

## AP, Green World Bio-tech sign MOU

AP (Dhaka) Ltd Bangladesh and Green World Bio-tech of India have signed a memorandum of understanding to set up a most modern agro-processing (herbal) industry in Bangladesh.

A F M Fakhru Islam Munshi, chairman of AP (Dhaka) Ltd, and Dr. G Arumugam of Green World Bio-Tech signed the MOU on behalf of their respective sides in the city recently, says a press release.

According to MOU, AP will select a proper place for plantation of herbs, marketing of agro-based products, keeping a keen eye on government policy and counseling for the same.

Green World Bio-tech will provide modern technology on herbal production, research and development facility, cultivation of developed medicinal plants, sources of herbal raw materials from different countries, infrastructure development, help expand international market for the product and will extend all possible cooperation to install a Bio-Fertilizer Production Centre in Bangladesh.

AP (Dhaka) has been engaged in marketing processed food, ayurvedic medicine and herbal cosmetics.

## Anu Fashions shifted to new premises

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The factory of Anu Fashions Ltd was shifted to new premises at Hamayetpur, Savar in Dhaka yesterday.

The factory, which was earlier housed at Shaymali in the city, is now equipped with modern machinery.

According to officials, the production capacity of Anu Fashions Ltd will be increased in the new factory premises.

The officials hope the factory will produce clothes worth eight million US dollars a year from existing capacity of garments valued at six million US dollars.

Dewan Md Salahuddin MP inaugurated the new premises as chief guest. C.M Koyes Sami, executive president of Al-Baraka Bank Ltd, was also present on the occasion.

According to Managing Director of Anu Fashions Ltd Belal Ahmed, company exports its products mainly to the US and EU countries.

## Indonesia mulls cocoa export tax at 5-20pc

REUTERS, Jakarta

Indonesia's trade and industry ministry is proposing a tax of between five to 20 per cent on cocoa bean exports to help ensure sufficient raw material for its ailing grinding industry, a senior official said on Thursday.

Grinders in Indonesia, the world's second largest cocoa producer, have been hit by lack of raw material as traders and farmers prefer to export, forcing grinders to operate at low capacity.

"We are still discussing the level with the private sector... but we are proposing 5 to 20 per cent. It won't be effective... below 5 per cent and will hurt farmers if above 20 per cent," Yamin Rachman, the ministry's agro-industry director, told reporters.

The proposal will be submitted to the finance minister who has the final say on all taxes in Indonesia.

Rachman said Trade and Industry Minister Rini Suwandi has asked the finance ministry to revoke all taxes growers have to pay to sell beans to local grinders as a further means of encouraging the domestic industry.

He said local grinders were using only half their 200,000 tonnes a year processing capacity as producers preferred to export beans to get more profit.

The government currently imposes a 10 per cent value added tax and a 1.5 per cent tax on growers' income and on raw cocoa beans sold to the local market.

The Indonesian Cocoa Grinders and Chocolate Manufacturers Association said the export taxes should be set at an equal level with taxes imposed on cocoa beans sold to the domestic market.

"We have a total processing capacity of 200,000 tonnes per year but we get only 70,000 tonnes of cocoa beans as raw material," association chairman Sonny Satari said.

Indonesia's 700,000 hectares (1.73 million acres) of cocoa plantations have produced an average of 400,000 tonnes of cocoa in the past five years.

# SEC slaps suspension on Doha Securities

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) yesterday suspended Doha Securities from trading for 30 days for not maintaining a required form in keeping records of investors.

The SEC order said the broker had violated Securities and Exchange Rules, 1987 as it maintained a different form other than the SEC prescribed 'Customer Accountant Information Form'.

According to SEC officials, prior to slapping the 30-day suspension, the SEC had convened the broker for a hearing on Tuesday where the broker failed to give any acceptable

explanation.

Sources said the SEC had actually suspended the broker to make ensure that the broker does not get caught to trade shares of Bangladesh Online Ltd (BOL).

Talking to The Daily Star one SEC official said the brokerage house traded a large quantity of BOL shares after which share price shot up to Tk 42 per share from Tk 18.

An investigation into trading of the BOL revealed during August 19 to October 3, a huge quantity of BOL shares worth over Tk 60 crores were traded in the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

Doha Securities had started trading the shares of the company

from August 19 and continued up to October 3, a SEC source said seeking anonymity.

