

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:**Pilot kicks off for digital payment with QR code**

- The Bangladesh Bank will commence a campaign tomorrow to popularise an interoperable QR code across the capital city in a move to bring millions of small businesses such as street vendors and lower-income groups under the digital transaction system.
- The uniform digital payment method, Bangla QR, will help clients pay bills for goods and services through mobile banking applications, mobile financial service (MFS), and payment service providers (PSPs). Ten banks, three MFS providers and three card-based payment gateways will take part in a pilot project of the central bank that will run between January 18 and February 21.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/pilot-kicks-digital-payment-qr-code-3223756>

Economy improving, say two ministers

- While Bangladesh Bank was seeing various challenges looming over the country's economy, two ministers yesterday said the condition of the economy was improving.
- "Due to the ongoing global crisis, the foreign exchange reserves are under pressure for legitimate reasons but we have gradually managed to deal with it," Planning Minister MA Mannan said. The country seems to have handled the fluctuations of inflation well," he said.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/economy-improving-say-two-ministers-3223971>

Village digital booths to ensure banking services in 90,000 villages

- Aspire to Innovate's (A2i) payment processing platform Ekpays and Zaytoon Business Solutions will be introducing village digital booths in about 90,000 villages of the country to bring marginalised people under banking and financial services.
- Initially, some booths will be installed in 50 villages in Munshiganj. Besides, these booths will provide various facilities, including remittance withdrawal, card transactions, bill payments of various services and deposit-withdrawal of Mobile Financial Services (MFS) such as Bkash, and Rocket.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/banking/village-digital-booths-ensure-banking-services-90000-villages-569606>

Matarbari deep-sea port to open in 2026

- State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday hoped for a part of the Chattogram port's Bay Terminal to become operational from early 2026 while the Matarbari deep-sea port either from the middle or end of that year.
- He also hoped for the Chattogram port's Patenga Container Terminal to be operational very soon as around 97% of its construction was complete.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/matarbari-deep-sea-port-open-2026-3223071>

Bangladesh needs structural reforms to attract investment: IMF DMD

- Past reforms have placed Bangladesh today in a better position in macroeconomic management than many low and middle income countries, but further reforms are needed to attract more private investment to sustain higher levels of growth, says a visiting senior IMF executive.
- Besides, she said, "You need policies to improve corporate governance and the financial sector's efficiency to attract a higher amount of foreign direct investment."

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/bangladesh-needs-structural-reforms-attract-investment-imf-dmd-569638>

Higher govt borrowing may crowd out private sector: DCCI

- The central bank's target to raise the public sector credit growth in the January-June half of the ongoing fiscal year may crowd out the private sector, said the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) yesterday.
- The credit growth target for the public sector has been adjusted upwards to 37.7% from 36%, according to the monetary policy statement (MPS) unveiled on Sunday. The goal for the private sector credit growth has been kept unchanged at 14.1%. "The target for public sector credit may cripple new borrowing and investment by the private sector," said DCCI President Sameer Sattar in a press release.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/higher-govt-borrowing-may-crowd-out-private-sector-dcci-3223006>

Bangladesh to be first in Asia to receive loan from IMF's 'Resilience and Sustainability Fund'

- Bangladesh is going to be the first country in Asia to receive loan from International Monetary Fund's (IMF) "Resilience and Sustainability Fund" (RSF).
- The IMF board approved the fund on 13 April, 2022, and it became effective on 1 May, 2022. The fund was created for low and middle-income countries that are at risk due to climate change. According to the IMF, this fund is for countries with low incomes, high debt burdens, high costs to deal with climate change risks, and deficits in development spending.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/bangladesh-be-first-asia-receive-loan-imfs-resilience-and-sustainability-fund-569362>

Payra power plant may halt production due to coal crisis

- 1,320 MW coal-fired Payra power plant may halt its production as banks have declined to open letters of credit (LCs) to import coal due to the dollar crisis, according to UNB. "We may not continue our operation from February next if things are not settled", Shah Abdul Moula, plant manager of the Bangladesh-China Power Company (Pvt.) Limited (BCPCL), said.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/payra-power-plant-may-halt-production-due-to-coal-crisis-1673959434>

Bangladesh urges AIIB to review loan terms

- Bangladesh has requested the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to review its loan terms considering the recent abnormal increase in Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR).
- The finance minister also urged the bank to introduce a cap, redefine spreads, extend maturity period and waive the commitment fee as the World Bank does.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/bangladesh-urges-aiib-review-loan-terms-569602>

BB raises rates on LTFF loans

- Bangladesh Bank has raised the interest rate regarding Long Term Financing Facility (LTFF) under Financial Sector Support Project (FSSP).
- Foreign Exchange Policy Department of the central bank issued a circular to this effect on Monday. According to the circular, an indicative pricing range of 3% to 4% would be applicable to the Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs) until further notice.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/bb-raises-rates-on-ltff-loans-1673938241>

Nat'l roadmap, policy reforms, integrated OSS key to attracting FDI: DCCI

- Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) President Md Sameer Sattar on Tuesday underscored the need for a time-bound national roadmap for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in Bangladesh, to elevate the FDI to GDP ratio to 5%.
- "FDI to GDP ratio is currently 0.80%. To attract FDI, a study should be undertaken to see if the One Stop Service (OSS) is operating in a functional and effective manner conducive to the investors," he said while leading the DCCI Board of Directors in a call with Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida) Executive Chairman Lokman Hossain Miah.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/natl-roadmap-policy-reforms-integrated-oss-key-attracting-fdi-dcci-569550>

