

# Ctg customs starts disposing of goods of 88 containers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Customs House yesterday started disposing of nearly 2,000 tonnes of perishable goods stuffed in 88 containers as the importers left those abandoned for years.

Goods include onion, ginger, garlic, apple, malta and pomegranate. These products were brought in refrigerated containers between 2010 and 2016. Around 50 businesses imported these goods from different countries.

Md Nazmul Haque, assistant commissioner of customs, told The Daily Star that goods of 16 containers were destroyed on the first day.

Representatives of the department of environment, navy, Chittagong City Corporation, Chittagong Metropolitan Police, RAB, shipping agents and customs were present on the spot.

Sirajul Islam, managing director of Sathi Fresh Fruits and one of the importers of these goods, said he brought in 24

tonnes of malta from China in 2010.

"While heading towards Bangladesh, the containers onboard did not have the power connection leading to the deterioration of the quality of fruits. We won't be able to sell the fruits in the market due to its condition," said Islam, also the president of Bangladesh Fruits Importers Association.

According to Chittagong Port Customs, over 7.19 lakh tonnes of goods worth Tk 4,309.74 crore are lying at the port. Out of these, usable and edible goods will be put on auction and others will be destroyed, officials said.

"Port authority missed revenues and we were deprived of our charges," said Ahsanul Huq, chairman of Bangladesh Shipping Agents' Association.

Moreover, he said, shipping agents had to pay electricity bills for some of these containers. If the authority had taken timely measures, such losses could have been avoided, he said.

# Int'l trade, tourism expo begins Dec 12

STAR BUSINESS DESK

A five-day "11th Asian International Trade and Tourism Expo 2017" will begin at International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka from December 12.

Meherun N Islam, group president and managing director of Cems Global, the exposition's organiser, made the announcement at a press conference in Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Around 75 stalls from 15 countries will be showcased in the exhibition. The exposition will remain open from 10:30am to 9:00pm every day. Further information is available at [www.cemsonline.com](http://www.cemsonline.com).

A "Beauty & Fitness Expo 2017" and "Kids & Toys Expo 2017" will also concurrently run at the same venue.



Meherun N Islam, group president and managing director of Cems Global, at a press conference in the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday announcing organizing a five-day "11th Asian International Trade and Tourism Expo 2017" from December 12 at International Convention City Bashundhara.



OBOSHOR

Priti Chakraborty, chairman of Universal Medical College Hospital, and Gazi Mohammad Nurul Kabir, director general of the Department of Social Services, sign an agreement at the Sonargang hotel in the capital yesterday to jointly develop a resort for senior citizens, "Oboshor: My Dreamland", at Moulvibazar's Srimongol. Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, State Minister for Finance MA Mannan and State Minister for Social Welfare Nuruzzaman Ahmed were also present.

# Leathergoods makers to organise sourcing show every year

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The leathergoods makers and exporters association has decided to organise its recently concluded international sourcing show every year, as the event has received warm responses from the global buyers.

Md Saiful Islam, president of Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB), shared the information after successfully organising Bangladesh Leather Footwear and Leathergoods International Sourcing Show (BLLISS) 2017 in the capital's International Convention City Bashundhara.

On November 16, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the three-day show jointly organised by the commerce ministry and LFMEAB. Buyers, brands and business leaders from more than 20 countries, including China, India, Vietnam and Thailand, took part in the show.

BLLISS 2017 has positively been highlighted in global industry magazines such as ModaPelle, International Leather Maker, Leatherage, and World Footwear Magazine, which bolstered Bangladesh brand image, the LFMEAB said in a statement yesterday.

BLLISS has been instrumental to change the mindset of the foreigners about Bangladesh's leathergoods and footwear and help in attracting new buyers, Islam said in the statement.

The leathergoods exporters have to sell country first and then the product, Syed Manzur Elahi, chairman of Apex Footwear Ltd, said in BLLISS Networking Dinner at the event.

Under the factory visit segment of BLLISS 2017, different brands and buyers visited leathergoods and footwear factories and were introduced with practices of production and management and overall culture of manufacturing and exporting in Bangladesh.

"Some of the Bangladeshi factories are even much better than that of factories in Italy," said William Wong, president of the Federation of Hong Kong Brands.

As a potential investment relocation country, Bangladesh is being considered as emerging country in global footwear export market, Wong said.

"BLLISS event was organised for the first time and it did show the professionalism in all aspects," said Rachid Maliki, general manager for supply chain and procurements at RM Williams.

"I talked to a few guests and the general feeling was very positive."

Around 70 international dignitaries, including business leaders of 16 footwear associations from Asian countries, visited BLLISS 2017.

"BLLISS will help us to explore new avenues for business and overall growth of the leather industry," said M Rafeeq Ahmed, former chairman of the Council for Leather India.

