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DHAKA, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2011 FALGUN 1, 1417 BS

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...the deceased as Shaukat
alias Nyara Shahid (30), a
resident of slum 1 at
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— bdnews24.com

Ctg region 'can be turned into special economic zone'

FE Report

Experts and port users at a roundtable discussion Saturday said Chittagong region should be converted into a special economic zone as a free port to tap its vast potentials.

The speakers were addressing a roundtable discussion meet on "Can Chittagong be a Free Port" at the conference room of The Financial Express (FE) in the city.

Making Our Economy Right (MOER), a free market think tank established in 1991, organised the even-

The Financial Express (FE) was the media partner.

Former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury moderated the roundtable discussion.

The speakers repeatedly stressed the need for construction of deep sea port, expansion of Chittagong port facilities and improvement of its management capacity to face the future challenges of fast-track container handling.

They also said for introducing shuttle vessels between Dhaka and the port

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Edible oil prices continue to soar

PM meets traders today

FE Report

The prices of edible oil continue to soar as the committee entrusted to refix the prices at regular interval (forthrightly) has apparently failed to fix the same in time, allowing the unscrupulous traders to raise the prices at their whims, market sources said.

The committee failed to refix the prices of soyabean and palm oils as it did not sit further since December 22 last year.

To bring stability in soyabean prices, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will sit with the businessmen today

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Veneer of stability

Palpable surge of relief

Heba Saleh FT Syndication Service

CAIRO: Hosni Mubarak, who was forced on Friday to step down as Egyptian president after 18 days of protests, had looked to be one of the most unshakeable rulers in the Middle East.

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BANK

SHARIAH BASED ISLAMI BANK

Prayer Timings

February 13, 2011

	Beginning	Jammat
Fazr	5:20 am	6:00 am
Zohr	12:16 pm	1:15 pm
Asr	4:14 pm	4:45 pm
Maghrib	5:54 pm	6:01 pm
Esha	7:09 pm	7:45 pm

Source: Islamic Foundation of Bangladesh

The Financial Express is using syndication services of Financial Times, London.

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ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশ
নির্য়ে রাষ্ট্রীয় মালিকানা
অগ্রণী ব্যাংক
এর অগ্রণী পদক্ষেপ

ses and damaged scores of vehicles following the path of Sunbeam Hasan Nibir, a play group student, around 3pm.

Nibir, son of a teacher of the institution, AKM Nizam Uddin, was crushed under the wheels of a bus at the Radio Colony point.

In another incident, people in Mirpur area blocked keya Sarani in the morning when a student was injured by a speeding vehicle, disrupting traffic movement for nearly an hour.

The blockade was however withdrawn after the authorities concerned assured that a foot overbridge and speed breakers could be built on the road to prevent such accidents, the police said.

Officer-in-Charge of Mirpur police station Wazed Ali said the news agency that many people had blocked the road at around 8:15am after an accident of Monipur High school was hit by a vehicle.

WB VP due

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She will visit some projects related to the impact of climate change in the coastal districts and the Sundarbans mangrove forest. She will review progress of the programmes," said spokesperson Mehrin Hossain.

Ms. Andersen will also call finance minister AMA Muhith, food and disaster management minister Abdur Razzaq and state minister for environment and forestry Hasan Mahmud during the visit.

A finance ministry official said during her meet with Mr. Muhith, government officials would seek increased aid to weather the full impact of global warming, which is regarded as a major drag on the country's development and poverty reduction.

Bangladesh is one of the most victims of the climate change which have caused huge loss in the coastal areas in the few decades. Since 2007, the country was pounded by devastating cyclones and floods.

Ctg region 'can be turned into special economic

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city to cope with the increasing containerised cargoes growing on an average 15 per cent per year.

The speakers said the new concepts like Chittagong free port might be contradictory with the existing social and religious values.

Professor Mahbubullah said new creative ideas are important for economic development any country.

He said: "We must know its operational features, advantages and disadvantages prior to launching of its operation."

Mr Mahbubullah, a professor of economics, said impacts of such changes on the society and politics should be studied properly.

"National security is also equally important while thinking of such an issue," he said and added, export processing zone (EPZ) is also a type of free port.

Mr Mahbubullah, former chairman of state-owned Sonali Bank, asked: "Do we need free port in addition to existing EPZs?"

Mr Mahbubullah said the employment rate is not satisfactory in the EPZs as it was expected.

He said capital is now considered as "global capital", adding: "It will go where it feels comfortable."

