

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
Week-on-week		As of Friday		Friday Closings				As on Thursday			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▼ 1.98%	▼ 2.06%	\$1,731.97	\$64.57	▲ 1.17%	▲ 1.56%	▲ 0.52%	▲ 1.63%	BUY TK 83.95	98.19	114.12	12.62
5,327.22	9,304.98	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	49,008.50	29,176.70	3,157.95	3,418.33	SELL TK 84.95	101.99	117.92	13.27



# Star BUSINESS

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## RMG orders slump

Buyers go slow amid fresh fears and lockdowns

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

International buyers are following a 'go-slow' policy in placing orders with apparel suppliers in Bangladesh because of fresh lockdowns and stricter restrictions in key markets amid a rise in coronavirus infections and piling up of unsold goods amid depressed sales.

Local garment suppliers say there were receiving 20 per cent fewer work orders for the next season beginning from June.

The fewer order placements are taking place mainly in small and medium enterprises as they have less production capacity and weak financial strength, and a few trade partners or buyers abroad.

Moreover, the demand for deferred payment is still as severe as it was in the initial months of Covid-19 in 2020. In a few cases, it has worsened as the situation in the Western market is dire, industry insiders say.

AK Azad, managing director of Ha-Meem Group, a top garment supplier, faces fewer orders and deferred payment.

"I know the lockdown will lengthen, and there is an uncertainty, and I am trying to improve the efficiency so that I can survive during Covid-19."

The third wave of infections is sweeping through Europe, which accounts for 60 per cent of garment exports from Bangladesh.

### RISKS AND WAY FORWARD

Exporters got **20%** fewer work orders for next season

Small enterprises are the worst sufferers

Third wave of infection sweeping through the West

Exporters improving efficiency to cut cost

Countries such as Italy, Germany, France and UK are reinstating stricter lockdowns, and many other countries across the world are following the suit.

Previously, buyers used to give at sight, a form of payment due on demand. It requires the party receiving the good or service to pay a certain sum immediately upon being presented with the bill of exchange.

Buyers are now requesting a deferred payment for 180 days, sometimes even more.

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## Export dev fund being raised to \$5.5b

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh Bank has decided to increase the size of its export development fund (EDF) as it reaches out to businesses tackling slowdowns from a recent resurgence in daily Covid-19 cases, the highest since last July.

The fund will come to stand at \$5.5 billion upon the addition of \$500 million, said a central bank official.

A notice is scheduled to be issued today stating the decision would take immediate effect.

The fund last saw a raise in April 2020 from \$3.50 billion soon after the coronavirus was first detected in the country.

The increase is expected to help exports rebound, given the fund had been depleted recently amidst immense demand for loans from the fund.

In addition, the central bank is allowing "Type-B" companies of export processing zones (EPZs) to avail foreign currency loans from the fund since last week.

Firms with 100 per cent foreign ownership are considered "Type-A". Joint venture companies with foreign and Bangladeshi ownerships are treated "Type-B" and those with 100 per cent Bangladeshi ownerships "Type-C".

Several years ago, the central bank allowed "Type-C" companies to enjoy loans from the fund.

The EPZ decision fuelled demand for the fund, said the BB official.

"This is a time-befitting decision beyond a doubt as it will make

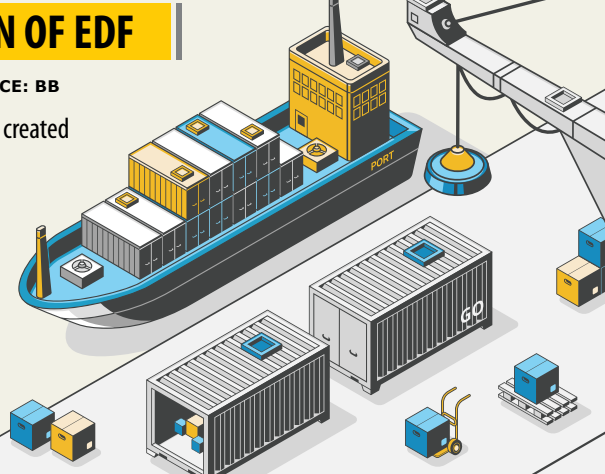
### AT A GLANCE

- Extended amount to boost economy: exporters
- BB takes the move to meet market demand
- Interest rate of EDF 1.75pc
- Repayment tenure 6 months
- A notice to be issued today

### EXPANSION OF EDF

Figures in \$; SOURCE: BB

- 1989: fund was created
- 2005: 100m
- 2010: 400m
- 2015: 1,800m
- 2020: 5,000m
- 2021: 5,500m



the whole economy vibrant," said Kutubuddin Ahmed, chairman and founder of Envoy Group, a conglomerate focusing on readymade garments and textile manufacturing.

The economy faces setbacks from time to time due to different causes but taking proper measures in tackling the situations is important, he said.

If the country's export sector suffers from a problem, it will have a spill

over effect on the whole economy, Ahmed added.

Exporters use the fund to settle import bills on time to secure raw materials smoothly.

Loans from the fund had to be paid back within three months from the date of disbursement but the central bank recently increased the repayment tenure to six months.

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## GOVT INCENTIVE SME Foundation to hand Tk 100cr to small businesses

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The SME Foundation will disburse Tk 100 crore as a government incentive to small and medium entrepreneurs in the current fiscal year to help them recover from the damages caused by the pandemic.

It will also hand over Tk 200 crore more in the next financial year, said Masudur Rahman, chairperson of the foundation.

He shared the information at the foundation's 15th annual general meeting at its office in Dhaka yesterday.

Regular coordination will be made with Bangladesh Bank to ensure smooth disbursement of these loans among the actual affected entrepreneurs through banks and financial institutions, the foundation said in a statement.

Some 10,199 entrepreneurs have benefited from SME Foundation's multifaceted activities related to product marketing, skills development and market expansion of products produced at home and abroad in 2019-20 financial year, said Nazim Hasan Sattar, general manager of the foundation.

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## So many potatoes, yet nowhere to store

Farmers in trouble as cold storages are almost full

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Increased potato production has become a cause for concern for farmers, particularly in the northern region of Bangladesh, as growers are finding it hard to manage space at cold storages to preserve the tuber.

The northern region accounts for 70 per cent of the total production of the popular vegetable in the country.

Most of the cold storages in the main potato producing region, Rangpur division, are already full, forcing many farmers and traders to return from the gates of the facilities. As they could not store a portion of their produce, the prices of the vegetable have declined at the farmers' end.

Mazidul Islam, who hails from the northwestern district of Lalmonirhat, could store only 150 bags (50kg each) of potato out of 460 bags in the cold storages. He has stored 50 bags of potatoes by following conventional methods in his house.

The 48-year-old grower had to sell the rest of the produce to local traders at Tk 8 per kg, which was below his cost of production.

"I had never thought that the potato market would be like this," he said.

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Cold storages are very near to reaching their capacity limit, frustrating potato farmers, especially those of the northern region, who have managed to secure increased harvests this time around. The photo was taken at Birganj upazila of Dinajpur last week.

## Stock investors on edge over Covid surge

### ANALYSIS

AHSAN HABIB

Stock investors are in a state of panic due to the sharp increase in Covid-19 infections across the country, leading to a downward trend in the market for the past two weeks.

Besides, the ongoing political unrest and announcement of a hartal have only exacerbated their anxiety.

