

## Telecom system ready for Y2K, says BTTB

The country's telecommunications system is fully Y2K compliant, but BTTB will have eight-day round the clock extra monitoring from today to face any emergency due to the dreaded millennium bug, reports UNB.

Control rooms will be in operation at the BTTB head office and all regional offices across the country from December 29 to January 5, 2000," said a press release of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) here today.

It said the board has taken up a massive contingency plan to face any eventualities. Experts, officials and employees will be present at all important establishments of the BTTB from midnight on December 31.

The BTTB, however, assured that all none of its systems and chips will give trouble due to the millennium bug as all the equipment are ready to accommodate the year 2000 digits.

After reviewing the steps undertaken, it is hoped that all satellites, international trunk exchange, data exchange, telex exchange and Internet systems of BTTB have been made Y2K compliant, the release said.

Besides, all digital exchanges as well as transmission links and equipment related to long-distance telecommunications service have also been made Y2K friendly.

Elaborating the steps taken so far and the contingency plan to face emergency, the BTTB announced that the bug would not in any way affect the local, national and international telecommunications systems.

"The BTTB took timely steps to make everything Y2K compliant although many of those were year 2000 accommodating since their inception," it said adding those which were not docile have been upgraded."

The BTTB said it procured certificates from the vendors of its high-tech digital equipment that those are Y2K compliant. Its own experts have also checked and cross-checked the equipment.



## Abu Taher new Chairman of NBL

AKM Abu Taher has been unanimously elected Chairman of National Bank Limited.

The election was held at a meeting of the board of directors in the city on Sunday, says a press release.

A leading entrepreneur and industrialist of the country, Taher is one of the sponsor directors of National Bank Limited.

He is the Chairman of Beco Group of Industries. He is also the Adviser of Progati General Insurance Company Ltd.

Taher is the founding member of Barura Government College, Pavel Gacha Degree College and Rahima Nagar Degree College.

## Unemployment rate falls in Japan

TOKYO, Dec 28: Japan's unemployment rate fell to 4.5 per cent in November, down 0.1 percentage point from the previous month, the Management and Coordination Agency (MCA) said today, reports Reuters.

The figure is the lowest since January, when the jobless rate stood at 4.4 per cent. The unemployment rate has been declining since August, after hitting a record high of 4.9 per cent in June and July.

"Some bright movements are being detected, the first in about two years," an MCA official said of the November data.

The number of people with jobs was unchanged from a year earlier, the first time in 22 months that the number did not fall below the year-earlier level, the official said.

In addition, the number of unemployed rose just 40,000 from a year earlier to 2.95 million, the smallest rise in 25 months, the official said.

Still, the jobless rate remains above last January's level and Japanese corporations are still restructuring by cutting payrolls, which could cause the jobless rate to rise again in the future, the official said.

In fact, unemployment worsened last month among men, particularly young men.

The jobless rate for males aged 15-24 rose 1.7 percentage points in November to 9.7 per cent, the official said.

The overall jobless rate among men rose 0.1 percentage point to 4.7 per cent.

But the jobless rate among women fell 0.3 percentage point from the previous month to 4.2 per cent, partly due to an increase in part-time jobs in manufacturing and service industries, the official said.

## BB decision to dodge Y2K glitch

# Banks to keep away from forex dealings on Jan 2

Branches to remain open on Dec 30, check out world-wide Y2K impact before business on Jan 3

Star Business Report

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has asked all commercial banks to abstain from foreign exchange-related transactions on January 2, 2000 as a precaution to avert Y2K glitches.

However, the banks will remain open on the day and continue all other forms of business.

The BB also asked all banks to keep their branches closed on January 1, 2000 and asked them to contact its Y2K Cell on January 3 before starting transactions to know if the banks of other countries, which are ahead of Bangladesh time, faced any problem caused by the

millennium bug. The BB has taken steps to collect information regarding Y2K problems from countries which are ahead of the local time and will advise the commercial banks here about facing any disruption.

