

## BANGLADESH BUSINESS AWARDS 2003

# Hats off to corporate champions

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A spectacular dance with fire, music and rhythm marked the beginning of the gala event. The audience was waiting in suspense to see the corporate heroes selected for Bangladesh Business Awards 2003. And finally their names were announced with thunderous applause breaking the pin drop silence.

The night of March 19, 2004 belonged entirely to the four exceptional personalities and companies who were awarded for their individual and organisational

success, their vision and their enterprising spirit that contributed immensely to the corporate arena of Bangladesh.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman gave away the crests to the winners at the colourful function in the Winter Garden of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel after Bangladesh Bank Governor Fakhruddin Ahmed and the winners of previous years announced the names in front of a galaxy of businessmen, high government officials, diplomats and elite.

Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, chairman of PHP Group,

Chittagong, received the award as the Business Person of the Year 2003. Monjulika Chakma, proprietor of Bain Textile of Rangamati, as Outstanding Woman in Business of the Year 2003 while M M Ispahani Limited got the award as the Enterprise of the Year 2003 and Coats Bangladesh Limited as the Best Joint Venture Enterprise of the Year 2003.

Mohammed Mizanur Rahman and Monjulika Chakma turned out at the function to receive the individual awards while Mirza Ali Behroz Ispahani, chairman of M M Ispahani Limited, received the

award on behalf of M M Ispahani Limited and Shafiq Uz Zaman, managing director of Coats Bangladesh Limited, on behalf of Coats Bangladesh Limited.

Imbued with the motto of 'Bringing Global Corporate Standards to Bangladesh,' DHL Worldwide Express and The Daily Star organised the event for the fourth consecutive year to recognise outstanding contributions of businesspeople to the national economy.

In his opening remarks, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam said the winning individuals and

enterprises make money not only for themselves but also for contributing to the national development. "Sound tax paying record are considered for selection as it means that gains are shared with people of the country. The winners are nation builders," he said.

Desmond Quiah, country manager of DHL Worldwide Express, Bangladesh said good corporate governance, appreciable social commitment and ethical standards are the basis of the award.

Anselm Quiah, managing director of DHL Bangladesh, wrapped up the event with vote of thanks.



A section of guests at the gala evening of Bangladesh Business Awards 2003 at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# The four winners of Bangladesh Business Awards 2003

### Business Person of the Year

Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, chairman of the PHP Group, received



Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, chairman of the PHP Group

the 'Business Person of the Year 2003'. PHP (Peace, Happiness and Prosperity) Group has 16 different business concerns. Being the largest manufacturer of flat steel products in Bangladesh, it has started exporting its products to the global market. PHP Shipbreaking & Recycling Industries Ltd exported copper and other products to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and other countries. Some other products of the group are exported to Myanmar, China, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and many African countries. Total exports of the group amounted to Tk 98.27 crore in 2003. Born in 1941 in Narayanganj, Rahman now is envisioning the establishment of the country's first integrated steel mill to produce finished goods (CI sheet) from ironore.

"Divine blessings combined with hard work, backed by good intention make this miracle," said Rahman while unveiling the reason behind his success before the audience at the award giving ceremony.

### Outstanding Woman in Business of the Year

Monjulika Chakma of Rangamati-based Bain Textile



Monjulika Chakma, proprietor of Bain Textile

was awarded the 'Outstanding Woman in Business of the Year 2003'. Born in 1943 in Rangamati, Monjulika is the first tribal woman entrepreneur in the country, who took bold and unprecedented initiatives to develop traditional looms as an industry. Bain Textile has three showrooms in Rangamati and one in Cox's Bazar. Besides, her products are sold in selected outlets in Dhaka. Around 80 weavers, experts and helpers are engaged in her handloom business, apart from the more than 100 tribal women in four villages who produce handloom products for sale.

"My future plans include establishment of another unit equipped with power looms to increase production volume," Monjulika said at the function.

### Enterprise of the Year

MM Ispahani Ltd was awarded 'Enterprise of the Year 2003'. Blessed with a 184 year-old heritage, the



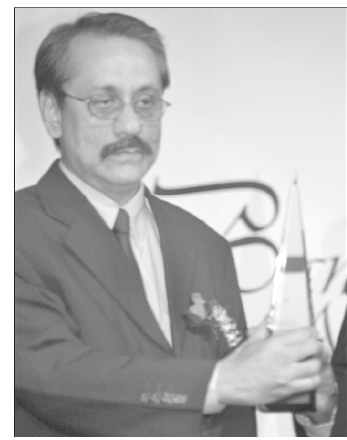
Mirza Ali Behroz Ispahani, chairman of MM Ispahani Ltd

House of Ispahani today is one of the most respected business concerns in the entire subcontinent. The company's historical roots can be traced way back to 1820 when its founder Haji Mohammed Hashem moved from Isfahan, Persia to Bombay and started a business that soon expanded phenomenally in both scale and coverage. In Bangladesh, the first branch office was opened in Dhaka in 1888. After 1947, the corporate headquarters of M M Ispahani Ltd was shifted from Calcutta to Chittagong. Today, the company is involved in numerous sectors such as tea, textile, real estate, poultry, shipping and internet services. It has corporate offices in Chittagong, Dhaka and Khulna employing more than 20,000 people.

