

Star BUSINESS



High production and transport costs behind runaway food inflation

DCCI study finds

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

High production and transportation costs, limited bargaining power due to market structure inefficiency, seasonal supply, price fluctuations and limited market access for producers are triggering food inflation, according to a study by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

The organisation for businesspeople revealed the findings during a seminar titled "Food Inflation: An Analysis on Price Dynamics of Essential Commodities" on its premises yesterday.

Food inflation in the country has remained above 10 percent since April this year.

Meanwhile, overall inflation has

presented the findings.

It claimed that hikes in the prices of most local products came about at the producer's stage due to increasing cost of living of farmers.

The products include coarse and fine rice, onion, potato, lentil, green and red chilli, turmeric, ginger, garlic and Rui fish.

In the case of imported products, like onion, ginger, lentil, sugar, milk powder and red chilli, it found that price hikes occur at the wholesale and retail levels.

The rate of price hike is moderate, largely confined to single digits, although the maximum is 21 percent, it said.

The study also recommended providing businesses with easier access to finance and investment in technology and

Challenges faced by foreign investors in renewable energy

SOURCE: CPD'S FINDINGS

Institutional environment:

- ▶ Administrative delays
- ▶ Corruption in project allocation
- ▶ Inconsistency in rules and processes
- ▶ Lack of priority access to grid

Macroeconomic environment:

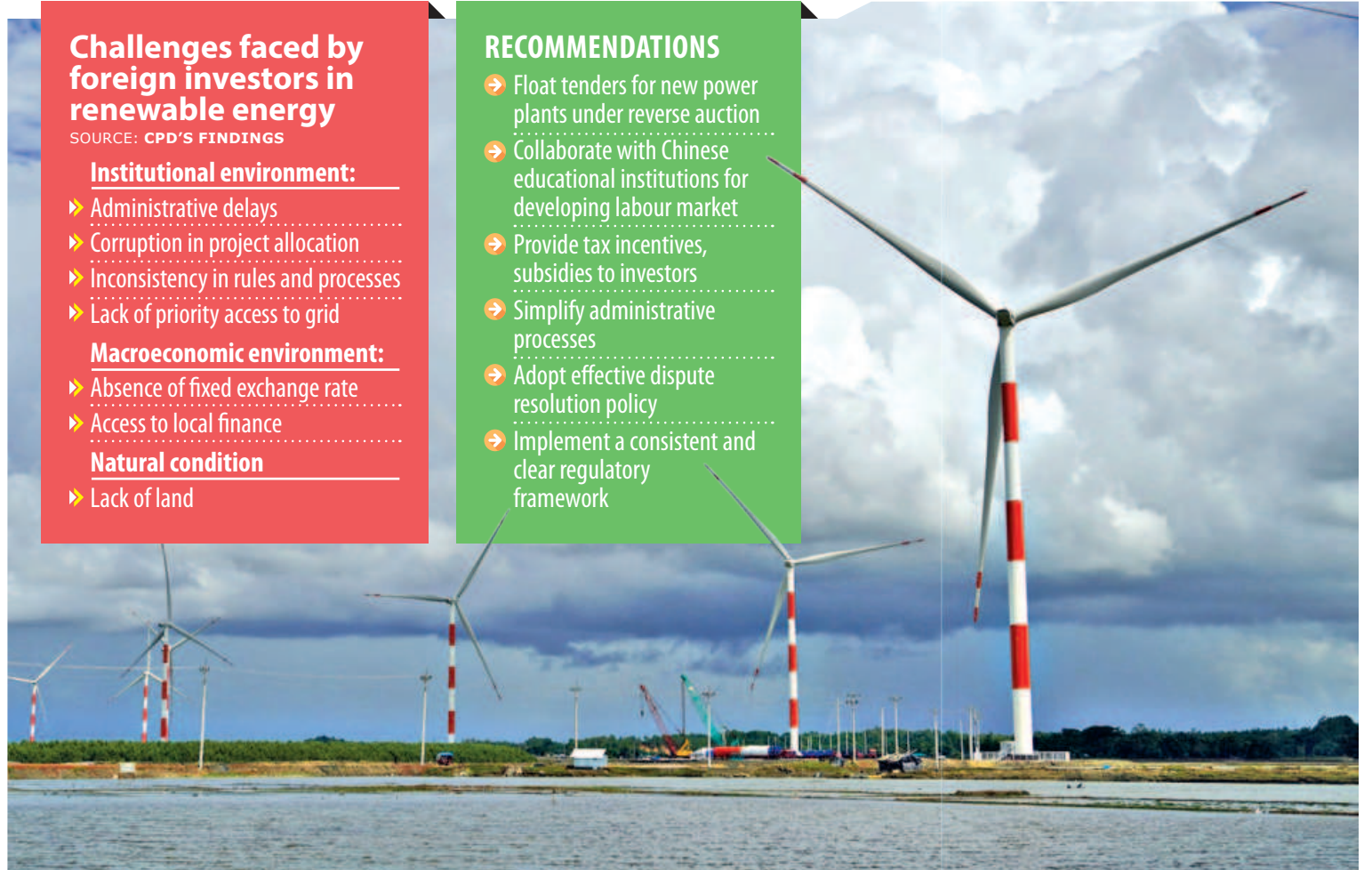
- ▶ Absence of fixed exchange rate
- ▶ Access to local finance

Natural condition

- ▶ Lack of land

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Float tenders for new power plants under reverse auction
- ▶ Collaborate with Chinese educational institutions for developing labour market
- ▶ Provide tax incentives, subsidies to investors
- ▶ Simplify administrative processes
- ▶ Adopt effective dispute resolution policy
- ▶ Implement a consistent and clear regulatory framework



Prioritise withheld renewable energy projects in fresh tenders

CPD urges interim government

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has called for prioritising more than three dozens of renewable energy projects, which have been withheld by the interim government, in upcoming tenders.

Without bidding, 37 clean energy projects were awarded by the previous Awami League government under the controversial "Speedy Enhancement of Power and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act, 2010".

At a dialogue in Dhaka yesterday, local think tank CPD proposed that the tenders for the renewables be floated using the "reverse auction" method, which means multiple suppliers will bid and the lowest price quote would win the contract.

After the political changeover in August, the interim government scrapped a total of 42 power plant projects on August 27, including the 37 renewables plants with a combined capacity of around 3,102 megawatts (MW).

Of them, 30 plants were to be set up under joint ventures or build-own-operate (BOO) initiatives by investors from 15 different countries, according to the CPD analysis.

"The decision to cancel these projects sent a mixed signal to investors about the interim government's long term goal on clean energy," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the CPD, while presenting the keynote paper.

He was speaking at a dialogue, titled

"Overseas Investment in the Renewable Energy Sector: How to Attract Chinese Investment in Bangladesh?", at the Lakeshore Hotel Gulshan in Dhaka.

