

আপনার বিআরটিএ ফি এবং সকল ইউটিলিটি বিল এসআইবিএল এর যে কোন শাখার মাধ্যমে জমা দিন

ফ্রি অনলাইন সেবা

যে কোন প্রয়োজনে ০৯৬৩২০০৯২২


SIBL
উদ্বোধন ডেভেলপমেন্ট

READ MORE ON B3





Bashundhara Group Vice Chairman Shafiat Sobhan Sanvir attends an event styled ‘Partners Award 2019’ jointly organised by the Bashundhara Food and Beverage Industries and Bashundhara Multi Food Products at the International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka on Thursday.



Md Kamrul Ahsan, chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, and Matiur Rahman, chairman and managing director of the Uttara Group of Companies, attend the launch of new Suzuki Alto and all variants of Suzuki WagonR cars at the InterContinental Dhaka yesterday, where 50 new Altos and WagonR cars were handed over to customers. Uttara Motors is the sole distributor of Japanese automobile company Suzuki’s brand-new vehicles, including passenger cars, microbus, ambulance, pick-up trucks and spare parts.

Virus hammers China’s February economic activity

China’s manufacturing activity fell to its lowest level on record in February as official data on Saturday confirmed the massive damage the deadly coronavirus epidemic has caused to the world’s second-largest economy.

The announcement comes as the epidemic has rapidly spread to a growing number of countries, pushing stock markets to their lowest levels since the 2008 global financial crisis over fears that the coronavirus could wreak havoc on the world economy.

Analysts have warned that China’s economic growth will likely take a major hit in the first quarter, and Saturday’s data was the first glimpse at the damage the virus has caused to industries across the country.

The Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI), a key gauge of activity in China’s factories, was at 35.7 points in February, well below the 50-point mark that separates growth and contraction every month.

This was down from 50 points in January and the worst level since China began recording the figure in 2005.

It was also well below expectations of a smaller contraction, at 45.0, according to a Bloomberg poll of analysts.

It was the first official economic indicator published for the month of February, showing the devastating impact of the epidemic on China’s economy -- with fallout likely to be seen around the world.

The National Bureau of Statistics said the auto and specialised equipment industries were hit hard, but the effect was “more severe” in the non-manufacturing area.

“There was a plunge in demand for consumer industries involving gatherings of people, such as transportation, accommodation, catering, tourism, and resident services,” the NBS said in a statement.

Non-manufacturing activity was at an abysmal 29.6 points in February, down from 54.1 points in January.

Toyota plans new \$1.2b EV plant in Tianjin with FAW

Japanese automaker Toyota plans to build a new electric vehicle plant in the Chinese city of Tianjin with its local partner FAW Group, a document from the local authorities showed.

The joint venture between Toyota and FAW plans to invest around 8.5 billion yuan (\$1.22 billion) in the planned car plant in Tianjin, according to a document issued by authorities of the China-Singapore Tianjin Eco-city.

The plant will have manufacturing capacity of 200,000 new energy vehicles a year, the document showed. In China, new energy vehicles include battery-only, plug-in hybrid and fuel-cell vehicles.

Toyota declined to comment on the project but said in a statement that the company regards China as one of its most important global markets and is constantly considering various measures to implement in China to meet the needs of growing the business in the country.

Last year, despite China’s overall auto market dropping 8.2 per cent, Toyota sold 1.62 million Toyota and premium Lexus cars in China, the world’s biggest auto market, a 9 per cent sales jump compared with a year earlier.

It is also expanding car manufacturing capacities in its Guangzhou-based venture with another partner GAC.

India’s Airtel says \$1.1b payment complies with top court’s order on dues

India’s Bharti Airtel Ltd said it was complying with a Supreme Court order to pay dues, after it paid more than 80 billion rupees (\$1.10 billion) to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Saturday.

The court, which had ordered Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel among others, to pay 920 billion rupees in overdue levies and interest by Jan. 23, rejected petitions last month to review its October order.

Airtel has deposited with the DoT 30.04 billion rupees and an additional 50 billion as an ad-hoc payment to cover differences, if any, it said.

“We have now complied,” the company said in a statement, referring to the judgment and court directions of Oct 24, 2019.

The Supreme Court overturned a lower court ruling and agreed with the government’s definition of adjusted gross revenue (AGR), which mobile carriers have contested for more than a decade.

Companies say AGR should comprise just revenue accrued from core services, while the government says it should include all revenue, such as money from rent, land sales or sale of scrap.

