

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 0.19%	▲ 0.37%	\$1,838.40	\$61.52	▼ 0.04%	▲ 0.19%	▼ 0.32%	▲ 1.43%	BUY TK 83.95	100.78	115.15	12.87
5,509.40	9,642.79	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	51,309.39	29,562.93	2,925.84	3,655.09	SELL TK 84.95	104.58	118.95	13.53



Star BUSINESS

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Local clothing retailers, brands pin hopes on upcoming festivals

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Local clothing retailers and brands expect their sales to revive in the upcoming Pihela Falgun, Valentine's Day, Pihela Baishakh and Eid festivals thanks to the arrival of the Covid-19 vaccine, according to market insiders.

Last year, the businesses missed out on the sales bonanza that takes place during Pihela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Fitr as it was the peak pandemic period.

Sales ahead of the Valentine's Day and Pihela Falgun were good last year, but the situation started deteriorating from March, market operators said.

The sale of clothing items is higher during Pihela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Fitr because a lot of garment items are given as Zakat, they added.

"Every year, local spinners and weavers can sell Tk 25,000 crore worth of yarn and fabrics during the Pihela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Fitr festivals," said Monsoor Ahmed, secretary to the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA).

"Last year, we missed a huge amount of business as most of the factories were closed during the two big festivals in March and April," Ahmed told The Daily Star by phone.

This year, all the factories are busy in manufacturing yarn, fabrics and garments for local markets to catch the huge sales bonanza during the two festivals.

But, if the second and third wave of the pandemic comes and affects normal business



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once again, then there is a possibility of losing business this year too.

"However, I am hopeful that the vaccine has been boosting the confidence of people. So the possibility of any damage in business is almost zero, thanks to the vaccine's arrival," Ahmed said.

Khalid Mahmood Khan, entrepreneur of Kay Kraft, a leading local clothing brand, also echoed the same.

Business had been very dull over the last eight to nine months but it is reviving now with the arrival of vaccines as people have started coming out from their long homestays, Khan said.

Last year, his company made good

business in February but from March onwards, turnover was not so good, said Khan, who runs 25 outlets across the country.

"It is expected that people will start coming out from their homes," he added.

Biplob Saha, managing director of Bishworang, another leading local clothing brand, said business has been reviving gradually but is yet to fully return to normalcy.

The lack of business during major festivals hit hard the local brands, he said.

But, Azharul Hoque Azad, managing director of Sadakalo, yet another local clothing retailer, remains sceptical about the full revival of sales as the country's educational institutions have not been reopened yet.

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Bangladesh 2nd biggest source of online workers in Asia: ADB

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh is the second biggest source of online workers in Asia followed by India, said an Asian Development Bank (ADB) report released yesterday.

The Asian Economic Integration (AEI) report 2021 said India, Bangladesh and Pakistan account for 52 per cent of the global online workforce. The Philippines is at sixth.

The majority of online jobs are related to software development, technology and creative and multimedia, said the report.

According to the AEI, from 2017 to 2020, the share of workers in creative and multimedia has increased by 34 per cent in Bangladesh and by 40 per cent in Indonesia.

To date, it accounts for around 59 per cent of Bangladesh's online workforce and 74 per cent of Indonesia's.

In the Philippines, such online workers in creative and multimedia share the bulk of online employment (47 per cent) while its share is 31 per cent in Pakistan.

Around 25 per cent of online workers in the Philippines are into clerical and data services while

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MFS operators can now bring IT service remittance

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday enabled mobile financial service (MFS) providers to bring home the export earnings of online workers such as freelancers and exporters of information technology-related services.

Earlier only banks were able to provide such remittance services.

A business in the service sector is now allowed to bring in remittance of a maximum of \$10,000 per transaction of items exported, a Bangladesh Bank official said quoting a previous guideline to this end.

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The central bank set a number of criteria for MFS providers to roll out the service, which will benefit freelancers, software exporters and other services under the IT sector.

The MFS providers will have to ink agreements with internationally recognised foreign payment service providers such as online payment gateway service providers and digital wallet providers.

A payment service provider offers shops online services for accepting electronic payments through a variety of methods, including credit cards and bank-based payments such as direct debits and real-time bank transfers.

This means importers abroad will be allowed to send money through the foreign fintechs to the country's MFS providers.

The central bank allowed banks in 2011 to make arrangements with online payment gateway service providers to repatriate proceeds from small value service export.

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11 banks cause Tk 123.49cr sectoral provision shortfall

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh's banking sector faced a provision shortfall of Tk 123.49 crore last year, primarily for a lacklustre performance of 11 banks.

