

## Half of banks' CSR spending went to disaster management

Most were for ex-PM's relief and other funds

SUKANTA HALDER and MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Of their total corporate social responsibility (CSR) expenditure, banks spent 45 percent on disaster management violating rules in the first half of 2024, with bankers saying it mainly went to various funds maintained by the Prime Minister's Office before the political changeover on August 5.

Data released by the Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday showed that banks spent Tk 309 crore in the January-July period of 2024 for CSR initiatives, with Tk 138 crore going towards disaster management.

Donations under the sector included the distribution of blankets to the poor in cold regions, the BB report said. Relief and distribution of food items among affected families after the floods in late August also contributed.

However, as per the CSR policy framed by the central bank, a lender is supposed to provide 20 percent of their total CSR allocation to disaster management, 30 percent to the education sector, 30 percent to the health sector and 20 percent to the environment and climate sector.

However, in the first half of this year, banks spent Tk 71.98 crore, or 23.28 percent of total CSR expenditure, on the health sector.

The donations mainly went towards providing medical assistance to poor and disabled patients at the individual level and for the treatment of people suffering from various incurable and complex diseases.

In addition, grants were provided for construction and operational expenses of hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres and purchase of medical equipment.

Education received the third-most at Tk 63.63 crore, accounting for 20.58 percent of total CSR spending, the report said. Reviewing expenditure in this sector, it was seen that most of it went towards providing scholarships to students.

Providing various educational materials and developing infrastructure in the education sector as well as donations made to the prime minister's education assistance trust also contributed to expenses in this sector.

Additionally, Tk 9.66 crore was spent in the sports and culture sub-sector and Tk 7.35 crore was spent on environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation, the lowest.

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## Consumer sales slow as inflation bites



JAGARAN CHAKMA

Grocery shelves are not clearing as quickly for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), while many are switching to mini-packs of food and toiletries – indicating that people are losing ground in their prolonged battle against inflation.

Take the case of Abul Bashar, a grocery shop owner in Dhaka's upscale Uttara area with customers from at least five dozen neighbouring buildings.

Bashar says there are fewer buyers of mega and jumbo packs of toothpaste or shampoo. Instead, most of his customers are now spending mainly on essential food items like potato, onion, garlic and lentil – even in smaller quantities.

"People who used to buy an item three kilogrammes at a time are now asking for only half a kilogramme or one kilogramme maximum," the grocer said.

He attributed this consumer behaviour to

rising prices and people's incomes failing to keep pace.

Zooming out from the small Uttara area to the nationwide scale, Zaved Akhtar, managing director of Unilever Bangladesh, said their monthly FMCG sales have declined 5 percent in recent months.

Despite several interest rate hikes by the central bank to blunt the brutal price pressure, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has been hovering around 10 percent since March last year.

In September, the CPI stood at 9.92 percent, down from 10.49 percent in August, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Unilever Bangladesh MD said the prolonged price pressure has badly impacted people's purchasing power.

"The impact is largely evident on our sales of premium and semi-essential products like shampoo. However, highly essential items like soap or detergent are still showing some

degree of immunity from inflation," he told The Daily Star.

According to Akhtar, around 10 percent of Unilever's FMCG basket consists of premium items like Surf Excel and Rin Washing Powder.

"People are not purchasing these products as they have shifted to more affordable alternatives like Wheel Washing Powder, also an FMCG item by Unilever," Akhtar added.

He said the local monthly FMCG sales, which were usually Tk 4,000 crore, have declined to around Tk 3,800 crore since July, marking a 5 percent decrease.

Now, consumers are opting for smaller quantity packs instead of larger ones due to their declining spending capacity, the Unilever Bangladesh MD said.

From October every year, local FMCG manufacturers usually increase production of winter products like petroleum jelly, body lotion and skincare products for winter supply.

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## Fitch Ratings trims growth forecast citing policy uncertainty

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Fitch Ratings has cut its economic growth forecast on Bangladesh to 4.5 percent for the current fiscal year as the country's recent political transition created policy uncertainty in the near-term.

The American credit rating agency previously projected that the economy of Bangladesh, which is the second biggest in South Asia after India, would witness growth of 5.3 percent in FY25.

"But we expect a recovery [of the economic growth rate] to 5.7 percent in FY26," Fitch Ratings said in a commentary on Bangladesh released yesterday.

Similarly, the World Bank had slashed its economic growth forecast on Bangladesh by 1.7 percentage points to 4 percent for FY25 due to "significant uncertainties following recent political turmoil" and "data unavailability" early this month.

In its commentary, Fitch Ratings said the country's interim government appointed a new finance minister and central bank governor after taking office on August 8.

The previous Awami League government was ousted by a mass uprising on August 5 following weeks of unrest stemming from a brutal crackdown on student protests aimed at reforming the quota system for state employment.

"This political transition has increased economic policy uncertainty in the near-term. But under our baseline, we expect its impact on the country's sovereign credit profile will be temporary," it said.

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## Unrest erodes Bangladesh's RMG edge over rivals

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Garment exports by Bangladesh's market rivals like India, Vietnam, China and Cambodia have increased to major Western markets due mainly to the latest spell of labour unrest and political changeover earlier in August in the country.

In September, India's readymade garment (RMG) exports grew by 17.3 percent year-on-year, capitalising on political instability in Bangladesh, according to Indian daily The Telegraph.

The growth comes despite global challenges such as inflation and supply chain disruptions, which have impacted other major garment-exporting nations, the report says.

"India's RMG exports have recorded high growth despite global headwinds and inflationary pressures," said Sudhir Sekhri, chairman of the Apparel Export Promotion Council.

"Many leading apparel exporters have experienced a slowdown in recent months, but India has benefitted from Bangladesh's socio-political unrest," he added.

Bangladesh's internal turmoil forced some factories to close temporarily, causing delays in delivery schedules.

Referring to India's CareRatings, The Telegraph also said if the unrest continues for more than one or two quarters, Bangladeshi exporters could face significant challenges in meeting deadlines.

In the July-September period of the current fiscal year, Bangladesh's garment export grew 5.3 percent year on year to \$9.28 billion, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

Despite the EPB's growth count, apparel exports in the first eight months of 2024 to the US and European Union (EU) were not encouraging compared to Bangladesh's market competitors.

For instance, garment export to the USA, the country's main export destination, fell by 9.16 percent year-on-year to \$4.70 billion in the January-August period of the current year,



**Impact of labour unrest**

- Bangladesh's competitors taking advantage of labour unrest
- Apparel sector faced \$400m production loss
- Exporters encountered difficulties in shipment of goods

**India**

- India's garment export grew 17.3% in September

**Present situation**

- Normalcy restored in garment sector
- Buyers are coming back with work orders in greater number than before

**US market**

- Bangladesh's garment export to the US declined
- US economy is rebounding but Bangladesh cannot cash in on it

according to data from the Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA).