Investors are mainly concerned about the economy deteriorating again due to the Covid-19 fallout as it could have a severe impact on the stock market.

"People are worried about the potential impact of a second wave of infections and so the market is falling," said Rezwana Islam, who has been invested in the stock market since 2015.

DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), dropped 192 points, or 3.47 per cent, in the last week.

Many investors nearly lost half of their funds in the last year, Islam said. "So they became careful now."

Thirty-nine people died from Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, according to a press



release issued yesterday by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

This is the highest number of deaths recorded in a single day due to Covid-19 in more than three months.

The total number of deaths has now reached 8,869 while the death rate stands at 1.5 per cent.

At least 3,674 new infections were recorded in the meantime, taking the total number of people infected to 591,806, according to the DGHS. The daily infection rate remained at above 3,500 for the fifth consecutive day yesterday.

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## Uncertainty may curb rising card spending

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Spending through credit cards maintained an upward trend in Bangladesh in January, but bankers say the rising coronavirus infections and deepening uncertainty may discourage credit-based purchases.

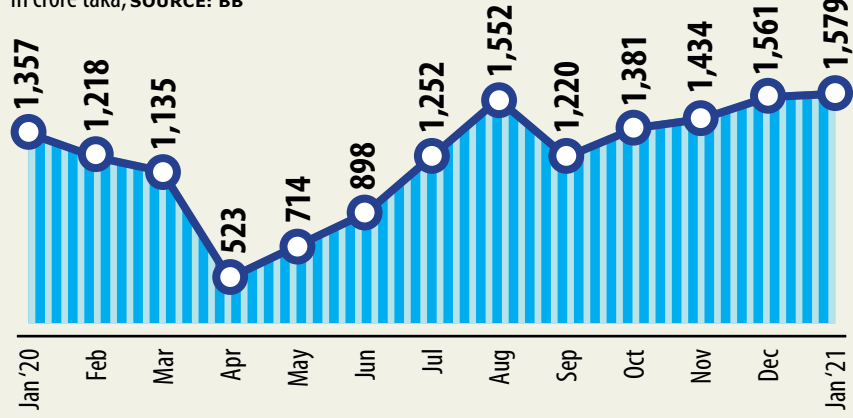
Total card loans stood at Tk 1,579 crore in January, the highest on record in a single month.

The figure is up 1.19 per cent from a month earlier and 16.38 per cent year-on-year, according to the latest Bangladesh Bank data.

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### MONTHLY CREDIT CARD TRANSACTIONS

In crore taka; SOURCE: BB



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## 1,320MW Payra plant awaits inauguration

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

A coal-fired Payra power plant of 1,320 megawatts (MW) in Dhankhali area under Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali district is awaiting inauguration.

Already connected to the national grid, the plant's commercial supply is soon to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said AM Khorsheedul Alam, chief executive officer of North West Power Generation Company, one initiator of the construction.

Some 163 kilometres (km) of transmission lines connect the plant to a Gopalganj grid. Another 85km of lines are being set up to take it up to Amin Bazar in Dhaka.

The power plant's first unit has been supplying 660MW of electricity to the national grid since May 15 last year after being constructed in four years.

The second unit started production on December 8, 2020.

The plant is currently generating 1,000MW on an experimental basis, burning through some 13,000 tonnes of coal a day, generating 180 tonnes of fly and bottom ash as byproducts.

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A view of the 1,320MW coal-fired power plant in Dhankhali area under Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali district.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



# US spending and income declined in February as stimulus faded

AFP, Washington

US spending dropped more than expected and income plunged in February, Commerce Department data released on Friday said, an outcome economists blamed on the tapering-off of government stimulus checks and bad winter weather that kept shoppers at home.

The 1.0 per cent drop in spending was worse than expected while the 7.1 per cent, or more than \$1.5 trillion, plunge in income was in line with analysts' expectations. "Spending was hit by the storm and, perhaps, a dip in spending financed by the stimulus payments; these effects can't be separated," Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said.

The \$149 billion fall in spending was caused by a \$155.9 billion decline in spending on goods, offset by a \$7 billion increase in services spending.

The data also showed prices grew at a less-than-expected 0.2 per cent in February, 1.6 per cent higher than the same month in 2020. The lack of a strong uptick in prices may soothe stock markets, which have grown wary that the \$900 billion relief measure Congress approved in December and a \$1.9 trillion bill enacted this month will overheat the economy even as it recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic and cause inflation to rise.

That could prompt the Federal Reserve to raise its lending rate from its zero level sooner than expected in 2024, ending the easy money policies that have helped indices rebound sharply over the past year even as the

wider economy has suffered. The savings rate also fell to 13.6 per cent with \$2.4 trillion in consumers' pockets, about where it was in December before the measure passed that month sent out checks of up to \$600 per-person.

The relief measure passed in March does out another round of payments of as much as \$1,400 per-person, and Rubela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics said to expect a similar dynamic in that month's data, with income climbing again. "Overall, prospects for growth have brightened on a combination of factors, including progress on vaccinations, although virus cases have been edging up in recent

days," she said. "As restrictions are relaxed and support measures are delivered, household spending is set to lift growth in" the first quarter, she added.

In a separate report, the University of Michigan said its consumer sentiment index had reached its highest level in a year at 84.9, while respondents' assessments of current conditions and future expectations both posted healthy gains. "Consumer sentiment continued to rise in late March, reaching its highest level in a year due to the third disbursement of relief checks and better than anticipated vaccination progress," the survey's chief economist Richard Curtin said.



A woman shops in Chinatown amid the coronavirus disease pandemic in New York City.

REUTERS/FILE



SINGER

Singer Bangladesh CEO MMH Fairoz launches a range of refrigerators at its head office in Dhaka marking Bangladesh's 50 years of independence.

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তারিখঃ ২৪ মার্চ ২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

**দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

হবিগঞ্জ জেলাধীন উপজেলাসমূহের ৭৮ (আটাত্তর)টি ইউনিয়ন পরিষদে কর্মরত গ্রামপুলিশ (দফাদার ও মহসূদাদার)দের পোশাক ও সরঞ্জামাদি (তফসিল "খ") সরবরাহ প্রাপ্তির নিমিত্ত PPR, 2008 (সর্বশেষ সংশোধনকৃত) অনুসরণে সিলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহ্বান (তফসিল "ক") করা যাচ্ছে। ১ম পর্যায়ের সিডিউল ২য় পর্যায়ের ব্যবহার করা যাবে না। ১ম পর্যায়ের যোগ্য ও কাঙ্ক্ষিত দরদাতা পাওয়া না গেলে ২য় পর্যায়ের জন্য দরপত্র বিক্রয় উন্মুক্ত থাকবে। একইভাবে ২য় পর্যায়ের যোগ্য ও কাঙ্ক্ষিত দরদাতা পাওয়া না গেলে ৩য় পর্যায়ের জন্য দরপত্র বিক্রয় উন্মুক্ত থাকবে। দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত যোগ্যতা ও অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী সিডিউল ফরমে সংযুক্ত থাকবে।

