

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.

Immunisation set to begin in early February

- Bangladesh is set to roll out the Covid-19 immunisation across the country in early February, ending speculations over the availability of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. The state-run Directorate General of Health Service (DGHS) took the decision as the first consignment of the antidote developed by Oxford University is likely to reach between January 21 and January 25. The Director General of the DGHS said that they would open the online registration of vaccine recipients from January 26, 2021.
- Beximco has told us it is likely to bring the first consignment of the doses in the country from India's Serum Institute between January 21 and 25, he said. After bringing the first batch of 5.0 million doses, the leading drug maker will keep those in its warehouse for two days to complete the required formalities and then will supply those to the dedicated points of district headquarters in accordance with the directorate's list, he added.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/immunisation-set-to-begin-in-early-feb-1610389150>
<https://tbsnews.net/coronavirus-chronicle/covid-19-bangladesh/bangladesh-begin-covid-vaccination-februarys-first-week>
<https://www.dhakatribune.com/health/coronavirus/2021/01/11/dghs-covid-19-vaccination-in-bangladesh-will-begin-in-february>

4.5 million new mobile users in 2020

- The year 2020 saw more than 4.5-million new mobile subscribers despite the impact of Covid-19 on the economy from March last year. Industry insiders said nearly 4.0-million mobile subscribers left their networks at the onset of the pandemic. However, they have returned to the networks in recent months along with the new addition of subscribers. The total number of mobile SIM users, irrespective of operators, reached 170.13 million last December, disclosed the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) from 165.57 in December 2019.
- With this new addition, the country's tele-density surpassed 100% in 2020. In a multi-SIM-driven market like Bangladesh, they had to lose nearly 4.0-million subscribers from our networks, Robi Axiata chief corporate and regulatory officer. The number of total internet, including cellular data, users reached 111.87 million last December from 99.42 million in December 2019, adding 1.2 million in 2020. However, mobile phone operators said much of the benefits of the increased internet usage did not go to their pockets because of reduced data prices.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade-market/45m-new-mobile-users-in-2020-1610383815>
<https://www.newagebd.net/article/126959/number-of-mobile-connections-tops-17cr>
<https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2021/01/12/everyone-in-bangladesh-now-has-a-mobile-connection>

Rising cotton prices take toll on apparel makers

- A rise in international cotton prices has had a ripple effect on local yarn, affecting garment shipments, especially of knitwear, during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The widely consumed 30-carded yarn is now selling for USD 3.60 to USD 3.75 per kilogramme (kg) whereas it was USD 2.60 to USD 2.80 two months ago, according to knitwear manufacturers and suppliers. On the other hand, between July last year and January this year, international cotton prices went up nearly 28.60%. In July, New York futures market was trading every pound of it in the range of 63 cents to 63.30 cents. However, yesterday it was ranging between 79 cents and 80.25 cents per pound.
- Charges for its transport to the mills adds to the local importers' costs, which also has an impact on yarn prices. Cotton prices have gone up in international markets mainly for increased imports by China, the largest consumer worldwide, because of a recovery trending among businesses. The report also said Bangladesh may reduce its import by 500,000 bales in the cotton marketing year (August–July) of 2020-21.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/rising-cotton-prices-take-toll-apparel-makers-2026249>

Cement companies see profit rise in Q1 despite pandemic

- Most listed cement makers witnessed higher profits in the July-September quarter last year thanks to an increase in demand from the construction sector amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Among the seven listed cement makers, four saw a rise in profits, one a fall, another a reduction of losses and the last an increase in losses. Government development projects helped the cement makers stay afloat in the first few days of the quarter, when the private sector was yet to resume any construction, according to cement makers. The managing director of Premier Cement, said cement makers made a profit in the first quarter of FY20-21 as sales had increased compared to that in the previous quarters.

- The government development activities resumed in full swing in the last quarters of the year, which created a demand for cement, he said. Besides, the manufacturers tried hard and put in their best efforts to reach pre-pandemic levels in sales, he added. So even amid the pandemic, where cement makers incurred huge losses, it was easy for them to quickly recover, he added. The managing director of Confidence Cement, said the company's profit margin slightly increased during the July-September quarter in 2020 as private and government construction work had resumed.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/cement-companies-see-profit-rise-q1-despite-pandemic-2026241>
<https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2021/01/12/listed-cement-makers-are-bouncing-back-from-the-pandemic-hit>

Local demand saves the day for ceramics maker

- The local market has emerged as a saviour for ceramics makers as the recovery in construction activities pushed up demand, helping manufacturers make a turnaround from the pandemic-induced losses amid a consistent fall in exports. The relief came in the last three months of 2020 after domestic sales rebounded, allowing them to recover from the loss incurred in the initial months of the countrywide lockdown. The sector started to pick up from June after the demand for sanitary and tile items from the housing and construction sectors rose, said the senior marketing manager at Akij Ceramics.

- The managing director of DBL Ceramics, said the business scenario might have improved but it was yet to regain its previous momentum and therefore, uncertainty remains. The year that just ended was a challenging one not just for the ceramic industry, but for the whole world, he added. Of the 68 ceramic manufacturers currently operating, 20 produce tableware, 32 make tiles, and the rest 16 produce sanitary ware. The sanitary ware and tiles segments made a turnaround in July to October and reached the pre-pandemic level. An additional 10% customs duty on the import of foreign tiles and sanitary wares that was slapped this fiscal year helped the sector recover immediately, he said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/local-demand-saves-the-day-ceramics-makers-2026245>

Aziz Pipes suspends production for lack of funds

- Aziz Pipes, a listed PVC product maker, has suspended production for a temporary period as it could not buy raw materials because of a shortage of funds. Their supplier did not deliver PVC resin, the main raw material, on time due to Covid-19, the company said. The lack of stocks of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) resin hampered production. Because of the abnormal increase in the price of raw materials in the local market, the cost of production will also be much higher for the company, Aziz Pipes said. As a result, the company will suffer in marketing products. Under the circumstances, production was temporarily stopped from C-shift on January 10, the disclosure said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/aziz-pipes-suspends-production-lack-funds-2026229>
<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock-corporate/aziz-pipes-suspends-production-due-to-lack-of-pvc-resin-1610387417>

World Stock and Commodities*

Index Name	Close Value	Value Change YTD	% Change YTD
Crude Oil (WTI)*	\$52.19	\$3.67	7.56%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	\$55.60	\$3.80	7.34%
Gold Spot*	\$1,843.19	(\$51.91)	-2.74%
DSEX	5,718.75	316.68	5.86%
S&P 500	3,799.61	43.54	1.16%
FTSE 100	6,798.48	337.96	5.23%
BSE SENSEX	49,269.32	1,517.99	3.18%
KSE-100	45,605.42	1,850.04	4.23%
CSEALL	7,203.63	429.41	6.34%

Exchange Rates

USD 1 = BDT 84.87*
 GBP 1 = BDT 114.71*
 EUR 1 = BDT 103.06*
 INR 1 = BDT 1.16*

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

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