

## Business leaders fire salvos at SEC

Star Business Report

Business leaders have criticised the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the capital market watchdog, saying "the activities of the SEC are not adequate enough to attract more foreign investment in the country."

The business leaders have also demanded protection of the real investors' interests and punitive steps against curb market manipulators. They want chamber's representation on the SEC Board.

The Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) organised a discussion with SEC Chairman MA Syed as the chief guest at its conference room yesterday. Samson H Chowdhury, the president of the chamber, opened the discussions.

### Dutch minister, Mannan discuss child labour

Visiting Employment and Social Welfare Minister of the Netherlands APW Melkert called on State Minister for Labour and Manpower MA Mannan at his secretariat office yesterday, reports UNB.

Discussing the matters of mutual interests, especially the child labour and trade union activities in Bangladesh, Mannan said the government has taken initiatives to remove child labour from the garment industry and other risky sectors.

He hoped that it would be possible to eradicate the child labour from all risky professions by the year 2010.

The Dutch minister praised the role of Bangladesh in rooting out child labour from all sectors and assured of necessary help and assistance on behalf of the Netherlands.

Earlier, Melkert visited a local NGO run project, "Bangladesh Women Health Qualiton," in Agargaon slum area and reviewed the activities of the project.

### Another Pak bank lays off 4,500 employees

ISLAMABAD, Dec 21: The state-run National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) on Saturday laid off 4,500 employees as part of banking reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund, reports AFP.

A total of 9,000 NBP staff volunteered for the voluntary redundancies, but only half could get the golden handshake scheme, bank officials told the official Associated Press of Pakistan news agency.

The bank will pay about five billion rupees (113 million dollars) in retirement benefits. The World Bank recently gave a 250 million dollars loan to support Pakistan's banking reforms.

### New privatisation chief of Russia

MOSCOW, Dec 21: President Boris Yeltsin has appointed Farik Gaitzulin as a deputy prime minister in charge of privatization, the presidential press service said Sunday, reports AP.

Renowned lawyer Dr. Kamal Hossain, SEC members Faizuddin Ahmed and Imdadul Haq, MCCI vice president Laila Rahman Kabir, SEC legal advisor AK Mohammad Ali, Renata chairman SH Kabir were also present.

Chowdhury, in his speech, asked the SEC chairman to take measures against the "quick buck manipulators" and to support the "real investors."

"The growth of capital market is being jeopardised by these quick buck manipulators," Chowdhury said. "It will be really difficult to control any industry in our capital market if firm measures are not taken."

The business chiefs accused the SEC of its failure to protect interests of the listed companies. "A group of identified hooligans, who either by virtue

of their being members or through proxies obtained from members, disrupt AGMs through lawlessness," MCCI president said.

SH Kabir of Renata gave a similar view. He regretted that someone began his speech in an AGM saying, "In the beginning I pray for the death of my company chairman..."

Some turn violent, assault company executives and make them hostages to realise their unfair demands in the AGMs, said another participant.

They said the SEC should have something to do with such incidents at AGMs.

Dr. Kamal Hossain said business people should respect laws before they expect others to abide by. "If you wish to go public, you must have a disclosure," he said adding the SEC must see "what is going wrong with the wrong-doers."

One participant said time had come to reassess some of the accounting firms. He said that the SEC did not have the capability to perform its monitoring task properly.

The speakers said the SEC should look into what had happened in the DSE elections. They said the SEC must develop itself to be able to attract more foreign direct investment.

The chairman responded by saying the SEC could not shoulder every responsibility for capital market mismanagement. "We only go by disclosures," he said and added the SEC had limitations in playing a watchdog role in the auditing systems of the listed companies.



M A Syed, Chairman of Securities and Exchange Commission along with high officials of the SEC, met members of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka at its Conference Hall yesterday. Samson H Chowdhury, president, MCCI, is also seen in the picture.

## Joint administration of regional resources suggested

The SAARC countries and other sub-regional bodies in the region should accrue benefit from internal resource mobilisation for their economic development and social changes, speakers told a discussion here yesterday, reports UNB.

Speaking at the discussion on "Bangladesh Foreign Policy: SAARC and Subregional Cooperation," former foreign secretary and first SAARC secretary general Abul Hossain emphasised on joint planning, execution and administration of water and other natural resources in the SAARC region.

