

Pizza Hut introduces KFC popcorn chicken pizza

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Global fast-food brand Pizza Hut yesterday launched a new 'KFC Popcorn Pizza' with seven variations ranging from spicy to deluxe.

Amit Dev Thapa, chief executive officer of Pizza Hut, officially launched the new item at its Gulshan outlet in Dhaka, a press release said.

The price of the new fast-food product starts from Tk 289.

"We are elated to bring this innovative and global pizza to the hands of Bangladeshi consumers," Thapa said, adding that Pizza Hut will open three more outlets in Dhaka by this year.

"We look forward to growing our footprint in Bangladesh and preparing more innovative and mouth-watering products for next year.

"These flavors highlighted and celebrated Bangladesh's cultural vibrancy and diversity, allowing us at Pizza Hut to mingle with society and connect with consumers by giving them what they want," Thapa added.

In addition, Pizza Hut has started its battle of the beef campaign, introducing the all new Kala Bhuna and Mejbani Beef flavors this year.

The global brand also introduced the Super Limo pizza in Bangladesh, making it the first country in the region to get a taste.

Tanjina Akter, head of marketing at Pizza Hut, and Rupam Prasanna Tagore, operations manager, were present at the event.



Amit Dev Thapa, chief executive officer of Pizza Hut, cuts into the latest addition to their menu, the KFC popcorn chicken pizza, at the brand's Gulshan outlet in Dhaka yesterday.

US economy eyes strong 2021 finish as labour market tightens, spending accelerates

REUTERS, Washington

The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits dropped to a 52-year low last week, suggesting economic activity was accelerating as a year ravaged by shortages, high inflation and an unrelenting pandemic draws to a close.

The plunge in claims reported by the Labour Department on Wednesday was, however, exaggerated by difficulties adjusting the data for seasonal fluctuations this time of the year.

Still, the labour market is tightening, with jobless rolls shrinking in mid-November to the smallest since March 2020 when the economy was in the grips of the first wave of Covid-19 infections.

The economy's strengthening tone was confirmed by other data showing strong consumer spending in October as well as business orders for equipment, excluding transportation. The goods trade deficit narrowed sharply last month as exports surged.

But prices remained stubbornly high, with annual inflation jumping by the most in nearly 31 years. The raft of solid reports ahead of Thursday's Thanksgiving holiday prompted economists to boost their fourth-quarter growth estimates to as high as an 8.6 per cent annualized rate.

"There might be some seasonal adjustment problems, but the handwriting is on the wall and all the anecdotal reports on how companies cannot find the help they need are true," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWDBONDS in New York.

"The economy will finish the year with a bang, there is lots to give thanks for."

World Bank warns over looming plunge in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq could suffer a 20-per cent drop in water resources by 2050 due to climate change, the World Bank said Wednesday, warning of repercussions on growth and jobs.

Water is a crucial issue for the oil-rich country of 40 million that is facing an acute energy crisis, compounded by increasingly severe droughts and low rainfall.

"Without action, water constraints will lead to large losses across multiple sectors of the economy and come to affect more and more vulnerable people," the World Bank's Saroj Kumar Jha said in a statement accompanying a new report.

"By 2050, a temperature increase of one degree Celsius, and a precipitation decrease of 10 per cent would cause a 20 per cent reduction of available freshwater" in Iraq, the report said.

"Under these circumstances, nearly one-third of the irrigated land in Iraq will have no water by the year 2050.

"Economic modelling showed that "real GDP in Iraq could drop by up to 4 per cent, or \$6.6 billion compared to 2016 levels", according to the report.

Demand for unskilled labour in the agricultural sector could fall by 11.8 per cent, and by 5.4 per cent for non-agricultural activities.

Nokia seeks to recapture past glory with Made-in-Bangladesh smartphones

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After that, there was over a decade of tremendous advancement for Nokia in Bangladesh and it became a household brand.

Over the years, CMPL's sales rocketed to a proportion where Nokia was established as a preferred cellphone brand in the country.

In its heyday from 2008 to 2011, its local market share was 60 per cent to 75 per cent.

"And when Android sets started getting popular and Nokia couldn't cope with that, the Nokia smartphone market started to shrink and the business was almost gone in Bangladesh in 2014," said Kabir.

Nokia's fall from the top resulted from the Finnish multinational's failure to adapt to the latest technologies since 2007 and not taking the popularity of iPhones as a serious threat.

