

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	
0.29%	0.53%	\$1,884.30	\$43.34	38,128.90	22,751.61	2,579.51	3,196.77	83.95	95.99	105.82	11.76	
4,080.94	7,044.64	(per ounce)	(per barrel)					BUY TK	84.95	99.79	109.62	12.36
								SELL TK				

Star BUSINESS

DHAKA SUNDAY JULY 26, 2020, SRABAN 11, 1427 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

Vendor has been paid in full, but NBR is still without a successful online tax return filing system

SOHEL PARVEZ

Everything was going well for the online tax return filing project until the end of 2019.

The first online tax return filing scheme -- Bangladesh Integrated Tax Administration System (BITAX) -- completed on June 2018 and the National Board of Revenue's agreement with the vendor expired on 29 November 2019.

Just a month later, the first blow came from the then NBR Chairman Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan.

The former bureaucrat, who had been at the helm of the revenue administration for two years since January 2018, wrote to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the major financier of the project, calling the BITAX project a failure.

He raised some allegations against the vendor, FPT Information System Corporation of Vietnam, that the contractor did not hand over the project credentials to the IT wing of the NBR.

"FPT is extremely non-responsive on any technical query. It is not in a position to hand over any substantial output," Bhuiyan wrote in the letter to the ADB on 1 January.

The letter referred to an investigation into the BITAX by the IT team of the NBR and said the audit found that the system would not bring the desired outcome and failed to meet its goals.

The reasons, he pointed out, for the failure included keeping the archaic system of return processing. He suggested the ADB investigate the matter.

BITAX was one of the two components of the project and the NBR spent \$7.5 million to develop the software and buy required hardware for its 650 field-level tax offices.

Another component was the digitalisation of the land records management system in selected districts and \$12.7 million was spent for the component.

The government took the project in December 2011 to facilitate the online filing of tax returns to improve tax collection and establish an efficient, fairer and less corrupt tax system and improve public service delivery.

The tax administration introduced e-filing facility in November 2016 and FPT operated and maintained the BITAX for three years until November 2019.

ADB RATED THE PROJECT SUCCESSFUL

The Manila-based multilateral lender did not respond to Bhuiyan's request for inquiry.

In a draft project completion report in May sent to the Economic Relations Division and the NBR, the ADB sang for the project, titled 'Strengthening Governance Management Project, for which it footed 86 per cent of the \$20 million cost.

"Overall, the project is rated successful,"

said the draft report.

The lender said the project was highly relevant at appraisal and completion. It rated the project as "less than effective" in achieving the outcome and output envisioned at appraisal.

Of the performance indicators, the establishment of the facility for online submission of tax returns for all taxpayers in all income tax offices has been achieved. However, the goal of ensuring online filing of at least 75 per cent of large taxpayers was not achieved.

Besides, only a small percentage of the taxpayers -- about 6,000 or 0.33 per cent of the 22 lakh returns submitted in fiscal 2019-20 -- submitted returns through

filing of tax returns possible. The primary stage of establishing transparency and accountability in the tax department has been established.

"However, the main problem is lack of acceptability among taxpayers."

The report also said FPT did not hand over the whole system to the NBR although the project had completed in 2018. The total bill was paid before the full handover.

The Vietnamese firm won the Tk 51 crore contract to develop the BITAX software and supply hardware to the tax offices.

The IMED said the software and hardware were purchased on a turn-key basis under the project because of a lack of knowledge of BITAX.

susceptible to abuse.

The NBR can't operate BITAX without the help of FPT at present, the IMED report said, while calling for taking full control of the system.

Accordingly, the NBR took an initiative after the end of the service agreement with FPT. But there was a dearth of sincere effort from the contractor to hand over the system.

In April 2018, an IMED official inspected the implementation of BITAX and submitted a report the following month.

The report said the project did not begin on schedule owing to a lack of coordination between local and international consultants.

The project implementation phase was apparently successful but there was no scope of e-payment, it said.

NBR'S REPORT TO IMED: 'PROJECT SUCCESSFUL'

Just a year before the release of the IMED's report, the NBR had submitted the project completion report to the IMED. It came in May 2019.

The NBR report said the implementation of the project was successful.

The project has been successful in introducing digitalisation of the NBR's tax revenue management through installation of BITAX, Bhuiyan said in his remarks.

"A follow-up project is needed to complete the remaining task of full automation of the tax administration," he said.

The completion report, in contrast to the IMED's report, said BITAX, which is based on SAP Integrated Tax Revenue Management, is easily configurable, standardised and able to support the full tax lifecycle management.

It, however, said engagement of the local IT team was minimal due to the lack of ownership, inadequate team members and lack of proper skill sets.

The report also identified drawbacks such as taxpayers' hassle in collecting password for online return filing, absence of e-payment facility and interfacing with other government agencies such as the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), the Bangladesh Bank and the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

NBR RESPONDS TO IMED'S LATEST REPORT

The IMED's latest impact evaluation report did not mention the findings of the previous reports on BITAX and the versions of the NBR, the ADB and FPT.

In the middle of June 2020, Hafiz Ahmed Murshed, member for tax information management & services of the NBR and director of the BITAX, raised questions about the IMED's report.

In a letter to the IMED Director General, he said: "There is a lot of factual errors in the final draft report, which is undesirable. The errors need correction before finalising the report."

He blamed the absence of the scope for tax payment through online. E-payment was not deliverable in the online tax return filing project.

On the IMED's findings on making full payment before the handover of the system, the NBR's letter said the payment was done in line with the ADB's clearance and against a financial bond from the contractor.

READ MORE ON B3

Fair Group announces car assembly tie-up with Hyundai

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Fair Technology yesterday announced it has entered into an exclusive partnership with South Korean automotive manufacturer Hyundai Motors to set up a car assembly plant in Bangladesh within the second half of next year.