Moazzem added that the act allowed the previous regime to enter unsolicited contractual arrangements that were criticised for higher contracted prices and the provision of capacity payments.

To reduce the prevailing fiscal and financial

Moazzem said that since the interim government has decided to adopt an open and competitive tendering process for new power plants, this would present a number of opportunities for Chinese investors and financiers. At the same time, the ministry is expected to secure better deals compared to the cancelled ones, he said.

"The Power Development Board (PDB) is now preparing to issue tenders for the development of 10 grid-connected solar power plants in the private sector, each with a capacity of 50 MW, totalling 500 MW. Chinese investors now have a particularly good opportunity to invest as they are known to offer more competitive prices than other foreign or local investors."

The CPD research director said nearly \$39.74 billion in global funds is available for renewable energy investments in Bangladesh, which can be accessed in the form of loans, equity, technical assistance and financial aid.

According to him, Chinese investors prefer using funds from Chinese financial institutions such as the China Development Bank (CDB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Exim Bank of China and Silk Road Fund.

"Chinese investors usually do not engage in the planning phase of renewable energy projects. They prefer local private firms or the government to plan projects and then bid for investment and equipment supply," Moazzem said.

READ MORE ON B3

REASONS BEHIND HIGH FOOD INFLATION

(As per DCCI study)

- ▶ High production and transportation costs
- ▶ Limited bargaining power due to market structure inefficiency
- ▶ Seasonal supply and price variation
- ▶ Limited market access of producers
- ▶ Fluctuation of local currency against US dollar

HOW TO FIGHT FOOD INFLATION

- ▶ Enhance supply chain and reduce intermediaries
- ▶ Remove information asymmetry and create real-time price reporting
- ▶ Create national food reserve to buffer against price spikes
- ▶ Encourage sustainable agricultural practices and climate-smart methods
- ▶ Provide subsidies for key agricultural inputs like fertiliser, oil and electricity

hovered above 9 percent since March 2023, although Bangladesh Bank has been raising the policy rate, meaning that at which it lends money to commercial banks, to curb demand and control inflation.

In May 2022, the policy rate stood at just 5 percent. It has been raised 10 times since and currently stands at 9.50 percent.

The DCCI study recommended strengthening the supply chain by reducing intermediaries and importing essential food items that are in short supply due to imbalances between production and demand.

It also suggested implementing a tracking system for cash memos of local and imported food items, and providing subsidies for key agricultural inputs like fertiliser, oil, and electricity to lower production costs.

AKM Asaduzzaman Patwary, executive secretary (research and development, policy advocacy department) of the DCCI,

research.

It also sought to empower agricultural marketing departments to perform regular audits. Building up market infrastructure is also required, it said.

The study found that an increase in production costs had been affecting producers of coarse rice, broiler chicken, beef, and egg.

Meanwhile, low supply is a common issue that influences the prices of onion, ginger, garlic, and red amaranth.

Inefficient market mechanisms are evident in the trade of broiler chicken, beef, and green and red chilli, it said, adding that high transportation costs significantly impact prices of beef, Rui fish, lentil, salt, and turmeric.

Ashraf Ahmed, president of the DCCI, said there was a large difference between the prices that producers were getting and those that consumers were paying.

READ MORE ON B3

BB eases forex rules

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday eased foreign exchange rules through three separate notices, allowing banks to remit different types of payments abroad without central bank approval.

The relaxed rules will apply to banks making payments to accounts that handle lease rentals by airlines incorporated in Bangladesh.

It will also apply to remittances for service charges to the bank accounts of cloud services, IT infrastructure and remote software applications.

Banks can also make payments on behalf of service arrangers routing respective services to the ultimate users without prior BB approval.

Resident Bangladeshis proceeding abroad for professional or skilled employment or immigration are required to maintain bank accounts in the respective country before obtaining a visa.

So, banks will be allowed to remit funds to deposit in the accounts as per the requirements of relevant authorities abroad.

A central bank official said that Bangladesh Bank has continuously been updating regulations to enhance smooth cross-border transactions.

The new rules will empower banks to make outward remittances on behalf of their customers for meeting relevant payments without prior approval from the Bangladesh Bank, he added.

Govt makes major moves to cut prices of edible oil, sugar, egg

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

In the face of public outcry over the high prices of essential food items, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday slashed customs taxes on imports of eggs, edible oil and refined sugar.

The move is designed to encourage businesses to purchase the items from the international market and bring down prices in the domestic market.

The revenue authority reduced the import tariffs through separate orders.

Import duties for eggs saw the highest cut, being reduced by 20 percentage points to 5 percent, as prices of the cheapest protein source hit as much as Tk 200 per dozen in shops in the capital.

Similarly, the specific import duty for refined sugar was reduced alongside the value-added tax (VAT) on the import, processing and trade of soybean and palm oil.

The duty and VAT have been reduced for eggs, edible oil and sugar with the objective of keeping prices within the purchasing capacity of the masses by increasing supply, the NBR said in a statement.

Inflation in Bangladesh has been hovering above 9 percent since March of 2023 while food inflation has remained above 10 percent since April this year.

In another development yesterday, a senior commerce ministry official said they were considering allowing the import of nearly five crore eggs to



PHOTOS: STAR

The move is designed to encourage businesses to purchase egg, edible oil and refined sugar from the international market and bring down prices in the domestic market.

boost supply in the domestic market and contain prices.

Last week, the commerce ministry allowed seven firms to import 4.5 crore eggs. The NBR said the cost of importing eggs would decline by Tk 13.8 per dozen and become affordable for commoners following the duty reduction.

The reduced import tax for eggs will be valid until December 31 this year.

VAT relaxed for edible oil

In the case of edible oil, the NBR slashed the VAT on imports of soybean and palm oil to 10 percent from 15 percent. It also fully exempted VAT at the production and trading stages of the

highly import-based commodity.

The reduced VAT privilege will remain effective until December 15 this year, the NBR said.

The rate cut followed a Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) recommendation to reduce indirect taxes in order to contain prices of edible oil, especially as 90 percent of Bangladesh's demand for it is met through imports.

Prices of soybean and palm oil soared in the international market over the past several months, according to a BTTC report. As such, local consumers also saw higher prices.

READ MORE ON B3

BB wants to see a strong Nagad

Governor says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) Governor Ahsan H Mansur yesterday said their objective is not to destroy Nagad, but to strengthen the mobile financial service (MFS) provider so it can be a formidable competitor to bKash.

He made the comments while speaking at an event, styled "Stakeholder Consultation on Revitalising Financial Inclusion in Bangladesh", organised by Policy Research Institute (PRI).

While Nagad has some issues relating to transparency and licensing, bKash is the sole big player in the country's MFS sector, he said while speaking as chief guest.

Upay and Rocket are still "small players", Mansur said, adding that six or seven big players were required to make the market competitive and attractive.

Nagad has the potential to play a vital role in moving financial inclusion forward, but it needs a huge investment, he said.

