

Banglalink to work for farm sector

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mobile operator Banglalink has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Access to Information (A2I) Programme of the Prime Minister's Office and Agricultural Information Services (AIS) of the agriculture ministry.

The partnership will allow Banglalink to be part of any kind of possible mobile integrated services, events and projects of the agriculture sector of the country, officials said.

Under the agreement, Banglalink will be a strategic ally of AIS, A2I or any entities of the agriculture ministry to work together within all the possible scopes in line with the digitisation of the country's agriculture sector.

The MoU was signed at a ceremony at The Westin hotel in Dhaka on Thursday. National Project Director of A2I Programme

Md Nazrul Islam Khan, Chief Executive Officer of Banglalink Ahmed Abou Doma and Director of AIS Md Nazrul Islam signed the MoU on behalf of their respective parties.

Md Nazrul Islam Khan said: "The initiative is an excellent example of cooperation between the government and the private sector for the advancement of the agriculture sector."

"The agreement ties up agriculture, which is the heart of Bangladesh economy, with telecommunication, which is the fastest growing sector of the country," the Banglalink CEO said in his speech.

The initiative will allow the country's farmers to have instant access to any agriculture related information according to their needs, said Director of AIS Md Nazrul Islam.

Other senior officials from the parties concerned were also present at the signing ceremony.

