

More sectors to be brought under VAT from next fiscal

UNB, Dhaka

The tax net is going to be cast wide in the next budget as the new government, which has undertaken some ambitious development agenda, has instructed the National Board of Revenue to enhance revenue collection from VAT sector.

Sources in the NBR said they are now defining new areas for imposing the Value Added Tax (VAT), which comes from the pocket of the consumer.

Besides, the NBR team is also scrutinising and examining from which sectors the VAT exemption could be done away with. The government, issuing SROs (statutory regulatory order) at different times, exempted various sectors and sub-sectors from VAT.

In this connection, the NBR official mentioned that the government already has taken decision to abolish tax exemption from the import of mild steel (MS) rods to protect the

local re-rolling mills. "A statutory regulatory order to this effect will be issued very soon," he said.

There will be 15 percent VAT on the import of steel products as presently there is no VAT but only a 7 percent import duty imposed on imported rods.

Earlier, in the middle of 2008, the caretaker government abolished VAT and reduced duty to 7 percent from 25 percent to facilitate real estate and construction sectors when the price of MS rod hit an astronomical high.

The finance minister gave his green signal for expanding the VAT base to earn more revenue from this sector as the revenue earnings from import level has been on the downturn.

The government is now on a hectic move to increase its revenue from direct tax sectors due to the downtrend in revenue receipt from import duties.

In the recent trend the revenue collection is becoming insignificant day by day due to the rules and regulations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and price fall on the international market, now under shocks from the sweeping recession. The revenue generation from imports will have to suffer more in the near future as the WTO is heading towards a duty-free world.

"We already had found out some new sectors we could impose VAT on," said one NBR official.

But, he said, everything depends on the finance ministry. "We got the instruction to figure out the way of enhancing revenue collection from the VAT sector," he added.

In the current fiscal year, the target for revenue collection from VAT is Tk 10,681 crore from local level while Tk 9,562 crore from import level.

The collection of VAT from import level stood at Tk

6391.46 crore with a 12.10 percent growth as on April 26 while from local level Tk 7397.39 crore, marking an 18.79 percent growth.

With the decline of import duties, the revenue collection from import-level VAT will also fall down the mark.

That means the revenue collection from the local-level VAT has to be increased by way of bringing more people onto the tax net—to cope with the higher target of revenue.

The finance minister in a recent visit to the NBR hinted that the revenue target for fiscal 2009-10 year, first under his custodianship of the national exchequer, would be no less than Tk 60,000 crore. And he also instructed the NBR officials to enhance revenue from direct tax.

Additional revenue incomes are an imperative to finance the next budget that could have a total outlay somewhere around one hundred thousand crore taka.



Local residents wait in a long queue at Wireless Gate in Maghbaraz in the city yesterday to collect drinking water being supplied by Army men. Residents in many areas of the city are facing acute water crisis recently.



A session of special prayer was held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the city after Juma prayers yesterday for early recovery of ailing nuclear scientist Dr MA Wazed Miah, husband of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Migratory bird fair kicks off

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday got a different look as pictures and models of over 100 migratory birds were on display along the corridors of its compound.

Visitors and bird-lovers thronged the TSC compound since morning to visit a migratory bird fair organised in connection with the celebration of the World Migratory Bird Day.

15 injured in AL-BNP clash in Noakhali

UNB, Noakhali

At least 15 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Awami League and BNP at Muradnagar in Sonaimuri in the district Thursday evening.

Police, however, held six, who are alleged to be BNP cadres, early yesterday in connection with the incident.

The arrestees were identified as Nazmul Hossain, 30, Saddam Hossain, 28, Amir Hossain, 26, Sohel, 27, Babar, 23 and Manik, 24.

A group of BNP activists, led by Sonapur Union Jubo Dal President Yusuf, attacked AL activists when they were going to Muradnagar from Amishapara by a CNG-run autorickshaw on Thursday evening.

The BNP workers hacked Nurul Amin, 30, Shakib Hossain, 28 and Kamal, 27, indiscriminately.

As the news spread, AL activists rushed to the spot and launched a counter attack on the BNP activists and a clash ensued, leaving at least 12 people from both sides injured.

The feuding groups also ransacked four houses of their rivals.

Of the injured, AL activists Amin, Shakib and Kamal were at first rushed to Noakhali General Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka as their conditions deteriorated. The other injured were taken to local hospital.

In a sequel to Thursday's clash, the BNP cadres yesterday vandalised two decorator shops of Nurunnabi, elder brother of critically injured Nurul Amin, at Tinteri Hirapur Bazar yesterday morning.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

This year the theme of the day was 'Barriers to Migration'.

The two-day fair began with a colourful procession and release of balloons at 9:00am.

