Govt to brand shatranji, black tiger shrimp in Europe

STAR/FILE

Shatranji, basically a sitting mat made from garment waste such as leftover cotton, accounts for 50 per cent of handicrafts exported to various European countries each year, earning about $40 lakh. Meanwhile, black tiger shrimp, cultivated in the southern coastal belts in brackish water, accounts for 80 per cent of the country's total seafood export and 77 per cent of all species of shrimp.

SUKANTA HALDER

The government plans to start branding shatranji and locally grown black tiger shrimp (or Bagda chingri in Bangla) as GI products to amplify their popularity in Europe, the biggest market for Bangladesh's exportable products.

The Geographical Indication (GI) is a name or sign used on some particular products to certify that they possess certain qualities enabled by the environment, weather and culture of a country.

This in effect facilitates branding highlighting traditions and reputations in the global market and creates a separate demand for the product.

The path to commercial production, marketing rights and legal protection is paved. GI-tagged products fetch higher prices compared to similar products in other countries.

Shatranji got recognition as a GI product in June 2021. A craft originating Rangpur, shatranji is basically a sitting mat made by handloom off of garment waste, such as leftover cotton.

Black tiger shrimp, grown in the southern coastal belts in brackish water, is expected to get the GI certificate soon, according to officials of the industries ministry's Department of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (DPDT).

They said to be teaming up with World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to work on branding the two, which have already raked up substantial value in international markets. The DPDT in its journal said shatranji accounted for 50 per cent of the handicrafts exported to various European countries each year, earning about $40 lakh.

Black tiger shrimp accounts for 80 per cent of the country's total seafood export and 77 per cent of all species of shrimp.

> *Businesspeople think such initiatives would help small and medium-sized businesses of the country*

According to the ministry, the WIPO has expertise in branding products in the European market and they agreed to collaborate. In a recent meeting, the DPDT selected these two products for branding for the first time.

Abdus Sattar, registrar of the DPDT, said the WIPO's involvement here would as an advisory body.

"We need their help to know the packaging process of a product for export. And they will train some of us, who will work for branding other products in future," he said.

Meanwhile, the DPDT will hold a meeting with stakeholders of the black tiger shrimp industry in Khulna on November 29 and with those of the shatranji industry in Rangpur on December 6 on this issue.

Belal Hossen, examiner (trademarks) of the DPDT, is the focal point here. He said traders of small and medium-scale enterprises now export those items on a small scale but they were lagging behind in terms of branding.

"If we can conduct proper branding, they will get fair prices for this GI product in the international market as well," he said.

The first product to get the GI certification of the DPDT was the Jamdani saree, in 2016. Then it was the hilsa in 2017 and Chapainawabganj's Khirsapati mango in 2018.

In March this year, six more we added to the list -- Dhakai Muslin, Rajshahi silk, Rangpur's shatranji, sada mati or China clay of Bijoypur at Netrakona, Kataribhog paddy of Dinajpur and Kalijira paddy.

Arefin Siddique, an entrepreneur and exporter of shatranji in Rangpur, said it would be a very good initiative.

"I am exporting shatranji to 12 countries regularly, but small and medium entrepreneurs face various hurdles in exporting their products. Through this initiative, the business of those who are in this sector will expand," he said.

Shyamal Das, managing director of Jessore's MU Seafoods, said it was true that such initiatives would help small and medium-sized businesses. He suggested that the government should separate branding promotions at fairs held abroad.

Stocks continue to bleed

Index falls to three-month low

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's stock market continued to bleed yesterday as the benchmark index fell to a three-month low while investors wait in the sidelines in fear of further decline.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), nosedived by 56 points, or 0.82 per cent, to 6,799, its lowest since August 19, when the index was at 6,760 points.

With yesterday's fall, the index dropped 107 points over the past three trading days.

The non-bank financial institutions sector experienced the highest loss of 2.51 per cent followed by food and allied, fuel and power, engineering, bank, telecommunication, and pharmaceutical.

"Investors are on the sidelines because they are afraid the market may fall further," a stock broker said.

> *"Investors are on the sidelines because they are afraid that the market may fall further," a stock broker says*

"Although many stocks' value shrank by 5 to 7 per cent compared to two months earlier, they are refusing to purchase shares as the market dropped almost continuously so people are lacking confidence," he added.

The country's stock market fell yesterday following a similarly sharp decline in the previous session as shaky investors continued their selling binge in sector-specific stocks, said International Leasing Securities in its daily market review.

