

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 0.73%	▲ 0.99%	\$1,770.44	\$74.38	▲ 0.88%	▼ 2.17%	▲ 0.71%	▲ 0.19%	BUY TK 84.35	97.82	114.28	12.74
7,258.57	12,746.01	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	59,005.27	29,839.71	3,063.20	3,613.97	SELL TK 85.35	101.62	118.08	13.39

# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 22, 2021, ASHWIN 7, 1428 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

## Govt cuts interest rates of savings tools

High investment to yield low return; new rates won't affect current investment

AHSAN HABIB and REJAUl KARIM BYRON  
The government has cut the interest rate on savings certificates and wage-earner bonds by 1 to 3 percentage points – a move that may help the authorities save but hurt the middle-income group dependent on the returns to make a living.  
The new rates will not affect the present investment and will only be applicable for fresh investments.  
According to the new rules, which

came into effect yesterday, the higher the investment amount, the lower the returns will be. If the investment amount is higher than Tk 15 lakh, investors will get a lower interest rate, according to a circular of the Internal Resources Division (IRD) of the finance ministry.  
The decision will hurt middle-income savers like Rezaul Islam.  
The private job-holder had planned to keep all of his retirement benefits in savings certificate as private-sector employees in Bangladesh don't get

any pension benefit.  
"I'm worried."  
He said an investment amount that would provide a monthly income of up to Tk 40,000 from savings certificates should not see any rate cut so that people like him could depend on them.  
The five-year savings certificate will yield an interest rate of 10.30 per cent from 11.28 per cent now if the investment amount exceeds Tk 15 lakh.  
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Vehicles used for transporting goods kept off the streets in Patenga sea beach area in Chattogram yesterday during a countrywide strike of transport operators.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

### NEW INTEREST RATES OF SAVINGS TOOLS

#### 5-YEAR BANGLADESH SAVINGS CERTIFICATE

	Previous	New
Up to Tk 15 lakh		11.28
Tk 15 lakh plus to Tk 30 lakh	<b>11.28</b>	10.3
Tk 30 lakh plus		9.3

#### 3-MONTH PROFIT BEARING SAVINGS CERTIFICATE

	Previous	New
Up to Tk 15 lakh		11.04
Tk 15 lakh plus to Tk 30 lakh	<b>11.04</b>	10
Tk 30 lakh plus		9

#### PENSIONERS' SAVINGS CERTIFICATE

	Previous	New
Up to Tk 15 lakh		11.76
Tk 15 lakh plus to Tk 30 lakh	<b>11.76</b>	10.75
Tk 30 lakh plus		9.75

#### FAMILY SAVINGS CERTIFICATE

	Previous	New
Up to Tk 15 lakh		11.52
Tk 15 lakh plus to Tk 30 lakh	<b>11.52</b>	10.5
Tk 30 lakh plus		9.5

#### TERM DEPOSIT AT POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK

	Previous	New
Up to Tk 15 lakh		11.28
Tk 15 lakh plus to Tk 30 lakh	<b>11.28</b>	10.3
Tk 30 lakh plus		9.3

#### WAGE EARNERS' BOND

	Previous	New
Up to Tk 15 lakh		12
Tk 15 lakh plus to Tk 30 lakh	<b>12</b>	11
Tk 30 lakh plus to Tk 50 lakh		10

## Transport strike affects export, import

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA, DWAIPIKAWAN BARUA and MOHSIN MILON

The transport operators' countrywide strike yesterday affected export and import of goods at a time when businesses have been attempting to make a recovery from the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Any disruption to business, including in transportation of goods,

in the time of revival will only prolong the recovery.

Almost a five-kilometre long tailback of exports-laden trucks was seen at the Benapole port.

Many exporters faced difficulties to carry goods from their factories to the Chattogram port and vice-versa.

Moreover, all types of activities at the Chattogram port almost came to a halt as a faction of owners and

workers of goods transporting vehicles enforced the countrywide 72-hour work

abstention since yesterday morning over a 15-point demand.

Goods and container transport to and from the

port as well as loading and unloading of goods and containers at the vessels berthed at the jetties remained suspended yesterday as no goods-carrying vehicles like trucks, covered vans and prime-movers operated.

Activities at the 18 private inland container depots (ICDs) also were badly disrupted due to the work abstention of vehicle workers.

Bangladesh Covered-Van, Truck, Prime Mover Goods Transportation Owners Association and Bangladesh Truck Drivers Workers Federation jointly enforced the countrywide work abstention.

Some of the major demands are cancellation of the decision of hiking advance income tax imposed on the vehicle owners and removal of complications in issuing driving licences for heavy vehicles, they said.

READ MORE ON B3

## E-commerce firms warned for anti-competitive practices

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Competition Commission (BCC) yesterday warned e-commerce platforms that punitive measures would be taken over predatory pricing through abuse of dominant positions in the market and anti-competitive practices, including collusion.

The warning came at a meeting organised by the commission with representatives of the e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB) and leading digital commerce companies including Daraz Bangladesh, Chaldal, Redx, BoomBoom, BabyNeeds BD, Aladinerprodip and Priyashop.com.

Representatives of Bangladesh Bank, Directorate of the National Consumer Rights Protection and National Security Intelligence were present at the meeting chaired by BCC Chairperson Md Mofizul Islam.

The BCC said the purpose of the meeting was to inform e-commerce platforms about competition laws and take stock of their business models.

*Bangladesh Competition Commission acknowledged that anti-competitive activities of e-commerce platforms came to its notice a bit late*

The initiative comes amid widespread fraud in the e-commerce sector in recent months that led thousands of customers and merchants to lose hundreds of crores of taka.

Several e-commerce platforms including Evaly, Eorange and Dhamaka Shopping are under regulatory scrutiny on allegation of embezzling money of customers and merchants.

Eorange Founder Sonia Mehjabin and several of its officials have been in jail since their arrest on August 16 on charge of embezzling Tk 1,100 crore of customers.

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## ADB embarks on \$12b lending scheme

Launches country strategy

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Asian Development Bank has launched a new country partnership strategy (CPS) for Bangladesh with a plan to accelerate lending in order to boost competitiveness, employment, green growth and social protection.

