

# Focus on South Asia's women entrepreneurs

Four-day event hosted by the US starts tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US Department of State will host a four-day conference of South Asia's entrepreneurs at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital tomorrow.

The event -- South Asia Women's Entrepreneurship Symposium -- will be organised in support of the New Silk Road vision of enhancing regional economic integration and advancing economic growth, peace, and stability.

The symposium will serve as a platform for catalysing follow-on activities to advance women's entrepreneurship in the region and beyond and build stronger economic ties between South and Cen-

tral Asia, the US embassy said in a statement yesterday.

The programme will address the challenges and opportunities faced by women-owned small and medium sized enterprises and create cross-border linkages between women entrepreneurs and leaders throughout South Asia.

It will also focus on women's empowerment through entrepreneurship and trade, role of women in technology and economic development and factors that create an enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship.

Around 120 participants from South and Central Asia, including Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan,

Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka along with representatives from outside the region will attend the event.

Participants will include women entrepreneurs, other private sector leaders and senior government officials.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni is scheduled to be present at the opening ceremony, which will be held on Sunday.

US Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne S Verveer, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Robert O Blake, and US Ambassador Dan W Mozena will also be present there.

## Robi launches info service

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Robi and Access to Information (A2I) yesterday launched Tothyokosh mService that provides access to information about birth registration and visa.

The service was launched at a ceremony held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

Matia Chowdhury, agriculture minister, chaired the ceremony. Sajeeb Wazed Joy, an IT expert and son of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and Mahmudur Rahman, executive vice president of Robi, were also present.

Tothyokosh mService is intended to educate people of Bangladesh with the policy and procedures of government ministries

and departments using IVR, SMS, USSD and call-centre platform.

Initially, only Robi subscribers will be able to verify birth registration, VISA under Bangladesh Manpower Employment and Training and use many other advisory services of Dhaka City Corporation by calling 16364 from their Robi connections or SMS.

The project is intended to create a platform which will offer day-to-day citizen services encompassing all available delivery channels from a single point of access.

The Tothyokosh services will undoubtedly enhance customer convenience and give more options to Robi subscribers for contributing to the society and the nation as a whole.

## HR conference starts tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS DESK

An international conference on human resources management is due to start in Dhaka tomorrow.

The conference, organised by the Society for Human Resource Management at the Sonargaon Hotel, aims to enhance knowledge on talent management and adaptive HR practices.

Experts will speak on issues pertaining to the talent management of the 'Y generation', culture transformation from a human resource perspective and Bangladesh-specific human resources (HR) issues.

Top management from reputed organisations and different levels of HR professionals from the world over are expected to attend the conference, which will also hold an exhibition. Interested participants can register, for a fee, at the venue an hour prior to the start of the conference at 9:00am.

## Fire breaks out at Ctg garment washing factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Fire broke out at a washing factory of Liss Washing and Sand Blasting Industries Ltd near AK Khan Intersection in the port city yesterday.

The fire was originated from a gas-operated washing oven due to overheating at the readymade garment factory at around 2:00pm and spread to the whole room, according to fire service officials.

Four units of the Fire Service and Civil Defence in Chittagong put out the fire at around 2:45pm, said its Deputy Assistant Director Md Jashim Uddin.

The fire service personnel estimated that goods worth Tk 15 lakh were damaged by the fire, where the owner of the facility, Hamidul Haq, claimed the amount to be nearly Tk 40 lakh.

The factory lacked enough fire extinguishing equipment and the firm's electric wiring was not concealed, according to the fire officials.

The firemen also warned that proximity of the electricity transformer, right next to the four storied factory, could have worsened the accident.

The stairs of the factory are not specious for emer-



ORION INFUSION

Mohammad Obaidul Karim, managing director of Orion Infusion, attends the company's 29th annual general meeting at Officers' Club in Dhaka yesterday. The company approved 16 percent cash dividend for the year ended on June 2012. Mohammad Ferdous Jaman, company secretary, was also present.



ROBI

Matia Chowdhury, agriculture minister, takes a look at a mobile at the launch of an info service --Tothyokosh mService -- in Dhaka yesterday. Sajeeb Wazed Joy, an IT expert, and Mahmudur Rahman, executive vice president at Robi, were also present. Robi and Access to Information launched the service.

## Minister stresses support for handloom industry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information Minister Hasanul Haque Inu yesterday urged the government to disburse financial loans among handloom industry entrepreneurs to boost their efforts of nurturing the traditional cloth of Bangladesh.

"The government can build up specific handloom areas to renovate the industry and its position. The handloom weavers have to be provided modern training facilities to sustain in the competitive market," he said.

Supportive measures like reduced raw material prices are necessary to bring back the industry from the verge of extinction, according to the minister.

He spoke at the launch of a book -- In the shadow of death: the tantes of Bangladesh -- at the city's Liberation War Museum.

Employment through law of the common people (ELCOP) organised the event for the book written by a group of law students of different universities and later edited by univer-

sity teachers and lawyers.

The socio-economic conditions of the weavers and the crisis of the handloom industry owners have been delved into the book, said students who contributed to the writing of the book.

The traditional handloom industry is being ruined due to the influence of capitalism-based industry system in the market, said Prof Mizanur Rahman, chairman of the National Human Rights Commission.

Rahman said it is the state's responsibility to stand by the neglected community and provide necessary assistances.

