



BUSINESS

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Paddy price stays low as aman harvest beckons

SOHEL PARVEZ

Paddy prices are refusing to pick up, much to the anxiety of farmers who are set to kick off aman paddy harvesting next month.

In September, the prices of coarse and medium grains fell further from August as the market saw ample supply of the staple resulting from back-to-back good yields, including the principal rice crop boro harvested in the April-May period.

Last month, consumers could buy one kilogramme of coarse rice at Tk 32 in Dhaka, down from Tk 32.75 in August, according to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization, a specialised agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat

hunger.

Data from the UN agency also showed that residents in the city could buy medium-quality grain at lesser prices in September than they could in August.

And since the beginning of October, the prices of coarse grain declined in kitchen markets of Dhaka city, according to data from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

"There is no chance for the prices to go up as harvesting of new crop is just in front of us," said Abul Kalam, a farmer in the northwest district of Rangpur.

Instead, the prices may decline for the arrival of the new crop.

"It seems nothing but losses are left for us," said the 65-year-old grower, who planted fine variety of paddy so that he can get better prices by selling the surplus in the market.

Rice is the staple crop in Bangladesh and is grown



Rice is grown on 70 percent of the total crop area of 1.54 crore hectares in Bangladesh.

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As many as 77 percent of the marginal and small farmers depend on rice for food security and their livelihoods, according to the Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey 2015.

Prices of the cereal started to decline in the middle of aman harvest in 2018 and the downturn continued even though imports dropped after the government hiked import tariffs, according to data from the food ministry.

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GP, Banglalink lose in MNP battle

7 lakh users switched operators since its launch

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banglalink has lost the highest number of subscribers to other operators in the last one year as the users changed the carrier using the mobile number portability service.

The MNP service, which was rolled out in October last year, allows users to retain their original mobile phone number while opting out of an operator in order to join a new network.

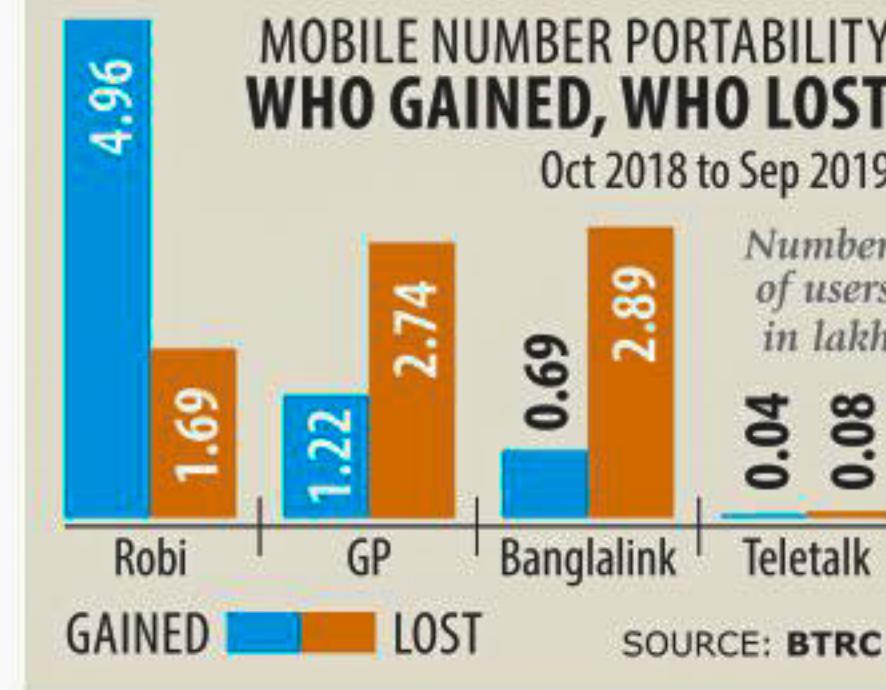
Banglalink, the third-largest operator, lost 2.89 lakh subscribers and gained 68,528 users from its three contenders, according to a report of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission published yesterday.

Grameenphone, the market leader, lost 2.74 lakh customers and pulled 1.22 lakh users.

The report said 6.91 lakh mobile phone users have successfully used the service, while another 2.57 lakh users had tried to switch operators but were unsuccessful.

Robi gained about two-thirds of the customers who switched. It drew 4.96 lakh users from other operators, while 1.69 lakh customers left the network of the second-largest operator.

"It shows that Robi has emerged as the most-preferred digital brand of the country," said Shahed Alam, chief corporate



and regulatory officer at Robi.

Md Hasan, a deputy general manager of Grameenphone, said, "We respect our customers' freedom of choice. At the same time, we are happy to welcome new customers into our strong network."

Ankit Sureka, senior manager for corporate communications at Banglalink, said, "We welcomed the MNP as it gave customers the freedom to choose any operator keeping their mobile numbers unchanged."

"However, we are mostly focused on our overall business growth. We have turned around significantly registering impressive overall results this year and are trying to improve our performance further."

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ICB to inject Tk 1,000cr into market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) will support the stock market by buying as much shares as possible from the secondary market on the back of Tk 1,000 crore it is raising, said its managing director yesterday.

The DSEX shed 50.57 points to close at 4,711.30, the lowest since November 17, 2016.

