

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▼ 0.05%	▼ 0.03%	\$1,905.68	\$41.87	▼ 0.37%	▼ 0.70%	▲ 0.11%	▼ 0.38%	BUY TK 83.95	98.36	109.28	12.42
4,914.03	8,432.95	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	40,558.49	23,474.27	2,528.41	3,312.50	SELL TK 84.95	102.16	113.08	13.05

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Outbound remittances remain largely untraceable

Complex work permit system for foreigners to blame

REJAUH KARIM BYRON, JAGARAN CHAKMA and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Foreign nationals working legally and illegally in the local, foreign and multinational companies in Bangladesh send home billions of dollars every year, but there is no reliable data that can capture the true extent of the outbound remittance.

Officially, remittance outflow averaged only \$57 million per year in the last five years, data from the central bank showed, far lower than the assumption of the government, experts and analysts.

The official outflow of remittance was \$93 million in the last fiscal year, up from \$68 million a year ago.

Economists, business leaders and even ministers said on various occasions in the past that as much as \$5 billion is sent out of Bangladesh every year by foreign nationals working mostly in the export-oriented garment industry.

In May 2018, former finance minister AMA Muhith said, "This \$5 billion is taken mostly by Indians, Sri Lankans and nationals

from our neighbourhood."

According to a study of the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) released in February this year, an estimated \$3.1 billion is siphoned out every year by foreign nationals employed in the country.

About 1.6 lakh foreigners became gainfully employed in Bangladesh after entering the country on a tourist visa, it said.

Typically, foreigners enter Bangladesh on a three-month tourist visa and manage jobs soon afterwards given the shortage of people with strong communication and management skills, which are in high demand in the garment sector, the second-largest supplier of apparel in the world.

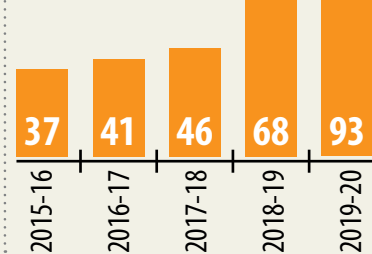
When their visa nears expiration, they go back to their home countries and return with a fresh tourist visa and continue in their previous jobs, the TIB alleged.

"The central bank data is unrealistic and unbelievable," said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of the TIB, on Tuesday.



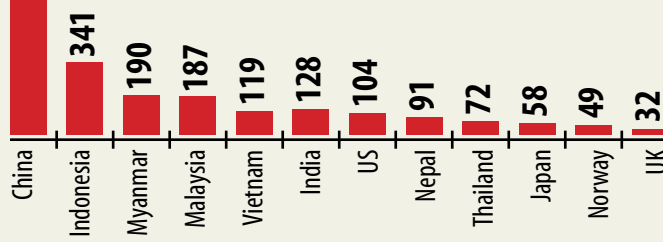
OUTFLOW FIGURES FROM BB

In million \$



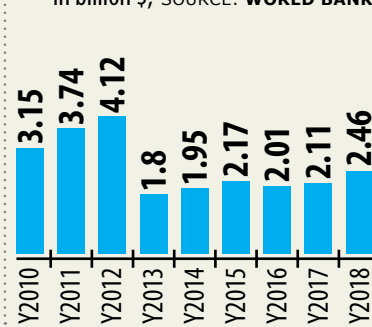
ESTIMATED REMITTANCE OUTFLOW TO VARIOUS COUNTRIES FROM BANGLADESH

In 2018; In million \$



ESTIMATED OUTFLOW FROM BANGLADESH

In billion \$; SOURCE: WORLD BANK



The World Bank's Bilateral Remittance Matrix gave some idea on how much money goes out of the country in the form of remittance. The multilateral lender estimated that \$2.46 billion went out of the country in 2018, the latest year for which data is available.

The figure is the highest in six

years and up 17 per cent from \$2.11 billion in 2017. In 2012, \$4.12 billion was remitted from Bangladesh, WB data showed.

In 2018, China received the highest \$1.03 billion in remittance from Bangladesh, according to the WB estimate, which arrived at the figure taking into account migrant stocks, host country incomes, and

origin country incomes.

Indonesia is estimated to have received \$341 million from Bangladesh, Myanmar \$190 million, Malaysia \$187 million, India \$128 million, Vietnam \$119 million, the United States \$104 million, Nepal \$91 million, and Thailand \$72 million.

READ MORE ON B3

Mr Baker's bank accounts frozen for alleged VAT evasion

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The VAT Intelligence has frozen the bank accounts of Mr Baker Cake & Pastry Shop on the allegation of evading value-added tax, said a top official yesterday.

The field office of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) also asked the banks to furnish account details of the baker to assess actual transactions.

"We have got two bank accounts of the firm and asked banks to freeze transactions temporarily. We will unfreeze the accounts if the company submits actual sales details to us," VAT Intelligence Director-General Moinul Khan said over the phone.

"We have taken the step to stop the company from shifting funds from the accounts."

Khan said his office had found evidence of VAT evasion by Mr Baker.

"We would be able to come to a figure on the evasion after scrutinising transactions and other documents of the pastry maker."

The move comes after a former bureaucrat in a post on his Facebook account brought allegations against a branch of Mr Baker in Dhaka's Uttara about non-issuance of VAT chalang.

He requested NBR Chairman Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem to take steps, citing that the government was deprived of value-added tax although it was paid by consumers.

Later, Muneem directed the VAT Audit, Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (VAIID) to probe the allegation, according to a press release.



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DISPLAY CENTRE
dbi CERAMICS
Nasir Trade Centre (2nd Floor)
89 Bir Uttam C.R. Dutta Road (Sonargaon Road)
Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh
Hotline: 01713 656565

Edible oil prices cut by Tk 2 a litre

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Edible oil processors yesterday agreed to cut the prices of loose soybean and palm oil by Tk 2 per litre at mill gates to give some relief to consumers amid the rising prices of essential items.

