

BB relaxes age limit for pandemic-hit job-seekers

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The Bangladesh Bank has relaxed the age limit for job-seekers in the banking sector due to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the recruitment process.

Candidates who were aged 30 on March 25, 2020 will qualify to take part in the recruitment process as of June 30, 2023, said the central bank in a notice yesterday.

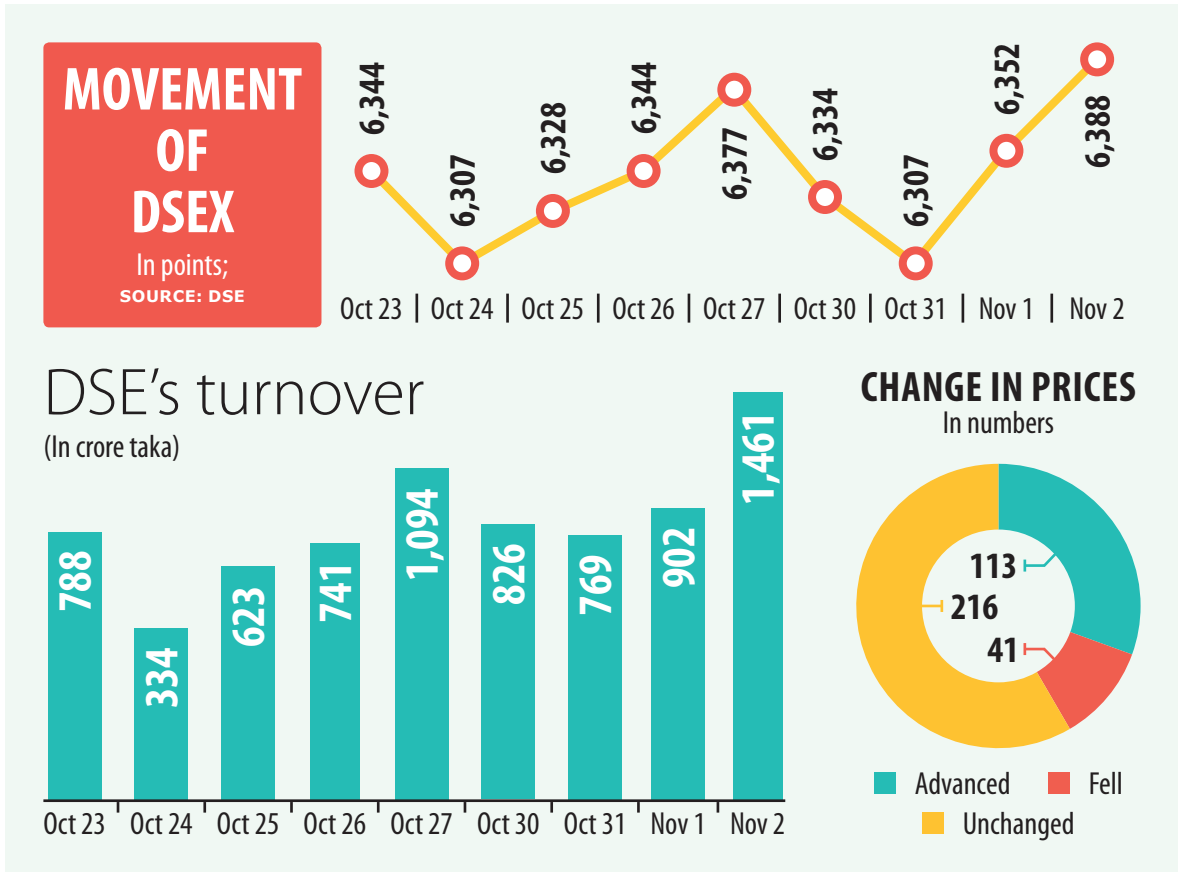
The central bank has also directed banks to calculate the highest age of the applicants considering March 25, 2020 as the cut-off date.

On the day, the government introduced the first countrywide lockdown to tame the deadly virus, keeping educational institutions closed for the next 18 months. Educational activities also saw disruption earlier this year, albeit for a shorter period.

