

US jobless rate rises to 9-yr high in May

AFP, Washington

The US unemployment rate rose to a nine-year high of 6.1 percent in May as businesses axed 17,000 jobs, the government said Friday, reflecting a sluggish postwar recovery with slim pickings for the jobless.

The jobless rate, the highest since July 1994, was in line with Wall Street economists' expectations.

But businesses cut about half as many jobs as had been forecast.

"It was better than feared," said BMO Financial Group senior economist Sal Guatieri.

Many of the figures underwent a sweeping series of statistical revisions, notably scaling back job losses in April from 48,000 to zero. The revisions had no impact on the unemployment rate.

"It paints a little more favorable picture of the US economy," Guatieri said.

"It is still weak but not as weak as before the war."

Overall, the number of unem-

ployed people rose 212,000 to 9.0 million.

Factory workers were hard hit as manufacturers cut 53,000 jobs, despite about 9,000 people returning to work at car plants after temporary shutdowns.

Losses in manufacturing amounted to nearly 2.6 million jobs since July 2000.

Retailers pared 14,000 employees.

Airlines shed 5,000 jobs, bringing the total losses to 113,000 since March 2001.

But buoyant housing, powered by four-decade low interest rates, spurred an 8,000-strong rise in construction jobs.

"Strength in residential housing spurred growth in specialty trade contractors and construction of buildings," Bureau of Labor Statistics commissioner Kathleen Utgoff said in a statement.

It was the latest in a series of reports showing the US economy gingerly pulling out of a slump, with businesses thawing out from an Iraq-war inspired freeze.

Manufacturing activity shrank in May, but at a slower pace than in April, a closely watched survey by the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) showed.

In a separate measure of the vast services sector, the ISM said its index of non-manufacturing activity, based on a survey, showed a modestly accelerating expansion.

The US economy plodded ahead at a 1.9 percent growth rate in the first quarter of 2003, only a marginal improvement from the 1.4 percent rate of the fourth quarter of 2002.

With deflation now overshadowing inflation as a concern for the US economy, speculation has been mounting that the Federal Reserve will cut the federal funds target rate, which commercial banks charge each other for overnight loans.

The key rate is already at a four-decade low of 1.25 percent. Federal Reserve policymakers hold their next meeting June 24-25.

Base Textiles becomes corporate client of GP

Base Textiles Limited has signed an agreement with GrameenPhone Ltd under its corporate sales package initiative to use GP mobile phones and other services.

An agreement to this effect was signed at the Base Textiles office in Chittagong recently, says a press release.

Jamal Uddin, director of Base Textiles Ltd, and Hasan Md Zahid, head of Corporate Sales of GrameenPhone Ltd, signed the agreement on behalf of their organisations.

Shahadat Hossain, Chairman of Base Textiles, was present at the signing ceremony. Tauhidul Karim, Manager of Base Textiles, and Mir Rashedul Hossain, deputy manager of Corporate Sales of GrameenPhone, were also present.

Under the agreement, Base Textiles has been provided with GP subscriptions to maintain effective communication among its different offices and plants.

Green Delta Ins declares 35pc dividend

Green Delta Insurance Company Limited has declared a 35 per cent dividend for the shareholders for the year 2002.

The dividend was announced at the 17th annual general meeting of the company held in Dhaka on Thursday, says a press release.

A Q M Nurul Absar, chairman of the Board of Directors of the company, presided over the meeting.

During the year 2002, the company earned a gross premium of Tk 342.09 million. Its assets and reserve increased to Tk 711.81 million and Tk 261.27 million respectively. Investment income accelerated to Tk 43.50 million and underwriting profit increased by 37.36 per cent.

The meeting re-elected Md Sarqum Ali, Farida R Ahmed, Waqar A Choudhury, Habibur Rahman, Tahmina R Choudhury, M Muhibur Rahman and Tanjil Choudhury directors amongst sponsor-shareholders while Arif A Choudhury, M A Tarek and Ayesha Farha Chowdhury amongst the public-shareholders.

SARS wipes out 3m tourism jobs in Asia

REUTERS, Bangkok

SARS has wiped out three million tourism jobs in the worst-hit parts of Asia since mid-March, delivering a harder hit than the September 11 attacks, the Bali bombings and the Iraq war, an industry group said Friday.

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) said job losses in four places — China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam — could be as high as seven million if tourism-related sectors, such as catering and retail, were included in the figures. "Unexpectedly, the impact of SARS on our region has been

greater than September 11, the Bali bombs, and the Iraq war," PATA president Peter de Jong told reporters in Bangkok.

"The downturn in tourism affects many people who really feel the pinch," he said, adding that most tourism jobs in the Asia-Pacific region were in small-and medium-sized enterprises.

