

# Nvidia nears deal to buy chip designer Arm for more than \$40b

REUTERS  
Nvidia Corp is close to a deal to buy British chip designer Arm Holdings from SoftBank Group Corp for more than \$40 billion (£31.26 billion) in a deal which would create a giant in the chip industry, according to two people familiar with the matter.

A cash and stock deal for Arm could be announced as early as next week, the sources said.

Nvidia is known for its graphics chips that power video games, but it has developed other markets including artificial intelligence, self-driving cars and data centers.

Arm supplies the chip technology for virtually all mobile devices such as phones and tablets but is also expanding into processors for cars, datacenter services and other devices.

The British company does not make chips. Instead it licenses out the underlying technology so others can make chips with it. It has previously collaborated with Nvidia.

Last year Nvidia said it would make its chips work with processors from Arm to build supercomputers, deepening its push into systems that are used for

modeling both climate change predictions and nuclear weapons.

SoftBank acquired Arm for \$32 billion in 2016, its largest-ever purchase, in part to expand into the internet-of-things technology, which connects everyday devices from traffic signals to refrigerators to the internet.

The terms would mark a big win for the Japanese company which has struggled to jump-start growth in the business, according to the Wall Street Journal, which reported on the deal earlier.

Nvidia declined to comment. SoftBank and Arm did not respond to Reuters' requests for comments.



REUTERS  
**A man wearing a protective face mask demonstrates the facial recognition and elevator navigation systems, at the entrance hall of SoftBank's new headquarters building, in Tokyo, Japan on September 9.**

# South African economy to shrink by more than govt's 7pc forecast

REUTERS, Johannesburg  
South Africa's economy will likely contract this year by more than the 7 per cent previously forecast by the Treasury, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni said in an opinion piece published on Sunday.

Gross domestic product shrunk by a record 51 per cent in the second quarter, its fourth quarterly contraction in a row, as a strict lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus saw activity grind to a near-standstill.

"The contraction in growth is larger than anticipated by the National Treasury and the SA Reserve Bank, which raises the risk that the actual GDP outcome for this year could be lower than previously thought by both policymakers and the broader market," Mboweni wrote in the piece published in the City Press weekly newspaper.

In July the Reserve Bank cut its 2020 forecast for GDP to a 7.3 per cent contraction. In its emergency budget in June, the Treasury pencilled in a 7 per cent decline, but some analysts see a double-digit contraction.

In his article Mboweni, brought back to cabinet by President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018 after more than a decade in the private sector, said his office would speed up reforms, by easing regulatory hurdles and allowing more private investment in the public sector, especially in electricity. State utility Eskom, which provides around 90 per cent of the country's power, has struggled for years to meet demand, unleashing nationwide blackouts to keep the grid from collapsing.

With debt of around 500 billion rand (\$30 billion) and heavily reliant on bailouts from government, Eskom has regularly been cited as the main threat to the economy and fiscal stability.

The government has long been criticised for its slowness in dealing with Eskom. In the article, Mboweni said the government would move with greater speed via "Operation Vulindlela" (open the way), a joint initiative between the Treasury and the presidency announced in his budget speech in June and aimed at accelerating structural reform.

# With travel limited, plane cafes take off in Thailand

REUTERS  
With millions around the world stuck at home due to the pandemic, "plane cafes" in Thailand are offering customers the chance to pretend they are in the sky -- and the idea seems to have taken off.

On board a retired commercial airplane in the coastal city of Pattaya, coffee drinkers make themselves comfy on first-class-style seats and pose for photos by the overhead lockers.

Boarding passes in hand, some "passengers" even opt for a tour of the cockpit.

"With this cafe I can sit in first class and also mess around in the cockpit pretending to be the captain of the plane," 26-year-old Thipsuda Faksaitong told AFP.

"It's a lot of fun. Chalisa Chuenranoi, 25, said her visit was as good as any trip she had taken before the pandemic, which shuttered Thailand's borders in March. "Sitting right here in the first-class section... really gives me the feeling of actually being on a plane, cruising through the air," she said.

In another cafe at the headquarters of national carrier Thai Airways in Bangkok, hungry diners appear even to have missed plane food as they gobble up spaghetti carbonara and Thai-style beef served on plastic trays by cabin crew.

But for Intrawut Simapichet, 38, who came to the cafe with his wife and baby, the experience is about more than a meal.