Responding to queries on the success of SAARC in comparison to ASEAN and other regional bodies, Hossain said, "Opportunities have now been created for leaders of this region who can sit together regularly and discuss their problems" following the formation of the seven-nation SAARC.

He said visa system has been relaxed for certain categories of people in the SAARC countries and gradually other cooperative process would gain momentum through political goodwill of the leaders in South Asia.

Highlighting the changes taking place globally and within the region, Hossain said national and regional politics should come up through "a sober political process" in the future SAARC meetings to overcome hurdles and harness-

ing the resources of this region for greater benefit of the people.

Former ambassador and foreign secretary Kamaluddin Chowdhury, though a bit skeptical about the success of SAARC after 12 years of its foundation, said SAARC leaders should now take concrete programmes to improve the quality of life of the millions of people in the region.

"Otherwise, it would be a forum of only discussion, nothing else," he said.

Canadian High Commissioner in Dhaka Nicholas H R Ethridge, former ambassador of Bangladesh, Group Capt (ret'd) Dasgiri, BISS research director Col Nuruzzaman and senior research fellow A K M Abdus Sabur also spoke at the meeting at BISS auditorium. BISS chairman Maj Gen. Mostafa Kamaluddin presided.

## Big investors see bleak currency scenario in '98

HONG KONG, Dec 21: Institutional investors retained a bleak outlook for Asian markets in the coming year, recommending high cash positions and warning of further currency turbulence, reports Reuter.

"It's pretty gloomy, actually. We're still advising people to hold cash and we don't expect to change that view for six months," said Robert Rountree, strategist at Nomura Research Institute in Hong Kong.

Investors' confidence in Asia, once known for its "miracle" economic growth rates and out-performing financial markets, would remain badly shaken by this year's economic crisis.

Rebuilding that confidence would require strong policy measures, such as further opening of markets, credible monetary policy management and convincing efforts at structural reform.

"It's going to be a tough road," said another strategist.

"I don't see any easy recovery because the bottom line is domestic policy remains in reactive rather than proactive mode."

And as far as much-needed relief from international sources such as the US, it won't be easily forthcoming.

Assessing the region's investment opportunities against this backdrop was almost impossible, strategists said.

## IDB keen to finance foreign trade, industries

Visiting Vice President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Ousmane Seck showed keen interest to establish credit lines for foreign trade financing and a long-term industrial financing in the country, reports UNB.

The hints came when the IDB Vice-President called on Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria at this office yesterday.

Ousmane Seck informed the Finance Minister that the IDB was expanding its operations in different Islamic countries and the prospects for greater investment in Bangladesh was bright.

He also expressed satisfaction over the progress of the on-going IDB funded projects in Bangladesh.

Seck also informed the Finance Minister about the IDB policy to help member countries

in promoting privatisation programmes and establishing an infrastructure development fund for private sector in Bangladesh.

They discussed matters of mutual interest with particular reference to future programmes of IDB in Bangladesh.

Welcoming the proposal to establish credit lines in foreign trade financing and long term industrial financing, the Finance Minister appreciated the IDB for its continued support to the social and economic sectors of Bangladesh.

The Finance Minister sought greater support of the Bank to rural infrastructure, rural electrification, rural health care, rural water supply and sanitation, irrigation, education and rural agro-based industries, which are directly involved in

poverty eradication.

The IDB Vice president told the Finance Minister that the Bank would undertake a country assistance strategy study in consultation with Bangladesh government in order to develop a work plan, which will be the focus of the IDB assistance to Bangladesh for the next three years (1998-2000).

Another report adds: The IDB Vice-President yesterday said Islamic Development Bank is interested in giving financial support to the small and large scale industries in Bangladesh.

"Now Bangladesh is a place of foreign investment," he said during a courtesy call on State Minister for Planning Dr. Mohtashim Khan Alamgir.

The IDB Vice-President expressed his satisfaction to know that the government has

opened the avenue to invest in private sector during the fifth five-year plan.

"Bangladesh is one of the member countries of the Bank and the Bank will be happy to support for its development," Ousmane Seck said.

Dr. Alamgir informed the IDB Vice-President of the massive programmes have been taken to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2005, when a primary school will be set up in every village of the country.

The Minister referred to the Ganges Water Agreement with India and said the government has taken up a plan to construct a barrage across the river Ganages.

He sought financial support from donor agencies, including IDB and Asian Development Bank (ADB).

