

Investment promotion roadshow in Ctg

Economic zone in Mirsarai to see industrial units in two years: BEZA chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Industrial units can be set up within two years in the first economic zone developed on 550 acres in Mirsarai upazila.

The construction of an access road to the zone has already started, Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority, said at a discussion in Chittagong yesterday.

The BEZA has also signed contracts to build embankments and sluice gates and they would develop the infrastructure required at the zone for utility services such as electricity and water, he added.

Thirty economic zones -- big or small -- will be developed on 27,000 acres of land in Mirsarai in 15 years, according to Chowdhury.

It will be a full-fledged modern industrial city, having schools, col-

leges and training institutes, which would create jobs for 10 lakh people, he added.

A garment park will also be built at the site in two years to bring back the city's lost glory in the apparel sector, Chowdhury said.

Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) developed only 2,290 acres of land in the last 35 years and BEZA aims to develop 30,000 hectares to establish 100 EZs in 15 years. It has already selected 37 sites in parts of the country.

BEZA and the Prime Minister's Office organised an investment promotion roadshow -- Development of Economic Zones in Bangladesh -- to share its plans with the business community in Chittagong.

In his speech as the chief guest at the inaugural session, Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Shafiqul Alam said the EZs could be the key driver

of economic growth and employment generation, and could be the major factor in transforming Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021.

The availability of large hassle-free lands is important to set up EZs, he said.

Despite being a relatively new government authority, the BEZA was able to develop 1,000 acres of land in Bangladesh in the last one year, said Alam.

Md Shahidul Haque, secretary of Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, and Mahbubul Alam, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, were present as special guests.

Eight keynote papers on different issues, including business landscape of Bangladesh, transition from EPZs to EZs and roles of private EZs, were presented at the discussion.



Analysts attend a seminar on the state of labour tripartism in Bangladesh's garment sector and the scope of harmonious industrial and labour relations, at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. A study on employment disputes, by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies and German-based Friedrich Ebert Stiftung was released at the seminar.

Apparel disputes arise mainly from wages: study

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The study was conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) and German-based Friedrich Ebert Stiftung on the basis of newspaper reports published in 2014.

Roy Ramesh Chandra, a BILS member, said the weakest point of the garment sector in Bangladesh is that the sector does not belong to any particular ministry. As a result, when a dispute arises, so many ministries and agencies try to resolve those and finally, very little is done effectively, he added.

Chandra said China's current share

in the global garment business is 37 percent while Bangladesh's share is only 5 percent.

"If we can capture 10 percent of China's total garment business, our exports will cross \$50 billion soon."

Wajedul Islam Khan, secretary to the executive committee of BILS, said the tripartite committees in the garment sector cannot work effectively mainly because of a lack of monitoring by the government.

Shahidullah Azim, the immediate past vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters

Association, said the arbitration cell of the association can be a good example of a tripartite committee.

So far, 8,658 out of 9,550 disputes have been resolved through the BGMEA's arbitration cell; in the resolved cases, the owners have paid Tk 30.43 crore to the workers, he added.

Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, a rights group, called for social dialogues among workers, owners, trade union leaders and government officials so that the disputes can be resolved in a peaceful way.



Trainers and participants pose at a daylong training programme on arbitration, organised by Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre in Dhaka on Saturday.

Walton opens four more service centres

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Walton Service Management System (WSMS) has opened four of its service centres this month at the divisional cities of Sylhet, Barisal, Copalganj and Dhaka.

Walton currently has eight cell phone service points countrywide, which will be increased to 15 with an aim to increase sales of the company's mobile phones, the company said in a statement yesterday.

Currently, WSMS provides after sales services at 280 points across the country facilitated by 1,500 skilled and experienced engineers and technicians.

Walton has got ISO certificate, as the company took initiatives to ensure world-class and smooth post sales services for the users of its branded products, according to the statement.

Prime goal of the company is to gain the

customers' faith, said Md Neamul Haque, senior deputy director of Walton Group and also the head of WSMS. "To reach the goal, the company is continuously releasing world-class products and also delivering quick and best post sales services."

A total of 60 service points are operated across the country so that customers can receive better after sales services within their reach. Post sales service centres have also been established in about 220 Walton Plaza. The process of opening new service points is also going on.

Shah Mohammed Imtiaz, deputy director of Walton Group and monitoring chief of WSMS, said they have set up 60 service points in 42 district towns till date, of which 10 points are in Dhaka.

Customers of Walton products can also dial 16267 to receive information about any problems of the purchased products.

