

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES				
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY	
▲ 0.43%	▲ 0.39%	\$1,865.37	\$80.30	▼ 0.62%	▼ 0.30%	▲ 0.13%	▼ 0.47%	BUY TK	84.85	95.08	114.79	13.08
7,091.81	12,459.80	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	59,636.01	29,598.66	3,237.02	3,520.71	SELL TK	85.85	98.88	118.59	13.75



Star BUSINESS

DHAKA FRIDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2021, AGRAHAYAN 4, 1428 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

Remittance to lose steam

World Bank projects

REJAUU KARIM BYRON and AHSAN HABIB

The World Bank has projected lower remittance growth for Bangladesh compared to that of India and Pakistan in 2021 due to the slower outmigration of workers who have returned home at the height of the global coronavirus pandemic.

The projection came in the Migration and Development Brief of the global lender published yesterday.

Bangladesh's remittance receipts may stand at \$23 billion this year, which is 4.54 per cent higher than in 2020.

Migrant workers sent home \$18.88 billion in the first 10 months of 2021, up 7 per cent from \$17.61 billion during the same period last year, Bangladesh Bank data showed.

In India, remittances are estimated to advance by 4.6 per cent to \$87 billion, the WB report said. Pakistan will have another year of record remittances with growth at 26 per cent and levels reaching \$33 billion.

Despite the slowing remittance flow, Bangladesh retained its position as the seventh highest recipient of the money

transferred by migrant workers in the world. India will remain at the top and Pakistan at sixth.

China will come at second, Mexico third, the Philippines fourth, and Egypt at fifth.

"Bangladesh's slowing growth in remittances in the first nine months of 2021 already suggests the downside risks for 2022, fueled mostly by the slow outmigration of returnee migrants, keeping remittances flat in the year," said the WB.

"Although remittances rose above pre-Covid-19 and 2020 levels by almost 6 per cent to reach \$23 billion in response to the government's tax cuts and other incentives in 2021, the slowdown in growth is distinct."

The forecast came as the deployment of workers from Bangladesh to the Gulf nations fell by 19 per cent year-on-year in the first three months of 2021.

Another hurdle to outmigration is the slow pace of visa issuance in the GCC countries.

Saudi Arabia granted 12 per cent fewer work visas in the first quarter of 2021 relative to the same period in 2020, while



Sales of sporting goods are picking up as people, particularly the younger generation, are returning to playgrounds following a sharp fall in coronavirus infections. The photo was taken in front of a shop at Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium in Dhaka recently.

FIROZ AHMED

Taka to weaken against dollar: Fitch

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladeshi currency taka will face more depreciatory pressures against the US dollar mainly due to imported inflation, according to a report released by Fitch Solutions.

It forecasted that the exchange rate would stand at Tk 85 per dollar this year and Tk 86.50 next year.

The local currency will go on to stand at Tk 87 in 2023.

The Fitch Solutions and Country Risk and Industry Research released the prediction on November 17.

It earlier forecasted that the exchange would be at Tk 84.75 per dollar this year and Tk 85 next year.

Bangladesh Bank data showed that the inter-bank exchange rate stood at Tk 85.80 compared to Tk 84.80 a year ago.

Since the last update of Fitch Solutions in August, the taka has depreciated 1.1 per cent against the dollar, taking the year to date exchange rate average to Tk 84.93 per dollar, it said.

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Sporting goods sales rebound

SUKANTA HALDER and MD ABU TALHA SARKER

Sports accessories businesses in Bangladesh are making a comeback as people, particularly the younger generation, are returning to fields to play again following the easing of restrictions and sharp fall in coronavirus caseloads.

Traders say the revival would help them recoup much of the losses they have incurred in the last one and a half years as the spread of the virus forced the authorities to enforce lockdowns, upending everyday life and prompting the cancellations of sporting events, both professional and amateur.

They, however, believe that it will take at least a year for the business to return to the pre-pandemic level.

