

## DCCI hails govt for declaring Ctg Port services essential

President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) Matur Rahman has hailed the government for declaring Chittagong Port as an essential service organization for the next six months, says a press release.

The DCCI president hoped the decision would restore discipline and congenial working atmosphere at the port.

The DCCI thinks that some basic restructuring especially in the port management is essential to make this biggest seaport of the country efficient and dynamic.

## Janata Bank expands women entrepreneurs' financing scheme

Janata Bank has extended the women entrepreneurs' financing programme and enhanced its credit limit, says a press release.

Under the programme, the bank expanded the programme through 9 more branches in different divisions and districts outside the Dhaka city.

Janata Bank has also enhanced the credit limit from Tk 4 lakh to Tk 5 lakh without any collateral.

The bank launched a Women's Entrepreneurs Programme for self-sufficiency of the trained and skilled women entrepreneurs through its five branches of Dhaka city last year.

33 entrepreneurs were financed under this programme.

The main target of this programme is to build up, expand or small scale industries and supply working capital.

Under this programme, Janata Bank finances in areas such as batik, butik, tailoring, screen print, fast food, food processing, sauce production etc.

## Rangpur Foundry declares 16pc Dividend

Rangpur Foundry Limited (RFL) has declared a 16 per cent dividend for its shareholders for the year 2001, says a press release.

The dividend was approved at the 22nd annual general meeting of the company held in the city yesterday.

The meeting was presided over by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the company Lt. Col. (Retd) Mahtabuddin Ahmed.

Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, managing director, Sabiha Amjad, Maj Gen Amjad Khan Chowdhury, directors and Md Anwar Hossain, executive director of the company, were present at the meeting.

The meeting was informed that the pretax profit of the company increased by 2.65 per cent from Tk 1.89 crore in 2000 to Tk 1.94 crore in 2001 and its turnover for the year under review increased by 21.52 per cent over the previous year to Tk 29.02 crore.

## Eastland Camellia incurs Tk 1.66m loss in 6 months

Eastland Camellia Ltd, the owner of Chaklapunji Tea Estate, incurred a loss of Tk 1.68 million in the first six months of the year that ended on June 30, 2002, says a press release.

In the corresponding period of the last year, the loss incurred was Tk 3.66 million. This was disclosed at the Board meeting of the company held yesterday.

The Board also approved unaudited accounts of the company for the period. A Rouf, a director of the company, presided over the meeting.

## Dhaka Bank course ends

A seven-day training course on "Lending Risk Analysis (LRA)" was concluded at the Dhaka Bank Training Institute (DBTI) in the city on Sunday, says a press release.

Md. Mokhlesur Rahman, managing director of the bank, addressed the session and distributed certificates among the participants.

A total of 20 officers from different branches and head office of the bank participated in the course.

KAM Majedur Rahman, executive vice president, Arham Masudul Huq, executive vice president, Shamsad Begum, senior vice president and Principal, Salahud Din Ahmed, Senior Assistant Vice President & Faculty Member and Dr M Saiful Karim Chowdhury, Assistant Vice President & Faculty Member of DBTI also spoke on the occasion.

# Khosru admits unusual price hike

## No govt plan for immediate intervention in essentials' market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmood Chowdhury yesterday admitted prices of essentials in the city's kitchen markets have crossed 'usual limit', putting pressure on consumers.

However, the government will not intervene in the market immediately to control the situation despite some traders confessed they have deliberately increased prices to make windfall profits.

If the situation does not stabilise in normal course the government then may go for market intervention and legal steps to control the price hike of

essentials.

And then action will be taken against those found stockpiling potatoes and other essentials in blind pursuit of profit, attributing the price hike to flood and rains.

"After observing the market situation in the next few days we will take necessary steps," the commerce minister said replying to queries of newsmen after a meeting to review the price situation of essentials in the capital yesterday.

State Minister for Commerce Barkatullah Bhulu, Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed, officials and representatives of government departments and agencies concerned and a representative of

Consumers' Association of Bangladesh (CAB) and traders of different wholesale markets attended the meet.

