

Holland, USA to invest jointly in Dhaka EPZ

BSS, Dhaka.

United States and Holland have jointly decided to invest 3.6 million US dollars in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone.

They will invest in the garments accessories sector. The enterprise will be known as M/s. Paxar Bangladesh Ltd, said a press release of Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority Wednesday.

USA and Holland signed an agreement with BEPZA in this regard here on Tuesday.

Member of BEPZA M Nazrul Islam and Director of the Paxar, Barry Leonards signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

The industry will annually produced about 100 million pieces of fabric labels, more than 202 million pieces of self adhesive labels and 173 million pieces of woven labels.

Paxar Limited, a 100 per cent foreign-owned company will create employment opportunities for about 350 Bangladesh nationals.

India needs to remove trade barriers: US

AFP, New Delhi

US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said Friday India needs to remove trade barriers and encourage respect for property rights to attract foreign investment.

Addressing members of the Confederation of Indian Industry here, O'Neill said the biggest impediments to India's growth are poor governance and lack of economic freedom.

"In India, average import tariffs are over 32 percent, more than three times higher than many other Asian economies -- Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Sri Lanka to name just a few," O'Neill said.

He said various indices of trade and investment restrictiveness rate India among the most restrictive countries in the world.

O'Neill, in New Delhi to attend the G-20 economic summit, said that while several large companies have invested in India, many more have stayed away.

"Respect for property rights and protection against public or private thievery is an essential requirement for economic success," he added.

The treasury secretary said India had come a long way, moving from a command economy towards a more market-based system.

Australia, Thailand eye free trade pact by mid-2004

AFP, Sydney

Australia and Thailand will step up efforts to sign a free trade agreement by June 2004, Australian Trade Minister Mark Vaile said Thursday.

Vaile said the deadline would add impetus to the talks on the agreement, which began in June.

"The ultimate aim of the negotiations is the elimination of tariffs and other barriers to trade and investment with Thailand," he said.

The agreement will boost Australia's domestic product by an estimated 12 billion dollars (6.7 billion US) and Thailand's by 46 billion dollars over a 20-year period.

Oil prices up

AFP, New York

The price of oil rose Thursday as worldwide expectations mounted of a war in Iraq and as US investments rolled into a new oil contract, analysts said.

In New York, the light sweet crude January-dated futures climbed 26 cents a barrel to close at 26.35 dollars after the expiry of the contract for December delivery.

"There was no huge news today and the market reflects that," said GSC Energy trader Chris Schachte. The January oil contract climbed to catch up with the price of the expiring December contract, he said.

The price of benchmark Brent North Sea crude oil for January delivery rose 31 cents to 24.84 dollars.

"It would seem as if funds are once more buying the market because of fears of a war with Iraq," said GNI analyst Lawrence Eagles in London.

North Bengal Paper Mill closes down November 30

UNB, Pabna

The government has decided to lay off the debt-ridden North Bengal Paper Mill at Pakshi in Ishwardi upazila in Pabna on November 30, frustrating some 10,000 families of its workers.

The decision to shut down the mill, which has over 900 officials and employees, was taken recently due to its staggering losses. Its outstanding loan has heaped up to

Tk 250 crore.

One of 21 large mills of BCIC, the North Bengal Paper Mill has been incurring losses since its inception. So far, it has contributed Tk 113.47 crore to the national exchequer.

Addressing a press conference here on November 17, the officials and employees of the mill said at present there are over 26,000 metric tons of raw materials in the factory and called for its mini BMRE

to raise its production capacity.

They suggested the government should give gas connection to the mill, which they said would reduce the fuel cost by Tk 30 to 40 lakh per month.

They attributed the higher production cost of paper in the mill to wrong planning of the government and demanded immediate withdrawal of its decision to lay off the mill.

35pc rebate on single payment for SoE

Govt adopts new policy to speed up privatisation

ZAHIDUL HAQUE

The government has adopted a new policy to allow 35 per cent rebate to anyone willing to buy a state-owned enterprise (SoE) in a single payment.

If any buyer is willing to pay the total payment in foreign currency he is given five per cent additional rebates.

They feel that such a procedure will quicken the privatisation process.

