



Habibullah Khan new CSE president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Habibullah Khan has been elected president of the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) for 2003-2004 term.

He was elected in the first meeting of the newly-elected board of directors of the bourse on Tuesday.

The new board of the CSE also elected Syed Mahmudul Huq, MKM Mohiuddin and ASM Nayem vice presidents of the CSE.

Fakhor Uddin Ali Ahmed, MKM Mohiuddin, Abu Sayed Md Shahidullah and Tareq Kamal were also elected directors. The current CSE board comprises twelve elected and twelve non-elected directors.

Directors of the present CSE board are Nurul Quayyum Khan, M Salman Ispahani, Nasiruddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Mohammed Mohiuddin, Al Maruf Khan, Tareq Kamal, Fakhor Uddin Ali Ahmed, Yasmeen Murshed, Rabiul Husain, Abu Ahmed, Hossain Zillur Rahman, Abdul Majid Khan, Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan, Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, Mohd Safwan Chowdhury, M Kaykobad, Masih Ul Karim, Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury and Md Shah Jahan. The CEO is also an ex officio director of the bourse.

Earlier, the eighth annual general meeting (AGM) of the CSE was held the same day.

Outgoing CSE President Mirza Salman Ispahani presided over the meeting, which approved the audited accounts of 2002 and re-appointed Rahman Rahman Huq as the auditor for the next year.

Previously, Habibullah Khan served the CSE as its vice-president for last seven years.

Khan, who was born in 1943, is the managing director of Chittagong-based Meenhar Group of Companies, a leading seafood business house.

Khan is also a sponsor director and former chairman of Reliance Insurance Ltd, member of the governing council of Independent University Bangladesh, former president of Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association and former executive committee member of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

US hits 47 with charges in forex sting

REUTERS, New York

Federal authorities on Wednesday charged 47 people, netted in a sting operation dubbed "Wooden Nickel," with running a scam in the foreign currency market that defrauded retail investors and big Wall Street firms of millions of dollars.

The latest scandal to hit Wall Street involves charges related to stock and wire fraud, extortion, kickbacks, rigged trading, money laundering, guns and cocaine. The schemes included phony trades and fraudulent or non-existent investments to con small investors into thinking they were getting a piece of a market generally beyond their reach.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's 18-month operation used one undercover agent posing as a hedge fund manager who operated in the industry and provided recordings of the suspects.

ROK GDP to grow 5pc in 2004

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's economy is expected to recover its full growth potential next year, with its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate reaching five percent, the head of the central Bank of Korea said Thursday.

"The economy, albeit slowly, is returning to its growth path," bank governor Park Seung said.

"We believe that the economy will be able to achieve its full growth potential of five percent next year."

Although this year's growth rate has been unsatisfactory, he said, the prospect for next year is "rather bright."

Hunt on for local banker to manage Agrani Bank

Int'l firms in touch with dozen of former, serving bankers

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

International consulting firms intending to take over the management of Agrani Bank are looking for a competent Bangladeshi banker who can take the responsibility of the state-owned bank's highest executive post.

Sources said the firms have contacted a dozen of former and serving bankers and are now scrutinising their experiences in banking sector. For this purpose they also had talks with a few Bangladeshi bankers living abroad.

The firms have primarily chosen four Bangladeshi bankers and one expatriate for the post of chief executive officer (CEO) who will lead a management team to run the bank under a World Bank-IMF prescribed reform programme.

Sources said the four Bangladeshi bankers are National Credit and Commerce Bank Ltd (NCCBL) Managing Director M Aminuzzaman, The City Bank Ltd MD Abbas Uddin Ahmed, Premier Bank Advisor Kazi

Abdul Mazid and former Janata Bank MD M A Hashem. An expatriate Bangladeshi banker is also on the preferred list.

M Aminuzzaman held high positions at Pubali Bank and Eastern Bank. He also helped Uttara Bank to come out of the 'problem bank' list of the central bank. City Bank MD Abbas Uddin Ahmed had earlier worked as MD of IFIC Bank.

Premier Bank Advisor Mazid held the highest posts of Pubali Bank, National Bank and Prime Bank while former Janata Bank MD M A Hashem worked as managing director of Rupali Bank and deputy managing director of Sonali Bank.

The management team will comprise eight advisors who along with the selected CEO will get appointment by March next year.

Earlier, the government decided to bring changes in the Agrani Bank's management as per conditions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under national-

ised commercial bank (NCB) reform programme.

A five-member taskforce headed by Bangladesh Bank deputy governor Nazrul Huda has already short-listed five international consulting firms one of whom will be finally appointed by the government.

The five companies are: Dublin-based ICC Consulting along with International Business and Technical Consultants Inc of Vienna, ING Institutional and Government Advisory Services of Hong Kong, Bearing Point Inc of USA, American-Bangladeshi venture IOS Partners and HB Consultants, and Pricewaterhouse Coopers of Hong Kong.

Short-listing from the five companies the taskforce will submit two or three names to the government which will appoint one initially for 36 months.

