



Quazi Osman Ali, managing director of Social Islami Bank, opens three new branches in Bhanga of Faridpur, Muradnagar of Cumilla and Chayani Bazar of Noakhali through a digital platform yesterday.

Canadian officer in Huawei CFO's arrest says he did not ask for phone passcodes

REUTERS, Vancouver

A Canadian police officer involved in the arrest of Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou two years ago in a US extradition case testified on Monday he did not plan to obtain her mobile phone passcodes or search her electronic devices.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Constable Gurvinder Dhaliwal told a Canadian court that he and his partner were "discreet" about their contact with Canadian border officials on the eve of Meng's arrest on Dec. 1, 2018.

He said they discussed collecting Meng's phone and other electronic devices and putting them in protective bags, but that he did not ask the border agents to get passcodes.

Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) superintendent Sowmith Katragadda had previously testified that he requested Meng's phone and laptop passcodes and she provided them voluntarily.

Meng, 48, is accused of misleading the bank HSBC Holdings PLC on Huawei Technologies Co Ltd's business affairs in Iran, allegedly causing the bank to break US sanctions. If extradited, Meng will face trial for fraud in the Eastern District of New York.

She denies the charges and is fighting them from under house arrest in Vancouver, arguing the arrest itself was the product of political interference.

Huawei lawyers are seeking evidence to support their case that Meng's rights were violated before her arrest. In a document submitted to the court last year, CBSA admitted making an "error" in sharing the passcodes with RCMP.

Dhaliwal said it was his job to secure the devices after the CBSA examination was complete and Meng was in custody. He said he retrieved the devices along with a piece of paper with passcodes on it.

A border agent handed him the paper, but they did not discuss how the device passcodes were collected.



Meng Wanzhou

Asked if he requested the passcodes, Dhaliwal replied, "Absolutely not," adding that he was not concerned about the presence of the piece of paper stating the passcodes. "I didn't even think about it. I just put it with the phones."

Dhaliwal told the court that days after the arrest he received an email from RCMP staff sergeant Ben Chang requesting the make, model, and serial numbers, as well as photos of the devices, which Dhaliwal retrieved. Chang has declined to appear for testimony. Court documents showed that the government initially declined to release notes relating to him to

Huawei lawyers, citing witness safety.

Dhaliwal testified that he was never asked for passcodes, and did not look at the contents of the devices.

In the afternoon defense lawyer Scott Fenton pressed Dhaliwal about his travel to the airport on the eve of Meng's arrival at Vancouver International Airport.

Dhaliwal said the main purpose of his trip was to find out whether Meng was on the flight. Fenton countered by telling Dhaliwal he could have learned whether Meng's plane took off with a "simple Google search."

Dhaliwal also said he did not pay close attention during a briefing with the Department of Justice on the eve of Meng's arrest, nor did he spend much time reading the provisional warrant before the arrest.

Meng's lawyers are fighting to get her extradition dismissed on the basis of alleged abuses of process, arguing they constitute violations of her civil rights and that US and Canadian officials coordinated before her arrest.

Officers with the CBSA testified last week that their questioning of Meng, daughter of Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei, followed standard procedures and was separate from any action by law enforcement.

This week's witness testimony is expected to last until Friday, when a series of police witnesses will speak of their role in Meng's arrest.

Diplomatic relations between Ottawa and Beijing have degraded in the wake of Meng's arrest. China arrested Canadian citizens Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig on espionage charges days later.

Meng's extradition hearing is set to wrap up in April 2021.

Singapore, Saudi companies push Indian solar tariffs to record low

REUTERS, Chennai

The Indian units of Singapore-based Sembcorp Industries Ltd and Saudi Arabia-based Aljomaiah Holding Co won government auctions to sell solar power for a record low of 2 rupees (\$0.0270) per kilo watt hour (kWh), sources said.

The tariff represented a discount of nearly a sixth from the lowest bid for solar power of 2.36 rupees in the auctions conducted by Solar Energy Corp of India Ltd (SECI) in June.

India, the world's third-biggest greenhouse gas emitter, has set a target of raising its renewable energy to 175 gigawatts (GW) by 2022 and 450 GW, from about 90 GW now.

Sembcorp's Indian unit Green Infra Wind Energy Ltd will operate a solar plant with a capacity of 400 megawatts (MW), while Aljomaiah Energy and Water Co will construct a 200 MW plant, a screengrab of the results of the auctions conducted by state-run Solar Energy Corp of India Ltd (SECI) showed.

Three sources familiar with the matter, including a SECI official, independently confirmed the development. NTPC and Sembcorp declined comment. Reuters was not able to contact Aljomaiah for comment beyond regular business hours.

