

# Star BUSINESS

Government's food distribution under various social protection schemes declined 14 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of fiscal 2024-25



Story on B4

## Cash outside banks keeps rising

AM JAHID and MD MEHEDI HASAN

The volume of cash outside the banking sector of Bangladesh has been increasing since the start of the year due to persistent inflation, the loss of consumer confidence in the sector due to the presence of ailing lenders, and the prevailing situation following the recent political changeover.

During the July-August period of this year, cash outside banks rose by nearly 1 percent, or Tk 2,000 crore, to Tk 292,000 crore compared to the end of June, data from the Bangladesh Bank (BB) showed.

In July, the volume of money outside banks was Tk 291,000 crore, showing an uptick, the central bank data showed. August was the ninth consecutive month that currency outside banks grew.

BB data showed that money outside the banking sector began to decline after June 2023, standing at Tk 248,000 crore at the end of November.

However, this trend reversed in December of last year, a month before the national elections, and money outside banks continued to rise until August.

Between November 2023 to August this year, the volume of currency outside banks soared 17 percent or Tk 44,000 crore, according to the BB.

Bankers attributed persistent inflationary pressure and a deficit of trust among depositors in some banks as factors that contributed to the rise. Besides, the cash crunch at banks could also be responsible for the recent spike in cash among the public, they said.

**During July-August this year, cash outside banks rose by nearly 1 percent, or Tk 2,000 crore, to Tk 292,000 crore compared to the end of June**

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and chief executive officer of Mutual Trust Bank Limited (MTB), said the current situation stems primarily from a lack of overall public confidence.

Many individuals are struggling to withdraw money from ailing banks, leading to apprehension about the future, he said.

Rahman also noted the significant presence of black money in the economy complicates matters further, especially with governmental changes that hinder efforts to address it.

He also pointed out that people are increasingly spending more to manage their daily expenses.

"This trend of money going outside the banking system is alarming. This is why we aim to transition to a cashless society," Rahman said.

Central bank data showed that total deposits in banks declined by nearly 1 percent, or Tk 10,907 crore, to Tk 173,100

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| STOCKS   |           |
|----------|-----------|
| DSEX ▼   | CASPI ▼   |
| 0.92%    | 0.50%     |
| 5,316.21 | 14,972.32 |

| COMMODITIES |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| Gold ▲      | Oil ▼        |
| \$2,674.6   | \$70.59      |
| (per ounce) | (per barrel) |

| ASIAN MARKETS |           |           |          |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| MUMBAI        | TOKYO     | SINGAPORE | SHANGHAI |
| ▼ 0.39%       | ▼ 1.83%   | ▼ 0.13%   | ▲ 0.05%  |
| 81,501.36     | 39,180.30 | 3,590.62  | 3,202.95 |

## Deal for 2nd Excelerate FSRU scrapped

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The interim government has decided not to sign an agreement with US-based Excelerate Energy to build another regasification plant for liquefied natural gas (LNG) imported by Bangladesh, according to officials of state-run Petrobangla.

Petrobangla has cancelled a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for signing the deal, said the officials.

The decision comes following the cancellation of another deal with Summit Group for building a third floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) in the country, said a top Petrobangla official yesterday after a meeting with Excelerate Energy delegates.

Former US ambassador to Bangladesh Peter D

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## Govt takes first step to join China-led trade bloc

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The commerce ministry on Monday sent a letter of consent to the foreign ministry, requesting Bangladesh's entry into the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world's largest trade pact.

It is the first formal step taken by Bangladesh to join the RCEP, which is a major trade agreement that includes trade in services, investment, economic and technical cooperation, and dispute settlement.

Bangladesh has taken the initiative to join the RCEP mainly because it will lose preferential trade benefits to markets that make up the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) group once it graduates from the list of least developed countries (LDCs) in 2026.

The 10 Asean nations -- namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam -- are potential markets for Bangladesh.

Moreover, the RCEP also includes five other countries that have signed the Asean Free Trade Agreement (FTA): China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

These 15 countries within the RCEP account for 30 percent of global GDP, 31 percent of global foreign direct investment (FDI) and one-fourth of global trade.

"We have sent a letter citing our consent to join the RCEP," a senior officer of the commerce ministry said on condition of anonymity.

Earlier, the office of the chief adviser approved

### ABOUT RCEP

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is the largest trade agreement globally
- RCEP countries cover 30% of global GDP and 31% of global FDI

### ON BECOMING RCEP MEMBER ...

- Bangladesh's exports may rise by \$3.26b
- GDP may expand by 0.26%
- FDI may increase by 3.36%

Bangladesh's participation in the RCEP.

The RCEP was formally launched in November 2020 and came into effect in January 2022 before opening up its platform in July of 2023 and allowing other countries to join.

Any developed or developing country as well as LDCs can join as members.

The commerce ministry has already completed the required assessment for joining the RCEP, according to a document from the commerce ministry.

Primarily, it is assessed that Bangladesh's export would increase by \$3.26 billion and FDI by 3.36 percent.

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## Three drug makers ready to produce raw materials in API park

**KEY POINTS**

- Three factories started trial production of active pharmaceutical ingredients at API park in Munshiganj
- The three factories are of ACME, Ibn Sina and Healthcare
- UniMed UniHealth started production on a pilot basis
- ACME Laboratories and Ibn Sina Pharmaceutical submitted samples to regulator for approval
- Healthcare Pharmaceuticals got approval for production from the DGDA

**CHALLENGES**

- Lack of gas connection
- Central effluent plant in the API park is not ready yet

**Industry at a glance**

- Bangladesh depends on import to meet around 85% demand for APIs
- The country imports APIs worth of \$1.3b per year

JAGARAN CHAKMA

After successful trials, three local drug makers are set to begin full-fledged commercial production of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) at the BSCIC API Industrial Park at Gazaria in Munshiganj.

Two of the factories, ACME Laboratories and Ibn Sina Pharmaceutical, are currently awaiting regulatory approval, while the third, Healthcare Pharmaceuticals, has recently begun limited-scale commercial production of these essential drug-making raw materials.

"We obtained approval from the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) and began manufacturing on a limited scale recently," said Muhammad Halimuzzaman, managing director of Healthcare Pharmaceuticals.

He said full-scale commercial production of some items requires permission from the narcotics department, which they are currently awaiting.

The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) established the industrial park along the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, allocating 42 plots for 21 industrial facilities.

So far, four local manufacturers -- ACME Laboratories, Healthcare Pharmaceuticals, Ibn Sina Pharmaceutical and UniMed-UniHealth Fine Chemicals -- have set up factories there.

Commercial production at the park spanning 200 acres was scheduled to begin in April of this year. However, it has yet to be connected to the national gas grid or

equipped with a functional common effluent treatment plant (ETP).

"We commenced trial production nearly three months ago and submitted samples to the drug directorate for approval," said Mizanur Rahman Sinha, managing director of ACME Laboratories Ltd.

