

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:**BBS to publish quarterly GDP data from 2024**

- The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) will publish quarterly data on the country's gross domestic product (GDP) from 2024, said Md Matiar Rahman, director general of the state statistics agency. The BBS will publish the GDP data from the first quarter of 2024, he said in a seminar on the occasion of National Statistics Day-2023 at the bureau's headquarters in Dhaka.
- The BBS has taken the move to release quarterly GDP data as it was one of the conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the upcoming USD 4.5 Bn loan for Bangladesh. Rahman said the BBS starts calculation after getting data from various sources of the government.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/bbs-publish-quarterly-gdp-data-2024-3259146>

Chinese company to set up USD 8.7 Mn RMG factory

- China-based IHM Garments and Textile Company Ltd will invest USD 8.7 Mn to establish a garments factory at the Ishwardi Export Processing Zone in Pabna district, says a press release. An agreement to this effect was signed between the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) and IHM Garments at Bepza Complex in the capital on Monday.
- Ali Reza Mazid, member for investment promotion at Bepza and Yu Binbin, chairman of IHM Garments signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations in the presence of Bepza Executive Chairman Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman. This fully foreign owned company aims to annually produce 2.6 Mn pieces of woven tops and 10.6 Mn pieces of knit tops and pants for ladies, kids and men, creating employment opportunities for 2,457 people.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/chinese-company-set-87m-rmg-factory-591490>

Insurance premium collection up 17%

- Premiums collected by the insurance sector in 2022 rose nearly 17% year-on-year in spite of business facing challenges amid the pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war. The growth was 16.81% to be exact, with the total reaching BDT 168.12 Bn, according to data from the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA). Of the amount, life insurance drew BDT 113.99 Bn and non-life the rest.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/insurance-premium-collection-17pc-3259141>

Bank of Ceylon, Bida sign deal on OSS

- The Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC and Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida) signed a memorandum of understanding recently for the former to provide two specialised services for local and foreign investors through an online One Stop Service platform of Bida. Najith Meewanage, the lender's chief executive officer, signed the deal in Bangladesh Bank, said a press release.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/bank-ceylon-bida-sign-deal-oss-3259006>

Deposits thru agent banking decline slightly

- Deposits through agent banking outlets of the country's banks declined slightly to BDT 301.57 Bn in December compared with that of BDT 306.63 Bn in September. According to Bangladesh Bank quarterly report on agent banking, deposits in the rural areas fell by 4.29% while deposits in the urban areas grew by 8.27% in the December-end quarter over the previous quarter.
- Deposits through agent banking were BDT 277.545 Bn in June 2022 and BDT 242.94 Bn in December 2021. So, the overall growth was 24.14% in 2022 over the previous year. Experts said that the deposit growth in the banking system was sluggish in recent months due to high inflationary pressure, economic crisis, low interest rate and loan irregularities.

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/195544/deposits-thru-agent-banking-decline-slightly>

Project spending drops to record 28% in 7 months on austerity, cost hike

- Annual Development Programme (ADP) implementation registered a record low of 28.16% progress in the first seven months of FY23, according to available data, with the implementation rate of some of the ministries and divisions that have the highest allocations being among the lowest. The previous lowest rate of ADP implementation in the July-January period was recorded at 28.45% in FY21.
- Among the 15 ministries and divisions that have got some 83% of the total ADP allocation for this fiscal year, four ministers and divisions - Health Service Division, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, the Secondary and Higher Education Division, the Ministry of Shipping spent below 16% in the July-January of FY23.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/project-spending-drops-record-28-7-months-austerity-cost-hike-591682>

Central bank's USD investment plunges

- Bangladesh Bank's foreign exchange reserves invested in US dollars declined 34% year-on-year to USD 23.63 Bn in February as the country is heavily dependent on the American greenback to settle payments for global trade. The central bank had 73% of its foreign exchange reserves invested in the US dollar as of February 22, data from the BB showed. Forex reserves totalled USD 32.44 Bn on the day.
- The forex reserves denominated in the US currency have been falling for two years owing to escalated import payments against moderate export and remittance receipts. Bangladesh has been facing an acute dollar shortage since the beginning of 2021 after the global economy started to recover from the business slowdown emanating from the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/central-banks-usd-investment-plunges-3259151>

