

Pathao gets 'Employment Catalyst Award'

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Pathao, the largest digital services company of Bangladesh, was awarded with the "Employment Catalyst Award" by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday for its outstanding contributions to job creation, particularly in the youth segment.

Fahim Ahmed, managing director and chief executive officer of Pathao, received the award from the prime minister at the inauguration ceremony of the "Bangladesh Startup Summit 2023" at the InterContinental Dhaka.

"Pathao is a homegrown champion of technology and innovation that has catalysed self employment opportunities for the youth of Bangladesh. We are honoured to receive this award, as a recognition of our efforts towards empowering people as they strive to improve their lives," said Fahim Ahmed.

Since its inception in 2015, Pathao has created more than 500,000 jobs in Bangladesh through its market-leading ride-hailing, food delivery and e-commerce logistics businesses.

With operations in Nepal and Bangladesh, Pathao is currently serving more than 10 million consumers, daily earners and small businesses.

US oil giants report lower profits

AFP, New York

ExxonMobil and Chevron reported profits Friday that were much lower than last year's due a drop in commodity prices, but still lofty enough to enable increased shareholder distributions.

The two US oil giants joined European rivals Shell and Total in seeing steep declines in their bottom-line results compared with the heady year-ago period when Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent crude and natural gas prices sky bound.



A hawker is seen selling handcrafted flowers to students in front of Boyra Metro Police Line School in Khulna city. The flowers made of cloth, paper and plastic earn him about Tk 10 per piece. The picture was taken recently. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Stabilisation fund invests Tk 270cr to support ailing stock market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Capital Market Stabilisation Fund (CMSF) has invested Tk 270 crore since its inception in 2021 with a view to supporting the ailing stock market.

The fund has been invested through the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh, said Md Nojibur Rahman, chairman of the CMSF.

He shared the information during a speech at CMJF Talk organised by the Capital Market Journalists' Forum (CMJF) at the latter's office in the capital.

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has formed the CMSF as a custodian of undistributed cash and stock dividends, non-refunded public subscription money and unallotted rights shares from the issuer of listed securities.

Cash and stocks in the fund are returned following claims by the shareholders or investors at any time in the indefinite perpetuity.

The move from the regulator came after it

Currently, the size of the fund is Tk 1,270 crore. Of the sum, Tk 560 crore came from undistributed cash dividends and Tk 710 crore in the form of stock dividends

decided to use undistributed and unclaimed dividends of listed companies. It ordered listed companies to deposit their undistributed dividends to the fund.

Currently, the size of the fund is Tk 1,270 crore. Of the sum, Tk 560 crore came from undistributed cash dividends and Tk 710 crore in the form of stock dividends, said Rahman, also a former chairman of the National Board of Revenue.

The former principal secretary to the prime minister said many investors did not receive

dividends properly in the past for several reasons. "About 1,200 investors have got back their dividends with the help of CMSF."

"The fund has given a boost to investors' confidence, so we are trying to enlarge the size of the fund."

In future, he said, the CMSF will provide dividend distribution services. "Currently, dividends are disbursed through banks. The BSEC is going to give us the task in the future."

According to Rahman, the stock market has the potential to grow, so people should get disappointed even if they do not get success immediately by investing in the market.

The BSEC has issued a directive, saying if a listed company fails to deposit undistributed dividends to the CMSF, it will be fined.

On top of that, the regulator announced recently that it will run special audits into companies to see whether they hold any undistributed dividends.

CMJF President Ziur Rahman and General Secretary Abu Ali also spoke.

Beef to be Tk 50/kg cheaper in capital

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Dairy Farmers Association (BDFFA) yesterday announced that its members would sell beef at a price that will be Tk 50 per kilogramme lower than the current rate.

The reduced rate will be applicable in the capital city and comes into effect today.

The association shared the information at a seminar on how to bring the price of meat within the purchasing power of consumers. The event was organised by the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection at the National Press Club.

Beef was sold at Tk 750 to Tk 780 per kg yesterday, according to the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

But the BDFFA said it is possible to sell the meat at Tk 500 to Tk 550 per kg if the government provides some policy support, including reducing the lease rate of cattle markets and setting up farmers' markets.

Imran Hossain, president of the association, said "We want to bring the price of beef within the reach of consumers. As part of the effort, growers will sell beef at Tk 50 lower rate."

The BDFFA has 17,000 members. He said milk, meat and other products produced at the farm level change three to four hands before they reach end-consumers.

"But if the products reach consumers directly from farmers, it will be possible to remove two to three middlemen. That will reduce prices further."

Mastercard Experience Centre brings the future of commerce to life

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Making payments using solar credits, enjoying a football match in a virtual reality stadium, scanning a product to understand the ethics of its supply chain – these are just some of the next-generation technology propositions on display at the revamped Mastercard Experience Centre (MEC) in Singapore.

The refreshed facility serves the company's clients and partners across the Asia Pacific region.

Mastercard has six MECs globally. They are located in London, Stockholm, Dubai, Mexico City and New York City beside Singapore.

The revitalisation of the Singapore innovation space coincides with the release of Mastercard's Future of Payments report which highlights three broad trends that have the potential to collectively expand prosperity and inclusion in the digital economy.

