

## DHL Express announces price adjustments for 2024

### STAR BUSINESS DESK

DHL Express, an international express service provider, yesterday announced price adjustments that will take effect on January 1, 2024.

The average increase in Bangladesh will be 4.9 percent. Along with it, a number of services and surcharges will also be adjusted, said a press release.

“Overall, the global macroeconomic situation has started to stabilise although uncertainty remains. Through these turbulent times, we deliver stable and reliable services to all our customers globally,” said Md Miarul Haque, managing director of DHL Express Bangladesh.

**The average increase in Bangladesh will be 4.9 percent. Besides, a number of services and surcharges will be adjusted**

“With the annual price adjustment, we can continue to invest in improved solutions, increase flexibility across our network and focus on our responsibility to the environment to deliver resilient and sustainable logistic solutions,” Haque added.

Prices are adjusted on an annual basis by DHL Express, taking into consideration inflation and currency dynamics as well as administrative costs related to regulatory and security measures.

Both national and international authorities regularly update these measures in the more than 220 countries and territories that DHL Express serves. Depending on local conditions, price adjustments will vary from country to country.



The recent price hike of construction materials was the highest since February earlier this year, when the average growth in construction costs stood at 6.03 percent.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

# Construction costs keep climbing

### MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Construction costs in Bangladesh rose by 6.98 percent in August, making it costlier to implement both public and private construction projects, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

As per the Building Materials Price Index (BMPI), overall construction costs saw month-on-month growth of 0.80 percentage points from 6.18 percent in July.

The recent price hike was the highest since February earlier this year, when the average growth in construction costs stood at 6.03 percent, shows data of the state-run statistical agency.

The BBS released its updated BMPI after compiling the cost of three key components, namely building materials, transport and labour charges, during the February-August period.

Of these components, the price of building materials registered month-on-month growth of 0.95 percentage points to reach 7.27 percent in August.

Similarly, the growth in labour costs stood at 6.18 percent, up by 0.35 percentage points from July.

On the other hand, transportation charges reduced slightly, BBS data shows.

“We are in an adverse situation due to the higher price of building materials,” said Bimal Chandra Roy, president of the Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry.

Most contractors are under pressure as their contracts were signed years earlier, when construction costs were lower, but prices have gone up since then while their funding has not risen at the same pace.

“We don’t know where the solution is,” said Roy, also managing director of Next Spaces Limited.

“We definitely need policy support in the domestic market to adjust the raw material prices at the same pace of the global market,” he added.

Mir Nasir Hossain, managing director at Mir Akhter Hossain Limited, said the trend in growing construction costs has remained constant in recent times owing to the higher US dollar exchange rate.

“Most raw materials for construction, such as cement and stone, come from abroad. So, the freight and import costs directly hit the total value of building materials,” Hossain added.

The price of steel rods for construction has also jumped to more than Tk 1 lakh per tonne from Tk 68,000 before the Covid-19 pandemic while cement prices have gone up by 47 percent as well.

“The domestic gas price instability has also hit the total construction cost,” said Hossain, also a former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Kamal Mahmud, vice president of Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh, said real estate companies are being cautious about taking up new projects for concerns about getting returns properly.

“We always remain in fear of which material’s price will become high. So, the sector’s entrepreneurs are just focusing on ongoing projects,” he added.

Mahmud said the Russia-Ukraine war, ongoing strain on foreign currency reserves, US dollar shortage, runaway inflation and higher construction costs have cemented worries in the sector.

“When any price of raw material goes up, it does not want to drop,” added Mahmud, also chairman of ISO Holdings Limited.

## Three banks get nod to issue Tk 1,600cr bonds

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd (DBBL), Brac Bank Ltd and One Bank Ltd have got permission from the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) to issue bonds worth Tk 1,600 crore collectively.

The three private commercial lenders shared the information in separate filings on the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.

The BSEC approved a proposal of DBBL for the issuance of fully redeemable, non-convertible, unsecured floating rate subordinated bonds of Tk 500 crore.

The face value will be Tk 1 crore each.

The purpose of the bond issuance is to increase the Tier 2 capital to meet capital requirements under Basel III and strengthen the regulatory capital base of the bank, it said.

Subordinated debt is an unsecured loan or bond that ranks below other, more senior loans or securities with respect to claims on assets or earnings. Non-convertibility means the debt instrument can’t be converted into equity.

Brac Bank got the nod to issue a similar category bond worth Tk 700 crore. It will be issued for seven years through private placement to enhance the Tier II capital base.

One Bank has secured the consent also to issue fully redeemable, non-convertible, unsecured floating rate subordinated bonds worth Tk 400 crore. It will be issued under private placement with a tenure of seven years

## No source tax for IT freelancers

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday clarified that freelancers do not have to pay tax at source on remittance from IT freelancing jobs, ending speculations on social media.