According to Sinha, ACME has already invested Tk 500 crore to import sophisticated machinery from the United States, Germany, Japan and India to ensure local APIs meet global standards.

**Bangladesh now meets over 97 percent of its domestic demand for pharmaceutical products and exports medicine to more than 151 countries worldwide**

He said the ACME unit will be able to produce APIs worth Tk 600 crore annually.

Jasim Uddin, chief financial officer of Ibn Sina Pharmaceutical, said they submitted their samples to the drug directorate in June this year.

"If the DGDA approves, we will proceed with commercial production of APIs. Our plant is fully ready to begin commercial production."

However, Nazmul Hossain, director of UniMed UniHealth Pharmaceuticals Ltd, said current market conditions are unfavourable for commencing commercial production due to high financing costs.

"We will begin commercial production once financing costs come down," he added.

**Factories ready, park not**

The initiative to establish the API park was taken in 2008, while the BSCIC allocated the plots to drug makers in 2018.

While pharmaceutical giants like Square and Beximco Pharmaceuticals got plots there, they are yet to begin factory construction.

Previously, SM Shafiuzzaman, secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, which represents 265 local drug makers, said most of their members have not set up factories at the park due to the long delay in providing gas connections.

Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Managing Director Halimuzzaman said API manufacturing needs uninterrupted electricity supply, necessitating a gas-run captive power plant.

Diesel-fueled electricity is expensive, ultimately pushing up costs.

Besides, he mentioned potential health hazards and pollution risks associated with pharmaceutical raw material manufacturing without a functional ETP.

Ashraf Uddin Ahmed Khan, the current chairman of the BSCIC, said he was unaware of the latest condition of the API park as he had only recently been appointed to the post.

Sanjoy Kumar Bhowmik, the immediate past chairman of the BSCIC, told The Daily Star that Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company assured them of gas connections.

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## Ailing FAS Finance's board reshuffled again

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday reconstituted the board of directors of FAS Finance, marking the third time in four years that the ailing non-bank financial institution (NBF) has seen a change in its top decision makers.

In a letter to the managing director of FAS Finance, the central bank said it formed the new board in accordance with Finance Companies Act, 2023 to protect the interests of depositors and ensure proper management at the company.

However, two independent directors appointed to the NBF in July earlier this year -- Maj Gen (ret'd) Md Anwarul Islam and Md Mokhlesur Rahman -- remain on the new board.

Islam has been appointed as chairman of the board of FAS Finance, replacing Mohammed Nurul Amin, who was recently named chairman of Global Islami Bank.

The three new independent board members are Md Abdul Hakim, a former executive director of Bangladesh Bank, Md Anwarul Islam, a former deputy managing director of Agrani Bank, and Mostafa Kamal Ahmed FCA, an accountant.

In May 2021, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) reconstituted the board of FAS Finance with five independent directors.

Then in July this year, the BSEC restructured it once again by removing Md Kamal Uddin Talukder, a former ministry secretary, and Selim Omrao Khan, a journalist.

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## Rejoinder, our reply

Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC (CBC) has sent a rejoinder to a story headlined "Amid liquidity crunch, banks offer high rates to lure depositors" published in The Daily Star's print version on October 15, 2024.

In the rejoinder, the CBC said the report portrays a negative image of the bank.

It said the article incorrectly highlights a simple interest rate of 13.13 percent without explaining that it applies to CBC's innovative FlexiFD product, which has a four-year maturity period.

When the nominal interest rate is annualised, the effective interest rate is 11.13 percent, which is lower than the risk-free 91-day Treasury Bill (T-Bill) yield of 11.48 percent, it said.

The CBC said its liquidity position is one of the best in the industry.

"CBC has maintained a liquid asset ratio of 41.47 percent, far exceeding the regulatory requirement of 13 percent, and its Capital to Risk-weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) stands at 47.24 percent, well above the regulatory requirement of 12.5 percent."

It also said CBC's loan-to-deposit (LD) ratio is comfortably at 60 percent, indicating its commitment to maintaining adequate liquidity in both foreign currency and in taka (BDT).

**Our reply**

In our report, we wrote, "NRB Bank is offering the highest interest rate on deposits at 13.46 percent followed by Commercial Bank of Ceylon at 13.13 percent, and Meghna Bank and South Bangla Agriculture and Commerce Bank at 11.50 percent each." Specifically, the CBC has raised the question regarding this paragraph.

Our report contains the names of the top 10 banks

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Eastern Bank PLC.

প্রবৃদ্ধি যখনই  
প্রয়োজন  
ব্যবসায় চাই  
ইবিএল  
উদ্বোধন

বার্ষিক ও আবার্ষিক  
স্বাধীন নির্মাণ, ক্রয় ও  
সম্প্রসারণের জন্য  
সর্বোচ্চ ২৫ কোটি  
টাকা পর্যন্ত ঋণ সুবিধা

আপনার প্রয়োজনে  
আপনার পাশে  
ইবিএল  
এসএমই ব্যাংকিং

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## Gold sits below record highs

REUTERS

Gold prices firmed on Wednesday and were a whisker away from the record high amid prospects of monetary policy easing globally and geopolitical risks, while investors also awaited US economic data to gauge the Federal Reserve's rate cut trajectory.

Spot gold rose 0.5 percent to \$2,674.38 per ounce by 0718 GMT and was \$11 shy of the all-time high level hit last month. US gold futures gained 0.5 percent to \$2,690.90.

"The game changer for gold is monetary policy easing as it sets the stage for investment demand. The uncertainty surrounding US elections and geopolitical tensions is also supporting prices," said ANZ commodity strategist Soni Kumari.

In the short term weak data could push gold prices above \$2,700, while prices could reach \$2,900 by next year, Kumari said.

Spot gold looks poised to revisit its Sept. 26 high of \$2,685 as it has broken resistance at \$2,666, according to Reuters technical analyst Wang Tao.

Gold is expected to rise to \$2,941 over the next 12 months, delegates to the London Bullion Market Association's annual gathering predicted on Tuesday.

Investors are looking forward to US retail sales, industrial production and weekly jobless claims data, all due Thursday.

## Prime Bank, Mart Promoters sign payroll deal



M Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank PLC, and Md Shakher Hossain, general manager of Mart Promoters, pose for photographs after signing an agreement at the latter's head office in Chattogram recently. PHOTO: PRIME BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC recently signed a payroll solutions agreement with Mart Promoters, a property maintenance company in Chattogram.

M Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of the bank, and Md Shakher Hossain, general manager of Mart Promoters, penned the deal at the latter's office in the port city, the bank said

in a press release.

Under this agreement, employees of Mart Promoters will enjoy a seamless payroll management solution that will streamline salary disbursements and offer exclusive banking services like digital banking solutions, financial services and reduced interest rates on loans and other facilities from the bank.