Last month, the BB appointed Muhammad Badiuzzaman Dider, who previously served as director of the central bank's Chattogram office, as the administrator of Nagad for a year after numerous allegations of irregularities in the MFS provider's operations and dealings.

Around 59 percent of people still do not use smartphones in Bangladesh, he said, adding that the government needs to make them more affordable in order to boost financial inclusion. Internet costs also should be reduced, according to Mansur.

"We also need to foster financial and technology literacy."

READ MORE ON B3

TK Group signs deal with StanChart to boost import financing

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Standard Chartered Bangladesh recently signed an agreement with Chattogram-based TK Group of Industries to provide the conglomerate with trade solutions such as liquidity support and import financing.

Luthful Arefin Khan, country head of transaction banking at the multinational bank, and Tariq Ahmed, senior director of TK Group, penned the deal at the latter's head office in Chattogram, according to a press release.

The bank will support imports of key commodities by the conglomerate such as refined, bleached, and deodorised palm olein, crude degummed soybean oil, wheat and other essentials.

"We are proud to be part of TK Group's long-standing success in Bangladesh by creating a solution that not only meets their financial requirements but also enhances their market success and overall supply chain efficiency," said Arefin Khan.

"We look forward to continuing our collaboration and to supporting TK Group to achieve their ambitions," he added.

Ahmed said the bank's innovative product solutions have been ahead of the curve in the market, and they have greatly benefited from that.



Luthful Arefin Khan, country head of transaction banking at Standard Chartered Bangladesh, and Tariq Ahmed, senior director of TK Group of Industries, shake hands and exchange signed documents of an agreement at the latter's head office in Chattogram recently.

PHOTO: STANDARD CHARTERED

"Through this facility, we have been able to get timely liquidity and low-cost financing, which is pivotal in meeting our import obligations and maintaining market stability," said the senior director of TK Group.

The solution leverages Standard Chartered's high-quality balance sheet and unique capabilities to enable TK Group to access funds at a competitive rate and eliminate exchange rate risk, despite market headwinds.

The solution will help TK Group manage their supply chain seamlessly, utilising the bank's strong network and technology platforms to streamline processes and capitalise on market opportunities.

BRAC Bank introduces financing for safe water, sanitation

STAR BUSINESS DESK

BRAC Bank, in collaboration with Water.org, a global nonprofit organisation, and its microfinance partners, has introduced financing for safe water supply and sanitation.

The bank marked the launch through a ceremony, styled "Improving Lives through Water Supply and Sanitation" at the Lakeshore Hotel Gulshan in the capital, according to a press release.

The initiative aims to extend financial support to rural communities to access safely managed water and sanitation products, collaborate with technology partners to introduce advanced solutions, improve the quality of water and sanitation services, and offer financial assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the water and sanitation sector to foster development and sustainability.

The ceremony was a networking session for microfinance institutions (MFIs) and Water.org as they shared knowledge, exchanged ideas, and discussed innovative solutions.

Selim RF Hussain, managing director and CEO of the bank, and Manoj Gulati, regional director for South Asia at Water.org, attended the programme.

Mohammad Jakirul Islam, head of SME strategy, innovation and new business of the bank, moderated the session.



Selim RF Hussain, managing director and CEO of BRAC Bank, and Manoj Gulati, regional director for South Asia at Water.org, attend a programme, styled "Improving Lives through Water Supply and Sanitation", at the Lakeshore Hotel Gulshan in the capital recently.

PHOTO: BRAC BANK

China to almost double support for unfinished housing projects

AFP, Beijing

China said Thursday it would boost credit available for unfinished housing projects to more than \$500 billion as it unveiled another round of measures to shore up the sector and try to reignite the economy.

The real-estate sector has long accounted for around a quarter of gross domestic product and experienced dazzling growth for two decades but a years-long housing slump has battered growth as authorities eye a target of around five percent for 2024.

At a briefing, housing minister Ni Hong offered fresh help, saying Beijing will "increase the credit scale of white-list projects to four trillion" yuan (\$562 billion) by the end of the year, up from more than two trillion.

The "white list" scheme, announced earlier this year, pushes local authorities to recommend housing projects for financial support and work with banks to ensure their completion.

"The urban real estate financing coordination mechanism should strive to include all eligible real estate projects in the white list," Ni said.

"An additional one million worn-out homes... will be renovated," he added. "There are many safety hazards and poor living environments in urban villages, and people are eager to renovate."

The move, he said, would "be conducive to absorbing the existing stock of commercial housing".

China's leadership last month warned the economy was being plagued by "new problems" as officials unveiled a raft of stimulus in one of the biggest drives to boost growth for years.

Among the measures were a string of interest rate cuts, the loosening of restrictions on home-buying and moves to free up cash for banks to lend more.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (OCT 17, 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	0	-2.30 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 100-Tk 105	-4.65 ↓	-4.65 ↓
Soybean (litre)	Tk 152-Tk 156	2.67 ↑	.98 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 55-Tk 60	9.52 ↑	32.18 ↑
Onion (kg)	Tk 110-Tk 120	2.22 ↑	27.78 ↑
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 50-Tk 54	-3.70 ↓	-2.80 ↓

SOURCE: TCB

UCB strikes deal to enhance banking services for Dmoney

STAR BUSINESS DESK

United Commercial Bank (UCB) PLC recently signed an agreement with payment service provider Dmoney Bangladesh to improve banking services for the latter's customers.

Mohammad Arif Hossain, chief executive officer of Dmoney Bangladesh, and Nabil Mustafizur Rahman, additional managing

director of UCB, penned the deal at the bank's head office in Dhaka, according to a press release.

This collaboration aims to provide Dmoney customers with more convenient and efficient banking options, further strengthening the bank's commitment to delivering exceptional financial services.

It includes a range of services, such as the Trust Cum Settlement

Account, options to add money from the bank to the payment service provider, and seamless money transfers from Dmoney to the lender.

Md Abdullah Al Mamoon, deputy managing director of the bank, and Md Sekander-E-Azam, senior executive vice-president and head of transaction banking, attended the event.



Mohammad Arif Hossain, chief executive officer of Dmoney Bangladesh, and Nabil Mustafizur Rahman, additional managing director of United Commercial Bank PLC, pose for photographs after signing an agreement at the latter's head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: UNITED COMMERCIAL BANK

MTB distributes loans among Garo farmers in Madhupur

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mutual Trust Bank (MTB) PLC recently organised a loan disbursement programme for Garo farmers at Madhupur upazila of Tangail, the bank said in a press release.

Under this initiative, 27 farmers received cheques to cultivate pineapples and bananas. Several farmers were able to open MTB Shanchay (SME) accounts, with initial deposits of Tk 10, Tk 50 and Tk 100, digitally on-site through assisted services. Md Jubayer Hossain, upazila nirbahi officer of Madhupur upazila in Tangail, attended the event as the chief guest, according to the press release.

