

BCS computer show begins Sept 22

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The country's science and ICT organisations will showcase their innovative products in the 13th BCS Computer Show-2005 to be held from September 22 to 27 in Dhaka.

Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) President SM Iqbal announced the schedule of the fair yesterday saying the nation should be apprised of the local works and innovations.

Organisers have been requested to communicate with BCS Fair authorities within the month to allocate their pavilions at the six-day fair at exhibition centre of Bashundhara City shopping mall in the capital.

This is the first time, BCS authorities chose the largest show area of around 90,000 square feet on a single floor (level-7) of the Bashundhara City to make the fair more spontaneous and successful than before.

More than 20 lakh people are expected to visit the fair this time, organisers hoped.

Abdul Fattah, convener of the fair, hoped that some foreign companies would also participate in the fair.

A large number of ICT firms would showcase the latest IT products, mainly system units, hardware, accessories, networking products, internet services, IT publications and few software products at the fair, which will have at least 180 stalls and 22 pavilions.

The name of the chief guest, number of local companies and entry fee at the fair are yet to be finalised, sources said adding that the show would remain open from 10am to 8pm.

Abu Dhabi Group CEO in Dhaka

Bashir Tahir, chief executive officer of Abu Dhabi Group, accompanied by a high-powered technical team arrived in Dhaka Saturday, says a press release.

Dhabi Group has a significant investment plan in various sectors in Bangladesh.

StanChart, Financial Express CSR award trust formed

Standard Chartered Bank and The Financial Express have formed the 'Standard Chartered-Financial Express Corporate Social Responsibility Award Trust' on Wednesday.

The Trust will soon formally invite applications for the awards through announcement in newspapers to recognise and award businesses who comply with corporate social responsibility in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Earlier, Professor Wahid Uddin Mahmud was elected chairman of the Trust. Other members of the board of the Trust include Syed Manzur Elahi, Samson H Chowdhury, AHM Moazzem Hossain, Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, Hafiz GA Siddiqui, Yasmeen Morshed, MA Momen, Osman Morad, Ahmed Ali Shah and Shah Masud Imam.

India-China plan to pour oil on troubled relationship stirs doubts

AFP, New Delhi

Energy-thirsty India is hoping to turn its arch rivalry with giant neighbour China for fuel supplies into an alliance but becoming oil patch partners could be tough, analysts say.

India, which lags way behind China in the frenzied global race to secure oil and gas supplies, said last week the Asian giants would sign pacts in November aimed at teaming up to bid for oil and gas projects.

But analysts are doubtful about whether such a partnership between two neighbours with a history of hostility could work.

"It's a nice idea for India and China to talk cooperation, but they have a mountain to climb as they have no history of cooperation," said Ng Weng Hoong, editor of Singapore-based industry publication Energy Asia.

"They haven't been really talking for decades and suddenly they find themselves searching the same parts of a shrinking world for energy. It's tough to talk intimately when you're both rushing for the door at the same time."

Iran keen to buy RMG from Bangladesh

Urges local businesses to import processed cotton

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Visiting Iranian business leaders yesterday expressed their keen interest to import readymade garments from Bangladesh.

The business delegates also urged the Bangladeshi business community to import processed cotton from Iran to make RMG products in Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh's RMG goods can also find their market in central Asian countries through Bandar Abbas, an Iranian seaport," said Mohammad Reza Behzadian, president of Tehran Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), while speaking at a discussion on 'Bangladesh-Iran Business Development' in Dhaka.

Behzadian also said as Iran consumes 60,000 pounds of imported tea a year, Bangladesh has the potential to grab a portion of

the Iranian market by exporting its quality tea.

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) organised the discussion in a bid to explore different business opportunities between the two countries.

The Iranian delegates also expressed interests in investing in oil refinery, gas and coal mining in Bangladesh.

Speaking at the discussion, Bangladeshi businesspeople complained that some jute goods exporters are facing difficulties in getting their payments from Iran due to cumbersome banking procedure.

The delayed pre-shipment inspection (PSI) of Iran is also discouraging the Bangladeshi exports, they added.

To expand the bilateral trades between the two countries, Iran can import more diversified products from Bangladesh, said DCCI

President Sayeeful Islam.

Addressing the discussion, International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B) President Mahbubur Rahman stressed the need for identifying three to four specific areas at first to strengthen cooperation between the two sides.

Following the discussion, the DCCI and the TCCI signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to build up mutually beneficial cooperation in economic, trade and investment areas.

Sayeeful Islam and Mohammad Reza Behzadian signed the MoU on behalf of their sides.

Among others, Iranian Ambassador to Bangladesh Mohammad Behesti Monfarah and business leaders from both of the countries were present at the discussion.



