

Fake firms import 15 consignments, face no scanning at port

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg
The importer whose two consignments were seized at Chittagong Port on Sunday for carrying contraband products had taken delivery of 15 consignments in 11 months without facing the mandatory scanning.

These consignments of "capital machinery" in 78 containers were imported from China in the last 11 months to January this year. The two firms which brought in the consignments however don't have any office or factory at the given addresses. The firms are owned by one Khorshed Alam.

According to the data of the

scanning division of Chittagong Customs House, those 78 containers were delivered without the compulsory scanning. The scanning is mandatory when a loaded container is delivered without seal-breaking or physical inspection.

Both the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate and Chittagong Customs House have launched investigation into the 15 consignments.

Moinul Khan, director-general of the Customs Intelligence, suspects an organised syndicate of criminals was involved in importing illegal or contraband goods in the name of capital machinery.

Containers carrying capital machinery or raw materials are usually allowed on-chassis delivery without seal-breaking or physical inspection to save time for the sake of the industrial sector, said AFM Abdullah Khan, commissioner of Chittagong Customs House.

Khan said the culprits might have taken advantage of this provision.

During a visit on Tuesday, no office of clearing and forwarding agent Rabeya & Sons, which cleared the consignments, was found at its given address. The C&F agent has another address shown on the customs' website but that too was found fake.

According to documents, the importer of nine of those consignments was Agro BD & JP of Keraniganj, Dhaka, and the rest was imported by Henan Anhui Agro LC of Khilkhet, Dhaka. But none of the addresses is valid.

The consignments were exported by Jam Raj Industries, China.

On February 5, the customs intelligence recovered huge quantity of contraband liquor, expensive televisions, cigarettes and photocopiers from the two consignments. The estimated value of the items in the containers could be more than Tk 100 crore, officials said.



Panel Discussion 1
Changing the Women Dialogue: A Holistic Perspective

From left, Deneb Zeenat Latif, director of the organisational development adviser services at Magnum Management Consulting; Professor Dr Rownak Jahan; Weseqa Ayesha Khan, lawmaker from Chittagong; Luna Shamsuddoha, founder and chairman of Dohatec New Media; and Nirupama Subramanian, a leadership development consultant, attend a discussion on the occasion of International Women's Day. The event powered by IPDC Finance took place on the sidelines of Le Meridien Dhaka Women Leadership Summit 2017 yesterday.



Chairman of AB Bank M Wahidul Haque and Managing Director (current charge) Moshir Rahman Chowdhury cut a cake to celebrate International Women's Day at the bank's corporate office in Dhaka yesterday.



Meher Afroze Chumki, state minister for women and children affairs, and Fazole Kabir, governor of Bangladesh Bank, hand over an SME loan cheque of Uttara Bank to a woman entrepreneur, at an exposition for women entrepreneurs at Bangladesh Mahila Samity in Dhaka. Mohammed Rabiul Hossain, managing director of Uttara Bank, was also present.

Customs to auction off 85 luxury cars

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As a result, the auction prices were very low and no vehicle was released, according to NBR meeting minutes.

Khan said the NBR plans to hold the next auction in the presence of a representative of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

"We also plan to go for wider publicity to get a good response."

He said the NBR chairman may also send a "demi-official" letter to the commerce secretary to issue clearance permits to the auction winners.

"Anyone with a taxpayer's identification number will be able to participate in the auction. No trade licence will be required," he said.

Showkat Ali Saadi, additional commissioner of the customs house in Chittagong, said the date for the auction will be announced soon.

The tax administrator has given authority to the auction committee to cancel the auction, if the quoted prices in the second auction are not satisfactory as well, he said.

Since 1963, the revenue authority has allowed 245 cars under the Carnet de Passages facility. Most of the vehicles were brought in by British-Bangladeshis hailing from Sylhet, according to the NBR officials.

MCCI for raising tax rebate investment limit

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It also wants authorities to abolish the scope of discretionary powers of the tax authorities.

The MCCI, citing past experience, said additional taxes were imposed to make up the gap of revenue collection shortfall.

"It is like punishing compliant taxpayers like us," said Golam Mainuddin, vice president of MCCI, at the programme.

In its budget proposal, BCI demanded raising the tax free income limit for individual taxpayers to Tk 3.5 lakh from Tk 2.5 lakh a year at present.

It urged the government to raise the surcharge-free ceiling on net wealth to Tk 5 crore from fiscal 2017-18.

The chamber also appealed the revenue administration to withdraw the advance income tax and advance trade vat on capital machinery and basic raw materials on imports by registered producers.

BCI asked to raise the upper limit on turnover tax to Tk 5 crore a year from Tk 80 lakh a year at present. It also demanded equal treatment and tax incentives for both local and foreign investors.

In addition, the BCI appealed to the government to review the avoidance of double taxation treaties signed with

various countries earlier.

Local entrepreneurs face discrimination in many cases, said BCI President Mostafa Azad Chowdhury.

He said businesses are anxious that they would have to face additional taxes to finance the huge budget for next fiscal year.

In response, NBR Chairman Md Nojibur Rahman said the tax administration has taken steps to expand the tax net.

"We will give importance to women's empowerment in budget framing. We will frame an investment and people friendly budget."

Rahman also said good and compliant taxpayers would be nurtured. A forum with large taxpayers will be formed to address their concerns and issues, he added.

