

Bank Asia to use AIW Works software

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia Limited has recently signed an agreement with AIW Works India, a cutting-edge technology company specialising in AI-based hyper-automation solutions for financial institutions.

Adil Chowdhury, president and managing director of the bank, and Sohaib Siddiqui, founder of AIW Works, signed the deal at Bank Asia Tower in Dhaka, said a press release.

Under the agreement, Bank Asia will leverage AIW Works' state-of-the-art AI-powered software solutions to automate and streamline various business processes.

These advanced technologies utilise artificial intelligence to enhance operational efficiency, reduce errors, and accelerate processes, revolutionising how the bank operates.

SM Iqbal Hossain, deputy managing director of the bank, Hossain Ahmad, chief information officer, Md Saiful Islam, chief technology officer, Mahub A Alam, chief digital officer, and Mehraab Anwar, CEO of DOTech Limited, were present.

The partnership between Bank Asia and AIW Works marks an important milestone in the banking industry's adoption of AI-powered automation, the press release added.

It not only signifies the growing potential of advanced technologies but also showcases the commitment of Bangladeshi financial institutions to leverage AI for digital transformation and improved customer experiences, it said.



Adil Chowdhury, president and managing director of Bank Asia, and Sohaib Siddiqui, founder of AIW Works, exchanged signed documents of an agreement on AI-powered software solutions to automate and streamline various business processes at Bank Asia Tower, Karwan Bazar in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: BANK ASIA



Md Afzal Karim, managing director of Sonali Bank, speaks at a quarterly meeting on National Integrity Strategy with stakeholders of the Cumilla region at a local hotel in Cumilla City on Saturday. Among others, Mir Mofazzul Hossain, deputy managing director, Md Safayet Hossain Patwary and Md Soriat Ullah, general managers, Bithi Akter, deputy general manager, along with beneficiaries, depositors and related officials were present.

PHOTO: SONALI BANK

'EBL Super Saver' launched

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Eastern Bank Limited (EBL) yesterday launched "EBL Super Saver", a new service for individual account holders.

M Khorshed Anwar, deputy managing director and head of retail and SME banking at the EBL, inaugurated the service at its head office in Dhaka, said a press release.

Individuals maintaining a deposit of Tk 5 lakh and above for a certain period in their current or savings account will qualify for the service.

They will enjoy complimentary pre-approved credit cards, zero fees on account services, complimentary access to EBL Skylounge in Bangladesh and international airport lounges in other countries.

Syed Zulkar Nayen, head of business, Sarmin Atik, head of liability and wealth management, and other senior officials from the retail and SME banking division of the bank were present.



M Khorshed Anwar, deputy managing director of Eastern Bank, Syed Zulkar Nayen, head of business, and Sarmin Atik, head of liability and wealth management, along with other senior officials from retail and SME banking division of the bank attended the launching of "EBL Super Saver" at its head office in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: EASTERN BANK

Community Bank wins Infosys awards

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Community Bank Bangladesh has won awards in three categories at Infosys Finacle Innovation Awards 2023.

This is the third time in a row that the bank won the awards for maintaining consistency in driving transformation and innovation across their product portfolio, said a press release.

The categories are "Process Optimisation & Innovations", "Sustainable Finance with Open Banking Ecosystem" and "Banking the Community".

Of them, the bank won platinum awards for the first two categories and gold for the latter.

"We dedicate this achievement to our valued customers, stakeholders, regulators who have supported us all the way through," said Masihul Huq Chowdhury, managing director and CEO of the bank.

MetLife offers Tk 50,000 free insurance coverage

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

MetLife Bangladesh has come up with an additional life insurance coverage of up to Tk 50,000 free of charge for its customers for travelling within Bangladesh during the upcoming Eid-ul Azha.

Any MetLife customer with active insurance policy will be eligible to receive the additional insurance coverage against loss of life, accidents, and disability and the coverage period will be from June 23 to July 3, the insurer said in a statement yesterday.

The customers do not have to pay any extra premium to avail the coverage for this, MetLife Bangladesh said.

"The initiative looks to ease the journeys for our policyholders and keep them confident. Besides, pilgrims for Hajj will also benefit from the additional insurance coverage," said Ala Ahmad, chief executive officer of MetLife Bangladesh.

