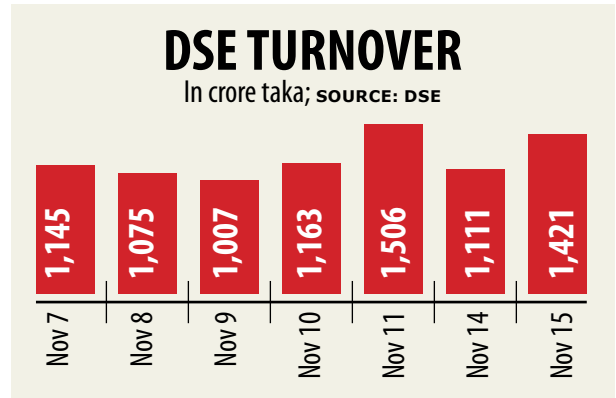


Stocks recover from single-day knock



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The domestic market yesterday put a stop to its falling trend from the previous day thanks to increased investor participation.

"Many investors are rearranging their portfolios based on the corporate earnings reports recently published by most listed companies for the July-September period," a stock broker said.

"So, they bought and sold many shares at the same time, which is a good sign for the market," he added.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), rose 11 points, or 0.12 per cent, to hit 6,941 yesterday after dropping 65 points a day earlier.

Similarly, turnover of the Dhaka bourse rose 28 per cent to Tk 1,421 crore, up from Tk 1,111 crore the day before amid the rising trend of the index.

At the country's premier bourse, 115 stocks rose, 227 fell and 31 remained unchanged.

Among major sectors, the bank, non-bank financial institution, and food and allied sectors experienced price appreciation while ceramics, service, real estate, and cement faced correction.

Square Textiles topped the gainers' list, rising 10 per cent, followed by Acme Pesticides, Brac Bank, Sena Kalyan Insurance, and Salvo Chemicals.

National Feed Mills shed the most, dropping 9.91 per cent, followed by Saiham Cotton, Bangladesh Thai Aluminium, Fu-Wang Foods, and Alif Industries.

READ MORE ON B2

Piper chaba bringing extra earnings for farmers in north

DISTRICTS IN FOCUS

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

A creeper resembling betel whose vines are used to make meat dishes spicier is bringing some extra cash for around 10,000 farmers growing traditional crops in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts.

Piper chaba, called chui jhal in Bangla, costs little to nothing to grow but its climbing stem requires support. Its extracts are also believed to cure dysentery and aches. Yields can be availed within two years of planting.

Farmers can sell each kilogramme for Tk 450 to Tk 500. High market demand brings traders to farmers' doorsteps to directly collect the vines, which are into about four-or-five-foot long pieces and sold by the maund (around 37 kilogrammes).

The scenario is increasingly encouraging farmers to grow the creeper on a commercial basis.

Officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) said between 100 tonnes and 120 tonnes were collectively produced from the two districts every year.

"I have been growing chui jhal within my betel nut plantation for around 20 years," said Maniram Chandra Barmon, a farmer of Sindurmati village in Lalmonirhat sadar upazila.

The demand for piper chaba has been growing exponentially each year and many farmers are increasing their production, according to Nabin Chandra Roy, a farmer of Dalgram village in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila.

"I already earn as much as Tk 70,000 annually from the crop," Roy said, adding that now almost every household in



A farmer shows his piper chaba, whose vines are called chui jhal in Bangla and used to make meat dishes spicier, in Sindurna village in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Dalgram union cultivates piper chaba.

Afsar Ali, a farmer of Miabari village in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila, told The Daily Star that he and his peers have been benefiting from producing chui jhal for the past couple of years.

"I earned Tk 30,000 from selling the spice this year and besides, it's an extra beneficial crop since it costs almost nothing to produce," he said.

Haradhan Chandra Sen, a piper chaba trader based in Barabari Haat in

Lalmonirhat sadar upazila, said he has been in the business for about 22 years.