Its dominance further eroded when the Android operating system began to rule the roost in the mobile manufacturing technology.

Nokia started to rebound slowly after HMD Global, a company set up by former executives of Nokia and Microsoft, secured a licence for the marketing and manufacturing of Nokia in 2016.

Union Group now wants to establish Nokia, which is still a market leader in the basic phone segment, as a dominant player in the smartphone segment.

"We want to reestablish Nokia as a popular brand and regain its past glory," said Kabir.

"Not only that, we have plans to export Made-in-Bangladesh devices."

Alvee Rana, a director of Union Group, said: "We have set up the factory following European standards set by HMD Global."

"The Made-in-Bangladesh handsets will certainly help us gain more market share in the smartphone segment and provide consumers more affordable handsets."

"Almost everyone in the country has a connection with the Nokia brand."

The two-storey factory equipped with advanced technologies will process 300 smartphones every day through six production lines, of which four are for assembling and two are for packaging.

The plant features all the required infrastructure, including its own testing laboratory, and employs around 200 workers.

The local mobile handset manufacturing industry began its journey in 2017, when electronics brand Walton launched production in Bangladesh.

Since then, 14 brands, including global smartphone vendors Samsung, Symphony, Oppo, Realme and Xiaomi, began production.

These brands produce 90 per cent of the smartphones sold in the local market and meet 60 per cent of the local demand for both smartphones and feature phones.

Banking thru voice

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Within two to three months after the formal launch, clients will be able to transfer funds from one bank to another, make utility bill payments, top up mobile phones, and so on.

In order to secure financial services through voice banking, clients will have to dial the bank's short code from a basic or smartphone and speak in their native Bangla dialects.

The conversational engine will fulfil the clients' need on a real-time basis. It will store and save the clients' voice so that it can recognise it later while accomplishing transactions.

It is like a thumb or face recognition, eliminating the scope for an unwanted person copying the voice of the actual accountholders to embezzle funds.

"We will pursue mobile phone operators to bring down the call rates so that people feel comfortable to use the new service," Ali said.

Reducing the call charge will be a win-win situation for both parties as it will attract a good number of people to use voice banking using the mobile network.

Bank Asia also plans to provide subsidy for the phone calls to motivate clients.

Fayadan Hossain, co-founder and chief operating officer of Hishab, said the conversational engine would work in different phases.

It will automatically recognise the dialects of clients and process the language, he said, adding that voice banking might surpass internet banking as it will serve all kinds of customers.

The voice banking service will be particularly helpful for the clients of agent banking who live in the hinterland.

Bank Asia, the pioneer in the field of agent banking, has 60 lakh accounts, of which 75 per cent were opened through agents.

"We strongly believe that the number of accounts will rise riding on the new method," Ali said.

Getting a fair price while selling gold jewellery

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"If someone has lost the receipt, he has to bring the photocopy of the national identification card and the citizenship certificate while selling gold," said Kartick Karmakar, owner of Shatarupa Jewellers.

There is issue of the amount of pure gold an ornament contains.

Gold traders say there had been a lot of confusion among jewellers in the past. The situation has improved a lot after the Bangladesh Jewellers Samity (Bajus) made the use of hallmarks mandatory in 2007.

Jewellers have to engrave the amount of pure gold an ornament contains. They also require to clearly mention the amount in the sales receipt issued to buyers.

Dilip Kumar Agarwala, general secretary of the Bajus, says it is better to go to the shop from which the seller has bought it in order to get a fair price.

Again, if he doesn't go to that shop, if he has pure gold, he will get a fair price if he goes to any jewellery shop in Bangladesh.

Many shops now have gold testing machines to measure the amount of pure gold in an ornament.

Jewelers also give out mortgage loans against ornaments to people who need funds to meet emergency needs. In that case, one has to pay the same interest as in the bank.

"I don't want people to sell their favourite ornaments in difficult times," said Agarwala, managing director of Diamond World Ltd, which is licensed to provide loans against mortgaged ornaments.

SS Steel to spend Tk 20cr to expand

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"SS Steel has already acquired Saleh Steel Industries and is now in the process of buying a major stake in Southeast Union Ceramic Industries," Oppenhaffen said, adding that a bank loan has been approved to this end.

