

# INFRASTRUCTURE

## How concerned are we about building maintenance?

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly 20 years ago, Rabiul Islam had constructed a four-storey building on his ancestral land in the capital's Tejgaon area. Just a couple of years ago, he had extended the building to another floor with a tin-shed roof. And in 2018, he had installed tiles on the floors to be able to get higher rent from tenants.

Typically, complaints related to broken windows or damaged faucets are what is understood as maintenance by the owner who is in his 50s. When a tenant leaves, maintenance issues are limited to factors such as repainting the walls or fixing small cracks of the particular apartment to welcome new tenants. Thorough and periodic check-ups of the building, such as testing the strength of the concrete and corrosion of steel, are something very new to him.

Like Rabiul, most homeowners in Dhaka do not pay much attention to building maintenance. They lack concern about periodical check-ups with many being clueless about building maintenance, in general. Experts suggest auditing buildings or conducting conditional surveys after a particular time is necessary for the safety of buildings. Timely maintenance reduces risk and increases the durability of such structures. Therefore, inspection and relevant actions are essential for Dhaka's buildings, since countless structures have been built without following proper design and regulations.

Over 95 percent of the structures under Rajuk's jurisdiction were built without building approval, according to survey

Over 95 percent of the structures under Rajuk's jurisdiction were built without building approval, according to survey findings for the ongoing revision of the capital city's Detailed Area Plan (DAP).

findings for the ongoing revision of the capital city's Detailed Area Plan (DAP). Experts recommend third party inspection of buildings and the formation of a separate authority for monitoring them.

According to a 2006 survey for drawing up the DAP, the number of structures in Rajuk area was 11,96,000. The survey conducted during 2016-17 for revision



Fire outbreak at FR Tower in Banani on March 28, 2019.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

of DAP found 21,46,000 structures in the said area. So, over a decade, 9.5 lakh structures were built in the said area of Rajuk's master plan, with a yearly average increase of 95,000 structures. In total, a 1,528 square kilometres area falls under Rajuk's jurisdiction.

### ABSENCE OF BUILDING AUDITING

Prof Mehedi Ahmed Ansary of the Civil Engineering Department of BUET says, it is an international practice to audit all buildings after a five-year interval; during the auditing, a third-party firm checks up on every aspect of a building. A homeowner has to hire a qualified engineering firm for auditing and he or she has to submit the audit report to a regulatory authority like Rajuk in Bangladesh. That's not all. The owner would fix the building on the basis of the findings

and would submit compliance report to the authority.

"Unfortunately, that is not happening in our country," he told *The Daily Star* on February 15.

He further says, proper auditing and action on the basis of the report would increase durability of a building and, on the other hand, reduce the risk of any incident of collapse.

He cited FR Tower as an example which is infamous for the devastating fire that caused the death of 25 people and injuries to more than 70 others in March 2019.

The building was extended twice from a 15-storey building. If building auditing had been done properly, safety concerns would have been known and necessary steps could have been taken, he says.

Prof Mehedi adds, "The owner is responsible for carrying out the

auditing but the regulator has to force them to do so."

Besides, Rajuk does not have the capacity to do such work, he shares.

### PERIODIC CONDITION SURVEYS ARE NECESSARY

Prof Dr Md Tarek Uddin of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering of Islamic University of Technology (IUT) shares that a person or authority may plan the service life of a structure for a period of 50 to 100 years.

But for many reasons, concrete structures may deteriorate significantly before the expected service life due to harsh environmental conditions, poor construction work or lack of consideration for durability-based design of structures, he says.

"Therefore, we need to understand the reasons behind early deterioration and we need to take counter-measures to avoid such problems in future," he told *The Daily Star*.

"Routine maintenance alone may not suffice in cases of distress, cracks or deflections in our structures or structural elements. In such a scenario, detailed surveys to find the reasons behind the deterioration of the building have to be identified and proper actions should be taken to keep structural health conditions within a desired level," he adds.

He says, it is also economical and safer to solve structural health-related problems at an early stage, adding, "Our infrastructure owners have to be vigilant and wary of any distress on the surface of the structural elements of their infrastructure."

"Building and infrastructure owners have to carry out condition surveys periodically (say at every five-year interval). This is similar to the health checkups we do at hospitals at regular intervals."

During the survey, aspects such as the strength of concrete, level of steel corrosion in concrete, besides other issues, have to be checked and appropriate actions have to be taken. He says, designers need to focus on the service life of a structure during planning and design stages; written guidelines in this regard should be produced, covering the regular maintenance services and condition survey.

"Owners of infrastructure need to follow this guideline," he adds.

### SEPARATE AUTHORITY FOR MONITORING BUILDINGS

FR Khan, managing director of Building

Technology & Ideas Ltd (bti), shares that bti now provides mandatory maintenance service for five years after handing over a building to the owners.

Earlier, they used to provide maintenance service for two years, he told *The Daily Star* on February 16. "We knock the owners periodically for maintenance concerns. Some of them respond while many others do not. They are not legally bound to comply with our suggestions," he says.

"The number of house owners who do regular maintenance is not impressive," he says, adding, "We are not obliged to do it but we do it because our name is tagged with the buildings."

Citing an example from Sri Lanka, he shares that they have Condominium Management Authority to monitor buildings after they are constructed. "We should have a separate authority for monitoring buildings. Rajuk is overburdened with work. So, we need a clean, professional body."

### VITAL RECOMMENDATION REMAINS UNIMPLEMENTED

The issue of checking buildings came to the fore after the collapse of Rana Plaza in Savar on April 24, 2013, which claimed the lives of more than 1,100 people and left around 2,500 others injured.

Prof Ansary says, on several occasions after the collapse of Rana Plaza, they have called for introducing third party vetting of buildings.

The committee, formed after the collapse and led by National Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury, included this recommendation to introduce the system in its report in April 2016. "But the recommendation has not been implemented yet," he says.

