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Bird flu costs poultry industry Tk4,100cr

Poultry owners' association study says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's poultry industry has incurred a loss of over Tk 4,100 crore in the last one year due to the outbreak of avian influenza or bird flu, according to a recent study conducted by Bangladesh Poultry Industries Coordination Committee.

"This loss has hit the rural economy which had earlier faced the devastation of cyclone Sidr and twin floods. Let's be conscious, rather being panicked," Dr Jahangir Alam, director general of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI), told a roundtable on Bird Flu & Solution yesterday.

The coordination committee submitted the study to the government last week. The study covered the period between February 2007 and January 2008.

Alam asked for government help to ensure bank loans at 2-3 percent interest for the agriculture and poultry farmers to save the sector.

The roundtable was organised jointly by Watchdog Bangladesh and Breeders Association of Bangladesh at the National Press Club in Dhaka.

Microbiologists, doctors, agro economists, journalists and poultry industry representatives spoke at the roundtable that focused on the need for proper diagnosis of diseases to avert unwarranted losses of the industry.

Experts suggested creating awareness to encourage people to consume poultry items and save the country's about Tk8000 crore industry, which employs about half a crore people and provide protein at cheaper price.

According to the study, avian influenza does not transmit from human to human, while the disease also does not spread vertically; it does not transmit from eggs. Besides, properly boiled chicken does not contain the virus, experts said.

Bird flu or avian influenza, which broke out in March last year, became devastating early this year

forcing thousands of farms closed and tens of thousands jobsless.

The fresh blow also caused about 50 percent slump in consumption of poultry items and a pause in the new farming initiatives with hatcheries selling the day-old chick three times lower than the production cost.

"We are hit hard. This loss has eaten up about 40 percent of our investment," said Md A Saleque, general secretary of World Poultry Science Association-Bangladesh and also head of BRAC Agro Industries.

"So far, we have not found any human case of Avian Influenza in Bangladesh," said Dr Md Rafiqul Islam, a physician at the Sohrwardy Hospital.

Rafiqul stressed bringing change in the behavioural pattern of the people engaged in the slaughtering or cooking of the poultry birds.

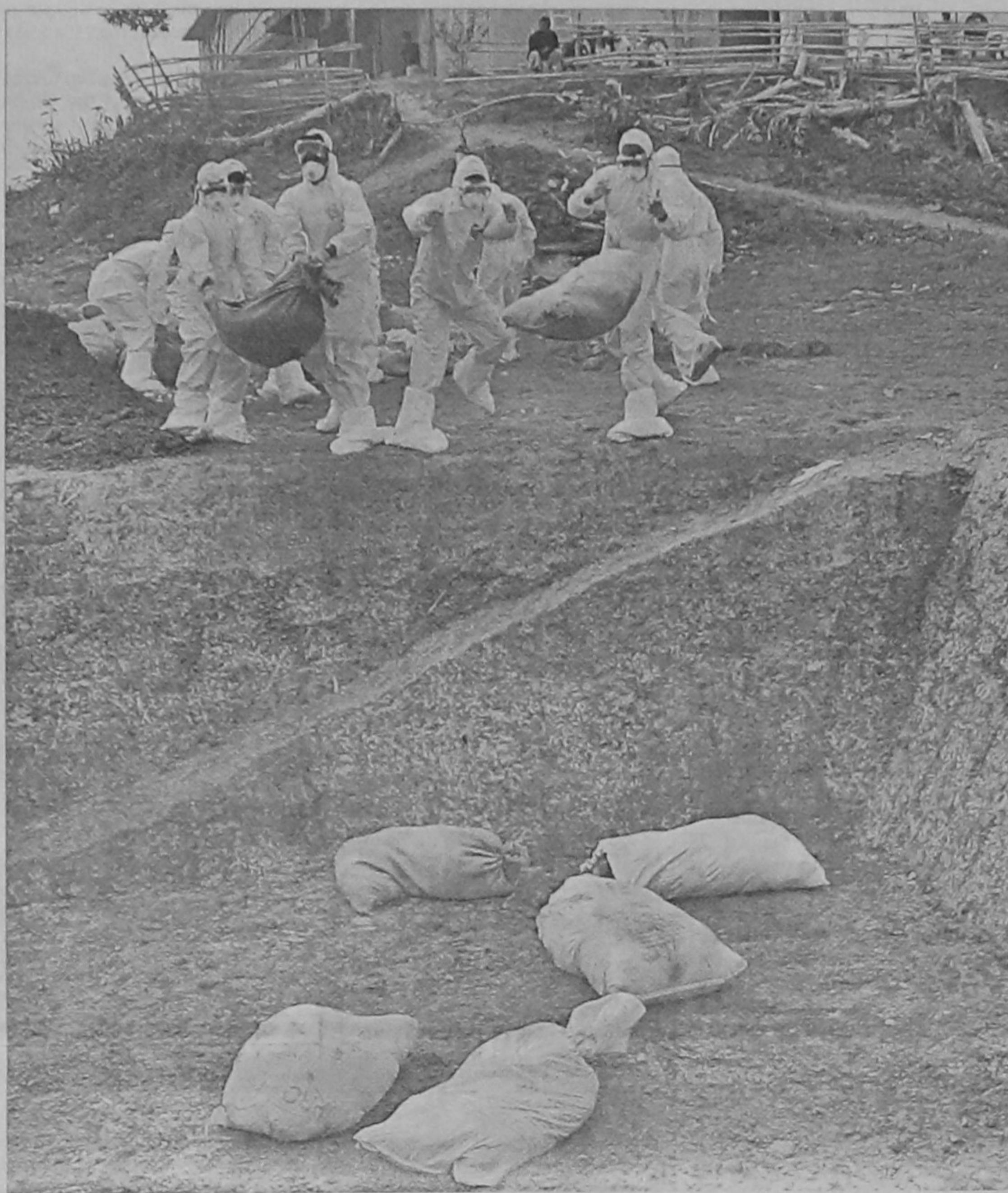
Dr Md Mansurul Amin, who teaches Microbiology and Hygiene at the Bangladesh Agricultural University, said the avian influenza virus could not survive under high temperature. He, however, suggested the government ensure a proper diagnosis of the poultry diseases.