Index stable, investors inactive after imposing floor price

- Following the imposition of floor price in the capital market, stock indices have remained almost stable, but the participation of investors – already suffering due to a liquidity crisis – has decreased and turnover has dropped significantly
- Capital market investors have been struggling to sell their shares as buyers are not interested in acquiring shares stuck at the floor price, causing a bearish trend. Since the floor price was introduced on 28 July last year, the DSEX remained above 6,000 points for 147 consecutive working days.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/stocks/index-stable-investors-inactive-after-imposing-floor-price-591702>

Declined imports hit revenue collection

- Declined imports due to the dollar crisis-induced import curbs has reflected in the government's revenue collection as import duty dropped year-on-year this January. A slight decrease in the price of goods in the world market is another reason behind the drop in revenue collection, which businessmen say will have a negative impact on the country's industries and employment.
- According to the National Board of Revenue (NBR), year-on-year import duty collection growth declined to negative 0.53% in January which was 23% in the previous fiscal year. The growth in import duty collection from July to January — the first seven months of the current fiscal 2022-23 — is less than 8% despite the rise in prices of imported goods. The figure was over 22% in the same period of the last fiscal year.
- "The main reason behind the decrease in import duty collection is the decrease in imports due to the dollar crisis. The government moved to control imports to keep the reserves stable," Mostafa Azad Chowdhury Babu, senior vice-president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), told The Business Standard.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/declined-imports-hit-revenue-collection-591694>

Stocks:**BANKASIA | Bank Asia offers zero cost internet for its app users**

- Bank Asia launched a "Zero cost internet facility" campaign in collaboration with Grameenphone, enabling Bank Asia customers (GP users only) to enjoy cost-free internet while using the lender's Smart App, said a press release. Mohammad Ziaul Hasan Molla, deputy managing director of Bank Asia, inaugurated the campaign at the bank's corporate office in Rangs Tower in Purana Paltan, Dhaka recently.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/bank-asia-offers-zero-cost-internet-its-app-users-3259066>

EXCHANGE | MK Footwear allowed to raise BDT 100 Mn from SME board

- The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has allowed MK Footwear PLC to raise BDT 100 Mn from the small and medium enterprises (SME) platform of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) through a qualified investor offer (QIO). The company will issue 10 Mn shares at a face value of BDT 10 each, and use the fund to purchase machinery. Alpha Capital Management Limited is the issue manager and underwriter of the company's QIO.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/stocks/mk-footwear-allowed-raise-BDT10cr-sme-board-591638>

EXCHANGE | Asif Ibrahim re-elected chairman of CSE

- The board of directors of the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) has re-elected Asif Ibrahim as chairman of the bourse. All independent and shareholder directors unanimously elected him for the next three years at a meeting held on Sunday, according to a press release.
- The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has recently approved a list of seven independent directors following the expiry of the tenure of the incumbents. Apart from Asif Ibrahim, Abdul Halim Chowdhury, Kaashif Reza Choudhury, Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Md. Sajib Hossain, Ms. Ishter Mahal, and Mohammad Naquib Uddin Khan will serve as independent directors.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock/bangladesh/asif-ibrahim-re-elected-chairman-of-cse>

PUBALIBANK | Pubali Bank Perpetual Bond's 2nd half-yearly coupon rate set at 10%

- Pubali Bank Ltd has informed that the trustee of the bond has approved the second half-yearly coupon rate at 10% which has been traded at the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) since March last year. The trustee of the bond announced the coupon rate for the six months period through March 23 this year. The record date for entitlement of coupon of the bond is March 9.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock/bangladesh/pubali-bank-perpetual-bonds-2nd-half-yearly-coupon-rate-set-at-10pc>

MEGHNALIFE | Meghna Life Insurance premium now through Nagad

- Customers can now pay premiums of Meghna Life Insurance in the comfort of their home using Nagad, a mobile financial service of the Bangladesh Postal Department, said a press release on Monday. Besides, they can buy different insurance products through Nagad app offered by the insurance company. To this end, Nagad and Meghna Life Insurance Company Limited recently signed an agreement at the latter's head office in the capital's Motijheel area.
- Because of this partnership, the clients will easily pay monthly, quarterly, and yearly premium of Meghna Insurance Company's different products, such as Ekok Bima (ordinary life insurance), Loko Bima (micro life insurance), and Islami Bima Takaful (Islami Shariah-based ordinary life insurance). They can also pay insurance policy renewal fees using Nagad wallet.

