

BANGLADESH

Land of opportunity

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One of the most densely populated countries on the planet, Bangladesh is revving up to become an important economic player

Bangladesh, less than a quarter of the size of Texas, is the heart of South Asia. Once part of the Indian subcontinent under British rule and then cut from India thus becoming East Pakistan in 1947, the People's Republic of Bangladesh finally became an independent nation in 1972 after a bitter conflict over the right to use the Bengali language and the right to govern themselves democratically.

Since independence, the fighting spirit of the people has lived on, and despite their struggle with natural calamities and political unrest, they have defied the odds and battled on to become a land of opportunity.

The now vibrant economy of Bangladesh (which has grown between 5% and 6% per year since 1996) still remains a widely open market, but with a young population of approximately 160 million and its strategic position at the core of South Asia, nobody can deny that this small country looks set for rapid development.

The Bangladeshi people are some of the most hospitable in the world, always welcoming with a ready smile and happy to help. It is that nature which makes them excellent business partners and is propelling Bangladesh into the limelight as the next destination for foreign direct investment in a variety of sectors, as well as for joint ventures that are proving to be exceedingly lucrative.

"When it comes to branding, I think our new entrepreneurs have a very good opportunity now, particularly when it comes to working with



other large companies and major importers around the world," stresses Akramul Qader, Bangladeshi Ambassador to the U.S.

Indeed, "Made in Bangladesh" is a label – not only for its well-known ready-made garments but also for pharmaceuticals and bone china, for example – that is rapidly becoming more commonplace. Currently Bangladeshi garment manufacturers are second only to China in their offerings to the world and the United States is the number one importer of Bangladeshi products.

"WE ARE A MUSLIM COUNTRY, BUT OUR PEOPLE ARE VERY TOLERANT AND WE DO NOT HAVE PROBLEMS LIKE IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHEN IT COMES TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM."

AKRAMUL QADER, Bangladeshi Ambassador to the U.S.

According to Ambassador Qader, Bangladesh exported \$4.23 billion worth of goods in 2010-2011, despite the lack of a free-trade agreement – something he would like to change in the future. "We had to pay something like \$657 million in penalties, which is way too high

if you compare it to other countries. If we were allowed duty free and quota free exports of goods, particularly garments, we could divert this to important areas including women's empowerment," he remarks.

Aside from partnering with local entrepreneurs, U.S. in-

vestors will find plenty of plans and projects in need of foreign know-how and funding. Once completed, these will only add to Bangladesh's growing potential as a regional economic power and boost social development.

"I think the potential here is easy to recognize and investors will continue to come and invest in Bangladesh," says Minister of Finance Abul Maal Abdul Muhith. "Billions of dollars need to be invested in power, roads, highways and obviously in railways. So, we're appealing for higher foreign

investment and higher foreign assistance. I must say we are receiving strong responses from investors."

With the eighth-largest population in the world, Bangladesh is certainly a country to be considered on the global economic stage. It is also making waves regionally in terms of social progress. Although Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim nation, it stands out as an international example for many countries in terms of women's empowerment. Both the current Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and the leader of the opposition party, Khaleda Zia, are women, as is the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Dipu Moni.

A country which has been recognized by Goldman Sachs in the world's list of "N-11", or next eleven economies, which has provided the UN with more peacekeepers than any other, and which strides forth tackling challenges and exceeding expectations – Bangladesh has a private sector made up of outstanding entrepreneurs who are making the future bright for their people.

These 'Best of Bangladesh' are recognizing opportunities and creating world-class corporations. Their examples of what can be done in Bangladesh show that the sky is the limit.



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Beyond a family business

Mohammadi Group, one of the leading garment manufacturers in Bangladesh today, has broadened its base to include various other lines of business

If Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) sector ever had a cheap connotation tied to it, it is well on its way out, thanks to the efforts of high-quality manufacturers such as Mohammadi Group (MG).

"It's time for Bangladesh to re-brand itself as a producer of higher value-added items," says the group's Chairman, Anisul Huq, adding that the entrepreneurs of the RMG sector have risen above the challenges of natural disasters and labor issues to sustain growth in the sector. "Nothing deters our spirit. The resilience comes from our need to survive and compete in today's world with excellence," he says.

MG was initially established in 1986 by four friends who scraped together just enough capital, with 52 people working a two-line factory in the Lalbagh area of Dhaka. "We had no cash to invest, so I borrowed money from my father's pension account, my friends pawned their wives' jewelry and a cousin decided to fund a portion," recalls Mr. Huq.

In the mid-90s, the four partners split the business, each setting up their own garment



ANISUL HUQ, Chairman of Mohammadi Group

manufacturing companies. Mr. Huq went into business with his wife Rubana, who serves as MG's Managing Director. Their son, Navid, runs the sweater division.

From these humble origins nearly 30 years ago, the group has expanded into a 26-line business that produces monthly 750,000 pieces of ready-made woven garments, 300,000 sweaters, and 250,000 pieces of lingerie. The group's port-

folio of international customers includes some of the most recognized names in Europe and the U.S.

Not only is Mr. Huq at the helm of a thriving company, he is also a prominent figure in the business community, having served as President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' Exporters Association (BGMEA), President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), and President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

"Leading all these organizations helped me gain a better vision of a global business scene and my roles enabled me to look beyond just my company," he says.

Mr. Huq's vision has led him to look beyond the RMG sector and to diversify into IT, power, media and real estate. He even plans to enter agriculture soon.

His firm Technovista is one of the largest software and IT services companies in Bangladesh, and has gone into partnership with a Danish company to open Boarding Vista Ltd, an IT and DTP service solution provider. In the energy sector, MG co-owns two 110MW power plants with Desh Energy. In other areas, MG Properties Ltd. focuses on providing one-stop services – all the way through to interior design.

Business aside, the group is also concerned with the human aspect. MG's Sharaf Pathshala School provides free education to the factory workers' children. "My goal is to replicate this initiative in all of our factories and to cajole a few of our colleagues to set up a similar school in their manufacturing units, as well," says Mr. Huq.



Mohammadi Group's customers include Zara, H&M, Esprit, Sears, Wal-Mart and Target

In Loving Memory of Samson H. Chowdhury, one of the greatest entrepreneurs the world has ever known

Born on the 25th of September, 1926 in Pabna, Samson H. Chowdhury went on to study at both Harvard University and Dhaka University in Bangladesh (also known at that time as "The Oxford of the East"). Upon completion of his studies he returned to Pabna in 1952 and started his first entrepreneurial venture – a pharmacy. This led to his first success in business and he went on to begin the Square Group of Companies with three friends.

A devout Christian, Samson served as vice president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1985 to 1990. Additionally, Mr. Chowdhury served in other global Baptist organizations, including on the BWA General Council, the Executive Committee, the Baptist World Aid Committee, the Promotion and Development Committee, and the Memorial Committee. Mr. Chowdhury was also elected president of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Fellowship (BBCF) a dozen times, and was honorary general secretary for 14 years, between 1956 and 1969. He was a president of both the National Church Council of Bangladesh and the National Evangelical Alliance.

But it was his religious beliefs which took up the majority of his attention. His business acumen, and immense contribution to the development of Bangladesh made him incredibly popular with the people and his contemporaries alike. He was of course recognized for his achievements on several occasions, being awarded accolades such as Business Executive of the Year by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh in 1998, Best Entrepreneur of the Country for the year 2000–2001 by the Daily Star and DHL, Worldwide Express, Special Contribution in the country's industrial and commercial sectors for the year 2003 by the Mercantile Bank Award, For Uncompromising Business Ethics, Honesty & Transparency of the year 2005 by the Banker's Forum Award. He was also the recipient of CIP (Commercially Important Person in Industry) 2009–2010 status by the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.



It was through his dynamic leadership that Square Group is one of Bangladesh's leading conglomerates with a turnover of more than \$600 million, and Square has recognized, like many others, the enormous potential of ready-made garment manufacturing in Bangladesh.

