

Overall exports drop in July-Nov

The Daily Star, Tuesday January 12, 2010

The overall exports of merchandises from Bangladesh declined 6.96% in the July-November period of the current fiscal year compared with the same period of the previous year, according to the provisional data of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB). In November such exports declined 7.7% to USD 1.2bn from USD1.3bn in the same time a year earlier. The overall exported target was fixed at USD 17.60bn for fiscal year 2009-10 against the actual export performance at USD 15.57bn in FY 2008-09.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121447>

Imports record rise by 20% in December

The Financial Express, Monday January 11, 2010

The country's overall imports recorded a rise by over 20% in December over the previous month of last calendar year, officials said on Sunday. The settlement of letters of credit (LCs) for imports, generally known as actual imports, rose to USD 2.071bn in December 2009 from USD 1.717bn in November of last year. Overall imports have increased to meet the growing demand of essential items including fertiliser and petroleum products during the ongoing Boro cultivation season. On the other hand, opening of fresh LCs against imports, generally known as import orders, fell by nearly 16% to USD 1.979bn during the period over the previous month of the current year.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89239

6% ADP cut likely

*Most ministries fail to meet their implementation target
The Daily Star, Tuesday January 12, 2010*

The government might slash the Annual Development Programme (ADP) by 6% or BDT 20bn (USD 288mn) as most ministries have failed to spend their budget allocations. In the current fiscal year, the government took up an ambitious ADP of BDT 30.5bn (USD 439.8mn). Now it will come down to BDT 28.5bn (USD 411mn). According to preliminary information of the planning ministry, during the six months from July to December only 28% of the ADP allocation has been spent. Of the total ADP, 10 large ministries received 76% of the allocation.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121505>

BB to propel investment, put inflation on leash

*Monetary policy announced, GDP growth projected at 5.5-6%
The Daily Star, Wednesday January 20, 2010*

Bangladesh Bank (BB) on January 19 announced a supportive monetary policy for the second half of the current fiscal year, aiming to increase investment in the productive sector but control inflation. To reach the two goals, the central bank has taken a strategy to drastically cut credit to the government but support the private sector for productive purposes. According to the Monetary Policy Statement, the government credit growth will be reduced in June 2010 to 13.80%, down about 9.44%, compared to June 2009. Public sector credit growth was 23.24% in June 2009. The growth of credit to the private sector in June 2010 will be increased to 16.70% by pushing it up by 2.08% points compared to June 2009. Private sector credit growth was 14.62% in June 2009. The monetary policy said that given the current

trends in internal and external prices, both food and non-food inflation in Bangladesh looks set to continue over the coming months on a fluctuating trend, with some upward bias. The monetary policy said that though export growth was negative in the beginning of the fiscal year, it is expected to regain enough momentum in the coming months for fiscal year 2009-10 export growth to be in the double digits, as in fiscal year 2008-09.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122618>

Rush for savings tools forces government to downsize bank borrowing

The Financial Express, Sunday January 17, 2010

The government has downsized its bank borrowing target for the current fiscal year to BDT 97.08bn (USD 1.4bn), or about 43%, in view of its higher borrowing from non-banking sources, including savings instruments. Of the revised target, BDT 47.48bn (USD 684.6mn) has already been borrowed from banking sources during the first six months of the fiscal year. The remaining BDT 49.60bn (USD 715.2mn) will be borrowed from January-June of the current fiscal year. The government in its budget document for the current 2009-2010 fiscal year had estimated its bank borrowing at BDT 167.55bn (USD 2.4bn) and non-bank borrowing at BDT 38bn (USD 548mn) to finance the budget deficit.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89757

Sugar refiners demand subsidy to keep market price stable

The Financial Express, Saturday January 16, 2010

The country's sugar refiners urged the government to provide them with a subsidy to keep the price of the commodity stable in the local market, as the international market price of sugar continues to rise. Currently, finished sugar is being sold at USD 730 per tonne in the London market. The sugar price has been rising for the last several months in the international market mainly due to a production shortfall in major sugarcane growing countries including Brazil and India.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/innerpage.php?page_category_id=2

Rice price on rise despite big stock

The Daily Star, Friday January 08, 2010

The price of rice rose by 5% to 18% during the previous month in spite of the 11.5 lakh metric tonnes of the grain in government stocks and projected Aman production of 13mn tonnes. Agronomists say the price hike is basically driven by high international prices, especially as India and Philippines faced production shortfall in droughts and typhoons respectively late last year. India lost 15mn metric tonnes of production while the Philippines imported 2.5mn metric tonnes of rice last year.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=120998>

Indian countervailing duty hits Bangladesh RMG exports

The Financial Express, Saturday January 09, 2010

The country's readymade garment exporters have been counting an additional duty to enter the Indian market, as the latter has imposed a countervailing duty on subsidized export items of other countries. Apparel items imported from Bangladesh are being subjected to a countervailing duty on the basis of MRP (maximum retail price) instead of ad-valorem. Initially two RMG products---

cotton and blended or other natural or man-made fiber fabrics--- will fall under the increased tariff measures. Duty on cotton garments imported from Bangladesh will increase to 11.8% or USD 21.52 from 8.46% or USD 15.43 per piece due to tariff changes in the recent budget. Taxes on blended and other natural or man-made fibre fabrics also increased to 19.5% or USD51.51 from 12.84% or USD33.89.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89046

Government yet to sign WB aid revision deal

Aid flow, project implementation affected
The Financial Express, Sunday January 10, 2010

The World Bank's aid deal revision proposals, held up for nearly two months, have affected aid flow and project implementation as the lender asked the government to suspend local procurement before amendment of agreements. The Washington-based lender in late November, 2009 sent a proposal to the Economic Relations Division (ERD) for revising the deals of 26 projects worth nearly USD 2.5bn due to its reservation to some provisions of the recently amended public procurement act (PPA).