Bangladesh is still a reconditioned car dominant market as only 25 per cent of cars sold here are new, said Mohammed Mesbah Uddin, chief marketing officer of parent company Fair Group, in a virtual ceremony marking the announcement.

As per Fair Technology's market study, some 25,000 to 30,000 cars are sold every year in Bangladesh -- and most of them are second-hand ones brought in from Japan, where due to the superior road conditions the wear-and-tear is minimal.

"We are committed to building the car assembling ecosystem in the country. Our target is to reshape the market as one of new cars," Uddin said.

The company is targeting to upgrade the market share of brand-new cars to 50 per cent within the next three to four years.



Some years ago, the government undertook a favourable policy to develop the car assembling industry and a few companies moved to take advantage of it.

Fair has started discussions with the government, especially with the National Board of Revenue, over some tax issues and if a clear direction comes up the company would expedite the preparations for the plant, Uddin added.

Fair already has developed the competency to manufacture sophisticated, high-tech products.

It is already manufacturing a huge variety of electronic goods of Samsung in their Narsingdi plant including smartphone, television, refrigerator, washing machine, air conditioner, microwave oven, air purifier and other home appliances.

Fair Technology also obtained the exclusive dealership of Hyundai and yesterday rolled out two car models of the South Korean brand.

A few more would be made available within the next 15 days.

Fair had planned to launch the cars sometime between March and April but the pandemic forced them to bring changes to the plans, according to Uddin.

"Our vision is to transform the Bangladeshi car market and provide the best quality products for the consumers," said Mutassim Daiaan, director of Fair Technology.

Hyundai has the best in quality in their car line-up and Fair Technology would provide a world-class customer experience in their showrooms and after-sales service, he said, adding that attractive warranties would be provided too.

The South Korean brand is currently dominating different markets, including that of India, where it is the second biggest player.

READ MORE ON B2



BITAX.

"Thus, the contribution of the online return filing was not significant in income tax collections," the lender said.

More time is needed for taxpayers to gain confidence in the online tax return filing, it said.

"Online filing of tax returns would in due course enhance the efficiency of the tax machinery and help expand the tax base, lower tax evasion and ultimately lead to higher tax collection."

The modules of e-payment and tax deduction at source were not included in the design of BITAX due to weak internet services in the country at the time of project preparation, the ADB added.

IMED FINDS TAXPAYERS NOT TAKING TO BITAX

Just a month after the ADB's report, the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) under the planning ministry released an impact evaluation report on the project.

The report, which was released in June, said the implementation of the project has made online

"But the software implementing agency implemented the tax system partially taking advantage of turn-key contract."

Only tax returns of individual taxpayers were uploaded and it was not possible to upload the returns of all categories of taxpayers, it said. No option has been kept for submission of withholding tax and advance income tax return.

The IMED alleged that the contractor and its technical team were accessing taxpayers' confidential information but confidentiality of such information is protected by law.

"It is a threat to the safety of the secret information of the state, which is not acceptable at all."

Tax returns contain information of wealth, income and expenditure of citizens. The returns contain income tax-related information of the president, the prime minister and other very important persons.

"It is essential to ensure the safety in preservation for the sake of ensuring the confidentiality of taxpayers' information," the IMED said.

The report recommended the NBR decide on the usage or application of the system as BITAX was implemented partially, was not expandable and there is a scope for uploading faulty information and

Upscale boutiques had a choice: pivot or perish. Some chose the former and survived

MAHMUDUL HASAN

It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change, said the most famous naturalist Charles Darwin back in the 19th century.

And Sultana Nasreen Shumi, the owner of upscale boutique Azaaraz, has unconsciously been following the adage in the last four months.

When news first came out of the novel coronavirus outbreak in China's Wuhan for a wet market -- where live animals are sold, slaughtered and skinned, in squalid condition -- in January, she did not pay much attention.

Then the following month, when the rogue virus began to tear through parts of Europe and Asia, her husband told her that the pathogen's arrival to Bangladesh was inevitable.

Before she could take any preparations, she was confronted with a flight-or-flight situation, as the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Bangladesh was announced on 8 March.

About a fortnight later, the country



Sultana Nasreen Shumi, proprietor and designer of upscale boutique Azaaraz, shows her clients her latest creations. The boutique, whose atelier is located a floor above, is open on an appointment basis and is making the bulk of its sales online.

went on a general shutdown, leaving her with no option but to shutter her shop and factory for the time being. As the shutdown, which was initially supposed to be for ten days, kept on getting extended, she became restive.

Does she continue to keep her business on pause, which would ultimately go on endanger the mere survival of her fledgling business? Or does do something out-of-the-box to help her pay the salary of her 12 staff and rent of the space?

She chose to fight and opted for the latter option.

Her atelier and her showroom were housed in the same residential building in Gulshan and the building authority walked off the property to non-residents.

Besides, a big portion of the workers live in Mohammadpur, another part of the city, and asking them to commute such a long distance every day and brave the possibility of coronavirus contagion did not sit right with her conscience.



COLLECTED

So, she rented a space in Mohammadpur and shifted her atelier there, and in one fell swoop, she was able to solve the dilemma of lives and livelihood that has been consuming businesses and governments alike.

And she pivoted from her business from one rooted in bricks and mortar to one online. She opened a Facebook page for her boutique, where she put up her creations, whose ticket prices start at Tk 5,000 and go up to Tk 30,000, up on display and also took custom orders.

"I never thought that people would respond so much during this hard time. With what I have been able to earn, I have been able to pay the salaries due times," Shumi told The Daily Star yesterday.

The 30-something woman entrepreneur has recovered about 60 per cent of her sales and is now upbeat about steering her business in this 'new normal' situation.

The boutique has since opened its doors to customers but only an appointment-basis, just in time to log in Eid sales.

READ MORE ON B3

UK companies and shoppers send recovery signals for economy

REUTERS, London

British businesses have reported their fastest upturn in five years and shoppers pushed their spending back to near pre-lockdown levels, a survey and data published on Friday showed.

