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# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA MONDAY NOVEMBER 8, 2004 E-mail: dsbusins@gononet.com

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## Law ensuring consumer rights yet to be enacted

Proposed law awaits law ministry vetting

TAWFIQUE ALI

The government has failed to enact Consumer Rights Protection Act in the last one decade despite frequent public and media outcry over violation of consumer rights.

A proposed law in this regard is currently lying with the Ministry of Commerce for about three months following approval from the cabinet on August 9 this year. The draft is presently awaiting vetting from the Ministry of Law.

The government has formed a 21-member national committee in 1995 to draft the law on consumer rights protection.

The committee comprised of representatives from consumer rights group, teacher and high officials of commerce, law and health ministries had proposed the draft in 1998.

"Although the matter is of tremendous public interest, it has not been given due importance," said the General Secretary of Consumer Association of Bangladesh (Cab) Qauzi Faruque.

Pointing out that neighbouring countries like India and Nepal have already made similar laws, Faruque said such a law is mandatory to protect consumer rights and to ensure market stability, fair and ethical market practices in an open market system.

"Consumer rights are being violated everyday in absence of a specific protection law," Faruque said.

Referring to frequent media reports on marketing of low-quality and adulterated consumer items in brought day light, he said there is no adequate legal provision for an affected and aggrieved consumer to seek legal redress.

In spite of being extremely hazardous for public health, rampant use of deadly chemicals in fruits and vegetables to enhance their taste goes unabated exploiting the commoners' helplessness, he pointed out.

"There are many examples like Public Safety Act and Speedy Trial Act that were brought into force almost overnight but an extremely public interest law for protecting consumer rights could not be enacted in ten years," Faruque said.

According to various sources concerned, the dilly-dally in enacting the law has been due to disapproval of certain business circles and influential quarters, who fear the law will restrict their money-making in the way they presently do in absence of it.

"I also wonder why it is not being enacted," said Prof Anwar Hossain of Institute of Business Administration (IBA), who was one of 21 members of the draft committee.

"There has been a strong busi-

ness lobby opposing the law," Hossain pointed out.

He said in the context of Bangladesh, consumers are deprived of their rights both in terms of quality and quantity.

"Some vested quarters may be active within the government virtually impeding to enact such a people's law," said Prof Hossain.

He said a quasi-judicial body is urgently needed under the law to protect consumer rights and act against unscrupulous sections of businessmen, adding that the United States made its consumer protection law in 1963.

Commerce Secretary Aminur Rahman ruled out any hindrance by business circles in the process of enacting the law adding, "I don't know what happened in this regard earlier as I was appointed as a secretary only few months back."

"But we are hopeful that it will soon get passed in the parliament," he said.

The commerce ministry, holding an international workshop on the draft law, brought several modifications to it and incorporated some opinions of international experts.

The Cab made a contribution to the draft by compiling opinions of grassroots-level consumers to make it a uniform consumer right law and it was sent to the law commission in 2000.

Commerce ministry sent the law commission's version of the draft to the cabinet sub-committee or secretary committee for scrutiny in 2004 and later to the cabinet.

The cabinet in its observation said the proposed law provides punishment for those who adulterate foodstuffs and medicines and adopt other dishonest and harmful methods to market substandard goods at higher prices, a source said.

The proposed law also provides an autonomous 'National Consumer Council' to be represented by people from different professions and classes to protect and expand consumer rights with the secretarial assistance from the proposed 'Bureau of Consumers Affairs'.

The cabinet also suggested that a Consumer Tribunal should be empowered under the Criminal Procedure Code of 1898 to conduct trial of offence against consumers, as most of the offences under the proposed law are of criminal nature.

It suggested that the law ministry should scrutinise the proposed 'Consumer Rights Protection Act-2004' to make it consistent with and complementary to existing several other similar laws like 'Pure Food Ordinance-1959', 'Drug Control Ordinance-1982' and 'Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution Ordinance-1985'.



A woman chooses a dress at a crowded market in Dhaka yesterday. Shopping in city's markets and malls has entered its peak with Eid-ul-Fitr only a week away.

PHOTO: STAR

## Membership to Atab made mandatory for travel agents

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has made it mandatory for all travel agents to become members of Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (Atab) to bring discipline and prevent agencies from practising 'unethical' businesses.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism recently issued the order which it says would enable the association to play a watchdog-role to check irregularities and bring an end to unhealthy competition among agencies.

Sources say some travel agencies often make false bookings and sell tickets at zero commission to lure

clients that creates an unhealthy business environment.

Earlier, Atab forwarded a set of proposals to the ministry including mandatory membership of the trade body. In its set of proposals, Atab said some travel agencies are indulging in unethical business in absence of a regulatory body and guidelines.

Atab says it was possible to bring discipline in the ready-made garment sector and recruiting agency business after the government made it mandatory for such enterprises to be members of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and Bangladesh Association of

International Recruiting Agencies respectively.

According to Atab, some 1,500 companies have licences to run travel agency business, of which 550 are currently active in business but only 350 of them are now members of the association.

