

Stocks

DGEN 2.77%
3,119.03

CSCX 0.27%
5,949.42

Asian Markets

MUMBAI 2.15%
16,063.18

TOKYO 0.71%
14,440.14

SINGAPORE 0.14%
3,188.05

SHANGHAI 0.75%
3,459.04

Currencies

	Buy TK.	Sell TK.
USD	68.10	69.10
EUR	104.29	108.87
GBP	132.67	137.82
JPY	0.64	0.67

SOURCE: STANDARD CHARTERED

Commodities

Gold	\$ 886.13 (per ounce)
Oil	\$ 127.31 (per barrel)

SOURCE: AFP

More News

BB asks banks, financial institutions to follow CSR

Bangladesh Bank (BB) on Sunday issued a circular asking all scheduled banks and financial institutions to include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in their activities. Mofiz Uddin Chowdhury, general manager, department of Off-site Supervision of BB signed the circular.

Govt opens up import of iron steel, scrap

The commerce ministry in its latest move yesterday allowed the import of iron steel and scrap for all with a view to keeping the skyrocketing price of the essential construction material MS (mild steel) rod at a tolerable level. A statutory regulatory order (SRO) has already been circulated to execute the decision in this regard, a statement of the ministry said yesterday.

International

Crisis-hit airlines to lose \$2.3b this year



Air travel industry body IATA predicted Monday that airlines would lose 2.3 billion dollars this year, dramatically reversing an earlier forecast of profits nearly twice this figure.

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Govt set to slash further 30-37pc off internet tariffs

MD HASAN

The government looks set to slash a further 30-37 percent off internet tariffs in an effort to encourage growth in the high tech industries and enable Bangladesh to compete for global outsourcing contracts with its South Asian neighbours.

The cut has been proposed by Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB), the country's sole internet bandwidth provider, and is now being considered by the finance ministry.

BTB cut internet tariffs by 20 to 40 percent in February, however it was considered inadequate by many people active in the ICT sector who pointed out that internet access was still more expensive than in neighbouring countries.

They claim that high internet charges are holding back the rapid growth of software developers and IT outsourcing companies, the kind of companies that have been so important to economic

growth in countries such as India.

Under the new proposal the cost of bandwidth will fall by a third, and according to BTB, give Bangladesh the cheapest internet costs in the region.

"BTB submitted its proposal to the Ministry of Finance last week. We are examining it and perhaps a decision will come within a month," said a high official of Ministry of Finance.

Habibullah N Karim, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Service (Basis) said, "I don't know what the proposal is but we want a materialization of the commitment made by BTB chairman last month when he said that Bangladesh's internet bandwidth tariff will be the lowest in South Asia."

"This will help not only the software industry, but the whole ICT sector including the upcoming call centers," he said.

Mohammad Salam, president of Internet Service Provider Association

Bangladesh (ISPB) said, "We may also reduce our monthly charges proportionately."

However he said, "It's possible to reduce internet price more if government come forward in building a common under ground cable line for the internet service providers."

ISPs have to spend Tk30,000 per connection for establishing connection route to the users.

Under the proposed tariff plan, monthly leased internet access between 3 to 18 Mbps will be reduced 32 percent from existing Tk40,000 a month to Tk27,000.

In the second range from 20 to 45 Mbps charges will reduce by 31 percent from Tk38,000 to Tk26,000, a month. From 50 to 90Mbps, the third range for ISPs, internet charge will reduce by 33 percent from existing Tk36,000 to Tk24,000 per month. The proposed plan said charge for 100 Mbps and above will reduce by 31 percent from Tk32,000 to Tk22,000.

According to BTB's new tariff plan, annual rentals for leased internet access service for 64kbps (kilobits per sec-

Monthly rental charges of leased Internet access above 2Mbps

Slab	Slab Bandwidth	Existing Rate	Proposed Rate
Slab-1	3-18Mbps	Tk40,000	Tk 27,000
Slab-2	20-45Mbps	Tk38,000	Tk 26,000
Slab-3	50-90Mbps	Tk 36,000	Tk 24,000
Slab-4	100 Mbps and above	Tk 32,000	Tk 22,000