ক্রঃ	বিবরণ	বিত্তারিত তথ্য (তফসিল "ক")
০১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ, স্থানীয় সরকার, পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মন্ত্রণালয়।
০২	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ	জেলা প্রশাসক, হবিগঞ্জ।
০৩	দরপত্রের বিবরণ	২০২০-২০২১ অর্থবছরে হবিগঞ্জ জেলাধীন ৭৮ (আটাত্তর)টি ইউনিয়ন পরিষদে কর্মরত গ্রামপুলিশ (দফাদার ও মহসূদাদার)দের পোশাক ও অন্যান্য সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহ।
০৪	দরপত্র আহ্বানের সূত্র	স্মারক নম্বরঃ ৪৬.০০.০০০০.০১৮.০২.০০১.১৭(অংশ-১)-৪৬২, তারিখঃ ২২/১০/২০২০ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ।
০৫	সংগ্রহ পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)।
০৬	সিডিউল প্রকল্পের নাম ও ঠিকানা	ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনারের কার্যালয় (স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা), সিলেট। খ) জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয় (স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা), হবিগঞ্জ। গ) পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, হবিগঞ্জ।
০৭	দরপত্র শেখ তারিখ ও সময়	১ম পর্যায়ঃ ১১/০৪/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ (অফিস চলাকালীন পর্যন্ত)। ২য় পর্যায়ঃ ২৫/০৪/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ (অফিস চলাকালীন পর্যন্ত)। ৩য় পর্যায়ঃ ১০/০৫/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ (অফিস চলাকালীন পর্যন্ত)।
০৮	দরপত্র তারিখ ও সময়	১ম পর্যায়ঃ ১৫/০৪/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ, বেলা-১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত। ২য় পর্যায়ঃ ২৮/০৪/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ, বেলা-১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত। ৩য় পর্যায়ঃ ১৩/০৫/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ, বেলা-১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
০৯	দরপত্র সিডিউল দাখিলের স্থান	ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনারের কার্যালয় (স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা), সিলেট। খ) জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয় (স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা), হবিগঞ্জ। গ) পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, হবিগঞ্জ।
১০	দরপত্র সিডিউল খোলার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	১ম পর্যায়ঃ ১৫/০৪/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ, বিকাল ২:০০ ঘটিকা, জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, হবিগঞ্জ। দরপত্রদাতার সম্মুখে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন)। ২য় পর্যায়ঃ ২৮/০৪/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ, বিকাল ২:০০ ঘটিকা, জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, হবিগঞ্জ। দরপত্রদাতার সম্মুখে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন)। ৩য় পর্যায়ঃ ১৩/০৫/২০২১ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ, বিকাল ২:০০ ঘটিকা, জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, হবিগঞ্জ। দরপত্রদাতার সম্মুখে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন)।
১১	দরপত্র সিডিউলের ক্রম মূল্য	২,০০০/- (দুই হাজার) টাকা (অফেন্ডেযোগ্য)।
১২	পোশাক সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহের মেয়াদকাল	পোশাক সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহের মেয়াদকাল কার্যাদেশ প্রাপ্তির পর ৪৫ (পঁয়তাল্লিশ) দিন।
১৩	বায়নার/জামানতের টাকা	দরপত্রে উল্লিখিত মূল্যের ১০% টাকা জামানত হিসাবে "জেলা প্রশাসক, হবিগঞ্জ" এর অনুকূলে যে কোন তফসিলি ব্যাংকের যে কোন শাখা হতে ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৪	দরপত্রের সাথে যে সকল কাগজপত্রাদি ও নমুনা দাখিল করতে হবে। (সকল সনদপত্রের কপি ১ম শ্রেণির গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত হতে হবে)	ক) দরপত্রদাতার সদ্য তোলা পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি ০১ (এক) কপি, হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্সের কপি, হালনাগাদ কাগজপত্রাদি ও নমুনা দাখিল করতে হবে। (সকল সনদপত্রের কপি ১ম শ্রেণির গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত হতে হবে)। খ) এ কার্যালয়ে সংরক্ষিত স্থানীয় সরকার প্রদত্ত বাইসাইকেলের ও কাগপের নমুনা অনুযায়ী পোশাক তৈরী করে প্রতিটি আইটেমের ০২ (দুই) সেট পোশাক ও অন্যান্য সরঞ্জামাদি দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে। গ) দরপত্রে উদ্ধৃত মূল্য অঙ্কে ও কন্ট্রোল স্ট্যাম্পের লিখতে হবে। দরপত্রে কোনো প্রকার কাটা-ছেঁটা, ঘষা-মাজা বা ফুঁড় উত্থাপিত ব্যবহার করা হলে দরপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে। ঘ) গৃহীত দরপত্রদাতাকে কার্যাদেশ প্রাপ্তির ০৭ (সাত) কার্যদিবসের মধ্যে নিজ খরচে ৩০০/- (তিনশত) টাকা মূল্যের নন-জুডিশিয়াল স্ট্যাম্পে জেলা প্রশাসক, হবিগঞ্জ কর্তৃক আরোপিত শর্তাবলী সফলিত চুক্তিপত্র সম্পাদন করতে হবে। ঙ) দরপত্র গ্রহণ/মূল্যায়ন কার্যক্রম PPA, 2006 ও PPR, 2008 (সর্বশেষ সংশোধনকৃত) অনুসরণে বাবতী আর্থিক বিধি-বিধান অনুযায়ী করা হবে। চ) দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত তথ্য এবং শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিডিউলে বর্ণিত থাকবে। এছাড়া উক্ত শর্তাবলী ও পোশাকের কাগপের নমুনা নিম্নোক্তকারীরা অফিসের স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা (কক্ষ নম্বর-২১৩) হতে সংগ্রহ করতে হবে। ছ) মূল্যায়ন কমিটি কর্তৃক পোশাক ও সরঞ্জামাদির দর/গুণগত মান যাচাই-বাহাই পূর্ব সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করা হবে। মূল্যায়ন কমিটির সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে। জ) কোনো কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই যে কোনো দরপত্র আংশিক বা সম্পূর্ণ গ্রহণ বা বাতিল এবং চাহিদা অনুযায়ী দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে উল্লিখিত পোশাক ও সরঞ্জামাদির সংখ্যা কম-বেশি/সময়/যে কোন ধরনের পরিবর্তন/পরিবর্তন করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন।