Led by the CEO, the management team will look after the issues of credit, risk management, human resources, management information system, accounting, internal audit and other

affairs. However, it will be a difficult task for the CEO to run the bank having 872 branches with over 12,000 staff. Bringing down classified loans, reducing number of branches, rationalising manpower and taming a strong trade union will be the major hurdles.

According to International Accounting Standard Agrani Bank's non-performing asset is 51 per cent, although the bank estimated it at 30 per cent.

The team will have to work for minimising the bank's operating losses, curtailing new lending except to good borrowers and terminating any waste, fraud and politically motivated or insider abuse.

The management team will financially restructure and re-size the bank to bring it to the point where state divestiture will be possible with a minimum injection of financial resources from the government.

CityCell eyes taking client care to top tier

CEO Chris Maloy tells The Daily Star

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (PBT), the operator of CityCell mobile phone, has set its target to be the number one service provider in terms of customer care.

"We have major plans for next year to invest in network expansion and improve customer care," Chris Maloy, who assumed office of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CityCell recently, told The Daily Star in an interview yesterday.

"Since I took over, I'm planning to bring new products and services, which will help attract more subscribers into our network," said Maloy whose business plans would be presented soon to the PBT board for approval.

Maloy said CityCell has now been providing solid customer care. "But we can always improve. I want to be in a position by next year that if anybody asks which is the best service provider in the country, the answer would be CityCell."

Currently, CityCell has some 250,000 customers and network coverage in 48 districts.

Asked why CityCell could not grow in comparison with its rival cell phone operators despite being the country's

first operator, he said the introduction of new technology like CDMA takes time to be accepted by customers.

However, CDMA (code division multiple access) networks are being rolled out very fast and the number of networks rose to 71 with 174 million customers worldwide.

The products and services of the CDMA will be able to surpass that of GSM, said Maloy, who has 29 years' experience in telecom sector. He worked in different capacities in Austrian Telestra and Sri Lankan Mobitel.

"We knew when we decided to go with CDMA that we would suffer short term pain but enjoy long time gain," he added.

CityCell officials said the company would launch a RUIIM (removable user identification module) card next year, which is similar to the SIM (subscriber identification module) of GSM (global system for mobile communications) service.

The RUIIM will enable the customer to change handsets at will and use their handset in other countries, they said.

Commenting on the network congestion often faced by subscribers, Maloy said CityCell is in discussions with other operators to find out a solution to the network congestion.

"Already we have seen an improvement."

He however said CityCell will have full interconnectivity in SMS (short messaging service) with other operators.

Asked whether CityCell has any intention to obtain licence for internet telephony, Maloy said "We are still waiting for finalisation of its terms of reference and will evaluate once they are released."

"I am more than happy to discuss with the government and its officials to share my views and ideas on how we can assist in further growth," he said while commenting on the government-operator relations in the country.

Expressing his optimism over the country's growth of cell phone industry, he said Bangladesh has huge potential for further growth.

Earlier, PBT Managing Director Faisal Morshed Khan told reporters at a briefing that the company would invest \$250 million for network expansion till 2005 to bring the entire country under network coverage by mid-2004.

PBT has so far invested \$120 million in its network building, he said. PBT officials said the fund would be channelled from profit revenue and a syndicate bank loan.



Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury formally inaugurates an Islamic banking branch of The City Bank Limited at Motijheel in Dhaka yesterday. The City Bank Chairman Deen Mohammad, Vice-chairman Aziz Al-Kaiser and Managing Director Abbas Uddin Ahmed are also seen.

Banks urged to come up with new products

Khosru inaugurates City Bank's Islamic branch

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday advised the banks and insurance companies to come up with diversified products and services to bring dynamism in the sector.

Banks and insurance companies are growing in number but the quality of their products and services is not increasing, he said inaugurating the Islamic banking branch of The City Bank Limited at Motijheel in Dhaka.

"All banks of the country are doing business with same products and services and there has been no diversification in the sector," Khosru said.

The banks should introduce new ideas and specialised banking products and services, Khosru said.

The commerce minister appreciated The City Bank's Islamic banking programme and said it will help people to a great extent.

He also hoped the initiative will bring in idle money from those who avoid interest-based traditional banking.

As the Islamic banking system is based on profit or loss, the system will inspire people to invest in the capital market, he said.

Speaking at the function, The City

Bank Chairman Deen Mohammad said with the opening of the new branch the number of branches now stands at 77.

The bank, which started its journey in 1983, has introduced online banking in its seven branches.

"Another three branches will come under online banking system within this year," Mohammad said.

All the next branches of the bank will come under Islamic banking system, he said.

Managing Director Abbasuddin Ahmed said the bank's city branches will re-start as Islamic banking branches.

Bank holiday

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank (BB) and other schedule banks will remain closed on November 25, 26 and 27 on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, a BB press release said yesterday.

Deal signed for development of 10 land ports

The Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC) will assist Bangladesh Land Port Authority (BLPA) to develop ten land ports in the country.

An agreement to this effect was signed between the two sides in Dhaka recently, says a press release.