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)

Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1 | Ministry/division | Secondary and Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education. |
| 2 | Agency | Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information & Statistics (BANBEIS). |
| 3 | Procuring entity name | Project Director, Establishment of Integrated Educational Information Management System (IEIMS) Project. |
| 4 | Procuring entity code | 224246000 |
| 5 | Procuring entity district | Dhaka |
| 6 | EOI for Selection of | A firm for software design and development for Educational Information Management to be used by MOE, BANBEIS, DSHE, DTE, DME, NTRCA and Others. |
| 7 | Title of Service | Software design and development for Educational Information Management to be used by MOE, BANBEIS, DSHE, DTE, DME, NTRCA and Others with maintenance support for 3 (three) years. |
| 8 | EOI Ref. No. | 37.20.0000.005.14.107.2020 |
| 9 | Date | 27 February 2020. |

KEY INFORMATION

| | | |
|----|--------------------|--|
| 10 | Procurement method | Quality and Cost based Selection (QCBS). |
|----|--------------------|--|

FUNDING INFORMATION

| | | |
|----|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 11 | Budget and source of funds | Development Budget (GOB). |
| 12 | Development partners | None/Not applicable. |

PARTICULAR INFORMATION

| | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 13 | Project/programme code | 224246000 |
| 14 | Project/programme name | Establishment of "Integrated Educational information Management System (IEIMS)" Project. |
| 15 | EOI closing date | 12 March 2020 within 3:00pm. |

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS/SOFTWARE FIRMS

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 16 | Brief description of assignment | <p>Tentative list of the software modules to be developed under this assigned service is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Module for institutional web portal (student data collection from class VI to class XII, student's attendance, internal result processing, report card generation etc.)E-MIS software of DSHE, DME and DTEGovernment Teacher's database at MoEdu, DSHE, DME, and DTE (profile, posts and vacancies at institutions)MPO database at DSHE, DME and DTEOnline websites of all boards, agencies and ministryNon-government teacher registration database at NTRCAGeneration of EIIN at BANBEISOnline E-Survey database (all educational institutions public and private)Online foreign scholarship processing databaseGIS repository of all institutions at BANBEISE-Teacher database at BANBEISModules for Analytics for one stop information services. <p>The following points describe the expected standard of the software of the above modules in brief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The software will be developed using state-of-the-art design standards ensuring high performance, security, maintainability and extendibility.The software will be deployed in optimized and scalable way.It is expected that the firm will develop a customized solution for the proposed system. Use of open source technology will be recommended unless justified otherwise to prevent unnecessary use of licensed tool/technology/database.The firm must follow a well-defined software development process to meet the SQA (Software Quality Assurance) criteria specified by the nominated consultants and followed by standard industry practices.It must have the provision for extensive configurability and parameterization to ensure easy maintainability.The reports should be easily extendable to meet various future requirements.It will be a fully bi-lingual (Bangla and English) system.The system must be able to communicate through internet using web based and mobile communication technologies so that the users can access to the system from anywhere at any time.Old data of several years has to be entered from soft-copy document and data migration is also needed from existing database.All the documents including the source code and test scripts will have to be provided to the Project Authority for further maintenance and extensibility.The specifications of the project (the required modules and functionality) will be prepared by the nominated consultants from CSE, BUET of this project.The product, in different phases of the software development, will be tested by the team of nominated consultants. <p>Establishment of "Integrated Educational Information Management System (IEIMS)" Project now invites eligible firms to indicate the interest for providing the services. Interested firms are invited to provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services as mentioned in the serial number 17: Experience, Resources and delivery capacity required. This will require substantiation through submission of brochures and other documents describing similar assignments, experiences, availability of appropriate professional qualifications and experiences among applicant's staffs, resources to carry out the assignment, financial capability, etc. A firm may associate with other firm to fulfill their qualifications.</p> |
|----|---------------------------------|--|