"The Mastercard Experience Centre is designed as a portal to that future, a place where customers and partners can virtually experience that future today, and where we're only limited by the power of our collective imaginations," said Sandeep Malhotra, executive vice-president (products and innovation) for Asia Pacific at Mastercard.

bKash wins 'Fintech Pioneer Award'

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Leading mobile financial service provider bKash has won "Fintech Pioneer Award" at the Bangladesh Startup Summit 2023 for playing a pioneering role in the fintech sector.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over an award to bKash Founder and CEO Kamal Quadir in the inaugural ceremony of the summit organised by the Startup Bangladesh at InterContinental Dhaka on Saturday, MFS provider said in a press release.

"The award came as a recognition of bKash's 12-year-long endeavours of making peoples' daily transactions convenient and secure through financial inclusion. Receiving the "Fintech Pioneer Award" from the Prime Minister will greatly inspire us and further accelerate our journey," said Quadir.



Kamal Quadir, founder and CEO of bKash, receives a trophy of "Fintech Pioneer Award" from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the inaugural ceremony of the "Bangladesh Startup Summit-2023" at InterContinental Dhaka on Saturday. PHOTO: BKASH



Wahida Akter, secretary to the ministry of agriculture, attends an "Internal Research, Review & Planning Workshop-2023" organised by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute at the institute's Kazi Badrudduza Auditorium in Gazipur yesterday. PHOTO: BARI

BARI organises workshop

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) organised the "Internal Research Review & Planning Workshop-2023" for evaluating all the research programmes undertaken in 2022-2023 and formulating the research programme for 2023-2024 at the institute's Kazi Badrudduza Auditorium in Gazipur yesterday.

Wahida Akter, secretary to the ministry of agriculture, inaugurated the workshop, said a press release.

BARI is currently conducting research activities on 211 crops. A total of 1,290 technologies, including 650 high yielding, disease resistant and various adverse environment resistant varieties, and 640 other production technologies have been developed by the institute.

LC opening slumped

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Hossain linked the drop in the reserves to the requirement of payments for LCs opened earlier.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, blamed the non-availability of adequate dollars for the slide in LCs opening.

"Besides, the value of overall LCs was lower in FY23 than the previous year because of a decline in the prices of commodities, including petroleum in the international market. There was a lot of unmet demand."

A detailed breakdown of the category-wise LC opening for the entire FY23 was not available yesterday. But data for the July-May period of the fiscal year showed that the opening of LCs for capital machinery nosedived.

During the 11-month period,

businesses opened \$2.69 billion worth of LCs to import capital machinery, which was 55 per cent lower year-on-year.

The LC opening for the import of industrial raw materials slumped 30 percent to \$21.17 billion. The ratio of decline was 24 per cent for intermediate goods, according to the BB.

Overall, businesses opened 18 percent lower LCs at \$7.14 billion in July-May.

Mansur, also a former economist at the International Monetary Fund, said the decline in imports along with higher inflation has caused a slowdown in the economy.

"We saw a decrease in imports of capital machinery and industrial raw materials. The fall in capital machinery imports indicates a drop in investment."

Local startups ripe

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e-commerce and retail, education, software-as-a-service (SaaS), artificial intelligence, agriculture and food, and healthcare.

In addition, the summit featured engagements on broader topics encompassing gender lens investing, impact investment, venture capital, innovation, and insider startup insights.

The summit also brought together 100+ global and local venture capital firms and investors, featuring 100+ national and international speakers,

and engaging 600+ startups across the country beyond networking opportunities and startup-focused lessons.

Besides, 50+ startups pitched their ideas to investors at the event.

The speakers also said Bangladesh boasts over 2,500 active startups, from the idea to implementation stages, which generate more than 1.5 million jobs to support the economy.

Since 2010, homegrown startups have raised over \$900 million in funds and are projected to cross the \$1 billion mark by next year.

FBCCI polls today

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withdrew their candidacy and 23 directors have been elected unopposed.

The election will take place only in the association group to elect 23 directors at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka today.

In the election, Mahbul Alam, the representative of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry,

is contesting from the panel named Sammito Oikko Parishad and Mir Nizam Uddin Ahmed, a representative of the Bangladesh Electrical Association, is contesting from a panel named Sammito Baboshayee Parishad.

As per the rules of the FBCCI, the next president will come from the chamber group. Mahbul Alam is representing from the chamber group. There are 2,500 voters this year.

Application

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The central bank said the sponsors or directors must qualify for the Fit and Proper Test (FPT) criteria applicable to the proposed directors of digital banks.

In its guideline issued earlier, Bangladesh Bank said digital banks will not be allowed to provide any service to clients directly through physical counters and cannot issue any physical instruments.

Likewise, digital banks would not be permitted to give out loans to carry out foreign trade or term loans for medium and large industries.

The guideline says a digital bank must go public within five years after getting the licence from the central bank. The amount of capital to be raised through initial public offerings cannot be less than the paid-up capital amount.

The rule bars loan-defaulting companies, persons and their family members from becoming sponsor shareholders of digital banks.

No sponsor shareholder will be able to transfer shares without the prior approval of the central bank within five years of operation. The guideline has kept the number of members from the same family who will be given permission to sit on the board in line with the Bank Company Act.

Rules relaxed

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will remain locked in for a period of three years from the date of first trading in the stock exchanges.

The second condition is the company will not be allowed to issue shares further from the date of application—October 26 of 2022—until the issuance of shares under the IPO.

And the last condition is the company has to duly comply with the provisions of all other relevant laws, including the securities laws, in applying for the IPO.

The regulator exempted the rules on several conditions against the company's urge to relax it, BSEC Spokesperson Mohammad Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star.

"I think, the company will have to submit the IPO application again complying with all other rules and regulations."