

HongkongBank to open branch in Ctg this year

Star Business Report

HongkongBank will open a branch in Chittagong this year. David T Humphreys, the Chief Executive Officer of HongkongBank in Bangladesh, announced this at a meeting organised in honour of the eminent businessman at Hotel Agrabad in Chittagong recently, according to a press statement of the bank.

He also mentioned that Matt Bosrock, an International Executive Officer, has been appointed Manager of Chittagong branch.

At a programme organised in Dhaka to celebrate the first anniversary of HongkongBank Finance Minister S A M S Kibria said that the government had permitted HongkongBank to open a branch in Chittagong and an offshore banking branch in Dhaka.

The bank started its operation in Dhaka in 1996.

Dutch-Bangla Bank opens branch at Banani

Star Business Report

The third branch of Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited, the first Bangladesh-Europe joint venture bank in the country, has been inaugurated at Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, in the city yesterday.

Chairman of the bank opened the branch, says a press release.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Alain Ruche of the European Commission, the representative of the Dutch Embassy, diplomats, businessmen, director, managing director, advisor and senior executives of Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd.

Financial scandal Japan's central bank official arrested

TOKYO, Mar 11: A widening financial scandal reached Japan's central bank Wednesday when prosecutors arrested a senior official of the Bank of Japan for allegedly taking bribes from two leading Japanese banks, reports AP.

Yasuyuki Yoshizawa, 42, the chief of the Capital Markets Division at the BOJ is suspected of accepting more than four million yen (\$31,500 dollars) in the form of lavish dinners and other entertainment from the Industrial Bank of Japan and Sanwa Bank.

In return, Yoshizawa allegedly provided the banks with information about the central bank's market operations, the Tokyo District Prosecutors Office said.

Earlier in the day, the Tokyo District Prosecutors Office raided the BOJ building, launching the first ever criminal investigation involving Japan's central bank.

BOJ officials were not immediately available for comment.

The scandal centres on the chronic collusion between bureaucrats and the businesses they regulate. Wednesday's moves follow the arrests of several other government officials, including two Finance Ministry bureaucrats.

Yoshizawa is accused of using his influence as a senior BOJ official to obtain money from the two banks. He is suspected of having started accepting bribes in 1993.

Yoshizawa also allegedly leaked the BOJ's quarterly "tankan" survey of business sentiment, which is closely watched by financial institutions as an indicator of central bank monetary policy.

Rashid Hussain to buy Sime Bank

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 11: In Malaysia's biggest banking merger ever, financial services giant Rashid Hussain Bhd. agreed to pay 852.4 million ringgit (\$18.6 billion dollars) for ailing Sime Bank Bhd., reports AP.

In a faxed statement released late Tuesday, Rashid Hussain announced plans to buy Sime Darby's 60 per cent stake in the bank as well as KUB Malaysia's 30 per cent interest.

The announcement came a week after Malaysia's central bank revealed that Sime, the country's fifth largest bank, had amassed losses of nearly 1.6 billion ringgit (431.3 million dollars) since July.

In the statement, Rashid Hussain said that the sale price is subject to adjustments arising from a due diligence exercise which has still to be conducted.

Rashid Hussain said once the purchase is completed, it will merge Sime Bank with its own commercial banking arm, RHB Bank.

This acquisition and merger creates the second largest bank in Malaysia in line with the government's call for consolidation of the financial services sector to further strengthen the financial services industry in Malaysia.

Abdul Rashid Hussain, executive chairman of Rashid Hussain said.

Tofael tells JS Export to India increases

Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed yesterday informed the parliament that Bangladesh's export to India in first six months of the current fiscal was Tk 145.88 crore, but import from India in the first five months was Tk 12,422.06 crore, reports UNB.

Replying to Abul Kalam Azad (AL), the minister told the House during the same period in the last fiscal the export of Bangladesh to India was Tk 133.48 crore against import of Tk 13,596.69 crore.

Tofael Ahmed said to bring down the trade deficit with India the government has taken various measures under bilateral, Bangkok and SAPTA agreements.

He said Bangladesh held two meetings with India under

SAPTA agreement and after the first meeting India exempted duty ranging from 50 to 100 per cent from 513 items and after second meeting India exempted duty to the tune of 25 to 50 per cent from 513 items and withdrew non-tariff barriers from 180 items. He said third phase of talks in progress.

Tofael Ahmed said special measures have been taken to increase export in the north-eastern states of India.

Agreements with Vietnam, Romania, Uzbekistan

Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed yesterday told the parliament that Bangladesh has signed trade agreement with Vietnam and Romania and trade and economic cooperation agreement with Uzbekistan since July, 1996.