| 17 | Experience, resources and delivery capacity required | A shortlist of firms will be prepared upon evaluation of EOIs of the eligible firms and "Request for Proposal" documents will be issued in their favour. A firm will be selected using the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method. It is expected that the services will commence on April 2020. Total duration of the assignment is fifteen (15) months where nine (9) months are for development and six (6) months are for testing, implementation, installation, training and commissioning. The firms must prove that they have solid technical background and operational strength to undertake and move this work forward without any hindrances. The firms must also have adequate technical ability, resources, and processes. As such, following are defined as minimum eligibility criteria: - The firm must have minimum 10 years of practical experience of developing large scale software systems to automate organizational activities. - Multiple firms (not more than two) having technical and legal competency for developing such a product can apply jointly, but they must have legal agreement among them where one firm needs to be the lead firm. All the firms must be Bangladeshi firm. - The firm(s) must have minimum 60 in-house system architect, software developers (including high, medium and low levels), testing and dev-op having experiences in developing applications with web-based frameworks (e.g., Spring, Struts, etc), non-licensed databases (Relational DBMS such as PostgreSQL, MariaDB), enterprise architecture and frameworks. - The firm(s) must have full-time deployment expert with experience of optimized development and provisioning in cloud environment. - The firm(s) must have strong practice of high quality software engineering process and Quality Assurance (including automated testing). - The firm(s) is expected to have experience in developing software solutions for Government of Bangladesh or any of its agencies. - Quality experience of large-scale software system for Foreign Organizations will be appreciated. - To demonstrate experience, the firm(s) must present the following information of the major 5 software development projects: brief description of work, technical challenge, value earned (own portion in case of joint venture) and provide completion/satisfaction certificate from the project authority. Work order will not be considered. - To demonstrate the human strength, the bidder must give a table for employees mentioning educational qualification with institute/university, experience in relevant technology, and experience in projects. Supporting signed CVs should be attached along with photos. - The firm(s) must demonstrate its technical management capacity (describing experience to lead similar assignments, experiences, availability of appropriate professional staffs and experiences among applicant's staffs, resources to carry out the assignment) in managing large scale projects. - The firm(s) must demonstrate its logistical capability, i.e., well-equipped office space in Dhaka with necessary facilities like development and test server of sufficient capacity, other hardware requirements needed to carry out the service. - The firm(s) must have the minimum amount of liquid assets, i.e., working capital or credit line(s) of 3 (three) crore. - The firm(s) must have updated audit report of previous 2 years. Yearly turnover of the firm(s) shall be at least BDT 1 crore. All financial requirements must be supported by verified audit report. - The firm(s) must have up-to-date valid trade license, income tax and VAT certificates. |
| 18 | Other details | Interested firms shall obtain further information from the Project Office from 10:00am to 4:30pm in any working day before the closing date. Firms shall have to submit 3 (three) copies of EOIs including original and forwarding letter in a sealed envelope labeled with "EOI for software design and development for Education Information Management to be used by MOE, BANBEIS, DSHE, DTE, DME, NTRCA and Others with maintenance support for 3 (three) years under Establishment of 'Integrated Educational Information Management System (IEIMS) Project" to the following address. | | | | |----|----------------------------------|----------------| | 19 | Association with foreign firm is | Not applicable | |----|----------------------------------|----------------| **PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS** | | | | |----|--|--| | 20 | Name of official inviting EOI | Md. Shamsul Alam | | 21 | Designation of official inviting EOI | Project Director, Establishment of "Integrated Educational Information Management System (IEIMS)" project. | | 22 | Address of official inviting EOI | 1 Zahir Raihan Road (Palashi-Nilkhet), Dhaka-205, Bangladesh. | | 23 | Contact details of official inviting EOI | Phone: 55151815, 9665457-extn. 117 & 168. email : shamsul.alam30@yahoo.com | | 24 | The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all EOI without assigning any reason whatsoever. | | **Project Director** IEIMS Project |
| GD-395 | | |

Dhaka travel mart postponed for coronavirus

STAR BUSINESS DESK

This year's edition of Dhaka Travel Mart, a travel and tourism fair which attracts a large number of participants from abroad, has been postponed due to fears over the spread of coronavirus.

US-Bangla Airlines Dhaka Travel Mart 2020 was scheduled to begin in the capital from March 12 and a fresh date will be announced once the situation improves, says a statement. The virus has killed more than 2,800 people and infected more than 84,000 since late December.

"In 17 years of history of the travel mart,

we have never encountered such a situation in the past, which could deter us in holding the event on due date," Kazi Wahidul Alam, editor of The Bangladesh Monitor, a travel publication which organises the event.

"But the present situation is beyond anybody's control. To us health and safety of our valued partners, participants, visitors from home and abroad are of topmost priority, hence we can't take any risk," he added

Around 100 participants from Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, India and Bangladesh had already registered to participate, the statement added.

United Airlines sharply cuts flights to Asia

REUTERS, Washington

United Airlines Holdings Inc said on Friday it was sharply cutting flights to Japan and South Korea, as travelers worried about the coronavirus outbreak slash ticket purchases for those destinations.

It also canceled its investor day that had been due to be held on March 5. With investors firmly focused on how the company is managing the near-term impact of the coronavirus, United said it was not "practical to expect that it can have a productive conversation focused on its long-term strategy next week." The event will be rescheduled for September.

Chicago-based United already withdrew its 2020 guidance this week due to uncertainty over the duration and spread of the virus. It warned that near-term demand to China has almost disappeared, with demand for the rest of its trans-Pacific routes down by 75 per cent.

As a result, the company is temporarily reducing flights from the U.S. mainland to Tokyo, Osaka, Singapore and Seoul and extending the suspension of U.S. flights to mainland China and Hong Kong through April 30, it said on Friday.

Container transport to Ctg port resumes after four days

FROM PAGE B1

About 89 per cent of the country's export cargoes are brought by trucks and lorries to the ICDs, from where they are sent to the port in containers for exports.

In the last three days, seven vessels left the port without taking any export container for the strike.

Yesterday morning, two vessels -- Xpress Kabru and Penang Bridge -- left the port with only 100 TEUs of goods-laden export containers, whereas they were supposed to carry 1,530, said Saiful Islam, senior manager of Sea Consortium Bangladesh, the vessels' operator.

Some 1,430 TEUs export containers missed export deadline, which is a record for the port, he said.

Kabru was actually scheduled to leave the port on Friday but it waited one more day to take 1,242 TEUs of containers. But only 100

TEUs reached the ship in time, he said.

Penang Bridge was assigned to carry 188 goods-laden export containers. But none reached the port.