The CPS, which will continue for five years until 2025, will help Bangladesh realise its aspiration of becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2031 through increased public and private investments, said the Manila-based lender in a statement yesterday.

"It will also support rapid socioeconomic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic."

The CPS is the lender's primary platform for designing operations to deliver development results at the country level.

During the five-year period, the ADB will increase its lending operations to \$10 billion–\$12 billion, from \$9.6 billion in the past five years.

"Sustained growth and appropriate policy measures have helped Bangladesh achieve good development outcomes. Moving forward, the country's industry and export base need diversification," said ADB Director General for South Asia Kenichi Yokoyama.



"Diversification in manufacturing and export items, such as agricultural products, information and communication technology, light engineering, and pharmaceuticals, together with increased competitiveness and access to new markets, will be critical in recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, sustaining rapid economic

growth, and generating substantial employment."

The lender will further expand its private sector operations and continue to leverage a high level of co-financing with other development partners.

Improving the banking sector, the ease of doing business, business environment, and investment climate will help accelerate private sector development and promote economic diversification, the statement said.

The CPS also envisages enhancing ADB operations to support climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk management to address the country's high vulnerability to climate events and other natural disasters, in line with the Paris Agreement.

A holistic approach to integrating climate change will be applied to all operations while expanding programmes to directly address climate change impacts through integrated management of water, river, and coastal areas, said the development lender.



## SBAC Bank chair steps down

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

SM Amjad Hossain, chairman of South Bangla Agriculture and Commerce Bank, has expressed his intention to resign, citing illness.

On September 7, he wrote to the board of the private commercial lender expressing the intention to step down.

He also requested the board to begin the process of selecting a new chairman by October.

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Twenty-five jute mills were shut on July 1 last year due to heavy losses and excessive production costs, laying off more than 50,000 workers.

## LEASING OUT STATE JUTE MILLS

# Ministry vetting 12 proposals

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Over a year past shutting down state-run jute mills, the government has made little progress in modernising and reopening them, up until now having merely selected some potential lessee proposals for ministry-level vetting.

The 25 mills were shut on July 1 last year due to heavy losses and excessive production costs, laying off more than 50,000 workers in three categories – permanent, temporary, and substitute.

At the time, the Ministry of Textiles and Jute in a press release stated that the mills would be modernised and reopened through joint venture, public-private partnership, or a government-to-government agreement.

This year, the government decided to lease them out and a nine-member inter-ministerial committee finalised the terms and conditions of the lease contracts and

international tenders.

Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) floated an international tender on April 27 to lease out the mills for a period of five to 20 years even though industrialists seem uninterested on the short-term deals.

The last date for submissions of expressions of interest was August 31 and the BJMC received around 55 proposals from home and abroad.

Of them, 12 have been selected by an evaluation committee and forwarded to the ministry for approval, said BJMC Chairman Md Abdur Rouf yesterday.

The BJMC does not want to "waste time" in signing agreements with the investors, he added.

He had earlier told The Daily Star that the government would not spend any money behind modernising the mills. At most, it could remove the old machinery if the investors wanted, he said.

READ MORE ON B3



ONE BANK LIMITED

M Fakhru Alam, managing director of ONE Bank Limited, and Md Mafizur Rahman, managing director of SME Foundation, signed a deal last Thursday. MA Mannan, planning minister, Kamal Ahmed Mojumder, state minister for industries, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, Zakia Sultana, secretary to the industries ministry, and Md Masudur Rahman, the foundation chairman, were present.



PARTEX STAR GROUP

Aziz Al Kaiser, vice-chairman of Partex Star Group, recently inaugurated a new showroom of Partex Furniture on Jasimuddin Road in the capital's Uttara. Shah Alam Monshi, head of business at Partex Furniture, and Mostafa Kamal Ahmed, chief financial officer (complex-1) of Partex Star Group, Fazle Rabbi, head of marketing (complex-1), and Md Ziaul Islam, channel partner of Partex Furniture, were present.



LANKABANGLA FINANCE LIMITED

Khwaja Shahriar, managing director of LankaBangla Finance Limited, and Md Mafizur Rahman, managing director of SME Foundation, signed documents of a deal centring the government's second phase of stimulus packages. The former will avail Tk 50 lakh from the foundation to give out loans to entrepreneurs of cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises at 4 per cent interest. MA Mannan, planning minister, Kamal Ahmed Mojumder, state minister for industries, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, Zakia Sultana, secretary to the industries ministry, Md Masudur Rahman, the foundation chairman, Md Kamruzzaman Khan, head of the LankaBangla's SME division, and Haniam Maria Chowdhury, head of women entrepreneur development unit, were present.

## Electric vehicles may cut global refining capacity demand

REUTERS, Singapore

A global drive towards electrification of road transport to reduce carbon emissions may cut demand for the world's oil refining capacity by half in 2050, consultancy Rystad Energy says. "Going forward we will be touching by 2050 somewhere very close to 90 per cent of electrification," Mukesh Sahdev, senior vice president and head of downstream at Rystad Energy said, adding that this scenario would probably lead to a 50 per cent decline in global refining capacity.

Electric vehicles will cut global consumption of gasoline and diesel, but demand for other refined oil products in aviation, maritime and petrochemical sectors could remain high because of urbanisation which will pose a challenge to the refining sector, Mukesh said. "How are we going to meet those demands with a 50 per cent scale down in refining capacity? I think that's a big signal that we might have a lot of shorts in the sectors which are coming with demand," he added. "This is going to lead to a significant rationalisation of the downstream

assets across the entire supply chain." For example, cokers, upgrading units used to produce gasoline and diesel, would have to tweak their production to produce more petcoke for graphite in batteries, he said, adding that processing crude directly to petrochemicals is another trend. Still, global oil demand could rise in the short term. The consultancy expects pent-up oil demand from the Covid-19 pandemic to drive up global crude processing to 80.1 million barrels per day in the second half of 2021 as refiners maximise gasoline output.

## Global stocks sink on Evergrande contagion fears

AFP, London

World stocks sank Monday as trading floors were gripped by contagion fears from the expected collapse of debt-plagued Chinese property giant Evergrande, with investors also on red alert over spiking wholesale gas costs.

