

*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:****Cashless Bangladesh gets a boost**

- Bangladesh Bank yesterday took new measures to gear up for the "Cashless Bangladesh 2023-27" programme by offering charge-free transactions through Bangla QR to micro merchants. Micro merchants were previously required to pay a 0.7% charge for each transaction through Bangla QR, which is a quick response based digital payment solution.
- Now, they are allowed to settle such transactions without any charge, according to a central bank notice issued to all banks and non-banks in the country. A Bangladesh Bank official said if micro merchants like street vendors are compelled to pay the charge, then they might not show interest in using the platform.
- And considering how a majority of micro merchants are underprivileged, the central bank has asked lenders not to take the charge and instead list it as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) expenditure, he added.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/cashless-bangladesh-gets-boost-3279231>

**Govt bringing another LNG shipment from spot market**

- The government is going to bring another shipment of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the international spot market, the fifth since February, at a cheaper rate to boost electricity production ahead of the Boro and summer season. The cabinet committee on purchase in a meeting yesterday approved the procurement of 3.36 Mn MMBtu of LNG from Exceletrate Energy LP of the US for BDT 5.79 Bn.
- This time the price of the super-chilled fuel was USD 13.69 per MMBtu. It was USD 14.66 on March 10 when Bangladesh bought the same amount of fuel from Switzerland-based TotalEnergies Gas & Power. In the first week of March the country bought the fuel from Singapore-based Vitol Asia at USD 16.10.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/govt-bringing-another-lng-shipment-spot-market-3279256>

**Bangladesh's footwear exports to US rise by 64.40% in 2022**

- Bangladesh's footwear exports to the United States in 2022 increased by 64.40% to USD 451.40 Mn compared with those of USD 274.58 Mn in 2021 as the US buyers were relocating their sourcing from China and Vietnam. The country's exporters hoped that the US would be the bigger market than the European Union for Bangladeshi footwear in the coming days thanks to the diversion of export orders of the item from China.
- Exporters said that the US buyers were going for the country-of-origin diversification and Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Cambodia were getting the benefit of increased orders for the footwear. According to the US Department of Commerce data, Bangladesh's leather footwear exports in 2022 to the US market also grew by 63.25% to USD 406.49 Mn from that of USD 249 Mn in the past year.

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/197778/bangladeshs-footwear-exports-to-us-rise-by-6440pc-in-2022>

**Banks offer higher than fixed rate to remitters to build forex**

- The volatile foreign exchange market turns out to be a blessing for remitters, but a challenging impediment for importers and eventually consumers. According to bankers, remitters are receiving as much as BDT 114 for a dollar along with a 2.5% cash incentive from the government.
- This rate is much higher than the BDT 107, agreed upon by the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association (Bafeda) and the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB) in September last year. Out of the country's 61 banks, at least 20 are offering higher rates for a dollar than the agreed rate in order to meet the demand for the greenback.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/banking/banks-offer-higher-official-rate-remitters-build-forex-606062>

**Soybean consumption to rise in Bangladesh: USDA**

- Bangladesh's soybean consumption is likely to rise owing to the recovery from the economic slowdown in the fourth quarter of the calendar year, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecasted last week. The agency forecasted that Bangladesh would buy 2.4 Mn tonnes of soybean for crushing in local mills in the 2023-24 marketing year, up 50% from its previous estimate for the marketing year beginning in July.
- Last year's imports were 41% below the USDAs' official estimate of 2.7 Mn tonnes. Higher prices and the foreign exchange crisis affected consumption and imports. "Since the middle of 2022, Bangladesh has been facing a severe dollar shortage that disrupted imports. Appreciation of the US dollar against Bangladeshi taka also increased import costs," said the agency in its Oilseeds and Products Annual released on Thursday.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/soybean-consumption-rise-bangladesh-usda-3280371>

**Govt to appoint int'l operator for New Mooring terminal**

- The government is going to appoint an international operator to run New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) of the Chattogram port. The cabinet committee on economic affairs in a meeting yesterday approved a proposal of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) in this regard.
- The committee approved implementing the CPA's proposal regarding appointment of an international standard private operator for operation and maintenance of New Mooring Container Terminal and Overflow Container Yard as per the Procurement Guidelines for Public Private Partnership Project, 2018. The government is currently in talks with Dubai-based global terminal operator DP World to run the NCT.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/govt-appoint-intl-operator-new-mooring-terminal-3279296>

**Fashion brands expect huge Eid sales as Covid fear goes away**

- Though Eid is still a month away, shopping centring the festival has already begun as consumers are flocking to fashion outlets to buy lifestyle items. Retailers have worn a festive look, decorated their shops and introduced new collections as they think shoppers' sentiments have been positive despite the persisting economic woes. Fashion outlets expect huge sales this season.
- Shoppers will have to pay extra for their purchases as the price of the clothing items has gone up by 15 to 20% due to the hike in raw material costs. Industry people say although shoppers flocked to the markets ahead of Eid last year as well, there was some uncertainty and the fear of catching Covid-19.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/fashion-brands-expect-huge-eid-sales-covid-fear-goes-away-3279311>

