

Denim expo set for Oct 15-16

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The second phase of the first Denimsandjeans Expo will be held at Radisson Hotel in Dhaka on October 15-16, organisers said in a statement yesterday.

The expo will focus on industry growth and attracting buyers toward Bangladesh for quality jeans and related apparel. Its first phase was held in March, it said.

"Bangladesh is the second largest denim apparel manufacturing country in the world and China is in the first position. This is the reason behind planning to hold a denim event here for the last few years and the first show materialised in March," said Sandeep Agarwal, the

founder of the Denimsandjeans.com Bangladesh show.

"Our second event shall be an extension of the last event and we hope to bring in some of the best in the denim industry together again," he said.

Bangladesh exported about 74 million pieces of denim apparel to the US market in 2013 and around 140 million pieces of jeans to Europe, according to Denimsandjeans.com.

The country was also the largest exporter of men's jeans to Europe in 2013 with 89 million pieces compared to 65 million from China, it said.

Denim apparel exports from Bangladesh surged 11.48 percent to America in 2013 over 2012 and to EU by over 19.65 percent in the same period.



Shagufa Anwar, general manager for business development at Apollo Hospitals, and Sabbir Ahmed, head of retail banking and wealth management at HSBC, attend the signing of a deal for HSBC Select customers, at a programme recently. HSBC Select customers will enjoy priority services and discounts at the hospital.

KPMG partners with Dataedge

UNB, Dhaka

Rahman Rahman Huq Chartered Accountants, a member firm of KPMG, and Dataedge have recently signed a deal to explore mutually beneficial business engagements on Microsoft technologies and other IT advisory-related opportunities in Bangladesh.

Ali Ashfaq, partner of Rahman Rahman Huq, and Zahoor Hossain Mahmud, head of strategic business unit of Dataedge, inked the deal at a programme, according to a statement.

Founded in 1962, Rahman Rahman Huq provides audit, tax and advisory services. Dataedge provides ICT consulting, system integration and development services since 2002.

Lufthansa pilots threaten new strikes as talks fail

AFP, Frankfurt

German pilots' union Cockpit announced Thursday that talks with Lufthansa over early retirement provisions had crashed and warned a new wave of strikes could be expected with immediate effect.

"Cockpit regrets that negotiations have failed once again," the union said in a statement, accusing management of not wanting to reach an agreement.

"Further industrial action can be expected with immediate effect. The public will be warned in advance," the statement said.

After three separate days of walkouts in recent weeks, Lufthansa pilots agreed to postpone a fourth warning strike last week after receiving a new proposal from management.

Lufthansa pilots can currently take paid early retirement from the age of 55. They are fighting a plan by the airline to raise the minimum age and to involve pilots in the financing of their pensions.



Selim RF Hussain, managing director of IDLC Finance, and Rashed Maqsood, Citi country officer, sign a direct debit agreement at a programme recently. IDLC will be able to pull funds from its customers in local currency and digitise its cheque collection process.



Samuel S Chowdhury, chairman of Square Pharmaceuticals, presides over the company's 48th annual general meeting on factory premises in Kaliakoir, Gazipur yesterday. Tapan Chowdhury, managing director, was also present.



MA Mannan, state minister for finance and planning, attends a conference on business transparency, organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) in Dhaka yesterday. Showkat Hossain, president of ICAB, was also present.

Los Angeles raises minimum wage for hotel workers

AFP, Los Angeles

Los Angeles voted yesterday to raise the minimum wage for its hotel workers to more than \$15 an hour, in a move opposed by hoteliers but in line with a recent pay hike in Seattle.

The City Council approved a \$15.37 an hour wage -- more than twice the national minimum wage -- for hotels with 300 rooms or more by next Tuesday, to be followed by hotels with 150 rooms or

more a year later.

Hoteliers opposed the proposed pay hike -- which will affect an estimated 13,000 workers -- arguing that it will lead to job losses or hotels cutting back on services.

Hotels facing bankruptcy or other financial problems would be able to apply for a waiver from paying the new minimum.

Municipal lawmakers will vote again to formalize the deal next week, because Wednesday's 12 to 3 approval was not unanimous.

'Make in India' vision linked with neighbours

FROM PAGE B1

"At the same time, India is convinced that it can do so only in cooperation with its neighbours, particularly with a county like Bangladesh, which is a growing economy in the South Asian subcontinent."

