

Women entrepreneurs push for hassle-free loans

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Women entrepreneurs yesterday called for simplifying the loan processing system as the existing procedure discourages them from borrowing from banks.

They also demanded ensuring the disbursement of 10 percent of SME funds that has been allocated for them by Bangladesh Bank.

"A women entrepreneur has to go through a lengthy process to obtain a loan from a bank. She has to fill up a number of papers and documents to get a loan, which is time-consuming," said Rokia Afzal Rahman, president of Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs.

Loan processing should be simple and hassle-free to ensure that more women entrepreneurs have access to the SME Funds, said Rokia.

The former caretaker government adviser was speaking at a debate programme between the members of Nordic Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bangladesh and women leaders and



Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, state minister for women and children affairs, speaks at a debate organised by the Nordic Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bangladesh in the capital yesterday. Rokia Afzal Rahman, second from left, president of Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs, is also seen.

entrepreneurs at the Ericsson Bangladesh office.

A lack of credit is one of the major problems that

Bangladeshi women face in starting or expanding a business. Banks also decline to lend them on the grounds of collateral.

Bangladesh Bank has reserved 10 percent of its SME sector-refinancing fund for women entrepreneurs in an attempt to

ensure more female participation in trade, commerce and productive sectors.

However, many women who run small businesses allege that they do not get any bank loans.

Rokia said women in Bangladesh have shown good business acumen and proved to be good, reliable borrowers.

"Studies have shown that the success of business women has brought about positive socio-economic changes in the country. So far, women entrepreneurs have shown their entrepreneurial skills through their own basic knowledge, without technological support," she said.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury said Bangladeshi women possess competence and skill and are capable of changing the corporate and business landscape of the country.

She said the government has already taken various steps for the development of women and their endeavours that will encourage women entrepreneurship.



PRIME BANK
Tanjil Chowdhury, vice chairman of the executive committee of Prime Bank, inaugurates the 60th ATM booth of the bank on Gulshan Avenue in Dhaka yesterday. Ehsan Khasru, managing director, was also present.

New CEO for Partex Star Group

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Abdul Haque has recently been appointed chief executive officer for complex-2 of Partex Star Group, the organisation said in a statement yesterday.

An MBA from the Institute of Business Administration of Dhaka University, Haque started his career with Unilever Bangladesh in the marketing department.

Before joining Partex, he was the chairman and managing director of Reckit Benkizer Bangladesh



GP support-staff, drivers want to be regularised

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Hundreds of drivers and support-staff of Grameenphone yesterday demonstrated peacefully in front of the operator's head office to demand permanent employment contracts.

The drivers said in a statement that they were demonstrating in front of GP House as the Telenor President and Chief Executive Jon Fredrik Baksaas was now in town.

The drivers demanded appointment letters according to the Bangladesh Labour Law 2006. They held a press conference in this regard on Sunday.

A Grameenphone statement said its drivers and support-staff are outsourced from a pool of staffs offered to the company by vendors. The drivers and support-staff are the direct employees of the vendors.

Grameenphone said the outsourced drivers and support-staff have been demanding direct employment over the last few years. They have filed cases against the operator for permanent employment, which is now awaiting hearing before court.



Mashiur Rahman, centre, an adviser to the Prime Minister, speaks at a discussion on the insurance act and the sector, organised by Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF), in Dhaka yesterday. Nasir A Choudhury, extreme left, veteran insurance personality; Asif Ibrahim, second from left, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Monowar Hossain, second from right, ERF President; are also seen.



Officials of Orascom Telecom Bangladesh Ltd (Banglalink) have recently submitted an application for the renewal of cellular mobile phone operator licence and radio communications equipment licence to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission at a programme in Dhaka.

Regulator: no scope for fresh non-life insurers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

There is no space for new non-life (general) insurance companies in the country, said the chairman of Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA) yesterday.

"Only two to three new licences can be given to life insurance companies, but no scope exists for already saturated general insurers," said M Shefaque Ahmed, quoting the IDRA's recommendation report sent to the finance ministry.

Ahmed was speaking at a discussion on the insurance act and the sector, organised by Economic Reporters' Forum with its President Monowar Hossain in the chair. Prime Minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Mashiur Rahman spoke as the chief guest.

Ahmed, also an actuary, said most of the 44 non-life insurance companies are sick and cannot hire required human resources for fund constraints.

