



DHAKA MERCANTILE CO-OPERATIVE
Tofael Ahmed, a member of parliament, inaugurates the 93rd branch of Dhaka Mercantile Co-operative Bank in Bhola yesterday. Md Hamidul Hossain Tareq, director of Dhaka Mercantile Bank, and Abu Jafor Chowdhury, chief advisor, also attended the programme.

Muhith suggests efforts to make Planning Commission more active

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A substantial streamlining and flawless planning is required to make the Planning Commission more active, said Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday.

Muhith was addressing a national dialogue on strategic direction and policy framework as part of the draft sixth five-year plan (2011-15) at the NEC conference room at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in Dhaka.

The minister emphasised devolution of power, strengthening monitoring and evaluation, exploring economic benefit of providing transit facilities to neighbours, rural land-use planning, domestic resource mobilisation and halting migration of people to urban areas.

Muhith said the future direction of the Planning Commission is yet to emerge clearly and the situation should be addressed immediately by defining the functions of the commission.

"Clear direction of removing inequity and regional disparity should be incorporated in the plan," said Muhith. The paper discussed the disparity where inequality is not properly addressed, he said.

Muhith described transit as a significant issue and said it should also be focused in the plan.

The ownership of the plan is political and therefore, its modification is required to make it more people-oriented, he added.

Unless devolution of power took place, the dream of the

government would not be realised, said the minister stressing the division of power.

Earlier during the dialogue, Shamsul Alam, member of General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission made the keynote presentation.

PM's establishment Adviser HT Imam said that the IMED (Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division) should be strengthened as it lacks professionalism and, in-depth monitoring should be conducted.

According to Imam, regional disparity is a growing concern and it fuelled discontents among the people of some districts of northern and southern regions. Stressing the importance of restoring confidence among the public service employees, Imam

said they feel frustrated about political intervention under different government regimes.

Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haque Mostafa Shahid disagreed with the term "very poor country" used in the introductory part of the paper to define Bangladesh. He said Bangladesh is no longer a very poor country as even villagers are also using mobile phone widely.

The minister also tried to differentiate between the unemployed and those not willing to be employed. He remarked that a lot of spending took place in the education sector but the results were not satisfactory.

PM's Adviser Tawfiq-E-Elahi Chowdhury said the draft plan is weak especially on issues like environment and good gover-

nance. He recommended giving particular concentration on matters such as child and maternal malnutrition.

Centre for Policy Dialogue Executive Director Mustafizur Rahman suggested that the trade policy outlined in the draft Plan would have to be re-designed in line with the industrial sector demands.

State Minister for Environment and Forests Hasan Mahmud said the tax net should be expanded and the tax-GDP ratio should be increased by 5 percent instead of 2.28 percent shown in the draft Plan.

Prime minister's economic adviser Dr Mashur Rahman said the paper mentions a good set of targets it is not clear how they would be achieved.

Natore onions may hit record

BSS, Dhaka

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Natore expects a record cultivation of onions in the current season. It is expected to surpass the target of over 60,000 tonnes.

The probability of such record is due to the fact that onions this year were cultivated to an additional 8,450 hectares, apart from its 10,070 acres.

M Delwar Hossain, deputy director of DAE, said that farmers are encouraged participate in training and take bank loans to ensure cost effective cultivation of onions.

Cultivation of its kind was introduced in Gurudashpur and Boraigram upazilas, which later on extended to other parts of the district.

DCCI demands stern action against stock manipulators

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) yesterday demanded stern action against stock manipulators and insider traders for proper growth of the country's troubled stockmarket.

The demand came at a roundtable held on the current capital market situation in the country at the auditorium of the chamber in Dhaka. DCCI President Asif Ibrahim moderated the discussion, the chamber said in a statement.

To ensure economic development and proper growth of its capital market, the government should establish some short-term, mid-term and long-term rules and regulations to streamline the stock market operations, discussants said.

Reforms and professionalism amongst stakeholders, awareness creation of small investors by training and proper monitoring of the overall mechanism were also stressed.

Encouraging retail investors in portfolio investment, broad research and consultancy services and education and training of retail investors are crucial needs of the moment, the discussants observed.

Speakers also said the supply side of stocks should be strengthened, shares of state-owned enterprises should be floated and large companies should immediately enter into the market.

They emphasised capacity building of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the stockmarket regulator and establishing a guideline-based research and information cell.

They urged the commercial banks not to invest in the capital market and recommended a flexible process of listing of companies in stock market.

They also called for an immediate reassessment of the actual asset base, turnover, debt/equity ratio of all the Z category listed companies.

BB issues eco guideline

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday issued a guideline for managing the environmental risks in the financial sectors, said a statement.

All banks and other financial institutions in Bangladesh will have to adopt the guidelines on environmental risk management by June 30 this year.

The environment in Bangladesh is deteriorating significantly and the key areas of decline include land degradation, air pollution, water pollution and scarcity, biodiversity resources and impacts of natural disasters.

