

Knitwear expo Nov 15-16 in NY

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A two-day exposition of Bangladeshi knitwear products will be held at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York on November 15 and 16.

The Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) in a press release yesterday said knitwear products of 54 member organisations of BKMEA would be on display at the fair.

BKMEA in association with South Asia Enterprise Development Facility (SEDF) has organised the fair.

A Bangladesh delegation led by Commerce Ministry Adviser Barkatullah Bulu will participate in the fair.

INT'L YEAR OF MICROCREDIT Shamima returns today from NY

Shamima Khatun, one of the four winners of the Global Microentrepreneurship Awards (GMA) organised by Citigroup Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Citigroup, and United Nations capital development Fund (UNCDF), returns to Dhaka today from New York after attending at the closing ceremony of the International Year of Microcredit as a guest of honour.

Organised and managed by Citibank NA Bangladesh as the local support to the programme along with Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation (PKSF), Shamima has been adjudged as the winner of the "Most Innovative Business of the Year" by a high-level advisory council formed for this award.

In her speech at the gala reception, she had mentioned, "I started my business of fresh vegetables with Tk 4,000.00 only. I was the first person who supplied fresh vegetables from nearby districts to my area and gained the first-mover advantage. Now I have become the whole-seller of vegetables in my area."

Shamima will be received at the Zia International Airport, by acting Citigroup Country Officer Bangladesh Khawja Masum Billah and Citigroup Country Corporate Affairs Manager Mehreen Mahiuddin.

ADB to offer risk guarantee loans

Bid to boost private sector investment

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Asian Development Bank (ADB) under its commercial co-financing programme is going to offer risk guarantee loans to boost local and foreign private sector investment in Bangladesh.

Under the programme, ADB will offer Complementary Co-financing Scheme, Political Risk Guarantee, Partial Credit Guarantee and Export Credits.

Foreign and local investors with long term projects can get the loans with risk guarantee through some local private banks, said Daniel Wanger, senior commercial co-financing specialist of ADB, at a workshop on ADB's guarantee products to the private sector yesterday in Dhaka.

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI)

organised the workshop where Mir Nasir Hossain, president of FBCCI, Dewan Sultan Ahmed, second vice president of FBCCI, and high officials from some private banks were also present.

Wanger said ADB offers \$150m for Political Risk Guarantees and \$75m for Partial Credit Guarantees for 15-year projects.

He said investors can get the loans for any of new projects, but the ADB will encourage some special areas such as gas, power, and port development.

He also said rule of law, political stability and good business environment are vital to attracting investment in any country.

He however said, "Not only Bangladesh, but every country in the world is facing political unrest. So, the borrowers will get financial guarantees

from ADB for some risks stemming from political violence, terrorism, strike, riots and civil commotion," he added.

"The new scheme is specially designed for attracting foreign direct investment in Bangladesh," he said adding that Bangladesh is a good destination for investment as Tata and Dhabi Group are planning to invest in the country.

So, the ADB's new products will be very fruitful for the investors who want to invest in Bangladesh, he hoped.

Speaking at the workshop, the FBCCI president said lack of adequate capital is one of barriers of private entrepreneurs.

ADB's initiative will be very helpful for the investors, he hoped.

Banks in Dhaka to remain closed on Nov 13

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank and all the commercial banks in the capital will remain closed on Sunday (November 13) on the occasion of the 13th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit.

Bangladesh Bank yesterday sent a circular to all the commercial banks to this effect.

However, branches of commercial banks at the Zia International Airport, Sonargaon Hotel and Sheraton Hotel may remain open for summit purposes through special arrangements.

Japan to offer Tk 40 crore for portable steel bridges project

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Japanese government will provide Bangladesh with grant assistance of Tk 40 crore for a project to install portable steel bridges in rural areas.

An exchange of notes to this effect was signed yesterday between Bangladesh and Japan, said a Japanese embassy press release.

Matsushiro Horiguchi, Japanese ambassador to Bangladesh, and Md Ismail Zabihullah, secretary of Economic Relations Division of Bangladesh, signed the exchange of notes on behalf of their governments.

Under the project, 92 dilapidated bridges will be improved in the rural areas of 17 districts in Bangladesh. The project will also install portable steel bridges at different locations of major rural roads of the districts. Since 1994, Japan has supplied 230 portable steel bridges to Bangladesh.

Oil near \$58

REUTERS, Tokyo

Oil prices slid to a new 15-week low near \$58 Thursday after a big increase in US crude stocks added pressure to a market already reeling from lacklustre demand growth and mild weather.

US light crude oil CLC1 tumbled 43 cents or 0.73 percent to \$58.50 a barrel, having hit a low of \$58.36 a barrel in electronic trade, its weakest level since July 25.

London Brent crude LCOc1 stood at \$56.45, down 43 cents.

