

Swedish firms keen to invest in Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A Swedish business delegation yesterday showed interest to make investments in energy, infrastructure, information technology and manufacturing sectors of Bangladesh.

Swedish State Secretary for Trade Gunnar Oom is leading such team's first two-day visit to Bangladesh consisting of the officials of 11 Swedish companies, including bus and truck manufacturer, tool maker, retail, IT and financial companies.

The companies are: Atlas Copco, Exportkreditnämnden, Geodesign, Indpro, Oriflame, Raychem, Sandvik, Scania, SEB, Volvo and Walter Tools.

The delegation will leave today. "We would like to see much more trade between the two countries to boost exports and

imports," said Oom.

Exports from Bangladesh to Sweden increased 67 percent since 2007 and the amount is nearly five times bigger than Swedish exports to Bangladesh, he said.

Bangladesh's exports to Sweden stood at Tk 2,640 crore in the last fiscal year while import figure touched Tk 690 crore.

"It is my great pleasure to introduce Swedish companies to the government agencies and businesses in Bangladesh," Oom said.

Swedish companies are renowned for their long-term commitment, innovative capacity and cost effectiveness, and their products and services are sustainable and of high quality, he said.

"We are convinced that increased trade and investment will create deeper relation between the two countries."

All companies represented in the

delegation are seeking new or continued opportunities for cooperation, he said.

Bangladesh is an incredibly dynamic country which has enormous business opportunities, said Anneli Lindahl Kenny, Swedish ambassador to Bangladesh.

Swedish companies can offer solutions and products that would benefit Bangladesh in many different ways, she said.

"I hope and believe that this trade delegation is the beginning of much more intensified trade relations between our two countries."

"We have started a help desk to help foreign business man in Bangladesh," said Sabur Khan, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Bangladesh is an emerging country with stable GDP growth and the country is looking for new investments, he said.

Sylhet businesses protest vandalism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Businessmen in Sylhet city kept their shutters down yesterday to protest the attack, vandalism and looting of different business establishments by different Islamist groups and Bangladesh Chhatra League recently.

Sylhet Zilla Bayboshayee Oikya Kalyan Parishad pressed the shut down and will sit with the office bearers of the affected markets and other stakeholders to decide the next course of action, informed its president Sheikh Mokon Mia.

On Friday, procession members of Islamist groups vandalised Shahid Minar and two bank offices nearby while the student wing of the ruling Awami League in processions attacked different shopping malls, banks, eateries

and looted money and also torched some businesses.

The leaders of Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry at a meeting yesterday chaired by its president Faruque Ahmed Misbah strongly condemned the attack in the city.

The chamber also condemned the law enforcers' apathy during the vandalism and demanded immediate punishment of the perpetrators.

The business leaders requested the ruling party leaders and law enforcement agencies to ensure security of the business community.

The trade body will hold a press briefing today about the overall situation and the next course of action, said Md Lays Uddin, director of the chamber.



EXIM BANK
Mohammed Haider Ali Miah, managing director of Exim Bank, attends the inauguration of Exim Exchange (Australia) Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of the bank, in Sydney, Australia recently. Lt Gen Masud Uddin Chowdhury, Bangladeshi high commissioner in Australia, was also present.

India to give away Kingfisher slots, flying rights to others

REUTERS, New Delhi

The Indian government said it will give away Kingfisher Airlines' slots and foreign flying rights to other operators in the latest blow to the grounded carrier.

Kingfisher, controlled by liquor baron Vijay Mallya, has been halted due to a cash crunch, and lenders are trying to recover \$1.4 billion of loans in default.

Kingfisher, which saw its flying license expire at the end of last year, has two years from then to apply for a renewal. But with lenders, airports, and banks looking to recover their dues, and with its slots going to rivals, a comeback could prove extremely difficult for the airline, once India's no.2 carrier.

The civil aviation ministry said in a statement it will make the slots and flying permits available to other airlines.

