

MCCI proposal to place Customs under Commerce, VAT under Industries

**'Is it a no-confidence against me?'**

Star Business Report

Finance minister SAMS Kibria yesterday angrily rejected a chamber proposal to redistribute the administrative control of revenue departments, calling it a "no-confidence" against him.

"I was somewhat taken aback by your suggestion to dismantle the ministry of finance. Is this a no confidence against me?" he asked when the Metropolitan Chamber made the suggestion at a pre-budget discussion.

"The Ministry of Finance should consider placing the Customs Department under the Commerce Ministry since our objective is not to earn revenue only but also to promote exports and make our products competitive. Similarly, the VAT section should be placed under the Industries Ministry. This, in our view, will help industrial development and export promotion and, at the same time, serve the government's revenue interests. Just because these two sections are revenue earning departments, these need not be kept under the Finance Ministry. There are revenue earning departments such as telecommunications, ports etc. which do not come under the Finance Ministry," said MCCI president Lalla Rahman Kabir in her statement welcoming the finance minister.

"If this what the business community wants, than I simply cannot function... I do not

nave the confidence of the business community," the minister said. "I just can't think how this proposal is made."

"What about the Ministry of Industries? Are the industries being run efficiently?" the finance minister asked.

The MCCI proposal meant that the finance ministry would be left with only the income tax administration.

The chamber statement also contained a scathing attack against the administration and bureaucracy.

"It is needless to stress that the government administration which does not meet the requirements of an environment in a changing global setting, will prove to be a barrier rather than help to development. The business community continues to be skeptical and apprehensive of the government administration," Lalla Kabir said. "Red-tapism scares many investors."

The scenario in the infrastructure sector is an illustration of how unresponsive and unaccountable the public sector has become.

"We take this opportunity to once again stress that the government must abandon 'business as usual' approach to administrative reform, as an accountable and transparent administrative system is a vital development input."

"The next budget, we submit, should, therefore, ensure that allocations and monitoring of



Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria addressed the members of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka yesterday at the MCCI conference hall, and discussed a number of issues relating to next budget of the government.

financial resources are linked to progress of administrative reforms," the MCCI president said.

The minister questioned the efficiency of private commercial banks when the chamber pointed out that there were something fundamentally wrong with the management of the Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs) reflected by the default situation.

The minister informed that the government was planning to set up an investment advisory council which could address the problems of new entrepreneurs. Training the newcomers in business was important, he said.

Kibria listened to issues raised by the MCCI members and said he would "look into" them.

**'Finding willful defaulters difficult'**

The minister also dismissed the chambers' suggestion to identify willful defaulters saying it would be a futile exercise but thanked them for admitting that there were some willful defaulters.

"The chambers have done a great service because they have accepted and loudly said that there are willful defaulters and I am loudly saying there are a large number people who have become victims of circumstances," he told business leaders.

He also rejected FBCCI's earlier proposal to set up a committee to identify willful defaulters. "If you set up a committee, can you identify a willful defaulter?"

"The move will not succeed as every single person has a story to tell, nobody will say I am a willful defaulter."

The minister said he did not volunteer to publish the list and that it did not include names of the persons or the defaulted amount.

"I don't believe publishing list could be solution to problems. I was obliged to publish because under the Constitutional provision I have to answer when a question is raised," Kibria said.

The minister said he knew that a large number of businesses, especially the small ones, also became victims of liberalisation.

**Priorities outlined**

On MCCI's budget proposals, the minister outlined the government's policy priorities.

The main thrust, said Kibria, should be on developing competitive 'industries.' "We have followed new lines. The software and electronics have already been given a very liberal package, and we are ready to give them more if they rise up to the challenge. Equally important are the agro-processing entrepreneurs."

"We are going to give them very substantial concession, knowing fully well that these hopes may or may not be realised," he said.

"The Awami League set out its broad goals in the election manifesto and the coming budget is not going to be deviated from this goal."

The basic goal is to achieve a high growth and reduce poverty, which will be reflected in the forthcoming budget, he said.

"The main thrust in the coming budget will be on social sectors, exports and infrastructure."

