



M Aminuzzaman

Bankers Club renamed, new chairman elected

Bankers Club Limited has got new name and new chairman and secretary general.

The name of the Bankers Club has been changed as 'Association of Bankers, Bangladesh' at an extraordinary general meeting held on Thursday, says a press release.

On the same day, M Aminuzzaman, managing director of National Credit and Commerce Bank Limited, and Khondker Fazle Rashid, deputy managing director of Dhaka Bank Ltd, were elected new chairman and secretary general at the 6th annual general meeting of the association.

Syed Anisul Huq, managing director of Bank Asia Limited, Abbas Uddin Ahmed, managing director of The City Bank Limited, and K Mahmood Sattar, managing director of Eastern Bank Limited, have also been elected vice-chairmen of the governing body of the association.

Election to master stevedores assoc postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The election to the executive council of Bangladesh Master Stevedores Association (BMSA), scheduled for today, has been postponed.

FBCCI Arbitration Tribunal postponed the election till hearing of one MA Bakar's case on December 27, which was filed by him challenging the cancellation of his candidature, sources said.

MA Bakar filed the case with the arbitration tribunal as BMSA Election Appeal Board cancelled his candidature for membership, which was earlier, declared legal by the election commission.

Signatories to the interim order that postponed the election include Tribunal Chairman and FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo and members Abul Kasem Ahmed, SM Shafiuzzaman and Shafi Ullah Chowdhury.

4-day training course of BGMEA ends

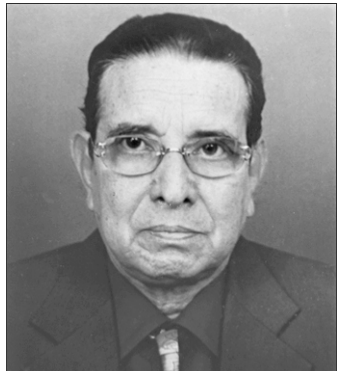
A four-day training course for garment factory management concluded in Dhaka on Thursday.

The training course focused on improving labour relations, working conditions and raising productivity in garment factories, says a press release.

The course, jointly organised by the ILO-BGMEA Partnership Project, was organised for the 6th batch of garment factories in Dhaka, involving about 40 factory owners and managers.

M Jinnat Ali Miah, second vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), formally opened the course while Lutfor Rahman Matin, director of BGMEA, formally concluded the training course.

New chairman of Uttara Bank



Md Mahfuz Subhan has been elected chairman of Uttara Bank Limited.

Subhan, a freedom fighter, is a retired secretary, says a press release.

Joining the erstwhile EPCS cadre service in 1968, he held various important positions of the government.

ICC-B int'l business conference begins Jan 17 Economic governance high on agenda

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Next month's high profile international business conference in Dhaka will focus on global economic governance, multilateral trade regime in post-Cancun perspective and investment promotion in developing nations.

Delegates from 32 countries have already confirmed their participation in the two-day conference organised by International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B).

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the conference on 'Global Economic Governance and Challenges of Multilateralism' at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka on January 17.

ICC-B President Mahbubur Rahman and other office-bearers of the chamber met the members of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) at the MCCI conference room yesterday to discuss the progress in preparations of the conference.

Mahbubur Rahman said a total of 187 foreign participants from 32 countries have so far confirmed their participation and the number will go up. Apart from them, around 100 local participants will take part in deliberations.

Thai Prime Minister Dr Thaksin Shinawatra, EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy, WTO Director General Dr Supachai

Panitchpakdi and former Indian premier IK Gujral will be among the leading participants.

The ICC-B president mentioned that three business sessions will be held on January 18 on multilateral trade regime in post-Cancun perspective, capacity building for investment promotion in developing countries and trade facilitation through dispute resolution.

The participating countries are Bahrain, Bhutan, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Republic of Korea, Nepal, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam and United Kingdom.

Speaking at the meeting, outgoing president of MCCI Tapan Chowdhury said more pressures are being brought by some of the transnational corporations on poor countries for tailor-made policies for their entry and growth in the name of level play-field.

"There must be a system of economic governance to ensure that a game in a level play-field is held only among comparable players and not between giants and dwarfs," he observed.

Chowdhury said the next decade belongs to those countries, which will take advantage of globalisation of the knowledge industry.

But till now, the WTO and for that matter, other multilateral organisations have done very little to facilitate transfer of information technology to the poorer countries so as to accelerate their growth, he said.

"The LDCs can benefit from close linkages with the developed countries if their supply response can be improved through investment and flow of technology. Unless this is done quickly, the least developed countries (LDCs) will be in serious problem."

The Unctad has already stated that the LDCs, even under optimistic assumptions, require more than 50 years from now to move above the cut-off point of US\$900 per capita income, which is the benchmark of development, Chowdhury pointed out.

