

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
Week-on-week		As of Friday		Friday Closings				As on Thursday			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 5.11%	▲ 4.85%	\$1,826.59	\$55.10	▼ 1.11%	▼ 0.62%	▲ 0.16%	▲ 0.01%	BUY TK 83.95	100.94	113.62	12.78
5,909.31	9,403.54	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	49,034.67	28,519.18	3,004.87	3,566.38	SELL TK 84.95	104.74	117.42	13.44



Star BUSINESS

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Apparel job uncertainty on the wane

But export making slow recovery for the pandemic's second wave, CPD study says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

With recuperation of international retailers and brands' work orders, job uncertainty among Bangladesh's garment workers has been alleviated to 4 per cent in September last year from 36 per cent in April, says a CPD study.

Factory workloads have risen past that in Sri Lanka, another major South Asian garment exporter. Factory managements have been recruiting workers on a daily basis, said the study made public yesterday.

Bangladesh's garment export has been making a slow recovery for detrimental effects arising anew for the pandemic's second wave.

Bangladesh cannot invest a lot in online sales, which has now emerged as the major engine for retail business, said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Different government supports need to be continued for mid and long-term recovery of the sector's business, he said while presenting the study's findings at a virtual discussion.

Some 60 per cent of factories have started recruiting workers afresh, he added.

The CPD and Southern Voice, a network of over fifty think tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America, jointly organised the discussion on "Recovery of the Apparel Sector from the Covid-19 Crisis: Is a Value



Chain Based Solution Possible?"

CPD Chairman Rehman Sobhan suggested a regional response for the garment trade's recovery, reasoning that the neighbouring countries have been facing the same challenges.

He also recommended introducing a micro-social insurance scheme for workers affected by the Covid-19 fallout. Factory owners, the government and even workers and buyers could contribute to the formation of such an insurance scheme fund, he said.

Moderating the discussion, Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the CPD, proposed for a global compact for garment businesses to make a faster recovery and for supporting factory owners and workers.

Ziaur Rahman, Swedish retail giant H&M's regional manager for Bangladesh, Pakistan and Ethiopia, advocated for increasing workers' minimum wage as their monthly pay was still low.

He also said that H&M had started paying higher prices for Bangladesh's garment items in tune with the last increase in wages.

"We will increase the price of garment items if the wage of workers is increased

again," he said.

Rahman said China, Vietnam and Cambodia were making a faster recovery in business because Bangladesh's products can still be characterised as being basic and by their large volumes.

Bangladesh needs to improve its product diversity and innovation for faster recovery and sustainability in this business, he added.

There was no disruption or cancellation of work orders being placed by H&M even amidst the pandemic, he said.

He suggested shifting to man-made fibres to reduce overdependence on cotton and grab a bigger global market share.

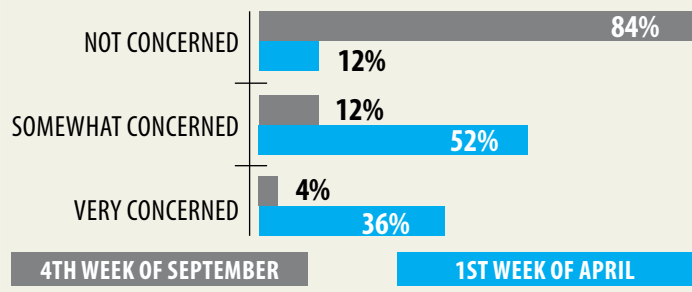
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MONTH-WISE FIRED/RETRAINED WORKERS

Months in 2020	Average no. of workers fired	Average no. of workers laid off	Average no. of workers with due wage payment
June	21,023	12,083	39,9251
July	24,534	15,782	27,2008
August	23,582	19,831	93,998
September	23,660	22,978	10,8629

SOURCE: CPD STUDY BASED ON DIFE DATA

PERCEPTION OF JOB-RELATED UNCERTAINTY AMONG BANGLADESHI WORKERS



SOURCE: CPD

27,000 tonnes of imported onion lying at Ctg port

Indian onion, local harvests undercut other varieties

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Chattogram

Some 27,000 tonnes of onion worth Tk 102 crore have apparently been abandoned at the Chattogram port by importers, as their market price expectations were decimated by an influx of the Indian variety and local harvests.

September last year saw a mad rush for importing the kitchen staple after prices took off to reach a record high of Tk 250 per kilogramme (kg) in 2019, fuelled by India's export ban and weak local supplies.

Importers secured government approval to bring in 217,000 tonnes. Since then they imported 147,000 tonnes. Of it, about 120,000 tonnes went through the Chattogram port as of Thursday, as prices stayed afloat to as much as Tk 100 per kg.

But after India lifted the ban on exports on the first day of January and the local variety started to be harvested, the onions that were imported from other countries lost their appeal.

If the importers attempt to receive their goods, they might have to pay charges for storage facilities of refrigerated containers and demurrage charges for delays in getting the items released.

Then the overall cost would reach about Tk 50 per kg. But the imports will not sell for more than Tk 15 a kg as



they are of inferior quality compared to those from India and the local sources.

Several importers say perishable items such as onion have a short shelf life once they are thawed on being taken out of freezer containers. So traders come to receive the goods from the port after having sold them in advance to reduce chances of it rotting. There is a shortage of space at warehouses as well.

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Vegetable growers left in the lurch

Prices nosedive amid transport constraints, reign of middlemen

KONGKON KARMAKER, from Dinajpur

Seeing bright-coloured vegetables dotted across large stretches of land could make any farmer take pride in the hard work they put in to produce them.

But the moment farmers in the northern districts think about the prices wholesalers offer them, their delight starts wearing off.

