

**TRAWLER CAPSIZE**  
**Rancon extends Tk 2cr assistance to victims' families**

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Rancon Group has given Tk 2 crore cash assistance to the family members of eight people, including six sailors, who died when a fishing trawler of the group sank in Karnaphuli river.

The incident occurred when the trawler FV Magferat was trying to dock at a dockyard at Ichanagar area on the southern bank of the river around 1:30am on October 12.

At that time, there were 21 persons, including 15 crewmen on board, at the trawler owned by Rancon Oceania Limited, a concern of Rangs Group.

Rancon Group officials handed over the cash assistance at a programme at Rancon Group's office in port city's Sadarghat yesterday.

At the event, a cheque worth Tk 1 crore was given to Arifin Jahan, wife of Md Faruq bin Abdullah, the captain of the fishing trawler.

Cheques worth different amounts were also handed over at the programme, when Tk 5 lakh was given

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The BSCIC industrial estate in Dinajpur has the highest concentration of rice mills in the country but other than processing the staple food grain, it also emits large amounts of ash and other pollutants into the atmosphere due to the lack of proper facilities. PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

# Dinajpur BSCIC estate a growing health hazard

Lack of treatment facilities, drainage system causing pollution

KONGKON KARMAKER

The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) industrial estate in Dinajpur is causing untold sufferings for people living and working in the area as the rice mills present are pouring copious amounts of ash and other pollutants into the environment.

As Dinajpur is one of the largest producers of food grains in the country, entrepreneurs were given priority for setting up rice mills inside the BSCIC industrial estate, which was established in 1965 on 35.14 acres of land in the Pulhat area under Dinajpur municipality.

With a total of 189 plots available, 54 entrepreneurs set up rice mills in the 1980s while the rest were eventually filled out over the years.

As result, about 90 per cent of the units at the estate are operating as rice mills that employ about 6,400 people collectively.

In addition, about 45 of the industrialists have since transformed their units into automatic or semi-automatic rice mills thanks to the adoption of modern practices that have helped improve production.

However, their activities have turned the estate and its neighbouring areas into a mess as much of the waste produced goes untreated amid the lack of necessary facilities, maintenance and infrastructural development.



The situation is so bad that even the BSCIC office itself is in shabby condition.

Besides, hazardous pollution emanating from the BSCIC industrial area in Dinajpur is affecting residents of neighbouring villages that become densely populated.

During a visit to the compound last Thursday, it was found that all the rice mills were constantly emitting plumes of black smoke filled with dust particles.

The smoke and dust make it hard to breathe while the falling particles make visibility an issue as well, according to locals.

The heavy air pollution means that getting eye injuries is commonplace in the area, they said, adding that the situation could have been avoided had rice millers used improved technologies.

The mills produce tonnes of ash each day but the particles

are kept in open piles that are gradually disbursed into the air by wind.

Making matters worse, the estate's lack of a proper drainage system means that polluted water released from mills remains stagnant.

This correspondent found that the entire drainage system is clogged for a lack of cleaning while the whole area is similarly dirty for the same reason.

According to BSCIC officials, the estate has a roughly 9,000 feet-long drainage system that was built in the 1990s.

And although more heavy industries were set up since then, the drainage system was not renovated or improved, they said.

Another problem plaguing the BSCIC industrial estate in Dinajpur is the sorry state of its interior road network.

Around 5,000 feet of roads were constructed inside the

industrial area in the 1990s, BSCIC officials say.

However, this correspondent found that not a single street is in good condition as there is a lack of maintenance amid heavy vehicle movement in the area.

A number of roads were even seemingly flooded with sludge made from ash and polluted water as a result of the poor drainage system.

The estate authorities said that 1,400 feet of roads were renovated around 10 years ago, but that was not enough to improve road connectivity in the area.

Md Golam Rabbani, deputy general manager of the BSCIC office in Dinajpur, said pollution in the area comes down to the uncontrolled release of pollutants created by scores of rice mills inside the industrial estate.

The situation is so bad that even the furniture inside his office was found to be covered in a layer of dust and ash particles that needs to be cleaned daily.

Rabbani went on to say that investors of the industrial estate in Dinajpur collectively pay around Tk 40 lakh each year as various fees and charges.

However, around 20 per cent of the plot holders are not making payments regularly, he said.

The deputy general manager then said the asphalt being used on local roads is not suitable and instead, roller compacted concrete would be the best solution as it tends to last for 50 years.

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# Moving towards a command economy may not help

MAMUN RASHID

The Bangladesh Bank capped the interest rate on loans at 9 per cent and on deposits at 6 per cent for banks, and 11 per cent on loans and 7 per cent on deposits for non-bank financial institutions.