Proposed yearly bandwidth rates up to 2Mbps

Speed	Existing BW rent	Proposed BW rent	Existing local loop rent (up to 5Km)	Proposed local loop rent (Up to 5Km)
64 Kbps	Tk 96,000	Tk 90,000	Tk 16,000	Tk 12,000
128Kbps	Tk 1,68,000	Tk 1,44,000	Tk 24,000	Tk 18,000
256Kbps	Tk 2,76,000	Tk 2,16,000	Tk 36,000	Tk 24,000
512Kbps	Tk 4,56,000	Tk 3,24,000	Tk 60,000	Tk 42,000
1 Mbps	Tk 7,20,000	Tk 4,80,000	Tk 96,000	Tk 60,000
2 Mbps	Tk 14,40,000	Tk 9,00,000	Tk 1,30,000	Tk 96,000

ond) to 2Mbps (megabits per second) bandwidth range between Tk 90,000 and Tk 9 lakh from the earlier charges of Tk 96,000 and Tk 14.4 lakh respectively. In these ranges, BTB is proposing to cut up to

37 percent rental charges. BTB's proposed charge for individual dial up internet subscriber is Tk 700 a month for unlimited usage, reduced from Tk1,000.

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Bahrain softens ban on workers from Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bahrain has said the ban on issuing work permits to Bangladeshis imposed on May 26 will not affect anyone already working in that country and the professionals who intend to apply for work there, reported Bahraini newspaper Gulf Daily News yesterday.

Bangladeshi residents and their families already in Bahrain as well as those changing jobs in that country will be exempted from the ban, said Assistant Under-Secretary for Entry Points, Research and Follow-up Yousif Al Ghatam.

The ban will only be slapped on Bangladeshi labourers who applied for work visas in Bahrain after May 27, and will apply afterwards, he said.

Bahrain imposed the ban after a group of lawmakers called for action following the death of a Bahraini, Mohammed Jassim Dossary, 38, who was allegedly murdered by a Bangladeshi mechanic last month.

Meanwhile, six organisations for migrants' rights at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday demanded reconsideration of the ban.

At the press conference, Obhibashi Karmi Unnayan Programme Chairman Shakir Islam said around five lakh people who are the relatives of over 1 lakh Bangladeshis living in Bahrain will be in serious financial troubles if Bahrain's parliament

ment accepts a proposal that recommends expulsion of the Bangladeshis.

"A democratic country like Bahrain that signed various international treaties on labour and human rights should reconsider the ban on Bangladeshis," he said, condemning the killing of a Bahraini allegedly by a Bangladeshi.

The organisations also urged the government of Bangladesh to take necessary measures to ensure the rights of Bangladeshi migrants in that country.

Officials of Warbe Development Foundation, Bangladeshi Migrant Organisation, International Migrants Foundation, Mutual Welfare Society and Obhibashi Karmi Association, Sirajganj, were present at the press meet.

BSS adds: Meanwhile Bangladesh's Charge d'Affaires in Manama Mohammad Saful Islam in a letter to the foreign office here yesterday said Bahraini Interior Minister Sheikh Rashed-bin Abdullah Al Khalifa assured him that the ban was 'completely temporary'.

But, he said, the minister sought Dhaka's cooperation to tackle the growing trend of criminal activities in Bahrain and the 'involvement of Bangladeshis in the incidents'. "He (minister) assured me that after taking some steps to resolve the issue, the situation will be normal," the letter read.

Steel mill in Bogra can't start production due to lack of gas connection

Crisis casts shadow on industrialisation

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Uncertainty has descended on a steel mill in Bogra district as the authorities have decided that no new gas connection will be offered in the country's northern region until December due to shortages.

Pragoti Steel Mill Ltd in Bogra Bangladesh Small & Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) industrial area now only needs gas connection to go for production. But the mill has been lying idle for two months due to absence of gas connection.

"There is no scope to provide new industrial and commercial gas connections in Bogra right now because of gas shortage", said Saiful Islam Chowdhury, managing director of Paschimanchal Gas Company Ltd (PGCL), which is responsible for gas supply in the region.

"It is not possible to give any new connection right now in the district," he added.

Owner of Pragoti Steel Mill Sultan Mahamud Chowdhury said the mill has been built at a cost of more than Tk 3 crore to produce 50 metric tons of MS rod a day.

"I have not received any assurance about the gas connection from the authorities concerned," said Chowdhury.

The government's decision to suspend gas supply in the region has cast a shadow over the industrial projects in Bogra.

At least 14 industrial projects including two paper mills in Bogra district have been suspended due to the acute gas crisis.

