

## New CFO of ScanCement



Mahbubul Alam has been made new chief financial officer (CFO) of ScanCement International Ltd of Heidelberg Cement Group, Bangladesh, says a press release.

He replaced Ola Schippert, managing director and chief financial officer of the company.

Schippert is returning to Oslo to assume his new role. Alam, who joined the company on July 1, 2002 is responsible for all operations of HC Group including ScanCement International Ltd and Chittagong Cement Clinker Grinding Company Ltd in all financial matters.

Before joining in HC Group, Alam served in Standard Chartered Group, Bangladesh as Head of Finance & Administration for over eight years. He held various important positions at home and abroad.

A reception was held at a city hotel recently to bid farewell to Ola Schippert and welcome Mahbubul Alam.

## Jahangir Alam adjudged EBL 'Saver of Week'

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Titus Housing Ltd Managing Director SA Jahangir Alam has been awarded Eastern Bank Limited (EBL) 'Saver of the Week'.

Alam, a client of the bank, saved Tk 11.08 lakh in a piggybank within a week!

EBL organised a campaign titled 'Saving Week' for its customers in its twenty-two branches from August 17 to August 22. The branches collected some Tk 5.35 crore in cash during the campaign.

EBL Managing Director K Mahmood Sattar distributed prizes among the winners in the bank's principal office yesterday.

EBL Principal Office Branch Manager N Safiqat Chowdhury and other high officials were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, EBL Managing Director K Mahmood Sattar said: "We have organised this campaign to promote savings among the public and next year we will launch the programme throughout the country."

Award winner Jahangir said he had not saved the money with the intention of winning the prize but it was out of saving habit, which he used to do from his very early age.

KM Zahurul Islam and Afzalunnessa, two other bank clients, received 2nd and 3rd prizes by saving Tk 6.70 lakh and Tk 5.14 lakh respectively.

## Pak-Afghan trade ministerial commission revived

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan and Afghanistan Monday revived a joint ministerial commission to promote economic ties between the two countries, a government statement said.

The agreement came during talks between Afghan Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani and his Pakistani counterpart Shaukat Aziz.

The commission which has been revived after a decade will hold its next meeting in Kabul, the statement said.

The commission's deliberations will cover all aspects of relations including infrastructure development, tariff structure, transit trade and technical assistance.

## India has no plan to restrict grain exports

REUTERS, Bombay

India said Monday it did not plan to restrict exports of wheat and rice even though the winter crop is likely to be poor due to a patchy monsoon, since the country had enough grain stocks.

Traders have been speculating that the government might stop the sale of grains to exporters at subsidised rates in order to boost domestic supply at a time when the country is facing its worst drought in more than 15 years.

"There will not be any impact on exports," food minister Sharad Yadav told Reuters on the sidelines of a seminar on commodity exchanges, adding that the government did not plan to change its current grain export policy in the near future.

# Poor C'wealth nations deserve more FDI, ODA

## McKinnon calls upon developed members to come up with increased supports

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Commonwealth Secretary General Donald C McKinnon yesterday called for increased foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development aid (ODA) from the developed economies of the Commonwealth to its weaker members.

He said the developed nations should open up their markets for the developing ones, particularly for the least developed countries (LDCs).

Wealthy nations cannot feel safe with hungry neighbours, he said.

The Commonwealth Secretary General was addressing the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI) members at the Chamber building in the city.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed and Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and chambers and

business leaders attended the meeting.

The commonwealth secretary general said improving corporate governance and maintaining transparency in the private sector apart, the government has to work for ensuring good governance and minimising corruption.

He also underscored the need for improving infrastructure, developing human resources and sustainable projects, which would be helpful to attract more FDI.

"We encourage private sector-public sector partnership. You will see that there will be more trade within the member countries in the next five years and the Commonwealth Secretariat will be more busy," McKinnon said.

The Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) is becoming an important entity in the coming days with increased activities, he mentioned.

Around 180 Bangladeshi people

were trained under the Commonwealth initiatives in the last five years, he added.

McKinnon assured the Commonwealth Secretariat would seriously look into extending its technical assistance to assist small and medium enterprises run by the women entrepreneurs.