During the lockdowns, the recruitment process witnessed major disruption as well.

In November last year, the BB had set March 25, 2020, as the cut-off date, making job-seekers eligible for requirement until December 31, 2021.

At present, the age ceiling for public sector jobs is 30 years. In the case of the children of the Freedom Fighters, it is 32 years.



Stocks up despite weak economic data

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The stock markets rose yesterday on the back of a regulator's decision to allow investors to buy shares on the same day a cheque is deposited with brokerage houses and fresh bets from some big individual investors despite weaker remittance and export data.

On Tuesday, Bangladesh Bank data showed that remittance inflow declined 7.4 per cent year on year to \$1.52 billion in October, the lowest in eight months.

And the Export Promotion Bureau yesterday said foreign sales declined 7.85 per cent to \$4.35 billion last month.

Higher remittance and export earnings are crucial for Bangladesh in its attempt to fight off the impacts of the global crisis and the volatility in the foreign exchange market, which have pushed up

the imports of the country, driving down foreign currency reserves and driving up inflation.

Despite the weak export and remittance data, the DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), rose 35 points, or 0.56 per cent, to 6,388.

The DSEX, the blue-chip index, was up 0.37 per cent to 2,244 while the DSES, the index that represents shariah-based companies, advanced 0.68 per cent to 1,399. On the DSE, 113 securities advanced, 41 declined, and 216 did not see any movement. Turnover, one of the important indicators of the market, surged 61 per cent to Tk 1,461 crore.

The stocks on the DSE extended their gaining streak for the second consecutive session as investors put fresh bets on large-cap stocks amid the June-end declaration, said International Leasing

Securities Ltd, a brokerage house, in its daily market review.

Buying pressures of the investors pulled the prime index at the beginning of the trading session riding on the regulator's decision on the cheque encashing issue.

On Tuesday, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission revoked an order that stipulated that investors could buy shares only against funds already present in beneficiary owners' accounts.

Now, stock brokers and merchant bankers can transact securities against account payee cheques, payment orders, and demand drafts. However, merchant bankers and stock brokers would have to deposit cheques either on the day investors provide them or on the following working day.

If the cheques are dishonoured, brokers will have to transfer the fund from their

bank accounts.

A stockbroker said some big individual investors also injected fresh funds into the market.

Desh General Insurance topped the gainers' list, advancing 10 per cent. Bangladesh Welding Electrodes, Lub-rref Bangladesh, Navana Pharmaceuticals, and Genex Infosys also rocketed more than 9 per cent.

JMI Syringes suffered the sharpest fall, giving up 5 per cent. Aramit Ltd, Hakkani Pulp & Paper Mills, Intraco Refueling Station, and Apex Foods were also among the major losers.

The Caspi, the all-share price index of the Chittagong Stock Exchange, gained 71 points, or 0.38 per cent, to close at 18,804.

Of the issues that traded on the bourse in the port city, 91 advanced, 29 declined, and 157 did not show any price movement.

IMF calls for

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Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the present tariff structure must be revisited in view of concerns regarding revenue earnings, import substitution and support given to export-oriented industries.

"A comprehensive look is necessary," he said.

At the meeting, the IMF delegation also inquired about the country's progress in signing free trade agreements and preferential trading agreements with other nations.

The international financial institution suggested Bangladesh diversify its export basket for growth acceleration.

Garments-led exports have been a key driver of growth and job creation in Bangladesh.

However, trade openness is low

and Bangladesh remains one of the least diversified low-income countries, both in terms of products and destination, said the IMF in its Article IV Consultation report.

"Reducing relatively high nontariff barriers (NTBs) and domestic protection, improving trade-related infrastructure—especially energy and transportation, addressing regulatory barriers, and ensuring financing will be necessary to increase export competitiveness and expand trade," said the report.

The IMF delegation also wanted to know about Bangladesh's assessment regarding the impact of losses of duty-free benefits after the LDC graduation.

The team also wanted to know about the government's projection regarding export earnings for the next three years.

