

TRANSTEC
Window AC

TWF - 24CR (24,000 BTU/hr)
TWF - 18CR (18,000 BTU/hr)

TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

8853364-8
01712-645463

Stocks

DGEN	1.26%
3,167.99	
CSCX	2.17%
5,870.08	
Asian Markets	
MUMBAI	1.27%
16,316.26	
TOKYO	3.03%
14,124.47	
SHANGHAI	1.66%
3,401.44	

Currencies

	Buy TK.	Sell TK.
USD	68.10	69.10
EUR	105.10	109.70
GBP	133.14	138.30
JPY	0.65	0.68

SOURCE: STANDARD CHARTERED

Commodities

Oil	\$130.59
(per barrel)	

SOURCE: AFP

More News

Hilsa leaves fishermen with bitter taste



There has been heavy fishing of hilsa fry, known as jatka, on their migration to the sea. To deal with this the government got tough on the jatka fishermen, strictly enforcing a ban on the netting of jatka and their mothers in 20 southern coastal districts. While the traders are happy with business as a result, the fishermen are less so as they have benefited little from the upsurge in stocks, prices and demand.

B-4

No new gas connection in N-region till Dec

No new gas connection will be offered to the northern region of the country until December due to gas shortage.

Frequency allocation among mobile operators next week

BTRC is now at final stage to determine charges for new frequency to be allocated sometime next week among the three main mobile operators.

B-3

International

Japan calls for major boost in investment in Africa

Japan pledged Thursday to help its businesses double investment in Africa. Japan made the promise on the second day of a development conference in Yokohama, attended by 52 African countries including 40 heads of state.

B-4

Contact Us

If you have views on Star Business or news about business in Bangladesh, please email us at business@thedailystar.net

Internet fees for home users drop 25pc

MD HASAN

The average internet access charge for home users will come down by 25 percent to Tk 750 a month, president of the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB) said yesterday.

The decision, effective from next month, came following a meeting between the internet service providers and Bangladesh Telecommunication and Regulatory Commission (BTRC) yesterday in Dhaka.

The internet service providers took the decision on the heels of criticisms that they did not reduce fees for home users despite the fact that the government cut internet bandwidth charges by up to 40 percent in February.

"We have decided to cut monthly internet charges for home users by 25 percent," said Mohammed Salam, president of ISPAB.

Salam said, "We are happy to do it. It's high time we linked Bangladesh with the global community through the internet."

The president of the ISPAB said they will send letters to all ISPs by Sunday to implement the new tariff.

ICT industry insiders hope the rate cut will help increase the country's internet penetration rate. At present, Bangladesh is one of the lowest internet users with the penetration rate of only 0.3 percent.

According to the ISPAB, the number of internet users in Bangladesh is around 6 million. Out of 200 ISP licensee, only 70

ISPs are in operations offering internet services to home and corporate users.

According to BTTB's new tariff plan of charges to ISPs effective from February 1, annual rentals for leased internet access service for 64kbps (kilobits per second) to 2mbps (megabits per second) bandwidth range between Tk 96,000 and Tk 1.44 lakh from the earlier charges of Tk 1.65 lakh and Tk 1.92 lakh respectively.

Installation charge for leased internet access for above 2mbps bandwidth has been fixed at minimum Tk 20,000, while monthly rental for the same service is minimum Tk 36,000 and maximum Tk 40,000 for different slabs from Tk 55,000 and Tk 75,000 earlier.

hasan@thedailystar.net



Rahimafrooz to set up new auto battery plant

Expansion needed to meet export demand

REFAYAT ULLAH MIRDHA

Rahimafrooz, the country's leading automotive battery manufacturer and exporter, is setting up a separate plant at Ishwardi in Pabna district to produce batteries to meet growing demand worldwide.

A senior official of the company said the new plant, a joint venture, is scheduled to go into operation by the year-end with a target to manufacture 2 lakh batteries a month.

Pointing to the fast progress in the work, he said, "Machinery for the Ishwardi plant has already been purchased. If everything goes alright, we are hopeful that the fully export-oriented company will go into operation within this year."

At present, Rahimafrooz has been exporting automotive batteries to more than 35 countries including India, Dubai, Vietnam, Jamaica, Ghana, Chile, Paraguay, Mauritania and Lebanon, the official said.

The company mainly exports its brands Volta, Delta

and Optus to those countries. Another Rahimafrooz brand 'Locus' battery is produced for the local market.

Sources said in 2008 the total export of the company may cross Tk 700 million. The company's export earning from batteries was Tk 571 million in 2007.

The company is also planning to transfer its Nakhhalpara plant to Ashulia soon in order to reduce pollution levels in Dhaka.

Presently the company has two plants--one at Nakhhalpara and the other at Savar. Between them they produce 1.40 lakh batteries per month.

"You can say the whole local market for automotive batteries is controlled by Rahimafrooz as there is hardly any local competitor," the official told The Daily Star.

Of the total production, 50 percent is exported and the remaining is sold in the local market, he said.

reefat@thedailystar.net



Photo shows a salesperson at an automotive battery shop in Dhaka. Rahimafrooz will set up a new plant at Ishwardi in Pabna district by the end of this year.

Samuda aims to be major producer of industrial chemicals

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

An industrial chemical manufacturing company aims for expansion to become the leading local producer of hydrogen peroxide.

"After meeting the local requirements, we will also be able to export hydrogen peroxide," said Mustafa Haider, managing director of Samuda Chemical.

