

Bangladesh should open more research-based universities

Brac University VC says at an international event on business, management

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh should start working on creating universities solely focused on research as these have a leading role in building the nation and crafting national strategies, said Brac University Vice Chancellor Prof Syed Saad Andaleeb yesterday.

World-class institutions emphasise research, harbour a culture of shared values and practices and a climate of high morale and spirit of innovation, have a safe home for testing those, encourage mentoring and collaborative networks and provide adequate resource and multiple forms of communication, he said.

Prof Andaleeb was giving a keynote presentation on inaugurating the first International Conference on Business and Management (ICBM) 2017, at the Westin Dhaka.

Organised by Brac Business School (BBS), the two-day conference held the theme of global contemporary practices in business and management and participation of academics from prominent universities such as those of Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and the USA.

He cited the example of California where the first tier of research universities have faculty members who are expected to just create knowledge and who pass sleepless nights to get their works into reputed journals at the year's end.

The national education policy for 2010 of Bangladesh espouses the need for quality research for finding solutions to problems of the state but there is a general lack of interest among teachers to conduct research, he said.

Asian universities are considered as the next higher education superpowers with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong already in the competition for research supremacy with policies designed to promote world-class universities, he said.

Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley recently announced that an enabling regulatory architecture



Brac University Vice Chancellor Prof Syed Saad Andaleeb attends the opening of the two-day International Conference on Business and Management 2017, organised by Brac Business School of the university at the Westin Dhaka yesterday.

would be provided to 10 public and 10 private institutions to emerge as world-class teaching and research institutions, he said.

Similarly, the Malaysian government upgraded four institutions into research universities to participate in international competitions, the vice chancellor said while advocating for a symbiotic relationship between academia and industry.

On financing, he said the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has an annual budget of \$3.5 billion, 90 percent of it comes from some form of research and the rest from tuition.

In this regard, he talked of an interesting conundrum for budgetary allocations being taken up by consulting firms which then turn to academia for the actual work.

BBS Dean Prof Iftekhar Ghani Chowdhury gave a speech chairing

the inaugural session and he highlighted the pivotal role such conferences play in enhancing knowledge dissemination and improving the quality of academia.

Another keynote presentation came in a session chaired by Prof Dr Mirza Azizul Islam and Professor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed of FBS.

Prof Dr Mark GOH of the business school of National University of Singapore (NUS) spoke on cutting edge and emerging technologies and the ways which are shaping the contemporary businesses and supply chains.

He also spoke about future research avenues and briefly discussed the research potential offered by areas such as human-machine interactions, economics of supply chain and cryptocurrencies.

Prof Dr Premkumar Rajagopal, vice chancellor of Malaysia University of Science & Technology,

and Dr Piboonrungraj, associate dean of the College of Maritime Studies and Management, Chiang Mai University, gave another two keynote presentations.

Prof Rajagopal broached the critical roles played by smart data and other advanced technologies in enhancing supply chain responsiveness.

He discussed the four stages of industrial revolution and the importance of the current one defined as Industry 4.0.

Dr Piboonrungraj talked on how supply chain worked in the present era and offered a debate on whether to go for globalisation or deglobalisation in this context.

The conference will continue with over 150 academic papers to be presented in multiple parallel sessions and talks.

UNDP joins campaign to raise \$25,000 for farmers in Bangladesh

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The Global Compact Malaysia and the United Nations Development Programme Bangladesh have joined a crowd-funding campaign that aims to raise \$25,000 for farmers in the next 40 days.

In a statement, the UNDP Bangladesh said they are committed to boosting the impact of the "Growing together in Bangladesh" initiative through the "Farmers becoming entrepreneurs" campaign.

The "Growing together in Bangladesh" is an innovative franchise model to support farmers' access to market by passing the numerous middle entities that affect prices and consequently income.

Through 230 farmers' groups, the initiative has achieved significant results in the past two years, increasing three-fold the net income of 10,000 small farmers.

The campaign will raise the fund to test a digital innovation for 500 farmers, who will

have access to mobile devices and technology to connect to local markets and value chains, and to manage their finances.

The innovation will transform small farmers into entrepreneurs, according to the statement.

At the end of the project, the digital innovation will reach 10,000 farmers. The goal will be achieved through individual and private sector contributions channeled through the alternative financing platform that is supporting the project: Impact Bangladesh.

Private sector companies such as Syngenta have already contributed financial resources to the initiative. Those who wish to join the campaign can find more details at www.impactbangladesh.org/product/turn-500-farmers-into-entrepreneurs/.

In Bangladesh, small farmers are not integrated with the local market and are not receiving fair prices. Over 75 percent of them live on less than \$2 per day.

PM woos US investors, promises protection

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Hasina said all the developed countries except the USA, and even many developing countries have already granted duty-free access to LDCs as per commitments under Doha Round.

She said Bangladesh protects foreign investment by law, generous tax holiday, concessionary duty on import of machinery, remittances of royalty; 100 percent foreign equity, unrestricted exit policy, full repatriation of dividend and capital on exit.

