

# Star BUSINESS



## BB waiting for law to sue Nagad

MD MEHEDI HASAN

The Bangladesh Bank is waiting for the interim government to bring a Payment and Settlement System Act, 2024 into effect, as it intends to take legal action against mobile financial service (MFS) provider Nagad Ltd over alleged irregularities.

Nagad introduced itself as a financial arm of the Bangladesh Post Office when it entered the market in 2019. It is still running on a temporary licence from the central bank.

After the interim government came into office, the central bank in August appointed an administrator at Nagad over the alleged irregularities in operations and dealings.

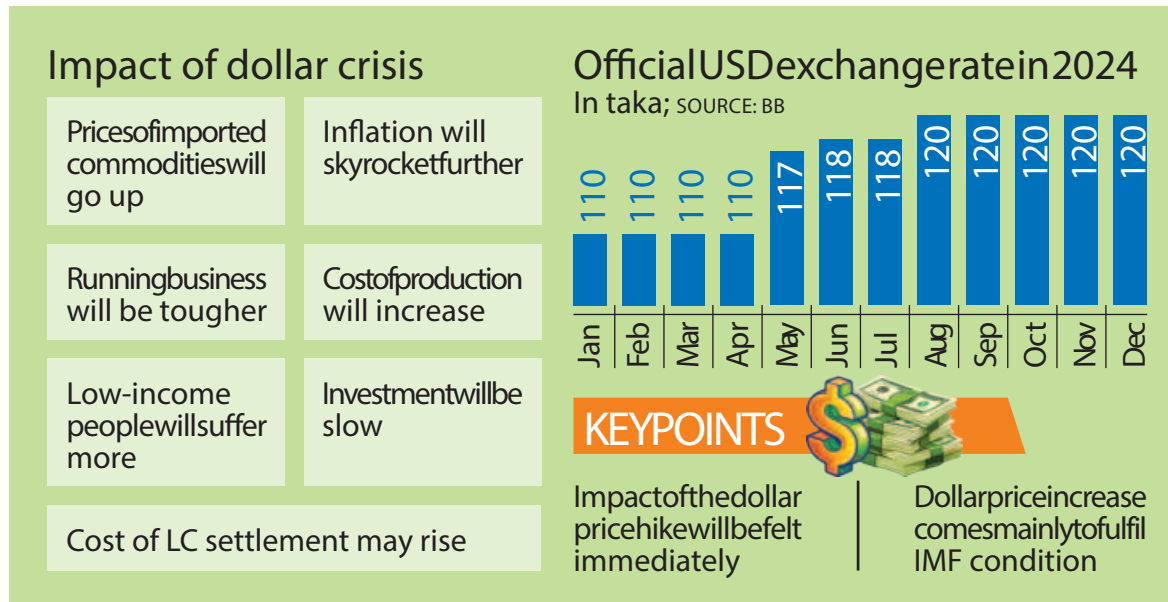
It said the appointment was made under section 31 of the act, which was passed in parliament in July this year.

However, sub-section 3 of section 01 says the act would come into effect on a date announced through a gazette. It is yet to be issued.

"We informed the matter to the government and the division concerned will issue a gazette soon by fixing the effective date," one central bank official, who is directly involved in the process, told The Daily Star.

Without the gazette, questions will arise regarding the administrator's appointment, he pointed out.

## As dollar jumps, old inflation battle to get tougher in new year



JAGARAN CHAKMA

After a four-month lull, US dollar prices made an abrupt jump in December, making imports more expensive and pushing up business costs.

Businesspeople and economists said that a further strengthening of the greenback would have a ripple effect on essential prices, further complicating the ongoing battle against inflation.

"The price of all imported essentials will increase shortly due to the rising dollar price," said SM Mujibur Rahman, head of accounts at the industrial conglomerate Meghna Group of Industries (MGI). Bangladesh has long been struggling to curb inflation, which has remained above 9 percent since March 2023.

To lower the price pressure curve, the central bank has hiked the policy rate five times this year to 10 percent.

Besides, a crawling peg exchange rate was introduced in May this year, allowing banks to buy and sell US dollars freely within a mid-range of Tk 117.

But Rahman said they are currently opening letters of credit

(LCs) at Tk 126 per dollar, while this rate could fluctuate further during settlement.

Bangladesh relies heavily on imports for a wide range of food essentials, including edible oils, lentils, onions, sugar, and spices. These items have been selling roughly 5 percent higher than a year ago.

Usually, poor and middle-income individuals are vulnerable to price increases in widely consumed food items.

To offer the vulnerable groups better protection and stabilise the local market, the government has announced duty and value-added tax (VAT) cuts on many food essentials.

But Rahman said a stronger dollar could undo the impact of these tax cuts.

