

Allocate special fund for small enterprises: experts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Special allocation is needed for the cottage, micro, small, and medium enterprises (CMSMEs) in the upcoming budget to recover the losses induced by the Covid-19 pandemic, speakers said at a webinar yesterday.

"The women entrepreneurs related with fashion houses faced severe losses during Eid and Pahela Baishakh in 2020 and 2021. So, they need special allocation to recover from the losses," said Mantasha Ahmed, founder president of the Association of Fashion Designers of Bangladesh (AFDB).

She spoke at a pre-budget discussion on "Addressing the challenges of CMSMEs in the informal sector -- creating opportunities through digital transformation", jointly organised by the SME Foundation and AFDB.

She also demanded exemption of five per cent value-added tax for online business for expansion of the business as well as one year of free access to the internet for CMSMEs.

At the programme, Planning Minister MA Mannan said debt flow for CMSMEs and skills development in the SME sector needs to increase along with the financial capacity of the SME Foundation to provide opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Mannan said it is needed to take initiative to increase the skills of entrepreneurs at the upazila level for the development of small and medium enterprises.

"It is necessary to arrange loans and grants for them under the supervision of SME Foundation and other government agencies," he noted.

He also called on the SME Foundation

to provide more financial assistance and opportunities for project implementation in terms of credit flow and skills development for small entrepreneurs.

AMA Muhith, former finance minister, said the informal sector of Bangladesh is very wide and this sector contributes to economic growth.

He also said the experiment is going on to find out the effective ways to support the sector and it is justified until an effective solution is found.

Muhith also opined to continue the support in different forms to keep them alive.

In the keynote presentation, Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD, said in order to recover from the losses caused by the coronavirus, small and medium entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs need to be provided with incentives in the coming budget.

Referring to a CPD study on CMSMEs, she said most SMEs did not get benefits under stimulus packages announced by the government to recover the Covid-19 losses.

Therefore, steps need to be taken to expedite the disbursement of loans in the incentive package, she said.

Fahmida also suggested distributing loans through the SME Foundation, PKSF and other state-run microfinance institutions.

Kamal Ahmed Majumder, state minister for industries, said the government is continuing to help the small and medium enterprises during the pandemic to reduce the damage caused to the informal sector.

The government is launching a credit guarantee scheme so that small and medium entrepreneurs do not face any problem in getting

loans due to a lack of collateral, he said.

He also said the National Skills Development Authority is working under the Prime Minister's Office to enhance skills in the informal sector.

Majumder said small entrepreneurs have to suffer a lot from getting loans from banks and financial institutions as they do not have a trade licence.

He, however, said big businesses get loans easily but they do not make repayments properly.

He also demanded that in the forthcoming budget, a special allocation should be made for the small enterprises.

Sonia Bashir Kabir, founder and chairman of SBK Tech Ventures and SBK Foundation, said access to finance is very important for the SMEs to reduce the credit gap.

"The commercial banks cannot provide them with loans as they do not have lending history on what basis loan can be provided," she said.

Kabir also said an increased number of women entrepreneurs are gradually starting to use digital platforms.

She said technological help is needed to move the SMEs to a higher level and their skills also need to be developed.

Md Mofizur Rahman, managing director of the SME Foundation, said SME entrepreneurs need policy support and budget allocation for their sustainable development.

He demanded incentive and support for SMEs to recover the losses caused by the pandemic.

Bibi Russell, noted fashion designer, demanded allocation for research for the development of small entrepreneurs.

Farzana Khan, general manager of the SME Foundation, conducted the discussion.

India's JSW Steel examining bid for Gupta's British business

REUTERS

India's largest steel producer, JSW Steel, is considering a bid to buy Liberty Steel in Britain as well as mills elsewhere, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters, as would-be buyers circle Sanjeev Gupta's global commodities empire.

