

# BTMA opposes decision on relaxation of yarn import rules thru' Benapole

UNB, Dhaka  
Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) yesterday strongly opposed the government decision about relaxation of conditions on yarn import through Benapole land port for the 100 percent export-oriented knitwear industry.

The decision came into effect on July 1. BTMA President Abdul Hai Sarker at a press conference alleged that the government took the decision to make a certain quarter happy. "The government should suspend the new system until having dialogue with sub-sectors," he said. The BTMA president said the decision has gone against the interest of yarn, causing piling up of thousands of tonnes of yarn in the godowns of mills across the country. Yarn import through the land port remains almost standstill due to procedural complexities despite withdrawal of a ban two years ago. There have been procedural problems relating to customs, bond licence and chemical tests despite withdrawal of the ban on use of the

land port for yarn import. In February 2006, the government imposed some conditions on import of yarn through Benapole land port. The imports were subject to examination by the count of yarn and chemical test. Such tests require at least seven days before the release of yarn from the port causing higher cost. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has issued an order to the Benapole port authorities removing the complexities. Knitwear exporters now can import yarn complying with

only three conditions that include the import of yarn within the allowable annual limit, against back-to-back letter of credits (L/Cs), and that import should be coordinated against utilisation of declaration (UD). "As there is a lack of adequate infrastructure facilities at Benapole port, there will be irregularities," the BTMA president alleged. Yarn is the main raw material for production of knitwear that shares around 60 percent of export value. The knitwear export alone fetched US\$ 4.5 billion in fiscal year 2006-07.



**Victor Fung**  
**ICC gets new chairman**  
STAR BUSINESS DESK  
Victor Fung has taken over as the new chairman of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). Fung was elected ICC chairman for a two-year term on June 13 at a meeting of ICC's World Council held in Stockholm. Prior to this assignment, Fung was vice chairman of the ICC, says a press release. He replaced Marcus Wallenberg, who has now become ICC's honorary chairman. Fung, chairman of Li & Fung Group of Companies, became the first ICC chairman from Hong Kong. He is the chairman of Greater Pearl River Delta Business Council, the Hong Kong University Council, and the Hong Kong-Japan Business Co-operation Committee. He is also a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the Hong Kong Government Commission on Strategic Development.

# Bangladeshi workers welcome Malaysian minister tells Iftekhar

UNB, Kuala Lumpur  
Malaysian Minister for Home and Immigration Affairs Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Syed Jaafar Albar yesterday told visiting Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury that Bangladeshi workers are welcome to Malaysia. The foreign adviser, also in charge of the Ministry of Overseas Employment and Expatriates Welfare, is currently attending the D-8 Conference here. There are currently over 445,000 Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia and the number is increasing everyday. It is likely that their number may exceed 500,000 by the year end.

"This is very different from the picture presented earlier this year that this market is shrinking. Actually, it's growing so rapidly that it's becoming somewhat a problem. Malaysia is about to initiate a series of development projects. And if we can develop the requisite skills, there is ample scope for our workers in Malaysia," Iftekhar later told media people. "Of course, there are some problems and many of our workers have been subject to harassment by many quarters. I've discussed this with Malaysian ministers and we're resolved to address these issues together," the foreign adviser added. The foreign adviser went on:

"Our goal is not just to have expanded markets. We're seeking to improve our skills and emphasising welfare aspects. Our policy thrust is being directed to that end." The foreign adviser earlier met Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Utama Dr Rais Yatim and discussed this among other things. He also met leaders of the Bangladesh community in Malaysia and visited a shelter house arranged for distressed workers. "I've instructed the High Commission to do everything possible to resolve the problems of the workers in the shelter. We've discussed ways and means as to how to go about it," Iftekhar said.

# Economy faces challenges to keep prices at tolerable level

## BB governor tells France-Bangla chamber meet

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Against the backdrop of skyrocketing prices of essentials both at local and international markets, the country's economy is battling against several challenges to keep the prices at a tolerable level, said the central bank governor yesterday.

Due to different internal and external shocks, the economy is going through a number of challenges, Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed said.

According to him, the internal shocks include repeated natural disaster, loss of domestic production, slowdown in real sector and political uncertainty, while the external shocks are upward trend in fuel and food prices in international market, financial crisis in developed countries, and recessionary tendency in the US economy. The governor was addressing the monthly luncheon meeting of France-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIFB) in Dhaka.