He estimated that the increase in the dollar rate has led to a 45 percent decline in real income over the past two years.

Echoing similar views of Rahman, Zaved Akhtar, managing director of Unilever Bangladesh, said the sudden and sharp depreciation of Taka would have immediate consequences for businesses and the overall economy.

Since business plans and assumptions depend on currency forecasts, businesses find it challenging, if not impossible, to modify and adapt their strategies in the near term, he said.

"In addition, given our country's import dependency, inflation is now unlikely to abate soon and the cost of operations is likely to rise," he added.

He also said companies with foreign currency exposure will face increased cost exposure.

"Needless to say, micro, small and medium enterprises will find it difficult to run as the cost of funds continues to rise," Akhtar added.

Although the crawling peg allows banks to buy and sell dollars at Tk 120, the actual exchange rate is now between Tk 125 and Tk 127, according to Ferdous Ara Begum, chief executive officer of the private sector think-tank Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD).

She said the crawling peg has not worked well because banks are running the system differently.

To cushion the dollar jump, she added that the Bangladesh Bank (BB) might need to raise the policy rate again.

## Islami Bank MD forced out of office

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mohammed Monirul Moula, the managing director of Islami Bank Bangladesh, has not gone to his workplace since December 19 when he was forced to leave by a group of officials.

An additional managing director (AMD) of the bank, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the development to The Daily Star.

He said Moula has been absent due to "internal issues".



Officials of the bank said Moula was working from home. The issue will be raised at a board of directors meeting scheduled for December 29, they added.

Neither Moula nor the bank's new chairman, Md Obayed Ullah Al Masud, received phone calls from The Daily Star for comment.

Moula was appointed in January 2021 when the controversial S Alam Group was dominating the bank's board.

Recently, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case against 58 people, including Ahsanul Alam, former chairman of Islami Bank and son of S Alam Group owner Mohammed Saiful Alam, and Mohammed Monirul Moula.

They are accused of embezzling Tk 109.2 crore from Islami Bank through loan fraud.

After the installation of the interim government, S Alam Group's control over Islami Bank ended in August as Bangladesh Bank dissolved the previous board that was heavily dominated by individuals linked to the conglomerate.



The Daily Star has learned that the gazette would be issued stating that the act would take retrospective effect.

There are options to take the legal steps under the Payment and Settlement System Regulation, 2008 and the Bangladesh Mobile Financial Services (MFS) Regulation, 2022, said central bank officials.

But the latest act is more precise when ensuring legal measures, they said.

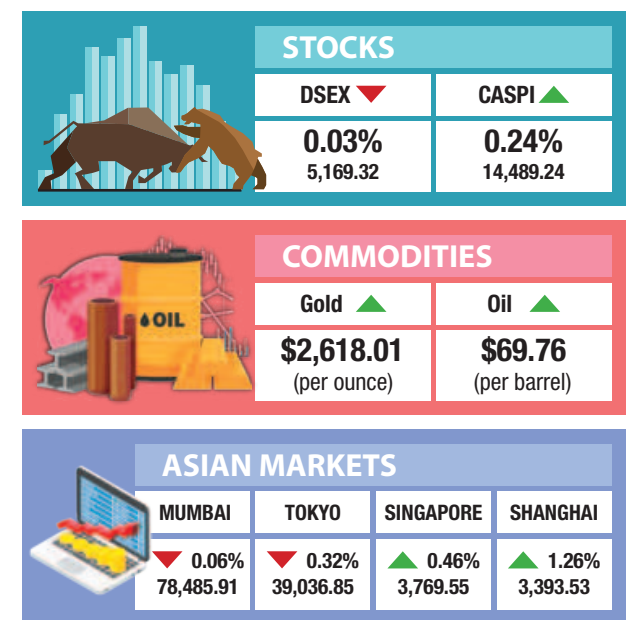
A director of Nagad filed a writ petition with the High Court on September 10 challenging the administrator's appointment for not complying with the act.

The High Court last week imposed a two-week status quo on all activities of Nagad, preventing the administrator and management board from taking any new step beyond regular business operations.

### ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES AT NAGAD

The Daily Star came to know that the administrator found a lot of alleged irregularities at Nagad.

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## Tax return submission deadline extended to Jan 31

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has for a second time extended by a month the deadline for individual taxpayers to file tax returns.

Now, taxpayers will get until January 31 next year to submit the documents.

Usually, November 30 is the deadline for the submission of tax returns for the fiscal year ending in the preceding June. The NBR had initially extended it to December 31.

In a notice issued yesterday, the tax administrator also said the deadline for businesses to submit returns has been extended to February 15 from January 15. The deadlines have been extended based on demands from various bodies of professionals, according to the NBR.

