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# Star BUSINESS

City

DHAKA MONDAY JULY 22, 2013, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

## No plan now to bring EPZs under new labour law

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has no immediate plan to bring the factories in export processing zones under the purview of the amended labour law, meaning workers in such zones will be barred from trade unionism for now.

"The EPZs are being run as per the EPZ Act, which will expire in December. So, the government has no plan now to bring them under the labour law," Labour and Employment Secretary Mikail Shipar said yesterday.

Shipar was attending a press conference with Foreign Minister Dipu Moni at the secretariat.

The secretary said the labour law was amended with the consent of the International Labour Organisation, and the UN body will oversee the implementation process of the law.

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## GB employees riled by commission report

### Angry staff stage countrywide sit-ins wearing black badges

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Grameen Bank employees yesterday wore black badges and staged sit-ins in their offices across the country to protest the impending report on the bank by a government-sponsored commission.

The employees vowed not to let the government split up their bank and turn it into a public one "as long as they are alive."

During demonstrations at the Grameen Bank headquarters in Mirpur, Shamsul Alam, president of the bank's employees association, said they do not want anybody to "loot" the bank in the name of cooperation.

"The bank's management, officials and employees have been solving the problems of the bank, if any, for the last three decades. They can do the same now and in the future."

He said the bank was performing efficiently with the current structure and that there is no need to split it into at least 19 units.

The association also urged the government to annul the final report of the commission, which is due anytime now. The Grameen Bank Commission's tenure ended on Saturday.

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Grameen Bank employees stage a sit-in at the bank's headquarters in Dhaka yesterday with a vow to save the Nobel-winning organisation from any 'takeover' bid.

## Banglalink to invest \$300m in two years

### Huawei wins deal to upgrade mobile operator's network

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banglalink, the country's second largest mobile operator, will invest \$300 million in two years as part of its plan to modernise the network and make it 3G-enabled, a top official said yesterday.

"The network upgrade will let us expand network coverage and increase overall network capacity," said Banglalink Chief Executive Officer Ziad Shatara.

Banglalink assigned Huawei, China's largest maker of telecom equipment, to upgrade the mobile operator's network. Shatara signed a procurement deal with Huawei's Chief Technical Officer Caoguiqi Frank at the Westin in Dhaka.

The agreement includes modernisation of the mobile network, reframing the frequency band, enhancing capacity and providing 3G compatible infrastructure and services, Banglalink said in a statement.

Perihane Elhamy, chief technical officer of Banglalink, said partnering with Huawei would open the doors of modern technology as well as quality to serve customers better.

Shatara also said the mobile operator would take part in the auction for 3G licence later this year. But some disputes clouding the telecom sector must be resolved first so the company could convince its board to participate in the auction, he said.

Banglalink Chief Commercial Officer Shihab Ahmad and Chief Financial Officer Mohamed Osman were also present.

Starting its journey in 2005, Banglalink's subscriber base exceeded 27 million recently.

## Anti-cancer drug sales growing fast

GAZI TOWHID AHMED

The anti-cancer drug market in Bangladesh is growing at 20 percent a year due to an alarming rise in cancer patients.

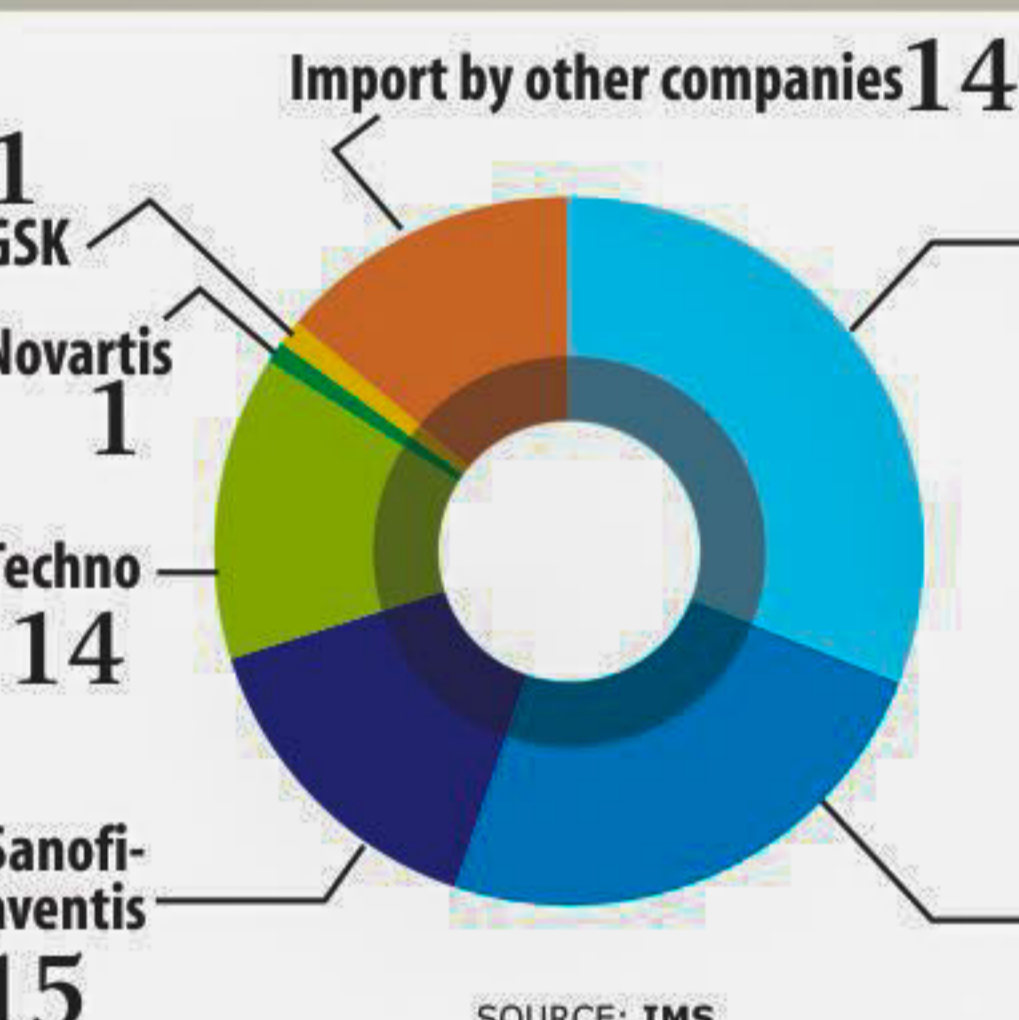
Locally-produced drugs are meeting 86 percent of the country's demand, while the remaining 14 percent is met through imports, according to Intercontinental Marketing Services, an international research firm.

