

Remittance grows 23pc in seven months

MONJUR MAHMUD

Remittance inflow saw a sharp 23 percent boost fetching US\$2,570 million during July-January period of the current financial year.

Non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) sent \$390 million in January and \$413.63 million in December, which was an all time high in a single month. In the first seven months of the last fiscal year the amount was \$2093.49 million.

As the central bank continues its efforts to encourage NRBs to send their money through banking channels, remittance inflow has so far been able to see a strong growth.

Private commercial banks (PCBs) have also become more

aggressive in remittance business offering quick and reliable services and attracting Bangladeshis abroad to send their money through legal channels. Remittance has also become a good source of income of some foreign banks with strong network in Bangladesh.

Remittance inflow was \$3,848.29 million in the last financial year. According to sources, NRBs send over \$ 7 billion a year and a significant portion of the total amount still comes through hundi, an illegal way of money transfer.

Bankers observed there are further scopes to increase remittance through banking channels.

"Some of the private banks are taking services of the globally

renowned money transfer companies that have networks around the world and have extended their services to rural Bangladesh," said a top executive of a private bank. "As a result, remittance has become a major source of their incomes."

With higher growth in remittance inflow, the foreign exchange reserve is in a relatively better shape amounting to \$2.83 billion last week, although the overall balance of payment (BoP) has been under pressure.

A surplus BoP turned into a deficit one during July-November period of the current financial year due to widening trade gap and declining net FDI and foreign aid.

The BoP was a surplus US\$484

million in the first five months of 2004-05 fiscal while it became negative \$369 million during the same period of 2005-06 financial year.

Although import growth over the same period dropped, it did not help in shrinking the trade gap as export growth also marked a decline during July-November period of the current financial year.

Import grew by 22.95 percent in the July-November period of FY05 while it recorded 10.95 percent growth during the same period of FY 06. On the other hand, export grew by 19.64 percent in the July-November period in FY05 while it recorded a 12.73 percent growth in the first five months of FY 06.

Textile, RMG machinery show begins tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

A four-day textile and garment machinery show begins here tomorrow to introduce local textile entrepreneurs with modern technologies in the sector.

Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) is organising the fair titled "The 3rd Dhaka International Textiles and Garments Machinery Exhibition-2006" at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, a BTMA communiqué said.

It added that the countries are in the effort to innovate new approaches besides improving their technical capabilities to face the challenges of post-MFA era.

The show will provide local entrepreneurs with the opportunity to have a first hand idea on the new technologies and machinery being used in the different sub-sectors of the textile industry, according to the communiqué.

Transcom Beverages wins 'Bottler of the Year Award'

In recognition of its accomplishment in soft drinks business, Transcom Beverages Ltd has been adjudged the "Bottler of the Year Award" for the South Asia Business Unit of PepsiCo International.

Aloke Malik, executive director of PepsiCo International (East Region), handed over the award to Latifur Rahman, chairman and managing director of Transcom Group, at a function in Dhaka, says a press release.

Shahnaz Rahman, Saifur Rahman, Atiqur Rahman, directors of Transcom Group, and Golam Quddus Chowdhury, executive director of Transcom Beverages Ltd, Sudhir Pradhan, country manager for Pepsi Cola in Bangladesh, and Khurshid Irfan Chowdhury, general manager of Sales & Distribution, were also present at the award giving ceremony.

Transcom Beverages Ltd is in the business of manufacturing, bottling and marketing of soft drinks under the trademarks of Pepsi, 7UP, Mirinda, Mountain Dew, Slice and other brands owned by PepsiCo Inc USA under Exclusive Bottling Agreement from PepsiCo Inc USA.

The company has come a long way since it took over the business from the previous bottler in March 2000 and its performance last year was adjudged the best among all the Pepsi Bottlers in South Asia.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia speaks at the inauguration of five-star Radisson Water Garden Hotel on the Airport Road in Dhaka on Sunday.

HC stays SEC order on transfer of 1m Apex Weaving shares

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The High Court has stayed for four months the operation of a Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) order on transferring 1 million shares and taking over the management of Apex Weaving and Finishing Mills Ltd by Dynamic World Holdings Ltd.

After hearing a writ petition filed by Apex Weaving and Finishing Mills Ltd, the High Court on Sunday issued a rule upon the SEC to show cause as to why its order transferring 1 million shares, and taking over Apex Weaving and Finishing Mills Ltd by Dynamic World Holdings Ltd should not be declared illegal.

The rule made by a division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Awald Ali and Jinnat Ara is returnable within four weeks.