"Normally I'm a person who travels very often, and when we are forced to stay at home... it's kind of depressing," he said as fellow passengers posed with luggage by a fake airplane door.

"(The cafe) relieves what's missing. Thailand was the first country outside China to detect a coronavirus case, but it has since registered a low toll, with about 3,400 infections and 58 deaths.

Travel restrictions have nevertheless eviscerated the tourism-reliant economy, while Thais have founded themselves stuck due to quarantine requirements in other countries. The government is currently mulling travel bubbles with select countries that also have low tolls.



AFP  
**A Thai Airways flight attendant wearing a face shield serves drinks at a pop-up air-plane-themed restaurant at the airline's headquarters in Bangkok recently.**

# Country needs to import six lakh tonnes of onion

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The BTTC said it analysed production, imports and demand for onion for the year.

Teams of the agency also visited main onion producing districts in the north, west and central regions and collected production and stock data for the current year.

The BTTC said six districts -- Pabna, Faridpur, Rajbari, Rajshahi, Kushtia and Manikganj -- account for 80 per cent of the annual production of the bulb.

Farmers bagged 25.5 lakh tonnes of onion in the last harvesting season of March-April, 2020 and the marketable supply stands at just over 19 lakh tonnes as post-harvest and storage losses take away as much as 25 per cent of the production.

The report said locally grown onion meets 65-70 per cent of the yearly requirement of nearly 25 lakh tonnes. The rest is imported.

This year, onion import dropped 35 per cent year-on-year to 4.36 lakh tonnes in the January-August period from 6.75 lakh tonnes, said the BTTC report.

"It appears that a higher amount of locally grown bulbs was consumed this year as imports declined," said the commission.

And now, the country has 5.25 lakh tonnes of locally produced onions. As the main harvest of the vegetable is six months away, the BTTC said a total of 11 lakh tonnes of onion were needed to meet consumption requirement for the rest of the year.

And more than half of the required quantity should be imported, it observed.

As India grapples with soaring prices, the BTTC said Myanmar, Afghanistan, Egypt, Turkey, China, Malaysia, Pakistan and the Netherlands could be alternative sources for import.

A commerce ministry official, seeking to remain unnamed, said the TCB already started selling onion in the open market at a price below the market rates. "It has also floated a tender initiative to import onion," he said.

# Boeing executives defend safety decisions on 737 MAX development

REUTERS, Washington/Chicago  
Two senior Boeing Co executives who oversaw the development of the 737 MAX defended the company's decisions on a key cockpit system later tied to two fatal crashes, according to testimony before congressional investigators seen by Reuters.

Michael Teal, then 737 MAX chief product engineer, and Keith Leverkuhn, who was vice president and general manager of the 737 MAX program, were questioned separately by investigators for the US House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in May.

"I don't consider the development of the airplane to be a failure," Leverkuhn told investigators for the House panel that is to release a final report next week on its investigation into the development of the plane, grounded since March 2019 after two crashes killed 346 people.

Leverkuhn defended the decision to tie a new safety system on the MAX, called MCAS, to a single sensor that has been

implicated in both fatal crashes. Boeing has since agreed to use data from two separate sensors when the plane returns to service, which could come as early as this year.

"I think based upon our understanding and our assumptions of flight crew actions, that it wasn't a mistake," Leverkuhn said.

Later in his testimony, Leverkuhn added, "Clearly what was in error was our assumptions regarding the human machine interaction. Because the process relied on the industry standard of pilot reaction to a particular failure. And what was clear post accidents was that assumption was incorrect."

Congressional investigators also questioned testimony that Boeing had never conducted an internal financial analysis to determine the impact of whether the Federal Aviation Administration would require more expensive simulator training.

Teal said that if the 737 MAX design warranted simulator training, Boeing would have created it, while acknowledging that customers may have been disappointed.

"Would airlines have been pleased with that, of course they would not have," he said, noting that Boeing had signaled all along that simulator training would not be necessary.

Last year, Boeing confirmed it had agreed to pay Southwest Airlines Co a \$1 million per MAX rebate if the training were required.

In January, Boeing reversed course and said it would recommend simulator training for all pilots before the MAX returns to service.

Teal, now the 777X chief project engineer, said the planemaker has since revised some pilot assumptions in the aftermath of the 737 MAX crashes. "It's a learning that we are now putting forth on the new aircraft," he said.

