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BUSINESS

DHAKA SUNDAY OCTOBER 6, 2013, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

BB, state banks may get separate pay scale this month

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government may declare a separate pay scale for the employees of Bangladesh Bank and state-owned commercial banks this month.

A committee led by Cabinet Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan is looking into a finance ministry proposal and the separate pay scale is likely to be finalised in the next meeting of the committee, officials said.

Meanwhile, the dear-ness allowance and new pay commission for the civil servants may also be announced this month.

After the cabinet meeting on Thursday, Finance Minister AMA Muhith held an informal meeting with the prime minister about this.

The Banking Division under the finance ministry has proposed a total of 11 grades for the staff of both the central bank and the state banks.

There are 20 grades in the existing pay scale for the civil servants, including those of the central bank and the state banks, a Banking Division official said.

But in case of a separate pay scale, the number of grades has been brought down to 11, the official added.

Banking Division Secretary M Aslam Alam told The Daily Star that they are trying to finalise the separate pay scale this month. However, as the number of grades is being reduced, some time is needed to ensure that none is affected.

Different aspects were considered by the Banking Division in preparing the draft pay scale. In the process, the Division considered suggestions made by the central bank and the state banks and also studied the pay structures of two private banks and the Indian central bank.

According to the Banking Division recommendations for the 11 grades in total, the basic salary for those in the highest grade will be Tk 52,000 and Tk 5,000 for the lowest grade.

In the existing 20-grade scale, the highest basic is Tk 33,500 and the lowest is Tk 4,100.

On the other hand, the pay structure of Mutual Trust Bank with 20 grades shows the highest was Tk 85,800 and the lowest Tk 6,400.

In case of Uttara Bank with 15 grades in 2011, the basic for the highest grade was Tk 40,000 and the lowest was Tk 4,200.

There are 20 grades in the existing pay scale for the civil servants, including those of the central bank and the state banks, an official said

Currency museum opens in Mirpur

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A currency museum, first of its kind in Bangladesh, was inaugurated yesterday to highlight the history of taka and its evolution.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury inaugurated the Taka Jadughar at Bangladesh Bank's training academy in Mirpur.

The museum will help people get acquainted with the lifestyle, education, culture and various aspects of archaeological developments of human civilisation through coins and currencies of different eras, the speaker said.

"We can preserve our culture and heritage through this museum as the currencies help us remember the history of the language movement and liberation war," she said.

The full-fledged currency museum will help young people to know the country's history of currency, said Atiur Rahman, governor of Bangladesh Bank.



An enlarged specimen of a 1,000 taka note hangs on a wall as people look at other displays at the currency museum that opened yesterday in Mirpur, Dhaka.

ADB: a partner in success

Lender marks 40th year in Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Asian Development Bank yesterday celebrated its 40th year in Bangladesh with a firm commitment to strengthening its partnership with the government, civil society and stakeholders to help the country unlock its potential.

The Manila-based lender also expressed strong determination to continue its support and reminded Bangladesh of the challenges it faces in

the coming days.

"We are happy to see Bangladesh progressing fast despite daunting internal and external challenges," said M Teresa Kho, country director of ADB, at Westin Hotel in Dhaka.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith thanked the bank for extending its support to all spheres of the economy and for venturing into areas where other development partners do not go.

He, however, urged the bank to

devise separate policies for every country, instead of any uniform policy for all countries.

"The ADB has done well in supporting all of these sectors in Bangladesh although it withdrew from the Padma Bridge financing project."

"But I am still hopeful that the bank will come back to the project in some time in the future, as this is a transformational project," the minister said.

Test finds no harmful bacteria in local firm's milk imports

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chittagong

A laboratory test in Singapore has not found the presence of any harmful bacteria in the samples of five consignments of milk powder imported by a local firm from New Zealand's Fonterra.

Chittagong Customs House sent the samples of 607 tonnes of milk powder imported by Abul Khair Milk Products Ltd to ALS, a private testing service provider in Singapore, following a request from Abul Khair Group.

