



PHILIPS
32" LCD TV
at BDT 65,000/-

Take home a Philips LCD TV at Tk. 4,167/- per month through Standard Chartered InstaBuy scheme. (Installment payment available at 0% interest.)

TRANSCOM
DIGITAL
think electronic. think digital.

Stocks

DGEN ▲ 1.51%
6,404.97

CSCX ▲ 0.46%
12,270.31
(Week-on-week)

Commodities

Gold ▲
\$1,190.50
(per ounce)

Oil ▲
\$79.60
(per barrel)
(As of Friday)

SOURCE: AFP

Hanoi eyes trade deal with Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Vietnam is eager to sign a trade agreement with Bangladesh to enhance bilateral trade and investment between the countries.

Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Sinh Hung said this when Foreign Minister Dipu Moni paid a courtesy call on him in Hanoi yesterday on the sidelines of the 17th Asean Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting that began on Friday.

During the meeting, the ministers discussed the common bilateral issues.

Dipu Moni said Vietnam has achieved tremendous development in many sectors, especially in agriculture.

Bangladesh has many things to learn from Vietnam, she said and emphasised enhancement of trade and investment from Vietnam.

The Vietnamese deputy prime minister also voiced the same and expressed his interest to promote trade relations with Bangladesh.

He said Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Regional Forum (ARF) is to ensure peace, security and friendship in the region. He also said ARF can be more cooperative in future in the issues of climate change and natural disaster.

The Vietnamese minister also expressed his interest to work together for socio-economic development of the Bangladeshi people.

Dipu Moni said Bangladesh is very much concerned about climate change.

Trade bodies of both the countries can work together to promote bilateral trade relations, she added. She also stressed an agricultural cooperation agreement, and student exchange.

The ministers also talked about a convenient schedule for the prime minister of Vietnam to visit Bangladesh.

The Vietnamese deputy prime minister said there should be visa exemption facilities for the businessmen of the two countries.

The foreign minister of Bangladesh said the authorities of the countries can work on it.

UK firms to enjoy cash boost from pension changes

REUTERS, London

Britain's plans to change the rate at which private-sector pensions are indexed for inflation could erase company pension deficits and free up cash for growth or higher returns to shareholders.

The government said this month it would bring private defined-benefit pensions in line with public sector equivalents, for which annual increases will from next year be linked to the consumer prices index (CPI), instead of the retail prices index (RPI), which is the current legal minimum.

A new lease of life for jute

SOHEL PARVEZ

A new era for the Bangladesh jute industry will begin as the government is finalising a packaging law that will boost local consumption of the green fibre and cushion growers and millers from falls in global demand.

The law already has a green light from cabinet and is being vetted at the law ministry. It is likely to be placed in parliament soon, a top official of the textiles and jute ministry said yesterday.

The act, after passage, will make jute packaging of essential commodities, such as rice, wheat and sugar, fertilisers, cement and seeds, compulsory for public and private organisations engaged in production, import and distribution.

This will enhance local demand for jute and give farmers and millers a buffer against a fall in demand abroad, where about 90 percent of Bangladesh jute is now sold.

"We expect to place the bill in parliament soon. We are trying to see the bill pass as early as possible," said Md Ashraf Moqbul, secretary of the textiles and jute ministry.

The government move to frame the law comes a year after the industry, an employer of nearly 150,000 workers, suffered a nearly 20 percent slump in export earnings in fiscal 2008-09 due to a fall in prices.

Exports, however, were on the rebound in 2009-10, spurred by a rise in the price of the natural fibre on the world

market. Exports soared 76 percent to \$736 million in fiscal 2009-10, from \$417 million the year before.

Moqbul said an increase in the use of jute for packaging would cut demand for polythene bag based packaging, which harms the environment.

According to the official, an advisory committee will suggest the percentage of jute sacks to be used for mandatory packaging, on the basis of annual jute production.

The draft law will allow a fine of up to Tk 50,000 and three-month imprisonment for violations.

At present, Moqbul said, only the food and disaster-management ministry and the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation buy jute sacks.