The slogan of the fair was 'Pakhira Sob Beche Thak, Prithibita Jure Thak' (Long live all birds flying across the globe).

Pictures of migratory birds, mostly taken from Bangladesh, were hung on the walls creating a unique environment at the compound.

Drawing competition on birds for children, quizzes on birds for all and a song of Ranjit Das Baoul and Kafil Ahmed were the special events at the fair.

Besides, slideshow and video presentation on migratory bird also attracted bird lovers and students.

Dr Narendra Prasad delivered a special lecture titled 'Geospatial Tolls and Avian Habitats' at TSC auditorium in the afternoon.

Today, children will draw pictures with noted artist Hashem Khan in the morning while DU Vice-chancellor Prof

AAMS Arefin Siddique will distribute prizes among the winners at noon.

The main objective of the fair is to ensure a peaceful habitat for the migratory birds in Bangladesh.

The organisers said thousands of migratory birds are slaughtered illegally in the country every year.

These birds come here from cold regions during winter season for food and shelter in the rivers and haors of Bangladesh, they said, adding that their security should be ensured.

"Our main goal is to create awareness among people about migratory birds and ensure a peaceful environment for them," said a member of Dhaka University Tourists' Society.

The fair has been organised jointly by Bangladesh Bird Club, Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh, Zoology department of Dhaka University, Bangladesh Bird Preservation Society, Bangladesh Wildlife Society, Bangladesh Scouts and the Department of Forest.

Eastern Housing Ltd has sponsored the fair.

One dies in rooftop fall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man died after falling from the rooftop of a one-storied building in Tejgaon industrial area in the city yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mahbubur Rahman, 30, son of Chan Mia of Begunbari area.

After finding Mahbub lying on the ground around 11:00am, his family members rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at around 2:30pm, family sources said.

Police said he was in a drunken state when he went to the rooftop.

'Help bring war criminals to book'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The government is facing conspiracies mainly for its election pledges that include trial of war criminals, steps against militancy and restoration of the spirit of the Liberation War in the constitution.

This was stated by Shahriar Kabir, president of Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, a forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals, yesterday.

He was addressing a public meeting at Bhubon Mohon Park in Rajshahi demanding speedy trial of the war criminals.

"We are concerned as the government's move to try the war criminals is being hindered. If the trial is not held, the existence of the nation would be at stake," said Kabir.

He called upon all to stay alert on streets to help bring the war criminals to book.

Dr Sujit Sarker, vice-president of the district unit of Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, chaired the meeting.

Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzaman Liton, Dr Sayed Shafikul Islam, Zihad Ali Mamun, Mostafizur Rahman Khan Alam, Abul Kalam Azad and Abdullah Al Masud also spoke.

Cash fails to heal wounds for child jockeys

AFP, Gazipur

Munna Mia was just five when his family fled to the Middle East to escape the hardships in the country -- but all that awaited him was a life of danger, pain and hunger as a child camel jockey.

His father, a bricklayer, had been offered a job in the United Arab Emirates by a recruitment agent who told him he could bring his wife and three children if he paid a 4,500 dollar fee.

Grinding poverty and a lack of jobs drove Mia's father to scrape together some of the money by selling the land he owned and getting loans from family and friends.

The rest he borrowed from the agent, with the promise it would be repaid with money he earned in Dubai.

But the dreams of Mia and his family were shattered when they arrived, and he and his two brothers -- all aged between three and eight -- were forced to ride in camel races for long hours under the desert sun.

"We didn't get much to eat and every morning they would weigh us. If we were even a

gram over 20 kilograms we would be beaten with a stick that gave us electric shocks," Mia told AFP.

"My brothers and I were separated from our parents and lived in a hostel with other jockeys.

"For a year, they trained us by just throwing us on top of a camel and I often fell off. I still have lots of problems because of all the injuries."

Mia and his brothers were among thousands of South Asian children used as camel jockeys in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states after being brought in by traffickers or under false pretences with their families.

"The hot sand would burn my feet. We'd come back at night and we were exhausted. Every day I'd wonder if I would die," said Mia, who rode in races until he was nine.

He seldom wore a helmet and his uniform was a cotton pair of shorts and T-shirt.

The UAE this week gave the authorities in Bangladesh nearly 1.5 million dollars to compensate almost 900 former child jockeys for the injuries and abuse they suffered.

State Minister for Home Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj, whose department is in charge of distributing the funds, said each child would get between 1,000 and 10,000 dollars depending on their circumstances.

The money would pay for their medical treatment and education, he said.

"Using children as camel jockeys was despicable. It stirred the world's conscience," Ahmed said, adding that the UAE government told him that robots were now being used in place of children.

The UAE officially banned child jockeys in 1993 although abuses remained widespread until 2005, UNICEF said. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), thousands of boys from Bangladesh, Pakistan and also Sudan were forced to become jockeys in the Middle East, where their small size was valued in the competitive camel racing scene.

They frequently fell off, sustaining injuries that could be fatal if they were trampled on.

For Mia's father, Abul

Kashem Mia, 45, watching his sons being used in such a dangerous sport was heart-wrenching.

"I was naive. All I could think about was getting us out of poverty. It all sounded too good to be true and it was. I frantically tried to save to pay back my debt so we could leave but it took a long time."

Four years after arriving, Mia's family fled after paying their dues and saving for five air tickets back to Bangladesh.

Mia, now 17, works behind the counter at a small fabric shop in his home town of Gazipur, his hand permanently damaged after a fall in Dubai.

He said he was delighted to be among those who will be compensated but that he still suffers emotional and physical scars from his time as a camel jockey.

"I haven't seen a camel since leaving and I don't want to ever see one again," he said.

"We are poor. This money is like winning the lottery for us. We don't know how much we will get, but it won't erase the pain and suffering my brothers and I went through."

Tagore's thoughts on economic dev influences Bangladesh Says president

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman has said poet Rabindranath Tagore's thoughts on economic development through promoting agriculture sector have influenced Bangladesh.

"He (Tagore) said the country's economic emancipation is possible through development of agriculture sector," the president said while inaugurating a programme marking the 148th birth anniversary of the poet at Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Zillur said Tagore stressed the need for cooperatives and modern cultivation to increase agricultural output and improve the economic status of the people.

"He (Tagore) himself took initiatives for hybrid crop production at Shantiniketan and Shilaidah," the president said.

Tagore was a genuine Bengalee in his mentality, spirit and activities, he said. "As long as Bangla language and Bangladesh will exist, Rabindranath will also remain

with us."

The president said alongside the art and literature, Tagore attached equal importance to vocational education with book-based education. He thought about modernisation of the education system.

Tagore also spoke about equality among the people, he added.

Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad, National Professor Kabir Chowdhury and Cultural Affairs secretary Sharful Alam also spoke at the function.

Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Golam Kibria, news editor of the daily Khabar, passed away at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 53.

He was suffering from kidney ailment, family sources said.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and one daughter.

President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Secretary General Altaf Mahmud and President of Dhaka Union of Journalists Shah Alamgir and General Secretary Omar Faruque expressed deep shock at the death of Golam Kibria.

Bimalendu Dutta
DU CORRESPONDENT

Bimalendu Bikash Dutta, father of the Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamol Dutta, passed away due to old-age complications at a clinic at Chittagong yesterday morning at the age of 82, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

A retired government official, Bimalendu was also a noted cultural personality, a social worker and a football referee.

Haider Ali
UNB, Faridpur

Haider Ali, a freedom fighter, passed away at Benapole in Jessore on his way home from India on Wednesday night. He was 58.

Haider, also a district Awami League leader, had been suffering from kidney problem since long. He went to India last week for treatment.

He left behind two daughters, a son and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

He was laid to rest at Matir graveyard in the district town with state honour.



Heatwave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

There are chances of rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind at one or two places over Sylhet division and the regions of Tangail and Mymensingh.

Severe heatwave is sweeping over Khulna division and the regions of Rajshahi and Ishwardi while mild to moderate heat wave over Dhaka division and the regions of Bogra, Rangpur, Sayedpur, Dinajpur, Chandpur and Patuakhali and it may continue.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:31pm today and rises at 5:18am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 42.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Jessore and the lowest of 21.8 degree at Sylhet.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	Max 36.9	Min 27.2	73	48
Chittagong	32.8	27.0	76	79
Rajshahi	41.1	26.5	63	30
Khulna	40.5	27.8	70	33
Barisal	35.8	27.0	81	70
Sylhet	33.0	21.8	66	73
Cox's Bazar	34.0	26.8	85	75



Workshop

Centre for Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS of JGSPH organises a four-day workshop on gender, sexuality and rights. Venue: Brac Centre Inn. Time: 9:00am.

Discussion

Sammilito Samajik Andolon organises a discussion on education system and policy in Bangladesh. Venue: Liberation War Museum auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

Dhaka University Alumni Association organises a roundtable on spread of swine flu and responsibilities. Venue: DU senate building. Time: 10:30am.

Human chain

Citizen Rights Movement and Future of World Foundation will form a human chain demanding two-hour load shedding and stopping use of air conditioners in the neighbourhood of the ministers. Venue: In front of Faculty of Fine Arts, Dhaka University. Time: 11:00am.