

NRB bank gets green light from Bangladesh Bank

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A new bank, 50 percent owned by non-resident Bangladeshis, has received a green light from Bangladesh Bank.
The central bank will seek applications from interested NRB entrepreneurs, said an official, after the BB's Board of Directors on Tuesday approved a proposal to set up the bank.
The central bank will also make a set of criteria for evaluating the application forms.
The proposal mentioned that the amount of foreign direct investment in Bangladesh is much lower than in neighbouring countries.

NRBs are interested to invest here and their demand for establishing banks owned by them was raised many times in different forums.
Considering the huge remittances sent by the NRBs, formation of such a bank to create a handsome foreign exchange reserve has opened up a positive side, the proposal said.
In line with a guideline, also approved by the board, the paid-up capital of the NRB bank will be Tk 400 crore. The NRBs will provide the half of the paid-up capital and the rest will be raised through a public offering.
An entrepreneur can hold a

minimum of Tk 10 crore in shares or a maximum of 10 percent of the total shares. No share of the entrepreneur can be transferred in three years without the central bank's permission.
A non-refundable amount of \$15,000 has to be deposited with the application.
There are about 50 local and foreign commercial banks operating in the country, of which 30 are private.
The approval for any new bank had been on hold from 2001, following the presence of more-than-required banks and criticisms from various quarters.

BB moves to tame credit flow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday took new steps to control the credit flow in an effort to contain inflation.
The central bank issued two separate circulars. One of them directed the banks to take back the loans given to rice-mill owners and traders every 30 days, which was 45 days earlier.
The circular said the move would ensure rice supply to the market. The price of coarse rice was Tk 35-36 a kg yesterday, about 34 percent higher than a year ago, according to a Trading Corporation of Bangladesh report.
In another circular, BB asked the banks to set the loan equity ratio at 50:50 for consumer loans. Earlier, there was no guideline for the loan equity ratio for consumer finance.
A high official of BB said it was done to curb the credit flow to unproductive sectors. Credit growth in the private sector was about 27 percent. Bangladesh Bank's monetary policy promises to cut credit growth in the private sector to 16 percent by June next year.



CONCORD
Concord Entertainment has signed a partnership deal with City Bank, which will carry out branding and promotional activities for Fantasy Kingdom, Go-Kart, Foy's Lake and Sea World of Concord. Deputy Managing Director of City Bank Sohail RK Hussain and DMD of Concord Group Shahriar Kamal were present at a signing ceremony.

Singapore Airlines to increase frequency for summer

STAR BUSINESS DESK
Singapore Airlines will increase services across parts of its global network during the northern summer period (March 27 to October 29, 2011), said a statement.
Airbus A380 services will be extended to Los Angeles, with SQ12/11 operated by the superjumbo on the Singapore-Tokyo Narita-Los Angeles route from March 27.
The route is currently served with Boeing 747-400 aircraft. Los Angeles will be the eighth destination that the A380 will serve from Singapore, the airliner added.
"The use of the Singapore Airlines A380 on the route will present an increased capacity on the route. It will also provide an enhanced level comfort with its three classes of product offerings -- the Singapore Airlines Suites, Business Class and Economy Class," said Malcolm Leong, general manager for Bangladesh operations.
Frequency will also be increased on select services between Singapore and points in North Asia (Singapore-Taipei and Singapore-Osaka routes), West Asia (Singapore-Maldives route) and Europe

Law for ship-breaking industry on cards

BSS, Dhaka
Commerce Minister Faruk Khan yesterday said the government has taken initiatives for the first time to enact a law for the ship-breaking industry.
The draft of the law has already been prepared and it is expected to approve by the cabinet soon, he added.
The minister was speaking as the chief guest at a seminar on ship breaking industry at the auditorium of Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) in the city.
He said the High Court verdict on ship-breaking industry must be followed and the government is working to protect the environment and save common people.
Khan assured the BCSIR of all cooperation in attaining ISO 30000 certification.
He also said the government is pledge-bound to carry on all development activities in an environment-friendly manner.
"Not only the ship breaking industry, it is the election pledge of the government to conduct all activities protecting environment."
Presided over by BCSIR Chairman SM Imamuul Huq, the seminar was also addressed by Environment Secretary Mihir Kanti Majumder.

New MD for Mercantile Ins

STAR BUSINESS DESK
Abdul Haque has recently joined Mercantile Insurance Company Ltd as managing director, said a statement.
A fellow member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh, Haque joined Federal Insurance in 1993 and served the organization for 17



BANK ASIA
Romo Rouf Chowdhury, director of Bank Asia, inaugurates the bank's 48th branch at Paltan in Dhaka yesterday. Erfanuddin Ahmed, president, was also present.



STAR
Yeafesh Osman, state minister for science and information and communication technology, inaugurates Digital ICT Fair at Multiplan Computer City on Elephant Road in Dhaka yesterday. Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, former vice chancellor of Brac University, and Aftab ul Islam, SME Foundation chairperson, are also seen.