**তফসিল "খ"**  
(প্যাকেজ-০১)

ক্রঃ	গ্রাম পুলিশদের জন্য পোশাক ও সরঞ্জামাদির নাম	পোশাক ও সরঞ্জামাদির বিবরণ ও পরিমাণ	মন্তব্য
০১	শার্ট (নীল রং এর)	(ক) ফুল হাতা-০১ (একটি করে মোট ৬৩৮ (ছয়শত আত্রিশ)টি। [নামযুক্ত ব্যাজসহ] (খ) হাফ হাতা-০১ (একটি করে মোট ৬৩৮ (ছয়শত আত্রিশ)টি। [নামযুক্ত ব্যাজসহ] (গ) ৫৬৮টি ফুল শার্ট ও ৫৬৮টি হাফ শার্টে লাল রং এর সোভার ব্যাজ এবং (ঘ) ৭০টি ফুল শার্ট ও ৭০টি হাফ শার্টে লাল রং এর সোভার ব্যাজ ০২টি করে কালো কাপড়ের রিবন থাকতে হবে।	দফাদার ৭০ জন, মহসূদাদার ৫৬৮ জন (৬৩৮ জন পুরুষ এবং ৭৯ জন মহিলা)।
০২	ফুল প্যান্ট (খাকী রং এর)	প্রত্যেকের ০২ (দুই)টি করে ১২৭৬টি (পুরুষ দফাদার ও মহসূদাদারদের জন্য)	
০৩	শাড়ি (মহিলা পুলিশের ন্যায়)	প্রত্যেকের ০২ (দুই)টি করে ১৫৮টি	
০৪	পেটিকোট (মহিলা পুলিশের ন্যায়)	প্রত্যেকের ০২ (দুই)টি করে ১৫৮টি	
০৫	ব্লাউজ (মহিলা পুলিশের ন্যায়)	ফুল হাতা-০১ (একটি করে মোট ৭৯টি হাফ হাতা-০১ (একটি করে মোট ৭৯টি	লাল রং এর সোভার ব্যাজ ও নামযুক্ত ব্যাজসহ
০৬	বেট (উন্নতমানের পুলিশের ন্যায়)	প্রত্যেকের ০১ (একটি) করে মোট ৭১টি	
০৭	মাথার কাপ (মনোপ্রাসমসহ)	প্রত্যেকের ০১ (একটি) করে মোট ৭১টি	
০৮	৪.৫০ ভোল্ট চার্জার চার্জ লাইট	৬৩৮ জন পুরুষের প্রত্যেকের ০১ (একটি) করে মোট ৬৩৮টি	
০৯	চামড়ার জুতা (মোজাসহ)	৬৩৮ জন পুরুষের প্রত্যেকের ০১ (একটি) করে মোট ৬৩৮টি	
<b>(প্যাকেজ-০২)</b>			
০১	উন্নতমানের বাইসাইকেল সরবরাহ	৬৫১ (ছয়শত একাত্তর)টি	
	পুরুষ গ্রাম পুলিশদের জন্য	মহিলা গ্রাম পুলিশদের জন্য	
	Frame size: steel: 28"x22" Lug Joint Fork: Steel Traditional Types. Brake Set: STL-28"-CP Rim Brake. Handle Bar: Traditional Type with High Grade PVC Grip. Rim: Steel 32/40 Holes CP. Mudguard: Steel. Carrier: Steel Carrier.	Frame size: steel: 26"x18" tig Welded Fork: Steel Rigid Fork. Brake Set: V Brake. Handle Bar: Steel Raise 30 mm, 22.2" 600 Barbore: 25.4 mm. Rim: Alloy Double Wall 36 holes. Mudguard: Steel MTB Mudguard. Carrier: Steel MTB Carrier.	পুরুষদের ৫৭২টি এবং মহিলাদের ৭৯টি

**ইশরাত জাহান**  
জেলা প্রশাসক  
হবিগঞ্জ  
Email: [dchabiganj@mopa.gov.bd](mailto:dchabiganj@mopa.gov.bd)

**Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation**

BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road  
Chattogram, Bangladesh

**Invitation for International Quotation for Import of Gasoil 0.005% (50 PPM) 'S', Jet A-1, MOGAS 95 RON, HSFO 180CST and Marine Fuel 0.5% 'S' during July-December, 2021**

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources/Energy and Mineral Resources Division.
2	Agency	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).
3	Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).
4	Procuring entity district	Chattogram, Bangladesh.
5	Invitation for	Procurement of 6.937-7.385 Million Barrels (9,300,000-9,900,000 Metric Tons) of Gasoil 0.005% Sulphur, 0.960 Million Barrels (120,000 Metric Tons) of Jet A-1; 20,000 Metric tons of High Sulphur Furnace Oil (HSFO) 180 CST; 0.387 Million Barrels (45,000 Metric Tons) of Mogas 95 RON and 60,000 Metric tons of Marine Fuel 0.5% Sulphur (+/-10% for each grade at Buyer's Option).
6	Invitation Ref. No./date	28.03.0000.041.01.010.2021; 28th March, 2021.
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>		
7	Procurement method	Request for International Quotation.
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>		
8	Budget and source of funds	Own source of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation/GoB fund.
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
9	Procurement name	Procurement of 6.937-7.385 Million Barrels (9,300,000-9,900,000 Metric Tons) of Gasoil 0.005% Sulphur, 0.960 Million Barrels (120,000 Metric Tons) of Jet A-1; 20,000 Metric tons of High Sulphur Furnace Oil (HSFO) 180 CST; 0.387 Million Barrels (45,000 Metric Tons) of Mogas 95 RON and 60,000 Metric tons of Marine Fuel 0.5% Sulphur (+/-10% for each grade at Buyer's Option).
10	Notice publication date	28/03/2021.
11	Document last selling date	09/05/2021; 1530 hours (BST).
12	Closing date and time of submission of quotation	Date: 11/05/2021 Time: 1500 hours (BST)
13	Quotation opening date and time	11/05/2021 1515 hours (BST)
<b>Name &amp; address of the office(s)</b>		
14	(a) Selling place of quotation document	(i) Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban (1st Floor), Saltgola Road, Chattogram, Bangladesh. (ii) Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BTMC Bhaban, Level-10, 7-9, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh. (iii) Document is available in BPC's website ( <a href="http://www.bpc.gov.bd">www.bpc.gov.bd</a> ). Document original money receipt must be enclosed with bid document during submission.
	(b) Receiving and opening place of quotation	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban (1st Floor), Saltgola Road, Chattogram, Bangladesh.
<b>INFORMATION FOR BIDDER</b>		
15	Eligibility of bidder	(i) The Bidders must own Refinery(s) and its processing capacity must be at least 3.00 million metric tons per year. (ii) The satisfactory completion of export of Petroleum Products of minimum 2.00 million Metric Tons per year in last 03 (three) years. Bidder must submit year-wise export quantity & name of destination/organization. (iii) Annual turnover of the Bidders during last 3 (three) years must be equivalent to minimum US\$ 3.00 billion. (iv) The Bidders must have minimum 05 (five) years' experience in the export of petroleum products. Experience certificate mentioning year & the country of supply must be submitted along with bid documents. (v) The Bidders must be free from any interdictory from international organization like UNO, OPEC, WTO etc. (vi) The Bidders must have to comply with international safety standard and environment compliances. (vii) The minimum amount of liquid asset or working capital facility must be US\$ 2.00 billion. (viii) The Bidders must have to fulfill all terms and conditions of quotation documents.
16	Brief description of goods	(i) <b>Package-A:</b> The total quantity to be supplied 3.357-3.580 Million Barrels (450,000-480,000 Metric Tons) of Gasoil 0.005% 'Sulphur' and 0.480 Million Barrels (60,000 Metric Tons) of Jet A-1 (+/-10% for each grade at Buyer's Option). (ii) <b>Package-B:</b> The total quantity to be supplied 3.580-3.804 Million Barrels (480,000-510,000 Metric Tons) of Gasoil 0.005% 'Sulphur' and 0.480 Million Barrels (60,000 Metric Tons) of Jet A-1 (+/-10% for each grade at Buyer's Option). (iii) <b>Package-C:</b> The total quantity to be supplied 20,000 Metric tons of High Sulphur Furnace Oil (HSFO) 180 CST (+/-10% at Buyer's Option). (iv) <b>Package-D:</b> The total quantity to be supplied 0.387 Million Barrels (45,000 Metric tons) of Mogas 95 RON (+/-10% at Buyer's Option). (v) <b>Package-E:</b> The total quantity to be supplied 60,000 Metric tons of Marine Fuel 0.5% Sulphur (+/-10% at Buyer's Option).
17	Quotation document price	BDT 10,000.00/ US\$ 120.00 non-refundable by Cash/Pay Order/Bank Draft drawn in favor of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.
18	Quotation security amount/bid bond	US Dollar 2.00 (two) million.
19	Type of payment for security amount	As per quotation document.
20	Mode of payment	Through Letter of Credit (L/C).
21	Mode of shipment	CFR Chattogram, Bangladesh.
22	Determination of quantification	The quantity of the products delivered shall be determined by the independent inspector by measurement of the Vessel's tanks immediately upon arrival at the customary anchorage at the discharge port.
23	Validity of the offer	7th September, 2021 at 1700 hours (BST).
24	Submission of quotation	Quotation should be inserted in closed envelope bearing the name and address of the Quotations, Ref. No. and date and be addressed to the procuring authority. 01 (one) marked as "ORIGINAL" and other as "COPY" in separate envelope in the form of book/spiral binding. Both the "ORIGINAL" and "COPY" shall have to be inserted in a single envelope. All submitted papers and quotation documents must be signed and sealed by authorized official of Bidder. The document must be well organized and table of contents must be included.
<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>		
25	Name of official inviting quotation	Md. Abu Hanif.
26	Designation of official inviting quotation	Sr. General Manager (Commercial & Operations).
27	Address of official inviting quotation	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, 1st Floor, Saltgola Road, Chattogram, Bangladesh.
28	Contact details of official inviting quotation	Telephone: +88-031-716121, Mobile: 01755587625 E-mail: <a href="mailto:gm.com.bpc@gmail.com">gm.com.bpc@gmail.com</a>
29	Incomplete, conditional quotation and alternate offer shall not be considered. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all quotations partly or wholly without assigning any reason.	GD-624

