

মুনাফার সাথে আস্থাতাও বেশি

বেশি মুনাফা 1%

এসআইবিএল সুপার সেভিংস একাউন্ট

পঞ্চাশ-উর্ধ্ব সিনিয়র সিটিজেনদের জন্য। ১৮-উর্ধ্ব মহিলারাও এই হিসাবটি খুলতে পারবেন।

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Oddity from start

Flaws in proposed Peoples Bank chairman's papers; BB may stall approval

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Abul Kashem, chairman of the proposed Peoples Bank, is set to fork out Tk 40 crore to buy shares in the bank, although his total net worth is Tk 44.51 crore.

He has net assets worth Tk 43.94 crore in the US, where he resides, and Tk 56.92 lakh in Bangladesh, according to the documents provided by him to the central bank as part of the process to purchase the stake.

This means, he would have to sell off about 90 percent of his assets to purchase shares in Peoples Bank -- a move that many would consider to be baffling.

Other than this oddity, the Bangladesh Bank found discrepancy in his net asset certificate by a New York-based accountancy firm by the name of Rafiq & Associates, CPA, LLC.

In the hard copy furnished to the BB by Kashem in February the firm's name differed in the letterhead and the stamp.

The central bank contacted Kashem about the discrepancy and a fresh copy was provided.

But, that copy did not carry the firm's letterhead and the certifier, Md Rafiqul Islam CPA, did not use his stamp -- which is mandatory if the document does not contain a letterhead.

Kashem also did not provide any document to support his claim of net worth -- such as his income tax returns filed with the US Internal Revenue Service -- other than the letter from the accountancy firm.

In September, Kashem informed the central bank that it was not compulsory in the US to state the net worth of the assets when filing income tax returns.

This prompted the BB in October to request the foreign ministry to get details of Kashem's net assets in the US and also to enquire whether there remains any impediment to bringing the amount from the US.

As of November 19, the BB did not hear back from the ministry.

In this backdrop, the central bank board of directors will convene on Sunday to make a final call on giving permission to three new banks. Bengal Commercial Bank and Citizens Bank are expected to get the preliminary approval (letter of intent) to start the process of opening new bank company, said a senior official of the BB requesting anonymity due to sensitive nature of the matter.

"But Peoples Bank may not get the letter unless all the requisite documents are furnished."

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Paying tax with little benefit

Citizens complain at tax tribunal

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Fazlur Rahman, a 43-year-old man, stood up and began to narrate an incident in which his mother fell ill four years ago.

Finding no available bed at a public hospital, he took her to a private clinic. A week later, he was handed a Tk 55,000 bill, which is quite an amount for someone like him with limited means of earning.

"As a citizen and taxpayer, I would like to know why in the massive budget of Tk 4.64 lakh crore basic services like education and health for families like mine are not included," Rahman said while tabling his petition to a mock tribunal termed 'Citizen's Tax Tribunal' yesterday.

ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) organised the tribunal at Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban Auditorium of the University of Dhaka.

The hall was almost at full capacity and Rahman was the fourth person to place a petition before a tribunal comprising a panel of amicus curie, jury, panellists and people giving testimonies.

"Why do I have to pay for such services out of my pocket when they are constitutionally recognised as basic needs?"

Rahman, who works for a private organisation, said he pays income tax every year and also contribute to the state coffer by paying indirect



ACTIONAID BANGLADESH

Participants are seen at "Citizen's Tax Tribunal", a mock tribunal, organised by ActionAid Bangladesh at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban of the University of Dhaka yesterday.

tax through consumption of various goods and services.

In return, he thinks he gets less from the state and his frustration got reflected when he questioned the reason behind the government's inaction on rent control.

"Why is house rent increased every year without any justification? If the government does not take any step to correct these, why should I pay tax?"

Rahman's previous petitioners also had similar grievances.

Shahadat Hossain Shagor, a student of Government Shaheed

Suhrawardy College in Dhaka, cited Article 17 of the constitution that states education was free and mandatory for all young people.

But his family had to pay everything related to his education and count value-added tax on several educational materials as well as transport.

Excluding tuition fees, my family pays on an average Tk 400 as VAT per month, which comes to about Tk 5,000 in a year, he said, adding that his parents had to meet additional expenses by giving up on some services.

He demanded that the government cuts down the VAT on essential products and increases the allocation for education, health and safety nets.

"After paying rent and utility bills and purchasing basic necessities, I am left with hardly anything from my monthly salary of Tk 8,000. Every month, it is the same struggle to meet my family's needs," said Fatema Begum, one of the 40 lakh garment workers, while tabling her petition before the tribunal.

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No more floating LNG terminals

REUTERS, Dhaka/Singapore

Bangladesh will scrap plans to build additional floating liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminals in favour of land-based stations, a government official said.

Adverse weather is making it difficult to operate the country's sole floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) and, hence, Bangladesh does not plan to build any further FSRU projects, said Mohammad Quamruzzaman, managing director of the Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Co.

His firm is in charge of LNG imports at state-owned oil firm Petrobangla.

"We will not go for more floating LNG projects at this time. One is already online and another is expected to start in March next year," he told Reuters.

Bangladesh began importing LNG from Qatar on a regular basis in September through the country's first FSRU operated by privately owned US company Exxcelerate.