Exporters are now fearing huge losses due to delays in completing shipments.

The export cargoes, which missed shipment deadline in Chattogram, would also miss their connecting mother vessels in Colombo, Singapore and Malaysia, from where they are sent to Europe and the US.

"We may have to go for costly air shipments to ensure that the products reach the buyers on time," Chowdhury added.

Usually, around 1,000 TEUs of export containers can be sent to the port from all the ICDs in a day. The strike has worsened the container congestion. Some 9,000 TEUs of export containers are now piled up in 18 ICDs and it would take another 8 to 9 days for the containers to reach the port.

Stock markets suffer worst week since financial crisis

FROM PAGE B4

Frankfurt headed the losses in Europe, shedding almost 3.9 per cent as the market closed.

Leading European stock markets have lost more than 10 percent in just one week, with London's FTSE 100, which fell by 3.4 per cent on Friday, dropping 11.3 per cent.

Wall Street also had another difficult day, with the Dow finishing down 1.4 per cent at 25,409.36, which meant a drop of more than 12 per cent for the week.

But US indices cut their losses after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell released a statement saying the US economy remains "strong" but vowing to "use our tools" to provide support if needed.

The markets in Shanghai, Sydney and Tokyo all closed down 3.0 per cent, while Jakarta shed more than four per cent.

"The panic mode is full on," said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, senior analyst at Swissquote Bank.

"The coronavirus outbreak has certainly hit businesses, and it might have a longer-than-expected negative impact on company earnings and global growth," she added.

Meanwhile, the Japanese yen continue to benefit from its status as a haven investment in times of economic uncertainty, making solid gains against the dollar. Yields on 10-year US Treasuries hit new all-time lows.

Concern that global crude demand will crash meanwhile sent oil prices down again: in London, Brent crude fell 3.2 percent, while the US benchmark WTI crude dropped 4.9 per cent.

"Another day, another sell-off," remarked analyst Stephen Brennock at energy consultancy PVM Associates.

"Risk assets took a significant step lower... as market players continued to squirm with unease over the growing coronavirus crisis." In addition to central banks, governments also

faced pressure to provide support.

French Economy and Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said the virus would be considered "a case of force majeure for companies," meaning they would not be penalized if they failed to meet deadlines on public contracts.

The virus has now proliferated worldwide, emerging in every continent except Antarctica, and prompting governments and businesses to curb travel and public gatherings.

On Friday, Nigeria reported the first new coronavirus case in sub-Saharan Africa, as the World Health Organization warned against the "fatal mistake" of complacency. Iceland reported its first case too.

The Geneva International Motor Show was the latest major event to be canceled after Switzerland banned large gatherings.

The virus has killed more than 2,800 people and infected more than 84,000 since late December.

Yet another trailblazing act from Walton

FROM PAGE B1

Currently, a passenger lift costs Tk 20 lakh but it will be slashed by a few lakhs within a year because of Walton's production, he said.

Cargo lifts are much more expensive.

In 2014, Walton took the initiative to set up the plant with the view to assembling heavy technology products.

About 150 local and a good number of foreign engineers are working in the plant, which has a capacity to manufacture 1,000 units a year. The company aims to expand the capacity based on the market response.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal is due to inaugurate the plant at a programme today in presence of Posts and Telecommunication Minister Mustafa Jabbar and State Minister for Information and Communication Technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak.

Rana also sought policy reforms from the government so that a local lift assembling industry develops.

Currently, local producers have to pay 10 per cent customs duty for equipment and raw materials needed to manufacture lifts, whereas finished products carry only 1 per cent duty.

"This needs to be revised to help the industry to grow," Rana said.

In line with the fast-growing economy, lift consumption in Bangladesh is increasing steadily. "New players will join the race to manufacture lifts locally in the near future."

With the plant, Walton added another feather in its cap. It manufactures refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, LED/LCD televisions, motorcycles, smart phones and home appliances.

Walton is the biggest exporter in the field of electronics, with presence in more than 20 countries, according to the company's website.

Declining onion prices a double-edged sword

FROM PAGE B1

Importers are taking preparation to open letters of credit to import onion from India, according to Harun Ur Rashid, president of the Import and Export Group at the Hili Land Port and chairman of Hakimpur upazila parishad.

Falling price is good news for consumers as they will not need to ration their consumption as they had to when the prices rose exorbitantly, said Shahanaaz Begum Panna, who works at a private company. "India's restriction has taught us a good lesson. We have to increase the local production and stand by our farmers to protect them from losses," she said.

Encouraged by the higher prices following India's ban, farmers cultivated onion on 2.34 lakh hectares of land this year, the highest in a decade and up 15 per cent year-on-year, according to preliminary estimates of the Department of Agricultural Extension. But declining prices have already created worries among farmers.

Yesterday, locally grown onions were sold between Tk 1,400 and Tk 1,600 a maund at the markets in producing zones, down from more than Tk 2,500 a week ago, said Mohammad Aminul Islam, an onion

trader in Pabna, one of the main onion producing districts.

