

US catalog show begins at DCCI tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A two-day American Catalog Exhibition Series starts in the city on Wednesday.

The main objectives of the series are to introduce the new US products, especially textile, machinery and equipment and US State Catalogs to the Bangladeshi businessmen and boost bilateral trade and business between the two countries.

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) in association with the US Embassy in Dhaka will organise the show at the Chamber auditorium.

The exhibition will be open to all and will continue from 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the inaugural day and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury will inaugurate the catalog show while US Ambassador to Bangladesh Mary Ann Peters will attend the ceremony as the special guest.

JCB award-giving ceremony held

JCB Award ceremony-2002 was held at a city hotel on Sunday, says a press release.

The ceremony was organised by Junior Chamber Bangladesh to recognise individuals and a company for their contribution to business, social and community services.

The Business Entity of the Year Award was won by Micro Electronics Ltd headed by Mofid-Doula.

The Business Personality of the Year Award was bagged by Iqbal Ahmed, OBE.

The Young Entrepreneur Award was received by Aziz-Al-Kaiser and Professor Abu Sayeed Chowdhury won the Special Recognition Award for social work.

Dr Moyeen Khan, Minister for Science, Information and Communication Technology, was the chief guest on the occasion and gave away prizes.

The awards were adjudged by eminent personalities of Bangladesh like Fazle Hasan Abed, chairman of BRAC, Syed Manzur Elahi, chairman of Apex Group, Debopriyo Bhattacharya eminent economist, CPD, and Adeeb Hossain Khan, partner of Rahman Rahman Huq.

The whole event was sponsored by Rangs Group, Grameen Phone, Partex Group, Seimens, Texas Group and Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd.

UCBL certificate giving ceremony held

The certificate awarding ceremony of a course on 'credit management' arranged by United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) Training Institute, Chittagong Zonal Office was held in Chittagong recently, says a press release.

Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury, chairman of UCBL, was present as chief guest at the function.

Mohammad Sajid-ul-Haq, managing director, BH Chowdhury, deputy managing director, and AHM Nurul Islam Chowdhury, principal of UCBL Training Institute, also attended the ceremony.

Swiss team visits AP factory

A delegation led by Neil Parkar of Inter Co-operation, a Swiss organization for development and co-operation, recently visited the factory of AP (Dhaka) Ltd at Armanitola in the city, says a press release.

The team also participated in a discussion on 'Production and Export Possibility of Medicinal Plants and Herbs in Bangladesh' held at AP Corporate Office in Gulshan.

AFM Fakhrul Islam Munshi, chairman of AP, chaired the discussion session.

Dr Ganapati Arumugam, a renowned herb scientist from Green World Biotech, Raquib Md Fakhrul, CEO of AP (Dhaka) Ltd, Dr Jahangir Hussain, program officer of Inter Co-operation, Zinia Rashid, technical officer of Inter Co-operation, and Anindya Kumar Bhattacharya, marketing consultant of AP, took part in the discussion.

Fund crisis hinders power project implementations

Serious electricity shortage in summer 2004 feared

RAZIUR RAHMAN

Shortage of fund for implementing a number of power projects is posing a serious threat of electricity shortage in summer 2004.

These 'picking plants' are Sylhet 150 MW, Chandpur 150 MW, Siddhirganj 120 and Tongi 80 MW. Picking plants are small plants that can be commissioned within 18 months from commencement of work.

"Evaluations of tender for all the four plants have been completed. But things are not moving as there has been no headway in arranging funds for the projects," said a Power Division official.

According to sources at the Power Division, the actual demand

for power during peak hours is between 3500 and 3600 MW this summer. However, the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) has estimated that the present power demand is 3200 MW on an average.

Currently, PDB generates 2800-3000 MW of power everyday. As per a government estimate, the demand is expected to increase to around 4200 MW in summer 2004.

PDB sources observed that implementation of the picking plants has to start right now to reap benefit from the projects by summer 2004.

Independent power producer AES Meghnaghat 450 MW plant would start supplying power to the

national grid from next month while Siddhirganj 210 MW plant is expected to be ready by June next year, sources said.

PDB officials hope to avoid any severe crisis with the new 660 MW power during the summer 2003. One official, however, said, "But we must commission the picking plants before the summer 2004 to meet the demand for around 4200 MW".

In the meantime, PDB has decided to float tenders for three new 450 MW power plants next month. Besides, initiatives have been taken to install a few other large plants with 210 MW to 450 MW capacity. The larger plants are expected to be commissioned in 2005-06 targeting demand for

more than 6000 MW of power in 2007.

Power Division sources said there have been some positive indications from Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Islamic Development Bank (IDB) regarding funding for a number of picking plants.

While talking to The Daily Star Power Secretary Shamsul Alam yesterday admitted the issue of financing remains the biggest problem in implementing the projects.

He, however, said the ministry, ERD and PDB have been trying to convince donors to provide funds for implementing the picking plants immediately.

NRBs to hold fair in Feb

Bid to boost Bangladesh-UK trade

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In a bid to strengthen trade relations between Bangladesh and the UK, Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) in London will organise a fair in Dhaka in February next year.

