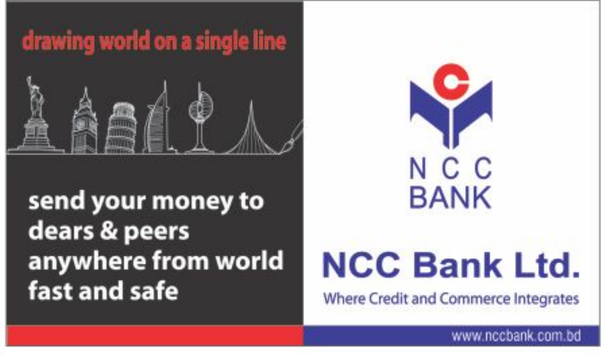
STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS			
DGEN	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
▼ 0.05%	▼ 0.31%	▲ $1,421.68 (per ounce)	▲ $89.70 (per barrel)	Closed	▲ 2.32%	▲ 1.17%	▲ 1.55%
3,660.59	6,938.16				13,843.46	3,322.71	2,218.32

CURRENCIES — STANDARD CHARTERED BANK

	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
BUY TK	77.70	98.48	116.41	0.74
SELL TK	78.70	102.53	120.44	0.83

IDLC financing happiness



Star BUSINESS

DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 25, 2013, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

SK ENAMUL HAQ

Bangladeshi workers stay at their temporary accommodation at Haji Camp in Ashkona yesterday while waiting to leave for Malaysia today for plantation jobs under state arrangements.

First batch of workers flying to Malaysia amid high hopes

BELAL HOSSAIN BIPLOB

The first batch of Bangladeshi workers will leave Dhaka today to join plantation jobs in Malaysia, for the first time under state arrangements at one-eighth the earlier migration costs.

Seventy workers from Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Manikganj will leave Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport by Malaysia Airlines for Kuala Lumpur at 12:40pm.

Another 70 will fly on Saturday and 60 on Monday, said Director General of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training Begum Shamsun Nahar.

The state arrangement, initiated two years back, resumed manpower export to Malaysia after it was suspended in 2009 for allegations of middlemen's intervention and irregularities in the recruitment process.

While a job seeker had to spend Tk 2 lakh to 2.8 lakh for a Malaysian job through private recruiting agencies, they now have to pay only Tk 33,178.

"I don't know how to thank the government for arranging me the job hassle-free and at such a low cost," said Sumon Chandra Das, a job seeker from Dhaka.

Sohel Hossain had to pay a private agency Tk 2.2 lakh for a cleaner's job in 2007 in Malaysia. He returned home in 2011 as he could not secure a permanent job and failed to save any money.

"I had to pay my agent an amount every month," Sohel said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Ali Haider Chowdhury, secretary general of Baira, said that workers were charged high migration cost as the interim government (2007-08) had no control over the recruiting agencies.

Asked how much they had charged each Malaysia-bound worker then, he put the sum between Tk 1.20 lakh and 1.80 lakh.

More than 700,000 Bangladeshis were working in different sectors in Malaysia, according to the BMET.

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Call for deep cuts in internet prices

Analysts say cheaper internet will boost penetration

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country needs to make internet more affordable to achieve the penetration levels it so desires, analysts said yesterday.

"Internet penetration is eight times lower in rural areas than in urban ones. So there is need of enforcement and incentive," said Nazrul Islam Khan, information and communication technology (ICT) secretary.

Although the government plans to reduce the bandwidth price from Tk 8,000 to Tk 5,000 for per megabits per second, Khan suggested going step ahead and slashing it to Tk 3,000.

"The less the internet price, the more the number of users."

Khan's comments came at a roundtable -- Bridging the internet usage gap: urban and rural areas -- organised by the ICT ministry and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre.

"The main hurdle to reaching the rural areas is the limitation of backhaul facilities," said Md Raqueebul Hasan, director of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

The price of per megabit internet bandwidth is Tk 8,000, but to take that bandwidth to say Khulna the cost goes as high up as Tk 42,000, he said.

Although the government has taken initiatives to reduce the backhaul price by 70 percent by leasing a 4,000 kilometres optical fibre cable line to two transmission companies, much needs to be done.

The 3G connection, Hasan said, will be crucial to achieving the desired internet penetration levels.

"If we can create demand from users, the supply side will automatically increase," he said, while citing the case of developed countries as examples.

Referring a study by the Boston Consulting Group, the BTRC director said by 2020 the ICT sector will contribute around 2.6 percent to the GDP, create 42 lakh new jobs and bring in Tk 12,800 crore in revenue to the government.

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STAR

Analysts take part in a roundtable -- Bridging the internet usage gap: urban and rural areas -- organised by the ICT ministry and The Daily Star at the newspaper's office in the capital yesterday.

Biman to carry hajj pilgrims without any hassle: MD

The airline awaits aircraft lease

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A top official of Biman said the airline would be able to fly hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia without any disruption to its current network, even though it is yet to finalise the lease on aircraft.

"We will be able to carry pilgrims without a third carrier and with no disruption to the rest of our network," Kevin Steele, managing director and chief executive of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, told a press conference at Biman headquarters in Dhaka yesterday.

Failing to lease the necessary number of aircraft for hajj operations last year, Biman management engaged several of its aircraft for hajj purposes, causing immense sufferings to several thousand passengers.

Many people were stranded at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and hotels for days, with many facing the threat of losing jobs overseas for failure to join work on time.