Md Khalid Mahmood Khan, additional managing director and chief business officer of the bank, presided over the programme, where Martin Mree, chairman of the credit office at Pingicha, Madhupur, was present as the special guest.



PHOTO: MUTUAL TRUST BANK

Md Jubayer Hossain, upazila nirbahi officer of Madhupur upazila, attends a loan disbursement programme organised by Mutual Trust Bank for Garo farmers in Tangail's Madhupur recently.

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB)
TCB Bhaban, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215
www.tcb.gov.bd
Commercial Section

Invitation For Tender (International) for Purchase of
(a) 11,000,000 Liter Refined Soyabean Oil, (b) 12,500 M. Ton White Refined Sugar & (c) 10,000 M. Ton Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Commerce.
2	Agency	Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB)
3	Procuring Entity Name	Additional Director (Commercial), TCB, Dhaka.
4	Procuring Entity Code	Not applicable.
5	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka.
6	Invitation for	a) Refined Soyabean Oil, b) White Refined Sugar, c) Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil.
7	Invitation Ref. No.	a) 26.05.0000.016.08.444.24.3121, b) 26.05.0000.016.08.444.24.3122, c) 26.05.0000.016.08.444.24.3123.
8	Invitation Date	17-10-2024

KEY INFORMATION

9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM) (International)
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FUNDING INFORMATION

10	Budget and Source of Funds	TCB's Own Fund.
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PARTICULAR INFORMATION

11	Package No.	a) TCB/Imp-95/Soyabean Oil/2024-25, b) TCB/Imp-95/Sugar/2024-25, c) TCB/Imp-95/Red Lentil/2024-25.
12	Package Name	a) Refined Soyabean Oil, b) White Refined Sugar, c) Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil.
13	Tender Publication Date	18-10-2024
14	Tender Documents Last Selling Date and Time	Date: 04-11-2024, Time: 17:00 P.M
15	Tender Closing Date and Time	05-11-2024, 12:00 P.M
16	Tender Opening Date and Time	05-11-2024, 12:15 P.M
17	Name & Address of the office(s)	Address: (1) Sonali Bank Ltd. Kawran Bazar Branch, TCB Bhaban, Dhaka. (2) Trust Bank Ltd. Kawran Bazar Branch, and (3) Accounts & Finance Division, TCB's Principal Office at Dhaka.

- Selling Tender Document of each item can be purchased from the banks & offices as mentioned in right column.
- Receiving Tender Document: In front of TCB's reception (2nd floor), TCB Bhaban, 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.
- Opening Tender Document: Board Room, TCB.

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

18	Eligibility of Tenderer	Bonafide Suppliers. Details conditions will be mentioned in the Tender documents.
19	Brief Description of goods	Import of a) 11,000,000 (Eleven Million) Liter Refined Soyabean Oil Packed in 02 (Two) Liter Food Grade PET Bottle. b) 12,500 (Twelve Thousand Five Hundred) M. Tons White Refined Sugar packed in 50 (Fifty) kg bag. c) 10,000 (Ten Thousand) M. Tons Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil packed in 25/50 (Twenty Five/Fifty) kg bag.
20	Price of Tender Document	Price of (a) Refined Soyabean Oil tender document is Taka 5,000 (Five Thousand), (b) White Refined Sugar tender document is Taka 5,000 (Five Thousand) & (c) Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil tender document is Taka 5,000 (Five Thousand).

Lot No	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender Security Amount (USD/BDT)	Shipment Schedule
21	1. a) Refined Soyabean Oil b) White Refined Sugar c) Whole Husked (Without Husk) Red Lentil.	Offers are to be made on CFR (C) Chattogram (Previous name Chittagong)/ Mongla Port by Sea or CPT Benapole/ Bangla Hili/Darshana/ Sonamasjid/ Bhomra/ Teknaf by rail/ truck	Tender is to be submitted along with Tender Security amounting to: a) USD 307,084 (US Dollar Three Hundred Seven Thousand Eighty-Four) or BDT 3,68,50,000 (BDT Three Crore Sixty Eight Lac Fifty Thousand) Only b) USD 272,917 (US Dollar Two Hundred Seventy-Two Thousand Nine Hundred Seventeen) or BDT 3,27,50,000 (BDT Three Crore Twenty Seven Fifty Lac) Only c) USD 187,500 (US Dollar One Hundred Eighty-Seven Thousand Five Hundred) or BDT 2,25,00,000 (BDT Two Crore Twenty Five Lac) Only in the form of Pay-Order/ Bank Draft must be issued from any scheduled Bank of Bangladesh and Bank Guarantee from a foreign Bank must be endorsed by any local scheduled Bank. The Successful Tenderer is to submit 5% (Five Percent) Performance Security in the form of Bank Guarantee.	Entire quantity of Goods is to be shipped within (a) 15.01.2025 (b) 15.01.2025 (c) 15.01.2025

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

22	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Golam Khorshed
23	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Additional Director (Commercial), TCB Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.
24	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Principal Office, Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.
25	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Telephone No. 02-8180060 Fax No. 880-2-8180057 E-mail: tcb@tcb.gov.bd tcbimp@tcb.gov.bd

26 **Special Instructions:**
a. All terms and conditions related to the tender and product details are mentioned in the tender document.
b. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender in whole/ in part without assigning any reason.

(Md. Golam Khorshed)
Deputy Secretary
Additional Director, Commercial (Substitute)
Trading Corporation of Bangladesh

GD-723

Key stock index lowest in two and a half months

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks in Bangladesh sank to a two-and-a-half-month low yesterday as investors poured their funds only into selective shares to pocket short-term gains amid price fluctuations.

The DSEX, the main index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), fell by 1.09 percent from the day before to close at 5,257 points, marking four days of constant decline.

The last time the DSEX had reached such a level was on August 4, when it stood at 5,229 points.

The DSES index representing Shariah-compliant companies edged down 0.74 percent from the day prior to close at 1,174 points and the DS30 index comprising blue-chip stocks slipped by 0.90 percent to close at 1,930 points.

Of the 395 scrips traded at the DSE, 53 saw their prices rise while that of 293 fell and 49 did not witness any movement.

Daily turnover of the DSE, which indicates the volume of shares traded, increased by 3.56 percent from the day prior to about Tk 306 crore.

The banking sector dominated the turnover chart, accounting for about 22 percent of the total.

Block trades, meaning high-volume securities transactions that are privately negotiated and executed outside of the open market, contributed 4.1 percent,

or Tk 12.7 crore, of the turnover, Shanta Securities said in its daily market update.

Agni Systems Limited emerged as the most traded share, registering a turnover of Tk 22.8 crore, followed by Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice cream PLC, BRAC Bank and Islami Bank Bangladesh.

Among all sectors, non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) and ceramics were the only two that closed in positive territory, showed the daily market update of UCB Stock Brokerage.

