

FBCCI worried over power, gas line disconnection. Seeks time for industries to set up ETPs. UNB, Dhaka

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) yesterday expressed deep concern over disconnection of electricity and gas lines to many industrial units for not setting up effluent treatment plants (ETPs) and urged the government to allow them some time they need in this regard.

"Setting up of such plants is time-consuming," a meeting of the FBCCI was told.

Representatives from different sectors, including textile, readymade garments and dyeing, were present at the meeting held at the federation bhaban with its first Vice-President Mohammed Ali in the chair.

The meeting, however, welcomed the government decision in this regard and viewed that the entrepreneurs should set up the ETPs in line with the size and production capacity of their respective factories.

The trade body leaders sought long-term bank loans at lower interest rates to help set up ETPs.

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An open market of essential commodities in front of Mohammadpur bus stop in the capital which BDR set up a couple of weeks ago to curb spiralling prices of essentials.

## Israel launches air strike against Gaza militants

AFP, Gaza City

Israel launched an air strike against suspected Gaza militants on yesterday, killing one and wounding two, as it made good on threats to get tough over persistent rocket fire from the territory.

Israeli fire also wounded a Palestinian militant commander on its most wanted list in the West Bank town of Jenin in what the militant group called a deliberate assassination attempt.

Palestinian medics named the



### 2 missing French 'kidnapped' in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Two French aid workers who went missing this week in Afghanistan have been kidnapped by Taliban militants and taken to volatile Helmand province, an official and police chief said yesterday.

An Afghan colleague who was travelling with the French workers may have been involved in the abduction, local police chief Mohammad Daud Askaryar told AFP.

The nationals - a man and a woman who were working for a French aid agency - were taken to

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## Little cheers for bid to up banks' capital

Overall deficit rises to Tk 1,500cr, mainly contributed by NCBs

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Despite Bangladesh Bank (BB) initiatives to increase banks' capital, overall capital deficit in the sector was Tk 1,500 crore as of December 2006.

According to BB data, capital deficit of the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) was Tk 3,412 crore and that of the specialised banks was Tk 39 crore.

The local private banks and the foreign banks operating in the country, however, as a whole showed a brighter picture with the private banks' capital surplus being Tk 530 crore and that of the foreign banks Tk 1,421 crore.

Of the private banks, the Oriental Bank had a deficit of Tk 663 crore and the Social Investment Bank Tk 27 crore.

As per the existing rules, the banking sector should have a total capital of Tk 13,788 crore but the amount was Tk 12,288 crore, the data of December 2006 shows.

According to the rules, a bank is

bound to keep its minimum capital at either Tk 100 crore or nine percent of its risk-weighted asset-- whichever is higher.

The government has recently initiated moves to increase the banks' minimum capital from Tk 100 crore to Tk 200 crore. The council of advisers has already approved a proposal for the increase and sources said the BB will soon issue a circular in this regard.

Sources said the BB is also planning to increase the amount of any bank's minimum capital from nine percent to 10 or 11 percent of the bank's risk-weighted asset.

But, officials of many private banks are against the central bank's new plan and said such moves will create problems for a few banks.

"General shareholders will be deprived if major part of a bank's profit is diverted as capital or risk-weighted asset," said an official of a private bank, adding that such plan may also affect the stock market when shareholders will not get regular dividends.

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A BB official, however, said the new rules for increasing banks' capital will not be a problem. Except for the NCBs, the local and foreign banks are making huge profits, he said, adding, "The banks will have to divert a portion of the profit and this is in the interest of the banks' clients."

Citing official data, he said operating profit of the whole banking sector was Tk 5,623 crore last year, of which the local banks made Tk 3,292 crore and the foreign banks Tk 1,180 crore.

The official said the government will infuse capital to the NCBs under a reform plan.

Another BB high official said there is continuous risk in some banks although the overall situation in the private banking sector is well.

He identified lack of corporate governance, insider lending, and fictitious and classified loans as the major factors that have turned a few banks into "problem banks".

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