ICAB holds conference on women in leadership and governance

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) yesterday organised a conference, titled "Women in Leadership and Governance 2026", at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel in Dhaka.

The conference brought together policymakers, corporate leaders, regulators, development partners and members of leading professional bodies to advance dialogue on leadership, governance and board diversity.

Abdul Moyeen Khan, a lawmaker and standing committee member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), inaugurated the conference as the chief guest, according to a press release.

In his remarks, Khan highlighted women's significant contribution to Bangladesh's economic and social progress and emphasised the need for greater representation of women in corporate leadership and boardrooms.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, former adviser to the caretaker government, and Barrister Jahrat Adib Chowdhury, a member of parliament, attended the programme as guests of honour.

Presented by Global Innovation & Leadership Centre (GILC), the conference reflected ICAB's commitment to leadership development, governance readiness and inclusion.

Zareen Mahmud Hosein, chairperson of GILC and council member of ICAB, said, "Stronger leadership is built through partnership. This conference demonstrates what becomes possible when institutions come together with a shared purpose."

Abdul Moyeen Khan, a lawmaker and standing committee member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), attends the conference, titled "Women in Leadership and Governance 2026", organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel in Dhaka yesterday. PHOTO: ICAB

PHOTO: MERCANTILE BANK

Mati Ul Hasan, managing director of Mercantile Bank PLC, poses for a group photograph during the launching ceremony of the bank's new Trade Finance Analytics software and its go-live programme at its head office in Dhaka recently.

Mercantile Bank launches trade finance analytics software

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mercantile Bank PLC has launched its new trade finance analytics (TFA) software, a foreign trade-based reporting and monitoring solution, at its head office in Dhaka recently.

The newly deployed system is designed to provide the bank with an advanced, automated framework to streamline foreign trade reporting and strengthen monitoring capabilities across its network.

Mati Ul Hasan, managing director of the bank, inaugurated the software as the chief guest, according to a press release.

The event was held in a hybrid format, allowing both physical and virtual participation.

Participants included members of the bank's senior management team, the TFA software steering committee, and the project implementation team.

Officials from the bank's international division, authorised dealer (AD) branches, and central trade processing centre (CTPC) units also attended the session.

Shahjalal Islami Bank clients to receive discounts at Perfect Global Health

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC has signed an agreement with Perfect Global Health, a Dhaka-based healthcare consultancy firm, to provide enhanced healthcare facilities to its customers.

Kaysar Kader Salim, chief executive officer of the healthcare consultancy company, and Md Shafiul Islam, assistant vice-president of the bank, signed the agreement at the bank's corporate head office in Dhaka on Sunday, according to a press release.

Under the deal, the bank's cardholders will be able to access special services and enjoy up to 10 percent discount on healthcare treatments at selected hospitals in India, Thailand, Malaysia, Turkey and China through Perfect Global Health.

Md Jafar Sadeq, deputy managing director of the bank, attended the event.

AKM Hasan Rahim, head of human resources division of the bank; Md Khirkil Nowaz, head of retail business; SM Mohiuddin, head of retail investment department; Shamsul Arifin Ferdose, manager of Airport Road branch; KM Harunur Rashid, head of public relations and Bank Foundation; and Parvez Kamal Rubel, marketing manager of the healthcare consultancy firm, alongside senior officials of both the organisations, were also present at the signing ceremony.

Kaysar Kader Salim, chief executive officer of Perfect Global Health, and Md Shafiul Islam, assistant vice-president of Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the agreement at the bank's corporate head office in Dhaka on Sunday. PHOTO: SHAHJALAL ISLAMI BANK

Nvidia unveils AI infrastructure deals with South Korea

AFP, *Seoul*

US chip titan Nvidia announced on Monday a raft of artificial intelligence deals in South Korea, where booming business for semiconductor companies is fuelling debate over how much of the profits go to workers.