## Stocks gain on upbeat economic data

AFP, London

Stock markets rose Friday after German, UK and US economic data provided a brighter outlook for major economies worldwide.

London, Paris and Frankfurt extended a global rally heading into the weekend, buoyed by upbeat UK retail data and a strong German business sentiment. US stocks were helped by government data that showed no sign of rising inflation in February, soothing fears that the world's biggest economy could overheat.

Oil prices also bounded higher at the end of a rollercoaster week. "Economic recovery optimism is boosting equity indices higher as we head towards the weekend," said OANDA analyst Sophie Griffiths. "Better-than-forecast US initial jobless claims, rebounding UK retail sales and stronger-than-expected German business sentiment are boosting markets, she added.

In the United States, a Commerce Department report also said that prices grew less than expected at 0.2 per cent in February, easing concern that government stimulus measures would cause inflation and force the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates sooner than expected.

## WB gives \$250m for faster recovery from pandemic

FROM PAGE B4

"This series of programmes promoted quality daycare for children in a bid to bring more women to the job market and supported actions to create a more inclusive labour market, for women, youth, and migrants."

With this programme, the total World Bank's financing to the Programmatic Jobs Development Policy Credit series stands at \$750 million.

The credit is from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), which provides concessional financing, has a 30-year term, including a five-year grace period. Bangladesh currently has the largest ongoing IDA programme totaling over \$14 billion.

The World Bank was among the first development partners to support Bangladesh and has committed more than \$35 billion in grants, interest-free and concessional credits to the country since its independence.



# Local aviation operators' platform gets new committee



Anjan Chowdhury

Mofizur Rahman

STAR BUSINESS DESK

A newly elected executive committee of the Aviation Operators Association of Bangladesh has recently taken over charge for 2021-2023.

Square Air Managing Director Anjan Chowdhury and Novoair Managing Director Mofizur Rahman have been elected president and secretary general respectively, according to a statement.

Other committee member are Z Mahmud Mamun of Impress Aviation, Mostafa Kamal of Meghna Aviation, Safwan Sobhan of Bashundhara Airways, Raquibul Kabir of Bangla International Airlines, Md Arifur Rahman of Sky Capital Airlines, Khandaker AFM Mohibullah of South Asian Airlines, Mohammed Younus of Galaxy Flying Academy and Abdullah Al Zahir Shapan of Blue Flying Academy.

# Bank Asia celebrates golden jubilee of independence

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia celebrated the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence through hoisting of the national flag at its Paltan corporate office in Dhaka, rendition of the national anthem and observance of one minute's silence for Liberation War martyrs.

Guests shared memories between patriotic songs and poem recitations, says a press release.

Rumee A Hossain, the bank's chairman of board executive committee, inaugurated the programme while directors Helal Ahmed Chowdhury and Romana Rouf Chowdhury, directors, and Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director, were present.

# So many potatoes, yet nowhere to store

FROM PAGE B1

Another farmer, Monirul Islam, from the same district, had a similar experience. He could store only 70 bags of potatoes in the cold storage.

In Taraganj upazila of Rangpur district, potato trader Tofayel Ahmed was able to keep 1,000 bags of tuber after his third attempt.

"All the storages have stopped taking potatoes," he said, adding that farmers will be in massive trouble in such a situation.

This has happened just for excessive production, he observed.

After failing to keep the vegetable in cold storages with a plan to sell them in the lean season, many farmers are preserving them using traditional methods in their houses. Yet there is a limit of storing.

Moshiur Rahman, managing director of Gobindaganj cold storage in Gaibandha district, said farmers' interest to store more potatoes increased this year as prices were higher last year.

"We have two cold storages in this upazila. We were open to store potatoes since February 25, and two storages were filled within 10 March," he said.

The Bangladesh Cold Storage

Association (BCSA) has 400 cold storages. Its members and the storages together can preserve up to 58 lakh tonnes of tubers. Cold storages in the northern region account for three-fifths of the total storing capacity, said Mosharaf Hossain, president of the association.

Already, 85 per cent of the capacity of the cold storages has been occupied. The rest will be filled in the next two weeks, he added.

Hossain also said that space was available mainly in the cold storages in Munshiganj district, which alone accounts for 12 per cent of the total annual production of potato in Bangladesh.

Agricultural extension officials, cold storage operators and farmers all said that the expanded cultivation of potatoes this year was encouraged by higher prices in the last quarter of the previous year.

Last year, the prices of the most popular vegetable soared up to Tk 50 per kg at the retail level in Dhaka due to a supply shortage.

This year, growers cultivated potato on 4.86 lakh hectares, 4 per cent higher year-on-year, data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and the Bangladesh Bureau of

Statistics (BBS) showed.

Growers bagged 96 lakh tonnes of the tuber in 2020, according to a BBS estimate.

DAE Director General Md Asadullah said increased area and favourable weather contributed to higher production this year.

"We expect total production to be 1.10 lakh tonnes this year," said BCSA President Hossain.

Prices of potato dropped by Tk 2 per kg over the last two weeks to trade at Tk 9-10 at the farmers' end.

Hossain said the prices were likely to decline further after storing is complete.

"Prices of potato are decreasing day by day this year," said Nabiul Islam, a potato trader from Kurigram sadar upazila, a northern district.

Sunil Chandra Das, a 58-year-old farmer in Kurigram, said buyers were not even showing interest to buy the vegetable at Tk 7-8 per kg.

The government should carry out a proper estimate on the production and requirement of potatoes and draw up plans for the excess crop to help farmers, said Hossain.

(Our correspondents from Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat and Bogura contributed to the report).

