

*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.*

### **Int'l Investment Summit kicks off today**

- Foreign investors are showing greater interest in the country's ICT, pharmaceutical, agro processing, light engineering and automobile sectors, and blue economy in addition to the apparel sector. To explore the investment opportunities in Bangladesh, a number of high level delegations from different countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United States and Turkey, have already reached Dhaka as an investment conclave begins today (Sunday). They will participate in the two-day International Investment Summit 2021 Bangladesh organized by the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) in a hybrid format comprising physical events to be held at a city hotel and virtual platforms.
- Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will virtually inaugurate the international event. This was disclosed at a press conference held at the BIDA office in the city's Agargaon area on Saturday. Speaking at the press conference, Salman F Rahman, the prime minister's private industry and investment adviser, said the investment summit aims to brand the country, which has been uniquely transformed under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/intl-investment-summit-kicks-off-today-1638033834>

### **How worried should we be about the Omicron variant?**

- The new Omicron coronavirus variant - identified first in South Africa, but also detected in Europe and Asia - is raising concern worldwide given the number of mutations, which might help it spread or even evade antibodies from prior infection or vaccination. News of the variant prompted countries to announce new travel restrictions on Friday and sent drug makers scrambling to see if their COVID-19 vaccines remain protective, reports Reuters. The World Health Organization on Friday classified the B.1.1.529 variant, or Omicron, as a SARS-CoV-2 "variant of concern," saying it may spread more quickly than other forms of coronavirus.
- The Delta variant remains dominant worldwide, accounting for 99.9% of U.S. cases, and it is not yet clear whether Omicron will be able to displace Delta, said Dr Graham Snyder, medical director, infection prevention and hospital epidemiology at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. But the new variant has over 30 mutations in the part of the virus that current vaccines target. It is also suspected of driving a spike in new infections in South Africa.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/health/how-worried-should-we-be-about-the-omicron-variant-1638016514>

### **Daily BPC profit now swells to BDT 25m**

- Global oil prices crashed over fears of demand slump with the spread of newly exposed Covid variant 'Omicron' and the twist gave the state-run Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) to see its profits swelling further daily. By official count BPC's profit now grows to around BDT 25 million a day, an almost threefold rise from the amount it would profit a couple of days back, riding on a substantial raise given in domestic oil prices early this month and the latest fall in tariffs on the international market. The government petroleum-marketing agency is now getting a profit of around BDT 1.75 per litre in diesel trading, as on November 26, cashing in on the double boosters.
- Southern Africa, might dampen economic growth and trigger another demand slump, market-insiders said. The corporation profit was around BDT 7.50 million a day as on November 23 trading, when it was profiting around BDT 0.50 per litre in diesel sales. "If the downtrend in oil prices on the international market lasts long, BPC's profit margins will also go high," said one of the insiders.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/daily-bpc-profit-now-swells-to-tk-25m-1638033920>

**New base year changes growth arithmetic**

- A new base year in economic calculations gives the government some solace about Bangladesh's struggling investment-GDP ratio as it yields a rise by 0.84 percentage points with a private-sector leap, analysts said Saturday. The private-sector investment-to- GDP (gross domestic product) ratio rose by 2.55 percentage points in the new estimation from that of the previous one, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data showed recently. On the other hand, public investment- to -GDP ratio has fallen by 1.71 percentage points in the new estimation compared to the previous one, the government data showed.
- Meanwhile, economists and analysts raised questions over the new estimation and wanted to know details from the BBS about the big leap in the private investment-GDP ratio as well as the reasons for the fall in public-sector investment share. The statistical bureau recently unveiled the GDP statistics after changing the base year to 2015-16 from the earlier consideration of 2005-06. After the updating of the base year, Bangladesh's near-stagnant investment-GDP ratio got a boost to 30.76% in the last fiscal from 29.92% in the previous FY2020, the latest official data show. Based on the new base year, the BBS has estimated the size of the country's GDP at USD 411 billion. As per the old base year 2005-06, the GDP was recorded at USD 355 billion in August last year.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/new-base-year-changes-growth-arithmetic-1638034166>