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89122

Stock Market News

DSE turnover sets new record

The Daily Star, Monday January 11, 2010

The single-day turnover on the premier bourse reached a new high of BDT 13.25bn on January 10, backed by price rallies in the power sector shares that were riding on the prime minister's visit to India and a probable deal on electricity imports. The rally in the power sector shares also pushed up the benchmark index, the DSE General Index, to a new high of 4,730.74 points, which rose by 8.64 points, or 0.18%.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121295>

Pre-IPO placement provision to go

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 13, 2010

The government is taking steps to do away with private placement as underwriters are obliged to buy unsold shares, said finance minister AMA Muhith in parliament (JS) on January 12. There will be a standardized face value for the future companies, which want to float shares on the market, he said. Shares of state-owned companies will be offloaded through direct listing and bond market will be made effective, he added.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89427

SEC designs new system for refund warrant

The Daily Star, Wednesday January 20, 2010

The stock market regulator has rearranged the refund warrant system for unsuccessful IPO applicants. Going forward, they can receive refund warrant money either through bank accounts or by cheque. The Securities and Exchange Commission has decided to put in place the same system to distribute cash dividends paid by listed companies. In line with the new system, the IPO applicants must choose between the two options and mention it in the IPO application form -- how they intend to get back the refund

warrant money. Prior to the new rules, the refund warrant money had been distributed through online banking.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122622>

SEC pores over 'flawed indexing' info

The Daily Star, Wednesday January 13, 2010

Two bourses followed apparently flawed computations for Grameenphone shares in November, despite clear instructions from the market regulator to follow a standard indexing method. The bourses were meant to follow the instructions from September of last year. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is yet to describe the bourses' calculations as a violation of law, but has said computations were far from "reliable and verifiable."

The Dhaka Stock Exchange follows IASCO-recommended guidelines in index counting, while the Chittagong Stock Exchange follows the Laspeyres index calculation method. On November 16, 2009, the trading debut day of Grameenphone, the benchmark index of DSE skyrocketed by more than 764 points, as the DSE counted the index from the first day, based on the face value of each Grameenphone share at BDT 10 (US 1.45 cents). On the other hand, CSE calculated the index on a five-day weighted average price of Grameenphone shares, which also did not give an accurate picture in the index.

However, the distortion was acute in the case of Grameenphone, because of its size. Even though the same methods were followed in the previous cases, the distortions were not reflected because of the small capital sizes. The SEC has now ordered the two exchanges to start counting the index from the second day of a company's trade, based on the first day's closing price.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121606>

SEC to get legal opinion on MF writ within a week

The Financial Express, Thursday January 21, 2010

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) lawyer will submit his opinion within seven days on whether to appeal or not against the verdict of the writ petition on mutual funds (MFs).

The SEC received the certified copy on January 19, 70 days after the High Court had delivered the verdict. The High Court in the verdict on November 8, allowed the mutual funds to increase their size by issuing bonus and right shares, without curbing the securities regulator's absolute power to determine which funds would be eligible to expand capital base.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90166

UCBL writ hearing likely to end by Feb 7

The Financial Express, Thursday January 21, 2010

The hearing on the writ petition of the United Commercial Bank Limited (UCBL) is likely to be completed within the tenure of the present Chief Justice (CJ), who is scheduled to retire on February 7.

As per the court direction, the UCBL board fixed July 30, 2008 as the record date for entitlement of dividends in the form of 90 per cent and 50 per cent bonus shares. This was a combined offer for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. Under this circumstance, three shareholders, who did get dividends of 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002, filed cases demanding their due dividends. The

UCBL fails to pay dividends, as it could not hold pending AGMs during the last 11 years since 1997 because of cases filed by some shareholders.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90110

SEC withholds four companies refund warrant distribution

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 13, 2010

The distribution of refund warrants worth BDT 5.0mn of four companies has been withheld by an order issued by the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) due to duplication and other mistakes made in the applications. 10% money from the refund warrants will be forfeited and the remaining 90% will be distributed among the unsuccessful applicants, who applied for an Initial Public Offering (IPO) of the four companies, an SEC official said.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89429

JS body for early listing of ICB subsidiaries

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 13, 2010

The parliamentary standing committee on finance recommended an early listing of the three subsidiaries of the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB). The subsidiaries are ICB Capital Management Limited, ICB Asset Management Company Limited, and ICB Securities Trading Company Limited. The minister said that the subsidiaries' performance is satisfactory and can be brought to the capital market.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89428

SIBL's share face value down

The Financial Express, Sunday January 24, 2010

The shareholders of Social Islami Bank Limited (SIBL) have approved a proposal for split of face value of its shares from BDT 100.00 to BDT 10.00. The approval came recently at the sixth extra-ordinary general meeting (EGM) of the bank.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90397

S Alam Steels, Aftab Auto get SEC nod to issue preference shares

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 13, 2010

Two companies, S Alam Cold Rolled Steels and Aftab Automobiles, got the nod of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to issue 5.33mn and 18mn preference shares respectively. S Alam will issue the 5.33mn preference shares with 6% interim dividends as per the decision of the company taken in its EGM on December 12. Each share will have a face value of BDT 100. The preference shares will be converted into ordinary shares and will remain locked-in for one year from the date of issuance. Aftab Automobiles will issue 18mn preference shares with 5% interim dividends. Each share will have a face value of BDT 100.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89385

Banking

BB asks banks to be cautious while investing in real estate

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 20, 2010

The central bank in the latest inclusive half yearly monetary policy has advised commercial banks and non-banking financial institutions (NBFIs) to be cautious while investing in the real estate sector. The Bangladesh Bank governor said that the growing workers' remittance inflows are strongly fuelling demand and creating bubble-like price pressures in the real estate markets.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90053

Banking goes aggressive

Credit-deposit ratio crosses 100%

The Daily Star, Sunday January 10, 2010

Banks' credit-deposit ratio continued to remain over 100% until the first four months of this fiscal year, much higher than Bangladesh Bank's norm of 82%. The ratio was above 100% in the first 11 months of last fiscal year, with 98.69% in June. The trend indicates higher utilization of loan-assets from deposits despite a sluggish investment demand amid the global crisis in 2009. As of June 30, 2009, the loan book of the banking industry showed that trade financing alone accounts over 35% of the total loans to the private sector, followed by industry (except working capital) 21.59% and working capital 17%. Construction, transport, communication and housing are other major sectors that went for bank borrowing.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121164>

BB to help banks comply with Basel-II framework

It gets down to guideline review

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 13, 2010

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has started reviewing the guidelines on risk-based capital adequacy for banks to help all commercial banks comply with the Basel-II framework. The central bank has taken the move against the backdrop of only 22 commercial banks being able to comply with the minimum capital required (MCR) under Basel-II framework out of 48 banks, BB officials said. The MCR has been set to 10 per cent with the risk-weighted assets of the banks or BDT 4.0bn of total capital, which is higher than would be treated as MCR of the banks under the Basel-II accord. The Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB) has recommended to the central bank to bring down the MCR to 9.0 per cent from the existing 10 per cent in terms of the risk-weighted assets of the banks. Bangladesh is now following Basel-II for the banks' capital adequacy requirement. Risk-based capital ratio was 8.0 per cent when it was first adopted in 1996. Later in 2002, the ratio was increased to 9.0 per cent.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89437

22 banks join Basel-II regime, others poised to sign deal

The Financial Express, Tuesday January 12, 2010

Twenty-two banks have already complied with the minimum capital requirement of the Basel II accord as Bangladesh Bank (BB) strives to develop a sound financial system in the country. The quarterly reports of the scheduled banks will include the developments regarding the Basel II accord. Banks have already been asked to encourage their clients to conduct credit ratings of their business units. Banks have already informed the bank

regulator that about 10% to 15% of their clients would opt for credit rating by March.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89337

State banks to get more leeway

The Daily Star, Friday January 22, 2010

The central bank plans to ease some terms and conditions for state-owned banks on credit growth and operating costs, letting them compete with their private peers with vigor. Bangladesh Bank plans to give more autonomy to the boards of four state-run banks to transform state banks into public limited companies.

