

# Genex Infosys buys G&R Technologies

*It plans to spend \$15m on expansion*

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Genex Infosys Ltd, the largest call centre operator in Bangladesh, has acquired Green and Red Technologies (G&R), the country's leading online advertising marketplace, to diversify and grow into a major ICT company.

The company has spent 'multi-million dollar' to buy G&R, a senior official of Genex told The Daily Star yesterday, without divulging the exact figure.

G&R has successfully served more than one billion ads on Bangla language websites since launching operations three years ago, and its ability is projected to grow bigger than Google's display network in Bangladesh this year.

It serves more than 20 million online banner ads per day across thousands of Bangla-language websites.

"We are very excited to bring G&R into

the Genex business groups," said Adnan Imam, managing director of Genex.

The British-Bangladeshi entrepreneur said G&R's engineering team has built big data products and its business development team has built partnerships with many leading local and international brands.

"We see a lot of synergy between our companies and we will continue to invest in building our combined businesses," he said in a statement.

Genex currently employs more than 1,200 people in Bangladesh to run its global BPO and IT operations. The company plans to invest more than \$15 million in the next two years to expand business.

G&R will continue to operate as an independent brand within the Genex group and all existing employees will remain with the company, said Nash Islam, chief executive of G&R.

## China's first stock options trading debuts in Shanghai

AFP, Shanghai

China launched stock options trading for the first time on Monday, aiming to develop broader capital markets and give investors a tool to manage risk.

An option gives the holder the right to buy or sell an underlying asset, but -- unlike futures -- with the choice of whether or not to exercise the contract.

The Shanghai Stock Exchange held a ceremony for the launch of the options on an exchange-traded fund, the China 50 ETF. It tracks 50 of its largest listed firms, including banking giant ICBC and carmaker SAIC Motor.

State media have said options could cause greater market volatility, but in the long run may help investors hedge against risk and discover value investing.

Yao Gang, deputy chairman of market regulator the China Securities Regulatory Commission, told the launch it "marked a new development in the establishment of a multi-tier capital market and also injected new vitality into Shanghai's establishment of an international financial centre". In morning trading the most actively exchanged contracts were call options -- the right to buy the ETF -- expiring in March, Bloomberg News reported.

China's cabinet said in May last year that financial derivatives should be developed in a "steady and orderly manner". China introduced stock index futures in 2010 for investors to bet on future price movements.

The Shanghai exchange requires individuals to hold at least 500,000 yuan (\$80,055) in their accounts to trade options, and 1.0 million yuan for institutions.



CIMA

Zareef Tamanna Matin, country manager of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountant (CIMA), and Sarder Akhter Hamed, head of retail business at United Commercial Bank, attend the signing of an agreement at a programme recently to help CIMA students get international credit cards easily.

## Oil prices extend gains

AFP, London

Oil prices advanced further Monday with buying boosted by a dip in North American crude production, while a robust US jobs report also provided support, analysts said.

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate for delivery in March advanced \$1 to \$52.69 a barrel compared with Friday's close.

Brent North Sea crude for March won 63 cents to stand at \$58.43 a barrel in London afternoon trade. Last week saw WTI surge seven percent and Brent add 9.4 percent, their best weekly gains since February 2011.

Nicholas Teo, market analyst at CMC

Markets in Singapore, said the gains were "motivated by supply-side influences" in the United States.

A survey by US oil services firm Baker Hughes Inc released Friday showed the number of rigs drilling for oil in the United States fell by 83 to 1,140 in the week to February 6. The dip followed a cut of 94 rigs the previous week. Bloomberg News reported that the rig count was standing at its lowest level since December 2011.

The drop, coupled with announcements of deep cuts in capital spending by major oil companies including BP and BG Group, suggests tighter supplies in the future.



EBL

Nazeem A Choudhury, head of consumer banking at Eastern Bank, and Dilip Pal, chief financial officer of Grameenphone, exchange documents of a merchant service agreement at a programme in Dhaka yesterday.



ICAB

President Md Abdul Hamid hands over a certificate to a chartered accountant during the 20th convocation of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka on Sunday.

