

Star BUSINESS

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Dollar rises 4.3pc against taka for imports in 7 days

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dollar price against taka for opening letter of credit (LC) surged by Tk 3.05, or 4.3 percent, in the last week compared to the previous week.

The greenback rate for the importers was Tk 73.95 yesterday while it was Tk 70.90 on November 9.

The price of dollar for LC opening remained high each day of the last week, market sources said.

Many importers and traders made advance payments for LC opening during the September-October period when the greenback value was less than it is now.

The dollar price against the local currency in the inter-bank foreign exchange market also increased by

Tk 2.25 last week compared to the previous week.

The greenback value in the inter-bank foreign exchange market was Tk 72.95, which was Tk 70.70 in the previous week's Thursday.

The dollar price showed its upward trend since last week. It was selling at Tk 67.50 during the ending period last month, according to the market sources.

Banking sources said supply position of the foreign exchange declined due to fall in the inward remittance flow, which was resulted from the recent political turmoil.

Sources said in October, the flow of remittances marked a 15.30 per cent decline over that in the previous month due to lower rate of the

BDT against the US dollar.

The BB sources said remittances from expatriate Bangladeshis stood at US\$377.71 million in October, \$68.28 million less than the amount remitted the previous month. In September, the total remittances were \$446.00 million.

The sources said the decline in remittance inflow caused the supply-demand gap of the greenback.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Bank has already asked all the commercial banks and the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association (Bafeda) to be cautious so that the situation could not be volatile.

GP introduces new logo

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Grameenphone Limited, the largest mobile phone operator of the country, has introduced new logo effective from today, replacing the previous one.

The new logo of the mobile phone operator, which serves more than 10 million customers now, symbolises trust, reliability, quality and constant progress, GP officials said launching the new logo formally at a press conference at a hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

"It is 10 years since Grameenphone received its license to operate. Since then, our industry and our customers' needs have changed, and so we have. We are evolving our business to meet the changing needs of all our customers across Bangladesh and we need a visual identity that reflects our ambitions for the future," Erik Aas, managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of the operator.

Although the 10-year old logo of the operator changes, the brand name -Grameenphone-will remain unchanged with a little change in writing style, the top official of the company announced.

"We are maintaining the name Grameenphone as part of the new identity. The name Grameenphone carries with it all of the heritage, success and values of our past", Aas mentioned.

He also said, "We are now taking a more modern design that reflects our future view as well. This change is not just about changing the way we look. We want to continually evolve our organisation and our dynamics to serve our customers even better in the future."

"I strongly believe that our new brand identity will inspire us in these ongoing efforts to deliver even better services to all our customers," he went on.

"We have been providing quality services for the last 10 years and during this period everything has evolved and changed. So we also need to change to keep pace with these changes, Rubaba Dowla Matin, head of Marketing of Grameenphone, to the press conference.

The new logo will be gradually visible on all advertisements, website, sale and service centres and billboards, including all Grameenphone's appearances.

Oil prices flat

AFP, Singapore

Crude prices traded flat in Asia on Thursday as the market digested a surprise drop in US stockpiles of heating fuel, dealers said.

At 10:59 am (0259 GMT) New York's main contract, light sweet crude for December delivery, gained one cent to 58.77 dollars a barrel from 58.76 dollars in late US trade Wednesday.

WTO's fresh bid to save global trade talks

AFP, Geneva

The head of the WTO urged governments Thursday to put forward concrete proposals on how far they would go to open up their markets at the start of a fresh bid to save global trade talks.

World Trade Organization director general Pascal Lamy was speaking as the WTO's 149 members gathered for the first time since the Doha round of trade liberalisation talks was suspended in deadlock more than three months ago.

"Today we are somewhere between the quiet diplomacy of the last months and the fully-fledged negotiations which will only come when members are prepared to put numbers to the flexibilities they have expressed in general terms on key issues," Lamy told an informal meeting of

the Trade Negotiations Committee.

The issues he referred to in the written copy of his speech -- market access for agricultural goods and domestic support for farmers -- are at the very core of the deadlock in the Doha Round. "While we are ready to start technical work at the level of experts, it would be, in my view, premature to move on to ministerial negotiations," Lamy cautioned.

The Doha Round of negotiations on cutting subsidies, tariffs and other barriers to agricultural, industrial and services trade was launched in the Qatari capital Doha in 2001.

It has repeatedly been torn apart by disputes between rich and poor nations, as well as between the world's top trading powers, the European Union and the United States, over what

concessions they each need to make.

