

## RAK Ceramics show held

RAK Ceramics (BD) Ltd, the country's modern tiles manufacturing firm, organised an attractive product exhibition at a city hotel on Wednesday, says a press release.

More than 100 modern designed wall and floor tiles were displayed in the exhibition.

Managing Director of the company Dr Khater Massaad attended the ceremony.

Ekrammuzzaman, director of the RAK Ceramics (BD) Ltd, General Manager Amir Hossain and Sales Manager Intiaz Hossain were also present among others on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Massaad said RAK Ceramics products have been accepted and appreciated by the topmost developers and renowned architects. The company has been producing and marketing more than 500 designed quality tiles.

RAK Ceramics (BD) Ltd is a UAE and Bangladesh joint-venture company. Its mother company RAK Ceramics of UAE was established in 1989 which is now exporting to 120 countries of the world including Europe, America and Australia. RAK Ceramics (BD) Ltd. started its production in November 2000 in a factory located at Gazipur in a 25-acre of land. Its own expertise, latest design, world-class quality and competitive price has helped RAK Ceramics to be the most popular ceramics and tiles of the country.

The company will soon produce sanitary wares in the country.

## Emirates flies to Mauritius

An Emirates Airbus A330-200 touched down in Mauritius recently to a grand welcome, says a press release.

Emirates' Chairman Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum led the official delegation on the inaugural flight, accompanied by senior Emirates management and a group of international media.

They were welcomed on arrival at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport by an official delegation which included PR Berenger, acting prime minister and minister of finance; and S Soohun, minister of labour and industrial relations & responsible for haj matters.

At a press conference at the airport, Sheikh Ahmed expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome extended on the occasion of Emirates' inauguration of services to Mauritius.

"We are very pleased that Mauritius is joining the Emirates network as our 60th destination," said Sheikh Ahmed. "I would like to thank the Mauritian government for granting us the rights to operate these flights."

Emirates flies three times a week, non-stop to Mauritius, operating an Airbus A330-200 aircraft in a two-cabin configuration, with 34 Business and 251 Economy Class seats.

Mauritius has developed a sophisticated tourism industry catering to the discerning traveller, while also ensuring the island offers facilities essential for family holiday enjoyment.

## Euro-zone growth set to slow further in third quarter

AFP, Brussels

The EU Commission cut further on Friday its forecast for euro-zone growth in the third quarter to 0.3-0.6 per cent, a reduction of 0.3 per centage points from a forecast of 0.6-0.9 per cent made on August 8.

Growth in the 12-nation euro zone slowed to 0.3 per cent in the second quarter from 0.4 per cent in the first quarter, estimates from the EU statistics office Eurostat also showed on Friday.

But in all 15 European Union countries growth in the second quarter was 0.4 per cent compared with 0.3 per cent in the first quarter.

The downgrading of prospects for growth in the third quarter by the commission was the second in a month. The figures advanced in August were 0.1 per centage point lower than an earlier forecast figure.

The Commission said on Friday that the euro-zone economy was set to grow by 0.3-0.6 per cent in the last quarter.

The Eurostat data showed that on a 12-month comparison gross domestic product in the euro zone grew by 0.6 per cent in the second quarter from the figure for the second quarter of last year, compared with growth of 0.3 per cent in the first quarter from the figure for the first quarter of last year.

# SAARC accountants to talk trade challenges

## SAFA confce begins in city today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The leaders of South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA), the apex body of accountants representing SAARC countries, gather in the city today to discuss the challenges of trade in the region.

Focusing on 'Global Economic Recession - Challenges for South Asia Region', the two-day conference will be inaugurated by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

"The conference will help to have interactions among the accountants

of the SAARC nations. We are continuing our efforts to bring about harmonisation of the accounting standards in the region," said Z U Ahmed, president of SAFA, at a press conference at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) in the city yesterday.

Established in August 1984, SAFA is the pioneer in the field of regional co-operation in South Asia, he said. "In the fast changing world, SAFA must take pragmatic and proactive steps to face future challenges."

The Institute of Chartered

Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) and the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB) are jointly sponsoring the event.

Chowdhury Hafizur Rahman, chairman of SAFA conference committee 2002, Rafiq Ahmad, president of ICMAB, M A Barea, president of ICAB, and other members of both the institutes were present at the press conference.

