

Policy on renewable energy soon, says state minister

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will formulate a policy on renewable energy as soon as possible to boost alternative energy production, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood said yesterday.

"Most of the countries have realised that a single power system is not enough to maintain a country's total power demand. In the arena of diversifying power, we are lagging far behind," said the state minister.

Speaking as chief guest at a seminar, he also said although some government and non-governmental organisations are working to develop renewable energy in Bangladesh, notable

output is not found for lack of policy as well as proper linkage between these organisations.

Bangladesh Solar Energy Society (BSES) and Renewable Energy Research Centre (RERC) of Dhaka University jointly organised the two-day national seminar in Dhaka.

Mahmood said, "Availability of electricity is needed for development work. So, we should formulate a policy first to help discover the potentiality of renewable energy."

"We have already taken some initiatives to make a regional framework of power supply among South Asian countries under Saarc. If we are able to do something to diversify our power

system by utilising our own resources, that will be the better option," he said.

He said a windmill constructed in Feni is now on trial.

Other speakers also said the country has potential to produce renewable energy, as it is essential for economic development by using wind-energy, bio-energy, marine renewable energy, tidal waves, and geothermal energy.

Now, more than 40,000 households have got electricity facility by solar energy in Bangladesh, said Prof Dr Muhtashan Hussain, president of Bangladesh Solar Energy Society.

He said, "Bangladesh gets a huge solar energy from the nature. If we can use only a slight

part of it, we will be able to produce as much electricity as we produce now."

After the opening ceremony of the seminar, state minister also inaugurated a three-day national exhibition on solar energy technology at Dhaka University science library. About ten organisations of local renewable energy are showcasing their technology at the fair.

Prof Dr SMA Faiz, vice chancellor of Dhaka University, Prof Dr AFM Yusuf Haider, Dhaka University pro-vice chancellor, Prof Shahida Rafique, secretary of BSES, and Director of RERC Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik also spoke at the seminar.

Policy for freight forwarders, shipping agents by April 15

UNB, Dhaka

Authorities will finalise licensing procedure for freight forwarders and shipping agents by April 15.

A meeting of stakeholders concerned at Chittagong Customs House took the decision yesterday with NBR member ATM Sarwar Hossain in the chair.

Related trade associations have been invited to submit their written proposals by April 3 to contribute to the licensing procedure.

A 10-member committee, headed by joint commissioner of the Customs House Masud Sadek, was constituted at the meeting to examine a proposal from Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) to amend an SRO on freight forwarding.

The NBR agreed with the stakeholders concerned to introduce the licensing system as the meeting pointed out that the freight forwarders and shipping agents "impose excessive charges", said a statement.

Representatives from BGMEA, freight forwarders, Shipping Agents Association, C&F Agents Association and senior customs officials were present.

Dialogue on women entrepreneurship held in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A dialogue on 'Importance of Rights and Good Governance Towards Trade Favourable Environment for Home-Based Non-Formal Women Entrepreneurship' was held yesterday in Khulna.

Alternative Development Organisation for Research & Evaluation (Adore) organised the dialogue, presided over by Finance Director of Adore Rumana Afroza.

Rokia A Rahman, an adviser to former caretaker government and president of Women Entrepreneurs' Association, Bangladesh, was present as chief guest while Ferdousi Ali, member of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry Executive Committee, was present as special guest.

Rokia A Rahman in her speech called upon women community to play a role in nation building through creative activities.

"There is no reason for women to stay away from doing welfare works. Each and every woman is blessed with the quality to play her due role for welfare of the people", she said. She stressed the need for increasing facilities for women entrepreneurs by the government.

New trading timing on DSE

UNB, Dhaka

The trading session of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) will start from 10am instead of existing 10:30am and will continue until 2pm.

The new trading session will be effective from April 2, a meeting of the DSE Board of Directors decided yesterday.

There will be no post-closing session of the trading from the same day.

WTO DEAL ON MEDICINE

New legislation adopted in India

AFP, Geneva

New legislation adopted Wednesday in India is partly aimed at bringing the country into line with a World Trade Organisation agreement that granted poor countries greater access to cheaper medicine.

The August 2003 agreement between the WTO's member states was designed to make it easier for poor countries to import cheaper generic medicines under certain conditions if they are unable to make the medicines themselves.

Under the agreement, New Delhi was obliged to present legislation to parliament by January 2005 guaranteeing protection for pharmaceutical patents.

After months of wrangling between poor countries and rich nations with large pharmaceutical industries, the WTO compromise tried to reconcile public health needs with those of the pharmaceutical industry, which partly rely on patents for revenue and to finance research.



PHOTO: STAR
Leaders of Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leather goods and Footwear Exporters' Association (BFLLEA) and Bangladesh Tanners Association (BTA) speak at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday to announce the three-day 7th Dhaka International Leather Fair 2005 scheduled to start on Sunday. BFLLEA and BTA are jointly organising the show.

Int'l leather fair begins Sunday in Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In a bid to attract more foreign buyers by displaying the latest development in the country's leather sector, a three-day international leather fair begins at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka on Sunday.