Replying to a question from Abdul Latif Mirza (AL), the minister said Bangladesh has also agreements of cooperation, including SAPTA, with the SAARC countries.

He said the Bangla-Nepal transit agreement providing the land route through Bangladesh for carrying goods to and from Nepal has been extended by one year on its expiry in October last.

The minister said if Nepal fully utilise the transit facility extended to it, Bangladesh will also earn a substantial amount of foreign exchange. For in that case both Nepal and Bhutan will use Mongla port for the export and import of their goods.



A Nepalese parliamentary delegation led by Local Development Minister GN Singh at a dinner hosted by Managing Director of International Project Support Services System Ltd, M Haider Uzzaman, at Gulshan in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Financial storm in Asia may worsen environment problems

By Jim Gomez, AP Writer

MANILA, Mar 11: Asia's financial storm is likely to worsen the region's environmental problems, and affected countries should put safeguards into place quickly, development officials said Wednesday.

Javad Khalilzadeh-Shirazi, the World Bank's regional manager for strategy and partnerships, urged Asian governments to enforce tough pollution and forestry laws and invest in low-polluting public transport.

Shirazi said most environmental problems across Asia emerged long before the financial crisis struck last year but current economic difficulties are likely to hamper the ability of governments to deal with the problems.

Last year, forest fires in Indonesia and Malaysia resulted in thick haze that blanketed many areas of Southeast Asia, causing massive pollution and respiratory problems.

Shirazi spoke to reporters after addressing a forum organized by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank on ways of dealing with Asia's financial woes.

Cielito Habito, the Philippines economic planning secretary, told the forum Tuesday night that Asia's economic difficulties also are expected to curtail employment, health services, education, housing

and social welfare services. In terms of the environment, weaker currencies have raised the costs of imported forest products such as timber, forcing Asian countries to exploit domestic forests, he said.

Most of the Philippines' already over-fished seas are expected to be exploited further by workers displaced from ailing industries, Habito said.

To cut production costs, many Philippine companies are expected to abandon the use of imported anti-pollution devices. Even government projects to protect the environment are likely to be suspended because of budget cuts in countries hit by the crisis, he said.

Habito said that even before the crisis began in July, many Asian countries were suffering serious environmental problems because of a philosophy of "grow now, clean up later."

Presently, Asian countries hard hit by the crisis must decide whether to relax enforcement of environmental laws to stimulate slowing economies or strictly safeguard the environment, he said.

"Where to settle on the trade-off is a choice governments in the region will have to make," he said.

Last month, the Philippine Department of Labour and Employment reported that more than 18,000 Philippine workers have lost their jobs so far this

year as Asia's currency crisis battered the Philippine economy.

Although hurt by the regional turmoil, the Philippines has emerged among the healthiest economies in Southeast Asia, mainly due to reform that were put in place before the crisis struck last year, officials say.

More than 350 foreign and local economic experts are attending the forum in Manila.

Hong Kong hopes to weather crisis

HONG KONG, Mar 11: The financial secretary said Monday that Hong Kong will weather Asia's economic crisis while maintaining its policy of fiscal prudence, reports AP.

"The seas ... will be heavy, not calm, but there is a lot more to Hong Kong than appears on the surface," Donald Tsang said in a speech outlining Hong Kong's next budget, the first put together since the return of Chinese sovereignty.

Although Hong Kong has managed to avoid the worst, it is experiencing some of the effects of Asia's economic downturn.

The Hong Kong dollar came under speculative attack in October, and interest rates are still high to protect the currency.

Tea prices down

CHITTAGONG, Mar 11: Prices of different types of teas were further down with heavy withdrawals compared to previous sale as the offer at the weekly tea sale held here yesterday was mostly of poor and off-season types, market sources said, reports BSS.

A few clean teas were sold quite well maintaining the previous levels following fairly good support mainly from internal market.

Poland, Russia and Sudan lent some support while Pakistan and Afghanistan were quiet, the sources said.

A few clean and large brokens were once again slightly lower but all others types were much lower declining often by Tk 20 per kg and sometimes more and medium and smaller brokens followed a similar

trend with the poorer types declining further by Tk 20 and sometimes more per kg.

A limited quantity of clean fannings were sold around last levels but all other types were much easier often declining by up to Tk 10 to Tk 20 and often more.

A total of 3,204 chests, 1,102 gunny sacks, and 32 chests of old season on offer once again met with a much restricted demand at easier rates.

Select few lines of clean liquoring types were sold at last levels around Tk 110 and above. All other types were substantially lower initially by Tk 10 to Tk 15.

