

## Jamuna Bank makes profit of Tk 333cr in nine months

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Jamuna Bank PLC registered a 9.6 percent year-on-year increase in consolidated profit to Tk 333.10 crore in the nine months to September this year.

The private commercial lender made a Tk 303.96 crore consolidated profit in January-September of 2022.

The bank, thus, reported consolidated earnings per share (EPS) of Tk 4.10 for January-September against Tk 3.74 in the identical period last year, according to its unaudited financial statements.

"The EPS increased due mainly to a hike in net interest income as well as investment income," the bank said.

Jamuna Bank's net profit rose marginally to Tk 75.74 crore in July-September this year from Tk 75.53 crore in the third quarter of 2022.

The consolidated net operating cash flow per share decreased to Tk 12.23 in January-September this year from the previous year's Tk 16.18, while the consolidated net asset value per share fell to Tk 25.75 on September 30 from Tk 26.41 on September 30 last year.

Shares of Jamuna Bank traded at Tk 20.90 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday, unchanged from a day earlier.

## Anwar Galvanizing's profit nearly doubles

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

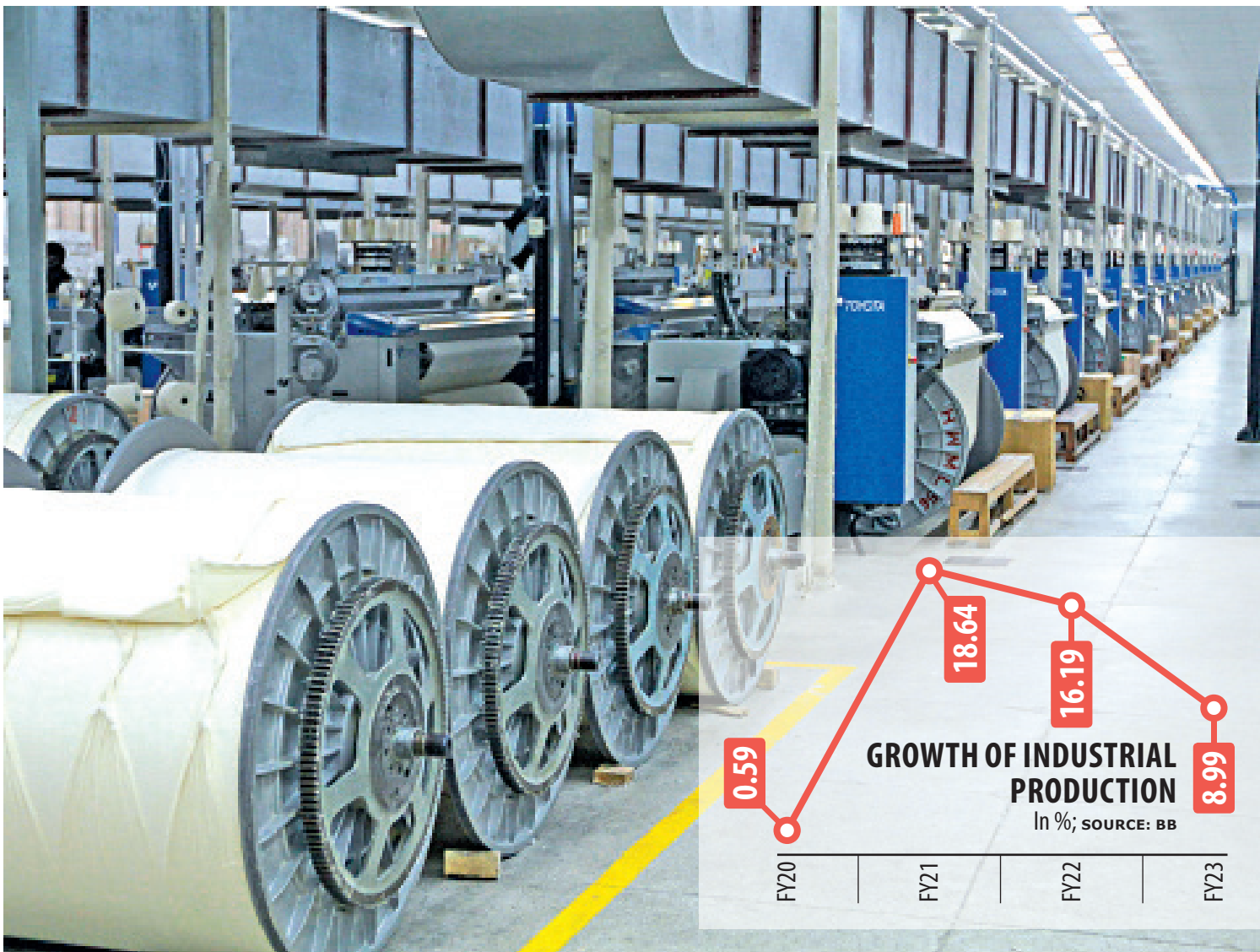
Anwar Galvanizing Ltd posted a 96.44 percent year-on-year increase in profit to Tk 3.32 crore in the July-September quarter of the current financial year.

