

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 1.16%	▲ 1.23%	\$1,731.30	\$64.75	▼ 0.17%	▼ 2.07%	▼ 0.21%	▲ 1.14%	BUY TK 83.95	98.82	115.35	12.67
5,412.19	9,458.04	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	49,771.29	29,174.15	3,128.08	3,443.44	SELL TK 84.95	102.62	119.15	13.32



# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY MARCH 23, 2021, CHAITRA 9, 1427 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

## Non-banks' dividend capped at 30pc

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The central bank yesterday imposed a dividend cap of 30 per cent on non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs).

Of the amount, the NBFIs will have to pay 15 per cent in the stock dividend, and the rest will be paid in the form of cash.

On February 24, the Bangladesh Bank had barred the NBFIs from paying more than 15 per cent in cash dividend. It said nothing about the stock dividend.

But some of the NBFIs, along with the Bangladesh Merchant Bankers Association, repeatedly requested that the central bank reconsider the decision to allow the payment of more than 15 per cent dividend.

"They misinterpreted the issue, alleging that the instructions of giving 15 per cent cash dividend have already put an adverse

impact on the capital market," said a central bank official.

The BB asked some of the NBFIs in the first week of February not to declare dividends in excess, given the ongoing slowdown in business.

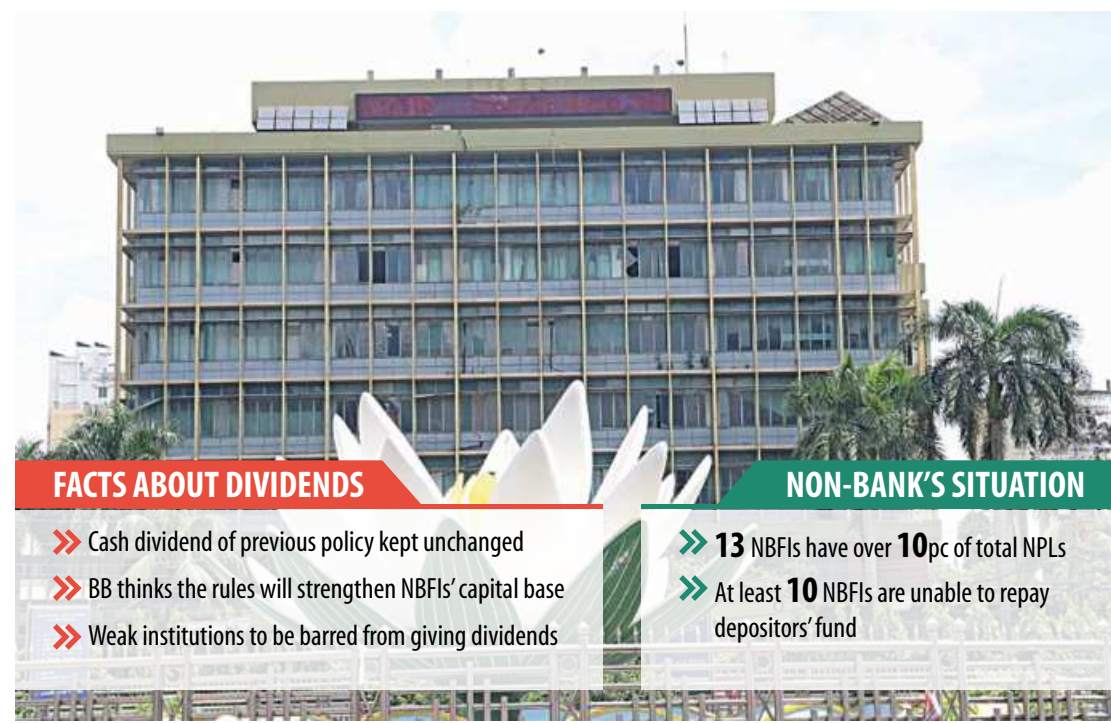
Still, some of the NBFIs announced excessive cash dividend, ignoring the regulatory instruction.

The central bank has issued the notice with the revision to bring an end to all misinterpretations.

This is the first time in recent years that the BB gave a directive to the NBFIs to be cautious in providing dividends, given the vulnerable financial health of some lenders.

A good number of NBFIs face a capital shortage and high amounts of classified loans because of a wide range of scams.

As per the central bank policy, the NBFIs, which have a capital adequacy ratio (CAR) of less



**FACTS ABOUT DIVIDENDS**

- Cash dividend of previous policy kept unchanged
- BB thinks the rules will strengthen NBFIs' capital base
- Weak institutions to be barred from giving dividends

**NON-BANK'S SITUATION**

- 13 NBFIs have over 10pc of total NPLs
- At least 10 NBFIs are unable to repay depositors' fund

than 10 per cent and default loans of more than 10 per cent, will not be able to declare any dividend.

The central bank said the NBFIs whose default loans went past more than 10 per cent would need to get approval to announce dividends.

Bangladesh has 36 NBFIs, and at least 10 of them struggle to pay

back depositors money despite those reaching maturity.

As of December 2020, the CAR of six of the NBFIs was less than what was required to be maintained, which is 10 per cent. A total of 13 had default loans of more than 10 per cent.

The CAR is a ratio of capital of a financial institution as percentage of its risk-weighted assets and

current liabilities. Regulators fix the CAR to protect depositors' money.

Industry insiders say following the BB order, many of the NBFIs would not be allowed to declare either cash or stock dividend for their shareholders for the year that ended on December 31 as their ratio of classified loans was high.

## Joint ventures in EPZs now eligible for export loans

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The central bank yesterday allowed "Type-B" companies in export processing zones (EPZs) to enjoy foreign currency loans from an export development fund (EDF).

A good number of companies in the EPZs have been facing a slowdown in business over the past couple of months due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has played a role in the "Type-B" companies being made eligible for the EDF loans, said a central bank official.

There are three types of companies in the EPZs, namely A, B and C.

Firms with 100 per cent foreign ownership are considered "Type-A". Joint venture companies with foreign and Bangladeshi ownerships are treated "Type-B" and those with 100 per cent Bangladeshi ownerships "Type-C".

Several years ago the central bank allowed "Type-C" companies to enjoy loans from the EDF.

The eligible companies can use the fund to settle back-to-back letters of credit, which helps them smoothly procure industrial raw materials.

This will ultimately help them produce items for export on time.

A company, which is a member of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), will be permitted to avail a maximum of \$25 million from the EDF.

Those which are not members can avail \$15 million each. Though the loan had to be paid back within three months from the date of disbursement, the central bank recently increased the repayment tenure to six months, given the business slowdown caused by the pandemic.

The extended repayment tenure will stay in effect until June this year.



