



Rukhmila Zaman

## New board for UCB

STAR BUSINESS DESK

United Commercial Bank formed a new board of directors through a meeting at its corporate office on Wednesday.

Rukhmila Zaman, Anisuzzaman Chowdhury and MA Sabur were reelected chairman of the Board of Directors, chairman of Executive Committee and chairman of Risk Management Committee respectively while Bashir Ahmed was elected vice-chairman, says a press release.

## Apple getting beefed up against spyware

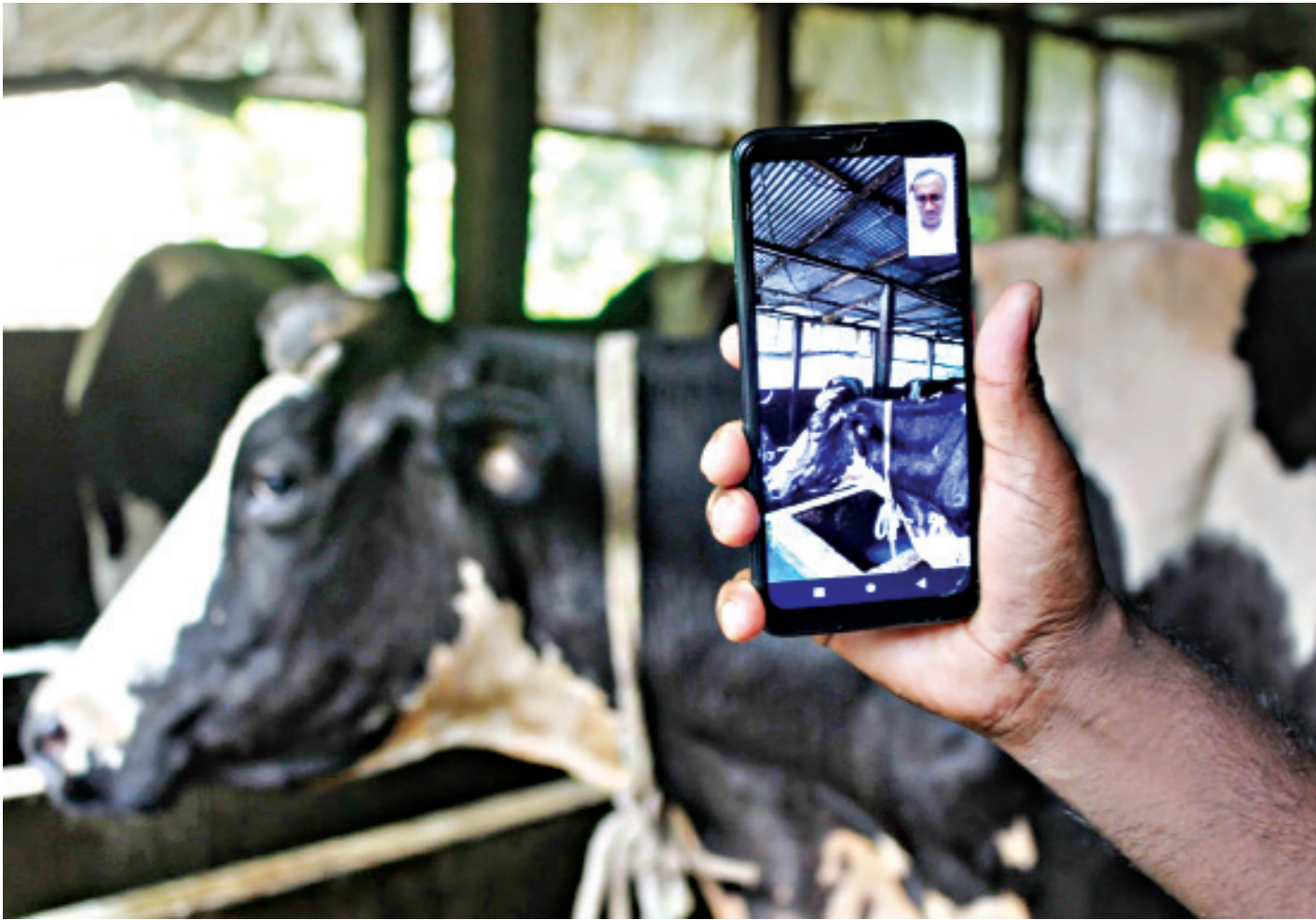
AFP, San Francisco

Apple on Wednesday unveiled a new way for activists, journalists and other targets of state-sponsored espionage to protect themselves from spyware.

A Lockdown Mode being added to iPhones, iPads, and Mac computers is intended to counter threats from a thriving industry that provides sophisticated espionage tools to governments.

"While the vast majority of users will never be the victims of highly targeted cyberattacks, we will work tirelessly to protect the small number of users who are," Apple head of security engineering Ivan Krstic said in a blog post.

The tech giant is upping the bounty it pays researchers for uncovering vulnerabilities in its software when it comes to Lockdown Mode, raising the maximum reward to \$2 million.



