

TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

# 50 lakh poor households to get cash aid through MFS from May 14

QR-based smart cards will be issued within Ramadan for distributing food aid

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The government's move to provide cash assistance to 50 lakh poor families hit by the coronavirus pandemic is finally taking off, with the four major mobile financial service providers set to deliver it from May 14.

The disbursement will be kicked off by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who will hand over Tk 2,500 each to ten families, said Md. Shah Kamal, senior secretary of the ministry of disaster management and relief.

The MFS operators will have to send the Tk 2,500 with the cash-out charge to each family and for disbursement purpose, the government will bear only Tk 15 (0.6 per cent) for each disbursement, said Tanvir A Mishuk, managing director of Nagad, a joint venture of the postal division and a private firm that will disburse the highest amount of Tk 425 crore.

"As our cash-out charge is 1.45 per cent, we will send an additional Tk 36.25 with the government fund of Tk 2,500 to each family. And we will get Tk 15 from the government for that."

The other operators will also get Tk 15 from the government but since their cash-out charge is higher they will have to send that full cash-out value to the beneficiary families, he added.

Market leader bKash will disburse Tk 375 crore, Rocket Tk 250 crore and SureCash Tk 200 crore.

In another move, the government has also planned to give food aid to the poor and low-income families who are battling food insecurity and hunger.

Before the food assistance disbursement begins, the government will complete the distribution of Quick Response (QR) code-based card.

Only the cardholders will get food support from the government, which will eliminate corruption in the process, said NM Zeaul Alam, senior secretary at the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division under the Ministry of Posts,

Telecommunications and Information Technology.

With the view to plugging the loopholes in the current distribution system, the ICT and Disaster Management and Relief ministries have created a database of poor households to assist.

The database initially has 50 lakh entries but once it is fully up and running there would be 1.20 crore beneficiary families, said officials at the two ministries.



The database and the issuance of smart cards will help remove duplication, eliminate ghost lists and reduce corruption related to the government's safety net programs, Alam said.

The Access to Information programme (a2i) under the ICT Division is helping to develop the software for the database.

The initiative comes at a time when the countrywide shutdown, enforced to fend off the coronavirus

outbreak, has forced tens of thousands of people to remain half-fed or unfed and government officials are frequently seizing subsidised rice, meant for distribution among poor and low-income people, from the illegal possession of a section of local government representatives and members of the ruling Awami League.

The government had a plan to develop a database and issue smart cards earlier but the coronavirus outbreak has precipitated the process, Alam said.

"We expect that the database will be ready within Ramadan," he said.

The database contains the National Identity (NID) number of recipients, their mobile phone numbers, address, the person's age and the number of family members such that all duplications and other irregularities can be avoided, according to officials.

"If any beneficiary does not have the numbers, we will definitely include them. But our target will be to incorporate as much information as possible," Alam said.

The NID and mobile phone number are the two main tools to identifying a person.

"We will not be rigid on NID and mobile number but we want to get the input from the regional offices," he added.

## NAGAD STANDS BY PM IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Nagad yesterday donated Tk 60 lakh to the Prime Minister's relief and welfare fund in a ceremony held at her office to fight the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Ahmad Kaikaus, principal secretary to the Prime Minister, received Nagad's donation cheque in her presence.

"We are going through a pandemic that has defined itself as the global crisis of our time. We consider it as our duty to stand by the people of the country during such a crisis. This is a war we must conquer. We believe in saving the people saves the Nation," Mishuk said.

# A vintage year for potato farmers

SOHEL PARVEZ

Potato growers are making profits this year on the back of reduced yield, higher demand and increased exports, said farmers and cold storage operators.

Farmers are selling the biggest vegetable crop at Tk 15-17.5 per kilogram, higher than Tk 11.25-15 a year ago, as many farmers who grew other vegetables are incurring losses owing to the supply chain disruption between producing regions and cities resulting from the ongoing shutdown.

However, the lockdown aimed at battling the coronavirus pandemic did not hurt northwestern district Joypurhat's potato grower Muzharul Islam and tens of thousands of others.