HC serves notice on govt to asses impact of Robi-Airtel merger

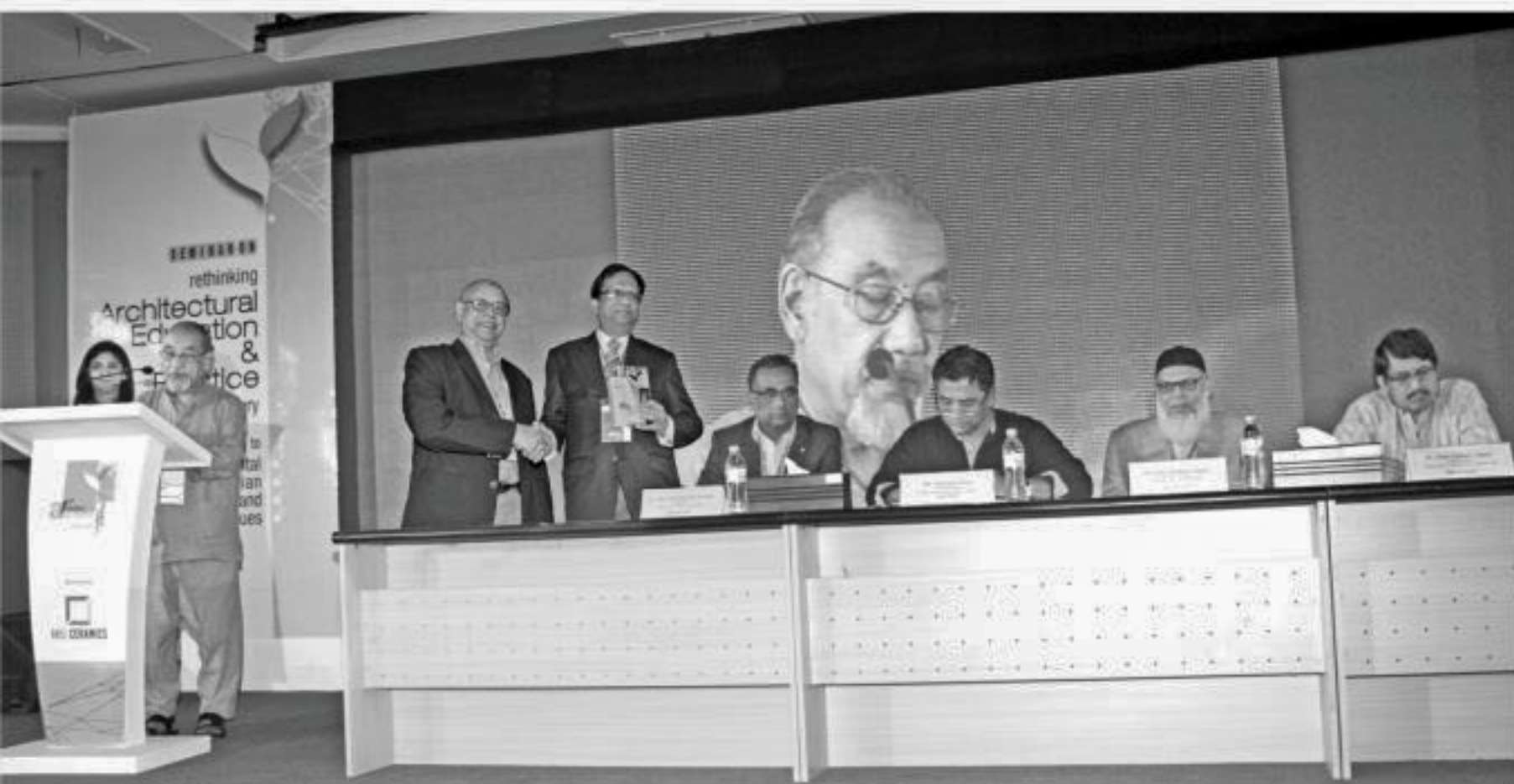
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But, the government has failed to find a competent person to appoint as the chairman of the competition commission to make it functional even after three years of its establishment, the petitioner said.

The HC bench of Justice Tariq Ul Hakim and Justice Farid Ahmed Shibli issued the rule.

Secretaries to the cabinet division, commerce ministry, Bangladesh Competition Commission, and telecom ministry, secretaries and chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, and CEOs of Robi and Airtel have been made respondents to the rule, petitioner's counsel Yousuf Ali told The Daily Star.

The merger, which will make the combined entity the second largest mobile operator in Bangladesh, is now awaiting the final approval.



Annisul Huq, mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, and Altaf Hossain, executive director of Akij Ceramics, attend a seminar during the Architecture Day, patronised by Akij Ceramics and organised by Ahsan Ullah University of Science and Technology, in Dhaka on Wednesday.



Md Abdul Halim Chowdhury, managing director of Pubali Bank, opens the bank's 436th branch at Gunabati Bazar in Comilla. Safiqul Alam Khan Chowdhury, deputy managing director, was also present.

