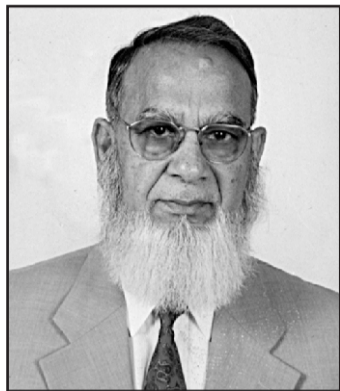


Int'l Jute Study Group chairman



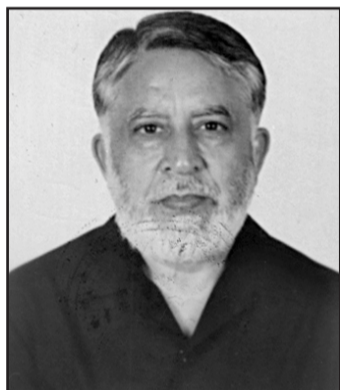
The private sector consultative board of the International Jute Study Group (IJSG) has unanimously elected Muhammad Shams-ul-Haque of Bangladesh its chairman, says a press release.

The decision was taken at the first meeting of the consultative board of the IJSG held at its secretariat in Dhaka on Tuesday.

The board also elected Sanjay Kajaria of India its vice-chairman.

Inaugurated by IJSG Secretary General T Nanda Kumar the meeting was also attended by delegates from IJSG member countries and associate members.

New chairman of Rupali Bank



Mufleh R Osmany, former foreign secretary, was appointed chairman of the Board of Directors of Rupali Bank Limited on Wednesday, says a press release.

Osmany is currently holding the post of the chairman of Bangladesh Institute of International & Strategic Studies.

He served as ambassador or high commissioner of Bangladesh to various countries and UN office in Geneva.

He retired from the government service in 1997.

Citibank NA area head due today in city



Sanjay Nayar, chief executive, India and area head for South Asia of Citibank NA arrives in the city today on a two-day visit, says a press release.

During his visit Sanjay will meet senior government officials, major clients of the bank, review the bank's business plan and community activities in Bangladesh.

Sanjay was previously area business head for South Asia of the bank.

He also worked as global sales head for fixed income emerging markets business at Salomon Smith

AB Bank, Paradise Spinning Mills sign deal

Arab Bangladesh Bank Limited (ABBL) and Paradise Spinning Mills Limited signed an agreement in the city on Sunday, says a press release.

Under the agreement, Paradise Spinning Mills will get credit facilities from ABBL for expansion of the existing mills.

ABBL Managing Director Abu Haniff Khan and Paradise Spinning Mills Limited Managing Director Md Mobarak Hossain signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

Two Senior Executive Vice Presidents of ABBL Iqbal U Ahmed and Ali Reza Iftekhar, Vice

Edible oil soars on smuggling

Govt refixes retail prices

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A meeting convened by commerce ministry yesterday observed that a certain quarter may have been involved in smuggling of edible oil, causing a 30 per cent hike in prices during the last six months.

The ministry held series of meeting during the last three months to keep prices under control. Even the oil refiners promised Commerce Minister Amir Khosru M Chowdhury to maintain a constant price of the essential item during and after Ramadan.

But the fact is that the prices continued soaring hitting as high as 12 per cent within a span of just over two weeks. In the wake of such a situation the commerce ministry yesterday convened the meeting where the DG of Bangladesh Rifles said they had seized some Tk 22 lakh worth of palm oil in the last two months. Some members at the meeting identified smuggling as the main reason for the price hike of edible oil.

Wholesalers of Moulvibazar blamed the refiners for not allotting edible oil at the rate they had committed. "Rather, the refiners stopped issuing delivery order, issued against every purchase order, before the Eid-ul-Fitr, which ultimately pushed the prices up

during the Ramadan," a wholesaler informed the meeting yesterday. According to the meeting, soybean is selling between Rs 47 to Rs 48 per litre in India which is above the prices in local market.

According to sources, businessmen are not disclosing information for 'obvious reason' as they are making money.

