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SINGAPORE	▲ 0.15% 3,080.98
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Currencies		
	Buy Tk	Sell Tk
USD	68.95	69.95
EUR	88.42	92.89
GBP	106.35	111.07
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Gold	▲ \$1,280.25 (per ounce)
Oil	▲ \$73.75 (per barrel)

Bangladesh's poor show

JASIM UDDIN KHAN from Shanghai

Bangladesh yesterday celebrated the national pavilion day at the Shanghai Expo, 2010 in a bid to promote local products among the foreign buyers.

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan inaugurated the day jointly with the Chinese officials and other Bangladesh delegates.

The six-month show began on May 1 with the theme 'Better City, Better Life'.

Although poorly presented, the Bangladesh pavilion has received a good number of visitors. The country fell short of best utilising the \$650,000 (nearly Tk 4.5 crore) donated by expo organiser China to develop the pavilion and display itself at the fair.

Over 10,000 visitors through the pavilion daily, mainly attracted by some digital pictures of Cox's Bazar, the Sundarbans and the Savar Memorial Monument, along with some handicraft and ceramic products. The Bangladesh pavilion theme is 'spirit and growth of golden Bengal'.

The country missed out on the opportunity of projecting its culture, heritage and capacity to produce quality apparel items for global retailers, visitors said.

The pavilion showing major Bangladeshi export items with indiscriminate display represented the country poorly to foreigners, they claimed.

"People will get a wrong impression of Bangladesh's progress and development by witnessing the pavilion," said Annisur Rahman, a businessman now visiting China.

The gala event has attracted around 200 nations and international organisations and expects around 70 million visitors.

The first registered world exposition in a developing country, it offers an opportunity for cross-culture dialogues. Before the conclusion of the show, a 'Shanghai Declaration' will be issued.

With a history of 159 years, the expo is being hosted by a developing country for the first time.

Every country has tried to display their urban development efforts -- from ancient to modern life. Participants have also presented the amenities their cities offer in addition to ecological and sustainable products they make for a better life.

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Anthrax fears fuel demand for poultry

SOHEL PARVEZ

Anthrax fears among consumers have encouraged people to farm poultry more amid rising prices of chicken, but the supply of chicks is less than expected.

High demand now fuels the prices of day-old chicks -- broiler, and the crossbred variety named sonali cock -- in the backyard of a supply shortage. Currently, a day-old broiler chick is sold at Tk 70-Tk 80 at farmer level, up from below Tk 70 a month ago, operators said.

However, the demand for layer chicks remains low.

"Farmers are interested in rearing more chicken because of a rise in the prices of chicken meat. The spread of anthrax has contributed partly to the rise," said Syed Abu Siddique, president of Bangladesh Poultry Industries Association.

The price of a kilogram of broiler chicken rose to Tk 160-Tk 170 yesterday from Tk 125-Tk 135 a month ago, according to the retail price data of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

The sector people said the poultry price usually goes up ahead of Eid and declines later with demand easing. But this year, the price is still high as many consumers continue to avoid beef.

The price of chicken began picking up amid a gradual shift from beef after the detection and spread of anthrax in cattle since mid-August. Beef sales have tumbled, butchers said.

Siddique, however, said the farmers were not reaping the benefits of the rise in prices due to the



SHAWKAT JAMIL
The rising demand for poultry amid the anthrax scare has pushed up chick prices.

high cost of day-old chicks and feed.

Kazi Zahin Hasan, director of a leading poultry breeder, Kazi Farms Ltd, however, linked the high price of day-old chicks to their demand among the farmers.

"The price of broiler chicks is high because the poultry farmers want to buy more broiler chicks than what the hatcheries are producing," said Hasan.

Moshiur Rahman, managing director of Paragon Group, said the demand for day-old broiler chick would be 65 lakh a week against a supply of about 55-60 lakh.

"It seems that many are inter-

ested in poultry farming," said Rahman.

He said the production of broiler chicks has increased a bit in the August-September period but the anthrax fear has created a sudden shortage as demand went high.

The industry people said the outbreak of the disease has had a positive impact on the profitability of the poultry industry, by accelerating the demand for chicken among the consumers.

They said the rise in demand for chicken would encourage hatcheries to breed more chicks to allow expansion in farming.

"Many people [farmers] will take risk to reap the benefit of the spike in demand for chicken," said Rahman, expecting that production of chicks would go up by the March-April period next year.

But others say such a high demand may not continue for long.

"The demand for beef will probably return to normal in a month or two. When that happens, the demand for chicken will also return to normal," said Hasan of Kazi Farms.

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Sports events may spur tourism

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Diehard fans travelling to support their beloved teams by cheering during games spend \$600 billion a year -- a tenth of international tourism, according to World Sport Destination Expo, an annual exhibition and forum that was held in South Africa during the final week of the World Cup.

Sport tourism is set to grow in the next decade, organisers of the niche industry forum claim. And local tour operators agree sports are becoming popular among tourists globally.

Jalal Yunus, spokesman of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, says events like the upcoming World Cup of cricket could give a much-needed boost to the country's tourism sector.

"As a co-organiser of the World Cup, Bangladesh will have a special place in global map," he says. "After the World Cup, we will be able to organise events that attract more tourists."

Bangladesh's domestic travel spots have more visitors now thanks to tour operators, says Khondokar Rakibul Islam Rakib, chief executive officer of Ambassa-

dor Holidays. "The number of foreign tourists is increasing, but the industry will get a huge boost if we can promote sports tourism," says Rakib.