Beacon Pharmaceuticals, a Bangladeshi-owned company, is the market leader with a 31 percent share, followed by Roche Bangladesh, the local arm of the Swiss healthcare company, at 24 percent.

"Beacon has a huge oncology facility to produce all kinds of cancer drugs. We believe we alone are capable of meeting the nation's entire demand," said Mohammad Ebadul Karim, managing director of Beacon Pharmaceuticals.

Beacon started exporting cancer medicines last year and earned \$23.4 million.

### ANTI-CANCER DRUG MAKERS MARKET SHARE IN %



"So far, Beacon has been able to stop exodus of a significant amount of foreign currency by diverting patients away from the expensive medications from abroad," he said, adding that his company has introduced 50-odd anti-cancer drugs to date.

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## Large-cap companies weigh down stocks

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks lost 3.2 percent yesterday, the highest for a single day in three and a half months, on the back of a drop in some big companies.

DSEX, the benchmark general index of Dhaka Stock Exchange, closed the day at 4090.02 points, after edging down 133.59 points. In terms of prices, 93 out of 288 traded scrips lost more than 4 percent.

The large-cap companies such as Grameenphone, Titas Gas, Padma Oil, Meghna Petroleum and Jamuna Oil have made a disproportionate impact on the index, said Mashrib Zahid, managing director of Cosmopolitan Finance.

In the lead-up to the fall, the companies had a good run, buoyed by anticipation of generous dividends. "But the companies' performance failed to meet investors' expectations," he said, while citing the case of Grameenphone.

Grameenphone's net profit dropped an astronomical 86.67 percent year-on-year to Tk 60 crore in the second quarter of 2013 due to huge provisioning requirement for tax expenses and deferred tax liability.

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## MOBILE MIGRATION Operators say deadline unrealistic

ABDULLAH MAMUN

Mobile operators have termed "unrealistic" the deadline to enable users to migrate from one operator to another with the same cell number, under an initiative known as mobile number portability (MNP).

The telecom regulator last month asked the operators to launch the service in seven months.

But due to complexities in various issues such as SIM tax, SIM registration and interconnectivity between the operators, the process may take not less than two years to complete, the operators said.

Once the MNP is implemented, mobile subscribers will have the opportunity to choose services of any operator without having to change their SIM (subscriber identity module) cards.

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SOURCE: DSE

## Hybrid rice boosts farmers' income

SOHEL PARVEZ

Fed up with underwhelming yields of traditional breeds, a growing number of farmers are switching to hybrid rice cultivation to bag higher outputs during the aus and aman seasons.

The absence of well-accepted HYV seeds such as BRRI Dhan-28 and BRRI-29 for plantation during the two seasons accounts for the shift, which has been more pronounced in recent years, Mohammed Masum, chairman of Supreme Seed Company, said.

Hybrids are taking off in a big way in the upland areas of Jessore, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Kushtia and some areas of the country's northwest, where farmers are switching to it after growing vegetables, tobacco and other crops.

Growers usually plant hybrids in April-June and harvest in September-October period, at least a month ahead of the rain-fed aman crops, according to seed firms.

"The scope to harvest earlier than traditional varieties provides farmers the opportunity to grow another crop," he said, adding that farmers typically switch to maize, wheat, potato and other winter crops after harvesting hybrids.

Sudhir Chandra Nath, head of BRAC's agriculture and food security programme, said the demand for hybrid seeds is rising among farmers despite there being no official adaptability trials.

"I'd say the farmers themselves are carrying out the field trials. The success of one encourages others to follow," he said, adding that trials by farmers are more accurate.

BRAC sold 100 tonnes of hybrids seeds after this year's boro season, according to Nath.

FH Ansary, executive director of agribusiness at ACI, said the rebound in prices of rice this year has propelled the demand for hybrid this year.

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