

# MCCI calls for a quick fix to air cargo mishandling

**Star Business Report**  
The new leaders of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday urged the government to improve the handling of goods at warehouses and the cargo village at the Dhaka airport.

Incidents of missing or thefts of goods from the warehouses and the cargo village are reported every day at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, the leaders said.

"Goods are still stockpiled under the open sky, due to a lack of proper warehousing," Nihad Kabir, president of MCCI, said at a meeting with Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed at the latter's secretariat office in Dhaka.

"The government should take emergency actions to stop mismanagement at the airport so that businessmen do not face problems in export and import," she said.

The MCCI chief said investment from home and abroad has been increasing gradually, but not at the expected rate. The higher cost of doing business is one of the major barriers to a higher inflow of investment, she added.

Bangladesh needs investments equivalent to 35 percent of its GDP, but the rate stands at 28 percent for the country, Kabir said.

The special economic zones should be

made operational soon so that businesses can invest in those areas, the MCCI president said.

"The development activities of the special economic zones are still confined to paperwork," she said. The government has been developing 100 such zones across the country to attract investment from home and abroad.

She suggested the government give cash incentives to the exports of some goods such as leather and leather goods, pharmaceuticals and light-engineering, for diversification of exports.

M Anis Ud Dowla, member of the MCCI committee, also discussed the corruption and poor management at the airport's cargo village.

The commerce minister said: "The situation at the airport is unfortunate. Such a situation cannot be allowed. Almost everybody complains about the mismanagement there."

Tabitha Awal, another MCCI committee member, said the good companies are facing the challenges of counterfeit and fake products, especially in pharmaceuticals and seeds packaging.

The consumers and real producers are becoming the victims, he added.

A section of dishonest people are even producing and marketing fake insulin, a widely used lifesaving injection for diabetic patients, he said.

# Microsoft selects 18 women as brand ambassadors

**Star Business Desk**

Microsoft Bangladesh has announced 18 female volunteers across the nation as its brand ambassadors, in an effort to empower women through technology.

Sonia Bashir Kabir, managing director of Microsoft Bangladesh, made the announcement at the National Youth Assembly 2017, in Cox's Bazar on February 1.

The Volunteer for Bangladesh, the youth wing of Jaago Foundation, organised the assembly, Microsoft said in a statement yesterday.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, and Marcia Bernicat, US ambassador to Bangladesh, were also present at the event, according to the statement.

"Microsoft Bangladesh will bring technology to the hands of these girls," said the Microsoft Bangladesh's chief.

"I am very passionate about developing women in technology business and will personally mentor all 18 of these girls to help them to bet on technology to solve problems which could later become a business idea."

"We will expose them to what is available in the world of technology," she said.

"Microsoft has a global competition called Imagine Cup in April 2017 and I will

encourage the girls to participate in the competition from Bangladesh."

She hoped one of the Bangladeshi girls would turn up as a winner of the event. Kabir handed over certificates to the brand ambassadors at the event, Microsoft said.

She also shed light on how technology could play a vital role in the progress of women empowerment in Bangladesh. The brand ambassadors will have internship and training opportunities at Microsoft Bangladesh, the company said.

"This ambassadorship is the gateway to the world of technology and other privileges needed for scaling up the endeavours of the young women. They will join the Windows Women team and will also be able to learn how Microsoft employees work through shadowing them during the internship."

"We want to build an inclusive Digital Bangladesh where both women and men will have equal opportunity and benefits," state minister for ICT said at the event.

"As part of the government's 'One Student One Laptop' initiative, I'm announcing 18 laptops for these women."

The National Youth Assembly 2017 is a four-day residential workshop that brought together about 200 youth leaders from eight divisions of the country.

# Nihad Kabir joins BUILD as chairman

**Star Business Desk**

Nihad Kabir, president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has joined the Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) as the chairman of the trustee board for 2017.

Kabir replaced Syed Nasim Manzur, who served BUILD as chairman in 2016, according to a statement.

Kabir is an advocate of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and a director and shareholder of Kedarpur Tea Co Ltd. She is a director of Brac Bank, Infrastructure Development Company, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation, bKash, and an independent director of Square Pharmaceuticals and Apex Footwear.

BUILD is a public private dialogue platform sponsored by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The platform provides secretarial support to the private sector development policy co-ordination committee at the Prime Minister's Office.



