Islam, chairman of the company, presided over the

Maruti posts \$21m net profit

AFP, New Delhi

India's largest carmaker Maruti Udyog Ltd. said Monday it posted a net profit of 1.1 billion rupees (21 million dollars) in the year to March, double its unaudited results announced earlier.

2002, announced an unaudited net profit of 550 million rupees," said a company statement released here.

Sales were revised upwards slightly to 94.10 billion rupees from nearly 93 billion rupees reported in April.

In the previous year, Maruti posted a loss of 2.6 billion dollars on sales of 92.53 billion rupees. "This turnaround by Maruti has

market situation. On May 15, the Indian govern-

Maruti Udyog to 45.8 percent from 50 percent to kickstart its privatisation programme Japan's Suzuki Motor Corp

bought new shares in Maruti to boost its stake in the joint venture from 50 percent and agreed to pay the Indian government 10 billion rupees as a premium for control of

pre-tax profit

million in the first six months of the year that ended on June 30, 2002, says a press release.

last year, the pre-tax profit was Tk

dited) of the company for the six months ending on June 30, 2002.

In April, Maruti said its net profit was 550 million rupees on Monday announced its audited results included a major writeback of provi-

"The company had, on April 3,

"At that time, substantial provisions had been made for certain excise claims against Maruti. The company had filed appeals against these claims and in the first half of April, certain excise cases were decided in favour of Maruti."

come about in a year when the car market was flat and the overal economic sentiment remained depressed," the company added in the statement. "Strong growth in the sales

volumes in the small car segment -including brands such as the Wagon R and Alto -- further enabled the company to overcome the difficult

ment said it would cut its stake in

IDLC arranges Tk 45cr loan for PHP power project

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Industrial Development Leasing Company Ltd Bangladesh (IDLC) has arranged syndicated term finance of Tk 45 crore for a power project of PHP Group.

The 15.4 MW gas-based power generation plant, Power Generation Plant Ltd (PGPL), will provide PHP Group's steel mills in Chttagong with power supply. The plant is expected to go into operation by September

As Bangladesh being a developing nation requires huge investment in different infrastructure projects, the IDLC has come up with the financing,

Finance of the IDLC, at the financial arrangement ceremony at Hotel Purbani Ltd in the city on Sunday.

He also said this syndicated finance will send the message to both entrepreneurs and financial institutions that it is possible to undertake large infrastructure project in the private sector as far as innovative financial solutions like syndicated finance is concerned.

Zia also said it is not possible for the government alone to finance all the infrastructure projects.

Md Mizanur Rahman, chairman of PHP Group, thanked the IDLC for arranging financing within a short

Apart from IDLC other financiers in the syndicate are Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, Uttara Finance and Investments Ltd, Prime Finance & Investment Ltd, Industrial and Infrastructure Development Finance Company Ltd, Bangladesh Industrial Finance Co Ltd. Fareast Finance & Investment Ltd ad Bay Leasing 8

Investment Ltd. Alstom UK, a reputed international supplier of power generating equipment, has been installing two 7.7 MW gas-based turbine generators on turnkey basis at Sitakunda in



Md Mizanur Rahman, chairman of PHP Group, speaks at a financial arrangement ceremony at a city hotel on Sunday. The Industrial Development Leasing Company Ltd Bangladesh (IDLC) has arranged the syndicated term finance of Tk 45 crore for a power project of the PHP Group.

Enron hid loans, say investigators

REUTERS, Washington

Congressional investigators say Enron Corp raised billions of dollars in cash from major banks in what amounted to loans that it concealed as it struggled to survive, The Washington Post reported in Monday editions.

In the final year before its bankruptcy protection filing, JP Morgan Chase & Co, Citigroup Inc and other banks transferred more than \$5 billion to Enron using complex energy trades, the newspaper reported, citing unnamed sources.

According to the report, the transactions, known as prepays, hid part of Enron's mounting debt burden during the last months before it filed for bankruptcy protection in December

The prepay arrangements will be the focus of a Senate governmental affairs subcommittee hearing on Monday.

According to the newspaper, investigators found that JP Morgan and Citigroups were Enron's main source of prepay funding between 1992 and 2001, sending more than

Jordan is to follow other Arab states

in signing a free trade agreement

with Iraq, despite Western press

reports that it is a likely staging post

for a threatened US strike on its

neighbour, an Amman daily

ments are determined to seal a free

trade agreement," Al-Dustour

quoted Trade and Industry Minister

Salah Bashir as saying during a

Baghdad soon at the heads of

government level," Bashir told the

"The deal will be signed in

four-day visit to Baghdad.

"The Jordanian and Iraqi govern-

The newspaper said the Houston

energy trader received large advance payments from the banks for supplies of natural gas or other commodities for which it had contracts for delivery over a number of years. Enron used the payments to improve its cash flow on its financial statements, rather than booking them as debt, according to the

"It has become common knowledge that Enron engaged in lenders, investors and analysts that the company was in better financial shape than it was." Sen. Carl Levin. a Michigan Democrat and chairman of a Senate Governmental Affairs subcommittee in investigations said in a statement "The guestion the subcommittee

will examine is the extent to which major financial institutions like JF Morgan and Citicorp knew of and aided Enron's accounting deceptions." Levin said.

Investigators from the Manhattan district attorney's office also are probing the deals.

paper, without elaborating on when

Prime Minister Ali Abu Ragheb

countries were already bound by a

trade agreement dating back to

1957, which grants duty-free access

for certain goods and has helped

make Iraq Jordan's main Arab trade

A free trade agreement would

Jordanian exports to Iraq

"provide the two countries' private

sectors with more scope to

reached 230 million dollars in 2001.

