

Exim Bank launches Bangla QR transaction

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Exim Bank recently launched a bill payment service through Bangla QR with the aim to help create cashless Bangladesh.

Mohammad Feroz Hossain, managing director and CEO of the bank, inaugurated the service at the bank's head office in Dhaka, said a press release.

As a result of launching the service, the bank's customers will now be able to pay bills directly from their accounts by scanning the Bangla QR code on their mobile phones at any store or outlet with Bangla QR through its modernised mobile banking app "Exim Aiser".

Shah Md Abdul Bari, additional managing director of the bank, Md Zoshim Uddin Bhuiyan and Maksuda Khanam, deputy managing directors, and senior executives of the bank's head office, including the head of information technology division, were present.



Mohammad Feroz Hossain, managing director of Exim Bank, cuts a ribbon to inaugurate a bill payment service through Bangla-QR at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: EXIM BANK

New chairman for Mercantile Exchange House (UK)

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M Amanullah, sponsor director of Mercantile Bank, has been elected as chairman of Mercantile Exchange House (UK) Ltd in the bank's 426th board meeting held recently.

Amanullah was the chairman of the bank and contributed heavily towards the efficiency and optimisation of Mercantile Bank during his tenure playing different roles as the chairman of

various committees of the bank.

He is the founder of the Aman Group of Companies and one of the directors of Daily Amader Shomoy, said a press release.

He is a commercially important person and the founder chairman of Gulshan North Club.

China's economic losses from disasters surge

REUTERS, Beijing

China's direct economic losses from natural disasters surged to 41.18 billion yuan (\$5.74 billion) in July, more than in January to June combined, driven by severe weather as two powerful typhoons hit the country in one month.

The impact of floods, while common in China in summer, has grown more pronounced this year, affecting over 7 million people nationwide in July, when Beijing was struck by the worst rains in 140 years after the capital's hottest June on record.

August, when rainfall usually peaks and summer temperatures soar, is set for further economic impact from floods and heatwaves. Rainfall in northeastern provinces could be as much as 50% higher than normal in August, China's national forecaster have warned.

July losses from Typhoon Talim, which landed in southern China in the middle of the month, were 2.61 billion yuan, while losses from the more destructive Doksuri, the remnants of which are still being felt in northeastern China, reached 14.74 billion yuan as of the end of July, the Ministry of Emergency Management said in a statement late on Friday.

Overall losses, compounded by damage from floods in southwest and northwest China, far exceeded the 38.23 billion yuan in the first half of 2023, and pose an unexpected drag on quarterly growth in the world's second-largest economy, which is already in want of stimulus.

In the northern province of Hebei, over 1.2 million people had been evacuated as of Wednesday due to flooding caused by residual rains from Doksuri.



PHOTO: NATIONAL BANK

Md Mehmood Husain, managing director of National Bank, attends the bank's "Half-Yearly Business Review Meeting" for Chattogram region's branch managers at the lender's Chattogram office yesterday.

National Bank holds business review meeting

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National Bank Ltd organised a "Half-Yearly Business Review Meeting" for Chattogram region's branch managers at the bank's Chattogram region office in the port city yesterday.

Md Mehmood Husain, managing director and CEO of the bank, attended the daylong meeting, said a press release. Husain provided guidance to the branch managers of the bank's Chattogram region on the recovery of overdue loans, deposit mobilisation, loan disbursement, supervision and ensuring the highest level of customer service.

Among others, Syed Rois Uddin, deputy managing director of the bank, Sheikh Akhter Uddin Ahmed, head of human resources and senior executive vice-president, Probr Kumar Bhowmick, regional head and senior vice-president, along with senior officials of the lender's head office and managers of all branches of Chattogram region were present.