"Many companies cannot come into the stockmarket due to losses," he

said. Total premiums earned by 44 general companies were less than Tk 1,500 crore in 2010.

The IDRA chairman also gave a recipe for general insurers to come out of the sickness.

"We've abolished the discount facility enjoyed by a group of people, and the move can raise non-life insurers' premiums up to Tk 3,500 crore by 2013," said Ahmed.

A stoppage in discounts could reduce premium rates, the highest in the region, and attract more people to come under insurance coverage, he noted.

Earlier on Monday, different business bodies and leading businessmen expressed their dissatisfaction over the IDRA chief, saying he took some unilateral decisions that go against the business and the insurance industry.

Recently, the insurance regulator issued some circulars mentioning that an insurance director cannot be a director in other finance companies as per the new law. The IDRA has also

imposed penalties for irregularities and abolished discounts in fire and marine tariff rates enjoyed by a group of businessmen.

Asif Ibrahim, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, also denounced the regulator's actions yesterday.

Ibrahim said the private sector will not accept decisions imposed unilaterally on them. He even blamed the IDRA for squeezing the flourishing private sector by using "anti-business" regulations.

"Please, withdraw the circulars issued recently," the DCCI president urged the regulator chief.

Veteran insurance personality Nasir A Choudhury said 200 applications for floating new insurance companies are now lying with the finance ministry, but India with a big market has fewer companies than Bangladesh.

On the recent regulations imposed by IDRA, Choudhury said the regulator should discuss the issue with the stakeholders.

Bangladesh betters farm output after 1971: Study

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh fared better than Pakistan in accelerating agricultural growth rate after its liberation in 1971, said a study yesterday.

Expansion of cultivation of boro rice, increased use of high yielding seeds and irrigation helped Bangladesh attain faster growth in agriculture, said Takashi Kurosaki, researcher of the study.

The country performed well in commercialisation of its farm sector compared with India and Pakistan after its Independence, said Kurosaki, professor of Institute of Economic Research of Hitotsubashi University, Japan, while sharing the findings of his study.

He was speaking at a seminar on 'Long-term agricultural growth in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh' at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). BIDS Director General Mustafa K

Mujeri chaired the programme.

Kurosaki said institutional and policy changes have significant impact on agricultural growth. "Bangladesh has been a top performer among the three countries in 1990s."

He conducted the research on these three countries based on data from the year 1901-02 to 2000-01.

The researcher compared performance of agriculture sector of the three countries in two broad categories -- under British colonial rule and after partition in 1947.

According to the findings, all three countries performed better in areas of output growth, land and labour productivity after the partition.

Kurosaki said the potential of Bangladesh's food production remained unexplored before its independence in absence of the use of modern seeds and technology and irrigation facility.

According to the study, Bangla-

desh's agricultural growth rates in terms of output, land and labour productivity accelerated at a faster pace after 1971.

Termining the achievement significant, he said Bangladesh should go for high value crops.

Mujeri said the pace of the farm sector should be maintained to ensure food security. "Not only rice, demand for other foods, vegetables, fish and meat will grow with the rise in people's income," he said.

The economist said attention should be paid to the growth of non-farm sector to cut poverty. "Major contribution will have to come from the manufacturing sector," he said.

According to the study, agricultural growth rate was higher in Pakistan followed by India and Bangladesh after 1947.

Pakistan's output grew 3.46 percent per year between 1947 and 2001, which was 2.28 percent for India and 1.73 percent for Bangladesh.



PUBALI BANK
Md Mosharrar Hossain, general manager of Pubali Bank, and SM Intekhab Alam, managing director of Phoenix Finance and Investments Ltd, exchange documents after signing a deal at a programme in Dhaka recently. Pubali sanctioned a term loan of Tk 20 crore for five years to Phoenix. Helal Ahmed Chowdhury, managing director of Pubali Bank, was also present.



IBBL
Abu Nasser Muhammad Abdur Zaher, chairman of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, opens the 258th branch of the bank on College Road in Feni recently.



MTB
Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, deputy managing director of Mutual Trust Bank (MTB), and Yusuf P Hameed, chief executive officer of Islamic Exchange Qatar, exchange documents after signing a deal at MTB Centre in Dhaka recently. MTB customers and the beneficiaries of Bangladeshi expatriates can receive remittance, sent through Islamic Exchange, from any branch of the bank in Bangladesh.