The market turnover also remained low as investors continued to hold off on purchases.

"The market started with a positive note but couldn't sustain it due to the absence of a clear market direction and out of panic," it said. The top ten traded stocks captured around 49.5 per cent with Beximco alone accounting for 8.6 per cent of the total trade, it added.

At the DSE, 55 stocks advanced, 296 declined and 26 remained unchanged.

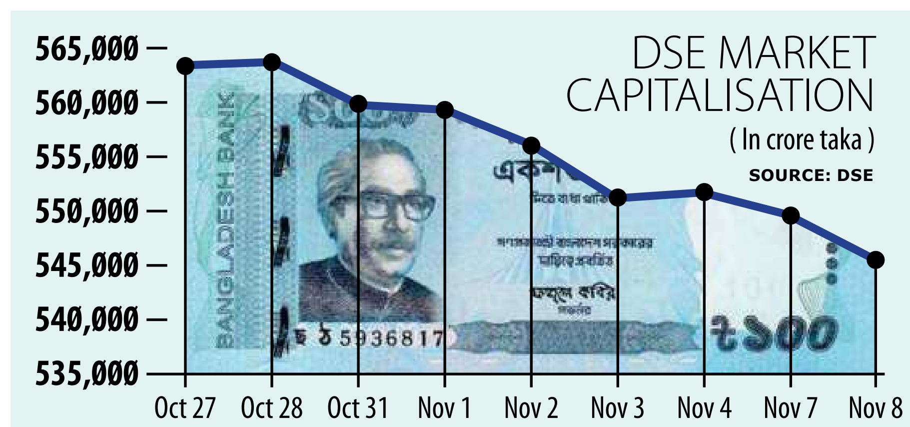
Sena Kalyan Insurance topped the gainers list, rising 10 per cent, followed by Golden Son, Aamra Networks, Safko Spinning, and Orion Pharmaceuticals.

Stocks of Beximco Limited traded the most, worth Tk 92 crore, followed by Genex Infosys, NRB Commercial Bank, Orion Pharmaceuticals, and IFIC Bank.

Alif Industries shed the most, dropping 8.37 per cent, followed by Pharma Aids, Shepherd Industries, Standard Ceramics, and Paper Processing and Packaging.

The Chattogram bourse also fell yesterday as the CASPI, the main index of the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE), dropped 210 points, or 1.04 per cent, to 19,868.

Among 283 traded stocks, 38 rose, 219 fell and 26 remained unchanged.



GLOBAL BUSINESS

Australia vows to sell coal 'for decades'

AFP, *Sydney, Australia*

Australia said Monday it will sell coal for "decades into the future" after spurning a pact to phase out the polluting fossil fuel to halt catastrophic climate change.

More than 40 countries pledged to eliminate coal use within decades during the COP26 UN climate summit in Glasgow, which aims to cap the warming of Earth since the Industrial Revolution to between 1.5 and 2.0 degrees Celsius.

Australia, along with some other major coal users such as China and the United States, did not sign up.

"We have said very clearly we are not closing coal mines and we are not closing coal-fired power stations," Australian Minister for Resources Keith Pitt told national broadcaster ABC.

Defending Australia's decision, Pitt said Australia had some of the world's highest quality coal.

"And that is why we will continue to have markets for decades into the future. And if they're buying... well, we are selling," Demand for coal is expected to rise until 2030, the minister claimed.

AFP/FILE

Australian Minister for Resources Keith Pitt said demand for coal is expected to rise until 2030.

"If we aren't to win that market, somebody else will," Pitt added.

"I would much rather it be Australia's high-quality product, delivering Australian jobs and building Australia's economy than coming from Indonesia or Russia or elsewhere."

Australia is one of the world's largest producers of coal and natural gas, but has also suffered under increasingly extreme climate-fuelled droughts, floods and bushfires in recent years.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government unveiled last month a 2050 net zero emissions target but the plan was criticised for lacking detail and relying heavily on as-yet-unknown technological breakthroughs.

The Minerals Council of Australia, which represents large miners such as BHP and Rio Tinto, has said a 2050 target is achievable through significant investment in technology.

Pitt said some 300,000 Australians' jobs were reliant on the coal sector. The Minerals Council of Australia itself says the coal industry directly employs 50,000 workers while supporting another 120,000 jobs.

Major mining groups such as BHP say they are exiting the most polluting fossil fuels.