The former national footballer who played left wing for the country for eight years is planning a football tournament in Cox's Bazar in November. "I have already obtained permission from district administrator to this effect," he says.

The marriage of sports and tourism may also boost other tourism spending, as sports-minded travellers also use some leisure time to visit historic sites and nature, to become better acquainted with a given part of the world.

Industry people said the trend might also provide an impetus to domestic sports, which are neglected -- cricket aside.

Rakib says many people love both travel and sports, and he loves to serve them. "We can offer packages to cater their needs. It will be huge for Bangladesh if local operators can plan such trips and organise sports events on top of sightseeing and shopping."

Local and international sports events attract both domestic and international spectators, opening the nation to fans and both amateur

and professional athletes. Events for cycling, football, beach football, boat races, marathons and skiing competitions and even trekking could be organised, Rakib says.

"We will have to choose sports according to the available facility of the tourist spot to attract onlookers and participants of all ages," he adds.

Mega-events like the Olympics and Commonwealth Games are the biggest combinations of sport and tourism. Bangladesh would have to make the most of people's enthusiasm for smaller events, at least at first.

Rakib says we are keen: "Football supporters did not need to be told to hoist flags over their roofs during the World Cup, and the number of people exploring offers of domestic tourist spots is also on the rise."

He said Dhaka would not be able to establish itself as a popular destination for sports tourism due to its traffic congestion. "We have to move outside of Dhaka to the areas such as Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Kuakata."

Cox's Bazar is frequented by 150,000 tourists daily during its peak season, from October to March, according to government

statistics. Rakib hopes to organise tournaments there and elsewhere every year.

"The private sector has to come forward, instead of looking up to the government, as the state alone will not be able to improve the image of sports tourism. The government, however, should improve roads."

The lack of roads stunts tourism difficult in Kuakata Beach, in the southern Patuakhali district, though the sea beach allows a rare view of both sunrise and sunset, said Rakib.

Bangladesh has to market itself cost-effectively if it wants to capture a better share of the \$6 trillion international tourism industry -- and give out visas faster and easier, the tour operator says.

Rakib will not estimate the domestic sport business: "We are in the early stages, but I believe sports tourism is going to be a huge thing for shoring up domestic tourism as well as attracting foreign currency."

He says most foreign tourists now are on business trips: "They only explore Bangladesh during their leisure time. We have to attract real tourists."

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Gas wait idles factories

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

The gas-supply authority has stopped giving out promised new connections to some industries for more than six months to prevent the crisis from worsening.

The Tk 800 crore Nasir Glass and Tube Industries site now sits idle, losing Tk 8 crore in bank interest per month for more than a year now because it can produce nothing without a gas connection.

Akij Group was ready to launch its ceramics production, but is facing the same wait. Meghna Bicycle, which recently expanded its factory, is hanging on for much-needed gas. And dozens of newer applications for industrial gas connections are now pending.

But so far, executive tempers are the only thing flaring.

"I have been waiting for over one year for a gas connection," said Nasiruddin Biswas, chairman of Nasir Group of Industries. "Titas has taken a demand draft in this regard in June of last year, but we are yet to get the connection."

"If they are unable to give us gas, they should not take the demand draft," he said.

There is no immediate hope for respite from the shortage, according to the managing director of Titas Gas Transmission Company.

The country's gas consumption is 2,000 million cubic feet per day (mmcf), with a shortage of more than 400 mmcf, according to Titas officials.

Many factories near Dhaka-Manikganj and Dhaka-Mymensingh roads and Narayanganj and Narsingdi belts are running at less than half of their capacity; small industries are on the verge of closure because of the gas crisis.

Industrial production, including that of apparel, ceramics, fabrics, steel and particles, is being affected. The situation has further been aggravated by the government's mismanagement, investors said.

"I have to pay at least Tk 33 lakh a month for gas bill, no matter whether the factory gets gas or not," said a senior official of a ceramics factory located near the Dhaka-Manikganj road.

He said his factory does not get gas even for four hours a day.

"There is no immediate solution to the gas crisis," Abdul Aziz Khan, managing director of Titas, told The Daily Star. "We are yet to decide on the gas connection to new industries."

"We are not getting gas," said Mizanur Rahman, chairman of Meghna Group of Industries that export bicycle. "We are frustrated."

Biswas said he is missing the opportunity to export energy-saving bulbs as well as incurring financial losses.

"I have been getting lot of orders from different countries," he said. "Yesterday, a Belgian buyer contacted me."

His fluorescent tube factory has a capacity of producing 60 million bulbs a year. Of these, 20 million would be consumed by locally and the rest exported.

A study prepared by Petrobangla, Gas Transmission Company and Titas in July found out that the country's gas crisis was created mainly by the lack of adequate pipelines, not an inability to extract gas.

"The situation will not improve before 2012, as setting up transmission lines takes time as well as money," said a Titas official, requesting anonymity.

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Govt moves on deep-sea port

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will float expression of interest (EoI) this month for the construction of a deep-sea port and a process to appoint a consultant firm is underway, said Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan in parliament yesterday.

Replying to lawmakers' queries, the minister said a law will be enacted to form a deep-sea port authority.

He however said the government is yet to receive financial assurance from any country to build the deep-sea port.

Khan said terms of reference have been formulated to appoint the consultant firm for preparing detailed design of the port.

He said the first phase of a techno-economic feasibility study has already been completed.

On the backlog of loading and unloading of goods at Chittagong sea port, the minister said berth operators will be appointed in a week after opening the tender tomorrow.

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