

Invest in ICT sector

Dhaka urges global investors

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh team at a country-showcasing event at the United Nations on Wednesday called for more investment in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector by global investors.

Organised by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the two-day event included a series of interactive panel discussions and country presentations by emerging markets like Bangladesh and Turkey as well as already developed markets like India.

It was attended by a large number of information technology professionals, investors, venture capitalists and representatives from developing countries and international financial institutions, according to a press release of Bangladesh Permanent

Mission to the UN received from New York yesterday.

The Bangladesh team comprising a government representative from the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN and three representatives from the private sector appraised the forum of the positive environment created in Bangladesh to attract more investment in the ICT sector.

Javed Ahmad, CEO of Aprosoft, a Boston-based IT consulting and outsourcing company with an off-shore development centre in Bangladesh, briefed the forum on the recent developments of the ICT industry and its future potentials.

Kamal Quadir, founder of CellBazaar, which introduced electronic platform for market information via cell phones, shared his experience in transferring technology to Bangladesh.

Kazi Islam, CEO of Grameen Solutions, spoke of the opportunities and future possibilities of ICT development in Bangladesh and called for increased investment by technology partners.

The presentation was followed by lively exchange of views by investors and panellists. Some investors said that they were very bullish about Bangladesh's investment climate and the potentials of return on equity.

Expressing deep appreciation for the recent developments in the ICT sector, a representative of an international financial organisation said that his organisation would focus on possibilities of more investment in Bangladesh, since much of the information he got at the forum made him take a fresh look at the emerging investment climate.



A two-day photography exhibition titled 'Rediscover the Night' begins at Drik Gallery in the city yesterday, organised by Nokia Nseries.

Russia links help in Afghanistan to Nato expansion

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday offered to come to the aid of Nato's hard-pressed forces in Afghanistan, Interfax news agency reported, but linked this to the alliance halting membership bids by ex-Soviet Georgia and Ukraine.

Speaking ahead of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation summit next week, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko told Interfax Moscow was "considering the possibility of deepening" cooperation with Nato in its war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The offer appeared to refer to ongoing negotiations over transit for Nato forces through Russia rather than Moscow sending troops -- something unlikely given the Soviet Union's traumatic defeat by Afghan insurgents in the 1980s.

However, Grushko warned this would not happen "if each other's lawful security interests are not taken into account," making clear that topping those interests was opposition to Nato expansion.

The statement came just ahead of a Nato heads of state gathering in Bucharest on April 2-4, where Afghanistan and expansion will be the main issues. President Vladimir Putin will attend the summit on April 4 for the Nato-Russia Council meeting.

Russian permission to travel overland to Afghanistan would be a significant boost for the alliance in Afghanistan, as well as an unprecedented gesture of support from the Kremlin for its former Western enemy.

But Nato has repeatedly rejected attempts to restrain its expansion plans, including for Georgia and Ukraine.

Both those ex-Soviet republics, which are on Russia's borders, are pressing to be granted Membership Action Plan status -- a roadmap toward full membership -- at the Bucharest summit.

Mymensingh road crashes kill 5

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Five people, including two children, were killed and 10 others injured in separate road accidents in the district in the last two days.

Three of them were killed in a collision between a BRTC passenger bus and a human hauler, locally known as 'Nasiman', on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at around 11:00am yesterday.

The Mymensingh-bound bus from Dhaka and the Nasiman collided head-on in Narayanpur Latkar Bridge area, killing three people on the spot and injuring

seven others.

Two of the dead were identified as Enamul Hoque, 28, driver of the Nasiman, and Abdur Razzak, 50. The injured persons were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

In another accident at Dharshar Par on Mymensingh-Haluaghat road, a minor girl was killed and her sister was injured at around 10:00am yesterday.

Rahima Khatun, 10, daughter of Abdul Halim, died on the spot and her sister Aklima, 4, were injured seriously as a speeding truck ran over them when they were crossing the road, the police said.

Aklima was sent to MMCH in a critical condition.

On Thursday, a two-year-old girl was killed and three others, including her parents, were injured when the car they were travelling in skidded off the road and crashed into a roadside tree at Churkhai on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway.

Police said the family was going to Netrakona from Gazipur, but on the way the driver lost control of the car after one of its tyres punctured at noon.

Local people rushed seriously injured Ekra and her parents Setu and Emu and driver Anwar to MMCH where the girl died.



