



**A Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of Bank Asia, poses with the participants of a foundation training course at its concluding ceremony, at Bank Asia Institute for Training and Development at Rangshabhan in Tejgaon, Dhaka on Wednesday. Mian Quamrul Hasan Chowdhury, deputy managing director, was also present.**

## EU, Bangladesh to hold business talks in Dhaka

FROM PAGE B1  
Bangladesh's exports to the US are also increasing, although the country's generalised system of preferences was suspended in June 2013.

Bilateral trade between the US and Bangladesh will reach the \$7.5 billion mark at the end of the year. The country's exports to the US will be close to \$7 billion, he said.

The minister said if UK's latest ban on the entry of direct cargo flights to London is prolonged, Bangladesh's existing trade ties with the country will be affected.

The civil aviation and tourism ministry has been working with the UK government to improve security at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

Mayaoudon said the main objective of the dialogue is to diversify economic relations between the EU and Bangladesh. "We want to encourage more European companies to consider Bangladesh as their prime business destination."

## Oil dips after rally but supply worries persist

AFP, London

Oil held most of the previous day's strong gains Thursday, but traders remain on edge over the long-running supply glut.

Around 1130 GMT, US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for delivery in April slid 13 cents at \$38.16 a barrel.

Brent North Sea crude for May delivery lost 28 cents to \$40.79 a barrel compared with Wednesday's close.

## BB kept the hacking episode under wraps

FROM PAGE B1  
The BB has around \$28 billion in foreign currency reserves. Nearly one-third of the reserves are in the form of liquid assets with different foreign banks including the central banks of the US and the UK. The rest are invested in bonds and gold. The stolen money that ended up in Sri Lanka has been retrieved, according to the BB.

The Anti-Money Laundering Council is investigating six persons for possible involvement in a cross-border electronic fraud and money-laundering scheme.

Meanwhile, RCBC President Lorenzo Tan denied allegations that the bank's top management knew of the money-laundering activities.

His remarks came after the Inquirer published a report on Wednesday that stated that the bank's top officials were aware of the transactions.

The Rappler news outlet quoted RCBC's Corporate Vice Chairman Cesar Virata as saying that the RCBC is investigating the deposit of \$81 million in its Jupiter branch and the subsequent transactions.

## Cemex to sell Bangladesh cement unit

FROM PAGE B1  
Currently Cemex Cement Bangladesh is producing Cemex brand Portland composite cement, which was used in some big infrastructure projects such as Khilgaon flyover, Apollo Hospitals Dhaka and Hotel Naz Garden in Bogra.

With 32 cement manufacturing companies at present, Bangladesh has an installed production capacity of 3.2 crore tonnes a year; the local demand is around two crore tonnes, according to Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers Association.

Bangladesh's per capita cement consumption is only around 105 kilograms.



**Dmitry Lapitskiy, chief executive of Beximco Communications; Prakash Das, director, and Noor E Tazrian Khan, PR and communication manager, attend a programme to announce the launch of RealVU, the company's direct-to-home TV channel service, in Dhaka yesterday.**

# China consumer inflation jumps in February

AFP, Beijing

China's consumer inflation jumped to 2.3 percent in February, its highest in nearly two years, official data showed Thursday, in a positive sign for demand in the world's second-largest economy.

Food prices surged during the annual Lunar New Year holiday, with pork prices jumping 25.4 percent year-on-year, and vegetables up a hefty 30.6 percent.

The rise in the consumer price index (CPI) released by the National Bureau of Statistics was the largest since July 2014, and came in ahead of market forecasts of 1.8 percent in a survey by Bloomberg News.

The producer price index (PPI), which measures prices of goods at the factory gate, fell 4.9 percent year-on-year, meeting expectations and an improvement on January's 5.3 percent drop.

But it was the 48th consecutive monthly fall as overcapacity in manufacturing drags on China's growth, with the protracted PPI declines -- now extending to four years -- boding ill for industrial prospects.

Moderate inflation can be a boon to consumption as it pushes buyers to act before prices go up, while falling prices encourage shoppers to delay purchases and companies to put off investment, both of which can hurt growth.

Analysts expected a rise in CPI due to a traditional surge in demand for the week-long holiday, known as the Spring Festival in China, as well as unusually cold winter weather in February pushing up food prices.

The increase was "mainly impacted by the cold snap and the Spring Festival", National Bureau of Statistics analyst Yu Qiumei said in a statement.

"Most of the country was hit by wind storms, a temperature drop, rain and snow storms in the middle of February, affecting the production and transportation of fresh vegetables," Yu said, adding that vegetable prices surged 29.9 percent from January, the highest monthly rise since March 2008.

Analysts with ANZ Research noted that the spike in food prices was temporary, so that consumer inflation was likely to be "mild" in coming months.

As the inflation rate was "significantly below the government's three percent target" they added, the central bank "will need to inject more liquidity to the real economy".

Beijing lowered its growth target last week at the annual meeting of the rubber-stamp National People's Congress, setting a target of 6.5 to 7.0 percent expansion for 2016, down from "around seven percent" last year.

The inflation figures are a glimmer of good news for China's economy, which saw its slowest growth rate in a quarter of a century last year.

The slowdown comes as Beijing strives to effect a difficult transition in the country's economic model away from reliance on exports and fixed-asset investment towards one driven by consumers.

Officials have been on a charm offensive to reassure investors they have ample monetary and policy tools to maintain growth while making much-needed overcapacity cuts.

Worries about the outlook still weighed on markets Thursday -- auto sales edged lower year-on-year in February, figures showed -- and the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index closed down more than two percent.

"If inflation pressure doesn't ease, the space for use of monetary policy will be limited," Hong Hao, an analyst at BOCOM International told AFP.