Kingfisher, whose planes have been idle since October, flew to Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, United Kingdom, UAE among eight others.

Indian carriers will now have an additional 25,000 seats available each week to fly to these countries, the statement said.

Kingfisher posted a 7.55-billion-rupee loss in the three months to December 31 as its planes sat idle,

Philips drops 'Electronics' name, in strategy switch

AFP, The Hague

Dutch manufacturing giant Philips said Monday it intends to drop the word "Electronics" from its name as it shifts away from consumer-based entertainment towards health, well-being and lighting products.

Based in Eindhoven in the southern Netherlands, Philips announced in late January it was selling its lifestyle entertainment branch which makes audio, video and multimedia products to Japanese company Funai in a 150-million-euro (\$199 million) deal.

The proposal to drop the word "Electronics" to rename the company "Royal Philips" will be put to shareholders at the annual general meeting in Amsterdam on May 3, Philips said in a statement.

"Philips is a diversified technology company focused on delivering meaningful innovation in healthcare, energy-efficient lighting and consumer health and well-being," its chief executive Frans van Houten said.

"We believe having Royal Philips as our new company name will position us well in our endeavour to make the world healthier and more sustainable," he added.

Founded in 1891, the company specialised for years in making lightbulbs and later televisions. In the last decade however, it has diversified into manufacturing

Solar home systems growing fastest in Bangladesh: WB

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Technical assistance to the power sector will also be provided.

The government-owned Infrastructure Development Company Ltd and non-government organisations such as Grameen Shakti, Rural Services Foundation and many others have partnered the effort.

Solar home systems are economically viable solutions to get electricity to villages where electricity grids would be too expensive to build.

Solar home systems meet the basic electricity needs of rural people, who would have otherwise been dependent on kerosene lamps for lighting. The electricity provided from the systems has helped children spend more time studying, and new opportunities are emerging for village enterprises. Rural markets can now remain open longer hours after dark and conduct



BANK ASIA
Md Mehmood Husain, managing director of Bank Asia, attends a ceremony to hand-over non-convertible subordinated zero coupon bond certificates to the officials of IIDFC, RACE Management PCL and AK Khan & Co, at the bank's corporate office in Dhaka yesterday. The bonds were used to raise Tk 60 crore as capital for six years.



GREEN DELTA
AQM Nurul Absar, chairman of Green Delta Insurance, attends the company's 27th annual business conference at its head office in Mohakhali, Dhaka on Wednesday. Nasir A Choudhury, managing director, was also present.

Stocks still in losing streak

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks continued its losing streak for the sixth day as investors sold shares anticipating a bear-run yesterday.

DSEX, the benchmark general index of Dhaka Stock Exchange, closed the day at 4,093.28 points, after shedding 51.66 points or 1.24 percent.

"Anxiousness regarding omnibus account closure within February 28, reduction of bank's exposure in capital market and political overheating may have contributed to the panic of investors," said LankaBangla Securities, in its daily market analysis.

"As political vibrations continued shaking up investors' confidence, DGEN hit another 1.24 percent drop. The market participants also stayed wary as omnibus closeout deadline approaches," said IDLC Investments.

Meanwhile, as hype over IPOs seemed to calm down, a majority portion of late entrants seemed stuck with their money, while opportunistic investors apparently stayed put after profit booking, according to IDLC's analysis.

Turnover at the premier bourse advanced 6.58 percent to Tk 315 crore than the previous day.

A total of 0.92 lakh trades were executed with 7.32 crore shares and mutual fund units changing hands on the Dhaka bourse.

Of the 270 issues traded, 43 advanced, 202 declined and 25 remained unchanged.

All the sectors fell as the overall market suffered heavily. Among the major sectors, power lost 2.42 percent, the biggest loser, followed by telecom 1.89 percent.

Non-bank financial institutions lost 0.73 percent, banks 0.57 percent and pharma 0.18 percent.

