

Stocks

DGEN ▲ 0.48%
3,058.79

CSCX ▲ 0.66%
6,716.42

Asian Markets

MUMBAI ▲ 0.20%
16,711.11

TOKYO ▲ 1.68%
10,443.80

SINGAPORE ▼ 0.07%
2,672.60

SHANGHAI ▲ 2.02%
3,060.26

Currencies

	Buy Tk	Sell Tk
USD	68.42	69.42
EUR	98.88	104.12
GBP	110.97	116.40
JPY	0.74	0.83

SOURCE: STANDARD CHARTERED BANK

Commodities

Gold ▲
\$1,021.54
(per ounce)

Oil ▲
\$72.68
(per barrel)

SOURCE: AFP

(Midday Trade)

News in Brief

India says inflation returns as food prices soar

AFP, New Delhi

India reported a return to inflation Thursday as a result of soaring food costs fuelled by a bad monsoon, prompting speculation about when the central bank may hike interest rates.

Prices, which have been falling since June, rose 0.12 percent, according to the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), India's most watched cost-of-living benchmark.

It followed a fall of 0.12 percent the week before.

The increase, reported by India's Ministry of Commerce, defied forecasts by economists that prices would fall by 0.1 percent and came despite a strong year-ago base effect.

86pc in US believe recession continues: Poll

AFP, Washington

Eighty-six percent of US adults believe the country remains in recession despite upbeat statements to the contrary from Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke, a CNN/Opinion Research poll out Thursday showed.

Only 13 percent of those surveyed agree with Bernanke, who on Tuesday said the US recession, which began in December 2007, "is very likely over at this point" from a technical perspective.

"Economists have typically called an end to recessions long before the public thinks hard times have passed," said Keating Holland, the CNN polling director.

Contact Us

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Chittagong Port wears a deserted look as stevedores went on strike yesterday to demand an increase in their Eid bonuses. Read the story on page 1.

FDI inflow sets a new benchmark

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh ranks third among the South Asian countries in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow list for 2008. The country received \$1.09 billion in the year.

This is for the first time the country crossed the billion-dollar mark in terms of FDI inflow, according to the World Investment Report (WIR) 2009, released globally yesterday.

The WIR 2009 shows that Bangladesh received 63 percent more FDI in 2008 than that of 2007. FDI inflow was \$666.3 million in 2007.

Prepared by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the report subtitled "Transnational Cooperation, Agricultural

Production and Development" was released by the Board of Investment (BoI) in Bangladesh yesterday.

In 2008 India received \$41.56 billion FDI and Pakistan \$5.4 billion, making them top two FDI receiving countries in the area. India ranked 13th globally, while the global ranking for Bangladesh was not available.

Despite a worldwide financial crisis, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan have made significant progress in receiving FDI.

But FDI inflow in Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan declined during the time, while it remained static in the Maldives at \$15 million both in 2007 and 2008, the report says.

"The rise in FDI shows that investors prefer Bangladesh for their business," SA

Samad, executive chairman of BoI, told journalists at the report launching programme.

Samad however termed the FDI inflow in the country 'very low' compared to the position of other countries. He said small countries like Taiwan and Singapore received a huge amount of FDI for congenial business environment and adequate infrastructure facilities.

"We are among the worst performers in the global ranking," said the BoI executive chairman.

He said gas, power and infrastructure are some of the lucrative areas that interest the foreign investors.

He also stressed infrastructure development, and branding Bangladesh positively to attract more FDI.

According to the report, telecommu-

nication sector performed the best in 2008 receiving \$641.39 million, which was \$201.90 million in the previous year.

Textiles and weaving pulled in \$126.36 in 2008, while the amount was \$102.35 million in 2007.

Banking, the third largest FDI recipient, attracted \$141.76 million, which was \$79.96 million in 2007.