Garment items are being processed for exports at a factory. STAR/FILE

## Chicken meat dearer as demand rises

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Prices of chicken meat have risen after growing social gatherings and ensuing Shab-e-Barat and Pahela Baishakh festival fuelled the demand for the protein, said industry operators yesterday.

The spiral has further stretched the wallets of consumers, who are already bearing the brunt of higher prices of staple rice and edible oil.

In Dhaka, consumers are paying up to Tk 170 to buy one kilogram of broiler chicken from neighbourhood retail shops.

The prices of broiler chicken ranged from Tk 150 to Tk 160 per kg in Dhaka yesterday, up 3 per cent from a month ago.

The prices were 24 per cent higher from Tk 120-Tk 130 per kg witnessed on the same day a year ago after demand dropped substantially after the government announced the maiden case of coronavirus



Amid a slump in demand, a large number of poultry farms had to shut operations, industry insiders say. STAR/FILE

infections in the country.

"Many poultry farms have been shut because of the pandemic. They are yet to restart farming," said Abu Taher, who runs a farm of 5,500 birds in Gazipur.

Insiders say the demand for chicken meat shot up ahead of Shab-e-Barat.

Muslims in Bangladesh will observe the Shab-e-Barat on the night of March 29. The Pahela Baishakh festival will be held in the middle of April.

Moshiur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Poultry Industries Central Council, said many poultry farms had suffered losses after demand collapsed because of the pandemic, forcing many to shut operations.

Breeders used to hatch 1.40 crore day-old chicks every week before the outbreak of the pandemic. The weekly production came down to 70-75 lakh in April 2020.

READ MORE ON B3

## Beacon may ship \$5m pharma products to Syria

**AT A GLANCE**

**BEACON Pharmaceuticals Limited**  
Light for life

- Starting amount of export: \$5m
- Potential to export: \$10m
- Syrian pharma market size: \$90m
- Deal to be signed in: June
- Beacon to avail Good Manufacturing Practice certificate from Syria
- Syrian experts inspected Beacon plant

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Beacon Pharmaceuticals, the local pioneer of oncology product manufacturing, may export \$5 million worth of pharmaceuticals to Syria by December this year -- a huge development for the local pharma industry.

The shipment will make Syria the single largest export destination for Bangladeshi pharmaceuticals.

"We will get registration from the government of Syria to export drugs by June," said Md Ebadul Karim, managing director of Beacon Pharmaceuticals.

"We are also in the process of availing a certificate of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) from the Ministry of Health (MoH) of Syria," he added.

The company will export oncology, general and cephalosporin drugs to Syria, according to the managing director.

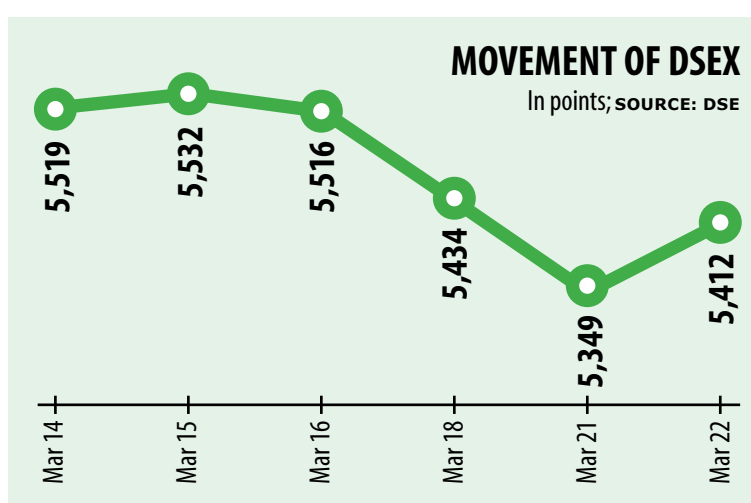
Karim also said it is a proud moment for the country as the international community's confidence on made in Bangladesh pharmaceuticals products has grown.

Sri Lanka is currently the top destination of drug shipments for Bangladesh with \$4.7 million in FY 2019-20 followed by Kenya with \$4.2 million.

READ MORE ON B2

## Stocks make a comeback

NRB Commercial Bank soars 32pc on debut



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's stock market bounced back yesterday after crashing for two days, turning many stocks lucrative.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the DSE, went up 62 points, or 1.16 per cent, to 5,412 yesterday. In the previous two days of trade, it dropped 166 points, or by more than 3 per cent.

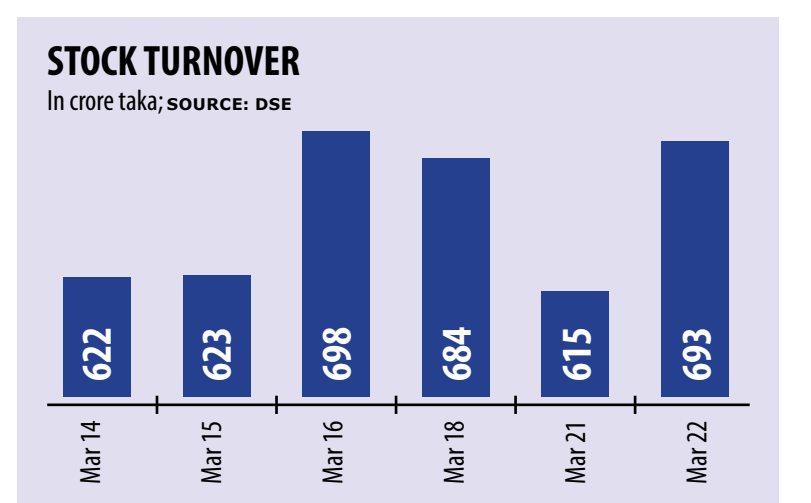
As many well-performing companies' stocks also fell in the last two days, they

can now be considered lucrative, said stock investor Sohel Rana.

Though investors are still fearful about the rise of infections of the coronavirus, they continued to buy shares, he said.

Now support from institutional investors is needed for the index to continue to rise, Rana added. Meanwhile, NRB Commercial Bank made its debut on the bourse yesterday, when it soared 32 per cent.

Turnover, an important indicator of the market, increased 12 per cent to Tk 693 crore.



Rumours have been going around that the market could be shut down as part of effort to contain the pathogen, said a stock broker.

Yesterday the stock market regulator issued a press release informing that the market would remain open if the banks continue operations.

The spread of the pathogen may hamper business of listed companies, said the broker. "So, investors were cautious in buying stocks in the previous days," he said.