An early flash reading of the IHS Markit/CIPS UK Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) shot up to 57.1 in July from 47.7 in June, above the 50 threshold for growth for the first time since lockdown began in March.

The figure, its highest since June 2015 and above the euro zone's reading for this month, was better than all forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists.

The surge suggested Britain's economy would return to growth in the third quarter after shrinking by more than 25% in March and April, Chris Williamson, chief business economist at PMI compiler IHS Markit, said.

"Even with the July rebound, there's a long way to go before the output lost to the pandemic is regained and, while businesses grew more optimistic about the year ahead, a V-shaped recovery is by no means assured." Separate official data showed retail sales jumped back almost to pre-coronavirus



People wearing protective masks look at a market stall at Columbia Road Flower Market after its reopening following the coronavirus disease outbreak, in London, Britain.

lockdown levels in June, when non-essential stores in England reopened.

Sales volumes in June leapt by 13.9% from May, above all forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists, as spending on clothes and home improvements jumped.

But economists said the shopping bounce was probably at

the expense of spending on other things, such as eating out or going to the cinema, which remain hit by worries about the virus.

While the PMI indicated a quickening of growth, it did not signal a return to normal levels of output across businesses, which some economists think could take years.

A Reuters poll this week suggested

the economy could contract by more than 9% this year, its biggest downturn since the 1920s.

The PMI's gauge of employment worsened in July, chiming with other indicators that suggest a wave of job cuts is on the way. Government budget forecasters have warned the jobless rate could rise to its highest since the mid-1980s this year.

On Thursday, Bank of England interest-rate setter Jonathan Haskel said Britain's economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis could be slow and it would depend on whether people felt confident that it was safe to go out.

Consumer sentiment is still below its level before the coronavirus struck, but employers have turned positive about hiring and investment for the first time since February, separate surveys showed earlier on Friday.

The PMI for services, representing most of Britain's economy, rose to 56.6 in July from 47.1. But IHS Markit said demand was weaker than expected for some businesses after the lockdown lifted for bars and restaurants on July 4.

Factories also reported a better July. The factory PMI rose to 53.6 from 50.1 in June, its highest level since March 2019.

Boeing to delay 777X as demand drops for big jets

REUTERS, Seattle

Boeing Co is preparing to delay its all-new 777X jet by several months or up to a year, three people familiar with the matter said, as the COVID-19 crisis exacerbates a drop in demand for the industry's largest jetliners.

Boeing hopes to bring the jet to market as passenger travel rebounds after a downturn caused by the pandemic. It would also hope for a detente in a trade war between Washington and Beijing, which has sidelined crucial Chinese aircraft buyers.

But stretching out the development opens up fresh risks for Boeing, such as losing engineering attention and momentum, and tougher scrutiny from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration during the years-long certification process.

Delay could also cause problems in Boeing's supply chain.

An announcement of the delay could come as early as next week when Boeing announces earnings, one of the people said.

Boeing declined to comment on the 777X timeline. It said it was continuing flight tests and "working closely with our customers around the world as they continue to adapt to the evolving COVID-19 situation."

Boeing has been working to get the 777X, a larger version of the 777 mini-jumbo, into the hands of customers in 2021. That's already a year later than originally

scheduled after snags with its General Electric GE9X engines among other issues.

Now Boeing is preparing to delay the timeline by perhaps a year, two of the people said. A third said a delay was likely but that Boeing wanted to get production "going hard" to put planes in the air by 2022-2023.

"There are so many widebody aircraft being retired, mothballed," the third person said. "If air travel comes back to 2019 levels, many new planes will be needed." The 777X will be the first major jet to be certified since the role of software flaws in two fatal 737 MAX crashes prompted accusations of cozy relations between Boeing and the FAA.

The 777X - composed of two models, the 777-8 and the larger and more closely watched 777-9 which seats 406 passengers and is due to be delivered first - competes with the Airbus A350-1000, which seats about 360 passengers.

Modern twinjets are displacing older four-engine Boeing 747s and soon-to-be-axed Airbus A380s. Boeing has told suppliers the last 747-8 will roll off assembly lines in around two years.

Experts had expressed worries about demand for large jets due to overcapacity and economic weakness, even before COVID.

While Boeing says it has sold 309 777X planes - worth \$442 million each at list prices many in the industry have questioned its dependence on Middle East carriers which are scaling back orders.

AmEx profit slumps as lockdowns hit spending, defaults loom

REUTERS

Credit card issuer American Express Co reported an 85 per cent slump in quarterly profit on Friday as spending using its card collapsed during global lockdowns imposed to contain the coronavirus.

Shares were down 1.7 per cent before the bell, even as the group managed to eke out a small profit rather than report a loss as expected by analysts.

American Express, one of the largest corporate card issuers in the United States, has been hit especially hard by cuts in large corporations' spending on travel and entertainment after the pandemic brought that sector to a virtual standstill.

Global commercial services group, which issues proprietary corporate and small business cards, suffered a \$60 million loss in the second quarter, compared with a net income of \$561

million a year ago.

In all, consumers and businesses cut their spending on travel and entertainment by 87 per cent in the quarter, with overall spending down by more than a third.

"Spending volumes, which declined to their lowest point this quarter in April, gradually improved in May and June, with small businesses being the most resilient," chief executive officer Stephen Squeri in a statement.

LDC graduation assessment could be delayed

FROM PAGE B4

of those items," Rahman added. He made these comments while speaking at the 5th dialogue of Resurgent Bangladesh, a virtual meeting on 'International Trade in Covid Times: Impact and Way forward for Bangladesh', organised by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

Various lawmakers, exporters, businesspersons, trade body representatives, economists and researchers participated in the meeting.

Resurgent Bangladesh is an economic recovery initiative organised by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI), DCCI, Chittagong Stock Exchange Ltd, Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD), and Policy Exchange.