Education, health, rural infrastructure, social welfare, women and children and development activities will be high on the agenda, he said.

On exports promotion, the minister spoke of the need for some changes. "We have to change the outlook for adopting import substitution strategy as it did not serve us."

Kibria said he foresaw some quick improvement in infrastructure. "In the next two to three years, we will see dramatic improvement in electricity, telecommunications, development of natural resources and other infrastructure like big roads, bridges."

**Exchange Rates**

Following is the Wednesday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank, Dhaka.

TT/OD	Selling	BC	Currency	Buying		
				TT Clean	OD Sight	OD
				Doc	Transfer	
46.5100	46.5500	USD	46.1100	45.9350	45.8366	
78.1833	78.2506	GBP	76.7270	76.4358	76.2721	
25.3185	25.3402	DEM	24.8304	24.7361	24.6433	
0.3518	0.3521	JPY	0.3436	0.3423	0.3416	
30.7809	30.8074	CHF	30.1176	30.0033	29.8804	
22.4469	22.4662	NLG	22.0411	21.9575	21.8790	
28.9601	28.9851	SGD	28.3405	28.2329	28.1206	
7.5381	7.5446	FRF	7.4251	7.3969	7.3775	
33.0327	33.0611	CAD	32.2899	32.1674	32.0312	
5.8356	5.8407	SEK	5.7351	5.7133	5.6989	
31.3012	31.3282	AUD	30.1098	29.9956	29.7938	
13.0940	13.1053	MYR	12.1920	12.1457	12.1293	
6.0098	6.0150	HKD	5.9428	5.9202	5.9098	
12.4692	12.4799	SAR	12.1984	12.1521	12.1397	

**Usage Export Bills**

TT DOC	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
46.0150	45.7310	45.3520	44.9162	44.4425	43.3813

US Dollar	Buying	Selling	Labor			
			1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
Cash	46.05	46.60	USD 5.68750	5.71094	5.75000	5.89063
Notes						
TC	45.90	46.50	GBP 7.56250	7.61328	7.61328	7.61328

**Exchange Rates of Some Asian Currencies Against US Dollars**

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
39.42/39.52	44.1475	39.05/40.10	3.6520/3.6820	8600/8800	1381/1386

**Market Commentary**

On Wednesday, trading in the local foreign exchange and money market was active. In the interbank market USD/BDT trading was steady and US dollar traded between BDT 46.44 and 46.45. The call money gradually increased due to withdrawal of funds from some nationalised banks and the call money rate ranged between 7 per and 9.75 per.

In the international markets US dollar still continues to be in news and for the time being is the star currency. The dollar remains bullish on expectations of US interest rate rise to keep inflation under control on face of economic growth. At 1800 hours local time US dollar traded at 1.8491/96 DEM, 133.28/38 yen and GBP at 1.6747/57 USD.

**The defaulting borrowers**

Responding to a query from Jaijal Abedin Hajari, MP, of the Awami League, Finance Minister S A M S Kibria placed in parliament on March 4 a list of defaulting borrowers as provided by the Credit Information Bureau, Bangladesh Bank. The list contains names of 2117 businesses having an overdue amount of at least one crore taka or above. Considering the reader interest, The Daily Star is publishing the list in phases.

