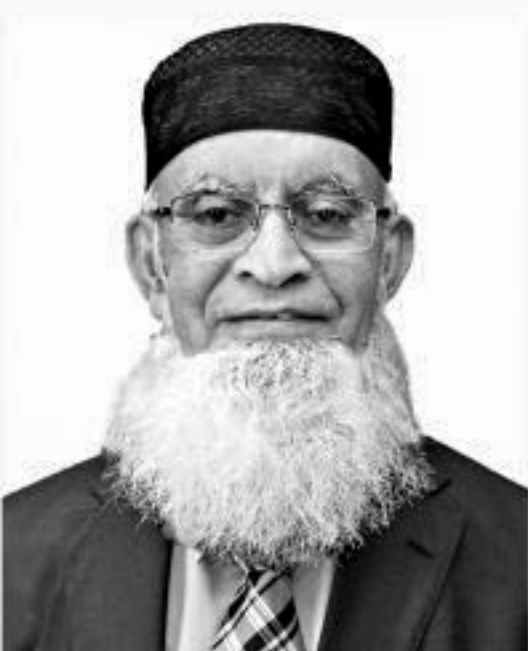


Jamuna Bank elects chairman



STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mosharraf Hussain has been elected the chairman of Jamuna Bank.

The election took place at the bank's 327th board meeting yesterday, the bank said in a statement.

He is also the managing director of Standard Group, chairman of The Civil Engineers Ltd and Amann Bangladesh Ltd (a Bangladesh-Germany joint venture).

Hussain completed his bachelor's in civil engineering from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

Bangladesh to sign trade deal with Cambodia: Tofail

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh will sign an agreement with Cambodia at the end of June to increase bilateral trade, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed said on Wednesday.

The minister also suggested his Cambodian counterpart Pan Sorasak visit Bangladesh for the signing of the deal.

Ahmed spoke while inaugurating a workshop on international trade finance and development of global value chains, at a hotel in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital.

The workshop was jointly organised by International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh (ICCB); the Trade Training and Research Institute of the Cambodian commerce ministry; the Institute of Banking and Finance Cambodia and Asian Development Bank.

There is huge potential for bilateral trade, a statement from the commerce ministry quoted Ahmed as saying.

He also said Cambodia can import medicines, leather products and jute goods from Bangladesh.

He said an agreement and nine memoranda of understanding were signed to boost bilateral trade during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Cambodia last year.

In the last fiscal year, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$5.39 million to Cambodia and



ICCB

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, sixth from left on back row, attends the inauguration of a workshop on international trade, finance and development of global value chains, in Phnom Penh on Wednesday. On the left of the minister, Cambodian Commerce Minister Pan Sorasak, ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman and Vice President Rokia Afzal Rahman are also seen.

imported \$0.4 million worth of goods.

The MoUs were signed for cooperation in tourism, information and communication technology, institutional cooperation under the joint trade council and collaboration in implementation of sustainable development goals.

The other areas of the MoUs include academic cooperation between the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies and the International Relations Institute of Cambodia.

Those also include collabora-

tion in the preservation of war relics, cooperation in aquaculture and fisheries and labour and training and promotion of investment between Bangladesh Investment Development Authority and the Council for the Development of Cambodia.

Trade has seen a dramatic change in 2017 thanks to a shift from globalisation to localisation, particularly in the US, China and the UK, said Mahbubur Rahman, president of ICCB.

"The challenges with the US on

the trans-pacific partnership, continued Brexit negotiations around trade, trade tariffs and political tensions, will lead to a turbulent 2018 in terms of trade negotiations."

He also mentioned a few new technologies are now being leveraged by retail and high street banks in an attempt to reduce operational costs, ensure trade security and facilitate the use of trade finance products.

Trade finance digitalisation has typically been materialised on products such as airway bills, bills

China warns US against causing damage to trade in Huawei probe

AFP, Beijing

China warned the United States on Thursday against harming trade after a report that US authorities had opened an investigation into suspected violations of Iran sanctions by China's Huawei Technologies.

