

BGMEA pushes for RMG ministry

Urges govt to prepare for WTO ministerial meet in HK

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) leaders yesterday urged the government to establish a separate ministry for readymade garments (RMG) industry.

They also recommended that the government take efficient preparation to participate in the upcoming World Trade Organisation ministerial meeting in Hong Kong to get due attention from US representatives.

BGMEA President Annisul Huq at a press conference in Dhaka also apprised reporters of the success of their latest visit to US.

Commerce ministry adviser Barkat Ullah Bulu was leading a BGMEA

delegation to the US to drum up support for the passage of TRADE (Tariff Relief Assistance for Developing Economies) Bill, seeking duty-free access of LDC products to the US market.

Huq said, the BGMEA was so far able to influence 20 senators and house of representatives to sponsor and support the TRADE Bill 2005.

The US administration has assured BGMEA of not putting any embargo on passing the bill, which is a success of BGMEA towards attaining duty free market access to US, he added.

Annisul Huq said a separate ministry is badly needed as the major export-earning sector is facing manifold problems after quota phaseout.

More concerted efforts are necessary to attain trade facility through bilateral discussion with different countries, he added.

He said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had promised before 2001 election to establish a separate ministry for readymade garments but the pledge is yet to be met.

The upcoming WTO ministerial meeting is very significant for Bangladesh as around 500 US representatives including 80 senators are likely to participate in the meeting, Huq said.

"Bangladesh should do everything to get US sympathy towards the passage of TRADE Act", he added in his written speech.

Huq told of his success during his 20-month tenure, which ended yesterday, as the president of the trade body saying the BGMEA is doing well to achieve duty free access to the US market.

He said garment manufacturers have some more challenges ahead which include market access, labour right issue, building internal infrastructure, bringing changes in the customs regulation, compliance issues and building a backward linkage industry.

China and US have settled their disputes over clothing export, which will certainly have an impact on Bangladesh export in future, he cautioned.

EU team visits Ctg, Cox's Bazar shrimp areas

UNB, Chittagong

Visiting European Union (EU) Food and Veterinary Office delegation visited some fish landing stations, hatcheries and fish processing zones in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar on Monday-Tuesday and inquired about their standards.

The four-member EU delegation, led by Stephen Hanig, visited Muradpur fish inspection and quality control office, Monohardi fish landing station and the factory of Sea Resources Ltd at Sadarghat in Chittagong yesterday and talked with the local officials about maintaining its standards.

The EU team talked with the officials about the implementation of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP). "Many progresses have already been made, but some faults still exist," said team leader Hanig.

The team also visited two hatcheries, Malumghat Shrimp Landing Station in Chokoria and Kuliarchar Sea Food Ltd at the BSCIC Industrial Area in Cox's Bazar on Monday.

The team will submit a report to the European Commission about the standard of Bangladeshi shrimps and the various processing areas.



World Bank Vice-president Praful C Patel pays a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh assured of continued WB support

UNB, Dhaka

World Bank Vice-president Praful C Patel assured the multilateral donor agency's continued support to Bangladesh in poverty reduction and other development programmes.

The WB top executive, now in Dhaka to attend the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Forum 2005, appreciated the progress in various sectors and good programmes for socio-economic development in Bangladesh.

Patel's assurance and appreciation came when he had a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. He also appreciated a "positive outcome" of the just-held Saarc summit in Dhaka.

Thanking the WB vice-president

for assuring continued support to Bangladesh, Prime Minister Khaleda hoped that the WB and other development partners and donor agencies would come up with a combined package of necessary financial support in implementation of the PRSP and other development programmes.

Khaleda also hoped that the World Bank would extend assistance in supply of pure drinking water in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna cities, in power generation and health sector.

While responding, Patel said the World Bank has been working in Bangladesh at three stages in power sector: power-plant rehabilitation, large-scale power generation and small-scale power generation.

The World Bank vice-president

appreciated Bangladesh's sustained high economic growth, economic development, timely reform in economic sectors, macroeconomic stability, success in poverty reduction, gender equality, micro-credit and remarkable progress in good governance.

He said Bangladesh media could project those success stories and achievements broadly which would help both nationally and internationally to know the country's progress and development.

Patel thanked Khaleda, the current chairperson of Saarc, for successfully hosting the 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka.

World Bank Country Representative Christine Wallich accompanied the vice-president.

Cooperation from locals needed to boost CHT economy: Mintoo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Businesspeople are keen to invest in the tourism and agro-based sectors in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region to boost its economy, but fear of adequate cooperation from the local authorities, said Abdul Awal Mintoo.

Mintoo, former president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), said investors need cooperation from the indigenous leaders and the local administration to strengthen the CHT economy.

He said this while meeting Dr Maniklal Dewan, chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC), and Gazi Mohammad Zulhash, deputy commissioner, on Sunday, sources said.

A joint team comprising top specialists from different United Nations Agencies and the government of Bangladesh is paying a 15-day visit from November 12 to CHT in a mission to assess economic opportunities of this region.