In all 16,420 chests, 3,060 gunny sacks and 10 paper sacks comprising end of season types were on offer in the sale.

India's exports to Asia decline

BOMBAY, Mar 11: India's exports to the rest of Asia declined by 1.7 per cent in 1997 against a rise of 5.20 per cent last year, said Independent Think-tank Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, reports Reuter.

Exports to Africa increased by 15.7 per cent after negative growth of 0.45 per cent last year while exports to Eastern Europe rose by 9.1 per cent against a decline of 21.61 per cent and exports to Oceania countries rose by 14.9 per cent against 5.69 per cent.

Exports to Asia stood at a 7,011.49 million dollars in 1997, compared with 7,136.30 last year, the CMIE said in its monthly review of the Indian economy.

Exports to Africa totalled 1,403.91 million dollars compared with 1,213.80 million dollars last year, exports to Eastern Europe were 854.63 million against 783.63 million.

Accord signed for setting up power plant at Haripur

A 15-year agreement for setting up a barge mounted power plant in the private sector was signed here on Tuesday between Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) and the New England Power Company (NEPC) Ltd, Bangladesh, reports BSS.

NEPC is a joint venture of Wartsila NSD Power Development Company (USA) and Fortune Ltd, Bangladesh, a Power Development Board press release said.

Under the agreement NEPC will install and commission a barge mounted power plant of 100 MW capacity at Haripur near Dhaka.

It will be the third barge mounted power plant in Bangladesh for generation of electricity in the private sector under the private sector power policy approved by the present government in October, 1996.



Nuruiddin M Kamal, Chairman of PDB, and Tomas Carbone, President of Wartsila NSD, USA, Tuesday exchange documents of an agreement for setting up third private sector barge mounted power plant at Haripur.



Mosharraf Hossain, Plant Manager, and M A Siddiqui, Marketing Manager of Singer Bangladesh Limited formally open Gazipur showroom-cum sales center on Tuesday.

Singer opens 68th showroom in Gazipur

Singer Bangladesh Limited opened its 68th showroom-cum-sales centre at Tajbari Road, Gazipur on Tuesday.

Mosharraf Hossain, Plant Manager and M A Siddiqui, Marketing Manager of the company jointly inaugurated the showroom, says a press release.

Executives of Marketing & Marketing Services Department of Singer Bangladesh were present on the occasion.

Japanese trade surplus jumps 213 pc in Jan

TOKYO, Mar 11: The Japanese Finance Ministry said Wednesday that Japan's current account trade surplus in January soared 212.8 per cent compared to the same month last year, reports AP.

The surplus, which was not adjusted for seasonal factors, totalled 476.2 billion yen (3.75 billion dollars). That was below a 574.9 billion yen (4.53 billion dollars) forecast by economists surveyed by Dow-Jones.

The latest numbers reflect the low demand for imports in Japan due to a sluggish economy and recent weakness in the yen's value against the US dollar, which has made Japanese exports more competitive overseas.

Exchange Rates

Following is the Wednesday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank, Dhaka.
Central Bank USD/BDT Rate: Buying-BDT46.15/Selling-BDT 46.45

Selling	Buying		
	TT/OD	BC	Currency
46.5100	46.5500	USD	46.1100
76.6485	76.7144	GBP	75.2515
25.5549	25.5769	DEM	25.0598
0.3671	0.3674	JPY	0.3583
31.4257	31.4527	CHF	30.7400
22.6767	22.6962	NLG	22.2646
28.8524	28.8772	SGD	28.2018
7.6084	7.6149	FRF	7.4939
33.2214	33.2500	CAD	32.4718
5.8430	5.8480	SEK	5.7422
31.6268	31.6540	AUD	30.4326
12.4027	12.4133	MYR	11.5854
6.0137	6.0189	HKD	5.9466
12.4692	12.4799	SAR	12.1984

US DOLLAR LIBOR

TT DOC	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	120 Days	180 Days
46.0150	45.7310	45.3520	44.9162	44.4425	43.3613

Exchange Rates of Some Asian Currencies Against US Dollars

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Thai Baht	Malaysian Ringgit	Indonesian Rupiah	Korean Won
39.4539/55	44.006	43.0043/15	3.86003/8600	9700/9900	1575/1579

Market Commentary
Trading in the local foreign exchange and money market remained steady on Wednesday. In the inter bank market US dollar ranged between Taka 46.40 and 46.50. The call money rate is expected to range between 7.5 and 8 per cent. The market was liquid and Bangladesh Bank's decision to hold Treasury bill auction on Sunday instead of Thursday also added to the liquidity of the market.