Riton Barua, head of corporate and institutional banking for Chattogram

region at the bank, Anup Kanti Das, head of payroll banking, Sarker Mehadhi Reza, regional head for Chattogram, and Shakhawat Hossain, head of Khulshi branch, were present.

Bibi Fatima, human resources and admin manager of Mart Promoters, and Jamal Uddin, manager of superstore Khulshi Mart, along with other senior officials from both the organisations, were also present.

## Boeing to raise up to \$25b as strike weighs on finances

AFP, New York

US aircraft manufacturer Boeing unveiled measures meant to replenish its cash flow Tuesday, including an intention to raise up to \$25 billion, as it navigates recurrent production problems and a major US strike.

In a regulatory filing, the aviation giant indicated plans to raise the funds by selling stock and debt.

It also earlier announced that it was in an agreement to obtain \$10 billion in credit from multiple banks.

The moves come amid a machinist strike in the Seattle region which effectively shut down assembly plants for the 737 MAX and 777.

About 33,000 Boeing workers in the Pacific Northwest have been on strike for nearly a month in a fight focused on higher wages and improved retirement benefits.

Workers complain of more than a decade of near-flat wages during a period when inflation has risen.

Boeing staff with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), walked off the job on September 13 after overwhelmingly rejecting a contract offer.

The direct financial impact of the first month of the strike cost Boeing more than \$3 billion, according to Anderson Economic Group.

Following the latest announcement, Boeing shares climbed 2.3 percent to end Tuesday.



Tareq Reaz Khan, managing director of NRB Bank PLC, cuts a ribbon to inaugurate 11 Islamic banking windows of the bank from its head office in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: NRB BANK PLC

## NRB Bank opens 11 Islamic banking windows

STAR BUSINESS DESK

NRB Bank PLC recently opened 11 Islamic banking windows.

The windows are situated at its different branches in Dhaka, Chattogram, Sylhet, Cumilla and Barishal, said a press release.

Tareq Reaz Khan, managing director of the bank, virtually inaugurated the windows as chief guest.

Md Shakir Amin Chowdhury, Md Shaheen Howlader and Md Ali Akbar Faraji, deputy managing directors of the bank, along with other officials of the bank were also present.

| PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY |                      |                            |                          |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
|  | PRICE (OCT 16, 2024) | % CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO | % CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO |
| Fine rice (kg)                         | Tk 64-Tk 80          | 0                          | 9.09 ↑                   |
| Coarse rice (kg)                       | Tk 50-Tk 55          | -1.87 ↓                    | 7.14 ↑                   |
| Loose flour (kg)                       | Tk 40-Tk 45          | 2.41                       | -2.30 ↓                  |
| Lentil (kg)                            | Tk 100-Tk 105        | -4.65 ↓                    | -4.65 ↓                  |
| Soybean (litre)                        | Tk 152-Tk 156        | 1.65 ↑                     | .98 ↑                    |
| Potato (kg)                            | Tk 55-Tk 60          | 2.68 ↑                     | 32.18 ↑                  |
| Onion (kg)                             | Tk 110-Tk 120        | 0                          | 27.78 ↑                  |
| Egg (4 pcs)                            | Tk 54-Tk 58          | 5.66 ↑                     | 4.67 ↑                   |

SOURCE: TCB

## HSBC Innovation Forum discusses digitisation of trade and payments ecosystem

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) Bangladesh recently arranged an event, titled, "HSBC Innovation Forum: Digital Transformation of Payments and Trade Solutions".

The event took place at The Westin Dhaka, where the forum discussed and highlighted the advancement of digital trade solutions and payment systems in the country.

Ian Tandy, managing director and co-head of Global Trade Solutions at HSBC Asia Pacific, attended the event, alongside 150 corporate customers of the multinational bank.

"As business models continue to evolve, we will be there to provide the right digital solution to solve our clients' trade needs," Tandy said.

"By leveraging HSBC's expertise, organisations can not only improve their operational efficiency but also strategically position themselves for growth in a dynamic economic landscape," said Gerard Haughey, managing director and head of wholesale banking at HSBC Bangladesh.



Ian Tandy, managing director and co-head of global trade solutions at HSBC Asia Pacific, and Gerard Haughey, managing director and head of wholesale banking at HSBC Bangladesh, attend an event, titled "HSBC Innovation Forum: Digital Transformation of Payments and Trade Solutions" at The Westin Dhaka in the capital recently. PHOTO: HSBC BANGLADESH

A panel discussion also highlighted the digital solutions that serve as a catalyst for clients' treasury and supply chain management.

Speakers shared their digital journey and highlighted HSBC's pivotal role in their growth journey and technological advancements in the panel discussions.

Among others, Zinnia Tanzina Huq, chief financial officer and finance director at Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, Muhammad Zahangir Alam, executive director at Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd, and Arshad Ali Chowdhury, chief financial officer at Epyllion Group, were also present.

## Social Islami Bank holds business review meeting

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Social Islami Bank Limited recently arranged a business review meeting at its head office in Dhaka.

Mohammad Forkanullah, managing director (acting) of the bank, attended the meeting as the chief guest, according to a press release.

At the meeting, Forkanullah directed branch managers to implement effective liquidity management strategies to run regular activities of the bank.

Abdul Hannan Khan, deputy managing director of the bank, urged the officials to be patient and proactive in providing services to clients.

Muhammed Mizanul Kabir, head of special asset management division at the bank, emphasised the importance of accelerating the recovery of overdue investments.

Md Nazmus Saadat, head of managing director's secretariat and investment wing, along with senior officials, joined the event virtually.



Mohammad Forkanullah, managing director (acting) of Social Islami Bank Limited, attends a business review meeting of the bank at its head office in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: SOCIAL ISLAMI BANK

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
**Office of the Project Director**  
**Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project (1st Revised)**  
Department of Fisheries  
Matshya Bhaban, Ramna, Dhaka-1000

Memo No.: 33.02.0000.949.32.037.23-2784 Date: 16/10/2024

### Job Opportunity

Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project (SCMFP), Department of Fisheries, Bangladesh invites application for appointment of contractual staff for survey vessel RV Meen Shandhani of Department of Fisheries during the project period. The remuneration will be provided as per project DPP. The required qualifications and experiences for the service are given below.

