

Aspirant beauticians get a face-lift

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government should provide IT training to the rural women, particularly working in the agriculture sector, a former caretaker government adviser said yesterday.

"They should get opportunities so they can make their own fortune," said Rokia Afzal Rahman.

She was speaking at a certificate giving ceremony of 'Beautification and Beauty Parlour Management' training course at Spectra Convention Centre in Dhaka.

Managing Director of SME Foundation Syed Rezwanul Kabir presided over the event, while its Chairman Aftab ul Islam and Deputy General Manager Nurul Quadir and Persona Managing Director Kaniz Almas Khan also spoke.

SME (small and medium enterprise) Foundation and Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs (BFWE) jointly organised the 10-day in-house training course, in association with Persona Institute of Beauty and Lifestyle.

A total of 27 women, mostly from outside the capital, took part in the training course, designed to help them become small entrepreneurs and create employment opportunities.

Rokia said: "With the training, these women now will be able to set up beauty parlours at their village homes and earn Tk 5,000 to Tk 10,000 a month."

"We hope they now know how to man-

age beauty parlour business efficiently."

The BFWE president thanked the SME Foundation, Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS), a microcredit organisation, and Persona for extending their support to the training programme.

SME Foundation provided daily allowances and tool kits for the trainees from Bogra, Joypurhat, Gaibandha and Dhaka districts, while TMSS arranged accommodation and Persona offered training free of cost.

Rokia called upon the trainees to work hard to become successful entrepreneurs. "Kaniz Almas started with only Tk 2 lakh, but now she is a successful entrepreneur."

Aftab ul Islam said easy credit with low interest rates should be made available for such trainees to help them succeed in their career.

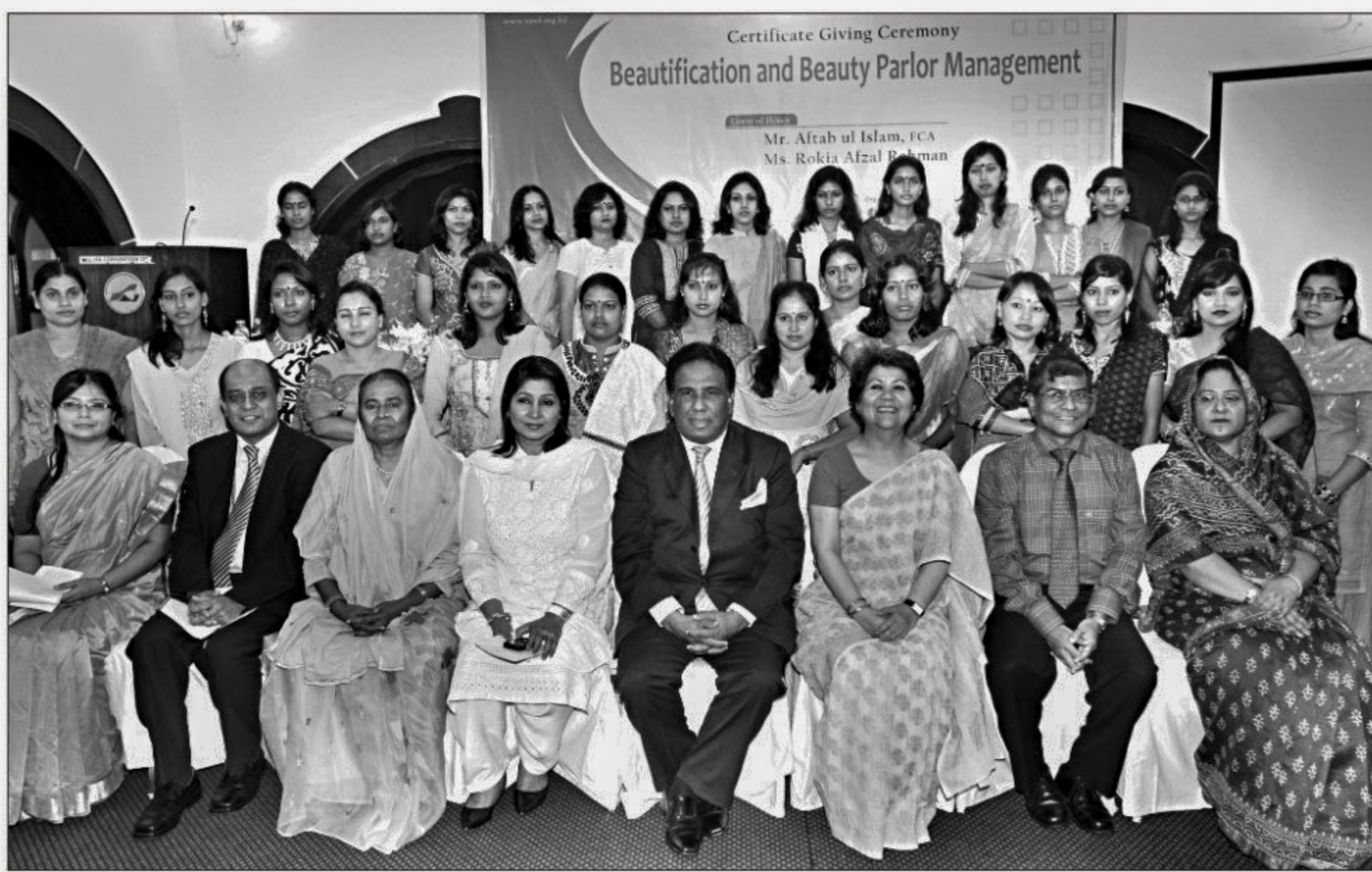
"There should be allocation for the beauty parlour sector in the national budget, as it is generating jobs for women. Besides, a minimal duty should be imposed on imported equipment and tools used in the sector."

