



**Humayun Kabir, head of regulatory and corporate affairs of bKash, hands over one of six ventilators as donations for Covid-19 patients at Central Police Hospital to Md Azharul Islam Talukder, the doctor in charge, in Dhaka on Sunday.**



**KSM Mostafizur Rahman, managing director of the National AgriCare Export and Import, and Ramendu Majumdar, managing director of Expressions, exchange documents after signing a deal in Dhaka on Sunday on branding the former.**

## Record \$1.2b remittance flows in 15 days of Nov

**FROM PAGE B1**  
Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal has expressed his gratitude to the expatriates.

He said the global economy faced a significant economic crisis suddenly because of the Covid-19. During the pandemic, the migrant workers have emerged as the drivers of the economy by sending their hard-earned money, he said.

The government introduced a 2-per cent cash incentive for the remittances sent through legal channels in the last fiscal year. Soon, remittances started to increase, Kamal said.

"At the time, many people started to say that it [the incentive] would not be effective and the flow would not sustain," he said in the press release.

Even, international organisations expressed doubt about the remittance flow, he said.

"But the flow of remittance since the announcement of the incentive has proved their predictions wrong, and it proved once again that we were right," the minister said.

"Achieving more than \$2 billion in remittance in a single month is rare in Bangladesh's history," he said.

Diversion of remittances from informal to formal channels due to the difficulty of carrying money under travel restrictions amid the pandemic and damages inflicted by the recent floods helped Bangladesh bring the remittance flow back to the positive territory in 2020, according to a recent statement of the World Bank.

In April, the multinational lender had said money sent by the migrant workers to Bangladesh is projected at \$14 billion for 2020, a fall likely of about 22 per cent because of the fallouts of the pandemic.

The rising flow from May led the WB to forecast on October 30 that inbound remittance would accelerate by about 8 per cent to \$19.8 billion this year.

Bangladesh is forecast to have posted the highest year-on-year remittance growth of 53.5 per cent among the top 49 recipient-countries in the third quarter of 2020.

Bangladesh received \$18.3 billion in remittance in 2019. Remittance is an important pillar of Bangladesh's economy and the second-largest source foreign currency after exports, accounting for 5.8 per cent of gross domestic product last year.

## Micro businesses can now accept digital payments

**FROM PAGE B1**  
Such accounts can be opened within five minutes through agent banking outlets.

"This is an outstanding initiative taken by the central bank," said Md Arfan Ali, managing director of Bank Asia.

"We have been working on the issue for more than two years such that digital financial inclusion and branchless banking get a momentum," he said.

The use of cash will decrease at a faster pace when the service gains a tempo.

Smartphones are essential both for customers and micro businesses to settle transactions through the new central bank initiative.

A micro business will display a quick response (QR) code in front of the

respective stall, and clients will have to scan the code to make payments for products purchased from the stall.

The value of products can be settled by using the mobile application of the respective banks, Ali explained.

Retail businesses can also pay the value of the products to the wholesalers by using the mobile app.

Bank Asia will open at least 30,000 personal retail accounts within next year and it has already completed the initial tasks, Ali said.

Micro businesses even will not come to branches as they will be allowed to open accounts at agent outlets.

Personal retail accounts can be opened through MFS providers as per the central bank notice.

A client will be permitted to open the retail account despite having an existing common MFS account. But MFS agents will not be permitted to open such accounts.

Officials of MFS providers or representatives appointed by them will have to supervise and monitor closely while opening the accounts.

The central bank has imposed ceilings on the financial transactions using MFS accounts.

A micro business will be allowed to take a maximum payment of Tk 30,000 per day and Tk 5 lakh per month from clients.

There is no limit on the number of transactions from a person to retailer.

"The central bank has, in brief, taken

a time-befitting decision," said Kamal Quadir, chief executive officer of bKash.

The digital programme will put a positive impact on both retailers and clients, he said.

"It will contribute to the government vision to digitalise the country's financial sector," Quadir said.

Retail personal accounts also can be opened by using the platforms of payment service providers (PSP).

A retailer, who holds such an account with a PSP, will be allowed to transact to the tune of Tk 10 lakh per month.

All stakeholders will have to come forward to implement the central bank initiative successfully, said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank.