The new mill gate rate of soybean oil would be Tk 90 per litre and palm oil Tk 80 a litre.

"Edible oil processors announced to cut the prices considering the current situation," said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi after a meeting with edible oil importers and processors at his office.

The new rate will be effective immediately.

The decision comes at a time when the soaring prices of essential commodities and vegetables are straining the wallets of consumers, especially the fixed and low-income groups and the poor.

From staple food rice, popular vegetable potato to key spice onion, the prices of most of the essential food items are now higher than a month ago.

Very few vegetable items are selling at below Tk 50 a kg in the kitchen markets in Dhaka.

The price of edible oil went up in the last



one month as processors revised upwards the rates on the ground of the soaring prices in the international market.

Yesterday, the retail price of each litre loose soybean oil was Tk 92-97, up 4.4 per cent from Tk 88-93 a month ago, market prices data compiled by state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) showed.

Traders hiked the prices of palm oil by 7 per cent to Tk 82-84 a litre. Bottled

or packaged soybean oil, consumed by relatively higher income groups, edged up slightly, according to the TCB.

The retail price of loose edible oil should go down by Tk 2 a litre in line with the cut in the mill gate rate, said Biswajit Saha, director for corporate and regulatory affairs at City Group, the leading commodity importer and processor in Bangladesh.

He said the price of bottled edible oil

will remain unchanged.

"None would be allowed to sell bottled oil at higher than the maximum retail prices," he said, adding that the government's market monitoring team would monitor prices.

Loose or non-branded cooking oil accounts for 65 per cent of the edible oil consumption in Bangladesh.

A senior official of the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) said the price of bottled edible oil would neither increase nor decrease.

He said both loose palm oil and soybean oil are sold in kilogram at the retail level.

"We had recommended for a price reduction in terms of kilogram, not in terms of litre," he said.

Bangladesh annually requires 20 lakh tonnes of edible oil and it has to import 18 lakh tonnes as domestic production is negligible.

Imports of oilseed, crude soybean oil and palm olein rose 20 per cent year-on-year to 18.30 lakh tonnes in the fiscal year 2019-20 from 15.30 lakh tonnes a year ago, according to the BTTC.

Private importers and processors brought in 16.9 lakh tonnes in the fiscal year 2017-18.

Nilphamari farmers pinning hopes on early variety potato

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Farmers in Kishoreganj upazila are now passing busy times in cultivating highly profitable early variety potatoes, which are ready for harvest 30 per cent faster than other varieties and normally bear higher price tags.

This potato variety can be harvested in 60 days after sowing seeds, much lower than the 90 days needed by other varieties, farmers in Nilphamari district said.

The early variety remains in the market for a short time and are normally sold at Tk 70-80 a kg. And this year, farmers believe the prices will be as high as Tk 100 per kg.

"This potato variety, despite being highly priced, is very popular among buyers because of its early availability and taste," said Habibur Rahman, the upazila's agriculture officer.

Yesterday, the cardinal and red

potatoes -- two traditional varieties which can be preserved throughout the year -- were sold at the local markets at Tk 40 and Tk 50 per kg.

During visits to different potato producing villages, including Panialpukur, Durakuti, Nitai and Kalikapur, this correspondent found that farmers and labourers are sowing seeds, some are making drains in between rows for irrigation, some are hoeing the weeds while others are breaking earthen blocks with wooden tools.

Traditional potatoes are usually sown in December and harvested in March.

Normally, the early variety potato seeds are sown in September but this year, floods have delayed the process by a month.

However, farmers believe that the delay will not be able to leave an impact on yield as they are taking extra care of the fields.

"This short-duration potato variety is helping us make double profits. We can now cultivate potato twice on same land in a season," said farmer Saded Ali of Putimari village.

"At first we sow early potato in September-October and then we go for production with the traditional variety in mid-December.

"We are blessed as when we sell the early potato, farmers in other areas of the country can merely prepare land for sowing seeds," said Shamim Hossain Babu, another farmer of Durakuti village.

Farmer Yakub Ali of Kalikapur village said he sowed the early variety of potato on three bighas of land and expects to get a yield of 90 maunds.

"My total production cost will be Tk 75,000 and I believe I can sell the produce at Tk 2.20 lakh if I sell each kilogramme of potato at Tk 60," he added.

READ MORE ON B3



Women day labourers working in a potato field in Kalikapur village of Nilphamari.

STAR

Indian economy set for a near double-digit contraction this fiscal year

REUTERS, Bengaluru

The Indian economy will suffer its deepest contraction on record this fiscal year and recent government stimulus does not go far enough to significantly boost activity depressed by the coronavirus pandemic, according to economists polled by Reuters.

With over 7.6 million coronavirus infections, India is the second worst hit country in the world after the United States and the spread shows no signs of abating.

While the government has removed most restrictions imposed on businesses to slow the spread of the virus, the Reserve Bank of India issued gloomy economic forecasts earlier this month but kept interest rates unchanged citing rising inflation.

That puts the onus on the government, which last week announced another round of fiscal stimulus to boost demand by \$10 billion.

But the Oct. 13-21 poll of 55 economists showed they were more pessimistic about this fiscal year's outlook than just two months ago.

Nearly 90 per cent of economists, 34 of 39, who responded to an additional question said the latest government stimulus was not enough to boost the economy significantly.

"While the measures introduced to push consumer spending and capital expenditure are clearly innovative within the confines of fiscal prudence,



Workers stitch garments at a factory of an apparel shop in Jaipur, India on October 20.

they do little to move the needle significantly in terms of the growth outlook this (fiscal) year," said Sakshi Gupta, senior economist at HDFC Bank.