"There is similarity in the symptoms of avian influenza with other diseases. So it is essential to have a different diagnosis arrangement for the diseases to save the unnecessary culling of the birds. It causes unwanted loss for farmers," he said.

Moshir Rahman, general secretary of the Breeders Association of Bangladesh, blamed lack of monitoring of the massive outbreak of the disease.

Dr Abdus Sattar Mandal, who teaches at the Bangladesh Agricultural University, said there is nothing to worry, as human body is not afflicted with avian influenza easily.

He, referring to the fall in consumption of poultry birds, hoped that it would be picked up in the next couple of months.



A recent photo shows culled chickens being dumped following bird flu infection at Omega Poultry Farm at Uttar Badda in Dhaka. Experts say the country's poultry industry, which incurred a loss of over Tk 4,100 crore in the last one year due to avian influenza outbreak, needs bank loans at 2-3 percent interest for survival.

SEC plans to change system for refund of IPO money

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) plans to change the existing system for refund of the money deposited during IPO applications in a bid to stop the use of fake bank account numbers in applications for primary shares.

The refund warrant will be deposited to an applicant's bank account number directly under the new system, according to sources.

Now, the refund warrant certificates are distributed by the issue manager among the applicants. Later the applicants encash the certificates by depositing these in their bank accounts.

Recently, the SEC made an experimental arrangement for distribution of money through bank accounts directly.

Under the arrangement, the

SEC asked the issue manager of Fidelity Assets and Securities Company to deposit the refund warrants in the applicants' bank accounts with two particular banks -- National Bank and First Security Bank.

Following the experimental arrangement the market regulator found that 151 fake bank account numbers with the National Bank were used during the IPO (initial public offering) applications.

The SEC also found 17 fake bank account numbers with the First Security Bank that were used in the Fidelity Assets IPO application.

The commission will forfeit the deposited money with IPO applications using fake or fictitious bank account numbers.

Bank account number is required to open a BO (beneficiary owners') account.

The watchdog will also do another experimental distribution of refund warrants certificates for the upcoming Delta Brac Housing IPO process. The SEC will ask the issue manager of Delta Brac to deposit the refund warrants to the IPO applicants' bank account numbers with two particular banks, which will be selected later.