## AFC Health to set up cancer hospital in Ctg

FROM PAGE B1  
Jason Bajaj, chief executive of Osiris Asia Impact Fund; ABM Ghulam Mostafa, chairman of AFC Health, and SM Saifur Rahman, managing director, were also present.

CTSI has multiple cancer care centres in the USA and India, where it provides comprehensive cancer care services to underserved areas through innovative, evidence-based treatment that meets the highest safety, quality and transparency standards.

The American Oncology Institute commenced its operations in Hyderabad, India, in 2012. The group now has several centres in India and is rapidly expanding across India and the region.

## NBR allowed, but now orders probe

FROM PAGE B1  
The revenue authority said the benefit was provided under the article 6 of the agreement, which allows duty exemptions for items available for in-flight shopping or consumption by passengers while on board the aircraft, catering and communication equipment, staff uniform, spare parts of aircraft, fuel and lubricants.

It categorically does not allow the import of vehicles free of duty.

Subsequently, in an order on March 6 the revenue authority, based on an instruction from Finance Minister AMA Muhith, directed an investigation into the matter, which has to be completed within 15 working days.

It also instructed confiscation of the vehicles during the period of investigation.

Moinul Khan, director general of the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate, said they asked Flydubai's Bangladesh office to surrender the cars voluntarily.

NBR Chairman Md Nojibur Rahman said steps will be taken based on the recommendation of

the investigation report.

When raised the issue of granting permission without proper verification in the first place, he said: "Those who were involved in it in the past did not do their job properly. For this, there will be a probe now."

In the order issued in April 2013 that granted Flydubai the permission, the engine capacity of the vehicles that can be imported duty free was not specified.

The ambiguity created the scope for Flydubai's local agent to import a Rolls-Royce of 6,600cc engine capacity and a Mercedes-Benz of 4,663cc, both ultra luxury brands, said revenue officials.

The other two vehicles imported were a Land Rover and a Range Rover, again luxury makes. They were imported in 2014.

Rahman said the privilege of duty-free import of cars is usually extended to the members of parliament, but even in those cases the type and the model of vehicles are clearly mentioned. "There is no right awarded to anyone to give a blank cheque," he said.

Contacted, Saiful Haque, chair-

man of Sky Aviation Services Ltd, the general sales agent of Flydubai in Bangladesh, denied the allegation of duty evasion and said the cars were imported by taking permission legally.

"I am a consumer and I can seek NBR permission. I would not have been able to bring the cars by force had they not given me permission. They granted the permission and I brought the cars by complying with customs formalities."

He said they had applied for permission in the same manner that other foreign airlines had in the past but acknowledged the fact that unlike others, the cc or engine capacity limits of the vehicles were not mentioned in the application.

For instance, in 2009, the NBR allowed another Dubai-based airline Emirates to import three vehicles free of duty in line with the article 6.

"What the difference here is that there were mentions of cc limit in the permissions granted in favour of other airlines. For my case, it was not mentioned."

Since there was no mention of cc

limit, the local office of Flydubai took the liberty to bring in the Rolls-Royce as a top official of the airline was supposed to visit Bangladesh in January, according to Haque.

When raised the issue that article 6 of the Air Service Agreement did not provide the scope of duty-free import of cars, he said: "Why did they grant me the permission then?" "I would not have imported if they told me so. There is no ground to give me punishment now," Haque said.

Asked how duty-free import permissions were given to Flydubai and others despite there being no such provision in the agreement, NBR Chairman Rahman said they will investigate all the cases.

He said Flydubai's local agent brought the cars 'unlawfully'.

"They wanted to take advantage by creating pressure on the NBR through various ways. The NBR does not bow down to any pressure. The approval given earlier has been cancelled and these vehicles are illegal now," he added.

Haque, however, said the customs were aware that the two

luxury cars are being imported.

"The cars arrived at the port on December 10 and had been there for six days. They did not raise any objection that they cannot be released."

He said he wanted to re-export the cars and sought permission from the NBR and the finance minister in this regard.

"I wanted to re-export the cars because there was objection from the customs and the top official of Flydubai did not come to Bangladesh," he added. Asked on the re-export issue, Rahman said the cars will be seized for the time being.

The Anti Corruption Commission had earlier opened a probe into the allegation of duty evasion by Flydubai but later discarded the plan, knowing that the NBR has already initiated investigations, according to Ritwik Saha, deputy director of the anti-graft watchdog.

Md Ghulam Hussain, then NBR chairman, declined to comment, saying he cannot remember anything about the matter.

Flydubai operates two daily flights from Dhaka and 10 weekly flights from Chittagong to Dubai.



**M Wahidul Haque, chairman of AB Bank, and Shamim Ahmed Chaudhury, managing director, cut a cake with female officials of the bank to mark the International Women's Day at its corporate office in Dhaka on Tuesday.**

## In memory of AKN Ahmed

FROM PAGE B1  
Former finance minister M Syeduzzaman said AKN Ahmed could take policies and guidelines that were must needed at that time.

"We needed him as the governor of Bangladesh Bank for a longer period," he said.

The regulator would have been in a better position and the situation in the banking sector would have been better if AKN Ahmed had been the BB governor for a longer time, he said.

Khurshid Alam, former governor of Bangladesh Bank; AQ Siddiqui, former chairman of Bangladesh Commerce Bank and former managing director of Sonali Bank; and Syed Ashraf Ali, former executive director of Bangladesh Bank, also spoke.



**Abrar A Anwar, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, and Aditya Mandloi, head of retail banking, pose with six credit cardholders of the bank that won Liverpool match package, at a gala event at the Westin hotel in Dhaka, organised by the bank to mark its 20 years of credit card services.**