Nvidia, the world's most valuable company, unveiled with SK Telecom a "gigawatt-scale" AI data centre construction project, with the first facility set to come online in 2027.

It will support "AI services for enterprises and industries across Korea, with the vision to expand to greater Asia regions", the companies said.

No figure was given for how much the pair will invest in the data centres, or for other new tie-ups that Nvidia touted with the likes of Naver, LG Group, Hyundai and Doosan Group, including on AI robotics.

The deals were unveiled after Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang spent the weekend eating barbecue and fried chicken with the country's tech leaders in Seoul and appearing on a popular TV show.

Nvidia also said it would work with chipmaker SK hynix to develop advanced memory components that are needed to run AI systems but are currently in short supply.

Nvidia, the world's most valuable company, unveiled with SK Telecom a "gigawatt-scale" AI data centre construction project, with the first facility set to come online in 2027

Their "multi-year technology partnership" will "sustain the global buildout of AI factories" by supporting supply for advanced memory chips, they said.

Lian Jye Su, a chief analyst at Omdia, told AFP that Nvidia's new deals were "about strengthening existing relationships and further validating South Korea's role in the global AI supply chain".

Governments and companies are pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into AI infrastructure, creating a global memory chip shortage.

That has sent profits skyrocketing for manufacturers such as SK hynix and rival Samsung Electronics, whose union recently agreed a deal with management on bonuses.

The chair of SK Group, parent of SK Telecom and SK hynix, vowed last week to double production capacity of the silicon wafers used to make memory chips.

But Chey Tae-won also reiterated his prediction that shortages could persist until 2030.

Huang signed a memory chip display at the SK hynix booth at last week's Computex trade show in Taipei, writing: "Please make more."

Asked in Taipei about the labour dispute at Samsung, Huang said companies should pay workers "as much as possible".

Under the union deal, struck to avert a strike, around 60 percent of Samsung's domestic workforce is eligible to receive a bonus of roughly $330,000 this year, based on a market estimate of operating profit.

Shimanto Bank offers subsidised home loans for govt employees

Ferdous Rowshan Ara, additional secretary (administration and planning wing) of the Finance Division, and Md Nurul Azim, managing director and CEO of Shimanto Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the memorandum of understanding at the Secretariat in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: SHIMANTO BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shimanto Bank PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Finance Division of the Ministry of Finance to provide home loans at a subsidised rate for government officials and employees.

Md Nurul Azim, managing director and CEO of Shimanto Bank PLC, and Ferdous Rowshan Ara, additional secretary (administration and planning wing) of the Finance Division, signed the MoU at the Secretariat in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Under the MoU, all permanent government officials and employees will be eligible to avail home loans under a special scheme offered by Shimanto Bank PLC. A portion of the loan interest will be subsidised by the government, while the remaining portion will be borne by the borrower.

Mohammad Abul Hashem, additional secretary of the Planning, Development and Reform Wing of the Finance Division, presided over the signing ceremony.

Mohammad Golam Kabir, deputy secretary of the Housing Building Loan Branch (additional charge) of the Finance Division; TS Shamim Siddiky, deputy secretary of House Building Loan Cell-2 (additional charge); Md Sahidul Islam, head of business; and Mohammad Masud Sajjad, head of retail assets and liabilities at Shimanto Bank PLC, along with senior officials from both institutions, were also present at the ceremony.

Uttara Bank partners with Elevate Solutions for SOC deployment

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Uttara Bank PLC has signed an agreement with Elevate Solutions Limited, a Dhaka-based software company, to implement a modern Security Operations Centre (SOC) powered by Microsoft Sentinel, a leading SIEM platform.

Kazi Rayhan Kabir, executive general manager and chief information technology officer of the bank, and Md Humaun Kabir, managing director and CEO of the software company, signed the agreement at the bank's head office in Dhaka on Sunday, according to a press release.

