

MoU signed with ADB for PPP projects in healthcare

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The government signed a memorandum of understanding with Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday to promote public-private partnership projects in the healthcare sector.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Public Private Partnership Authority (PPPA) and the ADB's Office of Public-Private

Partnership will jointly identify, prepare and implement projects including priority areas such as diagnostics and dialysis services.

The ADB will also provide support through Asia Pacific Project Preparation Facility, says a press release from the PPPA.

It can provide integrated support for capacity building, development of standardised templates for

procurement and contracting, creation of a potential healthcare project's pipeline and transaction advisory services.

DGHS Director General Prof Abul Kalam Azad, PPPA Director General Md Abul Bashar and ADB Country Director for Bangladesh Manmohan Parkash signed the deal on behalf of their respective sides held in the health ministry.



Officials of the Directorate General of Health Services, Public Private Partnership Authority and ADB in Bangladesh pose at a memorandum of understanding signing ceremony in the health ministry in Dhaka yesterday to promote public-private partnership projects in the healthcare sector.



New ED for Financial Reporting Council

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Md Sayeed Ahmed has recently joined as executive director for audit practice review division of Financial Reporting Council.

He previously worked as additional managing director and chief financial officer of Delta Life Insurance, according to a statement.

He also served Pubali Bank as deputy managing director.

Ahmed is a fellow member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh and an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, UK. He completed bachelor and master's degrees from the Department of Accounting and Information Systems of the University of Dhaka.

Waivers eat up 10pc of tax income: Kamal

FROM PAGE B1

In services sector, Chittagong Warehouse Ltd, Qatar Airways and Thai Airways were honoured.

The NBR honoured firms based on a 2005 policy that states that a firm would qualify if it pays 10 percent higher VAT than the previous fiscal year and has no tax dispute, pending cases or any tax and bank loan default.

Also, it recognised 135 firms for becoming top VAT-payers at district levels in the same year.

In Dhaka, it awarded 25 firms as top VAT-payers in manufacturing, trade and service sectors.

The minister also said the government spends the collected revenue to carry out development activities, including allocating funds for social safety net schemes to support poor and people lagging behind.

Kamal called upon people to pay tax saying that none would be harassed.

"If anyone complains of harassment to me, I will take actions instantly."

Anyone can submit VAT returns online from today sitting at home, said Abdul Mannan Shikder, member of NBR's VAT policy.

"We will provide EFD [Electronic Fiscal Device] to businesses by the end of January."

Shikder said firms having more than Tk 5 crore in annual turnover will have to use software to keep accounts from the first day of January next year.

Businesses will have to collect software from companies listed by the NBR, he said.

Automation will reduce human interaction, reduce hassle and increase revenue, said Khondaker Muhammad Aminur Rahman, NBR's member for customs audit, modernisation and international trade.

To increase collection from traders, electronic sales recorder—EFD—will be installed at 24 types of retailers, Md Jamal Hossain, NBR's member for VAT implementation.

The EFDs will be connected to a server at the NBR and customers would be able to know about the deposit of VAT instantly using mobile apps or by visiting NBR, he said.

This was the 14th year the NBR honoured the highest VAT-paying firms in an effort to increase collection from the segment.

Introduced in July 1991, the VAT has become the biggest contributor to the NBR's revenue collection from FY1995-96 and has been maintaining the lead since then.

Yet, a significant amount of non-compliance prevails in the VAT system and there is substantial scope for increasing collection of the indirect tax, according to a World Bank report on methodology to measure the VAT gap in Bangladesh in 2014.

The study said the VAT gap, the difference between the expected VAT revenue and the amount actually collected, was 56 percent in 2012-13.

Zakia Sultana, commissioner of customs, excise and VAT Commissionerate Dhaka North, also spoke.

US manufacturers see higher 2020 sales

AFP, New York

US manufacturers expect a bounce in revenues in 2020 despite lingering unease over trade tariffs that are prompting supply chain shifts, according to an industry survey released Monday.

The semi-annual survey painted a mixed picture for US manufacturers overall, with companies forecasting flat employment and lower capital spending but higher overall sales.

That could spell at least some relief for a sector hit hard by President Donald Trump's trade war with China, and that country's slowing economy.