PHOTO: DCCI

Sayeeful Islam (2-R), president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Mohammad Reza Behzadian (R), president of Tehran Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), Mahbubur Rahman (L), president of International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B), and Mohammad Behesti Monfarah (3-R), Iranian ambassador to Bangladesh, are seen at a discussion on 'Bangladesh-Iran Business Development' organised by the DCCI in Dhaka yesterday.

Ctg mobile phone fair draws huge crowd

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The mobile phone fair at the Engineers Institute auditorium in Chittagong witnessed a huge crowd yesterday, the second day of the three-day show.

Thousands of visitors thronged the fair venue from morning to take a glance at the latest brands and accessories of mobile phone sets.

The organisers expressed satisfaction both in terms of high sales volumes and a huge turnout in two days.

Soul, a commodity service firm, organised the show to boost cellphone sale, which saw a downslide following the tax imposition on SIM (Subscriber Identity

Module) cards in the budget for fiscal year 2005-06.

"We are satisfied with the turnout and profit," said Ahadur Rahman, marketing director of Soul. "In two days, we have made a business of Tk 2 crore from this fair."

He said, "More than 9,000 tickets were sold on the first day of the show."

Anisur Rahman, proprietor of Chittagong Telecom, was also happy with the response. "We used to sell over 6,000 SIM cards per month before the budget but the number has now reduced to only 500 to 600," he said.

Anis sold 60 SIM cards until yesterday offering an 8 percent

discount on each card.

The fair has a total of 40 stalls, mainly participated by the outlet agents and authorised dealers of GrameenPhone, CityCell, AKTEL and Banglalink. The cellphone operating companies are not taking part in the fair.

Most of the stall owners are offering 7 percent to 10 percent discount on each SIM card and mobile phone set. Some of them have also offered various attractive packages at competitive prices.

Siemens offers a special package of Tk 3,350 for a cellphone set with a free AKTEL ISD SIM.

The fair will remain open today from 10am to 8pm.

Foreign firm to invest \$ 6.8m in DEPZ

UNB, Dhaka

Hong Kong and Sri Lanka will jointly establish a garments manufacturing factory in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) involving US\$ 6.798 million.

An agreement to this effect was signed between the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) and M/S Shanta Denims Ltd, the jointly owned foreign company, here yesterday.

Md Shahjahan, member (Investment Promotion) of BEPZA, and Jamnadas Jashammal Paryaril, director of Shanta Denims Ltd, signed the agreement on behalf of their sides.

Shanta Denims is expected to produce 3.9 lakh dozens of trousers, shirts, blouses and vest and create employment opportunities for 1,500 Bangladeshis and foreign nationals.

BEPZA Executive Chairman Md Zakir Hossain, Member (Finance) Masud Ahmed, Member (Engineering) Abu Reza Khan, Secretary Syed Ahmed and General Manager (Investment Promotion) AZM Azizur Rahman were also present at the agreement signing ceremony.

ICB AMCL okays 18pc dividend

ICB Asset Management Company Ltd (ICB AMCL), a subsidiary of Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB), has declared an 18 percent dividend for its shareholders for the year 2004-05.

The dividend was approved at the fifth annual general meeting (AGM) of the company on Saturday in Dhaka, says a press release.

Md Fayekuzzaman, chairman of the Board of Directors of the company, presided over the AGM.

Grey Bangladesh Srijan Samman Agency of the Year

Grey Advertising Bangladesh Limited won the Agency of Year 2005 title of Indian "Srijan Samman 2005 Awards for Excellence in Bengali Advertising".

For the second consecutive year, Grey clinched the award introduced by the Kolkata-based daily "Sangbad Pratidin", says a press release.

Besides winning the gold for Agency of the Year, Grey bagged two gold, one silver, and four bronze awards for this year alone at the function held on August 20 in Kolkata.

The Srijan Samman awards have earned a reputation in the creative fraternities for their recognition of excellence in Bengali advertising over the last six years. More than 2000 entries were submitted this year alone.

China economists call for action to avoid looming slowdown

AFP, Shanghai

While China has spent two years battling to rein in its runaway economy, senior economists and government advisers now warn the economic powerhouse needs fiscal spending if it is avoid a looming slowdown.

Despite impressive headline numbers, there are big underlying problems which need to be confronted, they say.

They echo calls to relax China's fiscal stance, dust off the policies of former premier Zhu Rongji and start issuing a greater number of treasury bonds to finance public works, helping to mitigate what they say is a dangerously slowing economy.

Cooling import growth, worryingly low inflation and shrinking industrial profits all suggest the expansion which began in earnest three years ago is under threat said He Fan, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and adviser to the government on economic matters.

"If there was only one of these three signals, we should hesitate to say the economy is slowing down but all three are happening together so we are quite confident in saying that there is a danger of a slowdown," He said.

