

**জীবনে প্রয়োজন**  
আরো বেশি স্বাস্থ্য

সর্বাধিক প্রযুক্তি সম্বলিত ব্যাংকিং সেবায় মাসিক আয়ের সাথে বাড়তি আয় যোগ করুন আর জীবন করুন সুস্বস্ত।

যে কোন প্রয়োজনে ০৯৬১২০০১১২২

ইসলামী শরীআহ'র ম্যুদারাবা নিতির ভিত্তিতে পরিচালিত



DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 31, 2017, CHAITRA 17, 1423 BS

# Eco-friendly brick kilns growing in numbers

SOHEL PARVEZ

Cleaner and more efficient modern brick kilns are rising in numbers in a development that bodes well for the country's efforts to cut down on air pollution.

The traditional fixed chimney kilns (FCKs) emit large quantities of carbon dioxide and other environmental pollutants into the atmosphere each year, causing a harmful impact on health, agricultural yields and climate.

Until February this year, 121 modern brick kilns, including Hybrid Hoffman Kiln (HHK) and tunnel kiln, have been established and more such kilns are set to come into operation in the coming months, said the Department of Environment (DoE).

"Investors have realised that the days of making bricks through the traditional method are over," said DoE Director Md Ziaul Haque.

The pace of shift to modern and environment-friendly brick making technologies has picked up after the DoE, instead of issuing environmental clearance certificates for conventional kilns, started encouraging entrepreneurs for using improved technologies.

The government also began to enforce the Brick Making and Kiln Establishment (Control) Act 2013 from July 2014 to control air pollution, deforestation, loss of land fertility and to protect public health.



Environment-friendly brick kilns are emerging fast amid the rising demand from the builders of green structures.

The law prohibits the use of wood for firing brick and soil of farmland and hills as raw material to make bricks.

It also encourages the conversion of conventional brick kilns into energy-efficient and environment-friendly ones such as HHK, zigzag, automatic or tunnel kilns.

The demand for bricks is on the rise as an increased number of infrastructure projects is being taken in the country that sees its economy expand by more than 6 percent every year.

Until February, 4,227 brick kilns out of the 6,646 have been converted into modern ones. Of them, 4,108 kilns have been converted into zigzag or improved zigzag kilns and the rest into HHK and tunnel kilns, according to the DoE.

Some 2,541 FCKs are yet to be converted into modern kilns, according to data from the DoE.

Haque of the DoE said the conventional brick kilns will be phased out gradually. Bangladesh produces 1,720 crore pieces of bricks annually,

according to a 2011 World Bank report. The Washington-based multilateral lender, in the report, forecasted that the demand will rise 2-3 percent per year for the next ten years.

Modern brick kilns accounted for nearly 170 crore pieces, according to BN Dulal, secretary general of Bangladesh Auto Brick Manufacturers Association.

The demand for bricks made by modern kilns is rising, particularly from those who are building green structures, said Rabiul

Ahsan, managing director of Stone Bricks Ltd, which has the capacity to produce 3 lakh pieces of bricks daily.

"We had to do lots of marketing to educate people about the bricks from automated kilns," he added.

The pace of investment in modern and automatic tunnel kilns increased in recent years due to the extension of low-cost loans by banks and financial institutions, he said.

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# Global IT firm to fold Bangladesh operations

*Rising cost, red tape and security fears to blame*

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Vizrt, the world's largest creator of software-based media solutions, has announced closure of its seven-year-old Dhaka office from August this year due to rising cost of doing business, red tape and security fears.

The security situation in Bangladesh has deteriorated drastically in the last few years, which compelled the Vizrt management in Norway to take this decision, said Mahmudul Haque Azad, managing director of Vizrt Bangladesh.

"None of the high officials from Vizrt headquarters in Bergen could travel to Dhaka in the last one year, so executives from Dhaka had to go instead. This increased their operational costs."

Regulatory uncertainty and the rising costs of doing business in Bangladesh were the other reasons behind Vizrt's decision to wrap up its operations in the country.

"A company like Vizrt leaving Bangladesh is a great loss for the country," said Azad, who has been involved with the company from its inception.

Vizrt entered Bangladesh in 2010 by buying a local company that had started operations in 2007. Its yearly turnover is about Tk 15 crore.

About 45 local engineers are employed in Vizrt Bangladesh, which provides real-time 3D graphics and maps, visualised sports analysis, journalist story tools, studio automation, media asset management and so on for the broadcasting industry.

The office served local and foreign television channels like BBC, Fox, Al Jazeera. It provided analytics for the last FIFA World Cup, according to Azad, who owns shares in Vizrt Bangladesh.

"Even though the payroll is not high when compared to other countries, the cost of doing business here in Dhaka suddenly spiralled. This also forced the shareholders to quit the market," said another top official of the company.

For instance, the government announced some changes in the tax structure in last fiscal year's budget and the company found a Tk 50 lakh tax bill overnight. The shareholders took the move very negatively, Azad said.

