

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.

Macro:**Net forex reserves can clear four months' import bill: CPD**

- Bangladesh now has the ability to clear import payments of four months if the country's net forex reserves are taken into consideration, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said today. The nation's gross forex reserves hit USD 35.8 Bn in October this year, down from USD 46.5 Bn in the same period last year, it said.
- The overall balance came down to (-) USD 4.87 Bn in the July-October period this year, which was (-) USD 1.34 Bn in the same period previous year. In the same period, Bangladesh's ability to make import payments also reduced from 6.2 months to 5.2 months if the gross reserves are considered, the local think-tank said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/net-forex-reserves-can-clear-four-months-import-bill-cpd-3198561>

Non-performing loans triple in 10 years: CPD report

- The total volume of non-performing loans (NPLs) has increased by more than three times in the last 10 years since 2012, according to a report of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) revealed today. The NPLs increased to BDT 1,343.96 Bn in the first quarter of the fiscal year 2023 from BDT 427.25 Bn in the fourth quarter of FY2012, as per the report.
- The CPD unveiled the report titled "Managing the Economic Crisis: CPD's policy recommendation" at an event held in Dhaka. "However, actual NPL will be much higher if loans in special mention accounts, loans with court injunctions, and rescheduled loans are included," it said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/non-performing-loans-triple-10-years-cpd-report-3198331>

Leather goods exporters now can apply for additional discounts

- Exporters from now on can apply to the Discount Committee of the central bank for more than 5% discounts against the export of leather and leather goods. The Foreign Exchange Policy Department of the Bangladesh Bank issued a circular in this regard Thursday (15 December).
- The move will help leather and leather goods exporters to offset the loss of export proceeds they often incur by offering buyers discounts of more than 5% prescribed in the Guidelines for Foreign Exchange Transactions.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/leather-goods-exporters-now-can-apply-additional-discounts-552394>

Ctg port set to fall out of 'three-Mn-club'

- The country's premier port Chattogram is set to miss the 3 Mn twenty-foot equivalent unit container handling milestone this year too, according to estimates arrived at as a result of sluggish external trade.
- Besides, Chattogram's current position in the global list of 100 busiest ports may also slip, according to officials, as they attributed the downgrade to the Russia-Ukraine war, dollar shortage, inflationary pressure, cold shouldering to LC opening by banks and fears of a prolonged global recession.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/ctg-port-set-fall-out-three-Mn-club-552042>

Bangabandhu Hi-Tech City: PPP model binned for one segment

- The government has retreated from its decision to develop a portion of Bangabandhu Hi-Tech City in Gazipur's Kaliakoir on a public-private partnership (PPP) model due to lukewarm response from developers. To speed up the investment in the park Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority will instead directly allocate land to investors.
- The decision was taken at a virtual meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs held on Wednesday. The 355-acre city is divided into segments called blocks, developed and ready with all necessary amenities for tech-based industries.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/bangabandhu-hi-tech-city-ppp-model-binned-one-segment-3197406>

Inflation declining, wage rate increasing: Mannan

- Planning Minister MA Mannan today said that the general point to point inflation has been declining in the country over the last four months while, on the other hand, the wage rate is also increasing. The Planning Minister was addressing a dialogue titled "Crisis in economy: What could be the strategy?" held at the BRAC Centre Inn in the capital today.
- Organized by civil society think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), it's chairman and country's eminent economist Dr Rehman Sobhan moderated the dialogue. The Planning Minister said that although the inflation rate is declining, but the declining pace is slow.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/inflation-declining-wage-rate-increasing-mannan-553410>

Five Islami banks asked to update BB daily on big loans

- The central bank has instructed five Shariah-based private banks to send a daily log of lending of BDT 100 Mn and above. The banks are - Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank (SIBL), First Security Islami Bank (FSIBL), Global Islami Bank and Union Bank. Bangladesh Bank spokesperson Mazbaul Haque said the central bank regularly asks for information from the banks.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/banking/five-islami-banks-asked-update-bb-daily-big-loans-552846>

Ensure depositors' trust and good governance in banks: Economists

- Economists, during a discussion today, said the country's banking sector is under threat due to lack of trust and good governance in banks. Influential groups are involved, which is alarming for the economy, they added, UNB reports.
- They made the observations at a discussion on 'Managing the Economic Crisis', organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), at a Dhaka hotel on Saturday. Minister Abdul Mannan attended the event as chief guest while Professor Dr Rehman Sobhan presided over the function.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/ensure-depositors-trust-and-good-governance-in-banks-economists-1671276734>

'Help flourish tourism sector'

- Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged private entrepreneurs to come forward to develop the country's tourism sector and help achieve inclusive economic growth. "Tourism is very important to achieve inclusive economic growth of the country, which include poverty alleviation, massive job creation and improvement of living standards of marginal people," she said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/industries/tourism/news/help-flourish-tourism-sector-3198076>

Chattogram's Albion now set to export meds to Myanmar, Cambodia

- After Afghanistan, Chattogram-based Albion Laboratories Ltd, a company of the Albion Group, is set to export medicines to Myanmar and Cambodia. The company is scheduled to ship USD 30,000 worth of medicines to Myanmar later this month, while another shipment of eight types of medicines worth USD 23,000 to Cambodia is on the cards next month.
- Albion Laboratories Ltd has so far made two shipments to Afghanistan – worth USD 55,000 and USD 65,000 respectively. Their first shipment to the country was on 9 June last year. Currently, the company is preparing to ship USD 1,29,000 worth of medicines to the country, where it is exporting 35 different types of products.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/industry/chattograms-albion-now-set-export-meds-myanmar-cambodia-553126>

