

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES				
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY	
▼ 0.57%	▼ 0.58%	\$1,878.61	\$42.89	▲ 1.60%	▲ 0.26%	▲ 3.67%	▼ 0.40%	83.95	98.31	109.79	12.53	
4,899.64	8,466.46	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	43,277.65	24,905.59	2,705.00	3,360.15	BUY TK	84.95	102.11	113.59	13.18

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# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 11, 2020, KARTIK 26, 1427 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

## Businesses fear further losses as second wave looms large

They call for mandatory use of masks, following health protocols

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

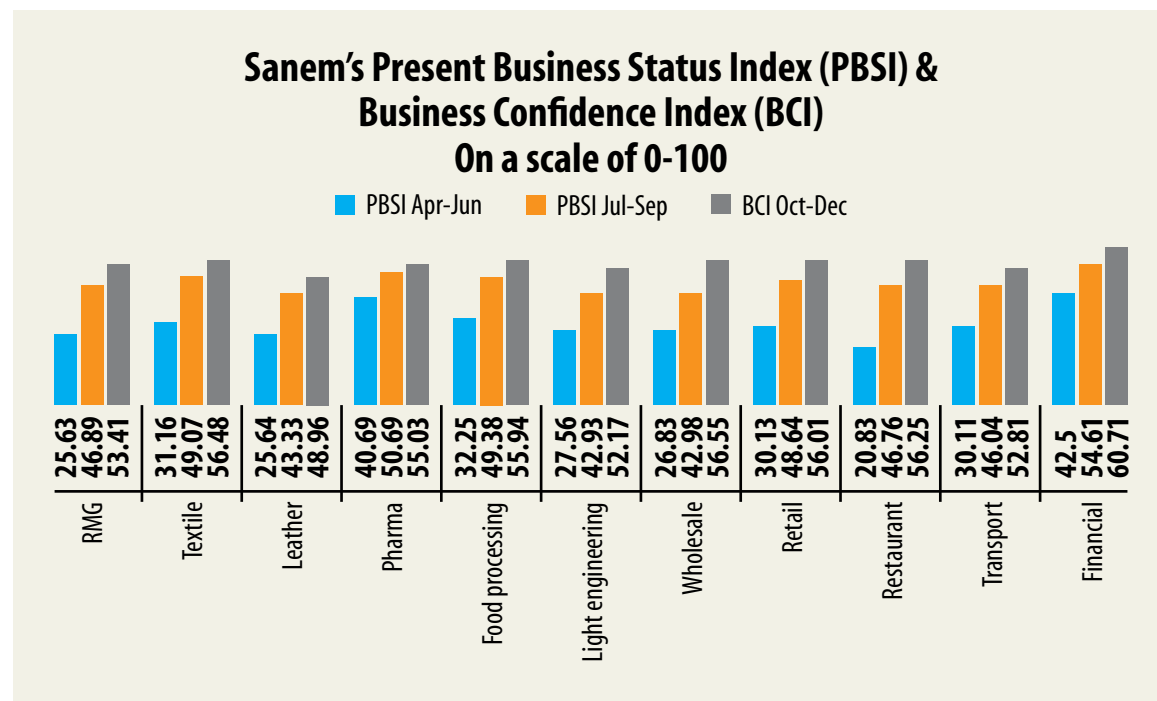
Exporters and local businesses have received a shot in the arm since June on the back of improved economic activity but the fragile recovery could evaporate before taking root if the country is hit with a second wave of the Covid-19.

Bangladeshis doing business internationally had witnessed their worst crisis in recent memory as orders collapsed after developed economies put in place lockdowns to tame the raging virus. Likewise, domestic firms missed almost all major spending seasons because of depressed demand and income losses.

As the cases of infections and deaths from the rogue virus reached a plateau and even started to decline at home and abroad in recent months and economies around the world reopened, buyers began putting in orders, giving exporters a much-needed lifeline.

The businesses focused on the local markets also made a turnaround.

Confidence among the country's manufacturing and service sectors grew in October thanks to the ongoing economic recovery,



according to a new survey.

The Business Confidence Index prepared by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) rose to 55.24 for the October-December period compared to 51.06 between July

and September, on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 depicting the highest level of confidence.

The improvement is evident in all major sectors: readymade garments, textile, leather and leather engineering, pharmaceuticals, wholesale, retail, transport, information and communication technology and finance.

Production in key industries such as jute, textile, yarn, cloth, garments, knitwear, paper, mild-steel and petroleum products, cement, pharmaceuticals, tea and salt all rose in June compared to May, the latest data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics showed.

But if there are new waves of

infections as already seen in some export destinations, the recovery for the exporters would be short-lived. In the same vein, a second wave in Bangladesh could mean a return of containment measures and this may drag down economic activity for a second time in less than eight months.

"For Bangladesh, a second wave, if that happens, will be disastrous," said Shams Mahmud, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said, "Of course, we are worried. We have to observe the situation with caution."

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## ACI returns to profit on higher sales of hygiene products

AHSAN HABIB

While the coronavirus pandemic continues to hammer economic activities, Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI) has managed the crisis than most others as it posted an increased sale of hygiene items.

And even though the pandemic has taken a toll on the operating costs, the group's consolidated profits stood at Tk 9.7 crore in the first quarter of the fiscal.

This is a huge feat for the company as it was Tk 29.9 crore in the red during the same quarter a year ago.

"Our profits rose thanks to higher sales, controlled operating costs and lower finance costs," said Pradip Kar Chowdhury, chief financial officer of ACI.

ACI's sales grew 16 per cent to Tk 1,823 crore in the July-September quarter compared to the same period last year. Operating expenses were up 3 per cent to Tk 410 crore.

Net finance cost declined 11.57 per cent year-on-year to Tk 92.33 crore, the company's financial report shows.

"The sales of pandemic-related hygiene products grew over the past few months. This boosted our brand value," Chowdhury said.

ACI Consumer Brands sells items in the categories of toiletries, home care, hygiene, electrical, electronics, mobile, salt, flour, foods, rice, tea, edible oil and paints.

ACI Agribusinesses is the largest integrator in Bangladesh in agriculture, livestock, fisheries, farm mechanisation, infrastructure development services and motorcycles, while ACI Retail Chain is the largest network of super-shops operating through 129 Shwapno outlets.

It has a presence in the pharmaceuticals segment. The company's hygiene products range from sanitizers to hand wash and soaps.

The sales of ACI's Consumer Brands surged 68.85 per cent to Tk 209.23 crore in the first quarter.

The pharmaceutical segment saw an increase in sales to Tk 314 crore, up from Tk 299 crore in the first quarter in 2019.

ACI's shares rose 3.81 per cent to Tk 264 yesterday on the Dhaka Stock Exchange after news broke that the conglomerate had returned to profits in the first quarter.

"We were able to keep our employees motivated and this positively impacted our company during the pandemic," said a top official of ACI preferring anonymity.

"No one lost jobs during the pandemic. Moreover, the salary of the employees was reviewed positively, which ultimately motivated them to work harder throughout the tough period."

The company's variable costs on the advertisement and promotional activities were also slashed, he added.

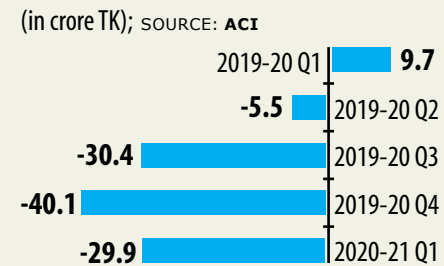
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Nano Crystal Polish Tiles  
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Glazed Wall Tiles

Hotline: 01713 656565

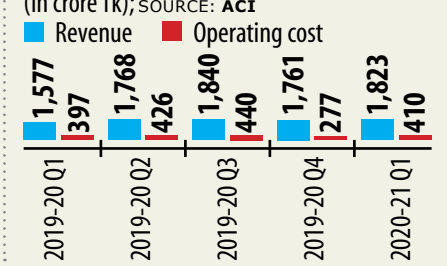
### Profits and losses of ACI

(in crore Tk); SOURCE: ACI



### ACI's revenue and operating costs

(in crore Tk); SOURCE: ACI



## Agent banking winning hearts of remitters

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Along with deposit mobilisation and loan disbursement, banks' agent banking outlets are increasingly becoming the key point in distributing remittance in the remotest part of the country.

