

## SIA to introduce Boeing 777 in Dhaka-S'pore flights next year

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Singapore Airlines (SIA) will introduce Boeing 777 in all its Dhaka-Singapore flights from next year to increase its passenger and goods carrying capacity.

SIA Regional Vice-President Freddy Khoo announced this on Wednesday at an award giving ceremony for local cargo agents.

SIA conferred ten awards to Bangladesh Air Express International Ltd, Concord Express Bangladesh Ltd, Dart Express Bangladesh Ltd, Fritz Air Freight Bangladesh Ltd, Enem Express Ltd, Expeditors Bangladesh Ltd, Newport Express Bangladesh Ltd, Topstar Cargo Systems Ltd, Globelink Air Cargo Services Ltd and Wings Air Cargo Ltd for their good services.

SIA Airport Cargo Operation (Dhaka Station) became first in Asia-Africa region for their excellent services for the financial year 2001-02. On behalf of Airport Cargo Operation, Sheikh Idris Ali took the prize from Hub and Line Stations Manager Peng Tat Wong.

SIA Bangladesh General Manager Joseph Chia, Regional Marketing Manager Desmond Lim, Senior Manager Singapore Sales Tan Chong Ben and GSA Chairman Azizur Rahman were also present on the occasion.

## New DMD of Uttara Bank



Md Abdul Halim has been promoted to the rank of Deputy Managing Director of Uttara Bank Limited, says a press release.

Prior to this he was the Assistant Managing Director.

Halim started his banking career in 1965 in the erstwhile Eastern Banking Corporation (Now Uttara Bank Limited).

He held many important positions in the bank.

Born in the year 1941, Halim obtained graduation degree from the Govt Anandamohan College, Mymensingh in 1961.

## Lanka gets \$130m ADB loan for power sector

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka has clinched two packages of loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) amounting to 130 million dollars for power sector development, the finance ministry said Thursday.

The packages comprise a programme loan of 60 million dollars and a project loan amounting to 70 million dollars, a ministry statement said.

The funds are expected to be utilised for the reform and restructuring of the power sector.

Among envisaged reforms are the establishment of an independent power regulator and tariff rationalisation.

Development in rural areas is also being highlighted, with at least 120,000 rural households to benefit from new power supplies.

The soft loan, which is to be released in two tranches, matures in 32 years and includes an eight-year grace period at minimal interest.

## Taiwan to lift ban on China corn temporarily

REUTERS, Taipei/Shanghai

Taiwan said it would temporarily lift a decades-old ban on China corn, a move which could eventually undermine US suppliers who dominate the island's US\$500 million-a-year market.

The temporary easing, announced by the Board of Foreign Trade in a statement seen on Tuesday, could pave the way for sharply increased grain trade between the island and mainland China.

"As long as quarantine and quality problems are sorted out, we don't see any reason the government will not lift the ban (temporarily) eventually," said a procurement executive with Uni-President Enterprise, Taiwan's largest food conglomerate.

The board said the temporary lifting of the ban, which allows China feed corn to arrive at Taiwan ports before December 31, was aimed at easing shipment delays and price volatility resulting from the US ports lockout.

# Law and order takes hefty toll on investment: Saifur

## Two investment bonds launched

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said the deteriorating law and order situation and poor business environment is keeping investors at bay.

Terming security of the people a prerequisite to any development, he said a society cannot sustain under the present situation. "Who will invest if the law and order situation is not good?"

The finance minister was speaking at the launching of two investment bonds at National Economic Council auditorium in the city.

M Saifur Rahman said without seven per cent growth rate the country will not succeed in alleviat-

ing poverty. "Employment has to be created and the nation has to save enough funds for investment to generate sufficient employment."

"We cannot accept the situation if people save money but musclemen snatch it," he continued. Referring to hassle at Zia International Airport, Saifur said, "People like to reach their respective destinations safely."

There is no alternative but to mobilise resources internally, the finance minister said mentioning that hundi is another area hitting the economy hard.

Referring to the present level of foreign exchange reserve, he added \$1.8 billion reserve is not a big deal. "Export earnings are going

up although we thought the sluggish trend might prolong. The country's entrepreneurs have developed their enterprising capacity," he noted stressing the need for increasing investment at home and export earnings.

State Minister for Finance and Planning Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain also attended the function. Chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) Dr Shoeb Ahmed, Joint Secretary of Internal Resource Division Md Tofazzel Hossen and Director of National Savings Directorate Md Fazlur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

The NBR chairman said that revenue earning in the first quarter

of the current financial year was highly impressive. The government has simplified the procedures of tax payment and the discretionary power of the tax officials has been reduced, he mentioned explaining the reasons behind revenue growth during July-September period of FY03.

With US\$250 million each, the two bonds namely US Dollar Investment Bond and US Dollar Premium Bond offer 6.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent interest rates respectively for a three-year term.

The government will pay interest in US dollar for the Investment Bond but in case of Premium Bond profit and other benefits will be given in taka.