An agreement for the current year

provides for that to rise to 260 mil-

Japan may relax bond cap

The minister recalled that the two

would visit Iraq

57.57 per USD for inward remittance and Tk 57.3850 per USD for exports. The readjusted rates would also be applicable for the buying of other foreign currencies. **DBBL** increases

Eastern Bank

In line with the government's efforts

to enhance the growth of foreign

currency inflow in the country

through export and inward remit-

tance Eastern Bank Limited has

raised its dollar buying rate for both

exporters and inward remitters with

immediate effect, says a press

The readjusted rates are Tk

raises dollar

buying rate

rate **Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited (DBBL)**

has raised the dollar buying rate to

dollar buying

Tk 57.70. The rate has been upped to boost export and augment the inflow of foreign currency into the country. says a press release

The rate come into effect from July 20, 2002. Buying rates of other foreign currencies have also gone up

accordingly This will help encourage exporters and remitters to contribute more to the national economy.

The selling rate has, whoever, been kept unchanged leaving the importers of the country unaffected.

Mercantile Bank ups dollar buying rate

Mercantile Bank Ltd has increased its buying rate of a dollar by Tk 0.27 in compliance with the central bank guidelines for narrowing the gap between the buying and selling rates of foreign currencies, says a press

The new rate will come into force with immediate effect. The readjusted exchange rate would also be applicable to the buying of other foreign currencies.

Asian stocks fall as Wall Street plunges

AFP, Hong Kong

AFP, Lagos

disrupted production.

barrel reservoir of crude.

US oil giant ChevronTexaco all but

halted its massive Nigerian opera-

tion Sunday after an oil terminal fire

and protests by village women

Wole Agunbiade said offshore oil

production had been halted as a

"precautionary measure" after a

lightning strike set fire to a 180,000

field in the western Niger delta had

Onshore production from the

Chevron Nigeria's spokesman

Asian shares sagged Monday in the wake of Wall Street's plunge and the collapse of WorldCom but losses were limited by bargain-hunters gambling the bottom may be nearing for regional markets.

While dealers said Asian markets would continue to be buffeted by Wall Street's gyrations, some added Asian shares were looking cheap. Sentiment remains grim, however, leaving Asian stocks at the mercy of Wall Street in the mean-

The Dow Jones industrials index plunged 390.23 points or 4.6 percent to 8,019.26 on Friday, below the depths plumbed in the immediate aftermath of the September 11

terror attacks and the lowest level since October 14, 1998.

The damage was more contained on the Nasdag composite. which fell 2.8 percent or 37.80 points to 1,319.15.

The news Monday morning Asian time that telecommunications giant WorldCom -- faced with a mountain of debt and a growing scandal over accounting irregularities -- had little impact on Asian markets, although some telecoms stocks declined, dealers said. Japanese share prices eased

marginally Monday after a small gain of 0.4 percent in morning trade, spite a rocky start to the day. The Nikkei-225 average of the

Tokyo Stock Exchange ended down

10,189.01, off a low of 9,982.24.

when the teams are sure that the

pipelines are clear and safe," he

said. "I would not like to put a

people's claims that the oil industry

has polluted their rivers, at a time

when political support for the

The protesters have the sympa-

thy of Delta State's governor, James

Ibori, who told AFP that while he

could not support their use of force

he endorsed many of their

women's uprising is growing.

The fire will add fuel to local

timescale on that."

Tokyo stocks were supported by a firmer dollar -- recent falls against the ven are seen threatening Japan's fragile export recovery -although dealers were unwilling to suggest the worst could be over for the local market.

Nihon Global Securities investment section manager Takayuki Suezaki said further rises in the value of the yen against the dollar were the biggest risk. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index

closed down 215.21 points or 2.2 percent at 10,110.25. Bruce Ruffy, SG Securities director of institutional sales, said selling pressure intensified in the afternoon session as European

markets opened and sell orders

Australia's benchmark SP/ASX 200 index closed down 19.8 points or 0.6 percent at 3,089.4 while the All Ordinaries index fell 19.8 points

Equity strategist Eric Betts from Nomura Australia said bargain hunters were helping to counter the panic selling by people determined to get out at all costs. In Singapore, the Straits Times

index closed the morning down 24.04 points or 1.5 percent at 1.529.10. South Korea's the composites index dived 33.72 points or 4.5

percent to close at 720.90. The Taiwan weighted index closed down 118.42 points or 2.3

BOJ says economy vulnerable

Jordan set to ink free

trade deal with Iraq

AFP, Amman

reported Monday.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi hinted Monday he may relax a key cap on new government bond issues next year after the central bank governor said shaky global markets still threatened the

Data released by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry indicated although activity at Japanese industries was improving the pace of recovery was slowing

down, economists said. The news came on a day when the Nikkei-225 index of the Tokyo Stock Exchange fell below 10,000 points for the first time in five months after a plunge on Wall Street. However share prices recovered some ground to end just 0.1 percent lower at 10,189.01.

"To keep the 30 trillion yen (258.6 billion dollar) cap for fiscal 2002 (the year to March 2003), we have made rarious efforts," Koizumi told a lower house budget committee at parlia-

"For fiscal 2003 (to March 2004), we want to take a bold, flexible

Koizumi suggested next year's budgetary process would target limiting spending rather than reducing the budget deficit, which ana-

lysts have said would help Tokyo implement planned corporate tax cuts and tackle deflation

"We would (also) like to see tax reforms play a role in economic revitalisation," Koizumi said.

Earlier, Bank of Japan governor Masaru Hayami said the country's economy was close to bottoming out but remained vulnerable to the volatile overseas market.

"We must heed developments in the world economy, including the US, as well as in foreign exchange and other financial and capital markets," he told a quarterly meeting of BoJ branch managers.