# Eurogroup gets new chief

AFP, Brussels

Portuguese Finance Minister Mario Centeno was picked as the new head of the Eurogroup on Monday, with the key job of chaperoning much needed reforms across the single currency bloc.

The little known former central banker will replace outgoing Eurogroup chief Jeroen Dijsselbloem in January, and beat out his counterparts from Luxembourg, Slovakia and Latvia to win one of Europe's most coveted jobs.

"Centeno, the minister for finance of Portugal, has been elected as the new Eurogroup president," the European Council of ministers said in a tweet after the vote.

Centeno was long the favourite for the post and his victory came after two rounds of voting at a closed door session of the 19 Eurogroup ministers in Brussels.

# Ceramics hold bright prospects

FROM PAGE B1

High import tariff protection offered by the government has also encouraged Akij Group to enter the ceramics business and fortify position in the building materials market, which grows 12-15 percent annually.

Currently, the annual market for building materials, which include steel, cement, ceramic and sanitary wares, and plastic pipe, is roughly Tk 45,000 crore. The estimate excludes glass wares, according to Akij Group.

"From various surveys, we have come to know that there will be a boom in the building materials sector in near future," said Bashir.

Public sector construction is rising in recent times, driving the growth of cement consumption, he said.

The number of households will also increase from 3.2 crore to 4.3 crore by 2025, he said, citing a survey of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Households are gradually shifting from wooden and corrugated sheets to brick and concrete. By 2025, brick-built houses will account for 24 percent of all households in Bangladesh from 13 percent in 2011.

"So, we foresee a good demand for building materials," said Bashir.

Son of noted entrepreneur Sk Akij Uddin, Bashir steers Akij Group's more than 20 concerns ranging from jute, textile, particle board, food and beverage, tobacco, plastic, cement and ceramics.

The founder of the group started his entrepreneurial journey with only 17 rupees in capital 75 years ago. Now the group's annual gross turnover stands at \$1.5 billion, including \$200 million from exports. It employs more than 30,000 people.

Bashir said the primary enablers for the group's success are reinvestment of

retained earnings, ensuring financial discipline and having a dedicated human resources base.

"These factors have largely enabled the group to grow," said Bashir, who wants to create jobs for 100,000 people in the coming days.

He said his father believed that there were two kinds of companies in the world. "In one type, owners are rich but the companies are poor, while in the other, owners are poor but the companies are rich," said Bashir.

"From the inception, it has been a zero dividend company and we are maintaining the principle. All the retained earnings are reinvested."

At Akij Group, shareholders draw a fixed salary like other employees.

"So, Akij is a company where the company is rich but the owners are poor," said Bashir.

He said the reinvestment of retained profits allows Akij to expand business and employ more people.

"We are in an expansionary mode. Every year we are building something."

Recently, it set up a flour mill with a daily production capacity of 1,300 tonnes.

Bashir is also upbeat about the country's economy.

He urged the authorities to fix infrastructure bottlenecks, ensure adequate supply of energy, curb corruption and create enabling regulatory environment so that businesses can flourish and create jobs.

He also shared his vision about the group.

"I want to make Akij Group the most respected company in the country. This is where I want to take the company, not necessarily in terms of revenue. I don't want to be the richest man in Bangladesh."

# Explore business opportunities in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE B1

On the agreement of cooperation between the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, Hasina said she believes the institutional cooperation between the two chambers will be instrumental in augmenting mutual trade and investment.

Traditionally, she said, Bangladesh enjoys close commercial and other links with most Asean member countries.

The prime minister said Bangladesh finds itself as a 'land-bridge' between South Asia and Southeast Asia, and it gives special emphasis on the expansion of trade and investment with Asean neighbours.

"Unfortunately, bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Cambodia, which is less than \$10 million per annum, doesn't reflect the true potential. Our trade with other Asean countries is growing fast and I wish this to be replicated with Cambodia as well," she added.

She said Bangladesh has the most liberal investment policy in South Asia as it includes the protection of foreign investment by law, generous tax holiday, concessionary duty on import of machinery, remittances of royalty, 100 percent foreign equity and unrestricted exit policy.

"Other advantages include the young, industrious and easily trainable workforce with competitive wages, cheaper costs of establishing business and duty-free access to the markets of the EU, Australia, Canada,

India, Japan and New Zealand," she said.

The prime minister said Bangladesh's success in the readymade garment sector is known to the world.

Like the RMG sector, she said, other sectors are making a significant progress.

"Pharmaceutical is such a sector. After meeting up to 97 percent of our domestic requirements, our pharmaceutical products are exported to 120 countries, including the USA and EU countries," she said.

Hasina said the industry is now equipped to produce bio-tech products and active pharmaceutical ingredients (API). "Bangladesh is fast emerging as a major global hub for high quality, low-cost generic medicines."

Hasina said the knowledge industry, ICT and related sectors of Bangladesh are also expanding rapidly. "Shipbuilding is another fast emerging industry in Bangladesh. Our builders have drawn global attention by making world-class light to medium size oceangoing vessels."

