

Dhaka stocks inch up, Ctg down

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The prime index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, DSEX, inched up 5 points or 0.08 per cent yesterday to close the day at 6,279.

The DS30, the blue chip index, edged down 0.08 per cent to 2,198 while the DSES, the Shariah-compliant index, went up 0.27 per cent to 1,373.

Turnover, a key indicator of the market, dipped 13 per cent to Tk 721 crore.

Of the securities, 94 advanced, 56 declined and 196 did not show any price movement.

CVO Petrochemical Refinery made the highest gain with an increase of 9.6 per cent.

Shurwid Industries, Legacy Footwear, Eastern Cables, and Apex Foods were among the top gainers.

Emerald Oil Industries was the sharpest loser, shedding 5.1 per cent.

BD Thai, Prime Islami Life Insurance, Intech Limited, and Ambee Pharmaceuticals were also on the list of significant losers.

Intraco Refueling Station was the most-traded stock on the day with its issues worth Tk 27 crore transacting.

Agni Systems, CVO Petrochemical Refinery, Unique Hotel & Resorts PLC, and Eastern Housing registered significant turnover as well.

The Caspi, the all-share price index of the Chittagong Stock Exchange, lost 1 point to close at 18,503.

Of the issues, 62 rose, 44 retreated and 114 did not see any price swing.

However, turnover of the port city bourse rose 37 per cent to Tk 22.5 crore.

Oil falls on rise in US inventories

REUTERS

Oil prices fell on Wednesday, ending a three-day rally as an unexpected rise in US oil inventories sparked demand concerns and investors awaited inflation data for a steer on US interest rates.

Brent crude dropped \$1.01, or 1.3 per cent, to \$76.43 a barrel by 0855 GMT while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude fell 99 cents, or 1.3 per cent, to \$72.72.

In a possible sign of weakening demand, US crude inventories rose by about 3.6 million barrels in the week ended May 5 while gasoline stockpiles rose by 399,000 barrels.



A worker is collecting the honey queen variety of pineapple, locally known as Joldungi, from a field in the Madhupur Garo area of Tangail. This year, the yield of the fruit has been better compared to the previous season thanks to favourable weather.



PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Better pineapple yield brings cheers for farmers

But the use of chemicals remains a concern

MIRZA SHAKIL

The honey queen variety of pineapple, locally known as Joldungi, cultivated in the Madhupur Garo area has seen a better yield this year compared to the previous season thanks to favourable weather.

The mature, sweet and tasty fruit has already started to hit the market and is fetching better prices, making growers happy.

Joldungi pineapples are smaller in size but sweeter and tastier than other varieties.

Tangail's Madhupur upazila is the key growing region for the fruit in Bangladesh. Nationally, the latest data on pineapple production from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics is not readily available. It is estimated that the country produced 208,000 tonnes of the fruit in 2020-21 and they were grown on around 35,000 acres of land.

Data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) showed 5.38 lakh tonnes of pineapples grew in 2021-22, up from 4.69 lakh tonnes a year ago.

Pineapples have been cultivated on 6,880 hectares of land alone in Madhupur this year. Giant Q, the main variety in Madhupur, has been cultivated on 4,000 hectares and honey queen on 2,700 hectares.

May and June are the months to harvest the honey queen variety while the harvesting season for the Giant Q variety is July and August.

Pineapple was cultivated on 7,660 hectares of land in Tangail in 2022-23, according to Nargis Akter, a sub-assistant agriculture officer at the DAE in the district.

The fruit was cultivated on 7,550 hectares of land in 2021-22, with production standing at around 2.40 lakh tonnes.

"The production target is the same for this season," the official said.

Tariqul Islam, a grower in Moter Bazar of Madhupur, has cultivated honey queen pineapples on 20 decimals of land this year and already sold the fruits.

He said the cost of production for honey queen pineapples is higher than other varieties as it needs more fertiliser, water and labourers.

"However, the output is much higher than other varieties."

Chand Miah, a grower in the Aushnara area in the upazila, has been cultivating honey queen pineapples since 2008.

One of the largest pineapple farmers in the region, he has grown four lakh honey queen pineapples on 47 bighas of land. Of the land, he owns 18 bighas and the rest has been leased.

"The yield is better this year than last year thanks to favourable weather conditions. The winter season was a little longer this year and this has been helpful for the cultivation of the fruit."

It is estimated that the country produced 208,000 tonnes of pineapple in 2020-21 and they were grown on around 35,000 acres of land.

Chand Miah has already sold a part of the pineapples to two wholesalers in Dhaka.

The small-sized pineapples have brought him Tk 10 to Tk 12 per piece while the medium and larger sizes have fetched Tk 15 to Tk 20 and Tk 25 to Tk 30, respectively.

The pineapples are retailing at Tk 15 to Tk 50. Shamsul Alam, a grower in Moter Bazar, has cultivated 1.5 lakh honey queen pineapples this year.

"The crop is getting mature and I will take them to markets next month," he said.

He said the yield looks good but the cost of cultivation has increased owing to the spike in the prices of fertiliser and labour costs.

However, the problems of using chemicals for making pineapples larger and ripening them still remain. The agriculture department says it is working on the issue and ill practices have reduced to a large extent than in the past.

Apart from using chemical fertilisers, a section of greedy farmers and traders apply an excessive amount of growth hormones to

immature pineapples for getting them to the market early, especially during the fasting month of Ramadan. These pineapples taste sour, according to some growers.

However, the mature honey queen pineapples that are now coming to the market are sweet and taste like honey, they say.

Mohammad Shahin, who lives on Victoria Road in Tangail town, says he bought a honey queen pineapple from the local market at Tk 50 during Ramadan and found the fruit sour and it was white on the inside.

