

## Prime Bank clients to get travel discounts

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Neera, Prime Bank's services tailored for women, and Wander Woman, a women-centric travel and networking platform in Bangladesh, entered into a deal recently enabling discounts for the bank's customers availing the latter's products and services.

Of the discounts, up to 10 percent is on guided tours, 10 percent on trip booking service charge, 10 percent on merchandise and up to 20 percent on hotel bookings inside Bangladesh. Moreover, credit cardholders can avail an equal monthly instalment facility of up to 36 months at zero interest.

Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of the bank, and Sabira Mehrin Saba, founder and CEO of the travel platform, inked a deal at the former's head office in Dhaka, said a press release.



Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank, and Sabira Mehrin Saba, founder and CEO of Wander Woman, exchange signed documents of an agreement at the former's head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

## India makes clean energy push at G20 with global biofuel alliance

REUTERS, New Delhi

India announced on Saturday the launch of a global biofuel alliance at a G20 summit in New Delhi to boost the use of cleaner fuels.

The alliance, with the United States and Brazil as its founding members, would help accelerate global efforts to meet net zero emissions targets by facilitating trade in biofuels derived from sources including plant and animal waste.

"We are launching the Global Biofuel Alliance. India invites all of you to join this initiative," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his remarks to leaders from the Group of 20 major economies at the summit.

**India is targeting to become carbon neutral by 2070 and is expanding use of biofuel in its transport sector.**

The push for a biofuels alliance mirrors the International Solar Alliance launched by New Delhi and Paris in 2015 to bring clean and affordable solar energy within the reach of all.

The International Energy Agency estimates in a July report that global sustainable biofuels production would need to triple by 2030 to put the world's energy system on track towards net zero emissions by 2050.

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, imports about 85 percent of its crude needs and is gradually building capacity to increase its output of biofuels.

India is targeting to become carbon neutral by 2070 and is expanding use of biofuel in its transport sector. It has advanced the deadline by 5 years to 2025 for doubling nationwide ethanol blending in gasoline to 20 percent.

The alliance will help by encouraging global biofuels trade, developing concrete policies on lesson-sharing and promoting provision of technical support for national biofuels programmes worldwide, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said in July.



Customers are seen talking at a stall of Bioline Diagnostics LLP in the "2nd BANGLA MED & LAB EXPO" jointly organised by SD Promo Media, in association with the Engineering Export Promotion Council of India and E3 Solutions, at the International Convention Centre Bashundhara in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: E3 SOLUTIONS

## Medical, lab expo ends in Dhaka

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Over 250 companies and 500 brands from home and abroad focusing the medical, hospital and laboratory fraternity have participated in a "2nd BANGLA MED & LAB EXPO" concluding at International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka yesterday.

The three-day event, alongside a "Medical Tourism Expo", was organised by SD Promo Media, in association with the Engineering Export Promotion Council of India, and E3 Solutions.

The event drew business leaders, doctors, scientists, pathologists, researchers, government officials, policymakers and industry professionals from hospitals, diagnostic labs, pharmaceuticals, research and related sectors, said the organisers in a press release.

The event focused on medical, surgical and X-ray equipment, diagnostic products, biomedical, analytical and laboratory instruments, hospital furniture, medical consumables, orthopaedic implants, medical gas, pharmaceutical machineries and other products.

## IFIC Bank to aid 200 Kumudini student nurses

STAR BUSINESS DESK

IFIC Bank PLC signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Kumudini Nursing College recently to support 200 students enrolled in the Diploma in Nursing course for academic year 2023-24 as a part of its corporate social responsibility.

Shah Alam Sarwar, managing director and chief executive officer of the bank, and Rajiv Prasad Saha, managing director of Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal (BD) Ltd, inked the MoU on Friday, said a press release.



Shah Alam Sarwar, managing director of IFIC Bank, and Rajiv Prasad Saha, managing director of Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal (BD) Ltd, exchange signed documents of a memorandum of understanding on supporting students enrolled in a diploma in nursing programme for 2023-24 on Friday.

PHOTO: IFIC BANK

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (SEP 9, 2023)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 60-Tk 72	-2.22 ↓	0
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 48-Tk 50	-2 ↓	-1.01 ↓
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 48-Tk 50	-6.86 ↓	-5 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 95-Tk 100	2.63 ↑	-7.14 ↓
Soybean (litre)	Tk 155-Tk 160	-3.08 ↓	-9.74 ↓
Potato (kg)	Tk 42-Tk 45	14.47 ↑	58.18 ↑
Onion (kg)	Tk 80-Tk 90	13.33 ↑	100 ↑
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 50-Tk 53	-1.9 ↓	21.18 ↑

SOURCE: TCB

## China's deflation pressures ease, more steps expected to spur demand

REUTERS, Beijing

China's consumer prices returned to positive territory in August while factory-gate price declines slowed, data showed on Saturday, as deflation pressures ease amid signs of stabilisation in the economy.

But analysts say more policy support is needed to shore up consumer demand in the world's second-biggest economy, with a labour market recovery slowing and household income expectations uncertain.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 0.1 percent in August from a year earlier, the National Bureau of Statistics said, slower than the median estimate for a 0.2 percent increase in a Reuters poll. CPI fell 0.3 percent in July.

Core inflation, which excludes food and fuel prices, was unchanged at 0.8 percent in August.

The producer price index (PPI) fell 3.0 percent from a year earlier, in line with expectations, after a drop of 4.4 percent in July. The drop in factory prices was the smallest in five months.

"There is a bit of improvement in the inflation profile. In the meantime, the PPI deflation appears to be narrowing, pointing to a slow and moderate restoring process," said Zhou Hao, chief economist at Guotai Junan International.

