



Dignitaries observe a one-minute silence at the beginning of the memorial meeting at the MCCI office in Dhaka yesterday.

Business luminaries remembered

MCCI pays tribute to Samson H Chowdhury, Syed Humayun Kabir and Amjad Khan Chowdhury

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

IN the pantheon of Bangladesh's entrepreneurs, few rank higher than Samson H Chowdhury, Syed Humayun Kabir and Amjad Khan Chowdhury.

A host of business leaders, economists, diplomats and civil society activists gathered yesterday to pay tribute to them for their contribution to the economy.

"Each of them was truly larger than life," said Syed Nasim Manzur, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, at a memorial meeting at the chamber's office in the capital.

"It is remarkable how each of them blazed trails for others to follow, creating new industries in their wake, yet they each remained humble, committed and full of hope to the end." "I thank their families for sharing them with us. They will also be a source of inspiration for the future generations," he said.

Samson H Chowdhury, the founder of Square Group, served the MCCI as its president in 1996 and 1997. He transformed a small medicine business in Pabna into one of the largest and most successful conglomerates in Bangladesh. He died in January 2012.

Syed Humayun Kabir, chairman of Renata Ltd, a pharmaceutical company, was the president of the country's oldest chamber in 1979 and 1984. He created Sajida Foundation in 1993 as a marriage anniversary gift to his wife and funded it with a majority shareholding in Renata.

He helped in shifting and renaming Narayanganj Chamber to the MCCI. He passed away last month.

Amjad Khan Chowdhury, founder of Pran-RFL Group, served the MCCI as its president in

2011 and 2012. He transformed his dream of rural advancement into reality and created an agro-processing firm. He also died a month ago.

A one-minute silence was observed at the beginning of the memorial meeting.

"Their departures have left behind not just world-class companies, organisations and industries, but also inspiration for future generations to be great like them," said Nasim Manzur.

CK Hyder, founding secretary general of the MCCI, said the chamber was lucky to have the three as its president as they made it a respected trade body through their leadership.

"They never saw leadership as a privilege; rather they accepted it as a huge responsibility. The MCCI has benefitted from their leadership."

He recalled one incident when Samson H Chowdhury gave away his own cardigan to a Bangladeshi migrant worker during their trip to Seattle via Seoul.

"Amzad Khan created his business out of his concern for the rural poor," said M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of ACI Ltd.

Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group, said the business community, the economy and he himself have benefitted from the values and ethics the three nurtured.

"When the word 'values' comes to my mind the name of Syed Humayun Kabir also comes up instantly, while Samson H Chowdhury was a giant in the business community and advised me when I entered the pharmaceutical sector even though I was going to be his competitor."

About Amjad Khan Chowdhury, Rahman said: "He never basked in his success."

Syed Manzur Elahi, chairman of Apex Group, said the three led simple life and

money did not bother them. "People like them are becoming scarce day by day as most entrepreneurs are running after making money at any cost."

Barrister Rafique-Ul Huq called for national recognition for the three for what they have done for the country in terms of poverty eradication and job creation.

Mahbub Jamil, chairman of Singer Bangladesh, said the three have proved that one can achieve anything in their life even by doing business ethically.

"There should be essays about them in textbooks so young generation can learn from their ethical and moral standards," he said.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the three were the architects of post-Bangladesh industrialisation. "They invested in different sectors, leading diversification of the industries."

"They also applied corporate social responsibility in their companies much before the theory came," the economist said.

Farooq Sobhan, a former foreign secretary, said they showed enormous sense of social responsibility.

Speaking on behalf of their families, Anjan Chowdhury, a director of Square Group, Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, deputy managing director of Pran-RFL, and Kaiser Kabir, chief executive of Renata Ltd, thanked the MCCI for organising the meeting and paying tribute to their family members.

Dr Kamal Hossain, a noted jurist, M Matiul Islam, first finance secretary of the country, Rokia Afzal Rahman, a former MCCI president, and Simeen Hossain, chief executive of Eskayef, were also present.

Bangladesh should join TPP to boost exports

DURJOY RAHMAN JOY

TRANS Pacific Partnership (TPP) had a small beginning as a regional free-trade agreement called P-4 between New Zealand, Chile and Singapore. Brunei joined the trade alliance in 2006.

In 2008 former US president GW Bush announced that the US would be joining the alliance. Australia, Peru and Vietnam also joined in the negotiation. Later Malaysia, Canada, Mexico and lastly Japan were added to the list of 12 countries supposedly controlling or linking 40 percent of the global economy.

A final accord is imminent while many outstanding controversies like access to Canada's agricultural market, Australia's concern over American pharmaceutical patent regulations, and Peru's rain forest management are yet to be ironed out by negotiating countries.

