

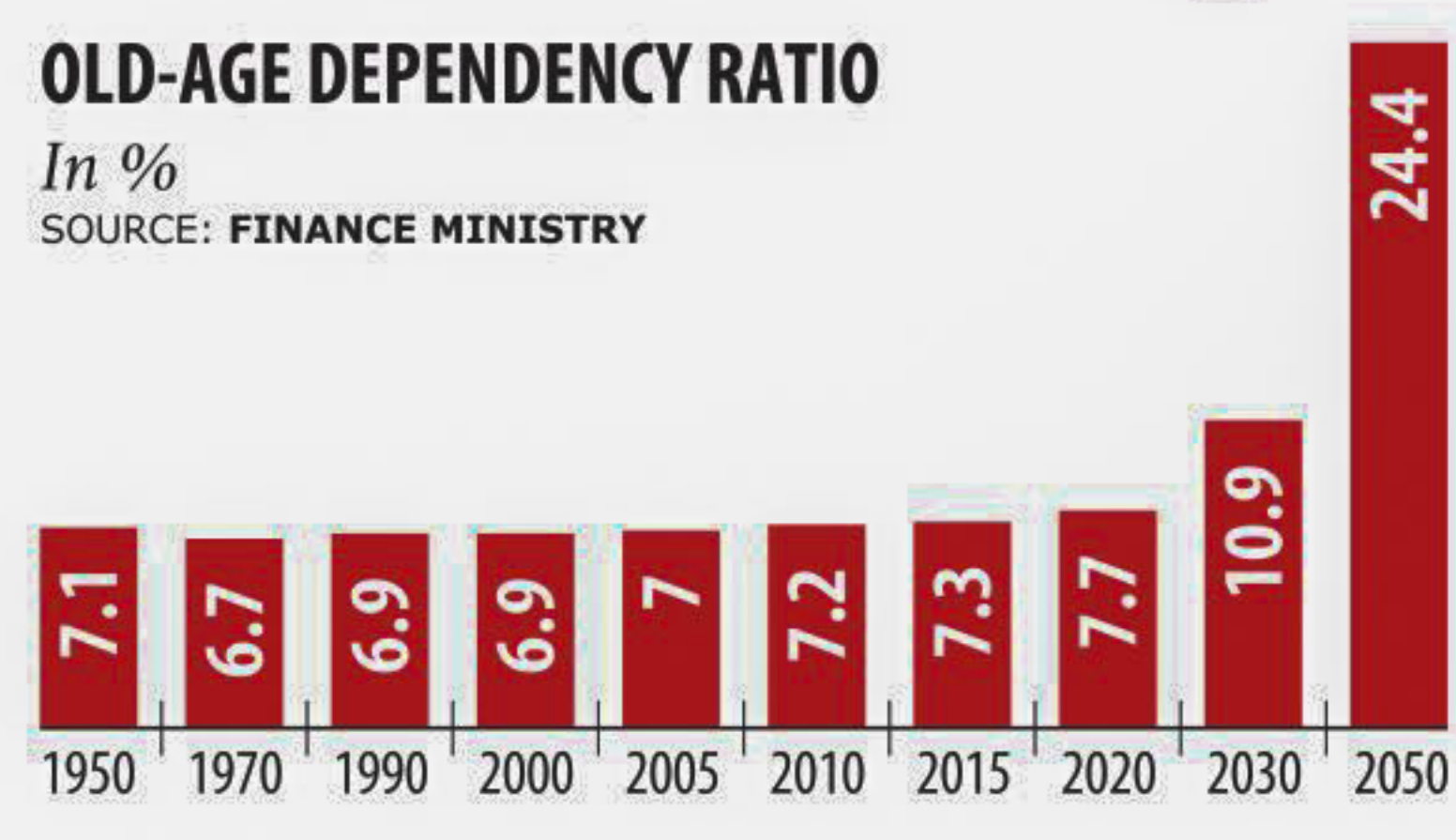
আপনার সংসার গুছিয়ে দিচ্ছি আমরা।
 ইসলামিক কনজুমার ফাইন্যান্স
 SIBL

