

Malaysia keen to invest in power, telecom

BSS, Dhaka

The visiting Malaysian business delegation yesterday expressed its keenness to invest in communication, telecommunication and power sectors in Bangladesh.

They showed the interest at a meeting of the Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BMCCI), held at a local hotel. President of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Anisul Huq and BMCCI President Syed Moazzem Hossain addressed the

meeting, among others.

The FBCCI president highlighted the present investment opportunities and incentives offered by the Bangladesh government.

He urged the Malaysians to come forward to invest in the infrastructure development sector in Bangladesh.

The BMCCI president assured Bangladesh's business leaders of extending all sorts of cooperation to the Malaysian business mission for investment either in joint collaboration with local entrepreneurs or in 100

percent foreign ownership on build, operate and own, or build, operate and transfer basis.

The eight-member Malaysian business mission arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a three-day visit to explore the possibilities of business opportunities in infrastructure development and related services including construction of rail line, roads, highways and bridges.

The mission will hold meetings with the communication minister, the chairman of Board of Investment and leaders of different trade bodies.



Mehboob Chowdhury, right, chief executive officer (CEO) of Citycell, and Md Shahid Uddin Akbar, left, CEO of Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development, exchange documents after signing a deal in Dhaka recently. The two companies undertook a joint initiative, Batighar project, under Citycell's corporate social responsibility. The project will work on the field of agriculture, farmer counselling, small and medium enterprises, telemedicine etc.



Dr Rohana Kuruppu, chief executive officer of Brandix College of Clothing Technology, speaks at a two-day workshop on Professional Development on Clothing Manufacturing at Hotel Sarina in Dhaka on Sunday. American & Efid Bangladesh organised the workshop for RMG industry people.

A&E arranges training for RMG people

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh should look into how it can develop the skills of workers, especially the production management and quality control segment, in the readymade garment industry to stay fit in the face of tough competition in the global apparel market ahead, as the cheap labour the country now enjoys will not sustain for long, a foreign expert has suggested.

"If you want to enhance your competitiveness, you have to raise your capacity through proper training," Dr Rohana Kuruppu told a workshop in Dhaka on Sunday.

Held at Hotel Sarina, the two-day workshop on 'professional development on clothing manufacturing' was organised by American & Efid (A&E) Bangladesh.

Kuruppu is the chief executive officer of Brandix College of Clothing Technology, Sri Lanka, the training institute that has been assigned to impart training to the apparel industry people.

A&E, one of the world's leading manufacturers of industrial sewing thread and yarn, started its Bangladesh operations in November 2007 with a target to produce 2,500 tonnes of thread a year.

The workshop also attached importance to RMG production process, covering factory flexibility, manufacturing resources, productivity improvement, planning and methods of production line set-ups.

Nilanthi Gamage, a training specialist on production management and quality control at Brandix College and co-speaker of the workshop, emphasised practical concepts, evaluation and improvement in production management.

Over 100 personnel from 20 buying offices and 20 RMG manufacturers took part in the training, also attended by Angelo Leanlage, chief operating officer of A&E Bangladesh.

"If we look at European and USA apparel markets, Bangladesh retains a good position with its comparatively low-priced products. The country mainly had done it with its cheap labour," Kuruppu told The Daily Star.

"But the labour cost won't remain static forever. The country should move to train its human resources and get ready for the future challenges," he said.

Pointing his finger at the inadequacy in proper training facility except from the BGMEA Institute of Fashion and Technology, the Lankan trainer said, "This is the first time Brandix came outside Sri Lanka to arrange this sort of training for Bangladesh RMG people."

Brandix offers both short term and long-term courses, including a degree programme, for students.

Aslam Omar, managing director for A&E Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Janaka Gamage, CEO, and Irfan Thassim, CEO of Brandix Textiles Limited, were also present.

Official points to untapped Dhaka-Thimphu trade prospects

BSS, Thimphu

Entrepreneurship on the part of Bangladeshi businesses kept untapped Bangladesh-Bhutan economic links with current trade balance largely favouring the landlocked Himalayan kingdom, a Bhutanese official said yesterday.

"It appears that Bangladeshi businessmen consider Bhutan as an insignificant market despite huge prospects for their products," Sonam Tshering, Bhutanese economic affairs secretary, told the news agency.

