

DSEX ▲ 0.11% 4,756.88
CSCX ▲ 0.08% 9,340.75



Gold ▼ \$1,332.56
(per ounce)



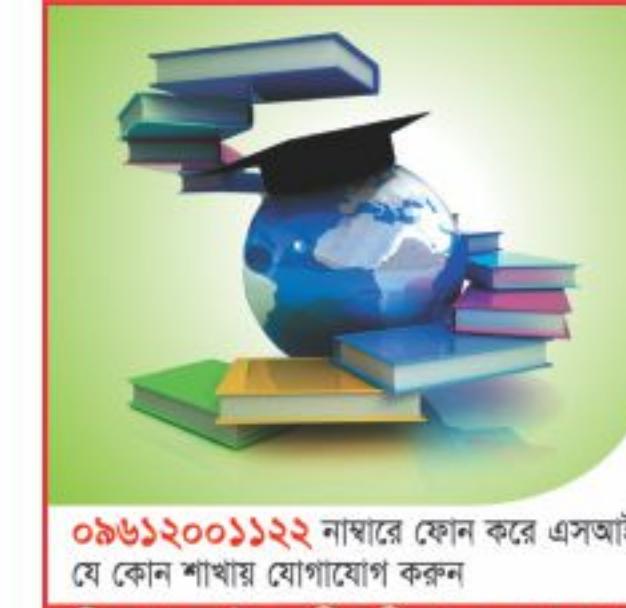
Oil ▼

\$102.12
(per barrel)

MUMBAI ▲ 0.20% 20,852.47
TOKYO ▲ 1.44% 15,051.60
SINGAPORE ▼ 0.07% 3,103.62
SHANGHAI ▼ 2.04% 2,034.22

USD EUR GBP JPY

BUY TK 77.20 104.46 126.95 0.74
SELL TK 78.20 108.49 130.96 0.77



এসআইবিএল
(সুন্দরবন শিক্ষা সংকল্প ক্লিয়ারিং প্রতিষ্ঠানের উচ্চ শিক্ষা
বাস্তুসম্পর্কের জন্য
এটি একটি আকর্ষণীয় ক্লিয়ারিং প্রতিষ্ঠান
হিসাবব্যবস্থার ইসলামী শরীয়ার মুদ্দাবার পক্ষতি প্রযোজন



BUSINESS

DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 26, 2014, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

Padma Bridge fund faces roadblock

Communications ministry seeks to divert Tk 510cr to road projects

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The funding for the much-publicised Padma Bridge project seems to have encountered another obstacle as the communications ministry seeks to divert Tk 510 crore from the project's allocation for fiscal 2013-14 to road schemes.

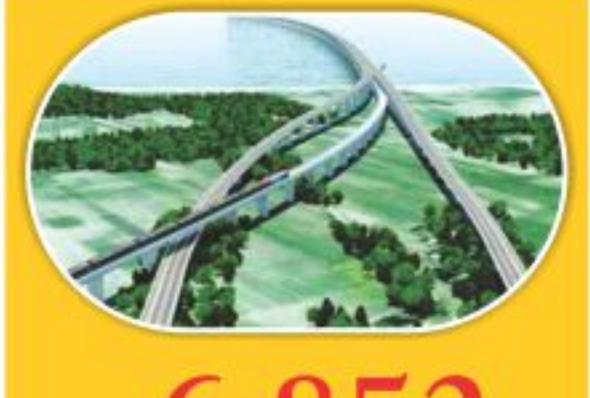
Some Tk 6,852 crore was allocated for the top priority project this fiscal year, but the finance division diverted Tk 4,252 crore from the fund to bankroll 20 percent dearness allowance for civil servants.

Last week, Communications Minister Obaidul Quader in a letter to the planning minister called for transfer of Tk 510 crore from the project's current allocation of Tk 2,600 crore—to fund a host of projects.

Quader said the fund cut would not encumber the implementation of the Padma Bridge project, a communications ministry official said, asking not to be named.

But a planning ministry official said going by the pace of implementation of the Padma Bridge project, there is unlikely to be any room for cuts from this year's budget.

The construction of the Padma Bridge approach roads at Mawa and Jajira is progressing fast, while the contracts for main-bridge construction, river training and



Tk **6,852** cr
Original allocation for fiscal 2013-14

Tk **4,252** cr
Diverted from the fund

Tk **510** cr
Communications ministry seeks

supervision consultancy are most likely to be awarded by June, which would then necessitate advance payment.

In preparation, the bridges division has already discussed the foreign currency allocation with Bangladesh Bank.

"So the entire revision allocation of Tk 2,600 crore may be needed," he said, adding that the bridges division has spent Tk 260 crore for the Padma Bridge project in the seven months to January.

