Stocks break three-day rally

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange closed lower yesterday, breaking a three-day rally.

The DSEX, the main index of the bourse, declined 50.23 points, or 0.90 percent, to settle at 5,485.90.

The other indices also had negative performance before the end of the day's trading. Shariah-compliant DSES declined 0.67 percent to 1,185.49.

The DS30, comprising the blue-chip shares, dropped 0.95 percent to close at 2,129.92.

Turnover, a key gauge of investor participation, hit Tk 911.73 crore, down from Tk 1,137.40 crore the previous session.

A total of 237,927 trades were executed, while block transactions amounted to Tk 11.9 crore across 24 scrips.

Market breadth was negative with 122 stocks advancing, 207 declining, and 68 remaining unchanged.

Among A-category scrips, 66 gained, 119 lost, and 34 remained unchanged.

The B-category saw 32 stocks rise and 42 fall, while there was no activity in the N-category.

Segment-wise performance was mixed. In mutual funds, 8 issues advanced and 10 declined.

Corporate bonds saw just one issue decline, while the government bond market saw one issue advance.

Among individual performers, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution topped the gainers' list with a 9 percent surge, while Trust Bank was the worst performer, dropping 8 percent.

Gold eases on profit-taking

REUTERS

Gold edged lower on Monday as investors booked profits after a sharp rise in the previous session after weaker-than-expected US jobs data boosted hopes for a US Federal Reserve interest rate cut in September.

Spot gold lost 0.1 percent to $3,361.32 per ounce, as of 0655 GMT. Bullion rose more than 2 percent on Friday. However, US gold futures gained 0.4 percent to $3,414.20.

"Gold has made a conservative start to the week following Friday's price jump. A combination of profit-taking and dollar stabilisation has caused gold to ease marginally to kick-off the week," KCM Trade chief market analyst Tim Waterer said.

Sylhet poorest division in Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

MPI score
Sylhet: **0.177**
National average: **0.123**

Multidimensionally poor
Sylhet: **37.7%** (41.9 lakh)
National average: **24.05%**

Poverty intensity
Sylhet: **46.86%**
National average: **44.17%**

Sylhet 3rd in remittance ranking, but
- Money spent on villas, not on education
- Health, or infrastructure poor in haor areas
- Poor living condition of tea garden workers

Remittance-rich Sylhet ranks poorest in new index

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

Long seen as the "London of Bangladesh" for its foreign earnings and opulent villas, Sylhet has been dealt a sobering blow. The country's first Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) has revealed that the division is, in fact, the poorest in Bangladesh when measured by access to education, healthcare and living standards.

Despite its image of wealth, due to generations of expatriates sending money home, Sylhet has topped the national poverty chart in both overall MPI score and the intensity of deprivation.

According to poverty analysts and researchers, the underdeveloped haor region and the plight of workers in the division's tea estates have weighed heavily on Sylhet's standing.

They say that while Sylhet receives the third-highest remittance inflow in the country, the money is rarely invested in education or health. Instead, it fuels lavish lifestyles, leaving millions trapped in poverty.

In the recently published MPI, Sylhet stands as the most deprived division with a score of 0.177, overtaking usually poorer regions like Barishal and Mymensingh.

More than 37.7 percent of the population in the division, around 41.9 lakh people, are classified as multidimensionally poor. Besides, the intensity of poverty in the division is the highest in the country, at 46.86 percent.

In the division, north eastern district of Sunamganj scores 0.225 in the index and ranks as the third poorest district in Bangladesh.

The MPI index was developed by the General Economics Division (GED) using clustered data from pre-Covid 2019. The GED collaborated with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Unicef and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) for the publication.

Nationally, 24.05 percent of people are multidimensionally poor, with an average deprivation intensity of 44.17 percent. Sylhet accounts for 11.66 percent of the country's multidimensionally poor population, despite making up less than 8 percent of the total population.

The 2012 harmonised dataset tells a story of decline.

Sylhet then ranked as the third poorest division, with a score of 0.237 and half of its people in multidimensional poverty.

At the time, Barishal and Mymensingh were worse off. Between 2012 and 2019, every division improved, and Sylhet's MPI dropped. But others progressed faster, pushing Sylhet to the bottom.

> **Sylhet was once strong in education, but more people moving abroad has weakened that. Even though remittances have increased, little has been spent on growth of the region**

AK Enamul Haque, director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said, "As this is the first MPI of the country, there might be anomalies with the data. In general, we consider affordability indicators to determine poverty, but this index is based on access indicators."

"The vast haor and tea garden areas of the region impacted the score where people have accessibility issues to education or healthcare. But still, this is a learning, and there is room for improvement," Haque said.

Sunamganj's entrenched poverty is clear. In 2012, it posted an MPI of 0.289, with 58.9 percent of people identified as multidimensionally poor. By 2019, the score dipped only slightly to 0.225, with 47.4 percent still considered poor, and the intensity of deprivation barely changing at 47.5 percent.