He pointed out that Bhutan could be a very prospective market for Bangladeshi construction materials along electronic accessories, while Thimphu is currently importing products, including readymade garments, ceramics and shoes, against its exports of fruits and minerals.

Bhutan's current export to Bangladesh amounts to \$25 million, while its imports are only \$3 million. Tshering bluntly said Indian businesses were filling up the vacuum in Bhutanese market despite the wider geographic distances compared to Bangladesh.

The comments of the Bhutanese senior official came as the heads of governments of the eight-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Sarc) were set to take a decision to implement the much-talked Sarta (South Asian Free Trade Agreement) in their attempts to reduce the existing trade gaps between the member countries.

said things appeared to be changing slowly with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's maiden official tour of Thimphu five months ago.

Bangladesh and Bhutan signed a transit protocol then, allowing Thimphu to use Bangladesh's ports and a trade agreement under which 18 Bhutanese products would get duty-free access to Bangladesh market.

The bilateral trade volume has stood now at \$27 million from \$1 million in 1988, though the formal ties between the two countries was established in 1978.

Tshering, however, appreciated the developments in recent months and proposed opening of a second land route from Haluaghat at Mymensingh in Bangladesh with Eastern Bhutan alongside the current road links from Burimari under Lalmonirhat with western Bhutan for enhanced trade links.

He said the understanding reached between the two countries allowing Thimphu to use the Mongla Port facility would reduce Thimphu's dependency on India's Kolkata Port alone, while it would enable Bangladesh to earn a huge revenue.

The Bhutanese official also said off late negotiations were initiated for direct bus services between Dhaka and Thimphu and expected that the increased connectivity through the service would expand bilateral trade links along with cultural connectivity.

Singapore tourism rebrands itself

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Singapore Tourism has unveiled a brand marketing campaign by rebranding 'Uniquely Singapore' into 'YourSingapore'.

The new brand promotes Singapore's strengths as a "premium destination, given its picturesque sights, sounds, multidimensional culture, authentic taste and other attractions coupled with unparalleled user-centricity", according to a statement released recently.

"YourSingapore reflects the essence of Singapore as fresh, contemporary, vibrant, dynamic, sophisticated, and multifaceted and mirrors the progression of Singapore as being future facing."

Ken Low, assistant chief executive of Singapore Tourism Board's Marketing Group, said: "The strategy in developing YourSingapore was built upon the emotional connection that visitors experience in Singapore and at the same time, connect with potential visitors in the digital media space."

"YourSingapore taps into the motivational factors, which drive their decision-making while differentiating Singapore in the destination brand marketplace."

The new logo of YourSingapore is vibrant and colourful and holds the promise of delivering a multifaceted experience. The logo resembles the island outline and reflects the imagery of Singapore's attractions.

"YourSingapore places a holistic digital approach at the heart of its communications strategy, including a brand new website with significant investment into search engine marketing, blogger engagement, mobile, social media and travel e-commerce," said Randall Tan, regional director (South Asia, Middle East and Africa) of Singapore Tourism Board.

The launch also features www.yoursingapore.com, an interactive official site.

Seminar stresses protection of intellectual property rights

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Non-compliance of intellectual property rights-related regulations deprives inventors, writers and singers of their rights to get rewarded from their creation, a law professor has observed.

"It acts as discouragement if a person is not paid back for the creation or innovation," Dr Mizanur Rahman, professor of law at the University of Dhaka, told a seminar yesterday.

The university's Faculty of Law and Intellectual Property Association of Bangladesh (IPAB) jointly organised the programme at the faculty, marking the World Intellectual Property Day.

The theme of this year's World Intellectual Property Day - was 'Innovation-Linking the World.'

Dean of Faculty of Law Professor Dr Borhan Uddin Khan, IPAB Honorary General Secretary Md Mahbubur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Citing piracy of books of writers, songs of singers and lyrics, Prof Mizanur said innovators, owners of know-how are not getting their due benefits because of the weak legal protection system in Bangladesh.

He also observed that laws relating to protection of intellectual property are not enough, while government initiative to protect traditional knowledge has also led to the denial of property rights in many areas.

Md Mahbubur Rahman said protection of property rights is needed for the benefit of innovators, producers and consumers.

Underlining the need for protection of property rights, he said without protecting such rights a country cannot attain economic prosperity.