Individual taxpayers and businesses can also submit their income and wealth statements both online and in person. Failing to do so within the deadline results in taxpayers being subject to fines.

Earlier, the NBR made the online filing of tax returns mandatory for government officials under tax zones of the Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur city corporations.

It also asked all bankers and officials of mobile network operators to file returns electronically for the current assessment year.

## Not a good year for job-seekers



MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Fresh graduates, their faces pale and uncertain, spent 2024 poring over newspaper job advertisements, applying for any suitable position and frantically appearing for recruitment exams in Dhaka.

The year was marked by somewhat regular public recruitments until June -- before a nationwide student movement turned into a full-blown anti-government campaign.

However, the private sector offered far fewer new jobs than the number of fresh graduates entering the job market.

Throughout the year, economic and political gauges constantly beeped red: a slowing economy, falling capital machinery import, sluggish private sector credit appetite, a nationwide upheaval culminating in the

government ouster and the formation of an interim government.

Amid the turmoil, the overall job market fared poorly in 2024.

The year began with roughly 10 lakh unemployed graduates, according to the latest official data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

In Bangladesh, public jobs represent around 6 percent of the employment while the private players accommodate the remaining workforce.

In 2024, a combination of factors such as global crises, local political instability, a worsening US dollar crisis and high inflation halted expansion plans.

Therefore, private firms saw their appetite for fresh credit waning. Private sector credit growth decelerated to 8.30 percent in October, the lowest in

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## শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

শ্রদ্ধেয় জনাব ফজলুর রহমান

আজকের এই দিনে, যমুনা ব্যাংকের সম্মানিত পরিচালক জনাব ফজলুর রহমানের প্রথম মৃত্যুবাসিকীতে, আমরা যমুনা ব্যাংক পরিবার তাঁর মহৎ অবদান ও বলিষ্ঠ নেতৃত্ব গভীর শ্রদ্ধার সাথে স্মরণ করি। ব্যাংকের উন্নয়নে তাঁর অটল প্রতিশ্রুতি, দূরদর্শী দিকনির্দেশনা ও কঠোর পরিশ্রম আমাদের জন্য চিরকাল অনুপ্রেরণার উৎস হয়ে থাকবে।

তাঁর রেখে যাওয়া অমলিন স্মৃতি ও অবদান যমুনা ব্যাংকের ইতিহাসে চিরকাল অক্ষয় থাকবে। যমুনা ব্যাংক পরিবার।

Jamuna Bank

# Malaysia keen to invest more in Bangladesh, envoy says

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Malaysia has a strong interest in increasing investments in Bangladesh, according to Mohd Shuhada Othman, the high commissioner of Malaysia to Bangladesh.

He made this comment at the 23rd annual general meeting of the Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BMCCI) at a hotel in Dhaka recently, as per a press release.

Othman highlighted the visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on October 4, during which he expressed a strong interest in increasing investments in Bangladesh.

Othman also reiterated his commitment to working closely with the BMCCI, backed by the full support of the Malaysian high commission in Dhaka.

Expressing his confidence, Othman said the BMCCI would support him on every step of the way, serving as a vital link between the Malaysian business community and Bangladeshi enterprises.

He emphasised his desire to see more Malaysian business entities join the BMCCI, highlighting the benefits of collaboration and shared goals of economic growth and prosperity.

The envoy concluded his speech by expressing optimism for the future, urging all stakeholders to work together and create a thriving business environment.



Mohd Shuhada Othman, the Malaysian high commissioner to Bangladesh, and Shabbir Ahmed Khan, president of the Bangladesh-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, pose for photographs at the chamber's 23rd annual general meeting at a hotel in the capital recently.

PHOTO: BMCCI

BMCCI President Shabbir Ahmed Khan presented their activity report for 2024 to members through a comprehensive visual presentation, emphasising the chamber's critical role and reaffirming its commitment to enhancing bilateral trade and investment.

Despite global and domestic challenges, the board has made

remarkable progress in fostering business growth and maintaining the chamber's vibrancy, he said.

Key achievements included a successful fact-finding mission to Malaysia, where the board re-established vital relationships with key stakeholders such as MDEC and MATRADE.

The board also participated

in the SEMICON SEA summit, marking a significant entry into the semiconductor and integrated circuit sectors, accompanied by plans to sign a memorandum of understanding with respective organisations for talent development.

Among others, former presidents and members of the BMCCI were also present.

# China to ramp up fiscal support for consumption next year

REUTERS, Beijing

China will ramp up fiscal support for consumption next year by raising pensions and medical insurance subsidies for residents as well as expanding consumer goods trade-ins, its finance ministry said on Tuesday.

