

Well Food plans big to turn up as global brand

UNB, Dhaka

Well Food, a food chain of Well Group of Industries, wants to be recognised as a global brand in the coming years, the group CEO said yesterday.

"We want to make it stand out as a global brand through maintaining proper quality and best taste. We're close to our mission," Syed Nurul Islam said at a press meet at Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka.

He said the products of his company have already reached the markets in the UK and Australia on a limited scale and will soon be available in Dubai and Bangkok.

The company celebrated its launching ceremony yesterday and will celebrate its two years of presence in Dhaka in October.

"We want to reach Tk 100 crore sales volume and we hope we'll reach it by the next two years," Islam said.

He also said the company wants to open 50 outlets in Dhaka in the next five years, up from 12 outlets now. It also plans to open another eight outlets in the next six months.

The company has 22 outlets in Chittagong.

Terming Dhaka as a competitive market, Islam said they would not deviate from their commitment to the consumers and will continue to concentrate on quality, taste and affordability of cost.

"Getting suitable space in Dhaka is very difficult. It is quite expensive too," he said, adding that the Well Food outlets will have more products in the coming days so that consumers can get all essentials under one roof.

He urged the consumers to provide feedback on their product's quality and taste as it will help them provide better products.

"We've a bigger responsibility today. We are investing more time on the food wing as food is a very sensitive issue," Islam said.

Syed Shahidul Islam, a director of Well Group, and Daisy Rahim, chief marketing officer of Well Food, also spoke.

The company plans to explore other parts of the country, including Sylhet and Rangpur.

CBC managing director in town

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Jegan Durairatnam, managing director of Commercial Bank of Ceylon, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka today for a two-day visit, the bank said in a statement yesterday.

During his visit, he will meet different officials and corporate customers in Dhaka and Chittagong, according to the statement.



Oil prices swing wildly in China uncertainty

AFP, London

Fragile financial markets are grappling with wild swings in world oil prices, unnerved by uncertainty over global supplies and the demand outlook from China.

By the close of business Monday, the price had shot up 27 percent in just three days for the US benchmark contract, West Texas Intermediate for October delivery, rebounding from six and a half year lows.

But they skidded again Tuesday when weak Chinese manufacturing data cemented concerns over demand from the world's biggest commodities consumer.

Later in the week oil prices got a boost from the European Central Bank, which on Thursday held out the prospect of yet more stimulus for the eurozone economies if needed. By the end of the week, crude oil prices were trading in London on Friday evening barely changed.

Brent North Sea crude sold at \$49.95 a barrel - down from \$50.17 a week earlier. The WTI contract traded at \$46.22, up from \$45.22.



Moazzem Hossain, general secretary of Bangladesh Surfing Association, and Umme Habiba, deputy manager of Brac Chicken, exchange documents of an agreement signed at Brac Centre in Mohakhali, Dhaka. Brac Chicken has become the official sponsor of the national surfing tournament, to be organised by Bangladesh Surfing Association, for the next three years for the 2016-2018 term.

Internet Week kicks off

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government yesterday started a weeklong event in all 487 upazilas to promote the use of internet. Called the 'Bangladesh Internet Week 2015', the event was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Mobile operator Grameenphone and Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) are organising the event in association with the ICT division. The event will end on September 11.

As part of the event, a three-day exposition on the internet is taking place at the capital's Banani Society Playground. The exposition, which remains open until 2pm,

will end tomorrow.

Major e-commerce companies, mobile application developers, web portals, device manufacturers and internet product and service providers are participating in the exposition, where free internet browsing is being offered.

At the exposition yesterday, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, Shameem Ahsan, president of BASIS, and Yasir Azman, chief marketing officer of Grameenphone, answered to queries from youths on internet use, speed and contents.

Two similar expositions will take place during the course of the internet week: at Rajshahi Nankin Bazar on September 9 and Sylhet City Indoor Stadium on September 11.



Chitpan Kanhasari, managing director of Bata Shoe Company (Bangladesh), hands over a cheque for Tk 53.5 lakh to Md Mujibul Haque, state minister for labour and employment, for contribution to the labour welfare fund, at a ceremony in Dhaka on Thursday. Mikail Shipar, labour secretary, was also present.