BGIC declares 12% cash dividend

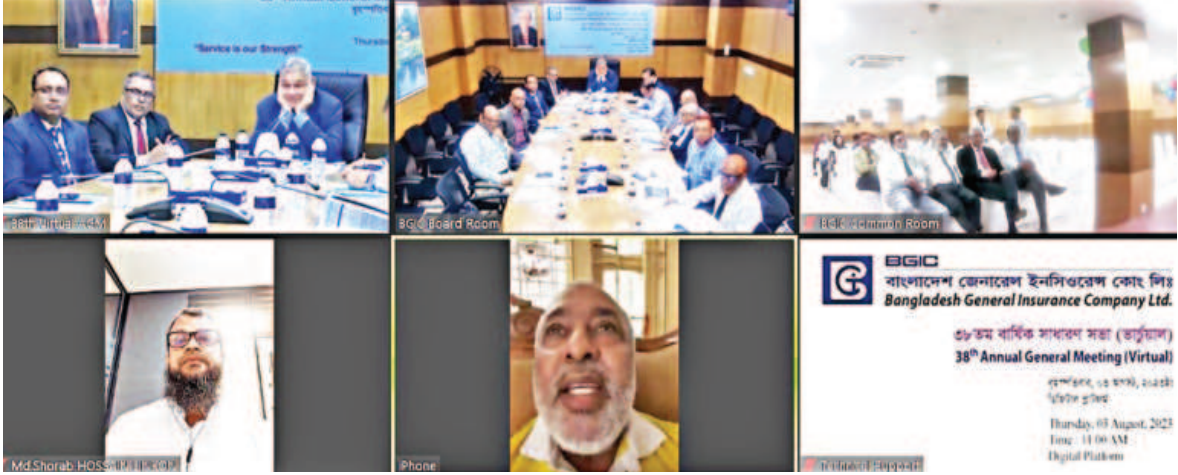
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Bangladesh General Insurance Company (BGIC) Ltd announced a 12 percent cash dividend for the year 2022.

This was disclosed at the insurer's 38th annual general meeting, which was held virtually last week, said a press release.

Towhid Samad, chairman of the insurer, presided over the meeting, where Ahmed Saifuddin Chowdhury, managing director and CEO of the company, along with a large number of shareholders were present.

Salim Bhuiyan, vice-chairman of the company, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, independent director, Md Shakil Rizvi, public director, Arunangshu Dutta, M Manjur Mahmud, nominated directors, AZ Chowdhury, financial consultant, and Saifuddin Ahmed, assistant managing director and company secretary, joined the meeting.



Towhid Samad, chairman of Bangladesh General Insurance Company, presides over the insurer's 38th annual general meeting, which was held virtually last week.

Two measures of global corporate health flash red

REUTERS, London

Two measures of corporate and economic health were flashing red on Friday as shipping group Maersk reported a fall in global demand for sea containers and advertising giant WPP said clients in the US tech sector were slashing their marketing spend.

AP Moller-Maersk lowered its estimate for global container trade this year as companies reduce inventories and higher interest rates and recession risks in Europe and the United States drag on global economic growth.

The company, one of the world's biggest container shippers, said it expects container volumes to fall by as much as 4 percent. It had previously forecast a decline of no more than 2.5 percent.

Maersk controls about one-sixth of global container trade, transporting goods for retailers and consumer companies such as Walmart, Nike and Unilever.

WPP, the world's largest advertising group, warned that US tech clients had pulled back spending in the second quarter, which Chief Executive Mark Read said took the company by surprise.

"Spend will pick up after a period of time, but I think we are nervous for the rest of the year because we can't get total clarity on when that's going to happen," he told Reuters.

The retreat in spending led WPP to follow rival Interpublic - which last month also blamed tech clients cutting marketing budgets - in lowering its growth forecast for this year, to 1.5-3.0 percent from 3-5

percent.

That was a stark contrast from February, when WPP, which owns the Ogilvy, Grey and GroupM agencies, reckoned clients would spend on marketing through any downturn to prop up sales and justify price rises.

Analysts said the news reflected caution among companies wrestling with higher borrowing costs and consumers tightening their own budgets amid a cost-of-living crisis.

Marketing spending is often the first to get cut when companies are worried about a strain on cash.

"Corporations are in wait-and-see mode when it comes to splashing the cash and handing margin over, at a time when demand is very tough to profile," said Sophie Lund-Yates, lead equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.



Mohammad Ali, managing director of Pubali Bank, attends the bank's "2nd Managers' Conference-2023" for Dhaka North, Dhaka Central, Dhaka South, Gazipur and Narayanganj regions at the lender's head office in Dhaka recently. Among others, Mohammad Esha, Ahmed Enayet Manzur, Md Shahnewaz Khan and Mohammad Anisuzzaman, deputy managing directors of the bank, along with general managers, deputy general managers, branch managers and sub-branch managers were present.

PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

Surging US crude exports

FROM PAGE B4

The widening exports illustrate the increasing influence of crude from the US, the world's biggest oil producer, in the global market. It further cements the role of US supplies in balancing the market, especially as outlets for sanctioned Russian crude are limited.

US crude exports have averaged 4.08 million barrels per day so far in 2023, up from an average of 3.53 million bpd in 2022, according to the Energy Information Administration.

Out of the 61 dated Brent assessments to July 27 that have included WTI Midland, the US grade has been among the most competitive in all but one, while it's been the single most competitive alone on half of those days, said Joel Hanley, global director, crude and fuel oil markets at S&P Global. This means WTI Midland is effectively setting the price for the benchmark.

Other physical crude grades are

feeling the pressure as a result of the US supplies. The price difference for Forties crude cargoes loading in the North Sea to dated Brent averaged a discount of 2.9 cents a barrel in July, down from a premium of 12.4 cents in June and 24.5 cents in May, according to data on Refinitiv Eikon.

"As Midland becomes more and more important in the dated Brent assessment, it has a knock-on effect on other grades having to price themselves lower to compete with WTI Midland," said Rohit Rathod, market analyst at energy researcher Vortexa.

The pressure exerted from the WTI Midland exports is even extending to Asian markets for Middle Eastern crude.

Murban crude from the United Arab Emirates is close in density to WTI Midland, but with more sulphur, and is used by traders to compare the economics of shipping WTI to the

east.

The premium of Murban futures to Dubai quotes averaged \$1.90 a barrel, steady from the previous month, while that for cash Dubai gained 43 cents to \$1.57 a barrel during the month, according to Reuters calculations using market trade data. A near-record volume of WTI Midland is set to be shipped east in August.

"There is more and more WTI production flooding the global markets," said Adi Imsirovic, director at Surrey Clean Energy, who formerly headed global oil trading at Gazprom Marketing and Trading.

Unlike crude from producers in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), who are currently reducing output to support prices, "WTI is freely traded, without destination and output restrictions, and WTI value has become a key to the global pricing," he said.

Pakistan's economic woes

FROM PAGE B4

The political chaos started in April last year, when Imran Khan was dismissed as prime minister by a vote of no confidence.

His attempts to parlay popular public support into a movement to force an early election saw him arrested in May, leading to violence that only ended with a massive crackdown on his party and its supporters.

He was convicted of graft on Saturday and sentenced to three years in jail. The textile and clothing sector employs around 40 percent of the country's 20 million-strong industrial workforce.

The main export markets are the US, EU, the UK, Turkey, and the UAE, supplying cotton fabrics, knitwear, bed linen, towels, and ready-made garments to global brands such as Zara, H&M, Adidas, John Lewis, Target and Macy's.

But many factories have closed in

recent months - at least temporarily - or are no longer running at full capacity.

"Perhaps 25 to 30 percent of all textile factories have closed. It is estimated that perhaps 700,000 jobs have been lost in the last year or year and a half," said Zaman.

Babar felt this keenly, having looked for work at other factories - but they were also laying off employees. "They said they were no longer receiving orders from abroad," she said.

After devastating floods in the summer of 2022, cotton production in Pakistan fell to an all-time low.

The textile industry was unable to compensate by buying from abroad because of a freeze on imports imposed by the government to preserve its forex reserves.

Thousands of containers filled with raw materials and machinery essential for the country's industries were held up for months in the

southern port of Karachi.

Textile companies also saw the cost of capital rise significantly, contending with interest rates of more than 20 percent as the central bank sought to curb record-breaking inflation.

Pakistan finally managed to consolidate its foreign exchange reserves with the approval in mid-July of a \$3 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and additional assistance from China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

"But that's not a solution, it's just getting deeper and deeper into debt," said Kamran Arshad, managing director of Ghazi Fabrics International.

"The only way forward is enhancing Pakistan's exports and creating an environment that is investor-friendly that would incentivise industrial production and activity," he added.