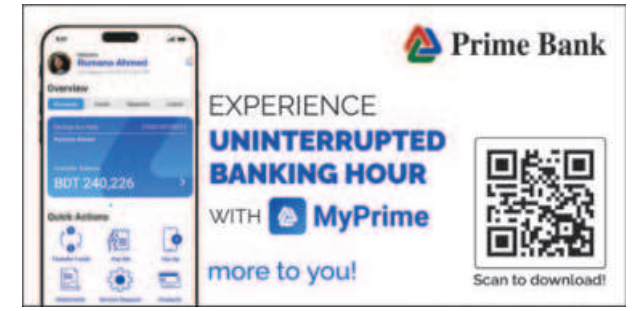


Star BUSINESS



Tk 2,000 minimum tax For those who need to file tax return

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Taxpayers who have to file returns to avail 38 types of services are likely to be required to pay a minimum tax from next fiscal year, said the finance ministry officials yesterday.

As per the plan, a person will have to pay Tk 2,000 as minimum tax even if he or she claims to have no income, according to the officials.

The tax authority is considering taking up the new measure a year after it made submission of tax returns mandatory for taxpayers seeking to avail services.

The NBR rules say proof of submission of return is needed for services such as getting loans exceeding Tk 500,000 from a bank or financial institution, becoming a director or a sponsor shareholder of a company and using an import or export registration certificate.

The proof will also be needed to secure or renew a trade licence in city corporations or municipalities and get the registration of a co-operative society.

As per the plan, a person will have to pay Tk 2,000 as minimum tax even if he or she claims to have no income, according to officials

Among others, the proof is also necessary for obtaining or maintaining a credit card, opening postal savings accounts exceeding Tk 500,000 or purchasing state sponsored savings instruments, known as "sanchaypatra" in Bangla, of over Tk 500,000.

People who open and continue using bank accounts of any sort with a credit balance of over Tk 10 lakh are also needed to submit tax returns and submit acknowledgement receipts or tax certificates, among others.

Officials said this section of registered taxpayers may be required to pay a minimum tax from the next fiscal year of 2023-24 if they have no income or they earn below the threshold of annual income where the tax rate is zero.

Officials said the ceiling of the zero-tax rate for personal income may be increased to Tk 350,000 from the next fiscal year, which begins in July, from Tk 300,000 at present.

READ MORE ON B3



Selim RF Hussain, centre, chairman of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh, speaks at a press conference on "Bangladesh Banking Sector Outlook 2023" at the head office of Brac Bank in the capital yesterday. Md Ahsan-uz Zaman, managing director of Midland Bank, Syed Waseque Md Ali, managing director of First Security Islami Bank, Mashrur Arefin, managing director of The City Bank, and Abul Kashem Md Shirin, managing director of Dutch-Bangla Bank, were present.

PHOTO: BRAC BANK

Banks alone can't tackle NPLs

CEOs say as bad loan situation turns severe; call for major reforms

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The banking sector alone can't tackle the challenge of the higher non-performing loans (NPLs) given the severity of the issue, said the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB) yesterday.

"The issue of defaulted loans has become a major challenge for the banking sector in recent times," said Selim RF Hussain, the chairman of the platform, which represents the chief executives of all banks in the country.

"The central bank and commercial banks can't resolve the problems stemming from defaulted loans if the whole country and society do not take concerted efforts to this end."

He made the comments at a press conference on "Bangladesh Banking Sector Outlook 2023" at the head office of Brac Bank in the capital.

Hussain said rules had been relaxed in the banking sector in the last four to five years, particularly since 2019, as the finance ministry

had thought that large borrowers would repay bad debts thanks to the flexible policies.

"But it was found after four years that the relaxed policies have not paid off."

Hussain said he had recently had a discussion with the central bank governor where he also agreed that global best practices should be followed to arrest NPLs.

Default loans in the banking sector increased 16.8 per cent year-on-year to Tk 120,656 crore in 2022.

The ratio of the default loans accounted for 8.16 per cent of the outstanding loans given out by banks as of December last year, up from 7.93 per cent a year ago, data from the Bangladesh Bank showed.

The extent of troubled assets is obscured by lax regulatory definitions and reporting standards, extended forbearance, as well as weak supervisory enforcement, according to the World Bank.

Published NPL statistics do not reflect internationally accepted definitions of non-performing exposures, it said.

"It is not possible to resolve the NPL problem overnight. It will take time," said Hussain, also the managing director of Brac Bank.

"We should have a big social commitment and must invest hugely to improve the legal framework for NPL resolutions. We need many more courts and concerned officials and special training for them."

According to the ABB chief, many businesses usually secure stay orders from courts to have their NPLs treated as unclassified loans.

"Businesses show the NPLs as regular loans years after years based on the stay orders. The banking sector can't deal with this sort of situation."

Hussain also admitted that there is a lack of corporate governance in the banking sector.

In Bangladesh, the banking sector has flourished in the last 30-40 years but this advancement has been different from many other countries.

