

Jt efforts of service providers sought as tourism fair begins

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

An international tourism exposition began in Dhaka yesterday with a call for launching concerted efforts by all hospitality service providers to tap full potential of the revenue-generating industry.

Some 42 organisations from 15 countries have gathered in the three-day fair styled 'Dhaka Travel Mart 2005' organised to hammer out ways on how airlines, travel agents, tour operators, hotels and other service providers can work jointly to promote the industry.

Wolfgang Vollmann, director and Unesco representative in Bangladesh, formally inaugurated the fair at Winter Garden of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

The Bangladesh Monitor, a travel fortnightly, has organised the

country's largest gathering of airlines, travel agents, tour operators, hotels and other hospitality service providers.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Wolfgang Vollmann said the Bangladesh's three World Heritage Sites -- the Sundarbans, Paharpur Buddhist Vihara and Shatgambuj Mosque -- are favourite tourist destinations.

He, however, said the country has a total of 355 archaeological sites which are currently conserved and documented in a poor manner. "People living beside the archaeological sites are key to preserving those. But in Bangladesh most of the people living beside the archaeological sites are less educated. They must be educated so as to understand the importance of the places they live beside," he said.

Presiding over the function, Abdul Mannan MP, president of Pacific Asia Travel Association's Bangladesh chapter, said all the service providers in tourism sector must work together so that tourists can get information and service from a single point.

He said the country's tourism sector is moving very slowly as the country has so far failed to identify what to do to promote the sector.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Chairman Mahbubur Rahman said the government is planning to set up a national tourism promotion fund. "Indian government provides over Rs 500 crore a year for tourism promotion. We hope our government will allocate Tk 25 crore in the coming budget for the fund," he added.

President of Tour Operators

Association of Bangladesh (Toab) Faridul Haque requested Unesco to declare more Bangladeshi sites World Heritage Site.

The fair will remain open daily from 10:00am to 8:00pm. Entry fee is fixed at Tk 20. There will be prizes that include air tickets for visitors each day of the three-day fair as well as a grand raffle draw on the concluding day on entry coupons.

Editor of Bangladesh Monitor and Chairman of Dhaka Travel Mart 2005 Kazi Wahidul Alam, President of Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (Atab) MA Muhaimin Saleh, Managing Director of Biman Mahmoodur Rahman, Director (Marketing and Sales) of GMG Airlines Ismail R Chowdhury and Country Manager of Amadeus Mustafa Kamal also spoke at the function.



PHOTO: STAR

Wolfgang Vollmann, director and Unesco representative in Bangladesh, inaugurates the Dhaka Travel Mart 2005 at Winter Garden of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday. Editor of Bangladesh Monitor and Chairman of Dhaka Travel Mart 2005 Kazi Wahidul Alam, President of Pacific Asia Travel Association's Bangladesh chapter Abdul Mannan MP and Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Mahbubur Rahman are also seen in the picture.

Garment workers demand new pay scale

UNB, Dhaka

National Garments Workers Federation (NGWF) has demanded that the government and garment factory owners fix a new pay scale for garment workers with Tk 1,800 as the minimum monthly wages, keeping in view the current market prices.

The demand came from a NGWF rally at Muktangan here yesterday with federation Vice-president Shahida Sarkar presiding.

Speakers at the rally said Tk 930 was fixed as the minimum monthly wages for the garments workers in 1994 while Tk 2,300 as the maximum wages for skilled workers.

Good RMG managers need engineering background

Speakers observe at BUET roundtable

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To run modern-day business, the garment sector needs managers graduated in a combined curriculum of business administration and industrial engineering, speakers said at a roundtable.

As managers in garment companies are not aware and capable of diagnosing and solving critical business problems themselves, a composite course on industrial and production engineering can enable the managers of these companies to solve such problems, they said.

The Association of Industrial and Production Engineers (AIPE) and Department of Industrial and Production Engineering (IPE) of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in co-operation with South Asia Enterprise Development Facility (SEDF) organised the roundtable on ready-made garments (RMG)

industry at the BUET auditorium on Thursday. The roundtable was arranged in line with a three-day ceremony during March 2-4 to mark the IPE Day 2005 at the same venue.

Speaking at the function, Annisul Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said lack of mid-level management system is a major problem in RMG industry.