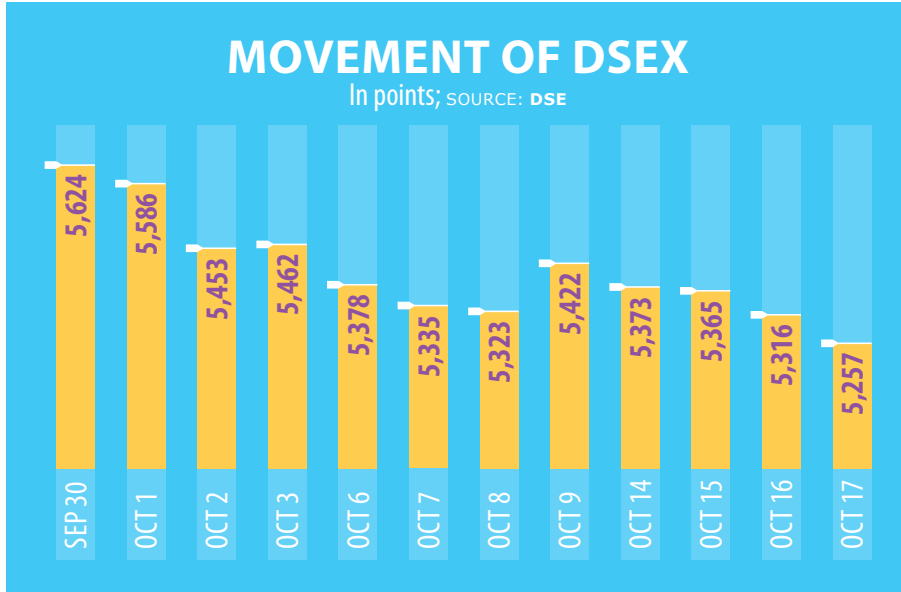
On the other hand, the services and real estate, life insurance and general insurance sectors were the top three sectors that closed in negative territory.

Most sectors that account for large amounts in market capitalisation, which refers to the total value of a company's outstanding shares, showcased negative performances, as per the daily market update of BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage.

Of them, the engineering sector experienced the highest loss of 2.02 percent followed by banking (1.33 percent), fuel and power (1.06 percent), food and allied (0.87 percent), telecommunications (0.76 percent), and pharmaceuticals (0.32 percent).

Meanwhile, the NBFI sector recorded a gain of 0.60 percent.

Shares of companies like Beximco Pharmaceuticals, Olympic Industries, Kohinoor Chemicals, Beacon Pharmaceuticals, Shahjalal Islami Bank,



Advent Pharma, Paramount Textile PLC, Padma Oil Company Limited, Uttara Bank PLC, and SK Trims and Industries Limited drew a significant number of investors, according to the LankaBangla Financial Portal.

However, none of them saw double-digit growth in share prices. Shares of Beximco Pharmaceuticals registered growth of 3.03 percent, the highest among all blue-chip and large-cap scrips.

Shares of BRAC Bank, Islami Bank Bangladesh, BAT Bangladesh, Square Pharmaceuticals, LafargeHolcim Bangladesh, Bangladesh Submarine Cables, Grameenphone, Renata, National Bank and Prime Bank suffered losses.

At the Chittagong Stock Exchange, the CASPI, the main index of the port city bourse, slipped by 1.01 percent from the previous session to settle the day at 14,821 points.

Don't invest in polluting industries

Rizwana asks banks

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has urged banks in Bangladesh not to invest in heavy polluting industries as a part of their responsibility to protect the environment.

She made this plea while addressing an event organised by BRAC Bank at the InterContinental Dhaka in the capital yesterday.

At the event, BRAC Bank launched its Sustainability Report 2023, titled "Bloom into the Future".

Rizwana, who was present as chief guest of the programme, said all banks in the country need to invest in sustainable businesses and renewable energy.

Highlighting the importance for environment-friendly investment, Rizwana said she is scared to know that some banks are investing in shipbuilding.

She also praised BRAC Bank for its efforts in disclosing its sustainability agenda.

"I envision a future where sustainability is integrated into every aspect of life, from urban planning to agriculture, which means embracing innovative solutions such as green finance, circular economy practices, and sustainable technologies," Rizwana said.

BRAC Bank has taken steps in this direction, and its initiatives in green finance can serve as a model for others looking to scale their impact and contribute to a greener, more resilient economy, she added.

Bangladesh Bank Deputy Governor Nurun Nahar emphasised the central bank's dedication to promoting a culture of sustainability disclosures among banks.

BB wants to see a strong Nagad Prioritise withheld

FROM PAGE B1

"If we can ensure QR codes in all vendors -- from rickshaw pullers to barbers -- only then can financial inclusion move forward. Only cash in and cash out cannot ensure financial inclusion," he added.

Snigdha Ali, Bangladesh's country lead at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, said many RMG companies provide salaries through MFS providers, but employees must pay charges to cash out.

If there was scope to pay all their expenses, from house rent to groceries, through MFS, it would be more convenient for them, she said.

"We are here to work intensively to ensure financial inclusion," she added.

Zaidi Sattar, chairman of PRI, said if the country can include artificial intelligence in the ecosystem, financial inclusion can be achieved faster and more smoothly.

Initially, Bangladesh saw progress in financial inclusion, but it is now lagging compared to neighbouring countries, said Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, director of PRI.

Challenges that have hindered the expansion of financial inclusion in Bangladesh include regulatory gaps, which lead to concerns about security, accountability and an uneven playing field.

Persistent gender and rural disparities as well as limited innovation and product diversification are other reasons, he said.

Razzaque recommended strengthening the regulatory framework to ensure all MFS providers operate under a unified and transparent system.

Enhancing digital infrastructure, promoting gender-inclusive financial services and encouraging innovation in financial products are also necessary, he said.

He focused on developing a roadmap for deepening financial inclusion through coordinated efforts among the government, financial institutions, the private sector and development partners.

Bazul Haque Khondker, research director of PRI, Abu Sayed Md Kamruzzaman, director general of the National Cyber Security Agency of the Information and Communication Technology Division, Shah Zia-Ul-Haque, additional director of the BB, and Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, also spoke at the event.

FROM PAGE B1

He believes if Chinese companies get involved, local investors can apply for financing from Chinese institutions.

Moazzem also highlighted some risks and challenges for foreign investors.

"There are some key risks that persist, including currency risks due to local currency volatility, permit risks from bureaucratic hurdles and financing risks related to securing affordable funding," he said.

"Additional challenges include land acquisition issues, social acceptance, grid limitations and off-taker credit risks, all of which impact project feasibility."

A major concern for Chinese investors is the Bangladesh government's insistence on resolving disputes domestically, which contradicts international norms that favour neutral, third-party arbitration, he said.

Moazzem also praised the government's decision to make public the data and documents on power plants.

