

BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY FEBRUARY 18, 2020, FALGUN 5, 1426 BS o starbusiness@thedailystar.net

Low-income group punctured by postal deposit rate cuts

SOHEL PARVEZ

The sudden cut in interest rates on postal savings came as a bolt from the blue for many small depositors who depend largely on the interest incomes to make ends meet.

"This is shocking," Masud Rana after learning of the development on Thursday evening.

Rana was once a migrant worker and over the last four years he has been bearing the lion's share of his family's expenses with his returns from his savings account with the postal department.

He rushed to the GPO Dhaka on Sunday to find out if the rate cuts -- from 11.28 per cent to 6 per cent for fixed deposits with a three-year tenure -- would be applicable for his deposits as well.

After finding no clear answer he opted to liquidate his fixed deposits: until Sunday evening, he was seen waiting anxiously in a queue for a cheque as cash had already dried



People throng the street outside the post office in the capital's Mohammadpur area to inquire about the future of their investments on postal savings. Media reports recently emerged saying the government has reduced the return on such savings.

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up amid a withdrawal pressure from 50 nearly lakh savers mostly from the low- and mid-income brackets.

T h

ministry on Thursday brought down interest rate on ordinary and fixed deposit accounts in post offices to conform to a government decision to bring down the interest rates on bank deposits and lending to 6 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. Most banks have cut interest

rates on fixed deposits schemes e from the beginning of this month f i n a n c e in line with the decision aimed at

spurring private investment.

Rana, who lives with his parents at Shanir Akhra in the capital, was in a fix over where he would invest the money he had earned as a migrant worker in Saudi Arabia.

The rich don't keep money here. The middle-class families deposit in post offices as they offer higher interest than banks," said Rana, father of a school-goer.

The government could have reduced the rate by 1 or 2 percentage points instead of a massive cut, added the crestfallen Rana.

"I am in a tight spot. I only see tough days ahead," said Safatun Nesa, a 65-year-old widow from Rajshahi city and is the sole bread earner in her family

She raised about Tk 1 lakh working as a housemaid and went for postal savings a year ago, our Rajshahi correspondent reported.

The latest interest rate cut means new savers will get 6 per cent returns at the time of maturity of their schemes. And those who will reinvest or renew their fixed deposits after the finance ministry's notice will also get the same rate.

Fixed income people, particularly the lower-income group, will be affected the most, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, a thinktank.

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BULLS RETURNING TO BOURSE

Febryary 18, 2020

DSEX, the benchmark index of the premier bourse, continued the bullish trend for the fifth day straight, in an indication of the improving investor confidence thanks to BB's announcement of its long-awaited financial support for the bourse on February 10. Turnover also rose to a new high yesterday.

DSEX rose to 4,768.14 points (up 33.98 points, or **0.72%**)

Daily average turnover rose to Tk **976.39**cr (increased Tk **60.14** crore, or **6.6%**)

TOP FIVE LOSERS

TOP FIVE GAINERS				
Company	Gain (in %)			
Rupali Life	9.96			
Prime Islami Life	9.92			
Metro Spinning	9.88			
Meghna Life	9.86			
Aftab Automobiles	9.86			

Company	Loss (in %)
Shyampur Sugar Mills	8.39
Standard Ceramic	6.67
Meghna Condensed Milk	5.69
Imam Button	4.93
Beach Hatchery	4.52

TOP SECTORAL CONTRIBUTION Sector Change in Market cap (in %) Bank 16.9 13.9 Fuel & Power Telecommunication 12.4 Food & Allied 8.6





China's envoy now apprehends delays in mega projects

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Chinese ambassador to coronavirus-imposed in an indication of the escalating overall insight into the coronavirus

Bangladesh has gone back on checked before being allowed back, he his assurance from five days ago said, expressing hope that there would that Bangladesh's mega projects be no significant interruption to the involving Chinese nationals would work. The programme was organised not face any hold-ups for the lethal by the Bangladesh China Chamber of lockdown, Commerce and Industry to provide an

conference at the National Press Club return on time after the spring festival holiday. Most of them are technicians, But they would be quarantined and engineers and project managers. Thus me progress of these projects mig delayed," he said yesterday.

> The mega projects include the Padma bridge and its rail link, a 1320MW thermal power plant in Payra, a rail link connecting Chattogram to Cox's Bazar (Ramu), a tunnel under the Karnaphuli river and upgradation of the Dhaka bypass

The projects involve several Chinese companies and are being implemented through Division, Bangladesh Railway, Power Division and the Roads and Highways Department.

Li said China was currently the largest source of imports for Bangladesh.

tightened customs Due to sanitation controls and suspension of operations of many Chinese exporters, Bangladeshi companies, for now, might not be able to get their requirement of goods, equipment and raw materials on time, he said.

The Chinese ambassador said an epidemic of such a scale would inevitably leave a dent on the economy.

Rumours are running high that the Chinese economy will lose steam and economies closely linked to it will suffer the most.

"Those are not true," he said. But such rumours can still affect the confidence of Bangladeshis doing business with China and negatively

affect bilateral trade, Li said.

"In view of these concerns of the business community, I would like to say, please have faith in China and rest assured. Right now China is making huge economic sacrifices to contain the virus. Chinese companies are also losing money both at home and abroad, and many Chinese projects are being halted."