Nihad Kabir

# GP's digital healthcare serves 20 lakh in seven months

**FROM PAGE B1**

"Over the years, there is a huge database of health data, and privacy is guaranteed under the European Union policy," Guilford added. The company has another service -- Tonic Jibon -- where customers can get free healthcare tips via SMS. Using Grameenphone internet, customers can also receive health tips without any data charge.

Under the service, more than 13.4 lakh people get tips via Facebook and 2.59 lakh through the Tonic website and app.



Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader attends the opening of the Indo-Bangla Automotive Show 2017 yesterday. Indian High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla was also present.

# IDB dismayed by 'abrupt' changes at Islami Bank

**FROM PAGE B1**

"As such, regrettably, the IDB representative on the IBBL board could not arrange to attend this important meeting."

The IDB also voiced its concern about the recent changes at IBBL.

It said the global best practices for corporate governance require that there should be an appropriate process to select the managing director of a systemically important bank like IBBL.

The process involves advertisements for recruitment in renowned newspapers, selection of a committee comprising members of the board to shortlist candidates for interview, and

finally, recommending a candidate for the board's consideration.

"It is evident that no such rigorous process was followed for appointing the new managing director of IBBL," said the IDB.

"Undertaking such important decisions in an abrupt manner, without taking the board into prior confidence, and without following best practices, does not suit well for the reputation of one of the largest commercial banks of the country."

Bangladesh is the single largest recipient of financing from the IDB Group, according to the letter.

In a statement yesterday, IBBL said notices about board meetings

are sent to all board members, both local and foreign, regularly and in time, as per the local laws and the banking regulations. Documents of the meetings are also sent along with the notices.

IBBL also said no exception took place in appointing the new managing director of the bank as the position had fallen vacant and approval was also taken from the board.

"Islami Bank Bangladesh also likes to assure all stakeholders that the country's laws as well as regulations and circulars of the regulators have been followed properly in bringing in the latest changes and this will continue in the future."

# Cotton prices may fall on supply glut: ICAC

**FROM PAGE B1**

Production in Brazil, the world's fifth largest producer and largest in the southern hemisphere, is forecasted to increase by 10 percent to 6.43 million bales.

Production in Australia could grow by 64 percent to 4.59 million bales due to expanded plantings as farmers were encouraged by high prices and better water availability.

World cotton consumption is likely to remain stable at 110.69 million bales.

While prices for polyester, the main competing fiber, have risen in recent weeks, they still remain well below international cotton prices, making it unlikely that cotton mills use will expand this season unless polyester prices continue to rise.

China's consumption is expected to remain stable at 33.98 million bales, making it the largest consumer.

However, mill use in India is projected to decline by 1 percent to 23.88 million bales, while mill use in Pakistan is likely to remain stable at 10.56.

Ongoing uncertainty in Turkey and competition from lower-priced cotton yarn imports could lead to a 3 percent decline in mill use to 6.66 million bales.

However, cotton consumption is forecast to grow by 5 percent to 5.97 in Bangladesh and 13 percent to 5.05 million bales in Vietnam.

Given that most large cotton-consuming countries depend at least in part on imported cotton, trends in consumption are mirrored in the top importing countries.

Substantial increases in exports are likely in countries with larger exportable surpluses and strong demand in international markets, such as the United States and Australia, which are expected to be the first and third largest exporters in 2016-17.

# LNG import not a long-term solution: DCCI

**FROM PAGE B1**

Subsequently, the DCCI president called for a long-term solution focusing on energy mix involving coal, LNG and natural gas.

Bangladesh should depend on its own gas and coal -- and not on imports. Gas exploration should be the top priority of the government, he said.

Citing the energy issue as a major barrier to growth and investment, Khan said coal-based energy security has to be considered as a long-term strategy for the economic development of Bangladesh.

Apart from energy, infrastructure bottleneck is another major obstacle to the economic growth.

"We are confident that Bangladesh can achieve high growth rates of 8-10 percent in the coming years but the

pre-conditions of such growth targets need to be addressed, which are mainly related to our infrastructure development," Khan said.

The infrastructure investment to GDP ratio in Bangladesh is only 2.87 percent, while it is 10 percent in Vietnam.

"Infrastructure investment was more than 10 percent of Vietnam's GDP for the last 12 years, putting the country ahead of most East Asian economies."