To check on any uneven influence from bad borrowers, BB entered into a memorandum of understanding with the boards of state banks four years back. At that time, as many as 17 conditions had been imposed on those with expectations of improved performances. As per one of these conditions, the 2009 credit growth of the banks was restricted to 10% over the amount spent in the previous year. In line with Bangladesh Bank rules, commercial banks in general are not allowed to lend any individual or organisation an amount that exceeds 35% of any bank's paid-up capital. The ceiling is 10-25% for state banks. The borrowing limit is likely to be at par with other banks as part of the new move.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122923>

CBC, AB Bank end month-long transaction using DIBOR

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 13, 2010

Commercial Bank of Ceylon (CBC) and AB Bank Limited initiated a month-long transaction based on the newly launched DIBOR Benchmark. The particular transaction has a unique feature of repricing the transaction in every week based on the published DIBOR of that period. Both the banks agreed that taking this step forward would help to create a more vibrant financial market in the country. Market experts are very optimistic that the official launch of DIBOR will encourage banks to quote two ways on transactions, thereby improving liquidity in the market.

Bangladesh Bank has officially launched Dhaka Inter-Bank Offered Rate (DIBOR) in Bangladesh Market recently. This came to success with able assistance from Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association (BAFEDA).

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89387

AB Bank goes for equity financing

The Daily Star, Sunday January 17, 2010

AB BANK IN BRIEF

- Incorporated on December 31, 1981. It started operations on April 12, 1982
- Existing paid-up capital: Tk 256.40 crore. Authorised capital: Tk 300 crore
- Listed on Dhaka Stock Exchange in 1983
- Each AB Bank share was traded between Tk 1,128.75 and Tk 1,105 on Thursday on DSE
- Net profit was Tk 210.27 crore with EPS of Tk 82 in nine months to Sept 2009

AB Bank has entered equity financing, as it has purchased preference shares of a power generation company and a telecom transmission service provider. With the purchase of the preference shares, it is the first private sector bank that has gone for equity financing. The bank has recently bought BDT 100mn (USD 1.45mn) worth of preference shares in Everest Power Generation Company Ltd and Fiber@Home. The two companies will have to go for initial public offering (IPO) after three years in line with the agreements signed with the bank.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122160>

Prime Bank likely to issue BDT 2.5bn subordinated bond

The Financial Express, Sunday January 17, 2010

Prime Bank Limited is expected to issue subordinated bond, for the first time, worth BDT 2.5bn (USD 36.3mn) this month to consolidate their capital base in line with the Basel-II framework. The central bank has already given approval to the bank to issue the bond on a private placement basis. The bonds will be amortized and have a tenure of seven years. The coupon rate has been fixed at 11.50% annually. Each bond will be for BDT 10mn (USD 145,348) and privately placed amongst institutions like banks, insurance companies, and non-banking financial institutions in the country.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89762

SCBs won't be allowed to float shares now

Merge and survive, Muhith advises banks

The Financial Express, Monday January 11, 2010

Banks in the country should consider mergers to become strong, or else it would be difficult for them to survive under stiff competition in the future, said finance minister AMA Muhith on January 10. "They can survive in 2010, but in 2015 when the financial sector will be opened, it will be difficult for them to survive," he said at a press briefing after meeting with the officials of Bangladesh Bank and three state-owned commercial banks (SCBs).

The finance minister rejected outright the idea of floating shares of SCBs on the capital market now as their financial barometers are not strong. The country does not have a merger culture as the business is less mature, but it is popular in other countries, the minister said.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89230

Committee to plan out for Expatriates Welfare Bank

The Financial Express, Monday January 11, 2010

A three-member committee led by the Expatriates Welfare Secretary Ilias Ahmed has been assigned to design modalities for the Expatriates Welfare Bank. The committee has been asked to submit recommendations in a month. The committee will recommend whether the proposed bank would be scheduled or specialised, and see whether the banking sector is saturated or if there is scope for any new scheduled bank to operate. The committee will also assess whether non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) could fully own the bank. In the case of ownership by NRBs, they would have to apply to the central bank and bring all capital in foreign currency from abroad.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121297>

Pharmaceuticals

Square Pharma expands production unit

The Daily Star, Tuesday, January 12, 2010



The earth-breaking ceremony of Square Pharmaceuticals Limited Unit 3 took place on January 10, 2010 to meet the increasing demands of the industry. The new unit was established near the Square Pharmaceuticals' Plant at Kaliakoir in Gazipur. The first phase construction will be finished in December 2012. The second phase will start in January 2014 and be finished by June 2016. The company hopes that the unit will start production from the first quarter of 2013. The estimated cost of the unit 3 will be BDT 5.14bn (USD 74.5mn). Total project area is 16 acres. The current plant, whose area is 35 acres, produces general products, Cephalosporin, Insulin, and SVPO etc.

Square Pharmaceuticals Limited is doing business in local and international markets with own goodwill. Their demand is increasing for providing quality products. To meet the increasing demand, they initiated to expand the plant. Once the expansion is completed, the production of Square pharmaceuticals limited will be increased. Then, ten billion tablets and capsules will be produced each year. Injections, LVP, anti-cancer drugs and special vaccines will be produced in the new plant.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89285

Food and Agriculture

BDT 680mn (USD 9.86mn) BKB loans for Cox's Bazar farmers

The Daily Star, Thursday, January 21, 2010

Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) will disburse BDT 680mn (USD 9.86mn) crore in farm loans in Cox's Bazar in the current fiscal year. The loans will be distributed through 19 branches of the bank in the district. The target of BKB is to stand by every farmer of the country as a farmer friendly bank. Farmers can open accounts in the bank by depositing BDT 10 (US 14 cents) only.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122726>