Mr Mahbubullah said Bangladesh needs to ensure "good enough governance", adding: "We should focus on the good enough governance in the next 15/20 years to attain economic goals."

He said Bangladesh needs vocational education instead of traditional learning to incorporate value addition to the products.

Addressing the roundtable, Abu Ahmed, a professor of economics, said the Chittagong port should immediately be made a listed company to raise its efficiency.

He said: "The government should retain the maximum shares of it and the remaining ones might be subscribed by the people of Bangladesh."

Mr Ahmed said foreign investors might also be included while turning Chittagong port into a public limited company.

Mr Ahmed, who was critical about the poor management of Chittagong port, said: "The port is now being operated by commodores and it has no people's ownership right at this moment."

Mr Ahmed said the government should not always invest for building infrastructures, adding: "In some cases, the private sector should also be allowed to invest in the infrastructure building."

He said: "Chittagong should be fully made a special economic zone."

Zahid Hossain, senior economist of the World Bank, in his speech, said, most ports around the world today are competing with one another on a global scale, with tremendous improvement in productivity in ocean transport achieved over the past decades.

He also said globalisation in production has sharpened the need for ports to be value addition, not value subtraction, in the supply chain.

Mr Zahid said major technology changes are taking place in the ocean shipping sector which requires port infrastructures and service.

He said those changes also present opportunities for new ways of doing business and open the door for entry of new players throughout the range of port activities.

"It's a brand new era for every one," Mr Zahid added.

Qayum Reza Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Garment Buying House Association, said Mongla port should be developed in the context of growing cargo handling by the country.

"Bangladesh will be in a good position, if Mongla port is strengthened," he added.

Neo G Mendes, managing director of Omnikom, said in the roundtable that shuttle vessels should be introduced mainly to reduce the port-

related costs.

He said discharging time at the Chittagong port might be reduced by introduction of such shuttle vessels between Dhaka and the port city.

Mr Mendes said now 14 days are required to reach a consignment to capital Dhaka, adding: "Fourteen hours are enough to reach an import-laden container through shuttle vessel."

He also said such vessels can ply even on 3.8-metre draught.

Speaking at the roundtable discussion, journalist Mahfuzullah said: We first need to know whom we want to serve, whether China or India."

Terming this as a political decision, he said: "Indecision on the issue will be detrimental to the economy."

Citing research findings of Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Studies (CEGIS), Mr Mahfuzullah said Chittagong port might be non-functional within the next 25 years.

He, however, stressed the need for construction of a deep-sea port.

Zillul Hye Razi, trade adviser of European Union in Bangladesh, said there are existences of free ports around the globe. He said: "It's like a restaurant where all are entertained."

Osman Chowdhury, a researcher of Policy Research Institute (PRI), said present value criterion should be evaluated before investing in the deep-sea port.

Syed Javed Ahsan, director of Areco Ltd, said local spinners suffer due to port congestion and delay in delivery.

He said local cotton importers have to pay US\$ 1100 for each container from Iranian ports while China gets the same at a freight cost worth \$ 200.

Mr Ahsan suggested building a big warehouse for raw cotton so that spinners could get it quickly.

A Qayyum Khan presented keynote paper in the dis-

ussion.

Mr Qayyum said a port, or a section of a port that is exempt from customs duties and regulations is a free port.

He said goods may be stored or processed into manufactured goods in the free port.

He said in a free port duty is charged only if the goods are moved from the free port to an adjacent territory.

Qayyum said free trade zone is the contemporary term that covers all variants of free ports.

He said 98 per cent of the free trade zones are in Latin America, Caribbean and Asia.

He said there are many types of free port facilities including bonded logistics zones, economic and technological; development zones, industry-specific development zones, export processing zones, border and economic cooperation zones.

Qayyum claimed Mauritius is a nation that has now achieved full employment after the whole country became free trade zone.

He said Korea launched free trade zones focusing on heavy and chemical industries to attract foreign direct investment and export promotion.

Qayyum said Chittagong port is an expensive and risky port caused by poor management and corrupt practices.

He said Chittagong Port Authority act must be updated to cope with the changing situation.

He claimed Chittagong port zone can possibly be converted into a vibrant free trade zone.

Chittagong port is in the radar of global investors, Qayyum said.

Tanvir Rahman, deputy general manager of Kuehne Nagel, MH Khaleque of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Mot MacDonald, an infrastructure consultant, Chowdhury M Ashraf Hossain, chief executive officer of Union Bond, and Nizam Ahmed of the MOER also spoke in the roundtable discussion.