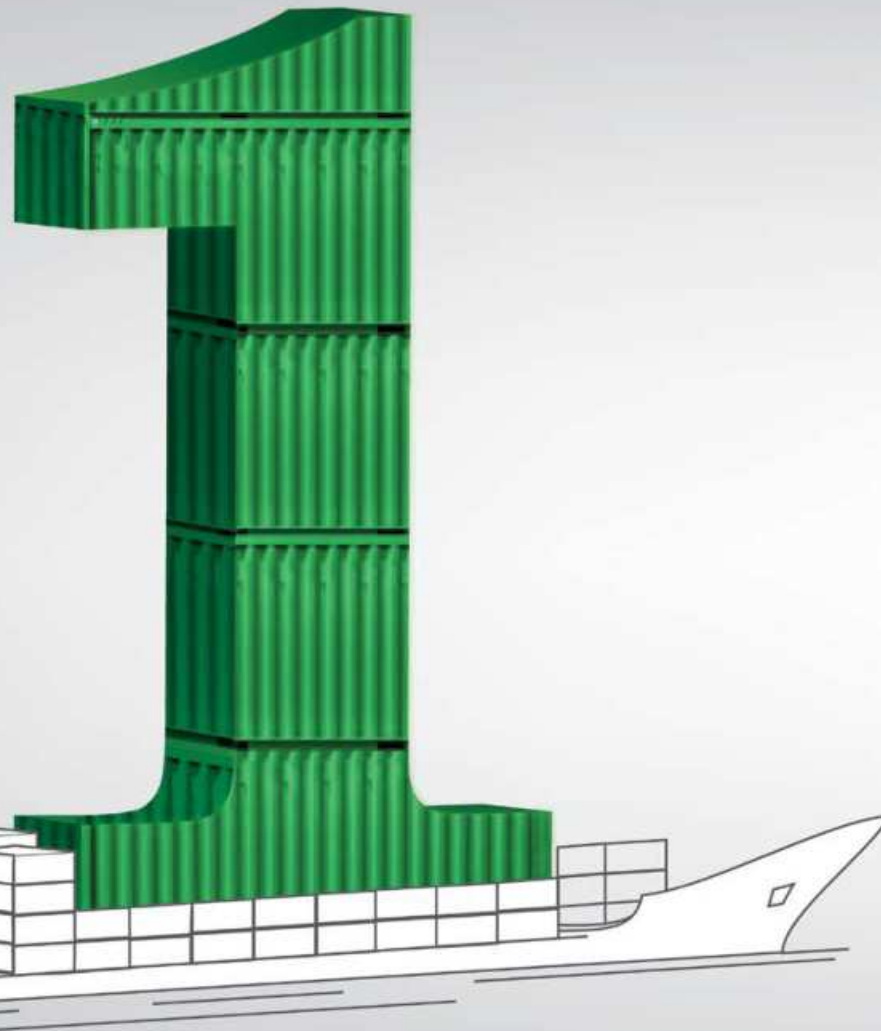
### WHAT DOES RAJUK SAY?

Contacted, Rajuk Chairman Sayeed Noor Alam says, although buildings in the post-construction period are also under their jurisdiction, they still do not have enough manpower to monitor them.

"We have a total of 1,300 staff in different wings. It is not possible for them to monitor all the buildings at post-construction stage," he told *The Daily Star* on February 17.

Asked about the recommendation for third party vetting, he says, "We are now considering the recommendation."

He, however, admitted that the matter is still being discussed at the planning level.



## THE EXPORT LEADER

Crown Cement has achieved National Export Trophy thrice for its outstanding performance in cement export. Demand for Crown Cement is gradually increasing at home and abroad for its quality. With the export of Crown Cement, Bangladeshi products are also getting the fame. In addition, Crown Cement is contributing to the national development through foreign currency earning. It's a pride for Bangladesh.





STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
Week on week		As of Friday		Friday Closings				As on Thursday			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 3.69%	▲ 4.50%	\$1,642.40 (per ounce)	\$58.50 (per barrel)	Closed	▼ 0.39%	▼ 0.55%	▲ 0.31%	BUY TK 83.95	89.78	107.71	11.80
4,733.14	8,812.23				23,386.74	3,181.03	3,039.67	SELL TK 84.95	93.58	111.51	12.40

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# Star BUSINESS

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## 'Robi's listing will be a gift for investors'

Says its CEO; will apply for listing in March

MUHAMMAD ZAHIIDUL ISLAM  
and AHASAN HABIB

Robi plans to submit its application for listing in the country's twin bourses to the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission in the middle of next month, as the long-awaited debut of the second largest mobile phone operator is finally taking shape.

The operator, which got the approval from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission last week for the initial public offering, though will make its debut on both the Dhaka and Chattogram stock exchanges in the second half of the year.

The reason being, its parent

Bangladesh's twin bourses to become stronger -- this will be a gift for the country's stock market investors," Ahmed said.

The operator intends to offload 10 per cent, or about 52.38 crore, shares to raise Tk 523.79 crore for network expansion in preparation for 5G.

Of the shares, 38.78 crore will be offered to the public and institutional investors in Bangladesh, while the remaining 13.61 crore will be set aside for employees and directors of Robi under the employee share purchase plan.

The face value of the shares would be Tk 10 and there will be no premium.

Talks of Robi's listing have been going on since 2013. The government

they have taken it very positively. Our policymakers now need to make it happen."

Robi will become the second mobile operator to get listed after Grameenphone, which started trading from November 16, 2009.

The operator, which is 25 per cent-owned by Indian Bharti Airtel and 6.31 per cent by Japanese NTT Docomo, has planned to invest \$500 million in Bangladesh. But the three stakeholders have put off the investment plan for regulatory restrictions.

"Our shareholders still have concerns about the regulatory issues and if policymakers can remove the unexpected elements from the market, it will be more mature," Ahmed said.

