

India's Adani tries to calm investors Market regulator confirms probe

REUTERS, New Delhi

Adani Group sought to reassure investors yesterday, saying it had strong cashflows and its business plans were fully funded, as an Indian regulator confirmed it was investigating a critical report by a short-seller that has battered the group's stocks.

Led by billionaire businessman Gautam Adani, the group's seven listed stocks have together lost about \$120 billion in market value since a January 24 report by US short-seller Hindenburg Research accused it of improper use of offshore tax havens and stock

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Members of Israeli security forces stand guard as a military excavator demolishes the house of Palestinian Adham Bashir in the Jabal Mukaber neighbourhood of Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Campaigners question govt's low numbers

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Road Transport Authority (BRTA) last week, 333 people died and 336 others were wounded in 322 road crashes in January.

The figures are 45.70 percent, 43.08 percent and 62.62 percent lower respectively than those mentioned in the Jatri Kalyan Samity's report.

The BRTA has collected the data through its eight divisional offices, reads a report sent by the BRTA chairman to the Road Transport and Highways Division on February 6.

Over the last five years, the country has witnessed three movements, including a massive one

in July-August 2018, demanding safe roads. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader on many occasions admitted his failure to bring discipline on roads.

At least three road safety campaign platforms early last month published their reports saying that the numbers of both road crashes and deaths went up last year compared to 2021.

But Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri at a programme on January 15 blasted the road safety campaigners for publishing "fabricated" reports on road crashes.

He said the reports were

creating confusion among the people and tarnishing the country's image abroad.

A transport association leader even demanded legal actions against the road safety campaigners if their reports were found to be not based on facts.

At the same event, the road secretary announced that they would publish reports on road accidents on a monthly basis.

Apart from having their own information, BRTA circle offices at the district level collected data from the district and police administrations, and sent those to the headquarters through divisional offices,

said BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder.

"We collect the information regularly and preserve it. But for the first time we have publicly circulated information as many organisations circulated their unverified reports on road crashes," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Replying to a question, Nur Mohammad said if anyone challenges the BRTA data, they will scrutinise it further.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of Jatri Kalyan Samity, said the government has published "confusing data" on road accidents.

He said the actual figures of road accidents and deaths must be higher than those mentioned in the Samity's reports prepared based on media reports as many incidents go unreported.

"If the government publishes data hiding actual numbers, it will not be able to make right decisions," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Saidur Rahman, executive director of Road Safety Foundation, said, "The numbers [mentioned in the government report] are very low. We don't think the data was collected from very authentic sources."

2 top officials from US, India fly in today

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officials' tour of Bangladesh in recent months. In January alone, Eileen Laubacher, senior director for South Asia at the US National Security Council, and Donald Lu, US assistant secretary for South and Central Asia, visited Dhaka.

Though Bangladesh and the US have a robust relation, it was strained following the sanctions against Rab and seven of its current and former officials in December 2021.

Initially, Dhaka was in a mode of denial, but eventually it said it may have made some mistakes and will be making corrections when required.

Lu, during his visit, lauded Bangladesh for the reduced number of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

While Washington is critical of Bangladesh's

2018 national polls, media freedom, space for the civil society organisations, it is keen to deepen engagement with Dhaka given its geostrategic location in the Indo-Pacific region, which is becoming a place of competition among the global powers.

"Mr Derek Chollet is expected to discuss the ways of bolstering US-Bangladesh relations. ... He will learn about the Rohingya situation on the ground and the humanitarian response," Sehel Sabrin, spokesperson for the foreign ministry, told reporters last week.

A US delegation on Sunday started visiting the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

Diplomatic sources said the US is attaching increased importance to promoting democracy in Myanmar, and helping Rohingyas, with more than

one million living in Cox's Bazar camps.

In December last year, the US Congress passed the BURMA Act meant to impose tougher sanctions against the regime leadership, support the pro-democracy movement and provide critical humanitarian assistance.

A diplomatic source said the US has been the largest donor for the Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh, and under the BURMA Act, it is mandated to bolster support at a time when the humanitarian assistance for the Rohingyas is declining amid Russia-Ukraine war.