Yet first half gross domestic product data and July indicators clearly underlined there was little real statistical evidence of a slowdown. The debate about economic stimulus, it seems, remains just that.

The headline numbers continue to shine and the government has revealed little about future policy direction, preferring to stick to its mantra of pursuing "a prudent fiscal and monetary policy".

Int'l meet on financing infrastructure today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In a bid to promote long-term finance for the development of infrastructure, including ports, power and telecoms in Bangladesh, a two-day international workshop begins in Dhaka today.

Policymakers, regulators, investors, operators, bankers and international experts will discuss policy and operational issues as well as international-standard practices of infrastructure financing at the workshop, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, organisers said at a press briefing yesterday.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the Board of Investment (BoI) are jointly organising the workshop, financed by the World Bank, at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman is expected to attend the workshop as chief guest, while Cesare Calari, vice-president (Financial Sector Network) of the

WB, will present the keynote paper. Besides, international and national experts will take part in different sessions of the workshop titled 'Infrastructure Financing in Bangladesh'.

Meanwhile, on the sidelines of the workshop, a three-day Infrastructure Project Fair already began at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Addressing the briefing, Executive Director of BB Ziaul Hasan Siddiqui said development of physical infrastructure of power, telecoms, ports, roads and railways is key to not only accelerating economic growth but also achieving poverty eradication.

It also plays a vital role in facilitating new investment (both domestic and foreign), expanding production base, product diversification, increasing productivity and reducing costs, he said. Above all, it will help better standard of life, he added.

"We have invited international experts having vast experiences in infrastructure financing and they will share experiences so that the private and banking sector entrepreneurs are benefited," he said.

The workshop will also help local stakeholders to find out problems, risks and potential of infrastructure financing in Bangladesh, Siddiqui hoped.

However, said the BB executive, the central bank will not make any moral persuasion to the banking sector to invest in infrastructure development at the workshop.

Citing an example of Indian conglomerate Tata's investment proposal, Shahabuddin M Hossain, advisor to the governor of BB, said Bangladesh is witnessing an investment trend in infrastructure in recent times.

"The workshop will encourage the private entrepreneurs and local banks to finance in infrastructure," he said.

Asian recession unlikely despite high oil prices

AFP, Singapore

Asian economic growth forecasts have been slashed for this year and in 2006 as benchmark oil prices edge towards \$70 a barrel, but economists say a recession is unlikely.

Strong growth in key export markets the United States and China should keep Asian economies running smoothly, albeit at a slower pace, they said.

New York light sweet crude briefly hit an all-time high of \$68 a barrel on Thursday before retreating to \$66.13 the next day on the diminishing threat of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf of Mexico.

But market observers believe the pullback is only temporary and that it is only a matter of time before prices gush past \$70 a barrel after more than doubling since the end of 2003 when prices hovered near \$33.

The surging oil prices have caused a number of multinational financial institutions to revise their growth forecasts for Asia, among them the Asian Development Bank, said ADB economist Cyn Young-

Park, without disclosing the new figures.

The ADB in its April report forecast East Asian growth to average 6.7-7.2 percent in the next two years. Its updated outlook is due to be released on September 8.

"Asian economies, in the face of rising oil prices, are likely to slow down. But we do not expect that this deterioration in growth will be something that will be full-blown and have a recessionary impact," Cyn told AFP over telephone.

"Generally, Asian economies are stronger (to withstand shocks) now, and we still have a very strong growth engine such as China."

Milan Brahmbhatt, the World Bank's lead economist for East Asia and the Pacific, said the bank is also likely to trim its growth forecast made in April, except for China whose growth is tipped to accelerate.

The downward revision is largely a result of higher oil prices and slower export expansion, he told AFP by email.

Growth for Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan is

likely to be at 3.8 percent this year from the original 4.6 percent, he said, pointing to the Korean and Taiwanese economies as among the most exposed to costlier oil.

"The main Southeast Asian economies -- Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand -- are also expected to experience slower 2005-2006 growth than we had expected in April," he said.

The World Bank is now projecting the four countries to grow at an average 5.0 percent this year instead of 5.3 percent. For 2006, these countries are likely to grow at 5.4 percent instead of 5.6 percent.

Thailand and the Philippines are expected to suffer more than Indonesia and Malaysia, which are both oil exporters.

But Brahmbhatt stressed the cuts are based on a "relatively benign" scenario of oil prices remaining at current levels this year and pulling back in 2006. This would mean oil prices averaging around \$55 a barrel in 2005 and \$50 in 2006.



PHOTO: STAR

A girl takes a closer look at a cellphone set at a three-day mobile phone fair at the Engineers Institute auditorium in Chittagong yesterday. The fair ends today.