So, banks need to protect their financing from the risks arising from the deteriorating environment scenario and climate change, the circular said.

The BB circular also said the central bank will conduct training programmes, seminars and workshops for the capacity building of the financial institutions.

British finance minister warns of 'turmoil'

AFP, London

British finance minister George Osborne insisted Sunday he would resist pressure to drop his deficit reduction plan, saying to abandon it would unleash "financial turmoil" within minutes.

Osborne said he did not like having to raise taxes and slash spending, but said the measures were necessary to give Britain financial stability as he bids to rein in the massive budget deficit and pay off the country's debts.

Speaking from the World Economic Forum gathering of the global business and political elite taking place in Davos, Switzerland, the chancellor of the Exchequer made the comments to BBC television.

"If on Monday I went to parliament and got up in the dispatch box in the House of Commons and said I am abandoning the deficit reduction plan that Britain set out last year, what do you think the reaction would be?", he said.

"Within minutes Britain would be in financial turmoil. I am not prepared to let that happen.

"It requires tough, difficult decisions. No politician likes cutting spending and increasing people's taxes, but I was delivered a mess by the previous

China central bank says inflation still high

AFP, Beijing

China's central bank governor warned Sunday that inflation is higher than expected and that banks' reserve ratios could be tightened further to soak up excess liquidity in the economy.

People's Bank of China Governor Zhou Xiaochuan said that although the rise of prices slowed slightly last month, it was stronger than anticipated, Dow Jones Newswires reported.

"Inflation is still higher than many people expected. It may be still going up a little, so we should keep vigilant on that," Zhou said on the sidelines of meetings in Kyoto, Japan.

Asked whether China needed to again raise banks' reserve requirements due to the excessive liquidity conditions, he answered: "Maybe we need to continue our efforts."

Ever fearful of inflation's historical potential to spark social unrest, China's leaders have been pulling on a variety of levers to rein in consumer prices

Flagship software fair starts tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's largest exposition for software and ICT-enabled services - BASIS SoftExpo 2011 -- will begin tomorrow in the city with a view to bridging the gap between service providers and users.

About 110 local companies and 10 firms from different European countries will participate at the five-day event scheduled to be held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Themed 'Digital Bangladesh in Action', the fair will pave the way for globally renowned ICT companies to know more about Bangladesh's growing market, tap outsourcing opportunities and help bring in foreign direct investment into the country's booming sector, said BASIS President Mahboob Zaman at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), the national trade association of software and IT-enabled services indus-



Mahboob Zaman, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services, briefs the media about BASIS SoftExpo 2011 in Dhaka yesterday. The five-day annual event starts tomorrow.

try in the country, is organising the ninth edition of the annual event, in association with the ministry of science and technology and Access to Information (A2I) programme of the

Prime Minister's Office.

"It will bridge the gap between service providers and our corporate clients, government offices and individual users," said the BASIS President. "The exposition

will also help popularise the use of ICT in every sphere of life."

BASIS Vice President AKM Fahim Mashroor said BASIS would arrange an IT job fair on the sidelines of the exposition. Its

objective is to create employment opportunities for IT professionals with over 400 BASIS member companies. Face-to-face interviews will be arranged at the Expo venue, he said.

The event will also feature over 20 seminars on software and ICT related issues along with a number of competitions.

Kazi N Islam, chief executive of GPIT, Martin Labbe, online and digital networks adviser of International Trade Centre, Atiqur Rahman, business development manager of Microsoft Bangladesh, Navid Iqbal, chief technical officer of BRAC Bank, Khonodokar Raihan Hossain, head of sales and marketing of Reve Systems also spoke at the press conference.

BASIS Vice President Farhana A Rahman and Secretary General Forkan Bin Kashem were also present.

The expo will remain open to visitors from 10am to 8pm everyday. The entry fee is Tk 30. Students, however, will enjoy free entry, organisers said.



M Abu Horaira, former vice-president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), and Md Hossain Ali, executive director of DCCI Business Unit, pose with participants in a training course on 'effective selling skills' at DCCI in Dhaka recently.



Md Moyjuddin Ahmed, member (investment promotion) of BEPZA, and Minoru Nakano, chairman of Nakano International Company, sign a deal recently to establish a garments manufacturing plant in Ishwardi. Story on B1.

China seek maximum fine for Carrefour

AFP, Shanghai

China price regulators are seeking to fine French retail giant Carrefour 2.5 million yuan (\$380,000) -- the maximum fine for overcharging customers, state media reported Sunday.

Municipal regulators fined three Carrefour stores in Shanghai and two in southwest China's Yunnan province 500,000 yuan each on Saturday, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

However, the final fine will be decided only after a hearing where regulators said Carrefour representatives will be able to respond to the charges, the report said. It gave no further details about the hearing.

A total of 11 Carrefour stores were accused of charging more than the price they displayed on products ranging from cotton underwear and tea