

United Airways set to launch Ctg-Kolkata flight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

United Airways is scheduled to begin operations on the Chittagong-Kolkata route on March 30, to cater to the growing needs of the residents of the port city.

A Canadian-built Dash 8-100 aircraft with a 37-seat capacity will initially operate daily flights for four days a week from Chittagong, Friday through Monday, officials of the airline said at a press meet in Chittagong yesterday evening.

The airline, a venture of non-resident Bangladeshis, was launched in July 2007.

"The one way and return fare for the route will be Tk 9,125 and Tk 17,547, respectively, inclusive of taxes. But as part of its inaugural offer, the airline is charging Tk 6,950 for the one-way route.

The flight will depart from Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport at 4.30 pm," said Fazle Rabbi



Fazle Rabbi Chowdhury Zilani, director (sales and marketing) of United Airways, speaks at a press conference in Chittagong yesterday to announce the start of the airline's flight on Chittagong-Kolkata route from March 30.

Chowdhury Zilani, director (Sales and Marketing).

He said the company eyes to stretch its wing further in the next five years with an investment of Tk 2,000 crore. In order to meet that challenge, it plans to begin operations on the Dhaka-Kathmandu, Dhaka-Kuala

Lumpur, Dhaka-Dubai and Chittagong-Bahrain routes very shortly.

Syed Abdul Muqtadir, senior adviser of the company, said, "We hope to break-even in only three years."

Khurshid Alam, director (Ground Service), and Md

Kamrul Islam, manager (Marketing Support and PR) were also present.

Later, a raffle draw was held where three journalists won three complimentary return tickets on Chittagong-Kolkata-Chittagong and Chittagong-Dhaka-Chittagong routes.

Obama defends Geithner, focuses on passing budget

AP, Washington

Amid the continuing backlash over AIG bonuses, President Barack Obama is defending his embattled treasury secretary and touting his ambitious \$3.6 trillion budget proposal as a boon for ordinary Americans.

And, as early as Monday, the administration is expected to roll out a plan to rid banks of their toxic assets and speed the flow of loans. Some industry officials familiar with the details said they expected the approach would try to remove as much as \$1 trillion from banks' books.

Obama used his weekly radio and Internet address to turn the focus back to his budget proposal, calling it "a firm foundation of investments in energy, education and health care that will lead to a real and lasting prosperity." He plans a network television interview airing Sunday and a prime-time news conference Tuesday to continue bolstering his case.

The disclosure that American International Group Inc. paid out \$165 million in bonuses to employees, including to traders in the financial unit that nearly collapsed the insurer, has dominated the news this week. It has left the Obama administration on the defensive and seeking to refocus attention.

AIG bonus bill runs into Senate objections

AFP, Washington

Top US senators expressed disquiet Sunday over a populist bill aimed at taxing nearly all of AIG-style bonuses, querying whether it was constitutional and if it might delay economic recovery.

The bill moves this week to the Senate after passing overwhelmingly through the House of Representatives on Thursday. Senators on both sides are looking at diluting its punitive levy of 90 percent.

"I've got my doubts whether that's the best way to do this," Senate Budget Committee chairman Kent Conrad said on ABC's "This Week" program.

"I think there are certain constitutional questions about the imposition of a tax on a limited group of people," the Democrat said, while sharing in the public outrage against bailed-out insurer American International Group.

"If I were in charge of AIG, I'd call in these folks and I'd say, 'Look, you either give them back or you're fired.' That we can do, because we own the company."

Transcom Foods wins awards

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Transcom Foods Ltd, the sole franchisee of Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken in Bangladesh, has been recently awarded the CEO's Award of the year for KFC and Running Great Restaurants for Pizza Hut by Yum! Restaurants (India) Pvt Ltd, says a press release.

Correction

We regret the mistake in the March 5 news item, headlined "Qatar Airways cuts ticket prices", as the airline has actually brought down fuel surcharge, not fare.

Jute traders in Khulna face loss on recession

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Global recession has created an adverse impact on jute export in Khulna district as around five lakh bales of high quality raw jute are still lying unsold in warehouses at Daulatpur, a hub of jute export trade in the south-western region of the country.

Both the jute exporters and traders told this correspondent that they would incur a huge loss due to the global economic meltdown.

Although high quality raw jute was purchased at Tk1,500 per maund at the beginning of the current fiscal year, the price has now come down to Tk1,000 amid a demand decline. In addition, the prices of twine and yarn made of raw jute have also fallen on the international markets, resulting in a fall in demand for jute, exporters said.

"We are now waiting for the worst instead of hoping for the best as recession has begun to hit our econ-

omy," said Convenor of Daulatpur unit of Bangladesh Jute Association (BJA) Sheikh Kawser Ali.

He said 27 countries including China, India, Pakistan and Thailand are the regular buyers of Bangladeshi raw jute.

But recession has affected most of the countries that import jute from Bangladesh, leading to the fall in their demand for Bangladeshi jute at desired prices, he said.

Kawser Ali said the country earned around Tk573.56 crore by exporting around 17.18 lakh bales of raw jute from July 2007 to January 2008, while the earnings came down to around Tk470.53 crore as export plummeted to only 8.83 lakh bales from July 2008 to January this year.

BJA members said every year the country produces over 60 lakh bales of raw jute, of which 32 lakh bales are used in local jute and spinning mills, while the rest are exported.



CERAGEM Bangladesh gets new MD

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Yoo Hong Yeol has been appointed as managing director of CERAGEM Bangladesh Limited, a subsidiary of World's largest USFDA and ISO certified thermal cup pressure device manufacturer CERAGEM of South Korea.