After shrinking a record 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter, the Indian economy was forecast to contract 10.4 per cent and 5.0 per cent in the third and fourth quarter, respectively and merely stabilize in the first three months of 2021.

That compares with contractions of 8.1 per cent and 1.0 per cent, respectively, and 3.0 per cent growth forecast in August.

For the current fiscal year ending March 31, Asia's third-largest economy

was predicted to shrink 9.8 per cent, more than the RBI's latest 9.5 per cent projection, and 26 of 55 economists saw a contraction of 10 per cent or more for the year.

The poll marks the seventh consecutive downgrade to this year's outlook and if confirmed, would be the weakest annual economic performance since records began six decades ago.

Although the economy was expected to grow 9.0 per cent and 5.7 per cent next fiscal year and in FY 2022-23, respectively, all but one of 36 economists with a view said it would take at least a year for Indian GDP to reach pre-COVID-19 levels.

UK borrowing exceeds forecasts

REUTERS, London

Britain's government borrowing in the first half of the financial year was more than six times higher than before the COVID pandemic, official figures showed on Wednesday, taking public debt to its highest since 1960.

Public borrowing in September alone totalled 36.101 billion pounds (\$46.90 billion), above all forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists, although August's figure was revised down by more than 5 billion pounds to 30.113 billion pounds. The increased borrowing took total public debt further above the 2 trillion pound mark to 2,060 trillion pounds or 103.5 per cent of GDP, its highest on this measure since 1960, the Office for National Statistics said.

Driven by a surge in coronavirus-related spending and a fall in tax revenue after the biggest economic hit since at least the 1920s, borrowing

from April to September totalled 208.5 billion pounds, over six times more than for the same time in 2019.

Britain's Office for Budget Responsibility predicted in August that borrowing would reach a record 372 billion pounds by the end of this financial year, equivalent to 18.9 per cent of gross domestic product, the most since World War Two.

Borrowing to date is below what the OBR pencilled in for this point in the tax year, though the ONS data does not yet include the cost of defaults on government-backed COVID loans which the OBR has factored in.

Spending risks rising again in the second half of the financial year as lockdown restrictions return to much of the United Kingdom, pressuring the government to offer extra support to closed businesses and their workers.

"The OBR's forecast for public borrowing of 372 billion still looks about

right," said Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. Ratings agency Moody's downgraded Britain's sovereign credit rating on Friday to the same level as Belgium's and the Czech Republic's, warning that Britain "effectively has no fiscal anchor".

But financial markets have shrugged off rising borrowing, and 10-year government borrowing costs of around 0.2 per cent are only slightly above an all-time low struck at the start of the pandemic. Economists polled by Reuters expect the Bank of England to launch a further 100 billion pounds of bond purchases next month, adding to the 300 billion pounds announced since March.

Britain's government had aimed to set out a three-year plan for public spending next month, but said on Wednesday this would only cover one year due to COVID uncertainty, with exceptions for schools, healthcare and some infrastructure.

কুমিল্লা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
কোটবাড়ী, কুমিল্লা

Corrigendum of e-Tender Notice

This is for information and necessary action to all concerned that the following amendments have been made to the **e-tender notice ID No. 503983**, Date: 20.10.2020 "Supply & Installation of Computer Lab Item for Faculty and Department of Comilla University".

Name	Publication in advertisement	Corrigendum or have to read
Tender/Proposal Security (Amount in BDT)	750000.00	75000.00

All other terms & conditions of the **e-Tender ID No. 503983**, Date: 20.10.2020 will remain unchanged.

Sd
Engr. S.M. Shahidul Hasan
Superintending Engineer
Comilla University
GD-1684

American Airlines posts third straight quarterly loss

REUTERS

American Airlines Group Inc reported a third straight quarterly loss on Thursday, hurt by a slump in travel globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The company said its third-quarter cash burn rate was about \$44 million per day, compared with about \$58 million a day in the second quarter.

The airline industry, hard-hit by the virus outbreak has so far failed to secure another \$25 billion bailout to help protect jobs and cover payroll costs.

The company posted a net loss of \$2.40 billion, or \$4.71 per share, in the third quarter ended Sept. 30, compared with a profit of \$425 million, or 96 cents per share, a year earlier.

On an adjusted basis, the company lost \$5.54 per share. Total operating revenue fell to \$3.17 billion from \$11.91 billion.

American Airlines ended the third quarter with \$13.6 billion in available liquidity.

China's fiscal revenues rise 4.7pc in third-quarter

REUTERS, Beijing

China's fiscal revenues grew 4.7 per cent in the third quarter from a year earlier, reversing a 7.4 per cent drop in the previous quarter, the finance ministry said on Wednesday, as the country's economic recovery picked up pace.

China's economy in the July to September quarter expanded by 4.9 per cent from a year earlier, weaker than analyst expectations but faster than the second quarter's 3.2 per cent growth.

For the first nine months of the year, fiscal revenues fell 6.4 per cent from a year earlier to 14.10 trillion yuan (\$2.12 trillion), while fiscal expenditures dropped 1.9 per cent to 17.519 trillion yuan, the ministry said.

Liu Jinyun, a finance ministry official, told a briefing that tax receipts could get a boost from China's continued economic rebound in the fourth quarter.

"The decline in accumulative fiscal revenues will gradually moderate," he said.