In the international foreign exchange markets the turbulent Japanese financial sector continues to make business headlines. The US dollar surged higher against the yen after Japanese prosecutors raided the Bank of Japan and arrested a top official on charges of corruption. The US dollar is also on a rising trend against the deutsche mark after release of Germany's inflation data which showed a decline of 1.1 pc. At 0500 hours local time US dollar traded at 1.8324/29 DEM, 128.85/90 yen and GAP at 1.6410/1.6420 US.

The defaulting borrowers

Responding to a query from Jinal Abedin Hajari, MP, of the Awami League, Finance Minister S A M S Kibria placed in parliament on March 4 a list of defaulting borrowers as provided by the Credit Information Bureau, Bangladesh Bank. The list contains names of 2117 businesses having an overdue amount of at least one crore taka or above. Considering the reader interest, The Daily Star is publishing the list in phases.

- 73. M/S Bay Trawling Ltd., 103, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
- 74. Asiatic Cotton Mills (Pvt) Ltd., Hathazari Road, Chittagong
- 75. Quashem Textile Mills Ltd., 107, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
- 76. M/S Saleh Jute Industries Ltd., Chamber House, Agrabad, Chittagong
- 77. Faridpur Textile Industries Ltd., BSCIC Industrial Estate, Shromoni, Khulna
- 78. M/S Miah Oil Mill, Savar Bazar, Dhaka
- 79. M/S Banani Complex (Cinema & Shopping) Ltd., 942/A.S.K. Mujib Road, Agrabad, Chittagong
- 80. M/S Zarina Carpet Mills Ltd., Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
- 81. Ashraf Jute Mills Ltd., Kanchan, Narayanganj
- 82. M/S Lina Textile Industries Ltd., 16, Nayapalitan, Baitul Hossain Bldg, Dhaka
- 83. M/S Osman Industries Ltd., Globe Chamber, 2nd Floor, 104, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
- 84. M/S Calico Cotton Mills Ltd., Rajapur, Pabna
- 85. M/S North Bengal Paper Mills Ltd., Paksey, Pabna
- 86. M/S Seals Bangladesh Ltd., TMC Building, Fifth Floor, Dhaka
- 87. M/S N.I. International, 51, K.B. Abdus Sattar Road, Rahmatganj, Chittagong
- 88. Bangladesh Auto Rick Ck S. Federation, 150, Kalabagan, Dhaka
- 89. M/S S K Sohrah Ali 21, Station Road, Khulna
- 90. BD Auto Rick Chakal S Samity Ltd., 60/1, Autisidipankar Road, Mughdipara, Dhaka
- 91. M/S Prime Compost Mills Ltd., Sena Kallayan Bhaban, Dhaka
- 92. M/S Siddique Textiles Weaving Ltd., 62, Kakrail, Dhaka
- 93. M/S SDS International, Nayahat, Savar, Dhaka
- 94. Ministry of Food Govt A/C, Secretariat, Dhaka
- 95. Maq Enterprises, 141/1, Segunbagicha, Dhaka
- 96. Star Vegetable Oils Limited, Kuripara, Siddharganj, Narayanganj
- 97. Faruna (Eastern) Ltd., 121, Karimullah Bugh, Postogola, Dhaka
- 98. M/S Amin Jute Mills Ltd., Sholashaha, Chittagong
- 99. M/S Furat Karnafuly Carpet Factory, 99, Sattar Chamber, Agrabad, Chittagong
- 100. M/S Eastern Commercial Services Ltd., 8/4A, Topkhana Road, Segunbagicha, Dhaka
- 101. Khulna Salt Industries, 26, R K Das Road, Narayanganj
- 102. M/S Gaz Nazimuddin, Road No 05, House No 10/A, Gulshan-2
- 103. M/S Pragoti Industries Ltd., 96, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
- 104. M/S Kalia Chakra Sugar Mill Ltd., Adamjee Court (6th Floor), 115-120, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
- 105. M/S Pioneer Pharmaceuticals Ltd., House-1/A, Road 79, Gulshan Model Town 2, Dhaka
- 106. M/S Rajshahi Sugar Mills Ltd., Adamjee Court, 115-120, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
- 107. M/S Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills Ltd., Town Khalishpur, Khulna
