

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
Week-on-week		As of Friday		Friday Closings				As on Thursday			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	BUY TK	SELL TK	USD	EUR
▲ 1.84%	▲ 2.03%	\$1,700.86	\$69.36	▼ 0.87%	▼ 0.23%	▼ 0.03%	▼ 0.04%	83.95	84.95	100.12	116.13
5,515.78	9,633.17	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	50,405.32	28,864.32	3,013.85	3,501.99	103.92	109.93	12.73	13.39



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People’s mobility surpasses pre-pandemic levels

Google’s community mobility report on Bangladesh shows

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

People’s mobility has reached the pre-pandemic level in Bangladesh, according to a new Google report, although the coronavirus pandemic is still prevailing in the country.

Bangladesh is the only country in the world that has shown positive growth in all the six indicators of the Covid-19 Community Mobility Report, which was published on March 2.

The positive growth came compared to the baseline period of January last year. The baseline is the median value, for the corresponding day of the week, during the five-week period from January 3 to February 6.

The data set is intended to help remediate the impact of Covid-19 and shows how visits to places, such as corner shops and parks, are changing in each geographic region.

The report shows how visits and length of stay at different places change compared to a



Tourist attractions like Patenga sea beach in Chattogram are witnessing huge turnout amid optimism created by the arrival of coronavirus vaccines.

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baseline. Google calculates these changes using the same kind of aggregated and anonymised data used to show popular times for places in Google Maps.

In Bangladesh, mobility trends for places such as restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums, libraries, and cinemas rose 13 per cent on March 2 compared to January year.

The trends for places such as supermarkets, food warehouses, farmers markets, specialty food shops and pharmacies were up 41 per cent compared to the baseline.

It rose 12 per cent for mobility trends for places like national parks, public beaches, marinas, plazas and public gardens.

Mobility trends for places that are public transport hubs, such

MOBILITY CHANGES (Compared to baseline)

+13%

Retail and recreation

+41%

Supermarket and pharmacy

+12%

Parks

+24%

Public transport

+5%

Residential

as underground, bus and train stations, went up by 24 per cent.

The visits to places of work increased 10 per cent, and that of mobility trends for places of residence went up 5 per cent compared to the baseline.

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12 tech startups want to raise funds from public

AHSAN HABIB

Twelve technology-based startups are interested to enter the stock market in order to raise funds.

The companies are: Sheba.xyz, Chaldal, Zantrik, Landknock, Hellotask, Bondstein Technologies, Brain Station 23, eCourier, Khaas Food, Divine IT, AnnaNovas IT, and CMED Health.

The companies already met with the stock market regulator last week to discuss the matter.

“We spoke with the startups to boost their confidence and show that we are eager to allow them faster listing on the sme board,” said Rezaul Karim, spokesperson of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC).

The small-cap board, called the DSE SME, was rolled out on April 30 of 2019 with a view to helping small and medium enterprises raise funds from the market. Companies of this size were previously shut out from the process due to their lower turnover. “The trading board is ready,



rules and regulations are ready,” Karim said.

Some other companies also asked to be listed but the regulator had to reject those for some unavoidable reasons, he said.

“The tech startups are interested to go public so we met them,” he said, adding that if the companies meet all the requirements, they

could fast-track the listing process.

A small company should at least have paid-up capital of Tk 5 crore to get listed with the country’s bourses. After listing, its paid-up capital should be at least Tk 10 crore.

Not all investors are allowed to trade on the SME board. The qualified investors are: merchant

bankers and portfolio managers, asset management companies, mutual funds and collective investment scheme (CIS), stock dealers, banks, financial institutions, insurance companies, alternative investment fund managers, alternative investment funds, market makers, issuer of listed securities, resident or non-

resident Bangladeshis, individuals having minimum net worth of Tk 1 crore, and other institutions as approved by the commission.

Startup companies have huge potential to grow so it is a good initiative for the market to invest in them, said Arif Hossain, a qualified investor.

Besides, the companies will also get finance as a result.

