

2,000 women entrepreneurs to get Tk 50,000 each

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will distribute Tk 10 crore among 2,000 women in Bangladesh in order to encourage women entrepreneurship in the country's e-commerce market.

The fund, to be provided on the occasion of Mujib Borsho, will be taken as non-refundable seed money from the ICT Division's Idea Project, said State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak.

"We will provide this money to make women more self-reliant," he added.

Palak also emphasised the need to raise awareness and enforce strict laws to ensure safety for women in cyberspace.

To eliminate gender inequality, morals and values should be taught by parents as well as educational institutions.

The ICT minister's comments came yesterday during an online discussion styled, "Women in Digital: Employment & Entrepreneurship".

The event was organised by Aspire to Innovate (A2I), a wing of the ICT Division.

Various initiatives are being implemented by the ICT Division to empower the country's female entrepreneurs.

These include allocating 30 per cent of the space in Bangladesh's high-tech parks to women as well as the She-Power project, which aims to create more skilled female entrepreneurs in the country. NM Ziaul Alam, senior secretary of the ICT Division, moderated the event.

Khatunganj lost over Tk 514cr to waterlogging in 2020: study

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An average rainfall of 125 mm a day creates water inundation of about 6 inches to 1 foot over the main road while a heavy rainfall of 200 mm a day with a climate change scenario gives around 4.1 metre water level, meaning around 1 meter depth of water inundation on the road.

All the 224 structures on both sides of Khatunganj main road become vulnerable on a day of heavy rainfall.

The study recommended revitalising the Chaktai canal by demolishing all RCC works from the bottom of it and widening the canal to allow adequate flow of water to revive biodiversity.

It stressed the need for revitalisation and reconnection of water-based transportation in the supply chain by reactivating Chaktai canal by demolishing current bridges over it and construct a new bridge allowing vessel navigation underneath.

Other recommendations include creating a multimodal transport hub to integrate road connection with the waterway and setting up a "waste to energy plant" to manage solid waste at the city and on a local scale.

It called for taking proper planning on land use to maintain water retention areas in the canal catchment and to increase water retention capacity of Chaktai canal by dredging and by widening roadside drains to keep the canal free from blockage.

Analysing the land at the site, currently building structures cover around 55 per cent of the whole area where water storage capacity in terms of water bodies covers only 7 per cent.

To get rid of waterlogging the study recommends to increase water holding capacity to 52 per cent and to reduce building structure in the area to 46 per cent.

Italy's OVS to retain 'limited presence' in Myanmar

REUTERS, Rome

Italian clothing retailer OVS said yesterday that it would keep its "limited presence" in Myanmar but would stop its business with suppliers acting in a discriminatory way towards workers involved in rallies against the country's junta.

"Given the modest size of current production (in Myanmar) OVS could easily abandon the country, however it will keep its limited presence," the group said in a statement.

The company did not say how much business it had with suppliers in Myanmar.

Now jail term for trade-based money launderers

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Misdeclaration of pricing of the imported and exported products is a grave concern for the country, the BIBM said.

The institute carried out another study on the issue in 2019 titled "Addressing Trade-based Money Laundering in Bangladesh: An Assessment."

It said: "Banks should develop data banks on their own to prevent billions of dollars from being siphoned out of Bangladesh through trade-based money laundering."

At the same time, banks should have self-initiatives to make data available to other private banks.

The Finance Act 2020-2021 imposed a penalty against launderers, which is at least twice but not exceeding four times the tax evaded by giving misdeclaration on exports, imports and investments in other countries.

Charuta accused of not paying Tk 30cr VAT

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After verifying documents, the VAT detectives found that the company evaded paying VAT of Tk 30.36 crore, said the VAID. Contacted, Syed Raquib Uddin, personal secretary to the managing director of Charuta, denied the allegation.

"Dodging VAT is beyond question. Firms for which we work deduct VAT at source. The jobs of embassies that we have done are exempted from VAT and we have submitted our documents," he said.



EXPORT IMPORT BANK OF BANGLADESH
Md Anwarul Azim Arif, chairman of Social Islami Bank and Islamic Banks Consultative Forum (IBCF), virtually presided over the 60th meeting of the IBCF on Sunday.

First river-borne food shipment goes to India today

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Pran has taken all required permission from Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority to export food products to India, said Mobarak Hossen Mojumder, deputy director for public relations at Pran.

"The consignment will be a symbolic one. Exporters and importers will be hugely benefited from the use of river routes as a single ship can carry products of nearly 50 trucks."

