

Star BUSINESS

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Oracle keen to offer help in making nat'l ID cards

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Oracle, the global software giant, yesterday announced its interest to offer technological assistance in preparing national identity cards, voter list and machine readable passports in Bangladesh.

The announcement was made by Samina Rizwan, regional director for Oracle South Asia Growth Economics (West), at a press briefing in Dhaka.

Oracle has helped Pakistan in preparing the country's national ID cards and machine readable passports, said Rizwan.

Oracle has already approached authorities to show its interest through its local system integrators - IBCS-PRIMAX Software (Bangladesh) Ltd and BASE Limited.

The software giant also mentioned its strengthened presence in Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh today is experiencing economic growth," said Rizwan. "As Bangladeshi businesses widen their horizons for expansion, they will require lots of choice in world-class software to meet their growing needs."

Oracle's business in Bangladesh is conducted through local business partners. In line with the company's expansion into Bangladesh, Oracle will continue to establish partnerships with leading independent software vendors.



Samina Rizwan of Oracle speaks at a press briefing.

Four-day Nepal trade fair begins

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A four-day Nepal trade fair began in Dhaka yesterday as Nepalese eye to boost trade relations with Bangladesh.

The entrepreneurs are exhibiting their products at the Second Nepal Trade Fair-2007 at the Nepalese Embassy.

The Nepalese are showcasing handicraft, jewellery, shawl, herbal products and food items what the traders said have a huge market potential in Bangladesh.

Golam Mostakim, additional secretary to the commerce ministry, and Ramesh Prasad Khanal, charge d'affaires of Nepal Embassy in Dhaka, inaugurated the fair, which will continue until March 25.

DSE seeks tax on profits foreign firms repatriate

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday urged the government to impose 10 percent or more supplementary tax on repatriation of profit or dividend by the shareholders of non-listed foreign companies.

The premier bourse also asked the government for taking effective steps in the upcoming national budget to make the bond market more vibrant for greater interest of the financial market in Bangladesh.

The stock exchange requested the government to restrict the commercial banks' use of treasury bonds as a component of SLR (statutory liquidity ratio) to a maximum 2.5 percent.

The DSE also called for widening the tax gap to 10 percent from existing 7.5 percent between the listed and non-listed companies.

The DSE officials said there are many companies such as telecoms, power, oil and gas in Bangladesh that are repatriating a huge amount of profits to their home countries. "We urged the government to impose the supplementary tax on profit repatriation so that a portion of the profits be left in the country," said DSE President Abdurrahman Bokhari addressing a pre-budget press conference in Dhaka.

The tax imposition will also encourage the companies to get listed with the stock exchanges to get waiver from the tax, which will ultimately increase the market depth, he said.

About activating the 'almost ineffective' bond market, the DSE president said the instruments are now having very high yields, which is more than 10 percent at present, but now remain only within the

market depth, he said.

At the press conference, among others, DSE Chief Executive Officer Salahuddin Ahmed Khan and Senior Vice-president Ahmad Rashid Lali spoke.

Korean economy at a crossroads: Sink or swim

Expert tells visiting board members of Asia News Network

ANN

The South Korean economy is at a critical juncture, and events now will determine whether the Asian country will complete its leap to join the ranks of advanced economies, or remain in the second tier, a senior adviser to the Korean government said yesterday.

Woo Cheon-sik, a senior counselor to the deputy prime minister for economic affairs, said the growth-oriented development paradigm, which drove Korea's rise from rags to riches, will no longer work.

He said Asia's third-largest

Kuwait firm to invest \$7m in aviation sector

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Kuwait-based Aviation Company, Al Aqeeq Aviation and Holdings will initially invest US\$7 million in the aviation sector of Bangladesh.