Jessore sees bumper jute seed production

Thursday, January 14, 2010

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) achieved bumper jute seed production through its contractual growers in three districts in greater Jessore in 2009. The corporation's jute seed division usually supplies quality seeds to contractual farmers and purchases new seeds from them after the harvest. Later, BADC refines the collected seeds and sells those among the growers in packets after certification. This year the

seeds were produced on around 907 acres of land in the Jessore zone, which comprises Jessore, Jhenidah and Magura districts. Of the total land, 387 acres were used in Jessore, 495 acres in Jhenidah and 25 acres in Magura districts. A total of 4,212 kilograms of jute seed were distributed among 1,761 farmers.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121760>

Telecom & IT

BTRC to sharpen watch on telecom transparency

The Daily Star, Sunday, January 17, 2010

The telecom regulator has moved to check how mobile and land phone operators abide by rules in paying it revenue. All operators are supposed to pay the Bangladesh Tele-communication Regulatory Commission at least 5.5% of the revenue they earn. BTRC is going for an advertisement this month to choose a firm to audit the financial and other service-oriented activities in the telecom sector. However, besides landline operators, four out of the six mobile operators now publish their financial status every three months, as these foreign companies are listed on bourses. The local telecom sector has so far contributed BDT 200bn (USD 2.9bn) against its BDT 300bn (USD 4.35bn) crore investment by the end of 2009.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122161>

Govt moves to open VoIP

The Daily Star, Tuesday, January 19, 2010

The government has decided in principle to issue more VoIP licenses for handling international calls to trigger a price war and bring illegal VoIP operators under a legal framework. As per an amended policy, illegal VoIP (voice over internet protocol) operators will get a chance to make their business legal by routing calls through legal exchanges. Earlier, international calls through VoIP were completely prohibited under the International Long Distance Telecommunications Service Policy. Currently, illegal VoIP operators on an average charge 1.75 cent per minute for an international call whereas legal call handlers charge 3 cents. Around 60 million minutes of international calls are made to and from Bangladesh a day. In Bangladesh, VoIP has become a lucrative business as the technology offers international calls at charges much lower than that of the legal calls. Hundreds of people have been engaged in this business.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122451>

Airtel to carve out own brand in Bangladesh

The Daily Star, Monday, January 18, 2010

Bharti Airtel is set to introduce its own brand in Bangladesh, targeting the youth and rural population in the six-operator mobile market. The brand will be named Airtel. The company, which has already acquired a 70% stake in Abu Dhabi Group's Warid Telecom, plans to localize its branding in Bangladesh, considering the cultural proximity. Earlier, Bharti Airtel said it would inject BDT 20.7bn (USD 300mn) in initial investment to take over a 70% stake in Warid. As per the deal, the transition is going to be completed in the next three months. Warid will issue new shares at a nominal price to hand 70% of its stake to Airtel. Airtel also will bear all of Warid's debt to local banks and other organizations.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122161>

BTCL reduces call charges for 55 countries

The Financial Express, Monday, January 18, 2010

Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) has reduced the call charge of its land phones and mobile phones in 55 countries and the new tariff has already been made effective. Now clients can speak at BDT 6.00 (US 9 cents) per minute on land phones and mobiles to 23 countries. On the other hand, they could speak to 32 countries at BDT 6.00 (US 9 cents) per minute on land phones and BDT 16 (US 23 cents) on mobiles. BTCL has also reduced call charges to India to BDT 12 ((US 17 cents) per minute from BDT 18 (US 26 cents) previously.

The 23 countries at BDT 6.00 (US 9 cents) per minute call charge both on land phone and mobile include the USA, Canada, China, England, Cyprus, Bahamas, Barmuda, Brunei, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Uzbekistan and Vatican. The countries for which BTCL will now charge BDT 6.00 (US 9 cents) on land phone and BDT 16 (US 23 cents) on mobile per minute are the UK, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Czeck Republic, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Ireland, Laos, Mongolia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Togo, Turkey, Venezuela and Zambia.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89869

China agrees to offer BDT 14.6bn (USD 211mn) for Teletalk upgrade

The Daily Star, Friday, January 15, 2010

China has agreed to provide BDT 14.6bn (USD 211mn) as a soft loan to state-run mobile operator Teletalk to develop its upcoming 3G (third generation) networks. The loan agreement will be signed at the state level. The Chinese government will provide the loan through China Exim Bank at a 2% interest rate in the next two years, and the loan repayment time might be 20 years in line with discussions. However, under the possible agreement, Teletalk will have to import all equipment for its 3G-expansion project from China-originated vendors, while CMEC will have the authority to select the vendors. BTRC is now working to prepare the final guideline for 3G spectrums. The 3G-spectrum auction is expected to take place by June this year.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121913>

Tourism & Aviation

Plan to celebrate a month in 2010 as a "Tourism Month" and 2011 as "Tourism Year" at the time of World Cup Cricket

The Daily Star, Friday January 22, 2010

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader said that the government is planning to celebrate one month in 2010 as a "Tourism Month" while "Tourism Year" would be observed in 2011 at the time of World Cup Cricket. He also said the government has taken various measures including setting up exclusive tourist zones and the appointment of tourist police to attract more tourists in the country. "The cabinet in principle approved the draft of Bangladesh Tourism Protected Area and Special Tourist Zone Act, 2009," he said.

Through the act, a legal framework for raising planned and coordinated tourist facilities is being prepared under public and private initiatives, he said. "A mega plan has also been taken for the development of different tourist spots across the country

including Cox's Bazar and Kuakata sea beaches to attract increased number of tourists," he added.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122938>

Master Plan to develop Cox's Bazar, Kuakata as tourist spots of global standards

The Daily Star, Monday January 11, 2010

Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism GM Qader on January 10 said the government is preparing two separate master plans for Cox's Bazar and Kuakata to develop them as highly attractive tourist spots of global standards. Qader said this while presiding over an inter-ministerial meeting to review the progress of preparing master plans. He asked the authorities concerned to quickly formulate the plans.

He said the government has decided to set up the Cox's Bazar Development Authority and upgrade Kuakata into a municipality as part of its plan to refurbish the locations with all tourist facilities. The minister requested the authorities that care should be taken in preparing the plans to add new infrastructures and other facilities to locations without disturbing the natural beauty and local resources.

They should add more natural beauty in those areas, promote good communication networks, hotels, restaurants and other entertainment facilities and sports outlets, including venues for international cricket. Modern shopping malls and security arrangements should be at the centre of such plans, he said, adding that the government is giving top priority to the development of tourism.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121381>

New five-star hotel to brighten Cox's Bazar image

The Daily Star, Monday January 18, 2010

A local entrepreneur is going to build a five-star hotel based on an international timesharing concept in Cox's Bazar at a cost of around BDT 1.5bn. The hotel -- **Sea Pearl Beach and Spa** -- is being built at Inani, some 20 kilometers away from Cox's Bazar, and is expected to start commercial operations in February 2012. Land development has started in over eight acres.

