

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
As on Sunday								As on Sunday			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▼ 0.40%	▼ 0.42%	\$1,813.48 (per ounce)	\$72.61 (per barrel)	▲ 1.36%	▲ 0.54%	▲ 0.69%	▲ 0.17%	BUY TK 84.25	98.24	114.97	12.75
6,823.60	11,899.12			56,889.76	27,789.29	3,102.11	3,528.15	SELL TK 85.25	102.04	118.77	13.41



BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY AUGUST 31, 2021, BHADRA 16, 1428 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

10 banks face show-cause for low deposit rates

The lenders maintained high interest rate spread for long

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh Bank has asked 10 banks to explain why they maintained a high interest rate spread for long depriving depositors.

The spread, the gap between lending and deposit rates, was high ignoring the BB rules, which is why the central bank sent letters to them on August 10 seeking an explanation, said a BB official.

They have been asked to reply in seven working days.

The 10 are Dutch-Bangla Bank, Shimanto Bank, Brac Bank, Standard Chartered Bangladesh, State Bank of India, Woori Bank, The City Bank, Prime Bank, Eastern Bank and Trust Bank.

Maintaining a high interest rate spread means the banks gave out loans at a high interest rate

while providing a low rate to their depositors.

As per the central bank rules, banks have to keep their spread either at or less than four percentage points.

But the banks maintained spreads of more than 4.50 percentage points, breaching the central bank policy, in order to make high profits.

A BB official said the central bank would take punitive measures if the banks continued to breach the policy.

"Depositors are now deprived of getting their required returns due to the high spread adopted by the banks," according to a BB paper.

The central bank also asked the lenders to explain why they did not reduce the spread as per the central bank rules.

BANKS THAT FACE BB'S SHOW-CAUSE NOTICE

Interest rate spread in June; Figures in %



SOURCE: BB

Among the 10, the spread of Dutch-Bangla Bank was the highest in June, with its weighted average deposit rate being 1.66 per cent against a lending rate of 7.80 per cent.

The spread of the bank stood at 6.14 percentage points.

Managing Director Abul

Kashem Md Shirin told The Daily Star that the central bank should calculate operating expenses of a bank when calculating the spread. "My bank's operating expenses is too much high as we are hugely involved in widening the digital financial inclusions," he said.

For instance, the bank's digital

infrastructure is larger than that in any other bank, putting an impact on the spread, he said, adding that the BB should consider the issue.

Selim RF Hussain, managing director of Brac Bank, said the high spread in his bank would go down in the quickest possible time as the lender had already revised the interest rate on deposits on August 9 complying with the BB instruction.

The spread in the bank stood at 5.40 percentage points.

On August 8, the BB asked banks not to set interest rates on fixed term deposits below the inflation rate as it yields negative returns for savers.

The weighted average interest rate on deposits stood at 4.13 per cent in June while the average inflation rate was 5.56 per cent.

The BB took the move as most banks had offered an interest rate of 2 per cent to 4 per cent on fixed deposit receipts (FDRs), which result in a negative real interest rate of 2 per cent to 3 per cent for savers.

The overall spread in the banking sector, however, stood at 3.09 percentage points in June as the weighted average rate on lending was 7.22 per cent.

READ MORE ON B3

Nagad's Tk 510cr bond gets nod



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The stock market regulator has approved Nagad's zero coupon bond on condition that some regulatory requirements are fulfilled for raising Tk 510 crore in funds.

A zero coupon bond is a debt instrument that does not pay interim coupons but instead trades at a deep discount, rendering profit at maturity, when the bond is redeemed for its full face value.

The decision came in a meeting of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) on Sunday presided over by Chairman Shibli Rubayat Ul Islam.

The regulator, however, did not mention this in its press release. Nagad has been asked to submit the bond's trustee deed registration, clearance of all directors from Credit Information Bureau and a no objection certificate from Bangladesh Bank, said a BSEC official.

Nagad is not listed so the approval news need not be in the press release, he said at first.

Actually the commission did not want to publish the news, he later admitted, repeatedly requesting not to be named considering sensitivity of the matter.

Another BSEC official acknowledged that Nagad's bond was approved despite some issues being raised by the regulator's department which deals with capital issues.

The main observation was that it had been doing business using a no objection certificate instead of a licence, he said, adding that the company was trying to get a licence complying with some conditions set by Bangladesh Bank.

READ MORE ON B3

Revenue receipts rise slightly

SOHEL PARVEZ

Revenue collection grew marginally in July owing to the slowdown in business activities in the face of the government's restrictions to combat the coronavirus spread.

Provisional data from the National Board of Revenue (NBR) shows that it logged Tk 15,354 crore in taxes in July this fiscal year, up 4 per cent year-on-year from Tk 14,755 crore the previous year.

TAX COLLECTION IN JULY

(Change year-on-year)

Customs tariff	Tk 4,925cr 2%	↓
VAT	Tk 5,697cr 1.3%	↑
Income tax	Tk 4,732cr 15%	↑

SOURCE: NBR

The tax authority's collection in July, the first month of the fiscal year, was Tk 5,613 crore short from its target.

The NBR said income tax was the main driver to keep the overall receipts in a little bit higher territory as collection of import tariff declined while value-added tax (VAT) was slightly up.

Income tax collection went up 15 per cent year-on-year to Tk 4,732 crore in July.

Collection of VAT, the biggest source of revenue for the state, rose 1.3 per cent year-on-year to Tk 5,697 crore in July from Tk 5,620 crore a year ago.

READ MORE ON B3



Boatmen get their vessels repaired anticipating the return of visitors to Ratargul forest in Gowainghat upazila near Sylhet town. The government allowed all tourist spots, community centres, resorts and recreation centres to reopen from August 19. This has led to a flurry of activity among residents associated with income-generating services at the special freshwater swamp forest characterised by trees inundated by water, particularly during the monsoon. The photo was taken recently.

