

Top Clean to offer online laundry service

SUMAN SAHA

CUSTOMERS of Top Clean, a mechanised laundry service provider in the city, will now get online updates on whether the delivery of their clothes could be delayed, through a web-based tracking system the cleaner plans to launch next month.

The service will reduce hassles of the customers as sometimes delivery of finished laundries is delayed due to various reasons.

"It will enable clients to save time as they won't need to come to the launderer several times to know whether their clothes were ready," said Md Mamunur Rashid, general manager of Top Clean Bangladesh Ltd.

He said the company has already installed software at a cost of Tk 10 lakh to help customers know at which stage of cleaning a particular clothe now is.

Launderers usually deliver the processed clothes within 48 hours, said Rashid.

But sometimes they fail to deliver on time if the clothes need extra care due to having spots such as stains and rips that come to sight during cleaning and washing.

"Then we have to delay the delivery to ensure quality service," said Rashid.

"The new service will reduce this hassle."

Two types of laundry services -- manual and mechanised -- now operate in the major cities of Bangladesh. Manual launderers use their own muscle power and basic detergents to wash and hang-dry clothes out in the open.

The mechanised laundry business has now grown to Tk 20 crore.

Health-conscious city-dwellers, those seeking better quality, quicker delivery or the perks that come with an improved living standard, are fueling the growth.

Top Clean began its journey in 1998 as a joint venture with a Singapore-based company. It is now fully locally owned and has 26 outlets all operating in Dhaka with around 50,000 clients.

The launderer said the clothes tracking system will help increase its sales by 5-7 percent a month. The company now charges Tk 165 for dry cleaning a blazer, Tk 60 for a shirt and Tk 70 for trousers.

The company has already introduced home delivery service -- Regular Express by 24 Hours at No Extra Cost - from its Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara outlets.

The general manager of the company said, "We aim to widen the home delivery network and offer customised services."

Bandbox and Best Clean are other top players in mechanised laundry services.

suman.saha@thedailystar.net

Western Marine hands passenger ship to Ctg Boat Club



STAR

Western Cruise, the first passenger vessel built by Western Marine Shipyard for Chittagong Boat Club.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

SHIPBUILDER Western Marine Group yesterday delivered its first passenger ship to Chittagong Boat Club.

Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Zahir Uddin Ahmed inaugurated the catamaran-type passenger-ship, Western Cruise, at a ceremony in the port city.

The passenger-ship, built at a cost of Tk 8 crore, can carry 200 passengers. It will be used for river cruises on the

Karnaphuli and is the first of its kind built by a Bangladeshi shipyard.

A catamaran is a specially designed luxury passenger carrier with twin hull, much safer than any other passenger-ship.

Ahmed said it would establish naval technical efficiency and could be considered as a great advancement in the tourism sector.

"Cruising along the channel will enhance the importance of the river Karnaphuli to the people of Bangladesh as well as tourists from across the

globe," he added.

For the first time since its establishment in 1986, Chittagong Boat Club has undertaken plans for expansion.

The ship is 31.5-metre long and 8.4-metre wide and will offer people an opportunity to enjoy wonderful sights of the port city.

During any cruise, passengers will enjoy amusements including cultural shows, dining, music and magic. A kids' corner will also be there. The ship can be hired for organising programmes such as conferences and get-together.

Sakhawat Hossain, managing director of Western Marine Shipyard, Begum Shabnam Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Naval Family Welfare Association, Nizam Uddin Ahmed, commodore commanding of Chittagong, Sohail Hasan, chairman of Western Marine Services and Arifur Rahman, technical director of the shipping company, attended the launching ceremony.

Set up in 2000, Western Marine has built over 60 vessels. It has sold some ships to European buyers.

Pundits fear 'perfect storm' despite official optimism

AFP, Davos

DESPITE attempts by political and business leaders to suggest the eurozone has turned a corner, the prevailing view of pundits is things can only get worse and a "perfect storm" is brewing.

The five-day Davos forum which ended Sunday, was dominated by the sovereign debt crisis in the single currency zone and was held against a backdrop of frantic negotiations on a write-down deal between Greece and its creditors.

Some of the players most closely involved with the crisis since the 2008 financial meltdown insisted there was now light at end the tunnel with European Central Bank president Mario Draghi hailing "outstanding progress".

"Outlook Less Bleak From Alpine Retreat" was the assessment on the news pages of the Financial Times, suggesting the cool mountain air and pristine snow had raised the spirits of leaders more used to Brussels summits.