The hotel has already been affiliated with Interval International, an operating segment of Interval Leisure Group Inc, listed on NASDAQ as IILG, a leading global provider of membership and leisure services in hospitality and the vacation industry. The hotel will consist of 200 rooms for residential accommodation including 150 timeshare rooms and suites. It will have facilities such as a spa, bar, barbecue, water sports, swimming pool, children amusement, restaurant, coffee shop, lobby, gymnasium, indoor-outdoor games, air-conditioned shuttle bus for pick-up and drop services and sightseeing.

The hotel will bring revolution in Bangladesh's tourism and hospitality industry in terms of earning foreign currency and building the image of the country," said Sunit Banerji, an international expert in hospitality and leisure management, who is providing consultancy for the project.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122323>

New int'l airport to be constructed outside Dhaka: Quader

The Financial Express, Friday January 22, 2010

A new international airport will be constructed outside the city to reduce the pressure on the Zia International Airport, minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ghulam Mohammad Quader informed the House on January 21. Responding to a query from treasury bench member Manzur Quader Qureshi, the minister said a committee has been formed initially to carry out a feasibility study on the new airport.

Replying to ruling party Lawmaker Maruf Saqlain, he said the government was considering resumption of Biman or other private airlines flight on the Dhaka-Sayedpur route for the convenience of people of the northern region. Answering to a supplementary raised by Awami League (AL) Lawmaker Mir Shakhawat Ali Badsha, the minister said the government has taken steps to complete the work of under-construction Khulna airport.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90238

Two Boeing aircraft to join Biman in 2011

The Daily Star, Friday January 15, 2010

Two new Boeing aircrafts will join the Biman fleet in 2011, as most of the planes of the national carrier are more than 15 years old and reaching the end of their economic life. A meeting of the cabinet committee on economic affairs on January 14 approved a proposal to give Biman Bangladesh Airlines the sovereign guarantee to take loans from local banks to purchase the airliners.

In line with an agreement with US-based Boeing Company, an aircraft will join the Biman fleet in November 2011, while another plane will be added in December of the same year, Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Shafique Alam Mehedi told The Daily Star.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121921>

Singapore team finds Biman's operation satisfactory

The Financial Express, Saturday January 23, 2010

A three-member audit team of the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) came to audit the national flag carrier of Bangladesh to see Biman's onboard safety measures, inside source of Biman told the FE. Regarding the CAAS audit outcome, the official claimed that the visiting team had expressed their satisfaction with Biman's flight safety, engineering and maintenance facilities.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90337

New player to fly the skies

The Daily Star, Sunday January 17, 2010

One of the country's oldest conglomerates, Habib Group, plans to venture into the aviation business, a growing market in Bangladesh. The group has 21 manufacturing and service sector concerns, ranging from apparels, power, steel and paper to fertilisers. It has already formed an entity -- HG Aviation Ltd -- as part of its plan to form an airline, Regent Airways, insiders said. The new airline eyes launching domestic flights by March, the first quarter of 2010.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122162>

United to fly to Manchester

The Daily Star, Monday January 18, 2010

United Airways (BD) Ltd, a private sector airline in the country, is going to operate flights to Manchester and Birmingham in the UK. The airline is also procuring two B767-300/200 ER aircrafts, which are likely to be commissioned on Sylhet-London routes from summer 2010. It has been operating two passenger flights a week on Dhaka-London (Gatwick) route since November 21 of last year. It is also planning to introduce additional passenger flights to London (Gatwick) from Dhaka and Sylhet.

United Airways came up with the plan to increase its flight frequencies to London from two to five per week following a two-day successful meeting on Air Service Agreement between the Civil Aviation Authority Bangladesh (CAAB) and the British Civil Aviation Department (BCAD), said a press release on January 17. The airline is currently operating flights from Dhaka to London, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Kathmandu, Kolkata, Chittagong, Jessore, Sylhet and Cox's Bazar and also from Chittagong to Kolkata.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122334>

Minister says Dhaka-NY flight resumes by March

The Daily Star, Friday January 22, 2010

The government hopes that the operation of Dhaka-New York flights will resume by next March following the addition of some leased Boeing 777 aircrafts. Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader said this in parliament on January 21 in reply to a supplementary question from Awami League lawmaker Manjur Quader Qureshi (Netrakna-3).

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122938>

Infrastructure & Energy

Power

All set for Singapore, New York road shows

The Financial Express, Friday January 22, 2010

Some 170 reputed international companies will take part in Bangladesh road shows in Singapore and New York next week to weigh up opportunities for investment in the country's nascent power and energy sectors, officials said. The government will put on offer several large power plants with the capacity of generating 4,000 megawatts of electricity and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal producing 3.5mn tonnes per year.

Rolls Royce, Enpower Corporation, Globeleq, AES, Vopak LNG, GCM Resources, Watson Gough, SBM Offshore, Mij International, Brummer & Partners, CDC Group, Seamark Group, EIC, RJI Capital, Centrax, Societe General and BNP Paribas are among the foreign firms that plan to take part in the London road show.

A total of 11 projects will be presented in the road shows. They include, Bibiyana 300-450 megawatt (MW) 2nd Unit, Meghnaghat 300-450mw dual fuel unit CC, Bhola 150-225mw 2nd CC, Savar Peaking and Kaliakoir Peaking plants each 100mw and imported coal-based steam plant of 2000-2600mw. Four renewable energy projects with a total capacity of generating 110mw will also be presented along with the LNG terminal project in the Bay of Bengal.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90261

India to help build power plants

Officials discuss grid inter-connection, coal-fired plants for Ctg, Khulna

The Daily Star, Wednesday January 13, 2010

On January 12 India offered assistance for Bangladesh's power sector that includes plans to build coal-fired power plants in Chittagong and Khulna. The offer was made during the first meeting of the Joint Steering Committee for Cooperation in the Power Sector in New Delhi. It was agreed that construction of the power plants would be undertaken as a joint venture with Bangladesh Power Development Board. India and Bangladesh's state-run power producers agreed to cooperate on the following projects:

a) The preparation of a feasibility report for two coal-fired power plants at Khulna and Chittagong - approximately 1320 MW each. NTPC will be offered to develop one of these projects in a joint venture with BPDB.

b) NTPC will have the opportunity to carry out technical assessment for BPDB's old thermal power stations for efficiency improvement, renovation and modernisation.

c) NTPC will provide training to power professionals from BPDB for their development. BPDB may first consider using the existing training modules of NTPC and assign some of their professionals for development. A long-term plan will be prepared simultaneously by NTPC for BPDB to utilize NTPC training facilities through tailor-made programmes to be organized by NTPC in India and Bangladesh.

d) To immediately start cooperation between the two companies, NTPC suggested taking up the O&M of Power Stations in Bangladesh on nomination, on a cost-plus basis. It was agreed that a Joint Technical Team will be formed within a week, with equal representation from NTPC and BPDB.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121704>

Coal power plants

Dhaka-Delhi joint Technical team study from March - 2010

The Financial Express, Sunday January 17, 2010

A joint technical team of Bangladesh and India will start a feasibility study next March to examine the pros and cons of installing two coal fired power plants in the country, reports BSS.

