

NBR to launch e-payment system by March

BSS, Dhaka

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) plans to introduce e-payment system by March to make income tax and other revenue payments easy and hassle-free.

"We're hopeful of introducing the e-payment system from March this year. It will bring a revolutionary change in tax payment system as taxpayers will be able to clear their payment online," said NBR Chairman Nasiruddin Ahmed.

As part of the automation of the entire revenue collection process, NBR has been implementing a project with financial and technological support of International Finance Corporation (IFC) to introduce the e-payment system,

he said.

"I'm hopeful that our revenue collection would also be increased," said Ahmed. He added the tax administrator would carry out a massive campaign before and after the introduction of the system to encourage people for using it.

While elaborating the system, an NBR official said taxpayers will be able to make their payment through credit or debit cards and bank accounts and they will receive payment receipt immediately after making such payments.

ICT firm Q-Cash, Sonali Bank and NBR will jointly operate the e-payment system, said Kanun Kumar Roy, NBR's e-governance focal officer and director general of the Directorate of Tax Inspection.

"Twenty-six banks are connected with Sonali Bank's Q-Cash system. Taxpayers having account or credit card with any of these 26 banks will be able to enjoy the online payment facility," Roy added.

A taxpayer will have to open NBR website and follow the instructions to get payment clearance receipt.

"Taxpayers having no credit or debit card will have to send a message to the bank concerned about the payment through NBR website," Roy said.

Roy said the NBR has included Sonali Bank in the system because payments of income tax, VAT and customs duties are deposited to Bangladesh Bank or Sonali Bank through treasury bills.

WB extends support to central bank project by one year

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank has extended its support by one year for the Central Bank Strengthening Project (CBSP) to December 2012.

The project, which was scheduled to end on December 31, 2011, supports the overall strengthening of Bangladesh Bank, the World Bank said in a statement.

The project helps automation of the central bank's core functions to enable it to effectively play its role as the country's monetary authority and banking regulator.

The government of Bangladesh has prioritised initiatives to build up a strong and effective regulatory and supervisory system for Bangladesh's banking sector, according to the statement.

In response to request from the government, the World Bank has extended the project period by one year.

The project has made significant progress, introducing automation system in Bangladesh Bank. All Bangladesh Bank branches are now connected to each other online and also to the Bangladesh Bank's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Banking systems.

The World Bank release said that Bangladesh Bank's IT organisation is now capable to conceptualise, procure and deliver large scale IT systems.

The implementation of the Credit Information Bureau and Automated Clearing House has also successfully taken off.



RAHIMAFROOZ SUPERSTORES

Niaz Rahim, managing director of Rahimafrooz Superstores, and Kamal Quadir, chief executive officer of bKash, ink a deal at a programme in Dhaka recently. bKash payment facilities will be available at Agora outlets.



VIYELLATEX

KM Rezaul Hasanat, chairman of Viyellatex, cuts a cake at the launch of the company's new corporate logo at its office in Dhaka recently. Ahasan Kabir Khan, vice-chairman, was also present.

Singapore cuts PM pay but still world's best paid

AFP, Singapore

Singapore will slash its leaders' unpopular multi-million-dollar salaries by at least a third, new guidelines showed Wednesday, but they will remain the world's best-paid politicians.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who promised the salary review to ease public anger that surfaced in landmark 2011 elections, will take a 36 percent reduction in basic pay to Sg\$2.2 million (\$1.69 million).

That is still the highest salary of any elected head of government in the world -- more than four times as much as Barack Obama who earns \$400,000 a year as president of the United States.

It is also more than 45 times the \$36,200 annual salary, including allowances, that Manmohan Singh is paid as prime minister of India, a nation of 1.2 billion people.

The People's Action Party (PAP), which has ruled Singapore since independence in 1965, has been on the defensive since its share of votes in the 2011 election fell to 60 percent, an all-time low.

Among the hottest issues facing the PAP was ministers' high pay, which the government has justified as necessary to attract talent from the private sector and to deter the corruption that afflicts other Asian countries.

Under the new scale the city-state's largely ceremonial president will see his pay reduced by 51 percent to Sg\$1.54 million, while entry-level cabinet members will receive half the premier's salary.

Strong year for Japanese yen: Citi

STAR BUSINESS DESK

(CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY)

Global foreign exchange market saw a stronger Japanese Yen (JPY) and a firm Swiss Franc (CHF) in 2011 as overall safe-haven buying reinforced them to strengthen against other major currencies. The Euro traded within the widest range amongst the major G3 currencies. The Pound Sterling (GBP) saw a sideways performance compared to the earlier three years' trading pattern.

The Euro zone crisis and an elevated risk aversion generated flight to safety bids throughout the year. The year was marked with political tensions in the Middle Eastern countries and economic despair in the Euro zone countries. Euro zone worries pulled down the single European currency Euro to the lowest level in 2011 at around EUR/USD 1.2871. The safe haven appeal boosted the CHF to reach a record low at CHF 0.7085 against the Greenback in August.

The JPY touched the year's high in April to trade around USD/JPY 85.54 and further towards the end of the year the JPY strengthened to hover around the year's low of USD/JPY 75.55 in October. Both the Japanese and the Swiss central banks intervened the foreign exchange market in August to weaken the respective currencies.

On September, the JPY traded at a 10

year high against the Euro. The Euro plunged to its 11 month low against the USD in December to hover around EUR/USD 1.2944 for a brief period. At the end of the year the Euro traded \$1.3089 while the JPY ended the year's trading at 77.83 JPY.

•EUR hit its lowest level in more than 11 months at \$1.2944 in December.

•CHF hit a record high against USD in August amid contagion worries in the EU and a US credit rating downgrade.