The country will boost the basic pension for retirees and for urban and rural residents and raise financial subsidy standards for urban and rural residents' medical insurance to help "vigorously" boost consumption, the ministry said after concluding a two-day national fiscal work conference.

China will also intensify support for consumer goods trade-ins and expand effective investment and drive more social investment through government investment, the ministry said.

The measures will improve people's livelihoods and the policy system to support population growth as well as strengthen the social security network and health care system, it said.

Fiscal spending will enhance technological innovation capabilities and fully support the research and development of key core technologies and promote industrial upgrading, the ministry added.

At an agenda-setting meeting this month, Chinese leaders pledged to increase the budget deficit, issue more debt and loosen monetary policy to maintain a stable economic growth rate as it girds for more trade tensions with the US when Donald Trump returns to the White House.

# Walton, Safe host annual conferences for distributors

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Walton Group in association with Safe, one of the largest electronic appliance brands in Bangladesh, recently organised two conferences, styled "Walton Electrical Appliance Annual Distributors Conference-2024" and "Safe Electrical Appliance Annual Distributors Conference-2024".

SM Shamsul Alam, chairman of Walton Hi-Tech Industries, and SM Mahbubul Alam, managing director, inaugurated these events at the Sea Pearl Beach Resort and Spa in Cox's Bazar, said officials of the conglomerate at a press conference.

"Walton and Safe are producing and marketing products according to your [customer] demands every year, ensuring international standard and quality," he said while citing how their distributors submit the names of new products sought by customers.



SM Shamsul Alam, chairman of Walton Hi-Tech Industries, poses for photographs with award-winning distributors and dealers of the company at the "Annual Distributors Conference-2024" at the Sea Pearl Beach Resort & Spa in Cox's Bazar recently.

PHOTO: WALTON

He also invited the distributors to visit the Walton headquarters and production plants in Gazipur to know details of the production process of Walton and Safe.

Pointing to distributors and partners, Walton Managing Director Alam said that they are skilled in the business sector.

"Walton and Safe are both moving forward through your skilled operations and activities," he added.

Suggesting increased branding activities, he also requested the business partners of Walton and Safe to analyse the market more extensively in a bid to grab larger portions of it.

# Unilever, Kewkradong organise cleanup campaign at St Martin's

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Unilever Bangladesh Limited, in partnership with Kewkradong Bangladesh (KB), country coordinator of US-based non-profit Ocean Conservancy, conducted a coastal cleanup campaign at Saint Martin's Island recently.

A total of 350 volunteers took part in the programme and removed 1,500 kilograms of marine debris, including food wrappers, plastic beverage bottles, bottle caps, plastic bags, utensils, and lids, from the island's beach and ensured safe disposal in the mainland, according to a press release.

Shamima Akhter, director of corporate affairs, partnerships and communications at the multinational company, said, "We must collaborate to design scalable systems and interventions that will reduce our environmental



PHOTO: UNILEVER BANGLADESH

Unilever Bangladesh Limited, in partnership with Kewkradong Bangladesh, conducts a coastal cleanup campaign at the Saint Martin's Island recently.

footprints and protect vulnerable ecosystems, such as St. Martin's Island."

"This year, the St. Martin Coastal Cleanup, in partnership with Kewkradong Bangladesh,

engaged youth volunteers and the local community to foster a sense of shared responsibility and demonstrate our commitment to improving the ecosystem," she added.

# CDBL announces 20% cash dividend

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Central Depository Bangladesh Limited (CDBL) has declared a 20 percent cash dividend for the year that ended on June 30, 2024.

The declaration came at the company's 24th annual general meeting (AGM), which was held virtually recently, said a press release.

Azam J Chowdhury, a director of the CDBL, presided over the meeting.

Syed Manzur Elahi, Naser Ezaz Bijoy, Md Shakil Rizvi, AKM Habibur Rahman, Md Harun-Or-Rashid, and Nasir Uddin Ahmed, directors of the CDBL, and Md Abdul Mutaleb, managing director and CEO (current charge), among others, were present.



PHOTO: CENTRAL DEPOSITORY BANGLADESH LIMITED

Azam J Chowdhury, director of the Central Depository Bangladesh Limited, presides over the company's 24th annual general meeting, which was held virtually recently. The meeting declared a 20 percent cash dividend for 2024.