"In general, the inflation (rate) still points to weak demand and requires more policy support for the foreseeable future."

Food prices fell 1.7 percent on year while non-food costs rose 0.5 percent - led by rising costs linked to tourism, the bureau said.

Recent floods have damaged corn and rice crops in China's key northern grain-producing belt, sparking domestic food inflation fears as consumers worldwide face tightening food supplies caused by the war in Ukraine.

"Both CPI and PPI are likely to show modest improvements in the fourth quarter," said Luo Yunfeng, an economist at Huajin Securities.

Compared with the previous month, CPI rose 0.3 percent, picking up from 0.2 percent in July, the statistics bureau said.

Pork prices rose 11.4 percent month-on-month, versus no change in July, due to the impact of extreme weather in some areas. They were down 17.9 percent from a year earlier, narrowing from a 26 percent drop on July.

Factory gate deflation moderated in August due to improving demand for some industrial products and rising international crude oil prices, the statistics bureau said.

China's anaemic price changes contrast sharply with the surging inflation most other major economies have seen since the Covid-19 pandemic waned, forcing their central banks to rapidly raise interest rates.

China in July became the first

of the Group of 20 wealthy nations to report a year-on-year decline in consumer prices since Japan's last negative headline CPI reading in August 2021.

August trade data showed China's exports and imports both narrowing their declines, joining a run of other indicators showing a possible stabilisation in the economic downturn, as policymakers seek to spur demand and fend off deflation.

"With early signs of growth stabilisation, we see deflationary pressures easing, a trend reflected in higher commodity prices in August," ANZ analysts said in a note.

Beijing has announced a series of measures in recent months to shore up growth, including mortgage rate cuts and the easing of borrowing rules last week by the authorities to aid homebuyers.

China's central bank could continue to cut interest rates and bank reserve requirement ratios, said Bruce Pang, chief economist at Jones Lang Lasalle.



Customers are seen shopping for groceries at a morning market in Beijing, China yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Japan cuts Q2 GDP on weak spending, wages slide

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan's economy grew less than initially estimated in the second quarter and wages slumped in July, casting doubt over central bank projections that solid domestic demand will keep the country on course for a recovery.

Capital expenditure and private consumption both fell in the April-June period, revised gross domestic product (GDP) data showed on Friday, underscoring the fragile state of Japan's economy, which is already facing headwinds from weakening Chinese and US growth.

Real wages adjusted for inflation fell in July for a 16th straight month in a sign households continued to feel the pinch from rising prices, separate data showed, boding ill for consumption.

"Weak exports to China may be making Japanese manufacturers cautious about investing. The hope is that service-sector firms will pick up the slack, though sluggish consumption could discourage them to spend money, too," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute.

Japan's economy grew an annualised 4.8 percent in April-June, the revised data showed, down from a preliminary estimate of 6.0 percent growth and below market forecasts for a revised 5.5 percent expansion.

The main factor behind the downgrade was a 1.0 percent drop in capital expenditure, compared with a preliminary flat reading, casting doubt on the BOJ's view that robust corporate spending will underpin Japan's post-pandemic economy. The revised decline was bigger than a median market forecast for a 0.7 percent fall.

## US interest rates in 'good place,' for now: Fed officials

AFP, Washington

High US interest rates are doing their job in the fight against inflation, but more hikes may yet be needed, senior US Federal Reserve officials said Thursday.

The comments from three regional Fed presidents with a vote on setting interest rates will likely solidify expectations that the US central bank intends to hold rates steady later this month amid growing signs of weaker labour market conditions.

The Fed has raised its benchmark lending rate 11 times over the past 18 months to a level not seen for 22 years as it grapples with inflation still stubbornly above its long run target of two percent.

After rapidly raising interest rates last year, the Fed slowed down the pace of its hikes over the summer, holding rates steady in June and then raising them by just 25 basis points in July.

Traders currently put the chances of a September pause at more than 90 percent, according to data from CME Group.

"Another skip could be appropriate when we meet later this month," Dallas Fed President Lorie Logan told a conference in Dallas on Thursday, according to prepared remarks.

"But skipping does not imply stopping," she continued, adding that "further evaluation of the data and outlook could confirm that we need to do more to extinguish inflation." The Fed should keep the "water bucket" of future interest rate hikes close at hand in case inflation returns, and "must not hesitate to use it as necessary," she said.

Logan's support for a possible September pause echoes comments from Fed Governor Christopher Waller earlier this week in which he suggested that data showing a weakening jobs market meant the Fed should "proceed carefully."

"There's nothing that is saying we need to do anything imminent anytime soon, so we can just sit there, wait for the data, see if things continue," he told CNBC on Tuesday.

New York Fed President John Williams was less direct than Logan in an interview with Bloomberg on Thursday.

"I think we've gotten monetary policy in a very good place in terms of we have a restrictive stance of policy," he said.

The Fed's interest rate hikes are having "the desired effects of bringing demand and supply more into balance," he continued, adding that inflation was "moving in the right direction."

But Williams did not explicitly say if he favored raising or holding interest rates, and urged the Fed to "keep watching the data carefully, analyzing all of that and really asking ourselves the question, is this sufficiently restrictive?"

Chicago Fed President Austan Goolsbee struck a more optimistic tone than both Logan and Williams in an interview with APM's Marketplace.

"I believe there is a golden path opportunity that is unusual, in recent modern Fed history, to be able to get inflation down without having a recession," he said.

Analysts have raised the chances of the Fed successfully cutting inflation while avoiding recession, which is also known as a "soft landing." "If you look at expectations in the marketplace, there's a growing confidence that we can pull it off," Goolsbee said.