

Stocks return to the black

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks returned to the black yesterday, following the resumption of trade in the new fiscal year, riding on the speculations of investors about good half yearly financial disclosures, especially from banks and non-banks.

The banks and non-banking financial institutions, especially those having capital market wings, made robust profit in June, market insiders say.

The investors are betting on these securities expecting a good return in a short time trading, which pushed the prices up.

So was with the non-banks. All such financial institutions traded higher on the floor.

Bank and fuel and power sector

shares also contributed to the gain, with the rise of majority shares.

The benchmark index of the premier bourse -- DSE General Index -- gained 63.39 points, or 1.03 percent to 6,217.07.

The non-banks, banks and energy sectors accounted for more than 80 percent of yesterday's total turnover.

However, the telecom and pharmaceutical sectors were the day's only two major negative performers.

The market started strongly after the trade opened and went on a steady climb till the end of trading hours.

Advancers beat losers 128 to 118. However, four securities remained unchanged on the DSE, which traded more than 7.05 crore shares and mutual fund units on a turnover of Tk 2,127.32 crore.

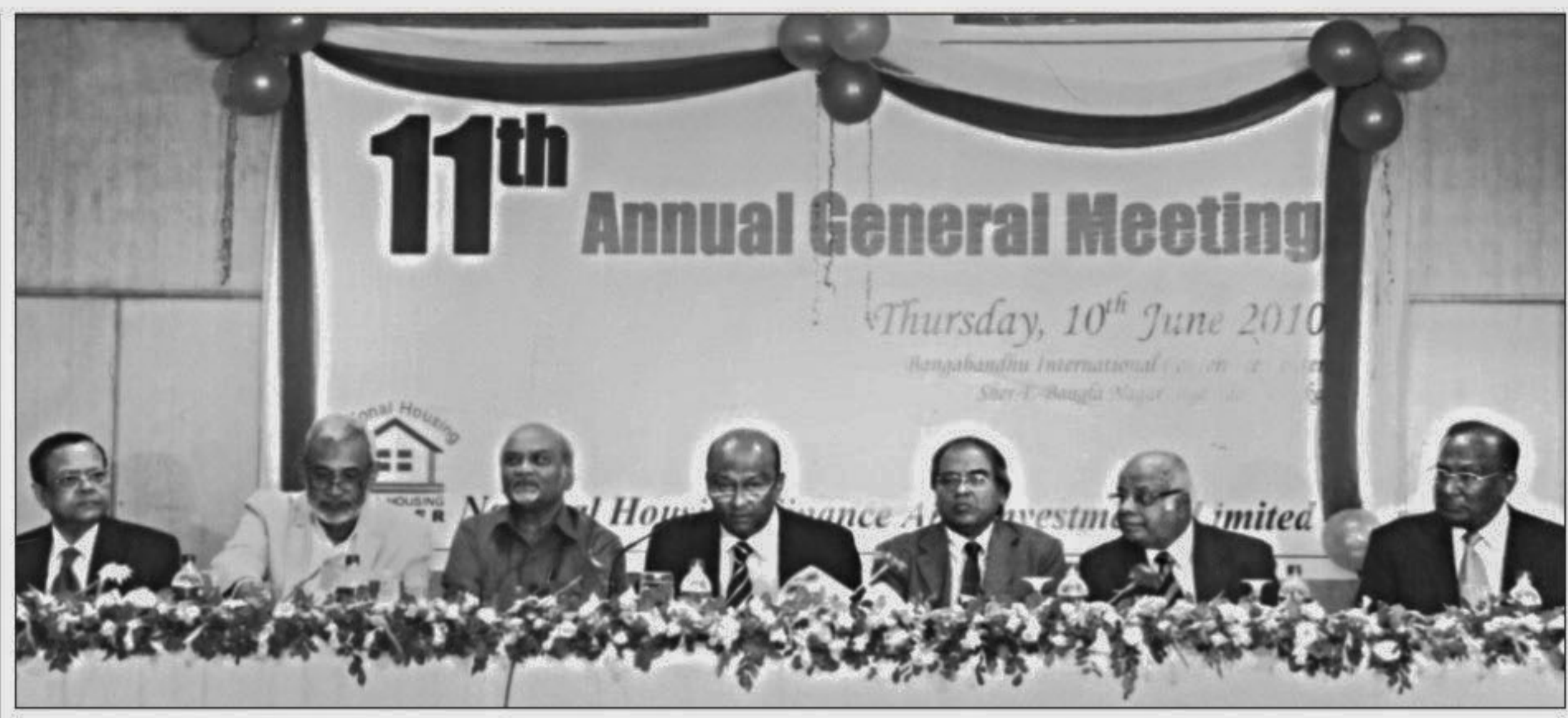
Titas Gas, the state-run fuel company, topped the turnover leaders with more than 21.69 lakh shares worth Tk 223.93 crore being traded.

