

Stocks

DGEN	1.27%	2,829.56
CSCX	1.52%	6,212.16

Currencies

	Buy Tk	Sell Tk
USD	68.45	69.45
EUR	95.21	100.90
GBP	110.44	116.36
JPY	0.71	0.79

SOURCE: STANDARD CHARTERED BANK

Commodities

Gold	\$951.50 (per ounce)
Oil	\$67.00 (per barrel)

SOURCE: AFP

(As of Friday)

More News

Financing social business



Social business can generate both social and financial returns and is highly suited to enabling poverty reduction in Bangladesh. It is generally agreed that creation of good quality, fairly paid rural employment opportunities are required to reduce rural poverty and, in my opinion, social business is likely to be the most cost effective and sustainable way forward.

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International

US hopes China talks spur economic recovery, jobs

With the global economy mired in recession, the United States and China begin talks Monday to seek a solution together despite tensions over currencies, the US budget deficit and the huge US trade gap with China.

Developing nations may have to wait on climate aid

Developing countries could be made to wait until the UN climate talks in Copenhagen in December before the EU reveals how much money it will give them to cope with the effects of global warming, the Swedish EU presidency said on Saturday.

Australia rejects push for protectionism

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on Sunday rejected calls for the government to favour local companies when spending money, saying such protectionist measures could spark a trade war. Rudd said much of Australia's national wealth depended on its access to export markets and it could not afford to support a union-backed push to give local firms preference over their overseas rivals.

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Contact Us

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

BTRC moves to discipline internet

MD HASAN

The telecom watchdog has decided to keep tabs on internet service providers to see whether they are reducing prices in line with a significant cut in bandwidth charges.

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has also moved to make a guideline, aiming to discipline the internet market at retail level.

"We cut wholesale bandwidth prices to take internet services to the mass at affordable costs," said a BTRC official. "We are now going to monitor the internet service providers, starting next month at retail level to ensure minimum standards of service to customers."

The fact that internet bandwidth prices have not been reduced at retail level was repeatedly pointed out by stakeholders. "At the same time, we have received complaints from customers about missing out on expected internet speed."

Internet bandwidth rates were cut three times over the last year to Tk 18,000 per mbps (Mbps (megabits per second) from Tk 80,000.

The internet market in Bangladesh flourished mainly with the introduction of low-cost internet devices by mobile phone operators. According to BTRC, the internet penetration rate in the country widened to 4 percent from a mere 0.4 percent three years ago.

According to internet service providers, around 4.5 million customers now enjoy internet services, of which 90 percent are connected through the mobile phone operators' wireless modems. The six mobile operators have 46 million mobile customers, according to statistics updated until the end of June 2009.

In the market of more than 200 local internet service providers, Citycell and Grameenphone are the market leaders. The monthly price based on bandwidth ranges between Tk 300 to Tk 850.

In some cases, customer are still paying what they used to pay when bandwidth price was more than one lakh per Mbps, the



AMRAN HOSSAIN

Internet users complain that they are missing out on expected speed.

BTRC official said. "A minimum standard must be followed by operators as customers do not always monitor internet speed."

The country was linked to a submarine cable in 2006 at a cost of \$35.1 million. The SMW-4 cable has a capacity to handle a 120 Gb bandwidth, of which Bangladesh currently subscribes to 24.12 Gb. The country

uses 23 percent of its capacity domestically. Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Ltd (BSCCL) handles the lone submarine cable.

Bandwidth users also feel the need to set up minimum internet service standards, as prices are now within relatively easy reach.

"It should be monitored to ensure a minimum level of quality," said Habibullah

N Karim, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services. The leading software maker also said a minimum uninterrupted internet speed is needed for getting better output of information technology services.

Wireless internet by mobile phone operators has become a craze among the youth, especially university and college going students. But fluctuating speeds often disappoint them and compel them to switch operators.

In addition to the availability of low-priced computers in the market, the price of wireless mobile phone modems cost Tk 3,000 to Tk 4,500, encouraging the youth to log on.

Mahfuzul Haque, a student of Asian University, said frequent disruptions to the internet are frustrating, although he has one of the best internet packages in the market.

"I don't understand where the problem is. Is it my laptop or the internet connection?" he said. "I don't have the speed I pay for."

The BTRC official said internet service providers would be asked to justify the bandwidth they provide, in line with the prices they charge.

Akhtaruzzaman Manju, president of Internet Service Providers Association Bangladesh, welcomed BTRC's move. However, he suggested that such monitoring should be based on the operators' cost of doing business.

"Bandwidth price reduction should not be the only consideration, as they have to bear other costs to provide the services to the end consumers," he said.

"Corresponding to BTRC's expectations, we recently lowered our internet package rates proactively to as low as Tk 300. This was done with an expectation that bandwidth price would be reduced by the government. We are pleased that the government has reduced bandwidth rates," said Rubaba Dowla, chief communication officer of the country's largest mobile operator Grameenphone.

