

## Another 92 migrant workers leave for South Korea

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Some 92 Bangladeshi workers left Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for South Korea yesterday through chartered flights operated by a Korean air company as the government of the East Asian nation resumed receiving foreign workers.

It was the first batch of Bangladeshi expatriate workers, who went to Korea this year, the Korean embassy said in a statement yesterday.

Forty four of the 92 workers were newly employed while the rest re-entered Korea.

The Korean government suspended accepting foreign workers in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and resumed receiving the expatriates from last month.

After the resumption, so far, a total of 203 Bangladeshi expatriate workers have travelled to Korea. In December, 111 Bangladeshi workers went to Korea.

Korea has been allowing medium and low-skilled foreign workers from 16 countries, including Bangladesh, under the EPS (Employment Permit System) programme. Due to the unprecedented and prolonged coronavirus pandemic, however, the Korean government suspended receiving EPS workers.

Accommodating continuous requests from the sending countries as well as from the employers, the Korean government decided to lift the suspension from November last year on a limited scale.

Bangladeshi EPS workers have played a crucial role in the Korea-Bangladesh relations, contributing not only to the economic development of Bangladesh but also to the supply of labour force to Korea, Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Lee Jang-keun said on the occasion.



Attendees and workers chat beneath a 5G logo at the Quectel booth at CES 2021 at Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, US.

PHOTO: AFP

# Do 5G telecoms pose a threat to airline safety?

REUTERS

US telecom companies and airlines have been fighting for weeks over the potential impact of 5G wireless services on aircraft, in stark contrast to the rollout of new-generation services elsewhere, which has broadly gone ahead without airing new safety concerns.

Here is some background on the dispute, in which Verizon Communications and AT&T agreed on Monday to a two-week delay in using newly acquired wireless spectrum, drawing back from a standoff that threatened to disrupt flights.

The agreement promises to avert most, but not all, potential disruption to air travel from 5G deployment.

The US auctioned mid-range 5G bandwidth to mobile phone companies in early 2021 in the 3.7-3.98 GHz range on the spectrum, known as C-Band, for about \$80 billion.

US aviation industry groups in recent months stepped up concerns and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a formal warning in November of the risk of interference with flight equipment.

In the airline industry, radar altimeters, which measure altitude, operate in the 4.2-4.4 GHz range and there are concerns that there is not a big enough buffer from the frequencies to be used by the telecoms companies.

The companies have faced pressure from the White House, airlines and aviation unions to delay the deployment amid concerns about potential interference of 5G with sensitive aircraft electronics like radio altimeters.

Radio altimeters help to minimize the risk of accidents or collisions by giving an accurate reading of the proximity to the ground.

The readouts are also used to facilitate automated landings and to help detect dangerous currents called windshear.

In short, the higher the frequency in the spectrum, the faster the service. So in order to get full value from 5G, operators want to operate at higher frequencies.

Some of the C-Band spectrum auctioned in the United States had been used for satellite radio but the transition to 5G means there will be much more traffic.

Following years of international discussions, the European Union in 2019 set standards for mid-range 5G frequencies

in the 3.4-3.8 GHz range.

They have been auctioned and taken into use in many of the bloc's 27 member states so far without issue.

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), which oversees 31 states, said on December 17 the latest discussion was specific to US airspace.

"At this stage, no risk of unsafe interference has been identified in Europe," it said.

AT&T and Verizon have agreed to adopt exclusion zones around many US airports similar to those used in France for six months.

FAA officials noted the spectrum used by France (3.6-3.8 GHz) sits further away from the spectrum (4.2-4.4 GHz) used for radio altimeters than in the United States and France's power level for 5G is also much lower than what is authorized in the United States.

But Verizon said it will not use spectrum that closer than what France is using for several years.

In South Korea, the 5G mobile communication frequency is 3.42-3.7GHz band and there has been no report of interference with radio wave since commercialization of 5G in April 2019.

## HSBC launches My Calendar App

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) has recently launched 'HSBC My Calendar App' to celebrate its 25-year journey in Bangladesh.

The app highlights the snippets of many memorable events surrounding Bangladesh's history and culture, according to a press release.

The digital calendar is a stepping stone to the road of sustainability and transition towards a greener tomorrow. The app with both Bangla and English calendar for 2022 helps users update about special events and occasions throughout the year.

The disability-friendly app contains brief depiction of the event with a unique tune and photo which resembles a part of the history for that date.

Every image on the calendar month represents a heritage to connect with culture and history.

The app also has year at a glance with all the special occasions and public holidays marked for the year.

The app is free, and once it is downloaded and installed, no internet connection will be needed to use it, said the bank.

## Indonesia to review coal export ban

REUTERS, Jakarta

Indonesian coal miners were due to hold talks with government officials on Wednesday on a ban on the country's coal exports that has unnerved global markets for the fuel and triggered energy security concerns in some major economies.

Indonesia, the world's top exporter of thermal coal and China's largest overseas supplier, on Saturday announced a ban on exports in January to avoid outages at domestic generators.

Miners were scheduled to meet Indonesian trade minister Muhammad Lutfi starting from 0900 a.m. (0200 GMT), an official at an Indonesian coal miners' association said.

Separately, State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) Minister Erick Thohir said his ministry, along with the energy ministry, will hold talks with state power company Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN) to review their coal supplies.

"We will clearly map out the condition in each coal power plant, so later on we won't find any more problems as has been directed by the president," Erick said in a statement late on Tuesday. It was unclear if coal miners would also attend the meeting with PLN.

PLN on Tuesday said it had secured an extra 7.5 million tonnes of coal, but aimed to continue increasing stockpiles so it had at least enough supplies to last 20 days.

