



Quazi Osman Ali, managing director of Social Islami Bank, opens the bank's e-account opening operation through its mobile app, SIBL NOW, at the bank's head office in Dhaka yesterday.

Beef up monitoring to improve construction standards: experts

FROM PAGE B1

Md Abu Sadeque, executive director of the Centre for Housing and Building Research, urged companies to follow the housing codes while carrying out construction work in rural areas as people often neglect such safety guidelines.

Sadeque also alleged that in many cases, developers lie about how long a finished project may last without having to be reconstructed.

Certain companies claim that their projects will last 100 years by manipulating their accounts to show the use of high-quality materials, he said.

Depending on a project's design, the construction work can be similar to the standards of the EU and the US, said F R Khan, managing director of Building Technology & Ideas (bti).

In most cases, developers do not follow a structured system, which leads to a dip in the overall construction quality.

"We cannot ignore the architectural design, electro-mechanical system for safety or the suitability and standard of construction work," Khan said, adding that maintenance is an important aspect of any project's sustainability.

SM Khorshed Alam, president of the Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry, said that around 65 to 70 per cent of a project's cost is spent on raw materials, which are now locally produced.

To ensure that standard materials are used, a new quality control lab should be set up at the field level as the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology is overloaded with

this work, he added.

Md Tarek Uddin, a professor for civil and environmental engineering at the Islamic University of Technology, urged the country's developers to follow local standards.

He stressed the need for legal frameworks on maintaining the standards of construction work. AFM Saiful Amin, a professor in the department of civil engineering at the BUET, said there is a lack of knowledge among the public on the standard of construction work in Bangladesh due to lax research.

According to Amin, Bangladesh follows US standards as there is no local building code for mega construction projects.

Tanjim Ferdous, the national consultant of the Unicef, moderated the webinar.

MetLife announces global environmental goals

STAR BUSINESS DESK

MetLife has committed to reduce its location-based greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 30 per cent from 2019 levels over the next 10 years.

It also pledged \$20 billion in new MetLife Investment Management (MIM)-managed green investments, and allocated \$5 million to develop products and partnerships that drive climate solutions.

These are just three of the company's 11 global 2030 Environmental Goals, which it announced recently, the company said in a statement.

MetLife also committed to plant 5 million trees prioritising areas vulnerable to natural disasters and to maintain carbon neutrality annually across its global offices, fleet, and business travel, and MetLife Foundation committed to

grant \$10 million for environmental causes.

In addition, MetLife pledged to mobilise 100 of its suppliers to set their own GHG emissions reduction target by 2025, according to the statement.

"These global environmental commitments reflect our purpose as a company," said Syed Hammadul Karim, general manager at MetLife Bangladesh.

"We are here to help our customers build a more confident future, and part of that has to be about using natural resources in a sustainable way and helping to address climate change."

The 11 new goals aim to reduce the environmental impact of MetLife's global operations and supply chain, while leveraging its investments, products, and services to help protect communities and drive innovative solutions.

Feeder operators oppose provision of flag vessel law

FROM PAGE B4

In June, two national flag container vessels -- the MV Sahare and MV Sarera -- began transporting goods from Chattogram port to Singapore and Malaysia.

Currently, over 80 feeder vessels are engaged in transporting containerised cargo between Chattogram port and four transshipment ports -- Colombo, Singapore, Port Klang and Tanjung Pelepas -- as well as directly with some Chinese ports.

The BSAA chairman also said that the two national flagged container vessels carry a small portion of the containerised

cargo.

Mentioning that foreign vessels would face uneven competition if such a provision is made effective, he argued that the time period should be shortened from 15 days to five.

When contacted, MMD Principal Officer Captain Giashuddin Ahmed admitted that applying 15 days ahead of loading is not feasible.

However, he added that everyone should comply with the directive as the concerned authorities have yet to make any changes to the provision.