"River routes cost 30 per cent lower than the roads. Besides, there is also a risk for the goods to get damaged and loose quality in case of exports through roads," said Kamal.

"It is quite environment friendly also." For road transports, businesses have to face the hassles of managing and renting trucks and it increases manifold in case of disruptions on the way, which is common phenomenon, he said.

Pran has been exporting food products to India since 1997. In the first shipment, it sent chana-chur, a traditional snack item, to Tripura.

Pran exports around 150 products to India, including fruit drinks, chips, snacks,

sauce, ketchup, noodles, jelly and spices.

It sends its items to 28 Indian states, including Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Tripura, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Export through river route has huge potential of bilateral trade now, Kamal said.

There is a huge demand for Bangladeshi processed food products in India, especially in the West Bengal and seven sister states, he said.

Pran is constantly trying to supply products that meet the needs of the people of India and its exports to the country is growing at an average rate of 10 per cent a year, he said.

The export volume to India came down slightly since the beginning of the ongoing pandemic, he said.

However, the export activities are getting its momentum back again now.

It is a matter of pride for Bangladesh as the products of Pran are now competing with the renowned brands and making a place in Indian super shops and retail stores, he said.

Pran's 500 products are now exported to 145 countries, Kamal said.

REUTERS

Microsoft stands to receive nearly a quarter of the Covid relief funds destined for US cybersecurity defenders, angering some lawmakers who do not want to increase funding for a company whose software was recently at the heart of two big hacks, according to sources.

Congress allocated the funds at issue in the Covid relief bill signed on Thursday after two enormous cyberattacks leveraged weaknesses in Microsoft products to reach into computer networks at federal and local agencies and tens of thousands of companies. One breach attributed to Russia in December grabbed emails from the Justice Department, Commerce Department and Treasury Department.

The hacks pose a significant national security threat, frustrating lawmakers who say Microsoft's faulty software is making it more profitable.

"If the only solution to a major breach in which hackers exploited a design flaw long ignored by Microsoft is to give Microsoft more money, the government needs to reevaluate its dependence on Microsoft," said Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, a leading Democrat on the intelligence committee.

"The government should not be rewarding a company that sold it insecure software with even bigger government contracts." Microsoft previously said it prioritizes fixing attacks that it sees in wide use.

A draft spending plan by the Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency allocates more

than \$150 million of their new \$650 million funding for a "secure cloud platform," according to documents seen by Reuters and people familiar with the matter.

More precisely, the money has been budgeted for Microsoft, according to four people briefed on the choice, largely to help other federal agencies upgrade their existing Microsoft deals to improve security of their cloud systems.

A CISA spokesman declined to comment. A key service Microsoft provides, known as activity logging, allows its clients to keep watch on data traffic within their part of the cloud and spot inconsistencies that could reveal hackers at work. Officials have sought access to Microsoft's premium tracking capability after discovering the lack of logs made it much harder to investigate recent hacks tied to nation states.

Microsoft said Sunday that while all its cloud products have security features, larger organisations may require more advanced capabilities such as a greater depth of security logs and the ability to investigate those logs and take action. It did not address the fairness issues raised by lawmakers.

While some senior US cyber officials feel they have no choice but to pay up, Wyden and three other lawmakers have publicly raised concerns about the plan. Most major software has been penetrated by well-financed teams of hackers at one time or another, but the ubiquity of Microsoft's products makes it a prime target.

The alleged Russian spying, known for exploiting software from SolarWinds, hit

nine government agencies and 100 private companies, many of whom were exploited through manipulation of a Microsoft system.

More recent sprawling hacks into tens of thousands of servers around the world running Microsoft Exchange by a handful of attackers, including some tied to the Chinese government, relied on four previously unknown flaws in the way those servers handled web versions of Outlook email. China has denied backing the attacks.

In a hearing on the SolarWinds breach Feb. 26, Rhode Island Congressman Jim Langevin challenged Microsoft President Brad Smith about charging extra for logging, asking: Is this a profit center for Microsoft, or is it a service being provided at cost to the customers? We are a for-profit company, Smith responded. Everything we do is designed to generate a return, other than our philanthropic work.

Microsoft has turned security offerings into a significant source of revenue, with the business generating \$10 billion annually, up 40% from the previous year.

Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger of the House appropriations committee said Congress must look into "why security is an afterthought in the procurement process" and move away from approving only the lowest bidders.

The government could impose new regulations, said Curtis Dukes, a former head of the defensive mission at the National Security Agency now at the nonprofit Center for Internet Security, which works closely with CISA. Maybe with additional size, vendors should have to do more.