The customers who are travelling to perform the upcoming hajj will also be eligible for the additional insurance coverage of up to Tk 50,000 for the same incidents.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (JUN 11, 2023)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 60-Tk 75	0	-0.74 ↓
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 48-Tk 50	2.08 ↑	-2 ↓
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 52-Tk 55	-6.96 ↓	22.29 ↑
Lentil (kg)	Tk 90-Tk 100	0	-11.63 ↓
Soybean (litre)	Tk 175-Tk 185	0	-3.23 ↓
Potato (kg)	Tk 35-Tk 40	0	59.57 ↑
Onion (kg)	Tk 70-Tk 75	16 ↑	93.33 ↑
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 44-Tk 48	-3.16 ↓	8.24 ↑

SOURCE: TCB

Depositors to get double

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The committee was asked to submit its report within 30 working days.

As per the current law, a depositor gets a maximum of Tk 1 lakh as compensation within 90 days if any scheduled bank or financial institution goes into liquidation.

The amended law proposed to increase this compensation to Tk 2 lakh. In Bangladesh, deposit insurance was introduced in August 1984 while the amount of insurance coverage was Tk 60,000, which was later increased to Tk 1 lakh.

Only banks were mentioned in the previous act whereas financial institutions have been included in the proposed law.

Besides, a Deposit Insurance Trust Fund (DITF) of Bangladesh Bank will be renamed "Deposit Safety Trust Fund."

The following types of money shall be deposited to the fund - (a) money received from insured banks as well as financial institutions; (b) income received from the bank wound up under section 7; (c) money received from the investment of money from the fund; and (d) money received from other sources.

According to the proposed bill, the fund shall not be spent out except for

payment of debt to the depositor or creditor of the bank wound up.

The proposed act suggested that Bangladesh Bank could primarily restrict deposits from being received by the banks and financial organisations if they fail to pay insurance premium for two consecutive times.

Moreover, the central bank will have the authority to shut or liquidate them if the same incident is repeated for a third time.

After the order of liquidation of banks and financial organisations, Bangladesh Bank will have to pay insurance money or a maximum of Tk 2 lakh to the depositors from the Deposit Safety Trust Fund.

Each depositor will get the same amount of compensation even if they had several accounts with the banks or financial organisations, the draft act stated.

Deposit Insurance Systems is an institutional initiative to protect depositors against the loss of their deposits in the event that a scheduled bank goes into liquidation.

All-scheduled banks or commercial banks, including the branches of foreign banks functioning in Bangladesh, are insured by the Deposit Insurance Systems.

Specific duty on crude oil

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The data points to a mixed economic picture, with slowing growth, a tight labor market, and inflation still well above the Fed's two percent target.

Currently, the duty stands at 5 per cent on the import price of crude oil, meaning the cost for importers goes up if the price climbs in the global market and vice versa.

Located in Chattogram, Partex Petro processes a wide variety of petroleum products from imported as well as local condensate and supplies the finished products to the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

Ghose said due to a lack of clarity about the duty in the outgoing fiscal year, companies, including BPC, have faced losses.

Ghose shared his thoughts on the proposed budget during an interview with The Daily Star recently.

"Energy is a price-sensitive commodity, so the government should be careful about it because if the price of fuel increases, the price of allied products as well as those that use the fuel also goes up overnight," he said.

According to him, naphtha should see the same duty that the

raw materials such as crude oil and condensate face.

Naphtha is a highly flammable liquid hydrocarbon mixture used chiefly as solvents and diluents and as raw materials for conversion to gasoline.

The CEO also touched upon the prevailing business situation in Bangladesh.

"The dollar crisis is the main reason for the ongoing economic and business slowdown in Bangladesh."

If letters of credit (LCs) can't be opened smoothly due to the crisis, it will have a negative impact on business and import and export trade, he said.

Owing to the US dollar shortage, importers are struggling to open LCs to bring in raw materials and equipment. A lower import might help stop the erosion of the foreign currency reserve, but the economy may slow down if manufacturing output declines because of a shortage of inputs and equipment.

Ghose thinks oil refinery companies can play a major role in saving dollars.

Between April and June this year,

local refiners helped the country save about \$180 million by refining crude oil in Bangladesh, he said, adding that Partex Petro alone helped save \$90 million.

Had the government imported the products that refiners brought in, it would have had to spend \$90 million to \$100 million from its reserves in the last three months.

