

\$58m PPP project for Patenga terminal gets cabinet nod

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The cabinet committee on economic affairs yesterday approved in principle a \$58 million project to increase the efficiency and logistical capacity of Chattogram port.

The project titled "Equip, Operate and Maintenance of Patenga Container Terminal" will be implemented under the public-private partnership (PPP) model, said the PPP Authority in a press release.

Mohammed Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury, secretary of the shipping ministry, provided an outline of the project to the meeting and sought approval.

Chattogram port is the largest port in Bangladesh and plays an important role in the economic development of the country. The under-construction Patenga Container Terminal project will increase the efficiency and the logistical capacity of the port.

According to a survey by the shipping ministry, the potential investment for the project is \$58 million, and the annual operating cost is \$8 million, the press release said.

Sultana Afroz, chief executive officer of the PPP Authority, said the output of the container terminal would be enhanced with the help of modern technology, equipment and skilled manpower if the project is managed and maintained by a private partner through PPP.

"At the same time, it will be possible to increase the capacity of the Chattogram Port Authority through knowledge-sharing and technology transfer."

She added that the implementation of the project would create jobs in the region and help alleviate poverty.

At present, seven PPP projects under the shipping ministry are at various stages of implementation.



A view of one of the terminals of Chattogram Port which registers congestion frequently nowadays because of increasing number of containers.

RAJIB RAIHAN

Workers of shuttered jute mills demand arrears

Place six-point demand before BJMC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

The workers of nine state-owned jute mills that were shut last year staged a two-hour demonstration in front of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) office in Chattogram yesterday.

During their protest, the workers placed a six-point demand to the BJMC. This includes payments of arrears for all displaced workers and the release of their leader Ruhul Amin.

A number of workers who participated in the demonstration claimed that are struggling to maintain their livelihoods ever since the mills were closed on June 2, 2020.

"We did not receive our salaries or allowances after the closure was announced," said Nasir Uddin Ahmed, a worker.

"As a result, we are living an inhumane life," he added.

Ahmed also claimed that workers' leader Rahul Amin was sued under the Digital Security Act for voicing their demands.

"Other leaders and workers are also being harassed in various ways. So, we made a human-chain and placed our six-point demand."



The workers of nine state-run jute mills that were shut down last year staged a sit-in in front of the Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporation office yesterday.

COLLECTED

Banks, NBFIs asked to sever ties with CTO Forum

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh Bank has asked banks and non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) to sever ties with CTO Forum Bangladesh as the latter's president spread false information on the capability of lenders in tackling cyberattacks.

The central bank issued letters on March 1 asking the banks and NBFIs to inform within March 11 of compliance with the instruction.

They will also have to ensure that their officials have withdrawn memberships with the platform and then provide their names.

The instruction has been given as per suggestions of the ICT Division and BGD

e-GOV CIRT or Bangladesh Government's Computer Incident Response Team, according to the letter.

Tapan Kanti Sarkar, president of CTO Forum Bangladesh, spread the false information while delivering a speech at a talk-show organised by a private TV channel last year.

CTO Forum Bangladesh is said to be a platform of present and past chief technology officers, chief information officers, head of technology and head of IT or equivalent positions of ICT user organisations in Bangladesh.

Contacted, Sarkar said to have just echoed comments provided by BGD e-GOV CIRT. The BGD e-GOV CIRT's current responsibilities

include receiving, reviewing, and responding to computer security incidents and activities.

"The BGD e-government CIRT said that five Bangladeshi banks had faced cyberattacks. But the organisations successfully resisted the attack. And I just delivered the information at the talk-show," Sarkar said.

"The moderator of the talk-show also asked me whether the Bangladeshi banks are capable of tackling the cyberattack. In reply to the question, I said banks in Bangladesh did not have adequate skill to prevent the attack," he said.

"For this reason, the BGD e-government CIRT was forced to resist the cyberattack," he added.

GLOBAL BUSINESS

Spanish unions cry foul as Inditex shuts stores

REUTERS, Madrid

Inditex staff in Spain say they are being forced out as the owner of fast-fashion brand Zara rolls out its plan to shut up to 1,200 stores worldwide, despite a company agreement with Spanish unions to project jobs.

The world's biggest clothes retailer is closing smaller outlets while expanding flagship stores and the Spanish closures are the first of up to 700 expected this year in Europe, as well as 100 in the Americas and 400 elsewhere in the world.

Under a December agreement, seen by Reuters, with two Spanish unions, Inditex aims to provide all affected staff with new vacancies matching their old contracts and seniority within 25 km (16 miles) of where they used to work.

But unions and staff say it's not going to plan.

In an internal report seen by Reuters, the UGT union analysed vacancies offered by Inditex and found 40 per cent of the new positions were outside the province where the worker in question had worked, in some cases on the other side of the country.



