

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 0.34%	▲ 0.38%	\$1,786.09	\$66.59	▼ 1.81%	▲ 0.01%	▲ 0.25%	▲ 1.49%	BUY TK 83.95	99.28	115.20	12.63
5,349.91	9,333.34	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	47,949.42	29,685.37	3,209.72	3,477.55	SELL TK 84.95	103.08	119.00	13.28

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Turkey farming drops as demand crashes

AKANDA MUHAMMAD JAHID

Mizanur Rahman sometimes takes a look at some photographs on his mobile phone. Those are a bit old, taken about a year ago.

After a while, he stops looking at them with a deep sigh. These pictures reminded him of his dream of making it big in turkey farming.

Watching inspiring stories of turkey farming on YouTube, Rahman bought 50 American variety of turkey chicks for Tk 60,000 in early 2019. Within six months, they weighed around five kilogrammes (kg).

The farmer in South Jhawgara village in Melandah upazila of Jamalpur made a good profit by selling them between Tk 500 and Tk 600 per kg.

Buoyed by the initial success, he expanded the sheds and bought 500 more chicks. Within one and a half years, the number of birds rose to 2,000.

Rahman's story was not just of merely turkey farming – it was a story of love, affection, sacrifice, and hard work. "My school-going daughter loved



these birds very much. I also adored them. In fact, I saw my daughter's future among these birds."

He worked tirelessly at the farm for more than a year. He was confident that if he sold these turkeys, he would earn about Tk one crore.

But when his poultry matured for sale, the price dipped sharply. He sold the birds for a paltry Tk 150 and Tk 160 per kg.

"There was a time during the

pandemic when no one wanted to take it for free," Rahman said.

He spent Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,500 to feed a turkey until it weighed up to three to five kg in six months. The cost of meat production was Tk 350 to Tk 450 per kg.

"The day I sold the last flock of turkeys, my daughter cried a lot. I couldn't hold myself either. Some sort of affection was created for them but I no longer had the ability to bear their expenses.

"But at this moment, these are just memories. When I look at these pictures, my heart aches. I can't hold back my tears.

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COVID DEATH Bankers' families to get up to Tk 50 lakh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The central bank yesterday asked banks to pay cash compensation to the families of bankers in the event of death from coronavirus infections.

The special compensation will range from a minimum of Tk 25 lakh to a maximum of Tk 50 lakh, according to a central bank notice.

The new instruction came as the central bank has kept banks open amid the countrywide lockdown, which was imposed to curb the alarming rise of infections.

The families of the first-class officers, senior officers, probationary officers, management trainee officers, or bankers holding equivalent posts will get a maximum of Tk 50 lakh in case of the death of the employees.

Tk 37.50 lakh will be given to the families of the bankers who hold positions from the trainee assistant official to the one just below the first grade.

Staff and sub-staff members have been brought under the scheme.

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Go on with policy support to fight second wave: IMF

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh faces challenges in sustaining the effective response it unveiled in the initial phase of the pandemic last year as it grapples with a devastating second wave of the deadly pathogen, the International Monetary Fund has said.

"Bangladesh is in the throes of another wave of the pandemic, and this is presenting challenges and downside risks to growth," said Jonathan D Ostry, deputy director for the Asia and Pacific Department of the IMF, at a virtual press briefing recently.

The multilateral lender had organised the press conference on the economic situation of the Asia-Pacific region as part of its Spring Meetings.

When asked about the types of fiscal measures the government needs to take to address the pandemic-induced economic downturn, Ostry said that the challenge for policy was to sustain the effective response that Bangladesh made during the initial phase of the crisis.

"The government will have to continue its support to the vulnerable groups through social safety nets and its support for the agriculture sector. So, this is the challenge," he said.

Since Covid-19 hit Bangladesh on March 8 last year, the government has announced 23 stimulus packages involving Tk 124,053 crore, which is more than 4 per cent of the country's gross domestic product.

Although key contributors to the economy such as small and medium enterprises, farmers and lower-income

IMF observations

- Second wave of pandemic creates risks for growth
- Policy support should continue for vulnerable groups
- Farm sector must be given continued focus
- Fiscal revenue capacity has to be strengthened
- Led by Bangladesh, South Asia is recovering despite the second wave

professionals have gone through their worst-ever crisis because of the first wave of the coronavirus, the implementation rates of the stimulus packages dedicated to them are not satisfactory.

As of March 18 this year, banks disbursed about Tk 13,011 crore among 89,892 borrowers under the stimulus package worth Tk 20,000 crore earmarked for the SME sector, data from the central bank showed.

Despite extending the deadline thrice by the central bank, many banks showed unwillingness to disburse loans to the SME sector, which is considered the bedrock of the economy.

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Ctg port deliveries slow amid lockdown

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

There has been a sharp fall in delivery of imported goods from the Chittagong port in the last six days since the countrywide lockdown was imposed on April 14 as importers are not taking the deliveries timely.

Overall container occupancy at the port yards is still at a comfortable level, sans those dedicatedly used for storing import laden containers.

