

20 women to get training to become entrepreneurs

Plan underway to create jobs

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Twenty underprivileged young women will receive training and be linked up with financial institutes to access loans to help establish their own businesses under the Young Women Enterprise Development Project launched on Tuesday.

The aspiring entrepreneurs will also be mentored by the established entrepreneurs under the joint project of Plan International Bangladesh and Bangladesh Youth Enterprise Advice and Help Centre (B'Yeah).

Beneficiaries have already received some training on different trades and have appeared before a loan panel, the organisers said in a

statement.

The project of its kind will not only help create new enterprises but also will open job opportunities for other unemployed youth in a country with high unemployment among youth, said Zakir Ahmed, joint secretary of the youth and sports ministry, at the project launch at Shooting Federation Complex in Gulshan.

Syed Md Ihsanul Karim, managing director of SME Foundation; Anis A Khan, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank; Abdul Moyeed Chowdhury, chairperson of B'Yeah; and Abdul Mannan, manager of Plan International Bangladesh, also attended the programme.

Telecom: major driver of growth

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The index ranks 155 countries' performance in information and communication technology infrastructure and uptake.

"The situation can be improved through proper policy formulation," Samarajiva said at a roundtable on revision of the telecom policy organised by Telecom Reporters' Network Bangladesh, an association of telecom journalists, at Lake Shore Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh's national telecom policy was formulated in 1998 but has never been updated. However, a consultant of the ITU prepared a revised draft of the policy in 2012.

The telecom policy will be revised soon as it has become too old, said Abdul Latif Siddique, the telecom and ICT minister, at the roundtable.

The policy needs extensive examination, as the government wants to use ICT to move Bangladesh forward, he said asking the BTRC to aggregate the recommendations for consideration into the revised policy.

Sunil Kanti Bose, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), said the policy should target the next 15 to 20 years with achievable goals—both long-term and mid-term.

The policy is very important as all foreign investors want to consider it before revising, and it should indicate how it contributes to the socio-economic goals of the government, he said.

The cost of the service should also be affordable to general people, he said.

The BTRC officials do not have adequate quali-

fication to publish indicators of the country's telecom industry, he added.

The current policy should be revised extensively and revisited every two or three years, said Abu Saeed Khan, senior policy fellow of LIRNEasia.

Recent merger of the telecom and ICT ministry reflects the government's commitment to the sector, he said.

The policy should have technical and service neutrality among the operators, and a unified licensing principle, said Mahmud Hossain, chief corporate affairs officer of Grameenphone.

Broadband penetration, safe internet, healthy competition, unified license, infrastructure sharing, foreign investment, tax policy and other related issues should be kept in mind during the revision of the policy, he said.

The role of the government and the regulator should also be defined in the policy, he added.

The environmental context should be indicated in the policy through imposing 'active sharing' to get the best use of technology, said Mahmudur Rahman, executive vice president of Robi.

Active sharing is a policy where operators can use each others' resources including spectrums.

The social obligation fund, collected from the revenues of the operators, should also be addressed in the policy, he said.

The policy should discuss the spectrum roadmap and suggest the creation of a level-playing field among operators, said Zakiul Islam, senior director of Banglalink.

Dismal customer service for electricity users

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Each of the electricity distributors should have round-the-clock dedicated call centres so consumers do not need to visit the customer care centres for minor troubles, it said.

Only Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd offers a round-the-clock call centre service.

The study indicates that the best form of demand-side management is to shift consumers away from using electricity at times of peak demand. In order to do this, time-of-day billing or metering must be introduced.

This requires policy change, and significant capital investment in the form of installing smart meters, said the study.

Information such as approximate consumption of electricity by commonly used household appliances can be printed on the back of electricity bills.

Overall, customer relationship scenario in the telecom sector is different when compared to the electricity sector.

About 85 percent of Bangladeshi users responded that they were treated nicely during a telecom customer service session and 74 percent believe that the information they received were relevant and was available easily.

In Bangladesh, CRM practices in telecom are comparatively more advanced than in the electricity sector, said the study.

The study found no specific examples of surveys and analysis on the part of the distributors to identify unmet or latent needs of potential customers.

So far, none of the distributors were found conducting any large scale survey to collect usage data and perform analysis to know existing customers better, it said.

Of the five distributors, only Rural Electrification Board (REB), Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd (DESCO) and Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd (DPDC) accept online application.

Only REB and DESCO accept online bill payment. However, all five distribu-

tors, which also include Power Development Board (PDB) and West Zone Power Company Ltd (WZPDC), receive mobile bill payment.

Of the five, only REB does not have any load-shedding forecasting mechanism.

All of the distributors have help line, while PDB and DESCO have launched pre-paid metering.