The government is on track to cut taxes and fees by more than 2.5 trillion yuan in 2020, including 1.88 trillion yuan in the first eight months, the ministry said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Pabna Sadar
Pabna
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.7655.000.07.001.18/580 Date: 21.10.2020

e-Tender Notice: 05/2020-2021 (LTM)

e-Tender invited in the National e-GP (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of undermentioned work:

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Package description	Last selling date and time	Closing date & time
1.	494604	Repair & Maintenance of Ataikula Union Parishad Bhaban under Pabna Sadar, Pabna.	12/11/2020 12.00am	12/11/2020 13.00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and online hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-GP tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 12.00pm date 12/11/2020. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Sd
Md. Bachchu Miah
Upazila Engineer
Pabna Sadar, Pabna
Email: ue.pabna-s@lged.gov.bd
Tel: 0731-66267

GD-1683

শেখ হাসিনার দর্শন
বাংলাদেশের উন্নয়ন

Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Division
Income Support Program for the Poorest (ISPP)-JAWTNO Project
DPHE Bhaban, Level 8
14 Shaheed Captain Mansur Ali Sarani, Kakrail, Dhaka 1000.

Memo No. ISPP/PMU-102/Internal Audit Firm (part-2)/2016/ Date: October 21, 2020

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
For Internal Audit

The Income Support Program for the Poorest (ISPP)-JAWTNO Project, the "Program" - a co-responsibility cash transfer (CCT) safety net program, implemented by the Local Government Division, that will provide income support to the poorest pregnant women/mothers and their two children up to 5 years in 444 Union Parishads in 43 Upazilas in Mymensingh and Rangpur Division, with the objectives of: (a) increasing mothers' use of child nutrition and cognitive development services, and (b) enhancing local level government capacity to deliver safety nets.

02. The Government has received a Credit from the International Development Association (the "Bank") an amount equivalent to US\$300 million, after cancellation of US\$50.00 million which stands US\$250.00 million at present, towards the cost of the Income Support Program for the Poorest, which includes a technical assistance component that will support and facilitate implementation of the CCT program for targeted beneficiaries, including enhancing local-level government capacity and monitoring and evaluation. The Government intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of this Credit for procuring services of a qualified Internal Audit Firm.

03. The Income Support Program for the Poorest (ISPP)-JAWTNO Project under The Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives now invites eligible Audit Firms to submit their Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the above contract package for providing the required services. Interested Audit Firms must provide information with documentary evidences indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, copy of its original registration, description of assignments of similar nature, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate professional qualifications and experience among staff, etc.). The EOIs received will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

- Registration of the Firm
- Age of the Firm
- Qualification and experience of professional and staffs assigned to this service.
- Experience of the Firm in similar assignments especially World Bank funded project
- Experience of the firm in other similar jobs/activities/services
- Support services of the Firm

04. The Internal Audit Firm shall support the project in the achievement of its goals by:

- An assessment of the adequacy of the project's financial management system, including internal controls. This would include aspects such as adequacy and effectiveness of accounting, financial and operational controls exercised by the project and suggestions of improvement, if any.
- Ascertain the extent of level of compliance with established policies, plans and procedures including those agreed under the legal agreement.
- Review the cash transfer systems and procedures and also monitor the reconciliations of cash transfer to beneficiary with the MIS report, BPO statements & Project Accounts;
- Review the beneficiary enrollment activities and procedures and ascertain the extent of level of compliance with ISPP establish policies, plans and procedures under legal agreement with the contracted firm.
- Review the services provided to the ISPP beneficiaries like Ante Natal Care (ANC), Growth Monitoring Promotion (GMP), Child Nutrition and Cognitive Development (CNCD) by the Community Clinics (CC), Community Facilitators (CF) under hired NGO BRAC and SPA as per contract agreement.
- Verify the procurement plans and procedures whether those are implemented in accordance with the government procurement rules and World Bank guidelines;
- Review and verify the recruitment of project staff and selection procedures with the compliance of World Bank and Government system.
- Review and verify the appointment of Consultants and selection procedures with the compliance of World Bank and Government system.
- Verifying that the funds received under the project have been used in accordance with the financing agreement, with due attention to economy, efficiency and utilized only for the purposes for which the financing was provided.
- Review whether budgeting & accounting practice meets established International/National standards.
- Verify the expenditures charged under the Project are eligible for financing, correctly classified and all necessary supporting documents, records, accounts and contracts have been kept in respect of all Project transactions/activities.
- Confirm an appropriate system of accounting and financial reporting exists, on the basis of which SOE claims/IUFRs are prepared and submitted for reimbursement.
- Examine & evaluate the adequacy of manpower for sound & effective operation of the Project.
- Justify the proper utilization of manpower appointed in the Project including National Consultant(s).
- Ascertain the reliability of integrity, controls, security and effectiveness with the system.

05. Special attention of interested Firms is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the World Bank's **Guidelines for Selection and Employment of Consultants under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits and Grants by World Bank Borrowers (January 2011)** which sets forth the World Bank's policy on Conflict of Interest (COI).

06. Internal Audit Firm may associate with other Firm in the form of a joint venture to enhance their qualifications. Firms which intend to participate in JV should submit information for each partner, which will be assessed independently regardless of capacity/experience of the other partner. In case of a joint venture all members of such association should have real and well-defined inputs to the assignment and it is preferable to limit the total number of Firms in the association to a maximum of 3 (three).

07. Firms be selected in accordance with **Fixed Budget Selection (FBS)** procedures set out in the **Guidelines for Selection and Employment of Consultants under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits and Grants by World Bank Borrowers (January 2011)**. Only shortlisted Firms will be invited to the next stage of Request for Proposal (RFP).

08. All EOIs (**one original copy and two duplicate copies**) must be submitted in a sealed envelope. Firms shall submit their EOIs by **4.00 pm on November 19, 2020** in a sealed envelope clearly marked "Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for Selection of Firm for conducting "Internal Audit" (Contract Package # SF-5) to the undersigned by hand/courier service /guaranteed express service through the post office. No EOI will be received through e-mail.

