

## Extend duty cut on import of 229 items

President urges Thai envoy

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday requested Thai government to extend the duty-cutback on the import of 229 items from Bangladesh as the facility expires this month.

He also said that the Thai government might encourage Thai businessmen to import more goods from Bangladesh. The president made the request when new Ambassador of Thailand to Bangladesh Chalermphol Thanchitt presented his credentials to him at Bangabhaban.

"Thai business community would be benefited by investing in road construction, infrastructure development, pharmaceutical and tourism sectors in Bangladesh," he said.

Welcoming the envoy on his new assignment, the President said, "Bangladesh attaches special value to its relations with Thailand."

He told the envoy that Bangladesh is interested in developing poultry, fisheries, and other

agro-based industries following the Thai success and experiences in these areas. The President sought Thai government's assistance in this regard. Dr Ahmed mentioned that Thailand could import skilled/semi-skilled manpower from Bangladesh in garment sector. He said Bangladesh is keen to establish road links with Southeast Asian countries through Thailand. Bangladesh has already signed an agreement on direct road link with Myanmar, which, by extension, hopefully would connect Bangladesh with Thailand. Ambassador Chalermphol Thanchitt assured the President of discussing with his government the matter of extending the facility of concessional import duty to 229 items from Bangladesh.

## Regional

FROM PAGE 16

several projects," he said. Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury will head the Bangladesh delegation at the meeting.

Iftekhar is likely to hold a bilateral meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee on the sidelines of the foreign ministers' meet. The two had met in Kampala last month just ahead of the Commonwealth summit and in Dhaka on December 1.

On the Saarc Development Fund, Menon said the meeting would try to work out an agreed text.

An agreement on setting up the fund could not be reached at the previous Saarc Summit in Delhi in March this year apparently because of differences over the amount of money to be contributed by the eight member countries -- Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Connectivity will be the main theme of the foreign ministers' meet, Menon said.

Saarc transport ministers at a meeting here last month discussed connectivity in the region, and the need to upgrade customs-related facilities at land transit points.

The issues under discussion are 1,100km Birganj (Nepal)-Kathihar (India)-Chittagong rail link, air connectivity between New Delhi and Islamabad, New Delhi and Male, and a rail corridor between Chennai and Colombo with a ferry link in between.

The connectivity proposals have been scanned by Manila-based Asian Development Bank, and Saarc countries are studying security aspects of the proposals, economic viability and benefits of these transport links.

The last summit had decided on connecting all the eight Saarc capitals, and the foreign ministers will now discuss implementation of the proposals in this regard.

Referring to air link between Delhi and Islamabad, Menon said national carriers of India and Pakistan have expressed their inability, citing shortage of aircraft. India has however proposed that private airlines of the two countries be allowed to operate the flights, he added.

The proposed Saarc Food Bank, one of the key areas identified by the Delhi summit, will be of crucial importance, particularly whenever there is a food shortage in any member-country.

Referring to tele-medicine network, Menon said it was ready for takeoff as most Saarc countries have identified hospitals to be linked by the network.

Adoption of villages for development was proposed at the Delhi summit, and it has moved further with plans to do so in clusters.

On the proposed South Asian University, the Indian foreign secretary said the centre of excellence to be based in India would take some time to get a concrete shape since it is intended to be an autonomous institution with plans to rope in private parties.

The proposal for Uniform Motor Vehicles Act will also come up for discussion, he added.

The foreign ministers' meeting will be preceded by a two-day meeting of Saarc foreign secretaries.

All the Saarc foreign ministers will call on Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday.



Syed Anisul Huq, president and managing director of Bank Asia, hands over a cheque for Tk 50 lakh to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed for the cyclone victims at the latter's office on Tuesday.



M A Matin, secretary general of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), hands over a cheque for Tk 10 lakh to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed for the cyclone victims.



Syed Anisul Huq, president and managing director of Bank Asia, hands over a cheque for Tk 50 lakh to Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed on Tuesday for the cyclone victims while Jahir Uddin, sponsor shareholder of the bank, looks on.



Fazlur Rahman, chairman of City Group of Industries and Dhaka Insurance, hands over 9000 pieces of sari, blankets and shirts, along with 2,25,000 kgs of various TEER food items to Lieutenant General Masududdin Chowdhury, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces.



Old Rajshahi Cadets' Association (ORCA) distributes relief among the cyclone-affected people at Kalapara in Patuakhali recently.

## BB mulls waiving agri loans

FROM PAGE 16

increased agricultural production.

Salehuddin said if the government decides to waive the agri-loans in the cyclone-hit areas, it will not be a major burden for the country's economy.

Asked about the nature of the possible impact of such loan-waiver on the economy, he said, "It will be possible for the central bank to make comments on the possible impact on the economy a few days later. We will have to keep the order of financial discipline of banking system."

