



## Rume Ali takes over as BB Dy Governor

Muhammad A (Rume) Ali assumed charge of Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank yesterday, says a press release.

Prior to his present assignment, he was the Chief Executive Officer of the Standard Chartered Group in Bangladesh.

His career in banking started with Grindlays Bank in 1975 as a management trainee. In 1983, he was posted to the bank's Mumbai office after spending three years in Dhaka as the Country Operations Manager.

In 1986, he was sent to the bank's London office for a three-year stint as credit inspector.

In 1995 he was posted outside Bangladesh and this time it was at ANZ headquarters in Melbourne, Australia as district manager of Retail Banking. He returned to Dhaka in March 1997 as Country Head and General Manager, Bangladesh: the first Bangladeshi to head a major international bank in Bangladesh.

After the take-over, in July 2000, of ANZ Grindlays Bank by Standard Chartered Bank he was appointed the Chief Executive Officer of the Standard Chartered Group in Bangladesh, heading both Standard Chartered Bank and Standard Chartered Grindlays Bank.

In 2001 he was elected a Fellow of the Bangladesh Institute of Bankers.

## Aims chairman reelected

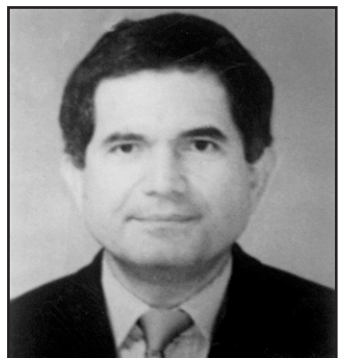


Manzurul Haque has been unanimously re-elected chairman of Aims of Bangladesh Limited for the next one year, says a press release.

The election was held at the 16th meeting of the board of directors of the company held in the city recently.

Haque is also the Chairman & CEO of ORG-MARG Quest Limited (OMQ), a member company of ACNielsen, the world's largest market research company and a director of Business & Information Systems Limited (BIS).

Haque is regarded as a pioneer in the field of survey research in Bangladesh.



## New country manager of Heidelberg Cement Group

Yavuz Ermis has taken over as the Country Manager of Heidelberg Cement Group (HCG), Bangladesh, says a press release.

He has been assigned as the Chief Operating Officer of Heidelberg owned Scancement International Ltd, Chittagong Cement Clinker Grinding Company Ltd, and Scancement Bangladesh Ltd.

Ermis joined HCG Group in the year of 1990.

He held many senior positions in Turkey and Belgium before being assigned to Heidelberg Cement Asia Hong Kong Office in 1997.

He has worked as the chief representative for China to develop cement and concrete investments of the Group in the Guangdong province where the Group is the major producer. Presently, he is also the Managing Director of Brunel and the Philippines operations of the Heidelberg Cement Group.

# Floating exchange rate not now

## Saifur sets \$3b reserve mark

MONJUR MAHMUD

Facing a strong demand for dollar over the past few weeks, the government has backtracked from its earlier plan to introduce floating exchange rate.

According to finance ministry sources, the government is not planning to go for market based dollar exchange rate unless the foreign exchange reserve crosses a three billion mark.

"Considering the size of economy, we think US\$2 billion foreign exchange reserve is not comfortable. We are not planning to introduce free-float exchange rate immediately," Finance and Planning Minister M

Saifur Rahman said yesterday.

The government was planning to introduce free-float exchange rate by mid November, provided the foreign exchange reserves exceed \$2 billion by then. "Free-floating of the foreign exchange rate is very risky, but we have to do it. If everything goes well, all control on exchange rate will go by mid-November," the finance minister said earlier.

According to banking sources, there has been a serious crisis of dollar in the inter-bank foreign exchange market. The crisis has forced the banks to sell dollar at unusually higher prices ranging from Tk 61 to Tk 61.50 and also in the inter-bank transaction against the official

rate of dollar ranging from Tk57.40 to Tk58.40.

"We are facing serious problems everyday to manage foreign currencies from other banks and there is no sign of improvement in the market situation," said a top official of a private commercial bank at Motijheel in the city yesterday.

The central bank is not selling dollar because it will have to pay around \$200 million import bill to Asian Clearing Union (ACU). The foreign exchange reserve was around \$1.80 billion last week, according to sources.

On the other hand, the Bangladesh Bank has strengthened its control on foreign currencies and

asked all commercial banks to send detailed information about foreign currencies on daily basis instead of weekly basis.

The 'present security measures' are forcing many to leave the country and they need the greenback which has also contributed in pushing the demand for dollar high, added the finance minister.

