

New country head for Woori Bank

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Dong Heon Kim has recently been appointed as the general manager and country manager of Woori Bank Bangladesh.

A seasoned banker with over 25 years of experience in banking, Kim had previously served as the general manager in several important branches of Woori Bank in South Korea. He has vast experience in corporate and retail banking.

"Bangladesh is a very potential country for banking business. Even after this global pandemic situation, there are lots of scope to grab this market by developing new ideas, products and business avenues" Kim said.

He said he aims at making Woori the number one foreign bank in Bangladesh.

Woori Bank, the first commercial bank of Korea, started its operation in Bangladesh in 1996 as a scheduled foreign commercial bank, according to a statement.

In the last 24 years, the bank expanded its network with five branches and one customer service centre.

To diversify business and extend its reach, Woori Bank is going to open two new branches in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar and Motijheel and a customer service centre in Chattogram Export Processing Zone.



Dong Heon Kim

Japan's next premier to find pandemic eroding job market gains made by 'Abenomics'

REUTERS, Tokyo

Whoever succeeds Shinzo Abe as Japan's prime minister will be confronted with growing signs that the job market is deteriorating in an economy laid low by the coronavirus pandemic.

Top government spokesman Yoshihide Suga is emerging as a front-runner to become next premier, heightening the chance the government will continue down the policy course set by Abe - notably the "Abenomics" strategy aimed at reviving the economy.

But the widening damage from COVID-19 is threatening job creation, among the few successes of Abenomics.

Japan's unemployment rate crept up to 2.9 per cent in July and job availability fell to a more than six-year low, data showed on Tuesday. Nearly 2 million people lost their jobs in July, about 410,000 more than in the same

month last year, with the number of job losses rising for six straight months through July.

Among the hardest hit have been non-permanent workers, who make up nearly 40 per cent of Japan's workforce and are concentrated in industries like hotels, restaurants and entertainment.

The number of temporary workers fell by 1.31 million in July from a year ago, the biggest drop in more than 6-1/2 years.

"We're seeing more non-permanent workers lose their jobs, especially in industries vulnerable to the pandemic," said Shinya Koderu, an economist at Mizuho Research Institute.

Government subsidies and Japan's unique labour practice, prioritising job security over wage hikes, have kept the jobless rate low compared with around 10 per cent in the United States.

But the pandemic is even starting to affect hiring of



Shinzo Abe

university graduates, who until recently had no trouble landing jobs due to chronic labour shortages in an ageing population.

As of Aug. 1, the ratio of students with job offers stood at 83.7 per cent, 4.5 percentage points below the 2019 level,

according to employment information provider Disco.

Analysts say conditions have already taken a sharp turn for the worse as companies face pressure to slash labour costs.

"In Japan, workers can't be laid off easily even when the economy

turns bad. So firms will make adjustments in graduate hiring," said Taro Saito, executive research fellow at NLI Research Institute.

Naoki Ishihara, a 24-year-old graduating this year, had a job offer from a design company cancelled in February. "It was an offer for a job that I wanted to do, so it was a shock when it was withdrawn," he told Reuters.

Job losses may spike when government subsidies to firms who keep employees under furlough end in December, analysts say.

Nobuyuki Sato, who owns a Japanese-style hotel in Yamagata, in northeast Japan, says the subsidies have helped him keep jobs even when his hotel was closed.

"I'm hoping the government will extend the subsidies for another year," Sato said. "It's hard to expect the infection number to start falling early next year," he said.

German inflation stalls in August

AFP, Frankfurt

German consumer prices were flat in August, official data said Monday, a month after inflation turned negative for the first time since 2016. Inflation was 0 percent in August, after falling 0.1 percent in July, with both figures still well below the 0.9 percent rise in June, as the country continues to reel from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Federal statistics agency Destatis said it was due in part to Germany's cutting of VAT in July to spur spending. The tax reduction is set to last until the end of the year.

The August reading, based on preliminary data, was slightly above analysts' predictions of a 0.1 percent fall, according to a survey by FactSet. Compared with the previous month, consumer prices fell 0.1 percent, according to Destatis.

