

22ND BANGLADESH BUSINESS AWARDS

The Daily Star

AWARDING EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS
SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT • SUNDAY OCTOBER 27, 2024, KARTIK 11, 1431 BS



From left, Sk. Bashir Uddin, managing director of AkijBashir Group; Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank; Kyaw Sein Thay Dolly, managing director of Cloths "R" Us; Kihak Sung, chairman of Youngone Corporation, and Alihussain Akberali, chairman of BSRM, pose for a photo at the 22nd DHL-The Daily Star Bangladesh Business Awards ceremony at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden on October 8. PHOTO: STAR

Awarding the private sector heroes

Since 2000, DHL Express and The Daily Star have been recognising firms, financial institutions, business icons, and women entrepreneurs for their achievements and efforts

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh is an inspiring story of economic growth and development. The country became the 35th largest economy globally from almost scratch since its independence in 1971.

Neither was the journey easy, nor the road smooth.

However, the country's dogged private sector entrepreneurs have persevered through turbulent times. With unwavering resilience and hard work, they have lifted the economy from near ground zero.

Since 2000, DHL and The Daily Star have been recognising the contributions of these businesspeople to the economy. The annual DHL-The Daily Star Bangladesh Business Awards (BBA), sponsored by DHL Express and The Daily Star, honoured the best in the business community this year too.

Finance and Commerce Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed presented the awards to the winners at the Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden.

This year, the BBA was given in five categories: Business Person of the Year, Best Financial Institution of the Year, Best Enterprise of the Year, Best Woman in Business and a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Kihak Sung, the chairperson of Youngone Corporation, a Korean garment giant operating in Bangladesh for over three decades, received the Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to exports, job creation and industrialisation in Bangladesh.

Sk. Bashir Uddin, managing director of AkijBashir Group, was honoured as the Business Person of the Year 2023.

BSRM, the largest steelmaker in the country, was recognised with the Best Enterprise of the Year award.

Pubali Bank PLC, one of the oldest private banks in Bangladesh, received the Best Financial Institution of the Year 2023.

Kyaw Sein Thay Dolly, managing director of Cloths "R" Us Ltd, a garment buying house, was awarded the Outstanding Women in Business

of the Year for her entrepreneurial zeal.

Congratulating the entrepreneurs, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed assured them of removing obstacles to improve the ease of doing business.

"We are trying to remove all kinds of barriers," Ahmed said.

Lutfey Siddiqi, special envoy to the chief adviser on international affairs, suggested that the business community be more responsive to be able to say that Bangladesh is raising standards of wages, safety, and environmental sustainability.

In his keynote speech, Youngone chairperson Sung said, "This is one of the most fulfilling moments of my life."

He said his life has been intertwined with Bangladesh.

"When I am in Korea, I am known as a man who spent 44 years in Bangladesh. I am going to work here for another 33 years," said Sung, who is now 77.

He said Bangladesh is a country of resilience. "Resilience is a truly fitting word for Bangladesh."

He cited the cyclone of 1991, saying they lost everything. Everyone struggled to get back to their regular lives. But the country rebounded eventually.

"I believe Bangladesh never fails," Sung said. He added that Bangladesh is making a big contribution to the global economy.

"It is a truly reliable source," Sung said.

Miarul Haque, managing director of DHL Express Bangladesh, said that as a country and business community, businesses have been facing a perfect storm over the past few months. "Now, they stand at a pivotal juncture where they must reset their direction for the future."

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said that although reforms in the constitution and education have been widely discussed, much-needed reforms in the business sector have not been highlighted.

"I would like to divide the business

community into two groups: one consisting of honest businessmen and the other, unfortunately not," he said.

"This distinction must remain in all our minds. The activities of those who did not conduct honest business must be singled out, but the group that did business honestly, ethically and followed all the laws of the land, paying their taxes to the best of their ability, must be helped in every way possible," he added.

The event was attended by numerous business luminaries, including M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of ACI Group; Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals; Simeen Rahman, group CEO of Transcom Group; AK Azad, chairman and CEO of Ha-Meem Group; Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and CEO of Pran-RFL Group; Hafizur Rahman Khan, chairman of Runner Group; Ashraf Ahmed, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh; and Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of Mastercard.

National Board of Revenue Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke, and Ambassador of South Korea Park Young-sik were also present at the event.

Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD); Matiur Rahman, editor of the Prothom Alo; Kazi Wahidul Alam, editor of tourism and aviation fortnightly Bangladesh Monitor; Farooq Sobhan, former ambassador and distinguished fellow of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute; Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh; Rounaq Jahan, distinguished fellow of the CPD; Rubana Huq, vice-chancellor of Asian University for Women; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; and Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD, were also present.



WINNERS OF DHL-THE DAILY STAR BANGLADESH BUSINESS AWARDS-2023

BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR
Sk. Bashir Uddin, managing director of AkijBashir Group

ENTERPRISE OF THE YEAR
BSRM Group

BEST FINANCIAL INSTITUTION OF THE YEAR
Pubali Bank PLC

OUTSTANDING WOMAN IN BUSINESS
Kyaw Sein Thay Dolly, managing director of Cloths "R" Us Ltd

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Kihak Sung, chairperson of Youngone Corporation

Top policymakers call for responsible business practices

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Two top government functionaries called upon entrepreneurs to conduct business activities transparently and responsibly, saying that the interim government is trying to remove all the barriers to facilitate trade and investment.

"Always be in the sunshine. Nothing should be done under the table. That's the best test of business," Finance and Commerce Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed said at a gathering of entrepreneurs and top executives at the Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden on October 8.

The event was held to hand over prizes of the 22nd Bangladesh Business Awards, a flagship annual event of DHL Express and The Daily Star which is organised to honour entrepreneurs and enterprises for

their outstanding efforts and landmark achievements in their respective business fields.

Ahmed assured the business community that barriers to doing business would be removed and said the business community is demonstrating empathy and altruism.

Ahmed said there is no uncertainty now and that the interim government has taken many initiatives to bring back discipline in banking and other sectors.

"Our main target is economic recovery," he said.

Lutfey Siddiqi, the chief adviser's special envoy for international affairs, said: "It's an extraordinarily opportune moment for us to imagine the possibilities that are available to us."

He said it's liberating for businesses to be able to operate in a responsible manner,

which is in a way true to stakeholders.

"To be able to say that we are raising standards of employment, wages, safety, and environmental sustainability. And, we will be doing business on the basis of quality."

"So, I look forward to all of us being part of the journey. It may be two steps forward and one step back. But as long as we are compassionate about each other's challenges and take everyone along on this journey, I am sure it is going to be a wonderful prize."

Referring to interim government advisers, he said every single person in the team is there to do a good job.

"We have variable capabilities. Some of us have better execution experience in some fields than others, but we are open-minded. We, of course, correct when we get feedback. And we are hopefully a responsible government," he said.



Salehuddin Ahmed



Lutfey Siddiqi