

## Request for SIM replacement duty waiver refused

GrameenPhone is going to start collection of Tk 4000 specific customs duty, as per National Board of Revenue (NBR) directive, from all GP post-paid subscribers who replaced their SIM cards or transferred their mobile phone ownerships during March 9-April 23, 2002 period, says a press release.

The amount will be charged with the forthcoming monthly bills of the post-paid GP subscribers concerned.

The NBR had imposed Tk 4,000 specific customs duty on March 9 this year through a statutory regulatory order (SRO) on all imported mobile phone handsets, SIM card replacements and ownership transfers.

Later on April 24, 2002, the NBR issued another SRO withdrawing the specific customs duty on SIM card replacements and ownership transfers while reducing the flat rate of import duty on mobile phone handsets to Tk 2,500.

In a letter issued on September 25, 2002, the NBR declined a request for waiving the specific customs duty on SIM card replacements and ownership transfers for the period between March 9-April 23, 2002.

During that period, GrameenPhone collected Tk 4,000 duty from the GP pre-paid subscribers for all SIM card replacements while they were given a printed form saying that the amount will be returned if the NBR gives a waiver at a later time. This amount will now be deposited to the government exchequer in compliance with the latest directive of the NBR.

The GP post-paid subscribers who replaced their SIM cards or transferred their ownership during that period, also signed a written form agreeing to pay the tax, which was to be added to their monthly bills, if the NBR declines to give a waiver.

## WTO aid to Bangladesh to continue

BSS, Dhaka

World Trade Organisation (WTO) will pursue its sincere efforts towards providing overall assistance including technical cooperation to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) including Bangladesh.

The newly appointed Director General of WTO Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi said this during a meeting with Bangladesh Commerce Secretary Sohail Ahmad in Geneva recently, an official hand-out said here yesterday.

He stressed more upon increased cooperation among the LDCs for their development and said WTO would provide all assistance in that regard. "We are opening a separate unit to look after the interest of LDCs," he said.

Dr. Supachai referred to the BIMST-EC and said regional cooperation was a very important matter for protecting the interests of LDCs like Bangladesh.

The Commerce Secretary put forward several suggestions including capacity building of the LDCs by utilising the opportunities of globalisation and market access of their products into the developed world. He said Bangladesh is deeply concerned at the anti-dumping policy of several developed and developing countries on the LDCs' products.

## ICMAB online job fair programme held

Dhaka Branch Council of The Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB) organised a day-long programme on "on-line job fair" at the ICMA Bhaban at Nilkhet in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

Md. Lutfor Rahman Khan, State Minister for Labour & Employment, was chief guest while Md. Helal Uddin Khan, Secretary of Labour & Employment, special guest on the occasion.

Among others President of the Institute, Rafiq Ahmad, Chairman of Dhaka Branch Council AKM Nazrul Islam, Chairman ICT Committee, GM Chowdhury, and Secretary of Dhaka Branch Council and Md. Mamunur Rashid, also spoke on the occasion.

Various organisation like bdjobs.com, jobsbd.com, grameenjobs.com, Consumark Ltd., Rapport Bangladesh Ltd, and Continuing Education Centre participated in the Job Fair.

A large number of members of the institute and students from various universities attended the programmes.

# FBCCI task force for BTRC reconstitution

## Recommendations submitted to govt

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The FBCCI task force on information and communication technology (ICT) policy of Bangladesh has recommended reconstitution of the Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

The task force has recommended that the BTRC should be reconstituted with equal representation from both the private and public sectors.

The 13-member task force, formed on January 8 this year with Akhtaruzzaman Manju, a director of

the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, as its convener, submitted its recommendations to Science and Information and Communication Technology Minister Dr. Moeen Khan at his office yesterday.

It also suggested rationalisation of tariffs for all telecommunication services in line with the rates in the neighbouring countries.

After reconstitution, the Commission should be entrusted with the responsibility of fixing tariffs from time to time, the task

force observed. The task force has also suggested that the infrastructure and service of the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) be separated within this year and the BTB operate as a service provider.

The task force observed that three per cent of annual budget of each ministry, division, department, state-owned enterprise and sector corporation should be spent on computerisation. Besides, every government office should have own web site and 25 per cent of total

works of a government office has to be computerised by 2003.