Sohail RK Hussain, deputy managing director (business) of City Bank, and Monzurul Haque, chairman and managing director of Org Quest Research Limited, a market survey company, exchange documents after signing a deal in Dhaka recently. Org Quest will conduct a customer survey for the bank.

Remove anomalies in land registration

Business forum urges govt

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government should take steps to remove anomalies in the land registration process in Bangladesh to help increase investment and boost the national economy, suggested the International Business Forum of Bangladesh (IBFB) yesterday.

"The government should take measures to bring the procedures of mutation and registration of property under one organisation, which will reduce the difficulties of initiating a new venture," said Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury, president of IBFB.

Chowdhury also suggested the government introduce online record keeping for property and tax payment. "If the government can ease the procedures, it will help attract new investment from local and foreign entrepreneurs," he told a discussion.

IBFB organised the discussion on 'improving property registration process and ranking of Bangladesh' at the National Press Club.

International Finance Corporation has prepared an annual ranking styled 'Doing Business Indicator' on the investment climate of a country on the basis of 10 indicators, including starting a new business, dealing with construction permits, registering property, getting credit, trading across borders and protecting investors.

Bangladesh ranked 119th out of 183 nations in 2010, declining from 110th in 2009 and 107th in 2008, showed an IBFB research paper.

"This ranking once again indicates the poor infrastructure and systems that need to be corrected immediately," said Islam, adding that the government should facilitate entrepreneurs with industry-friendly rules and regulations.

The research shows that there are eight procedures involving property registration, which require nearly 245 days and cost more than 10 percent of the value of the property, he said.

Simultaneously, the land ministry deals with mutation of any land or property, while the law ministry deals with registration, which make the procedure in transferring ownership of property a lengthy one.

The IBFB chief underscored the need to increase the number of sub-registry offices at upazilla levels and reduce the cost of mutation by 50 percent.

He suggested the government take initiatives to enhance the skills of the employees at relevant organisations.

IBFB plans to present a set of recommendations in this regard on May 6.

Iqbal Hussain, director, and M Mofizur Rahman, executive director of IBFB, were also present.



Hasan Mahmud, state minister for environment and forests, inaugurates the three-day Prantick Real Estate Fair 2010 at Chittagong Engineers Institute in the port city recently.

World Bank gives emerging countries greater clout

APP, Washington

The World Bank decided at a high-level meeting Sunday to give greater clout to emerging country members while also raising more money for them to work with.

The bank's 186 members approved a capital increase of 5.1 billion dollars, the first hike in more than 20 years, to help fund record lending in the wake of the global economic crisis.

They also approved a symbolic transfer of voting rights on bank policy to developing countries, giving them a stronger voice in one of the world's top financial institutions.

"Today was a very good day for multilateralism," bank president Robert Zoellick told reporters after a bi-annual meeting of the bank's development committee in Washington.

"This extra capital can be deployed to create jobs and protect the most vulnerable through investments in infrastructure, small- and medium-sized enterprises, and safety nets," he added.

Baira gets new execs



Mohammad Abul Bashar



Ali Haider Chowdhury

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mohammad Abul Bashar has been elected as the president of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) and Ali Haider Chowdhury as general secretary.

The portfolios of the elected members of Baira executive committee were distributed yesterday following the elections on Saturday, Baira said in a statement.

The portfolios of elected members, who contested under the panel titled Sammilito Samannay Front, were submitted to Tofael Ahmed, chairman of the Baira election board, at Baira office at Eskaton in Dhaka.

Reaz Ul Islam and Golem Mostafa have been

appointed as vice presidents, while Mansur Ahmed Kalam, Abdul Barakat Bhuiyan and Golem Maola as joint secretaries, Nasir Uddin Majumder as treasurer, AKM Nazrul Islam as cultural secretary and MA Salam as public relations secretary.

The members of the Baira executive committee include Siraj Uddin Ahmed, Abul Bashar, Noman Chowdhury, AHM Golem Kalam, Monirul Haque, Shahid Ullah, Emdad Ullah, Khalilur Rahman, Maolana Yakub Sharafati, Mostaque Ahmed, Mofizur Rahman Chowdhury, Tayeb Ali Sarker, MA Hamid, Faruk Al-Mahmud, Shawkat Hossain Bhuiyan and Aminul Haque Bhuiyan.