OTEXA attributed the fall to slumping demand for apparels in the American market.

In combined, the textile and garment shipment from Bangladesh to the USA also fell by 8.98 percent year-on-year to \$4.84 billion in the January-August period this year, showed the OTEXA data.

Bangladesh's competitors performed well in the USA and EU markets as data showed that their exports, in terms of quantity, increased. The countries also took the advantage of the rebounding US economy, as consumer

spending on retail goods, including apparel items, increased.

The retail sales in the US increased again in September as employment grew and inflation and interest rates fell, said Jack Kleinhenz, chief economist of the National Retail Federation (NRF), the world's largest retail trade association.

In the January-August period, the quantity of apparel imported by the USA increased by 1.5 percent year-on-year, while Bangladesh's export declined by 3.8 percent in terms of quantity.

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Md Anwar Hossain

## Holding fair elections top priority

Says BGMEA administrator

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Creating an environment for free, fair and credible elections is the first priority of the newly appointed administrator of the country's largest trade body, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

The government appointed Md Anwar Hossain, vice-chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), as administrator of the BGMEA on Sunday.

This decision came after SM Mannan Kochi, the association's elected president, handed in his resignation on August 24.

Hossain said he is scheduled to hold a meeting with the former president and other directors of the dissolved board on Monday night and design a roadmap to create a good environment for the elections.

The government has assigned Hossain to hold the elections within 120 days of his appointment.

Primarily, he will form a committee, which will be tasked with preparing a fair voter list. Moreover, the new

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# Bank Asia offers home finance at 'lowest rate'

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia PLC is currently offering home finance and investment facilities at its "lowest-ever profit rate", making it easier for people to build or own their dream homes.

Under Bank Asia's Islamic banking services, customers can avail home finance or investment at a profit or rent rate of just 10.50 percent, the bank said in a press release.

Moreover, no compounding profit or rent and no additional fees or charges for pre-maturity adjustments will be applied.

Salaried customers will need to submit an employment certificate, salary certificate, income tax return receipt, bank statement, photocopy of their national ID card and passport size photographs of both the applicant and co-applicant along with their application form.

Self-employed individuals and business owners will need to provide a photocopy of their trade licence, periodic profit and loss account, business bank statement, income tax return receipt, personal bank statement, photocopy of their national ID card and passport size photographs of both the applicant and co-applicant.

Those purchasing a flat will need to submit an agreement or assignment letter with the developer, a money receipt from the developer and project documents issued by the developer.

To avail investment for building construction, customers will have to submit the original title deed, a 21-year lease deed, a name-dismissal document, an updated rent receipt, an urban survey certificate, an RS certificate, an SA certificate, a CS certificate, approved plans from Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) or other relevant authorities, a layout plan and any necessary permissions.

For assistance, customers can contact any Bank Asia branch, Islamic window or the bank's 24/7 contact centre at 16205.



MA Kashem, chairman of Southeast Bank PLC, presides over the bank's 745th board meeting at its head office in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: SOUTHEAST BANK

# Southeast Bank holds 745th board meeting

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Southeast Bank PLC recently held its 745th board meeting at the bank's head office in Dhaka.

MA Kashem, chairman of the bank, presided over the meeting, the bank said in a press release.

As one of the leading financial institutions in the country, the bank continues to show steady growth in deposits and foreign trade, a testament to the strong confidence its customers place in the bank.

The meeting underscored that Southeast Bank remains the safest choice for customers to safeguard their hard-earned money, offering complete financial security.

Rehana Rahman, vice chairperson of the

bank, Azim Uddin Ahmed, Md Akikur Rahman, Duluma Ahmed and Jusna Ara Kashem, directors, and Mohammad Delwar Husain, independent director, were present.

The directors discussed the bank's strategic business initiatives and future plans in detail. They reaffirmed their unified commitment to guiding the bank towards continued success and elevating the commercial lender to new heights.

The bank's ability to consistently uphold its reputation over 29 years, with strong liquidity in both local and foreign currencies, further attests to its standing.

The lender continues to excel in areas such as corporate governance, profitability, and risk management.

# Zahid Hossain made Krishi Bank chairman

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mohammad Zahid Hossain joined Bangladesh Krishi Bank as its chairman on Sunday.

Hossain previously performed his responsibilities as a principal economist for the South Asia Department at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), said a press release.

He worked at the Manila-based multilateral lender to oversee ADB's Bangladesh Country Programming and Economic Analysis-related works.

He also worked as an ADB consultant for a long time in the Ministry of Finance to advise senior officials on macroeconomic and sector issues.

In 1979, he started his professional career in customs cadre.

Hossain played a central role in the design, development and implementation of value-added tax (VAT) in Bangladesh.

He was also involved in the coordinated reforms of indirect taxes in the country.

Hossain earned a master's degree in economics from the University of Dhaka and also another master's degree and PhD from the University of the Philippines.



# Bengal Commercial Bank opens branch in Narayanganj



Md Jashim Uddin, chairman of Bengal Commercial Bank PLC, cuts a ribbon to inaugurate a new branch of the bank in Narayanganj recently. PHOTO: BENGAL COMMERCIAL BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bengal Commercial Bank PLC recently opened a new branch in Narayanganj. This is the 30th branch of the bank, according to a press release.

Md Jashim Uddin, chairman of the bank, inaugurated the branch.

Ghulam Mohammed Alogir, vice-chairman of the bank, and Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, attended the programme as special guests.

The expansion of the branch and sub-branch network of Bengal Commercial Bank is ongoing across the country to help develop the business and economy, the press release added.

Tarik Morshed, managing director and CEO of the bank, presided over the inaugural ceremony.

KM Awlad Hossain, additional managing director and chief business officer, along with other high officials, clients, businessmen and locals were also present.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (OCT 21, 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 153-Tk 156	3.00 ↑	3.00 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 55-Tk 60	9.52 ↑	17.35 ↑
Onion (kg)	Tk 110-Tk 120	9.09 ↑	23.08 ↑
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 48-Tk 52	-2.41 ↓	-2.91 ↓

SOURCE: TCB

**সিলেট গ্যাস ফিল্ডস লিমিটেড**  
(পেট্রোবাংলার একটি কোম্পানী)  
**Sylhet Gas Fields Limited**  
(A Company of Petrobangla)

বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানি নিরাপত্তা সর্বোচ্চ আদায়কার

গ্যাস জারীর সম্পদ : এর অপসারণ বেগ করে জারীর দায়িত্ব পালন করুন।

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Ref. No. SGFL/WELLS/DRILLING/2024 Date: 21-10-2024

