

## Novoair to resume Dhaka-Barishal flight

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Novoair will resume its flights on the Dhaka-Barishal route from March 1.

One-way fare starts from Tk 2,800 on this route, a Novoair press release said yesterday.

Due to a shortage of passengers, Novoair temporarily suspended flights on the Barishal route from August 1 last year.

After resumption, the airline will operate flights on the route every Saturday, Monday and Wednesday.

The flights will depart from Dhaka at 10:40am and leave Barishal at 11:50am.

The airline is currently operating domestic flights from Dhaka to Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Jashore, Saidpur and Rajshahi. It operates an international flight to Kolkata.

Besides, Novoair is also operating direct flights on the Jashore-Cox's Bazar route and the Rajshahi-Cox's Bazar route every week.



Visitors are seen watching different types of birds and animals at the "Livestock Services Week and Exhibition 2023" organised by the ministry of fisheries and livestock next to the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Agargaon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



## Over Tk 1cr birds sold at livestock fair

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Birds worth over Tk 1 crore have been sold at a two-day livestock exhibition ending in Dhaka yesterday, said Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim yesterday.

"People have much interest in livestock rearing... Over Tk 1 crore birds, not animals, have been sold at the exhibition," he told the closing session as chief guest.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock organised the "Livestock Services Week and Exhibition 2023" under the theme "Smart Livestock Smart Bangladesh" next to Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Agargaon.

Campaigns focusing the week began on February 25 and will run till March 1.

Without wasting time searching for jobs on securing university degrees abroad, youths are now becoming farmers, rearing and marketing different animals and encouraging others to take up the profession, said Karim.

The government is working to form groups of livestock farmers at the most marginal levels to help them become self-sufficient and established as entrepreneurs, he said.

"Not only training, but various technical support and materials are being provided to the farmers so that they can be self-reliant and capable," he said, adding that the livestock exhibition was encouraging youths across the country to become entrepreneurs.

Farmers showcased crossbred animals having superior traits in around 300 stalls at the exhibition, drawing a large number of enthusiasts.

One of them, first grader Mustakim Rahman Arman, said, "I never see such a huge number of birds together. It's really enjoyable." His father, Md Mirazur Rahman, said there should be more of such arrangements around the year.

Md Emdadul Haque Talukdar, director general of the Department of Livestock, chaired the closing event while Fisheries and Livestock Secretary Nahid Rashid was present as the special guest.

## Steer clear of IPR violations

BGMEA urges members after US warnings

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has urged members to remain more careful about rights ownership when making products to avoid counterfeiting goods and violating intellectual property rights (IPRs).

The apex body of garment exporters made the call in its letter to its members in response to the alleged export of counterfeit products from Bangladesh.

The United States Trade Representative (USTR), the American government's chief trade negotiating body, sent a letter to Bangladesh on February 10 alleging that the IPRs rules on export of garments, footwear and electronic goods have been violated.

The BGMEA said the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) and Paris-based Union Des Fabricants (UNIFAB) made a submission to the USTR.

It sought to include Bangladesh, China and European Union in the priority watch list of the USTR's special review on the alleged export of counterfeit goods, including clothing.

The AAFA in its submission mentioned that "counterfeits from Bangladesh are being seized at an increasing rate globally as counterfeit production is growing", said the BGMEA in its letter.

The AAFA also said "well-organised Bangladesh-run counterfeiting networks effectively exported counterfeits for sales to consumers in the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Malaysia and other countries".

The BGMEA said it has taken the matter seriously and "we are working with the government".

The commerce ministry also responded to the allegations of the USTR through a letter. It said Bangladesh would strictly abide by the IPRs once it makes the United Nations status graduation from an LDC to a developing nation in 2026. Bangladesh is getting ready to follow the IPR rules, according to the commerce ministry letter.

Bangladesh, as a least developed country (LDC), has been enjoying some benefits under the IPRs rules of World Trade Organization (WTO).

The apex body of apparel exporters said "Though Bangladesh enjoys international support measures in the form of development assistance and certain waivers, however we should not label ourselves as a source of counterfeit goods."

## NBR removes customs duty

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Bangladesh requires 20 lakh tonnes of sugar every year. It imports more than 98 per cent of sugar in raw form to meet the demand as domestic production is too scanty.