Islamic banking

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approved, and maintained by world-renowned shariah scholars."

Earlier this year, Saadiq was named the "Best Islamic Bank for Digital Customer Experience" by the Digital Banker, a Dubai-based news, business intelligence and research firm, for the fourth time running.

"This achievement is another sign that our digital journey is headed in the right direction," said Ahmed, who obtained his MBA from the Institute of Business Administration under the University of Dhaka.

Islamic banks currently invest their excess liquidity in the Bangladesh Government Islami Investment Bonds. And the banker thinks a broader basket of Islamic finance assets would ensure optimum profits

for clients.

Developing a shariah compliant share market and establishing a secondary market to trade sukuk, shariah-compliant shares, are essential, he said.

"There has to be a vested interest in lifting up opportunities to launch and implement green sukuk, as part of creating an investment environment that is greener and geared towards long-term sustainability."

The banker recommended the central bank boost the adoption of Islamic banking by offering a lower stamp duty for Islamic products.

"The Bangladesh Bank should also permit borrowing from conventional current accounts to finance Islamic assets for Islamic banking windows and branches."

Shipping Corp plans

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So, income rose while costs were controlled, it said in a statement on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) website.

"As a result, the BSC has been able to earn more profits than before," it said.

Muhammad Ashraf Hossain, company secretary, did not receive phone calls and reply to The Daily Star's SMS.

The net asset value per share rose to Tk 72.52 from Tk 60.28 while the net operating cash flow per share climbed to Tk 23.87 from Tk 12.78.

The company's board of directors

recommended a 20 per cent cash dividend for 2021-2022.

The company's paid-up capital was Tk 152 crore. It has a reserve and surplus of Tk 302 crore, according to the DSE data.

Though its profits soared last year, it dropped in the first quarter of the current financial year of 2022-23.

The BSC reported a profit of Tk 60.71 crore for the July-September period of 2022, which was Tk 66.20 crore during the same quarter a year earlier, according to the unaudited financial statements.

Shares of the corporation were down 0.52 per cent on the DSE yesterday.

StanChart, IBA launch innovation challenge for enterprising youths

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Standard Chartered Bangladesh and the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) have recently announced the launch of the Standard Chartered-IBA Innovation Challenge.

At the event, Bangladeshi youths will have the opportunity to present promising and scalable business ideas centred around sustainability and development to a panel of renowned judges.

As part of the competition, entrants will benefit from training at every stage to hone their skills, the bank said in a statement today.

The platform will provide winners with a new avenue and connections to push their ideas forward, according to the statement.

Submissions are open from November 1 this year to January 13 in 2023 and entries will be accepted in two categories.

The first, 'Lifting Participation' relates to building a more inclusive

economy, while 'Accelerating Zero' is focused on embracing sustainability.

Each theme is tied to the bank's belief that it is possible to drive commerce and growth without leaving people behind, negatively impacting the planet, or creating divisions that diminish our sense of community.

Participants are expected to pick a theme and submit one original and creative business idea.

A bootcamp and workshop will be organised to ensure that life-long skills are built.

"The Standard Chartered-IBA Innovation Challenge is a chance for young Bangladeshis to say yes to the possibilities of the unknown," said Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh.

"It is a unique platform that will allow participants to explore issues that permeate our communities and come up with innovative and impactful solutions."

"The capacity for creativity that this generation has is unmatched –

E-orange founder, relatives bought assets

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launders of money deposited by subscribers of E-orange.

Lawyer Shamim Khaled Ahmed told The Daily Star that the HC may fix a date today for holding a hearing on the April 7 rule.

According to yesterday's report, E-orange paid Tk 497 crore to different merchants, meaning the suppliers of the products.

However, the BFU recommended conducting further investigations to unveil whether those merchants were

accomplices of the E-orange acting out a deception.

Naming 10 persons who withdrew Tk 25.94 crore from the E-orange Shop's accounts, the report said it was not clear whether those people were authentic beneficiaries.

According to the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP), customers filed 5,867 complaints against E-orange as of July. Only 33 or 0.56 per cent were settled by the DNCRP.

