

Pran takes part in SIAL fair in Paris to boost exports

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Pran, a leading food processor in Bangladesh, is participating in the SIAL Paris to boost its exports to Europe and North America.

The five-day fair of food processors began at the Nord Villepinte Exhibition Centre in Paris on October 19.

This year, about 7,500 exhibitors from 130 countries are participating in the fair, said a press release.

Pran Group is showcasing a variety of products such as juice and drinks, confectionery, snacks, biscuit and bakery, culinary, spice and frozen food in its stall, the company said.

In the fair, Pran is also exhibiting 20 new products, including new variants of noodles, biscuits, chocolates and juices.

Mizanur Rahman, executive director of Pran Export Limited, said their objective is to boost their export basket by searching new buyers and new markets.

"This year, we are particularly focusing on expanding exports to North America and Europe."

Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing director of Pran-RFL Group, said Pran Group currently exports its products to 145 countries worldwide.

"But we aim to reach every corner of the globe. SIAL fair offers a significant platform for achieving this goal."

"Additionally, we hope to increase the presence of Pran products in well-known chain stores across Europe and America," Kamal added.



Farmhands are seen laying thatch on a trellis to create shade for the cultivation of betel leaf plants underneath. Each farmhand can earn up to Tk 600 a day working from 8:00am to 3:00pm. The picture was taken at a farm in Wazirpur upazila of Barishal district recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Key stock index hits four-month low

The DSEX plunges 1.85% from the previous day to close at 5,160

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The prime index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) hit a four-month low yesterday as the cautious investors poured their funds only into selective shares amid fears of a further price erosion.

The shares of the large cap and blue-chip companies like BRAC Bank, Olympic Industries, Beacon Pharmaceuticals, Islami Bank, Square Pharmaceuticals, Best Holdings, LafargeHolcim Bangladesh, Robi Axiata, United Commercial Bank and Renata suffered losses.

Of them, BRAC Bank was the highest loser with a 10.51 percent fall, according to LankaBangla Financial Portal.

Shares of Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream PLC, Bangladesh Steel Re-rolling Mills (BSRM), Unilever Consumer Care Limited, Midland Bank, DBH Finance, Jamuna Bank, SK Trims & Industries, Singer Bangladesh, Takaful Islami Insurance and Meghna Petroleum Limited attracted the highest

number of investors.

But none of them saw a double digit growth in share prices.

Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream PLC posted a gain of 0.95 percent, the highest amongst the gainers.

The DSEX, the benchmark of the DSE, fell for the fourth consecutive day and yesterday it plunged by 97.24 points, or 1.85 percent from the previous day to close at 5,160.

The last time the DSEX had reached such a level was on June 19, when it hit 5,161.

Similarly, DSES, the index that represents the Shariah-based companies, went down by 18.56 points, or 1.58 percent, to 1,155, while the DS30 index for the blue-chip firms edged down by 34.14 points, or 1.77 percent, to 1,896.

Of the issues that changed hands on the DSE trading floor, 346 fell, 27 remained higher and the remaining 27 did not see any price fluctuations.

Turnover, which indicates the total value of shares traded on the day, stood at Tk 362

crore, an increase of 18.09 percent compared to the previous day.

The banking sector dominated the turnover chart accounting for 26.06 percent of the total.

Block trades, which refer to the high-volume securities transactions that are privately negotiated and executed outside of the open market, contributed 4.6 percent of the overall market turnover.

Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream PLC emerged as the most traded share with a turnover of Tk 34.5 crore.

Sector-wise, only the non-bank financial institution (NBF) sector closed in a positive territory, according to the daily market update by UCB Stock Brokerage.

However, the paper & printing, the services & real estate, and general insurance were the top three sectors that closed in the negative.

Most of the sectors that account for large amounts in market capitalisation showcased negative performances, as per the daily market update of BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage.

Financial literacy needed to empower women entrepreneurs

SME Foundation's official says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Financial literacy is crucial for empowering women entrepreneurs, according to Farzana Khan, general manager of the SME Foundation.

"We must go beyond offering financial products and ensure that women have the skills and knowledge to navigate these services effectively. This will complement policy efforts and enable women to fully participate in the financial system," she said.

Khan made the comments at an event, titled "Bridging the gap: regulation and practices for better credit access to women entrepreneurs", hosted by MicroSave Consulting (MSC) with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation at The Westin Dhaka yesterday.

The event marked the culmination of MSC's "Women Business Diaries" project.

"Despite efforts to support women entrepreneurs, we must look beyond concessional rates," said Nawshad Mustafa, director of the SME and special programmes department of the Bangladesh Bank.

He emphasised that policies must address structural barriers, such as collateral requirements and complex documentation, to accelerate access to finance for women-led businesses.