"This is very important for us. The previous regime's culture was highly non-transparent and we could not access contract documents. It was biased towards the political party's interests and was conducted in a very unconsolidated and uncompetitive manner," he

said.

At the event, Gan Peng, chairman of Chint Solar (Bangladesh) Co Ltd, expressed concern about higher tariffs compared to neighbouring countries and the political climate in Bangladesh.

"As a foreign investor, how can we feel secure after hearing of the political instability?" he questioned.

Echoing similar sentiments, Shafiqul Alam, lead energy analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, called on the interim government to reduce import duties to encourage foreign investors.

Md Ariful Hoque, director general of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, said that they have a 24/7 virtual service portal for investors, including a dedicated desk for Chinese investors.

Regarding renewable energy projects, he expressed concern over land availability.

"Nearly three acres of land is required to generate one megawatt of power. In that context, as a land-scarce country, we have challenges in agriculture and other areas," Hoque said.

He suggested utilising unused land in economic zones and gardens.

Md Abdur Rahman Khan, chairman of the National Board of

High production

FROM PAGE B1

Producers were also not getting reasonable prices due to the presence of intermediaries, he added.

Sometimes, indirect costs also contribute to an increase in prices, he added.

"If we can reduce the input costs in the storage, transportation and processing stages, prices may come down," he said.

He also underscored the importance of proper supply and demand data collection and data analytics and assessment to get a perfect policy guideline.

The DCCI president also requested a "tariff calendar" so that importers can bring products at low rates during off-seasons.

Sayera Younus, executive director (research) of Bangladesh Bank, said reining in inflation was the central bank's top priority.

She added that inflation had not cooled despite tweaks to the policy rate in recent times, as it was caused by non-economic factors.

A few other factors like international market dynamics, exchange rate volatility, and an increase in import costs are also responsible for inflation, she added.

Younus opined that strong monitoring was needed to control price fluctuations.

Saifuddin Ahmed, joint secretary to the trade support measures wing at the Ministry of Commerce, said accurate market data analysis was crucial for formulating appropriate policy guidelines.

"We have to conduct research to find out the actual demand, supply, production capacity, seasonal demand, variation, etc.," he said.

Govt makes major moves

FROM PAGE B1

Prices of unpackaged soybean oil increased by 2.67 percent to as much as Tk 156 per litre in Dhaka. Prices of bottled soybean oil edged up too. Meanwhile, prices of unpackaged palm oil rose roughly 10 percent to about Tk 146 per litre, according to market data compiled by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

Specific duty on sugar reduced by 25%

The NBR reduced the specific duty for imports of refined sugar by 25 percent to Tk 4,500 per tonne from Tk 6,000 per tonne in a bid to cut prices of the sweetener.

The reduced duty took effect immediately.

The fresh cut for refined sugar imports came a week after the regulatory duty on sugar imports was slashed from 30 percent to 15 percent.

At the time, the NBR said the reduced regulatory duty for raw and refined sugar

would reduce the import cost of raw sugar by Tk 11.18 per kilogramme (kg), and the cost of refined sugar by Tk 14.26 per kg.

However, retail sugar prices in Dhaka did not decline. Rather, they rose nearly one percent to Tk 127-Tk 135 per kg over the past week.

Yesterday, prices of sugar, 99 percent of the demand for which is met through imports, were 2.75 percent higher than a month ago, according to TCB data.

Revenue (NBR), assured those present that the government would not change its policies unless it was "very necessary".

"I can give you a commitment that we will try our best to maintain this consistency," he said.

Khan also encouraged businesses to report any harassment or hurdles through the online Grievance Redressal System (GRS).

Regarding tax exemptions, he said the revenue board needs to reduce tax expenditure to balance the tax-GDP ratio, which has been recommended for years by think tanks, economists and civil society.

"This does not mean that we will eliminate all existing tax benefits. Definitely not. We have to set our priorities," he said.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD, moderated the event.

সিরাজগঞ্জ জেলার বাঘাবাড়ি ঘাট সংলগ্ন জমি বিক্রয়

সিরাজগঞ্জ জেলার, শাহজাদপুর থানার বাঘাবাড়ি নৌবন্দরের পূর্বপাশে সেলাচাপরী মৌজায় দীর্ঘস্থায়ী মজবুত বাঁধ নির্মিত দুইদিকে নৌপথ সংলগ্ন বাউন্ডারি দেয়া ৮০ বিঘা নিষ্কটক জমি বিক্রয় হবে। জমিটি মাটি ভারটিকৃত, বন্যা মুক্ত এবং এখনই শিল্পকারখানা, পণ্যদাম, বাংলাব্যাড়ি, গেস্ট হাউস, পিকনিক স্পট ইত্যাদি নির্মাণের জন্য সম্পূর্ণ উপযোগী। জমিতে জাহাজ ভেড়ানোর জন্য জেটি-পল্টন, গভীর নলকূপসহ জমি সংলগ্ন বাঘাবাড়ি ২৩০ কে.ভি. সাব-স্টেশন থেকে নিরবিচ্ছিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ সংযোগ নেয়ার সুবিধা রয়েছে। প্রকৃত ক্রেতাপণ যোগাযোগ করুন।

(সকাল ১০.০০টা থেকে বিকাল ৬.০০টা পর্যন্ত)

