

# Azim Group opens new steel producing firm

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Leading garment exporter Azim Group has entered into the steel manufacturing industry with the opening of a new company—Global Steel and Engineering Ltd—at Dhamrai on the outskirts of the capital.

"We have already started production in the new company where we have so far invested Tk 250 crore," said Mohammad Fazlul Azim, chairman of the group.

Global Steel will mainly produce transmission line hardware materials and other kinds of steel sheets at the factory, which will gradually be established on a 25-acre land, he said.

"We hope to create 1,000 new jobs at the factory," he said at the opening ceremony held on the premises of the company yesterday.

Azim Group started its journey in 1975 and employs around 28,000 people in its different units.

The group exports garments to various markets in the world, including USA, South America, Russia, Japan, China and Australia.

"We have achieved remarkable success in the garments sector, which has encouraged us to launch the steel manufacturing company," Azim said.

Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, power, energy and mineral resources adviser to the prime minister, and Masum-Al-Beruni, managing director of Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, attended the opening ceremony along with other guests.

# Give Rohingyas jobs

## Says commerce secretary

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Rohingya refugees should be allowed to engage in economic activities so that they can contribute to regional development, Commerce Secretary Shubhashish Bose said yesterday.

"It may take a lot of time to send the Rohingyas back to their own land. In the meantime, they can be utilised in different works," he said at a forum styled "the Bangladesh Inc. - Chances & Challenges" at the capital's Westin Hotel.

The event was organised by amfori, a Brussels-based organisation of 2,000 retailers who transact more than \$1 trillion a year.

"Otherwise, we have to provide food and seek international assistance for them," Bose said, citing the making of handicrafts as an area in which the Rohingyas can be employed.

Almost a million Rohingyas came to Bangladesh since August 25 last year, ActionAid Bangladesh's Country Director Farah Kabir said.

"Most of them were traumatised. They had been deprived of their basics. After six or seven months they became restless. They want better food. They want to get money for buying better foods like meat. Women want more dignity."

She went on to urge the private sector to create employment for Rohingyas, she added.

"Many of the Syrian refugees sheltered in Turkey started working in that country's textile sector," said Pierre Groning, director of advocacy of amfori.

In order to achieve some of the development targets set for 2021 Bangladesh needs to attract \$10 billion in foreign direct investment, said Farooq Sobhan, president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.

At present, Bangladesh receives about \$2 billion in FDI a year.

Before 2021, the amount needs to be doubled, if not trebled, to achieve some of the targets, Sobhan said.

"If we do not act together the investment will go to Vietnam and Myanmar," he added.

Meanwhile, Bose said bilateral trade between Myanmar and Bangladesh will not be hampered due to the Rohingya issue.

"Although it is not so high at present, it is not because of the Rohingya crisis. It is for other reasons like difficulties in transportation and communications."

Between the months of July and December last year, exports to Myanmar declined 12.08 percent year-on-year to \$10.04 million, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau.

# Japan, China agree trade war will harm global economy

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan and China agree that a trade war will have serious consequences for the world economy, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono said on Monday after a high-level economic dialogue between the world's third- and second-largest economies. Concern is growing about a trade row between China and the United States in which the two nations have threatened each other with tariffs. Japan has been criticized by US President Donald Trump on trade and been hit with tariffs on steel and aluminum, but it has not yet threatened counter-tariffs.

"We have shared understanding that a trade war, no matter which country has brought it about, would have a very large impact on the prosperity of the international economy," Kono told reporters after the first such dialogue in more than seven years.

Kono and the Chinese government's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, co-chaired the Tokyo meeting. Wang is also foreign minister.

Financial markets have been roiled recently over fears that a full-blown US-China trade war could shatter global trade and economic growth.



BANK ASIA

Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of Bank Asia, cuts a cake to launch the bank's online marketplace at agent banking outlets through a partnership with Grameenphone at the lender's corporate office in Dhaka on April 12.



PRIME BANK

Rahel Ahmed, managing director of Prime Bank, speaks at a press conference on the bank's 23rd founding anniversary at Dhaka Club in the capital yesterday. Story on B4

# BPO summit ends with call for a wider local market

FROM PAGE B1

"Our competitor is not any local, Indian or Filipino company that is doing well in this field as we are challenging top US companies," said Kazi, while attending a session styled 'Rise of AI and the Impact of BPO'.

To get maximum success from the business process outsourcing field the country needs to adopt it in its educational curriculum, said Md Tanzirul Basher, chief executive officer at My Outsourcing, one of the leading outsourcing companies in Bangladesh.

India and the Philippines are the most successful in the field of BPO and both the countries have a separate curriculum for it, he said.