The exhibition, 7th Dhaka International Leather Fair 2005, will also give the local manufacturers an opportunity to know about the world's latest technologies used in leather industry, organisers said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the fair jointly organised by Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leather goods and Footwear Exporters' Association (BFLLEA) and Bangladesh Tanners Association (BTA).

"We are expecting a better response and significant number of spot orders in the fair this year," said Tipu Sultan, president of BFLLEA, at a press conference to announce the fair schedule in Dhaka yesterday.

A total of 66 leather firms including 27 foreign companies will participate in the fair. Major participating

countries are the USA, the UK, India, China, Italy, Germany, South Africa, Switzerland and Poland.

Organisers have also invited prospective foreign buyers. A large number of foreign buyers from 24 countries attended the fair last year where the exhibitors got spot orders worth US\$7.73 million.

According to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) statistics, export income from leather sector amounted to \$125 million in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, up by around seven percent during the same period of last fiscal.

Footwear, on the other hand, fetched \$68 million in the last fiscal year while the earning valued \$46 million during July-January period of 2004-05 financial year.

A fashion show, managed by Dream Entertainment, will be also held on Monday, the second day of the show.

The fair will remain open from 10am to 6pm everyday and the entry ticket is fixed at Tk30 for one person.

3-day Thailand show begins today in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A three-day show titled 'Thailand Exhibition 2005' begins in Chittagong today in a bid to promote Thai products in Bangladesh.

About 39 Thai manufacturers and exporters will take part in the exhibition at Institution of Engineer's Bangladesh auditorium, Minister Counsellor (commercial) of Thai Embassy Kanyarat Vongskul told journalists at a press conference here yesterday.

The first two-day of the exhibition will remain open for traders while the last day for general visitors.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will formally inaugurate the exhibition at 11am. President of

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed will be also present at the inaugural function.

The products such as auto parts and accessories, chemical products, children products, games and toys, construction materials, machinery, electrical appliances, food products and beverages, furniture, garments, textile and fashion accessories, gift and decorative item, leather products and footwear, hospital and medical equipment and medical services will be put on display at the show, organised by Department of Export Promotion (DEP) of Thailand.

Vongskul said Thailand currently exports goods worth US\$ 370 million to Bangladesh while it imports goods worth only US\$ 14 million from Bangladesh.

"Thai government is now working to reduce this huge trade gap," he said.

She said Bangladeshi goods such as software, pharmaceuticals, leather and food items have good prospect in Thai markets.

"Thai government has offered duty-free access of 229 Bangladeshi items to Thailand and this facility will continue until 2006," Vongskul said, adding this facility can be extended after mutual discussion between the two governments.



Ambani brothers dispute in India's Reliance close to settlement

AFP, New Delhi

The battle between the two Ambani brothers who own India's largest private sector conglomerate, the Reliance group, is on the brink of settlement, reports said

Thursday.

India's media quoted sources as saying the brothers had been in talks with a mediator to thrash out a settlement over ownership and control of Reliance Industries, India's biggest petro-

chemical producer, which is at the centre of the family feud.

"The broad contours of an agreement have been worked out and a final deal will be in place in a week to 10 days," the Times of India newspaper said, citing sources close to the negotiators.

The newspaper as well as the New Delhi Television channel reported that younger brother Anil Ambani was likely to get management control of the group's telecoms arm, Reliance Infocomm, as part of the deal.

Anil Ambani, who is vice-chairman of Reliance Industries and heads Reliance Energy, was expected to relinquish his claims to company flagship Reliance Industries in exchange for control over the telecoms firm.

Anil's older brother, Mukesh Ambani, is chairman of Reliance Industries, which holds a 45 percent stake in Reliance Infocomm.

The younger Ambani in December questioned the group's entry into the mobile phone business under Mukesh's leadership and forced his elder brother to return "sweat equity" -- shares given in exchange for work performed -- in the mobile telecoms subsidiary.

The battle to control Reliance burst into the open last November when Mukesh, 47, asserted control over the group, putting him at odds with his younger brother, Anil.

New trading timing on DSE

UNB, Dhaka

The trading session of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) will start from 10am instead of existing 10:30am and will continue until 2pm.

The new trading session will be effective from April 2, a meeting of the DSE Board of Directors decided yesterday.

There will be no post-closing session of the trading from the same day.

WTO DEAL ON MEDICINE

New legislation adopted in India

AFP, Geneva

New legislation adopted Wednesday in India is partly aimed at bringing the country into line with a World Trade Organisation agreement that granted poor countries greater access to cheaper medicine.

The August 2003 agreement between the WTO's member states was designed to make it easier for poor countries to import cheaper generic medicines under certain conditions if they are unable to make the medicines themselves.

Under the agreement, New Delhi was obliged to present legislation to parliament by January 2005 guaranteeing protection for pharmaceutical patents.

After months of wrangling between poor countries and rich nations with large pharmaceutical industries, the WTO compromise tried to reconcile public health needs with those of the pharmaceutical industry, which partly rely on patents for revenue and to finance research.