"But the consumers are paying for it and the country's foreign exchange is being drained out," said a business leader seeking anonymity.

The refiners on the other hand blamed the distributors for not receiving oil from them at Tk 39 per kg. The refiners claimed that they could deliver only 50 to 60 metric tons of oil before Eid.

Chairing the meeting, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said the government cannot penalise 13 crore people for saving only 16 oil refiners.

Revising the millers' rate at Tk 45.75 from Tk 38 per litre soybean, the meeting decided that the distributors have to complete delivery against order by January 15. It also decided that a five-member committee led by a joint secretary of commerce ministry would monitor implementation of the decision.

"If this mechanism does not

work the government has to take an alternative decision," the commerce minister told the meeting.

Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed, Director General of BDR, chairman of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, President of Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners and Vanaspati Manufacturers Association MA Rouf Chowdhury, leaders of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, officials from National Board of Revenue, traders from city's wholesale business hub Moulvibazar and representatives from Consumer Association of Bangladesh were present at the meeting.

MA Rouf Chowdhury earlier told The Daily Star that stock of edible oil was very satisfactory and the association arranged open market sale (OMS) at 22 points in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet to check prices.

The wholesalers would sell soybean oil at Tk 39 per litre and retailers at Tk 40 per litre and the association has taken different measures so that the hoarders cannot manipulate the market, he had said.

But edible oil prices had been on the rise with soybean oil was selling between Tk 50 to Tk 54 per litre while palm oil was selling

between Tk 40 to 42 per litre in different city markets yesterday.

"Price of one litre Rupchanda brand soybean was Tk 42 six months back but it is now selling between Tk 52 to Tk 54 now," said a retailer in a city market at the Karwan Bazar yesterday. "We used to sell per litre soybean (not branded) between Tk 35 to 36 six months back but it is now selling at Tk 48 per litre."

Soybean oil was selling between Tk 46 and Tk 48 in different city markets before Eid. Palm oil price was between Tk 32 and Tk 33 six months back but it is now selling at Tk 40 per litre, the retailer said, adding that before Eid palm oil was selling at Tk 35.

The government cut duties on crude edible oil by 14 per cent. The decision was taken as part of government measures for stabilising the prices of essential commodities during the Ramadan. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) reduced duties on edible oil by 14 per cent of which import duty is 7.5 per cent, advanced income tax (AIT) 3 per cent and infrastructure development surcharge (IDSC) 3.5 per cent.

Import duty on refined oil has been kept much higher, more than double the duty on crude oil, to protect local refining industry.

Garment barons strike deal to avoid leadership battle

Move aimed at tackling post-MFA challenges

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Two major groups of the country's apparel exporters on Sunday signed an agreement to frame common electoral panel in the upcoming BGMEA election to be held on January 26 next year.

Under the deal, the panel which comes out successful will lead the association for one-year term instead of going through the election process every term which had been the practice so far.

The agreement between the two power groups -- Sammilita Parishad and Forum Members' Council -- is aimed at forging unity and solidarity among the exporters to face the ensuing problems and challenges of the garment industry when the multi-fibre arrangement ends in 2004, said leaders of the two groups at a press briefing following the signing ceremony.

According to the agreement,

whichever panel gets elected will hold the post of BGMEA presidency for one year while the other group would lead the association for the next year.

The Sammilita Parishad has been elected panel leader of Forum-Member's Council for the next term.

The groups will also share the 27-member executive committee post of the BGMEA with 14 seats going to the incumbent panel leader's group while the rest 13 posts would go to the other group.

The agreement would end the longstanding ideological divisions of the exporters which had been hindering the smooth functions of Bangladesh Garments Exporters and Manufacturers Association (BGMEA), the exporters said.

"The agreement is sure to unite the people of this highest-earning

exports sector and uphold their causes on priority basis," BGMEA President Kutubuddin Ahmed said before the formal signing of the agreement in presence of BGMEA members at Gulshan Club last night.

Welcoming the move, Anisul Haque, president of Forum-Members' Council, said the garment sector might confront a crisis in 2005 when the WTO comes into effect and this unity would help the exporters to face the challenges.