SHEIKH NASIR

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Give long-term loans for industrial dev

Experts urge banks

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banks in the country should give long-term loans to entrepreneurs who wish to establish industrial units, said speakers at a webinar held yesterday.

They made this suggestion on the basis that no one can build up an industry on short-term loans.

The webinar, styled "Bangabandhu's Industrialisation Philosophy: Today's Bangladesh", was organised by the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) to mark the 46th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Participants said the lenders should give entrepreneurs five to seven years to repay the loans so that they can properly build an industrial unit.

Besides, they should give 25 years to repay the loan if it is used to build a house.

READ MORE ON B3

CURRENCY SWAP

Sri Lanka gets another \$100m from BB

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank has lent \$100 million more to Sri Lanka to help the island nation stay afloat tackling a foreign exchange crisis.

The fund was transferred from Bangladesh's reserve in Federal Reserve Bank of New York on August 30, according to a top central bank official.

On the second week of this month, \$50 million was initially lent under a currency swap agreement inked by the BB and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) on August 3.

As per the deal, the first-ever loan to any country from Bangladesh, the central bank will provide a total of \$250 million to help prop up the island nation's fast-depleting foreign reserves and ease pressure on its exchange rate.

The financing will be enabled in three phases, meaning another \$50 million will be provided, the official said, adding that the outstanding balance limit would never exceed \$200 million.

According to the BB official, the CBSL

On the second week of this month, \$50 million was initially lent under a currency swap agreement inked by the Bangladesh Bank and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka

will return the amount in three months at the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor) plus 2 per cent. But if the tenure goes up to six months, the interest rate will be Libor plus 2.5 per cent.

READ MORE ON B3

BSCIC seeks Tk 1,000cr stimulus fund

Wants to disburse loans for the expansion of cottage industry and SMEs

SUKANTA HALDER

The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) has sought a Tk 1,000 crore stimulus package from the government to disburse loans for the development and expansion of the cottage industry and SMEs.

Existing entities and entrepreneurs in remote areas will be allocated Tk 500 crore while those seeking to start business afresh the rest, said the corporation functioning under the Ministry of Industries.

Mustak Ahmed, deputy secretary (BSCIC) to the ministry, sought the allocation in a letter to the Bangladesh Bank governor on August 23.

The BSCIC has already disbursed Tk 50 crore that was allocated under a stimulus package last fiscal year, BSCIC Chairman Mostaque Hassan told The Daily Star. Borrowers are to pay a 4 per cent interest for the loans having a repayment period of two years, including a six-month grace period.

However, entrepreneurs have already started paying instalments, right from the following month on receiving the loan, said Hassan.

The BSCIC plans to use the fresh allocation to run various programmes, including lending and demand-based training, under its own management and in light of its long experience, said Ahmed in the letter.

READ MORE ON B3



The regional office of BSCIC in Barishal. The BSCIC plans to use the fresh allocation to run various programmes, including lending and demand-based training, under its own management and in light of experience, officials said.

STAR FILE



JQM Habibullah, deputy managing director of Islami Bank Bangladesh, and **Jibon Krishna Saha Roy**, director of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida), recently exchanged documents of a signed agreement enabling the bank to provide banking services to domestic and foreign investors through Bida's online one-stop service. **Md Sirazul Islam**, executive chairman of Bida, **Nikhil Kumar Das**, director general, and **Mohsina Yasmin**, executive member, and **Md Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan** and **Ahmed Zubayerul Huq**, executive vice presidents of the bank, were present.

ISLAMI BANK BANGLADESH

Mr. Noodles launches new spicy noodles

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mr. Noodles, a subsidiary of Pran-RFL Group, has recently launched a new flavoured noodles named "Mr. Noodles Korean Super Spicy".

"We've launched this product so that customers can have a taste of Korean spice and chilli," said Eleash Mridha, managing director of Mr. Noodles, inaugurating the product at the company's head office.

Each 62gm pack retails at Tk 20 while four and eight-piece packs are priced at Tk 75 and Tk 140 respectively, said AKM Moinul Islam Moin, executive director, in a press release. The product will be available at shops and super stores and e-commerce site Othoba.com, he said.



Eleash Mridha, managing director of Pran-RFL Group, recently inaugurated its new "Mr. Noodles Korean Super Spicy" for the local market at the company's head office in the capital's Badda.

PRAN-RFL GROUP

Australian economy slowing in Q2

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia's economy was likely already slowing before wide-scale coronavirus restrictions shuttered swathes of business and jobs, setting the stage for a vicious contraction this quarter.

There is even a non-trivial chance the economy is already in recession should Wednesday's data on gross domestic product (GDP) match the weakest market forecast.

The median call is for growth of 0.5 per cent in the June quarter, while forecasts ranging from a 0.1 per cent fall to growth of 1.2 per cent underline the uncertainty of the age. That would be a further step down from 1.8 per cent in the March quarter and a heady 3.2 per cent in the last quarter of 2020.

"For most of the June quarter the Australian economy was travelling well, but then the Delta variant arrived," said CBA's head of Australian economics Gareth Aird.

"For all intents and purposes, the Australian economy is currently in a manufactured recession as we go through another huge negative shock."

While consumer spending and

business investment were likely solid in the quarter, more of it was met by a flood of imports and a run down in inventories rather than an increase in output, so trimming overall GDP.

Fittingly for these strange times, annual growth is actually tipped to be the fastest in modern history at

9.2 per cent, but only because the first round of pandemic lockdowns last year caused a huge 7.0 per cent contraction, which is dropping out of the calculation.

With a new round of lockdowns gripping millions in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra the economy is set to shrink again.