Under the initiative, Elevate Solutions Limited will design, deploy and operate a centralised SOC to strengthen the bank's cybersecurity framework.

Md Humaun Kabir, managing director and CEO of Elevate Solutions Limited, and Kazi Rayhan Kabir, executive general manager and chief information technology officer of Uttara Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the agreement at the bank's head office in Dhaka on Sunday. PHOTO: UTTARA BANK

BB rolls out Tk 19,000cr

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Participating banks will also be required to collect updated CIB reports before applying for refinancing support.

According to the BB, many export-oriented industries possess strong growth potential but have failed to expand because of inadequate access to financing. The refinance facility is expected to address this gap and encourage fresh investment in emerging export sectors.

Tk 10,000cr FOR AGRI AND LIVESTOCK

The scheme, the largest of the four, is aimed at boosting agricultural production, strengthening national food security and generating employment in rural areas.

Scheduled banks participating in BB's agricultural and rural credit programme will receive refinancing at 4 percent and may lend to farmers and entrepreneurs at a maximum of 8 percent.

The five-year fund, financed from the central bank's own resources, will be managed by its Agricultural Credit Department-1.

The scheme covers crop cultivation, fisheries, livestock, agricultural machinery, irrigation equipment and other income-generating agricultural activities.

Small and marginal farmers may obtain loans of up to Tk 5 lakh for crop production without collateral, against crop hypothecation.

Loan ceilings have been set at Tk 30 lakh for crop production; Tk 15 lakh for livestock and other agricultural activities; Tk 20 lakh for agricultural machinery; and Tk 1 crore for fisheries and livestock projects.

Banks will be required to maintain separate accounts, submit regular reports and ensure proper monitoring of loan utilisation and recovery under the scheme.

Tk 1,000cr FOR GREEN INDUSTRIES AND FACTORIES

The fund is designed to accelerate investment in green industries and environmentally sustainable factory buildings, in support of Bangladesh's climate and sustainable development goals.

Under the scheme, banks and financial institutions will be able to access refinance support at a 2 percent interest rate -- the lowest rate among the four schemes -- and lend to eligible borrowers at a maximum of 5 percent.

The scheme's tenure will range from three to 10 years, with a grace period of up to one year. The fund, sourced from Bangladesh Bank's own resources, will take immediate effect.

The facility will finance the establishment of green industries and factory buildings certified or pre-certified under internationally recognised standards, including LEED, EDGE, BEEER and GreenARCH.

A single borrower may receive up to Tk 100 crore, with projects required to maintain a minimum debt-equity ratio of 70:30. Defaulted borrowers will not be eligible.

Participating banks and financial institutions must comply with the BB's sustainable finance, environmental and social risk management, and climate risk management and disclosure guidelines.

MONITORING

To access any of the four facilities, scheduled banks must sign participation agreements with the BB and meet all relevant risk management and regulatory requirements.

The central bank will monitor fund utilisation through reporting requirements and on-site inspections. Misuse of funds, submission of inaccurate information or non-compliance with scheme conditions could result in cancellation of refinancing facilities and financial penalties.

Govt to make

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"This move may set back the journey towards a cashless society. Many small vendors and marginal merchants are reluctant to enter the formal sector because they fear additional compliance requirements and administrative hassles," said a market insider, requesting anonymity.

The insider added that making BINs mandatory for merchant accounts could discourage some businesses from using digital payment platforms altogether.

There are currently nearly 10 lakh merchant account holders across the country, according to industry sources.

The finance ministry official said the government may also make BIN registration mandatory in several other areas, including opening and operating current or short-term deposit accounts with banks and non-bank financial institutions, obtaining loans, renewing trade licences, securing memberships in trade bodies, obtaining electricity and gas connections, and registering vehicles in the name of a business.

Officials familiar with the proposal said the requirement is intended to bring more businesses into the formal economy and improve the government's ability to track commercial activities that currently take place outside the tax system.