"Among other districts, I sell them as far afield as Chattogram, Barishal, Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira, where chui jhal is popular but will not grow easily due to unsuitable, saline soils," he said.

"We purchase each kg of chui jhal at Tk 450 to Tk 500 from farmers and sell it at Tk 600 to Tk 650," Sen added.

Manjurul Haque, deputy director of the DAE office in Kurigram, told The Daily Star

that local farmers enjoy a lot of benefits from piper chaba cultivation as it grows well all over the region.

"Besides, piper chaba is rarely affected by disease and it certainly has potential as a crop for this region," Haque said.

Shamim Ashraf, deputy director of the DAE office in Lalmonirhat, said piper chaba grows well if its base was well drained.

"And although our office has not actively promoted the vine, we do offer advice to growers when they request it," he added.



GLOBAL BUSINESS

China's factory output, retail sales see surprise jump

AFP, Beijing

China's economy showed signs of stabilising in October, according to data on Monday, with retail sales and factory output beating expectations as a power supply crisis appeared to ease.

The recovery in the world's second biggest economy has been losing steam for much of the year after a swift bounceback from harsh lockdowns to contain Covid-19, with officials earlier citing an "unstable and uneven" economic rebound.

Power outages in recent months caused by emission reduction targets, the surging price of coal, and supply shortages also had impacted some factory production.

But industrial production grew 3.5 per cent on-year last month, up from September, said the National Bureau of Statistics, as China worked to boost coal production and ease the energy shortage.

A survey of economists by Bloomberg News tipped a 3.0 per cent expansion.

However, NBS spokesman Fu Linghui cautioned Monday that the "international environment remains complex and severe" with many uncertainties, adding that China needs to "work harder to maintain economic stability and recovery".

"While electricity shortages and production cuts hampered output in early October, we don't think they are a significant problem anymore," said Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics on Monday.

He added that this follows "a range of policy measures to boost coal production and lower coal prices". But economic momentum remained weak in October, he said, "with the real estate downturn weighing on industry and a new wave of Covid outbreaks dampening household consumption". "The slowdown in the property sector continued, which is the key risk for the macro outlook in the next few quarters," said Zhiwei Zhang



Chinese workers make heavy truck engines at a factory in Hangzhou in China's eastern Zhejiang province.

AFP/FILE

of Pinpoint Asset Management. Retail sales rose 4.9 per cent on-year, according to latest data, up from September and far exceeding forecasts for 3.7 per cent.

But observers warn that this could be bogged down by recent containment measures, reimposed following a fresh

virus outbreak in mid-October that has spread to several regions.

While October is traditionally part of China's spending season, Fu said "domestic tourist numbers and income growth were below pre-pandemic levels" during the golden week holiday at the start

of the month. The urban unemployment rate remained at 4.9 per cent. Weakness in the economy is giving the country's central bank a headache as it must try to nurture a recovery while at the same time try to keep a lid on inflation, which is sitting at levels not seen since the mid-1990s.

Coal stocks lose ground after Glasgow climate deal

REUTERS, Sydney

An international agreement to reduce coal use has seen mining share prices fall, but tight supply of the commodity provided a floor for a sector that has chalked up huge gains this year.

UN climate talks in Glasgow ended on Saturday with a deal targeting fossil fuel use. Wording was softened to call for a "phase down" rather than "phase out" of coal after lobbying from India among others.

"The reality is that coal is going to be used during the next decade or so. It's still going to be a cash generator," said Mathan Somasundaram, chief executive officer at Sydney-based research firm Deep Data Analytics.

Big miners China Shenhua Energy and Yanzhou Coal fell 1 per cent and 3 per cent respectively in Hong Kong, where the broader stock market was mostly steady. An index of mainland-listed miners fell about 1 per cent.

In Indonesia, the world's biggest coal exporter, declines were exacerbated by surging production in China, a top customer. No 1 miner Bumi Resources fell 3 per cent while Adaro Energy and Indika Energy tumbled 5 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.

