

# Star BUSINESS

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## Govt likely to sign MoU with Sudan to send manpower

PORIMOL PALMA

The government is likely to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sudanese government to send manpower to the African country, which has a huge demand for foreign labourers for its growing economy.

Foreign Affairs Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and non-resident envoy of Sudan to Bangladesh Daffa Alla Elhag Ali Osman discussed the issue at a recent meeting in Dhaka.

The adviser sought cooperation from the ambassador regarding appointment of an honorary consul in Sudan where presently there is no Bangladesh mission, said a foreign ministry official.

The initiatives are being taken at a time when the local manpower businesses are considering Sudan a lucrative job market because of

massive investment by foreign companies there. Some of those companies have also sent letters to some Bangladeshi recruiting agents expressing interest in hiring workers from here.

The local businesses said many foreign companies are investing in Sudan lured by its mineral resources and setting up major industries, which require thousands of workers.

"The foreign companies there are interested to employ skilled manpower from countries such as China, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh," said a manpower businessman.

A Bangladeshi worker Tajul Islam, presently working in Sudan, told The Daily Star over telephone that a number of companies from Malaysia, United Arab Emirates and even Western countries have set up construction, cement, soft drinks,

juice and steel factories there.

"They want foreign workers," Tajul, who was once in Kuwait but later went to Sudan for higher salary, said, adding that the minimum monthly salary for unskilled workers is US\$120 to US\$160. Salary for technical jobs ranges from US\$500 to US\$700, he said.

Tajul said there are already around 15,000 Bangladeshi workers in Sudan, but there is no government-level arrangement for sending manpower to the African state. Workers are now going there through their own arrangements.

"We have no guardian to seek redress, as there is no Bangladesh mission here (Sudan)," he said.

Managing work permits sometimes is a problem here for the workers, he said, adding: "If there was the Bangladesh mission here, we would have someone to tell our problems."

## Bangladesh Brand Forum April 28-29

Leading international and national brand experts will gather at the two-day Bangladesh Brand Forum 2007 in Dhaka on April 28 and 29 to share their insights and thinking regarding different brands, says a press release.

Brandzeal, a brand consultancy firm, in partnership with the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) of Dhaka University and Global Brand Forum from Singapore will organise the seminar at Pan Pacific Sonargaon.

Country's leading cellphone operator Grameenphone (GP) Ltd is the platinum sponsor of the seminar, while The Daily Star and Channel i are the media partners.

A press conference to announce the schedule and present the details of the seminar was held on Wednesday in the capital where M Ziaulhaq Mamun, professor and director of IBA of Dhaka University, Mir Nawbut Ali, head of Market Communication of GP, and Shariful Islam, CEO of Brandzeal, among others, were present.

## Dollar near two-year low against euro

AFP, Tokyo

The dollar steadied close to a two-year low against the euro in Asian trade Friday as players traders took to the sidelines ahead of keenly awaited US jobs data, dealers said.

The euro inched down to 1.3425 dollars in early Tokyo trade from 1.3427 in New York late Thursday, when it had hit 1.3441 dollars, the highest level since March 2005.

The euro was unchanged at 159.42 yen, while the dollar edged up to 118.77 yen from 118.71.



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors collect information from a stall of a three-day international exhibition of medical equipment that began in Dhaka yesterday.

## India lifts freeze on special economic zones

AFP, New Delhi

India lifted a freeze on scores of economic zones on Thursday imposed following deadly protests, but promised there would be no forcible acquisition of land for the enclaves.

The government suspended land clearances for special economic zones (SEZs) last month following clashes between protesting farmers and the police who were sent to clear land for a petrochemical hub in the Marxist ruled eastern West Bengal state.

Fourteen people were killed when police opened fire in Nandigram, a village 120 kilometres (75 miles) south of West Bengal state capital

Kolkata.

"We are not stopping any (SEZ) process," Commerce Minister Kamal Nath said.

But following the protests at Nandigram and other proposed SEZ sites, Nath told reporters "no state can compulsorily acquire land from farmers" and said the onus had now shifted onto the developers.

Instead of the government acquiring land, promoters would have to approach landowners and acquire property at commercial rates.

The government said permission would be now be given for 83 SEZs and India's Board of Approvals will consider 162 SEZs which already have initial approval, along with 140 new applications.

Approval would be given to applications where there was no land dispute, the government said. 63 SEZs have already received final clearance.

The SEZ scheme to give foreign firms Chinese-style tax-free enclaves to push industrialisation has met with massive protests from landowners.

Nath also announced a cap of 5,000 hectares (12,350 acres) for SEZs.

The farmers' protests have sparked a debate over whether farmland should be used for industry in India, where some two-thirds of the billion-plus population live off agriculture.

## 3-day medical equipment show begins

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A three-day international exhibition of medical equipment, surgical instruments, pharmaceuticals and hospital products began at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

Some 51 companies from Bangladesh, China, India, Taiwan, the USA, Singapore, and Pakistan are showcasing their products in the fair organised by Conference and Exhibition Management Services (CEMS).

The fair, styled 'Meditex Bangladesh 2007', is open to all between 10am and 8pm everyday without any entry fee.

Ehsan Ul Fattah, secretary to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, inaugurated the event.

The \$33 billion Asia-Pacific healthcare and surgical market is projected to increase to \$43 billion in 2010, CEMS Managing Director Meherun N Islam said explaining the importance of organising such events.

The Daily Star, ATN Bangla and Radio Today are the media partners of the fair.

## 'China, ROK should speed up FTA talks'

ANN/ CHINA DAILY

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on Thursday said he expects China and the Republic of Korea (ROK) to speed up the study of a free trade area (FTA).

"China and the ROK should come up with a win-win FTA proposal at an early date to pave the way for the FTA," Wen said in a joint interview with journalists from 19 ROK news organizations.

The interview came ahead of Wen's ROK trip scheduled for April 10-11, the first by a Chinese premier in eight years.



PHOTO: BRANDZEAL

M Ziaulhaq Mamun, professor and director of IBA of Dhaka University, Mir Nawbut Ali, head of Market Communication of Grameenphone Ltd, and Shariful Islam, CEO of Brandzeal, a brand consultancy firm, are seen at a press conference organised in Dhaka on Wednesday to announce the schedule of Bangladesh Brand Forum 2007.

## STOCK