| Sl. no | Name of the Post & Remuneration   | Education Qualification and relevant experiences   | Responsibilities   |
|--------|---|--|--|
| 1      | Master Fisherman<br>Remuneration: BDT 80,000.00 (Eighty Thousand Only)        | 1. Graduation/Diploma on fishing gear technology or equivalent in related subjects from recognized institution.<br>2. Experience: 20 Years (at least 10 years as trawl Master/Boatswain in fishing vessel)<br>3. Working in research vessel will be preferred.   | 1. Perform trawl net and related fishing equipment's operation on the research vessel.<br>2. Supervise trawl net mending and repairing and related works onboard the research vessel and in the shore.<br>3. Assist in ensuring compliance with regulations pertaining to safety at sea and protection of the marine environment.<br>4. Manage and direct the activities of deck crew for navigational support tasks, shoot and hauling of trawls, berthing and un-berthing, cleaning and repair and replacement of defective gears.<br>5. Perform fish handling and related duties as assigned by the Skipper and the Scientists. |
| 2      | Navigational Technician<br>Remuneration: BDT 80,000.00 (Eighty Thousand Only) | 1. Graduation/Diploma or equivalent in Navigation from recognized institution.<br>2. Certificate of Competency (Class-3) Fishing Vessel Deck Officer or equivalent from DG Shipping.<br>3. Experience: 15 Years (at least 5 years as Deck Officer in fishing vessel)<br>4. Working in research vessel will be preferred. | 1. Basic knowledge on seamanship.<br>2. Operation and maintenance of vessel's navigational, deck and trawling appliances.<br>3. Assist Skipper in operation of the research Vessel.<br>4. Perform the regular duties of the Skipper as required.<br>5. Assist in ensuring the safety of crew members and scientists by providing safety instructions.<br>6. Operate ship's navigation and communication electronics when required.<br>7. Keep vessel's dock and storage areas neat and organized.<br>8. Perform related duties, as assigned by Skipper of the Vessel.  |
| 3      | Boatswain<br>Remuneration: BDT 70,000.00 (Seventy Thousand Only)              | 1. Fifteen (15) years of working experiences in fishing vessel.<br>2. Five (5) years of experiences as Boatswain in fishing vessel.<br>3. Experienced in trawl net mending and repairing and related works in fishing vessel<br>4. Working in research vessel will be preferred.   | 1. Perform trawl net mending and repairing and related works onboard the research vessel and in the shore<br>2. Perform trawl net and related fishing equipment's operation on the research vessel.<br>3. Ensuring that the mooring operations, anchoring or the vessel is carried out efficiently.<br>4. Update skipper on the progress of the deck work assigned to deck crew.<br>5. Assist skipper in the planning, scheduling and assigning of work to the deck crew on vessel.<br>6. Perform fish handling and related duties as assigned by the Skipper and the Master Fisherman.  |
| 4      | Greaser<br>Remuneration: BDT 40,000.00 (Forty Thousand Only)                  | 1. Class Eight<br>2. Basic knowledge of seamanship.<br>3. Basic knowledge of engine section/engine of a vessel.<br>4. Minimum 3 years practical experience as greaser in sea going fishing vessel.<br>5. Working in research vessel will be preferred.   | 1. Assist the chief engineer in adjusting, repairing and overhauling machinery.<br>2. Assist duty engineer for operation of engineering equipment.<br>3. Perform regular duties of chief engineer required.<br>4. Perform cleaning tasks of the vessel as required.<br>5. Participate in drills and safety drill.  |

**Terms and Conditions:**

- Applicant must write the name of the post, father's name, mother's name, date of birth, permanent and present address with mobile no., e-mail address, nationality, training and other qualifications. Applications format is available in the Department of Fisheries website ([www.fisheries.gov.bd](http://www.fisheries.gov.bd)).
- Application with attached copy of National ID card, educational qualifications, experience, training and others certificate should be reached to the Project Director, Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project, Department of Fisheries, Matshya Bhaban (Room No.-1011), Ramna, Dhaka-1000 during office hour (09.00 AM to 05.00 PM) on or before 31 October, 2024.
- The authority of the Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project reserve the right to cancel the circulation.
- No TA/DA will be provided for attending interview.
- The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applicants without showing any reasons.

(Md. Zia Haider Chowdhury)  
 Project Director (Add. Charge)  
 Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project (1st Revised)  
 Department of Fisheries, Ramna, Dhaka-1000  
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GD-713



# DSE turnover lowest in two and a half months

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The turnover of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday dropped to a two-and-a-half-month low of Tk 296 crore as skittish investors dumped their holdings to avert price erosions in their portfolios.

The turnover, which is the total value of all the shares traded on the day, was 6.83 percent lower than that on the previous day's trading session.

The last time it was lower than this was on August 4, when the turnover amounted to Tk 208 crore.

The banking sector dominated the turnover chart, accounting for 22.86 percent of the total.

Block trades, which refers to high-volume transactions in securities that are privately negotiated and executed outside the open market, contributed another 6 percent.

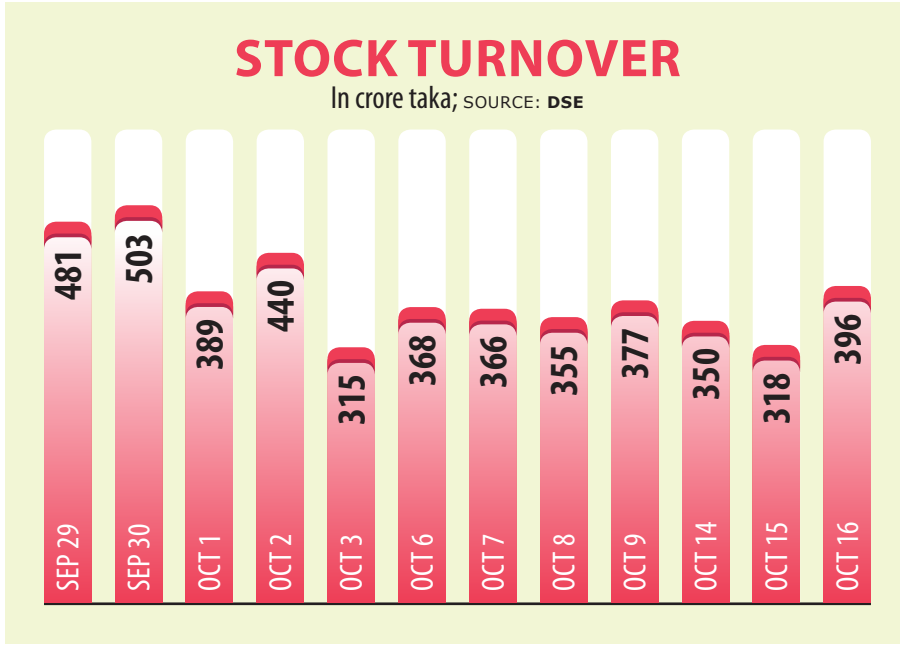
Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream emerged as the most traded share, with a turnover of Tk 18.9 crore.

As a result, the DSEX, the benchmark index of the country's premier bourse, edged down by 49.75 points, or 0.93 percent, from that on the day prior to close at 5,316, marking a fall for a third consecutive day.

Similarly, the DSES index, which represents Shariah-based companies, went down by 12.48 points, or 1.04 percent, to 1,182.

The DS30 index of blue chip firms dropped by 15.75 points, or 0.80 percent, to 1,947.

