ASIAN MARKETS

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DHAKA WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 26, 2012, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

COMMODITIES

Gold A

Deal to cut costs of labour migration to Malaysia

The Southeast Asian nation plans to allow in Bangladeshi workers by December

40,000 each.

SOHEL PARVEZ

STOCKS

DGEN

CSCX

Bangladeshi jobseekers are most likely to be able to go to Malaysia at much lower costs, thanks to a bilateral agreement that both nations are set to sign.

A government delegation is due in the Malaysian capital next week to finalise the fine prints of the memorandum of understanding (MOU), likely to be signed after approval from the Malaysian cabinet.

"We are now looking into finalising the MOU and hope to sign it as soon as possible," Malaysia's Human Resource Minister S Subramaniam told reporters in Putrajaya yesterday, as cited in a Bernama report.

Malaysia plans to allow in Bangladeshi workers by December this year under a government-to-government mechanism, Subramaniam said.

The pact would drastically cut down the migration costs from the prevalent Tk 2 lakh and above, it is understood.

Expatriates Welfare Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain indicated the costs would not be more than Tk

The minister's disclosure came after the visit of a Malaysian delegation to Dhaka to hold talks on resumption of hiring from Bangladesh in state arrangements.

There has been a hiring freeze from Bangladesh from early 2009 following reports of labour exploitation arising due to malpractices in the recruitment process.

The ban impacted Bangladesh's remittance earnings, which stands at \$12 billion a year at present, approximately 10 percent of the country's GDP.

Prior to the hiring freeze, the Bangladesh government fixed the migration cost for a job seeker at Tk 84,000.

But local recruiting agents charged much higher on grounds of high costs arising out of corruption for work permit procurement.

The presence of middlemen also pushes up the costs of migration.

The middlemen, in exchange for a sizable commission, broker the arrangement between the Bangladeshi jobseekers and Malaysian employers.

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Talk to newsmen with caution: BB asks officials

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

In a rare move, the central bank has restricted its officials from providing information to journalists.

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The move came as media reports on loan scams in the banking sector appeared as a major concern for the Bangladesh Bank. The BB issued the

instruction verbally and in a written internal notice on September 16. "I have never seen such

an office order in my career," said a BB official who has long been with the central bank.

Although the notice did not specify the issues of any news item, the instruction came after monthlong widespread news coverage on the biggestever loan scam, known as the Hall-Mark scandal that involves state-owned Sonali Bank.

Hall-Mark and five other companies swindled more than Tk 3,500 crore out of the bank on forged documents.

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6

2012-13

Robi's net profits double

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

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Net profits of mobile operator Robi more than doubled to Tk 25.9 crore in the second quarter this year compared to the first quarter.

Net profits in the first quarter were at Tk 11.6 crore.

Its revenue rose by 26.2 percent to Tk 962.7 crore in the second quarter (April-June) compared to the same period a year ago, said its officials at a briefing at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, chief financial officer of Robi, said the company has shown strong growth trends in almost all financial metrics amid strong growth in revenue and heightened operational efficiencies. The revenue growth was higher

due to a rise in the number of subscribers. The operator spent around Tk 80 as subsidy for each new subscriber acquisition, Ahmed said. The company added 15 lakh

new subscribers in the second quarter, which is a 26 percent rise compared to the same period in the previous year. "We have achieved Tk 324.4

crore in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) in the quarter, driven by higher revenue and operational efficiency." Steadily increasing EBITDA mar-

gin reached 33.7 percent in the period, the highest in the last six quarters.

"With a growth in EBITDA, stabil-



Michael Kuehner, managing director of Robi, announces the mobile operator's quarterly business update at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka yesterday. Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, chief financial officer, was also present.

brought positive growth in our profit after tax," said Ahmed. He said Robi's geographical cov-

erage increased to 89 percent and population coverage to 98.7 after its network development. The operator set up 37 new

base transceivers (BTS) in the tax regime. quarter, taking the total number to 8,392 now. The company's capital expendi-

ture was Tk 228 crore in the period,

7,963 crore since its inception. Robi contributed Tk 393.2 crore to the state coffer in the quarter,

according to a statement. The operator has recently crossed the two crore subscriber base, while

ity in foreign exchange environment other two big operators --Grameenphone and Banglalink -have 3.98 crore and 2.57 crore users.