READ MORE ON B2



**A Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of Bank Asia Securities, signs 2020's audited financial statement prior to its 10th annual general meeting at Bank Asia Tower in Dhaka. Directors Romana Rouf Chowdhury, Md Abul Quasem, Md Arfan Ali, M Shahjahan Mina and Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil, CEO Sumon Das, Company Secretary Md Anisul Alam Sarker and Head of Finance Nahid Raza were present.**



**Standard Bank Managing Director Khondoker Rashed Maqsood and NDE Group Chairman Imran Mustafiz exchange documents after signing a deal on Sunday facilitating an investment of Tk 530 crore.**

**Eastern Refinery Limited**  
(A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)  
North Patenga, P.O. Box No. 35  
Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh

**Invitation for Enlistment of Pharmaceuticals Company for Medicine Supply**

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources/Energy and Mineral Resources Division.
2. Agency	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.
3. Procuring entity name	Eastern Refinery Limited.
4. Procuring entity district	Chattogram.
5. Invitation for	Enlistment.
6. Invitation Ref No.	ER/PUR/IFE-02/2021
7. Date	21 March, 2021

**KEY INFORMATION**

8. Procurement method	Limited Tendering Method.
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**PARTICULAR INFORMATION**

9. Application closing date and time	12 April 2021, 14:30 Hrs.
10. Application opening date and time	12 April 2021, 15:00 Hrs.
11. Application document selling address	1) Accounts Department, Eastern Refinery Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram. 2) Dhaka Liaison Office, Eastern Refinery Limited, YMCA Building, 1/1, Pioneer Road, Kakrai, Dhaka.
12. Application receiving address	Purchase Department, Eastern Refinery Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram.
13. Application opening address	Purchase Department, Eastern Refinery Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram.

**INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT**

14. Eligibility of applicant	As per tender document.
15. Price of application form (Tk)	500.00
16. Enlistment fee (Tk)	5000.00

**PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS**

17. Name of official inviting application	Md. Tariq Hossain.
18. Designation of official inviting application	Manager (Purchase).
19. Address of official inviting application	Eastern Refinery Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh.
20. Contact details of official inviting application	Mobile: 01321149079 Email: managerip2018@gmail.com; managerip@erl.com.bd
21. The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all applications.	

GD-582 "দেশকে করব মোরা দুর্নীতিমুক্ত, এই চেতনায় হই আমরা প্রতিজ্ঞাবদ্ধ"।

## US economists see Fed hiking lending rate sooner than expected

AFP, Washington

The Federal Reserve has vowed it won't raise its benchmark lending rate anytime soon, but US economists in a survey released Monday believe the central bank could be forced to enact a hike as soon as next year.

The National Association for Business Economics (NABE) reported 46 percent of participants surveyed see the central

bank's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) raising its lending rate in 2022, while 28 per cent think they'll up it in 2023.

Only 12 per cent think the rate will be changed after that year, despite most officials at the conclusion of the FOMC's two-day meeting last week saying that they don't expect to raise it though at least 2023.

The NABE survey is the latest sign of rising

expectations for inflation, after Congress rolled out massive stimulus measures over the past year to keep the world's largest economy afloat as Covid-19 disrupted business.

President Joe Biden earlier this month signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, which was the third major relief measure passed during the pandemic and drew protests from some economists who said it could overstimulate the economy and drive up prices.

## Beacon may ship \$5m pharma products to Syria

FROM PAGE B1

The other major export destinations are Myanmar (\$1.3 million), Nepal (\$0.8 million), Afghanistan (\$0.7 million), and the US (\$0.6 million), data from the Export Promotion Bureau shows.

The local pharmaceuticals sector earned \$135.79 million from exports during the last fiscal year, when shipments witnessed a 4.49 per cent year-on-year growth.

Earlier, a technical team of the government of Syria inspected Beacon Pharmaceutical's plant on March 8. They expressed all-round satisfaction on the company's overall operations in manufacturing drugs by maintaining the GMP.

With a market size of around \$90 million Syria has become a market of choice for Bangladeshi pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Monjurul Alam, Beacon's director for global business, said the visiting team was highly satisfied after inspecting the company's manufacturing facilities.

He also disclosed the Syrian government's eagerness to import medicine for treating Covid-19 patients and cancer survivors.

"We have the potential to increase exports to \$10 million within one year by grabbing around 12 per cent of the pharmaceuticals market in Syria," Alam said.

Local players dominate Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry. Square Pharmaceuticals leads the pack with an 18.8 per cent share followed by Incepta at 10.2 per cent, Beximco 8.5 per cent, Opsonin 5.6 per cent, Renata 5.1 per cent and Eskayef 4.5 per cent, according to the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI).

Beacon will sign a deal with Syrian suppliers who will supply products to the country's hospitals by next June.

Alam said they will make an announcement to the capital market in this regard after completing all official formalities.

BAPI Secretary General SM Shafuazzaman, also managing director of Hudson Pharmaceuticals, said this development is good news for the local pharmaceuticals sector.

He also said it was a thing of pride for the country that Beacon will soon make the single highest export of pharmaceutical products.

"This order proves that Bangladeshi pharmaceuticals has achieved quality and is winning over the global market," Shafuazzaman said.

According to him, the local pharmaceutical sector is capable of manufacturing any kind of high-end drug.

An official of the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) said they are aware of Beacon's export to Syria and the company is capable of providing quality products.

Aside from Beacon, a number local drug makers have adopted modern technology and infrastructure with skilled manpower.

"The DGDA is ready to help the pharmaceutical companies secure export permission certificates within 25 hours of application," he added.

## Stocks make a comeback

FROM PAGE B1

As most stock prices had been downed for that fear, investors now are buying stocks, the broker added.

In the bourse, 188 stocks rose, 56 declined and 108 remained unchanged.

NRB Commercial Bank topped the gainers' list, rising 32 per cent, followed by First Finance, Intech, Premier Bank and Asia Pacific General Insurance Company.

Beximco topped the turnover list with trade worth Tk 76 crore followed by Premier Bank, NRB Commercial Bank, Robi Axiata and Beximco Pharmaceuticals.

GBB Power shed the most, dropping 4.31 per cent, followed by Jute Spinners, ICB AMCL First Agrani Bank Mutual Fund, Libra Infusions and Shyampur Sugar Mills.

The port city bourse also rose yesterday. The CASPI, the general index of the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE), gained 191 points, or 1.23 per cent, to reach 15,677.

Among 217 stocks to witness trade, 122 rose, 49 dropped and 46 remained the same.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Agriculture  
Office of the Project Director  
Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project  
Cotton Development Board, Dhaka  
Memo No. 12.07.3026.922.11(1).024.21.71 Date: 22.03.2021

### Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for Selection of a Firm/Company for Supplying Manpower for the Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project, Cotton Development Board (National)

<b>GENERAL INFORMATION</b>	
1. Ministry/ Division	Ministry of Agriculture.
2. Agency	Cotton Development Board.
3. Name of procuring entity	Project Director, Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project.
4. Procuring entity code	1430701-224322800
5. Procuring entity district	Dhaka.
6. Expression of Interest for	Supplying Manpower for the Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project, Cotton Development Board.
7. EOI Ref No. and date	12.07.3026.922.11(1).024.21.71, Date: 22.3.2021

<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>	
8. Procurement method	Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS).