- 1317. M/s Betka Poultry & Dairy Complex Vill-Bekta, Toncibari, Dhaka.
  - 1318. M/s North American Computing Dynamics 5, Mohakhali C/A, (7th & 8th Floor), Dhaka.
  - 1319. M/s National Garments Ltd House No-29, Road No 30, Gulshan Dhaka, Dhaka.
  - 1320. M/s World Resources Limited Room No 8, Plot No 32/A, Road No 46, Gulshan North C/A, Dhaka.
  - 1321. M/s A.P.S. Lines Ltd 39, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka.
  - 1322. M/s Siraz Miah Sutapaty, Noshindi.
  - 1323. M/s Trimar & Marlin Ltd 340, Sadarghat Road, Chittagong.
  - 1324. M/s Golden Cable Industries (Pvt) Ltd BSCIC Industrial Estate, Pabna.
  - 1325. Lagoon Shipping Lines Ltd 103, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
  - 1326. M/s Khan & Co Ltd 11/1/B, K.M. Das Road, Halkhola, Dhaka.
  - 1327. M/s Laboni Textile Vill-Pukurpur, Ps-Shahzadpur, Serajgonj.
  - 1328. M/s Dool Garments Ltd 29, DIT Avenue, Motijheel, Dhaka.
  - 1329. M/s Rosing Leather & Co 18/5 D, Moneswar Road, Zikatala, Dhaka.
  - 1330. M/s Delwar Pictures Ltd Shadhinata Bhaban, 88, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
  - 1331. M/s Jupiter Textile Mills (Pvt) Ltd Kushtia Iswardi Road, Ranakharia, Mirpur, Kushtia.
  - 1332. M/s Lamia Fashions 234/1, Kachukhet, Mirpur, Dhaka.
  - 1333. M/s Siraz Textiles Ltd 40, Nasirabad I/A, Baizid Bustami Road, Chittagong.
  - 1335. M/s Gold Coin Textile and Garments Ltd Sattar Chmaber, 99, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong.
  - 1336. M/s Uttara Spinning Mills Ltd Rahman Chamber (3rd Floor), 12-13, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
  - 1337. The Bangladesh Time Trust, 1, Rajuk Avenue, Dhaka.
  - 1338. M/s Rash Plastics Ltd Goral, Mirzapur, Tangail.
  - 1339. Continental Ship Breakers 6, Motijheel C/A, 1st Floor, Dhaka.
  - 1340. Islam Garments Ltd 156, Shantinagar, Dhaka.
  - 1341. M/s Ayub Fish Freezing & Ice Com. Ltd Ayub Mansion 58A, North Road Dhnmondi, Dhaka.
  - 1342. Sanchita Edible Oil Refinery Ltd 70, Dilkusha C/A (2nd Floor), Dhaka.
  - 1343. M/s Gareeb-E-Navaz Cold Storage Ltd Betka, Munshigonj.
  - 1344. M/s International Oil Mills Ltd North Patenga, North Patenga, Chittagong Chittagong.
- To be continued

**Experts to discuss South Asia's future today**

A group of leading intellectuals and policy-makers from the region will gather in the city today to discuss the future of South Asia.

At the meeting, South Asia Commission on the Asian Challenge (SACAC) formed in April last year will forge a new, indigenous vision and policy framework to accelerate South Asia's development in the 21st century.

A total of 20 thinkers, researchers and community leaders from the South Asian nations will take part in the event which will be held at the Dhaka office of the Islamic Development Bank, the Commission said in a press statement.

"South Asia has all the potential to become the most dynamic region in the 21st century if there is massive investment in human development," says Dr Haq, President of the Islamabad-based Human Development Centre, in the 1998 report on Human Development in South Asia, which is also set to be launched in Dhaka today.

In confronting the perennial challenges of poverty, inequality, peace and cooperation within and among the countries of the South Asia region, the Commission will combine rigorous analysis with fresh perspectives to identify and prescribe actions to tackle the roots of these endemic problems, the statement said.

Dr Haq asserts, "South Asians must be enabled to share more freely and equitably the opportunities opening up at home and in a fast globalising world economy."

Members of the Commission from Bangladesh include former Finance Minister Abul Maal Muhith, Grameen Bank Managing Director Mohammad Yunus, Senior Adviser to the International Food Policy Research Institute Dr Nurul Islam, and the Executive Chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue Dr Rehman Sobhan.

**Dearth of fry, disease pose threat to fish exporters hopes this year**

By Govinda Shil

Production and export of shrimp are going to be seriously affected this year due to lack of sufficient baby shrimp and wide spread "white spot" disease.

Exporters and frozen food processors in Khulna and Cox's Bazar say reaching the target of US\$ 320 million (Tk 1470 crore) in export revenue from the industry will be a far cry if proper measures are not taken soon.

Exporters say they will not be able to take advantage of the recent withdrawal of the European Union fish ban imposed July 30 last year.