The central bank has also said that banks will remain open on December 30 for normal transactions and December 31 will be considered as Bank Holiday.

But according to the banking norms, the last working day of each year is considered as a bank holiday. Since December 31 this year is a Friday, the

year-end bank holiday was scheduled to be on December 30. The BB decision came yesterday after the foreign commercial banks asked it to shift the bank holiday on December 30, the last working day of the millennium, to January 2, 2000, to dodge any possible Y2K glitch.

The foreign banks' logic was that if the banks in Bangladesh operate on January 2, they will be the first ones to risk the onslaught of the millennium bug.

The BB yesterday also advised all bank branches to keep the balances of all accounts in black and white at the end of

the last working day of the year as a precautionary measure against any Y2K problem.

The banks have also been asked to supply financial statements to all account-holders as on the last working day of this year.

The BB also directed to banks to maintain adequate fund reserves keeping in mind the possible excess cash withdrawal pressure.

Meanwhile, the foreign banks have decided to keep their IT divisions on full-alert for five days starting from December 31 to avoid and face the consequences of Y2K bug.

## Bank Reforms Committee report says

# NCBs face negative net worth by financing govt sectors

Star Business Report

The Bank Reforms Committee (BRC) in its final report has said that the net worth of four nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) has become negative as instead of operating purely on business grounds they acted as the main source of loans for the government's thrust and priority sectors.

It also mentioned that the conditions of the private commercial banks (PCBs) were also fragile. "Many irregularities occurred in the absence of transparency, accountability and good governance, and as a result, seven banks were identified as problem banks."

The Committee headed by Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud submitted its final report to the finance minister Monday.

The NCBs were found to be maintaining 5.25 per cent reserved capital instead of the required 8 per cent against their risk-based assets. The PCBs were maintaining a nine per cent reserved capital, while the

foreign banks had 15 per cent against their risk-based assets.

The Committee observed that the NCBs were still suffering from huge capital inadequacies despite the injection of Tk 5,000 crore fund as bonds in early 1990s to recapitalise them.

The report also said that the share of classified loans in the NCBs increased to 47 per cent in 1999 from 1993 while it reduced to 29 per cent from 45 per cent in the case of the PCBs. For the foreign banks, it came down to four per cent from 13 per cent.

The Committee, however, said that in cases of some problem banks the percentage of classified loans were as high as 50 per cent.

The BRC report observed that the assets of the NCBs had deteriorated creating an adverse impact on their earnings.

"It has now become impossible for the banks (NCBs) to make profits due to Tk 2,000 crore provisioning against

classified loans and Tk 3,100 crore interest suspense," the report said. "It has even become difficult for them to meet loan provisioning from their current income, and as a result, there is a Tk 3,600 crore provision shortfall."

The PCBs have successfully reduced their provision shortfalls from Tk 1,100 crore to Tk 900 crore, the report said. "Despite this, the earnings capability of the private banks is not satisfactory compared to the international standard or the foreign banks operating here."

The BRC, after reviewing the CAMEL ratings of the banks, mentioned that the overall situation indicates a still deteriorating banking situation. However, there had been some improvements in the management of the PCBs, which is an encouraging sign.

According to the Bangladesh Bank's CAMEL ratings, only three banks -- all of them for-

eign ones -- were found to be strong. Ten foreign and seven local banks were rated satisfactory, three fair, 15 marginal and one was dubbed unsatisfactory.

Between 1996 and 1997, two of the NCBs deteriorated while the situation of the other two remained unchanged. During the same period, four PCBs performed negatively, 12 remained unchanged and only two banks showed improvements in their performances.

The BRC report said that the huge amount of default loans had rendered the banking sector risky, making investment and proper use of capital difficult.

The report also mentioned that the difference between deposit and lending rates in Bangladesh was seven to eight percentage points because of the huge non-performing loans, which in any developed banking system should never cross one to two percentage points.