Forced sales by stock brokers and merchant banks and the sell-offs by foreign investors are to blame for the plunge in the last few days, according to analysts.

The fear of the index to nosedive further has also pushed the general investors to go for selling shares, they said.

A managing director of a stock brokerage house, requesting anonymity, has acknowledged that they had to go for the forced sale in the last few days.

If the prices of securities bought with margin loans decrease past a certain point, the lenders can legally force the investors to sell some of their assets to save the fund.

"Many other brokers have done it following rules because we had no other option as the prices of the good stocks are plummeting."

In the last few days, the stocks of the well-performing companies—where investors put in their funds through margin loans—were the top losers, he added.

Ali Xahangir, chief executive officer of amarstock.com, a website that provides technical analysis on market movements, said the index is falling because of the forced sale.

But the market may make a turnaround to some extent when this type of sale completes, he said.

He added that the investors are fearful and the nervousness is deepening as the Dhaka stocks continue bleeding.

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Fear of further fall grips stock investors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Investors passed another gloomy day yesterday as the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange sank for the sixth consecutive day to hit a three-year low.

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Export of digital device by 2021

Palak says at the opening of digital device and innovation expo

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh will start digital device export within the next two years, said Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, as the country looks to brandish its credentials in the field of engineering.

In 2016, the government brought down the tax on raw material and machinery equipment with the view to becoming a digital device exporting country from an importing one, he said.

He spoke at the country's first-ever Digital Device and Innovation Expo, which kicked off yesterday at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The country is already getting benefit from the tax policy, with 10 companies now in the process of meeting the local demand, he said.

"We have companies like Walton and Symphony that are making quality products in the country. Mobile phone users are now using Bangladesh made Samsung phones, which is a huge shift," Palak said, adding that Samsung announced that from 2020 it will not import any handsets to the country.

The three-day expo is jointly organised by the Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority, Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Division, Bangladesh Computer Somity (BCS) and Idea Project.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Mannan; ICT Secretary NM Zeaul Alom; AKM Rahmatullah, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on telecom and ICT division ministry; and Hosne Ara Begum managing director of the Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority, also spoke in the inaugural event.

The expo was categorised in

eight different zones focusing on innovation, start-up and robotics.

In Made in Bangladesh zone, the local digital device manufacturers would showcase their products to local and international buyers.

The changing scenario of Bangladesh through innovation in the field of agriculture, Bangla language tools, disability-related devices, education and health

would be showcased in the

Innovation Zone managed by the government's a2i project.

Start Up and the Robotics zone would focus on how the youth of the country are planning to commercialise their innovation and the future of the country's robotic technology.

The expo also gave much focus to the Mars Registration Zone, as the government is planning to launch its Mars project by 2041.



A robot welcomes visitors during Digital Device and Innovation Expo, which kicked off at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday.

58pc Asia-Pacific trade affected by non-tariff measures: UN bodies

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Non-tariff measures or NTMs are now affecting around 58 percent of trade in Asia and the Pacific because of their growing popularity as weapons of trade policy in regional and global trade tensions, according to a new report yesterday.

The NTMs can include government procurement limitations, export subsidies, import restrictions and import and export bans through unilateral or multilateral sanctions, said the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report (ATIR) 2019.

The report was launched in Geneva and at the Bangkok headquarters of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Ecap).

"Meeting these complex and often opaque rules can require significant resources, affecting in particular small and medium-sized enterprises," according to the report styled "Navigating non-tariff measures towards sustainable development."

However, the report also noted that NTMs as policy instruments can often be legitimate.

Most of the NTMs are technical regulations, such as sanitary and phytosanitary requirements for food.

The average cost of these measures alone amounts to 1.6 percent of gross domestic product, roughly \$1.4 trillion globally.

But they also serve important purposes such as protection of human health or the environment and can even boost trade under certain conditions, the ATIR said in a statement.

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Global fashion industry to grow 65pc by 2030: H&M

It would create huge business potential for Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Worldwide apparel consumption is set to increase by 65 percent by 2030 when the population will go up by 16 percent, creating huge business potential for Bangladesh's garment industry, a top H&M official said yesterday.

Environmental pollution will appear as a big challenge then, as it is spreading at the same rate of the global apparel consumption, said Ziaur Rahman, H&M's country manager for Bangladesh, Pakistan and Ethiopia.

Currently, the Swedish retail giant makes the largest purchase of over \$4 billion worth of fashion items from Bangladesh a year.

The company has already asked all its suppliers and manufacturers to be more aware of sustainability in fashion business, Rahman said at a press meet at Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka.

GJ Harry Verweij, ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh, said the "Made in Bangladesh" label was something for the country to be proud of.



A rise in global apparel consumption has created a window of opportunity for Bangladeshi garment makers.

sourcing, he said.

In the supply chain of fashion business, everybody should avoid life threatening working conditions, child labour and modern-day slavery practices, he added.

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BSEC halts trading via Shah Mohammad Sagir & Co

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A brokerage house of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) has been suspended from carrying out trading by the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) for its failure to settle transactions twice in a month.

The regulator took the decision against Shah Mohammad Sagir & Co Ltd at a meeting on Sunday.

However, investors who trade through the broker will be allowed to carry out transactions via a link account of other brokerage houses.

In case of trading via the link account, the investors will have to communicate with Central Depository Bangladesh Ltd or the DSE.