READ MORE ON B3



Onions which have slightly degraded in quality being processed for sale in the capital's Sadarghat recently. Traders buy such onions from the Shyampur wholesale market at Tk 15-20 per kilogramme. After removing any foul parts and sun-drying the onions, they are sold at Tk 35-40 per kilogramme.



- >> Coronavirus is delaying Chinese workers' return to projects in Bangladesh
- >> The spread of the virus is raising spending of Chinese contractors
- >> Bangladesh suspended on-arrival visa for Chinese travellers
- >> Some 312 Bangladeshis returned home from China's Wuhan, the birthplace of coronavirus
- >> Still 171 Bangladeshi students are staying in Wuhan
- >> Chinese airlines reduced frequency of flights to Bangladesh

gravity of the disease.

The number of deaths from the novel coronavirus has risen to 1,770 at the time of writing. There have been more than 71,000 cases worldwide, with the vast majority of those in mainland China.

Less than 10 per cent of the Chinese nationals had gone home for the Lunar New Year, the most important festival of the year in China, Li Jiming, the Chinese envoy, had said in a press

MJL Bangladesh Limited

outbreak in China.

But in a separate discussion --'Current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in China and our stand' organised by the Bangladesh-China Business Association (BCBA) yesterday at the same venue, he said there might be delays as the Chinese nationals could not return

"A lot of Chinese nationals working in major projects in Bangladesh can't

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BUSINESS

Coronavirus could damage global growth in 2020: IMF

The coronavirus epidemic could damage global economic growth this year, the IMF head said Sunday, but a sharp and rapid economic rebound could follow.

"There may be a cut that we are still hoping would be in the 0.1-0.2 percentage space," the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva, told the Global Women's Forum

She said the full impact of the spreading disease that has already killed more than 1,600 people would depend on how quickly it was contained.

"I advise everybody not to jump to premature conclusions. There is still a great deal of uncertainty. We operate with scenarios, not yet with projections, ask me in 10 days," Georgieva said.

In its January update to the World Economic Outlook, the IMF lowered global economic growth forecast in 2020 by a 0.1 percentage point to 3.3 percent, following a 2.9 percent growth the previous year, the lowest in a decade.

Georgieva said it was "too early" to assess the full impact of the epidemic but acknowledged that it had already affected sectors such as tourism and transportation.

"It is too early to say because we don't yet quite know what is the nature of this virus. We don't know how quickly China will be able to contain it. We don't know whether it will spread to the rest of the world," she said.

If the disease is "contained rapidly, there can be a sharp drop and a very rapid rebound", in what is known as the V-shaped impact, she said.

Compared to the impact of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002, she said China's economy then made up just 8.0 percent of global economy. Now, that figure is 19 percent.

She said the trade agreement between the United States and China, the world's first and second economies, had reduced the disease's impact on global economy.

But the world should be concerned "about sluggish growth" impacted by uncertainty, said the IMF chief.



Mahiul Islam, head of retail banking at Brac Bank, and Jalal Uddin Akand, executive director at Transcraft Ltd, a concern of Transcom Group, attend a deal signing ceremony in Dhaka recently. Transcraft's employees will get exclusive employee banking benefits including, lending and deposit products at the bank.

Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company Limited (A Company of Petrobangla)

Employment of Legal Advisers (Retainer) and Panel Advocates

Applications are hereby invited in plain paper from the members of the District Bar Councils of Dhaka, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Feni, Noakhali and Chittagong for appointment of Legal Adviser for Comilla Area and Panel Advocates four for Dhaka, two for Comilla, Brahmanbaria and one each for Chittagong (Experience in Labour Law), Chandpur, Feni and Noakhali Area for a period of two years for conducting suits in different courts on the following terms and conditions:

- 1. For Dhaka area the applicants must have ten years experience as legal practitioner in Civil Courts including five years experience in High Court Division. An advocate having a Bar-at-Law/LL.M or Doctorate Degree in any discipline of law will be given preference. Except Dhaka all other area's applicants must have ten years experience as legal practitioner in Civil Courts.
- Retired District Judges (age not exceeding sixty years) who are engaged in legal practice are eligible to apply.
- The applicants must be Bangladeshi by birth.
- The applicants must possess a good physique.
- The Legal Advisers will be paid a monthly retainer fee of Tk. 1,000.00 (one thousand). Legal Advisers and Panel Advocate will be paid legal fees separately at BGDCL's scheduled rate(s).
- Advocates engaged as Legal Adviser/Retainer in any other organization are not eligible to apply for appointment as Legal Adviser/Retainer in BGDCL.
- Interested candidates should submit 2 (two) copies of applications stating name, father's, mother's/Husband's name, present and permanent address,
 - attested copies of certificates regarding nationality experience/qualifications and 2 (two) copies of recent passport size photographs duly attested by First Class Gazetted Officer directly to the Secretary, Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company Limited, Head Office, Chapapur, Comilla within 15 (fifteen) days from the day of publication of this
- The words "Application for the post of Legal Adviser/Panel Advocate" should be mentioned on the application and envelops.

কাজের বিবরণ

বিজি-১৪৩৮, ফেব্রুয়ারি-২০২০, (৩x৭") GD-299

Secretary Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company Limited Comilla

Cathay Pacific flags 'significant' drop in H1 profit

REUTERS

Cathay Pacific Airways is expecting a significant drop in its first-half results and has also cut capacity due to the coronavirus outbreak, it said on Monday.

Severe travel restrictions as a result of a coronavirus outbreak in China, which has caused about 1,770 deaths across mainland China, have led to a steep rise in flight cancellations.