Chittagong stocks also posted a rise yesterday with the CSE Selective Categories Index increasing by 26.26 points, or 0.22 percent to 11,720.64.

More than 74.17 lakh shares and mutual fund units changed hands on the Chittagong Stock Exchange on a value of Tk 119.88 crore.

Of the traded issues, 105 advanced and 68 declined with two securities remaining unchanged on the port city bourse.

Beximco Limited topped the turnover leaders with more than 2.78 lakh shares worth Tk 8.24 crore being traded on the floor.



Latifur Rahman, chairman of National Housing Finance and Investment Ltd, speaks at the company's 11th annual general meeting at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka recently. The company declared 17.5 percent cash dividend for 2009.



Oddvar Hesjedal, chief executive officer of Grameenphone, and Jim McCabe, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bank, inaugurate a financial kiosk at GP HOUSE in Dhaka yesterday. Sandeep Bose, head of consumer banking of StanChart, and Syeda Yasmin Rahman, head of employee services of Grameenphone, were also present.

Kuwait keen to invest more in power

UNB, Dhaka

Kuwait is keen to invest in Bangladesh's power, energy and infrastructure and also wants to help Bangladesh for dredging the rivers.

The interest was expressed when Abdullatif Ali Ibrahim Al-Mawwash, the outgoing ambassador of the Gulf country, paid a farewell call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official Ganobhaban residence yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed a wide range of issues of bilateral inter-

ests, including expansion of trade and business between the two friendly countries, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told reporters.

Sheikh Hasina urged the Kuwaiti government to recruit more manpower from Bangladesh, including doctors, engineers, technical persons and other skilled and semi-skilled persons.

The Prime Minister also conveyed thanks to the Kuwait government for its support, especially in power, irrigation and infrastructures sectors over the years through Kuwait Fund for Arab

Economic Development.

She expected that Kuwait would ratify the bilateral technical cooperation agreement on manpower signed in November 2000 between the two countries.

Regarding expansion of bilateral trade, Sheikh Hasina said Kuwait may import Bangladeshi quality products like readymade garments, ceramic products, pharmaceuticals, toiletries, leather and leather goods and melamine to reduce the trade gap between the two countries.



Mamoon Mahmood Shah and M Fakhru Alam, deputy managing directors of Eastern Bank Ltd, inaugurate the bank's 58th ATM booth at Nasirabad in Chittagong recently.

Golden fibre to shine again

BSS, Rangpur

The harvest of jute has already begun here with excellent yield rates and lucrative prices, predicting a super bumper production in northern Bangladesh this season.

The fibre, now sells at around Tk 2,000 a maund, was cultivated on 1,99,833 hectares of land this year, 44 percent up from the 1,38,731 hectares of land targeted for jute farming in the region.

The growers failed to achieve their farming target last year. But they exceeded the target this time even after facing huge initial hurdles like seed crisis, droughts, lack of soil moistures and crop diversification.

Imports of adequate quality jute seeds and timely disbursement of

those by the government helped the farmers in this regard.

Jute harvest may continue till the end of July as the seed sowing period was prolonged from April to the end of May this season, said Dr MA Mazid, Dinajpur hub manager of Cereal Systems Initiative for South Asia, yesterday.

Talking to the news agency, jute growers of Rangpur and Dinajpur expressed their satisfactions over successful jute farming and the special incentives announced by Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury a few days ago.

They also lauded the special initiative taken by the government for supplying ribbon machines for easing jute-rotting process and upgrading fibre quality during droughts like last year.

Mohsin Ali, additional director of the Department of Agricultural Extension of Rangpur, said huge enthusiasm had been created among the growers this season and it would continue in future.

"There is no doubt now about a bumper jute production this season of around 22 lakh bales against the target of 14.74 lakh bales," Dr Mazid added.

He also suggested the farmers grow fine and Nabi variety T-Aman paddy like Lotishail, Binashail, Nazirshail, BR-5 and BRRI Dhan 34 instead of other varieties.

The scientist recommended to the government for ensuring fair jute prices constantly, reopening the closed jute mills and taking more steps to increase exports of jute products.

Women chamber opens 'hotline centre' in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI) in association with USAID-Pragati yesterday opened a 'hotline centre' at its Khulna office, aimed at doing business smoothly without being victims of corruption.

The centre will provide instant support for women entrepreneurs during any eventualities while doing business.

Director for Khulna division of Anticorruption Commission Major Ashish Sarker formally inaugurated the centre as chief guest while BWCCI President Selima Ahmad presided over the function.