Meanwhile, at yesterday's event Robi

## FBCCI demands support to bridge over coronavirus

BB might consider the requests

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's apex trade body yesterday called for policy support from the government to help businesses tide over the massive supply disruptions brought about by the coronavirus pandemic in China.

Banks should offer special credit facility to the businesses that have opened letters of credit to import products from China but have been unable to because of the lockdown in large parts of China to help avoid defaulting on their instalment payments.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) came up with the proposals at a press conference at its office in Dhaka.

Banks should not impose additional charges on LCs and penal interest on loans that were earlier disbursed to businesses, said FBCCI President Sheikh Fazle Fahim, while calling for a national strategy to tackle the crisis.

"The government should resolve the problem soon," he said.

Since the deadly virus was first reported in China in December last year, the outbreak has rattled the global economy and disrupted supply chains.

Bangladesh's trade with China is facing the doldrums as complexities have arisen for the shipment of the products against which LCs were opened before the outbreak of coronavirus.

"The supply chain has been facing disruption for a month. And we fear that the credit instalments of the



Sheikh Fazle Fahim

businesses may face an overdue because of the outbreak."

Normalcy, however, will return within next three quarters if businesses get the required support from the government, Fahim said.

China is the main source of fabrics and synthetic yarns, the two major raw materials for the export-oriented garment sector.

The world's second biggest economy is also the major supplier of industrial raw materials for other sectors, such as leather, plastic, electronics and electrical, footwear, cosmetics and toiletries, computer, water pump and medical instruments.

In January, the country imported 6.72 lakh tonnes of products from China, down 21 per cent from a year earlier, according to the FBCCI.

Last fiscal year, about 26 per cent of Bangladesh's imports worth \$52.19 billion came from China, according to data from the central bank. A year earlier, the share of imports from the country was 23.8 per cent.

"The problems pinpointed by the FBCCI are completely logical and banks are worried about the situation as well," said MA Halim Chowdhury, managing director of Pubali Bank.

The Association of Bankers, Bangladesh, a forum of managing directors of banks, has already discussed the issue in order to explore ways to manage the situation.

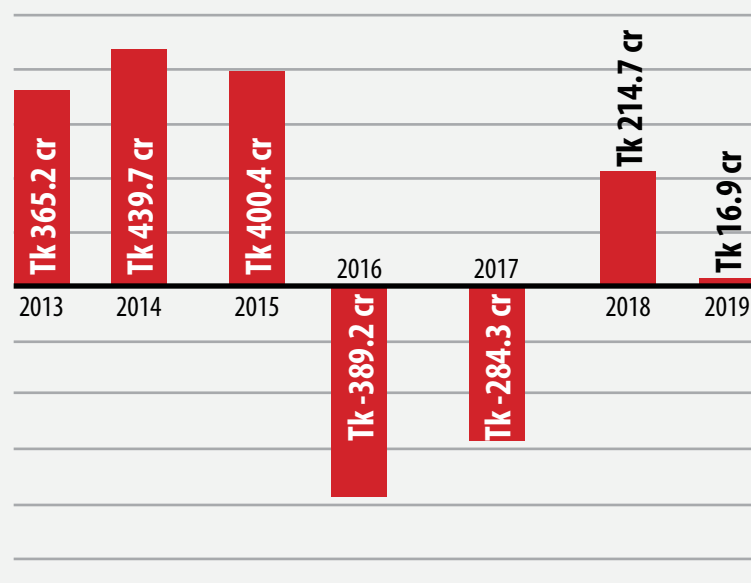
The central bank has collected trade-related data of China from each bank, he said.

READ MORE ON B3



ROBI AT A GLANCE		
Active Customers	Internet subscribers	Revenue
4.90 cr	3.13 cr	Tk 7,481 cr
Market share	Internet market share	EBITDA
29.6%	31.40%	38.5%

### ROBI'S PROFITS OVER THE YEARS



company Axiata, which has 68.69 per cent stakes, has put up two conditions for the listing and the operator is lobbying with the government for them.

"On February 20, our shareholders gave the green light to be listed in the market but at the same time they also asked us to ensure some policy support that will help to flourish business," said Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, chief executive officer of Robi, at a press conference yesterday at their headquarters in the capital.

The first condition is Robi's corporate tax must be brought down by at least 10 percentage points. At present, the operator pays 45 per cent corporate tax.

Grameenphone got the corporate tax benefit when it got listed. But the government withdrew the facility a few years ago.

The second condition is withdrawal of the 2 per cent minimum income tax on overall revenue that the government imposed from this fiscal year. The operator wants the rate to be 0.75 per cent.

Whether the government agrees to the conditions or not would be reflected in the national budget for fiscal 2020-21.

"Robi's listing will help

has requested the operator on several occasions to make its debut on the stock exchange.

The operator actually ceded to the government's requests in 2014 and was taking plans for the IPO. But, it led to nowhere as the government did not provide favourable policies then, Ahmed said.

Ahmed hopes the pattern does not repeat again as the move to get listed comes this time following requests from the government.

"Considering the country's benefit, we have placed the issue to our shareholders and

disclosed its financial results for 2019.

In 2019, Robi logged in profits of Tk 16.9 crore, down 92.12 per cent from the previous year, despite seeing double-digit revenue growth to Tk 7,481 crore.

At the end of last year, Robi's active customer number stood at 4.90 crore, which is 29.60 per cent of the market.

"We are in a very good momentum and if we get some support from the policymakers it will help us get optimum benefit from the market," Ahmed added.

Stock market stakeholders though are looking forward to welcoming Robi.

"These are the type of companies stock investors have been demanding in the last few years," said Md Sayedur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Merchant Bankers Association.

READ MORE ON B3

## Bashundhara builds Bangladesh's biggest bitumen plant

Factory cost \$143.7m; can meet local demand and export



AHM Mustafa Kamal, finance minister; Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power; and Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, chairman of Bashundhara Group, attend the launch of Bashundhara Bitumen Plant in Keraniganj yesterday.

