

Star BUSINESS

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New Product



PRAN launches pasteurised milk

PRAN Dairy has launched a new product, pasteurised milk, in the local market.

Maximum retail prices of 'PRAN Pasteurised Milk' have been fixed at Tk 8, Tk 14 and Tk 26 for 250ml, 500ml and 1000ml packs, says a press release.

The milk is available initially in Dhaka and its adjacent areas.

PRAN collects milk directly from the rural farmers of northern region of the country through its own collection centre and process it at the company's dairy plant at Palash in Narshingdi district.

PRAN Dairy, an enterprise of PRAN Group, earlier launched ultra high temperature (UHT) treated milk for the first time in local market.

IPSSL Group opens service booth in DEPZ

Aiming to offer a wide range of services to investors at the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ), International Project Support Services System Ltd (IPSSL) Group yesterday launched a service booth in the DEPZ.

The booth is offering car rental and travel related services, air cargo and emergency air ambulance services, hospitalisation service abroad, holiday resort facility arrangements and other support services.

Brig Gen (ret) Zakir Hossain, executive chairman of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), formally inaugurated the service booth. He hoped that the IPSSL would be able to meet the daily demand of every company in the DEPZ.

Speaking at the inaugural function M Haider Uzzaman, chairman and managing director of IPSSL Group, said, "I believe that DEPZ officials will be benefited through our 24-hour services from the booth."

The high-level team, led by John Hayward, came here on May 29 with a two-week mission to carry out an assessment of the Bank's work in Bangladesh with a strategic perspective. They will leave Dhaka today.

Discussing various aspects of agriculture, the minister said, none of the poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and other millennium development goals could be achieved without developing agriculture.

WB mission sought to explore areas of agriculture dev

The government has requested the World Bank to send a mission to Bangladesh to identify the areas of cooperation for the development of the country's agriculture to help achieve the millennium development goals.

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar made the request at a meeting with the visiting WB Quality Assurance Group at the Agriculture Ministry here yesterday.

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Circuit breaker on blue chip shares widened

General investors restricted from out-of-system transaction

M ABDUR RAHIM

Having brought shares of B, G and Z boards under a broadened circuit breaker limit, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) yesterday widened the price movement restrictions on blue chip shares which are placed under the A board.

The move, SEC officials say, is aimed at bridling traders who ride on the system to make share prices volatile. The decision will come into force from June 19.

With the decision, shares of all the boards - A, B, G and Z category -- with closing price up to Tk 200 will be allowed to fluctuate maximum by 20 percent or Tk 35, share

with closing price above Tk 200 up to Tk 500 can move 17.5 percent or Tk 75, share price between Tk 500 and Tk 1,000 by 15 percent or Tk 125 on a single day.

Share with closing price between Tk 1,000 and Tk 2,000 will be allowed 12.5 percent movement or Tk 200 and for shares priced between Tk 2,000 and Tk 5,000 will be allowed to move 10 percent or Tk 375 and share prices above Tk 5,000 will be allowed to fluctuate 7.5 percent at most or Tk 600.

The meeting decided that circuit breaker will be lifted for 24 hours from a company if its board meeting decides on dividend, bonus share and right share and other price sensitive information.

SEC Executive Director Mansur Alam said the circuit breaker will be lifted for market to decide the price following the price sensitive information but said such facilities will only be applicable to companies which reports the disclosures to the regulators and bourses within half an hour from the time of placing it before the company boards.

The SEC meeting also decided that the "crossing report" facility, a system that allows brokerage houses to perform out-of-system transactions at an agreed price, will be allowed to institutions only. But to qualify for such a transaction, the brokerage houses concerned will have to inform the report crossing 30 minutes before day's transactions

Previous day's per share price	Limits
Upto Tk 200	20% but not exceeding Tk 35
Tk 201 to Tk 500	17.5% but not exceeding Tk 75
Tk 501 to Tk 1000	15% not exceeding Tk 125
Tk 1001 to Tk 2000	12.5% not exceeding Tk 200
Tk 2001 to Tk 5000	10% not exceeding Tk 375
Tk 5001 and above	7.5% not exceeding Tk 600

begins on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

Earlier, the investors were allowed report crossing which was often found to create disturbing

factors in secondary market, Alam said.

Automation of customs vital to speed up movement of goods

WB-EU seminar told

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

South Asian customs officials at a high profile seminar in Dhaka yesterday called for complete automation in customs adminis-

tration to expedite cargo clearance and enhance export-import activities.

They said customs clearance service is still time-consuming in South Asian countries which is

hampering trade growth and deterring foreign direct investment in the region.