Speakers at the unveiling of the study blamed the lack of competition among power distributors for poor level of customer service, as only a single state-run company operates in a region.

Pial Islam, managing partner of pi Strategy, underscored the significance of innovation in electricity distribution sector.

"There are pockets of innovative experimentations taking place in the electricity sector. However, these need to be objectively evaluated and further refined before deploying them on a wider scale."

Helani Galpaya, chief executive officer of LIRNEasia, said the study was done through surveys of low-income micro-entrepreneurs and detailed interviews with service providers.

The intent was to explore challenges these sectors face now and to identify solutions that have already been successfully implemented in one sector and could possibly be replicated by the other, she said.

The study said despite some recent initiatives by distributors to better serve the customers by introducing online/mobile services, most of the customer services still remain poor due to weak design of such services.

Rohan Samarajiva, founding chair of LIRNEasia, said the electricity distributors would have to look at the consumers as resources, not as annoying beings.

"Customers can provide valuable information on the utilities' failures and faults in providing standard services. Their complaints should be seen as feedbacks."

Owner of a closed factory sends legal notices to inspection agencies

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He also termed the certification system of the Accord faulty. "The Accord did not conduct any soil tests before declaring my factory unsafe. Accord engineers are branding buildings risky on the basis of visual reports and hammer tests," Selim said.

Rob Wayss, executive director for Accord's Dhaka office, said he is yet to get any legal notice from Softex.

"But we are in talks with Softex for a solution. We have already held several meetings with the Softex management," he said.

Wayss, however, said the lead buyers do not need to be present during factory inspection. "But, the factory management can contact the lead buyers for compensation and fund for factory renovation," he said.

Mesbah Rabin, managing director of the Alliance's Dhaka office, said he did not receive any legal notice yet.

Shahidullah Azim, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and a member of the review panel for factory inspection, said: "I heard that Softex has gone for legal procedure for demurrage."

Azim also said a total of 22 factories have so far been closed down due to structural flaws in the buildings and around 18,000 workers lost jobs.

The Accord, a platform of 150 retailers and brands mostly from Europe, started inspection of nearly 1,600 factories in February and Alliance, a platform of 27 US-based retailers and brands, started inspection of 700 factories in March.

In another drive, 30 teams of engineers led by Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) started inspecting nearly 2,000 garment factories in November last year.

Formalin abusers must be jailed for life: minister

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Carrot, bean, tomato, lettuce, capsicum, banana, apple, pineapple and mango were contaminated with highly toxic pesticides. And the presence of banned pesticide Aldrin was found in milk, according to the NFSL tests.

"Unadulterated food is the constitutional right of the people. Death penalty should be awarded to the food adulterators as they are creating serious health hazards for the society," FBCCI President

Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, said, while calling for a social protest against food adulterators.

Helal Uddin, vice-president of FBCCI, called for immediate passage of the act to check the trade and use of the toxic substance, as the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution is not playing its due role.

Traders imported 40 tonnes formalin in fiscal 2012-14 and 750 tonnes in fiscal 2011-12. FBCCI has established 19 formalin free markets in the country, he added.

Call for investment friendly climate

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"The government should allocate a good amount of money for appointing lobbyists to regain GSP in the US market," he said.

But Aftab ul Islam, president of American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, said the country does not need to appoint such lobbyists as it is very expensive.

Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said businesses had to face a lot of troubles due to political unrest last year. "We do not want any repetition of the crises. We want a congenial environment for investment."

The FBCCI will hold a pre-budget consultative meeting on May 8 to put forward its proposals for the next budget, Ahmed said.

Former FBCCI president AK Azad also spoke.



PUBALI BANK

Helal Ahmed Chowdhury, managing director of Pubali Bank, receives the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh's certificate of merit award from Finance Minister AMA Muhith, at an event held at Radisson Blu Water Garden in Dhaka recently.

Promoting sustained and inclusive growth

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A continuation of the recent macro-economic and structural policy directions would help keep risks at bay, maintain investor confidence and sustain the region's growth leadership. Decisive progress on structural reforms is critical. The agenda varies across the region, involving vigorous implementation of the government's reform blueprint to put growth on a sustainable path in China; further product and labor market reforms to prevent deflation and low growth from returning in Japan; and lifting regulatory impediments, boosting infrastructure and continuing to promote trade and financial integration in many emerging, frontier and developing economies, as well as in Pacific island countries and small states.

In Bangladesh, too, economic growth is expected to improve. Unrest and uncertainty took a toll on economic activity in the run-up to the January 2014 general elections. The authorities, however, commendably maintained macroeconomic stability throughout the turmoil period. While food inflation has been elevated, reflecting in part unrest-related supply disruptions, non-food inflation has been trending down. Public debt remains sustainable. And Bangladesh's external position has remained strong, with exports resilient, allowing the country to continue to build up its international reserve buffers.