<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>	
9. Budget and source of funds	GoB (Development Budget).
10. Development partners (if applicable)	N/A.

<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>	
11. Project/ programme name	Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project.
12. EOI closing date and time	07/04/21, 3.00pm.

<b>INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS</b>		
13. Brief description of the manpower	পদের নাম	পদের সংখ্যা
	উপ-সহকারী প্রকৌশলী	১
	হিসাবরক্ষক	১
	অফিস সহকারী-কাম-কম্পিউটার অপারেটর	২
	পাড়াচালক	৩
	ম্যাবরেট্টারী এটেনডেন্ট	৫
নিরাপত্তা প্রহরী		৩
মোট		১৫ জন

14. Experience, resource & delivery capacity required (criteria for shortlisting)	1. The firm/company should fulfill the following requirements: A. Proven experience of undertaking similar assignment. B. Company has sufficient experienced core professionals specialized HRM. C. Required documents: The company must furnish the following updated documents: a. Company registration, b. VAT and income tax certificate, c. Financial statement (last year), d. Audit reports (Last 2 years), e. Bank solvency certificate, f. Project completion certificates from clients for similar projects, g. Annual turn-over for the last 3 (three) years, h. Resource personnel qualification for the project. D. Logistics support details including computer hardware, software licenses and other testing tools, training facilities, transport and office space. 2. Other relevant legal and commercial documents must be enclosed with EOI in support of qualification and experience. 3. All documents must be attested by the government class one gazetted officer.
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15. Other details	1. Place of assignment: May be inside or outside Dhaka at the CDB revenue and project office. 2. The expected date of commencement is <b>May 01, 2021</b> and completion <b>up to the project period</b> . 3. The consulting firm shall submit 2 (two) copies of Expression of Interest (EOI) (one original and one copy) and one soft copy (in MS Word) in sealed envelope; clearly marked "EOI for recruiting outsourcing manpower for the Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project, Cotton Development Board" to the Project Director, Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project, Cotton Development Board, Khamarbari, Dhaka-1215 on or before <b>07/04/2021 up to 3.00pm</b> . 4. Copy of the indicative TOR may be collected from the Office of the Project Director, Room No. 523, 4th Floor, 3rd Building, Cotton Development Board, Khamarbari, Dhaka.
16. Association with foreign firms or Joint Venture (JV)	NA.

<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>	
17. Name of the official inviting EOI	Dr. Sima Kundu.
18. Designation of the official inviting EOI	Project Director.
19. Address of the official inviting EOI	Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project, Cotton Development Board, Khamarbari, Dhaka-1215.
20. Contact details of the official inviting EOI	Tel. No. 55028271 E-mail: <a href="mailto:dcrtt.cdb@gmail.com">dcrtt.cdb@gmail.com</a>
21. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all EOIs without showing any reason.	

**Dr. Sima Kundu**  
Project Director  
Development of Cotton Research and Technology Transfer Project, Cotton Development Board, Khamarbari, Dhaka  
Phone: 55028271

**রাঙ্গামাটি বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়**  
অস্থায়ী প্রধান কার্যালয়, ভেদভেদি, রাঙ্গামাটি পার্বত্য জেলা  
স্মারক নং রাবিপ্রবি/পওউ/রাজস্ব/কম্পিউসামজী/০৩/১০১ তারিখঃ ২৩/০৩/২০২১খ্রিঃ

**Invitation for Tenders (IFT)**

Rangamati Science and Technology University

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education.
2. Agency	University Grants Commission of Bangladesh/Rangamati Science and Technology University.
3. Procuring entity name	Professor Dr. Pradanendu Bikash Chakma, Vice Chancellor, Rangamati Science and Technology University.
4. Procuring entity district	Rangamati.
5. Invitation for	Supply of Desktop Computer.

**KEY INFORMATION**

6. Procurement method	Open Tender Method (OTM).
7. Budget and source of fund	GoB.

**PARTICULAR INFORMATION**

8. Project/programme name	Not applicable.
9. Quotation/tender package No.	--
10. Quotation tender publication date	23/03/2021
11. Quotation/tender last collection date	05/04/2021 (office hours).
12. Quotation/tender closing date and time	06/04/2021; 12:00pm.
13. Quotation/tender opening date and time	06/04/2021; 12:30pm.

14. Name & address of the offices	
-Collection of quotation/tender document	Planning & Development Department, 2nd Floor, Admin Building, Rangamati Science and Technology University, Rangamati-4500.
-Receiving quotation/tender document	Planning & Development Department, 2nd Floor, Admin Building, Rangamati Science and Technology University, Rangamati-4500.

15. Place of opening quotation/tender document	Conference Room (2nd Floor), Admin Building, Rangamati Science and Technology University, Rangamati-4500.
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**INFORMATION FOR TENDERER**

16. Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	a) Updated trade licence, b) TIN certificate, c) VAT registration certificate (d) Bank solvency certificate and e) Experience in relevant work and other qualifications (as mentioned in tender documents/schedule).
17. Brief description of works	As per schedule.
18. Price of tender document	Non-refundable of Taka 1,000/- (Taka one thousand) only.
19. Tender security	Taka 35,000/- (Taka thirty-five thousand only) payable in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft of any schedule bank of Bangladesh in favor of "Vice Chancellor, Rangamati Science and Technology University."

**PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS**

20. Name of official inviting tender	Abdul Gafur.
21. Designation of official inviting quotation/tender	Assistant Director (P&D).
22. Address of official inviting quotation/tender	Rangamati Science and Technology University, Vedvedi, Rangamati-4500.
23. Contact details of official inviting quotation/tender	Mobile: 01830 161369.
24. Special instructions	a) Any tender received after deadline for submission of tender, shall be declared late, will be rejected and returned unopened to the tenderer. b) The procuring entity reserves the right to accept any tender to annul the tender process or to reject any or all tenders at any time prior to award of contract.
25. The tender will be performed according to "The Public Procurement Rules."	

//Signed//  
**Abdul Gafur**  
Assistant Director (P&D)  
Rangamati Science and Technology University

GD-578



United Commercial Bank Managing Director Mohammed Shawkat Jamil poses with probatory officers at the end of a 12-week "Comprehensive Foundation Training" at its Dhaka head office recently.

## Saudi Aramco 2020 profits slump on lower crude prices

AFP, Riyadh

Energy giant Saudi Aramco on Sunday posted a 44.4 per cent slump in 2020 net profit due to lower crude prices, as the coronavirus pandemic weighed heavily on global demand. Aramco, Saudi Arabia's cash cow, has revealed consecutive falls in profits since it began disclosing earnings in 2019.