READ MORE ON B3



Assess gravity of current problems first Economist Selim Raihan says in interview

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN



The government is yet to take any comprehensive corrective measures to tackle macroeconomic challenges as it has not properly assessed the gravity of the situation in the current fiscal year, an economist said.

The crisis flared up from deep-rooted problems accumulating over the years, Prof Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), told The Daily Star in a phone interview on Saturday.

Though some pressure has reduced, many challenges prevail in the macroeconomy's primary drivers, such as export and remittance earning fluctuations, depletion of foreign currency reserves and inflationary pressure on low-income people, he said.

READ MORE ON B2

STOCKS	
DSEX	CASPI ▲
Flat 6,281.65	0.01% 18,521.78

COMMODITIES	
Gold ▼	Oil ▲
\$1,974.28 (per ounce)	\$71.88 (per barrel)

ASIAN MARKETS			
MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
▲ 0.38% 61,963.68	▲ 0.92% 31,086.82	▲ 0.27% 3,211.09	▲ 0.39% 3,296.47

USTR inquires about labour situation

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDDHA

Visiting officials of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) yesterday sought the views of union leaders from different economic sectors on the labour situation in Bangladesh across six major areas.

The areas were: freedom of

association, collective bargaining agent, trade union registration, unfair labour practices, workers' wages and uniform labour laws for both inside and outside of Export Processing Zones (EPZs).

Local union leaders and USTR officials discussed these issues at a meeting organised by the Solidarity

Centre at its office in Dhaka.

Md Towhidur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation, was present at the meeting attended by five or six union leaders from the country.

After the meeting, Rahman said the union leaders wanted relaxation

READ MORE ON B2

Years of Sustainable Development

The Emerging Credit Rating Ltd. (ECRL) has rated Dhaka Bank Limited for the year of 2022 up to April 07, 2024. A brief info of the rating based on Financial Statements are presented here.

Surveillance Rating (ECRL)		INTERPRETATION
Year 2022	Year 2021	
Long Term AA	Long Term AA	Commercial Bank rated "AA" has a very strong capacity to meet its financial commitments, and is generally in a position to withstand adverse developments in the economy, and in business and other external conditions. The bank typically possess a good track record and have no readily apparent weaknesses.
Short Term ST-2	Short Term ST-2	Commercial Bank rated "ST-2" has a strong capacity to meet its financial commitments in a timely manner, however, it is somewhat susceptible to adverse developments in the economy, and in business and other external conditions.
Outlook Stable	Outlook Stable	"Stable" indicates that a rating is likely to remain unchanged.
Valid from		April 08, 2023
Valid till		April 07, 2024

DHAKABANK
LIMITED
EXCELLENCE IN BANKING

www.dhakabanktd.com

Officer to Manager (Grade: AO to SPO) Trade Operations, Eastern Bank Ltd.

Prime Responsibilities

- > Issuance of LC, TT, amendment following local and international rules and regulations.
- > Import bill scrutiny and settlement of payment/acceptance.
- > Disbursement and adjustment of import loans.
- > Export LC advising.
- > Export bill collection and purchase.
- > Maintaining and providing MIS for related activities on regular basis.
- > Ensuring internal and regulatory compliance including AML, CFT & TBML issues and strict monitoring of audit issues for non-recurrence.
- > Proactively support other team members in daily work and also for completion of different projects as and when assigned.
- > Ensuring service excellence.

Qualification & Other Competencies

- > Minimum graduation from relevant background.
- > 2-8 years of work experience in permanent position at Centralized Trade Processing in reputed banks.
- > Strong background in Trade Operations, candidates with related professional degrees are preferred.
- > Energetic and self-motivated team member and positive attitude to learn.
- > Strong interpersonal and communication skills.
- > Adequate computer literacy to work on online software modules and advanced knowledge in MS Office packages.

Job Location

Anywhere in Bangladesh

How You Can Apply?

Please log on to www.ebl.com.bd/career and apply on or before **Jun 01, 2023**. Eastern Bank Ltd. (EBL) offers excellent career opportunities with competitive salary and benefit package. Candidates will be treated strictly on merit, experience and performance record. Only short-listed candidates will be communicated and any sort of persuasion will result in disqualification. EBL reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason whatsoever.



Transcom Consumer Products Ltd honoured three of its top wholesale partners as the highest buyers at a daylong event styled "Bandhan Family Day-2023" for its top wholesale partners and their families at Fortis Downtown Resort near Dhaka recently. SK Firdous Karim, head of sales and trade marketing of the company, was present.

PHOTO: TRANSCOM CONSUMER PRODUCTS LTD



Ataur Rahman, secretary general of ICC Bangladesh, and Mahmudur Rahman, senior executive vice-president of Islami Bank Bangladesh, posed for photographs with participants of a workshop on "Export Operations, Back-to-Back LC Mechanism and Challenges of Export Finance" organised by ICC Bangladesh in Chattogram on Saturday. A total of 78 participants from 25 banks, 2 from Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company and 9 officials of clients of Eastern Bank and Prime Bank attended the workshop.