**Invitation for International Tender**

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources/Energy & Mineral Resources Division		
2. Agency	Bangladesh Oil, Gas & Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla)		
3. Procuring Entity Name	Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (SGFL)		
4. Procuring Entity District	Sylhet		
5. Invitation for	Procurement of Drilling Works for 3 Wells (Rashidpur-11, Kailashilla-9 & Dupitila-1) including Supply Materials, Land Development, Civil Works and Third Party Engineering Works on Turn-Key Basis.		
6. Invitation Ref. No.	SGFL/WELLS/DRILLING/2024 Date: 21-10-2024		
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>			
7. Procurement Method	International Competitive Tender (ICT), One Stage Two Envelope Tendering Method.		
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>			
8. Budget and Source of Funds	Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and SGFL's own Fund.		
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>			
9. Name of the Project	1. Drilling of Well No. Rashidpur-11 (Exploratory well). 2. Drilling of Wells No. Dupitila-1 and Kailashilla-9 (Exploratory well).		
10. Tender Selling Start Date	28-10-2024, Tender document will be available from 10:00 Hrs. to 16:00 Hrs. (BST) on all working days.		
11. Pre-Tender Meeting (Date, Time & Location)	13-11-2024 (Wednesday) at 11:00 Hrs. (BST) at Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Dhaka Liaison Office, Petrocentre (13th Floor), 3, Kawran Bazar C/A, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh. Tenderer must have to buy tender document to attend the pre-tender meeting and maximum 3 persons may attend for each Tenderer.		
12. Last Selling Date of Tender Document	17-12-2024 (Tuesday)		
13. Last Tender Submission Date and Time	18-12-2024 (Wednesday) at 12:00 Hrs. (BST)		
14. Tender Opening Date and Time	18-12-2024 (Wednesday) at 12:15 Hrs. (BST)		
<b>Name &amp; Address of the Officer(s)</b>			
15. Place of Tender Document Selling	1. Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Dhaka Liaison Office, Petrocentre (13th Floor), 3, Kawran Bazar C/A, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh. 2. Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Head Office, PO-Chiknagoal, Sylhet-3152, Bangladesh.		
16. Place of Tender Submission & Opening	Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Head Office, PO-Chiknagoal, Sylhet-3152, Bangladesh.		
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>			
17. Eligibility of Tenderer	1. The Tenderer from all countries except the countries those who have no diplomatic relationship with Bangladesh. 2. The Tenderer may be a physical or juridical individual or body of individuals, or company, association or any combination of them in the form of a Joint Venture (JV) will be accepted.		
18. Brief Description of Works	Drilling Works for 3 Wells (Rashidpur-11, Kailashilla-9 & Dupitila-1) including Supply of Materials, Land Development, Civil Works and Third Party Engineering Works on Turn-Key Basis.		
19. Price of each Tender Document	BDT 10,000.00 or USD 100.00 (Non-refundable).		
20.	Lot No	Identification Number	Location
	1.	SGFL/WELLS/DRILLING/2024	1. Rashidpur Gas Field, Babubal, Habiganj; 2. Kailashilla Gas Field, Goloaganj, Sylhet; and 3. Haripur Gas Field, Chiknagoal, Sylhet
			Tender Security Amount BDT 150,000,000.00 or USD 1,250,000.00
			Completion Time in months 18 (eighteen) months
<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>			
21. Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Atikur Rahman		
Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager (Procurement), SGFL		
22. Address of Official Inviting Tender	Procurement Department, Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Head Office, PO-Chiknagoal, Sylhet-3152, Bangladesh.		
Contact Details of Official Inviting Tender	Phone No.: +8801730-073649, +8801743-624679 E-mail: dgmp@sgfl.org.bd		
<b>Special Instructions:</b>			
i) Tenderers must submit their tender(s) for all of the groups. Submission of alternative tender will not be allowed. Tenders must remain valid for 150 (one hundred and fifty) days from the date of opening of the tender.			
ii) The tender security must remain valid for 178 (one hundred and seventy-eight) days from the date of opening of the tender.			
iii) In case of any unavoidable circumstances such as strike, civil commotion, Govt. declared holiday, etc. tender will be received and opened on the following working day.			
iv) Tender(s) submitted after the deadline for receiving of tenders will be rejected and returned unopened to the Tenderer.			
v) Tender submitted by E-mail will be rejected. Likewise photocopy or e-mailed tenders will also be rejected.			
vi) The tendering procedures will be conducted as per the Public Procurement Act 2006 and the Public Procurement Rule 2008 of Bangladesh. The aforesaid notice is also available on the websites of BPPA: www.cpts.gov.bd, Petrobangla: www.petrobangla.org.bd and SGFL: www.sgfl.org.bd			
24. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept any or reject any of all tenders or annul the tendering process at any stage without assigning any reason whatsoever and without incurring any liability to the affected tenderers.			

(Md. Atikur Rahman)  
Deputy General Manager (Procurement)

GD- 750

# Holding fair elections

FROM PAGE B1 administrator will also try to address any labour issues in order to improve the business environment.

"However, the day-to-day functions of the BGMEA will not be affected as a smooth election environment is created," Hossain said while speaking to The Daily Star.

For instance, he said, the BGMEA issues the very important Utilisation Declaration (UD) certification to its members, allowing them to use imported fabrics to make export-oriented garments.

The issuance of the UD must not be delayed for any reason since the business is very competitive globally. A smooth environment is also required in the issuance of the UD certification, he added.

International retailers and brands may think the business will be affected by the change at the BGMEA's top level, but Hossain assured that business will not be affected at all.

He said he would hold talks with international retailers and brands soon and brief them about the working processes.

Garment is Bangladesh's main export item, so no disruption in business should occur because of the change at the top level of the leadership, Hossain said.

The president of the now dissolved BGMEA board, Khandoker Rafiqul Islam, said a working committee may be formed soon by the new administrator.

"We are ready to cooperate with him to create a good election environment," Islam told The Daily Star over the phone. The biennial general elections of the BGMEA were held on March 9 this year, contested by two major panels, namely Forum and Sammilito Parishad.

The leaders of the Sammilito Parishad won all 35 director posts.

Ever since, members of the Forum panel have been protesting the credibility of the election. They have sought fresh elections several times.

After the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 this year, the

Forum again demanded the resignation of Kochi and his board.

Eventually, on August 24, Kochi resigned and handed over charge to Khandoker Rafiqul Islam. The board was later reconstituted and Islam was made president.

Even before the elections were held, members of the Forum panel complained to the election board, demanding the cancellation of the preliminary voter list and the publication of a new one as the tax files of 429 voters could not be found.

Hossain assumed the role of CEO and vice-chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) on June 30 this year.

He previously served as the wing chief of the World Bank Wing in the Economic Relations Division (ERD), where he held key positions in the America and Japan wings and the Development Effectiveness Wing. He also led the Asia Wing of ERD as Wing Chief.

Hossain entered the administration cadre through the 15th BCS in 1995, beginning his career as an assistant commissioner and magistrate in the Dhaka Collectorate.

He has also served in the Ministry of Public Administration and held various civil service positions.

