UK employment surges to record high

REUTERS, London

The number of people in work in Britain surged and one measure of wage growth rose to a near one-year high, according to data that may encourage some Bank of England policymakers to think interest rates should rise again before long.

Sterling touched \$1.41, its highest level against the U.S. dollar since the 2016 Brexit vote, and British government bond prices sank to their lowest level since October after Wednesday's stronger-than-expected headline figures.

Britain's economy slowed in 2017 as higher inflation - caused by a post-Brexit referendum fall in the pound - hurt the spending power of consumers. But forecasts of a bigger hit to growth did not materialise and job creation remained strong.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the number of people in work rose by 102,000 in the three months to November, the biggest increase since the period to July and taking those in employment to a record 32.2 million. A Reuters poll of economists had pointed to a fall of 13,000 in employment.

Full-time jobs accounted for most of the increase, with workers aged 50 to 64 benefiting the most.

Overall, the figures went some way to alleviating worries that Britain's labour market was running out of steam after a couple of months in which employment fell slightly.

"Today's jobs numbers once again strongly suggest that the UK economy is on a firmer footing than many had anticipated following the EU referendum vote," James Athey, senior investment manager at Aberdeen Standard Investments, said.

The BoE increased interest rates for the first time since 2007 in November as most of its

policymakers thought steeply falling unemployment would soon start to push up wages - a forecast that Wednesday's data justified, Athey added. Most economists expect the next BoE rate hike towards the end of this year but some say it could come in May.

The ONS said workers' earnings, excluding bonuses, rose by an annual 2.4 percent in the three months to November, the biggest increase since December 2016 and compared with 2.3 percent in the three months to October. Including bonuses, pay growth remained at 2.5 percent.

"Nevertheless inflation remains higher than pay growth and so the real value of earnings continues to decline," ONS statistician David Freeman said. In November, inflation outpaced wage growth to hit its highest in almost six years at 3.1 percent. Measuring both sets of data over the three months to November, that left regular pay in real terms down 0.5 percent on a year earlier.

Wages, adjusted for inflation, remain below their levels of before the 2007-09 financial crisis. The data also showed the unemployment rate held at a four-decade low of 4.3 percent, as expected in the Reuters poll.

Samuel Tombs, an economist with Pantheon Macroeconomics, said an annualised rate of growth in wages, excluding bonuses, over the three months to November compared with the previous three months, edged up to 3.4 percent. That suggested it would not be long before the headline rate also rose towards 3 percent.

"This recovery won't go unnoticed by the (BoE's) Monetary Policy Committee, which has placed more emphasis recently on shortterm movements in wages in its policy deliberations," Tombs said. "Even so, the Committee needn't panic; slack in the labour market is being used up only a slow pace."



Azam J Chowdhury, newly elected president of the Bangladesh Association of Publicly Listed Companies (BAPLC), and Muhammed Aziz Khan, the outgoing president, attend BAPLC's 18th annual general meeting at Six Seasons Hotel in Dhaka.

Eight banks asked to cut spread

FROM PAGE B1

In the letter to the eight banks on January 16, the central bank gave them a timeframe to bring down their spread. The BB gave the order after calculating the banks' spread in September. The sector's average spread that month was 4.45 percent.

The banks with a spread of 5 percent to 6 percent will have to bring it down to the permissible limit by February, while those with 6 percent to 7 percent spread will have to do so by March.

The lenders whose spreads have crossed 7 percent will have to bring it down by April.

Meanwhile, the interest rate on deposits has recently started creeping up because of a dearth of liquidity, said a central bank official.

This will have a knock-on effect on the interest rate for lending, much to the detriment of entrepreneurs.

"Banks might exercise an unhealthy competition in the months to come to mobilise deposits, which would create a haphazard situation in the banking sector," said the official.

A healthy situation would prevail if the banks follow the BB directive, he said, adding that the central bank should keep vigilance on this development.

90pc iPhones on sale are illegally imported

FROM PAGE B1

On November 14, the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate conducted a raid in Bashundhara City and Molly Capita Centre and seized more than 200 units of iPhone X, which retails for Tk 130,990 to Tk 150,500.

Kabir, subsequently, has urged customers to buy iPhones from authorised dealers as ting up a database two years ago but the many grey market traders sell fake or refurbished handsets as brand new and genuine.

"We don't want to see people buying fake or refurbished iPhones at the price of a brand new one," he added.

The curse of parallel imports has also struck its competitor Samsung despite having an official presence in Bangladesh: 40 percent of its handsets are not imported through the proper channel.

"The illegal imports have surged after the tax was increased in the current budget," said Ruhul Alam Al Mahbub Manik, president of the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Importers Association.

