

Star BUSINESS

Bangladesh's dependence on the US for soybeans has been increasing, with local traders, millers and conglomerates diversifying their sourcing.

Story on B4



State agencies go tough on S Alam Group

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In a major development, three state agencies yesterday made a series of moves against the S Alam Group, its chairman Mohammed Saiful Alam, and his family members amid allegations of loan irregularities during the 15-year tenure of the recently ousted Awami League government.

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) dissolved the board of loss-ridden National Bank Ltd (NBL) associated with S Alam Group, and the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) restricted the transfer and sale of shares of six banks with ties to S Alam and his family members.

In a separate development, the Customs, Excise and VAT Commissionerate, Chattogram, a field office of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), formed four teams to audit the VAT compliance status of 18 concerns of the S Alam Group to examine whether it properly deposited taxes to state coffers.



"We want to hold the group accountable. So, we have formed the audit teams. In the past, we did not receive cooperation. Now, we think we will get support from other agencies and ensure proper collection of taxes for the state," said Syed Mushfequr Rahman, commissioner of the VAT Customs, Excise and VAT Commissionerate, Chattogram.

The teams have been instructed to examine all categories of financial transactions and purchase and sales documentation from the past five years, starting in 2019.

The field office of the NBR earlier detected that S Alam Vegetable Oil Ltd and S Alam Super Edible Oil Ltd had unpaid VAT and consequent penalties worth over Tk 7,000 crore. The companies allegedly evaded VAT through various means, including by presenting lower purchase and sales data in VAT returns between 2019 and 2022, according to an audit by the field office.

The two companies "evaded" Tk 3,538 crore in VAT, for which they were fined Tk 3,531 crore, according to an audit report. S Alam has denied these allegations.

The development took place at a time when six banks linked to S Alam Group are facing restrictions on lending, a bar imposed by the BB on August 19 to prevent the situation of the banks from deteriorating further amid allegations of wrongdoing.

Last week, the NBR asked banks to provide account details of S Alam and his family members.

S Alam and associates lose control over NBL

Yesterday, the BB dissolved NBL's board, which caused S Alam Group and its associates to lose their grip on the private bank.

This marks the third time since December 2023 that the BB has dissolved the board of the NBL, one of the oldest private banks in Bangladesh.

In an order issued by BB Governor Ahsan H Mansur, the banking regulator said it had dissolved the bank's board for the sake of the depositors' money and public interest.

The central bank formed a new seven-member board, including three directors and four independent directors. The bank's board was dissolved for the first time in December last year and again in May this year.

READ MORE ON B3



Shibli Rubayat-Ul Islam

Bank accounts of former BSEC chair frozen

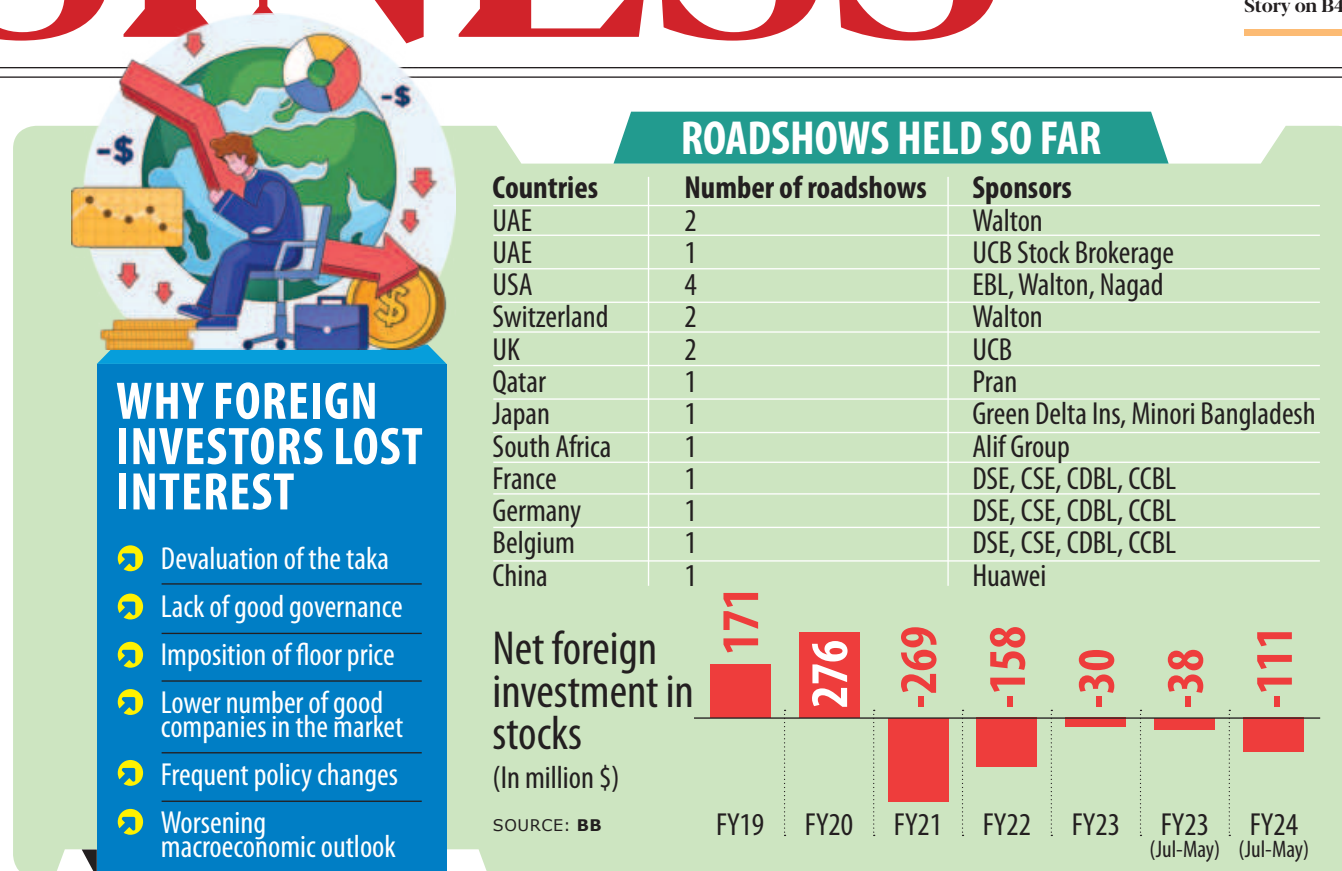
STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) yesterday asked banks to freeze the accounts of Shibli Rubayat-Ul Islam, former chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC), and his family members.

Banks have also been asked to suspend locker facilities extended to Islam and his family members for 30 days starting from the issuance of the BFIU directive.

Shibli Rubayat-Ul Islam resigned from his post on August 10 citing health reasons.

The resignation came five days after the fall of the Awami League-led government and the exit of Sheikh Hasina in the face of a civil uprising.



WHY FOREIGN INVESTORS LOST INTEREST

- Devaluation of the taka
- Lack of good governance
- Imposition of floor price
- Lower number of good companies in the market
- Frequent policy changes
- Worsening macroeconomic outlook

How BSEC wasted funds on ineffective roadshows abroad

AHSAN HABIB

Less than a year after Prof Shibli Rubayat-Ul Islam was appointed as chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) in May 2020, the regulator started holding roadshows abroad to lure in foreign investors and boost the local market.

The first roadshow was held in the United Arab Emirates in February 2021, but it was attended mostly by local intermediaries, businesses and non-resident Bangladeshis. The presence of foreigners was very thin.

In the years since, the BSEC has staged 17 additional roadshows in 11 countries.

The money to organise these events came mostly from listed companies owned by thousands of general investors as well as stock market intermediaries.

An analysis of the data shows that these companies spent at least Tk 50 crore to sponsor the events.

