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# The Daily Star BUSINESS

DHAKA, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2000

**GP regrets delay  
in activating  
new subscriptions****Star Business Report**  
GrameenPhone has regretted delayed activation of new subscriptions under the on-going sales campaign.

A GP press release said its activation unit is working round-the-clock. The normal time taken by the computer to process a new subscriber is about 24 hours. In view of the heavy demand of subscribers, the queue is now longer, and the process now takes 72 hours.

Furthermore, due to the ongoing upgrading work of its network, GP is sometimes facing small technical delays.

"GrameenPhone is fully aware of the situation, and we are committed to shorten the activation process," the release said.

"We would like to reiterate that GrameenPhone has not sold beyond their capacity. We have recently expanded our capacity, allowing us to take more subscribers," it further said.

All subscriptions sold till November 23 have been activated, and requested any subscriber who has not yet been activated to contact Points of Sale from where the subscription was purchased along with the subscription copy and GP will attend to specific problem.

Henceforth, the usual time for activation will be three working days from the date of purchase of the subscription, it said.

**Tax lawyers for  
raising number  
of tax-payers**

Bangladesh Tax Lawyers Association (BTLA) yesterday urged the authorities to find ways to raise government revenue by increasing the number of tax-payers, reports BSS.

BTLA also called upon the government to make effective measures to check attempts to evade tax. The countersigning by tax lawyers on tax returns should be made mandatory to contain tax evasion, a meeting of the executive committee of BTLA resolved.

Chaired by Advocate MA Sajam Talukder, President of BTLA, the meeting was attended by leaders of Tax Lawyers Association from 65 districts, a press release said.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by SN Chowdhury Azad and Mahbub Alam from Dhaka, Molis Khan (Rajshahi), Kazi Fazlur Rahman and Manzil Alami Chowdhury (Khulna), A Matin Khan (Barisal), Shafi Alam Mulla (Patuakhali), Robin Datta (Feni) and A Latif (Mymensingh).

**SMC's annual  
sales confece  
held**

The Annual Sales Conference of Social Marketing Company (SMC) was held recently at a city hotel, says a press release.

The conference was attended by all the sales officers, sales promotion officers, zone executives, area managers, members of the senior management and other staff.

National sales manager, Shahid Ahmed, presented the report on FY 2000 sales performance, according to his report. SMC distributed 22.15 million cycles of oral contraceptive pills (Femicon, Nordette 28 and Minicon) and 142.54 million pieces of condoms (Raja, Panther and Sensation) during the period.

SMC's national CYP (couple years of protection) achievement in FY 2000 was 2.6 million. In addition 74 million sachets of packaged oral rehydration salt (ORSaline) was sold during the period.

Ashfaq Rahman, Acting Managing Director of SMC appreciated the contribution of the sales force to the success of the company in terms of providing quality health and family planning products to the less-privileged people at a very affordable price.

**Colombo considers  
closing down  
casinos**

COLOMBO, Nov 25: Sri Lanka was considering closing down casinos amid protests that the gambling operations had led to international prostitution rackets and money laundering here, the state-run Daily News said today, reports AFP.

Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremayake told parliament Friday a government decision to licence casinos in 1996 had never been officially implemented.

Despite this, casinos have continued to operate in the country, some even within high-security zones of the capital, Colombo.

The Daily News quoted the prime minister as saying the government was now considering closing them down.

## Starwood joins in setting up 5-star pvt sector hotel in city

Star Business Report

With the increase in demand for high-quality hotel accommodation in the capital city, Starwood Hotel and Resorts Worldwide Inc of USA has joined hands with local investors to set up a five-star hotel named "The Westin Dhaka".

The hotel now under construction in the city's Gulshan area will have 242 rooms, said Al Chowdhury, advisor to the Unique Group which is expected to provide 56 per cent of the total equity. Starwood will give 10 per cent equity and the rest will be financed by other investors.

He said the foreign investors would prefer the new hotel because of its proximity to the

The Borak Real Estate (Pvt)

Ltd, a concern of the Unique Group, is constructing the hotel building.

The Starwood Hotel &amp; Resorts Worldwide Inc of USA has six different categories of hotels including Westin and Sheraton.

The Starwood will run the management of the proposed hotel and Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA), a US company based in Singapore, will design the interior of the hotel.

Creative Kitchen Planners Ltd of Malaysia is designing the kitchen facilities while the lighting works will be done by Project Lighting Design Ltd of Singapore.

Speaking on the occasion IPDC Managing Director CM Alam said that his company board has already agreed to invest in the hotel because of bright prospects.

### 'Allowing more cos will leave cement sector in disarray'

#### Meghna Cement gets ISO 2000

Star Business Report

Bangladesh has no possibility of becoming a cement exporting country in near future and allowing more cement companies would add to the list of defaulters, cautioned a leading entrepreneur of the country.

Most of the local cement factories are producing cement by importing clinker from different countries. The country is going to be self-sufficient soon and allowing more companies may create a dangerous situation in the cement sector," said Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, Chairman of Bashundhara group, at the ISO-9002 certificate awarding ceremony of Meghna Cement Mills Ltd at Sonargaon Hotel in the city Friday.