The website currently has over 800 veterinarians registered with it who provide advice on treating common diseases. If needed, there is even a video chat option for the vets to see the animals themselves.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

# Free veterinary services just a click away

MINTU DESHWARA

When one of her cattle died contracting hoof-and-mouth disease some time back, Salma Akther had grown deeply worried over the future of her remaining herd of 19 animals.

For this resident of Chapainawabganj's Nachole upazila, loss of livestock translates to livelihood being put in jeopardy. She had to quickly find a way to safeguard the rest of her cattle which she had been rearing for the past 10 years.

Though each upazila has an office of the state-run Department of Livestock Services (DLS) to provide veterinary services, service seekers have to avail it in person.

This meant spending time and money travelling to the office and queuing up with others waiting for the office's veterinary surgeon, livestock officer or staff to become available to provide the service.

As luck would have it, a relative informed Salma of a website where

veterinary services are provided round the clock free of cost. And sure enough, the platform provided her all remedies and even prescriptions.

The website, bdvets.com, is the brainchild of Dr Mithun Sarkar, the livestock officer of the DLS office at Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila. He started working on it in 2015 and created the website in 2018.

Service seekers have to provide some basic information about themselves to get registered, after which they can post their queries.

The website currently has over 800 veterinarians registered with it who provide advice on treating common diseases. If needed, there is even a video chat option for the vets to see the animals themselves.

For serious cases, they suggest locating a local veterinary surgeon using the website or visiting any local veterinarian engaged in private practice, said Abdus Samad, livestock officer of the DLS office in Bogura sadar upazila.

An online server stores all relevant data, including inputs by service seekers, veterinarians and the service being provided, Sarkar told The Daily Star.

The system even automatically sends SMS to registered users from time to time with relevant information, such as vaccination requirements and dates, he said.

So far over 3,500 people of 292 upazilas have availed the website's services while over 4,500 digital prescriptions have been issued.

In remote haor or rural areas, it is often difficult to get services on time, said cattle farmer MA Kaium, a resident of Amuli area which is around 25 kilometres away from Kulaura upazila town.

But the website makes availing services easy, sitting back at home, he said.

Praising the initiative, Kulaura Upazila Nirbahi Officer ATM Farhad Chowdhury said the website was contributing to improving citizen services and playing a direct role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Agro-preneurship and enhancing farm income

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There have been 23,600 small-scale enterprises, including agriculture-based ones. The major constraints faced by the small or cottage industries are finance and lack of access to bank financing.

Conventional research extension methods for the application of seed fertilizer-based technology have been working well in different countries. Apart from production, it is possible to add value to agricultural produce and there is an opportunity to engage the educated youth in remunerative activities.

However, the institutional structure has yet to be developed in the country or in the region for the expansion of agricultural processing technology. As a result, these innovative technologies do not reach entrepreneurs in most cases and cannot contribute to the agro-processing industry in the country. Moreover, the application of each processing technology requires a different institutional approach with a skill mix of agro-industrial set-up.

Several countries in Asia such as India, Indonesia, and Thailand, have introduced agribusiness incubation centres or accelerators at universities. These centres provide technology-based business capacity and support. Since agribusiness largely depends on geographical location, consumer demand, financial institutional arrangement and social structures, entrepreneurs must work together with the

incubation labs before investing in technology to transform it into a successful business.

There have been a lesser success in the development of agro-processed products and equipment, meaning that there is still a lack of technology suitable for the business of processing fruits, vegetables, pulses, spices, milk and fish for SMEs. As a result, Bangladesh imports these products. However, as a result of urbanisation, there is a potential for processed products considering the diversified food demand.

Although various types of flowers, vegetables and fruits are grown in the country as high-value crops, very little of the production volume is processed. On the other hand, these products are not available throughout the year. Only 70 per cent of the conventional or major fruits are available in the market during the three to four months of summer.

About 25-50 per cent of the production is either wasted or spoiled as post-harvest loss due to a lack of processing. The market depends on imported fruits for the rest of the time of the year.

There is a number of under-utilised fruits that are rich in nutrition but mostly ignored. It is said that only 2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) comes from agricultural processing. Bangladesh's large private food industry relies on foreign machinery and domestic raw materials and is exploiting this potential to some extent.

A number of agricultural and food-related public agencies in the country are conducting research to develop value-added products. Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, Bangladesh Jute Research Institute, Bangladesh Council for Science and Industrial Research, Bangladesh Sugarcrop Research Institute and universities are some of them. It is learnt that private industries have a memorandum of understanding with these public research bodies in getting product formulation.

These research organisations need to create closer links with small entrepreneurs on a partnership basis.

Food quality is considered a major concern in the food industry. In addition to fresh vegetables and fruits, two types of food items – ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat – are being sold in chain shops or big stores.

Ready-to-eat food products are more sensitive to public health that require compliance with strong regulations for marketing. If micro, small and medium entrepreneurs can market these products, the youth can be engaged in productive work.

Research institutes are waiting to find their space in the mainstream market with their products, including jelly, syrup, packaged products of green and ripened fruits, jute products, fish balls, noodles, by-products of agro commodities like shrimp, fruits, mushrooms, drying, preservation and equipment, and agro-tourism.

Small-scale seed

production of high-value crops and hybrid seeds may become a successful rural enterprise.