Teach children H for hand washing: Unilever webinar

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Experts suggested teaching the English letter "H" to children by describing it with the words "Hand Washing" and doing the same with Bangla alphabets in the curriculum to get strengthen the habit among children during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Washing hands in Bangla is pronounced as "Haat Dhua", starting with the Bangla letter "Ho".

The advice was given in a webinar titled "H for Handwashing - A Protected Hand Means a Protected Nation", organised by Unilever Bangladesh yesterday, says a press release.

"A campaign can attain momentum when relevant and Covid-19 has come up with such an opportunity," said

Education Minister Dipu Moni.

"Covid-19 has raised the importance of wearing masks and not touching the nose and mouth with unwashed hands and to wash hands properly," she said.

"We have to ensure that necessary hand washing facilities are present in educational institutions at all levels," said the education minister.

About the inclusion of the issue of hand washing in the education system, she said the subject of cleanliness, including hand wash, was already in the curriculum.

"Bangladesh's progress in overall economic development, including ensuring gender equality and sustainable development, is commendable," said Kedar Lele, chairman and managing director of

Unilever Bangladesh.

"Unilever believes that whatever is good for the country is also good for Unilever. With this belief, Lifebuoy has been running handwashing education and awareness campaigns in Bangladesh for more than a decade," he said.

Shyamal Dutta, editor of The Daily Bhorer Kagoj, moderated the webinar.

Reefat Bin Sattar, director for programme development and quality at Save the Children Bangladesh; Asif Saleh, executive director at Brac; Dara Johnston, chief for the water, sanitation and hygiene section at UNICEF Bangladesh; Orla Murphy, country director at Plan International Bangladesh, and Hasin Jahan, country director at WaterAid Bangladesh, also took part in the discussion.



BANK ASIA

Zakiul Islam, managing director of Northern Electricity Supply Company; ABM Imtiaz Ahmed, deputy manager, and Ahsan-Ul-Alam, senior vice president for agent banking division at Bank Asia, attend a deal signing ceremony at the former's head office recently for collection of utility bills through the bank's agent outlets, micro merchant points and smart app.



JAMUNA BANK

Nur Mohammed, chairman of Jamuna Bank Foundation; Mirza Elias Uddin Ahmed, managing director of Jamuna Bank, and Md Abdus Salam, deputy managing director, open the bank's Sattrasta sub-branch under its Ring Road branch in the capital.

Retrenched workers yet to get govt allowance in absence of beneficiary list

FROM PAGE B1

Still though, factories can submit a list in a structured Management Information System format to the BGMEA, which can then be forwarded to the labour ministry and Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment (DIFE).

"We are also asking all BGMEA members to update their list of workers currently working in each factory," she added.

Meanwhile, LFMEAB President Saiful Islam said his association is preparing a list of retrenched workers in the leather sector.

"We will send the list to the ministry concerned as soon as we receive a letter from the Department of Labour in this regard," he said.

Nazma Akter, president of the Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, a platform for workers' rights in the garment sector, said although the EU and German government committed to this fund far earlier, the money is yet to be disbursed due to bureaucratic red-tape.

"Many workers lost their jobs in April, May and June, however, most of them have already been re-employed

by the factories because of a rebound in incoming work orders from international retailers and brands," said Akter.

But even though it would be difficult to make authentic lists of retrenched workers in these sectors, the initiative is good for the workers as they will get financial benefits during this time of hardship.

"Maintaining full transparency is very important so that any authentic retrenched worker is not deprived of the financial benefit," Akter told The Daily Star over phone.

The government will make disbursements from its own fund, grants from the EU and from the German government for fiscals 2020-21 and 2021-22, it added.

The government might extend this service for social safety net purposes beyond this time limit if it is noticed that the workers could not return to their jobs and on the basis of the availability of funds from the government exchequer and from donor agencies.

So, the government also called for increased donations to the fund from the donor agencies.

Many workers lost their jobs because of the two-month nationwide shutdown in March-May or were laid-off for a lack of work orders from international retailers and brands due to the Covid-19 fallout, which has severely jolted the global economy.

