

EPB to embark on massive trade campaign in Australia

Bangladesh trade show begins in Sydney April 6

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) is to embark on a massive trade campaign in Australia to reap maximum benefits from duty free access facility offered by the Pacific economy.

For the first time, the government's export promotion wing will organise a single country fair in Sydney during April 6-8. A high-powered business delegation will visit the country during the show to explore trade, investment and joint venture scopes with the Australians.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury is expected to inaugurate the fair dubbed as 'Bangladesh Trade Show' at Sydney Convention Centre in Darling Harbour. EPB Vice-chairman Mir Shahabuddin

Mohammad will also be present.

An EPB official said there is no effort either from public sector or private sector to take advantage of the duty free access offered by Australia with effect from July 1, 2003.

"The Australian consumers will get a taste of Bangladeshi products from the single country fair which open an opportunity for local entrepreneurs," he said.

The visiting trade delegation, who will meet leading Australian businesspeople, will open up window for Australian investment in Bangladesh, he said.

He said the fair will focus on three major sectors -- textile, clothing and leather products. Some 60 companies will participate in the three-day trade exposition.

Apart from products of the three

sectors, ceramics and porcelain, handicrafts, ICT, toiletries and cosmetics, frozen foods, contraceptive products, imitation jewelry, saree, jute goods, automotive battery, kitchenware and plastic products will be on display.

Coinciding with the trade show, a cultural team will also fly to the Australian economic hub. Leading designer Bibi Russell will arrange a fashion show featuring exportable attires blended with Bangladeshi costume trend.

There will also be cultural programme, musical soiree, cricket and kabadi matches during the fair period.

On January 16, Australia Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ABCCI) was launched to promote trade and investment between the two countries. ABCCI President Klaus

Gohra and Vice-president Obaidur Rahman may also visit the Sydney fair.

The 2002-2003 volume of Bangladesh exports to Australia is about \$35 million with garments, leather, jute goods, ceramics, handicrafts and frozen foods being the major items. Major Australian exports to Bangladesh during the period include pulses, oilseeds, oil and medicine worth \$220 million.

Australia provided duty free access to least developed countries (LDCs) from July 1, 2003 to allow more LDC products in Australian market and improve trade position.

Imports from LDCs were valued at AS\$242 million in 2001-02 while Australia's merchandise imports totalled AS\$126 billion. LDCs represent only 0.2 percent of Australia's total imports.

Ctg chamber for private sector representation in port policy body

BSS, Chittagong

Chittagong Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) Friday strongly suggested representation of private sector in the policymaking body of Chittagong Port.

CCCI President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury in a fax message to the shipping minister made the suggestion, saying inclusion of his trade body leaders in the Board of Directors of Chittagong Port would raise the port performance.

"Inclusion of port users in the policymaking body would also ensure accountability and transparency in the financial dealings," the CCCI president wrote.

Referring to the formal request made by CCCI president at a recent meeting here with Shipping Minister Col. (ret'd) Akbar Hossain, the chamber leader has demanded the government to bring necessary changes in the existing policymaking body to boost efficiency of the port.

StanChart official dismisses takeover talk

AFP, Singapore

The death last month of Standard Chartered's biggest shareholder, Khoo Teck Phuat, has not made the London-based bank the target of a potential takeover, a top executive said in remarks published here Friday.

The Singapore-based Khoo's children, who have been actively running his business empire, have not indicated any desire to dispose of their father's 13.45 percent stake in the bank, group executive Kai Nargolwala told the Straits Times.

"Over the years, we dealt a lot with his children because they've been assisting him in looking after all his various businesses and certainly on the bank side, we've been dealing with the children," Nargolwala said.

"They've indicated to us that there's no change as far as they're concerned and it's business as usual and things will continue as they are," he said.

The death of Khoo, Singapore's richest man with a fortune estimated at almost five billion Singapore dollars (2.9 billion US dollars), triggered speculation of a takeover bid for Standard Chartered by rival lenders.



PHOTO: STAR

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan formally inaugurates a new showroom and service centre of Nissan Motor Company on Teigaon-Gulshan Link Road in Dhaka yesterday.

Nissan Motor service centre opens in Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

New showroom and service centre of Nissan Motor Company was inaugurated on Teigaon-Gulshan Link Road in Dhaka yesterday.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan inaugurated the centre, which can provide services to 50 vehicles at a time.

Pacific Motors Ltd Chairman A Karim, Managing Director Faisal Morshed Khan and Nissan Motor Company General Manager (sales and marketing) Yasuaki Hashimoto were also present at the opening ceremony.

