

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 0.26%	▲ 0.04%	\$1,875.82	\$51.29	▲ 1.14%	▼ 0.04%	▲ 0.28%	▲ 0.99%	BUY TK 83.95	101.74	112.36	12.68
5,358.25	9,332.61	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	46,973.54	26,656.61	2,848.14	3,396.56	SELL TK 84.95	105.54	116.16	13.33

**OPENING**  
of  
**SALIMGONJ BRANCH**  
30 December, 2020

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Nabinagar  
Brahmanbaria

Call Center  
16491

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# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 30, 2020, POUISH 15, 1427 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

## FBCCI pushes for extending loan moratorium

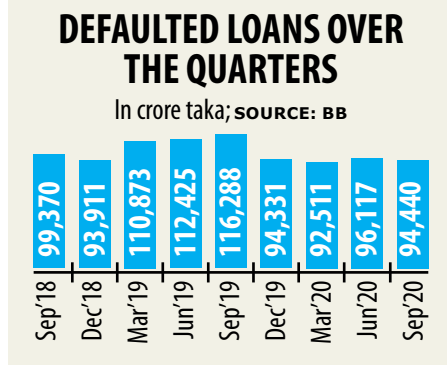
Private bank sponsors want no additional provisioning for loans being paid back regularly; analysts oppose both demands

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has reiterated its request for Bangladesh Bank to extend an ongoing loan moratorium until June.

Moreover, the Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB), comprising private bank sponsors, has called for exempting provisions for loans, against which instalments are being paid regularly, from the latest central bank directive on keeping an additional 1 per cent provisioning for all unclassified loans.

The rest of the loans making use of the moratorium, or in other words, against which repayment instalments are not being paid, should fall under the purview of the additional provisioning directive, said the



association.

Both platforms sought the measures sending separate letters to Governor Fazle Kabir on December 28, reasoning it was in the interest of borrowers and banks given the business slowdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

But analysts have opposed the requests, saying it would not bring any good for the country's banking sector and the economy as a whole given the ongoing business trend focusing financial recovery.

**DBL GROUP IS A SUPERBRAND**  
Consecutively for the second time

## Govt lowers first-year GDP growth target

EIGHTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has lowered the first-year growth target in its Eighth Five-Year Plan compared to its budget projections due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which forced the country to go into a lockdown that stalled its economy.

Besides, recovery from the Covid-19 fallout has been partially mired by a second wave of infections worldwide.

As per the Eighth Five-Year Plan, the government has set a target of 7.40 per cent GDP growth for FY21,



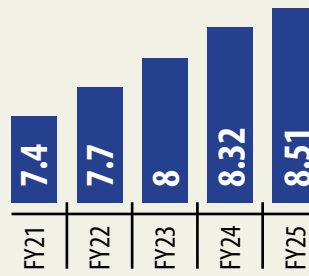
STAR/FILE

Riding on increased economic activities, the government targets to achieve 7.4pc GDP growth in fiscal 2021.

### ESTIMATION OF REAL GROWTH IN EIGHTH 5-YEAR PLAN

In %;

SOURCE: PLANNING MINISTRY



which is 80 basis points lower than the budget's growth plan of 8.20 per cent.

However, the target still remains ambitious as it is much higher than the World Bank (WB) forecast.

In its twice-a-year regional update, the WB projected 3.4 per cent economic growth for the next update, assuming that the Covid-19 crisis would linger.

According to the plan,

Bangladesh would post 7.70 per cent in FY22, 8 per cent in FY23, 8.32 per cent in FY24 and eventually 8.51 per cent in the final year of the plan period.

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## NBR urges all to file returns by today

Banks closed tomorrow

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With only a day remaining before the deadline to submit income tax returns for fiscal 2020-21, the National Board of Revenue yesterday requested individuals to clear tax payment through banks by today as the lenders will remain closed tomorrow.

All sorts of banking activities will remain shut on December 31 as it is a bank holiday, the NBR said in a press release.

The deadline for submission of income tax return for individual taxpayers was extended by one month on November 30, the official deadline for filing income statements. The deadline ends on December 31, 2020.

## Stimulus funds hardly reaching farmers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The central bank yesterday again extended the deadline for banks to disburse the Tk 5,000-crore stimulus package for entrepreneurs in the farm sector by three months following lacklustre lending.

When the package was announced in April, banks were asked to disburse the fund by September 30. But they have shown a poor performance, prompting the banking regulator to extend the timeframe until December.

But, the Bangladesh Bank has been forced to extend the deadline until March next year as lenders gave out 55.86 per cent of the stimulus fund as of December 15, according to data from the central bank.

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# After a trying year, cement makers bracing for slow recovery



JAGARAN CHAKMA

With the year about to come to a close, the cement sector finally experienced some relief from the ongoing pandemic thanks to increased consumption alongside fresh investments.

Makers of the key construction material have been in a tight spot since the Covid-19 outbreak began as almost all major development projects in the country, both public and private, were halted for an extended period.

"The cement sector managed to survive even though the manufacturers sat idle throughout April-September," Mohammed Amirul Haque, managing director of Premier Cement, told The Daily Star.

But now, there are various projects to work on, including mega projects such as the Karnaphuli Tunnel.

"We got some orders from the construction sector and our factory is running at full capacity," he said, adding that Premier Cement supplies cement to at

**AT A GLANCE**

- Consumption fell to **33.15m** tonnes this year from **34.12m** tonnes last year
- Consumption posted **3pc** negative growth this year
- The sector saw **Tk 2,300cr** fresh investment
- Market size came down to **Tk 24,250cr** from **Tk 25,500cr**
- No manufacturers laid off employees
- Direct employment so far **60,000**



least 77 government projects.

According to the managing director, there is no need to waste time on counting losses amid the pandemic since no one knows when the situation will return to normalcy.

Despite these turbulent times though, investment in the cement sector did not cease as around Tk 2,300 crore was spent on the industry over the past few months.

Of this amount, Premier Cement spent Tk 800 crore to establish a new unit in Narayanganj and another for Tk 500 crore in Chattogram. However, the new units are yet to begin production despite having

been ready since March.

"We could not start production within the stipulated time due to the absence of some technical experts and workers of China and Denmark," Haque said.

Now, the cement maker expects to begin commercial production next March or April.

Bangladesh's cement sector has 43 per cent overcapacity and like others local Bashundhara Group also had unused capacity. So the group went beyond borders for opportunities and finally found it in Northeast India.

The local industrial conglomerate is

trying to grab the export market of this region through a Tk 1,000 crore investment geared towards doubling its manufacturing capacity through the establishment of a third production unit.

To materialise the plan, Bashundhara is mobilising Tk 700 crore from banks.

Bank Asia is acting as the lead arranger of this syndicated term loan for Bashundhara Industrial Complex while the other participants are: Dhaka Bank, First Security Islami Bank, Pubali Bank, Social Islami Bank and United Commercial Bank.