Led by International Labour Organisation (ILO) top specialist Hans Christian Haan, the team included two other experts on youth employment and cooperative from the same agency, marketing sector development specialist Pushpa Mathema and Agro-processing specialist Narin Tongshiri of Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), five different sector specialists of World Food Programme (WFP), Tourism specialist Ramesh Chandra of World Trade Organization (WTO) and three others from the International Centre for Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

From the home side, the team includes Abdul Awal Mintoo and private sector resource person Mohammed Mamunur Rashid, private sector investment specialist of JOBS Imran Shaikat and Erika Hoffman-Kiess, sources detailed.



Outgoing President of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Annisul Huq (left) speaks at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday while BGMEA Director Tipu Munshi, who replaces Huq today, looks on.

MGH Group engages Impact as public relations agency

BDNEWS, Dhaka

MGH Group, one of the country's leading supply chain specialist conglomerates having worldwide operations, yesterday engaged Impact PR as its official public relations agency.

M Shamsur Rahman, chief executive officer of Impact PR, and Abdur Rahim, general manager of MGH Group, have signed an agreement to this effect in Dhaka.

Under the agreement, Impact PR will provide public relations services and media counsel for corporate entities under the umbrella of MGH Group and address all media inquiries on a 24-hour and seven-day-a-week basis.

Oil steady under \$58

REUTERS, Sydney

Oil held onto Monday's gains in early Tuesday trading, but failed to build on the rally after the Opec Oil cartel resisted calls to cut output in response to the recent price slide.

Analysts remain confident that Opec eventually will move to defend the oil price by easing production levels, which remain at full throttle in the wake of the autumn hurricane season.

But most analysts concede that colder weather is needed before a renewed rally will gain momentum.

Summit Power debuts on bourses

Price per share rises to as high as Tk 449.50

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Trading of Summit Power Limited (SPL) began on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) and Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) yesterday.

On the opening day the SPL share prices rose to as high as Tk 449.50 each from the initial public offerings (IPOs) price of Tk 140.

The highest price of Tk 449.50 was recorded at the CSE while the price rose to as high as Tk 400 at the DSE.

Share trading of SPL at DSE yesterday witnessed the price to close at Tk 359 while the lowest price was recorded at Tk 321 and at the CSE the price closed at Tk 373.75 while the lowest price was Tk 329.

A total of 342,700 shares of SPL worth Tk 119.86 million were traded at the DSE, while 55,200 shares worth Tk 19.56

million were traded at the CSE.

Earlier in the morning, the power generation company signed an agreement for listing with the DSE.

Salahuddin Ahmed Khan, chief executive officer of DSE, and Muhammed Aziz Khan, chairman and managing director of SPL, signed the agreement on behalf of their organisations.

About the share price on the opening day, Aziz Khan said the price reflected the maturity of the market.

Echoing him, DSE President Shahiq Khan said the investors are now more aware of the market.

DSE President Shahiq Khan urged the power generation company to follow the capital market rules, hold annual general meetings and declare dividends for the shareholders regularly.

SPL is the first Bangladeshi power generating company that went for IPOs, which closed on August 31 this year.

The company offered 20 lakh ordinary shares of Tk 140 each including premium of Tk 40 per share totalling Tk

28 crore.

Out of the total shares, 18 lakh shares were earmarked for general public and the rest two lakh for non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs).

SPL had received subscription of Tk 201 crore against 282,939 applications from general public and Tk 38 crore against 2318 applications from NRBs totalling Tk 239 crore.

The company is currently operating three 11-MW power plants at Ashulia in Savar, Chandina in Comilla and Madhabdi in Narshingdi.

The funds raised from the public shares will be utilised for expansion programme of two of these plants.

The company signed agreements with the Rural Electrification Board (REB) and government of Bangladesh to generate an additional 37.5 MW power.

With this new expansion, the power generation capacity at Madhabdi plant will be 35MW while the capacity in Chandina plant will be 24.5MW.

The plants will start full-phased power generation by August 2006.

China sides with developing world in WTO row

AFP, Busan, South Korea

China said Tuesday it stood with the developing world in a row over agriculture subsidies that threatens to derail global trade talks and next month's WTO meeting in Hong Kong.

Developing nations have argued that the chief stumbling block in the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks is the high level of agricultural subsidies in the United States and the European Union, along with barriers to farm imports.

"We hope that the WTO round in Hong Kong will be of a constructive nature and bring benefits to the

members of the WTO, particularly the developing members," Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said in South Korea.

WTO Director General Pascal Lamy and trade ministers from the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum held talks here amid growing fears next month's WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong could end in failure.

Apec members have expressed frustration with the EU's failure to offer substantial cuts in farm subsidies, and Tuesday's meeting drew up a hard-hitting statement calling for

concessions from all nations without specifically naming the EU.

Li said the finger pointing would not resolve anything, but made it clear that China would stand with developing nations in seeking greater concessions.

"I'm afraid the parties involved need to be constructive -- complaints or blaming sometimes don't have much (effectiveness)," Li said.

"China is a member of the developing world and also a member of the WTO, so we will work together with other parties to seek more progress," he said.