Facing interrogations from the commerce minister and the commerce secretary, President of Karwan Bazar Arat Malik Samity Abu Naser admitted the potato traders have deliberately increased the price of potato to make more profit in the onset of the flood.

"Yes, we have been waiting for the flood to make a good profit, as we could not make profit during last two years," he admitted. Earlier, he made an attempt to justify the price hike of potato.

But, the commerce minister

warned the trader, "If you want to make windfall profit, we would allow import of potato."

When asked whether they would seek the help of law enforcement agencies to control the situation, the commerce minister said, "If we find any evidence that the traders are cheating the consumers only then we can think of this measure. It would be our last resort."

"In a free market economy, it is quite natural that the price would be determined by the market. Still the government has the responsibility to interfere when the prices of essential goods exceed the limit", the commerce minister said.

The representative from Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) was grilled for not implementing a government decision to hang a price chart of essentials at different market places in the corporation area.

The decision to stick price list at market places was taken at a similar meeting during the last Ramadan.

The commerce minister and secretary yesterday instructed the DCC official to hang such charts within the first week of next month.

Representative of CAB informed the meeting that the price of potato was not more than Tk eight per kilogram about two months back. At present, per kilogram potato is

selling at no less than Tk 12, he informed.

Whole sellers of rice claimed at the meeting the price of rice has been stable at this moment. They, however, said it has increased by Tk 50 per maund due to heavy shower that has been hindering production of rice at rice mills.

The commerce minister told the meeting government would take necessary steps if the price of rice is not reduced within next ten days.

The meeting was informed that the price of per kilogram rice has been shot up by ten to fifteen per cent depending on different quality this year against the price of last year.

According to the statistics presented by government officials at the meeting, the price of garlic has increased by 64 per cent against last year's price although its import duty remains the same. Despite increase in production of red chilly, its price has increased by 44 per cent.

The meeting observed that production of other vegetables have been affected due to heavy shower and flood. The situation is likely to continue for another month.

## DPRK carrying out sweeping economic reforms, says ROK

AFP, Seoul

Stalinist North Korea is carrying out sweeping economic reforms aimed at turning around its failing centrally-planned economy, a top South Korean official said Thursday.

The rationing system will be phased out, professional managers will replace party officials at the helm of businesses and the exchange rate of the won to the US dollar will fall from 2.2 to 200.

"North Korea appears to be moving toward a market economy, following in the steps of China," said Lim Dong-Won, a special advisor for security to South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung.

Following his fact-finding trips to allies China and Russia last year, the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il issued directives demanding the implementation of reforms, Lim said.

"The gist of the guidelines was to renovate the economic system to seek practical gains while maintaining socialism," he said.

"This change is quite similar to that of the early years of China's reform," Lim said.

At the centre of the changes is the introduction of incentives and a new business management system, in which professional managers replace party officials to run businesses and wages will be dependent on profits.

Another main feature of the reforms is the phasing out of the rationing system, in which increasing proportions of the North Korean population will be weaned off state handouts and forced to buy staple food with wages, he said.

For this purpose, the North abandoned nominal prices for so-far rationed staple food and other goods and readjusted the prices

upwards to bring them to the level of prices at farmers' markets.

The official price of one kilogramme (2.2 pounds) of rationed rice was eight jun (one hundredth of a won), but North Koreans will from now on have to pay 600 times that amount to buy the same quantity from state-run outlets, Lim said.

North Koreans will as a result receive new wages in August, which according to South Korean civilians who have returned from visiting Pyongyang this week will be between 17 and 50 times higher.

Lim said the North was also moving to devalue its currency to 200 won per dollar from the current 2.2 won in step with the real exchange rate in its Rajin-Sunbong special economic zone on its eastern coast.

## Shebaworld booth opens at Rifle Square

Sheba Telecom (Pvt) Ltd opened a Shebaworld special promotional booth at Rifle Square in the city on Wednesday.

