

Star BUSINESS

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New 10-taka note hits market today

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank will issue a new 10-taka note with a changed size today.

The new note will be of 123X60 mm in size instead of its previous size of 130X60 mm, said a Bangladesh Bank press release yesterday.

However, other features of the new note will remain the same and different parts of its front side printed with intaglio ink could be felt at touch.

The new note, printed with the signature of Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, will be issued primarily from its Motijheel office.

The other 10-taka notes will also remain in circulation, the release added.

SEC fines Fine Foods MD, directors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) yesterday fined managing director and all directors of Fine Foods Limited for violation of securities rules.

The managing director and directors were fined Tk 200,000 each and the payments will have to be made to the stock market regulator within the next 15 days.

The capital market watchdog fined them for not distributing the dividend to Abu Nayeem, a shareholder of the company, in its annual general meeting held in December last year, said an SEC press release.

The release also said each errand official will have to pay Tk 10,000 every day if they fail to submit a report of distributing dividend to Nayeem within seven days.

\$2.5b US investment in Pakistan soon

APP, Islamabad

Minister of State for Investment, Omer Ahmed Ghuman on Tuesday expressed the hope about the prospects for pouring of \$2.5-billion investment from US businessmen into Pakistan in next one-two years.

Talking to PTV in a telephonic interview from New York, the minister said that President General Pervez Musharraf during his interaction with the US investors had removed all the misperceptions and reservations about the business environment in Pakistan.

SAARC MONETARY SYSTEMS

Central banks to work for close integration

UNB, Singapore

Central bank governors from the Saarc countries had a meeting on the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings here yesterday and decided to work for closer integration of the region's monetary system.

"The meeting has decided some preparatory works in this regard," Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, also the chair of the Saarc Finance Group, told the news agency after the 14th meeting of the group.

He said the member countries under the banner of Saarc Finance would prepare schedules of seminars, governors' symposiums, workshops, studies, research activities in the next one year to put the integration efforts into a shape.

They will consider how the existing central bank staff exchange programme could be strengthened, remittance can be enhanced, introduce multiple currency instead of one currency in the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) and strengthening the e-newsletter now Bangladesh Bank is releasing periodically.

The Group would also examine the impact of oil price on the macro-economic stability of the individual economies in the region.

The governor said Pakistan would host an SME seminar in November this year as part of the efforts to find cooperation in this area while Nepal would host a seminar on remittance sometime during May-June next year and Sri Lanka would host a meeting on ACU currency sometime next year.

"Individual countries will prepare papers on their country positions on the issues," he said.

Thai economy faces limited impact after coup

XINHUA, Bangkok

Thailand's business sector anticipates short-term negative impact from the coup d'etat, but the economic direction should be clearer with diminishing divisiveness in society and that should be in favour of local and foreign investors, according to the web edition of local newspaper the Nation.

Charlotte Dhanavanik, first senior executive vice president at the Bank of Ayudhya, said that from the Administrative Reform Council's (ARC) first announcement, things seem to be wrapped up in a quick manner.

A banker who asked not to be named wanted the Administrative Reform Council to make clear who was going to run key ministries especially the economic ones.

"In previous coups, the list of economic ministers were announced. If the reform group could come up with the list, this should restore confidence in the economic sector," he said.

Dusit Nontanakorn, secretary general of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, said last night it was too soon to comment on this incident, but the chamber was closely monitoring the situation.

"I still hope other countries would understand what happens here and the situation should return to normal in the short term," he said.

A stock analyst expected retail local investors to unload their shares yesterday on panic selling, but it was unlikely foreign investors who had bought into Thai stocks recently would sell.

Somchai Phakapasuwat, a political science lecturer at Thammasat University, noted the coup would return peace to society after a year of divisiveness.

AFP from Singapore adds: There has been only limited financial impact from the coup in Thailand, the head of the International Monetary Fund said Wednesday as regional officials expressed hope for a quick resolution of the crisis.

"Thailand's economy is fundamentally strong and financial market reaction has been limited. Regional financial markets have also been little affected thus far," IMF managing director Rodrigo Rato said in a statement issued after the close of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank annual meetings.

The Thai baht fell against the dollar as markets reacted nervously to news that Thailand's armed forces had seized power Tuesday from Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in a late-night bloodless coup.

Diversify exportables, improve port efficiencies

Say speakers at seminar

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Diversifying exportable products, improving efficiency at ports, cutting production time at factories and aggressive marketing are some of the factors Bangladesh needs to address for doing better in the global market, speakers told a seminar in Dhaka yesterday.

ICE Media Limited organised the seminar on 'Dynamic sectors of world trade: Prospects and policy options for Bangladesh' at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel with economist Professor Atiur Rahman in the chair. Dr Khalilur Rahman, chief of Trade Analysis Branch of Unctad, presented a keynote speech at the seminar.

Lauding Bangladesh's export performance in the last 10 to 15 years, Khalil said the country has done well in growing consistently. He, however, termed the performance an unbalanced one depending on a single product readymade garment (RMG) and stressed the need for diversifying the export basket.