Samuda Chemical Complex Ltd, which is now producing 35 tonnes of hydrogen peroxide per day in its single unit, is setting up another two units with a production capacity of 70 tonnes of hydrogen peroxide per day.

Presently, demand for hydrogen peroxide stands at 35,000 tonnes, which is used mainly in the textile dyeing and paper and pulp industries for bleaching or cleaning.

Of the total domestic market demand of 35,000 tonnes of hydrogen peroxide, Samuda and another local company produce around 20,000 tonnes of the product, while the remaining 15,000 tonnes are imported at a price of US\$ 520 to \$ 525 (around Tk 36,400 to Tk 36,750) per tonne.

"After starting production at our additional units, we can transform Bangladesh into a hydrogen peroxide exporting country from its present status of a hydrogen peroxide

importing country within a year," Haider said.

"With the addition of two new units, we will also be the largest hydrogen peroxide producer in the country with a total production capacity of around 30,000 tonnes of hydrogen peroxide per year," he said, adding that the company will be able to supply each tonne of hydrogen peroxide at a price of Tk 21,000 to Tk 25,000.

Samuda, which started hydrogen peroxide manufacturing in the mid 2006, has already signed a memorandum of understanding with Nuberg Engineering Ltd for installation of two new hydrogen peroxide units, using Swedish technology.

Haider said the use of hydrogen peroxide in textile dyeing industry is on the rise as it is more eco-friendly than chlorine based products, which is also used in the dyeing units for bleaching or cleaning textile products.

"In India, use of chlorine based products in the dyeing units has been stopped, as it is harmful for aqua-culture environment," he said.

Along with hydrogen peroxide, the company also produces caustic soda, sodium hypo chloride, chlorinated para firmex, hydro chloric acid, stable bleaching powder, bleaching earth and liquid chlorine.

sarwar@thedailystar.net

US slowdown spooks Asian SMEs

ANN/ CHINA DAILY

A possible economic recession in the United States is creating anxiety among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Asia, a survey by UPS showed Wednesday.

While 38 per cent of the SMEs surveyed on the mainland are worried about the negative impact of an economic slowdown in the US, more than half of SMEs in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Indonesia are concerned their businesses will be hampered, the survey found.

US courier UPS on Wednesday released its Asia Business Monitor 2008, an annual survey conducted on competitiveness of and issues facing SMEs in Asia. UPS surveyed 1,201 decision-makers of SMEs between Dec 18, 2007 and Jan 24, 2008.

Since its launch in 2005, the survey has been conducted annually to deliver the latest insight into the changing business needs of SMEs, defined as companies with fewer than 250 employees.

SMEs make up 60 per cent of China's GDP and generate more than half of the country's tax revenues. They also provide 75 per cent of the employment in urban areas.

The survey found most SMEs expect trade with North America to decrease significantly in the current economic climate. Only 39 per cent expect trade with the US to grow, compared with 51 per cent in 2007. But 71 per cent of the SMEs believe intra-Asia trade will remain robust.

"SMEs would be increasingly aware of the importance of lowering risk by diversifying trade partners. They should look at trade within Asia and with the Middle East," said Sebastian Chan, UPS China's vice-president for supply chain operations.

The survey found a sentiment of caution pervading Asian SME leaders. Fewer SMEs are projecting regional economic growth compared with last year. But they expect China and India will still see robust economic growth.

Govt urged to up essential drug prices

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Around two dozens of local pharmaceutical companies have urged the government to increase prices of some essential drugs on the plea that raw materials of those have marked a sharp rise in the global market.

"As the prices of raw materials have increased sharply in the global market we are struggling to cope with the high cost of production and we are unable to sell the drugs at a price we offered earlier," said Ataul Haque, general manager of Bimco Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

He said they will have to suspend production of some specific drugs if the Drug Administration does not endorse any increase in the prices of those items.

When contacted, this view was echoed by some top executives of some pharmaceuticals.

Nazmul Hassan, chief executive officer of Beximco Pharma, suggested the government review the maximum retail prices of 109 essential drugs, prices of those were fixed 14 years back.

"The supply of essential drugs may face a severe setback on the suspension of production by the medicine companies, who have been facing a huge loss," Nazmul added.

According to the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI), 90 percent of domestic demand for medicines is met by these essential drugs, prices of which are controlled by the government.

The prices of raw materials for Amoxicillin, jasim@thedailystar.net

Paracetamol, Vitamin B Complex, Domperidone, Antacid and Pheniramine rose three to four folds in the international market.

BAPI President M Shafiuzzaman said the association is now in a parley with the government to review the prices of the drugs in accordance with the prices of raw materials.

Meanwhile, drug dealers and medical representatives fear a crisis of some life saving drugs in the market if the present situation continues.

The Directorate of Drug Administration is learnt to have formed a committee to consider the proposal put up by the pharmaceutical companies.

There is a fear among experts that a good number of companies may not maintain quality of products, if there is no improvement in the situation.

"Many companies may compromise quality of products to cope with the rising raw materials prices if the situation remains unchanged and it would be suicidal for the industry as a whole," said Aminul Islam, a pharmacist.

He said it will also hamper the export potentials as the situation will send a wrong signal to potential buyers.

Also, as crude oil price has touched \$135 per barrel, there has been a negative impact on all bulk drugs derived from petro chemicals. And there is already a shortage of intermediates in Bangladesh and worldwide, according to industry people.