He earned first class in his bachelor's and master's degrees in economics from the University of Dhaka. Additionally, he holds a master's degree with distinction in development economics from Williams College, the US. He has worked as a research assistant (PhD candidate) at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, the University of Denver, the US.

Since 2017, Hossain has been actively involved in ensuring the smooth and sustainable graduation of Bangladesh from the LDC category.

He has expertise in public policy and economic analysis, macroeconomic management, project management, and procurement and supply chain management.

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Ref. No. SGFL/SYL-10X/DRILLING/2024 Date: 21-10-2024

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2. Agency	Bangladesh Oil, Gas & Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla)		
3. Procuring Entity Name	Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (SGFL)		
4. Procuring Entity District	Sylhet		
5. Invitation for	Procurement of Drilling works for Well No. Sylhet-10X at Haripur Gas Field including supply of drilling materials & equipment and Third Party Engineering works on Turn-Key Basis.		
6. Invitation Ref. No.	SGFL/SYL-10X/DRILLING/2024 Date: 21-10-2024		
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>			
7. Procurement Method	International Competitive Tender (ICT), Single stage two envelope method.		
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>			
8. Budget and Source of Funds	Gas Development Fund (GDF) & SGFL's Own Fund.		
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>			
9. Name of the Project	Drilling of Well No. Sylhet-10 (Exploratory well) (1st revised).		
10. Tender Selling Start Date	28-10-2024, Tender document will be available from 10:00 Hrs. to 16:00 Hrs. (BST) on all working days.		
11. Pre-Tender Meeting (Date, Time & Location)	13-11-2024 (Wednesday) at 11:00 Hrs. (BST) at Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Dhaka Liaison Office, Petrocentre (13th Floor), 3, Kawran Bazar C/A, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh. Tenderer must have to buy tender document to attend the pre-tender meeting and maximum 3 persons may attend for each Tenderer.		
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20.	Lot No	Identification Number	Location
	1.	SGFL/SYL-10X/DRILLING/2024	Haripur Gas Field, Chiknagoal, Sylhet
			Tender Security Amount BDT 4,50,00,000.00 or USD 3,75,000.00
			Completion Time in Months 09 (Nine) Months
<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>			
21. Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Atikur Rahman		
Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager (Procurement), SGFL		
22. Address of Official Inviting Tender	Procurement Department, Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, Head Office, PO-Chiknagoal, Sylhet-3152, Bangladesh.		
Contact Details of Official Inviting Tender	Phone No.: +8801743-624679, +8801730006953 E-mail: dgmp@sgfl.org.bd		
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iv) Tender(s) submitted after the deadline for receiving of tenders will be rejected and returned unopened to the Tenderer.			
v) Tender submitted by E-mail will be rejected. Likewise photocopy or e-mailed tenders will also be rejected.			
vi) The tendering procedures will be conducted as per the Public Procurement Act 2006 and the Public Procurement Rule 2008 of Bangladesh. The aforesaid notice is also available on the websites of BPPA: www.cpts.gov.bd, Petrobangla: www.petrobangla.org.bd and SGFL: www.sgfl.org.bd			
24. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept any or reject any of all tenders or annul the tendering process at any stage without assigning any reason whatsoever and without incurring any liability to the affected tenderers.			

(Md. Atikur Rahman)  
Deputy General Manager (Procurement), SGFL

GD-751



## Gold rallies for a fifth straight day

REUTERS

Gold rallied for a fifth straight day on Monday, hitting a record high on uncertainties around the US election, ongoing Middle East tensions, and expectations of central banks' interest rate cuts, while silver hit a near 12-year peak.

Spot gold gained 0.5 percent to \$2,733.50 per ounce, as of 0910 GMT, after hitting an all-time high of \$2,733.82 earlier in the day. US gold futures were 0.7 percent higher at \$2,748.20.

"The uncertainty of the US presidential election outcome is one factor supporting hedging demand for gold, the other probably are the geopolitical tensions in the Middle East," UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo said.

The presidential race between former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris is neck-and-neck in the seven battleground states that will decide the Nov. 5 election.

Elsewhere, in the Middle East, hundreds of Beirut residents fled their homes as Israel prepared to attack sites linked to the financial operations of the Hezbollah group. Gold, which is considered a hedge against political and geopolitical uncertainty, has risen 32 percent so far this year.

# Stocks bounce back after five-day losses

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The indexes of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) rose yesterday, snapping a five-day losing streak on the back of the good performance of shares in the blue-chip and large-cap sectors.

Shares of Islami Bank Bangladesh, BRAC Bank, Heidelberg Materials Bangladesh PLC, Bangladesh Steel Re-rolling Mills, Orion Pharma, BAT Bangladesh, Square Pharmaceuticals, MJL Bangladesh, Premier Cement Mills, and Saif Powertec Limited drew the most investors, according to the daily market update by LankaBangla Financial Portal.

However, none of these companies saw double-digit growth in share prices.

The highest growth was logged in the share prices of Islami Bank Bangladesh and BRAC Bank, rising by over four percent each.

Meanwhile, the share prices of Grameenphone, IFIC Bank, Prime Bank, National Bank, JHR Hospital Requisite Manufacturing Limited, Beximco Pharmaceuticals, Al-Arafah Islam Bank, Unique Hotel & Resorts PLC, BBS Cables and Robi Axiata Limited fell.

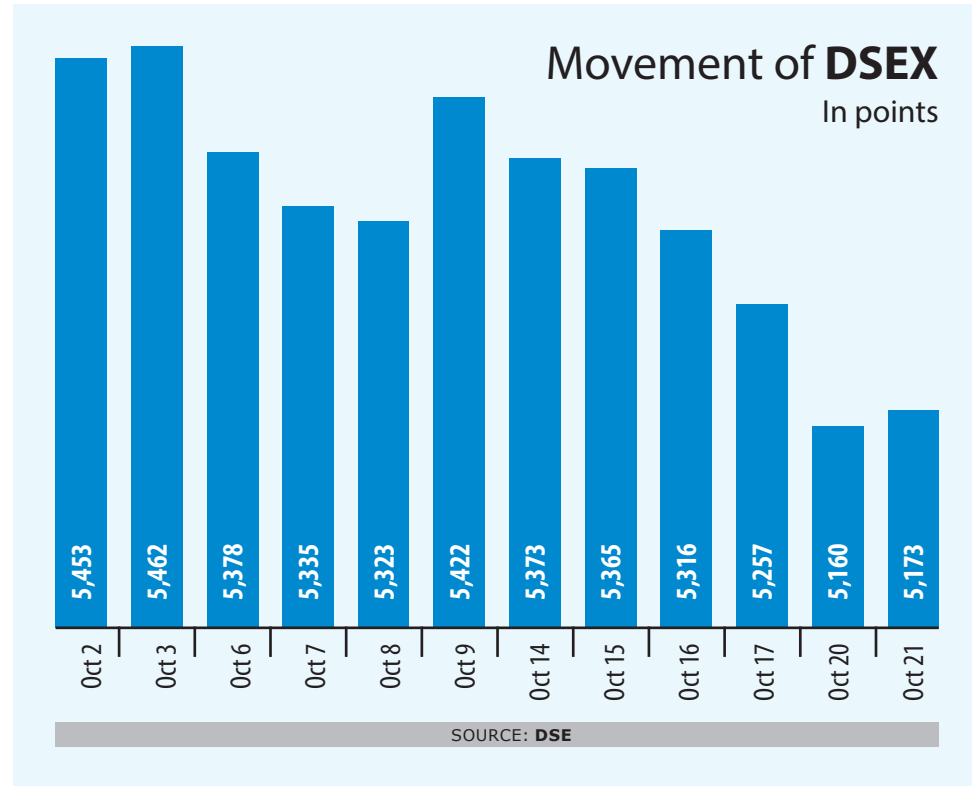
The DSEX went up by 12.38 points, or 0.24 percent, from the previous day to close at 5,173 points.

