

## EPZs export goods worth \$1b in FY02

The enterprises of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones exported goods worth US\$1.077 billion during the last fiscal year, 2001-02, which was US\$1.065 billion the year before, says a press release.

This is for the second consecutive year that BEPZA's export crossed the billion dollar mark.

Of the total, export from EPZ-Chittagong stands at US\$608.7 million while that of EPZ-Dhaka at US\$466.763 million.

EPZs contribution to the national export in 2001-2002 fiscal is 18.25 per cent. It was 16.51 per cent in the year before.

The goods exported to different countries of the world include footwear and leather goods, electronics and electrical goods, plastic, paper and metal products, cap, fishing and golf equipment, textile, knitted products, garments and accessories.

The enterprises of EPZ produced brand item products like Nike, Reebok, Lafuma, JC Penny, Walmart, Mother Care, Lee, Mark and Spencer, Konica, Minolta, Sony, Nissan, Mitsubishi and Hino.

The goods were exported to USA, UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Canada, Malaysia, China, India, Pakistan, UAE, Nepal, Australia and Rumania.

Meanwhile, 22 countries including Bangladesh have invested about US\$531 million in 174 operating industries and about 119 thousand Bangladeshi workers are employed in those industries.

The countries which have so far invested in the EPZs of Bangladesh include South Korea, Bangladesh, China, USA, UK, Germany, Pakistan, Malaysia, Taiwan, India, Singapore, Panama, Denmark, Thailand, France, UAE, Sweden, Italy, Belgium, Canada and the Netherlands.

Among the workers women labour force accounts for about 62 per cent while that of men 38 per cent.

About 113 industries are in operation in Chittagong Export Processing Zone, 58 in Dhaka Export Processing Zone while one each at Mongla, Uttara and Comilla EPZ.

## BTRC chairman lauds GP achievement

Chairman of the Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission Syed Marghub Murshed lauded the achievements of GrameenPhone in expanding telecommunication facilities around the country, says a press release.

"We at BTRC are very proud of the achievements of GrameenPhone over the last five years, he said while inaugurating as the chief guest a training programme for the sales representatives of the Channel Partners of GrameenPhone at a local hotel yesterday.

The week-long training programme is aimed at improving the skills and efficiency of the participants. It is being conducted by Upal Majumdar, a renowned international trainer in human resource development. More than 300 sales representatives of GP dealers, outlet agents and individual agents and GP employees from across the country are participating in the training programme.

GrameenPhone Managing Director Ola Ree lauded the role of the GP Channel Partners. He noted that the company has reached nearly 700,000 subscribers within a very short period of time, starting its service in March 1997. GP has so far invested nearly Tk 900 crore while it has also contributed about Tk 770 crore to the government exchequer in direct and indirect taxes up to March 2002.

## Tokyo govt plans to deposit \$852m with Citibank

REUTERS, Tokyo

The Tokyo metropolitan government, which now has deposits only with Japanese banks, plans to deposit more than 100 billion yen, or \$852 million, with major US bank Citibank to diversify risk, the Yomiuri Shimbun said Saturday.

The report comes after Japan lifted last April a blanket deposit guarantee on time deposits, and ahead of the removal of a similar guarantee on ordinary savings accounts next April.

The move, expected during the current fiscal year to next March, would make the Tokyo metropolitan government the first municipal government in Japan to deposit public funds with a foreign bank, the paper said, citing Tokyo government sources.

# Shrimp exporters plan to take govt to court

## 90pc fish processing plants to go bust on offered cash incentive: BFFEA

UNB, Dhaka

Frozen food exporters, disgruntled with government's refusal to revise a lopsided cash-incentive offer for the sector, are planning to seek legal bar to execution of the scheme.

Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association (BFFEA) is learnt to have been consulting senior lawyers about recourse to legal redress.

An influential member of the Association said court might be their last resort as they failed to make the Finance Ministry understand their hardship.

The Finance Minister turned down their repeated appeals for hearing from them how the cash incentives on offer would create an uneven competition at home and ultimately affect the already-

alarmed export of frozen foods, he said.

"The Finance Minister even doesn't want to see us and listen to us," the BFFEA member said, explaining the grounds that compelled them to go for legal course.

He says the 10 per cent cash incentives announced by the government ahead of the budget would only benefit those who export in consumer packs and they constitute less than 10 per cent of total exporters.