Singapore Airlines adds two new flights to Tokyo

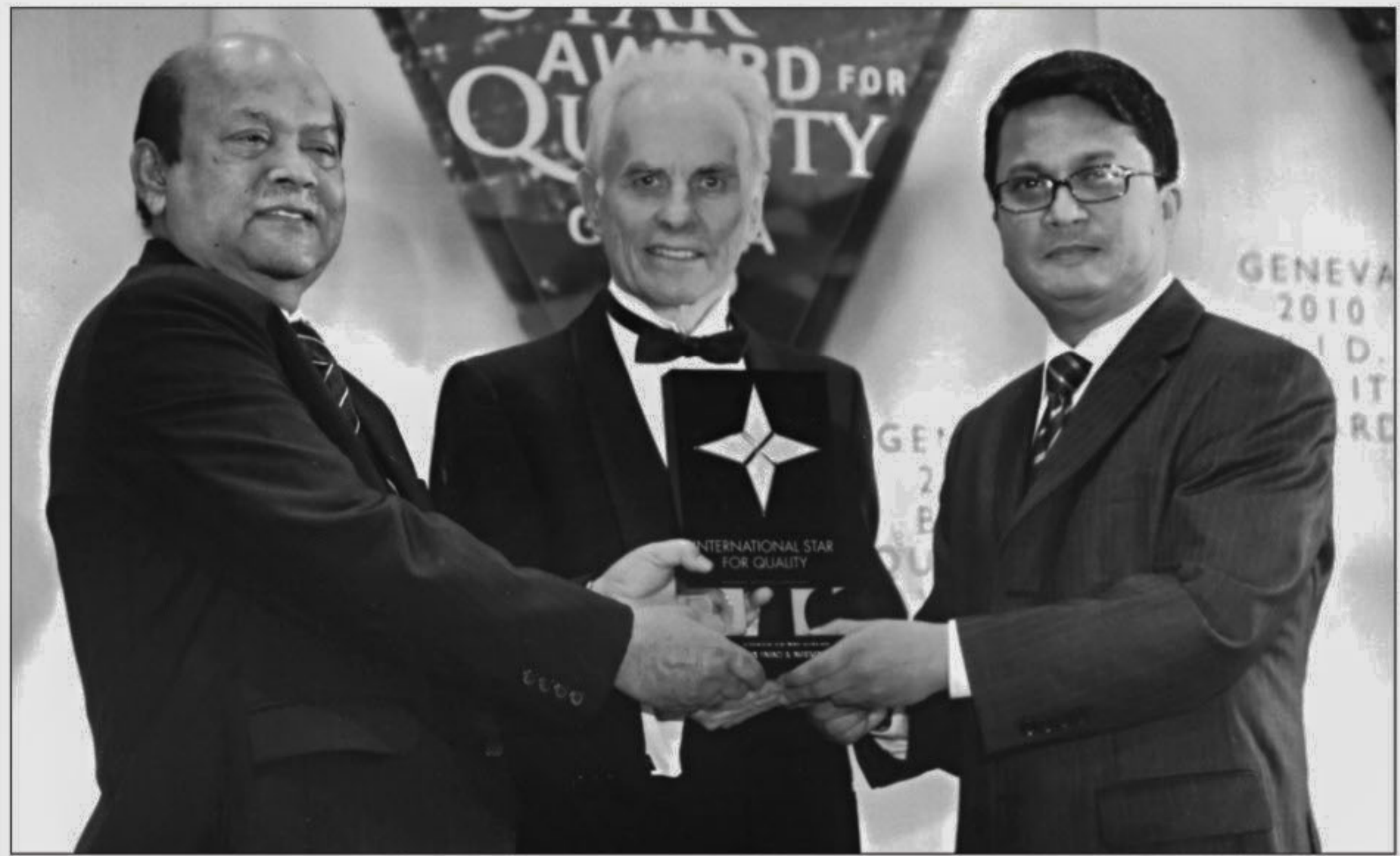
STAR BUSINESS DESK

Singapore Airlines is set to launch two new daily flights to Tokyo Haneda airport from its base Changi Airport, said the airline in a statement yesterday.

The flights, which are scheduled to kick off on October 31 with Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, will complement the current twice-daily Tokyo Narita services, bringing total frequency to Tokyo to four times daily.

"We are pleased to offer more options for customers travelling from Dhaka to Tokyo with the introduction of new services to Tokyo Haneda airport," said Malcolm Leong, general manager for Singapore Airlines in Bangladesh.

Currently, Singapore Airlines flies daily between Dhaka and Singapore.



PHOENIX FINANCE

Jose E Prieto, president and chief executive officer of Business Initiative Directions (BID), hands over the International Star Award (in gold category) to Deen Mohammad, chairman, and SM Intekhab Alam, managing director of Phoenix Finance and Insurance Ltd, at the BID International Star Award for Quality convention in Geneva recently.

London Fashion Week starts with record global support

AFP, London

British designers stepped out to prove their worth on the world stage at the start of London Fashion Week on Friday, as organisers hailed the capital as the globe's "number one fashion destination".

British fashion icons Vivienne Westwood, Paul Smith and Betty Jackson will feature in this season's event alongside international brands Burberry Prorsum, Pringle of Scotland, and Mulberry, as well as London's emerging young talent.

Hot on the heels of New York Fashion Week, the event -- featuring 66 catwalk shows over six days -- will attract the biggest ever turnout of international buyers, said organisers the British Fashion Council (BFC).

"I think we have reinvented ourselves to such an extent over the last two years that we are now the number one fashion destination in the world," said BFC chairman Harold Tillman.

While the London show may not reap the riches of rivals in New York, Milan and Paris, a report released Thursday showed that British fashion remains big business.

The industry has a direct value to the British economy of nearly 21 billion pounds and its influence on other industries is worth more than 16 billion pounds, according to BFC-commissioned research.

That makes it the equivalent of 44 billion euros or 58 billion dollars. BFC chief executive Caroline Rush said top designers were driving the sector's growth despite the economic climate.

"The strengths of the fashion industry are its innovation and breadth of designers here in London," she told AFP.

"It is the trends that you see here at London Fashion Week that you will no doubt see on the high street and in mid-market brands."



AFP

A model walks down the catwalk on the first day of London Fashion Week.

She said the London event, which runs until Wednesday at Somerset House, stood out from the "more commercial" New York offering by its wealth of fresh talent.