Furthermore, infrastructure is not readily available in Bangladesh; India and the Philippines are way ahead of Bangladesh.

"In Bangladesh, we have only two submarine cables, while the Philippines has eight connections," he added.

The global BPO market is worth about \$500 billion and Bangladesh companies have managed to grab only \$180 million from the international market and another \$120 million from the local market.

Earnings from BPO would cross the \$1-billion mark over the next three years.

Speakers said if the government takes services from the BPO sector, the local market will double within a year, which also will be helpful in grabbing a bigger slice of the foreign market.

Wahidur Rahman Sharif, president of the BACCO, expressed hopes that after the summit a huge number of government offices will open up their minds and digitise their services with the help of the BPO industry.

Industry leaders said both the government and private institutions should accept digitisation as a transformation process that might not reduce jobs and will increase efficiency and productivity in every case instead.

# Joy resolves tussle in mobile financial service

FROM PAGE B1

However, mobile operators said there was a lack of clarity in the revenue-sharing model. Now, there will be transparency and definitely it will not increase end users costs.

"This is a business to business price and no way to impact customers' charges. Rather they will get benefit when this change is implemented," said TIM Nurul Kabir, secretary general of the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh.

Kabir said USSD is a service from the operators like voice calls, SMS and internet services and without regulation they could not continue to provide it as demand is increasing. "Plus, it creates pressure on the mobile operators' network."

MFS started in Bangladesh in 2011. At that time, the USSD price was not fixed and an ad hoc basis revenue sharing model was established. Last December, some mobile operators even said they could not serve the MFS operators by disrupting their own business and reduced service in peak hours.

Top officials from mobile operators, mobile financial services providers and banking and telecom regulator, telecom minister were present in the meeting at the prime minister's official residence.



Eastern Bank Ltd (EBL) Chief Executive Officer Ali Reza Iftekhar and German development finance institution Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft Chief Executive Officer Bruno Wenn exchange documents after signing a deal at a Dhaka hotel yesterday. The deal is to deepen the duo's existing partnership to intensify collaboration in the fields of small and medium enterprises, corporate and infrastructure financing in Bangladesh. Story on B4

EBL

# Telcos seek duty benefit for 4G handsets

FROM PAGE B1

Amtob also demanded rationalisation of corporate tax for mobile phone operators. It is now 40 percent for operators listed at the stock exchange and 45 percent for non-listed ones.

The trade body also urged the revenue administrator for publication of a guideline on e-commerce and elimination of a provision for which firms have to pay a minimum 0.75 percent of their total annual turnover as tax.

In response, NBR Chairman Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said his office would examine ways to provide benefits to the mobile phone

operators. "But please clear all arrear taxes."

Negative reports are published in the newspapers, as the operators do not clear due VAT and tax properly, he said.

Bhuiyan suggested the operators settle tax disputes through alternative dispute resolution, an out of court process.

Earlier, Bangladesh Beverage Manufacturers Association demanded reduction of supplementary duty on local production of soft drinks to 15 percent from the present 25 percent.

Bangladesh Ceramic Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BCMEA)

urged keeping import duty on raw materials of ceramic at 3-5 percent.

The association, representing over 60 ceramics makers, said duty benefits and protection helped the sector grow and reduce import dependence.

"We can meet 80 percent of domestic requirement," said BCMEA President Md Shirajul Islam Mollah, demanding withdrawal of a 15 percent supplementary duty at the production stage and putting effort into stopping under-invoicing.

Sk Bashir Uddin, managing director of Akij Group, opined that high duty at manufacturing creates the tendency among people to go for tax evasion.

# Stocks rebound on buying spree

FROM PAGE B1

Conversely, market capitalisation of general insurers and banks declined 0.81 percent and 0.34 percent respectively.

Popular Life Insurance was the day's best performer with a 9.96 percent gain followed by Usmania Glass, Sonali Aansh and National Tea Company.

Mercantile Bank was the worst loser, shedding 13.85 percent followed by United Insurance, Advent Pharma and

Central Insurance.

Chittagong stocks also rose yesterday with the bourse's benchmark index, CSCX, increasing 15.65 points or 0.1 percent to finish the day at 10,787.78.

Gainers beat losers as 121 advanced, 84 declined and 28 finished unchanged on the port city bourse.

The stock exchange traded 76.67 lakh shares and mutual fund units worth Tk 27.27 crore in turnover.



RFL GROUP

RN Paul, managing director of RFL Group, cuts a ribbon to open a showroom of Walkar, the group's footwear brand, in Rangpur recently.



GREAT WALL CERAMIC

Mohammed Shamsul Huda, managing director of Great Wall Ceramic Industries Ltd, poses at the company's "Annual Dealers' Conference 2017" in Bangkok recently.