

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:**Japanese funds to revive closed sugar mills**

- The government has launched an initiative to modernise and revive six shuttered sugar mills, aiming to transform them into profitable enterprises through public-private partnerships and advanced technology. This brings forward a proposal on forming a joint venture and a potential finance by Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the Export-Import Bank of Thailand (EXIM). The majority of the fund may come from JBIC.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/japanese-funds-revive-closed-sugar-mills-3852711>

Slowdown in private credit growth raises alarms

- The declining credit growth for private companies in Bangladesh reflects the country's immediate economic challenges, including long-term risks to investment, employment and overall financial stability. Credit flow to private firms registered its lowest growth since at least 2015, achieving just 7.15% in January this year, as per Bangladesh Bank data.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/slowdown-private-credit-growth-raises-alarms-3852706>

BDT 7.21 Bn remittance case settled for just BDT 15,543 in taxes

- A businessman who brought BDT 7.21 Bn into Bangladesh under the guise of remittances and claimed a tax exemption is a leader of the Awami League, which ruled the country for 15 years before being ousted last year. SM Faruqi Hasan claimed he brought the remittances from Chinese companies, including Norinco International Corporation and China Shipbuilding and Offshore International, in phases since the 2012-13 fiscal year.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/tk-721-crore-remittance-case-settled-just-tk-15543-taxes-3852161>

BEPZA chief eyes big push for high-end product manufacturing

- Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) Executive Chairman Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman expected that the upcoming visit of Chief Adviser (CA) Prof Dr Muhammad Yunus to China would open the door to setting up Chinese high-end electrical and electronics products, vehicles and medical equipment manufacturing industries in Bangladesh, reports BSS. The BEPZA executive chairman said this in an interview with the national news agency BSS on the overall investment scenario of the country and moves to attract more investments.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock-corporate/bepza-chief-eyes-big-push-for-high-end-product-manufacturing-1742405790>

Social security coverage, allowances to increase in FY26: Finance adviser

- Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed today (19 March) said an equality-based, welfare-oriented budget will be prepared for the next fiscal year, which will increase the coverage of social security programmes and allowances. "The Annual Development Programme will avoid unreasonable and large projects," he said while exchanging views with editors and senior journalists of print and electronic media on policy issues for formulating the upcoming budget at the ministry.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/social-security-coverage-allowances-increase-fy26-financial-adviser-1097046>

LDC graduation essential for Bangladesh, export diversification crucial: Commerce adviser

- Graduating from the status of least developed country (LDC) is now a necessity for Bangladesh, and as the country relies heavily on a single-sector export, diversification is crucial, Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin said today (19 March). "We must diversify our exports, whether we graduate or not," he stated while addressing a seminar titled Diversification of Bangladesh's Export Basket: Challenges & Opportunities in the Post-LDC Graduation, where he was the chief guest.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/ldc-graduation-essential-bangladesh-export-diversification-crucial-commerce-adviser-1096766>

Remittance up yet reserves static for meeting growing needs

- Foreign-exchange reserves of Bangladesh still stay almost static despite a record volume of remittance inflow in recent months as officials say necessary external expenditures are being met. The Financial Express (FE) has observed the trends of the remittance and movement of the forex reserves in recent months. Despite the record inflows of foreign currencies sent by Bangladeshi citizens working abroad for the last several months, the volume of reserves in IMF arithmetic has been hovering in-between USD 19.0 Bn and USD 21.0 Bn.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/remittance-up-yet-reserves-static-for-meeting-growing-needs-1742407791>

Equality-based welfare budget coming

- Measures are envisaged in the next budget for boosting trade-commerce and investment in private sector alongside taming inflation and raising people's incomes, the finance adviser disclosed Wednesday. The Finance Adviser of the interim government, Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, gave a broad hint that an equality-based people's-welfare budget would be prepared for the next fiscal year in keeping with priority changes following the regime change. He said taming inflation would be a big priority and, at the same time, programmes would be budgeted to raise people's earnings.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/equality-based-welfare-budget-coming-1742407952>

Taxmen fan out to spot taxable income-holders countrywide

- Taxmen fan out to spot taxable income-holders across the country under a latest drive to expand the tax net and raise government revenues, officials say. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has launched the new Spot Assessment Initiative along with a simplified tax-payment system with assessors reaching taxpayers directly at their doorstep. This initiative -- part of massive financial and revenue reforms kicked off by the interim government -- is aimed at finding individuals and businesses with taxable incomes who are required to file income-tax returns but have not yet done so, says the revenue board in a news release.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/taxmen-fan-out-to-spot-taxable-income-holders-countrywide-1742408243>