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## Edible oil prices on the rise

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Ctg

Local consumers now have to spend more on edible oil as prices are rising in the international market almost every week due to decreased production in exporting countries, weakening of supply chain and stockpiling amid the pandemic.

Retailers say soybean oil prices in the domestic market have increased by anywhere from Tk 10 to Tk 15 per kilogram the past month.

Now bottled ones are selling for Tk 115 to Tk 120 per kg while that sold loose for Tk 110 to Tk 112.

Retailers were found selling one litre containers of Rupchanda brand at Tk 120 to Tk 125 whereas it was Tk 110 a month ago.

In case of its five-litre containers, the prices now range from Tk 580 to Tk 590 against a former Tk 520.

Similarly, the prices of one litre containers of Teer, Pushti and other brands have jumped to Tk 113 to Tk 120 against a previous Tk 100 to Tk 105. For five litres it has gone up to Tk 570 from Tk 510.

Anam Ahmed, a retailer at Hamzarbag Market in Chattogram

**PRICE HIKE OF EDIBLE OIL**  
(Taka/per litre)

Oil Type	Price on Dec 29	Price on Nov 26	Change
SOYBEAN OIL	107	98-100	▲ 7-9
PALM OIL	95-97	86-91	▲ 6-9

SOURCE: TCB

city, said they were charging higher prices as the refiners had gradually done the same every week during the past few months.

"All the refiners have increased oil prices as well as reduced supplies owing to an import crisis and rising prices in the international market," he added. The same was said to have happened for wholesale prices of edible oil at Chattogram's Khatunganj, one of the country's largest wholesale

commodity hubs.

Soybean oil prices there rose by Tk 350 per maund (around 37.3 kg) to about Tk 4,180 to Tk 4,200. Similarly, palm oil now costs around Tk 3,600 to Tk 3,650 per maund, an increase of about Tk 275-Tk 300.

"The price of these products is higher as the supply of oil is less than the market demand," said wholesaler Abdur Rahman.

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## Stocks edging up amid yearend optimism

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The stock market rose by 5 per cent, or 260 points, over the past five days thanks to buoyancy in investor participation.

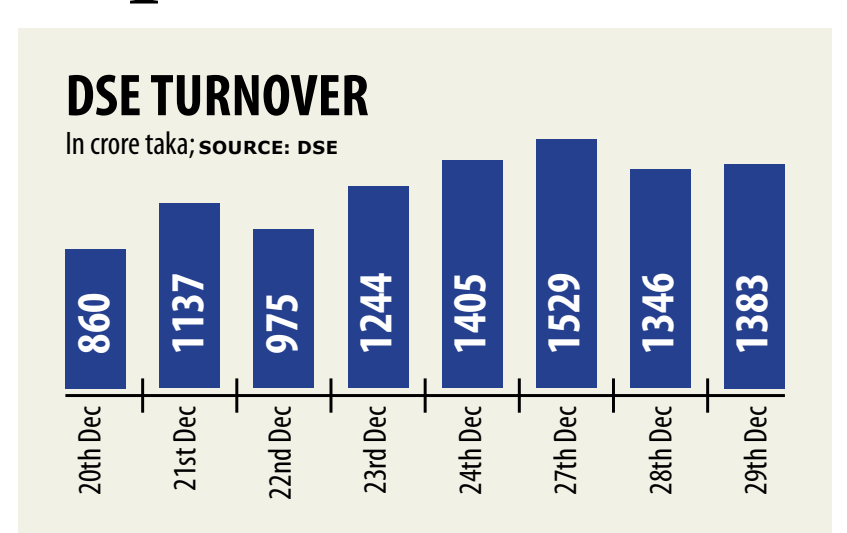
The DSEX, the Dhaka Stock Exchange's (DSE) benchmark index, edged up 14.24 points, or 0.26 per cent, to stand at 5,358.28 yesterday.

This occurred despite the downfall of most listed stocks, owing to an upward trend sweeping companies bearing large capital bases.

Of 363 companies to witness trade, 130 advanced, 168 declined and 65 remained unchanged.

Normally the stock market goes skywards when the calendar year's end draws near. This time around, some stocks had also turned lucrative for investment, said stock investor Arifur Rahman who has been involved in the market since 2006.

Furthermore, investors are gaining



confidence as the index had made a strong break for the 5,200 level, he said.

Several pharmaceutical companies showcased immense potential for

growth as the pandemic continues to linger, so people are investing into those to rake in higher dividends, Rahman added.

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**NCC Bank gets new MD**



**STAR BUSINESS DESK**  
NCC Bank saw the joining of its new managing director and chief executive officer on Monday.  
The appointee, Mohammad Mamdudur Rashid, was previously serving as additional managing director (business) of United Commercial Bank.  
He was also an independent director and chairman of the board's audit committee of IPDC Finance, according to a statement.  
Rashid also worked as group chief financial official of Brac and Brac International, prior to which he worked as additional managing director of Brac Bank.  
Rashid attained an MBA (finance) degree from the Institute of Business Administration of the University of Dhaka and an MA degree in international economics and finance from Brandeis University.

**Gig economy workers say they can no longer survive**

**AFP, Paris**  
Whether in Paris, Kuala Lumpur or California, gig economy workers fear they can no longer survive on meagre earnings from jobs that leave them increasingly vulnerable.  
The term "gig" stretches back a century to jazz musicians who used it to refer to a one-off show but now the "gig economy" involves millions of people in all sorts of jobs, from Uber drivers to Deliveroo delivery teams.  
Wissem Inal does more than 700 kilometres (450 miles) a week on his scooter, delivering up to 10 takeout meals in the Paris suburbs every evening.  
"At the moment, with the lockdown I end up with 500 euros (\$600) a month net," said the 32-year-old who has driven for Deliveroo since 2017 but also takes jobs for Uber Eats and Stuart.  
Inal has trouble seeing the "good side" of his job at the moment and criticises calculations by Deliveroo's algorithm that decide how much to offer him for jobs.  
"A delivery that's worth six euros at noon is worth just three euros in the evening. You can't earn a living with this job, unless you're willing to live like a slave."  
"He recently joined an association of gig delivery drivers that seeks to improve working conditions."  
"We should be able to defend ourselves," he maintains.  
When Erica Mighetto began driving with Lyft three years ago, "I just loved it", she said.  
Her grown son had left the house and

she thought it would be a great move until she found a job in bookkeeping or property management. "I really enjoyed, you know, choosing my own hours," she told AFP. "I thought life was good."  
"Mighetto lived in Sacramento but would drive more than an hour to the San Francisco area on weekends because there was more work in the richer towns.  
She slept in her car or shelled out \$25 for a room.  
Mighetto was pulling in \$60-\$80 an hour before expenses in 2017 but a series of rate cuts caused that to fall to \$20 at the beginning of the year and to less than \$10 in March. She finds the algorithms opaque and pernicious. "So it knows me personally," said Mighetto.  
"And the bonus offers were changed, you know, based on what I was willing to accept. "If friends were getting bonus offers of \$50 for doing 20 rides per week, the algorithm would offer her \$350 -- but for 120 rides a week.  
To get enough jobs and claim the bonus, drivers would accept lower fees. "You're in this like, vicious cycle black hole," said Mighetto.  
She does not buy the argument that gig work is flexible. "I personally call it on demand work... there's no flexibility -- you have to work when there's demand. You're going to work late nights, long weekends and every single holiday."  
In the spring, she gave up driving for fear of catching Covid-19 but had to fight for unemployment benefits of \$450 per week instead of the \$167 paid to gig workers.



