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PBTL launches
mobile service
in Cox's Bazar
today

Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd (PBTL) will launch its CityCell Digital brand of mobile services in Cox's Bazar today, says a press release.

Faisal Morshed Khan, Chief Operating Officer of PBTL, will inaugurate the service at a ceremony to be held at Motel Shaibah in Cox's Bazar.

PBTL launched the country's first mobile service in 1993, it is also the first operator, launching cellular mobile service in the sea resort city of Cox's Bazar.

Southeast Bank to extend term loan to IDLC

Southeast Bank Limited, a leading private sector commercial bank, will extend term loan facility to Industrial Development Leasing Company of Bangladesh Limited (IDLC), says a press release.

Shah Md Nurul Alam, Managing Director of Southeast Bank Limited, and M Aminul Islam, Managing Director of IDLC sign a deal to this effect on behalf of their respective organisations at a simple ceremony held at IDLC boardroom recently.

The credit line will be utilised in lease financing of capital machinery of various sectors.

Senior executives and officials of both the organisations were present on the occasion.

BanEx introduces 24-hour pick-up programme

Bangladesh Express Co Ltd (BanEx), licensee of Federal Express Co Ltd, recently introduced a 24-hour pick-up programme.

The programme has been introduced with a view to making its service available to its profiled clients who depend highly on FedEx service.

FedEx promises to deliver uncompromising reliability and service which stand as its hallmark.

This programme offers pick-up service between 2300 hrs to 0800 (next morning) that will be available to profiled clients and to clients in major international hotels.

However, the service will be limited to Dhaka city only (Except Old Dhaka, DEPZ and Narayanganj).

This new arrangement will no doubt benefit those valued clients who would like to have their shipment picked-up even after normal closing hours of its World Service Centres.

UK productivity growth hits 2-year low

Both productivity growth and confidence among small and medium-sized manufacturers in Britain have fallen to two-year lows, surveys released yesterday showed.

NTC Research said its private sector productivity index slipped to 51.9 last month from 52.8 in March, its lowest level since March 1999 and well below its peak of 56.9 in September of that year, when economic output was recovering sharply from a slowdown in 1998.

A number above 50 indicates expansion, below 50 a contraction. NTC, which produces its report with the Institute of Management Services, said manufacturing productivity growth remained ahead of that of the much bigger services sector because of job cutting by manufacturers.

"Last Thursday's quarter point reduction in interest rates will undoubtedly be welcome but will have a limited impact on productivity," said IMS head Harry Downes.

"The level of demand is insufficient to encourage the private sector to undertake significant capital or revenue investment," he added.

Official data shows whole economy productivity grew 2.3 per cent year-on-year in the fourth quarter of last year.

Separately, the Confederation of British Industry released a quarterly survey of small and medium-sized businesses showing a negative confidence balance of -30 between optimistic and pessimistic respondents, down from +7 the quarter before. The new level is the worst since January 1999.

The survey, which was similar to the CBI's recent report on manufacturing overall, showed output among SMEs fell at the fastest rate since October 1999.

ILO coming up with labour projects for garments, EPZs

UNB, Dhaka

ILO is formulating projects focusing on two important sectors – export-oriented garment industry and EPZ – for labour welfare ensuring recognised rights of the workers.

Despite the fact that 'a happy worker is a good worker', participants of the workshop found different situation in implementing the worker rights against the number of ratification of ILO conventions by governments.

"Bangladesh has so far ratified seven out of eight ILO conventions to ensure fundamental rights of the workers, but still it is not commendable position even after passing many years since independence," the meet noted.

Labour and Employment Minister MA Mannan inaugurated the

workshop as chief guest where, among others, ILO Officer-in-Charge Shengjie Li, President of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation ASM Quasem and Member Secretary of NCCU Mesbahuddin Ahmed also spoke.

Labour and Employment Secretary Sirajul Islam presided over the inauguration session.

The workshop was informed that the convention that is not ratified is C138 on Minimum Age.

In his speech, the chief guest admitted that collective bargaining and freedom of association help better business climate, minimise industrial disputes and ensure improved safety at workplace.

He said collective bargaining through the trade unions gives the legitimacy to the measure taken since workers' representatives participate in decision-making.

"The ability to adjust in a situation of globalisation has endowed collective bargaining with the virtues of an increasingly valuable instrument for introducing changes to enterprise and organisation," said the minister.

He, however, admitted failure in ensuring gender equity but said this is not for lack of proper mechanisms and institutional arrangement. There are many socio-cultural factors.

In the working session, ILO Senior Specialist on International Labour Standards ILO/SAAT New Delhi Coen Komper and Dr Borhanuddin Khan of Law Department of Dhaka University presented two papers.

About 40 representatives from the government, workers and employees' organisations are participating in it.

The speakers observed conflict between globalisation and ensuring labour rights in developing countries for which many countries do not ratify more than one ILO convention.



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India to build largest rail track in Malaysia

Two countries sign 7 cooperation deals

UNI, Kuala Lumpur

India and Malaysia signed seven agreements, including five memoranda of understanding (MOU) – for cooperation in various fields, including the largest-ever contract for construction of a railway line in Malaysia.

The agreements, covering areas of information technology, seaports, civil services and avoidance of double taxation, were signed in the presence of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his Malaysian counterpart Mahathir Mohammad.

The MOU signed on the 1.8 billion dollar railway project envisages its execution by the Indian Railway Construction Company

IRCON) on counter-trade basis by utilising the proceeds of palm oil exported to India.

The railway project would correct the balance of trade between the two countries which was heavily tilted in favour of Malaysia, its Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar told reporters.

The project involves double tracking and electrification of the 350-km Ipoh-Fadang Besar Section of the Malaysian railway.

The MOU was signed by IRCON Managing Director Arun Prasada and the Secretary General of the Malaysian Ministry of Transport.

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The agreement signed by Information Technology Minister Pramod Mahajan and Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar facilitates a stay for a period of 90 days which can be extended by the relevant authorities.

Another agreement signed by the two Ministers facilitates avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income. A similar arrangement was made in 1976 based on the income tax laws that existed then.

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