Boeing did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Wall Street Journal, which reported on the transcripts earlier, said Leverkuhn retired earlier this year as he had long planned, citing a Boeing spokesman.

# An agonising wait for Rupali Bank's officer post hopefuls

FROM PAGE B1  
"Even the BSC said that it would be done after Eid. One and a half months have passed since Eid," he said.

An applicant who secured a bachelor's degree from a college under the National University said the authorities do not seem to understand how important a job is for an applicant.

He said all the job circulars issued in 2016 and 2017 published their final results.

"Even after Rupali Bank's circular for officer posts, many tests have taken place and the hiring has been completed. Many have joined their workplaces."

According to the applicants, the results of the recruitment for the post of officers at Probashi Kallyan Bank and the senior officer of Rupali Bank have been published.

When contacted, Arif Hossain Khan, a general manager of the Bangladesh Bank and the member secretary of the BSC, said the test could not be held in the first three years due to lawsuits.

The test took place at the end of last year and the viva was over in February. "But due to the lockdowns and the coronavirus pandemic, it was delayed," Khan said.

He said the result of the senior officer post of Rupali Bank was published earlier because had the results of the officer positions been made public, the candidates selected for both posts would go for the superior posts.

"We will ask the candidates to have patience. The results will be published within this month."

The writer is a freelance journalist.

# Current crisis is an opportunity for apparel industry: experts

FROM PAGE B4  
"Responsible and sustainable supply chains are becoming increasingly important as consumers' choices are coupled with both innovations and disclosure."

"The Serai platform aims to be an effective conduit for industry players to form an open source platform with a shared approach."

"This will ultimately enable the apparel industry to reduce duplication and costs, re-build trusting relationships and make faster and better trade decisions," he added.

The industry can only retain or better its position by restructuring its capabilities, responding to the needs of lean manufacturing, reducing lead time and increasing online engagement, according to BGMEA president Huq.

"Effective business to business interactions are one of the most effective ways to go ahead," she added.

Serai CEO Ramchandran said it is clear that the future of international trade lies in increased digitisation and the efficiency gains that all participants can draw from.

"That's why we're building Serai -- a data powered platform to help businesses build trusted relationships and grow their business," he said.

Serai is a platform that brings buyers and suppliers together to build trusted relationships, with an initial focus on the garment industry.

The platform allows industry participants to share relevant data with their partners in a highly secure manner and access a range of digital solutions.

# IPDC targets housing sector to broaden customer base

FROM PAGE B4  
The leading NBFI can provide loan of over Tk 2 crore, which is helpful for high-end apartment developers, said Arifur Rahman Shazal, chief executive officer of Assure Group.

Banks can only provide up to Tk 2 crore due to the ceiling limit imposed by Bangladesh Bank.

"We construct apartments for commercial use, making the prices higher than that of normal apartments," Shazal said. This means that government officials cannot purchase the company's apartments as they have to take loans from state-run banks with 5 per cent interest rate.

Besides, they also have to provide the registration cost in advance to avail such a loan.

But on the other hand, NBFIs do not need registration fees in advance to disburse funding.

If the government withdraws this condition, then the real-estate sector would be benefited and the government officials would be able to purchase flats from renowned developers, Shazal added.

# DHL stays open throughout pandemic keeping Bangladesh connected

FROM PAGE B4  
There is a process of immediate clearance carried out in line with the guidelines of the World Customs Organisation.

The company's airport team categorises all shipments using its own systems before they land at the airport based on the category definition set by local customs. Nobody would touch the goods that would go through the green channel because information about them has already been transferred to the customs system with a very limited random exception.

Most of the shipments in the air express services are mostly low-value shipments.

Vietnam's airport allowed consolidated clearance. This means, for example, 1,000 shipments would be inserted into the customs system under a single bill of entry, instead of submitting 1,000 sets of documents for the 1,000 shipments.

"This saves a lot of time," Haque said.

In Bangladesh, there is no data integration.

Haque regularly meets the top officials of major sourcing companies.

He said Bangladesh has to import fabrics and accessories mostly. By the time, suppliers develop the samples by bringing in fabrics and accessories from outside of the country, the bidding process closes.

Because of this, Bangladesh loses business opportunities worth \$1 billion per year to Vietnam and Cambodia, two top buyers told Haque.