According to organisers, the conference will hold three technical sessions on Fair Trade an Instrument to Fight Recession, Resource Mobilisation Need for

Structural Reforms and Information Technology as a Vehicle for Economic Development.

Eminent economists and expert professionals of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka will present papers at the conference and participate in the discussion at technical sessions.

Speaking at the press conference, Chowdhury Hafizur Rahman said there are rampant smuggling, dumping and misuse of anti-dumping measures within the SAARC countries, undermining the potential of the regional trade.

# Building material show woos huge crowd

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With the participants displaying various building material items, hundreds of visitors yesterday gathered at the 7th Building Material Exhibition 2002 at Sheraton Hotel in the city.

Furniture, kitchen and bathroom fittings, aluminum product, door, window, paint, concrete post, paving slab, sanitary wares, electrical equipment, interior material, brick, block, roof tiles and water filter plant attracted the visitors at the three-day show that began on Thursday.

"We came here to buy a computer table. We came across various types of tables in different stalls. This will not

be possible without such kind of exhibition," said a couple who were visiting the exhibition, organised by Institute of Architects Bangladesh as part of the celebration of the World Architecture Day.

Another visitor Selina Jaman said, "I was really surprised to visit the exhibition because I even didn't know the name and utility of some products on display here."

"The main goal of the exhibition is to inform people about various building materials and equipment available in the market," said Sazzadur Rashed, convener of the Exhibition Sub Committee.

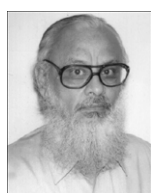
"The exhibition also helps manufacturers to get feedback about their products," he added.

"All items needed for building construction and room decoration are available in the fair," said Rabiul Hossain, president of Institute of Architects Bangladesh.

"Visitors showed interest in our pre-fabricated steel building products and we are encouraged by their feedback," said Mohammed Whidur Rahman, marketing executive of McDonald Steel Building Products Ltd.

The exhibition, being participated by 33 companies, concludes on 8 pm today.

## New DMD of Exim Bank



Muhd Mubarak Hussein has been promoted to the post of Deputy Managing Director of Export Import Bank of Bangladesh Ltd with effect from

September 1 this year, says a press release.

Mubarak Hussein started his banking career as a probationary officer of Standard Bank Ltd in 1967. He held important positions in Rupali Bank, Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited and Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd.

He joined Exim Bank in 1999 as executive vice president.

## Top 100 Chinese firms' profits rise despite global slump

AFP, Hong Kong

China's largest firms racked up steady profit gains last year despite companies around the world being pummeled amid the global economic downturn, a report said Friday.

The latest issue of Fortune magazine found profits among China's top 100 publicly traded companies rose four per cent in 2001. In contrast, profits for the largest 500 US companies plunged 53.5 per cent.

However, Fortune's international editor Robert Friedman said the 2002 list "reflects how the country's business dynamics remain quite different from the rest of the world."

The magazine noted key differences included the fact that China's economy grew 7.3 per cent in 2000 compared to only 2.8 per cent for the rest of the world overall.



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

A mechanic repairs a mobile phone set at a Stadium Market shop in the city. The man, who fixes 40-50 sets a day, charges between Tk 200 and Tk 500 for repair of each set. With the number of cell phone users increasing in the country, many repair shops have sprung up in recent days. Bangladesh, with a population of 130 million, has about 950,000 mobile phones provided by four private companies, besides some 700,000 fixed-line phones operated by state-owned Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB).

# Pran Agro plant reopens

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

After nearly a month-long closure, Pran Agro Limited plant in Natore restarted functioning on Thursday as two junior ministers pledged steps to ensure law and order around the factory.

At a daylong reopening ceremony held at the plant, Pran Group Deputy Managing Director Ahsan Khan Chowdhury along with State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Foreign Employment Affairs Major (Retd) Quamrul Islam and Deputy Minister for LGRR and Co-operatives Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu declared restarting of the plant.

The function, held with Deputy Commissioner of Natore Sadar Uddin Ahmed in the chair, was also addressed, among others, by

Quazi Golam Morshed MP, Tebaria UP Chairman Golam Sarwar, General Secretary of district BNP Shahidul Islam, Director of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Aminul Haque, President of Natore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Abdul Mannaf and Superintendent of Police Nazrul Islam.