০১৭০০৭০৪৪৫৫, ০১৭২৯২৪২৪৭৬

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

তত্ত্বাবধায়কের কার্যালয়

২৫০-শয্যা জেনারেল হাসপাতাল, নোয়াখালী।

ফোন নং-০৩২১-৬১৩৩৩

Email: -noakhali@hospi.dghs.gov.bd

তারিখ-১৭/১০/২০২৪খ্রিঃ

-: দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি:-

০১	মন্ত্রনালয়/বিভাগ	স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রনালয়/স্বাস্থ্য সেবা বিভাগ
০২	সম্প্রদায়িক/স্বল্পমূল্যের নাম	তত্ত্বাবধায়ক, ২৫০ শয্যা জেনারেল হাসপাতাল নোয়াখালী।
০৩	অর্থায়নের উৎস	রাজস্ব/জিওবি/স্বল্পমূল্য/অতিরিক্ত/ বিশেষ বরাদ্দ।
০৪	আহ্বানকৃত দরপত্রের তারিখ	জের/হাসপাতাল/এমএসআর-দরপত্র/শা-১/২৪-২৫/৮২০২ তারিখ- ১৭/১০/২০২৪ খ্রিঃ
০৫	দরপত্রের নাম / কাজের বিবরণ	২০২৪-২০২৫খ্রিঃ অর্থবছরে ২৫০ শয্যা জেনারেল হাসপাতালে এম.এস. আর সামগ্রী সরবরাহের দরপত্র (গ্রেপ নং- "ক" ষ্টমপত্র, "খ" সার্জিক্যাল যন্ত্রপাতি ও মেসামত, "গ"-লিনেন সামগ্রী, "ঘ"- গজ, ব্যাজেজ, কটন, "ঙ-(১)"-কেমিক্যাল রি-এজেন্ট সামগ্রী, "চ"- আসবাবপত্র ও কিলেন সামগ্রী।
০৬	সম্প্রদায়িক/স্বল্পমূল্যের জেলা	নোয়াখালী।
০৭	ক্রম পঞ্জিকা	পিপিআর ২০০৬, ২০০৮, ২০০৯ ও সংশোধিত ২০১২ মোতাবেক উল্লিখিত দরপত্র।
০৮	দরপত্র দাখিলের যোগ্যতা	যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন সকল এম.এস.আর সরবরাহকারী/বাজারজাতকারী/ আমদানীকারক/ উৎপাদনকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/এজেন্ট/টিকাদার।
০৯	দরপত্র তফসিলের মূল্য (অফারতথ্যে)	প্রতিটি সিডিউলের মূল্য বাক ২,০০০/- (দুই হাজার) টাকা মাত্র চালানোর মাধ্যমে কোড নং-১-২৭১১-০০০০-২৩৬৬ এ বাংলাদেশ/সোনালী ব্যাংক, নোয়াখালী শাখার জমাদান পূর্বক জেলা হিসাবরক্ষন অফিস কর্তৃক চালানোর সি.ডি.আর সহ মূল কপি কাশিয়ার এর নিকট জমা করে দরপত্র সংগ্রহ করতে হবে।
১০	দরপত্র জামানত/বায়না	গ্রেপের নাম দরপত্র জামানতের পে-অর্ডার/ডিউর পরিমাণ "ক" ষ্টমপত্র সামগ্রী ৫,০০,০০০/- "খ" সার্জিক্যাল যন্ত্রপাতি ও মেসামত ৩,০০,০০০/- "গ" লিনেন সামগ্রী ২,০০,০০০/- "ঘ", গজ, ব্যাজেজ, কটন ২,০০,০০০/- "ঙ", কেমিক্যাল রি-এজেন্ট সামগ্রী ৩,০০,০০০/- "চ", আসবাবপত্র ও কিলেন সামগ্রী ১,০০,০০০/-
১১	দরপত্র তফসিল বিক্রয় দর প্রস্তাব গ্রহণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা	তত্ত্বাবধায়ক এর কার্যালয়, ২৫০ শয্যা জেনারেল হাসপাতাল নোয়াখালী (দরপত্র পুস্তিকা কাশিয়ারের নিকট হতে সংগ্রহ করিতে হইবে)
১২	দরপত্র সংগ্রহের স্থান	তত্ত্বাবধায়ক এর কার্যালয়, ২৫০ শয্যা জেনারেল হাসপাতাল, নোয়াখালী।
১৩	দরপত্র তফসিল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৪/১১/২০২৪ খ্রিঃ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় (০৮-০২.৩০ মিনিট)
১৪	দরপত্র তফসিল দাখিলের স্থান	তত্ত্বাবধায়ক এর কার্যালয়, ২৫০ শয্যা জেনারেল হাসপাতাল, নোয়াখালী।
১৫	দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৭/১১/২০২৪ খ্রিঃ দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত
১৬	দরপত্র বাজর খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১৭/১১/২০২৪ খ্রিঃ দুপুর ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা

১৭/১০/২৪

ডাঃ হেলাল উদ্দিন

তত্ত্বাবধায়ক

২৫০- শয্যা জেনারেল হাসপাতাল, নোয়াখালী।

GD-720

North-West Power Generation Company Ltd

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 & ISO 45001:2018 Certified

(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Office of the Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)

Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-2)

Soydabad, Sirajganj.

Ref: 27.28.8878.201.07.001.21.234

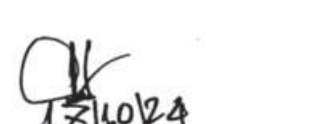
Date: 17/10/2024

e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date
1	1020558	Procurement of Spare Parts for GT Over-speed Protection System, Flame Monitoring System and Others	08-Oct-2024	10-Nov-2024 10:00 AM	10-Nov-2024
2	1024420	Procurement of tools and consumables for GT System and Auxiliaries	09-Oct-2024	03-Nov-2024 15:30 PM	04-Nov-2024

This is an online tender where only 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 (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


Engr. Md. Asad Halim
 Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)
 Sirajganj 225 MW CCPP (Unit-2)
 NWPGCL, Soydabad, Sirajganj.

GD- 719

New shipping policy offers platform for running lighters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The shipping ministry has introduced a new policy for the transportation of goods from seaports to destinations around the country via inland water routes using lighter vessels.

In Bangladesh, lighter vessels are used to unload a major portion of imported goods, including industrial raw materials, foodgrain and fertiliser, from mother vessels at the outer anchorage of the Chattogram port.

Lessening the load in this manner helps the mother vessels meet the draught limit for entering the Chattogram port.

Meanwhile, the lighter vessels, having carrying capacities of 1,000 to 2,000 tonnes, transport the goods to different destinations around the country over inland waterways.

According to the policy, the lighter vessels must be registered with the Department of Shipping (DoS) and avail different approvals, including a permit for traversing the Bay of Bengal, from the regulatory agency.

Coastal vessels, meaning those used for transporting cargo along the coastline, must get their approvals from Mercantile Marine Office.

Moreover, the lighter vessels will be allowed to run only based on allocations and scheduling of a new coordination body, Bangladesh Water Transport Coordination Cell (BWTRCC). This will not be applicable for lighter vessels owned by businesses for transporting their own cargo.

Violation of the policy could result in fitness certificates or permits for traversing the Bay of Bengal being revoked or suspended by the director general of the Department of Shipping (DoS).

The ministry issued a gazette in this regard on Tuesday, signed by Delwara



Lighter vessels are used to unload a major portion of imported goods, including industrial raw materials, foodgrain and fertiliser, from mother vessels at the outer anchorage of the Chattogram port.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Begum, secretary to the ministry.

A 10-member committee, headed by the DoS director general, will be established to monitor the BWTRCC's operations.

Around two decades ago, a "Water Transport Cell" (WTC) used to coordinate

the transport of imported cargo via inland waterways.

It was jointly formed in 2004 by Bangladesh Cargo Vessel Owners Association (BCVOA), the Inland Vessel Owners Association of Chattogram (IVOAC), and the Coastal Ship Owners

Association of Bangladesh (COAB).

However, tension had been rising between the BCVOA and IVOAC leadership in recent years, culminating in the IVOAC deciding to part ways with the WTC on December 19 last year to independently operate vessels under it.

Japan's exports fall for first time in 10 months

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan's exports fell for the first time in 10 months in September, data showed on Thursday, a worry for policymakers as any prolonged weakness in global demand may complicate the central bank's path to exit years of ultra-easy monetary policy.

Soft demand in China and slowing US growth weighed on exports, while the yen's recent rebound, in part due to the Bank of Japan's unexpected rate hike in late July, helped further push down their value.