While the country's bright image is an important aspect for attaining higher export growth, addressing the public health issues currently prevalent in the country is more crucial, said Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear.

Manzur also urged the authorities to reduce both the cost and ease of doing business in Bangladesh.

"Creating more demand in the domestic market is vital as well," he said, adding that most of the roughly 11 million people employed by the country's wholesale, retail and tourism industries are financially suffering due to the ongoing pandemic.

Abul Kasem Khan, chairperson of BUILD, suggested that Bangladeshi suppliers should tap into the export potential of China as the Chinese government offered duty-free benefits for 8,256 locally made products.

The Asean market is very important for Bangladesh, he said, adding that Bangladesh has a strong claim for entering the intergovernmental organisation as the country has already sheltered more than one million Rohingya people.

While moderating the meeting, DCCI President Shams Mahmud said many international retailers want to shift their orders and investments away from China, which is a big opportunity for Bangladesh.

Mahmud said that the authorities should negotiate with the leaders of various export destinations in order to avoid any restrictions on products while development of the country's port infrastructure, such as container terminals and Bay terminal, needs to be expedited.

He also urged the government to accelerate the procedure to secure an Asean observer status.

Mahmud went on to call upon the concerned authorities to address the issues of the para-tariff and non-tariff barriers with India and other Saarc countries.

Nihad Kabir, president of MCCI, suggested holding periodic discussions between businessmen and the prime minister so that major trade barriers can be effectively removed.

There are other issues though, such

as the automation of the National Board of Revenue, which have been hanging for over a decade even though these initiatives were taken far earlier, she said.

M Masrur Reaz, chairman of Policy Exchange, said that Bangladesh should consider the potential of the Japanese market alongside the Chinese one as well.

Asif Ibrahim, chairman of the Chittagong Stock Exchange, said capital should be taken from the stock market instead of banks.

The government should disburse export incentives in the proper sectors as export-oriented industries could create more jobs in the domestic markets, said Zaidi Sattar, chairman of the Policy Research Institute.

Humayun Rashid, managing director of Energypac Group, said opportunities have been created in the Indian market for transformer producers. His company has been exporting a good quantity of electrical transformers to India over the last two years.

Meanwhile, Tofail Ahmed, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry of commerce, said Bangladesh could potentially export \$2.5 billion in goods to China thanks to the market's zero-duty benefit on numerous Bangladeshi goods.

Bangladesh has enjoyed such benefits under the LDC criteria, however, the government has been slow in signing FTAs with other countries, he said.

A 'youth cell' under PMO is in order

FROM PAGE B4

Integrity is highly needed to ensure quality education for the youth, he said. It is the young population who go abroad and send a good amount of remittance every year, said Md Nazibul Islam, additional secretary of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry.

An increase in budget would not ensure proper utilisation of the allocation, so proper use of the money set aside is important, he said.

"We are giving training to the youth and the number of trained hands is increasing fast. But most of them are failing to succeed in life after the completion of the trainings."

Local institutions should collaborate with the foreign ones to upgrade the training system to achieve better output, he noted.

A connection should be established

between the madrasah students and technical education, said Md Omar Faruque, joint secretary of the technical and madrasah education division under the education ministry.

Around 60 per cent of the education system needs to be technical knowledge-based for a nation to develop, he said. Now the enrolment of technical education reached only 17 per cent against the target of 21 per cent by 2020 while in 2001 it was only 1 per cent, he said.

The ministry is working with young women for their skills development to let them get involved in economic growth, said Ferdousi Begum, deputy secretary of the women and children affairs ministry.

Khadiza Nazneen, deputy secretary of the social welfare ministry, said they not only focus on the disabled and distressed people, but also the

youth.

"We should find out what the youth wants," said Abu Eusuf, professor of the Department of Development Studies of Dhaka University.

A needs assessment is required to find out why the number of departments is increasing in universities, he said.

"We need to concentrate more on demand-based technical education instead of generating general graduates."

A follow-up is needed to check whether the trainees are utilising the knowledge they gained through the trainings, he said.

Selim Raihan, executive director of Sanem, chaired the discussion where Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, and Sayema Haque Bidisha, research director of Sanem, also spoke.

Fair Group announces car assembly tie-up with Hyundai

FROM PAGE B1

"In Bangladesh, we have no position right now but within the next few years, we want to cater to a good portion of the market, which we are expecting," Uddin said.

Fair Technology has fixed two top priorities -- best quality in after-sales service and availability of parts -- and they were putting massive efforts to ensure those.

It has developed a training module for mechanics across the country such that customers can easily access support from them.

It also has plans to establish a recycling industry in Bangladesh so that customers do not face any hassles on resale issues, Uddin said.

The company has initially targeted Dhaka and then to Chattogram. After that, it will set up shop in other cities.

Fair also plans to provide hybrid cars as the demand is gradually increasing alongside that of electric cars, both of which will lead the car market in the coming years, Uddin said.

Germany plans reforms to prevent Wirecard scandal repeat

AFP, Berlin

Germany's finance minister has drawn up reforms to give financial regulator Bafin more powers, according to a draft seen by AFP Friday, after the collapse of disgraced fintech group Wirecard exposed gaps.

Under minister Olaf Scholz's plan, Bafin will be given the power to intervene directly, bypassing the current two-tier system that splits supervision between a private-sector watchdog and the markets regulator.

Auditors would also have to be replaced every ten years instead of the 20 years currently. "There will never be a 100 percent protection against criminal behaviour in

the financial market," said the draft. "At the same time, criminality must be countered through all legal means... that includes preventing such violations through sufficiently strict controls and oversight."

"The German fintech company crashed in June after admitting that 1.9 billion euros on its balance sheets likely didn't exist."