"We found that the BOL share prices started shooting up specially after this particular brokerage house started trading in the shares of BOL," the SEC source said.

An official said as no allegations had been proven the SEC could not go into penalising the broker only on suspicion. So the SEC decided to restrict the broker from trading, he added.

The SEC has also formed a two-member investigation team to dig into alleged involvement of the brokerage house in share trading of BOL.

# FBCCI faction plans convention Nov 2

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A faction of the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) members under the banner of FBCCI Sangskar Sangram Parishad plans to hold a convention of the business community on November 2 to resist a commerce ministry order seeking change in electoral process of the country's apex trade body.

The Sangram Parishad is a platform of businessmen opposing the recent commerce ministry order to amend memorandum of article of FBCCI for a different electoral process.

The plan for convention was disclosed at an opinion exchange meeting of the Sangram Parishad Wednesday evening. Convenor of the Sangram Parishad Helal Uddin Helal alleged the commerce ministry issued the order without prior consul-

tation with the businessmen.

The meeting also decided to ask the FBCCI president to direct the FBCCI election commission to announce election schedule by October 15. The Sangram Parishad leaders said election commission of the apex trade body should announce the schedule as the High Court has stayed the commerce ministry order.

The meeting decided to form a human chain in the Federation Bhaban premises on October 16, form Chittagong unit of the Parishad on October 17 and bring out a silent procession on October 24.

Among others, former FBCCI president Akram Hossain, former FBCCI director Selima Ahmed and Chairman of Nitol Group Abdul Matlub Ahmed spoke at the meeting.

The problems over holding of FBCCI election surfaced following a commerce ministry order on July 31,

asking the FBCCI for indirect election to the top slots of the apex body, the president and two vice presidents.

According to the new order, the FBCCI will elect 24 directors through direct election in equal numbers from the chamber and association groups. As per the order another 14 will be nominated in equal numbers from chamber and association groups. The commerce ministry has also named the chambers and the associations who will have nominated representation in the FBCCI.

The 38-member executive committee of the FBCCI would then elect its president and two vice presidents.

At present, members of the FBCCI directly elect their president, one vice-president and 30 directors equally from chamber and association groups.

## Bank holiday Oct 15

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank and all scheduled banks will remain closed on Tuesday (October 15) on the occasion of Bijoya Dashami of Durga Puja, the greatest religious festival of the country's Hindu community, said a press release yesterday.

## Syngenta declares 20pc dividend

Syngenta Bangladesh Limited, a joint venture of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation and Syngenta AG of Basle, Switzerland, has declared a 20 per cent dividend for the shareholders for the year 2001, says a press release.

BCIC owns 40 per cent of Syngenta Bangladesh while the rest by Syngenta AG.

Managing Director of Syngenta Bangladesh Limited Sarwar Ahmed handed over the dividend cheque to Chairman of BCIC Hasanul Morshed at a simple ceremony held at the corporation office in the city yesterday.

Syngenta is well-known to Bangladesh farmers as the leading crop protection company with an emerging presence in high quality rice, vegetable, maize and flower seeds.

It has memorandum of understandings with BRR and BARI for transfer of indigenous technology to farmers.

Syngenta is a world leading agribusiness. The company ranks first in crop protection, and third in the high-value commercial seeds market. Pro forma sales in 2001 were approximately US \$6 billion.

## Farmland Dairy Whitener launched

New Zealand Milk Bangladesh Ltd has marketed 'Farmland Dairy Whitener' in the country, says a press release.

The product, a tea whitener, is used for making tea.

The company has organised a one-month raffle draw in Agora to mark the launching of the product.

Shahid Ali, sales executive of the company, handed over the gift of raffle draw to T D Pakir, manager operation of Agora, in the city on Wednesday.

The event will run for a duration of one-month and the raffle draw will be held in Agora on November 9, 2002.

## Shahjalal Bank extends Tk 5cr investment facility to ILFSL

Shahjalal Bank Limited (SBL) has extended an investment facility worth Tk five crore to International Leasing and Financial Services Limited (ILFSL) for import of equipment and vehicles for lease financing, says a press release.

An agreement to this effect was signed in Dhaka on Tuesday. Managing Director of SBL Matin Uddin Ahmed and Managing Director of ILFSL Mafizuddin Sarker signed the deal on behalf of their respective organisations.

