DHAKA SUNDAY JULY 18, 2021, SRABAN 3, 1428 BS starbusiness@thedailystar.net

Chorus of complaints about e-commerce firms

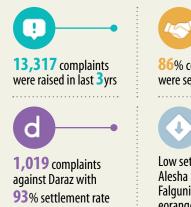
Most complaints raised against Evaly; Uber has highest settlement rate

MAHMUDUL HASAN and SUKANTA HALDER

Customers filed a staggering 13,317 complaints against top ridesharing, food delivery platforms, and Facebookbased businesses in Bangladesh in the last three fiscal years, official figures showed.

Evaly, which has come under regulatory scrutiny recently for its business practices that include offering unusual discounts, has seen the highest number of complaints among the top 18 online platforms from fiscal year 2018-19 to 2020-

About 4,932 complaints were made against the firm, which accounted for 37 per cent of the total complaints received against the online platforms, according to the Directorate of National Right Protection



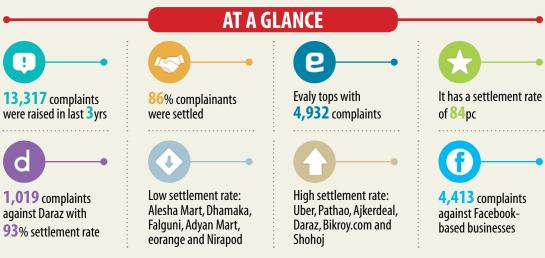
(DNCRP)

Many e-commerce companies don't serve in accordance with

bKash no longer with Evaly, 9 others

Leading mobile financial service provider bKash yesterday suspended transactions through its channel with 10 e-commerce

The platforms are: Evaly, Needs, Alesha Mart, Qcoom, Dhamaka Shopping, Aladiner Prodip, E-orange, Adyan Mart, Sirajgonj Shop and Boom Boom, according to a notice bKash published on its



the standard, and the gravity of online customers' plights cannot be measured through the DNCRP data as many dissatisfied and deceived customers don't file any complaints, according to industry people.

The most common complaints against the e-commerce firms are not getting the right product and delivery on time. The refund also sees a delay.

"Once we receive complaints, we take action after conducting an investigation. Most of the complaints have been filed against Evaly," said Bablu Kumar Saha, director-general of the directorate.

Of the complaints, Evaly has settled 4,145 complaints, which is payment was made. 84 per cent of the total.

"We have delivered 70 lakh products so far. So, when we compare it with 5,000 complaints, the main picture is clear— the number of complaints is not very high," said Mahbi Chowdhury, senior vice president of Evaly.

"However, we are concerned about the rights of the consumers. But the problems are not only associated with Evaly. There are some other issues related to supply chain, the coronavirus pandemic, and the payment gateway.

The complaints against Evaly are

Many consumers took to social media, alleging it doesn't deliver products even months after

READ MORE ON B3

RMG buyers putting work orders on hold

They cite uncertainty whether factories will operate during next lockdown, exporters say

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

International retailers and brands are putting on hold work orders placed with many factories amidst the uncertainty over whether garment factories will be allowed to run during the upcoming 14-day lockdown beginning July 23, said exporters.

The decision is yet to be taken although the local garment manufacturers and exporters on Thursday appealed to the prime minister in favour of continuing operations.

"So, the buyers have been asking me frequently how the work orders would be executed as the lockdown for two weeks is going to be imposed," said Mostafiz Uddin, managing director of Chattogram-based

"I am scheduled to send \$1 million worth of goods on August 1 and 5. If the lockdown continues, I cannot send those goods and my buyers have already said they will not give me a time extension anymore," he said.

The alternative solution is going for expensive air shipments which is a major concern for him, added Uddin.

Sending goods on aircraft is very expensive and many local exporters cannot afford it during this pandemic as they have been struggling to survive and revive business from the Covid-19 fallouts, he

READ MORE ON B3



KSRM faces Tk 231cr VAT evasion charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipus

Trade thru

suspended

this week

Hili port

Cross-border trade through the Hili land port in Dinajpur's Hakimpur upazila will remain suspended for a week from July 18 to July 24 marking Eid-ul-Azha, one of the main two religious festivals for Muslims.

Importers and exporters of Bangladesh and India took the decision holding a meeting on Tuesday, said Harun Ur Rashid, president of the port's Importers and Exporters Group.

READ MORE ON B3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg The Chattogram VAT commissionerate filed a case on Thursday accusing KSRM Steel Plant of dodging value-

material purchase. The alleged evasion took place during a span of five years since fiscal 2016-17, said the Customs, Excise and

added tax (VAT) payments worth Tk

231.17 crore on product sales and raw

VAT Commissionerate, Chattogram. However, KSRM Steel Plant, a sister concern of Kabir Steel Re-Rolling Mills (KSRM), claimed that they were yet to be informed of the matter.

The case was filed reviewing data

শেকড় থেকে শিখরে

on computers and reports of annual sales, purchases and chartered accountancy firms seized during a raid at the Sitakunda plant mid-June, said the VAT officials.

The company was supposed

to forward to the exchequer VAT amounting to Tk 188.71 crore paid by customers against its sale of 18.74 lakh tonnes of products from July 2016 to May 2021, showed a document.

But it deposited Tk 103.42 crore, meaning Tk 85.29 crore had been evaded, it added.

The company was also supposed to pay VAT Deducted at Source amounting to Tk 145.88 crore against the purchase of 19.98 lakh tonnes of raw materials from January 2017 to May 2021, according to the document. However, none of it was paid, it

READ MORE ON B3

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Deputy Manager/ Manager (Training & Development)

Job Responsibilities:

- Conduct Training Needs Assessment (TNA) of each individual Department, Division and business units. Collect training needs information from the annual appraisals and compile them for assessment of annual training requirements.
- Proposes yearly training and development programs and objectives · Prepare the annual training budget.