Atab President MA Muhaimin Saleh said the mandatory membership would encourage a healthy competition to benefit the customers. The association is also working on a code of conduct for agents which will help increase transparency in the business, he added.

The association said the proposed code will cover all aspects of travel agency business regarding

agency commission, relationship with airlines, training, booking system and punitive measures in case of violation of rules by any agency.

The association also plans to set up a training institute for the staffs of travel agency houses and seeks necessary support from the civil aviation ministry and airlines operating in Bangladesh to implement the plan.

Atab also sought establishment of passenger assistance desks at all international airports in Bangladesh to provide quality services for foreign guests like that opened earlier for garment buyers.

## India hails EU's proposal for partnership

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Sunday welcomed the European Union's proposal for a strategic partnership with India, as he left for a summit with EU leaders in The Hague.

"In recognition of India's growing stature and influence, the EU has proposed a strategic partnership with India. This will be formalised during the summit. We warmly welcome the development," Singh told reporters.

Counter-terrorism efforts and trade would also be in focus at the fifth India-EU summit on Monday, he said.

"My discussions with the EU leadership will be reflected in a comprehensive joint statement that will be issued at the conclusion of the summit," Singh said.

The EU wants to bring its relationship with India to "the same parity, density and quality" as it has with the US, Canada, China, Russia and Japan, a EU official said last week.

"Our relations are based on shared values -- democracy, pluralism, rule of law and free press," Singh said Sunday.

"Our partnership has evolved over the years from economic and development cooperation to a broad-based engagement on a wide range of issues -- globalisation, terrorism, proliferation, energy and environment."

Singh will hold talks separately with his Netherlands counterpart Jan Peter Balkenende and call on Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

The Netherlands holds the six-month rotating presidency of the 25-nation EU until December 31.

## Deficits may stumble Bush economic plans: Analysts

AFP, Washington

With the outlook fuzzy and the US economy saddled by big deficits, President George W. Bush will face a tough road implementing his ambitious economic agenda in a second term, analysts say.

Bush, fresh from his reelection victory, has reiterated plans to halve the record federal budget deficit of 413 billion dollars, while making his tax cuts permanent.

He also is eyeing plans to "simplify" the federal tax code, and pressing for private retirement savings that some say would

amount to a partial privatization of the social security system.

Although the new Congress will have a strong Republican majority and may be open to many of the proposals, analysts say there are limits to how much a second Bush administration can accomplish in the current economic climate.

Morgan Stanley economist Richard Berner said Bush's agenda may be too ambitious.

The president clearly wants his legacy to include a significant reshaping of the geopolitical and economic policy order, and he will try to use what he sees as 'political

capital' won in the election to implement it," Berner said in a note to clients.

"But the real obstacles to implementation will be the ambitious scope of his proposals, the practical problems in reconciling what I see as serious conflicts among the proposals, and the short timeframe he has to achieve them."

On taxes, Bush has yet to outline what he means by simplification, and has asked a commission for recommendations. But some Republicans are pressing for a "flat tax" or a national sales tax to replace the current system.

## Filipino youths showing entrepreneurship

ANN/INQUIRER

Last Oct. 15-16, 28 promising student entrepreneurs from different colleges and universities in Metro Manila showcased their creative and ingenious businesses and provided the public a glimpse of how aggressive and entrepreneurial the Filipino youth can become.

The event was the 2nd Ten Inspiring Entrepreneurial Students (TIES) Awards held at the Market! Market! at the Fort. The students were given the chance to showcase their creative and ingenious businesses and provide the public a

glimpse of how aggressive and entrepreneurial the Filipino youth can become.

Guest of honor Sen. Francis Pangilinan, a staunch advocate of youth development, stated "Do not be worried. There will come a time your P3,000 now will become half a billion in the future. There is no such thing as failure, only delay. You are the leaders, the future employers of the country."

Pangilinan emphasized the impact of entrepreneurship in the country, citing 70 percent of those working in the Philippines are employed by small and medium

enterprises. "Many Filipinos look for jobs, but it is the entrepreneur who provides these jobs."

Judging for the 2004 TIES awardees took place during the exhibit proper. The board of judges included Prof. Jay Bernardo of the Asian Institute of Management; Bam Aquino, chair, National Youth Commission; Ma. Luna David, VP for loans, Small Business Guarantee and Finance Corp. or SB Corp.; Dr. Alberto Fenix, chairman CHED Technical Panel for Business Education; and Gladys Judan, VP for Incoming Exchange & Finance, AIESEC Philippines.

## China to cut deficit, curb govt investment in 2005

AFP, Beijing

The Chinese government will try to cut its huge deficit next year and curb investment financed from public coffers, state media said Sunday, quoting Vice Finance Minister Lou Jiwel.

The policy next year will strive to curb "excessive development" in overheated industries, while boosting support for farmers, Lou told a seminar in Beijing, according to Xinhua news agency.