PHOTO: ICC BANGLADESH



Mohammad Feroz Hossain, managing director of Exim Bank, cuts a ribbon to inaugurate a hajj booth at Ashkona Hajj Camp in Uttara, Dhaka recently. Among others, Joint Secretary Md Saiful Islam, director of Hajj Office, Md Humayun Kabir and Shah Md Abdul Bari, additional managing directors of the bank, Jasim Uddin Bhuiyan and Maksuda Khanam, deputy managing directors, were present.

PHOTO: EXIM BANK



Mohammad Ali, managing director of Pubali Bank, cuts a cake at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently, celebrating its 64 years of operation in banking sector. Mohammad Esha, Mohammad Shahadat Hossain, Ahmed Enayet Manzur, Md Shahnewaz Khan and Mohammad Anisuzzaman, deputy managing directors, along with senior executives of the bank were present.

PHOTO: PUBALI BANK



Syed Nowsher Ali, additional managing director of Premier Bank, cuts a ribbon to inaugurate a Mongla branch of the bank in Bagerhat recently. Among others, Rafiqul Islam, manager of Mongla branch, and Habibur Rahman, manager of Gopalganj branch, along with senior officials of the bank, were present.

PHOTO: PREMIER BANK



Habibur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Barguna, inaugurated a Barguna branch of IFIC Bank on Sadar Road in Barguna Thana recently. Md Kefaeat Ullah, branch manager of IFIC Bank, and Sanjit Das, president of Barguna Press Club, were present.

PHOTO: IFIC BANK

Delta Life, Ha-Meem sign deal on insurance coverage

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Delta Life Insurance Company Ltd recently signed an agreement with Ha-Meem Group and its subsidiaries Channel 24 Ltd and the daily Samakal on insurance facilities.

Anwarul Haque, chief executive officer (current charge) of Delta Life, AK Azad, managing director of Ha-Meem Group, Talat Mamun, executive director of Channel 24, and Abu Sayeed Khan, advisory editor of the Samakal, inked the deal at the insurer's head office in Gulshan, said a press release.

Under the agreement, all officials and employees of the three organisations will get the facilities of group and health insurance from Delta Life.

Haliz Ahmed Mazumder, chairman of the insurer, and directors along with high officials of the organisations were present.

Prime Bank joins hands with Dream Square Resort

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank has recently signed a strategic partnership agreement with Gazipur-based Dream Square Resort.

Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of the bank, and Md Rafiqul Islam, assistant director of sales and marketing of the resort, signed the deal at the former's head office in Dhaka, said a press release.

Under the partnership, the bank's "monarch" (priority banking) customers, credit or debit cardholders and employees will enjoy benefits, including preferential pricing, at the resort.

Mamur Ahmed, head of consumer sales of the bank, and Masudul Haque Bhuiyan, head of cards, along with senior officials from both organisations were present.

Assess gravity of current problems

FROM PAGE B1
"If you want to take a collective measure, you have to understand the problem first with its gravity and why it happens," he said.

"I still don't see such a proper assessment in the current fiscal year," said Raihan, also a professor of economics at the University of Dhaka.

He went on to say there was a common narrative in the market justifying for the crisis -- the post-pandemic effect and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

"I don't disagree with this narrative. Of course, these issues contributed here. But the domestic management issues are the causes," said Prof Raihan.

The country still has some weaknesses in some areas. "We are still unsuccessful in revenue collection, addressing non-performing loans, containing money laundering and managing

inflation," he said. The development partners have done their assessments and taken steps, such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) attaching conditions on giving loans, said Raihan.

"This assessment should have been done from our own initiative. We, the economists, have been raising these issues for a long time, but the government did not take it seriously," he said.

If policymakers had conducted the assessments, collective measures could have been taken a long ago, he said.

Now it seems that the government is bringing about the reforms under pressure from the IMF and the World Bank, said Prof Raihan.

If this is the case, the reforms will not bear any "ownership" and would be "half-hearted", he said.

"It will be just measures taken to satisfy the IMF or get (loans in) instalments

from them, which is not very helpful for the country, because (here) ownership is extremely important," he said.

The government has announced that the foreign exchange rates, which differ for purchase and sales, will be unified two or three months later, said Prof Raihan.

Making such an early announcement is not a very good idea and unscrupulous people can take advantage of it by charging more than the rates fixed by dealers and banks, he said.

"If you want to do it, do it now without giving any kind of chance for manipulation," he said.

Asked what he would have done had he been a policymaker, Raihan said he would have acknowledged the facts at first and would have tried to find the root of the problems.

Here, the good governance aspect lies in

the proper implementation of the policies amidst the many obstacles and the way persons causing the impediments are handled, he said.

"Can these reforms be brought about against vested interest groups? I would have put emphasis on it," he said.

"In the last decade, we had a successful macroeconomic stabilisation story. But there are many fragilities in the main pillars of the current issues. We have to think about how to strengthen the pillars as the LDC graduation is ahead," said Prof Raihan.

