

Covid-19 variants threaten global recovery: G20

REUTERS, Venice

An upsurge in new coronavirus variants and poor access to vaccines in developing countries threaten the global economic recovery, finance ministers of the world's 20 largest economies warned on Saturday.

The G20 gathering in the Italian city of Venice was the ministers' first face-to-face meeting since the start of the pandemic. Decisions include the endorsement of new rules aimed at stopping multinationals shifting profits to low-tax havens.

That paves the way for G20 leaders to finalise a new global minimum corporate tax rate of 15% at a Rome summit in October, a move that could recoup hundreds of billions of dollars for public treasuries straining under the Covid-19 crisis.

A final communique said the global economic outlook had improved since G20 talks in April thanks to the rollout of vaccines and economic support packages, but acknowledged its fragility in the face of variants like the fast-spreading Delta. "The recovery is characterised by great divergences across and within countries and remains exposed to downside risks, in particular the spread of new variants of the Covid-19 virus and different paces of vaccination," it read.

While G20 nations promised to use all policy tools to combat Covid-19, the Italian hosts of the meeting said there was also agreement to avoid imposing new restrictions on people.



Palestinian fishermen release balloons carrying portraits of victims of Israeli airstrikes during a protest against the blockade on Gaza at the port of Gaza City yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Not even half the target could be met

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But the meeting, which was supposed to discuss the impacts of Covid-19 on project implementation and procurement review the status of agreed actions in the last TPRM meeting in March, was postponed yesterday to next month.

The performance issues with the ongoing projects that need immediate attention would have been assessed at the meeting.

Currently, 52 investment projects in six sectors are being implemented with ADB's funds worth \$12.3 billion.

Of the projects, 12 are in the transport sector; 11 in education and health; nine in energy; nine in water, urban infrastructure and services; six in agriculture, natural resources and rural development; and five in the finance sector.

PROJECTS HIT HARD BY PANDEMIC

The physical works of almost all the projects came to a near halt last year for more than two months after the government announced countrywide shutdown from March to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

In June last year, the ADB had said the pandemic has slowed down the implementation of at least 40 of the 49 projects it has been providing funding to.

With the view to giving momentum to the retarded project implementation rate, in July last year, the Manila-based multilateral lender had prepared a guidance on Covid-19 health and safety protocol for use by the executing and implementing agencies, contractors and consultants.

Then in the last TPRM held in March, a 141-point time-bound action plan was agreed.

As of June 15, 61 percent of the action plan has been fully complied with within the deadline, while 9 percent were met but missed the deadline; 16 percent have not been complied with at all.

To compound matters, the

finance ministry in April has asked all ministries except health and agriculture not to issue work orders for any physical work until June as part of the government's austerity measures for the pandemic.

TRANSPORT SECTOR: THE BIGGEST AND WORST AFFECTED

The ADB is currently funding 12 projects in the transport sector with 19 loans and one grant totalling \$2.98 billion, which is 28 percent of the country's profile and the highest in a single sector.

Of the 12 projects, five each are being implemented by the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and the Bangladesh Railway (BR), one by Dhaka Mass Transit Company and another jointly by RHD, Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

As of June 15, the sector's contract award and disbursement achievements have been \$24.99 million and \$161.93 against the annual targets of \$169.66 million and \$357.46 million respectively.

Eight projects are 'on track' while three need 'attention' and one is 'at risk', according to the ADB.

One of the projects that needs "attention" is Greater Dhaka Sustainable Urban Transport Project, under which a dedicated bus line -- formally known as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)-- is being built from the Dhaka Airport to Gazipur.

RHD, BBA and LGED are jointly implementing the projects.

The Tk 4,268.38 crore-project, which has witnessed several revisions in both cost and deadline, came to the fore again lately as commuters using the roads suffered immensely due to the construction works.

The project authority is unlikely to meet the latest deadline of June 2022.

The ADB mentioned that Railway Rolling Stock Operations Improvement Project is at risk.

Under the Tk 3,602.07 crore-project, the BR will procure 40 broad gauge (BG) locomotives, 75 MG and 50 BG luggage vans, 400 MG and 300 BG bogey-covered wagons, and 180 MG and 120 BG bogey open wagons.

Approved in June 2018, the project was supposed to be completed within June this year. As of June, the progress stands at 8 percent, shows BR documents.

The other ADB-funded projects are SASEC Road Connectivity Project and SASEC Dhaka Northwest Corridor Road Project, under which two-lane road from Gazipur to Rangpur is being upgraded to four lanes; SASEC Rail Connectivity: Akhaura-Laksam Double Track; SASEC Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Railway Project.

WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY

Contacted, RHD's Chief Engineer Abdus Sabur said although they continued with the project works amid the pandemic, full-fledged works were not possible.

For foreign-funded projects, contractors from different countries take part in the bidding process, so their physical participation is required.

"So, the procurement processes got delayed during the Covid situation," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides, the approval process for procurement is taking more time than usual during the pandemic.

"You can't blame any particular person or agency for the poor contract awarding or disbursement. You have to blame the total process," Sabur added.

Contacted, BR's Director General Dhirendra Nath Mazumder said: "It's true that railway projects got affected by the pandemic, but it is not immediately possible to state the extent of the holdup."

He, however, said BR fared well in the outgoing fiscal year regarding the implementation of the Annual Development Programme.

Study suggests superbug link to family dog

AFP, Paris

Antibiotic-resistant "superbugs" -- which the World Health Organization calls one of the top global threats to public health -- usually conjure images of hospital settings.

But new research may point to a less-obvious source: the family dog.

Researchers yesterday warned of "an international public health risk" after finding antibiotic-resistant bacteria in a range of different types of raw dog food.

"The trend for feeding dogs raw food may be fuelling the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria", the researchers said in a press release for their

study, to be presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases. Separate research to be presented at the same conference found resistance to a last-resort antibiotic may be passing between pet dogs and their owners.

Antibiotic resistant bugs can render minor injuries and common infections potentially deadly. Resistance has grown in recent years due to overuse of such drugs in humans and farm animals.

In the dog food study, a team from the University of Porto analysed 55 samples of dog food from 25 brands including 14 raw frozen types, looking for Enterococci bacteria.

NEWS IN brief

90-year-old infected with 'two virus variants at once'

A 90-year-old woman who died after falling ill with Covid-19 was infected with both the Alpha and Beta variants of the coronavirus at the same time, researchers in Belgium said yesterday, adding that the rare phenomenon may be underestimated. The unvaccinated woman, who lived alone and received at-home nursing care, was admitted to the OLV Hospital in the Belgian city of Aalst after a spate of falls in March and tested positive for Covid-19 the same day. While her oxygen levels were initially good, her condition deteriorated rapidly and she died five days later. When medical staff tested for the presence of any variants of concern they found that she was carrying both the Alpha strain and the Beta variant first detected in South Africa.

British billionaire Branson takes off for space

A twin-fuselage jet took off yesterday carrying a Virgin Galactic rocket plane primed to soar more than 50 miles above the New Mexico desert with British billionaire Richard Branson aboard in the vehicle's first fully crewed test flight to space. Branson, one of six Virgin Galactic Holding Inc employees strapping in for the flight, has touted the mission as a precursor to a new era of space tourism, with the company he founded poised to begin commercial operations next year. Yesterday's high-altitude launch of the VSS Unity rocket plane marks the company's 22nd test flight of its SpaceShipTwo system.



Biden picks LA Mayor Garcetti to be US ambassador to India

President Joe Biden has nominated Los Angeles mayor and climate advocate Eric Garcetti to be the US ambassador to India, a country Washington sees as a key partner in its effort to push back against China's expanding power and influence. Garcetti, a Biden loyalist who co-chaired the successful Biden-Harris 2020 election campaign, has served as mayor of Los Angeles since 2013. The White House biography accompanying the announcement of Garcetti's nomination highlighted his role in co-founding the bipartisan "Climate Mayors" network and in leading more than 400 US mayors to adopt the Paris Climate agreement.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Don't 'lose its way'

Wife of assassinated president Moise calls on Haiti

AFP, Port-au-Prince

The widow of slain Haitian leader Jovenel Moise, who was critically wounded in the attack that claimed his life, on Saturday issued her first public remarks since the assault, calling on the nation not to "lose its way."

Martine Moise's comments came three days after she was airlifted to a Miami hospital for treatment of grave wounds suffered early Wednesday when gunmen stormed the family home in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince.

They also come as the impoverished Caribbean nation reels from the slaying of its leader, with no clear succession plan on the horizon.

"I am alive, thanks to God," Martine Moise said in an audio message in Creole that was posted on her official Twitter account, and verified as authentic to AFP by Haiti's minister of culture and communications, Pradel Henriquez.

"In the blink of an eye, the mercenaries entered my home and riddled my husband with bullets ... without even giving him a chance to say a word," she said.