**ওয়েস্ট জোন পাওয়ার ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানি লিমিটেড (ওজেপাডিকো)**  
**WEST ZONE POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED**  
Office of the Project Director  
Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I project  
website: www.wzpdcl.gov.bd, e-mail: wzpdcl.mpsdgp@gmail.com, pd.mpsdgp@wzpdcl.gov.bd

Memo no: 27.22.4785.700.50.001.24.210 Dated: 24/12/2024

### Invitation for Prequalification (ICT)

01	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources		
02	Agency	West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited (WZPDCL), Khulna		
03	Procuring Entity Name	Project Director, Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I Project, WZPDCL, Khulna.		
04	Procuring Entity Code	N/A		
05	Procuring Entity District	Khulna		
06	Invitation for	Procurement of Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Twelve (12) 33kV AIS Bays and One (1) Switching Station with Substation Automation System on turnkey basis (GD-4).		
07	Invitation Ref No.	27.22.4785.700.50.001.24.210 BMZ No: 201667971 Procurement No: 33kV Bay Extension/Construction - 512180		
08	Date	24/12/2024		
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>				
09	Procurement Method	Two Stage Tendering Method (ICT)		
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>				
10	Budget & Source of Funds	Development Budget (Project Aid and GOB)		
11	Development Partners	KfW Development Bank, Germany		
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>				
12	Project / Programme Code	224365300		
13	Project / Programme Name	Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I Project		
14	Tender Package No.	GD-4		
15	Tender Package Name	Procurement of Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Twelve (12) 33kV AIS Bays and One (1) Switching Station with Substation Automation System on turnkey basis (GD-4).		
16	Prequalification Publication Date	24/12/2024		
17	Prequalification Last Selling Date and Time	Date: 16/02/2025; Time: During Office Hour (9:00 AM- 05:00 PM) Bangladesh Time.		
18	Prequalification Closing Date and Time	17/02/2025; 11:30 AM, Bangladesh Standard Time.		
19	Prequalification Opening Date and Time	17/02/2025; 12:00 PM, Bangladesh Standard Time.		
20	<b>Name &amp; Address of the Office(s)</b>			
	Selling Prequalification Document (Principal)	Office of the Project Director, Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I Project, Bidyut Bhaban, Boyra Main Road, WZPDCL, Khulna.		
	Selling Prequalification Document (Others)	1. Office of the Director of Purchase, Bangladesh Power Development Board, WAPDA Building (9th Floor), Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 2. Office of the Divisional Commissioner, Khulna  Interested bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents from www.wzpdcl.gov.bd website. But, for participating in this ICB, the prequalification document has to be purchased by interested bidders from the above addresses.		
	Receiving Prequalification Document	Office of the Director of Purchase, Bangladesh Power Development Board, WAPDA Building (9th Floor), Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.		
	Opening Prequalification Document	Office of the Director of Purchase, Bangladesh Power Development Board, WAPDA Building (9th Floor), Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.		
21	Place/Date/Time of Prequalification Meeting	Place: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </span> Date: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </span> Time: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </span>		
Not Applicable				
<b>INFORMATION FOR Applicant</b>				
22	Eligibility of Applicant	As per Prequalification Document		
23	Brief Description of Goods or Works	Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Twelve (12) 33kV AIS Bays and One (1) Switching Station with Substation Automation System on turnkey basis.		
24	Brief Description of Related Services	As per Prequalification Document		
25	Price of Prequalification Document (Tk)	BDT 15,000 (Tk. Fifteen Thousand Only) as non-refundable demand draft (for other districts)/pay order (for Khulna district) in favor of Project Director, Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I Project, WZPDCL, Khulna for each set of tender documents.		
26	<b>Package No</b>	<b>Identification of Lot</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Completion Time in Weeks / Months</b>
	GD-4	Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Twelve (12) 33kV AIS Bays and One (1) Switching Station with Substation Automation System on turnkey basis.	Magura, Rajbari, Khulna, Jhenaidah, Bagerhat, Patuakhali, Pirojpur & Shariatpur Districts of Bangladesh.	Shall be mentioned in the Tender Document
<b>PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS</b>				
27	Name of Official Inviting Prequalification	Md. Saifuzzaman		
28	Designation of Official Inviting Prequalification	Project Director (Superintending Engineer)		
29	Address of Official Inviting Prequalification	Office of the Project Director, Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I Project, WZPDCL, Khulna.		
30	Contact details of Official Inviting Prequalification	Phone: +8801700709721	Fax No: N/A	e-mail address: pd.mpsdgp@wzpdcl.gov.bd wzpdcl.mpsdgp@gmail.com
31	The Tender Process is subject to KfW's "Guidelines for the Procurement of Consulting Services, Works, Plant, Goods and Non-Consulting Services in Financial Cooperation with Partner Countries."			
32	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Applications or annul the Application proceedings.			

Raman  
24.12.2024  
(Md. Saifuzzaman)  
Project Director  
Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I Project  
WZPDCL, Khulna.

GD-1268

## Oil prices rise in thin pre-Christmas trade

REUTERS, London

Oil prices rose on Tuesday, reversing the prior session's losses, buoyed by a slightly positive market outlook for the short term, despite thin trade ahead of the Christmas holiday.