09. Any attempts to unduly persuade the procuring entity by any applicant will be ground for disqualification. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the EOIs without assigning any reason whatsoever. The EOI notice and ToR are available on the following websites: www.ispplged.gov.bd

(Shakh Md. Kabeedul Islam)
Project Director (Additional Secretary)
ID 4541 (Admn)
☎:02-55130514 (Office)
Email: pd.ispp.lgd@gmail.com

GD- 1688



Md Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, CEO of Mercantile Bank, and Md Kazim Uddin, CEO of National Life Insurance Company, exchange documents after signing a deal at the former's head office in Dhaka recently. The bank will facilitate the collection of life insurance premiums from the insurer's customers through its digital and other channels.

Coca-Cola revenue beats expectations as consumers venture out

REUTERS
Coca-Cola Co beat quarterly revenue expectations on Thursday as the world's largest soda maker benefited from the partial reopening of theaters and restaurants, which have remained shut for months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Net revenue fell 9 per cent to \$8.7 billion in the third quarter, above the analysts' average estimate of \$8.36 billion, according to IBES data from Refinitiv.



SM Abu Mohsin

Md Abul Bashar

NCC Bank gets new chair, vice chair

STAR BUSINESS DESK
SM Abu Mohsin has recently been elected chairman of NCC Bank. The bank also elected Md Abul Bashar as vice chairman, says a statement. Mohsin is the chairman of Alliance Deep Sea Fishing, JM Shipping Lines, and Food and Accommodation Co and managing director of Brothers Oxygen. He was the chairman of Continental Insurance and director of Central Hospital.

Mr Baker's bank accounts frozen for alleged VAT evasion

FROM PAGE B1
Two teams inspected the headquarters and the production unit of Mr Baker on October 20. During the inspections, the field office didn't get purchase and sales registers of the pastry maker as per VAT laws. The owners, who were present during the visit, could not show documents and give satisfactory answers to the inspection teams, said the VAIID. "It appeared to the VAT intelligence teams that Mr Baker is submitting VAT returns based on made-up accounts," said the VAIID. "At the same time, it did not deposit the actual amount of VAT collected from the consumers." VAIID officials disguised as general customers visited two outlets of Mr Baker at Uttara and Bailey Road in Dhaka and found that the pastry maker was selling products without VAT chalang. Khan said his office recorded the stock of raw materials of Mr Baker during the inspection at the factory. "We will check the stock on October 30 to get an idea about the sales of the bakery," he said. Iftekhar Alam, general manager of Mr Baker, said the VAT Intelligence seized chalang of transactions and asked them to submit the copies of gas and electricity bills of the last five years. "Mr Baker will comply with the rules if the VAT office detects any unpaid VAT as per laws." Established in 2001, Mr Baker widened its presence in Dhaka in the last two decades as demand for cake and pastry has grown among urbanites. It had 36 outlets before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in the country in March. It closed three outlets after suffering huge losses as social events such as birthday celebrations have largely been cancelled, said Alam.

REUTERS, Jaipur/New Delhi, India

Indian businesses are stocking up more ahead of this year's big festival season than at any time in the last five years, expecting people whose earnings were relatively unaffected by the pandemic to spend the money they saved during months of lockdowns. India's biggest shopping season is at the time of the festivals of Durga Puja and Diwali, which fall 20 days apart in October-November each year. Traditionally, this is a time when houses are re-decorated, big-ticket items purchased, feasts held and gifts exchanged. Businesses and shopkeepers expect more purchases than usual this year, beginning with Durga Puja on Thursday, because the months of lockdowns have resulted in pent-up demand. Recent data shows that demand for diesel, power and cars has already picked up, and any resurgence of retail buying of everything from phones to furniture would bode well for India's economy that shrank 23.9

per cent in the quarter ended June - its steepest decline. Brokerage firm Nomura said its India business-resumption index for the week that ended on Oct. 18 hit its highest level since the country first imposed a lockdown in late March to contain the coronavirus. Big retailers such as Croma and Vijay Sales, both dealing mainly in

electronics and home appliances, told Reuters sales in recent days indicated that this holiday season could be better than last year and that they were actually worried about tightening inventory in certain categories like entry-level laptops and high-end televisions. The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said its 70 million small businesses on average were

planning for a buffer stock of around 14 per cent this season compared with last year's 10 per cent, to ensure they don't run out of goods should demand surge.

"In the last two months, despite facing a financial crunch, we have been procuring goods in anticipation that in the festive season we will have considerable footfalls," said Praveen Khandelwal, the group's secretary general, seated in his home-fittings shop in Delhi's Karol Bagh area.

"Our expectation is that this will be the best Diwali for us in at least five years. Naturally, our stocks levels will be as high too." Customer arrivals this month have already been the highest in about seven months, hovering around 10 per shop on average - still only about a third of the normal level but expected to rise, Khandelwal said.

But not everyone is as enthusiastic. Shops and factories in the city of Jaipur, typically bustling with local and foreign tourists, did little business on a warm afternoon this week. Traders there said they had laid

off staff as the city's key income source of tourism was still feeble and it did not have as many salaried people as places like Delhi.

"Until a vaccine is out, I think we will keep operating at 30-35 per cent of pre-COVID levels," said Suresh Tak, owner of four clothes shops and factories printing designs on fabrics.

Even Google's mobility data from last week for West Bengal, India's fourth-most populous state where Durga Puja is the main festival, showed that people were mainly visiting supermarkets and pharmacies, not retail and recreation facilities.

Thousands of miles away in the rural district of Satara in India's west, Nilesh Kadam says he is trying to save as much as he can, having returned to work only recently.

"From June to August the company had given me a break as there wasn't much work at the factory," said the 35-year old, whose company makes steel products. "This year I am not planning to make any big-ticket purchase."



A customer with his family is seen at an electronics and appliances shop in Jaipur, India on October 20.

