

Vanik AGM held

The sixth annual general meeting of Vanik Bangladesh Limited was held in Dhaka on Monday, says a press release.

The company earned an operating revenue of Tk 277 million during the year 2002 with a modest growth of around 3 percent.

The meeting was presided over by Vanik chairman MAMoyeen.

The meeting was also attended by Edgar Guantungae, chairman of Sampath Bank Limited, Sri Lanka.

Repo auction

UNB, Dhaka

The repurchase agreement (Repo) auction of Bangladesh Bank for commercial banks and financial institutions was held here yesterday.

Seven bids of one-day tenor amounting to total of Tk 107.50 crore were received but these were not accepted, said a press release of Bangladesh Bank.

Oriental Bank, DESCO sign bill collection deal

An agreement was signed between The Oriental Bank Limited and Dhaka Electricity Supply Company Limited (DESCO) for collection electricity bills in Dhaka on Monday, says a press release.

Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, executive vice-president of The Oriental Bank, and AHM Nurul Huda, company secretary of DESCO, initiated the agreement on behalf of their organisations.

Among others Md Shafiquddin, deputy managing director, and Habibul Islam, assistant vice-president of the bank, Saleh Ahmed, managing director, and Showkat Hossain, director (Finance) of DESCO, were also present at the signing ceremony.

ACME sales centre opens at Gazipur

A new sales centre of The ACME Laboratories Ltd was inaugurated in Gazipur on Monday, says a press release.

Afzalur Rahman Sinha, deputy managing director of ACME, inaugurated the sales centre.

ACME executive director Dabir Uddin, directors Rezaur Rahman Sinha, Tanvir Sinha, Sabrina Sinha, Motiur Rahman Sinha, and director (Marketing and Sales) Rafiqul

S'pore hopes to end trade talks with India in a year

AFP, Singapore

Singapore hopes to conclude negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with India within a year, Trade Minister George Yeo said Wednesday.

"Our links with India are very good. We have begun negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement which should be concluded within a year," Yeo said at a business conference here.

"As India looks eastwards, we are their best partner in the region. Singapore can be a Hong Kong to India as it reforms and opens up its economy," he said, referring to the entrepot role played by the former British colony in trade with China.

Last month, Singapore and India agreed to begin talks and work towards a comprehensive economic accord. The talks will cover trade liberalisation as well as investment promotion, protection and cooperation, and further opening up of fair services.

US economy gets a boost

AFP, Washington

US economic rebound got a lift Tuesday from reports showing a robust housing market and a modest increase in consumer confidence.

The Conference Board said its consumer confidence index edged up to 83.8 from 81.0 in April. Although this was below some expectations on Wall Street, it was the highest level since November.

Two other reports showed housing remained a pillar of strength for the US economy.

The Commerce Department said sales of new homes rose 1.7 percent in April to an annualized pace of 1.028 million units, the highest level since December 2002.

Canadian team signs \$24m export, investment deals

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The visiting Canadian delegation has signed export and investment deals worth US\$24 million during its two-week stay in Bangladesh, said Antonio de Wilde, senior programme manager of SouthAsia Enterprise Development Facility (SEDF).

The agreements include US\$ 10 million in export orders and US\$ 14 million in investments and joint ventures, he said while addressing a business meeting with members of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) at its secretariat yesterday.

FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun presided over the meeting.

Significant investments have been made in sectors like ready made garment (RMG), beverage and leather but the delegation did not mention the sectors in which they signed export orders.

A Canadian garment manufacturer signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a Bangladeshi company for orders

worth three million US dollars. In another case, a Canadian garment manufacturer decided to relocate its Toronto factory to Bangladesh.

A Canadian beverage company signed a joint venture agreement with a Bangladeshi soft drink producer to set up a production plant with an approximate investment of seven million US dollars and annual sales of seven million US dollars.

Three Bangladeshi companies signed MoUs with a Canadian leather company. One of the MoUs, covers an investment of over three million US dollars. These three agreements cover immediate sales of over 2.5 million dollars, the delegation said in the meeting.

A Canadian Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) company signed a joint venture agreement with a local Internet service provider (ISP) for voice-over data contract with a value of one million dollars in annual sales.

A freight forwarding company signed MoUs with three Bangladeshi companies with an expected value of 750,000 US

dollars.

Addressing the meeting, Greg MacDonald, leader of the delegation, said the joint ventures will not only help increase Bangladesh's exports to Canada but also to the neighbouring US market.

