

Administrator appointed at Sonali Life Insurance

SUKANTA HALDER

The Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA) yesterday appointed Brig Gen (ret) SM Ferdous as administrator of Sonali Life Insurance with immediate effect.

After taking charge, Ferdous was tasked with submitting a report to the IDRA and hiring a qualified local or foreign auditor to conduct a full audit as soon as possible, according to a letter sent to the new administrator.

The administrator will manage the business and related activities, including the issuance of policies, as per clause 95(3) of the Insurance Act 2010.

He will also be able to appoint one or more consultants if needed, the letter also reads.

Sonali Life's board was dissolved due to corruption and irregularities, Zahangir Alam, spokesperson of IDRA, told The Daily Star.

"Besides, an administrator for Sonali Life has been appointed and he joined the company today (Sunday)," he said.

The administrator was appointed two weeks after an audit found Sonali Life's former chairman Mostafa Golam Quddus and six of his family members, who were also directors in the company, were involved in embezzling around Tk 187.84 crore from the company.

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The IDRA conducted the audit after the company's suspended CEO Mir Rashed Bin Aman complained about Quddus and his family.

The IDRA appointed audit firm Hoda Vasi Chowdhury & Co on December 31 last year to investigate 17 claims of irregularities, including over the appointment of Quddus as chairman in 2023.

The audit found that Quddus and his six family member embezzled funds in different ways, including by issuing shares for themselves, making illegal payment to companies owned by Quddus, and paying salaries to his family member directors.

Huge money was also pocketed through illegal purchases of luxury cars and payment of additional dividends to said directors as well as foreign travel and treatment bills.

They also took a large sum of money through illegal commissions from group insurance policies.

Established in 2013, Sonali Life has 204 branches with 26,693 agents across the country, according to IDRA data.

The company settled 99.9 percent of its total claims in 2020, 99.92 percent in 2021 and 99.98 percent in 2022.

In 2023, the company settled almost all its claims worth Tk 122.26 crore.



The ongoing heatwave has forced farmers to emphasise more on irrigation, which will raise their production cost for Boro paddy. The photo was taken yesterday from Dinajpur sadar upazila.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

Ongoing heatwave raises concerns over Boro yield

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The heatwave that has been sweeping across the country for over two weeks has raised concerns regarding agricultural production, particularly vegetables, mango and Boro paddy that are in the flowering and grain formation stages.

Under the circumstances, growers can do little apart from ensuring irrigation so that the paddy gets adequate water and does not turn out dry or underdeveloped.

"The irrigation for the heatwave is going to increase my cost of production and I have no alternative but to do so to protect my Boro crop," said farmer Yasin Ali of Buipara village in the northwestern border district of Dinajpur.

April usually brings showers which meet a portion of the irrigation requirements, he said.

However, this year, the skies have remained unusually devoid of clouds, said Ali, apprehending that the harvests would be delayed.

Boro season paddy is the country's principal crop, accounting for roughly 55 percent of total annual rice production.

Data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) showed that farmers have grown the dry season crop on 48.56 lakh hectares of land this time around, up marginally from 48.52 lakh hectares in the previous year.

Agricultural officials said roughly 20 percent of the crop have already been harvested.

"We are ensuring water for the rice field. Up until now, there is no big damage," said farmer Toriqul Islam of the southwestern district of Jashore over the phone yesterday.

Amidst the heatwave, Bangladesh Agro-Meteorological Information Service (BAMIS) for the third time this month, recommended that cultivators ensure adequate moisture on the croplands.

Boro season paddy is the country's principal crop, accounting for roughly 55 percent of total annual rice production.

Earlier this month, the BAMIS issued the advice for 54 districts and re-issued the advice to protect crops on the field, including Boro paddy, from the mild to moderate heatwave that arose on April 4.

Up until now, there has been no sign of the weather easing.

Yesterday, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department said the prevailing heatwave may continue until April 23.

Niaz Md Farhat Rahman, principal scientific officer and coordinator of Agromet Lab at Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), said temperatures above

35 degree Celsius affect flowering and grain formation of paddy.

This directly impacts the yield of rice, he said.

Chances of pollination reduces if the temperature exceeds 35 degree Celsius even for a couple of hours. As a result, the number of dry or underdeveloped rice grains rises, he said.

To avoid this, farmers are being advised to keep 5 to 7 inches of water in the field now, he said.

High temperatures also leave paddy plants susceptible to neck blast disease and to prevent this, farmers should use pesticides, the scientist added.

"We, from BRRI, have already issued a bulletin in this regard and we suggest farmers ensure water on the land until April 30," he said.

However, the risk of yield losses is not limited to rice.

Islam of Jashore, where the country's highest temperature of 42.6 degrees Celsius for the day was recorded yesterday, said the heatwave was affecting vegetables on the field and bitter gourd plants were drying up.

Emdatul Haque Milon, a farmer of the northwestern bordering district of Lalmonirhat, said high temperatures deter growth of plants. This is likely to affect overall yield, he added.

READ MORE ON B3

IBN Sina Pharma's Q3 profits up 44%

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

IBN Sina Pharmaceutical Industry reported a 44 percent year-on-year rise in profit in the January-March period of fiscal year 2023-24, which it attributed to an aggressive marketing strategy and proactive support from the management.

The profit amounted to Tk 13.46 crore whereas it was Tk 9.34 crore during the same period in the previous fiscal year.

"Our marketing team has put in an aggressive effort to counter a dull market while the management also provided proactive support," said Chief Financial Officer Md Jasim Uddin.

Besides, there was a positive impact of the economic rebound of the country in the sales and revenue growth, he said.