In Vietnam, 90 per cent of the air express shipments are cleared immediately through green channels under a rule called De minimis clearance, known as immediate clearance. In Bangladesh, although such provisions are allowed as per the customs laws of the country it is yet to have an effective process that meets the requirements of businesses.

"It's great that Bangladesh has made a few significant revisions in the last couple

of years about De minimis law like revising value threshold from Tk 1,000 to Tk 2,000 and defined the value as intrinsic."

In Bangladesh, around 80 per cent of the air express shipments would have an invoice value of less than Tk 2,000, or about \$23.

The ideal practice should be: If there are thousands of shipments with an invoice value of less than Tk 2,000, then all of them would be condensed into a single bill of entry and cleared through simplified manifested information.

In September last year, the National Board of Revenue published a statutory regulatory order, putting De minimis rule into practice. But there has been a very limited clearance using it as of now due to lack of effective process on the ground, he said.

In Vietnam, all shipments under invoice value of less than \$45 would be cleared immediately under De minimis clearance.

There are also challenges in the outbound flow of shipments.

One of them is the European Union has put Bangladesh on the list of high-risk countries in terms of operating cargo services destined to or transiting through EU countries since 2016, labelling it a "Red Country" as its security standards don't meet those of the economic bloc. Vietnam has no such problem.

The labelling means Bangladesh can't send any shipment to the EU directly. Rather, businesses have to require re-screening of their goods at a third airport in a green country en route to an EU country.

As a result, buyers face delays when it comes to time and cost.

"Ultimately, buyers would take the obstacles into consideration while reviewing competitiveness before placing orders with Bangladeshi suppliers."

A time-bound action plan has to be prepared to move out of the red labelling,

Haque said.

Bangladesh has put in place an automated explosive detection system at the Dhaka airport. "Now we need to ensure that the system is run efficiently, with the required capacity, with adequately trained resource and operated uninterrupted."

The processing centre of DHL Express Bangladesh has all security machines including automated explosive detection system (EDS) and maintains the required security standards thus RA3 (Regulatory Agent 3rd Country) certified by the EU nominated auditors.

However, despite having the certified standards, DHL Express Bangladesh is not able to transfer the benefits to the business community for not having the scope for air site operation at the airport.

He said because of the slow pace of improvement in competitiveness, Bangladesh would lose its attractiveness.

"Buyers explore competitive and efficient sourcing origins all the time. So, Bangladesh would remain very vulnerable."

He said Bangladesh has introduced authorized economic operators (AEO) for exports. Now, the country needs to explore how it can encourage and extend this to different operators offering the intended benefits and especially for imports where the biggest challenges lie.

He said Bangladesh's success would depend on how quickly it can enforce rules and regulations in the highest simplified form. Simplification of processes is also important to attract foreign direct investment.

"Implementation would be such that meets the requirements of businesses so that it can facilitate trade and can improve the country's competitiveness."

Bangladesh should see how it can release 90 per cent of the air express shipment from the airport within 3-4 hours of the

arrival of a flight, he said.

Duties and taxes collected on air express shipment are likely to be less than 1 per cent of all the revenues generated at all the ports, he said.

Bangladesh, for example, collects Tk 200 crore in revenues from air express shipments. If the country makes the processes even more complicated, it can earn another Tk 2 crore. But while chasing the Tk 2 crore, the country may potentially lose orders worth \$5 billion, or Tk 45,000 crore.

The country may forego Tk 100 crore because of the simplification of rules and procedures. But it would potentially fetch orders worth \$10 billion because the process is a gateway to bring in about \$40 billion worth of export orders at the moment.

"That's why it is very, very important, we consider the big picture."

Under Haque's leadership, DHL Express Bangladesh has been awarded as the "Great place to Work" three years in a row by the Great place to Work Institute, a global authority on building, sustaining and recognising high-trust, high-performing workplace cultures based in the US.

According to Haque, the company has learnt several things from the pandemic.

The pandemic gives a lesson that there is no alternative to global trade, he said.

"DHL's purpose statement is 'Connecting people, improving lives' and the pandemic situation is the best moment to live with the purpose statement."

"The third lesson is: if there are a well-thought-out plan and coordination at all levels, investment and business continuity can be maintained despite a difficult period."

DHL is continuously investing in Bangladesh because it believes in the potential of the country, Haque said. "We will continue to do that."