



Stocks	
DGEN	▲ 0.62% 5,635.72
CSCX	▲ 0.66% 10,707.98

Asian Markets	
MUMBAI	▲ 1.45% 16,152.59
TOKYO	Closed
SINGAPORE	▲ 0.70% 2,753.63
SHANGHAI	▲ 0.10% 2,985.50

Currencies		
	Buy Tk	Sell Tk
USD	68.65	69.65
EUR	93.25	97.42
GBP	106.04	110.40
JPY	0.75	0.80

Commodities	
Oil	▲ \$74.72 (per barrel) (Midday Trade)

News in Brief

Jute export ban sees limited waiver

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has decided to withdraw restriction on raw jute export for some time under some conditions.

Raw jute export will be allowed for those who have already opened L/C (letter of credit), said a government statement issued yesterday.

However, the export will face embargo again after this limited waiver, added the statement.

The government imposed a ban on export of raw jute in December to ensure smooth supply of the natural fibre to local mills.

Bangladesh's raw jute production is estimated to be 55 lakh bales this year. Domestic demand for raw jute is around 35 lakh bales.

SEC rejects review appeal of Arafat Securities

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The stock market regulator has rejected the review appeal of Arafat Securities, which was fined Tk 51 lakh for its involvement in price manipulation of Beach Hatchery shares.

The Securities and Exchange Commission through a letter recently rejected the review appeal, saying that the brokerage house violated securities rules and manipulated share prices of Beach Hatchery, which was under the Z-category during manipulation by Arafat Securities.

Upholding the imposed fine to Arafat Securities and its officials, the market watchdog sent a message that the commission will take measures to maintain transparency and accountability in the market, officials said.

Earlier in January, the SEC fined Arafat Securities Tk 40 lakh, while its chief executive Tk 10 lakh and authorised representative Tk 1 lakh.

The SEC imposed the fine following an investigation, which proved that Arafat Securities and its officials were involved in the manipulation.

The SEC on October 19 also suspended trading of the brokerage house for a month for violating rules.

Pharma companies brace for new phase

Analysts suggest innovations as patent looms on generic drugs

SAYEDA AKTER

Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies should prepare to maintain growth in local sales and exports and remain competitive in the post-2016 period, when patents will be imposed on all generic drugs, analysts suggest.

Upgrading product quality is one area the companies should focus on, they said. Other suggestions include capacity building in research and engineering and the setting-up of an active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) park to help local companies face the challenge.

Capacity building means innovations, strengthening reverse engineering, training local people and upgrading technology. An API park will help produce raw materials locally and innovate ingredients as well.

The word 'generic' is used to describe a product, particularly a drug, which does not have a trademark. For example, 'paracetamol' is a chemical ingredient that is found in many branded painkillers and is often sold as a generic medicine in its own right.

In 2001, under the trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS), the World Trade Organisation allowed developing and poor nations to produce generic drugs until 2016 without compulsory licences or paying the patent holders.

According to TRIPS, the least-developed country members of WTO will not have to apply for copyrights for a period of 10 years from the date of application, so they will be able to create a viable technological base for public health.

With that, the WTO trade rules have allowed developing and poor countries -- mostly without own drugs industry -- to issue a compulsory licence to a third country, such as India or Brazil, to produce cheap generic drugs and to import these to address a public health crisis.

Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD), thinks Bangladesh is yet to enjoy the full benefits of the deal.

"As a least developed country (LDC), we must make use of the opportunity to make lifesaving drugs without paying for patents or licensing. Our local pharmaceutical plants are of international standards and we have better infrastructure, which made it easy for us to benefit from the WTO deal.

"The government needs to take policy measures to safeguard the increasing pharmaceutical industry," Rahman said. "Initially, the government should set up an API park to enhance capacity with advanced research facility."

MARKET GROWTH

Pharmaceutical exports stood at \$18.69 million in the July-November period of fiscal 2009-10, a 15.44 percent rise from the same period a year ago, according to the Export Promotion Bureau

Top 10 companies by local sales (Ranking by Intercontinental Marketing Services)

Opsonin Pharma
Eskayef Bangladesh
Drug International
Beximco Pharmaceuticals
Incepta Pharmaceuticals
Renata
Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI)
Square Pharmaceuticals
Aristopharma
ACME Laboratories

STAR GRAPHICS

"Least developed countries have sought an extension of the deadline from 2016 to 2021. We have to aggressively negotiate on this point to extend the deadline by five more years," Rahman said.

Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, a trustee of Gonoshasthaya Kendra, echoed Rahman. He said the government should encourage investment in raw materials production to face intense price competition in the coming days on locally-manufactured products.

"The first effect of the post-2016 era will be the cost of patents, which will increase raw material prices, and eventually the prices of locally manufactured products," Chowdhury said.

Complaints over smart cards

PORIMOL PALMA

Mismanagement in delivering smart cards to the overseas jobseekers has triggered protest among the recruiting agencies, which said the government's inefficiency in issuing the cards is causing huge sufferings to the aspirant migrants and the agencies.

Leaders of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) and recruiting agency employees yesterday staged a demonstration on the premises of Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) in Kakrail, Dhaka.