Washington is urging all countries in the region, including South Asian and Southeast Asian ones, to create pressure on Myanmar junta, which took control of the country through a coup two years back. However, the civilian National Unity Government

(NUG) and other rebel groups now control about 80 percent of the country's territory.

Diplomatic sources said Washington wants Dhaka on its side as it supports the NUG and pro-democracy groups of Myanmar.

Foreign ministry officials said Dhaka will request Washington to lift sanctions, and support Bangladesh in addressing Rohingya crisis. It will also seek more US investments and transfer of technologies to adapt climate change challenges.

Meanwhile, Indian Foreign Secretary Kwatra will arrive in Dhaka on a two-day visit this evening, ending an official visit to Nepal.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen will hold foreign office consultation (FOC) with his India's counterpart tomorrow.

Foreign ministry officials said Dhaka and Delhi will take stock of all aspects of Indo-Bangla relations and discuss preparations for the upcoming visits of Foreign Minister Momen to New Delhi early March to attend the G20 foreign minister's level meeting and PM Hasina's visit to Delhi on September 9-10.

Kwatra is also expected to call on Hasina and Momen.

Hasina may hold a bilateral meeting with her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the summit.

From the Bangladesh side, addressing trade barriers and increasing export to India, Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and taking forward water-sharing issues of the common rivers will feature prominently in the FOC, officials said.

UKRAINE WAR

Russian forces claim gains

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia said yesterday its troops had pushed forward a few kilometres along the frontlines in Ukraine, while Kyiv said its forces had repelled Russian attacks in several areas.

As the first anniversary of the Russian invasion neared, much of the fighting was taking place around the eastern city of Bakhmut, still in Ukrainian hands amid a months-long battle.

The Ukrainian military yesterday reported heavy Russian shelling all along the frontline and said 16 settlements had been bombarded near Bakhmut.

Russia's Defence Ministry said Russian troops had managed to advance 2 km (1.2 miles) to the west in four days. However, it did not say which part of the long frontline, encompassing several Ukrainian regions in the south and east, had moved.

Ukraine's military said that over the past day, its forces had repelled a number of attacks near Bakhmut, which sits in the Donetsk region, as well as assaults in

the Kharkiv, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of Russia's Wagner Group, said on Sunday the mercenary force had taken the village of Krasna Hora, on the northern edge of Bakhmut. Wagner has for months spearheaded the assault on Bakhmut, making small but steady gains.

Bakhmut is a major objective for Russian President Vladimir Putin and months of Russian shelling have left much of it in ruins.

The Donetsk region is partially occupied by Russia and Moscow wants to occupy it fully. However, neither side has made a decisive gain for weeks.

Later on Sunday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said power workers had repaired much of the damage to the energy grid caused by Russian missile and drone strikes on Friday in Kyiv.

But he warned the population it was too early to declare victory on the energy front. Russia has carried out repeated waves of attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities in recent months.

Sarah showed

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has shown us how to defeat death and stay alive with honour even after death. To me, she is a torch-bearer of humanity."

He also congratulated those involved in the country's first cadaveric transplant, a surgical procedure by which multiple organs of a brain dead donor are taken for transplant.

Of them, Prof Habibur Rahman Dulal and his team successfully recovered the kidneys from Sarah and transplanted one of those to Shamima Akter. Dr AKM Khurshidul Alam, a professor of urology at BSMMU, transplanted the other kidney into another patient.

Meanwhile, Dr Mohammad Shish Rahman, a professor of community ophthalmology, and Dr Rajoshree Das, an assistant professor of ophthalmology

science at the BSMMU, transferred each of Sarah's eyes to Ferdaushi Akter and Mohammad Suzon.

Cadaveric donations may be of organs such as the corneas, heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and more.

Twenty-year-old Sarah had consented to donate her organs after death, an act which gave new life to four separate people in the country's first successful transplants of organs from a brain-dead patient on January 18.

The transplants took place at BSMMU, National Kidney Foundation and Sandhani Eye Hospital.

Speaking at yesterday's event as the special guest, Sarah's mother Shobnam said, "I don't think my daughter is dead. She is alive among many people."

As one of the kidney recipients, Shamima

came onto the stage and Shobnam hugged her.

"I cannot express my feelings today," Shamima said, later urging people to opt for cadaveric transplant.