The BFFEA had proposed 7.5 per cent cash incentives for exports in consumer packs and 6 per cent for traditional exports. Commerce Ministry forwarded the proposal to Finance Ministry, which "straightaway rejected" it and decided to pay 10 per cent incentives for consumer packs only, BFFEA executives said.

Association leaders restated their concerns to Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury at a seminar on frozen food at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

To their utter frustration, the Minister said the decision was final and he had nothing to do with it now. He however assured the frozen food exporters of co-operation in getting bank loans.

BFFEA President Salahuddin Ahmed told the seminar that implementation of the decision would lead to closure of 90 per cent of the existing export-oriented fish-processing plants. If a few exporters in consumer packs get the 10 per cent incentives, the rest would lose competitiveness and be phased out, he said.

The Association, which also includes consumer-pack exporters,

earlier had unanimously decided not to take 10 per cent cash incentives so long as it is for consumer packers only.

About Commerce Minister's willingness to assist frozen-food exporters in getting bank loans, a BFFEA executive said they mainly transact with private commercial banks and a minister has very little to help in it.

Seafood exports amounted to the highest ever 40,079 MT in 2001-02, but earning was US\$ 276.11 million, down from US\$363 million in 2000-01. Seafood prices dropped 34 per cent over the previous year.

Bangladesh seafood faces stiff competition from other Asian countries, including China, Indonesia, India, Thailand and Vietnam, who process quality products at cheaper cost.

# Appollo implementing Tk 110cr CR coil project

## StanChart, IDLC arrange Tk148cr syndicated financing

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Appollo Ispat Complex Limited, a subsidiary of Appollo Group, is implementing a Tk 110 crore project to produce cold rolled coil (CR coil), the main raw material for manufacturing GP and CI sheets.

The company has signed an agreement with banks to get Tk 148 crore as term loan, lease and working capital for the project. Standard Chartered Bank and IDLC of Bangladesh are the mandated arrangers of the syndicated financing.

The plant is expected to go into operation in the third quarter next year. Appollo Ispat is the leading galvanized plain and corrugated

iron sheet manufacturers and marketers in the country. The CR coil project will help to save the country annually 15 million US dollars in foreign exchange.

Chief Executive Officer of Standard Chartered Bank for Bangladesh Muhammad A (Rume) Ali and Managing Director of Appollo Ispat Md Ansar Ali signed the agreement on behalf of the respective sides at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday.

Speaking at the function, Ali said Standard Chartered Bank financed Tk 850 crore in the past five years in telecommunication, pharmaceutical, cement, power and other sectors. "The bank is willing to participate in the projects that will

help contribute to the country's economic development."

IDLC and Standard Chartered Bank apart, Bangladesh Industrial Finance Company, BRAC Bank, Eastern Bank Ltd, IFIC Bank, IPDC of Bangladesh, Prime Bank, State Bank of India, Uttara Bank and Uttara Finance and Investments are the other participating institutions of the syndicated financing. CEOs and representatives of the participating banks were also present at the signing ceremony.

With establishment of the backward linkage plant having 120,000 metric tons production capacity per annum, the value addition of Appollo Ispat will increase substantially, the company officials said.



PHOTO: EXIM BANK

Mohammed Lakiotullah, managing director of Exim Bank Ltd, and Khondker Manzoor Murshid, managing director of People's Leasing & Financial Services Ltd, sign an agreement on behalf of their respective organisations on extending credit facility to People's Leasing in the city on Wednesday. Alamgir Kabir, advisor of Exim Bank, was also present on the occasion.

# Pak carpet trade floored

AFP, Islamabad

Abdul Razzaq looked bored, but also slightly agitated. Sitting in the shade outside his carpet shop in the Pakistani capital, he pulled hard on a cigarette, exhaled an enormous cloud of smoke and stared blankly into the distance.

But then he noticed the approaching foreigner and his expression changed to something best described as predatory anticipation.

"Come in, please come in," he said with a broad smile before pulling open the door to a small showroom bathed in rich tones of red, brown, orange, purple and blue.

And as he deftly pulled carpets from the head-high stacks which lined the walls, it quickly became clear that Razzaq's sales pitch had

been well rehearsed. "This is a beautiful carpet," he said, caressing the intricately patterned woolen pile. "A carpet like this takes nearly six months to make, all natural vegetable dyes and local wool," he said.