The prices in the ongoing peak winter season are so low that most growers are unlikely to recoup their investment, let alone make any profit.

"The price has been falling for the last seven days," said Azizur Rahman, a vegetable grower in the Sadar upazila in the district.

Winter vegetables such as cauliflower, cabbage, beans, potato, brinjal, and gourd are grown abundantly in the northern districts, especially Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Nilphamari and Rangpur.

The vegetables are consumed



Vegetables such as brinjal are being loaded into vehicles in Birganj upazila of Dinajpur to be sent to other districts. The photos were taken yesterday.

KONGKON KARMAKER

locally and supplied to other parts of the country as well.

But the price fall is quite frustrating for farmers.

Farmers are selling brinjal directly to traders from their field for Tk 3 per kilogramme (kg), a third of Tk 9 per kg they took home a week ago.

Abu Bakkar, a farmer of Nijpara village under Birganj upazila in Dinajpur, grew brinjal, cabbage and cauliflower this year. The yield was medium, but the price upset him.

On Saturday, he sold brinjal to a trader hailing from Noakhali at Tk 3 per kg.

"The price is much lower than I had expected," he said.

Bakkar invested Tk 25,000 per bigha to cultivate the popular vegetable.

"If the price was around Tk 10, I would not have lost any money. When will the farmers earn a profit if they fail to make a profit during the peak season?" he added.

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Internet for all by this year: Palak

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The government is working to ensure internet for all and digitalise 90 per cent of public services by 2021, said State Minister for ICT Zunaaid Ahmed Palak yesterday.

"People will not run after services. Rather, the services will go to them," he said at a press conference at the ICT Tower in Dhaka marking 12 years of Digital Bangladesh, according to a press release.

Palak said a robust ICT infrastructure had been built in the last 12 years under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. This had taken information and communication technology to rural areas.

Some 3,800 unions are now covered by broadband internet connectivity, and 600 services have already been converted to digital services as part of a move to digitalise about 2,800 government services by this year, he added.

The government has introduced e-office activities to reduce the use of papers and pens, he said.

As part of the effort, e-documents have been introduced at ministries and other government offices to bring dynamism, transparency and accountability.

At present, more than 90,000 officials of 8,000 offices are using e-documents. So far, 1.43 crore files have been disposed of through the e-document system, he added.

SME Foundation to set up business incubation centres

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

SME Foundation is going to set up a Business Incubation Centre (BIC), one in Dhaka and another in Chattogram, to facilitate entrepreneurship development and create employment, the non-profit said yesterday.

"At the same time, a national strategy for incubation facilities in Bangladesh is in the final stage of development," it added in a press statement.

Cottage, small and medium enterprises play an important role in a country's economic development. "So, there is no alternative to strengthening these firms in order to strengthen the economy," said Kamal Ahmed Mojumder, state minister for industries.

He was addressing a virtual workshop organised by SME Foundation focusing on the national strategy and to present the draft strategy for incubation facilities.

The BIC is a system of supporting the development and scaling of growth-oriented early-stage enterprises.

The process provides entrepreneurs with an enabling environment at the start-up stage of enterprise development.

It generally focuses on supporting and promoting entrepreneurship, increasing employment through job creation, enhancing local, regional and national research and development as well as innovation.

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Robi, Beximco companies' stocks fly high all week

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks of Robi Axiata and a few concerns of Beximco Group continued to dominate the market, capping off a week on top of the turnover and gainers' lists.

Ever since Robi Axiata made its trading debut on December 24, its share price has been rising every day.

And although Beximco, Beximco Pharmaceuticals, IFIC Bank and Shinepukur Ceramics, all concerns of the conglomerate, witnessed a few corrections, they have remained bullish for the past few months.

DSEX, the benchmark index of the

Dhaka Stock Exchange, rose 287 points, or 5.11 per cent, over the previous week.

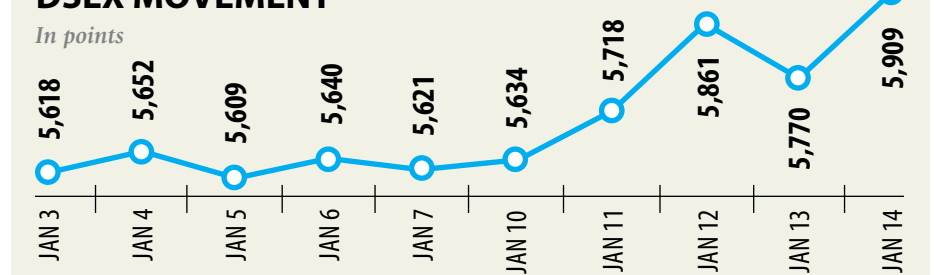
During this period, Robi rose 47 per cent, Beximco 33 per cent and Beximco Pharmaceuticals 12 per cent.

Beximco led the turnover list with an average daily turnover of Tk 162 crore while Robi came in second with Tk 116 crore and Beximco Pharmaceuticals third with Tk 107 crore.

Many investors believe that Robi has potential since it's a multinational telecom company, prompting them to buy the stock, said a senior official of an asset management company.

Meanwhile, a number of investors who

DSEX MOVEMENT



SOURCE: DSE



Investors watch price fluctuations of stocks on a large screen at a brokerage house in Dhaka.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

got Robi's shares through its initial public offering have already sold their stakes, thinking that the huge profit they made from the recent rise in value is enough, he added.

However, the official urged investors to

be careful when it comes to Robi since the company's earnings are low.

Robi's profit stood at Tk 38 crore while its earnings per share was Tk 0.08 in the July-September period.

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