The heads of the technical negotiating groups dealing with individual topics such as agriculture, market access and trade rules were given the green light Thursday to resume their work if and when they see fit. Those groups lie below the Trade Negotiations Committee.

Lamy, who has repeatedly called for concrete steps to restart the negotiations before key US legislative changes next year, underlined that contacts on the Doha Round had been maintained behind the scenes since the suspension in late July.

"Today there seems to be widespread support for multilateralising these contacts and bringing them back to the negotiating groups," he explained.

Xian Zhu new WB country director in Bangladesh

The World Bank Board has appointed Xian Zhu the new country director for Bangladesh with effect from February 1, 2007, says a press release.

Zhu is replacing Christine Wallich, who is leaving her post on Sunday after three and a half years in Bangladesh. Mohamed Alhousseyni Toure, operations adviser, will be acting country director in Bangladesh following Wallich's departure.

Zhu, a Chinese national, joined the bank in 2002 as country director, Papua New Guinea and Pacific Islands in the East Asia and Pacific region. Before joining the World Bank, Zhu was principal director for Co-financing in the Asian Development Bank. Before that he was the executive director for China at the World Bank.

INT'L TRADING SYSTEM Professionals urged to update knowledge

The International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B) has urged professionals to update their knowledge and energise skill to survive and compete in the changing scenario of the world trading system, says a press release.

"The world today is not what it was yesterday and it will not be the same tomorrow either. From human needs to aspirations, from technology to social behaviour, changes have been taking place with the passage of time," said ICC-B President Mahbubur Rahman.

"There also have been widespread changes in the practice of trade and commerce," added Rahman. He was speaking at the inauguration of the ICC workshop on "Transport Documents in Trade Finance: How to get Paid?" at Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) in Chittagong yesterday.

Quoting a recent survey of ICC headquarters, the ICC-B president said about 33 percent of the discrepancies in letters of credit are from transport documents.

Freight forwarders and carriers also have disputes with the bankers over discrepancies in transport documents, blaming them for mowing the lawn of their neighbours, he observed. These disputes are aggravated by the new requirements under the UCP, ISBP and other documents, he said.

President of CCCI Saifuzzaman Chowdhury said IT has brought about dramatic change in global trade and commerce to ensure safety and security in receipt of goods and payment.



Chairman of Brac Fazle Hasan Abed inaugurates the first branch of BRAC Afghanistan Bank in Kabul recently. Noorullah Delawari, governor of the Central Bank of Afghanistan, was also present during the inauguration.

US pushes idea of Apec FTA

AFP, Hanoi

The United States Thursday pushed the idea of a free trade zone stretching from China to Chile after Asia-Pacific nations agreed to study the idea, but some countries were sceptical of the initiative.

The proposal has become a major talking point of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum in Hanoi, where it is seen as a possible alternative if World Trade Organisation (WTO) talks to free up global trade fail.

Secretary of State Condoleezza

Rice said the US was "committed to exploring ways to promote greater economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, including through a possible Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP).

"The coming year will be exciting for Apec as our officials explore ways to take Apec in this direction," she said after Apec ministers agreed that experts would study the plan and report back next year.

President George W. Bush, who was heading to Hanoi from Singapore on Friday for the Apec weekend summit, would also promote the creation of a free trade zone in the 21-member grouping, said the White House.

But while Washington has championed the idea first mooted by business leaders, several Apec economies have expressed reservations.



Grameenphone Managing Director Erik Aas (R), among other officials, is seen at a press briefing in Dhaka yesterday to announce new logo of the leading cellphone operator.

New China rules for foreign banks

AFP, Beijing

China announced Thursday its long-awaited new rules governing foreign banks' operations in the country, as part of its World Trade Organization commitments to open up the sector to global competition.

"We have fully complied with the promises of making a full (market) opening," Song Dahan, deputy director of the legal office under the State Council said in a televised news conference.

"There is a certain degree of restriction but such provisions

comply with the common international practices and are consistent with our commitment to the WTO."

The rules, which will take effect on December 11 -- the fifth anniversary of China's entry into the WTO -- will however hold overseas banks to some tough restrictions as they seek to grab a slice of the nation's fast-growing wealth.

According to the rules, foreign institutions will be allowed to carry out "part of or all" foreign currency and yuan-denominated businesses.

This includes taking individual yuan deposits, granting short-term

and long-term loans and banking card business, it said.

But the new regulations also say foreign-funded and joint-venture banks must have at least one billion yuan (127 million dollars) in registered capital if they want to conduct yuan retail business in mainland China.

Overseas lenders will also only be allowed to take fixed-term deposits of at least one million yuan from Chinese residents.