The profit stood at Tk 1.69 crore in the first quarter of 2022-23.

Thus, the earnings per share of the company surged to Tk 1.10 in July-September from Tk 0.56 in the same quarter of FY23, according to the unaudited financial statements.

The net operating cash flow per share slipped to Tk 0.34 from Tk 0.52 during the quarter while the net asset value per share rose to Tk 14.07 on September 30 from Tk 12.98 on June 30.

Shares of Anwar Galvanizing closed unchanged at Tk 213.30 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.



# Industrial output halves as consumer demand drops

SOHEL PARVEZ

Industrial production in Bangladesh grew at a slower pace of 8.99 percent in the last fiscal year of 2022-23 as consumer demand dropped amid sustained higher inflation, sluggish export growth and falling imports.

Widely used for the observation and analysis of the current economic activity, industrial production rose 16.19 percent in 2021-22, according to the general index of industrial production for medium and large-scale manufacturing factories of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

The slowing trend is likely to persist in the current financial year 2023-24 amid the lingering downturn in imports of industrial raw materials and intermediate goods as well as political uncertainty.

Zaidi Sattar, chairman of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, however, termed the industrial production growth decent.

"The growth is satisfactory

**The slowing trend is likely to persist in the current financial year of 2023-24 amid the lingering downturn in imports of industrial raw materials and intermediate goods**



under the import compression and current economic challenges," he said.

He said factory output growth could be muted in the next couple of months and may pick up early next year.

The industrial sector contributed 35.55 percent to the gross domestic production in FY23. The manufacturing sector constituted 23 percent of the GDP. BBS data showed that the production of jute textiles, garments, pharmaceuticals, paper, fertilizer, processing of tea and coffee, soap and detergents, and processing and preserving of fruits dropped in June this year from a year ago.

Zaved Akhtar, chairman and managing director of Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, said inflation, fueled first by the post-Covid-19 impact, and then the Russia-Ukraine war, along with some

economic headwinds, had an impact on consumers and shoppers.

Bangladesh's currency saw a sharp depreciation over the last few months, he said.

"The above has created a challenging condition for consumers due to the drop in disposable incomes. People are coping by reducing shopping baskets and delaying purchases."

"This has led to a decline in discretionary items such as soaps and detergents, and both categories are seeing reduced purchase patterns in the market, especially for the more premium brands."

According to Akhtar, Unilever constantly optimises the costs through innovation, investments and transformation of production processes, ensuring that its products and services continue to meet consumer expectations,

even in the face of economic challenges.

Citing BBS data, Malik Mohammed Sayeed, chief operating officer of Square Toiletries Ltd, said the wage growth in Bangladesh has been below the inflation rate for the last 18 months.

Low-income families, including the working population, are cutting consumption of daily necessities for the sake of living cost management, he said.

"The market is observing a slight drop in demand, especially in personal care products. In some cases, consumers have moved from larger packs to medium-sized or smaller packs."

Square Toiletries has reduced the prices of several products to make them more affordable to customers, Sayeed added.

Zaidi Sattar, who formerly worked at the World Bank, said the manufacturing sector growth will slow if import remains compressed.

Following a 16 percent year-on-year decline in FY23 after the Bangladesh Bank moved to discourage the import of non-essential items in order to stop the depletion of the foreign currency reserves, imports slumped 22 percent in July-August of FY24, according to the BB.

"Import controls are not working. Instead of controlling imports, the authorities should allow the market forces to determine the exchange rate which will ultimately enable firms to operate in a better way," Sattar said.

## Do as I say, not as I do

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

The cherry on top is not always as delicious as it beckons you to believe. Those who look up to their leaders as infallible are often too soon disillusioned by their fallacies, double standard and hypocrisy being the most common of them.

Mr Johnson, a prominent board member, would always iterate that their corporate governance upholds strict policies, leaving no room for corruption or unethical conduct. In fact, that is the mantra of any board member. But we all know how the so-called ethical standards can fly out of the window when the ground beneath the feet gets rough.