The Chinese government has spent most of 2004 trying to reduce the flow of money into red-hot sectors such as real estate, auto manufacturing and steel, most recently resorting to the first interest rate hike in nine years.

Chinese spending on fixed assets -- a key measure for the country's investment fever -- soared 27.5 percent in the first nine months of the year.

The government expects a budget deficit of 319.8 billion yuan (38.5 billion dollars) this year, unchanged from the record deficit of 2003.

Observers have said China's deficit is still manageable, but that the government will end up in severe fiscal trouble if it does not eventually get it under control.

Zhu Zhixin, vice head of the State Development and Reform Commission, told the same seminar that the government would try to provide more assistance to the poorest members of society next year, according to Xinhua.

However, he said China would have "some difficulty" in raising the income of the country's 800 million farmers next year.

## South Korea plans huge spending to revive economy

AFP, Seoul

The South Korean government is preparing a huge "New Deal" spending package in the next few years to revive the country's sagging economy, Yonhap news agency said Sunday.

Some 10 trillion won (nine billion dollars) would be pumped into the stimulus package unveiled at a closed-door workshop attended by key economic officials and ruling party lawmakers, Yonhap said.

An expanded state budget and private funds are to finance new highways or housing planned over the next few years, it said.

Various government records will be pooled in databases to boost the information and technology industry in the stimulus package, reminiscent of the US "New Deal" economic initiatives in the 1930s.

Yonhap said the commerce, industry and energy ministry suggested a 7.2-trillion-won spending project while the information and communications ministry put forward a separate two-trillion-won plan during the seminar.

## GP nets 60,000 new subscribers in 4-day mobile fair

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

GrameenPhone (GP) has sold 60,000 new connections during the past four-day mobile fair which concluded on Saturday.

"We are overwhelmed by the response of the customers and their interest in GSM handsets," GP Director (sales and marketing) Mehboob Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.

With the latest figure GP subscribers' base reached 2.1 million. GP doubled its subscribers' number to two million in a year to August this year.

Considering the astounding response, GP planned to extend the

four-day fair for another day but could not make it due to security reason.

The Eid package offered at the fair will remain valid until the end of November, GP said in an advertisement.

Prospective subscribers have been requested to communicate with the nearest GP dealers for the package.

The proceeds of the entry ticket of Tk 20 each will be donated to Ahsania Mission Cancer and General Hospital and Grameen Shikhyatrust.

"We are yet to count the proceeds from the ticket sale," another GP official said.

## Outsourcing to dominate UK businesses meet

AFP, Birmingham

Britain's business leaders gather for their annual conference in the country's second city Birmingham this week, with the thorny issues of European bureaucracy and jobs outsourcing set to dominate debate.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the country's biggest business association, was to hold a two-day conference in this central England city, beginning Monday.

Its 28th annual gathering was to feature keynote speeches from Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, French Finance Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, EU trade commissioner designate Peter Mandelson and CBI director general Digby Jones.

It takes place amid mounting speculation that Britain's Labour government, seen as business-friendly nowadays despite its socialist roots, would call a general election early next year as it looks to win a third consecutive term.



### Janata Bank

Engineering Division  
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### Invitation for Tenders

- Project name : Supplying of spare parts for 3x300 TR Central Air-Conditioning Plant at Janata Bank, Head Office.
- Source of funds : Janata Bank's own funds.
- Tender Package No. : CACP-01.
- Invitation for tenders ref. & date : JB/KAZA/Engg/PK/CACP/0008 20/10/04
- Tender name : Supplying of 15 (fifteen) container compressor oil.
- Brief description of goods and services : Compressor oil in sealed container (each container content 18 litre) for "Carrier" Brand centrifugal water chiller using F-11 as refrigerant.
- Time for completion of delivery : 60 (sixty) days from the date of signing contract agreement.
- Eligibility of tenderers : Experience in supplying compressor oil/spare parts for Central Air-Conditioning Plant at minimum 2 (two) govt/semi-govt/autonomous organisation in the last 5 (five) years.
- Price for tender document : Tk 100/- (one hundred) only (non-refundable).
- Amount of tender security/earnest money : Tk. 10,000/- (ten thousand) only in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order from any scheduled bank in the name of Janata Bank Head Office.
- Name and address of the office selling tender document : Engineering Division, 110, Motijheel C/A (5th Floor), Dhaka-1000.
- Name and address of the office receiving tenders : Engineering Division, 110, Motijheel C/A (5th Floor), Dhaka-1000.
- Name and address of the office opening tenders : Engineering Division, 110, Motijheel C/A (5th Floor), Dhaka-1000.
- Last date and time for selling of tender document : 06/12/04, up to office hours.
- Date and time for submission of tenders : 07/12/04, within 2:15 PM.
- Date and time for opening of tenders : 07/12/04, 2:30 PM.
- Special instructions : Janata Bank reserves the right to reject all tenders prior to acceptance.

JB PRD No-HO-37/04  
GD-690

SA Md. Kamruzzaman  
Deputy General Manager