Terminating the agreement as a milestone Sammilita Parishad Kazi leader Moniruzzaman said it would help sink difference and solve the outstanding problems of the sector.

He, however, added as garment exporters believe in democracy, anybody from outside these two groups is open to forming election panel. "In case of such third panel direct election would be held."



Malaysian acting High Commissioner to Bangladesh Loh Seck Tiong, Malaysia Airlines Area Manager Mohd Anuar Mat Piah and other officials pose for photographs at the launching ceremony of Malaysia Airlines package programme titled 'Showcase Malaysia 2003' in the city yesterday.

'Showcase Malaysia' launched

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Malaysia Airlines yesterday launched a package programme titled 'Show Case Malaysia 2003' with a view to increasing flow of tourists from Bangladesh.

Under the tagline 'Stay 4 days/3 nights for free in Malaysia' the programme Showcase Malaysia offers at least two passengers traveling together to and via Malaysia between January 5 to May 29, 2003 a complimentary stay on a twin share basis.

Malaysian acting High Commissioner to Bangladesh Loh Seck Tiong formally inaugurated the campaign at a local hotel in the city yesterday.

Under this package, Malaysia Airlines is also offering 50 per cent

discount in first and business class tickets on all Malaysia Airlines (selected) international destinations.

It also offers free access to 'Golden Lounge' (world's best airline lounge, 2002) and anyone can win free ticket and 4 days / 3 nights accommodation at 5 star hotel.

A business class passenger or a first class passenger can get the opportunity by purchasing ticket at US \$ 581 or \$ 754 while for an economy class passenger the cost of ticket has been fixed at \$ 330 under which he would be entitled to stay 4 days/3 nights at a four-star hotel.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Malaysia Airlines Area Manager Mohd Anuar Mat Piah said to improve the tourism sector

between Malaysia and Bangladesh Malaysia Airlines has offered the package like the previous year.

"In anticipation of a good demand of 'Showcase Malaysia' we have increased an additional flight starting from December 18 that make-up four flights a week on Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur route," he said.

The Malaysia Airlines also arranged a quiz contest offering five prizes. The first prize is Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur-Dhaka air ticket for one person on economy class including 4 days/3 nights accommodation at Mandarin Oriental while the second one is Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur-Dhaka air ticket for one person on economy class including 4 days/3 nights accommodation at Concord Hotel.

Four-day housing fair kicks off today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A four-day housing fair organised by the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) kicks off in the city today focusing on environment-friendly housing.

Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas is expected to inaugurate the annual event as chief guest to be held at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Housing and Public Works Secretary Aminur Rahman and RAJUK Chairman Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury will also attend the inaugural ceremony.

"The fair has been organised to bring the buyers, real estate devel-

opers and financial institutions together to help them interact among themselves," said REHAB President Toufiq M Seraj.

He was speaking at a press conference organised by REHAB at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

REHAB General Secretary Mahmudul Hassan, Treasurer M Saiful Islam, Executive Committee members Rabiul Haque, Md Ashraf Haq and SM Anwar Hossain were present on the occasion.

Seventy-two participants including 52 real estate developers, three financial institutions, nine building material supplying institutions and one marketing

company are participating in the exhibition.

Speaking at the conference REHAB president said only members of the association would be allowed to participate in the fair. "A number of participants would offer gifts and discounts on purchase of plots and flats in the fair."

The three financial institutes are Delta Brac Housing Finance Corporation Limited (DBH), Industrial Development and Leasing Company of Bangladesh (IDLIC) and National Housing Finance and Investments Limited.

Environment and Forest Minister Shajahan Siraj will be present at the concluding cere-

mony on Friday.

Organised by REHAB, the fair is co-sponsored by Cemex Cement Bangladesh Ltd, Concord Real Estate and Building Products Ltd, East West Property Development Pvt Ltd and Jamuna Builders Ltd.

The fair will remain open to all from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm. Visitors would require to pay Tk five as entrance fee this year. Raffle draw on entry tickets will be held every hour throughout the fair and three prizes would be given to winners.