Remitters now opt for the platform largely because the beneficiaries can withdraw funds without visiting any bank branches, which are usually located far away from their homes.

Between July and September, agent outlets disbursed Tk 38,335 crore in remittance, up 43.84 per cent from three months earlier and 221 per cent year-on-

remittance from July last year to encourage the Bangladeshi diasporas to send fund through the formal channel.

In some cases, banks are offering one per cent additional cash incentive along with the two per cent if the remitters send the money through the agent banking outlets.

Islam hoped that there is no doubt that more remittance would be channeled through the agent banking in the days ahead. Migrant workers remitted \$2.11 billion last month, way higher than \$1.64 billion flow to the country in the same month a year ago.

Brac Bank has decided to embrace the branchless banking model riding on the

## Private hospitals look to make a turnaround in 2021

SOHEL PARVEZ and JAGARAN CHAKMA

Samorita Hospital, the lone listed healthcare provider, yesterday reported a sharp drop in profit for the last fiscal year, reflecting the sluggish business in the country's private healthcare sector as most treatment-seekers opted to stay away from hospitals.

The private hospital said its net profit dipped 90 per cent to Tk 32.5 lakh in the financial year ending in June 2020 from Tk 3.22 crore in the previous year.

Samorita blamed the coronavirus disease, which was reported first in early March, for the revenue drop, a view that was echoed by two top officials of the country's well-known Square Hospital and Labaid Specialised Hospital.

"The Covid-19 has eaten up our income from March to June," said Samorita Hospital Managing Director ABM Haroon.

"How will patients come to Dhaka from districts as buses were off the road? For the first time in 22 years, we could not declare any dividend



for our shareholders," he said.

He said the hospital had good business in the first eight months of the last fiscal year. Its income and profit dropped also because of increased expenditure for doctors, technicians and other healthcare workers and setting up of facilities for the treatment of Covid patients.

Md Shariful Islam, company secretary of Samorita Hospital, said

the number of patients arriving every day from April to June came down to 10-12.

Haroon, also the senior vice president of the Bangladesh Private Clinic and Diagnostic Owner's Association (BPCDOA), said except for a few large private hospitals that offer multidisciplinary treatment, all had sluggish business from March to August.

"The healthcare sector's business had been totally down during the April-June period due to the lockdown," said Md EE Yousuf Siddique, chief administrative officer of Square Hospitals.

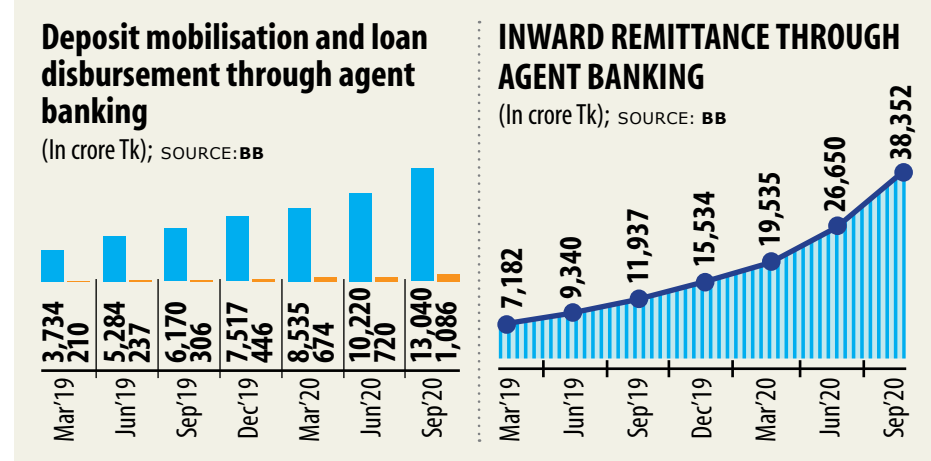
"Our revenue plunged to less than one-third during that time. Patients did not visit hospital except for emergency," he said.

"Referrals also dropped. Business had been really bad at that time," he said, adding that the number of outpatients dropped to 250 daily in the April-June period from the previous daily average of 1,200.

The number of in-patients slumped to nearly one-third during that time from a daily average of 300 previously.

"We had to face a lot of troubles. On the one hand, our income dropped. On the other hand, our expenditure increased for providing equipment to doctors and nurses, providing allowance and creating accommodation for healthcare providers. Overall, we had a bad time," he said.

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year, data from the central bank showed.

There are two reasons for the surge in remittance flowing through the agent banking, said Md Anwarul Islam, general manager of the financial inclusion department of the central bank.

First, the agent booths are usually located adjacent to the houses of the recipients. Second, the 2 per cent cash incentive provided by the government has attracted people, he said.

In the past, a good number of expatriate Bangladeshis preferred hundi, an illegal cross-boundary financial transaction system, to send their hard-earned money to allow their near and dear ones to receive it smoothly sidestepping the complex fund withdrawal process in the banking system.

But the recipients can now withdraw the fund easily from the agent outlets, which are expanding across the country, pushing the hundi channel aside.

As of September, the total number of agent outlets stood at 14,016 in contrast to 9,391 one year earlier.

The government has been providing the 2 per cent cash incentive against

agent banking method, said its Chairman Ahsan H Mansur.

"We have a plan to set up agent outlets in every village to bring the unbanked people under the financial umbrella," he said.

The bank has disbursed 50 per cent of the total outstanding loans of Tk 1,086 crore given through the agent banking by all lenders.

Nineteen banks now operate agent banking. The central bank issued the agent banking guidelines in 2013 as part of its effort to bring the unbanked population under the banking network to widen the financial inclusion.

Deposit mobilisation and loan disbursement have received a momentum on the back of the window.

Deposit collection soared 111 per cent year-on-year to Tk 13,040 crore at the end of September. Loan disbursement grew 255 per cent to Tk 1,086 crore.

Bank Asia has taken several initiatives to speed up loan disbursement through agent banking, said its Managing Director Md Arfan Ali.

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## ILFSL sinks to Tk 2,802cr loss

The company blamed higher provisioning for embezzled loans

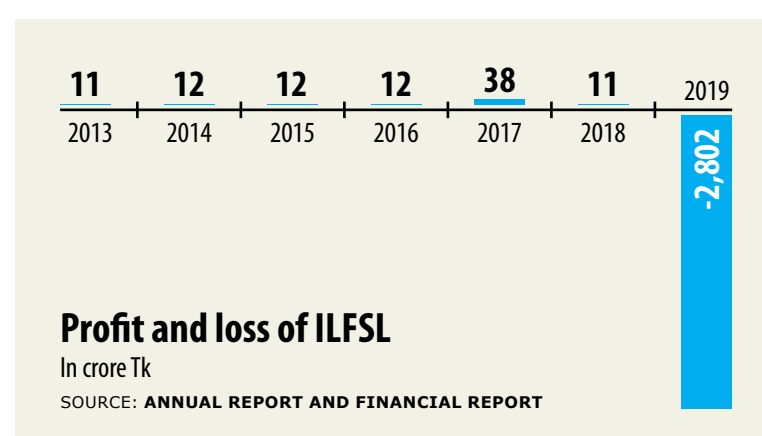
STAR BUSINESS REPORT

International Leasing & Financial Services Ltd (ILFSL) sank to losses in 2019 as the lender has had to set aside a huge amount of fund to cover for the money swindled by its former director PK Halder.

The non-bank financial institution incurred a loss of Tk 2,802 crore last year after making a profit of Tk 11.2 crore in 2018, according to its financial report. This was the first loss for the company in recent years.

The company's net asset value was Tk 285 crore as on September 30 last year, but it turned into liabilities of Tk 2,773 crore as on December 30 for the once-profitable venture because of the loan embezzlement.

"A huge amount of our loans



### Profit and loss of ILFSL

In crore Tk

SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL REPORT

has become low quality, so we needed to keep a higher amount of provision this year," Syed Abed Hasan, chief financial officer of ILFSL, told The Daily Star.

He declined to make comments when asked whether the loans' quality worsened because of the forgery committed by PK Halder. In an investigation, the central

bank found that Tk 1,596 crore was transferred from ILFSL in violation of rules through 48 accounts of various organisations related to Halder and its shareholders.