Officials from numerous firms said they had little choice but to spend as they felt pressured by requests from the regulator.

While the massive outlay from shareholders' funds raised questions, the roadshows also failed to boost foreign investors' confidence due to a lack of investible companies and good governance as well as frequent policy changes amid a worsening macroeconomic outlook.

In reality, many foreign investors sold off their shares in the stock market over the past three years, causing the net portfolio investment to fall.

Bangladesh Bank data showed that

net portfolio investment stood at \$111 million in the negative during the July-May period of FY24. It was \$38 million in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

The BSEC alone organised seven roadshows in three countries. But as many critics pointed out that hosting such roadshows was not the duty of the stock market regulator, it joined hands with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) thereafter.

UCB Stock Brokerage was the sponsor of the first roadshow in the UAE. The brokerage firm is a subsidiary of a listed company and is also regulated by the BSEC as a stock market intermediary, which makes the situation uncomfortable for the regulator.

Eastern Bank, local electronics giant Walton and Nagad, a mobile financial service provider, jointly sponsored roadshows in four cities in the US in mid-2021.

The same year that Nagad sponsored the event, it received approval to raise Tk 510 crore by issuing zero coupon bonds despite not being listed on the market.

Walton sponsored roadshows in two cities in Switzerland and the UAE while United Commercial Bank sponsored roadshows in two cities in the UK.

Pran Group, Alif Group, Green Delta Insurance and Minori Bangladesh, owner of Emerald Oil, also sponsored several roadshows.

Among stock market intermediaries, the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE), Central Depository Bangladesh and Central Counterparty Bangladesh

sponsored roadshows in France, Germany, and Belgium.

Top officials of several companies confirmed that they agreed to sponsor the events as the regulator had asked them to. They added that they felt pressured because a listed company cannot avoid a request from its regulator.

On top of that, the BSEC used former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's name, saying she would attend the events and that sponsorships would make her happy, sponsors said.

A top official of EBL said they spent around \$150,000 to sponsor a roadshow held in the US.

A top official of UCB said they spent 2.5 lakh pounds to sponsor the UK roadshow and around Tk 1.10 crore for the Dubai roadshow.

"When a regulator asks us to sponsor an event, we have little option to ignore it," the UCB official said.

Several officials of Walton, UCB, DSE and CSE echoed those sentiments.

Al Amin, an associate professor at the Department of Accounting & Information Systems at the University of Dhaka, said organising roadshows is not a duty of the stock market regulator.

Moreover, how it organised the roadshows is questionable.

The costs of the events were borne mostly by listed companies or other companies that have regulatory interests in the BSEC.

"When a regulator takes benefits from the firms it regulates, how can it regulate them? This is totally illogical," Al Amin said.

READ MORE ON B3

No special liquidity for ailing banks

BB governor says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank will no longer try to save any ailing bank by providing it special liquidity support, said Governor Ahsan H Mansur yesterday.

The central bank has suspended its special liquidity support for some Shariah-based banks, he said at a press briefing after meeting with a delegation of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) at the latter's office yesterday.

Seven banks, including six Shariah-based banks, have been facing a deficit in their current account balance with the central bank for more than a year.

The central bank was keeping those banks alive by providing special liquidity support. Only one recently showed signs of recovery.

As of August 7, the remaining six lender's current account deficit with Bangladesh Bank stood at Tk 14,621 crore. However, the combined shortfall is Tk 20,774 crore if their cash reserve ratio deficit is considered, as per central bank data.

The ailing banks are National Bank, First Security Islami Bank (FSIBL), Social Islami Bank, Union Bank, Global Islami Bank and Bangladesh Commerce Bank.

Seven banks, including six Shariah-based ones, have been facing a deficit in their current account balance with the central bank

Chattogram-based conglomerate S Alam Group has controlling stakes in all of these banks, except for National Bank.

Mansur said the banking regulator has already capped the lending activities of the six banks.

Replying to a question, Mansur said depositors have the right to withdraw money from the ailing banks, which would be liable for losing the confidence of their clients.

Against this backdrop, he said neither closing the banks or providing liquidity support was a solution.

Journalists also questioned how S Alam Group was allowed to control and take advantage of some weak Shariah-based banks.

In response, Mansur said the central bank has taken initiatives to prevent the withdrawal of funds by people who were responsible for ruining the financial health of these banks.

He added that a banking commission would soon be formed and the weak banks would have to cut down on their operations or merge with other banks under the banking commission, he added.

The new central bank governor also said the guilty or ill-motivated people would be caught but no business would be targeted.

READ MORE ON B3

Economy seeing renewed optimism

LightCastle Partners says on Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's economy is experiencing a surge in optimism as institutional reforms and positive investor sentiment take hold, according to LightCastle Partners, an international management consulting firm.

LightCastle highlighted these developments in its recent Bangladesh Update publication for August 2024, emphasising the country's emerging market potential.

"The Dhaka Stock Exchange has experienced a significant upswing, with the DSEX benchmark index rising by 786 points over a four-session period, marking a 12 percent increase, and market capitalisation surging by \$5.8 billion as of August 11," LightCastle.

The positive momentum came about after Sheikh Hasina resigned from her post as prime minister and fled the country on August 5 in the face of a student-led mass uprising.

"The rally has been primarily driven by fundamentally strong businesses, which have seen steady stock price increases, indicating early signs of an efficient market. This suggests that investors are optimistic in light of the ongoing institutional reforms," it added.

Institutional reforms, aimed at

improving governance and restoring business confidence, include the appointment of a new Supreme Court chief justice. The resignation of the Bangladesh Bank governor and the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange

long-standing issues within the country's institutions, which have been marred by political influence and inefficiency," LightCastle said.

Despite the positive developments, the manufacturing sector, particularly

OBSERVATIONS

- Institutional reforms and positive investor sentiment to drive economic growth
- Stock rally is driven by strong business with steady stock price increases
- Departures of political appointees crucial to depoliticise key institutions
- Banking sector is riddled with non-performing loans and capital flight

CHALLENGES INCLUDE

- The energy sector's rising payables
- Bureaucratic inefficiencies
- Constitutional reforms

Commission chairman present further paths towards reform.

These departures, all political appointees, signal a broader shift towards depoliticising key institutions.

"These changes are expected to lead to further improvements in governance and are seen as crucial steps in addressing

the garments industry, continues to face challenges.

LightCastle pointed out that security concerns have kept factories from operating at full capacity.

At the same time, Chittagong port, a critical hub for the country's

READ MORE ON B3

Committee to probe complaints against a2i officials

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The ICT Division has formed a three-member committee to investigate complaints, including corruption allegations, against 19 officials of the Aspire to Innovate (a2i) programme, a flagship initiative implemented by the ICT Division.

The complaints, raised by various individuals anonymously on social media against five officials, have prompted the department to take this action, according to an ICT Division statement.

On Monday, the formation of the committee was confirmed through an office order signed by Md Zillur Rahman, deputy secretary to the ICT Division.

Muhammed Mehedi Hassan, additional secretary to the ICT Division, will chair the committee, which has been tasked with thoroughly investigating the allegations and is expected to submit its report within five working days.

The remaining 14 officials and consultants of the a2i programme have been ordered to refrain from carrying out official duties as investigations into corruption allegations against them are underway, according to the statement yesterday.

The individuals include several key figures within the a2i programme — Policy Adviser Anir Chowdhury, e-Government Analyst Md Forhad Zahid Shaikh, Project Management Specialist Md Mazedul Islam, National Consultant for HD media Purabi Matin, Technology Analyst Md Halijur Rahman, Capacity Development Specialist Manik Mahmud, Resource Mobilisation Specialist Md Naser Mia, Digital Financial Service Specialist Md Tohurul Hasan, Solution Architecture Specialist Rezwanul Haque Jami, Strategy and Innovation Specialist and Senior Consultant HM Asad-Uz-Zaman, e-Noti Implementation Expert ATM Al Fatah, Senior Software Engineer Md Tanvir Quader, Admin Consultant Md Omar Faruk, and Senior Procurement Consultant Mohammed Salah Uddin.