Brent crude futures were up 36 cents, or 0.5 percent, at \$72.9 a barrel, and US West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose 34 cents, also 0.5 percent, to \$69.58 a barrel by 1213 GMT.

FGE analysts said they anticipated the benchmark prices would fluctuate around current levels in the short term "as activity in the paper markets decreases during the holiday season and market participants stay on the sidelines until they get a clearer view of 2024 and 2025 global oil balances."

Supply and demand changes in December have been supportive of their current less-bearish view so far, the analysts said in a note.

"Given how short the paper market is on positioning, any supply disruption could lead to upward spikes in structure," they added.

Some other analysts also pointed to signs of greater oil demand over the next few months.

"The year is ending with the consensus from major agencies over long 2025 liquids balances starting to break down," said Neil Crosby, Sparta Commodities' assistant vice-president of oil analytics, in a note.

"The EIA's short-term energy outlook (STEO) recently shifted their 2025 liquids to a draw, despite continuing to bring back some Opec+ barrels next year."

A plan by China, the world's biggest oil importer, to issue 3 trillion yuan (\$411 billion) worth of special treasury bonds next year, as Beijing ramps up fiscal stimulus to revive a faltering economy, was also supportive for prices.

That is likely to provide near-term support for WTI crude at \$67 a barrel, said OANDA senior market analyst Kelvin Wong.

# Central Counterparty denies allegations of operational inefficiencies

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Central Counterparty Bangladesh Limited (CCBL) has rejected concerns of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) over the lack of governance and transparency as well as operational inefficiencies at the clearing and settlement company.

Instead, the CCBL alleged that its activities are being delayed due to the activities of other parties like the Dhaka bourse, the company said in a detailed statement regarding these concerns last week.

Farhad Ahmed, managing director and CEO of CCBL, confirmed that they issued the statement through letters to the concerned authorities, including the DSE and Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC).

The Dhaka bourse had written to the market regulator earlier this month, calling for an immediate halt to the procurement activities of CCBL on grounds of its poor governance.

In response, CCBL said the Dhaka bourse raised concerns that several of its procurement decisions were taken against the country's best interests, exposing critical technology infrastructure to external vulnerability.

"But a little more detailed explanation would help us better understand the issue. All major stakeholders, including the Dhaka and Chattogram bourse, and Central Depository of Bangladesh, are using similar infrastructure, and CCBL is no exception," it added.

A "CCP Formation Committee" was

created at the initial stage with the DSE chairman as its committee chairman while the bourse's managing director and CEO was its member secretary. Additionally, several members were officials of the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) and various banks.

"None of these members have raised the issue of not ensuring the best interest of the country by exposing critical technology infrastructure to external vulnerability," CCBL said.

**The DSE had written to the BSEC earlier this month, calling for an immediate halt to the procurement activities of the CCBL on grounds of its poor governance**

Regarding the nearly three-year delay in starting operations, CCBL said a total of 535 days elapsed for the appointment of independent directors, which was a delay from the stock regulator's side.

And after the constitution of the first CCBL board, another 302 days were lost for reasons associated with the Dhaka bourse. For instance, the bourse delayed the replacement of its nominated directors for the CCBL.

Additionally, it took the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) 112 days to provide an opinion on the Request for Proposals from DSE nominated directors.

Regarding the DSE's observation that it has no interaction between CCBL and its stakeholders, CCBL

said it holds sufficient discussions and takes written feedback from major stakeholders like the DSE, CSE and Central Depository Bangladesh Limited (CDBL).

CCBL informed that till date, it has held a total of 63 board meetings and innumerable committee meetings with the participation of DSE nominated directors.

"No meeting of CCBL was ever held without their participation," it said.

The DSE also gave an observation that there were irregularities in sharing quarterly and annual financial statements of CCBL with the bourse.

CCBL firmly rejected this stance, saying all the reports were sent.

DSE Chairman Mominul Islam said the bourse is not blaming CCBL for anything, but rather is simply urging it to review all these issues.

The DSE is not only the largest shareholder, but also the largest stakeholder of CCBL, which is a nationally critical infrastructure of the country, he added.

Islam informed that due to its importance, the DSE Brokers Association has urged the bourse to monitor whether CCBL is taking good decisions.

Furthermore, Islam said CCBL informed that it maintains the international standard in operations.

"Whether it is possible to make better decisions or buy infrastructure for less, we want to go ahead with the discussion [with CCBL]. So, hopefully we will be together soon," he added.

## Biden launches new US trade probe into legacy Chinese chips

REUTERS, Washington

The Biden administration on Monday announced a last-minute trade investigation into Chinese-made "legacy" semiconductors that could heap more US tariffs on chips from China that power everyday goods from autos to washing machines to telecoms gear.