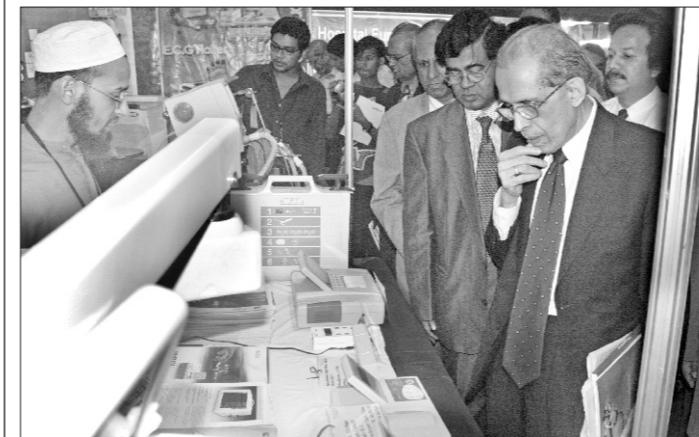
Al Aqeeq Aviation President Captain Abdullah Bastaki told the signing ceremony of a joint venture agreement with Best Aviation at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

He said Al Aqeeq Aviation has already acquired 70 percent share of Best Aviation to jointly launch domestic and international air passenger services by July this year.

This is the first such initiative in the aviation sector of Bangladesh.

Bastaki said Al Aqeeq's parent company, Al Aqeeq Leasing, Finance and Investment Group is also interested in further investment in the sectors of human resources, real estate, tourism and communications infrastructure.

Urging the government to initiate



Brigadier General (rtd) Abdul Malik, former health adviser to the caretaker government, visits a stall after inaugurating the MedExpo-2006 in Dhaka yesterday.

economy now faces the challenges of slowing economic growth, a widening income gap between the rich and poor, intensifying competition with emerging markets -- and all of these taking place at a time when Korean society is greying at an unprecedented speed.

"All of these call for a paradigm shift in the Korean economy. Growth will not take care of all those problems," he told a group of senior editors and journalists of Asia's leading English-language newspapers.

They are visiting Seoul for the annual board meeting of the Asia News Network, an alliance of 16

newspapers.

Woo called for a more "broad-based growth paradigm" that integrates economic and social policies while maximizing the country's economic dynamism through more proactive investment and bolder reforms.

He said that the 1997-98 financial crisis, which began in Thailand and spread to many Asian countries, was a "disguised blessing" for Korea. Thanks to appropriate policy responses, the country now has a more open and healthier financial structure.

However, Korea is only halfway there, he said. Most traditional sectors, including the services industry, still are protected from foreign competition.

Korea has signed only three free trade agreements so far -- with Chile, Singapore and the European Free Trade Association. The EFTA is composed of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. The country is in the final stage of negotiations for a trade pact with the United States.

Woo's lecture on Korea's economic development and future challenges was part of a two-day seminar organised by The Korea Herald and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation on the sidelines of the ANN meeting.

Dato' Ng Poh Tip, group editor and education advisor of the Malaysian newspaper, the Star, asked what would be the possible impact on South Korea's economy of a reunification with North Korea.

Despite the initial social and economic costs, Woo said, the reunification of the two Koreas would be a boost to the economy in the longer term.

"(It will create) a new market for Korea and reduce political uncertainties substantially, which was the main reason for the so-called Korea Discount," he added.

South Korea is technically at war with the communist North and political tensions between the two countries have been considered as one of the factors hindering Korea's economic development.

On Korean Wave

Speakers at yesterday's seminar included Kim Kyung-hun, the producer of the Korean martial arts show, Jump, who is also the chief executive of Yegam Inc. He spoke about the main features of Korean pop culture that is widely popular in many countries across Asia.

"When I produced Jump, I wanted to keep the very traditional

investment-friendly actions, he said. "Geographically, Bangladesh is a very potential country. Dhaka is the centre of this region, but Zia International Airport is much behind others."

M. Haideruzzaman, chairman of IPSSL Group, parent company of Best Aviation, said Best Air will start with a fleet of two B-737 aircrafts and is willing to operate in Chittagong and Sylhet domestically and Kolkata, Jaipur, Kathmandu, Bangkok, Kunming and Colombo internationally.

Best Aviation started its operation in 1991, pioneering as a helicopter operator in Bangladesh.

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On the backdrop of persistent delay in arrival and departure of the vessels even after takeover of the terminal's operation by a private company, the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) yesterday reached the decision to reduce turn-around time.

The new cut-off time will be applicable for the 9 crane-less vessels anchoring mainly at the CCT.

