



Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem, chairman of the National Board of Revenue, poses during the inauguration of a Samsung television manufacturing plant of Fair Electronics at Narsingdi on Saturday. Fair Group's concern Fair Electronics is the authorised manufacturer of Samsung mobile phone and consumer electronic products in Bangladesh. Ruhul Alam Al Mahbub, chairman of the group, was present.

Garment sector to lose \$4b in EU if duty-free benefit ends

FROM PAGE B1
Applying the standard GSP or most-favoured-nation (MFN) tariff will escalate the cost of sourcing from Bangladesh further. The EU's global average import price dropped 4.35 per cent from 2013 to 2018.

"While all competitors are offering further price discounts, any imposition of tariff on Bangladeshi goods may proportionately erode competitiveness," the study said. Bangladesh will have to negotiate strongly to meet the EU's GSP eligibility criteria.

The GSP Plus is a special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance. It slashes tariffs to zero for vulnerable low and lower-middle-income countries that implement 27 international conventions on labour rights, human rights, environmental protection and good governance.

Bangladesh has ratified almost all major conventions except for a fundamental convention of the International Labour Organisation's Minimum Age Convention.

The total imports of GSP eligible products into the EU shall have to be less than 7.4 per cent of the total imports of the bloc from all GSP beneficiary countries on an average during the last three consecutive years.

The share of Bangladesh's imports to the EU under the GSP facility was as high as 24.4 per cent in 2018.

Besides, the rules of origin under both Standard GSP and GSP Plus require double transformation for textile and clothing items. Currently, Bangladesh enjoys single transformation, or one-stage work processing, i.e., fabric to garment. Bangladesh received the benefit under the Everything But Arms (EBA) in 2011. In FY12, apparel export from Bangladesh to the EU was \$11.38 billion. It rose to \$21.13 billion in FY19, up 86.6 per cent.

Bangladesh's export competitiveness will also be affected because the current subsidy programme of the government may not continue in the post-LDC era.

The subsidy programmes will have to be re-designed and re-purposed so that it fits in the post-LDC market access criteria and helps keep the industrial competitiveness and excellence in the country, the BGMEA study said.

The study suggested lobbying with the EU. Discussions with the European Commission need to be initiated for about 7.4 per cent threshold for the GSP Plus scheme.

The EU is currently reviewing its GSP scheme for 2023, which will be finalised soon.

"It is important to have the issue of threshold addressed in the new GSP regulation. If we can successfully lobby with the EU to re-fix its threshold criteria from 'import under EU GSP' to 'EU's overall import', this may resolve the problem."

Extension of the EBA and other preferential tariff schemes for at least for 7-10 years on the ground of high concentration of exports and the impact on employment and poverty was stated in the report.

The fallouts of the Covid-19, Bangladesh's contribution towards global peace-keeping and humanitarian responses such as providing shelter to the Rohingya refugees, and combating terrorism should be considered in making this appeal. It also suggested ratification of the ILO Convention 138 on the minimum age and initiating stakeholders' consultation on Bangladesh's strategy to comply with 27 international conventions.

"Our development and growth strategies, including both public and private sector, should be directed toward a free trade agreement. Economic readiness and openness should be our main concern," the study said.

The study also recommended for persuading through the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as the LDCs submitted their transition plans and recommendations to the global body. Currently, 15 countries have standard GSP status in the EU market, eight GSP Plus status and 48 LDCs have EBA status, according to the website of the European Commission.

Investment summit tomorrow to attract Dutch business

FROM PAGE B1
opportunity for charting the new course of business collaboration," said the press statement. The duo's embassies concerned and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) are organising the event with active support from Larive International and LightCastle Partners.

The Daily Star is the media partner for this initiative.

The summit, to take place virtually, will be graced by top experts, policymakers and industry leaders, both from the Netherlands and Bangladesh.

It will be divided into three panels: agriculture & agro-food, light engineering, water & maritime, said the statement.