# AkTel signs network expansion deal

## \$43m contract to extend service to S-N districts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Telecom Malaysia International Bangladesh (TMIB), the owning company of AkTel mobile service, has awarded a US\$43 million contract to Swedish telecom equipment vendor Ericsson AB for expansion of its network in the country.

"The Ericsson will supply GSM900 switching gears to raise AkTel subscribers base to 400,000 by the middle of next year from existing 150,000," TMIB Managing Director Dato' Ezanee Ab Aziz told a news conference Wednesday.

He said the Swedish company would also supply 160 base stations raising the number of total base station to 355.

Successful completion of the programme would enable the company to extend its services to

many southern and northern districts.

Currently TMIB and other mobile phone service providers are using state-owned Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) infrastructure and networks along with its own networks.

BTB Chairman SATM Badrul Huq witnessed the contract signing ceremony as the chief guest while President of Telekom Malaysia International and Board Member of TMIB Nor Hizam Hashim, TMIB Chairman A.M. Zahiruddin Khan, Ericsson Managing Director Mats Bosrup, Ericsson Australia Pvt Limited General Manager Russell Collins were also present.

AkTel has recently introduced pre-paid phones service with BTB incoming facility and plans to introduce pre-paid with BTB

outgoing facility. "We have plan to introduce the service subject to availability of interconnections from BTB," Aziz said.

AkTel said there is a potential market for wireless telephony as the telepenetration remained low in Bangladesh.

The TMIB, which has invested US\$120 million in its project since its inception in November 1997, is a joint venture between Telekom Malaysia Sdn. Bhd of Malaysia and local A.K Khan & Company. Telekom Malaysia holds 70 per cent of its equity and the local firm the rest.

Bangladesh has some 700,000 fixed line phones provided by state-owned BTB and over a million mobile phones by four private operators.

## 19th AGM of Pubali Bank held

The annual general meeting (AGM) of Pubali Bank Limited was held at the banks auditorium in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Monir Uddin Ahmad, chairman of the Board of Directors of the bank, presided over the meeting.

Five directors were elected uncontested in the place of four retired directors and in one vacant post.

Among them, EA Choudhury, Monir Uddin Ahmad and Sheikh Wahidur Rahman were re-elected while Faizur Rahman and Md Eaqub were elected new directors.

The chairman of the bank informed the meeting that in the year 2001 the capital inadequacy was reduced to Tk 42.30 crore. The provision shortfall against classified loan reduced to Tk 102.95 crore. Tk 35.72 crore was preserved in statutory reserve from the profit earned during the year 2001.

Later the newly formed board of directors met and unanimously elected EA Choudhury chairman for the next year.

## FMO team visits DBBL financed export-oriented industries

Arno de Vette and Loes Broekhof, Investment Officers of Asia Department of Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO), are in Bangladesh on an official visit to process a 5 million US dollar export credit line for Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited, says a press release.

The money will be utilised to finance various export-oriented industries.

FMO is a joint venture partner of Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited.

They held meeting with the chairman of the bank, Mohammad Sahabuddin Ahmed and discussed various issues about the future development of the bank.

The Managing Director-in-Charge, Abul Hashem Khan, and other Senior Executives of the bank pertaining to the export credit line also had meetings with the FMO team.

The representatives also visited some of the bank-financed export-oriented projects located in Dhaka and Mymensingh.

## Lankan tea prices slip as quality drops

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka tea prices slipped at the latest auction on poorer quality, brokers said Wednesday.

The anticipated gross sales average was 150.00 rupees per kg, compared to 155.05 rupees per kg last week, Forbes and Walker Tea Brokers said in a statement.

"The slip is mainly to do with quality, and quantities are also on the increase. We'll see this kind of trend continue for the next few weeks," said Dimantha Jayasinghe, a broker at Forbes and Walker.

He said demand was greatest from the Middle East and, at the bottom of the market, from the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Among low-growns, select best quality broken orange pekoes appreciated, but most lost up to six rupees per kg.



Moniruddin Ahmed, chairman of Pubali Bank Limited, speaks at the 19th annual general meeting of the bank held in the city yesterday. Among others, K I Khaled, managing director, Ahmed Shafi Chowdhury, Sheikh Wahidur Rahman, Saied Moazzem Hossain, Hafiz Ahmed Majumdar, Monir Ahmed and Habibur Rahman, directors, were present.

# Draft land transport policy before cabinet this month

## Communications minister informs ADB chief

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The draft of National Land Transport Policy is likely to be placed before the cabinet for approval this month, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda disclosed yesterday.

"It is at the final stage. We hope it will be placed in the cabinet within next two to three weeks," he said.

Nazmul Huda was speaking at a meeting between a delegation of Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the communications ministry. The ADB delegation was led by its visiting President Tadao Chino.

Appreciating the government initiative to draft a national policy on land transport, the ADB president hoped that it would be approved soon. Chino observed once the country has such a policy, it would help attract foreign investment in the transport sector.

Praising different reform initia-

tives by the government on railway sector, the ADB chief stressed the need for corporatisation as well as participation of private sector in the railway sector.