According to Haitian authorities, a hit

squad of 28 men -- 26 Colombians, many of them retired soldiers, and two Haitian-Americans -- burst in and opened fire on the couple in their home.

So far, 17 have been arrested, and at least three were killed. A handful remain at large, police say.

But no motive has been made public, and questions are swirling about who might have masterminded the audacious assassination.

Martine Moise pointed at a variety of possible reasons: saying the killers could have been sent by people who might have been displeased with her husband's plans to provide "roads, water and electricity, a (constitutional) referendum and elections set for the end of the year."

She suggested that perhaps those behind the killing "do not want to see a transition in the country."

"I am crying, it is true, but we cannot let the country lose its way," she said. "We cannot let his blood... have been spilled in vain."

Moise's assassination has plunged already troubled Haiti -- the poorest country in the Americas -- into chaos.



JULY 12

1920 - The Panama Canal was formally opened, six years after the first ship sailed through it.

1996 - Britain's Prince Charles and Princess Diana agreed the terms of their divorce, ending their 15-year marriage.

2005 - Mei Mei, the world's oldest panda raised in captivity, died at a Chinese zoo aged 36.

2006 - Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas captured two Israeli soldiers and killed eight more in cross-border attacks, sparking a month-long war with Israel.

2007 - World's tallest man marries in China.

2012 - Fatal tanker fire in Okogbe, Nigeria.

SOURCE: REUTERS

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
 Local Government Engineering Department
 Office of the Executive Engineer
 District: Manikganj
 www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.5600.000.07.001.21-1805
Invitation for Tender (Works)
e-Tender Notice No. 01/2021-2022

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID & Package No.	Name of works	Tender method	Tender proposal document last selling & submission date and time
1	593371 IRIDP-3/MNK/ DW-13	Improvement of Baniaghona R & H road-Charmastol Bazar-Khalshi UP Road at ch. 1063-1863m. [ID-356103009] under Upazila Daulatpur, District: Manikganj	LTM	27-July-2021 14:00 & 28-July-2021 16:00
2	593372 IRIDP-3/MNK/ DW-14	Improvement of Jamirta Graveyard to Joymontop Maniknagar Road at ch. 00-700m. [ID-356825057] under Upazila: Singair, Dist: Manikganj (Salvage cost Tk. 530127).		
3	593373 IRIDP-3/MNK/ DW-15	Improvement of Betila Mitora-Dhaleshari Bridge via Mokimpur GPS & JK High School Road at ch. 5200-7200m. [ID-356463001] under Upazila Sadar, District: Manikganj (Salvage cost Tk. 3749578)		
4	593374 IRIDP-3/MNK/ DW-16	a) Improvement of Dautia Hat-Char Garpara High School Road at ch. 1356-2820m. [ID-356464038] under Upazila Sadar, District: Manikganj (Salvage cost Tk. 1787860). b) Construction of 01 No. 1x23.00x2.60m culvert at ch. 1481m on the same road.		
5	593413 e-Tender/ LGED/Manik/ GOBM/21-22/ W-02	On-Pavement Routine Maintenance & supplying Stone Chips 16mm, 12mm, 6mm downgraded, Coarse Sand, Sylhet Sand, 1st class Picked Bricks, Picked Bricks Bats Bitumin, Bitumin Emulsion, Empty Ganny Bag, Local Sand etc.		

These are online tender's where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. 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 branch. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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GD-1338

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EDCL/PD-Gopalganj/OTM/WM&T/2021/212

Amendment of Tender Notice (Amendment No -2)

Project Title : Establishment of Essential Drugs Company Limited (3rd Plant), Gopalganj
 Package Name & No. : GD-14, Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Testing of Workshop Machinery and Tools
 Ref. No : EDCL/PD-Gopalganj/ Workshop Machinery and Tools /2021/36, Date : 20 June, 2021

Notice Sl. No	Subject to be Amended	Existing As	Shall be amended As
16	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	11 July, 2021, Time : 03:00 PM (Local Time)	27 July, 2021, Time : 03:00 PM (Local Time)
17	Tender Closing Date and Time	12 July, 2021, Time : 01:00 PM (Local Time)	28 July, 2021, Time : 01:00 PM (Local Time)
18	Tender Opening Date and Time	12 July, 2021, Time : 01:30 PM (Local Time)	28 July, 2021, Time : 01:30 PM (Local Time)

All other terms & conditions shall remain unchanged.

Prof. (Dr.) Ehsanul Kabir
 Project Director
 Establishment of Essential Drugs Company Limited (3rd Plant), Gopalganj

Size: 5 inch x 4 col.