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bashundhara Group has set up the country's biggest bitumen plant in Keraniganj with an annual production capacity of a whopping 9 lakh tonnes for \$143.7 million, in a development that can be viewed as emblematic of the business giant's ambitions.

Bitumen is a hydrocarbon-based substance used to build roads and

highways. Currently, 90 per cent of Bangladesh's annual demand for 5 lakh tonne of bitumen is met by imports.

"Now, we don't need to import bitumen. Bashundhara can export the surplus after fulfilling domestic demand," said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday at the inauguration of the plant located on 65 acres in Pangaon area of Keraniganj.

READ MORE ON B3

Total investment	\$143.7m
Production capacity	9 lakh tonne/year
Export target	4 lakh tonne
Total land	65 acres
Employment	1,000 directly
Production starts	Apr

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**Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and CEO of Pran-RFL Group, attends a conference of the importers of the leading food processing company Pran. Importers from over 80 countries took part in the event in Dubai recently.**

## Saudi hosts G20 financial leaders amid coronavirus alarm

Finance ministers and central bank governors from G20 nations meet in the Saudi capital Saturday for a two-day gathering to discuss the global economy and the risks from the coronavirus epidemic.

Aside from an action plan to shield the world economy from the impact of the outbreak, financial leaders from the world's top 20 economies are also expected to discuss ways to achieve a fairer global taxation system for the digital era.

"Finance ministers and central bank governors will discuss global economic outlook and possible policy responses to support growth and safeguard against downside risks," G20 organisers said in a statement.

"In addition, they will discuss the priorities of the Saudi G20 Presidency under the theme 'realising opportunities of the 21st century for all...' including the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy." The meeting in Saudi Arabia, the first Arab nation to hold the G20 presidency, will be chaired by the kingdom's finance minister Mohammed al-Jadaan and central bank governor Ahmed al-Kholifey.

The meeting comes amid growing alarm over the new coronavirus as Chinese authorities lock down millions of people to prevent the spread of the disease, with major knock-on effects for the global economy.

The impact of the epidemic may be short-lived but it comes as the global economy remains "fragile", IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva told a gathering in Riyadh on Friday.

Georgieva said the economic impact could see a "V-shaped" trajectory, with a sharp decline in China's GDP followed by a sharp



**Saudi Arabia's central bank governor Ahmed al-Kholifey speaks at an economic conference in Riyadh, where finance leaders of the world's 20 largest economies are gathered.**

recovery.

She warned the situation could have more dire consequences for other countries as the impacts spill over.

The virus has now claimed 2,345 lives in China, cutting off transportation and forcing businesses to close their doors.

China has said it will not be sending any leaders from Beijing for the Riyadh gathering but the Chinese ambassador in the kingdom will instead lead a small delegation.

"We have been closely watching the developments of the virus and assessing its potential effects on economic growth," a senior US Treasury official told reporters.

"We expect ministers and governors will discuss the global economic outlook, particularly as it relates to the coronavirus outbreak." The G20

organisers will also host a ministerial-level symposium on international taxation on Saturday, focused on the challenges arising from the digitalisation of the global economy. The symposium will be attended by US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin along with a host of other financial leaders.

The Saudi presidency will see its host world leaders for a summit in Riyadh from November 21 to 22.

It will hold more than 100 events and conferences in the run-up to the summit, including ministerial meetings, organisers say.

Human rights groups have urged G20 member states to exert pressure on the kingdom over its intensifying crackdown on dissent, which has seen women activists, journalists and political dissidents jailed.



**Shirin Akter Shela, Miss Universe Bangladesh, and Anand Singh, country manager at Godrej Household Products (BD) Pvt Ltd, launch the company's Godrej No 1 Rose Soap at a hotel in Dhaka on Thursday. The company claims that three-fourths of the soap is made of natural ingredients.**

## BOJ's Kuroda blames yen's fall on strong dollar

Reuters, Riyadh

Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said on Saturday the yen's recent declines were largely driven by a strong dollar, shrugging off some market views that the widening coronavirus epidemic is triggering an outflow of funds from Asia.

Kuroda also said he had not changed his view that Japan's economy would continue to recover moderately, suggesting that he saw no immediate need for the BOJ to expand stimulus.

"If needed, we will take additional monetary easing steps without hesitation," he told reporters upon arriving at a Group of 20 finance leaders' gathering in Riyadh.

"But the situation is still uncertain. I don't think Japan's moderate economic recovery is derailing."

The yen bounced back on Friday after suffering its worst two-day performance since 2017 on worries about the health of Japan's economy, which has been hit by supply-chain disruptions and a plunge in Chinese tourists caused by the virus outbreak.

Kuroda said the Japanese economy was unlikely to enter a severe downturn as capital expenditure remained firm, adding that he saw no changes to the fundamentals driving exchange-rate moves.

## Government spending key in next recession: Fed official

APF, New York

Central banks will have limited room to stimulate the economy in the next downturn, which will make government spending an even more important tool, a top Federal Reserve official said Friday.

With lending rates still very low in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the usual option of slashing borrowing costs to boost lending and investment is not available, Fed Governor Lael Brainard said in a speech.

The Fed official said central bankers also need to adopt new strategies in the current low interest rate environment, including breaking with tradition to take a more sanguine approach to

inflation.

A "robust" fiscal policy response will be "vital" in the next recession, Brainard said in her prepared remarks.

"The reduced conventional monetary policy buffer makes the importance of fiscal support during a downturn even greater than it has been in the past," she said.

However, with the US budget deficit projected to surpass \$1 trillion this year, economists worry that policymakers will have little space -- or appetite -- to increase spending further.

In fact, Congress blocked a stimulus plan proposed by former President Barack Obama, when the Republican leaders at the time argued it would

raise the deficit to alarming levels.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell earlier this month repeated his argument to Congress in favor of fiscal discipline in good times to bank funds to the bad times.