Sentiment is being dented by strong inflation, the Federal Reserve's plans to taper monetary policy, surging infections with the Delta variant of coronavirus, and signs of weakness in the global recovery.

European markets mostly closed lower, with London losing 0.9 per cent and Paris 1.7 per cent. In Germany, the first day of the DAX blue-chip index's expansion to 40 firms from its previous 30 was marred by the Evergrande woes, shedding 2.3 per cent.

On Wall Street the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 2.0 per cent and the tech-heavy Nasdaq 2.5 per cent in morning trading. Hong Kong earlier dived 3.3 per cent, spearheading Asian losses, with Evergrande widely expected to default on upcoming interest payments this week.

## UK rules out gas supply emergency as prices soar

AFP, London

Britain's government does not expect a gas supply emergency during the winter as soaring prices threaten energy groups, Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng insisted on Monday.

"We have sufficient capacity, and more than sufficient capacity, to meet demand and we do not expect supply emergencies to occur this winter," Kwarteng told parliament after holding an emergency meeting with gas and electricity suppliers and consumer groups.

Kwarteng said protecting consumers was the government's "primary focus", adding that it would not bail out any energy company.

"There is absolutely no question... of the lights going out or people being unable to heat their homes," he added.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Local Government Engineering Department  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
District-Rangpur.  
[www.lged.gov.bd](http://www.lged.gov.bd)

Memo No. 46.02.8500.000.07.085-20219-2813 Date : 21/09/2021

### Invitation for Tender (Works)

**e-Tender Notice No. 08/2021-2022**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Package No	Description of work	Tender Closing/Opening (Date & Time)
1	609971	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-59	Rehabilitation of 1 no. single vent 2.50mx2.00m RCC Box culvert on Badarganj UZHQ-Khoyerpukur GC Road at Ch: 2100m, Road ID. 185032006 [Badarganj]	
2	609972	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-60	Rehabilitation of 1 no. single vent 3.00mx2.50m RCC Box culvert on Badarganj UZHQ-Khoyerpukur GC Road at Ch. 2705m, Road ID. 185032006 [Badarganj]	
3	609973	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-61	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 3.00mx2.50m RCC Box Culvert on Shyampur GC-Keranihat GC Road at Ch. 3800m, Road ID. 185492007 [Rangpur-S]	
4	609974	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-62	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 0.75mx0.75m RCC U-Drain on Rangpur Badarganj R&H Road at Dackgong to Palichara G.C via Baburhat Road at Ch.4360m, Road ID. 185492023 [Rangpur-S]	
5	609975	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-63	Rehabilitation of 2 vent 3.00mx3.00m RCC Box culvert on Chatra GC-Khalashpur GC Road at Ch: 4100m, Road ID 185762004 [Pirganj]	
6	609976	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-64	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 4.00mx3.00m RCC Box culvert on Chatra GC-Khalashpur GC Road at Ch: 8900m, Road ID. 185762004 [Pirganj]	
7	609977	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-65	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 4.00mx3.00m RCC Box culvert on Chatra GC-Khalashpur GC Road at Ch: 10700m, Road ID. 185762004 [Pirganj]	
8	609978	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-66	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 1.50mx1.50m RCC Box culvert on Chatra GC-Khalashpur GC Road at Ch: 10800m, Road ID.185762004 [Pirganj]	
9	609979	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-67	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 3.00mx2.50m RCC Box culvert on Pirganj UZHQ (Jamtola) - Sanerhat Road at Ch: 1350m, Road ID. 185762006 [Pirganj]	
10	609980	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-68	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 3.00mx2.50m RCC Box culvert on Pirganj UZHQ (Jamtola) - Sanerhat Road at Ch: 1650m, 185762006 [Pirganj]	
11	609981	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-69	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 3.00mx2.50m RCC Box culvert on Pirganj UZHQ (Jamtola) - Sanerhat Road at Ch: 7500m, Road ID. 185762006 [Pirganj]	
12	609982	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-70	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 3.00mx3.00m RCC Box culvert on Anondho Nogar (Khoerbari More) - Tukria hat Road at Ch: 1900m, Road ID.185763016 [Pirganj]	
13	609983	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-71	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 3.00mx3.00m RCC Box culvert on Anondho Nogar (Khoerbari More) - Tukria hat Road at Ch: 2400m, Road ID. 185763016 [Pirganj]	
14	609984	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-72	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 1.50mx1.50m RCC Box culvert on Anondho Nogar (Khoerbari More) - Tukria hat Road at Ch: 3200m, Road ID. 185763016 [Pirganj]	
15	609985	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-73	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 1.50mx1.50m RCC Box culvert on Chatra-Kuatpur Via Ghasipur Road at Ch: 900m, Road ID. 185764007 [Pirganj]	
16	609986	e-Tender/LGED/Rang/GOBM/21-22W-74	Rehabilitation of 1 No. single vent 2.50mx2.50m RCC Box culvert on Chatra GC-Raniganj GC (Pirganj portion) Road at Ch: 1600m, Road ID. 185762009 [Pirganj]	

Please see e-GP website

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

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GD-1699

**বাংলাদেশ পানি উন্নয়ন বোর্ড**  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর, ভোলা পত্তর বিভাগ-১, বাপাউবো, ভোলা  
ফোনঃ ০৪৯১-৬১৪০৯ (অফিস)  
ই-মেইলঃ [xen.bhola1@gmail.com](mailto:xen.bhola1@gmail.com)

Memo no. T-2/276 Date: 21-9-2021

### e-Tender Notice No: 01/2021-22 (Re-Tender)

An e-Tender has been invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works/goods

