

আপনার সংসার গুছিয়ে দিচ্ছি আমরা

আপনার সংসার সাজানোর আসবাবপত্র, পিছা সামগ্রী, ইলেক্ট্রনিক ও অন্যান্য জোশাপপত্র কেনার সুন্দর সমাধান দিচ্ছি আমরা।

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# Star BUSINESS

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## Incentives to bump up remittance inflow

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The government plans to extend incentives to Bangladeshi expatriates to encourage them to send money through the official channel in an effort to arrest the slide in remittance.

"I think this is a solution through which the fall in remittance collection could be tackled," Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said at a press meet yesterday.

The matter has already been discussed with the prime minister, finance minister and the Bangladesh Bank, he said. The minister did not elaborate on the incentives.

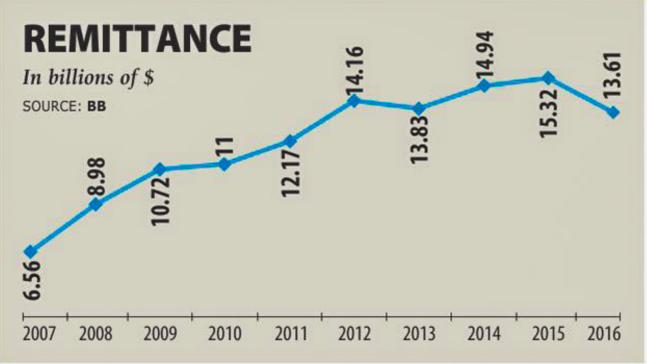
In 2016, inward remittances stood at \$13.61 billion -- the lowest in five years, despite a 35 percent increase in migrant outflow during the period. Remittance stood at \$15.32 billion in 2015.

Migrant outflow, which, in theory, is positively correlated to remittance, was two lakh more last year. In 2016, a total of 749,249 migrant workers went abroad for jobs in contrast to 555,881 in 2015.

The physical flow of migrant workers has been increasing by the day, so there is no reason behind the fall in remittance, Kamal said.

"Remittance has been flowing in but in other channels and not the official one."

Asked for a rationale behind extending incentives to remitters, the planning minister said: "There is a provision for



incentives everywhere. Why can't the remitters be given that benefit?"

If the incentive comes in the form of cash remittance will go directly to the receiver's account through official channels, he added.

Experts and policymakers said remittance fell for various reasons including rising preference for hundi by expatriate Bangladeshis.

Zahid Hussain, lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, earlier told The Daily Star that given the current international realities it is not reasonable to expect remittance growth to go back to double digits, as was the case three years ago.

A change in policy is needed to tap remittance that hinges on more than just sending money for family maintenance, particularly from the Bangladeshi diaspora.

"Our exchange houses in the Middle East, the UK and the US need to find ways of becoming much more remitter friendly with a view to minimising the hassles in transferring money through the formal channels."

The BB needs to recognise that a money transfer currently takes various shapes and forms.

It needs to reform the foreign exchange regulations to enable the money transfer operators to connect with the banking system at the earliest and also to arrest the growing premium in the informal market through easing of excessive foreign exchange controls, Hussain added.

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## BIDS to offer master's on finance, economics

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies or BIDS will introduce some subjects at the postgraduate level alongside continuing its research activities.

"The government has been working to make BIDS stronger," said Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal at a press meet yesterday.

The parliament in its current session will pass a law to bring some changes to the BIDS charter. BIDS will offer higher education like a university on the sidelines of research work.

Some subjects with link to the economy will be taught here, he said.

Primarily, master's degrees will be offered on two subjects: public finance and development economics, said a BIDS official.

A proposal involving around Tk 12 crore has already been submitted to the planning ministry for this purpose.

The official said they have a target to introduce the courses this year but it will depend on how quickly the related procedures could be resolved.

## Operators can sell blocked SIMs

*BTRC takes the decision as GP seeks a new number series to grow*

**MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM**

Mobile operators can now resell previously blocked connections -- a development that will bring a sigh of relief to market leader Grameenphone as it is close to exhausting its existing number series.

The decision came in a recent meeting of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, said a top official of the telecom watchdog.