November, December and January are

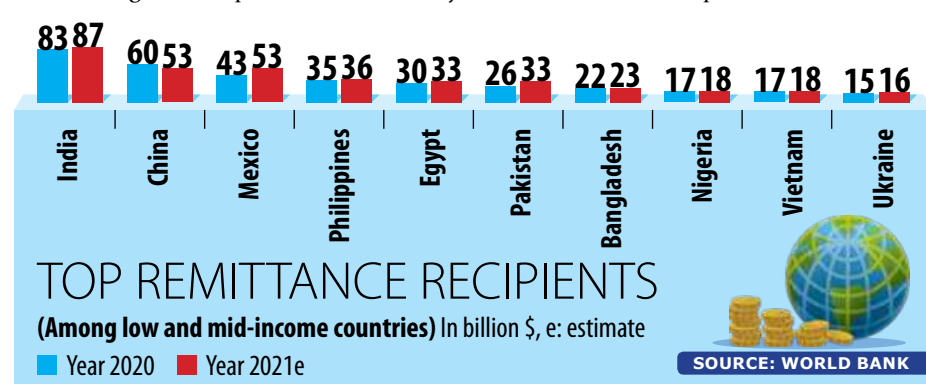
the peak seasons for traders in the sporting goods sector. According to traders, more than 60 per cent of the accessories are sold during the three-month period.

Bangladesh Sports Accessories Merchant Manufacturers and Importers Association estimates that Bangladesh has a Tk 1,500-2,000 crore sporting goods market. The sector employs about 50,000 people directly.

The sports accessories for the games such as cricket and badminton, popular among the youth, are already high in demand.

The largest wholesale and retail market for sports merchandise in Bangladesh are the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium Market and the Cooperative Twin Tower Sports Market, which is located on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

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FOR INQUIRIES CALL US AT 16704

dbi CERAMICS

Oman reported a 15 per cent decline in Bangladeshi workers.

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus, many workers have returned home after losing jobs.

For example, the number of persons returned from Libya has doubled since

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BTRC moves to make 4G internet faster

SHAHID BAPPY

The telecom regulator plans to set new standard for 4G and broadband internet speed as part of its move to ensure much-needed faster digital connectivity for the users across the country.

According to a decision of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the minimum speed for mobile internet will be 15 Mbps and that for the broadband internet will be 20 Mbps.

The decision was taken at a virtual meeting between the Post and Telecommunication Division, the BTRC and the Prime Minister's Adviser for ICT Sajeeb Wazed on October 12.

The minimum speed under the current standard for broadband internet is 10 Mbps, while it is 7 Mbps for mobile internet.

As per the latest decision, internet service



providers and mobile phone operators that don't maintain the minimum speed will not be categorised as broadband and 4G service providers.

The BTRC has formed a committee to implement the latest minimum speed.

The committee will consult with all the operators and submit a proposal to the commission. After receiving the report, the BTRC will issue the official order about the new internet speed standard.

There were 11.54 crore mobile internet users and 1.01 crore broadband internet users in Bangladesh at the end of August, BTRC data showed.

In 2018, the commission increased the minimum speed for broadband internet from 5Mbps to 10Mbps. Still, many users across the country are not getting the minimum speed.

In fact, Bangladesh has the worst mobile internet speed among 110 countries, according to the 2021 Digital Quality of Life index, published by Surfshark, a globally acclaimed VPN service company. The overall ranking of the country is 103rd.

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WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Bangladesh should negotiate duty benefit extension

Says CPD's Mustafizur Rahman

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh should engage in negotiations at the upcoming 12th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC 12) for extension of duty privileges to some extent following the status graduation to a developing country in 2026, said a noted economist yesterday.

Even if the privileges are for six or nine years following the graduation from a least developed country (LDC), it is still good for the country, said Mustafizur Rahman,

a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

He was addressing a virtual discussion on "Upcoming MC12: Bangladesh's Expectations and Possible Stance" jointly organised by the CPD and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's (FES) Bangladesh office.

The MC 12 will be held in Geneva between November 30 and December 3.

Rahman, however, said Bangladesh needs to learn to compete in an open market regime without depending on

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CTG REHAB FAIR

Realtors hope for good response

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chattogram

Real estate companies are hoping for a good response from buyers at a four-day housing fair that kicked off in Chattogram yesterday as apartment sales in the port city gained momentum in line with the waning of the coronavirus pandemic.

