

DIVISION-WISE AGENTS

In %; SOURCE: BB

- Dhaka

Barishal

Mymensingh

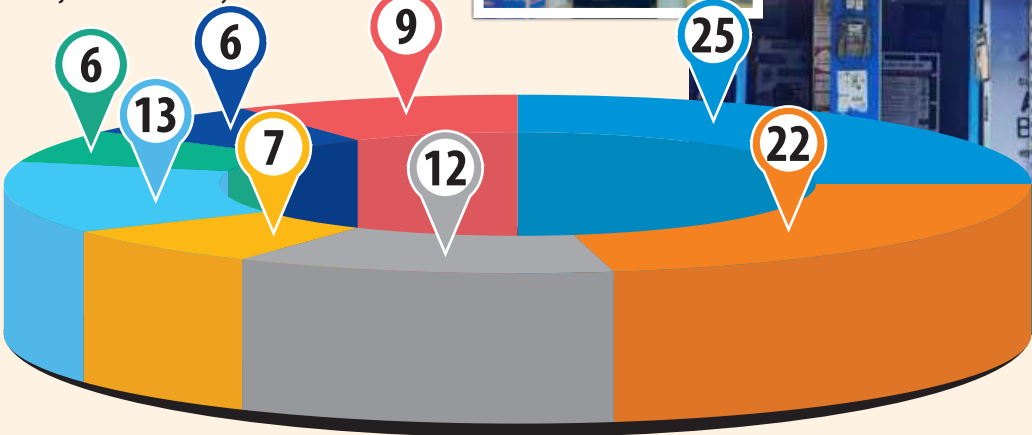
Chattogram

Khulna

Rangpur

Rajshahi

Sylhet



Bank-wise agents

In %; SOURCE: BB

- Bank Asia

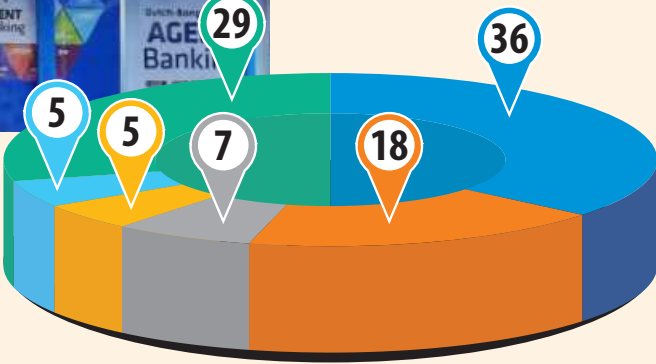
Islami Bank

Dutch-Bangla

City Bank

Brac Bank

Others



Dhaka, Ctg home to most agent banking activities

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Although agent banking is spreading at a faster clip in Bangladesh, accelerating financial inclusion, a majority of activities are concentrated in Dhaka and Chattogram divisions, central bank data showed.

As of October, the total number of agents was 14,833. Of them, 2,267 were in urban areas and 12,566 in rural areas, according to the monthly report of the Bangladesh Bank.

There are 2,820 outlets in urban centres versus 17,544 in rural areas, meaning rural areas are quite covered by banking facilities through agent banking, said the BB.

The Dhaka division has a maximum of 3,738 agents, accounting for 25 per cent of the total, while the Chattogram division came second with 22 per cent of the agents.

Khulna and Rajshahi had 13 and

12 per cent of the agents, respectively. The Mymensingh came last with 829 agents, or 6 per cent.

Similarly, the Dhaka division has a maximum of 5,041 outlets, again 25 per cent of the total. The Chattogram division was second-placed and is home to 22 per cent of the outlets.

Khulna and Rajshahi have 12 per cent of the outlets each.

"Entrepreneurs in the Dhaka and Chattogram divisions are more interested in agent banking businesses compared to other divisions," said the BB.

Mymensingh has 1,197 outlets, or 6 per cent of the total, the lowest among eight divisions in the country.

In 2013, the central bank introduced agent banking to provide banking services to underprivileged people in rural areas, especially those in remote areas.

It is less costly compared to the

traditional banking system and allows customers to receive various banking services in real time through an agent.

At present, 31 banks are running agent banking activities.

The monthly report showed the Dhaka district has the highest number of agents and outlets at 984 and 1,120, whereas Bandarban has the lowest number of agents and outlets at 34 and 42, respectively.