ONE Bank, Software Shop sign MoU on online ticketing services

STAR BUSINESS DESK

ONE Bank recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Software Shop Limited, a software developing company, to integrate the Shohoz online ticketing platform into the bank's OK Wallet mobile app.

Md Mozaffar Hossain, joint in-charge of the MFS unit of the bank, and Md Mohiuddin Tawfik, head of banking and financial services of the software developer, penned the MoU at the bank's head office in Dhaka, the bank said in a press release. Under this agreement, OK Wallet customers can purchase bus tickets using the Shohoz online ticketing platform.

Md Monzur Mofiz, managing director of the bank, and Abu Zafar Md Saleh, additional managing director, along with other senior officials from both organisations were also present.



Md Monzur Mofiz, managing director of ONE Bank, and Md Mohiuddin Tawfik, head of banking and financial services of Software Shop, shake hands and exchange signed documents of a memorandum of understanding at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: ONE BANK

Gold hits record high

REUTERS, London

Gold prices hit a record high on Tuesday as a weaker dollar and buying by Western investors extended the precious metal's rally amid bets the US Federal Reserve will cut interest rates in September.

Spot gold rose 0.7 percent to \$2,522.25 per ounce by 1014 GMT, surpassing a previous record hit on Friday. London's gold price benchmark hit an all-time high of \$2,521.55 per ounce at a morning auction on Tuesday, the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) said.

The dollar wobbled near a seven-month low on bets the US central bank will start cutting interest rates from next month, with traders bracing for comments from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on Friday.

"Gold is effectively trading in line with expected cross-asset correlations, albeit being driven more by the FX side rather than rates at the moment," said Marcus Garvey, head of commodities strategy at Macquarie.

NCC Bank launches VISA debit, credit and prepaid cards for women



M Shamsul Arefin, managing director and CEO of NCC Bank, poses for photographs after inaugurating three different types of cards for female customers at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: NCC BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

NCC Bank recently launched VISA debit, credit and prepaid cards for female customers.

M Shamsul Arefin, managing director and CEO of the bank, inaugurated the cards at the bank's head office in Dhaka, according to a press release.

Arefin said that NCC Bank is committed to providing the best services to satisfy all citizens across the country.

"Considering the importance of women in the socio-economic context of Bangladesh, NCC Bank launched women's banking, named 'NCC Parama', to support the financial prosperity of the women segment and actively participate

in entrepreneur development," Arefin said.

"To continue this, NCC Bank has launched VISA debit, credit and prepaid card facilities, which will allow female customer to get instant cash advance and deposit facilities, special EMI Smartpay facilities, various discounts, different lifestyle benefits and so on," he added.

Md Mahbub Alam, Mohd Rafat Ullah Khan, Md Monirul Alam and Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, deputy managing directors of the bank, were present.

Among others, Mohammad Ridwanul Hoque, executive vice-president and head of retail and SME business of the bank, and Syed Hasnain Mamun, head of human resources division, were also present.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (AUG 20, 2024)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 60-Tk 80	2.86 ↑	9.09 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 52-Tk 55	2.88 ↑	9.18 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	0	-13.27 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 105-Tk 110	0	10.26 ↑
Soybean (litre)	Tk 145-Tk 152	-1.00 ↓	-5.71 ↓
Potato (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 55	-8.70 ↓	38.16 ↑
Onion (kg)	Tk 110-Tk 115	-2.17 ↓	36.36 ↑
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 48-Tk 50	2.08 ↑	-2.97 ↓

SOURCE: TCB

BKB organises business review meeting

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) organised a business review meeting for fiscal year 2024-25 recently.

Md Shawkat Ali Khan, managing director of the bank, presided over the meeting at the bank's head office in Dhaka on Monday, according to a press release.

Khan emphasised loan disbursement, loan recovery, deposit collection and provided directives on achieving business targets in the current fiscal year to make all branches profitable.

Chanu Gopal Ghosh, Khan Iqbal Hossain and Salma Banu, deputy managing directors of the bank, joined the event.

All general managers from the head office, divisional general managers, divisional audit officers, chief regional managers, regional managers and regional audit officers also connected virtually.



Md Shawkat Ali Khan, managing director of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, presides over a business review meeting at the bank's head office in Dhaka on Monday.

PHOTO: BANGLADESH KRISHI BANK

China's BYD plans car plant in Karachi

REUTERS, Karachi

Chinese electric vehicle giant BYD has announced plans to open a car production plant in Pakistan, where it will also start selling three models through a partnership with Mega Motors.

BYD is the first major new electric vehicle (NEV) entrant in the Pakistani market, where there is a lack of charging infrastructure. "Our entry into the Pakistani market is not just about bringing advanced vehicles to consumers," said Liu Xuellang,

BYD's general manager for Asia Pacific, on Saturday. "It's about driving a broader vision of environmental responsibility and technological innovation."

BYD also plans to open three "flagship stores and experience centres" in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, the company said at a launch event in Lahore, adding it plans to start selling two SUV models and a sedan from the fourth quarter of 2024.

Mega Motors is a unit of Pakistan's largest private utility Hub Power Co Ltd, known as Hubco.

Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited
"Connecting Worlds for Enriching Lives"
116 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000
www.bscl.gov.bd

Invitation for Tenders
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology
2	Agency	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited
3	Procuring entity name	Dr. Shahjahan Mahmood, Chairman and CEO
4	Procuring entity code	Not used at present
5	Procuring entity district	Dhaka
6	Invitation for	Procurement of Supply, Installation and Maintenance of HT (High Tension) 33 KV VCB (Vacuum Circuit Breaker) Panel
7	Invitation Ref No.	14.39.0000.012.07.002.23-8(T)
8	Date	20/08/2024

KEY INFORMATION

9	Procurement method	Open Tender
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FUNDING INFORMATION

10	Budget and source of funds	Company's own fund
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PARTICULAR INFORMATION

11	Tender Package No.	BSCL/2024-25-PG-02
12	Tender package name	Procurement of Supply, Installation and Maintenance of HT (High Tension) 33 KV VCB (Vacuum Circuit Breaker) Panel
13	Tender publication date	21/08/2024
14	Tender last selling date	08/09/2024 Time: 05:00pm

	Date	Time
15	Tender closing date and time	09/09/2024 12:00pm
16	Tender opening date and time	09/09/2024 12:20pm
17	Name & address of the office(s)	
18	- Selling tender document (principal)	
18	- Selling tender document (others)	
18	- Receiving tender document	
18	- Opening tender document	

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

19	Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The minimum of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the supply of Goods and related services as Supplier shall be 3 years. The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply Goods of at least 1 contract(s) successfully completed within the last 3 years, of value of at least Tk. 10,00,000. 			
20	Brief description of goods	Supply of spare parts of VCB & High voltage panel			
21	Brief description of related services	Troubleshooting mechanical & electrical fault of existing Vacuum Circuit Breaker (VCB) Trolley & related maintenance.			
22	Price of tender document (Tk)	1,000/- (one thousand Taka)			
23	Lot	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in weeks / months
01	Procurement of Supply, Installation and Maintenance of HT (High Tension) 33 KV VCB (Vacuum Circuit Breaker) Panel		1. Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000	Tk. 50,000/-	As per the tender document

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

24	Name of official inviting tender	Dr. Shahjahan Mahmood, Chairman and CEO
25	Designation of official inviting tender	Chairman and CEO
25	Address of official inviting tender	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000.
26	Contact details of official inviting tender	0241030091-93 procurement@bscl.com.bd
27	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings.	

