

South Sudan ministers visit Pran-RFL's Industrial Park

STAR BUSINESS DESK

A seven-member delegation from South Sudan led by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Deng Dau Deng Malek visited Pran-RFL's Industrial Park at Palash in Narsingdi yesterday.

The delegation also included General Chol Thon Balok, deputy minister for defence and veteran affairs, a press release said.

Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman of Pran-RFL Group, Eleash Mridha, managing director of Pran Group, RN Paul, managing director of RFL Group, and Kamruzzaman Kamal, director for marketing at Pran-RFL Group, apprised the delegation about various aspects of the production process.

Pran-RFL is now exporting to 47 African countries

Expressing satisfaction about the overall activities of the factory, Deng Dau Deng Malek said, "There is a good demand for agro-processing products in South Sudan. Pran can grab the opportunity. The steps taken by the group for manufacturing products using modern technologies are praiseworthy."

Ahsan Khan Chowdhury said Pran-RFL is now exporting to 47 African countries and the demand for their products is increasing day by day. "We hope we will do better to export our products to South Sudan in the upcoming days," Chowdhury said.

Md Tarikul Islam, director-general for Africa at the foreign affairs ministry, Brigadier General Md Shamim Kamal, chief instructor, armed forces war course at the National Defence College, and Abu Nayeem Mohammed Maruf Khan, deputy commissioner of Narsingdi, were present.



Numerous furniture stores targeting low-income and budget conscious families have emerged by the road from Sayedabad to Jatrabari. Stores here offer sofa sets for as low as Tk 6,000-Tk 7,000. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

EU to make \$21m climate-smart investment in Bangladesh, South Asia

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The European Union is set to allocate a fund of \$21.5 million to help accelerate climate-smart and inclusive infrastructure investments in Bangladesh and five other South Asian countries.

The five other countries are India, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, according to a press release of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the largest global development institution, yesterday.

The IFC will implement the project under the programme, "Accelerating Climate-Smart and Inclusive Infrastructure in South Asia (ACSIS)".

The ACSIS is a five-year programme (2021-2026) to help spur investments



in energy, water, waste management, transport, logistics, and green buildings to benefit people and businesses in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. It would leverage \$850 million of private sector investments in the region.

The impact of Covid-19 on

investments in infrastructure has been widespread and severe. Investment commitments in infrastructure with private participation in 2020 dropped by an unprecedented 52 per cent from 2019 levels, said the IFC in the press release.

The IFC estimates that South Asian countries can unlock more than \$3 trillion of climate-smart investment opportunities by fully meeting the national targets under the Paris Agreement by 2030.

"Attracting private capital for climate-smart infrastructure in a sustainable and inclusive manner will be critical for post-Covid-19 recovery in South Asia," said Hector Gomez Ang, regional director for South Asia at the IFC.

"The EU's support for the programme could not come at a better time as it is vital to act now to unblock obstacles to spurring sustainable infrastructure projects. This programme will leverage IFC's experience and expertise in supporting climate-smart infrastructure development in the region," he added.

The programme will also support the development of climate-smart investments in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, health, and education while focusing on key themes such as cities, gender, and green finance.

The latest initiative builds on the IFC's previous partnership with the EU to support the Eco-Cities Programme in India and other programmes in the region.

Banglalink clinches Ookla Speedtest Award four times straight

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Banglalink has won Ookla's recognition as the fastest mobile network in the country for the fourth consecutive time.

The mobile phone operator remains in pole position with a speed score of 20.04 on the recently published Ookla Speedtest Award report for the third and fourth quarters of 2021, a press release said.

Its median download was 13.77 mbps, while the median upload speed was 7.54 mbps.

Ookla, the global leader in internet testing and analysis, gives the most accurate and comprehensive view of worldwide network performance, quality, and accessibility based on millions of results obtained through the Ookla Speedtest app each day.

Banglalink has managed to raise its performance bar significantly in recent times, providing super-fast 4G internet and high-quality digital services.

A total of 9.4 MHz new spectrum purchased by Banglalink last year contributed to winning this award by further enhancing the operator's network quality.

This year Banglalink is set to install around 3,000 base transceiver stations (BTS) across the country with an objective to gain double-digit growth.

"We want to keep this momentum going and expand our network for enabling more customers to benefit from our fastest mobile internet," said Upanga Dutta, chief commercial officer of Banglalink.