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/195539/meghna-life-insurance-premium-now-through-nagad>

World Stock and Commodities*

Index Name	Close Value	Value Change YTD	% Change YTD
Crude Oil (WTI)*	USD 75.73	USD 0.52	0.69%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	USD 82.29	USD 4.51	5.80%
Gold Spot*	USD 1,817.00	USD 42.85	2.42%
DSEX	6,199.20	-7.80	-0.13%
S&P 500	3,982.24	142.74	3.72%
FTSE 100	7,935.11	483.37	6.49%
BSE SENSEX	59,288.35	-1,552.39	-2.55%
KSE-100	40,784.13	363.68	0.90%
CSEALL	9,315.87	813.38	9.57%

Exchange Rates**1 US Dollar = 106.61 BDT****1 GBP = 128.50 BDT****1 Euro = 112.87 BDT****1 INR = 1.29 BDT**

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

Analyst Certification: Each research analyst and research associate who authored this document and whose name appears herein certifies that the recommendations and opinions expressed in the research report accurately reflect their personal views about any and all of the securities or issuers discussed therein that are within the coverage universe.

Disclaimer: Estimates and projections herein are our own and are based on assumptions that we believe to be reasonable. Information presented herein, while obtained from sources we believe to be reliable, is not guaranteed either as to accuracy or completeness. Neither the information nor any opinion expressed herein constitutes a solicitation of the purchase or sale of any security. As it acts for public companies from time to time, BRAC-EPL may have a relationship with the above-mentioned company(s). This report is intended for distribution in only those jurisdictions in which BRAC-EPL is registered and any distribution outside those jurisdictions is strictly prohibited.

Compensation of Analysts: The compensation of research analysts is intended to reflect the value of the services they provide to the clients of BRAC-EPL. As with most other employees, the compensation of research analysts is impacted by the overall profitability of the firm, which may include revenues from corporate finance activities of the firm's Corporate Finance department. However, Research analysts' compensation is not directly related to specific corporate finance transaction.

General Risk Factors: BRAC-EPL will conduct a comprehensive risk assessment for each company under coverage at the time of initiating research coverage and revisit this assessment when subsequent update reports are published, or material company events occur. Following are some general risks that can impact future operational and financial performance: (1) Industry fundamentals with respect to customer demand or product / service pricing could change expected revenues and earnings; (2) Issues relating to major competitors or market shares or new product expectations could change investor attitudes; (3) Unforeseen developments with respect to the management, financial condition or accounting policies alter the prospective valuation; or (4) Interest rates, currency or major segments of the economy could alter investor confidence and investment prospects.

BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage Limited

Research

Salim Afzal Shawon, CFA	Head of Research	salim@bracepl.com	01708 805 221
Anika Mafiz	Research Analyst	anika.mafiz@bracepl.com	01708 805 206
Fahim Hassan	Research Analyst	fahim.hassan@bracepl.com	01709 636 546
Hossain Zaman Towhidi Khan	Senior Research Associate	hztowhidi.khan@bracepl.com	01708 805 224
Billal Hossain	Research Associate	billal.hossain@bracepl.com	01708 805 229
Md. Tanvir Ahmed	Research Associate	mtanvir.ahmed@bracepl.com	01708 805 201
Syed Tawsifuzzaman	Research Associate	s.tawsifuzzaman@bracepl.com	01708 805 202

International Trade and Sales

Ahsanur Rahman Bappi	Chief Executive Officer	bappi@bracepl.com	01730 357 991
----------------------	-------------------------	--	---------------