

Stocks maintain gaining streak

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's stock market has maintained an upward trend for eight consecutive days now as the prime index of the country's premier bourse continues to make record advances.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), surged 62 points, or 0.86 per cent, to 7,258 points yesterday.

"People are rushing for the market seeing the index's rise," said a top official of a stock brokerage.

Besides, people are not concerned about potential corrections and big players are taking advantage of this by playing with the general idea.

"People's psychology is they should invest more in the market when indexes soar but this is when big players start to sell," he said, adding that investors remain highly optimistic.

by as much as 15 per cent to 20 per cent, a merchant banker said.

The DSEX soared 435 per cent, or 7.4 per cent, in the last eight days, according to the DSE data.

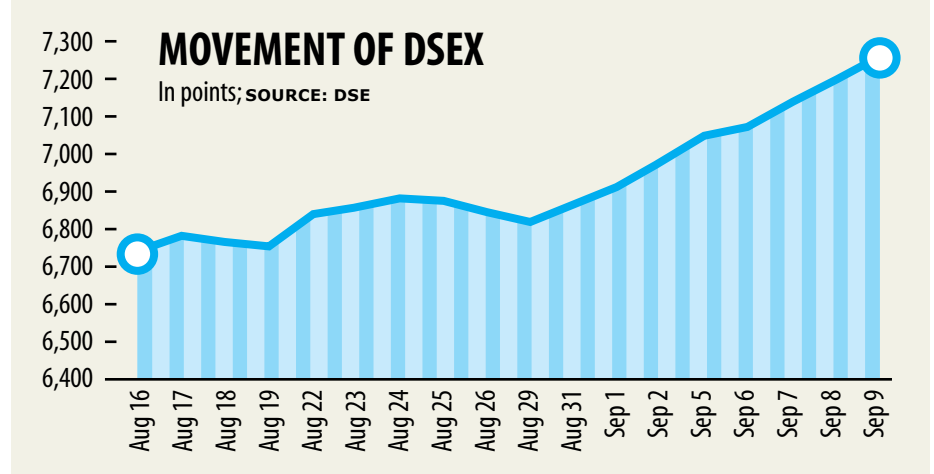
A correction was expected but higher investor participation propped up the market, he added.

Turnover, an important indicator of the market, rose to Tk 2,696 crore while it was Tk 2,555 crore previously.

Meghna Life Insurance Company Ltd topped the gainers' list, rising 10 per cent, followed by

Olympic Industries Limited, National Housing Finance and Investments Limited, Rangpur Foundry Ltd, and Kohinor Chemical Company (Bangladesh) Limited.

Meghna Pet Industries Ltd shed the most, losing 7.52 per cent, followed by Meghna Condensed Milk Industries Ltd, Imam Button Industries Ltd and Samata Leather Complex Ltd.



This optimism is sometimes good for the market but it might be harmful for investors.

"So, they should take their profits," the official said.

At the DSE, 177 stocks advanced, 177 fell and 22 remained unchanged.

On the same day, DS-30, the blue-chip stock index, rose 33 points to 2,647 points.

Although a profit taking tendency was seen among investors in the last few sessions, most stocks have now appreciated

Stocks of Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd were traded the most, worth Tk 81 crore, followed by Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, British American Tobacco Bangladesh and Meghna Life Insurance Company Ltd.

Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) also rose yesterday as the CASPI, the general index of the port city bourse, edged up 152 points, or 0.72 per cent, to 21,131.

Among the 332 stocks to undergo trade, 144 rose, 167 fell and 21 remained unchanged.

Demand for local green malta on the rise

MINTU DESHWARA

Locally grown green sweet orange, or malta, enhances immunity and has shown to be quite helpful for treating people with anemia.

The popular fruit also contains a type of fibre called pectin that helps prevent colon cancer. Given its many medicinal properties and delicious taste, the demand for malta has increased exponentially over the years.

During a recent visit to an orchard in Lathitila area of Juri upazila in Sylhet's Moulvibazar district, green malta ripe for the picking were seen hanging from their branches.

