

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
▲ 2.12%	▲ 1.72%	\$1,229.21	\$66.99	▲ 1.33%	▲ 0.80%	▼ 0.10%	▼ 0.58%	BUY TK 77.15	86.47	119.84	0.62
4,407.42	8,304.38	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	27,687.30	19,890.27	3,459.57	4,283.49	SELL TK 78.15	90.47	123.84	0.65

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# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY MAY 19, 2015, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

## Act fast to take advantage of large youth population

### Demographic Impact Study suggests

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh needs to act promptly to capitalise on the opportunities created by demographic dividends to accelerate its economic growth rate beyond its current level, a new report said.

"The realisation of the benefits of the demographic dividends is highly policy-dependent. Unless employment opportunities for a growing working age population can be improved, the economic gains of it will not be realised," said a report of the General Economics Division (GED) and the UN Population Fund.

The report titled 'Demographic Impact Study' was launched on the concluding day

of the two-day meeting on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Post-2015 Development Agenda at the capital's Sonargaon Hotel.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith and GED member Shamsul Alam launched the report.

"Demographic dividend creates wonderful opportunities to grow faster," said Christophe Lefranc, Asia Pacific regional adviser of UNFPA for population and development.

"The window of opportunity does not translate into dividends automatically. It has to be accompanied by policy support," he said in his presentation.

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## India looks to form a common South Asian market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

India has devised its trade policy for 2015-20 focusing mainly on building a common South Asian market as regional trade is growing among the Saarc nations, Indian Commerce Secretary Rajeev Kher said yesterday.

A common market is featured with a lot of harmonised policies like common currency, same taxation policy and free movement of people.

He, however, did not go into details about the prospective common market.

"We have placed the regional trade strongly in the trade policy for 2015-20. A South Asian common market is essential for strong economic growth," Kher told reporters after a meeting with Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed at his secretariat in Dhaka.

The two parties discussed how the two neighbouring countries can play bigger roles in global trade as well as further market liberalisation and higher market access to each other's country, Kher said.

Ahmed said a new horizon in bilateral trade has started with the renewal of trade agreement between India and Bangladesh.

The renewed trade agreement is likely to be signed during the forthcoming visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bangladesh next month, he said.

The new agreement, the duration of which has been extended to five years from the existing three years and with an option for auto-renewal, will allow Bangladeshi goods-laden trucks to Bhutan and Nepal through the Indian territories, he said.

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Rajeev Sethi

## Entire country to come under 3G coverage by next year: GP

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Grameenphone has received enormous responses from the data service market in its one and a half years into 3G technology, and the operator holds greater plans to further empower subscribers through this service.

Newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of Grameenphone Rajeev Sethi was excited about the prospects of 3G in the country and they have big plans to expand the network within the shortest possible time.

Exuding confidence in their ambition of 'internet for all', Sethi said, "We have big success in voice, and now data is a matter of customer awareness."

In an interview with The Daily Star, Sethi said their plans on network expansion are aggressive -- to cover the entire Bangladesh with 3G network by the end of next year.

Grameenphone currently has 8.7 million subscribers who are using the 3G technology, out of a total of 52 million active SIMs as of March, according to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

"In a span of 18 months, the response we

found from the market was huge, and we consider it an achievement for GP."

Currently 65-70 percent of Grameenphone's sites cover the 3G network, he said. "As per our parent company's (Telenor Group) plans, we will cover the whole country with modern network by the end of next year."

Subscribers who used internet with their 2G network are mainly the ones who switched to 3G services, Sethi said. "That was a significant achievement for us. Not many countries have seen that kind of a quick change."

With an increasing number of data users, especially of 3G data, Grameenphone's earnings from data are going up every quarter -- it went up from Tk 150 crore in the last quarter of 2014 to Tk 160 crore in the first quarter of 2015.

According to the operator's quarterly business update, their data earnings in the first quarter of 2015 increased 68 percent from the same quarter last year.

Sethi also said they had to invest more in data business to get optimal benefits from it.

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## 82pc of population yet to use internet

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Only 18 percent of the population is using the internet in Bangladesh, even though official data shows almost double the number of internet connections currently active, an industry analyst said yesterday.

More than 44.6 million internet connections are active, but there were just 28 million unique users as of March, Shahed Alam, executive vice president of Robi, said at a programme at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

Internet data consumption stands at 69 gigabits per second (Gbps) as of December 2014, against just 2.33 Gbps usage recorded at the end of 2008, Alam said in his presentation on internet, connectivity and knowledge framework.

Around 82 percent of the population is yet to experience the internet, and the World Bank ranks Bangladesh at 137 out of 146 countries in its Knowledge Economy Index.

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## PPP schemes can fix many problems of developing nations

### Analysts say at a meet on development goals

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The developing and low-income countries can address many of their challenges by replicating successful development models through public-private partnerships, analysts said yesterday.

Take the example of Community Housing Development Fund, a group of women from low-income families of Sirajganj, who have voluntarily raised funds among themselves to build homes.

Mohammadi Group, a garment exporter, runs a free school for children of garment workers and has recently taken up schemes to build low-cost housing for 600 workers, thanks to a refinance scheme offered by Bangladesh Bank to garment entrepreneurs at 2 percent interest.

Workers will be able to own the 150-

200 square feet rooms on a rent-to-own basis, said Rubana Huq, managing director of Mohammadi Group.

"There is so much to be done," she said, adding that such schemes should be replicated in other factories and at the community level through partnerships.

The cases were shared yesterday at a session on alternative models of financing for development at a meeting on South-South cooperation to attain post-2015 development goals.

Economic Relations Division in partnership with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and United Nations Development Programme organised the two-day meet at the capital's Sonargaon hotel ahead of a conference on financing in Addis Ababa in July.



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