Sl. no	Tender ID	Package No. & Description	Location of the Works/ Supply	Tender Document Last Selling Date & Time	Tender Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	610482	<b>DCP-DP-RBP-05</b> Bank Protection work from km 26.750 to km 27.000 = 0.250 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Daulatkhan Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
2	610556	<b>DCP-DP-SRBP-08</b> Strengthening of Bank Protection work from km 27.440 to km 27.790 = 0.350 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Daulatkhan Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
3	610557	<b>DCP-DP-SRBP-09</b> Strengthening of Bank Protection work from km 27.790 to km 28.140 = 0.350 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Daulatkhan Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
4	610559	<b>DCP-DP-RBP-04</b> Bank Protection work from km 26.500 to km 26.750 = 0.250 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Daulatkhan Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
5	610560	<b>DCP-DP-RBP-06</b> Bank Protection work from km 27.000 to km 27.250 = 0.250 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Daulatkhan Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
6	611013	<b>DCP-Bor-RBP-02</b> Bank Protection work from km 44.050 to km 44.150 = 0.100 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Borhanuddin Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
7	611016	<b>DCP-Bor-RBP-03</b> Bank Protection work from km 44.150 to km 44.250 = 0.100 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Borhanuddin Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
8	611020	<b>DCP-Bor-RBP-05</b> Bank Protection work from km 44.350 to km 44.450 = 0.100 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Borhanuddin Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
9	611025	<b>DCP-Bor-RBP-06</b> Bank Protection work from km 44.450 to km 44.550 = 0.100 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Borhanuddin Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
10	611026	<b>DCP-Bor-RBP-07</b> Bank Protection work from km 44.550 to km 44.650 = 0.100 km in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Borhanuddin Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours
11	611028	<b>DCP-Bor-RBP-04</b> Bank Protection work from km 44.250 to km 44.350 = 0.100 km of polder 56/57 in connection with "Protection of Daulatkhan Pourashava, Chokighat and other more vulnerable area from the erosion of the Meghna river in Bhola District" project under Bhola O&M Division-I, BWDB, Bhola.	Borhanuddin Upazila	10-10-2021 17:00 Hours	11-10-2021 10:00 Hours

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sd/-  
**(Md. Hasanuzzaman)**  
Executive Engineer  
ID 780105001

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১২" x ৩  
GD-1698



Sohail Alim

## Mastercard gets new director

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mastercard yesterday witnessed the appointment of its new director, account management, Bangladesh.

The appointee, Sohail Alim will be responsible for supporting customer relationships and will work on the company's key priorities in the country, including managing partnerships with banks and fintechs, a press release said.

He will report to Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of Mastercard in Bangladesh.

Sohail was previously serving Standard Chartered Bank Bangladesh (SCBB) as head of credit cards.

With a career spanning nearly 19 years with SCBB across retail, distribution and client servicing, Sohail is a dynamic and diversified professional with numerous accomplishments.

He obtained his graduation degree in Management Information System from AIUB.

## Sonali Bank tops govt performance scoring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State-owned Sonali Bank Limited secured top position among all government banks in implementing an annual performance agreement 2020-21 signed with the finance ministry's Financial Institutions Division.

The lender scored 93.6 out of 100, said a press release.

Managing Director Md Ataur Rahman Prodhhan attributed the success to implementation of the government's stimulus packages alongside rendering of digital banking services amidst lockdowns.

The Financial Institutions Division signed the agreement with 17 financial organisations to ensure development in rendering services to the people.

# Daraz relaunches dMart campaign

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

E-commerce platform Daraz Bangladesh relaunched its dMart campaign yesterday to give customers a special opportunity to conveniently grab their daily essentials.

The relaunch campaign will be live till September 27 with amazing discounts and other deals on offer, according to a press release from Daraz.

This campaign will consist of a wide range of household essentials like groceries, baby care, and beauty products and the customers can now utilize this special opportunity conveniently without leaving their homes, it said.

Daraz has revamped its online supermarket channel based on extensive research on customers' purchase behavior.

Equipped with a Dynamic Channel homepage, Daraz allows customers to browse available products according to their current location or previously saved delivery address. Customers can also select the location from the "City Selector" on the dMart homepage.

Syed Mostahidul Hoq, managing director of Daraz Bangladesh, said the company is continuously innovating new business solutions and features on the mobile app to make it easier and for customers to shop online.

"The relaunch of dMart with its new basket building features will enable people from across the country to purchase their monthly essentials online. We aim to become a part of our customers' everyday lives," he added.



MIDLAND BANK LIMITED

**Md Hsan-uz Zaman, managing director of Midland Bank Limited, recently inaugurated Automated Challan System for its customers at the bank's head office in Gulshan enabling e-passport fee, income tax, value-added tax, duty fee, surcharge and various government fees through online from home or office. Md Zahid Hossain, deputy managing director, and Md Ridwanul Haque, head of retail distribution, were present.**

# US Democrats unveil plans to suspend debt limit

AFP, Washington

Democratic congressional leaders on Monday unveiled plans to suspend the nation's borrowing limit, following a White House warning of "economic catastrophe" unless that ceiling is raised.

The legislation also would fund the government through the end of the year after the current budget lapses on September 30.

But the fate of the plan is unclear since Republicans have vowed to withhold support for raising the debt ceiling, which is needed to fund spending already approved by lawmakers, including the massive rescue packages rolled out during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The American people expect our Republican colleagues to live up to their responsibilities and make good

on the debts they proudly helped incur," Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a joint statement.

They warned that "a reckless Republican-forced default could plunge the country into a recession."

"Democrats have the majority in both houses of Congress, but the slim margin in the Senate means they will need some Republican support to push it through, since a single Senator can block any legislation that has less than 60 votes.

The measure would suspend the debt limit through December 2022 -- after the midterm congressional elections.

It also would keep the government running through the end of the year while legislators continue to debate two massive spending bills -- an eight-year,

\$1.2 trillion infrastructure package and a 10-year, \$3.5 trillion package with a host of social programs, largely paid for by rolling back tax cuts.

Schumer and Pelosi said the measure unveiled Monday would avoid "an unnecessary government shutdown," and called it "must-pass legislation."

"It will also include funds for disaster relief and Afghan evacuee resettlement, with the White House asking for \$20 billion for hurricane and wildfire aid and \$6 billion for tens of thousands of Afghan refugees.

"We look forward to passing this crucial legislation with bipartisan support through both chambers and sending to the president's desk in the coming weeks," they said. But Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell once again said Democrats should go it alone.

# Transport strike affects export, import

FROM PAGE B1

Stoppage of harassment by police through stopping vehicles at any place in the name of checking documents and setting up of adequate terminals and restrooms for the goods-carrying vehicles on both sides of the highways are some of other demands.