"We (officials of the two countries) will sit on February 18 for the preparation of a feasibility study for two coal fired power projects," ASM Alamgir Kabir, Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) Chairman told the news agency. "One of these projects would be developed by NTPC (National Thermal Power Company) in a joint venture with the PDB," he said.

As per the agreement of the first steering committee for power sector cooperation between Bangladesh and India, a six-member technical body will be formed in the proposed meeting. The technical body will work out every detail of the MoU (memorandum of understanding) on the grid inter-connection as well as cooperation between NTPC and PDB. The PDB chairman said they had selected two sites, Khulna and Chittagong.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89765

Bangladesh, India to establish power transmission line

The Financial Express, Friday January 15, 2010

Bangladesh and India have given a final shape to the agreement for setting up a 130-km power transmission line further strengthening cooperation between the two countries in the power sector. India has decided to set up a power transmission line between India and Bangladesh to be operational by July 2012 at an estimated cost of BDT 13.26bn (USD 191.66mn), Power Secretary HS Brahma told newsmen here. Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) would invest BDT 2.68bn (USD 38.88mn) while the rest would be borne by Bangladesh. Secretary of Power Division Mohammad Abul Kamal Azad led the Bangladesh delegation, media reports said.

The transmission line would connect Bheramara in Bangladesh and Behrampur in India. Out of the 130-km link, 45 km would fall in Indian Territory and the remaining on Bangladesh land, it said. India's largest power generation company National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) would also set up power projects in Bangladesh and would also take up renovation and modernization (R&M) of existing projects.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89604

Power import from India to start thru' Kushtia border

The Daily Star, Friday January 22, 2010

Ramkrishnapur under Bheramara upazila in Kushtia has been primarily selected for setting up of 250KV power sub-station aiming electricity import from India. A four-member team visited the location on January 19. Ishtiaq Hasan, project manager of Bangladesh Power Grid Company, led the team. Sources said the team finalized its report recommending the location as the most suitable site for the sub-station considering the geographical and other facilities. The survey report was sent to the authorities concerned on January 20. Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Bheramara Rajibul Islam and officials of Ishwardi 230 KV power sub-station were present during the survey.

According to the survey team, the government has 600 acres of free land under railway (west zone) in Ramkrishnapur while only 250 to 300 acres of land is necessary for the new sub-station. Moreover, the site is only 35 kilometres from Nadia, a border district of India, they added. Besides, setting up of power station here would reduce costs as a power network is already there from the Ishwardi sub-station. Only eight kilometres of cable connectivity will be necessary to supply electricity to Ishwardi sub-station, said the sources.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122920>

Dahagram-Angarpota enclaves to get electricity soon

The Daily Star, Friday January 15, 2010

Fifteen thousand inhabitants of Dahagram and Angarpota enclaves will soon get electricity after waiting for a long time. A battalion-level meeting between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on January 8 took the decision to provide the people of the enclaves with electricity. The people in the area see this decision as an achievement of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India.

This decision would play a significant role in improving the living standards of the people of the enclaves by opening up a new horizon in the education, health and agriculture sectors. According to sources, the people of the enclaves are likely to get electricity within the next month.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121968>

Another Kaptai dam for power generation Govt seeks US help

The Daily Star, Friday January 22, 2010

The government sought assistance from the USA in the power sector for building another Kaptai dam for doubling hydropower generation from the lake waters in Rangamati hill district. State Minister for Environment Hasan Mahmud sought the help when US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Patrick Moon met with him at his office on January 21.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122982>

PM Okays five rental bids New power projects to miss next irrigation season

The Daily Star, Friday January 15, 2010

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on January 14 approved bids for five rental power projects with a total production capacity of 330 megawatts. These were okayed by the cabinet purchase committee on December 23, 2009. Contracts with the bidders are expected to be signed in the next few days, sources said.

The projects include Barisal 50 MW heavy fuel oil (HFO)-fired plant, the contract for which was awarded to Coastal Saba, Noapara 100 MW HFO-fired plant and Bheramara 100 MW diesel-fired plant with the contracts awarded to Otobi, and Jamalpur 30 MW HFO-based plant and Thakurgaon 50 MW diesel-based plant with Rahim Afrooz getting the deals.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121931>

Govt move on 2nd nuclear power plant on way 1st one still on paper; but hopes pinned on such other projects in 10yrs

The Financial Express, Sunday January 17, 2010

Construction of a second nuclear power plant is in the government pipeline in line with the one at Ruppur, the pace of groundwork on which is moving in earnest, reliable sources disclosed on January 14. The country is poised to have a series of nuclear power plants in the coming decade under its long-term energy policy. "The 1000 MW power plant, which will be set up at the same site of the nuclear power plant project at Ruppur, may see the daylight by 2014 when the construction of the first plant would hopefully be at the final stage," a high level government official told the FE.

According to sources, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a recent cabinet meeting came up with the idea of a second power plant at the Ruppur site while mooted several such nuclear power plants to be built in various regions of the country by the end of the decade. "The idea of a second nuclear power plant was conceived after it was found that only one such single power plant would never be enough for meeting the government's target of fulfilling 10 per cent of the country's total energy consumption through nuclear power by 2020," the official added.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89724

255mw electricity to be added to nat'l grid by June

The Financial Express, Monday January 18, 2010

Three under-construction power plants in the Chittagong zone will add another 255 megawatts (mw) of electricity to the national grid by June of this year, reports BSS. Of these plants, the 55-mw plant at Shikalbaha will start commercial production on January 27, while the second 150-MW plant at the same site will start generation in April. The third unit of Karnaphuli hydroelectric power plant will start commercial operations of 50 mw electricity in June when rehabilitation of the plant will be completed.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89870

Ashuganj rental power plant now ready to operate National grid gets 55MW by this month

The Daily Star, Sunday January 17, 2010

The national grid will get 55 megawatt (MW) of electricity by the end of January, 2010 as a gas-fired rental power plant set up by a local company is likely to go into production in Ashuganj by that time. The company, Precision Energy Limited (Pel), started its pre-commissioning on January 16 after 15 months of delay. Now the plant is about to get ready for power generation and it can supply power to the national grid by January 31, official sources said.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122226>