"Speedtest awards are given to the best-performing mobile operators for their superior network speed and coverage," said Doug Suttles, chief executive officer of Ookla.

"According to the consumer-initiated tests taken with Speedtest, Banglalink's overall network performance was the best in Bangladesh in Q3-Q4 last year," he added.

Tap offers cashback on mobile recharge

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mobile financial service provider Trust Axiata Pay (tap) has brought cashback offers on mobile recharges.

The offers are cashback on various packs such as voice and data, according to a press release.

Users will be allowed to avail the cashback offer up to three times for each pack during this campaign. Under the month-long campaign starting from February 1, users can enjoy instant cashback ranging from 10 per cent to 71 per cent on every recharge.

Devan Nazmul Hasan, chief executive officer of tap, said, "When it comes to mobile recharge, people are now leaning towards mobile financial service providers so that they don't have to take any hassle. To encourage the users, tap has brought in cashback options along with other exclusive offers for the users."



Golan Gaffar Imtiaz Chowdhury, head of foreign remittance department at Bank Asia, receives the Remittance Award from AK Abdul Momen, minister for foreign affairs, at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: BANK ASIA

Bank Asia wins remittance award

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia Ltd has been awarded "Remittance Award 2021 and 2022" by the Center for NRB, a non-profit research organisation for non-resident Bangladeshis.

Golan Gaffar Imtiaz Chowdhury, head of the foreign remittance department at Bank Asia, received the award from AK Abdul Momen, minister for foreign affairs, at an event titled "World Conference Series 2022 - Branding Bangladesh" at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka recently, said a press release.

MS Shekil Chowdhury, chairperson of the Centre for NRB, presided over the ceremony, where Mashiur Rahman, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister, Prof Shamsul Alam, state minister for planning, General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed, chief of Army Staff, ABM Abdullah, professor emeritus of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Shahidul Alam, additional secretary of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry, and Sherwan Chowdhury, mayor of Croydon in London, were present.



Mohammad Gias Uddin Talukder, chairman of the Shariah Supervisory Committee (SSC) at Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd (IBBL), virtually presides over the bank's SSC meeting yesterday. Sayeed Ahmad, vice-chairman of the committee, Mohammad Abdus Samad, member secretary, and Muhammad Qaisar Ali and Md Omar Faruk Khan, additional managing directors, attended the meeting.

PHOTO: IBBL

Improved cook stoves: saving lives

FROM PAGE B4

Like Samiul and Shahedul, hundreds of small entrepreneurs in suburban areas are making and selling improved cook stoves to profit from its growing popularity.

Khadiza Begum, who lives in Lalmonirhat, used to cook her food on an ordinary stove just two months back when she had to use so much firewood that it would fill her house with smog.

But after following the advice of a local youth, Khadiza installed an improved cook stove at a cost of Tk 700. Since then, her weekly expenses for firewood have fallen to Tk

90 in the past two months, down 60 per cent from Tk 150 previously.

"Not only does it take less time to cook, but we also do not have to suffer from smoke inhalation while cooking," Khadiza said.

Convinced of the benefits, 40 other families in her village have also installed improved cook stoves.

"Our benefits would have been higher had we known about this cooking solution two or three years ago. Many of our relatives become enthusiastic about buying one themselves after seeing the stove

in our house," said Nuri Begum, another local in Lalmonirhat.

Mez-Babul Alam, deputy director of the Department of Environment in Rangpur, said improved cook stoves are environmentally friendly and so, they always advise people to use them.

"Various non-governmental organisations are regularly advising and raising awareness among people to use Bondhu Chula," he said.

Habibur Rahman, the civil surgeon of Kurigram district, says the amount of smoke released while

cooking on an ordinary wood-burning stove causes air pollution.

Due to this, family members have shortness of breath, asthma, heart attacks, lung problems and pneumonia.

"If the house is kept smoke-free, there will be no air pollution and the incidence of these complex diseases will be comparatively lower," he said.

"So, the use of these eco-friendly stoves should be increased not only in houses but also in restaurants, tea stalls, community centres and small factories."



Md Ataur Rahman Prodhan, managing director of Sonali Bank, hands over certificates to the participants of a three-week foundation course for the newly appointed senior officers and equivalent at the Sonali Bank Staff College in Uttara, Dhaka on Wednesday. Begum Aklima Islam, the college's principal, presided over the ceremony.

PHOTO: SONALI BANK