

Dhaka Bank to finance Asian Paints dealers

Dhaka Bank Limited will finance the dealers of Asian Paints (Bangladesh) Limited for procuring equipment for its Colorworld outlets.

A loan agreement to this effect was signed between the two organisations under the bank's SME financing programme, says a press release.

Shahed Noman, managing director of Dhaka Bank, and RV Ramanujam, chief executive of Asian Paints (Bangladesh), signed the agreement on behalf of their organisations on Sunday in Dhaka.

Among others, Khondker Fazle Rashid and Mohammad Abu Musa, deputy managing directors of Dhaka Bank, and other officials from both the organisations were present.

IDLC net profit grows 19pc

Industrial Development Leasing Company of Bangladesh Limited (IDLC) has achieved 19 percent growth in its net profit for the first six months of 2004, compared to the corresponding period of 2003.

Operating profit of the company for the same period increased 23 percent whereas operational revenue grew by over 21 percent, says a press release.

During the period, the company executed Tk 888 million against lease and term finance and disbursed Tk 235 million against real estate finance.

Total assets of the company as on June 30, 2004 stood at Tk 6.5 billion, which is 20 percent higher than the amount of the previous year.

Sulzer Corp holds seminar on CNG

Swiss multinational Sulzer Corporation organised a seminar on 'Global trends in CNG & benefits to Bangladesh' through its concern in India, Sulzer India Limited, recently in Dhaka.

AKM Mosharrarf Hossain, state minister for Energy and Mineral Resources, RR Das, minister (E&C), Indian High Commission in Dhaka, delegates from Switzerland, India and local entrepreneurs attended the seminar, says a press release.

Speakers at the seminar stressed the importance of a reliable machine along with a good service backup to make CNG business profitable and successful.

Sulzer Corporation offers high-tech products and services in mass transfer technology, pumps, surface coating, high-pressure compressors for all types of gases including natural gas for vehicles (NGV).

The state minister also unveiled a bilingual book (Bangla and English) on the maintenance of CNG stations prepared by Mashiur Rahman & Co Ltd, local sales representative of Sulzer India Ltd.

Australian parliament to back US free trade pact

AFP, Canberra

Australia's controversial free trade agreement with the United States now appears set to win parliamentary approval after key members of a Senate inquiry recommended Monday that the Labor opposition support it.

The three Labor senators on the opposition-controlled committee pre-empted release of the inquiry report by telling a news conference that, despite numerous imperfections, they had decided on balance it was in Australia's best interests to accept it.

"It is recommended that the Senate pass the appropriate legislation that will give effect to the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement," the senators said.

But they also want the government to support measures to protect manufacturers and the price of subsidised medicines, which they fear could rise because of the deal.

Their recommendation will go before a meeting on Tuesday of the full parliamentary Labor Party where it is expected to win majority support despite fierce opposition from the party's left wing, backed by key trade unions.

Prime Minister John Howard, who is seeking a fourth term at elections due by the end of this year, had turned Labor indecision on the pact into an election issue, accusing opposition leader Mark Latham of "dithering" over an agreement claimed to be overwhelmingly in Australia's interests.

Tax Ombudsman's office to be modelled on Pakistan set-up

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A committee headed by State Minister for Finance Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain has suggested establishment of the office of Tax Ombudsman with characteristics of similar administrative set-up in Pakistan.

The committee in a draft law recommended that the Tax Ombudsman, to be appointed by the president, would report annually to the head of the state.

As per the draft, the Tax Ombudsman will have the authority to consider appeals of taxpayers regarding income tax, property tax, duty and excise. However, the ombudsman will

not entertain any appeal if it is a sub judice matter.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday placed the draft law along with some recommendations on Tax Ombudsman before a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance Ministry.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman in his budget speech for 2004-05 formally announced government's plan to create the office of Tax Ombudsman to handle tax-related disputes in an accountable and transparent manner.

Following the announcement, the government formed the committee headed by the state minister for finance

to formulate a draft law. The committee comprises NBR chairman and its members in-charge of income tax, duty and VAT (value-added tax).

Earlier, in May this year, the state minister led a two-member fact-finding mission to Pakistan to study the structure and functioning of Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan, set up in 1991.

The mission met Pakistan Finance Minister Shawkat Aziz, Federal Tax Ombudsman Justice Salim Akhtar, Chairman of Central Board of Revenue and other high officials. After reviewing the *modus operandi* of the ombudsman in Pakistan, the mission suggested the draft law to be in line with the one presently practised in Pakistan.

