

EU launches WTO case against China patent rules

AFP, Brussels

The European Union launched a new challenge at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on Monday against China's rules on royalty rates for high-tech patents, amid escalating trade tensions between Beijing and Brussels.

The European Commission accused China of pressuring innovative European high-tech companies into lowering their fees by allowing its courts to set binding worldwide royalty rates.

"The EU's vibrant high-tech industries must be allowed to compete fairly and on a level playing field," said Maros Sefcovic, the EU's trade commissioner.

"Where this is not the case, the Commission takes decisive action to protect their rights."

The action comes as trade tensions are soaring worldwide, with tariff-loving Donald Trump set to be inaugurated as US President.

It adds to a longer-running spat between Beijing and Brussels, which has seen the pair accuse each other of unfair practices and take a series of tit-for-tat measures.

The EU slapped hefty tariffs on electric cars made in China last year. In turn, Beijing targeted European brands and launched probes into EU subsidies of some dairy and pork products.

The latest challenge revolves around "standard essential patents" protecting technologies enabling the manufacturing of goods to meet a certain standard.



Potato growers say they will suffer severely if the government continues to allow imports as the country saw massive production this year.

Govt eases potato import despite massive price fall

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN and KONGKON KARMAKER

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has allowed the use of nine more customs stations for the import of potatoes, specifically from Nepal and Bhutan, aiming to diversify supply sources and reduce dependency on India.

The nine stations include Rohnpur in Chapainawabganj, Sonahat in Kurigram, Dhanua Kamalpur in Jamalpur, Nakugaon in Sherpur, Gobrakura and Karaitoli in Mymensingh, and Tamabil, Zakiganj, and Sheola in Sylhet.

Earlier, potato imports were allowed through four customs stations, including Benapole and Bhomra.

This facility will remain in effect till March, according to a

gazette issued on Monday. Traders had sought the initiative last December, when prices of the tuber reached a record high of Tk 80 per kilogramme amidst a usual drop in stocks ahead of the harvest season between February and April.

Now the facility will have little effect as prices have fallen by a massive margin across the country, and farmers fear massive losses amid bumper harvests.

Azizul Islam, who heads a farmers' association in Dinajpur, expressed his frustration at the NBR's move.

"Why is the government still allowing imports now, when potatoes are available at cheap rates in Bangladesh?" he asked.

Islam, who hails from Gopalganj village in Dinajpur sadar upazila, highlighted the

plight of local farmers. "There has been massive production this year, and there aren't enough buyers... If the government continues to allow imports, farmers will suffer severely," he warned.

Potatoes in Dinajpur are currently being sold at Tk 13 per kilogramme (kg) at the fields and around Tk 15 per kg at retail markets. "If farmers are forced to accept such low rates, they won't recover even the money spent on potato seeds, let alone make a profit amidst rising labour and land costs," he said.

Islam urged the government to immediately halt potato imports and support farmers through state purchases.

"The government must prioritise farmers and take the necessary steps to safeguard their

livelihoods," he stressed.

Regarding the time taken for the facility to come about, Kazi Mostafizur Rahman, an NBR member of international trade (currently in charge), said, "The NBR took the move based on businesses' demand when the prices were high."

"But we received the official request to extend new routes from businesses at the end of December. We needed 20-22 more days for processing as we had to conduct vetting on this issue," he said.

This year, acreage increased to a record high of 5.21 lakh hectares of land.

Annual demand stands at 85 lakh tonnes to 90 lakh tonnes, whereas harvests amount to around 106 lakh tonnes.

In fiscal year 2023-24, 1.5 lakh tonnes were imported from India.

World economy to improve in next 12 months

Global CEOs say in a survey by PwC

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Global economic growth is on course to improve over the next 12 months, according to nearly 60 percent of CEOs surveyed under the PricewaterhouseCoopers' (PwC) 28th Annual Global CEO Survey.

The survey was launched at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, which gathered responses from 4,701 CEOs across 109 countries.

It revealed that 42 percent plan to increase headcounts by 5 percent or more this year, with only 17 percent expecting reductions.

