

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.

Forex reserve falls below USD 32 billion

- Country's foreign exchange reserve (forex) fell below USD 32 billion again on Wednesday, following a regular bi-monthly payment to Asian Clearing Union (ACU) and the central bank's direct selling of USD to the commercial banks. The forex reserve came down to USD 31.92 billion on the day from USD 33.23 billion on the day before, according to the central bank's latest data. Bangladesh paid USD 1.39 billion to the ACU against imports during the March-April period of the current calendar year. Earlier the forex reserve dropped below USD 32 billion around two months ago mainly due to higher import payments.
- The reserve was recorded at USD 31.93 billion on March 08, following the ACU payment for the January-February period of this year, and on the day before it was USD 33.49 billion. As per the official of Bangladesh Bank (BB), lower rice imports from India have brought down the overall import payments under the ACU arrangement during the period under review. The USD was quoted at BDT 83.10 each in the inter-bank forex market on Wednesday - the rate remained unchanged from the previous working day.
- The central bank resumed providing the forex backup in the recent months through selling the US currency to the banks directly to keep the exchange market stable. Nearly USD 2.0 billion had been sold to the commercial banks since July 01 of the current fiscal year. The central bank might continue with such support to the banks in line with the market demand, BB officials hinted.

<http://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/forex-reserve-falls-below-us-32b-1525888661>

International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects 7.0% growth in FY '18

- Bangladesh economy is set to grow by 7.0% in the current fiscal year (FY), according to the latest projection of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Fund's regional economic outlook for Asia and the Pacific, released on Wednesday, also showed Bangladesh would be the second fastest emerging market and developing economy in the region after India. Indian economy is projected to grow by 7.40% in the current year. They report also mentioned that in Bangladesh, growth should slow slightly to 7.0% in FY2018, while inflation should drop toward target as the effects of food price shocks wane.
- It also mentioned that growth was above 7.0% in Bangladesh in the past year which was mainly driven by consumption. The report also said Asia is embracing the digital revolution. India (USD 69 billion), China (USD 64 billion) and the Philippines (USD 33 billion) are the three largest remittance-receiving countries in the world; Pakistan (USD 20 billion) and Vietnam (USD 14 billion) are also in the top 10. The report also added that while mobile payments are expanding sharply in such economies as Bangladesh, India, and the Philippines, on average Asia is lagging sub-Saharan Africa.

<http://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/imf-projects-70pc-growth-in-fy-18-1525888619>

No change in yield rates of savings tools for now

- Finance Minister ruled out the possibility of revising the yield rates of the government saving certificates since the bank deposit rates are now almost equivalent to those. He also said that they don't need to revise it (yield rate of saving tools). They will settle it in a meeting. The minister also added that the government has a policy to fix the yield rates of savings tools at rates slightly higher than the bank deposit rates. The decision was taken so since the savings tools were floated for resource mobilisation.
- Finance Minister had been under pressure from experts and banks for revising the yield rates of savings tools vis-a-vis those of deposit rates because of the large difference between the two. But due to aggressive deposit hunting by banks, the interest rates of deposits have gone up considerably and those are now close to the rates offered by the savings tools. While presenting the salient features of the national budget for the upcoming fiscal year briefly, Finance Minister also mentioned that the budget size will be something around BDT 4.6 trillion and priorities will be given to human resources development.
- The minister said this year the corporate tax rate will see a change. The minister said the extent of hullabaloo raised over the outflow of money, is not justified since the outflow of fund actually does not take place to that level. Finance Minister again said that tobacco taxation will be very different this year.

<http://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/no-change-in-yield-rates-of-savings-tools-for-now-1525888300>

Summit's Gazipur plant starts supplying power to national grid

- The second unit of Summit power plant in Gazipur has started supplying electricity to the national grid commercially from Wednesday. The 300-megawatt (MW) furnace-oil fired power plant is owned by the consortium of Summit Corporation Ltd and Summit Power Ltd having the stakes of 80% and 20% respectively. The '100 hour Reliability run test' as well as 'dependable capacity test' were completed Wednesday. The power purchase agreement and implementation deal were signed with the government for a period of 15 years on December 10, 2017.
- This is, however, the only furnace oil-fired power plant under the fast-track project that came online within the stipulated timeframe of nine months. In August last, the government issued the letter of intent to the sponsor of this power plant along with several other firms to implement the projects within nine months under fast-track. Summit Gazipur II Power is located in Kodda, Gazipur -- about 30 kilometres (kms) north of Dhaka city. The power plant is supplying power at 230 kilo volt (KV) to Tongi and Kaliakoir grid sub-stations.
- Summit's total power generation reached 1,800 MW with the initiation of supply from its Gazipur power plant, consolidating its position as the leading private sector electricity producer.

