

Bangladesh can attract big investments: minister

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Commerce Minister GM Quader yesterday said Bangladesh has the potential to attract big investments as the country has liberal investment laws.

"We offer one of the most liberal investment policies and attractive packages of fiscal, financial and other incentives for foreign investors," he said. "Even, we offer 100 percent foreign ownership."

Bangladesh currently offers a number of incentives such as tax exemptions, zero import duty for export oriented industries, and concessionary duty on imported capital machinery to attract foreign investment.

Some other incentives include full repatriation of money and allowing foreign investors to participate in initial public offerings without any regulatory restrictions.

"We are a big market and a big place for investment because we



GM Quader, commerce minister, attends a presentation on the role of Asian Development Bank in private sector development, co-organised by CanCham Bangladesh and ADB at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka. Heather Cruden, Canadian high commissioner to Bangladesh; Masud Rahman, president of CanCham; and Juan Miranda, director general of SARD of ADB, were also present.

have cheap labour and very investment liberal laws," Quader said at a seminar at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the city.

Canada-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CanCham-Bangladesh) in association with the Asian Develop-

ment Bank (ADB) organised the discussion on Private Sector Development: Role of ADB.

Quader expressed dissatisfaction over the slow implementation of PPP (public-private partnership) initiatives.

The minister also sought sup-

port from the ADB for the development of the private sector.

Juan Miranda, director general of South Asia Regional Department of the ADB, said Bangladesh has the potential to attain higher growth because of its strategic location in a fast-growing region

and its cheap labour.

He, however, stressed the need for a stable macro economy. "Bangladesh must have macroeconomic stability for better investment and development."

He said the ADB will seek to prioritise private sector development to help accelerate economic growth.

Heather Cruden, Canadian high commissioner in Dhaka, said Bangladesh has adequate human resources that need to be trained up to make the private sector stronger.

She said Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is assisting Bangladesh in capacity building to help flourish the private sector.

Masud Rahman, president of CanCham Bangladesh, said the private sector needs right policy and regulatory frameworks to secure investments and incentivize private sector investment.



Md Ahsan Ullah, executive director of Bangladesh Bank, attends a workshop on remittance payment capabilities and exchanging services standards organised by Social Islami Bank (SIBL) at its head office in Dhaka recently. Muhammad Ali, managing director of SIBL, was also present.

Stop meddling with Grameen Bank

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Chowdhury said power should be given back to the Grameen Bank board members so that they can take decisions on their own. "They will pick whoever they want. Why are we interfering?"

Rashed Ahmed Chowdhury, a former ambassador, said each country organises programmes to celebrate the works of Nobel laureates.

"But here, we are hosting this event to protect Grameen Bank and Prof Yunus. This can only happen in Bangladesh."

He, too, termed the government move to amend the ordinance undemocratic.

The former diplomat urged the government to at least maintain status quo at Grameen Bank.

"I hope good senses will prevail and the government takes heed of the people's opinion."

Dr Tajmeri SA Islam, a professor of chemistry at Dhaka University, said the government is plotting to destroy the Grameen Bank. "It was functioning perfectly. There was no need for the amendment. It should be allowed to run as it was."

Poet Abdul Hye Sikder said the story of Grameen Bank and its founder Prof Yunus deserve to be taught in schools and colleges for what they have achieved.

"Rather, the government and a section of intellectuals are trying to destroy the bank and tarnish the image of Prof Yunus."

He said the government could have leveraged the worldwide acclaim Prof Yunus enjoys to bring more glory to the country.

"The future of Grameen Bank is bleak," he said.

Eight elected borrower-directors of Grameen Bank were also present at the programme.

Rozina Begum, a former director of the board, said as a woman the prime minister should be proud of the fact that Grameen Bank is run by nine women directors. "Instead, she is taking the wrong decisions. It is very unfortunate."

She went on to urge Sheikh Hasina to listen to the nine women directors.

"It will be helpful for you. It is hurting us that our rights are being curbed."