> Michael Kuehner, managing director and CEO, said the market has a very high growth despite the unpredictable regulatory environment and uncompromising

their revenue comes through valued added services (VAS), the new VAS guideline would affect their while it has invested a total of Tk earnings. According to the draft VAS guide-

He also said, as 5-6 percent of

line, the telecom operators will no more be able to provide such services; those will be provided by other licensed entities.

READ MORE ON B3

Aid utilisation goes up

Implementation of foreign-aided projects accelerates 5 percentage points in Jul-Aug

ADP IMPLEMENTATION RATE

IN PERCENTAGE OF ALLOCATED FUND/JULY- AUG

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The implementation of foreignaided projects increased by 5 percentage points in July-August compared to the same period a year ago, due to a joint effort by the Economic Relations Division and donors. The overall implementation of

the annual development programme (ADP) went up because of more utilisation of foreign aid, even after ministries and divisions lagged in using the government funds.

In July-August, ADP utilisation was Tk 4,151 crore or 8 percent of the total allocation. The total allocation for the current fiscal year was Tk 55,000 crore.

In the same period of the last fiscal year, ADP utilisation was Tk 2,622 crore or 6 percent of total allocation.

In the current fiscal year, foreign aid utilisation is about 6 times

higher than in the last fiscal year. The government has intensified

its monitoring effort that helped implementation, Planning Secretary Bhuiyan Shafiqul Islam said. The ministries had been advised to inform a high-powered

2010-11

2009-10

TOTAL FUND

sation. The panel took steps accordingly, he said.

In the last fiscal year, utilisation of

panel about any problem in utili-

foreign aid fell, which prompted both development partners and the government to take a number of steps.

2011-12

LOCAL FUND PROJECTED AID

Problems in foreign aid utilisation are discussed every three months at the Local Consultative Group, a platform of the local representatives of development partners.

Of all ministries and divisions,

the power division utilised 17 percent of its allocation to become the best performer, according to data from the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division. The division also spent the highest foreign aid: 32 percent of its allocation.

Besides, the local government division and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education utilised 13 percent of their allocations.

Among 10 large ministries and divisions, the performance of railways, roads, water resources and industries was poor.

The rail ministry utilised only 0.01 percent of its allocation, the roads division 0.13 percent and the industries ministry 1 percent.

The water resources ministry failed to utilise any fund in two months.

The information and communication technology, shipping, and civil aviation and tourism ministries also failed to use their allocated funds.

HC stays review panel's decision on bidding for New Mooring terminal STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

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The High Court yesterday slapped a three-month stay on the decision of a process to appoint a private operator for New Mooring Container Terminal of Chittagong Port.

An HC division bench comprising Justice Salma Masud Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Reza-Ul Hoque issued the stay order following a writ petition filed by the managing director of Saif Powertec Ltd, one of the five firms that submitted bids on August 30.

After hearing the petitioner's counsel -- Barrister Rafique-Ul-Huq, the HC bench also issued a rule upon six respondents.

The respondents are shipping ministry secretary, chairman of Chittagong Port Authority, review panel no-3 of the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU), director general of the CPTU, project director

of the container terminal project, and International Container Services Incorporations.

The petitioner filed the writ petition review panel that cancelled the bidding before the HC division against impugned judgment and order passed by the review panel no-3 of the CPTU that cancelled the list of pre-qualified tenders.

> The review panel passed the order on September 11 and also cancelled the bidding launched in June by the port authority.

The review panel gave the order following a review appeal submitted by Jose Manuel M De Jesus, vice president of International Container Terminal Services, who complained of irregularities

in the bidding process. International Container Terminal Services is a Manila Port-based container operator, which was selected as a pre-qualified firm by an evaluation committee on February 12 in 2009 to operate the container terminal.

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