

Stocks

DGEN 0.55%
3,079.09

CSCX 0.50%
5,566.00

Asian Markets

TOKYO 0.38%
14,102.48

SINGAPORE 0.61%
3,228.95

SHANGHAI 4.13%
3,579.15

Currencies

	Buy TK.	Sell TK.
USD	68.25	69.25
EUR	104.24	108.84
GBP	132.70	137.85
JPY	0.65	0.68

SOURCE: STANDARD CHARTERED

Commodities

Oil \$121.80
(per barrel)

SOURCE: AFP

More News

Potato output seen as ways to strengthen food security

Potato preservation facilities should be developed for encouraging farmers to grow more potatoes, which, in turn, would help strengthen food security of the country, Agriculture Adviser CS Karim said yesterday.

Special economic confce abroad to boost exports

The government has a plan to organise some special economic conferences abroad this year to boost exports and attract foreign investment, the commerce adviser said yesterday.

B-3

International

Genetically modified crops get mixed response in Asia



With food prices hitting record highs the jury is still out in Asia as to whether genetically modified crops hold the key to future food security. The Philippine government has openly embraced the commercial growing of genetically modified (GM) corn, but neighbouring countries appear less than enthusiastic.

US won't cite Vietnam for apparel dumping

The United States said Tuesday it found "insufficient evidence" to launch an antidumping investigation into Vietnam for its apparel exports.

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Unregistered mobile phones go off next month

BTRC won't extend deadline; 3m customers yet to reregister

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Unregistered mobile phones will face disconnection next month as the country's telecoms regulator yesterday announced there will be no extension of re-registration deadline.

Until yesterday some 3 million customers are yet to reregister their cellphone connections with the deadline expiring May 31.

"The re-registration deadline won't be extended anymore," Manzurul Alam, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication and Regulatory Commission (BTRC), told a press briefing at his office.

However, the BTRC said the six mobile operators have already told it (BTRC) that it is possible to complete the re-registration process within the deadline.

The BTRC said it will order operators to disconnect all unregistered connections after expiry of the deadline.

But the snapped connections can only be restored after re-registration if operators provide satisfactory reasons for missing the deadline.

Earlier in August last year

BTRC issued an order to Grameenphone, AKTEL, Banglalink, Citycell and TeleTalk to re-register customers who bought connections before February 28, 2006. And then the BTRC had to extend the deadline four times.

Starting from August 2007, following regulator's directive, within 9 months the mobile operators were able to reregister 70 percent or 7 million customers. On an average, 7.8 lakh customers had been reregistered per month.

Of the 3 million unregistered clients until March this year, 2.7 million use Grameenphone connections.

To re-register customers must produce a SIM (subscriber identification module) card, two copies of passport size photo, passport or any photo ID card (like the office ID card or driving licence) and the forms and documents given during subscription.

Re-registration is especially difficult in rural areas where many people do not have any kind of photo ID card.

If the customer does not have a photo ID card, he/she will have to fill in a BTRC form and get it attested by a first class gazetted

officer or by the local ward commissioner.

BTRC chief also spoke about the newly introduced penalty system for selling SIM cards without registration.

He also said the existing amount of \$10 fine for selling an unauthorised SIM card could be increased if the operators do not comply with the due process.

According to the latest figures released by the BTRC up to March 2008, the number of total mobile phone subscribers reached 38.93 million.

Grameenphone is the market leader in mobile telecommunication sector with around 17.8 million subscribers, while Orascom Telecom Bangladesh, which operates Banglalink, is the second leader with around 8.3 million subscribers.

Telecom Malaysia International Bangladesh, which operates AKTEL, and Warid Telecom International are the third and fourth market players with around 7.4 million and around 2.7 million subscribers respectively.

Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd, which operates Citycell, and the state-run Teletalk Bangladesh are the other two operators.



A file photo shows subscribers of TeleTalk reregistering in Dhaka. The re-registration deadline ends May 31.

Ctg businesses for speedy gas exploration to face crisis



CCCI chief Saifuzzaman Chowdhury speaks at a press briefing.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Business leaders of Chittagong yesterday urged the government for expediting gas exploration to cope with the countrywide gas crisis.

The businesses of Chittagong that have a concentration on heavy industries are also apprehending that new investment in Chittagong may come to a standstill due to govern-

ment's recent decision not to give any new gas connection in the region.

They said the decision would not only frustrate the entrepreneurs but also seriously hold back the flow of foreign direct investment in the country.

M Tamim, chief adviser's special assistant for power, energy, and mineral resources, on Monday said the government will follow a 'cautious' policy in giving new

industrial gas connections in and around Dhaka and has decided not to provide any new gas connection in Chittagong region.

"We know that there is acute shortage of gas in the country. The situation has been aggravated due to a production dip at the offshore Sangu Gas Field in recent time. But that doesn't necessarily mean the government should deprive Chittagong of any new gas supply," said

Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), at a press conference.

He said, "The country's industrialisation is now under serious threat due to gas shortage. And Chittagong, the commercial hub of Bangladesh, is experiencing the brunt more than any other region. Therefore, we request the government to take immediate steps for

offshore drilling to find new gas fields so that we can meet the ever-increasing demand for gas."

Many newly built industrial units in Chittagong are now sitting idle, unable to go into production due to gas crisis, he said.

CCCI president said entrepreneurs of a large number of these units are now on the verge of bankruptcy due to unpaid bank loan.

He requested the govern-

ment to arrange for gas supply to Chittagong from Baghabari and Begumganj gas fields as 'interim measures'.

Saifuzzaman also stressed the need for forming a cell, comprised of public and private sector representatives, for the greater development of the port city.

Terming the government's agreement with Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Ltd as 'inappropriate', he said the government should cancel it.

Thailand drops rice cartel plan

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's Foreign Minister Noppadon Pattama on Tuesday said the country would not form a cartel with other rice-exporting countries, bowing to concerns that it could worsen the global food shortage.

"Thailand will not lead the setting up of a rice-exporting cartel," he told reporters.

"That issue should be handled by UN agencies," such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development or the Food and Agriculture Organisation, he said.

"The rice issue is very sensitive, and if a rice cartel is formed it would make the world food crisis worse," he said.

The latest statement signals a reversal by Thailand, after Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej said last week the kingdom had agreed in principle to form a cartel.

The group would have included Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. The

cartel would have increased the countries' bargaining power for fixing the price of rice, as the global price of the staple grain rockets.

Samak said the grouping of Mekong nations would have been similar to the oil cartel Opec, and would have been called the Organisation of Rice Exporting Countries (OREC).

Instead, Noppadon said Tuesday that he would like to form a Council of Rice Trading Countries (CRTC), which would meet at least once a year to focus on increasing rice production, exchange of technology and improved rice quality.

Noppadon invited ambassadors from six countries -- India, Pakistan, Cambodia, China, Vietnam and Myanmar -- to name representatives in the next few months.

"Thailand is ready to host the meeting," he said.

Thailand, the world's largest rice exporter, shipped an estimated 9.5 million tonnes of rice overseas last year.

WFP for lowering commodity export curb

AFP, Washington

Facing a mounting global food crisis, the UN food aid agency Tuesday urged governments to lower export controls to allow much-needed grain to flow to the world's neediest.

"I call on all nations to provide procurement access for all humanitarian purchases," the head of the World Food Program (WFP), Josette Sheeran, said.

Rising shortages of basic grains, milk and foodstuffs that have led to deadly violence in developing countries is perhaps "the first global humanitarian emergency," she said in a speech at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, a think tank.

She said more than 40 nations imposed export controls on commodities since prices began "relentless" surge last June.

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