Intervention needed Seed, fertilizer-based technologies available today and those in the pipeline in Bangladesh and elsewhere will remain solutions to addressing food security. For sustainable development of the farming system, it will require higher income for the farmers. However, higher-income through value-addition remains unattended and this is highly context-specific in a specific location.

Reshaping the whole agricultural technology system will be required to support those unattended areas to augment farm income and improve livelihood.

Training should be provided to entrepreneurs in marketing products through the Department of Youth and Women and NGOs. Product quality, labelling, packaging, branding and market management can be included in the training.

The Center for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanisation under the UNESCAP may be persuaded for exchanging best practices of post-harvest management among the member countries for enhancing agro-processing.

Research institutes and universities engaged in food processing must work with business potential in mind in the technology innovation process. The institutional capacity of the institutes must be strengthened to promote agro-business with a skill

mix of technology and market promotion.

Financial institutions have an important responsibility to sponsor successful innovations. Entrepreneurs can be assisted by start-ups for potentially emerging products. The innovation fund under the A2I programme may be harnessed for the promotion of innovative ideas.

The author is former executive chairman of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council.

## Sri Lanka hikes

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government demonstrations calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation.

The central bank said the economy could go into a recession this year, having grown 3.7 per cent last year and contracted 3.6 per cent in 2020.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told parliament the economy could shrink as much as 7 per cent.

The bank said economic activity in the second quarter of this year had been severely affected by electricity and fuel shortages, while all non-essential offices and schools have been told to shut in a bid to reduce commuting and save scarce energy.

The country is officially out of petrol and diesel, while fresh supplies are at least two weeks away.

The government defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt in April and is negotiating a possible bailout with the International Monetary Fund.

## Stocks close flat

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stock prices in the domestic market closed flat yesterday, the last trading session ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, as most investors were in a cautious stance, according to analysts.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), remained almost unchanged from the previous trading session at 6,366.

The stocks edged flat after a bumpy ride as most investors have become cautious amid a global hike in fuel prices and its possible impact on the economy, International Leasing Securities said in its daily market review.

So, investors remained shaky and reluctant to make fresh investments in stocks ahead of the Eid vacation," it added.

At the DSE, 166 stocks advanced, 149 dropped and 63 remained the same.

Thanks to increased investor participation, turnover of the premier bourse rose to Tk 788 crore from the previous day's Tk 746 crore.

## Meghna Bank signs deal with Nagad

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Meghna Bank Limited recently signed an agreement with Nagad so that the bank's customers can directly send money from their accounts to a beneficiary account of the mobile financial service brand operating under Bangladesh Post Office.

Sohail RK Hussain, managing director and chief executive officer of Meghna Bank, and Rahel Ahmed, chief executive officer of Nagad, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisation.

Shyamol B Das, deputy managing director and chief information officer of Meghna Bank, M Nazeem A Choudhury, head of retail and SME banking, Md Saidur Rahman Dipu, head of business sales of Nagad, Sheikh Saud Bin Jahan, head of bank and FI of Nagad, among others, were present on the occasion.

## IMF needs to address internal complaints Says its managing director

REUTERS, Washington

The International Monetary Fund should speed up its handling of internal complaints and further strengthen internal safeguards, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Wednesday.

Georgieva told Reuters she was pleased that the IMF's first comprehensive review of data integrity standards had generally found "robust mechanisms" for institutional governance, but said there were ways to reinforce them.

"We have some ideas on how to make them even stronger and actually get people to feel comfortable to express their views," Georgieva said in an interview, without giving details about potential changes.

"If they are critical, great. This means they are comfortable to say what they think."



Officials of Electro Mart are seen showcasing the features of a new line of Konka android voice-control televisions at the group's corporate office in Gulshan, Dhaka.

PHOTO: ELECTRO MART

## Electro Mart rolls out new Konka TVs

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Electro Mart, a leading consumer electronics company in Bangladesh, recently unveiled new models of Konka android voice-control televisions at the group's corporate office in Gulshan, Dhaka, according to a press release.

While the domestic market for televisions is largely dependent on expensive imports, Electro Mart is always striving to bring affordable solutions in this regard.

"Our main motto is to provide the best quality televisions at affordable prices," said Md Nurul Afser, deputy

managing director of the company.

The new models feature advanced technology, such as 4K and 24K UHD resolution, true colour, home share, cavity speakers with a Dolby Digital sound system, TFT frameless LED display, HDR10 (1.07 billion colour), endless content with Android 11.0 OS, all the top apps, Google assistant, chrome cast and more.

With prices ranging from Tk 11,000 to Tk 90,000, Electro Mart markets 15 models of Konka televisions across the country.

Md Nurul Amin Faruk, managing director of Electro Mart, and Md Nurul Azim Sunny, director, were present.



Ahsanul Alam, chairman of Union Bank, presided over its 9th annual general meeting at its Gulshan head office in Dhaka recently. The meeting approved 5 per cent cash and 5 per cent stock dividends for shareholders for 2021. Managing Director and CEO ABM Mokammel Hoque Chowdhury was present.

PHOTO: UNION BANK