A view of a construction site for a train station on the Sydney Metro, Australia on July 22.

REUTERS/FILE

"While a flat to negative Q2 GDP print is a real risk, this is far in the rear vision mirror as far as the economy is concerned given the sharp contraction expected in Q3 which we have pencilled in at around -3 per cent q/q," said NAB chief economist Alan Oster.

Looking ahead, the key question is when the lockdowns will end and how quickly activity recovers afterwards.

Victoria state has signalled restrictions will be extended past this week while New South Wales plans to stay shut through all of September and, likely, into October.

This is longer than first expected by the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA), which had forecast the economy would shrink by only 1 per cent this quarter.

The central bank may decide not to trim its bond buying as planned in September, but with interest rates already at all-time lows of 0.1 per cent there is little more it can do.

The conservative government of Prime Minister Scott Morrison has stepped up with billions in disaster payments to businesses and workers, though at the cost of a lot more borrowing.

Cautious Fed keeps world stocks happy

REUTERS, London

World stocks hovered around record highs on Monday, confident the US Federal Reserve is no rush to step away from massive stimulus, while oil prices fell as Hurricane Ida weakened after forcing precautionary shutdowns of US Gulf oil production.

Major European bourses were broadly steady, as were US stock futures, and overall trade was subdued with London out for a public holiday.

The Europe-wide STOXX 600 traded flat, but was on course to end August with a more than 2 per cent rise - its seventh straight month of gains in what would be its longest such winning run in over eight years. Asian stocks rallied to a two-week high and Japan's blue-chip Nikkei closed up 0.5 per cent, leaving MSCI's world stock index hovering at record highs.

Underpinning positive sentiment in global equity markets was Friday's Jackson Hole speech by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell in which he said tapering of stimulus measures could begin this year, but added the central bank would remain cautious.

"Powell broke little new ground on the Fed's outlook for the economy and its

likely policy path," said Mark Haefele, chief investment officer at UBS Global Wealth Management.

"However, it did have a dovish tilt, with clear investment implications that support the continuation of the reflation trade."

Oil prices headed lower, meanwhile, pulling back from a four-week high as Hurricane Ida weakened into a Category 1 hurricane within 12 hours of coming ashore and attention turned to an OPEC meeting on Wednesday to discuss a further output boost.

Nearly all US offshore Gulf oil production, or 1.74 million barrels per day, was suspended in advance of the storm.

Brent crude futures were down 47 cents, or 0.7 per cent, at \$72.19 a barrel.

They rose more than 11 per cent last week in anticipation of disruptions to oil production from Hurricane Ida.

US oil fell 1.2 per cent to \$67.95 a barrel, having jumped a little more than 10 per cent over the last week.

"Hurricane Ida will dictate oil's near-term direction," said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at OANDA. "If Ida weakens and its path of destruction is lower than expected, oil's rally will temporarily lose momentum here."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Survey & Settlement Training Course
Department of Land Records and Surveys
28 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Sarani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.

Invitation for Tender

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH				
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Land (MOL)		
2	Agency	Department of Land Records and Surveys (DLRS)		
3	Procuring Entity Name	Course Director, Survey & Settlement Training Course 2021-22, Department of Land Records and Surveys Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208		
4	Procuring Entity Area	Dhaka		
5	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka		
6	Invitation for	Procurement of Different Types of Tents		
7	Invitation Ref. No.	31.03.2692.003.25.05.21-21		
8	Date	29/08/2021		
KEY INFORMATION				
9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
10	Budget and Source of Funds	Revenue Budget Government of Bangladesh		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
11	Programmed Cod (if applicable)	N/A		
12	Programmed Name (if applicable)	N/A		
13	Tender package Number	1 (Single Package)		
14	Tender package Name	Procurement of Tent for Survey & Settlement Training Course 2021-22		
15	Tender Publication Date	Between 31 August 2021 to 02 September 2021		
16	Tender Last Selling Date	22/09/2021 at 4:00 PM		
17	Tender Selling & Closing Date and Time	22/09/2021 at 4:00 PM		
18	Tender Dropping & Opening Date and Time	23/09/2021 at 2:00 PM, Opening 3.00 Pm		
19	Name & Address of the Office(s):	Address		
	Selling Tender Document	Course coordinator & Zonal Settlement Officer, Zonal Settlement Office, Dhaka (3rd Floor), Room No. 307, 28 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Sarani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.		
	Receiving Tender Document	i) Course coordinator & Zonal Settlement Officer, Zonal Settlement Office, Dhaka (3rd Floor), Room No. 307, 28 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Sarani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.		
	Opening Tender Document	j) Office of the Course Director & Director (Land Record) of Land Records and Surveys (1st Floor), Room No.201, 28 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Sarani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.		
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
20	Place/Date/Time of pre-Tender Meeting (Optional)	N/A		
21	Eligibility of Tender	Details in Tender Documents		
22	Brief Description of Goods	Tents (IP- 01 No, VIP- 02 No., UT- 30 No)		
23	Price of Tender Document (Tk.)	Price of the Tender Document of the Package can be purchased for Tk. 1,000 (One Thousand) only (Non-refundable) Money receipt (Original) of Tender documents must be submitted at the time of submission of Tender documents.		
24	Package No	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender Security Amount (Taka)
	01	Procurement of Tent for survey & Settlement Training Course of DLRS.	Department of Land Records and Surveys, (DLRS), 28 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Sarani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.	5% of the bidding Price/Tender price.
				Completion Time
				04 (Four) weeks From the date of Notification of Award (NOA).
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
25	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Muhammad Wahiduzzaman ncc		
26	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Course Director, Survey & Settlement Training Course 2021-22		
27	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Survey & Settlement Training Course 2021-22, Department of Land Records and Surveys(DLRS), 28 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Sarani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.		
28	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel: 02-9131573 e-mail : ashraf15210@gmail.com		
29	Special Instructions	The Procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason.		