IMF loan is like a character certificate: PM's advisor Mashiur

- Mashiur Rahman, Economic Affairs adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said on Thursday that the IMF loan is like a character certificate. "If we get this certificate, everyone will show interest in giving us loans," he told a seminar on 'South-South and Triangular Cooperation: Tapping New Opportunities.' The discussion was jointly organised by Economic Relations Division (ERD) and UNDP in the capital, Dhaka.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/imf-loan-character-certificate-pms-advisor-mashiur-552358>

Enhance production to lessen dependency on imported foods: Tipu

- Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi put maximum emphasis on enhancing crop production to lessen dependency on imported foods, including edible oils. "Most of the edible oils are being imported. If cultivation of soybean and mustard can be increased massively in the country, dependency on imported edible oils will be reduced," he said.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/enhance-production-lessen-dependency-imported-foods-tipu-553430>

MFS transactions rebound in Oct

- Transactions through mobile financial services (MFS) rebounded in October following a few months of decline thanks to a rise in government disbursements, cash-out and utility bill payments. The volume of transactions increased by BDT 55.67 Bn, or 6.35%, to hit BDT 930.13 Bn in October compared to BDT 876.35 Bn a month earlier.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/mfs-transactions-rebound-oct-3197446>

Cut expenditure in revised budget

- The finance division has strictly asked ministries and divisions not to demand any additional money beyond the amount allocated this year. It suggested cutting expenditures in the revised budget as per the prime minister's directives on austerity measures.
- The finance division yesterday issued guidelines and directives to all ministries and divisions for formulating estimations of revised budgets. Budget implementation has seemingly progressed at a slow pace so far this fiscal year with total expenditure growing a mere 0.83% in July, the first month of this fiscal year, compared to that last fiscal year.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/cut-expenditure-revised-budget-3197451>

Rural people facing large-scale digital inequality

- A huge part of the population, especially in rural areas, is still deprived of access to digital services due to their inability to purchase the required devices, according to an economist. "So, people in rural areas are facing digital inequality on a large scale," said Monzur Hossain, research director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).
- "Along with the lack of devices, the slow connection speed in rural areas and its cost make the internet inaccessible for rural people," he added. Hossain went on to say that data packages offered by mobile network providers in the country are not people friendly.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/rural-people-facing-large-scale-digital-inequality-3197396>

Minimum wage not enough to bear food cost

- High inflation is directly threatening the food security of workers of at least 14 industrial sectors earning a minimum wage, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday. The independent think tank urged the authorities to "urgently" revisit and revise the minimum wages of workers in all industrial sectors.
- The CPD put forth some estimates based on Bangladesh Urban Socioeconomic Assessment Survey 2019 conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. The average monthly cost of a basket of 19 common food items, enabling a regular diet for a household of four persons in Dhaka city, was BDT 23,676 as of December 15 this year, it said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/minimum-wage-not-enough-bear-food-cost-3198781>

Stocks:**STYLECRAFT | Stylecraft back to profitability after 18 months**

- Stylecraft Limited, an RMG manufacturer that has been incurring losses for the past 18 months, has finally bounced back to profitability. From July to September, the first quarter of FY2023, its year-on-year revenue grew by 396% to BDT 345.2 Mn with a net profit of BDT 0.848 Mn. It had incurred consecutive losses in the previous 18 months.
- The company also declared a 2% cash dividend for the shareholders for the fiscal year 2021-22 despite losses incurred in that fiscal year. However, its sponsors and directors will not get the dividend. In the previous fiscal year 2020-21, it could not pay dividends to its shareholders.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/stylecraft-back-profitability-after-18-months-551934>

RANFOUNDRY | RFL Group opens 2nd bicycle factory

- RFL Group opened its second bicycle factory in Rangpur's Gangachara upazila to meet the growing demand in both local and export markets. The factory will annually produce 0.6 Mn bicycles once fully operational, Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and CEO of Pran-RFL Group, said at the launch event held on the factory premises at Lalchandpur village in Rangpur.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/organisation-news/news/rfl-group-opens-2nd-bicycle-factory-3197401>

SBACBANK | SBAC Bank appoints DMD

- South Bangla Agriculture & Commerce (SBAC) Bank has recently appointed a deputy managing director. The appointee, Md Abdul Matin, was earlier serving as senior executive vice-president and head of credit risk management at Eastern Bank. He has also worked at National Bank and Prime Bank, says a press release.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/banks/news/sbac-bank-appoints-dmd-3197376>

World Stock and Commodities*

Index Name	Close Value	Value Change YTD	% Change YTD
Crude Oil (WTI)*	USD 74.29	(USD 0.92)	-1.22%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	USD 79.04	USD 1.26	1.62%
Gold Spot*	USD 1,793.08	(USD 36.12)	-1.97%
DSEX	6,256.83	-499.83	-7.40%
S&P 500	3,852.36	-913.82	-19.17%
FTSE 100	7,332.12	-52.42	-0.71%
BSE SENSEX	61,337.81	3,083.99	5.29%
KSE-100	41,301.48	-3,294.59	-7.39%
CSEALL	8,739.50	-3,486.51	-28.52%

Exchange Rates**1 US Dollar = 103.22 BDT****1 GBP = 125.39 BDT****1 Euro = 109.29 BDT****1 INR = 1.25 BDT**

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