Cut import duties on scrap metals, cement clinkers: Stakeholders

- The government has been urged to reduce import duties on raw materials for manufacturing construction materials in the upcoming budget for fiscal year 2025-26 to facilitate the sector's growth for the sake of the country's economy. The steel makers have sought to lower customs duty on imported scrap metals from BDT 1500 to BDT 500 per tonne while cement producers requested for lowering the duty on clinker to BDT 200 per tonne.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/cut-import-duties-on-scrap-metals-cement-clinkers-stakeholders-1742408379>

Bangladesh crumbles with financial burden of environmental pollution

- Bangladesh has been among the worst countries in the world in terms of undergoing the effect of environmental pollution, but what is more concerning is the financial burden it causes. Industrial waste, transport and brick kiln emissions, chemical fertiliser use in agricultural fields, faulty solid waste management and lead pollution are vitiating the environment and taking toll on public health as well as economy.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/bangladesh-crumbles-with-financial-burden-of-environmental-pollution-1742408490>

Govt plans BDT 2.72 Bn project

- The Department of Disaster Management plans to generate 3.63 Mn workdays under the Employment Generation Program for the Poorest (EGPP), allocating BDT 1.46 Bn to support 10,080 families in 15 upazilas of Feni and Brahmanbaria-two districts severely impacted by the August-September floods. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief has submitted a project proposal titled "Sustainable Recovery Emergency Preparedness and Response Project (B-STRONG)" to the Planning Ministry, with an estimated cost of BDT 2.72 Bn.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/govt-plans-tk-272b-project-1742408712>

Sector & Industries:**BANK | Islamic banks witness deposit shift**

- Islamic wings of conventional banks have become the preferred choice for religiously inclined depositors as many full-fledged Shariah-based banks struggle with a crisis of trust. At the end of 2024, deposit growth in the banking sector slowed to 7.47%. However, 18 banks experienced deposit surges exceeding 26%, with some Islamic wings of conventional banks registering increases of more than 100%.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/islamic-banks-witness-deposit-shift-3852716>

RMG | RMG exports to EU jump 61%

- Bangladesh's readymade garment exports to the European Union (EU) recorded a robust 61% growth in January this year, staying ahead of the major competitors, including China, Vietnam, Turkey, and India. Apparel exports to the EU market in January 2025 fetched 1.91 Bn euros, compared to 1.18 Bn euros earned in the same month last year, according to Eurostat data published on March 18. Eurostat is the statistical office of the EU.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/rmg-exports-to-eu-jump-61pc-1742408297>

NBFI | NBFIs see drop in loan recovery

- Non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) in Bangladesh saw a slowdown in loan recovery as many firms struggled to repay debts amid an economic slowdown and persistent inflation. Data from the Bangladesh Bank showed that NBFIs recovered BDT 67.15 Bn in loans and advances in the October-December quarter of 2024, down 3.2% year-on-year.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/nbfis-see-drop-loan-recovery-3852686>

TELECOM | AMTOB urges removal of VAT on SIM, e-SIM

- The Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB) today urged the government to remove VAT on SIM and e-SIM to foster growth in the telecom sector. In its budget proposals to the National Board of Revenue (NBR), AMTOB said eliminating VAT on SIM access packages, particularly in rural areas, would make them more affordable and financially viable for mobile operators. This, in turn, would support Bangladesh's digital transformation and boost the industry's development.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/amtob-urges-removal-vat-sim-e-sim-3852361>

TRADE | Ctg port links with Indo-Pacific maritime information sharing platform

- Chattogram Port has been linked with the Indo-Pacific Regional Information Sharing (IORIS) platform as part of efforts to enhance maritime security capabilities. The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) took the initiative to strengthen multifaceted security measures, focusing on the maritime single-window concept, the CPA said in a press release.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/ctg-port-links-indo-pacific-maritime-information-sharing-platform-3852246>