People hold flags from Spain's CGT labour union as they protest outside a Zara clothing store, an Inditex brand, in Madrid.

REUTERS/FILE

The report said one in four workers offered new positions in Spain so far had quit.

"If workers who used to work 40 hours are offered 12-hour jobs, hours away, that's not preserving employment," said Cristina Estevez, UGT's retail representative.

UGT, the second-biggest Spanish union within Inditex, signed the deal with the company along with the leading syndicate CCOO.

An Inditex spokesman said in an email to Reuters that it was complying with the union agreement and that relocations respected, "all its principles, wording and spirit, which is to prioritise the maintenance of jobs".

The company was offering more than one vacancy for every job lost, the spokesman said, pointing out that 75 per cent of workers had

been successfully relocated so far.

Clothing sales at Inditex and rivals such as H&M and Next recovered towards the end of last year from record lows when the COVID-19 pandemic first struck, boosted by online shopping and a quick rebound in China.

But the retail industry's recovery in the western world has been frustrated by lockdowns extending well into 2021 and slow vaccine rollouts in some countries.

While most retail jobs lost in the first quarter of 2020 in the United States and Europe have been reinstated, the number of people employed in the sector remains well below pre-pandemic levels, according to data from Eikon Datastream and Eurostat.

In the United States, the shortfall is about 400,000 jobs while in Europe it's nearly 350,000, the data showed.

Inditex said in June it would close 1,000 to 1,200 of its smaller, less profitable stores worldwide by the end of 2021. The pandemic tipped the company into a loss for the first time though Inditex attributed the closures to strong results from its integrated online and in-store model.

India's services growth at one-year high on boom in domestic demand

REUTERS, Bengaluru

India's dominant services activity grew at its fastest pace in a year last month, driven by an extended robust recovery in domestic demand though input costs rose at the quickest rate in eight years, a private survey showed.

Asia's third largest economy came out of a technical recession and expanded 0.4% annually last quarter and the recovery is widely expected to gather pace in the year ahead amid hopes a successful vaccine rollout will boost business activity.

The Nikkei/IHS Markit Services Purchasing Managers' Index rose to

points to a strong expansion in the fourth quarter should growth momentum be sustained in March," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

The economic rebound and the solid recovery in manufacturing activity helped boost the composite PMI to a four-month high of 57.3 in February.

Still, services firms reduced headcount at the sharpest pace in three months, signalling the bruised labour market will take more time to fully recover.

Firms faced the strongest increase in input costs in eight years but were unable to transfer it on to customers as they tried to



A waiter wearing protective face mask and gloves sets a table inside a restaurant of JW Marriott hotel, in Kolkata.

REUTERS/FILE

55.3 last month from 52.8 in January, its highest since February 2020, just before the coronavirus pandemic hit the economy.

It has stayed above the 50-level mark separating growth from contraction for the fifth straight month as a sub-index tracking new business orders hit a year high. The positive impulse came despite a persistent contraction in foreign demand, albeit the pace of the downturn was the slowest since March 2020.

"Economic activity is generally expected to recover in the final quarter of fiscal year 2020/21 after coming out of technical recession in (fiscal) Q3, and the latest improvement in the PMI indicators

maintain their market share and stimulate new orders.

That along with a recent spike in oil prices - a key component of headline inflation - mean overall price pressures are likely to intensify, making it difficult for the Reserve Bank of India to remain so accommodative.

"Again, inflation remains a topic of concern," said De Lima. "Once firms' additional cost burdens start to feed through to clients via price hikes, demand strength may come under pressure."

However, optimism was at a 12-month high last month, driven by the ongoing economic recovery and hopes for a successful vaccine rollout.

Samsung considers four sites in US for \$17b chip plant

REUTERS, Seoul

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd is considering two sites in Arizona and another one in New York in addition to Austin, Texas, for a new \$17 billion chip plant, according to documents filed with Texas state officials.

The tech giant is also seeking combined tax abatements of \$1.48 billion over 20 years from Travis County in Texas and the city of Austin, it added in the documents dated Feb. 26, up from the \$805.5 million previously mentioned.

Samsung is in talks with the sites at Arizona and New York, with each offering property tax abatement and "significant grants and/or



Signage is seen at the Samsung 837 store in the Meatpacking District of Manhattan, New York, US.

REUTERS/FILE

refundable tax credits" to fund infrastructure improvements, the documents said.

The new plant Samsung plans to build would produce "advanced logic devices" for Samsung's chip contract manufacturing business, and could create 1,800 jobs, according to previous documents filed with Texas state officials.

Samsung already has a chip plant in Austin, which due to shutdowns caused by a winter storm last month is expected to need a couple of weeks to resume production.

Samsung is considering a number of possibilities in terms of expansion, a spokesman for the South Korean firm told Reuters on Wednesday, without elaborating.