The local real estate industry is witnessing a boom in sales for the first time in several years as the demand for apartments in Chattogram rose following Bangladesh's recent return to economic normalcy, according to industry insiders.

Besides, recent policy support measures such as a reduction in registration costs and interest rate imposed on home loans, and allowing the use of untaxed income for

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A real estate company representative points out facilities available at one of its projects in Chattogram on the opening day of a four-day housing fair at Radisson Blu Chattogram Bay View yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

File returns timely, avoid penalty

SOHEL PARVEZ

Bangladesh has roughly 60 lakh registered taxpayers. And if you are registered with a taxpayer identification number (TIN), it is high time for you to prepare and file your returns of incomes, no matter whether you have taxable income or not.

And you have less than 15 days to accomplish the task as the deadline for furnishing income returns is November 30. Because from December 1, you will face a 2 per cent monthly fine on the payable amount of tax for delayed submission.

However, this is not the only hassle that you have to face. You will have to apply with your respective tax office to be granted additional time for filing returns and later collect the approved application. That means you will have to go to the tax office twice or thrice to finish the task of filing your annual income, expenditure and wealth statement.

In addition, you may miss this opportunity to avail a festive environment and cordial attitudes of taxmen at the tax office once the official deadline expires. "So the best way is to file returns within the deadline," said Md Mohidul Islam Chowdhury, second secretary of tax policy at the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

He said the 2 per cent fine would not be a small amount for taxpayers whose incomes come from sole proprietorship firms. Taxpayers who have fixed deposits are likely to bear a higher penalty for their failure to submit returns within the regular period.

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Asaduzzaman Noor, chairman of Asiatic 3sixty, Alihussain Akberali, chairman of Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills Ltd (BSRM), and Aameir Alihussain, managing director, cut a cake in BSRM's Chattogram office recently to mark the 10th anniversary of their partnership. Morshed Alam, managing director of GroupM, was present.



Mohammed Haider Ali Miah, managing director of Exim Bank Ltd, cuts a ribbon to inaugurate the bank's 136th branch in Shibbari, Khulna recently. Lal Mohammad, regional manager for Rajshahi of the bank, Sharif Atiquzzaman, principal of Government Brajalal College, Gazi Mizanur Rahman, managing director of Gazi Medical College and Hospital Ltd, and Sanjib Chatterjee, vice-president of the lender, were present.

COLLECTED

US asks Japan, China, others to consider tapping oil reserves

REUTERS, Washington

The Biden administration has asked some of the world's largest oil consuming nations - including China, India and Japan - to consider releasing crude stockpiles in a coordinated effort to lower global energy prices, according to several people familiar with the matter.

The unusual request comes as US President Joe Biden fends off political pressure over rising pump prices and other consumer costs driven by a rebound in economic activity from lows plumbed early in the coronavirus pandemic.

It also reflects US frustration with members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies who have rebuffed repeated requests from Washington to speed up their production increases.

"We're talking about the symbolism of the largest consumers of the world sending a message to OPEC that 'you've got to change your behavior,'" one of the sources said. Oil prices eased on the news after settling further below seven-year highs struck in early October.

Biden and top aides have discussed the possibility of a coordinated release of stockpiled oil with close allies including

Japan, South Korea and India, as well as with China, over the past several weeks, the sources said.

Tokyo responded positively to initial outreach, according to one of the sources.

It was not immediately clear how others had responded.

The US share of any potential release of reserves would need to be more than 20 million to 30 million barrels to affect

markets, according to a US source who participated in the discussions.

Such a release could be in the form of a sale or a loan from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve - or both.

The SPR was set up in the 1970s after the Arab Oil Embargo to ensure the United States has adequate supply to weather an emergency.

Several people familiar with the matter cautioned that negotiations over a coordinated supply release have not been finalized nor has any final decision been made about whether to pursue any specific course of action on oil prices.

The White House declined to comment on the detailed content of conversations with other countries.

"No decisions have been made," said a spokesperson for the White House's National Security Council.

For weeks, the White House has said it is "talking with other energy consumers to ensure global energy supply and prices do not imperil the global economic recovery," the spokesperson added.

