

German delegation seeks shipbuilding partnership

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A visiting German business delegation yesterday expressed its interest in forming a sustainable, long-term partnership in shipbuilding and other sectors in Bangladesh.

"German companies operate with long-term perspective, including transfer of technology and know-how and involvement of local partners in value creation," said Peter Clasen, head of the visiting delegation of OAV-German Asia-Pacific Business Association.

"Their approach (German companies) is not short-term profit but a sustainable long-term partnership," he said.

The statement came at a seminar on shipbuilding industry at the country's biggest shipbuilder Ananda Shipyard and Slipways Ltd (ASSL) at Meghnaghat on the outskirts of the capital.

Citing cooperation between Komrowski Group, a Hamburg-based trading and shipping company, and Ananda Shipyard, Clasen said: "We

wish further cooperation between Bangladesh and Germany in shipbuilding and related industries."

The German delegation arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a weeklong trip to explore business opportunities in shipbuilding, energy, engineering and textiles in Bangladesh.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan and German Ambassador in Bangladesh Holger Michael were present at the programme chaired by ASSL Chairman Abdullahel Bari.

Khan said his ministry had attached utmost attention to the development of shipbuilding. "Bangladesh has demonstrated its skills in building ships of international standards," he said.

In the past several years, two local shipbuilders ASSL and Western Marine Shipyard Ltd bagged orders for making more than 40 vessels of about \$600 million mainly from European buyers.

ASSL has handed a couple of ships to its buyers in Denmark and Mozambique.

Discussants at the seminar observed that Bangladesh has the capacity to tap the global shipbuilding

market as it can provide skilled and semiskilled workers at low-cost compared to other shipbuilding nations.

Operators said about 200 shipyards and workshops, employing about 100,000 skilled and semiskilled workers, are in operation to meet demand of the riverine country, offering a cheaper man-hour than any other shipbuilding country.

The industry estimates that ships built in Bangladesh would be about 15-20 percent cost competitive compared with the countries such as India, China, Korea and Singapore.

"I would like to convey my message through the German delegation to Europe and to the maritime world that Bangladesh would play a potential role in the global export shipbuilding market in coming years," said the minister.

"The government will extend all support enabling the sector to thrive with quality and compete with other ship exporting countries," Khan said.

He urged the developed nations to transfer technology to Bangladesh, which will develop the sector.



Dr Atiur Rahman, governor of Bangladesh Bank, and Jim McCabe, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bank, pose with the recipients of 'Governor's Scholarship' in Dhaka yesterday. The scholarship, sponsored by StanChart in partnership with Dhaka University Economics Department Alumni Association, will be given to 15 meritorious students at the university's economics department.

Grameen Foundation teams up with USAID

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Grameen Foundation announced a new private-public partnership to support local currency financing to micro-finance institutions (MFIs) throughout the developing world, says a press release.

Alonzo Fulgham, acting administrator of USAID, and Alex Counts, chief executive officer and president of Grameen Foundation, signed a memorandum of understanding recently to formalise the collaboration.

The \$162.5 million joint guarantee agreement will help MFIs around the world gain greater access to financing and address some of the effects of tightening credit markets.

Holcim holds seminars for contest

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Holcim Bangladesh has arranged a series of regional seminars starting in Dhaka for its contest titled "Holcim Green Built Bangladesh" since Thursday, the company said in a statement.

The goal of the seminars was to share the technical aspects of the project requirements and create awareness about effectiveness of green construction towards sustainable development and its necessity in Bangladesh.

New DG for BIBM



STAR BUSINESS DESK

Dr Bandana Saha has been appointed the director general of Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management, says a statement yesterday.

Prior to this new responsibility, she served the institute as a director for administration, accounts and research, development and consultancy.

Saha, a PhD from Moscow State University (Russia), joined BIBM as an assistant professor in 1980.

Mutual funds lead bull-run

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Dhaka market saw a bull-run yesterday, as a verdict date announcement on a mutual fund case triggered the investment sector price jump.

