

Two importers sued for laundering Tk 2.04cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Chattogram Customs House has filed two cases against four owners of two companies over charges of laundering money involving Tk 2.04 crore in the name of importing goods.

The cases were filed on Friday with Bandar Police Station in the port city against Dewan Bulbul Islam and Nur Al Mamun Rubel, owners of N Islam Enterprise, and Abdul Barik and Kabir Hossain, owners of Grambangla Food Corporation.

The cases came a year after Bangladesh Bank and the National Board of Revenue instructed the customs to file the cases after a primary investigation.

Md Nooruddin Milon, deputy commissioner of customs, told The Daily Star that the instruction prompted them to set up an anti-money laundering section and conduct further investigation. The cases were filed as the companies were found engaged in money laundering.

"We have already collected information about other money laundering incidents in the past two years," he said, adding that cases would be filed against them as soon as possible.

According to a central bank report and customs documents, in May 2018 the authorities seized two consignments of cigarettes worth Tk 12.77 crore. The importers, Grambangla Food Corporation, had declared its consignment as raw materials of textile goods and N Islam Enterprise as machinery.

The two companies had opened letters of credit for Tk 11 lakh to import the raw materials and machinery and had laundered Tk 2.04 crore through non-banking channel or hundi, case documents showed.

Customs sources said the tax for importing machinery and textile goods is a maximum 3 percent whereas it is up to 600 percent for cigarette.

The report suspected that the two consignments were imported by the same gang as two different companies imported them from Singapore's Sri Vaari international and through the same shipping agent, Fastex Logistics Maritime.

The report also said the companies exist only on papers and their documents related to house rent, trade licence, address, bank accounts, letter of credit and credit report of suppliers were all forged.

Trump moves ahead with new tariffs on Chinese product

AFP, Washington

Washington moved ahead Sunday with new tariffs on Chinese imports as it stepped up a high-pressure campaign aimed at coercing Beijing to sign a new trade deal even amid fears of a further slowing of US and world growth.

The additional 15 percent tariffs, affecting a portion of the \$300 billion in goods from the Asian giant that so far has been spared, took effect at 04H01 GMT, according to the US Trade Representative's office.

President Donald Trump on Friday ruled out any further postponement. "They're on," he told reporters.

The new tariffs will target a range of products, from foodstuffs (ketchup, butchered meat, pork sausage, fruits, vegetables, milk, cheese) to sports equipment (golf clubs, surf boards, bicycles), to musical instruments, sportswear and furniture, according to an official list.

Economists at the Washington-based Peterson Institute for International Economics estimate \$112 billion in goods will be affected.

The trade war touched off by Trump more than a year ago received its latest jolt last week with the US announcement that all Chinese goods would be subjected to tariffs by the end of this year.

More than \$250 billion worth of China's



US President Donald Trump

\$540 billion in exports to the US (2018 figure) are already subject to tariffs.

Trump's announcement earlier this month drew a retaliatory move from Beijing, which said it would target \$75 billion in US goods, beginning in part on September 1.

Hundreds of US companies and professional groups have appealed to the Trump administration to postpone the new tariffs, saying they would destroy jobs and place a burden on consumers. But on Friday, the Republican president, already campaigning for a second term, said those complaining were themselves partly at fault.

"Badly run and weak companies are smartly

blaming these small Tariffs instead of themselves for bad management," he tweeted. "...and who can really blame them for doing that? Excuses!"

Dismissing the idea of postponing the tariffs to a later date, Trump nonetheless offered a glimmer of hope in the form of ongoing talks.

"We're having conversations with China. Meetings are scheduled. Calls are being made. I guess the meeting in September continues to be on. It hasn't been canceled. We'll see what happens," Trump said.

Days earlier, Trump caused widespread consternation when he tweeted "I hereby order" American companies to stop doing business with China, sparking both doubts and derision. His aides quickly sought to dial it back.

The president launched his trade war in March 2018, demanding that China end practices widely seen as unfair, such as forced technology transfers from US firms and the massive subsidies given to Chinese enterprises.

While the strategy is clearly weighing on the Chinese economy, it has produced few positive results.

A further round of tariffs could sharply cut Chinese growth, the International Monetary Fund recently predicted, and continuing tensions could spark a global slowdown.

Yet Chinese leaders have shown little inclination to give in.



Law Minister Anisul Huq, sixth from left; Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, fifth from left; Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre (Biac) Chairman Mahubur Rahman, sixth from right, and Biac CEO Muhammad A (Rume) Ali, fifth from right, pose at Biac's 8th anniversary seminar on "Effective ADR Process to Resolve Financial Disputes for a Sustainable Financial Sector" at the Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka on August 31.