Pacific Motors Limited, a venture of Pacific Group, is the sole distributor of Japan's Nissan Motor Company in Bangladesh.

Speaking at the function, Faisal Morshed Khan said Nissan Motor has awarded Pacific Motors as one of the leading 25 distributors for outstanding sales performance. Nissan Motor has 7,000 distributors worldwide.

The Pacific Motors managing director also said his company contributed \$7 million last year to the national exchequer in the form of duties and taxes. The annual turn over of the company was \$13

million during the time.

Pacific Motors has also signed a 'distributorship appointment and assembling plant set up agreement' with Nissan Diesel Motor Co Ltd recently.

According to Nissan Motor general manager, it is the best service centre in the Asia-Pacific region. Talking to The Daily Star, Pacific Motors Vice-president Mahmudul Huq said annual demand for passenger vehicles in Bangladesh is estimated at 8,000 units. Of them, brand new vehicles meet only 30 percent while reconditioned vehicles fulfill the rest.

According to Huq, Pacific Motors imported a total of 639 units of passenger vehicles, which include car, jeep, pick-up and microbus from Japan last year.

"We have 32 percent market share in selling brand new cars in the country," Huq added.

Another Pacific Motors Vice-president Masudul Haq Khan said his company is planning to set up two other service centres -- one in Sylhet and other in Bogra. The company has one service centre in Chittagong.

CityCell customer service centres now open 7 days a week

CityCell mobile phone's customer service centres are now open 7 days a week.

The opening hours have been extended to provide better service to customers, says a press release.

The new opening timing is from 9am to 5:30pm Saturday to Thursday, from 3pm to 6pm on Fridays and 9am to 3pm on public holidays.

"At CityCell, we are committed to giving our customers the best service all the time," Chris Maloy, CEO of CityCell, said. "We have already offered our customers a 24-hour call centre service," he said.

Toyota seen selling hybrid Camry in 2006

REUTERS, Tokyo

Toyota Motor Corp is likely to sell a hybrid version of its best-selling Camry from 2006, a newspaper reported on Friday, a move that would shift hybrids from their niche position in the car market into the mainstream.

The Nihon Keizai business daily said that Toyota, the world's second largest car firm, was aiming to sell 100,000 eco-friendly, gasoline-electric Camrys a year, mainly in North America.

It sells over 400,000 Camrys annually in the United States, making it that market's most popular passenger car.

Toyota spokesman Shinya Matsumoto declined to comment on the report. "We do not talk about our product plans," he said.

But such a plan would fit in with Toyota's goal of producing 300,000 hybrids annually by the middle of the decade.

"It's a natural, very feasible strategy. Toyota is already making hybrids on regular car assembly lines, so they would not have to build a special line," said Noriyuki Matsushima, an auto analyst at Nikko Citigroup.

Toyota staked its claim as world leader in hybrid technology in December 1997 when it launched the Prius sedan, the first mass-produced vehicle to combine a battery-powered motor and a gasoline engine.

Training course on labour standards begins

A five-day training course on "Labour Standards and Workplace Environment in Apparel Industry", conducted by Young Consultants, a consulting firm with global network, has begun.

Mir Shahabuddin Mohammed, vice-chairman of Export Promotion Bureau, inaugurated the course as chief guest at the Brac Centre in Dhaka on Wednesday, says a press release.

Md Golam Hossain, deputy secretary (Export), Ministry of Commerce, David Helbourne, chief technical adviser of BDXDP project of The World Bank, and Abdur Razzak Mandal, director general (Textile Cell), Export Promotion Bureau, attended the ceremony as special guests.

The course is part of the skills and quality development project of post-MFA Actions Programme of the Ministry of Commerce.

31 participants from RMG, knitwear and textile industries are taking part in the course.

Premier Bank sanctions loan for Satata Hatchery

Premier Bank has sanctioned Tk 95 lakh in loan to Satata Hatchery and Beach Resort Limited for setting up a shrimp hatchery in Cox's Bazar.

An investment agreement to this effect was signed by Syed Nowsher Ali, first vice-president of the bank, and Md Abdul Majed Gazi, managing director of Satata Hatchery and Beach Resort, on Thursday in Dhaka, says a press release.

The project sponsored by Premier Bank has been approved by Bangladesh Bank under the Equity and Entrepreneurship Fund (EEF), which has given capital support of Tk 1.31 crore to the project.

The total cost of the project is Tk 3.95 crore and the project will employ about 50 people.

Among others, HBM Iqbal, chairman of Premier Bank, Kazi Abdul Mazid, advisor, MA Yussouf Khan, managing director, and Nurul Alam Chowdhury, deputy managing director, were present.