"I started cultivating native (green) malta on five bighas of land five years ago and have been doing well ever since," said Tufail Ahmed, a local farmer. Malta farming does not require much effort according to Ahmed, who spent just Tk 200 to plant his first tree.

"Within a year of planting, 250 to 300 pieces of fruit can be obtained from a single tree," he added.

Ahmed went on to say that around one hundred malta tree saplings can be planted on one bigha of land, making it a highly profitable crop.

"Now, I make a profit of about Tk 1.5 lakh each year," he said.

Hazi Jasim Uddin, president of Anaros Lebu Arat Samity in Sreemangal, told this correspondent that green malta was grown abundantly in the area to meet the growing demand for citrus fruits, especially amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Thanks to the increasing popularity of locally grown malta, imports are almost no longer necessary.

"The domestic product tastes better and has a lower price of about Tk 80 to Tk 120 per kilogramme (kg) compared to around Tk 250 per kg for the imported ones," Uddin said.

Echoing the same, Akhter Hossain, a fruit seller based in



PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

A farmer is seen displaying a green malta tree adorned with the highly profitable fruit. Thanks to increased demand and rising local production, native green malta are beginning to eclipse their foreign counterparts. The photo was taken recently in Lathitila area of Juri upazila in Sylhet's Moulvibazar district.

DISTRICTS IN FOCUS

ATM Farhad Chowdhury, upazila nirbahi officer of Kulaura, said he was overjoyed by the farmers cultivating chemical-free Bari-1 malta. He urged for the overall cooperation of the upazila administration for cultivating the high-yielding fruit so that further expansion of gardens in different areas of the region was possible.

Kazi Lutful Bari, deputy director of the DAE in Moulvibazar, said local farmers have woken from their stupor and were now motivated to work hard for the successful cultivation of malta.

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Moulvibazar's Kulaura Fruit Market, said it seems foreign malta would eventually be phased out due to rising domestic production.

Considering malta's growing popularity, cultivation of the fruit has been widely adopted in the Juri and Sreemangal upazilas, local farmers say.

Still though, supply remains

below the current market demand.

The younger generation has also taken a shine to malta farming with the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) having trained 270 new farmers in the region, where 18 hectares of land has been brought under cultivation, said Abdul Momin, agriculture officer of Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila.

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GLOBAL BUSINESS

Afghans fear for jobs and money after Taliban takeover

AFP, Kabul

As a nurse at one of Kabul's main hospitals, Latifa Alizada was the breadwinner for her family, providing for her three young boys and unemployed husband. Now -- since the Taliban rolled into Afghanistan's capital -- she too is jobless, and worried about the future.

The 27-year-old left her role at Jamhuriat Hospital because the hardline Islamist group said salaries would not be paid, and imposed rules that would force her to wear a face veil and be segregated from male colleagues.

"I have left my job because there is no salary. There is no salary at all," she said, holding the hands of two of her boys who chewed on sweetcorn cobs. "If I go there, they say 'do not work with this style of dress. Do not work with men. Work with women'. This is impossible," she told AFP at a street market in Kabul.

"For us, there is no difference between men and women, because we are medical workers. Afghans like Alizada worry about what lies ahead under the Taliban. Food prices have gone up at markets, the cost of fuel has risen and there are fewer opportunities to make money.

The United Nations this week warned prices for essential goods were soaring in Afghanistan, adding: "There are fears of food shortages, higher inflation, and a slump in the currency all resulting in an intensification of the humanitarian emergency across the country.

"Many government services are no longer functioning, while the international community -- which has long propped up the aid-dependent economy -- hesitates over funding Afghanistan.

In some sectors that are operating, the Taliban have offered wildly different salaries.

A former customs official, who did not want



AFP/FILE

The United Nations this week warned that prices for essential goods were soaring in Afghanistan.

to be named for security reasons, told AFP he had worked at the Spin Boldak border crossing with Pakistan for more than seven years.

Under the previous government he earned about \$240 per month, but the Taliban said they would pay him just \$110. "It is up to you if you want to continue your job, or quit," the Taliban told him. The official said he resigned after weighing up his salary against the cost of the long commute to work. The sight of big crowds queuing to get into banks to access cash is now

commonplace across Afghanistan.