But the port officials and users apprehend a possible container congestion if the deliveries do not gain pace in the coming days as the lockdown has been extended for one more week.

The port authority has already started knocking different business bodies to take steps for taking delivery of goods everyday of the week aiming at expediting the process.

As of yesterday morning, there were 35,138 TEUs (twenty feet equivalent units) of all types of containers lying at the port yards, which was around 72 per cent of the port's total capacity of storing 49,018 TEUs.

But concerns remain over the situation at the yards dedicated for storing import laden containers.



STAR/FILE

Port officials and users apprehend a possible container congestion if the deliveries do not gain pace in the coming days as the lockdown has been extended.

A total of 33,244 TEUs of containers were lying at these dedicated yards covering around 93 per cent of their capacity of 35,868 TEUs.

Overall, daily delivery from the port before the lockdown was over 5,000 TEUs on an average whereas it came down to only 3,100 TEUs per day in the last five

days till yesterday morning.

The overall delivery is a total calculation of different types of deliveries. A good portion of import goods are taken away

right from the port yards on being unstuffed from containers.

A portion of import containers carrying 37 types of goods as well as empty containers are taken out to 19 privately owned inland container depots (ICDs) from where the deliveries are made.

Consignees also take delivery of a portion of loaded import containers from the port, which is called on-chassis delivery.

The direct delivery of goods from the yards also saw a sharp fall in the last five days.

It was possible to deliver goods of around 3,000 TEUs on April 13, the day before the lockdown was imposed. But the figure came down sharply to 1,200 TEUs on the following day.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) on Saturday in an urgent letter to the president of Bangladesh Inland Container Depot Association (BICDA) requested for taking steps for the speedy removal of around 4,800 TEUs of ICD-bound import laden and empty containers from the port.

In the letter, the CPA mentioned that some 1,469 TEUs of empty containers and 1,363 TEUs of import laden containers bound for the ICDs were lying at the port.

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LOW GAS PRESSURE 60 textile mills suffer in Gazipur

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A group of primary textile mills in the industrial belt in Gazipur is in fear of losing export-oriented work orders and sales ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr due to a disruption in production caused by low gas pressure.

The gas pressure at more than 60 spinning, dyeing, finishing, printing and weaving mills in Madhabkhola, Sreepur, Baniachala, Bhabanipur, and Gazipur went down to three pounds per square inch (PSI) instead of the required 15 PSI. Many of these units are engaged in producing raw materials for export-oriented garment factories and local markets.

"The affected mills have been unable to operate in full swing for many months now. As a result, many cannot execute work orders on time," the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) said in a statement yesterday.

"If low gas pressure continues, paying the workers' wages will be difficult for industry owners."

In a letter on April 7, the BTMA urged state-run Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company to supply gas with adequate pressure to some mills in Madhabkhola, Sreepur, Baniachala, Bhabanipur, and Gazipur.

However, the gas pressure in these areas has deteriorated rather than improve, the statement said.

Production at mills and factories in the areas has declined by 75 per cent because of falling gas pressure. If the mills can't run properly, there is a possibility of a liquidity crisis at the factories as their business has also declined, the BTMA added.

Ali Iqbal Mohammad Nurullah, managing director of Titas Gas, could not be reached by phone for comments.

Pandemic gives a boost to ambulance business

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The number of ambulances hitting the streets is on the rise as businesses are spending more on import amid an increase in its demand during the ongoing pandemic.

Some 788 units of ambulances got registered in 2020, up 18 per cent year-on-year, according to data from Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

"Businesses invested more in ambulance import last year after the Covid-19 outbreak, when the demand for the vehicle started increasing," said Mohammad Shahidul Islam, secretary general of the Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association (Barvida).

The demand for ambulance service increased as attendants of patients now prefer using the automobile to reach hospitals smoothly, said Md Monsurul Mamun Khan, in-charge of the ambulance service of Ad-din Hospital. He said the hospital provides 24-hour service for patients at Tk 350 per trip inside Dhaka city.

"The charge is Tk 520 per trip for carrying patients to hospitals other than Ad-din. For places outside Dhaka, an additional payment

of Tk 30 per kilometre will be applied."

Khan said his company provides ambulance services to financially insolvent patients for free. "We have reserved two ambulances for transporting patients infected with coronavirus."

Around 613 private ambulance service providers are now operating in Dhaka city, according to Dhaka Metropolitan Ambulance Owners' Association.

The demand for ambulance services more than doubled in the last six months, said Alamgir Hossain, president of the association. "Now there is an acute scarcity of freezer vans in the country, which has also played a role in increasing the demand for ambulances."

Sometimes, ambulance drivers charge Tk 500 extra along with the regular fare to clean and sanitise the vehicles after carrying patients infected with Covid-19, he said.

The customs duty for customised ambulances stands at around Tk 4 lakh to Tk 5 lakh while it can be as much as Tk 15 lakh for passenger cars of the same capacity, said Mannan Chowdhury Khasru, owner of Nippon Autos Trading and a former president of Barvida.

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Businesses invested more in ambulance import last year after the Covid-19 outbreak. The photo was taken in front of Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College Hospital in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN