

Stocks

DGEN ▼ 1.44%
2,942.44

CSCX ▼ 1.56%
6,537.34
(Week-on-week)

Asian Markets


MUMBAI ▲ 0.29%
16,264.30


TOKYO ▼ 0.66%
10,444.33

SINGAPORE ▲ 0.04%
2,681.03

SHANGHAI ▲ 2.22%
2,989.79
(Friday closings)

Commodities

 **Gold** ▲
\$998.88
(per ounce)

 **Oil** ▼
\$71.98
(per barrel)
SOURCE: AFP

(As of Friday)

News in Brief

Bloomberg considering BusinessWeek bid

AFP, Washington

Financial news agency Bloomberg is considering a bid for BusinessWeek magazine, The Wall Street Journal said Friday.

The newspaper, citing "people familiar with the matter," said other potential bidders include Bruce Wasserstein, chief executive of investment bank Lazard Ltd., and private equity firms OpenGate Capital and Platinum Equity.

The Journal said bids for the magazine, owned by US publisher McGraw-Hill, are due next week.

McGraw-Hill said in that July it was "exploring strategic options for BusinessWeek," which has a US circulation of 936,000 and was founded in 1929.

The Journal said Bloomberg's interest in BusinessWeek reflects its interest in expanding beyond its core business of providing financial data, analytics and news to professionals.

Delta may invest up to 550 million dollars in JAL

AFP, Tokyo

US carrier Delta Air Lines may invest up to 550 million dollars in cash-strapped Japan Airlines to make it the carrier's biggest shareholder, Japanese media reported Saturday.

Delta has told JAL of its interest in investing up to 50 billion yen in the Japanese carrier, the Nikkei business daily and public broadcaster NHK said.

Reports emerged Friday that JAL, Asia's biggest airline, was reported to have entered "full-scale" talks over capital aid of tens of billions of yen from Delta.

Such an investment would give the world's largest airline operator a stake of up to 11 percent in JAL, which is undergoing a government-supervised reorganisation, the Nikkei said.

Contact Us

If you have views on Star Business or news about business in Bangladesh, please email us at business@thedailystar.net



SHAFIQUL ALAM

Shoppers crowd the floor of Bashundhara City mall on Friday, as the weekend is a time for shopping for many. With Eid-ul-Fitr nearing, people are now rushing to their favourite spots to settle final bargains.

Pharma sales upbeat

SAYEDA AKTER

Local pharmaceutical sales have grown to 21 percent in the April-June period, a rise from 19 percent in the first three months of this year, according to a report of a global pharmaceutical market intelligence agency.

Intercontinental Marketing Services (IMS) published the quarterly report in August.

Developed manufacturing process, newer investments in the sector and improved marketing strategy boosted the sales growth, said industry insiders.

Opsonin Pharma Ltd performed the best with a 51 percent growth, followed by Eskayef Bangladesh Ltd with 42 percent and Drug International Ltd with 39 percent in the period, the IMS report said.

Among the top ten performers ranked by IMS, others are Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Reneta Ltd, Advanced Chemical Industries

(ACI) Ltd, Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Aristopharma Ltd and ACME Laboratories Ltd.

IMS report indicates the local retail sales of pharmaceutical products of different countries for a particular period, excluding the government purchase and exports.

AM Faruque, managing director of Eskayef Bangladesh, said enhanced quality of their products helped increase prescription coverage during this period.

"The first and foremost concern of a consumer is the quality of a product. So when a drug company produces high quality products, doctors confidently prescribe the medicines of that company, eventually helping increase its sales," he said.

"People usually visit the doctors more when they are financially better off. This year the bumper production of Boro crop helped more people go to doctors. It's also an important reason for sales

growth," Faruque added.

"We are constantly trying to improve the quality of our products," he said, adding that the marketing strategy of the company also added to the growing sales in both the local and international markets.