Microsoft set to reap a quarter of relief funds for cyber defenders

Agrani Bank sole supplier of forex for Padma bridge

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The forex reserve of the country stood at \$42.98 billion on March 10, up 33 per cent from \$32.42 billion year-on-year, BB data showed.

Buoyed by rising foreign exchange reserves and export earnings, the government in 2012 decided to go ahead with the project with its own resources. Then came the question of making payments to the international contractors and consultancy firms in foreign currency.

During a meeting on February 3, 2014, on the management of the foreign currency, the Bridges Division decided that Agrani Bank, with which the division had already opened an account, would provide the money from its own foreign currency reserve or from the inter-bank forex market.

If there was still any shortfall, the BB would sell foreign currency to Agrani Bank, it was agreed in the meeting.

Starting with \$6.26 million in 2013, Agrani Bank has so far paid out \$1.2 billion. Last year, it contributed \$126 million, according to the bank's data.

"Initially, we thought we would buy foreign currencies from the Bangladesh Bank's reserve. But we have been able to pay solely from our own sources, especially from the foreign currency that our bank has earned," said Zaid Bakht, chairman of Agrani Bank.

"We are proud to have been working on such a transformational project," he told The Daily Star.

He hoped that the bank would be able to make foreign currency payments in the future from its own earnings.

The total money for the project

comes from the government's own funds. To build the bridge, the government makes allocations in the Annual Development Programme.

Both local and foreign payments are being made through Agrani Bank, said Shafigul Islam, director of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project.

KEY ASPECTS OF THE PADMA BRIDGE

The construction of the Padma bridge started in November 2014 to connect the country's 21 south and south-western districts with the capital via road and rail. The first span was installed on September 30, 2017.

Now fully visible, with the completion of the last span installation in December last year, the two-level steel truss composite bridge is expected to be a major boost to trade and economic activities.

Once in service, the mega bridge -- the top deck accommodating a four-lane highway for vehicles and the lower deck for a set of railway tracks -- will connect multi-lane expressways and railway lines with Dhaka to Mongla port and the deep-sea port at Payra.

The fast-track project is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product by 1.2 per cent.

The progress of the project was 82.5 per cent as of November last year. Around 91 per cent of work of the main bridge is done, while 76 per cent work of river training has been completed, according to project documents.

The original cost -- Tk 10,161 crore -- for the bridge was estimated in 2007 on the basis of a feasibility study. It did not include the cost of railway lines on the bridge at the time.

After several revisions, the cost of

the project rose to Tk 30,193 crore.

Now, the installation of the roadway deck and railway stringers is going on in full swing.

One of the major issues that are yet to be finalised is the bridge toll. A committee is working to finalise the rate.

Belayet Hossain, secretary of the Bridges Division, hinted that the rate was likely to be higher than that of Bangabandhu Bridge over the Jamuna river.

The Padma bridge is longer than the Bangabandhu bridge, he said. "So, the toll of the Padma Bridge may be higher than that of the Bangabandhu Bridge."

The rate will be fixed after getting the recommendations from the committee, he added.

BB to let banks, NBFIs pay higher dividends

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Till now, 26 banks have formed funds of around Tk 2,900 crore utilising the Bangladesh Bank incentive. Of the funds, around Tk 1,037 crore has already been invested.

The BSEC and the BB will work together to ensure secondary trade of treasury bonds and bills, reads the press release.

They also will work together to trade banks' perpetual bond.

The central bank officials will work to allow the cost price instead of market price in accounting of market exposure of banks and the NBFIs, the press release added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
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শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গাম শব্দের উন্নতি

Memo. No. 46.02.8600.000.07.002.20- 657

Date: 15-03-2021

e-Tender Notice No: 22/2020-2021

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of

Sl. No.	Tender/ Proposal ID	Name of Scheme with Package No.	Last selling Date and Time of Tender Document	Last Date and Time for submission tender
1	557936	CRMIDP/SRP/W-347/312 Construction of Two2 Storied Rural Market Building With 04 Storied Foundation in Dubishibar Hat Kazir Hat Under Zajira UpazilaDist.Shariatpur.	18-Apr-2021 16:00	19-Apr-2021 13:00
2	557930	DDIRWSP/Shariatpur/Naria/20-21/BR-01 Construction of 52.00 m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Janzira Naria Sureswar Road at Ch.1371 Km under UpazilaNaria DistrictShariatpur. Road ID No-386652006	18-Apr-2021 16:00	19-Apr-2021 13:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline / hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branches up to 16:00 on 18-Apr-2021.

Further Information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) and also for e-mail: xen.shariatpur@lged.gov.bd or call to: 0601-61454.

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