In his presentation, Ronald Beriet, representative of Trade Facilitation Office of Canada, highlighted the eligibility criteria of least developed countries (LDCs) for getting market access to Canada.

He also said the aim of the Canadian duty-free access is to help reduce poverty level in the LDCs and also to help poor countries cope with probable challenges of WTO regime.

He said the Trade Facilitation Office of Canada (TFOC) works for government departments and agencies, foreign trade and investment promotion organisations, and private companies

In the open discussion, speakers said small and medium industries have good prospects in Canada.

As the duty-free access allows any Bangladeshi product, except-

ing arms and poultry, to enter Canada, Dhaka should make extra efforts to diversify its export basket to include pharmaceutical, light engineering, shrimp, handicrafts, software sectors, apart from ready made garment (RMG) and leather, the speakers said.

Board of Investment (BOI) Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman urged for joint collaboration between the pharmaceutical sectors of both the countries.

Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Vice Chairman Habib Abu Ibrahim said the bureau will provide more facilities to the trade bodies to get access to foreign markets.

The EPB vice chairman also assured the Canadian delegation that the government will fill up the vacant posts of trade officials in different Bangladeshi foreign missions in the next two to three months after the delegation members expressed concern over it.

Mofizur Rahman, executive chairman of BEPZA, also spoke at the meeting attended by leading exporters, producers, and businessmen of Bangladesh.



PHOTO: ORIENTAL BANK

Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury, executive vice-president of The Oriental Bank Ltd, and A H M Nurul Huda, company secretary of Dhaka Electricity Supply Company Ltd (DESCO), sign an agreement on behalf of their organisations on Monday for collection electricity bills. Md Shafiquddin, deputy managing director of the bank, was also present.

SEC serves show-cause notices on four banks

Failure to hold AGM

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) yesterday served show-cause notices on four private commercial banks for suspending their annual general meetings (AGMs).

National Bank Limited, City Bank Limited, Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited and Dhaka Bank Limited have been asked to explain by May 31 as to why they deferred their AGMs.

Talking to The Daily Star, a bank

managing director admitted of receiving the SEC letter.

He said a day before the AGM date they received a letter from the central bank asking them to reduce their board members to 13.

"It was not possible for us to comply with the notification within a date after receipt of the notification as the board directors are elected in the AGMs," the MD said seeking anonymity.

He said his bank has decided to postpone the meeting in order to comply with the new notification

of the central bank.

A senior official of National Bank said prior to deferring AGM of their bank they had asked the SEC to know if they were bound to hold AGM or delay it due to the central bank notification.

Meanwhile, SEC officials said they received complaints from investors alleging that they were not well informed in advance regarding the postponement of the AGMs and many of them had returned from the meeting venues on the scheduled dates.



PHOTO: ICC-B

A two-day workshop on "International Standard Banking Practice & Documentary Credit Management" organised by International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)-Bangladesh concluded at MCC auditorium in Dhaka on Tuesday. Mamun Rashid, chairman of ICC-B Standing Committee on Banking Technique and Practice and CEO of Citibank NA Bangladesh, resource person of the workshop Vincent O'Brien from Ireland and participants posed for a photograph at the concluding ceremony of the workshop.

Automobile importers seek giants' plants at home

Five-day Bangladesh Int'l Motor Show-2003 opens

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Local automobile importers are planning to invite global giants to set up manufacturing plants in Bangladesh to help the country leapfrog into auto age.

In a primary step towards the goal, allied companies will be encouraged to jointly set up ancillary industries like tyre, spare parts, lubricant, battery, paint and vehicle audio and decoration, besides CNG conversion plants, said a local automobile distributor yesterday.

Ancillary industries will be harbingers to setting up manufacturing units, said the distributor, Abdul Matlub Ahmed, chairman and managing director of Nitol Motors Ltd.

He was speaking at a press conference organised to mark the business day of the Bangladesh International Motor Show-2003 that began yesterday at the China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Centre.

Bangladesh Automobiles

Distributors Association (BADA) has organised the five-day show, first of its kind in Bangladesh, to showcase brand new cars.

Matlub Ahmed, also a vice-president of BADA, said with auto purchases growing steadily, there is no reason why brand manufacturers will not come to Bangladesh.

He urged the government to offer special incentives to global brand manufacturers for setting up production units in Bangladesh.

If incentives are offered manufacturers will be interested to set up plants to use the strategic geographical location of Bangladesh.

He disclosed Malaysian car manufacturer Proton has already proposed joint production of spare parts in Bangladesh with a local company.

