

# NBR recognises best performing commissioners

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue has accorded the "Commissioner of the Month" title to seven head officials of its field offices for their performance in revenue collection in the July-August period of 2017-18.

The announcement came at a meeting on revenue collection at the NBR office in Dhaka yesterday. NBR Chairman Md Nojibur Rahman chaired the meeting.

Syed Mohammad Abu Daud, commissioner for Sylhet tax zone; Apurba Kanti Das, commissioner of tax zone 10, and Md Meftha Uddin Khan, commissioner of tax zone 2, won the title under the income tax wing.

Md Matiur Rahman, commissioner for large taxpayers unit and VAT; Md Moazzem Hossain of customs excise and VAT commissionerate in Rajshahi; Md Shahidul Islam, customs excise and VAT commissionerate of Dhaka West, got the recognition under the VAT department.

AFM Abdullah, commissioner of customs house in Chittagong, was awarded under the customs department.

The NBR started giving recognition to encourage taxmen to achieve collection target.

At the end of a fiscal year, the revenue administrator also honours best performing heads of field offices with the Commissioner of the Year title.

# Canada blasts Boeing, warns US jobs at stake in Bombardier trade row

AFP, Ottawa

Canada-US trade relations took a nose-dive Wednesday after the US Commerce Department announced it would impose steep anti-dumping duties on Canadian manufacturer Bombardier's new C-Series jetliners.

The two neighbors are among the world's closest allies and trading partners, with more than half a trillion (US) dollars worth of goods exchanged annually.

So the US imposition of a 220 percent countervailing duty on a major Canadian manufacturer, following an investigation into state subsidies sparked by a Boeing complaint, drew strong criticism.

Bombardier, unions representing Canadian aerospace workers, and both the Canadian and Quebec governments assailed the duties as "absurd," "ridiculous," "madness," and an attempt to "stifle competition."

The duties -- which are expected to be applied in 2018 when Delta Airlines will receive the first of 75 C-Series jetliners it ordered -- would also have a negative impact on the current renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta), they warned, and called for retaliatory measures.

"Obviously we're disappointed by the decision and I will continue to fight hard for good Canadian jobs," said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, calling

the US tariff "protectionist and warrantless."

Ottawa -- along with Britain, which is seeking to safeguard 4,200 Bombardier jobs in Northern Ireland -- has threatened to boycott Boeing, which is hoping to sell 18 Super Hornet fighter jets to Canada and 50 Apache helicopters to Britain.

"Canada strongly disagrees with the anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations into imports of Canadian large civil aircraft," Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said overnight after the US announcement late Tuesday.

"This is clearly aimed at eliminating Bombardier's C-Series aircraft from the US market," she said.

On Wednesday, Freeland said she would call US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to protest the tariff, and discuss Canada's next move with her British counterpart.

Freeland also warned that US parts suppliers for the C-Series aircraft, which employ 23,000 Americans, and their jobs could be at risk because of Boeing's petition. Her comments followed a meeting with US and Mexican counterparts for a third round of contentious Nafta talks in Ottawa.

At those negotiations Canada is facing pressure to grant the US more access to its dairy market.

Separately, Canada is fighting with

Washington for access to the US market for its softwood lumber, fearing a major hit to one of its top industries if it cannot secure a deal.

Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard called the Boeing-Bombardier row a low point in Canada-US relations.

"It's not positive," he said bluntly. The premier said that "Boeing will regret this" and that "the American economy and American workers will suffer as a result of the ruling."

Jerry Diaz, president of Canada's largest union, Unifor, which has consulted heavily with the Trudeau administration on the Nafta negotiations, went further in saying the gloves were off.

"If they're looking for a trade war, we ought not to continue to back down," he said. "We have to be very strong and we need to tell them, enough is enough."

"Ultimately, we're going to have to retaliate."

For Bombardier, the US announcement was as a double blow, coming on the same day that news broke of a tie-up between German train-maker Siemens and France's Alstom to create a rail juggernaut that would compete with Bombardier's struggling rail division.

After years of losses, Bombardier has pegged its hopes for a turnaround on the C-Series -- the first new aircraft design in the 100- to 150-seat category in more than 25 years.

# AmCham elects top brass



Md Nurul Islam



Shadab Ahmed Khan

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Md Nurul Islam has been re-elected the president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham).

The election took place at the 21st annual general meeting of the chamber that was held at The Westin Dhaka yesterday, AmCham said in a statement.

