

# Focus on CSR-friendly climate for business

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The government's revenue wing can create an enabling environment to entice businesses to be responsible to the society by providing incentives in the form of tax rebate and recognition of good work, discussants said at a dialogue in Chittagong yesterday.

A closer linkage between the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and the trade bodies will facilitate better functioning of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, they added.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) with support from Manusher Jonno Foundation jointly organised the policy dialogue on "Role of NBR in encouraging CSR activities" at Hotel Agrabad.

If women are given opportunities, they can be better entrepreneurs as they are more committed to work by nature, said Rokia Afzal Rahman, former caretaker government adviser and the chief



Rokia Afzal Rahman, centre, former caretaker government adviser, addresses a policy dialogue on "Role of NBR in encouraging CSR activities" in Chittagong yesterday. The programme was jointly organised by Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) with support from Manusher Jonno Foundation. Syed Md Aminul Karim, member of National Board of Revenue; Moazzem Hossain, editor of The Financial Express; Mahbul Alam, senior vice president of the chamber, and Hasibur Rahman, executive director of MRDI, were also present.

neers as they are more committed to work by nature, said Rokia Afzal Rahman, former caretaker government adviser and the chief

guest of the programme.

She called upon business people to give something back to the society from their profits.

Syed Md Aminul Karim, NBR member, highlighted the revised statutory regulatory order on CSR and hoped that it would

facilitate and encourage the business community to come up with more CSR activities.

Mahbul Alam, senior vice president of the chamber, urged the business community to use their CSR funds in alleviating poverty in a sustainable manner.

This can be done through developing skills of young people and creating job opportunities for them, Alam added.

If CSR funds can be used in addressing poverty alleviation issues in an effective and sustainable manner, dependency on the development funds will largely be reduced, said Hasibur Rahman, executive director of MRDI.

Moazzem Hossain, editor of The Financial Express, made the keynote presentation in the meeting where director and members of Chittagong chamber, representatives of the business community and the media were present.



Syed Imtiaz Hasib, deputy managing director of Southeast Bank, attends a workshop on "SWIFT operations" for the bank's officials, organised by Southeast Bank Training Institute, in Dhaka recently.

## Energy forum takes place in London

ANSAR AHMED ULLAH

An international forum took place in London on Wednesday with an aim to provide an exposure to the global oil economy, enabling Bangladeshi businesspeople to gain insights into the global oil and gas market.

The London School of Economics and Political Science Alumni Network in association with the UK government organised the forum titled "UK trade and investment in the Bangladesh oil and gas industry".

Prime focus of the event was to achieve higher goals, respectability and trust in the global market and to expose the oil and gas industry of Bangladesh, particularly small and medium enterprises, to a wider international energy sector audience.

The venue was central and ideally located for networking with representatives from the UK government, chief executive officers from Europe and India, academics, eminent oil economists and global experts.

The forum also provided the opportunity to facilitate and reinforce the link with the UK government departments for aid and trade, recognising Bangladesh as an emerging regional economic base endowed with natural resources and assisting British investment in the region.

"As an emerging oil economy, the Bangladesh oil and gas sector needs to redefine its identity as a strong suitable country capable of meeting the challenges of globalisation in the global marketplace," said Gautam Barua, one of the organisers.

British Lord Sheikh, founder and chairman of the Conservative Muslim Forum and vice chairman of various All Party Parliamentary Groups, and Prof Lawrence Saez, senior academic lecturer in comparative and international politics at the University

## Faruk Khan talks RMG with German business leaders

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan has recently met with some leading German readymade industry representatives at a dinner in Germany.

Bangladesh German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BGCCI) and McKinsey & Company, a global management company, organised the meeting at Hotel Breidenbacher Hof in Duesseldorf.

In the meeting, Dr Berg, partner at McKinsey, presented the findings of a study titled "Bangladesh RMG - the challenge of growth" that will be published in November, commerce ministry said in a statement yesterday.

Bangladesh has become the third-largest supplier for the European clothing market where Germany is the largest textile and clothing importer in the EU and second largest in the world, the statement added.

Top managers from companies like Adidas, C&A, NKD and Esprit appreciated the chance to have discussions with the commerce minister and BGCCI President Saiful Islam.

The minister discussed different issues regarding infrastructure, political unrest, strikes, labour, compliance and raw materials.

"The evening was a big success for branding Bangladesh," said Daniel Seidl, executive director of BGCCI.



Commerce Minister Faruk Khan poses with German readymade industry representatives at a meeting at Hotel Breidenbacher Hof in Germany recently. Bangladesh German Chamber of Commerce and Industry and McKinsey & Company, a global management company, organised the programme.

## Senior StanChart official due today



Jan Verplancke

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Jan Verplancke, group chief information officer of Standard Chartered Bank, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka today for a two-day official visit, the bank said in a statement yesterday.