The benchmark index of the country's premier bourse had hit a four-month low on Sunday, hitting 5,160 points. The last time the DSEX had reached such a level was on June 19, when it hit 5,161.

Similar to the uptick at the DSEX, the DSES index for Shariah-compliant companies also edged up by 1.42 points, or 0.12 percent, to 1,156 points.

In the blue-chip segment, the DS30 index grew by 7.54 points, or 0.40 percent, to 1,903.

Of the 397 scrips that changed hands yesterday, 150 saw price hikes while 184 closed



lower. The remaining 63 did not witness any price fluctuation.

The day's turnover, which indicates the total value of shares traded on the DSE trading floor, stood at Tk 344 crore, a decrease of 4.87 percent compared to the previous day's trading session. The banking sector dominated the turnover chart, accounting for 19.63 percent of the total.

The contribution of block trades, meaning high-volume transactions in securities that

are privately negotiated and executed outside of the open market, stood at 6 percent of overall market turnover.

Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream PLC emerged as the most traded shares, with a combined turnover of Tk 34.2 crore.

Sector-wise, the services & real estate, cement, and information technology were the top three sectors that closed in the positive, UCB Stock Brokerage said in its daily market update.

## Brokers urge DSE to act as primary regulator

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stockbrokers in Bangladesh have urged the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) to regain its role as the primary authority in allowing initial public offerings (IPOs) and monitoring the country's share market.

This request came at a meeting between leaders of the DSE Brokers Association of Bangladesh (DBA), the top 25 brokerage firms and the newly appointed DSE board at the association's office in Dhaka.

Saiful Islam, president of the DBA, said they asked the DSE board to empower the country's premier bourse so that it can play its due role just like those abroad. He added that the DSE should become instrumental in approving IPOs to prevent weak companies from listing in the market.

Furthermore, Islam said rather than handling all market surveillance, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission should rely on the DSE to point out issues requiring its attention.

"The DSE has not been playing its proper role for the last 10 to 15 years," he added.

The stockbrokers also urged the DSE board to tell the government to reduce the taxes related to share trading as it would make the market more attractive for investors.

They said even though such a move may initially reduce government revenue, the overall tax collection would actually rise in the long run as people would increase their investments and thereby pay more on share turnover.

A top official of a brokerage firm who was present at the meeting said they mainly stressed on reducing capital gains tax and other charges that are not investor friendly.

Capital gains are the profits investors make by selling shares. Over the past year, capital gains tax has gone from nil to 40.50 percent for general investors while it is 15 percent for institutional investors.

Neighbouring India charges investors a maximum capital gains tax of 15 percent, which reduces to 10 percent if the seller held the shares for more than one year.

## Fitch Ratings trims growth forecast

FROM PAGE B1

On the other hand, the change could improve credit metrics in the medium term, for instance if reforms are pursued and governance standards improve, it added.

Fitch Ratings also informed that Bangladesh was facing some external financing pressures before the protests began around mid July.

Earlier in May, the agency had downgraded Bangladesh's rating to B- from BB- due to sustained weakening of the country's external finances, which it believes will be challenging to reverse even with some policy reforms.

However, the external metrics have been stable ever since the change in leadership, it said.

The commentary by Fitch Ratings comes after more than two months since it said Bangladesh's rating may worsen if the political transition faces challenges or leads to policy paralysis and exacerbates fiscal or external stresses.

Several days before the report by Fitch Ratings in August, another US rating agency called Moody's said changes to Bangladesh's credit rating would depend on if its

interim government can maintain political stability and commit to structural reforms.

At the end of July, S&P Global had downgraded Bangladesh's long-term sovereign rating from BB- to B+ in face of deadly protests across the country.

In its commentary, Fitch Ratings said the inflow of remittance to Bangladesh from its workers abroad improved to \$2.4 billion in September after falling to \$1.9 billion earlier in July.

Garment exports, a key source of export revenue for the country, rose by about 7.2 percent year-on-year in August despite some reported damages to production units amid the protests.

Bangladesh's foreign reserves have remained largely stable during this period. As of October 8, the country's forex reserves stood at \$19.8 billion, down from \$20.5 billion on July 31.

Fitch Ratings also said Bangladesh Bank raised its policy rate by 100 basis points after the new governor took office.

Besides, the country's local currency depreciated after Bangladesh Bank shifted to a crawling peg system for determining

exchange rates in May, suggesting that pressure on its forex reserves will reduce.

"Initial steps by the interim government suggest that the authorities are attempting to stabilise the economy. For instance, a taskforce for banking sector reforms has been set up," it said.

"However, there are significant risks to our baseline expectations," it added.

And while a general election is due, its timing remains unclear. Additionally, political gridlock following the elections or the return of violence cannot be ruled out given the strong political polarisation over the past decade, Fitch Ratings said.

In particular, Bangladesh's credit profile would be affected if this further weakens the country's external metrics and leads to lower foreign reserves.

Significant slippage on key targets of a 42-month loan programme of the International Monetary Fund, which began in January 2023, could also disrupt access to other multilateral funding, it added.

## Unrest erodes

FROM PAGE B1

During the period, US apparel sourcing from China increased by 3.6 percent in terms of quantity.

Apparel exports to the USA by Vietnam during this period increased by 5.2 percent, from India by 7.6 percent and from Cambodia increased by 7.7 percent, according to OTEXA data compiled by the BGMEA.

Similarly, in the January-July period, garment imports by the EU countries increased by 3.3 percent and the growth was only 2.8 percent from Bangladesh, according to Eurostat data compiled by the BGMEA.

During this period, apparel export to the EU by China grew by 6.4 percent, from India at 5.18 percent, from Cambodia at 18.35 percent, from Vietnam at 12.61 percent and from Pakistan by 14.41 percent, showed the data.