"It was made here in Pakistan by poor Afghan refugees. Very good, much more durable than the manufactured carpets which use Australian or New Zealand wool.

"This carpet will last for at least one hundred years. And for you, a very special price."

Tea was then called for, and after settling cross-legged on the carpets laid-out on the floor, Razzaq began the haggling process in earnest.

"Business is not too bad, but I really couldn't sell this one for less than 16,000 rupees (270 dollars)," he eventually said. But something in

his tone betrayed a lack of genuine conviction.

"Actually, business is terrible," he added after a lengthy pause. "You are the first foreigner who has visited my shop in more than a month."

Originally from neighbouring Afghanistan, 38-year-old Razzaq followed his father into the carpet game. Until quite recently it was a lucrative business with his small shop doing a roaring trade with tourists, Islamabad-based diplomats and UN staff.

But a string of terror attacks against Western and Christian targets which have killed 59 people and injured dozens more has resulted in foreign diplomatic missions and international organisations evacuating dependents and all but essential staff.

## Exim Bank extends credit facility to People's Leasing

Export Import Bank of Bangladesh Ltd has sanctioned a credit facility to People's Leasing & Financial Services Ltd, says a press release.

An agreement to this effect was signed at the head office of the bank in the city on Wednesday.

Mohammed Lakiotullah, managing director of Exim Bank Ltd, and Khondker Manzoor Murshid, managing director of People's Leasing & Financial Services Ltd, signed the deal on behalf of their respective organisations.

Alamgir Kabir, advisor of Exim Bank, was present on the occasion. Muhd. Mubarak Hussein SEVP, Md Fazlur Rahman VP, Humayun Kabir, Md Noor Hossain Chaudhury, Shah Md Abdul Bari, Mohammed Ismail, Sheikh Basirul Islam SAVP, Engr. Shamsur Rahman, AVP of Exim Bank, and Dalil-Ul-Haque, general manager, and Md Shah Alam, asst manager of People's Leasing & Financial Services Ltd were also present on the occasion.

The credit line will be utilised to finance in leasing operation and merchant banking of the company.

## 6th AGM of institute of chartered secretaries

The sixth annual general meeting of The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Managers of Bangladesh was held at a city hotel on Saturday, says a press release.

Muzaffar Ahmed, president of the institute, presided over the meeting.

MS Alam Mia, secretary of the institute, presented the report of the council and audited accounts of the institute. Other office-bearers of the council including AKA Muqtadir, senior vice president, Mohd. Sanaullah, vice-president and N G Chakraborty, treasurer, spoke on the occasion.

Muzaffar Ahmed, in his speech, highlighted the activities of the institute. He also apprised the members of the progress of the (proposed) Chartered Secretaries Act pending with the government.

## Taiwan raises growth forecast

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan has raised its 2002 economic growth forecast to 3.14 per cent on the back of better-than-expected exports, but warned that sluggishness in private investment and uncertainties in the US economy could undermine its optimistic prediction.

The Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS) Friday revised its projection for full year gross domestic product (GDP) growth up from the 2.55 per cent predicted in May after confirming strong showings in the first two quarters.

GDP grew a revised 1.2 per cent in the first three months, compared with the same period last year, followed by 3.98 per cent in the second quarter.