"Prices should be between Tk 1,500 and Tk 2,000 each maund. Otherwise, farmers will suffer from losses," he said.

Farmers will have margins if they can sell onion at Tk 40-50 a kg, said Mohammad Abdul Mazed, general secretary of the Shyambazar Onion Wholesalers Association. "We will write to the commerce ministry soon to discourage onion imports," Agriculture Secretary Md Nasiruzzaman told The Daily Star on Thursday over telephone.

The ministry will also write to the National Board of Revenue for imposing higher tariff on the import of agricultural produce. Nasiruzzaman expects that farmers would produce 26 lakh tonnes of onion and the country might still need to import 5-7 lakh tonnes of the bulb during lean periods.

"If onions are not imported at all or are imported gradually, our farmers will get better prices and more land will come under onion cultivation next year."

But if there is huge import and prices drop to Tk 10-Tk 15 a kg, they will not grow onion next year, he added.

Correction

A photo caption published in The Daily Star on

February 28 inadvertently

identified Bibop Kumer Roy

as the managing director

of TVS Auto Bangladesh. In

fact, he is the CEO. We regret

the error.

Oil prices sink

REUTERS, New York

Oil prices slumped for a sixth day in a row on Friday to their lowest in more than a year, causing futures to drop by the most in a week since 2016 amid coronavirus outbreak. The coronavirus spread further with cases reported for the first time in six countries across three continents.

Garment wage digitalisation closer to target

FROM PAGE B4

The other problems include losses caused by management malpractices and presence of fake and damaged notes, said the study, which had engaged around 40 management professionals and owners from the apparel sector.

At this point, there is consensus on the necessity for raising the financial literacy of the garment workers to implement the payment system.

The study recommended greater collaboration between buyers, suppliers, digital financial service providers, government agencies and industry associations to accelerate wage digitalisation.

The digital financial service providers need to expand the ecosystem to increase adoption among workers while factories must have enough options to digitalise at a realistic rate with a service provider that suits them, according to the report.

Digital advocates among large suppliers and hosting platforms for knowledge sharing are required alongside training for workers on tech literacy by stakeholders to make a smoother transition.

Dhaka Bank to deliver customer service through WhatsApp

FROM PAGE B1

Customers would be able to transfer funds from Dhaka Bank to other banks and bKash, the country's largest mobile financial service provider, make utility payments and mobile top-ups.

The WhatsApp banking platform will offer mini statements to customers and credit card-related transaction record.

Customers can take the service both through messages and voice calls on the WhatsApp platform.

For instance, any customer can make calls to the customer service centre of Dhaka Bank through WhatsApp if he/she faces any problem while at home and abroad through WhatsApp.

This will help reduce the cost of customers as WhatsApp is a free internet-based communication application.

Besides, Dhaka Bank will not impose any change on clients for enjoying banking services through WhatsApp, Huq said.

The lender is hoping more than 50,000 of its customers will embrace the service within the next 2-3 months.

"WhatsApp banking model will also attract new clients as they can expect to conduct hassle-free banking and settle transactions while sitting at their home or office." The country's youths are highly tech-savvy and the new banking model may catch their attention too.

Over the next few day, Dhaka Bank will send a text message to its registered customers with link of the WhatsApp banking services.

After clicking on the link, customers will have to send a 'Hi' or 'Hello' message to initiate the WhatsApp banking service.

They will then be asked to reconfirm if they want to take banking service on the platform. They will then be asked to input their account number and create a four-digit passcode for the platform.

After completing the process, the lender will send a one-time password to clients for completion of the registration process.

"WhatsApp banking is safe because all messages are secured with end-to-end encryption," Huq said.

In case of theft of customers' smartphone, the thief will not be able to conduct banking service through the platform by pretending to be the customer.

The reason being, without the passcode the WhatsApp banking would not be activated and the thief would not know this passcode. The customer, however, should immediately deactivate their WhatsApp

account by informing the customer service centre.

"We have been rolling out a number of digital banking service in the last few years to keep up with the technology-based modern times. And the latest one will add value to our banking services further," Huq said.

The lender has also focused on expanding its SME and retail banking service in a quick manner and WhatsApp banking will only help in implementing the roadmap.

Dhaka Bank's retail and SME financing stand at 12.5 percent of its total outstanding loans of Tk 19,563 crore as of December last year.

"We have set a target to enhance the financing to the segment at 35 per cent of our outstanding loans within 2024," Huq added.

Dismal foreign aid use against ambitious targets

FROM PAGE B1

At this point last fiscal year, foreign aid utilisation was Tk 22,526 crore, which was 37.54 per cent of total foreign aid allocation for fiscal 2018-19.

Although foreign aid commitment rises every year, the government can't spend much of it. As a result, the amount of unused aid is piling up.

Foreign aid in the pipeline surged to a record \$48.11 billion at the end of the last fiscal year despite spending more of the committed money.

The amount of foreign aid has been increasing over the last few years as Russia, China, Japan and India have committed more funds to implement mega infrastructure projects.