Demand for dollar was very high in the local inter-bank foreign exchange market due to pressure on imports. But the demand for the greenback was higher in kerb market due to smuggling. Dollar in the kerb market hit as high as Tk 61.60 in the recent days.

# Energy Regulatory Commission Bill in next JS session: Musharraf

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Musharraf Hossain yesterday said that the Energy Regulatory Commission Bill would be placed before Jatiya Sangsad in the next session.

With the passage of the bill, the regulatory body would start operating early next year looking after the entire gas sector independently. "The government would not interfere in the activities of the commission," Musharraf Hossain said.

The minister was speaking at the launching ceremony of the strategic partnership between Manpower Generation Company Ltd,

Bangladesh (MGC) and Jenbacher AG, Austria at a city hotel.

He pointed out that more utilisation, dealing and investment are very essential for gas export from the country. He informed that 65 per cent natural gas is used in generating power sector in the country. The natural gas is also used as a captive generation. But he observed that gas price and captive power rate should be equal.

Under this strategic partnership between the two companies, MGC has been appointed as authorised representative of Jenbacher AG to marketing and servicing the Jenbacher gas engine products in the country till December 2004.

The Energy and Mineral Resources minister hoped that the partnership will encourage more investment in captive power generation sector in the country.

Director of Jenbacher Dieter Gruber said that the partnership is aimed at identifying the desires and requirements of the customer. "To provide the customers' need with technological outstanding solutions, to be close to the customers and to guarantee their investments this partnership will be more effective."

Jenbacher Product Manager Thomas Eelsenbruch said that Jenbacher gas engines are most efficient, low cost, low noise level, pollution free and third generation

gas engines. There are currently 22 such gas engines in operation in the country's industrial sector.

According to Jenbacher AG Managing Director Siegfried Spiegel, the partnership provides support for sales and services for the consumers of the country.

MGC is a sister concern of the Superior Group of companies that have been operating in the country's power sector for the last 25 years.

Superior Group Chairman Manjurul Ahsan Munshi MP, MGC Managing Director Rezwan Ahsan and Advisor Dr. Taifur Ahmed Chowdhury were also present at the occasion.

## PBTL AGM, Board meet held in Tokyo

The 11th annual general meeting (AGM) and Board meeting of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (PBTL) were held in Tokyo, Japan recently, says a press release.

Board members reviewed and approved the nationwide expansion programme.

Salient features of the Nationwide Expansion Project of CityCell are network coverage to more than 20 new districts, total coverage in 52 districts out of 64 by June 2003, additional coverage and capacity to meet the growing demand in the existing metro cities.

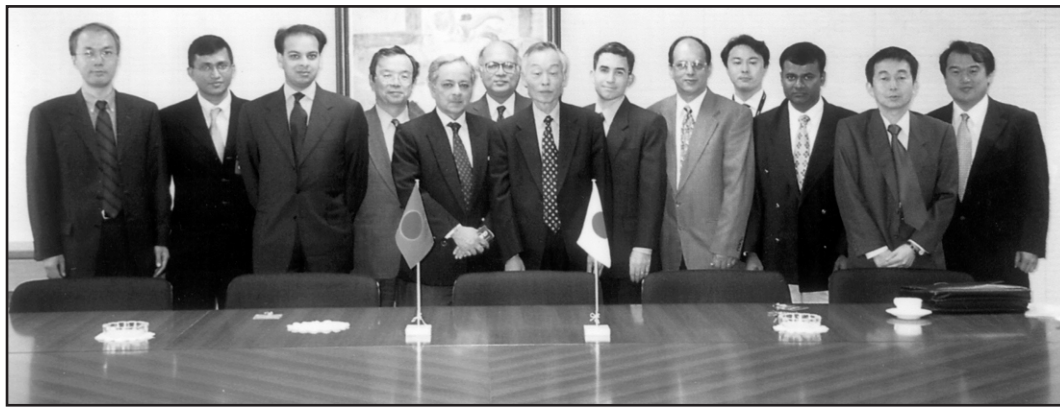


PHOTO: PBTL

Picture shows (from left to right) Yoshikuni Takashige, manager of Fujitsu Ltd, Faisal Hyder, CFO, Faisal M Khan, MD of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (PBTL), Koji Kashiwaya, CEO of AIDEC, Asghar Karim, acting chairman, A K M Ziauddin, advisor, Yasuo Imai, director representing Fujitsu Ltd, Paul Cristiano, director representing AIDEC, A K M Shaiful Azam, SVP-Sales & Marketing, Hide Hashimoto of Fujitsu Ltd, and Mohammad Tipu Sultan, CAO and company secretary, and other high officials of Fujitsu Ltd at the 11th annual general meeting and Board meeting of PBTL held in Tokyo recently.

