

Steps taken to keep prices of essentials stable: Faruk

UNB, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan said yesterday the government took necessary steps to keep prices of essentials stable in the local market, especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

"We're strengthening the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB)... lessening the lengthy process of its imports so that TCB can import goods quickly like private enterprises," he told reporters at his

office after a meeting with the Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

The minister said some amendments in rules are being done to make the TCB more effective and efficient with more skilled workforce employed, if necessary.

"We'll also keep a close watch into TCB activities so that no corruption takes place in its operation."

Replying to a question, he said the government would import edible oil, pulse, sugar and dates through TCB well ahead of Ramadan.

"We'll also sit together with the businessmen to discuss so that people can buy essentials easily at affordable cost," he said.

Prime Bank's new SEVP

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shawkat Hossain took over as senior executive vice president and head of SME at Prime Bank Ltd recently, according to a press statement.

Prior to joining Prime Bank, he was the head of finance at Bank AlFalah Ltd.

Hossain, a fellow of Cost and Management Accountants, held various positions in different organisations.

Minister stresses dairy farmers' safeguard

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdul Latif Biswas called upon milk processors yesterday to safeguard the interests of the dairy farmers instead of focusing more on making their own profit.

The minister made the call at a meeting with the milk processors to devise ways to help dairy farmers who recently threw hundreds of litres of milk on the highways protesting price cuts by the processors.

"You (processors) should not act entirely in your own interests. During the peak demand period you all turn to the farmers for milk even by paying in advance, now you should stand by them as they are in crisis," he told the milk processors.

Top officials of leading milk processing firms including Bangladesh Milk Producer Co-Operative Union, Brac, Pran and Akjij were present at the meeting.

While briefing the media, Latif on

the incident of throwing milk by dairy farmers in the milk hubs of Pabna and Sirajganj, said: "It's a drama created by the private sector. It was done by the middlemen, not by the farmers. If there was such a dissatisfaction among the farmers, we would know that."

The minister, pointing at some middlemen of a private milk processing company, said: "The protest was staged by milkers. I think there is something wrong with that. It was done to embarrass the government."

"If any vested quarter wants to embarrass the government with ill motive, it will not bring any good to them," he cautioned.

The dairy farmers, hurt by price cuts by the local milk processors, staged a symbolic protest by throwing milk on the highway, saying that processors now offer them below Tk 27 a litre, which was over Tk 32 a couple of months ago.

The farmers faced the cut in prices as some processors encountered a price competition due to a sharp fall in

the prices of imported powdered milk as global recession put a downward pressure on commodity prices.

To avoid the price competition some processors have also cut their procurement quantity as they found tonnes of their milk powder unsold.

The processors demanded imposition of a supplementary duty on the imported powdered milk to save the local dairy industry that last year enjoyed a surge in demand for liquid milk in the wake of higher prices of milk powder on the global market.

A melamine scare also helped milk processors last year boost their sales. But now the demand is eroding as imported milk powder prices have gone down, prompting consumers to opt for the low-priced imported milk powder, industry people said.

The minister said the processors should act taking into accounts the interests of the consumers, farmers and other stakeholders.

"I expect you all to take pragmatic steps to solve the problem," he said.

FBCCI suggests revenue target at Tk 55,000cr

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's apex trade body, FBCCI, urged the government yesterday to keep the revenue collection target at Tk 55,000 crore in the budget for fiscal year 2009-10 with an estimated growth rate at six percent.

Annisul Huq, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), put the proposal at a meeting with Dr Nasiruddin Ahmed, chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), at the latter's office.

Huq led a business team to the NBR chairman's office during the meeting.

Huq also called upon the government to bring down the import duty to one to two percent within 2016 for the sake of rapid industrialisation in the country.

The FBCCI boss urged the



Annisul Huq, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), speaks at a meeting with Dr Nasiruddin Ahmed, chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), in Dhaka yesterday.

NBR chairman to cap the duties on import of capital machinery at one percent, on intermediate goods at five percent, essential intermediate goods at 12 percent and on luxury items at 25 percent.

Huq suggested the ceiling of the income tax-free money should be raised up to Tk 200,000 from the existing Tk 165,000.

for the interest of the local re-rolling mills.

The NBR should encourage the businessmen to make friendly the electronic cash registers' business, Huq said.

He suggested the ceiling of the income tax-free money should be raised up to Tk 200,000 from the existing Tk 165,000.

Global crisis hampers 85pc of Chinese overseas business



Models pose at the Honda stand at Auto Shanghai 2009. Carmakers from around the world unveiled their latest products at the show, hoping to shrug off dreary times for the industry by tapping into the world's new top auto market.

ANN/CHINA DAILY

The world financial crisis has severely dampened Chinese companies' enthusiasm for investing overseas, although many of them said they still want to go global, results of a survey showed on Wednesday.

About 85 per cent of respondents said their overseas business has been hampered by the crisis, and as a result, merely 7 percent said, they would like to add to their outflows this year.

However, when asked whether they will expand overseas investment in the next two years, 40 percent answered yes.

The report, released by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and the third of its kind, is based on a four-month survey of 1,100 companies in sectors ranging from textiles, hi-tech and construction to resources.

Companies that are waiting for overseas opportunities see investment as part of a long-term strategy to improve profit margins and build their brands on the international stage, according to the report.

The findings do not appear to tally

with recent high-profile merger and acquisition (M&A) activity involving Chinese enterprises, which many experts believe heralded a fresh burst of overseas investment.