## Indian tycoon sees bright IT prospect in Bangladesh

An Indian IT business tycoon sees Bangladesh's bright prospect in the field, but says proper education and fast telecommunications are the prerequisites for its boost, reports UNB.

"Initiatives taken by both the government and the private sector entrepreneurs here are excellent for flourishing the IT industry," Pradeep Gupta, managing director of Cyber Media India Limited, told UNB.

"I visited Bangladesh four times. The enthusiasm I have seen here in the information technology (IT) sector was tremendous," he said, adding "but the approach should be more professional."

Before leaving Dhaka late Monday night, he said there is no doubt Bangladesh would emerge as a leader in the IT like India if the current enthusiasm continues with more professional approach.

"A strong education system with a clear vision is also a must for flourishing the IT industry," said Gupta, who is in Indian IT media for last 17 years.

Referring to India's boom in the field, he said Bangladesh could experience a similar break. "But fast telecommunications system is needed to attract European and American entrepreneurs."

Gupta's Cyber Media was the key sponsor of Asia's largest high-tech show 'Bangalore IT Com 99' and he was the event manager. His visit to Dhaka was in connection with the launching of a computer magazine, PC Quest Bangladesh.

The bilingual monthly is a joint venture of Cyber Media India and local software developer Technovista. It is the first four-colour international standard computer magazine in Bangladesh.

As Cyber Media publishes PC Quest and several other popular IT magazines in India, Gupta said the PCQ Bangladesh will not be an edition of Indian version, rather it will be an independent one.

Asked why they are here, he said the Indian experience and success in the IT is now a South Asian phenomenon and they want to share it with Bangladesh. The Cyber Media has association also in Sri Lanka and Nepal.



Roadside vendors are going through a brisk business time with the Eid festival drawing near. Many of them have even occupied the city streets causing problems to traffic movement. — Star photo

## Dhaka to get Tk 230cr Japanese debt relief grant

Bangladesh will receive 4,592,509 million yen (Tk 230 crore) Japanese grant aid for debt relief, says a press release.

To this effect, an accord was signed by the secretary of Economic Division Relations, Dr AKM Masihur Rahman and the Ambassador of Japan in Bangladesh, Kazuyoshi Urabe on behalf of their respective governments in the city yesterday.

When the repayment is made by a least less developed country, Japan, instead of reducing the debt, offers the same amount as the repaid debt. In this aspect, the grant will enable the recipient country to

purchase commodities and equipment from all member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Since this grant is to be utilised by the Government of Bangladesh for import of commodities and equipments for much needed investment programs, it will substantially contribute to the development of various sectors of the Bangladesh economy and social welfare.

It will also contribute considerably to improve the balance of payments of the recipient country.

## Warning against low grade shrimp processing

As per Fisheries and Fisheries Product (Inspection and Quality Control) Acts, low grade shrimp collection, selling, preservation and processing, separating heads of shrimp outside the processing plant is a punishable offence, reports BSS.

Shrimp sellers, stockists, owners of the depot, suppliers and processors have been requested to refrain from such acts.

Legal action would be taken against those who will sell or purchase low grade shrimp and found in depot, service centre or processing plant.

The export depends on the quality of procured shrimp. So it is the moral responsibility for all concerned in maintaining quality of shrimp.



Kazuyoshi Urabe, Ambassador of Japan in Bangladesh, and Dr AKM Masihur Rahman, Secretary, Economic Relations Division, sign an exchange of notes on debt relief grant assistance of 4,592,509 million yen (Tk 230 crore) for Bangladesh in the city yesterday.

# Labour leaders blast US campaign for EPZ TUs

Country's labour leaders from both right and left wings seek recognition of trade unions in EPZs, but they don't consider the flurry of American campaign a well-intentioned move, says UNB.

