

BRAC Bank to roll out m-banking

Fast-growing bank marks 10th founding anniversary

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

BRAC Bank is set to introduce mobile banking this month, a top official said yesterday.

The service will enable millions of banked and unbanked people to deposit, withdraw and transfer money through mobile phones.

bKash, a joint venture between BRAC Bank and US-based Money in Motion, will provide mobile banking with a fully encrypted VISA technology platform for transactions through mobile phones.

Any mobile user can register and open up a bKash account and then do transactions through their mobile phones in easy, convenient and reliable way.

"bKash will fundamentally change the way people now do transactions, as all transactions will be possible through mobile phones in future," said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of the bank.

"Customers will not need to come to the bank; rather the bank will go to them," he said at a press conference in Dhaka on the occasion of its 10th founding anniversary.



Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of BRAC Bank, speaks at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity on the occasion of the bank's 10th anniversary.

The bank said a bKash account will act as a digital mobile wallet and anybody can take the service.

"Your mobile phone will become your wallet. Customers can get financial services through phones, even by the handset that costs the lowest," Rahman said.

Under a partnership with

UNDP and Local Government Division, bKash is rolling out mobile banking in 4,501 union parishads in the country.

bKash has already signed a deal with a leading mobile operator and is in talks with others to enable all mobile users -- currently around 7.5 crore -- to have

individual digital wallets, said Mamdudur Rashid, deputy managing director of the bank.

BRAC Bank launched its operation 10 years back with the objective of bringing unbanked people under formal banking coverage.

The business model of the

bank is to mobilise deposits from urban areas and disburse it to rural areas.

The country's youngest bank has already set some records: it has acquired over 12 lakh customers, bringing full banking services not only to small and medium enterprises, but all strata of the banking industry, said the bank.

"Being the youngest Bangladeshi bank, we have emerged as the largest SME bank serving about 3.65 lakh entrepreneurs at grassroots level, an achievement that helped global recognition for this Bangladeshi bank," said Rashid.

The bank believes in 3P philosophy -- people, planet and profit and has been active in Green banking. It has already turned 22 of its SME Unit Offices solar-powered and plans to convert the rest in the same manner by 2012.

Apart from business, BRAC Bank has been active in discharging corporate social responsibilities as well. As a latest initiative, the bank has signed up with BRAC to extend financial support to Libya-returnees, said Zeeshan Kingshuk Huq, head of the bank's corporate affairs.



BITOPI
Nestle Bangladesh Ltd, a fully owned subsidiary of Nestle SA, the world's leading nutrition, health and wellness company, has signed an advertising services agreement with Bitopi Leo Burnett in Dhaka recently. Laurent Therond, managing director of Nestlé, and Sarah Ali, managing director of Bitopi, signed the agreement. Reza Ali, chairman of Bitopi, and Awrup Sanyal, executive creative director, were also present.

Greece to get urgent EU aid to avoid default

AFP, Brussels

Eurozone finance ministers began talks Saturday to clear urgent aid to save Greece from imminent bankruptcy amid tough behind-the-scenes wrangling on a second bailout for the debt-hit country.

The ministers started a conference call to release 12 billion euros for Greece, the fifth tranche of aid from a 110-billion-euro (\$160 billion) bailout granted by the European Union and IMF last year.

Eurozone governments reached an agreement in principle on the pay-out Friday after the Greek parliament met EU and IMF demands to pass tough austerity measures despite rioting in the streets of Athens.

The ministers decided to cancel a meeting in Brussels on Sunday and speak by phone instead because nothing is holding up the next tranche, diplomats said. But they need more time to negotiate a second bailout for Greece.

"Since things are moving forward on the fifth tranche, which is good news and a breath of fresh air, and that work on (the new bailout) is not ready for Sunday, we preferred to have a conference call," a European diplomat said.

US manufacturing firmed in June

AFP, Washington

The US manufacturing sector picked up pace in June hinting at a pickup in the economy at the end of a slumping second quarter, according to the closely-watched IMS survey released Friday.

The ISM purchasing managers index for the manufacturing sector climbed 1.8 percent in June to a better-than-expected 55.3, from 53.5 in May.

But that came after a sharp seven-percent drop in May from April, and the June index remained far below the 60-plus level achieved in the first four months of the year.

The ISM's new orders index rose just 0.6 percent in June, a suggestion of continuing fragility in the sector.

"New orders and production were both modestly up from last month," the Institute of Supply Management said, adding that manufacturers were also adding jobs at a steady pace.

The sector reported that prices of inputs for manufacturing were still rising but at a much slower

Medvedev orders to restore Belarus power supplies

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has ordered power supplies to be restored to cash-strapped Belarus after it made a late debt payment, the Kremlin said Saturday.

"Since Minsk has fulfilled its financial obligations, the president gave the order to restore electricity supplies to the Belarusian side according to the existing agreements," said a statement posted on the Kremlin website.

The decision came after deputy prime minister Igor Sechin, in charge of the energy sector, confirmed in a phone call to Medvedev that Minsk had made the payment, the Kremlin said.

