

Workshop on globalisation and farm sector held in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

A workshop on 'Globalisation and Problems in Bangladesh Agriculture Sector' was held here yesterday to identify field level problems in the farm sector.

Two non-government organisations, Incidin-Bangladesh and Swadesh, jointly organised the workshop where participants identified poor budgetary allocation as the major problem for the farm sector.

Held at Sadar upazila auditorium with Principal Asit Kumar Majumdar in the chair, the workshop was attended by Upazila Agriculture Officer Iftekhar Hossain as the chief guest.

The speakers also identified poor infrastructure, shortage of utility services as other barriers to the country's agriculture sector.

New head of StanChart Client Relationships



Ahmed Ali Shah has been made head of Client Relationships of Standard Chartered Bangladesh.

Prior to his new assignment, Ali headed the bank's global markets business in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Shah started his banking career with ANZ Grindlays in 1988. He joined Standard Chartered Group in 1999.

Software show from Nov 27

UNB, Dhaka

With a view to familiarising the people with the latest developments in the software sector, a five-day software fair begins in Dhaka on November 27.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (Basis) is organising the fair titled "Basis Softexpo 2005".

Microsoft Bangladesh is the co-sponsor of the show this year. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed to this effect between the two organisations in Dhaka on Tuesday.

Syed Faruk Ahmed of BASIS and Firoz Mahmud, country manager of Microsoft, signed the MoU.

On the sidelines of the fair, Basis will also arrange seminars and workshops on ITC developments and potentials.

Emirates gives 30 umbrellas to DMP

Emirates airline has presented 30 umbrellas to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to be used by traffic policemen.

Hanif Zakaria, sales manager of Emirates Bangladesh, handed over the umbrellas to SM Minzanur Rahman, commissioner of DMP, at a function in Dhaka on Tuesday, says a press release.

Dhaka may get \$100m conditional Japanese loan for 3 projects

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Japan has made a preliminary commitment to give a conditional loan of over \$100 million for three projects in the current fiscal year.

The indication came at the annual Japanese Official Development Assistant (ODA) Loan Consultation Meeting held in Dhaka yesterday during the officials of Bangladesh and Japan.

Japan has shown interest to provide loan in the country's power, information and communications technology (ICT) and environment sectors. The three projects are Transmission Line and Substation Development Project in power, Telecommunications Network Development Project in ICT and Karnaphuli Water Supply Project in environment sector.

After a full appraisal of the projects the exact amount of the loan will be settled, the Japanese dele-

gation told reporters after the meeting.

They, however, hinted that the amount might cross last year's figure, which was \$100 million, said an Economic Relations Division (ERD) official.

But Bangladesh will have to take some policy decisions to get the loan. The decisions include working out a plan for corporatising Bangladesh Power Development Board through a consensus with the major development partners by the end of 2005. In ICT sector, Japan also asked for corporatising the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) by 2006 to secure managerial autonomy, meeting sources said.

Suggesting more reforms in the power sector, the Japanese team recommended appointing full members of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission so that it becomes fully operational and the

regulatory framework is established. Japan also emphasised a systematic billing and collection procedure in order to enhance the revenue from this sector.

Besides, the Japanese team placed a four-year rolling plan. But no elaborate discussion was held on that plan, sources added.

Regarding power sector, the rolling plan said there is a huge supply-demand gap, leading to frequent load shedding. So, it is necessary to develop effective power generation facilities in the next five years, it added.

The Japanese delegation also stressed on developing substations and transmission grid for a stable power supply.

ERD Additional Secretary Badiur Rahman led the 14-member Bangladesh team while the 13-member Japanese team was led by Koichi Aiboshi, director, Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Joint venture company to produce gasohol

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A joint venture between a local company and two Singapore firms, have signed an agreement to invest US\$ 4.5 million to build a plant to manufacture non conventional fuel, gasohol, that will ease the pressure on imported petroleum fuel.

Nitol Motors, a concern of Nitol-Niloy Group, Far East Distillers Pte Ltd, and Peter Khong International jointly signed the agreement on Tuesday in Dhaka.

A MoU was signed in this regard between these companies six month ago in presence of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia during her visit to Singapore.