Pran Group was forced to shut down the factory on August 14 after a violence unleashed by some BNP cadres under the patronisation of Tebaria UP Chairman Golam Sarwar, who is also a local BNP leader, had taken place at the plant.

However, both the ministers in their speeches at the reopening ceremony denied the allegations of any criminal activities at the plant by the BNP men and claimed that

the plant had been closed following a labour unrest.

Major (Retd) Quamrul Islam called upon the officials and labourers of the plant to work with enthusiasm and without fear as a congenial atmosphere was prevailing in Natore.

Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu said newspapers published exaggerated stories behind the closure of the plant where, in fact, BNP men created no violence.

During the unscheduled closure, Pran Agro Ltd incurred a loss of more than one crore taka, company officials said.

The Tk 10 crore project with Tk 4.25 crore from the government-sponsored equity and entrepreneurship fund (EEF) was initiated one and a half years ago with a view to making good use of mango from Rajshahi region.

# Congress seeks documents from Goldman Sachs, CSFB

## Probe into Wall Street practices

AFP, Washington

Top banks Credit Suisse First Boston and Goldman Sachs have been added to the list of institutions ordered to provide documents as part of a House of Representatives investigation into Wall Street practices.

House Financial Services Committee chairman Michael Oxley said in a statement released late Wednesday that the requests cover analyst conflicts of interest and the distribution of stocks as companies went public.

The committee has already subpoenaed documents from Citigroup's Salomon Smith Barney showing that some WorldCom executives made millions from the initial public offerings (IPOs) of

shares of now worthless companies.

"Insider allocation of initial public offering shares unfairly dilutes the value of the stock for the small investor," Oxley said in his statement.

"Free and fair markets -- not favoritism or cronyism -- are what have made America the premier place to invest."

CSFB and Goldman Sachs were heavily involved in underwriting failed telecommunications companies during the dotcom-boom, and their analysts gave favorable ratings even as the stocks plummeted.

"We are more than happy to cooperate with Representative Oxley's request although we are surprised to have been asked," said a Goldman Sachs spokeswoman.

"We too have read of the so-

called industry practices, and do not accord them to how we do business at Goldman Sachs."

A spokeswoman for CSFB said: "We will cooperate with all authorities."

The committee is seeking to find out which IPOs the banks managed or co-managed and whether the banks provided any investment banking services to a host of groups that went public during the time under review including Engage Technologies, Global Crossing, Portal Software and PlanetRx.com among others.

Lawmakers are also seeking any research notes the banks put out on the groups in question and any private e-mails between analysts and their supervisors.



PHOTO: ELITE PAINT

Salim Ahmed, managing director of Elite Chemical Industries Ltd, one of the country's oldest paint manufacturers, speaks at a press briefing on the occasion of the company's 50th anniversary at Uttara Club in the city on Thursday.

# Indian minister for reforms to catch up with China

AFP, Bombay

The minister in charge of India's privatisation Thursday urged quick economic reforms to catch up with China, warning that the giant neighbour's economic weight could translate into greater military strength.

Addressing business leaders in Bombay, Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie said that if India did not act quickly, the gap with China would become unbridgeable.

"China started the reforms process 25 years back while we did only recently," Shourie said.

The minister pointed to a brief but bitter war between the world's most populous nations 40 years ago.

"They (the Chinese) consider us not as rivals but nuisance. We got a

slap from them in 1962. They have armed Pakistan, while they are taking control of parts in Myanmar and even their arms shipments have been caught.

"If we do not grow now, their economic strength will translate into military strength. A great deal is at stake if reforms do not happen."

India and China have had strained relations in the past, such as when Defence Minister George Fernandes said after India's 1998 shock nuclear tests that New Delhi's strategic concern was China, not arch-rival Pakistan.

But relations have since improved with a series of high-profile bilateral visits, including one to New Delhi earlier this year by Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji. Despite the countries' compara-

ble sizes, China accounts for 4.0 per cent of world trade, against only 0.6 per cent for traditionally protectionist India.

Shourie's comments came two days before a meeting of India's Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment called by the socialist Fernandes, which had raised doubts about the privatisation drive.

But Shourie said fears about a weakening privatisation policy were "lopsides" and that India was committed to the "strategic sale" of state companies.