That has piled pressure on government finances as Riyadh pursues multi-billion dollar projects to diversify the oil-reliant economy. "Aramco achieved a net income of \$49 billion in 2020," the company said in a statement -- down from \$88.2 billion in 2019. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, was hammered last year by the double whammy of low prices and sharp cuts in production.

Aramco chief executive Amin Nasser described it as "one of the most challenging years in recent history".

The firm said "revenues were impacted by lower crude oil prices and volumes sold, and weakened refining and chemicals margins. "But compared to many of its loss-generating international peers, the company, which made its stock market debut in 2019, played up its "strong financial resilience" despite the challenges.

Crude prices have risen in recent weeks to over \$60 per barrel. But in the short term, analysts say the Saudi giant is bracing for a possible further wave of coronavirus infections that could undermine a tentative global economic recovery.

As the global vaccination program gains momentum, however, Aramco said it was seeing a pick-up in crude demand

in energy-hungry Asia and other parts of the world. Analysts say the company's debt levels surged last year as it offered shareholders a bumper dividend even as its earnings plunged.

Aramco said it stuck to its commitment of paying shareholders dividends worth \$75 billion in 2020 -- an amount that exceeds the declared profit. Dividend payments from Aramco help the Saudi government, the company's biggest shareholder, manage its ballooning budget deficit.

Without addressing the company's debt, Aramco's Nasser said belt-tightening had kept the firm's financial position "robust", enabling it to pay out the dividends. "As the enormous impact of COVID-19 was felt throughout the global economy, we intensified our strong emphasis on capital and operational efficiencies," Nasser said.

The statement said Aramco "expects capital expenditure for 2021 to be around \$35 billion, significantly lower than the previous guidance of \$40-\$45 billion".

Aramco has also slashed hundreds of jobs as it seeks to reduce costs, Bloomberg News reported last June. A drop in oil income is expected to hinder Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's ambitious "Vision 2030" reform programme to overhaul the kingdom's energy-reliant economy.

Aramco was listed on the Saudi bourse in December 2019 following the world's biggest initial public offering, generating \$29.4 billion for 1.7 per cent of its shares. In January, Prince Mohammed said the kingdom would sell more Aramco shares in the coming years.



An employee rides a bicycle past an oil tank at Saudi Aramco oil facility in Abqaiq, Saudi Arabia.

## Chicken meat dearer as demand rises

FROM PAGE B1

The government eased the restrictions on movement in June, and farming recovered later. But the recovery has not kept pace with the recent spike in demand for poultry, operators say.

"Social events, such as weddings, are taking place. Many people also buy chicken marking Shab-e-Barat. Pahela Baishakh is another big event when consumption of poultry rises," Rahman said.

Kayser Ahmed, managing director of Diamond Egg Ltd, said a portion of farmers switched to layer farming to produce eggs after the demand for broiler chicken dipped following the spread of coronavirus last year.

"At that time, the prices of eggs were higher," he said. "As the prices of eggs are low now, a section of farmers will switch broiler farming."

## Congested ports and supply chain woes hit US factories and stores

AFP, New York

The cold snap that gripped the United States in February not only caused chaos in Texas and the southwest, it also triggered a shortage in plastics that has disrupted a supply chain already under strain from a lack of microchips and growing congestion at ports as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. So factories have had to shut their doors and consumers are feeling the crunch.

At Toyota, a petrochemicals shortage affected production at plants in Kentucky, West Virginia and Mexico. Honda cited supply chain issues "related to the impact of Covid-19, congestion at various ports, semiconductor shortages and severe winter weather" to justify the temporary closure of five of its factories in Canada and the United States. Consumers are also being affected. Nike said Thursday that its sales of shoes and sportswear were being affected by congestion at ports around the country.

At a Best Buy home appliance store in suburban Washington, a customer said she spent an hour with a sales assistant, only to find that many stove models wouldn't be available for several weeks. "I had to buy a black stainless steel stove when I wanted a white one, and for \$200 dollars more than I'd budgeted", complained Virginie Hines, a French woman living in Maryland.

The problems in the plastics sector are the latest glitch in the supply chain. In mid-February, freezing temperatures paralyzed Texas and Louisiana, home to many of the factories that transform oil into polyethylene, which is used to make plastic bags, shampoo bottles or toothpaste tubes, polypropylene, used for the hard plastic of car dashboards or refrigerators, or PVC, which is used to make pipes or window frames.

While they are used to weathering hurricanes, these plants rarely experience low temperatures. At the height of the cold snap, more than 70 percent of ethylene production capacity was down and at least 62 percent of polypropylene production, according to S&P Global Platts. "Not only was supply knocked off line from a freeze, but the demand for products had just started to rebound," said Robert Benedict of the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM). The consequences are hard to pinpoint, but with petrochemicals accounting for a third of the raw material costs of a car,

"it's easy to understand why we're now seeing ripple effect in other manufacturing supply chains," he said. "Frozen pipes -/Problems at several factories at the end of December had already limited supply, said Jennifer Van Dinter of S&P Global Platts. With the freeze, the plastics "supply shortages are likely to result in a supply-constrained market

for at least a few weeks and possibly into late spring. "After repairing the damage, especially the frozen pipes, the factories are now getting back up and running.

The chemicals giant Dow expects its activity in Texas to return to normal by April. The situation for PVC is more complicated because a "significant portion" of world production is located in Louisiana, which had already suffered from being slammed by Hurricane Laura last year, said Van Dinter.

These disruptions in plastics production come on the heels of a semiconductor shortage linked to the boom in demand for electronics since the start of the pandemic, which has plagued the auto industry since the start of the year.

For their part, the ports are facing a period of frenetic activity. "We are in the seventh month of an unparalleled import surge, driven by unprecedented demands by American consumers," said Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles.

Not being able to go to the movies, go on vacation or eat out, people instead ordered goods in large quantities. These disruptions are being closely watched by the Federal Reserve, whose chairman Jerome Powell stressed on Wednesday that the gradual reopening of the economy could push up prices, "particularly if supply belt bottlenecks limit how quickly production can respond in the near term.

## DU, Koica Bangladesh to promote entrepreneurship

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The University of Dhaka's Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship (ICE) Center and Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica) Bangladesh are set to initiate a project promoting entrepreneurship in Bangladesh.

A meeting on the project titled "Capacity Building of Universities in Bangladesh to Promote Youth Entrepreneurship" was held at the vice chancellor's office on Sunday, says a press release.

The project will be implemented under the Ministry of Education and include a consortium comprising Korea Productivity Center (KPC) and Korea Polytechnic University.

## ByteDance acquires gaming studio Moonton at around \$4b valuation

REUTERS

ByteDance said on Monday its video games unit Nuverse has agreed to acquire Shanghai-based gaming studio Moonton Technology, as it seeks to further expand into the video games business.