The FSRU arrived in April for commissioning at the port of Moheshkhali near the city of Cox's Bazar but its start-up was delayed by several months due to technical problems and bad weather.

A second FSRU project, operated by Summit Corp with Japan's Mitsubishi Corp as a partner, is expected to start operations in March next year, doubling the country's import capacity to 7.5 million tonnes a year.

Scrapped FSRU projects will include a project by India's Reliance Power and another by a consortium comprising Hongkong Shanghai Manjara Power and Malaysia's Petrolia Nasional Bhd, Quamruzzaman said.

Reliance did not reply to requests for comment while Hong Kong Shanghai Manjara Power declined to comment. Petrolia Nasional did not immediately respond to a comment request.

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Saarc not helping SDGs: CPD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) cannot play an effective role in helping nations attain sustainable development goals (SDGs) due to lack of intergovernmental cooperation, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday.

"It is in a state of paralysis," said Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of CPD, while presenting a paper titled 'Interpreting SDGs for South Asia: in search of a regional framework'.

The SDGs have created scope for poverty reduction, employment gener-

ation and human development, but Saarc is not helping in materialising the opportunities.

"The other regions are putting in a structure to support SDG implementation, whereas in SAARC the progress remains sluggish," he said at the event organised by the CPD at the capital's Hotel Golden Tulip - The Grandmark.

Given its inability to collectively promote the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the region and the indefinite postponement of SAARC Summit since 2016, any intergovernmental move in the region concerning SDG will be stalled.

South Asian nations can focus on

the development of productive capacity, structural transformation and decreasing inequality.

"Trans-border trade and connectivity in the region is very important in this regard," he said, adding that a pro-people new system is required to activate the forum.

The new system or institute will fulfil the aspirations of the people and for this reason new knowledge and review will be required, he said.

"This new knowledge and assessment regarding the regional forum should be forwarded to the policymakers so that they can take effective initiatives."

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Gowher Rizvi, international affairs adviser to the prime minister, speaks at a research-policy meeting on "Interpreting SDGs for South Asia: in search of a regional framework" organised by the CPD at a hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Strengthen local agency before Accord departs

Says official of European foreign traders association

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC), the local factory inspection platform for the garment sector, should be strengthened soon so that the European agency Accord can hand over its operations for a smooth departure, said a top official of European foreign traders association Amfori yesterday.

Until the RCC is strengthened, the Accord might continue its inspection and remediation monitoring for workplace safety in Bangladesh, said Christian Ewert, president of Amfori, a Brussels-based organisation of over 2,000 retailers and brands with an annual turnover of over \$2 trillion.

He said, over 200 signatories of the

Accord were also members of the Amfori and Bangladesh was among the top three important sourcing destinations for the Amfori members.

Following a human tragedy, the buying community stepped forward by creating the Accord. Over the last five years, Bangladesh has come to have some of the safest garment factories in the world, said Ewert.

"The Accord in cooperation with the local industry has done an outstanding job in providing factory safety," he said at a regular Amfori roundtable at The Westin Dhaka.

However, the job is not yet completed in a mindful transition to the RCC needs to be ensured in the interest of all parties involved, he said.

The roundtable was moderated by Daniel Seidl, founder of the Bay of Bengal Innovation Council, a newly launched organisation for promoting and branding Bangladesh and the associated region abroad.

"Gender equality can only be achieved by educating and empowering women inside and outside the workplace," said the Amfori president.

The responsibility of achieving this lies with the Bangladesh government, business sector and society, he said.

"Bangladesh has become a place recognised beyond the traditional RMG sector and is set to accelerate in the future," said Gowher Rizvi, the prime minister's international affairs adviser.

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Regulator relaxes rules of provision for merchant banks

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The stockmarket regulator yesterday relaxed the rules of provision for merchant banks' investment in mutual funds.

Now, the merchant banks can keep the provision on the basis of the net asset value of the funds like other financial institutions.

The provision would be equivalent to the difference between the purchasing price of a mutual fund and 85 percent of the fund's net asset value.

The net asset value will be calculated on the basis of the current market price, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission said in a statement.

The decision will bring some relief for the merchant banks as they now

have to maintain a lower provision, industry insiders said.

The capital market watchdog also approved a new set of rules for companies with small capital yesterday, for which a gazette will be published soon. The commission also plans to issue a letter to rebuke the AM Securities and Financial Services for its failure to submit yearly financial statements on time.

In the letter, the BSEC will also warn the stock broker that stern actions will be taken if it does the same in future. The commission has taken the decision when the benchmark index of the DSE—DSEX—rose 41.72 points or 0.79 percent to close the day at 5,298.83.

The Dhaka stocks have been rising for the last three consecutive days,

although the turnover declined by 10.7 percent to Tk 717.15 crore yesterday. Khulna Power was the top traded stock with 67.39 lakh shares worth Tk 52.71 crore changing hands followed by Brac Bank, United Power, Shepherd Industries and SK Trims.

Desh Garments was the day's best performer with a 9.95 percent gain while Golden Harvest was the biggest loser, shedding 11 percent.

Gainers outnumbered losers by 159 to 124, while 40 securities remained unchanged.

However, the key index of the port city bourse rose 68.44 points or 0.69 percent before finishing the day at 9,850.09.

The port city bourse traded 97.88 crore shares and mutual fund units worth Tk 27.09 crore.

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