"We've also a very good opportunity in Cambodia. We can produce food grains and set up food processing industries in Cambodia," she said.

Cambodian Minister of Commerce Pan Sorasak, Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority Kazi Aminul Islam and FBCCI President Shafiqul Islam Mohiuddin were also present.

# Turning waste into value

FROM PAGE B1

They said global food production should increase by 70 percent by 2050 as a child dies from hunger every 3.6 seconds. Green Bees, a team from the University of Rajshahi, was ranked third in the competition for its export idea of producing a fine quality yarn from pineapple leaf fibres to weave an anti-allergic garment, which is in high demand in the western world.

The team said over 150 million Europeans suffered from chronic allergy. The use of polyester fabric is largely blamed for it. They said the time was ripe for Bangladesh to exploit this business opportunity. The team planned to invest \$14,45,870 to set up a textile company and maintain costs to produce the eco-friendly yarn.

Eyeing markets in Portugal, Spain, the US, the UK, China, Australia and Germany, the team targets to make exports worth \$16.10 lakh in the first year, \$17.50 lakh in the second and \$22 lakh in the third.

They estimate to spend \$3.5 for each kilogramme of EcoFib, the yarn which could save Bangladesh \$45 million a year by reducing cotton imports.

The Rise High Bangladesh is a joint initiative of Crown Cement and The Daily Star. It aims to inspire Bangladeshi youth to come up with export ideas and convert them into feasible business products and services.

The champion team will get the opportunity to visit different industries in Malaysia to develop their idea, the runners-up received a cheque worth Tk 1 lakh while the third team received a cheque worth Tk 50,000. All three teams also received crests.

A jury panel selected the three teams, each comprising three students from a university, presenting the best business ideas at the final event.

Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal handed over the crests and cheques.

Imran Rahman, dean of the School of Business at the University of Liberal Arts, Syed Nasim Manzur, former president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and managing director of Apex Footwear, and Bitopi Das Chowdhury, head of corporate affairs of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, were in the jury panel.

# Port users oppose electronic seals on containers

FROM PAGE B1

Finance Minister AMA Muhith was scheduled to inaugurate the service tomorrow. Yesterday the programme was rescheduled to December 11, said Chittagong Customs House Commissioner AKM Nuruzzaman.

The Port Users Forum in an urgent meeting at World Trade Centre in the port city yesterday afternoon unanimously took a decision to disregard the SRO.

The forum chairman, Mahbubul Alam, also president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), chaired the meeting.

He said the NBR should have consulted stakeholders beforehand as the move was

"unnecessary" given that containers were usually locked by main line operators with bullet seals, an international practice with which importers and exporters were satisfied. Besides there is no record of theft during the movement, he said.

At least 2,000 containers are delivered from the port every day, said Chittagong Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vice President Mahub Chowdhury.

The new system will delay deliveries and create vehicular congestion and it is being introduced only to give a company the scope to "extort money" from businesses, he added.

# BTRC invites applications for 4G licences

FROM PAGE B1

The letter signed by Erik Aas, managing director of Banglalink, Michael Foley, CEO of Grameenphone, and Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, managing director of Robi, was also sent to the telecom division, requesting the regulator to arrange a meeting to settle the issues.

But the BTRC chief said the government has already addressed all the issues the operators have raised on 4G licence and spectrum.

"We are waiting for the mobile operators' enthusiastic response in the auction," he said. "We always want to sit with the telecom operators as they are our main forces to achieve the government's Digital Bangladesh Vision."

Operators will have to pay Tk 5 lakh as application processing fee and Tk 10 crore as licence fee. They also will have to pay Tk 5 crore as annual fee

for the 15-year licencing tenure, according to the final guideline.

According to the guideline, operators will have to deploy 4G network across the country in 36 months.

The telecom regulator will put up for spectrum auction 25 megahertz from 2100 band with floor price of \$27 million per MHz.

For 1800 and 900 bands, the floor price has been fixed at \$30 million. Some 18 MHz spectrum in 1800 band and 3.4 MHz spectrum in 900 band will be up for sale.

The telecom regulator had earlier included the technological neutrality issue in the spectrum guideline. Now it has been separated and sent to the finance ministry for fresh approval about revised conversion fees.

Technological neutrality helps mobile opera-

tors offer any service in any band. The conversion fee was earlier fixed at \$7.5 million per MHz and now has been revised down to \$4 million.

In the letter, the operators also raised fresh concern about spectrum fees and technological neutrality charges.

The operators also expressed worries about the new 4G definition, which says the speed has to be 20 Mbps under the fastest technology. The letter said the combined spectrum that would be made available during the auction will not be sufficient to provide the speed.

They also reiterated their concern on unresolved value added tax and fibre optic network issues.

The BTRC last arranged the auction for 3G spectrum in September 2013 and the operators immediately rolled out the service.