

Knitters plan big on exports to Japan

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA From Tokyo

Knitters have aimed to export knitwear products worth \$20 billion by 2020 with shipments to new destinations, maintaining an upward trend, exporters said.

Of the new destinations, the exports of garment items from Bangladesh to Japan are growing at a fast rate, they said.

"Now, grabbing the upscale garment market of Japan is our next target," Monsoor Ahmed, vice-president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), told reporters in Tokyo, Japan.

Ahmed, also the team leader of the Bangladesh knitwear exhibitors at the JFW-IFF fair, said many thought that there will be a catastrophic effect of the global

recession on Bangladeshi garment exports, but the country survived it.

This year, BKMEA held the sixth Knitexpo in Tokyo as the exports of garments to Japan increased after the Japanese government altered the rules of origin under the generalised system of preferences in April last year.

"If we can explore the new destinations with potential, we will be able to achieve the target of exporting \$20 billion worth of knitwear by 2020," Ahmed said.

In fiscal 2010-11, garment items worth \$18 billion, including woven and knitwear, were exported.

Shubhashish Bose, vice-chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), the state-owned export promoting agency, said leather products were on top of the

list of exports to Japan in fiscal 2010-11.

But in the last six months, garment items have crossed leather goods as exports are growing fast. In the last fiscal year, Bangladesh exported 151 types of goods to Japan worth \$434 million, he added.

He said now Bangladeshi manufacturers are exporting upscale garment items, including items for world renowned Hugo Boss.

"We have the confidence to ensure the quality of garment items for an upscale market like Japan," he said.

"EPB is working to develop 14 more products to diversify the export products and reduce the dependency on a few number of goods," he said.

Pledging support to exporters, Commerce Minister GM Quader said Bangla-

desh is able to supply any kind of quality garment item, in any quantity, for the Japanese customers.

"The recession did not affect us. So we are still competitive," he said. Direct flights between Dhaka and Tokyo will start once business grows, he added.

"The government will try to start direct flights between the two countries to minimise the communication gap. Japan is an important country for Bangladesh," he said.

"The international buyers can now rely on us. It is our great achievement," he added.

Mohammad Hatem, acting BKMEA president, also spoke.

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ICB ISLAMIC BANK

Villy Vellayappan, chief operating officer of ICB Islamic Bank, and Salma Akter, coordinator of customer care of Placid, exchange documents after signing an agreement to provide remittance services, in Dhaka recently. Mamoon Mahmood Shah, managing director of the bank, was also present.

Senior Citibank official due today

STAR BUSINESS DESK

A senior official of Citibank arrives today in the country for a two-day official visit, the bank said in a statement.

Terence Cuddyre, managing director and Citi country officer for Brunei and cluster head for Citi

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, will meet senior officials and key clients of the bank. He will also review Citi's potential for further growth in Bangladesh due his visit to the country, according to the statement.

Cuddyre, who joined Citi in 2000 after 23 years with Bank of America, has held numerous international roles including, Citi Country Officer of Thailand, Country Head of Ireland, Korea, Hong Kong and China.

He also held several risk positions in North America and Asia.

Cuddyre holds a bachelor in economics from the University of California, Santa Barbara and an



About 200 dealers of Transcom Electronics pose for photographs at the annual dealers' conference at BRAC CDM in Savar recently. Jafrul Alam Khan, general manager of electronics and appliances business, and Goutam Mojumder, national sales manager, were present.

TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

British envoy brands Ctg as economic powerhouse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong has truly become an economic powerhouse of the country, British High Commissioner Robert Gibson said yesterday.

At a press conference at a hotel in the port city organised by the high commission, Gibson said he has fond memories of his time in Chittagong as a deputy high commissioner between 2002 and 2005.

"During the period I visited Chittagong frequently and I am amazed at the changes and development I see today," he said.

Since its independence 40 years ago, Bangladesh has made a huge stride in its economic and social development, the diplomat said.

He said the commercial relationship between Bangladesh and the UK is growing from strength to strength.

The UK is the largest cumulative investor in Bangladesh, with about two billion pounds of investment to date. Over 50 UK companies now operate in Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Khulna.

The UK is also the third single largest export destination for Bangladesh, sending products worth over one billion pound a year, said Gibson.

He said Chittagong is home to Bangladesh's busiest seaport and has been a trading post since the 9th century. He said he was pleased to discuss with the chairman of the port how the UK can help its expansion and development.

He said a British company, Lide Truck Division, has won an order to supply two container trucks to the Bangladeshi company Nemsan Containers Ltd based in Sitakunda in Chittagong. Both trucks, worth over 0.5 million pound, will arrive soon in Chittagong and will be fully operational once commissioned.

The envoy also said he held talks with the president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry and discussed how the UK can do more to boost commercial links between the two countries.

He also shed light on the country's politics, saying the political parties should sit for dialogues to avoid confrontation and establish good governance.

He said the UK government wants a free, fair and credible election in Bangladesh for continuing the march of the democratic system. The government is helping the country so that it becomes a middle income nation.

Gibson said the UK government has a huge respect for Noble laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus for his outstanding role in alleviating poverty through microcredit.