Zainal Abiddin Isma Yatim, chief technical officer of Sheba Telecom (Pvt) Ltd, was present on the occasion as chief guest. Abu Sadat M Sayem, head of marketing, was also present.

Sheba Telecom is also offering free SMS service for one month. Customers of Sheba Telecom are having full-fledge.

Different packages with numerous handsets are available in this booth. Customer can get shebaworld Standard (mobile to mobile with BTB incoming & outgoing), shebaworld M2M Gold (mobile to mobile with BTB incoming) and shebaworld M2M Silver (mobile to mobile only) connection in this booth.

Sheba Telecom is going to install 13 more Base Transmission Stations (BTS) in Dhaka City within one month. The company is also expanding GSM coverage in Chittagong and Sylhet soon. It will also extend its coverage in Khulna, Barisal, Manikganj, Tangail and Bogra in the near future. The company is planning for prepaid and international roaming facility for its valued customers by the first quarter of next year.



Home Minister Air Vice Marshal (Rtd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury (2nd from left) shows off a new book titled 'Favourite Recipes of Raj' authored by Tommy Miah, a Bangladesh-born UK-based popular chef, at the book's publication ceremony held at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on Wednesday. This is the first Bangladesh-authored book where British Queen Elizabeth II wrote the foreword. Tommy Miah (left), Nasser Rahman MP (2nd from right) and Stewart, MD of Abela Airlines Catering, are also seen in the picture.



Lt Col (Retd) Mahtabuddin Ahmed (3rd-L), chairman of Rangpur Foundry Limited, presides over the 22nd annual general meeting of the company held in the city yesterday. Photo also shows (from left) Gias Uddin, director (Business Development), Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, managing director, Maj Gen (retd) Amjad Khan Chowdhury, director, Sabiha Amjad, director, and Anwar Hossain, executive director of RFL.

## Japan, Europe need vital structural reforms: US

AFP, Singapore

Two of the world's major economies, Japan and the European Union (EU), need vital structural reforms if they are to achieve sustainable growth, former US treasury secretary Robert Rubin said Thursday.

"In Europe and Japan... little if any progress has been made in recent years on the structural reforms absolutely requisite for strong growth on a sustained basis," he said.

Japan was unlikely to play a significant role in supporting the health of the global economy in the near-term, as it faced too many unresolved domestic issues, while Europe needed to vastly improve

productivity where it lags behind the United States.

"Japan seems to be experiencing a cyclical upturn and that could continue assuming that global economic conditions are favorable," he told central bankers and financial experts at a gathering organised by the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

"But the enormously complicated structural fiscal problems Japan faces has, at least in my view, in large measures not been addressed," he said.

"Thus, the prospect of Japan lending strength to the global economy, while I think likely in the longer-term, is not a short term prospect."

He cited a litany of problems in Japan covering banking, trade

restrictions, labor laws, regulations and "a severe fiscal and government debt problem made all the more serious by Japan's rapidly aging population."

Rubin, who held the treasury portfolio for much of Bill Clinton's presidency, and is now a director of US banking giant Citigroup, was confident Tokyo would eventually get its act together, but was unsure how.

"My personal view is that a nation and a culture that had the remarkable economic success experienced in post-World War II Japan, is likely to once again do what is needed to get on a successful economic track," he said.

## Islami Bank raises dollar buying rate

UNB, Dhaka

Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd (IBBL) has raised dollar buying rate by Tk 0.40 per dollar.

The decision was taken in compliance with the government instruction to increase foreign currency inflow and facilitate remittances from abroad, the bank said in a press release.

The bank will now buy the US dollar at Tk 57.78 instead of Tk 57.38. The rate for exporters has also been raised from Tk 57.17 to Tk 57.57 per dollar.

## City Bank ups dollar buying rate

The City Bank Limited raised the dollar buying rate by Tk 0.30 that took effect on July 21, says a press release.

The exchange rates have been revised to help increase foreign currency inflow into the country.

The increase in the conversion rate of foreign currency to taka will significantly benefit exporters and beneficiaries of inward remittances.