Oil prices up more after Madrid bombings

REUTERS, Singapore

High oil prices rose further Friday, after the Madrid bombings revived security fears and further strengthened a market boosted by soaring Chinese demand and persistent concerns of a gasoline supply crunch in the United States.

US light crude traded up 27 cents at \$37.05 a barrel, after jumping 68 cents in New York Thursday after three days of losses. It touched an intraday peak of \$37.19.

London's Brent crude gained 17 cents to \$32.98 a barrel.

Bombings in Madrid that rocked the Spanish capital on Thursday, killing 192 people and wounding more than 1,200, had a psychological impact on the oil markets and roiled financial markets.

"It's spooking all the markets. That's what took us over \$36.78," said a broker in New York referring to U.S. crude's settlement in New York. U.S. crude opened trade Friday at \$36.96.

"After having evaporated in the

last few months, the 'terror premium' is being factored into the market again," said analyst Phil Flynn of Aaron Trading in Chicago. "This comes at a time when supplies are already tight and any slight disruption or even the fear of disruption could mean a big spike in prices."

The Spanish government said it believed Basque guerrilla group ETA was responsible for the blasts but continued speculation of al Qaeda involvement renewed underlying security concern in the world crude market that relies heavily on Middle East producers. Global oil demand also remains strong. In its latest monthly report, the International Energy Agency (IEA) raised its forecast for world demand growth this year by 220,000 barrels a day (bpd) to 1.65 million bpd, saying China's soaring economy was driving up consumption faster than expected.

The Paris-based agency, which advises 26 industrialized nations on energy policy, said in a report issued Thursday that consumption would hit 80.2 million bpd in 2004, with China providing

580,000 bpd of incremental demand.

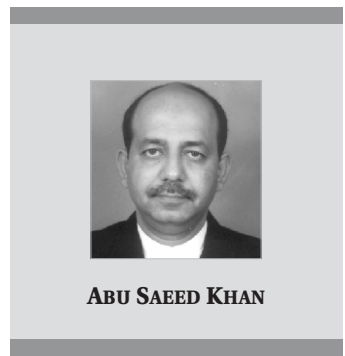
Worries over auto fuels supply sent U.S. gasoline futures prices up nearly five percent Thursday and extended gains by 0.51 cent at \$1.1254 a gallon Friday.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration said on Wednesday that gasoline stocks fell 1.6 million barrels last week and stood five percent below the five-year average, even as crude inventories rose.

Analysts also said the civil unrest in OPEC producer Venezuela continued to haunt the market as it stoked fears of a repeat of the 2002 oil workers strike that disrupted supplies from the world's fifth-largest oil exporter.

"Low U.S. gasoline stocks and trouble brewing in Venezuela have been the main drivers of the recent price strength," said David Thurtell at Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

3G mobile: It's a different league



ABU SAEED KHAN

"Thanks a billion!" exclaimed the mobile phone industry in 3GSM World Congress at Cannes, France in the last week of February. Nearly 30,000 representatives from operators, vendors, analysts as well as applications and content developers attended this annual event, which coincided with the intake of billionth GSM mobile customer.

Commercially launching in 1992 and eventually spreading over 200 countries, GSM had 970.80 million subscribers by 2003. Adding 180.30 million customers and posting 22.80 percent annual growth, GSM achieved 73 percent penetration in the worldwide digital mobile market last year. Touching the milestone of billionth customer made their evenings more sparkling in the exotic French Riviera.

GSM is considered as a second generation mobile technology. It offers secured conversation with limited data transfer through short message service (SMS). GSM crawls with 9.6 kilobits per second (Kbps) while third generation W-CDMA zooms with 2 megabits per second (Mbps) data speed. Transformation from GSM to 3G happens step by step.

General Packet Radio Service or GPRS is an important intermediary step in GSM's journey towards 3G. The industry has named GPRS as 2.5G technology. This packet-based technique transfers data up to 115 Kbps, using standard indus-

try protocols like TCP/IP and X.25, in the GSM network. It is an evolution from "text only" SMS to Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS).

GPRS users, with their camera phones, exchange MMS - bundled with picture, audio and video contents. GPRS also allows accessing the Internet followed by handling real time professional applications like news-feeds, stock quotes, stock charts, portfolio tracking threshold-crossing alerts

migration of GSM to 3G requires different radio spectrum as well as new equipment for the radio network. An operator also needs separate license to provide W-CDMA service.