Merger with Airtel a year away: Robi chief

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In 2014 and 2015, Robi invested \$500 million while market leader Grameenphone put in \$380 million and the second-placed Banglalink \$270 million. Weerasinghe said data will be the future driver of growth, and Robi has invested in the segment to give more comfort to the subscribers in using data.

He said additional investments would be needed in the area. "Joint investment might be helpful."

Malaysia's Axiata Group, the majority owner of Robi, and India's Bharti Airtel, owner of Airtel Bangladesh, signed a non-disclosure agreement on the discussion on the potential merger.

If it goes ahead, the merger will make Robi the second largest operator in Bangladesh in terms of subscriber base.

Robi and Japanese mobile phone operator NTT Docomo will have a 75 percent stake in Robi while the rest will go to Airtel, according to a joint letter signed by Weerasinghe, and PD Sarma, managing director of Airtel Bangladesh.

At present, Axiata and NTT Docomo own 91.59 percent and 8.41 percent share in Robi respectively.

Describing different aspects of the proposed merger, the Robi boss said as Bangladesh is a low return market, it would be helpful for the shareholders to invest jointly that will give them a good return.

"The proposed merger will create significant benefits for all stakeholders and create the platform for a Digital Bangladesh," Weerasinghe added.

India and Malaysia have already introduced 4G, and Bangladesh would launch the service within a short time. "Besides, 5G is also coming. In order to provide quality services, we need more and more investments," he said.

The merger was crucial to ensure broadband penetration in rural areas and make the business sustainable, according to Weerasinghe. "The merger will also help improve the quality of services."

Robi added 3.1 million new subscribers in the first nine months of the year to take the subscriber base to 28.4 million, giving it a 21.6-percent market share.

In the nine months to September, the company clocked a revenue growth of 6.7 percent compared with the same period a year ago, while data revenues growing by over 100 percent.

The growth in data revenue was propelled by the continuous investment in 3.5G network expansion coupled with innovative data offerings to drive data usage, said Robi.



Mahboobur Rahman Jainal, managing director of Hotel Purbani International, opens the relocated Dilkusha branch of Mutual Trust Bank on the premises of the hotel in Motijheel, Dhaka. Rashed A Chowdhury, chairman of the bank, and Anis A Khan, managing director, were also present.



Md Rafiqul Islam, managing director of South Bangla Agriculture and Commerce Bank, poses with the group of 34 management trainee officers of the bank who took part in a training course at the BIBM.

BB exposes complaints against banks

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The case that happened in 2012 was not the first in Bangladesh. There are hundreds of complaints against banks, which were depicted in the BB's latest report on financial integrity and customer services.

The complaints ranged from loans and advances, non-payment of bills, remittance, mobile banking to credit and debit cards.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman launched the report, which is the fourth of its kind, at the BB headquarters yesterday. In 2014-15, the central bank resolved all the 3,930 complaints it received, 2,542 of which were written and the remaining were lodged by telephone.

The central bank resolved 95.87 percent of the complaints in 2013-14 and 68.47 percent in 2012-13, officials said.

Analysis found that a highest of 1,361 complaints were linked to general banking, followed by loans and advances 670, local bills 435 and foreign bills 368. There were 228 complaints on credit and debit cards and 91 on mobile banking services.

"Banks should emphasise customer services and satisfaction. Even the people who are coming into the banking channel as part of financial inclusion have to be given the best services," Rahman told the chief executives of banks at the unveiling of the report.

The BB received about 56 percent of the

complaints against 39 private commercial banks, followed by over 28 percent against four state-owned commercial banks and 5.86 percent against foreign banks.

State-owned Sonali faced 256 complaints, the highest among all banks, followed by privately-owned Brac Bank with 175, Rupali 149, Agrani 140, Islami Bank 123 and Janata Bank 106.

Among the foreign banks, Standard Chartered Bangladesh faced the highest number of complaints: 79.

Earlier in March 2011, the BB introduced a help desk to safeguard the interest of the customers. Later in September 2011, the help desk was renamed the Customers' Interests Protection Centre.

To meet the rising number of complaints, the central bank on July 25, 2012 transformed the centre into an independent department known as the Financial Integrity and Customer Services Department. From March 2011 to June 30 this year, the central bank received 14,920 complaints from the public and has managed to settle all the cases.

In 2013-14 and 2012-13, the department received 4,476 and 4,296 complaints respectively from customers.

The BB, which is a regulatory body for the banks and non-bank financial institutions, also receives complaints through its nine branch offices across the country.



Analysts take part in a workshop on private sector's opportunities in local agri-business network, organised by Agri-business for Trade Competitiveness Project branded as Katalyst, at Spectra Convention Centre in Dhaka on Saturday.



Arshi Haider, adviser at Building Technology and Ideas (bti), and FR Khan, managing director, attend a corporate summit in the capital on Thursday.