Mirza Ali Behroz Ispahani, chairman of MM Ispahani Ltd, received the award and conveyed his thanks to the family members and company staff for extending him all out supports in attaining the success.

### Joint Venture Enterprise of the Year

This year's 'Joint Venture Enterprise of the Year', went to



Shafiq Uz Zaman, managing director of Coats Bangladesh Ltd

Coats Bangladesh, where Coats Plc, UK has 80 percent share and the remaining 20 percent equity belonging to A K Khan & Co Ltd of Bangladesh. The company began manufacturing industrial thread in Bangladesh when the market was hundred percent dependent on imports and over the last 12 years. It expanded capacity every year and is now one of the largest dye-houses in the Asia Pacific region. Coats Bangladesh now enjoys double-digit sales growth. On the production side, Coats Bangladesh established its first manufacturing plant in Chittagong in 1990 which now has a capacity of 14 tons of sewing thread a day.

Shafiq Uz Zaman, managing director of Coats Bangladesh, received the award. He acknowledged the supports he got from the ministries concerned, National Board of Revenue, Board of Investment and other regulatory bodies in doing business.

## 2-day Dutch catalogue show begins today

BSS, Dhaka

The two-day Dutch Catalogue Show, jointly organised by embassy of the Netherlands and Dutch-Bangla Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DBCCI), begins at Sheraton hotel here today.

The catalogue show includes and extensive exhibition of catalogues of the Dutch products and services along with video presentations on Dutch prospective sectors, says a press release.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury will open the show as the chief guest.

President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries Abdul Awal Mintoo and DBCCI Chief Alamgir Rahman will attend the function as special guests while Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh Sjef Inzangers will preside over the inaugural session.

This program coincides with the Netherlands Management Cooperation Programme's (NMCP) regional conference to be held at the same venue.

The show and the subsequent presentations from the embassy will remain open from 11:30 am to 7:00 pm today and 10:00 am to 7:00 pm tomorrow.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will attend the closing function of the show tomorrow as the chief guest. Jan J Roben, managing director, NMCP will be present as the special guest.

## Pakistan's forex reserves dip

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves slipped slightly to \$12.560 billion in the week to March 13, down \$5 million from the previous week, the State Bank of Pakistan said Thursday.

The central bank gave no reason for the fall, but bankers said the slide was mainly due to quarter-end repayments of foreign debt.

The central bank said its direct holdings were \$10.764 billion and those of commercial banks were \$1.796 billion.

The central bank changed the method it uses to calculate foreign reserves in 2002. It now monitors the total liquid foreign reserves, including previously undisclosed foreign exchange deposits by banks.

# Toyota plans exporting cars from India

REUTERS, Tokyo

Toyota Motor Corp could export Indian-made vehicles if it manages to use its expertise to produce cars more cheaply there than elsewhere in the world, an official at the world's number two auto maker said Thursday.

"One of my missions is to use Toyota's know-how and culture of cost cutting to turn India into our lowest-cost manufacturing centre in the world," said Akira Okabe, managing officer in charge of Asia, Oceania and Middle East operations.

"It would be wonderful if we could begin from the development stage and utilise India's many resources to achieve this," he told Reuters in an interview.

With sales of just 40,500 units last year, Toyota is still a small force in the fast-growing Indian market dominated by Maruti Udyog, held 54.2 per cent by Suzuki Motor Corp. Toyota ranks fifth in sales volume, with a four per cent share.

But Okabe, an India-enthusiast who first visited the country in the

1970s as a student to climb the Himalayas, said the world's second most populous nation had the potential to play an important role for Toyota in the region, or even globally.

Included in his long list of India's enticing features were its political and economic stability, big population, high-quality labour and the existence of a mature parts industry that makes manufacturing cheaper than in most other countries.

"It's not just the parts and raw materials, but also the machinery that can be procured locally, and that's a huge plus.

"Down the road, we will have to look at how to bring (India's strength) to the region or global level," Okabe said.

Toyota already has plans to use India as a supply base for manual transmissions as part of a global vehicle and parts supply chain project, dubbed the "IMF Project," to kick off this year.

