

Following is a summary of important business news published in the leading daily newspapers of Bangladesh. For the complete news, please follow the online link given below each news. Please note that the news summary doesn't reflect the opinion of BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage Limited.

BD studies Pfizer's vaccine

- Bangladesh is now willing to get the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine, according to official sources at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). Bangladesh has started working positively on it to avail the US vaccine following an offer made by COVAX, a platform developed to supply vaccines globally, in an official letter that asked the authorities concerned to know if Bangladesh is interested in getting the vaccine. The government will have to write back to COVAX by January 18, officials said after holding a meeting on it on Sunday.
- They are working to submit a complete plan to procure, store and distribution of the vaccine. And, there are some challenges which we are working with in storing and distributing the vaccine at the field level, the additional director general (planning and development) at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said. Meanwhile, the government is going to launch an online-based vaccine registration mobile application for the government-run vaccine programme.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/bd-studies-pfizers-vaccine-1610300915>

Mobile banking slowed at 2020 end as Covid restrictions eased

- Out of every three registered mobile financial services (MFS) accounts in November last year, only one was active, according to a report of the Bangladesh Bank. Published on Sunday, the report said although the number of active clients and transactions in mobile banking had increased in mid-2020 due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, it started declining at the end of the year. In October and November last year, the number of active clients decreased by 9.4 million. Earlier, in five months from July to November, the number of clients decreased by 11.1 million.
- A mobile banking account is considered inactive if there is no transaction for three months. After general holidays were announced in March last year because of the pandemic, the number of active subscribers and transactions rose to the highest level in July. But the situation began to change in August. The decline in the number of active clients continued till November. However, transactions began increasing in September. The chief technology officer and deputy managing director at Al-Arafah Islami Bank said that the lockdown caused the use of mobile banking services to increase, and many people opened accounts even though they did not need to.
- The managing director of Nagad said that new account opening increased to receive government allowances, pay garment workers, and also because both Eid festivals were celebrated during the pandemic. Those accounts remained active. However, most of those are now inactive. Many clients actively use mobile banking during festivals or at the beginning and end of the year, said the chief public relations officer of bKash. He described the decrease in the number of active clients at the end of the year as a normal trend.

<https://tbsnews.net/economy/banking/mobile-banking-slowed-2020-end-covid-restrictions-eased-183586>
<https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2021/01/11/mfs-platform-is-seeing-a-drop-in-active-users-of-late>

Mobile number portability flopped big time in Bangladesh

- After much ado and delay, the mobile number portability, the service that allows subscribers to swap networks without changing their existing 11-digit number within 72 hours, arrived in Bangladesh in 2018. Of the 168 million-odd mobile subscribers as of 2020, only 1.0 million have availed the service since its rollout. Users found the service to be more trouble than it is worth.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2021/01/11/mobile-number-portability-flopped-big-time-in-bangladesh>

Trading hours for DSE mobile app reduced by 45 minutes

- Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) has revised the schedule of conducting trading through mobile app for three weeks required to upgrade the exchange's order management system. As per the revised schedule, investors will be able to conduct trading through the DSE mobile app from 10.15 am to 2.0pm, according a release of the premier bourse. The exchange conducts trading for four and half an hour from 10am to 2.30pm. As a result, the trading hours for the DSE mobile app has been reduced by 45 minutes. The revised schedule will come into effect on Monday (today) and to be continued till February 1, 2021. After February 1, investors will be able to conduct trading through mobile app for four and half an hour.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock-corporate/trading-hours-for-dse-mobile-app-reduced-by-45-minutes-1610294289>
<https://tbsnews.net/economy/stock/share-trading-through-mobile-apps-dse-reduces-time-16-days-183556>

LafargeHolcim begins commercial production of clear size graded aggregate

• LafargeHolcim Bangladesh commenced the commercial production of clear size graded aggregate Saturday. The company earlier set up a unit having a capacity of producing 1.2 million tones of clear size graded aggregate. The clear size graded aggregate is one kind of graded limestone chips having uniform size and shape conforming to international standards. It also said the cone shaped crushing unit has been set up within the premises of the company's existing integrated clinker and cement manufacturing plant at Chhatak, Sunamganj with an investment of BDT 401 million. The entire investment is made from the company's own fund.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock-corporate/lafargeholcim-begins-commercial-production-of-clear-size-graded-aggregate-1610294200>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/lafargeholcim-enters-aggregate-business-2025721>

<https://tbsnews.net/economy/stock/lafargeholcim-hides-price-sensitive-information-regarding-share-price-hike-183565>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2021/01/10/lafargeholcim-s-stock-price-leap-on-news-of-backward-linkage-setup>

BRB to buy another 1.93% shares of Eastern Cables

• BRB Group is set to buy another 1.93% shares of the state-run cable manufacturer - Eastern Cables Limited - at the existing market price through the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) in the block market within next 30 days. The managing director of BRB Homes Limited, a sister concern of BRB Group, will buy 510,000 shares of Eastern Cables. Currently, he is a general shareholder of the state-run company. Earlier, BRB Cables and MRS Industries Limited, both of which are sister concerns of BRB Group and also corporate directors of Eastern Cables, bought 521,000 and 525,000 shares respectively.

• After completion of the fresh buying order, BRB Group will hold 23.66% shares of Eastern Cables. This is a bid to establish monopoly in the huge domestic cable market, said a BRB Cables official requesting not to be named. He said BRB now holds around 40% share of the domestic cable market.

<https://tbsnews.net/economy/stock/brb-buy-another-193-shares-eastern-cables-183550>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2021/01/11/an-ordinary-investor-to-hold-majority-stakes-in-state-run-eastern-cables>

World Stock and Commodities*

Index Name	Close Value	Value Change YTD	% Change YTD
Crude Oil (WTI)*	\$52.30	\$3.78	7.79%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	\$55.89	\$4.09	7.90%
Gold Spot*	\$1,843.72	(\$51.38)	-2.71%
DSEX	5,634.05	231.98	4.29%
S&P 500	3,824.68	68.61	1.83%
FTSE 100	6,873.26	412.74	6.39%
BSE SENSEX	48,782.51	1,031.18	2.16%
KSE-100	45,654.34	1,898.96	4.34%
CSEALL	7,119.53	345.31	5.10%

Exchange Rates

USD 1 = BDT 84.83*

GBP 1 = BDT 114.74*

EUR 1 = BDT 103.39*

INR 1 = BDT 1.16*

*Currencies are taken from XE Currency Converter and Commodities are taken from Bloomberg.

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