Speaking as the chief guest, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud said, "This is an extraordinary initiative."

He announced that he would also donate his organs as a cadaveric donor after consulting his physicians.

Pro-Vice Chancellor (academic) Prof Dr AKM Mosarrof Hossain, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Development) Prof Dr Moniruzzaman Khan, Proctor Prof Dr Habibur Rahman Dulal, and Freedom Fighter Shahjahan were among those who signed up for cadaveric organ donation at yesterday's event.

A path not often taken

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the village faced regular hardships because of the old road, one incident, in particular, that Kamal witnessed, served as a wake-up call for him.

"Last year, as I was passing through the old narrow road, I saw a pregnant woman being taken to the upazila town on a rickshaw van. The van suddenly flipped in a nearby field, and the woman gave birth then and there.

"Due to the road's poor condition, she couldn't

reach the hospital in time, I felt horrible and it was then that I made the decision to construct the new road."

According to locals, poor farmers make up most of the population in Kumirmara village, located in the Nilganj union.

Babul Mia, chairman of Nilganj Union Parishad, said, "I appreciate the excellent job Kamal Hossain has done to build the road. After seeing this fantastic work, I urge wealthy members of society to volunteer for such social development work."

Abu Sayeed, another resident of Kumirmara village, said, "It was challenging to traverse the old and narrow road. We frequently visited the local authorities for a new road. While we were unsuccessful, Kamal Hossain managed to construct this road on his own initiative."

Sultan Mia, a local farmer, said, "Vegetables are grown on most of the land in our village. Getting to the vegetable market was very challenging for us. That won't be an issue anymore."

Another cargo

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TotalEnergies offered \$19.74 MMBtu, the lowest among four participants who competed in the tender that closed on January 29.

RPGLCL has another tender open at present.

If prices of the super-chilled fuel stay below \$20 MMBtu, Bangladesh would be purchasing 10-12 cargo between February and June, Taufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, energy adviser to the prime minister, told Reuters on February 6.

When Bangladesh paused spot LNG purchase in June last year, the country paid \$24.25 per MMBtu for a cargo.

Asian spot LNG prices slipped to \$19.50 per MMBtu in the week to February 3, the first time they have fallen below \$20 since September 2021, as inventories remain high with peak winter demand due to end soon.

"This is a high demand season for us. Ramadan is coming, this is also irrigation season," Chowdhury told Reuters on the sidelines of the India Energy Week, held in Bengaluru from February 6 and 8.

European sanctions on Russia that pushed LNG prices up are discriminatory in nature for countries like Bangladesh, which are unable to secure LNG supplies due to high prices,

he said.

The development means the industries, which have been running on a truncated production schedule for want of gas, can brace themselves for uninterrupted supply once again.

To enable the spot purchases, the government last month hiked the retail price of gas by 14.5 percent to 178.9 percent for industries, power plants and commercial establishments, who together account for 78 percent of gas use in Bangladesh.

"So, supplying uninterrupted gas to them is our first priority now," said the Petrobangla official said.

Other than spot purchases, the country also imports LNG for about \$11 MMBtu through a 10-year import deal with Oman and a 15-year import deal with Qatar, according to Petrobangla officials.

At present, the total gas supply to the national grid is 2,656 million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d), which includes the 401 mmcf/d supplied by Qatar and Oman, shows the daily supply report of Petrobangla.

Once the cargo from the spot market arrives, the supply would increase by another 100 mmcf/d, according to Petrobangla officials.

Man dies of Nipah virus

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Rasel Mia, the deceased's brother-in-law, said a few days back, he and five to six of his friends had consumed raw date juice.

The relative added that Shah Alam had a fever last Thursday. He was given paracetamol tablets. The next day, the fever worsened and he became dizzy and started vomiting.

He was taken to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital, from where he was sent to DMCH on Friday night.

At least 11 people have been infected with the Nipah virus so far, and of them, eight people died.

Cases of the virus have been reported in Rajbari, Naogaon, Rajshahi, Shariatpur, Pabna, Natore

and Narsingdi this year.

The highest number of three deaths was reported in Rajbari, according to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

Urging people not to consume raw date juice, Health Minister Zahid Maleque recently said fruits half-eaten by birds should not be consumed.

