

Italian minister looks at areas for deeper ties

Diplomatic Correspondent

Bangladesh and Italy can cooperate in the areas of energy, infrastructure, transfer of technology, and heavy machinery for textiles for the benefit of both countries, a visiting Italian minister said yesterday.

Deputy Foreign Minister of Italy Benedetto Della Vedova appreciated Bangladesh's consistent growth rate at over 6 percent in the last six years. He met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam at the foreign ministry.

Italy imported products worth 904.2 million euros from Bangladesh during the January-October period of 2014, exceeding 865 million euros of the previous year, Vedova said in a statement.

Alam said the two countries have enjoyed excellent relations since Bangladesh's independence and newer avenues for trade and investment will emerge in the coming days.

Vedova extended the Italian prime minis-

ter's invitation to the prime minister of Bangladesh to the opening ceremony of Milan Expo 2015, scheduled for May 1.

He also hoped that the prime minister would be present at the Milan Expo on September 20, 2015 -- the day that would be celebrated as Bangladesh Day in Italy.

Vedova also paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker of Parliament Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed and Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday.

Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh Mario Palma and Head of Office of the Deputy Foreign Minister Lorenzo Galanti accompanied the deputy minister at the meetings.

Additional Foreign Secretary (bilateral) Mizanur Rahman and other senior officials of the foreign affairs ministry were also present at the meeting with the state minister.

Biman announces new local routes

Tickets for new routes to go on sale on Feb 25

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will begin flights to five additional destinations in the country from April 06, the national carrier said in a statement yesterday.

The airline will now operate six flights a week to Cox's Bazar, five to Jessore, three to both Rajshahi and Syedpur, and two to Barisal, it said.

Also, Biman will increase the frequency on existing local services, with 25 additional flights on the Chittagong and Sylhet routes, it said.

The additional destinations will be served with the recently leased Dash8-Q400 aircrafts.

In total, the airline will operate 120 local flights a week, with a jump of almost 80 percent in passenger capacity.

Tickets for the new services will go on sale on February 25, Biman said.

The improved schedule will connect more cities by air and will support the leisure travel market.

"Our customers will also get more flight options on the existing routes," said Kyle Haywood, managing director and chief executive officer of the airline.

Biman served some of the new routes before, but the services were cancelled due to aircraft shortage.



ISOFTWARE

Moniruzzaman, Phulbari upazila nirbahi officer, speaks at the launch of a training programme on ICT literacy for jobless women, at Phulbari in Dinajpur on February 15. Khondoker Abdul Hafiz, CEO of iSoftware Limited, which organised the programme under a project of the ICT Division, was also present.

ICT training for jobless women in Dinajpur

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The ICT Division launched a 15-day ICT training programme for jobless women who passed at least HSC exams, at Phulbari upazila in Dinajpur on February 15.

iSoftware Limited is organising the programme of the Learning and Earning Development project under the ICT Division of the post and telecom ministry,

the IT firm said in a statement yesterday.

Twenty women are now taking part in the training on basic IT/ICT literacy at Bangabandhu College in Betdighi under the upazila, according to the statement.

Moniruzzaman, Phulbari upazila nirbahi officer, attended the launch of the training as the chief guest where Khondoker Abdul Hafiz, chief executive officer of iSoftware Limited, was also present among others.



DIGICON

Wahid Sharif, managing director of Digicon Technologies, receives the ICT Achievement Award from Sajeeb Wazed Joy, ICT advisor to the prime minister, during the Digital World 2015 held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka recently.

Thailand may ink deal to recruit Bangladeshi workers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Thailand may sign a deal with Bangladesh for recruitment of workers for fishing, construction and manufacturing sectors to contribute to the economies of the two countries.

"We have highlighted the government to government initiatives for low-cost exploitation-free ethical labour recruitment of our people in Bangkok," Saida Muna Tasneem, ambassador at Bangladesh embassy in Bangkok, told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

She has recently met with Thai Labour Minister Surasak Karnjanarat and stressed the need for expediting the process of recruitment.

Kazi Russel Pervez, counsellor at the embassy, and Ali Haider Chowdhury, senior vice-president of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, accompanied the ambassador in the meeting.