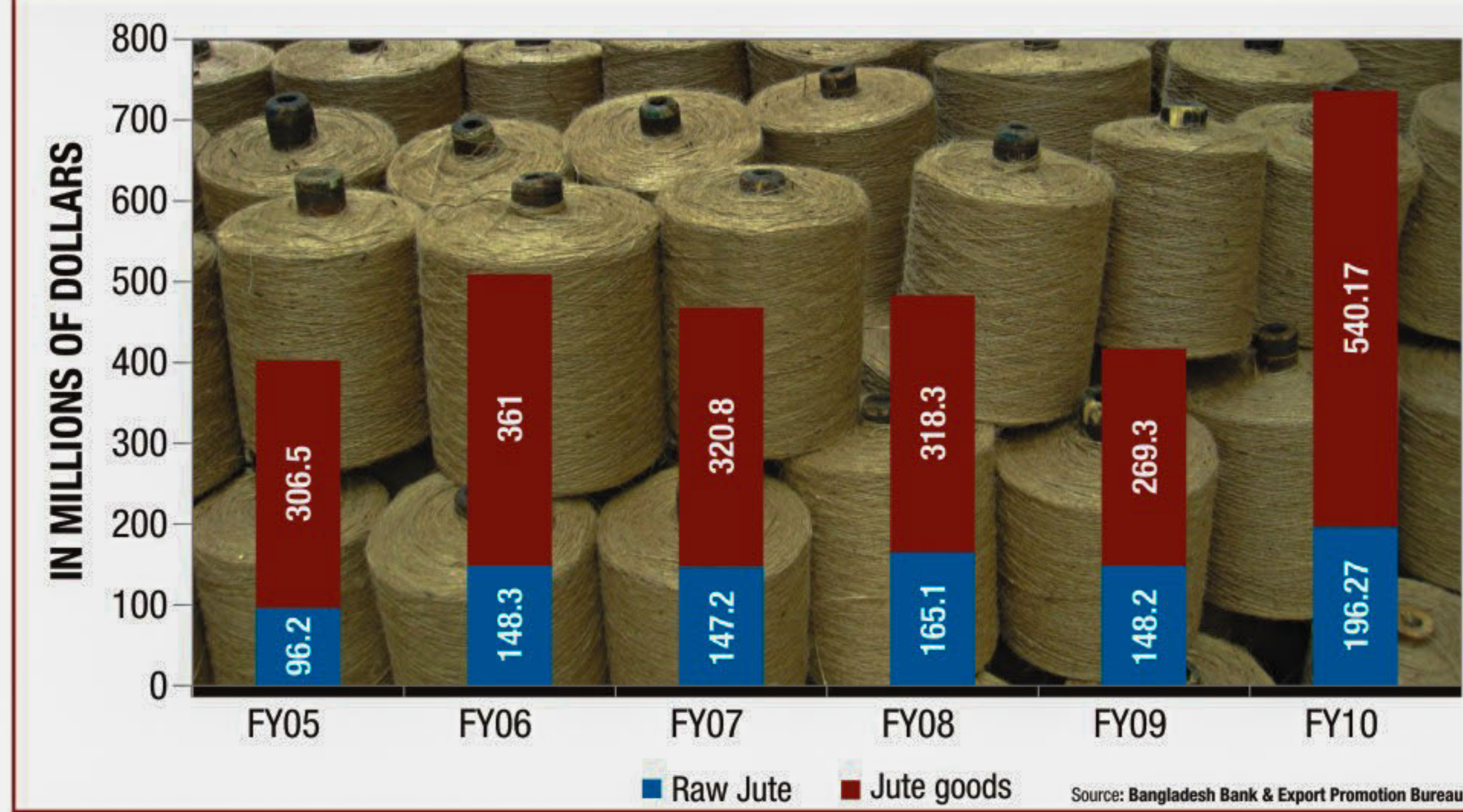
After enactment of the law, public sector bodies such as Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation and Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation will have to use jute for packaging, he added.

In addition, private sector entities will also have to use jute for packaging, officials said.

The initiative comes more than two decades after India enacted a similar rule to encourage domestic consumption. India uses jute in bulk for internal consumption.

"It is going to open a new chapter for the jute industry," said Najmul Huq, chairman of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association, a body of private sector jute mills.

EXPORTS TREND



"Now we are hostage to importers. But enactment of the law will be an indication that we have our own market," he said. BJMA has been lobbying for many years.

The law is expected to be in force at a time of surging raw jute production; nearly 60 lakh bales this year, up from

49.7 lakh bales a year ago.

Moqbul said the mandatory packaging law would shield jute growers and millers.

Md Shamsul Haque, marketing director of the state-run Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, said the law would benefit

jute farmers as well as his ministry.

"It will encourage increased cultivation due to a rise in demand."

At present, about 40 lakh people are involved in the cultivation of jute, the second most important fibre after cotton. sohel@thedailystar.net

NBR ratchets up campaign to get more taxpayers

Humayun Ahmed will script a drama



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The income tax department of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has launched a campaign to raise public awareness for paying taxes. Fiction writer and filmmaker Humayun Ahmed will script a television drama for the purpose.

The campaign includes the setting-up of 300 circle offices, mostly in upazilas. Five service centres will be established in Dhaka and Chittagong.