Okabe said that could be extended to vehicles too, although he did not specify a time frame.

destinations or models.

While he conceded it would be difficult to export cars to Japan, mainly due to concerns about how they will be received in a market with so much competition, one possibility would be to compete with Korean cars in various markets, he said.

For now, Okabe has other targets to keep him busy.

By 2010, he wants Toyota to control 10 per cent of the Indian car market, which would mean 200,000 cars, given his estimate that the market would be well over two million units by then, or double last year's figure.

That would signify a fivefold jump in Toyota's sales over the next six years, and would require a dramatic boost in local production volumes, Okabe said.

Toyota's Indian sales jumped 64 per cent last year, but fell 14 per cent the year before despite an expansion in the overall market as production was temporarily halted by a labour strike at its local factory.

# US jobless claims drop to three-year low

AFP, Washington

The ranks of America's newly unemployed shrank to a three-year low last week as employers spared the jobs axe, government data showed Thursday.

New hiring was now the missing ingredient for a recovery in the labor market, a battleground in the runup to November 2 presidential elections, analysts said.

The number of people lodging new claims at unemployment benefit offices in the week ending March 13 slid 6,000 to a seasonally adjusted 336,000, the smallest number since January 13, 2001.

"It is moving in the right direction, downwards, indicating that we are seeing a reduced pace of layoffs in the US economy," said BMO Financial Group senior economist Sal Guatieri.

"That is the good news. The bad news is we have yet to see any increase in the pace of hiring and that is because American businesses are still focussed on raising efficiencies and organizing their operations around information technology."

US president George W. Bush's administration, under fire from

Democratic presidential hopeful John Kerry over the sluggish rate of jobs growth, touted the latest figures.

"The rising economic tide is starting to lift Americans seeking work," said Commerce Secretary Donald Evans.

"The continuing decline in jobless claims shows that our gathering economic momentum is reaching more and more Americans," he said.

A barometer of future US economic activity, the leading index compiled by the Conference Board, was flat in February after a 0.4-percent increase in January, the business research group said.

"Sustained consumption and strong investment should start to induce stronger job growth," said Conference Board economist Ken Goldstein.

"What is unusual about the current business cycle, however, is the delay between the strengthening economy and the hiring of new workers. But the labor market should start to improve, barring a major disruption in the economy."

A four-week average of new claims for unemployment benefits fell 2,000 from the previous week to

344,000, the Labor Department report showed, down about 60,000 in the past six months.

Historically, the level of new unemployment benefit claims was consistent with a jobs growth of 140,000 a month or more, Guatieri said.

But there seems to be a structural break going on here and companies are just reluctant to hire because they are so focussed on boosting productivity," he said.

The economy churned out a meager 21,000 jobs in February, government data showed, meaning the nation has gone through a record 44 months without a single month of job creation exceeding 250,000.

The unemployment rate was stuck at 5.6 percent.

US Federal Reserve policymakers noted the lack of hiring when they froze short-term interest rates at a 1958 low on Tuesday in a bid to jolt the economy out of the job rut.

"Although job losses have slowed, new hiring has lagged," committee members said after a one-day meeting.

## Mystic signs deals with 5 countries to export medicines

BSS, Dhaka

Mystic Pharmaceuticals, a joint venture company of Bangladesh with England and Gibraltar, signed agreements with Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Turkey, Iraq and African companies to export its products.

Set up in March 2003, Mystic Pharmaceuticals at domestic level has more than 150 field officers to cater its products through eight sales and distribution centers in the country, a press release said here yesterday.

Equipped with state of the art equipment, Mystic Pharmaceuticals, a member of Mystic Group, started its marketing with 17 products.

The company is now producing around 60 products in various therapeutic groups like diabetics, cardiovascular, vitamin, antiulcerant, analgesic, antibiotics etc. Mystic's lists of products also include latest drugs like new generation oral cephalosporin, antihistamine, Valsartan.

Mystic strictly follows WHO guidelines at every stage ensuring quality of the highest standard. It has obtained GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) certificate from the Directorate of Drug Administration of Bangladesh for following and monitoring the prescribed standards.

It is the first pharmaceutical company of Bangladesh to achieve the ISO 9001:2000 and 14001 certificates at a time.

## Singapore, India wrap up eighth round of free trade talks

AFP, Singapore

Singapore and India said Friday they have completed an eighth round of talks here on a comprehensive economic agreement with the next stage of the negotiations to continue in May.

The topics covered include trade in goods and services, investment, mutual recognition agreements and a review of a bilateral double taxation avoidance agreement, the two governments said in a joint statement released here.