The Russian power company confirmed to AFP that powersupplies would be switched back on Saturday.

"Due to the complete resolution of technical and financial questions from the Belarusian side, the supplies of electricity will be restored today," spokesman for Russian power company Inter RAO



KS Tabrez, managing director Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd (DBBL), shakes hands with Md Imamul Kabir Shanto, chairman of Sundarban Courier Service Ltd after signing an agreement on mobile banking in Dhaka. DBBL will serve the un-banked people in rural areas using agent networks of Sundarban Courier.



Dirk Niebel, German federal minister for economic cooperation and development, and Andris Peibalgs, European Union commissioner for development cooperation, have jointly inaugurate a childcare centre on the VTL premises of Viyellatex Group in presence of its Chairman David Hasanat on June 23.

Stocks continue to rise

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks continued to rise for a second week as investor confidence got a boost from a nod to investment of 'undisclosed' money in the stockmarket.

The benchmark general index of the Dhaka (DGEN) bourse hit a two-month high and crossed 6,000 points with a significant rise in turnover.

During the week, the DGEN went up 269 points or 4.62 percent to close at 6,117.

The turnover also rose 80.8 percent week-on-week to Tk 4,002 crore, hitting a 12-week high, due to greater participation of investors.

The index and turnover moved positively based on the news that undisclosed money will be allowed in the stockmarket, said a market insider.

The government on Tuesday decided to allow undisclosed money in the share market with a 10 percent tax for the next two years.

Some big institutional investors also played an active role as the central bank has relaxed rules for the credit-deposit ratio, he said.

There were five trading sessions as usual in the week. The market lost in

the opening session on Sunday and then gained in the last four straight sessions. The new issue, MJL Bangladesh, in the fuel and power sector made debut on Sunday.

The market capitalisation was Tk 270,479 crore in the opening day of the week and at the end of the week it stood at Tk 285,389 crore, a 5.51 percent rise.

Out of the 263 issues traded, 223 advanced, 39 declined and one remained unchanged during the week.

All the major sectors gained significantly in the week. Grameenphone, which represents the telecommunications sector, gained 13.11 percent. It was the week's biggest gainer, while the cement sector added 10.53 percent.

The fuel and power sector advanced 5.74 percent, while banking increased 5.10 percent. Jute was the only loser and lost 0.51 percent.

United Commercial Bank topped the week's turnover list with shares worth Tk 153 crore changing hands.

The other turnover leaders were MJL Bangladesh, Southeast Bank, MI Cement, Grameenphone, Beximco, Aftab Automobiles, One Bank, LankaBangla Finance and National Bank.

Titas hands two operations to Bakhrabad Gas

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd yesterday handed over its distribution operations in Brahmanbaria district to Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company Ltd to make the latter financially viable.

The two parties signed an agreement to this effect at the board room of Petrobangla in the city. BGDCL Company Secretary Mahfuz Ul Haque Khan and GTDCL Company Secretary Abul Bashar signed the deal on behalf of their respective organisations.

Officials said BGDCL, then Bakhrabad Gas Systems Ltd, lost 90 percent of its business in October 2008 when the caretaker government split Bakhrabad Gas Systems Ltd, forming two companies -- BGDCL and Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Ltd.

With Titas Gas handing its distribution operations in Brahmanbaria district and Ashuganj to BGDCL, it will now be able to

be economically viable, said Petrobangla Chairman Hussain Monsur.

He said the handover, however, would not affect the financial strength of Titas Gas, as its activity is increasing day by day.

At present BGDCL covers its gas supply network in the adjacent towns, municipalities and upazilas of the districts of Comilla, Chandpur, Feni, Noakhali and Laxmipur.

The new deal will add Brahmanbaria district and Ashuganj power and fertiliser plants to its clients list. It will now sell about 200 million cubic metres of gas a day, the BGDCL company secretary said.

State Minister for Energy Muhammad Enamul Huq said the move is part of the government's initiative to help the companies run smoothly.

Energy Secretary Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Titas Gas Managing Director Md Abdul Aziz Khan, and BGDCL Managing Director AKM Abdus Salam were also present.



Salman F Rahman, vice president of Beximco Pharmaceuticals, presides over the company's 35th annual general meeting in Beximco Industrial Park in Gazipur yesterday. The company declared 20 percent stock dividends for shareholders.



Syed Manzur Elahi, chairman of Apex Group, formally re-opens its flagship shop Apex Adelchi Footwear at Bashundhara City Shopping Complex in Dhaka recently.

FarmVille's Zynga files for \$1b IPO

AFP, New York

Zynga, maker of FarmVille and other popular online games, filed paperwork Friday for an initial public offering aiming to raise about \$1 billion from the markets.

"By offering our shares to the public we hope to enable Zynga to invest more in play than any company in history," Zynga founder and chief executive Mark Pincus said in the company's IPO registration statement, posted on the website of the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

Zynga expects to raise \$1 billion from the IPO, based on a figure used to calculate its registration fee.

Recent media reports have suggested the company could sell about 10 percent of its shares and command a market valuation of between \$15 and