A US Justice Department probe would come on the back of subpoenas issued to the company by the US Commerce and Treasury Departments over sanctions-related issues, according to the Wall Street Journal.

Huawei -- one of the world's largest telecommunications equipment and services providers -- has been under tough scrutiny in the United States, where government national security officials say that its alleged close links to the Chinese government make it a security risk.

Its US business has been tightly constrained by worries it could undermine US competitors and that its cellphones and networking equipment, used widely in other countries, could provide Beijing with avenues for espionage.



STAR

Kamal Quadir, CEO of bKash, and Douglas Feagin, senior vice president of Ant Financial, a concern of Alibaba Group operating Alipay, exchange documents after signing a deal at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden yesterday. Alipay bought 20 percent stakes in bKash. Story on B1

Unwarranted extension for BSEC chief

FROM PAGE B1

Hossain's performance as the stock market regulator can at best be term a mixed bag, said a host of stock market analysts contacted by The Daily Star.

His success include formulating rules and regulations related to securities, development of a surveillance system and bringing structural changes to the capital market.

These enabled the BSEC to secure an 'A' category membership of the International Organisation of the Securities Commission, an association of organisations that regulate the world's securities and futures markets. His commission enforced two mutual funds to liquidate on time, which gained the confidence of investors in Bangladesh's mutual funds sector.

But, Hossain failed to take initiatives to develop Bangladesh's capital market.

He could hardly facilitate to bring good companies to the market. Many companies that got listed during his seven-year tenure were sub-par stocks: they showed inflated earnings and incurred losses soon after

listing.

He failed to encourage multinational and big local big companies come to the market. And the BSEC's ruling that a sponsor director must hold a minimum of two percent stakes in the listed company was not followed by many.

Market players said the major failure during his predecessor's tenure was the BSEC's mismanagement of margin loan, which forced many merchant banks not to sell shares after the 2010 debacle.

As per security rules, merchant banks are supposed to sell stocks to adjust the margin loan ratio. But the BSEC instructed them to not sell to prevent a panic from spreading in the market.

Many merchant banks are suffering for this decision on margin loans.

Prior to join the commission Hossain was the chairman of the state-owned Investment Corporation of Bangladesh from September 2009 to May 2011. Before that he was a professor of the department of finance at the University of Dhaka.

Private sector foreign loans a latent danger

FROM PAGE B1

Of the \$8.44 billion, \$18.67 million has gone into the overdue position in February, up 83.58 percent year-on-year.

The overdue amount, all of which is on the account of importers, poses a greater danger as they repay loans in foreign currency but they earn in local currency.

So when they repay, they have to buy

foreign currency from the local market, causing exchange rate fluctuations.

The Bangladesh Bank relaxed the rule of foreign borrowings following demands from exporters, said Abu Hena Mohd Razee Hassan, deputy governor of the central bank.

"At the beginning there were some misuses of foreign borrowings. But now, it is being monitored strictly," he added.

TIB for special tribunal to try people responsible

FROM PAGE B1

The trial has remained stalled at the High Court in the last two years as the investigating agencies are saying that they can't find witnesses, said Sultana Kamal, chairperson of the TIB.

It was not a killing in secret; rather, it happened in front of thousands of people and so it was very clear who were involved, she said.

However, a section of people halted the case proceedings in court, Sultana said. "It indicates that still there is a section of people in our country who can influence the judiciary."

The TIB said 102 major initiatives were taken in the last five years by factory owners, the government, buyers, and retailers to strengthen the workplace safety and improve workers' rights.

"Here too the progress is not satisfactory," said Iftekharuzzaman, adding that only 40 initiatives were fully implemented, 42 are still under process and 20 have been closed down.

He said a majority of the initiatives which have been implemented mainly focused on expanding the business of factory owners, generating profits and increasing productivity. But the initiatives that could have improved labour rights have not been fully implemented to date, he added.

"So, the workers are not benefitting from the steps taken after the Rana Plaza

collapse," said Iftekharuzzaman.

He said 632 trade unions exist in the garment sector, meaning only 3 percent of the total number of factories is covered.

However, the labour law was amended after the collapse to allow workers the complete freedom of association, he said.