Overall in the July-September period, garment export from Bangladesh grew by 5.34 percent, whereas Vietnam recorded the overall apparel export growth at 15.57 percent and India at 13.45 percent, the BGMEA compiled data showed.

The data analysis showed that the garment exports by other

countries grew faster than Bangladesh in the major markets largely because of the political and labour unrest.

The local garment exporters could not produce goods smoothly and ship those on time.

Exporters said some of the international retailers and brands either suspended their factory visit or shifted work orders to other countries.

A good number of garment factories have witnessed on and off situations since the beginning of the anti-discriminatory student movement in mid-July this year.

AK Azad, chairman and managing director of Ha-Meem Group, which mainly exports to the USA, said he experienced labour unrest and his export was affected like others.

"However, now I have been booking a lot of work orders from the buyer as they are coming back for the next seasons," Azad said.

Ex-president of now dissolved Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Khandoker Rafiqul Islam also echoed Azad, saying, "Buyers are coming back now as the normalcy has restored in the sector."

## Half of banks' CSR

FROM PAGE B1

Under the latter, grants were provided for research and projects related to climate change mitigation, including tree plantation.

Compared to CSR expenditure in the last six months of 2023, it fell by 12.42 percent, the BB report said. Banks spent Tk 353.07 crore on CSR initiatives in the July-December period of 2023.

CSR expenditure on environment and climate change mitigation-adaptation declined by about 50 percent compared to the six months prior. CSR spending also fell in the education and health sectors.

Analysing BB documents, it is noticeable that BASIC Bank, ICB Islamic Bank, National Bank, and Padma Bank have not given any money towards disaster management.

AB Bank provided Tk 1.6 crore, EXIM Bank Tk 3.77 crore, First Security Islami Bank PLC Tk 6.98 crore, IFIC Bank PLC Tk 13 lakh, Global Islami Bank PLC Tk 66 lakh, Social Islami Bank Limited Tk 7.93 crore and Union Bank PLC Tk 4.4

lakh, it showed.

Bankers claimed that they had to commit money to various funds run by the office of recently deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina through the Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB).

Abdul Hai Sarker, chairman of the BAB, said most CSR funds were sent to funds maintained by the prime minister's office in the name of different programmes, including for housing and flood relief.

"We had no control over it. There was no way to say that we wouldn't give money," he said.

Sarker, also chairman of Dhaka Bank, said everything will happen according to rules and regulations now that the regime has changed.

Mohammad Ali, managing director of Pubali Bank, said they have to spend 2.5 percent of their net profit on socially impactful initiatives.

"Our focus on health, education and climate change reduces when we have to spend more on disaster management," he explained.

## Consumer sales slow

FROM PAGE B1

"However, this season is different. Almost all companies are not making too much for now," said the Unilever Bangladesh MD.

He said it is difficult to predict how long this situation will continue, but unfortunately, high inflation may persist for another year.

Malik Mohammed Sayeed, chief operating officer of Square Toiletries Limited, said they have avoided increasing prices on essential hygiene and toiletries items by sacrificing profit margins.

"We did not increase the price of some products

despite their production costs increasing by 15 percent due to pricier raw materials," he said.

Echoing Sayeed, Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing director of Pran-RFL Group, said prices of their FMCG items have not increased, but consumption has declined substantially.

For this, he blamed both the declining purchasing power of consumers and rising inflation.

Kamal too said that people are now opting for smaller quantities instead of larger items.

SM Mujibur Rahman, head of accounts at the Meghna Group of

Industries (MGI), said their sales of FMCG products have declined since July.

The lower income to middle-class consumers are under pressure as their purchasing power has decreased due to rising prices of daily essentials, said Rahman, adding that this has forced them to reduce consumption as a part of the belt-tightening measure.

Overall, FMCG sales have declined by around 5 percent, but in some cases, the decline has been up to 12 percent depending on the products, Rahman said. MGI supplies 17 FMCG products under 15 categories.

**খুলনা পানি সরবরাহ ও পয়ঃনিষ্কাশন কর্তৃপক্ষ**  
**Khulna Water Supply & Sewerage Authority**  
৭ নং কলকোট রোটে যাট রোড, বোয়ালশাট নিকটবর্তী, খালিপুর, খুলনা-৯০০০।

**Re-Tender Notice**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of:

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description of Goods/Works	Last Selling Date and time	Closing Date and time	Opening Date and time
1026834	KWASA-G-PumpMotor.-24-25	Supply of 5 Nos. 10 HP Submersible Pump Motor Set for Financial year 2024-2025.	10-Nov-2024 17:00	11-Nov-2024 11:30	11-Nov-2024 11:30

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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank Branches.

Further Information and Guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

Khan Salim Ahmed  
Superintending Engineer  
Khulna WASA  
Phone No: +88-02 4777022973

GD-742

**Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited**  
**'Connecting Worlds for Enriching Lives'**  
116 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000  
[www.bscl.gov.bd](http://www.bscl.gov.bd)

**Invitation for Tenders**

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology
2	Agency	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited
3	Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited, represented by Managing Director
4	Procuring entity code	Not used at present
5	Procuring entity district	Dhaka
6	Invitation for	Tender
7	Invitation Ref No.	14.39.0000.012.07.006.22-18(T)
8	Date	21/10/2024
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>		
9	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>		
10	Budget and source of funds	Company's own fund
11	Development partners (if applicable)	Not applicable
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
12	Project / program code (if applicable)	Not applicable
13	Project name (if applicable)	Not applicable
14	Tender Package No.	BSCL/2024-25/PJ-04
15	Tender package name	Procurement of Laptop/Desktop, Computer Monitor & Computer Consumables
<b>DATE</b>		
16	Tender publication date	22/10/2024
17	Tender last selling date	10/11/2024
		Time: 05:00pm
18	Tender closing date and time	11/11/2024
		Time: 12:00pm
19	Tender opening date and time	11/11/2024
		Time: 12:20pm
<b>ADDRESS</b>		
- Selling tender document (principal)		Managing Director
- Selling tender document (others)		Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited
- Receiving tender document		SEL, Rose-N-Dale, Level-07, 116 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000.
- Opening tender document		
21	Pre-tender meeting	Not applicable
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>		
22	Eligibility of tenderer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tenderers shall have the legal capacity to enter into the Contract under the Applicable Law.</li> <li>The minimum of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the supply of Goods and related services as Supplier shall be 3 years.</li> <li>Specific Experience:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lot 1: The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least 1 (One) contract successfully completed within the last 02 (Two) years, each with a value of at least Tk. 60,00,000/-</li> <li>Lot 2: The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least 02 (Two) contract(s) successfully completed within the last 02 (Two) years, with a value of at least Tk. 4,00,000/-</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
23	Brief description of goods	Procurement of Laptop/Desktop, Computer Monitor & Computer Consumables
24	Brief description of related service	Procurement of Laptop/Desktop, Computer Monitor & Computer Consumables at BSCL.
25	Price of tender document (Tk)	1000/-
<b>PACKAGES</b>		
25	Package No.	1
Procurement of Laptop/Desktop, Computer Monitor & Computer Consumables		Location: BSCL Head Office & Ground (Gazipur & Barbania) Tender security amount (Tk): 1. Lot 1: Tk. 2,00,000/- 2. Lot 2: Tk. 10,000/- Completion time in weeks / months: As Per the Tender Document
<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>		
27	Name of official inviting tender	Rehnuma Taranum
28	Designation of official inviting tender	Senior Manager, Procurement
29	Address of official inviting tender	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited SEL, Rose-N-Dale, Level-07, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000
30	Contact details of official inviting tender	024103091-93, procurement@bscl.com.bd
31	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings	