Talking to The Daily Star, Secretary General of the owners' association Chowdhury Jafar Ahmad said the government in 2019 raised the annual advance income tax without any discussion with stakeholders.

It was from a previous rate of Tk 12,500 to Tk 16,000 against a truck or covered van and from Tk 19,000 to Tk 24,000 for a prime-mover, he said.

"We refused to pay the additional amount in the last two years but this year the owners are being asked to pay the full tax, including the previous years' arrears," he said.

Usually, 4,000 to 6,000 trucks and covered vans as well as 2,500 container-carrying prime movers enter the port a day for taking delivery of goods and containers.

No vehicle entered into the port since 6:00am yesterday, said CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk adding that delivery of bulk cargo and goods-laden containers almost remained suspended.

He, however, claimed that loading and unloading of containers from the vessels were ongoing on a limited scale.

But the berth operators said loading and unloading activities also came to a halt as prime-movers engaged in carrying the unloaded containers from the hook point to different yards did not operate.

Saif Powertech handles container movement at seven jetties under Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) and New Mooring Container terminal (NCT).

Tanveer Hussain, chief operating officer (COO) of Saif Powertech, said three container vessels, MV Conship Cox, MV Sahare and MV Peral River Bridge, berthed at three jetties of NCT yesterday morning.

But not a single import-laden container could be unloaded from these vessels yesterday, he said.

On an average day, 1,000 TEUs (twenty foot equivalent units) of import containers are usually unloaded from a vessel.

Transport of import and export containers between the port and 18 private ICDs was also suspended.

Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association (BICDA) Secretary Md Ruhul Amin Sikder said no import and export-laden containers could be transported between the port and ICDs yesterday as the drivers and helpers of prime movers abstained from work.

Usually, 1,500 TEUs of export-laden containers and 700 TEUs of import-laden and empty containers are transported between the port and the ICDs.

Scheduled departure of a Colombo-bound vessel named MV AS Sicilia berthed at CCT jetty No 3 may have to be cancelled as around 929 TEUs of export-laden containers bound for this ship could not be transported to the port from the ICDs yesterday.

Mohammad Hatem, first vice-president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said exporters who have their own transport facility were able to carry goods from factories to the ports and vice-versa.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan in a meeting on Monday night gave assurances of an amicable solution through discussions.

However, only 20 per cent of factories have their own transportation facilities to carry goods. So, \$80 million worth of garment export was affected due to the strike in a day.

Mokbul Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Covered-Van, Truck, Prime Mover Goods Transportation Owners Association, said apart from the higher licence renewal fee, collection of tolls at different points in and outside of Dhaka was a major challenge for the drivers.



WALTON GROUP

**Md Shahab Uddin, minister for environment, forest and climate change, Begum Habibun Nahar, deputy minister, SM Nurul Alam Rezvi, chairman of Walton Hi-Tech Industries Limited, and Md Ashraf Uddin, director general of the Department of Environment (DoE), attended a seminar organised jointly by the DoE and Walton Hi-Tech Industries Limited at Walton Corporate Office in the capital recently marking the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, observed on September 16.**

# Ministry vetting 12 proposals

FROM PAGE B1

The BJMC will remain as a monitoring body to oversee whether investors were complying with the terms and conditions.

It will also lay off 90 per cent of its 2,900 staff and officials and maintain a small workforce only to monitor compliance issues.

According to the lease terms and conditions, the main objective of operating state-owned jute mills under private management was to continue contributing to the economy through the production, diversification and export of jute goods.

It was to resume, as soon as possible, the productive utilisation of mill structures and facilities and create new employment alongside that for retrenched workers.

According to a fiscal 2018-19 assessment, the value of assets of the mills amounted to Tk 25,352.46 crore, with the highest being of those in the Chattogram region.

Fixed assets were valued at Tk 14,329.97 crore. Excluding accumulated depreciation, it was Tk 12,262.62 crore, mostly of those in the Dhaka region.

This includes permanent resources such as land, buildings and other establishments, equipment, furniture, transport and motor vehicles.

The conditions assert that the government would retain ownership of the mill premises.

The payment for the lease would need to be made as rent on a monthly basis. The first nine months will be provided as a grace period for mobilisation of resources. The rent would be increased by 10 per cent after every five years.

A total of 24 months' rent will have to be deposited as security before signing of the contract, refundable without interest on completion of the tenure.

The BJMC boss declined to disclose the rent amount and names of investors of the 12 proposals.

The BJMC sources said the initiative also sought relief from the burden of losses.

The latest data available was of fiscal 2018-19, when losses of the mills amounted to Tk 573.56 crore. In the previous fiscal year, it was Tk 498.16 crore.

# UK regulator to tackle 'misleading green claims'

AFP, London

Businesses falsely claiming environmental credentials could face sanctions, the UK's Competition and Markets Authority regulator said on Monday, due to concerns over "misleading green claims".

The CMA said it was conducting a full review into the issue from early next year, and warned businesses they had until then to comply with the law.

"We're concerned that too many businesses are falsely taking credit for being green, while genuinely eco-friendly firms don't get the recognition they deserve," CMA chief executive Andrea Coscelli said.

# E-commerce firms warned for anti-competitive practices

FROM PAGE B1

Evaly Managing Director and CEO Mohammad Rassel and its Chairman Shamima Nasrin were arrested last week on charges of embezzling customers' money.

BCC Chairperson Islam acknowledged that the anti-competitive activities of e-commerce platforms have come to the commission's notice a bit late.

"We will soon start collecting information on e-commerce companies' business models and discounts campaigns. If the market is competitive, then everyone involved with the business will benefit while business will expand," said Islam.

At the event, the BCC cited two provisions, 15 and 16, of the competition act 2012 and warned of legal action for violations.

Companies fixing abnormal purchase or sales prices will face legal action.

The law provides the scope for action against firms that impose, directly or indirectly, unfair or discriminatory conditions related to purchase and sale of goods and services or fix predatory prices to drive out competitors.

"We have been recommended to refrain from giving any offer that hurts competitive environment," Mesbah ul Aziz, head of regulatory affairs, Daraz Bangladesh, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

Abdul Wahed Tamal, secretary general of the e-CAB, urged the government to appoint an instructor at the central e-commerce cell at the Ministry of Commerce. "We also demanded increasing manpower in the cell," he said.

