

## New employment opportunity for Bangladeshis in Italy

A new opportunity has been created for legitimate employment of Bangladeshis in Italy.

This follows the Italian government's approval and induction of Bangladeshis into the list of countries as source of overseas employees for Italy, says a press release.

The decision of the Italian government has also set a new milestone for the overseas employment of Bangladeshi workers who will go to Europe with legitimate employment.

A protocol has already been signed and Datcoltalia, a reputed Italian company that lobbied and campaigned to persuade the Italian government to include Bangladesh in its list of countries for employment of foreign workers, has exclusively been authorised to deal with the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers.

A delegation from Italy is expected soon to start the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers.

Following the Italian government's decision last month, a special emergency quota in addition to regular one has been sanctioned for Bangladesh.

A letter of appreciation from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to be sent to the Italian prime minister for his government's decision to include Bangladesh in the list of countries of source of overseas employees for Italy.

Datcoltalia will soon undertake recruitment campaign jointly with its Bangladeshi counterpart DATCO to select Bangladeshi workers.

DATCO (Defense Advancement Trading Company), authorised by Datcoltalia to recruit Bangladeshi workers for Italy, is a multi-billion dollar offshore holding company operating in more than 42 countries including Italy and Bangladesh.

A number of business magnates from US, Europe and ME including a Saudi Prince are in the Board of Directors of this giant company.

## Denmark to give Tk 44 lakh

BSS, Dhaka

The Danish government has approved a grant of Tk 44 lakh under the Danida Private Sector Development (PSD) Programme for training and technical assistance and testing equipment for establishing an outsourced production of fibre optic components (FOC).

The products of FOC will be exported to leading telecommunications companies of Europe under a technical and marketing co-operation agreement between BBT Benny Larsen Aps, Denmark and FONS Bangladesh Limited.

The objective of the grant is to contribute to the economic and social development by attracting Danish technology and investment in the private sector of Bangladesh.

The programme supports the establishment of profitable, long-term and mutually binding commercial ventures between the companies of two countries.

It also provides advisory services, grants and loan facilities during the pre-project and the project implementation phase of the co-operation between Bangladesh and Danish companies qualifying for assistance.

## Shrimp industry urged to comply with traceability requirement

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh shrimp industry has been asked to comply with the traceability requirements and international codes to adjust with the changing market demands to remain globally competitive.

"Bangladesh could be a model for small-holding aquaculture, if the codes are implemented and traceability is ensured," said the instructors of Aquaculture Certification Council (ACC) at the first shrimp certification training course in Asia started in Cox's Bazar on Monday.

They, however, said traceability would enable the tracking of shrimp back from the processing level to the supplier, cluster of farms and the hatchery to help ensure transparency of the quality assurance system, to be certified by the international authorities concerned.

The US-based Aquaculture Certification Council in collaboration with the Shrimp Seal of Quality Programme (SSQP) is organising the four-day training course.

A total of 20 participants along with 30 observers from the USA, UK, China and Bangladesh are attending the training.

# Dhaka, Delhi differ on FTA outcome

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka expressed pessimism over the outcome of a possible free trade agreement (FTA) with New Delhi, while the latter argued that both trade and investment flow of Dhaka would increase with the signing.

The views were expressed at technical sessions of a seminar on FTA yesterday held in a local hotel. Bangladesh-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BICCI) and FBCCI organised the seminar, which was attended by the businessmen of both the countries.

Dr Mostafa Abid Khan, deputy chief of Tariff Commission of Bangladesh, presented a paper at the seminar on 'Indo-Bangladesh free trade Area: issues and concerns'.

On the other hand, Shri KC Rout, director of Department of Commerce of India, presented

deliberation on 'Implication of India-Bangladesh free trade agreement.'

Khan said despite concession given by India under the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), Bangladesh's export to India has not increased.

He attributed tariff and non-tariff barriers on the Bangladeshi items to the reason.

