

Govt asks millers to fast-track distributorship

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The commerce ministry yesterday asked millers and importers to complete the process of appointing distributors in selling edible oil and sugar as the old delivery order (DO) system has already been scrapped by law.

The ministry scrapped the DO system on June 21, said Commerce Secretary Ghulam Hussain in a news briefing at his office after a meeting with the trade leaders and importers of basic commodities.

The government will also introduce the distributorship system in marketing all other basic commodities to ensure efficient market monitoring and maintaining quality of the products, Hussain said.

"We know that some millers and

importers have not yet completed the process of appointing the distributors across the country as many DOs were issued earlier. But the government will not tolerate such delays in appointing distributors for any longer," he said.

Hussain said the newly appointed eight market monitoring teams under the commerce ministry will not only monitor the prices of basic commodities, but also progress in appointment of distributors.

The distributors will have to regularly report to the local administrators like upazila nirbahi officer, to keep a balance in supply and prices of goods, he said.

At the meeting, Hussain said the government's stocks of spices such as ginger, onion, garlic, pepper, tur-

meric, coriander and other condiments are satisfactory for meeting demand during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

Hussain said onion imported from India can meet demand for nine months in Bangladesh. There will not be any problem in supply of onion during the Eid-ul-Azha as India has already lifted the ban on exports of onion Tuesday.

He said the government will lend its support, if any importer wants to import onion from Turkey as this country is also one of the major sources of onion.

The secretary also said he has already had a talk with the Home Ministry officials to stop smuggling of garlic from Bangladesh to India through bordering areas.

Lafarge to change face value of its shares

UNB, Dhaka

Lafarge Surma Cement has decided to change the face value of its shares following the directives of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The company, through a web post of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday, announced the decision to comply with the directives of the market controller and changed the face value of their shares to Tk 10 from existing Tk 100.

The company has convened an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) on November 15 at 3pm to complete the

process of denomination of face value of the shares at the company's cement plant at village Noarai in Sunamganj. The record date for the EGM is October 18.

On September 15, the SEC directed all organisations and mutual funds enlisted in the capital market to change the face value of their shares to Tk 10 by December 1.

On Tuesday, MTB and HR Textiles also decided to comply with the SEC directive.

The finance ministry had decided to fix face value at Tk 10 several years ago, but the decision had not been made mandatory for all.



AIRTEL
Chris Tobit, chief executive officer of Airtel, and K Shamshi Tabrez, managing director of Dutch Bangla Bank, exchange documents of a deal on m-commerce at the corporate head office of Airtel at Banani in Dhaka recently. Airtel users will be able to open accounts with the bank and avail services; and existing mobile banking customers of the bank will get services at Airtel outlets.



SQUARE PHARMACEUTICALS
Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals, speaks at the company's 45th annual general meeting at its factory premises in Gazipur yesterday. The company declared 30 percent cash and 35 percent stock dividends for 2011. Samuel S Chowdhury, third from left, vice chairman, and Anjan Chowdhury, second from right, director, are also seen.

StanChart India plans to double private bank assets

REUTERS, Mumbai

Standard Chartered expects assets under management at its Indian private banking business to double by 2014, said the unit's country head, though stiff competition will continue to exert pressure on the fees charged by the sector players.

The U.K.-based bank, which also has a strong presence in corporate and retail banking in India, will raise the number of private bankers in the country by a third to 60 by 2012 to tap a rapidly mushrooming millionaire population, Sandeep Das said.

"We see a very encouraging long-term story in India. The number of wealthy people are rising at a very fast pace in this country," Das, who has been with Standard Chartered for 20 years, told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday.

The population of high net worth individuals -- those with more than \$1 million in investable assets -- rose nearly 21 percent in India to 153,000 in 2010 -- making it the 12th largest such market, ahead of Spain and just behind Brazil, according to a report by Capgemini and Merrill Lynch.

Standard Chartered does not disclose country-specific assets under management for its private banking unit, but Das said the bank is one of the top three wealth managers in India based on assets under management.

The top private banks in India have between \$1 billion and \$2 billion of assets under management each, industry sources say.

The cut-throat competition in the Indian wealth management sector with a slew of foreign banks vying with local firms for a bigger share of the market and sluggish market conditions are, however, likely to keep the fees under pressure, Das said.

Private banks in India charge between zero and 0.5 percent advisory fees to wealthy clients, which barely covers costs for smaller players, compared to about 0.5 percent to 2 percent in more developed markets.

"There is pressure on fees in the sector as private banks don't want to be on the higher side of the fee band because of the competition and this may continue in the short term," Das said.

Asia, home to more than 3 million millionaires, has become a battleground for private banks as global and Asian players compete for market share in a region that is fast outpacing the United States and Europe in economic growth.

Standard Chartered, which launched its private banking business in India in 2007, counts Hong Kong, Singapore and India as its fastest growing wealth management markets in Asia, Das said.

North Bengal Paper Mills to resume production

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

North Bengal Paper Mills in Pabna plans to resume its production as a Chinese expert team has recently visited the mill that will make paper from jute mould.

The four-party alliance government shut the loss-making factory on November 14, 2002.