Islam, also the president of American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham), demanded single-digit bank interest rate for the women entrepreneurs.

"The economy cannot move forward with a 12 percent interest rate that ultimately reaches 18 percent at the end."

SME Foundation will give the trainees loans between Tk 50,000 and Tk 750,000 at 9 percent interest, said Islam.

Syed Rezwanul Kabir said the



Former caretaker government adviser Rokia Afzal Rahman, seated third from right; SME Foundation Chairman Aftab ul Islam, fourth from right; and Persona Managing Director Kaniz Almas Khan, fifth from right, pose at the certificate giving ceremony of 'Beautification and Beauty Parlour Management' training course at Spectra Convention Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

Foundation has recently entered into an agreement with Mutual Trust Bank to finance the women entrepreneurs.

He said they would not stop just by providing training to the aspirant beau-

tyicians. "After 90 days, we will enquire about what they are doing."

Kaniz Almas said the training will play a significant role in changing the course of the life of the trainees. "Now

they will feel more confident."

Rokia later distributed certificates among the participants.

TMSS Executive Director Hosne Ara Begum also spoke.

Workshop suggests more revenue income for local government

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A suggestion came from a workshop in Dhaka yesterday that taxes on mobile phone towers, rural electric poles and auto-rickshaws could be lucrative sources of income for the local government.

The speakers said such government representatives should brainstorm new, innovative sources of income that can be used to fund local needs.

Held at Bangabandhu International Convention Centre, the workshop on 'union parishad revenue mobilisation' was organised by the Local Government Division in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Many a discussant said taxes should be fixed fairly and be collected in a way that encourages more people to pay. They also pointed out that the amount of taxes presently collected at the local government level is low compared to international standards.

"Fixing tax and administering its

collection are the two key functions of a local government," said Prof Musleh Uddin Ahmed of the Public Administration Department at Dhaka University.

There is a need to make it sure that taxes collected are proportionate to incomes and assets of the local taxpayers, he said. "Besides, it should also be checked whether tax collecting officials are doing their jobs efficiently and ethically."

A university teacher from the United Kingdom cited an example how authorities find innovating sources of income.

"Once the local government authorities of England levied taxes on house windows," said Professor Simon DeLay from the University of Birmingham.

However, people who build new houses, then, did not put windows to avert such taxes, he pointed out.

Taking such lessons from other countries, taxes imposed on the general masses should be equitable and fair.

"Simplicity is also another concern," he added, "it should be easy for the general people to understand the need and process of taxing."

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak said, "The national economy, in many cases, depends on the local government authorities."

"Therefore, it is necessary to create awareness so that more people are encouraged to pay taxes," he added.

Listing enactment of a number of laws by the present government to strengthen the local government and municipal authorities, Nanak said the government would move towards more decentralisation of the local government.

Chaired by Local Government Secretary Manzoor Hossain, the programme was also addressed by Additional Secretary Syed Mahboob Hossain, Joint Secretary (Admin) Ashoke Madhab Roy and UNDP's Country Representative Stefan Priesner.

Tourism fair abuzz with visitors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

EBL Bangladesh Travel and Tourism Festival pulled in a large number of visitors on the first day.

Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh organised the three-day fair in collaboration with Eastern Bank at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader inaugurated the event as chief guest.

Quader said Bangladesh has a lot of events round the year, like International Mother Language Day, the first day of the Bangla New Year, Independence Day, which can be occasions for tourists to visit the country.

He also said the archaeological sites in Narsingdi, Wari-Bateswar, are also tourist attractions.

The tourism minister said the government formed a tourism board to help boost the sector. Officials have been recruited and financial allotments made for the board.

"The government declared 2011 as a year of tourism, when various year-long programmes will be observed."

The minister said the next ICC World Cup will take place in Bangladesh and it is a great opportunity for the tourism sector to expose the country to the rest of the world.

Cultural Affairs Ministry Secretary Hedayetullah Al Mamun said: "The government already deployed Tk 100 crore to flourish the tourism sector."

At the fair, 110 organisations from 10 different countries, including Bangladesh, are showcasing their products and services at 163 stalls.

Tran Vinh Loc Jonathan, executive director of Lac Hong Voyager Co Ltd of Vietnam, told The Daily Star that his country has good relations with Bangladesh. There is an opportunity for Bangladeshis to visit Vietnam as well, he said.

