Dhaka stocks fall for fifth day

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange continued its downward run yesterday, extending its losses for the fifth consecutive day.

The DSEX, the main index of the bourse, declined 6.98 points, or 0.13 percent, to settle at 5,344.04.

The other indices posted mixed performances before the end of the day's trading. The Shariah-compliant DSES fell slightly by 0.02 percent to 1,162.08, while the DS30, comprising blue-chip shares, increased marginally by 0.01 percent to close at 2,067.02.

Turnover, a key gauge of investor participation, rose to Tk 610.86 crore, down from Tk 760.64 crore in the previous session.

A total of 195,303 trades were executed, while block transactions amounted to Tk 12.43 crore across 29 scrips. Market breadth was negative, with 121 stocks advancing, 201 declining, and 83 remaining unchanged.

Among A-category scrips, 66 gained, 126 lost, and 34 remained unchanged.

In the B-category, 29 stocks rose and 38 fell, while no issue was unchanged in the N-category.

Segment-wise performance was mixed. In mutual funds, 8 issues advanced and 16 declined.

Corporate bonds saw one issue advance and two decline, while the government bond market saw 8 issues decline.

Among individual performers, Mithun Knitting and Dyeing topped the gainers' list with a 10 percent surge, while Regent Textile Mills was the worst performer, dropping 8 percent.

Dollar slips

REUTERS, *Singapore*

The US dollar extended declines on Monday as investors watched for the outcome of events due this week, from Tuesday's key July US CPI data and deadline for Washington and Beijing to strike a tariff deal, to a Russia-US summit on Friday.

The dollar index fell 0.2 percent to 98.073 after last week's fall of 0.4 percent. Against the yen, it traded at 147.46 , or 0.20 percent weaker than late US levels, with Japanese markets closed for the Mountain Day holiday.

"If I'd be playing it any way, I'd be long volatility this week," said Tim Kelleher, head of institutional FX Sales at Commonwealth Bank in Auckland, citing the unpredictability of the looming events.

Workers load jute onto trucks to be sent to the mills. The photo was taken at Banibaha Bazar in Rajbari district. PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

Despite good prices, jute farmers in gloom over low yield

SUZIT KUMAR DAS , *Faridpur*

Although jute farmers in Faridpur district are getting better prices for their crop this year than a year ago, low yields caused by incessant rain have left many fearing losses in the end.

Jute growers in Faridpur, one of the country's main hubs for the golden fibre, said cultivation costs rose this season due to higher prices of seeds, fertiliser, irrigation and labour.

The price of raw jute has increased by about Tk 800 per maund (1 maund = 40 kg) this time, but farmers fear it may still not be enough to keep them in profit.

Md Sikandar Ali Khan, a jute farmer at Ramkantapur village of Saltha upazila, said yields last year ranged between 12 and 14 maunds per bigha. This year, it has dropped to just 8 to 10 maunds.

"No farmer is benefiting," Khan said, adding that he expects to incur a loss at the end of the season.

The situation is much the same across Faridpur and adjacent districts.

Raw jute now fetches Tk 3,800 to Tk 4,000 per maund, up from Tk 3,000 to Tk 3,200 a year ago. But the price rise hides the reality of falling profitability.

Farmers say production has plunged by up to 7 to 8 maunds per bigha due to waterlogging and early flowering due to heavy rainfall.

At Boalmari upazila, farmer Sukanto Pal said many of his plants died after being submerged.

"Production dropped by 6 to 7 maunds per bigha from up to 14 maunds last year. Due to waterlogging, many plants died, and the quality this time is poor," he said.

Shafiqul Islam, a jute farmer from Faridpur Sadar upazila, has produced 35 maunds this year, well below the 50 maunds he harvested last year. Meanwhile, traders say tight supplies have kept prices high.

"Many old stocks that farmers or traders usually hold are missing this year, which has increased demand," said Akhtaruzzaman Chan, a trader at Kanaipur, one of Faridpur's biggest jute markets.

According to Moktar Molla, president of the Faridpur Jute Farmers Association, cultivating one bigha of jute now costs Tk 40,000 to Tk 42,000. With yields down, those costs rarely turn into profit. After paying for inputs and rising labour charges, many farmers are barely breaking even.

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Even income from jute sticks, often a modest source of profit, will not be enough to cover the gap.

