

Vietnam bank says thwarted attempt of SWIFT messaging fraud

REUTERS, Hanoi
Vietnam's Tien Phong Bank said on Sunday it had thwarted a cyber fraud attempt late last year, and a third-party service it used to connect with the SWIFT global money transfers system may have been attacked by hackers.

In an emailed statement responding to Reuters queries, TPBank said the attack involved a suspect transaction worth more than 1 million euros (\$1.13 million). It said it has since stopped using the outside vendor on SWIFT's advice.

SWIFT declined to comment. BAE Systems last week said malware was used to target a Vietnamese commercial bank using fraudulent messages on the SWIFT network. The malware operated in a similar way to that used by hackers in the cyber heist of \$81 million from the Bangladesh central bank in February. BAE did not

name the Vietnamese bank, but SWIFT, the Brussels-based global financial messaging network, disclosed last Thursday that malware targeting a commercial bank had been discovered.

"Via a risk warning and oversight system and a tight internal control process, TPBank has identified a suspicious transaction worth more than a million euros transferred by invalid SWIFT messages that was not executed by the bank itself," TPBank said in the emailed statement. "This attack... did not cause any losses and had no impact on the SWIFT system in particular and the transaction system between the bank and customers in general," it said.

The bank said the servers of the third-party vendor were based overseas, but did not say where. It said the vendor had used a software application that SWIFT had told the bank may have been subject to the malware assault.

TPBank, founded in 2008 by Vietnam's top technology firm FPT Corp FPT.HM, is considered one of Vietnam's most modern and technologically savvy banks.

Hanoi-based TPBank on May 11 received the "Best Internet Banking" prize from The Asian Banker.

TPBank's major shareholders include Doji, a local gold and jewellery firm, state-run Vietnam National Reinsurance Corporation and Singapore-based SBI Ven Holding Pte Ltd, a unit of Japanese financial services conglomerate SBI Holdings Inc. FPT has divested most of its shareholdings and now has a 9 percent stake in TPBank.

After BAE systems said a Vietnamese bank had been targeted, TPBank, when contacted by Reuters on Friday, initially denied it had been subject of an attack, saying it "did not have any problems."

Can Buffett-backed bid unlock Yahoo growth where others failed?

REUTERS, San Francisco
Warren Buffett struck media gold with a 2012 investment in debt-laden Media General Inc. Now the famed investor may try to reprise that success by supporting a bid for Yahoo Inc's Internet assets.

The Berkshire Hathaway Inc chairman is backing a consortium that includes Quicken Loans Inc founder Dan Gilbert, that is seeking to buy Yahoo's online portfolio, Reuters reported on Friday.

The consortium is in the second round of bidding in the auction for Yahoo's assets, people familiar with the matter said. Buffett is helping to finance the offer, one of the people added.

If they succeed, the investment would be a relatively rare foray into digital media for Buffett, whose portfolio is heavily weighted toward U.S. insurers, industrial companies and major consumer brands.

Yahoo, once the world's largest consumer email service, has struggled in recent years to compete with Alphabet Inc's Google and Facebook Inc for digital advertising market share.

In February, CEO Marissa Mayer announced the company would auction off its Internet business and cut 15 percent of its workforce. It is also selling \$1 billion to \$3 billion in noncore assets such as patents and property.

Poynter Institute media business analyst Rick Edmonds said Buffett's history of betting on struggling companies that maintain a large consumer base could work in Yahoo's favor.

In the case of Media General, Buffett bought a majority of the company's newspapers, making him one of the largest publishers in the United States as the industry struggled with plummeting advertising and subscription revenue.

Buffett also provided nearly \$450 million in debt relief to Media General, whose remaining business focused on dozens of local US television stations and related websites, in return for a stake of nearly 20 percent in the company. The day the transaction was announced, Media General's shares jumped 30 percent. The stock closed Friday at \$17.12, up from \$3.32 in May 2012.