Professor Hosne Ara Begum,



Machinery at Pragoti Steel Mills Ltd lies idle due to absence of gas connection.

executive director of the NGO Thengamara Mohila Shabuj Shangha (TMSS), said her organisation has suspended a Tk 24 crore paper mill project due to the gas crisis.

Bogra Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC) President, Fazlur Rahman Paiker said he has to abandon his proposed paper mill project of Tk 30 crore since he does not get any assurance from the authorities about the supply of gas.

A senior official of PGCL also said 10 proposed CNG filling station projects of Tk 30 crore have been suspended due to the short supply of gas.

Earlier reports said the PGCL received a letter from Petrobangla on May 26 regarding the suspension of new gas supply following a recent meeting in Dhaka.

Talking to The Daily Star, PGCL officials said the Petrobangla letter has instructed them to inform the applicants that new connections cannot be approved now, due to a shortage of gas.

When contacted over telephone last week, Jalal Ahmed, chairman of Petrobangla, admitted the gas shortage, but declined to comment on issuing the order to stop gas connection.

The PGCL officials said they are receiving only 82 million cubic feet per day (mcfpd) against the demand for 97 mcfpd gas for three power stations, 10 CNG filling stations, 38,385 residential and several other commercial connections.

"We were informed in February that it was not possible to provide us with more than 81 mcfpd gas," said a PGCL official.

At present, the process to offer more than 3,000 residential connections has been stalled due to supply dearth and lack of spare parts, PGCL officials in Bogra said.

Slow pace in layer chicken farming may lead to egg price hike

SOHEL PARVEZ

When broiler chicken farming marks a slow recovery, layer chicken farming is not picking up amid farmers' worry over the possible return of bird flu disease in the coming winter, according to industry operators.

They fear eggs, one of the nutrition sources, might turn dearer on such worry among the layer chicken farmers seeking ensuring bio-security.

Bio-security is a precaution taken to minimise the risk of introducing an infectious disease into an animal population.

"Layer chicken farmers don't want to take any risk. They are afraid of losses because they think the bird flu disease may return in the winter," said Kazi Zeeshan Hasan, director in charge of marketing and sales of Kazi Farms, one of the biggest poultry breeders in the country.

Sources said a day-old chick requires over five months to start laying eggs, which means if a farmer starts farming of layer chicken today, he or she will have to wait until October, a month that may experience any outbreak of the avian influenza, or bird flu disease. This time-consuming factor usually results in such unwillingness on the farmers' part to go for layer chicken farming.

The bird flu, which hit the country's Tk 10,000 crore poultry industry early last year, led to the closure of thousands of farms and joblessness of many, with layer chicken farmers hit hard mostly.

Breeders said they had to lower the day-old layer chicks output gradually due to the fall in the demand. Now the weekly production of day-old



A vendor arranges eggs at a store. Poultry industry operators fear stagnation in layer chicken farming may lead to price hike of eggs.

However, the sector started regaining on a slow recovery in the demand for meat and eggs as the spread of bird flu disease has declined due to the rise in temperature.

The increased demand for both poultry meat and eggs has also resulted in the rise in the prices of the items, supply of which are scarce.

According to the retail market, broiler chicken was selling yesterday at Tk 122-125 a kg, up from Tk 90 by the end of March. The price of egg also shot up to Tk 22-24 a 'hali' (four pieces) from Tk 16-18 a 'hali' early this year.

"We could have sold all our day-old layer chicks the previous days. Now we have to sit idle with unsold chicks despite the fact that overall production of such an item has nearly halved," Zeeshan said.

Breeders said they had to lower the day-old layer chicks output gradually due to the fall in the demand. Now the weekly production of day-old

layer chicks stands at 3.0-3.5 lakh from 5.0-5.5 lakh a year ago, they added.

"I have lost my interest after facing a huge loss. The views of many are identical," said BI Siddique, president of Bangladesh Egg Producers Association.

MA Saleque, general secretary of World Poultry Science Association-Bangladesh, said farmers are now more interested to go for broiler chicken farming because they get their return after the broiler ages a month.

"But they have to wait for about six months to get egg from layer chicken," he said.

Saleque said many farmers who have incurred losses due to the bird flu outbreak are worried that they might face losses again if they start layer chicken farming now.

"If the trend continues, the price of eggs may go up," he said.

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