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DHAKA MONDAY AUGUST 19, 2013, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

COMMODITIES

Tannery relocation by 2016, Barua says

SUMAN SAHA

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The government intends to complete the relocation of the hazardous tanneries from Hazaribagh to Savar by 2016, now that the dispute over who would bear the lion's share of the project cost has finally been resolved.

BY THE NUMBERS

Project cost Tk 1,079cr

Govt to pay Tk 913.4cr

Factory owners to pay Tk 165.6cr

"I hope the tanneries will now speed up the relocation process," Industries Minister Dilip Barua told reporters yester-

"The delay has not only been affecting the city's environment, it is also threatening the country's leather and leather goods sector," he said, while citing the European Union's, the leading destination of the country's leather exports, threat to stop buying Bangladeshi products beyond 2014.

READ MORE ON B3

Inactive landline operators to lose licences

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ASIAN MARKETS

ABDULLAH MAMUN

The telecom regulator will soon ask the inactive landline operators to return their licences and spectrum if they fail to resume operations within a certain period. THE NON-OPERATIONAL The regulator took

the decision last week as a huge amount of spectrum in different bands remains unused with the inactive private operators.

The regulator will then allocate the spectrum for other purposes, said Sunil Kanti Bose, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

The operators also owe more than Tk 20 crore in total to the

government in spectrum and annual launched services at all. licence fees. Some of them have dues with the

mobile phone operators too, Bose said.

Of 11 fixed phone or PSTN (public switched telephone network) operators, only two are active now --RanksTel, which provides nationwide services with 2.15 lakh subscribers, and BanglaPhone, which is operational in the northeast (Sylhet area) region with 5,430 subscribers.

Bose said, only one operator, RanksTel, is doing well, while the rest are either inactive or running improperly.

"If the operators do not show up

within the stipulated time, their licences will be scrapped."

However, the regulator, which has already reviewed the current situation of all the PSTN operators, is yet to decide how much time they will get to resume operations.

Bose said most of the operators are going through tough times and they hardly pay any charges to the government. "They don't have any income but bear huge expenses," he said.

The operators failed to meet their rollout obligations and so their licences can be revoked under the telecom law, the BTRC chief said, adding that there are some operators who did not

Bose also said some cases between the operators and the regulator are pending in courts.

The regulator issued eight private PSTN licences in 2004, seven in 2005 and four in 2007 in different spectrum bands such as 450 megahertz, 850 MHz, 1,800 MHz and 1,900 MHz.

However, eight licences were cancelled in 2007 and 2010 on various grounds -- failure to launch services and meet rollout obligations on time, and illegal use of voice over internet protocol.

READ MORE ON B3

HALL-MARK SCAM 8 more petitions filed against Jasmine's bail

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed eight more petitions with the High Court to cancel the lower court's orders that had granted bail to Hall-Mark Group Chairman Jasmine Islam in eight loan scam cases.

The anti-graft watchdog had filed three similar petitions last week seeking cancellation of her bail in three other cases.

ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan said the High Court may hear all the 11 petitions today.

On August 4, the Court of Senior Special Judge in Dhaka granted bail to Jasmine in all the 11 cases after she pledged to pay back in monthly instalments Tk 2,600 crore, which her company swindled out of Sonali Bank.

In yesterday's petitions, the ACC lawyer said the court had granted the bail to Jasmine 'illegally', as investigations were underway and there were serious allegations of money laundering against her.

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WORLD'S

India taking back onion from land ports

Indians put pressure on Bangladeshi traders to hike prices

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Indian exporters are taking back Bangladeshbound onion from their land ports and selling them at higher prices in West Bengal, Bangladeshi importers said yesterday.

"Even yesterday large shipments of onion were waiting at Indian land ports to enter Bangladesh, but those were taken back and sold in the local [Indian] markets at higher prices," said Khandaker Babul, general secretary of Dhaka Mohanagar Krishiponno Amdanikarok Association, a platform of perishable goods importers.

The prices of onion at the ports were set-



tled at \$330-\$350 a tonne a few weeks ago, before the Indian government set the minimum export price of the cooking ingredient at \$650 on Wednesday to tame its market.