•The Japanese government intervened in the currency market on August to restrain JPY's strength.

•AUD hit 29 year high against the USD in April, following credit rating downgrading of EU countries.

•CAD hit a three year high against the USD at 0.9540 in April.

Commodities

Crude Oil

Oil prices were seen to rise steadily during early 2011 reaching \$116.89 per barrel on March 2, marking a rise of 22 percent from the beginning-of-the-year levels. Fear of oil supply disruptions due to the social unrest in Middle East and Africa, particularly in Libya, was one of the main reasons for the price hike. Violent clashes in Libya forced oil firms to decrease production and evacuate staffs resulting in the supply side worries.

However, Brent crude prices experi-

enced its biggest drop in 13 months on March 15, falling 4.5 percent after Japan was hit with a triple disaster. The nuclear crisis following one of the worst tsunami and earthquake in Japan triggered risk aversion across global markets.

Oil prices recovered from the Japan crisis but tumbled again by a margin of 8 percent reaching \$111.93 per barrel on May 5, posting the largest one day fall on record for Brent crude and the second largest fall for US crude oil. This massive decline was fuelled by weaker economic data from Europe and United States. Demand for oil suffered another blow as S&P downgraded US sovereign AAA credit rating on August 8 which led oil prices to plunge by nearly 5 percent.

The Euro zone debt crisis came to the frontline during the later part of the year as uncertainties deepened. Oil prices created many crests and troughs in the 4th quarter with the crest signifying a positive event in alleviating the Euro zone debt crisis and the troughs the opposite.

On the supply side, geopolitical risks surrounding Iran, Syria and other Middle Eastern and African countries continued to keep investors cautious about sudden supply interruption. For the year Brent crude rose 12.7 percent till December 27 to trade at around \$108 per barrel.



WESTERN MARINE

One of the two passenger ships that Western Marine Shipyard will deliver to Karachi Port Trust in Pakistan today is anchored. The ships with a carrying capacity of 215 passengers and 10 crew members each were built at a cost of Tk 20 crore.

New country director for Muslim Aid UK Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mohammad Obaidur Rahman has recently joined Muslim Aid UK Bangladesh field office as country director with effect from the December 1, 2011, the organisation said in a statement.

Mohammad Obaidur Rahman

He replaced Fadlullah Wilmot, the statement added.

Rahman started his career with Muslim Aid in 2000 with Bangladesh office. He also served Muslim Aid India, Pakistan, Indonesia and headquarters in London in different capacities.

Yahoo names ex-PayPal boss Thompson new CEO

AFP, Washington

Internet giant Yahoo on Wednesday named PayPal's Scott Thompson its new chief executive, saying he would recharge growth but also leaving open the possibility of selling off assets.

Thompson was named four months after the company sacked his predecessor Carol Bartz over her unsuccessful effort to turn the ailing Internet giant around.

Yahoo said Thompson would focus on the company's core business and work with the board to "identify the best approaches for the company and its shareholders."

"Scott brings to Yahoo a proven record of building on a solid foundation of existing assets and resources to reignite innovation and drive growth, precisely the formula we need at Yahoo," chairman Roy Bostock said in a statement.

"His deep understanding of online businesses combined with his team-building and operational capabilities will restore the energy, focus, and momentum necessary to grow the core business and deliver increased value for our shareholders."

Thompson was until Wednesday's announcement head of the large online payments firm PayPal, a key unit of eBay, for almost four years.

He said in a conference call with analysts and investors Wednesday that Yahoo needs to build traffic to its websites and hold them there.

He also said the company's core assets are stronger than many people believe.

"To me Yahoo's core business is providing a great experience for our users. Everything comes from that," he said.

"With a solid base of advertisers, it presents both a huge opportunity and a great challenge," he said, adding that "Speed is critical of course."

Oil prices rally to November peaks on Iran tensions

AFP, London

World oil prices hit their highest levels since November on Wednesday, before pulling lower, as traders fretted over heightened tensions between key crude producer Iran and the United States, analysts said.

The market also won solid support from a stream of positive economic data which boosted the outlook for the global economy and energy demand.

In early morning deals, Brent North Sea crude for delivery in February jumped to \$112.59 per barrel -- which was the highest level since November 15. It later stood at \$111.58, down 55 cents from Tuesday's closing level.

New York's West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for delivery in February, spiked to \$103.15, reaching a point last touched in November 17. The contract later changed hands at \$102.30, which was 66 cents lower than Tuesday.

Oil had rocketed on Tuesday, underpinned by positive US, Chinese and eurozone economic data, and deepening worries over Iran. The WTI contract leapt by \$4.13 and Brent surged \$4.75 per barrel.

"There has been a little bit of slowing across commodities after the (sharp) rise yesterday. But the situation with Iran remains worrisome," Nick Trevethan, senior commodities strategist at ANZ Research, said on Wednesday.

"The consequences of any military action in the Middle East will be enormous. A spike in crude prices will kill off any recovery in the US," he added.

A military confrontation between the United States and Iran could see crude oil prices hit the \$200 mark, Trevethan told AFP.

Iran has threatened to choke off shipping or go after American naval ships if Western governments implement the latest round of punitive sanctions over its nuclear programme.



ACI

Arif Dowla, managing director of ACI Ltd, and FH Ansari, executive director of ACI Agribusiness, attend the annual meeting 2011 of ACI Agribusiness at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka on Tuesday.



ACME LABORATORIES

Md Moshir Rahman, chief executive officer of ICB Capital Management; Nasir-ur-Rahman Sinha, chairman of ACME Laboratories; and Mizanur Rahman Sinha, managing director, attend a programme in the capital on Tuesday where ACME appointed ICB Capital Management as the issue manager to offload its shares through an initial public offering.