TEXTILE | BGMEA urges factory owners to pay half of March salary before Eid

- The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has formally instructed factory owners to pay at least 15 days' salary for March and the Eid bonus to garment workers before Eid-ul-Fitr. In a notice issued yesterday evening (18 March) to its member factories, BGMEA Secretary General Md Faizur Rahman referred to the decision of the 85th meeting of the Tripartite Consultative Council, which was held at the Ministry of Labour and Employment on 6 March to review the labour situation, wages, bonuses, and holiday arrangements for garment sector workers ahead of Eid.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/bgmea-urges-factory-owners-pay-half-march-salary-eid-1096351>

BANK | NPLs in S Alam-controlled banks under Hasina jumps by BDT 860 Bn in Jul-Dec

- Non-performing loans (NPLs) in eight banks, including Islami Bank, controlled by S Alam Group during the Awami League regime, have risen by BDT 863.47 Bn in six months through December, according to the Bangladesh Bank. In the second half of 2024, the total defaulted loans of 12 of these banks increased by BDT 1.03 Tn, according to the central bank's latest report.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/banking/npls-s-alam-controlled-banks-under-hasina-jumps-tk86000cr-jul-dec-1096331>

Stocks:**NTC | National Tea seek buyers again to raise BDT 2.80 Bn**

- National Tea Company today said it had extended the subscription period to raise BDT 2.80 Bn in capital, as it did not receive the expected response from investors and its shareholders during the initial period. Stock investors attributed the lack of interest among general shareholders to the company's significant losses. The new subscription period will begin tomorrow and continue until March 27, according to a disclosure on the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/national-tea-seek-buyers-again-raise-tk-280cr-3852396>

LHB | Sinha Fashions to sell 2.62 Mn LafargeHolcim shares

- Sinha Fashions Limited – a corporate sponsor of LafargeHolcim Bangladesh – has announced its intention to reduce its stake in the cement manufacturer by selling 2.62 Mn shares. A subsidiary of the once-prominent apparel conglomerate Sinha-Medlar Group, Sinha Fashions owns 27.8 Mn shares, equivalent to a 2.40% stake in the multinational company as of February 2025. According to its announcement on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) today (19 March), the readymade garment exporter will sell these shares at the prevailing market price in the public or block market within 30 working days.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/stocks/sinha-fashions-sell-2627-lakh-lafargeholcim-shares-1097081>

EXCHANGE | Mutual funds shine amid stock market downturn

- While the stock market experienced a downward trend today (19 March), mutual funds emerged as a bright spot, attracting increased investor interest. Out of 37 listed mutual funds, 25 posted gains, five declined, and seven remained unchanged. According to the EBL Securities daily market review, the mutual fund sector delivered the highest return of 2.8% for investors on the day.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/stocks/mutual-funds-shine-amid-stock-market-downturn-1097091>

SONALIPAPR, FINEFOODS, FORTUNE | BSEC fines a dozen manipulators BDT 800 Mn

- The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) in February imposed fines totalling BDT 799.2 Mn on a dozen individuals and entities on a charge of manipulating share prices in three listed companies: Sonali Paper & Board Mills, Fine Foods and Fortune Shoes Limited.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/stocks/bsec-fines-dozen-manipulators-tk80cr-1097071>

EXCHANGE | Stock market task force to propose sweeping reforms to public issue rules

- A task force on the country's capital market reforms is set to deliver a series of recommendations aimed at overhauling public issue rules to attract good companies to the stock market and enhance its depth. One of the crucial proposals from the committee will be to make stock exchanges responsible for ensuring the due diligence of initial public offering (IPO) proposals. Under the new guidelines, the regulator will not approve IPO proposals if the stock exchanges deem them unfit for public listing, sources close to the task force said.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock-corporate/stock-market-task-force-to-propose-sweeping-reforms-to-public-issue-rules-1742405724>

Stock and Commodities*

Index Name	Close Value	Value Change YTD	% Change YTD
Crude Oil (WTI)*	USD 67.50	(USD 3.93)	-5.50%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	USD 71.08	(USD 3.31)	-4.45%
Gold Spot*	USD 3,046.45	USD 437.97	16.79%
DSEX	5,207.36	-9.08	-0.17%
S&P 500	5,675.29	-231.65	-3.92%
FTSE 100	8,706.66	585.65	7.21%
BSE SENSEX	75,449.05	-2,750.88	-3.52%
KSE-100	117,974.03	2,715.03	2.36%
CSEALL	15,406.16	-538.45	-3.38%

Exchange Rates**1 US Dollar = 121.50 BDT****1 GBP = 158.07 BDT****1 Euro = 132.63 BDT****1 INR = 1.41 BDT**

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