Speaking at the gathering, MCCI President Tapan Chowdhury said trade and industry of the LDCs of the Commonwealth are passing through uncertainties. "Most of the LDCs have been marginalised in the global trade and they are faced with not only deteriorating terms of trade but also lack of flow of the FDI."

"On the other hand, international financial system is becoming increasingly difficult for them. If the trend continues like this, most of the LDCs will remain out of the global integration process," the MCCI president said.

In spite of provisions in the WTO

agreement for special and differential treatment for the exports from the LDCs and for enhancement of their ability to have access to international markets, the reality of the current global trading pattern indicates that the LDCs have least chances to benefit unless they have massive flows of ODA and global FDI.

The Commonwealth can be of immense help in establishing marketing tie-ups for some of the Bangladeshi products like leather goods, agro and agro-processed items, the MCCI president mentioned.

Eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain, International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman, former MCCI president Laila Rahman Kabir, woman entrepreneur Selima Ahmed, among others, drew the attention of the Commonwealth Secretary General on some specific issues.



Commonwealth Secretary General Donald C McKinnon (2nd from left) speaks at a discussion with the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI) members at the Chamber building in the city yesterday as Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Yusuf Abdullah Harun and MCCI President Tapan Chowdhury look on.



Photo shows executives of Bangladesh Bank, four nationalised banks and HSBC at a seminar on money laundering deterrence arranged by HSBC in the city on Monday.

## Chances of US double-dip recession low: Fed official

AFP, Washington

The likelihood that the United States might slide into a double-dip recession is low, William Poole, president of the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, said Monday.

Speaking in St. Louis, in the US state of Missouri before the Midwestern States Association of Tax Administrators, Poole noted that there's only been one double-dip recession since World War II.

The short 1980 recession was followed by a four-quarter recovery

and then by the deep 1981-82 recession, he stated.

He added that the climate that spawned that double-dip - high and rising inflation, poor public policies and a major oil shock - is absent this time.

"Expectations of low and stable inflation are entrenched and the banking system is well-capitalized, making credit readily available to creditworthy firms," he said.

"Hence, barring and unpredictable calamity, I think the probability of a double-dip recession at the

present time is low."

Poole also said the economic recovery does not depend on the exact timing of policy adjustments by the Federal Open Market Committee.

"That's an unreasonable standard to apply to judging the FOMC, and fortunately not at all necessary," he said.

"As I have repeatedly emphasized, one of the great benefits of achieving low and stable inflation is that this environment makes the economy less sensitive to the exact timing of policy adjustments."

## HSBC seminar on money laundering held

"HSBC organized a day long seminar on money laundering deterrence" at its Motijheel Training Centre in the city on Monday, says a press release.

Acting CEO of HSBC Simon Jukes inaugurated the seminar.

Head of Anti-Money Laundering Department of Bangladesh Bank Mustafizur Rahman along with other Bangladesh Bank officials and executives of four nationalised commercial banks were present at the seminar.

MA Al Mamun, manager Compliance & Control and Abul Ali Ahad, training officer of HSBC, made presentations on money laundering and the techniques to detect and prevent money laundering using the HSBC Group's extensive knowledge and expertise in the deterrence of money laundering.

An effective open discussion was held during the 2nd session to foster the awareness on money laundering deterrence among the banks in the country and share best experiences.

## Iraq expects \$40b pact with Russia soon

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq expects "soon" to sign an economic cooperation pact with Russia worth around 40 billion dollars, Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said in remarks published Tuesday.

"It's a long-term accord that I proposed to the Russian leadership during my last visit to Moscow. We have learnt that they (Moscow) are about to finish studying our proposals, and we hope that the signing of the agreement will happen soon," Ramadan told the Al-Rafidain weekly newspaper.

Ramadan, who visited Moscow in April 2001, said the agreement "defines the axis of future cooperation between the two countries and should boost development of bilateral relations in a more constant and stable way."

Iraq revealed earlier this month it had inked a framework economic agreement, but Russian officials stressed it did not mention any specific figures.

Crippling UN sanctions imposed on Iraq since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait can not be lifted until UN weapons inspectors -- who withdrew in December 1998 -- certify it is not developing weapons of mass destruction.

## Thailand wants free trade with Japan

AFP, Tokyo

Thai Finance Minister Somkid Jatusripitak said Tuesday he wanted a free trade agreement (FTA) between Japan and Thailand, according to a Japanese finance ministry official.