He urged Bangladesh to produce power in India. The Bangladesh government has already identified and expressed interest in prospective hydro power stations in the North Eastern states of India, he said.

"We have been discussing the issue of producing power in India with Bangladesh's power ministry and they have deep interest."

India allows 100 percent foreign direct investment in the power sector, he said.

He urged the different ministries to start talks on business that will bring a positive impact in the lives of people.

India is one of the biggest destinations for Pran, said Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, deputy managing director of Pran Group, a leading food processor.

The company has invested in India to tap its food and plastic markets.

"We all want to be a bigger corporate. If we want to be a bigger corporate in India, we first have to do more business with India."

"I think the condition of doing business with India is to start operating in India; make for India and make in India. I think it will be good services to their consumers

and jobs will be created in India," Chowdhury said.

"We are very competitive in India. I think foreign investors can enjoy a lot of potential and facilities offered by the country and we are focusing on diversifying our products there."

The Indian prime minister highlighted 'trust', which is important not only in government but also in the private sector, said Abdul Matlub Ahmad, chairman of Nitol-Niloy Group, a distributor of Tata Motors, India's biggest automaker.

"The most important thing required by businesses to flourish is trust. If there is a gap, then the government can intervene, but we must start with trust. We want to trust all our countrymen," Modi said in New Delhi.

Modi wants more investment in the manufacturing sector, which is wonderful news for Bangladesh and India, said Ahmad referring to the Indian prime minister's new definition of foreign direct investment (FDI).

Modi said: "People are talking about FDI but I see things differently. FDI is also a responsibility of the people of India. My definition of FDI for the people of India is First Develop India."

"We need to move our government to allow us to invest in India and we should tie up with Indian companies, where we can have larger and bigger investment," Ahmad said.

The puzzle of rise and fall in capital machinery imports

FROM PAGE B1

"It is difficult to explain why capital machinery imports dropped now and rose when the political turmoil was gaining steam," Zahid Hussain, lead economist at the World Bank Dhaka office, said.

Investors could not have been moving on with the implementation of their investment plans when the immediate political horizon was "totally cloudy".

It is possible that precisely because of the turmoil and uncertainties about when and how it will be resolved, nervous holders of surplus money were moving their funds to safe havens by over-invoicing or misinvoicing their capital machinery imports, he said.

The difference between informal market exchange rate and the formal market exchange also widened at that time in 2013, which suggests that demand for foreign exchange in the informal market then was stronger as a result of the tendency to move money out.

Such tendencies have likely weakened considerably in July this year, even though political uncertainties have not fully dissipated, he said, adding that the uncertainty prevailing now is different in order of magnitude than what the country experienced in the last half of 2013.

Uniform minimum wage can protect workers from discrimination: Inu

FROM PAGE B1

"Though discrimination of wages varies across regions and seasons and between men in the agricultural sector, in all places and seasons women received the lowest wage because they cannot bargain," Karmaker said.

He said a minimum wage for this sector can address the discrimination faced both by men and women.

Minimum wage in the agricultural sector cannot be implemented without defining agricultural workers and ensuring that farmers get the right price for their produce, he said.

ADB lifts economic growth forecast for Bangladesh

FROM PAGE B1

"Bangladesh has higher growth potential, which is not possible to utilise without a jump in investment. Skills deficit is another major challenge for Bangladesh to grow at a faster rate," Hossain said.

Investment has remained virtually stagnant between 25 percent and 26 percent of GDP over the past several years. Analysts said investment needs to be raised to at least 32 percent to achieve 7 percent or more economic growth.

Enthusiasm over e-commerce fair

FROM PAGE B1

Mustafa Jabbar, a former president of Bangladesh Computer Samity, the national association of ICT companies, called upon the government to make a guideline for e-commerce ventures. "It is necessary to bring online stores under a guideline that provides for planned development and considers customers' security," he said.

The size of the country's virtual marketplace has increased significantly in the last two years, said Arild Klokkehaug, director of Ekhane.com, a leading virtual store.

Trust and safety is the top priority for his portal, he said, adding that the popularity of virtual stores will increase significantly with declining internet costs. "I strongly believe that e-commerce will grow at a faster rate in the country."

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, inaugurated the three-day fair at Begum Sufia Kamal National Public Library in Dhaka.