Moreover, the existing trade unions are controlled by a section of influential leaders deployed by factory owners. As a result, workers can't enjoy the benefits of the labour law reforms, according to Iftekharuzzaman.

Here, all participants such as the government, manufacturers, retailers, brands, the Accord and the Alliance have been negligent in implementing the steps taken for the benefit of workers, he said.

Iftekharuzzaman also talked about the government's ongoing inspection of small factories not affiliated with the Accord and the Alliance.

He said inspection and remediation standards for workplace safety should be the same for every factory.

The anti-graft activist said the surviving Rana Plaza victims and relatives of the deceased have not received compensation yet, as the money that has so far been provided to them was financial assistance.

Compensation and financial assistance is not the same thing, he said.

The TIB said the monthly minimum salary for a garment worker should be \$202 from \$68 now.

More graduates join jobless queues

FROM PAGE B1

In 2016, \$2.01 billion of remittance was sent from Bangladesh to other countries, according to the Washington-based think tank Pew Research Centre.

The highest amount was sent to China (\$947 million), followed by Indonesia, Malaysia and India during the year.

The National Board of Revenue has tax record of 10,000-12,000 foreigners, said a senior official. Employers have to hire foreigners for dearth of personnel with the requisite technical and managerial skills, said Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury, chairman of Evince Group, an apparel and textile company.

"We have to employ foreigners to enhance competitiveness and develop the skills of our workforce," he added.

No one wants to hire from abroad if qualified people can be hired from local talent pool, said Md Siddiqur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. "Unemployment among the educated people will remain if we continue to maintain the traditional view of having BBA and MBA degrees," he said, adding that more people with technical and vocational education are needed.

Both of them suggested building an education system based on the needs of various sectors of the economy.

The textile sector will need 175,000 persons with technical skills by 2021, said the chief of Evince Group, which hires 7,500 people. Of them, 30,000-35,000 could be met through the existing educational institutions.

Chowdhury went on to cite India as a template for Bangladesh to follow to address the problem.

The neighbouring country has opened a human resource ministry and assessed the human resource requirement for existing and potential industrial sectors. The human resource ministry also shared the requirement with the education ministry. "This current situation could have been averted had Bangladesh taken up such a strategy. This should be done. And if we can develop our educational system based on the requirement of industries, joblessness rate will decline."

Tea workers demand pay hike

FROM PAGE B1

"The tenure of the last agreement expired in December of 2016. But the owners did not sign any new agreement and are still paying the workers at Tk 85 a day."

"The owners always delay in signing new agreement. The raise they give under the last agreement signed in 2015 was not justified. Even the agreement was signed after a break of six years," Guala said. "So we demanded the wage to be fixed at Tk 230 a day and pay the workers at the rate with retrospective effect from January 2017." "So we urged the owners to renew the agreement by tomorrow; otherwise we will go for strike for an indefinite period."

The wage of the tea workers should be increased considering the spiralling cost of daily commodities, said Jiten Sabar, president of Malnichhara Tea Garden Sramik Union.

Tea production will get hampered to a great extent because of the work abstention, as this is the high time for tea cultivation, said Mansur Ahmed, manager of Shreepur Tea Garden.

"The rough copy of the new agreement has already been finalised. But several discussions should be held between the workers and the owners to set the final wage," said Shah Alam, vice-president of Cha Sangshad, the tea garden owners' association. "The workers are not interested to sit for discussion through which the problem could easily be solved."



LANKA BANGLA FINANCE

Khurshed Alam, head of retail finance at LankaBangla Finance, and Sohail Majid, director for marketing & sales of Regent Airways, exchange documents after signing a deal in Dhaka on April 23. LankaBangla cardholders can pay for the airline's tickets and holiday packages in six monthly instalments at zero interest.



MIDLAND BANK

Md Ridwanul Hoque, head of retail distribution of Midland Bank, and Md Al-Amin, director for sales & marketing of The Westin Dhaka, exchange documents after signing a deal at the bank's head office in Dhaka on Wednesday. The bank's visa credit cardholders will get buffet meals for two paying the price for one at the hotel.