"It's possible that exports will continue to struggle in coming months in light of uncertainties particularly in the Chinese economy," Kazuma Kishikawa, economist at Daiwa Institute of Research, said.

China's domestic demand appears to be weaker than expected with the country's stimulus packages slow to make an impact, he added.

Total exports in September dropped 1.7 percent from a year earlier, Ministry of Finance data showed, missing a median market forecast for a 0.5 percent increase and following a revised 5.5 percent rise in August.

Exports to China, Japan's biggest trading partner, slumped 7.3 percent in September from a year earlier, while those to the United States were down 2.4 percent, the data showed. Weak demand for automakers led the export declines for both countries.

ECB set to cut rates again as inflation cools

AFP, Frankfurt

European Central Bank policymakers meet on Thursday with fading price pressures and weaker economic activity in the eurozone nudging them towards making another cut to interest rates.

The 26 members of the governing council are gathering in Slovenia, as they make one of their regular tours away from the ECB's headquarters in Frankfurt.

ECB President Christine Lagarde arrived ahead of her colleagues, "checking on prices" at a market in the capital Ljubljana, she said in a video posted on social media on Tuesday.

What she heard from traders might well have reassured her -- recent data show that inflation in the eurozone has slowed considerably.

In Slovenia, the annual rate of consumer price rises was a mere 0.6 percent in September.

For the whole of the eurozone,



PHOTO: AFP/FILE

the figure was 1.8 percent -- the first time it has been below the ECB's two-percent target in three years.

After cutting rates twice already this year, including at their last meeting in September, policymakers initially signalled a preference to wait until December

to cut again.

But September's below-expectations reading has added to the sense that consumer prices are back under control after they soared in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Telecom reforms for a smarter future



MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

Bangladesh's digital infrastructure services -- towers, fibre networks, submarine cables and data centres -- have all the potential but sadly, it is buried under layers of mismanagement and corruption. A few players hold monopolistic control, which seems to do wonders for their wallets, but not so much for national interests or digital progress. With mobile penetration still under 60 percent and fixed-line broadband crawling at a snail's pace, it is no surprise foreign investors are thinking twice.

There is a massive FDI opportunity here -- if only policies weren't written by those too busy protecting political interests. Fixing this mess could bring balanced growth, jobs, and financial inclusion. If we truly want "Digital Bangladesh," it is time to eliminate the cronyism, encourage competition and let innovation flourish.

TOWER POLICY OVERHAUL

Bangladesh's tower policy is stifling the growth of its telecom sector. Out of the country's 45,000 towers, only 22,000 are managed by tower

companies, with Edotco holding the lion's share. Mobile network operators (MNOs) often hoard their towers, benefiting from current policies while neglecting industry-wide collaboration. This reluctance to share towers limits infrastructure efficiency. Globally, tower companies typically have much higher sharing ratios than MNOs, emphasising the need for policy reform.

To address these issues, the following recommendations should be considered.

Mandatory site sharing: MNOs must be required to share sites within a stipulated timeframe. Large MNOs often refuse to share strategic locations, forcing smaller operators to build redundant infrastructure. This not only wastes national resources but also increases operational costs.

Prioritise tower companies (TowerCos): Policy revisions should empower TowerCos to manage infrastructure. If a TowerCo fails to deliver a site within a specified timeframe, MNOs should be allowed to build towers, but these must eventually be transferred to the TowerCo. Countries like Indonesia (tenancy ratio of 1.65x) and Myanmar (1.72x) outperform Bangladesh (1.28x). Prioritising TowerCos would help achieve economies of scale and enable MNOs to focus on advanced technologies like 5G.

Streamline tower construction: Regulatory hurdles delay tower construction by 6 to 12 months, and border areas can take years. These delays waste resources and slow

customer service improvements. Simplifying the approval process would accelerate development and reduce inefficiencies caused by regulatory bottlenecks.

Maximise active and passive sharing: Incentivising the sharing of active (RAN) and passive (tower, fibre) infrastructure would reduce unnecessary investment, save foreign currency, and prevent unhealthy competition. Active RAN sharing should be promoted to ensure efficient use of resources.

These challenges directly impact

telecom service quality, and without immediate reform, the industry will continue to fall short of expectations. The recent decision by KKR-backed Pinnacle to halt a \$300 million tower investment due to regulatory risks and American Tower's inactivity underscores the urgency for policy change.

Reforming Bangladesh's tower policy could attract up to \$1.5 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) over the next two years. Selling MNO-owned towers to TowerCos would generate capital gains tax,

boost national income, and improve shareholder returns, providing a much-needed stimulus to the capital market. As 4G and 5G technologies advance, dependency on tower infrastructure will only increase, making policy reform essential for future growth.

FIBRE: THE LIFELINE OF TELECOM

Bangladesh's telecom infrastructure faces significant challenges due to restrictive policies preventing MNOs and ISPs from laying their own fibreoptic cables, which are critical for digital connectivity. Since 2009, the National Telecommunication Transmission Network (NTTN) operators have controlled fibre rollout, limiting access to dark fibre, essential for building a robust network. This has weakened the transmission network, with 53 percent of overhead fibre being unsuitable for 4G, let alone future 5G. Two private NTTN operators have formed a cartel, refusing to offer dark fibre and proposing unsustainable capacity models instead.

In contrast, countries like India and Malaysia have empowered telecom operators to lay fibre, leading to significant improvements. Large government projects in Bangladesh, such as the Info Sarkar project (19,500 kilometres of fibre), remain underutilised due to a lack of access and poor deals with the above two NTTN operators. The regulators need to review the arrangement and open Info Sarkar for all the MNOs and ISPs.

In addition, MNOs and ISPs should be allowed to build their own dark fibre if NTTN operators fail to offer it at reasonable rates. Opening the fibre market to more players will reduce costs, improve service and support Bangladesh's digital transformation goals.

POWER STRUGGLE TO PROGRESS

In Bangladesh, telecom regulation is in disarray due to overlapping responsibilities between the telecom ministry, BTRC, and DOT, causing inefficiencies. Currently, the ministry handles policymaking, despite lacking the expert resources housed within the BTRC. Previously, policy formulation was the BTRC's role, but power struggles and ill intentions shifted it to the ministry. Meanwhile, the BTRC has transitioned from a revenue collector to a telecom development enabler. To fix this, the interim government must merge DOT with the BTRC, enabling the BTRC to both regulate and create policies while the ministry provides guidance. Without such reforms, meaningful progress will remain elusive.

Bangladesh's telecom sector feels like a never-ending game of favouring a few. Monopolies, red tape, and poor policies are slowing down progress. If we truly want a "Digital Bangladesh," it is time to focus on national interests and ensure everyone benefits, not just a select few.

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Bangladesh's tower policy is stifling the growth of its telecom sector, says an expert.

PHOTO: STAR