



Md Sanaullah Shahid, chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank, presides over the 13th extraordinary general meeting and 19th annual general meeting (AGM) of the bank through a digital platform on August 12. In the AGM, the bank declared 5 per cent stock and 5 per cent cash dividends for its shareholders. M Shahidul Islam, managing director and CEO, also attended the event.

Australian jobs surge in July

REUTERS, Sydney
Australian employment surged further in July, handily beating forecasts, though the increase was still not enough to offset the ballooning numbers of those looking for work as the jobless rate ticked up to a 22-year high.

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on Thursday showed employment jumped by 114,700, on top of a hefty 210,800 new jobs in June and surpassing expectations for a 40,000 increase as large parts of the economy reopened.

Australia has been one of the few countries in the world with relatively low numbers of coronavirus infections and death. Most states and territories reopened their economies in late May, although a recent resurgence of cases and deaths in Victoria marked an unwelcome setback.

The July jobs boost came as the number of people out of work, available to work and actively looking for work topped one

million for the first time ever, the data showed.

Indeed, the participation rate rose by 0.6 percentage points to 64.7 per cent. As a result, the jobless rate climbed to 7.5 per cent from 7.4 per cent in June, highest since late 1998, but below the 7.8 per cent forecast.

The monthly increase in employment was underpinned by a jump of 71,200 in part-time work while full-time jobs rose by 43,500.

Employment was still more than half a million people lower than in March when coronavirus-driven shutdowns kicked in. "The pick-up in employment in July is likely to be unwound in the coming months as the stricter lockdown in Victoria weighs on the labour market," said Ben Udy, analyst at Capital Economics.

Udy expects the unemployment rate to shoot up to 8.5 per cent in coming months. "... the stalling in business and consumer confidence suggest that the recovery in other states is running out of steam."



A cashier works behind a protective plexiglass shield at a Coles supermarket following the easing of restrictions implemented to curb the spread of the Covid-19 in Sydney, Australia.

China's banking sector expected to dispose \$490b of bad loans in 2020

REUTERS, Beijing
China's banking industry is expected to dispose 3.4 trillion yuan (\$489.91 billion) of bad loans in 2020 to contain financial risks in an economy weakened by COVID-19, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

"The sector will further step up bad loan disposals in 2021, as some of the problems will be exposed next year due to delayed loan payments," Xinhua quoted Guo Shuqing, chairman of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission (CBIRC), as saying in an interview released on Thursday.

Chinese lenders disposed 2.3 trillion yuan of bad loans in 2019, according to Guo. Guo, also the Communist Party chief of China's central bank, warned that financial risks are prone to occur under current circumstances, and that the upward pressure on bad loans is "relatively big".

He urged banks to boost loan loss provisions and replenish their capital to strengthen their buffers against risks.

Asia markets mostly up after US rally, stimulus woe tempers hope

AFP, Hong Kong
Asian markets mostly rose Thursday following a rally on Wall Street but investors continued to fret over US lawmakers' failure to find common ground on a new rescue package for their beleaguered economy.

All three main indexes in New York saw more sharp gains fuelled by optimism over the US economic recovery following a forecast-busting jump in inflation that indicated the key consumer sector was revving up again, while hopes for a vaccine and the wall of central bank cash were also providing support.

Asian traders extended the rally in early trade but struggled to maintain momentum. Tokyo ended up 1.9 per cent as a recent drop in the safe-haven yen boosted exporters, while Singapore and Manila also added more than one percent. Seoul, Taipei, Jakarta and Wellington were also higher.

But Hong Kong dipped 0.2 per cent, Sydney fell 0.7 per cent and Manila shed 0.4 per cent.

London sank one percent at the open after jumping more than two percent Wednesday, while Paris and Frankfurt were slightly lower.

"The main force that's been driving markets the last few weeks has really been momentum," said Kevin Caron at Washington Crossing.

"We've got a market that has taken a great deal of comfort in that fiscal policy is going to be there to support an economy through tough times."

"There was also some cheer about Joe Biden's choice of Kamala Harris as his running mate for November's election, with observers pointing out she is not considered anti-business and was a more centre-ground politician than other options."