"It's kind of consistent with Buffett's pattern of buying things that are out of

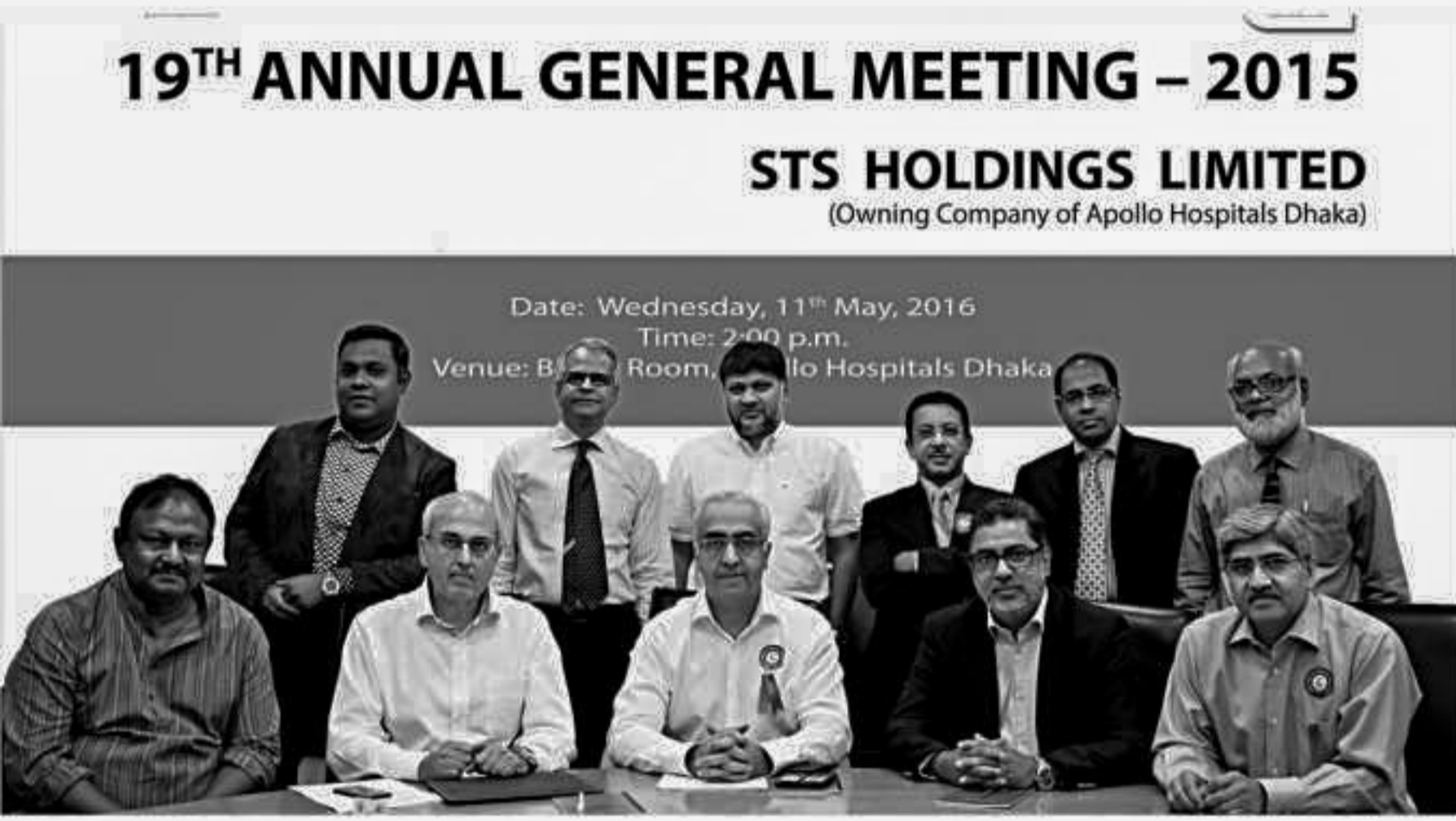
favor, undervalued and have a big customer base," Edmonds said. The paradox is Yahoo's huge, it remains huge, and it's got a lot of customers. It's not the case customers are fleeing them right and left, it's just that no one can get a good pattern of growth."