Jute farmers receive 1 kg of seeds and 14 kg of fertiliser from the government as incentives. This year, 14,500 jute farmers in Faridpur received such support, according to local officials. Most sell their crop in local markets, from where traders supply mills nationwide.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), jute production fell 6 percent year-on-year to 89.5 lakh bales in fiscal 2024-25, with one bale weighing 180 kg. The drop was due to smaller acreage and lower yields caused by unfavourable weather.

Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) figures show that jute was grown on 705,000 hectares nationwide this year, with a production target of 83.3 lakh bales.

Faridpur, Rajbari, Sirajganj, Kushtia, Pabna, Manikganj, Tangail, Jamalpur, Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha and Bogura are among the main producing districts.

Md Shahaduzzaman, deputy director of the DAE in Faridpur, said, "Though production is slightly lower, jute cultivation in Faridpur has crossed targets, so the production goal will still be met. We expect the market value of jute produced in Faridpur this year to reach around Tk 2,000 crore, up from Tk 1,600 crore last year."

In Faridpur and neighbouring districts, B-grade jute, which has shorter fibres than top-grade and some discolouration, fetches less. Jute grades range from A to C, based on fibre length, strength, colour and cleanliness.

Md Mahmudun Nabi, a trader from Pabna, said, "In Pabna and nearby districts, jute is selling at Tk 3,500 to Tk 3,700 per maund, whereas last year the price was Tk 2,700 to Tk 2,800 per maund. The jute produced in Pabna and neighbouring areas is B-grade, so prices are lower than Faridpur jute."

Shahadat Hossain, senior market officer of the DAE in Faridpur, said, "Prices per maund have increased by Tk 600 to Tk 800 compared to last year. The lower volume of supply has driven demand and prices up. If supply increases, prices may fall."

Jahangir Hossain Mia, chairman of Karim Group, which has jute mills in the district, said, "There is talk in the market that jute production is down this year, so everyone is eager to buy jute in advance. However, mill owners always want stable jute prices and hope the government sets prices that ensure farmers benefit."

Chasing what matters

AHMED HUMAYUN MURSHED

In Bangladesh, ambition is never in short supply. Our people are naturally enterprising. We have all seen small ventures grow into respectable businesses, sometimes with nothing more than a smartphone, determination and a good idea. But we also tend to follow trends too quickly. The moment one e-commerce or f-commerce business takes off, many others rush in. If a delivery app gains traction, a dozen more appear. If a ride-sharing company makes it big, suddenly everyone wants a share of the same market.

This is why we need a clear, thoughtful definition of what a startup means in our country. Not every new business is a startup. A true startup solves a real problem, brings innovation and has the potential to grow beyond small circles. Without that distinction, we risk wasting energy and resources on ideas that do not push us forward, while truly transformative ventures get lost in the noise.

To see why this matters, it helps to look at how industries have shaped history. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, steel built cities, railways and the framework of modern civilisation. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the automobile industry transformed how we lived and moved. From the 1970s onwards, banking and finance became dominant, as deregulation made global money movement faster and more complex. At the same time, oil and gas companies rose to power, shaping the global economy through energy supply and consumption.

Then came the digital age. In the 1990s, the internet changed the way we did business. After the dot-com crash of 2000, a few survivors reshaped the world. From the early 2000s to today, tech and e-commerce have led the way. Amazon, Google and Facebook began as ideas and became global platforms used by billions.

But the focus is shifting again, this time to something more urgent. Today, the world's most meaningful startups are tackling issues around sustainability, climate change and environmental resilience. Recycling, renewable energy, water conservation, green construction and sustainable agriculture are no longer buzzwords but global priorities. Investors, policymakers and forward-thinking nations are paying attention.

So, where does Bangladesh stand? For now, we are lagging behind. We continue to chase models that worked years ago in other markets, trying to replicate them without asking if they still make sense. A few young innovators are working on green solutions, from recycling plastic waste to building solar-powered systems, but they often work in isolation. They struggle to find funding, rarely make headlines and receive little support.

We cannot afford to ignore these sectors. If we want to secure our future, we need to back startups that are working to protect it. That starts with defining what a startup is, so the right ones can be nurtured. We need to actively identify ventures in climate-friendly industries and design policies that help them grow. Just as importantly, we must make it easier to start and scale such businesses.

