

BBS to launch GIS app to collect climate change data

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The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is going to launch a web application that would be used to gather data and information on the environment, climate change and natural disasters and generate statistical information.

Using the platform, the BBS would collect data and information from various agencies, integrate them into the web platform and churn them out as statistical.

"This is an open-source platform and a great medium to publish socio-economic, demographic and environment-related data," said Rafiqul Islam, deputy director of the BBS.

Islam said there is no such GIS (geographical information system) database in Bangladesh.

The web platform is expected to assist policy-makers in project planning and decision-making. This will also empower government officials, academia, researchers and potential knowledge clients to securely host, manage, share, visualise and analyse geospatial data, according to a presentation.

The BBS has taken the initiative under its Strengthening Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Statistics project.

Reckitt Benckiser, Unique Hotel take PLC suffix

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The Dhaka Stock Exchange Limited (DSE) has approved the proposals that sought to change the name of Reckitt Benckiser (Bangladesh) Limited and Unique Hotel & Resorts Limited.

Accordingly, the name of Reckitt Benckiser (Bangladesh) Limited will be Reckitt Benckiser (Bangladesh) PLC. Similarly, Unique Hotel & Resorts Limited will be known as Unique Hotel & Resorts PLC.

The changes will come into effect on March 23, according to two separate posts on the DSE yesterday.

In Bangladesh, the companies are switching to the PLC (Public Limited Company) suffix in order to comply with the amended Company Act 1994. The amendment was made in 2020.

A PLC is a public company and is the equivalent of a US publicly traded company that carries the Inc. or corporation designation.



According to aviation experts, Biman now boasts one of the youngest fleets in Asia with 21 modern aircraft. The national flag carrier owns 18 of the 21 planes while the remaining five are operated on lease.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangladesh plans to buy aircraft from Airbus

Says state minister for civil aviation

RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh plans to purchase new commercial aircraft from Airbus, a Netherlands-based multinational aerospace company, in order to bolster the fleet of Biman Bangladesh Airlines and thereby tap into the growing aviation industry.

"We definitely have plans to buy aircraft from Airbus to increase the size of Biman's fleet and we are working on it," said M Mahub Ali, the state minister for civil aviation.

However, he did not elaborate on how many planes would be bought or when.

Ali was speaking to reporters after the first-ever Bangladesh Aviation Summit, organised by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism in collaboration with its France and UK counterparts at a city hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

He went on to say that while Airbus previously submitted proposals for selling aircraft to Biman, the matter was brought up again during the summit.

Emerging from the inaugural session, Shafiul Azim, managing director and CEO of Biman, said discussions are being held with Airbus to this end.

"If it helps meet our requirements, then why not [buy aircraft from Airbus]?" he added.

According to aviation experts, Biman now boasts one of the youngest fleets in Asia with 21 modern aircraft comprised of four Boeing 777-300 ER, four Boeing 787-8, two Boeing 787-9, six Boeing 737-800, and five De Havilland Canada DHC-8 Q400.

Biman owns 18 of the 21 planes while the remaining five are operated on lease.

To bolster its fleet after becoming a public limited company in 2007, Biman went on a shopping spree the following year, spending around Tk 19,020 crore on new planes.

In 2008, Biman had inked a deal with

Boeing for purchasing 10 brand new planes, including the four 787-8 aircraft. Later, two 787-9 were also purchased from the American multinational aerospace company.

All 12 of the aircraft were delivered by 2019.

Since 2000, the number of air passengers has increased at an annual rate of 9.1 per cent on average, as per data from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Some 1.3 million people in the country opted to travel by air that year while the number jumped to about 6 million in 2020.

As such, the aviation market has almost doubled with passenger and cargo transportation growing by about 10 per cent annually over the past 10 years, according to the aviation ministry.

With this backdrop, aviation in Bangladesh is expected to almost triple over the next 15 years.

Currently, the number of air passengers in the country stands at eight million while it is expected to reach 16 million by 2035.

In a written speech at the programme, Ali said that along with the country's socioeconomic development, its civil aviation sector has undergone massive changes in the last 14 years.

And to ensure that passengers are provided with services of international standard while also sustaining the current growth trend of the aviation industry, the present government is implementing various development works along with formulating timely laws and policies.

Work is also underway to ensure the timely expansion of aviation infrastructure across the country, increase passenger services,

improve technical and public skills and ensure safe and smooth air navigation.

Besides that, fleet modernisation of Biman Bangladesh Airlines is ongoing.

"In this era of globalisation, it is not possible to achieve the desired goal of development alone in a high-tech industry like aviation as this requires the exchange of technology, research and services," Ali said.

"The UK and France, whose cooperation we received earlier, are interested to support our aviation industry. So, I hope to see them in the future to help develop our aviation," he added.

In his speech, Salman F Rahman, the prime minister's adviser on private industry and investment, said the proposed partnership and collaboration with Airbus will undoubtedly accelerate growth in the local aviation sector. This includes cooperation in areas such as trading, infrastructure development, maintenance, repair and overall service.