The jute ministry moved to resume the mill's production after transferring the stewardship of the mill from Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation to Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporation (BJMC).

Earlier, experts from 'China Yunnan Corporation' visited the mill a month ago and became satisfied about the possibility of reviving the plant.

Under the supervision of BJMC, a technical team of 'China Yunnan Corporation' engineers Tang Uin, Wang Young, Jian Bao Wei and Hawang Bi Gui visited the mill on September 16, 17 and 18 again and conducted the feasibility study of the mill, said Md Hossain Khan, general manager of Rajshahi Jute Mills.

"The team expressed their satisfaction to the jute minister on Sunday."

"Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporation gets the charge of the mill as the government shifted its operational responsibilities to the jute ministry last month," said Jute Secretary Md Ashrafuk Mokbul to The Daily Star.

"We expect the Chinese experts' report in 15 to 20 days as they were satisfied after visiting the mill," the secretary said. The BJMC will take moves to start production after obtaining the report, he added.

In a primary study, it was learnt that the mill would run with the target of producing 20,000 tonnes jute mould annually, he said, adding that at least 40,000 tonnes of green jute would be needed for the purpose.

Bangladesh grows around 70 to 75 lakh bales of jute every year. But we can use just 60 lakh bales in our jute mills and for other jute products. The rest 10 to 15 lakh bales do not get a fair price.

"Since there is a ban on export, we have decided to use it so that the farmers are not deprived of good prices," said Mokbul.



RFL
RFL dealers pose with a banner during a recent weeklong tour to London for the company's 17 best performers.

IMF to keep interest-free loans for poorest nations

AFP, Washington

IMF chief Christine Lagarde said Wednesday that the Fund would maintain its zero-percent loan program for poorest countries for another year after it expires at the end of 2011.

Lagarde said the International Monetary Fund hoped to keep open a lending window for low income countries that has been expanded to \$17 billion, offering lending rates close to zero.

That rate plan expires at the end of 2011 "and (we) are on track to keep rates at or near zero next year," she said.

"An important lesson that the IMF has learned in recent years is that for our financial support to be effective, it must reach our members quickly and with fewer strings attached," she said.

The facility is open to around 30 of the poorest countries to help address medium-term balance of payments difficulties.

While holding out the prospect of access to cheap lending, Lagarde also prodded poor countries to steel themselves against contagion from the turmoil in the economies of the richest countries.

Taiwan's Quanta to cut 1,000 workers

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan's Quanta Computer, a leading notebook computer maker, said Wednesday it will lay off 1,000 workers at a local factory that was reopened just months ago due to poor sales of non-iPad tablets.

Workers at the company's plant in Linkou, northern Taiwan, were informed of the decision, which will cut the staff at the facility in half, at a company briefing Tuesday.

"They were offered a better-than-required compensation package if they agreed to quit voluntarily," said a spokeswoman for the company, which employs a total of 65,000 people, most of them in China.

The local assembly line reopened in early 2011 after closing down for several years when the company moved production to China, enticed by the cheaper labour there, she said.

The partial move back to Taiwan was motivated by a wish to better protect the intellectual property of one of its top clients, Research In Motion (RIM), the Ontario-based BlackBerry maker.

Local media said the decision to lay off workers was forced by worse-than-expected sale of PlayBook, a rival of iPad launched by RIM.

Apple to unveil iPhone 5 on October 4

AFP, San Francisco

Apple plans to unveil its next generation iPhone next month, technology blog AllThingsD said Wednesday.

AllThingsD cautioned that Apple could "change its plans anytime," but said the present plan calls for Apple's new chief executive Tim Cook to preside over the launch of the iPhone 5 on October 4.

Cook, 50, replaced Apple's ailing co-founder Steve Jobs as chief executive of the Cupertino, California-based gadget-maker last month.

Citing "sources close to the situation," the Dow Jones-owned AllThingsD said the iPhone 5 would go on sale within a few weeks after the announcement.

Jobs, 56, the Silicon Valley visionary behind the Macintosh computer, the iPod, iPhone and iPad, stepped down as Apple's CEO on August 24.

Jobs has presided over Apple's splashy product launches in the past and AllThingsD said "the pressure will be on Cook to turn in a good performance."

"What will be interesting to see, of course, is if Jobs himself will also make an appearance, which is something that is likely to be determined by his health, in a decision that will be made very close to the event," it said.



MTB
Saifuddin Ahmed Chowdhury, founding director of Mutual Trust Bank and chairman of Associated Builders Corporation, inaugurates an ATM booth of the bank at ABC House at Banani in Dhaka recently. Anis A Khan, the bank's managing director, was also present.



EDCL
Essential Drugs Company Ltd (EDCL), a state-run medicine manufacturer under the health and family welfare ministry, has recently signed a deal with ICB Capital Management Ltd at a programme in Dhaka. ICB will be the issue manager for EDCL in its move to offload shares in the stockmarket.



SIBL
Nasiruddin, chairman of the executive committee of Social Islami Bank, inaugurates the bank's Bangshal branch in Dhaka yesterday. Muhammad Ali, managing director, was also present.