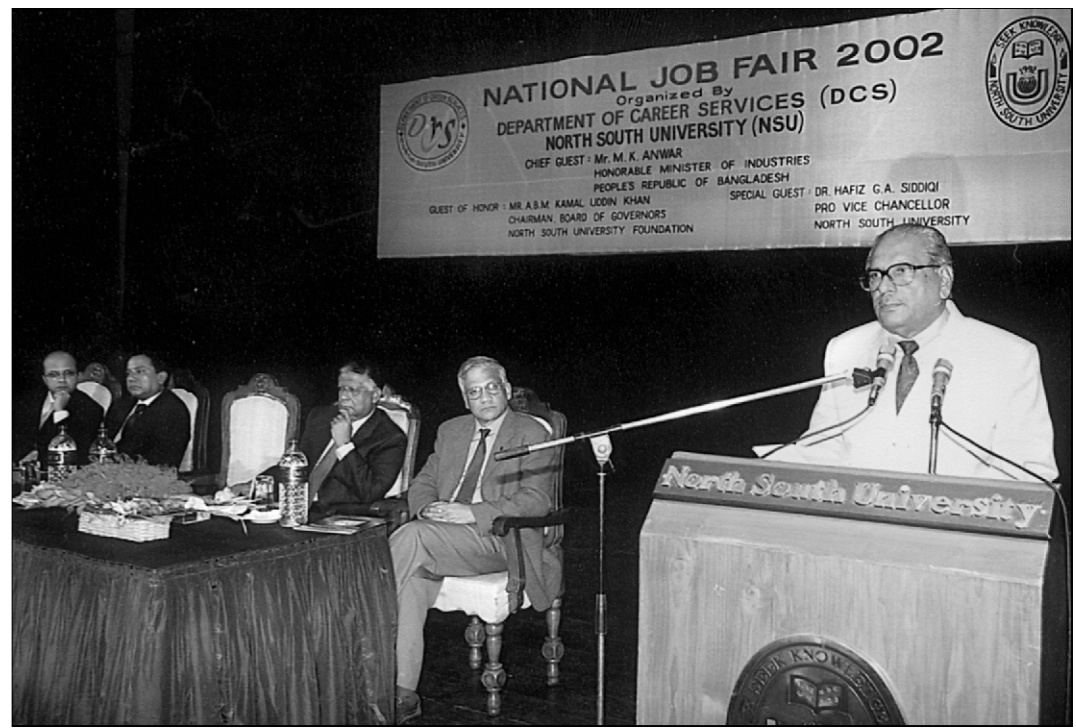


PHOTO: NSU

M K Anwar, minister for industries, speaks at the inaugural ceremony of the National Job Fair 2002 organised by the Department of Career Services of North South University in the city yesterday.

# Job seekers crowd NSU fair

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

It was an annual opportunity for the country's job seekers and employers to interact in a bigger perspective when they gather at a job fair in the city yesterday.

At least fifteen thousand job seekers contacted prospective employers at the Osmani Memorial Hall. As many as 30 leading multinational and local companies participated in the fair, titled 'National Job Fair 2002', organised by the Department of Career Services of North South University (NSU).

Each company participated in the fair on average received around 500 applications. Besides, 1000 resumes were dropped online.

According to the organisers, 15 per cent of the total applicants were women. Most of the job seekers in the fair found the occasion to be a convenient way for searching

employment. "I think it's an excellent way to avoid the tedious searching for jobs," said Rubaiya Hasan, an Economics graduate from the US.

"Most importantly, this sort of fair gives us the opportunity to be aware of the factors the employers judge for hiring a person," added her friend Tasmia Farooque, who also graduated in Management from the US.

The employers, who participated in the fair, said they look for combination of different qualities in prospective employees.

"A degree in a certain discipline is not enough to make someone eligible," said Rizwan Hamid Quraishi, Head of Recruitment and Selection, HRD, GrameenPhone. "A person with MBA is required to have adequate knowledge in computer just as a Computer Science graduate may need managerial

capability," he clarified.

The daylong fair was arranged not only for the fresh graduates but also for the persons who are planning to switch jobs. "I'm not satisfied with my current job and came here to seek something better," said Altaf Hasan who has been working in a private company for the last 20 years.

"Private and multinational companies should come forward to address the problem of unemployment as it is hard for the government alone to see an end to the crisis," said Industries Minister M K Anwar, during the inauguration of the fair.

"Our duty is not confined in offering knowledge but also in supplying skilled human resources," said Hafiz G A Siddiqui, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the NSU, on the occasion.