Addressing a press conference at the fair venue, BADA President M Salahuddin appreciated government efforts for rationalising duties on car imports in last year's budget which has brought new cars within the affordability of middle-

class people.

He said revenue realisation from automobiles sector has also risen significantly after the introduction of the new tax and duty structure.

He urged the government to further restructure taxes and duties on import of brand new cars in the upcoming budget.

He urged people to buy new cars rather than reconditioned ones, mentioning that the price gap between new and old cars has become negligible after the budgetary measures.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda will formally inaugurate the show at 10am today. After the inauguration ceremony, the show will be open to all from 12 noon. From May 30 to June 1, the exhibition will remain open to visitors from 10am to 9pm.

The entry fee is fixed at Tk 25 a person. A raffle draw will be held on the entry coupons.

Attractive prizes will be given to winners.

Major participants at the show are A&A Autos Ltd (distributor of Fiat and Alfa Romeo), Amfco Motors Ltd (Hyundai), A One Motors Ltd (Volvo), Ifad Autos Ltd (Ashok Leyland), MAM Automobiles Ltd (Ford), Meghna Automobiles Ltd (KIA), Navana Ltd (Toyota and Hino), Nitol Motors Ltd (TATA), Rancon Motors Ltd (Mercedes Benz), Rangs Ltd (Mitsubishi and Mahindra), Uttara Motors Ltd (Maruti-Suzuki, Swaraj-Mazda and Isuzu), and Multimode Transport Consultant Ltd (Proton).

Allied companies are also taking part in the fair.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and Department of Environment will also take part in the show as part of their awareness programme in the sector.

Matiur Rahman, chairman and managing director of Uttara Motors Ltd, Anwarul Islam Tarek, director of Navana Ltd, and Syed Ashfaqur Rahim, managing director of A&A Autos Ltd, were also present at the function.

Malaysia Airlines offers new package

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Malaysia Airlines has offered a new travel package for its passengers.

Under the package, which will run from June 1 to September 13, people travelling with the airline will get a four-day three-night free hotel accommodation.

"Any passenger traveling with Malaysia Airlines to any of its destinations can avail of this offer known as Showcase Malaysia,"

said Anuar Mat Piah, area manager for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, at a press briefing at Hotel Purbani in Dhaka yesterday.

Malaysia Airlines earlier estimated around 5,000 passengers will travel from Bangladesh during January to June this year, Anuar said, adding "Our performance is satisfactory as roughly 3,500 passengers already travelled in the January to April period".

People willing to travel with

Malaysia Airlines will be charged US\$ 330 for Kuala Lumpur and Nepal, \$365 for Penang and Langkawi, \$450 for Kota Kinabalu, \$438 for Labuan, \$455 for Sandakan, \$395 for Kuchin, and \$435 for Miri.

Passengers can choose from a list of 72 hotels and resorts across 14 cities in Malaysia, Anuar said. "Besides, people will be able to complete their total medical check-up at \$120 at different hospitals."



PHOTO: ACME

Afzalur Rahman Sinha, deputy managing director of ACME Laboratories Ltd, opens a sales centre of the company in Gazipur on Monday.

Chittagong tea market dulls

BSS, Chittagong

The weekly tea sale held here on Tuesday witnessed a dull trend as the decline in quality continued and there was less interest from all sections of the market.

However, according to market sources, a handful of clean teas available were well supported by the Afghan buyers around last levels whilst Pakistan buyers were slightly less active. Blenders and loose tea buyers lent fair support.

As a result, prices have fallen for all grades with more withdrawals

this week, the sources added.

Dusts also had an easier market in line with the quality.

The details of the market reports are as follows:

CTC Leaf: 1,805 chests, 15205 gunny sacks, 1,872 ppws, 25 p/s and (237 gunnysacks of old season) on offer met with less demand at easier rates.

Broken: Except for a handful of clean well made medium broken which were about steady, all others were easier in line with the quality often declining by Taka 3/- to Taka 5/- . Large broken were similarly

easier. Plainer varieties were again easier.

Fannings: This category also met with less demand and decline by Taka 4/- to Taka 6/- with fair withdrawals. Plainer types also an easier market.

CTC Dust: 140 chests, 1940 gunnysacks and 712 ppws and (65 gunnysacks of old season) on offer met with less demand at easier rates. Ds eased by Taka 3/- to Taka 5/- . RD, PD eased by Taka 5/- . CDs eased by Taka 10/- and sometime more following quality. Internal market lent a fair support.