The High Court on Thursday announced that it would give the verdict on the mutual fund case on November 4.

With the bull-run, the benchmark index of the premier bourse reached a new height of 3,356 points, surpassing the previous highest of 3,326.08 points on October 20.

The DSE General Index yesterday rose by 38.57 points, or 1.16 percent.

The investment sector or

mutual funds and non-banking financial institutions (NBFIs) pulled the market up, operators said.

"On mutual fund verdict announcement, operators will be able to announce dividends, pending for the last two years due to a legal bar," said a DSE broker.

All of the mutual funds gained more than 5 percent.

The HC in August last year stayed the dividend declarations by all mutual fund managers until disposal of a writ petition filed with the HC challenging the modifications of mutual fund rules by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The HC also stayed the stock market regulator's ban on the issuance of bonus shares or rights issues for

closed-end mutual funds.

The broader index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, DSE All Share Price Index, also gained 29.7 points, or 1.06 percent to 2,813.77.

Advancers beat losers 120 to 112 with four securities remained unchanged. A total of 6,99,37,958 shares and mutual fund units worth Tk 1,184.77 crore were traded on the prime bourse.

Titas Gas topped the turnover leaders with 15,21,000 shares worth Tk 110.45 crore being traded.

Grameen Mutual Fund One, which advanced 20 percent, was the largest gainer, while Al-Haj Textile, which declined 13.74 percent, was the biggest loser.

Chittagong stocks also posted rise yesterday. The

CSE Selective Categories Index gained 56.01 points, or 0.77 percent to 7,249.84. The CSE All Share Price Index increased 83.09 points, or 0.72 percent to 11,558.03.

A total of 1,09,98,421 shares worth Tk 114.98 crore changed hands on the Chittagong Stock Exchange. Of the traded securities, 93 advanced, 74 declined and two remained unchanged.

AIMS 1st Mutual Fund was the biggest gainer, rising 19.94 percent, while Niloy Cement was the largest loser, declining 19.44 percent.

Bextex topped the turnover leaders with 11,78,800 shares worth Tk 10.56 crore being traded on the port city bourse.



President Zillur Rahman poses with a Dhaka Stock Exchange delegation at Bangabhaban in the capital yesterday.

Protect small investors' interest

President urges DSE

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday urged the authorities of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) to take necessary initiatives for attracting new investors along with steps to protect interest of the small investors.

"You will have to be alert always so that no vested quarters can influence or destabilise the market by providing any wrong information to the market," he told a 10-member DSE delegation when they met him at Bangabhaban.

Rakibur Rahman, the prime bourse president, led the delegation.

During the meeting,

Zillur Rahman said DSE should ensure the financial security of ordinary investors. "You must keep in mind that ensuring financial security of small investors is one of your main responsibilities."

The President noted that the present government had taken various steps for expanding the capital market with a view to making the industrialisation process more vibrant.

Referring to the 'Vision 2021' declared by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he emphasised ensuring strong and efficient financial management in the country to implement the vision. "The role of stock exchange is very important in building a

strong financial management."

Appreciating the government's initiative of public-private partnership (PPP), the President believed that the PPP would be able to play significant role in developing the capital market.

"I urge all concerned including the DSE to work more sincerely for making a success of the government's steps as well as attracting local and international investment," he said.

Zillur Rahman also lauded DSE's efficient role in keeping upward trend of the market amid ongoing global recession.

The DSE chief informed the President of their reform activities and the present

scenario of the capital market.

He mentioned that presently around Tk 1000 crore are being transacted daily in the capital market, as the non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) and other financial sectors are playing vital role in strengthening the market.

The DSE president said since induction of electronic trading in the Dhaka Stock Exchange from 1998, the activities of fake institutions were stopped.

Rakibur Rahman told the President that the government could also collect fund for its different sectors, including power and energy, through floating shares in the capital market.

Govt urged to run EPB, BoI under private management

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Industrial entrepreneurs yesterday called upon the government to immediately improve the supply of gas and power, and law and order situation to attract domestic and foreign investments.

