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DHAKA THURSDAY AUGUST 15, 2013, e-mail: business@thedailystar.net

Ctg port put on alert amid milk scare

Commerce ministry asks NBR to provide information on imports of Fonterra brand

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA
 Bangladesh beefed up checks at its premier seaport to control entry of Fonterra brand dairy products of New Zealand following a botulism milk scare that sparked global recalls.

Anlene and Annum maternal milk formula, which is available in Southeast Asia and other regions.

After deadly bacteria was found in the milk of the brand in China on August 3, Fonterra said it had supplied contaminated milk to its customers including The Coca-Cola Co, Danone SA and China's Wahaha in nine countries.

Fonterra also said it had sold contaminated whey protein concentrate to eight customers in Australia, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and Saudi Arabia for use in a range of products, including infant milk powder, according to Reuters.

On August 4, China halted imports of all New Zealand milk powder after bacteria found in some dairy products raised food safety concerns.

Botulism is an infection caused by a bacteria that can lead to paralysis and death. The sales were restricted in Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand as well.

Fonterra's managing director of NZ Milk Products Gary Romano also resigned yesterday, according to a statement of the company.



A street vendor catches a nap, beside his makeshift shop of artificial gemstones and jewellery on Mitford Road in Old Dhaka yesterday, as the second day of Jamaat-enforced shutdown kept customers away.

Local firm to make tablet PC

ABDULLAH MAMUN

A local telecom company is gearing up to manufacture Bangladesh's own brand of tablet PC - Bangla Pad - and launch it by next May.

"We will make the devices through a joint venture with a Korean company - Cobalt Ray," said Amjad Khan, managing director and chief executive officer of Bangla Phone, a fixed phone operator.

The tablet PCs with Android operating system will come in two sizes with 7-inch and 9-inch screens at Tk 7,000 to Tk 8,000, Khan said.

"Cobalt Ray will also assist us in designing the device."

Khan also said his company targets to manufacture 23,000 devices a month though the factory to be set up at Ghorashal on the outskirts of Dhaka will have the capacity to make 35,000.

Some of the parts, such as the circuit board and screen, will be manufactured in Korea, he said.

"We will soon sign an agreement with Cobalt Ray and start constructing a four-story factory building by next month."

"We also plan to make mobile phones once we are successful with the tablet PCs."

Last year state-run Telephone Shilpa Shangstha started assembling laptops with the brand name of Doel. Though the laptops are being sold in public institutions, the brand has failed to get expected response from the general people.



CSE to cut settlement time

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) is set to introduce a shorter trade settlement period from September.

At present, sellers are credited three days after the trade has been made. "It will be brought down to two days," said Syed Sajid Husain, chief executive officer of CSE.

The Dhaka Stock Exchange is yet to implement the regulatory directive. A high official of the bourse said the process is being held up due to reluctance of 58 of its 278 members to migrate to the automated clearing system.

Hybrid rice seed exports get green light

SOHEL PARVEZ

The government has approved the exports of hybrid rice seeds for the first time, in a bid to dispose of surplus produce by local companies and cut their sole dependency on home market.

"The production has been higher than local demand, so we have allowed a few companies to export," said Anwar Faruque, director general of the seed wing of agriculture ministry.

The ministry last month gave permission for exports of 530 tonnes of seeds to four companies—Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corp, Ispahani Agro, Lal Teer Seed and GETCO—after pleas on grounds of surplus stock and interests from foreign buyers.

The decision comes amid slack demand for hybrid rice among growers, owing to their lower prices than the traditional high-yielding



varieties (HYVs). The sales of hybrid rice seeds have been hovering between 5,000-7,000 tonnes over the last couple of years, according to seed selling companies. During the immediate boro and

aus cultivation seasons, the local firms sold 7,000 tonnes of hybrid seeds, leaving surplus upwards of 2,000 tonnes.

Mahbub Anam, managing director of Lal Teer Seed, said the local

firms have developed expertise in producing hybrid seeds by breeding parental lines imported from China and in the process have significantly brought down import dependency.

"The total capacity is now much higher than the local demand," said Anam of Lal Teer, which got permission to export 180 tonnes of hybrid rice.

Lal Teer, which is exploring opportunities in Vietnam, Indonesia and Pakistan, got the permission to export 180 tonnes of hybrid rice seeds, Anam said.

"Our cost of production is lower than in China—it can be a lucrative business for Bangladesh."

Ashraf Uddin Ahmed, business development manager of Ispahani Agro Ltd, said Chinese companies are interested in procuring hybrid rice seeds from Bangladesh through contract growing arrangements.

Ispahani Agro now got the permission to export up to 200 tonnes of hybrid rice seeds, he said.