Uwe Burkert, chief economist at LBBW bank, said inflation wouldn't

pick up noticeably until the start of 2021. "As expected, not much has happened in August as regards German inflation."

After the slide in July caused by the reduction in VAT, inflation is now hovering around zero and this is likely to remain so for the time being in the coming months," he said. The stagnating prices in Europe's largest economy will continue to raise the spectre of eurozone deflation and are likely to cause some anxiety at the European Central Bank.

The numbers might drag down eurozone inflation data, which is to be released on Tuesday, and hinder any chance of prices recovering towards the ECB's target of close to, but below, two percent across the currency bloc.

"There had been speculation as to whether the current (coronavirus) crisis would be deflationary or inflationary..." Today's German

inflation data suggest that for the time being the deflationary threat is clearly more pressing than any inflationary one," said ING economist Carsten Brzeski.

In response to the devastating economic consequences of the pandemic, the ECB unveiled an emergency 1.35-trillion-euro (\$1.61-trillion) bond-buying programme to keep credit flowing to the continent's businesses.

The German economy shrank by a record 10.1 percent in the second quarter as coronavirus lockdowns took their toll, but many say a recovery is well on its way. The country predicts a fall in GDP of more than six percent for 2020 as a whole.

According to the ECB's preferred yardstick, known as the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP), German inflation fell 0.1 percent year-on-year. In a month-on-month comparison, HICP inflation declined 0.2 percent.

Facebook threatens ban on Australians sharing news in battle over media law

AFP, SYDNEY

Facebook threatened Tuesday to block users and media organisations in Australia from sharing news stories in an escalating challenge to government plans to force digital giants to pay for content.

Australians would be stopped from posting local and international articles on Facebook and Instagram, the company said, claiming the move was "not our first choice" but the "only way to protect against an outcome that defies logic".

Government officials quickly shot back, with Treasurer Josh Frydenberg rejecting what he called "coercion or heavy-handed threats" from the social media giant. Rod Sims, head of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), which drew up the draft law, called the threat "ill-timed and misconceived".

In one of the most aggressive moves by any government to curb the power of US digital giants, Canberra has

drawn up legislation to force Facebook and Google to pay struggling local news organisations for content or face millions of dollars in fines.

The measures would also force transparency around the closely guarded algorithms that tech firms use to rank content. Facebook Australia and New Zealand managing director Will Easton said the proposed overhaul "misunderstands the dynamics of the internet and will do damage to the very news organisations the government is trying to protect".

"Most perplexing, it would force Facebook to pay news organisations for content that the publishers voluntarily place on our platforms and at a price that ignores the financial value we bring publishers," he said in a statement.

Easton also accused the ACCC of having "ignored important facts" during a lengthy consultation process that ended Monday. "The ACCC presumes that Facebook benefits most in its relationship with publishers,

when in fact the reverse is true," he said.

"News represents a fraction of what people see in their News Feed and is not a significant source of revenue for us," Easton said. Facebook sent 2.3 billion clicks to Australian websites in the first five months of 2020 at an estimated value of Aus\$200 million (US\$148 million) and had been preparing to bring Facebook News to Australia -- a feature launched in the US last year where the tech giant pays publishers for news.

"Instead, we are left with a choice of either removing news entirely or accepting a system that lets publishers charge us for as much content as they want at a price with no clear limits," he added. "Unfortunately, no business can operate that way. Facebook on Tuesday also informed Australian users of a change in its terms of service that will come into effect on October 1 and allow it to remove or block access to content if "necessary to avoid or mitigate adverse legal or regulatory impacts".

Maize import soars as floods, rains damage crops

FROM PAGE B1

The US Department of Agriculture in April this year projected that Bangladesh's total corn consumption would grow 3.7 per cent to 56 lakh tonnes in the May-April period of 2020-21.

Increased demand for maize led to the expansion of the market for seeds which were basically imported from India, said Sudhir Chandra Nath, business director of ACI Seed, a unit of ACI.

Bangladesh's maize seed market is roughly worth Tk 260 crore, he said.

Nath expects the cultivation of winter maize to increase as a section of growers might prefer early maize instead of cultivating aman rice crop this season.