It was in 1997 that Square (famous for their pharmaceutical production) entered the textile sector with its manufacturing of cotton yarn. Under Square's unique and inspiring atmosphere, this new venture soon rose to the top of the local textile industry and today it has one of the most sophisticated vertically integrated set-ups.

In 2002 after approximately half a decade producing quality textiles for export-oriented garment manufacturers around the world, Square Group embarked on their final stage of vertical integration through the establishment of Square Fashions Ltd.

Using the highest standard of international technology and expertise, Square Fashions Ltd. is producing quality apparel. Utilizing the cotton yarn – which is the company's superior product – Square decided to complete their mission to be a one-stop shop for the international buyer and incorporate the manufacturing of a range of apparels.

'Made in Bangladesh' stands for quality and efficiency

Bangladesh has already been positioned as a major attractive garments exporter and has successfully survived the global financial downturn. The future of the apparel sector looks even brighter as apparel buyers are increasingly looking to source more from Bangladesh

It's high time that Bangladesh is recognized as an upscale, quality high-street manufacturing hub rather than a low-priced apparel manufacturer.

Located in CEPZ, Pacific Jeans Ltd. is one of the country's leading ready-made garment (RMG) exporters and a pioneering premium jeans manufacturer in Bangladesh. This company is one of the first-

movers to get into the high-end market and uphold Bangladesh as a high-street fashion manufacturing hub. Pacific Jeans Ltd. has been awarded five consecutive national export trophies by Bangladesh's government.

"We are capable of accommodating the needs of the top-tier international premium brands. In fact, upmarket retailers are already sourcing from

Bangladesh," says Nasir Uddin, Chairman of Pacific Jeans.

He adds: "Made in Bangladesh is a symbol of quality and efficiency. Pacific Jeans Ltd. has experienced a robust learning curve in apparel manufacturing over the past several decades with a continuous focus on efficiency and value addition without compromising the quality. Our relentless effort to attain efficiency and our strong drive to achieve excellence have contributed enormously to our reaching a new height and representing our country as an attractive sourcing destination of premium apparels."

"The biggest competitive advantage of Bangladesh is that we offer the best price, quality and capacity in Asia. We are not only offering low labor costs as our competitive advantage; our efficiency, productivity and capacity are our greatest strengths in generating growth and taking the market share from our competitors in the apparel sector."

Pacific Jeans Ltd. has got a well-equipped research and development center to generate innovation in joint collaboration with the design teams of the international brands who are the trendsetters of the fashion world. The practice of research and development of upcoming trends has turned the company into an ultimate fashion solution institution rather than a mere apparel manufacturer.

Mr. Uddin always puts emphasis on the standard of working conditions for the company's 24,000 employees. "We are practicing ethical social and labor standards, as compliance has become a key factor for survival in this industry. If there is no compliance, there is no business. We confidently state that our state-of-the-art production facilities, strong adherence to regulations, and product quality are comparable to those in China or Turkey."



"WE ARE CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING THE NEEDS OF THE TOP-TIER INTERNATIONAL PREMIUM BRANDS."

NASIR UDDIN, Chairman of Pacific Jeans

"We have light, airy and hi-tech facilities which are worker-friendly and environmentally sound. We are educating the workers with proper training to generate a pool of skilled human resource in the industry. "To validate our corporate environment commitment we purify the waste water at a very efficient effluent treatment plant. We are continuously investing in hi-tech, energy-saving machinery."

Pacific Jeans Foundation is the CSR wing of the company which has already established two primary schools and two high schools to provide education for the privileged. It also provides free medical treatment, medicines and scholarships to unprivileged children.



BEXIMCO: taking Bangladesh to the world

Bangladesh Export Import Company Limited (BEXIMCO) is a group that has transformed from primarily a merchandise trading company into a leading diversified group with strong market position in industry sectors that account for nearly 75% of Bangladesh's GDP

Globalization has now become a new world order and virtually influences everything. Developing countries like Bangladesh with vulnerable geopolitical locations and weak economies are now looking at globalization to strengthen their economy to fight any perceived threats. From the moment Bangladesh won its independence, if not before, BEXIMCO – the largest private sector group in the country today – has been one of the most important and influential pioneers in the private industries.

The conglomerate was founded by two brothers, Ahmed Sohail Fasir Rahman and Ahmed Salman Fazlur Rahman, in the 1970s. The two brothers have taken their business from a small joint to a conglomerate of over 21 companies. What makes BEXIMCO even more impressive is that it commenced operations when Bangladesh was embroiled in the middle of a war for independence against Pakistan. Today, Director Shayan Rahman represents the second generation of leadership as he takes BEXIMCO into the 21st century and turns the company into one of Bangladesh's most exemplary ambassadors to the world.

BEXIMCO as a conglomerate

has been serving the basic human needs over the decades, with operations and investments across a wide range of industries.

BEXIMCO not only sells its products and services in the domestic Bangladesh market but also in international markets. The company is the largest employer in the private sector in Bangladesh and employs over 48,000 people worldwide.

The BEXIMCO name has now become one of the most recognized brands in Bangladesh. They have four publicly traded and 17 privately held companies. The publicly traded companies are Bangladesh Export Import Company Ltd., Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd., Shinepukur Ceramics Ltd. and Beximco Synthetics Ltd., which together have a combined market capitalization of approximately \$675 million. The total revenues of the group were of \$834 million in 2010.

BEXIMCO boasts state-of-the-art manufacturing plants located in the vicinity of Dhaka, which provide the group with a highly cost effective manufacturing base. A majority of its plants are in the BEXIMCO Industrial Park, a vertically integrated self-

contained facility. This facility provides ready access to captive power generation, water purification, liquid nitrogen, wastewater treatment and other key infrastructure.

The group's global clients include some of the world's most well known brands including BT, BASE,

Chevron, Calvin Klein, H&M, JCPenney, Macy's, Zara, UNICEF, Royal Doulton, and Villeroy & Boch.

Achievements

Since the company launched its own brand in 1983, BEXIMCO Pharma has remained one of the fastest growing pharmaceutical companies in the country. It witnessed particularly phenomenal growth during the 1980s and 90s owing to its outstanding product quality and acceptability among doctors. With its range of innovative products and professional services to the medical community, the company built its unique brand positioning as 'trend setter' in the Bangladesh pharmaceutical industry.

The company led the industry to diversify into active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) in the early 90s, and explored the immense opportunities in overseas markets for locally manufactured medicines. Today, BEXIMCO Pharma is one of the largest exporters of pharmaceuticals in the country and it has received National Export Trophy "Gold" for a record three times for its outstanding achievement in export. BEXIMCO Pharma still remains the only company in Bangladesh to receive

regulatory approvals from ANVISA (Brazil), Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), and Gulf Central Committee for Drug Registration (for GCC member states) for its manufacturing facilities.

Approvals from UK MHRA, EMEA and USFDA are in process for its Oral Solid Dosage and Metered Dose Inhaler facilities. The company has the unique distinction of being the only Bangladesh company to be listed on AIM of London Stock Exchange.

Shinepukur Ceramics was certified ISO 9001:2000 in August 2001, which was later upgraded to its 2008 version and has been certified as the most environmentally friendly tableware plant in the sub-continent. Regular environmental protection practices have been set up in line with EIA Reports and World Bank guidelines for internationally accepted standards. The company has become the top ceramic tableware exporter from Bangladesh between 2004 and 2010.

Each group company is managed by an independent, professional team with significant depth of experience. The group has established a clear strategic plan that will further strengthen the overall platform.



SHAYAN F. RAHMAN
Director of BEXIMCO

Made in Bangladesh

BEXIMCO's myriad activities have been instrumental in Bangladesh's socio-economic development and as the company's motto says, they are "taking Bangladesh to the world"

BEXIMCO's activities span a wide scope of sectors. Although its main focus lies in textiles, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, real estate, construction, marine foods, and trading, the conglomerate is also involved in aviation, hospitality, financial services and various other businesses.

Provider of fine materials for the world's leading clothing brands

BEXIMCO covers a presence of South Asia's largest vertically integrated textile and garment companies. The textile division is a fully integrated manufacturer of cotton and polyester blended garments for men, women and children, both for domestic and export markets.