But it is certain that the TPP countries will have the privilege of lower or zero tariff for exporting goods to the member countries. It would be prudent to assess the agreement in Bangladesh's perspective as this will impact our export sector. Garments and textile sectors will greatly be affected as the US and Canadian markets are under TPP countries and this is of great concern for Bangladesh.

The basic concept of TPP is to implement lower or zero tariff from the existing level between the member countries as long as trade is practised within the agreement framework.

Each TPP country has to rectify their tariff structure after a final agreement is reached. Anticipated final implementation will not occur before January 1, 2017 and may be stretched to late 2017.

The final details of TPP agreement are yet to be released and remain confidential. However, excerpts from initial meetings and comments made by the representatives of respective countries make it clear that TPP could have a substantial effect on different apparel product categories currently being exported to the US from countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

The tariff difference between TPP member and non-member countries will substantially affect cost of export for non-member countries after full implementation of the agreement.

Although the TPP agreement would insist state-owned enterprises to be more transparent with their books and discourage government subsidies and other anti-competitive practices, it is unclear how the currency devaluation by the member countries would be monitored or disciplined.

It is not clear to what extent labour unions will be made liberal by the member countries. Recently Malaysia's human rights status had to be upgraded such that it could qualify in the final TPP negotiations. Relevant here is the fact that Bangladesh lost its GSP (generalised system of preferences) status a couple of years ago on the ground of labour standards,

factory safety and trade union rights.

Some Bangladeshi garment insiders are sceptical about the full execution of the TPP agreement showing many reasons. One of the reasons is the clause of "Yarn Forward" that is, to qualify for preferential tariff, fabric must be made from fabric woven in a member country or that fabric must be made from yarn made in a member country.

But the "Yarn Forward" rule could be bypassed on the ground that if the particular yarn and fabric is in short supply in the TPP region, then it could be sourced from outside the region. If that particular product is not import-sensitive to the US then it might still qualify for full TPP benefit.

Among the 12 participating countries, the US is the only country which has sufficient cotton yarn production and a major exporter. It also has the capacity in synthetic yarn.

Vietnam and Malaysia are planning to set up units to process semi-finished US raw materials to catch the benefits of TPP. US importers will then start taking advantage of lower or no tariff by shifting production from countries like Bangladesh.

Thailand has signed a memorandum with Vietnam recently to have cooperation in textiles, which will give Vietnam advantage on faster technology transfer.

Availability of production space has been always a big challenge in countries like Vietnam, but better logistics and shorter sailing time will give Vietnam and possibly Malaysia an edge and will make these two countries preferred over Bangladesh.

Vietnam has a population of more than 92 million of which 63 percent are between the age of 14 and 54 with another 24 percent between one and 14. As a result, Vietnam enjoys a young median age of just 28 years which makes up a sizable and young workforce.

The recent available data shows that apparel imports from Vietnam increased in May by 18.4 percent year-on-year to \$786 million, making it the number two source of US apparel imports. It gained 1.2 percentage points in its apparel share so far this year.

So, Bangladesh should start the process to counter any possible effect of TPP on its exports. The move to revive GSP status is critical since this will be exemplar as the first obstacle to start any preferential trade talk.

Soon after the current TPP agreement is reached, phase two will begin to add new countries to the agreement and a wide range of countries have lined up to join TPP in phase two, including the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Costa Rica. So Bangladesh may look into the process to be included in TPP in the second phase.

It is high time for Bangladesh to have a proper action plan by bringing all stakeholders on the table so that the impact of TPP is minimal when it finally gets rolling.

The writer is involved in garment sourcing.

Smile! Emoji is taking over advertising

AFP, Paris

Everyone speaks emoji, and now advertisers do too.

Catching on to the digital era's cross-cultural language of choice, advertisers have learned to speak emoji in a world where promotional videos are ignored and ad banners are blocked.

Tiny digital pizza and French fries icons, and pictures of animals and planes are being used to advertise fast food, airlines and even NGOs.

Emoji characters have become at least as pervasive as smartphones, and users are moving away from communication platforms that allow advertising towards networks that don't, said Marie Dolle, a digital media content specialist at Kantar Media.

In their online advertising campaigns, the World Wildlife Fund charity and Domino's Pizza have tapped into the bank of emoji icons universally approved by the Unicode Consortium, the non-profit group that develops and maintains digital standards.

In May, McDonald's -- a pioneer in emoji advertising -- launched its own digital stickers package that allows users to insert pictures of Big Macs, sundaes and chicken nuggets into their Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger or text messages.

Disney and Duracell have commissioned Feeligo, a Paris-based start-up, to create their brand stickers. Last winter, Duracell's iconic pink bunny was shared 20 million times.

Swedish low-cost homewares giant Ikea also launched an emoji range depicting its products earlier this year, from furniture to the meatballs sold in its cafeterias.

Emoji advertising is just as much

about communication and having a sense of humour as it is about branding.