Govt to work for high job rate in manufacturing

UNB, Dhaka
The government will work to increase employment rate to 16 percent in the manufacturing sector by 2015 with an aim to achieve gross domestic product growth to about 8 percent.
At present, the manufacturing sector accounts for 11 percent of employment although it includes over 80 percent of the country's industrial units, according to a draft of the sixth five-year plan (SFYP) for 2011-15.
General Economics Division of the Planning Commission placed the draft before the meeting of the steering committee who formulate the SFYP.
The meeting was held at the NEC conference room at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in Dhaka yesterday.
Headed by Planning Minister AK Khandker, the steering committee comprises secretaries of different ministries.
The SFYP will concentrate on reducing regional disparities and developing human resources for converting Bangladesh into a middle-income country.
Strategic directions and policy framework of the SFYP identified 22 core targets in the context of the government's 'Vision 2021'.
The SFYP will target increasing manufacturing sector's GDP share to 25 percent and employment to 16 percent by 2015. Besides, it will also seek removal of

constraints on expansion of external trade for diversifying the country's exports.
The SFYP will also look for improving the efficiency of and access to financial sector by reducing intermediary costs.
The proposed plan will further focus on removing infrastructure constraints through massive investment in power and transport sectors.
It will strive to address the issues of disadvantaged regions, especially Khulna, Rajshahi and Barisal divisions, through a strategy that involves public expenditure in infrastructure and human development. It will also seek to facilitate more trade and investment in the border districts with the neighbouring countries including India, the draft said.
The SFYP will seek to address the income inequality problem through a range of measures. These are creating better access to high productivity, high-paid jobs, and improving farm productivity and income.
It will also strive improving the access of the poor to agriculture inputs including fertiliser, seeds, water, electricity and also rural transportation.
Bangladesh has made significant progress in education and gender equality both at primary and secondary levels, the draft document mentioned.

ICT fair kicks off

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
A nine-day fair kicked off in the capital yesterday to showcase and sell world-class IT gadgets.
Yeafesh Osman, state minister for science and information and communication technology, inaugurated the exposition, 'Digital ICT Fair 2010,' at the Multiplan Computer City on Elephant Road.
Multiplan Centre Shop Owners Association organised the fair, where ICT products such as laptops, digital cameras, LCD monitors, TV cards, pen drives and memory cards will be available at discounted prices.
The fair, which will also feature seminars, debates, drawing and quiz competitions, voluntary blood donation campaign and cultural programmes, will remain open for the visitors from 10:00am to 8:00pm everyday.
Speaking as chief guest, Yeafesh Osman said the government is working to help the IT sector outperform the country's garments sector in bringing foreign exchange through outsourcing.
"But nothing can be achieved without cooperation with the private sector," he said.
He said the government has adopted an ICT policy, which has outlined 306 action plans.
"The policy has spelt out responsibilities of each ministry in incorporating ICT under the government's Digital Bangladesh vision," he said. "We are working on e-governance to reduce our dependency on paper."
Zia Ahmed, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), said, "By declaring Vision

2021, the government has rightly informed us of opportunities in the ICT sector."
Over 6.5 crore people currently use mobile phones in the country, while the number of people using internet has almost touched one-crore mark, said the BTRC chief, focusing on the sector's achievement.
"We've become a member of International Telecommunication Union, he said.
He also disclosed some of his organisation's plans to take the country's telecom sector to a new height. "We'll soon add another submarine cable. The price of internet bandwidth will also go down from the existing Tk 18,000 to Tk 12,000."
"Operators will also be given access to landing stations. Besides, we also hope to launch satellite within the tenure of the government. We've also progressed much in allowing licence for 3G network," Ahmed said.
Entry fee is Tk 10 but students of schools and colleges will enjoy free access to the fair.
Former Vice Chancellor of BRAC University Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury said Bangladeshis will benefit from some of the projects under the country's Digital Bangladesh Vision from 2011.
Aftab ul Islam, SME Foundation chairperson, and Mostafa Mohsin Montu, the Dhaka district commander during the Liberation War, also spoke on the occasion.
Tawfique Ehsan, president of Multiplan Centre Shop Owners Association, chaired the opening ceremony.
With 450 showrooms, the centre is one of the largest markets for ICT products in the country.



MTB
SK Sur Chowdhury, Bangladesh Bank executive director, and Anis A Khan, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank (MTB), exchange documents after signing a deal in Dhaka on Tuesday. MTB will enjoy financing facility from the World Bank, to be administered by the central bank, to extend credit facilities to infrastructure projects.



ARISTOPHARMA
MA Hassan, chairman and managing director of Aristopharma Ltd, attends the company's annual sales conference 2010 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka on Tuesday.

Sony to launch PlayStation smartphone in spring

AFP, Tokyo
Sony's long-remoured PlayStation Portable smartphone is set to be launched in North America and Europe as early as the spring, according to a Japanese newspaper report Wednesday.
The device would likely be based on Sony's handheld PSP Go game console, would be made by Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications and run Google's Android operating system, said the Asahi Shimbun's English edition, citing unnamed sources.
Sony hopes to take on Apple's iPhone, Research in Motion's BlackBerry and Nokia devices by offering the first smartphone that is based on a portable game console.
The PSP Go, launched in November 2009, already features software downloads, allowing players to also browse the Internet, watch movies, play music