(Signed)  
Rehnuma Taranum  
Senior Manager, Procurement (Additional Charge)  
Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited

GD-749



## BB reduces repo auctions to one day a week

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank has further reduced the number of its repo auctions for banks to one day per week in a bid to improve the implementation of the monetary policy.

The new measure will come into effect from November 1, the central bank said in a circular issued yesterday.

The Bangladesh Bank had cut the number of its repo auctions to two days a week from the previously daily basis to meet a condition for a \$4.7 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund.

Husna Ara Shikha, executive director and spokesperson of the central bank, said the repo auctions have been reduced for better implementation of the monetary policy.

As per the decision, the Bangladesh Bank will now lend to banks against government securities for tenures of seven days, 14 days and 28 days.

"This will enable the banks to plan well," she added. Under the repo auction, banks can borrow from the central bank against government securities with the condition that they will buy the instruments back at a specific date, usually for higher prices. By doing so, the banks can avail funds and meet their liquidity requirements.

# Cargo movement halts at Ctg port

Drivers and helpers of prime movers call 48hr strike

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The transportation of export-import laden containers to and from Chattogram Port has been halted since yesterday morning due to a 48-hour strike enforced by prime mover drivers and their helpers.

The strike, called by the Chattogram District Prime Mover Trailer, Concrete Mixer, Flatbed, Dump Truck Workers Union, began at 6:00am yesterday and will continue until 6:00am on Wednesday.

The workers are pressing for several demands, including the issuance of appointment letters and identity cards, which they claim have long been denied by prime mover owners.

The union's president, Md Selim Khan, said that despite repeated requests, the owners have failed to address these issues. Additional demands include the implementation of fixed work hours and a minimum wage, reports our local correspondent.



Drivers and helpers of prime movers demand issuance of appointment letters and identity cards.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

As a result of the strike, cargo transport between private inland container depots (ICDs) and Chattogram port has been suspended.

Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of the Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association, confirmed that prime mover drivers and helpers have ceased operations at all 20 ICDs since the strike began.

However, Abu Bakar Siddique, executive president of the Prime Mover Owners Association, dismissed the demand for appointment letters as "illogical", saying that the workers operate on a "no work, no pay" basis.

He added that the owners' association is meeting to address the situation and resume operations.

Over 10,000 prime movers are involved in cargo transport across the country, with around 4,000 responsible for moving containers to and from Chattogram port.

# High inflation a concern for stability

Selim Raihan, executive director of Sanem, tells The Daily Star

### FEDA AL HOSSAIN

Bangladesh has been grappling with elevated inflation for the past two and a half years, significantly straining the daily lives of its population.

Despite expectations that the country's political shift on August 5 would alleviate the situation, inflation has continued to rise to what many now consider intolerable levels, according to economist Selim Raihan.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Selim Raihan, the executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), said that the high inflation has raised concerns about its potential impact on the country's economic and political stability.

Raihan, also an economics professor at Dhaka University, identified six major factors driving inflation in the country.

"The first and most critical is a supply crisis, where essential goods are not adequately available in the market. This shortage has created a supply-demand imbalance, driving prices higher across the board," he said.

The economist pointed out that a key challenge in this regard is the lack of accurate data on supply and demand, which makes it difficult to address these imbalances.

Besides, the credibility of government data is also in question as a whole, further complicating the fight against inflation.

Another contributing factor is the lack of market competition, with certain traders exploiting the situation by hoarding goods and creating artificial shortages to manipulate prices.

This practice has worsened under the current inflationary pressures, said the Sanem executive director.

"The absence of timely and appropriate monetary and fiscal policies has also exacerbated the problem," Raihan said. "The coordination between key institutions, such as the Bangladesh Bank and the National Board of Revenue (NBR), has been insufficient, hindering effective inflation control."

The devaluation of the local currency Taka over the past two years is another significant factor.

The sharp depreciation increased the cost of imports, particularly that of

essential commodities, and is thereby contributing to the inflationary pinch. Although adjustments in import duties could have mitigated these effects, no such measures were taken, he said.

Additionally, the rising fuel prices have increased the cost of production, transportation and distribution, further intensifying inflationary pressures, he added.

Raihan emphasised that addressing this prolonged inflation crisis requires coordinated efforts across different government sectors.

However, such coordination has been lacking both under the previous government and the current interim administration. Against this backdrop, he outlined several areas that require immediate attention if inflation is to be brought under control.

"One of the most important steps is the collection and analysis of accurate market data," Raihan said.



"Reliable statistics on the demand and supply of essential commodities are crucial for understanding where shortages exist and for implementing corrective measures," he added.

Raihan stressed that government agencies must cooperate with experts to ensure effective data management. If shortages are identified, he suggested that the government should make arrangements for imports to prevent further price hikes.

Maintaining a stable supply of goods in the market was another key recommendation of the economist.

He said natural disasters, such as the recent floods, have disrupted food production in Bangladesh, leading to inflationary pressure on food prices.

Raihan advised that authorities should keep adequate stockpiles of essential goods and, when necessary, resort to imports to fill supply gaps.

He also recommended that special

measures be taken to address crop losses during natural calamities.

Raihan further called for streamlining the import process for essential commodities. He argued that the government should plan imports well in advance of forecasted disasters to avoid shortages and ensure smooth operations without unnecessary bureaucratic delays.

This would help maintain price stability, he commented.

To enhance market stability, Raihan suggested the formation of an integrated platform under the leadership of the Ministry of Commerce. This platform would include the Bangladesh Bank, the revenue board, and other relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Food and Ministry of Agriculture. Regular meetings would allow these bodies to assess market conditions and take required actions.

"Such coordination is essential for a unified response to inflation."

He also highlighted the need for better coordination between monetary and fiscal policies.

Raihan proposed that the Bangladesh Bank set clear monetary policies while the NBR develops fiscal policies that complement these efforts. This might involve adjusting interest rates or offering tax concessions to help control the price pressure.