To resell the blocked numbers, the operators will have to transfer the balance amounts on those SIMs to the telecom regulator and also keep a register of the previous owners' names.

In August last year, BTRC had decided to allocate a new number series to Grameenphone with some conditions, as its existing '017' prefix is almost full.

But it went back on the decision earlier this month and formed a committee to explore the option of reselling blocked SIMs.

A BTRC official said they learnt that more than three crore SIMs of Grameenphone were blocked at different times.

And in light of the new information, the telecom regulator decided to allow resell of previously barred SIMs.

"We think there is no urgency to allocate one more new number series right now. When our user volume reaches around 20 crore a new number series may come then," said BTRC Chairman Shahjahan Mahmood.

With this move Grameenphone will find a way to grow further, he added.

Grameenphone declined to comment on the issue.

In 2008, when BTRC first initiated SIM re-registration process, Grameenphone had to block about 78 lakh SIMs that were not re-registered following repeated calls then. No operator was allowed to resell numbers from that lot.

The operator also blocked few more lakh SIMs at different times upon suspicion that the numbers were being used to carry illegal international calls.

Grameenphone first applied for a new number series in 2014, but the regulator came up with various ways for the operator to continue to sell SIMs.

For instance, at that time operators were allowed to resell their unused numbers that were not used in 24 consecutive months, but BTRC lowered the ceiling to 15 months.

"Even after applying different methods we are very close to the 10 crore ceiling and we can't grow after a few days," said a top official of Grameenphone.

A numbering series has 10 crore slots and if they get new number series they can issue 10 crore more SIMs.

As of October last year, Grameenphone has 5.57 crore active subscribers out of the country's total of 12.74 crore.

The operator has not disclosed the actual number of SIM cards it has sold so far.

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## Garment exports to Germany to rise: buyers

**REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA, back from Frankfurt**

Garment exports to Germany, the second largest export destination for Bangladeshi apparel after the US, will continue to grow in future due to the high quality of products and competitive prices, German traders said.

As a member of the EU, Germany will continue its duty privilege for Bangladesh, said Manfred Junkert, deputy general manager of the Confederation of the German Textile and Fashion Industry, at a press conference on the sidelines of the Heimtextil fair in Frankfurt, Germany on Thursday.

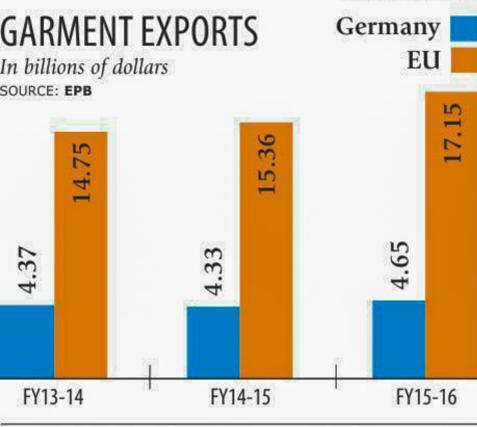
Garment exports to Germany have been increasing over the years. Bangladesh exported garments worth \$4.65 billion to Germany in fiscal 2015-16, \$4.33 billion in 2014-15 and \$4.37 billion in 2013-14, according to Export Promotion Bureau.

Talking about Brexit, he said it is a serious issue for them as the UK is a big trading partner of Germany. "If the UK leaves us, there is a possibility of serious consequences for Germany," Junkert said.

"Brexit may take a long time to become effective, but our industry will suffer."

The UK is the third largest export destination for Bangladesh after the US and Germany, with Bangladesh shipping apparel worth more than \$3 billion to the UK a year.

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Housing and Public Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain speaks at a daylong seminar on investment promotion, organised by Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority, at Radisson hotel in the port city yesterday. Beza's Executive Chairman Paban Chowdhury was also present.

## Garment technology fair this week

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

Three international trade shows on the apparel industry will take place in Dhaka on Jan 18-21 as part of the 16th Garmentech.

Exhibitors will showcase the latest machinery in sewing, knitting, embroidery, laundry, finishing, dyeing, printing and cutting from leading global companies.