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Recession to take centre stage in regional workshop

BSS, Dhaka

A four-day high-level regional workshop on policy responses to the global financial crisis in the Asia-Pacific begins in Dhaka today.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith will inaugurate the workshop, which will be joined by senior finance and central bank officials from 17 Asia-Pacific countries, including Bangladesh.

The workshop will look at various macroeconomic policies used by governments in the region to deal with recession.

Macroeconomic Policy and Development Division (MPDD) of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is organising the workshop hosted by Bangladesh Bank.

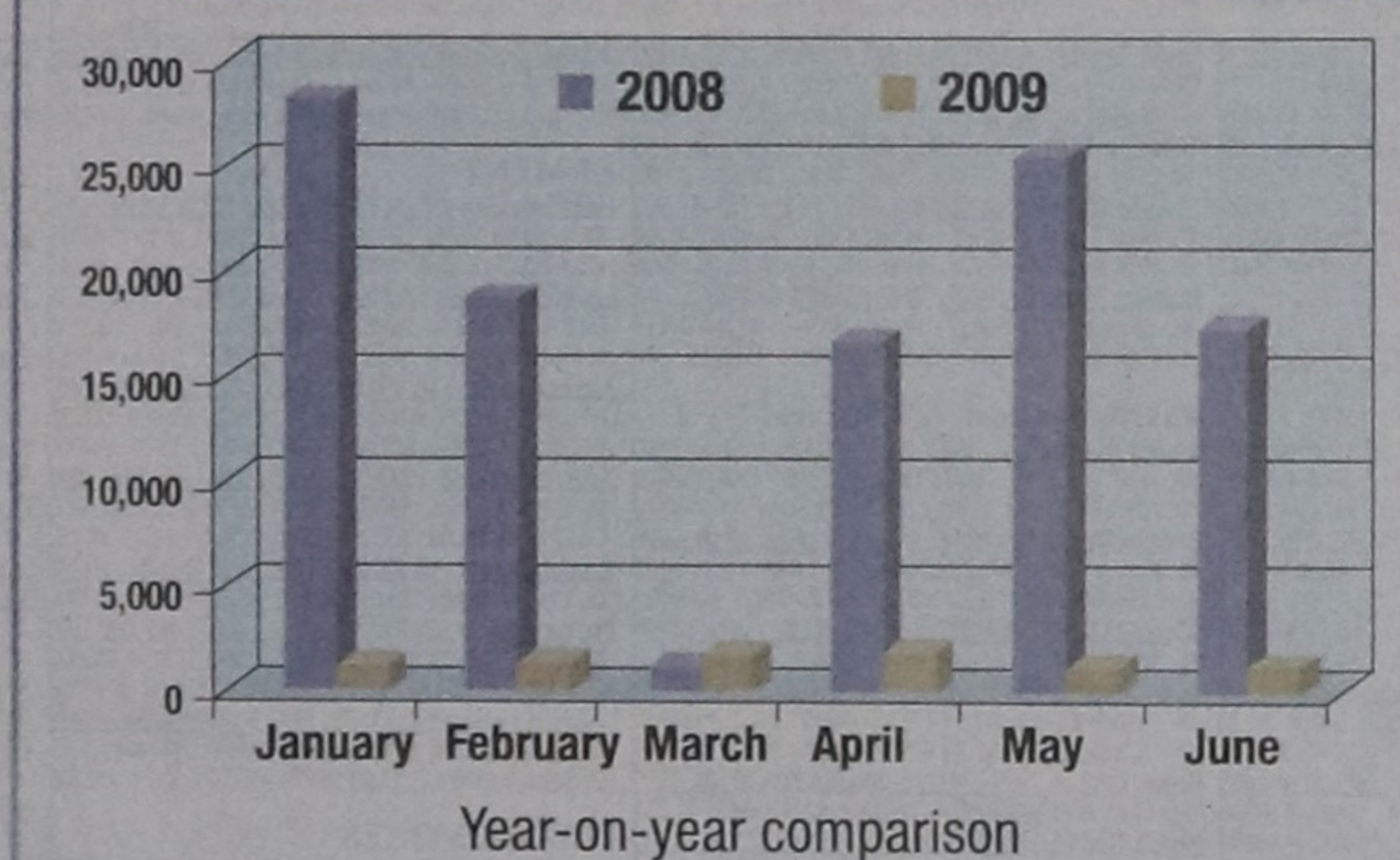
Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Atiur Rahman will present the keynote address at the workshop.

High-level officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Russia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam are expected to attend the workshop.

Experts from international organisations, including the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the UN Development Programme, World Bank and civil society bodies are also expected to attend.

Saudi jobs fizzling out

MIGRANT OUTFLOW TO SAUDI ARABIA PLUMMETS



KAWSAR KHAN

The number of Bangladeshi workers heading for Saudi Arabia fell drastically in the last one year.