### Kibria apprises Dutch minister of investment climate

Visiting Social Affairs and Employment Minister of the Netherlands APW Melkert called on Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria at his office yesterday, reports UNB.

During the meeting, the Finance Minister appraised the Dutch minister of the prevailing investment climate in Bangladesh and said, "We have a very large deposit of natural gas, mostly to use in generation of power, production of fertilizer and domestic purposes."

The export market of gas is also promising," he said adding that the government has opened up exploitation of gas in private sectors and many foreign companies are working in this field.

Referring to the country's employment problem, the Finance Minister laid emphasis on creating job opportunities in the country as well as abroad to eradicate poverty.

The minister also gave a description of changing situation of employment in the country and stressed the need for assistance of donor communities in efforts of our development programmes.

Earlier, the visiting Dutch Minister wanted to know about the potential of natural gas and its proper utilisation and appreciated the efforts undertaken by the government for the development of the country.

Labour and Manpower Secretary M Ahsan Ali Sarkar, the Netherlands Ambassador to Bangladesh DCB Deu Hass and Director General of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands EJ Mulack Hower were present.

### RR Cold Storage awarded for best loan repayment

Star Business Report  
Ms Rokeya Rahman, Managing Director of RR Cold Storage Ltd., was awarded with Shilpa Bank's "Crest" for excellent loan repayment performance during 1996-97.

She said, the last payment of the total amount on Thursday, says a BSB press release.

## Bangladesh leads UN to adopting resolution on microcredit

UNITED NATIONS, Dec. 21: The UN General Assembly has adopted by consensus a resolution on the role of microcredit in the eradication of poverty, a pioneering and exemplary model of which is the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh.

This is the first time that microcredit has been the subject of a separate resolution in the United Nations.

The adoption of this resolution is an important achievement in the process set in motion by the "Friends of Microcredit at the UN" to widen the recognition and support for microcredit in the global forum.

The Friends group was formed by Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, and consists of a number of permanent representatives from countries that attended the Microcredit Summit.

The group works to make the UN system and the member states more familiar with issues relating to the follow-up of the Microcredit Summit, which

was held in Washington in February this year under the co-chairmanship of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. US First Lady Hillary Clinton had also attended the summit.

The resolution adopted at the UN welcomes the outcome of the Microcredit Summit and its goal to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, particularly women, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by the year 2005.

It also encourages all involved in the eradication of poverty to consider incorporation of microcredit programmes in their strategies and adopt policies that support development of microcredit resolutions.

The resolution was initiated, drafted and negotiated by Bangladesh on behalf of 40 co-sponsors, which include Brazil, Canada, Egypt, India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the US.

Source: India Abroad News Service

### BB auction held

The 75th auction of the 90-day Treasury Bill, the 66th auction of the 30-day and 180-day Treasury Bills and the 39th auction of the 1-Year Treasury Bill were held yesterday, says UNB.

Sixty one bids for a total of Tk 833 crores of 30-Day Bill, one bid for a total of Tk 10 crores of 90-Day Bill and three bids for a total of Tk 12 crores each both of 180-Day and 1-Year Bills were offered.

Of these, 25 bids for a total of Tk 687 crores of 30-Day Bill were accepted. No bids were accepted against the 90-Day, 180-Day and 1-Year Bills.

The weighted average price of the accepted bids was Tk 99.35 per 100 Taka. The corresponding yield is 7.83% per annum.

### Emirates awards top passenger, cargo agents

Star Business Report  
Emirates has given awards to top cargo and passenger agents for achieving success in its air business.

The awards were distributed at a ceremony held at a city hotel on Wednesday, says a press release.

Speaking on the occasion, Keith Longstaff, Senior General Manager of Emirates for West Asia and Pacific Rim, said the airline, began serving Dhaka in 1986, a year after its formation, and we have been extremely successful because of you all present here agents, staff members and GSA.

Pradeep Kumar, Cargo Revenue Optimisation Manager, said more capacity would be introduced in future.

Salem Obaidallah, Manager Bangladesh, thanked the GSA, Emirates staff and media for their support.

Keith Longstaff and Pradeep Kumar honoured the top agents.

The Golden Dhow with certificate for top passengers agent (1996-97) went to Vantage Tours and Travels Ltd. and the Silver Dhow with certificate to Air Trip International Ltd., Aeroways Ltd., Ima Overseas, Travel International Ltd., Victory Travels, Bengal Trade and Tourism, Regency Travels, The Travel Channel, Al-Siraj Travels of Chittagong and Shipper Air Service of Sylhet received certificates.