Prepare the monthly and annual training calendar

- Arrange training facilitators/trainers/resource persons to provide training Liaise with different Training institutes and HR consulting firms to
- arrange the titled training as required if needed. Coordinate with business Heads for technical up-gradation and Mktg.
- Sales and customer services related training and other activities.
- new entrants employees.
- Establish skill metrics to define the competencies required for each role/Department to set-up the KPI framework.
- Prepare training materials in power point for audiovisual presentation. Develop a training culture, a proactive attitude in work behavior- using new technology and
- methods among the employees of the company

Carry out any other jobs as assigned from time to time.

Educational Requirements Post Graduation in Marketing, Management or any other discipline from the reputed university. MBA in HRM/ PGD in HRM with adequate knowledge in Labor Law, General Administration, Compliance

Experience Requirements: 6 to 7 year(s) in Training & Development

Additional Requirements

Age 35 -40 years

- 3 -5 years' experience in Training & Development area. Proven work experience as a training manager
- Familiarity with traditional and modern training methods (mentoring, on-the-job training, e-learning,
- workshops, simulations etc.) Excellent communication and leadership skills
- Self-starter & proactive

Good interpersonal skil

- Ability to plan, multi-task and manage time effectively Strong writing and record keeping ability for reports and training manuals
- · Good computer, database and power point skills
- Sound knowledge in Bangladesh Labor law & rules Job Location: METAL, Corporate Office
- Salary: Negotiable (Other Benefits: As per company policy)

Send your CV on abu.sayed@metalbd.biz ation Deadline: On or before 16th August, 2021



BTMA denounces rumours over textile safety compliance

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) yesterday strongly denounced rumours regarding safety compliance in the country's textile industry.

According to a statement issued by BTMA President Mohammad Ali Khokon, some people were capitalising on a recent fire at a Narayanganj juice production plant by spreading rumours about textile mills.

The BTMA also expressed deep shock over the death of

52 workers at the fire at Hashem Foods factory. "With grave concern, the BTMA has observed that after the fire incident, a domestic and foreign quarter has been trying to disrupt the prevailing peace and order of the country's industrial sector with various unsolicited statements centring the incident," he said.

They are spreading these rumours at both home and abroad in hopes of tarnishing the image of local exportoriented industries.

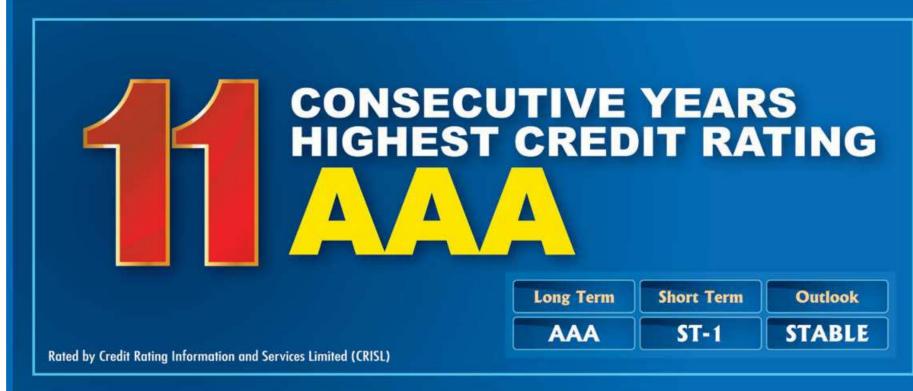
"So, we strongly protest this and are completely against the spread of this kind of propaganda," Khokon added.

He went on to say that some of the local authorities involved in setting up and monitoring the country's industrial establishments have been trying to pass the buck regarding the fire.

"We think the authorities concerned are consciously trying to pass the blame from one to another. We request the government to ensure proper justice through an impartial investigation of the fire incident. Otherwise, it will be difficult to prevent such accidents in the future,"

Khokon said in the statement. Md Monir Hossain, chief of the BTMA's media committee, shared Khokon's statement with a group of journalists at a programme at InterContinental Dhaka.

READ MORE ON B3



A bank rated "AAA" in the long term is adjudged to be of best quality, offer highest safety and have highest credit quality while rated "St-1" in the short term has highest certainty to meet its financial commitments in a timely manner. Stable outlook indicates that the operational performance is likely to remain unchanged in the near future.







OUR INTEREST IS IN YOU



Mohammed Mahtabur Rahman, chairman of NRB Bank, virtually presided over its 8th annual general meeting recently. The bank has declared 8.5 per cent stock dividend (bonus share) for 2020. Tateyama Kabir and Mohammed Jamil Iqbal, vice chairmen, Khandakar R Amin, chairman of its executive committee, Imtiaz Ahmed, chairman of its audit committee, Ali Ahmed, chairman of its risk management committee, and Mamoon Mahmood Shah, managing

Global sustainable debt issuance will crack \$1 trillion mark in 2021

Global issuance of sustainable debt is on track to surpass \$1 trillion this year with green bonds dominating while emerging markets have some catching up do to, the Institute of International Finance (IIF) said in a report.

With corporations and financial institutions under growing pressure from investors to up their environment, social and governance (ESG) game, the issuance of bonds to raise money for climate-related or social projects, or linked to sustainability targets, is an increasingly popular option.

Sustainable debt sales more than

doubled year-on-year in the first half of 2021 to over \$680 billion, closing in on the \$700 billion issued during the whole of last year.

"With Net Zero commitments n the spotlight, an acceleration in low-carbon energy investment and technological innovation has been supporting ESG securities issuance, along with strong investor appetite," said IIF economist Khadija Mahmood.