JSW's interest could mark yet another chapter for Britain's steel industry, which has been privatised and sold to overseas buyers as its pre-eminence slid in lock-step with the country's manufacturing might. In a statement on Saturday, JSW Steel said its focus remained in India for now and it was not looking at acquiring any overseas assets. A sale would chip away at Gupta's sprawling network of businesses, comprising hundreds of privately held companies with interests spanning steel, aluminium, mining, financial services and real estate, built up over years of acquisitions.

Gupta has been scrambling to refinance after his go-to source of funding, British supply chain finance firm Greensill, filed for insolvency in March.

Banks fast embracing cash recycling machines

FROM PAGE B1

Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, the top lender in the segment, has already set up more than 400 CRMs and will set up another 400 CRMs within the next year.

The move aims at reducing clients' dependency on branches, said an official of the lender. The Shariah-based bank introduced the technology in 2019.

M Kamal Hossain, managing director of Southeast Bank, said his bank had installed 185 CRMs.

The lender has opened letters of credit to import 300 more CRMs, which will arrive by July.

"We will install all machines by this year. We have 100 ATMs at this moment. We will gradually replace them with CRMs," Hossain said.

The bank has attached priority in setting up the machines in the rural areas in order to provide banking services to the underprivileged people, he said.

Yesterday, Southeast Bank inaugurated four CRMs, with two each in Feni and Chattogram.

Banks have to invest a sizeable amount in deploying CRMs: they have to count between Tk 13 lakh and Tk 18 lakh per CRM. It is Tk 5 lakh per ATM.

The central bank plans to take the technology one step further by ensuring interoperability.

A central banker said depositing money through the tool would be interoperable within the next three months as the BB has taken measures to this end.

Using the CRMs, clients will be able to deposit money to any bank account on a real-time basis once interoperability becomes available, the official said.

Similarly, retailers will benefit from the new technology as they can keep their funds in their accounts at the end of the day, he said.

"The money will be safe," the central banker said.

City Bank plans to set up 150 CRMs this year and another 100 next year.

The bank now has around 350 ATMs, which will be gradually replaced by CRMs, said Md Mustafizur Rahman Ujjal, head of alternative delivery channels of City Bank.

"The CRMs will help clients withdraw cash by using the quick response (QR) code. This means there will be no requirement to inject cards into the machine."

City Bank now operates five CRMs. Currently, there are 12,225 ATMs in Bangladesh.

Women entrepreneurs may get tax relief

FROM PAGE B1

Currently, the tax-free income ceiling for women taxpayers is Tk 350,000 annually, and the threshold may remain unchanged in the next fiscal year.

The move comes amid growing interest among women to set up businesses to tap the demand among the burgeoning middle-class in Bangladesh resulting from the economy's steady growth over the last three decades.

In addition, the National Board of Revenue plans to encourage businesses to employ transgender people, also known as hijra, in order to integrate the community into the mainstream economy and reduce discrimination.

As part of the plan, the government may offer a 5 per cent rebate on corporate tax if a company employs more than 100 transgender persons. The government officially recognised the community as gender in January 2014. Yet, the people of the segment are not welcomed in the job sector.

The official expected that the tax incentive would inspire companies to employ transgender people.

Transgender people, however, get an allowance from the government's social protection schemes.

The government allocated Tk 46 crore to support transgender, bede, and disadvantaged communities in the current fiscal year.

US regulator orders GreenHat Energy to pay \$242m fine

REUTERS

The US energy regulator on Thursday ordered GreenHat Energy LLC to pay \$229 million in civil penalties and \$13.1 million in unjust profits on allegations of electric market manipulation.

The US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission enforcement staff's report raises serious allegations about market manipulation that cost consumers in the PJM market nearly \$180 million, Chairman Richard Glick said in a press release. The agency alleges that GreenHat Energy sent false price signals into the PJM market, the largest in the country, by purchasing Financial Transmission Rights (FTR) based on minimal collateral, deliberately made false statements to PJM to try to avoid a collateral call and rigged FTR auctions.

