

Shahjalal Islami Bank launches Shariah-based credit card



M Shahidul Islam, CEO of Shahjalal Islami Bank, addresses the launching of its Shariah-based credit card at Hotel Purbani International in Dhaka yesterday.

STAR BUSINESS DESK
Shahjalal Islami Bank yesterday launched a Shariah-based credit card. M Shahidul Islam, CEO of Shahjalal Islami Bank, presented its details at a press conference at Hotel Purbani International in the capital.

The card is under the concept of Wakalah, which denotes an agency contract where one party appoints another to conduct a defined legal

action on one's behalf for a specified fee. Carrying no issuance charge, the EMV chip-based card will be available in Classic, Gold and Platinum categories, the bank said in a statement.

The Platinum category offers access to Balaka Executive Lounge at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Islam said the bank's total equity now stands at Tk 2,594 crore, paid-up capital Tk 848.56 crore, total asset Tk 25,682.41 crore and total

deposit and investment Tk 38,436 crore.

The export and import business in the first six months of 2019 was Tk 15,000 crore and earned remittance Tk 400 crore. The credit rating of the bank is AA2 for the long term and ST-2 for the short term.

Abdul Aziz, additional managing director of the bank, and Md Shahjahan Shiraj and M Akther Hossain, deputy managing directors, were present.

Google appears to have leveraged Android dominance

REUTERS, New Delhi

Google appears to have misused its dominant position in India and reduced the ability of device manufacturers to opt for alternate versions of its Android mobile operating system, Indian officials found before ordering a wider probe in an antitrust case.

A 14-page order from the Competition Commission of India (CCI), reviewed by Reuters this week, found Google's restrictions on manufacturers seemed to amount to imposition of "unfair conditions" under India's competition law.

Reuters reported last month that the CCI had launched a probe in April against Google for its alleged abuse of Android's dominant position to block rivals, but the contents of the directive detailing the initial assessment upon which that investigation was ordered have not been previously revealed.

The Indian case is similar to one Google faced in Europe, where regulators imposed a \$5 billion fine on the company for forcing manufacturers to pre-install its apps on Android devices. Google has appealed against the verdict.

By making pre-installation of Google's proprietary apps conditional, Google "reduced the ability and incentive of device manufacturers to develop and sell devices operated on alternate versions of Android", the CCI said in the order. "It amounts to prima facie leveraging of Google's dominance".

Asked for comment, Google referred Reuters to its statement last month, in

which it said Android had enabled millions of Indians to connect to the internet by making mobile devices more affordable. Google looked forward to working with the CCI "to demonstrate how Android has led to more competition and innovation, not less", the company said at the time. The CCI did not respond to a request for comment.

While the order, dated April 16, called for a wider probe against



Google, the watchdog's investigations unit could still clear Google of any wrongdoing. The amount of any fine that could be imposed on Google if the CCI rules against it was not clear.

Android, used by device makers for free, features on about 88 percent of the world's smartphones. In India, about 99 percent of the smartphones sold this year used the platform, Counterpoint Research estimates.

In the EU case, regulators said Google forced manufacturers to pre-install Google Search and its Chrome browser, together with its Google Play app store, on Android devices, giving it an unfair advantage.

In the Indian case, Google argued

that Android was an open source platform and pre-installation obligations were "limited in scope", the CCI order said.

The CCI said that complainants in the Indian case - which according to sources involve more than one person - have alleged that Google engaged in abusive behaviour similar to the kind outlined in the European case.

They said Google was engaged in anti-competitive practices "with the aim of cementing Google's dominant position".

Google's "impugned conduct may help perpetuate its dominance in online search markets while resulting in denial of market access for competing search apps", the CCI said in its order.

The investigations arm of the CCI should complete the wider probe in the case within 150 days, the order said, though such cases at the watchdog typically drag on for years.

The CCI also said the role of any Google executive in alleged abuse of the Android platform should also be examined.

The investigation is not the only antitrust headache for the Mountain View, California-based company in one of its key growth markets. Last year, the CCI imposed a fine of 1.36 billion rupees (\$20 million) on Google for "search bias" and abuse of its dominant position.

Google appealed against that order, saying the ruling could cause it "irreparable" harm and reputational loss. That appeal is still pending in an Indian tribunal.



Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, and Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), attend the signing ceremony of a deal between the chamber and the ICT Division titled "e-Wallet for RMG Workers" at the BGMEA Complex in Dhaka on Thursday facilitating garments workers' salary disbursements through mobile banking.



Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, speaks at the concluding ceremony of a two-day "NRB Jobs Presents National Career Fair-2019" organised by Brac University at Bangabandhu International Conference Center in Dhaka on Friday.

US, Japan to 'speed up' trade talks

AFP, Osaka

The US and Japan will "speed up" talks on a trade agreement, Japan's economy minister pledged Friday, as Washington pushes Tokyo for a "more fair" trade relationship.

President Donald Trump, while touting his close ties with Japan, has repeatedly criticised Tokyo for what he views as a trade imbalance, with the issue coming up during his bilateral talks with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the sidelines of the G20 Friday.

"During the Japan-US summit, the two leaders agreed to speed up trade negotiations so that they can achieve results swiftly. Based on that, we held a ministerial meeting in the afternoon," Japan Economy Minister Toshihiko Motegi said after talks with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.

The two negotiators agreed to "vigorously push for meetings of working-level and high-level officials to move negotiations forward", Motegi told reporters.