But stalled talks in Washington dampened the mood. Traders have continued to bet on Congress eventually agreeing on a new pandemic deal despite long-running animosity between Democrats and Republicans.

But both sides are blaming each other for the lack of movement, with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin saying House Leader Nancy Pelosi would not budge unless their demand for spending of at least \$2 trillion is met.

That is well down from the \$3.5 trillion initially proposed by Democrats but Republicans say they are unwilling to shift from their \$1 trillion plan.

"The Democrats have no interest in negotiating," Mnuchin said, accusing them of playing politics to hurt Donald Trump with a general election just months away.

But in a joint statement, Pelosi and top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said: "Democrats have compromised."

They added: "Repeatedly, we have

made clear to the administration that we are willing to come down \$1 trillion if they will come up \$1 trillion.

However, it is clear that the administration still does not grasp the magnitude of the problems that American families are facing.

"There is also a focus on this weekend's US-China talks to review their trade pact signed in January."

There had been concerns that rising tensions between the superpowers could scupper the agreement, which ended a painful and long-running trade war that battered the global economy.

But top officials on both sides have expressed confidence the deal will be kept in place and analysts said there was little desire from either side to scrap it.

"From the US perspective, imposing more trade taxes on US companies in the middle of a pandemic would generally be considered a bad thing for the stock market," said Stephen Innes at AxiCorp.



Exim Bank Managing Director and CEO Mohammed Haider Ali Miah speaks at the Half Yearly Business Development Conference 2020 of the bank organised through a digital platform on August 12.

Electronic cash devices to be rolled out on 25 Aug

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The NBR plans to buy more of the devices after the successful installation of the first 100,000 EFDs.

There will be a huge transformation when all stores start using the e-devices, said Hossain.

"We have to move gradually taking businesses on board."

The NBR official said the EFDs will be helpful for firms to know the actual sales of their stores and branches and curb the scope of leakages.

There will be incentives for the customers so that they feel encouraged to receive EFD-generated receipts.

There will be quick response (QR) code on the receipt and mobile phone number of customers will be recorded at the NBR's server when they scan the code.

The NBR will hold lottery three to four times every year to award people for using EFDs while buying goods and services.

Lenovo sails past expectations with 31pc Q1 profit jump

REUTERS, Hong Kong
Lenovo Group, the world's biggest PC maker, smashed expectations with a 31 per cent leap in first-quarter net profit, as the coronavirus pandemic spurs businesses to shift to remote work and schools to switch to online learning.

Consumers stuck at home are also spending more on PCs and other smart devices for entertainment purposes, the Chinese giant said.

Net profit came in at \$213 million for the April-June quarter, nearly double market estimates while

revenue grew 7 per cent to \$13.3 billion.

In particular, China sales surged, climbing 17 per cent while those in Europe, the Middle East and Africa jumped 28 per cent. Sales in the Americas however dropped 9 per cent, hit by a declining demand for smartphones in Latin America and a shortage of components for Chromebooks in North America.

"Chinese government is driving domestic consumption - for sure we should leverage that to grow our business. Last quarter results can prove that we have very strong

position in China," Lenovo Chairman Yang Yuanqing told a briefing.

Yang told Reuters in a later interview that demand still had far more room to grow in China, where the penetration rate for PCs was still somewhere between 20 per cent and 30 per cent compared to that in the United States of 70 per cent.

He said Lenovo's sales during China's June 18 shopping festival - which is heavily promoted by e-commerce platforms - had doubled over the previous year. "We really see the strong rebound after the COVID-19," he said.

Govt looks to implement plans on ease of doing business on time

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"We have to ensure a smooth implementation by working step by step so that the process is completed in due time," Kamal said, adding that the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) will coordinate with ministries, departments and agencies to this end.

The finance minister also said that the committee will soon hold another meeting that will include even more people who have roles to play in the implementation plans.

Several initiatives have been put in place to improve the country's ease of doing business. However, some complications have already arisen.

The World Bank releases a report on the ease of doing business in countries all over the world each year. The report and subsequent placing on the index are based on 10 economic indicators.