(Muhammad Wahiduzzaman ncc)
Director (Land Records)
Department of Land Records & Surveys
&
Course Director
Survey & Settlement Training Course 2021-22



Naushad Chowdhury, director (brand marketing) of Shah Cement Industries, recently handed over a car to **Md Hasan Golam Mostofa**, winner of Shah Cement Hopeful Offer 2020 Campaign.

COLLECTED

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ এর কার্যালয়
সড়ক বিভাগ, শরীয়তপুর।
ফোন - ০৬০১-৬১৪০৬/ফ্যাক্স: ০৬০১-৬১৪০৬
ই-মেইল-eesar@rhd.gov.bd

স্মারক নং : ৩৫.০১.৮.৬৬৯.৪৬৮.০৭.০০২.২১-১৬৪০ তারিখ : ২৯/০৮/২০২১খ্রি:।

“সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে (LTM) ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তি”

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, সড়ক বিভাগ, শরীয়তপুর এর স্মারক নং ৩৫.০১.৮.৬৬৯.৪৬৮.০৭.০০২.২১-১৬৪০(৯) তারিখ ০৯/০৮/২০২১খ্রি: এর মাধ্যমে আহবানকৃত বিজ্ঞপ্তি CPTU কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরম বিক্রয় ও জমাদানের তারিখ নিম্নলিখিত সংশোধন করা হলো। সিপিটিইউ (CPTU) কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরম অত্র দপ্তর হতে অফিস চলাকালিন সময়ে সরবরাহ করা হবে। আগ্রহী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নির্ধারিত আবেদনপত্র (Document) সঠিকভাবে পূরণ করে প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রসহ নিয়ে বর্ণিত তারিখ ও সময়ের মধ্যে অত্র দপ্তরে জমা দেয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

তালিকাভুক্তির ফরম বিক্রয় ও জমাদানের পূর্বলক্ষ সময় ও তারিখ	তালিকাভুক্তির ফরম বিক্রয় ও জমাদানের সংশোধিত সময় ও তারিখ
তারিখ : ৩১/০৮/২০২১খ্রি:; সময় : বিকাল ০৫.০০ টা	তারিখ : ০৭/০৯/২০২১খ্রি:; সময় : বিকাল ০৫.০০ টা

উল্লেখ্য যে, সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে (LTM) ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তির অন্যান্য সকল শর্তবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।

(মুহাম্মদ রেদওয়ানুর রহমান)
পরিচিতি নম্বর: ৬০২২৫৪
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী (চ.দা.), সওজ
সড়ক বিভাগ, শরীয়তপুর।

GD- 1551

Moody's assigns Ba3 rating to Brac Bank

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Moody's Investors Service has assigned a Ba3 rating to Brac Bank amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Obligations rated Ba are judged to have speculative elements and are subject to substantial credit risk, according to Moody's.

One of three big credit rating agencies, Moody's has also changed the outlook from "negative" to "stable".

It has also affirmed long-term local and foreign currency deposit and issuer Ba3 ratings for the fifth consecutive year, said a press release.

Moody's expects Bangladesh's robust economic growth and pandemic-related forbearance measures, which eased the debt repayment burden of affected borrowers, would limit the bank's asset quality deterioration and support solvency over the next 12 to 18 months.

The funding structure is strong and has improved, backed by its established domestic franchise, Moody's reported.

"We are pleased to receive this news, especially given the abundance of financial challenges resulted due to Covid-19," said Selim RF Hussain, managing director and CEO of Brac Bank.

"Brac Bank has a solid ground, records of financial stability and prudent financial management, and we are committed to continuing that legacy - even under difficult circumstances," he added.

China graft watchdog calls for stricter regulation of restaurants

REUTERS, Shanghai

China's graft watchdog on Monday called for stricter supervision of restaurants that chase rapid success online after a series of food safety scandals, as regulators continue to ramp up pressure on social media and the tech sector.

In a commentary on its website, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said so-called "Wanghong" restaurants - those with explosive online popularity - must ensure public safety.

It highlighted examples of popular restaurants that have recently been exposed for the use of fake duck blood, expired and rotten ingredients, and unsanitary food preparation practices.

"Some restaurant brands are rapidly expanding their popularity with the help of online marketing hype, while others are created with the aim of quickly making money," the commentary said.

Authorities should strictly investigate food safety problems and make the results of investigations public, it said.



Popular restaurants have recently been exposed for the use of fake duck blood, expired and rotten ingredients, and unsanitary food preparation practices.

They should also step up supervision, including inspection, sampling, monitoring and media supervision.

China has boosted efforts to bring its tech and social media firms under tighter control in recent weeks, with regulations targeting "chaotic"

celebrity fan culture and algorithms used by technology companies to drive their business.

On Saturday, China's top social media platforms said they would begin to "rectify" accounts not officially registered with the authorities that publish financial information.

France fine-tunes business aid as Covid blank cheque ends

AFP, Paris

France will turn off the fire-hose of aid to help businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic, instead directing funds where most needed, the government's accounts chief said on Sunday.

"It's the end of whatever it takes", Minister for Public Accounts Olivier Dussopt warned.

The government wants to "look at what is really being lost, rather than just what is being said".

He added that not all industries or regions were suffering equally, and that even within some Covid-hit sectors, there were businesses that were thriving.

"We are ready to help the sectors that really need it," Dussopt told Radio J ahead of a meeting with leaders from industries still suffering from the pandemic, including tourism, small businesses and culture.

He said that any aid "will be a necessarily transitional, very sector-focused approach".