"The first half of 2020 was already expected to be extremely challenging financially," the company said in a statement.

"As a result of this additional significant drop in demand for flights and consequential capacity reduction caused by the novel coronavirus outbreak, the financial results for the first half of 2020 will be significantly down on the same period last year."

Flight cancellations have led the number of customers seeking refunds to skyrocket. The airline has told those affected that reimbursement could take also said in a statement it had cut capacity by 40 per cent for February and March, against an earlier planned 30 per cent cut.

Japan suffers worst economic slump in five years

AFP, Tokyo

Japan has suffered its worst quarterly GDP contraction in more than five years, with a tax hike and a deadly typhoon taking a toll on the world's third-largest economy.

The nation's gross domestic product in the three months to December shrank 1.6 percent from the previous quarter, even before the novel coronavirus outbreak in China hit Japan, according to official data published on Monday.

The quarter was marked by a rise in consumption tax from eight percent to 10 percent, as well as Typhoon Hagibis, which killed more than 100 people and caused widespread flooding.

Economists were braced for a contraction of around one percent but had not expected such a poor figure, with Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute, saying it was "quite an undershooting".

"There was a hit from natural

particularly weak after the tax hike and tourism. despite government measures to ease the impact," he told AFP.

Monday's data snapped four quarters of growth and was the biggest contraction since the second quarter of 2014 when the economy shrank 1.9 percent.

That quarter followed a hike in the sales tax from five percent to eight percent and the latest slump also appears to have been affected by a rise in consumption tax to 10 percent that came into effect on October 1.

Private consumption was hard hit, dropping by 2.9 percent -- the first fall in five quarters.

Expenditure on factories and equipment decreased 3.7 percent despite investment getting a boost from cashless-payment systems that allow consumers to alleviate the consumption tax hike.

Economists are now carefully watching to see what impact the new virus will have on the world's thirdlargest economy, as it hits Japanese quarter of 2020.

disasters but consumer sentiment was companies' manufacturing activities

Japan has only a "bleak" prospect of returning to growth in the first quarter of this year, said Minami.

Private consumption would likely pick up from the October-December quarter but how much it will recover in the coming months would depend on the spread of the virus, he said.

"Also, exports might struggle as delays of parts shipments from China could disrupt supply chains," he said.

He added it was "possible" that the economy will shrink for a second consecutive quarter, the technical definition of a recession.

Health minister Katsunobu Kato on Sunday urged the public to avoid crowds and "non-essential including Japan's gatherings", notoriously packed commuter trains, to prevent the virus from spreading.

However, Naoya Oshikubo, senior economist at SuMi Trust, predicted the new coronavirus outbreak would not impede recovery in the first

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Chattogram City Corporation Tigerpass, Chattogram www.ccc.org.bd

'আপনার সমস্যা-পরামর্শ ১৬১০৪ নম্বরে জানান

"উন্নয়নের গণতন্ত্র শেখ হাসিনার মূলমন্ত্র"

Corrigendum No: CCC/CGP/ED/ICGP/B2/ChCC-38

Memo No: 46.11.1600.002.32.106.20.0008

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following works, tender are given below. Dainik Purbadesh, Amader Somoy, The Daily Star published at 31-1-

202	U							
		Government of	of the People's	Republic of Ban	gladesh			
1	Ministry/divis	sion	Ministry of	Local Govern	ment, Rura	Development	and	
			Cooperatives/Local Government Division.					
2	Agency		Chattogram C	ity Corporation.				
3	Procuring er	ntity name	Chief Enginee	er of the Chattogra	am City Corpo	ration.		
4	Procuremen	t nature	Works					
KEY	INFORMATI	ON						
5	Procuremen	t method	National Open Tendering Method (OTM).					
6	Source of fu	nds	GOB & JICA ODA LOAN: BD-P79					
FUN	DING INFOR	MATION						
7	Budget and	source of funds	Development, JICA & GOB.					
8	Developmer	nt partners	Japan International Cooperation Agency.					
PAF	RTICULAR IN	FORMATION						
9	Project nam	е	City Governance Project (CGP).					
10	Tender pack	kage No.	ICGP B2 ChCC-38					
11	Schedule te	Schedule tender publication date &		Date		Time		
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			30-Jan-2020		22:00			
12	Tender closing date & time		20-Feb-2020 15:00		15:00)		
13	Tender opening date & time		20-Feb-2020		15:00			
INF	ORMATION F	OR TENDERER						
14	Brief descrip	otion of works:						
Sub	Sub-project No. Tender ID		Tender security amount (Tk.)		Comp	Completion time in days		
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38			only)					
15	Price of tend	der document (Tk)	Tk 4000.00					
16	Tender validity period		90 days					
The	procuring ent	ity reserves the right to re	ject all the tend	ers or annul the to	ender proceed	ling.		
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This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and offline hard copies will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to date 20-Feb-2020

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Lt Col Sohel Ahmed, psc CCC/PRD-54/2020 The Chief Engineer GD-306 Chattogram City Corporation