"I am receiving huge orders from the EU countries but I am afraid whether I will be able to ship meet their requirement," says Amjad Hossain, managing director of the Lockpur Fish Processing Plant in Khulna.

According to him, the volume of baby shrimp catches from the Bay of Bengal has declined significantly this year.

The farm's annual exports stand at Tk 200 to 250 crore. But Ferdous Alam Farazi, chairman of Lockpur plant says much less this year. "I am struggling to make only Tk 125 crore this year," says Farazi.

Bangladeshi shrimp farms need 400 crore baby shrimp each year, but barely 200 crore are available; only 15 to 20 crore fry come from some 10 to 12 local hatcheries. About 30,000 tonnes of shrimp and prawn are produced in the country each year.

A senior fisheries ministry official admits that there will be a production fall this year.

Liaquat Ali, director general of Fisheries, told The Daily Star that there was no immediate way out of this problem. He, however, said, the government was planning to help private entrepreneurs set up new hatcheries.

Fisheries officials hope that 17 new hatcheries and 100 nurseries may be set up in the private sector in next five years. "Work for new hatcheries will begin next year," Ali said.

Prices of baby shrimp have also gone up in the local market.

Dr. Aftabuzzaman, secretary general of the Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association, says the cost of 1,000 baby shrimp is Tk 2,000 this year against last year's price of Tk 600-800.

All also admits that the devastating white spot disease which has been affecting fish output since 1992 is a problem. But he has no answer if the government has any specific programme to arrest the viral disease.



Renowned economist Dr. Mahbul Haq makes a point to the audience of the concluding day of a three-day international conference on 'Adjustment and Beyond: The Reform Experience in South Asia' held at a city hotel yesterday. Prof Rehman Sobhan, Nurul Islam and Prof Wahiduddin Mahmood are on his right.

**বাংলাদেশ শিপিং কর্পোরেশন**  
**Bangladesh Shipping Corporation**  
Chittagong  
Tender No 01/97-98 (Disposal)

**International Tender Notice for Disposal of Ocean-going Cargo Vessel MV Banglar Kiron**

Sealed quotations on 'as is where is' basis are invited for sale of the Cargo Vessel MV BANGLAR KIRON (built-1976/Pakistan, DWT-13257MT, LDT-5230 MT). The vessel is now engaged in lighterage operation at Chittagong.

2. The tender should be deposited in the tender boxes kept in Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) Head Office at Chittagong, Marketing Office at Dhaka and the Office of the Divisional Commissioner, Chittagong as per the terms and conditions as laid down in the Tender Documents No. 01/97-98 (Disposal) latest by 1200 hrs. Bangladesh Standard Time (BST) on the 20th day of May, 1998. The Tender Documents containing the main particulars and certificates/survey status of the vessel, terms and conditions for the tenderer etc. can be obtained from the following addresses during office hours on application and payment of US\$ 25.00 (US dollar Twenty-five) or Bangladesh Taka 1000.00 (Taka One thousand) (non-refundable) per set:-

a. Regional Representative, BSC Johnson Stevens House, 2, Abbey Road, Barking, Essex IG11 7AX, London, UK Tel: 0181-507-8800 (3 Lines) Telex: 8811818 BSC G, Fax: 0181-594-0234

b. Regional Representative, BSC 22, Martin Road, Hex 06-01 King Sun Building, Singapore-239058 Tel: 735-7735 Telex: RS. 21509 LTS GP, Fax: 735-6167

c. General Manager (Accounts) Bangladesh Shipping Corporation "BSC Bhaban," Saltgola Road, Chittagong, Bangladesh. Tel: 710149 Telex: 676253, BSC BJ, Fax: 880-31-710506

d. General Manager (Marketing), Bangladesh Shipping Corporation 28/1, Toyenbee Circular Road, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka, Bangladesh Tel: 9553568, 9553585 Telex: 642231 BSC BJ, Fax: 88-02-9565589

3. Tender Documents will not be sold on the day of closing of tenders and it will not be sent to any tenderer by post. For further information, if any, the undersigned may be contacted.

