

# Bangladesh can cash in on global crisis

Says British envoy

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The current global economic crisis may be a blessing for Bangladesh, said British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Stephen Evans yesterday.

He said the looming global recession had dwindled the real purchasing power of developed country's consumers and consequently they would be forced to go for relatively cheaper goods.

As Bangladesh generally produces low-end goods and even enjoys reputation for quality, consumers of developed countries would likely go for Bangladeshi items, the envoy added.

Prospects for Bangladeshi garments and other items are therefore very good in the international market, he said, adding that the country now

just requires to capitalise this opportunity with cautiously keeping proper strategy and measures in place.

He was speaking at a courtesy meeting with Chittagong chamber presidium at the chamber president's office, said a statement.

The high commissioner said the economic turmoil that erupted in USA has a rippling effect and likely to engulf all the economies particularly the developed and emerging ones.

The envoy also emphasised maintaining the efficiency of Chittagong Port attained in the last two years and improving the physical infrastructure in the country to tap the opportunities associated with global economic crisis.

He particularly underscored the need for address-

ing the country's persisting power crisis and nagging gas supply problems. Evans also informed the meeting that EU would show zero tolerance to import frozen fishes and other food items having traces of nitrofurantoin or any other alien particles from any country including Bangladesh.

President of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry Saifuzzaman Chowdhury said bilateral relation between Bangladesh and the UK in all fronts are very strong, and expressed optimism that it would also increase further in days to come for the shared benefits of both the nations.

Chowdhury said although Bangladesh is relatively immune from the current global economic turmoil due

to its less exposure to and integration with global financial market, longer stay of this economic meltdown is likely to adversely affect the economy by squeezing export markets and volume.

He also requested the envoy to arrange financial, expert and technical assistance from his country for Bangladesh's food sector entrepreneurs including frozen foods ones to help them be compliant of EU standards meant for the same to enable them avail of the duty and quota free market access guaranteed by EU for Bangladeshi products.

CCCI Senior Vice President MA Latif, Vice President Mahub Alam, UK Trade and Investment Director Kevin Ringham were also present at the meeting among others.

## Search for new export avenues suggested

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh needs to diversify exports and explore new markets to offset the current global economic recession, said

Debaripriya Bhattacharya, ambassador and permanent representative of the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN office and WTO in Geneva yesterday.

"Diversification is a must for Bangladeshi products and markets to sustain the changing global economic order and the country should move up its value chain," Bhattacharya said at the monthly luncheon meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) held at a city hotel.

He said Bangladesh should

look forward to emerging markets like India, China or Brazil where economies are strengthening and huge consumers exist.

The Dhaka envoy to the WTO pointed out that the Doha Round, expected to be concluded in early 2011, would be the last opportunity for Bangladesh to negotiate trade preferences as a least developed country.

"I believe, Bangladesh will emerge as a middle-income country by the time another round of WTO negotiations begin," he said, expressing the high hope that Bangladesh would at least become a lower middle income country when it will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

He said the Doha Round is now facing setbacks due to the elections in the United States, followed by the European Union and India, and the current global financial crisis.

Expressing his frustration over grouping, Debaripriya said the country would have to find new partners in the second round of trade negotiations under WTO, as African least developed countries (LDCs) are not supporting Bangladesh.

AmCham President Syed Ershad Ahmed welcomed the guests, seeking appropriate trade policies as part of overcoming the current global financial crisis. He said the importance of WTO is increasing in tackling the financial crisis more efficiently.

## PRICE, WorldFish partner to raise shrimp yields

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The USAID-funded Poverty Reduction by Increasing the Competitiveness of Enterprises (PRICE) Project and the WorldFish Centre has recently completed a partnership agreement to raise shrimp farm yields for the benefit of the entire shrimp sector, says a press statement.

Under the subcontract with the PRICE, the WorldFish Centre would implement the Greater Harvest and Economic Returns from Shrimp (GHERS) initiative with partner depot owners to provide embedded extension services to 2000 bagda and golda farmers for the 2009 farming season.

Alan Brooks, regional director of WorldFish Centre, said, "This PRICE initiative will definitely promote increase in production and quality by improving farming methods and farmer group cooperation."