(Signed)
Rehnuma Tarannum
Senior Manager, Procurement (Additional Charge)
Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited

GD-220

One year in

FROM PAGE B4

It is too early to say whether Apple will fall into line without the EU's heavy hand but one thing is clear: Brussels is ready for a fight.

Another high-profile test of the bloc's new powers will be X, with regulators to decide as early as September whether the former Twitter should be made to comply with the DMA.

The DSA's rules on curbing disinformation and hate speech have already sparked a spectacular clash between X's billionaire owner Elon Musk and the bloc's digital chief Thierry Breton -- with the spectre of fines or an outright EU ban on the site if violations persist.

EU competition chief Margrethe Vestager has said that Brussels is going at "full speed".

EU plans 36% tariff

FROM PAGE B4

"The EU is open to reach a solution that would be an alternative solution to the imposition of duties that would be effective and WTO compatible," a commission official told reporters.

"We consider that it's very much up to China to come up with alternatives," they said.

Concerning the provisional duties companies have faced since July 5, provided in the form of bank guarantees, the commission said it had determined it did not have legal grounds to collect the funds, which will be

This was always the goal: to cut short the length of competition investigations, which lasted years, to a maximum of 12 months under the DMA.

But companies can challenge fines or decisions in the EU courts, which could mean years of subsequent legal battles, lawyers say.

And difficulties can also come from elsewhere: Apple said in June it would delay the rollout of new AI features in Europe because of "regulatory uncertainties".

EDRI's Penfrat accused Apple of fearmongering by blaming the EU for certain features not arriving in the bloc in order "to put pressure on the commission to be not too tough in the enforcement".

Apple aside, big tech isn't happy with DMA action so far.

released once definitive measures take effect.

China and the EU have butted heads in recent years on a range of issues relating to trade, technology and national security.

The EU has launched a raft of probes targeting Chinese subsidies for solar panels, wind turbines and trains, while Beijing has begun its own investigations into imported European brandy and pork.

But Brussels faces a delicate balancing act as it tries to defend Europe's crucial auto industry and pivot towards green growth while also averting a showdown with Beijing.

বাংলাদেশ পানি উন্নয়ন বোর্ড

Office of the Executive Engineer
Pataukhali WD Division, BWDB, Pataukhali

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E-mail: xen.pataukhali@gmail.com

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর
পটুয়াখালী পানি উন্নয়ন বিভাগ
বাগাউনো, পটুয়াখালী
ফোন: অফিস ০২-৪৭৮৮৩৫৫৫৪
মোবাইল:

স্মারক নং-১ই-১৯/১৪৬ তারিখ: ১৮/০৮/২০২৪খ্রিঃ

সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতির (LTM) আওতাধীন কার্যক্রম ও পণ্য সরবরাহের নেয়ার লক্কে ত্রিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি/নবায়ন বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এছাড়াও সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, পটুয়াখালী পানি উন্নয়ন বিভাগ, বাগাউনো, পটুয়াখালী দপ্তরে পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা, ২০০৮ এর আলোকে সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতির (LTM) আওতাধীন অন্যান্য ত্রিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী তালিকাভুক্তি/নবায়ন করা হবে। তদ্বারা প্রকৌশলী, কন্ট্রোল এন্ড প্রকিউরমেন্ট সেল, বাগাউনো, ঢাকা মহানগর এর স্মারক নং-৪২.৩১.০০০.০০৫.২২.০০৩.১৫.১৩৪, তারিখ: ২০-০৭-২০২০খ্রিঃ মোতাবেক The Accounts Officer, Regional Accounting Center, BWDB, Pataukhali, এর অনুকূলে নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফি বাবদ (ডকুমেন্ট) ৫০০.০০ (পাঁচশত) টাকার অফেরতযোগ্য পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট করতঃ অত্র দপ্তরের প্রাক্কলন শাখায় দাখিলের মাধ্যমে আবেদনপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। নির্ধারিত আবেদনপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) সঠিকভাবে পূরণকরতঃ প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রসহ আদানী ১৯-০৯-২০২৪খ্রিঃ বিকাল ৪:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে অত্র দপ্তরের প্রাক্কলন শাখায় জমা প্রদান করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো। উল্লেখ্য যে, LTM পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এর বিধি ৬৩(২) অনুসরণযোগ্যঃ

ত্রিকাদার সরবরাহকারী তালিকাভুক্তির (কার্য-ক্রম ও পণ্য) আবেদনের তফসিলঃ

১।	মন্ত্রণালয়	পানি সম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়।
২।	সংস্থা	বাংলাদেশ পানি উন্নয়ন বোর্ড।
৩।	ক্রয়কারীর নাম	পটুয়াখালী পানি উন্নয়ন বিভাগ, বাগাউনো, পটুয়াখালী।
৪।	আবেদনকারীর আত্মবিশ্বাসীয় তথ্যাদি	১) বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, ২) VAT & TIN সার্টিফিকেট, ৩) হালনাগাদ ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সার্টিফিকেট (কার্য-৩০.০০ লক্ষ টাকা এবং পণ্য- ৫.০০ লক্ষ টাকা), ৪) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের ফটোকপি এবং ৫) পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি ৪ কপি।
৫।	আবেদন করণ ফি	আবেদন করণ ফি বাবদ- ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকার অফেরতযোগ্য পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট হিসাবরক্ষণ অফিসার, আঞ্চলিক হিসাব কেন্দ্র (রায়ক), বাগাউনো, পটুয়াখালী এর অনুকূলে।
৬।	তালিকাভুক্তিকরণ ফি	নিবন্ধন ফি বাবদ- ৫,০০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার) টাকার অফেরতযোগ্য পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট হিসাবরক্ষণ অফিসার, আঞ্চলিক হিসাব কেন্দ্র (রায়ক), বাগাউনো, পটুয়াখালী এর অনুকূলে। এছাড়াও অতিরিক্ত ১৫% হারে মূল্য সংযোজন কর (ভ্যাট) বাবদ ৭৫০/- (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকার চালান কপি হিসাবরক্ষণ অফিসার, আঞ্চলিক হিসাব কেন্দ্র (রায়ক), বাগাউনো, পটুয়াখালী এর অনুকূলে।
৭।	আবেদনকারী নাগরিক	পটুয়াখালী জেলার স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের জন্য প্রযোজ্য।
৮।	আবেদনের সময়সীমা	১৯-০৯-২০২৪খ্রিঃ, বিকাল ৪:০০ ঘটিকা (সাপ্তাহিক ও সরকারী ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত)।

ত্রিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি (কার্য-ক্রম) নবায়নের তফসিলঃ

১।	আবেদনকারীর আত্মবিশ্বাসীয় তথ্যাদি	১) বৈধ হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স এবং ৩। ভ্যাট ও ট্যাক্স ক্রিয়ারেপ সার্টিফিকেট।
২।	নবায়ন ফি	নবায়ন ফি ২০০০/- (দুই হাজার) টাকার পে-অর্ডার ও সরকারী নির্ধারিত ফি অতিরিক্ত ১৫% হারে মূল্য সংযোজন কর (ভ্যাট) বাবদ ৩০০/- (তিনশত) টাকার চালান কপি হিসাবরক্ষণ অফিসার, আঞ্চলিক হিসাব কেন্দ্র (রায়ক), বাগাউনো, পটুয়াখালী এর অনুকূলে। চালান নং-১১১৩০-০০০১-০৩১১
৩।	আবেদনের সময়সীমা	১৯-০৯-২০২৪খ্রিঃ, বিকাল ৪:০০ ঘটিকা (সাপ্তাহিক ও সরকারী ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত)।

উল্লেখ্য যে, ক্রয়কারী কর্তৃপক্ষ (Procuring Entity) আবেদনকারীদের আবেদনপত্র যাচাই-বাহাই সাপেক্ষে কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীতই সর্বস্বত্ব আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতাবান। তালিকাভুক্তি মানেই কাজ প্রদানের নিশ্চয়তা নয়।

পানি-১৮২/২০২৪-২০২৫
৯'X৩

স্বাঃ/মোঃ আরিফ হোসেন
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী
পটুয়াখালী পানি উন্নয়ন বিভাগ
বাগাউনো, পটুয়াখালী

GD-218

'Need favourable legal framework to recover NPLs'

AM JAHID

A favourable legal framework should be made in consultation with the attorney general and legal experts in order to facilitate the recovery of non-performing loans (NPLs), according to Selim RF Hussain, chairman of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB).