# Switzerland assures Bangladesh of continued assistance

REZAUL KARIM, back from Switzerland

Switzerland has assured Bangladesh of continuing financial and technical supports towards development activities.

The assurance came at a meeting between officials of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and a visiting Bangladesh delegation led by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan late last month.

Bhuiyan led an 11-member delegation as part of a study tour on 'decentralisation in Switzerland and Sweden' from October 21-31.

Other members of the delegation are: Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, Treasury Bench Whip Rezaul Bari Dina, BNP MPs Sakhat Hossain Bokul and Ali Newaz Mahmud Khaiyam, BNP central leader Mofiqul Hasan Tripli, Managing Director of Palli Karma Shoyahak Foundation Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Executive Chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, Joint Secretary of LGRD Ministry Fazlul Haque, Director General at the Prime Minister's Office Kazi Monwarul Haque, senior assistant secretary of the LGRD ministry Waliul Islam and Senior Reporter of The Daily Star Rezaul Karim (Lotos).

During the tour in Switzerland, the delegation members held a number of meetings with high

officials of the SDC where Swiss officials assured of enhancing their cooperation for upliftment and socio-economic development of the people of Bangladesh.

They also assured of extending cooperation in strengthening local government and decentralising administration in Bangladesh.

SDC officials said that 31 per cent of their annual contribution goes to Asia, particularly to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal etc. In last fiscal, they said the SDC contributed a total of 809.6 million Swiss frank for development of the under developed countries.

They said that there are three overarching guiding principles of the SDC cooperation- safeguarding sustainability, looking into the future and aiming for impact.

Officials said that Switzerland selects a country for its contribution on the basis of four criteria need of the country, its development potentials, strong determination of decentralisation and considering political and bilateral relations as well as historical relation.

During the meeting, they said that the Swiss contribution might further increase if Bangladesh ensures good governance, enhances social justice, ensures sustainable use of natural resources and goes for massive reforms, strengthens local government systems and decentralises administration.

Adrain Schlapfer, a senior official of the SDC told the delegation members that the Swiss govern-

ment has been extending cooperation to Bangladesh since its independence and has contributed greatly for the poverty victims, post-flood rehabilitation, food, shelter and medicine aid in times of need.

He said that the SDC is contributing to Bangladesh about 20 million on an average each year in different sectors, especially in supplying drinking water, sanitation, growth centre, sustainable land use, non-formal education, micro-finance, etc.

The SDC official said that they came to know that the present government in Bangladesh has strong determination towards decentralisation and the processes to strengthen local government bodies is now taking place in Bangladesh.

Adrain Schlapfer said that there are ups and down in the Swiss contribution but Bangladesh would always be in the priority list of Swiss bilateral cooperation.

He said development and decentralisation are long term processes and cannot be achieved overnight but there must be good initiative and determination. In this context, he talked about the Swiss efforts and how it achieved development through decentralisation process and delegation of power to local authorities.

In reply, BNP secretary general and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan thanked the SDC and the Swiss government for their continued support to Bangladesh and said the

people of the country are being greatly benefited by SDC's support.

Bhuiyan said that there has been a lot of study, seminar and workshops on arsenic, but the alternative source of drinking water for the people is still far. He sought Swiss cooperation for ensuring supply of arsenic free water to the people. He hoped that the SDC would give emphasis on finding alternative source of water instead of investing fund for seminar or further study on arsenic.

Bhuiyan said the people of Bangladesh would be more benefited if Switzerland imports products from Bangladesh and urged for Swiss investment in Bangladesh. "I think Bangladesh can be benefited more from Swiss investment instead of project aid," he added.

The Swiss officials said that the private sectors in Switzerland are thinking about investment in Bangladesh as there are attractive packages for the investors. They think that there is bright scope for investment in the textile sector of Bangladesh.

About arsenic, they said that there is public opinion in Switzerland to provide assistance to address the arsenic problem in Bangladesh.

SDC and foreign ministry officials, including Philip Besson, Ursula Laeubli, Anne Claude Cavin and Peter Hafner were present during the meetings with the Bangladesh delegation.



PHOTO: SQUARE INFORMATIX

Picture shows (sitting from left to right) Ragib Ali, chairman of Southeast Bank Ltd, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, minister for commerce, Charles C R Patra, managing director of Square Informatix Ltd, Syed Abu Naser Bukhtear Ahmed, president and managing director of Southeast Bank Ltd, Syed Marghub Mursheed, chairman of Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC), at the signing ceremony of an agreement between Southeast Bank and Square Informatix.

# Saifur terms energy sector a black hole

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman said the country would go bankrupt one day if pilferage in the name of systems loss in different public sectors continued unabated.