At Chittagong Stock Exchange, the



CASPI, the main index of the port city bourse, also slipped by 75.32 points, or 0.50 percent, to settle at 14,972.

Of the issues that changed hands at the DSE, prices of 53 rose, 300 decreased and the remaining 42 did not witness any price movement.

Sector-wise, jute, engineering and miscellaneous were the top three sectors to close in the positive, according to the daily market update by UCB Stock Brokerage.

Services and real estate, ceramics and general insurance became the top three sectors to close in the negative.

Most sectors that account for large amounts in market capitalisation, which refers to the value of a company's outstanding shares, posted a negative performance, BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage said in its daily market update.

Among the sectors, non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) experienced the highest loss of 2.21 percent, followed by fuel and power (1.14 percent), pharmaceuticals (1.14 percent), banking (0.85 percent), and food and allied (0.52 percent).

However, gains were made by telecommunication (0.19 percent) and engineering (0.68 percent).

Companies like Grameenphone, Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream, Square Pharmaceuticals, Bangladesh Steel Re-rolling Mills, Khan Brothers PP Woven Bag Industries, British American Tobacco Bangladesh, Libra Infusions, Sonali Aansh Industries, Prime Bank and Paramount Textile drew investors the most, according to LankaBangla Financial Portal.

But none of the companies showcased a double-digit growth in share prices.

Grameenphone, the country's leading mobile operator, rose 1.31 percent.

Shares of Islami Bank Bangladesh, Renata, BRAC Bank, Beacon Pharmaceuticals, Beximco Pharmaceuticals, Olympic Industries, LafargeHolcim Bangladesh, Shahjalal Islami Bank, Mercantile Bank and Heidelberg Cement suffered losses.

Among all the listed companies, Libra Infusions topped the gainers' list, growing by 7.50 percent.

Sonali Aansh Industries, Usmania Glass Sheet Factory, Renwick Jaineswar & Company (BD) and Dulamia Cotton Spinning Mills made gains as well.

GQ Ball Pen Industries, NRB Bank, Eastern Lubricants Blenders and Monno Agro & General Machinery were also on the gainers' chart.

However, Union Insurance Company shed the most, losing 9.85 percent.

Purabi General Insurance Company, Fortune Shoes, City Insurance, Bangladesh National Insurance Company, Miracle Industries and Bangladesh Industrial Financial Company suffered losses as well.

# China set to post slowest quarterly growth this year

## Survey finds

AFP, Beijing

China's economy likely expanded at its slowest pace this year, according to an AFP survey ahead of data Friday, as authorities struggle to reignite consumption amid a chronic debt crisis in the property sector.

Officials have in recent weeks unveiled a string of measures to reignite the world's number-two economy and bring an end to years of depressed business activity with an eye to achieving five percent annual growth.

But after a blistering market rally fuelled by hopes for a long-awaited "bazooka stimulus", optimism has waned as authorities refrained from providing a specific figure for the bailout or fleshing out any of the pledges.

Officials on Friday will unveil figures for the third quarter, with analysts polled by AFP forecasting the economy to have grown 4.5 percent -- having expanded 4.7 percent in the previous three months and 5.3 percent in January-March.

"China's economy got a shot in the arm in September," said Harry Murphy Cruise, economist at Moody's Analytics, referring to the stimulus, but added that investors have been left "disappointed" by the lack of further announcements.

Beijing in September revealed a raft of measures to funnel cash into the economy including a string of rate cuts and loosened restrictions on home-buying. But those supports "won't be enough" to correct woes in the property market -- once a key driving force in the Chinese economy, Murphy Cruise warned.

Analysts surveyed by AFP predict 4.9 percent overall growth in 2024 -- even worse than last year, which was the weakest in decades, outside of Covid.

Beijing has said it has "full confidence" that it will reach its target this year and revive the economy but analysts say officials must go further and inject new money before the end of the year.

# Cash outside banks keeps rising

FROM PAGE B1  
The volume of cash remains outside the banking system, it affects the money supply, which is crucial for managing inflation and maintaining economic stability, they noted.

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Anis A Khan, former managing director and former chairman of the Association of Bankers Bangladesh (ABB), said the volume of money outside banks fluctuates in response to the macroeconomic situation and political environment.

"We had seen such a trend during the Covid-19 pandemic, when people kept a lot of money in hand instead of depositing it in banks."

Amid the political unrest and uncertainty, fear regarding whether their

accounts may be frozen has gripped people, Khan pointed out.

"Basically, those who are assuming assets illegally are interested in keeping money at home instead of banks because of fear," he said.

Another major reason is that people are losing trust in banks as some lenders are failing to repay depositors, the senior banker observed.

MTB's Rahman warned that the public holding excess cash would exacerbate the liquidity crisis at ailing banks, creating pressures that can drive up deposit

costs and lending rates.

He stressed the importance of enhancing the credibility of the banking system and bridging the trust gap with the public to move forward.

Encouraging individuals to deposit money in banks is essential and reducing inflation will also play a crucial role in decreasing the amount of cash outside banks, he said.

"In the meantime, we must focus on building the banks' credibility and alleviating concerns about trust."

# Three drug makers Ailing FAS Finance's

FROM PAGE B1  
The country's pharmaceutical industry has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent decades from a heavily import-dependent sector to one that is nearly self-sufficient.

Bangladesh now meets over 97 percent of its domestic demand for pharmaceutical products and exports medicine to more than 151 countries worldwide.

But the country is still reliant on imported raw materials for around 85 percent of its requirements for both biological and non-biological small molecule APIs, incurring costs of around \$1.3 billion annually.

These APIs are mainly sourced from China and India. Local pharmaceutical companies cater to the remaining demand, with at least six companies, including Square Pharmaceuticals and Incepta Pharmaceuticals, producing APIs worth

more than Tk 2,000 crore annually.

Industry people say at least 50 percent of the country's demand for APIs could be met through local production if more big companies would invest in the sector.

This means the remaining 50 percent would still need to be imported since it is now possible to manufacture only non-biological small molecule APIs locally. "Still, it is a worthwhile venture as the domestic market for non-biological small molecule APIs is currently worth around Tk 6,500 crore," said Sinha of ACME Laboratories.

FROM PAGE B1  
FAS Finance was one of the companies that fell victim to swindling by PK Halder, former managing director of NRB Global Bank, which was later renamed as Global Islami Bank.

At the end of June earlier this year, the NBF's total disbursed loans stood at Tk 1,822.83 crore, of

which Tk 1,820.89 crore, or about 99.89 percent, have turned sour.

The company faced a provision shortfall of Tk 549.96 crore, the highest among all NBFs, by the end of June, as per central bank data.

FAS Finance was first listed on the country's stock exchanges in 2008.

# Deal for 2nd Excelerate FSRU scrapped

FROM PAGE B1  
Haas, who recently joined Excelerate Energy as a strategic advisor, led the delegation.