Due the slow implementation of the projects the fund utilisation is low, although the lenders are ready to give a lot of funds to Bangladesh.

Delays in appointment of project staffers, contract approvals and revision of project design and costs are often blamed, an official said.

Weak capacity of implementing agencies, coordination issues with the planning commission, procurement delays and difficulties in managing the contractors further hinder implementation and slow down fund disbursement, he added.

The government allocated foreign funds for the upgradation work of three international airports under the civil aviation ministry, including the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

None of the airports spent a single taka from the allocation between July and January.

The ministry undertook a Tk 13,610

crore project to add a terminal at the HSIA in 2013. Later the design was amended and the first revision of the cost came in December last year, raising it to Tk 21,399 crore.

Of the top recipients, the water resources ministry received an allocation of Tk 1,456 crore from the aid pipeline. It spent only 8.46 per cent of the funds.

The railways ministry expended 14.05 per cent of the Tk 8,311 crore allocated to it.

Of the allocation from the foreign-aided portion, the Prime Minister's Office spent 14.34 per cent, the health services division 21 per cent, the roads and highways division 22 per cent, the primary and mass education division 23.24 per cent, and the science and technology ministry 28.52 per cent.

The power division stood out, using 56.69 per cent of the allocation, followed by the bridges division at 53.61 per cent and LGRD at 34.92 per cent.

The total size of ADP for the current fiscal year is Tk 215,114 crore. Of the sum, Tk 68,980 crore, or 32.07 per cent, was spent in the seven-month period. The expenditure stood at 34.43 per cent a year earlier.

Of the ADP, 81 per cent went to 15 ministries and divisions. Out of them, eight ministries and divisions spent higher than the average.

Nearly 36 per cent of government-owned funds was spent between July last year and January this year, up from 32.41 per cent a year earlier.

Fund use by the state-owned enterprises was 14.71 per cent of the allocation, which is way less than the 39.81 per cent logged in a year earlier.

India yet to formally lift ban on onion exports

FROM PAGE B1

The lifting of the ban on onion would be effective only after the DGFT issues a notification in this regard.

Despite huge arrivals of late kharif crop and early rabi crop onion, prices have shot up since Thursday last week just because of the increased pressure on demand from exporters on anticipation of the DGFT notification allowing the lifting of the export ban, according to sources in Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) in Lasalgaon.

In Lasalgaon, onion price shot up to Rs 21.50 a kg from Rs 16.50 on Thursday the previous day. Some 1,500 tonnes of onion arrived in Lasalgaon on Thursday after 1,000 tonnes had come a day earlier.

Trade sources believe that the decision on lifting the export ban was taken at a meeting of Group of Ministers on Wednesday last week. The meeting also discussed reducing the minimum export price (MEP) of \$850 a tonne.

Rabi season crop of onion is set to reach Lasalgaon in full swing in another ten days, which may again see onion prices decline further.

But what is bothering the exporters is the stock limit of five tonnes for retailers and 25 tonnes for wholesalers imposed by the Maharashtra government in December.

BASIS to toast 100 outsourcing firms

FROM PAGE B4

"BASIS intends to honour the best players of the outsourcing industry," said Farhana A Rahman, senior vice-president of BASIS and convener of the award ceremony, which is being sponsored by Bank Asia.

The lender is working with various international organisations to facilitate the country's freelancers to bring in their earnings through the legal framework, said Arfan Ali, managing director of Bank Asia.

Currently, Bangladesh earns about \$1.2 billion from outsourcing but BASIS wants to hit the \$5 billion mark ahead of the government's stipulated deadline, said Rashad Kabir, co-convener of the event.

With help from the banking sector, Bangladesh's five lakh freelancers raked in \$83 million from outsourcing in 2019. Interested companies or individuals can register for the award through an online portal, outsourcingaward.basis.org.bd, from March 1 to 15.

Dollar dives to 20-week low

REUTERS, New York

The US dollar slid to a 20-week low against the Japanese yen on Friday after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell suggested the central bank could cut interest rates in the wake of the coronavirus.

Powell on Friday said the central bank will "act as appropriate" to support the economy in the face of risks posed by the coronavirus outbreak, though he said the economy remained in solid condition.

From catkin field to the model economic zone

FROM PAGE B1

The MIEZ is an example of how an economic zone should be developed, said Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA).

In 2015, the area was just a catkin field with banana trees strewn about but BEZA helped MGI build up the industrial hub with their cooperation and by providing land.

"We need more people like Mostafa Kamal, who builds up industries, helps create jobs and contributes to GDP growth," he added.

In the last five years, Bangladesh's GDP has increased by 105 per cent due to the rapid growth of private investment from companies like MGI, said Sheikh Fazle Fahim, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"Kamal is an exceptional man who breaks the typical landlord stereotyping of big businessmen in the country," he added.

But it has not been smooth sailing for the MGI chief though.

In his speech, he said 13 of his industrial units located in the zone did not get gas supply for a long time even though he had

deposited the Tk 220 crore as security to Titas Gas.