Hussain, also managing director and chief executive officer of BRAC Bank, made this comment while informing journalists at his office about the outcome of a recent meeting with a delegation of bankers.

He said a lot of planning is needed to formulate the right legal framework and that officials responsible for dealing with NPL cases should have proper knowledge about the financial sector and related issues.

"Otherwise, it will not be possible to reduce NPLs," he added.

Regarding the crisis-hit sharia-based banks, Hussain said they should not have been kept alive through special liquidity support and instead be allowed to gradually die.

As per a report on Tuesday, S Alam Group and its concerns took Tk 95,331 crore from six banks between 2017 and June this year, with 79 percent of the sum coming from Islami Bank Bangladesh.

Hussain alleged that central bank officials were instrumental in allowing loan irregularities.

For example, a major conglomerate was able to pilfer money from several banks with the direct involvement of some senior central bank officials.

"The financial health of these banks started to deteriorate after the company took control of their operations. So, the culture of loan repayment was destroyed," he said.

Responding to a question on what steps should be taken for the crisis-hit Shariah-based banks, he said each financial institution must become independent and sustainable in the long run.

"If they are not, then according to the market economy, those institutions should be allowed to gradually die as commonly seen in developed countries," Hussain added.

Citing how ailing it is not sustainable to keep ailing banks alive using public money, Hussain said the situation has worsened due to the poor macroeconomic policies adopted over the last two years.

"Steps should have been made much earlier to stop whatever created this situation."

The Bangladesh Bank should not have been kept weak banks alive by supplying money," he added.



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Indexes of stock markets in Bangladesh maintained their losing streak for a fourth straight trading day yesterday as skittish investors made fresh bets on lucrative blue-chip stocks amid price fluctuations.

A Dhaka-based investor said the situation of the market remained volatile as the interim government was yet to take any tangible measures to bring back good governance in the market.

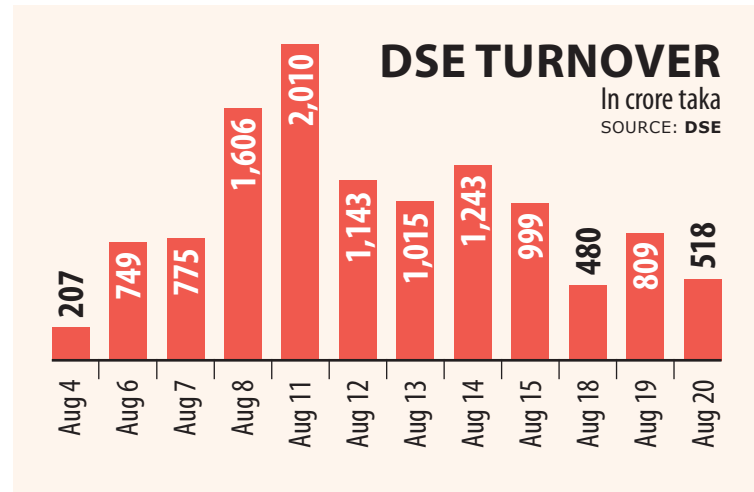
He also acknowledged that it would take some time, for new chairmen had been appointed at the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission and the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government.

The benchmark index of the DSE edged down by 60.13 points, or 1.04 percent, from that on the day before to close at 5,715.

Likewise, the DSES, the index that represents Shariah-based companies, dropped 16.46 points, or 1.32 percent, to 1,229 and the DS30, the index that is composed of blue-chip firms, slipped 27.87 points, or 1.31 percent, to 2,093.

The CDSET index, for shares of companies which account for large amounts in market capitalisation, which refers to the total value of their shares at present, also went down by 1.08 percent to 1,126.18 points.

Stock indexes drop for fourth day



Chittagong Stock Exchange also saw an identical downward trend as its all-share price index plunged 185.92 points, or 1.12 percent, to settle the day at 16,430.

Most of the sectors which represent such large-cap stocks posted a negative performance yesterday, according to the daily market update by BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage.

Telecommunication experienced the highest loss of 2.91 percent, followed by food and allied, non-bank financial institutions (NBF) and pharmaceuticals which logged losses of 1.85 percent, 1.84 percent and 1.05 percent respectively.

Other sectors which suffered losses include banking (0.80

percent), engineering (0.72 percent) and fuel and power (0.13 percent).

Jute, tannery, and fuel and power were the top three sectors that closed in the positive.

Turnover, meaning the total value of shares traded at the country's premier bourse, stood at Tk 518.6 crore, a decrease of 37.75 percent compared to the previous day's trading session.

The banking sector dominated the turnover chart, accounting for 22.18 percent of the day's total market turnover.

The contribution of the block trades, meaning high volume transactions in securities that are privately negotiated and executed outside of the open market, was 3.8 percent of the day's overall

market turnover.

Greenphone was the most traded share with a turnover of Tk 53.4 crore.

Out of the 397 issues that were traded on the DSE, prices of 64 scrips increased, 301 declined and 32 did not witness any price movements.

Stocks of Al-Arafah Islami Bank, BRAC Bank, Navan Pharmaceuticals, Pragati Life Insurance, Midland Bank, JMI Hospital Requisite Manufacturing, MJI Bangladesh, Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, United Commercial Bank and Lub-ref Bangladesh drew investors the most, according to LankaBangla Financial Portal.

Islami Bank Bangladesh, Gramenphone, BAT Bangladesh, Renata, Beximco Pharmaceuticals, Olympic Industries, National Bank, Robi Axiata, IFIC Bank and LafargeHolcim Bangladesh displayed a poor performance.

Aman Feed topped the gainers' chart with a rise of 7.08 percent.

Desh Garments, NRB Bank, Al-Arafah Islami Bank, Lub-ref Bangladesh, Midland Bank and Pragati Life Insurance showcased a strong performance.

Navana Pharmaceuticals, Hami Industries, Saiham Cotton Mills and Al-Haj Textile Mills were also on the gainers' list.

Islami Bank Bangladesh shed the most, losing 4.78 percent.

Demonstrators storm IDRA office

Chairman confined to his room, army called in

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Around 300 people, including staff members of Sonali Life Insurance, staged a demonstration in front of the office of IDRA Chairman Mohammad Jainul Bari over corruption allegations.

An IDRA official told The Daily Star that protesters had stormed the office and confined the chairman to his room until at least 11pm last night.

"We were confined to our office for hours and couldn't work," the official added.

Chanting slogans on the IDRA premises, the protesters also demanded the withdrawal of an administrator that was appointed by the IDRA to improve Sonali Life's condition.

Another official of the IDRA said all vehicles that had left since the afternoon with officials and employees were checked to ensure that the chairman cannot leave the office.

Around evening, after the lift of the IDRA building was shut down, 20-25 individuals came up the stairs and vandalised the main gate of the regulator's office, the official said.

The volatile situation forced the IDRA

administration to call in the army, the official added.

IDRA Chairman Bari said, "The employees of Sonali Life vandalised the main gate of the IDRA office. One of our officials and a security guard were injured. Initially, it was reported that the guard had suffered a head injury."