Therefore, apprehension of Bangladesh is whether formation of a free trade area will help increase Bangladeshi export to India, Khan said in his paper.

He highlighted some issues that should be addressed prior to signing an FTA with India.

The export of Hilsa fish and Zamdani saree did not register any growth despite duty free access on these products and export of jute bags to India declined drastically during the last two years, Khan said.

Rout, in his paper, said the FTA will lead to investment flows and correct regional trade imbalance.

Non-tariff barriers will be addressed in an institutional way once the FTA comes into effect between the two countries, Rout said.

He said both the finished products and consumer goods will be available at cheaper rates under the proposed arrangement. "Under the FTA, tariff will understandably lead to revenue loss."

BK Bajoria, executive committee member of Bangladesh-India chamber, spoke on infrastructure development for the increase of trade volume between the two countries.

"It is estimated that Bangladesh-India trade can be doubled if the trade infrastructure alone is smoothed even with the existing level of tariff," he observed.

# Matlub showcaused by FBCCI election board

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The election board of Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) yesterday served a show cause notice on one of its presidential candidate in the upcoming election to the apex trade body.

Sources said the election board in the notice asked Abdul Matlub Ahmad, chairman of Nitel Group, to explain within three days as to why his candidature will not be cancelled for violation of code of conduct of FBCCI election rules.

Sources said the notice was served as Matlub Ahmad published a booklet of voter list using colour photograph in the front page which

is violation of rules.

The booklet used FBCCI monogram and list of voters issued by the election board. The booklet also contained a coloured sticker of Nitel Group covering signature and seal of chairman of the election board, the notice said.

The board said by printing, publishing and distributing the voter list free of cost which is similar to final voter list the candidate is causing financial loss as many voters' list remain unsold, the notice said.

In the booklet, the candidate has his photograph with some ministers and eminent persons.

The board on Sunday also served show cause notice on four candidates for distributing coloured

leaflets. The board warned that repetition of such activities might end up in cancellation of their candidature.

They are M Mozammel Hoque of Bangladesh Cellophane Merchants' Association, Abu Moteleb of Bangladesh Poly Propylin Polythin Khudra Shilpa Karkhana Malik O

Banik Samity, Md Delwar Hossain of Bangladesh Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Merchants' Association and Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury of Bangladesh Zamdani Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

# BKB cuts loss, exceeds loan recovery target in FY03

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Krishi Bank's (BKB) loss went down by Tk 62 crore to Tk 130 crore in the last financial year.

The specialised bank also exceeded its loan recovery target by Tk 220.31 crore during the period, BKB officials said.

The bank's expenditure in FY 2002-03 amounted to Tk 559 crore against Tk 429 crore income, they added.

BKB's loan recovery and deposit continued to decline in the last 10 years though it achieved yearly targets of loan disbursement, forcing the bank to be dependent on Bangladesh Bank's refinancing.

"Our expenditure is high because we have to collect high cost deposit. Despite this, we have been able to earn Tk 50 crore more

in the last fiscal," said AKM Sajedur Rahman, managing director of BKB.

Against a Tk 1,700 crore target the bank recovered Tk 1,920.31 crore in FY03. Of the amount recovered, 55 per cent was classified and would be classified loan.

The bank's volume of classified loans reduced to Tk 2,400 crore at the end of June 2003 from Tk 2,702.02 crore a year ago, officials said.

As deposit is one of the main sources of its fund, BKB adopted a policy of discouraging high cost and encouraging low cost funds.

Under the policy, the bank management took steps to release Tk 450 crore high cost fund and attract low cost deposits, pulling down the fund cost by around 6.5 per cent in FY03.

However, BKB did not borrow funds from the central bank under refinancing system last fiscal, rather it made a payment of Tk 140.40 crore against refinancing.

"Also, because of qualitative changes in management and strong monitoring mechanism, branches did not borrow fund from the head office," said an official.