Talking to the news agency separately TU stalwarts like Abdul Bashir, Abdus Salam Khan, Nazrul Islam Khan, Dr Wajedul Islam and Abdullah Sarkar all came up with the opinion and criticised both the government and US labour lobbies' move.

"No Yankee move is designed for welfare of the third-world countries," trade union veteran Abdul Bashir said about the campaign in the consumer nation for granting union rights in Bangladesh's Export Processing Zones.

He smells a rat in the US pressures on Dhaka for allowing trade union in the restrictive nascent economic zones when thousands of workers in that country do not enjoy the right.

ica continued pressure for trade union right in the EPZs while campaigning for curbing the just right in the banking sector," said the left leader.

Abdul Bashir said all the labour organisations in the country had long been demanding workers' right in the EPZs, but became suspicious about sudden pious wishes of America.

"We also don't like to see child labour. America compelled the government to eliminate it. But what is the reality in America? Still children are at work there," said Bashir, who heads a trade union alliance in jute, yarn and textile sector.

He thinks all the USA moves from child-labour to current trade-union issues are designed to "destroy our economy as it ruined our industrialisation process through so-called globalisation."

Ruling party labour front Jatiya Samik League leader, Abdus Salam Khan said both the government and the owners

of units in the EPZs should not be worried about constructive trade union there.

But, he says he doesn't understand the sudden interest of USA in establishing the right. "Apart from pressures from people and labour bodies in America, there might be something more behind USA's interest."

Nazrul Islam Khan of Jatiyatabadi Samik Dal told the news agency that like every labour body they were in movement for trade-union rights in the EPZs but don't welcome any interference from outside.

"Unfortunately, the present government took the situation to a stage where people from outside had to press," he said referring to the move taken by US Ambassador John C Holzman and an American trade-union alliance.

He said the government didn't listen to workers' voice, but now is responding to Washington as it did the same earlier.



## Bangladesh Power Development Board BPDB's Local Tender Notice

দেশে প্রস্তুত উদ্ভব হউন  
বিদ্যুতের অবৈধ সংযোগ বন্ধ করুন

Local sealed tenders are invited by the Bangladesh Power Development Board from reputed suppliers/local agent of overseas manufacturers for supply of Micro Computers, Leser Printers, Dot Printer, UPS, AVR, Scanner & Color Printer.

Sl No	Tender enquiry no	Description of materials	Qty	Cost of document (non-refundable)	Tender receiving & opening date
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Pur-271/99 dated 13.12.99	1. Micro Computer 2. Leser Printer 3. Dot Printer 4. UPS 5. AVR 6. Scanner 7. Color Printer 8. Computer Table (Standard)	40 Nos 12 Nos 23 Nos 42 Nos 42 Nos 9 Nos 4 Nos 20 Nos	Tk 2,000/-	17.1.2000

- A complete set of tender document may be purchased by interested bidders on submission of written application upon payment of non-refundable fee of Taka 2,000/- in the shape of Bank Draft/Pay Order in favour of "Director, Purchase, BPDB, Dhaka."
- Bidding documents will be available for sale from the office of the undersigned during office hours up to 16.1.2000.
- Offer must be accompanied by a Bid Security of 2.5% (two & half per cent) of total bid amount and must be delivered to the above office on or before 11:00 AM Bangladesh Standard Time (BST) on 17.1.2000. The validity of bid bond shall be 150 days.
- Tender will receive up to 11:00 AM of 17.1.2000 and will be opened at 11:30 AM on the same day in presence of the intending bidder or their representative if any at the office of Director, Purchase, BPDB, WAPDA Building (9th floor), Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.
- Bids submitted by post/fax or telex will be rejected. Bids submitted beyond scheduled time will neither be received nor accepted.
- The expenditure will be booked against Central Office Equipment Purchase Budget 1999-2000.

Biddut/Jana-967(4)/99-2000  
DFP-28573-22/12  
G-2184

Director, Purchase (Incharge)  
BPDB, Dhaka