Real estate linkage industries hit by political unrest

FROM PAGE B1

"Please don't use us for your politics. Let us do business and live," Rahman said.

Mustafa Kamal Mohiuddin, secretary general of Bangladesh Land Developers Association, said around Tk 5,000 crore has been stuck due to the crisis.

Other linkage industries such as stone suppliers, cement and brick manufacturers and electrical contractors are also in great trouble as they cannot sell their products and are counting losses.

"We usually get our work done by day labourers. As we have no work, we cannot provide job to them," said AKM Shamsuddin, president of Bangladesh Electrical Contractors Association. "We did not see such a bad time before," he said. The REHAB sought interest waiver and rescheduling of bank loans of their members for two years.

"We want compensation for our losses," said Alamgir Shamsul Alamin, president of REHAB.

The realtors also demanded banks give them loans at a single digit interest rate.

CSE looking for strategic investors

FROM PAGE B1

The CSE has also taken an initiative to attract small and medium enterprises to help them raise capital from the stockmarket. The contribution of the SMEs to the country's economy is around 25 percent, Matin said.

He said 51 companies are now listed on the OTC (over-the-counter) market, a separate platform for junk shares.

As there have been allegations that many of these junk companies are nonexistent, the CSE boss said they will soon open probe into the matter.

YouTube to launch subscription model

REUTERS

Google Inc is set to launch a subscription model for YouTube in a few months, CNBC quoted Robert Kyncl, the online video service's head of content and business operations as saying at the Code/Media conference.

The company was "fine-tuning the experience", Kyncl said at the conference in California.

YouTube has been exploring a paid, ad-free version of its service for some time. The company launched a pilot program in May 2013 that allowed individual content creators to charge consumers a subscription fee to access a particular "channel" of videos.



SSG SOLAR

Harun-Ar-Rashid, deputy managing director of Super Star Group, and Samit Mitra, regional business director of d.light Energy, sign documents of a business agreement at a programme recently.

Poultry sector eyes double digit growth

FROM PAGE B1

The poultry industry is incurring losses worth around Tk 18.28 crore a day on average, as ongoing violence has disrupted the sector's tight supply chain, industry insiders said recently. The industry's total losses would be around Tk 4,500 crore, if all the shutdowns and blockades in the last 15 months are taken into account, they added.

It is expected that rising incomes and population growth would boost demand for protein, especially chicken and egg, in the coming years.

Moreover, the sector's 16 percent growth a year will largely depend on a number of issues like political stability, access to low-cost loans, a supportive government policy, and proper marketing infrastructure, they said.

In commercial broiler marketing, retailers now get 46 percent of total profit on average, while farmers' share is 26 percent, and wholesalers get 28 percent, Khaled said.

"A stable market will allow farmers to get higher profits, and encourage them to expand business. It will also increase farmers' purchasing power and create local and regional market opportunities, which are still untapped."

At the event, Matia Chowdhury, agriculture minister, urged local poultry entrepreneurs to increase protein production to meet local demand and explore export options.

Bangladesh used to import all of its processed food even a few years ago, but the

local industry now produces those, which is good news for the country, she said.

On toxic feed, she said the government is aware of poultry feed production from tannery waste. "We are working to expunge such toxic manufacturers. Consumers are now enjoying safer eggs and chicken as a result."

"If we want to ensure food security for all, we need to enhance production of non-crop food like animal protein along with good crops," said Md Eunusur Rahman, agriculture secretary.

The goal is to first become self-sufficient, and then explore export options, by making production safe and sustainable, he added.

The per capita protein consumption needs to be increased to ensure a healthy nation, said Ajoy Kumar Roy, director general of Department of Livestock. As poultry is the main supplier of protein for most developing nations, it needs to develop further, said EN Silva, president of WPSA.

He also said the World Poultry Congress will be held in Beijing next year to help boost the industry, especially in developing nations.

The government should provide tax benefits and other financial support to the struggling local poultry industry, said Rahman, president of WPSA-BB.

A total of 297 stalls from 147 local and foreign companies have been set up at the show, which will end tomorrow. Some 47 technical papers will be presented at the seminar.

India's gold imports set to rise

REUTERS, Mumbai/Singapore

Gold imports to top consumer India are set to jump in coming months after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) eased gold import curbs, ahead of an expected cut in import duty in next week's budget.