M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of ACI Group, demanded the NBR to refund excess payments to taxpayers against advance income tax at source.

Sometimes, the total amount of tax at source exceeds the total amount of tax payable, he said.

But taxmen are reluctant to refund, he added.

Instead, they ask taxpayers to carry forward the excess amount to adjust with next year's payable tax, he said.

Council to resolve crisis in garment sector

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The council members will meet thrice a year to discuss the latest labour situation to update the government.

The head of the council can call more meetings if necessary, the gazette said.

The director general of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, labour director of the labour directorate and director general of industrial police will also be present at the meetings.

In consensus, the tripartite body can

include any person anytime from home and abroad if they think it is necessary.

The council will be in place until the issuance of further notice in this regard.

The deputy secretary of the labour ministry will act as the member-secretary of the committee.

The council was formed, as the international community put pressure on the government after the arrest of 35 workers and unionists during the Ashulia garment unrest in December last year. However, the detainees were released later.



Mutual Trust Bank Chairman MA Rouf and Managing Director Anis A Khan attend a programme to celebrate International Women's Day at MTB Tower in Dhaka yesterday.

Weak apparel exports pare down earnings

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Britons are suffering from an inflationary pressure due to a fall in the value of the pound.

Similarly, apparel export to the US, the single largest export destination for Bangladesh, declined a bit because of a volatile economy after the national elections.

Of the top 10 exporters to the US, apparel shipments of only three countries were in the negative territory in January. Among the three, Bangladesh's garment export declined 2.31 percent to \$500 million in that month.

Garment exports to the US from India, Pakistan and Vietnam, the major competitors of Bangladesh in the global apparel markets, increased in January.

"People in the western world are now spending more on smart gadgets than on clothing. This is a major reason for a fall in consumption of cloth-

ing items worldwide," Rahman said.

In July-February, earning from the garment sector was recorded at \$18.63 billion, which is 2.82 percent higher than that in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year, data showed.

The February receipt from garment export was 5.64 percent lower than the periodic target at \$19.75 billion.

"We need to grow at 12.25 percent every year to reach our export target at \$50 billion at the end of 2021. But we are growing at only 2 to 4 percent now," Rahman said.

The jute and jute goods sector was one of the top export performers in the July-February period, with shipments rising 15.28 percent year-on-year to \$646.62 million. It was also higher than its periodic target of \$626.83 million.

Shipments of leather and leather goods grew well during the eight-month period as well. It stood at

\$827.62 million, up 9.95 percent year-on-year. This segment too hit its periodic target of \$793.30 million.

Furniture exports rose 16.84 percent to \$28.52 million and pharmaceuticals 9.94 percent to \$60.19 million.

Home textile exports increased 3.16 percent to \$500.15 million and plastic products 39.87 percent to \$82.37 million, riding on the back of a 10 percent cash incentive on shipments.

Some sectors performed poorly during the period. Exports of frozen and live fishes declined 3.89 percent to \$357.95 million. However, it was 1.75 percent higher than the target of \$351.78 million.

Exports of petroleum byproducts declined 31.40 percent to \$158.04 million.

The government has set the export target of \$37 billion for this fiscal year, which is 8 percent higher than the receipts in fiscal 2015-16.



Star Jingkaoji, sales and marketing director at Siam City Cement Bangladesh, and Shampa Rahman, director of City Group, attend a deal signing ceremony, at the head office of City Group in Dhaka on Tuesday. City Group will use Insee cement of Siam City.

Telcos getting ready to launch 4G services

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"It is to be noted that one of our technology partners has already successfully tested 4G in our network," he added.

In the mean time, Robi has launched a campaign on its social media platform to convert all of its SIM cards into 4G-enabled ones. Users will be charged Tk 100 to convert each SIM.

Robi is interested in introducing the service but the whole ecosystem is not yet ready as optical fibre connectivity is a main part of this service, and there is a huge gap in that connectivity, said a top official.

In the auction for 3G spectrum in 2013, the BTRC sold each megahertz of spectrum for \$21 million, and for 4G services, the floor price may be around \$25 million for each megahertz of spectrum, said BTRC officials.

There are around 6.63 crore mobile internet users in Bangladesh, of whom 3 crore use 3G services.

Women outperform men in repaying loans: bankers

FROM PAGE B1
Women borrowers are more law-abiding than men, said Ishfaq Ahmed Chowdhury, managing director of Trust Bank.

He said hardly any fraud is found in case of women borrowers. "In some cases men take loans at their wife's name, and in that case, the loan gets defaulted," he said.

A banker at Southeast Bank's Moghbazar branch, which is run by female staff only, said:

"We have no loan recovery team. More than 90 percent of the clients are women and they pay installments regularly."

Eastern Bank has opened a separate department last year to serve the female clientele after it found that women are very good borrowers.

"We have customised products, such as deposits and credit cards, for women," said Nasrin Jahan Khan Kanak, head of the women and student banking at the bank.

73pc women face cyber crime: Tarana

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Tarana said on average 49 percent schoolgoing students face cyber bullying.

She urged parents to take this issue into serious consideration and talk to their children.

Experts at different sessions said various government agencies are working on cyber security but there is no coordination among them. BTRC acting chairman Md Ahsan Habib Khan also spoke at the concluding session.