The SEC, on January 26, issued an order permitting the Dynamic World Holdings Ltd, a Hong Kong-based company, to purchase 1 million shares of the Apex Weaving from the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB). The SEC also ordered the Apex Ltd to transfer management of the company to the Dynamic Holdings after the execution of purchase.

Harun-Ar-Rashid on behalf of Apex Weaving and Finishing Mills Ltd filed a writ petition in the High Court challenging the validity of the SEC order.

Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud assisted by Barrister Mustafizur Rahman Khan moved the petition before the court.

Sources said the ratio of the share of the Dynamic Holdings is scheduled to be 28 percent after it (Dynamic Holdings) will purchase 1 million shares of Apex from the ICB. The ICB is supposed to make the deal with the Dynamic Holdings at Tk 112 for each share of the 1 million shares, market sources added.

Asked, Golam Rasul Mohsin, Company Secretary of the Apex Weaving, said the ICB held 35 percent shares of the Apex Weaving currently.

Yuan opens at post-revaluation high against US dollar

AP, Shanghai, China

China's currency began trading Monday at a post-revaluation high against the US dollar, as local banks sold some of their excess dollar positions after the lunar New Year holiday, traders said.

The US dollar opened at 8.0560 yuan on the automatic

price-matching system. The dollar last traded in Shanghai at 8.0616, on Jan 27.

On the over-the-counter market, the dollar opened at 8.0555, the lowest trading level since a July 21 revaluation. The last OTC trade on Jan 27 was at 8.0623.

The first trade took place about 15 minutes after the market

opened as traders were surprised by the low opening rate posted for Monday.

The opening rate for the yuan, known as the dollar/yuan central parity, is set according to a weighted average of prices submitted by designated banks. The highest and lowest offers are excluded from the calculation.

Oil jumps \$1 a barrel

AP, Singapore

Oil prices rose sharply on Monday after Iran ended all voluntary cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog agency, saying it would start uranium enrichment and bar surprise inspections of its facilities.

Light, sweet crude for March delivery rose US\$1.01 to US\$66.38 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange in Asian electronic trading.

On London's ICE exchange, March Brent crude rose 97 cents to US\$64.36 a barrel. Nymex heating oil advanced 2.34 cents to US\$1.8050 a gallon (3.8 liters) while gasoline gained 1.33 cents to US\$1.6950 a gallon.

New training institute opens

A new training institute, Institute of Training Innovative Management and Technology (INTIMATE), was launched in Dhaka yesterday.

Education Minister Osman Faruk formally inaugurated the institution at a function, says a press release.

Among others, MH Rahman, chief executive officer of INTIMATE, Saadat Husain, former cabinet secretary, Mahbubur Rahman, president of International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh, Samson H Chowdhury, chairman of Square Group, and MA Momen, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, attended the function.

The institute will focus on management and professional skill development training, research, study and consultancy, publication and dissemination of important news and views concerning national and international business and education offering professional certificate or diploma courses.

US trade show kicks off tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In a bid to boost bilateral trade between Bangladesh and the US, a three-day exposition of US products and services will begin in Dhaka tomorrow.

US embassy and the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) are jointly organising the 15th version of the fair styled "US Trade Show-2006".

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan is expected to inaugurate the show, while Chargé d'affaires of US embassy in Bangladesh Judith A Chammas will also be present, organisers said.

A total of 75 US companies will showcase their products and services at 127 stalls at the fair at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, said Andrew L Fawthrop, AmCham president, at a press conference yesterday, while announcing the fair schedule.

US products and services including soft drinks, health and

beauty products, software, educational services, gym and health club equipment, marine engines, gift items, ICT products, electronic products, telecommunication products and services, toys, cosmetics, home interiors, raw cotton, international air and sea freight forwarding services, soybean, coffee, rubber, sugar, fruit juice, poultry and textile machinery will be put on display at the show.

Organisers said the show will remain open to all from 10am to 8pm with a Tk20 entry ticket.

AmCham president said businesspeople from the US and Bangladesh will get an opportunity to interact with each another at the exposition, which will help boost trade relation between the two countries.

He said, "A positive business trend grew between the US and Bangladesh during last few years, promoting the US to invest so far around \$1 billion in different sectors of Bangladesh".

Replying to a question, Dundas

McCullough, councillor of politics and economic affairs of US embassy, said the draft of Tifa (Trade and Investment Framework Agreement) is still under the review of US government.