At present, the barriers are too high. From licensing and compliance to funding and mentorship, every step is a hurdle. If we want real innovation, we need to clear space for it.

Bangladesh is home to nearly one in every 40 people in the world, yet our livable land is limited and shrinking. The pressure on our economy and environment is already intense. Other nations with similar GDPs are moving ahead through innovation. We are still debating definitions.

We do not need another copy of what already exists. We need bold ideas, rooted in our reality, that address today's problems and those to come. It is time to stop chasing what is popular and start building what is essential.

If we get this right, we will not only create successful businesses but also secure a better future.

The writer is co-founder and CEO of Accfintax

Nvidia, AMD to pay US 15% of AI chip revenue from China

AFP, *Washington*

US semiconductor giants Nvidia and Advanced Micro Devices have agreed to pay the United States government 15 percent of their revenue from selling artificial intelligence chips to China, according to media reports Sunday.

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang met with US President Donald Trump at the White House on Wednesday and agreed to give the federal government the cut from its revenues, a highly unusual arrangement in the international tech trade, according to reports in the Financial Times, Bloomberg and New York Times.

According to the Financial Times, the artificial intelligence chips that are part of the agreement with the US government are Nvidia's "H20" and the "MI308" from Advanced Micro Devices (AMD).

Nvidia did not deny the reported deal when approached for comment. "We follow rules the U.S. government sets for our participation in worldwide markets," a spokesperson told AFP.

"While we haven't shipped H20 to China for months, we hope export control rules will let America compete in China and worldwide."

The company spokesperson added: "America cannot repeat 5G and lose telecommunication leadership. America's AI tech stack can be the world's standard if we race." AMD did not immediately respond to inquiries for comment.

Investors are betting that AI will transform the global economy, and Nvidia -- the world's leading semiconductor producer -- last month became the first company ever to hit $4 trillion in market value.

In India, Trump's tariffs spark calls to boycott American goods

REUTERS, *New Delhi*

From McDonald's and Coca-Cola to Amazon and Apple, US-based multinationals are facing calls for a boycott in India as business executives and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's supporters stoke anti-American sentiment to protest against US tariffs.

India, the world's most populous nation, is a key market for American brands that have rapidly expanded to target a growing base of affluent consumers, many of whom remain infatuated with international labels seen as symbols of moving up in life.

India, for example, is the biggest market by users for Meta's WhatsApp and Domino's has more restaurants than any other brand in the country. Beverages like Pepsi and Coca-Cola often dominate store shelves, and people still queue up when a new Apple store opens or a Starbucks cafe doles out discounts.

Although there was no immediate indication of sales being hit, there's a growing chorus both on social media and offline to buy local and ditch American products after Donald Trump imposed a 50 percent tariff on goods from India, rattling exporters and damaging ties between New Delhi and Washington.

McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Amazon and Apple did not immediately respond to Reuters queries.

Manish Chowdhary, co-founder of India's Wow Skin Science, took to LinkedIn with a video message urging support for farmers and startups to make "Made in India" a "global obsession," and to learn from South Korea whose food and beauty products are famous worldwide.

"We have lined up for products from thousands of miles away. We have proudly spent on brands that we don't own, while our own makers fight for attention in their own country," he said.

An Apple retail store is pictured in Mumbai, India. There's a growing chorus both on social media and offline to buy local and ditch American products after Donald Trump imposed a 50 percent tariff on goods from India. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Rahm Shastry, CEO of India's DriveU, which provides a car driver on call service, wrote on LinkedIn: "India should have its own home-grown Twitter/Google/YouTube/WhatsApp/FB -- like China has."

To be fair, Indian retail companies give foreign brands like Starbucks stiff competition in the domestic market, but going global has been a challenge.

Indian IT services firms, however, have become deeply entrenched in the global economy, with the likes of TCS and Infosys providing software solutions to clients world over.

Toyota cut its full-year operating profit forecast by 16 percent on Thursday. And expects a nearly $10 billion hit from US tariffs on imported cars.

On Sunday, Modi made a "special appeal" for becoming self-reliant, telling a gathering in Bengaluru that Indian technology companies made products for the world but "now is the time for us to give more priority to India's needs."

He did not name any company.

Even as anti-American protests simmer, Tesla launched its second showroom in India in New Delhi, with Monday's opening attended by Indian commerce ministry officials and US embassy officials.