BEXIMCO Textile (Bextex) encompasses the full range of textile manufacturing operations starting from spinning to finishing garments. It is the golden goose of BEXIMCO Group. Although Bextex was set up in 1984, it didn't begin production until 1990. Two years later, it was listed on the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

Located inside the BEXIMCO industrial park, Bextex supplies 44 million garments to international buyers every year.

A Bextex factory worker earns \$110 a month on average, higher than Bangladesh's minimum wage, which is \$43.

The group plans to expand the textiles business through capacity additions. Post-expansion, the annual capacity of knit fabric is expected to increase to 80 million pounds currently from 11 million pounds pounds, and the annual capacity of apparel knits is expected to reach 145 million pieces from 20 million pieces.

The group's global clients are blue chip brands like Zara, one of the world's largest international fashion companies, and Calvin Klein, a globally leading fashion design and marketing studio, among others.

Exporter of pharmaceuticals to 45 countries

BEXIMCO is also the largest exporter of pharmaceuticals in Bangladesh with a presence in 45 countries. The Pharmaceuticals division manufactures and sells generic pharmaceutical formulation products, active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) and intravenous (IV) fluids. Beximco Pharma's product portfolio in-



BEXIMCO's products are well accepted in the Western world and the group operates through show rooms in different locations around the globe

cludes a variety of therapeutic areas, such as analgesics, antibiotics, cardiovascular, central nervous system, dermatology, gastroenterology, and respiratory. It also has contract manufacturing agreements with global pharmaceutical firms.



The group plans to expand manufacturing capacities in value added products such as inhalers, eye drops and sprays. Targeted global expansion areas include the Middle East, the European Union, Latin America, USA, Australia, and New Zealand.

Beximco Pharma is the largest manufacturer of metered dose inhalers and the only company in Asia from whom GSK has

outsourced manufacturing of its major brand Ventolin.

The largest ceramics exporter in Bangladesh

BEXIMCO's ceramics division, Shinepukur Ceramics Ltd., was established in 1997 and is the largest ceramics exporter in Bangladesh.

The company produces 15 metric tons (MT) per day of high quality porcelain and 3MT per day of bone china tableware; however, the group plans to expand bone china capacity by 4.5MT per day. The manufacturing facilities are equipped with state-of-the-art testing and quality control laboratory facilities, decal and carton packaging plants, a modeling unit and a gas based captive power plant, and the best effluent discharge mechanisms.

For the upper echelons of the global tabletop industry, Shinepukur produces world-class bone china, using only top quality raw materials, sourced



by highly reputed suppliers from all corners of the globe. These are meticulously crafted and transformed into exquisite bone china tabletop, mirroring a unique blend of eye-catching shapes, enviable translucency, durability, all of it with a lead and cadmium-free glaze.

Leadership in a variety of diversified activities

BEXIMCO is one of the leading real estate developers in Bangladesh with a large, high-quality land bank in and around Dhaka. For years, it has been an industrial leader and innovative construction firm, exclusively serving the needs of the construction industry in a world of rapidly changing technology.

The company also has a presence across the value chain from culturing, processing, packaging, and selling marine food products. BEXIMCO has over 1,000 acres of land with best-in-class infrastructure in this segment, and plans to enter the deep-sea fishing business and value added production, including ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook products.

The group capitalizes on industry knowledge and identifies market opportunities in actively traded commodities.

Setting world-class standards in broadcasting

The group is a leading provider of banking and general purpose software and high-speed Internet services in Bangladesh. It has a high-quality customer base supported by long-term contracts and services over 750 bank branches in Bangladesh.

BEXIMCO also owns Independent Television, a 24-hour Bangla news channel that presents a full spectrum of news and analysis to its viewers. It is one of the first in Bangladesh that transmits in HD compression format and is HD ready. It also has a tapless workflow and all housed in a purpose-built facility. BEXIMCO invested \$10 million into the ITV project, which is today the most technologically advanced electronic platform in Bangladesh.

BEXIMCO's newspaper, *The Independent*, is a leading English language daily in Bangladesh and the only newspaper to have all 32 color pages. Its weekly supplements include *Young and Independent*, *Faith*, *The Week* and *Independent Magazine* and *Dhaka Live* (daily).

A broad array of exportable business and industrial activities have transformed BEXIMCO into one of Bangladesh's most global brands, while at the same time, making it one of the country's most important contributors to social and economic development.



Hamid Fabrics top the RMG sector

Mahin Group is one of the vertically integrated leaders in the export of clothing and textiles from Bangladesh. The company started in 1985 with a ready-made garment manufacturing unit named Mahin Apparels, along with a well-equipped washing unit. In 1996 the group resolved to plow back the earnings from manufacturing into backward linkage industries. Since then, investments continue in dyeing, finishing and weaving facilities. Following this diversified business concept, the group is now also engaged in insurance, IT and the hotel business.

Hamid Fabrics Ltd., the textile facilities of the group, runs the most sophisticated fully-automated technology, setting a nationwide benchmark for solid dyed woven textiles with a capacity of 30 million yards per annum. All facilities are run by an experienced manage-

ment team comprising both local and foreign expertise. "Only a handful of mills in Bangladesh operate at this level, thus making us one of the major players nationwide," says Abdullah Al Mahmud, an enthusiastic and dynamic young entrepreneur and the group's Managing Director.

According to Mr. Mahmud, new yarn dyeing facilities supported by a new weaving unit are being planned in response to demand. Hamid Fabrics also plans to set up a spinning mill so as to achieve fully integrated status.

"The total investment here will be about \$40-50 million," says the Managing Director. "Textiles are our core business. We aim to expand over the next few years and be at the top of our game, being conservative yet aggressive at the same time; always looking for new ideas and new people."

Alliance's diversified holdings

If diversification is a positive factor for success, then Alliance Holding's success is guaranteed. With businesses in an enormous range of sectors – including textiles and garments, knits and dyeing, telecommunications, inland container depots, real estate and land development, soft drinks, livestock, petroleum, steel and pre-engineered steel buildings – there isn't much that Alliance Holding isn't involved in.

In fact, Managing Director Yasser Rizvi says that the group is looking into pharmaceuticals, power generation, food industries, and river ports. The last one, which will be called Summit Alliance River Terminals Ltd., is actually already at "an advanced stage" in a joint venture with Summit Group, with whom Alliance operates Summit Alliance Port Ltd. and Oceans Containers Ltd.

"With these [two] companies combined, we handle 30% of all exports out of Bangladesh," says Mr. Rizvi.

He attributes the group's success in large part to Bangladesh's rapidly growing economy and the consequent wide berth for error.

"In a country like ours which is growing so rapidly, especially if you are diversified, you can enter a sector and make a few mistakes and still do well. You can overshoot your capital budget by 10-20% and still make a good profit."

"We are at such an exciting stage – every minute must be utilized to take advantage of this growth," he adds.



Fulfilling the nation's potential

Award-winning company ACI introduces new products and business models to Bangladesh while complying with strict environmental standards

Approximately 10 years ago, Dr. Anis Dowla, a PhD in math from UCSD, returned to his native Bangladesh where he believed he could help contribute to his country's development. Applying mathematical concepts to his management style, he serves as Managing Director at Advanced Chemical Industries Ltd (ACI), an exemplary company with successful foreign joint ventures that was selected Enterprise of the Year 2011 by the Daily Star.

ACI operates 21 businesses in the fields of agriculture, food, consumer brand, pharmaceuticals and retail. In agriculture, ACI has set up leading businesses in seeds, fertilizers, crop care, animal health, agriculture motors, poultry, and water management solutions. "Our motto is to generate wealth for the farmer," says Dr. Dowla. This is done, to a large extent, through ACI's retail chain business, which strives "to have the deepest supply chain and connect the farmer



ANIS UD DOWLA, Chairman of ACI

to the consumer, cutting out intermediaries and offering the lowest prices to the consumer."