The net profit after tax of ILFSL declined by Tk 2,813.91 crore in 2019 from a year ago because of lower interest income, higher interest expenses and increased provisioning for leases, loans and advances, according to the NBFIL.

Provisioning is an expense that is reserved for default or bad performing loans. ILFSL's default loans were Tk 941.67 crore, or 24.42 per cent of the outstanding loan as of December 2019. It rose to Tk 3,356.83 crore, or 83.98 per cent of the outstanding loans as of June this year.

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# Pfizer vaccine trial success signals breakthrough in pandemic battle

**REUTERS**  
Pfizer Inc's experimental COVID-19 vaccine is more than 90 per cent effective based on initial trial results, the drugmaker said on Monday, a major victory in the war against a virus that has killed over a million people and battered the world's economy.

Scientists, public health officials and investors welcomed the first successful interim data from a large-scale clinical test as a watershed moment that could help turn the tide of the pandemic if the full trial results pan out. However, mass roll-outs, which needs regulatory approval, will not happen this year and several vaccines are seen as necessary to meet massive global needs.

The prospect of a vaccine electrified world markets with the S&P 500 and Dow hitting record highs. JPMorgan said on Monday it expected the S&P 500 index to hit 4,000 points by early 2021 and called Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine and called Pfizer Inc's COVID-19 vaccine update "one of the best backdrops for sustained gains in years."

Spain to get first Pfizer vaccines in early 2021, Health Minister says  
Israel asks for US help in getting potential Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine  
Stock of theme park and film company Walt Disney rose 12 per cent and movie chain operator AMC Entertainment Holdings was up 51 per cent. Shares in companies that have thrived during lockdowns, such as

diseases expert at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville, Tennessee, called the Pfizer results better than most anticipated. "The study isn't completed yet, but nonetheless the data look very solid."

US President Donald Trump welcomed the test results, and the market boost: "STOCK MARKET UP BIG, VACCINE COMING SOON. REPORT 90 per cent EFFECTIVE. SUCH GREAT NEWS!" he tweeted.

President-elect Joe Biden said the news was excellent but did not change the fact that face masks, social distancing and other health measures would be needed well into next year.

The World Health Organization called the results very positive but



Pfizer's logo is reflected in a drop on a syringe needle in this illustration. **REUTERS/FILE**

Pfizer and German partner BioNTech said they had found no serious safety concerns yet and expected to seek US emergency use authorization this month, raising the chance of a regulatory decision as soon as December.

If granted, the companies estimate they can roll out up to 50 million doses this year, enough to protect 25 million people, and then produce up to 1.3 billion doses in 2021.

"Today is a great day for science and humanity," said Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla, noting the data milestone comes with "infection rates setting new records, hospitals nearing over-capacity and economies struggling to reopen."

Experts said they wanted to see the full trial data, but the preliminary results looked encouraging.

"This news made me smile from ear to ear. It is a relief to see such positive results on this vaccine and bodes well for COVID-19 vaccines in general," said Peter Horby, professor of emerging infectious diseases at the University of Oxford.

There are still many questions, such as how effective the vaccine is by ethnicity or age and how long immunity may last.

"But the bottom line is, as a vaccine it's more than 90 per cent effective, which is extraordinary," top US infectious diseases expert Dr. Anthony Fauci told CNN.

Pfizer expects to seek US emergency use authorization for people aged 16 to 85. To do so, it will need two months of follow-up safety data to assure no side effects crop up. That is expected to be available in the third week of November.

US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said it would take several weeks for US regulators to receive and process the data before a potential approval.

William Schaffner, infectious

Netflix Inc and conferencing platform Zoom Video tumbled. Gun stocks sold off on higher hopes for a return to normal and a lack of civil unrest.

Pfizer shares jumped more than 8 per cent to their highest since July last year, while BioNTech's stock hit a record high. Mizuho Securities analyst Vamil Divan forecast the vaccine may generate sales in excess of \$8.5 billion for Pfizer in 2020-2021 alone.

Shares of other vaccine developers in the final stage of testing also rose with Johnson & Johnson up nearly 4 per cent and Moderna Inc, whose vaccine uses a similar technology as the Pfizer shot, up more than 8 per cent. Britain's AstraZeneca, however, fell 2 per cent.

Moderna is expected to report results from its large-scale trial later this month. "It's likely that we're going to have more than one vaccine that's effective," Fauci said.

William Schaffner, infectious

warned there was a funding gap of \$4.5 billion that could slow access to tests, medicines and vaccines in low- and middle-income countries.

There are other challenges as well that could affect less affluent countries. The Pfizer vaccine must be shipped and stored at an extremely cold temperature, which requires necessary infrastructure. Even many US hospitals lack these super cold storage units, which may impact when and where the vaccine becomes available in many US rural areas as well.

That highlights the need for more traditional vaccines in development, such as J&J's candidate.

Still, there was cause for jubilation. "I'm near ecstatic," Bill Gruber, one of Pfizer's top vaccine scientists, said in an interview. "This is a great day for public health and for the potential to get us all out of the circumstances we're now in."

# US renewable fuels legislation could garner bipartisan support under Biden

**REUTERS, New York**  
Renewable fuels are a niche market for now, but with Democratic President-Elect Joe Biden set to enter office with a divided Congress, legislation supporting demand for products like renewable diesel could garner bipartisan support.

Biden, elected president last week, defeating Republican Donald Trump, has pledged to move the United States to a zero-carbon emissions scheme by 2050. Under a divided Congress, however, ambitious plans to tackle rising emissions may be put on ice.

Renewable fuels, however, may be different: their development is supported by some in both the oil and green energy industries.

Some refiners have been investing in cleaner fuels derived from feedstocks like cooking oil, taking advantage of state subsidies designed to reduce carbon emissions. State and federal incentives could expand that market, giving energy companies revenue opportunities while reducing carbon emissions.

It is unclear whether renewable fuels legislation could pass a Republican-led Senate. Senators representing oil states would be less likely to push for legislation that transitions away from the oil industry.

The US oil market has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. Demand for motor gasoline has dropped 13% so far in 2020, forcing several refineries to close or convert operations to produce more biodiesel.

Many refiners announced plans this year to convert facilities for renewable diesel production, supported by state incentives. In California, refiners can generate tradable credits by producing renewable diesel because it has a lower carbon intensity than fossil fuels, and sell them on to other fuel producers.

Oregon has a similar program, and several other US states are also developing standards for renewable

diesel.

The oil industry was braced for more federal incentives for renewables if Biden won the presidency.

In August, Biden stated that "a Biden-Harris Administration will promote and advance renewable energy, ethanol, and other biofuels to help rural America and our nation's farmers, and will honor the critical role the renewable fuel industry plays in supporting the rural economy and the leadership role American agriculture will play in our fight against climate change."

Producing renewable diesel also helps refiners reduce their exposure to costs to comply with U.S. biofuel blending obligations.

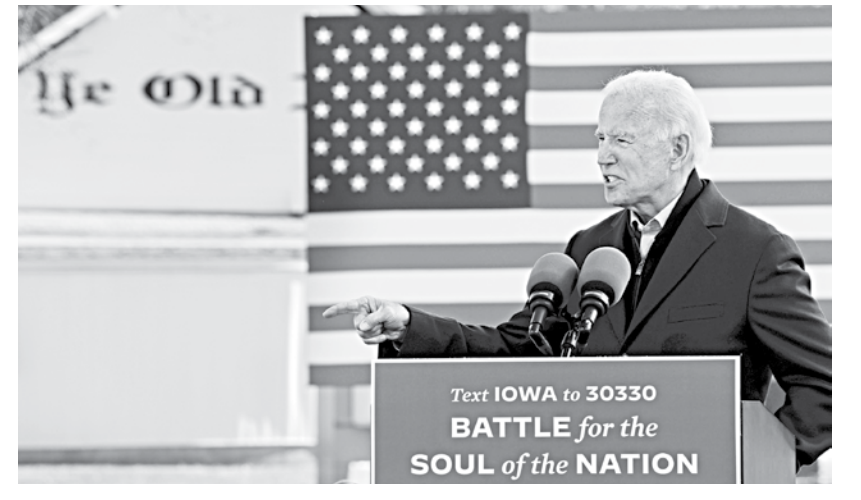
"If you have something optically ESG-friendly, that probably carries more weight today than it used to," said Stewart Glickman, energy equity analyst at CFRA Research.