**Increased bilateral trade and investment in focus**

- Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BMCCI) is set to celebrate its 20th anniversary eyeing more bilateral trade and investment between the countries. To this effect, the association will organize a business luncheon titled "Importance of FTA with Trading Nations for Bangladesh" on December 01 and a "Grand Gala Night" on December 13, 2021 at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden. Besides, BMCCI will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) to promote trade relation between businesses of the port city and Malaysia.
- The announcements were made at a press conference organized by the association at a hotel in the city's Karwanbazar. With BMCCI president Raquib Muhammad Fakhru in the chair, the event was addressed by the association's secretary general Mahbubul Alam, vice-president Md Anwar Shahid, and the Anniversary Celebration Organizing Committee chairman Syed Almas Kabir. Detailing the programme schedule, Mr Kabir said the 20th anniversary celebration is going to be a flagship programme of BMCCI which is looking forward to boost bilateral trade relations further. Referring to the trade imbalance between the two countries, he informed that Bangladesh imported around USD 1.57 billion worth of products and services from Malaysia against export of USD 306 million.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade-market/increased-bilateral-trade-and-investment-in-focus-1638029669>

**Credit card spending keeps growing as virus recedes**

- Spending through credit cards maintained an upward trend in September as people kept flocking to online sites in the tourism and hospitality sector as the coronavirus crisis continues to wane. Credit card transactions collectively stood at BDT 1,840 crore in September, up 10% from a month earlier and 51% year-on-year. The tourism and hospitality sector reopened in August after the Covid-19 infection rate began receding.
- Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of MasterCard, said people are now purchasing lifestyle products and engaging in both domestic and international travel as coronavirus curbs have been eased. However, he expressed concerns about the new coronavirus variant that has already spread to some countries, creating a tense situation in the business community. He added that a lack of confidence in e-commerce caused by massive irregularities recently unearthed in the sector came as a major blow to the digital payment segment.
- Mahiul Islam, head of retail banking at Brac Bank, said the use of credit cards had increased to a large extent. The

bank has set a target to issue around 7,000 credit cards to clients this month. Up until September, the number of credit cards in the market totalled about 1.803 Mn, up 1.0% from a month ago and 11% year-on-year.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/banks/news/credit-card-spending-keeps-growing-virus-recedes-2904561>

### **Standard Chartered arranges 1st green bond for Pran Agro**

- Standard Chartered Bank Limited has arranged the country's first-ever green bond for Pran Agro Limited, a concern of PRAN-RFL Group, to support green and energy-efficiency initiatives. The total face value of the bond is BDT 150 crore, Standard Chartered said in a statement on Saturday. Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman of PRAN RFL Group, Naser Ezaz Bijoy, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh, Uzma Chowdhury, finance director, and Fakhru Ahsan, corporate finance manager, of PRAN-RFL Group, Enamul Haque, managing director and head of client coverage, CCIB of the bank, Muhit Rahman, managing director and head of financial markets, Md Maroof ur Rahman Mazumder, head of financing solutions, all representing Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh attended the financial closure ceremony at the head office of Pran-RFL Group.

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/155868/stanchart-arranges-1st-green-bond-for-pran-agro>

### **NBFIs seek deferral of BB rules seeking to restore discipline**

- Non-bank financial institutions have demanded postponement of the application of a Bangladesh Bank guideline that is seeking to restore credit discipline in the fragile sector. The central bank issued the guidelines on September 14, saying that no NBFIs would be allowed to inflate the income segment of the balance sheet artificially without realising cash from borrowers after rescheduling default loans.
- It came after many NBFIs were found to have overstated their income segment in the past without getting back any cash from the rescheduled loans. In addition, they had also not kept provision against the default loans, but many of them subsequently rescheduled the loans. Besides, NBFIs have been barred from transferring the provision of the NPLs right after the rescheduling of the loans.
- They had requested the central bank to suspend the guidelines as many businesses were still struggling to manage daily cash flow and were yet to recover from the damages caused by the coronavirus pandemic. These borrowers may start to pay regular instalments if adequate support is provided to them to absorb the shock.
- A central bank high official says that there is no relation between the pandemic and the guidelines. He added that if the central bank entertains the BLFCA demands, it will be quite difficult to establish the corporate governance in the NBFIs sector. A spokesperson and executive director of the central bank has described the NBFIs' proposals illogical as the same rules applied to banks.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/banks/news/nbfis-seek-deferral-bb-rules-seeking-restore-discipline-2904566>