Share of developing countries has gone up substantially, he said, adding that quality of products has improved while their prices remain almost at the same level or come down.

In his speech, Atiur Rahman said Bangladesh's economic growth is

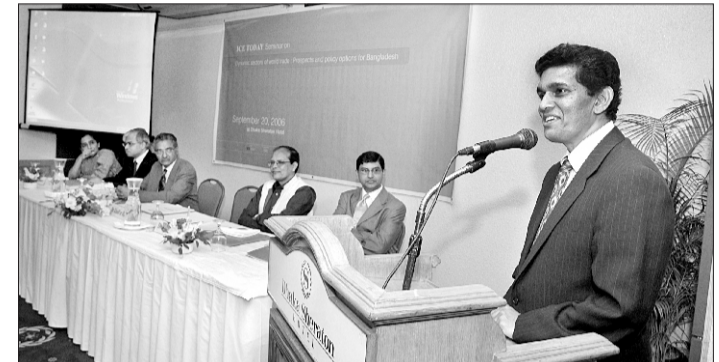


PHOTO: ICE MEDIA
Chief of Trade Analysis Branch of Unctad Khalil ur Rahman speaks at a seminar on 'Dynamic sectors of world trade: Prospects and policy options for Bangladesh' in Dhaka yesterday. Economist Prof Atiur Rahman presided over the seminar.

now 6.7 percent despite having political hostility and other unfavourable domestic environment.

Underlining the need for identifying potential areas, he felt that achieving a 10 percent economic growth is not difficult for Bangladesh.

Demand has to be created by the people for a government, which is entrepreneurial, facilitating and has intention to do good for the people, Atiur suggested.

Wali Bhuiyan, former president of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), said

it is necessary to address the issues like improving efficiency at ports and reducing processing time in factories.

While diplomats of other countries have become aggressive in promoting business of their respective countries, Bangladeshi diplomats are working with traditional outlook, he lamented.

Md Nasser Shahrear Zahidee, adviser to Roche Bangladesh, said Bangladeshi farmers, workers and businessmen are performing better but the political leaders are frustrating the people.



PHOTO: DHAKA BANK
Dhaka Bank Ltd opened its 31st branch on Outer Circular Road in Maghbazar in the capital yesterday. Managing Director of the bank Shahed Noman inaugurated branch while directors and senior officials, among others, were present.

IMF still faces uncertain future after reform step

AFP, Singapore

When her husband plan the International Monetary Fund has restored some of its credibility but still faces questions over its relevance in a rapidly shifting economic landscape.

The revamp giving more voting power to fast-growing China, South Korea, Mexico and Turkey easily got more than the 85 percent of the vote needed for its adoption

but splits emerged within member countries over the plan.

Many nations in Asia, Latin America and Africa remain deeply suspicious of the Fund and almost two dozen nations voted against the reforms.

"Let me say that the 23 countries -- many of them large, emerging and well-performing countries - that voted against the resolution may have lost the vote but have not lost the argument," Indian Finance

Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram told the annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank.

"What is at stake here is the credibility and legitimacy of the IMF," he said.

The IMF, born in the ashes of World War II, is seeking to overhaul its governance and operations to bring it into the 21st century, including an increased focus on exchange rate surveillance and multilateral consultations.

Batexpo-2006 kicks off today

STAR BUSINESS REPORTER

The three-day Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition (Batexpo-2006) kicks off today in the capital to showcase products of the textile and garment industry to the foreign buyers.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) in association with the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) is organising the largest exposition of apparels, fabrics, accessories and machineries at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

A total of 85 entrepreneurs from countries including Pakistan, China, Taiwan, India and host Bangladesh will participate in the fair, said SM Fazlul Hoque, president of BGMEA at a press conference yesterday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is

scheduled to inaugurate the 17th annual display of readymade garments and accessories.

The overseas participants in the fair include Kavi International Ltd of Hong Kong, China, Classic Denim Mills Pvt Ltd of Pakistan, Zong Sine Textile Ind. Ltd of Taiwan, Envision Exports of India.

Like the previous years, special arrangements have also been made this year to exhibit ready stock lot apparels for on-the-spot sales at the fair.

Three separate seminars on different issues relating to the garment industry and its upcoming challenges will also be held on the sidelines of the exhibition. Eminent scholars, prolific writers and elo-

quent speakers will present their research-oriented papers at the seminars.

BGMEA has opened a buyers' reception cell at Zia International Airport to provide services to the foreign visitors on their arrival at the airport. Besides this, there will be a buyers' corner at the fair venue to provide internet facilities and other logistics supports to the visitors.

My Shipment.Com of MGH Group, Banglalink, Exim Bank Ltd are the co-sponsors of the fair, while ATN Bangla is the media partner of the show.

Garment exporters received orders worth \$68.6 million from foreign buyers at the Batexpo-2005.