"However, the prospect of Bangladesh economy, in the future, is positive as we are working to consolidate our reforms, taking further actions to create enabling environment for business and economic activities," Salehuddin said.



Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed (2-R) speaks at the monthly luncheon meeting of France-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dhaka yesterday. French Ambassador to Bangladesh Charley Causeret and Chamber President Alamgir MZ Rahman were also present.

Recently a substantial growth has been seen in private sector credit in which industrial term loan and also credit to industrial working capital are somewhat higher than the projected level, he added. He hoped these developments may ensure substantial growth in the real sector of the economy as well as employment generation. "In addition, Bangladesh Bank has recently taken several steps to bolster the real sectors of the economy. These steps aim to increase domestic output in agriculture,

manufacturing and service sectors," he said. The real sector encompasses activities related to the aggregate supply and aggregate demand in an economy. Data on this sector cover gross domestic and national products, consumption, savings, and capital formation. The governor said the stance on the policies of the central bank is directed to increase the much-needed employment opportunities for a huge number of people. "Recently, we have taken steps in simplifying foreign

borrowing by the private sector. We are also taking measures for rationalising foreign exchange transactions to encourage increased FDI and foreign portfolio investment in Bangladesh," he said. French Ambassador in Dhaka Charley Causeret and CCIFB President Alamgir MZ Rahman also spoke at the meeting. In fiscal year 2006-07, exports from Bangladesh to France amounted to US\$732 million, while imports from France were worth \$107 million.

## Warid's bonus to inactive subscribers

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Warid Telecom is offering a special bonus talk-time for its Zem prepaid subscribers from Monday, says a press release.

Subscribers who remained inactive since March can avail the latest offer.

Under the offer, those inactive subscribers can enjoy free talk-time, SMS and voice SMS services by simply recharging their accounts with only Tk 10 and above. Subscribers must have to recharge their accounts within July 31 to avail the offer. The offer will remain valid till the month of September. Customers will get the bonus benefits on every first week of August, September and October if they recharge their accounts with any amount of money every month from July.

The subscribers could use the bonus airtime for making calls to other operators while the SMS could be sent to Warid network only and voice SMS to any operators' network.



Wahiduddin Mahmud (2-R), a noted economist and chairperson of the advisory council for the Citigroup Microentrepreneurship Awards, and Rokia A Rahman (2-L), member of the advisory council and former adviser to the caretaker government, among others, are seen at a press conference organised in Dhaka yesterday to announce the launch of the fourth Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards programme.

# MICROENTREPRENEURSHIP Citi launches 4th award programme

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Citi Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Citigroup, yesterday launched the fourth Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards (CMA) programme in Bangladesh.

"The goal of this award is to promote micro entrepreneurs and enterprises and increase awareness about their financial service needs in the country," said professor Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, chairperson of the Advisory Council for the Citigroup Microentrepreneurship Awards.

He was addressing a press conference in this regard and announced the awards schedule at the National Press Club, in the capital.

Wahiduddin Mahmud said the awards for microentrepreneurship bears a symbolic value as it recognises the contribution of micro credit to personal and social life.

"Bangladesh is the motherland of micro finance. Therefore, we are expecting a good response, and we will focus on how we select only four winners from hundreds of successful micro credit stories," he said about the probable response for entries.

The Foundation members told the press conference that the competition would formally begin from this week and the last date for the submission of the entries is August 15.

The awards will be announced by the end of October, said the conference.

The award titled 'Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards-2008' will be given in four categories to micro entrepreneurs and micro finance institutions for their outstanding performances.

The four categories of the 2008 awards are 'Best Innovative Micro Business of the Year', 'Best Woman Microentrepreneur of the Year', 'Best Microentrepreneur of the Year' and 'Best Microfinance Institution (MFI) of the Year'.

Prospective winners will be short-listed by a selection committee and then a jury board, comprising of microfinance experts, media personalities and economists, will finally nominate the awardees.

The winner of the each category will receive Tk 3,50,000 as prize money.

Citibank NA and the 'Shakti Foundation for Disadvantaged Women', a local NGO, will jointly manage and implement the awards programme in Bangladesh.

Rokia A Rahman, member of the advisory council and former adviser to the caretaker government, said the objective of the award is to recognise and honor the leadership, entrepreneurial skills and best practices of individual microentrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

She said the awards programme will help to bring more micro entrepreneurs into focus and will recognise their contribution to the national economy.

A jury board will be formed within a few days, said Citigroup Country Officer Mamun Rashid, at the press conference.

Prof Abu Ahmed of the Department of Economics at the Dhaka University, Professor HI Latif, Managing Director of Grameen Trust and Sarwar Ahmed, Managing Director of Syngenta Bangladesh Ltd were present among other advisory council members.

The Daily Star, the Prothom Alo, and Channel i have joined the programme as partner organisations.

The award was first launched in 2005, and grants from the Citi Foundation will be used for implementation of the award programme.

# Nigeria cancels oil leases granted to Indian firms

AFP, Lagos

Nigeria has cancelled three lucrative oil concessions awarded to two Indian firms during a controversial round of bids last year, the independent This Day newspaper said Monday.

The paper quoted a letter by senior oil official Sadiq Mahmoud as saying that oil prospecting leases awarded to Essar Exploration and Production Limited and Sterling Global Resources limited in May 2007 were revoked because the firms did not meet the pre-qualification requirements.

The oil ministry could not immediately confirm the development, the latest in a series of investigations into oil concessions awarded during the era of ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo.

President Umaru Yar'Adua who succeeded Obasanjo in May 2007, has vowed to reform the country's multi-billion-dollar oil and gas industry, which is ridden with mismanagement and corruption.

Last month, the director of the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), Tony

Chukwueke, was asked to go on leave pending the completion of an in-depth audit relating to the 2007 oil prospecting bid round.

The DPR is responsible for allocating exploration blocs through an auction system.

**Bimstec ministerial meet begins today**  
UNB, Dhaka

The 2-day Bimstec ministerial meeting on poverty alleviation will begin here today.

Finance and Planning Adviser Dr A B Mirza Md Azizul Islam will inaugurate the meeting of high officials at a city hotel, said a handout.

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed will inaugurate the ministerial meeting tomorrow.

# Crucial period ahead for agriculture sector

## Workshop told

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The coming months can be crucial for the country's agriculture sector due to price hike of commodities and climatic changes, a workshop was told yesterday.

Soaring prices of fertiliser in the international market, various climatic factors such as possible flood and cyclone pose threat to the country's food security, said Ad Spijkers, FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) country representative in Bangladesh.

Spijkers made the remark at the inaugural session of a two-day workshop on 'Research in Support of the National Food

Policy', at the BIAM Foundation in Dhaka, attended by about 200 researchers.

The workshop is organised under the research grant initiative of the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP) to share preliminary findings of the 22 research projects, which explored areas for ensuring food for poor people.

Stefan Frowein, ambassador and head of delegation of the European Commission (EU), and Carey N Gordon, deputy mission director of USAID in Dhaka were also present at the programme.

Citing the bumper boro and

potato production of this year Spijkers said the government gave a good incentive to farmers by purchasing rice at Tk 28 a kg.

He also referred to the rise in Bangladesh rice production of the last decade and said food production has increased but the problem remains in people's purchasing capacity.

"Bangladesh must be self-reliant in food production to feed its people," he added.

Stefan Frowein, head of delegation of EC, said food prices are rising globally. He said the rise in food price might fade the achievements made under the Millennium Development Goals.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission  
Government of Bangladesh  
TCB Bhaban, 1 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215.

### Public Notice

Subject: **Public Hearing on Rate Application submitted by Bangladesh Power Development Board to increase electricity tariff to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission.**

This is to notify all that pursuant to the relevant provisions of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act, 2003 Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) filed a formal application to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) for approval of the Commission to increase its wholesale/bulk and retail electricity tariff rates by 41 percent on an average. BERC held an Open Meeting on July 03, 2008 with all relevant stakeholders on the BPDB's application and declared acceptance of BPDB's wholesale/bulk rate application and deferment of consumer-level rate application.

Now a Public Hearing will be held on August 20, 2008 at 10.30 am at Commission's office on the aforesaid wholesale/bulk rate application of BPDB. Any person, entity or organization desiring to participate in the Public Hearing to support or oppose the application must register his name through an application to the Commission by July 15, 2008. The complete BPDB's rate application is available for review in the Commission's office which can be procured by a cash payment of Taka 300/- as processing fee. Also the Commission will accept all written comments on the rate application up to August 13, 2008.

By the order of the Commission  
Meshkat Ahmed Chowdhury  
Secretary

Tel # 9140125