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

উপজেলা পরিষদ কার্যালয় রাজবাড়ী সদর, রাজবাড়ী

স্মারক নং- ৪৬.০২.৮২৭৬.০০০.১৪.০২৭.২০-২০৩

প্যাকেজ নং

জিডি-৩০৭

(প্ৰকৌশল শাখা) তারিখঃ ১৬-০২-২০২০খ্রিঃ

প্রাক্কলিত মূল্য বায়নার টাকা সিডিউল সময়সীমা

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০৭/২০১৯-২০২০খ্রিঃ

রাজবাড়ী সদর উপজেলা পরিষদ চত্ত্বরে জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান এর ম্যুরাল নির্মাণ কাজ বাস্তবায়নের জন্য পিপিআর ২০০৯ (সংশোধিত) অনুযায়ী এলজিইডির তালিকাভুক্ত হালনাগাদ নবায়নকৃত প্রকৃত দরদাতাদের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে (LTM Method) দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

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२।	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময় এবং স্থান		00	তাং- ০৪/০৩/২০২০খিঃ, সময়ঃ অফিস চলাকালিন সময় পর্যন্ত। স্থানঃ (ক) জেলা প্রশাসক এর কার্যালয়, রাজবাড়ী। (খ) পুলিশ সুপার এর কার্যালয়, রাজবাড়ী। (গ) নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর, এলজিইডি, রাজবাড়ী। (ঘ) উপজেলা প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর, গোয়ালন্দ, রাজবাড়ী এবং (ঙ) নিমুস্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তর।				
৩।	দরপত্র দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ, সময় এবং স্থান		00	তাং- ০৫/০৩/২০২০খিঃ, সময়ঃ দুপুর ২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত। স্থানঃ (ক) জেলা প্রশাসক এর কার্যালয়, রাজবাড়ী। (খ) পুলিশ সুপার এর কার্যালয়, রাজবাড়ী। (গ) নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর, এলজিইডি, রাজবাড়ী। (ঘ) উপজেলা প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর, গোয়ালন্দ, রাজবাড়ী এবং (ঙ) নিমুস্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তর।				
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Ø 1	প্রাক-দরপত্র মিটিং এর তারিখ, সময় এবং স্থান		8	তাং- ২৬/০২/২০২ স্থানঃ নিমুস্বাক্ষরকা	০২০ সময়ঃ বেলা ১১.০০ ঘটিকা কারীর দপ্তর।			
৬।	দরপত্রের				০ (ষাট) দিন পর্যন্ত দরপত্র মেয়াদ বৈধ থাকবে।			
٩١	টেভার সিকিউরিটি, বিভি/সিভি/পে- অর্ভার		00	উপজেলা প্রকৌশর্ল সিডিউল ব্যাংক হরে	প্রকৌশলী, রাজবাড়ী সদর, রাজবাড়ী অনুকূলে নির্ধারিত ব্যাংক হতে নির্ধারিত পরিমাণ টাকার বিডি/পে-অর্ভার নরপত্রের সহিত সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।			
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প্রাক্কলিত ব্যায়ের ৫% এর অধিক নিমুদর বা ৫% এর অধিক উর্দ্ধদর দাখিল করলে দরপত্রটি সরাসরি বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে। অর্থ বরাদ প্রাপ্তি স্বাপেক্ষে বিল পরিশোধ করা হবে। বিল হতে ১০% জামানত এবং বিধি মোতাবেক আয়কর ও ভ্যাট কর্তন করা হবে। কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন

> মোহাম্মদ গোলাম রব্বানী উপজেলা প্রকৌশলী ফোনঃ ০৬৪১-৬৫৫৭০ ue.rajbari-s@lged.gov.bd

FTA with Nepal in the final stage

Says Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh is close to signing a free trade agreement (FTA) with Nepal, said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi yesterday.

"We have reached a consensus with Nepal," the minister said in a meeting with visiting Nepalese Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali at the secretariat in Dhaka.

The telecom watchdog yesterday scrapped

the licences of 32 internet service providers

(ISP) for failing to pay their licence renewal

category-C ones, as per the public notice

from the Bangladesh Telecommunication

licence holders are allowed to provide

internet services at the district and upazilla

levels. The licence tenure of the ISPs had

Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

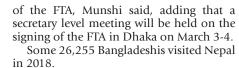
All 32 of the cancelled licences were

According to regulations, category-C

Bangladesh exported products mainly goods, battery, garment, toiletries and pharmaceuticals -- worth \$38.05 million to Nepal in fiscal 2018-19 and imported goods worth \$18.13 million.

Exports to Nepal to increase manifold in the near future after the signing

fees on time.



Bangladesh has given transit facilities to Nepal. Both the countries now use Banglabandha land port and Nepal also has the scope to use sea port of Bangladesh, the

are still providing services to customers.

In the BTRC notice, the telecom regulator

Certain ISPs in other categories are also

At the same time, a huge number of

going to lose their licences over unpaid

licences are being awarded in an effort to

bring broadband internet services across

Currently, there are 595 category-C ISPs

The total number of ISPs licences stands

requested companies and individuals not

to take any further service from the ISPs.

dues and condition violations.

the country, said BTRC officials.

operating in Bangladesh.

commerce minister said. Work is now going on to increase communication through road, river and air with Nepal, Munshi added.

At the meeting, Gyawali expressed interest to use Syedpur airport and, in response, the Bangladeshi minister said they will consider the landlocked country's call.



expired between 2014 and 2019 but some at 1,985 across five different categories.

BTRC cans 32 ISPs' licence

Singapore lowers growth forecast

Singapore cut its economic growth forecast for this year on Monday as the coronavirus batters tourist arrivals and

The city-state is one of the worst affected places outside China, with 75 cases of the virus so far. China has more than 70,000 infections.

