

# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY AUGUST 15, 2017, SRABAN 31, 1424 B3

রোগ নির্ণয়ে সর্বাধুনিক যন্ত্রপাতি, সর্বোচ্চ মান।  
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## Rising overseas trade brings joy for private ICDs

SOHEL PARVEZ

Increasing volume of overseas trade is bringing businesses to private inland container depots (ICD), enabling operators to utilise more than 75 percent of their capacities, according to sector insiders.

Also known as off-docks, the 18 ICDs handled 46,078 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of export containers during the first seven months of the year, up 8 percent year-on-year.

Their handling of containerised imports rose 11 percent year-on-year to 26,419 TEUs in the first seven months of 2017, according to data from the Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association (BICDA).

"Today, we, ICDs, are an integral part of the Chittagong port. We are silently contributing to the economic growth of the country," said BICDA President Nurul Quayyum Khan.

The private off-docks handle 90 percent of containerised exports and 23 percent of import containers through the Chittagong port, the country's biggest maritime port.

The journey of private ICDs began in the early 2000s by handling only empty containers.

Later in 2003, new operators namely Summit Alliance Port Limited (SAPL) ventured into the territory, when the Chittagong port handled about 6.24 lakh TEUs of containers.

A dozen of off-docks entered the scene during the tenure of the caretaker administration in 2007-08, said Khan. And over time, container handling by the ICDs increased.

In 2016, the off-docks handled 16.53 lakh TEUs of containers, up from 9.90 lakh TEUs in 2010, according to BICDA.

Handling by the private ICDs was 70 percent of the total 23.46 lakh TEUs of containers han-



dled at the Chittagong port in 2016.

Kamrul Islam Mazumder, executive director and chief operating officer of SAPL, said the volume has risen but revenue has not increased as expected.

"Our operational cost has risen because of the spiral in wages, cost of transport and electricity."

But the rates for handling export, import and empty containers as well as cargo have not risen to that extent, he said.

The rates have been revised upwards in 2016, but they are still below the 2005 level, he added.

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## Shipment of vegetables falls for floods

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Vegetable exports from Bangladesh dropped significantly over the last few months as the massive flood damaged seasonal crops in many districts, exporters said.

Even two months ago exporters shipped up to 120 tonnes of vegetables a day, but the quantity dropped to 70 tonnes a day due to scarcity of fresh produce.

Most of the fertile northern districts, including Kurigram, Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Jamalpur, Bogra and Sunamganj, were hit by flood.

Moreover, the transportation is also a big challenge for the vegetable exporters as the roads and highways have also been damaged by the flood, said Mohammad Mansur, general secretary of the Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables & Allied Products Exporters' Association.

"We are facing a scarcity of produce," said Khaleedur Rahman, a vegetable exporter.

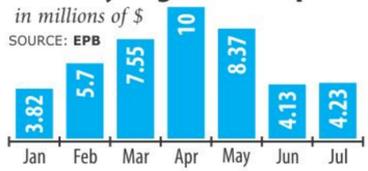
In full season, when there was no flood, Rahman used to export between 4 and 6 tonnes of vegetables a week. But, now the quantity has become negligible.

Rahman said his quantity declined not only for flood but also for an ongoing self-imposed ban on the export of vegetables to European Union by the government.

The Plant Protection Wing of the Department of Agricultural Extension has imposed a ban on export of vegetables to the EU to avoid any harsh action.

The Plant Protection Wing came up with

### Monthly vegetable exports



the self-imposed ban as there were warnings of non-compliance from the EU in shipment of vegetables a few months ago, said Md Anwar Hossain Khan, its deputy director of export.

"We have stopped vegetable exports to the EU for some months now as we found insects in the consignments."

The EU, especially the UK and Italy, is a major destination for the country's fruit and vegetables because of a sizeable population of non-resident Bangladeshis.

Of the total exports of vegetables from Bangladesh in a year, 60 percent are sent to the EU and the remaining 40 percent elsewhere, according to the exporters.

Khan also said his office has relaxed the ban slightly for three to four items like lemon and jackfruits a few days ago as those have little chance of having insects on them.

He, however, is hopeful that the ban could be lifted permanently from early next year as exporters have been advised to pack the produce from the central warehouse that was partly launched a few months ago.

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## Banglalink's revenue hits eight-quarter low

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banglalink's revenue fell 2.99 percent year-on-year to Tk 1,195.12 crore in the April-June quarter, which is also the lowest in the last eight quarters.

In a financial statement, Banglalink's parent company Veon blamed the fall in revenue on the SIM re-verification process for which the operator lost around 38 lakh connections.