## Market turmoil pushes Japan's Nomura deep into red

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's top broker Nomura Holdings posted a large loss Tuesday because of turmoil in world markets and warned that it could suffer further due to exposure to Iceland's financial meltdown.

Nomura, which is buying the Asian and European operations of troubled Wall Street bank Lehman Brothers, reported a first-half net loss of 149.5 billion yen (1.57 billion dollars), against a year-earlier profit of 64.2 billion.

In the fiscal second quarter alone it lost 72.9 billion yen.

"The management regrets that the company posted losses for three consecutive quarters. We feel a sense of crisis and are now trying to break through this situation," said Nomura chief financial officer Masafumi Nakada.

The broker said earnings were hit by the collapse of Lehman Brothers, which sparked chaos on global financial markets.

Nomura said it may also lose money on its 425 million dollar exposure to Iceland, whose once booming financial sector has collapsed under the weight of the worldwide credit crunch.

## Rural electrification strategy should fall in line with urban's

CPD-FBCCI dialogue told

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The rural electrification strategy should be in line with that of urban to keep the country's economic growth steady, experts said yesterday.

They said the government policies have always bypassed the need for rural electrification. But electricity supply to the rural areas is a must to bring villagers to the mainstream economy.

"We are always talking about urban electrification. We should understand that rural people also suffer from shortage of electricity," said M Asaduzzaman, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

He said it is true that solar energy is spreading in rural areas to meet household needs. "But for commercial venture, electricity is the only



CPD Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan speaks at a dialogue on 'Energy for Development: Options and Strategies for Bangladesh' in Dhaka yesterday. Chief Adviser's Special Assistant for Energy M Tamim, and FBCCI President Annisul Huq were present among others.

way," he said.

Asaduzzaman was speaking at a dialogue styled 'Energy for Development: Options and Strategies for Bangladesh' in Dhaka.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of

Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) jointly organised the discussion, which was presided over by CPD Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan.

Asaduzzaman said only one percent people living in rural areas are enjoying the benefits of electricity. Kerosene, dung,

firewood, tree leaves and crop residue usually meet the rest of their energy demands.

In Bangladesh more than 80 percent people live in rural areas. The government has a national strategy under which it will have to ensure electricity for all the citizens by 2025, he said.

If the government wants to reach the target, it will have to add on an average 2,000 MW electricity a year to the national grid. At present, both the government and private sector generate only 3,800 MW electricity per day against the demand of 5,000 MW.

Asaduzzaman also recommended ensuring governance in the power sector.

M Fouzul Kabir Khan, secretary to Power Division, said separate policies are needed for urban and rural areas so that electricity pricing could be rational.

## Iceland seeks aid from ECB

AFP, Reykjavik

Iceland jacked up its key interest rate to 18 percent and announced a request for help from the European Central Bank and the US Federal Reserve in twin moves on Tuesday to stave off national bankruptcy.

"Iceland's central bank sent a request to the ECB, the Fed and the Nordic banks on Friday," Icelandic Prime Minister Geir Haarde told reporters in Helsinki where Nordic leaders were meeting.

Haarde said Iceland had not yet received replies to its request.

## Citibank honours online banking clients

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Citibank NA yesterday held a programme to honour the clients of its online banking services as part of the celebration of winning the Best Corporate/Institutional Internet Bank Award in Bangladesh for 2008.

International finance magazine Global Finance had named the bank for the award for its 'CitiDirect Online Banking'.

BRAC University Vice Chancellor Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, a former caretaker government adviser, attended

the programme as chief guest.

"The government is trying to promote the use of ICT. People will be able to benefit from mobile commerce as this is more readily available than computers," Chowdhury said.

He hoped all banks would come forward to popularise internet banking in Bangladesh.

Citibank was selected as the Best Internet Bank in Bangladesh based on its "strength of strategy for attracting and servicing online customers and success in getting clients to use web offerings", it said in a press statement.



Biz Letters, Star Business, The Daily Star, 19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words.

## We need to thrive globally



In this world of globalisation, the survivability of a nation is only possible if the commerce of that nation thrives well in other countries. A nation cannot expect to grow economically if it only thinks of its local market alone. A nation like Bangladesh, for instance, must never think that the economy of the nation will grow if only it has a strong domestic economic system. Our economy is thriving but in order to thrive beyond one's own imagination we must move on and thrive strongly in other nations.