Cattle insurance with digital tracking

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"Digitalisation is inevitable, but it should be win-win both for farmers and innovators. Otherwise, both will be impacted."

Seraj said Phoenix Insurance can see whether the policy is cost-effective for farmers. The government can also come up with a subsidy programme to help farmers buy the insurance policy that will ultimately improve the livestock sector.

"Due to the absence of historical database on cattle deaths, re-insurers don't want to lower the premium," said Gokul Chand Das, a member of the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority.

With the help of digitalisation, a database will be prepared. Then insurers will realise that the death rate of livestock is low, which may prompt them to reduce the premium, he said.

He said the risk reduction for farmers,

not the profit, should be the main goal of the insurance policy.

Md Raisul Alam Mondal, fisheries and livestock secretary, said such an insurance policy would be helpful for the livestock sector because any accident facing an animal may hamper a farmer badly.

"Our ministry will be with you to provide any policy support but the product should be win-win for the farmers and the insurers."

Fida Haq, managing director and chief executive officer of ShurjoMukhi Ltd, Mohammed Shueb, chairman of Phoenix Insurance, Feisal Hussain, team leader of the Business Finance for the Poor in Bangladesh, Abdul Jabbar Sikder, acting director general of the livestock department, and Nathu Ram Sarker, director general of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute, also spoke.

Citibank NA Bangladesh recognised for digital leadership

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Citibank NA Bangladesh has recently been recognised for digital leadership by Global Finance for the 12th consecutive year.

The recognition comes at the publication's Annual World's Best Digital Bank Awards, the bank said in a statement yesterday. In the publication's 2019 World's Best Corporate/Institutional Digital Bank Awards in Asia Pacific, Citi got the winning title across 17 markets covered by the awards programme.

Citi was named best corporate/institutional digital bank in Australia, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

The bank also won six regional sub-category awards, namely best online cash management, best trade finance services,

best online treasury services, best in mobile banking, best mobile banking app, and best open banking APIs.

Citi's Treasury and Trade Solutions launched CitiDirect BE® on mobile and table devices in Asia Pacific over the past year.

CitiDirect BE® is an award-winning institutional online banking platform. The business also introduced biometric authentication for institutional clients, enabling facial recognition and fingerprint authentication for convenient access to CitiDirect BE®.

"As the leading digital bank in Bangladesh, Citi is committed to bringing its range of global innovative solutions to customers," said N Rajashekaran, Citi country officer for Citibank NA Bangladesh.

"We continue to scale by plugging into relevant digital ecosystems where our customers are active to offer increasingly innovative and personalised products and services."

Deals signed with Reliance for 718MW plant

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It also signed gas supply agreement with Petrobangla and transmission agreement with Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB).

Power Division Joint Secretary Sheikh Faezul Amin, BPDB Secretary Saiful Islam Azad, PGCB Secretary Mohammad Jahangir Azad, Titas Gas Secretary Mahmudur Rab and Reliance Bangladesh LNG and Power Director Sameer Kumar Gupta signed the deals on behalf of their respective sides.

At the event at Bidyut Bhaban in Dhaka, Prime Minister's Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury said large power projects are being set up to ensure that every citizen gets uninterrupted electricity in due time, according to news agency BSS.

Khaled Mahmood, chairman of BPDB; Riva Ganguly Das, Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh; M Abul Kalam Azad, principal coordinator for SDG affairs at the Prime Minister's Office; Ahmed Kaikaus, power secretary, and Abu Hena M Rahmatul Munim, energy secretary, also spoke.

Unpredictable tax system making exports less competitive

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As of now, there is no effective programme to make them skilled and employed, he said.

He said the advantage of demographic dividend of the population will be over soon.

"We will have a larger number of older age population soon," he said.

Shehzad Munim, FICCI president, also urged the government for a predictable taxation system and long-term continuity of policies.

Banks hardly lend via agent banking

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Nineteen banks have so far commenced agent banking services, but only seven give out loans.

With a view to taking banking services to the underserved parts of the country, the BB in 2013 issued the agent banking guideline. But the licensees did not start full-fledged operations until 2016. Agent banking offers limited banking and financial services by way of village stores.

Agents provide services such as cash deposits, withdrawals, remittance disbursement, small value loan disbursement and recovery of loans as well as cash payments under the government's social safety net programmes.

Of the total disbursed loans, Bank Asia accounts for 89 percent of the sum and has plans to bump up its lending even more. Md Arfan Ali, managing director of Bank Asia, said his bank was now focused on accelerating loan disbursement through the agent banking window.

"The bank wants to disburse loans at the same rate at which it mobilises deposits from rural areas."

The reason being, Bank Asia is working to lessen its loan concentration by way of giving out small loans to a wide range of customers, he said.