The latest issuance bonanza will see the total market size grow to well above \$3 trillion during this year, the IIF found.

Green bonds, which are used finance climate-related environmental projects, made up the lion's share of all new issuance, at 35

REUTERS/FILE

A crow flies over a garbage-strewn beach in Mumbai, India.

per cent, led by Germany, China and

While sovereigns, institutions and utilities dominate issuance, firms from elsewhere in the energy sphere as well as materials and consumer discretionary sector increasingly joined the fray.

Other types of debt falling into the sustainable category also recorded stellar issuance in the first half of the

Issuance of social bonds, which

raise funds for projects with positive social outcomes, more than tripled year on year to \$140 billion, boosted in part by the European Union's introduction of the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR) which imposes mandatory ESG disclosure obligations.

of sustainability-linked bonds, where an issuer pledges to reach specific ESG targets or face, for example, higher coupon payments rose nearly four times to \$160 billion.

Cash-flush Americans lift US retail sales

REUTERS, Washington

US retail sales unexpectedly increased in June as demand for goods remained strong even as spending is shifting back to services, supporting expectations that economic growth accelerated in the second quarter.

director and CEO, also attended the meeting.

The rebound in sales reported by the Commerce Department on Friday was despite purchases of motor vehicles declining for a second straight month due to a lack of supply caused by a global semiconductor shortage.

Sales were also flattered by higher prices resulting from supply constraints as Covid-19 vaccinations, low interest rates and massive fiscal stimulus fuel demand.

"Growing pains from reopening are on the supply side," said Chris Low, chief economist at FHN Financial in New York.

"Inflation reports earlier this week confirm firms are still struggling to keep up with this demand, but another month of high retail spending should give companies confidence that consumer demand is not slowing down anytime soon.'

Retail sales rose 0.6 per cent last month. Data for May was revised down to show sales falling 1.7 per cent instead of declining 1.3 per cent as previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast retail sales dropping 0.4 per cent in June.

Sales advanced 18.0 per cent compared to June last year and are now 18.0 per cent above their pre-pandemic level.

Retail sales mostly capture the goods component of consumer spending, with services such as healthcare, education, travel and hotel accommodation making up the remaining portion. Restaurants and bars are the only services category in the retail sales report.

Demand sĥifted to goods like electronics and motor vehicles during the pandemic as millions of people worked from home, took online classes and avoided public transportation. Spending is now rotating back to services like travel and entertainment.



Sheikh Mohammad Maroof, additional managing director of City Bank, Zainal Abedin, director (technical) of BTP1, Mohammad Jahangir Alam, cluster head, public sector of City Bank, and Mahbub Jamil, head of structured finance of the bank, signed a multi-party loan agreement to set up a high speed diesel-fired power plant of Bangla Trac Group at the head offices of Mashreq Bank (Dubai, UAE), City Bank and BTP1 (Dhaka, Bangladesh) yesterday. Iqbal H Khanyari, senior vice president of Mashreq Bank, Ali Asghar Hamid, vice president, and M Jahangir Alam, CEO of Bangla Trac Group, and Fahad Mahmud Islam, CFO, were also present.

US warns of growing risks for business in blow to Hong Kong

AFP, Washington

The United States on Friday warned its business community of growing risks of operating in Hong Kong due to China's clampdown, as an increasing number of Western companies consider abandoning the historic financial hub.

The United States also imposed sanctions on seven more Chinese officials in Hong Kong as it vowed there would be a price for Beijing's imposition of a draconian security law a year ago.

"Beijing has chipped away at Hong Kong's reputation of accountable, transparent governance and respect for individual freedoms and has broken its promise to leave Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy unchanged for 50 years," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

"Today we send a clear message that the United States resolutely stands with Hong Kongers," Blinken said. In a long-awaited advisory that has already been denounced by China, US government agencies led by the State Department told businesses that they face "growing risks" in Hong Kong.

"As a result of these changes, they should be aware of potential reputational, regulatory, financial and, in certain instances, legal risks associated with their Hong Kong

"The advisory acknowledged that Hong Kong, a former British colony handed back to China in 1997, "retains many economic distinctions" from the mainland including stronger protections of intellectual property.

But it pointed to a declining climate under the national security law including the arrest of one US citizen -- John Clancey, a prominent human rights lawyer.

China imposed the law in June 2020 after massive and sometimes destructive protests that demanded the preservation of fundamental



People shop at a fruit and vegetable store in Hong Kong.

the handover. Dozens of people have been charged under the law including the media tycoon Jimmy Lai, former lawmakers and prodemocracy activists.

The US advisory also warned of heightened risks to data privacy and less access to information, noting the closure of a leading newspaper, Apple Daily, which was a thorn in the side of authorities.

The advisory also highlighted that businesses were at greater risk of incurring US sanctions, which have been aimed in particular at banks that work with the police. In the latest sanctions, the United States blocked any US assets of seven deputy directors of the Liaison Office, which represents

Beijing in Hong Kong. The United States has already

rights promised to the city before slapped sanctions on top officials including Hong Kong's pro-Beijing chief executive, Carrie Lam, who has admitted that she has struggled to use credit cards as a result.Xia Baolong, director of China's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, said earlier Friday that sanctions will anger China and backfire.

You would only lift a rock and drop it heavily on your own feet," Xia said in a speech. In a statement after reports first emerged of the advisory, the office of the commissioner of the Chinese foreign ministry in Hong Kong said the United States was trying to "mislead" international businesses.

"We believe that visionary people around the world will remain clear-eyed, see through the tricks of the US side, and make the right choice," it said.

Hong Kong emerged as one of the world's premier trading hubs thanks to its business-friendly policies, respect for rule of law and proximity to the vast Chinese market.