Singapore downgraded its 2020 growth estimate to a range of -0.5 percent to 1.5 percent. That compares with its previous forecast in November

of 0.5 percent to 2.5 percent. The outbreak of the coronavirus... has affected China,

Singapore and many countries around the world," the trade ministry said in a statement.

"In Asia, the outbreak is likely to dampen the growth prospects of China and other affected countries this year." Tourism arrivals have already started to decline, exports are expected to take a hit, and domestic consumption is likely to fall as people cut back on shopping and dining out, it

Bangladesh most expensive in S Asia New York-based magazine finds

New York-based CEOWORLD magazine has billed Bangladesh as the most expensive country to live in South Asia and Pakistan the most affordable one in the world.

Nihad Kabir, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, speaks during a networking lunch in honour of the

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

diplomats and representatives of various development partners at its Gulshan office in Dhaka yesterday.

In South Asia Bangladesh ranked 110th, followed by Sri Lanka at 112.

The magazine identified the world's most and least expensive countries to live in by collecting and reviewing data from dozens of studies, consumer price index, Numbeo Cost of Living Index, numerous national and international media reports.

The rankings are based on five major metrics: cost of living, rent, groceries, eating out and purchasing power.

These data are then compiled into an index, using the notoriously expensive city of New York City (NYC) as a benchmark. New York was given an index score of 100. So a country with a score higher than

100 is more expensive than New York,

while below signals that it is cheaper. Nepal held the third spot and, surprisingly, India, the biggest economy in South Asia, turned up as the third most affordable country to live in with its rank of 130. Afghanistan came 131th and Pakistan 132th. However, Bhutan and the Maldives were not included in the list.

The CEOWORLD magazine is a leading business publication for CEOs, CFOs, high-level executive professionals, business leaders, and high net worth individuals.

Switzerland has topped the list as the most expensive nation on earth to live in. Of the top 20 nations, nine were in

Europe, five in Asia, one in North America, one in Africa, two in the Caribbean and two in Oceania. Norway ranked second in the list, followed by Iceland, Japan, Denmark, Bahamas, Luxembourg, Israel, Singapore and South Korea.



Sudipto Mukerjee, resident representative of UNDP Bangladesh, and Ashish Goupal, managing director of Marico Bangladesh, exchange documents after signing a deal at the former's office in Dhaka to extend the partnership for Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) programme till 2021. SWAPNO is a joint initiative of the government of Bangladesh, UNDP and Marico for giving sustainable livelihood to ultra-poor women.



Md Shafquat Hossain, head of retail business division at Dhaka Bank, and Shoeb Ahmed, divisional director at Rangs Limited, a company of Rancon, exchange the signed documents of a deal at the bank's corporate head office in Dhaka. Customers of Rancon Autos and Rancon Car Hub will get 50 per cent discount on loan processing fees at the bank. Emranul Huq, the bank's managing director (current charge), was present.

Vodafone Idea to pay 35b rupees in telecom dues this week, shares rise

Beleaguered Indian wireless carrier Vodafone Idea will pay 35 billion rupees (\$490 million) in telecoms dues to the government by Feb. 21, a lawyer for the company said on

Hopes that Vodafone Idea could outlive the financial squeeze due to the outstanding dues payments helped its shares gain as much as 23.5 per cent on Monday, their best intraday gain since Jan 21, after dropping more than 24 per cent percent on Friday.

"While there is a concern that Vodafone is against the wall, there is a slim hope that they will get through," said Siddhartha Khemka, head of research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services in Mumbai.

The company lawyer declined to be name as the matter is still in court.

mobile carriers to immediately pay billions of dollars in dues after the Supreme Court threatened the companies and officials with contempt proceedings for failing to implement an earlier ruling.

Vodafone Idea, a venture between the Indian unit of Britain's Vodafone Group Plc and billionaire Kumar Mangalam Birla's Idea Cellular, will pay 25 billion rupees to the government on Monday and another 10 billion by Friday, TV news station ET Now reported earlier.

Vodafone owes roughly \$3.9 billion to New Delhi in dues, interest and penalties.

company declined to comment, and India's telecoms ministry did not respond to an email seeking comment.

Local rival Bharti Airtel Ltd said on firm Ambit Capital.

The government last week ordered Monday it had made a payment of 100 billion rupees towards the dues. Analysts covering India's telecoms

sector say Vodafone Idea is the most fragile of India's three major wireless carriers and if it shuts shop, the market would shape up as a duopoly of rivals Airtel and Reliance Industries' Jio.

Vodafone Idea has previously said its ability to continue as a business was contingent on the Supreme Court allowing it to modify issues such as payment timelines with the government.

government's the "Given keenness on maintaining three private telcos, we believe the Department of Telecommunications or the government will request the Supreme Court to negotiate AGR payments with telcos," said analyst Vivekanand Subbaraman of research

Low-income group punctured by postal deposit rate cuts

"The banking sector is in a crisis and giving low interest rates. The capital market is bearish. So where will the fixed income group keep their money?' The measure will shrink the

disposable income of people and have a negative impact on living standards, she said, adding that the inflationadjusted returns from the savings will, in fact, be negative or negligible.

The blow came at a time when deposits in post offices were increasing as people found keeping money there safer and more rewarding than in banks. Fixed deposits in post offices stood at Tk 15,500 crore in fiscal 2018-19.

Deposits jumped 66 per cent yearon-year to nearly Tk 11,700 crore in the first half of the fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Post Office data.