Chowdhury Saima Ferdous, professor at the Department of International Business of the University of Dhaka, highlighted the nonavailability of suitable financial products for women.

"We need policies that address the unique challenges women face, such as limited mobility and social constraints. This will help make financial services more inclusive," she said.

Shafquat Hossain, head of retail banking at Mutual Trust Bank Limited, stressed the need to go beyond traditional approaches.

"We must develop products tailored for women entrepreneurs' needs, simplifying loan processes and offering flexible collateral requirements and advisory services," he said.

Making banking more accessible will help women-owned businesses thrive in a competitive market, Hossain said.

Sohail RK Hussain, managing director of Bank Asia, noted that having more women bankers and agents on the ground has significantly improved outreach to female customers.

"It's not just about offering financial products but creating a supportive environment that encourages women to engage with formal financial institutions," he explained.

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, emphasised the importance of collaboration between banks, fintechs, and development organisations in enhancing financial access for women.

Restaurants face

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Still, the situation improved slightly in September and October as more customers were arriving in the afternoon and evening hours.

"The more stable the country becomes, the more relief its people will feel," Hossain said.

Sabikoon Nahar, manager of a Herfy branch on Dhanmondi-27, said if they compare the customer footfall in the September-October period with that of July-August, they would find that business has not yet recovered 60 percent.

"People can't save as much as they did six months ago because of high inflation. For this reason, they are not coming to restaurants as often as before," she added.

Mohammad Golam Mustafa, general manager of the Sky Lounge in Mirpur-1 of Dhaka, said their sales had fallen by 70 to 80 percent between July and September.

They recovered by about 50 percent in September-October as customers gradually started returning, he added.

Mustafa pointed out that amid the current situation, most people have become cautious about spending too much on eating out.

As such, even people who would previously visit the restaurant thrice weekly now come just once at best, he said.

Imran Hassan, secretary general of the BROA, said the business situation was unbelievably bad in July-August, but it improved slightly in the months that followed.

"Still, recovery has not been as expected as sales remain 30-35 percent lower," he added.

Hassan also said that as soon as the government brings law and order under proper control, it will automatically have a positive effect on the restaurant business.

What finance Govt appoints administrator to BGMEA

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sound companies and stakeholders who said the existing public issue rules do not support a good price for well-performing companies.

Therefore, the regulator is going to reform the rules to attract good companies to the market. These reforms will also support multinational companies and other well-performing companies in getting listed.

At the same time, the government has already taken steps to bring state-run companies to the stock market. After listing, these companies will have to follow good governance practices and publish financial reports regularly.

The government is hopeful that the listing of these government-owned companies will boost their paid-up capital and ensure the depth of the stock market, the press release said.

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Forum panel have been protesting the credibility of the election and have sought fresh elections several times.

After the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 this year, the Forum again demanded the resignation of Kochi and his board.

Eventually, on August 24, Kochi resigned and handed over charge to its acting president, Khandoker Rafiqul Islam. The board was later reconstituted and Islam was made president.

However, massive labour unrest began in the latter part of August and continued until the first week of October, resulting in production losses of around \$400 million.

Even before the elections were held, members of the Forum panel complained to the election board, demanding the cancellation of the preliminary voter list and the publication of a new one, as the tax files of 429 voters could not be found.

Checking the website of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), the panel found that of the 2,315 voters who had been named in the list, 429 did not have a proper tax identification number (TIN) and other tax-related documents.

In order to become eligible voters, they must have proper tax documents.

The tenure of the immediate past elected board led by Faruque Hassan was extended for one year in two phases, citing the critical period the garment sector has been facing because of the severe fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, the dollar crisis and internal problems.

When extending the board's tenure, many lawmakers who are also garment manufacturers and exporters, said they were uninterested in holding BGMEA elections before the national polls, slated for January

of 2024.

On February 12 this year, the High Court ordered the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) to make a decision about more than 400 garments, which allegedly have no relevant documents for being voters in the upcoming BGMEA election.

In response to a writ petition, the court asked the arbitration tribunal of the FBCCI to dispose of the application that requested for correcting the voters' list prepared for BGMEA.

The HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque issued the order and rule following the writ petition filed by Faisal Samad, owner of Surma Garments, seeking necessary directives.

BGMEA is the largest trade body in the country. Its members contribute more than 84 percent to national exports and employ more than four million workers.

Death of reliable energy

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According to him, discovering new gas wells is urgent.

The energy expert said without drilling at least ten new wells annually, Bangladesh may become heavily reliant on imported liquefied natural gas (LNG).

According to Hossain, Bangladesh is also losing around 10 percent of the national grid supply to illegal connections, which equates to \$1 billion per year.

"This is simply theft," he added. "It has become extremely shocking."

