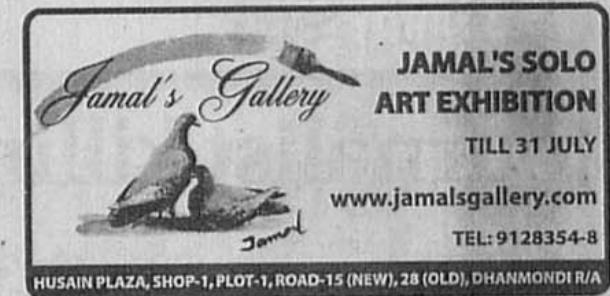




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After East Africa, medicine exporters eye SE Asia

Team off to Laos, Sri Lanka to expand export market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

After a successful visit to four East African countries last month, a six-member delegation of pharmaceuticals exporters left Dhaka on Sunday on a five-day visit to Laos and Sri Lanka to further expand export market.

Industry people hope they will be able to capture the market of Laos and increase export to Sri Lanka through the visit. "This will open a new era for Bangladesh's pharmaceutical products export to Southeast Asia," an exporter said.

Last month, a 13-member delegation led by Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (Bapi) President SM Shafiuzzaman visited Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda to explore markets in those African countries.

"During the visit, 7-8 local com-

panies signed agreements with some leading African importers," Bapi Secretary Ziaul Haque told The Daily Star yesterday. "From this region, we expect orders of several crores of taka within few months."

Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited alone received orders of half-a-million US dollars from Kenya, said Akhtur Hossain, general manager (marketing) of the company, who was one of the members of the delegation.

The four African countries have a medicine market of Tk 3,000 crore a year and they import 80 percent of their requirements.

Encouraged by the visit to Africa, the medicine manufacturers are now looking at the vast Southeast Asian market starting with Laos. The country also imports about 80 percent of the medicines it requires annually.

The Bapi secretary said the

ambassador of Laos based in New Delhi recently called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in Dhaka and expressed his country's willingness to import pharmaceuticals from Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh has huge potential for exploring medicine export market in Laos," said a member of the Laos-bound delegation.

The six-member team will meet Laos Health Minister, Chief Controller of Drug Regulatory Authority, Laos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, chief of Food Control Directorate and leading pharmaceutical importers.

Ending the visit to Laos, the team will go to Sri Lanka on Thursday to meet the country's Health Minister, Chairperson of Drug Regulatory Authority, State Pharmaceutical Corporation of Sri Lanka and pharmaceutical importers.

The Bapi secretary said

pharmaceuticals exporters will also visit some West African countries within a very short time with a hope to further expand export market.

Bangladesh at present exports medicines to over 50 countries. The major markets include South Korea, Brazil, the Netherlands, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Yemen, USA, India, South Africa, Ukraine, Vietnam, Kenya, Norway, Sweden, Indonesia and Hong Kong.

According to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), export earnings from pharmaceuticals sector stood at Tk 50.22 crore in the first 10 months of the last fiscal year. The export volume was Tk 52.37 crore in FY2002-03.

The exporters hope the export volume will increase significantly if the government sets up an API (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients) production unit which will also enable the country to export raw materials of pharmaceuticals.

Online search engine for agriculture launched

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

An online search engine for agriculture and agribusiness in Bangladesh was formally launched in Dhaka yesterday.

The search engine, KrishiQuest, is the first comprehensive online information resource center for agriculture in Bangladesh. The URL for the search engine is www.krishiquest.biz.

ATDP (Agro-based Industries and Technology Development Project), a USAID and Bangladesh government project, has developed the search engine to support local agriculture sectors.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, State Minister for Agriculture Fakhru Islam Alamgir appreciated the efforts of ATDP, saying information is a vital tool for business operation in Bangladesh.

Among others, Gene George, mission director of USAID, and MA Aziz, additional secretary of the agriculture ministry, also spoke at the function.

The search engine contains market information, agricultural news archive, data and statistics, publications, manuals and reports relating to agriculture and agribusiness.

Besides, ATDP has established a "Search Zone" at its headquarters and regional offices for its clients, especially for those who do not have access to internet.

Chhatak Cement Factory exceeds production target in Fy04

UNB, Sylhet

State-owned Chhatak Cement Factory has set a record in production and sale in the last fiscal (2003-04) year, factory officials disclosed at a function here on Wednesday.

The factory, one of the oldest industrial units in the country, produced 1,80,820 tonnes of cement exceeding its target of 1.75 lakh tonnes during the period. At the same time, the factory sold 1,87,129 tonnes of cement.

Local MP Kalimuddin Milon attended the function as chief guest while Chairman of BCIC Major General (retd) Imamuzzaman and Managing Director of Chhatak Cement Factory Dilip Kumar Kundu were present.

The ambassador also noted that completion of the submarine-cable project by the middle of next year would immensely benefit Bangladesh in attracting foreign investors.

He noted that stable politics, less corruption and less bureaucracy, low inflation, sound banking system and better infrastructure attract foreign investors. When foreign companies want to make investment, they usually look for comparative advantage in different countries of a region, as their aim is to make profit.

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