Pivotal Research Analyst Brian Wieser agreed the move would be a familiar one for Buffett.

"He is known for having a lot of assets that have a lot of potential that for a host of reasons have not realized that potential," he said.

Former Yahoo president and chief financial officer Susan Decker is now a director on Berkshire's board. Wieser said that Buffett, with Decker's input, might consider bringing back former Yahoo executives, such as interim CEO Ross Levinsohn, who was a candidate for the top job before Mayer was appointed.

Decker said last month on CNBC that the next owner should "create a distinction in consumers' minds about why they love Yahoo still." She said that plan would be helped if Yahoo is "private or part of a much larger corporation."



Bhagwan Wassiamal Kundanmal, chairman of STS Holdings, the owning company of Apollo Hospitals Dhaka, presides over the company's 19th annual general meeting at the board room of the hospital in Dhaka. R Basil, chief executive, was also present. STS Holdings earned a net profit of Tk 37.6 crore after tax in 2015, which is a 12 percent increase over the previous year.



Manjur Ahmed, managing director of Bangladesh Development Bank, speaks at a training course on foreign exchange and international trade finance organised by the bank at its training institute in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka yesterday.

Two made DMDs at National Bank

STAR BUSINESS DESK
Abdus Sobhan Khan and Shah Syed Abdul Bari have been promoted to the post of deputy managing director of National Bank, according to a statement.

Khan, head of treasury, served as a senior executive vice president before the promotion, it added.

He has been with the bank for 32 years, and is a graduate in accounting from the University of Dhaka.

Bari was a senior executive vice president and head of human resource at the bank prior to the promotion, the statement added.

Bari began his banking career with AB Bank, and later worked with American Express Bank, Prime Bank, and Mercantile Bank in various capacities.



Abdus Sobhan Khan and Shah Syed Abdul Bari

Google faces record 3b euro EU antitrust fine: Telegraph

REUTERS
Google faces a record antitrust fine of around 3 billion euros (\$3.4 billion) from the European Commission in the coming weeks, the British newspaper Sunday Telegraph said.

The European Union has accused Google of promoting its shopping service in Internet searches at the expense of rival services in a case that has dragged on since late 2010.

Several people familiar with the matter told Reuters last month they believed that after three failed attempts at a compromise in the past six years Google now had no plans to try to settle the allegations unless the EU watchdog changed its stance.

The Telegraph cited sources close to the situation as saying officials planned to announce the fine as early as next month, but that the bill had not yet been finalized.

Google will also be banned from continuing to manipulate search results to favor itself and harm rivals, the newspaper said.

The Commission can fine firms up to 10 percent of their annual sales, which in Google's case would be a maximum possible sanction of more than 6 billion euros. The biggest antitrust fine to date was a 1.1 billion euro fine of chip-maker Intel in 2009.

The Commission declined to comment, while Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

China asks Britain for advice on creating financial super-regulator

REUTERS, Hong Kong/Beijing
China has asked Britain for advice on plans to create a financial super-regulator, as it looks to improve financial oversight following last year's stock market crash, sources with knowledge of the talks told Reuters.

The discussions between representatives from China and the UK Foreign Office and Treasury highlight Britain's burgeoning relationship with Beijing on financial issues, notwithstanding this week's gaffe by Queen Elizabeth, who was caught on camera grumbling that Chinese officials accompanying President Xi Jinping on a visit to the UK last year had been "very rude to the ambassador".

The talks signal Beijing's growing willingness to seek outside help to improve regulation of its financial infrastructure, in a bid to increase transparency, reduce systemic risk, and stop companies exploiting loopholes.

Several Chinese and British sources with direct knowledge of the talks said Beijing had sent delegations to London to study the UK regulatory framework, with two sources citing a visit in the first quarter.

UK government representatives also visited Beijing last month to discuss financial, economic and regulatory issues, two sources with knowledge of the visit said.

Weaknesses in Chinese regulation were exposed last summer when China's stock markets lost a third of their value in a month, having soared 150 percent in the previous 12 months.

Government and regulators rushed out a series of measures to arrest the crash,

including limiting short-selling, stopping new listings and strong-arming big funds to buy more stocks.