A Dutch-investment mapping report, in context of the bilateral economic engagements till date, will be launched at the end of the event.

The Embassy of Bangladesh, the

Hague, the Netherlands, in collaboration with LightCastle Partners and Larive International will launch the report.

The report will cover key areas of accomplishment in the various industrial zones and economic arenas of Bangladesh and also earmark the possible scope of collaboration between private sectors from the two counterparts, said the press statement.

The maiden event takes place against the backdrop of a robust relationship between the two countries in various areas.

Bangladesh exported goods worth 850 million euros to the Netherlands in the July-June period of fiscal 2019-20, with readymade garments topping the list followed by footwear, fish and frozen food.

Bangladesh imported goods worth 137 million euros in 2018-19 from the Dutch. Machinery and transport equipment topped the import list.

Govt vehicle purchase halted till June 2021

FROM PAGE B4
There have been 6,838 deaths in the last eight months. The death rate stands at 1.43 per cent.

Against this backdrop the government has sought funds from development partners to help the health ministry.

The finance ministry estimates that \$2 billion might be needed to vaccinate the nation of 165 million.

Initially, the government aims to buy three crore doses at \$5 apiece. The finance ministry has so far released Tk 735 crore for the health ministry.

Recently, the finance ministry has softened the stance on disbursement of funds from the ADP for low-priority projects bowing down to pressures from the line ministries and also because of

improvements in revenue collection.

The government had also planned to ban foreign tours of government officials as part of the austerity measures, but such an order would not be necessitated because of the pandemic.

STAFF OUTSOURCING BARRED

The finance ministry has issued a directive barring outsourcing through public and private universities for hiring employees of salary grades 11 to 20 for all ministries and government offices.

No fund allocation or proposal can be sent for such outsourcing-based recruitment as per a government decision, said a ministry circular.

The new decision has turned null and void an October 2019 circular on outsourcing for such grades, it said.

DSE key index goes past 5,000 points

FROM PAGE B1
Dacca Dyeing, Fas Finance, and Silco Pharmaceuticals. Beximco had its stocks traded the most, worth Tk 52.35 crore, followed by Republic Insurance, LankaBangla Finance, Fortune Shoes and Beximco Pharmaceuticals.

Of the total 354 companies to witness trade, 154 advanced, 120 declined and 80 remained unchanged.

Nitol Insurance shed the most, losing 8.16 per cent yesterday, followed by CAPM IBBL Mutual Fund, Prime Insurance, Green Delta Insurance and Provati Insurance.

Chattogram Stock Exchange also witnessed a rising trend in its index.

The CSEX, the prime index of the port city bourse, rose 94.41 points, or 1 per cent, to 8,681.71 yesterday.

Out of a total of 256 companies' stocks, 135 rose, 76 fell and 45 remained same.

FBCCI launches centre to develop technopreneurs

FROM PAGE B1
"The aim is to enable technology adaptation to strengthening business, both small and large firms, by leveraging innovations across economic sectors in Bangladesh to be a part of the global value chain and ecosystem with indigenous synergies," he said.

Bangladesh's future economic success, growth and competitiveness depend on a thriving and innovative technology sector.

"And so, data-driven innovation is now the foundation for businesses across the country," Fahim added.

Echoing him, the education minister said the FBCCI's initiative was aligned with the Digital Bangladesh agenda.

"The ministry has also been preparing to adapt to the fourth industrial revolution.

Therefore, it is heartening to see such initiatives that leverage today's concepts of technology, collaboration, globalisation and enable us to thrive," Moni said.

Technology will play an essential

role in attaining Vision 2021, Vision 2041 and Bangabandhu's Sonar Bangla, according to State Minister Palak.

Leveraging tech innovations to have a competitive edge will help improve Bangladesh's economic growth but for that the country needs a thriving and innovative technology sector, he said.

Sonia Bashir Kabir, an advisor to the FBCCI, gave a presentation about Tech C at the event.

FBCCI TECH C entails startup preparedness skills, Ag Tech (Agriculture Tech), Digital Financial Service (FinTech), Med Tech (Health Tech), Ed Tech (Education Tech), e-commerce, Rural Broadband Smart Cities and so on.

"It will also work for developing artificial intelligence, ensuring cyber security, creating internet of things (IOT), adaptation of blockchain for the private and public sector, enhancing data analytics & machine learning and applied skills, or tech vocational training," she said.

Kabir went on to say that the

centre would help startups graduate from democratising technology to democratising innovation.

Elisabeth Rees-Johnstone, a faculty of the University of Toronto, agreed that Tech C would help create "Impact Tech Preneurs" for the country.

"We're excited to extend the work we do in the ecosystem to more startups with our FBCCI Accelerator, powered by Accelerating Asia," said Amra Naidoo, co-founder of the Singapore-based organisation.

Sharon Bort, senior officer of sustainability at the MIT, said the global challenges for 2021 includes ensuring equitable connectivity to access digital commerce and public services for everyone and protecting all people from health security threats and disease outbreaks.

It also encompasses reimagining classrooms for the next generation of learners, preserving and strengthening ecosystem services, including carbon mitigation and harnessing tech to promote racial justice and the formation of antiracist society, said Bort.



UNILEVER BANGLADESH

Sakshi Handa, human resources director of Unilever Bangladesh, hands over a cheque worth Tk 1.03 million to Rabeya Yeasmin Neela, principal of Amar Joti Special School, in Dhaka recently. The global consumer goods company made the donation to the school marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.



MUTUAL TRUST BANK

Adil Islam, country head at Bank Alfalah, and Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, exchange documents after signing a deal at the latter's head office at MTB Centre in Dhaka recently. Bank Alfalah will facilitate US dollar financing of trade related transactions originating from Mutual Trust Bank.

Bilateral trade to grow 15pc as Dhaka-Thimphu sign PTA

FROM PAGE B1
country in 2024 from the least developed country grouping.

Munshi said the Chilahati-Haldibari railway route would start functioning soon to establish a railway link to boost connectivity between Bangladesh and Bhutan.

"The PTA will create new opportunities and take the relationship to a new height," said Sharma.

Bangladesh is the first country in this region with which Bhutan has signed a fully functional for trade, he said, adding that the private sector of both countries appreciates the PTA.

Waterways and railways connectivity between India and Bangladesh will provide additional convenience to the trade between Bangladesh and Bhutan, the Bhutanese minister said.

Dhaka has assured Thimphu of additional ports of calls between Chilmari and Narayanganj to carry their goods to destinations at nominal costs.

For that, the upcoming railway links between Agartala of India and Akhaura of Bangladesh will provide additional access to Bangladesh.

The government of India has approved Agartala as an additional land customs station for Bhutan, and Bangladesh has also assured providing access to Tripura, Sharma said.

"Similarly, we are looking forward to adding access to and from Haldibari of India and Chilahati of Bangladesh through railway link. Railways, waterways and road transport all are very important for us to

connect."

Lotay Tshering said Bhutan always places high importance on bilateral trade with Bangladesh.

"A new era of prosperity has opened up because of the signing of the PTA," he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the PTA would further consolidate the relations between the two countries for mutual benefit, according to state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha.

Tandi Dorji, foreign minister of Bhutan, said Bangladesh and Bhutan shared common goals over the last five decades.

Bangladesh has a significance as it is the second-largest trading partner of Bhutan, he said.

AK Abdul Momen, Bangladesh's foreign minister, said: "We might have different ways and means, but we share common goals -- economic and social development goals. The PTA signing carries the significance of common goals of the two countries."

Md Jafar Uddin, commerce secretary of Bangladesh, said the PTA would help address the challenges related to trade privileges once the country graduates to a developing country.

The agreement came into effect immediately.

The bilateral trade balance tilts towards Bhutan as Bangladesh is an importer of stones used in the construction sector.