# SBAC Bank chair steps down

FROM PAGE B1

"If the process is completed before the month, I'm ready to resign earlier," Hossain said in the letter.

The board will discuss the issue in a meeting on September 26, said a top official of the bank, referring anonymously.

"We will decide whether the resignation letter will be accepted or not."

Hossain couldn't be reached for comments.

He has been serving the board as its chief since the inception of the bank in 2013.

Hossain is facing probes over irregularities.

On March 11, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit asked banks to freeze the

accounts of Hossain, his wife Begum Sufia Amjad and their daughter Miss Tajori for 30 days.

The agency also sought the details of the accounts.

Earlier on January 7, the Anti-Corruption Commission banned them from travelling abroad. It urged the Special Branch of police to impose the ban.

The ban was slapped as part of the commission's investigation into loan-related irregularities perpetrated by Hossain. Hossain holds a 3.21 per cent share in the bank.

Shares of SBAC Bank, which went public in August, closed 2.38 per cent higher at Tk 21.50 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.

# Govt cuts interest rates of savings tools

FROM PAGE B1

For an investment over Tk 30 lakh, the interest rate has been fixed at 9 per cent.

The rate for the three-month profit-based savings certificate is 11.04 per cent. But, again, if the investment is higher than Tk 15 lakh, the rate will slip to 10 per cent, and a savings of Tk 30 lakh will fetch 9 per cent.

The interest rate of the five-year pensioners' savings certificate is 11.76 per cent. Now, it will be 10.75 per cent for an investment of more than Tk 15 lakh and 9.75 per cent for more than Tk 30 lakh.

"Bringing down the interest rate on the savings certificate was not a right decision as our social security system is weak," said Zaid Bakht, a former research director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

The decision will hurt savers, low-income groups, and the middle-class, he said.

In Bangladesh, many people depend on the income from the interest, especially post-retirement.

Some people assume that banks will not get enough deposits if the savings certificate rate is higher.

"But this is not true. When the interest rate on savings certificates was even higher, banks did not face any problem in attracting funds," said Bakht, also the chairman of Agrani Bank.

The rate cut will help the government bring down its interest rate expenses. But Bakht believes the interest expenses could be cut by eliminating the misuse of the investment tools.

The interest rate cut will put more pressure on the savers, whose incomes have already been squeezed because of the lower rates on bank deposits.

Since April 1 last year, banks have been giving the highest 6 per cent interest on deposits after the central bank capped the rates on loans and deposits.

In fact, the weighted average rate on deposits stood at 4.13 per cent in June,

down from 5.06 per cent a year ago, data from the Bangladesh Bank showed.

As a result, depositors are facing a negative return on savings given the inflation rate of 5.64 per cent in June.

The country's top-selling family savings certificate provides an 11.52 per cent interest rate. If the investment goes past Tk 15 lakh, the rate will be 10.50 per cent, and it is 9.50 per cent for the amount over Tk 30 lakh, according to the circular of the IRD.

The rate of the postal savings bank scheme has been slashed to 10.30 per cent from 11.28 per cent for the fund amounting to Tk 15 lakh. It is 9.30 per cent if the sum crosses Tk 30 lakh.

A senior official of the finance ministry said it took the decision as people were rushing towards the savings certificates for higher returns instead of keeping the funds in banks.

In the fiscal year of 2020-21, savings certificates worth Tk 112,188 crore were sold, up 67 per cent year-on-year.

Net sales of the savings certificates were Tk 41,959 crore and its growth was 190 per cent year-on-year, according to the data of the Directorate of National Savings. This increased the government's expenditure on interest payments.

The government has set aside Tk 62,000 crore for 2021-22 to pay interest on domestic borrowings, up from Tk 58,253 crore in the previous budget.

Yesterday, the government also cut the interest rate on wage earners development bonds.

The interest rate for the new investment in wage-earner development bonds will be 11 per cent from 12 per cent if the investment amount surpasses Tk 15 lakh.

If the amount crosses Tk 30 lakh, the return will be 10 per cent, and in the case of investment over Tk 50 lakh, the yield will be 9 per cent, the IRD said.

The rate on the bonds such as the US Dollar Premium Bond and the US Dollar Investment Bond has been kept unchanged.

# Stocks jump for cuts in bond, savings interest rates

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Shares on the Dhaka Stock Exchange rose for the second consecutive day yesterday thanks to the investors' sustained optimism and a cut in the interest rate on savings certificates and wage-earners development bonds.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the premier bourse in the country, advanced 52 points, or 0.73 per cent, to close the day at 7,258.

The gain took the index to its highest level, first touched on September 9.

If the rate of return on bank deposits, savings instruments and other investment tools is slashed, it bodes well for the stock market as investors rush to the equity market, said a top official of a merchant bank.

The decision to bring down the interest rate on savings certificates and wage-earners

Securities in its daily market review.

This is in response to the government's initiative to lower the rate of return on savings schemes.

The market also soared amid positive expectations about the performance of the listed companies in the upcoming quarter as the devastating impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the economy are petering out.

Pacific Denims topped the gainers' list after it rose 9.86 per cent, followed by International Leasing, Alif Industries, Premier Leasing, and Tung Hai Knitting.

Turnover rose 8.3 per cent to Tk 1,910 crore compared to Tk 1,762 crore a day earlier.

Most of the investors had been in a profit-booking mode in the last few weeks so the index had fallen, said a stockbroker.

"Now, the index is soaring again as some people are buying stocks."

# Dairy farming gets costlier

Soaring feed prices to blame, farmers say

## DISTRICTS IN FOCUS

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Milk production has turned costlier in the past few months due to soaring prices of animal feed, leaving dairy farmers with little hope of securing expected profits.

Feed prices have increased rapidly due to a lack of market control, according to various farmers across the country.

Wheat bran, a component of animal feed, is now sold for Tk 1,200 to Tk 1,250 per maund (around 37 kilogrammes) even though the same amount would cost just Tk 950 to Tk 1,000 a couple of months ago.