Syed Golam Rahman, general manager of Opsonin Pharma, also echoed Faruque's view, saying the increased prescription coverage and improved marketing strategy have fueled their growth in sales.

"Simultaneously, we have launched some new products in the local market that also helped us gain more revenue," he said.

Opsonin recorded a 38 percent growth in the January-June period of this year, the highest among the local companies, said Rahman.

Square Pharmaceuticals, the local leader with around 20 percent of the total market share, has recorded an 18 percent growth in the April-June period.

Ahmed Kamrul Alam, assistant

general manager of Square Pharmaceuticals, said quality products and growing health awareness among people are the main reasons behind the growth in sales.

Square launched some essential pharmaceutical products, including anti-fungal and anti-depression medicines in the April-June period, which also helped the company post more sales in local market, said Alam.

Currently, the market size of the local pharmaceutical industry is worth Tk 7,000 crore, said industry insiders.

There are 250 small, medium and large local and multinational pharmaceutical companies operating in Bangladesh. Of the companies, the top 10 -- Square, Beximco, Eskayef, Incepta, ACME, Opsonin, Reneta, ACI, Aristopharma and Drug International -- take up nearly 70 percent of the total market, according to an IMS survey conducted in 2008.

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Imitation ornaments are on display at a showroom of Milon City Gold Ltd in Jhenidah. The local jewellery maker has boosted its sales by offering quality products for low prices. The company has grown into an employer of about 650 workers in three factories that produce around 4,000 pairs of jewellery a day.

STAR

Jhenidah jeweller holds out hope

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

A jewellery maker, based in Jhenidah, has widened its market reach by offering low-priced but quality ornaments.

Located in Moheshpur upazila in the district, Milon City Gold Ltd produces an array of imitation ornaments such as earrings, bangles, bracelets, necklaces and chains.

Earrings priced at only Tk 50 to Tk 60 a pair have become a hit among women. Customers can also electroplate their old imitation ornaments only for Tk 20 to Tk 30.

"We are planning to export the ornaments soon," Rashedunnabi Milon, managing director of Milon City Gold, told The Daily Star.

Milon's father Rahim Uddin started the jewellery business at Moheshpur Bazaar in 1974. After his father's death, Milon took the

reins of the company in 2003 when the prices of gold were high.

He experienced the first signs of profit in 2004 -- a year for a turnaround. Milon said his daily sales turnover reaches as high as Tk 2 lakh.

The company has grown into an employer of about 650 workers in three factories that produce around 4,000 pairs of jewellery a day.

Apart from the factories, the company has two showrooms -- one in Moheshpur town and the other in Dhaka.

Dipali Rani, a customer from Kaliganj, said she had come here to buy the ornaments as their colour lasts long.

Abed Ali, a wholesaler from Kushtia, said the items produced by Milon City Gold cost less than Indian peers.

"People from all walks of life use these imita-

tion ornaments," Ali said.

Indian ornaments dominated the local market before the arrival of Milon City Gold.

The pricey Indian ornaments are losing out to the local company. A pair of Indian earrings costs around Tk 200 to Tk 250 -- much higher than the local ones.

But Milon is not free from worries. He said the local ornaments are made manually. On the other hand, Indian companies are mass-producing the ornaments by machine in a short spell of time.

Local companies like Milon City Gold are reluctant to set up ornament-making machinery as they suffer nagging power outages.

"Milon City Gold is our pride. We will do our best to ensure adequate electricity to help them set up automated machines," Shafiqul Azam Khan, a lawmaker from Jhenidah-3, told The Daily Star.

Q1 progress report on projects from next month

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

As part of a new exercise to ensure proper implementation of the annual budget, the finance ministry has early this month sought the first quarterly progress reports of all projects and programmes from all the ministries and departments.

The officials who man the projects have been directed to submit the reports next month so that these can be placed before the next parliament session, possibly in November.