Merchant banks won't go for forced sales

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Merchant banks will not go for 'forced sales' for the sake of investors' interest, the president of Bangladesh Merchant Bankers Association (BMBA) said yesterday.

"I am requesting the merchant banks not to go for forced sales to protect the interest of the investors," said Mohammad A Hafiz at a press briefing on the monetary policy of the

central bank at Syntax Building in Motijheel.

The recent bearish trend came as the investors lost confidence because of misunderstanding about a government circular that enforced a ban on public employees' investment in the stockmarket, said Hafiz.

He said a recent circular of the National Board of Revenue on undisclosed money has eroded much of the investors' confi-

dence. A dearth of liquidity also played havoc on the market, he added.

The president of the association said the monetary policy of the government is stockmarket friendly as the Bangladesh Bank did not term the stockmarket as a non-productive sector.

It is the right time to invest in the market for long term as PE (price-earnings) ratio of the market is 11.8 now, said the

president.

He said the market will be stabilised soon as most of the companies including the state owned firms will declare dividends by June.

"Most of the merchant banks are preparing for raising their equity," said Hafiz.

Also the banks are thinking of raising their capital when the market is going through tough times, he said.

Qatar Airways opens 'premium' lounge at Heathrow

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Qatar Airways has opened its new 'premium' lounge at Heathrow Airport in London, reinforcing the importance of one of the airline's busiest routes, the airline said in a statement yesterday.

The lounge at Terminal 4 will be the airline's first dedicated facility for first and business class passengers outside its Doha hub.

The new lounge at Heathrow has been created to provide the ultimate in luxury and five-star service, as it is designed to resemble a boutique hotel or private member's club rather than a conventional airport lounge, according to the statement.



It said the lounge has private shower facilities, with heated floors and mirrors, hotel-style towels and luxury-brand toiletries and amenities.

Business and leisure travellers can stay connected with free Wi-Fi throughout the lounge, discreet power sockets at every seat and a business

centre that includes PCs and printers.

Akbar Al Baker, chief executive officer of Qatar Airways, said the new lounge reflected the importance of extending the airline's award-winning service beyond the signature premium terminal in Doha.

"London has long been

one of our best-performing routes, so Heathrow was an obvious choice for our first premium lounge outside Doha," he said.

"With the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place this summer, the international spotlight will be on the British capital and we look forward to the increase in capacity and welcoming more premium travellers on our high demand services to London.

"The lounge is the latest development in our expanding global network and will enable both loyal customers and those travelling with us for the first time, to take full advantage of the high levels of service we provide."

India still a foreign investment hot spot

REUTERS, Mumbai

Foreign direct investment in India is set to swell in coming years as investors stomach a lack of transparency, poor infrastructure and policy paralysis in their search for growth, professional services firm Ernst & Young (E&Y) said in a report.

Overseas investment in Asia's third-largest economy rose for the first time in three years in 2011, the report noted, as global investors put their faith in rising salaries, an expanding middle-class and a large and cheap labour force.

"The fundamentals that make India attractive to investors remain intact," Farokh T Balsara, head of markets at Ernst & Young India, wrote in the report released on Sunday.

"However, our respondents continue to cite inadequate infrastructure and a lack of governance and transparency as major obstacles to investment."

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India rose 13 percent to \$50.81 billion in the first 11 months of 2011 from a year earlier, while the total number of projects rose 25 percent to 864, the report said, citing data

German firms expect exports growth this year

AFP, Berlin

Germany, the world's number two exporter, expects healthy growth in foreign demand for its goods thanks to booming emerging markets and a nascent US recovery, according to a report Sunday.

News magazine Der Spiegel cited a new poll for the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) among 3,200 firms forecasting a four-percent rise in exports in 2012.

The figure was down slightly from the average over the last 10 years of nearly six-percent growth in exports, traditionally the backbone of Europe's top economy, Der Spiegel said.

"Companies' expectations for business abroad are cautiously optimistic," the study said, as quoted by the magazine.



Md Atharul Islam, the civil aviation and tourism secretary, inaugurates an MTB booth at the departure lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on Thursday. The booth will enable outgoing travelers to purchase and sell foreign currencies. Mahmud Hussain, chairman of the civil aviation authority, Arif Dowla, chairman of Mutual Trust Bank and Anis A Khan, managing director of the bank, were also present.



Mohammad Mejbahuddin, chairman of Bangladesh Gas Fields Company and secretary of the Energy and Mineral Resources Division, presides over the 56th annual general meeting of the company in Dhaka on Thursday. It posted Tk161.46 crore in profits during the last fiscal year and declared 9.88 percent dividends for the period. Md Nurul Islam, managing director of the company, was also present.



Barrister Shafique Ahmed, minister for law, justice and parliamentary affairs, attends a dialogue on investment arbitration, organised by Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre (BIAC) in Dhaka on Thursday. Mahbubur Rahman, chairman of BIAC, Toufiq Ali, chief executive of BIAC, Dr Kamal Hossain, an eminent lawyer, and Gavan Griffith, former solicitor general of Australia, are also seen.