Raihan underscored the importance of improving the country's law and order situation, particularly to curb extortion from essential-laden trucks, which have disrupted supply chains and raised transportation costs, adding to inflationary pressures.

With the August political changeover, Raihan said new extortion networks have emerged, further impeding efforts to stabilise the market.

As such, Raihan called for stringent measures for traders engaged in hoarding and market manipulation.

He urged the government to take strict action against those creating artificial shortages and monitor the market regularly.

He also recommended empowering the Bangladesh Competition Commission to effectively tackle market irregularities, ensuring that traders are held accountable.

Without these reforms, Raihan warned it would be difficult for the interim government to restore economic stability amid the ongoing inflation.



The rising fuel prices have increased the cost of production, transportation and distribution of agricultural and other products, further intensifying inflationary pressures.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Premier Cement made Tk 74.23cr profit in FY24

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Premier Cement Mills PLC, one of Bangladesh's leading cement manufacturers, reported a profit of Tk 74.23 crore for the financial year ending on June 30, 2024.

This marked a significant turnaround from a Tk 84.23 crore loss in the previous year.

The cement producer also announced consolidated earnings per share of Tk 7.04, a sharp contrast to the loss per share of Tk 7.99 in the previous year, according to a disclosure on the website of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

Premier's board has also recommended a 21.50 percent cash dividend, which is the highest payout in nine years. Premier Cement, which began operations in 2001, has steadily expanded its production capacity to 2.4 million tonnes annually, as per the data from its website.

A strategic partnership with FL Smidth-Denmark in 2017 further bolstered its output to 5.16 million tonnes, positioning it as a key player in the cement industry.

Shares of Premier Cement surged 4.52 percent to Tk 64.8 yesterday at the DSE.

## Far East Knitting posts Tk 36cr profit

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Far East Knitting & Dyeing Industries Ltd reported a profit of Tk 35.87 crore for the financial year ending on June 30, 2024, reflecting a 3.7 percent increase year-on-year.

The company also posted earnings per share of Tk 1.64, up from Tk 1.58 in the prior year, according to a disclosure on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) website.

Its net operating cash flow per share surged to Tk 6.36, which the company attributed to increased cash inflows from customers.

Far East's board has proposed a 14 percent cash dividend, marking its highest payout in 10 years.

Established in 1994, Far East Knitting has grown from a small garment operation into a major player in Bangladesh's textile sector, serving global brands like Zara and Mango, according to its website.

Its spinning mill in Habiganj produces 100 percent cotton and viscose yarn using advanced machinery from leading manufacturers.

Shares of Far East Knitting soared 10.98 percent to Tk 18.2 yesterday at the DSE.

# As poor nations' default wave peaks, cash shortage could take its place

### REUTERS

The punishing post-Covid wave of sovereign defaults has finally crested, with the likes of Ghana, Sri Lanka and Zambia concluding years of painful debt reworks.

But the International Monetary Fund and others worry that a dangerous liquidity shortfall could take its place in many emerging economies - setting back development, stunting climate change mitigation and fuelling distrust in governments and Western institutions.

The issue, and what to do about it when western countries are increasingly loath to send money overseas, is a key topic at the IMF World Bank autumn meetings taking place in Washington, D.C. this week.

"It's a challenge in the sense that for many, debt service has grown, borrowing has become more expensive, and external sources (have become) less certain," said Christian Libralato, portfolio manager with RBC BlueBay.

The US Treasury's top economic diplomat has called for new ways to provide short-term liquidity support to low- and middle-income countries to head off debt crises.

The Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable - an initiative bringing together representatives from countries, private lenders, the World Bank and the G20 - has also tried to tackle the issue, and it will be on the agenda when they meet in Washington on Wednesday.

But with constrained budgets and crises around every corner, Vera Songwe, chair of the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility - a group that aims to lower debt costs for Africa - said current fixes lack the scale and the speed needed.

"Countries are avoiding... education, health and infrastructure expenditures to service their debt," Songwe said. "Even in the advanced economies... there are stresses in the system."

### QUESTION OF CAPITAL

Data from non-profit advocacy group ONE Campaign shows that in 2022, 26 countries - including Angola, Brazil, Nigeria and Pakistan - paid more to service external debts than they received in new external finance.

Many first gained access to bond borrowing roughly a decade prior, meaning big payments came due just as global interest rates rose, putting affordable refinancing out of reach.

ONE estimates those flows turned net negative for developing countries on the whole in 2023, estimates backed by experts at the Finance for Development Lab.

"The IMF-led global social global financial safety net is simply not deep enough anymore," Ishak Diwan, research director at the Finance for Development Lab told Reuters.

Diwan, who spent two decades at the World Bank, said that while full official figures are not yet available, net negative transfers for 2023 and 2024 are likely worse. Fresh funding from the IMF, the World Bank and other multilaterals failed to compensate for the rising costs, he said.

World Bank and IMF officials seem to agree. The World Bank aims

to boost lending capacity by \$30 billion over 10 years. The IMF cut surcharges, lowering the cost for the most overstretched borrowers by \$1.2 billion annually.

### TIDE TURNING?

Bankers say many of the countries are now able to tap markets again, alleviating cash flow worries.

"I don't think there's a limitation on access," said Stefan Weiler, head of CEE/MEA debt at JPMorgan. "The market is really wide open."

Weiler expects bond issuance in Europe, the Middle East and Africa to reach a record \$275-\$300 billion this year - with more countries, even Nigeria and Angola, possibly issuing bonds next year.

But the cost remains high. Kenya, scrambling to repay a maturing dollar-bond, borrowed at above 10 percent, a threshold seen widely as unsustainable.

Finance minister John Mbadi said Kenya cannot fund infrastructure investments through the budget.

"Kenyans keep on complaining about 'we don't have money in our pockets.' That in a sense is just saying that we have challenges with liquidity in the economy," Mbadi said during a news conference.

China's pull-back in lending has

also hit emerging countries hard, turning what had become a large source of incoming cash into a net negative flow for those repaying old debts.

### SO WHAT?

Development banks are already scrambling to work together to maximise lending; the Inter-American Development Bank and the Africa Development Bank are in the midst of a global campaign to get countries to donate their IMF reserve assets, so-called "special drawing rights", which they say could turn every \$1 donated into \$8 in lending.

But the World Bank and others are still fighting to convince western countries to cough up more cash to supercharge their lending; debt-laden France plans to cut 1.3 billion euros of foreign aid, following cuts by the previous government in Britain.

A strong dollar means key donor Japan would have to significantly boost its contributions to keep at the same level.

The mix is toxic for developing nations.

"We see protests from Kenya to Nigeria to elsewhere. It's a very dangerous situation," Diwan said.

"We're losing the whole global south at this stage."



Traders sell products at Makola market in Accra, Ghana. The International Monetary Fund and others worry that a dangerous liquidity shortfall could occur in many emerging economies -- setting back development and stunting climate change mitigation.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE