

## New chairman of BTMA



M A Awal has been elected chairman of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) for the 2003-2004 term, says a press release.

Awal is the Managing Director of Prime Composite Mills Ltd, Chairman of Prime Group of Industries, former chairman of North South University Foundation and National Credit & Commerce Bank Ltd.

Abdul Hai Sarker, managing director of Shohagpur Textile Mills Ltd and former chairman of Dhaka Bank Ltd, has been elected Vice Chairman from Spinning Group.

Akram Khan, managing director of Newtext Dyeing and Printing Ltd and Chairman of Newtext Group of Industries, has been elected the vice-chairman from Weaving Group while Anwarul Huq, director of Jamuna Textiles Ltd, has been elected vice-chairman from Dyeing & Finishing Group.

## Agro-processor assoc's new president, GS



President



General secretary

Major General Amjad Khan Chowdhury (ret), CEO of AMCL-PRAN, and Syed Rezaul Karim, director of BRAC Dairy and Food Projects, have been elected president and general secretary respectively of the Bangladesh Agro-Processors' Association (BAPA) for the term ending September 17, 2004, says a press release.

They were elected at the association's annual general meeting (AGM) held recently.

Besides, AFM Fakrul Islam Munshi of AP (Dhaka) Ltd was elected senior vice-president while MA Rouf Chowdhury of Rahima Food Corporation elected vice-president and NH Zahed of Planters Bangladesh Ltd made treasurer.

Seven others were also elected as executive members of the association.

## AkTel now in Barisal

AKTEL launched its full-fledged services in Barisal recently, says a press release.

The expansion is a part of commitment of the joint venture Malaysian telecommunications company to cover all divisional headquarters of Bangladesh by the end of 2002.

AKTEL currently covers all major districts in the country including Dhaka, Tangail, Mymensingh, Manikganj, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Munshiganj, Narsindhi, Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Khulna, Rajshahi, Jessore, Bogra, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, Chittagong, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Feni, Noakhali, Cox's Bazar and now Barisal.

Presently AKTEL has around 1,60,000 subscribers.

# FBCCI advocates urgent measures to woo FDI

UNB, Dhaka

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has sought urgent steps to attract more foreign direct investments (FDIs) in port, power and telecom services to spur economic growth as the country's apex trade body observed sharp decline in both local and foreign investments till November this year.

The government in cooperation with the private sector should continue its efforts to net increased foreign direct investment for augmenting production and generating employment, FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun said at the annual general meeting of the Federation yesterday.

Investment by non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) also dropped this year, he said.

He suggested accelerating

privatisation to stop economic haemorrhage by SOEs and corruption that holds back economic growth.

The FBCCI chief also noted that Bangladesh's industry must acquire modern technology and management to raise productivity and competitive edge to sustain global competition.

Besides, the trade bodies must be well equipped to provide advisory services to help private sector identify goods and services having comparative advantages so they could reap benefit from duty-free market access to EU as well as newly-found markets in Canada, Australia, Japan, Pakistan and Thailand.

"We must remember that market access does not mean anything unless this can be translated into actual exports," Harun told the meeting of the country's leading

businesspeople. He regretted that the government had not yet taken any significant steps to root out corruption that affects the economy and the nation.

"The best way to curb corruption is to restrict government procurement to minimum through increased privatisation," he said and called for reduction of discretionary power of bureaucrats, ensuring good governance and political will of the government to institute accountability and transparency at all levels of governance.

About the current state of foreign exchange reserves, he observed it showed gradual improvements helped by strong growth in remittance inflows from expatriate Bangladeshis.

But export of major items, including woven garments, knitwear, jute goods, leather and leather goods, frozen foods, tea and agro-based

products, declined this year compared to the previous fiscal year, he pointed out.

The apex trade body chief stressed the need for rapid privatisation to save national exchequer from haemorrhage of Tk 5000 crore per annum that goes for running the loss making state-owned enterprises.

He welcomed the army-led joint drive to control law-and-order situation that had been worsening hindering economic growth, and hoped for a stable scenario soon, which will further stimulate economic growth.

The business leader urged all stakeholders to forge a political consensus on major economic issues, end confrontation in politics and implement various reforms to capacitate the economy to face upcoming challenges of globalisation.



Newly elected President of BARVIDA (Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association) A Mannan Chowdhury speaks at the association's AGM in the city.

# HK shuts wholesale poultry market amid bird flu scare

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's wholesale poultry market was closed on Monday for two days for cleaning after the slaughter of some 16,000 chickens on a farm here amid fears of an outbreak of the deadly bird flu.

Cleaning at the Cheung Sha Wan wholesale poultry market started on Monday after live-chicken wholesalers and retailers were given an extra 24 hours to sell off their remaining 20,000 stock.

The market was supposed to close on Sunday for cleaning for precaution after more than 1,000 chickens were found dead in Ta Kwu Ling farm in the New Territories on Saturday. The farm's remaining 16,000 chickens had to be culled.

Initial tests showed 12 of the chickens in the farm had the H5 avian virus, a strain of which killed six people in Hong Kong in 1997.

To stop the avian flu from

spreading, the government had decided to thoroughly cleanse the Cheung Sha Wan market, to which some chickens from the infected farm had been delivered.

But the authorities decided not to slaughter the unsold chickens there and the move has drawn criticisms from politicians, fearing that if there should be another bird flu outbreak, it would be difficult to distinguish if the flu originated from the farm or the market.

The government had also reportedly asked mainland suppliers and local farms to stop sending chickens to the Cheung Sha Wan market.

The remaining 20,000 chickens at the wholesale market were sold at a discount of six Hong Kong dollars (77 US cents) about one-third of the price, before the market were closed down for two days for cleaning.

Tsui Ming-tuen, president of Hong Kong Live Poultry

Wholesalers' Association, told reporters that the market would reopen for business on Wednesday.

"There's nothing we can do if we suffer losses," he said.

Hong Kong has suffered a series of bird flu outbreaks over the past two months, but deaths at Ta Kwu Ling have been the most significant.

The previous major outbreak of bird flu occurred in February. Although there were no human fatalities, 860,000 chickens and other poultry were culled to stop the disease spreading.

In the 1997 outbreak, the H5N1 strain crossed the species barrier for the first known time and killed six people after they ate or came into contact with infected chickens. That outbreak led to the slaughter of 1.4 million birds.

Some 1.2 million birds also had to be culled after another outbreak last year.

## Pran products seized on VAT evasion charge

BSS, Rajshahi

Customs officials in a surprised raid seized a truck carrying a huge quantity of Pran Agricultural Marketing Company Limited products on charges of evading value added tax (VAT) at Natore town Sunday.

According to the official sources, a special customs team from Rajshahi office led by Assistant Commissioner Syed Mohidul Hassan raided the truck and seized various items worth about Tk 2.80 lakh after searching the truck.

The goods were being sent to Dhaka after evading VAT worth Tk 41,954.

Ali Ahmed, commissioner of Rajshahi Customs and VAT Commissionerate, alleged the Pran authorities had earlier transported their products from Natore factory to Dhaka and their Narsingdi plant, evading a huge amount of VAT.

A departmental case was recorded with the customs office in this connection and the seized goods along with the truck were deposited with the local godown.

## Dulamia Cotton AGM held

Dulamia Cotton Spinning Mills Ltd has declared a 3.5 per cent dividend for the year 2001-02, says a press release.

The declaration was made at the 15th annual general meeting (AGM) of the company held on the factory premises in Feni on Saturday.

The dividend is meant for the general shareholders other than the sponsors, according to the release.

Managing Director of the company Abdur Rob presided over the AGM. Bangladesh Shilpa Bank nominated Director AMM Zeaul Haq, Investment Corporation of Bangladesh nominated Director Kamrul Islam and the company Director Nuruzzaman were also present in the meeting.

## New executives of BARVIDA

A Mannan Chowdhury and Nirmal Kanti Dev have been elected president and secretary general of the Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association (BARVIDA) for the term 2002-04, says a press release.

Besides, Nurul Absar, Abdul Hamid and Shah Mosarraf Hossain have been elected vice-presidents of the association.

The election result was declared at its 9th AGM on Sunday.

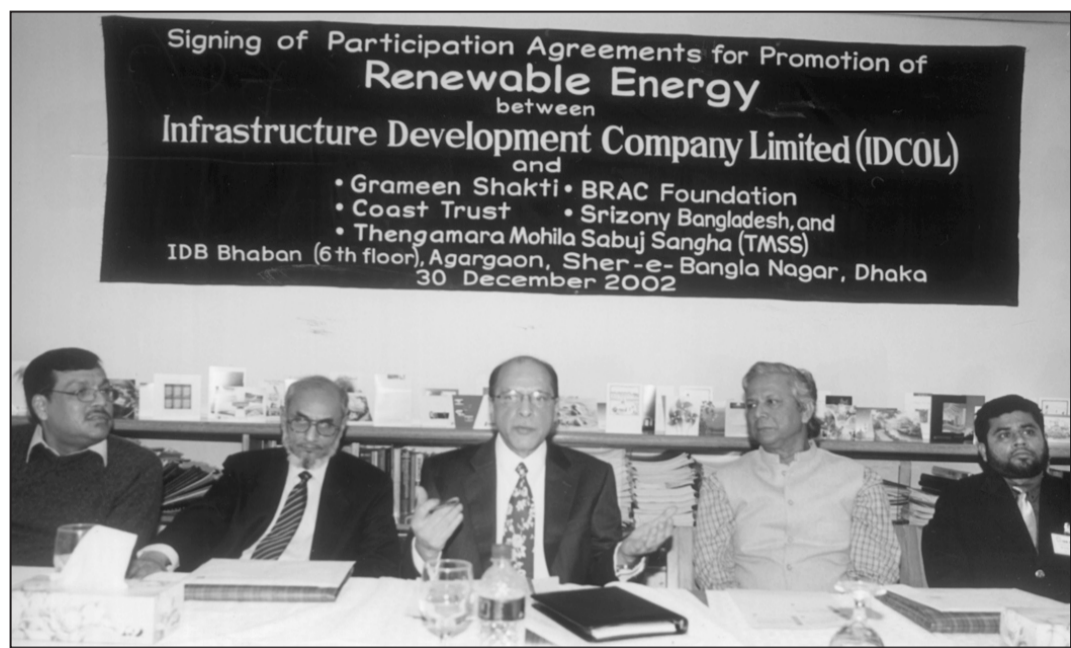
## New MD of GSK



M Azizul Huq has been appointed managing director of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Bangladesh Ltd with effect from January 1, 2003, says a press release.

Huq joined the company in 1998 as marketing manager.

GlaxoSmithKline is one of the world's leading research-based healthcare companies.



Anisul Huq Chowdhury, secretary of ERD and chairman of Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL), speaks at an agreement signing ceremony between IDCOL and five organisations in the city yesterday. Professor Muhammad Yunus, managing director of Grameen Bank, Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, executive director of BRAC, and M Fouzul Kabir, CEO of IDCOL, are also seen in the picture.

# 5 bodies to take part in IDCOL energy project

## Electricity key to rural development: Prof Yunus

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Grameen Bank Managing Director Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday said electricity can make rural economy vibrant.

"Electricity will increase working hours of rural people helping them enhance production and promote trade," Professor Yunus made the observation while speaking at an agreement signing ceremony for promotion of renewable energy.

Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL) signed the participation agreements with Grameen Shakti, BRAC Foundation, Coast Trust, Srizony Bangladesh and Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha at its office at the IDB bhaban in the city.