The government has also decided to take over or write-off all the long-term liabilities of the SOEs.

The decision came at a recent cabinet committee meeting of economic affairs chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman.

According to decisions, the Privatisation Commission will identify the SoEs for privatisation in consultation with the ministries concerned and with due approval of the government. Earlier, the initiatives were left only with the ministries concerned.

The commission has been given authority to sign sale contracts with

the buyers and hand over the enterprises. Earlier the power was vested on ministries concerned.

Privatisation Commission Chairman Enam Ahmed Choudhury said they have taken an ambitious project to privatise 100 SoEs within next year and the policy will surely help them to reach their target.

Three of these SoEs have already been sold and the handing over process is expected to be completed very soon.

These SoEs are Kalichapra Sugar Mills Ltd in Kishoreganj, Nabarun Jute Mills Ltd in Narayanganj, and Bawa Jute Mills Ltd in Narayanganj.

The commission has already issued the Letters of Intent (LoIs) to four others after finalisation of the sale process. These are Kokoil Textile Mills Ltd in Brahmanbaria, Kohinor Battery Manufacturers Ltd in Gazipur, Nishat Jute Mills Ltd in Gazipur and Daulatpur Jute Mills Ltd in Khulna.

The Commission has also finalised the tender process of another enterprise Chittagong Chemical Complex and sent it to the cabinet committee on economic affair for

final approval.

After completing the tender process two enterprises, Fish Export Ltd in Khulna and Lira Industrial Enterprises in Gazipur, have been approved for sale to the respective buyers at the commission level.

The commission has invited international tender for sale of seven more SoEs. These are Cabinet Manufacturing Plant in Khulna, Wood Treating Plant in Khulna, Mangrove Tannin Plant in Khulna, Ahmed Bawani Textile Mills Ltd in Dhaka, Service Facilities Centre in Sirajganj, Service Facilities Centre in Brahmanbaria and Dhaka Leather Company in Dhaka.

Valuation of twelve other enterprises has been completed and tender will be invited shortly for selling those units. Valuation of seventeen enterprises is also under process for inviting international tender.

Since the formation of Privatisation Board in 1993, which was re-named as Privatisation Commission in 2000, a total of 41 SoEs have been privatised.



City market is humming with Eid shopping as people have started visiting garment stores. Every apparel shop in the New Market area is found busy with customers browsing various types of clothes.

Wintel ISP launched

Wintel Bangladesh Limited launched Wintel ISP and moved to its new office at Gulshan in the city on Wednesday, says a press release.

Barrister Aminul Haque, minister for Post & Telecommunication; State Minister of Education Ehsanul Haque Milon, Chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission Syed Marghub Murshed, and BGMEA President Kutubuddin Ahmed, among others, were present at the launching ceremony of the ISP.

Chairman of Wintel Limited Dr Toufiq M Seraj, Faisal Alim, managing director, and A T M Mahabubul Alam, executive director of the company, were also present.

Other than importing and marketing mobile phone sets, Wintel is also engaged with different telecommunication and IT solutions business.

Wintel officials said the company will be the ultimate solutions house for all operators and in future.

US banks on Lankan peace bid to boost investment

AFP, Colombo

The United States expects Sri Lanka's latest peace bid to succeed and is keen to get involved in rebuilding the island's war-ravaged infrastructure, a top US trade official said here Thursday.

The visiting US deputy trade secretary, Jon M. Huntsman, told reporters here that he believed the Norwegian-backed attempts to end decades of ethnic bloodshed in the island would work.

"There is great hope that peace will prevail... This will allow private sector confidence for investment flows and investment flows in turn will support the peace process," Huntsman said. "It is a cycle of sorts."

He said the United States, as Sri Lanka's largest trading partner, hoped that the island's peace bid would bring results and believed that the island had the potential to become one of the most dynamic and competitive economies in Asia.

WTO chief seeks explicit proposals in farm talks

AFP, Geneva

WTO chief Supachai Panitchpakdi on Thursday pressed the EU and other members to come forward swiftly with explicit proposals in global talks to reform the farming industry.

In an interview with AFP, the director-general of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) voiced what he called "some limited concern" about the negotiations which aim to cut farming subsidies.