The vessels would from now on sail after discharging import containers and loading the export containers available at the terminal. As per the CPA decision, collection of export containers after arrival of

CHITTAGONG CONTAINER TERMINAL HANDLING

New cut-off time for arrival of crane-less vessels from Sunday

RAFIQ HASAN

A new cut-off time for arrival of crane-less vessels anchoring at the Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) will come into effect from Sunday.

On the backdrop of persistent delay in arrival and departure of the vessels even after takeover of the terminal's operation by a private company, the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) yesterday reached the decision to reduce turn-around time.

The new cut-off time will be applicable for the 9 crane-less vessels anchoring mainly at the CCT.

The vessel M V Eagle Pride left the terminal on Wednesday noon with 900 TEUs, but the ship was supposed to leave the terminal two days earlier. Out of the 900 containers, 160 were loaded and the rest

were empty. Another ship, Eagle Express, left the terminal on Tuesday but it was scheduled to leave on Sunday afternoon.

All the import containers at M V Eagle Pioneer were discharged on Wednesday morning, whereas it was supposed to leave yesterday afternoon with export containers, but its departure might be delayed for two days more due to non-availability of such containers.

Sources in the Saif Power tec, the CCT's private operator, said the company has been allocated an exclusive yard for keeping export containers at the terminal in the interest of quick delivery.

Rather than any acceleration in the process, the turnaround time at the Chittagong port reached a peak 10-15 days, the highest in the South Asia region.

MedExpo-2006 begins

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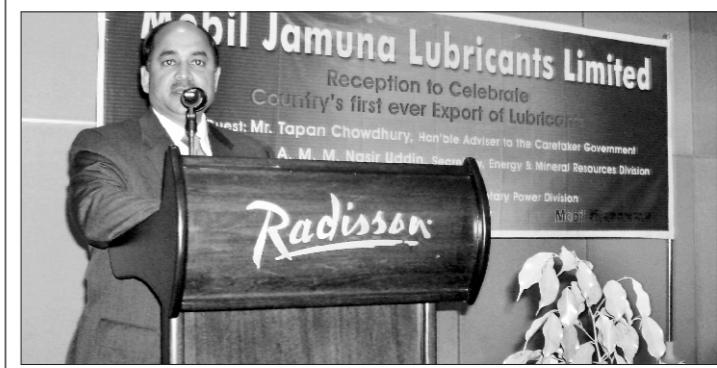
A total of 43 local and international companies will display their products and services in 57 stalls at the fourth version of the show.

Among others Chairman of MedExpo-2006 Kazi Wahidul Alam, President of Bangladesh Private Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association (BPCDOA) Dr Moniruzzaman Bhuiyan, Head of Marketing and Sales of Otobi Ltd Saleh Mujahid also spoke.

Triune Exhibition and Event Management Services (TEEMS) is organising the show while the Daily Star and Channel i are the media partners.

BPCDOA is the co-organiser and medical furniture producer Otobi Limited is another sponsor of the event.

The participants include healthcare service providers, equipment manufacturers and diagnostic centres.



Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury speaks at a function in Dhaka yesterday to mark the success of Mobil Jamuna Lubricants Ltd to export lubricants to Nepal.

Mobil Jamuna starts exporting lubricants to Nepal

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

As Mobil Jamuna Lubricants Ltd has started exporting Mobil and Esso brand lubricants to Nepalese market, the company yesterday hosted a reception to celebrate its success.

Tapan Chowdhury, adviser to energy and mineral resources ministry, was also present at the function in Dhaka.

Azam J. Chowdhury, managing director of Mobil Jamuna Lubricants Limited, said the company's laboratory received ExxonMobil's certificate of compliance and achieved record setting precision in blending lubricants according to global standards, said a press release.

"Due to the company's dedication to quality and professionalism, it has been given the permission to export Mobil and Esso brand lubricants," he added.

The managing director also said that a new project is at the feasibility stage for processing naphtha into premium grade motor gasoline. Naphtha, a clear colourless flammable mixture of light hydrocarbons obtained from petroleum, is a by-product of Eastern Refinery, which is currently sold at spot market prices and exported.

A large number of foreign delegates, government officials, stakeholders were present at the function.