"Foreign investment is protected by relevant acts of parliament and bilateral investment treaties. It is to note that Bangladesh already signed Bilateral Investment Treaty and Convention on Avoidance of Double Taxation Treaty with USA," she said.

Hasina mentioned that the government has planned to establish 100 exclusive economic zones (EEZs) throughout the country where investors will find all the services available at one place.

She said more than half a dozen EEZs are ready with all facilities for foreign private enterprises to set up industries.

Hasina said Bangladesh enjoys duty- and quota-free access to almost all the developed countries, and developing countries like China, Japan, India and South Korea

amongst others. USA is the second largest investor in Bangladesh, she said.

"We're investing heavily to improve the infrastructure and power in order to facilitate investment."

She said Bangladesh has evolved from one of aid dependence to that of trade dependence.

Bangladesh is now the 32nd largest economy of the world (based on PPP) and foreign aid is less than 1.5 percent of Bangladesh's annual GDP, Hasina said. "Bangladesh is today a role model of economic development."

Representatives from LTC Associates, Denham Capital, McLarty Associates, Elliott Dredges, Motorola Solution, APR Energy, Uber Technologies, Viasat, American Tower, Walmart, Orbis, Ethihad, Metlife, Medtronic, BCIUI, Boeing, Mastercard, Skypower, Exxon Mobil, Pragma Systems, Karnafuly Shipbuilders, AOT Energy, Chevron, Coca-Cola, GE Power, Fedex, Powerpac, and Proctor & Gamble were present.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, PM's ICT Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy and President of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Shafiqul Islam Mohiuddin, among others, accompanied the prime minister.



Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, chairman of Standard Bank, launches the bank's new Visa Platinum Card at a programme at its head office in Dhaka. Mamun-Ur-Rashid, managing director, was also present.

NBR organises tax camp in Dhaka

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The tax zone-5 of the National Board of Revenue yesterday organised a camp to bring potential taxpayers under its net and encourage compliance.

The camp was organised at Khilgaon Taltola City Corporation market where taxmen assisted people to get electronically generated taxpayers identification number (e-TIN) and file income tax returns, according to a statement.

Thirty-one tax returns were submitted at the camp, which was inaugurated by Shaheen Akhter, tax commissioner for zone-5.

Taxmen issued 28 e-TINs and collected Tk 136,810 in tax on the spot. They provided tax-related advice to 159 individuals.

The NBR started holding camps all over the country from this month.

"We plan to organise more camps this year," said Md Ashrafur Islam, deputy commissioner for taxes of the zone.

Air Arabia Holidays launched in Ctg

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Air Arabia launched a new service—Air Arabia Holidays—at an event in Chittagong, the Middle East and North Africa's one of the largest low-cost carriers said in a statement. Under the service, the airline will run direct double daily flights from Chittagong via Sharjah to Alexandria, Cairo, Istanbul, Moscow, Kiev, Tbilisi, Yerevan, Baku and Nairobi, Amman, Jeddah and Medina.

"These leisure and religious destinations will add a new flavour to the people of Bangladesh who are enthusiastic about travelling to new harbour," according to the statement.

"Leisure and religious travellers can get these destinations as their next holiday spot at a very affordable price as Air Arabia is offering very low and inexpensive fares and attractive land package for the above end points," said Bikramjit Ghosh, country manager of Air Arabia.

Housing fair of bti starts today

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A three-day fair organised by building technology and ideas (bti), a real estate company, starts today at its head office in Dhaka and in its branch offices in Chittagong and Comilla.

Sixteen new projects as well as ready residential projects will be showcased in the fair, the company said in a statement yesterday. The newly launched projects in

Dhaka are: Lakeview at Gulshan, The Sunrise at Bashundhara Residential Area, Roselyn at Uttara, Fairview at Lalmatia and Rose Gradenia at Wari.

In Chittagong, two new projects will be showcased which are New Haven and The Orient, at the port city's Panchlaish residential area.

The fair will also showcase a commercial project—Premier Plaza—at Pragati Sarani in Dhaka.

Global trade rebounding: WTO

REUTERS, Geneva

Global trade is rebounding strongly but risks remain, the World Trade Organization said on Thursday, with commerce expected to grow by 3.6 percent

in 2017, well above last year's 1.3 percent.

The forecast marks a sharp upward revision of the WTO's April estimate, when it foresaw growth of 2.4 percent and in a range of 1.8-3.6 percent, due to a high level of political and economic uncertainty.

Big plan for tuna fishing

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However, there are concerns. Insiders said none of the four firms that got licences for longline fishing last year have bought the necessary vessels yet. Only two have submitted specification of the trawlers for the DoF's approval.

But as per provision, the firms get two years from the day of permission to buy the vessels. Insiders said quite a good amount of investment is needed for longline fishing.

Besides, local investors do not have the experience in tuna and pelagic fishing in deep water.