"We are leading a respected life because of Grameen Bank. Please do not snatch Grameen Bank from us. You have to be careful as you are being ill-advised," she said.

Tahsina Akhter, a director of Grameen Bank board, said: "We do not understand why the prime minister sees Grameen Bank and Prof Yunus as enemies."

She said the nine elected women borrowers-directors and the three government-appointed members, including the chairman, are properly running the bank.

"The amendment has curbed our rights. We should be given back our power."

Tahsina said they know that Yunus will not always be able to run the bank.

"We will have to sustain it in his absence. But the government will not be able to protect it."

"The government insists that all is being done in a transparent manner. But nothing seems transparent. From the loan scam at Sonali Bank, we have already got an idea what could happen to Grameen Bank if the government takes control of it."

Md Delwar Hossain, secretary general of Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre, said many have wrongly branded Prof Yunus as an agent of capitalism.

"But his microcredit and social business theories do not represent the capitalist world. Still, the capitalist world adores him because of his work and achievement. He is much adored in China as well."

Advocate Kazi Sadrul Huq Sudha, general secretary of the centre, said if necessary they would launch a countrywide movement in September to garner support for Grameen Bank to thwart the



Nazra Mahjabeen Sabet, programme head at BRAC Enterprises, and Md Faizul Hoque, registrar at Sylhet Agricultural University, sign a memorandum of association between BRAC Artificial Insemination Enterprise and the university at BRAC Centre in Dhaka on Wednesday. Muhammad A (Rumee) Ali, managing director of BRAC, was also present.



Nizam Uddin Ahmed, chairman of Meghna Life Insurance Co Ltd, attends the company's 16th annual general meeting held in Dhaka on Tuesday. Meghna Life declared 30 percent cash dividends for 2011. Muhammed Shah Alam, managing director, was also present.

Stocks end flat on profit-taking

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Stocks ended flat yesterday, as investors sold shares to pocket profits from their previous purchase.

DGEN, the benchmark General Index of Dhaka Stock Exchange, finished the week at 4,446.87 points, after falling 6.56 points or 0.15 percent.

The market started amid spontaneous buy pressure, lifting the index by some 125 points within the first hour of trading.

Afterwards, profit-taking through the rest of the session calmed the market eroding the early-hour gain, IDLC Investments, a merchant banker, said.

Improved turnover boosted investors' confidence while they kept cautious by realising profit and investment reallocation, it said.

Turnover rose 11.6 percent to Tk 785 crore, compared to the previous day.

"The morning session was dominated by optimistic buying while the afternoon was marked by heavy sales by the confused and profit-taking traders," Lanka Bangla Securities said.

Newly listed companies have seen a sharp correction on the day after a weeklong rally, the stockbroker said.

A total of 1.89 lakh trades were executed with 17.16 crore shares and mutual fund units changing hands on the Dhaka bourse.

Of the total 275 issues that traded on the DSE floor, 116 advanced, 147 declined and 12 remained unchanged.

During the day's flat movement, information technology lost 5.88 percent, textile 3.98 percent and telecommunication 3.04 percent.

The banking sector covered 30 percent of the total market cap, rising 2.79 percent.

Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company featured on the top traded stocks chart with 30.52 lakh shares worth Tk 39.85 crore changing hands.

Titas Gas and MI Cement were the next popular stocks of the day.

Fine Foods was the biggest gainer of the day, as it posted 10 percent gain.

The Selective Categories Index of Chittagong Stock Exchange finished the week at 8,536.95 points, after falling 10.17 points or 0.11 percent.

Japanese team explores ways to invest in Bangladesh

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A Japanese business delegation has showed interest in establishing a Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Economic Zone on the riverbanks outside Dhaka to boost trade and tourism between the two countries.

The eight-member delegation, led by Kazuhisa Matsuoka, chairman of Japan International Cooperation Centre (JICC), made the proposal to the civil aviation and tourism minister in Dhaka yesterday.

