



Nuruddin Md Sadeque Hussain, managing director of Southeast Bank, and Maruful Islam Jhalak, executive director of Nagad, exchanged signed documents of an agreement on remittance disbursement at the bank's head office in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: SOUTHEAST BANK

Southeast Bank signs deal with Nagad

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Southeast Bank Limited signed an agreement with mobile financial service (MFS) provider Nagad on remittance disbursement.

Nuruddin Md Sadeque Hussain, managing director of the bank, and Maruful Islam Jhalak, executive director of the MFS company, inked the deal at the former's head office in Dhaka yesterday, said a press release.

Under this agreement, the bank's associate overseas exchange houses,

money transfer operators, banks and its 100 per cent owned subsidiary Southeast Exchange Company (South Africa) can easily collect remittances and send to Nagad's 7.88 crore beneficiaries' wallets directly round the clock.

Even the beneficiaries can withdraw the money from Nagad's 220,000+ payout locations around the country which will ultimately facilitate financial inclusion to the masses.

Since inception, the bank has been playing an instrumental role

for the migrant workers to distribute their hard-earned remittances to their family members by providing smooth and fast remittance services using modern technology and large distribution networks.

Last year, Southeast Bank was among the "Top 10 Remittance Collecting Banks" earning \$800 million and one of the "Top Three Export Earning Banks", according to the press release.

The total trade business of the bank was \$6 billion last year.



SM Mahfuzur Rahman, chairman of Janata Bank, poses for photographs after holding its 16th annual general meeting at the bank's head office in Dhaka yesterday. Md Azimuddin Biswas, additional secretary to the financial institutions division of the finance ministry, Ajit Kumar Paul, KM Shamsul Alam, Ziauddin Ahmed, Md Abdul Majid, Rubina Amin, Meshkat Ahmed Chowdhury, Muhammed Asad Ullah, directors, Md Abdul Jabbar, managing director of the bank, Md Quamrul Ahsan, Md Golam Mortuza, Md Abdullah Al Mamun and Md Ramjan Bahar, deputy managing directors, and Md Nurul Alam, chief financial officer, were present.

PHOTO: JANATA BANK

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (JUN 13, 2023)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 60-Tk 75	0	-2.88 ↓
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 48-Tk 50	2.08 ↑	-2 ↓
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 52-Tk 55	-6.96 ↓	25.88 ↑
Lentil (kg)	Tk 90-Tk 100	0	-11.63 ↓
Soybean (litre)	Tk 168-Tk 180	-3.33 ↓	-7.2 ↓
Potato (kg)	Tk 35-Tk 38	-2.67 ↓	55.32 ↑
Onion (kg)	Tk 75-Tk 80	19.23 ↑	106.67 ↑
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 44-Tk 48	-3.16 ↓	8.24 ↑

SOURCE: TCB

Oil prices tick up

REUTERS, London

Oil prices rose on Tuesday on apparent bargain hunting, recovering some ground from the previous day's plunge.

But gains were limited as investors remained cautious ahead of key policy decisions by central banks and on weak economic data from China.

Brent crude futures climbed \$1.47, or 2.1 per cent, to \$73.31 a barrel by 1034 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was at \$68.32 a barrel, up \$1.20, or 1.8 per cent. Equities, which often trade in tandem with oil, also rose.

Brent's six-month backwardation, a market structure whereby shorter-dated futures trade above longer dated ones, has fallen to its lowest since March at around \$1.30, indicating faltering market confidence in demand outstripping supply over the year.

Investors concerned over EU deforestation law

May exit consumer goods firms, they say

REUTERS, London

As a new European Union zero-tolerance deforestation law looms, several major investors told Reuters they are concerned about their exposure to the issue, with some saying they could quit consumer goods makers with "risky" supply chains.

The EU agreed in December a new rule to prevent companies from selling into its market coffee, beef, soy, rubber, palm oil and other commodities linked to deforestation. Companies must prove their supply chains aren't contributing to the destruction of forests or be fined up to 4 per cent of their turnover in an EU member state.

Germany's Union Investment, a top 20 investor in Unilever and Reckitt, last year wrote to 56 consumer goods companies to find out more about deforestation in their supply chains.

"The fines can be a risk for the performance of these companies in the stock market," said Henrik Pontzen, head of ESG at Union Investment, which has about 424 billion euros (\$467 billion) in assets under management and stakes in Nestle, Pepsico, Danone, Beyond Meat and L'Oreal.

An internal Union Investment document seen by Reuters shows that the firm received just 30 responses to its outreach. Of those, only 14 companies said they had zero deforestation goals.

"As a major investor, this is very atypical," said Pontzen. "Typically, we receive an answer from any company we write to. Maybe the reason for not answering is they don't have anything to say."

Union "will exclude companies

when all our escalation options have been exhausted," Pontzen said.

He is not alone in his frustration over the companies' lack of engagement.

Eight major institutional shareholders - Schroders, Janus Henderson, NBIM, Union Investment, KLP, Aviva, Fidelity International and Ninety-One - told Reuters they were talking to

manager at Aviva, which invests over 223 billion pounds (\$278 billion) and has stakes in Tide maker P&G, Unilever, Nestle and Reckitt.

Norway's sovereign wealth fund, NBIM, one of the world's largest investors with over \$1.3 trillion in assets under management, said the rules will impact firms that haven't prepared for it.



PHOTO: REUTERS

consumer goods makers about this issue, three of whom said they will identify stocks they may exit.

