

## 24 out of 44 Bangladesh missions abroad fall short of export targets

**\$4179.61m fetched in Jul-Mar in FY06**

**Md HASAN**

More than half of Bangladesh missions abroad failed to achieve their respective export targets for 11 months of the fiscal 2005-06.

A total of 24 out of 44 Bangladesh missions abroad could not achieve their respective export targets for the July-May period of the last fiscal, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

During the period, these 24 missions lagged behind the target of exports worth \$4885 million, fetching only \$4179.61, that is \$705.39 million less.

Besides, eight out of 16 commercial wings in the foreign missions also failed to reach their export targets set for the same period.

However, although 24 missions could not achieve their export targets, export growth of 15 missions including Washington, Paris, Ottawa, Ankara, Islamabad, Beijing, Bangkok, Moscow, Manila, Nairobi, Kuwait, Pretoria, Doha, Manila and Hanoi was higher than that in the corresponding period of the previous year.

The rest 9 missions, including Tehran, Seoul, Canberra, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Tashkent, Thimphu, Katmandu and Muscat completely failed to reach the target set for 11 months for the last fiscal.

A leading businessman of the country said missions' officials are not skilled enough to understand global market trends and they even do not know how to impress the foreign buyers.

"The mission officials also fail to give update information regarding business opportunities of Bangladeshi products in their destinations," he told The Daily Star.

A commerce ministry official attributed failure in promoting country's export in the foreign market to lack of proper training of the mission officials, of whom a major portion were appointed on political consideration.

He also alleged that the missions' officials were not often found co-operating with the country's businessmen if their help sought.

He suggested establishing separate trade facilitation center in every country where Bangladeshis

export most of their products.

As per the data given by the state-run export promotional agency, of the total 44 missions, as many as 20 missions including Berlin, London, Rome, Madrid, Brussels, The Hague, Stockholm, New Delhi, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Riyadh, Dubai, Amman, Cairo, Colombo, Rabat, Yangoon, Tripoli and Brunei successfully achieved their target set for the period.

The target set for these missions was \$4400.57million whereas they fetched \$5036.44million during the timeframe, that is, \$635.87million more than the target.

From the statistics of mission-wise export target and achievement, it also shows that out of 16 only eight commercial wings achieved the export target and eight commercial wings could not achieve target set for them during the period.

These eight commercial wings are based in Washington, Paris, Ottawa, Beijing, Tehran, Canberra, Moscow and Kuala Lumpur.

Although eight commercial wings could not achieve their export

target but out of them, performance of five commercial wings based in Washington, Paris, Ottawa, Beijing, Katmandu and Muscat was found better than that in the corresponding period of the previous year.

The rest three commercial wings based in Tehran, Canberra, Moscow and Kuala Lumpur fully failed to achieve the target set for the period.

The target set for these unsuccessful commercial wings was \$3992.58million, whereas they fetched \$3876.72 million during the period.

However, the commercial wings in Berlin, London, New Delhi, Brussels, Tokyo, Dubai, Yangoon, and Madrid went ahead of their target of \$3302.39million, earning \$3748.02million during the period.

The actual export earning for the July-May period of FY 2005-06 was \$9410.55 million as against the target of \$9094.51 million, a 3.48 percent higher than the target and 20.89 percent more than that in the corresponding period of the previous year, EPB statistics shows.



PHOTO: UNITREND

Jamilud Din Ahsan, Bangladeshi ambassador to Libya, and Syed Mahmudul Huq, honorary consul of Malta in Bangladesh, met Austin Gatt, minister for investment, industry and IT of Malta, recently to discuss mutual cooperation for enhancement of trade and investment between Bangladesh and Malta.

## Minister frustrates over less fund for rural ICT centres

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The science and ICT minister has voiced his frustration as ICT centres for the disadvantaged population are yet to be set up in the country's rural areas due mainly to inadequate fund allocation.

"I have been trying for Tk 100 crore for the last five years but I did not get it," Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan said yesterday at a workshop in Dhaka.

He was inaugurating a two-day consultative workshop on "Establishing Rural ICT Strategy for Bangladesh" organised by Commonwealth Secretariat, a London-based international development organisation, at Brac Centre Inn.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is funding for setting up four rural ICT access centers commonly known as telecentres. Total programme outlay to assist Bangladesh ICT sector is around Tk 20 million.

Professor Arunachalam, a renowned Indian expert in the area of ICT for development and rural telecentres, is working on the project and a company from the UK is assisting him.

The loan to the Tangguh Liquified Natural Gas Project in Iran Jaya will help in the building and operation of gas production wells, platforms and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility, the ADB said in a statement.

The facility will export gas initially to China, South Korea and the West Coast of North America, it said.

"The project encourages clean energy use around the region. At the same time, it will increase revenue flows to the national, provincial and local governments," to help social development, said ADB director-general for private sector projects, Robert Bestani.

"Since this is ADB's first private sector project in Indonesia's oil and gas sector, it has the potential to spur subsequent projects not only in Indonesia but also in the region," the bank said.

The project is aimed at developing an appropriate operating framework that creates an enabling environment for businesses in rural Bangladesh to effectively use ICT as a source of economic activity.

Arunachalam made a presentation on how his country built such centres in the rural areas.

Citing example of updating voter list, the minister explained had there been at least two computers in each union council office across the country, the task could have been much easier.

"If young boys and girls were engaged in this task, they could do it in less than one month," he observed, referring to the expensive budget for updating voter list.

Moyeen Khan said developing countries are facing a serious development divide but intelligent use of information and communication technology can yield digital dividends for millions of poor people in the country.

"There is development divide between the rich and the poor," he observed. "Intelligent use of ICT for the poor will lead to job growth in the country. ICT development, if implemented properly, can create digital dividends for millions of people."

In his presentation, Arunachalam highlighted the power of ICT for development said capacity of rural people should not be underestimated. "If the facilities are available, they can do a lot."

Around 70 percent of the population or 700 million people live in the rural areas in India and it is a very big power for a country for using ICT, he felt.

Speaking at the workshop, Ram Venuprasad, adviser of the Commonwealth Secretariat's special advisory services division, hoped that the project would have a positive impact on the development of a new economic activity for the country and it also has a plausible link with pro-poor growth and development in rural Bangladesh.

"There is no doubt that ICT brings tangible benefits to rural communities and businesses in those communities," he said.

Bangladesh government's initiative to implement this project is very much in line with strengthening the capacity of the least developed countries in order to respond to the challenges of globalisation, Venuprasad went on.

Components manufactured by 94 makers in Thailand will be shipped abroad with the Tida compact model's body panels, with interior parts being exported to Mexico and engines parts to South Africa for local assembly.

On July 20, Nissan Motor Co. announced a plan to set up an export base for automobile parts near the Thai port of Laem Chabang, 130 kilometers southeast of Bangkok.

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