

# Remittance grows 26pc in five months

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Remittance continues to post robust growth as it increased by 26 percent in the first five months of the current fiscal year.

Non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) sent US\$ 1,756.87 million in July-November of the 2005-06 financial year, which was \$ 1,398.05 million in the corresponding period of previous fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Bank statistics.

According to sources, remittance inflow has so far been able to see a strong growth as the central bank continues its efforts to increase remittance through formal channels.

On the other hand, private commercial banks (PCBs) are now more aggressive in providing quick and reliable services to woo remittance.

"Some of the private banks are taking services of the globally renowned money transfer companies that have network around the world. Besides, the banks have extended their services to village level," said a top executive of a PCB.

Strong network at home and abroad helped some PCBs see a huge growth in remittance business and it has become a major source of their income, he explained.

However, Asian Development Bank (ADB) in its quarterly economic update, released Sunday, said: "Remittances appear to be positively related to increases in global petroleum prices and hence provide Bangladesh with an in-built buffer from this form of global shock. Since some 70 percent of all Bangladeshis that work abroad are employed in the Middle East, when

global petrol prices increase, the demand for expatriate workers in the Middle East increases and so do the wages paid to expatriates employed there."

The ADB report also mentioned the heightened money laundering surveillance and exchange rate offers as another reason behind the rise in remittance.

The report pointed out that this combination of higher rise in remittance and strict control of the government has contributed to the sharp rise in the remittance growth.

But the reserve is not growing, which was down by 26 percent on December 6 compared to the amount on June 30, 2005. The forex reserve yesterday stood at \$ 2.41 billion, which was \$ 3.27 billion on June 30.

The mismatch between import

and export, increased expenditure for oil products and less foreign aid are also responsible for the shrinking forex reserve.

While import rose by 16 percent, export raised by a mere 4 percent during the first two months of the current fiscal year.

The government is under pressure to meet increased expenditure for petroleum products. In the last three months 40 percent fresh LCs were opened only for importing oil.

Foreign aid in the July-August period of the current fiscal year witnessed a paltry \$ 38 million foreign aid while the amount was at \$ 335 million in the same period of the last fiscal year.

# NBR plans uniform identification system for taxpayers

## JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) plans to introduce uniform taxpayers identification system to stop tax evasion.

The NBR on Sunday formed a technical committee comprising information technology experts and asked the committee to submit its report soon.

The committee will examine merits and demerits of the system with the consultation of foreign experts working in the NBR in this connection.

The new system will bring around

17 lakh taxpayers' identification number (TIN) holders and 4 lakh business identification number (BIN) holders at the local level and 5 lakh others at import level under one general category, NBR sources said.

The board officials are planning to introduce the system from the middle of the next year.

A high official of the NBR yesterday said the system will cover both the income tax and value-added tax to check tax evasion in the existing system.

The NBR finds some TIN holders despite paying huge amount in value

added tax evade taxes during income tax payment, he said.

The NBR officials will follow example of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in introducing the uniform card.

Another official said the uniform card system is also planned for an interim period in order to catch tax evaders before introducing computerised system.

International Monetary Fund has long been asking the NBR to introduce computerised in keeping taxpayers' record.

## Pizza Hut celebrates 2nd anniversary in Bangladesh

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Pizza Hut, the world's largest pizza chain, yesterday celebrated its second anniversary in Bangladesh.

Akku Chowdhury, head of operations of Transcom Foods Ltd, inaugurated the anniversary function by cutting a cake at the Gulshan outlet. Pizza Hut franchisee Transcom Foods Limited is a concern of Transcom Group.

To mark the anniversary Pizza Hut, which started its journey in Bangladesh on December 6, 2003, announced a customer offer -- personal size pizza -- at a cost of Tk 99 from today.

Customers can enjoy the offer from 12 noon to 4pm everyday from Pizza Hut's Favorite Line Menu until December 31.

Highlighting the salient features of Pizza Hut, Chowdhury said all the success of Pizza Hut goes to the customers.

"Pizza Hut will continue serving its highly valued customers," he said.

Pizza Hut opened its second outlet in the port city Chittagong on September 12 this year. It is also planning to open another four outlets in different places of the country.

Started in 1958 in USA, Pizza Hut presently operates nearly 12,000 units and kiosks in more than 100 countries and serves more than 1.7 million pizzas everyday.

# Altaf assures BGMEA of looking into problems

## UNB, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury yesterday assured the leaders of RMG industry of considering their problems, including support to resume production in the sick units and develop a 'garment village' on the outskirts of Dhaka.

"The government has taken initiatives to resolve most of the problems you have raised," he told a meeting with the new BGMEA executive committee at his secretariat office.

The minister appreciated the new committee and described BGMEA as a place of practicing democracy, as three persons share the leadership of the apparel sector

apex body.

President of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Tipu Munshi led the delegation, first by the new committee after it assumed the shared tenure of office, to apprise the minister of their 10-point problems.

The commerce minister in the meeting advised the BGMEA leaders to find out a piece of over 100 acres government khas land for developing a 'garment village'.

"Find out a land near the capital... the government will do everything possible to develop a village for the RMG industry soon," he told the meeting.

The BGMEA leaders requested

the minister to review 100 sick industrial units to resume production under a pilot project.

Commerce Ministry Advisor Barkat Ullah Bulu was also present at the meeting.

BGMEA's other demands are endorsing the EU-prescribed regional cumulation to utilise free-market access for woven apparels, allowing the tax holiday, now applicable only to the high value items, for all RMG items, training support for the BGMEA Institute of Fashion and Technology (BIFT), and bringing freight forwarders under licensing system and introduce code of conduct for them.