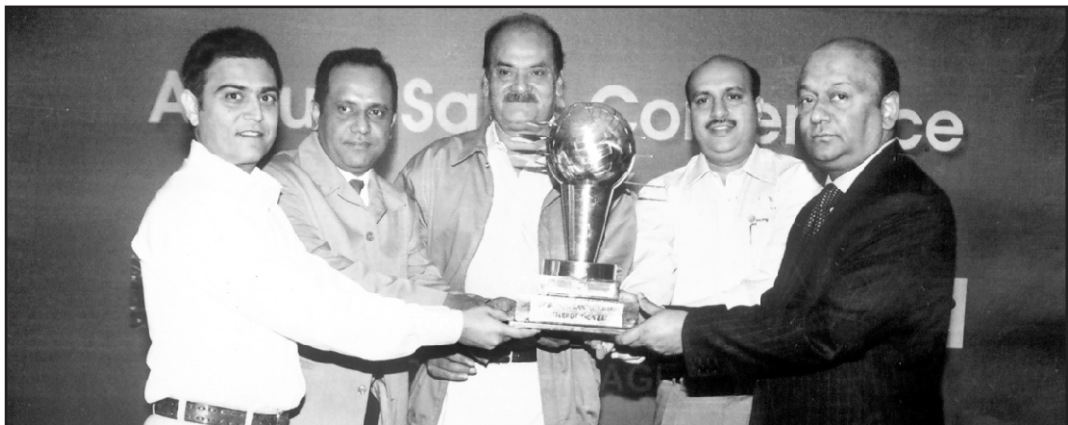
"We are ready to welcome any further development of the Tifa," he said.

"As part of the embassy's trade promotion activities, we are ready to support Bangladesh by supplying US Boeing aircraft to Bangladesh Biman fleet," McCullough said.

Among others, Dayle Johns, officer of economic affairs of US embassy, and A Gafur, AmCham executive director, were present at the press conference.

Meanwhile, the American Center of the US embassy in Dhaka in a press release said it will showcase its services at booth number 85.

Staff from the Student Advising Center of the embassy at the show to answer to questions and give information on higher studies in the US.



Latifur Rahman (R), chairman and managing director of Transcom Group, receives on behalf of Transcom Beverages Ltd the "Bottler of the Year Award" for the South Asia Business Unit of PepsiCo International from Aloke Malik (L), executive director of PepsiCo International (East Region), at a function in Dhaka.

WTO NEGOTIATIONS

Ruling, opposition leaders for strategy to ensure gains

BDNEWS, Chittagong

Leaders of the ruling and opposition parties at a seminar yesterday stressed the need for pragmatic strategy to ensure gains from the post-Hong Kong negotiations under the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The seminar titled "WTO Hong Kong Ministerial: Our Road Map" was organised by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) on the sidelines of the three-day Chittagong Apparel, Fabrics and Accessories Exposition (CAFAXPO) that ended yesterday.

Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman, former commerce minister Tofail Ahmed, former state minister for Planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, former president of BGMEA Annisul Huq, Director of BGMEA SM Fazlul Haq and First Vice President of BGMEA Abu Taiyyab took part in the discussion at the seminar. Professor of Dhaka University MA Taslim was the moderator.

Tofail Ahmed said lack of coor-

dination among the ministries of commerce, foreign affairs and finance was the main factor for the failure to achieve anything from the Hong Kong ministerial.

Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir said the failure of Bangladesh prominently surfaced in the ministerial conference, which offered gains for even the poor cotton producing countries in Africa.

Foreign Advisor Reaz Rahman rejected the allegation of failure and said the government took a series of steps ahead of the ministerial to protect the country's interest in global trade talks. But, he admitted, it could have been a better deal in Hong Kong for Bangladesh.

He stressed the need for activating the parliament and its standing committees to arrange meaningful discussions on nationally important issues.

The participants urged the government to set up a task force on WTO with representatives from all concerned, including ministries, trade bodies and do required homework before going for further negotiations in Geneva.



Mamun Rashid (R), Citigroup country officer-Bangladesh, speaks at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday to mark the launch of a Citigroup Foundation-Grameen Trust (GT) project to give interest-free loans to beggars as Prof HI Latifee, GT managing director, looks on.

Sensex hits historic 10,000 mark

AFP, New Delhi

Indian share prices touched a historic high Monday afternoon with the benchmark 30-share Sensex tipping the 10,000 points level for the first time ever.

In a volatile trading session, the Sensex briefly topped the 10,000 mark before dropping swiftly on heavy selling pressure.

Brokers at large securities firms were seen giving "high-fives" and clenching fists in celebration when the level was breached.

At a leading brokerage firm Motilal Oswal in south Mumbai, brokers cut a large cake with a "10,000" in icing to mark the moment.