WB gives \$100m to boost public service delivery

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The programme will also help improve fiscal planning, pension and debt management and state-owned enterprises, for example, by supporting modernising payment processes including electronic fund transfers for pension processing and payment, it said.

Monowar Ahmed, secretary to Economic Relations Division (ERD), and Dandan Chen, acting country director of the WB, signed the financing agreement at the ERD office in the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar yesterday.

"The programme will support the government's PFM action plan 2016-2021, the multilateral lender said in a statement. "The government of Bangladesh is committed to further strengthen the public financial management system and ensure transparency and accountability," said Ahmed.

"Bangladesh is a pioneer in having a PFM with built-in disintegration ability in terms of climate, gender, poverty and other development priorities," he said.

He believes such PFM sensitiveness ultimately ensures that citizens receive social services effectively and on time.

"An efficient public financial management system is essential for sound macroeconomic management," said Chen. "The programme will build on the successes of the government's ongoing efforts to help public agencies strengthen oversight and improve availability of public resources for effective and efficient public service delivery," he added.

Agriculture remains in neglect

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One of the reasons might be the poor extension system, he said.

From that point of view, the declining share of agriculture in budgetary allocation is not a good sign.

Akhter said agriculture should not be seen from its share in overall GDP. "It is a broad based sector and 75 percent of rural population depend on farming. Allocation for agriculture has been increased for greater impact on poverty alleviation."

Farmers also have to be given price support, he said, adding that paddy should be purchased directly from producers. He went on to cite the West Bengal government as an exemplar on this front.

The agriculture ministry has recently asked the IFPRI to carry out a study to support farmers, he said, adding that the IFPRI will begin study soon.

"We should view procurement from the objective of giving price support and incentive to farmers and not from the objective of building public stock," he added.

There should have been some measures in the proposed budget to ensure fair prices for farmers who

suffered losses for slumping prices of paddy in the last boro season, said M Asaduzzaman, former research director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

"No sensitivity was shown towards farmers and farming in the budget speech although they are producing food for the nation."

The government could have allocated funds to provide interest-free loans to growers during the harvesting season so that they do not have to sell their produce to meet any emergency need for fund, he added.

Rice accounts for more than 70 percent of total cropped area of 1.54 crore hectares, and 77 percent of marginal and small famers depend on rice for food security and their livelihoods, according to Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2015, funded by the USAID.

The initiative to introduce crop insurance is a good move as it will address the risk of crop losses for farmers, said Quazi Shahabuddin, former director general of the BIDS.

The falling share of government allocation in agriculture is not satisfactory.

"We are nearing the exhaustion of

our technological frontier, the high-yielding varieties. The HYV rice are grown on 90 percent of Boro area, and nearly 70 percent of Aman acreage. We need second green revolution to ensure food security of future generation."

Since cultivable land is shrinking, the only way to expand production is to increase productivity, he said, while suggesting exploiting modern biotechnology for increased food production.

The biggest risk for agriculture is climate change and steps should be taken to address the risk, Asaduzzaman said.

Rice production is unlikely to grow after 2021, but there is lack of concern for that, said a senior agricultural scientist working at a public research institute.

As production is increasing every year, it may be that all are thinking that there is nothing to worry about, he said.

"Massive investment is needed. Farmers also have to be ensured profitable prices for their produce so that they feel encouraged to grow and improve their living standards," he said.



Md Hedayetullah, chairman of Mutual Trust Bank (MTB), launches its third air lounge at the domestic terminal of Osmani International Airport, Sylhet on Thursday. Anis A Khan, CEO of MTB, and Mohammad Shams-ul-Islam, CEO of Agrani Bank, were present.

Beach Hatchery to set up plant for koral farming

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"I hope it will be a successful project," Islam said, adding that the same technology from AquaOptima is being used in Thailand, Indonesia and Iran where farms are making profit.

Beach Hatchery will borrow the fund from external sources in two phases. In the first phase, it targets to borrow Tk 125 crore.

In order to process the export-oriented fish, the company will set up a processing plant as well as storage facilities, said Islam, also the chairman of Meghna Sea Foods Ltd.

Cat fish, grouper fish, white fish, and Indian Salmon will also be grown at the plant, albeit in small scale and the feasibility is now being looked into.

Beach Hatchery is listed on both Dhaka and Chattogram stock exchanges.

Islami Bank's default loans double in three months

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"But the impact of IBBL going bad would be 3 to 4 times more," said Mansur, also a former senior economist of the International Monetary Fund.

The central bank should take prompt measure to protect the IBBL or else the banking industry and financial sector as a whole may face the music, he added.

Khondker Ibrahim Khaled, a former deputy governor of the central bank, echoed the same as Mansur, saying the financial health of the bank has deteriorated after the new owners took over.

When the financial health of a bank declines its invariably because its sponsors intervened in the operations.

"The central bank should ensure the independence of the IBBL's management," he added.

Meanwhile, Yeahia said the bank's default loans will come down in the second quarter of the year as a number of initiatives have been taken to recover and reschedule the default loans once again.

BB needs full autonomy

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Bankers should focus on strengthening their monitoring on the big loans as the habitual defaulters usually take those, said Ahmed Firoz Kabir, a member of the parliamentary standing committee on the finance ministry.

Jamaluddin Ahmed, a director of the BB; Md Akhtaruzzaman, economic adviser of the central bank; and Mohammad Ismail, chairman of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, spoke among others.