Since the imposition of the security law, a growing number of international companies have announced plans either to leave or reduce staff in Hong Kong including VF Corp, the US apparel giant known for its Timberland and North Face brands.

A survey in May by the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong found that 42 percent of its members were considering or planning a move out of the city.

Tensions between China and the United States have soared in recent years as Beijing becomes increasingly assertive both at home and abroad.

Saudi PIF buys into McLaren as part of £550m equity raise

The McLaren Group announced a 550 million pound (\$758 million) equity investment on Friday with much of it coming from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) and global investment firm Ares Management.

McLaren Group includes the British supercar maker as well as McLaren Racing, which competes in Formula One and IndyCar in the United States and is also entering the Extreme E off-road electric series next year.

McLaren said PIF and Ares were providing 400 million of new capital, in the form of preference shares and equity warrants.

The rest will come from existing shareholders as convertible preference shares, allowing for repayment of a loan received in June last year from the National Bank of Bahrain.

Bahrain's Mumtalakat sovereign nvestment fund is McLaren's majority shareholder with a 62.55 per cent stake according to its website.

"Following the strategic investment

into Racing that we secured last year, this successful equity raise is a key element of our comprehensive financial strategy to support the Groups sustainable growth plans," said McLaren Group's executive chairman Paul Walsh.

"With these strong foundations now in place, we are well positioned to achieve our ambitions as a global luxury supercar and elite motorsport business, with Automotive as McLarens core profit driver."

McLaren had a 300 million pound equity injection from existing shareholders in March 2020 and last April completed a 170 million pound sale and leaseback deal on its Woking headquarters.

US-based investment group MSP Sports Capital also acquired a significant minority stake in McLaren Racing last December in a deal that brought in 185 million pounds and eased pressure from the Covid-19

Automotive revenues in the first quarter of this year were 170.5 million pounds, a rise of 145 per cent on the same pandemicaffected period in 2020.

EU probes €3.2b restructuring aid for airline TAP

EU competition regulators will investigate whether a 3.2-billion-euro (\$3.8 billion) restructuring plan for ailing Portuguese airline TAP is proportionate and complies with EU state aid rules, the European Commission said on Friday.

The overhaul plan involves around 2,000 job cuts by 2022, pay cuts of up to 25 per cent, a reduced fleet and the sale of non-core assets.

The EU watchdog said it would investigate whether TAP or market operators would provide a sufficient contribution to the restructuring cost and also whether measures would be adopted to offset any negative impact on competition.

The Commission also re-adopted an

earlier decision clearing a 1.2-billion-euro rescue loan for TAP after Europe's secondhighest court in May annulled its approval because regulators had not provided adequate reasons.

Rival Ryanair had challenged the TAP rescue loan, which forms part of the 3.2 billion euro restructuring aid and will be converted into equity.

Portugal's infrastructure ministry said the EU probe would focus on assessing the compatibility of the aid with the rules for

supporting companies in difficulty. This is an important step for the European Commission to make more solid, namely from a legal point of view, the solutions that may be found to ensure the future viability of TAP without dependence on public resources," the ministry said in a

Pran Agro gains financial closure of \$25m bond

Pran Agro has achieved financial closure of a Tk 2,100 million (\$25 million) nonconvertible, redeemable bond, with credit guarantee from GuarantCo and fully subscribed by MetLife Bangladesh.

Financial closure is defined as a stage when all the conditions of a financing agreement are fulfilled prior to the initial availability of funds. The development came about on May 19.

Proceeds of the seven-year fixed coupon bond will be used to develop critical infrastructure in the agricultural supply chain and support the company's expansion plans in local and export markets, says a

Rated AA- by Fitch and A1 by Moody's, GuarantCo is a part of Private Infrastructure Development Group.

Green Delta Insurance Company acted as the bond trustee and security agent to the issue while independent Bangladeshbased merchant bank Riverstone Capital acted as financial advisor to Pran Agro and arranger to the issue.

The agricultural and food processing company, a sister concern of Pran-RFL Group, is working with 1,00,000 registered contract farmers and employs 110,000



Shamima Akhter, head of corporate affairs, partnerships and communications of Unilever Bangladesh, handed over products as Covid-19 relief support to Air Commodore M Moyeenuddin, director general of Sena Kalyan Sangstha's welfare division, at the latter's head office in the capital recently.

National Housing Finance gets new MD

National Housing Finance and Investments vesterday witnessed the appointment of a new managing director for three

appointee, The Mohammad Shamsul Islam, had already been serving additional managing director since February 2021, says a press release.



Mohammad Shamsul Islam

The Board of Directors made the appointment upon the retirement of the immediate past managing director.

Islam was previously deputy managing director of Global Islami Bank since May 2017. He started his career with AB Bank as a probationary officer in 1989 on obtaining an MBA degree in banking from the University of Dhaka.

RMG buyers putting

work orders on hold

"It (imposing lockdown) will be the biggest disaster in our industry," Uddin told The Daily Star over the phone. Many buyers have already been following a go-slow

policy regarding placement of work orders considering the

possible imposition of lockdowns, although they were not

The months of July and August are also very important

This is the peak season for sending goods for the

upcoming winter season and Christmas sales and for

placing work orders for the next summer season, said

Uddin who has also been struggling to revive his business

shifted to other countries if the local suppliers cannot cater

are diverted from here to other countries for any reason,

Uddin also said. "Both we and the buyers are very much

Faruque Hassan, president of the Bangladesh Garment

Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the

platform of apparel makers and exporters, echoed Uddin.