Gas

Bapex set for maiden 3D survey

The Daily Star, Saturday January 23, 2010

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company (Bapex) is set to start for the first time three dimensional surveys in large national gas fields within a couple of months, completion of which will give a new understanding of the fields. A top Bapex official said through this survey, they expect to find an increase in recoverable gas reserves from Rashidpur and Titas fields by 3 to 4 trillion cubic feet (tcf). Of this, recoverable reserves of Titas may go up by 2 to 3 tcf. If the survey ups the recoverable gas reserves, wells with bigger casings may be constructed to increase gas production from these fields. If everything works well that could take a couple of years.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=123075>

Tender for LNG terminal likely by June - 2010

The Financial Express, Sunday January 24, 2010

The government will float a tender by June this year for a USD 1.0bn (BDT 69.2bn) liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal to ease the gas crisis and meet country's long-term energy needs, officials said on January 23. Prime Minister's energy adviser Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury said the government is simultaneously weighing the scope to import LNG on an urgent basis to supply gas to the gas-starved industries and power plants via special tankers known as floating, storage, re-gasification units or FSRUs.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90420

Ship-breaking policy soon: Barua

The Daily Star, Sunday January 17, 2010

The government will soon make a policy for the shipping-breaking industry to ensure environment-friendly growth of the troubled sector. Industries Minister Dilip Barua said this on January 16 while inaugurating a two-day workshop titled 'Chemical Hazards, Safety and Environment' at Mokarram Hossain Khandaker science building auditorium at Dhaka University. As planned in the proposed policy, all ship-breaking industries will be brought under a legal framework and control.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122168>

Seaports to be developed for use by India, Nepal, Bhutan: PM

The Financial Express, Sunday January 17, 2010

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told media personnel on January 16 that Bangladesh would soon take initiatives to prepare and develop the Chittagong and Mongla sea-ports and also its road and other related infrastructures "for movement of goods to, and from, India through road and rail," report agencies. Large investments will be required for the purpose and also to make the same facilities available to Nepal and Bhutan at both sea-ports of Bangladesh, she added.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89756

Chittagong port looks to partner with Malaysia's Penang

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 20 2010

The Chittagong port looks to build a strategic partnership with the Malaysian Penang port as the government moves to modernize the country's main gateway by sea, Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan said on January 19. He said Bangladesh was keen to make Malaysia's Penang its sister port to foster trade and economic relations between the two countries and also share expertise on how to operate the port in a more efficient way.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90060

BB sets ceiling on bank guarantee charge for ship builders

The Financial Express, Tuesday January 19, 2010

Local commercial banks will be able to charge a fee of not more than 1.5% annually for issuing any guarantee to local shipbuilders for receiving any advance from a ship importer abroad, officials said on January 18. "We've taken the measure to promote the country's growing shipbuilding industry," a senior official of the Bangladesh Bank (BB) told the FE, adding that the shipbuilders would benefit from the latest measure.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89975

15th landport at Ramgarh opens soon

The Financial Express, Sunday January 24, 2010

The 15th landport of the country on the frontier between Ramgarh under Khagrachhari of Bangladesh and Sabrum under Tripura state of India will soon begin functioning. Official sources said both the countries reached a consensus in this regard during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to India.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90423

Infrastructure**ESCAP to make plan for Asian connectivity****Rail, road networks, energy cooperation**

The Daily Star, Wednesday January 20, 2010

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has been requested by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to prepare the necessary programme for establishing road and railway connectivity among the Asian countries. ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer apprised President Zillur Rahman of this latest initiative when she paid a courtesy call on him at Bangabhaban on January 19. President Zillur Rahman appreciated the ESCAP for selecting Dhaka as its venue for the High-level Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and for giving the opportunity to Bangladesh to jointly host this important meeting.

On socioeconomic impacts of inter-regional connectivity, Heyzer said "The connectivity would facilitate the transporting of goods and services in this region." The UN agency is also working to build an energy-cooperation network in this region, she said.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122682>

India for fast rail upgrade for Bangladesh

The Daily Star, Wednesday January 13, 2010

On January 12, New Delhi assured Dhaka of speedy implementation of rail infrastructure upgrade projects in Bangladesh. All rail projects would be expedited as per the agreement with Bangladesh, Indian Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee told reporters after meeting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in New Delhi.

A railway link between Rohanpur and Singhabad to facilitate transit traffic from Bangladesh to Nepal through India and making Akhoura-Agartala line operational were finalized on January 12. Indian railway would help Bangladesh build rail infrastructure that is expected to allow train services from Kolkata to Tripura, she said.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121702>

PM to visit China soon**Deals likely on road, rail links, ports**

The Daily Star, Tuesday January 19, 2010

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit China soon to sign deals on road and rail links between Kunming and Chittagong, and the use of two seaports. "The agreement on the use of Chittagong and Mongla ports will be signed with China like India, Nepal and Bhutan," Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam told journalists at the party chief's political office in Dhanmondi.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122526>

Three elevated expressways draw good response from local, foreign bidders

The Financial Express, Wednesday January 13, 2010

Prospective national and international bidders have shown keen interest in participating in the prequalification bidding of the

country's first ever PPP project to construct three elevated expressways in Dhaka, requesting the government to provide articulate data for helping them prepare acceptable proposals. Representatives from different national, regional and international bidding companies on January 12 met the Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) at a pre-bid meeting and placed their request both verbally and in written form.

The companies that participated in the pre-bid meeting include Dopco from South Korea, Gammon House of Mumbai, Italian-Thai Development Public Company, KPMG-Singapore, Hyundai of Korea and R and R Holding.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89424

All highways to be made 4-lane

Communications minister informs National Parliament

The Financial Express, Tuesday January 12, 2010

The government has planned to upgrade all the highways to four-lanes in phases with an estimated expenditure of BDT 250.0bn in efforts to develop communication networks across the country, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told the House on January 11. The minister also said four hundred wide-body buses will be purchased to ply the capital to reduce traffic jams.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?id=121507>

Contract signed for 4-lane Dhaka-Ctg highway

The Daily Star, Monday January 11, 2010

On January 10, the government signed agreements with three construction companies to turn the Dhaka-Chittagong national highway into four lanes. Under the plan, the 192.30-km highway from Daudkandi to Chittagong City Gate would be made into a four-lane expanded road at a cost of BDT 16.55bn (USD 239.51mn).

The work of the project, divided into ten roadwork and three bridgework packages, is scheduled to be completed within 36 months, officials said. The project will have a five-metre wide median with plantation, a number of bridges totaling 1,137 metres in length, three railway overpasses, 33 steel foot-over-bridges and two underpasses.