Under the accord, the land ports at Akhaura, Bhomra, Bibirbazar, Birol, Burimari, Darsana, Haluaghat, Hili, Sonamasjid and Tamabil will be developed.

AKM Shamsuddin, chairman of Bangladesh Land Port Authority, and Nazrul Islam, executive director and CEO of Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre, signed the agreement on behalf of their organisations.

IIFC will assist BLPA for conceptual design, evaluation of pre-qualified bidders, preparation and evaluation of bid documents, negotiation of concession agreements, in the development of the land ports.

The land ports will facilitate the flow of goods between Bangladesh and neighbouring countries.

BATB provides staff with Hepatitis B vaccine

British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BATB) has completed vaccination of the consecutive second dose of Hepatitis B vaccine to 768 employees of the company.

The vaccine used for the programme is Engerix-B, manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline, says a press release.

The company launched the first phase of Hepatitis B vaccination programme on September 28, 2003, to vaccinate their employees free of cost.

The third phase, among the four phases of the vaccination, will start after the Eid vacation.

Japan slightly upgrades view of economy

AFP, Tokyo

The Japanese government on Thursday modestly upgraded its economic assessment in its monthly report for November, stating that the world's second-largest economy is clearly showing evidence of recovering from 13 years of stagnation.

"The economy is showing an incipient recovery," the Cabinet Office said in the report. The previous month's report used more tentative wording, saying "the economy is showing movement toward incipient recovery."

Dhaka finalises 5-point proposal for KL Make recruitment process quicker, transparent

RAFIQ HASAN

Dhaka has finalised a five-point proposal to be sent to Kuala Lumpur for bringing some changes in the recruitment process of Bangladesh workers to stop forgery and ensure transparency.

It has decided to propose introduction of 'block visa' system meaning issuance of visa to a group of workers instead of existing system of 'calling visa'. In the present system, visa is issued against each individual worker that delays the recruitment process.

The block visa system is now operational in Saudi Arabia. If the system is introduced in Malaysia the recruitment process would be expedited, said a high official at the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment.

The Bureau of Manpower Export and Training (BMET) has finalised the proposal and it would be sent to Malaysia very soon, according to sources.

The Bangladesh high commission in Malaysia would place the proposal at the joint working committee for recruitment of fresh workers from Bangladesh.

The proposals also include using a database while selecting workers instead of collecting workers through sub-agents, taking prior permission from the Bangladesh officials concerned before issuing visa, and imposing restriction on recruiting agencies which would send list of workers to the employer for issuing calling visa.

The joint working committee would be formed after formal approval of the

memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur in last October for starting fresh recruitment of workers from Bangladesh. The MoU would be placed before the Malaysian cabinet very soon, sources said.

Malaysia stopped recruitment of workers from Bangladesh in 1997 following huge inflow of undocumented workers. But now the East Asian country is keen to hire workers from Bangladesh as most of the companies are preferring recruitment of Bangladeshi workers.

The officials at the expatriate welfare ministry hope that large number of people would get employment in Malaysia if the recruitment process becomes quicker and transparent.



Participants and officials pose for a photograph at the end of a workshop on 'Credit Risk Management-Industry Best Practices' organised by Bank Asia Limited in Dhaka recently.

Incoming APEC host Chile to pursue closer ties with Asia

AFP, Singapore

Chile's APEC hosting duties next year will help forge closer trading ties with the Asia Pacific and promote the nation as a springboard for Asian companies into the Americas, a senior Chilean official said here Thursday.

The deputy director of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) secretariat, Mario Artaza, said hosting the influential forum was a big economic opportunity for the Latin American nation.

"We have 4,000 kilometres (2,480 miles) of coast... so we have a very good window to the Asia Pacific and we have to use this to create the Pacific as a point of connection between Latin America and Asia," Artaza told AFP.

"It will be the opportunity to also show that Chile may be the point of entrance of Asian products to the rest of Latin America."

"We have very nice ports waiting for your exports."

Artaza was speaking to AFP on the sidelines of a forum to outline Chile's plans for APEC next year, with the forum's annual summit of leaders and other talks to be held in the capital of Santiago.

The Asia Pacific is already an important trading ground for Chile, with APEC members accounting for more than 60 percent of the country's foreign trade, Artaza said.

With its strong infrastructure and highly educated workforce, Chile is keen to draw more Asian interests into its economy, he said.

"So the year 2004 will give Chile the opportunity to look closer to the most important market in the world... Japan, China and other very vibrant economies of the Asia Pacific."

"So it's a great opportunity for Chile to look now to the Asia Pacific."

Thailand was the APEC host this year and it is Chile's turn to take over in 2004.

Reviving stalled global trade talks and evaluating the role of regional and free trade agreements within APEC are expected to be among the key themes next year, Artaza said.

"Without trying to give you an advanced information of what the (Chilean) president (Ricardo Lagos) will say, we know that there are some important subjects that will be brought forward during the Chile year," he said.

"One is strengthening the multilateral negotiations of the WTO (World Trade Organization)... the other is the discussion of the regional and free trade agreements because they have increasing importance for our economies."