The central bank issued a circular in this regard.

The circular comes a day after State Minister for ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak stated that a section of people was spreading lies by saying that freelancers now have to pay source tax, which is a propaganda against Bangladesh Bank, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and him.

However, an NBR official said a 10 percent tax at source would be applicable for non-IT freelancers.

## Vietnam probes China-made wind towers

### REUTERS, Hanoi

Vietnam’s industry ministry has launched an investigation that could lead to anti-dumping duties on wind towers originally from China, following a complaint by domestic producers, the government said on Saturday.

Producers in Vietnam have claimed that dumping of Chinese-origin towers has caused “significant damage” to them, the government said in a statement, without elaborating.

# The dark side of AI on social media

### ANN/ THE STAR

Even innocent pictures or videos shared on social media can be turned into explicit content with artificial intelligence (AI), warns civil society.

Especially vulnerable are women and children.

Melaka Action Group for Parents in Education (Magpie) chairman Mak Chee Kin said parents should refrain from sharing pictures or videos of their children on social media.

He said tech-savvy, irresponsible individuals could do all sorts of things with images or videos found online.

“In this era of AI and advanced technology, incidents of scammed or doctored images, and in some cases, voices, are happening.

“The truth is that the more one exposes themselves to social media, the higher the risks they will encounter,” he said.

He pointed out that even those innocently sharing images or videos of loved ones on social media could be victims of undesired consequences.

“What was supposed to be a fun and happy thing could lead to unforeseen problems,” Mak added.

Parent Action Group for Education chairman Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim said parents should prepare their children to be mentally strong and smart enough to face these technological challenges.

“What we can do is take care of our own children and build their confidence and mental strength to overcome such situations.

“Though it is easier said than done, it is best to talk about it with the children and strengthen their minds,” she said.

When asked, Noor Azimah agreed that the culture of oversharing online is partly to blame, as children are too eager to share without realising the consequences.

Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor executive director Irene Xavier also said women should be cautioned to be wary of uploading pictures of themselves and their families.

“We have cases of women who uploaded pictures of themselves in revealing positions for their boyfriends, and when the

grandmother wearing a bikini.

Earlier this year, Mstar also highlighted how certain quarters used AI to superimpose women’s pictures in the nude.

It quoted user @magmalaya who made a post on X (formerly known as Twitter) cautioning women against posting too much on social media due to this.

MCA Public Services and Complaints Department head Datuk Seri Michael Chong said devious individuals would usually conduct background checks on those they wanted to target through deep fakes.

Chong said some of the cases he handled were between boyfriends and girlfriends and married partners

