



## Syeduzzaman becomes member of IRR Board of Trustees

M Syeduzzaman, chairman of Bank Asia Ltd, has been appointed member of the Board of Trustees of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) based in Manila, the Philippines.

Earlier he was a member of the Board of Trustees of International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) based in Washington DC, says a press release.

Currently Syeduzzaman is the chairman of Bangladesh Rice Foundation, a research and advocacy institution.

## MICROENTREPRENEURSHIP

## Citigroup awards nomination submission date extended to July 23

The submission deadline for sending nominations for 'Citigroup Microentrepreneurship Awards' programme has now been extended to July 23, 2006.

The winners in five categories - 'Best Innovative Micro Business of the Year', 'Best Woman Microentrepreneur of the Year', 'Best Microentrepreneur of the Year', 'Best Microfinance Institution (MFI) of the Year' and 'Best Program for the Hardcore Poor' - of the award programme of Citigroup Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Citigroup, will be announced at the end of the selection process.

All nominations for five categories of the awards with complete information are requested to be sent to Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation (PKSF).

The Citigroup Microentrepreneurship Awards programme is locally managed by the PKSF and Citibank NA Bangladesh.

More information is available with Akond Md Rafiqul Islam, assistant general manager (Operations) of the PKSF, at 9126240 ext: 1115 or at [www.asia.citibank.com/bangladesh/corporate](http://www.asia.citibank.com/bangladesh/corporate) or [www.pksfbd.org](http://www.pksfbd.org).

## ONE Bank chairman re-elected



Sayeed H Chowdhury

Sayeed H Chowdhury has been re-elected chairman of ONE Bank Ltd for a one-year term with effect from June 29, 2006.

The Board of Directors of the bank also re-elected Zahur Ullah its first vice chairman and elected Hefazatur Rahman second vice chairman, says a press release.

A member of the British Institute of Management and president of Bangladesh Ocean Going Ship Owners Association, Chowdhury is the chairman and chief executive officer of HRC Family and chairman of Media NewAge Ltd.

Zahur Ullah is the chairman of Apparel Fair Pvt Ltd while Hefazatur Rahman is the managing director of Mostafa Group.

# Safta success hinges on non-tariff barrier removal

## Commerce minister tells Indian fabric show

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Effectiveness of Safta (South Asia Free Trade Area) largely depends on removal of non-tariff barriers, Commerce Minister M Hafiz Uddin Ahmad said in Dhaka yesterday.

He was inaugurating the 3-day 'Indian Cotton Yarn & Fabric Show-2006' at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council (TEXPROCIL) of India in association with Indian High Commission in Dhaka organised the show.

Although bilateral trade volume between Bangladesh and India has been increasing day by day, which resulted from Safta and Bimstech free trade agreements, this trade is highly tilted towards India, the minister said, suggesting that existing tariff, non-tariff and para-

tariff barriers should be removed to address the huge trade gap.

Figuring a US\$ 1886 million trade deficit between the two countries in FY 05, Hafiz Uddin anticipated "such a deficit may be widened this year too".

He also told the show that the bilateral trade volume stood at \$ 2,200 million in the same fiscal year.

The minister also urged the Indian entrepreneurs to invest in fabric and yarn sector in Bangladesh taking the advantage of the country's LDC (least developed country) status.

Highlighting the positive sides of the show, he suggested that India should supply fabric and yarn to Bangladesh as a next door neighbour.

Bangladesh imports a huge volume of accessories for its export-

oriented RMG industries, the commerce minister also told the function, expressing hope that this exposition would provide country's RMG manufacturers an opportunity to compare price and quality of required items and thus help in reaching this sourcing decision.

Veena Sikri, high commissioner of India to Bangladesh, DN Srivastava, minister (Economic and Commercial) of Indian High Commission, and Siddhartha Rajagopal, executive director, TEXPROCIL, also spoke on the occasion.

On the trade imbalance, Sikri said India is well aware of its trade deficit with Bangladesh and working sincerely to reduce the gap.

She, however, made a suggestion that gaining a trade atmosphere

in its favour is linked to the country's infrastructure development.

Sikri also urged Bangladesh to develop Mongla sea port and establish trade link with Haldia port of India to accelerate trade and reduce trade gap between the two countries. She laid emphasis on a direct rail, road and water link to increase trade.

Sikri informed the show that Bangladesh was India's third largest export destination for fabrics and second largest for yarn.

Attended by 19 fabric and yarn producers of India, the show aims to have a wide interaction with local yarn and fabric importers and to project their wide range of cotton and blended textiles. The fair is open from 10am to 8pm every day.



PHOTO: STAR

Commerce Minister Hafizuddin Ahmad along with Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri visits a stall after inaugurating a three-day 'Indian Cotton Yarn & Fabric Show-2006' at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

# Europe for level playing field as China competition grows

### AFP, Brussels

As Chinese companies cut into their market share at home, European businesses are stepping up demands for China to open its own vast markets and ensure a level playing field with local firms.

Although Europe's low-cost labour-intensive industries such as clothes and textiles were the first to feel the heat from Chinese competition, increasingly it is high-tech sectors that are coming under pressure.

"As China deepens its investment in research and development and moves into higher-cost production it will be cars and precision manufacturing" that face competition, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson said.

"And after that aircraft and marine engineering," he added, speaking at a conference on trade and investment with China on Friday.

Over the last year, Mandelson has struggled to ease trade tensions with Beijing over booming clothing and shoe imports and is eager to avoid further conflict as China becomes dominant in other industries.

Smooth relations have become a top priority for both the EU and

China as trade between them has boomed in recent years, reaching an estimated 200 billion euros (256 billion dollars) last year.

The EU has become China's biggest trading partner while China is now the EU's second-largest trading partner after the United States, according to the European Commission.

Despite the booming trade relationship however, the general secretary of the ETUC federation of European unions, John Monks, warned that Europeans were often left with the impression that it was not taking place on a level playing field.

"There is undoubtedly a feeling around that we are not being played with fairly and that we are at risk, particularly in the trading sector of the economy," he said.

European business leaders are nonetheless eager to stress that China represents an opportunity, not just a challenge.

The chief China representative for German chemicals giant BASF, Joerg Wuttke, said China should not be seen as the world's factory, but increasingly as a vast global marketplace for goods and services.

"China is not going to be just a supply story, it's turning into a demand story," Wuttke said.

"By 2015 China will have about 600 to 700 million end-consumers and that's why business is establishing itself at this stage in order to be present for the years to come," he added.

However, the head of the EU chamber of commerce in China, Serge Janssens de Varebeke, warned that European business still faced considerable obstacles when doing business, making it difficult to compete with more savvy locals.

"Some regulations appear to be designed to be non-tariff barriers to trade limiting foreign access to Chinese markets," he said.

The head of the China network of the UNICE European employers lobby, Michel Bricout insisted that China stick to internationally agreed trade rules so foreign firms could compete fairly.

"What is crucial is that competition in China is fair and based on the full implementation of economic and trade rules," he said.

"European companies are committed to China, but the more that China is a key partner playing by the rules the more European businesses will commit to China," Bricout added.

## GP introduces int'l MMS

GrameenPhone Ltd has introduced international MMS (mobile multimedia service) enabling all GP subscribers to send and receive MMS from subscribers of some selected foreign mobile phone operators.

All GP subscribers, both prepaid and postpaid, can now send and receive photographs of their near and dear ones or other graphic contents through MMS from subscribers of some selected foreign mobile phone operators.

The service, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, was launched on June 26, says a press release.

Now GrameenPhone has agreements with 11 mobile phone operators in as many countries to send and receive MMS. The mobile phone operators are Telenor in Norway; Pannon in Hungary; Sonofon in Denmark; Promonte in Montenegro; China Mobile in China; Maxis Telecom in Malaysia; Telstra in Australia; Wataniya in Algeria; Jersey Telecom in Jersey of the United Kingdom; Orange in Switzerland; and Meditel in Morocco.

More mobile phone operators will be available for sending/receiving International MMS within the current month.

The GP subscribers will only need an EDGE-enabled handset and have the EDGE service activated to avail the international MMS. GP subscribers (both pre and postpaid) will be charged Tk 15+VAT for sending each international MMS. No charge will be applicable for receiving an international MMS. Maximum allowable MMS size is 100 kb.

Details of EDGE activation procedures are available in GrameenPhone centres or the website - [www.grameenphone.com](http://www.grameenphone.com).

## Warid selects Motorola to deploy 2.5G GSM network in Bangladesh

Warid Telecom International has selected Motorola to deploy a new 2.5G GSM network in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Expected to be commercially deployed by the end of 2006, the network will provide region-wide coverage in the northeastern region. Eventually Warid Telecom's entire network will support voice and data services for up to five million new customers in Bangladesh, the release added.

Warid Telecom will be deploying Motorola Reach GSM solutions to provide an 1800 MHz mobile network to deliver voice and data services. This new network will be upgradeable to EDGE and eventually 3G to deliver media-rich data services.

Motorola will also be supplying and implementing its wi4 Canopy® wireless broadband system to connect Warid's headquarters with its distributors nation-wide in Bangladesh.

The wi4 Canopy, part of Motorola MOT0w4Tm wireless broadband solutions, provides a scalable, reliable platform that supports high-speed broadband applications.

Bashir A Tahir, CEO for Warid Telecom International LLC, said, "We are pleased to be playing a part in the growing telecommunications sector in Bangladesh."



PHOTO: STAR

Annisul Huq, former BGMEA president and a member representing the owners in the newly formed wage commission for garment industry, speaks at a meeting with the leaders of 16 garment workers' associations in Dhaka yesterday.

# Islamabad braces for legal wrangle with Delhi over Safta

### PTI, Islamabad

A day after India approached the Saarc Secretariat against Pakistan's decision to limit trade to a few items under South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta), Islamabad Friday indicated that it might move to the dispute settlement mechanism of Safta to resolve the differences.

Reacting to reports that Commerce Minister Kamal Nath has written to Saarc Secretary General Chenkyab Dorji about Pakistan's decision not to fully accord Safta benefits to India,

Foreign Office spokesperson here Tasnim Aslam said Islamabad has not yet received India's complaint.

"We have not seen the complaint. Safta has a dispute mechanism. We will take action after receiving India's complaint," she said.

Pakistan's commerce ministry officials said Islamabad braced for a legal battle on Safta application through dispute mechanism agreed under Safta.

Safta agreement has listed an elaborate dispute settlement procedure and Pakistan, which insists that it would not accord full trade

status to India until the Kashmir issue is resolved, is expected to defend its case through the dispute settlement mechanism of Safta.

Safta came into operation on January 1 this year, but the Tariff Liberalisation Programme started on July 1. All member countries conduct trade with each other on all items, except those in negative list on which duties are not reduced.

Pakistan, however, has decided to trade with India on the basis of a small list of 773 items under a positive list and has also refused to grant it the Most Favoured Nation status.

# Asia going nuclear amid rising oil prices

### AP, South Korea

Led by fast-growing China and India, Asia is going nuclear in a big way to feed its ravenous appetite for energy.

The strains of economic growth are already showing. Energy shortages have forced Chinese factories to scale back production, and farmers in India often have power for only half the day. Both countries say their future growth is at risk unless they diversify their energy mix.

So does South Korea, where Yoon Ho-taek scans a construction site the size of 10 football fields in the southeastern city of Ulsan, points to what looks like a partly built amphitheater, and declares: "The future of nuclear power is bright."

South Korea, the world's second biggest coal importer and third biggest oil importer, already depends on nuclear reactors for 40 percent of its

power and is talking of increasing that to 60 percent by 2035.

Yoon's company, Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power, is building four reactors and plans four more by 2017. Two of them are 1,000-megawatt reactors going up in Ulsan, lighting as many as 2.4 million homes in South Korea's industrial heartland.

Along with homemade reactors, Asia's plans hold out the promise of a bonanza for American companies such as Westinghouse Electric Co. and General Electric Co which already have a strong presence in the region.

Westinghouse has helped build 14 nuclear plants in South Korea and provided technology for almost half of Japan's 55 nuclear units. GE, meanwhile, has helped build 36 reactors in Japan, India and Taiwan.

"We expect Asia to become a

leader in the use of commercial nuclear power," Timothy Collier, president of Westinghouse Korea, told The Associated Press. Asia needs a reliable electricity source, he says, and "Nuclear offers the opportunity to do that free of the dependence on oil."

Eighteen reactors about 70 percent of the world's total under construction are going up in Asia, and another 77 are planned or proposed, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute, an industry advocacy group based in Washington, D.C.

Japan depends on nuclear plants for a third of its power and plans to double its nuclear capacity by 2050. Australia wants to build its first plant, and Indonesia has vowed to go nuclear, even though it's vulnerable to earthquakes, floods and landslides.

# EU to force cellphone operators to slash roaming charges

### AFP, Brussels

Despite a fierce lobbying campaign by the telecoms industry, the European Commission is poised to force operators to slash the cost of mobile phone calls while abroad, officials say.

Upset that operators have ignored warnings to cut so-called "roaming" rates, the European Union's executive arm is to carry out its threat to introduce measures aimed at cutting prices in half.

Information Society and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding is to unveil on Wednesday controversial new regulations to push prices lower, which the industry has fought tooth-and-nail to avoid.

"The cross-border nature of international roaming services ... partially explains the difficulties for the national regulators to address the high prices for international roaming," she said in a recent speech.

"In addition, given the cross border nature of the problems, any type of legislative intervention by member states would be ineffective and would risk giving rise to divergent results," she added.

With 147 million Europeans using roaming services, the market is estimated to be worth about 8.5 billion euros a year.

But although Reding has decided to go ahead with the mea-

sures in the teeth of resistance from operators and even some national measures, she has watered down the new regulations.

In particular, she has dropped plans for a so-called country-of-origin principle under which a Frenchman, for example, on a trip in Berlin would pay a local rate if he called a taxi with his mobile phone.

Critics warned that the rule could have encouraged consumers to import SIM cards -- which, inserted into a mobile phone, manage which networks the caller can use and at what price -- from countries with the lowest rates.

But under the plans she is to present on Wednesday, a copy of which has been obtained by AFP, Reding will fix the wholesale rate that an operator charges a foreign

rival who uses its network on the behalf of a customer travelling abroad.

However, what really makes operators shiver with dread are plans for a cap on retail rates they can impose.

Consumer associations and the European Commission consider that the measure is necessary so that the benefits of lower wholesale rates are passed on to consumers.

Even more controversially, the commission does not allow customers to be charged when they receive a call while abroad.

The GSM Association, an industry lobby, warns that the reform will only result in operators raising their domestic prices so that they can make up for the lower roaming profits.



PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Qazi Saleemul Huq, chairman of Prime Exchange Co Pte Ltd, a subsidiary of Prime Bank Ltd, inaugurates the exchange company in Singapore on Saturday. The company will offer remittance services to Bangladeshi expatriates in Singapore. Imam Anwar, chairman of the bank, among others, was present at the inauguration.