Outbound remittances remain largely untraceable

FROM PAGE B1
Kazi M Aminul Islam, a former executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida), said there is a lack of skilled workforce at higher levels that compels the private sector to hire foreign citizens for better output. He also thinks that the central bank data is inaccurate. "Former finance minister AMA Muhith himself publicly disclosed the actual remittance outflow of around \$4 billion to \$5 billion per year." According to him, the BB records the outflow based on the salaries of the officially appointed experts or consultants. But the amount is nominal in comparison to the salaries paid by the private sector to foreign citizens. "During my tenure at the Bida, I initiated a move to find out the exact figure of outbound remittance. But it did not complete during my time," he said. Islam urged the government to find out the real figure of remittance outflow by carrying out a study. "It is important to unearth the data to ensure the outflow through the official channel. The government will get tax from it." Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said the record of the BB is unrealistic as the actual remittance outflow is far higher than

the official data.

There are a lot of foreigners from India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan who work in the private sector and at multinational companies, he said.

The private sector depends on foreign employees at the managerial level as they are sincere. On the other hand, Bangladeshis are not skilled and do not work sincerely, Mansur said.

Foreigners send their incomes through the unofficial channel as the private sector does not want to face unnecessary hassles in securing permission, he said.

There are thousands of Chinese citizens employed at various projects and do business in Bangladesh. They earn legally but transfer their earnings through the unofficial channel, said Mansur, also a former senior official of the International Monetary Fund.

Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority, said the Beza provides permit to work in the economic zones but it has no authority to keep the record how foreign citizens send their salaries and other allowances to their country.

The employers and government agencies are responsible for ensuring that the outbound remittance goes through the official channel, he said.

Md Sirazul Islam, executive chairman

of the Bida, said the agency grants work permits to foreign citizens against the demand of investors.

The Bida does not have data or study on remittance outflow, he said, suggesting that banks could keep the record and provide it to the central bank.

According to him, the Bida has the scope to keep the records of the payments made for technical assistance and royalty.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank Dhaka office, said the number of foreigners working in Bangladesh without securing work permits is far higher than those who have the availed the permission.

"So, payments made to them have to be done through informally as there is no other option."

The economist blamed the complexities in issuing work permits for the situation.

"If the process had been transparent, the foreign workers would have received payments officially and thus sent home the money through official channels."

Hussain said if skilled workers had been available locally, employers would not have gone for foreign hiring since the latter creates a lot of liabilities for them.

He said if skilled workers are not available locally and companies do not hire them from other countries, production would be hampered. "This would ultimately hurt the

economy."

"The lack of adequate skilled workers also points to the weakness in our education system. Until the country can plug the skill shortage, employers would have to rely on foreign workers."

Nilphamari farmers pinning hopes on early variety potato

FROM PAGE B1
"It is inspiring to see that Kishoreganj's early harvested potatoes are taken to vegetable markets in the capital at the very beginning of the season," said Habibur Rahman.

Traders from Dhaka and other big cities come directly to different villages in Kishoreganj with trucks to purchase early potato in November and December, said Md Farhanul Haque, senior vice-president of Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"We try to cooperate with them as the crop is harvested here much earlier than other districts in the country," he added.

Liaquat Ali, sub assistant agriculture officer of Kishoreganj, said this year they target to cultivate the short-duration early variety potato in around 7,000 hectares, up from 6,500 hectares last year.

Google's antitrust legal woes far from over if Biden wins

REUTERS, Washington
The US Justice Department's nascent antitrust case against Google will get the attention it needs to succeed if Democrat Joe Biden wins the US presidency next month, antitrust experts said. William Kovacic, an antitrust professor at George Washington University Law School, said he expects a Biden Justice Department would do one of two things: support the case all the way as it is, or amend the complaint to add new claims. "What they will not do is drop this case," Kovacic predicted. The Justice Department asked a court on Tuesday to find that Alphabet's Google had broken antitrust law to maintain its dominance in search and search advertising. Google has denied wrongdoing. While the Biden campaign declined comment on the lawsuit, spokesman Bill Russo said a Biden administration would work closely on Big Tech issues with Rep.



Inam Ahmed, general manager of Bangladesh Edible Oil; Faisal Mahmud, senior marketing manager, and Istiaq Mahmood, senior brand executive, unveil the new logo of its brand Fortune at the company's head office in Dhaka yesterday. Fortune markets Fortune Rice Bran Oil and Fortune Biryani Special Basmati Rice.

Prime Bank to get \$35m from IFC

FROM PAGE B1
The first loss guarantee is a mechanism whereby a third party compensates lenders if the borrower defaults. As the third party pays for the losses, it gives lenders confidence to give out loans.

"This new investment from IFC will allow us to extend critical working capital, trade finance and forex liquidity to affected businesses," said Rahel Ahmed, managing director and CEO of Prime Bank.

"This fresh fund injection will enable us to lend a helping hand, particularly to export and import-based SMEs and other corporate clients, and thousands of suppliers and employees who depend on these businesses."

Prime Bank, a private-sector commercial bank in Bangladesh, has been an IFC client since 2014.

"This is an unprecedented crisis that the world is facing and we need all hands on deck to navigate the public health crisis and the resulting economic challenges," said Rosy Khanna, IFC regional industry director for Financial Institutions Group for Asia and Pacific.

"Small and medium enterprises are key not just in terms of overall contribution to GDP but also in terms of job creation and the impact of the pandemic on them has to be addressed."

The IFC states to be the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets, working in more than 100 countries.

In fiscal year 2020, the IFC invested \$22 billion in private companies and financial institutions in developing countries, saying that it was leveraging the power of the private sector to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity.

The World Bank Group created the \$2.5 billion IDA Private Sector Window to catalyze private sector investment in the poorest and most fragile countries.