Technology solutions on display at the show will address the pressing concerns of the industry, such as safety, compliance, productivity, efficiency and value addition, organisers said at a press meet at La Vinci Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Garmentech will also have the latest collection of natural and synthetic yarn and fabrics for both the woven and knit sectors.

Zakaria Trade and Fair International, ASK Trade and Exhibitions and Bangladesh Garment Accessories and Packaging Manufacturers and Exporters Association are organising Garmentech Bangladesh 2017. The fair will also display garment accessories and packaging by leading companies from Bangladesh as well as overseas.

Some 400 exhibitors from Bangladesh, China, India, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Italy, Singapore, Japan, Germany, USA, UK, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Malaysia, Switzerland, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Thailand, France, and Colombia will showcase their products at the fair.

"After an eventful 2016, the garment sector is on track to reaching the export target of \$50 billion by 2021. The cutting-edge technology will be showcased by technology leaders from across the world," said Tipu Sultan Bhuyian, chief executive of Zakaria Trade and Fair International.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed will inaugurate the trade shows as the chief guest, while Annisul Huq, mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, will be present as the special guest.

The fair will take place at International Convention City Bishundhara in Dhaka and entry will be free for all.

## Mirsarai Economic Zone in fast lane

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The regulator will start handing over industrial plots at Mirsarai Economic Zone to prospective entrepreneurs from both home and abroad in the next one year.

Tariff on the land has already been approved at a governing body meeting of Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority on January 5, and the prime minister will sign the meeting minutes in the next few days, Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Beza, said yesterday.

"We will then initiate the process of allocating the plots," Chowdhury said at a seminar on investment promotion for the economic zones of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, at Radisson hotel in Chittagong.

Mirsarai Economic Zone is going to be the biggest in this region and should be kept free of interference from any quarter, he said.

"If we cannot ensure security in this economic zone, all investors -- foreign and local -- would be frustrated."

Many large Chinese and Japanese firms in power, petrochemical and steel sectors are keen on investing in the economic zones in Bangladesh, he said.

"Apart from providing security, we would also need to ensure infrastructural development, uninterrupted electricity, gas and industrial water supplies."

On the ongoing infrastructure development in the 30,000-acre Mirsarai zone, Chowdhury said: "Last year we developed 550 acres of land in the first phase. We are now developing another 1,300 acres in the second phase."

The construction of seven kilometres out of a 29km four-lane road inside the zone is ongoing, while the tender for a 10km road has been floated. A tender was floated for a 10km four-lane approach road to be built from Dhaka-Chittagong highway to the Mirsarai zone involving around Tk 130 crore.

"We will construct another 18.5km two-lane marine driveway with protection embankment from Sonagazi to Sitakunda involving Tk 1,163 crore," Chowdhury said.

An exclusive tourism park will be developed on Jaliardwip Island on the Naf River. It would be Bangladesh's next tourist destination, which will have cable cars, hanging bridges, resorts and other facilities.

Bai Yinzhan, vice-president of China Harbour Engineering Company, which is developing Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone on around 774 acres in Anwara upazila, presented a paper on Chinese investment in the zone.

He hoped that labour intensive industries such as textiles and apparel, electrical and electronics, automobile related products, machinery and chemical products would be set up in the Anwara zone.

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## Amazon's Gandhi flip-flops spark anger in India

**AFP, New Delhi**

Flip-flops bearing the face of India's independence icon Mahatma Gandhi for sale on Amazon triggered fresh outrage Sunday, days after the e-retailer giant was forced to stop selling Indian flag doormats. On Wednesday, India demanded Amazon apologise for selling "insulting" doormats featuring India's national flag, with Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj warning of tough action against the company.

Amazon removed the offending products from its website, but the controversy had barely died down when Twitter users began posting screengrabs of the pink Gandhi flip-flops on sale on Amazon USA.

"Amazon should be banned in India. They have crossed the limit. This is ridiculous!" Mayank Parmar posted on Sunday.

"#Amazon must rollback its slippers with face of Mahatma Gandhi on it. Respect our leaders and avoid controversy," wrote another user Ashok Tanwar.

The flip-flops, which cost \$16.99, are described on the website as "professionally printed" and a product that "will look great and make someone smile".

Amazon could not immediately be reached for comment Sunday but the flip-flops appeared to have been taken down from their site.