In January and February, more than 20 overseas M&A deals worth US\$20 billion were reportedly inked by Chinese companies, involving many big players.

In February alone, Shenzhen Zhongjin Lingnan Nonfemt, China's fifth largest zinc producer by output, acquired 50.1 percent of Perilya, an Australian zinc and lead mining company. In the same month, Chinalco announced plans to inject \$19.5 billion into Rio Tinto, one of the largest mining corporations worldwide.

But Su Chang, macro-economic analyst at China Economic Business Monitor, told China Daily that such cases do not reflect the whole picture. "They are limited to resource-oriented sectors," he said.

According to the report, more than half the companies establish an overseas presence through sales offices, compared with only 8 percent through M&As, and "the general situation will not change in three to five years".

Su forecast that investment will pick up only after the global economy takes a turn for the better in the last quarter of this year.

A recent report by PricewaterhouseCoopers agreed, saying Chinese companies' overseas investment will rebound when the global economy comes out of recession.

Besides the dire economic situation, the fear of trade protectionism and limited funding channels are also obstacles.

"There has been a slowdown in growth of overseas investment because the biggest concerns are a deteriorated investment environment and difficulty in fund-raising," Sun Yanbin, vice-chairman of CCPIT Hubei branch, told the China Daily.

The CCPIT report also shows the major challenges Chinese companies encounter are worries about quality and safety of products.

This year, the government has rolled out policies to stimulate overseas investment but the companies surveyed reflected only a low level of satisfaction with credit insurance and foreign exchange facilities.

Malaysia relaxes rules for investors

ANN/THE STRAITS TIMES

Investors in parts of Malaysia's services sector no longer have to find Malay partners who will own 30 percent of the business.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak announced Wednesday that the long-standing requirement will be lifted immediately for 27 sub-sectors, including health and social services, tourism, transport, business and computer-related services.

At present, foreign investors in the services industry must take on Malay partners to own 30 per cent of any joint venture.

The government hopes that lifting the requirement will boost investment and make the services sector more competitive, Datuk Seri Najib said.

The decision comes amid official warnings that the economy could shrink by as much as 1 per cent this year. Malaysia has been hard hit by the global economic crisis, with exports down 15.9 per cent in February from a year ago.

Critics say it has failed and that only a handful of well-connected Malays have benefited from it. It is also blamed for dampening foreign interest in areas such as finance and telecommunications.

The services sector is the largest, contributing 55 per cent to Malaysia's gross domestic product last year.

Najib said the government aims to raise this to 60 per cent, a shift that would lessen its dependence on electronics exports and commodities.

Within the services sector, financial service is the biggest, followed by tourism, one of the top foreign exchange earners.

The government plans to liberalise other sectors in stages, with details for the financial sector to be unveiled next week, Najib said.

The 30 per cent ownership rule is part of the New Economic Policy (NEP), a controversial policy aimed at closing the wealth gap between Malays and non-Malays, particularly the Chinese.

Critics say it has failed and that only a handful of well-connected Malays have benefited from it. It is also blamed for dampening foreign interest in areas such as finance and telecommunications.



Zafar Osman, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), speaks at a national workshop on Green Initiative: Way to Go Green at DCCI auditorium in the capital yesterday. Dilip Barua, industries minister, and Mustafizur Rahman, state minister for environment and forest, among others, are seen.

Institute of Information Technology (IIT) UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA DHAKA -1000

Master in Information Technology (MIT) Admission Notice, Session 2009-2010

Applications are invited from the prospective students desiring to take a full time regular (one-year) course for the Master in Information Technology (MIT), to be offered by IIT, University of Dhaka.

Thirty Five (35) students will be taken strictly on the basis of merit. Applicants must satisfy the following requirements:

1. Citizen of Bangladesh
 2. 4 years Computer Science/Information Technology/Electronics/ Communications (or equivalent degree) with CGPA 2.5 out of 4.00 (or 2nd class approved by the equivalence committee of IIT) or successful completion of PGDIT (or equivalent).
 3. No third class/division (or equivalent).
- Admission test will be held in two phases. Written examination will be held to test computer, quantitative, analytical and English Language proficiency. Successful (written exam) candidates will have to appear a viva voce for final selection to enroll in MIT.

The course will be full time and divided into 2 semesters. Detailed syllabus, rules and regulations may be obtained from the office of IIT.

Application forms are obtainable from the office of Institute of Information Technology (April 26, 2009 to May 27, 2009), University of Dhaka, on payment of Tk. 500/- in cash (non-refundable) between 10.00 am to 4.30 pm.

Schedule for Admission Test

Last date to submit the application	May 27, 2009 (Wednesday)
Date of written test	May 29, 2009 (Friday, IIT Building, DU at 3.00 pm)
Results of written test	May 31, 2009 (Sunday)
Date of viva voce	June 03-04, 2009
Eligible candidate list	June 07, 2009 (Sunday)
Orientation	1st July, 2009 (Wednesday)

Detailed information of the MIT admission can be seen at <http://iit.univdhaka.edu>

Director, IIT, DU.



K Nanda Gopal (2-L), chief executive officer of ASK Trade and Exhibitions India, poses for photographs at a signing ceremony with Bangladesh Engineering Industry Owners' Association (BEIOA) in Dhaka yesterday. ASK Trade and Exhibitions India and BEIOA will host the country's first ever engineering and industrial trade show in Dhaka next year.