With demands from the association, BMET at a meeting yesterday afternoon decided to expand the services in different parts of the country.

"There might be some minor errors, but the allegations that it takes three to four days to take fingerprints are false," BMET Director General Khurshed Alam Chowdhury told The Daily Star. Until February 10, the bureau issued 1,250 smart cards, he said.

BMET introduced smart card, a tag with computer chip, for overseas jobseekers from February 7 aimed at easing immigration hassles and helping them more effectively when

they are abroad.

The card contains all the information furnished in passport, a jobseeker's fingerprints and the name and licence number of the recruiting agency so that the authorities can identify all the parties involved in the migration process and take prompt actions when needed.

President of the association Ghulam Mustafa said it is a good system, but BMET did not consult them before introducing it, and when they did it, they are not able to deliver smoothly.

He alleged the workers who generally have to come to Dhaka for several times for job-related issues are facing another trouble, as they have to rush to give fingerprints and get smart cards that takes more than three days.

BMET should make smart card system optional for three months and start full operation only when the bureau is fully equipped, Mustafa said.

A recruiting agency official, Rafiqul Islam, said he submitted 25 passports last Sunday to get smart cards, but until yesterday got only seven.

"The operators of the card printing machines are not efficient enough. They were not trained," alleged an employee of another recruiting agency.

He said BMET earlier could issue more than 5,000 immigration clearances a day, but now it can issue hardly 200 to 250 smart cards.

"Often they talk of troubles in computer servers," he said.

Another recruiting agency man said one Dubai-bound worker returned from Zia International Airport, as the fingerprint did not match at the airport. "As Air Arabia does not refund ticket, it is a total loss on our part."

Sometimes it is seen that fingerprints of 10 jobseekers were given, but only six smart cards were issued with the operators saying they did not get entries for the rest or the money was not paid.

"This means there are faults in the system. BMET must correct it and then start full operation. We will extend our full cooperation," said Mustafa.

The BMET director general said the agencies can talk to the higher authorities in case of any emergency.

On Baira's demand for making the system optional for three months, the ministry of expatriates' welfare will take decision, he said. "But I don't think it can in anyway be made optional now."

Build network to lure investment

Former Canadian minister says

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh should enhance communication from different fronts with Canada to attract more investment from the North American rich country.

The suggestion came from Maria Minna, a Canadian parliament member and former minister, while she spoke to The Daily Star in an exclusive interview on Wednesday.

"Canada-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CanCham) and other trade bodies can play a pivotal role for strengthening the bilateral trade relationship," Minna points out.

Minna, chairperson of the Canada Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group, is now on a visit to Dhaka.

The CanCham, Bangladesh awarded her honorary membership for her outstanding contribution to establishing rights of Bangladeshi community in Canada and for her laudable role in women empowerment, world peace and protecting the rights of immigrants.

"Bangladesh should seek a niche market in Canada, as our country is going to be one of the most important trading partners of yours," the visiting dignitary also proposed.

"Also, you can hire our rich expertise in different sectors to utilise it in the development of Bangladesh," Minna further said.

She cited the crisis-ridden energy sector where such expertise might be transferred to develop renewable energy.

"Moreover, Bangladesh also can seek our expertise for your agricultural and food processing industries, hydroelectric power development, and in climate change," Minna said.

Pointing her finger at the rapid growth in the trade between the two countries, she said the bilateral trade reached \$1 billion in 2009 from \$956 million a year ago. In this context she mentioned that Dhaka, whose main exportable items include woven and knit products, is reaping benefit from the zero tariff facility Ottawa offered a few years back.



Maria Minna

"Canadian investments here have also marked a rise, as your economic indicators are showing positive signs at a time when the world is yet to come out of recession completely," the parliamentarian adds.

She said Bangladesh is one of the frontline countries that has been affected by the global climate change. "Canada can assist you in transferring technologies to tackle such bad impact."

In response to a query on migration categories in Canada, Minna said the Canadian government prefers to give opportunity to other categories than a category experiencing oversupply of manpower.

Canada stopped last year allowing journalists and teachers to migrate under citizenship right.

Minna asked Bangladesh government to impart training to the people from different sectors so that they can migrate to Canada, as her country needs a considerable number of technical hands for everyday purposes.

On another query, Minna pointed out that rules for admission to Canadian universities are not difficult, but in many cases foreign students are not allowed to go to Canada as they are weak in English and face financial hardship.

reefat@thedailystar.net

Govt's bank borrowing falls

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government borrowing from the banking system went down to a record low in the first seven months of the current fiscal year mainly because of increased foreign assistance and a huge sale of national savings instruments.