In order to promote generation and use of renewable energy in the remote areas, 50,000 solar home systems will be installed in the next five years and a few mini-hydro and wind energy projects will also be implemented in areas where grid has not yet reached or is unlikely to reach in the near future. IDCOL will implement the project worth US\$ 25

million through these organisations. "We are going through a time when it is not possible to live without electricity. We are in the information communication technology (ICT) era and it is impossible for ICT to reach the rural areas without electricity," the Grameen Bank managing director added.

Referring to the solar energy, Prof Yunus mentioned using solar home system (SHS) the benefit of ICT can be made available to village people and if the generation cost of SHS is reduced it would bring about a change in rural areas.

Anisul Huq Chowdhury, secretary of Economic Relations Division and chairman IDCOL, Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, executive director of BRAC, and Dr M Fouzul Kabir Khan, executive director and chief executive officer of IDCOL, also spoke on the occasion.

Mueyed Chowdhury stressed the need for manufacturing solar panel locally, which is one of the expensive components of SHS to make it more popular.

Steps should be taken to encourage local investors so that they can

start assembling solar panel at the initial stage, he said mentioning BRAC would train up its own human resource soon to provide necessary service in the remote areas to expand SHS.

"Our pilot project to promote SHS has been successful and we think that SHS can play a significant role in social development in the rural areas," Chowdhury told the function.

Anisul Huq mentioned that there are many areas in the country where electricity will not reach in the next 30 years. SHS can be an alternative source for those areas.

Fouzul Kabir said the current rate of electrification will take decades to provide access to electricity to all people in Bangladesh. In contrast, favourable natural conditions like sufficient sunshine and wind-speed exist for promotion of renewable energy in the country.



The 15th annual general meeting of Dulamia Cotton Spinning Mills was held on the factory premises in Feni on Saturday with Managing Director of the company Abdur Rob in the chair.

# Analysts see better times for European stocks in 2003

AFP, London

As another annus horribilis for European stock markets draws to an end, many analysts are betting on a recovery in share prices in 2003, hoping not to be wrong-footed for the fourth year in a row.

It was another year to forget for investors in European stock markets in 2002, with major indices from London to Frankfurt, Paris to Amsterdam plunging by around 25 to 35 per cent.

The FTSE 100 index of leading shares on the London stock market, the largest in Europe, nears the year-end nursing the biggest loss in its 17-year history in per centage terms, having plunged by around one quarter over 12 months.

The index is down over 40 per cent from its all-time high seen in December 1999, and up just eight per cent from its September nadir, which was the lowest level for over six years.

The DJ Euro Stoxx 50 index of leading euro-zone shares fared even worse, diving by about 35 per cent in 2002.

A steady stream of profit warnings, falling profits and corporate scandals battered sentiment and sent investors big and small alike scrambling to shift money out of equities and into alternatives such as cash and bonds.

Analysts expect a better year for European stock markets in 2003, with some pencilling in gains of over 20 per cent.

Anis Faraj, global strategist at the Nomura brokerage firm,

expects European share prices to rise on average by about seven to eight per cent in 2003, giving a total return of 10 per cent including dividend yields.

"If you take Iraq out of the equation then a lot of other factors are looking slightly better than they were two or three months ago, certainly the earnings story."

"So basically I think people are optimistic about 2003, it's only Iraq that makes them slightly hesitant which is why they're in wait-and-see mode," he said.

Lehman Brothers strategist Ian Scott expects European equity markets to generate a total return of 18 per cent in 2003 thanks to relatively attractive valuations, a recovery in earnings expectations and improved sentiment.

"The bottom line for us, looking at the economic outlook for Europe in 2003, is that although growth is likely to be subdued, it is unlikely to be as weak as the outlook that appears to be factored into European equity markets," he said.

Yet even upbeat forecasts of a 25-per cent rebound by the end of 2003 would only take markets back to levels first reached in early 1998, meaning that in effect markets would have gone nowhere in about five years.

Moreover, not all analysts are so optimistic about the outlook.