The interventions were widely criticized for over-riding market mechanisms, poor inter-agency coordination and creating moral hazard by implying government support.

Reuters reported in November that China was considering consolidating supervisory powers in one regulator covering banking, mutual funds, insurance and securities, but two Chinese sources with direct knowledge of the matter said no decisions had yet been made.

The Chinese sources said any proposals would include a few options for China's cabinet, the State Council, to choose from, but it was unclear if a proposal had yet been submitted.

Britain overhauled its regulatory system after the global financial crisis of 2008-09, handing enormous power to the Bank of England, which is responsible for averting risks to the financial system as a whole.

The new structure aims to reduce blind spots by more closely aligning macro-economic policies with on-the-ground regulation and supervision of financial institutions and markets.

China can't exactly recreate Britain's regulatory structure due to differences in their political systems and potential rivalries over where such a powerful regulator would fit among senior decision makers.

"The UK model is a reference, but we can't completely copy it," said one of the sources. "The UK model is worth us studying but it would have flaws when imple-

mented in China."

This is not the first time China has sought foreign help in addressing financial problems at home. Reuters reported in March that the People's Bank of China (PBOC), the central bank, approached the U.S. Federal Reserve last July for advice on handling its tumbling stock markets.

The UK Treasury has lobbied hard to become China's partner of choice on a range of financial issues, and the two are collaborating on several economic and financial projects, including a stock trading link between London and Shanghai.

Another source briefed on the matter said Britain had "answered questions when asked" on its regulatory structure as part of this broader dialogue, but added that "Chinese regulation is a matter for the Chinese government."

The Foreign Office and Treasury declined to comment.

In one of the options currently under discussion, China's top financial regulators - the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) and the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC) - would be merged.

Currently these three agencies operate independently, reporting to the State Council, China's cabinet, and would continue to report to the cabinet if merged.

Another option under consideration would see the new super-regulator report to the PBOC, giving the central bank more power, as in Britain. The PBOC would still report to the State Council, the sources said.



Kamrun Nahar, general manager of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, receives a "letter of appreciation" from SK Sur Chowdhury, deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, for BKB's contribution to agricultural and rural credit in fiscal 2014-15, at the central bank's head office in Dhaka.



Officials of Industrial Promotion and Development Company open a branch of the company at Navana GH Heights on Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

Put pressure on Rizal Bank to return stolen funds

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The three parties vowed to work together to run a proper investigation into the incident, bring the criminals to justice and recover the entire amount of the stolen money.

Also at yesterday's meeting, the standing committee instructed the finance ministry to give a detailed report on the Bangladeshi persons and institutions that were mentioned in the Panama Papers and Offshore Leaks.

The committee also expressed concern on the VAT law that would be introduced next fiscal year.

Court grants more time for Robi-Airtel merger

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The two companies submitted the merger application to the court and to the government in September 2015.

Malaysia-based Axiata, the parent company of Robi, and India-based Bharti Airtel last year announced their intent to merge their Bangladesh operations. They signed an agreement on January 29.

Upon completion of the proposed merger, Axiata will hold a 68.3 percent controlling stake in the combined entity, while Bharti Airtel will hold 25 percent; the remaining 6.7 percent will be held by NTT DOCOMO of Japan.

At present, Axiata Group's share in Robi is 91.59 percent and NTT DOCOMO holds the remaining 8.41 percent.

Beza meets firms keen on operating Sylhet economic zone

FROM PAGE B1
Beza has so far awarded prequalification licences to six private sector companies to set up seven economic zones -- one each to AK Khan and Company, Abdul Monem Ltd, Bay Group, Aman Group, Maisha Group, and two to Meghna Group.

These economic zones are part of Beza's plan to develop 100 such zones by 2030 on 75,000 acres, to create jobs for one crore people and to produce \$40 billion worth of products and services. Beza has so far selected 59 places across the country for economic zones, of which feasibility studies on 22 sites are currently underway.

Many private companies such as Bashundhara, East Coast, Unique, Alliance and City have expressed interest in developing economic zones.