## Russia sanctions have cost EU 21b euros: Spain

AFP, Brussels

The EU has suffered 21 billion euros in lost exports as a result of sanctions against Russia over Ukraine, Spain's foreign minister said Monday as he met his counterparts to discuss further measures.

"Sanctions have had a heavy cost for us all, the EU has so far lost 21 billion euros (\$23.7 billion). In Spain we have been badly hit in terms of agriculture and tourism," said Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo, giving the first figure of its kind for the EU.

The European Union has become increasingly divided over the tough economic sanctions that it has progressively imposed on Russia since July, with some member states fearing for their trade ties with Moscow.

Exports for the 28-nation bloc to Russia in 2013 amounted to 119 billion euros, according to EU figures.

EU foreign ministers were meant to agree on adding further individuals to the Ukraine blacklist at a meeting in Brussels on Monday, but with a four-way peace summit in Minsk looming this week they appeared to be having second thoughts.

"Ministers are discussing the handling of the Ukraine item" on their agenda, which was meant to have been passed automatically, a diplomatic source told AFP.

## JP Morgan probed over hiring of China minister's son: WSJ

AFP, Beijing

Investment bank JP Morgan is being investigated by US authorities for hiring the son of China's commerce minister despite him being one of the worst candidates its recruiters had seen, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Gao Jue, son of minister Gao Hucheng, was hired by JP Morgan and kept on during major job cuts despite an extremely poor performance, and after he inadvertently sent a sexually explicit e-mail to human resources, the paper said.

The elder Gao said he was willing to "go extra miles" for the bank if his son was spared from company-wide job cuts in 2008, it said.

Meanwhile, a senior banker described Gao Jue as "immature, irresponsible and unreliable", according to the report, and one recruiter said in an internal email that she was concerned about his qualifications.

## Target to double software exports

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BASIS has been working to create 10 lakh internet users more in the country by 2018.

Hasina spoke while inaugurating the Digital World 2015, a four-day fair on ICT, at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

She said the government has formulated the ICT Act and ICT policy and work to set up a high-tech park and a software technology park has already begun.

The aim of the government is to ensure the socioeconomic development of people and improve their lifestyle using ICT, the prime minister said.

Hasina mentioned that her government reduced the price of internet bandwidth to Tk 2,800 in 2014, down from Tk 76,000 in 2007.

She also urged the people to keep vigil round the clock and put up a strong resistance against those who want to push the country into darkness again from the path of development through their destructive activities.

The ICT Division and BASIS in collaboration with several IT organisations organised the fair with the theme of "Future is here".

Eighty-five IT experts alongside officials, policymakers, business leaders and entrepreneurs from 25 countries are taking part in the fourth edition of the fair occupying 137 stalls.

Sajeeb Wazed Joy, prime minister's ICT affairs adviser, attended the inauguration programme as a special guest. State Minister for ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak presided over the function, while BASIS President Shamim Ahsan delivered the welcome address.

A video message of US congressman Mike Honda was also played at the event.

With inputs from UNB

## Correction

There was an inadvertent error in the report titled "GP rolls out fresh 65pc dividends" published yesterday. The record date for the dividends was written February 20 instead of February 18.

We regret the error.

## Greece warns euro could collapse like house of cards

AFP, Rome

A Greek exit from the euro would see the euro collapse like a house of cards, Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis warned in comments that triggered a spat with Italy.

"Greece's exit from the euro is not something that is part of our plans, simply because we believe it is like building a house of cards. If you take out the Greek card, the others will collapse," Varoufakis said in an interview with Italian public broadcaster RAI that was aired on Sunday.

Varoufakis also incurred the wrath of his Italian counterpart Pier Carlo Padoan by comparing Italy's problem with its large public debt to those of Greece.

"Italian officials... have approached me to say they are supportive of us but that they cannot tell the truth both because Italy risks bankruptcy and they fear the consequences with Germany," he said.

"A cloud of fear has hung over Europe in recent years. We have become worse than the former Soviet Union."

Padoan responded with a tweet calling Varoufakis's remarks misplaced and insisting that Italy's debt was "manageable."

Italy's debt mountain represents just over 130 percent of GDP, compared to 175 percent for Greece.

Quizzed by Italian reporters attending the G20 meeting in Istanbul on Monday, Padoan played down the clash.

"We have had a chat about it and exchanged some messages. There is no problem, and even less so on a personal level," Padoan said.

"Italy's objective is to find a shared solution to Greece's situation, starting with the eurogroup meeting in Brussels on Wednesday," he was quoted as saying by the AGI news agency.

"The European institutions are very open to finding a solution in everybody's interest. For the moment there is no plan B. Before anything else we must see what plan A is."

## Japan logs record-low current account surplus in 2014

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's current account surplus shrank nearly a fifth to a record low \$22 billion in 2014, the fourth straight annual fall, as its trade deficit swelled amid a weak yen, official data showed Monday.

The surplus on its current account fell from 3.23 trillion yen in 2013 to 2.63 trillion yen last year, the smallest since 1985, when comparable data became available, according to the finance ministry.

The current account is the broadest measure of the country's trade with the rest of the world, including not only trade in goods but also services, tourism and returns on the

country's foreign investment.

Japan's trade deficit last year grew by 18.1 percent to 1.04 trillion yen from the previous year, as the cost of imports of oil and gas -- which is priced in dollars -- overwhelmed export growth.

Japan has been saddled with a trade imbalance stoked by its heavy dependence on importing fossil fuels to generate electricity, with nuclear reactors shut down in response to the 2011 tsunami-sparked atomic disaster.

But overall income is improving with higher gains from equity and other direct investment, as well as from investment in financial items.

The rise has been inflated by a

weaker yen, the consequence of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's pro-spending policy and the Bank of Japan's massive monetary easing.

In December alone Japan posted a current account surplus of 187.2 billion yen, the sixth straight monthly surplus, reversing a deficit of 679.9 billion yen a year earlier.

Capital Economics said Japan's current account surplus should continue to improve in coming months as the trade balance may return to surplus as the oil price falls.

"Looking ahead, we expect the yen to weaken towards 140 against the dollar by the end of the year, which should provide an additional boost to the income balance," it said.

## Dollar takes breather after rallying on robust US jobs

AFP, Tokyo

The dollar retreated in Asia on Monday after rallying at the end of last week as a robust US jobs report fuelled speculation the Federal Reserve would bring forward its timetable to raising interest rates.

The greenback bought 118.85 yen in Tokyo afternoon trade, slightly down from 119.00 yen in New York Friday afternoon but still sharply up from 117.33 yen in Tokyo earlier Friday.

The euro bought \$1.1334 compared with \$1.1316 in US trade and 134.72 yen against 134.65 yen.

On Friday the US Labor Department said the world's largest economy added a better-than-expected 257,000 jobs in January and revised upward already healthy growth in the prior two months. The gains were the best over three months since 1997.

Investors poured into the dollar on expectations the Fed will hike interest rates around the summer as it tries to prevent bubbles from developing in the US economy, which is on a strong recovery track.

"If employment data remain strong, it is highly possible that rates will be raised by mid-year even if pay

raises are small," Junichi Makino, chief economist at SMBC Nikko Securities, said in a note.

If the Fed raises rates by 1.0 percentage point annually, the dollar could rise to 125 yen by the end of the year, he said, adding that it could hit 131 yen if the Bank of Japan eases monetary policy further.

The dollar was higher against other Asia-Pacific currencies.

It gained to 62.08 Indian rupees from 61.72 rupees on Friday, to 12,647.50 Indonesian rupiah from 12,624.40 rupiah and to 1,097.72 South Korean won from 1,087.30 won.



SIBL

Md Rezaul Haque, chairman of Social Islami Bank, poses at the bank's business review meeting at its corporate head office in Dhaka recently. Md Shafiqur Rahman, managing director, was also present.



SJIBL

AK Azad, chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank, opens the relocated premises of the bank's Banani branch on Kamal Ataturk Avenue in Banani, Dhaka recently.