# BB'to announce' new cyber security guidelines

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bangladesh Bank will soon announce new cyber security guidelines for the banking sector, said the central bank's head of IT recently.

Cyber security does not just encompass technology but processes and human resources, said Debdulal Roy, also an executive director.

He was addressing a webinar on the issue organised by Hoplon, an emerging cyber security company of Bangladesh, in collaboration with Group IB, according to a statement.

Bangladesh Bank has been providing banks relevant guidance for some time now and recommends availing ISO certifications and security operation centres, said Roy.

Cyber-attacks can target all kinds of banking channels—mainstream banking, credit cards, ATMs and mobile banking, said Nick Palmer, VP Global Business of Group IB.

# City Bank wins AsiaMoney award

STAR BUSINESS DESK

City Bank has been awarded a "Best Digital Bank in Bangladesh 2021" by global financial publication AsiaMoney for "outstanding contributions in digital banking in Bangladesh".

The bank's "Ekhoni" instant account opening app, digital banking services City Touch, interactive voice response call center, WhatsApp banking and others helped gain the award, the bank claims in a statement.

# Pandemic pushes French govt debt to highest since 1949

AFP, Paris

French public debt soared last year to its highest levels since shortly after World War II due to the coronavirus pandemic and ensuing economic crisis, the statistics office said on Friday. France's public debt in 2020 was equal to 115.7 per cent of annual GDP and the budget deficit amounted to 9.2 percent of GDP, "the highest level since 1949", statistics office Insee said. In 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic erupted, French government debt was 97.6 percent of GDP and the budget deficit 3.1 per cent.

The government had expected even worse figures, with a deficit of 11.3 percent and debt of around 120 percent. The Covid-19 pandemic has battered the French economy which contracted 8.2 per cent in 2020, forcing the government to provide massive support to business to avoid bankruptcies and mass job cuts.

# Uncertainty may curb rising card spending

FROM PAGE B1

The upward trend may hit a high though because of the rising number of coronavirus infections.

Banks have taken initiatives to encourage people to spend more online on the occasion of the two biggest shopping seasons: Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bengali calendar, and the Eid-ul-Fitr, the biggest spending season in Bangladesh.

During the fasting month and Eid festivals, clients usually use credit cards two to three times higher than in other months.

The transaction may face a blow this time as witnessed during the same period last year as spending fell owing to uncertainty at the height of the pandemic in the country.

Bankers overseeing cards say if coronavirus infections continue to rise in the days ahead at the current alarming rate, people may rein in their expenses.

Bangladesh recorded the highest number of deaths from Covid-19 in a single day since December 15 in the 24 hours to 8:00am yesterday. Thirty-nine people died during the period, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

At least 3,674 new cases were recorded. The number of caseloads remained more than 3,500 for the fifth consecutive yesterday because of people's reluctance to maintain health protocols amid lax legal enforcement.

Just after the government enforced a nationwide lockdown and general holiday by the end of March last year, the use of credit cards drastically went down amid uncertainty and massive income and job losses.

It rebounded in October as the economy began to recover from the fallout of the pandemic-induced lockdown. A record Tk 1,561 crore was spent through credit cards in December.

The central bank is yet to prepare the credit card lending statement for February, but spending also went up in February, bankers said.

The increased use of credit cards has created hope among card-issuing banks and non-bank financial institutions that the upcoming festivals will bolster digital transactions.

"If the latest spike of the cases continues, the card issuers will face woes," said Ahsan Ullah Chowdhury, head of card and digital banking at Eastern Bank Ltd (EBL).

EBL has so far issued nearly 1.70 lakh credit cards.

"People usually buy a huge number of groceries during Ramadan. Such a trend will take a hit if the deadly flu spreads more," Chowdhury said.

Mahiuul Islam, head of retail banking at Brac Bank, said the lenders were still feeling comfort thanks to a hefty return from the card businesses in recent months.

Transactions through credit cards during Ramadan rises nearly three times compared to the average month, he said.

"But this will not be possible if infections spread further. We are working on the upcoming festivals to boost transactions."

Brac Bank now issues 6,000 to 7,000 credit cards per month, which is higher than before.

Banks usually offer discounts to clients if they purchase selected goods and services by using

credit cards during festivals.

The number of digital transactions has been growing steadily since 2010, driven by the increasing popularity of mobile financial services (MFS).

Yet, digital transactions, including those routed through MFS operators, are less than 5 per cent of all retail transactions in Bangladesh.

Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of MasterCard Bangladesh, said that card transactions would face trouble in case of a rise in infections.

But the gravity of the impact might not be dreadful compared to what the country had gone through during the lockdown from the last week of March to May last year.

A good number of people have become habituated with using credit cards to protect themselves from the virus.

"So, e-commerce will be on the rise in the days to come," he said.

Syed Mahubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, said the numbers of transactions would go up if infections pick up as people would prefer cashless settlement to avoid dirty notes and going outside of their homes.

But the volume of transactions may dip as cardholders could spend less amid all the uncertainty.

"The income level of people has already gone down due to the pandemic and will decline further if the rogue virus spreads further," Rahman said.

The issuance of credit cards rose in January, when the number of cards stood at 16.93 lakh, up from 16.76 lakh a month ago.

# Stock investors on edge over Covid surge

FROM PAGE B1

The DSEX may have dropped due to mounting fears over the growing infection rate, said AB Mirza Azizul Islam, former adviser to the caretaker government.

As the Covid-19 crisis continues to gain steam, fear among investors is also rising.

"So, it may impact both businesses and the economy."

However, since the infection rate is still hovering around 3,500, nothing much is there to worry about yet as the index could bounce back if the situation subsides, he added.

While answering a query, Islam, also former chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, said the recent political unrest may not last long and so it should barely have an effect on the stock market.

Covid-19 has impacted the whole

economy and its recent resurgence has impacted the market, said Sharif Anwar Hossain, president of the DSE Brokers' Association.

Investors fear that the economy will be impacted again due to the increased infection rate.

"However, I don't think the political clash is going to be a big deal for the market because the agenda is not very important."

"If the pandemic gets worse again, the government should focus on bringing stocks of well performing companies to keep the market attractive," he said.

Quality stocks are the main remedy for the market in any situation because investors are always looking for good investment tools, added Hossain, who is also managing director of Sahidullah Securities.

# 1,320MW Payra plant awaits inauguration

FROM PAGE B1

Fly ash is a substance containing aluminous and siliceous material that forms cement in the presence of water.

A company buys fly ash from the plant, said Shahmonir Ziko, assistant manager of Bangladesh-China Power Company (Pvt), which built the plant. The amount of byproduct purchased is yet to be known.

The plant has a 76.30 acre dumping zone where 25 years' byproduct can be kept, added Ziko.

The plant is currently importing coal from Indonesia. It has its own jetty whose conveyor belts can unload 3,200 metric tonnes of coal in an hour from four vessels simultaneously.

An agreement was signed between Bangladesh's North-West Power Generation

Company and China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation to set up the power plant during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to China in 2014.

Later, Bangladesh-China Power Company (Pvt) was formed.

This company built the plant on 982.77 acres of land at a cost of around Tk 20,000 crore or \$2.46 billion. Of the amount, \$1.96 billion has been loaned by The Export-Import Bank of China.

Rezwon Iqbal Khan, executive engineer of the power plant, said on October 14, 2016, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Chinese President Xi Jinping laid the foundation stone of the power plant.