But, in an end of forum debate, experts predicted the break-up of the eurozone, economic malaise in the United States and a rise of militancy -- and then there are the consequences of a conflict over Iran's nuclear programme.

Nouriel Roubini, professor of economics at New York University, said the world might just about muddle through in 2012 but not much longer.



REUTERS

Protesters display a banner and a poster during a demonstration against the ongoing World Economic Forum (WEF) in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos on Saturday.

"2013 could be a perfect storm where you have a full eurozone crisis, where the fiscal problems of the United States come to a head and ... there is an investment bust and you have a hard landing in China as well," he said.

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman had a similarly bleak forecast.

"I feel we will be back here next year and the hole will be that much deeper," he said.

Google executive chairman Eric Schmidt was among those who argued at Davos that globalisation had been a huge force for good, raising two

billion people out of poverty.

But Friedman said the growing inter-connectivity meant the woes felt in one corner of the world impacted on everyone.

"If the world were a table with four legs -- the American economy, the European Union, the Arab world and China/India -- what strikes me right now is that all four legs are really shaking and they have never before been more interconnected and interdependent," he said.

European leaders such as Germany's Angela Merkel and Denmark's Helle Thorning-Schmidt were among those

who argued the eurozone crisis meant more integration was needed on the continent.

But Gideon Rachmann of the Financial Times warned of a potential backlash against the European Union and a rise of extremist parties as a consequence.

He raised the possibility that far-right wing leader Marine Le Pen could beat incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy in the first round of France's presidential election in March.

"You will see a radicalisation in politics," he said. "The potential for the unravelling, not just of the euro but the

political structures which underpin the European Union, is really quite real."

Roubini said it was only a matter of time before the 17-nation eurozone started breaking up, warning starkly: "The eurozone is a slow motion train wreck. Not only Greece but other countries are insolvent."

"Probably not all members of the eurozone will be able to stay in the eurozone ... Greece (will exit) in the next 12 months, Portugal might take longer."

Perhaps second only to the eurozone, the issue that most exercised minds here was the possibility of Iran acquiring the nuclear bomb.

Friedman said Israel was "keeping its options open" as its leaders regarded a nuclear-armed Iran as an existential threat to the Jewish state.

He said the US government had made clear to Israel it did not want to see it launch any attacks on Iran as "the consequences could be so unpredictable".

"The deepest, deepest American fear is that Israel would start a war with Iran that America could be forced to finish," he said.

And Roubini said a war with Iran would have devastating consequences for the world economy.

"Oil prices would spike at least 50 percent and you would have a global recession," he said. "If we decide we are going to attack Iran let's think about the consequences."

Davos wowed by device that reads 'code of life' in hours

AFP, Davos, Switzerland

IT was the talk of Davos, grabbing the imagination of a forum otherwise shrouded in gloom: a miracle machine that cracks the code of life within hours and could revolutionise healthcare.

Patients will no longer have to wait weeks to know if they have cancer and their doctors will know immediately what kind of disease they have, allowing them to target therapies precisely and to avoid harmful delays or mistakes.

Health officials confronted by superbug outbreaks will be able to identify the bug's strain and begin planning treatment within hours rather than days or weeks, potentially saving thousands of lives.

Soon, researchers in the developing world will take portable DNA sequencers into the field to identify new viruses and verify water quality.

And police investigators will be able to develop a suspect's DNA profile as quickly as their fictional counterparts do in glossy television dramas, while commanders on the battlefield will identify the bodies of friend and foe.

The man behind the revolution is Jonathan Rothberg, master biotechnician and CEO of Ion Torrent, owned by US firm Life Technologies, which produces the Ion Proton -- the world's first desktop semiconductor-based gene sequencer.

Business and political leaders at this year's Global Economic Forum were gripped by pessimism over the economy, but -- at a summit boycotted by Mick Jagger -- Rothberg was received in Davos like a rockstar of science.

"He's a genius. I want to buy his machines," Sami Sagol, a leading Israeli neuroscientist and research sponsor, told passengers on a minibus ferrying delegates through the snowbound streets of the Swiss resort.

"I was sat next to him at dinner. He's amazing," declared a young investment banker swigging beer in a nearby bar, admitting he had found Davos' scientific programme more uplifting than the headline economic debates.

The man himself, geekily excited in a woolly ski hat and loud striped shirt, bursts with enthusiasm for a machine that has brought the once laborious task of gene-sequencing to the era of the semi-conductor microchip.