"Putting the federal budget on a sustainable path when the economy is strong would help ensure that policymakers have the space to use fiscal policy to assist in stabilizing the economy during a downturn," he said.

And Brainard said government spending can be more effective than what the Fed can do.

"Whereas monetary policy is powerful but blunt, fiscal policy can be more targeted in its effects," she said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Project Director Bangladesh Railway, Kamalapur, Dhaka-1217.				
Invitation for Tenders (International)				
1.	Ministry/Division	:	Ministry of Railways	
2.	Agency	:	Bangladesh Railway	
3.	Procuring Entity Name	:	Project Director, Name of Project: Construction of 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Lines in Dhaka-Tongi section and Doubling of Dual Gauge line in Tongi-Joydebpur section including Signalling works.	
4.	Procuring Entity Code	:	Not used at Present	
5.	Procuring Entity District	:	Dhaka	
6.	Invitation for	:	Design, Supply, Installation and Testing-Commissioning of Computer Based Interlocked Signaling system at 7 (Seven) stations including interlocking of selected level crossings and installation of optical fiber cable based telecommunication system for block operation and CTC interface work (Turnkey Works) in connection with construction of 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Track in Dhaka-Tongi section and Doubling of Dual Gauge Track in Tongi-Joydebpur section.	
7.	Invitation references No.	:	PD/DTJDLPT/TENDER/WD2-831	
8.	Date	:	20.02.2020	
<b>KEY INFORMATION:</b>				
9.	Procurement Method	:	Open Tender Method (International) (One Stage Two Envelope Tendering Method)	
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION:</b>				
10.	Budget and Source of Fund	:	Indian Line of Credit -1 (LOC-1) and GOB.	
11.	Development Partners	:	Government of India through Exim Bank, India.	
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION:</b>				
12.	Project / Programme code	:	224089200	
13.	Project Name	:	Construction of 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Lines in Dhaka-Tongi section and Doubling of Dual Gauge line in Tongi-Joydebpur section including Signalling works of Bangladesh Railway.	
14.	Proposed Tender Package No.	:	WD2	
15.	Proposed Tender Package Name	:	Design, Supply, Installation and Testing-Commissioning of Computer Based Interlocked Signaling system at 7 (Seven) stations including interlocking of selected level crossings and installation of optical fiber cable based telecommunication system for block operation and CTC interface work (Turnkey Works) in connection with construction of 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Track in Dhaka-Tongi section and Doubling of Dual Gauge Track in Tongi-Joydebpur section.	
16.	Tender Publication Date	:	20.02.2020	
17.	Tender Document Last selling Date	:	07.04.2020 (during office hours).	
18.	Tender Closing Date and Time	:	08.04.2020	Up to 12.00hrs BST
19.	Tender Opening Date and Time	:	08.04.2020	At 12.30hrs BST
20.	Name & Address of the Office(s)	:	Address	
	Selling of Tender Document (Principal)	:	Office of the Project Director, Outer Circular Road, Kamalapur, Dhaka-1217, Bangladesh.	
	Selling of Document (Others)	:	Office of the Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer (DSTE), Bangladesh Railway, Kamalapur, Dhaka, Bangladesh.	
	Receiving of Tender Document	:	Office of the Project Director, Outer Circular Road, Kamalapur, Dhaka-1217, Bangladesh.	
	Opening of Tender Document	:	Office of the Project Director, Outer Circular Road, Kamalapur, Dhaka-1217, Bangladesh.	
21.	Place/Date/Time of Pre-Tender Meeting	:	Conference Room 'Meghna' (5th Floor), Rail Bhaban, 16 Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka. Date & Time: 12.03.2020 at 11.00 hrs BST	
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER:</b>				
22.	Eligibility of Tenderer	:	Only Indian Firm (s) or Joint Venture of Indian Firms having qualifying criteria stated in the tender document.	
23.	Brief Description of Works	:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design, Supply, Installation and Testing-Commissioning of Computer Based Interlocked Signaling system at 7 (Seven) stations (Dhaka, Tejgaon, Dhaka Biman Bandar, Tongi, Dhirasram and Joydebpur)</li> <li>Interlocking of selected level crossings and</li> <li>Installation of Optical Fiber Cable based Telecommunication system for block operation and</li> <li>CTC Connectivity work.</li> </ul>	
24.	Brief Description of Related Services	:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Construction of Railway Signalling Equipment building.</li> <li>b) Provision of related arrangement for uninterrupted train operation service during execution of the work</li> <li>c) Service during Defect Liability Period and Maintenance Support</li> </ul>	
25.	Price of Tender Document (Tk.)	:	BDT. 30,000.00 (BDT Thirty Thousand) in cash (Non-refundable).	
26.	Package No	:	Identification of Package	Location
	WD2	:	Design, Supply, Installation and Testing-Commissioning of Computer Based Interlocked Signaling system at 7 (Seven) stations including interlocking of selected level crossings and installation of optical fiber cable based telecommunication system for block operation and CTC interface work (Turnkey Works) in connection with construction of 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Track in Dhaka-Tongi section and Doubling of Dual Gauge Track in Tongi-Joydebpur section.	Dhaka and Gazipur Districts
		:		Tender Security
		:		USD 500000 (Five Hundred Thousand)
		:		Completion Time in week/Months
		:		30(Thirty) months
<b>EMPLOYER DETAILS:</b>				
27.	Name of Official Inviting Application	:	Md. Shahidul Islam	
28.	Designation of Official Inviting Application	:	Project Director, Construction of 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Lines in Dhaka-Tongi section and Doubling of Dual Gauge line in Tongi-Joydebpur section including Signalling works Project.	
29.	Address of Official Inviting Tender	:	Office of the Project Director, Outer Circular Road, Kamalapur, Dhaka-1217, Bangladesh.	
30.	Contacts details of Official Inviting Tender	:	Cell phone: +88 01711506113 E-mail: pd_3rd4th@railway.gov.bd	
31.	The procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders or annul the Tender proceedings.			
 20.02.2020 <b>(Md. Shahidul Islam)</b> Project Director Construction of 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Lines in Dhaka-Tongi section and Doubling of Dual Gauge line in Tongi-Joydebpur section Project.				