Prosecutors said Wednesday they have arrested the former chief executive and two former board members of Wirecard for "commercial fraud" reaching 3.2 billion euros (\$3.7 billion), saying investigations show that the financial scam was already happening in 2015.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
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Memo Dated:

Invitation for e-Tender

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works given below:

Sl No.	Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Name of works	Tender closing date & time
01	480647	PWD/Baril/Cancer/WD-1	Construction of Cancer Hospital Building 15-storied Building with 17-storied foundation having 2 (two) basement at Barishal	24-08-2020 13.00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Gerald Oliver Guda
Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Barisal

GD-1191

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Kaira, Khulna
www.lged.kaira.khulna.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.4753.000.99.010.20-485 Date: 23/07/2020AD

Invitation for Tender (Works)

e-Tender Notice No. 01/2020-21 (NOTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works. Details are given below:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of work	Tender last selling (date & time)	Tender security last submission (date & time)
1	479472	e-Tender/PEDPA/KL/NKOI/2019-2020/W14.0857	Construction Boundary Wall including Gate of 1) Anbarubi GPS, 2) Kaira GPS, 3) Laka GPS, 4) Sheriar Ali Adarsha GPS	18-Aug-2020 17:00	19-Aug-2020 11:00
2	479466	e-Tender/PEDPA/KL/NKOI/2019-2020/W14.0480	Construction Boundary Wall including Gate of 1) Kharis GPS, 2) Khorol Rawson Ara Alansad GPS, 3) North Madirabadi GPS	18-Aug-2020 17:00	19-Aug-2020 11:00
3	456316	e-Tender/PEDPA/KL/NKOI/2019-2020/W14.0479	Construction Boundary Wall including Gate of 1. 03 No. Kaira Community GPS, 2. Baria GPS, 3. Masjid Kur GPS	18-Aug-2020 17:00	19-Aug-2020 11:00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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GD-1188



Bank Asia Chairman A Rouf Chowdhury attends the two-day "Half Yearly Business Meet 2020" of the bank, organised by the financial institution through a digital platform starting on July 24. Chairman of Board Executive Committee Rumea A Hossain, Chairman of Board Audit Committee Dilwar H Choudhury, Chairman of Board Risk Management Committee Prof MA Baqui Khalily, directors Enam Chowdhury, Romana Rouf Chowdhury, Ashraf Haq Chowdhury, Md Abul Quasem, President and Managing Director Md Arfan Ali also took part in the event.

Japan, Britain to protect encryption keys in trade pact: Nikkei

REUTERS, Tokyo
Japan and Britain have agreed not to force their companies to disclose algorithms or set up local data servers, as part of talks aimed at a bilateral trade deal, the Nikkei said on Saturday.
A Japan-Britain agreement on advanced digital standards would pave the way for creating an international framework to protect intellectual property and the free flow of data, the business daily reported, without citing sources.

The two nations hope to clinch a deal before Britain's transition out of the European Union concludes at the year end, to avoid any gaps in bilateral trade arrangements.
Under the bilateral deal, the two governments would not force their companies to hand over encryption keys, which are used to protect proprietary corporate technology and information, the Nikkei said.

The two nations are expected to agree not to force companies to set up servers and other related facilities within their borders and to protect the free flow of data, the report said.

A Japanese government official declined to comment, as the talks are ongoing. A call to the British embassy in Tokyo went unanswered.

Although Britain will be covered by the Japan-EU economic agreement until the end of the year, Tokyo hopes to complete the bilateral trade deal before that, as it would need legal checks by the government before being submitted to parliament, which could meet in coming months, a Japanese negotiator said this month.

In the trade talks, Tokyo wants to secure at least as favourable automobile tariffs as it has in its existing EU trade pact, the negotiator told Reuters.



Md Ahsan-uz Zaman reappointed as Midland Bank managing director

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Md Ahsan-uz Zaman has been re-appointed as managing director and CEO of Midland Bank (MDB) for another three-year term.

Zaman joined the bank in July 2014 as CEO, the bank said in a statement yesterday.

"I am honoured to lead an institution like Midland Bank as CEO and managing director," Zaman said while commenting on his reappointment.

"Miracles happen and MDB is one of them in the banking sector. We built the local bank with international standards. I thank all stakeholders specially clients for trusting us with their business and for the privilege to serve."

Vendor has been paid in full, but NBR is still without a successful online tax return filing system

FROM PAGE B1
It acknowledged the problem of matching records of tax payment with other state agencies. FPT handed over user administrator and password with the account information through a letter on 17 December 2019.

The NBR letter, however, did not clearly refute the claim that data is accessed by FPT. It only said that it is a normal practice that passwords changed after the handover. Murshed did not clear whether the passwords had changed.

He said a seven-member IT team of the NBR has been assigned to operate and maintain BITAX after the expiry of the contract with FPT. Bhuiyan was misguided to present wrong information about the BITAX on the verge of his retirement, he said.

It warrants probe into the intention of sending the letter, Murshed added.

WHAT THE TAXMEN SAY
The correspondent spoke with a dozen taxmen, including four income tax members who headed the BITAX project on several occasions until now and three IT officials of the NBR.

All agreed that the e-filing of the tax return was not user-friendly enough to make online filing popular among taxpayers.

The ADB said BITAX has been fully operationalised, and 650 tax circles have been connected. Some 44,000 taxpayers submitted online tax returns in fiscal 2017-18.

The number of online returns dropped to 2,700 in fiscal 2018-19 and eventually rising the following year.

Taxmen agreed that some facilities are absent in the system. This includes e-payment and the scope to verify taxpayer's tax payment claims electronically with other agencies such as the BB and the CGA.

Some taxmen, including a former project director, said as manually submitted returns are digitalised for uploading in the BITAX system, the risk of entry of errors in the data remains high.

The tax offices digitalised nearly 27 lakh manually submitted tax returns since the launch of the e-filing.
"Data entry makes a lot of irritation for officials in the fields. We have to digitalise the manually submitted returns. It takes a lot of time. This is one of the reasons officials have a negative perception about the system," said a deputy commissioner of taxes.