**Foreign banks made hay from dollar crisis**

- Amid rising interest rates, Bangladesh's dollar crisis offered a great opportunity for foreign banks to turn significant profits from their Dhaka branch operations. Some foreign banks experienced up to 700% profit growth last year riding on exchange gains from greenback sales in the volatile forex market. Foreign banks made such hefty profits at a time when the country was suffering from faster depletion of forex reserves amid a severe scarcity of dollars.
- Annual balance sheets of foreign banks for the year 2022 show that exchange income mostly contributed to more than double their profits during the global crisis as income growth from dollar sales was far higher than interest earnings, the core banking income for banks. The growth of exchange income of foreign banks was up to 477% last year when the country was in the midst of high inflation triggered mostly by rising dollar prices.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/banking/foreign-banks-made-hay-dollar-crisis-605062>

**Chittagong Urea Fertilizer resumes operation after four months**

- State-owned Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Limited (CUFL) has resumed operation after a four-month closure following a fire incident. The factory located in Chattogram's Anwara upazila started production of urea and ammonia from Thursday afternoon, CUFL Managing Director (MD) Mizanur Rahman told The Business Standard.
- However, the amount of gas required to run the factory in full swing is not available, Mizanur added. On 22 November last year, a fire broke out at the ammonia plant of the fertiliser factory, which caused production to come to a halt.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/industry/chittagong-urea-fertilizer-resumes-operation-after-four-months-604998>

**Import of 20 goods thru Ctg port halves, revenue drops by BDT 25.14 Bn**

- Imports of 20 types of import products through the Chattogram port have halved in the eight months of the current fiscal year 2022-23 compared to the same period last FY, resulting in a drop in revenue earning by BDT 25.14 Bn, according to Chattogram Custom House data.
- In the eight months of FY23, the import of these products, including cane sugar and betel nuts, was 4.45 Mn tonnes, which generated BDT 26.05 Bn revenue earnings. During the same period in FY22, import volume of these products was 8.91 Mn tonnes that brought in BDT 51.19 Bn in revenue.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/import-20-goods-thru-ctg-port-halves-revenue-drops-BDT2514cr-605058>

**Telcos' payment service set to spark debate**

- Mobile network operators have launched a service that would allow subscribers to make payments to secure some government certificates using their mobile balances, a move that may generate a debate about its legality. Grameenphone and Robi, the two largest mobile phone operators in Bangladesh, have already launched the service while Banglalink is scheduled to inaugurate it.
- In collaboration with the Aspire to Innovate (a2i) initiative of the government, Robi Axiata, Grameenphone and Banglalink will facilitate payments using mobile balances, known as direct operator billing (DOB), against 30 types of services, including nationality and birth registration and marriage certificates.
- This will allow customers to make payments for services facilitated by government portals Prothoyon & myGov, which have been developed by the a2i. But according to the Bangladesh Bank, the operators haven't taken any approval from the central bank to roll out the service.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/telcos-payment-service-set-spark-debate-3280586>

**Gold price changes for fourth time in a week**

- In less than a week, Bangladesh's jewellers have revised gold prices four times on the ground of changes in prices of pure gold in the domestic market, reflecting high volatility. Bangladesh Jewellers' Association (Bajus) today hiked the rate of each bhoori of gold by 1% or BDT 1,166 a day after reducing prices to BDT 96,461 per bhoori (11.664 grams).
- Buyers had to purchase gold at BDT 96,461 a bhoori on Thursday. From Friday, buyers will have to pay BDT 97,627 per bhoori of gold from the local market, said Bajus in a press release. On March 18, the association increased prices of the popular metal to a historic high of BDT 98,794 a bhoori citing higher cost of pure gold in the local market.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/gold-price-changes-fourth-time-week-3278981>

**Tax receipts fall BDT 229.78 Bn short of target in July-Feb**

- The government's revenue earnings fell BDT 229.78 Bn or 10.49% short of the target set for the July to February period of the current financial year 2022-23 amid poor customs revenue collection, according to the National Board of Revenue. The NBR collected BDT 1960.37 Bn as income tax, value-added tax and customs duties against the target of BDT 2190.16 Bn which was set for the first eight months of the current financial year.
- Customs revenue fell by 18.92% or BDT 138.15 Bn as the government-imposed import restrictions due to shortage of dollar currency amid global inflation, said NBR officials. Besides, VAT collection fell by 6.99% or BDT 57.39 Bn and income tax collection fell by 5.36% or BDT 34.25 Bn during the July to February period of FY23.