Bangladesh is to make the United Nations status graduation from a least developed country to a developing one in 2026.

"So, the government should synchronise reforms for the critical issues, not half-heartedly. That's why this year's budget is very important," he said.

Half of UK firms to defer investment for tax hike

FROM PAGE B4
of between 10 million and 300 million pounds (\$12 million - \$379 million) reported that the rise in corporation tax would delay investment, while 39 per cent said it would slow hiring or lead to job losses.

To try to limit the impact on investment, finance minister Jeremy Hunt said in March that businesses

would be able to immediately offset investment in plant and machinery against tax, a policy known as full expensing.

"The recent rise in the headline corporation tax rate will dampen current business investment plans although the positive reaction to the new full expensing capital allowances regime suggests this may only be a short-

term effect," said Paul Falvey, a tax partner at BDO.

Britain's overall tax burden remains lower than that in almost all other European countries, but has risen steadily in recent years - reflecting an ageing population and slow economic growth - and is on track to reach its highest since World War Two. Hunt told businesses

at the British Chambers of Commerce's annual conference last week that he wanted to reduce their taxes, but that he did not know if that would be possible when the government is next scheduled to set out its budget plans towards the end of the year.

The BDO survey was based on responses from 512 companies polled between March 30 and April 16.

USTR inquires about labour situation

FROM PAGE B1
of some provisions of the labour laws so that workers can enjoy the benefit of freedom of association at the factory level.

Currently, there are some provisions in the labour laws that have been acting as barriers to this end.

For instance, if workers want to form a union, holding two board meetings with all the members is necessary.

So, union leaders demanded that these meetings be held by an executive committee rather than all the workers, he added.

Besides, the consent of 20 per cent of a factory's workforce is mandatory for forming a union at the unit. As such,

union leaders urged for the withdrawal of this threshold and opined that the consent of just 20 workers should be enough.

Union leaders also urged for easing the online union registration process as they have to submit printed documents along with the submission of an application online.

They also requested stopping unfair labour practices at the factory level. For instance, workers who are involved in the formation of a union must not be terminated or face any criminal case against them.

The union leaders also informed that they want uniform labour laws at factories both inside and outside of EPZs as just two

labour laws are practiced at present.

They also demanded Tk 23,000 per month as the minimum salary for garment workers, Rahman said.

The USTR team mainly wanted to know whether the roadmap of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is being followed in labour issues, he added.

Razequzzaman Ratan, president of the Socialist Labour Front, a left-leaning labour rights body, was also present at the meeting.

Echoing the views of Rahman, Ratan said they mainly discussed how to smoothen rules related to the formation of unions at the factory level.

For example, Ratan said

the 20 per cent threshold is really detrimental for the formation of workers' unions.

Instead, the government should follow the conventions of the ILO in allowing the formation of unions as Bangladesh has also ratified those conventions, he added.

Both Rahman and Ratan said they already submitted their views on these six issues along with other agenda to the Ministry of Labour and Employment in January this year.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
office of the Executive Engineer
PWD Division Barguna
Tel & Fax No: 02478885505
www.pwd.gov.bd

Memo No-25.36.0400.140-1232

Date: 21.05.2023

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Barguna for the Procurement of:

Tender ID No	Reference No	Description of works	Type, Method	Publishing Date & Time	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
Tender ID-835749	Barguna/egg/resp/air/22-23/Hospital	Repair of chilikote, changing of old grill and dilapidated collapsible gate, changing of old water line and water tank on the roof of the building of Barguna Civil Surgeon office.	NCT OTM	21-May-2023 12:12	30-May-2023 15:30	31-May-2023 13:12	31-May-2023 13:12
Tender ID-835783	Patua/egg/repair/22-23/6	Construction of generator room of Barguna General Hospital.		21-May-2023 10:55	30-May-2023 15:30	31-May-2023 13:30	31-May-2023 13:30
Tender ID-835782	Patua/egg/repair/22-23/5	Changing of sanitary pipe and outside painting of Barguna Civil Surgeon office.		21-May-2023 10:49	30-May-2023 15:30	31-May-2023 13:30	31-May-2023 13:30
Tender ID-835780	Barguna/egg/resp/air/22-23/4	Construction of drain from northside alongwith westside of Nursing Institute boundary wall to northside of Moruge of Barguna General Hospital.		21-May-2023 10:43	30-May-2023 15:30	31-May-2023 13:30	31-May-2023 13:30
Tender ID-835768	Barguna/egg/resp/air/22-23/3	Changing of old door window of westside of 1st floor women ward and changing of bathroom fittings of Barguna general Hospital.		21-May-2023 10:35	30-May-2023 15:30	31-May-2023 13:30	31-May-2023 13:30
Tender ID-835755	Barguna PWD Memo No:-667 Date:-15/03/2023	Uplifting of drain, changing of pipe for removal of roof water and renovation of septic tank, soak well of 3rd class quarter of Barguna General Hospital.		21-May-2023 10:26	30-May-2023 15:30	31-May-2023 13:26	31-May-2023 13:26
Tender ID-835784	Barguna PWD Memo No:-667 Date:-15/03/2023	Construction of dustbin for removal of waste of Barguna 250 bed Hospital.		21-May-2023 10:03	30-May-2023 15:30	31-May-2023 13:30	31-May-2023 13:30

This is an online Tender where only e-Tenders will be accepted in National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender Registration in the National e-GP System 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 deposited online through any schedule bank.
Further information and guide lines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk.
(helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

(Md. Haroon Rashid)
Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Barguna

GD-901



Jashim new president of Saarc chamber

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Md Jashim Uddin, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), is going to be the new president of the Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), the apex trade body of the south Asian region.