"I don't see any reason why a divided Congress would have a problem encouraging renewable fuels, as it affects key states that Democrats and Republicans are motivated in," said Bill Barnes, director of energy consultancy Pisgah Partners.

The United States consumes roughly 21 million barrels of renewable diesel per year, compared with 4.1 million barrels used every day for conventional distillate fuel oil, according to US Energy Department data.

Legislators from Farm Belt states such as Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois could see the market as a way to help boost demand for their constituents' products.

Legislators from Farm Belt states such as Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois could see the market as a way to help boost demand for their constituents' products.



Joe Biden points a finger as he speaks during a drive-in campaign stop, in Des Moines, Iowa, US. **REUTERS/FILE**

# Dealers in India consider legal action against Harley Davidson

**REUTERS, New Delhi**  
Dealers in India for Harley-Davidson Inc said on Tuesday they are exploring legal action against the iconic American motorcycle brand after it effectively abandoned the market as part of a broader restructuring plan.


The dealers have hired leading Indian law firm AZB & Partners to

review their paperwork with Harley-Davidson and suggest if there is a legal remedy, Rishi Aggarwal, a dealer for the motorcycle company, told reporters.

"Harley has to compensate us for our losses. That is the only bone of contention. AZB is studying the case," he said during a press conference organised by The Federation of Automobile Dealers Association

(FADA) in India. Harley-Davidson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Harley-Davidson in September said it would discontinue its sales and manufacturing operations in India in a move it said would involve \$75 million in restructuring costs, some 70 redundancies and the closure of its Bawal plant in northern India.



**Project Implementation Unit (PIU)**  
Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part  
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www.rajuk.gov.bd  
www.uru.gov.bd

**Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK)**

Memo No: 25.39.0000.154.14.182.20/743 Date: 08 November, 2020

### Invitation for Bids

Country : Bangladesh  
Name of Project : Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part  
Credit No. : IDA-55990  
Contract Title : Procurement of Equipment: Cutter Crane with 10 inch RCC Slab Cutting Capacity & 3.65 Ton Lifting Capacity  
Reference No. : URP/RAJUK/G-24

**IFB No.: ICB-1(G)/2020-21**

- The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GOB) has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part, and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for Procurement of Equipment: Cutter Crane with 10 inch RCC Slab Cutting Capacity & 3.65 Ton Lifting Capacity.
- The Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part, RAJUK now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the following:

**Brief Description of required Goods including Quantities:**

Cutter Crane with 10 inch RCC Slab Cutting Capacity & 3.65 Ton Lifting Capacity (1 No.)
---


The location of delivery of Goods is **Dhaka, Bangladesh**.  
The delivery period is **180 (One Hundred Eighty) days from the date of contract**.

**Qualifications of the Bidder:** (i) Financial Capability: at least US\$ 0.3 (Zero point Three) Million or an equivalent amount, (ii) Specific Experience: Supplying of Heavy Field Equipment of minimum value US\$ 0.3 (Zero point Three) Million of not more than one contract within the last 5 (Five) years etc.


Detailed qualifications requirements and a margin of preference for certain goods manufactured domestically shall be applied as defined in Section III - Evaluation and Qualification Criteria of bidding document. Specifications of required Goods are available in Section VII - Schedule of Requirements of bidding document.

- Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding (ICB) procedures as specified in the World Bank's *Guidelines: Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers January 2011 (Revised July 2014)* ("Procurement Guidelines"), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the Procurement Guidelines. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
- Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from the Project Director, Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part, RAJUK, electronic mail address: [helalyrajuk@yahoo.com](mailto:helalyrajuk@yahoo.com) and inspect the bidding documents during office hours [Local Time: 0900 to 1700 hours] at the address given below.
- A Pre-Bid meeting will be held at **11.00 AM local time (GMT+6 hrs.) on November 29, 2020** at the office of the undersigned.
- A complete set of bidding documents in English may be purchased by interested eligible bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **BDT 4,200.00 (Four Thousand Two Hundred Bangladesh Taka) or US\$ 50.00 (Fifty US Dollar)**. The method of payment will be cash or pay order in favor of "Project Director, Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part".
- Bids must be delivered to the address below **on or before 02.00 PM local time (GMT+6 hrs.), December 28, 2020**. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders' designated representatives and anyone who choose to attend at the address below **on 02.15 PM local time (GMT+6 hrs.), December 28, 2020**.
- All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in favor of the "Project Director, Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part" in the form of an unconditional and irrevocable Bank Guarantee from a reputed bank as per specified format mentioned in the bidding document. The amount and currency of the bid security shall be **BDT 0.6 Million (Zero point Six Million Bangladesh Taka) or US\$ 7,000 (Seven Thousand US Dollar)**. If the bid security is submitted by a financial institution located outside of the Purchaser's Country, the issuing financial institution shall have a correspondent financial institution located in the Purchaser's Country to make it enforceable.
- The address(es) referred to above is(are): Office of the Project Director, Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part, RAJUK Commercial Complex cum Car Parking Building, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh, Cell: +88-01730013947 e-Mail: [helalyrajuk@yahoo.com](mailto:helalyrajuk@yahoo.com), [pd.urp@uru.gov.bd](mailto:pd.urp@uru.gov.bd)

**Abdul Latif Helaly**  
Project Director  
Urban Resilience Project: RAJUK Part  
& Chief Engineer (Implementation), RAJUK

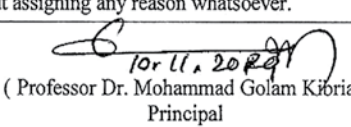


**GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH**  
College Education Development Project (CEDP)  
Government B M College  
Barishal



### Invitation for Tenders

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education
2	Agency	University Grant Commission/National University
3	Procuring Entity Name	Principal, Govt. B M College, Barishal
4	Procuring Entity Code	N/A
5	Procuring Entity District	Barishal
6	Invitation for	Works
7	Invitation Ref No	bmc/cedp/otm/w-01/2020-21
8	Date	10-11-2020
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>		
9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (National)
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>		
10	Budget and Source of Funds	Development Budget (Government & IDA Credit)
11	Development Partners	International Development Association (IDA), World Bank
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
12	Project Code	224017200
13	Project Name	College Education Development (CEDP)
14	Tender Package No.	W-01
15	Tender Package Name	Renovation & Refurbishment of Class rooms, Wash rooms, Seminar, Lab & Library of Govt. B M College
16	Tender Publication Date	10-11-2020
17	Tender Last Selling Date	30-11-2020, 5 p.m
18	Tender Closing Date and Time	01-12-2020, 2:00 p.m.
19	Tender Opening Date and Time	01-12-2020, 2:30 pm.
20	Name & Address of the office	
	Selling Tender Document	Office of the Principal, Govt. B M College, Barishal
	Receiving Tender Document	
	Opening Tender Document	Govt. B M College, Barishal.
21	Place /Date/Time of Pre - Tender Meeting (Optional)	Will not be held
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>		
22	Eligibility of Tenderer	1. The minimum number of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the construction works as Prime Contractor shall be 03 years 2. The minimum specific experience as a Prime Contractor in building construction/refurbishment works of at least 01 contract(s) successfully completed within the last 03 years, each with a value of at least Tk. 40 (Forty) Lac 3. The required average annual construction turnover shall be greater than BDT 55 (Fifty-five) Lac only over the last 03 years 4. The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be BDT 45 (Forty-Five) lac only. 5. The other criteria as stated in tender document
23	Brief Description of Goods or Works	Renovation works include Wall tiles, Floor tiles, Window Thai, Plastic emulsion paint and Melamine board false ceiling, etc.
24	Brief Description of Related Services	Related service shall be in accordance with Section 4: Particular Conditions of Contract, Section 6: Bill of Quantities
25	Tender Document Price	BDT 1,500.00 (One Thousand Five Hundred) only.
26	Tender Name	Location Tender Security Amount(Tk) Completion time in Months
	Renovation & Refurbishment of Class rooms, Wash rooms, Seminar, Lab & Library	Govt. B M College, Barishal BDT 1,25,000 (One Lac Twenty Five Thousands) 90 days
27	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Professor Dr. Mohammad Golam Kibria
28	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Principal
29	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Govt. B M College, Barishal
30	Contract Details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel: 0431-64793 <a href="mailto:principalbmcollege@gmail.com">principalbmcollege@gmail.com</a>
31	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.	