Trade-dependent Singapore is one of the earliest advocates of Free trade agreements (FTAs), having inked several accords with its key trading partners including the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

# US leading indicators flat in February

AFP, New York

A key barometer of future US economic activity, the Conference Board index of leading economic indicators, was flat in February, the business research group said Thursday.

The index was unchanged in February, after a downwardly revised 0.4 percent increase in January, and a similar 0.4 percent rise in December.

Nonetheless, the conference board said the index suggests the US economic expansion remains strong, despite the risks posed by sluggish job growth.

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induce stronger job growth," said Conference Board economist Ken Goldstein.

"What is unusual about the current business cycle, however, is the delay between the strengthening economy and the hiring of new workers. But the labor market should start to improve, barring a major disruption in the economy."

"The upturn in the leading index since March 2003 has been signaling stronger economic growth, and real GDP growth picked up to a 6.1 percent annual rate during the second half of 2003," the board said.

"While the growth rate of the leading index has slowed somewhat in recent months, it is still

signaling relatively strong economic growth in the near term."

The report is an average of several indicators, including the "coincident," or current conditions index and a "lagging" index.

The coincident index, a snapshot of where the economy is now, rose by 0.3 percent in February, while the lagging index was unchanged.

Six of the ten indicators that make up the leading index increased in February, including the money supply, retail activity, average weekly manufacturing hours, stock prices, manufacturers' new orders for consumer goods and materials and manufacturers' new orders for nondefense capital goods.

## Weekly Currency Roundup

March 13-March 18, 2004

### Local FX Market

US dollar got weaker this week. Increased inflow of greenback and subdued demand for dollar weakened. It increased slightly by the end of the week due to increase in demand for import payments.

### Money Market:

Bangladesh Bank borrowed BDT 3,768 million by the Treasury bill auction held on Sunday, compared with BDT 8,139.50 million in the previous week's bid. The weighted average yields of t-bill of different tenors were almost unchanged.

The call money rate was stable this week. Call money rate ranged between 5.00 and 6.25 percent this week. Slight shortfall of liquidity increased the rate in the beginning of the week. The rate steadied since then and ranged between 5.75 and 6.25 percent.

### International FX Market

In the middle of the week, the dollar was on a downward trend. It fell nearly one percent against the Swiss franc as growing indications al Qaeda may have planted last week's deadly bombs in Madrid encouraged a flight to safe-heaven currencies. Spain announced at the weekend that police had recovered a videotape purportedly from al Qaeda saying the Islamic militant group carried out the attacks in retaliation for Spain's support for the US led war against Iraq. Euro pushed to session highs above \$1.2290. It remained steady against the yen as investors speculated Japanese authorities would continue to sell yen ahead of the end of Japan's business year on March 31.

The yen pushed to three-week highs on the dollar and a six-week high on the Euro in the middle of the week, gripped by speculation that Japan may scale back its massive yen-selling intervention. A US Federal Reserve statement late the previous day left US interest rates unchanged as expected and held out the prospect of no-dollar boosting rise for months to come, leaving the yen to lead the way for the market. The dollar had fallen to 108.08 yen on Wednesday, its lowest for 3 weeks. Euro fell more than one percent to 132 yen, its lowest in more than a month and the yen was also climbing against sterling, the Swiss franc and Australian dollar.

BY the end of the week, the yen steadied after jumping to a one-month high against the dollar as foreigners snapped up Tokyo stocks and speculation continued that Japan could be stepping back from aggressive intervention. The yen rose to around 107 yen per dollar, above New York high of 107.95 yen and the highest since February 20. Riding the same wave, the Japanese currency also surged against the Euro to a fresh six-week high. Traders said there was a good chance the dollar would fall to its next support level of 105 yen in the near term, as the market tests the resolve of Japan's Finance Ministry to intervene. Euro was largely unmoved against the US dollar today.

-- Standard Chartered Bank

## Asean China investment fund launched to target SMEs

AFP, Bangkok

An Asean China investment fund was launched in Thailand Friday aimed at directing 125 million dollars to small- and medium-sized enterprises in China and Southeast Asia.

The private equity fund was launched by visiting Swiss President Joseph Deiss, whose country is a main initiator and contributor to the fund involving China and the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

"It is the first private equity fund that will serve small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the whole Asean China region," Deiss told reporters at the fund's launch.

"It is also the first time ever that a private equity fund has an explicit goal to promote closer economic and trade links within the countries of Asean and between Asean and China," he said.

China and Asean have grand plans to set up the world's largest free trade area by 2010 which will boast 1.7 billion consumers, a combined economy worth about 2.0 trillion dollars and combined external trade of over 1.2 trillion, according to fund documents.

The fund plans to target growth industries such as car parts, electronics and transport over eight years, after which investments will be liquidated with all proceeds distributed to investors.