

Star BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY JULY 22, 2003

REPO auction

UNB, Dhaka

The Reserve REPO auction of Bangladesh Bank for commercial banks and financial institutions was held here yesterday.

Three bids of one-day tenor amounting to Tk 270.0 crore were received and accepted.

The rates of interest against the accepted bids ranged from 3.90 percent to 3.95 percent per annum, said a Bangladesh Bank press release.

Emirates SkyCargo to start service to Auckland

Emirates SkyCargo will start its double daily services to Auckland in New Zealand from August 1.

The 14 weekly flights will also boost the vibrant trade along the Trans-Tasman route, spanning outwards globally to encompass the busy trade routes of the Far East, Middle East, and Europe, says a press release.

SkyCargo has the capacity to carry around 50 tonnes of cargo everyday to Auckland and back, in each direction, in the belly of the Boeing 777-300 passenger aircraft.

Emirates' daily services to Brisbane starting on October 26 will notch up the Auckland frequency to 21 weekly flights and further augment the cargo capacity to 75 tonnes daily in either direction.

Ram Menen, senior vice-president Cargo, said: "Auckland, the 68th destination in the 48th country on our global network, is a very important and exciting destination for us. It extends our well-established services in the region even further, building on the strong foundation and extensive network we have created in Australia that currently includes Perth, Sydney and Melbourne.

Vietnam to host int'l rice forum

AFP, Hanoi

The world's rice exporting countries will gather in the Vietnamese capital in October for this year's World Rice Commerce forum, the trade ministry said Monday.

More than 150 delegates are expected to attend the conference in Hanoi on October 16-17, an official from the Ministry of Trade said.

"The main goal of the meeting is to swap experiences in rice production and update information about markets and prices, as well as give producers the opportunity to meet trade partners," he said.

Originally known as the Asia International Rice Conference, World Rice Commerce has its beginnings in 1996, when the inaugural event was held in Singapore.

Since then, Bangkok, Phuket, Cebu and Langkawi have hosted the annual meet. Last year it took place in Beijing, where it was renamed World Rice Commerce.

Vietnam is the world's third largest rice exporter after Thailand and India. Last year it exported 3.2 million tonnes.

Thailand to pay last of IMF debt by end of July

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand will repay the remainder of its debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by the end of this month, nearly two years ahead of schedule, a Thai government spokesman said Monday.

The kingdom would pay its last installment of 1.67 billion dollars to the IMF before July 31 in line with its previously announced plans, spokesman Sita Divari told AFP.

"After paying the last of its debt, Thailand will still be left with around 40 billion dollars in foreign reserves," he said.

On Friday the central Bank of Thailand said Thailand's foreign exchange reserves stood at 39.4 billion dollars.

Thailand announced in January it would repay its then-outstanding 4.8 billion dollars of debt in three installments by the end of July.

With Thailand's economy on an upswing, the government decided it would send a positive message to foreign investors by clearing the outstanding debt, it said at the time.

Under the original schedule of the rescue package Thailand agreed to during the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, payments to the IMF were to have been completed in May 2005.

SEC engages audit firms to dig deep into listed company affairs

Financial institutions get exemption

NAZRATUN NAYEEM MONALISA

With a view to ensuring proper utilisation of funds raised from the capital market, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has decided to engage accountancy firms to audit all the listed companies excepting the financial institutions.

The SEC has already appointed two auditors from its panel to conduct audit of Padma Cement Ltd and Modern Cement Ltd in the first phase of work.

Rahman Rahman Huq has been appointed to audit Padma Cement Ltd while Chowdhury Hossain Zaman and Co assigned for Modern Cement Ltd.

The SEC in the appointment letters asked Altaf Siddiqui of Rahman Rahman Huq and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury of Chowdhury Hossain Zaman and Co to take the lead role in the auditing of the two companies.

Talking to The Daily Star, SEC officials said more such audit firms will be engaged to audit rest of the companies.

The appointment has been made as per the IPO consent order under the Securities and Exchange Ordinance, 1969, said a senior official of SEC.

As per the terms of reference (TOR), the auditors will examine the utilisation of fund collected through IPO and pre-IPO placement, the official said.

The audit firms will check if there is any inconsistency between the estimated costs projected in the company prospectus and their actual fund utilisation.

They will also look into the growth projections made in the prospectus and try to identify the reason for deviations, if any.