Rotary Club of Dhaka distributes wheelchairs among the physically challenged people at a function at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

Wheelchairs for people with disability

BSS, Dhaka

Wheelchairs, the most important aid for the people with disability, will now be available at Dhaka Central Jail and domestic routes of a private airlines.

Rotary Club of Dhaka yesterday donated five wheelchairs each to the authorities of the central jail and Best Aviation for easy movement of the physically challenged people.

Rotary Club of Dhaka and Rotary International District 3280 jointly organised a programme yesterday to distribute 140 wheelchairs to the organisations and poor people with disability.

Crocodile, a fashion house of Singapore, donated 250 wheelchairs to Rotary, which paid freight charges and import tax from the donation of Apollo Hospitals for making chairs available for the handicapped.

Anwarul Kabir Bhuiyan, a Rotarian and executive director of Securities and Exchange Commission, informed this to BSS on the sidelines of the programme.

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS 'Expand JSC course in dists to ensure education for all'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Participants at a conference yesterday called for expanding Junior School Certificate (JSC) programme for disadvantaged students, who dropped out from regular education, in all districts with a view to ensure education for all by 2015.

They said JSC programme under Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is now playing a vital role in bringing back poor students to education especially for completing Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Course, but the programme is now running only in 40 centres in Dhaka, Khulna, Jessore, Dinajpur, Parbatipur, Sonargaon, Savar and Munshiganj.

The JSC Tutors Conference was organised jointly by the Campaign for Popular Education (Campe), BOU and Unesco at LGED Bhaban in the capital where several hundred teachers from remote areas

were present.

The teachers said vast number of students are dropping out from the formal education due to various reasons including poverty while the JSC programme is helping dropped out students in receiving education.

Mosharrar Hossain Bhuiyan, secretary to primary and mass education ministry, said time has come to expand the JSC programme in all districts.

"Around 40 percent students at secondary level dropped out before reaching SSC examination because most of them are involved in different types of works. JSC programme can bring back those dropped out students to education," he said while addressing as chief guest.

Tapan Kumar Das of Campe presented the keynote paper on JSC programme and said mass campaign is needed to create awareness among the common people about JSC programme.

Hasan A Kenan of Unesco, Moazzem Hossain of Gram Bikash Kendra, BOU Professor Mizanur Rahman and Tasneem Atahar of Campe also took part in the conference.

Nepal to place soldiers on Everest to prevent Tibet protests

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal is to deploy soldiers on its side of Mount Everest to prevent pro-Tibet protests when China carries the Olympic torch to the summit in early May, officials told AFP yesterday.

Government sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said video cameras would be banned from the area and foreign climbers would only be able to approach the upper reaches once the Olympic expedition was clear.

"Four soldiers will stay at Everest base camp while the another four will remain at camp two," an official said.

The soldiers will "monitor the activities of expedition teams so that no anti-China protest takes place," the source said.

A Chinese team plans to take the torch to the summit of the 8,848-metre (29,028-feet) mountain -- which straddles the border between Nepal and Chinese-controlled Tibet -- in early May.

The northern side of the world's highest peak will be closed off altogether to private expeditions.

Thai PM warns of coup plot

AFP, Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej said yesterday he had been warned of a coup plot against his government, but refused to say who was scheming against him.

Samak, whose government replaced a military regime after his People Power Party (PPP) won elections in December, said he had

received a letter listing people who were planning to overthrow him.

"Anyone who might try another coup must ponder, why should he do that? For whom should he do that? Why and how?" Samak said, without revealing details of the threat.

But the premier said he did not believe there would be another putsch because the military top brass have already said they would not try to seize power.

"The military's supreme commander has said that he would never do that. The army chief, the navy chief, the air force chief and the supreme commander -- none of them have ever said that they would consider a coup," Samak said.

He later told reporters that the plotters wanted to use the legal system to place the government in deadlock in the hope of forcing the military to stage a new coup.

2 more Probashi Kalyan Desk in Ctg, Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Ifekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said two more 'Probashi Kalyan Desk' (expatriate welfare desk) will be opened at Chittagong and Sylhet International Airport soon.

Talking to the reporters at his office the adviser said Probashi Kalyan Desk would enhance the information and service delivery capacity of the unit for Bangladesh migrant workers who make a valuable contribution to the economy through their earnings.

Earlier, on Thursday the adviser inaugurated a Probashi Kalyan Desk at Zia International Airport.