Attending the function as chief guest, Industries Minister Toofal Ahmed mentioned that

Savem Sobhan and Sadat Sobhan, vice chairmen of Bashundhara group, also spoke on the occasion.

The country presently produces around 43 lakh metric tons of cement against a 60 lakh metric tons demand. Of the total 17 cement factories, five are going for expansion which will raise the total capacity to around 53 lakh tons. World cement majors like Holderbank, Lafarge, Cemex and Scancem have already entered the country.

French Ambassador in Bangladesh Michel Luminaux attended the function as special guest while Trevor Nash, representative of NQA, a British audit firm, Habibur Rahman, Chief Executive Officer of Meghna Cement Mills Ltd.

He said that he would try his best to attract more French investment in Bangladesh.

French Ambassador Michel Luminaux mentioned that ISO certification is important not only for the corporate houses, but also for a country's image.

In addition to the provision to the organisers of tickets to the value of Dh 1 million, Emirates will promote the event through Emirates offices across the network with promotional material and advertising. Its Destination and Leisure Management Division will offer special packages, details of which will be announced shortly. Competitions for passengers to win major prizes are also planned.

In one of the most visible worldwide promotions of the event, Emirates will feature decals of the DSF logo on every aircraft. The colourful decal will be placed near the rear of the aircraft fuselage so that it can be clearly seen by passengers boarding by air bridges and steps. In addition, DSF will feature in a special video on the airline's in flight entertainment system.

At a press conference to announce the 14 key sponsors for next year's event, Hussain Ali Lootah, Chief Executive Officer of DSF 2001, said that this year's event had attracted 2.5 million visitors, an increase over the previous year of four per cent overall and 28 per cent from Europe. He added that total sales during DSF 2000 reached US\$1.1 billion (Dh 4.31 billion).

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Chuck C.F. Lai, Managing Director of Chargeurs Interlining, Asia, and Basher A Khan, Executive Director of Osman Textiles Ltd, have signed a memorandum of understanding to set up a joint venture DHJ Interlining factory in the city.

### Commodity: Weekly Roundup

## Oil surges above \$33 on ME tension, Iraqi squeeze threat

LONDON, Nov 25: Oil prices climbed above 33 dollars a barrel this week on forecasts of a fall in temperatures in the United States, renewed tensions in the Middle East, and fresh Iraqi threats to hold back oil exports.

Benchmark Brent North Sea crude oil for January delivery was selling for 33.30 dollars a barrel in London by Friday afternoon, compared with 32.34 dollars a week earlier.

Prices rose despite more sales from the International Rubber Organisation that have been "continually absorbed by the market because of the bad weather in south Thailand, and in north Malaysia," Singapore trader Martin Hampson said.

Prices rose in response to a combination of continued cold weather in the United States and the increased tension in the Middle East," Dreasner Kleinwort Benson analyst Paul Spedding said.

Temperatures are forecast to fall in the next six to 10 days in parts of the United States, notably in the northeast, by the US National Weather Service which market players fear could drain fragile stocks.

Prices were also supported by the increased, but slim, prospect that oil producing nations might use oil as a political tool in support of the Palestinians in the Middle East conflict.

Rubber stretched. Rubber bounced back this week in response to bad weather in Asia

that could affect supplies, analysts said.

The London rubber index for October delivery rose to 53.25 pence per kilo from 51.50 pence the previous week.

In Kuala Lumpur, the RSSI index climbed to 2,545 ringgit from 2,477 ringgit per kilo last week.

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Sugar: Coated sugar prices, which set the tone for the market, fell slightly this week, but the effect was neutralised for international buyers at least, by a stronger Australian dollar.

The Eastern index ended the week at 715 cents per kilo from 721 cents per kilo last week.

Rubber: Coated rubber prices advanced to their highest in four weeks in New York on expectations of an increase in

demand from Russia.

On the London market, May contracts rose to 242.9 dollars a tonne from 240 dollars last week.

In New York, a pound of white sugar (for May delivery) climbed to 9.35 cents from 9.06 cents the previous week.

Prices rose ahead of the Russian auction of import licences for up to 3,65 million tonnes of unrefined sugar on Monday.

**Cotton:** Strong. Cotton prices ended the week flat, despite picking up in the middle of the week thanks to a poor weather forecast for number one US producer Texas.

On the NYCE in New York the March contract rose as high as 68.80 cents to 68.45 cents last week, before closing on Thursday at 68.08 cents. Cotton prices have now advanced some 11 per cent in little more than a month.

The Cotton Outlook index of physical cotton prices, for January delivery was selling for 649 dollars per tonne from 666 dollars a week earlier.

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Jatindra Lal Tripura, Chairman of Khagrachari Hill District Council, inaugurates a showroom of Sony-Rangs at Khagrachari recently.

— Sony-Rangs photo

### Emirates to be key sponsor of Dubai Shopping Festival 2001

Emirates, the international airline of the UAE, is once again supporting as a key sponsor, the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), a month-long festival of shopping and entertainment taking place in March 2001 which will be themed 'One World, One Family, One Festival'.

Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, who is also the president of the Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers Association (BCMA), said the local producers are facing uneven competition with foreign companies because of high interest rates in the range of 16 to 17 per cent.

Meghna Cement Mills is the largest cement grinding plant in the country, Sobhan said.

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