

Singaporeans urged to relocate sick industries to Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Local business leaders have urged the leaders of Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) to relocate their sick industries to Bangladesh as the country is offering an attractive package of investment facilities.

The call came at a meeting with the SICCI leaders at the conference room of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) in Dhaka yesterday.

Speaking at the function, FBCCI President Mir Nasir Hossain said Singapore should come forward to increase the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) to Bangladesh, especially in shifting of sunset industries to Bangladesh by taking advantage of the attractive invest-

ment facilities provided by the Bangladesh government.

The FBCCI chief informed SICCI Chairman M Rajaram that his country's businesses could take the facilities of low cost, easily trainable labour, presence of natural gas, port and other infrastructure facilities.

Trade between Bangladesh and Singapore is around US\$655 million. During the July–March period of FY 2005–06, Singapore exported goods worth \$604.18 million to Bangladesh and imported goods worth \$51.79 million from Bangladesh.

To reduce the trade gap, Singapore needs to enhance its imports from Bangladesh such as vegetables, frozen fish and shrimps, textile, woven garments, knitwear, jute goods, pharmaceuticals, chemical fertilizer and ceramic tableware," he said.

In reply, the SICCI chairman noted that his country has very less opportunity to trade with Bangladesh as it mainly trades with China and India.

He, however, stressed the need for exchanging visits by the business leaders of the two countries for exploring potentials for boosting trade.

M Ramajan spelt out that high taxes in Bangladesh had remained as an obstacle in the way of boosting trade and investment between the two countries.

Meanwhile, the SICCI delegation in a separate meeting with the Dhaka chamber expressed their eagerness to invest in some potential areas like real estate, tourism and manufacturing here.

The Singaporean business team head said, "We are very much eager

to enhance bilateral trade and investment between Bangladesh and Singapore."

The probable areas of investment, M Ramajan hinted, are property development, oil and gas, power, infrastructure development and agro-based and other manufacturing industries, he added.

On easing visa procedure, he said they would pursue their government for simplifying the procedure for the entrepreneurs of Bangladesh.

President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry M A Momen was present during the meeting, among others.



BASF president of Asia Pacific due today

UNB, Dhaka

Dr Tilman Krauch, president (Asia Pacific) of BASF East Asia Regional Headquarters Ltd, Hong Kong, arrives in Dhaka today on a two-day official visit.

During his stay in Dhaka, Krauch is scheduled to exchange views with the new management of BASF Bangladesh Ltd, a subsidiary of German chemical conglomerate BASF Aktiengesellschaft, and meet key customers.

One of the world's leading chemical company, BASF's portfolio ranges from chemicals, plastics, performance products, agricultural products and fine chemicals to crude oil and natural gas.

SEC warns 6 firms for defying rules

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has warned six listed companies, their directors and company secretaries for violation of rules.

Of the six companies, one company namely Sripur Textile Mills Limited, its directors and company secretary have been cautioned for not submitting audited accounts statement for the year that ended December 31, 2005 on time to the commission, an SEC press release said.

Besides, the SEC warned four companies, their directors and company secretaries for not submitting half-yearly financial statements to the commission on time. These companies are Excelsior Shoes Limited, Pharmaco International Limited, Tamjiduddin Textile Mills Limited and Amam Sea Food Limited.

The capital market watchdog also warned Amam Sea Food Limited, its directors and company secretary for not submitting audio-visual record of annual general meetings held in the year 2005 to the commission.

The SEC also warned Daffodil Computers Limited, its directors and company secretary for not submitting half-yearly revised financial statement to the commission on time.

Fed faces closest of rate calls

AFP, Washington

The Federal Reserve has been driving up US borrowing costs ever since June 2004. That could be about to change, economists believe after compelling evidence that the US economy is hitting the brakes.

The central bank's federal open market committee (FOMC) meets on Tuesday to decide whether to continue with 17 straight hikes that have pushed the headline US interest rate up to 5.25 percent.

If the majority of Fed-watchers on Wall Street are correct, chairman Ben Bernanke and his FOMC colleagues will decide that enough is enough, after rates had sunk to historic lows in response to a 2001 recession.

"We look for them to leave the rate unchanged for a long period and not just a short-term pause," Societe Generale economist Stephen Gallagher said.

The Fed has been on the fence, faced with higher inflation and slowing growth. The desire has been to pause, provided inflation and inflation expectations could stabilize," he said.

This (Friday's) employment report adds to softening evidence on the economy and will restrain inflation expectations."

In the last big piece of economic news before the FOMC session, the government said Friday that US employers added just 113,000 new jobs in July, while the jobless rate ticked up to 4.8 percent from 4.6 percent.

It was the fourth straight month that the Labor Department's "non-farm payrolls" report had proven tepid. Most worrying for an economy driven by consumer spending, retailers are proving most reluctant to take on new staff.

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Mpofu ordered businesses to reverse "with immediate effect, any price of any commodity that was increased in excess of that obtained by converting from the old to the new currency."

He said traders who defied the order would be prosecuted.

Zimbabwe four years ago introduced price controls to fight a flourishing black market for staples such as cornmeal, cooking oil and bread, and had instituted a fine of one million Zimbabwean dollars for violators.

ChINESE YUAN: The yuan ended Friday at 7.9784 to the dollar on the exchange-traded market, compared with the closing price of 7.9768 on the previous day and 7.9712 a week before, traders said.

The yuan traded between 7.9755 and 7.9800 on Friday, according to a dealer with a domestic bank.

Friday's central parity rate for the yuan was set at 7.9772 to the dollar.

HONG KONG DOLLAR: The US-dollar pegged Hong Kong dollar

Invest in pharma sector PM urges Thailand

UNB, Dhaka

Suphamongkhon, made a courtesy call on her at the PMO.

The PM congratulated the Thai FM on his opening a new Chancery Building of the Thai Embassy-cum-Ambassador residence at Baridhara in the city and requested providing land for building the chancery of Bangladesh Embassy in Bangkok.

Cooperation in energy sector, air communications, express highway in Dhaka city, agricultural and tourism also came up for discussion in the meeting.

The PM also requested Thailand to import more items from Bangladesh to reduce a yawning

trade gap between the two countries, which is against Bangladesh.

Khaleda Zia thanked Thailand for its support to Bangladesh in becoming member of the Asean Regional Forum (ARF).

She also thanked the Thai foreign minister for providing coconut seeds to Bangladesh and hoped for their cooperation in coconut production.

Training at Defence Training Institutions in both the countries, vice versa, and cooperation between Medical Services in Armed Forces of Bangladesh and Thailand were also discussed.



PHOTO: STAR

Mahmudur Rahman (C), energy adviser and executive chairman of Board of Investment, speaks at a presentation titled 'FDI and Private Investment in Bangladesh during 2001-2005' at a meeting organised by Economic Reporters Forum in Dhaka yesterday.

Govt to run 6 vessels on Mongla-Karachi route

Bid to facilitate jute export

UNB, Dhaka

by exporting raw jute.

They demanded withdrawal of VAT on export of jute through container and congestion surcharge that imposed on shipment.

The association leaders also requested the government to allow jute export via Bhomra land port.

The state minister assured the BJA of all-out support to facilitate jute export.

Shipping Secretary Md Rafiqul Islam, BJA Chairman Farhan Ahmed Akhand and Vice Chairman PM Saha were, among others, present at the meeting.

'High oil prices won't dent AirAsia's plans'

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

High oil prices will not put Asia's largest budget carrier AirAsia off new routes to Indonesia, China and India as it looks to fly 15 million passengers by the end of 2007, its CEO said.

AirAsia's Tony Fernandes, however, warned that rising fuel costs could force another round of consolidation among budget carriers in the region such as those in neighbouring Singapore.

"AirAsia has never experienced such strong passenger load. People want to fly and we will continue to offer discount prices," Fernandes told AFP over the weekend.

"People want to fly to new places in the region. We are not seeing any slowdown in traffic volume," he said, adding that "we expect passenger numbers to rise to 15 million in the year ending June 2007."

The profitable carrier flew nine million passengers in the fiscal year ending in June 2006.

Fernandes said the Malaysia-based airline was keen to expand in Indonesia with first flights to Yogyakarta and Palembang, and new routes to Pekanbaru and Solo.

"There is strong demand from passengers in Indonesia" where the number of passengers is expected to soar by 50 percent next year to three million, he said.

Asian currencies rise against dollar

AFP, Hong Kong

Asian currencies ended the week mostly higher against the dollar amid growing expectations of an end to the cycle of US interest rate hikes.

Traders speculated that the US Federal Reserve would bring a pause to its two-year campaign of rate increases at its meeting Tuesday.

US job data released Friday came in well below expectations, making another rate hike look increasingly unlikely.

The employment figures came on top of news that world's largest economy slowed markedly in the second quarter to a growth pace of just 2.5 percent, from the first quarter's red-hot expansion of 5.6 percent.

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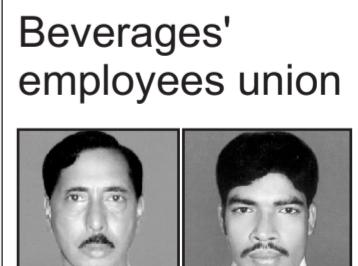
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HONG KONG DOLLAR: The US-dollar pegged Hong Kong dollar

Office bearers of Transcom Beverages' employees union



President Gopal Chandra Saha, Jamal A Nasser and Lal Chan Molla have been elected president, general secretary and treasurer of the workers-employees union of Transcom Beverages Ltd, says a press release.

Other office-bearers of the union are Rafique Sardar, executive president, Nurul Alam, first vice president, Golam Mortuja, second vice president, Md Mayeen Uddin, first joint general secretary, Md Abdul Jabbar, second joint general secretary, Abdul Matin, organising secretary, Abdul Motaleb, joint organising secretary, Jahangir Alam, publicity secretary, Ruhul Amin, office secretary, Kazi A Bakul, sport secretary, and Md Abdul Malek, Harun Mia and Md Motaleb, members.



PHOTO: STAR

Zimbabwe freezes price hikes after currency reforms

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe has ordered a new freeze on prices of goods following a spate of increases on the heels of last week's currency reforms to combat the effects of the country's nearly 1,200 percent inflation, a state-run paper said Sunday.

Commuter fares on some routes in Harare doubled from 100,000 Zimbabwe dollars (40 US cents) to 200,000 a day after Reserve Bank chief Gideon Gono announced the change in currency and a 21-day ultimatum to hand in old bank notes.

Gono had said the reforms were aimed at snuffing out a burgeoning parallel currency market and help shoppers who had to carry bags and

rucksacks of cash even to buy groceries.

Mpofu ordered businesses to reverse "with immediate effect, any price of any commodity that was increased in excess of that obtained by converting from the old to the new currency."

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