As an example, Dussopt cited the restaurant trade: "In some regions, the number of visitors is the same as before, it is even higher than in July and August 2020, which were months that were not affected."

"Companies must also take responsibility for their own operations and for finding solutions to their problems, he said.

Instead of simply complaining about the difficulty they face hiring, he said, employers "have an interest in making the careers they offer more attractive" -- by increasing salaries, for example.

The state had made great efforts, he said. Moreover, economic growth is forecast at six percent this year, with the government hoping for four percent in 2022.

Singapore's Shopee changes the game in Brazil's e-commerce sector

REUTERS

Sea's Shopee took just two years to become Brazil's most-downloaded shopping app, winning users to its low-cost marketplace with its game-changing approach to e-commerce: In-app mini-games offering coupons to winning users.

The Singapore-based company has combined online shopping with the gaming nous of its separate mobile game arm Garena - creator of "Free Fire", Brazil's most-downloaded title for eight consecutive quarters - to generate sales analysts estimated at almost a third of local champion Magazine Luiza.

Back home, Shopee only needed five years to become Southeast Asia's most-visited e-commerce website, overtaking the likes of Lazada, backed by China's Alibaba Group Holding, and Tokopedia, backed by Japan's SoftBank Group.

"Shopee has a track record in Southeast Asia of coming into the market late, looking at how others have solved existing problems and then building a system to leapfrog those issues," said analyst Jiangan Li at advisory firm Momentum Works.

Shopee's early surge highlights the space left for foreign entrants to grow in a sector once dominated by regional firms like Magazine Luiza and Argentina's MercadoLibre.

To be sure, the startup's timing was fortuitous, launching in Brazil just as the Covid-19 pandemic drove consumers away from physical stores, pushing up 2020

e-commerce sales by 44 per cent to US\$42 billion, showed data from Brazilian payments company EBANX.

Shopee - akin to Alibaba's AliExpress, carrying Chinese-made knick-knacks - emerged as Brazil's top app by downloads and time spent in use, showed data from analytics platform App Annie.

Yet, in pursuit of growth, Shopee is still losing money, propped up by Sea's profitable gaming division. In the second quarter of this year, Garena posted an adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) of US\$740.9 million even as the e-commerce arm lost US\$579.8 million.

"Money being generated by one side of the business, which is a cash cow, is being reinvested aggressively in Brazilian e-commerce - with success," said Itau BBA analyst Thiago Macruz.

Sea's Brazil foray is just one element of its global ambition. Investment arm Sea Capital is also considering putting money into startups in Latin America and beyond, said a person with knowledge of the matter, who was not authorized to speak with media and so declined to be identified.

The firm has also taken Shopee to Chile, Colombia and Mexico where, unlike Brazil, it has no locally based staff and so has partnered social media influencers to increase brand awareness, said two people familiar with the matter.



A signage of Shopee, the e-commerce arm of Sea Ltd, is pictured at its office in Singapore on March 5.

Ukraine pins hopes on Gulf visitors for pandemic-hit tourism

AFP, Lviv

Saudi tourists ride horse-drawn carriages, pose for portraits by street artists and play chess on benches with locals in Lviv, a city in Ukraine more accustomed to hosting European guests.

But with strict Covid-19 travel restrictions still in place across Europe, travellers from the Middle East -- especially Saudi Arabia -- now rank among the top visitors to the ex-Soviet state. The trend has given hope to the country's pandemic-hit tourism industry.

"We need to seize the moment," says Bogdan Gets, a tour guide on a sightseeing train that ferries tourists along cobbled streets in central Lviv, a city in western Ukraine known for its Renaissance architecture.

For Gets and his colleagues at "Chudo Tour" (Wonder Tour), the unexpected influx of tourists from the Middle East is a chance to recover after a string of lockdowns that put pressure on Ukraine's struggling economy.

In the first half of 2021, the number of Saudi tourists alone visiting Ukraine skyrocketed to 14,000 compared to just 350 in the same period last year, according to the country's state tourism agency.

This new cohort are attracted by a visa-free regime enacted in August last year and cheap direct flights. In previous years, the city was mostly visited by Poles, Belarusians, Turks, Germans and Britons.

"Last year put the tourism industry in extreme conditions", the agency said, and "radically changed" how tourists decide

which countries to visit.

Before the pandemic 32-year-old Asma, a tourist from Saudi Arabia, travelled with her husband and two sons to various European destinations every year, but never considered Ukraine. After exploring Lviv and the capital Kiev this summer, the family was pleasantly surprised.

"The bars, the food and the coffee -- all things here in Ukraine are amazing," Asma told AFP outside the iconic Lviv Opera.

Anna Nayda, the head of the Kredens Cafe chain, admitted that the local tourism industry experienced some initial difficulties when catering for their new customers. "At first it was very difficult to find a common language," she told AFP.

But now her cafes are printing menus in Arabic and replacing pork in their sandwiches to ensure they have halal options.

Several souvenir shops in the city have started making signs in Arabic while "Chudo Tour" said they are translating their pre-recorded audio guides.

"This is a push for change," Nayda said, adding that during the pandemic businesses struggled to pay rent and salaries.

"Of course in these conditions you think about how to survive. We decided to make changes and everything turned out great," she said. Tourism to Ukraine is picking back up, but the climb is slow.

After the number of tourists in 2020 was just a quarter of the level of the previous year in 2020, it was up nine percent in the first half of this year compared to the second half of last year.

Nagad's Tk 510cr bond gets nod

FROM PAGE B1

The government and private firm Third Wave Technologies agreed to share Nagad's ownership by 51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively, he said.

The company is doing good business and investors are ready to invest so the regulator approved its zero coupon bond, he added.

With a paid up capital of Tk 3.5 crore, Nagad wants to raise the capital to pay off existing debts, support capital expenditure and meet working capital requirements to expand its business in the mobile financial service sector.

The sector has been growing fast since it was launched in Bangladesh in 2011.

Nagad has Tk 416 crore in debt, of which the company plans to pay off around Tk 350 crore through the bond issuance, according to its filing at the BSEC.

It wants to use around Tk 100 crore to manage day-to-day operations, said the application.

Kiu Global, a US-based digital services company, has already expressed interest to subscribe to \$30 million (Tk 254.45 crore)

of the bond, Nagad said in a press release last month.

The bond issuance announcement came on July 26 in New York at an investors' road show organised by the BSEC.

Nagad, which is one of the key partners of the event, has received initial approval from the BSEC for issuing the bond, the company said in a statement.

Riverstone Capital is acting as the arranger of the bond while Green Delta Capital will be the trustee, it added.

ZA Capital Advisory is the official financial consultant for the bond, according to the statement. Investors of the bond would get Tk 750 crore at the end of its five-year maturity period.

"We are yet to get any written document about the bond approval, but we are ready to fulfil all the conditions," said Muhammad Zahidul Islam, head of communications of Nagad.

"With the bond proceeds, we want to cater our services to the rural people," he said.

Responding to a question, Islam said Nagad was working on getting the licence.

Revenue receipts rise slightly

FROM PAGE B1

Officials said domestic market-oriented business activities were almost shuttered for nearly three weeks in July, affecting revenue from the two biggest sources -- cigarettes and mobile phones.

The government imposed curbs from the beginning of July until the 14th of that month to ease the restrictions for eight days for Eid-ul-Azha.

The restriction was restored for the rest of the month, which largely affected business activities.

Some four crore mobile phone users had zero balance, said a senior official of the Large Taxpayers Unit of VAT.

Most shops were closed in July and it affected VAT receipts, said Md Anwar Hossain, director general of statistics and research at the NBR.

He said revenue collection usually remains low in July as works for government development projects do not gain pace.

Import pressure also remains low as importers show a lack of interest in opening letters of credit since they wait for the passage of the fiscal measures by the parliament at the end of June.

"Revenue collection gradually increases in the subsequent months," Hossain added.

In July, customs officials logged Tk 4,925 crore, down 2 per cent year-on-year from Tk 5,015 crore the previous year, data from the NBR showed.

Sri Lanka gets another \$100m from BB

FROM PAGE B1

The Libor is the global reference rate for unsecured short-term borrowing in the interbank market and acts as a benchmark for short-term interest rates.

If the CBSL fails to return the money, the Sri Lankan government will pay back the loan as per the state guarantee attached in the agreement, the BB official said.

He said Bangladesh was not extending the loan for any commercial purpose.

The decision for the currency swap agreement was set in motion during Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's visit to Bangladesh in March.

As per the deal, the CBSL will hand over an equivalent amount of its currency, which depreciated 6.8 per cent against the US dollar this year.

The BB will open an account with a bank in the South Asian country to keep the sum, which will be around 49.5 billion Lankan rupees, a BB official said earlier. The amount would be used for import payments.

The injection of the American greenback from Bangladesh would be a great relief for Sri Lanka, which has \$3.7 billion of foreign debt maturing this year.

It had \$2.4 billion in foreign currency reserves at the end of July, down from \$4 billion in April.

Give long-term loans for industrial dev

FROM PAGE B1

"Industrial credit companies should be revived. Then we can take up the challenges well to deal with the fourth industrial revolution," said Md Jashim Uddin, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

Binayak Sen, director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said that very few countries have done well in agriculture and industry together.

"Bangladesh is one of them. This is a

significant thing and has to be maintained," he added.

"Bangabandhu always thought about the marginalised people of the society. He worked for them," said MA Mannan, planning minister.

Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury, president of the BCI, presided over the event.

Rizwan Rahman, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries; Zakia Sultana, secretary to the Ministry of Industries; and Selima Ahmad, president of the Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries, also spoke.

Policy framed to give CIP status to recruiting agents

FROM PAGE B4

Besides, they will get the benefit of using VIP Lounge-2 and special handling at the airport.

However, the government can withdraw the benefits by issuing a gazette without any reason at any moment.

The selection process will be completed between January 1 and October 15.

The CIP aspirants will be disqualified

if the applicant's recruiting agent's licence has not been renewed or suspended and if they have any trade dispute with a foreign employer or if they are not interested in resolving the dispute.

Besides, if applicants have been convicted by the court and five years have not been passed after serving the sentence or if they are declared persona non grata for any reason, they will not be eligible for the CIP status.

after the pandemic hit the country.

However, the disbursement rate of the loans was low compared to that for the large industrial and service sectors.

With small businesses still struggling to recover from the pandemic-induced economic slowdown, the government rolled out a fresh stimulus package in January involving Tk 1,500 crore.

Of this amount, the Finance Division has released Tk 570 crore, out of which Tk 276 crore has been disbursed. Of the eight government and semi-government agencies tasked with the disbursement, three could not give out any money.

The BSCIC has already given out the Tk 50 crore it received out of its allocation of Tk 100 crore.

BSCIC seeks Tk 1,000cr stimulus fund

FROM PAGE B1

"In addition, the new, trained entrepreneurs will be able to accelerate the process of creating new entrepreneurs and jobs in the country by expanding their economic activities," it read.

The BSCIC will provide a corporate guarantee if necessary, it said.

"We are the only organisation that lends to small entrepreneurs in 64 districts. We have the ability to lend Tk 5,000 crore. But we have requested Bangladesh Bank to allocate Tk 1,000 crore for the time being," said Hassan.