After Reuters reported on the White House discussions, US crude futures were trading at \$78.18, down from a close of \$78.36 a barrel, while Brent fell to \$80.21 after ending at \$80.28 a barrel.



REUTERS/FILE

An oil storage tank and crude oil pipeline equipment are seen during a tour by the Department of Energy at the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in Freeport, Texas.

India's biggest-ever IPO Paytm slumps on market debut

AFP, Mumbai

Indian mobile payments giant Paytm lost a quarter of its value on its market debut Thursday, after raising \$2.5 billion in the country's biggest-ever IPO, as traders questioned whether the loss-making firm would ever turn a profit.

Asia's third-largest economy has been in a grip of an initial public offering frenzy, with start-ups attracting billions of dollars in investment in a bright spot in the Covid-battered economy.

But while Paytm has established a leading position in the fast-growing marketplace for mobile payments it has lost money in each of the past three years and its market debut showed the limits of investor appetite.

Founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma, once named as India's youngest billionaire, wiped away tears from his eyes when the national anthem was played at the opening ceremony before trading began on the Bombay Stock Exchange.

Referring to the phrase "Bharat bhagya vidhata" -- "the one who will define the fortune of this country" -- he said Paytm has "actually done that".

But the company's shares tanked more than 25 per cent from their IPO price of 2,150 rupees within minutes of the open, before recovering slightly.

"There is a lot of euphoria for the digital space and that seems to now be subsiding," said SMC Global Securities analyst Saurabh Jain. "These companies are coming out with IPOs at scorching valuations and it's anybody's guess what valuations are correct," he told AFP.

"It is very difficult for a company like Paytm to turn profitable. They have the scalability but they are not able to make money through their business model."

Following the debut, Paytm's market capitalisation fell from an IPO valuation of \$20 billion to under \$14 billion when shares dropped as low as 1,586 rupees.

Realtors hope for good response

FROM PAGE B1

purchasing property has fuelled the demand for housing solutions.

In addition, long stays at home amid recurring nationwide lockdowns aimed at curbing the spread of Covid-19 influenced many affluent individuals to purchase their own apartments, they said. However, realtors have expressed concerns over the increasing price of various construction materials, such as iron rods, as it may soon have a negative impact on the industry.

The fair, styled "REHAB Chattogram Fair 2021", was organised by the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) at Radisson Blu Chattogram Bay View.

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, inaugurated the event with REHAB President Shamsul Alam Kajal in the chair. Rejaul Karim Chowdhury, mayor of Chattogram City Corporation, attended the opening ceremony as a special guest.

A total of 46 firms from Dhaka and Chattogram, including eight firms dealing in construction materials and six financial institutions, set up 71 stalls in the fair. The 29 participating real estate firms are displaying a number of their ongoing projects, with a total of around 800 residential apartments on offer, said the REHAB officials.

A total of 83 Chattogram-based real estate firms are REHAB members.

Realtors said the demand for ready apartments in the port city has increased ever since economic activities in the country bounced back.

Seeing the increase in demand, many firms which do not have apartments ready for sale have taken on new projects. Md Abdul Kauim Chowdhury, chairman of the REHAB's Chattogram Regional Committee, said the domestic real estate sector was gradually coming out from a bad phase thanks to some policy support.

He informed that the government recently reduced the registration cost in the industry by 2 per cent while the central bank last month issued a notification to provide home loans of up to a maximum of Tk 2 crore for the purchase of flats against the earlier limit of Tk 1.20 crore.

"These steps are obviously positive for the sector," Chowdhury added.

The CPDL, a leading local real estate and construction company, has completed 34 projects in Chattogram so far while another 22 are ongoing.

Iftakhar Hosen, president of the CPDL, told The Daily Star that the firm's sales increased by 50 per cent this year compared to that in 2020.

The firm already sold around 90

residential and commercial properties as of October. "Comparatively cheaper apartments ranging from Tk 60 lakh to Tk 70 lakh have the most demand but renowned realtors cannot satisfy such requirements considering the high cost of land and increasing price of construction materials," he said.

Hosen went on to say that the demand for large apartments that come with facilities such as gyms, playgrounds and community halls is rising while stay-at-home measures to prevent Covid-19 made people realise the benefits of these amenities.