They completed harvesting before the shutdown was enforced on March 8 and stored a part of the tuber traditionally in their home yards and the rest in cold storage to release the crop slowly into the market before the next crop arrives by the end of the year.

"This has been a very good year for us. We have got attractive prices," said Islam over the phone on May 5.

He planted potato on more than three acres of land and bagged more than 80 maunds of the tuber on each bigha.

He sold the vegetable at Tk 10-Tk 10.25 a kg in March, the first month after the harvest.

The prices were 38 per cent higher than the production cost of Tk 7.4 per kg estimated by the Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM) in a study in February 2017.

Some 275km southeast from Joypurhat, farmers in the main potato-producing district Munshiganj, are also content for the higher prices.

Mohammad Monir Hawlader is one of them. The farmer at Tongibari in the district sold potato at Tk 650-Tk 700 per maund at farm gates. One maund equals 37.32 kg.

Farmers in the northern districts planted potato on less area, he said.

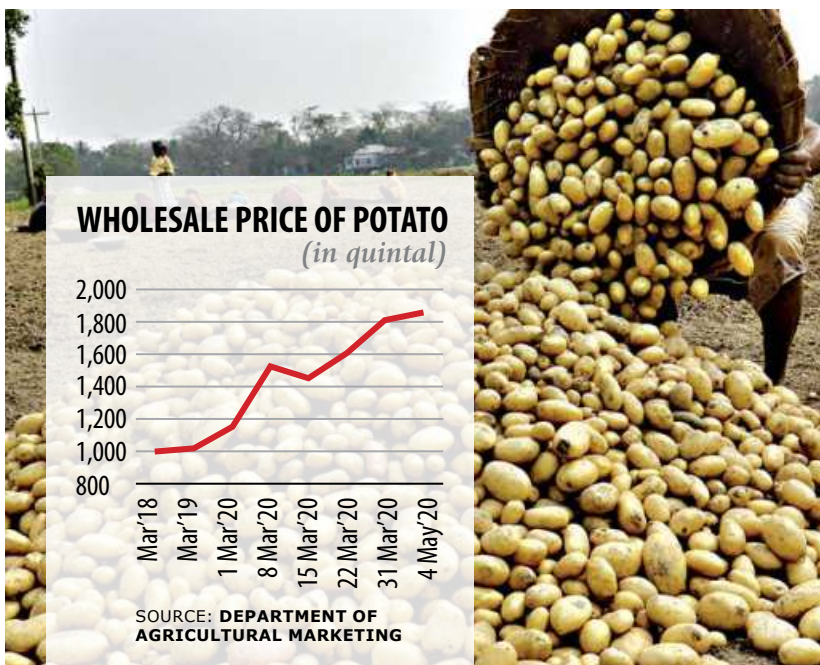
Originally a foreign crop, the potato was assumed to be brought by Portuguese navigators in the 17th century to the subcontinent and initially, it was cultivated in areas around Calcutta, according to Banglapedia.

Its cultivation expanded gradually in Bangladesh and acreage crossed two lakh hectares in 1999 and three lakh hectares in the next six years, thanks to growing popularity of the vegetable, according to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Today, Bangladesh is the six largest producer of the tuber. In fiscal 2018-19, 96.55 lakh tonnes were grown, which is nearly double the production

per kg in the retail markets in Dhaka city yesterday, up 31 per cent from a year ago, data from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh showed.

The root vegetable stored by farmers following the traditional methods are now being sold in the market and cold storages would begin releasing the tuber after May. By that time, prices may increase by Tk 4-Tk 5 a kg, Hossain said.



ANISUR RAHMAN

from a decade earlier, showed Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Farmers grew potato on 4.64 lakh hectares in the current fiscal year, down 1 per cent from the previous years, the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) said.

The total yield would fall to nearly 90 lakh tonnes this year because of the reduced acreage, said Mosharrar Hossain, president of the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association (BCSA).