He also said Airbus emphasised that it is not only interested in selling aircraft to Bangladesh as the company is keener on transferring technologies and providing training.

Rushanara Ali, trade envoy of the prime minister of the UK to Bangladesh, also spoke at the programme.

Among others, Marie Masdupuy, ambassador of France to Bangladesh, Robert Chatterton Dickson, the British high commissioner to Bangladesh, Mokammel Hossain, secretary of the aviation ministry, Remi Maillard, president and managing director of Airbus India and South Asia, were present.



In the past, the government used to give subsidies of about Tk 8,000 crore for fertiliser every year but now the amount has been increased to more than Tk 30,000 crore owing to price hike in the international market, experts said.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Development spending lowest in 12 years

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Development spending in Bangladesh stood at 32.10 per cent in the first eight months of the current fiscal year, the slowest pace of implementation during the rule of the Awami League, official figures showed.

In taka terms, the amount spent from the budget under the annual development programme (ADP) was lower in July-February as well than the amount expended in the identical period a year earlier.

The government managed to spend Tk 82,170 crore from its ADP budget in July-February of 2022-23, which was Tk 84,765 crore in the same period in 2021-22, according to data from the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED).

As of February, the ministries and divisions managed to spend 32.10 per cent of the total ADP allocation of Tk 256,003 crore set aside to carry out development activities throughout the current fiscal year.

It was 35.80 per cent in the same period of FY22 and the lowest since 2010-11 when it stood at 37 per cent.

Between July and February, implementing entities spent Tk 46,261 crore from the government's portion of the ADP, down 6.72 per cent year-on-year.

The government managed to spend Tk 82,170 crore from its ADP budget in July-February of 2022-23, which was Tk 84,765 crore in the same period in 2021-22

The use of government funds declined as Bangladesh took various austerity measures in project implementation owing to the economic crisis, higher inflation and the US dollar shortage caused by the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

For the past three years, it has put the implementation of low-priority projects on hold to free up funds for the more productive sectors.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, said the lower spending of the government fund was in line with the need to stabilise the macroeconomy.

There has been no restriction when it comes to spending from project assistance. As a result, the use of project assistance saw a 6 per cent year-on-year increase to Tk 33,190 crore during the same period. It was Tk 31,285 crore in the previous fiscal year.

"But there should have been more emphasis on accelerating the implementation of the projects backed by foreign aid," said Hossain.

Spending by the state-owned enterprises came down to Tk 2,719 crore in the eight months to February, against Tk 3,886 crore in FY22, IMED data showed.

Though there has been no directive on restricting expenses in the health and education sectors, development expenditure in the segments has remained the lowest.

Among the fifteen highest recipients of ADP, the health services division was the worst-performing division in July-February. Its spending stood at Tk 2,366 crore, accounting for only 15 per cent of the total allocation of Tk 15,779 crore.

Other low performers include the shipping ministry, the secondary and higher education division, and the primary and mass education ministry.

The power division was the top performer as it spent 47.78 per cent of the budget.

The bridges division came second with expenditure standing at 47.19 per cent, followed by the housing and public works ministry and the Prime Minister's Office, whose spending was 38.83 per cent and 38.03 per cent respectively.

Balanced use of fertiliser can save Tk 20,000cr a year

Experts say

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Balanced use of fertilisers could increase crop production by 8 per cent to 14 per cent and save Tk 20,000 crore annually in Bangladesh, according to researchers.

The researchers shared the information at a programme titled "Fertiliser Policy Dialogue" at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) at Farmgate in Dhaka on Tuesday, according to a press release.

They said in the past, the government gave subsidies of about Tk 8,000 crore for fertiliser every year and now the amount has been increased to more than Tk 30,000 crore owing to the price hike in the international market.

Speaking at the dialogue, the panellists also urged the farmers and other stakeholders to use fertilisers moderately and cautiously.

Agriculture Secretary Wahida Akhtar said that the government has decided to increase the use of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fertiliser and reduce the use of fertiliser.

"But it is seen that the use of urea is increasing day by day. The use of DAP is also increasing. This leads to wastage of fertilisers and increases the cost of importing fertilisers."

She said if one kilogramme of DAP is applied, the requirement to use fertiliser will go down by 400 grammes. "In this case, there is no need to use triple superphosphate (TSP) fertiliser."

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Fintech Hub launched to nurture young entrepreneurs

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Fintech Hub Bangladesh, a non-commercial initiative, has been launched to help young fintech entrepreneurs and professionals under the age of 30 years.

More than 30 fintech experts, researchers and entrepreneurs were present at the launching ceremony in Dhaka on Tuesday.

Monzurul Hoque, a professor at Saint Xavier University in Chicago, presented the objective and roadmap of the Fintech Hub.

A six-member steering committee of the Fintech Hub was also introduced. The committee includes a few veteran fintech founders, senior bankers and technology experts.

The hub has been set up with the objective of

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