As such, many affluent people who already own 1,800 square feet or 2,000 square feet apartments are showing interest to trade off their homes for more spacious flats ranging from 2,500 square feet to 3,000 square feet.

Accordingly, many firms have started constructing condominiums.

After completing two condominiums in Chattogram, the CPDL has now started another project called Sultana Gardenia in the port city's Devpaha area targeting upper middle-class families.

Equity Properties Management recently started its second condominium project near Agrabad commercial area on a 45-katha plot, offering 148 apartments. Equity is offering a 10 per cent discount on its flats at the fair.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Govt. Shah Sultan College, Bogura
Sherpur Road, Banani, Bogura
Website: www.govssc.edu.bd

Memo No. gssc/bog/idgsp/cedp/2021/215 Date: 17/11/2021

e-Tender Notice 01/2021-2022

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	598041	Procurement of Air Conditioner	06 Dec 2021, 11.30	06 Dec 2021, 14.00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://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 up to 06 Dec 2021, 11.30am.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP held desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Shahidul Alam
29/11/2021
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Phone: 051-65249
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GD-2101

Russian economy keeps up Covid rebound in third quarter

AFP, Moscow

Russia's economy rebounded in the third quarter as the country continues to recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, official figures showed Wednesday.

Gross domestic product grew by 4.3 per cent compared to July-September last year, with strong gains in passenger transport, retail trade and mining, according to the federal statistics agency.

It was the second consecutive quarter of growth, after the economy rebounded by 10.3 per cent in the second quarter with strong gains in the same industries.

The economy had contracted in the first three months of the year.

শেখ হাসিনার উদ্যোগ, ঘরে ঘরে বিদ্যুৎ

আশুগঞ্জ পাওয়ার স্টেশন কোম্পানী লিমিটেড
ASHUGANJ POWER STATION COMPANY LIMITED
(An enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)
ISO 9001:2015, ISO: 14001:2015 & ISO 45001: 2018 Certified Management System.

Memo No:02/APSC/Co.Aff./Recruitment/2021/847 Date: 18/11/2021

"Career Opportunity in Power Sector"

Ashuganj Power Station Company Limited (APSC) is an enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board looking for energetic and promising person for immediate appointment to the post of **Executive Director (Planning & Development)** and invites applications from Bangladeshi Nationals who are interested to serve the company and ready to accept the challenging job.

Duties and Responsibilities

The **Executive Director (Planning & Development)** is one of members of the management of the Company who reports through the Managing Director to the Board of Directors. He is responsible for technical studies, planning, development of project, policies and strategies, engineering, construction, supervision of all the running and upcoming projects of the company. He is also responsible for providing proper assistance to the Managing Director for ensuring timely completion of the project, financing and compliance issues of the project

Educational qualification & Experience

- At least graduate in Electrical/Mechanical/Civil Engineering from any recognized university.
- No third Division/Class at any stage of the academic career shall be acceptable. Candidates passed in the grading system must possess at least a CGPA 3.5 on a scale of 5.0 and a CGPA 2.5 on a scale of 4.0.
- At least 20 years of work experience in the relevant fields as assistant engineer or above position of which at least 5 years in senior management position (SE/DGM/equivalent or above).
- At least 5 years' experience in relevant field like generation/ transmission/ distribution utilities.
- Able to demonstrate skill in the analysis & preparation of DPP, PPP and Projects Management.
- Must demonstrate strong participatory leadership ability.
- Knowledge in TPM, TQM, Preventive maintenance, Corporate Governance etc.
- Must have strong communication skill in Bengali & English (written & oral) including working experience using computer.

Age Limit: Maximum age limit will be 60 years on the last date of submission of the application.

Remuneration Package: Including Basic Pay as per company's payscale, Medical Support, Power Station allowance, Residential accommodation at site, Full-time transport with driver, Group Insurance and other allowances & fringe benefits as per Company's Rules/Policies/Provisions.

Terms of Appointment

- The **Executive Director (Planning & Development)** will be appointed on a contractual basis initially for a period of 01 (one) year which is renewable subject to satisfactory performance upto 62 years of age.
- Persons serving in Government, semi-government or autonomous organizations should apply through proper channel.
- APSC reserves the right to cancel any or all applications without assigning any reasons whatsoever.
- Only short-listed candidate(s) will be called for interview.