The district fares poorly in nearly every area: education, nutrition, access to clean water, reproductive health and household assets, according to the MPI.

Munira Begum, joint chief of the Poverty Analysis and Monitoring Wing of the GED, said, "The poverty index is not based on income, but based on the indicators of accessibility. The vast haor areas of the region contributed to the downfall of the region, while other regions leveraged public investments and infrastructural development by 2012 and 2019."

Recent data by the Bangladesh Bank shows that Sylhet remains the third largest remittance recipient, after Dhaka and Chattogram.

Rezai Karim Khondker, former professor of economics at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, said, "Historically, Sylhet was a prosperous region. But in the last couple of decades, the prosperity has been declining. This is not surprising to see Sylhet is marked as the poorest division in the country."

"Sylhet was an educationally enriched region once, but the trend of immigrating to other countries is gripping the prosperity. Remittance inflow increased, but it was never invested in the development or the benefit of the region," said the professor.

Advocate Sha Saheda Akther, general secretary of civil society platform Shushasoner Jonno Nagorik (SUJAN) in Sylhet, said, "Sylhet has historically seen large in-migration. Many residents here have livelihoods that differ from the local population."

"By focusing only on service access and not considering local economic realities, the index may have conveyed a misleading picture. There is a need for broader research and inclusion of economic indicators in future versions," added Akther.

Jobs are changing, skills aren't

MAMUNUR RAHMAN

Job growth in Bangladesh is facing a serious threat, not from war or inflation, but from our failure to prepare the workforce for a world increasingly being shaped by artificial intelligence (AI). As automation and generative AI rapidly transform global employment, we continue to teach outdated skills that no longer match market demands.

Over the past year, many industries, from design to customer service, have replaced large segments of their workforce with AI tools. A recent report by The Daily Star revealed that several business process outsourcing firms in Bangladesh have cut junior staff by more than 80 percent after adopting AI. Yet across hundreds of Technical Training Centres (TTCs), government training still centers on software like Photoshop, despite the shrinking relevance of such roles.

Even more alarming is that these outdated courses are delivered through multi-billion-dollar projects. The country's four flagship training programs—EARN, SICIP, ASSET, and PARTNER—together account for more than $2 billion (Tk 20,000 crore). With a target of 500,000 trainees, the government is spending nearly $4,000 (Tk 468,000) per person. Yet most courses still fall under vague ICT categories, with little focus on AI tools, freelancing platforms, or digital entrepreneurship

This is not just a missed opportunity, it's a misallocation of public funds. When investments of this scale fail to equip young people for today's economy, they don't just hold us back. They risk training workers for jobs that no longer exist.

Rabiya Khatun, a trainee at TTC Gaibandha, voiced her frustration: "We're learning tools my younger brother already knows from YouTube. What job will this help me get?" Her concern is shared by many who see little connection between their training and real employment opportunities.

The Technical Education Department alone receives more than Tk 4,000 crore annually. But the output, in terms of employability, digital fluency, or entrepreneurship, is underwhelming. Hundreds of TTCs are stuck in legacy training while the rest of the world moves forward. Countries like India, Vietnam, and Indonesia have introduced AI literacy programmes, micro-credentials, and industry partnerships. In contrast, Bangladesh hasn't meaningfully updated its curricula in years.

The problem runs deeper than outdated content. At the heart of this inertia is the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA). As of July 25, 2025, the NSDA website still lists deceased members, ousted politicians, and even fugitives on its industrial councils. This reflects deep institutional stagnation. While many junior officials are capable and motivated, they have little influence. A specialized agency like NSDA must be led by experts in digital transformation, not bureaucrats marking time.

Globally, AI is no longer just a technical issue, it is central to economic strategy. While governments are racing to lead in AI governance, Bangladesh remains passive. But pretending AI isn't here won't slow its impact. It will only widen the country's skills gap and deepen youth unemployment.

If Bangladesh truly aims to become a "New Bangladesh," we must act now. That means redesigning skills training around AI readiness, modernising TTC curricula, giving voice to digital practitioners, and reforming the very institutions responsible for workforce development.

This is not about chasing trends. It's about survival. As the world keeps moving forward, we cannot afford to keep preparing people for the past.

The writer is coordinator of Ella Alliance and founder of Ella Pad.

Trump tariff rates unlikely to change

AFP, *Washington*

New US tariff rates are "pretty much set" with little immediate room for negotiation, Donald Trump's trade advisor said in remarks aired Sunday, also defending the president's politically driven levies against Brazil.

Trump, who has wielded tariffs as a tool of American economic might, has set tariff rates for dozens of economies including the European Union at between 10 and 41 percent come August 7, his new hard deadline for the duties.

In a pre-taped interview broadcast Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation," US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said "the coming days" are not likely to see changes in the tariff rates.

"A lot of these are set rates pursuant to deals. Some of these deals are announced, some are not, others depend on the level of the trade deficit or surplus we may have with the country," Greer said.