In March last year, the government announced a Tk 20,000-crore stimulus package for cottage industries and the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector

Policy framed to give CIP status to recruiting agents

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The expatriate welfare and overseas employment ministry has framed a policy to recognise recruiting agents as commercially important persons (CIPs) for their contribution to overseas employment.

The ministry issued a gazette notification in this regard on August 25.

As per the policy, the government would annually recognise 20 recruiting agents as CIPs for two years in recognition of their significant contribution to the country's economy through safe, regular, quality and responsible immigration activities.

Of them, three CIPs will be reserved for women entrepreneurs. Besides, the incumbent president and secretary of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) will be selected as CIP ex-officio member.

For the selection of a recruiting agent as a CIP, their activities for the previous two years will be evaluated.

Ali Haider Chowdhury, former secretary general of Baira, said it was their long-standing demand.

"We are now feeling honoured. Now those who work in this sector will be encouraged. They will go for more ethical competition," he said.

The last time the CIP status was given in this sector was in 2001, he added.

ELIGIBILITY FOR CIP STATUS

In the case of a proprietary organisation, the proprietor of the organisation will apply for CIP status and in the case of a limited company, the company chairman or managing director will apply following approval from the board of directors of said company.

The applicant recruiting agent must send a minimum of 2,000 employees, both male and female, in the relevant period and manage employment for them abroad.

At least 200 workers will have to be sent abroad through demand letters and a minimum of 300 expatriate workers will have to be trained by their respective agents.

Interested applicants can apply within the prescribed date mentioned in the

Govt will annually recognise 20 recruiting agents as CIPs for two years in recognition of their contribution to the economy through safe and responsible immigration activities

advertisement directly or online.

The Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment will form two committees to select the CIPs.

BENEFITS OF THE STATUS

CIPs will get a government-approved identity card from the ministry, can enter the secretariat and be included as a member in the policy making committee of the ministry.

They will be invited to attend important national and international events, including Victory Day and Independence Day, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, Martyr's Day, International Mother Language Day, the birthday of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, May Day, National Mourning Day, and International Migrants Day.

The CIPs will get priority in the reservation of seats in air, rail, road and watercraft transport and they will get cabin facilities at government hospitals for the treatment of their wife, son, daughter or themselves.

READ MORE ON B3

Hoarders, exporters dominate jute markets

Small mills lag behind

DISTRICTS IN FOCUS

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Allured by the high price of raw jute at the fag end of last year, a section of traders and seasonal buyers are now rushing to stockpile the product.

Each maund (37 kilogrammes) of jute sold for as much as Tk 6,500 at the time while it was just Tk 1,800 not long before, bringing up to three times the profit for sellers.

As such, certain traders and buyers who expect a similar scenario to play out this year have started to hoard the fibrous material.

Besides, a mad dash among exporters to buy jute coupled with the reluctance among farmers to sell the product right now in hopes of better prices in the future has led to a shortage in local markets.

Jute was cultivated on 6.80 lakh hectares to produce 77.25 lakh bales in FY2020-21, down from 6.79 lakh hectares and 80.45 lakh bales the previous year, according to data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Major jute exporters and other buyers purchase the product either directly from the farmers or as soon as they reach the market.

As a result, many small jute mills lag behind in collecting their required amounts of raw jute as big buyers create an unhealthy competition that leads to higher production costs as well.

Mahamud Rahman, a jute trader based in Nilphamari district, said that this year's situation is unlike the past, when jute mills under the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation explored the area to source raw jute each season.

"Initially we were confused as



Piles of jute are seen being readied for shipment as a section of traders and buyers are rushing to stock up on the product in hopes of securing profits similar to that of last year, when raw jute sold for as much as Tk 6,500. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

to who would purchase raw jute in their absence but the emergence of hoarders, exporters and seasonal buyers gave a new and dynamic shape to the jute market," he added.

Siddiqui Alam, owner of Eque Jute Process in Saidpur upazila, said they managed to buy just 200-300 maunds of jute from the market even though they would get as much as 2,000-3,000 maunds in previous years.

"This is insufficient to run the mill," he added.

Exporters pay their local agents in advance to buy jute at higher

prices. The product ultimately leaves the country in the name of export, hindering the development of local mills, Alam said.

During a visit to jute markets in the Jaldhaka and Saidpur upazilas, this correspondent found that buyers were purchasing jute from farmers almost as fast as it was being harvested.

However, the competitive market is a blessing for farmers as each maund now sells for between Tk 2,500 and Tk 3,200 depending on quality.

DAE officials in Nilphamari

informed that farmers cultivated jute on 7,000 hectares of land in the district this year while it was 6,800 hectares in 2020, when 15,000 tonnes of the product were collected from the region.

Abdul Gani, a farmer of Sadar upazila's Dolua Dogasi village, said it costs about Tk 10,000 to cultivate jute of ordinary quality on one bigha of land, which produces 8 to 10 maunds of the product.

"The jute can then be sold for a total of about Tk 20,000, bringing farmers double their investment," he added.

GLOBAL BUSINESS

Australia considering new laws for Apple, Google, WeChat digital wallets

REUTERS, Canberra

The Australian government is considering new laws that would tighten the regulation of digital payment services by tech giants such as Apple and Alphabet's Google.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said he would "carefully consider" that and other recommendations from a government-commissioned report into whether the payments system had kept pace with advances in technology and changes in consumer demand.

Services such as Apple Pay, Google Pay and China's WeChat Pay, which have grown rapidly in recent years, are not currently designated as payment systems, putting them outside the regulatory system.



A smartphone with the Apple Pay logo is placed on a displayed Google Pay logo in this illustration taken on July 14.

REUTERS/FILE

"Ultimately, if we do nothing to reform the current framework, it will be Silicon Valley alone that determines the future of our payments system, a critical piece of our economic infrastructure," Frydenberg said in an opinion piece published in the Australian Financial Review newspaper.