Petrobangla Chairman Zandendra Nath Sarkar led the Bangladesh side at his office. The Daily Star could not reach him for comment. There are currently two FSRUs in the country, one owned by Summit Group and the other by Excelerate Energy.

Both were on way to start running another two in late 2026.

"The government awarded the works under the controversial Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply Act 2010 without any tender process," said the top Petrobangla official on condition of anonymity.

The interim government reviewed the associated agreements, which were at a primary stage, and cancelled those, he said.

One was a term sheet or MoU signed with Excelerate Energy in November last

year for running an FSRU in Payra area of Patuakhali, he said.

The cancellation notice was issued on the same day the Summit got the notice, he said.

Summit Group got the cancellation letter on October 7 and appealed against the decision.

At yesterday's meeting, Petrobangla informed that it would float a tender if a decision was taken to run new FSRUs and Excelerate Energy would be welcome to participate, according to the

sources.

Besides, Excelerate Energy asked about the cancellation of a recent tender in which it had placed a bid for supplying LNG from the international spot market, they said.

Petrobangla replied that at least three bids were required whereas it received two, said the sources.

"We will invite the suppliers again and you (Excelerate Energy) can join there," the sources quoted the Petrobangla officials as saying.

**বাংলাদেশ সরকারী কর্ম কমিশন**

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Bangladesh Public Service Commission Secretariat  
Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.  
[www.bpsc.gov.bd](http://www.bpsc.gov.bd)

Memo No: 80.00.0000.403.07.007.24-356 Date: 14.10.2024

**Amended e-Tender Notice**

This is to notify all concerned that the following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of goods as follows-

| Name of Goods  | Package No & Tender ID  | Publication, Last Selling and Closing Date & Time   |
|--|---|---|
| Supply of Desktop computer and Laptop  | Invitation Reference No. : 80.00.0000.403.07.007.24-341<br>Tender ID: 1022261 | Tender Publication: 10-October-2024 09:01 am<br>Last Selling: 27-October-2024 04:30 pm<br>Closing: 28-October-2024 11:01 am |
| Supply of Laser Printer, Laser Color printer, Scanner, Multimedia Projector and photocopier Machine. | Invitation Reference No. : 80.00.0000.403.07.007.24-342<br>Tender ID: 1022442 | Tender Publication: 10-October-2024 09:01 am<br>Last Selling: 27-October-2024 04:30 pm<br>Closing: 28-October-2024 11:15 am |
| Supply of Television, Refrigerator, Microwave oven and Air Conditioner                               | Invitation Reference No. : 80.00.0000.403.07.007.24-343<br>Tender ID: 1022824 | Tender Publication: 10-October-2024 09:01 am<br>Last Selling: 27-October-2024 04:30 pm<br>Closing: 28-October-2024 11:30 am |

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP helpdesk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

(Md. Abdur Rouf)  
Assistant Director [Admin-4]  
(Additional Charge of Admin-3)  
Telephone No: 55006639

GD- 712

# Govt takes first step

FROM PAGE B1  
The apparel industry will account for a significant portion of the exports while the demand for skilled and unskilled workers in the garment sector will rise by 18 percent, according to the commerce ministry document.

Overall, the country's GDP will increase by 0.26 percent if it joins the RCEP, the document said.

However, if competitiveness is not increased, the services, investment and e-commerce sectors will face numerous challenges.

Since Bangladesh is located in South Asia and is also a member of the Asean Regional Forum, the country will need to negotiate separately with member countries. However, it will also enjoy the benefit of geographical proximity.

As a result, Bangladesh will benefit from the global value chain, the document said.

Another commerce ministry official mentioned that a meeting

would be held with Japan in Dhaka next month to initiate formal negotiations to sign an economic partnership agreement (EPA).

Bangladesh and Japan have already completed a joint feasibility study on the EPA. However, formal negotiations were delayed due to the political transition in Bangladesh in August.

However, the commerce ministry official did not specifically say when the meeting with Japan would take place.

The official also said the commerce ministry has not taken any steps to start formal negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India.

Bangladesh and India completed a joint study on the CEPA more than two years ago. Both parties are now awaiting the formal launch of negotiations.

He also said that negotiations on a proposed FTA with China are expected to start in the near future.

**বাংলাদেশ মাদ্রাসা শিক্ষা বোর্ড**  
২নং অরফ্যানেজ রোড, বখশিবাজার, ঢাকা-১১১১  
Website: [www.bmeb.gov.bd](http://www.bmeb.gov.bd), E-mail: [info@bmeb.gov.bd](mailto:info@bmeb.gov.bd)

Memo no: 57.16.0000.006.84.008.24-1050 Date: 16/10/2024

**e-Tender Notice**

e-Tender are invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of following goods. Details are given below.

| SL No | Tender ID No | Name of Goods  | Schedule last selling date & time | Last Date and Time for Tender Security Submission | Tender Closing/opening date & time |
|-------|--------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 01    | 1026258      | Supplying of Aluminum Foil Paper Envelopes.  | 30-Oct-2024<br>14:00              | 30-Oct-2024<br>14:30                              | 30-Oct-2024<br>15:00               |
| 02    | 1025858      | Supplying of complete Answer Scripts, MCQ OMR & Pre-printed Form.                    | 13-Nov-2024<br>14:00              | 13-Nov-2024<br>14:30                              | 13-Nov-2024<br>15:00               |
| 03    | 1025892      | Supplying of LDPE film Paper Security Envelope with temper evident void level closer | 30-Oct-2024<br>14:00              | 30-Oct-2024<br>14:30                              | 30-Oct-2024<br>15:00               |
| 04    | 1026230      | Supplying of white printing papers as per specified                                  | 06-Nov-2024<br>14:00              | 06-Nov-2024<br>14:30                              | 06-Nov-2024<br>15:00               |

This is an online Tender, where e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to deposit online through any registered Banks branches up to the date mentioned above.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

  
**Registrar (In charge)**  
 Phone: 9612858  
 e-mail: [registrar@bmeb.gov.bd](mailto:registrar@bmeb.gov.bd)

GD-711



# Govt's food distribution slides 14% in first quarter

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Government's food distribution under various social protection schemes declined 14 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2024-25, mainly because of reduced transfer of grains under the Food for Work (FFW) and Food Friendly Programme (FFP).