BBC Bangladesh Sanglap today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fifth edition of the special series of BBC Bangladesh Sanglap titled 'Trade and Investment' will be held at the Theatre Institute Auditorium in Chittagong today.

Executive Chairman of Bepza Ashraf Abdullah Yusuf, banker and financial analyst Mamun Rashid, former president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce Industry Saiful Islam and former president of Bangladesh Economic Association Prof Moinal Islam will take part in the Sanglap as panellists.

Journalist and writer Abul Momen will moderate the programme as the BBC's guest presenter.

The recorded programme will be aired on BBC Bangla radio at 8:00pm tomorrow and on Channel 4 at 8:00pm on Monday.

US sees 'excellent' ties with Taiwan under new leader

AFP, Taipei

The head of the US representative office in Taiwan said yesterday he was confident of "excellent" relations with its incoming president but gave no word on whether he would be granted a Washington visit.

"We are very confident to have an excellent relation (with Taiwan) in the next four years," said Raymond F Burghardt, the Washington-based chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT).

The AIT is a non-profit, quasi official organisation that has handled ties in the absence of formal relations since Washington switched formal diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979.

Burghardt said that Ma's focus "looks like it will be somewhat different" than under outgoing President Chen Shui-bian, who irked Washington and Beijing with his pro-independence stance.

"That does offer hope that Ma will be able to devote more time to working together on practical issues of mutual importance," Burghardt told reporters, including trade and bilateral cooperation.

Ma, of the opposition Kuomintang (KMT), has stressed his hopes for better ties with Washington and said he would like to visit there before his May 20 inauguration.

Burghardt declined to comment on whether Washington has given Ma the green light, only saying the issue "is being discussed."

By allowing Ma to visit, Washington could anger Beijing which opposes any foreign visits by top government officials from Taiwan.

China views the island, which split from the mainland in 1949 after a civil war, as part of its territory awaiting reunification, if necessary by force.

Although the United States switched diplomatic recognition, it has remained a key ally to Taiwan and its leading arms supplier.

US President George W Bush was among the first to congratulate Ma, seen as a moderate on the China question than Chen.

Embassy in Dhaka soon: Algerian envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Algeria is going to establish its embassy in Dhaka soon to further promote trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

"The process is going on. We'll set up our embassy here as soon as possible to improve trade and economic cooperation," said Nadir Larbaoui, Algerian Ambassador to Bangladesh who is resident in Islamabad, in an interview with UNB at a city hotel yesterday.

The Ambassador said: "We're also going to renew all agreements in the fields of trade and commerce and planning to establish foreign office consultations."

He said a 20-member business delegation from Bangladesh visited Algeria last year to promote bilateral trade and investment.

Larbaoui, who had meetings with Bangladeshi businessmen and companies, said: "We're thinking to set up a council of Bangladeshi and Algerian businessmen."

The present bilateral trade is insignificant and done through third country Bangladeshi pharmaceutical products and medicines are mainly exported to Algeria.

Larbaoui said that although based in Pakistan, he always made a point of coming to Dhaka to share with brotherly people of Bangladesh on the occasion of the Independence Day and express good wishes on behalf of Algerian President M Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the Algerian people.

He said Algeria as a brotherly country is following with great interest political and economic developments in Bangladesh and praised the government efforts to promote democratic process and ensure stability, security and development of the country.

He also praised Bangladesh's role in UN peacekeeping missions especially in African continent to protect peace and stability in some areas.

The Ambassador said Algeria faced the challenge of terrorism with four major conditions -- it has national consensus against terrorism and extremism as Algerians are moderate and tolerant and know the real value of Islam. Secondly, Algeria has a strong constitution and democratic institutions important civil society with special role played by women and consensus to reject any kind of foreign intervention.

He said Algeria's economic growth is now around 6.5 this year. "We've now started projects in infrastructure, agriculture, industry, etc. We've launched privatisation policy."

On Bangladesh-Algeria relations, the envoy said the two countries have common history, values and roots in war liberation.

He recalled the role played by former Algerian President Houari Boumediene to promote reconciliation between Bangladesh and Pakistan in 1974. President Boumediene came to Dhaka and took with him Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to attend the OIC summit held in Lahore.



Chevron Dhaka office employees donate blood in the city on March 25 on the occasion of the Independence Day. Chevron Dhaka office organised the blood donation programme in cooperation with Bangladesh Red Cross and Red Crescent Society. Earlier, Chevron's Bibiyana Field employees donated blood. A total of 125 bags of blood were collected from the two programmes.

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