

CURRENCIES

As on Thursday

STANDARD CHARTERED BANK

USD

77.20

EUR

105.12

GBP

123.11

JPY

0.77

BUY TK

78.20

SELL TK

109.15

127.14

0.85

IDLC

financing happiness

Gift to Life

Money Double Program

Money Triple Program

Special Deposit Scheme

NCC Bank Ltd.

Where Credit and Commerce Integrates

www.nccbanc.com.bd

RMG MINIMUM WAGE

Owners' final proposal Tk 4,680

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The garment owners are set to propose a minimum wage of Tk 4,680 per month, their final salary offer, for the workers at today's meeting of the wage board. The figure, although an improvement over the owners' original proposal of Tk 3,600, falls way short of the workers' demand of Tk 8,114. The amount provides Tk 3,900 as basic salary, house rent and medical allowance, Tk 520 as food allowance and Tk 260 as transport allowance, said a source in the wage board. "I am still firm on my previous position of Tk 8,114 as minimum wage. But, there is a room for further negotiation," Sirajul Islam Rony, workers' representative on the wage board, said yesterday. Regardless, the new wage structure would be locked in today's meeting as it will be the final one of the six-member wage board, he added.

READ MORE ON B3

LDCs to demand full duty waiver

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Trade analysts yesterday demanded full duty-waiver for least-developed countries' (LDCs) exports to developed countries, as promised in the Sixth World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in 2005. They also urged the leaders of the developed countries to outline a specific timeline for implementation of the full duty-waiver on import of goods from LDCs, in the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Bali from December 3 to 6. Currently, the developed countries, particularly the US, offer duty benefits to 97 percent of the products from LDCs. The major exportable products, however, are excluded, so the LDCs do not enjoy any meaningful gains from the facility. For instance, the country's main foreign exchange earner, readymade garments, is not included in the duty benefit scheme to the American market; it is subjected to 15.30 percent duty upon entry to the US shores. In 2012, the country paid \$746 million as duty to the US customs for exporting a little above five billion dollars worth of garment items.

Bangladesh, however, was supposed to enjoy the zero-duty benefits on export for all products to the US market, as per the commitments in the 2005 Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong. "So, we want inclusion of those 3 percent products in the WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali," said Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), during a conference at the capital's BRAC Centre Inn yesterday on the upcoming WTO Ministerial meet. He also urged the developed countries for expeditious and effective implementation of the LDC services waiver. Rahman also demanded that the WTO harmonise trade facilitation with other issues like customs valuation, as the LDCs would "benefit from flexibility of trade facilitation". Earlier, at a session on trade facilitation, Manzur Ahmed, an adviser to the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), said the transit and energy transit are the newest issues in trade facilitation. "So, those newest issues should be elaborated while any action is taken in this regard."

READ MORE ON B3

HIGHLIGHTS

LDCs to demand duty-waiver for all products

Currently 97pc products enjoy zero-duty benefit

Bangladesh pays 15.3pc duty for RMG exports to the US

Ninth WTO ministerial will be held in Bali in December

LDCs to demand subsidy cuts on cotton production

Grameen Bank Act may be placed in parliament today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The draft Grameen Bank Act, which will give back the government the control it had relinquished to the microfinance institution two decades ago, may be placed in parliament today. The finance ministry on Thursday, after law ministry's vetting, sent the bill to the parliament secretariat. The new law says the government, through official gazettes, will be able to make rules in order to achieve the Act's objectives. According to existing rules, the government has power only to make rules for electing nine Grameen Bank directors from the bank's borrowers. The cabinet approved the draft act on October 3. The act contains 39 provisions, against 38 of the Grameen Bank ordinance, as the government added a new provision allowing Bangladesh Bank to take steps to remove the barriers to implementing the new law.

READ MORE ON B3



Left, Vivek Sood, chief executive of Grameenphone, attends a press briefing to disclose the company's performance in the third quarter of 2013, at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

GP profits soar 78pc

High revenues account for the jump

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Grameenphone's third quarter profits surged 78.13 percent year-on-year to Tk 570 crore mainly on the back of higher revenue from increased traffic. The figure is also an astronomical jump from the Tk 60 crore recorded during the previous quarter. The other reasons for the significant jump in profits are lower operating expense induced by lower subscriber acquisition cost from SIM tax reduction, lower consultancy and gains from disposal of GPIT shares, according to the statement from the operator yesterday. Its revenues in the July-September period stood at Tk 2,500 crore, up 9.4 percent from a year ago. "Grameenphone managed this growth amid competition, sluggish economic activity, apprehension of political unrest and respite from strong tailwind of Eid festivity," said the statement. The mobile operator launched its quarterly results at a press briefing at Sonargaon Hotel in the capital yesterday. The growth is attributed to increase in traffic, brought about by "attractive" recharge-based campaign and rate cuts. Growth in interconnection minutes, higher device sales and adjacent business also contributed significantly. The operator added 20.7 lakh users to take the quarter-end subscription base to 4.60 crore.

READ MORE ON B3

GP in third quarter

● Net profit Tk 570cr

● Revenue Tk 2,500cr

● Subscribers 4.60cr

● Investment Tk 1,906cr

● EPS Tk 4.25

BB launches digital map on financial services

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The central bank has introduced a new tool with which both policymakers and consumers will be able to get information on the financial services available in different parts of the country. Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman yesterday launched the web portal, Digital Map of Financial Services in Bangladesh, at a function at the BB Training Academy. This project was sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, facilitated by BB and Microcredit Regulatory Authority, and implemented by a specialist firm Brand Fusion who hired local data collectors to go around Bangladesh over a six-month period earlier this year. The project geo-mapped the vast majority of places where people can access financial services, including banks, microfinance and post office branches, as well as savings, cooperatives and mobile money agents.

READ MORE ON B3

A Digital Map of Financial Services in Bangladesh

Dr. Atiur Rahman

Dr. Hassan Zaman

Second from left, Atiur Rahman, governor of Bangladesh Bank, speaks at the launch of a financial access digital map sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation at the AKN Ahmed Auditorium in Mirpur, Dhaka yesterday. Second from right, Hassan Zaman, chief economist of BB, was also present.

BB

Peg minimum RMG wages to cost of living: analysts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Economists and rights activists yesterday favoured a system of determining the minimum wages for garments workers by considering the cost of living, not just by taking food inflation into account. "It will be unwise to fix minimum wages by considering inflation. Factors such as the cost of education, health and others should also be taken into account," said Salehuddin Ahmed, a former Bangladesh Bank governor. He made the suggestion at a roundtable organised by Chintar Chash, a research firm, on the rights of garments industry workers from the perspective of globalisation, at the National Press Club in the capital yesterday. He said workers' productivity is linked to wages. "How would a worker pay attention to work if he/she is malnourished?" The call comes at a time when a new minimum wage is expected to be announced soon for the country's 35 lakh garment workers. Garment workers, mostly women, receive one of the lowest minimum wages among the major industrial sectors in Bangladesh; it is also the lowest among Bangladesh's competing countries in Asia. Both owners and workers are human beings and society expects humane behaviour from owners as they are well-educated, said researcher and columnist Syed Abul Maksud.

READ MORE ON B3

Honouring the pioneers of a greener future

Our conscious choice of preserving the environment today can lead to a better and sustainable future. The 'HSBC - The Daily Star Climate Awards 2013' seeks to promote and recognise the climate champions of Bangladesh for their commendable efforts in making a difference in protecting our environment and managing the risks of climate change.

The awards will be given in the following categories:

- Climate Champion in Green Business
- Climate Champion in Green Operations
 - Group A: Companies with 100% Bangladeshi ownership
 - Group B: Companies with full or partial foreign ownership
- Climate Champion in Knowledge Management
- Climate Champion in Community Engagement

Deadline Extended

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Send your nominations on or before **3 November 2013**
For nomination form or other details, please visit www.hsbc.com.bd or www.thedailystar.net

The Daily Star

Knowledge Partner

HSBC

The organisers reserve the right to verify and validate the nominations and make any changes to the assessment modality, as well as revise or cancel the entire programme