As per the TOR, the firms will get into action within 10 days from receipt of the appointment letters and submit a report before the Commission within 30 days.

The SEC has a number of auditing firms in its panel of auditors including SF Ahmed & Co, Rahman Rahman Huq, Acnabin, Ahmed and Ahmed Co, Chowdhury Hossain Zaman and Co and Hodavasi Chowdhury and company.

Experts call for use of energy saving home appliances

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Power experts yesterday stressed the need for encouraging the use of energy saving home appliances.

They urged the government to make it mandatory for local electrical product manufacturers and importers to attach 'efficiency labels' on their goods.

Energy saving electrical home appliances can save up to 400 MW power daily, they said at a USAID-sponsored seminar on "Energy Efficiency Standard Setting and Labeling (EES & L) of End-use Appliances."

Power Cell of the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry and NexanT, South Asia Regional Initiative Energy organised the two-day seminar at a local hotel to create awareness among users on the benefits of efficient electrical goods.

Power experts from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and host Bangladesh are attending the seminar.

They said energy efficiency labels are informative labels fixed on a product to describe its energy performance. The concept of energy efficiency labels is mandatory in developed countries.

The discussants observed quality of products would also improve once the efficiency labeling is made mandatory for home appliances.

There should be efficiency standards for energy performance of products, they said.

At present, the total daily power generation of around 3,500 MW, 41 per cent of which is consumed by residential users.

If these users can choose efficient electrical home appliances, it would significantly help save power, the experts told the seminar.

They urged the government to involve Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) in formulating energy efficiency labels for such appliances.

Inaugurating the seminar, State

Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood said the users should save energy by using efficient appliances to help the government expand electricity coverage.

He said electricity coverage must be increased as 70 per cent of the population in Bangladesh still do not have access to it.

The government is committed to bringing 100 per cent of the population under electricity coverage by 2020, he added.

Power Division Secretary SM Shamsul Alam said a campaign is needed to promote efficient electrical products. "Efficient goods can save energy as well as ensure efficient service," he said.

Charles Uphaus, director of USAID, Mokhlesur Rahman Khondkar, reform project director (Project Management Unit) of Power Division, Mohsin Ali, convenor, National Steering Committee of EES & L, Rafiqul Hossain, general manager of PDB, also spoke at the function.

DBBL's training programme begins

A 5-day training programme on 'Asset and Liability Management' began at the Dutch-Bangla Bank training centre in Dhaka on Sunday.

The programme has been organised by Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited (DBBL).

The Managing Director of the bank, Md Yeasin Ali, inaugurated the programme.

Ziegfried Vermaak, chief executive officer of Simulation Architects International Belgium, will impart training to the executives of DBBL, other nationalised and private commercial banks including the central bank.

A total of 26 participants from Bangladesh Bank, Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, Argani Bank, Rupali Bank Ltd, BASIC Bank Ltd, The City Bank Ltd, Prime Bank Ltd, Dhaka Bank Ltd, Southeast Bank Ltd, Mercantile Bank Ltd and South Asia Enterprise Development Facility are taking part in the programme.

The inaugural ceremony was also attended by senior executives of the bank.

Nokia's market share likely to drop: Vodafone chief

HELSINKI, July 21 (AFP) - Nokia's share of mobile phones sold by operator Vodafone is likely to drop in the near future, the British company's outgoing chief executive Christopher Gent told Finnish business daily Kauppalehti on Monday.

"It is very unlikely that in four years Nokia's stake in our handset sales would be close to 40 percent. There are a lot of skillful handset producers on the market who will cut Nokia's stake," Gent was quoted as saying in an interview.

Vodafone is one of the world's leading mobile phone operators, with some 120 million customers worldwide.

Presenting its second quarter results last week, Nokia said its share of the global handset market grew to 39 per cent in the period, up a percentage point from the previous quarter.

Meanwhile, Gent rejected speculations that Vodafone would be interested in buying up Finland's second-largest mobile phone operator Radiolinja, with which it currently has extensive cooperative agreements.

"Our current co-operation is useful for the both of us and we are pleased with it. We have no plans to buy shares in Radiolinja or the whole company," said Gent.

He added however that Vodafone was currently looking for acquisitions in the French, Polish, Romanian and South African markets, without specifying further.