British govt planning even deeper spending cuts

AFP, London

Britain's coalition government has ordered many ministries to plan for spending cuts of up to 40 percent, far greater than announced in an emergency budget, the finance ministry said Saturday.

As Britain bids to slash a record budget deficit, departments had been warned to expect spending cuts of about 25 percent, but many ministries have now been asked to identify where cuts of 40 percent could be made.

It is the latest step in laying the ground for a spending review to be published in October which is expected to be the toughest since World War II.

The newly created Office for Budget Responsibility has forecast that 600,000 public sector jobs will be lost as Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservative-Liberal Democrat government grapples with the deficit.

Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne said last month that the defence and education ministries would receive favourable treatment, but they have now been told to assess the potential impact of cuts of 10 percent and 20 percent.

They only departments to escape any cuts will be health and international development, whose funding is "ringfenced" during the current parliament term.

A Treasury spokesman said: "We are determined to tackle the record budget deficit in order to keep rates lower for longer, protect jobs, and maintain the quality of essential public services."

"The Cabinet has been briefed on the planning assumptions that their departments should use for the initial phase of the spending review."

"These planning assumptions are not final settlements, and do not commit the Treasury or departments to final settlements."

"These assumptions will be negotiated so that we both tackle the deficit and support the freer, fairer and more responsible Britain we want to see."

Laptop fair kicks off Wednesday

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A three-day laptop fair will begin in Dhaka on Wednesday.

Top brands such as HP, Compaq, Samsung, Dell, Fujitsu, Gateway, Gigabyte, Asus, Lenovo, Toshiba, Acer, MSI, BenQ and Apple will be on display at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The theme of the show, Dhaka Laptop Fair 2010, is "Light up the technological light".

The fair will remain open from 10:30am to 8:30pm, said Sultan Mahmud, event co-ordinator of the fair, at a press meet at

Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

The entry fee for the show of 14 pavilions and 11 stalls is fixed at Tk 20 a person.

Half of the money generated from ticket sales will be used for education of deprived children, Mahmud added.

Around 3,000 laptops were sold at last year's fair. Mahmud hoped for more than 5,000 units this time.

HP is the promotional partner of the exposition, while Acer, Lenovo, Samsung and Toshiba are the sponsors.

A raffle draw, cultural programme and quiz will be held on the sidelines of the event everyday.



Sultan Mahmud, event co-ordinator of Dhaka Laptop Fair 2010, speaks at a press meet at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Govt to set up SME village in Keraniganj

Says managing director of SME Foundation

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has selected Keraniganj for establishing the first ever cluster village in the country for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the managing director of SME Foundation said yesterday.

Syed Rezwanaul Kabir said the feasibility study of the cluster village will be complete within December this year and the government will then go for land acquisition.

International Finance Corporation (IFC) will provide fund for the project.

Rezwanaul Kabir was speaking at a discussion on 'development of plastic industries' at Bangladesh Plastic Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BPGMEA) office in Dhaka. BPGMEA and SME Foundation co-organised the discussion.

The cluster village will have facilities for light engineering, plastic, electric and electronic industries, news agency BSS said, quoting the MD of the SME Foundation.

The SME village will be fully operational in two years subject to availability of support from all corners including the trade bodies, Rezwanaul Kabir said.

Leaders of the plastic goods sector demanded low-interest loans and arrange-

ments to provide training for the workers in the sector.

They also called for establishing an international standard testing laboratory, and polymer, mould and recycling industry to accelerate the growth of the sector, now growing at 20 percent annually.

The SME Foundation has extended support to the association to help develop its ICT capacity.

Shahedul Islam Helal, president of BPGMEA, said the sector is already stuck with such problems as misinterpretation of the environmental law and its use, and absence of export subsidy.

The industry indirectly exports products worth around Tk 1,200 crore a year to countries including the US, Canada and in Europe, he added.

The plastic industry has a domestic market of Tk 5,000 crore and provides jobs to around six lakh people in 3,000 factories across the country, Helal said.

The SME Foundation MD said the government has already declared plastic as a thrust sector.

He said the SME Foundation will help the association get a paperless environment and ensure an easy access to information.



Das Deba Prashad, managing director of Delta Life Insurance Company Ltd, and Md Saiful Islam, president of Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh, exchange documents after signing a deal in Dhaka recently. Under the agreement, all workers/employees of member companies of the association will receive insurance coverage from the insurer.



Md Habibur Rahman, deputy managing director and head of international banking wing of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, and DP Bhattachan, chairman of Prabhu Money Transfer, USA, exchange documents after signing a deal in Dhaka on Thursday. Bangladeshi expatriates in the US can now send money home through the banking channel at a lower cost.