He will serve as the president of SCCI for the period of 2023-2024.

Md Jashim Uddin will succeed Pakistan's Iftikhar Ali Malik, who served the SCCI as the president from June 2020 to May 2023.



Workers build cages bending and welding together steel rods for piling foundations into the ground. The piles are built under different structures to transfer loads from the structures to the ground, helping to support them. Five workers can prepare anywhere from five to six cages in a day, earning Tk 600 each. The photo was taken from Khulna city on Sunday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Private firms to get 90% revenue from govt's broadband infrastructure

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government spent a whopping Tk 1,200 crore to lay optical fibre across 2,600 unions of Bangladesh under phase-3 of the Info Sarkar project, which aims to provide high-speed internet at the union level.

The Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) yesterday signed a deal with Summit Communications and Fiber@Home for the maintenance, upgradation, replacement, operation and connection of the new broadband internet infrastructure.

Under a public-private partnership (PPP), 90 per cent of the revenue earned from the broadband connections will go to the two private entities while the government will just get 10 per cent.

The Daily Star spoke to one senior government official and two executives of

private companies for their views on the deal, all of whom said they are surprised to see the government's share of the revenue.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, one said the government's share of the revenue is "really meagre" considering that it bore the cost of the entire project.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, said the agreement was not made in secret and all regulations were maintained so far, including those related to PPP, public procurement and tenders.

"They [the two private companies] will also provide Tk 30 crore upfront under the condition of the deal," he said while speaking at the signing ceremony held at ICT Tower in Dhaka.

"They will do everything for 20 years and share 10 per cent of the revenue with the government," Palak added.

Five years earlier, Summit and Fibre@Home won the tender for implementing phase 3 of the Info Sarkar project, which involved laying the fibre cables.

Now, the same two entities got the task of repairing, maintaining, operating, and upgrading these broadband connections.

Summit Communications will extend the internet to over 1,290 of the 2,600 unions while Fiber@Home will cover the rest under the deal signed yesterday.

Ranjit Kumar, executive director of the BCC, Md Arif Al Islam, managing director and CEO of Summit Communications, and Brig Gen (ret'd) Md Rafiqur Rahman, managing director of Fibre@Home, signed the deal, according to a statement from the ICT Division.

Md Arif Al Islam, managing director and CEO of Summit Communications, said if it takes Tk 100 to build a fibre optic

network, the cost of maintenance, repairs and upgradation could total Tk 300 to Tk 400 in 20 years.

Considering the huge burden, the company was initially very shaky about the project but ultimately took it up as a social and governmental responsibility, he added.

Islam then said that they would face substantial loss in running the network for roughly the next eight years.

"We may make some profit in the 9th and 10th years," he added.

Moydul Haque Siddiqui, chairman of Fiber@Home, said that through underground and overhead fibre optical networks, this network will reduce the digital divide at the marginal level.

However, duplication of this network will not provide any benefit and the entire network will be threatened, he added.

Underinvestment could trigger oil market volatility

Opec secretary general says

REUTERS, Dubai

Opec Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais said on Monday that underinvesting in the oil and gas sector could cause market volatility in the long term and imperil growth.

He also said the world needs to focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions rather than replacing one form of energy with another, stressing that major investments were needed in all energy sectors.

"That is the truth that needs to be spoken," Al Ghais told at the Middle East Petroleum and Gas Conference in Dubai.

Opec estimates that the world needs \$12.1 trillion in investments to meet rising oil demand in the long term.

With global oil demand growth at around 8 million barrels per day

(bpd), the world could face a supply problem as Western sanctions on Russian oil curtail production growth, Fereidun Fesharaki, chairman of the FGE Consultancy, said at the same event.

Russia can maintain production at around 10 to 11 million bpd but 2 million bpd of future growth are unlikely to go ahead with sanctions in place, he said.

Russian oil and gas are subject to a range of Western sanctions aimed at limiting sales to the West and capping prices for Russian oil.

Fesharaki also said he saw OPEC behaving in a very different way than it used to with US shale oil growth no longer a worry with higher prices.

Opec has instead shifted its focus to monetising oil resources before demand peaks.

China keeps rates unchanged

REUTERS, Shanghai/Singapore

China kept its benchmark lending rates unchanged for the ninth month in May on Monday, matching market expectations, as a weakening yuan and widening yield differentials with the United States limited the scope for any substantial monetary easing.