The commission has already discussed the issue with issue managers to introduce the new distribution system. "We have also discussed with the central bank to this effect. We will also discuss with all the commercial banks very soon," said an SEC official.

There is an allegation that one person submitted several IPO applications with fake or fictitious bank account numbers and they encash the refund warrants in connivance with a section of bank officials.

57 candidates found valid for FBCCI polls

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Fifty-seven candidates have been selected for directorship of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

The Election Board of the apex trade body yesterday published the official list of candidates for the biennial election scheduled to be held on March 17.

The deadline for withdrawal of nominations for directorships is February 28. On the same day, the election board will publish the final list of the candidates.

The board declared 28 candidates legal from Association Group and 29 from Chamber Group to run for the election.

The board also declared the nominations by each of the seven selected leading chambers and associations legal. These 14 nominated directors are selected and then inducted in the executive committee as directors without election.

Earlier, the election board primarily legitimised 52 candidates -- 24 from Association Group and 28 from Chamber Group -- for the election.

The board also rejected nominations of seven contenders earlier. Of the seven, six candidates filed appeal petition and the appeal board gave them nod to go ahead accepting their plea.

Meanwhile, the FBCCI Election Board cancelled voting power of five members from the Association Group following orders from the court and commerce ministry. But, the appeal board declared the five voters legal and requested the election board to keep them in the voter list and following the request the election board decided to keep the five voters in the list.

According to the FBCCI constitution, 24 directors -- 12 from Chamber Group and 12 from Association Group -- are elected through direct voting. The elected and nominated 38 directors enjoy voting rights and also become eligible to contest for the posts of president and vice-presidents of the apex trade body.

GlaxoSmithKline wins European nod for bird flu pandemic vaccines

AFP, London

British pharmaceuticals giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has won European recommendations for two vaccines aimed at combatting a potential bird flu pandemic.

Pre-pandemic vaccine Prepandrix has been granted a "positive opinion" by a key panel of the European Medicines Agency (EMA), according to a company statement received Friday by AFP and a press release by EMA.

Prepandrix was developed on the basis of an existing strain of H5N1 bird flu, which can be deadly for humans. It is widely expected to gain European marketing approval in the next few months after winning EMA recommendations, experts said.

Scientists fear that H5N1, which now mostly infects birds, will eventually mutate into a form that is much more easily transmissible between humans, triggering a global flu pandemic.

The idea behind a pre-pandemic vaccine is to stockpile a formula that would give at least an effective shield against a pandemic strain. It would be the best available protection for frontline workers until a new vaccine, calibrated to work against the actual pandemic virus, becomes available.

Another GSK formula, a so-called mock-up vaccine, Pandemrix, has also gained a positive opinion from the EMA.

Pandemrix would not be available until four to six months after an influenza pandemic is declared because the vaccine needs to be adapted to fight the new strain of influenza virus.

Several governments have approached GSK with regard to building stockpiles of Prepandrix, according to Jean-Stephane, president and general manager at GSK's vaccine division, GSK Biologicals.

Demand for immediate execution of Livingstone Declaration on LDCs

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A demand for Bangladeshi RMG products' duty-free access to the US market and immediate execution of the Livingstone Declaration on LDCs (least developed countries) was raised yesterday.

At a press conference in Dhaka, the Make Trade Fair Alliance, an advocacy network that works for the cause of garment workers, also suggested a unity among LDCs for gaining preferential treatment for their products.

The Alliance organised the meeting on the eve of the LDC trade ministers' meet in Lesotho to place the civil society's recommendations before journalists.

"Bangladesh needs to take strong initiatives to get a duty-free facility for its RMG products to US market and raise a collective voice from LDCs in the Lesotho meet," said AKM Masud Ali, a member of the Make Trade Fair Alliance.

"LDCs should raise a common voice for impartial tariff structure in the US to encourage exports from poor countries," he added.

In his keynote paper Masud observed that the recommendations of Livingstone Declaration, which asked for a zero tariff facility for LDCs' products and flexibility in intellectual property rights, are yet to be implemented.

The provisions of flexible intellectual property rights that are incorporated in the Livingstone Declaration are very necessary for protecting the interest of the Bangladesh pharmaceutical industry, Masud pointed out.

Livingstone Declaration was adopted at the Fourth LDC Trade Ministers' Meeting at Livingstone, Zambia in June 2005.