**Mohammed Jahangir Alam, chairman of MI Cement Ltd (Crown Cement), presides over the company's 26th annual general meeting through a digital platform yesterday. The company approved 10 per cent cash dividend for the year ending on June 30, 2020. Molla Mohammad Majnu, managing director, was present.**

**A historic oil price collapse, with worries headed into 2021**



**An oil worker walks toward a drill rig after placing ground monitoring equipment in the vicinity of the underground horizontal drill in Loving County, Texas, U.S.**

**REUTERS, New York**  
This year was like no other for oil prices.  
Even as global prices end the year at about \$51 a barrel, near the average for 2015-2017, it masks a year of volatility. In April, U.S. crude plunged deep into negative territory and Brent dropped below \$20 per barrel, slammed by the COVID-19 pandemic and a price war between oil giants Saudi Arabia and Russia.  
The remainder of 2020 was spent recovering from that drop as the pandemic destroyed fuel demand around the world. While the short-lived decline of U.S. oil futures below negative-\$40 a barrel is not likely to be repeated in 2021, new lockdowns and a phased rollout of vaccines to treat the virus will restrain demand next year, and perhaps beyond.  
"We really haven't seen anything like this - not in the financial crisis, not after 9/11," said Peter McNally, global sector lead for industrials, materials and energy at research firm Third Bridge. "The impact on demand was remarkable and swift."  
Fossil-fuel demand in coming years

could remain softer even after the pandemic as countries seek to limit emissions to slow climate change. Major oil companies, such as BP Plc and Total SE, published forecasts that include scenarios where global oil demand may have peaked in 2019.  
World oil and liquid fuels production fell in 2020 to 94.25 million barrels per day (bpd) from 100.61 million bpd in 2019, and output is expected to recover only to 97.42 million bpd next year, the Energy Information Administration said.  
"Every cycle feels like the worst when you're going through it, but this one has been a doozy," said John Roby, chief executive of Dallas, Texas-based oil producer Teal Natural Resources LLC.  
As coronavirus cases spread, governments imposed lockdowns, keeping residents indoors and off the roads. Consumption of world crude and liquid fuels fell to 92.4 million bpd for the year, a 9 per cent drop from 101.2 million bpd in 2019, EIA said.  
The changing landscape poses a threat to refiners. About 1.5 million bpd of processing capacity has been

taken off the market, Morgan Stanley said.  
Worldwide crude distillation capacity is expected to keep rising, according to GlobalData, but falling demand and weak margins for gasoline, diesel and other fuels has prompted refiners in Asia and North America to close or curtail output, including several facilities along the U.S. Gulf Coast.  
Shutdowns in more developed economies "increase refineries' exposure to the highly competitive product export market," BP said in its outlook, released in September.  
The next several months are likely to be volatile as investors weigh tepid demand against another potential spike in oil supply from producers, including the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies.  
"Markets have been tumultuous and disorderly over the last 12 months with long-lasting implications, as we begin to form new contours of normality towards a post-virus equilibrium," Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group analysts said.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD  
Road Division, Pirojpur  
Phone No. 0461-62576/Fax: 0461-63599  
E-mail: pirdivisionrhd@gmail.com  
Memo No. 35.01.7980.462.07.001.20-2509 Dated: 27/12/2020

**Invitation of Quotation for Ferry Ghat Toll Collection (5th Invitation)**

1.	Lease Quotation Notice No.	03/PRD/2020-2021
2.	Name of quotation	Lease for Toll Collection of "Amrajhuri Ferry Ghat" at 40th(P) Km of Gariapar-Bananpara-Sarshina-Sawrupkathi-Kawkhali-Naikathi Road (Z-8033) under Pirojpur Road Division, during the three financial years.
3.	Lease implementation period	3 (three) financial years (1095 days).
4.	Price of lease quotation schedule	Tk 5000/- (five thousand) only per set (non-refundable).
5.	Security money	10% of quoted rate (including VAT and tax) (in favour of Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Pirojpur in the form of Pay Order or Bank Draft).
6.	Quotation last selling date	17/01/2021 up to office hour (5.00pm).
7.	Tender closing date and time	18/01/2021 at 12:30pm.
8.	Eligibility of lease quotationer	All interested persons/firms regardless of whether enlisted or not with the employer may submit quotation provided that they are otherwise qualified who can fulfill the qualification criteria stipulated in the quotation's document.
9.	Selling quotation document	Divisional Commissioner, Barisal/DC, Pirojpur, EE (RHD), Road Division-Pirojpur/Barisal/Jhalakati/Bhola/Planning Division-1, (P&D) Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka/SDE (RHD) Road Sub-Division, Pirojpur/Kawkhali.
10.	Receiving quotation document	D.C, Pirojpur, SE (RHD), Barisal Road Circle, Barisal, EE (RHD), Road Division, Pirojpur.
11.	Quotation opening place, date & time	Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Pirojpur, 18/01/2021 at 3:30pm.
12.		a. The concern authority reserves the right to accept or reject any/all quotations. b. If it is not possible to receive/open the quotation the schedule date for any unavoidable circumstances, the same will be received/opened on the next working date at the same time and same venue. c. The quotationer will quote the rate in figures & words. d. This Quotation Notice will also be seen at RHD website www.rhd.gov.bd.

Masud Mahmud Sumon  
ID No. 602165  
Executive Engineer (C.C), RHD  
Road Division, Pirojpur  
GD-2097

**DRC-ICAB gets top brass**



**STAR BUSINESS DESK**  
Md Selim Reza, a partner of ARTISAN-Chartered Accountants, and Md AKH Hasif Sowdagar, senior audit manager for group internal audit at Standard Chartered Bank, have recently been elected chairman and secretary respectively of Dhaka Regional Committee (DRC) of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) for 2021.  
The election took place at a DRC annual general meeting at the ICAB auditorium in Dhaka, according to a statement.  
Other members are Md Mohammad Redwanur Rahman, Ziaur Rahman Zia, AHM Ariful Islam, Miltan Bepari, Md Razib Hossain, Anika Sultana and Md Amran Hossain.

**AirAsia to sell bulk of stake in its Indian operations to Tata Sons**

**REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur**  
Malaysian budget airline AirAsia Group Bhd said on Tuesday it plans to sell 32.67 per cent of its stake in its Indian operations to majority shareholder Tata Sons for \$37.7 million.  
The airline, which until now owned 49 per cent of AirAsia India as part of a joint venture with the Indian conglomerate, said the sale would allow it to focus on its recovery in its key Southeast Asian markets amid the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel.  
"The directors having considered the rationale for the transaction and after careful consideration, are of the opinion unanimously that the transaction is in the best interest of AirAsia and its shareholders," the airline said in a bourse filing.  
The announcement comes two months after AirAsia shut its operations in Japan, citing highly challenging conditions amid the pandemic. Group Chief Executive Officer Tony Fernandes told Reuters in September that the group intended to consolidate and strengthen its foothold in Southeast Asia, which could mean exiting both Japan and India.

