



Md Siraj Uddin, director general of Bangladesh Post Office, and Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of Bank Asia, attended a daylong "Agent Banking Workshop for Digital Post Office Entrepreneurs" organised by Bank Asia through a digital platform on Saturday.



Wafi Shafique Menhaz Khan, managing director and CEO of Green Delta Securities, and Sabbir Ahmed, managing director and head of retail banking of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, signed an agreement last week to offer "attractive brokerage commission rates" to the latter's clients seeking to open non-resident Bangladesh beneficiary owner accounts.



Emranul Huq, managing director and CEO of Dhaka Bank, and Sohana Rouf Chowdhury, managing director of Rang Motors, signed an agreement last week facilitating cash management services for the latter.



Tamara Hasan Abed, managing director of Brac social enterprises, inaugurates outlet of Aarong some 500 metres away from the previous one in Tejgaon last Friday.

Bank directors' demand for extending loan repayment tenure faces criticism

FROM PAGE B1 This means a majority of clients had paid instalments despite the business slowdown, the MD said. "So, why will the central bank relax the repayment tenure? The BAB proposal is completely illogical and will go against the interest of the banking industry," he said. Directors of banks are trying to fulfill their vested interests as many of their enterprises are in dire straits because of their ill practices in operating businesses, he said. For instance, they took loans worth Tk 171,666 crore as of September 2019, which is around 18 per cent of the total outstanding loans in the banking sector. A good number of directors may become defaulters if they fail to manage the facilities. The Association of Bankers, Bangladesh, a forum of managing directors of banks, earlier welcomed

the central bank that allowed borrowers to repay loans by extending the repayment tenure by two years. But, the BAB proposals have contradicted the ABB's stance, the MD said. Defaulted loans, which decreased last year, may go up in the days ahead as the central bank lifted moratorium. Non-performing loans (NPLs) stood at Tk 94,440 crore as of September last year, down 1.74 per cent from three months earlier and 18.73 per cent year-on-year, data from the Bangladesh Bank showed. Salehuddin Ahmed, a former governor of the central bank, said that the BAB was not authorised to submit such proposals to the central bank as there had been a conflict of interest. "Directors are not allowed to be involved in the operation of banks. But the proposals have given a clear indication that they are engaged in the

daily operations of banks, breaching rules," he said. The central bank should strictly oppose the BAB recommendations, Ahmed said. If required, the central bank can sit with the ABB to take a decision to this end, he said. Business chambers are supposed to raise such demands, so it is quite illogical for the BAB to submit the proposals, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue. Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said that the central bank should not issue any notice based on the BAB recommendations. "Some borrowers who have taken working capital may face troubles in the days ahead. So, the central bank may think of the matter positively. But, such an issue should not be generalised," he said.



KM Awlad Hossain

Bengal Commercial Bank appoints DMD

STAR BUSINESS DESK Bengal Commercial Bank recently witnessed the appointment of a deputy managing director. The appointee, KM Awlad Hossain, was previously serving as deputy managing director and chief operating officer of Dutch Bangla Bank. He gathered 27 years' experience in banking starting his career with Agrani Bank in 1993 as a senior officer.

Euro zone recovery delayed, to gather pace from mid-year: Lagarde

REUTERS, Frankfurt Europe's recovery from a recession induced by the Covid-19 pandemic has been somewhat delayed but should pick up pace from mid-year, European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde said in comments published by a French

newspaper on Sunday. With euro zone nations locking down their economies to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus, the bloc's economy shrank last quarter and a contraction in the first three months of 2021 is a distinct possibility as much of the services sector remains shut.

Proposed industrial policy aims at skills uplift

FROM PAGE B1 State Minister for Industries Kamal Ahmed Mojumder said there is a lack of skilled technicians for higher production. "We need to build up skilled technicians and we have to address the workers' benefit," he said. Mojumder also suggested giving priority on light-engineering so that the discrimination between imported and local machinery decreases. The case of investment abroad by local entrepreneurs will be given priority in the industrial policy, he added. Considering the issue of environmental conservation, the industrial policy will be formulated by ensuring the establishment of industrial factories in designated areas. While addressing the workshop, Matiuur Rahman, chairman of Uttara Motors, suggested including local vendors' issues to help develop local components for the automobile industry. He demanded a separate policy so that local vendors can build their