The move has been initiated under Public Finance and Budget Management Act, 2009, which was passed in the budget session.

The finance ministry, who has prepared a list of 217 priority programmes as per the current budget, sent letters to secretaries of the ministries concerned asking for such quarterly progress reports.

Reminding the ministries' top officials, who are ex-officio the chief financial officers, of their failure in achieving project budget targets at the end of the financial year, these advisory letters pointed out that cost-effectiveness of government money and quality could not be ensured in different projects because of the hurried implementation of those.

A bigger portion of the budgetary allocation for most projects and programmes remained unspent, the letters also said. As a result, the government had to take the liabilities of internal loans.

The quarterly progress reports will help bring efficiency and discipline in project execution, the letters sent to the secretaries hopped.

This dispatch preceded a meeting with the secretaries last month, with the finance minister in the chair, where they were advised to open planning and budget cells in their respective ministries. The officials working with these cells should not be transferred, the meeting was told.

Available data during the last two decades show that annual development programmes (ADP) were often down-sized on revision of every fiscal year's budget.

Sometimes, implementation of the revised budget has not been possible.

Investigations reveal one-fourths of the entire budgetary allocation is shown spent on the last day of every fiscal year. Revelations are there that even programmes under any revenue budget remained unimplemented despite various government steps.

Officials said the past failures have prompted the government to move for the first time to enact a law in parliament to expedite implementation pace.

The projects the finance ministry listed include setting up of about 2500 community clinics, 5 new medical colleges, 6 health technology institutes and 12 nursing institutes and formulation of patient welfare fund policy.

Besides, connecting Bangladesh with 2nd submarine cable under the telecommunication ministry and bringing all upazilas under internet in five years in addition to widening networks for 6 divisional cities and other 23 district towns.

Also, formulation of the national ICT road map and establishment of an expatriate bank are on the list of projects.

Govt urged to open discussion on WTO issues in parliament

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Equity and Justice Working Group (EJWG), a forum of non-government and civil society organisations, yesterday called upon the government to initiate open discussion in parliament for outlining Bangladesh's position at the forthcoming WTO Ministerial in Geneva.

"The government should take decision based on open discussion. We want the government to raise the WTO-related issues in parliament," said Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, convener of EJWG, at a press conference in Dhaka.

The EJWG, which campaigns for economic justice, raised the issue after trade ministers of about 36 nations concluded talks in New Delhi early this month, affirming the need to complete the eight-year-old Doha Round expeditiously by 2010.

The informal Delhi ministerial meeting called upon top negotiators to meet in Geneva this week to draw up a process of engagement for the next two to three months.

The meeting also called for works with the chairs of the negotiating groups to prepare an overall agenda of action ahead of the seventh WTO Ministerial Summit scheduled to begin in Geneva on November 30 this year.

Rezaul said the two-day Delhi meet brought together trade ministers of the biggest players such as the United States, the EU, Brazil and China and other key WTO members.

"But unfortunately Bangladesh did not receive invitation for attending the meeting although it plays a leading role to raise concerns of the least-developed countries (LDCs)," he said.

"We felt embarrassed for not getting any invitation from our neighbour India," said Rezaul, blaming the Bangladesh government and the role of Geneva mission for not winning an invitation for attending the Delhi ministerial meeting.

In absence of Bangladesh at the Delhi meeting, the LDCs' one of the major demands -- movement of natural persons to facilitate manpower export -- was not raised at all, the EJWG said.

The forum said the issue of duty- and quota-free market access for LDCs was raised in a low voice.

"We will lose much in the upcoming WTO ministerial talks unless we can strongly raise our demands for duty- and quota-free access and movement of natural persons," said Rezaul.

The commerce ministry had earlier announced that Bangladesh would negotiate at the ministerial for attaining duty- and quota-free access for its major exportable products to rich economies.

The EJWG suggested the government should take a strong leadership role in favour of LDCs' concerns and demands.



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