Gasohol, a mixture of petrol and alcohol that can be used in cars, is also known as green fuel, as it is environment-friendly. The mixing ratio of

gasohol is up to 23 percent or higher percentage of ethanol with the remaining portion of petrol or octane.

Motor engines need very minor conversion and sometime no change to use gasohol.

The joint venture officials said the plant will be established in Kishorgang and production will start next year with the capacity of 12,000 liters of ethanol per day.

However, the investors did not mention the price of gasohol. But they only said price will be 20-30 percent lower than conventional fossil fuel.

As 12 sugar factories in the country produce a huge quantity of molasses as by product, the prospect of gasohol is very bright, Abdul Matlub Ahmed, chairman of Nitol-Niloy Group, said at the agreement

signing programme.

Speaking as the chief guest, Energy Ministry Advisor Mahmudur Rahman said his ministry will give all-out support to the initiative.

FBCCI President Mir Nasir Hossain, consul to Singapore Manik Binwani, Ong King Son, chief executive officer of Far East Distillers PTE Ltd, Peter Khong Thong Siong, managing director of Peter Khong International, and Musabbir Ahmed, managing director of Nitol Motors Ltd, among others, were present at the programme.

Use of gasohol started in Brazil in 1950s and became alternative source of energy in different countries including China, Australia, India, Thailand, Vietnam, New Zealand and Japan.

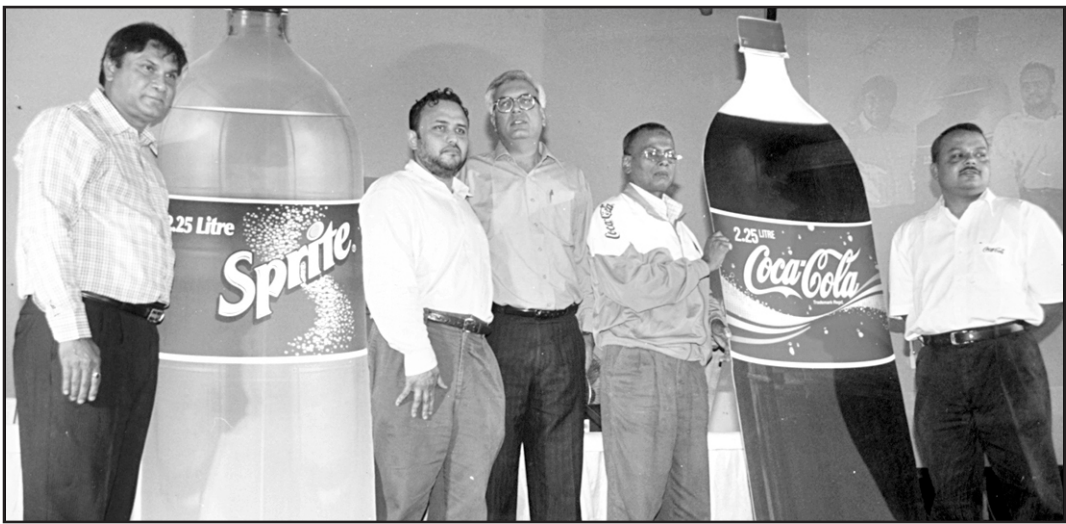


PHOTO: STAR
Vineet Kumar Kapila (centre), vice-president of Coca-Cola India Division, along with other officials of Coca-Cola Far East Ltd, Tabani Beverage Ltd and Abdul Monem Ltd poses for photographs at a launching ceremony of Coca-Cola and Sprite 2.25 litre PET bottles in local market in Dhaka yesterday.

Khulna Hardboard Mill resumes production after 3 years

UNB, Khulna

Khulna Hardboard Mill, which remained closed since 2002, went into full operation again yesterday with a target to produce up to 60,000 square feet of hardboard.

Industries Minister Matiur Rahman Nizami inaugurated the resumption of production at a function on the mill premises.

The Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), which closed the mill on December 15 in 2002, decided in April this year to reopen the factory. The BCIC allocated a provisional fund of Tk 1.10 crore to the authorities for the purpose.

Mill sources said retail price of each sheet of hardboard produced at the mill has been fixed at Tk 195.50. They will also be sold in local market through dealers.