The largest natural gas distributor in Bangladesh continues to make different excuses for the delay in connecting the units to gas supply, he said.

After meeting local demands, MGI intends to export the various products manufactured at the zone.

MGI has 48 operational industrial units located in different areas. Of that total, 24 factories, which include six foreign companies, are found at economic zones.

"I have a dream that the MGI's Fresh brand products will be found at every household of Bangladesh. MGI is committed to ensuring product quality," he added.

The units that were formally inaugurated are: Meghna Sugar Refinery, Sonargaon Seeds Crushing Mills, Meghna Ball Pen and Accessories MFG, Meghna Noodles and Biscuit Factory, Sonargaon Printing and Packaging Industries, Fresh Welding Electrodes and Wire, Meghna Fresh LPG, Sonargaon Ship Builders and Dockyard, and a second unit of Fresh Cement.

Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, state minister of the shipping ministry, and Liakat Hossain Khoka, MP, spoke at the programme among others.

Garment wage digitalisation edges closer to target

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Some 70,000 workers of seven garment factories have recently joined the ranks of people receiving wages through bKash, giving a boost to the government push towards building a cashless society, empowering women and financial inclusion.

The government aims to bring 90 per cent of the garment sector's 4 million-strong workforce under the digital wage system by 2021.

As of November last year, 1.5 million garment workers had been brought under this mode of payment.

Another 2.6 million were set to join them, according to the Access to Information (a2i) Programme, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others.

Digital financial service provider bKash said now it would be serving over 400,000 workers in 400 export-oriented garment factories.

Following in the footsteps of Noman Group, DBL Group and Mohammadi Group are the seven new factories: AJ Group, Purbani Group, Masihata Group, Sonia Group, TEAM Group, Aman Group and Al-Muslim Group.

Their inclusion was celebrated at a hotel in the capital recently when speakers informed that bKash initiated such salary disbursements in 2015, bKash said in a press release.

The service provider in the mid of last year said it bears the 1.85 per cent transaction charge in 90 per cent of the factories while jointly with the factory owners in case of the rest, meaning workers do not lose any money while availing the services.

Digital payments benefit both employers and employees in terms of security, efficiency, empowerment and independence while promoting stronger business relationships.

Garment factories recorded 53 per



cent savings in staff time for their administration and finance teams.

British retailer Marks & Spencer, which sources nearly \$1 billion-worth garment products in a year from Bangladesh, says the use of the digital platform since 2007 helped its affiliated factories reduce annual operational costs by 3 per cent.

Digitalised platforms provide 60 per cent less complexities over manual ones alongside real-time data, seamless monitoring and reviewing and recording variable component of salaries on top of the government mandated base, allowing sounder

decision-making, says a study released in July last year.

It is a way to ensure female workers get full ownership of their earnings and more transparency in payment, said the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Women were 15 per cent more likely to participate in household decisions related to spending and savings, says the a2i and the UNDP.

There is a stark gender gap in access to financial services in Bangladesh, where only 36 per cent of women have a formal bank account compared to 65 per cent of men, according to the International Finance Corporation.

It said to have run initiatives between 2016 and 2018 which helped over 70,000 female workers benefit from wage digitalisation, including helping send money, build savings and make payments securely.

Some 82 per cent of apparel factory owners will digitalise wage disbursement if it assures transparency, saves time and lowers complexities, says the 2019 study conducted by consulting firm LightCastle Partners.

Factory owners face multiple challenges with cash-based disbursements, the most pertinent of which is risks of transporting Tk 15-20 crore every month.

READ MORE ON B3



COLLECTED

BASIS President Syed Almas Kabir attends a press conference at its head office yesterday to share the plan to organise the BASIS Outsourcing Award 2020.

BASIS to toast 100 outsourcing firms, individuals

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) is set to honour 100 outsourcing companies and individual freelancers at the 'BASIS Outsourcing Award', which is being reinstated after a pause of five years.

"Our main target for this award is

for it to help the government achieve their goal of earning \$5 billion in exports from the industry by 2023," said BASIS President Syed Almas Kabir at a press conference held yesterday at the ICT sector's apex trade body's headquarters.

This will be the sixth edition of the award.

Prizes will be distributed under

five categories: export excellence (8), outsourcing organisation (15), individual freelancer (10), district-level freelancer (64) and female freelancer (3).

Kabir expects the decorated individual freelancers will go on to set up full-fledged companies in the near future.

READ MORE ON B3



BKASH

Officials of bKash and seven garment factories pose after introducing a digital salary disbursement solution for garment workers, at a hotel recently.