A raft of data over the past month or so, including April indicators last week, pointed to an economy losing momentum after the initial post-Covid bounce and lifted hopes of more easing measures.

But given capital outflow risks that could further hurt a sliding yuan, some analysts now expect the People's Bank of China (PBOC) could lower the amount of cash banks must set aside as its next policy move.

Earlier in the day, China's one-year loan prime rate (LPR) was kept at 3.65 per cent and its five-year LPR was unchanged at 4.30 per cent.

In a Reuters poll of 26 market watchers conducted last week, 23 predicted no change to the rates for this month.

financial account has widened. The gap will narrow in the days to come as multilateral lenders are disbursing a good amount of funds."

Md Ahsan-uz Zaman, managing director of Midland Bank, said the liquidity situation has improved recently.

Syed Waseque Md Ali, managing director of First Security Islami Bank, and Abul Kashem Md Shirin, managing director of Dutch Bangla Bank, also spoke.

Abu Dhabi sees \$2b in investment opportunities in S Korea

REUTERS, Seoul

Abu Dhabi organisations have identified about \$2 billion of investment opportunities in South Korea after the two sides agreed to expand business ties in January, a

joint statement said on Monday.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) pledged during South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's visit to Abu Dhabi in January to invest up to \$30 billion in the Asian country in sectors including energy and information technology.

"To date, Abu Dhabi organisations have helped identify approximately \$2 billion of potential investment opportunities in Korea," read the statement on Monday from Korea Development Bank and Mubadala Investment Company.

Banks alone can't tackle NPLs

FROM PAGE B1

"The ownership in the banking sector has come from private and business houses. This is not the case in India and many other countries," Hussain said.

"It is not possible to change the structure overnight."

He said a major reform is required to ensure corporate governance and get rid of the NPL problem.

Hussain said banks carry out their business based on public trust.

"Some banks faced

problems last year, but they have almost come out of the situation and have settled depositors' claims successfully," he said.

The issue of the exchange rate volatility also came up during the event. The taka has fallen by more than 25 per cent against the dollar within a year due to the commodity price hike in the global market.

"This created a stress in the macroeconomy last year that we did not see in our entire career. A good

number of banks failed to settle import payments on time last year," Hussain said.

"But things are improving now and a majority of lenders are not facing such a problem currently."

Mashrur Arefin, managing director of The City Bank, said that both the trade gap and the deficit in the current account have declined considerably, giving a breathing space to the economy.

"But the deficit in the

taxpayers or taxpayer identification number (TIN) holders.

However, as of December 2022, around 28.51 lakh submitted returns for the current fiscal year, according to the National Board of Revenue.

The official,

however, said they were taking steps so that taxpayers get refunds of excess tax payments to their bank accounts automatically.

If there is any suspicious claim of refund, a tax file may come under audit, the official added.

Tk 2,000 minimum tax

FROM PAGE B1

So, the plan, if passed in parliament, will require most registered taxpayers to pay the minimum tax if their income fall below the zero-tax rate, popularly known as tax-free income ceiling.

"We are considering

the move to expand the tax base and create a tax culture in the country. In many countries such as the US, there is a practice of a token tax," said a senior official seeking anonymity.

Bangladesh has more than 85 lakh registered

taxpayers or taxpayer identification number (TIN) holders.

However, as of December 2022, around 28.51 lakh submitted returns for the current fiscal year, according to the National Board of Revenue.

The official,

however, said they were taking steps so that taxpayers get refunds of excess tax payments to their bank accounts automatically.

If there is any suspicious claim of refund, a tax file may come under audit, the official added.

“চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন সম্পর্কিত যেকোন ধরনের
অভিযোগ/পরামর্শ জানাতে ১৬১০৪-এ কল করুন”

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Chattogram City Corporation
Tigerpass, Batali Hill, Chattogram
www.ccc.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.11.1600.002.03.23.100560 Dated: 18/05/2023

e-Tender Notice-SE/Elect/2022-23/08

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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of following packages from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to **05.06.2023 at 16.00.**

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender ID	Last date & time of selling documents	Last date & time of submission documents
1.	EEMSWK-00203	Electrical Re-Wiring Work at Modern Chowk Super Market (1st Floor to 3rd Floor) under Chattogram City Corporation.	825770	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
2.	EEMSWK-00603	Supply & installation of 60KVA Generator and other materials of Electrical Department under Chattogram City Corporation.	825771	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
3.	EELTWK-00103	Supply & fitting fixing of LED light shade and other materials for Thandachori Resort at 1 No. Ward.	825773	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
4.	EEMSWK-00103	Uprooting & installation of 76 Nos. old prepaid meter and new installation 54 Nos. prepaid meter for Madarbari Sebok Colony.	825774	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
5.	EELDWK-00103	Supply & Installation LED Street Lights other accessories for Karnofuly Residential area under 24 No. North Agrabad ward.	823304	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
6.	EEMSWK-00303	Supply & installation of Security System at Theater Institute Chattogram City Corporation.	828004	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
7.	EEMSWK-00703	Supply & installation of GI pole, Energy light shade, Bracket, Cables and others accessories at Firojshah and Akbarshah Graveyard.	828011	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
8.	EEWRWK-002111	Electrical re-wiring work at 34 No. Patharghata ward office.	828014	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
9.	EEMSWK-000103	Maintenance work of Electrical substation and PFI at Dewanhat Port City Market.	828019	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00
10.	EESPTL-00104	Replacement of LED light at Kotowali -Laldighi-Buddhist Temple and K.C Dey Road.	828129	05.06.2023 16.00	06.06.2023 14.00