The government has increased the tax on handset import by 10 percentage points to 34.05 percent. About 30 percent of the handsets are now imported by bypassing the legal channels, according to Manik, also one of the distributors of Samsung.

"For high-value sets, the number is much higher," he added.

And the grey market operators are being encouraged by the absence of an International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) database,

complex customs system and high import duty, according to industry insiders. They also got a helping hand from the telecom regulator, which recently increased the number of handsets inbound passengers to Bangladesh can carry from five to eight.

The BMPIA had started a process of set-Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission is yet to complete the process.

Importers said the government needs to take this matter very seriously as it is losing a few hundred crores of taka in taxes every "If the government fails to stop the illegal

channel, we cannot survive and then the whole market will be dominated by the gray segments," said Rezwanul Hoque, immediate past general secretary of BMPIA and the chief executive officer of Transsion Bangladesh. Last year, the handset industry imported

about 3.40 crore units through the legal channel, less than 90 lakh of which were smartphones. The industry had targeted to import one

crore smartphones in 2017 but was thrown off its tracks by the increase in tax rate in June last year, said industry insiders.

"Hearing the importers, it seems the situation has taken a turn for the worst," said Moinul Khan, director general of CIID, adding that his department is not taking the matter lightly.

New CEO for First Finance

Star Business Desk

Md Nazrul Hossain has recently been appointed as managing director and chief executive officer of First Finance Ltd. He started his bank-

ing career in 1983 with IFIC Bank and worked in different banks, the non-bank financial institution said in a statement yesterday.

He also worked as deputy managing director of Meghna Bank and managing director of GSP Finance Company (Bangladesh) Ltd.

Hossain obtained master's degree in management from Dhaka University.

Euroboom marches on as businesses see best growth since 2006

Business activity in the eurozone accelerated in January to reach its highest level for 12 years as the single currency area's recovery continued, a key survey showed on Wednesday.

Analysts said the rise in the headline readings of the survey by data monitoring company IHS Markit confirmed that the economy in the 19 countries that use the euro was booming. A purchasing managers' index (PMI) by Markit rose to 58.6 in January after 58.1 in December, the group said in a statement. Anything over 50 means the economy is expanding.

It was the highest since June 2006, while job creation held at its fastest pace since 2000. "The eurozone has got off to a sion to leave the European Union.

flying start in 2018, with business activity expanding at a rate not seen for almost 12 years," said Chris Williamson of IHS Markit.

"The acceleration of growth pushes the survey data into territory consistent with the economy expanding at a super-strong quarterly rate approaching 1 percent."

France's growth pace picked up, with the eurozone's second-biggest economy recording its best spell over the last three months since the spring of 2011, Markit said. Germany, the eurozone's powerhouse, meanwhile was slightly down on December's peak but future optimism increased, it said.

After years of crisis, the eurozone's recovery has picked up in recent months despite worries about the impact of Britain's deci-

Bangladesh an excellent investment destination: PM

Hasina said the country's power generation capacity has increased to 16,350 megawatts (MW) from a mere 3,200 MW. Investment in Bepza has doubled while export increased by 2.5 times from 2009 to 2017, she said.

She said some 468 industries are in operayears, she said.

Hasina said the EPZs under Bepza are 2010" to protect the rights of workers. contributing about 20 percent of the total national exports and foreign investment to the economy. Due to investment-friendly policies, investors from 38 countries, including China, Japan, South Korea, India, the USA and the UK, have been producing world

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famous brand items in the factories of EPZs,

tion in eight EPZs set up on 2,307.27 acres of land. About 5 lakh Bangladeshis have been working in the EPZs and 64 percent of them are women. Some 283,620 new jobs have been created in the EPZs in the last nine she added.

The prime minister said Bepza has undertaken an initiative to establish low-carbon green zones. "Our target is to set up industries and increase industrial production protecting our farmlands." She urged the workers of factories not to harm their factories at the instigation of any vested quarter.

Hasina said her government always gave importance to workers-owners' management relationship and enacted "EPZ Workers Welfare Council and Industrial Relation Law

She said the government hiked the pay and allowances of the workers of EPZs twice in the last seven years. "The workers are now getting healthcare services and medicines free of cost. Women workers are enjoying maternity leave and other benefits."