SIA retrenches 26 pilots, 156 cabin crew

AFP, Singapore

Singapore Airlines (SIA) said Monday it is laying off 26 pilots and 156 cabin crew in an effort to cut costs as it struggles to recover from the heavy damage caused to the business by SARS.

The laid-off pilots, representing 1.5 per cent of its air crew strength, comprise 21 captains and five first officers. Six of the captains are based overseas, SIA said in a statement.

The 156 stewards and stewardesses are of various ranks and represent 2.4 per cent of the cabin crew strength.

The airline has about 1,800 pilots and 6,600 cabin crew.



Poultry farming has gained popularity in Bangladesh in recent years. Consumers now heavily depend only poultry meat. Chicken sells at Tk 70-75 a kg in Dhaka market.

Spain-Bangla chamber comes into being

Businessmen seek Spanish embassy in Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladeshi businessmen yesterday said bilateral trade with Spain could be increased by setting up of a Spanish embassy in Dhaka.

Speaking at the launching ceremony of Spain Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium they urged the government to negotiate with the Spanish authorities to set up an embassy.

Such an embassy would make visa processing system easier, they said.

Currently, Bangladeshis intending to visit Spain need to go to New Delhi for obtaining visa.

The local businessmen also proposed that the Spanish embassy in New Delhi consider sending their visa officer to Dhaka two or three days a week to facilitate the visa processing for Bangladeshis.

A 15-member executive committee of the Spain-Bangladesh

Chamber has been formed with Sharif M Afzal Hossain as its president. Three Spanish businessmen have also been included in the committee.

Chamber Vice-president Golam Dostagir Gazi, Treasurer Azizur Rahman and Honorary Consul of Spain in Bangladesh M Jalal Uddin also attended the function.

The existing trade volume is in favour of Bangladesh as it exported goods worth \$133 million to Spain and imported products worth \$19.22 million in 2001-02 fiscal year, the Spain-Bangladesh Chamber president said.

He said valuable time of Bangladesh businesspeople is wasted as they have to contact the Spanish embassy in Delhi for their business trip in the absence of an embassy in Dhaka.

The main objective of the chamber is to help the private sector people of the two countries and encourage them in developing trade relations and organising regular trade fairs, seminars and symposiums in both the countries.

Bangladesh exports mainly ready made garments, jute goods and finished leather to Spain and imports live animals, mineral products, plastic goods, textiles, food and beverage, Chamber sources said.

Honorary Consul of Spain M Jalal Uddin said Bangladesh could export artificial flower, handicrafts, seafood, antiques and ornaments to Spain. There is also prospect of sending people with agricultural background to Spain, he added.

Terminating the existing relations between the two countries 'healthy', the honorary consul of Spain said the Spanish government has already provided soft term loan of \$80 million to the Bangladesh government.

Jalal said seven Spanish projects involving \$5.49 million have so far been registered with the Board of Investment (BoI). "One of the projects has already started production and the rest are under implementation process," he added.

Britain's economy still mired in gloom: Survey

AFP, London

The British economy remains deeply troubled despite having picked up slightly over the past few months, a survey by the country's main business advocacy group said on Monday.

The findings of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) survey for the second quarter of 2003 were "disappointing and worrying", the chamber's economic adviser David Kern said.

Despite a slight improvement from a dire first quarter of 2003, many of the 5,720 BCC member companies polled said business remained considerably worse than last year, the report said.

The country's embattled manu-

facturing sector registered a "very modest improvement" in the second quarter of the year, although this only clawed back some of the losses seen in the first three months.

Polled expectations for job prospects sank to minus one per cent, meaning that of the firms polled, more had a pessimistic view of the issue than those feeling optimistic, it said.

The service sector also "remains frail and recovery prospects are highly uncertain," the report said, with job expectations negative there as well.

Overall, conditions were bleak, the BCC said.

"In spite of the modest second-quarter improvement, UK busi-

nesses will continue to operate in a difficult and dangerous economic climate," warned Kern.

Earlier this month the Bank of England cut its benchmark interest rate by a quarter point to 3.50 per cent in an attempt to breathe new life into the economy, a move strongly urged by the BCC.

However BCC director general David Frost said more changes were needed, including an easing of regulations and taxes on the business sector, particularly for manufacturing.

"There needs to be some sort of industrial strategy to show where manufacturing is going in the next five-10 years," he said.