How to Apply

Candidates should apply in **prescribed application form** which is available in APSC website: www.apscl.gov.bd and should attach necessary documents as described in the form. Application **must be reached on or before 09/12/2021 within office time latest by 5.00 pm** to the below address:

Mohammad Abul Mansur FCMA, ACS
Company Secretary
Ashuganj Power Station Company Limited
Navana Rahim Ardent (Level-8),
185, Shahid Sayed Nazrul Islam Sarani,
Bijoynagar, Dhaka-1000.

ADB gives \$150m to support SMEs hit by Covid

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$150 million loan for Bangladesh to provide financing for cottage, micro, and small enterprises (CMSEs) operated by youths, returning migrant workers and rural entrepreneurs, particularly women, who have been hit hard by Covid-19.

The loan to Bangladesh Bank will be on-lent to participating financial institutions (PFIs), which in turn will help 30,000 CMSEs operated by the beneficiaries.

The project aims to facilitate employment creation and help these vulnerable groups recover from the adverse impacts of the pandemic, a press release said.

Youth unemployment remains at a high level in the country, and they are more severely affected as they concentrate in sectors such as retail trade, accommodation, and food services, which were worst hit by the pandemic.

About 400,000 overseas migrant workers have returned since the start of the pandemic, and many remain unemployed. Rural incomes have stayed depressed and non-farm employment opportunities remain limited.

Rural enterprises were severely affected, putting further pressure on rural employment.

"The ADB supports the Bangladesh government's long-term strategy to tackle the country's employment challenges, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic," said Dongdong Zhang, the ADB's principal financial sector specialist for South Asia.

"Promoting access to finance will help address a critical challenge of helping vulnerable groups in the immediate term and developing CMSEs in the long term," he added. The project aims to disburse 20 per cent of the funds to microbusiness led by women to support their recovery.

The ADB will provide an additional \$900,000 as a technical assistance grant from its Technical Assistance Special Fund for Bangladesh Bank and PFIs to help them strengthen their risk management capacities, business process, and information systems.

The assistance will also boost their support of CMSEs by incorporating mobile finance, value chain financing, and sustainable financing tackling climate change.

This project builds on the \$250 million policy-based Strengthening Social Resilience Program, approved by the ADB in June 2021, to strengthen Bangladesh's social protection programmes and resilience of vulnerable groups.

It also complements the \$50 million additional financing to the ongoing Microenterprise Development Project, approved in December 2020, to help restore economic activities of local microenterprises affected by Covid-19.

Weavers in a tight spot for rising production costs

DISTRICTS IN FOCUS

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *Pabna*

Md Bulbul Hossain, a resident of Jalalpur Tanti para in Pabna sadar upazila, once owned a big weaving factory featuring around 40 power looms.

However, Hossain was recently forced to shutter operations and sell off many of these looms in order to pay off his mounting debt amid the rising cost of raw materials.

"The burden of paying loan instalments in the face of increasing production costs came as a double blow," he said.

"So, I decided to close my factory after suffering huge losses for the past few years and am now considering other ways to use the space," Hossain added.

Similarly, other traditional weavers who have grown tired of suffering prolonged losses are now thinking about switching to other professions.

During a visit to Jalalpur Tanti para, this correspondent found that most weaving factories with handlooms and power looms are on the verge of closure after sustaining huge losses in their fight to survive the Covid-19 pandemic.

While speaking with The Daily Star, many weavers claimed that yarn prices have soared by as much as 70 per cent to 80 per cent in just the last six months.

Besides, the cost of dye and other raw materials also rose but the price of the finished cloth is yet to increase in line with the increase in production cost, said the weavers.

Each pound of 80-count thread currently sells for about Tk 340 to Tk 360 while it was just Tk 190 or Tk 200 a few months ago.

Meanwhile, the 60-count thread is selling for Tk 225 to Tk 240 per pound even though it was previously about Tk 150 to Tk 160.

Likewise, the 40-count thread is now valued at Tk 190 to Tk 200 per pound despite being previously priced between Tk 125 and Tk 160 per pound, they added.