Food industry received \$22.89 million in 2008, agriculture and fisheries \$14.43 million and others \$139.5 million, while the figures were \$9.84 million, \$7.33 million and \$264.99 million respectively in 2007.

Egypt emerged as the top investor in 2008 with \$373.4 million as its telecom company Orascom invested heavily in Bangladesh's mobile phone operator Banglalink. The second largest investor

was UK with \$130.57 million. Bangladesh received \$102.19 million from the United Arab Emirates, \$70.72 million from Malaysia, \$57.15 million from Japan and \$44.64 million from South Korea in the period.

The United States, Hong Kong, Norway and the Netherlands were the other major investors in 2008.

BoI officials at the function said a total of 89 foreign companies registered themselves with the BoI in the first eight months of 2008 till August to invest Tk 4,161 crore, while registration in the same period of 2007 was worth Tk 4,668 crore.

Dr M Ismail Hossain, professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University, presented the report, while Abu Reza Khan, executive member of BoI, also spoke among others.

Sleepless for shopping

MD HASAN and REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

It was almost midnight. Shoppers' turnout was same like the rest of the day at Bashundhara City shopping mall. Each floor of the eight-storey mall was abuzz.

Young boys and married couples were the majority at the city's different shopping malls, with a few days left for celebrating the two main religious festivals back-to-back. Eid and then Durga Puja.

Long queues were seen at ATM booths outside some malls, indicating much money was circulating for the shopping purpose.

"I think it's the best time for shopping after taking Iftar and dinner," said Russell, a student of Dhaka University, standing in front of a Cats Eye showroom at Bashundhara. Russell bought some T-shirts, which he said are the best for this season's fashion.

Customers were seen rushing mainly to shoe, punjabi and baby-wear shops. Women were crowding cosmetics outlets.

Bata Shoe showrooms witnessed a heavy crowd. Shoe is the item that the customers usually buy during the last hour shopping, said Atique, a salesman. He said daily sales went up to Tk 25 lakh from Tk 15 lakh in the first week of Ramadan.

At Family Mart, a baby-wear shop, Noumita wanted to buy a dress with a price tag of Tk 8,000. But her parents declined as the price was too high. However the gloomy face of Noumita was enough to convince her parents. She smiled her gain.

Salespersons at Family Mart said the customers' flow to the market remained same until 12.30am. Shopkeepers were busy until 1.30 at Bashundhara City.

There is no limit of choices for products in the Eid shopping. So crowd was seen at almost all types of shops.

At the music outlets, albums of Bappa and Tapu were seen on the top selling list. "Three albums of the two artists are on the top in terms of sales," said Alamgir of Smiley CD shop.

"Eid doesn't mean wearing smart clothes only. Music and movie are also

the parts of the festival," said Tanmay who was holding more than 30 CDs in his hand at the Smiley CD shop to pick his choices.

A big crowd was also seen in Eastern Plaza and Elephant Road shopping areas.

But the footpath vendors were not that busy. From Fakirapool to Motijheel a few customers were found. Shopkeepers blamed heavy rain for slack sales in the roadside makeshift markets.

"Sale is good. Electricity shortage sometimes disrupts our sales," said Mia Rahmat, who was closing his clothes shop at 12.45am at Baitul Mukarram market.

At 1am, Karnaphuli Garden City mall at Kakrail was closed. But the markets in Malibagh areas were open until 2am. "We are coming at midnight as we had shift duties in our company that ended at 8pm," said Aysha, a garment worker at Mouchak market.

"This area is suitable for us for buying clothes at affordable prices," she added.

Eid marks up punjabi sales



REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Many cannot think of a festival like Eid without punjabi. They do not want to miss the chance to pick up this attractive and comfortable dress from the city shops.

Although the festival vacation is yet to kick-off, the rush reached its peak everywhere, be it Elephant Road, Peer Yeaman Market, Gulistan, Gausia or Dhanmondi.

The demand for embroidered ones is high, according to retailers.