Shares in Australia-listed thermal coal miner Whitehaven Coal fell about 2 per cent and rival New Hope about 1 per cent in a slightly firmer broad market. Metallurgical coal miners South32 and Coronado Global Resources dropped about 1 per cent and 4 per cent.

The moves extend a recent pullback that has taken the edge off whopping year-to-date gains for Whitehaven, South32 and New Hope amid a global energy crunch. They are each up more than 40 per cent.

China, the world's biggest producer and consumer of coal churned out its highest tonnage in more than six years last month, official data showed, which helped to knock near-term spot prices on Monday.

The Glasgow deal has elicited promises of future cuts to use, has resolved rules for carbon markets and also takes aim at fossil fuel subsidies - all of which could speed up the transition to other energy sources.

Covid hits Japan economy harder than expected in Q3

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's economy shrank far more than expected in the three months to September, as a surge in virus cases hit spending and supply chain issues hampered business, data showed Monday.

The world's third largest economy shrank 0.8 per cent quarter-on-quarter, much worse than the 0.2 per cent economists had forecast.

The contraction was driven in part by a 1.2 per cent dip in household consumption that tracked the imposition of a virus state of emergency over the summer, when Japan saw its worst-ever Covid surge.

Also weighing heavily was a drop in non-residential investment, which

plunged 3.8 per cent on a chip shortage and supply chain issues that weighed on factory output.

Exports, another key factor driving Japan's economy, were also down, with vehicle exports stalling over a shortage of semiconductor components, though imports of goods and services also dropped, making net trade a slight positive overall for GDP growth.

The data, issued by the Cabinet Office, revised the figure for the second quarter to June to 0.4 per cent growth.

Virus cases surged in Japan over the summer, after a slow start to the country's vaccination campaign, and the government imposed a virus state of emergency that limited restaurant and bar opening hours and alcohol

sales.

The Olympics went ahead during the period, despite calls for its cancellation, but foreign spectators and almost all domestic fans were barred.

Analysts said that the slowdown was likely shortlived as Japan's vaccination programme has picked up speed, with the government lifting virus restrictions in October.

"For the fourth quarter, if the virus cases are kept low, consumption will probably bounce back strongly," said Takashi Miwa, economist at Nomura Securities.

He warned though that "some companies say the impact on production from the supply issues may continue until December.

Thai economy shrinks, hopes for tourism-led recovery

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's economy shrank in the third quarter, official data showed Monday, but hopes for a gradual recovery are picking up after the kingdom's reopening to foreign tourists this month.

The country last year suffered its worst performance since the Asian financial crisis of 1997, with a 6.1 per cent economic contraction.

Gross domestic product shrank 0.3 per cent year-on-year in the third quarter, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) said, blaming it on Covid restrictions.

"The measures to control the outbreak affected the economic

activities," said Danucha Pichayana, secretary general of the board of the NESDC, on Monday during a news conference. A coronavirus outbreak in April this year saw the emergence of the highly contagious Delta variant, which led to reimposing tough restrictions on services and restaurants.

According to NESDC data, the food service and accommodation sector shrank 18.6 per cent July-September because of "a decrease in domestic tourism and household spending".

In Bangkok -- a key hotspot during the Delta wave -- restrictions only started to ease in recent weeks, with the government allowing certain restaurants to reopen and serve alcohol.

The relaxation of Covid restrictions -- along with a gradual return of

vaccinated foreign tourists since November 1 -- has officials hopeful for growth of 1.2 per cent this year.

The country also expects five million tourists to return next year, bringing revenues of up to 440 billion baht (\$13.4 billion), said the NESDC.

Pandemic travel restrictions sent Thailand's visitor numbers plummeting from 40 million in 2019 to just 73,000 in the first eight months of 2021.

Danucha said the forecast for 2022 was between 3.5 and 4.5 per cent as Thailand slowly recovers from the pandemic. But with China -- the source of most of Thailand's foreign travellers before the pandemic -- still restricting returns, the kingdom's cash-cow industry is unlikely to fully recover before 2024, experts say.