PHOTO: STAR

Akku Chowdhury, head of operations of Transcom Foods Ltd, cuts a cake to mark the second anniversary of Pizza Hut in Bangladesh at the Gulshan outlet in Dhaka yesterday.

## Intel to invest \$1b in India

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The Intel Corporation, the world's largest manufacturer of computer chips, on Monday announced it would invest more than one billion dollars in India in the next five years.

Intel Corp Chairman Craig Barrett told reporters here that 800 million dollars would go into expanding business, mostly research and development activities, and another 250 million dollars would be spent on setting up Venture Capital fund for investing in Indian companies which can benefit from rapid growth in domestic information technology market.

"This investment demonstrates Intel's long-term commitment and builds on the foundation we have created during our ten years of operating in India," he said. Intel has invested over 700 million dollars in India in the last ten years.

Intel now has a design center in Bangalore, India's technology hub, where it employs some 3,000 engineers and professionals to develop products at a fraction of costs in the United States.

Barrett said his company was in talks with Indian government for setting up a chip manufacturing plant but nothing has been finalized so far. Intel's global rival AMD has already decided to extend chip technology for a three billion dollar plant to be set by a consortium of non-resident Indians.

## Oil prices ease in Asian trade

AFP, Singapore

Oil prices were slightly lower in Asian trading Tuesday after solid gains overnight due to a cold snap in the United States, the world's top consumer, dealers said.

At 11:40 am (0340 GMT), New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in January, was down 15 cents at 59.76 dollars a barrel from its close of 59.91 dollars in the United States Monday.

"It is a really small change this morning. It is part of the volatility of the market," said Victor Shum, an analyst with energy consultancy Purvin and Gertz.

Forecasters predict a prolonged cold snap in the northeastern part of the United States, which consumes about 80 percent of the country's heating oil, with temperatures set to hit minus 9.0 degrees Centigrade (16 degrees Fahrenheit) this week in New York State.

This will continue to be the driver behind oil prices, dealers said.

"Today is just a correction from the excitement of (Monday) ... going forward into the short-term future, December and January weather is going to be cold," said Shum.

New York prices, which had not topped 60 dollars since November 4, traded as high as 60.80 dollars Monday.



PHOTO: STAR

Kazi Wahidul Alam (L), managing director of Triune Exhibition and Event Management Services (TEEMS), speaks at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday to announce the third version of international medical equipment and services exposition styled 'Medexpo-2005'. Moniruzzaman Bhuiya (R), president of Bangladesh Private Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association (BPCDOA), and Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan, managing director of Bangladesh Oxygen Company Ltd, are also seen.

# Gold prices reach \$510

## REUTERS, Singapore

Spot gold prices soared above \$510 an ounce on Tuesday, their highest since January 1980, buoyed by continued fund buying on inflation worries and increased diversification into commodities, dealers said.

However, profit taking and selling interest above \$510 pushed the bullion market back to the previous day's closing level.

Spot gold briefly hit \$510.30/\$511.25 an ounce before easing to \$507.90/\$508.70 by 0708

GMT, down from \$508.40/\$509.20 last quoted in New York on Monday. In January 1980, gold hit a record \$850.

"We saw some good Japanese buying, mainly related to Tokyo futures," said a bullion dealer in Hong Kong.

He said Japanese investors were doing arbitrage -- selling Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM) gold futures and at the same time buying spot bullion.

In the short term, gold was expected to trade between \$505

and \$512, with major support seen between \$502 and \$498, he said, adding that if gold were to exceed \$512, it could surge to \$520-\$530.

"The market is very much driven by funds and investors," said a bullion dealer in Singapore.

"I don't think it's dependent on the physical side anymore because the spread between physical gold and paper gold in Singapore is apparently quite compressed. So there is no big physical buying going on."

# Medical services show from December 9

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With a view to introducing latest medical services to people, a three-day international exposition will begin at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on December 9.

A total of 43 companies including some foreign hospitals from China, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and India will showcase their equipment and services at 57 stalls and two pavilions in the fair.

Triune Exhibition and Event Management Services (TEEMS) a local event management company is organising the fair, while Bangladesh Private Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association (BPCDOA) and Bangladesh Oxygen Company Ltd are the co-organiser and co-sponsor of the fair.

Organisers said prominent local healthcare service providing institutions of the country such as Apollo Hospital and Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital will participate in the show. Besides, National University Hospital, KK Women's and Children's hospital, Raffles Hospital from Singapore, BM Birla, Woodland, Wockhardt, and Ruby from India, Heartscan from Malaysia, and Thailand's Bumrungrad, Bangkok Hospital and

Pattaya General Hospital will also take part in the exhibition.

Renowned specialist doctors from home and abroad will be available in their stalls to offer free medical consultations to patients, said Kazi Wahidul Alam, managing director of TEEMS, at press conference in Dhaka yesterday.

As in the past two years, healthcare services and equipment related to medical science, especially medical diagnostic imaging will be exhibited at the third version of the exposition.

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury is expected to inaugurate the fair as chief guest. Commerce Ministry Advisor Barkat Ullah Bulu will also be present.

The exhibition will remain open from 10am to 8pm. The exhibition is open to all and no entry fee will be charged.

Dr. Moniruzzaman Bhuiya, president of Bangladesh Private Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association (BPCDOA), and Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan, managing director of Bangladesh Oxygen Company Ltd, were also present at the press conference.