He urged garment owners to set up new handloom industries along with garment industries.

Prof Shah Alam, Law Commission's acting chairperson, urged the information ministry to publicise the importance and pride of the handloom industry through radio and television.

Md Rahmat Ullah, executive director of ELCOP, was also present.

## Branding Bangladesh: time to go for an integrated policy

FROM PAGE B1

The development of a fully integrated branding strategy can also help position Bangladesh as a destination for ICT investment and outsourcing, and attract foreign direct investment.

Bangladesh should review the wages annually, take proper safety measures, generate efficient mid-level management, become more dependent on domestic management experts and improve infrastructure to attract more investment.

"There is a dire need to implement the multimodal transport policy to improve the transport facilities and reduce the cost of business."

As per the suggestions, cost of

energy should be kept lower to sustain competitiveness.

The ICT sector can be considered a thrust sector due to its rapid expansion and growing contribution to the economy.

"Bangladesh should focus on IT and IT-enabled services. Policies should be auspicious to encourage this competitive sector," according to the recommendations. Tariff policies should gradually be liberalised to bring the private sector-led economic growth into a reality.

"There should be exclusive interaction and coordination between Bangladesh Tariff Commission and the National Board of

Revenue prior to finalising the annual national budget."

Policymakers should give special attention to counter-productive policies. The mismatch between macro and micro policies exists all over the world. However, the mismatch should be within an acceptable limit, the recommendations said.

"In order to get the desired benefits of macro and micro policies, coherent and consistent policies should be devised and enacted in an orderly fashion."

Crop insurance should be introduced to save farmers in grey days, according to the recommendations of the conference.

## Five Wal-Mart vendors made clothes at Tazreen factory

FROM PAGE B1

The Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity photographed the documents. The group passed them on to the Worker Rights Consortium, a labour-rights monitoring group based in Washington, which provided the documents to Bloomberg News. Suppliers cited in the documents include Topson Downs, of Culver City, California. That supplier subcontracted work to Bismillah Sourcing, a Bangladesh firm.

Shorts branded Faded Glory, Wal-Mart's private label, were sourced by Success Apparel of New York from the Tazreen factory, according to production reports dated in August. Success subcontracted to Simco Group, a handwritten note on the reports shows.

Various documents show Tazreen manufactured Khaki & Co shorts for Wal-Mart's Sam's Club brand through a company called IDG. The reports include IDG's "production order" forms from

October 2011; a "fabrics inventory report" from February 2012, which lists Tazreen, IDG and the shorts' style number all on one page; a "shipment status" report listing four IDG shipments of those shorts between February and March of 2012.

In a telephone interview, Haynes Holding, the president of IDG, or International Direct Group, said his company had not used the Tazreen factory.

## Business models must keep poor farmers in mind

FROM PAGE B1

"Our inclusive business approach promotes increased production of maize, which, in turn, helps produce sufficient animal feeds," he said.

While Lal Teer's inclusive business model involves providing mini packs of seeds for poor farmers' affordability, said Mahabub Anam, the company's managing director. "We got huge response from the people," Anam said.

Banglalink in collaboration with Channel i introduced 'Krishi News' to inform people of the latest developments in agriculture, said Mahbubul Alam, associ-

ate general manger of Banglalink. "We got good response from the subscribers."

UzBMO (Upazial Business Membership Organisation), a traders' association that works to facilitate a better flow of agriculture information to rural farmers, also spoke of their inclusive business approach.

"UzBMO builds a bridge between farmers and upazila officers and private companies. We also provide advisory service to the farmers based on their needs," said Akhteruzzaman Al Munsur, UzBMO's joint secretary.

## Govt may get IMF loans next month

FROM PAGE B1

He also said the government will pursue legal and prudential reforms to strengthening financial sector governance and oversight, and reinforce Bangladesh Bank's supervisory mandate and capacity.

Cowen said amendments to the Banking Companies Act aim to put oversight of all banks on a level-playing field.

The amendments will also strengthen internal governance and risk controls, in support of a stable, well-regulated banking system.

The IMF mission chief said enhanced oversight of the state-owned commercial banks will also be pursued to improve their financial performance and increase their operational independence.

On pursuing sound fiscal and debt management, the government has agreed to contain its budget deficit to 4.5 percent of gross domestic product in fiscal 2013, including the settlement of fertiliser subsidy overrun from fiscal 2012.

The IMF official said, further efforts will be made to contain subsidy costs, anchored by a fuel price adjustment formula.

To mitigate the impact of adjustments on the most vulnerable, agreed fiscal target will protect social spending by the government, Cowen added.

About the growth prospects, he said, "We expect the real GDP to grow by about 6 percent in FY13, reflecting external uncertainties and the broader global slowdown."

## EU envoy stresses safety standards in RMG factories

FROM PAGE B1

EU heads of mission also issued a joint statement underlining the high importance which the EU attaches to safety and other social compliance issues in factories.

The EU is already engaged in improving factory safety in Bangladesh.

Under the 'Promotion of labour standards in the RMG sector' project, support is being given to the Ministry of Labour and Employment and BGMEA and BKMEA to provide compliance audits to factories (this includes fires safety) and to train the labour inspectors and factory compliance officers.

The EU is also working closely with the Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate.

Under the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme, the EU has provided equipment and training to help improve to the directorate's fire-fighting capabilities in factories. The comprehensive programme is a joint initiative of several donors, it