SECI, the country's main agency for renewable energy adoption, awards contracts to the company offering to sell electricity at the lowest price, following which a power purchase agreement (PPA) is signed.

The decline in renewable energy generation costs has helped India in its drive to use green power to fight climate change. India's largest electricity generator NTPC Ltd won the licence to operate the remaining 470 MW at 2.01 rupees per kWh. The companies will develop the power plants in India's northwestern desert state of Rajasthan.



Md Touhidul Alam Khan

Standard Bank gets new additional managing director

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Md Touhidul Alam Khan yesterday joined Standard Bank as its additional managing director.

Prior to the joining, he was a deputy managing director of Prime Bank, according to a statement.

Khan started his banking career at Agrani Bank as a senior officer in 1993.

He also worked at Bank Asia and Modhumoti Bank in different capacities.

Khan obtained his master's degree in finance from the University of Dhaka.



UNITED LUBE OIL

Kazi Inam Ahmed, managing director of Gemcon Sports, and Amir H Khan, CEO of United Lube Oil, the sole distributor of Petronas Lubricants International, exchange the signed documents of a deal in Dhaka on Saturday. Petronas Lubricants became the title sponsor of Gemcon Khulna team in the ongoing Bangabandhu T20 Cup 2020.

SMEs with access to finance double employee numbers since inception

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The rise in the volume of SME loans will not gain momentum unless the transparency of boards is ensured, said Arif Khan, managing director of IDLC Finance.

The NBFI started to give out loans in 2007 when many industry people argued that such financing options are highly risky, he said.

"But, we have got success by way of disbursing loans to the SME sector," he said.

Defaulted loans at IDLC Finance is below 3 per cent, much lower than the average non-performing loans in the NBFI sector.

NPLs in the 33 NBFI in Bangladesh stood at Tk 8,905.62 crore in June, which is 13.29 per cent of the outstanding loans, according to data from the central bank.

Bazlul Haque Khondker, a professor of economics at the University of Dhaka, presented the research paper at the event.

Quoting the study, he said the highest employment growth was recorded in the service (174.2 per cent) and manufacturing (131 per cent) enterprises since their inception.

The highest growth rate of 134 per cent has been found for salaried jobs over the period.

This form of employment is more stable, creating a predictable income stream for the workers, Khondker said.

Climate risk insurance crucial for coping with future disasters

FROM PAGE B1

It is necessary to identify the risks and conduct joint activities at both the private and government levels.

In Bangladesh, research on risk management for climate change is needed to create a larger database at the academic level so that the people are better prepared, said Mahbuba Nasreen, a professor of the Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies at the University of Dhaka. "There is no other alternative for ensuring economic safety for farmers and agro-traders," she added.

Rezaul Karim, head of programme support at the WFP, said food security is an important issue in the country, which just recently faced a number of floods that caused untold damage to farmers.

"We should find out how to develop our systems in a way that could improve the delivery of social safety nets," Karim said.

Additional Managing Director and Company Secretary of Green Delta Insurance Syed Moinuddin Ahmed; REECALL-2021 Coordinator Harun-Or-Rashid; Head of Policy Influencing, Campaign and Communications of Oxfam S. M. Monjur Rashid; and Co-Founder and Director of WRMS Anuj Kumbhat were, among others, present at the event.

Come and invest in special economic zones

FROM PAGE B4

Although it has been more than three years since the mass exodus of Rohingyas to Bangladesh from their homeland Myanmar, not a single Rohingya has been repatriated to Myanmar because the Myanmar authorities have not created the conducive environment for repatriation, said Momen.

All three ambassadors strongly commended Bangladesh for its humanitarian stance for the Rohingyas.

They appreciated the extraordinary humanitarian gesture of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina by providing shelter to the 1.1 million Rohingyas who have fled their homeland in Rakhine State of Myanmar after being persecuted by their own state.

Pick projects cautiously to save fund for coronavirus job

FROM PAGE B1

The provision of a foreign tour of 32 officials under the "Expansion of improved varieties of grasses for the development of animal nutrition and transfer of appropriate technology" project was discussed in the meeting.

Of them, 27 officials are from the ministries that have nothing to do with the project. The meeting instructed to drop their names.

Regarding the foreign tour, the planning secretary said the foreign tour had been allowed, but the number of officials has been reduced.

The Ecneec meeting approved seven projects involving Tk 10,702 crore. The government funding is Tk 6,749.27 crore and the rest Tk 4,242 crore will be mobilised as foreign aid.

The expansion of improved varieties of grasses for the development of animal nutrition and transfer of appropriate technology project under

the fisheries and livestock ministry will cost Tk 116.6 crore. It will be implemented between April 2020 and March 2024.