During his second visit to Bangladesh, Verplancke is expected to meet the senior government officials, clients, stakeholders and staff of the bank.

He will be accompanied by Matthew Norris, chief information officer for India and South Asia, the statement added.

Prior to joining Standard Chartered Bank in 2004, Verplancke was the chief information officer at Dell.

Verplancke also worked with Levis Strauss.

## Fair that raises high hopes for tourism

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The first-ever Asian Tourism Fair in the city ended yesterday, with promise to help link up regional stakeholders and help Bangladesh's largely untapped sector flourish.

About 190 stalls from 14 countries took part in the three-day fair at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Of them, foreign participants ran 35 stalls. More than 20,000 visitors roamed the fair venue in the last few days, said organisers.

Organisers and visitors said the fair has been helpful, as it offered various options to the potential visitors.

Kamal Uddin, a businessman from Motijheel, said a number of tour operators operate covering the same geographical zones boasting tourist destinations. "So, the customer has many options to choose from these days," said Kamal Uddin, who wants to visit Nepal this month.

Participating companies from concerns such as tour agencies, tour operators, and realtors with focus on tourist spots came up with various products and offers, most of them offering discounted prices.

Tiger Tours Ltd, which customises products for clients, is promoting tourism through the river routes.

Officials of Kearsy Tours and

Services Ltd, which takes tourists to Saint Martin's and Cox's Bazar, said although they are not offering any discount they have received a good response from the visitors.

Royal Resort of Dhonbari, Tangail, took part in the three-day fair and offered 50 percent discount for promoting the historic King's Palace as a popular tourist destination.

A number of real estate companies also came up with different products, with some offering apartments and land at the country's various tourist spots at discounted prices.

Ideal Real Estate Ltd is building an 18-storey hotel in Cox's Bazar to accommodate both domestic and foreign tourists.

The hotel will be run on time-sharing ownership basis, which means buyers of the apartments will be able to stay for a month every year in their apartment at no cost through the rest of their life.

The company is also developing a land at the tourist spot Kuakata. Buyers will enjoy 50 percent discount if they pay the entire amount at one go, officials said.

Green Delta, another real estate company, is offering 15 percent discount for their projects across the country, including those at Cox's Bazar and Kuakata.

Mirza Noor Ahmed, an engineer from the city's Dhanmondi, came to the fair to book his tour passage to Nepal.

"I have never visited any foreign country with the help of a tour operator. I have heard bad things about them. Now I want to see by myself whether the allegations are true or not," said Ahmed, who will be accompanied by his wife.

Salahuddin Rumi, administrative officer of Mountain Club Tours, said the sector's reputation has been tarnished a bit because of the activities of 'a counted few' operators. "Most operators are professional people."

A number of foreign tour operators also took part in the fair. Rammani Sapkota, chief executive of Himalayan Rock, a tour trekking and expedition company, said his company received good response from the visitors.

His company provides adventure activities, culture and heritage tour, sight seeing and leisure trip and helicopter tour in Nepal.

He said Bangladesh's tour operators should take part in fairs in Nepal to woo the Nepali tourists into visiting Bangladesh. "There are many areas that Bangladesh can explore."

Phub Gyeltshen, managing director of Youe-Zere Tours and Treks in Bhutan, said tourism in Bhutan is one of the top revenue earning sources for the govern-

ment. "Bangladesh can do the same."

His countryman, Rinchen Wangdi, a tour manager of Shangri-La Bhutan, said his company has come to Bangladesh to promote Bhutan as a top tourist destination. "In Bhutan, we only get tourists from the western nations. We are offering budget packages so that Bangladeshi and Indian tourists can afford."

Seagull Hotels Ltd offered 35 percent discount. Officials of Bawa Group of Hotels said his company offered more than 40 percent discount for Bangladeshi travellers.

Organisers said the fair has been very successful and will help promote tourism in the region.

"Tourism in Bangladesh needs further promotion. Our objective was to create awareness among tourists about local tourism. We have been successful to an extent," said Mohiuddin Helal, chief coordinator of the fair organising committee.

He said tourism in Bangladesh has never been able to attract appropriate attention from the authorities. "As a result, the sector is still developing. This fair also aimed to connect our country to the regional countries developed in the sector so that we can learn and grow."

Helal said the fair also helped them link with regional businesses.



Mozibur Rahman Fakir, state minister for health and family welfare, attends a scientific symposium on "Improving maternal and child nutrition", organised by Nestle Nutrition Institute, at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka on Thursday.



Abdullah Al Mahmud, managing director of Hamid Fabrics Ltd, attends the 17th annual general meeting of the company at Spectra Convention Centre in Dhaka recently. The company approved 20 percent cash dividends for its shareholders. AHM Mozammel Hoque, chairman, was also present.



Mohammad Abdul Mannan, managing director of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, speaks at a discussion on Islami banking in Dhaka yesterday. RR Kairi, president of Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society, was also present.