The country's central bank only has access to a fraction of its usual financing, cut off from the international banking system and access to the country's foreign currency reserves. It means cash is in short supply and the Taliban are enforcing a withdrawal limit of \$200 per person each week.

In the capital on Wednesday about 150 men jostled in the midday sun outside a branch of Kabul Bank, where government employees under the last administration held accounts.

US growth 'downshifted' amid labour, supply shortages

AFP, Washington

US economic growth "downshifted slightly" in July and August amid shortages of workers and materials, as well as concerns about the rise of the highly transmissible Delta variant of the virus that causes Covid-19, the Federal Reserve said Wednesday.

And while those shortages also caused rising wages and prices in some areas, the report of a slower recovery could add weight to the argument that the central bank should hold off on plans to withdraw stimulus to the world's largest economy.

The nationwide surge in coronavirus infections has led to the reimposition of some restrictions and mask-wearing rules, and delayed the return to the office for some businesses.

In its "beige book" report on the economy, the Fed said the recent growth slowdown was largely due to "a pullback in dining out, travel and tourism in most districts, reflecting safety concerns due to the rise of the Delta variant.

"But activity declined in some areas of the country due to labor issues and 'pervasive resource shortages' that also were driving up prices, the report said.

With inflation picking up and progress made on restoring jobs lost during the pandemic, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has signaled the central bank expects to begin to pull back on its massive bond-buying program by the end of the year.

However, he acknowledged that the

Delta variant has introduced uncertainty about the course of the recovery.

In a speech Wednesday, the president of the Fed's New York branch, John Williams, cautioned that "a full recovery from the pandemic will take quite some time to complete.

"He also echoed Powell's position that the recent spike in inflation is mostly due to temporary issues and the rate should drop back to around two percent next year from double that currently.

However, "there is still a great deal of uncertainty about the inflation outlook," Williams said. A sustained rise in inflation is a concern for the White House, which on Wednesday announced an initiative to contain rising meat prices.

Linking consolidation in the meat industry to food price increases that have contributed to overall inflation, the White House said it would invest \$1.4 billion into the food supply chain aimed at small businesses, as well as crack down on price fixing and antitrust violations in meat processing. The Fed report noted that sales of autos and homes in the United States were depressed by low inventory, while retail sales growth slowed, but construction rose modestly.

The analysis, prepared in advance of the Fed's next policy meeting on September 21-22, said contacts in most districts "remained optimistic about near-term prospects, though there continued to be widespread concern about ongoing supply disruptions and resource shortages.



A woman adjusts her face mask while shopping at a clothing store in Los Angeles, California in July.

AFP/FILE

Ford to stop manufacturing cars in India

REUTERS, New Delhi

Ford Motor Company will stop manufacturing cars in India and shut down its plants in the country, two sources told Reuters, becoming the latest automaker to quit a market still dominated by Asian rivals.

The US automaker made the decision because it was not profitable for it to continue, said one of the sources, adding that the process is expected to take about a year to complete.

Ford is the latest vehicle maker to cease production in India, following US companies such as General Motors and Harley Davidson, which have already left a market that had

once promised exponential growth.

Ford has struggled to win over India's frugal buyers and turn a profit in a market dominated by mainly low-cost cars made by Suzuki Motor Corp and Hyundai Motor.

The US automaker will continue to sell some of its cars in India through imports of fully-built vehicles and knocked-down units, said the second person, adding that it would also provide support to dealers to service existing customers.

Ford did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. It has previously said it would decide on a capital allocation plan for India in the second half of 2021.

Ford will allocate capital consistent with

its plan to generate consistently strong cash flow and achieve an 8 per cent company adjusted EBIT (earnings before interest and tax) margin, the company has previously told Reuters.

The decision to cease local production came after Ford ended its partnership with domestic carmaker Mahindra & Mahindra - a move that would have ended most of Ford's independent operations in India but allowed it to launch new vehicles faster, at a reduced cost and with lower investment.

Ford entered India 25 years ago but has a less than 2 per cent share of the passenger vehicles market in the world's second-most populous nation.