Moreover, the Padma Bridge project is amongst the government's six fast-track projects, so utmost attention has to be paid that its progress is not hampered

forward of funding, the official added.

On January 31, the government requested the World Bank to withdraw its funding for the Padma Bridge project as it could delay the implementation. The government then decided to execute the project with its own resources.

Meanwhile, the planning ministry has proposed slashing the roads division's original allocation of Tk 2,473 crore by Tk 403 crore.

But the communications ministry instead demanded a further Tk 869 crore from the planning ministry for the ongoing and new projects.

READ MORE ON B3

Posts of eight Pubali Bank directors vacant: HC

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The High Court yesterday declared vacant the posts of eight Pubali Bank directors, including its chairman, for not possessing the mandatory 2 percent shares each in the bank.

The eight are: Hafiz Ahmed Mazumder, Md Faizur Rahman, Ahmed Shafi Chowdhury, Fahim Ahmed Faruk Chowdhury, M Kabiruzzaman Yaqub, Rumana Sharif, Suraiya Rahman and Azizur Rahman.

The positions of the eight directors will be filled up according to a notice issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission on November 22, 2011, the HC said.

The bank's AGM will be held on March 25 and the posts will remain vacant till that day, a lawyer said.

Justice Md Rezaul Hasan came up with the verdict after hearing a petition filed by the eight directors.

They submitted the petition on August 20 last year, challenging the decision of Pubali Bank's election board to declare them disqualified for contesting the polls for the posts of directors.

READ MORE ON B3



Seated left, Syed J Noor, country head for global trade and receivables finance of HSBC, and Ataur Rahman, secretary general of ICC Bangladesh, sign a deal to launch ICC Knowledge Centre, at the Westin Hotel in Dhaka yesterday. James Emmett, global head of trade and receivables finance of HSBC; Mahbubur Rahman, president of ICC Bangladesh; Latifur Rahman, vice-president, Rokia Afzal Rahman, vice-president; Andrew Tilke, CEO of HSBC Bangladesh; and Mahbub-ur-Rahman, the bank's corporate banking head, were also present.

HSBC and ICC launch trade knowledge centre

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

HSBC Bangladesh and the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh yesterday jointly launched a knowledge hub for exporters and trade professionals in a bid to better equip them for global commerce.

Called the ICC Knowledge Centre, the platform will give professionals access to online resources, insights and trade-related articles, researches and up-to-date trade information, class room training sessions, seminars, knowledge events and roadshows, HSBC said in a statement yesterday.

The first of its kind to be launched

in Bangladesh, the trade resource centre will help the country's trade professionals enhance their market knowledge, build a network and keep up-to-date with global trends.

"Bangladesh's trade outlook is very positive and it is therefore crucial to provide exporters with the means to develop their knowledge of global trade practices," James Emmett, HSBC's global head for trade and receivables finance, said.

Mahbubur Rahman, president of ICC Bangladesh, hopes that corporate houses will take full advantage of the centre.

"In today's globalised and free

market trade regime, it is very important and crucial to be capable of following rules and access to market information is critical to safeguard trade interests," he added.

The launch was complemented by a deal signed between HSBC and ICC Bangladesh.

HSBC is the world's leading international trade finance bank, with a 10 percent market share of bank-financed trade revenues. In Bangladesh, HSBC has presence in all eight export processing zones.

ICC is a globally accepted body for trade regulation and plays a pivotal role in shaping global commerce.

15 returnees from HK demand compensation

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The 15 Bangladeshis who had been sent back home from Hong Kong due to termination of contracts by their employers find no ways to clear the loans they took to go to the Chinese city.

They went to Hong Kong between June and August last year under a deal through Sadia International, a Bangladeshi recruiting agency, for two years by taking a loan Tk 1.4 lakh each from Probashi Kallyan Bank.

They were supposed to pay back the loan gradually from their monthly salaries of Tk 41,500 as domestic helps in Hong Kong.

But without showing any reason, the employers started sacking the workers in September before the expiry of their two-year contract.

Now, they urged the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry to help them pay back the bank loans and asked Sadia International to compensate for their losses.

The workers made the call at a press briefing in the city's Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

"I have failed to find a new job after returning home from Hong Kong in October last year," said Monowara Begum.

"It is impossible for me to clear the loan, as no-one wants to give me a job now," said Monowara who used to work in a clinic in the capital before leaving for HK.

The victims said the recruiting agencies of the two countries and the expatriates' welfare ministry had promised that the jobs would continue for at least two years.

The HK employers compelled them to work for a minimum of 15 to 16 hours a day without any weekly leave, violating the conditions in the contracts.