ACI's most well known consumer brand is Savon antibacterial range and Aerol

which comprises of a range of mosquito and insect repellents, while its pharmaceutical business provides a wide range of medicine and technology based products. In addition, the company hosts nationwide clinical meetings, healthcare awareness programs and doctors meetings.

Lastly, ACI produces high quality and safe packaged commodities (including salt, sugar, spices, flour and edible oil) that contrast with the large unhygienic unpackaged market found throughout Bangladesh.

Anis Ud Dowla, ACI Chairman, is proud of the quality that goes into every single product. "We were the first company in Bangladesh to adopt ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems," he says, adding, "When the production process uses the latest technology, best quality machines and processes, and the best raw material, we can proudly claim 'Purity' as our brand slogan. 'Purity' says,"

Soaring from strength to strength

Habib Group stands true to its tagline "Serving the Nation to Build the Future". They provide a wealth of products and services ranging from fertilizers and power to textiles and apparel to ship recycling, steel and cement, which further expand and sustain domestic economic growth.

Founded in 1947 as a trading company by late Habib Ullah Meah, the Habib Group's success is also owed to its visionary management team and their speed in both realizing and developing Bangladesh's most abundant resource: manpower. Going into business an astounding 65 years ago, the Ali family have brought pride to their region (Chittagong) and their country.

Habib Group now welcomes its newest company, Regent Airlines. Being able to travel efficiently and comfortably is crucial to the business environment of Bangladesh, and indeed the business development of Bangladesh.



YASIN ALI, Managing Director of Habib Group

comes its newest company, Regent Airlines. Being able to travel efficiently and comfortably is crucial to the business environment of Bangladesh, and indeed the business development of Bangladesh.

Managing Director Yasin Ali explains, "For businesspeople, time, not money, is very important. You have to give them trust and dependability, and that is what we are looking to provide."

The quality and popularity of the Regent domestic service is exemplary of the thriving Bangladesh economy, and Mr. Ali reiterates, "Our objective is to be the market leader in point-to-point destinations."

The company has already taken extraordinary strides in accomplishing its goal and plans to add jet planes to its fleet by the end of the year.

Incepta is huge on health

Since its creation in 1999, Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd. has built a solid reputation for quality and reliability. Delivering quality healthcare throughout Bangladesh, the company is also a major exporter

The pharmaceutical industry in Bangladesh has the potential to be enormous. Currently, the half dozen accredited manufacturers export some \$50-60 million worth, but if and when the government's regulatory body expedites the accreditation procedure, an additional 20 or so companies could also add to the country's export bill, possibly boosting it up to \$20 billion, according to Abdul Muktar, Managing Director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Established just 12 years ago, Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd. is already Bangladesh's second largest company, and among the country's top five manufacturing companies, it is the fastest growing. Having undergone the lengthy registration process, Incepta is a leading exporter of a wide variety of pharmaceutical products.

Mr. Muktar puts Incepta's rapid growth down to its diversification. "We are diversifying in all facets of health care. We started producing vaccines and then we started producing bio-similar products. We are also getting into hormonal products, which are very high potent drugs. Our factory is probably the world's largest factory producing hormones. It has a capacity of producing around 20 billion tablets a year," he says.

To put this into perspective, he says that any Chinese factory producing 5-6 billion tablets a year is considered a big factory. Yet not only are Incepta's vaccine, hormone and biotechnology facilities large, they are also world-class. "If you stepped into our factory, you would not be able to differentiate between our factory and a U.S. factory. Probably our Taksim factory is one of the best in the world," claims the Managing Director.



ABDUL MUKTAR, Managing Director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Incepta specializes in value-added high-technology dosage forms and prides itself on its state-of-the-art research and development lab, which enables the company to continuously launch new and innovative products – always a step ahead of the competition – to fulfill unmet demand in the medical community. Coupling sophisticated technology and highly skilled, dedicated professionals with heavy investment in R&D, Incepta has already launched more than 334 generics with a total of 639 presentations. As many as 124 of the generics were new to Bangladesh at the time of launch.

Incepta currently exports to 35 countries, and with the imminent opening up of the European Union, this number will rise to 60. Nevertheless, Incepta does already export

certain products to the U.K. Mr. Muktar explains: "We have special ties with some U.K.-based companies and one U.S.-based company. They would be selling our product in America as well as the U.K. and Europe. We have recently made our first shipment to the U.K., which was our own development. Incepta is the first company from Bangladesh to start selling its own product in the U.K. It's a medicine for the treatment of arthritis, so it is not just a cheap over-the-counter product, but a prescription drug."

"This is what we are doing and will continue to do, so our export figure will go up very fast and we will become a major source for vaccine bio-similar, biotechnology products and also pharmaceuticals, and it is all a front-run open market."

ACI
Enabling Bangladesh through Quality and Technology

Advanced Chemical Industries Limited (ACI) is one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh. Originally it was established as a subsidiary of Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) UK in 1968. ACI's Mission is to enrich the quality of life through responsible application of knowledge, skills and technology. ACI is committed to the pursuit of excellence through world-class products, innovative practices and empowered employees, to provide the highest level of satisfaction to its customers.

ACI is the first company in Bangladesh to obtain ISO 9001 Quality Management System and ISO 14001 Environmental Management System certifications and also the only company in Bangladesh to be inducted as founding member of the Community of Global Growth Companies (CGGC) by the World Economic Forum.

ACI Limited
Advancing Possibilities

www.aci-bd.com

Approved global supplier of UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO

Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

A very large production facility with state-of-the-art technology and full compliance to WHO GMP standard

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Energy works wonders

With origins dating back 30 years, Enerypac is today the largest power engineering company in Bangladesh and unrivaled leader in the local market

Bangladesh's population of 160 million and growing, coupled with the country's booming economy are creating ever-increasing demands on the power sector. That Bangladesh needs more energy is clear, and of the various power companies operating in the country, perhaps the greatest load of responsibility rests on the biggest one: Enerypac.

It's a very big challenge for the country. When there is a challenge, there is an opportunity. We have to address this opportunity," claims Humayun Rashid, Managing Director of Enerypac. "As a local company, we have a lot of experience in terms of the culture, the way of working, licensing and environmental issues."

Nevertheless, in order to meet the rising demand, Enerypac cannot do it alone. Mr. Rashid explains: "We need a lot of foreign investment for large power infrastructure projects and in order to address environmental issues. As a local company, we can address these things if we get foreign joint ventures and international companies experienced in working overseas. We can provide our local support."

The biggest local and foreign names in the corporate, residential and commercial sectors rank among Enerypac's customers. In fact, Enerypac has already provided solutions for around 300 companies in Bangladesh – supporting a vast range of sectors such as garments and textiles, plastics, pharmaceuticals, cold storage, construction,

cement and steel manufacturing.

The focus of Enerypac is spread from power generation to power transmission and distribution. Providing a wide range of products from sub-circuit breakers and control and relay panels, Enerypac provides the best for the best, with 24-hour customer support for immediate response. The company has been working with both the public and private sectors to create an environment of trust in providing efficient and reliable services in different sectors, which has enabled to grow an international presence in India, Nepal, Sudan, and Yemen, among others.

Enerypac understands that though power generation is necessary there must be environmental awareness. "We are committed to environmental issues. We always work on energy efficient power plants. We understand that energy efficiency means more profits. You can sell energy, and if you can sell more, you are earning more money for the company. We

"WE NEED A LOT OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT FOR LARGE POWER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS."

HUMAYUN RASHID, Managing Director of Enerypac



design any power plants taking this into account," says the MD.

Keeping the motto "Energy works wonder" in mind, Enerypac is committed to bringing wonder into the lives of its customers with the most advanced technology and the least power consumption. This it has also ventured into bringing energy saving and lighting solutions by manufacturing and bringing international brands to the local market.

Enerypac is known for its ability to deliver. Although the majority of the company's projects are either turnkey or time-bound, in actuality it is its planning implementation that has made it stand out over the years. The company's financial health has also ensured quality services at an international standard, while an impressive team and dynamic leadership have guaranteed success.

Mr. Rashid says that Enerypac can be a key ally for any potential investor looking to make a profit because we believe energy works wonders."