DoF officials said local investors will be able to catch tuna in joint venture with foreign investors to acquire knowledge and experience on such type of fishing and develop human resources. At present, 247 industrial trawlers are permitted to fish beyond the 40-metre depth of the sea.

In addition, 68,000 mechanised and non-mechanised boats are engaged in fishing in Bangladesh's marine waters, which accounted for 6.27 lakh tonnes of fish out of the total of 3.88 crore tonnes in fiscal 2005-16, according to the DoF. Industrial fishing accounted for 13 percent of the total marine catches.

Shrimp farmers staring at heavy losses

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Gopal Das, another farmer in Kachua, is also worried about losses.

He cultivated prawn on more than 6 acres of leased land after borrowing Tk 6 lakh from banks and microfinance institutions.

"If the market prices fall this way, how will I repay my loan and bear my family's living expenses? The government should monitor the market so that we get fair prices," he added.

Fakir Mahitul Islam Sumon, president of the Bagerhat District Shrimp Farmers Association, said the majority of the people of the district are engaged in freshwater and brackish water shrimp farming mainly for exports.

The slump in prices of prawn

would be a double-blow for farmers after disease affected black tiger bagda farms, he said.

Many farmers cultivate prawns by taking loans at high interest rate from banks, non-governmental organisations and moneylenders.

The prices of shrimps are fluctuating in the absence of government monitoring and surveillance. As a result, they are incurring losses, said Sumon. "Farmers have become frustrated. If the government does not take effective steps, this shrimp sector will be destroyed," he added.

Mahmud of Jahanabad Seafood said the international market is likely to be sluggish this year. "Our buyers still have previous stock," he said.

Bagerhat District Fisheries Officer Zia Haider Chowdhury said his office has informed the higher-ups about the price fall. He expects the prices to return to the previous level as they are taking necessary steps.

Freshwater shrimp accounted for 19 percent of 40,726 tonnes of shrimp exported in 2015-16. Prawn shipment rose to 7,626 tonnes in 2015-16, up 15.78 percent year-on-year, according to the DoF.

Bangladesh produced 1.25 lakh tonnes of shrimp, mainly bagda, in 2.75 lakh hectares area in 2015-16.

Export earnings from shrimp slipped 1 percent year-on-year to \$446 million in 2016-17, according to the Export Promotion Bureau.

BASIC makes headway in loan recovery

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In July 2014 the new board took over, led by BASIC's former managing director Alauddin A Majid as the chairman.

In the three years since the new management took over, Tk 4,008 crore worth of loans were also rescheduled, the report said. As a result, at the end of August, the amount of classified loans was 51 percent, which is expected to come down to 40 percent by the end of the year.

In last three years, BASIC disbursed fresh loans of Tk 2,152 crore to take the tally of outstanding loans at the end of August to Tk 14,090 crore.

The bank logged in losses of up to Tk 122 crore, but as of August this year it made operating profit of Tk 32.62 crore which is expected to hit Tk 60 crore at the end of the year.

In the last three years the government gave BASIC Tk 3,390 crore to meet its capital deficit but still it has a deficit of Tk 2,210 crore. In the report BASIC said it did not give out the money received from the government as loan.

Of the amount, the bank invested Tk 2,799 crore in government treasury bonds and Tk 929 crore in the money market. If the government money is deducted, the bank's capital deficit stands at Tk 5,600 crore, which has accumulated between 2009 and 2014 thanks to bad loans.

A high official of BASIC told The Daily Star that they are still struggling to realise the bad loans.

After the new management took charge they found that several traceless firms were given loans by their predecessors. They were finally able to trace 50 firms but seven borrowers still remain to be identified although three years have passed.

In the report, BASIC gave the committee a list of 628 defaulting firms that owed Tk 6,538 crore to the bank as of June 30. BASIC told the committee that in order to realise the loans, it filed cases with Artha Rin Adalat.

But many of the firms in question have filed writ petitions with the High Court. The number of on-trial cases at the end of last month stood at 326. Together, the firms owed Tk 4,535 crore to the bank. BASIC MD Khondoker Md Iqbal told the parliamentary committee that the former chairman of the bank made a huge mess while giving out the loans.

The MD told the committee meeting that while granting loans the former chairman did not go by any rules of the central bank, the banking division and even the bank's.

DHL hikes shipping rates from January

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The express services provider deployed new solutions – such as On Demand Delivery and Parcel Lockers – to make the delivery process even more convenient for retailers and their customers in the dynamically growing e-commerce segment.

"Our annual price increase ensures that we can make the investments needed to meet our customers' expectations and to continue to make them successful over the long-term," said Allen. The statement said DHL Express adjusts its prices annually, taking into account inflation, currency dynamics and other rising costs, such as expenses related to compliance with enhanced security regulations, in each of the more than 220 countries and territories that it serves.

Price adjustments will vary from country to country, depending on local conditions, and will apply to all customers where contracts allow, it said.