READ MORE ON B3

GPH Ispat to buy 10pc shares of GPH Steels

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

GPH Ispat will buy a 10 percent stake in GPH Steels, a separate and newly set up company that will start commercial operations by 2015. "We took the investment decision at a

......

board meeting on Saturday," said Mohammed Jahangir Alam, managing director of GPH Ispat. The total value of investment in GPH

Steels and other particulars, including sources of funds, will be disclosed later. With the sale proceedings, GPH Steels will set up an integrated steel plant to make

MS billet and MS rod. The installed capacity of the new unit will be six lakh tonnes a year. "The new plant will be a large scale industrial unit, and it will emerge as a big compet-

itor in the steel sector after it starts commer-

cial operations," said Alam, also chairman of GPH Steels.

market in 2012, also decided to modernise some equipment of its billet manufacturing plant to make more use of its installed capacity of 1.68 lakh tonnes a year. Around 52 percent of the plant's capacity

GPH Ispat, which got listed on the share

was utilised in 2012-13, the company said in a web posting on the website of Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.

The company expects the capacity utilisation will increase up to 80 percent after modernisation. The cost of modernisation and source of finance will, however, be decided later.

At Saturday's meeting, GPH Ispat recommended 15 percent cash dividends and 10 percent stock dividends for the year ended on April 2013.

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Roundtable Primary Energy: A Big Challenge to Vision 2021

Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury addresses a roundtable on energy at the CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka yesterday.

Better prices may attract oil companies to Bangladesh

Analysts call for alternative fuel sources

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh should offer attractive gas prices to international oil companies to encourage them to invest heavily to search for new discoveries, experts said yesterday.

They urged the government to develop coal mines without further, as Bangladesh's gas reserves are fast depleting and reliance on expensive imported oil is increasing.

The plea came at a roundtable styled "Primary energy: a big challenge to vision 2021", organised by Energy & Power, the country's leading energy magazine, at the Cirdap auditorium.

M Tamim, former energy adviser to a caretaker government, said the country must tap its indigenous resources, as it would be tough to meet the country's energy demand on import-based energy in the coming future.

He urged the government to revise its

energy pricing so that international firms can be lured in to Bangladesh for exploring oil and gas fields.

"If we limit onshore fields to BAPEX [Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd] and offshore fields to international oil companies [IOCs], we will not get any gas."

Prof Rafiqul Islam, who was a state minister for energy between 1996 and 2001, too, called for better pricing for IOCs.

Although the country has sorted its electricity crisis for the short-term, the country is yet to take measures to maintain the status quo, he said. He, therefore, recommended extensive

diplomatic efforts to bring in hydropower from India and Nepal. Islam went to criticise Petrobangla for misguiding the government by exaggerating the discovery of new gas fields. "These fields

were basically discovered in 1996-97." READ MORE ON B3

Recruitment of factory inspectors unlikely by Oct 15

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The recruitment of 200 factory inspectors, mandatory for reinstatement of trade benefits to the US, might take long due to bureaucracy, the labour and employment secretary said yesterday.

The GSP review committee headed by Commerce Minister GM Quader on August 5 asked the labour and employment ministry to recruit the factory inspectors by October 15, ahead of the scheduled review of duty status by the Obama administration in December.

"It will not be possible by this stipulated timeframe, given the lengthy recruitment process for government jobs. All we can manage by October is the advertisement for the positions," Labour Secretary Mikail Shipar told The Daily Star yesterday.

"My ministry sought permission from the public administration ministry in February for creation of 2,200 posts. We are yet to hear back-this is what I mean by the lengthy recruitment process." However, from the

onset, Quader asked the labour ministry to recruit the inspectors under a special arrangement to circumvent the lengthy selection process for government positions. Of the 2,200 posts

sought, 800 were for factory inspectors, Shipar said. "However, there is a meeting scheduled for August 21 at the public administration ministry. Some of the posts might be approved then."

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TRANSCOM U DIGITAL



Buyers must make at least one bid in 3G auction: BTRC

ABDULLAH MAMUN

Telecom operators must make at least one bid to be a successful buyer in the 3G auction scheduled for September 8, an official said yesterday.

The base price of spectrum at the auction is \$20 million per megahertz, and each bid will be equivalent to \$1 million.

"Otherwise the auction won't be successful," said Abdus Samad, a commissioner of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). The telecom watchdog will finalise the

auction procedure today after discussing the issue with the top officials of five mobile operators, he said.

All the five applicants—Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi, Airtel and Citycell—have qualified for the 3G auction, according to a web posting by the regulator. But how many operators will eventually join the auction will become clear on August 26, the deadline for depositing the earnest money.