Fixed deposits rose after the government tightened rules for investment in savings certificates to ensure transparency in the sector, said a senior official at the Bangladesh Post

However, the official said the number of rich people keeping money in post office accounts would be about 30 per cent of the total accountholders.

About 70 per cent of the accountholders here are middle-class and low-income people living mainly in the rural and suburban areas, he said, adding that they are farmers and women who prefer not to go to banks.

Officials also said high interest rates, availability of branches in rural areas, ease in opening accounts and flexibility in withdrawing deposits drew a large number of people towards the post offices. Anyone can open an ordinary account at post offices by paying as low as Tk 10 and a fixed deposit account by Tk 100.

The finance ministry could have brought down the deposit ceiling to shut out affluent people from depositing here, the official added.

'I have no son to look after me after the marriage of my three daughters. I am now living in my village home with my husband. Savings in the post office are my main income source," said Suchata Saha, a retired primary school teacher in Rangunia upazila of Chattogram.

The interest rate cut will only fuel withdrawal and divert fund from formal channels, encourage illegal multi-level marketing (MLM) companies and spur investment in the unproductive sectors, analysts said.

forms of savings," said Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development (InM), adding that a section may also buy land or gold.

Many pensioners and distressed women have accounts in post offices.

"And in many cases, they depend on income from savings. The interest rate cut means their income has been reduced. This has a welfare implication and effect on income distribution, said Mujeri, also a former chief economist of the Bangladesh Bank.

not depend only on the rate at which banks can get deposits; the other costs of banks are factored in while calculating the rate at which loans would be given out. "We are not addressing the main

The interest rate on lending does

reasons -- the high cost of fund and default loans. There would have been long term benefits were the main reasons addressed," he added.

Investment does not depend only on the interest rate, said KAS Murshid, director general of the Bangladesh institute of Development Studies.

"A lot of other factors such as the business climate influence investment decisions," he added.

China's envoy now apprehends delays in mega projects

did not come without its disturbing ramifications on the normal bilateral exchanges and economic ties.

According to him, Bangladesh suspended on-arrival visas for Chinese travellers in early February and evacuated 312 Bangladeshi citizens living in the city of Wuhan, the epicentre of the virus.

As per new regulations of the Bangladeshi authorities, some Chinese airlines have reduced the frequency of flights between the two

"Although the WHO has suggested strongly not to impose international travel restrictions in the wake of the epidemic, we fully understand the legitimate concerns of the Bangladeshi

side to protect its own people. And our political viewpoint on the situation The ambassador said the epidemic embassy will take all possible actions to stop the virus from spreading to Bangladesh."

There are 171 Bangladeshi students still in Wuhan, according to Li.

For their own safety and health, local authorities and school managers have advised them not to leave their

Daily supplies including drinking water, rice, oil, vegetables and other cooking materials are being delivered to them by logistics personnel on a

frequent and regular basis, Li added. Muhammad Zamir, former chief information commissioner, urged the Chinese embassy to regularly post updates on the situation on its

There is no scope of having a and creating panic.

as this is a global crisis and not China's alone, said Salim Mahmud, information and research secretary of the Bangladesh Awami League.

Jadab Debnath, president of the BCBA, expressed hope of return to normalcy in 15 days.

"We at the BCBA firmly believe that China will be able to deal with this terrible situation with great sincerity and maximum efficiency and may control the spread."

Despite having concerns, the business community has confidence in China's ability to control the deadly outbreak, he said.

Shyamal Datta, editor of the Bangla daily Bhorer Kagoj, urged the media to refrain from publishing rumours



PARTEX STAR GROUP

Aziz Al Kaiser, vice chairman of Partex Star Group, opens an outlet of Ashley, an American furniture store chain, at DH Tower in the capital's Panthapath. Partex Homestore, a concern of Partex Star Group, is the licensee of the brand

BUSINESS

StanChart betting big on Shariahbased banking

Bangladesh is a key focus for its large Muslim population





AKM Zamir Uddin

Standard Chartered is bullish about the fortunes of its Islamic banking business, Saadiq, in the country, seeing the religious bent of the Bangladeshis and the economy's tremendous growth momentum, said the global head of the lender's Shariah-based

"For the country, we have lots of expectations," Rehan M Shaikh, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Saadiq, told The Daily Star in an interview on his last trip to

Shaikh is based in Dubai, where Standard Chartered Saadiq's headquarters are located.

There are not many countries in the globe where the majority of the population is Muslim. But Bangladesh has the third largest number of Muslim population in the world.

The global lender introduced Islamic banking in Bangladesh 15 years ago and has been a trendsetter

It was the first to introduce Islamic credit card in Bangladesh in 2007 and arrange Sukuk transaction in 2019.

In 2017, the lender arranged a \$32 million Diminishing Musharakah Facility for Noman Terry Towel Mills and Ismail Spinning Mills, two concerns of Noman Group, in what was the first Islamic syndication.

Its achievements have caught the attention of different global entities in recent years. For instance, in 2019 Global Finance, a New York-based monthly financial magazine, recognised it as the best Islamic financial institute in Bangladesh for 2019.



Rehan M Shaikh

ambitions.

"We are increasing our investment in line with the expectation of the country. We want to be part of the journey that Bangladesh is going through.

the Shariah-based Ensuring products are in front of the clients when they need them is becoming a challenge for Standard Chartered given its remarkable growth, Shaikh

Bangladesh, Islamic Besides banking has seen tremendous progress across the globe in the last two decades thanks to regulatory support.