"The energy sector has become a black hole. The power division owes crores of taka to the petroleum and mineral resources division. The mineral resources division, on the other hand, owes crores to the finance ministry. This is a vicious circle," the minister told the seminar on "Crucial Time for Planning the Future of the Energy Sector" on Monday.

The Bangladesh Energy Companies Association (BECA) organised the seminar at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) auditorium.

State Minister for Petroleum and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain and State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood also took part in the seminar, presided over by BECA president Aziz Khan.

Mainuddin Monem presented a paper on small power plants and Azam J Chowdhury, the BECA vice-president, on liberalisation of downstream petroleum operation.

Saifur underscored the need for small power plants in the rural areas and asked the Rural Electrification Board (REB) to

come up with proposals to set up such plants.

"Money is no problem. I can give you around Tk 500 crore this year to set up small power plants with a capacity of 15 megawatts (MW)," he said, adding the plants would change the power scenario in rural areas.

Mahmood emphasised on investment in distribution system and urged the private sector to come forward. "I am not against private power generation, but at this moment I want investment from the private sector in distribution."

However, Saifur said it would be too much to expect private investment in the distribution system.

Saifur told the state minister for power that when the public sector with the backing of the state machinery was failing to check huge theft in distribution how could he think the private sector would feel encouraged.

Mahmood said, besides systems loss, the PDB and the REB are already financially overburdened as they sell power at a price lower than what they pay to private-sector power producers.

Later, talking to newsmen, Mahmood said the country on an average loses around Tk 300 crore annually due to the price differential.

# Southeast signs online banking agreement

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With a view to providing on-line banking services, Southeast Bank has signed an agreement with Square Informatix Limited.

Under the agreement, signed on Monday at Square centre in the city, every branch of the bank would be connected round the clock to provide on-line banking facility through Square Net VSAT.

Southeast Bank will be the first private commercial bank of the country to use the technology of Square Informatix Limited- a satellite-based end-to-end nation-wide and international data communication service provider that has eliminated the need for telephone line or microwave link.

Southeast Bank Managing Director Syed Abu Naser Bukhtear Ahmed and Square Informatix Managing Director Charles CR Patra signed the agreement on behalf of their respective companies.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury was present as chief guest at the signing ceremony. Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) Chairman Syed Marghub Mursheed and the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Tapan Chowdhury were also present.

Commerce Minister said this state-of-the-art technology has made the world 'geographically neutral' and the system would help customers to get better services.

Square Informatix Managing Director said that it takes four to five thousand US dollars per month for any company to use a foreign satellite. "But it will take only a few for using our VSAT," he added.

# DBBL starts rural health service programme in Chittagong

Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited has opened a rural health service programme at its Patherhat rural branch in Chittagong, says a press release.

The Managing Director in-charge of the bank, Abul Hashem Khan, inaugurated the branch recently.

The bank has started the service as part of its decision to extend munificent hand to the destitute people of the rural area by way of providing free medical services through the rural branches.

Among others, Manirul Islam, Dr Nazrul Islam and Dr Prasenjit Dutta Gupta spoke on the occasion on behalf of the local community.

Speakers in their speeches lauded the noble initiative of DBBL for providing health care service to the rural people.

Under this programme now, local people can avail services of specialist physician for various diseases with regard to child, eye, skin and gynaecology.

Clients, businessmen, representatives of different industrial and commercial undertakings and guests of the locality were present at the function.

# Modern Cement 2nd unit operation soon

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Modern Cement Ltd, a publicly traded company, hopes to begin operations of its second unit soon.

Talking to a group of newsmen, Managing Director of the company Md Anisur Rahman said the company is at the final stage to start the unit.

"We hope to launch expansion of our new product line next month," the MD told journalists during a factory visit at Gazaria in Munshiganj district.

With the installation of the second unit, the production capacity of the company will reach 700 tonnes per day (tpd) from the existing 100 tpd capacity.

The MD said the existing first unit will come under BMRE after the inauguration of the second unit

aiming to double the production capacity of the company which floated shares worth Tk 100 million in mid-January of the year (2002).

The company raised Tk 60 million under pre-IPO placement and rest Tk 40 million was raised from general shareholders in the initial public offering (IPO) which was managed by Equity Partners Limited, an issue manager.

Referring to future plans, the MD said mechanical operation will run under full computer system instead of manual.

Speaking on the letter of undertaking to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) prior to going public, the MD said all the commitments would be materialised in due time.



PHOTO: DBBL

Abul Hashem Khan, managing director in charge of Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited, inaugurates Rural Health Service Programme at the bank's Patherhat Rural Branch in Chittagong recently.