"Thread prices have increased rapidly in the past few months in the name of cotton price hikes in the international market,"



Many of the handloom and power loom factories in Pabna, the country's biggest traditional cloth producing region, are going through tough times in the face of rising raw material costs amid continuous losses caused by Covid-19. Here, a weaving factory is seen operating at half capacity in a bid to curtail production costs. The photo was taken at Jalalpur Tanti para in Pabna sadar upazila recently.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Md Azizul Hakim, a weaver of Jalalpur village, told The Daily Star.

This abrupt spike in the price of raw materials led to a subsequent increase in production costs but since the value of finished products remains unchanged, weavers are facing huge losses, he said.

The market price of a medium quality lungi that costs about Tk 2,400 to produce now ranges between Tk 2,200 to Tk 2,300, up by roughly 30 per cent from just Tk 1,800 to Tk 2,000 a few months ago.

"And after experiencing continuous losses amid the pandemic, I have already

shut down 12 of my 24 looms and am now running a grocery shop beside the factory," Hakim added.

Handloom weaver Md Shanto said more than 20 of the 34 handlooms at his factory have been left lying idle while the rest will likely follow suit early next month, effectively putting him out of a job.

"We used to process more than 60 pounds of thread each day over a few months but now, we cannot process more than 100 pounds of thread per week due to production cuts in almost all handloom factories," said Md Mobarak Hossain, who

works at a dying factory.

As such, most dying sheds at the factory have remained closed amid a lack of orders, he added.

About 25 lakh to 30 lakh people from both Pabna and Sirajganj are involved in the handloom weaving business in various capacities, such as factory owners, workers and traders, according to the handloom and power loom owners association.

They have been facing unbearable hardship ever since the pandemic began in March last year, they said.

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GLOBAL BUSINESS

European, US recovery helps boost 2021 remittances to \$589b: World Bank

REUTERS

Remittances to low- and middle-income countries from citizens working abroad will rise by more than expected in 2021 thanks to a strong economic recovery in the United States and Europe as well as rising oil revenue in Russia and the gulf, the World Bank said.

Remittances are expected to have grown by 7.3 per cent to \$589 billion this year following a 1.7 per cent decline in 2020 as the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic tipped the world economy into a recession, the World Bank said in its report published on Wednesday.

"The immediate impact of the crisis on remittance flows was very deep," said Dilip Ratha, lead author of the report and head of the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD).

"The surprising pace of recovery is welcome news. To keep remittances flowing, especially through digital channels, providing access to bank accounts for migrants and remittance



Remittances are expected to have grown by 7.3 per cent to \$589 billion this year following a 1.7 per cent decline in 2020.

REUTERS/FILE

service providers remains a key requirement," Ratha said.

Remittances to East Asia

and the Pacific are forecast to fall 4 per cent this year to \$131 billion, though excluding

China the yearly flow would increase by 1.4 per cent.

Remittances to South Asia

likely grew around 8 per cent to \$159 billion in 2021.

Remittance flows to Europe and Central Asia are seen rising 5.3 per cent to \$67 billion, the Middle East and North Africa is expected to increase remittance inflows by 9.7 per cent to \$62 billion, and flows to Sub-Saharan Africa should see a 6.2 per cent increase to \$45 billion, the World Bank said.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, remittance flows will likely reach a new high of \$126 billion this year with Mexico taking some 42 per cent of the regional haul, or close to \$53 billion.

El Salvador, Honduras and Jamaica are expected to receive remittances exceeding 23 per cent of GDP in each case.

Globally, remittances are expected to grow by 2.6 per cent in 2022, with the downside risks focused on a resurgence of Covid-19 cases and the mobility restrictions that could come with it.

Lower fiscal stimulus in developed countries could also weaken remittance flows.

UN warns of soaring prices in 2022 due to freight rate spike

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations warned Thursday that a surge in container freight rates could mean higher prices for consumers next year unless pandemic-fuelled problems are untangled.

The UN's trade and development agency (UNCTAD) said global import price levels could increase by 11 per cent and consumer price levels by 1.5 per cent between now and 2023.

"Global consumer prices will rise significantly in the year ahead until shipping supply chain disruptions are unblocked and port constraints and terminal inefficiencies are tackled," UNCTAD said in its Review of Maritime Transport 2021 report.