“However, the companies should have good intentions,” Hossain said, adding that tech-giants like Microsoft and Apple were once startups.

Among the 12 startups, some are already major businesses.

For example, Chaldal is now the country’s largest online grocery shopping venture while Sheba.xyz, launched in July 2016, provides numerous services and solutions to both service seekers and providers.

Waseem Alim, CEO of Chaldal, said that they are keen to be listed in the stock market but some requirements might not be fit for all startups.

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RAJIB RAIHAN

Mostafa Hakim Group invested Tk 1,000 crore to establish the new unit, HM Steel and Industries, in Chattogram’s Karnaphuli upazila.

HM Steel has the capacity to produce 4 lakh tonnes of billet, the semi-finished product, to produce MS rods, angles, square bars, flat bars and channels.

Golden Ispat has the capacity to produce 2 lakh tonnes annually. So far, its share of the country’s total production capacity of 8 million tonnes is only 2.5 per cent.

Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills (BSRM), which has two units and can produce a combined 1.6 million tonnes of MS rod each year, currently leads the market.

BSRM is followed by Abul Khair Steel with 1.3 million tonnes, GPH with 0.9 million tonnes and KSRRM with 0.6 million tonnes.

Although GPH recently expanded its capacity to 0.9 million tonnes, it is yet to go for full production and has kept the limit at 0.5 million tonnes, according to market insiders.

Over 140 steel factories of varying sizes are currently in operation.

However, the local demand stands at 6.5 million tonnes per year against an annual production capacity of 8 million tonnes.

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Female garment worker numbers on decline: survey

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The percentage of female workers in the garment industry declined between 2015 and 2000, according to a survey.

In 2020, 59.2 per cent of the 4.22 million workers were female while 40.8 per cent male.

In other words, there were some 24.98 lakh female workers while some 17.22 lakh male.

In 2015, some 65 per cent or 25.91 lakh of the 4 million workers were female while 14.10 million male.

The annual growth rate of female workers witnessed a slowdown of 0.7 per cent.

However, the rate was a positive 4 per cent for male workers. This also means the number of workers increased by only 1.07 per cent every year, said the survey.

The findings were detailed in a report on “Socio-economic Profile of Garment Workers of Bangladesh”, which was made public by AK Enamul Haque, executive director of research firm Asian Centre for Development, at a virtual programme yesterday.

The survey was conducted among 1,119 workers in 160 woven and knit garment and sweater factories in Dhaka, Savar and Chattogram.

It said the female worker ratio declined because of automation and for the nature of the machinery in the sector.

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Win-win for vegetable growers, consumers as farmers’ market gains traction

SOHEL PARVEZ

It has become a regular task for Mohammad Monir Hossain.

Every Thursday evening, the small farmer from Savar, located on the outskirts of Dhaka, loads his harvested vegetables onto a refrigerated van of the Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM) along with some of his peers.

The van arrives at the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) in the Manik Mia Avenue of the capital before the dawn breaks.

Hossain and his fellow farmers reach the same place later in the morning to unload and display their fresh produce to customers.

This is the Farmers’ Market where Hossain has been coming with his fresh vegetables since the agriculture ministry opened it in December 2019.

The idea was to create a place for growers who produce vegetables and seasonal fruits following integrated

pest management (IPM) approach, a method of crop production and protection that combines various management strategies and practices to grow healthy crops and minimise the use of pesticides.

Managed by the DAM, farmers who produce vegetables by following IPM techniques, including bio-pesticides, bring their crops to the market.

The field offices of the DAE certify the vegetables as safe for human consumption.

The initiative was taken at a time when concerns about the safety of farm produce are high owing to the use of chemical pesticides by farmers to protect crops from the losses resulting from pest attacks.

“We don’t use pesticides harmful for human health, and the good thing is that many customers believe in us,” said Hossain, who produces vegetables on 12 bigha land. He owns 1.5 bigha of land, and the rest is rented.



A man is selling his produce to a customer at a farmers’ market on the BADC premises on Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka on Friday.

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PINAKI ROY