The Reserve Bank of India said on Wednesday banks would again be allowed to import gold on a "consignment basis", under which they act as intermediaries and don't pay for the stock until a buyer has been found, which is usually quickly.

Trading houses will be allowed to bring in gold with no conditions attached.

Gold flows into the country have slowed despite the removal in November of the so-called 80-20 rule that required importing agencies to re-export a fifth of total imports, as importers and customs officials waited for more clarity.

"These clarifications were pending for a

long time and should boost sentiment. Gold imports may increase to 75-90 tonnes in coming months as against about 40 tonnes in recent months," said Prithviraj Kothari, executive director of the India Bullion & Jewellers' Association.

Imports had dropped despite the reversal of the rule as the industry was taken aback by the sudden change in the central bank's position and banks remained wary, fearing customs officials would hold up incoming shipments.

"Some imports had been stuck at the airport, but not huge quantities, as customs officials were awaiting clarification from the RBI. They will be cleared now," said Sudheesh Nambiath, an analyst at precious metals consultancy GFMS, owned by Thomson Reuters.

Nambiath said imports could average 80 tonnes a month, boosted by the RBI move and expectations of a duty cut.

GSMA stresses transparent spectrum auction

FROM PAGE B1

Any pending industry issues related to the previous 3G auction are also needed to be resolved amicably before conducting a new auction to provide certainty for future investments, the GSMA said in the letter.

"In particular, ensuring that a predictable regulatory and taxation framework is in place is critical for operators to plan the necessary investment in spectrum and infrastructure for the widespread adoption of mobile broadband services."

Only 6.5 percent of the population are internet users in Bangladesh, which is one of the lowest usage rates in the world. The low 3G penetration in Bangladesh is due, in large part, to the late release of 3G spectrum in 2013, the association said.

"With this in mind, it is critical that the ministry takes the necessary steps to imple-

ment a spectrum allocation process that is fair, timely, transparent and consistent with global best practices to ensure that increased mobile broadband penetration can transform Bangladesh into a digitally empowered society and knowledge-based economy," said Giusti.


Unlocking the digital potential of Bangladesh requires timely release of spectrum to operators that make efficient use of the radio frequencies, Hakon Bruaset Kjol, senior vice president and head of corporate affairs for Asia at Telenor Group, which controls majority share in GP, said in a statement yesterday.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, however, said it has proposed the policy to create a level-playing field among all operators so that no operator holds excess spectrum.



BDBL

Syed Aftaar Hussain Pear, director of Bangladesh Development Bank, opens the bank's 32nd branch on Saifur Rahman Road in Moulvibazar, Sylhet recently. Md Wahiduzzaman Khandaker, deputy managing director, was also present.



Directorate General Medical Services

Ministry of Defence
Dhaka Cantonment

Emergency Tender Notice

- Sealed tender in local currency is invited from all bonafide manufacturers/dealers/suppliers/indentors (Directorate General of Defence Purchase, P-3 enlisted only) to supply the Electro Medical Equipments for use of Defence Services.
- The tender schedule with detailed specifications/terms & conditions will be available on cash payment (non-refundable) and received in sealed envelope in the tender box at Directorate General Medical Services, Dhaka Cantonment as per scheduled date & time mentioned in the following table. Tender will be opened in presence of all available bidders.

S/No.	Description of stores	Selling and dropping date & time		Tender value	Tender No.
		From	To		
a.	Electro Medical Equipments & Instruments	20-2-2015 0800 hours	20-04-2015 1400 hours	1,000/-	06.04.0000.009.001.25.4610/EM

- Tender must be submitted with the following informations:
 - Authenticated certificate to local agency from principal supplier.
 - Manufacturers name and country of origin.
 - Original catalog with the offer.
 - Soft copy CD (Rewritable) along with hard copy in MS Word.
 - Receipt of purchase schedule to be attached with the tender.

Lieutenant Colonel
Assistant Director General Medical Services (Stores)
Directorate General Medical Services
Ministry of Defence
Dhaka Cantonment

Dated—Feb 2015
ISPR/Misc/2015/2061
17/02/15
GD-658