### **Rogue realtors deceive buyers of land and money**

- Owning a flat of one's own is the dream of thousands but many have been rudely awakened to a nightmare of lost money, fraudulent papers, and an endless journey for redress in the labyrinth of law. They have been deceived by some rogue real estate companies with false promises, attractive advertisements and sleek talking executives of these realtors. More than 20,000 buyers are without possession of their properties even years after paying all the money as the realtors concerned deliberately deceived them abusing economic and political influence, allege the victims.
- According to sources, more than 12,000 fraud cases against a number of real estate and housing companies sued for plot-and-flat-related deceptions are pending in different Dhaka courts. Of the total, around 9,000 cases have been filed over plot-related irregularities involving BDT 15,000 crore and the rest of the cases have been lodged by flat

buyers who have been deceived and lost around BDT 6,000 crore.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/dropped/real-estate/rogue-realtors-deceive-buyers-land-and-money-335575>

### **BSEC backs exclusion of their bond investments**

- The securities regulator would request Bangladesh Bank (BB) to exclude banks' investments in perpetual bonds from their exposure on bourse, in a measure meant for increasing liquidity supply to the capital market. Sources say the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) will raise the issue, among others, at a meeting scheduled to be held with the central bank Tuesday. A senior official at the BSEC said the proposal is being mooted so that the banks' investment in the bond market does not get squeezed due to the exposure limit and the bond market remains vibrant. Under the existing provision, such investment is considered included in the banks' exposure to the capital market as soon as the bonds are listed with the stock exchanges.
- It is now mandatory for the perpetual bonds to be listed with bourses. The securities regulator has so far allowed 15 banks to issue perpetual bonds. A senior official said the BSEC would try to convince the BB to deduct such investments by banks from their respective exposure limits. "The banks will then be able to play more supportive role in the stock market." Meanwhile, the securities regulator asked the issuers to accelerate the process of listing perpetual bonds on bourses. Presently, subscriptions of two such bonds are going on. According to the central bank sources, the banks invested BDT 31 billion, as of June 30, 2021. Presently, the amount would stand at around BDT 50 billion.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/bsec-backs-exclusion-of-their-bond-investments-1638033632>

### **Profit growth signals strong economic rebound**

- Listed companies across almost all sectors saw their profits rise 8.6% on average in the first quarter of the ongoing fiscal year, indicating that Bangladesh is making a strong economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The collective profits of 288 listed companies stood at BDT 7,203 crore in the July-September period of 2021-22, up from BDT 6,631 crore a year earlier, according to Sandhani Asset Management Company.
- Grameenphone logged the highest first-quarter profit of BDT 856 crore, followed by Square Pharmaceuticals at BDT 499 crore. Profits of Beximco Ltd, British American Tobacco Bangladesh, and United Power Generation stood at BDT 360 crore, BDT 294 crore and BDT 289 crore respectively.
- The service and the fuel and power sectors witnessed a fall in profits in the July-September period. Due to the expiration of power purchase agreements, the profitability of some listed electricity generation companies was negatively impacted, said Shahidul Islam, chief executive officer of VIPB Asset Management. Low interest rates on bank deposits also impacted the profitability of some cash-rich companies.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/profit-growth-signals-strong-economic-rebound-2904571>

### **Reckitt Benckiser sees highest price appreciation**

- LafargeHolcim Bangladesh saw the highest price correction among listed multinational companies (MNCs) in last week on Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE). During the week, the company's share price declined 8.5% to close at BDT 75.60 each on Thursday. Of 12 MNCs, the share price of five companies including LafargeHolcim Bangladesh declined ranging between 0.4% and 8.5%. Of other MNCs which saw price correction, the share price of Bata Shoe Company declined 0.4%, British American Tobacco Bangladesh Company 1.1%, Linde Bangladesh 3.7%, Marico Bangladesh 0.4% and Singer Bangladesh 0.5%.
- Of the MNCs whose share prices advanced, Reckitt Benckiser (Bd.) witnessed the highest price appreciation in last week. During the week, the company's share price advanced 2.2% to close at 4949.9 each on the premier bourse