production capacity. "If a separate policy is developed, the local vendors will be able to manufacture a number of local components for the automobile industry," Rahman said. Hafizur Rahman Khan, chairman of Runner Automobiles, said Bangladesh has the potential to improve its automobile industry as the market is moving to Asia. He suggested giving priority to the automobile policy in the national industrial policy 2021. Ferdous Ara Begum, chief executive of the Business Initiative Leading Development, said the cost of doing business in Bangladesh is increasing day by day due to the hiking of logistic cost. So, the logistic sector should be incorporated in the policy to reduce the cost of doing business, he added. Md Mafizur Rahman, managing director of the SME Foundation, urged the government to incorporate the informal sector in the industrial policy to address the problem. According to him, the informal

sector contributes greatly to the economy and so it should be incorporated. Md Mostaque Hassan, chairman of the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, said entrepreneurs cannot develop their business due to a lack of efficiency. He suggested the need to address the skills development issue of entrepreneurs. Anwar Hossain Chowdhury, director general of the Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistance Center, also emphasised on the inclusion of skills training in the policy. He also said technology should also give priority with skills development in the policy. "We need skilled trainers for building efficiency of workers to operate the high technology," he said. Moderating the workshop, KM Ali Azam, industries secretary, said all these suggestions would be incorporated in the final policy. He said the government is giving priority to the fourth industrial revolution in the upcoming policy so that the target will be fulfilled.

Mashreq Bank relocates office to Gulshan

STAR BUSINESS DESK Mashreq Bank of the United Arab Emirates inaugurated its relocated representative office at South Breeze Square, 12th Floor, Plot No 52 (old) and 90 (new), Block CES (A), Gulshan Avenue in Dhaka at January's end. James Pearson, global head of financial institutions and non-banking financial institutions, corporate and investment banking group, and Nadeem Saleh, regional head of financial institutions, corporate and investment banking group, spoke at the event.

President candidate introduces panel

FROM PAGE B1 The international clothing retailers and brands have been diverted to Bangladesh with work orders because of political troubles in Ethiopia and Myanmar and loss of the Generalised System of Preferences by Cambodia, he said. Vietnam does not have that much of the capacity to cater to additional work orders, he said, explaining why Bangladesh had become the prime destination for retailers and brands. "We need to get ready to do the business. We will have to face a lot of challenges in future like price falls. We have seen a fall in prices in the EU, USA and even in non-traditional markets," said Shamsuddin. "Prices of garment items fell by 4.75 per cent over the last four years," he said. "We are not getting prices despite having so many green factories. Only construction of green factories is not adequate, the buyers will also have to come up with green prices," he said. "We've got numerous hurdles to overcome. The first and foremost is addressing the fall in prices. To sustain

ourselves we have to fight together against it. We must not show any weakness that can give buyers a leverage," he said. BGMEA President Rubana Huq said the most important achievement of the association's outgoing board was improving owner-worker relations. "It is possible if we want to work," she said. She also mentioned the government's contributions for the interests of the sector when the Covid-19 fallouts were the most severe. "The Accord and Alliance governed us for seven years," she said, adding that the RMG Sustainability Council was formed for better monitoring of the sector's safety. Bangladesh National Building Code has been changed and a separate chapter is being incorporated in it, she said. Bangladesh was given a special paragraph by International Labour Organization because the European Union raised questions about Bangladesh due to labour unrests. "We have tackled it very intelligently," she said. Digital membership card is important at the BGMEA as health insurance will be provided soon, she said.

WB gives another \$40m

FROM PAGE B1 It will also build a provision to support the small and medium-sized and women-led enterprises and scaling-up citizen engagement in public procurement. The multilateral lender said it has been supporting the government to improve public procurement since 2002. With the World Bank's help, the government rolled out e-GP in four procuring entities. In FY 2019-20, \$17.5 billion worth of procurement contracts, representing about 62 per cent of public procurement expenditure in the country, were processed through the e-GP system. During the pandemic, e-GP enabled over 1,300 public organisations to process all procurement activities online following national competitive procurement methods. The additional financing will help enhance the capacity of the e-GP data center and improve cyber-security. It will ensure countrywide rollout of the electronic contract management and payment module with the provision of uploading geo-tagged images, the World Bank said. "The digitization of public procurement was a game-changer for both the public and private sector. It helped to increase efficiency and transparency and made doing business easier," said World Bank Team Leader for the project Ishtiaq Siddique. To complete the ongoing and new activities, the project has been extended by one and a half years till December 31, 2023. With this extra financing, the World Bank's support to the project now stands at \$95 million.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Skill Development Center (BDTC) regarding a training program for women in the garment sector. It includes details about the program, dates, and contact information.