Last month, IEDCR officials also advised people to not drink raw date juice, the main source of the Nipah virus in the country.

According to the IEDCR, infected people initially develop symptoms such as fever, headaches, myalgia (muscle pain), vomiting and sore throat. An undetected patient can even fall into

a coma within 24 to 48 hours.

There are currently no drugs or vaccines that specifically target Nipah virus infection. The primary treatment for humans is supportive care.

The virus was first identified as the cause of an encephalitis outbreak in 2001 in Meherpur. Since 2001, Nipah virus patients have been found in 33 districts.

In 2006, the Nipah Surveillance and Laboratory was established at the IEDCR.

Since then, 337 cases of the infection were documented. Of those infected, 235 died, indicating a very high mortality rate -- 71 percent, according to the IEDCR.

seized the truck but its driver and helper had fled the spot.

Meanwhile, in Cox's Bazar, three people died and three others were injured in two road accidents on Sunday night and yesterday morning.

In Sadar upazila, two people on a motorbike died after being hit by a covered van in the Eidgah area around 7:00am yesterday.

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officer-in-charge of Khetlal Police Station.

On information, members of the fire service rushed there and rescued the victims with the help of locals.

The four injured were taken to the upazila health complex, where three of them succumbed to their injuries.

OC Razibul said they

Md Azim, 30, and Delwar Hossain Saydee, 28, died on the spot.

In a separate incident, one Hasan Ahmed, 35, was killed and three others were injured after a truck overturned on the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Marine Drive Road on Sunday night.

(Our correspondents from Dinajpur and Cox's Bazar contributed to the report.)

Advertorial

In conversation with Mike Henniger, CEO and President at Illume Student Advisory Services

Staff Correspondent



Mike Henniger visited Bangladesh recently to attend an educational event named "Canada Application Day", organised by Osprey Education Canada Inc. and Eduproof Inc. at The Westin Dhaka. The Daily

Star sat down with him for a brief conversation.

The Daily Star: Why is it important for institutions to recruit international students?

Mike Henniger: It is extremely important to internationalise universities and colleges, and to have an international mindset for all students, faculty and staff. There is no real area of study that does not have international and cultural implications. Take the Business and Economics Faculty, if they do not have international students and faculty members, it limits the general perspective because we know that the world is a global village, economies are global, and businesses are international.

DS: How do you think Bangladeshi students can benefit from an education abroad?

MH: When I look at the countries and universities that I represent, I know they are providing world-class education in sectors like Environmental Sustainability to Economics or Social Justice. I think Canada is a leader in many of those fields, and Bangladesh needs to continue to advance in those sectors. Many of the students studying at the institutions we represent will be able to come back to Bangladesh and be future leaders.

DS: What are some of the challenges prospective international students from Bangladesh face when applying abroad? What are some of the things they should be aware of?

MH: I think one of the biggest challenges is that related to budget. Unfortunately, international

study is expensive. Many students look for scholarship opportunities that often are unavailable.

For many, the realisation that they want to study abroad comes later in life. Most of these people are excellent students that the universities would be more than happy to accept, but because of study gaps or because they have dependents, it can often be difficult to obtain a Canadian visa.

When that happens, it is important that the student remains true to their dreams. I believe it is important to carve out an academic life and career path, instead of finding ways to just get to Canada or any other country. It will also allow institutions and immigration officials to understand the student's story and help them actualise their dreams.

Knowing the basics, and not outsourcing your education choice will go a long way. Researching about the faculty, entry requirements or job outcomes will make sure that the student is making the right choice.

DS: Can you talk about some of the shortcomings in the current application process? How can students get around those shortcomings to make sure their profiles are being accurately judged?

MH: Universities and colleges pride themselves with inclusivity, but often we do not do a great job and end up putting up more barriers. There is a constant effort to try to make education easier to access, but certain problems still persist, such as those related to proof of English proficiency and shorter degrees.

It is my personal belief that in academia, all the importance is put in a student's grades, even though we know that a student's skills in terms of conflict resolution, and their ability to gain different experiences in life are more influential. We often do not measure these things. However, many programs are now looking at a more holistic approach, so I believe we are headed in a direction.