Mr Johnson was a partner from an audit firm and joined the group company as an independent director. Now, the group appoints him at different subsidiaries on remuneration, which comes at the cost of losing his independence immediately.

Two such subsidiaries happen to be interdependent, and in one of them, say Company A, the shareholders have more interest than the other subsidiary, Company B.

Now, Mr Johnson pushes for the interest of Company A for obvious reasons while sitting at board meetings of Company A. He can also be found threatening the local management for not fulfilling the demand of Company A. He gets away with this malpractice because he enjoys support from a particular section at the head office.

In another case, Mr Johnson is simultaneously the chairman of a subsidiary, the chairman of a defalcation committee in the group office, and an independent board member of the group.

When an allegation is raised against Ms Tailor, a senior manager of the subsidiary, Mr Johnson, with the support of the head office, manipulates and reports the case to the group and the local boards. Sensing foul play, Ms Tailor lodges a formal complaint against him to the board.

In response, in compliance with the local law, an independent inquiry committee, comprising board members only, is formed, excluding Johnson. Realising how the investigation was going against his conspiracy, a situation

was orchestrated that saw the enquiry committee's chairman quitting and paving the way for Johnson to replace him to gain complete control once again.

Understanding the meaning and implication of terms such as conflict of interest, segregation of duties, and process and system fairness is known to Mr Johnson like the back of their hands. Why do they deviate from the ethical standards they claim to be masters of?

If you look around, many such powerful leaders are engaged in playing dual games. For example, the US and its allies champion human rights, the UN Charter and other international agreements upholding justice. But they are often found playing to a different tune.

In 1994, a military intervention against Rwanda's genocide was promised but never materialised. In 2003, the US invaded Iraq on the pretext of having weapons of mass destruction. But no such weapons were ever found. The US and its allies support Israel in violation of the UN Charter in ethnically cleansing Palestine. Don't they know their shameful acts? Of course, they do.

People in power have often demonstrated to practise double standards as if the rules they set do not apply to them. Reasons behind this trend are possibly a manipulative mindset for self-interest, ego, arrogance, and collective social or political pressure, among others.

A hypocritical leader is someone who promises you a bridge when there is no river. These leaders are often dishonest and self-serving, and in dealing with them, one should be as direct as possible, trusting gut instincts and setting clear boundaries.

In any leadership, accountability plays a pivotal role in ensuring leaders live up to the standards they profess. By being informed and engaged citizens, we can choose to create a more honest and ethical world.

*The author is founder and managing director of BuildCon Consultancies Ltd*

## LinkedIn hits 1b members

### Adds AI features for jobseekers

REUTERS

LinkedIn, the business-focused social network owned by Microsoft, on Wednesday said it now has more than 1 billion members and is adding more artificial intelligence features for paying users.

Crossing the billion-users mark puts LinkedIn - where members maintain a resume-like profile of their education, work experience and professional skills - in the top tier of social media networks that include rivals such as Meta Platforms.

About 80 percent of recent members are signing up from outside of the United States, the company has said.

LinkedIn has a free tier of membership but also offers subscriptions. Members of its \$39.99-a-month tier will get new AI features that can tell a user, who may be plowing through dozens of job postings, whether they're a good candidate based on the information in their profile.

The system can also recommend profile changes to make the user more competitive for a job.

The tool is designed to help users go "from what used to be just seeing a job and feeling insecure to being able to make tremendous progress in just one session, all the way towards an interaction," Tomer Cohen, LinkedIn's chief product officer, said in an interview.

LinkedIn also introduced on Wednesday a button that will summarize long posts into a few key bullet points tailored for each user, for example by giving a sales professional a different takeaway than a stock broker.



People shop at a grocery store in Los Angeles, California. The US central bank has kept the policy rate unchanged as it wants to slow stubborn inflation without damaging the strong economy.

## Fed holds interest rates at 22-year high

AFP, Washington

The US Federal Reserve voted Wednesday to hold interest rates at a 22-year high for a second straight meeting, as it moves to slow stubborn inflation without damaging the strong economy.

The Fed's decision to keep its benchmark lending rate between 5.25 percent and 5.5 percent gives policymakers time to "assess additional information and its implications for monetary policy," the central bank said in a statement.

"The process of getting inflation sustainably down to two percent has a long way to go," Fed Chair Jerome Powell said at a news conference Wednesday, referring to the Fed's long-term target for interest rates.

He added that the Fed, "is not thinking about rate

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

READ MORE ON B2