The "Section 301" probe, launched just four weeks before President-elect Donald Trump takes office on January 20, will be handed over to his administration in January for completion, Biden administration officials said.

The effort could offer Trump a ready avenue to begin imposing some of the hefty, 60 percent tariffs that he has threatened on Chinese imports.

Departing President Joe Biden has already imposed a 50 percent US tariff on Chinese semiconductors that starts on January 1. His administration has tightened export curbs on advanced AI and memory chips and chipmaking equipment to China and also recently increased tariffs, opens new tab to 50 percent on Chinese solar wafers and polysilicon.

The US Trade Representative's office, which will conduct the new probe, said it is aimed at protecting American and other market-driven chip producers from China's massive state-driven buildup of domestic chip supply.

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said that the trade agency has found evidence that Beijing is targeting the semiconductor industry for global domination, similar to its buildup in steel, aluminum, solar panels, electric vehicles and critical minerals.

He's assisted by the wearable exoskeleton robot he helped develop.

"This is enabling its companies to rapidly expand capacity and to offer artificially lower priced chips that threaten to significantly harm and potentially eliminate their market-oriented competition," she told reporters on a conference call.

Legacy chips use older, mature manufacturing processes and are found in a wide range of mass market applications. They do not include advanced chips for use in artificial intelligence applications or sophisticated microprocessors.

## Not a good year for job-seekers

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41 months, according to the Bangladesh Bank.

This figure is the lowest since May 2021, when credit growth fell to 7.55 percent during the Covid-induced lockdowns.

Besides, private investment as a percentage of the country's GDP has declined for the past three years.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, the private investment to GDP ratio decreased by 0.67 percentage points year-on-year to 23.51 percent, according to BBS data.

These figures suggest that businesses were hesitant to expand or take up new ventures, limiting the potential for new job opportunities.

AKM Fahim Mashroor, CEO of Bdjobs.com, the largest job site in Bangladesh, said hiring remained stagnant in the first half of 2024. This trend had been continuing for the previous two years.

"Political upheaval severely impacted hiring between July and September," Mashroor said. "However, the situation has shown some improvement in October to November."

He said that hiring has not fully normalised as the economic situation still remains uncertain.

After the government

formation in August and the formation of the interim government, a crackdown on corruption opened up investigations of several business tycoons.

This also impacted the labour market to some extent.

For instance, Beximco Group recently laid off nearly 40,000 workers across its 15 apparel units in Gazipur citing a lack of work orders.

Following the August changeover, Beximco came to the spotlight with its Vice-Chairman Salman F Rahman, an adviser to the previous prime minister who allegedly weaponised his influence for business gains, being arrested and now staying behind bars.

**'FORMAL JOBS MIGHT HAVE SHRUNK'**

"The year 2024 has seen a sharp decline in investment and output remained stagnant in the first half of 2024. This trend had been continuing for the previous two years."

"Political upheaval severely impacted hiring between July and September," Mashroor said. "However, the situation has shown some improvement in October to November."

He said that hiring has not fully normalised as the economic situation still remains uncertain.

## As dollar jumps

FROM PAGE B1

Begum said that due to high exchange rates, exporters cannot reap the benefits as they have to open import LCs at higher rates.

She noted that while the BB is trying to address demand-side issues, supply-side issues also need to be addressed properly.

Md Moshir Rahman Dalim, head of business at Akij Steel and Akij Cement, claimed that pricier dollars would cause the cost of production to rise by at least 2 percent.

According to him, the construction materials manufacturing industry would suffer losses as a result of the recent dollar

jump and the already stagnant construction business would face further trouble.

According to Dalim, the steel and cement industries are currently running at only 45 percent of their capacity due to low demand. "Under these conditions, the construction industry will suffer even more."

Monjurul Alam, chief executive officer at Beacon Medicare Ltd, said the drug-making sector would also face trouble due to the further appreciation of the dollar against the local currency.

"Despite a rise in the cost of production due to pricier raw material

negative," he added. "In such circumstances, people often resort to lower-quality jobs in the informal economy or share work in agriculture."

"To my knowledge, little has been done to address overall employment and youth employment in particular," he added.

"The government set an ambitious target of increasing the [private investment to GDP] ratio to 27.34 percent in the FY25 budget. However, achieving this goal remains uncertain due to persistent economic challenges and uncertainty," said Deen Islam, an associate professor of economics at the University of Dhaka.

**'TICKING TIME BOMB'**  
A white paper panel that assessed the state of the economy and submitted its report to the interim government referred to the mismatch between employability and labour market dynamics in Bangladesh as a "ticking time bomb".

