

# Faruk blames price hike on businessmen

## Minister opens international trade fair in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan yesterday blamed a section of dishonest businessmen for increasing the prices of essential commodities illogically to cause sufferings to people and create problems for the government.

In doing so, they are ruining the image of the business community, the minister said.

Khan, however, blamed the overall price hike of different items on the heated international market.

The government, including the prime minister, is regularly monitoring the market situation and has taken several steps to contain the price spiral, the minister said.

He also urged the businessmen not to make bigger profit

amid the world recession, considering the sufferings of the people and to supply commodities at cheaper rate.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of month-long 19th Chittagong International Trade fair (CITF) 2011 on Pologround.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) is organising the show.

Thai Ambassador to Bangladesh Tassanawadee Miancharoen and President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) AK Azad were present as special guests at the opening ceremony with CCCI President Murshed Murad Ibrahim in the chair.

The commerce minister said the whole world is now facing the price hike of commodities.

He said the government is supplying food items such as rice, wheat and pulse at cheaper rates at subsidised prices by importing the items at costly rates to tackle the situation.

Mentioning the earlier step of a complete withdrawal of tax on importing raw sugar, Khan said the government has decided to reduce VAT on edible oil to keep the market stable.

He said the interest rates on bank loans would come down further to help the local investors.

Terming Chittagong an attractive place for future business activities, the Thai ambassador said a company from his country is keen to establish a 150 kilowatt power plant and a paper mill in Chittagong with an initial investment of \$500 million.

FBCCI President AK Azad

urged both the ruling and opposition parties to establish political stability to help grow local business smoothly.

The export sector has grown about 45 percent in the last six months, and such earnings can double in the next 5-6 years if political stability prevails.

The Chittagong chamber president called upon the government to solve power and gas crises and develop transport and communication facilities to help the business expansion.

He said CITF is the largest trade fair organised under private initiative.

The speakers said the month-long show would offer greater scope for interaction between the local and foreign entrepreneurs to widen trade connectivity, while local traders would get an opportunity to showcase their products.

Sprawling on an area of around four lakh square feet, the fair will have 36 pavilions -- 8 premier gold pavilions, 4 mini-mega pavilions, 8 premier pavilions and 16 standard pavilions -- and a total of 263 stalls, said CITF Co-Chairman Ashiq Bhuiyan.

He said the fair committee would make special arrangements this year for the foreign tourists who would visit the city during the World Cup matches.

Thailand is the partner country of the fair for the eighth time, while there will be a large pavilion for Thailand on around 4,500 square feet of space on the fair premises. Traders from Pakistan, Iran, Korea and United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kashmir will join the show with large pavilions, Ashiq said.

## DCCI urges China to invest more

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) yesterday urged the Chinese business delegates to invest in Bangladesh as it has duty and quota free market access in the major global markets.

"Chinese entrepreneurs can exploit the duty and quota free market access to Bangladesh by EU, Norway, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand," said Asif Ibrahim, president of DCCI.

He made the remarks while addressing the promotional seminar on the 109th session of China Import and Export Fair, jointly organised by China Foreign Trade Centre (CFTC), Chinese Embassy in Dhaka and DCCI, at its auditorium.

The DCCI President urged the Chinese investors to invest in Bangladesh -- either 100 percent ownership or in joint venture -- in the promising sectors like linkage industries for value-added garments, leather and leather goods, food and fruit processing, IT and IT enabled services, renewable energy, and infrastructure development.

Speaking at the seminar as chief guest, Industries Minister Dilip Barua said "Bangladesh is one of the largest trade partners of China in South Asia. Our growing economy is actively shaped by China's profound support."

"We urged the Chinese government to take initiatives to build roads and railway networks between Kunming and Bangladesh to help facilitate diversified support from China in the country's economy," said Barua.

He said Bangladesh acknowledges direct Chinese support to construct and develop various communication infrastructures that widened the scope of trade and commerce at home or abroad. "China also agreed to establish a Deep Sea Port near Sonadia Island for our economic prosperity."

Describing China as a tested friend and a development partner, the Industries Minister expressed his belief that Chinese investors and government will both come forward in achieving the mission of development of Bangladesh.

Addressing the seminar Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Zhang Xianyi termed Bangladesh as a potential country in the South Asia where more infrastructural development is needed for foreign investment.