To discuss various matters relating to organising the fair, a fifteen-member delegation of the Bangladesh-British Chamber of Commerce (BBCC) are now visiting Bangladesh.

They had a meeting with the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) at the FBCCI conference room yesterday.

FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun, BBCC Director General Wali Tasaruddin and first ever Regional President Anwar Hossain, and FBCCI directors and other members of BBCC team were present at the discussion meeting.

Harun said that both the government and FBCCI are putting more emphasis on economic diplomacy. As result, Canada and Norway have

given duty free access facility for Bangladesh products to their market, he said.

The FBCCI president said Bangladeshis operate around 92 per cent of total 11,500 restaurants in London and the annual turnovers in this sector is about 3.5 billion-pound. But the raw materials and workers needed to run those restaurants come from India.

He requested BBCC to help Bangladesh so that the country can earn significant amount of money by supplying the raw materials and manpower.

BBCC Regional Director for Scotland MA Rouf said maximum workers were employed from India, Qatar and other countries in those restaurants due to lack of educated and trained workers in Bangladesh.

He said a catering institute should be established in the country so that it could give job-oriented training to the people.

"500 people can get jobs every year if the institute provides training," said Rouf.

The FBCCI President sought a list of products from BBCC that could be exported in the UK from Bangladesh.

He said a large number of NRBs sent their hard-earned money to buy land or to do real estate business, which is not helping the country's economy.

He urged the NRBs to invest their money in the capital market.

BBCC Director General Wali Tasaruddin said they have been here to know the areas where NRBs can make investment. He sought necessary helps from FBCCI in this matter.

Wali said the BBCC was formed with an aim at promoting and strengthening economic relations between two countries.

Around 100 non-resident Bangladeshis are millionaires in the UK and they are trying to bring them in the country, he informed the meeting.

Dhaka urges EC to reshape aid strategy for LDCs

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh yesterday urged the European Commission (EC) to reshape its assistance strategy for the least developed countries (LDCs) and low-income nations saying that allocations for LDCs have decreased in absolute as well as proportional terms.

They said the EC aid to other regions has grown rapidly while it has come down in LDCs.

"In 1990, 46 per cent of EC aid was given to LDCs which has fallen to 27 per cent in 1999. An analysis shows that EC aid to Poland to enable its accession to EU is more than its aid to Asia and Latin America combined together," said Economic Relations Division (ERD) Joint Secretary AMM Nasiruddin at a EC-Bangladesh specialised sub-group meeting on economic development cooperation at ERD in the

city yesterday.

The sub-group meeting was held against the backdrop of EC's country strategy paper and the draft National Indicative Programme (NIP) document, which has been the subject of close consultations between Bangladesh government and the EC.

Markus Cornaro, head of unit, director general for external relations, led the EC at the meeting, which was also attended by Ambassador Esko Kentrschynskyj, head of delegation of the EC to Bangladesh, while AMM Nasiruddin represented the Bangladesh side. Other officials from both sides were also present at the meeting.

The EC delegation leader said EC and other development partners feel that Bangladesh should implement its development projects and reform programmes at faster pace.

The government should take

measures to ensure transparency in all stages, improve governance and law and order, Markus mentioned.

Nasiruddin said the government has prepared the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) and that all the future development plans, programmes and budgets will be formulated in line with the PRSP targets.

The Bangladesh delegation requested the EC increased allocations for social services to meet basic needs.

The EU is committed to the 20:20 Declaration of the Copenhagen World Summit on social development that calls for 20 per cent of donor aid and 20 per cent of recipient government budgets to be allocated in social sectors, Nasiruddin said.

The EC will provide 41.1 crore (411 million) euro in the next three years, the meeting sources said.

BRAC Bank to use GP's fibre optic network

GrameenPhone (GP) recently signed a tripartite agreement with BRAC BD Mail Network to provide data transmission facility of BRAC Bank, says a press release.

Under the agreement, BRAC Bank will use 64 KBPS bandwidth to transmit data between its branches in Dhaka and Sylhet.

The agreement was signed by Ola Ree, managing director of GrameenPhone, Dr Salahuddin Ahmed, chairman of BRAC BD Mail Network, and AHM Sultanur Raza, assistant general manager of RANKS-ITT, on behalf of their respective organisations. RANKS-ITT is the dealer agent of GP's optical fiber network, leased from Bangladesh Railway.

Apex Tannery declares 15 pc dividend

Apex Tannery Limited has declared a 15 per cent dividend for its shareholders for the year ending June 30, 2002, says a press release.

The dividend was announced at the 26th annual general meeting of the company held on the city on Thursday.

Syed Manzur Elahi, chairman of the company, presided over the meeting.

AKM Rahmatullah, managing director, Syed Nasim Manzur and Md Hedayetullah directors, were present at the meeting.

Food festival begins at Sonargaon Hotel

The Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel has organised a week-long Bangladeshi Food Festival & Cultural Show at its Cafe Bazar restaurant on the occasion of World Tourism Day.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammed Nasiruddin inaugurated the festival as chief guest on Saturday, says a press release.