- 108. M/S Quayyum Dyeing and Printing Mills Ltd., Chamber Building 122/124, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
- 109. Fancy Leather Enterprise, 95, Gazmahal Road, Hazaribagh, Dhaka
- 110. M/S M Rahman Steel Mills Ltd., Nahar Mansion, 116, CDA Avenue Muradpur, Chittagong
- 111. M/S Shamsul Al Amin Cott Mill Ltd., 70, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka
- 112. M/S Northern Distilleries Ltd., House No 8, Road No 14, Dhanmondi, Dhaka
- 113. M/S Bismilla Ship Breaking Industries, 19, Zila Parishad Super Market, Chittagong
- 114. M/S Taj Tubes, C-145, BSCIC Industrial Estate, Tongi, Gazipur
- 115. Nirman International Ltd., 66, Dilkusha C/A, Motijheel, Dhaka
- 116. Prime Textile Spinning Mills Ltd., Sena Kallan Bhaban, 195, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
- 117. M/S Husna Tobacco (Pvt) Ltd., Uttom, Dinaipur Road, Rangpur
- 118. M/S UMC Jute Mills, Sattipara, Narsingdi
- 119. Peoples Jute Mills Limited, Town Khalishpur, Khulna
- 120. The Siddiquee Ltd., Al Islam Chamber (1st floor), 91, Agrabad, Chittagong
- 121. M/S Chromevegl Tanneries Ltd., 12/A, Abhoy Das Road, Tikatuli, Dhaka
- 122. Chand Textile Spg Mills Ltd., Chand Mansion, 66, Dilkusha, Dhaka
- 123. M/S Bonanza Garments Ltd., 11, Motijheel C/A, Ellal Chamber, Dhaka
- 124. M/S ARA Jute Trading Corp Ltd., 37, Dhanmondi R/A, Road No 5, Dhaka
- 125. M/S Poly Fabrics Ltd., 29, DIT Avenue, Sarker Man, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
- 126. M/S National Tubes Ltd., 131-142, Tongi 1/A, Gazipur, Dhaka
- 127. M/S Bagdad Dhaka Carpet Factory, North Kattail, Feorsha Colony, Chittagong
- 128. M/S K Rahman & Company, 9/A, Dhanmondi R/A, Kalabagan, Dhaka
- 129. New Dhaka Industries, Ruppang, Narayanganj
- 130. M/S Jilani Tea House Ltd., 1138, West Sholashahar, Hathazari Road, Chittagong
- 131. M/S MB Tannery Ltd., 13, Moneshwar Road, Hazaribagh, Dhaka
- 132. Bengal Leather Complex Ltd., 61/1, Tejkuini Para, Tejgaon, Dhaka
- 133. M/S BRTC Paribahan Bhaban, DIT Avenue, Dhaka
- 134. Chowdhury Leather & Co., Vill Chottotala, PO Kadma, PS Sheharasti, Chany, Dhaka
- 135. M/S Khulna Newsprint Mills Ltd., Khalishpur, Khulna
- 136. Professional Knitters Ltd., 402, Dhanmondi R/A, Road 27, Dhaka
- 137. Crescent Textile Mills Ltd., BSCIC Industrial Estate, Pabna
- 138. M/S Jahanara Al Amin Spinning Mill Ltd., 70, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka
- 139. M/S Azad Jute Mills Ltd., Balaadanga, Jessore
- 140. M/S Shaqil Leather Corporation Ltd., 43/1, Sher-e-Bangla Road, Hazaribagh, Dhaka
- 141. M/S Sirajganj Spinning & Cotton Mills Ltd., Hospital Road, Sirajganj
- 142. M/S Givenchy Spinning Mills Ltd., Bishiya, Koribary, PO Monipur, Gazipur
- 143. M/S Rupayam Textile Mills Ltd., Durgapur, Comilla
- 144. M/S BIKRAMPUR Tannery, 180/2, Hazaribagh, Dhaka
- 145. M/S Premier Products Ltd., BSCIC I/E, Cox's Bazar
- 146. Bengal Fine Ceramics Ltd., 72, New Elephant Road, Dhaka
- 147. M/S Four Brothers (BD) Ltd., PO Box No 43, Masdarai, Narayanganj
- 148. M/S Bengal Jute Industries Ltd., 102, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Kawn Bazar, Dhaka
- 149. M/S Meghna Textile Mills, Tongi 1/A, Gazipur
- 150. M/S Feather Touch Foam Leather (Ltd), Dhaka-Chittagong Highway, Katchpur, Demra, Dhaka
- 151. Daulatpur Leaf Tobacco Company Ltd., Hosnabad, Mothurapur, Daulatpur, Kushtia
- 152. Ullapara Flour Mill, Vill: Newargacha, PO Ullapara 2/R, Sirajganj
- 153. M/S Shadin Tannery, 101, Hazaribagh, Dhaka
- 154. M/S Chowdhury Enterprise, Chamber, 2nd Floor, 1102, Nur Ahmed Sarak, Jubilee Road, Chittagong
- 155. M/S Ullapara Cold Storage, Vill Newargacha, Ullapara, Sirajganj