## Commodity market: Prices of gold, tea, oil up

LONDON, Dec 21: The bottom fell out of the base metals complex this week, as the spectre of shrinking demand across Asia, where key economies have been affected by financial turmoil, spread pessimism across the London Metals Exchange (LME), reports AFP.

Copper fell to its lowest level for almost four years and lead slumped to its lowest point for one and a half years. Aluminium prices were also knocked down to a 13-month low and nickel plummeted to a two and a half years low point.

Dealers feared that a sharp downward correction in economic growth rates across Southeast Asia and Japan as the current financial turmoil unleashes widespread cutbacks in jobs and investment will slash demand from the region.

The Asian tiger economies have been hungry consumers of base metals in recent years.

Dealers fear the demand might fall for as long as three years as the impact of economic slowdown dogs demand for the base metals.

Despite the gloomy outlook some traders predicted that demand would stage a significant rally in the second quarter of 1998.

Among other commodities, gold recovered some lost ground, in the light of a technical rally and sooting words from Bundesbank chief Hans Tietmeyer, who said that future European monetary authorities would continue to hold strategic gold reserves.

GOLD: Resurrection. Gold prices recouped some lost ground this week on a technical

rally and comments made by Bundesbank chief Tietmeyer, who said that Europe's new central bank will have "a limited amount" of gold in its reserves.

Prices on the London bullion market rose by more than five dollars to 288.65 dollars per ounce.

There is a consensus between national central bank governors on the fact that there will be a limited amount of gold in the reserve of the European central bank," Tietmeyer said.

He also hinted that the German central bank had no intention of selling off its gold reserves.

SILVER: Stable. Silver prices remained broadly unchanged at 6.01 dollars per ounce, in the light of strong demand as stock markets around the world continue to be dogged by volatility.

COPPER: Dull. Copper, a vital material in the construction and electronics industries, again suffered from market concerns over the worsening economic situation in Asia.

The three-month price of the metal fell 25.5 dollars to 1,785.5 dollars a tonne.

Asia's financial weakness has affected everyone's spirits," a dealer said after South Korea asked for an International Monetary Fund bail out to be speeded up.

LME stocks dropped 8.3 tonnes to 329,175 tonnes, analysts said demand could rise towards the end of March.

LEAD: Improved. Lead was up slightly over the week thanks to a drop in LME stocks.

The three-month price was 553 dollars a tonne at the end

of the week, up 17.5 dollars. Reserves on the LME fell to 112,750 tonnes, down 1,800 tonnes.

ZINC: Bright. Zinc prices continued to climb after Canadian mining group Cominco reported lowered production levels.

The three-month price reached 1,154 dollars a tonne, up 16.5 dollars.

ALUMINIUM: Slump. Aluminium prices fell sharply this week, hitting a 13-month low point midweek, as the financial turmoil in Asia continued to hit demand for the metal.

Three-month aluminium prices fell by about 30 dollars to 1,531.5 dollars per tonne.

NICKEL: Meltdown. Nickel prices fell to their lowest level since August 1994 as demand, and in particular demand from Southeast Asia, evaporated this week.

Three-month nickel prices fell by 33 dollars to 5,990 dollars per tonne.

TIN: Tumble. Tin prices fell sharply in the face of a large rise in market reserves.

Prices fell by 86.5 dollars to 5,295 dollars per tonne. They hit a two-year low point during the week.

OIL: Heating. Oil prices were slightly up over the week thanks to the continuing standoff between Iraq and the United Nations and the closing of the St. Croix, Virgin Islands refinery.

The benchmark price of Brent North Sea crude was 17.80 dollars a barrel, up 22 cents.

RUBBER: Flat. Rubber prices

remained unchanged at 540 pounds per tonne, amid plentiful supply and quiet trading, because of the financial and economic turmoil in Asia, prices were unlikely to move before the end of the year, analysts said.

COCOA: Cold. Cocoa lost ground this week, falling amid profit-taking by 24 dollars to 1,096 dollars a tonne for delivery in March.

COFFEE: Weak. Robusta prices for coffee fell sharply this week under pressure from massive profit-taking following a week of big gains.

Prices for delivery in March fell 121 dollars to 1,684 dollars a tonne.

However, traders noted that only 30 per cent of long positions in investment funds had been sold in London.