Entrepreneurs, businesspeople and their leaders also urged the government to run Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and Board of Investment (BoI) under private management, as they said these business promotion bodies are unable to perform under public management.

They also expressed concerns over the high cost of business and the risks of losing competitiveness due to poor infrastructure and

performance of Chittagong Port.

They were speaking at a seminar on 'Current Investment Scenario and Way Forward', organised by the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) at its office in Dhaka.

Citi Bank NA Country Chief Mamun Rashid presented the keynote paper at the seminar, conducted by BCI President Shahedul Islam Helal.

FBCI President Annisul Huq said entrepreneurs are not going for expansion, which reflects that investment is not coming to the economy.

"A major negative indicator of the economy is the declining import of capital machinery, as no new investment is taking place

and entrepreneurs are not expanding operations."

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan said the government is going to finalise the coal policy soon.

He said the government is accelerating activities of the Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms, so that it needs only six hours to register a company.

Aftab Ul Islam, president of American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, said the country should generate employment right now by increasing investment.

Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Selima Ahmed said banks are less interested in giving loans to women entrepreneurs.

Food festival starts today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A three-day British fusion food festival - Taste of Britain Curry Fest -- is set to start at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel today, which will present the culinary success of British Bangladeshis in the UK.

Dhaka Sheraton Hotel and Curry Life, a British magazine on UK's fusion food industry, are co-organising the festival.

GM Quader, civil aviation and tourism minister, is scheduled to inaugurate the

festival.

"The festival will focus on the success of Bangladeshi chefs in winning the appreciation of British people and the gradual inclusion of our dishes in British cuisine," said Syed Belal Ahmed, director of the festival.

"The festival aims to create a fusion between food from the east and the west."

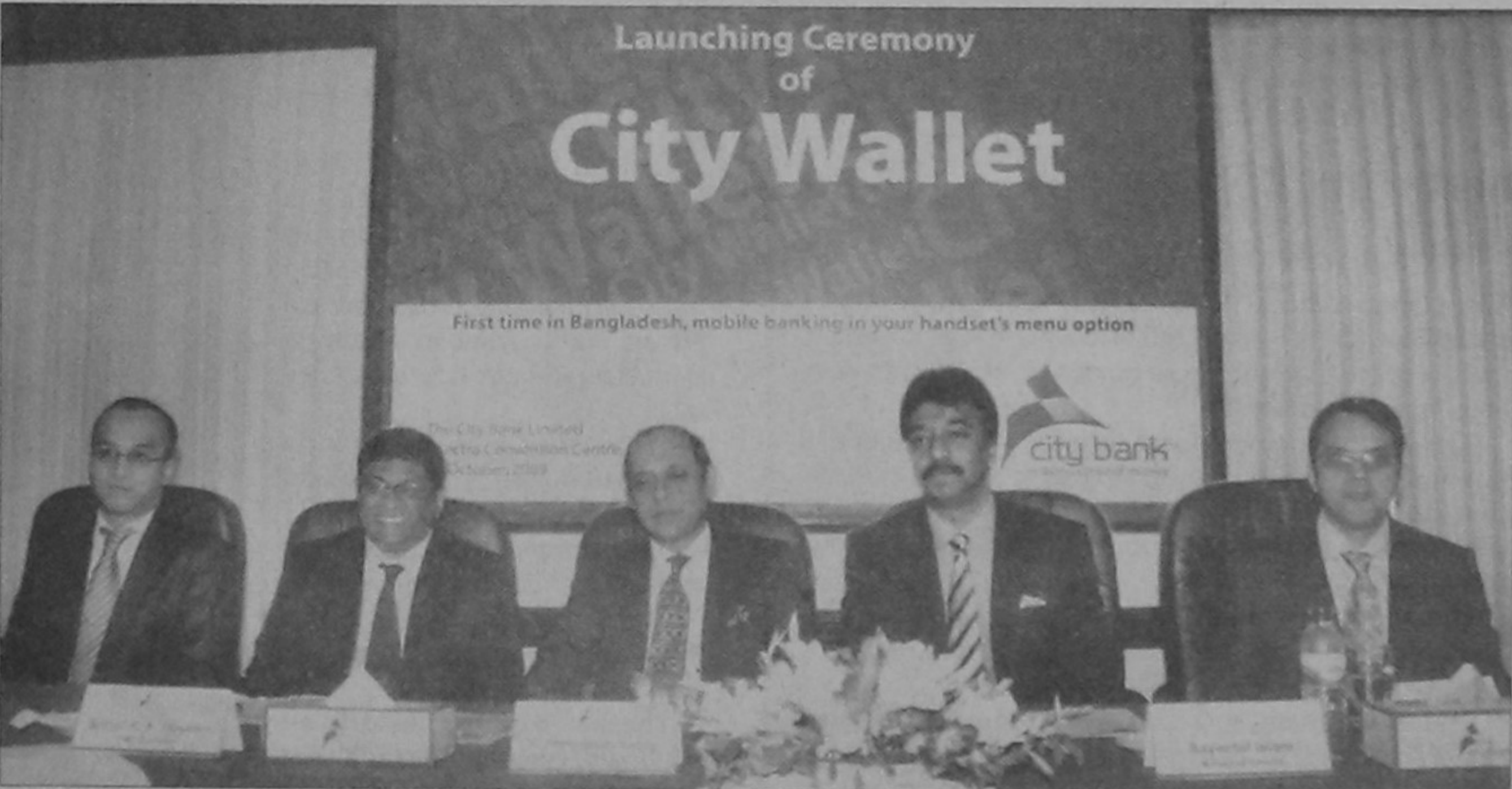
Ahmed was addressing a press conference on the sixth British Fusion Food Festival.