On Thursday, the Singaporean firm discarded the possibility of the presence of Clostridium Botulinum in the milk powder after conducting a 15-day analytical test, officials of the customs house said.

The customs authority was supposed to send the samples to Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, but Abul Khair Group opposed it saying that the tests in BCSIR would take more time than needed, the officials said.

3G tech to open new services

Smartphones with NFC chips will unlock new possibilities: software expert

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Services requiring the identification of users can easily be provided through smartphones powered by 3G technology, a software architect said at a seminar yesterday.

The services will use the near field communication (NFC) chips inserted into phones for individual identification.

NFC identification can be used to open locks at offices or homes, make mobile payments, access controls or bus ticketing, said Ejaz Jamil, president and chief software architect of Soalib, which stands for Service-Oriented Architecture Library.

He spoke at a seminar on NFC in cloud computing at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. NFC is a set of standards for smartphones and similar devices to establish radio communications with each other by touching them together or bringing them into close proximity, usually no more than a few inches.

Global leaders of Android mobile phone makers use NFC chips on handsets which can be used as connecting devices to authenticate users' identity. NFC carries a unique number.

Jamil said countries in Europe, USA, Brazil and Australia enclose NFC chips with machine readable passports so that no-one can copy them. NFC can also prevent copying or faking of credit cards and national ID cards.

Apple phones did not have NFC chips earlier, but the latest models do.

Soalib, incorporated in Massachusetts



Ejaz Jamil

in 2007, is a start-up company aiming to deliver high-quality software based on service-oriented architecture.

As digital services are provided online, the information is kept in clouds or servers. Mobile handsets can get the data just in a single touch through its paired chip, Jamil said.

Cloud computing connects various digital devices through the internet in real time. The server may be put in any unknown or distant place called a cloud.

Jamil's company has an office in Dhaka to consult any firm that wants to incorporate NFC within its system or services.

He demonstrated some of the services at the event where guests witnessed door-opening with NFC chips.

Teletalk faces troubles in clearing 3G spectrum payments

The operator launches 3G services in all divisional cities

ABDULLAH MAMUN

Teletalk is now grappling with financial hurdles to pay \$210 million for the 10 megahertz spectrum it has been using since the launch of its 3G services in October last year.

Now the operator plans to take loans to pay the spectrum charges and will request the telecom regulator to extend the payment deadline, said Md Abubakar Siddique, telecom secretary and chairman of the Teletalk board.

Teletalk may also return half of its allocated 10 MHz spectrum because of its financial weakness, its officials said.

"Advertisements play a big role for mobile operators in raising their earnings. But we cannot spend much on ads due to audit objections," Siddique said.

Currently, the company has 3,000 base transceiver stations (BTS) or

towers for 3G and voice connectivity, and installations of around 5,000 BTS will be completed by December, which will enable the operator to maintain 90 lakh connections at a time.

"It's not possible for Teletalk to compete with the private mobile operators, but we will survive in the market with our limited resources," the telecom secretary said.

The operator has already cut its 3G SIM prices to Tk 129 from Tk 450 and brought down 2G SIM prices to Tk 99 to become competitive, its Managing Director Mujibur Rahman said.

The company has recently launched 3G services in all divisional cities, he said. Earlier, the services were limited to Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet.

New data packages with reduced rates have also been launched, and Teletalk has already installed an auto-

matic answering machine to upgrade its customer care services.

The operator will also open five new customer care centres by this year for its 20 lakh users, including five lakh 3G subscribers, according to Rahman.

"We hope our subscriber base will reach 30 lakh by the year end."

Teletalk was launched in 2005 as a project of the Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd.

The telecom regulator provided 3G licences to Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi and Airtel last month and they have already launched the services on a trial basis.

Grameenphone has purchased 10 MHz while the other three private operators bought 5 MHz each.

The oldest operator, Citycell, could not purchase 3G spectrum due to a fund crisis.

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