**Md Mahbub ul Alam, CEO of Islami Bank Bangladesh, opens 13 new sub-branches in Dhaka, Chattogram, Gazipur, Barishal, Khulna and Shariatpur through a digital platform yesterday.**

## Paramount Textile to buy 80pc stake in Intraco Solar for Tk 60cr

**FROM PAGE B1**  
The company has paid-up capital of Tk 147.69 crore, according to DSE data.

Paramount Textile continued to grow amid the pandemic thanks to its diversified business pattern. "And we want to continue diversifying," added Islam.

The government approved Intraco Solar Power to set up a 30-megawatt plant. The construction is yet to begin.

"We will set up the plant at the cost of around Tk 350 crore," Islam said.

The owners would take bank loans to finance the project.

The proposed solar power plant project, located in Gongachhora of Rangpur, has a 20-year tenure. The power tariff will be 18 US cents per kilowatt.

Since Paramount Textile has expertise in the power plant business, it decided to move ahead with the expansion, Islam added.

The textile-maker's diverse portfolio made it possible to book higher profits in the July-September quarter of the fiscal year. In the quarter, Paramount Textile raked in Tk 12.98 crore in profits from its investment in the power plant project. The company's total profit was Tk 22.23 crore in the period.

As a result, the textile-maker topped the chart of listed apparel companies in terms of earnings per share, which stood at Tk 1.51 in July-September.

Paramount Textile made an equity investment in Paramount BTarc Energy in 2018. It holds a 49 per cent stake in the 200-megawatt power plant situated in Sirajganj.

"Our last year's business was impacted due to the spread of the Covid-19, but the power plant business saved our profit growth," Islam added.

The company took home Tk 515 crore in sales from its textile business in 2019-20, a 9.17 per cent drop compared to the previous year. Gross profits declined 6 per cent to Tk 79 crore in the last fiscal year.

Despite the lower gross profit, Paramount Textile's net profit rose 60 per cent to Tk 65 crore riding on higher profits from the power plant business.

The profits from the power plant segment rose 278 per cent to Tk 36.77 crore. Yesterday, stocks of Paramount Textile closed 0.69 per cent higher at Tk 58.60.

## Improve business climate, go for intense negotiation for more Japanese investment

**FROM PAGE B1**  
in the sectors which have gone through diversification," said the ambassador.

"I am confident that both trade in services and goods will increase to Japan. The Japanese investment has increased a lot over the years," he said.

There is a big room for improvement for Japanese investment and export from Bangladesh, he added.

Of the total \$57 billion Japan invested in Asia, Bangladesh's pie is only 0.1 per cent. Countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) got most of the Japanese investment.

Naoki said Bangladesh needs to improve on its investment climate so that a change in perception comes about among the Japanese investors about the country.

Although Japanese companies are coming here, they are not gaining that much of confidence to make large investments, he said.

This is occurring despite government initiatives aimed at taking the country to a double-digit ranking from a three-digit one in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index, he added.

"To attract more Japanese investment, the government should take care of Japanese companies which have already invested in Bangladesh, so that they become satisfied and can expand operations," said Naoki.

"If they are satisfied here, other Japanese companies will feel encouraged to invest in Bangladesh," he said.

Apart from improving the investment climate, Bangladesh should not discriminate in providing incentives to companies housed inside export processing zones (EPZs), be it owned by locals or foreigners, said the ambassador.

For example, although local garment factories in the EPZs are eligible for a 4 per

cent cash incentive on export to emerging markets, those owned by foreigners are not, he said.

The envoy lamented that little has changed till date even though his office sent letters to the government several times about this discrimination.

Even the immediate past Japanese prime minister, Shinzo Abe talked about this with his Bangladeshi counterpart, Sheikh Hasina, in August this year for attracting more Japanese investment, he said.

There are some other small issues like long waits for customs clearances and problems centring telegraphic transfers of Japanese investment that need to address as soon as possible so that bilateral trade and investment grow at a faster rate, the ambassador also said.

"More improvements are needed. Some improvements took place recently due to the government's efforts," he said.

The foreign factories are being allowed to avail loans from the government's stimulus package aimed at fighting the fallouts of the Covid-19 pandemic, he said.