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/197710/tax-receipts-fall-BDT-22978-crore-short-of-target-in-july-feb>

**Food import cost ballooning owing to scanty local output**

- Although Bangladesh has almost achieved self-sufficiency in rice production, its dependence on the international market remains high for food items with import cost rising two and a half times to BDT 808.00 Bn from a decade ago.
- The country, which produced 38.1 Mn tonnes of rice in the fiscal year of 2021-22, had to spend the money to buy rice, wheat, spices, edible oil, oil seeds, pulses, sugar and dairy and milk products, according to Bangladesh Bank data

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/food-import-cost-ballooning-owing-scanty-local-output-3281651>

**BSEC to get power to dissolve board without hearing**

- The finance ministry has drafted rules empowering the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) to dissolve the board of listed companies without any hearing if they fail to submit financial reports or follow corporate governance. The Financial Institutions Division published the draft of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission Act, 2022 on March 5 and sought feedback from stakeholders.
- If the listed issuers fail to submit the annual reports or any other reports or break rules, the commission can restructure the board, the draft act said. In the case of board restructuring, the commission would consult with the primary regulator of listed companies. The commission can't restructure the board without holding a logical hearing. In special cases, the commission can recast the board without holding any hearing considering the interest of the securities market and general investors, said the draft.
- A number of directors of the listed companies have opposed the provision that allows the restructuring of a board without holding any hearing. The commission should allow the existing board to offer their explanation or give statements and then the decision may be taken, they said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/bsec-get-power-dissolve-board-without-hearing-3280566>

**Stocks:****ACI | ACI Tire Solutions begins journey with LingLong Tire**

- ACI Tire Solutions, a subsidiary of ACI Group, has begun its journey in the tyre industry with "LingLong Tire". Subrata Ranjan Das, executive director of ACI Motors Ltd, inaugurated the solutions, said a press release. The company is expecting to bring more of the world's top-class tyre brands in the near future. Officials of ACI Motors and reputed business personalities of the tyre business from Dhaka and all over the country were present.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/organisation-news/news/aci-tire-solutions-begins-journey-linglong-tire-3279216>

**WALTONHIL | Walton brings European brand's AC to local customers**

- Walton Hi-Tech Industries, a powerhouse in the electronics and home appliance markets of Bangladesh, recently launched a premium category air conditioner (AC) designed by European brand ACC. "We released ACC brand's AC in the domestic market to increase our share of customers in the premium segment," said Md Tanvir Rahman, chief business officer of Walton's AC division.
- Walton launched the new product through an event held at its corporate office in the Bashundhara Residential Area of Dhaka last week. The company aims to increase its share in the BDT 50 Bn domestic AC market as the sector has been growing by about 20% annually over the past eight years, including the pandemic period.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/organisation-news/news/walton-brings-european-brands-ac-local-customers-3279226>

**SIMTEX | Simtex Industries ordered to restructure board**

- The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has ordered Simtex Industries to restructure its board in order to ensure effective corporate governance. The stock market watchdog asked the textile company to remove its existing independent directors Md Akram Hossain and Shah Md Asad Ullah, nominated director Sharif Shahidul Islam and chairman Md Sarwar Hossain.
- The company was also asked to form the board with five independent directors, namely: Shobod Deb Nath, Kawser Ahmed, Md Abdul Kaium, Abid Al Hasan and Sheikh Mamun Khaled and make Khaled chairman of the new board. The BSEC issued an order on Wednesday saying that the decision was taken for the sake of the investors and development of the securities market.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/organisation-news/news/simtex-industries-ordered-restructure-board-3279251>

**SALVOCHEM | Salvo Chemical's net profit drops 26% in H1**

- Salvo Chemical Industry, which produces sulphuric acid, sulphate, battery-grade water and glucose, has reported a 26% year-on-year drop in net profit for the six months through December 2022 due mainly to costlier raw materials. The chemical producer logged a net profit of BDT 64.66 Mn in July-December 2022 as against BDT 87.56 Mn in the same period of the last fiscal year, according to its un-audited financial report published on Thursday.
- As a result, the earnings per share (EPS) stood at BDT 0.99 for the six months through December 2022, down from BDT 1.35 for the same period a year before. High prices of local and imported raw materials, currency devaluation and increase in energy prices have adversely affected the overall profitability of the company, said the company in a disclosure.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock/bangladesh/salvo-chemicals-net-profit-drops-26pc-in-h1>

**World Stock and Commodities\***

Index Name	Close Value	Value Change YTD	% Change YTD
Crude Oil (WTI)*	USD 69.90	(USD 5.31)	-7.06%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	USD 75.61	(USD 2.17)	-2.79%
Gold Spot*	USD 1,972.74	USD 198.59	11.19%
DSEX	6,215.30	8.30	0.13%
S&P 500	3,970.99	131.49	3.42%
FTSE 100	7,405.45	-46.29	-0.62%
BSE SENSEX	57,527.10	-3,313.64	-5.45%
KSE-100	39,942.05	-478.40	-1.18%
CSEALL	9,419.35	916.86	10.78%

**Exchange Rates****1 US Dollar = 105.24 BDT****1 GBP = 128.86 BDT****1 Euro = 113.44 BDT****1 INR = 1.28 BDT**

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