That has prompted the industry coming up with EDGE (Enhanced Data rates for GSM Evolution). It supplements the data-centric GSM/GPRS network with up to 384 Kbps speed. This is also the speed being offered at the early stage of

3G. It promises to deliver 2 megabits per second (Mbps) broadband connectivity to your grip, laptop and desktop!

NTT DoCoMo, Japan's largest operator, has become the global flagship of 3G success using W-CDMA technology since 2001. More than 40 million Japanese, almost 90 percent DoCoMo customers, routinely access the internet with cellphones. DoCoMo posted 3.2 percent annual sales growth with

PASSWORD

W-CDMA is more than telephony. It is personalised multimedia communication with mobility. A market has to have a knowledge-based clientele to exploit the features of 3G. An operator has to have the required know how to segregate its network according to the market's diverse profile. That is the key issue to make a successful business case out of 3G.

etc. Downloading new ring-tones and entertainments like mobile games for single and multiple players are also being offered by GPRS.

What are the impacts of GPRS? According to Hakan Eriksson, research and development vice-president of Ericsson, ring-tone alone became US\$3 billion industry in 2003. Paul Merry, research analyst at ARC Group, said mobile music download was almost US\$4 billion business last year and it will increase by 75 percent in 2008.

Industry analyst Datamonitor predicts MMS will generate US\$11.30 billion revenue in 2006. Camera phones are playing a vital role in the growth of MMS. Strategy Analytics, another market research outfit, said 25 million camera phones were sold during the first half of 2003 and this figure will hit 65 million by the end of this year.

It may be noted that GSM/GPRS operates in 900 megahertz (MHz) frequency while W-CDMA runs on 2000 MHz band. Therefore, the

3G service.

Shortage of handset has been a setback for EDGE. But Texas Instruments, a US-based semiconductor provider, has announced the release of TCS 3500 chipset, which supports GSM, GPRS and EDGE altogether. It also works with Symbian, Microsoft, Linux and Palm platforms. Therefore, one handset with unified standards is hitting the market soon.

Using a GPRS/EDGE-enabled PCMCIA card, a laptop user can have high-speed access to internet from any outdoor location. It is a giant leap towards productivity in mobility. It is also where the mobile industry has locked horn with WiFi.

However, the W-CDMA or Wideband CDMA technology offers more futuristic services in addition to the above. Watching flawless live video image of the counterpart, while conversing, is its prime feature. Exchanging video clips, accessing to live audio and video with numerous multimedia features are the salient features of

US\$ 45.30 billion in 2002-03 fiscal year. Its Freedom of Mobile Multimedia Access (FOMA) is the world's first high-speed data service for cellphones using W-CDMA standard.

DoCoMo had more than two million FOMA subscribers until January and it hopes to double that number within four months. Vodafone, the UK rival of DoCoMo, is still struggling with just 111,700 customers and 5.60 percent penetration in Japan until 2003.

Five new FOMA handsets -- made by NEC, Panasonic, Fujitsu, Mitsubishi and Sharp -- will be driving the growth. Each of this handset has 300 hours standby battery life, weighing from 115gm to 130gm. This is a monumental example of addressing the handset crisis by DoCoMo.

Carl-Henric Svanberg, president and CEO of Ericsson, underscored the importance of vendor-operator partnership. While addressing the media in 3GSM Congress, Carl-Henric said, "The

vendor must work closely, as a committed business partner, to the operators from a very early stage".

Ericsson has the largest market share in mobile network equipment and it also holds most of the portfolios of essential patents for 2G, 2.5G and 3G technologies. Its CEO said the crucial prerequisites are now in place and 3G is taking off this year. "It is a vision about communication needs, satisfied with advanced technology and it is encouraging to see that this vision is now becoming a reality," he remarked.

Victoria Eklund, Ericsson's director of Marketing, said 10 percent of the worldwide GSM users are ready to use 3G. She said is not just selling connections rather customising the customer's needs in terms of high-speed multimedia communications.

Eklund said her company has provided the highest number of 3G infrastructure worldwide. "We consider the operators as our partners and we make sure they don't lose money while rolling out the 3G networks," she said.

Mats Olsson, president of Ericsson South East Asia, said, "The Malaysian and Singaporean regulators have been very methodical while issuing 3G licenses." He said Japan is already leading the global 3G race and other leading Asian economies will be equally successful. Mats said the affluent clients will initially use 3G but very soon it will proliferate.

W-CDMA is more than telephony. It is personalised multimedia communication with mobility. A market has to have a knowledge-based clientele to exploit the features of 3G. An operator has to have the required know how to segregate its network according to the market's diverse profile. That is the key issue to make a successful business case out of 3G.