The mission found that the social justice system was strengthened after appointment of Federal Tax Ombudsman in Pakistan.

However, there is no office of Tax Ombudsman in Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Though general ombudsman is existent in many countries, specialised institution like Tax Ombudsman is rare. In most cases the general ombudsman handles tax-related disputes. In Australia, an ombudsman from the office of general ombudsman, better known as Commonwealth Ombudsman, handles tax disputes.

FBCCI initiates study on new duty structure

UNB, Dhaka

A month after the budget was passed, FBCCI initiated a study on the impact of reorganised structure for import duties on finished products and raw materials.

For finished goods, the highest level of import duty in the budget was lowered from 30 percent to 25 percent introducing a three-tier duty structure to replace the previous four-tier one.

Also, the supplementary duty has been brought down to 35 percent from 75 percent for the finished goods.

On the other hand, the duty for raw materials was fixed at 7.5 percent while for intermediary goods 15 percent.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry has asked all its member bodies to inform it about the impact of the restructured duty on the manufacturing and other local industries.

The apex business body also sought suggestions from the members to protect local industries on the competitive market.

India says new WTO accord will benefit poor farmers

AFP, Mumbai

India, a leader among developing nations, hailed Monday the revival of World Trade Organisation (WTO) trade talks as a "major victory", saying the move would help protect its massive agricultural sector from subsidized goods of rich countries.

WTO members agreed Sunday on a framework for liberalising global agricultural trade that helped avert a damaging rift between rich and poor countries.

India had initially opposed the talks, aimed at opening up global markets to farm goods, because of what it said were trade-distorting subsidies provided by developed nations to their farm sector.

An Indian government statement hailed the progress as a "major victory" and said, "India has secured significant gains and succeeded in fully protecting her interests in agriculture as well as in other key areas."

The weekend breakthrough was aimed mainly at eventually cutting subsidies and reducing barriers to the multi-billion-dollar global trade in farm goods.

Economists and industrialists said the move would not only protect India's poor farmers in their domestic market, but also enable them to compete in the markets of other countries.

"The developed nations are providing high subsidies. It will be really good for India as the interest of farmers at home will be protected even if the market is opened up," said Riaz Khan, chief macro-economist at the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy.

(March 2005) and European Sea Food Exposition in Brussels (April 26-28, 2005).

As a member of D-8, a body of eight major Muslim developing countries, Bangladesh will take part in D-8 Trade Fair to be held in Iran a month after next Ramadan.

The other fairs are India International Trade Fair (November 14-27), International Autumn Trade Fair (Dubai, December 12-16), ATPF Joint Fair 'Style Asia' (Tokyo, December 16-18), Industrial India Trade Fair (December 20-31), Trade Fair of Islamic Countries (Bahrain, February 5-9), Guwahati International Trade Fair (February-March 2005) and International Trade and Industry Fair, (Karachi, March 26-28, 2005).



PHOTO: STAR

Master chef Tommy Miah cooks food during the formal launching of 'Tommy Miah's Institute of Hospitality Management', which offers training on food and beverage production, at the institute in Dhaka yesterday. Among others, Rizwan Bin Farouq, managing director of Axiom Technologies Ltd, which partners with Tommy Miah in the institute, and Rubina Farouq, principal of the institute, are also seen.

Bangladesh to participate in 17 int'l trade fairs this fiscal

Five single country shows on the cards

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Local manufacturers and exporters will get the opportunity to display their products before the potential buyers by participating in 17 international fairs and five Bangladesh single country trade shows in the current fiscal.

The Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) will organise the single country trade fairs in Nepal, Sri Lanka, UK, Italy and Myanmar, said a high official of EPB, which will facilitate businesspeople in participating in the international fairs.

The EPB, a government body responsible for export promotion, has already sent schedules and other particulars of the fairs to all the chambers, associations and trade bodies

inviting them to participate in the trade shows.

EPB officials said the main objective of participating in the fairs abroad and organising the single country trade shows is to showcase local exportable items for attracting potential foreign buyers and to provide marketing support to the local manufacturers.

Local companies will display home textiles, ceramics, readymade garments, handicrafts, food items, IT, seafood, leather items, knitwear and diversified jute products in the fairs.

According to EPB, the first single country trade show will be held in Nepal during October 8-10, to be followed by Sri Lanka in February, UK in May and Italy in June next year. The schedule of Myanmar fair is yet to be

fixed.