There should have been a scope to scan and

digitalise the returns directly. "We have scanners but it is for scanning supporting documents and not the main tax return," he said.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF IT TEAM OVERLOOKED

IT officials said they were not trained enough to take full control of the system from the Vietnamese firm, maintain and operate it.

One official said they could not enter the system using the passwords given by FPT.

Another official said the issue of providing adequate training to build the capacity of IT personnel to run BITAX after the end of the contract was not given enough importance.

There was also no provision of knowledge and technology transfer in the project and the vendor took that advantage, he said.

TAXMEN DIVIDED ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE PROJECT

One view is that BITAX could not yield any fruitful result for e-filing and it is better to discard the system as the database is prone to error.

Another view was to address the bottlenecks to make the system user-friendly and more functional.

WHAT IMED, OTHERS SAY

Md Afzal Hossain, a director general of the IMED, said there were differences of opinions on the project's success.

"We will take into account both the opinions in our final report and give our recommendations. Now, it will be up to the authority to deal with it." He, however, added that most of the observations of the IMED would remain the same.

The IMED official, responding to the ADB's report terming the project successful, said: "We have not termed the project unsuccessful. What we said is that the management is still in the hands of the Vietnamese company."

FPT did not respond to an email. The ADB did not respond to request for comment.

Bhuiyan said the project was in its last stage when he joined the NBR and he got an impression from the officials involved in the project and from visits by the ADB representative that the project was going well.

"And when the contract was set to expire and the proposal for an extension came, I asked for progress and deliverables. I came to know that returns can be submitted but payment cannot be done electronically. It was annoying."

Bhuiyan said he asked FPT for deliverables and submission of all credentials.

"Then I wrote to the ADB for taking action

against them."

He said he held many meetings before writing the letter.

On making full payment to FPT in May 2019, the former NBR chief said: "If you blame me for this, I will have nothing to say. But no one would be able to know anything unless I raised the questions. All would know that the project completed well."

On his remark as 'successful' in the project completion report, he said this is a common outline and the project completion reports are required to be sent to the IMED.

No authorities submitted to the IMED call projects unsuccessful in the reports, he said.

The former NBR chair disagreed with the IMED's findings that FPT was accessing taxpayers' data.

Only former finance minister AMA Muhith would submit his return online and other files were submitted manually, Bhuiyan said.

WHAT'S THE NBR'S TAKE?

When the IMED released the report regarding the BITAX, the NBR had already embarked on popularising the online tax return filing. For the first time, it offered Tk 2,000 rebate to motivate individual taxpayers to submit returns online.

Amid a debate over the efficacy of the system, the tax administrator, on July 16, formed a seven-member panel, headed by Murshed, to prepare an action plan to complete the system to facilitate online filing.

At a meeting on 22 July, NBR Chairman Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem, who took over on 6 January, asked officials to identify the shortcomings so that the system could be made functional.

The NBR is also considering signing a two-year contract with FPT for maintenance and operation of BITAX and introduce new programmes, Murshed said.

"If we give the contract to a new firm, a lot of time will be lost for them to begin with and cause a delay. Already we have started working with FPT and it has some samples of the home page."

Steps would be taken to enhance the skills of IT staff so that NBR can take control of the project, he said.

"We could not look after the whole system as soon as the project ended. That is why they have been with us. We will take the control once our skilled manpower is ready," he said.

A final decision over the extension of the contract with FPT is likely to come early next month.



Mokbulla Huda Choudhury, sales director for retail at Singer Bangladesh, exchanges signed documents of a deal with Brigadier General Kazi Shameem Farhad, principal of Dhaka Residential Model College, in presence of Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, at a programme recently. Students and teachers of the educational institution can now purchase Dell computers at a special price with an easy payment facility from Singer.

EU countries must urgently diversify 5G suppliers: European Commission

REUTERS, Brussels

EU countries must take urgent action to diversify their 5G suppliers, the European Commission said on Friday, a move set to shrink Huawei's presence in Europe as the United States pressured the bloc to follow Britain and ban the Chinese company from 5G networks.

In November last year, the European Union agreed to take a tough line on 5G suppliers to reduce cybersecurity risks to next-generation mobile networks, seen as key to boosting economic growth and competitiveness.

The strategy included reducing countries' and telecoms operators' dependency on one supplier. World No. 1 telecoms equipment maker Huawei competes with Finland's Nokia and Sweden's Ericsson. While some progress has been made, a lot of work needs to be done, the Commission said.

"Progress is urgently needed to mitigate the risk of dependency on high-risk suppliers, also with a view to reducing dependencies at (European) Union level," the EU executive said, reporting on the progress made by the 27 EU countries.

MTB digital fair brings all under one roof

FROM PAGE B4

Anwar Landmark provided up to 15 per cent discount on all its ongoing projects and Structural Engineers Tk 250 on every square feet.

Assure Group, UPSL and Manama also provided different discounts on their products.

Auto loan partners Toyota, Nissan, Hyundai, Ssangyong, KIA, Peugeot, Motors Garages and Renault offered discounts on different models of automobiles.

Furniture carried discounts of up to 40 per cent from Athena's, Hatil, Hatim, Isha, Navana, Nadia, Omega and Regal.

Discounts on home appliances of ACI Electronics, Bosch, Konka, Gree, Esquire, iPhone, Samsung, Singer, Sony Rangos, Transcom Digital, Walton, Vision and oikko.com reached up to 64 per cent.

MTB card holders bought cattle from Bengal Meat, Cowhaat, Daraz and PriyoShop.

Upscale boutiques had a choice: pivot or perish. Some chose the former and survived

FROM PAGE B1
"The business is a little better this Eid," she added.

Sarah Karim Couture, another upscale boutique in Gulshan, has a similar story of triumph -- thanks to the digital platform.

The brand now only sells items through digital platforms.