<http://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/last-page/summits-gazipur-plant-starts-supplying-power-to-natl-grid-1525888532>

Power tariff to be hiked soon: Finance Minister

- The government is going to increase electricity tariff soon as the cost of raw materials has gone up, said Finance Minister. He said that he is certain that the tariff of electricity will rise. The minister, however, added that the hikes would be gradual to make those bearable. He also hinted that if the power tariff will continue rising in future because the prices of raw materials have risen. Finance minister also described the existing power situation well and said investments have already been made to set up power plants to generate 30,000 megawatts of electricity by 2024. He also said that the size of the next budget would be fixed in a week and it might be BDT 4.60 trillion.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/electricity-price-tariff-be-increased-soon-says-ama-muhith-1574188>

Telecom companies asked to set BDT 5 limit by June 1

- Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission has set a fresh deadline of June 1 for mobile phone operators to limit customers' internet pay per use within BDT 5. The telecom regulator came up with the fresh instruction to the mobile phone companies on Monday as they continued to violate BTRC's earlier directive in this regard. One of the leading mobile operators was earning more than BDT 12.00 billion every year in the absence of such limit. Meanwhile, a BTRC conducted survey showed that 99% of the mobile phone subscribers support the regulatory move to limit pay per use data.
- Operators, however, would be allowed to resume internet connection of the customer under the pay per use tariff after getting any visible consent from them. In case of a data package user, mobile operator will have to take consent from the customer for the using pay per use data above BDT 5 once the data package ends. Even if any customer agrees to continue with pay per use internet tariff rate, he or she, however, must not be charged above BDT 200 within a month under the tariff rate. In February this year, the commission issued a directive in this regard asking mobile phone operators to implement the instruction within March 1, 2018.

<http://www.newagebd.net/article/40819/telcos-asked-to-set-BDT-5-limit-by-june-1>

Singer witnesses record turnover in 2017

- Singer Bangladesh Ltd hopes the demand of consumer durables will be accelerated in the coming days in the country as the government has taken a serious move to ensure access of electricity for all by 2021. Singer, country's largest home appliances and consumer electronic item selling company is also optimistic that Bangladesh's elevation from least developed country to developing country will have positive impact to raise the market size of consumer durables.
- According to the company's latest annual report, Singer recorded the highest BDT 11.1 billion turnover in 2017, registering an increase of 23% compared to the previous year, thanks to stable trading conditions, additional marketing initiatives and presence of new products. As per 2017 annual report, Singer Group as well as the company achieved its highest ever turnover of BDT 11.1 billion in the backdrop of macroeconomic stability and political calmness. The company's profit after tax increased by 37% to BDT 746 million, with consolidated earnings per share (EPS) stood at BDT 9.79 in 2017, from BDT 7.12 in 2016.
- Operating profit increased by 27% to BDT 1.20 billion, from the previous year's operating profit of BDT 935 million, with higher operating margins at 10.7% , the annual report shows. The company's consolidated net asset value (NAV) per share stood at BDT 28.17 in 2017 as against BDT 25.39 in 2016. The net operating cash flow per share (NOCFPS) was BDT 5.17 as against minus BDT 7.69 (restated). Based on the performance of the company, the board of directors has recommended 100% cash dividend for the year 2017, which is 42.8% higher than the last year.

<http://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock-corporate/singer-witnesses-record-turnover-in-2017-1525891412>

World Stock and Commodities*

Index Name	Close Value	Value Change	% Change
Crude Oil (WTI)*	\$71.74	+0.60	+0.84%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	\$77.79	+0.58	+0.75%
Gold Spot*	\$1,313.58	+0.86	+0.07%
DSEX	5627.33	-15.13	-0.26%
Dow Jones Industrial Average	24,542.54	+182.33	+1.28%
FTSE 100	7,662.52	+96.77	-0.02%
Nikkei 225	22,446.45	+37.57	+0.17%

Exchange Rates

USD 1 = BDT 84.16*

GBP 1 = BDT 114.17*

EUR 1 = BDT 99.86*

INR 1 = BDT 1.25*

*Currencies and Commodities are taken from Bloomberg.

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