"Demand for potato has increased as it is given along with rice as food relief to the poor and vulnerable people. Prices also went up in March amid stockpiling by consumers after coronavirus cases were first reported in the country," he said, adding that prices rose to Tk 21 a kg at farmers' end at that time.

Potato was sold at Tk 22-Tk 25

# BB eases rules to fast-track lending to large industries, service sector

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday eased the rules of the stimulus package worth Tk 30,000 crore for the large industries and service sector with a view to helping borrowers get loans quickly.

Now, borrowers will not need credit rating for their companies to qualify for loans as stated earlier in the guidelines of the BB.

The change came as many clients have failed to secure credit ratings from agencies due to the ongoing shutdown. This has created a roadblock for them in availing loans from the package.

The BB has asked lenders to analyse the credit risk of each borrower following their respective policy before taking decision on lending.

And banks will have to select clients on bank-customer relationship. The BB on April 12 formed the package to be provided in the form of refinancing scheme.

Under the scheme, lenders will get funds from the BB as working capital at 4 per cent interest and give out the loans at 9 per cent.

Banks will have to provide at least 50 per cent of each loan from their own sources to enjoy the refinancing scheme. They will be allowed to get an interest subsidy of 4.50 per cent.



## Jamuna Bank gets new chairman

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Fazlur Rahman has recently been elected as the chairman of Jamuna Bank.

The election took place at a meeting of the board of directors of the private commercial bank, according to a press release.

A renowned entrepreneur, Rahman is the chairman and managing director of City Group, which he founded in 1972. It is now a leading group of companies in Bangladesh, employing more than 15,000 people.

Rahman had served the bank as its chairman from 2006 to 2007.

## Bank Asia teams up with UAE's RAKBANK to channel remittance

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia has recently partnered with the UAE'S RAKBANK to offer instant money transfer solutions to channel funds to Bangladesh from the middle eastern country.

R A K B A N K 's RAKMoneyTransfer, a money transfer service provider, now facilitates fund transfer to Bank Asia accounts within minutes and any other bank in Bangladesh within 24 hours.

The remittance solution to Bangladesh will be free of charge until June 30.

"Considering the current Covid-19 pandemic, we have jointly waived remittance charge to help our expatriates send money easily to their beloved families back home," said Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of Bank Asia.

Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh  
Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges  
Bangladesh Bridge Authority  
Setu Bhaban, Banani, Dhaka-1212.  
www.bba.gov.bd

Memo No: 50.01.0000.691.37.002.20 (Part -1)- 356  
Date: 07/05/2020

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) (International)  
for  
Engaging Consultant for Design Review and Supervision of the construction of Bridge and Associated  
Facilities Across the Paira River along Kachua- Betagi-Patuakhali-Lohalia-Kalaya Road (Z8052).