Winners of Citigroup Microentrepreneurship Awards '06

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

It was a special occasion for the three exceptional personalities and two non-governmental organisations when they received Citigroup Microentrepreneurship Awards 2006 for their individual and organisational success at a grand function in Dhaka on Tuesday.

The award programme was organised by Citigroup Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Citigroup. Citibank NA in Bangladesh and PKSF (Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation) were the local partners of the programme. The Daily Star, the Prothom Alo, Channel i and Dhaka Sheraton hotel were the partner organisations of the event.

Zahida Begum bagged the Best Woman Microentrepreneur of the Year while Zakir Hossain won the Best Microentrepreneur of the Year and Nilufar Yasmin received the Best Innovative Micro Business of the Year.

Nilufar has also been selected to attend the Global Microcredit Summit at Halifax, Canada to be held in November this year.

Eco-Social Development Organisation (ESDO) got the Best Microfinance Institution of the Year while Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) Bangladesh won the Best Programme for the Hardcore Poor.

Md Shahiduzzaman, executive director of ESDO, and Tapan Karmakar, finance director of RDRS, received awards on behalf



Zahida Begum

of their organisations.

Zahida Begum
When her husband failed to maintain the family with his combined income from a jute mill job and one bigha arable land, Zahida planned to share the responsibility. She bought a sewing machine by selling a goat.

Within a span of ten years, she surprised the locals by building a house and multi purpose farm on a land of 5 bigha.

Zahida did not stop just after setting up a farm for fish cultivation, rearing livestock and poultry, and planting fruit trees and vegetables on the bank of the pond. She also established a factory for producing food for poultry and fish on the farm premises. She has a fertiliser shop at Prembagh market in Avaynagar upazila in Jessore district. She also has opened a restaurant named 'Kings Corner' at the other end of the



Zakir Hossain

market. All the projects are under her direct control.

The loans taken from the 'Bilashi Nari Kalyan Samity' of NGO 'Jagoroni Chokro' have made it possible for her to reach the success.

Zakir Hossain
Once Zakir Hossain was a day labourer of a loom factory at Kalihati in Tangail. After his father fell ill, he took the responsibility of his nine-member family.

In 1998, he became a member of Society for Social Services (SSS), an NGO. After a few days the SSS allotted a loan of Tk 5000 to him to produce loom-made saree. With his additional savings he bought two looms for Tk 7000. That was the beginning.

And now his number of looms is 43. Some 120 labourers including 40 females work in his loom factory.

The sarees woven at Zakir's



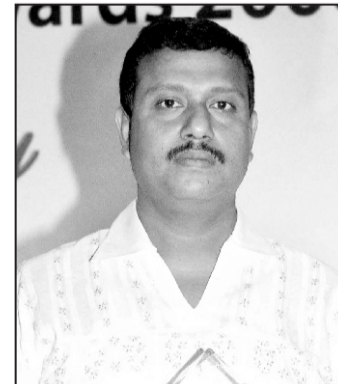
Nilufar Yasmin

factory is known as Saima Tangail Saree. The factory produces at least 560 pieces of sarees a week. In another place, 100 of his looms are running with half ownership. He is earning a profit of Tk 500,000 a year from both the places. Recently, he has established an oil mill for Tk 700,000 in Bolla Bazar with his share of profits.

Nilufar Yasmin
Nilufar Yasmin was an extremely poor housewife at a little known village at Nesarabad in Pirojpur district in 2002. But, after becoming a 'savings member' of 'Manobik Unnayan Kendro' in 2002, she started producing cricket bats with Tk 8,000 loans.

Now she owns a two-storied house made of wood and a factory. She has also purchased cultivable lands measuring an area of 11.25 katha.

Nilufar's success came from her innovative initiatives to establish a



Md Shahiduzzaman of ESDO

factory of cricket bats. But it has never been heard that anyone ever thought of making cricket bats from the Gewa trees of the Sundarbans. Though she is solvent now, her hard work and struggle continue. Her husband, children and eight labourers work along with her day and night.

ESDO
As floods hit Thakurgaon in 1988 the Eco-social Development Organization (ESDO) appeared to work in disaster-prone areas. Since then, in the last eighteen years, it has played a major role in the improvement of standard of life of many poor people in the northern part of the country. It is now one of the most successful micro credit providing organisations.

With an aim of establishing a stable society and alleviating poverty, ESDO has expanded by taking 37 projects in 9 sectors covering 10 districts in the North.



Tapan Karmakar of RDRS

Its micro-finance programme has covered Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts.

RDRS
With the aim to improve the standard of living of the underprivileged poor people in the northern region, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) has been conducting an integrated programme since 1972. The ultra-poor credit programme of this organisation started in 2004, which has made significant achievement in two years by serving 30 thousand extremely poor people of the monga (famine-like situation)-hit 22 upazilas in Nilphamari, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts.

Although PKSF provides loan at 10 percent interest for the project of the ultra poor, RDRS has set the rate at 9 percent considering the social obligation.