The LDCs, which have less than one per cent share in the world trade, will be further marginalised if inflow of capital and technology are delayed, he added.

ICC-B vice-presidents Latifur Rahman and ASM Quasem; Ambassador Toufiq Ali; former advisor to caretaker government Syed Manzur Elahi; MCCI Secretary General CK Hyder; President of Women Entrepreneurs Association, Bangladesh Rokia A Rahman; American Chamber of Commerce President Aftab ul Islam, among others, attended the meeting.

ATM opens at Rangs Bhaban

Bank Asia Limited in collaboration with Electronic Transaction Network (ETN) has set up an automated teller machine (ATM) at the Rangs Bhaban on Old Airport Road in Dhaka.

A Rouf Chowdhury, vice-chairman of the bank, inaugurated the ATM on Saturday, says a press release.

This ATM will be supported and cash provided by Scotia Branch of Bank Asia Limited.

The users will be able to utilise the facility for cash withdrawal, payment of bills any time during the day throughout the year.

Bank Asia ATM network is expected to go online soon and customers will be able to access their entire available balance as well as obtain credit card facilities.

Under the proposed customer service expansion programme, Bank Asia ETN card holders will soon be having access to over four hundred POS retail outlets within the country.

Directors, managing director, senior officials and customers both of Bank Asia Ltd and Electronic Transaction Network Ltd attended the function.

Nepal, Pakistan to resume air links

AFP, Kathmandu

Pakistan International Airlines will resume services to Nepal on January 4 after India ends a two-year ban on Pakistani flights in its airspace, the Pakistani embassy said here Monday.

The state carrier will fly twice a week from Karachi to Kathmandu and reopen its office in the Nepalese capital, press secretary Kamal Ahmad told AFP.



PHOTO: STAR

International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B) President Mahbubur Rahman, Vice-presidents Latifur Rahman and ASM Quasem, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) President Tapan Chowdhury and Women Entrepreneurs Association, Bangladesh President Rokia A Rahman, among others, are seen at a meeting between ICC-B and MCCI held in Dhaka yesterday.

Survival in post-MFA era hinges on product quality

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Surviving in the international market after the phase out of multi-fibre arrangement (MFA) will be difficult unless quality of exportable items is ensured within a year, speakers at a seminar yesterday observed.

They put accent on achieving ISO-9001:2000, an international certificate which ensures quality of the exportable items, by all companies before 2005.

"It will be difficult for us to survive in the post-MFA era after 2004 MFA if we cannot improve the quality of exportable products within a year," said Abdul Awal Mintoo, president of the Federation of Bangladesh

Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

He was speaking at a seminar on 'Quality Awareness of ISO-9001:2000' jointly organised by the chamber and Management System Services (MSS), a consulting firm engaged in providing consulting services on ISO 9001:2000 in Bangladesh, held at FBCCI conference room in Dhaka.

The seminar was organised to create awareness about the certification among manufacturers and industrialists.

The FBCCI president said ISO 9001:2000, developed by the International Standard Organisation

(ISO), can help both product and service oriented organisations achieve standards of quality that are recognised and respected throughout the world.

Mintoo said quality awareness is essential for avoiding or minimising losses and conforming to the international standards.

Presenting the seminar paper, Robert Starkweather of Orion Registrar Inc, a quality and environmental systems registrar headquartered in the USA, said ISO-9001:2000 is a way of interaction between suppliers and customers, which ensures the businessmen about the items they import.



PHOTO: BANK ASIA

A Rouf Chowdhury, vice-chairman of Bank Asia Limited, cuts tape to inaugurate an automated teller machine (ATM) at Rangs Bhaban in Dhaka on Saturday.

India adopts 'open sky' policy

Air travelling in Saarc region to be cheaper

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's decision to go for 'open sky' policy means air travelling in Saarc region will be easier and cheaper.

The Indian government has decided to permit private domestic carriers to operate to Saarc countries and a policy is being worked out for sharing of unused bilateral air traffic rights between state-owned carriers Air India and Indian Airlines and private airlines to operate flights in destinations in the region.

The 'open sky' policy means private Indian airlines Jet Airways and Sahara Airlines can now fly to South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan.

But formal accords need to be signed for allowing private airlines to fly to Saarc countries before evolving a formula for sharing unused landing rights with government-owned airlines.

At present, Indian Airlines operates 30 flights to Saarc countries every week and Saarc-based airlines operate 88 flights to India.

said adding, if India uses all bilateral rights, there is scope for earning Rs 2000 crore, they said.

According to the President of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries, AC Muthiah, India's unutilised air traffic rights are nearly 65 per cent of the total rights. He urged New Delhi to allow private Indian airlines to use these rights.

However, travel industry sources say permission for private airlines to attractive destinations like the US, West, the Persian Gulf and Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur may come only after a while as the Indian government would have to assess how much Indian Airlines and Air India would stand to lose in revenue by that measure.