"Our emerging designers are true innovators and that gives them global influence and the ability to compete with major brands in attracting international buyers," she added.

Newcomers scheduled include Swedish fashion house Acne and up-and-coming designers Michael

Van Der Ham, David Koma and Holly Fulton.

But it was long-established designer Paul Costelloe who opened the programme with his latest womenswear and menswear collections.

The Dublin-born designer, who trained in Paris, says his collections are inspired by French fashion designer Madeleine Vionnet and styles of the 1920s and 1930s, "reinterpreted with a rock'n'roll attitude".

Govt plans industrial belts in Mirsarai, Sirajganj

UNB, Dhaka

In a bid to generate employment and provide infrastructural support to small and medium entrepreneurs in Chittagong, the government has planned to set up an industrial town in Mirsarai upazila.

The industrial town, or Mirsharai Shilpanagari, Chittagong, recently received its approval from the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council, according to the industries ministry.

"The project site has already been

selected... close to Mirsarai railway station," said Industries Minister Dilip Barua.

The project, to be implemented by 2012, will be on 25 acres at a cost of Tk 22.96 crore.

According to the project profile, the town will have 186 industrial plots where 125 small and medium industrial units could be set up.

Some 6,000 people would be directly employed once the project is implemented, apart from indirect jobs to be created, hoped Barua.

Besides, the government has also

decided to set up a park -- Bscic Industrial Park -- in Sirajganj with a view to reviving the rural economy.

The Sirajganj project, covering 400 acres at Saidabad and Kalia Haripur in the district town, also received a 'go ahead' from the economic council, he added.

The project, which will have around 801 industrial plots, is expected to complete by mid-2014 for Tk 384 crore.

A total of 570 export-oriented, import-substitute and domestic mills and factories will be set up on the industrial park, officials said.

Stocks pass a quiet week

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks remained nearly flat with intraday price fluctuations in all four trading sessions after the Dhaka market resumed trade on Monday, the first workday following the Eid-ul-Fitr vacation.

Week-on-week, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, DSE General Index, fell 9 points, or 0.14 percent, to 6,797.

The volume however dropped to the lowest since April 19, 2010.

"This was mainly because of SEC's suspension on netting facilities of non-marginable securities in an attempt to thwart excessive fund flow into the market," said BRAC-EPL, an investment bank, in its weekly market analysis.

The directive came into force on the day for the first time. "In addition to that, a large number of investors had not yet returned to the market following the Eid holidays," BRAC-EPL said.

However, it said, the turnover improved to some extent later in the week as some investors returned.

At the end of the week, total turnover stood at Tk 4,838 crore, up by 2.21 percent over the previous week.

Any suspension of netting or finan-

cial adjustment facility means no investor is allowed to buy shares against the sale proceedings of other securities within the existing settlement and clearance period.

Securities of a company will not be considered margin-worthy from the category-changing day until completion of thirty trading days, and also from the day of debut.

Z-category companies or junk shares, physical shares and the companies with price-earning ratio of above 40 also fall in the non-marginable securities category.

Most major sectors lost last week. Banks, telecom, fuel and power and cement were among the most notable losers.

Although general insurance companies gained, life insurance companies lost. Advancers however beat losers 149 to 109, with three securities remaining unchanged on the floor of the premier bourse.

At the end of Thursday's trading session, market capitalisation stood at Tk 3,02,323 crore, down by 0.47 percent.

Beximco Limited, the flagship of business conglomerate Beximco Group, topped the list of turnover leaders, followed by LankaBangla

Finance, Aftab Automobiles, Prime Finance and BSRM Steels.

Dacca Dyeing was the largest gainer, followed by Fine Foods, Saiham Textile, Ambee Pharma and City General Insurance.

BD Autocars was the biggest loser followed by 6th ICB Mutual Fund, Kohinoor Chemicals, ICB and Jute Spinners.