A total of 8,594 workers went to the Gulf country -- still the biggest remittance-earning source -- during the January-June period of 2009, while the number was 1.08 lakh in the same period last year, government data shows.

The number was 24,564 in the July-December period of 2008, according to statistics of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training of the Bangladesh government.

Experts said job opportunities for Bangladeshi workers in the Arabian country declined as the kingdom is unwilling to recruit more Bangladeshis in an attempt to maintain a balance among the number of workers from different nations.

Another reason behind such a fall is media campaign in Saudi Arabia against Bangladeshi workers by journalists of some other countries, which are the competitors of Bangladesh in the Saudi labour market, they said.

Although the market shrank amid the global recession, the Arab nation is still recruiting manpower from Nepal, India and Pakistan, skipping Bangladesh.

"Recruitment of Bangladeshi workers in the monarchy has 'virtually' come to a stop now as most of the people who went there in the last six months were not recruited by any agency or company," said Tasneem Siddiqui, chairperson of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit.

She said it is frequently quoted that around 25 lakh Bangladeshi workers have been recruited in Saudi Arabia till date, while there is no statistics about their homecoming, and this big figure may lead to no more recruitment by the Arab state.

"The Saudi government's policy is to keep the ratio of workers from each country or ethnic group at a certain level, and so we should not unnecessarily show a big number of workers there," said Tasneem Siddiqui.

The government should take note of the number of people who returned home and are now working there so the Saudi government knows about the actual number of Bangladeshi workers.

According to official statistics, labour migration plummeted by 46 percent in the first six months this year, when around 250,900 people went overseas for jobs, while the number was 464,000 in the same period last year.

"Our business has marked a sharp fall as Saudi Arabia has not been issuing visa for the last six months, and the reason should be identified by the government," said Muhammad Mosharraf Hossain, a leader of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies.

President of the association Golam Mostafa recently said the government was failing to efficiently manage the labour market in the kingdom, as it lacks adequate efficient workforce for this purpose.

"If any crime by Bangladeshi workers is spotted in Saudi Arabia, it receives a widespread media coverage there, whereas misdeeds by other nationals largely remain unnoticed," said Tasneem Siddiqui.

She alleged that a good number of Indian and Nepalese journalists work in the monarchy and generally try to project Bangladeshi workers negatively to make a room for their countrymen there.

She also blamed Bangladesh's mission in the Middle East country for not doing public relations works properly with Saudi media.

Bangladesh's remittance earning in fiscal 2008-09 was \$9.68 billion, and Saudi Arabia contributed around 30 percent of it.

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Tea output to miss target



AMRAN HOSSAIN

Tea production is feared to fall short of the target this year because of unfavourable weather conditions.

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Insufficient rain, coupled with high temperature, has badly hit the country's tea farming this year, according to different tea estate officials.

They fear a 20 percent shortfall of the production target for 60 million kilograms.

An approximate estimate of Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) shows that 14.2 million kg has been produced since the beginning of the year 2009, a 1.8 million kg less compared to the output in the same period a year earlier.

Most of the 138 gardens in Sylhet region were forced by the inclement weather to start plucking tea leaves either in late March or early April, but the normal time is early March, a tea board official told The Daily Star.

Mohammad Shajahan Akand, manager of Somonbhag Tea Estate, pointed to the late irrigation that also led to low

output.

He said tea plants need a balanced rainfall and irrigation, but natural water sources had dried up because of the prolonged drought at the beginning of the season.

However, the last few weeks witnessed a rainfall, considered too inadequate to recoup the loss of the important cash crop.

"Besides, we could not use adequate fertiliser as the soil remained dry," Akand added.

The rainfall some days ago has marked a slight improvement in the situation in the north Sylhet circle, but the water crisis persists, said Numan Haider Chowdhury, general manager of Khadim Tea Estate.

Meanwhile, a senior BTB official has reported of a sporadic outbreak of pest attack on tea plants as fertilisation delayed. "Normally, fertilisation is not possible without a minimum rainfall," he said.

Navana CNG set for direct listing

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Navana CNG Limited, a sister concern of Navana Group, received a go-ahead yesterday from the premier bourse to go public under a direct listing method.

The company will offload 1.8 crore shares worth Tk 10 each, totalling Tk 18 crore, Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) officials said.

The DSE board approved Navana CNG's direct listing at a meeting.

Navana CNG, which submitted a direct listing application to the DSE in March this year, will be the third private company, after Shinepukur Ceramics and ACI Formulations, to go for direct listing.



Advanced Chemical Industries Limited

ACI Centre, 245 Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208

Price Sensitive Information

The Board of Directors of Advanced Chemical Industries Limited in its meeting on 26th July 2009 has decided to invest in two new Pharmaceuticals projects i.e. Anti-cancer and Amino Acid. The projects will start operating from mid 2011. The estimated investment in these two projects will be Tk. 350 million.

By Order of the Board
Sd/-
Sheema Abed Rahman
Company Secretary

Dated : 26 July 2009