Global supply chains faced unprecedented demand from the second half of 2020 onwards as consumers spent on goods rather than services during coronavirus lockdowns.

But the upswing in demand hit several practical constraints, including container ship carrying capacity, container shortages, labour shortages, congestion at ports and Covid-19 restrictions.

The mismatch led to record container freight rates "on practically all container trade routes", according to the report.

"The current surge in freight rates will have a profound impact on trade and undermine socioeconomic recovery, especially in developing countries, until maritime shipping operations return to normal," said Rebeca Grynspan, UNCTAD's secretary general.

"Returning to normal would entail investing in new solutions, including infrastructure, freight technology and digitalisation and trade facilitation measures," she said.

UNCTAD said the pandemic had magnified pre-existing industry challenges, particularly labour shortages and infrastructure gaps.

It also exposed vulnerabilities, such as when China's Yantian Port shut in May due to a coronavirus outbreak, causing significant delays, or when the giant container ship Ever Given blocked the Suez Canal in March, snarling global trade.

Still, the pandemic's impact on maritime trade volumes last year was less severe than initially expected, UNCTAD said.

Maritime trade contracted by 3.8 per cent to 10.65 billion tons in 2020, and is projected to increase by 4.3 per cent in 2021. UNCTAD said the medium-term outlook remained positive but was subject to "mounting risks and uncertainties".

The agency predicted that annual growth will slow to 2.4 per cent between 2022 and 2026, compared to 2.9 per cent over the past two decades.

"A lasting recovery... largely hinges on being able to mitigate the headwinds and on a worldwide vaccine roll-out," said Grynspan.

"The impacts of the Covid-19 crisis will hit small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) the hardest.

EU plans to ban food imports from deforested areas

AFP, Brussels

The EU plans to bar food and wood imports from deforested areas, according to a proposal unveiled Wednesday aimed at using its trade power to drive sustainability.

The draft law, which Brussels wants to turn into binding rules for all 27 European Union nations, would require companies show their soy, beef, palm oil, cocoa, coffee and wood products are certified "deforestation-free".

It follows an international pledge made at the COP26 summit last week to end deforestation by 2030.

"This proposal is a truly ground-breaking one," the EU commissioner for climate action policy, Virginijus Sinkevicius, told a media conference.

"It targets not just illegal deforestation but also deforestation driven by agricultural expansion," he said.

Under the EU plan, two criteria would have to be met: that the commodities are produced in accordance with the origin country's laws; and that they were not produced on land deforested or degraded since the beginning of 2021.

Pandemic debt adds to challenge of funding world's climate goals

REUTERS, Washington

Huge spending by governments kept the world economy afloat during the pandemic as officials mobilized a fiscal response not seen since World War Two to bolster household incomes and give businesses a fighting chance to survive the health crisis.

But the resulting nearly \$300 trillion pile of debt held by governments, businesses and households will leave many countries with vulnerable finances and weigh on efforts to address urgent challenges such as climate change and ageing populations.

Even as rich and poor governments take stock of battered finances, inflation is pushing central banks

toward higher interest rates and a tightening of monetary policy which, for the indebted, can only make the math less favorable.

"That means higher borrowing costs, higher interest burdens for the government and for the real sectors," said Emre Tifitk, direct of sustainability research for the Institute of International Finance (IIF), the global association of the financial industry.

"Over the medium term, the issue is all about finding the resources to fund climate goals and most are extremely behind on that," he added of the rapid decarbonization of the global economy needed to avert a climate crisis.

This month's Glasgow climate talks produced some new pledges by countries to reduce carbon emissions,

but left many questions unanswered about how commitments will be financed and put into practice.

According to the IIF, global debt may just about have hit its peak from the pandemic and may fall slightly by year's end from the current \$296 trillion. But easing the reliance on carbon-based fuels and mitigating climate damage is expected to require massive public and private investment - on order of \$90 trillion by 2030, according to one World Bank estimate.

At this point there's no global plan for how to underwrite it, and governments' share of climate investments will have to compete with social, health and other spending priorities set to intensify because of demographic trends like ageing populations.