In August 2020, the company declared its plans to acquire Saleh Steel with an investment of about Tk 158 crore in order to capture a larger portion of the overall steel industry.

In January this year, SS Steel took aim to expand its product base in the construction sector by acquiring a 75 per cent stake in Southeast Union Ceramic Industries for Tk 200 crore.

The company's stocks dropped 4.44 per cent to Tk 21.50 yesterday.

Ctg port moves to make import delivery order paperless

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The number of containers handled also rose over time.

For import containers, it was 13.8 lakh TEUs in fiscal 2020-21, up 25 per cent from 11 lakh TEUs five years ago.

With the introduction of the digital system, C&F agents would not need to go to the offices of the shipping agents and freight forwarders to collect the DO, which would save significant time, said CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk.

He said the CPA has created a Terminal Operating System incorporating the EDO module where shipping agents or freight forwarders just need to upload required data to issue the DOs.

Chattogram Customs Clearing and Forwarding (C&F) Agents Association General Secretary Altaf Hossain Bacchu said at present the staff of the C&F agents have to wait three to four hours in queue to get a serial number for submitting documents required to get the DO from the leading shipping agents.

Preferring anonymity, a CPA engineer, engaged in operating the system, said the C&F staff would not need to wait for the serial numbers anymore.

They will be able to submit requisitions from home at any time through the module using their user IDs, and the shipping agents will also be able to upload data onto the system even after office hours, said the official.

Reliable data a must for sustainable development

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"In this spirit, Switzerland will continue to support the data ecosystem in Bangladesh as a part of their country strategy," she added.

Mohammad Tajul Islam, director-general of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, focused on the demand for quarterly data from various domestic and international agencies and the users of macroeconomic aggregates.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, another distinguished fellow of the CPD, said cross-border information sharing was relevant in the context of pandemic response as monitoring traveller mobility has also become critical.

Anir Chowdhury, programme adviser of the data innovation cluster at the Aspire to Innovate (a2i), said national identity was the single thread that binds many data

platforms together but it was not enough.

"Data-sharing partnership works most effectively when there is a partnership platform to share data," he added.

Morseda Chowdhury, director for the health, nutrition and population programme at Brac, said data analytics was as important as data availability, especially for policymakers.

So, analyses should be carried out at the repository level and unique identification is necessary not only for health issues, but also for social security and other purposes.

"We should also ensure equity and capacity development across the system, particularly for small organisations lacking the required resources," Chowdhury added.

Rumana Huque, a professor of economics at the University of Dhaka, suggested a steering committee coordinate data initiatives at the national level.

Price hike of essentials, falling remittance are emerging challenges: MCCI

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Both exports and imports, the two important drivers of the economy, have done well, with the steady rise in overseas sales facilitating the economic recovery in recent times, according to the review.

Export earnings in the July-September period rose 11.37 per cent year-on-year to \$11.02 billion, helped by a rebound in garment shipment.

Import payments stood at \$18.72 billion, which was 47.55 per cent higher than in the same period a year ago, thanks to the restoration of business and economic activities in the country's major export destinations due to vaccination drives.

The rate of inflation increased in the quarter, largely due to the global supply chain disruptions and a hike in commodity prices in the international markets.

The inflow of remittances went down by 19.45 per cent to \$5.41 billion in the quarter.

"This decline in remittances is a reflection of the second wave when many Bangladeshi migrant workers lost jobs. Besides, many others returned home and couldn't go back due to the suspended international flights and unmet vaccination requirements," said the MCCI.

The review says the foreign currency reserve is in a satisfactory position, and the exchange rate has remained stable.

On the other side, some of the economic indicators appear to be less promising than projected earlier, said the MCCI.

"The fiscal framework continues to be weak in view of poor achievements, more specifically, both in terms of revenue mobilisation and public expenditure."

The unemployment situation and low investment are also challenges.

"A significant increase in public and private investment is necessary to maintain competitiveness and generate further growth," the chamber added.

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tenders have been published through e-GP Portal.

Sl. No.	Tender ID Package No.	Name of package	Publishing date and time	Online tender last selling date and time	Online tender closing date and time
1	628709 SFD/Cable/2021-2022/GD-01	Supply of Motor Cycle	24-November-2021 10:00	08-December-2021, 17:00	09-December-2021, 16:00

The interested person/firms may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get the details of the tender. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd, +8809609112233, +880176225528, +8801762625529).

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