In Bangladesh, private refiners import crude petroleum products to produce octane, petrol, diesel and jet fuel and supply the finished goods to the BPC since they are not allowed to sell the finished products directly in the market.

Ghose alleged that BPC pays local refiners 1 per cent less than the rate the state-run agency pays for its imports from the global markets.

He said the proposed budget does not provide any benefit to the oil refinery sector.

"The government should provide some incentives to the sector since we are helping the country directly. If the government extends some benefits to us, we will be able to help ease the dollar crunch and cut the subsidy burden in the energy sector."

bKash CEO named

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senior finance leaders driving industry change to power societal progress.

The 23 leaders of the 2023 class join more than 100 finance fellows around the world who are committed to forging a new cultural paradigm in the finance industry - a paradigm that marshals the industry's global influence to address urgent societal challenges and promote sustainable economic growth, said Aspen Institute said in a media release.

Of the other 22 of 2023's finance leader fellows, 12 were selected from the USA, two from Canada, three from the UK and one each from Singapore, Germany, Malaysia,

Romania and Saudi Arabia.

All of them, including Kamal Quadir, will join a wider community of over 3,500 values-based leaders in over 60 countries as part of the Aspen Global Leadership Network (AGLN).

"The finance ecosystem is a bedrock that sits beneath communities big and small, affecting lives and livelihoods in every corner of the world. We believe the global finance industry needs the imagination and leadership of these Fellows to recreate itself to be a force for good and belonging," said Dar Vanderbeck, acting executive director of the Finance Leaders Fellowship.

Divided Fed

FROM PAGE B4

The data points to a mixed economic picture, with slowing growth, a tight labor market, and inflation still well above the Fed's two percent target.

Jefferson, who was recently nominated for the vacant number two spot at the Fed, added that "a decision to hold our policy rate constant at a coming meeting should not be interpreted to mean that we have reached the peak rate for this cycle." But those pushing for a further hike, like Fed governor Christopher Waller, have indicated support for a more aggressive stance on inflation.

"I do not support stopping rate hikes unless we get clear evidence that inflation is moving down towards our two per cent objective," Waller

said last month, adding: "whether we should hike or skip at the June meeting will depend on how the data come in" before the next decision.

The division among members of the FOMC over the best path forward has led some traders on a journey, from predicting a pause to expecting a hike - and back again.

Futures traders who as recently as late May were predicting another hike, now see a more-than 70 per cent chance that the Fed will vote to hold rates on Wednesday. And many analysts now also see a pause as the most likely scenario on Wednesday.

"Chairman Powell is expected to corral the cats and get the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) to skip a rate hike in June, while leaving

the door open to hike in July," KPMG Economics chief economist Diane Swonk wrote in a recent note to clients.

While most major banks now predict a pause, there are still some notable outliers who expect the Fed to hike rates by another quarter percentage point.

"We are maintaining our call for a 25bp rate hike next week - though admittedly it is a close call," Citi economists wrote in a recent investor note.

If Powell does succeed in winning over a majority of FOMC members for a June pause, analysts expect the Fed to signal through its interest-rate announcement and updated summary of economic projections (SEP) that it expects another rate hike to complete the cycle.

S Korea declares 'all-out war' on chips to support chip industry

ANN, The Korea Herald

The competition in the chip industry is an "all-out war," President Yoon Suk Yeol said Thursday, vowing to back local chipmakers with interagency support amid the intensifying tech competition between the US and China.

"The government and the private sector should come together to ride out challenges ahead. ... The government will closely work with allies like the US to resolve issues involving the industry," Yoon said at a meeting attended by senior officials, lawmakers and industry experts.

The meeting discussed maintaining South Korea's edge in memory chips and fostering system or nonmemory chips development. It also discussed securing the equipment, materials and talent required to fend off chip rivals.

The Industry Ministry said it will roll out a fund dedicated to those goals within the year, as well as expand research and development on next-generation chips and reveal concrete steps for bolstering chip ties between Seoul and Washington, its biggest ally. Better protection for chip technology and the building of a chip testing facility will follow, the ministry said in a statement.

It was the second time for the Korean leader to convene a meeting on chips after an initial public discussion in late April. Earlier that month, Yoon had instructed officials to come up with a broader strategy for chips and rechargeable batteries - the key battleground for advanced economies.

Seoul is home to the world's largest and second-largest chipmakers, as well as global battery companies that supply automakers such as Tesla and General Motors.