



Visitors flock to a stall at the Dosti Women Entrepreneur Trade Expo 2009 that began at Bangabandhu International Convention Centre in Dhaka yesterday. Apparels, fabrics, carpets, utensils, handicrafts, iftar items, gems and jewellery and bags are among the items put on display at the six-day international fair.

## Fair to promote women entrepreneurs begins

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In a bid to identify and promote deserving women entrepreneurs, a six-day international trade show targeting Eid began in Dhaka yesterday.

The Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka organised the exposition styled "Dosti Women Entrepreneur Trade Expo (WETEX) 2009" at Bangabandhu International Convention Centre at Agargaon.

Women entrepreneurs from at least five countries -- Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China and Malaysia -- are showcasing their products at the show.

"I believe the fair would

help develop womanhood," Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, deputy leader of the House, said after its inauguration.

Pakistan High Commissioner in Bangladesh Alamgir Babar was also present at the launching ceremony.

Products like apparels, fabrics, carpets, utensils, handicrafts, iftar items, gems and jewellery and bags are on display at the show.

The fair has 125 stalls and is open from 11 am to 10 pm till Saturday at a Tk 20 entry fee.

The Pakistani mission organised the fair in association with MIDAS Financing, Brac, SME Foundation and Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"We need more specialised schools of such sort to develop our women entrepreneurs," said Faruk Khan.

"The government will take steps to help the

specialised design school will help educate local women entrepreneurs to understand the latest in fashion trends around the world and export their products to developed nations," said the commerce minister yesterday.

"Only a few fashion designing schools are operating presently in the country. We need more specialised schools of such sort to develop our women entrepreneurs," said Faruk Khan.

"The government will take steps to help the

minister was speaking at a Grand Project Dissemination Event, co-organised by the BWCCI, Silk Association of Nepal and Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) in Dhaka.

"We are constantly working to ensure women empowerment by encouraging entrepreneurship and facilitating training programmes to further develop their skills,"

said Khan.

He said the government is set to appoint 10,000 primary school teachers, 80 percent of whom would be women.

The European Commission and Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry funded the two-year project that started in November 2007.

Stefan Frowein, ambassador and head of delegation of the European Commission in Bangladesh, said the main objective of the project is to propel women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh and India, mainly in the handicrafts and silk industry.

"Women entrepreneurs in both the countries have made good progress. They require further training to develop an understanding over international marketing strategies and global fashion trends. It will help them enhance their production capacity and turnover eventually," he added.

Duncan Noeman, deputy high commissioner of British High Commission in Dhaka, and Shankar P Pandeya, president of Silk Association of Nepal, were also present.

## China to give \$1b in project funds

UNB, Dhaka

China plans to provide over \$1 billion for funding three projects in Bangladesh as Dhaka and Beijing are negotiating the terms of the loan.

The projects are: Shahjalal Fertiliser Plant, Digital Telephone Project, introduction of 3G and expansion of 2.5G network, and Pagla Water Treatment Plant.

"It's my view that these projects coincide with policy goal of the government to improve agriculture production, living environment of the people and to build up digital Bangladesh in 2021," Chinese Ambassador Zhang Xianyi said.

Speaking to the news agency on the 12th meeting of the Joint Commission on Economic and Trade Cooperation in Beijing, Xianyi said Bangladesh came up with other projects concerning development of infrastructure -- road, bridge and railway.

At the meeting, China agreed to extend the term of the unutilised 50 million yuan (\$ 7.35 million) interest-free loan for another five years.

The ambassador said China agreed to conduct feasibility study on the seventh friendship bridge on Arial Kha River at Kazirtek in Madaripur. A team from Beijing will come here this year for an appraisal of the project. The Chinese government will build it as a grant to Bangladesh if it is feasible.

The ambassador added both sides at the meeting agreed on further expansion.

sion of trade and economic cooperation and accelerating regional cooperation proceedings.

On bilateral trade, the two sides expressed satisfaction over the expansion of the trade volume from \$2.48 billion in 2005 to \$4.70 billion in 2008.

About a huge trade imbalance, the envoy said China would continue to take constructive measures to expand imports from Bangladesh. China gave preferential treatment to 1,717 items of Bangladesh and special preferential to 162 items under the Framework of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. Out of the 162, 84 items enjoy zero taxation.

Besides, he said, Beijing imports 10 percent of total production of jute and jute products from Bangladesh. "We want to import as much as we can but items must be compatible in quality and price," he added.

At the meeting, Bangladesh sought better access to Chinese market, which was welcomed by the Chinese side.

On economic cooperation, the Ambassador noted that China will write off unpaid debts of interest on loans provided to Bangladesh up to the end of 2008. This is for the first time China exempts debt stemming from interest as a gesture of friendship in the wake of economic recession.

On investment, the ambassador said some \$30 million was invested in Bangladesh in 2008, three times higher than the previous year's.

Australia's second-largest press group Fairfax Media on Monday reported an annual net loss of \$30.0 million (315.4 million US) as the global downturn and the Internet hit earnings.

Fairfax, which publishes

the flagship Sydney Morning Herald and the Age in Melbourne, said the same factors that had caused numerous newspaper closures around the globe weighed on the bottom line.

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