During a meeting with Japanese Finance Minister Masajuro Shiokawa, Somkid said Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, should also individually pursue their own FTAs with Japan, South Korea and China, the official said.

Shiokawa did not directly comment on Somkid's comments, but said Japan would continue to build close ties with Thailand and ASEAN members.

ASEAN comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

## BCI seminar calls for new export markets

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday put accent on exploring new export markets for the country.

Dependency on a few markets may turn out to be unsafe, they observed.

The seminar participants also called for ensuring quality products to be able to compete in the global market.

The seminar organised by Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) on 'Export Diversification: Problems and Prospects' was attended by Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury as chief guest.

Presided over by BCI acting President AK Azad, the seminar was also attended by State Minister for Commerce Barkatullah Bulu and Hafiz Ibrahim MP. Former BGMEA vice-president Anisul Haque and member of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries AKM Shamsuddoha attended the programme as discussants.

Speaking on the occasion Khosru said it is not safe to remain confined in two or three markets.

Research Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue Professor Mustafizur Rahman, who presented a keynote paper, said during the last ten years export market of Bangladesh has become concentrated.

"Exports from Bangladesh will be hampered severely if those few countries suffer from economic recession," he explained. "We have to get out of this. If we want product diversification we have to have market diversification."

According to him, the market of European Commission (EC) is considered to be a single market.

"But the reality is that we are yet to capture most of the EC market other than Germany, United Kingdom and France. There is an opportunity to get increased market share in rest of the European countries," he said.

The commerce minister said Bangladesh already has duty free access to a number of countries and efforts are on to gain more market access. "We are expecting positive response from the signatories to the Bangkok agreement by the end of this year," he said.

He said the government has taken a number of initiatives, including setting up a foreign trade institute and reform of Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and Tariff Commission, to boost export.

At present, the EPB is not in a position to perform, observed the commerce minister. "The Tariff Commission has become a dumping ground. When a government official is disliked by the higher authorities, he is transferred to the commission."

In his keynote paper, Professor Mustafiz said the government needs to help in ensuring quality of export goods. He informed the African countries are not able to export products worth nearly 800 million-dollar due to lack of quality.

State Minister Barkatullah Bulu said the government is taking punitive steps against exporters of sub-standard products.

Former BGMEA vice president and Chairman of Mohammad Ali Group of Industries Anisul Haque said in addition to RMG at present the country exports 11 to 12 items. "We need to conduct market survey to identify more exportable items," he observed.

## Oil surges on Cheney's comments on Iraq

AFP, London

The price of oil rallied here on Tuesday after US Vice President Dick Cheney made the White House's most forceful case yet for military action against Iraq.

Reference Brent North Sea crude oil for October delivery rallied 80 cents to 27.79 dollars a barrel - levels not seen since early April. The London market was closed on Monday for a public holiday.

In New York, the light sweet crude October contract rose 65 cents on Monday to 29.28 dollars a barrel.

Prices climbed in the wake of a warning Monday from Cheney that "the risk (sic) of inaction are far greater than the risk of action."

Cheney argued that the world could not wait until it became clear that Iraq had nuclear weapons before trying to topple Saddam Hussein.

Analysts, who say that the prospect of a US-led attack on Iraq has added a so-called war premium of between three and six dollars to each barrel of crude, believe prices could climb even higher.

"Cheney's comments are just another indicator that the US are pretty adamant that they're going to go into Iraq," said Deutsche Bank analyst Jay Saunders.

## Myanmar kyat hits new low

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's currency, the kyat, has plunged to a new all-time low of 1,050 against the dollar and the prices of basic foodstuffs are spiralling, observers said Tuesday.

Analysts believe the introduction of a money-laundering law, the prospect of Thai border checkpoints reopening after a three-month closure and a continued crackdown on illegal currency trading are behind the kyat's decline.



The 56th Rangs-Toshiba showroom was inaugurated at Akond Mansion in Gazipur on Monday by Md Shahab Ullah, deputy commissioner of Gazipur. General managers of Rangs-Toshiba Altaf Hossain and Nurul Quader Chowdhury, businessmen and managers of different commercial banks were present on the occasion.