"These tariff rates are pretty much set."

Undoubtedly some trade ministers "want to talk more and see how they can work in a different way with the United States," he added.

But "we're seeing truly the contours of the president's tariff plan right now with these rates." Last Thursday, the former real estate developer announced hiked tariff rates on dozens of US trade partners.

They will kick in on August 7 instead of August 1, which had previously been touted as a hard deadline.

Among the countries facing steep new levies is Brazil. South America's largest economy is being hit with 50 percent tariffs on exports to the United States -- albeit with significant exemptions for key products such as aircraft and orange juice.

Markets' Trump truce is on ever-shakier ground

REUTERS, *London*

If stock markets are to be believed, Donald Trump has pulled off a masterstroke. The US president has ratcheted up tariffs on trading partners while avoiding tanking either the economy or asset prices. Yet investors' muted response to Thursday's latest levies may be misleading. The Trump-market truce will soon face steeper tests.

Equities have come a long way since April 2, when the president's so-called reciprocal tariffs sent the S&P 500 Index down about 10 percent in a week. Stocks quickly bounced back and then set records, boosted by the idea that Trump would always chicken out, known as the TACO trade.

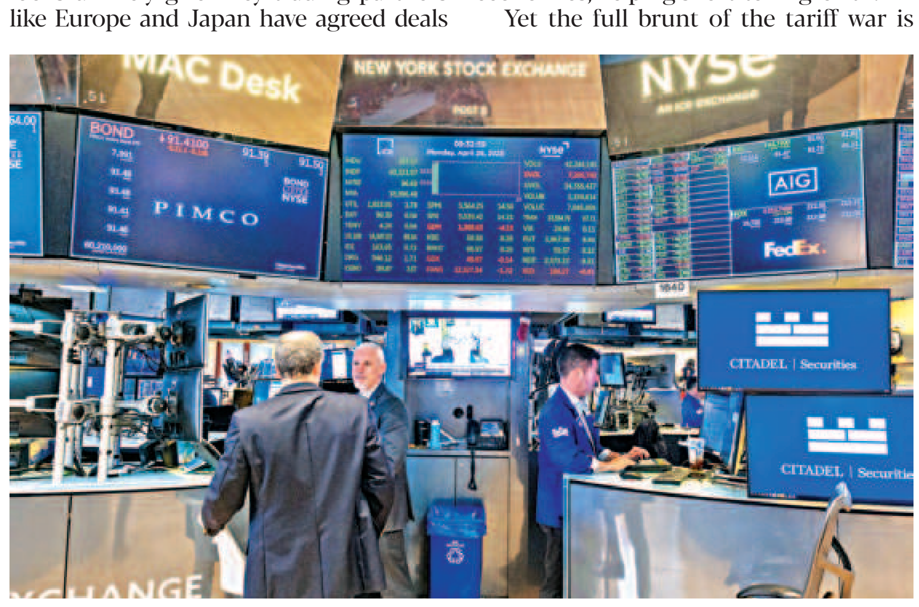
That theory is crumbling. Thursday's assault raised the average US levy on imports to about 20 percent – not far off the April 2 level of 22 percent, Société Générale economists reckon. Canada, Switzerland and others saw their scheduled duties spike. Yet S&P 500 futures fell just 1 percent before US markets opened, which would still leave the benchmark about a quarter above its April nadir.

There are some good reasons for the nonchalance. Some levies, like India's 25 percent rate, may yet come down. The new package may just be a last-minute ploy to maximise pressure on trading partners before striking deals. And the most damaging scenario – a global trade war – looks unlikely given key trading partners like Europe and Japan have agreed deals without retaliation. Lastly, even if tariffs are now a reality, looser fiscal policy in the US and Germany means there is more money sloshing around two of the world's biggest economies, helping short-term growth.

Yet the full brunt of the tariff war is still only starting to emerge, and the final implementation of the global levies is due next week. Core US goods inflation was a reassuring 2.4 percent in July, yet price rises may have been kept lower by importers bringing in more goods ahead of the duties. Analysts at Pictet reckon the impact will become more apparent in August and September. They note that surveys point to between 60 percent and 80 percent of US firms planning price increases over the next three months. That may squeeze consumer confidence, hurting growth.

Higher US inflation may also make it harder for the Federal Reserve to cut. That will fuel tensions with Trump, who has a $1.9 trillion deficit to fund this year and wants lower rates. The more the administration attacks Chair Jerome Powell, the more bond markets will fret over wayward fiscal policy and higher inflation, driving up long-term borrowing costs and hitting asset prices.

Nor can the rest of the world rest easy. As other countries face more obstacles selling the $3.3 trillion of goods shipped into the United States annually, they will need to find alternative markets, driving down prices elsewhere and hurting rival exporters.



Traders work on the New York Stock Exchange floor in New York City. Equities have come a long way since April 2, when the president's so-called reciprocal tariffs sent the S&P 500 Index down about 10 percent in a week.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE