

# Star BUSINESS

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**Election board  
vows to hold  
BGMEA polls  
today**

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The BGMEA election board yesterday vowed to hold polls scheduled for today.

The announcement of the board came after a case was filed with a court alleging an enrolment of huge number of 'fake voters'.

"So far we have not received any directives from the court to postpone the election," M Annuzaman, chairman of the election board, told journalists yesterday evening.

"As the election board is yet to receive any order, it is our duty to hold the election," he added.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Jahangir Alam of Shah Sufi Apparel and Textiles filed a case on February 22 with the 4th assistant judge court, Dhaka alleging that a huge number of 'fake voters' have been enrolled for BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association) polls.

Following the case, the court issued a stay on holding the election until the case is disposed of, said a press statement signed by Sheikh Jahangir Alam.

However, the election board and the candidates have finished their preparations. Two panels, Sammilito Parishad led by Tipu Munshi and Forum headed by Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury Parvez, will contest the executive committee elections.

Candidates and members of the BGMEA predict a stiff competition between the two groups.

They said after the polls, elected directors would form the executive body of BGMEA. Forty-two candidates, including two independents, will vie for 20 posts in Dhaka and 14 candidates for seven posts in Chittagong.

A total of 2,411 voters, 1,896 of whom are in Dhaka and 515 in Chittagong, will cast votes, officials said.

**IT fair in  
Sylhet ends  
today**

A three-day information technology (IT) fair organised by Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS), which began in Sylhet on Friday, is concluding today, says a press release.

Around 19 IT firms from Dhaka and Sylhet and three universities of Sylhet are showcasing various software, hardware, multimedia, internet and telecoms products and services at 30 stalls at the fair styled 'Sylhet IT Mela' at Hafiz Complex at Bandar Bazar.

The participating firms are offering discounts on their products at the show, which is open for all from 10am to 8pm without any entry fee.

Mobile phone operator CityCell is sponsoring the fair while development organisation Catalyst is supporting it.

Dr ABM Shahidul Islam, vice chancellor of Leading University in Sylhet, and AKM Fahim Mashroor, treasurer of BASIS, among others, were present at the opening ceremony of the fair.

Speakers at the inaugural session said the fair would be able to introduce modern IT products and services to the local students, IT users, corporate bodies, government and non-government organisations and the general people.

**Nissan to make  
small cars in  
India**

## AFP, Tokyo

Japanese automaker Nissan Motor plans to build a car plant in India to make small cars now being developed for emerging markets, it said.

The plant will be set up in the port city of Chennai with its French partner Renault SA and local firm Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd, a news report said Saturday.

The joint venture plant, which is expected to start operating in 2009, will aim to turn out around 500,000 units a year, the Nikkei said, adding that an official announcement is expected on Monday.

The newspaper did not report the size of the investment.

The venture will likely be set up with the Nissan-Renault alliance putting up half the necessary investment and Mahindra and Mahindra providing the rest, the newspaper said.

In addition to Indian sales of this vehicle, the firm will likely export some of the output to Europe, the Nikkei said.

**COMMISSION CUT BY BRITISH AIRWAYS**

## Travel agents oppose, demand new incentive package

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

British Airways' (BA) unilateral decision to drastically cut commission on ticket sales in Bangladesh evoked sharp reaction among its travel agents here. In a bid to impose a service or management fee on air travellers, the airline cut such commission to one percent from seven percent, according to the business insiders.

As many as 40 agents in a meeting, chaired by M A Muhamin Saleh, president of the Association of Travel Agents Bangladesh (Atab), yesterday reached a unanimous decision to urge the BA authority to reconsider its move saying that it is 'unacceptable' to them. The airline's new decision had also surprised and angered them, they added, suggesting introduction of an incentive package keeping the seven percent commission in place.

The BA in a letter to the Atab chief informed that the new commission rate would come into effect from April 1.

"The current seven percent

commission represents the vast majority of our overall cost of sales in Bangladesh and as it is heavily discounted which fails to add any kind of value for money to the British Airways," the letter mentioned.

It said it would go for reduction in the number of BA agents having ticketing access and all agents are required to introduce their own service fee structure.

The new system would improve margins and profitability of the agents' sales, it also expressed its hope in the letter.

Responding to the letter, M A Muhamin Saleh opposed the commission cut on the plea that the time chosen for bringing the changes in the trade is not appropriate. "Not long ago our commission was reduced from nine percent to seven percent and the airline's move to reduce it to one percent is shocking to all of us," he said.

To make up for BA's overall cost you may at best charge your walk-in passengers a service fee, the

ATAB chief suggested.

The airline, however, explained that the new move is aimed to make a specific charge for service customers need at individual level.

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Muhamin Saleh told The Daily Star that the commission cut would create an opportunity to remit huge amount of foreign currency from the country.

Around six million dollars were remitted from the country annually due to such commission cut by only two per cent earlier, he noted. He said all other airlines have been offering the travel agencies a seven percent commission to cover up the cost of sales.

The British Airways is carrying about 25 percent of the traffic to Europe and USA from Bangladesh.

**REHAB fair  
concludes**

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The five-day housing fair ended at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday with huge responses from the visitors.

Participants and customers were found passing busy time on the concluding day with each other interacting about products and investments in the housing sector.

"We have received huge queries from the visitors. But customers took time to reach decision on spot purchase of plots or flats," said sales executive of a real estate company.

He said overall sales may drop this year compared to the last year. The present government move against black money probably created panic among the buyers, which may have kept them aloof from frequent purchase of flats of plots, he added.

He, however, described the customers' interests in plots or flats as very impressive.