Among the upazilas, Lakshmipur sadar has the highest number of agents, which is 102, and Savar has the highest number of outlets at 167.

Ruma upazila in Bandarban has the lowest number of agents and outlets. There is only one agent and one outlet in the hilly upazila.

According to the report, the top five banks in the agent banking segment – Bank Asia Ltd, Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd (IBBL), Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd (DBBL), Brac Bank and City Bank –

captured 71 per cent share in the total agents.

Bank Asia has the highest 5,285 agents, making up 36 per cent of the total. IBBL was second-placed with 2,693 agents, or 18 per cent of the total.

DBBL has 1,067 agents, Brac Bank appointed 773 agents and City Bank has 705 agents.

The five banks accounted for 77 per cent of the total outlets. Of them, DBBL has the highest number of outlets at 6,016, which is 30 per cent of the total.

Bank Asia came second with 5,404 outlets, followed by IBBL (2,693 outlets), Brac Bank (848 outlets) and City Bank (717 outlets).

There are 1.7 crore deposit accounts on the agent banking network as of October.

The Dhaka division has a maximum of 39.77 lakh deposit accounts. The Mymensingh division has the lowest number of accounts of 8.19 lakh.

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Stocks drop for fifth day

Turnover slips below Tk 350cr once again

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks in Bangladesh yesterday took a dive for the fifth consecutive trading session while turnover once again plunged below the Tk 350-crore mark amid lower investor participation.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), dropped 12 points, or 0.20 per cent, to close the day at 6,226 points.

Similarly, the DS30, comprised of blue chip companies, fell 0.10 per cent to 2,199 points while the DSES, an index which represents shariah-compliant companies, slipped 0.25 per cent to 1,363 points.

Meanwhile, turnover, an important indicator of the market's liquidity, plummeted 29 per cent to Tk 322 crore compared to Tk 456 crore the previous day.

Among the companies to witness trade, 14 advanced, 66 declined and 235 remained the same.

The market had opened on an upbeat note that lingered for a while but ultimately started fading away after a half-hour of trade, International Leasing Securities said in its daily review.

Pessimistic investors continued their selling spree due to a confidence crisis, pulling down the market indices in the process. Besides, turnover was lower as more than 200 stocks are stuck at their floor prices, it added.

Among the sectors, travel, life insurance and ceramics rose by 0.5 per cent, 0.3 per cent and 0.2 per cent respectively while jute and tannery fell by 5.5 per cent and 1.3 per cent respectively.

Islami Commercial Insurance posted the highest price appreciation, rising 9.59 per cent, while Stylecraft Ltd surged 6.19 per cent. Among the gainers, Bangladesh Autocars, GQ Ball Pen, and Aziz Pipes each rose by more than 3 per cent.

Orion Infusion suffered the sharpest fall, sliding 7.4 per cent. Intraco Refueling Station dropped 7.1 per cent, Jute Spinners slipped down 6.4 per cent, Eastern Cables eroded 6 per cent, and Northern Insurance fell 5.3 per cent.

Monno Ceramic Industries was the most traded stock on the day with shares worth Tk 25 crore being transacted. Intraco Refueling Station, Genex Infosys, Bashundhara Paper Mills and Advent Pharmaceuticals also saw significant transactions.

The Caspi, the all-share price index of the Chittagong Stock Exchange, fell 20 points, or 0.10 per cent, to end the day at 18,383 points.

Of the securities traded, 12 advanced, 44 declined, and 76 did not show any price movement.



PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Currently, Bangladesh is the global leader in terms of the number of green garment factories. According to entrepreneurs, green factories are one of the most scientific ways of keeping the balance of growth and sustainability. Green factories attach the highest importance to energy use, water use and indoor environment quality.

2 more garment units get 'green' certificates

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Two more Bangladeshi garment factories have been awarded with the green garment factory certificate in gold category for their outstanding initiatives to save environment and ensure compliance.

Victoria Intimates Ltd, a garment factory at Boiragirchala in Gazipur, was awarded the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification by the United States of Green Building Council, according to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

The second one is Dresden Textiles Ltd, which is situated in Mymensingh's Trishal.

Twenty-seven factories received green certificates in 2022, of which 13 are platinum rated, the highest category LEED certificate, according to the BGMEA data.