Around 40 thousand visitors visited last year's REHAB fair. The organisers are expecting the number to be double this year.

Import of machinery, raw materials up in October

UNB, Dhaka

Import of machinery, raw materials and petroleum products showed a rising trend in October compared to September.

Opening of import LCs during October was higher by 4.27 per cent compared to September, according to a Bangladesh Bank analysis.

The increment was 2.29 per cent in industrial raw materials, 30.94 per cent in petroleum and petroleum products, 10.39 per cent in capital machinery, 5.22 per cent in other machinery while it was only 0.25 per cent in consumer goods.

LCs opened for intermediate goods grew by 83.38 per cent in September, while the growth in consumer goods was 6.21 per cent.

LCs for industrial raw materials

rose by 16.83 per cent, capital machinery by 3.41 per cent, petroleum and petroleum products by 18.64 per cent and other machinery 23.65 per cent and others 21.26 per cent in September.

Authorised dealer banks opened import LCs worth Tk 17,634 crore (US\$ 3045.69 million) during July-October this year.

LCs worth Tk 5051 crore (US\$ 872.38 million) were opened only in October.

Textile fabrics and accessories for garment had the biggest share in LCs opened during July-October period, totalling Tk 3887.06 crore.

LCs for import of capital machinery were worth Tk 1136.71 crore and other industrial machinery Tk 1479.80 crore.

LCs opened for rice were worth Tk 491.69 crore, wheat Tk 450.23

crore, sugar Tk 469.04 crore, onion 41.83 crore, fresh and dry fruits Tk 74.67 crore, pulses Tk 217.27 crore, milk food Tk 134.72 crore, edible oil Tk 774.38 crore, drug and medicine Tk 71.97 crore, raw cotton and synthetic fibre Tk 55.84 crore, yarn fibre Tk 52.82 crore, pharmaceutical raw materials Tk 266.36 crore, fertilizer Tk 539.55 crore and other chemicals and chemical products Tk 748.61 crore.

Letters of credit of Tk 1558.66 crore were opened for P.O.L import during July-October period, Tk 82.53 crore for coal and coke, Tk 64.18 crore for cement, Tk 248.45 crore for clinker and limestone, Tk 391.35 crore for tin sheets and plates, Tk 279.50 crore for scrap vessels, Tk 1136.71 crore for paper and paper board and Tk 2627.11 crore for other heads.

4th AGM of BCBL held

The 4th annual general meeting of Bangladesh Commerce Bank Ltd was held on Saturday in the city, says a press release.

Chairman of the Bank ATM Alamgir presided over the meeting. Shareholders discussed last year's activities and then passed Directors' Reports including the accounts of 2001.

Janata Bank MD reviews business of Bandarban branches

Managing Director of Janata Bank Murshid Kuli Khan visited Bandarban district recently to review the business activities of the branches of the bank in the district, says a press release.

During the visit, the managing director of Janata Bank stressed the need for increasing the flow of investment especially in various handbased cottage industries, agro-based project processing and wood treatment plant in the hill districts.

Besides, he also called for enhancement of the flow of supervisory credit for self employment of the people of the Chittagong Hill Tract districts.

IDLC to get Tk 10cr from Mercantile Bank

Mercantile Bank Limited and Industrial Development Leasing Company (IDLC) of Bangladesh have signed an on credit line facility, says a press release.

Under the deal, Mercantile Bank will extend a credit line of Tk ten crore to the IDLC.

Mercantile Bank Managing Director M Taheruddin and IDLC Managing Director Aminul Islam signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

Mercantile Bank Chief Advisor Lutful Rahman Sarkar, Deputy Managing Director Nurul Islam and IDLC Deputy General Manager Arif Khan and Senior Manager Arifur Rahman were also present on the occasion.



Arab Bangladesh Bank Limited Managing Director Abu Haniff Khan and Paradise Spinning Mills Limited Managing Director Md Mobarak Hossain sign an agreement in the city on Sunday.



Mercantile Bank Managing Director M Taheruddin and IDLC Managing Director Aminul Islam sign an agreement on credit line facility in the city recently.