DSE. Of the remaining MNCs, the share price of Bata Shoe Company advanced 0.4%, Berger Paints Bangladesh 0.8%, Heidelberg Cement 0.6%, RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) 1.6% and Unilever Consumer Care 1.0%.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock-corporate/reckitt-benckiser-sees-highest-price-appreciation-1638027128>

### **Listed cement cos struggle amid raw material price surge**

- The business of listed cement companies took a tumble in the July-September period amid an abnormal rise in raw material and oil prices on the international market. Out of the six listed companies, only two companies managed to raise profits slightly, the profit of one company remained unchanged, profit of two companies declined and one company declared a loss in the July-September period.
- Losses per share of Heidelberg Cement increased to BDT 1.91 in July-September 2021 compared with that of BDT 0.48 a share in the same period in the previous year. Earnings per share of Premier Cement dropped by 85.18% to BDT 0.12 a share in the July-September period compared with that of BDT 0.81 a share in July-September 2020. The EPS of Confidence Cement decreased by 31.56% to BDT 2.32 in July-September 2021 against BDT 3.39 each in July-September 2020. Profits of Meghna Cement remained unchanged at BDT 0.46 a share in the July-September period. LafargeHolcim Bangladesh posted a rise in the EPS by 44% to BDT 0.81 in July-September 2021 against BDT 0.56 in July-September 2020. EPS of MI Cement increased slightly to BDT 0.54 in July-September 2021 compared with BDT 0.51 in the previous year.
- Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers association vice-president and Metrocem Cement Ltd managing director Md Shahidullah told New Age that the cement industry business was dealt a heavy blow in the latest quarter due to an abnormal rise in raw material prices. He claimed that the prices of raw materials had shot up by around 40-45% recently and that weighed heavily on the sector. Clinker occupies 70% of the raw materials in the cement sector, and price of the product has risen by around 60% in recent time.

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/155863/listed-cement-cos-struggle-amid-raw-material-price-surge>

### **Lanka Bangla receives USD 21m in foreign currency loans**

- Lanka Bangla Finance Limited, one of the leading non-bank financial institutions of the country, has recently received two foreign currency loans-USD 5 million from Financing for Healthier Lives DAC and USD 16 million from five funds managed by responsibility Investments AG. Before availing the loans Lanka Bangla obtained approval from Bangladesh Bank, said a statement. The proceeds from the loans will mainly be utilized to lend to small and medium enterprises and finance projects which will have positive social impact.
- Financing for Healthier Lives is a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) based out in Ireland that has been established to issue social bonds for the purpose of on-lending. On the other hand, responsibility Investments AG is a Swiss impact investment manager. Earlier in May this year Lanka Bangla received another foreign currency loan of USD 15 million from Blue Orchard Microfinance Fund. The NBFIs also obtained a foreign currency facility of USD 20 million from Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector in 2019.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock-corporate/lankabangla-receives-21m-in-foreign-currency-loans-1638027098>

**World Stock and Commodities\***

<b>Index Name</b>	<b>Close Value</b>	<b>Value Change YTD</b>	<b>% Change YTD</b>
Crude Oil (WTI)*	USD 68.15	USD 19.63	40.46%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	USD 72.72	USD 20.92	40.39%
Gold Spot*	USD 1,802.59	(USD 92.51)	-4.88%
DSEX	6,852.10	1,450.03	26.84%
S&P 500	4,594.62	838.55	22.33%
FTSE 100	7,044.03	583.51	9.03%
BSE SENSEX	57,107.15	9,355.82	19.59%
KSE-100	44,114.16	358.78	0.82%
CSEALL	11,197.68	4,423.46	65.30%

**Exchange Rates****1 US Dollar = 86.04 BDT****1 GBP = 114.78 BDT****1 Euro = 97.40 BDT****1 INR = 1.15 BDT**

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