Financial regulators of Malaysia, Pakistan, the UAE and some other countries, where Islamic banking has managed popularity, are very active in promote Shariah-based finance.

Similarly, the Bangladesh Bank is

about business ethics in light of the profits. It is my desire to spread it globally.

The lender will arrange the event in Bahrain and Malaysia next.

"So we want to institutionalise the event as our job is just not restricted to offering products."

He also touched upon some issues such as uniformity among Islamic scholars' thinking -- that have held back Islamic banking in the global

"The challenges of Islamic banking is not different between Bangladesh and the global market."

Human capital is a big challenge for Islamic banking.

"I have also come from conventional banking, but I have been doing my job in Islamic banking for the last 15 years. But there is hope as also coming up with time-befitting many universities are running Islamic

No harmful radiation from mobile network towers

Finds study by BTRC, operators; radiation levels well below limit

MOBILE TOWER RADIATION

>> 42,469 towers across the country

>> Global standard radiation ratio is

>>> BTRC found only 2 sites above 1

radiation of 1.591 watt/sqm

>> A site in Mirpur (Section-06) had

radiation of 1.025 watt/sqm

>>> BTRC ran radiation study on 6

divisional HQs

>> About **70** sites surveyed

2.106 watt/sqm

watt/sqm radiation

>> A site in Mohammadpur had

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and various mobile operators yesterday unequivocally refuted claims that cell towers emit harmful radiation.

"The permissible amount of radiation exposure from mobile network tower is below both international and BTRC standards," said Md Shahidul Alam, director general of spectrum management at BTRC, during a discussion jointly organised by the BTRC and Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB) at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka.

The cell towers do not emit radiation of more than one watt per square meter in any area, said Shamsuzzoha, deputy director of BTRC's engineering and operations division.

Only two towers are special cases as high-rise buildings have been developed adjacent to the cell sites. "So the antennas need to be redesigned.'

The levels of radiation emitted by cell towers is well below the permissible limit set by the International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and World Health Organisation. Therefore, it does not pose any human or environmental threat, according to experts.

Up to 2.106 watts per square metre is acceptable but the BTRC found that currently there are just two sites emitting radiation above one watt per square metre, the ICNIRP said.

The BTRC conducted surveys to find out how much radiation is present in 70 random cell sites at six different divisions.

The study found the highest amount of radiation was emitted by a single tower is in Mohammadpur, where they recorded 1.591 watts per square metre.

A BTRC technical survey team, led by Shamsuzzoha, also conducted studies all over Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Sundarbans,

Feni, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur and Jamalpur.

So far, radiation higher than standard limits have not been reported. The only notable case was in Mirpur's sector-6 area, where 1.025 watts per square metre of radiation was found. Reducing the number of telecom towers is not the solution.

Instead, people should understand that if there are more towers, radiation will actually decrease. If a tower is placed far away from those using it, then the tower emits more radiation to provide a better output for customers,

"Sometimes people complain that their mobile phones frequently heat up. In our observation, we found that this is caused by electrical heat, not radiation," said Syed M Samshur Rahman, executive vice-president of Robi.

Over the years, Robi has run about a thousand surveys to find out if the rumours are true. But harmful radiation was not reported in even a single case, he added.

Like cell towers and handsets, a wide range of household products such as microwaves, televisions and WiFi routers emit radiation but are in no way harmful, said SM Farhad, secretary general of AMTOB.

Without wireless technology, it is quite impossible to get the best services nowadays, said Satya Prasad Majumder, an electrical and electronic engineering (EEE) professor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) Hospitals also use a lot of wireless technology, which

give off radiation. Since they are within the permissible mit, they are not considered harmful. "It is very satisfying that the BTRC did not find any

excessive amount of radiation coming off any of the towers. But still, the rumour has already made the rounds -- this needs to be overcome."

The telecom regulator needs to continue its surveys and take the appropriate steps to eliminate the public's misconception.

This can only be done by continuously publishing independent related surveys cell tower radiation, Majumder added.

"Radiation is found in all forms of technology and there will be no communication services or electricity for that matter if everyone wants a radiationfree environment," said Md Aminul Hasan, BTRC's commissioner of spectrum management.

He also criticised the 'completely baseless rumours' before going on to say that a report on the matter will be filed soon as per a High Court directive.

"In my 35 years of experience in the telecom business, right from the beginning I have heard about radiation threats from cell towers. So far though, not one survey or document from any acceptable organisation has proven as much.

The industry will require even more cell sites when 5G services arrive. Therefore, if technological progress is halted due to irrational fears, the country will fall far behind, he added.

Nazmul Hasan, marketing director of Huawei, and other senior executives of various mobile operators also

SCB SAADIQ'S ACTIVITIES OVER SCB SAADIQ'S NET SCB SAADIQ'S **PROFIT** TOTAL ASSETS THE YEARS Deposit Investment

"We will open up this market more within the next 4-5 years both for retail and corporate clients," said Shaikh, the global head of standard

chartered Saadiq. huge time, effort and resources to take its Shariah-based financial services forward and the brand to the next stage in Bangladesh, where it has been since 1905.

It has introduced a product, Saadiq Hajj Savers, to provide its customers a one-stop solution for Hajj and Umrah. This account will enable customers to deposit a fixed amount every month and earn profit on their monthly average balance at an attractive rate.