"To me, Eid means buying new punjabi," said Mansur Alam, who buys a piece, at least, every year. However, this senior executive of a private bank finds the prices relatively higher this time.

The prices of embroidered punjabi range from Tk 900 to Tk 2000 a piece. Posh shopping malls charge higher, between Tk 3000 and Tk 6000.

"Eid is only around four days away. Time is money now because we don't waste it in bargain. The high demand for punjabis turns a boon for us. Sales go brisk and we expect a peak time at Chand Rat (moon sighting night)," Mohammed Faruque of Khushaal, one of the largest punjabi stores on New Elephant Road, told The Daily Star yesterday.

A further rush of customers is imminent, as the Eid vacation starts today, he added.

On higher prices of embroidered punjabis, some shop owners pointed their fingers at the high cost of design and raw materials.

Retailers said they send simple punjabis to the designers in rural areas to embroider those in metal items and beads to make the pieces more attractive to the fashion-conscious buyers, especially the young section of the society.

Punjabis inscribed with traditional local symbols and heritages are available at Shahbagh area.

The presence of punjabi customers was found relatively thin in the upmarket like Gulshan area, as majority of them were window-shoppers.

Meanwhile, Bazlur Rahman of Moon Garment in Elephant Road area pointed to many options for the customers, in terms of markets and products.

However, upper middle class customers and young people are more interested in branded shirts, rather than a new punjabi, he said.

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In Pabna, hand embroidery picks up pace



AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

At her young age, Shahana Khatun learnt how to do intricate hand embroidery on saris at home from her father.

Shahana, an eighth grader, goes to work after school and embroiders saris into the evening. She has been working there over the last two years, earning Tk 300-Tk 1,500 per sari depending on designs.

She is one of the many working on colourful saris in a small handicrafts factory near her home on Nazimuddin Road in Ishwardi upazila in Pabna.

Most of the workers are young women and children engaged in hand embroidery, commonly known as karchupi shilpo. There are at least 400 to 500 small handicraft factories in the village of Fateh Mohammadpur in Ishwardi.

The workers are passing busy days as Eid-ul-Fitr is around the corner. Demand for quality hand-embroidered sari is at an all-time high -- because of the key festival of the year.

The trade has soared to its popularity for the past 10 years. The area was once well known as the 'Benarasi village' in the district as it produced luxury fabrics like Benarasi and Katan.

When the Benarasi industry had faced challenges, a large number of workers engaged in the sector migrated to Dhaka and other places in search of work.

But Benarasi workers of Ishwardi upazila learnt the art of hand embroidery to stay afloat. As the area was known for expensive and intricate handwork, the

trade rapidly kicked off.

"Women used to undertake handwork on a small scale at their homes, by taking private orders for pieces. But now, a majority of the women in the village are engaged in hand embroidery," Badal Benarasi, now a hand-embroidery entrepreneur, told The Daily Star yesterday.

In anticipation of Eid, at least 200 to 300 pieces of hand-embroidered sari are produced a day in the 400 to 500 factories in the area.

"I have 40 workers at my factory with an abundant number of work orders. Prior to Ramadan, we received 25 to 30 orders a week. But now we get over 50 orders a week. Demand has risen as the saris we produce are better in quality than Indian peers," Badal said.

He also said there are 10 to 12 large hand-embroidery factories in this village, which is the largest zone in the northern region of the country.

Workers said they do handwork on katan, georgette, tissue material and saris of other fabrics using beads, stones, thread and sequins.

"Depending on designs, we usually need 5-10 days to complete work on a single sari, but we are now trying to speed up work to meet Eid demand," said Md Rubel, an embroidery worker.

"Even three or four workers are deployed on each sari to complete the work faster," he added.

Workers said the cost of embroidery on a sari will range between Tk 700 and Tk 7,000, depending on designs, while the end piece will be sold at Tk 2,000-Tk 15,000.