

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
SDX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
▲ 0.27%	▲ 0.26%	\$1,147.50 (per ounce)	\$47.92 (per barrel)	▼ 0.95%	▼ 1.32%	▼ 1.44%	▲ 0.28%	BUY TK 77.20	84.68	115.92	0.62
4,866.76	9,070.92			25,616.84	17,645.11	2,791.92	3,100.99	SELL TK 78.20	88.68	119.92	0.66

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যে কোন প্রয়োজনে ০৯৬২২০০৯২২

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Star BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

Robi-Airtel merger another step closer to reality

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Robi and Airtel have formally applied for permission to merge their operations from the telecom regulator, a move that will turn the combined entity into the second largest mobile operator after Grameenphone in Bangladesh.

"We received a joint application. The approval process will start in a short while," said Md Sarwar Alam, spokesman for Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

The merger will also require the government approval, on top of the regulator's recommendation, to go through, he added.

Both the operators plan to start the integration process next week, with the view to completing the merger by January next year, according to senior executives of Robi and Airtel.

Robi will have a 75 percent stake in the merged entity and Airtel 25 percent, according to the joint application signed by Supun Weerasinghe, chief executive officer of Robi, and PD Sarma, managing director of Airtel Bangladesh, to the telecom regulator.

Of Robi's 75 percent stake, 70



percent will be owned by Axiata Group, Robi's Malaysia-based parent company, and 5 percent by Japan's NTT DOCOMO.

At present, Axiata Group's share in Robi is 91.59 percent and NTT DOCOMO's 8.41 percent.

The merged entity will be registered as Robi Axiata Ltd and it will operate under the brand name of Robi, according to BTRC officials.

As per the joint application, Robi and Airtel's spectrum will be allocated

to the merged entity.

The necessary changes and arrangements in numbers will be attained without imposing any costs to customers, according to the letter.

The existing Airtel subscribers will continue to use the 016 code, with the issuance of new connections from the 016 numbering plan to be discontinued after three years from the date of amalgamation of the two entities.

Meanwhile, officials of Airtel, of various rankings, said they are feeling insecure about their jobs as Robi is unlikely to retain all the Airtel employees after the merger.

At present, there are about 800 officials in Airtel, of which 470 are permanent.

"This is a frustrating deal for us as we were doing very well in recent times," said an Airtel employee.

As of July, Robi's customer base stood at 2.79 crore and Airtel's approximately 91 lakh, according to BTRC statistic.

The combined entity will have the second largest subscriber base in Bangladesh. Grameenphone, the largest operator, has 5.3 crore subscribers.

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Sanjay Kathuria

Lot to gain from South Asian connectivity: WB economist

REJAUL KARIM BYRON, from New Delhi

Bangladesh stands to gain substantially from greater economic integration with its South Asian neighbours, experts said yesterday.

"For Bangladesh, there are massive opportunities for trade and foreign direct investment," Sanjay Kathuria, lead economist for the World Bank's South Asia region, said at the South Asia Economic Conclave in New Delhi.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a not-for-profit organisation, organised the first-of-its-kind three-day event with support from the Indian government and the WB, aiming to achieve inclusive economic integration in South Asia.

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Processed food makers investing more in cold chain networks

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

Local processed food makers are increasingly investing in building their cold chain networks to maintain the quality of products, industry insiders said.

Golden Harvest Agro Industries is setting up the country's largest cold chain network at a cost of more than \$50 million (about Tk 400 crore). USAID is helping the company implement the project.

Brac, Pran, Aftab, Kazi Farms, Bengal Meat and other processed food makers are also gradually putting their money forward in developing the cold chain network.

"Cold chain development is an investment-intensive proposition," said Zakir Ibne Hai, chief operating officer of Golden Harvest.

"There are a few companies that are involved in ice cream, frozen foods, dairy and poultry products that are investing in building their cold chain networks."

A cold chain network is a logistics system, which helps maintain and provide a series of facilities to ensure ideal storage conditions for perishable items from the point of origin to the point of sales.

A well-developed and efficiently organised cold chain reduces waste and spoilage. The network includes refrigerators, refrigerated vehicles, chilling centres and storage facilities. Bangladesh imports all this equipment.

A lack of proper storage facilities spoils perishable products in Bangladesh. It is

KEY POINTS

- Golden Harvest to build a cold chain network at over \$50m
- Brac, Pran, Aftab, Kazi Farms and Bengal Meat to follow suit
- Almost 30pc of overall perishable products get spoiled in Bangladesh

almost 30 percent of overall produce, according to some estimates.