The Bangladesh-China Power Company (Pvt) completed the construction work of two units on time, he said.

# Export dev fund being raised to \$5.5b

FROM PAGE B1

The extension is due to stay in effect until June this year.

The central bank earlier also brought down the interest rate on the loans.

Banks now receive the fund from the central bank at 0.75 per cent interest rate and will be allowed to charge borrowers a maximum 1.75 per cent.

The previous rate was 2 per cent.

The revolving fund was introduced in 1989 by way of taking support from World Bank. The central bank, however, injected money 2-3 years later.

The whole fund now comes from the central bank's foreign exchange reserves.

The swelling of foreign exchange reserves to more than \$43 billion at present also influenced the central bank's recent decisions.

# SME Foundation to hand Tk 100cr to small businesses

FROM PAGE B1

"Of them, 4,509 are women entrepreneurs and 5,690 male."

The participating SME entrepreneurs of the eighth National SME Products Fair held in 2020 sold products worth Tk 4.95 crore

and received orders for Tk 6.38 crore, said Sattar.

The audited financial statement of the foundation, auditor's report and its budget for 2021-22 financial year were approved at the meeting.

# An unprecedented crisis in shipping

FROM PAGE B4

**Lockdown:** To contain the deadly virus, many countries imposed lockdown. As a result, normal economic activities were restricted. Containers were lying at different destinations for a longer period of time as there was not enough cargo to fill and ship those out.

Consequently, when the restrictions were being lifted, many countries resumed normal operations, there were shortages of containers at the right places.

**Limited ship time:** As the demand had dropped significantly during Q1 of last year, major shipping lines were forced to reduce number of ships plying in different routes.

**Congested ports:** During the lockdown, cargo handling got slowed down massively because of limited operations at different ports. This caused severe delays in vessel turnaround time as well.

**Changes in buying behaviour:** There have been noticeable changes in consumers' buying behaviours during pandemic period. As there were restrictions on travelling and some other outdoor amusement activities, consumers spend more money on consumables. Demand for certain items suddenly gone up which changed the traditional container movements.

**China bounced back earlier than others:** China managed to contain the virus much earlier and was able to resume their production and exports since the beginning of Q2 of 2020. When other Asian countries had started their exports, a significant number of containers were already on their way to Europe and North

America. Those containers did not come back quickly to Asia.

**Surge in demand for Christmas:** Approximately 900,000 TEUs of containers were sent from China to North America during September to cater for the Christmas demand. Chinese exporters were desperate to get boxes, 3 out of 4 containers from the US to Asia were going back empty. Resultantly, many countries did not get enough boxes.

**Limited land freight capacity:** Because of shortages of trucks and lorry drivers, containers were stuck at the port, couldn't be taken to the customers' premises. Whatever containers were taken to customer ends couldn't be returned back to ports timely. In the process, container turnaround time increased substantially.

**Delay in delivering new containers:** There were more than 3 million empty 20-foot containers lying at Chinese ports at the end of March last year and 1.2 million in storage at container manufacturers. Due to the surplus of the boxes and in the anticipation that business would collapse as a consequence of the pandemic, there were slump in orders for new containers in 2020 to the Chinese container manufacturers who supply more than 90 per cent of global demand.

Consumer demand in the US and Europe started uprisings from Q2 last year made the situation reverse. Suddenly, there was a huge jump in container demand and so orders for new boxes went up. The industry did not have enough capacity to manufacture new containers

quickly enough.

Given the alarming logistics challenges, what should the businesses do? First and foremost, organisations need to take this into cognizance that, this crisis is not going to over soon.

Therefore, right from the raw material sourcing to distribution of the finished goods, few things need to be readjusted:

- Increase the inventory of raw materials and other items to ensure smooth production
- Add adequate buffer to the supply lead-time
- Go for long term contract with the shipping companies to ensure maximum space in advance
- To absorb the additional freight costs, look for the options to save costs from elsewhere or the last resort is to adjust the price of the finished products
- Increased inventory would put pressure on working capital, so plan accordingly

Business associations should start dialogue with the port authorities and other logistics service providers like the transporters etc. to increase their capacities to ease out the huge congestions.

Here come the government's interventions like providing financial support to the logistics companies to build their capacities.

This global crisis needs to be collectively dealt with by all the key stakeholders, otherwise, situation might get deteriorated further.

The writer is the chairman and managing director of BASF Bangladesh Limited.



# WB gives \$250m for faster recovery from pandemic



The financing will help Bangladesh create more and better jobs and expand support for both formal and informal workers affected by the Covid-19 crisis, the World Bank said.

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The World Bank approved \$250 million on March 26 to help Bangladesh effectively respond to the Covid-19 pandemic for a faster recovery and stronger resilience to future crises.

"This financing will help Bangladesh create more and better jobs and expand support for both formal and informal workers affected by the Covid-19 crisis," said Mercy Tembon, the World Bank's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

The Third Programmatic Jobs Development Policy Credit -- the last in a series of three credits -- is supporting the Bangladesh government to develop stronger policies and institutional framework to modernise the trade and investment

regime; improve social protection for workers; and help youth, women and vulnerable population access quality jobs.

"Job creation remains central to Bangladesh's development objectives," Tembon said.

"While Bangladesh has had strong economic growth in recent years, the pace of job creation has slowed, especially in the manufacturing sector. The Covid-19 pandemic increased the challenges, and the poor and women were hardest hit."

This financing will support the government in its efforts to protect the earnings of workers affected by the Covid-19 crisis and enable firms to continue paying their workers' wages.

It will also support informal micro-entrepreneurs in recovering from the

shock by extending micro-finance facilities.

Overall, it will support government programmes to protect over 5 million jobs as part of the government's near-term response to the crisis, while laying the groundwork to accelerate recovery and build resilience.

This programme will also help streamline business and investment services, reducing the cost of starting a business. Further, it supports reforms to align the skills development sector with labor-market demands.

"Although income and job losses due to the pandemic impacted people from all walks of life, women are most at risk of exiting the job market," said Aline Coudouel, the World Bank's lead economist and task team leader for the project.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

READ MORE ON B2

# An unprecedented crisis in shipping



SAZZADUL HASSAN

Off late shipping costs have gone through the roof, making life miserable for the businesses. The freight rate for a 40-foot container to European base ports from Chattogram has reached to \$5,000 level.

Six months back this rate was hovering between \$1,500 to \$2,000. This is not the case for shipments to Europe only. It applies to all the trade routes.

Freight costs to the US has also skyrocketed -- an overall rise of 85 per cent in recent times compared to that of October 2020.

Traditionally, for imports, freight costs used to be much lower than that of exports. That situation has also changed. Rates for imports have also gone up significantly.

This crisis is not specific to Bangladesh only. Rather, it is similar or worse elsewhere across the globe.

Freight rates from China to the US and Europe have surged 300 per cent compared to the rate of March 2020.

Spot rates for the Asia to North Europe route have seen a nearly 264 per cent year-on-year rise. Freight rates for Asia to the US West Coast are also up by 145 per cent.

The challenge is multifold. There are acute shortages of containers, because of which shippers around the world have to wait for weeks to get the boxes.

A study suggests against the demand of 100 containers there are only 50 containers available.