Real Estate Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) organised the fair, while a total of 133 companies took part. The number of participating firms was 90 in the last year. Financial institutions as well as developers represented the exhibitors.

The organisers said they will give all sales account next week on gathering information from all participants.

According to the REHAB statistics, the fair had a business of about Tk 525 crore by selling 700 flats, 200 shops and 1100 plots last year.

**Safta CoE meet kicks  
off in Kathmandu**

## BSS, Dhaka

Revenue and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Safta committee of experts (CoE) started a two-day meeting at Saarc headquarters in Kathmandu, the Nepalese capital city, yesterday ahead of the Safta ministerial council meeting scheduled to be held tomorrow, the official sources said.

On the following day, inter-governmental expert group on Afghanistan will meet at the same venue to discuss and clear issues related to Afghanistan's joining in the next Saarc summit, due in Delhi in April next.

The Safta CoE and its ministerial council will also discuss and clear intra-regional free trade issues for forthcoming summit of the regional body.

Saarc commerce ministers will take part in the Safta ministerial council meeting which is the highest decision making body of the free trade issues in the region.

Adviser for Finance and Commerce Dr AB Mirza Azizul Islam will take part in the ministerial council meeting. He will leave Dhaka today.

Meanwhile, a five-member team of the committee of experts from Bangladesh was attending the meeting from yesterday. Its members include two senior commerce ministry officials, one representative each from Bangladesh Tariff Commission, National Board of

**EXPO BANGLADESH  
Over Tk50cr  
spot orders  
received**

## UNB, London

The Expo Bangladesh 2006-07 concluded Friday at Old Truman Brewery of Brick Lane receiving spot orders from buyers of Bangladeshi goods, including dry fish, worth more than Tk 50 crore.

The four-day Expo that began on February 21 ended a day earlier due to various reasons, including inadequate participants, according to the organisers.

"We had to end the fair one day before... we didn't get adequate participants as a number of Bangladeshi traders failed to get visa," project director of the Expo Bangladesh Mirza Zillur Rahman told the news agency.

He said the buyers gave spot orders for various items, including dry fish, mustard oil, readymade garments, jute bags, handicrafts and textiles.

Bangladesh-British Trade Cooperation organised the event to showcase Bangladeshi products abroad. The aim of the fair was to promote Bangladeshi small entrepreneurs.

The United Kingdom, the third largest destination for Bangladesh products, particularly RMG, after USA and Germany, account for about 10.91 percent of the country's total exports.

**China bans  
imports of  
US butter**

## AFP, Beijing

China's ministry of health has warned consumers against eating two brands of US-made peanut butter and has banned imports and sales of the products, state press said Saturday.

The ministry banned the "Peter Pan" and "Great Value" brands of peanut butter after the World Health Organization warned that the products could be contaminated by the food-borne bacterium salmonella, Xinhua news agency said.

The ministry warned people not to buy the brands and suggested that those who have eaten the foods seek medical advice if they come down with fever, abdominal pain or diarrhoea, it said.

Chinese import agents of the two brands were also ordered to immediately recall their products, it added.

**Sino-Pak MoU  
on port  
business**

## APP, Islamabad

Pakistan and China have decided to set up a joint venture company "Pak-China Sost Dry Port Pvt. Ltd." for amicable handling of all affairs pertaining to business and management of Sost Dry Port.

The company will be registered in Northern Areas, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this connection was signed here Friday by Chairman Sinoport China Yuan Jianmin and Vice Chairman Saleem Khan in presence of Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, Maj (R) Tahir Iqbal.

The minister said the account management and administration of SDP would be jointly controlled by Pakistani and Chinese side and a balance will be attained in the number of officials from the two sides.

## Correction

In a photo caption of JCI (Junior Chamber International) Bangladesh published on page 9 yesterday, it was inadvertently mentioned that JCI Bangladesh 2006 national president received an award from civil aviation and tourism minister of India. Actually the award was handed over by Arun Arora, president of Times of India Group.



A delegation of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Dhaka, led by its President Latifur Rahman Islam in the capital on Thursday.

## Good management can help eradicate corruption

**Int'l confce told**

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Good management in public and private institutions can help eradicate corruption and guarantee prosperity in the society, speakers told an international conference in Dhaka yesterday.

Mirza Azizul also said low quality education and resource constraints stand in the way of good management skills in the South Asian region.

Mohammed Jasimuddin, Commonwealth Secretariat (Asia region) adviser, said the Commonwealth is trying to ensure good governance in different parts of the world through good management.

Speaking at the function, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said his government is trying to ensure good management since it is an important tool to fight corruption.

Ajith Nivard Cabral, governor of Central Bank of Sri Lanka, presented a keynote paper titled 'Importance of Corporate Governance for Banking Sector'.

Professor Syed Zahoor Hassan, vice chancellor of Lahore University of Management Science and President of AMDISA, Hafiz G A Siddiqi, vice chancellor of North South University and vice president of AMDISA, Farooq Sobhan, president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, and Mamun Rashid, chief executive officer of Citibank NA Bangladesh, also spoke at the ceremony.

Freeze-dried coffee results from brewed coffee that has been frozen before the water is evaporated. It is more expensive and flavorful than regular instant coffee that is "spray-dried."

"The consumption of spray-dried coffee is on the decline in Russia and other export markets while the consumption of freeze-dried coffee is growing by leaps and bounds," said Ashraff. "It sells for three times the price" of the low-end variety.

It is starting production of so-called freeze-dried instant coffee, a high-end variety, at a new 2,500-tonne plant by March that will be sold overseas under the Eight O'Clock brand, Ashraff told reporters.

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