PATA, which counts 1,300 hotels, travel agents and government agencies as members, launched a \$500,000 public relations campaign in Bangkok on Friday in an attempt to convince tourists the worst of the SARS outbreak is over.



PHOTO: ISLAMI COMMERCIAL INS Director of Islami Commercial Insurance Company Limited Md Anwar Hossain formally inaugurates the company's new head office at Motijheel in Dhaka recently. Among others, Chairman of the Board of Directors M Kamaluddin Chowdhury, directors Niaz Ahmed, MG Faruk, Sk Salahuddin, Nadim Ahmed Khan, Advisor AZM Shamsul Alam and Managing Director (CC) AK Momtaz Khan were present.

ReadyCash Raffle Draw Winners

The latest ReadyCash Raffle draw was held at ReadyCash Bangladesh office at Dhanmondi in Dhaka on Thursday, says a press release.

Prizes	Name of Winners	Card No
China Junction Chinese Free Lunch for Two	Md Hannan Khan	504798000047505
Meal in the Box Free Lunch for Two	Md Alam Mridha	5047980010015949
Kena Kata free Gift Box	Md Rafiqul Islam	5047980010016241
Obsession free Gift Box	AKM Nurul Arefin	5047980010016269
Liton's Snacks Free Meal Box	MA Haque	5047980000047511

Winners can collect their prizes from the Executive, Promotion of ReadyCash, within 30 days of this news circulation by producing their ReadyCash card transaction vouchers. ReadyCash encourages its cardholders to read the Daily Star and the Daily Prothom Alo on every Sunday or call our Customer Service at: 81233850, 8130497, and 8125294-7.

CURRENCY

Following is yesterday's forex trading statement by Standard Chartered Bank

Selling	Currency	Buying
TT/OD	BC	TT Clean
58.9300	58.9800	USD 58.0000
69.9558	70.0152	EUR 66.9958
98.8551	98.9390	GBP 95.5550
39.6422	39.6758	AUD 37.5086
0.5008	0.5013	JPY 0.4839
45.0225	45.0607	CHF 43.5795
7.6513	7.6578	SEK 7.3773
43.6680	43.7051	CAD 42.4753
7.5638	7.5702	HKD 7.4301
34.2218	34.2509	SGD 33.4101
16.1749	16.1886	AED 15.6634
15.8393	15.8527	SAR 15.3435

Indian Rupee	Pak Rupee	Lankan Rupee	Thai Baht	Nor Kroner	NZ Dollar	Malaysian Ringit
46.83	57.7	97.27	41.625	6.9804	0.5772	3.80

Local Interbank FX Trading: Taka remained steady against dollar on Saturday. Interbank trading was limited due to holiday in the international market. Local Money Market: Call rate ranged between 15.0 and 15.5 per cent compared with 12-14 per cent previously. International Market: 118.66/72 against the dollar. This memorandum is issued by Standard Chartered Bank and is based on or derived from information generally available to the public from sources believed to be reliable. While all reasonable care has been taken in its preparation no responsibility or liability is accepted for errors of fact or any opinion expressed herein.



PHOTO: GREEN DELTA INS AQM Nurul Absar, chairman of Green Delta Insurance Company Limited, speaks at the 17th annual general meeting of the company held in Dhaka on Thursday. Nasir A Choudhury, managing director, and directors of the company were present.



PHOTO: GRAMEENPHONE Official of GrameenPhone and Base Textiles Limited sign an agreement at the Base Office in Chittagong recently. Under the deal, Base Textiles Limited has become corporate client of GP.

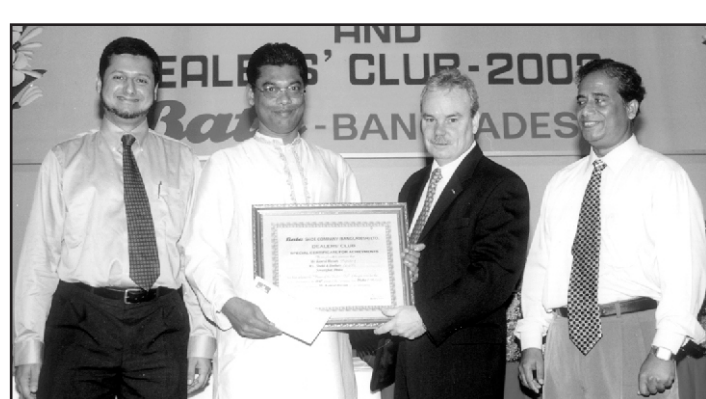


PHOTO: BATA B Rhodes, managing director of Bata Shoe Company (BD) Ltd, hands over prize and special certificate to Kamrul Hassan of M/s Shakil & Brothers, DSP dealer of the company, as the winner of the Dealers' Club for the year-2002 in Dhaka yesterday. Hafiz Sikander, WCSM manager, and Habibur Rahman, Wholesale Service manager of the company, are also seen.

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