Diplomats urge govt to speed up trade union registrations

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
 Foreign diplomats yesterday urged the government to strengthen worker rights by accelerating the process of union registration in garment factories in and outside export processing zones.
 "We welcome the steps already taken to ensure worker rights but more still needs to be done," said Alison Blake, the British high commissioner to Bangladesh, after a meeting with three secretaries at the commerce ministry in Dhaka.
 Blake was the spokesperson of the meeting, which was attended by US Ambassador Marcia Bernicat, Canadian High Commissioner Benoit-Pierre Laramée, EU Ambassador Pierre Mayaudon and International Labour Organisation's Country Director Srinivas Reddy, among others.
 From the Bangladesh side, Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque, Senior Secretary to the commerce ministry Hedayetullah Al Mamoon and Labour Secretary Mikail Shipar attended the meeting.
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Overhaul of pension scheme in the offing

REJAUL KARIM BYRON
 The government will form a pension authority within next two years to oversee the pension scheme for the private sector.
 It may also bar the retired government staff from selling more than 50 percent of their pension benefit from next fiscal year.
 The decision was taken at a high level meeting yesterday at the secretariat with Finance Minister AMA Muhith in the chair.
 After the meeting, Muhith told reporters that many government officials sell their pension benefit at a time, due to which they face many problems later on.
 None will be allowed to draw more than 50 percent of his/her pension money at a time, the minister said. The rest of the amount can be drawn every month in the course of his/her life.
 In his budget speech earlier in June, Muhith said the existing pension system would be reformed and an initiative would be taken to introduce a pension system in the private sector.
 At yesterday's meeting, the finance division presented a concept paper about the initiative, and it was decided that a proposal in this regard will be placed in the cabinet meeting, said a finance ministry official.
 The government will introduce



a universal pension system for both public and private sector employees, according to the concept paper.
 For this, several subsidiary institutions will have to be established, including pension enrolment office, pension trust, custodian, central record keeping agency, trustee bank, pension fund managers and annuity service providers.
 A new pension office will be established for reforming the existing pension system. Besides, a pension cell will be formed in the finance division for preparing a revised draft law for the pension scheme.
 A pension authority will be formed to bring all the citizens under the pension scheme.
 In the meeting, the finance division said the joint families

Citycell runs risk of losing licence

Regulator serves notice on beleaguered telecom operator

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM
 The telecom regulator on Wednesday sought reasons from Pacific Bangladesh Telecom that owns Citycell for not cancelling its licence although the operator failed to pay Tk 477.63 crore in dues.
 Citycell will have to reply within 30 days, according to the letter signed by SM Golam Sorwar, a senior assistant director of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's legal and licensing division.
 Senior Citycell executives acknowledged the receipt of the notice and said they will discuss the matter with the operator's lawyers.
 The government on Tuesday set in motion the process to revoke Citycell's licence after the operator failed to pay its dues.
 Subsequently, the telecom division requested the subscribers of Citycell, the country's oldest operator, to switch to another network by August 23.
 Citycell did not pay the second and third instalments -- amounting to Tk 229 crore -- of its spectrum renewal fee, which were due in 2012. The operator renewed its licence for another 15 years in 2011.
 Besides, it owes annual spectrum fees totalling Tk 27.14 crore from 2013 through to 2016; revenue sharing proceeds of Tk 27.84 crore from 2014 to 2016; social obligatory fund contributions of Tk 8.92 crore from 2011 to 2016; value-added taxes of Tk 39.92 crore; and Tk 135 crore in penalty.
 Contacted, Tarana Halim, state minister for telecom, yesterday said the other formalities for the termination of Citycell's licence