Closed to cut costs but continue to incur loss

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"So, it will be difficult to bring farmers back into sugarcane cultivation if the mill resumes," he said.

Sajahan Ali Badsha, a sugarcane farmer, said growers always seek profit and although sugarcane does not bring in huge sums, the

government fixed its price so there is no trouble in marketing the crop.

"But now that the mill is closed, only molasses traders are buying sugarcane and they have no fixed price, so farmers avoid sugarcane cultivation," he added.

People's income has not risen in line with inflation

Planning minister says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

People's income has not increased the same way inflation has risen in the country, Planning Minister MA Mannan said yesterday.

"But we should keep in mind the immediate reason for the rise in inflation as it is not a failure of our market," he said.

"Our market is now integrated with the global market and due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, some pressure in other economies has affected us," Mannan added.

He made these remarks after meeting with a delegation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at the planning ministry.

Mannan then claimed that the current inflation is actually good for Bangladesh.

"Still, we are working on it and will continue [doing so]," the planning minister said.

Asked whether the economy will reach a comfortable place if the IMF loan comes through, Mannan used an analogy to explain that it would.

"If I have Tk 100 in my pocket, it would be a little better if someone lends Tk 10 more," he said.

The government had approached the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan in July earlier this year to address the country's current economic challenges.

And although the loan would provide some relief, Mannan said the government is not actually in any uncomfortable situation at the moment.

Evaly ordered to stop selling gift cards on discount

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The commerce ministry has asked Evaly to stop selling gift cards on discount to promote the company's products, said a senior official of the ministry yesterday.

"We served the letter to the Evaly Tuesday as we have noticed that the company was promoting its products with offering gift cards," he said over phone.

Evaly will not be able to sell the gift vouchers until further notice from the ministry in this concern, the official also said.

Germany primes energy price cap

AFP, Germany

Germany on Wednesday put the finishing touches on an energy price cap, the cornerstone of a massive 200-billion-euro (\$198-billion) package to shield households and businesses from rising costs.

"Immediate help is on its way!" Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Twitter, who has ploughed ahead with plans despite criticisms from European partners.

The major energy market intervention is deemed necessary to support consumers at a time when Europe's largest economy is drifting towards recession and inflation has shot past 10 per cent.

The plan will see the price for a percentage of household and businesses' typical consumption capped at lower-than-market prices, according to a position paper from the government.

For gas, 25,000 larger businesses, as well as almost 2,000 hospitals and schools will benefit from the cap as soon as January 1 next year, under the plans.

Households and smaller businesses meanwhile could have to wait until March 1 at the latest for the price brake to come into force.

Energy crisis chips away at Europe's industrial might

REUTERS, London

Europe needs its industrial companies to save energy amid soaring costs and shrinking supplies, and they are delivering - demand for natural gas and electricity both fell in the past quarter.

It is far too early to rejoice, though. The drop is not just because industrial companies are turning down thermostats, they are also shutting down plants that may never reopen.

And while lower energy use helps Europe weather the crisis sparked by Russia's war in Ukraine and Moscow's supply cuts, executives, economists and industry groups warn its industrial base may end up severely weakened if high energy costs persist.

Energy-intensive industries, such as aluminium, fertilisers, and chemicals are at risk of companies permanently shifting production to locations where cheap energy abounds, such as the United States.

Even as an unusually warm October and projections of a mild winter helped drive prices lower, natural gas in the United States still costs about a fifth what companies pay in Europe.

"A lot of companies are just quitting production," Patrick Lammers, management board member at utility E.ON told a conference in London last month. "They actually demand destruct."

Euro-zone manufacturing activity this month hit its weakest level since May 2020, signaling Europe was heading for a recession.

The International Energy Agency estimates European industrial gas demand fell by 25 per cent in the third quarter from a year earlier. Analysts say widespread shutdowns had to be behind the drop because efficiency gains alone would not produce such savings.

"We are doing all we can to prevent a reduction in industrial activity," a European Commission spokesperson said in an email.