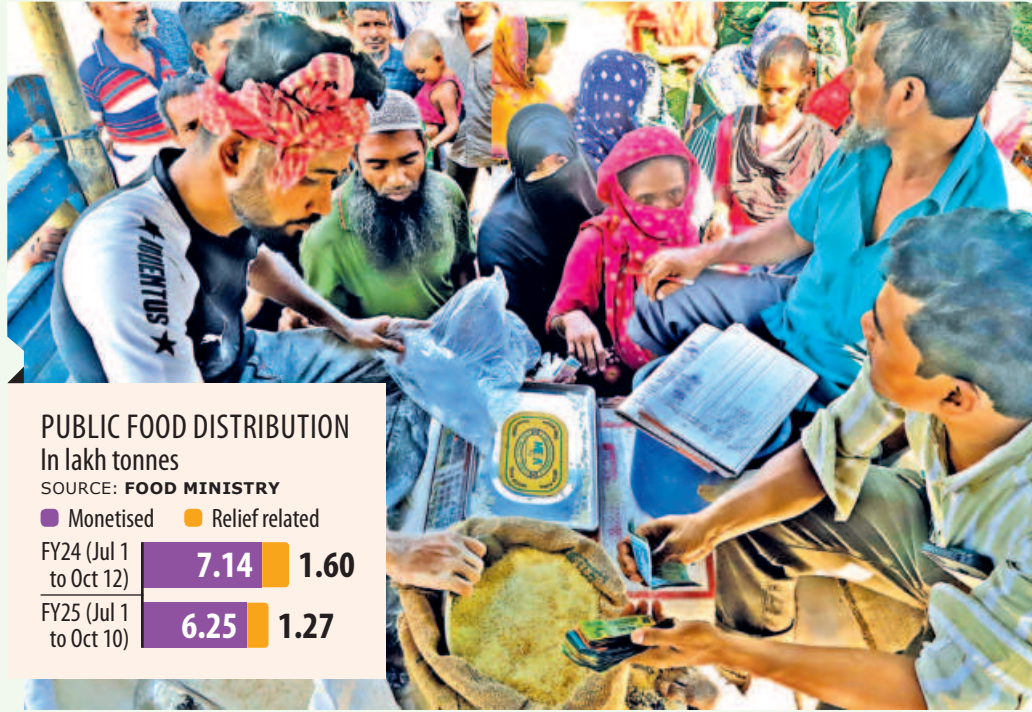
Public agencies, including the Directorate General of Food and the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, distributed 7.5 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat between July 1 and October 10 this year.

This was a marked decrease from the 8.75 lakh tonnes distributed by state agencies between July 1 and October 12 of the previous fiscal year, according to the food ministry data.

The distribution of grains under the FFW scheme, deployed mostly in the semi-urban and rural areas to support poor people, slumped to only 74 tonnes between July 1 and October 10 this year from 10,000 tonnes in the same period a year ago.

The decline was recorded during a time when high food prices squeezed the purchasing power of poor and low-income people.

Md Kamrul Hasan, secretary



## PUBLIC FOOD DISTRIBUTION

In lakh tonnes

SOURCE: FOOD MINISTRY

|                        | Monetised | Relief related |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| FY24 (Jul 1 to Oct 12) | 7.14      | 1.60           |
| FY25 (Jul 1 to Oct 10) | 6.25      | 1.27           |

of the disaster management and relief ministry, said food grains are distributed under various FFW programmes. He added that requests to release cereal under the FFW are sent from the field level.

"We are yet to receive requests from the field level. We usually deliver food on a quarterly basis. We will distribute the grains soon," he said.

However, he said the

ministry distributed a lot of grains under the Gratuitous Relief scheme.

Data shows that the relief and disaster management ministry's distribution under the scheme nearly tripled to 27,830 tonnes between July 1 to October 10 this year from 10,275 tonnes in the previous year.

"We have given plenty of relief to flood-affected

districts," Hasan said.

However, the distribution of food grains under the Vulnerable Group Feeding scheme, a fully subsidised social safety net programme, slumped to 15,800 tonnes in the period from 28,000 tonnes a year ago.

At the same time, there was a jump in the transfer of another fully subsidised scheme under the Vulnerable Group

Development or Vulnerable Women Benefit.

Under the monetised or cash-based food distribution schemes, the food directorate increased sales of rice and wheat under the Open Market Sales programme, a popular scheme in urban areas.

Sales of cereal at subsidised prices under the scheme grew 5 percent year-on-year to 3.19 lakh tonnes from July 1 to October 10.

However, distribution dipped 36 percent to 1.88 lakh tonnes under the FFP during the period, according to the food ministry.

The FFP is a poor-friendly initiative under which the government provides rice to 50 lakh families at Tk 15 per kilogramme (kg).

Every month, each of these families gets 30 kgs of rice for five months in two phases each year.

Contacted, a food ministry official said the ministry distributed 4.5 lakh tonnes of rice under the FFP scheme from September to November. Some 1.5 lakh tonnes will be delivered soon, he said.

"We bought high quantities of wheat last year. So, we had to release a higher quantity of rice in advance at that time to create space to keep wheat in storage," he said.

## WB unlocks another \$30b for developing countries

AFP, Washington

The World Bank approved changes to its lending practices on Tuesday which will unlock an additional \$30 billion in much-needed financing for middle-income developing countries.

The Washington-based development lender has been looking for ways to make its balance sheet go further, while also seeking to bring in additional funding from both member countries and the private sector under new president Ajay Banga.

The bank said in a statement Tuesday that it had approved "a package of financial measures" to boost the lending capacity and affordability of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) — its lending arm for middle-income developing economies.

Key among the reforms was the announcement that the IBRD's minimum equity-to-loans ratio will fall to 18 percent from 19 percent, which will generate \$30 billion in additional financing.

By agreeing to lower the equity-to-loans ratio, the bank is allowing itself to squeeze more lending out of every dollar pledged by donors. It said it will also be removing some fees and lowering the cost of some loans to make them "easier to get and cheaper to repay."

"These new financial measures will boost our lending capacity and enable us to drive meaningful change in the lives of people," Banga said in a statement.

"Our Equity-to-Loans change is the latest step of sustained effort, and whenever we are able to responsibly secure additional optimizations to IBRD's balance sheet — we will," he added.

## UK inflation hits three-year low, fuelling rate-cut hopes

AFP, London

Britain's annual inflation rate fell to a three-year low in September, official data showed Wednesday, fuelling speculation that the Bank of England will resume cutting interest rates next month.

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) reached 1.7 percent last month, well below the BoE's two-percent target, after hitting 2.2 percent in August, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

The inflation rate was lower than the 1.9 percent rise that analysts forecast and has cemented expectations that the central bank would likely cut interest rates again in November.

"Lower airfares and petrol prices were the biggest driver of this month's fall," said Grant Fitzner, chief economist at the ONS.

He added that this was partially offset by a strengthening in food price inflation for the first time since early last year.

The inflation data "clears the path for another 25-basis point rate cut in November," said Richard Flax, chief investment officer at wealth management company

Moneyfarm.

"The underlying conditions support this move — energy prices have eased, the economy has cooled, and the labour market has stabilised," he said.

It comes after official data on Tuesday showed an easing in Britain's unemployment rate and wage growth, which also bolstered analysts' expectations of a rate cut.