Private refiners import raw sugar mainly from Brazil and Argentina.

Refiners earlier blamed the inadequate supply of gas to the mills, the increased cost of the US dollar and the higher import duty for the spike in the price of the item in the local market.

Gas supply to factories across the country has been hampered in recent months after the

government stopped buying liquefied natural gas from the international spot markets to save to foreign currency reserves, which have declined about 30 per cent in the past one year owing to escalated import bills.

Similarly, a 25 per cent depreciation of the taka against the US dollar has made imports costlier for Bangladesh.

The total tax on the import of raw sugar was 61 per cent before the removal of the import duty and regulatory duty cut.

Biswajit Saha, director for corporate and regulatory affairs of City Group,

echoed the MGI official saying that the overall price would drop by Tk 5.5 each kilogramme.

"We will sell sugar after duty assessment on new rate upon arrival of next consignment. We hope that prices will decline to some extent during Ramadan," he said.

Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission estimates the country's monthly sugar consumption at 150,000 tonnes. The amount of consumption rises to 300,000 tonnes during the month of Ramadan, which is going to start by the end of next month.

## MFS booming

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enhance the digital financial ecosystem.

Bkash has put in place innovative technologies and services and formed partnerships with various financial institutions.

"All these efforts will boost digital transactions and empower customers in their daily financial activities," Sadique said.

Muhammad Zahidul Islam, head of public communications of Nagad Ltd, said the MFS provider is working on upgrading the country's overall position when it comes to going cashless and paperless.

"We have removed the paper-based know your customer process and introduced charge-free bill payments alongside easing merchant payments. The strategy has facilitated the expansion of financial inclusion and given a push to popularise cashless payments."

Nagad, a majority of which is owned by the government's postal department, is now placing emphasis on resolving merchant and other payment issues. It is offering cashback and discounts.

"We are going to introduce some new services within a short time. We are very hopeful that cashless payments will be popular in the country and day-to-day transactions using mobile phones will be at the top," Islam said.

Abu Saeed Khan, a senior policy fellow of LIRNEasia, a think-tank based in Colombo, said transactions through MFS providers are rising, which shows that the overall pie has become larger. "This is a very

positive sign."

He said the market is still in a growing mode and there is room for growth.

Khan, however, laments that MFS is yet to become a medium for over-the-counter transactions in stores on a massive scale.

"It is a big setback. Policymakers and industry should see how this sort of transaction can be raised."

Khan also sees cost as a major issue. "Cost of transaction needs to be contained."

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, said the slow growth in the shares of digital transactions does not go with the aspiration for a digital Bangladesh.

Problems exist on both demand and supply sides.

Products and services of MFS such as salary payments have not been publicised and promoted from the supply side. And firms that can avail the benefits have not shown interest, he said. One reason, Raihan said, is the high prevalence of informal transactions.

"It may be that many firms don't want to use digital platforms to avoid recording transactions. There are firms that maintain more than one book of accounts to avoid taxes."

There is also an absence of push for digital transactions from regulators and policymakers, said the economist, calling for the formalisation of digital payments.

"India has nicely implemented digital payments and Bangladesh can learn from the neighbouring country."

Raihan, also a professor

of economics at the University of Dhaka, said increased digital transactions would ensure transparency of businesses, which will eventually bring more taxes for the state.

He cited the International Monetary Fund's condition of raising the tax-to-gross domestic product ratio.

"This is high time to promote digital payments."

Last month, the central bank launched an interoperable payment method, Bangla QR, to help customers pay bills through mobile banking applications, MFS providers and payment services.

The central bank also asked lenders to replace their proprietary QR codes within June with Bangla QR.

"There will be a boom in the cashless transactions when payments become interoperable," said Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of Mastercard.

"We are on the right track to becoming a cashless economy."

Md Mezbaul Haque, executive director of the BB, said the central bank monitors cash-out.

"The ratio of cash-out is falling. It will reduce further once the Bangla QR code transaction gains traction. But it is a big challenge to change people's habits. It takes time."

The BB plans to launch cashless transactions in three districts before Eid-ul-Azha, the biggest religious festival in Bangladesh.

"We are very optimistic. There are some challenges but we are working to give a boost to digital transactions," Haque said.