Mohammad Rabiul Hassan Rasel, a manager of Sonali Life, said, "After entering the regulator's office, some of our officials hit us. As a result, some of our employees were injured."

He could not provide a clear explanation for the vandalism that had occurred.

In a press release yesterday, Bangladesh Insurance Association (BIA) said some field-level employees of "a life insurance company" had been trying to spoil the working environment of the IDRA to destabilise the insurance sector.

"This is not desirable at all. The BIA has called on field-level employees to refrain from such programmes," it said.

Although the names of all life insurance companies are being mentioned in the sit-in programme, employees from only one life insurance company have been identified, it added.

"The BIA strongly condemns the intentional use of the names of all the insurance companies and urges those concerned to refrain from such activities in the future," it mentioned.

Economy seeing

FROM PAGE B1
trade, is currently experiencing severe congestion, with container volumes exceeding capacity by 50 percent, as per data till August 14.

Additionally, the daily number of vehicles transporting goods from the port has plummeted, further exacerbating supply chain disruptions.

Expressing that the banking sector is still under pressure, the firm

said that high levels of non-performing loans (around 10 percent) and capital flight have been masked by the previous regime.

"The sector has also been hit by inflation, declining foreign exchange reserves, and slowing economic growth, further straining financial stability," LightCastle said.

LightCastle also flagged other challenges, including the energy sector's rising

payables, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the need for constitutional reforms.

These issues, if left unaddressed, could hinder the country's economic progress, it added.

However, the ongoing institutional changes and renewed political consciousness among the youth, spurred by recent student movements,

offer hope for long-term structural changes, the firm noted.

How BSEC wasted funds on ineffective roadshows

FROM PAGE B1
"Most importantly, the BSEC used the funds of listed companies, which are ultimately shareholders' funds, and this impacted the profit of the companies. Did the roadshows benefit investors? Not at all."

Such roadshows can only be held by BIDA and with government funds, he said.

A number of roadshows were even held after the government instructed organisations to cut costs and restrict foreign tours.

The BSEC planned to organise another roadshow in Brazil last month, but

it was postponed due to the anti-discrimination students movement.

A top banker said: "I don't know how a roadshow in Brazil would help us. The people of our country have little connection with Brazil. And Brazil does not even account for any significant investment."

"It is no more than organising a picnic with the fund of listed companies."

As such, it could not be expected that the country would attract foreign investors through these roadshows. In fact, the foreign portfolio investment

despite the roadshows.

To hide the failure of the roadshows, the BSEC verbally ordered the DSE not to publish data on foreign portfolio investments publicly.

Al Amin said foreign investors are not interested in coming to a market that frequently adopts artificial market price mechanisms such as floor prices.

At the same time, there are very few investible products in the market.

The governance in the market is also problematic as policies change frequently and on a case-to-case basis, he added.

No special liquidity

FROM PAGE B1
"Action will be taken if any official, irrespective of the organisation, is found responsible," he said, adding that the same applies for central bank officials as well.

Regarding the ongoing inflationary pressure, Mansur said the inflation rate would come down to around 5 to 6 percent within the next seven to eight months. The central bank will increase the policy rate until the inflationary pressure begins to decline, he added.

The business delegation led by FBCCI President Mahbul Alam included former FBCCI president

and BNP Vice Chairman Abdul Awal Mintoo, BKMEA Executive President Mohammad Hatem and Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Kamran T Rahman.

The businesspeople present demanded punishment for people who scammed and looted banks in the pretext of doing business.

At the meeting, FBCCI President Alam urged to stabilise the interest rates on bank loans, ensure adequate US dollar supply and provide support to affected industries and commercial establishments.

Foreigners started offloading their shares in 2020 when they predicted that the local currency would face significant devaluations. The imposition of the floor price mechanism during the pandemic also severely dented their confidence. Bangladesh's forex reserve has almost halved in the past two years. At the same time, the taka has depreciated by around 35 percent compared to the US dollar, as per central bank data.

Furthermore, when the BSEC launched floor

prices in 2020 to stop the freefall of market indices, it went against the regulatory guidelines of many other countries. This was because they recognised that the mechanism risked rendering the local market illiquid as share selling would become tougher due to floor prices.

The floor prices were gradually removed but were brought back in mid-2022 amid the Russia-Ukraine war.

State agencies go tough

lawyer of the Supreme Court, who was chosen by Chattogram's Sundarban Consortium Ltd, AKM Tofazzal Haque, a professor at Chittagong University, who was selected by Chattogram's East Coast Holdings Ltd, and Ershad Mahmud, brother of former foreign minister Hasan Mahmud, who was picked by Stitches and Weave Ltd, based in Chattogram.

Sponsor director Moazzam Hossain, founder of Hosaf Group of Companies, which is based in Dhaka, was retained on the board.

The other directors that were dropped include independent directors Prof Md Helal Uddin Nizami of Chittagong University, chartered accountant Ratna Dutta, and ABM Zahurul Huda, a former executive director of the Bangladesh Bank.

Ratna Dutta's husband, Subrata Kumar Bhownik, is an executive director of the S Alam Group.

Sponsor director Khalilur Rahman, the

chairman of Chattogram-based KDS Group, was also dropped from the board. Barred from selling shares of banks


Based on a request from the central bank, the stock market regulator barred S Alam and his family members from selling any

part of their stake in Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank, First Security Islami Bank, Global Islami Bank, Union Bank, and Bangladesh Commerce Bank.

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission sent a letter instructing the Dhaka Stock Exchange,

Chittagong Stock Exchange, and Central Depository Bangladesh to this end.

The letter lists 56 companies owned by 25 relatives of S Alam, all of whom have come under the restriction. The BSEC asked the intermediaries to follow the order immediately.



সিলেট গ্যাস ফিল্ডস লিমিটেড
(পেট্রোবাংলার একটি কোম্পানী)
Sylhet Gas Fields Limited
(A Company of Petrobangla)

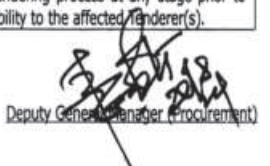
বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানী নিরাপত্তা
সর্বোচ্চ আধিকার
গ্যাস ক্ষাতির স্বপক্ষে। এর স্বপক্ষে গ্যাস
করে ছাড়ায় পালতি পক্ষ কখন।