The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) earlier this month called for global financial watchdogs to urgently get to grips with the growing influence of 'Big Tech' and the huge amounts of data controlled by groups such as Google, Facebook, Amazon and Alibaba.

The Australian report recommended the government be given the power to designate tech companies as payment providers, clarifying the regulatory status of digital wallets.

It also recommended the government and industry together establish a strategic plan for the wider payments ecosystem and that a single, integrated licensing framework for payment systems be developed.

The Reserve Bank of Australia, which is currently in charge of designating who is a payment services provider, reported that payments through digital wallets had grown to 8 per cent of in-person card transactions in 2019, up from 2 per cent in 2016.

The Commonwealth Bank of Australia, which has estimated digital wallet transactions more than doubled in the year to March to 2.1 billion Australian dollars, has urged regulators to address "competition issues" and consider the safety implications of their use.

REUTERS, Beijing

Growth in China's factory activity likely cooled further in August, a Reuters poll showed on Monday, as Covid-related restrictions and high raw material prices continued to pressure manufacturers and the economy lost momentum.

The official manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) is expected to slip to 50.2 in August from 50.4 in July, a fifth month of slowing growth, according to the median forecast of 33 economists polled by Reuters.

A reading above 50 indicates expansion from the previous month.

PMIs for manufacturing and services will likely moderate in August due to Covid-19 outbreaks of the more infectious Delta variant and ensuing lockdown measures, said analysts at Barclays in a note.

"With slowing growth momentum and dovish signals (from China's central bank) we expect more easing, but still at a measured pace as policymakers eye headwinds in 2022."

The world's second-largest economy staged an impressive recovery from a coronavirus-battered slump, but growth has recently shown signs of losing steam due to domestic Covid-19 outbreaks, slowing exports, tighter measures to tame

Singapore must remain open as anxiety over job competition grows: PM

REUTERS, Singapore

Singapore must stay open to preserve its status as a global business hub, its prime minister said on Sunday, even as the country continues to tighten its foreign worker policies and addresses anxieties among locals over competition for jobs.

Foreign labour has long been a hot button issue in Singapore, but uncertainties due to the Covid-19 pandemic have increased employment worries among locals as the city state recovers from last year's record recession. "We must make it crystal clear to the world that Singapore is determined to stay open, in order to earn a living for ourselves," Lee Hsien Loong said in

his National Day Rally speech.

He said the country must not give the impression that Singapore is becoming xenophobic and hostile to foreigners. "It would gravely damage our reputation as an international hub. It would cost us investments, jobs and opportunities. It would be disastrous for us."

While Singapore will continue to tighten its foreign worker policies, it will only do so gradually so as not to hurt businesses, Lee said. The government will also pass a law to ensure fair hiring, he said.

Lee's government has been tightening foreign worker policies for several years while taking steps to promote local hiring, including by raising the salary threshold for

issuing work permits. Just under 30 per cent of Singapore's 5.7 million population are non-residents, up from around 10 per cent in 1990, according to government statistics.

On Sunday, Singapore hit a key milestone of fully vaccinating 80 per cent of its population against Covid-19, setting the stage for further reopening of the economy as the country gets ready to live with the virus as endemic. "We may have to tap on the brakes from time to time, but we want to avoid having to slam on the brakes," Lee said.

"So in the next phase, we will move step by step not in one big bang like some countries but cautiously and progressively, feeling our way forward," Lee added.

China August factory activity seen growing at slower pace



A man wearing a face mask works on a production line manufacturing bicycle steel rim at a factory, as the country is hit by the novel coronavirus outbreak, in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China.

REUTERS/FILE

hot property prices and a campaign to reduce carbon emissions.

To bolster the economy, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) in mid-July cut the amount of cash banks must hold as

reserves, releasing around 1 trillion yuan (US\$6.47 trillion) in long-term liquidity.

Many analysts expect another cut later in the year.

China's latest coronavirus outbreaks

appear to have been largely brought under control, with zero locally transmitted cases reported on Aug 29., for the second day in a row.

But it spurred authorities across the country to impose counter-epidemic measures including mass testing for millions of people as well as travel restrictions of varying degrees and port shutdowns.

Meishan terminal at China's Ningbo port resumed operations in late August after shutting down for two weeks due to a Covid-19 case.

The closure caused logjams at ports across the country's coastal regions and further strained global supply chains amid a resurgence of consumer spending and a shortage of container vessels.

Higher raw material prices, especially of metals and semiconductors, have also pressured profits. Earnings at China's industrial firms in July slowed for the fifth straight month.

The official PMI, which largely focuses on big and state-owned firms, and its sister survey on the services sector, will both be released on Tuesday.

The private Caixin manufacturing PMI will be published on Wednesday. Analysts expect the headline reading will slip to 50.2 from July's 50.3.

France's Covid relief spending hits 240b euros

AFP, Paris

The French government has extended 240 billion euros (\$283 billion) in financial aid to businesses hammered by the coronavirus pandemic since March 2020, mainly in the form of state-guaranteed loans, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire announced Monday.

President Emmanuel Macron vowed to protect French companies and their employees "whatever the cost" after many were forced to close during three nationwide lockdowns since the outbreak began.

"The bill for 'whatever the cost' stands at 80 billion euros in subsidies, and 160 billion euros in loans," Le Maire told France Inter radio.

The aid will now be limited to only the hardest-hit sectors such as tourism and leisure, whose representatives are to meet with Le Maire and other officials later Monday.

The government expects economic growth to hit six per cent this year after France and other countries plunged into recession last year. France's recovery "is going to continue," Le Maire said, in large part thanks to higher consumer spending that is helping the economy operate "at 99 per cent of its capacities."