Ashis Kumar Chakraborty, managing director of Universal Medical College & Hospital, and Ramendu Majumdar, managing director of Expressions, sign an agreement at the hospital's head office on Wednesday. Universal Medical College & Hospital, formerly known as Ayesha Memorial Hospital, has appointed the advertising agency for advertisement, branding and promotion for their services.

Minister moves on idle telecom fund

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As part of the 2010 telecom law, the telecom regulator started collecting the fund in November 2011, when Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi and Citycell renewed their licences.

The fund will be used to develop the telecom network and serve more people with telecom services, according to the rules made by the government in December last year.

Grameenphone contributed Tk 321.83 crore to the fund, Banglalink Tk 140.16 crore, Robi Tk 137.86 crore and Airtel Tk 40.93 crore. Citycell stopped contributing to the fund after giving only Tk 1.29 crore as of March 2012 while state-owned Teletalk never took part in the initiative. As much as Tk 83.44 crore was added to the fund as bank interests.

The Telecom Division plans to place proposals before the committee, headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, which will handle the fund, Tarana said.

"This is our money and there is a written guideline on how to spend it. We hope the government will follow the guideline," a senior executive of a mobile operator said, asking not to be named.

India, Pakistan, Nepal, Thailand and Malaysia have utilised similar funds to upgrade rural basic telecom networks, broadband services and fibre optic backbone network, said Mustafa Hussain, an assistant professor of East West University and a specialist on the telecom industry.

They have also taken special initiatives to provide the senior citizens and underprivileged people with telecom services, which could be followed in Bangladesh also, he said.

Singer awards Eid campaign winners

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Singer Bangladesh has recently awarded the grand prize winners of its Eid campaign, the company said in a statement.

The company gave a bedroom set in Singer Eid Surprise Offer to Enayet Hossain from Mirpur who bought a refrigerator. The other winners were: Milon Mia from Bogra, Mujibur Rahman from Chittagong and Azizul Islam from Moulvibazar.

Govt to rewrite public procurement rules

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A limited tendering method means getting the job done by a contractor listed with the purchasing authorities.

The LGD also called for participation of new contractors under open tender for work involving up to Tk 1 crore. At present, only those who have previous relevant experience can participate in the open tenders.

For projects above Tk 2 crore under open tenders, a clause must be added. It stipulates that contractors quote prices 5 percent more or less than the estimated price, as per another proposal. If the contractor quotes price beyond the range, he/she will be disqualified.

In case of international open tenders, the PMO and the Power Division have recommended adopting "single stage two envelopes" method, which means the bidders will place technical and financial offers at one go.

The planning ministry proposal said the World Bank purchase policy does not allow this method but the Asian Development Bank gives this scope. In case of appointing consultants by development partners, performance security clause will be included in the agreement to ensure accountability.

Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal already held an inter-ministerial meeting last week about the planned amendment to the PPA, with another meeting scheduled for today.

BlackBerry buys mobile security company for \$425m

AFP, Ottawa

Canadian smartphone maker BlackBerry on Friday bought rival mobile security provider Good Technology for \$425 million in a move to broaden its software sales.

With its consumer smartphone sales sagging in recent years, BlackBerry turned to mobile security for governments and corporations, a market in which Good Technology also operates.

Good Technology of Sunnyvale, California serves more than 6,200 organizations, including banks, aerospace and defense firms, as well as healthcare, manufacturing and retail firms. Its software secures devices that use mostly Apple, but also Android and Windows operating systems.

BlackBerry is the mobility partner of all G7 governments, 16 of the G20 governments, the world's top banks and law firms as well as healthcare, investment and oil and gas companies.

BlackBerry's strength is in security for its own BBM operating system as well as Android.

"Enhanced by Good, BlackBerry will expand its ability to offer a unified, secure mobility platform with applications for any mobile device on any operating system -- supported with security that has been certified by governments around the world embedded in every component of the mobility infrastructure," BlackBerry said in a statement.

Bangladesh yet to ratify WTO deal

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The cost of doing business will fall by 10-15 percent, if international trade goes paperless, the WTO estimated.