Referring to a report from PricewaterhouseCoopers, Khan said every \$1 invested in infrastructure development is expected to yield additional increase in GDP by \$0.05-\$0.252, which implies growth by 5-25 percent.

"Development of infrastructure is

also crucial for enhancing trade competitiveness," he said, while requesting the government to form a public-private partnership for infrastructure development.

Replying to queries, he said private sector investment growth is not satisfactory even though macroeconomic indicators are favourable, interest rate is low and political stability is present.

"Actually, the cost of doing business is still high and there are problems at ground level," said Khan, also a director of AK Khan and Company, the country's one of the oldest industrial groups.

He however was hopeful that Bangladesh can be the 30th largest economy by 2030. "Still, we have enough time and it is possible if we

# Savings certificates choke bond market

**FROM PAGE B1**

Paul said the beneficiaries of savings schemes are the wealthy segment of the society. "When the government savings schemes are far more lucrative, why will people invest in bonds?"

A rush for investment in savings has also fuelled the government interest payment liability, Paul added.

In India, the return on 10-year savings certificates is only 50 basis points above the 10-year benchmark

bond yields.

The government paid Tk 33,000 crore as interests in fiscal 2015-16 and the figure may soar to Tk 40,000 crore this year, as people continue to park their funds in savings certificates, according to data from the finance ministry.

Over Tk 20,319 crore worth of savings certificates were sold in the first five months of the fiscal year, up 79.4 percent year-on-year.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue, a civil society think-tank, said the government should adjust the interest rates on national savings certificates in line with those on bank deposits to bring down the debt servicing liabilities.

A Bangladesh Bank official, however, said they are trying to make the bond market vibrant by bring in some changes such as introducing online trading instead of over-the-counter transactions.

# Ctg port, customs to remain open six days

**FROM PAGE B1**

Shipping Ministry Additional Secretary Zikrur Reja Khanam, CPA Chairman Rear Admiral M Khaled Iqbal and Chittagong Customs Commissioner AFM Abdullah also participated.

Among other decisions, Chittagong Port Authority and Chittagong Customs House will form a joint committee, headed by the CPA member for harbour and marine affairs, to identify and solve the problems hindering the clearance of import and export goods through Chittagong Port.

It decided that the central bank would give instructions to the commercial banks to include proper description of goods while opening letters of credit to reduce valuation-related disputes, false declaration and long procedure of physical examination of consignments at the port. After import, the C&F agents would submit the description of goods according to the L/C.

The meeting also decided to hold regular auctions of consignments that are not taken by the importers from the port after 30 days of container congestion. It also recommended establishing more private off docks and expansion of the existing 18 inland container depots (ICDs).

Meeting participants also suggested purchasing necessary equipment like gantry crane and accelerating the Bay Terminal project at Potenga coast.

A decision was also taken to bring the newly built auction shed and car-shed in the bonded area within a month.

The meeting also addressed the manpower crisis at the Customs House.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry Director Mahfuzul Hoque Shah said the customs authority is conducting full physical examination of the selected containers delaying the delivery of containers.

He said only six to seven ICDs out of the 18 are now



Shafiul Islam, chairman of Navana CNG Ltd (LPG unit), and Tropa Majumdar, director of Expressions Ltd, exchange the signed documents of a deal at a programme at the head office of Navana Group on February 1. Expressions will be the advertising agency for branding and promotion of LPG products of Navana CNG.

# Credit growth up in Dec

**FROM PAGE B1**

The central bank projected that the credit growth ceiling will be enough to support the GDP growth target of 7.2 percent.

Private sector credit witnessed steady growth of over 15 percent in the last six months amid a stable political situation and lower lending rates.

The banking sector experienced a sharp fall in lending rates due to huge excess liquidity.

The weighted average lending rate in the sector stood at 9.93 percent in December last year, which was 11.18 percent in the same month in the previous year.

The lending rate of consumer financing came down to a single digit, even lower than business loans. The average interest rate on consumer loans was 9.83 percent as of December last year.

Banks are offering home loans at 5 percent to 9 percent, which is mostly cheap among the other long-term loans.



Iqbalur Rahim, whip of the parliament, and Niaz Rahim, chairman of Agora, attend the opening of the 15th outlet of Rahimafrooz Superstores Ltd, which is also known as Agora, at Zam Zam Tower in Uttara on February 1.