

# Food minister asks NGOs to create replicable models of development

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Food Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque yesterday called upon non-government organisations to create some models of development by focusing on some certain localities so that the government can replicate the models in other parts of the country.

"Take some villages as models and expand your activities massively to create an example so that the development partners or the government can replicate the models in other areas," said Razzaque.

The minister made the call at a seminar on 'food security in char islands of north and northwest of Bangladesh' at Cirdap auditorium in Dhaka.

Unnayan Shamannay, a

research and advocacy organisation, and Concern Worldwide, an international charity, hosted the event.

Most of the people in char areas suffer from hunger. Natural disasters like floods and river erosion put their lives and livelihoods at stake.

The minister said RDRS Bangladesh, a development NGO, has been working in two northern districts -- Rangpur and Dinajpur -- since the independence of the country.

"But if you ask RDRS to give example of poverty alleviation of any single union in Nilphamari, Kurigram or Dinajpur, it will not be able to do so although it has done a lot of things," said the food minister.

The NGO has provided seeds,

food and blankets to the poor, he said.

"Do something that we can replicate," he said, referring to Concern Worldwide, which works in remote char areas of the north and northwest.

Under the project, Concern provided peanut seeds to a poor woman living in a char island under Rajshahi district. But the woman could not reap any benefit as her crops got damaged due to a lack of irrigation.

"You have given the woman seeds. But there was no follow-up as to what led to the failure," he said.

The food minister said he would take up the problems of the people in the char islands with the prime minister.

He also said he would request

the disaster management and relief ministry to take special safety net schemes to ease food insecurity among the poor in the remote char areas.

AKM Musa, country director of Concern Worldwide in Bangladesh, said large investment is needed for sustainable solutions to the problems of the char people.

"Coordinated initiative of the government and the private sector is necessary."

Mahabub Hossain, an economist and executive director of BRAC, said there have been problems of coordination not only among the government agencies but also among the NGOs.

He said farming is the main economic activity of the people in the char areas. But the farmers cannot sell their produce due to

the poor transport and communication system.

He suggested developing a contract farming system by involving the private sector processors.

Public-private-NGO partnership is necessary to address the problem, he said.

Lawmaker Shariar Alam of Rajshahi stressed the need for building infrastructure like concrete roads to solve the problem of communication. He also cited the poor law and order situation in the char areas and said robbers take away the produce of the farmers in broad daylight.

If roads are built to connect the char islands with the mainland, many of their problems like marketing of crops can be addressed, he said.



Rashed Ahmed Chowdhury, vice chairman of Mutual Trust Bank, inaugurates the bank's 81st branch at Kakrail in Dhaka recently. Anis A Khan, managing director, was also present.

## NBR adds 153 new taxpayers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Taxmen of zone-8 of the National Board of Revenue brought 153 new taxpayers from the capital's Badda and its adjacent areas under the tax net through its first spot assessment in 2012-13.

The taxpayers paid Tk 459,000 in tax for 2011-12, according to a statement released yesterday.

Taxpayer identification numbers were issued to the new payers at a programme last week. In the previous fiscal years, taxmen also conducted such

## Lalmonirhat chamber holds election after 15 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The election of Lalmonirhat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which was supposed to take place every two years, was held after 15 years at its office on Saturday.

A ballot system was chosen, with a total of 541 votes being cast.

Thirty-five candidates contested in the biennial election from two panels.

From the Babu-Fozol panel 15 candidates and 3 won from the Gofran-Swapon panel.

"The election is a way of democracy," said Shaikh Abdul Hamid Babu of the Babu-Fozol panel.

"All the members of this panel will work for the welfare of the traders in Lalmonirhat. We will bring

## Japan's Abe steps up pressure on central bank

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's incoming premier Shinzo Abe stepped up pressure on the Bank of Japan Sunday to set a two-percent inflation target, threatening to change a law guaranteeing the bank's independence if it did not agree.

Speaking on Fuji Television, Abe said the BoJ's central policy board must back his proposed inflation goal at its next meeting in January.

"If unfortunately it refuses to agree to it, we have to amend the BoJ law, reach an accord (between the government and the bank) and we will have the policy," Abe said.

The law, called the Bank of Japan Act, spells out the central bank's duties and guarantees its independence.

The act also says the bank should work with the government to make sure "its currency and monetary control and the basic stance of the government's

## Stocks depressed by year-end effect

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Turnover fell by 12.78 percent overnight.

Furthermore, due to the volatile political tension investors have taken on a wait-and-see stance, according to the investment bank.

The banking sector dropped 1.09 percent, followed by non-bank financial institutions at 1.46 percent, non-life insurance 1.36 percent, textile 1.88 percent and engineering 0.89 percent.

The subscriptions for Golden Harvest Agro Industries' initial public offerings started yesterday.

A total of 0.63 lakh trades were executed, with 5.63 crore shares and mutual fund units changed hands on the Dhaka bourse.

Of the 263 issues that traded on the DSE floor, 44 advanced, 198 declined and 21 remained unchanged.

Beximco, with a transaction of 38.42 lakh shares worth Tk 24.55 crore, was the day's top traded stock.

The company also featured in the biggest gainers chart, posting a 3.89 percent gain.

United Airways and Unique Hotel and Resorts were the next popular stocks of the day.

Sonali Aansh was the worst loser, slumping by 5.48 percent.

CSCX, the selective categories index of Chittagong Stock Exchange, finished the day at 8,039.13 points, after falling 70 points, or 0.86 percent.