The projected 4.8 percent bump in manufacturing revenues was "one of the more surprising" figures in the semi-annual survey, said Timothy Fiore of the Institute for Supply Management, which released the report.

Fiore noted that manufacturers had overestimated sales in the last survey in May, projecting that 2019 revenues would rise 4.0 percent.

At this point the increase is expected to come in at 1.9 percent, the report said.

The upbeat revenue forecast could reflect manufacturers' belief that they are now "at the maximum impact" as far as items that could be affected by trade conflicts after Trump administration tariffs on steel and aluminum and a series of measures on Chinese goods.

But Fiore also noted that Trump last week reinstated tariffs on metals from Brazil and Argentina and announced new tariffs on French goods.

"Trade continues to weigh on the supply community," Fiore said.



Md Zahid Ahsan Russel, state minister for youth and sports, launches chatbot Panda of Youth Opportunities at Software Technology Park in Janata Tower of Dhaka yesterday. Osama Bin Noor, co-founder of Youth Opportunities, was present.

Redesign development strategies to meet people's needs

FROM PAGE B1

In Bolivia, while indicators have shown impressive socio-economic progress over recent years, people feel disconnected from the government, which faced allegations of corruption during its last election. The country quickly plunged into huge political uncertainty.

As protests spread from country to country, demanding various structural reforms, some commonalities can be drawn, said Pezzini.

First, governments did not anticipate the protests. This is symptomatic of a growing disconnection between governments' perception of people's well-being and the reality.

Second, feelings of discontent with policies that are perceived as unfair and harmful to people's well-being are often root causes of social unrest.

Third, in many cases, protests are waged against the system, rather than aimed at a

particular government or over one specific issue.

"Governments need to dig deeper to understand the root cause behind these unrests as the usual policy remedies do not seem to work anymore," Pezzini said.

"Global responses and national reforms must be built on solid evidence of current economic and social realities, a better understanding of people's concerns, and outside-the-box policy solutions."

Pezzini said the situation has necessitated government initiatives to upgrade the set of indicators they use to anticipate and better understand the perception and realities of their people.

M Syeduzzaman, a member of the CPD Board of Trustees and a former finance minister, chaired the event. Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the think-tank, and Fahmida Khatun, executive director, also spoke.

Inflation hits 25-month high

FROM PAGE B1

The government has targeted a 5.5 percent inflation rate for this fiscal year. It was able to contain it at 5.48 percent in fiscal 2018-19, which is comfortably below the target of 5.6 percent.

"Inflation is in control but it is going in a

zigzag way," Mannan said, while expressing hope that it will come down in December thanks to the harvest of winter vegetables and onion. With demand growth slowing, ensuring smooth functioning of the supply chain will be the key to keep inflation within target, Hussain added.



Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza); Md Shoab, general manager for administration and finance, and Ali Reza Iftekhar, CEO of Eastern Bank Ltd (EBL), attend a deal signing ceremony on the sidelines of a seminar on "Role of Economic Zones in the Bangladesh Development Narrative" jointly organised by Beza and the bank at the latter's head office in Dhaka recently. The bank will open a branch at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpa Nagar in Mirsarai.

Bangladesh an ideal destination for FDI

FROM PAGE B1

"It is not possible for a single country to mobilise the required financing. That's why we have been urging for mutual cooperation among the nations," Hamid also added.

Domestic resource mobilisation coupled with enhanced participation of the private sector and effective international development assistance can ensure the required financing, Hamid said.

However, proper utilisation of the resources is also very important. Against the backdrop, the conference is a timely initiative, he said.

"We have already created enabling and friendly environment for business and investment. Therefore, FDI jumped by 58 percent in 2018 from 2017. Our investment, trade and industrial policies have also been aligned accordingly."

"To attract more and sustainable foreign and domestic investment, the government

of Bangladesh has decided to set up 100 economic zones in the country. Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority is working in this regard," Hamid said.

Around 100 delegates, including ministers, from 30 countries, are scheduled to participate in the summit. The event has been organised to celebrate the centenary of the ICC and 25th anniversary of ICC Bangladesh.

Delivering the welcome speech, ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman said mobilisation of sufficient funds to achieve SDGs is a major challenge, especially for least developed countries.

According to the UN-ESCAP estimation, financing SDGs would require an additional investment worth \$1.5 trillion per year in the Asia and the Pacific region, which is 5 percent of the GDP of the entire region, he said.

