

Tk 1 lakh fine against Premier Bank recommended

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Anti-money Laundering Department of the central bank has recommended Tk 1 lakh fine against Premier Bank Limited for opening false accounts in its different branches.

The department in its recommendations submitted to the BB governor for approval also suggested punitive action against Nowsher Ali, manager, Banani branch of the bank.

The department which recorded statements of 14 branch managers of the Premier Bank on May 3 and 4, made the recommendations after finding violations of the Money Laundering Act and other

Bangladesh Bank orders.

The branch managers explained that the fake bank accounts were opened after receiving verbal orders from former managing director (MD) Kazi Abdul Mazid and the manager of Banani branch who maintained liaison between the MD and branch managers.

The Anti-money Laundering Department also recommended issuance of caution notices against the managers of 13 Premier Bank branches.

The Banani bank branch manager denied the allegation against him when the central bank investigators asked him to explain.

The Bangladesh Bank on April 28 removed MD of Premier Bank

Kazi Abdul Mazid as its probe into the private bank's initial public offering (IPO) scam detected his involvement with opening of fake bank accounts.

The BB launched the probe on February 14 after the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on February 12 suspended Premier Bank's Tk 55 crore IPO. The capital market watchdog froze the IPO following the unearthing of 25,000 fake beneficiary owners' (BO) accounts in its preliminary investigation.

On completion of its probe, the BB on March 13 served a show cause notice on the Premier Bank MD asking him to explain in a week why he should not be removed from

job.

The MD sent his reply to a three-member BB standing committee headed by Deputy Governor Allah Malik Kazemi. The committee also conducted a personal hearing of the MD but found his explanation unacceptable. It then recommended to the BB governor that the MD be removed.

The BB investigation into the Premier Bank IPO scam found gross violation of banking rules in the opening of around 17,000 accounts with different branches of the bank. The accounts were later found to be fake.

BISIC to arrange training course for unemployed

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Institute of Small Industry and Cottage (BISIC) will organise a training programme for the unemployed educated people from June 4 to 16.

The 'Enterprise Development' programme has been arranged for those who want to set up their own business.

Participants will be able to have a practical knowledge on marketing, production and financial system of their future institutions from this programme.

Minimum educational qualification to participate in the course is HSC and the course fee is Tk500. Last date of admission is June 4, says a press release.

The institution has already trained 2500 entrepreneurs.

EU backs launch of talks with China on textile exports

AFP, Brussels

The European Union went a step forward Monday towards imposing limits on some types of surging Chinese textiles after member states voted in favour of opening formal negotiations with Beijing.

The EU's textile committee, which represents the EU's executive commission and member states, approved a proposal by EU trade commissioner Peter Mandelson to launch formal talks with China on a surge in exports of T-shirts and flax yarn.

"Following the committee's approval, the decision to launch formal consultation should be taken by the commission on Wednesday," the commission said in a statement.

Speaking to journalists at the European Parliament here, Mandelson said: "I am very glad that what I have proposed and the approach I am taking, this has found broad support among an overwhelming majority of our member states."

India, Russia vow to deepen trade links

AFP, Moscow

Indian President Abdul Kalam, on the first visit to Moscow by an Indian head of state since the Soviet Union's collapse, met Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday for talks on boosting trade and high-tech cooperation.

"Russia and India are unique nations. In difficult times for India and happy times for India you are our close friend," Kalam told Putin at a ceremony in which both countries' anthems were played in the gilded surrounds of the Kremlin palace's George Hall.

Kalam told Putin the two countries enjoyed close cooperation in science, defence, technology and trade. He also repeated calls for Russian-Indian trade volume to rise from current levels of about three billion dollars a year to 25 billion dollars over the next decade.



PHOTO: STAR

AB Ahmed, managing director of Mohona Holdings Ltd, speaks at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday with Mizanur Rahman Shelley, chairman of the company, in the chair. The company is working for setting up an international consortium to finance the planned tri-nation Myanmar-Bangladesh-India gas pipeline.

Bangladesh trade show kicks off in Milan

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In a bid to attract more foreign buyers and expand existing market, Bangladesh organised a three-day single-country trade show of its products that began in Italian capital Monday.

Inaugurating the first ever show of its kind at Milan, Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury highlighted the excellent investment environment and incentive packages offered by Bangladesh and urged the Italian investors and business community to take the opportunities.

Secretary General of Italian Institute of Foreign Trade (AICE) Francesco Bossi and Chief Counsellor for trade Roberto Predolin jointly inaugurated fair organised by the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and Bangladesh Embassy.

A high powered Bangladesh business delegation is now visiting Italy in connection with the trade

show.

A total of 45 manufacturing and exporting companies from 16 different groups are displaying their products that include readymade garment, knitwear, leather goods, shoes, ceramics, melamine products, jute goods, home textile, silk, furniture, imitation jewelry, agro-processed products, frozen fish, handicrafts, food items and plastic products.

The commerce minister said Italy is importing a number of Bangladeshi products of which leather is an important one.

The high quality black goatskin is of international standard and has tremendous potential in Italian market, he mentioned hoping the exposition would definitely increase the present trade volume between Bangladesh and Italy.

Bangladesh's exports in the current financial year have so far grown by around 14 percent despite facing serious challenges following quota phaseout in textile sector, he added.

Bangladeshi exporters will make a big breakthrough in marketing their non-traditional products and diversifying export items in the Italian market, Altaf hoped.

Speaking at the function, the secretary general of AICE and chief counsellor for trade in Italy praised Bangladesh's endeavour in promoting their products in Italian market.

They also praised expatriate Bangladeshis working in Italy for their high standard of skill and making positive contribution to Italian economy.

Bangladesh trade team will also meet the members of Milan Chamber of Commerce and Foreign Trade Association of Milan.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Italy Anwarul Bar Chowdhury, President of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Abdul Awal Mintoo, Chief Counsellor for trade and Vice-chairman of EPB Mir Shahabuddin Mohammad also spoke at the inaugural function.

Cross border listing of bourses key to growth in South Asia

SAFE meet told

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The cross border listing of securities and investment opportunities should be given more attention to promote economic development in South Asia, observed Salman Shah, advisor to the prime minister of Pakistan.

He urged the South Asian Federation of Exchanges (SAFE) representatives to prepare a smooth road map for regional cooperation in the capital market. He made the call while inaugurating the 5th annual general meeting and 8th theme conference of SAFE in Islamabad recently.

"The private sector, especially the stock markets, has a leading role to

play for economic growth of a country," a press statement of Dhaka Stock Exchange said quoting him.

South Asian economy is performing well and it will be a hub of world trade and investment in the next ten years, the advisor noted.

The governments in this region are ready to extend all possible help to SAFE to achieve its goal and target, Shah said.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Tariq Hasan, chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, said increased financial activities within South Asia will definitely give rise to a growth in the capital markets in the region.

More can be achieved in phases

by enhancing cooperation among the regulators, harmonising regulatory frameworks and unifying cross border operations, he pointed out.

The first and foremost factor in determining the success of an integrated financial market is to see whether the regulators are geared to handle the new challenges and cross border jurisdictional business, Tariq added.

All the SAFE delegation met Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz during the conference. Ahmad Rashid Lali, vice-president of Dhaka Stock Exchange, attended the AGM and theme conference.

Citigroup named best co in Forbes 2000 ranking

Citigroup, the owning company of Citibank NA, has been ranked the number one company in the world on Forbes Global 2000 list, which was published in Forbes special issue on April 18, 2005.

The list is a comprehensive one, which includes the world's largest and most powerful companies, as measured by composite rankings based on revenue, profit, asset and market value.

Forbes reported that Citigroup, with revenue of \$108.28 billion, net after-tax profit of \$17.05 billion, assets of \$1.48 trillion and market value of \$247.66 billion, had the best composite ranking based on its four measurement criteria, says a press release issued by the company.

Overall, Citigroup ranked no 1 in terms of assets, no 3 in profits and no 4 in terms of market value.

Other top ranking companies according to the Forbes list are General Electric, American Intl Group, Bank of America, HSBC Group and Exxon Mobil, the press release added.

ECB rate cut may harm euro zone

Says Trichet

REUTERS, Brussels

European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet dismissed calls for lower interest rates on Monday, saying a cut would only make the euro zone's problems worse.

But ECB chief economist Otmar Issing said risks to price stability had eased since last autumn, in a further sign that rates are unlikely to rise any time soon.

Giving evidence to the European Parliament, Trichet said ECB policymakers had agreed at their last interest rate meeting earlier this month that cutting borrowing costs without reforming the euro zone economy would do more harm than good.

"I am very, very clear on that," Trichet told the parliamentary Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee.

Dhaka-KL jt commission meet to discuss trade, manpower

UNB, Dhaka

Investment, trade, manpower, visa, education and cultural cooperation will figure high in the long-overdue Bangladesh-Malaysia Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) to be held here on June 7.

An official of the Foreign Ministry told the news agency yesterday that the forthcoming JCM will review the entire range of bilateral relations and discuss ways to expand cooperation in potential sectors of the two Muslim countries.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamad bin Syed Jaafar Albar will arrive in Dhaka on June 6 to attend the 3rd JCM being held after a long break. Bangladesh Foreign Minister

M Morshed Khan will lead the host side.

The Bangladesh-Malaysia Joint Commission was set up in 1992 for cooperation in economic, trade, investment, science and IT sectors.

The long-overdue JCM is an important move forward to strengthen bilateral economic cooperation. As a fellow member of OIC and an exponent of Muslim ummah, Malaysia can come up with more prospective move to boost cooperation in all fields for mutual benefits, the foreign ministry official hoped.

The two-way annual trade, amounting to more than US\$300 million, is heavily inclined towards Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur exports

goods worth more than US\$300 million to Dhaka against Dhaka's paltry US\$16-17 million worth export.

Malaysian investment that stands around US\$100 million is mainly in telecommunications and power sectors. It also has an investment in capacity building in the fisheries sector here under an OIC project.

Malaysian wants to invest in low-cost housing projects and power sectors in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, , among others, is interested to send more workforce to Malaysia. Some 1.13 lakh Bangladeshi workers are now employed there.



PHOTO: STAR

M Sajidur Rahman, head of consumer banking of Standard Chartered Bank, Prashant Rana, general manager of Katalyst, Syed Fahim Munaim, managing editor of The Daily Star, and Lars P Reichelt, chief executive officer and managing director of Sheba Telecom Pvt Ltd (Banglalink), shake hands after signing a memorandum of understanding between Katalyst and The Daily Star. Katalyst has chosen to co-brand 'More Business' with two private sector companies with the support of a media partner. The brand will promote small and medium enterprises (SMEs).