Newly listed Summit Purbanchol Power Company featured in the most traded stocks chart with 49.74 lakh shares worth Tk 42.82 crore changing hands.

Islamic Finance and Investment was the day's highest gainer, posting a rise of 4.10 percent, while RAK Ceramics was the worst loser, slumping by 15.87 percent.

The Chittagong Stock Exchange also ended lower, as the Selective Categories Index lost 100.76 points or 1.24 percent to close at 7,973.70.

Losers beat gainers 152 to 23 with 14 issues remaining unchanged on the port city bourse that traded 1.06 crore shares and mutual fund units, generating Tk 42.07 crore in turnover.

Apple signals emerging-market rethink with India push

REUTERS, New Delhi/Bangalore

As BlackBerry launches the first smartphone from its make-or-break BB10 line in India, one of its most loyal markets, the company faces new competition from a formidable rival that has long had a minimal presence in the country.

More than four years after it started selling iPhones in India, Apple Inc is now aggressively pushing the iconic device through instalment payment plans that make it more affordable, a new distribution model and heavy marketing blitz.

"Now your dream phone" at 5,056 rupees, read a recent full front-page ad for an iPhone 5 in the Times of India, referring to the initial payment on a phone priced at \$840, or almost two months' wages for an entry-level software engineer.

The new-found interest in India suggests a subtle strategy shift for Apple, which has moved tentatively in emerging markets and has allowed rivals such as Samsung and BlackBerry to dominate with more affordable smartphones. With the exception of China, all of its Apple stores are in advanced economies.

Apple expanded its India sales effort in the latter half of 2012 by adding two distributors. Previously it sold iPhones only through a few carriers and stores it calls premium resellers.

The result: iPhone shipments to India between October and December nearly tripled to 250,000 units from 90,000 in the previous quarter, according to an estimate by Jessica Kwee, a Singapore-based analyst at consultancy Canalys.

At The MobileStore, an Indian chain owned by the Essar conglomerate, which says it sells 15 percent of the iPhones in the country, iPhone sales tripled between December and January, thanks to a monthly payment scheme launched last month.

"Most people in India can't afford a dollar-priced phone when the salaries in India are rupee salaries. But the desire is the same," said Himanshu Chakrawarti, its chief executive.

Apple, the distributors, retailers and banks share the advertising and interest cost of the marketing push, according to Chakrawarti. Carriers like Bharti Airtel Ltd, which also sell the iPhone 5, run separate ads.

India is the world's No. 2 cellphone market by users, but most Indians cannot afford fancy handsets. Smartphones account for just a tenth of total phone sales. In India, 95 percent of cellphone users have prepaid accounts without a fixed contract. Unlike in the United States, carriers do not subsidise handsets.

Within the smartphone segment, Apple's Indian market share last quarter was just 5 percent, according to Canalys, meaning its overall penetration is tiny.

Still, industry research firm IDC expects the Indian smartphone market to grow more than five times from about 19 million units last year to 108 million in 2016, which presents a big opportunity.

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd dominates Indian smartphone sales with a 40 percent share, thanks to its wide portfolio of Android devices priced as low as \$110. The market has also been flooded by cheaper Android phones from local brands such as Micromax and Lava.

Most smartphones sold in India are much cheaper than the iPhone, said Gartner analyst Anshul Gupta.



SOUTHEAST BANK
Duluma Ahmed, director of Southeast Bank, opens the 95th branch of the bank at Banasree in Dhaka recently. Shahid Hossain, managing director, was also present.



LINDE
Erphan S Matin, managing director of Linde Bangladesh, attends the annual Welding Dealers' Conference 2012 of the company at the Officers' Club in Dhaka recently.



NCC
Md Omar Faruque Bhuiyan, head of cards at NCC Bank, and Md Mostafizur Rahman, chief executive officer for MediConsult Associate of Singapore Health Service (SignHealth), exchange documents of a corporate deal at a programme recently. Cardholders and employees of the bank will get special services and discount facilities at SignHealth group hospitals.