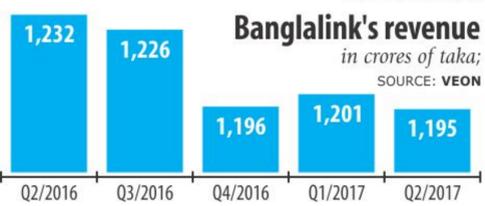
The operator's data revenue increased 32.2 percent year-on-year to Tk 154 crore in the period, said Asif Ahmed, head of corporate communications at Banglalink.

In the same quarter, the operator's data revenue growth was driven by data usage growth of 117.2 percent along with 9.3 percent growth in active data users, Ahmed said.

However, the operator did not mention anything about its profitability though they made a profit of around Tk 245 crore last year for the first time since its inception.

In 2015, Banglalink made profits in three quarters, but at the end of the year it lost momentum.

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## City Bank issues Tk 500cr bonds

STAR BUSINESS DESK

City Bank has recently completed the process of issuing coupon bearing subordinated bonds worth Tk 500 crore in Bangladesh, the bank yesterday said in a statement.

RSA Capital Ltd and City Bank Capital Resources Ltd are the prime arrangers of the issuance process of these bonds.

The issue of bonds has enhanced City Bank's Tier II capital as per Bangladesh Bank's requirement.

As a result, this has also led to the increase of the bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio.

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## PUM comes to the rescue of SMEs

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

Are you an entrepreneur and making small progress? Do you feel there is much more to gain? But you either do not have the resources to hire a commercial consultant or, in case you do, there is simply no local consultant around with specific knowledge and experience.

Here comes PUM, a Dutch non-profit organisation, with its pool of around 3,000 experts on 70 fields to help you out and grow.

PUM stands for "Programma Uitzending Managers" which is Dutch for "Manager Deployment Programme".

It is a voluntary organisation that was established in 1978 by the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

PUM promotes entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth in developing countries and emerging markets with its experts' hands-on advice to small and medium enterprises (SME) of different sectors.

The experts are either retired or nearing retirement from their professions who act voluntarily to help SMEs in developing countries to improve their capabilities, be it productions, employee or store management or quality improvement.

The Daily Star had a talk with John Hummel, representative of PUM, and Geert van Asbeck, its immediate past representative in



STAR

John Hummel, right, representative of PUM in Bangladesh, and Geert van Asbeck, its immediate past representative, pose for photographs during an interview at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka recently.

Bangladesh, at The Daily Star Centre recently.

They said SMEs in developing countries including Bangladesh lack knowledge and production and management skills which are prerequisites for their sustainability but cannot afford commercial consultants to do so.

"It is an opportunity for SMEs in Bangladesh to get an expert person in a specific field at relatively little money," said Asbeck.

"Just be specific in your requirement and ask the right question," he

advised local SMEs who might be interested in applying for PUM's expertise.

PUM pays for the airplane ticket of the expert, insurance, visa costs, admin and other expenses. An SME that seeks the advice will have to pay for board, lodging, interpreter costs (if necessary) and local transportation costs of the expert.

"You don't need to keep them in a 5-star hotel. A decent house with internet access is good enough," said Hummel.

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## Satellite company starts journey

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Communication Satellite Company Ltd has started functioning, taking on its role of running commercial operations of Bangabandhu Satellite-1.

The company already got registered with the Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms last week and its board of directors held a meeting soon after.

The company's authorised capital is Tk 5,000 crore and paid-up capital Tk 500 crore. Initially, 200 shares of Tk 10 each have been provided to each director.

As per the registration, the board will consist of 11 members with the telecom secretary as the chairperson.

An official of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory

Commission (BTRC) said Thales Alenia Space, the French contractor for the project, has completed constructing the satellite.

Now Thales is running different tests, including a number of sensitivity tests, to ensure that the satellite works fine on being launched into the space, the official said.

On completion of all procedures, Thales will hand over the satellite to US firm Space Exploration Technologies Corporation (SpaceX) for launching it.

SpaceX is a private aerospace manufacturer and space transport services provider that works with Nasa and transports cargo to the International Space Station.

Citing a study of the telecom watchdog, officials said, once the satellite is launched, Bangladesh will be able to save at least \$14 million a year, which the local television channels pay to foreign satellite companies as transmission fees.

The satellite will also help launch DTH (direct-to-home) services and narrow the digital divide.

Along with providing services locally, the company also aims to get foreign clients. The BTRC study found that about 70 percent of the satellite's revenue will come from neighbouring countries while the rest will be earned locally.

The satellite will have the capacity to serve all the South and Southeast Asian countries, including Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

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