AZIZ AL KAISER, Vice-Chairman of Partex Star Group

The powerful Partex name

Established in 1959, Partex Holdings is today a leading conglomerate comprising more than 20 companies across diverse industries

More than 50 years ago, Partex founder and Chairman M.A. Hashem initially set out to make his way in the business world as a tobacco trader with the small amount of money his recently widowed mother could afford to give him.

With time his business grew and by 1971, when Bangladesh declared its independence from West Pakistan, his tobacco warehouse in Chowmuhini was packed full, thereby placing him in an excellent position to grow his business exponentially. A move to Chittagong, the commercial capital of Bangladesh, brought greater success and a subsequent diversification into imports of various consumer items and building materials – two much sought-after groups of products in the newly formed nation.

It was in Chittagong that Mr. Hashem founded M/S Hashem Corporation Ltd. and quickly became known as a trading tycoon. However, this sharp-minded businessman realized that imports were merely a temporary solution to a permanent need and decided to make the switch to pioneer several industries of domestic importation in the newly established Bangladesh.

By domestically producing the same products his company had been importing, he would create the basis of a small new business empire that would bring greater value to the Bangladesh economy, more jobs for local workers and greater self-sufficiency for the nation.

In the 1980s, Mr. Hashem

moved his business to Dhaka and purchased Star Particle Board Mills Ltd. from the government on auction, which he turned into a profitable company. Thus was born the Partex Group.

Mr. Hashem began setting up new industrial units and diversified his business across multi-dimensional sectors both at home and abroad. With other business colleagues, he founded two new



M.A. HASHEM, Chairman and founder of Partex Holdings

banks – City Bank Ltd. and the United Commercial Bank Ltd. – and Janata Insurance and Phoenix Insurance.

Partex's other companies are market leaders in nearly all sectors, including food and beverages, plastics, fabrics, yarn, cotton, sugar, paper, jute, shipping, furniture, real estate, media, education, services, and IT, among many others. It has been Mr. Hashem's missionary zeal and unflinching commitment to quality, honesty, values, ethics and service that has taken the group to its present heights.

Working in a competitive environment of free market economy, the Chairman has played a pivotal role in promoting private sector enter-

preneurship with new innovative ideas and translating them into action. Congruent with the Millennium Development Goals and guided by Mr. Hashem's vision, Partex is one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh today.

"Ours is a free market economy. And the private sector as the engine of growth plays a key role in establishing the basic industrial base. We have been trying to play the role and contribute to the making of our GDP," he says.

Having come from a modest background himself, Mr. Hashem has not forgotten his social responsibilities. He is closely involved in various social, religious, cultural, educational, humanitarian and healthcare related activities. For example, he has established a good number of mosques, orphanages, clubs and philanthropic institutions. He is also the founding President of Noakhali Diabetic institution.

Together with some friends and colleagues, Mr. Hashem established North-South University, Bangladesh's first private university and currently ranked number one in the country. He also founded M.A. Hashem Degree College in Noakhali.

Partex Holdings, along with Partex Star Group, are enormous yet still maintain the family-run appeal. Indeed, Mr. Hashem's five sons have all proven their worth as head of different subsidiaries in the holding and group: Rubel Aziz is Chairman of City Bank Ltd., Showkat Aziz Russel is Managing Director of Partex Dairym, Aziz Al Kaiser is Vice-Chairman of Partex Star Group, Aziz Al Mahmood is Managing Director of Danish Condensed Milk Bd. Ltd., and Aziz Al Masud is Director of Partex Group.

Connecting the dots of strengths

From furniture to dairy, the multifaceted Partex Star Group's products are in demand

One of the largest conglomerates in the country, Partex Star Group owns and successfully operates 20 manufacturing, service and trading concerns that contribute to Bangladesh's industrialization and GDP growth by delivering best value to its customers through innovative products and services. The group is continuously evolving, expanding its business and customer base, and creating more job opportunities.

Together with its customers and professional workforce, Partex Star Group contributes comprehensively towards building a prosperous future for the nation. From the hiring of people to the selection of merchandise, negotiations with vendors to the designing of showrooms, and the generation of the purchase order to the delivery to customers' homes, the team at Partex Star Group is dedicated

to creating an enriched customer experience through top-to-bottom focus on excellence in execution.

The group primarily deals with areas including consumer durables, doors, doorframes, furniture, and different types of boards – particle board, veneer board, melamine-faced chipboard, plywood and PVC sheeting.

Partex Furniture produces a diversity of products maximizing the use of timber-substitutes as well as products of solid timber. Specially laminated boards, stainless-steel accessories and high-grade plywood offering the best quality/cost-substitute for natural timber combine to create elegant products for custom-made, innovative, modern and stylish furniture. The group is also involved in fast-moving consumer goods



AZIZ AL KAISER, Vice-Chairman of Partex Star Group

(FMCG) such as dairy products, cookies and spices, etc. Its subsidiary Danish Condensed Milk Bd. Ltd. is the first condensed milk producer in the country and has held the leading position in the local market since 1991. Presently, Danish Condensed Milk is being exported to Nepal, Bhutan and some parts of India in bulk, and its reach is expanding internationally.



AZIZ AL MAHMOOD, Managing Director of Danish Condensed Milk Bd. Ltd.

Danish also offers a range of spices under the brand Rani, which has gained widespread popularity as a convenient and simple way of adding taste, texture and flavor to meals.

Most of the group's companies have achieved ISO and HACCP certification for quality and for maintaining stringent quality in all phases of production. The company's dis-

tributors cover the market nationwide with Danish products such as milk powder and fruit juice through its vast distribution network.

With Bangladesh getting increasingly involved in the arena of world trade and commerce, Partex Star Group emphasizes the need to expand its base, add value to its products and services, be more competitive, value driven and environmentally compliant. The company is also looking to embark on improving HR protocols, be more technologically sound, financially stronger and logistically advanced.

The group's Vice-Chairman Aziz Al Kaiser is one of a new generation of private-sector investment wizards with a global outlook and a profound interest in the nation's art, culture and sports. After returning to Bangladesh following his graduation in the U.K., he joined Partex Group and his special

emphasis was on the group's flagship company, Star Particle Board Mills Ltd. He launched a new genre of industrial units and added to the group's reach with more stakes in banking, insurance, shipping and the capital market.

Family values, excellent academic upbringing and childhood exposure to industrial entrepreneurship are but a few attributes that helped his colleague Aziz Al Mahmood, Managing Director of Danish Condensed Milk Bd. Ltd., become a key decision maker in the Partex Star Industrial Empire. With his inherent quality of leadership, based on a strong educational background and pragmatic outlook, he played a vital role in the group keeping pace with advancements in information technology that revolutionized the traditional methods of production, trading, export and internal communication.

www.partexstar.com

a legacy, with a new face forward

Star Particle Board Mills Ltd. | Partex Furniture Industries Ltd. | Partex Agro Ltd.
 Partex PVC Industries Ltd. | Partex Builders Ltd. | Partex Laminates Ltd.
 Partex Real Estate Ltd. | Danish Condensed Milk Bangladesh Ltd.
 Danish Foods Ltd. | Danish Milk Bangladesh Ltd. | Rubel Steel Mills Ltd.
 Corvee Maritime Co. Ltd.

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Banking sector resilient, yet more

The Governor of the central bank says the banks are resilient but more needs to be done as Bangladesh integrates more fully with the global economy

The financial sector has come a long way in the four decades since Bangladesh gained its independence, growing steadily in line with the economy.

Forty years ago, when the country's banks were almost entirely state-owned, their credit and investment assets totaled a mere \$90 million or so. In today's market-based sector, the amount is more than 650 times higher at \$57 billion.

There are now many more banks—almost 50, including four state-owned lenders, four specialized development banks and 10 foreign banks, including Citibank, HSBC, and Standard Chartered—and licenses have been issued for nine new ones. Decades of institutional and market reforms overseen by Bangladesh Bank, the coun-

try's central bank, have resulted in a robust and stable financial system that weathered the financial storms of the East Asian currency crisis of the mid 1990s and the global financial crisis of 2008-09 with no need for bank bailouts.