Chittagong stocks also fell marginally, with the CSE Selective Categories Index declining 0.05 percent to 12,902.

More than 3.22 crore shares and mutual fund units were traded on the Chittagong Stock Exchange on a value of Tk 434 crore.

Losers beat gainers 111 to 96, with six securities remaining unchanged on the port city bourse.

Beximco topped the turnover leaders, followed by Keya Cosmetics, Al-Arafah Islami Bank, Aftab Automobiles and Bextex.

Niloy Cement was the largest gainer, followed by 4th ICB Mutual Fund, Saiham Textile, Dacca Dyeing and Alpha Tobacco.

Fahad Industries was the biggest loser, followed by Jago Corporation, Saiko Spinning, AMCL (Pran) and 1st BSRM Mutual Fund.

Corruption threatens Indonesia's economic rise: IMF

AFP, Jakarta

The International Monetary Fund warned Friday Indonesia must make fighting corruption a priority if it wants to build on its progress as one of the world's best-performing economies.

Southeast Asia's biggest economy expanded 4.5 percent in 2009, the third fastest in the Group of 20, and is poised for accelerated growth in the years ahead, the IMF said in an annual report.

But it said foreign investors who are needed to fund Indonesia's expansion into a regional powerhouse would be cautious until more is done to fight rampant corruption and improve the rule of law.

"A decisive and successful response, as well as a decade of sound policies and structural reform, helped Indonesia recover quickly from the 2008 global crisis," the report said.

"However, lingering concerns over weak enforcement of the rule of law, transparency, and governance

issues weigh on market perceptions. Addressing these weaknesses should be a priority."

The IMF praised Indonesia's "remarkable achievements" over the past decade, as it transformed from the Suharto dictatorship into a flourishing democracy and recovered from near-bankruptcy in the 1998-1999 Asian financial crisis.

Indonesia was forced into a 43-billion-dollar bailout from the IMF in 1998, and only exited supervision by the Washington-based organisation in 2003.

But the Fund said Indonesia "still faces challenges to preserve financial stability and develop its financial system", especially in areas such as supervision and the development of the non-bank sector.

"Market participants view Indonesia as a country with great potential, supported by a large consumer base and rich in natural resources," the report said.

"Yet, Indonesian securities continue to trade at a discount relative to regional peers and many wealthy

Indonesian individuals still prefer to place their savings offshore."

As if to prove the point, 26 politicians were banned from leaving the country Friday amid investigations into graft related to the election of a central bank deputy governor in 2004.

The Fund's mission chief for Indonesia, Thomas Rumbaugh, told reporters the corruption fight was a "big objective the government has set for itself" and there had been improvement in terms of removing obstacles to investment.

"Recently we have seen some interest from multinationals moving into Indonesia ... but investors will be watching closely and what happens in this area will say a lot," he told reporters.

Foreign direct investment in the archipelago of 240 million people -- the fourth biggest country in the world by population -- soared 53 percent on-year to 35.6 trillion rupiah in the April-June period, official figures show.

The local stock market has leapt

more than 30 percent this year to pre-crisis levels thanks to strong offshore interest in emerging markets.

A survey of business leaders from 523 companies by UK Trade and Investment and the Economist Intelligence Unit, published this week, put Indonesia fourth behind China, Vietnam and India as a destination for investment capital over the next two years.

But the country's economic transformation masks glaring social inequalities reflected in indicators such as maternal mortality, which at 228 per 100,000 is considerably higher than its neighbours.

A recent "strategic assessment" of Indonesia's prospects for growth and democratic governance by the Harvard Kennedy School found it was "losing ground" to China, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines.

"Oligarchy and collusive democracy have left Indonesia ill equipped to respond to the challenge of globalisation," it said.



AFP

Latest trading results are displayed on an electronic board outside Jakarta's Stock Exchange building seen at left on Friday. The International Monetary Fund has advised Indonesia to make fighting corruption a priority.