Inflation ticks up in August

FROM PAGE B1

In a positive development, wages have started to increase, which would allow workers to breathe a sigh of relief as their incomes had largely been wiped out because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The general wage rose nine basis points to 5.91 per cent in August, according to the Wage Rate Index.

The sharpest increase came in the services sector at 50 basis points, in an indication of the gradual opening up of the economy. The rate was 6.02 per cent last month against 5.52 per cent in July.

Wages in the industrial sector rose seven basis points to 5.25 per cent and that of the agriculture sector rose one basis point to 6.16 per cent.

Samsung's new foldable phone is its biggest

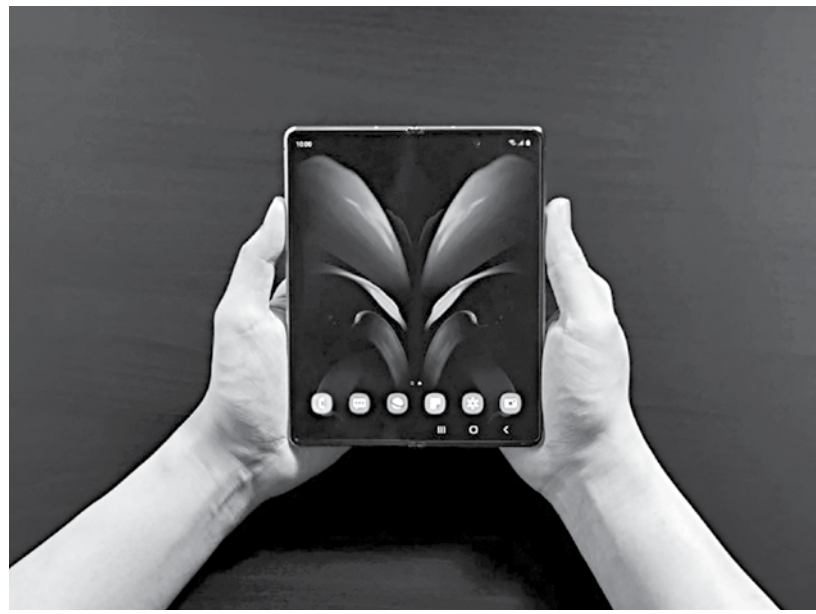
REUTERS, Seoul

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd's latest foldable smartphone is also its largest, offering users a tablet-size screen 12 per cent bigger than its first Galaxy Fold.

Unveiled on Tuesday, the Galaxy Z Fold2's screen measures 7.6 inches (19.3 cm) when unfolded. The 5G compatible phone will also be Samsung's most expensive foldable, priced at \$1,999 in the United States compared to \$1,980 for the Galaxy Fold launched last year.

The new model, however, is facing a tough market with economic uncertainties created by the coronavirus pandemic cooling demand for high-end smartphones.

Despite the launch of its premium Galaxy S20 lineup in March, Samsung has fared particularly badly. Its second-quarter smartphone sales plummeted 30 per cent and South Korean tech giant ceded its position as the world's biggest smartphone seller to Chinese rival Huawei



REUTERS

Samsung Electronics' new foldable smartphone Galaxy Z Fold 2 is seen in this handout picture provided by Samsung Electronics on August 31.

Technologies Co Ltd, according to black and mystic bronze - the Galaxy Z Fold2 will go on sale on Sept. 18 in about 40 countries.

Uber extends mask selfie verification feature to riders

REUTERS

Uber Technologies Inc on Tuesday said it will roll out a global selfie feature to verify its ride-hail customers wear a mask, modeled after a similar feature introduced for drivers in mid-May.

Uber instituted its "No Mask No Ride" policy on May 18 and extended it indefinitely due to the ongoing pandemic, requiring both drivers and riders to wear a face covering at all times during a ride.

Drivers are required to take a selfie with a mask each day before starting work, while drivers and riders are able to cancel a trip without penalty if they report the other party is not wearing a mask. Failure to comply can lead to account deactivation.

The rider selfie feature will be rolled out in the United States and Canada by the end of September, and across Latin America and other regions after that, Uber said.

Unlike for drivers, the rider app will only prompt a passenger to take a selfie if a driver previously reported they were not wearing a mask.