4. BSC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers without assigning any reason whatsoever.

**M. Shahidul Alam**  
General Manager (Exp. Control) Bangladesh Shipping Corporation "BSC Bhaban," Saltgola Road, Chittagong, Bangladesh  
Phone: 723282, Telex: 676253 BSC BJ  
Fax: 880-31-710506  
E-mail: bsc-ctg@spcnet.com

GD-245

**Air Parabat starts flights to Cox's Bazar from today**

Air Parabat, country's second airline in the private sector, will begin serving Cox's Bazar four times a week from today, says a press release.

Flight AP-119 will leave Dhaka at 1450 hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays arriving in Cox's Bazar at 1555 hours while Flight AP-120 will leave Cox's Bazar at 1610 hours arriving in Chittagong at 1635 hours, taking off from Chittagong at 1655 hours arriving in Dhaka at 1750 hours.

**ANZ Wage Earners' Office relocated**

ANZ Grindlays Bank has formally opened the relocated premises of its Wage Earners' Office at Kakrail yesterday, says a press release.

This new office is located on the ground floor of the newly built Karnaphuli Garden City Complex at Kakrail Road.

General Manager of the bank, Muhammad A (Rumee) Ali, inaugurated the office.

Talking about this move to Kakrail, Mahtabuddin Mahboob, the Manager of the office, said that it was done to get closer to the customers.

"Residents of this area now have access to the services of an international bank," he said.

**Proper distribution of OMS rice DCs asked to take necessary steps**

Food and Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury yesterday asked the Deputy Commissioners to take necessary steps for proper distribution of OMS rice for ensuring stabilisation of food grain price, reports UNB.

The Minister was presiding over the Deputy Commissioners' conference at cabinet room of Secretariat here.

State Minister for Relief and Disaster Management Talukder Abdul Khaleque, Deputy Food Minister Dhirendra Debnath Shambhu, cabinet secretary Ataul Huq and others concerned officials also spoke on the occasion.

Motia said there is a good harvest of wheat this year and the government has taken steps to procure wheat from surplus areas for the interest of the farmers.

She urged the DC to play more active role in increasing production of a food grain. Matia said the government has taken necessary steps to keep the supply and price of food at normal position.

The DCs listed various problems in the fields of agricultural development, distribution of agriculture inputs, food management, distribution of

**Reception at EBL Dhanmandi branch**

Dhanmandi branch of Eastern Bank Limited arranged a reception in honour of its distinguished clients on the occasion of the inauguration of its new premises recently, says a press release.

Nurul Husain Khan, Chairman, Board of Directors, M Aminuzzaman, M Ghaziul Haque, Mir Nasir Hossain, Directors, M Khairul Alam, Managing Director, M Hedayatul Islam, Executive Vice President, Branch Manager S.I Khan, Senior Executives of the bank attended, the function.

The bank management and the guests exchanged views on different aspects of banking and EBL's specialised service to clients.

**5th Friendship Bridge China, Bangladesh sign accord**

An agreement was signed between government and China in the city yesterday on making design and conducting pre-construction activities and supervision of construction of the 5th Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge over the river Gabkhan, reports UNB.

Chief Engineer of Roads and Highways Department M Abdul Wadud and Director of Henan Provincial Communications Planning, Survey and Design Institute Huang Yuling signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments at Sarak Bhaban.

**Philips PCs won't be available in Bangladesh**

Star Business Report

Flora Ltd and Electronics & Computers, local distributors of Philips, will not market the Philips personal computers any more in Bangladesh, due to close-down of a production unit.

Philips, a consumer electronic giant, recently announced that Philips Business Electronics Personal Computers Asia Pacific had shut down its PC production, said Flora Ltd in a press statement.

**City Bank training course ends**

Closing and certificate awarding ceremony of the 4th refresher course was held at the Training Institute of the City Bank Limited recently, says a press release.

Mohammad Faiz, Additional Managing Director of the bank distributed certificates among the participants.



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury inaugurated an exhibition of Kunming Cigarette, a Chinese brand, at a city hotel on Tuesday. — Star photo