Ashfaq U. Chowdhury, advisor of the bank, Jilur Rahman, executive vice-president and manager of Dhaka Main Branch of SBL, SVP of SBL Nazrul Hossain and other high officials of ILFSL were present on the occasion.

## Infosys profit up 12pc

AFP, Bangalore

India's second largest software exporter Infosys Technologies said Thursday its second quarter net profit rose 12 per cent after losses on investments cut back earnings growth.

The net profit of 2.26 billion rupees (46 million dollars) in the three months to September reflected a 35 per cent jump in revenue to 8.8 billion rupees but followed a pattern of decline since the last year to March when profit grew 28.5 per cent.

Infosys, which earned software export revenue of 521 million dollars in the financial year to March, said its results had been affected by depressed spending on information technology.

"There is no question that information technology spending is under great pressure and people are circumspect about their IT spending," said chief executive and managing director Nandan Nilekani.



PHOTO: STAR

Kids crowd a stall at the 11-day CityIT Computer Fair 2002 that began in the city yesterday.

# Computer razzmatazz begins in city

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The 11-day CityIT Computer Fair 2002 began in the city yesterday with a call for making continuous efforts to explore the potentials of the information technology.

Speaking at the inaugural function as chief guest, Aftabul Islam, president of American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh and former president of Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS), said the country has no option but to go ahead with IT.

"We are behind others. If we want to reach their levels, we have to follow a prudent management policy for transforming our manpower into a skilled one to achieve the goal," he said.

IT has become one of the main areas of economic strength around the world today and

Bangladesh should give priority to developing skilled manpower, he mentioned, adding that the computer fair can play a significant role in this regard.

SM Iqbal, acting president of BCS, I S Kim, senior vice-president of SamSung and chief executive officer of Asia Head Quarter, Ahmed Hassan, president of BCS Computer City, and Azimuddin Ahmed, convenor of CityIT Fair 2002, also spoke at the inaugural ceremony at IDB Bhaban.

In his speech, S M Iqbal said implementation of information and communication technology (ICT) policy would help the country achieve its goal.

I S Kim said his company would extend all possible cooperation for developing the IT sector

in Bangladesh.

A total of 170 hardware, software and internet service providers (ISPs) are participating in the fair. The participating companies will provide 15 to 20 per cent discounts at the fair.

In a bid to make the fair attractive to visitors, the organisers arranged different events everyday that include providing guidelines for buying PC, Internet and web development, e-commerce, career in software development and maintenance of PC and PC in video editing.

A significant number of visitors most of which are school, college and university students gathered at the CityIT Fair yesterday. New products of different companies were the main attraction to the visitors.

# WEA handicrafts fair kicks off

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A six-day handicrafts and niddle works exhibition began in the city yesterday at Midas Mini Mart in Gulshan.

The exhibition has been jointly organised by Women Entrepreneur's Association, Bangladesh (WEA) and Banche Shekha, Jessore an NGO working with distressed and poor rural women.

French Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Lummaux formally inaugurated the exhibition. Among others, Angela Gomez, founder and executive director of the NGO, WEA President and

former advisor to the caretaker government Rokia A. Rahman attended the inaugural session.

Speaking on the occasion, Michael Lummaux said such exhibition of handicrafts and niddle works would ultimately help the distressed and poor rural women to be self-reliant.

WEA President Rokia A Rahman said the exhibition is part of an effort to create market and awareness for the products.

Such exhibition would also help the women to improve their skills, she observed.

The exhibition will remain open to visitors from 10am to 10pm.

# Euro-zone growth forecasts lowered

AFP, Brussels

The EU commission, citing weakening consumer spending and soft export demand, lowered its third and fourth-quarter euro-zone growth forecasts Thursday to between 0.2 and 0.5 per cent, a 0.1-point decline from the range projected in early September.

"The reason for this new downward revision in the growth forecast is the deterioration in household spending and external demand in the last few months," the Commission said.

It also noted that auto sales in the

12-nation euro zone had declined over the summer and pointed to grimmer export prospects in response to a fall in the pace of US manufacturing activity in September.

In another report, the European statistics office Eurostat said growth in the 12-nation euro zone came to 0.4 per cent in the second quarter of 2002 compared with the first, revising upward a previous estimate of 0.3 per cent.