**Consumer Prices Index reached 1.7 percent last month, well below the BoE's 2-percent target, after hitting 2.2 percent in August**

"It is absolutely amazing to see such a dramatic drop in the UK's CPI number, and the news had brought nothing (but) good things for the Bank of England," said Naeem Aslam, chief investment officer at Zaye Capital Markets.

The inflation news will likely be a boost to the new Labour government ahead of its maiden budget later this month.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has

warned Britons that the budget announcement will be "painful", with tax rises and spending cuts expected.

"We are being repeatedly told tough decisions are to be announced, so any sliver of good economic news will likely be pounced upon," said Lindsay James, investment analyst at Quilter Investors.

Starmer's Labour government won power at the start of July, ending 14 years of Conservative rule.

In August, the BoE reduced its key rate for the first time since early 2020, from a 16-year high of 5.25 percent as inflation returned to normal levels.

But it decided against a second reduction in a row in September.

The BoE hiked borrowing costs 14 times between late 2021 — when they stood at a record-low 0.1 percent — and the second half of last year.

Supply-chain disruptions following Covid lockdowns, together with soaring food and energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, sent global inflation surging.

## Goal to end extreme poverty by 2030 'out of reach': WB

AFP, Washington

A global target of ending extreme poverty by 2030 is "out of reach," said the World Bank on Tuesday, adding it could take three decades or more to do so.

"Global poverty reduction has slowed to a near standstill, with 2020-30 set to be a lost decade," according to a new report assessing progress on eliminating poverty after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The world is experiencing serious setbacks after decades of progress, noted World Bank senior managing director Axel van Trotsenburg.

This comes amid overlapping challenges including slow economic growth, the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as climate shocks. He warned that with these crises, "a business-as-usual approach will no longer work."

Almost 700 million people, or 8.5 percent of the global population, live on less than \$2.15 daily — the threshold for extreme poverty.

This is set to remain at 7.3 percent in 2030.

Today, extreme poverty remains concentrated in countries with low growth and fragility, many in Sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank said.

And 44 percent of the world's population lives on below \$6.85 a day, which is the poverty line for upper-middle-income countries.

"The number of people living under this poverty line has barely changed since 1990 due to population growth," the bank noted.

It added that "future poverty reduction requires economic growth that is less carbon emissions intensive than in the past."

AFP, Mumbai

A diplomatic falling out between India and Canada over allegations that New Delhi was behind the killing of a Canadian Sikh activist threatens to overshadow increasingly close trade and investment ties between the countries.

Last year India responded angrily after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau publicly accused it of involvement in the murder of separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who had been wanted by New Delhi and was shot dead in June 2023 near his home in Vancouver.

Indian authorities briefly curbed visas for Canadians and forced Ottawa to withdraw several diplomats.

Relations slowly improved, but this week both sides expelled the other's top envoys and other diplomats after India said its ambassador was among the "persons of interest" named in the murder probe.

With neither side appearing ready to back down — Trudeau on Monday branded India's behaviour "unacceptable", while New Delhi has called the allegations "ludicrous" — a prolonged diplomatic rift could eventually impact economic ties.

"As this dispute drags on, both nations will need to carefully manage their actions to avoid a full-blown economic

fallout," Ajay Srivastava of the New Delhi-based Global Trade Research Initiative said in a brief. India's trade with Canada is small in comparison to some of New Delhi's biggest trading partners, but it has grown steadily.

Bilateral merchandise trade rose

from US\$6.36 billion to US\$8.27 billion between the 2019 and 2023 fiscal years, according to India's commerce ministry.

And so far it appears to have weathered the storm, rising again, marginally, to US\$8.4 billion in fiscal 2024.

India's biggest exports to Canada

include pharmaceuticals, steel and iron products and electrical machinery.

New Delhi, in turn, depends on Canadian fertiliser.

"I don't foresee a major impact on trade immediately," Srivastava told AFP.

"Companies in both countries export and import based on their needs. Unless either India or Canada choose to ban trade in some segments, it is unlikely that bilateral trade will be hurt."

The diplomatic dispute, however, is unlikely to help the countries' efforts to reach a free-trade agreement.

Talks on the proposed deal were put on hold last year, before the row broke out, but the possibility of any resumption seems remote before the political issues are addressed.

India is the world's fastest-growing major economy, and Canada ranks 17th in terms of foreign direct investment into the country.

Canadian pension funds have cumulatively invested around US\$55 billion in India, New Delhi's foreign affairs ministry said in June.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board currently holds a more than one percent stake in companies such as food delivery app Zomato, and private-sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank.



In this file photo, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomes Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau upon his arrival at Bharat Mandapam convention centre for the G20 Summit in New Delhi on September 9, 2023.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

## Walton makes more shares available to public

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Sponsor directors of Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC have transferred nearly 29.7 percent of their shares to non-director family members, most of it as gifts, based on a regulatory instruction, according to a BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage report yesterday.

When the Bangladeshi electronics and technology product manufacturer and exporter went for its initial public offering (IPO) in 2020, it had made less than 1 percent of its shares available to the general public.

Afterwards, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) had instructed the company to offload more shares.

Sponsors and directors of the company started to sell their shares from the end of 2023.

They also gifted shares to their family members who were not directors. Though the shares were tradeable, the family members retained those, for which no volatility was created in the market.

In other words, through such share sales and giftings, the company increased free float, meaning the number of shares available for trade by the public.

At present, sponsor and directors hold 74.07 percent of the company's shares, institutional investors 0.52 percent, foreigners 0.09 percent and public 25.32 percent, according to the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

On the other hand, the offloading will enable the company to avail an income tax reduction of 2.5 percent.

According to regulations of the National Board of Revenue, any company having a free float of at least 10 percent will enjoy an income tax rate of 22.5 percent instead of the usual 25 percent.

Moreover, for fiscal year 2023-24, the company announced a 350 percent cash dividend for general shareholders and a 200 percent cash dividend for directors and sponsors.

Though the offloading will result in the company paying an additional Tk 111 crore in dividends, the money will essentially end up going back to the family.

Shares of the A category company rose 2 percent to Tk 494 at the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.

## Jidalai to invest \$5.85m in Adamjee EPZ

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Jidalai Company Limited is going to invest \$5.85 million to set up a factory to produce pullers of zippers at the Adamjee Export Processing Zone.

The Chinese company, a strategic business partner of renowned zipper brand YKK, will annually produce 70 million pieces of pullers of zippers.

The factory will create employment opportunities for 189 Bangladeshi nationals, the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) said in a statement.

Ashraful Kabir, a member of Bepza, and Hsueh-Min, managing director of Jidalai Company, signed an agreement in this regard at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka yesterday.

Bepza Executive Chairman Major General Abul Kalam Mohammad Ziaur Rahman thanked Jidalai for choosing Bepza as its investment destination. He assured Jidalai of providing all sorts of support for running its business smoothly.

Bepza has been one of the most successful organisations in Bangladesh in attracting investment through providing services to businesses for 44 years, Rahman said.