The Alliance also raised the issue of New Partnership for Development Act 2007 (NPDA) that was tabled in US Congress in October last year. The NPDA will

allow duty-free exports from LDCs to the US.

Abdullah Al Mamun, director of Karmojeebi Naree, an NGO working for protecting labour rights, said the least developed countries should unite against the WTO pressure to withdraw subsidy on agriculture sector.

Bayezid Doulla, director of Proshika, a local NGO, and Khalid Hossain, director of Oxfam, an international NGO, were also present.

Make Trade Fair Alliance allies with Oxfam, CPD, Action Aid, Brac, Labour Security Forum, Karmojibi Nari, INCIDIN Bangladesh, BELA, Proshika, Fulki, SST, Garments Oikyo Parishad and Telecine Subtext and forms a secondary level linkage with BGMEA, Shandha Pradeep in Rajshahi, Rupantar in Khulna and BITA (Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Association) in Chittagong.

ALLEGED CRIMES BY SOME BANGLADESHIS IN KSA Country's labour market abroad faces heartbreak

UNB, Dhaka

Criminal acts, reportedly by a few Bangladeshis in Saudi Arabia, not only harm the nation's image but may also jeopardise the country's huge labour market abroad.

A spokesman for the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry yesterday said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is Bangladesh's largest labour market.

Bangladeshis got the biggest share of the 1.5 million Saudi visas issued in 2007. Bangladeshis workers got 23.50 percent of the 1.5 million visas issued.

The spokesman said unfortunately some Bangladeshis in the Middle East country were engaged

in claiming shops illegally, selling banned CDs, running illegal telephone business, stealing manhole covers from roads and footpaths, stealing electricity and telephone cables, and printing fake currency.

These crimes were reported by the Saudi media. In addition, by violating the Saudi laws, Bangladeshi workers started laying siege, ransacking and calling strike to press home their various demands, according to Saudi newspapers and media reports.

The spokesman of the ministry said such activities have put the image of Bangladeshi workers and Bangladesh in peril. The ministry has already asked the Bangladeshi workers to abide by

the Saudi laws. A negative impact on Bangladesh's largest labour market caused by the unlawful acts by a handful of Bangladeshis cannot be tolerated, he said.

Other Arab countries will observe these events in Saudi Arabia, he said, adding that labour markets in those countries are very competitive. Due to lack of awareness, Bangladesh's manpower export to some countries is being impeded.

The spokesman urged the Bangladeshi workers abroad to inform the Bangladesh ministry, embassy/consulate of any of their problems. The government will try to resolve their problems diplomatically.

Micro-finance stakeholders' meet begins today

A three-day meeting of micro-finance stakeholders begins in Dhaka today, says a press release.

The stakeholders are expected to be benefited from newly-launched training materials that are part of a capacity-building programme by Citi, the Foundation for Development Cooperation (FDC) and the Banking with the Poor Network (BWTP).

This regional micro-finance initiative will share best practices in establishing partnerships and strategic alliances between micro-finance institutions (MFIs), regulators, donors and private enterprises that will, in turn, help expand the reach and range of micro-finance services delivered to the poor in Bangladesh.

Following a symposium in the morning today, a two-and-a-half-day training workshop will be held for about 35 micro-finance practitioners from various micro-finance organisations in Bangladesh.

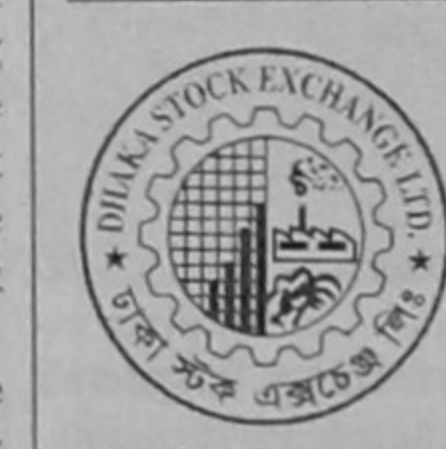
The workshop is designed to develop the critical knowledge and skills needed to create partnerships and alliances in the micro-finance sector. Potential MFI partners could include government bodies, other non-profit organizations or private sector companies such as retailers, telecom operators and large financial institutions.