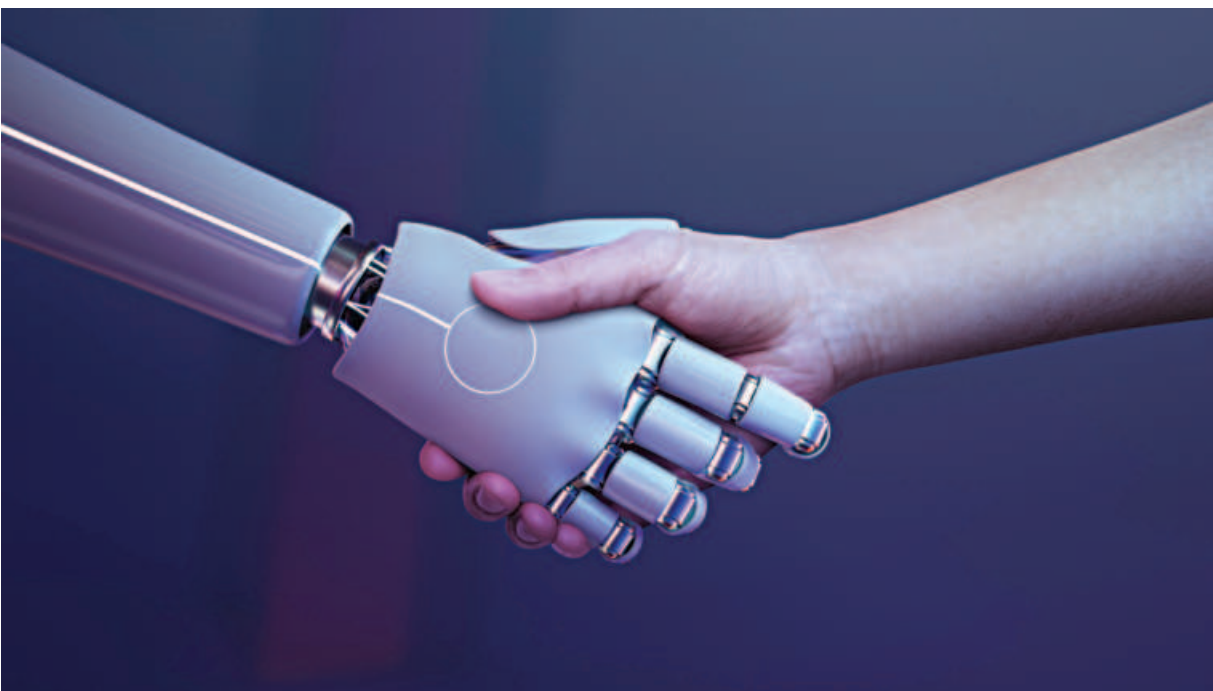


IMAGE SOURCE: FREEPIK

relationship goes sour, these pictures have been abused,” she said.

She added that women should think hard before posting photographs of themselves.

In September, a Melaka lawmaker highlighted how a private Telegram group uploaded hundreds of doctored and obscene pictures of innocent victims, comprising female executives, housewives and even young men.

Kota Laksamana assemblyman Low Chee Leong said the doctored image included a 65-year-old

The comment section of the post was also filled with users discussing how some were conducting “business” by selling the images.

Recently, in Spain, over 20 girls in a town came forward as victims of AI-generated nude images, which were created by feeding an AI app with fully clothed pictures of themselves on social media.

Some of the girls had received demands for payment from the creators of these images, or their pictures would be uploaded to adult websites.

who had parted ways.

“There are cases of perpetrators superimposing images of people in obscene acts, destroying their reputation, and even extorting them for money.

“If you are a victim, don’t keep it to yourselves. Speak to those around you or to non-governmental organisations that have expertise in dealing with such matters.

“From there, weigh your options and decide what you want to do next,” he said, adding that this included lodging police reports.

## Default loans hit

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Recently, the International Monetary Fund said that elevated NPLs could dampen the growth prospects of Bangladesh.

“A holistic and time bound NPL resolution strategy would help address bank balance sheet weaknesses.”

Anis A Khan, a former chairman of the Association of Bankers Bangladesh, a platform of chief executives of lenders, said banks provide restructured and rescheduled facilities to borrowers. As a result, bad loans have increased.

He said almost all companies are facing slower profit growth due to the ongoing US dollar crisis and skyrocketing inflation, making it harder for them to repay loans.

“Besides, there are some willful defaulters who have no intention to pay bank loans while some borrowers have a tendency to divert funds to the sectors not specified in the loan proposals.”

Fahmida Khatun, executive

director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, described the NPL figure as both “surprising and shocking”.

“We should have been careful and efforts were needed on the part of banks and the regulator to stem the rise of NPLs. However, it remains unchecked.”

“This is even more worrying since the culture of willful loan default is taking deep roots.”

She said the spiral in the default loans is alarming at this period of time as the economy is going through one of its worst periods in history in recent times.

The economist says that a rise in default loans will shrink the space for the private sector to borrow from banks as the availability of liquidity will be tight.

“It has macroeconomic implications from many aspects. Loans for the private sector will be costly and the private sector credit growth will be low which has ramifications for production, jobs and overall poverty reduction.”

## Board yet to propose

### FROM PAGE B1

A platform of 11 workers’ federations, including Garments Shramik Samhati Andolon, Bangladesh Textile Garments Federation and Garments Shramik Oikyo Forum, decried the delay even though the board’s tenure was soon to expire.

The platform has been demanding that the minimum wage be raised to Tk 25,000, which involves a 65 percent raise in the basic wage.

The board can extend its tenure if needed, said Jafrul Hassan Sharif, a Supreme Court lawyer, alongside Md Towhidur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation.

Rahman, under a new alliance with other trade unions, submitted a proposal to the board chairman demanding a minimum monthly wage of Tk 23,000.

Sirajul Islam Rony, a representative of workers on the board, said they would apply to the board chairman for extending the tenure.

Regarding the Tk 23,000 minimum

wage demanded by the unions, he said a rational wage structure would be determined in consultation with the board members.

Different factors like calorie intake, transportation costs, house rent and food costs have to be brought under consideration for fixing the new salary, he said.

He also suggested that the government prevent landlords in industrial hubs in Savar and Ashulia from abnormally hiking house rent right after workers’ wages are increased.

Moreover, the government should also sell essential commodities to workers at subsidised rates, he added.

Md Siddiqur Rahman, the representative of garment factory owners on the board, echoed the views of Rony.

He said the board members have already visited different garment factories in Dhaka, Chattogram and Habiganj and talked to the owners and workers and now were analysing their views to determine the wage structure.