  
 (Professor Dr. Mohammad Golam Kibria)  
 Principal  
 Govt. B M College, Barishal

GD-1800

# India's October CPI likely above 7 per cent again, industrial output falls

REUTERS, Bengaluru

India's retail inflation likely stayed above 7 per cent for a second straight month in October as supply distortions led to a surge in vegetable prices, especially of onions, a Reuters poll showed, lowering the chances of further interest rate cuts.

Disruption from by the coronavirus pandemic and excessive rainfall in states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have damaged and delayed the harvesting of onions - a key ingredient in Indian kitchens - alongside other vegetables.

A Reuters poll of 50 economists conducted from Nov. 4-9 predicted consumer prices rose 7.30 per cent last month from a year earlier, a touch lower than September's 7.34 per cent rate.

If realised, it would be above the top end of the Reserve Bank of India's medium-term target range of 2 per cent-6 per cent for the seventh consecutive month, a streak not seen since August 2014.

"India's recent inflation trajectory is driven by a confluence of seasonal supply-side drivers lifting the food segment, magnified by COVID-19-led disruptions, hindering inter-state transfer as well as provision of general services," said Radhika Rao, economist at DBS Bank.

"Price and tax rigidity in commodities has also added to the boost."

Demand remains weak in Asia's

third-largest economy, which contracted at the sharpest pace on record of 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter, as the ongoing pandemic left millions unemployed and resulted in massive pay cuts. India has the second-highest total infections in the world at more than 8.5 million cases.

The poll also predicted industrial output in September dropped 2.0 per cent from a year earlier, the seventh consecutive month of falls and its longest streak of decline since June 2009, as infrastructure output, which accounts for about 40 per cent of total

industrial production, contracted 0.8 per cent.

Still, the RBI, which has eased its key repo rate by 115 basis points since March, was widely expected to wait until February before cutting the rate again amid worries over higher inflation.

"We see a space for a rate cut in the February policy meeting as the RBI leans towards stimulating growth and acts at the first window it gets when inflation drops within its target range," said Sakshi Gupta, senior economist at HDFC Bank.



A customer with his family is seen at an electronics and appliances shop in Jaipur, India.

# Vaccine news may weaken need for US stimulus, but help still needed: investors

REUTERS, New York

An apparent breakthrough in a coronavirus vaccine weakens the case for another large US fiscal stimulus bill, but relief is still needed for struggling businesses to create a bridge for the economy, investors said.

Pfizer Inc's announcement that its vaccine was more than 90 per cent effective in tests came as Senate Republicans and House Democrats are in a standoff over the health of the economy and investors are closely watching any movement over talks.

Democrats have pushed for a \$2 trillion package, with support for state and local governments that are facing steep layoffs, but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has pushed back, arguing Congress should enact a smaller coronavirus stimulus package highly targeted at the pandemic's effects.

"You have to assume in general that whatever level stimulus you would have received will probably be less because policy makers will say that the economy will mend," said Jonathan Golub, chief US Equity Strategist for Credit Suisse.

The vaccine news came after the United States became the first country to cross more than 10 million coronavirus cases on Sunday, according to a Reuters tally.

New Jersey joined some other US Northeast states on Monday by

reimposing economic restrictions such as closing indoor dining by 10 p.m.

Mohamed El-Erian, chief economic advisor at Allianz, the corporate parent of PIMCO, cautioned that stimulus relief was still required to minimize the pandemic's economic and social effects. The "inclination is to argue that the fiscal support is no longer needed. That would be wrong," he tweeted.

Talks for another stimulus bill will likely be affected by polls for two open US Senate seats at play in the Jan. 5 run-off elections in Georgia, said Esty Dwek, head of global macro strategy at Natixis Investment Managers, who cautioned that the US economy remains weak.

"Even with a vaccine we need stimulus," she said, adding that the risk is that any further relief bills will "be about politics and not about need."

While another stimulus bill would likely extend the market rally, the lack of a relief package now will not sink stocks or investor sentiment as much as before Pfizer's news, said Lamar Villere, portfolio manager at Villere & Co.

"The downside risk of what does a world look like in a no-stimulus scenario is frankly less disastrous to the market than it was yesterday," he said. "We now appear to have blue skies ahead if all of this is as positive

as it looks."

As investors moved into riskier assets on Monday, stocks hit record peaks while benchmark 10-year Treasury rates jumped to their highest since March, when the US economy froze under lockdowns to prevent the spread of the virus.

Expectations for an imminent vaccine will likely push interest rates higher as investors price in an economic rebound next year, said Jabaz Mathai, head of US rates strategy at Citigroup, wrote in a note Monday. "Nevertheless, a stimulus package would be ideal to create a bridge for the economy."

Paul Nolte, portfolio manager at Kingsview Investment Management in Chicago, said a vaccine reduced the need for a stimulus but said if it was not available to the general public until March or April, "we might need something to bridge that."

Markets could continue to rally even if new stimulus is pushed to next year, said Anwiti Bahuguna, head of multi-asset strategy at Columbia Threadneedle. A stimulus bill will now likely range from \$500 billion to \$1 trillion, rather than the \$2 trillion plus that Democrats had been pushing for, she added.

"People were rightly staying away from certain sectors" like hotels and travel, she said. The market's broad rally Monday "implies that rotation trade is on."

# Private hospitals look to make a turnaround in 2021

FROM PAGE B1

"The situation for almost all other hospitals had been bad," Siddiquie said.

This was the first time the country's private healthcare sector, which had seen a burgeoning growth since the 1990s, suffered a blow.

Buoyed by the government's patronisation and the growing income and health consciousness among the people, nearly 15,000 private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic facilities emerged in the medical care landscape over the last three decades to cater to growing demand.

No official estimate of the industry's annual turnover is available.

However, AM Shamim, managing director of Labaid Group, one of the biggest private sector healthcare providers, earlier said the annual

turnover would be \$6 billion and the sector was growing at 25 per cent annually until the pandemic hit the country.

Today, private hospitals and clinics have 91,500 beds, which are nearly double that in public hospitals, said the Health Bulletin 2019.

In 2007, the number of private clinics and hospitals was 1,000, and they had 16,000 beds, just half the total beds in the public sector hospitals, showed official data.

Yesterday Shamim said industry turnover slumped roughly 35 per cent during the March-July period as doctors did not sit in the outpatient sections and patients preferred staying home instead of visiting hospitals.

"We saw a sharp fall in both outdoor and inpatients," he said.

However, things started returning to the pre-Covid period since September. "We have started seeing a peak after September," said Yousuf.

Shamim said the industry was likely to grow by 20 per cent next year as the Covid-19 also opened up opportunities for the private medical service providers to show their capacity, especially to those well-off people who used to travel abroad for treatment.

"We have been able to win the confidence of many," said Yousuf.

Haroon said the pandemic halted the growth of the sector. "We will recover fully unless the second wave of the pandemic hits us," he said.

Executives of the three hospitals said the sector has started rebounding since September and they expect the next year will be good one.

# Walmart partners with GM's Cruise on self-driving delivery pilot in AZ

REUTERS

Walmart Inc is adding Cruise, a majority-owned affiliate of US automaker General Motors Co, to its roster of self-driving startup partners, in a pilot delivery program early next year in Scottsdale, Arizona, the retailer said on Tuesday.

Walmart previously has partnered with tech startups Flytrex, Nuro and Gatik on pilot delivery programs with self-driving vehicles in several US locations, and with Ford Motor Co in a Miami delivery pilot.

Cruise has been testing its self-driving vehicles for several years in San Francisco, as well as Phoenix. In addition to robotaxis, it has provided automated grocery delivery services to residents in San Francisco.

Backed by Honda Motor Co, SoftBank Group and T Rowe Price, Cruise told Reuters in an email it is "laser-focused on making this first pilot successful with Walmart."