will start in a day or two.
 The recommendation for cancellation of licence will soon be forwarded to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who also serves as the telecom minister.
 Citycell began its operations in 1993, though its licence was awarded in 1989.
 Singapore's SingTel owns 44.54 percent shares in Citycell, Pacific Motors 37.95 percent and Far East Telecom 17.51 percent.
 Meanwhile, Citycell sought time until December 31 to clear its outstanding charges with the telecom regulator.
 Tarana said Citycell's letter has been received and if the arguments put in it are worth considering the government will do so.
 On August 16, Md Matiul Islam, chairman of the Industrial and Infrastructure Development Finance Company Ltd or IIDFC, wrote to Hasina and requested her to give Citycell a six-month extension to find a foreign or local buyer.
 Citycell borrowed Tk 1,500 crore from 23 banks and six non-bank financial institutions, including IIDFC, according to Islam, also a former secretary.
 The operator's revenue was Tk 139.77 crore in fiscal 2014-15, while its investment was zero, according to the BTRC's annual report.
 Its revenue was Tk 230.52 crore in fiscal 2013-14 and Tk 267.64 crore in fiscal 2012-13.
 Citycell's subscription reached a peak of 19 lakh in 2011, but it has been a minor player in the market for at least 10 years now. Currently, it has about 1.5 lakh active connections.

Twelve private economic zones in the pipeline

PROPOSED ECONOMIC ZONES	LOCATION	AREA SIZE IN ACRES
Sirajganj Economic Zone	Sirajganj	1,035
Sonargaon Economic Zone	Narayanganj	300
Comilla Economic Zone	Comilla	270
East Coast Group Economic Zone	Habiganj	150
City Special Economic Zone	Dhaka	115
Alliance Economic Zone	Comilla	100
Akij Economic Zone	Mymensingh	100
City Economic Zone	Narayanganj	91
Fomcom Economic Zone	Bagerhat	80
Magura Group Economic Zone	Narayanganj	52
Jaj Bhuiyan Economic Zone	Narayanganj	40
Karnaphuli Dry-dock Economic Zone	Chittagong	20

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY
 Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority or Beza reviews proposals for 12 more private economic zones, a step further in creating jobs and attracting investment from both home and abroad.
 If the proposals get through, Beza will provide prequalification licences to the private companies to set up the economic zones in parts of the country.
 "Local companies have expressed their intention to set up and operate private economic zones," said Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Beza.
 But it does not mean that all of them will be allowed to develop an economic zone. "We will give prequalification licences to only those who can meet all regulatory requirements."
 Huge investment is required to develop an economic zone, he said. "So, the groups of companies who have their own industrialisation ability, financial strength and are connected with other entrepreneurs at home and abroad are much more eligible and will be successful in setting up and running an economic zone."
 A prequalification licence will be awarded to one of the 12 economic zones this month. "The rest will be awarded in phases," said Chowdhury.
 An economic zone is a designated area in a country with special economic regulations that differ from the rest of the country. An entrepreneur can enjoy various benefits, including tax incentives from the authori-

ties, by setting up an industrial unit in an economic zone.
 The entrepreneurs can also enjoy Bangladesh's significant market access to developed and neighbouring countries, demographic dividends, the domestic consumer market and most importantly, a cheap labour force.
 Receiving a prequalification licence from Beza depends on fulfilling certain requirements that includes proper documentation of land, company information and financial strength, project description, development plan, development cost and source of financing.
 After receiving the prequalification licence, the company or group will carry out an environmental impact assessment, feasibility study and prepare a master-plan in the next one year to get the final nod from Beza.
 Beza has so far awarded licences to eight local private companies to set up 10 economic zones -- one each to AK Khan and Company, Abdul Monem Ltd, Bay Group, Aman Group, Maisha Group, United Group and two each to Meghna Group and Bashundhara Group.
 The government is also setting up four economic zones in the public sector -- Mirsarai Economic Zone in Chittagong, Mongla Economic Zone in Bagerhat, Sirhatta Economic Zone in Moulvibazar and Sabrang Tourism Park in Cox's Bazar.
 The government plans to develop 100 such zones by 2030 on 75,000 acres to create jobs for one crore people and produce products and services worth \$40 billion.