The deal values the gaming studio at around \$4 billion, two sources told Reuters.

The acquisition of the video games studio come as ByteDance, the owner of TikTok and the similar Chinese short video platform Douyin, has made sizeable inroads into the video games business, putting it in direct competition with China's Tencent.

"Through cross-team collaboration and drawing on lessons and insights from its own rapid growth, Moonton provides the strategic support needed to accelerate Nuverse's global gaming offerings," ByteDance said in a statement, declining to comment on the size of the acquisition.

In an internal memo, Yuan Jing, CEO of Moonton, said the company would operate independently from ByteDance after the acquisition, a source told Reuters on condition of anonymity as he is not authorized to speak to the press.

Moonton Technology, founded by an ex-Tencent employee, is most famous in Southeast Asia for its multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game Mobile Legends.

Tencent, China's biggest video games and social media company, made a bidding for Moonton but the offer was matched by ByteDance last week, two sources familiar with the situation told Reuters.

When contacted by Reuters, Tencent said it does not comment on market speculation.

The acquisition means ByteDance now has a MOBA game under its belt that could compete with Tencent's Honor of Kings and League of Legends, both a cash cow for Tencent.

Since 2017, Tencent and Riot Games have filed multiple lawsuits against Moonton for what they say was copyright infringement.

## AGRANI BANK LIMITED

ESTABLISHMENT & ENGINEERING DIVISION  
HEAD OFFICE, 9/D DILKUSHA C/A, MOTIJHEEL, DHAKA.

### Invitation For Re-Tenders (IFT)

1. Procuring Entity Name	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head office (7th floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.
2. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka.
3. Invitation for	Supply & Installation of Air Cooler for Agrani Bank Limited, Amin Court Corporate Branch, Dhaka.
4. Invitation Ref No	E&ED/ Engg/ Mecha-2/084/2021
5. Date	Date : 21/03/2021
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>	
6. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>	
7. Budget and Source of Funds	Own fund of Agrani Bank limited.
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>	
8. Tender Publication Date	21/03/2021
9. Tender Last Selling Date	18/04/2021 during office hour
10. Tender Receiving Date and Time	19/04/2021 at 10.00 AM to 02.00 PM
Tender Closing Date and Time	19/04/2021 at 02.00 PM
11. Tender Opening Date and Time	19/04/2021 at 02.15 PM in presence of Tenderers or their representatives (if any present)
12. Name & Address of the office (s)	
Selling Tender Document.	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head office (7th floor), Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
Selling Tender Document (Others)	N/A
Receiving Tender Document	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head Office (7th Floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.
Opening Tender Document	DGM's Chamber, Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head Office (7th Floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.

13. INFORMATION FOR TENDERER (Eligibility of Tender):			
Reputed Firm/ organization / manufacturer/ authorized agent who have minimum 03 (Three) years of general experience of similar nature of works. Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper.			
Having experience in successfully completion of Air Cooler supply & Installation of at least 02 contract(s) successfully completed within the last 03 years, each with a value of at least Tk. 23.80 Lac. (The year counting backward from the date of invitation of this Tender (IFT) under any Govt./ Semi-Govt./ Autonomous bodies/ Govt. owned Public Limited Company.			
i) The above experience/ Works certificate for successfully completion of similar supply, installation, testing & commissioning work.			
ii) The certifying authority of the work under any Govt./ semi Govt./ autonomous bodies/ Govt. owned Public Limited Company should be an officer not below the rank of Executive Engineer or equivalent post and the certificate will be duly verified by the concerned authority.			
The Tenderer must process: i) Up to date valid Trade license ii) In case of Limited Company, the certificate of Incorporation, Memorandum of association, Article of association & Power of attorney iii) Up-to-date income tax certificate iii) Valid VAT registration certificate iv) e-TIN Certificate			
The minimum amount of liquid assets or working capital or credit facilities shall be Tk. 25.00 lac. Should be counting 28 days backward from the date of opening of tender. In case of Bank Solvency Certificate an Account statement should be attached counting 90 days backward from the date of opening of tender.			
The Tenderer will submit financial statements such as profit and loss statements and audited balance sheet of last 03 years.			
The Tenderer must submit: i) International Standard Compliance (CE/UL/ISO/ Any other) ii) Original Catalogue/ Brochure must be submitted with Tender iii) Necessary document of Distributor/ Authorize Dealer/ Importer of Mentioned Brand iv) Manufacturer's Authorization must be submitted with the tender.			
All other reputed qualification, terms and conditions of the tenderer are shown in the tender data sheet (TDS) of Tender documents and all experience certificates will be submitted as per format. Necessary supporting Documents to be submitted as per requirement of ITT Clauses and technical specification of the tender.			

14. Completion Time	4 (Four) weeks from the date of Contract Signing.		
15. Brief Description of Goods or Works	Supply & Installation of Air Cooler for Agrani Bank limited, Amin Court Corporate Branch, Dhaka.		
16. Brief Description of Related Services	As per STD		
17. Tender Document Price	Tk. 2,000.00 (Taka Two Thousand) only per set (non-refundable) by Pay order/ Bank Draft from any Branch of Agrani Bank Limited in favour of Agrani Bank Limited, Head Office, Dhaka.		
18. Invitation For	Location	Tender Security Amount (Tk.)	Completion Time in Weeks/ Months
Supply & Installation of Air Cooler for Agrani Bank limited, Amin Court Corporate Branch, Dhaka.	Motijheel, Dhaka	The amount of the Tender Security shall be 0.70 Lac in the form of Pay Order/ Bank Draft (refundable) from any branch of Agrani Bank Limited in favour of Agrani Bank Limited, Head office, Dhaka.	4 (Four) weeks from the date of Contract Signing.

<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>			
19. Name of Official Inviting Tender	MD. Nurul Islam		
20. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager.		
21. Address of Official Inviting Tender	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head Office (7th floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.		
22. Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager, Establishment & Engineering Division, Agrani Bank Limited, Head Office (7th floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka. Tel: 02-9561674.		

23. Special Instructions			
i) Tender security money must be submitted along with the tender documents through Pay Order/ Bank Draft favoring Agrani Bank Limited. Head Office, Dhaka from any branch of Agrani Bank Limited.			
ii) Attested copy of Experience certificate, Up to date Trade License, Last Income Tax Certificate, Vat registration certificate, e-TIN, Bank Solvency Certificate, etc should be submitted with tender schedule.			
iii) In Addition to the original tender 1 (One) duplicate copy will be submitted.			
iv) If it is not possible to receive/ open the tender on the schedule date & time for any unavoidable circumstances the same will be received/open on the next working date at the same time & same venue.			
v) All submitted documents must be signed by the tenderer in every page of tender all true/ photo copy must be attested as per prevailing Laws & Rules.			
vi) If the Tenderer submits any false/ incorrect or forged certificate, action may be taken as per PPA-2006 and PPR-2008 and its amendments.			
vii) This tender will be governed by the PPR 2008 and its amendments.			
viii) The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all Tenders prior to acceptance without assigning any reason. Agrani Bank Limited shall not be under any obligation to accept the lowest tender.			