READ MORE ON B3

BSCIC industrial parks fail to live up to expectations

Lack of proper planning and political influence to blame

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country is failing to grab the full socio-economic benefits from the industrial estates as many have been established only for political reasons.

The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation has 74 industrial estates in 59 districts, of which at least 20 were established without any feasibility study, said its Chairman Shyam Sunder Sikder.

Subsequently, the allotment policies were faulty, with many entrepreneurs refusing to set up factories in the allocated plots, he said at a roundtable styled "Past, Present and Future of BSCIC" at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel.

The plots are now sitting idle, with some being used for grazing cattle or as playgrounds. BSCIC has failed to ensure appropriate usage of the industrial estates."

Of the 5,747 industrial plots, 4,278 units are now in production, while 321 have either become sick or shutdown, according to the study. Some 487 plots are yet to be allocated.

Poor communication, gas and electricity problems are the key

BY THE NUMBER

Industrial estates: **74**

Total plots: **10,338**

Manufacturing units:

4,278

Sick/closed industrial

units: **321**

Total investment (as of Nov 2013):

Tk **17,411** cr

Annual exports (last fiscal year):

Tk **20,890** cr

hurdles to attracting investment in the industrial estate, Sikder said.

Though the industrial estates were set up for small industries, many large industries have set up plants by buying 14-15 plots gradually.

Sikder urged the large companies to not expand their activities into the BSCIC estates taking the best interests of the small entrepreneurs into consideration.

At the event, MM Akash, professor of economics at Dhaka University, also criticised the successive governments for building the industrial estates under political influence and overlooking the need for feasibility study before giving the go-ahead.

"Since many BSCIC estates have been established without any proper assessment, the country cannot grab desired benefits from the industrial parks."

BSCIC should give more focus on creating new entrepreneurs by arranging funding for them, Khondaker Golam Moazzem, additional research director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, said, adding that access to credit is the key challenges to developing new entrepreneurs.

The government should provide incentives for small industries as the sector contributes significantly to the economy, said Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce Industry.

State Minister for Finance MA Mannan called upon the BSCIC to set up industrial estates targeting the

Ctg port widens container storage capacity by 18pc

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

Users of Chittagong port are expected to get better services as it has increased container storage capacity by about 18 percent, adding new yards and creating more space in the existing ones.

The port is now able to store 36,357 TEUs (twenty equivalent units) of containers against its previous capacity of 30,886 TEUs, according to a report from a three-member panel formed by Chittagong Port Authority.

New yards were set up at the New Mooring Container Terminal and more space was created at the General Cargo Berth in the last few years, said CPA Terminal Manager Enamul Karim, who headed the committee formed to gauge new capacity.

The increased capacity will benefit the business community as it would take less time to handle containers, Mahbubul Alam, chairman of Port Users' Forum, told The Daily Star.

The port is now able to handle over 2.2 million TEUs of containers a year against its previous capacity of 2 million TEUs, said the terminal manager.

Chittagong port handled 1.54 million TEUs of export and import containers last year, experiencing 9.6 percent growth year-on-year.

The port's capacity depends on the proper use of space and use of modern equipment. The committee placed some recommendations to further enhance capacity at the premier sea port, according to port officials.

Currently, the port has equipment, like the straddle carriers, to handle, transport and stack a maximum of four containers, to a maximum of four.

The committee recommended the purchase of overhead bridge cranes having the ability to stack seven or eight containers—one over the other.



Jon Fredrik Baksaas, president of Telenor, speaks to reporters yesterday at the Mobile Congress in Barcelona.

WhatsApp voice service, a threat to telcos: Telenor chief

Baksaas speaks at Mobile World Congress

ABDULLAH MAMUN, from Barcelona

The move of WhatsApp, a free messaging application for mobile users, to launch free voice services through the cellular network is an 'enormous threat' to the telecom companies, said Jon Fredrik Baksaas, president of Telenor.

WhatsApp will launch free voice services by the second quarter of this year, Jan Koum, chief executive of WhatsApp, said at a Mobile World Congress seminar in Barcelona, Spain on Monday.

"We are going at a good pace and what we are saying about empowering societies through the mobile network is happening in Bangladesh right now."

WhatsApp for \$19 billion, he said, "People would crush us if we bought WhatsApp, but you heard Mark Zuckerberg explaining his grounds the other day though it raised more questions."

Zuckerberg, chief executive of Facebook, said at the congress that his company purchased WhatsApp in line with a vision to make basic internet services free for all.

The Telenor boss said his company is working to build a global network through the internet to empower society.

"We are going at a good pace and what we are saying about empowering societies through the mobile network is happening in Bangladesh right now."

Norway's Telenor that owns 55.8 percent in Grameenphone is helping to build a Digital Bangladesh, he said.