In the fiscal year of 2018-19, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$7.56 million and imported goods worth \$42.09 million, according to data from the commerce ministry.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Divisional Forest Officer and Project Director Reforestation and Infrastructure Development in Sylhet Forest Division to Mitigate Adverse Effect of Climate Change Project		
Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for Selection of Consulting Firm for Detail Estimate, Plan, Design and Supervision of Construction Works (Package No. SFD/Sylhet/2020-21/Service-01)		
Ministry/Division	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	
Agency	Bangladesh Forest Department	
Procuring entity name	Divisional Forest Officer and Project Director, Reforestation and Infrastructure Development in Sylhet Forest Division to Mitigate Adverse Effect of Climate Change Project	
Procuring entity district	Sylhet	
Expression of Interest for Selection of	Consulting Firm (NCT)	
Title of service/procurement name	Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for Selection of Consulting Firm for Detail Estimate, Plan, Design and Supervision of Construction Works	
EOI Ref. No.	22.01.0000.672.29.001.20.3810	
Date	06/12/2020	
Procurement method	Fixed Budget Selection (SFB) using the PPA 2006 and Public Procurement Rule 2008	
Budget and source of funds	GOB	
Development partners	N/A	
Project/program name	Reforestation and Infrastructure Development in Sylhet Forest Division to Mitigate Adverse Effect of Climate Change Project	
EOI closing date and time	23/12/2020, 3:00pm	
Project/program code	224301500	
Brief description of the assignment	- Preparation of work plan, detailed designs and drawing, 3D perspective views, component wise detailed estimates and tender documents for all works included in the project as mentioned in TOR. - Full time supervision during construction works under the project throughout the project period. - Regular reporting to Project Director. - Any other allied work.	
Minimum eligibility of the firm	- At least 5 years of professional experience in the relevant field of civil engineering; - At least 2 similar nature of works completion experience in the last 5 years; - Documentary evidences such as up-to-date trade licence, VAT registration certificate, up-to-date income tax certificate, bank solvency certificate and experience certificate(s) to be submitted. - The intending Consulting Firm shall have adequate knowledge to perform such a job with qualified Architects, Engineers and other technical key personnel as per TOR. - Financial Soundness: Audit and Accounts Record of 3 years; Average Annual Turnover of last 3 years (in BDT lac). - Institutional Soundness: Office Space, Equipments and logistics; Professionals in the regular payroll of the firm. - Interested Consultants should provide information on prescribed Format issued with this REOI demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services. - The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment and soft copy of prescribed Format for submission of Expression of Interest can be found at the following website: www.forest.sylhetdiv.gov.bd or can be obtained at the address given below during office hours 9:00 to 5:00 hours (BST). - The number of working partners in case of Joint venture (if any) not more than 02 (two). - The short-listed firm will be invited for submission of proposal. - Interested firms should provide the necessary documents as evidence that they are qualified to perform the services. - Expression of Interest must be delivered on or before 23/12/2020, 3:00pm either hand delivered or by post to the address below. Please mark clearly on the envelope "Expression of Interest (REOI) for Selection of Consulting Firm for Detail Estimate, Plan, Design and Supervision of Construction Works."	
Name of official inviting EOI	S.M. Sazzad Hossain	
Designation and address of official inviting EOI	Project Director "Reforestation and Infrastructure Development in Sylhet Forest Division to Mitigate Adverse Effect of Climate Change" Project, Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Sylhet Forest Division, Tophkhana, Sylhet.	
Contact details of official inviting EOI	Phone: 0821-716356, E-mail: dsylhet@yahoo.com Web: www.forest.sylhetdiv.gov.bd	
The authority reserves all the rights to accept or reject any or all EOIs without showing any reason.		
S.M. Sazzad Hossain Project Director Reforestation and Infrastructure Development in Sylhet Forest Division to Mitigate Adverse Effect of Climate Change Project		
GO-1948		