The window is said to recognise a key role the private sector would play in achieving IDA18 objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is said to provide concessional funds for co-investment alongside the IFC and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency private investments.

The statement says concessional funds help to mitigate risk and reduce barriers, which unlocks and crowds in private investment in emerging markets.

The man who inspired a tangy trade

FROM PAGE B4
The hubs are Banaripara and Wazirpur upazilas in Barishal, Nesarabad and Nazirpur upazilas in Pirojpur, and Jhalakathi sadar and Nalchhiti upazilas in Jhalakathi, he said.

"I had started farming malta in 2016 and was able to begin selling the fruit in 2017. This year I think I will make a profit of at least Tk 2 lakh," said Shyamal.

When it comes to costs, he is said to have spent only about five lakh, that too just to purchase the shrubs years back alongside saplings of coconut and mango varieties such as Bari Mango-5, Bari Mango-4, Haribhanga, Gopalbhog, Fazli and Banana Mango.

Shyamal inspired the creation of about 100 malta gardens in Ujirpur upazila, said Agriculture Officer Zakir Hossain Talukder.

And all because he refused to give in to failure and tried making the best of what he had.

The man who inspired a tangy trade

SUSHANTA GHOSH and FAHD MANNAN

Like every other South Asian, Gurudas Banerjee, alias Shyamal, was expected to take up the helm of the family once he finished his studies at Barishal's Uzirpur upazila.

He had a hard time finding his niche but eventually settled on fish cultivation in 2004 with a small amount of capital on one acre of land passed down by his late father at Dakshin Shikarpur village.

"I planted 55 different species of mango saplings around the perimeter. When the water in the enclosures dries up, I cultivate paddy and vegetables," the 42-year-old told The Daily Star recently.

Shyamal also went organic with his use of fertilisers and opted for pheromone traps instead of insecticides.

His growing affinity with agriculture gave him a thought: why not also make use of the empty slopes of his water bodies by planting some other fruit bearing plants to bring in some extra cash?

And sure enough, a lucrative, locally developed sweet orange came to his mind. Little did he know that he would become so successful at it that it would go on to inspire some 100 other residents of his upazila.

Oranges are believed to be native to the tropical regions of Asia, especially the Malay Archipelago; along with other citrus species, they have been cultivated from remote ages, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The Roman conquests, the development of Arab trade routes, and the expansion of Islam contributed significantly to its dispersal, it said.

Sweet orange (*Citrus sinensis*), commonly known as malta in Bangladesh, has always been cultivated on a large scale in Chattogram. The profusely branched thorny shrub or small tree is presumed to have its origins in India and South Eastern China.

Shyamal had decided to plant Bari

The fruit grows well in Sylhet and Chattogram regions, but its cultivation has now spread from the hills to the southern part of the country

Malta-1, one of two varieties of sweet oranges developed through rootstock by the Horticulture Research Center at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (Bari) in 2005.

Each plant provides a harvest of some 14.35 kilogrammes of the yellowish green fruit, each of 100 grams to 120 grams, between August and November.

It grows well in Sylhet and Chattogram regions, which Shyamal believed was due to the hilly landscape preventing the water from pooling around the base of the plant, effectively keeping orchards well drained.

Besides its cultivation had already spread from the hills to the southern part of the country, said Dr Mehedi Masud, deputy director of a Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) project to ensure nutrition through cultivation of fruits year-round.

Researchers had first presumed Bari Malta-1 grew well in red soil but it actually needs a soil pH of approximately 6 to 7, which promotes the ready availability of plant nutrients.

With the soil pH in the south hovering around 7.5, the Bari Malta-1 plants did not fail Shyamal. He says his



TITU DAS

Gurudas Banerjee became so successful in malta cultivation that it inspired some 100 other residents of his upazila.

plants on 30 decimals of land provide him with more than 50 maunds of malta each season.

Being organically grown and free of formalin, the fruit has been able to draw buyers right to the garden, bringing in slightly higher wholesale prices of Tk 120 per kilogramme compared to what others go for in the market.

Nonetheless, there has always been appreciation of the dietary values of citrus fruits in Bangladesh. They are a healthy source of several vitamins and minerals such as vitamin C, thiamine, folate, potassium, antioxidants and fibre.

In combination these ensure healthy

immune systems, prevent skin damage, keep blood pressure in check, lower cholesterol, control blood sugar levels and lower the risk of cancer.

It is hard to imagine any Bangladeshi who has not heard of bringing along oranges on hospital visits or travels.

And the pandemic has driven up demand, with over 40,000 tonnes of citrus fruits being imported in the first three months (July to August) of fiscal 2020-21, as per data from the DAE's Plant Quarantine Wing.

To put this into perspective, just 21,880 tonnes were imported in the whole of fiscal 2019-20. And that's excluding illegal entries from across the

border.

The popularity of Bari Malta-1 has grown simultaneously.

Some 17,800 tonnes of the fruit were grown on 2,525 hectares of land in fiscal 2019-20, around 800 tonnes higher from that in the preceding year, said Kobir Ahmed, deputy director for fruit and flower at the DAE's horticulture wing.

Horticulture Research Center, Barishal provides some 3,000 to 4,000 saplings of Bari Malta-1 to customers of Barishal division every year, said Shahidul Islam, the centre's former deputy director.

READ MORE ON B3

Mutual Trust Bank to remain shut for upgrade for six days

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mutual Trust Bank will keep all banking services, except credit card operations, suspended from 11:55pm on October 29 to 9:30am on November 5.

Branch banking of the lender will also remain unavailable during the period, according to a Bangladesh Bank notice released yesterday.

All transactions will be put on hold as the bank will shift its core banking system from its existing platform to another.

The upgraded system will cater a smooth service to clients in contrast to the existing one, said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of the lender.