Revenue from individual taxpayers up 50pc

NBR to conduct survey as number of tax returns declines

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Revenue income from individual taxpayers rose by 50 percent in the current fiscal year. However, only 37 percent of the total individual taxpayers with Tax Identification Number (TIN) submitted tax returns.

National Revenue Board (NBR) is also going to conduct a special survey in big cities as the number of tax returns has declined.

October 31 was the last date for submitting income tax returns in the current fiscal year. An NBR source said 5.27 lakh individual taxpayers submitted returns in the general category while 1.52 lakh submitted in self-assessment category. The total revenue earning from these two categories

stood at Tk 228.14 crore.

Last year, 5.38 lakh individual taxpayers submitted returns in the general category while 1.25 lakh in self-assessment. The total revenue earning from these two categories reached Tk 152.44 crore.

The NBR sources said the number of tax returns will rise as there are some 31,000 pending applications seeking more time to pay tax.

Now, the number of total taxpayers with TIN is around 17 lakh. About 63 percent taxpayers have not yet submitted returns. The NBR source said many take TIN for different purposes but provide fake addresses. Later they cannot be tracked.

The NBR is going to conduct a

special survey with the help of school and college students. The survey will be conducted primarily in Dhaka and Chittagong. A high official in the NBR said they are going to send a proposal to the finance ministry seeking money for the purpose.

The NBR sources also said until October around Tk 100 crore was whitened and some Tk 7.5 crore tax was earned.

As the provision to whiten black money will go from next financial year, the NBR is getting good response from the black money owners, said sources. However the businessmen who are involved in politics are largely utilising this opportunity.

WTO HONG KONG MINISTERIAL

Govt urged to take strong stand to revive food aid

UNB, Dhaka

Stakeholders at a meeting here yesterday asked the government to take a strong stand in the coming WTO ministerial conference in Hong Kong for reviving food aid to the least developed countries (LDCs) as well as duty and quota-free access of their goods to the developed nations.

The meeting with a group of NGO representatives was organised as part of a series of meetings ahead of the Hong Kong ministerial billed for December 13-18. Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury presided over the meeting.

The commerce ministry convened the meeting to take inputs from the stakeholders so that it can evolve strategies to face the WTO negotiations where Bangladesh is expected to play an active role for the LDCs to protect interests of the world's poor-nation club.

After the meeting, Altaf however

told the news agency that the possible withdrawal of farm subsidy by the developed and developing countries would not affect the interest of the LDCs, including Bangladesh.

Asked about the WTO Cancun meeting's failure, the commerce minister said he is optimistic that this meeting would yield positive results.

"All the representatives from the LDCs want positive results from the meeting," he said, adding, "It's very difficult to say anything before the WTO meeting, but I am very much optimistic about it."

As part of the series, the commerce ministry will hold a meeting with the WTO Advisory Cell on November 16. Another meeting of the Bangladesh delegation to WTO will be held on November 29.

The NGO representatives also suggested enhancing agri-subsidy locally as a price support.

Nasiruddin Ahmed, director

general of the WTO Cell under the commerce ministry however, made it clear that Bangladesh is not allowed to provide farm subsidy as per rules as the country did not submit a requisite schedule in this regard to the WTO by the 1994 deadline.

Some 22 countries have submitted the schedules within the timeframe and they are eligible for providing the agri-subsidy, Nasiruddin apprised the meeting.

He further said Pakistan and India also missed the bus, as they too could not submit the schedules.

The NGO representatives also suggested the authorities not to take fiscal policies internally that run against the WTO rules and seek a flexible rules-of-origin regime.

They also noted with concern that WTO was contributing to widening the gap between the rich and the poor, and urged the government to take up the issue with the WTO ministerial.

FAILURE TO SUBMIT REPORT ON CAPITAL

SEC issues show cause notices on 10 listed cos

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has issued show cause notices to some 10 listed companies as the companies failed to submit report on their capital and shareholding position to the commission in due time.

The capital market watchdog also asked the companies to appear for hearing at the commission's boardroom on November 22 along with written explanation showing causes as to why appropriate action should not be taken by the commission against them.

The SEC issued the orders in show-cause-cum-hearing notices to Aftab Automobiles Ltd, Bangladesh

Welding and Electrodes Ltd, Dulamia Cotton Mills Ltd, Eastern Cables Ltd, Eastern Housing Ltd, GMG Industries Corporation Ltd, Jute Spinners Ltd, Kay & Que Ltd, Apex Spinning & Knitting Mills Ltd and Wata Chemicals Ltd.

As per the SEC regulations, an issuer of a listed security must submit to the commission other documents, information or explanation regarding its affairs. But, the issuers have failed to furnish the same.