"We have never emphasised online before. I would only put up photos of the photoshoot on Facebook before. But now, pictures of every dress are uploaded on Facebook," said Sarah Karim, the owner and designer of the upscale boutique.

Like Shumi, she too has been able to cover the salaries and rent and also turn in a small profit.

"I am happy with the sales given the bad times we are in."

To tide her through these challenging times, she is conceding her profit margins: she has trimmed down her price tag and cut back on the production of heavy and expensive dresses.

One of the silver linings of the pandemic, Karim says, is that it has made the well-heeled shoppers go local.

"Those who used to go to Kolkata for shopping are not able to go there now. They are now coming to us and asking us to make clothes for them. As a result, the clientele base is broadening," she added.

But not every clothing business is as lucky as Azaaraz and Sarah Karim Couture.

The Daily Star talked to several upscale boutiques and many of them said their sales have nosedived since the pandemic began.

"Business is very bad. Our clients are usually from the upper class and they are not at all interested in leaving their homes," said a top official of Libasse Fashion Creations requesting to be anonymous.

During Eid-ul-Fitr, the biggest selling season, the boutique, located in Gulshan, had opened its doors to customers. But it did not send the cash registers ringing.

"Although I did not lay off any of our employees, we kept 5 of our 18 employees in the shop to help customers. But buyers did not show up to expectations," she added. The brand went online but found almost no response.

"We have even called up our clients by phone. But they are just not in the mood to splurge," she added.



Md Maksudur Rahman, senior executive vice president and head of Jashore zone of Islami Bank Bangladesh, opens the bank's Sheikhpura Bazar sub-branch under Jhenidah branch at Sheikhpura, which is close to Islamic University, Kushtia.



Shahjalal Islami Bank's Managing Director and CEO M Shahidul Islam presides over the Half-Yearly Business Conference-2020 of the bank through a digital platform yesterday. Chairman Md Sanullah Shahid also joined the event.

To tighten purse strings, software maker moves office to rural backwater

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Most companies have been put in harm's way because of the ongoing pandemic, but a local software and mobile application developer stands to benefit from the new normal.

Advanced Apps Bangladesh Ltd (AAPBD) had a plan to relocate their back office to a remote haor area in distant future but due to the Covid-19 they are fast-tracking the project.

"We had a plan to shift the office to our village in Sunamganj, which is 185 kilometres northeast of Dhaka, and the pandemic has compelled us to move fast," said Md Shafiqul Alam Biplob, chief executive officer of AAPBD.

The company mostly makes mobile applications for four countries -- the USA, the UK, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia -- and so far



contacted Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar, who also hails from the same region.

The minister asked state-owned Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Ltd to help Biplob. However, the entrepreneur had to buy a huge three-and-a-half-kilometre-long fibre cable and take the responsibility to maintain it.

Staving off all the headwinds, the AAPBD started functioning from the backwater office recently after the telecom minister inaugurated a 50 Mbps-strong internet connection in Dharmapasha.

Securing a stable electricity connection was also a challenge for the company as four to five hours of load-shedding is a commonplace in the area.

So, the company arranged solar power and generators also, Biplob said, pointing to the intention of developing their office as a private hi-tech park.

"I thought it would be tough to convince our developers but surprisingly almost all of them were willing to go there to live in a remote place," said Biplob, who won the BASIS Outsourcing Award in 2013 and Startup Award in 2015.

AAPBD also manages rented houses for their developers in their village and is now planning to build their own dormitory.

The AAPBD has already shifted half of its 50 employees there and hopes it will complete relocating the entire office by December. Only the marketing team will remain in Dhaka.

Biplob said they are now working with banking software and developing wallets for two state-owned banks and toll collection software for bridges.

For the last few years, the AAPBD team has been faring well although the company's performance was not up to the mark last year when it was able to generate \$300,000 in overseas earnings.

Recently, the AAPBD got some new work orders from its US buyers, he added.

The company was incepted in Mymensingh in 2009 but due to poor internet quality in the district town, its office was later moved to Dhaka.



Md Shafiqul Alam Biplob

developed about 400 applications.

"All the industry leaders and policymakers speak about decentralisation but none moves out from the city," he said.

The software company has been operating in Mirpur DOHS in the capital for the last few years. However, it bought a one-acre land in a village named Ahmedpur of Dharmapasha



In a bid to bring down costs amid the pandemic fallout, Advanced Apps Bangladesh Ltd is shifting its office to this village named Ahmedpur in the haor areas of Sunamganj district, about 185 kilometres northeast of Dhaka.

COLLECTED

in Sunamganj district to take its whole back office there.

Though the village is situated in Sunamganj district, all of their regular communication is done through Netrokona.

Biplob has a family-run agro business—

Advanced Agro Farm Bangladesh—in the village and in a sudden decision he is relocating his office there.

"Our workload has increased in the Covid-19 time. But it was very tough for us to work together as our developers live in different

places," he added. "Cost is also a factor."

Biplob faced several gigantic challenges in making the plan work: he had to convince his colleagues and lay a long fibre cable for internet.

To get internet connection, Biplob

LDC graduation assessment could be delayed

Bangladesh may continue to enjoy duty-free benefits longer than expected, says an expert

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh may continue to receive duty-free benefits on exports to developed and developing countries for longer than expected as the United Nations Centre for Development Policy (UN CDP) could delay the country's assessment for graduation from a least developed country (LDC) by three to five years.