Provided that the political situation remains calm and uncertainty abates, Bangladesh's economic performance looks set to normalise in 2014-15, with growth improving from around 5.5 percent in fiscal year 2014 (FY14) to its ten-year average of about 6.25 percent in FY15. The garment industry may face some headwinds as it adjusts to absorb higher wages and compliance costs associated with improving factory safety standards, but

growth will be underpinned by a recovery in domestic demand, particularly an increase in public investment.

There are, however, downside risks to near-term growth. A resurgence of political tensions would undermine activity as well as business confidence. Insufficient progress in improving labour and factory safety standards in the garment industry could lead to sanctions by trading partners or international buyers. A further deterioration in the finances of the state owned banks could pose risks to fiscal and financial stability.

Bangladesh has emerged as a new frontier in the global economy. With support from the IMF's three-year Extended Credit Facility arrangement, steady progress has been made in strengthening macroeconomic stability and implementing the government's reform agenda.

Going forward, to fully realise Bangladesh's growth potential on a sustainable footing, policies should continue to focus on maintaining prudent fiscal and monetary policies; increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio to create space for priority fiscal spending, particularly investment in power and transport infrastructure projects with high social returns and well-targeted social safety nets to support the income of the poor; continued efforts to strengthen financial sector supervision aimed at mitigating banking sector vulnerabilities; and reforms to improve the business climate and gradually streamline foreign exchange regulations to stimulate domestic and foreign investment. The IMF, as a partner to Bangladesh, stands ready to continue working closely with the Bangladesh authorities to support their policy program centred on these priorities.

The writer is International Monetary Fund's mission chief for Bangladesh.

Raising the game to deliver pro-poor growth

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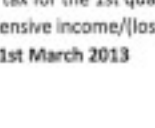
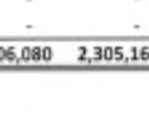
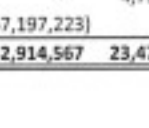
Second, Bangladesh should cater more aggressively to the skills development of its growing youth population to fully harness the "demographic opportunity" resulting from the falling fertility rates -- the other key driver of poverty reduction. Linking this labour, the majority of which is in the informal economy, to productive employment in both domestic and global labour markets will help with both poverty reduction and increase the flow of remittances. Renewed focus on facilitating remunerative, affordable and safe migration for both semi-skilled and skilled workers in large numbers is a pressing priority.

Third, Bangladesh can make better use of its vast social safety net expenditures through improvements in programme

design so as to emphasise human capital accumulation (such as child nutrition and cognitive development, education, and skills) and productive employment. Targeting these benefits and services to the poorest people, and improving the timing of safety net responses to mitigate the effects of various natural disasters and global shocks, will ensure that growth remains inclusive.

Consolidating efforts to deliver results in these three areas in both the short and medium term could provide Bangladesh with a powerful formula to increase growth with equity.

The writers are senior economists at the World Bank and authored the 2013 Bangladesh Poverty Assessment Report.