Clearance from customs department takes days or weeks in these countries while the same is

few hours in international standard, they said at a session on 'Views from government and private sector representatives on trade facilitation.'

The World Bank and European Union-sponsored three-day seminar on 'Trade Facilitation and Customs Reforms in South Asia' at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka will conclude today.

Addressing the session, Mohammad Alam, a commissioner of National Board of Revenue (NBR), said though customs department at ports are being automated, there is no interconnection among customs houses across the country.

"All the customs houses need to be inter-linked through LAN (Local area network) so that they can share information and expertise for improving clearance service," he said.

Apart from customs, the facilities of port authorities and immigration should also be automated to release the cargo quickly from port premises, he said.

M Shafiq Karim, secretary (customs) of Pakistan Central Board of Revenue, said apart from automation the customs department needs skilled manpower to appraise and provide expeditious service.

"All the fresh recruits in Pakistan Central Board of Revenue now have to complete an MBA degree from Institute of Business Administration at Karachi University prior to joining service," he said.

Sangay Zam, director, Department of Revenue and Customs of Bhutan, said though Bhutan is a landlocked country it is working on to automate the whole customs department.

Ravi Raj Pal, director (customs), Nepal, said the landlocked country has adopted automated system of customs data (ASYCUDA) for quick clearance. All the customs offices at land ports with India have been computerised, he said.

Sarath Jayatilake, director general (customs), Sri Lanka, said Sri Lankan seaport takes only six hours for customs clearance. "We are trying to provide the service to other items with the help of automated system. We need more IT facilities," he said.

Abdul Baquee Khogani, policy advisor of Afghanistan Customs Department, said the war-torn and landlocked country needs transit facility with Iran and Pakistan.

Lack of automation ups shipment time by 20pc

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Lack of automation in the customs administration costs businesses 20 percent extra time in overall shipment reducing efficiency of the department at the same time, said an official of World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Besides, an average customs transactions involving 20 to 30 different parties and documentation numbering some 40 are hindering smooth movement of goods, observed Nora Neufeld, legal affairs officer of the Market Access Division of WTO, at a World Bank-EU sponsored seminar in Dhaka yesterday.

Presenting her paper on 'Multilateral aspects of trade facilitation,' she said the government can improve efficiency of the department by limiting customs formalities to a minimum level and ensuring compliance with the customs law.

The WTO official felt the documentation requirement often lacks transparency and are vastly dupli-

cative and differ widely among countries.

Apart from corruption and infrastructure problems, Neufeld also identified lack of co-operation between customs, traders and other government agencies to be other problems in trade facilitation.

The WTO legal affairs officer said clarification of fees, proper definition of terms and introduction of consultative and feedback mechanisms at the customs administration could improve management efficiency.

Wahiduddin Mahmud, professor of economics at Dhaka University, presided over the morning session of the second day of the three-day seminar.

Peter Wilmott, director of SITPRO (Simpler Trade Procedures Board), UK-based trade facilitation agency, presenting his paper on 'Trade facilitation in South Asia: Unilateral, regional or multilateral' said trade facilitation makes international trade easier.



Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud (centre) speaks at the World Bank and EU sponsored seminar on 'Trade Facilitation and Customs Reforms in South Asia' at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday, second day of the three-day seminar.

LDCs need tools to cope with liberalisation: MCCI

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Market access, though important, is not enough to enable the least developed countries (LDCs) to reach a level of development and equally compete with others, said Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

"LDCs gain less from trade than do industrial countries partly because of falling commodity prices and specialisation in exports of low value added products," MCCI said in its latest monthly publication -- Chamber News.

While industrial countries gain much more from trade by developing mechanisms to cope with the vulnerabilities induced by trade liberalisation, the poor nations lack the required capacity to compensate the adverse effects, it said.

"If the global trade regime is to consistently serve LDCs' needs, it must reflect these differences more

seriously and effectively than at present," suggested the chamber.

The MCCI said the LDCs can maximise the poverty-cutting effects of international trade pursuing a development-led approach to trade rather than a trade-led approach to development. "Trade should be seen as a means to development rather than an end."

The poor countries will need to pursue renewed efforts, with the support of their development partners, to tackle structural weaknesses and develop domestic production and trade capacities, the chamber observed.

If the LDCs fail to do this, the MCCI said, their ongoing economic recovery process will be seriously undermined.

Referring to the Unctad's Least Developed Countries Report 2004, the MCCI suggests that the commercial interests of developed countries as trading powers should

not be in conflict with their development objectives as donors.

"Donors should strengthen their own capacities for trade-related assistance, and development partners need to elaborate innovative approaches to private sector development in the LDCs as part of a broad-based approach to trade capacity building."

The Unctad report identified national and international policies which can make trade a more effective mechanism for poverty reduction and provides important policy guidelines for both LDC governments and their development partners.

The report shows that export growth was rarely associated with sustained poverty reduction in the LDCs during the 1990s even though trade contributes a high proportion of their GDP and most of them have undertaken far-reaching trade liberalisation.

BUDGET QUIPS

"I understand this year's budget will be heavily saddled with new taxes."

"This was expected but perhaps not any more."

"Why not?"

"With Munshiganj by-poll behind and Dhaka by-poll in the forefront, the HPM would rather face a budget deficit upfront than a chronic vote deficit."

Summer festival at PQS

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PQS Super Centre, a chain store in Dhaka, has launched a month-long summer festival at all its three outlets in Uttara, Shantinagar and Dhanmondi.

With the theme "Shoppers are Winners", PQS (Price, Quality & Services) is offering its customers special discounts, gifts and coupons until July 10.

During the festival customers will get five percent discount on readymade garments, and leather products including shoes, bags and belts.

Five to ten percent discount will be available on perfumes, 10 percent on jewellery (segment), 15 percent on CDs and three percent on bakeries of the food court.

Besides, customers buying products worth minimum Tk 499 will get a coupon for prizes includ-

ing refrigerator, air conditioner, VCD player, micro oven and telephone set," SMA Haroon Sohel, president of PQS Super Centre, said at a press briefing on the "FataFati Summer Festival-2004" and formal opening of PQS Food Court in Dhaka yesterday.

Snacks, Chinese and Bangladeshi food items are available at the newly opened food court in the superstore.

Speaking at the extension programme of PQS, Abu Naser, manager (Sales and Marketing) of PQS, said an IT corner will also be opened today at the Dhanmondi outlet of PQS in association with Daffodil Computers.

Fresh vegetables, fish, fruits, readymade garments, shoes, cosmetics, crockery, confectionery, and other essentials are available at the chain store that started its operation in 2000 in Uttara.

Myanmar requires about five million tons of diesel every year.

A factory official from Numaligarh Refinery said the export of diesel would be a profitable business venture. Subsequently the factory would also start exporting other petroleum products once the logistics were worked out.

On the other hand, plans are afoot to wheel back natural gas from Myanmar with the Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) conducting feasibility studies. Between 4 to 6 trillion cubic feet (TFC) of gas reserves were discovered recently in Myanmar.

"It would be economically cheaper to wheel back gas from Myanmar for use in India," the Numaligarh official said.

Myanmar Energy Minister Lun Thi had earlier offered Indian oil companies a \$116-million refinery revamp contract, a gas field and diesel purchase orders. But the business deal between the two countries could face some diplomatic roadblocks.

Japan Trade Show records Tk 3cr business contracts on debut day

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The first-ever Japan Trade Show in Dhaka is witnessing tremendous response roping in some Tk 3.13 crore worth of business contracts on the very first day on Tuesday.

Organisers said more than 2,200 business contracts were struck at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, the venue of the three-day exposition, according to senior officials of Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro), sponsor of the event.

The opening day was reserved exclusively for businessmen who turned up in good number to have a taste of the latest technological innovations put on display.

The exposition also recorded Tk 2.22 crore worth of spot sales on the first day, the organisers told The Daily Star.

Some 57 companies are showcasing their products and services in about 100 stalls at the exposition.

A wide array of automobile and automobile parts, electronics, garments and leather accessories, industrial machinery, transport

services, IT, chemical, musical equipment, mineral water, stationery, consultant, garment merchandise, and food items were put

on display in the exhibition reflecting the Japanese manufacturers' innovative ideas.

Jetro has organised the trade

show to promote bilateral trade, attract Japanese investors to Bangladesh and also to introduce Japanese products in the

Bangladesh market.

Several thousand visitors, mainly from the upper and upper middle class, and a significant

number of entrepreneurs also visited the exhibition yesterday, the second day of the fair, said an official of Jetro.

Sotaro Nishikawa, Jetro representative for Bangladesh said five of the participating companies have made substantial investment in Bangladesh.

With Jetro planning to make the event a regular one, more such companies will be encouraged to participate in the fair and find their areas of interest in Bangladesh, hopes Nishikawa.

The show is supported by Japanese Embassy in Bangladesh, Japan-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tokyo Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Japanese Commerce & Industry Association in Dhaka and Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The show will remain open from 10am to 8pm today, the concluding day.



Japan Trade Show at a glance: Visitors (left) crowd the CityCell stall, a Lancer car (centre) put on display at the Mitsubishi Motors stall and a visitor (right) sees a catalogue at the NYK Line stall.

PHOTO: STAR AND CITYCELL