Prior to this new assignment, Yoo held various marketing and management positions in CERAGEM'S South Korea, USA, Russia and Ukraine operations, according to a press release.

Ceragem Bangladesh is currently operating 15 centres mainly in Dhaka, Chittagong and Shylet.

Yoo, following his appointment, said Ceragem would set up more than 50 demonstration centres across the country this year to provide health benefit to a large number of people.

New DMD for National Bank

STAR BUSINESS DESK

National Bank has recently promoted Md Baidul Alam to deputy managing director, says a press release.

Prior to this new appointment, he was the bank's senior executive vice president and regional head of Chittagong.

Alam, an accounting graduate from Chittagong University, joined National Bank in 1983.

China stimulus to contribute 1.9pc to growth

AFP, Beijing

China's huge stimulus package is expected to contribute at least 1.5 percent to the nation's economic growth this year, a top official said Sunday, as the Asian giant continues to fight the crisis.

Zhang Yutai, head of the development research centre of the State Council, or cabinet, said the four-trillion-yuan (580-billion-dollar) package could contribute 1.5 to 1.9 percent to China's growth, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

The figure was a preliminary assessment, Zhang was quoted as saying.

The stimulus package was unveiled in November in a bid to fight the impact of the global financial crisis.

China has set an economic growth target of about 8.0 percent this year, a level that the government says it needs in order to keep unemployment at a manageable level.

However, just over a week ago, Premier Wen Jiabao admitted this target would be difficult to achieve.

On Wednesday, the World Bank slashed China's economic growth forecast to 6.5 percent in 2009.

Bepza reviews economy, trade, business

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) Board of Governors in its 30th meeting at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday discussed various issues, prospects and problems of the country's economy, trade and business.

The meeting, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, also discussed the

ways of "stimulating rapid economic growth of the country".

During the meeting of the governing body of the country's export-based special economic zones, all authorities concerned were directed to ensure a congenial investment climate in the country.

The meeting approved the minutes of the 29th board meeting of the Bepza. Finance Minister Dr Abul

Mal Abdul Muhith, Planning Minister A K Khandaker, Industries Minister Dilip Barua, State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Monnojan Sufian were among others present.

Besides, the secretaries of the ministries concerned, high officials, Bangladesh Bank Governor, NBR chairman and the Bepza chairman were also present at the meeting.



Muhammad A (Rumeel) Ali, chairman of BRAC Bank Ltd, inaugurates its first Premium Banking Lounge at its head office in Gulshan, Dhaka recently. It will offer exclusive services and preferential rates to its clients.

Asian currencies gain

AFP, Hong Kong

Asian currencies ended the week higher against the dollar in reaction to the Federal Reserve's decision to pump more than a trillion dollars into the financial system.

JAPANESE YEN: The yen gained ground during the week as the greenback was under pressure following the surprise move by the Fed.

The Japanese unit stood at 95.90 against the dollar late Friday in New York, up from 97.72 a week earlier.

The Fed's decision to buy long-term Treasury bonds and mortgage securities raised fears that by effectively printing money it would make US assets less attractive to investors, dealers said.

"The surprise announcement prompted investors to sell the dollar immediately," said Masato Otsubo, a dealer at Resona Bank.

The Fed said it would buy

up to 300 billion dollars in long-term US Treasury bonds over the next six months and boost its purchases of mortgage securities by 750 billion dollars in an effort to revive the ailing economy.

AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR: The Australian dollar is likely to extend its rally in the coming week, with a serious challenge expected to the US 70 cent mark, dealers said.

NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR: The New Zealand dollar ended local trading on Friday at 55.79 US cents, sharply up from 52.00 cents the previous week.

On Friday the kiwi rose above 56 US cents for the first time in more than two months as the US dollar fell on news the US Federal Reserve would pump more than a trillion dollars into the economy.

BNZ Capital currency strategist Danica Hampton said the New Zealand unit was captive to broad US

dollar weakness.

CHINESE YUAN: On the over-the-counter market, the yuan ended at 6.8277 Friday to the dollar, compared with Thursday's finish of 6.8285, and a closing price of 6.8380 the dollar the week before.

The central bank had set the yuan central parity rate at 6.8293 to the dollar Friday, compared with 6.8301 on Thursday.

The People's Bank of China allows a trading band of 0.5 percent on either side of the midpoint.

SINGAPORE DOLLAR: The dollar was at 1.5121 Singapore dollars Friday from 1.5391 the previous week.

SOUTH KOREAN WON: The won strengthened to 1,412.50 to the dollar Friday, compared with 1,483.50 won a week earlier, as South Korea is expected to post a large trade surplus this month and the greenback weakened globally.



Rachi Islam, managing director of Super Cut Saloon, attends a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium in the capital yesterday, marking its month-long celebration of the company's 12 years of business.

Hairdressing industry seeks govt support

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The hairdressing industry might be a great way of employment generation, eliminating poverty, which needs government attention to grow, a press meet in Dhaka was told yesterday.

"The government should take necessary measures to improve the socio-economic status of the barber community," said Rachi Islam, managing director of Super Cut Saloon.

He said the millennium-old business of the barbers is gradually emerging as an industry, the annual turnover of which is at least Tk 192 crore.

The Super Cut organised the press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium to mark its month-long celebration of the company's 12 years of business.

"Most of the barbers in the country are not paid well and socially neglected," Islam said, pointing out that educated and skilled barbers can be a great working force at home and abroad.

Currently, there are around five lakh people involved directly in the industry.

Super Cut Saloon, which started its business in 1997 on Jakir Hossain Road of Mohammadpur, now has three branches at Dhanmondi and Mohakhali highway.

Football star Arif Khan Joy was also present at the press conference.