The state power company had previously said it needed 5.1 million tonnes of additional supply for January to avoid widespread outages.

## Germany may clamp down on Google activities

AFP, Berlin

Germany's antitrust regulator on Wednesday classified Google a company of "paramount significance across markets", a move paving the way for the authorities to clamp down on any potentially anti-competitive activities.

The decision is the first after an amendment of the German Competition Act came in force January 2021, allowing the authority to intervene earlier, particularly against huge digital companies.

"This is a very important step since based on this decision the Bundeskartellamt (regulator) can now take action against specific anti-competitive practices by Google," said Andreas Mundt, president of the Federal Cartel Authority, in a statement.

Wielding the new legislation, the authority has over the last year opened probes into US tech giants such as Amazon and Facebook.



Benazir Ahmed, chairman of Community Bank Bangladesh and inspector general (IG) of Bangladesh Police, presides over the bank's 28th board meeting at police headquarters in Dhaka yesterday. Board members and senior officials were present.

PHOTO: COMMUNITY BANK BANGLADESH

## Japan tuna goes for \$145,000

AFP, Tokyo

The buyer of a \$145,000 tuna at Tokyo's traditional New Year auction said Wednesday he hoped the purchase would "brighten" a Covid-hit 2022.

The top price paid for a tuna at the first auction of the year at Tokyo's Toyosu fish market fell for the third year running, with demand hit by the pandemic.

The 16.88 million yen shelled out jointly by a restaurant operator and a wholesaler for the huge bluefin tuna on Wednesday was far below the 2019 record of 333.6 million yen. The first tuna auction of the year at Toyosu market is a closely watched tradition that draws a horde of fish wholesalers every year.

Bidders sometimes shell out an enormous amount to win the top-priced tuna, which is seen as bringing good luck, as well as plenty of publicity for the buyer.

Wednesday's top priced 211-kilogram (465-pound) fish was caught off the

northern Aomori region of Japan, famous for its quality tuna, and went to Michelin-starred sushi restaurant operator Onodera Group and Japanese wholesaler Yamayuki.

Hours after the early-morning auction, the prize fish was delivered to a restaurant operated by Onodera in Tokyo's upscale Omotesando neighbourhood to be publicly sliced and filleted.

"I participated in the auction hoping to get the top-priced tuna, which is considered auspicious, and serve it to our customers to brighten their year ahead a little, even as our world remains marred by the pandemic," head chef Akifumi Sakagami told AFP.

The tuna will be offered to customers both in Japan and at the firm's restaurants abroad, including in Hawaii, New York and Los Angeles, he added.

Sushi enthusiasts gathered outside the upscale Tokyo restaurant to await the tuna, eager for a morsel.

REUTERS

US financial firms have been more proactive than other industries in encouraging employees back to the office, but those plans have come under renewed scrutiny due to the rapid spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant.

Most major US banks have had staff working in offices since the summer, but some are now choosing not to host holiday parties and others are strongly recommending staff to get booster shots. The following are the pandemic-related rules among Wall Street's biggest banks and financial firms.

For a FACTBOX on Canadian financial firms, click on **Bank of America Corp**

The bank is encouraging employees to work remotely in the first week of January, according to a person familiar with the matter. It will host on-site vaccine booster clinics for its staff across the country. Since late summer, the bank has also been encouraging employees to get fully vaccinated and more recently to get their booster shots when eligible. It offers onsite clinics in several locations.

**Citigroup Inc**  
Citigroup has asked staffers to work from home during the

first few weeks of 2022, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters.

On December 15, the bank told employees at its New York City office they could work from home if they were able to through the holidays, a source with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The bank has been requiring employees in the United States to be vaccinated but is not mandating boosters. It is providing rapid test kits and encouraging testing for employees going into the office, a source said earlier.

**Deutsche Bank**  
The German lender has made

Covid-19 boosters available to staff at its new midtown headquarters in New York City since early November, according to a source familiar with the matter.

**Goldman Sachs Group Inc**  
Goldman Sachs is encouraging its eligible US staff to work from home until January 18, a spokesperson for the bank said.

Its offices will continue to remain open with previously announced Covid-19 safety protocols - a vaccine requirement, booster for all eligible populations effective February 1, bi-weekly testing effective January 10 and mandatory masks.

## Qualcomm inks car chip deals with Volvo, Honda

REUTERS

Qualcomm Corp on Tuesday announced deals to supply chips to automakers Volvo Group, Honda Motor Co Ltd and Renault SA, accelerating its push to partner with legacy automotive firms digitizing their product lines.

The San Diego, California, company once known for its mobile phone chips has created a range of automotive offerings, from self-driving car brains to chips that operate digital dashboards and infotainment systems.

But the chips are all aimed at the same goal of helping automakers transform their vehicles into rolling computers that can be updated over the air with paid upgrades that generate revenue for carmakers long after a vehicle has left dealer lots, a business model pioneered by Tesla Inc.

At the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Qualcomm said it has reached a deal with Geely Holding-backed brands Volvo and Polestar to use Qualcomm's "Snapdragon Cockpit" chips and an operating system from Alphabet Inc's Google in vehicles starting later this year.

The deal will allow Volvos electric SUV, which is to begin production this year, to tap into hands-free use of Google Assistant and navigation with Google Maps.

The companies said that future upgrades will be sent out over the air. Qualcomm also said that Honda will start using its "cockpit" chips in vehicles that will hit roads in 2023.

Qualcomm also said Renault has agreed to use its automotive technology, but did not give specifics of which chips or when vehicles using them would arrive.