"Private sector should be encouraged to invest and operate telecommunication and data-communication infrastructure", the task force said in its report.

It has also recommended withdrawal of duty and VAT from communication products and tax-holiday for the ICT industry for ten years. It has also recommended enactment of cyber law.

# Remittance up 34.83pc

## First quarter flow braves global recession

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Despite global economic recession, the inflow of remittance continued to show upward trend in the first quarter of this fiscal.

The amount of remittance totalled 732.07 million US dollars during the first three months of fiscal year 2002-03, which is 34.83 per cent more than last year's figure. During the first quarter of the last fiscal, the amount was 542.92 million US dollars.

In September this year, the inflow of remittance amounted to 244.09 million US dollars against 185.41 million of September 2001. The amount is also higher than the remittance received in August this year.

The number of Bangladeshi employees in overseas also increased significantly during last month against the corresponding

period of last fiscal. "This is a good indication in terms of sustaining the growth rate in remittance," observed a high official of Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment.

The amount of remittance stood at 2501.13 million US dollars during fiscal 2001-2002 against 1882.10 million US dollars in the previous fiscal. The growth rate was 32.89 per cent.

During FY 1991 to FY 2001 the average growth rate in remittance was 9.53 per cent.

Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya while presenting a paper recently said at present remittance has appeared as 'a driving force of the country's economy'.

Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment officials said they were optimistic that the

upward trend in remittance flow will continue during this fiscal as they have a plan to recruit more Bangladeshis abroad.

In the last calendar year, a total of 1.88 lakh Bangladeshi people were recruited outside the country. This year the target has been fixed at two lakh.

"If every thing goes well, I hope that we would be able to recruit more people than the target," said Major (ret'd) Quamrul Islam, state minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment.

He also informed the number of overseas recruitment only in September this year is about six thousand more than that of September 2001 when a total of 17,094 Bangladeshis were employed abroad.



M Naser Rahman MP, inaugurates the Motijheel Branch of Paramount Insurance Company Limited in the city on Tuesday.

## JAN Associates launches new Canon items

JAN Associates Ltd., the Bangladesh partner of Canon, launched some latest Canon products in local market and introduced JAN hologram stickers to check cheating of customers, says a press release.

Abdullah H Kafi, managing director of JAN Associates and former president of Bangladesh Computer Society, and a large number of renowned IT personalities of the country were present at the product launching ceremony held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel on Wednesday.

The new products are Bubble Jet Printers, Canon Laser Beam Printers and Canon Multimedia projectors.

JAN Associates also announced an incentive trip for the best performing master resellers to Bangkok from October 9 to October 13.

## BSHRM workshop concludes

A two-day workshop on fundamentals of human resource management organised by Bangladesh Society of Human Resource Management (BSHRM) concluded in the city on Sunday, says a press release.

It was attended by 36 participants from Armed Forces, Acme Laboratories, Bata Shoes, Beximco Textiles, CARE HI Telecom, Hyper Systems, IDCL IUB, KAFCO, Pally Bikash, Partex Group, Petrobangla, Rahimafroz, Shamil Bank, Somatec Pharma, Square Textiles, TM International, Transcom Beverages and Westfarmers Kleenheat.

A K Raihan, Chowdhury M A Q Sarwar, M A Salam, Mehboobur Rahman, Md Musharof Hossain, Parveen S. Huda, Sayeed Ahmed, SA Mansoor, Suman Bhattacharjee and SK Deb led the sessions.

The closing session was addressed by S H Gafur, secretary of AmCham, as chief guest and Dr Iftekhar Ghani Chowdhury of IBA of Dhaka University as special guest.

## PRAN sales managers' confce held

Annual sales manager conference of PRAN was held on Tuesday at its factory at Ghorasal in Narshingdi, says a press release.

Among others, DMD of PRAN Group Ahsan Khan Chowdhury was present at the conference.

Executive Director of AMCL-PRAN Eleas Mridha highlighted the global presence of PRAN products, its progress and future plan and activities.

General Manager (sales) of AMCL-PRAN Mamunur Rashid, and all sales, marketing and production related people of the company attended the programme.