According to him, the marketing team worked proactively to increase sales during the last quarter which helped to increase the profit margin.

Uddin also hoped for the trend to continue in the coming days.

The company's consolidated earnings per share (EPS) stood at Tk 4.31 in the quarter, according to its unaudited financial statement published on the Dhaka Stock Exchange website yesterday.

It was Tk 2.99 in the same period of the previous year.

As for the July-March period this fiscal year, it was Tk 16.23 whereas Tk 13.52 in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

Meanwhile, its consolidated net operating cash flow per share was Tk 15.5 in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, down from Tk 17.47 in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Profit rose by 44% in Q3
- Net profit in Q3 Tk 13.46cr
- EPS was Tk 4.31 in Q3
- Profit in FY23 Tk 60cr
- Authorised capital Tk 50cr
- Paid-up capital Tk 31.24cr
- Market capitalisation Tk 792cr

Its shares closed 1.34 per cent higher at Tk 257 on the DSE yesterday.

Founded in 1983, the company manufactures and sells pharmaceutical drugs, including traditional herbal and unani medicines, according to its website.

The company's manufacturing plant in Gazipur, 56 kilometres away from the capital Dhaka, sits on over 15 acres of land and features sophisticated technology and machinery for manufacturing and quality testing of various dosages of various therapeutic classes.

Oil rises slightly

REUTERS, New York

Oil settled slightly higher on Friday, but posted a weekly decline, after Iran played down a reported Israeli attack on its soil, a sign that an escalation of hostilities in the Middle East might be avoided. Brent futures settled up 18 cents, or 0.21 percent, at \$87.29 a barrel.

NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLAN EXPO 2024

Rising to resilience: Bangladesh's journey towards sustainable climate adaptation



Dr Farhina Ahmed



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As Bangladesh proudly hosts the ninth global National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Expo this week, the world turns its gaze to a nation that not only faces formidable climate challenges but is also leading by example in climate adaptation.

The NAP Expo, an initiative under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), serves as a vital platform for sharing knowledge and forging partnerships in our collective journey towards environmental resilience.

The event not only underscores the urgency of climate adaptation, but also highlights the collaborative spirit required to tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Hosting this event is not just a matter of pride for Bangladesh; it is a vibrant testament to the country's

commitment to protecting and strengthening its communities against climate adversities.

WHY ADAPTATION IS AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT

As the 39th country to submit its NAP, Bangladesh is not only responding to the immediate threats posed by climate change, but also proactively planning for a sustainable future.

This plan, submitted just before the pivotal CoP-28 event, represents a strategic effort led by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under its global NAP support program, as well as the Economic Relations Division (ERD), among other partners.

It integrates national development goals with the global climate agenda.

In Bangladesh, adapting to climate change is not merely a strategy;

it is a necessity for the country's sustainable development. As sea levels rise and weather patterns shift due to climate change, agriculture, water resources, and coastal communities in Bangladesh bear the brunt.

The NAP is designed to protect these vulnerable sectors and communities, ensuring that development gains are resilient and sustainable. This includes scaling up home-grown adaptation models that have been jointly and successfully tested by the government, UNDP and other partners across Bangladesh.

Crafted through collaboration between domestic and international experts, this policy embodies a comprehensive approach. Extensive consultations were conducted with stakeholders spanning vulnerable communities, sector ministries, academia, and more.

Importantly, synergies with national priorities like the Delta Plan, Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan, and Agenda 2030 were established, ensuring alignment and maximizing impact.

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION
The vision of Bangladesh's NAP 2023-50 is to "build a climate-resilient nation through effective adaptation strategies to foster a robust society and ecosystems and stimulate sustainable economic growth."

With the NAP now officially adopted, Bangladesh is transitioning its focus toward effective



As sea levels rise and weather patterns shift due to climate change, agriculture, water resources, and coastal communities in Bangladesh bear the brunt.

PHOTO: UNDP BANGLADESH ARCHIVE

implementation. Institutional leadership and strategic planning are therefore fundamental in this phase.

The government of Bangladesh is committed to securing the necessary resources, engaging local communities, and ensuring that its policies result in significant enhancements to climate resilience.

Implementing this plan requires a substantial investment – estimated at \$230 billion over the next 20 years – highlighting the need for concerted efforts from both international and domestic partners. While public entities are the primary funders

of adaptation projects, there is a critical need to attract more private investment.

The perception of a lack of bankable adaptation projects may be misleading; the real challenge is the scarcity of projects that meet the risk and return criteria and are large enough to attract private investors.

The UNDP is ready to fully support the government of Bangladesh in these efforts by providing technical assistance and leveraging our partners.

BANGLADESH AS A MODEL OF CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Bangladesh's dedication to climate adaptation transcends national borders. The country is eager to share its experiences and the valuable lessons learned on its journey towards resilience. Platforms like the NAP Expo provide a unique opportunity for mutual learning, allowing countries to both share and gain insights as they advance their own NAPs.

Through this exchange, Bangladesh aims to inspire and assist other nations, especially those within its region, to develop robust and resilient strategies to combat the diverse challenges posed by climate change, including in both rural and urban settings.

CONCLUSION

As Dhaka welcomes stakeholders from across the globe to the NAP Expo 2024, Bangladesh invites the global community to witness firsthand the strides it has made in climate adaptation.

This event serves as a call to action for all countries to not only draft, but actively implement their NAPs. With strong partnerships and commitment, we can collectively advance towards a resilient and sustainable future, ensuring that we leave no one behind.

Dr Farhina Ahmed is secretary to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Stefan Liller is the UNDP resident representative in Bangladesh.