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

CCC/PRD-172/22-23
Size: 8" x 4 Col
GD-899

Engr. Jhulan Kumar Das
Superintending Engineer (Elect)
Chattogram City Corporation

Ensure fire safety of business centres

BB asks banks

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The central bank has asked banks to take precautionary measures to ensure the fire safety of their business centres.

The instruction from the Bangladesh Bank comes after a number of fire incidents took place in various parts of the country recently, killing and injuring people and causing damage to properties.

In a notice yesterday, the BB asked banks to ensure fire safety compliance in line with the Fire Prevention and Extinction Act 2003 and the Bangladesh National Building Code 2020.

It also instructed banks to examine the effectiveness of the automatic fire safety equipment that has been installed at business centres, train the staff who work there, and carry out fire drills regularly.



The view of a factory of Delta Agro Food Industries, a joint venture of Seacom Group and Samuda Group, in Narayanganj. The plant was up at an investment of more than Tk 1,200 crore one and a half years ago, but it has not been able to go into production due to a lack of gas connection.

PHOTO: DELTA AGRO FOOD

Govt to recognise tea industry entities, individual

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government, for the first time, will recognise one individual and seven organisations for their contribution to Bangladesh's tea industry, said the commerce ministry yesterday.

The awards include tea garden with the highest yield, garden producing the "best quality" of tea, entity making the highest amount of export, "best" small-scale tea producer and best tea garden based on worker welfare.

Awards will also be presented to the "best" company based on market diversification and on marketing and packaging, according to a press release.

Another award will be given to the "best" worker engaged in plucking tea. The details of this criteria are yet to be made public. There are an estimated 1,50,000 workers in the country's tea estates.

The commerce ministry and Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) will jointly present the award.

"We have taken the decision to expedite the advancement of tea industry and encourage people engaged in the sector," said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi at a meeting ahead of National Tea Day to be observed on June 4.

The decision comes at a time when tea

Oil price steady

REUTERS, Singapore

Oil prices were steady on Monday as caution relating to US debt ceiling talks dragged on optimism over demand later in the year and offset support from lower supplies from Canada and Opec+ producers.

Brent crude futures rose 13 cents, or 0.2 per cent, to \$75.71 a barrel by 0850 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for July delivery, the more actively traded contract, rose 12, or 0.20 per cent, to \$71.81.

The June WTI contract, which expires later on Monday, fell 10 cents to \$71.45 a barrel.

Talks to avert a default on US debt were set to resume in Washington on Monday, as the prospect of a default and resulting economic downturn and cooling of fuel demand continued to spook markets.

Still, the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned of a looming shortage in the second half when demand is expected to eclipse supply by almost 2 million barrels per day (bpd), the Paris-based agency said in its latest monthly report.

"I expect plenty of volatility in the coming days and a bounce upward in crude prices as and when a deal is reached to raise the debt ceiling," said Vandana Hari, founder of oil market analysis provider Vanda Insights.

The cost of not getting gas

Despite being ready, factories can't go into operation

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Delta Agro Food Industries, a joint venture of Seacom Group and Samuda Group, has set up a factory in Narayanganj at an investment of more than Tk 1,200 crore one and a half years ago.

The aim is to manufacture edible oil and wheat products to meet the growing demand for healthier consumer goods in Bangladesh.

Accordingly, it hired around 250 employees to operate the facility where soybean oil, palm oil, soybean cake, soya milk and flour will be produced.

But Delta Agro has not been able to go into production due to a lack of gas connection. As a result, it is facing a pre-operational loss and paying the bank interest rate every month.

The pre-operational loss is also known as opportunity loss, which is the value of a lost chance or a potential profit that was not realised.

The company applied to Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company for a gas connection for the factory on November 10, 2021.

"But we are yet to receive any positive response from Titas Gas," said Mohammed Amirul Haque, managing director of Seacom Group.

In the absence of a gas connection, the facility has been lying idle for one and a half years and the company is facing around Tk 16.5 crore in opportunity lost per month, he said, adding that they are paying bank interest against loans as well.

"This type of situation is really painful for investors."

Delta Agro Food Industries has the capacity to produce 1,000 tonnes of soybean oil and 1,000 tonnes of palm oil every day.

The company is not the lone manufacturing unit that is suffering from the lack of gas

connections as well as an adequate supply of the energy.