Besides, the private airlines may not be in a position right now to operate flights to all these attractive destinations. All that they can do is to make a beginning to certain select destinations, get the hang of tough competition before taking a plunge, travel industry sources say.

While Sri Lanka has already agreed to permit private airlines from India to operate flights to Colombo, efforts are on for similar arrangement with other Saarc countries, civil aviation officials in New Delhi said.

Sri Lanka has also been given the rights to fly to various Saarc destinations from Indian airports.

But sources in travel industry reckon it may take some time before Saarc becomes a hot destination for travel and tourism. Besides India, only three other countries -- Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal -- are happening places as far as tourism is concerned.

In fact, Jet Airways plans to launch flights to Kathmandu and Colombo, and services to other Saarc destinations would be worked out only after February next year, a spokesman of the airlines says.

Jet Airways is also planning to make arrangements with international airlines to carry passengers heading to the United States to any of the Saarc countries before they could be transferred to the other international carrier for onward journey.

Under this mechanism, passengers can book tickets for any destination, travel industry sources said.

But once private airlines cover the entire Saarc region, long and agonising wait for tickets and costly airfare will become a thing of the past.

Aktel eyes one million subscribers by end '04

UNB, Dhaka

Aktel eyes to reach million-mark in subscriptions by the end of 2004, as the leading cellular phone brand in a major policy shift now looks towards the mass market.

Executives of Telecom Malaysia International Bangladesh (TMIB), the owning company of Aktel, announced the future expansion plan at the Aktel Corporate Night 2003 Sunday at Hotel Sheraton.

Starting its operation in Dhaka in November 1997, Aktel has got close to 400,000 subscribers by December and is set to reach half a million mark by the first quarter of next year. The expansion will no way compromise the quality of service, company officials told the function.

One of the large corporate taxpayers in Bangladesh, the TMIB registered 148 per cent growth in the current year and its network so far covered 52 districts, while the remaining districts are expected to be netted by end of 2003, company officials said.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed, who attended the function as chief guest, lauded TMIB's excellence and rapid expansion of its services here.

He mentioned Bangladesh's impressive successes in controlling population growth and attaining 'theoretically self-sufficiency' in food production. The minister felt that the country needs further development in telecommunications and information technology to sustain devel-

opment and keep pace with globalisation process.

TMIB Chairman AM Zahiruddin Khan said the cellular telephony is a business of interdependence where typical mindset of competition needs to be changed.

"Here one's network is others' network also," he said, stressing the need for partnership in improving the quality of service as well as expanding the business as a whole.

A former minister, Khan appreciated the presence of representatives from two of their competitors -- City Cell and Grameen Phone -- in the function, apart from top executives of Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission and Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB).

He said the TMIB is a result and manifestation of South-South Co-operation policy pursued by Malaysia's great leader, former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir.

Company's outgoing managing director Dato Ezzanee Ab Aziz said he was going back home with a positive image about investment climate in Bangladesh.

"When I came here three years and nine months ago, I had a feeling of uncertainty. Many of my well-wishers advised me to go back home," he said, recalling the first impression he got about Bangladesh.

He introduced Nasir Baharom, who will take over soon as the new MD, to the audience. TMIB Director Salahuddin Kashem Khan also spoke at the function.

Int'l trade fair in Dubai from January 10

Bangladesh, 24 other countries to participate

The 18th edition of the annual International Autumn Trade Fair 2004 (IATF04) will begin on January 10 next at the Dubai International Exhibition Centre (DIEC) with 10 per cent increase in exhibitor turnout compared to last year.

Over 525 exhibitors from 25 countries, including Bangladesh, have confirmed their participation in the five-day IATF04, compared to last year's 471 exhibitors from 23 countries, says a press release.

Leading participants in the show include companies from Bangladesh, China, Iran, Hong Kong, Turkey, Indonesia, India, Mauritius, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Algeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Cyprus and the UAE.

"We expect trade visitor turnout to cross 15,000 at this year's show compared to 14,496 last year," Satish Khanna, general manager of

Dubai-based leading exhibition organiser Al Fajer Information and Services, said.

The exhibition, ranked as one of the most significant trade fairs in the region, has grown to an acknowledged regional buyer-seller meeting ground for the consumer goods segment, Khanna said.

The show, which will be a veritable showcase of a diverse range of consumer goods, will be open to the general public till January 14 evening.

The fair will showcase products including cosmetics, foodstuff, electronics, household appliances, plastic household products, toys, stationery, electrical, handicrafts, carpets, garments, textiles, house wares, kitchenware, sanitary ware, novelties, machinery and machine tools, hardware accessories as well as diary products.



PHOTO: AKTEL

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed (R) receives a crest from Telecom Malaysia International Bangladesh Chairman AM Zahiruddin Khan at a function held at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on Sunday.