Similarly, each maund of Mashkalai dal bran, a pulse grain, currently sells for about Tk 1,400 per maund while it was around Tk 1,200 previously.

Oilcake, another vital component of animal feed, costs Tk 3,000 to Tk 3,200 now compared to about Tk 2,500 a few months back, said a number of dairy farmers.

Besides, the price of ready feed such as straw also soared up to Tk 80 to Tk 100 per maund at the same time, they added.

Md Motiur Rahman, a dairy farmer of Ramkharua village in Sirajganj's Shahzadpur upazila, said he has to spend about Tk 2,400 per day to feed his 12 cows.

Previously, he would spend just Tk 1,500 to Tk 1,700 a day to feed his cattle, which produce about 60 litres of milk daily. It would cost around Tk 35 to produce one litre of milk just a few months back but now it costs about Tk 45 per litre.

However, the selling price of milk has not increased in line with the rising production cost, Rahman said, adding that dairy farming was becoming too costly to be sustainable at this rate.

Rahman went on to say that it costs at least Tk 75,000 to Tk 90,000 to produce milk worth Tk 90,000 to Tk one lakh per month.

So, he does not expect to secure adequate profits considering the current situation.

Poor and marginal dairy farmers have been hit the hardest as they



AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

The price of dairy feed such as straw and wheat bran as pictured above has soared in the past few months, making it near impossible for small or marginal farmers to make a profit amid increased production costs. The picture was taken recently at Selonda Bazar in Santhia upazila of Pabna.

lack the capital to buy costly dry feed and their farms do not have enough grazing space either.

For example, Md Eakub Ali, a marginal dairy farmer of Modhdho Pungol village in Pabna's Faridpur upazila, owns just four cows that produce 20 to 22 litres of milk worth about Tk 850 every day.

However, he needs to spend a minimum of Tk 750 to feed the animals if he depends only on dry feed. "I do not have enough cash to buy dry feed every day so I often give water hyacinth as feed to save costs," Ali said.

And due to improper feeding, the cows have grown thin and milk production has fallen, making it near impossible to recover production costs, he added.

Md Shakhawat Hossain, a dairy farmer of Sonahara village in the same upazila, told The Daily Star that milk was selling for about Tk

55 per litre in local markets but farmers often sell it directly from their farms for just Tk 45 per litre.

Milk Vita is the biggest buyer of the product in the region but farmers do not get adequate profits by supplying the milk processing company and so seek out private markets instead for profit.

The price of milk offered by Milk Vita varies depending on quality and so, the farmers often do not get more than Tk 40 to Tk 42 from the company. "That is not enough to cover production costs and as a result, farmers mostly seek out private markets," Hossain said.

Due to the lack of market control, dairy feed prices have increased rapidly and the production cost of milk is increasing too.

"There is no authority for monitoring the dairy feed market, where producers have been increasing prices as they wish since

nobody controls them," he added.

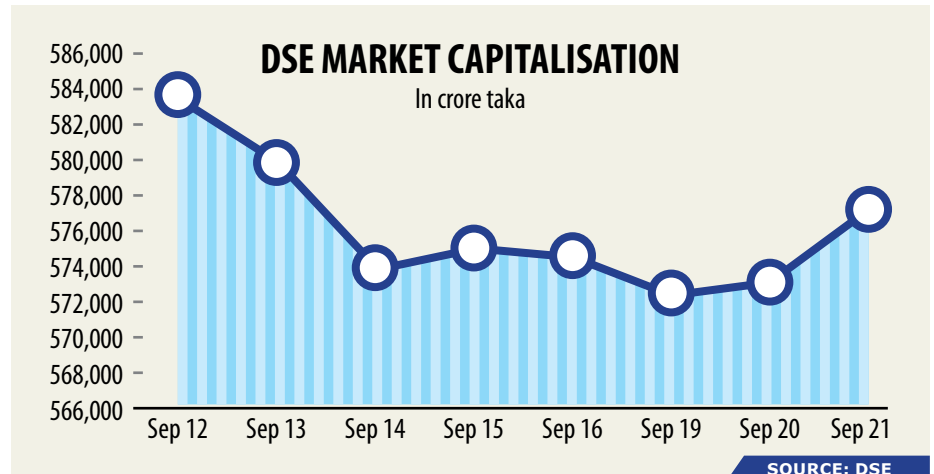
As a result, dairy farmers of Pabna and Sirajganj, the biggest milk producing zones in Bangladesh, have been struggling to keep the regional industry afloat.

"If the dairy feed market cannot be controlled, people may lose interest in dairy farming. For the sake of keeping milk production at normal levels, the dairy feed market must be controlled," Hossain said.

While speaking with The Daily Star, Dr Al Mamun Hossain, district livestock officer of Pabna, said dairy farming gets costlier during the monsoon season every year.

Due to flooding, grazing fields become mostly submerged. So, farmers become dependent on ready feed, increasing production costs in the process.

"But the situation becomes normal in the dry season," he added.



development bonds had a positive impact on the market, he said.

For the new investment of more than Tk 15 lakh in the savings certificates, the interest rate has been reduced by 1 to 2.28 percentage points.

The yield would be 10.27 per cent instead of 11.20 per cent for a fresh investment of Tk 15 lakh in the wage earners development bond, according to a circular of the Internal Resources Division.

If the investment amount crosses Tk 30 lakh, the interest rate would be 9.33 per cent. It will be 8.40 per cent for the investment of more than Tk 50 lakh.

Investors' increased participation coupled with growing optimism caused the premier exchange to exhibit a shining session, said International Leasing

Reliance One, a mutual fund, gave up the most, falling 6.26 per cent, followed by ICB AMCL Second Mutual Fund, Eastern Lubricants, National Housing Finance and Investments, and BD Lamps.

On the DSE, 224 stocks rose, 117 declined, and 35 remained unchanged.

Beximco Ltd was the most-traded stock with its shares worth Tk 144 crore changing hands. Beximco Pharmaceuticals, Alif Industries, LafargeHolcim Bangladesh, and Saif Powertec also saw higher trade volumes.

The CASPI, the general index of the Chattogram Stock Exchange, added 210 points, or 0.99 per cent, to end the day at 21,240.