Inflow of remittance through BKB increased to Tk130.51 crore in the 2002-03 fiscal from Tk 119.44 crore in the previous financial year.

The bank's import business rose to Tk 669.22 crore in FY03 from Tk 414.13 in FY02 and income from export went up to Tk 327.50 crore in FY03 from Tk 289.53 in the previous year, bank officials said.



Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Yussuf Abdullah Harun, and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry President AC Muthiah pose for a photograph at the inaugural ceremony of a seminar on 'Free Trade Agreement' jointly organised by the FBCCI and Bangladesh-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry at a city hotel yesterday.

## ONE Bank IPO oversubscribed by 15 times

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Belying notions of liquidity crisis in the stock market, ONE Bank Limited IPO got overwhelming response with more than 15 times oversubscription.

Against an amount of Tk 19,698 crore in IPO (initial public offering) investors applied for shares worth Tk 300 crore with the subscription day ending yesterday.

Stock market sources said the amount exceeded all previous records in financial and banking sector IPO.

The subscription of the company began on Monday.

## New Product AIKO data safe



AIKO brand data safe has been introduced in local market.

The safe, resistant to fire, humidity and magnetic field, can store and protect computer diskettes, CDs, tape cartridge, magnetic tape, microfilm and other digital storage devices and files for years, says a press release issued by Fair Trade, the local distributor of AIKO data safe.

The safe, certified by Japanese Industry Standard Association, can protect data from even 1000 degree Celsius temperature, according to the press release.

# Sonali Bank cuts rate for agro-based industries

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The largest nationalised commercial bank, Sonali Bank, has decided to reduce its lending rate for agro-based industries.

In a board meeting Monday, the bank fixed interest rate at 10 per cent for project finance in agriculture sector.

As a result of the decision, the farmers and entrepreneurs will get credit from the bank at one to two per cent cheaper than the existing rate.

The new rate will come into force on September 1, 2003.

Banking sources said other nationalised and specialised banks

are expected to announce similar rate cut following the decision of Sonali Bank.

Finance ministry sources said the decision came in the wake of a directive from Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman.

The minister on Thursday asked the commercial banks to consider slashing interest rates to farmers and agro-based industries.

Agricultural entrepreneurs find both the interest rates and power tariffs unusually high, reducing profit margins of their enterprises.

At a meeting with the chief executives of the commercial banks the minister told them to lower their

lending rate for farm sector to 9 or 10 per cent.

He said many people are interested to invest in agro-based sector but the industry could hardly make profit after paying high interest on loans.

Sonali bank has disbursed Tk 2,825 crore agri loan in the 2002-03 fiscal. Sources said the bank may lose around Tk 6 crore annually due to the rate cut.

The bank's reduced rate will be applicable for harvesting of sugarcane at mill area, fish farming in ponds, special crop loan, special investment in livestock, among others.

# Govt plans updating industrial policy

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government is planning to update the industrial policy to help accelerate industrialisation and face the challenges of globalisation.

This was stated by Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury at a seminar on 'Policy Towards Investment and Industrialisation' in Dhaka yesterday.

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) in co-operation with Centre for International Private Enterprise organised the seminar at the DCCI auditorium.

The discussants stressed the need for good governance, infrastructure facilities and a proper industrial policy to attract more investment and promote industrialisation.

The commerce minister emphasised capacity building of the government agencies and trade bodies as well as more coordination between government and private

sector.

DCCI President Matuir Rahman said weak regulatory framework, lack of infrastructure and law and order situation are leading to inadequate investment flow in Bangladesh.

Former industries secretary Al-Ameen Chowdhury said the government should cut expenditure by merging the ministries of commerce, industry, jute and textiles.

SMAI-Husainy, former secretary, presented the keynote paper at the seminar.

Good governance issues should be interrelated with democratic process to promote industrialisation and increase investment flow, he said in the paper.