He assured that they would handle everything from visa processing to hotel booking and site seeing for the visitors.

Salman Ahmed, deputy director of international marketing division of Tourism Malaysia, said they are offering special holiday packages with return air tickets to Malaysia at discount prices.

"Tourism is a reciprocal deal and just like we expect visitors from Bangladesh, the host country also expects visitors from my country."

The fair will remain open from 10am to 8pm with an entry fee of Tk 20.



Md Abdul Karim, principal secretary to the prime minister, speaks at the monthly luncheon meeting of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) at the Westin Dhaka in the capital yesterday. AM Hamim Rahmatullah, second from right, Ficci president, is also seen.

SME Foundation goes paperless

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The SME Foundation yesterday launched its paperless office in an effort to cut costs, increase productivity and provide better services to stakeholders.

Md Abdul Karim, principal secretary to the prime minister, announced the launch of the new office from a ceremony at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.

Aftab ul Islam, president of SME Foundation, chaired the event, which was also addressed by Syed Rezwanul Kabir, managing director.

Speaking as the chief guest, the PM's principal secretary said the government and non-governmental organisations should cooperate in making the government's vision for a Digital Bangladesh a reality.

"Using the ICT power and capacities, we have to take all services to people's doorsteps," he said.

Karim said the government is taking steps to promote e-commerce, e-banking and e-learning. "The private sector has to be involved."

He thanked the foundation for playing a pioneering role in automating its office in

compliance with the government's digitisation efforts.

"We could get rid of corruption, irregularities and lack of transparency if all offices are automated," Karim said.

He said digitisation of land records and registration systems could curb corruption and save people from hassles in the hands of rogue officials.

Aftab ul Islam termed the digitisation of his office as a milestone achieved.

The ICT wing of the foundation has developed necessary software for its internal use.

"We hope productivity of the office will go up and the internal office operations will be faster, reliable and less expensive, lessening the use of paper," he said.

The SME Foundation stakeholders will also be benefited if it grows efficiently and digitally, he added.

In his presentation, Md Mujibur Rahman, deputy general manager of SME Foundation, said the paperless office style would create an environment that makes paper redundant for routine tasks such as record-keeping, noting, filing and mailing.



Borwin Jung, regional HR director for BAT Asia Pacific, inaugurates the renovated structures of IBA in Dhaka yesterday. BAT Bangladesh has supported the business school to repair some of its structures. GM Chowdhury, IBA director, and Arun Kaul, BAT Bangladesh's managing director, were also present.

BAT teams up with IBA on talent development

STAR BUSINESS DESK

British American Tobacco Bangladesh has joined hands with the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) of Dhaka University to help develop talents in the country.

As part of the initiative, BAT Bangladesh has supported IBA's efforts to renovate some infrastructures in the business school, said a statement.

Inaugurating the renovated infrastructures in the IBA yesterday, Borwin Jung, regional HR director for BAT Asia Pacific, spoke about global career and potential recruitment opportunities with BAT Bangladesh.

IBA Director GM Chowdhury, BAT South Asia Area Head of HR Murali Thanabalan, and BAT Bangladesh's Managing Director Arun Kaul, Head of HR Syed Intiaz Faruque and Head of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs Zakir Ibne Hai were also present at the inauguration.

Borwin was impressed with the success of IBA students working in the country's private and public sectors. During the visit to IBA, he also tried to have a detailed understanding on how leading business schools in Bangladesh are developing talents.

Appreciating BAT Bangladesh's

efforts to support IBA, GM Chowdhury said growth of public sector is possible with support from private sector.

Seeking support from global organisations, the director also said IBA will not limit itself within Bangladesh. "It aspires to be a major force in the region."

Arun Kaul said BAT has always been committed to the development of management talent in the country.

The company has offered internship and career opportunities to a number of IBA graduates over the years. More than 52 IBA alumni are currently working in BAT Bangladesh and other BAT markets.



GM Chowdhury, middle, director of Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Dhaka University, announces a weeklong event titled "IBA Corporate Week" in Dhaka yesterday. The event that starts today is meant for IBA students to consider their career prospects. Participating corporate entities will also get an opportunity to shortlist their potential recruits.

India boasts record 69 billionaires: Forbes

AFP, New Delhi

Tycoon Mukesh Ambani kept his title of richest Indian as the fast-growing economy minted 17 new billionaires in 2010, driving the total to a record 69, according to a Forbes rich list Thursday.

Ambani, chairman of India's biggest private sector firm Reliance Industries, retained his top slot as the wealthiest Indian for a third consecutive year with a net worth of 27 billion dollars, Forbes India magazine said.

Ambani was closely followed by London-based steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal, at 26.1 billion dollars.

The record number of billionaires "is yet another clear signal the centre of gravity will increasingly shift to India and China over the next decade," said Indrajit Gupta, editor of Forbes India.

Indian entrepreneurs are displaying "their ability to harness the unprecedented wealth creation opportunities that exist in this part of the world," Gupta said.