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Principal Naogaon Technical School and College, Naogaon E-mail: naogaontsc@gmail.com				
Memo No. 37.03.6400.000.20.01.20.178		Date: 19/02/2020		
e-Tender Notice No-01/2019-2020				
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal ( <a href="http://www.eprocure.gov.bd">http://www.eprocure.gov.bd</a> ) for the procurement of the following works under Naogaon Technical School and College, Naogaon as mentioned below:				
Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of work	Tender closing & opening (date & time)
01	428340	Naogaon/tsc/Rawmats/PG-1	Supplying of Raw materials and Spare Parts for Practical Classes at Naogaon Technical School and College Sadar Naogaon.	10/03/2020; 12:00
02	428341	Naogaon/tsc/engineering and equipment/PG-2	Supplying of Engineering and others equipment at Naogaon Technical School and College Sadar Naogaon.	10/03/2020; 12:00
03	428342	Naogaon/tsc/office equipment/PG-3	Supplying of office equipment at Naogaon Technical School and College Sadar Naogaon.	10/03/2020; 12:00
04	428343	Naogaon/tsc/learning materials/PG-4	Supplying of Learning Materials at Naogaon Technical School and College Sadar Naogaon.	10/03/2020; 12:00
05	428344	Naogaon/tsc/furniture/PG-5	Supplying of furniture at Naogaon Technical School and College Sadar Naogaon.	10/03/2020; 12:00
a) This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP System Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. b) The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to 17.00 on 09/03/2020. c) The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever. d) Tender publication date on live of all packages is 24/02/2020 at 10:00am.				
Md. Ramzan Ali Principal Naogaon Technical School and College Sadar, Naogaon Telephone No. 0741-61754				



## Three more garment factories fall prey to sliding exports

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

The authorities of Savar-based Raquef Apparels Washing and Packaging Industry, Passion Jeans, and Passion Apparels and Ware announced the closure of their factories on Thursday because of continued losses amid falling exports.

This kind of factory closure has been a common phenomenon recently: only in Gazipur, some 178 small and medium garment factories shuttered in the last one year.

All three are owned by the same entity and it, however, has decided to keep open the washing unit of Raquef Apparels.

Earlier on the day, some 3,000-odd aggrieved workers and staff members of the factories took to the streets with a demand to clear their arrears, keeping the Hemayetpur-Singair road blocked for four hours.

The workers called off their demonstration later after the owner agreed to clear all the dues in three phases by March 29, said Rafiqul Islam Sujon, president of Bangladesh Garments and Shilpa Sramik Federation.

"We are okay if we get our salaries and other dues in time," Fazlul Haque, a staff of Passion Jeans, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The authorities have promised to give January's salary and allowance of workers and staffers by February 27 and February's salary (20 days), compensation and other benefits by March 29.

They also agreed to clear the dues of workers who recently have resigned or have been terminated from job by March 5.

The workers and staffers have accepted the decision, Sujon said.

However, the correspondent could not reach Shakil Mahmud, deputy general manager, for comment despite several attempts.

## US, India at odds over trade as Trump heads for encounter with Modi

REUTERS, Washington

Trump administration officials on Friday acknowledged that US President Donald Trump's visit to India next week will not result in even a limited trade deal, saying they still have major concerns over India's trade barriers.

Hopes that the world's two largest democracies could negotiate a "confidence building" deal in time for Trump's arrival Monday on a two-day visit have faded in recent days as differences over agriculture, medical devices, digital trade and proposed new tariffs fester, according to business groups.

US concerns that led last year to the suspension of India's tariff free access for some \$5.6 billion in exports under the 1970s-era Generalized System of Preferences still remain, a senior Trump administration official told reporters on a conference call.

"We do want to make sure that we get this balance right. We want to address a lot of concerns and we're not quite there yet," the official said, adding that Trump will likely discuss these concerns with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Trade talks will continue, but new Indian tariff proposals aimed at strengthening the country's "Make

in India" domestic manufacturing push have made them more difficult, the official said. Apart from growing protectionism, the Trump visit comes against the backdrop of India's multibillion-dollar purchase of a Russian missile shield system, which added friction to its ties with Washington.

India in its Feb. 1 budget proposal announced new import tariffs on medical devices, walnuts, toys, electronics and other products in a move aimed at reducing imports from China but affecting many US firms.

The new tariffs surprised US negotiators, especially as they were working with Indian counterparts to reduce the impact of India's price controls on US medical devices such as cardiac stents and knee implants.

"We will be discussing those concerns and what we see an increase in barriers not a decrease. This will certainly come up among the leaders," the US official said. The official did not completely rule out any trade related announcements during the trip, but said this was "really wholly dependent on what the Indians are prepared to do."

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, who has been leading the trade discussions, will not be among the US delegation accompanying Trump, the official said. Earlier this month, Lighthizer cancelled a trip to India to work out a package, even as India made some new proposals to improve US dairy and poultry access.

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is joining the trip, which will include announcements of commercial transactions in the energy and defence sectors, the officials said.



India's Border Security Force soldiers ride their camels past hoardings with the images of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump, as they take part in a rehearsal for a road show ahead of Trump's visit, in Ahmedabad, India on Friday.

## New top brass for Dhaka Taxes Bar Association



Syed Iqbal Mostafa Sufi Mohammad Al Mamun

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Syed Iqbal Mostafa and Sufi Mohammad Al Mamun have been elected as president and general secretary of the Dhaka Taxes Bar Association respectively for a one-year term.