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়  
সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তর  
সড়ক বিভাগ, সুনামগঞ্জ  
ই-মেইলঃ eesun@rhd.gov.bd  
স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.৯০৮৯.৪২.০৭.০৫০.২০-৪১২১ তারিখঃ ২৮/১২/২০২০

**ফেরিঘাট ইজারা কোটেশন আহবান বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

০১।	ইজারা কোটেশন নং	:	০৪ (চার)/২০২০-২০২১/নিঃপ্রঃ, সওজ, সুনামগঞ্জ
০২।	ইজারার বিবরণ	:	২০২১-২০২২ইং অর্থ বছর ও পরবর্তী ০২ (দুই) অর্থ বছরের (২০২২-২০২৩ এবং ২০২৩-২০২৪) জন্য সুনামগঞ্জ সড়ক বিভাগীয় পাগলা-জগন্নাথপুর-রাণীগঞ্জ-আউসকান্দি সড়কের ৩০তম কি:মি:-এ অবস্থিত রাণীগঞ্জ ফেরিঘাট এর টোল আদায়ের ইজারা কোটেশন।
০৩।	ইজারা চুক্তির মেয়াদ	:	০৩ (তিন) অর্থ বছর (১০৯৫ দিন)।
০৪।	ইজারা কোটেশনের সিডিউল মূল্য	:	টঃ ৫০০০.০০ (পাঁচ হাজার টাকা মাত্র)।
০৫।	বায়নার টাকার পরিমাণ	:	উদ্ধৃত মূল্যের ১০% (শতকরা দশ ভাগ) ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার আকারে।
০৬।	ইজারা কোটেশন বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	১৭/০১/২০২১ খ্রীষ্টাব্দ তারিখ বিকাল ৫.০০ পর্যন্ত।
০৭।	মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় ইজারা কোটেশন গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	১৮/০১/২০২১ খ্রীষ্টাব্দ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.০০ পর্যন্ত।
০৮।	ইজারা ডাকে অংশগ্রহণের যোগ্যতা	:	ভ্যাট ও আয়কর সনদধারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/নাগরিক, সরকারি/বেসরকারি/স্বায়ত্বশাসিত সকল প্রতিষ্ঠানের ঠিকাদার।
০৯।	যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন প্রেরণের জন্য পাওয়া যাবে	:	জেলা প্রশাসক, সুনামগঞ্জ/নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, সুনামগঞ্জ/উপ-বিভাগ, সড়ক উপ-বিভাগ, সুনামগঞ্জ/সড়ক বিভাগ, সুনামগঞ্জ/সড়ক বিভাগ, সুনামগঞ্জ/বিভাগীয় কমিশনার সিলেট।
১০।	যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় গ্রহণ করা হবে	:	নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ সুনামগঞ্জ/তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সিলেট সড়ক সার্কেল, সিলেট/অতিরিক্ত প্রধান প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক জোন, সিলেট/বিভাগীয় কমিশনার, সিলেট/জেলা প্রশাসক, সুনামগঞ্জ।
১১।	ইজারা কোটেশন খোলার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	:	স্থানঃ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তর, সড়ক বিভাগ, সুনামগঞ্জ। তারিখঃ ১৮/০১/২০২১ খ্রীষ্টাব্দ। সময়ঃ ০৪.০০ ঘটিকা।
১২।	ইজারা আহবানকারী যে কোন সময় যে কোন কোটেশন/সকল কোটেশন বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।	:	

স্ব/=  
জহিরুল ইসলাম  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী  
সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তর  
সড়ক বিভাগ, সুনামগঞ্জ  
জিডি-২০৯৪

**লালমাই-ময়নামতি প্রকল্প**  
(আবাসনিক প্রকল্পের বার্ড অংশ)  
বার্ড, কোটবাড়ী, কুমিল্লা।  
স্মারক নং: ৪৭.৬৩.০০০০.০৬২(লালমাই).০০৭.০০৪.২০/৪২২ তারিখ: ২৮/১২/২০২০ খ্রি:

**দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

অত্র প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিম্নোক্ত পণ্য ক্রয়ের জন্য অভিজ্ঞ ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

বিবরণ	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি (টাকা)	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্টের মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য) (টাকা)	দরপত্র শেষ বিক্রয়ের তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় এবং দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়
প্যাকেজ নং-১	লট-১ Construction of Bio Compost Shade	১৫,০০০/=	১,০০০/=	দাখিল: ২১/০১/২০২১ দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত খোলাঃ ২১/০১/২০২১ দুপুর ১২:৩০ ঘটিকা
	লট-২ Construction of Mushroom Development and Cultivation Centre	১৫,০০০/=		
	লট-৩ Construction of Hydroponic Shed at BARD campus	১৫,০০০/=		
প্যাকেজ নং-২	লট-১ Supply of Chicks and Ducklings	৬৫,০০০/=	২,০০০/=	

বিস্তারিত তথ্যাদি টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট-এ উল্লেখ রয়েছে। টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট অফিস চলাকালীন নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তর হতে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই দরপত্র বাতিল/গ্রহণের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

২৮/১২/২০২০  
(ড. মোঃ শফিকুল ইসলাম)  
উপ-প্রকল্প পরিচালক  
লালমাই-ময়নামতি প্রকল্প  
বার্ড, কোটবাড়ী, কুমিল্লা।  
GD- 2099



## ETBL Securities MD Rizwan elected DCCI president

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Rizwan Rahman, managing director of ETBL Securities & Exchange and a director of Eastland Insurance Company and daily Financial Express, has been elected president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) for 2021.

Holding different DCCI posts since 2006 on attaining higher education from the United Kingdom, he heads several segments of ETBL Holdings, which also has a presence in dredging infrastructure, commodities trade, cold storage and furniture.

Rahman also served as a director of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries and Bangladesh Philippines Chamber of Commerce & Industry and as vice president of Dutch-Bangla Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Meanwhile, NKA Mobin, managing director of Emerging Credit Rating and a board director of state-run Biman Bangladesh Airlines, was re-elected senior vice president.

A fellow member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh and Institute of Chartered Secretaries Bangladesh, Mobin is also a board member at Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company, Mobil Jamuna Bangladesh and Shasha Denims.

Moreover, Monowar Hossain, proprietor of export-import firm Monowar Trading, was elected vice president.

The new board took charge at the DCCI's 59th annual general meeting yesterday, the chamber said in a statement.

The newly elected directors are Golam Zilani, Hossain A Sikder, Khairul Majid Mahmud, MA Rashid Shah Shamrat and Nasiruddin A Ferdous.



Rizwan Rahman

## bKash tops students' list as 'employer of choice'

Nielsen conducted the survey in 16 universities

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The country's largest mobile financial service provider bKash has emerged as the number one 'Employer of Choice' among 53 multinational and local companies across all sectors for the first time in the 2020 Campus Track Survey.

bKash has also been chosen as the 'Dream Employer' for the second year in a row with significant margin in both categories, the company said in a statement yesterday.

Final year BBA and MBA students of 2020 from selected top 16 universities in Bangladesh, including IBA of Dhaka University, IBA of Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh University of Professionals, Rajshahi University, Khulna University, Chittagong University, North South University and Brac University, took part in the survey.

Nielsen, the globally reputed organisation specialised in research, conducted the survey.

The survey was carried out based on three parameters -- industry preference, job, salary and campus activities and aspirational factors.

In terms of campus recruitment index (CRI) across all organisations, bKash excelled in all parameters with its campus activities, students' preference, attractive salary range, work environment, growth opportunity and job security.

During the survey, the final year business school students mentioned mostly about multinational FMCG and financial technology or MFS sectors in terms of best career opportunity for employment; this was followed by banking and telecom sector.

In terms of CRI (across all industries), bKash appeared as top-of-the-list among all 53 multinational and local companies.

bKash was able to retain its first position as the 'Dream Company' due to goodwill of the company and good

work environment. In "Best selection process" dimensions, bKash has also secured the top position.

In the survey, it was observed that top five important factors driving choice towards employers are: good reputation of the company in the market, learning opportunity, total salary package, independence and decision making scope at work and opportunities to work with and learn from in-house top talents.

bKash also offers management trainee (MT) programme in different universities and as per the survey, bKash MT programme became the best MT programme among all the companies. In addition, it arranges grooming and knowledge-sharing sessions for students on relevant topics. Along with these, bKash also provides paid internships where students go through an enriching learning experience on fintech by managing projects that have a direct impact on the business.

## Eastern Bank appoints two new DMDs

STAR BUSINESS DESK

MM Haikal Hashmi and M Khurshed Alam have been appointed deputy managing directors of Eastern Bank.



M Khurshed Alam

MM Haikal Hashmi

Hashmi was previously the deputy managing director, head of internal control and compliance and chief anti-money laundering compliance officer at IFIC Bank, where he had started his career as a management trainee.

He obtained a master's degree in banking and finance from Istituto Giordano Dell'amore, Italy.

Alam had previously served as deputy managing director for retail and SME at NRB Bank. He completed his MSS in public administration from the University of Dhaka and joined Eastern Bank as a management trainee.

## After a trying year, cement makers bracing for slow recovery

FROM PAGE B1

Through this expansion, Bashundhara's daily production capacity will reach 25,000 tonnes.

Khandoker Kingshuk Hossain, chief marketing officer of Bashundhara Cement, told The Daily Star that the sector will shrink by about 3 per cent this year due to lower consumption compared to last year.

The cement sector's market size reached 34.12 million tonnes in 2019 and it may come down to around 33.15 million tonnes this year.

"Business does not run equally every year as there are ups and downs. But this year was different due to the Covid-19 fallout," Hossain said.

The sector suffered an unprecedented collapse in demand between April-May, when the government declared a nationwide shutdown to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Sales started to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels from June-July.

"But it will still take time to return to full capacity as both government and private development works are yet to gain momentum," said Mohammad Shahidullah, first vice-president of the Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers Association (BCMA).

Regarding the overall situation, he said that aside from the coronavirus pandemic, repeated flooding has wreaked havoc on the country's construction projects and the cement sector is bearing the brunt.

Besides, manufacturers were unable to collect their dues from dealers and contractors as they too were devastated by the pandemic, added Shahidullah, also managing director of Metrocem Cement.

Cement makers often found themselves in a tight spot even before the pandemic began, when overproduction led to unhealthy competition.

Asadul Haque Sufiyan, chief operating officer of Bengal Cement, recently said that because of the pandemic, cement consumption will likely to come down to 7 per cent this year from the 12-15 per cent average growth it clocked for the last few years.

Sales increased slightly as mid-income people and expatriates started purchasing the key construction material but the government's purchase for development projects is yet to reach expected levels, he added.

The sector's confidence is still intact largely due to steadily growing demand in a country where the per capita cement consumption is very low. There are 37 active cement factories in Bangladesh and more than Tk 30,000 crore has been invested in the industry.

Manufacturers have a combined annual production capacity of 58 million tonnes against a local demand of 33 million tonnes. In the 1990s, Bangladesh used to meet 95 per cent of its total demand for cement through import but the requirement is now met entirely by the local industry, where annual sales have reached \$3 billion, according to the BCMA.

Of this consumption, individuals account for 25 per cent, real estate companies and developers 30 per cent and the public sector 45 per cent.

The industry employs 60,000 people directly and another one million indirectly.

## Stimulus funds hardly reaching farmers

FROM PAGE B1

As per the central bank rules, the affected clients of banks can receive an additional 20 per cent of their existing credit ceiling under the scheme.

In case of new borrowers, banks will fix the credit ceiling through scrutiny. Loans taken under the scheme cannot be used to adjust the old credit of the clients.

The tenure for the loans will be 18 months, including a grace period of six months at both banks and clients' ends.

Banks will borrow from the refinancing scheme at 1 per cent interest rate, which they will lend at 4 per cent.

## Govt lowers first-year GDP growth target

FROM PAGE B1

However, International Monetary Fund in its latest World Economic Outlook published in October, projected that the country's GDP growth may stand at 7.3 per cent in fiscal 2024-25.

But the government remains very optimistic about the growth plan and seems unfazed by the prospect of the delayed recovery anticipated by its development partners.

"The development partners have said that the recovery will be prolonged but we don't expect that," M Shamsul Alam, a member of the General Economics Division and the main author of the plan, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We think recovery will be swift and the economic growth would be according to our projection," he said.

"The government thinks that the economy will rebound because of our domestic demand. Hopefully, we will achieve all the goals we have set in the eighth plan," he added. The plan's implementation will require Tk 64,959.8 billion in FY21.

Of this amount, Tk 12,301.2 billion (18.9 per cent) would come from the public sector and Tk 52,658.6 billion (81.1 per cent) from the private sector.

Planning Minister MA Mannan said the private sector would invest following the policy of the government.

"The private sector will enjoy freedom but it will be within the government's policy," Mannan added.

Out of the estimated Tk 64,959.8 billion, Tk 57,483.9 billion (88.5 per cent) is scheduled to come from domestic sources and Tk 7,475.9 billion (11.5 per cent) from foreign sources.

## Delivery Hero gets \$4b Woowa deal approval, must sell South Korean unit

REUTERS, Seoul/Munich

Germany's Delivery Hero will sell South Korean food delivery app Yogiyo as part of the conditions for regulatory approval of its \$4 billion takeover of top South Korean food delivery app owner Woowa Brothers.

The sale clears a major hurdle for Delivery Hero in gaining the dominant position in the world's third-largest online food delivery market, as competition heats up amid accelerated demand triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. Delivery Hero agreed last year to buy Woowa in a buyout that throws it a lifeline in an intensely competitive market.

Shares in Delivery Hero rose 3.6 per cent after its statement accepting the decision, and adding in a regulatory filing that it expected to close the deal in the first quarter of next year.

"We are deeply saddened by the

required condition to divest Delivery Hero's subsidiary," Chief Executive and co-founder Niklas Östberg said in the statement, while welcoming the regulatory approval.

"We... will work hard to ensure that this transition is as smooth as possible for all impacted employees."

On Monday, the Korea Fair Trade Commission (KFTC) had said it would approve the takeover on condition that Delivery Hero sold its entire stake in No. 2 food delivery app Yogiyo within six months, with the possibility of an extension.

The sale would ease concerns that diners would end up paying more under the current deal, while allowing the synergy that Delivery Hero cited as the reason for the acquisition, said KFTC chief Joh Sung-wook.

"Delivery Hero said the purpose of this deal is to combine its logistics technology and Woowa's marketing

ability, and I think this is sufficiently possible," she told a briefing.

KFTC said the combined market share of the entity resulting from the takeover, if the unit was not sold, would have been 97 per cent of food delivery transactions by July.

Even without Yogiyo, Woowa's No.1 app had about 15.8 million monthly active users by November, or 82 per cent of all food delivery apps' monthly active users in South Korea, says mobile big data platform IGAWorks.

South Korea ranks third in the food delivery market after China and the United States, Euromonitor data showed, and is expected to grow 40% this year to about \$15.4 billion.

Highlighting the growing market competition is the rapid spread in the Seoul region of Coupang Eats, a rival service by SoftBank-backed e-commerce firm Coupang launched in April 2019.

## Stocks edging up amid yearend optimism

FROM PAGE B1

In the past few weeks, Beximco Pharmaceuticals and Square Pharmaceuticals reigned supreme in the list of gainers and turnover as their stocks were higher in demand.

Another source of hope was the arrival of some new companies in the past few months, including Robi Axiata, which in turn renewed investor confidence, added the stock broker.

Turnover, an important indicator of the market, rose 2.74 per cent to Tk 1,383 crore yesterday.

Eastern Cables topped the gainers' list rising 9.99 per cent followed by

Dominage Steel Building Systems, Crystal Insurance, Intraco Refueling Station and Robi Axiata.

Beximco saw its stocks being traded the most, worth Tk 133 crore, followed by Beximco Pharmaceuticals, IFIC Bank, LankaBangla Finance and BD Finance.

GQ Ball Pen shed the most, losing 7.39 per cent, followed by Eastern Lubricants Blenders and Vanguard AML BD Finance Mutual Fund One.

In turn, banking stocks fell yesterday as investors are apprehending a downing of profits, and subsequently the asset quality, once the year ends

for the pandemic, said a stock broker.

Of the listed 30 banking stocks, 26 fell and four remained the same, shows the DSE data.

The fall of banking stocks, along with most of the mutual funds, had somewhat an impact on the index, he said.

Meanwhile, the port city bourse also witnessed a rise. The benchmark index of Chittagong Stock Exchange, the CSCX, rose 40.31 points, or 0.43 per cent, to stand at 9,332.

Of 285 companies to witness trade of their stocks, 106 rose, 117 fell and 62 remained unchanged.

## FBCCI pushes for extending loan moratorium

FROM PAGE B1

The moratorium on bank loans was introduced in the middle of March after the pandemic arrived on the shores of the country and began hammering economic activities for the following three months.

The support was expected to last until the end of June. Later it was extended up to September as the health crisis showed no signs of abating.

On September 28, the central bank extended the moratorium up to this ongoing month of December.

This has helped bring down non-performing loans (NPLs) in the banking sector in the third quarter (July-September) of this year.

The NPLs stood at Tk 94,440 crore as of September, down 1.74 per cent from that three months earlier and 18.73 per cent year-on-year, showed data from the central bank.

Although this moratorium facility adversely impacted the loan recovery of banks, it caused their net profits to go up significantly, since it massively decreased the amount of provision needed to be kept against the NPLs.

As per the banking rules, lenders are allowed to transfer the interest of the loans, which is yet to be realised, to their income books.

This caused the net profit to become enlarged, soaring 33.60 per cent year-on-year to Tk 2,424 crore in the first half of 2020.

Such interest is treated as an accrued interest in banking norms. Banks are allowed to show the accrued interest as income, but such amounts have to be treated as an interest in suspense if loans become defaulted.

Against this backdrop, the central

bank asked banks to set aside an additional amount of around Tk 10,000 crore in provisioning to absorb shocks arising from the ongoing financial crisis.

Lenders must keep an extra 1 per cent provision than what they now maintain for all types of unclassified loans, according to a central bank notice issued on December 10.

"We had requested the central bank in September to extend the moratorium until March next year. The latest request is for extension of the support considering the ongoing economic situation," Sheikh Fazle Fahim, president of the FBCCI, told The Daily Star.

The apex trade body of the country has not requested waiving loans or interest but rather to extend the support for another six months, he said.

Both proposals of the platforms are illogical, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

The wholesale moratorium facility cannot be expected further as this will worsen the financial health of banks, he said.

"Banks can offer the moratorium on a case-to-case basis to certain borrowers with prior approval from the central bank," said Mansur, also chairman of Brac Bank.

Salehuddin Ahmed, a former governor of the central bank, echoed him.

Although the second wave of the Covid-19 has already started, borrowers should not be allowed to enjoy the moratorium further, he said.

"We have to run the businesses to keep pace with the deadly flu.

## Berger awards six young painters

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Berger Paints Bangladesh has awarded six young painters under the Berger Young Painters' Art Competition (BYPAC) this year.

Berger handed over prize money, crests and certificates among the winners at the silver jubilee round of the BYPAC programme held at Berger Bhaban in the city's Uttara on December 28.

The leading paint manufacturer organises the programme every year with the objective to encourage the promising artists of the country.

"BYPAC established itself as a platform for talented artists and has given them the opportunity to attain national recognition for their brilliant works of art," Rupali Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh, said while addressing the event.

She expressed her gratitude to the artist community of Bangladesh, who have supported and facilitated BYPAC every year.

Chowdhury said: "There have been some marvellous submissions this year. I have been truly inspired by the display of talent by the young artists. Given the increasing number of submissions and participating artists in the competition since 1996, this competition has proven its role in uplifting the creative development of Bangladesh's youth."

Professor Nisar Hossain, dean of the fine arts faculty of Dhaka University and chairman of 25th BYPAC Jury Committee, praised all who are associated with the competition for making it a success amidst the ongoing pandemic.

Jayatu Chakma, secured first position in this year's competition with his painting titled 'Lockdown', Sumiya Mehemaz Joya and Rumana Rahman secured second and third positions respectively.

Md Rafiqul Islam, Saiyad Saif Ali and Shahed Hossain were the rest three of the top six painters.

A total of 772 paintings were submitted and 392 of them took part in the competition.

The jury board also consisted noted artists Sheikh Afzal Hossain, Asmita Alam Shamy, Ahmed Shamsuddoha, Kanak Champa Chakma and Mohammad Iqbal Ali.

The winners will get chance to take part in an art workshop at Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata.

## India's financial sector faces challenging times ahead: RBI

REUTERS, Mumbai

India's financial sector should brace for challenging times ahead with an increased risk of deterioration in asset quality and lower demand for loans, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a report on Tuesday.

The central bank has introduced various measures to support the banking sector including a relaxation in recognition and provisions for bad loans to protect lenders and creditors during the coronavirus pandemic. The roll back of these measures could now hit the books of banks.

"The challenge is to rewind various relaxations in a timely manner, reining in loan impairment and adequate capital infusion

for a healthy banking sector," the central bank said in its annual report on Trends and Progress of Banking in India.

## Edible oil prices on the rise

FROM PAGE B1

Soybean oil price has risen from Tk 3,100 in several phases to Tk 4,200 per maund in the last four months. Similarly, the price of palm oil has also increased from Tk 2,950 to Tk 3,650 per maund, he said. The prices went up almost every week for a shortage, he added.

Most of the country's demand for soybean oil is met through imports from Brazil and Argentina where production has declined due to the pandemic, said Nasir Uddin Chowdhury, director of the TK Group of Industries.

"The export-import chains are yet to normalise due to the coronavirus situation."

On the other hand, large countries, including China, are stockpiling edible oil amid the potential threat of a second wave of the virus in the winter, which could once again fuel the prices, he told The Daily Star.



EXPECTATIONS FROM 2021

# Vaccination, education and sustained economic recovery



ZAHID HUSSAIN

The new year always carries the legacy of the year gone by. Expectations for the new year are naturally conditioned by these legacies. This is true every year. But 2021 is starting from an exceptional footing. Preceded by a prolonged 10 months of unprecedented trauma and fear all the world over, 2021 inherits the legacies of a year that will go down in history as the most cursed in last hundred years.

**Looking back**  
The pandemic caused the wheels of the global economy to brake and restart off and on as the virus found a way of striking back even in countries that excelled in flattening its' spread. Bangladesh like others had no immunity from the health and economic consequences of the virus. Thousands died and tens of thousands got infected. As in most countries, official statistics underrepresent the full extent of infections and fatalities.

The economy slowed like never in recent memory. Progress on poverty reduction and human development was partially reversed as the incomes from employment in services crashed suddenly, industrial activity suffered serious setback, trade faced major disruptions and schools remained closed since March till we still do not know when. A vast majority of the population receded down the income ladder while few lucky ones with higher order skills, digital access and elite connectivity prospered.

The never ending 2020 ended with a shining note of optimism as vaccines begun to emerge successfully from clinical trials. Yet the virus found a way of saying forget me not by mutating into a 75 per cent more transmissible new strain in several parts of the world including Bangladesh.

What then can we reasonably expect from 2021? While the wish list is long, expectations must respect the laws of the probable.

Fortification against the virus  
Among these, fortifying the population with vaccination against the virus is central. Herd immunity through vaccination of a critical mass is the only permanent solution



SK ENAMUL HAQ

Schoolgoers are unlearning what they had learned before, as the ongoing pandemic has kept educational institutions closed since March.

followed by cures or therapeutics. Until these are attained, public health measures such as testing, treating, and isolating couple with behavioural changes such as masking, social distancing, hand washing and so on are the only ways of containing the community spread of the virus. As we are learning from most countries, the latter are challenged by virus fatigue. It will therefore make sense to shoot for vaccination of a critical mass of Bangladeshi population by the end of 2021.

About 20 per cent population may be vaccinated by next June, according to some reports. High level government officials assure that the 120,000 centres under the Expanded Program on Immunization across the country can vaccinate 5 million people per month. This will not get us 20 per cent vaccination in six months even if we start from January 1. The government is reportedly planning to vaccinate

slightly over 138 million people to achieve herd immunity. With 5 million vaccinated per month it will take 27.6 months to get there. This will complicate achieving herd immunity if the vaccines provide protection for only a year or so.

The existing immunisation workers are reportedly adept in post-vaccine risk management, cold chain monitoring and record keeping, including vaccine card preparation. But the existing numbers may be inadequate, thus requiring partnership with non-state actors to bridge the gap with adequate and speedy training for all. Procurement and distribution of the vaccine throughout the country will be a challenge unmatched in its magnitude by anything else in recent memory. Getting nearly 280 million doses of the vaccine when rich nations have already pre-ordered dozens far exceeding expected supply will require more than just the ability to pay. Most countries facing severe Covid-19 epidemics are mature advanced economies with vast resources, strong institutions, and powerful administrative systems. This favours their capacity to acquire and distribute the vaccines as felt needed by their authorities.

Getting children back on learning track  
Reopening schools to stem the acceleration in learning poverty is the second key expectation. This cannot wait for achieving herd immunity. The whole enterprise of online learning is plainly and irrevocably inadequate when a vast majority of school age population cannot access it. Evidence is already emerging that online learning is leading to an education gap that is almost certainly growing wider by the day. Children in poor households

suffer disproportionately from school closures are missing out on school meals and find it harder to access digital learning in oftentimes overcrowded and poorly connected environments. Children are not learning. Worse, they are unlearning what they had learned before the pandemic. The lucky ones have digital access and parents who can take time off from work to help with lessons and maybe even conduct supplementary lessons of their own. Most families do not have such capabilities.

If the community transmission risk of returning to school does not appear to be high for either students or teachers, as the data seems to suggest, why are schools still closed in large parts of the country? There is growing international evidence that reopening is not only safe but, in fact, one of the few safe things a nation can do in a pandemic. Of course, we want to be safe than sorry. This means schools must be armed with an environment allowing access to testing, and adherence to masking, social distancing, and sanitisation practices. This is challenging but doable if the parents, public health specialists, teachers, regulatory authorities, and schools' management act in concert.

Surely, a solution can be worked out that would stop bleeding in learning. Our expectation from 2021 is to get back on track to achieving the reduction in learning poverty goals. According to the World Bank, 5 months of school closures due to Covid-19 can result in an immediate loss of 0.6 years of schooling adjusted for quality. Bangladesh was already struggling with a learning crisis prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

Sustaining and accelerating economic recovery

Sustaining and speeding up economic recovery is the third major expectation. Covid-19 shuttered factories, curtailed domestic demand, postponed investments, and collapsed global trade. Unemployment, loss of income and inflation in healthcare prices pushed existing poor deeper into poverty and the vulnerable into poverty, including many middle-income households. This was particularly the case for household depending on the large informal sector without access to health care and social protection.