Regarding Japanese companies seeking to relocate from China to Bangladesh, Naoki said there were two types of Japanese companies in China.

Many Japanese companies have invested targeting the Chinese domestic markets and many invested for making exports from there, he said.

The companies which have targeted the Chinese domestic markets will not relocate as they are doing fine in China, he said.

The Japanese export-oriented small companies may relocate to Bangladesh or other Asian countries from China, said Naoki.

Supply chain disruptions acted as the major reason for the relocation decision of Japanese companies to other Asian countries. Another factor is higher wage

levels in China, he said.

**PROGRESS OF JAPAN-FUNDED MEGA PROJECTS IN BANGLADESH**

The construction work of some mega projects funded by the Japan government can be completed within the next five years as the works have been going on in full swing even during the time of Covid-19, said Naoki.

Naoki particularly spoke of the Dhaka metro rail project, Arahazar economic zone for Japanese investors, deep-sea port and power plants in Matarbari.

He said the Dhaka metro rail can be partially opened by the end of next year while that of the third terminal at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka would be possible by 2023 and deep-sea port and power plants in Matarbari by 2024.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) has 30 ongoing projects, including large infrastructure projects like that of the Matarbari power plant in Maheshkhali, where a couple of billions of US dollars have been invested.

"These projects in Bangladesh will ensure the base of quality infrastructures for an industrial belt in the country," the Japanese envoy said.

In 2014, both the Japanese and Bangladesh governments undertook some mega projects for infrastructure development under the Japanese concept of Big B plan (Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt) for establishing an industrial corridor between Dhaka, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar.

The Big B plan has been formulated under the model of Japan's Tokyo and Osaka industrial hub that arose between the 1960s and the 1980s mainly aiming to develop many industrial hubs in Japan.

"Such a model worked wonders in Japan," he said.

So, the Big B model is being replicated in Bangladesh for the creation of many industrial hubs between Dhaka, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar, so that Bangladesh can become a developed nation in this region, Naoki also said.

Bangladesh has the opportunity to become a developed country if the Big B model starts working efficiently, he added.

Geographically, Matarbari is very important because the deep-sea port will work as the hub of connectivity with the Indian subcontinent, the Asean countries and East Asian nations, including Japan.

The landscape of infrastructures of this area will dramatically change within three or four years. This will lay the foundation for economic development in this area.

He also said Japan wants to see a Free and Open Indo Pacific (FOIP) for a common vision of peace, stability and prosperity in the Bay of Bengal region.

Last month, the foreign ministers of Japan, the US, Australia and India met in Tokyo to promote the FOIP for disaster management, freedom of navigation, quality infrastructures and for connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region, he said.

Naoki also said by the next two years the development of the economic zone for Japanese investors at Arahazar in Narayanganj would be completed.

It is expected that 100 Japanese companies will primarily invest more than \$1 billion in this special economic zone.

There was no considerable delay in the construction work of Japan-funded projects. For instance, the Japanese engineers and experts did not leave the project sites of Matarbari even in the time of the Covid-19.

So, it is expected that the construction works of some mega projects would be completed within the next five years, he said.

## IPDC Finance far from pandemic blues

**FROM PAGE B1**  
In 2020, the company's customer deposits increased 20.5 per cent to Tk 4,278 crore from that at the end of December last year, the company said in its press release.

Its loans, advances and leases increased by nearly 1 per cent to Tk 5,105 at the end of September this year from that of December 2019.

The NBF's classified loan ratio was 1.59 per cent, the lowest amongst listed diversified NBFs in the sector, it added.

Meanwhile, its revenue grew 29 per cent year-over-year to Tk 1,987 crore in the January-September period compared to that a year ago.

Islam emphasised on his company's technology-enabled, socially responsible business models that focus on cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises (CMSMEs), women and young entrepreneurs and lower middle-income households outside Dhaka and Chattogram.

Islam also said the IPDC would continue to support businesses in need, especially the CMSMEs, since they comprised the largest segment of the economy in terms of employment opportunities they generated and their contribution towards the GDP.

The IPDC launched an SME Bondhu package to help disburse Tk 70 crore from the government's stimulus package as per instructions from Bangladesh Bank, he added.