He acknowledged there had been delays by Japan and the European Union to make proposals, although he said both were "forthcoming", especially from Japan. Tokyo this week presented a plan that did not contain figures.

Argentinians in city to tap CNG business potential

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A two-member business delegation from Argentina is in Dhaka to explore the opportunities of installing CNG stations in the capital and other parts in the country.

Jose Aspromonte and Albar Ramenzoni, both from Delta Compression SRL, while talking with local journalists yesterday said Bangladesh needs to set up more CNG stations to meet the growing demand.

Jose Aspromonte, president of CNG machine manufacturer Delta

Compression SRL, said in Argentina his company has 70 per cent of the total market share. At present, the Latin American country has around eight lakh CNG-run motor vehicles and in every month 12 thousand more vehicles are being converted into CNG-run ones.

The Delta Compression SRL president also informed the company has been installing CNG stations in Mexico, Chile, Bolivia and Brazil. Besides, it has recently started installing CNG machines in India and Iran.



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Corporate Religion

With the throwing away of religions into waste baskets in this secular world, corporations (and even countries like ours) suddenly find a moral vacuum in the way their employees (or citizens) conduct their business. Without this religious moral anchor, a new corporate religion has been invented to ensure that even the fundamental value of being simply honest is ensured. Where corporate edicts have failed, governments are now enacting laws to ensure that corporate thievery can be checked. After the fall of Enron and other mega corporations, we have seen this event happening in the USA, in spite of 'In God We Trust' splattered on coins and coffers.

Codes of Conduct explaining how one should behave, under what situations, are being approved by corporation Boards, making the Directors and all employees accountable for their 'corporate' behaviour. This is binding and if any one is caught twisting any article of faith enshrined in these codes, the axe is the promised prize for such unfortunate beings.

These corporate religions usually begin with an over-arching vision - Be the Best, Number One in your industry, etc. etc. Then come ideals about pleasing or delighting the customer, the shareholders, and not to forget the employees or associates as some people would like to call. What follows are an array of other ideals like 'be close to your customer, be decisive, be entrepreneurial in your attitude, believe in teamwork, be compassionate' and yet some more, an impressive list of colourful, soul moving nouns and adjectives.

The employees are the stalwarts of the company. They are expected to convert with missionary zeal to these ideals which sometimes they do and then fall flat as what is actually practiced is a far cry from what is preached. Why?

The living of these ideals need to begin at the top of the organisation. It needs a massive change of behaviour from the top management. Once these corporate religious edicts are lectured and plastered around offices and other sites, top management beam with pleasure of having done a good job and then go back to their normal mode of working. If an employee, imbued with the new spirit dares to venture and take an entrepreneurial decision, zapp... he is frowned upon and has to explain... 'who gave you the authority to do this?'

There goes all the lectures and posters out of the minds of employees. What they see is more important than what they hear. So if any of us would like to practise these corporate religions, we would need to 're-engineer' our souls. We will need to believe and do deeds that will show to the rest of the crowd that yes, we have changed and do believe in those ideals.

Another way of making sure your organisation is morally right is to imbibe the appreciation of religion - whatever religion the employees' profess. Religious persons make good employees. I don't mean narrow minded religious persons who will not even shake hands with a person of another religious denomination but people literate and educated enough to appreciate the diversity of religions and nations and to follow their own.

Human beings are basically spiritual in nature. One way to ensure your business' success is to kindle this spirituality which in turn will sprout the right morality and keep corporate felony at the minimum. Let this spirituality work for you and enlighten your organisation.

Textile dyestuff of Bezema AG launched

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

R H Corporation yesterday formally launched textile dyestuff of Switzerland-based Bezema AG in Bangladesh.

Bezema AG International Sales Manager B Elmiger and Jurg Casserini, charge d'affaires of Switzerland to Bangladesh, were present as chief guest and special guest respectively at the launching ceremony held at a local hotel.

B Elmiger said the dyestuff are high quality, eco-friendly and cost effective for natural, synthetic and blend fabrics.

Elaborating Swiss presence in Bangladesh's development activities, Jurg Casserini said there are 40 Swiss development projects in the country that allocate 20 million Swiss francs every year.