So far, in the first phase, Golden Harvest has invested approximately \$15 million in infrastructure and USAID has put \$5 million in the form of technology transfer, capacity building and support services.

Three collection centres have been established by Golden Harvest for aggregation, sorting, grading and packing of produce in proper containers. These producers have been linked with Golden Harvest to supply vegetables and poultry.

The company has also established nine cold storage units with capacities of 90,000 litres and purchased 30 refrigerated vans as well as thousands of refrigerators for the outlets to keep food safe.

"This is a long-term investment effort where the first phase has seen this level of resource mobilisation. In the next phase, spanning over the next four years, we would channel the remaining resources," said Hai.

Taufiqur Rahman, director of dairy and food industries of Brac, said they are also investing in building a strong cold chain network.

"Brac has invested around Tk 50 crore to build the network," said Rahman.

Pran, another emerging player in the processed food segment, also plans to invest more on the cold chain network.

"We have invested on refrigerators and refrigerated vehicles," said Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing director of Pran-RFL Group.

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AMTOB gets new president



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Supun Weerasinghe, managing director and CEO of Robi, has been elected president of Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh or AMTOB, a platform of carriers.

The election was held at the association's annual general meeting on September 20 in Dhaka.

Weerasinghe replaces AMTOB's outgoing president Ziad Shatara, CEO of Banglalink.

Airtel's Chief Executive PD Sarma was elected senior vice-president of AMTOB and Grameenphone's CEO Rajeev Sethi was elected vice-president, the association said in a statement.

The executive council appointed TIM Nurul Kabir as the secretary-general and CEO of AMTOB. AMTOB is a national trade body representing all mobile telecom operators in Bangladesh.

Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi, Airtel, Citycell and Teletalk are the members of AMTOB, and Huawei and Ericsson are associate members.

German retailer to boost apparel purchase from Bangladesh

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

German retail giant Lidl will increase its garment purchase from Bangladesh by 20 percent in 2015 as the company thinks the country is still competitive for low prices.

In 2014, the company purchased 251 million pieces of apparel from Bangladesh, Markus Reinken, buying director of Lidl, said in an interview with The Daily Star in Narayanganj.

Currently, the company purchases garments worth \$700-\$800 million from Bangladesh a year, said a company official.

"Bangladesh is an important source for apparel items for Lidl and we purchase a substantial volume from here," said Reinken.

He however declined to mention the percentage of the company's total purchase from Bangladesh. Lidl also sells non-apparel items in different countries.

"We will increase our purchase of garments from Bangladesh in the near future, as other sourcing countries have become expensive due to higher costs of production and a shortage of workers there."

"We have long term plans for Bangladesh, as the country is improving in regards to compliance and diversification of fashion and technology uses in garment production," Reinken added.

Compliance is not a problem for Bangladesh alone, it is a problem for other countries as well, he said.

Lidl prefers purchasing garment items from factories that not only make business but also invest in water saving and green technologies, he added.

"We will start a water-saving technology or WST next month in the factories from where Lidl purchases garment items in Bangladesh," he said. The company will pay higher prices to buy the

garment items, if any company invests in WST, he added.

WST will primarily be launched in 30 factories as those are currently capable of adopting the new technology; it will gradually be adopted in other factories as well, he said.

All the factories that Lidl sources garments from do not have the capacity to adopt WST, he said. "So, it will take time to introduce WST in its all client factories."

Lidl aims to reduce water use by 50 percent. Currently in Bangladesh, 15 litres of water are required to produce a T-shirt. "Our target is to reduce this figure to 7 litres."

Reinken visited Narayanganj-based Plummy Fashions Ltd to place work orders with the green factory.

"We support factories like Plummy. This could be the future. We need to go in the direction that Plummy has gone."

Located in Narayanganj, 20 kilometres south of the capital, Plummy Fashions, a LEED Platinum certified company, began its production in March by employing 1200 workers.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification is a rating system that reviews a factory's green initiatives, such as site development, energy and water conservation, material selection and indoor environmental conditions.

To receive LEED Platinum certification, a company must score 80 out of the available 110 points. "Plummy received 92 points from the US Green Building Council," said Fazlul Hoque, managing director of Plummy Fashions.

The two-storey manufacturing unit is situated on a campus of 5.5 acres, 50 percent of which are open areas with lush greenery. Its six reservoirs will store around six lakh litres of rainwater and use it for washroom flushing.

World Heart Day 29 September 2015

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ফার্স্ট সিকিউরিটি ইসলামী ব্যাংক লি.

বিশ্বায়িত্ব জানতে: ০২-৯৮৯২২২১

* শর্ত প্রযোজ্য

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