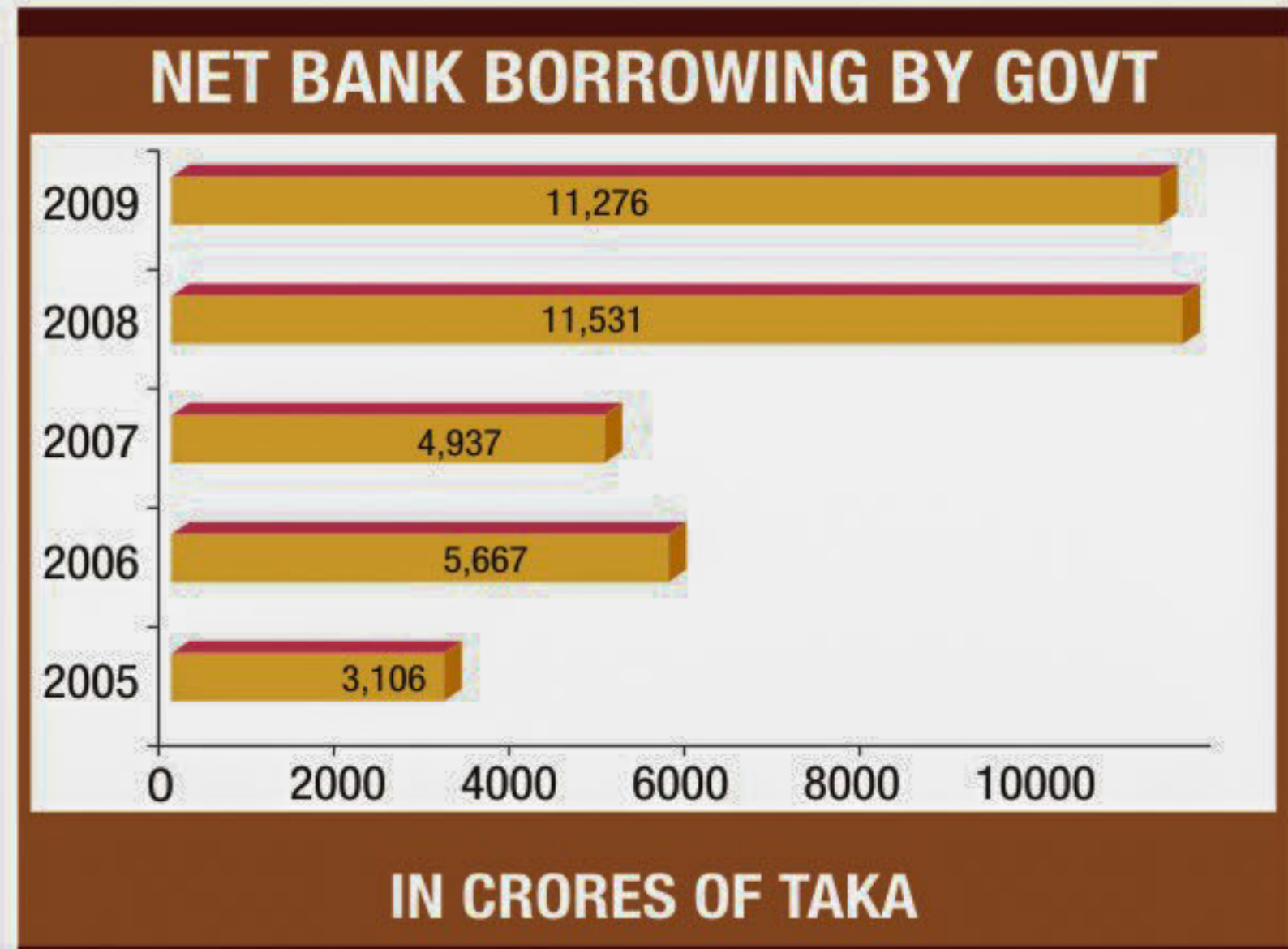
Foreign aid increased by 446 percent and the sale of savings instruments by 313 percent in the first six months of the current fiscal year.

According to Bangladesh Bank statistics, the government did not borrow from the banking system during the July-January period, rather it repaid Tk 9,138 crore. The government borrowed Tk 7,429 crore in the same period last year.

The government's outstanding borrowing was Tk 56,730 crore on June 30, 2009, which came down to Tk 47,592 crore on January 31.

In the budget for the current fiscal year a target was set to borrow Tk 16,775 crore from the banking system.

Finance ministry officials said the sale of huge national savings instruments and increase in foreign assistance caused the fall in borrowing from banks.



Also, the government is still lagging far behind in budget implementation. In this context, the bank-borrowing amount has been cut to half of the target in the revised budget.

The target of net borrowing through sale of national savings instruments was Tk 3,800 crore, but the net sale increased by around 313 percent in the first six months of the current fiscal year and stood at Tk

5,034 crore. During the same period last year the amount was Tk 1,218 crore.

The government received foreign aid of Tk 6,073 crore in the first six months of the current fiscal year, which was Tk 1,112 crore during the same period last year.

The government spent 34.8 percent or Tk 39,560 crore of the full-year budget of Tk 1,13,819 crore in the first six months.

CORPORATE BOOKING

Water Kingdom will be reserved on 12th February, 2010 (Friday) for Dealers' Day Out 2010 of R. A. K. Ceramics (Bangladesh) Ltd.

From 13th February, 2010 (Saturday) Water Kingdom will remain open for all.



Tel: 8833786, 9896482, 01913531381