Roksana Akter, a resident in the district town's Adalatpara area, says her family likes pineapple thanks to its health benefits.

"But we found that the fruits that arrived in the market during Ramadan were chemically treated. I do not want to give my family members any chemically treated fruits."

Another problem that growers face is birds and animals eat naturally ripened fruits when they are still in the fields. But if they spray ripening hormone on the fruits, birds and animals do not eat them, said a number of farmers.

Saiful Islam, a grower in the Beribaid area, admits that the farmers use hormones to ripen the fruits.

"If we do not use hormones, pineapples will ripen on the fields and by the time they ripen, we might not get buyers. Besides, wholesalers do not want to buy pineapples that have not been sprayed with ripening agents since fruits that ripen naturally rot within a short time," he said.

Several hundred shops that sell chemicals and growth hormones have sprouted in Madhupur and adjacent upazilas.

Several farmers say since agriculture officials do not come to them with the necessary advice, they use chemicals as per the advice of shop owners.

Al Mamun Rasel, upazila agriculture officer in Madhupur, said they are working on the chemical issue to curb ill practices.

"Awareness is required for all, including growers and buyers," he said, adding that there is a lack of preservation facilities as well.

EBL's profit declines 10% in Q1

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Eastern Bank Ltd posted Tk 107.31 crore profit in the first quarter of the current financial year, a decrease of 9.9 per cent year-on-year.

The profit stood at Tk 119.11 crore in January-March of 2022.

So, the private commercial bank reported consolidated earnings per share of Tk 1 for January-March of 2023 against Tk 1.11 in the identical quarter of 2022, its unaudited financial statements showed.

The consolidated net operating cash flow per share returned to the positive territory at Tk 0.19 from a negative Tk 4.76.

The NOCFPS increased significantly due to the net purchase of a low volume of trading securities, mostly treasury bills and bonds, and a lesser decrease in other assets, said EBL in a post on the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

The bank's consolidated net asset value per share rose to Tk 34.29 on March 31 this year from Tk 30.94 on the same day last year.

EBL shares traded at Tk 29.40 on the DSE yesterday, unchanged from a day earlier.

City Bank makes Tk 88cr profit in Jan-Mar

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The City Bank Ltd made a Tk 88.84 crore profit in the first quarter of the current financial year.

The private commercial bank reported a similar profit in the January-March quarter of 2022 as well. Thus, the consolidated earnings per share were Tk 0.74 in January-March of 2023, unchanged from the same three-month period of 2022, according to the unaudited financial statements.

The consolidated net operating cash flow per share plunged to a negative Tk 10.71 from a positive Tk 6.71.

Higher cash outflows for loan disbursements than cash inflows for acquiring deposits and borrowings resulted in the change in the NOCFPS, said City Bank in a filing on the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

The consolidated net asset value per share improved to Tk 28.84 on March 31 from Tk 28.21 on December 31.

City Bank shares traded at Tk 29.40 on the premier exchange of Bangladesh yesterday.

Envoy Textiles' profit jumped 433% in FY22

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Envoy Textiles Limited posted a 433 per cent year-on-year increase in profit to Tk 50.15 crore in the financial year of 2021-22.

It made a profit of Tk 9.39 crore a year earlier. The textile manufacturer reported earnings per share of Tk 2.99 for 2021-22, way higher than the Tk 0.56 it clocked in 2020-21.

The net asset value per share rose to Tk 38.21 in the last financial year from Tk 37.79 in FY20 while the net operating cash flow per share returned to a positive territory at Tk 3.43 from a negative Tk 2.25 during the period.

The board of directors has recommended a 15 per cent cash dividend for the year that ended on June 30.

Envoy Textiles also published its unaudited financial statements for the first three quarters of the current financial year.

Chinese company earnings reveal lopsided economic recovery

REUTERS, Hong Kong

People in China splashed out on dining, travel and luxury goods after emerging from three years of pandemic restrictions but are still not spending freely on routine consumer items, as first quarter corporate results are an indication.

There was a broad bounce in earnings after China ended its zero-Covid policy involving city-wide lockdowns and extensive quarantine in December, but consumer caution over global growth and job prospects have dented confidence and overall demand.

China A-shares posted 3.2 per cent growth in earnings in the first three months from a year earlier, rebounding from a 5.7 per cent drop in the fourth quarter of 2022, BofA Securities estimates.

The benefits to companies, however, varied widely even though the economy grew faster than expected in the first quarter.

Restaurants and tourism businesses recovered, with travel-related consumer services sector earnings surging 155 per cent, data from China International Capital Corp (CICC) showed. Food and beverage sector earnings jumped 18 per cent and automobiles were up a smaller 8 per cent.

In contrast, both home furnishings and apparel firms' earnings declined 9 per cent.

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Travellers walk past an installation in the shape of five stars at Beijing Daxing International Airport on April 24. There was a broad bounce in earnings after China ended its zero-Covid policy in December last year, but consumer caution over global growth and job prospects dented confidence and overall demand.

PHOTO: REUTERS

India inflation likely hit 18-month low in April

REUTERS, Bengaluru

India's consumer inflation likely cooled to an 18-month low in April as rises in food and fuel prices moderated, keeping it below the Reserve Bank of India's upper tolerance limit for the second consecutive month, a Reuters poll of economists found.

Food inflation, which accounts for nearly half of the overall consumer price basket, was expected to have fallen again in April, as price rises of cereals and edible oils softened.

Inflation as measured by the annual change in the consumer price index (CPI), was forecast to have fallen to 4.80 per cent in April from 5.66 per cent in March, according to the median view from the May 8-9 Reuters poll of 53 economists.

Predictions ranged from 4.40 per cent to 5.80 per cent, with respondents expecting inflation to remain below the RBI's 6.00 per cent upper tolerance limit for the second consecutive month.