The trade body also elected Shadab Ahmed Khan as its vice-president for 2017-18.

Islam is the chairman for Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar at MetLife. He joined MetLife's American Life Insurance Company in Bangladesh in 1981.

Khan, who holds a postgraduate diploma in management from TA Pai Management Institute of India, is the managing director of Coca-Cola Bangladesh.

# Tax receipts rise 27pc in July

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This fiscal year, taxmen have been given the target of Tk 248,190 crore, which is 34 percent higher from the NBR's total receipts in fiscal 2016-17.

The NBR could log in 91 percent of the tax collection target of Tk 203,152 crore last fiscal year, according to data from the NBR.



## Orientation For Newly Recruited Senior Officers & Officers - 2017

Organized by Human Resources Division

HEAD OFFICE AUDITORIUM / SEPTEMBER 2017

PUBALI BANK

Md Abdul Halim Chowdhury, managing director of Pubali Bank, attends the inauguration ceremony of a five-day "orientation programme" for newly recruited senior officers and officers of the bank at its head office in Dhaka on Sunday.

Hassan O Rashid, additional managing director of Eastern Bank, receives the "Best Corporate and Investment Bank in Bangladesh 2017" award on behalf of the bank at the Asiamoney Awards ceremony at The Ritz-Carlton in Beijing, China on Tuesday.



EBL

# Five mobile operators face legal action

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The operators have not given a reply and BTRC took into account this "reluctance" to go for legal measures, he added.

BTRC will take the final approval on the issue in the next commission meeting, said Haque.

It is unable to convene a meeting at present as it needs three commissioners, including the chairman, to do so while three commissioner posts of the five-member body are vacant. The operators, upon a BTRC directive, blocked around two crore connections.

The regulator presumes that most of these have unused prepaid balance, amounting to around Tk 100 crore.

Grameenphone blocked 2,540,666 SIMs as they were allegedly being used in making illegal calls. Most had unused prepaid balance.

After Grameenphone handed over the money, BTRC allowed it to resell those SIMs. The operator moved quickly to settle the issue for having used up most of the number combinations under its "017" series.

While handing over the money, Grameenphone informed BTRC that it found Tk 9.37 crore and deposited Tk 1.22 crore from it with the National Board of Revenue in the form of 15 percent value-added tax, which is charged from the usage of subscribers.

It then said to have kept for itself Tk 81.44 lakh, which is 10 percent of the remaining amount, reasoning that it had already paid this amount to various government authorities in different taxes against the SIMs.

Robi too took permission from BTRC to resell a huge number of either previously used or blocked SIMs.

# Myanmar's conflict-hit Rakhine a magnet for Chinese cash

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Rakhine, a vast area of farmland, coast and off-shore gas reserves, has been roiled by communal violence for decades, pitting ethnic Rakhine Buddhists against Rohingya Muslims -- labelled illegal 'Bengali' immigrants by many in Myanmar.

Clashes erupted last October when the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) carried out deadly attacks on unsuspecting border police.

The militants attacked again on August 25, prompting an army crackdown that has forced some 480,000 Rohingya to flee into Bangladesh in the past month.

Swathes of land have been abandoned with scores of Rohingya villages burnt to the ground allegedly by the Burmese army and Rakhine mobs.

"The land freed by the radical expulsion of the Rohingya might have become of interest to the military and its role in leading economic development around the country," said Saskia Sassen, sociology professor at Columbia University.

"Land has become valuable due to the China projects," she added. The government said this week it would manage all fire-damaged land in Rakhine for "redevelopment" purposes, without elaborating.

It is not clear what that might mean for the masses of Rohingya who have been pushed into Bangladesh over the past month -- with questions looming about how or when they could return.

Despite its natural resources, Rakhine is one of Myanmar's poorest states -- some

78 percent of the population live below the poverty line, nearly double the national average.

Ethnic Rakhine, who remain deeply suspicious of the motives of Myanmar's Bamar majority, have seen scant benefits from increased investment in the area.

There is also discomfort among the public with Chinese influence across Myanmar.

"These massive Chinese projects in Rakhine state have deeply upset local populations who have not seen any positive fallout," said Alexandra De Mersan, Rakhine expert and researcher at the French School of Oriental Studies (Inalco).

An August report by a government-backed commission on Rakhine's troubles, led by former UN chief Kofi Annan, echoed alarm about who is really benefiting from investments in the area.

"Profit tends to be shared between Naypyidaw and foreign companies, and as a consequence, local communities often perceive the government as exploitative," the report read.

But Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi has said that development is a top priority for the region, even as rights groups have warned against investing in Rakhine.

"We have been continuing with our socio-economic development programmes in Rakhine," she said last week in her first national address since the latest crisis erupted.

# Easy bikes outgrowing limitations

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The whole world is moving towards electric vehicles, so Bangladesh cannot keep its distance from the growing trend for long, said Ijaz Hossain, a professor of the chemical engineering department at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

"In Bangladesh, easy bikes have expanded massively without any government intervention, but there is no vision and control," he said, adding that the government needs to be proactive and should formulate a policy to allow easy bikes to grow in a sustainable way.

Easy bikes are also good from the viewpoint electricity load: they are charged at night and so they do not disturb the supply. "What is more, as they are charged at night, electricity is also being sold," said Prof Hossain.

Some Tk 13 crore is spent every day for charging easy bikes, said Quazi Ahmad Faruque, head of access to energy of Rahimafrooz Renewable Energy.

About Tk 12,500 crore has been invested in easy bikes so far, he said, adding that a large number of low-income people are making a living through the electric vehicle.

Easy bikes have a multiplier effect on the economy: it has reduced the cost of transportation and created jobs with no carbon emission and air pollution. Some 76 percent of the respondents in the study favoured easy bikes, as it is very useful for transporting people and goods at low fares.

Despite the advantages, conventional batteries in electric vehicles at present rely on unauthorised charging stations that usually get power illegally from the grid and need almost 10 hours to fully charge, Faruque said.

To this end, Palli Bidyut Samity and West Zone Power Distribution Company in collaboration with Rahimafrooz Solar have installed four solar charging stations for easy bikes and rickshaws on a pilot basis.

"The study report implies that current limitations of charging electric vehicles can be surpassed with modern super-fast charging technology powered by solar energy," Faruque said. Electric vehicles have the potential to reduce the adverse impacts on the environment and dependency on imported fuel or compressed natural gas, while promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy to alleviate pressure on grid electricity.

"Electric vehicles are now competitive in many ways: it has simple mechanics, no internal combustion engine, require less equipment and is easy to assemble."

Some 19 lakh batteries are used in easy bikes every year, according to Mohammed Shahidul Islam, secretary of the Bangladesh Accumulator & Battery Manufacturers Association. Speakers called for amending Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1983 to legalise easy bikes and plugging holes in policy vacuum in many areas.

They also said easy bike drivers do not have licences and have received little training, putting passengers' lives at risk. This sector has become very big so it can not run without a policy, they said, adding that the government was in fact losing revenue by not giving attention to easy bikes.

The issue of battery-run vehicles also came up at a hearing on retail power tariff at the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) on Tuesday.

BERC Chairman Monowar Islam, who presided over the hearing, backed the proposal incorporating battery-run vehicles in the tariff plan. "The world is increasingly moving towards electric vehicles. So we are taking this into consideration."

Yesterday, Md Emdadul Haque, a member of the BERC tribunal, said the government should address the issue in line with the thoughts of the commission.

# Chemical exporters appeal against India's anti-dumping duty

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Abdul Karim, assistant general manager of ASM Chemical, said the export of hydrogen peroxide would be affected if the anti-dumping duty is not withdrawn.

Local companies also export the chemical to Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal, Akramuzzaman said, adding that

Bangladesh's four companies produce more than the annual requirement for the chemical.

Apart from the hydrogen peroxide exporters, four jute millers have filed appeals with the Indian authority for review of the anti-dumping duty of \$19-\$352 a tonne on January 5 this year.

# GP-Brac campaign on safe internet for students begins today

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Asif Saleh, senior director for strategy, communication and empowerment at Brac, said youths were now simultaneously running between "a golden age of digitisation" and "nightmares". This challenge is not limited to urban areas as rural teenagers are also facing the same types of problems, he said.

Saleh said, though schools have computer labs, youngsters were facing challenges in practical life as security and awareness were not enough. Hossain said, being a digital service provider in Bangladesh, Grameenphone considers it a responsibility to ensure that people, especially children, get the best of the digital technology.

"We believe that spread of the internet and its benefits among people will help in reducing inequality," he said.

Grameenphone and its parent company Telenor Group selected child safety online as part of their activities to support the sustainable development goals declared by the United Nations, he said.



ASGAR ALI HOSPITAL

Zabru SM Haque, CEO of Asgar Ali Hospital, attends a rally in Dhaka yesterday organised by the hospital in observance of World Heart Day themed "share the power".