The election took place at the association's annual general meeting yesterday, according to a statement.

The association also elected Jahangir Alam Sarker and Sk Gulam Mohammed as its vice presidents.

Jakarica Khan became the treasurer of the association.

## France ready to hear US proposal on digital tax

REUTERS, Riyadh

France is ready to listen to the US administration's proposal of offering U.S. companies a "safe harbor" from a new, international digital tax, its finance minister said on Saturday, while admitting that he still didn't know what that meant in practice.

"I'm not in a position to tell you what it (a safe harbor) really means," Bruno Le Maire told journalists on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Saudi Arabia. (But) it's fair and useful to give all the attention to this new proposal."

## US existing home sales slip in January

AFP, Washington

Sales of existing homes fell slightly in January as compared to the month before, but there is still strong demand amid low borrowing rates, according to an industry report Friday.

Prices also dipped last month but remain sharply higher than a year ago, as would-be homebuyers compete for available properties and builders struggle to keep up while focusing largely on high-end construction, according to the National Association of Realtors.

The housing market remains a critical bright spot for the US economy, and NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun said in a statement that "sales are off to a strong start" this year.

Total sales of single-family homes, townhomes, condos and co-ops were down 1.3 percent compared to the prior month to an annual rate of 5.46 million, dragged down by a sharp drop in the western United States.

However, sales surged 9.6 percent compared to January 2019, while prices are 6.8 percent higher -- the 95th consecutive month of year-over-year increases,

according to the data.

The hot sales pace has caused the inventory of housing available for sale to steadily dwindle and in January it fell to its lowest level since 1999, dropping nearly 11 percent from a year earlier to 1.4 million units, NAR said. That is equivalent to 3.5 months' supply at the current sales pace.

But Yun said there are signs construction is ramping up, which should boost sales.

First time homebuyers comprised about a third of sales last month, continuing a slow uptick in recent months.

"It is good to see first-time buyers slowly stepping into the market," Yun said.

"The rise in the homeownership rate among the younger adults, under 35, and minority households means an increasing number of Americans can build wealth by owning real estate."

However, he said for that to continue, "significantly more inventory and home construction are needed at the affordable price points." Sales of pricier single-family homes, worth \$250,000 and more, have jumped more than 20 percent from the same month of 2019, according to the report.

## Hopes dim for EU budget deal

AFP, Brussels

Feuding EU leaders kicked off a second day of haggling over the bloc's trillion-euro budget on Friday, with hopes of a deal fading as "frugals" and big-spenders refused to give ground.

After a night of tough talks, leaders and diplomats poured doubt on the chances of reaching an agreement at this summit for the EU's seven-year post-Brexit budget.

The tussle over money is a Brussels ritual, made more intense this time by the departure of Britain from the bloc, which has left a 75-billion-euro (\$81-billion) "Brexit gap" over the 2021-27 period.

"Are you asking if we're going to resolve the whole budget discussion this weekend? No, I don't think so," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said as she arrived.

Denmark is one of the self-styled frugal four nations -- along with the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria -- who have set themselves against a proposal by summit host Charles Michel, the EU Council president.

They insist Michel's 1.09-trillion-euro budget plan is excessive and must be trimmed, while also calling for the budget to be modernised.

Leaders are at odds over how much to increase the long-term budget -- called the multi-annual financial framework (MFF).

They also disagree over how spending should be shifted between priorities and how much

each member should pay as a percentage of its gross domestic product (GDP).

The last MFF came in at 1.08 trillion euros (in 2018 prices).

"My prime minister has been very clear from the start -- we will not pick up the tab," said a diplomatic source from one of the "frugal" countries.

"We are fighting 21st-century challenges with a budget made in the 1980s." Against the frugals are France, which wants farm payments protected and more money for European defence projects, and the so-called friends of cohesion -- a group of eastern and southern countries wanting to ringfence the money they get from the budget.

Michel met the leaders of the "frugals" along with President Emmanuel Macron of France and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Friday morning in a bid to find a way out of the deadlock. Leaders from friends of cohesion huddled in the meantime, but given the differences between the 27, it is not certain Michel will present a revised budget proposal on Friday, a diplomat told AFP.

Instead, the summit could break up without agreement, forcing leaders to reconvene for another meeting, most likely in April.

A frustrated Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis questioned the value of a second day at the summit, saying if the rich countries were not prepared to move, "then we have nothing to discuss".

The inconclusive late-night tussle on Thursday

revealed leaders' red lines and potential grounds for compromise to Michel, who is tasked with finding consensus for a deal.

Macron, who visits the national farm show in Paris in two days, said he would "battle" to protect the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

"The overall budget total was brutally attacked by the countries of the north, in particular the CAP," a French diplomatic source said.

In a sign of French sensitivity on the subject, Macron's agriculture minister suggested in a TV interview that he had secured a victory in protecting the CAP, which was worth 383 billion euros in the current long-term budget.

The claim was swiftly shot down by French diplomats who pointed out that nothing had yet been agreed. Macron has sought to push the EU to be more united and more ambitious and insisted Thursday that Britain's departure should not clip the bloc's wings.

But his calls for post-Brexit largesse were met with scepticism by the "frugals" and even Finland, whose prime minister said it was time for the EU to be "realistic" with its spending.

Finland, like Germany, is sympathetic to some of the calls for moderation made by the "frugals", but is not fully aligned with them.

Adding yet more discord is the European Parliament, which wants the MFF hiked to 1.32 trillion euros to pay for costly goals such as turning the European Union into a carbon-neutral economy within three decades.

## 'Robi's listing will be a gift for investors'

FROM PAGE B1

Robi's listing will increase the depth of the country's stock market because it will enhance market capitalisation, he said, adding that it will also attract new local and foreign investors. Subsequently, the government should give Robi tax incentives to encourage other companies of its ilk to come to the stock market.

Stock market's trade will increase by the presence of well-performing companies like this, which, in turn, will boost the government's tax revenue, said Rahman, also the managing Director of EBL Securities.