(MD. Nurul Islam)  
Deputy General Manager

20 x 3

# Yellow tea produced for first time

MINTU DESHWARA

After black, green and white tea, growers in Bangladesh have developed highly valued yellow tea, a development that will take the country to another step forward in saving foreign currencies spent on importing expensive varieties of the beverage.

Even the country can earn more by exporting higher-priced teas thanks to price competitiveness.

Brindaban Tea Garden in Habiganj has produced yellow tea for the first time in Bangladesh, said Nasir Uddin Khan, manager of the garden.

"Earlier, we started to produce yellow tea experimentally. Now, we are producing it commercially," he said.

Mahmud Hasan Prince, a scientific officer of Mirzapur Tea Garden, said such tea had never been produced in the country. "Brindaban Tea Garden has made history."

The development of yellow tea will drive innovation and other tea gardens will follow suit, he said.

Native to China, yellow tea, which has slowly gained popularity across the world, is a little different in taste, as it offers a fruity and distinct after taste, smooth texture and a pleasing aroma, according to an article in the Times of India.

The bright yellow colour is not natural and is attained through a process called "sealed yellowing". Under the process, the tea polyphenols are first oxidised to attain the yellow tinge and then further treated to preserve the colour and aroma of the dried leaves, it said.

Yellow tea was auctioned in Chattogram on March 15. The authorities put up for auction six kilogrammes of yellow tea, with each kg fetching Tk 8,300. Popular Tea House in Sreemangal bought the tea.

Another auction took place at



COLLECTED

The development of yellow tea will drive innovation and other tea gardens will follow suit.

the Sreemangal Auction Centre on March 18. The auction was offered by Sreemangal Brokers Ltd, and each kg was sold for Tk 12,200.

Jahar Tarafder, member secretary of the Tea Planters and Traders Association of Bangladesh, said: "Yellow tea was auctioned at the highest price in the history of tea in Bangladesh."

Established in 1920, the area of Brindaban Tea Garden is about 1,183.37 acres. About a thousand workers are employed there.

Khan said after successfully producing white tea, yellow tea had now been produced.

"There is a great demand for yellow tea at home and abroad. If this type of tea is produced

commercially, it will be possible to earn a lot of foreign exchange," he said. No unique tree has to be planted to produce white or yellow tea. They can be produced from the same plant through special processing, he said.

Yellow tea commands several times higher prices compared to regular teas in many countries.

In India, yellow tea is sold for 75,000 rupees per kg. There is a huge demand for the tea in European countries, according to Khan.

Brindaban Tea Garden has targeted to produce 500 kg of yellow tea this year.

Tarafder said imported white tea cost Tk 7,000 per kg while it was

available at Tk 4,500 locally.

There are about 32 lakh people in Bangladesh who drink imported white, green, yellow and black tea.

"If we can offer these teas to this group of customers at half the price, they will not buy them from other countries. Therefore, if we want to capture the tea market at home and abroad, we must give importance to diversification," Tarafder said.

"Then the import will go down. And due to lower prices, there is the possibility that exports will go up."

Some 86.39 million kg of tea were produced in Bangladesh in 2020, down 10.01 per cent year-on-year, because of adverse weather. Annual consumption stood at 84 million kg.

GLOBAL BUSINESS

## Electric shock - German auto stocks get a new lease of life

REUTERS, London

Volkswagen and BMW's plans to grab market share in the fast-growing electric car market and challenge Tesla could shift the dial for their cheaply priced shares.

A deadline set by many countries to go carbon-free by 2050 has led to rising adoption of zero-emission vehicles and Tesla has been at the forefront of this transformation, selling long-range battery electric vehicles (BEVs).

Despite a recent pullback, its stock has soared 650 per cent in the last year, helped also by a cult following for CEO Elon Musk. But it is no longer the only electrification play in town.

Volkswagen, the German company competing with Toyota to be the world's biggest vehicle seller by volume, laid out its ambitious plan to turn 70 per cent of European sales at its core VW brand electric during its "power day" last Monday.

The plan, months in the making, has helped to fuel a Tesla-esque rally in the 83-year old company's shares, with CEO Herbert Diess even taking to Twitter, Elon Musk-style to crow as the company's market value crossed 100 billion euros (\$119 billion) earlier this month.

The stock is now up 52 per cent year-to-date, taking its market value to 143 billion euros.

"With VW's CEO really pushing the

message on BEVs across all channels (conventional media, investors as well as Twitter and LinkedIn) we believe the private investors are picking up on this story and could be quite a powerful force by themselves," said Barclays analyst Kai Alexander Mueller.

German rival BMW, meanwhile, said on Wednesday it was aiming for half of its sales to be non-fossil fuel vehicles by 2030, and that around 90 per cent of its market categories would have fully-electric models available by 2023.

"No one can know today who will win in the global electric car market, but while there is greater balance among the players, in stock market valuations there is unprecedented imbalance between early adopters and those who are becoming so," said Alessandro Fugnoli, a strategist at Kairos in Milan, calling it "the rebirth of the German auto".

UBS recently forecast Volkswagen would match Tesla's output by 2025 and raised the price target on the company's shares by 50 per cent to 300 euros - the most bullish target among the 28 analysts covering the stock. The stock is currently at about 223 euros.

Valuation comparisons are also supportive.

At 160 times forward earnings, Tesla is by far the most expensive stock in the autos sector, whereas Volkswagen and BMW still trade at only around 9-10 times forward earnings.



The BMW iNEXT electric autonomous concept car is introduced during a BMW press conference at the Los Angeles Auto Show in Los Angeles, California.

REUTERS/FILE

GLOBAL BUSINESS

## Wall Street's year of boom and bust

REUTERS, New York

Wall Street giddiness in recent weeks stands in stark contrast to the pandemic panic of one year ago.

US stocks on Tuesday will mark the one-year anniversary of the market low as the spread of the COVID-19 and government lockdowns began to crush economic activity, before massive government and central bank stimulus plus the development of vaccines fueled a stunning, if uneven, rebound.

As investor optimism grew, stocks began to recover from the selloff that ended an 11-year bull market, history's longest.

The S&P 500 bottomed by closing at 2237.40 on March 23, and topped the Feb. 19, 2020 bull-market high on Aug. 18, when the index ended the session at 3389.78. That high marked the end of

the shortest bear market ever and confirmed that on March 23 a new bull had been unleashed. Initial lockdowns hit customer-facing services sectors the hardest as social distancing mandates to curb COVID's spread shuttered restaurants and slammed the travel and leisure industry.