Though a moratorium significantly decreased defaulted loans, the sector is still bogged down in the undesirable situation thanks to the 11, whose combined provision shortfall had amounted to Tk 7,146 crore, shows Bangladesh Bank data.

The errant are Agrani, BASIC, Rupali, Bangladesh Commerce, Dhaka, Mutual Trust, National, Social Islami, Standard Bank, Bangladesh Krishi, and Probashi Kallyan.

A provision shortfall is an amount by which a financial obligation or liability exceeds the amount of cash available.

It can be temporary, arising out of a unique set of circumstances, or persistent, which may indicate poor financial management practices.

Banks have to keep 0.50 per cent to 5 per cent in provisioning against general category loans, 20 per cent against classified loans of substandard category and 50 per cent against classified loans of doubtful category.

The errant banks are Agrani, BASIC, Rupali, Bangladesh Commerce, Dhaka, Mutual Trust, National, Social Islami, Standard Bank, Bangladesh Krishi, and Probashi Kallyan

It is set at 100 per cent against classified loans of bad or loss category.

Some of the 11 have been repeatedly facing shortfalls over the years due to a lack of corporate governance.

The shortfall of state-run Agrani, BASIC and Rupali alone stood at Tk 5,429 crore, the result of a wide range of financial scams.

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PHP to rev up car assembling capacity

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Chattogram

In line with the growing market trend of brand new cars, PHP Automobiles, one of the country's leading car makers, plans to increase its assembling capacity as well as locally manufacturing a majority of the components.

Now, the company's factory employs about 265 workers to assemble 10-12 vehicles per shift.

There are plans to add three more shifts very soon as the company is getting good response from corporate sales. On Wednesday, PHP Automobiles handed over 50 models of the Proton Saga MC 2021 brand to Popular Life Insurance Company.

At the beginning of this year, the company sold 50 cars to Alpha Islami Life Insurance and 35 cars to Sonali Life Insurance Company.

According to the company's officials, in mid-2015, the PHP family announced the addition of new cars with the slogan 'Amader Rastai, Amader Gari'. PHP's cars came to the market for the first time in mid-2017 with the launch of the Proton Saga 2017 model.



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A view of the assembling plant of PHP Automobiles in Chattogram.

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Govt to amend rules for faster purchase of commodities

REJAUIL KARIM BYRON and DWAIPIYAN BARUA

The government is going to amend procurement rules to import rice, wheat and other commodities in the fastest possible time.

The cabinet committee on economic affairs yesterday approved a proposal to reduce the time it took to make such

purchases.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal at a press briefing said they needed to reduce the time to secure competitive prices in a volatile global market.

According to the public procurement rules (PPR), nothing can be procured in a short time through international tenders, he said.

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Beximco opens \$100m PPE plant in Savar

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Beximco yesterday opened its \$100-million PPE Park in Savar where the leading company will produce personal protective equipment (PPE).

"The new facility shall help manufacturers, buyers, retailers, brands and the government with required services since all the services will be available under one roof encompassing European, American and other global regulatory standards," Beximco CEO Syed Naved Husain said at the inauguration ceremony.

"This should help us realise our vision of seeing Bangladesh as the largest manufacturer and exporter of PPE products."

The Park will serve both domestic and international markets and is aimed at increasing the diversity of the supply of PPE, ensuring that it is not totally dependent on any one country, he said while hosting the event.

"Beximco has steadily contributed to Bangladesh's meteoric rise as a manufacturing hub in South Asia. I am delighted with the new development since it would place Bangladesh on the world's PPE manufacturing map."

The PPE park converts granules to melt-blown as well as laminated fabrics in different weights, the company said in a statement.

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Stocks cross 5,500 points again

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks crossed 5,500 points yesterday thanks to a rising trend among large cap companies amidst a drop by most stocks.

The DSEX, the Dhaka Stock Exchange's (DSE) benchmark index, rose 10 points, or 0.19 per cent, to 5,509.

Stocks of 26 per cent of companies, or 95 firms in other words, rose while 41 per cent, or 148 companies' stocks, fell, showed the premier bourse's data.

The index rose mainly due to the same old stocks that were undergoing a rising trend in the last few months, said a stock

broker. The companies are Beximco, Beximco Pharmaceuticals, Robi Axiata and LankaBangla Finance.

The companies now lead the market and investors are also honing in to the stocks, he said.

As all the companies have large sums of capital, their movements impact the index by a huge extent, so the market has been moving in tune with the stocks, pointed out the stock broker.

The index is at a level where it is finding an average level to hover around, so small falls and rises are now not a big deal, said a merchant banker.

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