# China ups scrutiny of tech giants with draft anti-monopoly rules

REUTERS, Beijing/Shanghai

China on Tuesday published draft rules aimed at preventing monopolistic behavior by internet platforms, a move that will increase scrutiny on e-commerce marketplaces and payment services belonging to the likes of Alibaba Group.

China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR), which issued the draft, said it wanted to prevent platforms from dominating the market or from adopting methods aimed at blocking fair competition.

The definitions it provided for internet platforms mean the new rules could apply to e-commerce sites such as Alibaba Group's Taobao and Tmall marketplaces or JD.com and payment services like Ant Group's Alipay or Tencent Holding's WeChat Pay. Food delivery platforms like Meituan could also be included.

The draft rules would also consider whether a transaction treats different customers in different ways based on big data, payment ability, consumption preferences, and usage habits.

They come after China's Financial Stability and Development Committee, a cabinet-level body headed by Vice Premier Liu He, last month flagged the need to improve mechanisms to ensure fair competition and called for the strengthening of anti-monopoly law enforcement.

The move also comes after the shock suspension last week of the planned \$37

billion share market listing of Ant Group, an Alibaba affiliate, not long after regulators warned the company its lucrative online lending business faced tighter government scrutiny.

The draft rules issued on Tuesday would look to prevent e-commerce practices such as "choose one between two", under which an e-commerce marketplace restricts brands from selling on multiple platforms.

A number of competitors and merchants have accused Alibaba of previously adopting such practices on its platforms. Last year, SAMR called more than 20 platforms to a meeting to ask them to stop requiring merchants to sign exclusive cooperation agreements.

Xie Wen, a former Yahoo China president turned Chinese technology critic, said China had previously avoided taking a hard line with its technology sector in order to help local tech giants grow and compete against US rivals, most of whom have now been blocked from of the country's cyberspace.

With the focus now turning to building up domestic capabilities, Beijing was moving to rein in these companies, he said. "At that time people believed that Chinese internet companies were competing against the US firms, and they are China's pride. But now we are switching to internal circulation," he said.

SAMR is seeking reviews and feedback from the public toward the draft rules until Nov. 30.

# Agent banking winning hearts of remitters

FROM PAGE B1

"In order to give a boost to lending through agent banking, we will set up sub-branch in every upazila where full-fledged branches are not available," he said.

The sub-branches will approve the micro-loans replacing the head office as the bank looks to decentralise the existing system, Ali said.

The bank, which has so far disbursed 27 per cent of the total outstanding loans given via the agent banking outlets of all lenders, will disburse Tk 800 crore in 2021.

"The agent banking model should be used to provide the fund to the underprivileged section under the government's social safety net programmes," said Abul Kashem Md Shirin, managing director of Dutch-Bangla Bank (DBBL).

Sonali Bank is now dedicated to disbursing the fund, but the beneficiaries of the social safety net programmes do not have accounts.

If the fund can be disbursed through the agent banking window, more transparency will be ensured,

Shirin said.

The prospect of the agent banking is bright thanks to the initiatives taken by the central bank and banks, Anwarul Islam said.

Customers now allowed to open an account with an agent within 5-7 minutes by filling up the electronic KYC (know your customers) form.

"This has attracted people," Islam said.

As of September, the total number of accounts under the programme stood at 82.21 lakh, up 107 per cent year-on-year.

# ACI returns to profit on higher sales of hygiene products

FROM PAGE B1

Net operating cash flow per share was Tk 30.17 in the negative in the first quarter. It was Tk 7.24 in red during the same period in 2019.

ACI's consolidated net operating cash flow was also in the negative because of high consumption of working capital to build up inventory and cater to increased demands, the company said in a disclosure published on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) website yesterday.

It declared 80 per cent cash and 10 per cent stock dividends for the year that ended on June 30, 2020, despite incurring losses of Tk 105 crore in the year. The loss stood at Tk 74 crore a year ago.

The dividends were recommended out of accumulated profit, the company said in its statement.

It was not recommended from the capital reserve, revaluation reserve, unrealised gain or profit earned before the company's incorporation and through reducing paid-up capital, anything that would turn post-

dividend retained earnings negative or debit balance, ACI added.

In fiscal 2019-20, its consolidated earnings per share were Tk 18.45 in the negative against Tk 13.51 in the negative for the same period the previous year.

ACI's total revenue was about Tk 6,974 crore in the last fiscal year, up from Tk 6,314 crore a year ago.

The company has a reserve and surplus of Tk 874 crore, according to DSE data.

"It's a good sign that a large market capital-based company like ACI has returned to profits amid the pandemic," said Abdul Mannan, a stock investor.

ACI's market capitalisation was Tk 1,458 crore as of yesterday.

Since the company had incurred losses for the last few quarters, mainly due to higher finance costs, ACI should focus on getting equity investment to expand and repay loans early, the investor said.

"We want to see good companies like ACI make a profit because it boosts the confidence of investors," he added.

# ILFSL sinks to Tk 2,802cr loss

FROM PAGE B1

In 2019, the interest income of ILFSL dipped by Tk 756.98 crore as a result of interest suspense and provision for leases, loans and advances of Tk 759 crore and Tk 2,035 crore respectively as required by the Bangladesh Bank and its auditor.

The interest expenses were up by Tk 62 crore last year compared to 2018 due to the increase in the cost of fund.

As the company fell into losses, its stock price tumbled by a third to Tk 5.5 in the last few days. It closed 5.56 per cent lower at Tk 5.1 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange

yesterday. In order to keep the NBFII afloat, the High Court had appointed Khandaker Ibrahim Khaled, a former deputy governor of the Bangladesh Bank, as ILFSL chairman on January 19.

He assumed the post on February 5 but resigned after just 25 days into the job citing health reasons.

One PK Halder and his associates ate up Tk 1,600 crore of Tk 3,500 crore loans, he had said after quitting.

The central bank replaced Khaled with Md Nazrul Islam Khan, a former secretary.

# Businesses fear further losses as second wave looms large

FROM PAGE B1

The garments sector, which accounts for more than 80 per cent of export earnings, has been on a recovery track volume-wise in the last two or three months albeit at a compromised price level. This is leaving the suppliers extremely vulnerable.

"With the second wave in western countries, the volume might drop as well, buyers might hold back placing new orders," Huq said.

"This means factories, which are already in a weak financial position due to the price hits, might end up with idle capacity. This might provide extremely difficult for the industry to cope with."

Bangladesh's merchandise exports declined 4.08 per cent year-on-year to \$2.94 billion in October because of the faltering recovery of garment shipments from the coronavirus pandemic, official data showed.

Md Saiful Islam, president of the Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh, said some countries in the European Union, the largest export destination for Bangladesh's leather products and footwear, have already witnessed a second wave.

"This being the case, with varying extents, our sector is going to face the heat of the second wave, whether there is any second wave in Bangladesh or not."

The entrepreneur said the period from November to December was supposed to be a sales season in most of Bangladesh's export markets. "If the second wave hits hard the countries, stocks in the markets will pile up."

This will result in the slowing down, postponement or even cancellation of export orders by foreign brands and buyers as seen at the height of the first wave.

Islam lamented that just as the industry had started to recover, the second wave has started knocking at the door of Bangladesh.

"The second wave could further delay the recovery and will put some factories, particularly

small and medium firms, in a struggle for survival."

If countries such as China face any second wave, the supply chain and imports will face serious disruptions, especially for the export sector, said Islam.

Abdul Mukhtar, chairman and managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals, said the most severe form of the pandemic faced by the country still seems milder compared to that undergone by other countries.

"But if lockdowns are introduced because of the second wave, businesses would suffer. So, we should try to manage the situation without enforcing lockdowns. If we can do that, the status quo will be maintained."

He said if the government could ensure that every person wears a mask, then there would be no second wave in Bangladesh.

"Wearing masks and following health protocols to avoid the second wave would be extremely beneficial for the economy and the livelihoods."

He called on the government to enforce its initiative to ensure mandatory use of masks and maintaining of health protocols.

"The second wave may inflict more losses to the businesses than the first one," said Tapan Sengupta, deputy managing director of Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills (BSRM), the country's top steel maker.