1	Ministry/Division	:	Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges/Bridges Division
2	Agency	:	Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA)
3	Procuring Entity Name	:	Chief Engineer, BBA
4	Procurement Entity Code	:	131018200
5	Procurement Entity district	:	Dhaka
6	Expression of Interest for Selection of	:	Consulting Firm for Design Review and Supervision of construction of the Bridge and Associated Facilities Across the Paira River along Kachua- Betagi-Patuakhali-Lohalia-Kalaya Road (Z8052), Patuakhali, Bangladesh Time Based Contract
7	Eoi Ref No	:	50.01.0000.691.37.002.20 (৬৭-১) - 356
8	Date	:	০৭/০৫/২০২০
KEY INFORMATION			
9	Procurement Method	:	Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)
FUNDING INFORMATION			
10	Budget and Source of Fund	:	Government Of Bangladesh
11	Development Partners (If applicable)	:	Not Applicable
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
12	Project/Programme Code	:	224310300
13	Project/Programme Name	:	Construction of Bridge at 17th Kilometer (Z 8052) on Kachua-Betagi-Patuakhali-Lohalia-Kalaya Road over the river Paira
14	EOI Closing/Submission Date & Time	:	09 July 2020 at 15:00 hours (during office time)
15	EOI Opening Date & Time	:	09 July 2020 at 16:00 hours
	EOI Submission Place	:	The Chief Engineer, Bangladesh Bridge Authority, Room No-405, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, Setu Bhaban, New Airport Road, Banani, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT			
16	Brief Description of the project and the Assignment	:	Government of Bangladesh (GoB) intends to build a bridge across Paira River along the Kachua- Betagi-17Patuakhali-Lohalia-Kalaya Road (Z8052) at Payrakunja Ferrighat, Patuakhali, Bangladesh. To this end the GoB has sanctioned a fund to BBA for the Project. The following are the salient Features of the bridge project: a) The tentative length of the bridge is 1690 meter; b) The cost of the Project has been estimated at US\$ 120.00 million approx. c) Construction of the Project is taken up engaging Plant & Design Build Contractor following the FIDIC form of Contract (Yellow Book). The scope of the consultancy services in brief include the following but not limited to: a) The consultants shall work as Engineer's Representative; b) Review, comments and recommend the Design, Drawing, plans and all other reports furnished by the Contractor under the Contract; c) Preparation of Land Acquisition Plan and Environmental Impact Assessment d) Deploy necessary manpower to Supervise the Construction Works; e) Assist the Employer in Contract Administration, implementation of Environmental Management Plan A detailed scope of services required under the consultancy contract will be furnished in the Request for Proposals (RFP).

17	Experience, Resources and Delivery Capacity Required	:	The Applicant Shall furnish the following information along with the EOI:  1. Company Brochures describing background of the firm(s), their expertise and resources/facilities available;  2. Specific Experience of the Firm(s) in the Design and Construction supervision of similar nature and complex project in the last 10 (ten) years;  3. Experience in similar operating environments and conditions.  4. Availability of the appropriate skills among staff (list of relevant professional staff including brief description on their qualification and experience in similar nature of works) and availability of the resources demonstrating capacity to carry out such assignments;  5. Financial capability & administrative/managerial strength: (a) average annual turnover, liquid assets or working capital; and submit (b) Company's incorporation certificate, Trade license, VAT registration certificate, IT certificate; and (c) Administrative/managerial structure with company's organogram with list of staff. (d) Procurement of works The 'similar nature and complexity' is defined as multi-span Pre-stressed concrete/composite Box Girder Bridges built under Plant & Design-Build Contract on river channel with the following properties: (i) Length of bridge: Not less than 1,000 (one thousand meters) with spans of 90 meters; and (ii) Large diameter (more than 1.5 meters) deep (more than 80 meters) pile foundation.
18	Other Details	:	The EOI shall bear the name and address of the Applicant, EOI no. & date and shall be submitted at the address stated above. The EOI shall be submitted in one original and two copies duly marked as "ORIGINAL" and/or "COPY" as appropriate.
19	Association with other Firm(s)	:	Allowed.  a) Interested firms may associate with other firms (Domestic or International) to enhance their strength/capability and should mention whether the association is in the form of "Joint Venture" or "Sub- Consultancy". In case of association with other firm(s) all members of such "association" shall have real and well defined input of assignment.  b) In the case of Joint Venture, Lead Partner should have similar experience in project within the last 10 (ten) years involving design and construction supervision.  In case of JV the authorized representative should be from the lead partner.
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS			
20	Name of Official Inviting EOI	:	Quazi Muhammad Ferdous
21	Designation of Official Inviting EOI	:	Chief Engineer, BBA
22	Address of Official Inviting EOI	:	Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA), Setu Bhaban, New Airport Road, Banani, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh
23	Contract Details of Official Inviting EOI	:	Tel: 55040313, Fax: 55040444, E-mail: dir-tech@bba.gov.bd
24	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reason whatsoever.		

A draft ToR of the assignment is made available in the following website [www.bba.gov.bd](http://www.bba.gov.bd) as ToR for Paira Bridge along Kachua-Betagi

  
(Quazi Muhammad Ferdous)  
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Tel: 55040313, Fax: 55040444  
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GD-816