DECADES OF INSTITUTIONAL AND MARKET REFORMS overseen by the central bank have resulted in a robust and stable financial system

The bank has overseen the introduction of global best practice standards for capital adequacy and liquidity. The 11% overall risk weighted capital base of Bangladesh's banks is above the international Basel II regulatory requirement, while non-performing loans as percentage of total assets are at single digit lev-

els, and liquidity stresses arising from unduly high advance deposit ratios in some banks last year have eased.

Stress test exercises have resulted in World Bank-IMF assessment of the financial sector as resilient against moderate

shocks. Meanwhile, preparations are under way for the implementation of Basel III requirements by the 2018 deadline or earlier.

There is no complacency at Bangladesh Bank, however, despite the reassuring overall view. Atiur Rahman, the Governor of the bank, says that as Bangladesh

advances towards its goal of becoming a prospering advanced nation fully integrated with the global economy there is a need for further reform across every aspect of the bank supervisory system—from the IT architecture to liquidity risk monitoring.

He insists the central bank is committed to putting in place a regime of "macroprudential supervision" and making the most relevant tools and practices available both to the economy and the financial sector itself expand.

"Much of our growth-related new investments will have to be attracted abroad, heightening our financial sector's exposure and vulnerabilities to market volatilities in the global scene," he says.

"In step with rising external exposures, our financial sector will need to build up and bolster resilience against shocks from perennial volatilities and instabilities of the international markets. Besides shocks of external origin, there are also the demand and supply shocks of domestic origin to build up resilience against, particularly as the market-based Taka interest and exchange rates may move in adverse directions."

Mr. Rahman says the central



bank intends to work further towards faster upgrading of corporate governance and disclosure practices in the overall business environment, both in Bangladesh and real sectors.

Strengthening Bangladesh

Bank's supervisory oversight will continue to remain a high priority, including specifically on risk management, corporate governance, internal control, and internal audit in banks.

Unusually, the central bank does not have full monitor-

Long-term strategy best policy for GDIC

Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd. has just celebrated its 26th anniversary, a testament to its philosophy of always looking for long-term growth

Green Delta Insurance Company Limited (GDIC) is one of the leading private non-life insurance companies in Bangladesh, providing an array of insurance such as fire, burglary, marine and health.

GDIC was incorporated in late 1985 as a public limited company with a paid up capital of only BDT 30 million (\$366,500). After the privatization of the insurance sector, Green Delta was the fifth company to be established, and it has gained a reputation as one of the most respected companies in the business.

Nasir A. Choudhury, Managing Director of GDIC, has played an important role in the growth of the company thanks to his 54 years of experience in the insurance sector. Mr. Choudhury attended two different insurance courses for a total 14 months in the UK and Germany, and upon completing them was posted in Pakistan Insurance Corporation's Regional Office in Chittagong, which became the Bangladesh Insurance Corporation after independence.

Success for GDIC began from day one. It was the first insurance company to be launched purely by professionals and technocrats, and Mr. Choudhury and his colleagues' first-hand experience working abroad got the company off to a flying start. Today the company has paid up capital of BDT 510.3 million. Despite the fact 2011 was a turbulent and gloomy year



"WE ARE PLEASED WITH OUR PROGRESS AND OPTIMISTIC THAT WE CAN ACCELERATE THE MOMENTUM IN OUR BUSINESS."

NASIR A. CHOUDHURY, Managing Director of GDIC

for the economy, capital markets and the financial services industry, the insurance sector in the country has moved ahead. The top line continued to grow in 2011. "We are pleased with our progress and optimistic that we can accelerate the momentum in our business. We can proudly confirm that with the right strategic guidelines and timely executions of the plans, Green Delta Insurance Company has successfully overcome the hurdles during the year 2011," says Mr. Choudhury.

In 2011, GDIC was once again the highest premium collector, and despite the worldwide recession GDIC is still producing the numbers. It reported 17.5% increase in gross premium to BDT 2,351.47 million, an investment income of BDT 131.80 million, profit after tax is now BDT 134.01 million, an 11.9% growth in net premium, fixed asset growth of 58.2% now standing at BDT 212.94 million, and an underwriting profit growth by 24.5% standing at BDT 124.17 million.

Green Delta's success can be attributed to its multiple strategies concerned with long-term success. Creating value for its customers, investing in and developing the talent of its employees, committing to ethical conduct, and assuming social responsibility are just a few of the ways GDIC is focused on maintaining a strong financial stance, both for now and for the future.

Local bank enjoys huge success

City Bank can safely say that although it's not the biggest bank in Bangladesh, it is among the best

Named "The Strongest Bank in Bangladesh" by *The Asian Banker* in 2010, and the "Best Bank in Bangladesh—2012" by *FinanceAsia*, City Bank has undergone an entire transformation, starting in 2007, and has adopted a whole new Vision, Mission and Values.

Today, rather than a mere bank, City Bank considers itself a "financial supermarket" that offers its clients "enjoyable experiences" instead of mere transactions. The three-year transformation project focused on remodeling the business along a customer value segmented line through centralizing the business process. This is in contrast to the traditional decentralized, or branch-based model. The new structure allows City Bank to better tailor its services for specific customer segments, such as corporate and investment banking, retail and cards, SME, and treasury and market risks.

Consequently, customer service and the quality of product offerings are higher than ever, evidenced by the bank's results in the last

few years. The net profit margin for 2009–2011 has been 26%, 25.3% and 18.7%, respectively. Given that this has taken place during one of the worst financial crises the world has seen, these margins seem satisfactory enough. In addition, net asset value per share in 2011 rose by 18.2% from 2010. City Bank is listed on both the Dhaka and the Chittagong stock exchanges.

According to Rubel Aziz, a dynamic and young entrepreneur and the Chairman of City

Bank, the institution's success is due in large part to its "strong ability in correctly understanding the domestic credit needs and culture, and responding to it rapidly through a very tight due diligence process."

The bank's risk management policies have also played a major role in maintaining liquidity at satisfactory levels—in spite of a national major liquidity crunch in 2011—and in putting capital adequacy ratio (CAR) at a desired level. From 11.15% in 2010, the CAR grew to 12.79% in 2011, safely above the Basel II requirement of 10%.

City Bank holds the exclusive rights to issue American Express credit cards in Bangladesh. Launched in 2009, City Bank Amex Credit Cards redefined the country's entire credit card industry and converted the bank into the second largest credit issuer and the largest point-of-sales acquirer of credit cards in the market.



RUBEL AZIZ, Chairman of City Bank

Wearing the country, we set a new future.

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the capital insurance general led by Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd. www.gdic.com.bd

making sense OF MONEY

Named "Strongest Bank in Bangladesh—2012" by *The Asian Banker* and "Best Bank in Bangladesh—2012" by *FinanceAsia*

City Bank is one of the oldest private commercial banks operating in Bangladesh today. It is the country's only bank with full ISO certifications in its operations and technology processes, and also the only bank to issue and acquire American Express Credit Cards here. With one of the largest networks (120 branches & SME centers) and 130 ATMs offering hundreds of advanced products and services to Retail, SME, and Corporate clientele, City Bank is poised to go beyond being just a bank and turn into a financial supermarket.

Visit us at www.thecitybank.com

city bank™ making sense of money

reforms needed

Dhaka's skyline is proof of the country's growing economy



ing control over all the country's lenders. A "dual governance" arrangement gives the Finance Ministry partial control over supervision of the state-run banks.

This can lead to a blurring of responsibility when things go wrong, as has been clearly demonstrated in the case of one of the country's most recent and biggest ever banking scandals, a \$43 million scam involving a state-owned bank and the little-known Hullmark Group.

Mr. Rahman wants full supervision powers to rest with the central bank. He says, "Exemption of state-owned banks from some of Bangladesh Bank's supervisory empowerment of the Bank Companies Act stands in the way of effective supervision of these banks. Unless this differential treatment is done away with, management weaknesses from insufficient accountability are likely to linger in the state-owned banks."