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE

Ref. no. SGFL/BGFT/24-25/FP-03

Date: 20-08-2024

1. Ministry/Division	: Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources/Energy & Mineral Resources Division.					
2. Agency	: Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (A company of Petrobangla).					
3. Procuring entity name	: Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, (SGFL).					
4. Procuring entity district	: Sylhet.					
5. Invitation ref. no.	: SGFL/BGFT/24-25/FP-03 dated 20-08-2024.					
6. Invitation for	: Tender for Procurement of Portable Diesel Engine Driven Instrument Air Compressor Set with Spares Including Installation, Testing & Commissioning on Turn-Key Basis.					
KEY INFORMATION						
7. Procurement method	: Open tender method (OTM), Single stage one envelope system.					
FUNDING INFORMATION						
8. Budget and source of funds	: Own source of Sylhet Gas Fields Limited.					
PARTICULAR INFORMATION						
9. Project name	: N/A.					
10. Tender publication date	: N/A.					
11. Tender last selling date	: 21-10-2024.					
12. Place of tender selling	: Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Dhaka Liaison Office, Petrobangla (13 th Floor), 3, Kawran Bazar C/A, Dhaka-1215.					
13. Date & time of selling of tender document	: The tender document will be available for sale from 27-08-2024 to 21-10-2024 during office hours on all working days.					
14. Tender closing date & time	: 22-10-2024 and 12-00 hrs (BST).					
15. Tender opening date & time	: 22-10-2024 and 12-15 hrs (BST).					
16. Place of tender receiving & opening	: Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Procurement Department, P.O. Chiknagool, Sylhet, Bangladesh.					
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER						
17. Eligibility of Tenderer	: Bonafide manufacturers/suppliers or their authorized agents of all countries except the country/countries having no diplomatic relation with Bangladesh.					
18. Brief description of Goods	: Procurement of Portable Diesel Engine Driven Instrument Air Compressor Set with Spares Including Installation, Testing & Commissioning on Turn-Key Basis.					
19. Price of tender document	: Taka 4,000.00 (non-refundable).					
20. Special Instruction:	<p>a) If it is not possible to receive/open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstance (Strike, Holiday, Lockdown etc.) the same will be received/opened on the next working day at the same time and Venue.</p> <p>b) Tender must remain valid for 120 (one hundred twenty) days from the date of opening of the tender.</p> <p>c) Tenderer shall furnish with the Tender an acceptable Tender Security in the form of Demand Draft or Pay Order or Bank guarantee (as per format provided in the Tender Document) issued by a scheduled bank in Bangladesh or by any scheduled foreign bank operating in Bangladesh or by any reputed foreign bank duly endorsed with full obligation and liability by a scheduled bank of Bangladesh in the amount as under:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; font-size: x-small;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Description of Goods</th> <th>Tender security amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Procurement of Portable Diesel Engine Driven Instrument Air Compressor Set with Spares Including Installation, Testing & Commissioning on Turn-Key Basis</td> <td>Taka 1,50,000.00 or USD 1,270.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>d) The Tender Security must remain valid for 148 (one hundred forty-eight) days from the date of opening of the tender.</p> <p>e) The scope of supply, terms of supply and information require to be furnished by the Tenderers, etc. are included in the tender document.</p> <p>f) Tender(s) submitted after the deadline for receiving of tender(s) will be rejected and returned unopened to the Tenderer.</p> <p>g) The Tender must not be submitted by Fax or E-mail.</p> <p>h) This tender notice will also be available at Petrobangla Website: www.petrobangla.org.bd and SGFL Website: www.sgfl.org.bd</p>	Description of Goods	Tender security amount	Procurement of Portable Diesel Engine Driven Instrument Air Compressor Set with Spares Including Installation, Testing & Commissioning on Turn-Key Basis	Taka 1,50,000.00 or USD 1,270.00	
Description of Goods	Tender security amount					
Procurement of Portable Diesel Engine Driven Instrument Air Compressor Set with Spares Including Installation, Testing & Commissioning on Turn-Key Basis	Taka 1,50,000.00 or USD 1,270.00					
21. Name of Official inviting tender	: Deputy General Manager (Procurement)					
22. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	: Deputy General Manager (Procurement)					
23. Address of Official inviting tender	: Sylhet Gas Fields Ltd, P.O. Chiknagool, Sylhet, Bangladesh.					
24. Sylhet Gas Fields Limited reserves the right to reject any or all tender or annul the tendering process at any stage prior to award of contract without assigning any reason whatsoever and without incurring any liability to the affected Tenderer(s).						


Deputy General Manager (Procurement)

GD-217

China leaves key lending rates unchanged

REUTERS, Shanghai/Singapore

China left benchmark lending rates unchanged at a monthly fixing on Tuesday, in line with market expectations.

The steady monthly LPR fixings met market expectations, as shrinking interest margins at lenders hampered continued easing efforts after China lowered a string of key interest rates a month earlier.

The one-year loan prime rate (LPR) was kept at 3.35 percent, while the five-year LPR was unchanged at 3.85 percent.

In a Reuters survey of 37 market participants conducted this week, all respondents expected both rates to stay unchanged.

Most new and outstanding loans in China are based on the one-year LPR, while the five-year rate influences the pricing of mortgages.

China surprised markets by cutting major short- and long-term interest rates in July, its first such broad move in almost a year, signalling policymakers' intent to strengthen economic growth.

China's bank lending tumbled more than expected last month, hitting the lowest in nearly 15 years

The sequence of the rate cuts also showed the PBOC's monetary framework had changed, shifting the short-term rate to being the main signal guiding markets, traders and analysts said.

China's bank lending tumbled more than expected last month, hitting the lowest in nearly 15 years, dragged down by tepid credit demand and seasonal factors and raising expectations that the central bank may deliver more easing steps.

Economists at Goldman Sachs: "The expansionary fiscal policy, along with other support including continued monetary policy easing, is needed to stem further weakening in domestic demand and to ensure real GDP growth stays close to 5 percent year-on-year in the second half of this year. We believe the growth target is important to the authorities and recent policy communications have indicated so."

They expect one 25-basis-point reserve requirement ratio (RRR) cut in the third quarter, followed by another 10-basis-point policy rate cut in the fourth quarter of this year.



KEY POINTS

- Bangladesh imported **3.76m** tonnes of soybean products from all over the world in 2022-23 marketing year
- Of the amount, the US supplied **1.08m** tonnes and the import value was **\$302.95m**

Soybeans grow in a field in Dwight, Illinois. Bangladesh's dependence on the US for soybeans has been increasing, particularly after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Bangladesh's dependence on US soybeans growing

REFAYAT ULLAH MIRDHA, from San Francisco

Bangladesh's dependence on the US for soybeans has been increasing, particularly after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, with local traders, millers and conglomerates diversifying their sourcing for uninterrupted supply of edible oil and animal feed.

Prior to the war's outbreak in February 2022, Bangladesh was meeting around 15 percent of its annual demand with US soybeans. However, it has increased to 40 percent since the war erupted.

Previously, Russia and Ukraine were the major cultivators of soybeans, wheat and corn and a stable source not only for Bangladesh but also for other South Asian countries.

Bangladesh's import of soybean products has been growing over the last couple of decades for changes in food intake owing to rapid urbanisation and a reduction in cultivable land for the economy shifting to industrialisation.

The imports grew 169 percent year-on-year in fiscal year 2023-24.

In the marketing year 2022-23, Bangladesh imported 3.76 million tonnes of soybean products from all over the world, according to the US Soybean Export Council (USSEC).

Of it, 1.08 million tonnes, valued at an estimated \$302.95 million, were from the US, according to the USSEC and United States Department of Agriculture.

One of the prime imports is edible oil. Previously local growers used to meet a majority of the demand for edible oil with mustard seed and rapeseed.

But that scenario has changed as 90 percent of the edible oil consumed in Bangladesh is now imported. Over 60 percent of it is soybean oil, with a majority coming from the US, while the rest is palm oil.

Local importers say the US soybean products are increasingly being preferred

mainly for assurances of supply continuity, seed and grain quality, nutritional value and favourable prices.

For instance, the damage ratio of US soybean products is around 0.50 percent while that of products from other countries is nearly 4 percent.

American soybeans are much better than the Brazilian and Argentinian ones as the damage ratio is lower, said Amirul Haque, managing director of Delta Agrofood, at Soy Connex 2024.

He set up a mill last November taking note of the growing local demand and now processes 2,500 tonnes of soybeans per day.

About 90 percent of the edible oil consumed in Bangladesh is now imported. Over 60 percent of it is soybean oil, with a majority coming from the US, while the rest is palm oil

Some 35 percent of his soybeans are from the US, and he believes it would increase if their price remains competitive.

The Meghna Group of Industries also sources the same portion of its raw materials from the US for its mill at Meghna Economic Zone in Sonargaon under Narayanganj district, which has a crushing capacity of 3,000 tonnes per day.

Its executive director, Varun Goyal, said they use the US soybeans from November to February but Brazilian soybeans for the majority of the year because of their price competitiveness.

He, however, said they would have preferred the US ones for the quality even if the prices had been \$4 to \$5 higher per tonne.

City Group also sources around 40 percent of its soybeans from the US for its edible oil plant which has a pressing capacity of 5,000 tonnes per day.