"Sometimes, we have to hire educated management officials from abroad."

Fazlul Hoque, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said Bangladeshi engineers are not mentally prepared to serve in the RMG industry.

M Ahsan Akhtar Hasin, associate professor of Industrial and Production Engineering, BUET, presented a paper on 'A Portrait of RMG: How to Increase Productivity' at the roundtable.

North-south disputes strangle WTO talks

AFF, Ukunda, Kenya

A deep north-south rift over farm subsidies and market access persisted here Friday as talks aimed at boosting chances for reaching a global trade liberalisation pact in 2006 ended in uncertainty.

With a landmark World Trade Organization ruling against US cotton subsidies highlighting the split, ministers and senior officials from 32 WTO members and the European Union failed to bridge the differences but insisted they had given political momentum to

the so-called "Doha round" of trade talks.

"The ministers present made bold political decisions on behalf of themselves and their governments," said Kenyan Trade Minister Mukhisa Kituyi, the host and chairman of the WTO "mini-ministerial" at this Indian Ocean resort.

However, Kituyi prefaced his comments by saying they were a "personal assessment" of the talks and when he finished reading his summary of the meeting several participants took issue with his positive tone.

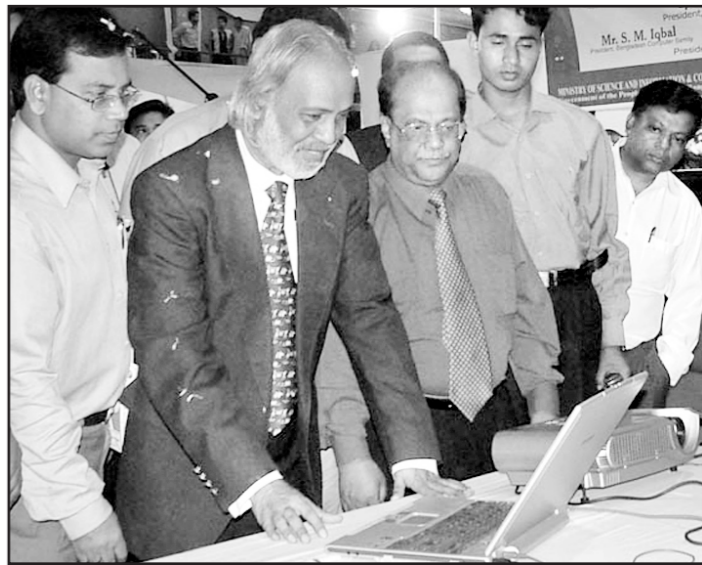


PHOTO: STAR

Science and Information & Communication Technology Minister Abdul Moyeen Khan inaugurates an Internet browsing fair organised by Chittagong Cyber Café Owners' Association at CJKS Indoor Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Weekly Currency Roundup

Feb 26-Mar 3, 2005

Local FX Market

US dollar was mixed against BDT in this week. Dollar got slightly stronger due to increased demand in the beginning of the week. But the greenback eased by the end of the week due to improved liquidity in the market.

Money Market

Bangladesh Bank borrowed BDT 4,054.00 million through the Treasury bill auction, compared with BDT 9,782.50 million in the previous week's bid. Weighted average yields remained almost unchanged.

Call money rate was on the upward trend throughout the week. The rate ranged between 3.00 and 6.00 percent up to the middle of the week. Increased demand for liquidity pushed the rate up and it rose to as high as 10.50 percent by the end of the week.

International FX Market

In the beginning of the week, the yen jumped on Monday after data showed Japanese industrial output posted stronger growth than expected in January, raising hopes the economy may be pulling out of last year's recession. The dollar was also on a negative tone against other major currencies. The rise in oil price for a sixth straight day was seen by some as negative for the dollar, based on the perception that the US economy, the world's largest consumer of oil, is most vulnerable to higher oil price. Dealers were awaiting upcoming economic events in the US for dollar direction, including US personal income and spending data later on Monday and key manufacturing and job market reports later in the week.

The US dollar hit a three-week high against Australian dollar and a one-week peak in the middle of the week versus the euro on the back of concerns about economic growth in Australia and Europe. The market is now waiting for Federal Reserve Chairman's testimony before US congress on the economy and US job market data for more direction of currencies.

-Standard Chartered Bank