The International Monetary Fund agrees, and says the release of the \$140 million second tranche of its \$1 billion Extended Credit Facility to Bangladesh is contingent on the government amending the Bank Companies Act so that the state-run and specialized banks come within the full supervisory control of the central bank.

In terms of the economy generally, Mr. Rahman believes that amid the global slowdown Bangladesh's macroeconomic trends are broadly on course towards attainment of its goal of becoming a middle income country.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit between July 2011 and June 2012, Bangladesh enjoyed an estimated real GDP growth of 6.3%, a figure the EU forecasts will be maintained over the coming years.

While Bangladesh's economy is supported mainly by

services and industry, nearly half the population works in agriculture.

Abul Anwar Abdul Muhith, Minister of Finance, says that agriculture needs more attention, as does the issue of power generation. "I see the future of Bangladesh including large developments in the rural areas... because they are occupying most of our land. Along with agricultural development, we need to develop the power sector. About 50% of the electricity of our country is for rural areas. The problem is not power transmission, the problem is power generation," he highlights.

Mr. Muhith adds that foreign investment in Bangladesh has been hindered in part due to power shortages, but that by increasing the use of coal (in addition to natural gas, a resource the country has plenty of), "I hope we will be able to correct our electricity crisis very soon," he concludes.

Meeting a nation's financial needs

With a global network of branches and subsidiaries and a broad array of products and services, Sonali Bank Ltd. is creating value for the Bangladesh banking sector

What is today one of Bangladesh's leading largest banks, Sonali Bank is the product of the nationalization and liquidation of three banks – National Bank of Pakistan, Premier Bank and Bank of Bhawalpur – into one fully state-owned institution in the early 1970s, and the later transformation of this into a PLC in 2007. With the recent corporatization, Sonali Bank was allowed more autonomy to raise its competitiveness and efficiency.

The mission of Sonali Bank is to provide a whole range of quality products that support divergent needs of people aiming at enriching their lives, creating value for the stakeholders and contributing towards socio-economic development of the country. Sonali customers have access to personal, SME and international banking, investment bonds, foreign currency accounts, and deposit and credit schemes. The bank also extends industrial financing, rural and micro credit.

Banking at Sonali is made easy and convenient thanks to its extensive network. Spread throughout the country, nearly

1,200 branches – of which just 342 are located in urban areas, with the remaining 854 in rural zones – in addition to two branches in India serve thousands of customers daily.

In the U.S., the banks present



PRADI KUMAR DUTTA, MD and CEO of Sonali Bank

through its subsidiary Sonali Exchange Co. Inc. (SECI). Incorporated as an international money remitter in 1994, SECI has 10 offices in New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Michigan. In England, Sonali Bank (UK) Ltd. functions as both remittance center and bank in London, Luton, Birmingham,

Manchester, and Bradford.

The bank's merchant banking arm, Sonali Investment Limited, operates out of its four branches in Mottifield, Paltan, Uttara and Mirpur.

Bangladesh is home to the fourth largest Muslim population in the world. To better satisfy local demands and more accurately tailor its products and services to this audience, Sonali Bank launched Islamic banking in 2010, based entirely on Shariah law and spearheaded by a supervisor committee consisting of reputed Islamic scholars, economists and bankers.

Sonali has made Islamic banking available online and is bringing dynamism into the sector by leveraging the bank's reputation and financial strength.

In 2011, Sonali underwent a surveillance ratings as both a government support entity bank and commercial bank. For the former, it received AAA rating for long term and ST-1 for short term – both the highest ratings for the category. As a commercial bank, Sonali received A- and ST-2. Overall outlook is deemed stable.

way to do business. We at EBL believe in creating lasting value for our clients, shareholders and employees, and above all for the community we operate in. Our purpose is to sustain and ensure growth by simply making profit for people and not over them."

A promoter of positive thinking Mr. Iftekhar says, "We are optimistic about the future. Throughout our 20 year history, our belief in responsible leadership, our dedication to our customers and our fortress balance sheet has carried us through the toughest challenges. These are the core values we maintain day after day."

The undiscovered paradise

Huge on beauty and cultural heritage but small on tourism, Bangladesh is one of the world's most fascinating, exotic and pristine destinations

Despite being able to boast lush tropical jungles, abundant wildlife, pristine beaches, fascinating culture and welcoming and hospitable people – to date Bangladesh has remained one of the Asia's best-kept secrets.

However, that is all about to change as the large country that lies north of the Bay of Bengal and that spans over

55,600 square miles gears up to promote its vast array of unspoiled natural and cultural highlights. With the development of a new wave of ecotourism and high-end luxury resorts, Bangladesh is on target to become a top tourist destination particularly with travelers seeking relaxation and adventure well off the beaten track.

Water is an element that has carved the land and molded the culture of the Bengal people for millennia with 360 miles of coastline, countless clear water lakes, cascading waterfalls and over 800 serpentine rivers – some of which are home to numerous fish species including the rare fish water dolphin.

One of Bangladesh's most famous attractions is the Sundarbans, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designated in November 2001. The largest mangrove forest in the world, it is located at the mouth of the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers between India and Bangladesh. Voted one of the seven natural wonders of Asia, its forest and waterways are one of the most biologically productive of all natural ecosystems and support a wide range of fauna including a number of species threatened with extinction such as the single largest population of Bengal tigers in the world. Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) researchers also reported in early 2009 that nearly 6,000 rare Irrawaddy dolphins – marine mammals that are closely related to orcas, had been discovered living in freshwater regions of the Sundarbans and the adjacent waters of the Bay of Bengal.



Bangladesh is chock-full of beautiful historic monuments

Continued on page 8

The flagship carrier and source of pride

Biman Airlines, renowned for safety and comfort, has grown alongside Bangladesh since independence was won in 1971

Biman Bangladesh Airlines prides itself on being an ambassador to the world of business and recreational travelers alike. Despite difficult times in the aviation industry due to the global economic downturn, Biman has managed to remain strong in the face of adversity – a feat achieved thanks to the resilient nature of all things Bangladeshi.

This year, Biman welcomes the addition of fabulous new carriers from their manufacturer of choice, Boeing. This ushers in a new era for the Bangladeshi flagship of comfort and security. Biman has always considered flight safety as its number one concern, which is why it is considered a reliable and trusted airline within the international aviation circuit.

As Biman enters its 41st year in service to the people and businesses of Bangladesh, it plans to open new routes, in-

cluding a direct flight between Dhaka and New York City. "We want traveling to Bangladesh to be as seamless as possible," says Muhammad Zaikul Islam, CEO and Managing Director of Biman. "Right now we're operating direct flights from London to Dhaka and once we start flights across the Atlantic, we'll have the shortest route flying from JFK with one stop at Manchester."

Biman also now reflects the 'the digital Bangladesh' initiatives by offering a flexible price viewing system through its website. This system, available for international flights, makes inquiries into seat availability and pricing much faster and easier.

It is not only the business or leisure travelers who have experienced the efficiency and standards at Biman Bangladesh; in fact it has become the airline of choice for dedicated Haj pilgrims. Already, Biman

has flown some 45,000 Muslims to Jeddah so that they might complete the journey of their spiritual life.

Government-owned, Biman has been an integral part of the country's history. "We say that Biman was one of the first institutions started by the father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, right after our liberation," explains Mr. Zaikul. And though the airline remains small, it has good infrastructure, including a training center where crew, pilots, ground engineers and all other staff are trained.

In the four decades that the airline has been operating, the country has been hit by turbulence in terms of political instability and natural disasters, and yet Biman remains an example of the quality of service Bangladesh delivers and the hospitable nature of the people of this small but by no means insignificant country.