Bangladesh Lamps Limited						
Financial Statements 1st Quarter 2014		Sadar Road, Mohakhali Dhaka - 1208				
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (UN-AUDITED) AS AT 31 MARCH 2014						
	As at 31 March 2014	As at 31 December 2013				
	Taka	Taka				
Assets						
Property, plant and equipment	154,343,610	163,421,982				
Capital work in progress	630,000	630,000				
Intangible assets	919,166	1,025,222				
Investments:						
At cost	55,346,673	55,346,673				
Fair value adjustment	276,536,526	305,912,432				
	331,883,199	361,259,105				
Loans and deposits	3,303,818	3,340,953				
Total non-current assets	491,079,793	529,677,262				
Inventories	176,741,467	248,351,772				
Trade and other debtors	235,277,947	248,436,940				
Advance, deposits and prepayments	17,458,704	6,570,224				
Advance income tax	125,469,622	123,360,941				
Cash and cash equivalents	10,766,071	2,715,841				
Total Current assets	565,713,811	629,435,718				
Total assets	1,056,793,604	1,159,112,980				
Equity						
Share capital	93,706,080	93,706,080				
Reserves and surplus	469,929,696	497,113,514				
Total equity	563,635,776	590,819,594				
Liabilities						
Long term loan	23,278,484	28,441,377				
Deferred liability - gratuity payable	42,609,460	44,898,845				
Deferred tax liability	9,486,769	10,247,909				
Total non-current liabilities	75,374,713	83,588,131				
Current portion of long term loan	20,651,574	20,651,574				
Short term finance	175,210,751	250,421,311				
Trade and other creditors	86,337,207	75,002,648				
Accrued expenses	16,380,707	12,486,967				
Other liabilities	8,823,262	9,576,627				
Provision for tax	97,915,705	96,641,298				
Provision for royalty	12,463,909	19,924,830				
Total current liabilities and provisions	417,783,115	484,705,255				
Total Liabilities	493,157,828	568,293,386				
Total equity and liabilities	1,056,793,604	1,159,112,980				
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (UN-AUDITED) FOR THE 1ST QUARTER ENDED 31 MARCH 2014						
	1 January to 31 March 2014	1 January to 31 March 2013				
	Taka	Taka				
Sales (net of VAT and SD)	253,404,991	315,039,562				
Cost of goods sold	(192,801,919)	(226,604,850)				
Gross profit	60,603,072	88,434,712				
Other income	3,113,632	3,535,253				
Operating expenses	(57,800,292)	(82,217,524)				
Profit from operation	5,916,412	9,752,441				
Finance expense	(6,566,311)	(11,064,707)				
Finance income	3,490,522	6,808,249				
Net finance expense	(3,075,789)	(4,256,458)				
Profit before contribution to WPPF	2,840,623	5,495,983				
Contribution to WPPF	(135,268)	(261,713)				
Profit before income tax	2,705,355	5,234,270				
Income tax :						
Current tax	(1,274,407)	(1,917,907)				
Deferred tax	761,140	1,415,705				
Net profit for the period	2,192,088	4,732,068				
Other comprehensive income/(loss) :						
Changes in fair value of available-for-sale financial assets	(29,375,906)	(67,197,223)				
Total comprehensive income/(loss)	(27,183,818)	(62,465,155)				
Earning per share (par value Tk. 10 each)	0.23	0.50				
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS (UN-AUDITED) FOR THE 1ST QUARTER ENDED 31 MARCH 2014						
	1 January to 31 March 2014	1 January to 31 March 2013				
	Taka	Taka				
Cash flows from operating activities:						
Collection from customers	309,245,506	365,695,403				
Collection from other income	3,113,632	5,406,596				
	312,359,138	371,101,999				
Payment to suppliers	(106,712,691)	(106,434,662)				
Payment to employees	(29,411,317)	(21,680,796)				
Income tax payments	(2,108,681)	(5,954,629)				
VAT & Supplementary duty payments	(46,802,361)	(50,099,748)				
Other payments for expenses & services	(38,871,353)	(102,888,011)				
	(223,906,403)	(287,057,846)				
Net cash flows from operating activities	88,452,735	84,044,153				
Cash flows from investing activities:						
Payment for acquisition of property, plant and equipment	(8,100)	(3,142,933)				
Net cash used in investing activities	(8,100)	(3,142,933)				
Cash flows from financing activities:						
Dividend paid	(20,951)	(12,134)				
Repayment of long term loan	(5,162,894)	(9,258,313)				
Net cash used in financing activities	(5,183,845)	(9,270,447)				
Net changes in cash and cash equivalents	83,260,790	71,630,773				
Opening cash and cash equivalents	(247,705,470)	(225,357,267)				
Closing cash and cash equivalents	(164,444,680)	(153,726,494)				
Closing cash & cash equivalents represent the following:						
Cash & cash equivalents	10,766,071	38,478,947				
Short term finance	(175,210,751)	(192,205,441)				
	(164,444,680)	(153,726,494)				
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY (UN-AUDITED) FOR THE 1ST QUARTER ENDED 31 MARCH 2014						
	Share Capital	General Reserve	Fair value Reserve	Retained Earnings	Total	
	Taka	Taka	Taka	Taka	Taka	
Balance as at 1 January 2014	93,706,080	2,305,167	170,154,699	305,912,432	18,741,216	590,819,594
Net profit after tax for the 1st quarter 2014	-	-	-	2,192,088	2,192,088	2,192,088
Other comprehensive income/(loss)	-	-	-	(29,375,906)	(29,375,906)	(29,375,906)
Balance as at 31 March 2014	93,706,080	2,305,167	170,154,699	276,536,526	20,833,304	563,635,776
Balance as at 1 January 2013	93,706,080	2,305,167	199,720,486	300,113,790	18,741,216	634,586,739
Net profit after tax for the 1st quarter 2013	-	-	-	4,732,068	4,732,068	4,732,068
Other comprehensive income/(loss)	-	-	-	(67,197,223)	(67,197,223)	(67,197,223)
Balance as at 31 March 2013	93,706,080	2,305,167	199,720,486	232,916,567	23,473,294	552,115,584
 Company Secretary (C-4)						
 Chief Financial Officer						
 Director						
This Financial Statements will be available in our web-site at www.bll.com.bd .						