The meeting also approved a project to construct more than 100 five-storied buildings in Khurushkul, Cox's Bazar, to rehabilitate 3,606 families, who have become homeless due to the expansion of the airport and the climate change. The Khurushkul Special Shelter project would cost Tk 1,334 crore.

According to the proposal of the planning ministry, 119 five-storied buildings will be constructed. In addition, about 23 kilometres of internal and connecting roads, 36km of drains, 26 special pumps, 8km of water lines, 14 overground water reservoirs, four cyclone centres, solar panels and several other infrastructures will be built.

The meeting approved the revised proposal of Payra deep seaport in Patuakhali, increasing the cost by

Tk 1,024 crore and extending the deadline by two years.

The cost of the seaport project rose by 23 per cent from the last estimate of Tk 3,350 crore to meet the additional expenses on land acquisition, among others.

The Ecneec approved the "Establishment of Sheikh Hasina Weaving Village Phase I (first revised)" project, raising the cost to Tk 307.45 crore from Tk 253.30 crore originally.

Other approved projects are the Western Economic Corridor & Regional Enhancement Programme (WeCARE) Phase-I: Rural Connectivity, Market and Logistic Infrastructure Improvement Project; Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (Phase II); and WeCARE Phase-1: Development of Jhenaidah-Jessore Highway project. The Ecneec has instructed to complete the Jhenaidah-Jessore Highway project by 2023 instead of 2025 as proposed by the planning ministry.

Bangladesh pays industrial victims way less than ILO standard

FROM PAGE B1

"Yet much more still needs to be done to mitigate the safety and health risks at workplaces. The skills and lessons learned from remediation of RMG factories can be applied to workplaces in other sectors," he said.

"Improved collaboration between different regulatory bodies and the industry is needed to strengthen the enforcement of national laws and standards on workplace safety," he

added.

Building safety of all residential and commercial establishments should be regulated by Rajuk and the Fire Service and Civil Defence during the design and construction stage of buildings.

Once a factory starts operating in a building, the DIFE (the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments) would be responsible for industrial operational layouts and

occupational safety and health issues in the factory, Poutiainen said.

"The ILO is working closely with the DIFE to strengthen its governance and monitoring mechanisms."

"It is important that government, employers and workers all work together to establish a culture of safety to prevent accidents at work. Safety is something that we all need to work on every day," he said in a written reply to queries from The Daily Star.



AKIJ BOARD

Sk Bashir Uddin, managing director of Akij Group, and Mohammad Khoureshed Alam, a director for sales and marketing at Akij Board, pose at Akij Board Business Conference 2020 at the Radisson hotel in Dhaka on Saturday.

Xiaomi's profit jumps 19pc in third quarter as smartphone shipments surge

REUTERS, Shenzhen, China

Xiaomi Corp reported a 19 per cent jump in third quarter net profit on Tuesday, beating estimates, as the Chinese smartphone maker's smartphone shipments over the quarter surged by 45.3 per cent on a year earlier.

Smartphone revenue grew to 47.6 billion yuan, an increase of 47.5 per cent in the same period, it said in a statement. Overall quarterly revenue rose to 72.1 billion yuan, up from 53.7 billion yuan.

Import of painted bike components allowed again

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They are likely to reopen," said Matiur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Motorcycle Assemblers and Manufacturers Association.

He said all the companies, be assemblers or manufacturers, would have to import CKD components of bikes.

"We need an extension of the scope to test new models of bikes and to see customers' response to decide on the models that we will start making from next year," said Rahman, also chairman of the Uttara Group of Companies.

Until 2015, motorcycle assemblers could import painted knocked-down components of motorcycles.

In April 2015, the Motorcycle Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh (MMEAB) demanded amendments to definitions of CKD motorcycles, citing that the difference that painted CKD bikes are allowed to be imported, although vehicles can be imported in CKD form sans the painting.

Later, the government decided to stop providing the scope to import bikes in CKD form. However, the revenue authority extended the scope until June this year amid demands from assemblers.

The NBR discontinued the benefit along with withdrawing the value-added tax (VAT) exemption benefit for bike manufacturers in June this year.

"It would have been proper justice if the NBR had reinstated the VAT exemption benefit for firms which are really making motorcycles," said MMEAB President Hafizur Rahman Khan.

Khan, also chairman of Runner Automobiles, a pioneer in motorcycle making, said the latest decision reflects weakness in policymaking.

Already three categories of manufacturers/assemblers have been created without clear policy guidelines on motorcycle components import with or without paint, he said.

Subrata Ranjan Das, executive director of ACI Motors, said the policy should be updated in line with advancements of technology used in motorcycles.

Bangladesh's bike market began to expand fast from the fiscal year 2016-17 when the government slashed the supplementary duty by 25 percentage points to 20 per cent on the import of the two-wheelers' components to encourage domestic manufacturing.