Edible oil prices raised again

FROM PAGE B1

"We don't want oil prices to go beyond the purchasing capacity of consumers. But we are paying 15 per cent VAT at the import stage and additional VAT at the time of delivery. Meanwhile, the dollar has risen," he said.

Now every tonne has risen to \$1,350 from \$1,250 on an average, he added.

In Chattogram's wholesale Khatunganj-Chaktai market, the latest proposal sent palm oil prices up by Tk 50 to Tk 60 on every maund (around 37.3 kilograms) over the last two days.

On Saturday it was selling for Tk 4,200 to Tk 4,250 as per one trader.

Meanwhile soyabean oil had risen by Tk

100 to Tk 4,500 recently.

However, retail prices are still stable.

"Prices are currently declining in the international market but why are prices here being increased again...I do not understand," said wholesaler Abdur Rahman.

Dhaka's retailers have already adopted the new prices, even for products with old price tags, alleged multiple consumers.

According to Chattogram Custom House, over 7.13 lakh tonnes of edible oil, including crude soyabean and refined palm oil, were imported through the Chattogram port in four months till April.

Some of 6.59 lakh tonnes were imported in the same period last year.

Creative book publishers in an uphill battle

FROM PAGE B1

Due to Covid-19, the book fair, which usually starts from the beginning of February and runs till the end of the month, started on March 18 this year, allotting 154 units on Bangla Academy premises to 107 organisations, and 680 units in Suhrawardy Udyan to 433 organisations.

Amidst the resurgence of Covid-19, it abruptly ended on April 14.

Although Boi Mela is taking place in an open area, the number of visitors were low amidst the fear of a second wave of the virus which has turned out to be more lethal than the first one.

The book sales of Prothoma, a top publisher of the country, dropped 65 per cent during March 2020 to March 2021 compared to the same period a year earlier.

During this fair it sold only 5 per cent of the number of books it had sold in the fair of last year, according to its manager, Zakir Hussain.

According to industry insiders, online book sales doubled this year as customers are cautious about going out for the fear of contracting the pathogen.

"Online sales were great this year. Prothoma's online sales increased 150 per cent in the period," said Hussain.

He said an association for creative book publishers has sought incentives from the government.

So far there has been no response. If the government buys books from creative publishers for its departments, then the publishers will be able to recover from their losses at least to some extent, he added.

Prothoma released 60 new books in the latest book fair, down from 98 books published in 2020's book fair.

Readers are mainly interested in books on research, essays, biographies, religion, science and cooking, said Hussain.

From March 2020 to March 2021, Somoy Prokashon's sales dropped to less than 20 per cent compared to that in the same period a year earlier.

According to Farid Ahmed, proprietor of the publication, the sales in this book fair was only 10 per cent of that of the last one. And the turnover was around Tk 8 lakh, which is less than what it takes to build a pavilion, pay rent for the space and bear other expenses of taking part in the month-long book fair.

He said online sales were not that good as it was yet to adopt "professional practices". Online sales would be around Tk 1 lakh in the last one year, which he termed "really low".

"We do not want any stimulus or help from the government. All we want is for the government to buy books from us," he said.

There are different agencies, ministries and departments which need to buy books every year. But in the process, the publishers do not get any direct benefit. "So we want these entities to buy books directly from publishers," added Ahmed.

He urged the government to increase allocation for its entities which purchase books.

Somoy published 62 new books in the latest book fair, down from 85 in 2020's book fair.

On the back of strong online sales, the coronavirus has not been able to make a dent in the business of Pathak Shamabesh, a top publisher.

Online sales accounts for over 40 per cent of its total sales and it makes home deliveries.

"The sales at this book fair was the same as that last year. Our turnover did not decrease because of the Covid-19," said Shahidul Islam Bizu, managing director of Pathak Shamabesh.