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# State banks saw rapid credit growth in 2016

JEBUN NESA ALO

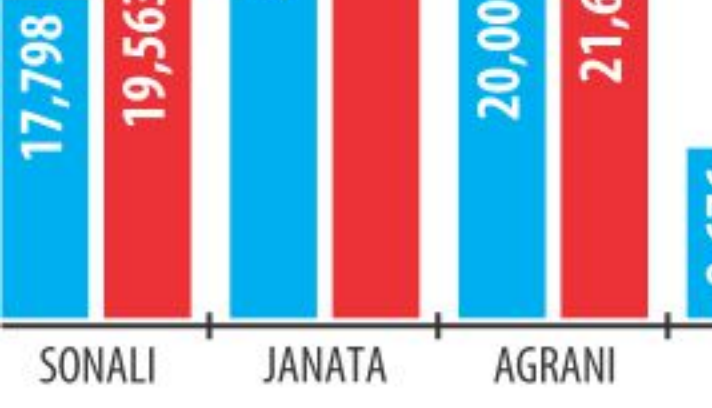
Four state-owned commercial banks saw higher credit growth at the end of December last year thanks to a surge in lending to small businesses.

Even two of them surpassed the credit ceiling set by the central bank.

Bangladesh Bank held a meeting with the top executives of Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali banks on Wednesday to discuss their performance in line with the targets set in the memoranda of understanding the regulator has signed with the lenders.

BB Governor Fazle Kabir chaired the meeting.

According to the MoU review report, the adjusted loan growth of Sonali Bank was 9.92 percent or Tk 19,500 crore last year compared to Tk 17,800 crore in 2015. The



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credit ceiling for the biggest bank in the country was 10 percent.

The adjusted loan growth excludes credits going to the government and the agriculture sector. BB set the loan disbursement target on the basis of adjusted loans.

The total loan growth of Sonali Bank was 10.85 percent or Tk 32,600 crore last year compared to Tk 29,400 crore the previous year.

The bank experienced negative credit growth of 5.26 percent in 2015 after it fell short of reaching the BB ceiling of 6 percent.

The four banks saw higher credit growth last year as the banks were focused on SME lending moving away from corporate financing, said Md Obayed Ullah Al Masud, managing director of Sonali Bank.

"We are very serious about increasing our lending to small businesses," he said. The BB governor also expressed satisfaction over the performance of the state banks, he said.

Janata Bank surpassed the credit growth target. Its adjusted loan growth was 16.70 percent last year, up from 12 percent fixed by the central bank.

The total loan growth of the bank was 9.91 percent in 2015 against the target of 10 percent.

The bank's total adjusted loan stood at Tk 31,100 crore in 2016 compared to Tk 26,600 crore a year ago.

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Rashed Khan Menon, civil aviation and tourism minister, visits a stall at Dhaka Travel Mart at Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka yesterday. Kazi Wahidul Alam, editor of the Bangladesh Monitor, the organiser, is also seen.

# Tourism fair kicks off in city

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A three-day international tourism fair began in the capital's Sonargaon hotel yesterday.

About 50 organisations, including tourism companies, airlines, tour operators, hotels, resorts and healthcare service providers from home and abroad, are taking part in the fair.

Participants are offering special discounts on airfares, tour packages and other tourism products and services.

Rashed Khan Menon, civil aviation and tourism minister, inaugurated the show. The Bangladesh Monitor, a leading travel and tourism publication, organised the fourteenth edition of the travel mart in association with private carrier US-

Bangla Airlines and national carrier Biman.

Kazi Wahidul Alam, editor of the Bangladesh Monitor; Aparup Chowdhury, chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation; AM Mosaddique Ahmed, managing director of Biman; and Imran Asif, CEO of US-Bangla Airlines, were present at the inauguration.

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# Apex court clears way for FBCCI polls

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Supreme Court yesterday cleared the way for authorities to hold the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry election that has been scheduled for May 14.

The apex court yesterday scrapped a High Court order that stayed the process on March 22 to hold the FBCCI election for two months.

It also asked the FBCCI authorities to include a director nominated by the Mymensingh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) in its list by May 30.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha passed the order following a petition filed by FBCCI authorities challenging the HC order.

Barrister Imtiaz Moinul Islam, a lawyer for FBCCI, told The Daily Star that there is no legal bar for the concerned authorities to hold the FBCCI election on May 14 following the SC order.

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# Safety campaign launched for apparel workers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A new campaign to raise awareness on basic Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) issues in the apparel sector was launched yesterday.

The radio-based campaign titled 'Safe Workplaces, Go Ahead Bangladesh' was initiated by the labour and employment ministry and Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments (DIFE), in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The campaign has received funding from Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

In order to create better recognition amongst garment workers, supervisors and managers, well-known TV celebrity Mosharraf Karim will support a number of campaign activities, said a statement from the ILO.

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# Dhaka bourse moves to revamp OTC market

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

The Dhaka Stock Exchange has moved to revamp over-the-counter (OTC) market so it becomes more active and attractive.

One of the measures planned will be to allow small cap companies to raise funds through listing on the OTC market set up in September 2009.

Non-listed companies with a paid-up capital of a minimum Tk 1 crore and a maximum Tk 5 crore can raise funds from the OTC market, instead of the main market, where the listing of small cap companies is

discouraged. But before the plan comes to fruition, the transaction process has to be made easier and more functional, as the existing system allows investors only to offer a price in case of selling shares whereas they cannot quote a price when they want to buy, according to an official of the DSE.

"There must be a buy option just like that in the main market to make the transaction process easier and functional," he said. The DSE has sent a set of proposals on how to improve the OTC market, to the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) for

approval. The bourse has proposed creation of at least two categories for the companies that are listed on the OTC market.

"We will go for the next course of action after receiving instructions from the regulator," the DSE official said.

The premier bourse launched the OTC market for setting up a separate trading floor for junk shares. The aim was to ensure discipline and transparency, enhance efficiency and safeguard the interests of retail investors.

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