## China suspends Australian live cattle imports

REUTERS, Sydney

China has suspended all imports of live Australia cattle after an attempt was made to ship cattle rejected as unfit by quarantine officials. Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) said on Thursday.

China acted after Australian and Chinese inspectors on September 27 found 41 dairy heifers out of a consignment of 1,950 were infected by ringworm or infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR), non-deadly diseases barred under China quarantine rules. AQIS spokesman Carson Creah told Reuters.



Science and Information and Communication Technology Minister Abdul Moeen Khan shakes hands with GrameenPhone Managing Director Ola Ree at the launching ceremony of X-Net Ltd, a joint venture between GrameenPhone and Genesis Technology Group (GTG), in the city yesterday.

# Deregulation of telecom a must for ICT growth

## Moeen Khan says at X-Net launching ceremony

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Science and Information and Communication Technology Minister Abdul Moeen Khan yesterday said deregulation of telecom of information and communication technology.

"Now it is time to open up the country's telecom sector for private sector," said the minister.

He was speaking as chief guest at the launching ceremony of X-Net Ltd, a joint venture between GrameenPhone and Genesis Technology Group (GTG), at a city hotel.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) Chairman Syed Marghub Murshed was present on the occasion as special guest. GrameenPhone

Managing Director Ola Ree and X-Net Ltd Managing Director Shapur Khasru were also present.

The minister said it is not possible for the government alone to do hundred per cent for the ICT. "Private sector should help the government in this matter," he added.

He also urged the private sector to give more emphasis on providing proper training to rural boys and girls on information technology.

"As 80 per cent of the total population live in rural area, it is not possible to develop without them in this sector," he added.

He said a 70,000-square-foot 'software incubator' is going to be set up in the city within two months where software producers of the country can meet one other under one roof.

BTRC chairman thanked the

company to arrange the global exchange of data facility through X-Net Ltd for the people.

X-net will offer VSAT services as business communications provider that brings a seamless link between all locations of Bangladesh and abroad. It will also offer Internet gateway service that will provide broadband Internet accesses within customers' networks.

"Banking, healthcare, education, software exports, multinational corporations, NGOs and government agencies can be benefited from our solutions," said Ola Ree.

The company will utilise the fibre optic network backbone of Bangladesh Railway to reach throughout the country to provide robust, scalable and secured data connectivity to all sectors of Bangladesh.



M Wahidul Haque, chairman of Bangladeshiy Cha Sangsad (Bangladesh Tea Association), speaks at the 42nd annual general meeting of the sangshad held in Chittagong on Monday. Executive Committee members Mirza Salman Ispahini and Zeba Rasheed Chowdhury, among others, are also seen in the picture.

## Japan stocks hit to 19-year low

AFP, Hong Kong

Japanese stocks crashed to a fresh 19-year low Wednesday as Asian markets reacted coolly to a surge on Wall Street with investors still pessimistic over the outlook for global business.

Wall Street shares surged Tuesday, bouncing off their lowest levels for several years and European bourses also made up ground after a dramatic plunge on Monday.

# Pakistan, Lanka finalising free trade agreement

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka and Pakistan are finalising details of a free-trade agreement to boost trade between the two countries, a government official said today.

A ceasefire signed in February has raised hopes of an end to the conflict and faster economic growth in the country. Colombo entered into a free-trade pact with India in 2000, although so far it has had limited success in lifting trade.

"They will hold another round of

talks with ministry officials today," he said.

Pakistan has been a supplier of military hardware to the island during a 19-year war with separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas.

A ceasefire signed in February has raised hopes of an end to the conflict and faster economic growth in the country.

Colombo entered into a free-trade pact with India in 2000, although so far it has had limited success in lifting trade.

Sri Lanka is hoping to export tea,

light electronic items and textiles to Pakistan and could open its markets for engineering services, vehicles and agricultural items such as fruit.

A framework treaty on free trade was signed in August when Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf met Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in Colombo.

A seven-nation regional group comprising of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives have plans to draw up a draft regional free-trade zone.



Sales managers of PRAN are seen at their annual conference held at the company's factory in Ghorasal on Tuesday.