That is not the end of the story. To add to the sufferings, transit time to all the major destinations has also increased quite noticeably. A consignment



## OPINION



STAR/FILE

Transit time to all the major destinations has increased quite noticeably. A consignment would normally require 25-30 days to reach to the major European ports from Chattogram, whereas nowadays, it requires a minimum of 45 days.

would normally require 25-30 days to reach to the major European ports from Chattogram, whereas nowadays, it requires a minimum of 45 days.

Similarly, to reach to the US West Coast the transit time used to be 30 days which is now at least 50 days.

To add to the worries, a shipping jam occurred on March 23 in one of the world's busiest shipping arteries involving the Suez Canal.

About a quarter mile long (400 metres), a 224,000-tonne container vessel named Ever Given ran aground diagonally across the single lane stretch of the southern canal during a dust storm.

On Wednesday, 185 vessels, mostly bulk carriers, container ships and oil or chemical tankers, were waiting to

transit the 120-mile canal connecting the Red Sea with the Mediterranean, according to shipping data compiled by Bloomberg.

As a result, it created another setback for global supply chains, which are already strained by chaotic congestions and a shortage of containers in many ports due to the impact of the pandemic.

A good thing is the freight rates have been stable for last so many years. But an abnormal increase in transit time is really a bolt from the blue in the context of so many other challenges businesses have been dealing with in the past one year due to the pandemic. Experts have identified some of the major reasons behind this crisis:

READ MORE ON B3



## GLOBAL BUSINESS

# UK, EU agree post-Brexit financial services regulation

AFP, London

Three months after Britain exited the EU, London on Friday reached a cooperation agreement on financial services with Brussels but despite this first step rivalries between the two sides remain. The memorandum of understanding, which is still to be signed, will "create the framework for voluntary regulatory cooperation" and establish a regulatory forum which will "serve as a platform to facilitate dialogue on financial services issues", Britain's finance ministry said.

London and Brussels reached a last-gasp free trade agreement on December 24, just days before Britain was due to leave Europe's single market and customs union on January 1. But the culmination of months of tense talks saw both sides agree to push back a decision on the finance sector, leaving it in limbo.

International banks took an early gamble to prepare for the worst and the possibility of a "hard Brexit" by strengthening their European operations, which allowed for a smooth transition when Britain left the customs union.

"The relationship is more one of competition than cooperation at the moment," Sarah Hall, professor of economic geography at the University of Nottingham, told AFP.

While the particulars of the agreement



REUTERS/FILE

Trucks queue at border control for the port of Dover after the end of the Brexit transition period, in Dover, Britain.

have not yet been released, the full text of the memorandum should be published once it is signed before an end of March deadline set by the UK and the European Union.

The City does not expect an ambitious

agreement between the two sides, given the importance of the financial services sector to the British economy: it contributes about seven percent of GDP and 10 percent of the country's tax revenues amounting to 76 billion.

The memorandum is also not anticipated to address the crucial issue of equivalence, which allows London-based firms to operate on the European continent. For equivalence to be agreed, it has to be granted in 40 separate areas of activity and these can easily be revoked.

For the time being, the EU has only granted two to Britain, while London has granted the EU equivalence in 17 areas. One of these, for example, allows European investors to use British clearing houses and another concerns securities deposits.

Brussels' approach to London in this regard has been less favourable than the 21 equivalences it has with the United States, the 19 it has with Japan and its 15 with Singapore.

Miles Celic, chief executive of TheCityUK, which represents financial services firms, said "securing equivalence determinations from the EU has mutual benefit, especially as economies seek to recover from the pandemic". He added in a recent statement that the delay already had "the unintended consequence of driving more European financial activity to non-European centres, such as New York".

Hall said Brussels had taken a hard line because the EU fears that the UK will end up diverging from European rules. "It seems clear that both the UK and the EU are currently working to support their own financial services sectors," she explained.

## NEWS In Brief

### Boeing resumes 787 deliveries as widespread inspections loom

REUTERS, Seattle

Boeing Co has resumed deliveries of its 787 Dreamliner jets, handing over one plane to United Airlines on Friday, an initial step as the U.S. planemaker works through production defects that sidelined dozens of aircraft.

Reuters reported last week that Boeing remained on course to resume deliveries of a few 787s this month, which a Boeing spokeswoman said remained the goal.

The delivery from its South Carolina factory comes as Boeing undertakes painstaking repairs and forensic inspections to fix structural integrity flaws embedded deep inside dozens of 787s, issues which halted deliveries since October, cutting off a key source of cash.

The inspections and retrofits could take up to a month per plane and are likely to cost hundreds of millions - if not billions - of dollars, depending on the number of planes across the fleet that are impacted and the defects involved, sources told Reuters.

"We have resumed 787 deliveries, following several months of engineering analysis and inspection work," Boeing spokeswoman Jessica Kowal said by e-mail.

A United Airlines representative did not immediately return a request for comment. Separately last week, the US Federal Aviation Administration decided to independently handle final pre-delivery checks on four 787 jets, in the latest signal of the agency's tougher scrutiny of Boeing after two fatal 737 MAX crashes.



REUTERS/FILE

Final assembly of the first Boeing 787 Dreamliner takes place at the company's Everett, Washington plant.

### Volkswagen recalls Audi A3s in US over air bag concerns

REUTERS, Berlin

Volkswagen has issued a recall for more than 150,000 Audi vehicles in the United States on concerns that their passenger air bags might not activate, according to a filing to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

The recall is expected to affect 153,152 Audi A3 cars built between 2015 and 2020, including the Sedan, Etron and Cabriolet models, as well as certain S3 Sedans.

The system which detects whether the passenger seat is occupied might malfunction and switch off the air bag even if a person is sitting there, the filing said.

Volkswagen will write to owners of the affected vehicles by May 21 and will contact them again once a solution to the problem has been found.

# Suez Canal steps up efforts to free stuck vessel, US watches energy market impact

REUTERS, Cairo

Dredging and tugging aimed at freeing a mega vessel stuck in the Suez Canal failed on Friday to end a blockage that has lifted shipping rates for fuel tankers and scrambled global supply chains for everything from grains to baby clothes.

US President Joe Biden said his administration was looking at what it could do to help, after the 400-metre (430-yard) long Ever Given ran aground in the vital trade waterway on Tuesday due to strong wind.

"We have equipment and capacity that most countries don't have. And we are seeing what help we can be," Biden told reporters in Delaware.

A US official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the Navy was prepared to send a team

of dredging experts to the canal, but was awaiting approval from local authorities.

The latest effort to dislodge the ship with tug boats was suspended

late on Friday, and attempts would resume on Saturday, three sources at the canal said. The Suez Canal Authority (SCA) could not immediately be reached for

comment.

Shipping rates for oil product tankers nearly doubled after the ship became stranded, and efforts to free the giant vessel may take weeks

and be complicated by unstable weather, threatening costly delays for companies already dealing with COVID-19 restrictions.

All its 25 crew members, who have remained on board, were safe, in good health and spirits, Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement (BSM), the Ever Given's technical manager said.

A Dutch rescue team had confirmed two additional tugs would arrive on March 28 to help dislodge the ship, BSM said.

"There have been no reports of pollution or cargo damage and initial investigations rule out any mechanical or engine failure as a cause of the grounding," a BSM statement said.

Earlier, the SCA said efforts to free the ship by tug had resumed following the completion of dredging operations at its bow to remove 20,000 cubic metres of sand.



REUTERS

Ships are seen at the entrance to the Suez Canal, Egypt on March 26.