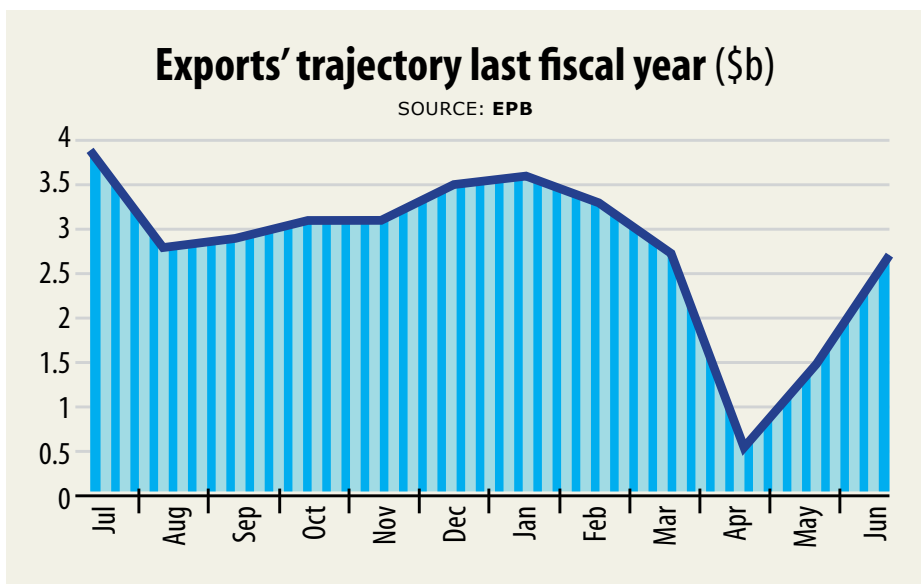
The UN CDP was scheduled to evaluate certain LCDs, including Bangladesh, for promotion to the developing country category in 2021.

"However, the assessment could now be delayed by three to five years in consideration of the global economic losses caused by the ongoing coronavirus fallout," Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said yesterday.

The assessment could now be carried out in 2024, however, if this is not feasible for any reason, then the UN CDP may consider alternative measures, some of which have already been proposed by LDCs in light of Covid-19, he added.

One such alternative is that the UN CDP will conduct assessments in 2021 as initially planned and allow qualifying countries to complete their graduation as scheduled.

The key difference though is that



developing and developed countries will be asked to continue to provide zero-duty benefits for the newly graduated countries for an additional five years, Rahman said.

"The UN CDP is considering both options," he added.

On the other hand, Rahman urged local suppliers to brace for the 12 per cent export duty they will face when shipping goods

to the EU once the country completes its graduation.

Already, Vietnam has signed a free trade agreement (FTA) with the EU, Bangladesh's main export destination.

If Vietnam enjoys such benefits while Bangladesh pays a 12 per cent duty for goods bound for the EU, then the country's competitiveness will fall significantly, said Rahman.

Therefore, Bangladesh needs to sign a number of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) with certain countries and regions for preferential trade benefits since FTAs alone do not cover all incentives.

For example, FTAs only cover tax privileges while the CEPA covers all duty, investment and domestic market-related benefits.

The CPD economist also suggested that Bangladesh further penetrate the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean) markets in a bid to boost the country's exports, adding that exporters should search for new business opportunities in India, China, Japan and other major Asian economies.

Reducing lead time is also a very important task for businesses in Bangladesh as export earnings have been on the decline since even before the Covid-19 outbreak, Rahman said.

This is a concerning fact and it needs to be known why exports witnessed a downward trend between the July-March period of the previous fiscal year.

Besides, certain products like jute goods, footwear and pharmaceuticals performed well in fiscal 2019-20.

READ MORE ON B2

MTB digital fair brings all under one roof

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

As businesses increasingly go online to meet customers' demand for home deliveries of all types of products due to the coronavirus outbreak, a recent five-day digital fair said to have brought them all together.

Concluding on July 20, MTB Digital Lifestyle Fair 2020 is said to have offered the best combinations of products and services from home loans, appliances, furniture and automobiles to cattle and real estate.



"As people still have a huge demand for buying things, the fair aimed to promote e-commerce which is safe during this pandemic," said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and CEO of Mutual Trust Bank (MTB).

"Such fairs help make a habit of cashless transaction, which would eventually build a cashless society," he said.

Customers also benefitted from the fair getting discounts from the bank and its partner companies on availing products, Rahman said.

From among the partners, ABC Real Estate offered flats with a 10 per cent down payment.

MTB customers who bought flats from building technology & ideas (bti) got complimentary furnished kitchens.

READ MORE ON B3

A 'youth cell' under PMO is in order

Minister says as experts discuss measures for youth development

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A youth cell should be formed under the Prime Minister's Office to effectively implement the action plan for youth development and reap the benefits of demographic dividends, Planning Minister MA Mannan said yesterday.

The youth development programme will bring better outcome through coordination and cooperation among different ministries and divisions, he said while addressing a virtual discussion on "Youth budget framework: an appraisal".

The discussion was jointly organised by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) and ActionAid Bangladesh.

Some officials are preparing faulty development project proposals (DPPs), which get detected later, the minister said. So, a cell should be established to strongly monitor the preparation of the DPPs.

Mannan said the country has improved significantly since 1990 to 2020.

"Now we are giving efforts on becoming a developed nation," he added.

Nahim Razaqa, a lawmaker and convener of



RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Form a youth cell under the Prime Minister's Office
- » Invest in youths to cash in on demographic dividend
- » Address the wide array of challenges thwarting youth development
- » Build up institutional efficiency for utilisation of youth budget and planning
- » Integrate youth budget framework in national budget

Young Bangla of the National Youth Platform, suggested forming a youth development cell for effective implementation of action plans for youth development.

He urged the organisers of the discussion to spread the outcome of the event to create awareness among all stakeholders.

Sometimes the budgetary allocation cannot be used properly due to a lack of efficiency.

"There is a scope to work jointly with the private sector under public private partnership," he said.

Education should be driven by technology and based on the market, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"It would not be possible to provide jobs to all. So, ensuring effective training for the youth along with providing necessary funds for start-ups are a must."

Since 2010, the ministry has been receiving Tk 30,000 crore on average every year, which are used for youth development, said Md Belayet Hossain Talukdar, additional secretary of the secondary and higher education division.

READ MORE ON B2