In its latest divestment, BHP announced Monday it had sold its 80 per cent stake in a metallurgical coal mine in the eastern state of Queensland to Stanmore Resources for at least US$1.2 billion.

"As the world decarbonises, BHP is sharpening its focus on producing higher quality metallurgical coal sought after by global steelmakers to help increase efficiency and lower emissions," BHP head of Australian mining Edgar Basto said in a statement.

IFC partners with South African tech group to boost digital infrastructure

REUTERS, *Johannesburg*

The World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC) has partnered with South Africa's Liquid Intelligent Technologies to expand data centre capacity and roll out fibre-optic cable on the continent, the groups said in a joint statement on Monday.

The link-up with Liquid Intelligent Technologies, formally Liquid Telecom, aims to increase digital connectivity in Africa and to support the region's growing digital ecosystem, the partners said.

The investment in data centres underscores the rising demand for cloud services even in relatively undeveloped corners of the continent.

US tech giants such as Microsoft and Amazon are already competing with Chinese telecom firm Huawei to set up massive data centres on the continent as demand for cloud connectivity soars as companies save huge costs by renting storage space than building their own servers.

IFC's equity and debt investments in Liquid, which to date totals approximately $250 million, will support the company to grow its hyper-scale data centre capacity in Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa through its subsidiary, Africa Data Centres, the statement said.

"As Africa's population grows and is increasingly urbanized, data consumption is expected to grow strongly and with this comes the need for secure local data hosting," they added. The investments will also support the continued roll out of Liquid's fibre broadband network, which today covers more than 100,000 kilometres of sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the Broadband Commission on Sustainable Development, sub-Saharan Africa needs around $100 billion in investment to achieve affordable and high-quality broadband access by 2030. It would need at least 250,000 kilometres of new fibre lines to achieve this.

Some investors look to diversify amid big tech rally

REUTERS, *New York*

Rising valuations and hefty year-to-date gains for big technology stocks are pushing some investors to diversify away from the sector that has led markets for years.

Tech stocks have soared this year, and their big weighting in the S&P 500 has helped push the index to records with a 25.1 per cent year-to-date gain in 2021.

Some investors are worried the valuations may have ascended into nosebleed territory. Google-parent Alphabet, for instance, trades at a 12-month forward price-to-earnings ratio of 26.6, compared to a valuation of 21.1 for the S&P 500.

Apple Inc is valued at 26.2 forward earnings, while the information technology sector, up nearly 28 per cent this year, carries a forward P/E of 26.4. While gains in big technology stocks have boosted the S&P for more than a decade now, their heavy weighting could sink the index if tech falls out of favor. Microsoft, Apple and Amazon, Wall Street's three most valuable companies, account for close to 15 per cent of the S&P 500's market capitalization, according to Refinitiv Datastream.

Fund managers in last month's BoFA Global Research Survey named "long tech" as the market's most crowded trade and had collectively reduced their "overweight" positions in tech stocks to the lowest level since May.

The market's top four most crowded individual stocks are Microsoft, Apple, Alphabet and Amazon, according to a recent analysis by research firm Bernstein, incorporating factors such as institutional ownership and price momentum.

The US flag is seen on a building on Wall Street in the financial district in New York.

REUTERS/FILE

Limiting exposure to tech stocks over the last decade has tended to hurt portfolio performance over the long run, making investors wary of cutting their holdings too drastically. Still, some are looking to broaden their portfolios to reduce their exposure to the sector's biggest names.

Garret Melson, a portfolio strategist at Natixis Investment Managers Solutions, believes large technology company stocks may be vulnerable to investors seeking to lock in profits and move some funds to other sectors.

Melson is buying shares in financial and energy companies, which he believes will benefit from rising inflation and a strong economic recovery.

"We're in the camp that the growth rate in the economy is being under-appreciated this year and next year," Melson said.

Tesla sold 54,391 China-made vehicles in October

REUTERS, *Beijing*

US electric vehicle maker Tesla Inc sold 54,391 China-made vehicles in October, including 40,666 for export, the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA) said on Monday.

Tesla, which is making Model 3 sedans and Model Y sport-utility vehicles in Shanghai, sold 56,006 China-made vehicles in September, including 3,853 that were exported.

Chinese EV makers Nio Inc sold 3,667 cars last month and Xpeng Inc delivered 10,138 vehicles. Volkswagen AG said it sold over 12,000 ID. series EVs in China in October. CPCA said passenger car sales in October in China totalled 1.74 million, down 14 per cent from a year earlier.