He said many international retailers and brands have

been either sending messages or making phone calls

and sending mails to know what would happen over the

'No buyer has cancelled work orders up until now as no

There is a possibility of a portion of work order getting

"It will be difficult to bring back the work orders if those

yet cancelling those already made, said Uddin.

for two critical reasons, he said.

from losses incurred last year.

worried," he said.

brands," he said.

to those timely and properly, he said.

Investors lap up Zomato's India IPO with bids of \$46b

REUTERS, Mumbai

A stock offering by Indian food delivery startup Zomato drew bids worth US\$46.3 billion as it was more than 38 times oversubscribed on Friday, signalling investors were bullish about the fast-growing sector.

The \$1.3 billion IPO of Zomato, which is backed by China's Ant Group, was the first in India's food delivery sector. It was priced at 72 to 76 rupees per share, giving it a valuation of up to \$7.98 billion.

Big institutional investors also placed major bets, with the subscription for their category at 52 times the shares on offer, stock exchange data after subscriptions closed on

"There is insane demand and a lot of excitement," said Jimeet Modi, founder of Indian brokerage Samco Securities. "Retail investors are looking at this from a listing gains point of view.

Investors are placing bets on Zomato even though it flagged in its IPO draft prospectus that its costs and losses would continue to rise as it ramps up investments.

Before the IPO opened this week, Zomato raised \$562 million from 186 big financial investors, including marquee names such as Tiger Global, BlackRock, JPMorgan and Morgan Stanley. The Zomato IPO comes when India's markets are near their all-time highs and there is growing interest from digital companies to list on bourses.

Alibaba-backed financial payments app Paytm on Friday filed draft papers in India for a \$2.2 billion IPO, while Walmart's e-commerce giant Flipkart is also planning one.

Just like US-based DoorDash, Zomato is mainly a food delivery app, having partnered with 350,000 restaurants and cafes in 526 Indian cities. It also allows customers to book tables for dining-in, write food reviews and upload photos.

Zomato competes with local rival Swiggy, which is backed by Softbank, and Amazon's still nascent food delivery service in a food delivery market that Boston Consulting Group expects will touch \$8 billion by 2023, from just \$4 billion last year.

The Zomato app has 41.5 million customers using its service on an average every month, and orders on its platform surged to 403.1 million in the year 2019-2020, from just 30.6 million in 2017-2018, its draft IPO prospectus showed.

US regulators to meet tomorrow to discuss stablecoins

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen announced on Friday that she will meet with regulators next week to discuss "interagency work" on stablecoins, a rapidly growing class of digital currencies that is facing growing scrutiny from policymakers.

The President's Working Group

on Financial Markets will meet on Monday with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to go over the benefits and risks of stablecoins, a form of cryptocurrencies that are pegged to more traditional assets, including fiat currencies such as the dollar.

"In light of the rapid growth in digital assets, it is important for the agencies to collaborate on the regulation of this sector and the development of any recommendations for new authorities," Yellen said in a statement, noting it was important for regulators to assess the potential benefits of stablecoins while also mitigating risks they could pose to users, markets, or the financial system.'

Stablecoins and other digital pavments options are receiving more attention from lawmakers, Federal Reserve officials and other policymakers as new options emerge and gain traction.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell told lawmakers during congressional hearings this week that stablecoins are "growing incredibly fast" but pointed to their lack of appropriate regulation



US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen testifies before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services about the FY22 Treasury budget request on Capitol Hill, in Washington, DC, US on June 23.

as a point of concern.

"If we're going to have something that looks just like a money-market fund or bank deposit ... we really ought to have appropriate regulation and today we don't," Powell said.

US Senator Elizabeth Warren sent a letter to Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chair Gary Gensler last week asking him to address the risks the cryptocurrency market poses to consumers and financial markets.

And last month, Boston Fed president Eric Rosengren called the moving in that direction.

name stablecoins a "misnomer," adding that they can be volatile and may pose financial stability risks.

The Fed is in the process of evaluating the digital payments universe to determine if it should issue a central bank digital currency, known for short as CBDCs.

Powell said this week that one of the strongest arguments in favor of a CBDC is that it could lessen the need for multiple stablecoins or cryptocurrencies, but he made it clear it is not certain that the Fed will be

lockdown as they were very worried about their supply of BGMEA member has complained about it. However, a lot

> For instance, buyers who were supposed to place orders for one million pieces of t-shirts are now seeking half of it as uncertainty prevails over production due to the upcoming lockdown, he said.

> of the members have been complaining to me about the

placement of work orders by the international retailers and

Although the buyers were not cancelling work orders up until now, if uncertainty prevails, the situation might prompt them to go for cancellations in the near future, said

He said he has been lobbying with the government highups over the past three days to keep garment factories out of the purview of the lockdown for maintaining smooth operations of the supply chain of apparel items in the peak

season, he said. Particularly, if the buyers lose their confidence ir Bangladesh, it will be very difficult to restore it, he added. Abdul Kader Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garments Accessories & Packaging Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BGAPMEA), said most of the

garment workers were from northern districts. They could turn into carriers of the virus if they are allowed to travel to their village homes, he said.

Shahadat Hossain Sohel, chairman of the Bangladesh Terry Towel & Linen Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BTTLMEA), said all hotels in Europe and the US have

They need a lot of towels and this is peak season for the shipment of towels, he said. "We will be losers if we cannot

supply towels to them timely," he also said. If the factories cannot run, the garment suppliers will have to face expensive air shipments for which many will

be affected badly, Sohel said. Freight charges have reached abnormal highs, with the cost of sending a kilogramme (kg) of garments from the Chattogram port to London now being 36 cents. It used to

previously cost nearly 20 cents. But sending each kilogramme of goods by aircraft from

the Dhaka airport to London currently costs \$4.30.

The rates will go even higher if the international retailers and brands want to get goods within the time they have

No factory owner is capable of bearing the cost of expensive air fares in the time of pandemic, which has already affected the global supply chain badly, Sohel said.

Leaders of trade bodies of the garment and textile sector in Thursday's joint statement to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the cabinet secretary said Bangladesh's garment export would lose out \$119.38 million per day if

On the first 14 days of the current fiscal year, the earning from the garment sector is estimated to be \$1.68 billion,

the factories were shut down for any reason.

bKash no longer with Evaly, 9 others

"We are working closely to implement regulatory guidelines of payment system for e-commerce," said Shamsuddin Haider Dalim, head of corporate communication at bKash. "In the meantime, to protect customers' interests, the

payment gateway service of bKash has been temporarily suspended for few merchants. When the payment system is implemented in compliance with the regulatory guidelines, bKash Payment service will be launched again." Earlier, some private banks suspended card transactions

with a number of online merchants as many clients of the lenders have recently alleged that they have not received their products on time despite having made advance payments to the e-commerce platforms.

In some cases, the clients made payments several months ago but failed to get their products as per the commitment given by the e-commerce platforms.

Meanwhile, the commerce ministry earlier in the day agreed in principles that the local e-commerce companies will not get the payment until and unless the goods are delivered to the buyers.

China puts controlling stake of revamped Anbang on the

block for \$5.2b

Two Chinese state investors plan to sell a combined 98.78 per cent of their stakes in Dajia Insurance Group, the revamped entity of embattled Anbang Insurance Group, for 33.6 billion yuan (\$5.19 billion), according to an auction filing on Friday. China Insurance Security Fund Co Ltd, the state rescue

fund for the insurance sector which is controlled by the Ministry of Finance, aims to auction all of its 98.23 per cent stake in Dajia for 33.38 billion yuan.

China Petrochemical Corp is auctioning its 0.55 per cent stake in Dajia for 186.9 million yuan, according to an auction statement filed to the Beijing Financial Assets

The auction will end by Aug. 12.

The move marks the latest development in the restructuring and divestiture of Anbang, which appears to have stalled since February 2020, when the country's top banking and insurance watchdog said Dajia "was close to a decision on a batch of strategic investors" and "would remain privately owned".

The Chinese government took control of Anbang Insurance Group in February 2018 as part of its sweeping campaign to reduce systemic financial risk after an assetbuying spree by a handful of private-sector conglomerates.

It finished running Anbang in 2020, and handed over Anbang's management to Dajia, a newly established entity that took over Anbang's assets.

BTMA denounces rumours over textile safety compliance

"The QIMA, a Hong Kong-based supply chain compliance solutions provider, recently ranked Bangladesh's garment sector as second in ethical manufacturing," Hossain said.

The globally trusted McKinsey& Company also praised the country's garment sector for its transparency, he added. Still, a section of critics are passing negative comments that are damaging the image of the local garment sector,

Trade thru Hili port suspended this week

However, trade already undergoing processing at the port will continue, said Sohrab Hossain, public relations officer of Hili Panama Port Link, the port's private operator.

Immigration services will be available for incoming travellers, said Sekendar Ali, in-charge of the Hili immigration check-post.

Chorus of complaints about e-commerce firms

The second-highest number of complaints was lodged against Daraz, behemoth Alibaba.

were 1,029 complaints There against the top e-commerce platform during the three-year period. However, the settlement rate is 92 per cent as it resolved 945 complaints.

"It is important to recognise that the number of complaints is only 0.2 per cent compared to the total number of orders received by Daraz," said Shayantani Twisha, head of public relations, media and communications at Daraz Bangladesh.

A high percentage of complaints are filed because the customer is not aware of the terms and conditions of Daraz, and as a result, they fail to understand the already established convenient procedure for the resolution of customer issues, she said.

"In most cases, they directly make complaints with the DNCRP before raising the issue with Daraz Customer Care. When a case is being dealt at the DNCRP, the customers are often satisfied when they are informed

about the conditions of Daraz. Alesha Mart had the lowest complaint settlement rate at 10 per cent. It resolved one out of 10 complaints made at the directorate. It is one of the e-commerce platforms

which some banks have customers' grievances as it had a suspended card transactions.

The settlement rate of Dhamaka Shopping stands at 26 per cent. The Criminal Investigation Department has recently written to the Bangladesh Bank to seize the bank account of the e-commerce company.

Other e-commerce companies with a lower settlement rate are Falguni (73 per cent) Adyan Mart (49 per cent), eorange (65 per cent) and Nirapod (56 per cent). Police arrested Nirapod CEO Shahriar Khan for allegedly embezzling customers' money last week.

According to the directorate, there are some reputed e-commerce platforms with a lower settlement rate.

The number of complaints raised against priyoshop.com was 562, with a settlement rate of around 74 per

Priyoshop.com serves an average of 1.5 lakh orders per month. "So, 500 complaints in three years are less than 1 per cent," said Rabiul Islam, head of strategic growth and partnership of the company.

"However, we would undoubtedly have been happier if the number had

Foodpanda, the top food delivery platform in Bangladesh, did not do well when it comes to addressing

resolution rate of 84 per cent. Some 269 complaints were made

against the company, and it resolved 225 complaints. "We take every complaint seriously,

and try to resolve their issues as fast as we can," the company said in a statement. Chaldal, the largest grocery delivery platform, sorted out 89 per cent of the 183 complaints during the three-year period. "We are ready to resolve every

complaint. We deliver 95 per cent of the orders on the same day or the next day after the orders are placed," said Waseem Alim, chief executive officer of the firm.

Uber topped the list of the firms in terms of resolving complaints, with the settlement rate standing at 99 per cent, followed by Pathao (96 per cent).