As of yesterday, 16 out of 161 WTO members have given go-ahead to the TFA, which will be automatically enforced once two-thirds of the members of the organisation accept the agreement.

Belize, Switzerland, China, Niger, Nicaragua, Hong Kong, Trinidad and Tobago, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the United States, Mauritius, Malaysia, Japan and Australia are some of the countries who have already approved the agreement.

"Bangladesh has tried to ratify the

TFA once, but it was not done finally as some quarters opposed it. Now we are thinking again to implement the deal," a senior official of the commerce ministry said preferring anonymity.

Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, is backing the deal.

"Bangladesh should approve the TFA for making the business procedures easier for both domestic and overseas trade," Rahman told The Daily Star by phone. "The ratification is required for our own interests. Once the agreement comes into effect, it will leave a positive impact on the prices of imported basic commodities at the customers' level."

The prices of commodities will come down for quick customs clearance of goods at the ports, he said.

After approving the TFA, Bangladesh can demand a significant amount of money from the developed and developing countries to improve its infrastructure and to train the officials. The WTO will provide the fund under its "Aid for Trade" package adopted in 2005.

"Bangladesh, which is a least-developed country, will also be able to submit its trade roadmap to the developed and developing countries," he said.

But Bangladesh will also have to follow certain rules if it ratifies the agreement, Rahman said.



Mahfuzur Rahman, executive director of Bangladesh Bank, hands over customised agricultural items to a farmer at a ceremony at Dashiari Chhora, a former enclave, in Fulbari, Kurigram for self-reliance. Mutual Trust Bank extended support to 235 farmers as part of its corporate social responsibility effort. Azad Shamsi, a senior official of MTB, is also seen.



Sophie Aubert, French ambassador to Bangladesh, speaks at a seminar on intelligent solutions for modern buildings organised by Schneider Electric in a local hotel. Rajesh Sawant, senior manager for eco-building business at Schneider, and Pradeep Saikia, country president of Schneider for operations in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, also attended the seminar.

GP has lowest internet penetration among Telenor's Asian units

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Though the focus is different in different countries, the group is mostly looking to students, showing them the needs and benefits of good internet services, he said. "With continued growth at the current rates, our internet-user number in the region will reach 80 percent by 2017."

Telenor has 160 million users in the region as of December last year. "We are also offering access to smartphones under various offers to boost internet use," Johnsen added.

Alberm Murty, chief executive of Digi Telecommunications, said: "All our programmes are internet-focused, leading to success in the market." A subscriber is currently using one gigabyte internet data every month on average, and the numbers are increasing, Murty added. "The launch of 3G services, like in Bangladesh, has also increased data usage," he said.

Most Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia use Digi's network to contact relatives back home, along with using various modern applications that also increase data consumption, he added. Telenor's Thailand operation Dtac has 26 million subscribers, 50 percent of which are connected to the internet, and 46 percent are using smartphones.

Telenor launched its Myanmar operations two years ago and now has 3.4 million active users, about half of whom use its internet services. "Data penetration is increasing heavily in Myanmar, as some 30 percent of total revenue comes from data," said Johnsen. "They are hungry for information and use the internet to learn."

Two Japanese firms shortlisted for Matarbari coal power plant

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Bangladesh is looking for outside help to meet its growing demand for power. The country now generates, on average, 7,500MW of electricity, which caters to two-thirds of the population. The government plans to generate 24,000MW by 2021, and the country's power capacity growth is currently about 10 percent a year.

The country is increasingly moving toward other modes of electricity generation as domestic reserves of natural gas, which now accounts for about 75 percent of power generation, are fast depleting.

Ansar-VDP Unnayan Bank seeks change in ownership

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Ansar-VDP Unnayan Bank has been profitable since 2001-2002. It made more than Tk 15 crore in profit in 2014-15, up from Tk 10.5 crore a year ago.

The bank's nonperforming loans are less than 5 percent of its total loans, much below the banking industry's average NPL of around 11 percent. Its loan recovery rate is nearly 98 percent. The bank celebrated its 20th founding anniversary at a programme in Dhaka yesterday.