He said China is keen to increase its support and cooperation to Bangladesh to boost its exports in the coming days through various facilities. "Last July Bangladesh exported 70 percent of export goods to China under zero-tariff treatment and this facility will be increased to 90 percent in the coming days."

The business leaders in the seminar emphasised the need of taking both government to government and business to business initiatives to remove trade gap between Bangladesh and China. They also suggested increasing access of Bangladeshi products to the Chinese market under tariff free quota.

Chen Chaoren, deputy director general of CFTC, Lin Weiqiang, counselor of the Economic and Commercial Office of the Chinese embassy, and TIM Nurul



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## Minister seeks Canadian investment in power

### Canada Showcase held in Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan yesterday asked Canadian businessmen to invest more in the power sector to help alleviate the nagging energy crunch crippling the country.

He said so far, the Canadian entrepreneurs have invested \$300 million in Bangladesh in different sectors and the bilateral trade balance between the two countries stood at \$1.4 billion in fiscal 2009-10.

While inaugurating the daylong first "Canada Showcase-2011" at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre as the chief guest, the minister also sought Canada's cooperation in making Bangla as one of the official languages at the United Nations.

The bilateral trade balance between the two countries will cross the \$2.0 billion mark at the

end of the current fiscal year," said Khan at the showcase, where businessmen from both Canada and Bangladesh are displaying their products at 25 stalls.

In the two-way trade, the main Canadian exports to Bangladesh include iron and steel, pulses, cereals, machinery, oilseeds, electrical machinery and pharmaceutical raw materials.

On the other hand, Bangladesh exports to Canada include ready-made garment, fish, bicycles, textile fabrics and yarn, footwear and ceramics.

Canadian High Commission in Bangladesh and Canadian-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CanCham) jointly organised the fair.

Canadian High Commissioner Robert McDougall and CanCham President Masud Rahman among others were present at the inaugural.



Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, Canadian High Commissioner Robert McDougall and CanCham President Masud Rahman, visit a pavilion at Canada Showcase in Dhaka yesterday.



Geoff Strong, president of Chevron Bangladesh, hands over a cheque to Juan Carlos Negrette, chief of party, Smiling Sun Franchise Program, to support healthcare programmes in Chevron's operational areas of Habiganj and Moulvibazar recently.



Nafees Khundker, director of Bank Asia, inaugurates the bank's second SME/Agriculture branch at Baligaon of Tongibari upazila in Munshiganj yesterday. Aminul Islam and SM Khorshed Alam, deputy managing directors, were also present.

## China raises petrol, diesel prices

AFP, Beijing

China raised wholesale petrol and diesel prices by 350 yuan (\$53) per tonne Sunday, the second rise in two months in the world's second-largest fuel consuming nation, the government announced.

The hike, which marked about a 4.6 percent rise, came as the price of crude oil closed last week above \$100 per barrel in London, China's economic planning agency said when announcing the increase Saturday.

The "limited" rise would see the benchmark retail price of petrol increase by 0.26 yuan per litre and diesel by 0.3 yuan per litre, the National Development Reform Commission said in a statement on its website.

In Beijing 93-octane petrol costs 7.45 yuan (\$1.13) per litre.

China last increased petrol prices on December 22, the third time fuel prices rose in 2010 following hikes in October and April.

Inflation has become Beijing's top economic concern as it struggles to keep a lid on rising costs of food

## EADS stake decision could leave Berlin in bind

AFP, Frankfurt

Torn between the need to save money and the desire to maintain German influence in the European aerospace group EADS, Berlin could be in a bind if automaker Daimler seeks to reduce its holding.

"We have to make a break from nationalisations, they were necessary during the crisis but only during the crisis," Michael Fuchs, economic spokesman for the ruling conservative CDU/CSU parties, told the Berliner Zeitung daily on Friday.

Fuchs said a desire to maintain the shareholder balance in EADS between French and German interests did not justify the government taking a direct participation.

He spoke to the newspaper following reports that Daimler, which owns 15 percent of the equity in EADS, the parent group of the plane maker Airbus, wants to sell half of its stake.

Such a move would upset the balance of French and German interests in EADS, because Daimler also controls 22.5 percent of the voting rights, the same level as that