Abdur Razzaque MP, Professor Habibur Rahman of Dhaka University, MIDAS Managing Director A Karim, IDLC General Manager Minhaj Zia and DCCI Director Sheikh Abdul Aziz took part in the discussion.

# StanChart OT, children's ward open at Islamia Eye Hospital

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

An operation theatre and a children's ward, sponsored by Standard Chartered Bank (SCB), were opened at Islamia Eye Hospital in Dhaka yesterday.

Under a global campaign titled 'seeing is believing', the SCB provided Tk 1.2 crore to establish the operation theater (OT) and 30-bed children's ward at the 2nd floor of the hospital.

The objective of the campaign is to restore the sight of 28,000 people globally, who are affected by cataracts, before the World Sight Day on 9th October, said SCB Group Executive Director Chris Keljik while inaugurating the OT and the ward.

The cost of restoring sight of a cataract patient is around \$25 and each of the 28,000 SCB staff working in more than 50 countries around the world will raise the

money, he said.

"Thus each of our staff members will contribute to restoring at least one's sight," Keljik added.

SCB officials said the newly set up 'Standard Chartered Operation Theatre' has arrangements of operating upon 10 patients at a time.

Regional General Manager of the bank David Edwards said the global campaign has been initiated to mark the bank's 150th founding anniversary, in partnership with UK-based Sight Savers International, a global partner of the bank.

"Apart from doing business, the bank believes that it is also important to uphold humanitarian values to protect the sick, needy and disadvantaged people in society," he said.

SAA Masrur, acting chief executive of Standard Chartered Bank Bangladesh said the bank is also supporting a Tk 72-lakh training programme on primary eye care in

Bangladesh to be conducted by the Sight Savers International.

According to Enamul Kabir, country representative of Sight Savers International Bangladesh, training will be imparted to 7,000 government and 2,000 non-government health workers so that they can identify treatable blindness.

The programme has also been undertaken to mark the 150th anniversary of the bank.

After the inaugural ceremony, attended by Zahida Ispahani, member of the hospital management committee, and MA Mannan Talukder, senior consultant of the hospital, the SCB officials went round the ward and operation theatre.

According to the available statistics, some 10 lakh people in Bangladesh are visually challenged.



A doctor attends Tamanna, an eight-year-old girl, at Islamia Eye Hospital in Dhaka yesterday as Standard Chartered Bank Group Executive Director Chris Keljik, among others, looks on. The bank has donated Tk 1.2 crore to set up an operation theatre and a children's ward in the hospital.

## Vanik, B&F sign deal

Vanik Bangladesh Limited (VBL) and B&F Communications Ltd, a Korean company, have signed an agreement to provide technical assistance and equipment for expanding the Vanik Credit Card operations in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

Sayed Husain Jamal, managing director of VBL, and CW Park, managing director of B&F, signed the deal on behalf of their organisations in Dhaka recently, says a press release.

According to the agreement, VBL cardholders will be able to use their Cards in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

## Agrani Bank computer course held

The certificate distribution ceremony of the evening training course on computer: Its Application in Agrani Bank was held at the bank's head office in Dhaka on Saturday.

The executives of the 7th batch participated in the course, says a press release.

Managing Director of the bank ASM Imdadul Haque distributed certificates as chief guest.

Presided over by General Manager Md Humayun Kabir, the ceremony was attended by deputy managing directors Muhammad Abdul Matin and KM Ashaduzzaman, general managers, director of Agrani Bank Training Institute and deputy general manager of Computer Division.

## HSBC ranks 14th in Global 1000 survey

The Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) holdings ranked 14th position in this year's Global 1000 survey conducted by The Business Week Global 1000.

Using data from Morgan Stanley Capital International Inc in Geneva, The Business Week ranked companies in 23 countries by market capitalisation as of 31 May 2003, says a press release.

The complete report of the survey was published in the July 2003 issue of The Business Week magazine.

Last year the company ranked the 22nd position.