Meanwhile, a meeting at the civil aviation ministry yesterday decided that out of the total 1.27 lakh aspiring pilgrims, Biman will carry 65,000 and the rest will be ferried by Saudi Arabian Airlines.

The meeting also turned down a demand by Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh to allow a third carrier to ferry the pilgrims.

Addressing a post-meeting brief at the Biman headquarters, Civil Aviation Minister Faruk Khan said the national carrier will lease two Boeing 747 aircraft by June for the hajj operations.

The airline is looking to lease two Boeing 777-200/200ER aircraft, which will supplement the hajj operations, the Biman MD said at the briefing.

On how Biman would profit by operating leased aircraft, he said they are taking a dry lease (only the aircraft), which will enable them to make a profit according to their calculations. Biman was previously unable to make a profit from operating leased aircraft.

Steele also said the national flag carrier will be commercially viable and profitable in fiscal 2014-15. He said the airline can earn $20 million a year without hiking the fare with a better revenue management system.

Steele said the airline might increase fare only during peak seasons, when all airlines do so.

Biman plans to achieve 80-90 percent punctuality by the yearend, he added.

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Target for tax receipts far from achievable

NBR chairman discusses next year's plan of action

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government's preliminary target for National Board Revenue's takings in the upcoming fiscal year is unfeasible, the tax authority's chairman said yesterday.

Ghulam Hussain, chairman of NBR, said the government's expectation of 21 percent revenue growth over the current fiscal year's target in 2013-14 is not viable given the ongoing political turmoil.

"I have brought the matter to the attention of the prime minister and the finance minister. If an unrealistic target is imposed, it cannot be attained by any means," he said at a pre-budget views exchange programme with the Economic Reporters' Forum.

Last month, the resource committee preliminarily set Tk 136,000 crore as NBR's collection target for the next fiscal year, up from 2012-13's target of Tk 112,259 crore.

The collections this year, however, are likely to fall short of the target by Tk 2,000 crore to Tk 3,000 crore, an NBR official said, preferring not to be named.

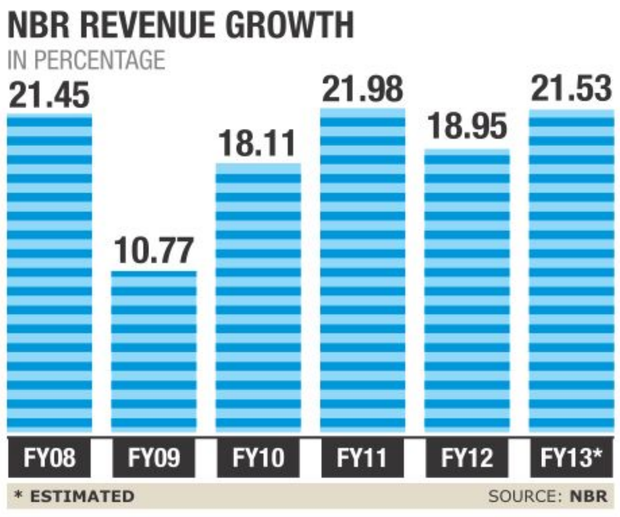
"Besides the political unrest, the fact that the economy is going through a slowdown will make things harder. Sluggish trends in imports and exports do not help matters, either."

The NBR chief said revenue collection is severely being hampered by the shutdowns.

"The loss in VAT [value-added tax] collections from even a day's shutdown cannot be recovered at all."

Hossain, however, reckons the current fiscal year's target can be met if no shutdowns were take place until the end of June.

There are about five lakh shops throughout the country from which VAT can be collected, according to NBR's preliminary estimate. In reality, only 60,000 shops pay VAT.



"Most of the homeowners in Dhaka city don't have any TIN number and do not pay any tax. That's another possible revenue source for us."

The tax authority estimates some 27,000 homeowners do not have any TIN number at present. A special move will be taken next year to bring all homeowners in Dhaka city under the tax net, Hossain said.

The NBR chairman also touched upon the current state of the share market. "Things cannot continue like this," he said, adding that the NBR will soon sit with stakeholders to discuss measures to improve the situation.

The NBR hoped to collect Tk 800 crore as tax from the share market, but has managed less than half of that sum -- around Tk 300 crore -- so far.

Hossain says the NBR will recommend to the government to withdraw the 5 percent tax on the profits of saving instruments.

Another shock for garment

Exporters say building collapse to further dent prospects

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

The collapse of a nine-storey building in Savar yesterday came as another blow to garment exports.

The building, Rana Plaza, housed five garment factories, according to the latest member directory of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Around 3,000 workers were supposed to be at work in the factories when the building collapsed.

Garment manufacturers and exporters said the incident occurred at a time when the main foreign currency earning sector is passing rough waters against a backdrop of the ongoing political turmoil in the country.

Bangladesh exported knitwear worth $7.59 billion and woven products worth $8.09 billion in the July-March period of fiscal 2012-13.

Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury Parvez, a former president of the BGMEA, said the incident will surely have an impact on the export-oriented apparel sector.

"Export orders have already started to drop for political instability, and the situation would worsen after today's (yesterday) incident," said Parvez, also the chairman of Evince Group.

At a press briefing on Tuesday, BGMEA said international buyers are shifting orders to other destinations, as Bangladeshi garment manufacturers are struggling to maintain the lead time.

According to an estimate by the association, 32 garment factories lost orders worth $2.5 million between January 31 and April 20.

The incident of building collapse is a fresh blow to the industry as the Tazreen fire and the ongoing political unrest have already cast a shadow on the sector, BGMEA President Atiqul Islam said at a press conference yesterday.

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