Committee formed to revise quota for importing rice, wheat from India

- The commerce ministry has formed a five-member committee to assess the annual demand for rice, wheat and sugar to send a revised quota to India for importing the three essentials to meet the demand in the time of crisis.
- The committee headed by Noor Md Mahbulul Haque, additional secretary (FTA) of the ministry, is scheduled to submit the assessment report to the ministry within the next 10 days, said Senior Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh after a meeting with the senior officials of different ministries, departments and agencies of the government on Tuesday.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/commerce-ministry-forms-committee-assess-annual-demand-3-commodities-569506>

BTRC makes preinstalling Bijoy key board on smartphones mandatory

- The telecom regulator has recently made it mandatory to pre-install Bijoy key board (Android package kit or APK file) on locally manufactured and imported smartphones.
- The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) sent a directive to all mobile manufacturers and the president of the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Importers Association. Any smartphone without Bijoy APK file will not be allowed to be marketed in the country, said the directive.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/telecom/news/btrc-makes-preinstalling-bijoy-key-board-smartphones-mandatory-3223401>

Bangladesh to see effects as global economy heading towards 'recession': BIPSS

- The global economy is heading towards a "recession" which will affect not only large economies but also small economies, including countries like Bangladesh, said an independent think-tank on Tuesday.
- Tensions over the maritime space could be "accelerated" as there is increased Indo-Pacific "competition and uncertainty" over the Pacific island waters, it said.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/bangladesh-see-effects-global-economy-heading-towards-recession-bipss-569442>

Unemployment hits all-time high at 6.91% in Nov

- Bangladesh's unemployment rate hit an all-time high of 6.91% in November, indicating that high economic growth has not been enough to create jobs for the youth. The rate of unemployment hit 6.47% in June, the last month of the fiscal 2021-22, and it accelerated to this new high in November.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/unemployment-hits-all-time-high-691-nov-569674>

Bangladesh's economic outlook still clouded by uncertainties: Cenbank

- The Bangladesh Bank (BB) in its latest annual report has sounded a caution stating that some headwinds to economic growth and inflation outlook could emerge from external factors despite a resilient economic recovery that prevailed in FY22.
- The BB report reads, "The strong recovery in economic activities is expected to prevail during the coming years. However, this growth and inflation outlook is clouded by some uncertainties like pass-through effects of higher global commodity and energy prices into domestic wage and production costs, and potential loss of export demand in Europe caused by the Russia-Ukraine war driven economic slowdown and exchange rate volatility from growing current account deficits."

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/external-factors-dim-economic-outlook-despite-resilient-recovery-fy22-bb-569302>

Growth in financial account ownership has slowed down in Bangladesh: Findings

- While Bangladesh made great strides toward financial inclusion between 2014 and 2017, as measured by the Findex Bangladesh findings, growth in account ownership has slowed in subsequent years.
- In 2021, 53% of adults in Bangladesh owned accounts with financial institutions or mobile money platforms, relative to 50% of adults in 2017. However, a shift in patterns of account ownership illustrates a more nuanced narrative, reads a press release.

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/growth-financial-account-ownership-has-slowed-down-bangladesh-findings-569290>

Stocks:**MTB | MTB launches 'Ei Somoyer Islami Banking' campaign**

- Mutual Trust Bank (MTB) Limited on Monday formally launched a special campaign called 'Ei Somoyer Islami Banking', in order to promote its shariah-based banking operations 'MTB Yaqeen'.
- The top officials of the private commercial bank launched the campaign at a ceremony held at its corporate head office in the city's Gulshan area.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/stock/mtb-launches-ei-somoyer-islami-banking-campaign-1673931159>

EXCHANGE | Panels to look into assets of three mutual funds

- Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has formed three committees to look into the assets of three fund managers: LR Global Bangladesh, Race Asset Management and ICB Asset Management.
- The panels will submit reports within 30 trading days. The regulator formed the committees amid criticism when a report got circulated that UFS Asset Management has embezzled BDT 1.58 Bn from investors' funds.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/panels-look-assets-three-mutual-funds-3223926>

World Stock and Commodities*

Index Name	Close Value	Value Change YTD	% Change YTD
Crude Oil (WTI)*	USD 80.74	USD 5.53	7.35%
Crude Oil (Brent)*	USD 86.43	USD 8.65	11.12%
Gold Spot*	USD 1,909.00	USD 134.85	7.60%
DSEX	6,281.74	74.74	1.20%
S&P 500	3,824.14	-15.36	-0.40%
FTSE 100	7,579.85	128.11	1.72%
BSE SENSEX	60,655.72	-185.02	-0.30%
KSE-100	38,342.21	-2,078.24	-5.14%
CSEALL	8,366.93	-135.56	-1.59%

Exchange Rates**1 US Dollar = 103.99 BDT****1 GBP = 127.77 BDT****1 Euro = 112.66 BDT****1 INR = 1.28 BDT**

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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
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Website

www.bracepl.com

Address

Symphony, Plot No. S.E. (F) - 9,
 Road No. 142, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

E-Mail

Research: research@bracepl.com
 Sales : frader@bracepl.com

Contact

Phone: +880 2 985 2446-50
 Fax: +880 2 985 2451