Biman Bangladesh Airlines plans to open a new route to New York's JFK International Airport

Creating value through innovation

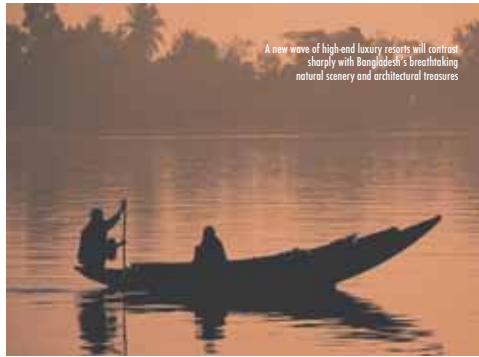
In the past two decades product innovation, state-of-the-art IT solutions and excellence in service proposition have become synonymous with Eastern Bank Limited (EBL), the most valuable financial brand in Bangladesh.

"We value our customers and our marketing concept revolves around a customer-centered 'sense and response' philosophy. The job is not to find the right customers for our products, but to find the right products for our customers. For us service excellence is not just customer satisfaction, but customer delight," says Ali Reza Iftekhar, Managing Director and CEO,

on EBL's brand promise.

He took over as CEO of EBL when he was only 46. A visionary banker and a dynamic leader, Mr. Iftekhar transformed the size of the balance sheet of EBL in the space of three years (2007-09), from \$492 million to \$855 million.

"The success of EBL lies in its customer first policy" and the ethos of "passion to perform," says Mr. Iftekhar and elaborates, "We are precise, confident and innovative. The trust people place in us is based on our passion to perform. We understand issues in depth. This is why we keep things simple and clear. Our brand proposition defines the



A new wave of high-end luxury resorts will contrast sharply with Bangladesh's breathtaking natural scenery and architectural treasures

The undiscovered paradise

Continued from page 7

For travelers seeking beach paradise, Cox's Bazar offers 75 miles of golden sand coastline, making it the longest uninterrupted swathe of beach in the world. Also nominated one of the seven natural wonders of Asia, its turquoise waters are home to numerous sea animals including the mighty blue whale; and here visitors can see towering cliffs, colorful pagodas, Buddhist temples, enjoy excellent seafood and even surf the coast's world class breakers.

There are also the jungle-clad hills, ravines and bamboo covered cliffs of the Chittagong Hill tracts, home to the people of the Adivasis tribes and ancient Buddhist monasteries. This is the setting for the stunning Lake Kaptai fringed by evergreen forests, and is the zone of Bangladesh's peaks including Tahindong, at 4,632 feet, the highest mountain in the country.

Bangladesh has been a major tea producer for hundreds of years and this has forged the development of thousands of hectares of tea plantations that drape the rolling hills of the Sylhet region. Srimangal is known as the tea capital of Bangladesh and the slopes of the picturesque Surma Valley are crisscrossed with the terraces of tea gar-

dens set amongst lush green tropical forests. The area has over 150 tea gardens including three of the largest tea gardens in the world both in area and production, spread over 40,000 acres of verdant Bangladesh countryside.

A visit to the tea plantation in Sylhet is unforgettable. The gardens are relics from the days of the British Raj and tea plantation managers still live in the colonial white timber bungalows that stand on beautifully maintained lawns. Life in the plantations has changed little over the past two centuries and the tea gardens make a delightful stop over for visitors who can enjoy the tranquil surroundings while sipping freshly picked tea.

But natural wonders are not all that Bangladesh has going for it. Tourists are beginning to catch onto Bengal cultural wealth too, such as the eighth century Somapuri Vihara monastery at Paharpur. Formerly the biggest Buddhist



"BANGLADESH IS A TOURISM SPOT. IT IS SO GREEN. YET IT IS NOT JUST THE NATURE THAT MAKES IT SO BEAUTIFUL - IT IS ALSO THE PEOPLE."

FARUK KHAN, Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism

2,450 years old it is one of the oldest monuments in the region and is thought to have formed the eastern limit of ancient Mauryan Empire.

Fortunately, recent governments have acted with foresight to protect Bangladesh's natural and cultural heritage; and the country is party to key global environmental treaties on biodiversity, climate change, endangered species and hazardous waste. In 2002 Bangladesh took the bold step to ban the use, production and marketing of polyethylene shopping bags; and has also put in place strict controls to curb vehicular air pollution.

In addition, the country has put in place reforms to conserve its wetlands, generate green electricity and keep its rivers pollution free. The government has also set up 602,137 acres of national park and protected zones which make up 2% of the country's total area. This includes eight national parks, five conservation sites, seven wildlife sanctuaries and one game reserve.

It is hard to understand why such a natural paradise which is also so rich in world-class archeological sites has been overlooked by the global tourist industry but Faruk Khan, Bangladesh's Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism, provides an explanation. He believes that tourists have been slow to catch onto Bangladesh because of misconceptions about the country as a flood zone as it is often only catapulted into the world's media attention in times of disaster. He says:

"When you talk about floods, it is not the same as it is in Brazil. We have three kinds of floods - low, medium and high. Bangladesh must have a medium flood every year in order to replenish the topsoil for our fertile land. We have floods, but they are part of the monsoon cycle and key to our agriculture. They are very much not flash floods that come and destroy everything in Indonesia and Brazil."

Mr. Kahn believes that there is a huge opportunity for the sustainable development of the tourism industry given the country's natural and cultural treasures, its stable economy and burgeoning home grown middle class. The country has seen growth of more than 6% a year over the last decade.

The Minister explains that the combination of a stable economy in a country that still has huge room for development means that now is an excellent time for investors to take a stake in Bangladesh's potentially lucrative tourist industry. He says: "If we want to attract tourists from different parts of the world, we have to develop communications infrastructure and accommodation and transport infrastructure, as well as entertainment. I think there is scope to develop this industry in my country, and if investors invest in this sector in Bangladesh, it will be profitable, and the country will develop. The sector will flourish and people will be able to discover at last the wealth of unspoiled natural and cultural heritage that Bangladesh has to offer."



monastery south of the Himalaya it covers some 11 hectares. It is among the best known Buddhist viharas in the Indian Subcontinent and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.

The country also claims another UNESCO World Heritage Site - the Lost Mosque City of Bagerhat. Founded in the 15th century by the Turk-

ish warrior, general Ulugh Khan Jahan, the city has been listed by *Forbes Magazine* as one of the top 15 lost cities of the world. It includes more than 50 Islamic monuments and the renowned Sixty Pillar Mosque constructed with 60 pillars and 77 domes, as well as the UNESCO protected mausoleum of Khan Jahan.

As recently as 2004 scientists discovered an ancient citadel in northern Narsingdi, 30 miles northeast of the country's capital Dhaka. At

Bangladesh Tourism Board's top recommendations

CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

A combination of dense jungle, sprawling hills, and beautiful bamboo-covered cliffs, the Chittagong Hill tracts are decidedly unlike anywhere else in Bangladesh. Located south of Chittagong, the second largest city in the country, the hill tracts are inhabited by Adivasis (tribal people) who dwell in bamboo houses with thatched roofs, and have a wealth of ancient traditions. Visiting Buddhist monasteries and a boat trip on the Kaptai Lake are amongst the range of things to do.

THE SYLHET DIVISION

The gentle bumpy hills of the Sylhet division are crowned by the glorious and seemingly never-ending vibrant green tea plantations. A must see, Sylhet has 150 tea gardens spread over 40,000 acres of lush Bangladeshi countryside. The stunning and romantic waterfall in Madhabkunda southeast of the city is also a refreshing sight.

THE SUNDARBANS

The largest mangrove forest in the world with wildlife straight from the jungle book, the Sundarbans National Park is deeply ensconced in magic and mystery. After arriving in Khulna, you can board a luxury tour cruise which will take you deep into the park - a bird watcher's paradise where you can relax and get lost whilst realizing every adventurer's dream of seeing a Royal Bengal Tiger roaming wild and in its habitat.

COX'S BAZAR

The longest un-cut beach in the world, Cox's Bazar situated in the southern tip of Bangladesh. Sit back and relax in the soft white sand or take trips to nearby natural islands on fishing boats to see the hidden beaches bedecked with surprising bright red crabs. There is a range of hotels available for those on any budget. Also recommended is a trip to St Martin's island at the most southern point of the country where the waters are turquoise and the palm trees reign supreme.