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Alliance Fortnightly Insight

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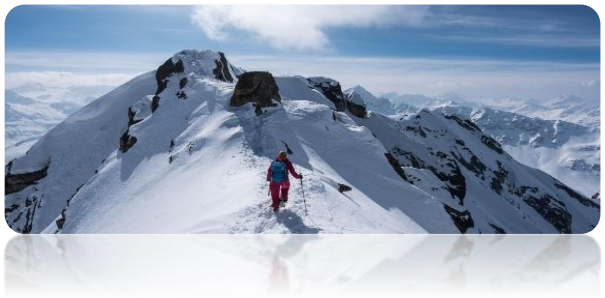
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Editor's Columns

Cement Industry at a Glance:

The cement industry has made a significant comeback after the reopening of the economy in early June from an unprecedented collapse in demand in April and May amid coronavirus-induced nationwide shutdown. 52% sales declined in April-May with a sectoral growth at negative 6.98% in Jan-Aug. There was a loss of tk. 3,000cr amid pandemic with a 6.62% growth in Jun-Aug. 7 out of 36 companies saw negative growth in August. 70% companies attained growth in Jun-August all together with small companies doing better. 6 companies achieved growth during covid-19 shutdown. Currently 36 factories are active with a 3.5cr tonnes yearly demand and an 8cr tonnes yearly production capacity. Current market leaders include Shah Cement, Lafarge Holcim, Bashundhara Cement, Seven Rings etc. 81% market share is enjoyed by 10 companies with total investment of tk 42,000cr and bank loans of tk 30,0000cr.



Brexit is back and the stakes are greater than ever before.

Eight months ago, Britain departed from the European Union. For most individuals back then, nothing much changed, but Brexit is now back with a vengeance as negotiations on a agreement to keep trade going reach the final stretch next year. On January 1, 2021, a drastic increase in cases of coronavirus is piling the pressure on British and European leaders to make concessions and avert a chaotic rupture that would further blight the recession-scarred economy, cause thousands of trucks to queue up at the border, and threaten critical food and medicine supplies. The final scheduled round of negotiations began in Brussels on Tuesday between EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier and his British counterpart, David Frost. It is just two weeks before the critical meeting of EU leaders and one month before the final deadline set by Brussels for an agreement. Since Brexit in January, the United Kingdom has continued to enjoy free entry to EU countries (and vice versa), thanks to transitional agreements that expire on 31 December. Currently, if UK businesses want to escape higher trade costs and other barriers, the country desperately needs a deal with Brussels. Between March and August, UK businesses shed nearly 700,000 jobs. In August, the Bank of England warned that by the end of the year, 2.5 million individuals might be out of work and searching for employment. The United Kingdom does not have a trade agreement that can offer the advantages of continued membership in the European Union, the largest single market region in the world, and the destination for 43% of British exports.

The new Trump punt on White supremacy indicates that a recovery in debate would be hard

The inability of President Donald Trump again to unambiguously denounce Wednesday's White supremacy — to clear up a chilling moment from his debate fight with Democratic nominee Joe Biden — shows how it could be hard for him to reset for his next critical fight. Asked about not repudiating the Proud Boys, a far-right group, during the debate, Trump said: "I don't know who the Proud Boys are. I mean, you'll have to give me a definition, because I really don't know who they are." Trump has never had a reset button, so if after a bellicose first confrontation with Biden, his hopes of retaining his presidency rely on a change in approach and temperament, then he's in deep trouble. His Proud Boys comments demonstrate how his instinct is to strike back harder when cornered, escalate personal attacks and target the punches deeper below the belt. In 2016, when he was an outsider who appreciated the potential for a nationalist, radical movement when no one else did, such an strategy worked well. It is far from clear that an antagonistic strategy is a good match for 2020, when the nation is stuck in several crises and Trump is the incumbent president. He will need a Hail Mary moment to turn around the campaign with Election Day fast approaching. As Tuesday night shows, that's not a scenario in which he seems to prosper.