It has another one-of-its-kind savings product in the works: the Saadiq Graduate account targeting

fresh university leavers. The overall market size of Islamic banking in Bangladesh is about 23-24 per cent and it is expected to grow further as clients are gradually becoming aware of the Shariah-based financial services, said Shaikh, who has a business administration degree from an American university.

Given the religious bent of Bangladeshis, the lender is finding the Bangladesh market more receptive towards Islamic products.

A lot of conventional banks are turning in to Islamic ones and some of them are opening Islamic banking windows, he said. "This means the space of Islamic banking is growing at a faster pace."

In Bangladesh, two conventional banks -- Standard and NRB Global -- have recently managed approval from the central bank to become fullfledged Shariah-based lenders.

This will take the total number of including Bangladesh. Islamic banks operating in the country

The Islamic banking window of

regulations, which have helped the lender to promote Shariah-based banking here.

"The initiatives have helped banks like Standard Chartered. And Islamic Standard Chartered is putting in finance has become an integral part of our business," he said, adding that the British lender is expanding its services to new markets like African countries given the tremendous growth opportunity. Shaikh, who has more than 30

years of banking and management experience, said that Islamic banking has yet to get the shape that conventional bank has.

Shariah-based banking started its journey 35-40 years ago in a structured manner and Standard Chartered embraced it in 2003.

"We are quite hopeful that our Islamic banking window will get boost in a tremendous way as 70 per cent of the Muslim population in the world are living in 70 countries where Standard Chartered has active

Besides, the lender is operating the Shariah-based financing services in some countries from its head office.

The bank is trying to make sure that the customer demand for Islamic banking products are fulfilled whether they are retail or corporate banking customers and government agencies.

"As part of our commitment, the bank is bringing in a lots of events globally to push up the Islamic finance base."

One such event is the "Living Islam" series, which draws in Islamic scholars and experts to talk about topics that are part of Muslims' everyday life. The lender has taken a decision to organise the event in its different core markets,

Standard Chartered held the event in Bangladesh on February 3 in Dhaka.

"Bangladesh is the second the lender is also intent on helping country where we have organised Bangladesh achieve its growth the event. We discuss specific issues

programmes."

Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and some other countries are running different courses on Islamic

All stakeholders, ranging from regulators to Shariah scholars, have to work in tandem to make sure that products and services are in the line with the expectations of clients and Some markets have successfully

set up the appropriate infrastructure given their liquidity framework and corporate governance, he said, adding that Shariah-based banking has reached a uniform platform in the last 5-7 years among some countries.

"In Bangladesh, we are working closely with the central bank and it has given all-out support to promoting our business," he said, adding that the required regulation for Islamic financing services for Bangladesh are being well met from the global Shariah board.

The lender is completely prepared to set up Shariah board in Bangladesh if the central bank provides any such condition.

"We are the only bank with four Shariah boards. One is the global Shariah board and the three others are for the UAE, Pakistan and Malaysia."

Shaikh said Islamic banking can be embraced by non-Muslims too. "It is a wrong concept that Islamic

banking is only applicable for Muslims. It is an alternative banking form paralleling the conventional ones. It is true that Muslims prefer

Shariah-based banking. But some of Standard Chartered's key markets have a lot of non-Muslims who are taking Shariah products. "It is because, they are getting

benefits from the Shariah products

that the bank has offered."

Coronavirus deals blow to scrap plastic industry

Buyers blame a lack of business with China

S DILIP ROY From Lalmonirhat

The coronavirus epidemic in China has adversely impacted the scrap plastic industry in Lalmonirhat, a northern border district of Bangladesh, as local merchants now find it difficult to offload their stocks.

Over the past three weeks, the amount of scrap plastic sold in the district has decreased with buyers citing a lack of business with China following the coronavirus outbreak as the principle cause.

Scrap plastic is cut or chipped into pieces and packaged for sale in Lalmonirhat. Buyers from Dhaka and Chattogram then purchase the scrap, which is resold to plastic product manufacturers as raw materials.

About 60 per cent of all scrap plastic available in the district is shipped to China while the rest is used by local

factories.

With the local demand for the raw materials unable to make up for the surplus left by China, Lalmonirhat's scrap plastic traders have begun to count losses.

As warehouses for the product are full-up, scrap plastic is currently not being bought from merchants across the country since it cannot be resold to China, said Nur Alam, who works as a labourer at a scrap plastic factory in the district.

Like Alam, about 600 workers in the district earn a living by chipping scrap plastic and so, all of them have been impacted by the novel virus, he said.

Mujibar Rahman, a scrap plastic trader based in Bhelabari area of Aditmari upazila, said he invested Tk 25 lakh in the business which, due to a lack of sales, is on hold.

Scrap plastic is bought for Tk 15-35

per kilogram and sold at Tk 45-60 per kg after being chipped.

Even when buyers from Dhaka and Chattogram do come, they want to purchase one kg of chips at just Tk 25-30 to take advantage of the situation, Rahman added.

To make matters worse, even local plastic product factories are buying less of the material, according to Abdul Kuddus, a scrap plastic trader of Nayarhat area in Lalmonirhat Sadar

"Coronavirus outbreak in China has dealt us a blow. I cannot even regain the capital I invested," said

On average, 30-35 kgs of discarded plastic can be collected daily, said Nur Mohammad, a hawker, adding that local merchants have not been paying reasonable prices for the past







About 60 per cent of all scrap plastic available in the district is shipped to China and the rest is used by local