Eight of the ten companies failed to submit report on their capital and shareholding position to the commission from July 2004 to August 2005 while two other companies did not submit report from September 2004 to August 2005.

Govt signing anti-state deal with Tata

Speakers allege

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday alleged the government is trying to sign an anti-state agreement with India's industrial giant Tata Group, keeping the nation in dark.

An investment deal should be handled under a specific policy but the investment negotiations with the Tata Group are going on adhoc basis, leaving a chance of corruption and unfair deals, they said.

An organisation styled National Committee on Oil-Gas-Mineral Resources and Power, Port Protection organised the discussion in Dhaka.

Convener of the organisation Sheikh Mohammad Sahidullah presided over the meeting where

Serajul Islam, former chairman of Petrobangla, among others, was present.

In his keynote paper, M Shamsul Alam said the government did not consider the Tata investment proposal through an open competition and the proposal contains no study on economic impact of the investment.

He termed the Group's demand for tax exemption and uninterrupted gas and power supply unrealistic.

The speakers urged the government to make Tata negotiations public for the sake of transparency and accountability. They said it is also necessary to discuss the issue in the national parliament for better understanding of the investment proposal.

Ctg Women Entrepreneurs, State Bank of India sign MoU

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Chittagong Women Entrepreneurs and State Bank of India with a view to enhancing trade and bilateral relations between women entrepreneurs of the two countries.

Dukha Bandhu Nath, chief executive officer of State Bank of India, and Sharmin Hassan of Chittagong Women Entrepreneurs signed the MoU on behalf of their sides at a function on Wednesday. Both sides hoped to work for mutual benefits in the field of trade and commerce.

Assistant High Commissioner of India Ashok Das, Chittagong Women Entrepreneurs President Monwara Hakim Ali, acting President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries SM Nurul Haque, among others, were present at the function.

High demand in Asia Pacific boosts Holcim profits

ANN, Undated

Swiss cement firm Holcim Ltd reported Wednesday a substantial improvement in its performance in the third quarter of 2005, noting that an increased demand in Asia Pacific has contributed to its overall growth.

In a statement, Holcim said the demand for cement picked up in almost all markets in the Asia Pacific region, with housing and infrastructure construction mainly responsible.

India, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand all reported respectable growth in construction, although cement consumption declined slightly in Malaysia and the Philippines as a result of limited public spending, it said.

It reported delivery of 21.9 million tonnes in cement, a 14.7 per cent improvement compared with the first nine months of 2004.

Prof Yunus hails concept of South Asian poverty fund

BSS, Dhaka

World's micro-credit doyen Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday welcomed the concept of creating a South Asian Poverty Development Fund (SAPDF) under Saarc saying such fund would create a common platform to fight poverty in the region.

In a reaction he, however, said the proposed amount of money is not enough for alleviating poverty.

"But the most significant perspective of the fund is that it will create a platform to fight poverty for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015," he added.

Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue Debapriya Bhattacharya said the principle of establishing a separate fund for poverty alleviation should be pragmatic and efficient to facilitate all the members

sates of South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (Saarc) to work effectively.

Former Saarc secretary general AQM Rahim told the news agency that at the fag end of his tenure he submitted a paper on the poverty reduction fund with some recommendations.

Poverty alleviation experts of various implementing agencies suggested that the mechanism should maintain strong link between macro and micro finance. It should have components to deal with urban poor because nearly 20 percent of the urban people live under poverty line in Bangladesh.

The fund will also help create a bridge between the Saarc countries in understanding each other's poverty reduction plans and problems. It will also help establish a central data bank on poverty alleviation activities.

China won't again adjust yuan

Central bank says

REUTERS, Beijing

China will not again adjust the yuan exchange rate as it did in July, and will instead let market forces play a main role in setting its value, deputy central bank chief Xiang Junbo was quoted Thursday.

Chinese officials have repeatedly rejected market speculation of another one-off currency adjustment even though many economists believe July's 2.1 per cent revaluation was too modest. The United States has also continued calling for a stronger yuan.

"In the future, the renminbi (yuan) exchange rate will be mainly decided by market supply and demand and there won't be another one-off official adjustment," Xiang said in a recent.

China has let the yuan rise by just

0.3 per cent against the dollar since it revalued the currency by 2.1 per cent in July, even though in theory the yuan can now rise or fall against the dollar up to 0.3 per cent each day.

China would widen the yuan's trading band at an appropriate time, Xiang said, without saying whether he was referring to the closely watched yuan/dollar trading band.

"The People's Bank of China will adjust the renminbi's floating band when the time is appropriate, based on its consideration of the markets as well as the economic and financial situation," he said.

In September the central bank said the yuan's trading band against the dollar was appropriate, soon after it widened the yuan's daily trading band against non-dollar currencies to 3.0 per cent from 1.5 per cent.