Optimism about emerging technologies like generative AI (GenAI) is driving this outlook as more than half of the CEOs reported employee efficiency gains from AI adoption, and 32 percent saw revenue growth in 2024.

However, trust remains an issue, with only a third of CEOs expressing high confidence in embedding AI into key processes, according to a press release.

Despite challenges, 49 percent anticipate profitability gains from AI within the next year.

The survey also highlighted a growing urgency for business reinvention.

Four in 10 CEOs believe their companies will not be viable in a decade without significant change.

While 63 percent have taken steps to transform value creation, slow resource reallocation hampers agility, with two-thirds moving less than 20 percent of financial and human resources annually.

Dollar pares losses

REUTERS, Sydney

The dollar pared some overnight losses on Tuesday after US President Donald Trump suggested the United States could impose tariffs on Canada and Mexico in the near future, challenging suggestions his policies would be more gradual.

Trump told reporters his team was thinking of tariffs around 25 percent that could be announced on Feb. 1, but offered no other specifics. He also floated the idea of universal tariffs, but said the United States was not ready for that yet.

The dollar had fallen sharply on Monday after Trump's first day included no specific plans on tariffs and officials signalled any new taxes would be imposed in a "measured" way, a major relief for trade exposed currencies.

A following trade memo merely directed agencies to investigate and remedy persistent trade deficits.

ARMY HEADQUARTERS E IN C'S BRANCH, WORKS DIRECTORATE DHAKA CANTONMENT

INVITATION FOR TENDER

Notice no. 600/15/19/2024-2025/E-6

Dated : 16 January 2025.

MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence
2. Agency	Military Engineer Services
3. Procuring Entity Name	E in C
4. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
5. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
6. Budget and source of Funds	GOB, Development Budget
7. Development Partners (if applicable)	None
8. Project / Programme Name (if applicable)	Establishment of BNS SHER-E-BANGLA Patuakhali-2 nd Revised.
9. Selling of Tender will commence from	23 January 2025 (from 1200 hours to 1400 hours in Office Time).
10. Selling of Tender will close on	13 February 2025 (from 1200 hours to 1400 hours in Office Time).
11. Last date and time of submission of Tender	16 February 2025 upto 1200 hours.
12. Date and time of opening of Tender	16 February 2025 at 1230 hours.
13. Name & Address of the Office(s)	
- Selling Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre of Works Directorate at GE (Army) Central Dhaka and AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantt.
- Receiving Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre of Works Directorate at GE (Army) Central Dhaka.
- Opening Tender Document	-Do-
14. Eligibility of Tenderer	<p>a. MES enlisted contractors Class - 'C'</p> <p>b. Contractors enlisted in other Govt, Semi Government & Autonomous Organization of similar capacity may also participate in tenders having security clearance from DGFI.</p>
15. Brief Description of Works	
Lot No	Identification of Lot
	Location
	Price of Tender Document (Taka)
	Tender Security Amount in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/Bank Guarantee in favour of AHQ, E in C's Br, Wks Dte, Dhaka Cantt (Taka)
	Completion Time in weeks/ months
a.	Remaining works for Construction of 1 x Petty Officers' Family Quarter (keeping ground floor open 10 storey building, 36 nos Flat with 10 storied foundation, 4 nos unit in each floor) including ancillary works at BNS SHER-E-BANGLA Patuakhali (Petty Officers' Family Quarter No. 01) (Group-II).
16. FName of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works
17. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works
18. Address of Official Inviting Tender	AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment Web address : www.army.mil.bd
19. Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Army Headquarters, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment Tel No. : 9832870 Fax No : 9832906
20.	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.

SE
For Director of Works
Army Headquarters
Engineer in Chief's Branch
Works Directorate
Dhaka Cantonment
Tele : 8711111 Ext 2874
Civil: 9832874

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২০/০১/২৫

GD-220

BTRC initiates

FROM PAGE B1
business entities. The initiative seeks to foster healthy competition and collaboration among stakeholders, including consumers, businesses, and the government.