Millions of workers at corporate, mills and factories lost their jobs because of the pandemic and neither the country's workers, exports, imports nor corporations were immune to the economic fallout.

As a result, a good number of workers lost their jobs. Of those recently unemployed, some may get jobs in another factory but not at substantial rates, according to industry insiders.

However, many workers who could not complete a one-year tenure in their position will still be allowed to avail the fund.

Director General of the Department of Labour will lead disbursements from the fund while senior officials from the DIFE, labour and employment ministry, BGMEA, BKMEA, LFMEAB, BFLLEA and EU will act as members and provide assistance as needed, the circular said.

Bangladesh set to surpass India in per capita GDP

FROM PAGE B1

China, the world's second-largest economy, would see its per capita GDP growth rise at 3.01 per cent.

In Africa, only Malawi's per capita GDP growth would be higher than that of Bangladesh as it would expand by 5.65 per cent.

Among the Latin American and Caribbean countries, only Guyana is ahead of Bangladesh: its per capita GDP would increase by 32 per cent this year, the IMF data showed.

No other country in the world is ahead of Bangladesh when it comes to per capita GDP growth in 2020 and most of them would see a contraction because of the pandemic.

"Agriculture, exports and remittance are behind the country's strong economic growth," said Prof M Shamsul Alam, a member of General Economics Division of the planning ministry.

He said Bangladesh's rice production rose by 2 million tonnes alone last fiscal year compared to that a year ago. The country brought home its highest-ever remittance in FY20 and the flow has kept its momentum even during the pandemic.

"We have always said that the economy has been growing at a

higher pace but some civil society organisations and experts did not take our words into consideration. Now, a multilateral organisation's data is showing that we have been right," Prof Alam told The Daily Star yesterday.

India's top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been critical of the centre over the state of the economy, hit out at the government after the IMF projections.

"Solid achievement of 6 years of BJP's hate-filled cultural nationalism. Bangladesh set to overtake India," he tweeted yesterday.

Bangladesh's GDP grew 5.2 per cent last fiscal year, which was the highest among 46 countries in Asia, said the Asian Development Bank recently. India's economy declined by 9 per cent and Pakistan's economy grew by 0.4 per cent.

The ADB has forecasted that Bangladesh's economy would expand by 6.8 per cent in FY21 to post the fourth-highest growth in the region.

Three countries would be ahead of Bangladesh this fiscal year: China's economy would grow by 7.8 per cent, India's by 8 per cent and that of the Maldives by 10 per cent.

Pakistan's economy would expand by 2 per cent.

Air shipment to Europe hits a snag

FROM PAGE B1

Shipment to Europe brings nearly 40 per cent of the total export earnings from fresh vegetables, said Mohammed Monsur, general secretary of the Bangladesh Fruits Vegetables and Allied Products Exporters' Association.

He said vegetable shipment to the Middle East has continued but exports to Europe has almost got stopped because of the scanning issue at the HSIA in Dhaka.

Hossain said on a normal day they export 10 to 12 tonnes of fresh vegetables to Europe.

Now, the quantity of shipment has reduced to 2 to 3 tonnes as the limited number of bomb detection dogs can not

screen all the export cargoes at the airport.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman could not be reached over the phone and text messages to comment on the issue.

Contacted, HSIA Director Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan said the scanners stopped functioning as their "bearings" needed to be changed.

"The bearings have already been brought from abroad. Tools, engineers and technician from Dubai, India and Malaysia are expected to come within the next seven days," he said.

The machines will become operational once the bearings are changed, he added.

Ahsan said problems over visa issuance for the Covid-19 pandemic

delayed the process of fixing the problem. "We have been told that by the first week of November the machines will be workable," he added.

And export cargoes can again be screened by the scanners from the second week of November, according to the CAAB official.

Ahsan said the frequency of screening by dogs has been increased to facilitate shipment of export cargoes to Europe.

However, the exporters' association General Secretary Monsur said a section of importers would inevitably switch to suppliers in other countries because of the shipment problem.

"Once they go, it becomes difficult to get them back," he said.