In September, foreign currency dealers and banks capped the dollar exchange rates following Bangladesh Bank's instructions, whereby the rate for inward remittances will be Tk 108 or below and Tk 99 for export proceeds.

This move also resulted in the rates of the US dollar exchanged through cards increasing by as much as Tk 13 to Tk 108. Previously, customers paid around Tk 95 per dollar bought through cards for overseas tuition, event fees, and the purchase of services and goods.

Force fixing special exchange rates for different instances is already creating confusion and chaos in the market and this is adding even more undesired volatility within the overall economy.

By capping or fixing interest rates and exchange rates, the market is no longer allowed to make its own necessary adjustments but is rather under strict and forceful control. Especially in a period of high inflation, capping interest rates is blocking free market forces from compensating and fixing themselves.

If that's not enough, in Bangladesh, the prices of various essential commodities are also fixed by the regulators at frequent intervals. Even the amount of savings tools an individual may be allowed to buy is also capped.

But who is benefiting the most from the cap on interest rates? Such a ceiling is supposed to help SMEs and the rural economy, but the beneficiaries are the already wealthy big business owners and those who are taking undeserved and unfair advantage of low-cost funds from traditional banks.

**The inherent lack of competition in a command economy could hinder innovation, thereby impacting aspiring entrepreneurs and even existing businesses**

Perhaps the interest rate cap was initially well-intentioned and was meant to provide a needed economic boost. "The rising tide" might have lifted some boats, but others seem to have run aground. Such a move should have been temporary at best and eventually, the market forces should have been allowed to determine interest rates like it is done in most other market-based or even emerging economies.

The inherent lack of competition in a command economy could hinder innovation, thereby impacting aspiring entrepreneurs and even existing businesses. Efficiency (in resource allocation) is also likely to be compromised if the authorities decide to act as a monolith, trying to control these pivotal aspects of a country's economy.

Leaving no room for naturally regulated allocation of resources poses risks for the creation of a more mammoth problem — a possibility of a black-market/shadow economy explosion.

Now the question is whether such constant interferences and controlling of vital economic forces are yielding any true benefits? Yes, some vested and influential parties are most certainly benefiting from such moves but most likely it is not the average Bangladeshi citizen. At the same time, it is sending the wrong message to the international investment community and even the local young entrepreneurs.

The author is an economic analyst.

# Ctg motor festival ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A three-day Chattogram Motor Fest 2022 ended yesterday, with the highlights being PHP Automobiles unveiling a Proton sedan and ACI Motors displaying a 998cc superbike.

About 28 companies from the country's automobile sector displayed various products at this fifth edition of the fair, organised by Wizard Showbiz and powered by PHP Family at GEC Convention Center in the port city.

Apart from the Persona Signature, PHP Automobiles displayed other Proton vehicles such as Saga, X-50 and X-70.

"Persona Signature is a car of the latest model that we have brought to the market with all modern safety features," said PHP Automobiles Managing Director Mohammed Akther Parvez.

"After getting a good response from the buyers with respect to technology and modern models of cars, we have changed the body as well as used advanced technology in all our models," he added.

"Now our car parts are not yet available...we are delivering parts online to any part of the country within 24 hours and also with five years of after-sales service," he said.

The special attraction of ACI Motors was a YZF-RIM of Yamaha. There were also other models — R15 M, FZ S, MT-15 and FZ X.

"We organised various activities like a test ride and stunt show in the fest to give the touch and feel experience of the bike, which added an extra dimension in the event," said Subrata Ranjan Das, executive director of ACI Motors.

The other participants included Honda, Haval and Chery Automobile Company.



About 28 companies from the country's automobile sector displayed various products at this fifth edition of the fair, organised by Wizard Showbiz and powered by PHP Family at GEC Convention Center in the port city. PHOTO: STAR

# Policy gap blamed for slow export diversification

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh has made limited progress in export diversification because of the absence of integrated policy and slow implementation of current strategies, experts said.

They spoke at a seminar titled "Export diversification imperative: key sectoral opportunities and policy priorities for Bangladesh" organised by the Policy Exchange of Bangladesh at a hotel in Dhaka on Thursday.

Tapan Kanti Ghosh, senior secretary of the commerce ministry, attended the programme as the chief guest while M Masrur Reaz, chairman of Policy Exchange Bangladesh, presented the keynote paper.

Reaz mentioned that the next phase of the growth trajectory requires the economy to expand significantly in order to absorb additional labour and allow Bangladesh to use its demographic dividend.

Bangladesh has made good progress in export-led growth, but the country's growth model has been highly reliant on readymade garment products, he said.