The other platforms that fared well are AjkerDeal (94 per cent), Shohoj (92 per cent), Othoba (90 per cent), and Bikroy.com (93 per cent).

DNCRP's Saha said customers had some responsibilities too.

"They need to be cautious while ordering products online. They should know about the business policies of the companies," he said, adding that the directorate had taken various steps to raise awareness among the

KSRM faces Tk 231cr VAT evasion charge

explanation will be sought from the company Mohammad Akbar Hossain, commissioner of the VAT commissionerate, told The Daily Star.

"If they fail to provide valid documents, we will impose a penalty equal to the amount evaded as well as interest as per rules," he added. "We have not been informed of any

VAT evasion incident by KSRM from the VAT commissionerate office,"

Samsul Haque, director (corporate) of the KSRM Steel Plant, told this newspaper.

"A team of VAT officials conducted a raid in our factory last June but they did not make any contact with us since then," he said.

"If there has been any revenue evasion, we are obliged to pay but before that we should have been given a chance to defend ourselves," he added.

"We trying to communicate with demand of eight million tonnes.

the commissionerate office and nothing can be said before that," he Bangladesh's steel industry sales

amount to some Tk 55,000 crore annually. are about 40 active There manufacturers with a combined

capacity to produce nine million tonnes of steel a year.

Of them, KSRM and three others meet more than half of the annual

BUSINESS

Keep tea industry open during next lockdown

Garden owners urge govt MINTU DESHWARA

Tea garden owners in Bangladesh have urged the government to keep the industry out of the purview of the strict nationwide lockdown beginning on July 23.

They made the demand in a letter to the cabinet secretary on Thursday afternoon, stating that the closure of their operations for such a prolonged period would lead to huge losses for the sector.

Following an unprecedented rise in coronavirus-related deaths across the country, the government has decided to impose a 14-day lockdown in a bid to curb the infection rate.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Tea Association, a platform of garden owners, said they raised the demand so that the country's largest industry could continue production and meet the promises made to both domestic and international buyers.

The tea industry has always played an important role in Bangladesh's economy, by alleviating poverty in remote regions, including hilly areas, and generating export

The industry provides opportunities for direct employment to about six lakh people, many of whom have taken up residence at the tea gardens themselves, while another five lakh people are indirectly involved through marketing or other services.

In 2020, Bangladesh produced 86.39 million kilograms of tea worth Tk 1,631 crore, of which 2.18 million kgs worth Tk

34 crore were exported.

Even though similar lockdowns took place last year, tea gardens were allowed to run operations under the prime minister's directive.

Another argument for keeping the industry open is that those working at plantations adhere to all the health safety guidelines while at work.

However, as soon as they are out of a job, they start breaking these rules by going to different places, according to garden

So, if these establishments are closed, the risk of spreading Covid-19 becomes higher, they said.

Besides, if the tea leaves are left to rot, orders will be cancelled. In addition, the scope to repay bank loans will also reduce, they added.

M Shah Alam, chairman of the Bangladesh Tea Association, said now was the peak season for the industry.

We counted losses during the offseason. So, if the industry remains closed for two weeks, it will go bankrupt," he

"So, our demand is to keep the tea industry open even if there are restrictions for everything else."

The association represents 146 tea gardens in the greater Sylhet and Chattogram, the two main producing regions for the popular beverage.

There are 167 tea gardens in Bangladesh.



The tea industry has always played an important role in Bangladesh's economy, by alleviating poverty in remote regions, including hilly areas, and generating export revenue, insiders say.

Farmers in a pickle with unsold cattle

Blame pandemic for low demand

PARTHA CHAKRABORTTY and MIRZA SHAKIL

Ever since the beginning of July, Abul Hossain, a livestock farmer based in the southwestern district of Bagerhat, has been patiently waiting for buyers for the three bulls he reared over the past three

His untiring efforts eventually paid off as one of the bulls, weighing nearly 45 maunds, was finally sold.

He hopes to sell off the other two sacrificial animals ahead of the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, which accounts for roughly half of the cattle slaughtered in Bangladesh

Being unable to find buyers that are willing to pay his desired prices in Bagerhat, Hossain set off for Dhaka on July 16 with the two bulls, including the largest one, in search of more affluent customers.

"I even tried to sell online but did not get a good response," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Hossain is just one of tens of thousands of farmers who have fattened their cattle to profit from the increased demand ahead of Eid-ul Azha, the second biggest religious festival for Muslims.

Department of Livestock Services (DLS), nearly 70,000 farmers fattened a total of 38.58 lakh cattle, including bulls, for this year's

However, their hopes have been hanging in the balance thanks to the nationwide lockdowns imposed by the government to contain the spread of Covid-19.

However, the government has suspended these restrictions from July 15 till after Eid. As such, cattle markets were able to be set up all over the country, rejuvenating the hopes of farmers.

Soon after the lockdown was ifted, trucks of cattle began moving towards the makeshift markets.

Still though, buyers are yet to turn up in adequate numbers.

During a recent visit to the Karatia cattle market, one of the largest regular weekly cattle handle their online sales under the markets in Tangail sadar upazila, it guise of being farmers.



According to data from the Nearly 70,000 farmers fattened a total of 38.58 lakh cattle, including bulls, for this year's festival, according to data from the Department of Livestock Services.

was found that a huge number of animals had reached the market more than 1,000 cattle farms have but the turnout of buyers and wholesalers was poor.

The scene was quite similar at the Elenga cattle market in Kalihati upazila and Air Force Bazar cattle market in Sakhipur upazila.

Traders at the markets said most buyers currently just come to check the prices.

On the other hand, several buyers said that although they hoped for lower cattle prices this year due to the Covid-19 situation, the cattle owners are demanding unreasonably high prices.

Besides, many marginal farmers feel uneasy about selling their cattle online in fear of being duped.

As a result, many middlemen

Across the 12 upazilas of Tangail, fattened about 50,000 animals for sacrifice, according to the DLS office in the district.

Farmers blame the lockdown measures for the sparse number of

Shah Aziz Talukder, owner of the Bina Agro Farm in Baluchara area of Tangail municipality, said he is yet to get the desired response when trying to sell cattle through online But Dulal Hossain Chakdar,

owner of the Chakdar Cattle Farm, the largest cattle farm in Bhuapur upazila, did succeed in securing buyers through his efforts online.

As of July 15, he sold 26 of the animals from his farm, where he fattened 100 bulls and oxen in hopes of good profits during Eid.

"People are communicating online every day. Wholesalers are also coming to see them," he said.

However, Nazmul Molla, a livestock farmer of Mollahat upazila of Bagerhat, could not sell his bull weighing 1,325 kilogrammes for his desired price of Tk 12 lakh. "People come to visit the bull

but no one offers any price," he "The coronavirus has destroyed

our hopes and businesses," added Nazmul, who has to spend about Tk 700 daily to feed the bull.

The case is similar for Bagerhat's Hossain, who could not sell his bulls last year either thanks to low demand amid the economic downturn caused by Covid-19.

Still though, both Hossain and Molla hope their luck will improve in Dhaka

GLOBAL BUSINESS

Stocks sag on concerns about Covid, global growth

Global stocks mostly fell Friday as worries about rising Covid-19 cases and their effect on global growth weighed on sentiment, pushing Wall Street into the red for the week.

After data showed an unexpected rise in US retail sales, Wall Street pushed higher at the open. But markets soon tumbled into the red and losses grew as the day progressed.

Analysts pointed to profit taking as a factor in Friday's session and throughout the week following records earlier in the month. Investors are "continuing to trim winning positions" as they await more clarity on the course of the economy, said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

The broad-based S&P 500 ended down 0.8 percent at 4,327.16, taking its weekly losses to around one percent. The highlycontagious Delta variant has led to surging infection rates in many parts of the world, leading authorities to reimpose certain restrictions.

"Covid-19 concerns still linger and the economic outlook is not as bright as it was just a few weeks



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in New York City, US on July 12.

ago," said market analyst Edward Moya at trading platform Oanda.

Major retreated,

European

bourses which closed one percent lower along with Tokyo, as investors worried over rising of Japan trimmed its economic growth forecast for the current fiscal vear

Hong Kong's leading index was flat as late profit-taking wiped out earlier gains ahead of a US warning about doing business in the territory.

In a long-awaited advisory that has already been denounced by China, the United States warned its business community of "growing risks" of operating in Hong Kong due to China's clampdown.

The advisory acknowledged that Hong Kong, a former British colony handed back to China in 1997, "retains many economic distinctions" from the mainland, including stronger protections of intellectual property.

But Washington to a declining climate under a national security law enacted last year, including the arrest of one US citizen -- John Clancey, a prominent human rights lawyer.

Shanghai closed 0.7 per cent lower while Seoul, Taipei, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok also retreated. Wellington was flat while Sydney, Singapore, and Jakarta ticked higher.

NEWS In Brief

US consumer sentiment drops in early July on inflation fears

US consumer sentiment fell sharply and unexpectedly in early July to the lowest level in five months as inflation worries dented confidence in the economic recovery, a survey showed on Friday.

The University of Michigan said its preliminary consumer sentiment index fell to 80.8 in the first half of this month - the lowest since February - from a final reading of 85.5 in June. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index would rise to 86.5.

"Consumers' complaints about rising prices on homes, vehicles, and household durables has reached an all-time record," Richard Curtin, the survey director, said in a

China vows to curb commodities speculation to ensure price stability

REUTERS, Shanghai

China will crack down on the hoarding and speculation of commodities while ensuring supplies and prices are stable, in a move to tame price volatility seen in recent months, said China's Ministry of Industry and Information

"We will coordinate with relevant departments to ensure the stability of bulk commodities supplies and prices... guide upstream and downstream players in the industrial chain to stabilise production, supply and marketing of raw materials," ministry spokesperson Huang Libin told a press conference on Friday, according to a transcript on the



Workers unload coal at a storage site along a railway station in Hefei, Anhui province in China.

Ericsson's 5G march hits a wall in China, shares fall

REUTERS, Stockholm

Ericsson said on Friday it was no longer banking on previously anticipated contract wins for 5G tenders in China as it gets caught in the crossfire of a political battle between Beijing and the West, sending its shares down 8 per cent.

rival Huawei Chinese Technologies Co Ltd has been

in Sweden, where Ericsson Mellander told Reuters on Friday is based, and in some other western countries.

Ericsson had previously warned that Sweden's ban might said in a statement that sales impact its business in China, which is undertaking a huge 5G build-out and where it generates just under 10 per cent of its revenue. .

that 5G tenders expected during the second quarter in China did not take place, and the company there fell by 2.5 billion Swedish crowns (\$290 million).

Ericsson expected to recoup that expected to be announced before money, Chief Executive Borje the end of this month, according than-expected second quarter.

Chief Financial Officer Carl Ekholm replied: "No, it's not to two sources familiar with the coming back."

Mellander said in an interview that it was "prudent to forecast in sharp contrast to Nokia, along materially lower market share in with Huawei one of Ericsson's China going forward."

Initial contract allotments for the second phase of 5G

matter.

Ericsson's dour outlook was main rivals in the race to upgrade global wireless systems to 5G.

The Finnish group said this Asked on an analyst call if deployment in China are week it would likely raise its fullyear outlook due to a stronger-