Printing estate on way soon

SUMAN SAHA

The government is going to set up an exclusive industrial park for the printing industry in Munshiganj in a bid to spur the sector's expansion.

"We will develop the printing estate on the banks of Dhaleshwari River to help the sector grow in a planned way," said Shyam Sunder Sikder, chairman of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), which would develop the park on nearly 50 acres of land at Sirajdikhan upazila.

A memorandum of understanding was signed on this with Bangladesh Mudran Shilpa Samity (BMSS) at its head office in Dhaka yesterday.

"It is a memorable day for us as we are finally getting a permanent address," said Shahid Serneabat, chairman of BMSS, which represents more than 1,000 printing companies.

The project will be a public-private initiative, with BMSS footing 90 percent of the project cost and the government the rest, according to Serneabat.

The estate will be home to 419 printing companies, all of which are members of BMSS, and employ around 17,000 people.

The companies will print textbooks and make accessories (price tags and labels) for the garment sector, medicine boxes for

pharmaceutical companies and packaging for frozen food industry.

BSCIC will develop the plots ranging from 2,600 to 6,000 square feet, together with the infrastructure such as road, drain and culvert, power and gas connection. The government has set a four-year deadline for the project's completion.

"It is an emerging sector for Bangladesh," said AFM Shah Alam, general secretary of BMSS, adding that its market size stands at around Tk 3,000 crore a year.

Around 7,000 printing companies, including small and medium enterprises, are in operation across the country, employing around 2 lakh directly and indirectly, according to the BMSS general secretary.

Last year, over 24 crore pieces of academic textbooks worth around Tk 600 crore were printed, and products worth Tk 1,000 crore were indirectly exported, he said. "The local companies even participated in international tenders."

The sector is being held back by the acute shortage of land, especially in Dhaka, needed to set up modern printing presses, he said.

"We have been urging the government to set up the park for several years now for the development of the sector. Finally, our wishes were answered."

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United to start daily flights to Nepal

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

United Airways, a local private airline, will fly to Kathmandu daily, starting August 24, thanks to an increased number of travellers bound for the Himalayan nation. The airline first started its Kathmandu flights on Jan 4, 2010.

"We want to serve the increased number of passengers, especially Bangladeshi tourists and Nepalese transit travellers to Kuala Lumpur via Dhaka," said Md Kamrul Islam, assistant general manager of the airline.

The airline will use a 170-seater MD-83 aircraft on the route, and will charge Tk 16,888 for a two-way ticket and Tk 7,589

for one way, he said. The flight will leave for Kathmandu at 4:00pm and depart for Dhaka at 5:50pm (Nepal time).

United Airways currently flies to Jeddah, Dubai, Muscat, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, and Kolkata from Dhaka. It also flies from Chittagong to Muscat and Kolkata. It has domestic flights to Chittagong, Sylhet, Jessore, Cox's Bazar, Saidpur, Rajshahi and Barisal from Dhaka.

Of its nine planes, one is of the Dash-8 model, two ATR-72, four MD-83s and two Airbus-310.

Currently, Biman Bangladesh Airlines is operating daily flights on the Dhaka-Kathmandu route.

Google's street view of Dhaka by Oct

ABDULLAH MAMUN

Search engine giant Google has completed capturing the street views of Dhaka and Chittagong cities and hopes to upload the videos of the capital city on internet by October.

Anir Chowdhury, policy adviser to the Access to Information (A2I) project of the Prime Minister's Office, said the street view of Dhaka will be available online within September or October.

Once the videos are uploaded, people across the globe will see online the landmarks and natural wonders of Bangladesh, and even go inside restaurants and small businesses on both sides of city streets.

The services will be offered through Street View, which is a

popular feature of Google Maps, already available in more than 40 countries, and allows users to virtually explore and navigate a neighborhood through 360-degree panoramic street-level images.

Google in partnership with the A2I project kicked off the one-year project in February when Google cars equipped with powerful cameras started capturing the street view of the two cities initially.

Google has filmed all the attractive places and roads in Dhaka, which will help boost the tourism industry of the country through global branding, Chowdhury said, adding that five other divisional cities may come under the project.

"We want to see 100 tourist spots of Bangladesh in the Street

View." Nazrul Islam Khan, the ICT secretary, had earlier said that Google would bear all the expenses of the project.

Google Maps hopes to help foster the country's economic development and promote Bangladesh as an emerging destination for visitors around the world, according to a statement of Google released in February.

Google Street View was launched in 2007 for several US cities and since then has been expanded to include cities and rural areas worldwide.

On June 6, 2012 Google announced that it had captured 20 petabytes of data for street view, composed of photos taken along five million miles of roads, covering 39 countries and about 3,000 cities.

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