The indicators are: the number of business start-ups, construction approvals, power acquisitions, property registrations and loan disbursements made in a country alongside its rate of small investor interest, tax payment, border trade, contract enforcement and bankruptcy settlement.

As per the World Bank's definition, a business start-up index is a measure of the time and expense required to resolve a business dispute and the quality of the legal process involved.

On Wednesday, Salman F Rahman, the Prime Minister's private industry and investment adviser, said that the current Awami League government has targeted a double-digit ranking for Bangladesh on the Ease of Doing Business index by 2021.

"So, we have to forge ahead keeping that target in mind," he added.

Bangladesh jumped eight notches to 168th out of 190 countries in the global ease of doing business ranking.

The meeting decided that it would frame another outline for implementing the plans that will identify those who will be given supervisory roles and those who will carry out other responsibilities, BIDA executive chairman Md Sirazul Islam told The Daily Star.

It is a part of the government's move to improve Bangladesh's ranking on the ease of doing business index within the next year, Islam said.

Tipu Munshi, minister of commerce; Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, minister of home affairs; Md Tajul Islam, minister of local government; Farhad Hossain, state minister for public administration; Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, state minister for shipping; and Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, were also present at the meeting.

Should Bangladesh Bank scale up its gold holdings?

FROM PAGE B1
Global central banks bought a record of 385.7 tonnes of gold in the first half of last year.

But, the declining trend of gold purchasing by global central banks is a temporary phenomenon as they are now in a state of crisis due to their effort to fight against the financial meltdown.

Against the backdrop, the central bank should start to frame a roadmap to invest its reserve into gold in the days ahead. This will also help it trade off the loss because of its investment in different short-term investment in both global central banks and commercial banks.

BSEC continues with its tough stance on gamblers

FROM PAGE B4
The commission meeting allowed Mir Akhter Hossain to find its cut-off price, which is going to raise a capital of Tk 125 crore through book building method.

With the proceeds of the initial public offering, it will purchase construction materials, machinery and repay loans. The construction company's earnings per share stood at Tk 6.32 for the 2018-19 financial year. IDLC Investments is its issue manager.

BSEC approved the right shares of Pragati Life Insurance to raise a fund of Tk 23 crore. The premium of each share is Tk 5.

Latifur Rahman: a role model for new generation of businessmen

FROM PAGE B4
Zaraif Ayaat Hossain, a grandson of Rahman, said the integrity, honesty and values of Latifur Rahman are memorable.

"The amazing legacy of Latifur Rahman will continue. We will always uphold his vision and values."

"We are all here today with heavy hearts. He was an example of a true entrepreneur. Let's learn from him how to live larger than lives," said Syed Ershad Ahmed, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh.

Mahbub Jamil, chairman of ICE Technologies, did not find any arrogance in Rahman. "He had always had a smiling face. A person like him is rare. We could have learnt a lot had he lived longer."

"Latifur Rahman was not just an individual; he was a brand," said Mohammad Ali Khokon, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association.

"He was committed to the country.

He was down to the earth. I have not heard of any criticism about him," he said.

Abdul Muktedir, senior vice-president of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, said Rahman established high-quality factories and business in the pharmaceuticals sector.

"The legacy that he has left behind is simply unbelievable. The kind of commitment he had in this country is also unbelievable."

The chairman of Incepta Pharmaceuticals said many people believe that Bangladesh is not a safe place for investment and many bought homes abroad for safety.

"But he did not do so. He used to say that Bangladesh is his place to invest and he believes in Bangladesh and invested here. Many people do not know the value of this kind of philosophy," Muktedir said.

"If we follow his principles in business, we can see a big change in Bangladesh in the next 15 years."

Mohammad Hatem, vice-president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said: "We can learn the ethical business from Rahman."

"Rahman was not only a business leader but also a role model for us. He was a living legend," said Rupali Chowdhury, president of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Mahbubul Alam, president of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said Rahman himself was an institution.

"He was like an ambassador of the country and business community."

Members of the private sector and the younger generation are enjoying the benefits of the hard work and dedication of Rahman, said Shams Mahmud, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Tareq Rahman, president of the Nordic Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said Latifur Rahman's ethical values are second to none.