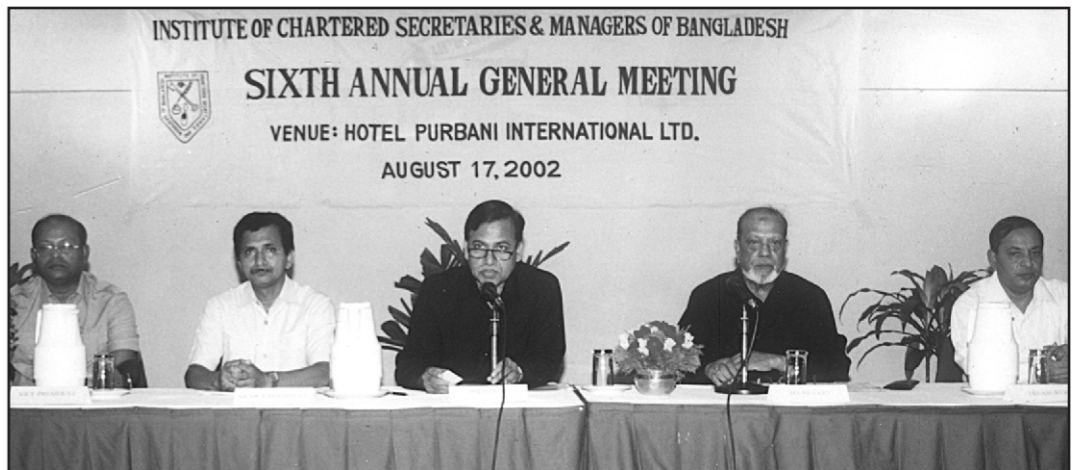


PHOTO: INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED SECRETARIES

Photo shows (from left) Mohd Sanaullah, vice-president, AKA Muqtadir, senior vice-president, Muzaffar Ahmed, president, MS Alam Mia, secretary, and NG Chakraborty, treasurer of the institute, attending the sixth annual general meeting of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Managers of Bangladesh at a city hotel on Saturday.

# Pak trade team to visit Kabul Aug 25

AFP, Islamabad

A 20-member Pakistani business delegation will leave for Afghanistan on August 25 to boost exports and explore opportunities in its reconstruction, an official report said Sunday.

The private sector team will be led by Pakistani minister of state and chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Tariq Ikram, state run Associated Press of

Pakistan said.

"We are going to explore opportunities in the fields of construction, food, pharmaceuticals, grain, telecoms and furniture," Ikram was quoted as telling the news agency.

He said the visit was aimed at assessing the opportunities for Pakistani exports to Afghanistan.

"I will also meet donor agencies there, besides looking for ways to eliminate hurdles (to trade)," he said.

## Myanmar kyat plunges 17pc

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's currency, the kyat, has plunged more than 17 per cent against the dollar over recent days, in the latest shock to hit the military-run nation's crippled economy, traders and analysts say.

The recent introduction of a money-laundering law, the prospect of Thai border checkpoints reopening from Sunday and a continued crackdown on illegal currency trading are all contributing to the kyat's fall.

# China pvt sector negotiates hurdles in race to future

AFP, Shanghai

Huang Qiaoling was short more than 29 million yuan (3.5 million dollars) of the 30 million he needed to start the tourist and entertainment business he had envisioned.

So, as with most of China's entrepreneurs, the son of a farmer from China's eastern Zhejiang province was forced to begin by borrowing the start-up capital from friends in 1994.

Eight years later, from inside the oval office of his million-dollar Washington White House replica in the eastern city of Hangzhou, Huang rules over the Song Dynasty Town Group, a Disneyland-like empire worth 4.0 billion yuan.

The self-made entrepreneur is testament to market forces at work in China's fast-changing economy and the growing role of private

enterprise in an increasingly affluent and modern nation.

Official statistics show private firms contributed 27 per cent of China's 9.5 trillion yuan (1.1 trillion dollar) gross domestic product last year, becoming a major engine of economic growth as well as bringing hope it will relieve the nation's massive joblessness.

Yet despite the clear paradigm shift in China's centrally dictated economic policies, getting a business of the ground remains a murky process which requires navigating a web of personal and political relationships and deals as complex as they are risky.

For hopeful entrepreneurs, the avenues to the acquisition of seed capital remain restricted, and those who are fortunate enough to have wealthy family and friends usually turn to them.

Other than personal favours, to begin a business independently needs approaching another firm with a good business plan or finding one of a handful of the country's venture capital firms, said China Europe International Business School management professor Zhang Weijiong.

Securing a government-sponsored incubator plan is another way, but that also requires capital.

Starting a business is very difficult without assets confirmed Huang, 44, whose group is made up of 20 tourist-related businesses in the eastern cities of Hangzhou, Nanjing and Ningbo and northeastern Dalian.

His own path to super-wealth could barely have begun in a more complex way, and Huang swears he would never choose to launch a business again.



PHOTO: GP

Picture shows Chairman of the Bangladesh Telecom Regularity Commission Syed Marghub Murshed and GrameenPhone Managing Director Ola Ree at the inaugural session of a training programme organised for the channel partners of GP held at a city hotel yesterday.