The NBR official said it is taking these steps to increase the number of taxpayers and expects to net five lakh new taxpayers. The number of tax identification numbers (TINs) stands at 27 lakh. Of them, only 8.03 lakh pay tax in a country that has a population of more than 15 crore.

The NBR has received Tk 6 crore in the budget for this fiscal year to splurge on the publicity campaign.

Bangladesh Television (BTV) will telecast the 13-part drama serial by Humayun Ahmed. NBR Chairman Nasiruddin Ahmed and other high officials sat with the dramatist several times to discuss the subject. Officials said the drama would highlight the trouble one might face if he/she does not pay taxes.

When the caretaker government was in power, many high-profile people faced hassles for not paying taxes. The drama will subtly project the hassles, along with the reasons why taxes should be paid. Humayun Ahmed has made an outline for the drama.

The officials said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wants to pass a message to the public: it is necessary to protect one's wealth by paying taxes.

Humayun Ahmed has been chosen to script the serial, as his acceptability in society is high, said

NBR Member Syed Aminul Karim. "Even by spending crores of taka, we cannot pass the same message to people as he will -- by using subtle techniques."

"We want to promote an idea that if a person's wealth is validated by the tax department by receiving due taxes, it will serve as a guarantee for the person and he will enjoy peace of mind," he added.

Besides, different NBR offices will get portions of the budgetary allocation to carry on publicity to motivate people into paying taxes in time.

The income tax department has 303 circle offices in Bangladesh. The number will rise to 600 this fiscal year. Among the circle offices, at least 100 will be set up in the upazilas, which are large growth centres.

The establishment ministry approved NBR's proposal that is

being reviewed by the finance ministry now, the officials said. After the proposal is approved, NBR will appoint about 4,000 people at different levels.

Of the four centres in Dhaka, one will be in NBR itself, one in the tax zone where professionals pay taxes, the third in the zone where government officials pay and the last in the zone where large tax payers pay.

At the service centres, there will be four to five highly qualified officials and a bank booth, where taxpayers will receive various types of services, such as assistance in filling up the income tax forms, provision for online tax submission, meet queries on tax arrear and issuance of TIN certificates.

NBR is in talks with some donor agencies, including Asian Development Bank, for technical support in setting up the service centres.

Bangladesh ranks fourth in global apparel exports

Says WTO report

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh has ranked fourth in the global apparel exports and grabbed 3 percent market share, according to a recent World Trade Organisation (WTO) report.

Bangladesh secured the fourth position in terms of value followed by China, EU-27 countries and Turkey, said the report.

According to the report, China exported apparel items worth \$115 billion, EU-27 countries \$103.40 billion, Turkey \$14 billion and Bangladesh more than \$10 billion.

The report was prepared on the basis of export data of 2007 of the respective countries.

Faruque Hassan, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said the latest position of Bangladesh might be third in terms of value and volume, as apparel exports have maintained steep growth over the last few years.

Apparel exports of the competing countries increased in some markets but decreased in some others, while Bangladesh's growth was steady in all the markets, he said.

On the basis of BGMEA data, he said volume-wise Bangladesh's position was second in knitwear exports last year, followed by China.

Hassan said the three-decade old garment industry of Bangladesh has transformed on its own into a global sourcing hub.

Bangladesh was the largest exporter of cotton T-shirts and was second for cotton pullover and jeans exports to European countries in 2009. In terms of volume, the country was the second largest exporter of cotton trousers to the US last year, he added.

The BGMEA data also said Bangladesh exported 127.14 million dozens of woven garments and 206.20 million dozens of knitwear during the July-March period of fiscal 2009-10.

The exports were 169.59 million dozens of woven and 290.92 million dozens of knit in fiscal 2008-09.

The latest data from state-owned Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) said Bangladesh fetched \$12.59 billion from garment exports last fiscal year, and contributed around 80 percent to national exports.

Of the total amount, the country exported knitwear items worth \$6.48 billion, and woven worth \$6.01 billion, registering a 0.84 percent and 1.60 percent growth respectively, according to the EPB data.

Bangladesh also exported terry towel worth \$157.07 million, textile fabrics worth \$8.22 million, knitted fabrics worth \$20.68 million and home textile worth \$539.28 million in fiscal 2009-10.

Last year Bangladesh also explored some new export destinations such as Japan, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and some countries of South America and South Africa.

refayat@thedailystar.net



MTB Int'l Travel Card
"Travel smarter just the way you like it"

বিশ্বায়তন ট্রাভেল ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
Mutual Trust Bank Ltd.
you can bank on us

Phone: +88 017 300 807 04-5
www.mutualtrustbank.com