## Matarbari, Banshkhali

FROM PAGE B1

Labu said: "The power plant will go into full swing operation by June this year."

The price of electricity will be Tk 9 per unit. If the coal price in the world market drops, the production cost will be lower as well, he said.

"We have signed agreements with companies in Indonesia and Australia to import coal for the plant."

The first unit of the Matarbari plant in Cox's Bazar is expected to go into commercial production in January 2024. The unit has a capacity of generating 1,200 MWs of electricity.

Bangladesh Power Development Board Chairman Md Mahbubur Rahman, Power Grid

Company Limited Managing Director Golam Kibria, and Power Cell Director Mohammad Hossain were present during the visit of the adviser.

Chowdhury said due to the high price of the US dollar followed by the war, the cost of energy has gone up. As a result, Bangladesh, like other countries, is paying the price.

The situation will change once the war ends, he said.

The energy adviser said the government has already spent thousands of crores of taka to sell imported gas and fuel at subsidised rates.

"Due to the increased price in the global market, the government had no other option but to increase the price of power."

## IT industry needs

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(BASIS) organised the show, funded by the private sector to highlight the latest technological innovations and ICT capabilities of Bangladesh to the world.

Since Bangladesh has a limited amount of land and resources, the digital economy is very critical for Bangladesh, said Naser Ezaz Bijoy, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh. Because businesses in the sector are scalable in an accelerated manner, he added.

Banks and financial institutions should start adopting cloud banking, said Moynul Haque Siddiqui, founder and director of Fiber@Home.

"If we really want to be a smart country, software utilisation and adoption are

needed in every way of life," he added.

Two policy supports – back-to-back letters of credit and bonded warehouse facility – have played a key role in the success of the garment industry, said Salman F Rahman, the prime minister's private industry and investment adviser.

The private sector has proposed the policies and the government accepted them, he said.

So, for the development of the ICT sector, the ICT players must come up with suggestions on the policy support they need, he added.

The lead generation of local IT firms in the expo was of Tk 120 crore while 92,000 people came to visit, said Russell T Ahmed, CEO of the BASIS.

## Thousands throng

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University, visited the fair with the hope of getting a job at a software firm.

"I am a full-scale web developer and applied to 30 companies. It's really amazing to find many firms at a single venue and it's a big opportunity for me," he added.

AKM Fahim Mashroor, chief executive officer of bdjobs, said: "We received an incredible response from recruiters and job-seekers."

"We hold job fairs at the district level throughout the year. But this was the first time a job fair was arranged in a completely paperless way."

More than 5,000 job-seekers applied for employment

opportunities using QR codes against 500 positions. Besides, over 100 IT companies organised on-the-spot tests of the candidates who took part in the process using their mobile phones.

Of the job-seekers who participated in the largest-ever tech job fair in Bangladesh, about 90 per cent were fresh graduates. At least 1,000 are expected to be hired within the next few weeks.

Prokash Roy Chowdhury, marketing director of bdjobs.com, said: "There is a lot of demand for skilled IT professionals in the growing information technology sector."

"So, we organised this fair keeping the needs of the industry in mind."

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH  
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Ref. No.-MGMC/CEDP/126/2023 Date: 25/02/2023  
**e-Tender Notice 05/2022-2023**  
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package:  

Tender ID No.	Name of Package	Last Date and Time of Tender Security Submission	Tender Closing Date & Time
794493	Establishment of Campus Networking at Muminunnisa Govt. Mohila College, Mymensingh.	14-Mar-2023 13:00	14-Mar-2023 14:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.  
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.  
The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' Branches **13-Mar-2023 15:30**  
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP Help Desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).  
SD/-  
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Memo No. CEDP/MMC/2022-23/ad/G-8 Date: 27-Feb-2023  
**e-Tender Notice: 04/2022-2023**  
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package:  

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of Package	Last Date and Time of Tender Security Submission	Tender Closing Date & Time
01	794822	Establishment of Campus Networking in Mohammadpur Mohila College	14-Mar-2023 01:00 PM	14-Mar-2023 02:00 PM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.  
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.  
The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' Branches upto 13-Mar-2023 04:00 PM.  
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP Help Desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).  
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