"Stickers have to represent emotions. A logo doesn't work by itself," said Feeligo co-founder Davide Bonapersona, whose campaigns have spread to several European countries and which often cost clients less than traditional formats.

"Depending on the target, we are looking at 20,000 to 100,000 euros (\$22,000 to \$110,000)," Bonapersona said.

US-based Swyft Media and Asian messaging apps Line and WeChat share this growing niche market with Feeligo.

The latest advertising trend is mainly logo-free, giving emoji users on both ends of the chat more freedom.

"Users are saturated with publicity," Dolle said, adding that many people use free software that blocks pop-up advertising to keep their screens uncluttered by ad banners and videos.

Emoji is "less aggressive, it's not intrusive. We give them playful tools that they can choose whether or not to use. This contributes to making people love the brand and share it in their conversations," she added.

France's state-owned postal service La Poste has also launched its own stickers in the shape of personalised stamps to celebrate special days in users' lives, such as the birth of a child or a wedding.

The campaign has proved a major success, with the digital stamps seen by users more than nine million times, said Rassem Belhouadjeb, a member of La Poste's digital marketing team.

"We exceeded our goal eight times over," he said.

But emoji campaigns may do little to keep brands' foes at bay, as a prank by a graffiti artist in the British city of Bristol showed this summer.

Taiwan's Foxconn to invest \$5b in India

AFP, Mumbai

Apple iPhone manufacturer Foxconn has agreed to invest \$5 billion on a new plant in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, a government official said Saturday, in a major boost for Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Taiwanese firm's chairman Terry Gou signed a memorandum of understanding with Maharashtra's chief minister Devendra Fadnavis in India's financial capital of Mumbai.

"Extremely elated to witness the signing of 5 billion dollar MoU between GoM (government of Maharashtra) & Foxconn with employment generation of 50,000", Fadnavis wrote on Twitter.

The investment on the new manufacturing facility will take place over five years.

The Apple supplier, also known as Hon Hai Precision Industry, is the world's largest computer components manufacturer and also



AFP

Chief Executive Officer of Taiwan-based electronics firm Foxconn Terry Gou addresses a press conference in New Delhi on August 5.

New hacks strike at heart of mobile innovations

AFP, Las Vegas

As fierce competition leads to rapid innovation in the smartphone market, hackers have pounced on cracks in defenses of developments on devices at the heart of modern lifestyles, experts say.

Smartphones have become increasingly targets for cyber criminals as people cram the gadgets with troves of personal information and go on to use them for work.

"Mobile devices are taking a bigger place in businesses and in our lives," Avi Bashan of Tel Aviv based cyber defense firm Check Point Software Technologies told AFP on Thursday at a Black Hat computer security conference in Las Vegas.

"As more people use them for more things, attackers gain interest."

Check Point has seen attacks rise during the past three years on the world's leading mobile operating systems - Apple iOS and Google-

backed Android, according to Bashan.

Check Point researchers at Black Hat revealed a vulnerability that allows hackers take over Android smartphones by taking advantage of a tool pre-installed that was intended to give tech support workers remote access to devices.

"It effects every version of Android," Check Point mobile threat prevention director Ohad Bobrov said.

The hack can be triggered by tricking a smartphone user into installing an application rigged to reach out and connect with the pre-installed support tool, Bobrov explained.

In some cases the hack can be accomplished by sending a text message that a recipient doesn't even have to open, he warned.

The text message tricks a smartphone into thinking it is connecting with a legitimate support technician remotely when it is actually linking to an online server commanded by a hacker.

"I need your phone number and that is it,"

assembles products for Sony and Nokia.

Setting up a facility in India could help cut Foxconn's labour costs and boost sales of iPhones in a country that boasts 952 million mobile connections.

In June, Maharashtra's industry minister Subhash Desai told AFP that Foxconn was in talks with the Indian government to build a plant in the state as the business-friendly Modi seeks to boost foreign investment in Asia's third-largest economy.

Desai had said local officials had pitched several possible sites to the Taiwanese technology giant.

Modi swept to power at elections in May 2014 pledging to attract overseas businesses to the country as he promised to inject life into a stuttering economy.

He later launched his "Make in India" campaign which aimed to send a message to the world that India was open for business.

Bashan told AFP. Bobrov said the flaw in Android software architecture has been disclosed to Google and smartphone makers.

The Check Point revelation came a week after cyber security firm Zimperium warned of a "Stagefright" vulnerability in the world's most popular smartphone operating system that also lets hackers take control with a text message.

Zimperium research senior director Joshua Drake took a stage at Black Hat to discuss Android code at the heart of the problem.

Stagefright automatically pre-loads video snippets attached to text messages to spare recipients from the annoyance of waiting to view clips.

Hackers can hide malicious code in video files and it will be unleashed even if the smartphone user never opens it or reads the message, according to Drake.

Stagefright imperils some 95 percent, or an estimated 950 million, of Android phones, according to the security firm.