Bangladesh will take part in two specialised international trade fairs on handicrafts, both in Germany, this fiscal. The Frankfurt International Trade Fair is scheduled to be held during August 27-31 this year and another similar show during February 11-15 next year.

Two specialised fairs for IT products in the list are GITECH in Dubai billed for October 3-7 next and CeBIT in Hanover, Germany during March 10-16 next year.

The other specialised trade fairs include GDS Shoe Fair at Dusseldorf, Germany (September 16-19), New York Home Textile Show (October 8-11), SIAL Food Fair in Paris (October 17-21), Asia-Pacific Leather Fair in Hong Kong

FAILURE IN HALF-YEARLY ACCOUNT SUBMISSION

DSE fines 27 cos

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) on Sunday slapped a daily fine of Tk 500 on 27 listed companies for failing to submit their half-yearly accounts to the bourse by July 31.

The companies are Arbee Textiles, Bangladesh Hotels, Bangladesh Services, BD Dyeing, Beach Hatchery, BLTC, Dhaka Bank, Federal Insurance, German Bangla Food, Karnaphuli Insurance, Kay & Que, Legacy Footwear, Lexco, Maq Paper, Meghna Shrimp, One Bank, Padma Printers, Paper Processing, Peoples Insurance, Pioneer Insurance, Prime Insurance, Rahman Chemicals, Rupali Bank, Saleh Carpet, Sreepur Textile, Uttara Finance and Wata Chemicals.

In separate letters to the managing directors of those companies, DSE Chief Executive Officer Salahuddin Ahmed Khan pointed out that the relevant clause of the DSE Listing Regulations calls for submission of half-yearly accounts by every listed company within one month from the last date of

the half-year period.

However, on receipt of the letter, five companies -- Bangladesh Services, Dhaka Bank, One Bank, Peoples Insurance and Uttara Finance -- submitted their accounts to DSE.

"The last half-year period of your company, as per our record, had ended on June 30, 2004," said a letter sent to one of the defaulting companies. "Accordingly, your company was required to submit half-yearly reports by July 31, 2004."

The DSE letter said, "Our record as on July 31, 2004 shows that your company did not submit half-yearly reports neither made any request for extension of time which is a violation of the listing regulation and also impair the investors interest in your company vis-à-vis that of securities market."

The bourse requested the company to furnish its last half-yearly reports as soon as possible along with a daily fine of Tk 500 to be calculated from August 1, 2004 as per the listing regulations.

Govt to frame policy for private investment in gas transmission

UNB, Dhaka

The government is formulating a business-friendly policy for private investment in the country's gas transmission sector.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrarf Hossain made the disclosure after a meeting of the advisory council on his ministry here yesterday.

The policy is being formulated to bring private investment in the transmission sector.

Several chamber bodies and entrepreneurs have reportedly told the state minister that they would not be able to put in huge amount funds without any official guideline for protecting their private investment.

If private sector can be engaged in the transmission sector, Mosharrarf said, the government would get some relief in making huge investment to spread gas network in new areas. "The government will also earn revenue in the form of wheeling charge."

The planned policy is also aimed at ensuring local investment for joint venture projects with state-run Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (Bapex).

The Energy Advisory Council at its meeting asked Petrobangla to formulate a draft on its functioning by August 31 to bring necessary amendments to the Petrobangla Act.

"With the launching of the ERC that will look into everything excluding the gas exploration and production, Petrobangla's functions need to

be redefined," said State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrarf Hossain.

He said Petrobangla would not be a holding company as thought in the past because in that case it would not be able to deal with its companies in different areas.

The meeting was attended among others by FBCCI President Abdul Awal Minto, BGMEA President Annisul Haq, Energy Association Vice President Azam J Chowdhury, Prof M Nurul Islam and Prof M Tamim of BUET. All of them are members advisory council on energy.

Mosharrarf for LPG price rationalisation

At the meeting, the state minister also asked Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation to bring a uniformity in the prices of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas).

His directive came as the private companies engaged in LPG bottling and marketing business in the country are facing an uneven competition with the BPC-controlled LPG Gas Limited.

The company sells a cylinder of gas at Tk 335. But, in practice, the users do not get it at that price and buy gas at the tariff equivalent to private companies' gas. The profit goes only to the dealers.

On the other side, the price of each cylinder of LPG of the private companies for the dealers was Tk 365 to Tk 370 even six months back, which went up to Tk 400-430 due to price hike of crude oil.