Losers beat gainers by 134 to 22, with five securities remaining unchanged on the port city bourse that traded 89.51 lakh shares and mutual fund units at a turnover of Tk 50.58 crore.



Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of BRAC Bank, hands an award to a winner of the fourth Biochemistry Olympiad 2012 at Curzon Hall of Dhaka University on Saturday. Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, vice chancellor of the university, was also present.



Abu Haniff Khan, additional managing director of Premier Bank, opens the bank's 72nd branch at New Market in Dhaka recently. Nazrul Islam, managing director of Biswas Builders, was also present.

# Nordic economies cool as chill winds of eurozone bite

AFP, Stockholm

Sweden slashed its economic growth forecasts late last week, becoming the third Nordic country to do so in a move that highlights the troubled eurozone's impact on its trading partners.

The Swedish government cut its gross domestic product (GDP) projection for 2013 to 1.1 percent, compared with a 2.7 percent estimate in September. This year it sees the economy growing by just 0.9 percent, compared with an earlier forecast of 1.6 percent.

"It's becoming increasingly clear that the crisis in Europe and the events in the US are having a renewed effect on employment and growth in Sweden. We can expect a poor year in 2013," Finance Minister Anders Borg said in a statement.

The centre-right government, which has been in power since 2006, said it now believes Swedish unemployment will rise next year to 8.2 percent from an average rate of 7.7 percent this year.

Analysts mostly back its view. "Unemployment will inevitably rise in 2013," Handelsbanken's Anders Brunstedt wrote in a

research note.

But the country, praised by the OECD on Monday for its handling of the economy during the European crisis, is not alone in feeling the effects of the uncertainty surrounding the eurozone.

Neighbouring Denmark, which had already been dipping in and out of recession as its banks buckle under a 25-percent fall in property prices, last week admitted that it too had been too optimistic on future growth.

The Danish government lowered its growth projections for next year to 1.2 percent from the 1.7 percent level stated in August, and said the economy would shrink 0.4 percent this year instead of growing 0.9 percent.

The Finnish economy entered recession in the third quarter, and on Thursday the government halved its growth forecast for next year to 0.5 percent.

Finnish unemployment rose to eight percent in November, its highest level in more than one and a half years.

The three Nordic countries are all heavily reliant on exports, which account for around half of all output in Sweden, 40 percent in Finland, and almost a

third in Denmark.

The debate over exports is particularly strong in eurozone member Finland.

"Finnish exports have underperformed the (overall) growth in export markets" due to a large portion of investment goods, poor competitiveness and downscaling at Nokia, once the world's largest mobile phone maker, analysts at Danske Bank wrote.

In a rare move, two high-profile Finns in Europe, European Central Bank board member Erkki Liikanen and the European Commissioner for Economic Affairs Olli Rehn, have both weighed in on the matter, urging the country to improve its competitiveness and balance its budget.

But Helsinki has so far felt little pressure from voters to implement reforms, with the government's largest coalition partner, Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's National Coalition Party, performing well in October's municipal elections.

Bucking the Nordic trend is Norway, which -- bolstered by its oil production -- expects its economy to grow by 3.1 percent this year and by 2.5 percent next year.

## Digital Jessore: a model to copy

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All the 3,300 academic institutions of the Jessore Board have been connected to the district web portal.

"I can see how many students are present at the classes through the web," said Rahman, adding that people can now apply for certificates by submitting applications online.

This remarkable digitisation of the district has not gone unnoticed; the project has been awarded in the e-Asia, an annual international event for ICT development, in 2011.

Furthermore, on Thursday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pronounced Jessore as the first 'digital district' of Bangladesh, at the inauguration of the district e-centre, the heart of the automated system.

Nazrul Islam Khan, ICT secretary and national project director of A2I, said other districts would be digitised in the same manner as Jessore.

The online submission for land ownership certificates started in Jessore on September 11 and so far the office has provided 111,000 documents, the DC said.

On an average, 500 applications are submitted to the DC office every day, he added.

Reza, who runs the info service centre at Nowapara Union-4 as an entrepreneur,

said most of his works are related to landownership certificates. His other responsibilities include typing, filling in various forms, e-mailing, taking photographs and scanning.

He has been in the business since 2010 and the government provided him all the logistics including computer, camera, printer, internet modem, projector and screen, and also the training to run the business.

The government has already set up around 5,000 Union Information and Services Centres across the country. Around 10,000 people are working in these centres and half of them are women.

But Jessore district is different and running far ahead of other areas.

Rahman, the DC, said all the administrative letters to other 240 offices of the district are sent through the web.

At the same time, the DC as well as other officials can check the status of any work.

Rahman said he not only looks after the activities of all the offices and educational institutions in the district through the system, he also sets his appointments with people online.

People can get all the notices of the DC office at the portal, he said.



Md Muklesur Rahman, deputy managing director of Eastern Bank, and Harun-Or-Rashid, police superintendent of Noakhali, open the 66th branch of the bank in Noakhali yesterday.



Syed Waseque Md Ali, deputy managing director of First Security Islami Bank, inaugurates the bank's 100th branch at Ramu in Cox's Bazar yesterday. Quazi Osman Ali, senior executive vice president, was also present.



Iftekharul Islam, vice chairman of Uttara Bank, opens the bank's 215th branch at Badda in Dhaka recently. Shaikh Abdul Aziz, managing director, was also present.