Asif Ibrahim, vice-chairman of the Newage Group of Industries, said the second wave leading to shutdowns in Europe has initiated cancellations of export orders since the beginning of November. This may impact export earnings.

He said Bangladesh has shown resiliency during the first wave. "Hopefully, we can take lessons from it and minimise the impacts through proper planning and government stimulus packages."

Like other sectors, the real estate sector also faced a major impact, said Tanvir Ahmed, managing director of Sheltech, one of the top

realtors in Bangladesh.

According to the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh, progress in about 6,000 real estate projects has slowed down as construction work was halted for about three months because of the pandemic.

At the beginning of 2020, the realtors were expecting growth on the back of a lower interest rate, a rise in the ceiling of loans and reduction of property transfer fees, Ahmed said.

"However, due to the Covid-19, the industry is still suffering and it will be very hard to recover." Ahmed said Bangladesh has to prepare to limit the spread of the virus to ensure economic stability.

"So, the occupational health and safety should be given special priority," Ahmed said.

Shams Mahmud of the DCCI said the micro, small and medium enterprises have not received the support they required and were finding it difficult to stay afloat.

"We are seeing the second wave hitting Western countries. Export markets may suffer because of that. The positive news is online sales are up. So, even if we see a decline in stores, the orders may not come to a standstill for Bangladeshi exporters."

The small-scale enterprises missed out on business during Pahela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Fitr and witnessed subdued sales during Eid-ul-Azha. Many failed to secure loans from banks and have had to borrow from loan sharks at higher interest rates.

"The second wave will deal a severe blow to them," he said.

The small-scale enterprises need immediate support. Otherwise, new employment generation, ensuring financial security for informal sector people and women empowerment will all face a setback, the DCCI chief said.

The government should engage the media to raise awareness at this point, Mahmud said.

"We have come a long way since the outbreak of the Covid-19 in Bangladesh. So, we now have an idea where we have fallen short."

# Revamp efforts to secure market access, seek more American investment

Business leaders, economists say about steps after change in US leadership

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Any major trade benefit on the export of goods bound for the US from Bangladesh with the changeover in power is unlikely as Washington rarely alters tariff structures on the import of apparel items.

However, the power shift may open the door for Dhaka to step up its efforts to secure preferential market access and investment from the US, according to experts and industry leaders. Their comments came as American voters chose Democrat Joe Biden as the 46th president of the US.

Of the total shipment to the US from Bangladesh, nearly 95 per cent includes the apparels. But the US government has never cut

Bangladesh's apparel exporters face 15.62 per cent tariff, one of the highest, in the US markets. The rate is far lower for countries like China and Vietnam.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said Bangladesh might not get any major benefit on the export of garment items to the US because the tariff on the imports is fixed on the most-favoured-nation basis.

Rather, the new Democrat government might impose more stringent conditions on labour and compliance issues practised in Bangladesh.

"Historically, the democrats are always more careful about global human rights, labour rights and compliances in industries compared to the Republicans."

Group, a top local garment exporter, said there might not be any extra benefit due to the change in the administration in the US.

Of his total garment shipment, 90 per cent are destined to the US. Some of his clients include GAP, American Eagle, JC Penney, Abercrombie and Fitch and VF Asia.

However, if the Biden administration maintains the same policy on China as enforced by the Trump administration, Bangladesh might benefit from shifting of work orders from China, Azad said.

Before the Covid-19, local garment manufacturers were receiving work orders moving away from China, but the pandemic stopped the shift.

"A lot of major US retailers and brands had contacted me to source more garment items. The pandemic put a halt on their plans. I hope they will revive their plans once the pandemic is over."

During the fifth round of meeting under the Trade and Investment Forum Agreement (Ticfa) in August, Bangladesh sought more American investment in potential sectors like the pharmaceutical. The issue of reinstating the GSP for certain Bangladeshi products was also raised.

Before the country's GSP status was suspended, Bangladesh shipped products worth \$24 million to the US under the preferential trade treatment.

As much as 97 per cent of the goods of Bangladesh-origin had enjoyed the duty-free access to the US markets as a least developed country. The country's main export item, garment, was not included in the package.

Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said: "We can't predict trade based on the shift of the US administration."

"We also have to consider the dynamics of the US economy which is going through a slowdown at this moment and how the second wave of the Covid-19 unfolds in the US."

There may be some shifts in the trade policy between Trump regime and the upcoming Biden administration which may reshape the US trade relationship with China and Vietnam, she said.

"To be more specific, lifting off the punitive tariff imposed by the US on China and reopening of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) discussions would certainly not be favourable for Bangladesh."

"Yet, the dynamics of China's competitiveness in apparel items and the capacity of Vietnam vis-à-vis Bangladesh in the products that we manufacture tilt [the balance] to our favour somewhat."

In contrast, Huq said, the power shift may equally open the door for Bangladesh to revamp its efforts and lobby in the US for market access since it has been making so much of progress in the area of sustainability.

# Pran awaits gas supply to expand Tk 100cr Rajshahi pulping estate

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Having already invested Tk 100 crore to establish an industrial estate in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila in 2017, Pran is planning expansions there, subject to government assistance, including the supply of natural gas.

The zoned area on 34 acres of land in Godagari's Amanatpur village currently houses equipment to pulp agricultural produce before those are sent off to its other plants for further processing and packaging.

Factory activity is currently seasonal, based on the availability of mango, tomato, guava and olive.

The list is set to get bigger very soon as the country's biggest food processor aims to work with watermelon, pineapple, cucumber and aloe vera.

"We have prepared a new plant for producing frozen food and noodles to export those from Rajshahi," said Chowdhury Kamruzzaman, director of marketing of Pran-RFL Group, yesterday.

"We have already applied for gas supply. When we get it and other assistance from various government agencies, we will go into production," he said while exchanging views with journalists at the estate, Barind Industrial Park.

Using alternative fuels such as furnace oil and diesel will raise costs fivefold, he said.

The estate already employs 1,500 people and the new plans promise jobs for at least another 5,000 people, about 95 per cent of whom is being planned to be sourced from the locality.

If an enabling environment prevails, many others will come over to set up

their operations in this region, said Kamruzzaman.

Pran chose Godagari to source the region's quality agricultural products directly from farmers. This not only lowers transportation costs for growers but takes out the need for middlemen, he said.

Prior to 2018, farmers sometimes had no option but to leave tomatoes out to rot in the field because the prices had gotten too low and there was a lack of buyers, said the park's deputy general manager, Sayed Md Sarwar Hossain.

The situation has now dramatically changed with tomato cultivation increasing day by day because farmers are getting fair prices, he said.

"We prioritise the collection of quality raw materials so that customers can get standard products," he added.

Pran is said to create pulp using aseptic technology. Aseptic means free from contamination caused by harmful bacteria, viruses, or other microorganisms.

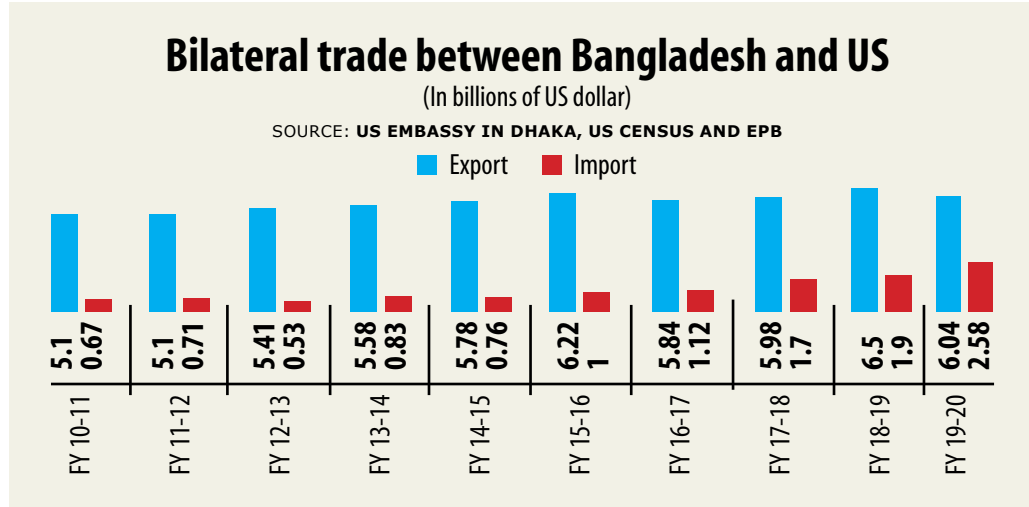
The process involves filling the cooled food products into airtight sterile containers under aseptic conditions enabling safe storage at room temperatures.