Computer Jagat, a leading ICT magazine in Bangladesh, is organising the exhibition to popularise online shopping and lure the youth into setting up more e-trading companies.

"Online shopping is gaining popularity in the country, but the amount of transactions is still little," said Md Abdul Wahed Tomal, convener of the Dhaka e-Commerce Fair 2014.

The slogan of this year's fair is 'Business at your click' and is expected to increase such trading by building awareness.

The number of e-commerce sites increased more than threefold to 350 in the past year,

he said, adding that around 2,000 companies are doing business through Facebook.

Around 35 exhibitors, including Bangladesh Bank, are showcasing their products at the fair. An awards night will also be organised where 16 people will be honoured for their contribution to the sector in 2013.

The fair will remain open from 10am and till 8pm, and visitors will not be charged for entrance to the fair or seminars.

Six seminars on e-commerce will be held at the fair -- electronic banking services paved the way for e-commerce in the country; local e-commerce and upcoming Bangladesh market; the progress of mobile apps and games in Bangladesh; e-commerce beginning and continuation; ICT for youth entrepreneurship and innovation; and preparation of Bangladesh for the bright future of e-commerce-where we stand?

According to business projections, e-commerce has the potential to become one of the five leading sectors in Bangladesh in the next 10 years.

In Bangladesh, online shopping, including e-ticket sales and sales through Facebook, has yearly transactions worth around Tk 200 crore, which is growing by nearly 30 percent every month, according to industry insiders.

Ekhane.com, a popular classifieds website, and Totho Apa are platinum sponsors for the fair. Team Engine and WebTV next are gold sponsors and Aarong is a silver sponsor. The Daily Star is the media partner for this year's fair.

Uncertainty grips retail shareholders of United Airways

FROM PAGE B1

More than 2.75 crore shares of the carrier, which was listed on the stock exchanges in 2010, were traded, generating a turnover of Tk 29.82 crore. "I think it's a temporary suspension and am hoping that the airline will resume its operations soon," said Mizanur Rhaman, an investor who bought the company's shares seeing the fall in price as an opportunity to take positions.

General investors hold 74.37 percent shares of United Airways, while institutional investors 17.19 percent and the sponsors and directors 8.44 percent.

Meanwhile, the DSE yesterday sent a letter asking the private carrier to inform the bourse about the suspension, which it was supposed to as per securities rules.

"The company did not inform us anything about the suspension. We saw the news on the media," said Swapnan Kumar Bala, managing director of the DSE, adding that they have informed the regulator and requested it for the next course of actions as per securities laws.

An official of United Airways said the person responsible for it had resigned on Monday. "It's the duty of the company secretary but he was long gone. Who will do that now?"

Contacted, M Eliash, flight operations director of the troubled airline, said they have communicated with the chairman of

the newly-formed board. "The chairman is coming to Bangladesh from Dubai and we are expecting a positive decision," he said.

He announced the suspension of flights on Wednesday night, after the private carrier's new board failed to come up with plans to keep the company afloat.

In a separate move, Shahinoor Alam, acting managing director of the airline, on Wednesday night wrote to the Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh, informing it of the airline's intent to suspend operations.

Members of the new board, reconstituted on Monday after its founder Tasbirul Ahmed Choudhury was forced to resign, did not come to office for the next three days to steer the carrier out of crisis.

The abrupt flight suspensions also created sufferings for the carrier's passengers. Some 30-40 outbound passengers gathered in front of the counters of United Airways at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday. They also demonstrated there.

Set up in 2007, the airline has 11 aircraft -- two Airbus 310-325s, five MD-83s, three ATR 72s and one DASH-8 100.

It was operating domestic flights to Chittagong, Sylhet, Jessore, Cox's Bazar, Rajshahi, Saidpur and Ishwardi. On the international routes, it was flying to Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Kathmandu, Kolkata, Jeddah, Bangkok, Muscat and Singapore.



M Farid Uddin, managing director of Rupali Bank, presents a certificate to one of the participants of a foundation training course at the bank's training institute in Motijheel, Dhaka yesterday. Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury, deputy managing director, was also present.



AAM Zakaria, managing director of First Security Islami Bank, attends the launch of the bank's mobile banking services in Jessore recently. Sk Abdul Wadud, zonal head for Khulna, was also present.