The euro-zone economy expanded 0.4 per cent in the first three months of the year, according to Eurostat.

# Vietnam denies US shrimp dumping accusations

REUTERS, Hanoi

Vietnam's seafood industry is facing a fresh round of dumping accusations from the United States, with its shrimp exports coming under fire even while its low-priced catfish remain under investigation.

As with the catfish controversy, the main seafood trade group for Vietnam has denied it is glutting the US market with unfairly priced shrimp.

The group said US lawmakers were considering a proposal to withhold government funding to seven countries, including Vietnam, until they cut monthly shrimp exports to America.

The Vietnamese seafood group official, who declined to be named, said its members vehemently opposed any such law.

The other shrimp-exporting countries under scrutiny are Thailand, China, India, Indonesia, Ecuador and Mexico.

A statement from the seafood group urged the United States to respect the bilateral trade pact between the two countries that went into effect last December.

The United States approved \$170 billion to finance its agricultural products over the next 10 years, the group noted.

A US Commerce Department delegation was in Vietnam last week to explain what information was being sought in the US probe into tra and basa catfish exports from Vietnam.



PHOTO: SYNGENTA

Hasanul Morshed, chairman of BCIC, receives dividend a cheque from Sarwar Ahmed, managing director of Syngenta, in presence of the company's directors at the BCIC Office in the city yesterday.

# Nepal economy in limbo

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's political crisis may set back hopes of turning around the troubled economy, as donors and tourists hesitate to spend money in the kingdom, financial experts said Thursday.

King Gyanendra on October 4 declared Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba "incompetent" and said he would assume power until he selects an interim government.

His self-imposed deadline passed Thursday, as palace sources said he was still deciding whom to appoint.

Economists said all would depend on whether the king's

actions bring stability or more chaos to the kingdom, which has been ravaged for the past year by an increasingly violent Maoist insurgency.

"If the king sets right the track of the democratic systemd pursues a strict role of constitutional monarch, the royal action may have a positive impact on the Nepalese economy and tourism as it would assure good governance and a peaceful environment," said political analyst Parthiv Shumshere Thapa.

"But if the king acts against the constitution and derails the democratic system... it may invite protests and political instability," he said.

Nepal's gross domestic product

grew by just 0.8 per cent in the fiscal year that ended July 15, far below the projected 6.0 per cent.

Tourism, the main hard currency earner in the land of Mount Everest, has plummeted since June 2001, when Gyanendra's brother king Birendra and nine other members of the royal family were massacred by the drunken former crown prince.

Many visitors are still staying away as the Maoists, who want to topple the monarchy, clash across the kingdom with security forces. Some 3,200 people have been reported killed since the ultra-leftist guerrillas broke a ceasefire in November 2001.

# Proposed trade pact with Japan may raise ASEAN GDP

AFP, Singapore

A proposed trade pact with Japan could lift ASEAN's economic output by two per cent and boost its exports to the Asian economic giant by 21 billion US dollars, a senior Singapore trade official said Thursday.

ASEAN must enhance its business environment in order to continue attracting Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) which has remained strong despite the rising attraction of China, Minister of State for Trade and Industry Raymond Lim said.

"The gains from working

together will be substantial," Lim said in a speech at the annual ASEAN-Japan Business Meeting.

"The benefits of a FTA (free trade agreement) with Japan would even surpass those from a FTA with China due to the complementary nature of the Japanese and ASEAN economies," he said.

In a trip to the region earlier this year, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's call for a closer economic partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) received backing from the region's leaders.

If the vision of a proposed trade

pact is realised, Lim said the 10-member regional bloc's export volumes to Japan would grow by 21 billion dollars by 2020, while Japanese exports to the region would also receive a similar boost.

"ASEAN's GDP (gross domestic product) growth will be boosted by 2.0 per cent," he added.

Trade between Japan and ASEAN between 1995 and 2001 was worth 54 billion dollars, higher than the 48 billion dollars between China and Japan.

"The economic ties between Japan and ASEAN therefore remain strong," Lim said.



PHOTO: SHAHJALAL BANK

Managing Director of Shahjalal Bank Limited (SBL) Matin Uddin Ahmed and Managing Director of International Leasing and Financial Services Limited (ILFSL) Mafizuddin Sarker sign an agreement on behalf of their respective organisations on Tuesday in the city.