\$50 fine for each SIM with flawed registration: Tarana

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
 The government has so far detected nearly 1,000 SIMs, which were not correctly registered through the biometric system, State Minister for Telecom Tarana Halim said yesterday.
 "We will fine the telecom operators in a week and the operators have to pay \$50 as a fine for each faulty SIM," Tarana said after a meeting with the telecom regulator at the regulator's office.
 "When we started the biometric verification in December last year, illegal VoIP traffic was 35 percent of the entire call volume, which came down to 12 percent in June after the end of re-registration."
 The illegal VoIP traffic came down to 9 percent in July, she said.
 Of 13.2 crore active SIMs, 11.6 crore were re-registered through the biometric system, according to government data.

Wal-Mart boosts forecast on higher earnings; shares up

AFP, New York
 Wal-Mart Stores reported higher second-quarter earnings and lifted its profit forecast Thursday after notching higher sales in the US.
 Earnings for the quarter ending July 31 were \$3.8 billion, up 8.6 percent from the year-ago period.
 Sales were up 0.5 percent at \$120.9 billion.
 Wal-Mart scored higher comparable sales and customer traffic in the US, the linchpin of the company. The company has invested heavily in the last year and a half in higher wages for workers and in stronger e-commerce infrastructure.



Analysts attend a discussion on commercial establishments in Dhanmondi-Gulshan areas organised by Bangla-language newspaper Prothom Alo at its office in Dhaka yesterday.

Wholesale eviction is not the way: analysts

City planners, architects say govt should follow DAP instead

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
 The government should follow Dhaka's Detailed Area Plan or DAP to ensure a planned city, instead of going for blind eviction of educational institutions, hospitals and shops that provide services to residential areas, city planners and architects said yesterday.
 There is plot-wise demarcation in the DAP about the type of establishments to be set up, the analysts said.
 The authorities should proceed in line with the DAP to avoid widespread relocation of educational institutions, healthcare and other facilities and reduce the impacts on businesses, they added.
 City planners also urged the government to implement the Dhaka Structure Plan for 2016-2035 to solve the problems of commercialisation of residential areas.
 "The structure plan has everything to make an inclusive and safe city, with scope for educational institutions and other necessities of residents. It should be approved soon for implementation," said Prof Nazrul Islam, chairman of Centre for Urban Studies or CUS, at a discussion on commercial establishments in Dhanmondi and Gulshan. The event was organised by the Prothom Alo at its office.

The Dhaka Structure Plan was finalised in December and eight months have passed since then, he added.
 The discussion took place at a time when city developer Rajuk has taken a drive to evict commercial establishments from residential areas, sparking fears of job and business losses.
 Many residents have also become anxious about their children's education and healthcare as many schools, universities and healthcare providers will also need to relocate.
 It would be wise to give them time to relocate, according to Islam.
 Architect Mobasher Hossain, former president of Institute of Architects, Bangladesh, said government agencies created scope for illegal commercial establishments to flourish in residential areas.
 Electricity, gas and water connections were given at commercial rates, while the revenue authority collected VAT and income tax, he added.
 "The government is the biggest partner in illegal activity."
 He blamed Rajuk for remaining silent when illegal establishments and structure bloomed. "Everything can be done secretly except construction work. And it cannot be done overnight," he said, pointing at an inadequate workforce for Rajuk's

failure to take action.
 "But why did they not decline to accept the work of plot allocation on the grounds of inadequate workforce?" Hossain said.
 "You cannot rectify 40 years of wrongdoings in a day," he said, adding that at least five years are needed for rectification.
 Architect Iqbal Habib said Rajuk framed a structure plan for Dhaka in 1997. The DAP was supposed to be framed in five years after the structure plan.
 "But it took ten years to frame the DAP. And then, three more years passed for its notification."
 But Rajuk did not stop conversion of residential areas into commercial areas. Millions of taka have been invested; a symbiotic relationship has also been created because of the co-existence of people and various service providers, he added.
 He suggested restructuring based on area specific action plans in light of DAP, and favoured solving the issue politically.
 Abdur Rahman, Rajuk's member of development and planning, said many establishments sprouted illegally for the needs of people.
 "Some have set up hotels in residential areas. It cannot be."
 It plans to follow DAP regarding schools and colleges, he added.