The minister informed the delegation of handing over ticketing and some other services to the private sector.

Terming the issue of reform in the railway sector as a sensitive one, the communications minister said employees of Bangladesh Railway have already taken a strong position against the concept of corporatisation. "We have to handle the issues carefully," he said.

The minister hoped the ADB would continue its assistance in the sector even if government fails to implement all the desired reforms in the sector quickly.

Speaking at the meeting Communications Secretary Rezaul Hayat observed the issue of further reform in the railway sector should

be discussed more to find out a solution that would be acceptable to the government, ADB and the employees of Bangladesh Railway.

Rezaul Hayat hoped the ADB would come forward in projects involving traffic movement and road development of Dhaka city in a bigger way.

The communication minister hoped the ADB would take a leading role in implementing the Padma Bridge project.

In this regard Chino said ADB would decide after examining the feasibility of the project after completion of a study by the Japanese in 2004.

Among others, ADB Bangladesh Resident Mission Country Director Toru Shibuichi and State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed attended the meeting.

# Ctg EPB to be recast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Chittagong would be reorganised soon in a bid to give the Bureau more autonomy.

Beside, new items would be included in the export lists.

These steps will be taken as part of the government's plan to expand the export markets.

This was disclosed at a roundtable on export trade held at Chittagong Club here on Wednesday.

EPB, Chittagong, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) and Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Chittagong jointly organised the roundtable.

The conference was organised with a view to identifying the problems of exporting from Chittagong

region.

While addressing the conference, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said EPB, Ctg would be reorganised with an appointment of one director general to run it. At present, it is run by a director.

The government is thinking of giving more autonomy to EPB, Ctg so that the exporters of this region can get all the procedures for exports done here, the minister said.

Commerce minister said efforts have to be made to get access to USA, Russia, China, Korea and EU markets.

CCCI President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury presided over the conference where EPB Vice Chairman Abu Saleh, CCCI Senior Vice-President and BGMEA first Vice-President Ershad Ullah, CCCI Vice President Monjur Ul Amin Chowdhury, Managing Director of

AK Khan Group Md. Shamsuddin Khan, Chief Executive of James Finlay AQL Chowdhury, Youngone Group President Peter Bour, Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association President Salah Uddin, Managing Director of Summan Group Lutfi M Ayub and a woman entrepreneur, Monowara Hakim Ali, spoke.

The local businessmen in the conference pointed at the existing problems of power, gas and complexities in the port and customs, hampering the export.

They observed export of the country could be increased in a large proportion, if the bureaucratic tangling, irregularities and corruption could be curbed.

The speakers further said that the volume of export increased in the recent past, but the export income declined. They attributed it to fall in the price of Bangladeshi goods in the foreign markets.

# Deal signed to install ICT incubator

## Space allocation for software exporters begins today

UNB, Dhaka

Distribution of space for the software exporters and IT-enabled service companies in the newly set up ICT Incubator begins today.

Official sources said the government has already provided 68,000 square feet of area at Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) Bhaban at Kawan Bazar to install the incubator costing Tk 3.6 crore.

They said the representative of Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) and BSRS yesterday signed an agreement at Science, Information and Communication

Technology Ministry for setting up the incubator.

Under the agreement, spaces from the 3rd to the 9th floors of BSRS would be provided for the software exporters and IT-enabled service companies at a subsidised rate.

BCC will provide a generator for round-the-clock uninterrupted power supply and a broadband Internet connection for the software exporters and the IT-enabled service companies.

So far, 30 software exporters and IT-enabled service companies have come up to use the spaces, according to the sources.

# No over profiteering during Ramadan

## Khosru asks traders

UNB, Dhaka

The government has advised the traders to refrain from over-profiteering practices and make sure that the prices of essentials remain steady during the holy Ramadan.

The appeal came from a meeting between Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and representatives of importers, wholesalers and retailers yesterday.

As price hike has been a usual phenomenon during Ramadan, the minister said the government would keep an eye on the price situation to reduce people's sufferings during the holy month.

The traders have been requested to keep the price of soyabean at Tk 40 per litre and that

of onion at Tk 13-15 per kg, and reduce the price of lentil at least by Tk two per kg. The prices of other items, including sugar, should also be kept at a reasonable level.

"We've told the minister that we'll do our best so that the people do not suffer during Ramadan," said ARouf Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners and Vanaspati Manufacturers Association.

The wholesale price of soyabean oil is Tk 37 per litre, which is sold at Tk 40-44 by retailers, he said, appreciating the reduction of customs duty and tax on imports.

"We feel that it's our responsibility to ensure fair prices of essentials for consumers during the holy month," Chowdhury said.



A seminar on money laundering was held at the BIBM auditorium in the city on Wednesday. Managing Director of Janata Bank Murshid Kuli Khan presented a paper on money laundering at the seminar. Rabiul Hossain, managing director of Sonali Bank, K I Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank Ltd, M Taher Uddin, managing director of Mercantile Bank Ltd, and Muhammad A (Rume) Ali, chief executive of Standard Chartered Grindlays Bank, were also present on the occasion.