Japanese investors are keen on tourism, aviation and healthcare sectors, Matsuoka said.

Faruk Khan, civil aviation and tourism minister, lauded the proposal and said: "We can jointly set up such an economic zone, which could be a model of friendship for Bangladeshi and Japanese people."

Bangladesh always favours Japanese investment for three reasons -- such investment is good, protected and carries state-of-the-art technology, Khan said.

Promising all assistance, Khan suggested the delegation should visit possible sites and prepare a detailed proposal in this regard. Also, a small committee could be formed to select areas for the proposed economic zone, he said.

The minister asked for assistance from the delegation in building a cargo village and set up new radar to modernise the Chittagong airport.

Khan also assured the team of taking steps to ease visa procedure for the Japanese businessmen.

The delegation discussed various issues, including introducing Dhaka-Narita direct flights, and setting up new hospitals in Bangladesh.

Japan is a major destination for Bangladeshi goods, such as footwear, shrimp, garments and leather goods.

India revises key growth data, raising reliability fears

AFP, New Delhi

India has quietly revised a slew of key economic data ahead of new GDP figures due out on Friday, a move economists say raises questions about the reliability of the country's financial records.

India's Central Statistics Office (CSO) has a history of making frequent small revisions, but seasoned experts have been startled by the scale of the latest changes, which were released unannounced on the Internet.

Among the most significant alterations, the CSO sharply downgraded growth in the last quarter of the financial year to March 2009 from 5.9 percent to 3.5 percent.

"That big revision more than three years after the event doesn't leave one with great confidence in the quality of these numbers," Credit Suisse economist Robert Prior-Wandesforde told AFP on Thursday.

Western Marine delivers two tankers to local clients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

New Western Marine Shipbuilders Ltd yesterday handed over two double-hull tankers to Carbon Holdings & Coastal Gas Ltd.

The tankers, named MT Pride of Shah Ali & MT Pride of Shah Jalal, will be used to transport fuel oil across the country, the shipbuilder said in a statement.

The keel laying ceremony of these tankers were held last year. Each tanker

has a 1,350DWT capacity and is 63.80 metres long. They were built under the supervision of Germanischer Lloyd, a technical supervisory organisation based in Hamburg, Germany.

Abubakar Siddique, chairman of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), attended the handover ceremony for the tankers as the chief guest.

Nurul Amin, managing director of NCC Bank Ltd, the financier of the project, was also present.



ABM Ghulam Mostafa, chairman of AFC Agro Biotech Ltd, attends its second annual general meeting held in Segunbagicha, Dhaka, on Wednesday. SM Saifur Rahman, managing director, was also present.



Shagufa Anwar, general manager for business development at Apollo Hospitals Dhaka, and Kazuhisa Matsuoka, chairman of Japan International Cooperation Centre, pose with a delegation of JICE and other Japanese organisations after their tour of the hospital in Dhaka to observe health services in Bangladesh recently.

Five bidders for New Mooring Container Terminal

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Meanwhile, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Awami League's president for Chittagong city unit, initiated a human chain in front of the Chittagong Press Club to protest the alleged slackening of several terms and conditions of the bidding to favour a company.

Chattagram Bandar Raksha Parishad, which organised the demonstration -- of which Mohiuddin is the chairman -- deems one of the bidders to be incompetent to operate the specialised terminal.

He alleged a "mafia group" was plotting to destroy the country's premier port.

A huge number of law enforcers, including police and RAB members, as a result, were deployed at the Chittagong Port Authority building since the morning.

Ruling party lawmaker MA Latif, however, criticised Mohiuddin's move: "Why didn't Mohiuddin raise the question of irregularities in the tender documents, if there were any, earlier?"

Govt to set up new rail lines

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The finance minister said the performance of government departments is poor in various construction works.

He said the government plans to eliminate monopoly of different departments in construction works.

Besides, the purchase committee also gave a nod to a proposal for procuring 92,980 electric poles that will be used to expand electricity supply to the rural areas.