What remains after the pulping is used to generate compost fertilizer for farmers.

"We produce organic fertilizer and energy from the wastages, so there is no environmental concern. Liquid waste is treated in a modern effluent treatment plant," he said.

The estate is one of the 23 Pran has in 16 locations across the country, employing more than 1 lakh people.

The conglomerate does not want to stop at exporting to 141 countries. "We will soon set up industries outside the country as well," said Kamruzzaman.



the import duty on apparels and the garment has remained excluded in the list of the items that have been granted the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP).

The GSP status for Bangladesh has remained suspended since June 2013 after the nation's deadliest industrial incident Rana Plaza building collapse in April 2013 that left 1,138 workers dead and more than 2,500 workers injured.

The current tenure of the US GSP scheme is coming to an end next month and unless the Congress renews the preferential trade scheme, Bangladesh would have little possibility of gaining any extra benefit with the shift of power in the US, the south Asian country's single largest export destination.

Currently, 120 developing countries and territories are GSP beneficiaries, according to the US GSP Review Book.

In 2018, products valued at \$23.8 billion entered the US duty-free under the programme, out of \$238.4 billion worth of total imports from GSP-eligible countries. The US imports from all countries amounted to \$2.6 trillion in the year.

Bangladesh may seek US investment. The Trump Administration has some reservations on foreign investment by American companies.

"Bangladesh can lobby with US companies to attract investment from major American conglomerates as the Democrat governments are liberal on foreign investment," Rahman said.

Furthermore, Bangladesh can seek supports from the Biden administration at various multilateral forums like the World Trade Organisation for the extension of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights so that the country's pharmaceuticals industry benefits.

So far, the US government has allowed duty-free benefit on apparel imports only to some African countries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

However, the beneficiary nations are failing to fulfil the expectation on the garment export to the US as they are not strong in apparel manufacturing and do not have adequate facilities to produce clothing items as per the demand of American customers.

AK Azad, managing director of Ha-Meem



People are seen in front of Pran-RFL Group's Barind (Varendra) Industrial Park at Godagari, Rajshahi yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Vaccine news prompts Asian share rally but signs of weakness emerge

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Asian share markets mostly rose on Tuesday as global investors applauded successful trial data for a coronavirus vaccine, although expected delays to any mass roll-out took the gloss off early gains.

European futures trading during the Asian session were indicating a weaker open of at least 1.2 per cent, while US

per cent in early trade.

Singapore's Straits Times gained 2.94 per cent to take the index to its highest point since June.

Despite the optimistic tone across the region, there was some weakness in China, with the CSI300 Index slipping 0.17 per cent.

Analysts attributed the decline to the heavy exposure of China's indices to tech stocks, which came under pressure as



A worker in protective suit takes body temperature measurement of a woman inside the Shanghai Stock Exchange building, at the Pudong financial district in Shanghai, China.

futures showed a potential fall of at least 0.5 per cent after Monday's steep market gains.

The positive tone in Asian equities came after Pfizer Inc said its COVID-19 vaccine, developed with German partner BioNTech, was more than 90 per cent effective in preventing infection, marking the first successful results from a large-scale clinical trial. Major Asian markets soared on the vaccine news before weakening later in the session.

Japan's Nikkei ended up nearly 0.3 per cent after being 1.1 per cent higher in early trading, touching a 29-year high. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 closed 0.66 per cent higher after trading up as much as 1.6 per cent, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index was at 0.77 per cent in the afternoon after rising 1

investors eyed less consumer reliance on technology if a vaccine leads to an easing of movement restrictions.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was 0.1 per cent higher.

"The market is looking forward to a more sustained solution to the pandemic and that is why we have seen such a sharp reaction," said Tai Hui, chief Asia market strategist at JPMorgan Asset Management.

However, he sounded caution over the speed in which the vaccine could be implemented.

"Given more tests are needed, then the approval process. Manufacturing and distribution would mean the vaccine, if truly effective, is still months away from mass deployment."

# Govt to set up packhouse, lab to boost farm exports

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government is planning to set up a modern packhouse and a certified laboratory to boost the export of agricultural products.

A packhouse is a facility where fruits and vegetables are received and processed before distributing them to markets.

A two-acre plot in the capital's Purbachal area has already been awarded to the agriculture ministry for the project.

Quick initiatives will be taken to expedite the construction of the packhouse, said Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque.

Once built, the number of fruits and vegetable shipments to the EU, the Middle East and other regions will increase manifolds, according to a press release.

"Agriculture will be able to make a huge contribution to the overall economy of the country," he added.

The minister's remarks came at a seminar on the importance of building a modern packhouse and accredited laboratory, organised by the Horticulture Export Development Foundation at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council auditorium yesterday.

Bangladesh already exports fresh fruits and vegetables to various countries, including those in the EU. Besides, the demand for

processed food is also increasing day by day.

However, exporters have to supply food products according to the needs of the importing countries.

Fresh vegetables and fruits are exported from Bangladesh to about 43 countries, including the UK, Italy, France, Greece, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, the

Middle Eastern countries, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka.

In fiscal 2019-20, fresh vegetables and fruits worth \$165 million were exported. This includes \$23 million worth of potatoes.

Many importing countries ask for phytosanitary certificates following the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures adopted by the International Plant Protection Convention as a requirement.

The establishment of modern packhouse and accreditation laboratories is essential to accelerate the trend of exporting vegetables and fruits.

"The main hurdle is the lack of internationally accepted certifications for packaging and safe food. If this packhouse and lab are set up, these obstacles will be removed," Razzaque said.

As the house is close to the airport, it will facilitate the transportation of goods, he added.

KEY POINTS

- A two-acre land in Purbachal has been awarded to the agriculture ministry for the house
- Construction of the state-of-the-art facility will start soon
- The house and lab will help in increasing export of fruits and vegetables abroad, including Europe and Middle East
- It will also help in gaining globally accepted certifications for packaging and safe food
- Goods transportation will be easier from the house as it will be established in the vicinity of the airport

# Huawei to sell smartphone unit for \$15b to Shenzhen government, Digital China, others

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Huawei plans to sell budget-brand smartphone unit Honor in a 100 billion yuan deal to a consortium led by handset distributor Digital China and the government of its home town of Shenzhen, people with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The plan comes as US restrictions on supplying Huawei Technologies Co Ltd force the world's second-biggest smartphone maker - after South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co Ltd - to focus on high-end handsets and corporate-oriented business, the people said.

It also indicates little expectation for any swift change in the US perception of Huawei as a security risk following a new US administration, one of the people said.

The all-cash sale will include almost all

assets including brand, research & development capabilities and supply chain management, the people said. Huawei could announce it as early as Sunday, one of the people said.

Main Honor distributor Digital China Group Co Ltd will become a top-two shareholder of sold-off entity Honor Terminal Co Ltd with a near-15 per cent stake, said two of the people. Honor Terminal was incorporated in April and is fully owned by Huawei, the corporate registry showed.

Digital China, which also partners Huawei in businesses such as cloud computing, plans to finance the bulk of the deal with bank loans, the two people said. It will be joined by at least three investment firms backed by the government of financial and technology hub Shenzhen, with each owning 10 per cent to 15 per cent, they said.

After the sale, Honor plans to retain most of

its management team and 7,000-plus workforce and go public within three years, the people said, declining to be identified due to confidentiality constraints.

Honor declined to comment. Huawei, Digital China and the Shenzhen government did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

"It seems to be a drastic move given the Honor brand has been highly complementary to Huawei's smartphone portfolio," said Nicole Peng, vice-president of mobility at market research firm Canalys.

"The interesting synergy with potential buyers actually can be Honor's IoT (Internet of Things) business, which can see potential upside."

Honor is one of several brands aiming to turn their phones into control centers for internet-connected devices such as home appliances, to capture a potential market for future growth.