Addressing challenges such as transitioning from existing licences, establishing sustainable investment policies, and creating effective regulations, the BTRC plans to submit its reform proposals to the government by March.

The chairman

acknowledged the need for consumer-centric policies to ensure sustainability and facilitate, rather than regulate, telecom companies.

He said the committee would streamline complex network structures, reduce pressure on spectrum usage, and enhance fixed broadband services.

The commission also aims to adopt green technologies and promote active sharing to support digital service expansion.

READ FULL STORY ONLINE

VAT hike

FROM PAGE B1
economists, Ahmed said, "Let critics say what they want. There's no reason to stop them. The rationale behind this VAT hike will be explained in due time."

Tax and VAT adjustments are typically made during the formulation of the national budget, and various measures will be adopted in the budget this year to ensure conformity with the hikes, he said.

While the VAT rates have been raised, certain customs duties have been reduced to achieve a

balance, he said.

The Advisers' Council Committee on Government Purchase yesterday gave retrospective approval to an Open Market Sale (OMS) initiative run by the Department of Agricultural Marketing last December.

Under the initiative, 10 agricultural products such as potatoes, eggs, onions, raw papaya, and various green vegetables were sold at subsidised prices through trucks around the capital.

READ FULL STORY ONLINE

SMEs lose

FROM PAGE B1
business climate and credit outlooks have improved, according to Mohammad Salekeen Ibrahim, head of asset at Eastern Bank.

"Banking activities were almost shut in July and August of last year. During that period, curfews and general holidays were frequent," recalled the banker.

"Banks were unable to reach customers, and customers were likewise unable to access bank services," he added. "While the overall situation in the country has shown signs of recovery since August, it has not fully stabilised."

Ibrahim said they are looking for potential clients. However, the current business climate

and high interest rates remain major obstacles.

"The loan disbursement rate may remain sluggish until the client confidence stabilises," he commented.

The high-interest rate environment is a direct consequence of the central bank's prolonged battle against stubbornly high inflation, which has been dragging on for more than two years.

In the first half of FY25, inflation averaged 10.87 percent, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

To curb spiralling prices, the BB has been steadily increasing the policy rate, the rate at which it lends to banks, since May 2022.

READ FULL STORY ONLINE

Army Headquarters E in C's Branch, Works Directorate Dhaka Cantonment

Invitation for Tender

Notice No. 600/15/28/2024-2025/E-6

Dated: 16 January 2025

Military Engineer Services

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence
2	Agency	Military Engineer Services
3	Procuring entity name	E in C
4	Procuring entity district	Dhaka
5	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
6	Budget and source of funds	GOB, Development Budget
7	Development partners (if applicable)	None
8	Project/programme name (if applicable)	Establishment of BNS Sher-e-Bangla Patuakhali-2nd Revised.
9	Selling of tender will commence from	23 January 2025 (from 1200 hours to 1400 hours in Office Time).
10	Selling of tender will close on	20 February 2025 (from 1200 hours to 1400 hours in Office Time).
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13	Name & address of the office(s)	<p>- Selling tender document</p> <p>- Receiving tender document</p> <p>- Opening tender document</p>
		<p>Tender Selling & Information Centre of Works Directorate at GE (Army) Central Dhaka and AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantt.</p> <p>Tender Selling & Information Centre of Works Directorate at GE (Army) Central Dhaka.</p> <p>-Do-</p>
14	Eligibility of tenderer	<p>a. MES enlisted contractors Class 'B' & 'C'</p> <p>b. Contractors enlisted in other govt, semi government & autonomous organization of similar capacity may also participate in tenders having security clearance from DGFI.</p>
15	Brief description of works	
Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location
		Price of tender document (Taka)
		Tender security amount in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/Bank Guarantee in favour of AHQ, E in C's Br, Wks Dte, Dhaka Cantt (Taka)
		Completion time in weeks/ months
a.	Construction of Remaining Boundary wall including ancillary works at BNS Sher-e-Bangla Patuakhali.	Kalapara, Patuakhali
		7,000.00
		10,90,000.00
		04 (four) months
16	Name of	