So far, 180 garment factories received LEED certificates in the country. Of them, 58 were platinum rated, 108 gold rated, 10 silver rated and four are only LEED certified.

Some 550 garment factories are waiting to be certified green as the process is underway, the BGMEA said.

Sustainability goes mainstream: Unilever Bangladesh shows the way

TANVIR AHMED CHOWDHURY

As the world becomes increasingly aware of the negative impacts of traditional business practices on the environment and society, corporations are reevaluating their purpose and goals. Gone are the days when the sole focus was on maximising profits at any cost. Today, companies are increasingly recognising the benefits of incorporating sustainability into their operations and strategies. A prime example of this is Unilever Bangladesh, a leader in the movement towards sustainable business practices. By placing sustainability at the core of the business, the company is not only doing its part to address pressing environmental and social issues, but it is also positioning itself for long-term success and building positive relationships with stakeholders.

"Our strategy is centered around making sustainable business practices the norm. We define it by our motto, 'Brands with purpose grow, companies with purpose last, and people with purpose thrive,'" said Zaved Akhtar, CEO and Managing Director of Unilever Bangladesh at the CXO Summit 2022 that was held on December 3, 2022.

Unilever Bangladesh has made significant progress in incorporating sustainability into all aspects of their value chain, as demonstrated by their commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030, and collecting more plastic than they produce by 2025. The company has implemented various measures to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions within its operations, as well as reducing water consumption (412 million litres since 2020) and waste generated from plastic. These efforts have resulted in the equivalent of planting 150,252 mature trees. In addition, Unilever Bangladesh has created a more carbon-neutral production zone, further demonstrating their commitment to sustainability.

Unilever Bangladesh partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Narayanganj City Corporation and piloted a project called 'Plastic Waste Management: Building Circular Cities,' which aimed to create a plastic-neutral environment in Narayanganj City. The project focuses on finding a circular economic model for plastic waste, particularly in relation to flexible packaging and single-use plastics (SUP). To date, the initiative has collected approximately 482 tonnes of flexible plastic waste and SUP from homes and the environment in Narayanganj

City. The project has also been expanded to Chattogram with a local NGO, Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), and in partnership with the Chattogram City Corporation. It is showing promising results in managing plastic waste in the port city.

According to Zaved, the project has been successful in educating households on how to manage plastic waste and create a sustainable ecosystem for its collection. The project has also explored various models for plastic collection, including household, waste picker, and community-based approaches.

"This year, our sustainability team will recover 40% of the plastic that we produce; next year, it will be 100%," he added while talking about the plastic footprint.

Zaved also believes that great brands are made by rooting them in a purpose, which is reflected in Unilever Bangladesh's Dove Self-Esteem Project (DSEP) in partnership with Plan International Bangladesh. The brand worked with teachers and parents apart from female students.

"I have learned to distinguish what to say and what not to say in front of my children. After all, they will learn from me," says Marufa Begum, a parent. Globally, Dove is working on this project to educate more than 50 million

children about self-esteem by 2030, as they believe children who grow up with self-esteem can ensure a beautiful future.

Unilever Bangladesh has a number of notable projects in addition to the initiatives mentioned above. These include the Lifebuoy Friendship Hospital, a floating hospital on the banks of the Jamuna river that provides healthcare to marginalised communities in the char areas, and Domex's efforts to promote safe sanitation practices.

"Unilever Bangladesh has been educating people about the importance of handwashing for over a decade. According to an empirical study, handwashing was correlated with a reduction in diarrheal instances and child mortality below the age of five. We could see the positive impact of this practice," said Zaved Akhtar.

He added that Unilever Bangladesh is working on equipping more than a million youth with skills by 2030 and propelling this initiative across the education and business competition programmes.

"We believe that when sustainability is at the core of your business strategy, you can actually grow the business," says the CEO & MD of Unilever Bangladesh.

With the core principle, "What is good for Bangladesh has always been good for Unilever", the company strives to rebuild the world in a sustainable way. From ensuring eco-friendly business strategies to strengthening the building blocks of the nation- the youth, Unilever Bangladesh is pulling out all the stops to make Bangladesh better socially and environmentally.



PHOTO: UNILEVER BANGLADESH

Unilever Bangladesh's initiative to improve plastic waste management includes connecting all the actors in the plastic value chain, including waste pickers as seen in the picture.