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জিডি-২১১

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়

স্মারক নং পটুয়া(প্রশাঃ)/টেন্ডার/২০২/ই

তারিখঃ ২২/১/১৮

মোহাম্মদ মইনুল হাসান

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পুলিশ সুপার, পটুয়াখালী

ফোন-৬২৫৮০/ফ্যাক্স-৬২৪৫০

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০২/১৭-১৮

এতদ্বারা ২০১৭-১৮ অর্থ বৎসরের পটুয়াখালী জেলা পুলিশের নিমুবর্ণিত কাজের জন্য "দি-পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট রুলস-২০০৮" মোতাবেক যোগ্যতা

ও অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন আগ্রহী ঠিকাদার/প্রতিষ্ঠান/ব্যবসায়ীদের নিকট হইতে সীলমোহরযুক্ত খামে কাজের নাম উল্লেখপূর্বক দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে।

স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়/পুলিশ বিভাগ মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পটুয়াখালী দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান 9 জেলা পুলিশের বিভিন্ন মেরামত কাজ দরপত্রের বিষয় দরপত্র সূত্রের নম্বর ও তারিখ পুঃ হেঃ কোঃ স্মারক নং-৪৪.০১.০০০০.০৪৩.৩৮০-২০১৭/৪৬৮৯(৪) তারিখ ২১-১২-দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM) রাজস্ব বাজেটের আওতায় পুলিশ বাজেটের সংশ্রিষ্ট কোড বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক খাত দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ ২৫-০১-২০১৮খ্রিঃ দরপত্র সিডিউল সর্বশেষ প্রাপ্তির তারিখ ০৭-০২-২০১৮খিঃ বিকাল ১৪:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত। ০৮-০২-২০১৮খ্রিঃ ১৩ঃ০০ ঘটিকা দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময় দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময় ০৮-০২-২০১৮খ্রিঃ ১৪ঃ০০ ঘটিকা দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর অফিস ও ঠিকানা পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পটুয়াখালী দরপত্র প্রাপ্তির স্থান পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পটুয়াখালী/পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, বরগুনা দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পটুয়াখালী 78

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	(১৪) পট্রাখালী জেলার দুমকি থানার সীমানা প্রাচীর মেরামত কাজ।		800/-	0,000/-	
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0	বিশেষ শর্তাবলীঃ				
	(ক) দরপত্র জামানত পরবর্তী সময়ে কার্যসম্পাদন (খ) ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বতাধিকারীর স্বাক্ষরযুত্ত পর্যন্ত দরপত্র সংগ্রহ করা যাইবে। কোন ব্যক্তি প্রা মাধ্যমে দরপত্র ক্রয়ের ক্ষমতা প্রদানকরতঃ প্রেরণ ব	় প্যাডে আবেদনপূর্বক সংশ্লিষ্ট দপ্তর হইতে তিনিধির মাধ্যমে দরপত্র ক্রয় করিতে চাহিতে করিতে হইবে।			
	(গ) দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ হইতে ১২০ দিন পর্যন্ত দরপত্র বলবং থাকিবে।				

(ঘ) দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তপক্ষ যে কোন সময় যে কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত দরপত্র বাতিলের ক্ষমতা রাখেন

Bidders selected to build 181km LNG pipeline FROM PAGE B1

They will set up the eight sections of the pipeline at a

combined cost of Tk 346.54 crore.

The government has taken initiatives to import a huge amount of LNG to tackle a growing energy shortage largely caused by depleting domestic reserves and rising demand of gas.

It signed an agreement with Excelerate Energy, Singapore to set up a floating LNG terminal with a capacity of processing 500 million cubic feet of gas per day in Moheshkhali of Cox's Bazar. The LNG will be added to the national network by April.

The government also awarded Summit Group the work to set up another floating LNG terminal with the same capacity in Moheshkhali. This one is due for commissioning in October.

Three projects have been undertaken to set up a total of 290 kilometres of transmission pipeline to import a total of 2,000 mmcfd of gas.

The cabinet committee also approved a proposal to import about 10.10 lakh tonnes of gasoil, 1.1 lakh tonnes of jet fuel and 2.6 lakh tonnes of furnace oil from 10 countries from January to June. The imports will cost the country Tk 6,651 crore

and come from China, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Kuwait and the Philippines. The petroleum products would be imported

The committee also approved a proposal allowing the Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP) to buy a further 50 lakh machine readable passport (MRP) booklets and 55 lakh lamination foils from British firm De La Rue under an existing contract at Tk 94.97 crore.

through government-to-government arrangements.

In 2013, Bangladesh signed a deal with the supplier to procure 1.5 crore MRP booklets and as many lamination foils.

As per the deal, the British firm has already supplied 1.48 crore booklets and 1.5 crore foils. The DIP has already used 1.33 crore booklets and 1.36 crore foils, leaving it with a stock of 15.38 lakh booklets and 13.68 foils.

The stocks can meet the country's requirements of booklets and foils for three months as the DIP uses about 3.30 lakh booklets and lamination foils every month.