The underpasses will be constructed at Comilla Cantonment and Chittagong while railway overpasses will be constructed at Comilla, Feni and Chittagong. Chinese company Sinohydro Corporation Ltd was awarded the work of seven road packages as the lowest bidder while two other local firms—Reza Construction and TBL-ACL-JV were given the works of three other road packages.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?id=121318>

Govt invites PQ tender to build 2nd Dhaka-Chittagong Highway

The Financial Express, Friday January 22, 2010

The government has taken a move to invite pre-qualification (PQ) tenders from national and international investors to construct the proposed second Dhaka-Chittagong Highway under a public-private-partnership (PPP). The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) issued the international notice on January 21, inviting proposals for two options -- one to build an access control highway and another to explore the possibility of building an elevated highway between the country's two major economic hubs.

The tender notice said an access control highway would be constructed from Daudkandi part of the existing highway moving towards Kachua-Laksham-Nangalkot to end at Rampur of the highway bypassing Feni. The feasibility study shows its total length to be 215-km, which would also have 1.6-km flyover and 10-km mega bridges of different kinds. The elevated expressway has been proposed for the entire 230-km length of the existing Dhaka-Chittagong Highway.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90253

WB offered new role in Padma bridge project

The Financial Express, Tuesday January 12, 2010

The government has decided not to select the World Bank as the lead donor for the Padma multipurpose bridge project and requested that the lending agency play a coordinator's role in the project to avoid conflicts with other development partners. The Economic Relations Division (ERD) issued a letter to the World Bank on January 11 with the request. It also highlighted the contributions of other development partners including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan International Cooperating Agency (JICA) to the country's mega project.

Officials of the communications ministry and the ERD said though the multilateral lending agency's commitment bridge project was so far the highest, the government took the decision following objections from other development partners.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89331

ECNEC approves 8 projects

The Financial Express, Friday January 22, 2010

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) on January 21 approved eight projects involving about BDT 26.54bn (USD 384.08mn), including BDT 14.35bn (USD 207.67mn)-in project assistance. The approved projects are: Enhancement of crop production through mechanization under the Agriculture Ministry, deep tube well installation project (2nd phase) under the Agriculture Ministry, procurement of 46 locomotives for Bangladesh Railway under the Road and Railway Division, Sayedabad water purification project (phase-2) under Local Government Division, Pirchar-Shibchar-Madaripur road expansion and improvement under Road and Railway Division, rehabilitation of Hatia-Jahajmara Road and Tamruddin link road (amended) under Road and Railway Division, construction of residential building and other work at National Defence College at Mirpur Cantonment under the Defence Ministry, and development and fortification of Bangladesh Betar Kabirpur 250-kilowatt short wave centre under the Information Ministry.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90263

Clean Energy

Country has potential to generate 350mw more low-cost hydropower

The Financial Express, Thursday January 21, 2010

The country has the potentials to generate more than 350 megawatts of low-cost hydropower by setting up new plants, especially in the southern region, a senior official of the state-owned Power Development Board (PDB) told the FE.

New power plants could be built on the banks of the rivers Sangu, Matamuhuri and Mohamaya to generate 100mw, 100mw and 50mw electricity respectively, he added. Two units could be built at the Karnafuli hydro-power station at Kaptai having the capacity of 50 mw each.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=90164

Manpower

Manpower export to top job destinations BAIRA demands govt's diplomatic efforts

The Financial Express, Tuesday January 19, 2010

Leaders of Bangladeshi recruiting agents on January 18 urged the government to launch diplomatic efforts to raise manpower exports to the country's top four job destinations for skilled and non-skilled workers, namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia and Iraq. "Bangladesh can export 0.8-1.0 million (8-10 lakh) manpower in 2010 if restrictions on export to those countries go," the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) President Golam Mustafa said at a press conference in the city.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89973

Libya keen to recruit docs, nurses, workers - Says minister

The Daily Star, Sunday January 17, 2010

Libya has expressed interest in recruiting a large number of doctors, nurses and workers from Bangladesh. Labour and Employment and Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Mosharraf Hossain said to journalists on his return from Libya at Zia International Airport on January 16.

The Libyan government will set up five vocational training centres in their country to increase skilled manpower, and trainers from Bangladesh will be appointed for imparting training in the centres, said the minister. Bangladesh and Libya have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this connection, he added.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=122241>

Textiles

Bangladesh's garment export gets a boost

The Financial Express, Friday, January 15, 2010

The garment industry of Bangladesh has bounced back after a lull period caused by order cuts or cancellations by some top US and European buyers in the wake of the global financial crisis. A massive diversion of orders from China, the world's largest apparel producer, has also contributed to this effect. In the first quarter of the fiscal year, garment shipments grew by a record 45% to USD 3.4bn, with over 90% of the exports going to the US and Europe. The people in the West are switching to cheaper items and their Bangladesh manufacturers, not the Chinese, who can supply the items at a price they now want. Bangladesh specializes in low-end clothing. The garment industry accounts for about 80% of Bangladesh exports and employs more than 40% of its industrial workforce.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89525

Insurance

Insurance turnover exceeds BDT 60bn (USD 868.31mn)

The Daily Star, Monday January 11, 2010

Insurance companies performed well in 2009, beating back the impact of the global recession. Turnover from insurance business surpassed BDT 60bn (USD 868.31mn) in 2009 with life insurance alone having a record of BDT 50bn (USD 723.59mn). The growth rate of insurance stood at 20 percent to 25 percent, said an official of Bangladesh Insurance Association (BIA). Business turnover of general insurance covered the remaining volume of business and its growth rate is estimated at 15 percent to 20 percent, he added.

Insurance business in 2008 stood at BDT 47.13bn (USD 682.05mn), while it was BDT 35.97bn (USD 520.55mn) for life insurance. It is to be noted that the business growth figure has been estimated on the basis of premium income reports presented by 22 life insurance and general insurance companies to BIA for the period up to September 2009.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=121299>

USD 2.0mn (BDT 138.2mn) micro-insurance project launched

The Financial Express, Tuesday January 12, 2010

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Bangladesh have recently signed a letter of agreement (LoA) for a USD 2.0mn (BDT 138.2mn) project titled 'Developing Inclusive Insurance Sector,' said a press release. Jointly developed by PKSF, the Government of Bangladesh, the Government of Japan and ADB as an inclusive micro-insurance initiative, the project is expected to benefit about 20,000 poor households.

The project will reach out to the poor and vulnerable in rural households, particularly women, by enabling them to seek protection from common risks, which threaten their daily lives through affordable insurance coverage. PKSF will implement the project to be financed by a USD 2.0mn (BDT 138.2mn) grant from the Government of Japan through the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR).

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=89288