TEA: Strong. London's tea market showed strong demand, with production from Sri Lanka selling well and East African tea also at high prices. The top price was 1.65 pounds kg and the average price 1.47 kg.

SUGAR: Sweeter. The sugar market rebounded slightly this week on the back of Russian purchases of Brazilian sugar, rising on the London futures market by 7.2 dollars to 312.6 dollars a tonne.

Trading house Czarnikow said that Russia had so far purchased one million tonnes of sugar and would import a further 3.1 million tonnes to compensate from poor sugar beet harvests.

VEGETABLE OILS: Slippery. The Malaysian palm oil market was up thanks to the weakness of the ringgit, which made it

cheaper for foreign buyers, and a tightening up of supplies.

Palm oil for delivery in February was trading at the end of the week at 1,985 ringgit a tonne, up 70 ringgit.

GRAINS: Crushed. Grain prices fell as demand from Asia dried up amid financial turmoil there and plentiful supply on the export market this week.

On the Cbot, wheat prices fell by 30 cents to 3.20 dollars per bushel (of 27.2 kg for delivery in December).

Russian grain output for 1997 was expected to total 86.4 million tonnes from 69.3 million tonnes in 1996, Moscow said.

Argentina raised its forecast for the 1997-98 wheat harvest to 13.09 million tonnes from a previous forecast of 12.95 million tonnes.

COTTON: Shrunk. Cotton prices fell in line with witting demand on the export market this week. The market did, however, enjoy a brief rally towards the end of the week, after a rescue package designed to relieve the struggling Japanese economy raised hopes of revived demand in Asia.

Cash prices covered by the cotton outlook index fell by a little more than one cent over the week to 73.45 cents per pound.

WOOL: Muffled. Wool prices on the Bradford market were unchanged at 392 pence per kg amid extremely thin trade ahead of the Christmas holiday.

Festivities eclipsed all trade in Australia, where no auctions were held this week.

**Bangladesh Railway**  
**Local Tender Notice**

Dated: 15-12-1997

No: 9717

1. The Controller of Stores/West, Bangladesh Railway, Rajshahi invites quotation against following tender:

Sl. No	Tender No	Description of Stores and Quality
1.	STR/P2/GB11/97/25/REQN/P1	Printing and supply of Forms-1 item.
2.	STR/P3/D1/96/13/SR	Steel Keys two way for 90 lbs. 'R' Rail =1,09,000 Nos.
3.	STR/P1/HE/97/07/REQN	Table Telephone Magnato Ringing =30 Nos.
4.	STR/P1/GB-3/97/22/ACST	Leather Buffalo sole full size 7-10 lbs=1960 kg.
5.	STR/P3/GB10/95/27/ACST	Salamonic signal for detonating Kynoch's or equal. Specification No. PRSS No. Z-2-2142 Nos.

N. B: (1) Only printing press owners are eligible to participate in the tender against Sl. No. 1.

(2) Manufacturer of the tendered item at Sl. 5 should have licence for manufacture of explosive.

Sl. No. 1 to 3 period of selling of tender documents 28-12-97 to 11-01-98 and date of opening 12-01-98. Sl. No. 4 & 5 period of selling of tender documents 28-12-97 to 12-01-98 and date of opening 13-01-98.

Cost of tender documents Tk. 400/- per set for Sl. No. 1, 3, 4 & 5 and Tk. 750/- per set for Sl. No. 2 & cost of drawing per set Tk. 100/-.

2. Tender documents can be obtained from the office of the undersigned, Controller of Stores, Bangladesh Railway, Dhaka and Divisional Commissioner Office/Rajshahi (only for Sl. No. 2) on working day Sunday to Wednesday from 1000 hrs. to 1400 hrs. and Thursday from 900 hrs. to 1100 hrs. except opening day of tender on payment of postal charges Tk. 20/- (non-refundable) either in cash or remittance by money order.

3. Sealed tender will be dropped between 900 hrs. to 1200 hrs. in the tender box kept in the office of the undersigned, Controller of Stores, East, Bangladesh Railway, Chittagong, Asstt. Controller of Stores, Bangladesh Railway, Dhaka and Divisional Commissioner Office/Rajshahi (only for Sl. No. 2) opened at 1231 hrs. on opening date of the tender.

for Controller of Stores/West  
Bangladesh Railway, Rajshahi

RPRD No-752  
dated 18/12/97  
GD-448