Putting poverty reduction back on track will require containing food inflation while restoring income and employment back to pre-pandemic levels. The latter were weak to begin with. All the key macroeconomic activity indicators such as exports, imports, private credit, VAT collections, industrial production, electricity generation and mobility, available monthly through November, suggest significant recovery relative to April-May, but either lower or close to the pre-pandemic levels in most cases. The largest services sector is stuck what may turn into a secular stagnation because of aggregate demand externalities. A simultaneous shock to income of a vast majority of households and relatively high contraction risk in human contact-based services have depressed demand for services in general, not to speak of demand for many fast-moving consumer goods.

A strong rebound in the global economy, propelled by the unleashing of pent-up demand as vaccination spreads in developed and emerging economies, will present renewed and expanded opportunities for exports of both merchandise and labour.

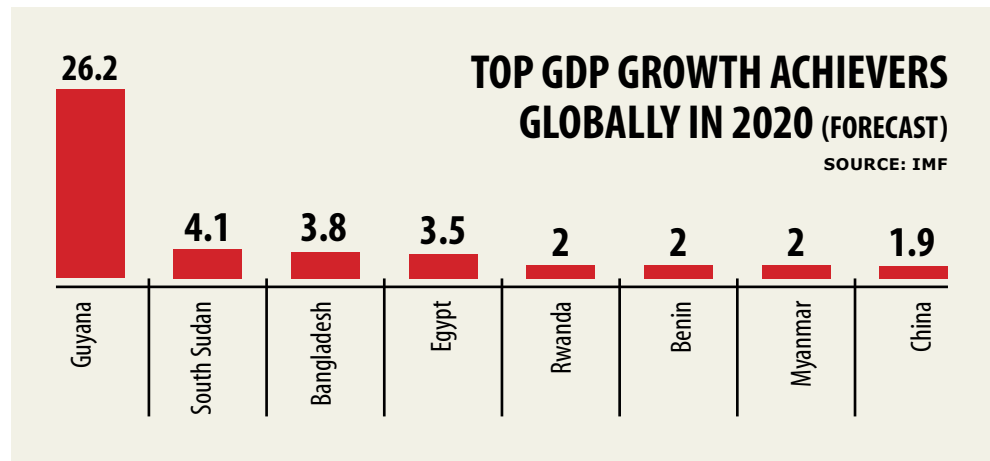
While successful immunisation will not act as an instant economic remedy, economies and businesses globally are currently expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2021. Unlocking of strong pent-up demand in key economic sectors such as tourism, aviation, restaurants, entertainment, and medium and small businesses could subsequently generate economic expansion not seen in recent decades.

The IMF is projecting the global economy will grow by plus 4.3 per cent in 2021 and plus 3.7 per cent in 2022. We expect to see Bangladesh get better organised in 2021 to reconnect with the process of a rejuvenated global recovery.

Effective public health measures such as ramping up testing and treating; behavioural change such as masking, social distancing and minimising congregated indoor gatherings; and improved design and implementation of policy support can be expected to revive feeble domestic demand and make the operation of supply chains safe.

But these will not be enough to trigger up the animal spirits that drive private investments. Structural reforms, policy predictability and macroeconomic stability will be key to earn the financial votes of confidence from the local as well as foreign entrepreneurs and investors.

The writer is the former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office.



GLOBAL BUSINESS

## Trump administration bolsters order barring US investment in Chinese firms

REUTERS, Washington

The Trump administration on Monday strengthened an executive order barring US investors from buying securities of alleged Chinese military-controlled companies, following disagreement among US agencies about how tough to make the directive.

The Treasury Department published guidance clarifying that the executive order, released in November, would apply to investors in exchange-traded funds and index funds as well as subsidiaries of Chinese companies designated as owned or controlled by the Chinese military.

The "frequently asked questions" release, posted on the Treasury website on Monday, came after Reuters and other news outlets reported that a debate was raging within the Trump administration over the guidance.

The State Department and the Department of Defense had pushed back against a bid by Treasury Department to water down the executive order, a source said.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday that the announcement "ensures US capital does not contribute to the development and modernization of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) military, intelligence, and security services."

"This should allay concerns that US investors might unknowingly support (Chinese military-controlled companies) via direct, indirect, or



Donald Trump

other passive investments," he added. The Chinese foreign ministry said on Tuesday that China is firmly opposed to the "smeared of China's military-civilian integration strategy." "Politicizing economy and trade, abusing the power of the state, stretching the concept of national security, such actions go against the principles of market competition and international trade that the United States has always prided itself with," the foreign ministry's spokesperson's office told Reuters.

Specifically, some media outlets reported that Treasury was seeking to exclude Chinese companies'

subsidiaries from the scope of the White House directive, which bars new purchases of securities of 35 Chinese companies that Washington alleges are backed by the Chinese military, starting in November 2021.

The guidance released on Monday specifies that the prohibitions apply to "any subsidiary of a Communist Chinese military company, after such subsidiary is publicly listed by Treasury."

It added that the agency "intends to list" publicly traded entities that are 50 per cent or more owned by a Chinese military company or controlled by one.

## How India's grain policies have stoked FCI's debt binge

REUTERS, New Delhi/Mumbai

Food Corporation of India (FCI), the state grain procurement agency, buys rice and wheat from growers every season at guaranteed prices but farmers fear that those purchases may end under new agricultural laws at the centre of recent protests.

Farmers say the new laws will shut the regulated wholesale markets they depend on to take their produce. But FCI has racked up huge debts from the purchases required to meet its role as a buyer of last resort and to supply India's food welfare program.

For years, India's federal government, across different administrations, has ordered FCI to purchase grain in excess of its requirement to run the world's biggest food welfare programme as a buyer of last resort to placate farmers.

FCI's safety net encourages farmers, especially from states such as Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh to grow tonnes of rice and wheat.

FCI supplies grain to more than 800 million beneficiaries entitled to receive 5 kg (11 pounds) of rice and wheat every month at 3 rupees (4.1 US cents) and 2 rupees a kg, respectively.

Robust output in many states and rising purchases by FCI have led to overflowing warehouses.

By the end of the crop year to June 2020, FCI's rice and wheat stocks surged to 97.27 million tonnes against its requirement of 41.12 million

tonnes.

According to official estimates, the value of the extra grain lying at state warehouses comes to about \$39 billion.

FCI cannot export the grain as its rice and wheat are more expensive than world prices.

Also, World Trade Organization rules restrict exports of grain meant for welfare programmes.

Punjab and Haryana were at the forefront of India's Green Revolution in the 1960s and have traditionally

accounted for the bulk of FCI's purchases.

But in the past two decades farmers from other states such as Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have ramped up rice and wheat output, increasing FCI's purchases.

In 2020, Madhya Pradesh sold 12.94 million tonnes of wheat to FCI against 351,000 tonnes in 2000/01. FCI's purchase of rice from Chhattisgarh totalled 5.2 million tonnes this year, up from 857,000 tonnes two decades ago.



REUTERS/FILE

A worker carries a ladder past sacks filled with wheat at a Food Corporation of India (FCI) warehouse in Morinda in Punjab.