Among 327 stocks traded, 194 advanced, 100 fell, and 33 were unchanged.

## GLOBAL BUSINESS

# OECD lowers global, US economic growth forecasts

AFP, Paris

The OECD warned Tuesday of an "uneven" global economic recovery as it lowered its 2021 growth forecasts for the world and the United States while raising the outlook for Europe.

The world economy has bounced back this year on the back of stimulus measures, the rollout of effective Covid vaccines and the resumption of many economic activities, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said.

"The recovery remains very uneven, with strikingly different outcomes across countries," the OECD said in its interim economic outlook.

Global gross domestic product has surpassed its pre-pandemic level following last year's Covid-induced recession.

Global output is now expected to expand by 5.7 per cent this year, down 0.1 percentage points from the organisation's previous forecast in May. But the outlook for 2022 has slightly improved, with 4.5 per cent growth now expected, up by 0.1 points.

"Output and employment gaps remain in many countries,



AFP/FILE

The OECD says 'sizeable uncertainty remains' about the global economic recovery.

particularly in emerging-market and developing economies where vaccination rates are low," the report said. The OECD lowered its growth outlook for the United States, from 6.9 to 6.0 per cent this year. The US Congressional Budget Office has forecast 6.7 per cent growth for the world's top

performing as well.

The OECD's eurozone forecast, however, was raised by one point to 5.3 per cent, though the outlook varied within the single-currency bloc, with higher growth now expected in France, Italy and Spain while Germany was not performing as well.

The growth prospects of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey have also improved, while those of Australia, Britain, Japan and Russia were lowered. The forecast for China, the world's second biggest economy and a driver of global growth, remained

unchanged at 8.5 per cent.

The impact of the Delta variant of the coronavirus has "so far been relatively mild" in countries with high vaccination rates, but it has lowered the momentum elsewhere and added pressures to global supply chains and costs, the OECD said.

"Sizeable uncertainty remains," the report said.

"Faster progress in vaccine deployment, or a sharper slowdown of household savings would enhance demand and lower unemployment but also potentially push up near-term inflationary pressures," it said.

However, it added, "slow progress in vaccine rollout and the continued spread of new virus mutations would result in a weaker recovery and larger job losses.

Earlier this month, United Nations chief Antonio Guterres expressed disappointment that vaccine-manufacturing nations have been unable to ramp up production toward the goal of vaccinating some 70 per cent of the world population by the first half of 2022.

"Covid-19 is a wake-up call, and we are oversleeping," Guterres said.

# Airline sector relieved over lifting of US travel ban

AFP, Paris

The United States' decision to lift restrictions on incoming travellers vaccinated against Covid-19 was met with a sigh of relief by the global airline sector, which has been dealt a body blow by the pandemic.

With transatlantic flights traditionally among the most lucrative for Europe's biggest airlines, the Monday announcement was "formidable news" for a sector that has hemorrhaged tens of billions of euros over the past 18 months, Air France-KLM chief Benjamin Smith told AFP.

For most of Europe's flag carriers -- such as Air France, British Airways and Lufthansa -- the restrictions on long-haul routes across the Atlantic were particularly hard to swallow.



The International Air Transport Association described the development as a major step forward.

AFP/FILE

Air France-KLM, for example, generates 40 per cent of its sales from its North Atlantic services, and for Germany's Lufthansa, the proportion is 50 per cent.

"Today's news... marks an historic moment," said British Airways chief Sean Doyle.

"Our customers should now feel that the world is reopening to them and they can book their trips with confidence."

US airlines such as United, Delta and American are much more domestically orientated and less dependent on international services, which account for 25-30 per cent of revenues.

But they, too, welcomed the news.

"Today's announcement marks a positive step in our nation's recovery," said the head of the industry association Airlines for America, Nicholas Calio.

Sister organisation Airlines for Europe tweeted that it similarly "applauds the decision", which would "give a much-needed boost to trans-Atlantic traffic & #tourism and will reunite families and friends".

The International Air Transport Association, or IATA, which has 290 member airlines accounting for 82 per cent of global air travel, described it as "a major step forward".

# Britain may give state loans to energy companies

REUTERS, London

Britain is considering offering state loans to energy companies that take on customers from firms which go bust due to soaring wholesale natural gas prices, Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said on Tuesday.

As economies reopen after Covid-19 lockdowns, wholesale natural gas prices in Europe have soared this year, pushed up by high demand for liquefied natural gas in Asia, nuclear maintenance and lower-than-usual supplies from Russia.

The record prices have strained the British energy sector, destroying the business model of smaller energy traders and sending shockwaves through the chemical and fertiliser markets, leading to a shortage of carbon dioxide.

Britain's biggest energy companies have asked the government for support to help cover the cost of taking on customers from firms that have gone bust.

Asked by Sky News if state-backed loans were an option, Kwarteng said: "There are lots of options."

"It costs a company to absorb up to hundreds of thousands of customers from another company that's failed, that costs money, and there may well be a provision for some sort of loan and that's been discussed," he added.

Kwarteng said that in an average year about 5-8 smaller energy companies exited the market in Britain, but that this year the number could be bigger.

"We have to have a much more robust supply of last-resort capability," Kwarteng

said, adding that customers should be able to get supply at a tariff similar to the one offered by a company that goes bust.

One source at a large energy firm involved in the talks said if a company with many hundreds of thousands of customers went bust it would be extremely difficult for another supplier to take them on. "We could be looking at a loss of nearly 500 pounds per customer. How could we take that on if the only government support is a loan that we would need to pay back," he said speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

European consumers are facing the prospect of soaring winter heating bills due to a confluence of global factors that have raised questions about how

vulnerable Europe remains to swings in global energy prices.

Benchmark European gas prices have risen by more than 250% since January, with contributory factors also including low storage stocks, high EU carbon prices and low renewable energy output.

Britain privatised British Gas in 1986 and, after a series of deregulating steps since then, the consumer market has seen a plethora of different companies - some essentially just traders - offering gas and electricity to households.

"I don't think we should be throwing taxpayers' money at companies which have been, let's face it, badly run," Kwarteng said. "A number of these companies have been badly run." "I don't want there to be a reward for failure."