Jobs in these sectors - typically on the lower end of the wage scale - evaporated overnight, and as new coronavirus infections spiked and abated, those jobs have been slow to return.

Conversely, the shutdown caused consumer demand to shift from services to goods, boosting resilience of US factories and prompting a restoration of manufacturing jobs that outpaced the whole.

Along with the stimulus supplied by the US Federal Reserve and the government, stocks worked their way off the low thanks in part to the start of vaccine rollouts and optimism that economic reopenings were on the horizon.

But companies that commanded attention during the beginning of the pandemic, so called "stay-at-home" plays such as Amazon, Zoom Media and Teladoc saw their fortunes begin to turn in the latter stages of 2020, with cyclical sectors such as energy, materials and small cap stocks garnering more favor.

As optimism about reopenings began to rise, so did investor appetite for stocks that traditionally do well as an economy

recovers from a recession. Many of those stocks fall into a "value" profile as they were largely ignored for bigger "growth" names in sectors such as technology and communication services.

That change in tenor helped value stocks close what had been a widening gap versus the outperformance of growth stocks over the past several years.

Uncertainty about the medium- or long-term recovery prognosis saw several pivots between stay-at-home and reopening plays.

For instance, the equities market looked beyond grim current conditions and toward an expected recovery in commercial air travel, which can be seen by comparing air traffic data with airline stocks. Investors clearly see the battered sector taking off despite persistently low passenger numbers courtesy of the Transportation Safety



REUTERS/FILE

A man walks past the New York Stock Exchange on the corner of Wall and Broad streets in New York City, New York.

Administration (TSA).

The housing market has been the star of the US economic recovery, rebounding beyond pre-pandemic levels as the hunt for lower population density and home office space, along with historically low mortgage rates, sent demand soaring, home prices surging and supply of homes on the market to all-time lows.

Housing stocks have also handily outperformed the broader market since its nadir. A year later, the Philadelphia SE Housing index is up nearly 150%, almost double the S&P 500's advance over the same time period.

The sector's strength is also a reminder of who suffered the worst of the largest economic downturn since the Great Depression, as lower income Americans typically rent and are less likely to be prospective home buyers.

## Turkish lira plunges to record lows on central bank chief's sacking

REUTERS

Turkey's lira slid 15 per cent to a near all-time low on Monday after President Tayyip Erdogan's shock weekend ousting of a hawkish central bank governor sparked fears of a reversal of recent rate hikes, before clawing back some overnight losses.

The appointment of Sahap Kavcioglu, a former banker and ruling party lawmaker, in the early hours on Saturday marked the third time since mid-2019 that Erdogan has abruptly fired a central bank chief.

Kavcioglu sought to ease concerns about a sharp selloff in Turkish assets and a pivot from tight to loose policy, telling bank CEOs on Sunday he planned no immediate policy change, a source told Reuters.

The currency tumbled to as weak as 8.4850 versus the dollar, from 7.2185 on Friday, back to levels touched in early November when it reached an intraday record of 8.58.

It recovered about half of those losses after Finance Minister Lutfi Elvan said Turkey would stick to free market rules, reaching 7.76 at 0620 GMT, 7 per cent weaker from Friday.



REUTERS/FILE

A currency exchange office worker counts Turkish Lira banknotes in front of an electronic panel displaying currency exchange rates at an exchange office in Istanbul.

Goldman Sachs and others had expected a sharp dive in the lira and Turkish assets given the new governor's dovish and even unorthodox views, and what was seen as the latest damage to the bank's credibility amid years

of policy interference that has dogged the major emerging market economy. The weekend overhaul could soon reverse the hawkish steps taken by predecessor Naci Agbal, analysts said, and nudge Turkey toward a

balance of payments crisis given its depleted buffer of FX reserves.

Turkey "will be left with two choices, either it pledges to use interest rates to stabilise markets, or it imposes capital controls," said Per Hammarlund, senior EM strategist at SEB Research.

Finance Minister Elvan said authorities were determined to stick to free-market rules and a free-floating currency regime. He said in a statement the macro policy framework would continue until there is a lasting fall in inflation.

Erdogan fired Agbal two days after a sharp rate hike that was meant to head off inflation of nearly 16 per cent and a dipping lira.

In less than five months on the job, Agbal had raised rates by 875 basis points to 19 per cent and regained some policy credibility as the lira rallied from its nadir.

Cristian Maggio, a strategist at TD Securities said the overhaul "demonstrates the erratic nature of policy decisions in Turkey, especially with regard to monetary matters (and risks) looser, unorthodox, and eventually mostly pro-growth policies from now on."

## Deliveroo eyes 8.8b pounds valuation at London float

AFP, London

British meal delivery app Deliveroo is aiming for a higher-than-expected valuation of up to 8.8 billion pounds when it launches shortly on the London stock market, the company said Monday following a pandemic-fueled boom in demand.

The Amazon-backed company, in line with other home-delivery firms, says it has seen demand soar in the past year as locked-down households called in food. The big listing, expected in April, is seen as a major boost to London's financial sector which has been hit by Brexit turmoil. London's financial sector, known as the City, recently lost its European share trading crown to Amsterdam following Britain's exit from the European Union.

Eight-year-old Deliveroo's market capitalisation on listing is set to be between 7.6 billion and 8.8 billion (\$10.5 billion-\$12.2 billion, 8.9 billion euros-10.3 billion euros), it said in a statement Monday. "We are proud to be listing in London, the city where Deliveroo started," company founder and CEO Will



REUTERS/FILE

A Deliveroo delivery rider cycles in London, Britain.

Shu said. "Becoming a public company will enable us to continue to invest in innovation, developing new tech tools to support restaurants and grocers, providing riders with more work and extending choice for consumers," he added.

The offer price range has been set at between 3.90 and 4.60 per share, Deliveroo said. It will sell around 1.0 billion worth of new shares,

while current investors in the company plan to sell part of their holdings.

The share price range "is higher than previously expected and makes it the biggest IPO in London for some time," said Neil Wilson, chief market analyst at Markets.com. A recent fundraising round had valued the company at more than \$7.0 billion.

The listing update was published alongside news that Deliveroo's app transactions ballooned by 121 per cent in the first two months of 2021. "We have seen a strong start to 2021 and we are only at the start of an exciting journey in a large, fast-growing online food delivery market, with a huge opportunity ahead," Shu said.

Deliveroo earlier this month announced that it made an underlying loss of 223.7 million in 2020. That was despite the value of transactions rocketing 64 percent to 4.1 billion.

Since its London launch in 2013, Deliveroo has expanded into mainland Europe, Asia, Australia and the Middle East. Last year, more than six million people ordered food and drink every month via its app from 115,000 cafes, restaurants and stores.