More than 20 factories are about to be commissioned at the private economic zones such as those owned by Meghna Group of Industries, City Group, Abdul Monem Ltd, and Bay Group of Industries.

But ASM Mainuddin Monem, managing director of Abdul Monem Economic Zone, said recently that Titas Gas has not taken steps to provide a gas connection to the zone, which is located over 216 acres of land in Munshiganj's Gazaria upazila.

We have installed all manufacturing equipment. But since we have not got gas connections, we have not been able to go into operation.

Luthful Bari
Chief operating officer of Meghna Group

Similarly, Meghna Group of Industries, which has three economic zones, said it has been waiting for about two years to avail gas connections. It has submitted applications and paid fees to the government coffers.

Luthful Bari, chief operating officer of Meghna Group, one of the major rubber users in Bangladesh, says the company has expanded its factory at a cost of Tk 150 crore to manufacture tyres for commercial vehicles such as trucks and pick-ups.

"We have installed all manufacturing equipment. But since we have not got gas connections, we have not been able to go into operation."

Seacom's Haque said Delta Agro Food is ready to employ around 2,000 people in the new production facility after commissioning.

"The commercial production will begin when we get the gas connection."

Md Haronur Rashid Mullah, managing director of Titas Gas, said the state-run utility service provider can't provide industrial gas connections in line with the demand due to a lack of adequate supply of gas.

"Even, we can't supply adequate gas to existing customers. We are helpless owing to the disruption in the global energy supply chain and the appreciation of the US dollar."

He admits the importance of providing industrial gas connections as it contributes to economic development. "But the current situation is not favourable to raising the number of industrial connections."

In Bangladesh, industries account for about 18 per cent of national gas consumption, according to Petrobangla.

But they are experiencing a shortage of gas owing to a lower than adequate supply. Bangladesh has long struggled to meet local demand for the energy even before the ongoing crunch, induced by the global energy crisis, cropped up.

Against a local demand of 4,000 million cubic feet of gas per day, local sources supply 2,100 MMCFD and imports deliver 750 MMCFD.

Md Shahenur Alam, company secretary of the Pashchimanchal Gas Company, which supplies gas to the north-western region of the country, says they have delayed providing gas connections to industries owing to supply shortage.

There is no initiative on the part of the utility service provider to give gas connections, said Sheikh Monwar Hossain, managing director of the Sirajganj Economic Zone.



PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

production and consumption are growing in the country.

Bangladesh is currently listed as the world's ninth largest tea producer, accounting for around 2 per cent of the world's total production.

The country produced 100 million kilograms of tea in 2022, which was 28 per cent higher year-on-year, according to Bangladesh Tea Board.

Until March this year, tea production rose 16 per cent year-on-year to 2.4 million kgs.

In 2022, 0.78 million kg of tea were exported, worth around Tk 196.31 million.

There are 167 tea gardens in the country, located in the northeast division Sylhet, Chattogram and northwest bordering district Panchagarh, covering almost 280,000 acres of land.

A total of 90 of the tea gardens are in Moulvibazar, which accounts for 55 per cent of the tea produced in the country. Habiganj is the second largest producer of tea, contributing 22 per cent.

India's note withdrawal to improve liquidity

Analysts say it will also help ease short-term rates

REUTERS, Mumbai

The Indian central bank's decision to withdraw its highest denomination currency note from circulation is likely to improve banking system liquidity, bringing down recently elevated short-term rates, analysts and bankers said.

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday said that it will start withdrawing 2,000-rupee notes from circulation, although they will remain legal tender. Customers holding these notes can deposit them or exchange them for smaller notes by September 30, 2023.

The value of such notes in circulation is 3.6 trillion rupees (\$44.02 billion).

Kotak Institutional Equities estimates that liquidity could improve by around 1 trillion rupees, while QuantEco Research pegs the potential liquidity impact at 400 billion rupees to 1.1 trillion rupees.

ICICI Securities Primary Dealership estimates the liquidity surplus could increase to 1.5-2 trillion rupees.

India's banking system liquidity surplus has averaged around 600 billion rupees so far in May.

About 2.5-3 trillion rupees of banking sector liquidity leaks out as currency in circulation each year, said Pranjal Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC.

"As such, markets may anticipate some comfort on the liquidity front."



A general view of skyscrapers in The City of London financial district seen from City Hall in London, Britain. Low business investment is one of the reasons economists give for the weak growth in British productivity and living standards over the last decade.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

Half of UK firms to defer investment for tax hike

Survey finds

REUTERS, London

Almost half of medium-sized British companies plan to delay investment plans due to last month's rise in corporation tax, a survey published on Monday found.

Low business investment is one of the reasons economists give for the weak growth in British productivity and living standards over the last decade, and businesses have complained that higher tax rates reduce their incentive to invest.

Britain's headline rate of corporation tax rose to 25 per cent in April from 19 per cent the year before, under the enactment of a policy announced in March 2021.

Accountants BDO said 46 per cent of businesses surveyed with a turnover

READ MORE ON B2