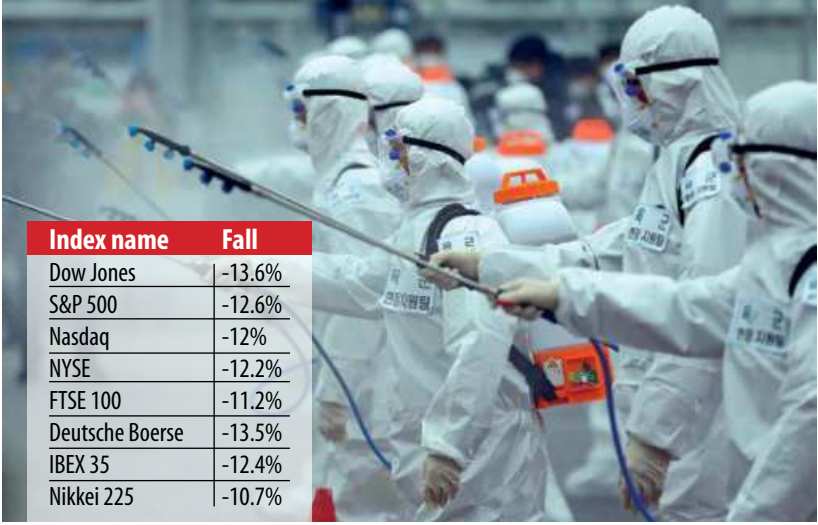
Stock markets suffer worst week since financial crisis

AFP, New York

Global stocks slumped again Friday to mark the largest weekly drop since the 2008 global financial crisis over fears the coronavirus could wreak havoc on the world economy.

Crude oil prices tumbled as well and analysts said central banks, especially the US Federal Reserve, might have to shift into crisis-resolution mode with urgent interest rate cuts.

READ MORE ON B3



| Index name | Fall |
|-----------------|--------|
| Dow Jones | -13.6% |
| S&P 500 | -12.6% |
| Nasdaq | -12% |
| NYSE | -12.2% |
| FTSE 100 | -11.2% |
| Deutsche Boerse | -13.5% |
| IBEX 35 | -12.4% |
| Nikkei 225 | -10.7% |

Special Supplement

Building sustainable future for over 15 years

Over the last several years, Bangla Trac Limited has been the major stakeholder in developing and shaping the socio-economic framework of our beloved country Bangladesh. The company has been contributing in all the major sectors serving the country with quality, reliability, and safety. The philosophy of such leadership is simple- committed to build a sustainable future of Bangladesh.

Bangla Trac Limited is a home-grown corporate conglomerate that is successfully serving the country with its

infrastructure development, engineering solutions to both state & private sectors, IT & digital services with hardware & software solutions, international franchisee of chain food restaurant, and international gateway services. Having the ambition of presenting,

Technologies and HP managed by BTRAC Technologies; franchisee ownership of Burger King in Bangladesh.

From inception, BanglaCAT has been grown exponentially to power the nation with trusted solutions. With an expansive network of facilities owning

for customers & stakeholders, BanglaCAT delivers solutions to power & infrastructure development sector with the aim to build a brighter and stronger Bangladesh.

B-Trac Technologies Ltd. is a technology solutions provider and a hardware distribution Company in Bangladesh. A concern of Bangla Trac Limited, it's striving for excellence in customer service with experienced team of Professionals. B-Trac Technologies Ltd. has distribution partnership with global leaders of IT industry like Dell and HP, & has become one of the top distributors of commercial products in Bangladesh within 3 years of operation. The company possesses solutions geared towards the needs of both private commercial clients and state and local governments.

Tiffin Box, an arm of Bangla Trac Group, has entered into a Master Franchise and development agreement with the Burger King AsiaPac Pte Ltd to develop, open and operate BURGER KING® Restaurants in Bangladesh. It has entered into the QSR (quick service restaurant) sector with a long-term development agreement to launch, operate, establish, and expand Burger King brand in Bangladesh. Presently



it's running with 9 outlets in Dhaka city located in Banani, Gulshan-2, Bashundhara, Jamuna Future Park, Uttara, Mirpur, Dhanmondi, Shimanto Shambhar, & Balaka, New Market.



business operation for over 15 years. A group of independent yet mutually supportive organizations that form a significant force in the areas of business it operates. The company is effectively contributing in the industries of power generation &

establishing, and leading globally acclaimed brands in Bangladesh, Bangla Trac limited manifesting the rights with- authorized dealership of Caterpillar Inc USA in Bangladesh with the brand name of BanglaCAT; distribution partnership of Dell

rich basket of products and services with gensets, machines & equipment for heavy construction & industrial usage, marine propulsion & power generating system, rental services, original spare parts from CAT inventory, & dedicated 24/7 service support



Being one of the successful business ventures leading top notch global brands, Bangla Trac Limited has also been one of the major participants & contributors of an annual expo organized by American Chamber of Commerce- US Trade Show. Even this year, the company partnered with the event to bring amazing experiences for the visitors.

Bangla Trac Limited has been relentlessly working with a firm commitment to improving the socio-economic wellbeing of communities it functions within. It has been strengthening the economic development of Bangladesh through unparalleled contributions in the energy, power and infrastructure development, digital integration and service sectors. A remarkable growth story, fueled by unrelenting pursuit for success, a pioneering vision and an unyielding promise to quality and service excellence has made Bangla Trac a name to be reckoned with.