The Cafe Bazar restaurant was tastefully decorated with different decorative items like, kula, Dala, shika, a rickshaw earthen wares at the entrance of the restaurant. All these items represent the heritage and culture of rural Bangladesh.

A stage was decorated at the Cafe Bazar restaurant for the cultural show.

The Bangladeshi Food Festival & Cultural Show will continue till October 04, 2002 and there was a 50 per cent discount on buffet lunch and buffet dinner at Cafe Bazar on September 29, and 30.

Lanka economy grows 1.4pc in first half

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's economy rebounded 1.4 per cent in the first half of the year, laying the base for the war-weary island to reach its full-year growth target of three per cent, the central bank said Monday.

The government has said it was aiming for full-year growth of three per cent on the back of a Norwegian-brokered peace bid with Tamil Tiger guerrillas to end a 19-year ethnic conflict.



Ola Ree, managing director of GrameenPhone, Dr Salauddin Ahmed, Chairman of BRAC BD Mail Network, and AHM Sultanur Raza, assistant general manager of RANKS-ITT, sign a tripartite agreement which will enable BRAC Bank to use GP's fibre optic network for data transmission.

BRTC in bid to make vehicles

Int'l tender seeking foreign partners soon

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The state-owned Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) would go for collaboration with foreign companies in manufacturing and assembling motor vehicles in the country.

BRTC would invite international tenders very soon for this purpose, BRTC chairman Taimur Alam Khandakar disclosed this at a press conference held at the BRTC workshop in Tejgaon yesterday.

Currently, motor vehicles are assembled at Joydevpur BRTC workshop and government is going to increase the capacity of the workshop in collaboration with the foreign companies, he said.

"If foreign companies agree to cooperate with us, big buses, trucks

and other vehicles could be assembled and manufactured at our workshop," the BRTC chairman said.

BRTC also plans to auction 17 old vehicles, which have been lying idle in the workshop for years together, he said.

The expensive cars belonging to various government organisations are also lying at the workshop occupying a large space creating problems, Toimur said.

He said that the BRTC would hand 1,000 CNG three wheeler vehicles to the distressed auto-rickshaw drivers within this year. In the first phase fifty such vehicles would be distributed from first week of this month.

The three wheeler CNG vehicles would be imported from India and

China. The price would be Tk 1.49 lakh each for Chinese and Tk 1.57 lakh for Indian vehicles.

The vehicles would be given after deposition of Tk 40,000 as security money with Tk 250 for each day payment. After completing the entire payment the drivers would become owners of those three wheelers.

Dr. S M Salehuddin director of the BRTC also spoke on the occasion.

Khandakar said that 134 government organisations owe Tk 1.32 crore to BRTC for repairing charge of their vehicles at its workshop.

"The organisations are very reluctant in making the payments despite repeated reminders by the corporation," he said.

India's first quarter GDP seen around 5.5pc

REUTERS, New Delhi

India Monday is expected to report its economy grew by around 5.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2002/03 fiscal year, boosted by strong performances in the farm and services sectors, analysts said.

The government expects the economy of the country of more than a billion people to grow at around 5.5 per cent in the year to March 2003 but the nation's worst drought in 15 years is seen having some impact on overall growth.

"The first quarter was the period when the economy was looking up. Optimism was building up. Growth should be about 6.0 per cent during that period," said T.K. Bhaumik, economist with the Confederation of Indian Industry, a leading industry group.

The Indian economy, the world's 12th largest, started emerging from a slowdown earlier this year and a slew of data in recent months has confirmed the belief that the recovery process was gathering pace.

The government is yet to

announce the impact on growth from the drought but some analysts say the sustained recovery suggested the effects of the drought had been countered to some extent by rains in August.

The average growth forecast of six analysts surveyed by Reuters on Saturday was 5.5 per cent with the lowest estimate at 5.0 per cent and the highest 6.0 per cent.

Economists say that the drought-hit Indian economy is expected to slow down in the third and fourth quarters when the actual impact of the scanty monsoon rains on growth would be felt.

The annual June-September monsoon is crucial for India's agricultural sector, which contributes about 25 per cent to gross domestic product, employs about 70 per cent of its population and is a main driver of demand in the rural areas.

"The impact of previous year's strong agriculture growth would be felt in the first quarter. Industry and services sector performance should also be good," said D. H. Pai

Panandikar, President RPG Foundation, a private-economic think-tank.

India is also expected to release data on balance of payments (BOP) and monthly fiscal deficit on Monday. The BOP for the first quarter is expected to show a surplus due to robust growth in merchandise exports and a small rise in imports.

"The narrowing trade deficit should help India to post a current account surplus in the first quarter," said M. R. Madhavan, economist with Bank of America.

India posted a \$1.35 billion surplus on the current account last year, the first time since 1977, compared to a deficit of \$2.26 billion the previous year.

Analysts said robust foreign direct investments, purchases of Indian assets by overseas portfolio funds, steady remittances by expatriate Indians and record forex reserves are likely to keep India's balance of payment position healthy.