The energy expert suggested that if illegal gas connections to domestic households were factored in, the estimated losses would be even higher.

He suggested replacing the domestic gas supply with LPG gradually, even by offering subsidies to encourage its use.

Regarding renewable energy, the former Buet teacher said Bangladesh is likely the only country worldwide where the share of renewable electricity in total electricity generation has decreased over time.

He said the contribution of renewables to national power generation declined from 11 percent in 1990 to 1.33 percent in 2023.

"Importing energy is more expensive than importing food," said Hossain. "If the government allowed around 1 percent of farmland for solar panels, around 50,000 megawatts of electricity could be generated."

At the programme, Energy Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan criticised the previous government's energy tariffs.

"The previous government set exuberant tariffs by claiming the sector was in emergency. But how long can an emergency persist?" he questioned.

"We have dismantled the corrupt practices established by the previous government over the past 15 years," he claimed. "The previous government bypassed the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) for setting prices, but we have restored the commission's authority."

Khan mentioned that the current government is revising renewable energy policies. It is developing a renewable energy park in Jabalpur, where the government will provide land and transmission lines to the private sector.

The government's primary objective is to reduce subsidies in the power sector by lowering the cost of power procurement, he said.

Foreign debt

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Still though, the Economic Relations Division (ERD) says the debt burden will reduce after 2031.

"Also, if the interest rates on new loans do not decrease, then there is no possibility of reducing the burden of debt servicing," he said.

For example, the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) has already been reduced to 4.8 percent from 5.3 percent. So, the burden could be eased with new loans bearing lower interest.

Hussain also underscored the need for ensuring proper utilisation of foreign funds.

"Many development projects could become a problem for the nation if they do not bring any returns soon," he said.

Against this backdrop, he pointed out that the foreign funded Rupsha 800-Megawatt Combined Cycle Power Plant is yet to begin operations due to delays in getting gas connections.

Sanem Executive Director Raihan termed the Bangabandhu Tunnel project as a "white elephant".

The ousted government took many projects without ensuring proper feasibility studies or estimating their economic returns, he said.

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ক্রম.	বিষয়	বিবরণ
০১	স্বাস্থ্য শিক্ষা ও পরিবার কল্যাণ বিভাগ	স্বাস্থ্য শিক্ষা ও পরিবার কল্যাণ বিভাগ।
০২	সংগ্রাহক/স্বাস্থ্যবিধিকারীর নাম ও ঠিকানা	বাংলাদেশ নার্সিং ও মিডওয়াইফারি কাউন্সিল, ২০৩, শহীদ সৈয়দ নজরুল ইসলাম সার্বী, বিজয়নগর, ঢাকা-১০০০।
০৩	বাজেট ও বরাদ্দের উৎস	২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরে নিজস্ব অর্থের বাজেট।
০৪	দরপত্র আহ্বান পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
০৫	আজানকৃত দরপত্রের স্মারক ও তারিখ	স্মারক নং-বিএনএমসি/২০২৪-৮-৬৪, তারিখ: ২০ অক্টোবর ২০২৪
০৬	দরপত্রের নাম/কাজের বিবরণ	দরপত্র সিডিউলের ফরম পিডি ২-২ মোতাবেক এ-৪ কাগজ (নমুনা মোতাবেক)
০৭	দরপত্র প্রচারের তারিখ	২১ অক্টোবর ২০২৪
০৮	ক্রয় প্রক্রিয়া	পিপিএ-২০০৬ ও পিপিআর ২০০৬ মোতাবেক উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র।
০৯	দরপত্রাদানের শর্তাধীন	দরপত্র সিডিউলের ITT ৯.১ (ক) মোতাবেক।
১০	দরপত্র অফিসের মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)	দরপত্র প্রতিদিন অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে অত্র অফিস হতে সিডিউলের মূল্য বাবদ ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য) নমুনা প্রদানকরতঃ সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।
১১	দরপত্র জামানত এর পরিমাণ	২,২০,০০০/- (এক লক্ষ ২০ হাজার) টাকা মাত্র।
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১৫	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম ও পদবি	মোঃ হালিমা আক্তার, রেজিস্ট্রার, বাংলাদেশ নার্সিং ও মিডওয়াইফারি কাউন্সিল, বিজয়নগর, ঢাকা।
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দৃষ্টব্যঃ (১) বিস্তারিত বর্ণনা ও অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী/নিয়মাবলি দরপত্র সিডিউল মোতাবেক।
(২) এই টেন্ডার প্রক্রিয়ার যে কোন পর্যায়ে ক্রয়কারী কর্তৃক টেন্ডার প্রক্রিয়া স্থগিত বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে।

৩০-১০-২৪
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