

FOREIGN AID

Utilisation back on slow lane

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The use of foreign aid in the first four months of the fiscal year dropped 8.80 percent in spite of the ambitious utilisation target set by the government.

The government had set about mobilising \$7.5 billion of foreign aid at the start of the fiscal year, which would be the highest in the country's history.

But, as of October, the government managed to put to use only \$1.33 billion, according to data from the Economic Relations Division.

The development can be viewed as the ministries and divisions reverting to type: last fiscal year they expended a record amount of \$6.1 billion, which was double of what they managed each year between fiscal years 2012-13 and 2016-17.

The reason for the decline in foreign aid utilisation is the slowdown in implementation of the annual development programme (ADP), said an official of the finance ministry.

He said the pace of ADP implementation would pickup in the second half of the fiscal year.

"We are hopeful that we will be close to the target by the end of the fiscal year," he added. Russia committed \$11.38 billion for the Rooppur nuclear power plant project,

the work on which is on schedule.

Of the amount \$1 billion has been spent in fiscal 2017-18; the rest will be spent by fiscal 2023-24, when the project is supposed to be completed.

This year, disbursement for the project will be more than last fiscal year's, according to the finance ministry official.

Of the amount used in the first four months of the fiscal year, the World Bank provided \$305 million, the Asian Development Bank \$315 million, Japan International Cooperation Agency \$273 million and Russia \$63 million.

Other than utilisation, foreign aid commitment from the development partners also slumped during the period: by 36 percent.

Foreign aid commitment was \$3.61 billion, most of which came from the WB and the ADB. The WB committed \$1.11 billion and ADB \$2.18 billion.

The reason for the decline is that in the last couple of years big amounts were committed by two bilateral partners for a number of mega projects, which bloated the figures, said an ERD official.

It is unlikely that the foreign aid commitment this year would be the same as in the previous two years.

"We are now laying more emphasis on implementation of the aid that is already piled up in the pipeline," he added.

Before fiscal 2009-10, Bangladesh used to receive aid commitment of \$1 billion to \$2 billion every year. From fiscal 2009-10 the amount jumped to \$5 billion and it went on to hit \$7 billion in fiscal 2015-16.

READ MORE ON B3

78 digital campaigns recognised

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Seventy-eight digital commercial campaigns won this year's Digital Marketing Award for creative communication in marketing and branding.

Bangladesh Brand Forum honoured the winners across 16 categories at the second edition of the awards at the Le Méridien Dhaka on Saturday.

The event was presented by Meghna Group of Industries, powered by Content Matters and was organised in association with The Daily Star.

The winning campaigns were recognised in three categories: Grand Prix, Gold and Silver. Sixteen campaigns won Grand Prix, 39 Gold and 23 Silver awards.

This year, a total of 456 nominations were received from different production houses and creative departments of various organisations and four jury panels shortlisted 202 works and another four jury panels selected the ultimate winners.

Grand Prix for the best integrated digital campaign went to Analyzen and Mindshare for their campaign Lux Super Star 2018. This campaign also won two more Gold awards in separate categories.

READ MORE ON B3

Luxury brands to delight watch connoisseurs

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Watch connoisseurs no longer need to go abroad to buy a luxury timepiece thanks to an initiative of Meghna Group, which opened a high-end boutique in Dhaka to cater to the country's growing affluent class.

Called Mohammad & Sons (M&S), the store located at Shanta Western Tower will showcase timepieces from five Swiss watchmakers Zenith, Tag Heuer, Movado, Montblanc and Frédérique Constant.

The starting price of a watch at the store is Tk 45,000 and goes up to Tk 11 lakh. The timepieces will come with two years' global warranty.

Rashidur Rahman Mahin, managing director of M&S, said there is a demand in the market for such high-end watches.

READ MORE ON B3



COLLECTED

Luxury watches are on display at a showroom of Mohammad & Sons on Tejgaon-Gulshan link road in Dhaka.

Robi turns a profit after seven quarters

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Robi bounced back to profitability in the third quarter of the year after seven straight quarters of losses, helped by the sell-off of its 20 percent stakes in the telecom infrastructure provider edotco Bangladesh.

Between the months of July and September, the mobile operator, which is Bangladesh's second biggest, logged in a net profit of Tk 310 crore.

This is the first quarter in which Robi was in the green after its industry-shaping merger with Airtel in November 2016.

"We still can't turn in profits solely



from our core business," said a senior official of Robi requesting anonymity. Robi sold 20 percent of its shares in edotco Bangladesh to Axiata

Group for about \$120 million, the payment for which was received in September. The one-off payment dragged Robi to profitability.

"So this is not profit in the true sense. It's just that our accounts were in the positive zone because of the handsome one-off payment. But, we are very close to logging in profit."

Robi's operating losses have come down after their service level has increased following the merger, he added.

The operator's service revenue increased 9.1 percent year-on-year, according to the financial report of Axiata Group, its parent company.

READ MORE ON B3

HSBC celebrates the successful journey of Bangabandhu Satellite-1

Congratulations to Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology (MoPT), Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and Bangladesh Communication Satellite Company Limited (BCSCL).

HSBC celebrates the successful handover of the title of Bangabandhu Satellite-1 and two ground stations from Thales Alenia Space, France to BTRC and subsequently BTRC to BCSCL. The journey began with the nation's desire to introduce its own Satellite. With the takeover of the Bangabandhu Satellite-1 by the Bangladesh Government, this final stage symbolises a firm step towards new frontiers of connectivity and prosperity for Bangladesh.

As a proud financier of the Bangabandhu Satellite-1, HSBC is honoured to be a part of this monumental achievement.

Visit business.hsbc.com.bd



Together we thrive