He attributed their sales consistency to its communications efforts with 30,000 customers registered through phone call, WhatsApp and

email and an app that provides one-stop service.

From March 2020 to March 2021, it released 27 new books, up from 24 during the same period a year earlier.

Pounded by the pandemic, Baatighar, a much loved publication known for its decent taste in book releases and picturesque stores, introduced its own online book sales mechanism last year amidst the pandemic. The effort paid off.

"When everything stalled in the pandemic last year and our sales crashed, we started an online home delivery process. And online sales are really good," said Dipankar Das, owner of Baatighar.

However, its sales during the period of March last year to March this year dropped to 50 per cent compared to that of a year earlier.

At the fair, the sale of the publication, which has three stores located in Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet, was 40 per cent compared to that at last year's fair. And 50 per cent of book fair sales comes from online orders.

"If the government purchases quality books from real publishers in a transparent way, the sector will turn around from the pandemic-induced slump," added Das.

According to the academy, 2,640 books were published in the fair that took place in 2021, down from 4,919 published in the fair of 2020.

Jalal Ahmed, director at the division of sale, marketing and reprinting at Bangla Academy, which organises the month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, said sales in this year's book fair dropped to 10 per cent compared to that in the previous one.

The UK consumer book sales climbed 7 per cent, with a 16 per cent jump in the sales of fiction, last year as British people "rediscovered their love of reading" in the lockdown, reports BBC.

Bangladesh-US economic relations largely unutilised

FROM PAGE B1

"However, Bangladesh has more opportunities than challenges," he told the discussion attended by diplomats, business chamber leaders and senior officials of US companies operating in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh and the US signed a Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (TICFA) in 2013 to remove trade barriers through discussions.

In their latest efforts to boost trade and economic relations, a US Bangladesh Business Council was formed last month.

Currently, the US is the single largest export destination for Bangladesh with shipments amounting to nearly \$7 billion, some 90 per cent of which is garment items.

However, imports from the US have also recently increasing in the form of agricultural products, nuclear power plant equipment, and machineries for garment factory remediation.

For many years, this import figure remained

below \$1 billion. However, importers say in 2019 it reached \$2.3 billion.

"We have a wonderful resource, the US Bangladesh Business Council," said Earl R Miller, the US ambassador to Bangladesh.

The trade body is a powerful organisation for boosting bilateral trade and investment, he said.

Regarding investment potentials of Bangladesh's economic zones, Miller said these were good selling points but needed some labour issues to be resolved to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).

He also suggested Bangladesh take up branding initiatives and reforms in the tax policy for more US investment in Bangladesh.

The ambassador also said he was scheduled to hold an important meeting with the government within one month to discuss bilateral trade and investment issues.

Chairing the discussion, AmCham President Syed Ershad Ahmed said the chamber was also conducting research to identify the challenges

and opportunities in economic relations.

Tapas Kumar Mondal, managing director of International Beverages Private, Bangladesh, a subsidiary of The Coca-Cola Company, sought amendments to the tax policy.

He said the company has no plan to cut investments in Bangladesh despite the presence of some big challenges in doing business here.

Md Nazrul Islam, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), said a new economic zone at Mirersharai in Chattogram would be coming into operation soon under Bepza where US investment was expected.

Rubaba Dowla, country managing director at Oracle Bangladesh, said the company was giving support to build smart cities in Bangladesh by providing ideas on environment, safety and public health.

Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of Mastercard and vice president of AmCham, moderated the discussion.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়
পঞ্চগড়
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তারিখঃ ২৩/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ

পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় (স্বরাষ্ট্র) ২৩/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ
১৬ ডিআইজি, রংপুর রেঞ্জ বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ রংপুর এর কার্যালয়, পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় ঠাকুরগাঁও ও পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় পঞ্চগড়।
১৭ ডিআইজি, রংপুর রেঞ্জ বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ রংপুর এর কার্যালয়, পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় পঞ্চগড়।
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১৩ দরপত্র উন্মোচন/সিডিউস বিক্রয়কারী অফিস
১৪ ডিআইজি, রংপুর রেঞ্জ বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ রংপুর এর কার্যালয়, পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় ঠাকুরগাঁও ও পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় পঞ্চগড়।
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১৬ মাসামালের বিবরণ

ক্রমিক নং	আইটেম	পরিমাণ (আনুমানিক)	সিডিউলের মূল্য	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি মনি	মাসামাল সরবরাহের সময়সীমা
১	মস্তর ডাল	৪০,০০০ কেজি	১০০০/-	১,৫০,০০০/-	১৫ দিনের মধ্যে
২	সয়াবিন তেল	৪০,০০০ লিটার	১০০০/-	১,৫০,০০০/-	১৫ দিনের মধ্যে
৩	পোলাওয়ের চাউল	চাহিদা অনুযায়ী	৫০০/-	১০,০০০/-	ঐ
৪	স্তালানি খড়ি (বেকনা ও চিরাই)	ঐ	৫০০/-	১০,০০০/-	ঐ
৫	গম ভাদানো	ঐ	৫০০/-	৩৫,০০০/-	ঐ
৬	পরিবহণ	ঐ	৫০০/-	১০,০০০/-	ঐ
৭	সেবার কাজ	ঐ	৫০০/-	১০,০০০/-	ঐ
৮	পুরাতন বাগিচা বিক্রয়	স্টক মোতাবেক	৫০০/-	১০,০০০/-	বর্তমান জমাকৃত বন্ধ

দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর বিবরণ

১৭	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম	জনাব মোহাম্মদ ইউসুফ আলী।
১৮	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী	পুলিশ সুপার, পঞ্চগড়।
১৯	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পঞ্চগড়।
২০	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার সাথে যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম	অফিস টেলিফোনঃ ০৫৬৮-৬৩৩৩৩, ফ্যাক্সঃ ০৫৬৮-৬৩৩৩৩

২১ বিশেষ শর্তাবলী

ক) নির্দিষ্ট সময়ে পর আর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।
খ) কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
গ) দরপত্র উন্মোচিত যে কোন আইটেমের পরিমাণ চাহিদা মোতাবেক ক্রয়ের বিষয়ে কর্তৃপক্ষের ক্ষমতা রয়েছে।
ঘ) দরপত্র পিপিআর/২০০৬ ও পিপিআর/২০০৭ মোতাবেক সফল শর্তাবলী কার্যকর হবে।
ঙ) উন্নতমানের দেশী চিনন মস্তর ডাল ১.৫ কেজি, ২ কেজি খন্ড পলিপ্যাকে প্যাকেটজাত সরবরাহ করতে হবে।
চ) উন্নতমানের ভোজা সয়াবিন তেল (BST) কর্তৃক অনুমোদিত অবশ্যই কোলস্টেরল ও ফ্যাট মুক্ত এবং ভিটামিন 'এ' যুক্ত হতে হবে ভোজা সয়াবিন তেল ০.৫/১/২/৫ লিটার ট্রাস্টিক ক্যানের সরবরাহ করতে হবে।
ছ) গম পেশাই করে উন্নতমানের আটা ১ কেজি, ৫ কেজি, ৩০ কেজি খন্ড পলিপ্যাকে প্যাকেটজাত করে সরবরাহ করতে হবে।
জ) আইটেম হিসেবে ভোজা সয়াবিন তেল, মস্তর ডাল ও পোলাওয়ের চাউল ছেদে দরপত্র সিডিউল দাখিলের সময় নমুনা দাখিল করতে হবে। উক্ত নমুনা পরীক্ষার জন্য দায়বদ্ধতারীতে প্রেরণ করা হবে এ সকলকাজ বাবতীয় ব্যয় দরদাতাকে বহন করতে হবে।

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জিডি-১০৯