Switzerland is also considering to expand scholarships programme for Bangladesh students, the charge d'affaires announced.

Managing Director of RH Corporation, the local representative of Bezema AG, Rajibul Huq Chowdhury said the dyestuff were formally launched in the country two years ago.

Japanese PM orders extra spending, strong reform

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Friday ordered a boost to government spending in the current financial year and a strengthening of his economic reform drive, but analysts were unimpressed.

Koizumi told his cabinet to draw up details of a supplementary budget for the year to March after the government and ruling coalition parties agreed the previous day to earmark an extra three trillion yen (24.4 billion dollars) for public works projects and a social safety net.

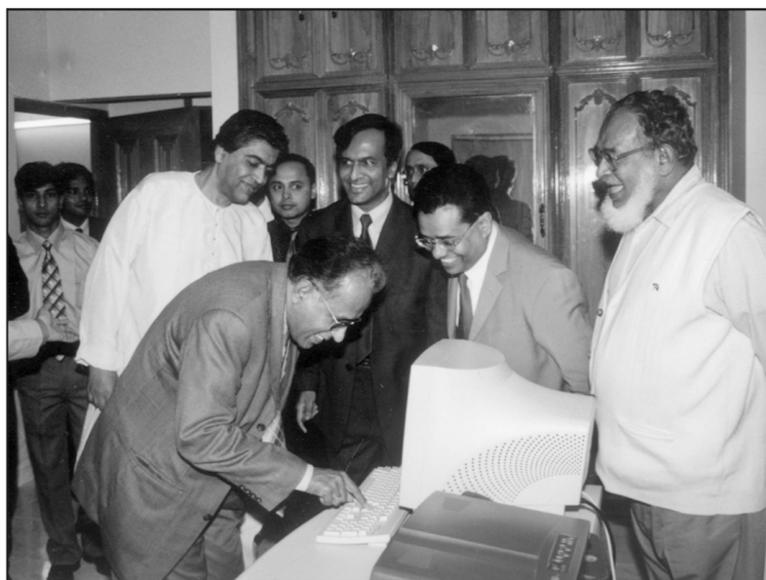
But some ministers and analysts warned the amount was insufficient to fight deflation and end a 12-year economic slump.

Mercator delivers major accounting system to Air Malta

Air Malta is now enjoying the benefits of Oracle Financials, the world class enterprise resource planning system, following a successful implementation led by Mercator, the IT division of the Dubai-based Emirates Group, says a press release.

Mercator, in partnership with Malta-based IT solutions provider Megabyte, supplied Air Malta with the consulting services essential to achieving the roll-out of this industry-leading system, which will serve as the cornerstone of its future success.

Oracle Financials offers general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, fixed assets, cash management, purchasing and inventory modules.



Minister for Post and Telecommunications Barrister Aminul Haque presses a key of a computer on the occasion of the launching of Wintel ISP in the city on Wednesday.

Foreign visitors praise local handicrafts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Foreign visitors on Wednesday praised the quality of jute handicrafts, nakshikantha, traditional blanket, stitch works and straw cards made by rural women.

They were visiting an exhibition organised by Taranga, a non-profit organisation that aims to support helpless women.

The exhibition was held at a Spanish couple's house, who willingly organised the show only to promote the rural women's creativity.

The products include shopping bags, leisure bags, marketing bags, toilet bags, door mats, toilet paper, shoe holders, table set, mats, spectacle covers, table cloths and napkins.

Women from seven areas of the country -- Dinajpur, Barisal, Gopalganj, Gazipur, Kushtia, Cox's Bazar and Dhaka are engaged with the Taranga.

Alan flux, an English trainer of Taranga, describing his experience about his training to Bangladeshi women, said these women have enough creativity and all they need

is proper training.

Taranga Acting Chief Executive Officer Kohinur Yeasmin said a woman earns one thousand to three thousand taka per month after getting the training from them.

Over five thousand women are engaged with Taranga and seven hundred women are with Taranga's handicraft section.

Taranga in cooperation with German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) has also developed an entrepreneurs development programme for illiterate women entrepreneurs.

PHOTO: WINTEL