The workshop will also share industry best practices related to the development of new microfinance products such as insurance and pensions, and educational materials.

The symposium and workshop are part of a US\$570,000 grant given by the Citi Foundation to FDC and BWTP to expand the provision of microfinance services across 10 Asian countries including India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

DSE DIRECTORSHIP Yet another may withdraw candidature

STAR BUSINESS REPORT



At least another candidate is likely to withdraw his candidature today from the election race for the post of director of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

"I may withdraw the nomination paper tomorrow (today) morning," he said preferring to be unnamed.

Today is the last day for withdrawing candidature. The election is scheduled for March 9.

With the latest development, the number of the candidates withdrawing from the DSE directorship will be 7.

Earlier on Wednesday, six candidates out of nine departed the polls race. They are Anwar Hossain, managing director of Anwar Securities, Mujibur Rahman, managing director of Prudential Securities, Khondker Asadul Islam, chief executive office of IDLC Securities, Azizur Rahman, managing director of Globe Securities, Feroz Khan, managing director of Eminent Securities, and Rafiqul Islam, managing director of Parkway Securities.

The three other candidates are: MA Mumin, chairman of Surma Securities Holding Company, Lutfor Rahman Badal, managing director of Latif Securities, and Dastagir Md Adil, managing director of Adil Securities.

There are 12 elected and 12 nominated directors in the board of directors of DSE. According to the DSE constitution, four elected directors retire every year and four others replace them through direct voting.

The 12 elected directors include the new four, one president, one

senior vice-president and one vice-president for the next one year.

The withdrawal of candidature has already raised a question whether the election will be held, as there is already a dearth of candidates for the four posts.

The DSE management is already started consulting lawyers about the issue as the bourse constitution lacks any guideline to face such a vacuum.

One of the candidates, who tries his chance for being a director unopposed, is learnt to have put his influence to grab the top post of the premier bourse.

India sets wages for housemaids abroad

AFP, New Delhi

India has begun rolling out mandatory minimum wage requirements for housemaids working in the Gulf and parts of Africa and Southeast Asia, a minister said Friday.

"They are the most exploited lot," Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi told AFP, citing frequent complaints of harassment, overwork and low wages from female domestic workers.

"They are not covered by the labour laws of those countries." Indian embassies in 18 countries have been told to prescribe minimum monthly wages for maids in the range of 300 to 350 dollars in consultation with local governments, the minister said.

"Otherwise we will not give them clearance to go," said Ravi, adding that he expected Indian embassies in the countries concerned to issue wage guidelines by the beginning of March.

S'pore airshow sees \$13.4b in deals

AFP, Singapore

The Singapore Airshow saw more than 13.4 billion US dollars in sales of aircraft and related equipment this week, thanks to a booming aviation market, organisers have said.

Another 2.6 billion dollars was generated from contracts for facilities and other services, they said in a statement issued late Friday, at the inaugural event.

The small but wealthy city-state decided to host its own airshow after organisers of the Asian Aerospace fair moved the event to Hong Kong after a long presence here.

The biggest deal announced at the airshow was an order for 56 Boeing 737-900ER aircraft worth more than 4.4 billion dollars by Indonesian low-cost carrier Lion Air.

Indonesian flag-carrier Garuda ordered four Boeing 777-300ERs worth 1.0 billion dollars and business jet operator Bjets signed a 600-million-dollar contract for 40 Cessna and Hawker jets.

US-based Boeing's European rival said it had secured orders for five A330-200F cargo planes from BOC Aviation, an aircraft leasing firm fully owned by Bank of China.

The deal is worth a total of 877 million dollars at catalogue prices. Brazilian aircraft-maker Embraer said US aircraft leasing firm Jetscape Inc has ordered 10 E190 jets, with options for another 10 and purchase rights for 10 more.

The deal is worth 375 million US dollars at list price. It could be worth up to 1.1 billion dollars if all the options and purchase rights are confirmed, Embraer said at the airshow.

Embraer also said Australia's Virgin Blue has signed a contract to exercise four purchase rights for E190 jets worth 150 million US dollars. This takes the number of firm orders from Virgin Blue to 24, consisting of six E170s and 18 E190s. "The new deals announced at the airshow demonstrate once again that Asia is the world's fastest-growing aerospace market," said Jimmy Lau, managing director of the event's organisers.