On the BB plan to distribute agri-loans in Khulna and Barisal, he said, "Of the amount, Tk 1,300 crore will be distributed among farmers of Barisal region and the rest Tk 400 crore in Khulna region." The state-owned banks will provide the loans.

During his visit to Barisal and Khulna this week, the BB governor asked the local branches of the state-owned banks to distribute at least 70

percent of the targeted loans by this month.

He said the chief executive officers of the state-owned banks have been asked to monitor the distribution of agri-loans for proper and quick disbursement. The BB will also monitor the process, he added.

The central bank governor said he will hold separate meetings with the top brass of the state-owned and private commercial banks and request them to provide loans to small and medium entrepreneurs in the cyclone-hit areas.

"We will ask the banks to disburse loans not only to farmers, but also to fishermen and small shopkeepers," he said, adding that the people of these areas will need loans also for renovation and building new houses.

"Interest-free loans to the cyclone-affected people is another option to help them," the BB governor said. The Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) has already

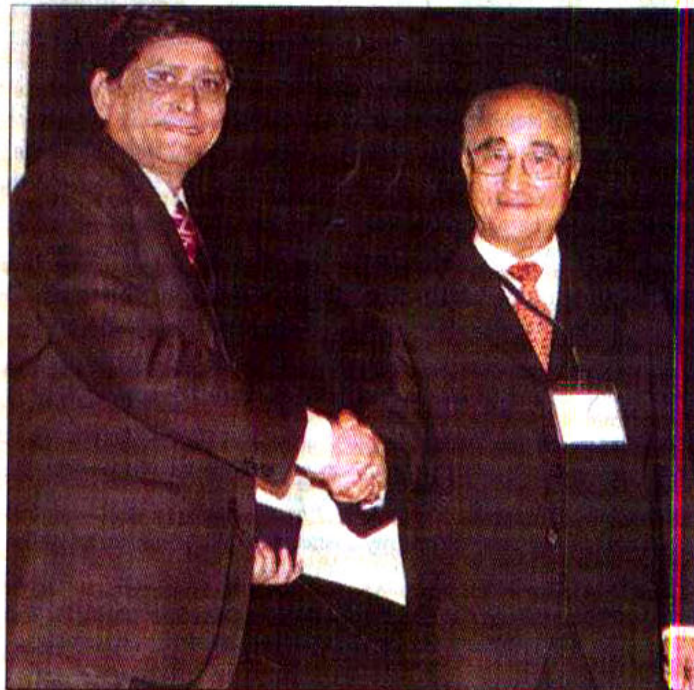
initiated distribution of such loans, he added.

Salehuddin said as the private banks have no branch in the cyclone-hit areas they will be asked to divert their funds to Krishi Bank and NGOs.

Stressing the importance of the private banks' participation in the rehabilitation of the cyclone-hit people, he said, "Currently we evaluate performances of the commercial banks through camel rating, but in the future we will also consider their contribution to the national economy." He termed such contribution a new parameter for performance rating.

He identified forcing the economy towards a stable state as one of the major challenges for the government at present. "We will have to implement all decisions quickly for this," Salehuddin said.

The BB is studying possible impacts of good grain import and increased price of petroleum on the country's economy.



Faruque Ahmed, director of Brac Health Programme, receives the "Stop TB Partnership Kochon Prize" at Cape Town in South Africa from Kochon Foundation Chairman Doo Hyun Kim. Brac and the Ministry of Health of People's Republic of China jointly received the award for contribution to reducing Tuberculosis.

**CONSULTANT WANTED**

For BUTTERFLY PARK & SEA LIFE AQUARIUM We want some one who have good experience & idea to give turn key solution of the two project.

CONTACT US

**Petro Product Company Ltd.**  
69, Suhrawardy Avenue, Baridhara, Dhaka.  
Mobile: 01711465063, e-mail: azim\_friend@yahoo.com

**RAHIMAFROOZ**  
Exclusive Distributor of Dunlop Tyres

**The Largest Selling Automotive Tyres**

**DUNLOP**  
DRIVING TO THE FUTURE

Dhaka: 9565238, 8822351, 8915165 Chittagong: 712313 Jessore: 68553 Bogra: 63946 Sylhet: 713603

**Congratulations**  
to Our Cardiology Team on Completion of

**1000**

Angioplasty (PTCA) on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2007  
and a total of **3805** Cardiac Procedure

This has been possible because of the care we have in mind for you  
and the immense trust you have on us

**United Hospital**  
Exceptional People. Exceptional Care.

Plot 15 Road 71 Gulshan Dhaka 1212  
Tel: 880 2 8836000 8836444  
Fax: 880 2 8836446  
Emergency: 0191 4001234  
www.uhbd.com

**Chittagong Information Centre**  
23/A M M Ali Road Goal Pahar Moor  
Mehdibag Chittagong  
Tel: (031) 625420  
Cell: 0191 4001210