The company will launch another plant with a 3,000-tonne capacity next month to meet growing demand for edible oil and soybean feed, said its director for planning and business development, Md Imran Uddin.

The US beans are preferred for their quality and golden coloured oil and it will increasingly be used, he said on the sidelines of Soy Connex 2024.

Bashundhara Multi Food Products was also seeking information at the event on hearing of the assurance of competitive prices and supply continuity.

Its chief operating officer, Syed Farhad Ali Reza, said they would open a mill in November this year with a crushing capacity of 5,000 tonnes per day.

These gave hope to American soybean farmers, traders and government officials at the three-day Soy Connex, an annual signature summit of the USSEC ending today at San Francisco Marriott Marquis.

"I think the price of soybean oil and soybean meal increased over the last few years due to the demand increase," said farmer Jerry C Gaffner who produces around 35,000 bushels of soybeans a year on 525 acres of land in Illinois.

"...you now see the prices dropping rapidly due to the increase in supply of soybeans both in the United States and South America," he said.

Apart from quality, the Russia-Ukraine war played an important role for the increase in the import of US soybeans, said Khabibur Rahman, country team lead, Bangladesh of the USSEC.

There is a lot of potential as Bangladesh has an annual crushing capacity of 4 million tonnes, including those of big conglomerates like City Group, Meghna Group, Delta Agro, TK Group and Bashundhara Group, he said.

Currently, the mills crush 2.2 million tonnes of soybeans a year, he added.

More effective steps needed to widen tax net

AF NESARUDDIN

With 53 years having passed since Bangladesh gained independence, it is now considered as one of the next emerging economies in Asia and has the prospect of being ranked among middle-income countries.

However, there is nothing to be complacent about considering these feats alone as there is still huge potential for growth.

In a country with a population of around 180 million and subsequently large consumer market, the per capita income in terms of US dollars currently stands at \$2,784, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

And although the National Board of Revenue has spent many years trying to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio, it remains surprisingly low at less than 8 percent compared to the regional average of above 15 percent.

Of the roughly 10 million TIN holders eligible for taxation in various categories, only 3.4 million individuals and 34,000 corporates regularly file tax returns. A major reason for this disparity is the lack of close monitoring by the tax regulator, indicating that its steps so far are not enough to widen the tax net.

For example, corporate and individual tax rates have been gradually rationalised over the years but it has not been reflected positively in increasing tax collection.

This makes it evident that tax evaders, particularly a section of businesses and individuals, have not been adequately motivated to start complying with the rules.

Furthermore, the scope to whiten black money by paying 15 percent tax on undisclosed income is doing more harm than good by discouraging genuine taxpayers.

This is because those who regularly pay taxes are often harassed by tax officials due to arbitrary issues in their assessment while certain businesses and individuals are constantly evading taxes.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh had introduced a document verification system in 2020 to prevent the submission falsified financial statements and ensure transparency. Still, tax evasion continues with the help of corrupt officials.

It is also surprising that many businesses conduct much of their transactions in cash and neglect to report them when filing their official financial statements.

So, these issues warrant proper investigations by experts and other experienced personal.

Besides, identifying new tax payers is not very complicated or challenging but the inspectors responsible in this regard have been largely unsuccessful due to corruption and lack of proper monitoring.

As such, tax enforcement should be made more effective and rational without causing more undue harassment for genuine taxpayers. This entails strictly monitoring TIN holders, identifying new taxpayers with external support if needed, and redefining the role of inspectors.

Also, digitalisation is a prerequisite for ensuring transparent financial reporting.

Faceless assessments should be introduced, as is the case in neighbouring countries, and the taxation system should be simplified to reduce the scope for harassment.

Big businesses should be more closely scrutinised as well, with everything from their start-up capital to current investments being brought under the scanner to ensure financial transparency.

Additionally, close monitoring of tax officials must be ensured so that they cannot exercise their powers for personal gain at the cost of taxpayers.

Ultimately, there is no alternative to overdue reforms in tax administration to address these issues.

The author is a senior partner of Hoda Vasi Chowdhury & Co and former ICAB president



EU plans 36% tariff on Chinese EVs, lower for Tesla

AFP, Brussels

The European Commission said Tuesday it plans to slap five-year import duties of up to 36 percent on Chinese electric cars, unless Beijing can offer an alternative solution to the damaging trade row over state subsidies.

It also said Tesla cars that are made in China would face a lower duty of nine percent.

Brussels last month slapped Chinese EVs with hefty provisional tariffs -- coming on top of current duties of 10 percent -- after an anti-subsidy probe found they were unfairly undermining European rivals.

On Tuesday the commission released a draft plan to make those tariffs definitive, subject to input from interested parties by end August, and to approval by EU member states by end October at the latest.

The definitive rates faced by major Chinese manufacturers would be 17 percent for market major BYD, tweaked downward from 17.4, 19.3 percent for Geely, down from 19.9, and 36.3 percent for SAIC, down from 37.6.

Other producers in China that cooperated with Brussels will face a tariff of 21.3 percent -- revised slightly upwards from 20.8 -- while those that did not would be subject to the maximum 36.3 percent duty.

US billionaire Elon Musk's Tesla -- which manufactures in China -- had asked Brussels for its own duty rate, set at nine percent, after the commission deemed that it benefited from fewer Chinese subsidies than domestic manufacturers. Beijing vociferously opposes the EU tariffs, and has filed an appeal with the World Trade Organization -- of which Brussels has taken note while voicing confidence its measures are WTO-compatible.

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One year in, EU turning up heat in big tech fight

AFP, Brussels

If 2024 already looks like an annus horribilis for big tech in the EU, the months ahead could prove a winter of discontent as the bloc wields a fortified new legal armoury to bring online titans to heel.

Since August 2023, the world's biggest digital platforms have faced the toughest ever tech regulations in the European Union -- which shows no sign of slowing down in enforcing them.

Brussels scored its first major victory after forcing TikTok to permanently remove an "addictive" feature from a spinoff app in Europe in August, a year after content moderation rules under the bloc's Digital Services Act (DSA) started to apply.

That followed a seven-day period earlier in the summer in which Brussels issued back-to-back decisions targeting Apple, Meta and Microsoft.

And more is to come before 2024 is over, say officials.

The EU's moves are all thanks to two laws, the DSA -- which forces companies to police online content -- and its sister competition law, the Digital Markets Act (DMA) -- which gives big tech a list of what

they can and can't do in business.

Since the DMA curbs kicked in in March, the EU has notably pressured Apple to back down in a spat with Fortnite maker Epic over a gaming app store.

"The European Commission is doing the job: it is implementing the DMA with limited resources and within a short timeframe compared to lengthy competition cases," said EU lawmaker

Stephanie Yon-Courtin, who focuses on digital issues.

Jan Penfrat, senior policy advisor at online rights group EDRI, says changes are already visible: the DSA giving users the "right to complain" when content is removed or accounts are suspended, or the DMA allowing them to select browsers and search engines via choice screens.

"This is just the beginning," Penfrat said.

He notes for instance that EDRI and other groups in July compiled a list of areas where Apple fails to follow the DMA. "We expect the commission to go after those as well in time," Penfrat told AFP.

Apple is the biggest thorn in the EU's side as the DMA's chief critic, claiming it puts users' security at risk.

The iPhone maker became the first company in June to face formal accusations of breaking the DMA's rules and faces heavy fines unless it addresses the charges.

Apple announced changes to the App Store on August 8 to comply with the DMA, although smaller tech firms under the Coalition for App Fairness slammed them as "confusing". The EU is now evaluating Apple's plans.



The logo of US tech giant Apple can be seen on an Apple store in Munich, southern Germany. Apple is the biggest thorn in the EU's side as the Digital Markets Act's chief critic, claiming it puts users' security at risk.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

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