"We definitely wanted to make sure that we are targeting this feature to riders who are maybe just coming back to the platform and maybe they're not aware of... our (mask) policy," Sachin Kansal, Uber's Senior Director of Product Management, said in an interview.

Demand for ride-hailing trips has dropped sharply during the pandemic, especially in the United States, Uber's largest market. Kansal said 99.5 per cent of all Uber trips since mid-May had been completed without driver or rider complaints over masks.

BIDA pulls investment of \$11b since inception in 2016

FROM PAGE B1

The finance ministry assured BIDA that it would bring necessary reforms to its policies in order to streamline investment procedures.

Among the changes made so far, reforming the 1997 Bankruptcy Act was one of the more major steps, he added.

The target for Bangladesh set by the prime minister to reach a double-digit ranking in the Ease of Doing Business Index by 2021 is an achievable goal, according to the executive chairman.

Bangladesh rose from 176th position on the index to 168th last year, the World Bank said in its Doing Business report 2020.

Islam said the organisation routinely holds dialogues with representatives of the embassy of Japan, Japan International Cooperation Agency and Japan External Trade Organisation to bring Japanese companies that are planning to shift their operations from China to Bangladesh.

The Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Project of BIDA aims

at promoting employment and entrepreneurship, he said.

As such, the organisation would like to carry out training programmes on regulatory regimes and business procedures in an effort to create skilled entrepreneurs across all 64 districts of the country within the next two years.

In turn, this would help the government achieve its target to increase private investment, he added.

Under the programme, around 14,050 individuals have been provided training on entrepreneurship with 2,926 of them going on to launch their own start-ups.

The National Committee for Monitoring Implementation of Doing Business Reforms, headed by the cabinet secretary, is working towards an improvement in the ease of doing business while creating a more investment-friendly environment.

To do that though, the country will need to achieve and maintain changes to its rules and regulations, Islam said.

edotco deploys Bangladesh's first hybrid solar-wind tower in Hatiya

FROM PAGE B4

A similar solution was deployed in four sites across Myanmar last year, Nalini said.

The engineering teams worked together to adopt the learnings from Myanmar and bring a better, improved solution to the site in Hatiya, she added.

"Bangladesh has been home to a few firsts for edotco over the years, and we look forward to bringing and creating more innovations for and by the people."

Established in 2012, edotco Group is the first regional and integrated telecommunications infrastructure service company in Asia, providing end-to-end solutions in the tower services sector from tower leasing, co-locations, build-to-suit, energy, transmission and operations and maintenance.

The group operates and manages a regional portfolio of over 31,820 towers across scores of markets in Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Laos, Philippines and Pakistan with 20,230 towers being directly operated by edotco.

In Bangladesh, edotco currently owns and operates over 10,000 telecom towers.

Remittance keeps rising despite pandemic headwinds

FROM PAGE B1

Yeahia also found repeated floods behind the spiral in inflows. There was a restriction on sending money above a certain amount in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia. That restriction has been relaxed, he said.

Gulf countries, which include Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, are home to 75 per cent of about 1.3 crore Bangladeshis living abroad for jobs.

Remittance hit an all-time high of \$18.2 billion in the fiscal year 2019-20, up 10.87 per cent year-on-year.

The growing inflows of remittance boosted the country's foreign exchange reserve and it came amid gloomy forecasts by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The ADB said Bangladesh would be among the five worst developing Asian economies in terms of remittance inflows. In the worst-case scenario, Bangladesh's remittance will decline by 27.8 per cent from its 2018 level.

billion in remittance.

In April, the World Bank forecast that remittance flow to Bangladesh may plunge by as much as 22 per cent this year because of the ongoing pandemic.

The rising flow of remittance took the country's foreign currency reserves to an all-time high of \$38.48 billion on August 26, BB data showed.

Transfers from migrant workers have progressively become a pillar of strength for the Bangladesh economy.

Some 590,000 migrant workers left Bangladesh on an average every year from 2007 to 2017 and 8 per cent of the households have at least one international migrant. Remittances account for 60 per cent of income in households with international migrants.

Forty-one per cent of households with at least one family member engaged as a migrant worker would be in poverty without remittance, said Stefano Paternostro, practice manager for social protection and jobs for South Asia at the WB last September.