If Robi comes to the stock market it will be a good boost for the market, said Khairul Bashar Abu Taher Mohammed, former secretary general of the BMBA.

However, their two conditions can pose to be a roadblock. If the government can consider it for all the listed telecom companies then it would be good for the market, said Bashar, also the chief executive officer of MTB Capital.

"Robi's incurring losses in 2016 and 2017 might be a concern for stock investors though," he added.

The carrier started its journey in 1997 under the brand name of Aktel, after being incorporated under the Bangladesh Companies Act, 1994 as a public company limited by shares on October 12, 1995 under the name of Telekom Malaysia International (Bangladesh).

On May 28, 2009, the name of the company was changed to Axiata (Bangladesh) and subsequently on 19 August 2010, the company assumed its present name, Robi Axiata. At present, Robi's authorised share capital is Tk 6,000 crore and its paid-up capital is Tk 4,714 crore.

## FBCCI demands support to bridge over coronavirus

FROM PAGE B1

"I think the central bank may give a roadmap to this end to solve the ongoing situation. We are waiting for the central bank's instructions," Chowdhury said.

Agrani Bank Managing Director Mohammad Shams-Ul Islam echoed Chowdhury.

"The problems can be resolved by taking collective steps," he said, adding that the situation is still under control.

The majority of the demands placed by the FBCCI will be fulfilled under the existing central bank's rules, said a Bangladesh Bank official with direct knowledge of the matter. But some fresh policy support can be taken for the time being in order to give credit facility to businesses, he said.

Businesses of various provinces of China have assured that export from the country will start from February 24.

"We expect that the government will take measures to release the products to be exported from China on time from ports," Fahim added.



AK Abdul Momen, foreign minister, and Farzanah Chowdhury, managing director of Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd, launch a report on sustainable development goals at the Westin Dhaka recently. The insurer in partnership with the CSR Centre and CRAB Ltd, a credit rating agency, published the report which is first of its kind in private sector.

## Bashundhara builds Bangladesh's biggest bitumen plant

FROM PAGE B1

The prospects for the plant, which is a subsidiary of Bashundhara Oil and Gas Company, are bright given Bangladesh's development goals.

With major construction and repairs of 22,000 kilometres of roads and highways under the Roads and Highways Department ongoing, local demand for the material is on the rise.

Besides, of the 354,000kms of undeveloped roads under the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), 105,000kms have already been upgraded to paved streets.

Moreover, the government is expanding all national highways from four to six lanes. This includes district level roads, for which the use of bitumen has increased about 10 to 15 per cent annually.

With the standard requirements set by engineers given utmost priority,

the premium quality Bashundhara bitumen product has penetration values of 60/70 and 80/100 and comes in various grades: cut back, emulsified, oxidised and polymer modified.

Other than meeting the local demand, Bashundhara plans to penetrate the international market for bitumen products by 2021.

The bitumen plant will provide a product that is better suited for the construction of roads and highways, according to the finance minister.

"The length of roads in our country is short. The roads are damaged during rainy seasons as imported bitumen does not suit the weather. Now, Bashundhara Group will process bitumen that suits local weather conditions," Kamal added.

The new factory will directly benefit thousands by creating jobs, said Nasrul Hamid, state minister for

power, energy and mineral resources.

He also appreciated Bashundhara's initiative to increase investment in the country and create jobs.

"Bashundhara is an example of true entrepreneurship," Hamid added.

The group has established 30 factories and two major housing projects in the country, said Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, chairman of Bashundhara.

"Bangladesh's economy has developed in the last five years as there were no strikes for a single day. This fuelled robust economic growth," said Sobhan, adding that Bashundhara will set up a school in the area within one-and-a-half-years to provide quality education to locals.

M Shamim Z Bosunia, an expert on structural engineering, and Shahin Ahmed, upazila chairman of Keraniganj, also addressed the programme.

## Wells Fargo to pay \$3b to US, admits pressuring workers in fake-accounts scandal

REUTERS, Washington

Wells Fargo & Co has agreed to pay \$3 billion to resolve criminal and civil probes into fraudulent sales practices and has admitted to pressuring employees in a fake-accounts scandal, US officials said on Friday, wrapping up one of the last major investigations looming over the bank.

Wells Fargo will pay the penalties to the US Justice Department and Securities and Exchange Commission and enter into a three-year deferred prosecution agreement during which the San Francisco-based bank will continue to cooperate with any ongoing government investigations, Justice Department officials said.

As part of the deal, Wells Fargo admitted that between 2002 and 2016 it pressured employees to meet "unrealistic sales goals that led thousands of employees to provide millions of accounts or products to customers under false pretenses or without consent, often by creating false records or misusing customers' identities," the department said in a statement.

In a statement, Charles Scharf, Wells Fargo's new chief executive, described the past conduct as "reprehensible." Wells Fargo is the fourth-largest US lender.

"This case illustrates a complete failure of leadership at multiple levels within the bank. Simply put, Wells Fargo traded its hard-earned reputation for short-term profits, and harmed untold numbers of customers along the way," Nick Hanna, US attorney for the Central District of California, said in a statement.

Top managers within Wells Fargo's Community Bank division were aware of the "unlawful and unethical" practices as early as 2002, and many of the practices were referred to as "gaming" within the bank, the Justice Department said.

The agreement resolves the civil and criminal liability regarding Wells Fargo's fake-accounts scandal.

About \$500 million of the penalties will go to the SEC to be distributed to investors to settle charges that the bank committed fraud by misleading investors about its sales practices, an SEC official said on a call with reporters about the resolutions settlement.

Settling the multi-agency investigation marked an important milestone for Scharf, who joined the company from BNY Mellon in September shortly after the third anniversary of the scandal.

"We are committing all necessary resources to ensure that nothing like this happens again, while also driving Wells Fargo forward," Scharf said.