He said almost one-fourth of the time to meet the SDGs had elapsed. The LDCs

would need 16 percent of their GDP to finance the SDGs, he said.

This clearly suggests that in addition to building national capacity, regional resource mobilisation is also needed, he said. Financing SDGs needs unprecedented collaboration and cooperation between public and private sectors facilitated by multilateral development banks, he said.

UN Secretary General António Guterres and his predecessor Ban Ki-moon delivered video messages.

Guterres said the financing was essential to meet the 2030 Agenda or SDGs. He laid emphasis on developing women entrepreneurs and micro-level businesses. Ban Ki-moon said financial inclusion could support the overall economy to achieve the SDG.

In a speech, UN-Escap Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana said innovative ways should be explored to mobilise financial resources to implement

the SDGs.

She focused on addressing three issues, including mobilising additional domestic resources, infrastructure financing and enhancing financial inclusion using technology.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal as a special guest said concerted efforts of the world community was required to meet the SDG.

He also focused on addressing the climate change vulnerability of Bangladesh.

Special guest Foreign Minister AK Momen said mobilising domestic resources through imposition of wealth tax, combating tax evasion and strong government-private sector partnerships were required to arrange funds for implementing the SDGs.

ICC Bangladesh Vice-President Rokia Afzal Rahman delivered the vote of thanks while Prime Minister's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman was another special guest.

Mahathir hopeful of 1MDB settlement with Goldman soon

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is hopeful of reaching an out-of-court settlement with Goldman Sachs over the 1MDB scandal soon, but that compensation of "one point something billion" dollars offered by the bank was too small.

The Southeast Asian nation has charged Goldman and 17 current and former directors of its units for allegedly misleading investors over bond sales totaling \$6.5 billion that the US bank helped raise for sovereign wealth fund 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

Mahathir said they have demanded \$7.5 billion from Goldman and negotiations were ongoing.

"We would like to avoid having to go to the courts, but if they come up with a reasonable sum I think we will agree," Mahathir, 94, said in an interview with Reuters on Tuesday.

"But at the moment their offer is too small. We're continuing to talk with them to explain why they should pay what we demand. Of course it's not the full amount, that they may be able to bring down, but we think that we can reach some agreement at a later stage."



Salahuddin Alamgir, president of the Bangladesh Dyed Yarn Exporters Association, presides over the association's 14th annual general meeting in Dhaka on Sunday.

Stocks extend fall

FROM PAGE B1

Square Pharmaceuticals dominated the turnover chart with its shares worth Tk 12.51 crore changing hands, followed by Saiham Cotton Mills, Sonar Bangla Insurance, Sinobangla Industries, and Daffodil Computers.

Samata Leather, a junk stock, was the day's best performer with 9.95 percent gain, while Sonar Bangla Insurance was the worst loser, shedding 8.72 percent.

Chattogram stocks also fell with the bourse's benchmark index, CSCX, declining 89.95 points, or 1.07 percent, to finish the day at 8,301.45.

Losers beat gainers as 143 securities declined, 60 advanced and 36 finished unchanged on the Chittagong Stock Exchange.

Record GDP growth

FROM PAGE B1

Bangladesh's per capita gross national income (GNI) jumped more than 9 percent to \$1,909 last fiscal year from \$1,751 a year ago, as per the final figures unveiled yesterday by Planning Minister MA Mannan.

The GNI is the sum total of all income of a country's residents and businesses including residents abroad while GDP takes into account domestic production only.

The per capita GDP also rose at the same pace to \$1,828 last fiscal year from \$1,675 the previous year.

The per capita GNI was \$120 in 1972 and it took a decade to double to \$240 in 1982. It added only \$80 to

\$320 in the next decade until 1992.

The per capita GNI has been rising constantly alongside the country's economic growth since the new millennium.

The per capita GNI rose by 124 percent to \$940 in the decade to 2012 and more than double to \$1,909 in the next seven years.

The GNI per capita is highly associated with the quality of life of citizens.

However, in terms of taka, the GDP per capita increased 11.68 percent year-on-year to Tk 1.54 lakh and GNI per capita 11.58 percent to Tk 1.60 lakh.

Mannan attributed the discrepancy to the weakening of the taka.