The government is trying to sell 31 state-run companies, including some of India's top businesses, and has set an ambitious target of raising 120 billion rupees (2.5 billion dollars) from disinvestment this year.

# Japan to take fresh steps to revive economy

AFP, Tokyo

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Friday he will introduce more

measures to attempt to breathe life into Japan's comatose economy and halt the slide in share prices, which slumped this week to a 19-year low.

But analysts warned the move would probably do little to stop the rot, as was the case with previous similar initiatives.

Details of the package will be fleshed out before Koizumi meets

US President George W. Bush on September 12 in New York, lawmakers said.

"We will go ahead with economic and financial measures to prevent uncertainties," Koizumi said.

He made the remarks as the key Nikkei-225 average sank briefly through the 9,000-point level in morning trade. The benchmark index later recovered slightly to end the day down one per cent at 9,129.07.

Japan's ruling coalition parties will meet over the weekend to

hammer out additional measures to help the economy and boost stock prices, said Mitsuo Horiuchi, head of the Liberal Democratic Party's general council.

A second party leader, Mikio Aoki, said the three coalition parties would come up with a set of measures by Monday when they would discuss them with the government.

Fears are mounting that banks -- which own massive share portfolios -- will suffer huge half-year losses if stock prices remain at current levels, analysts said.

## Weekly Currency Roundup

September 2-September 5, 2002

Market experienced mixed demand for dollar in this week. The demand was steady in the beginning of the week. But remittances by foreign companies and increased demand for import increased the demand for demand in the middle of the week. But the dollar became steady by the weekend. The dollar opened the week at 58.29/30 and went as high as 58.30/32 in the week against the BDT.

Treasury bill auction was held on Sunday where Bangladesh Bank accepted treasury bills worth of BDT 15,525 million. The central bank accepted BDT 8,065 million at 6.22 per cent for 28D T-bills, BDT 15 million at 6.10 per cent for 91D T-bill, BDT 150 million at 6.17 per cent for 182D T-bill, BDT 290 million for 364D T-bills at 6.42 per cent and BDT 6,870 million at 10.07 per cent for 5-year T-bills. Yield for 28-day and 5-year T-bill is on the rise for the last few weeks and weighted average yield for 28D T-bill & 5Y T-bill increased by 7 bps and 18 bps respectively.

Demand for BDT for overnight borrowing was high throughout the week. The call money rate increased slightly from Sunday at the beginning of the week as there was a mismatch of amount T-bill auction and maturity. The call money rate remained high throughout the week as market experienced shortfall of liquidity. Cash withdrawal ahead of local Friday weekend also contributed to the rise of call money rate.

The dollar edged up in Asian Market in the beginning of the week, supported by firm U.S. economic data and a slip in Japanese stock prices. But its gains were kept to a minimum ahead of more key U.S. figures due later in the week. Traders were reluctant to push the dollar higher before Tuesday's ISM manufacturing report, which will give a better indication of whether the rebound is a nationwide or merely regional trend. US currency as well as equity market is likely to be vulnerable as September 11 is coming. Possible war with Iraq is also a bigger worry.

Dollar lost ground against most of the currencies in the middle of the week. Fall in Tokyo shares sparked concern about a renewed rout in global equities market and it led to the fall in greenback. Fall in the Wall Street weakened the greenback further. Market was wary of taking long position before the release of key US ISM manufacturing data. Dollar fell to a one month low against euro. It also fell two-third of a per cent against yen. Euro crossed the 99 cents and yen reached the level of 117 against the greenback.

Greenback continued its slide at the end of the week. Although dollar regained some footing on the close of Wednesday as US stock prices went up and stronger than expected US Auto sales in August. But it could not hold on its rise and edged lower against euro, yen and Swiss franc on Thursday. Increasing nervousness about war with over Iraq was attributed as a main reason for the fall. Dollar traded close to 5 week low against the euro was traded near the parity. It fell by almost half a percent lower against the yen and fell to 2-1/2 week low against the yen. Against the safe heaven of Swiss franc, greenback shed by around two third of a percent.

At 1500 hours on Thursday, euro was traded at .9975/80, yen at 117.54/59 and GBP at 1.5711/17 against the dollar.

-- Standard Chartered