Through the window, Bank Asia, one of the pioneers in agent banking, disburses loans ranging from Tk 20,000 to Tk 20 lakh. In some cases, it disbursed even Tk 50 lakh to a single client, he said.

NATIONAL EXPORT TROPHY 2016-17 WINNERS		
GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
Zaber and Zubair Fabrics	AKM Knit Wear	That's It Sportswear
Refat Garments	Four H Fashions	DIRD Composite Textiles
Square Fashions	Kamal Yarn	Maksons Spinning Mills
Badsha Textiles	Four H Dyeing and Printing	Paramount Textile
Envoy Textiles	Bright Seafood	BD Seafood
Noman Terry Towel Mills	Janata Jute Mills	Karim Jute Mills
Seamark (BD)	BBJ Leather Goods	Footbed Footwear
Akij Jute Mills	FB Footwear	Heritage Enterprise
SAF Industries	Alin Foods Trade	Habiganj Agro
Picard Bangladesh	Alin Food Products	Classical Handmade Products
Bay Footwear	BD Creation	Allplast Bangladesh
Mansur General Trading Company	Durable Plastic	Meghna Innova Rubber Company
Pran Agro	Rangpur Metal Industries	Jeans 2000
Rajdhani Enterprise	BRB Cable Industries	RM Interlinings
Karupannya Rangpur	BSRM Steels	Zaber and Zubair Accessories
Bengal Plastics	Incepta Pharmaceuticals	Bengal Poly and Paper Sack
Shinepukur Ceramics	Pacific Jeans	
Uniglory Cycle Industries	Shasha Denims	
Engerypac Engineering	Bang-chung Trade and Tourism	
Marine Safety System	Nihao Food Company	
Square Pharmaceuticals	Uniglory Paper and Packaging	
ServicEngine		
Universal Jeans		
Fardin Accessories		
Moon Trims		
Orchid Trading Corporation		
Mir Telecom		
Monno Ceramic Industries		

Working on single-digit interest rate: PM

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Hasina also asked them to plant trees to protect the environment. The prime minister handed over export trophies to 66 companies under 28 categories for their extraordinary export performance.

For 2016-17, some 29 companies were selected for gold trophies, 21 for silver and 16 for bronze ones. Hasina went on to urge the exporters to add new products to the country's export basket.

"You have to know the demands of various countries and manufacture products in line with that. You have to grab new markets." She also asked the businesspeople to look into the demands of non-traditional products across the globe alongside the traditional ones.

Chaired by Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, the function was addressed, among others, by Tofail Ahmed, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the commerce ministry; Sheikh Fazle Fahim, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry; Md Mofizul Islam, senior secretary of the commerce ministry; and Fatima Yasmin, vice-chairperson of EPB.

Migrant workers suffer for rogue recruitment

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Around 25 million people are victims of forced labour around the world and one fourth of them are international migrants, it adds.

Bangladesh has a significant market opportunity for businesses to secure their connection to a global market where the legalisation of corporate responsibility is increasingly becoming a reality, said Sharon Dimanche, deputy chief of mission of IOM Bangladesh.

If Bangladesh ensures sustainable sourcing and ethical recruitment, it will increase the country's competitiveness, she said.

"Labour is a very sensitive issue. That's why we need to take this issue as an utmost priority," said Rubana

Huq, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"We want to do what is best for our labourers. We need to make a bridge among the stakeholders. And, we need to engage ourselves to bring positive changes," she added.

The garment sector has gone through significant positive changes after the Raza Plaza collapse, said Asif Ibrahim, a director of the BGMEA.

"I would urge you, all the international community, to visit our factories which are now the best factories in the world," he said.

"We take workers' issues very seriously. We must follow the labour law. We want to promote a sustainable business model where we have a good

supply chain," he added.

Humayun Rashid, president the IBFB, said, "We want to promote ethical labour practices. It will help us to build a better business environment. This will include improving well-being and opportunities for Bangladeshi workers."

Md Rezaul Haque and Ahmed Munirur Saleheen, additional secretaries to the labour and employment ministry; Kazi Roushan Ara, executive director of the Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh; Marina Manke, head of labour mobility and human development division at IOM International, and Saiful Millat, country representative of Amfori Bangladesh, also spoke.



Atiur Rahman, former governor of Bangladesh Bank; SK Sur Chowdhury, banking reform adviser; Abdul Hai Sarker, founder chairman of Dhaka Bank; Altaf Hossain Sarker, a director; ATM Hayatuzzaman Khan, another former chairman, and Syed Mahubur Rahman, CEO, attend an orientation for Dhaka Bank's management trainee officers at Six Seasons Hotel in Dhaka recently.