The legislation is expected by lawmakers to be implemented by the end of 2024 for "big operators". Although consumer goods manufacturers are particularly exposed, other sectors that import goods associated with deforestation, including commodities houses and industrials companies, will also face scrutiny.

"The companies have to be cleaner than clean, given the fact that there's such a high penalty," said Jonathan Toub, a portfolio

"It can influence market access, potentially lead to non-compliance penalties, or impose increased due diligence costs," said Snorre Gjerde, NBIM's investment stewardship manager.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 420 million hectares of forest - an area larger than the EU - were lost to deforestation between 1990 and 2020. EU consumption represents around 10 per cent of global deforestation, according to the European Parliament. Palm oil and soy account for more than two-thirds of this.



Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem, senior secretary to the Internal Resources Division and chairman of the National Board of Revenue, inaugurates an outlet of Tasty Treat, a fast food retail brand of Pran-RFL Group, on the premises of the NBR in Agargaon, Dhaka yesterday. Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman of Pran-RFL Group, Choudhury Atiur Rasul, director (accounts), and Ibrahim Khalil, head of business at Tasty Treat, were present.

PHOTO: PRAN-RFL GROUP

Europe takes lead over US on crypto regulation

AFP, Zug, Switzerland

Born out of the desire to create a decentralised currency not controlled by a government, the crypto movement has long resisted regulation.

But those days may be numbered as the EU recently adopted comprehensive rules regarding crypto

era and what everyone wants in the industry is the rules of the game," he told AFP at an event supporting startups.

Bailly said that while everyone was initially hostile towards MiCA, "finally it has become a selling point for Europe" as it fixes a clear framework for companies which can then organise their business operations



PHOTO: REUTERS

assets, taking a lead over the United States, which has meanwhile cracked down on two major crypto exchanges.

In April, the European Parliament adopted by a wide margin the Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA) regulation and it received final approval by the Commission last month.

The first comprehensive regulation of the sector, MiCA aims to reduce illegal practices including money laundering as well as protect investors and consumers. It covers issues of crypto assets as well as trading venues and providers of the "wallets" where investors hold their assets.

"MiCA brings clarity, said Jerome Bailly, vice president of Crypto Valley, an association which supports the crypto industry in Switzerland.

"We're no longer in the Wild West

accordingly.

He believes a "European bloc" will emerge, with the Britain and Switzerland following the EU's lead to create a regulatory zone.

On the other hand, "the signals coming from the United States are clearly negative," Bailly warned.

US crypto firms were weakened by the failures of Signature Bank, Silvergate and Silicon Valley Bank, which were key institutions in financing of the larger tech sector and startups.

Plus, US authorities have begun to turn the screws on the sector since the failure of the FTX and Genesis exchanges, charging the world's top cryptocurrency exchange Binance with securities law violations, as well as its rival Coinbase.

No concrete job plan

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from the proposed budget to revive the labour market and generate employment by a significant margin, Bidisha said.

Besides, despite impressive progress in terms of different socioeconomic indicators, there remain challenges in some areas, including the labour market, she said.

"Therefore, the importance of job creation has not been duly considered in this budget," said Bidisha, also the research director of think tank South Asian Network on Economic Modeling.

Among the previous initiatives, the proposed budget laid emphasis on a few in particular, she said.

This includes the establishment of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Industrial City in Chattogram targeting to generate 5 lakh jobs, expansion of an initiative to generate 30 lakh jobs in information technology alongside related services by 2025 and employment generation for 2 lakh youth by 2030 through high-tech parks, she said.

In case of skills training programmes, the proposed budget again put emphasis on a Skills for Employment Investment Program, said Bidisha.

Through this the government has implemented a number of initiatives

for skills training and stressed on the creation of a central database to link the demand and supply side of the labour market, she said.

In addition, the proposed budget laid emphasis on initiatives taken for the protection of workers' rights and promoting women and children-friendly workplaces, she said.

For migrant workers, it mostly re-emphasised the previous initiatives of skill and language training and the continued effort of finding new destinations, said Bidisha.

She thinks tax rebates or continuation of previous rebates on VAT and the import of raw materials for the expansion of domestic industries focusing electrical and electronic devices and household appliances could have a positive impact on industrialisation and local employment generation.

However, given the time lag associated with any industrialisation process, the expected positive impact on job creation will take some time and therefore might have a positive impact only in the medium or long term, she said.

As for boosting private sector investment, which is crucial for generating employment, a continuation of the current fiscal's budgetary initiatives is not sufficient, said Bidisha.

Deepen structural reforms

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continued support to help Bangladesh achieve sustainable and inclusive growth.

"We stand ready to redouble our support under our new country strategy and accelerated implementation of our large existing portfolio."

Raiser's comments came as he concluded his two-day visit to the country as part of his current tour to

the South Asia region.

During the visit, he met with the Bangladesh Bank governor, the state minister for power, energy, and mineral resources, the senior secretary of the finance ministry, the secretary of the Economic Relations Division, and other senior government officials.

They discussed the WB's new country partnership framework for Bangladesh for fiscal years 2023-27

as well as how the WB support can be best utilised to help Bangladesh navigate the global uncertainties and increasing climate change impacts.

Raiser urged speeding up the pace of implementation of the WB-supported projects.

Yesterday, the bank and Bangladesh also signed a \$191 million financing to strengthen the higher education sector and respond better to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Higher Education Acceleration Transformation Project will support regional and global collaboration, research and innovation in higher education. It will help more women access quality tertiary education.

Sharifa Khan, secretary of the ERD, and Abdoulaye Seck, country director of the WB for Bangladesh and Bhutan, signed the agreement, said the press release.