## Unocal completes name changes

Unocal has completed the name changes for its subsidiaries, which were known as Occidental of Bangladesh Ltd. and Occidental Exploration of Bangladesh Ltd, says a press release.

The entities are now Unocal Bangladesh Blocks Thirteen and Fourteen, Ltd. and Unocal Bangladesh Block Twelve, Ltd. respectively with effect from July 22.

These name changes, however, have no effect on the assets, rights, duties, and obligations of the corporations. The business and operations of the corporations are unchanged.

In 1996, Unocal acquired a 50 per cent interest in Blocks 12, 13 and 14 in northeast Bangladesh.

## Pakistan urges Central Asia to strive for food hub status

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf told Central Asian agricultural ministers meeting here Thursday to encourage corporate farming in a bid to turn the region into a hub for food.

Musharraf was addressing the first meeting of agriculture ministers from the 10-member Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) who are seeking foreign investment to move away from subsistence farming and get into mass production.

"We have vast and bounteous natural resources and the region can become a hub of food production, provided there is investment and we have cooperation (among us)," Musharraf said.

He said Pakistan has already adopted "business friendly" economic policies and was seeking foreign capital to develop grain storage and cold rooms that were lacking in the country.

Musharraf said he wanted the ECO, which groups Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan,

Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, to focus on technology sharing and develop a regulatory framework.

"The challenge is also to meet WTO (World Trade Organization) requirements," Musharraf said.

Pakistan's agricultural minister Khair Mohamed Junejo urged ECO members to agree on a common strategy to deal with the WTO and agree on farm subsidies in the region.



Photo shows officials of Sheba Telecom (Pvt) Ltd at the inauguration of the company's special promotional booth at Rifle Square in the city on Wednesday.

## New Singapore visitors' centre opens

A new Singapore Visitors' Centre (SVC) operated by Wheelpower Rent-a-bike Pte Ltd has opened on Bencoolen Street offering bicycle tours across the city for tourists and residents, says a press release.

Located at the junction of Bencoolen Street and Waterloo Street at Sunshine Plaza, SVC @Bencoolen offers visitors a comprehensive range of travel related services from 9.00 am to 7.00 pm daily.

These include tourist information, bicycle rental and tours, air ticketing and bookings for sightseeing tours around Singapore. Internet stations are also available inside the SVC for visitors to use.

The SVC@ Bencoolen is also the first establishment in Singapore to offer bicycle tours for visitors. Two bicycle tours led by qualified guides are currently available.

## Japan firms move production lines to China from SE Asia

AFP, Tokyo

Major Japanese firms said Thursday they are shifting production lines to China from Southeast Asia to cut costs and consolidate their assembly operations.

Hi-tech giant NEC Corp. said it planned to close a personal computer production line in Malaysia and move it to China.

"By doing this we can use common parts for the domestic and international market," said NEC spokesman Chris Shimizu.

China is closer to Japan which makes it a more convenient location and it is often cheaper to assemble whole products there, he said,

adding the firm will likely consider further similar moves in the future.

"It is a case by case decision, there is no reason that everything should go to China but if the costs merit, then we will consider it," Shimizu said.

Seiko Epson Corp., which has produced scanners for personal computers in Singapore since September 1995, will close a production line there in September and transfer some production to China as well as another plant in Singapore.

"Labour costs are cheaper in China and also the technological know-how is high," said Seiko Epson spokesman Akida Yamada.

The firm decided to shut the

Singapore line -- laying off 700 staff - because the business environment was tough and it was hard to make a profit, he said.

Similarly, camera maker Minolta Co. Ltd. plans to move a camera assembly line from Malaysia to a factory in Shanghai, China, by March 2003.

"At the moment we are totally restructuring our camera business," said Minolta spokesman Ichiro Shirai.

Minolta has an assembly plant for high-end models in Japan, one for compact cameras in China and a third for more basic types in Malaysia.



Photo shows participants of a seven-day training course on 'Lending Risk Analysis' which ended at Dhaka Bank Training Institute in the city on Sunday.