Except for a few industries like ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, food and others, most of our local companies think about the local market alone. In today's world, it is like committing suicide.

A company or an organisation will only flourish if it launches its strategies into other markets. For example, we have various real estate companies but all these market their products locally for the local people. They can easily expand their business by entering other countries and pursue the same kind of business.

Africa is developing and so are the other nations of South America. They can go to these places and invest in the real estate sector by constructing apartments and hotels. The same principle applies to other industries like toiletries and food companies.

We must not think of making profit by doing business locally. Profit should also be made from doing business in foreign countries as well. We do not have to go far, if we just look at our neigh-

boring country India then we can get a clear glimpse of their business strategies.

Companies like Tata or Aditya Birla Group are not just sitting in their own backyard and making profits. They ask for more by stepping into foreign soils in order to dominate foreign markets as well. How many companies in Bangladesh are like Tata or Aditya Birla?

Even if we talk about the media and entertainment industry, we are far behind India. Subhash Chandra, the chairman of Zee Telefilms and Essel Group, knows how to attract foreign viewers. Most of the Hindi television series are sub-titled in English so that foreign viewers can understand the story in the drama. Why can't our television channels do the same thing in order to attract foreign viewers? This would surely solidify our culture abroad.

It is time that our Ministry of Commerce steps forward in implementing laudatory efforts in helping the local industries go abroad for business expansion.

Minhaj Ahmed  
Dhaka

## Salesmanship and customers' needs

The prime objective of successful sales personnel is to enter the hearts of customers. Salespeople must want to know what the customer is actually looking for. From experience, I have seen many times that people in sales always believe in 'push sale'.

It means they just try to fulfill the business targets that have been assigned by supervisors or sales managers. Rather, they should truly want to know what customer wants or desires.

It is an era of modernisation. Automation has made our life much easier than ever before. Machines are programmed to do just about anything like man (emotional feelings aside). There is just one thing that machines cannot do, that is, figure out exactly what customers demand.

Customisation is at the heart of modern business transactions. Most organisations are trying heart and soul to offer the best services to their customers.

In times of fierce competition, 'survival of the fittest' is ever more true now. If an organisation cannot compete, then it does not have the right to stay in the market as it wastes the valuable time of customers and deprives other competent businesses to operate.

A satisfied customer is a person who will bring in another ten new customers for any organisation. On the other hand, dissatisfied customers will destroy at least the next thirteen business prospects!

Many of us make a common mistake. We think that sales only come from the efforts of the sales personnel. But actually, all the people in an organisation, from the CEO to the security guard, are sales representatives. An integrated contribution from all those people generates sales. And misbehavior of any one of them sharply declines sales.

Organisations need to not only find their position on the shelves of stores, but also in the hearts of customers. The "your view point" is most important here. Discerning the subtle hints of customers and converting their desires into actions is vital.

If an organisation can develop this attitude, then it would be the king in the customer's mind. Prosperity will be the next logical step...

Sajib Saha  
Dhaka

## Creating a paper-less office

In the book "Business @ the speed of thought", the writer, Bill Gates states, "Digital technology can transform your production processes and your business processes. It can also free workers from slow and inflexible paper processes. Replacing paper processes with digital processes liberates knowledge workers to do productive work... It is a great vision. No more stacks of paper in which you can't find what you need."

Our government offices should take lessons from the above comments. Still today our government offices do paper work in the same old British style. As a matter of fact, this delays expensive amount of time.

In this age of information, file works and all types of paperwork should be limited and switched to digital technology where information will be displayed with just with a single click.

Our government offices follow old-fashioned ways to maintain files and this creates chaos among the ordinary people who knock at their doors for service.

The government must take steps in creating paper-less government offices.  
Minhaj Ahmed  
Dhaka

## BIZ LETTERS

bizletters@thedailystar.net

"CLEAR, RICHLY DETAILED...A SMART INVESTMENT." —Business Week

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

**BILL GATES**

**BUSINESS @ THE SPEED OF THOUGHT**

SUCCEEDING IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY