

Stocks	
DGEN	1.56% 8,451.59
CSCX	1.52% 15,346.05

Asian Markets	
MUMBAI	1.19% 19,696.48
TOKYO	0.90% 10,232.33
SINGAPORE	0.34% 3,202.80
SHANGHAI	0.95% 2,848.55

Currencies	
Buy Tk	Sell Tk
USD 69.98	70.98
EUR 90.71	95.77
GBP 108.20	113.31
JPY 0.82	0.88

SOURCE: STANDARD CHARTERED BANK

Commodities

Gold ▼
\$1,393.00
(per ounce)

Oil ▼
\$88.02
(per barrel)
(Midday Trade)

SOURCE: AFP



Morshed Murad Ibrahim

Ctg chamber gets new chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Morshed Murad Ibrahim has been elected the president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI).

The newly elected 24 members of the board of directors in a meeting yesterday chose the chamber's new leader.

Mahub Alam and Nurun Newaj Selim were elected senior vice president and vice president.

In Tuesday's biennial polls of the trade body, 18 directors were elected, while 6 others were previously elected uncontested.

Chittagong Babosayee Parisad, one of the two panels, boycotted the CCCI elections protesting the cast of votes by the nominees and proxy voters in violation of a High Court direction.

Ibrahim is the managing director of Crystal Group. He as a Grand Alliance candidate contested the last parliamentary election from a city constituency.

Alam is the proprietor of Alam Trading Corporation and president of Khatunganj Trade and Industries Association.

Selim is the chairman of Electromart Limited.

The Chamber Parishad, led by the trade body's incumbent chief MA Latif MP won all the 17 director posts, while the rest one was won by Babosayee Parishad, led by former CCCI president Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Zaved.



Angry investors take to the streets in front of Dhaka Stock Exchange building, as the market suffered a historic 547 points fall within less than one and a half hours of trading yesterday.

(STORY ON PAGE 1)

STAR

Big players buy cargo ships

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

Top business groups bought dozens of ocean-going ships in the last three years to freight their own goods to save transportation costs.

Different conglomerates, including Meghna, Bashundhara, Akij, Abul Khair, East Coast and Brave Royal Shipping, in the last three years bought over 30 such ships, which are called bulk carriers. Other ship purchases are in the pipeline.

"We are planning to buy four more ships to take the tally to five," said Azam J Chowdhury, chairman of East Coast Group, which has business that range from power-generation to oil refining.

Of the four ships, three will be operating by next month, Chowdhury said. East Coast is buying a crude oil tanker with a 1.2-lakh tonne capacity, which will be the first of its kind in Bangladesh.

"Mainly, we carry our own goods, but often we rent it for others," said Mostofa Kamal, chairman of Meghna Group of Industries, a \$1-billion-turnover company. Meghna has three ships, two of which were bought recently at a cost of Tk 336 crore (\$48 million).

MAJOR BUSINESS GROUPS HAVE BOUGHT OCEAN-GOING SHIPS	
Brave Royal Shipping	9
Meghna Group	3
Akij Group	2
Bashundhara Group	2
Abul Khair Group	1
East Coast Group	1

These ships carry billets, scraps clinker, slag, iron ore, wheat, sugar, rice and oil etc. across the world. Earlier, foreign ships carried goods for Bangladeshi companies, and it costs importers more. Often, importers had to wait for months for ships.

Akij Group, one of the largest fast-moving consumer-goods companies in Bangladesh, bought two ships -- each costing over Tk 160 crore (\$23 million) -- to carry goods for them. Similarly, Abul Khair Group bought one ship recently. Bashundhara Group bought two, each costing nearly Tk 92 crore (\$13 million), during the economic meltdown when the price was low, according to the market players.

But the biggest player in the field is Brave Royal Shipping. It owns nine ocean-going vessels, all of which are bulk carriers. Kabir Steel Rolling Mill (KSRM) is its parent company.

Brave Royal Shipping is now in the limelight because Somali pirates hijacked one of its ships on Sunday.

All the ships are registered in Bangladesh and carry the national flag wherever they go.

"The buying of these large ships by local businesses shows that Bangladesh's economy is growing," said Chowdhury of East Coast Group.

"We have created employment for high-end people. A captain gets \$8,000-9,000 per month," said Mostofa Kamal.

But the business is not going as smoothly as it seems. In addition to fears of attacks by pirates, buyers of these ships face hassles during registration in Bangladesh.

"The government agency asked us to bring the ship to Bangladesh for registration. It is impossible to bring it here without any cargo," said Chowdhury.

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Aman paddy prices defy govt move

SOHEL PARVEZ

Farmers and traders are upbeat despite a government announcement that it will not buy aman paddy during the current harvesting season.

Almost all paddy varieties are trading at Tk 100 more for every 40 kilos (a maund) at bazaars in the northern region than a year ago, farmers and traders said.

Farmers in the north are selling a maund of fine varieties of rice, such as paizam, at Tk 900, 16 percent more than last year.

The price of the medium variety of rice, like guti swarna, went up 14 percent from last year to Tk 800 a maund, they added.

"Prices look attractive this year. I am really happy," said Shohel Khandoker, a farmer at Mahiganj, Rangpur.

He planted rain-fed aman on about 10-acres of land. Khandoker, like many of the farmers, expects to bag better crops this year.

Even with expectations of good yield this year, the price of paddy went up with the onset of aman harvest early last month. The high price of rice on the domestic and international markets influenced the paddy market.

A mid-year hike in the government-procurement price of a kilo of coarse rice to Tk 28 from Tk 25 also buoyed paddy prices, said farmers and traders.

To control the market, the government last week said it would refrain from buying rice from the domestic market in this season.

Farmers said the announcement and a lack of interest from rice traders and millers to buy rice at higher prices helped rein the paddy market for a brief spell. However, the market rebounded in the last couple of days.

According to farmers and traders, the

main reason behind the higher prices of freshly harvested aman paddy is that it can be stored for a longer period of time than boro, the biggest crop.

"As aman paddy can be preserved, the scope of a slump in prices is faded," said Khandoker, who plans to sell 25 percent of his aman shortly.

He hopes to see a rise in production per acre this year, and wants to hold the rest to get higher prices because he expects the rains to come in late.

"Production will be higher this year," said ASM Sisnabi Mondol, a farmer at Chirirbandar, Dinajpur.

The agriculture ministry had earlier set a production target of 1.35 crore tonnes of aman rice this year. Now it is aiming for production of 1.90 crore tonnes in the next boro crop season to ensure food sufficiency.

Traders said the current price of the aman paddy made the growers excited about planting the next rice crop, boro.

A better production prospect of boro might cause rice prices to dip, and thereby cut food-price inflation. The rising prices of essential foods, such as rice, pushed up overall inflation on a point-to-point basis by 0.09 percentage points to 7.61 percent in September from August.

Nirod Boron Saha, president of Naogaon Dhanno-Chal Aratdar O Babosayee Samity, a rice and paddy wholesalers' body, said prices would fall if boro production looks good. He said the market might dip after the middle of this month if seedlings sprout well.

"Farmers are preparing the seedbeds now and the weather is good. If there is no foggy weather, the seedlings will sprout well and open the possibility of good crops," said Saha.

"Under such a scenario, the prices of paddy and rice may drop after December 15."



LANCER CUP

Golf tournament 2010

Date: 9th & 10th of December 2010
Venue: Kurmitola Golf Club, Dhaka Cantt.

All golfers are invited to participate

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