The bank has decided to make the shift after availing approval from the central bank, he said.

"We have selected two weekends for the migration period for the system so that our clients don't face too many difficulties," Rahman said.



RAJIB RAIHAN

Plastic drums used for transporting edible oil being stacked at a cleaning station in Fouzdarhat in Chattogram city. The cleaners can wash over 250 drums a day, getting Tk 500 from the oil companies for every 60. The photo was taken recently.

Beza beefs up services

Adds 11 new ones to its one-stop service platform

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority has successfully added 11 new services to its One-Stop Service (OSS) platform as part of its ongoing efforts to improve the ease of doing business in Bangladesh.

Beza now offers a total of 32 services under the OSS that provides easy access to information, application processing and other facilities required by investors at home and abroad.

By improving Bangladesh's ranking on the Ease of Doing Business index, Beza hopes to attract more investment for the country's various economic zones.

Of the 11 services added, 8 are for securing environment clearance certificates under different categories. The categories are: (ECC -Red), renewal of ECC (red), ECC (green), renewal of ECC (green), ECC (Orange A), renewal of ECC (Orange A), ECC (Orange B), renewal of ECC (Orange B).

The remaining 3 services include approval of application for environmental impact assessment, repatriation of technical know-how and assistance fee (in case of exceeding 6 per cent of the cost of imported machinery) and repatriation of royalty fee (in case of exceeding 6 per cent of the annual sales on income tax return for the previous year).

Beza launched the new services at a programme held at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka yesterday. It also announced that Inter-Asia Group Pte is set to invest \$80 million in the country's tourism sector.

The Singapore-based company will

use the fund to establish a hotel, cultural centre, museum, amphitheatre and an entertainment park at the Sabrang Tourism Park in Cox's Bazar.

This investment will generate around 6,000 employment opportunities, according to Beza.

The economic zones authority has also signed an agreement with Great Outdoors Adventures for tourism infrastructure development at Sabrang Tourism Park. The organisation will invest \$5.5 million at the zone.

The OSS Centre offers 125 services, of which 37 will be delivered by Beza within the year end while the remaining 88 will be provided by other departments concerned through the platform.

Of the 37 services designated to Beza, the organisation will provide 32 through an online platform. However, the 93 other OSS services are delivered manually.

Beza currently provides 21 services under OSS.

Ever since the OSS was first launched in October last year with an aim to improve the ease of doing business in Bangladesh, the centre has helped its clients secure a total of 56 project clearances, 7,202 import permits, 1,411 export permits, 669 visa recommendations, 181 work permits, and 41 trade licences, according to a senior official of the OSS Centre.

By ensuring the quick delivery of its services without having to jump through all the bureaucratic hoops, the centre has made the use of speed money redundant, said Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Beza.

All trade barriers with India will be removed: Munshi

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Any existing barriers that impede exports to Indian markets will be removed soon, according to Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi.

"Bangladeshi entrepreneurs face some difficulties when exporting goods to India. We have chalked out many of these problems, which will now be solved through bilateral discussions," he said.

Munshi made these comments during a meeting with the newly appointed Indian High Commissioner, Vikram Kumar Doraiswami, at the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday.

India is a major trading partner of Bangladesh as exports to the neighbouring nation are on the rise, Munshi said, adding that resolving the current issues will benefit the country further.

In fiscal 2019-20, Bangladesh's total exports to India were valued at about \$1,096 million while imports from the neighbouring nation were around \$5,774 million for that year.

"Border haats (markets) are becoming popular and so, we are going to launch another three border haats as soon as possible," the commerce minister said.

Md Shahidul Islam, additional secretary to the commerce ministry (FIA), was also present at the meeting, where Doraiswami informed that India has taken an initiative to build a digital museum to commemorate Bangladesh's 50th year of independence and the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Regulator okays IPOs of Energypac, eGeneration

Will fine two corporate directors of Appollo Ispat for breaching rules

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The stock market regulator has approved the initial public offerings (IPOs) of Energypac and eGeneration, which will raise Tk 150 crore and Tk 15 crore respectively from the capital market.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) on Wednesday presided over by its Chairman Professor Shibli Rubayat Ul Islam, the commission said in a statement.

Energypac will issue 4.02 crore shares, of which 2.02 crores are allocated for bidding among eligible investors while the rest will go to the general investors.

With the IPO proceeds, the local power engineering company will expand its business, repay bank loans and meet IPO expenses.

Energypac has already completed the bidding process and set a cut-off price of Tk 35 for its shares. General investors can purchase the stock at Tk 31 per share, which is a 10 per cent discount



from the cut-off price.

However, the BSEC also said that it would seek an explanation from certain investors as to why they bid over Tk 60 for the company's shares.

This is because the stock market regulator

wants to know whether they bid excessively without analysing the company's data, as was the case for Walton Hi-Tech Industries and certain other companies as well, according to the statement.

"If we are not satisfied with their analysis,

then they could face action," it added.

Meanwhile, eGeneration will issue 1.5 crore shares. With the IPO proceeds, the local ICT firm will buy office space, repay bank loans, develop a digital healthcare platform and meet IPO expenses.

eGeneration's net asset value and weighted average earnings per share was Tk 20.56 and Tk 1.82 respectively for the fiscal that ended on June 30, 2019, as per the company's audited financial reports for that year.

It was also decided that two corporate directors of Appollo Ispat -- Art International and Jupiter Business -- will be fined Tk 10 lakh each for selling shares without issuing declarations.

As per the securities rules, it is mandatory for the directors and sponsors of listed companies to inform the country's bourses when they want to buy or sell stocks.

Momtazur Rahman, representative of Art International, and Mosfequr Rahman, representative of Jupiter Business, sold 8.88 lakh and 8.91 lakh shares respectively.