

স্বপ্নময় জীবনের চাবি আপনার হাতে

এসআইবিল ইসলামিক হোম ফাইন্যান্স

গ্র্যাণ্ডস্টেট / ফ্ল্যাট ক্রয়, গৃহ নির্মাণ, গৃহ বর্ধিতকরণ অথবা গৃহ সংস্কারের জন্য সর্বনিম্ন ৫,০০,০০০ টাকা থেকে সর্বোচ্চ ৯,২০,০০,০০০ টাকা পর্যন্ত বিনিয়োগ সুবিধা।

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star BUSINESS

DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 31, 2015

Foreign employees on the rise in Bangladesh

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The number of foreign nationals employed in the country is on the rise in the absence of adequate manpower with the technical know-how among a labour force of nearly 4.4 million and expanding economic activities.

The majority of the foreign nationals are employed in the garment sector in top posts like production managers, merchandisers, senior sewing operators, cutting masters, designers and washing experts.

The foreign nationals mainly come from India and Sri Lanka, followed by Pakistan, China, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines.

Last year, the foreign employees, their number being more than two lakh, took home nearly \$5 billion in salaries and allowances, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

From 2009 to September this year, 7,030 new work permits were issued, according to data from the Board of Investment, one of the government bodies that issue employment visas for foreign nationals.

Of the new work permits issued by the BoI over the last seven years, 1,574 came in the first nine months of 2015 alone. And during that period, it also renewed work permits for 2,167 foreign nationals.

In 2014, the BoI issued 3,511 extensions, and in 2013 the number was 2,907.

The other government bodies that are authorised to issue work permits are the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority and the Department of Passport and Immigration.

Between January 1 and November 29, the Department of Immigration and Passport gave extension to employment visas for 7,822 foreign nationals. In 2014, it authorised extensions for 8,957 foreign

workers.

The number is increasing everyday as many foreigners are coming here for different job purposes, said Sabina Yeasmin, a director of the BoI.

Furthermore, there are many foreign nationals who are residing in Bangladesh without valid documents, said a senior official of the Department of Passport and Immigration.

FOREIGN EMPLOYEES IN BANGLADESH

Number of foreign employees: **2 lakh**

They are mainly from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, China and South Korea

They took home nearly **\$5b** last year

Most of them are employed in garment sector

From 2009 to September this year, **7,030** new work permits were issued

The department of passport and immigration is not responsible for identifying the undocumented migrant workers; it only gives permission to applicants for new visas or extensions, he added.

Yeasmin said the applications for renewals are more than those for fresh permits.

Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the platform asked its about 5,000 members in October to report on the number of foreign employees they have employed.

So far, only 233 factories have replied with their foreign employee counts.

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A record-breaking year for garment sector

LOOKING BACK

2015

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The year 2015 saw the garment sector log in its highest ever export earnings, facilitated in part by the regrouping brought on by the twin industrial disasters of Rana Plaza collapse and Tazreen Fashions fire.

Between January and November, garment exports raked in \$26.26 billion, which is already the highest figure recorded by the sector at any given time, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau.

In 2014, the sector logged in \$24.53 billion in exports.

Exports grew phenomenally in the months of October and November this year: by 18.40 percent and 14.74 percent respectively.

Buoyed by this momentum, the garment manufacturers are now looking forward to 2016 with much optimism.

Their confidence was boosted by three main factors -- shifting of garment business from China to Bangladesh, the historically low price of cotton and the restoration of international retailers' confidence on the structural soundness of Bangladeshi garment factories.

The engineers of Accord and Alliance, two factory inspection agencies, found less than 2 percent of the factories to be risky.

Exports raked in \$26.26b in Jan-Nov this year

Export earnings were **\$24.53b** in 2014

"It is my hope that 2016 will be better than 2015 as all the factories have already been inspected and are safer now," says

SIDDIQUR RAHMAN
BGMEA president

"It is my hope that 2016 will be better than 2015 as all the factories have already been inspected and are safer now," said Siddiqui Rahman, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

He said the factory owners are now more cautious, and many have shifted their units from Dhaka for safety reasons out of their own volition.

Besides, the factory owners have been spending millions of dollars for remediation, as per the sugges-

tions from the inspectors of Accord and Alliance.

The BGMEA president said Bangladesh's garment export is on the rise mainly because of the China factor: the Chinese garment makers are no longer interested in apparel trade. As a result, Bangladesh is now poised to become the largest cotton importer this season.

In the year ending on July 31, 2016, Bangladesh may import a record 5.75 million bales (each bale weighs 480 pounds, or 218 kilograms) of the fibre, up 6.5 percent from a year earlier, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

The garment makers were also heartened by the demand from new destinations this year, which accounted for about \$5.5 billion of the export earnings.

Of the new export destinations, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Brazil, Chile, China, India, Turkey, Mexico and South Africa are among the most promising countries for Bangladesh.

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3G brings a boom to telecom

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The telecom industry added an average of 40,000 new 3G connections a day to their networks in the passing year, according to its regulator.

Mobile operators have expressed satisfaction over their performance and expect the growth to be even faster in the coming days.

"This growth is very natural for our market and it is having a great impact on the society," said TIM Nurul Kabir, secretary general of Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh.

At the end of November, the total number of 3G connections stood at 2.47 crore, up from 1.12 crore at the beginning of the year, according to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

Riding on the wave of 3G adoption, the import of smartphones and the use of data also saw a surge.

"Our market is growing fast and it will help digitise the country quickly," said Tarana Halim, state minister for telecommunication.

From January to November, the industry added 1.03 crore internet connections to take the tally to 5.39 crore.

However, internet growth hit a speed bump when the government blocked Facebook and some other social media sites for more than three weeks.

The six mobile phone operators also bagged 1.28 crore new SIM connections in the first eleven months of the year, which was only 65.66 lakh in the whole of 2014. The number of new internet connections was a mere 78.5 lakh in that year too, according to BTRC data.

The growth figures for 2015 were vast, considering the 3 percent extra supplementary duty that was slapped on all telecom services, said experts.

The government also reduced the SIM tax to Tk 100 from Tk 300 in the last budget, which was also a boon for the sector, they added.

Handset imports witnessed a noteworthy hike as well.

As of October, 2.69 crore were imported, 46.71 lakh of which were smartphones, according to data from Bangladesh Mobile Phone Importers' Association.

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Merge Teletalk, BTCL to make profitable entity: Joy

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The prime minister's ICT adviser has directed the Posts and Telecommunications Division to take steps to merge the two loss-making state-owned telecom companies -- Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) and Teletalk -- in efforts to make them profitable.

Sajeeb Wazed Joy made the call in a meeting at the secretariat recently, said a senior official of the division.

Joy also stressed the need for the appointment of a management consultant group for Teletalk to recommend how the merger could take place.

State Minister for Telecom Tarana Halim said the adviser asked them to start a process to merge the two companies. "Before going for a full merger, the two can develop some sort of a partnership between them."

"Teletalk has bright opportunities to serve the nation in a modern way. But to do that we need to revamp the company and we have already started working on it," Tarana said.

Teletalk is also suffering from a scarcity of capital and strength, she said.

The state minister said Teletalk and BTCL can be helpful to each other.

Tarana along with a group of officials from Teletalk is scheduled to visit Telecom Malaysia, a state-owned company of Malaysia, on January 16-23.

"We want to learn the best practices from that company and implement those in our country's telecom companies."

The ICT adviser also directed the posts and telecoms division to immediately launch the mobile financial services of Teletalk.

The mobile operator can also take infrastructural help from the postal services to launch the services, senior

TELETALK	
Established	March 2005
Current subscribers	41 lakh
Capacity	1 crore
Revenue (2014-15)	Tk 969 crore
Total investment	Tk 3,000 crore

BTCL	
Established (as company)	2008
Active connections	8.33 lakh
Capacity	14.11 lakh
Revenue (2013-14)	Tk 1,075.06 crore
Expenditures (2013-14)	Tk 1,078.39 crore

officials of the telecom division who were present at the meeting quoted Joy as saying.

BTCL has been a losing concern for the last couple of years. The revenue of the country's major telecom infrastructure service provider was Tk 1,075.06 crore in 2013-14, and Tk 1,056 crore in the previous year.

The revenue of Teletalk, which has never been a profitable company for the government, reached Tk 969 crore in 2014-15, up from Tk 753.69 crore in 2013-14. It incurred losses worth Tk 20.86 crore in 2013-14.

BTCL can immediately launch wireless broadband services and the two state entities can help each other in this regard, said Tarana.

The ICT adviser also suggested that the two companies can take projects in coordination with each other.

Joy emphasised improving Teletalk's overall quality of services. The state firm can also take help from other private operators by signing agreements with them, he said.

Teletalk currently has 3,750 base stations, of which only 1,562 are 3G sites. It has covered 476 upazilas with 2G technology, but their 3G coverage is available in only 91 upazilas.

Teletalk is also working to set up 1,000 new base stations across the country, company officials said.

BTCL has greater service coverage up to the union parishad levels, covering 481 upazilas out of 486.

The landphone operator has more than 5,000 kilometres of optical fibre network connectivity, covering 126 upazilas and 108 union parishads, according to the company profile.

Teletalk is also considering a fourth generation mobile network project worth Tk 4,600 crore, which is currently being evaluated by the Planning Commission.

Under the project, the operator will establish 25,000 Wi-Fi hotspots across the country, and the project's tenure is supposed to be between 2016 and 2019.

Stocks end flat for second day

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks closed almost flat for a second day yesterday, amid mixed performance in the market.

DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, rose only 8.1 points or 0.17 percent, finishing the day at 4,604.91 points.

The selling pressure overwhelmed the buying interest in yesterday's session, said LankaBangla Securities in its regular analysis.

TURNOVER ON DSE IN LAST 7 DAYS

IN CRORES OF TAKA

526	394	429	333	413	390	367
DEC 22	DEC 23	DEC 24	DEC 27	DEC 28	DEC 29	DEC 30

"Some large-cap stocks supported the market to close above the 4,600-point level," the stockbroker said.

IDLC Investments said in spite of standing on the verge of December closing, the market passed another flat session amid lacklustre trading.

Investors were observing a wait-and-see policy to get a clear direction to settle their investment mindset, the merchant bank said.

Turnover, another important indicator of the market, however, declined 5.87 percent to Tk 367.31 crore, with 8.98 crore shares and mutual fund units changing hands on the DSE floor. Of the traded issues, 147 advanced, 122 declined with 47 securities closing unchanged on the premier bourse.

Singer Bangladesh dominated the turnover chart with 7.35 lakh shares worth Tk 13.3 crore changing hands, followed by Quasem Drycells, Beximco Pharma, Beximco and BSRM Steel.

Among the major sectors, cement increased 1.07 percent in market capitalisation, followed by food and allied that rose 0.77 percent, textiles 0.56 percent, banks 0.42 percent, non-banking financial institutions 0.36 and fuel and power 0.29 percent.

Conversely, only the pharma sector declined 0.14 percent. Prime Textile was the day's best performer with 7.89 percent in gains, while Samata Leather Complex was the worst loser, shedding 5.7 percent.

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স্বপ্নময় জীবনের চাবি আপনার হাতে

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