An official of the mill said local firewood is being used now by the mill as raw material. They hope to use Geyya wood of the Sundarbans later and a proposal on this has been sent to forest department.

The BCIC has also promised to provide Tk 4.71 crore in phases for further development and installation of heavy equipment, sources said.

Khulna Hardboard Mill was set up in 1965 and went into commercial production in 1966.

Ficci concerned at two-day weekly holiday

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) has expressed concern over the two-day weekly holiday.

In a press statement the chamber said, "FICCI reiterates its earlier position demanding the change from Friday to Sunday as weekly holidays along with the rest of the world."

The statement also said, "If the government does not change its decision, the country will remain isolated for three consecutive days a week from the rest of the world."

It said the government must keep open the offices such as Export Promotion Bureau, ports, banks and customs on Saturday.

Coca-Cola launches 2.25 litre PET bottles

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Coca-Cola Far East Ltd (CCFL) yesterday at a function in Dhaka launched Coca-Cola and Sprite 2.25 litre PET bottles in local market.

Vineet Kumar Kapila, vice-president of Coca-Cola India Division, Saumindra Bhattacharya, country manager of CCFL Bangladesh, Md Shahjahan, general manager of Tabani Beverage Ltd, and ASM Mainuddin Monem, chief executive officer of Abdul Monem Ltd, were present at the launching ceremony.

Shakil Hasan Chowdhury of ACNielson made a multimedia presentation at the function on market share and growth rate of Coca-Cola brand beverages and other brand beverages.

LDC goods should get duty-free access to developing nations

Says CPD executive director

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Along with the developed economies, advanced developing nations should also allow LDC products duty-free market access, Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said yesterday.

"Not only the developed countries, the advanced developing countries should also give the least developed countries market access," he said while making a presentation on different aspects of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at The Daily Star office in Dhaka.

Speaking at the presentation, Mustafizur Rahman, research director of CPD, said, "As we are moving towards the sixth Hong Kong ministerial meeting, there are some danger signals for Bangladesh."

Bangladesh is a net food importing country. So, reduction or withdrawal of subsidy on agriculture will actually push the import cost up, he said.

However, Bangladesh will also be able to export some food products, he added.

About the movement of less skilled manpower in the developed countries, an issue Bangladesh has

been pursuing long before Cancun ministerial, Debapriya said it is quite unlikely that the developed nations will respond to it positively in the face of growing tension on security aspect globally.

"But it is possible that the developed countries may agree to allow manpower movement on bilateral negotiations as they need nurses and care workers for their welfare

services," he added.

Echoing Debapriya, Rahman said if the developed countries allow movement of natural persons and open only 3 percent of their manpower market, the developing countries can earn about \$ 50 billion annually.

Journalists of The Daily Star were present at the presentation.



PHOTO: STAR
Chye Hoon Pin, chief operating officer of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd, the owning company of CityCell, displays a UTStarcom CDMA handset as Jerry Soloway, senior vice president of UTStarcom Inc, looks on at the launch of UTStarcom handset in Dhaka yesterday.

UTStarcom CDMA handsets to be available in local market soon

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

UTStarcom Inc, a US-based mobile handset manufacturing company, has entered into an agreement with CityCell, to sell its CDMA handsets in Bangladesh.

Under the deal, CityCell, the only CDMA mobile phone operator in the country, will market the UTStarcom C1160 CDMA1x w handsets with connection.

The new CDMA handsets will be available in the market soon, announced a senior official of UTStarcom Inc in Dhaka yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference, Jerry Soloway, senior vice president of UTStarcom Inc, said, "We will provide CityCell subscribers in Bangladesh with high quality and cost-effective CDMA handsets."

The mobile set will attract users who are interested in creative designs and simplicity, said Chye Hoon Pin, chief operating officer of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd, the owning company of CityCell.

He said CityCell will fix a competitive price for the new set.

UTStarcom is presently supplying its own CDMA handsets to North American, Latin American and Southeast Asian countries, said Vijay Yadav, managing director (South Asia) of UTStarcom Inc.

With a 1.3 inch DSTN LCD screen, the handset offers polyphonic ring tones and SMS predictive text capability, he added.