"Presently, there are around 12,000 Bangladeshi restaurants in the UK. Visitors to the festival will know how successfully Bangladeshi chefs run the food business in Britain," said Ahmed. "The festival will help enhance ties between Bangladesh and Britain."

He also said there are half a million Bangladeshis working in the culinary industry in UK, while there is a dearth of skilled and efficient chefs specialised in the eastern cuisine.



Abu Naser, regional head of customer relationship management (retail) for South Asia of OTOB, inaugurates the extension of the company's Mirpur outlet in Dhaka recently.



K Mahmood Sattar, managing director and chief executive officer of The City Bank, launches the bank's 'City Wallet' service at a ceremony in Dhaka recently. Customers having a JAVA enabled handset and an internet connection would no longer require traditional SMS-based banking services for their City Bank account queries.

TCB to sell essentials before Eid

UNB, Dhaka

About 3.50 lakh tonnes of sugar are on import pipeline and TCB will sell essentials through its dealers before Eid-ul Azha to stabilise the market.

Lutful Hye, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry, told reporters after a meeting yesterday.

The parliamentary body reviewed the price line and recommended that the

government take all possible measures to stabilise the market.

The meeting was told that 3.5 lakh tonnes of sugar are on import pipeline, including 2.46 lakh tonnes by private sector. Sugar consumption is now estimated at 3,000 tonnes per day, which is likely to increase to 4,000 to 5000 tonnes per day during Eid-ul-Azha.

Hye said sugar, now selling at Tk 45 a kg, should not go beyond Tk 50 per kg during

Eid. Asked if the committee recommended enacting law to fix profit margin for traders, he said the matter came up for discussion in the meeting.

TCB has opened LC for importing 20,500 tonnes of soybean oil and 5,500 tonnes of lentil, which are expected to reach before Eid, the meeting was also told.

Arrangements have been taken to sell consumers items like sugar, edible oil, spices through TCB

appointed dealers. The meeting suggested the government take steps to strengthen the intelligence watch, regular market monitoring and inspection of wholesale and retail markets in the capital by law enforcing agencies to check artificial crisis by dishonest businessmen.

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, Tipu Munshi, Abul Kashem and Rumana Mahmud attended the meeting.