According to the white paper, the unemployment rate among educated youth has increased 2.5 times since 2010 due to a mismatch between their qualifications and the structure of industries and the economy.

"Not only that,

despite having tertiary-level education, these graduates are ill-prepared for the market due to low technical knowledge," the paper added.

Over the past 12 years, the number of tertiary graduates has increased by about 2.5-fold, accounting for around 9 percent of the total labour force in 2022.

Hand in hand, the unemployment rate of this group increased from 4.9 percent in 2010 to 12 percent in 2022.

"Special attention must be given to address the precarious job situation, especially for educated jobseekers," said Rizwanul Islam.

He also said, "It's easy to say that they should create their own jobs. However, in a situation where the real economy is struggling, it is difficult for anyone to find a way to create decent jobs, let alone for newcomers to the labour market. Special programmes are needed to help them."

"Ultimately, there is no alternative to reviving the economy's growth trajectory." All efforts must be made to restore investor confidence and channel investments towards sectors that can drive higher employment growth, he said.

## Shipping adviser angered by slow auction process of Ctg customs Auctionable goods piling up at port yards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (ret) M Sakhawat Hussain expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Chattogram Custom House for its slow progress in clearing auctionable goods and vehicles piled up in various yards and auction sheds at Chattogram port.

He warned that action would be taken if the customs authority does not address the issue in two months.

The adviser expressed his frustration during a visit to the port's auction and car sheds yesterday.

While there, he met with Chattogram Customs House Joint Commissioner Mohammad Marufur Rahman and questioned the lack of noticeable progress in clearing auctionable goods despite directions given during his initial visit three months prior.

In response, the customs official explained that several pending court cases are delaying the auction process for certain consignments.

However, Rahman assured the adviser that steps would be taken to expedite the auction of import containers and vehicles that are free of legal issues. Speaking to journalists after the visit, the adviser said the condition of auctionable containers is nearly the same as it was during his first visit in early October.

"Although the customs authority has auctioned some goods during this period, the pace is extremely slow. At this rate, the backlog of auctionable cargo will not be cleared within the next three months."

He added that the customs authority has committed to clearing the backlog within the agreed upon deadline on February 28.

The adviser also warned that he has instructed the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) to take unilateral action against the customs authority if the deadline is not met.

CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk noted that approximately 10,000 twenty-foot equivalent units of containers, scrap materials and a number of cars are lying in various yards and sheds awaiting auction.

## BB waiting

FROM PAGE B1

One was a deficit of Tk 600 crore, which came about through the creation of e-money that did not exist in cash. This is a major crime in the financial sector, as per industry insiders.

In another instance, there have been unauthorised withdrawals of around Tk 1,711 crore in total over the years through 41 distribution accounts which are designated for government allowances.

The administrator team informed the director general of the Directorate of Posts.

The administrator recommended legal action against the Nagad officials involved in the irregularities.

Nagad CEO Tanvir A Mishuk and some of its senior officials have not been coming to office since the administrator's appointment.

**BB FORENSIC AUDIT**  
The central bank is going to appoint auditors

to conduct a forensic audit of Nagad's previous operations alongside a regular audit for fiscal year 2023-24.

A forensic audit is an examination and evaluation of a firm's or individual's financial records, through which evidence is derived to be used in a court of law or legal proceeding.

Last month the banking regulator brought out newspaper advertisements inviting foreign auditors to take part in a tender.

## Rupee hits record low

REUTERS, Mumbai

The Indian rupee weakened to its all-time low for the sixth consecutive trading session on Tuesday as a rise in US bond yields boosted the dollar and strong demand for the greenback from importers added to the lingering pressure on the local currency.

### Bangladesh Lamps Limited

Head office: House-22, Road-4, Block-F, Banani, Dhaka-1213

#### Price Sensitive Information On Credit Rating Report

In accordance with the notification no. BSEC/CMRR/2009-193/37/Admin/132 dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 of Bangladesh Securities & Exchange Commission (BSEC), the summary of credit rating report of Bangladesh Lamps Limited is stated below, as rated by Emerging Credit Rating Limited, based on the audited financials from 2021 to 2024 and 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of unaudited financial statements of the Company:

Date of Rating	December 24, 2024
Valid From	December 24, 2024
Valid Till	December 23, 2025
Rating Action	Surveillance-11
Long Term Rating	AA-
Short Term Rating	ST-2
Outlook	Stable

By order of the Board



Dhaka  
25-12-2024

Mohammad Ruhan Miah  
Company Secretary

**TRANSTEC**  
ON and AHEAD

### TENDER: SOYBEANS FROM THE USA

IESC, with offices in USA, offers for sale high quality commodities from the USA for import into Pakistan, Bangladesh or Nepal.

Commodity: 40,000MT yellow soybeans

Delivery: CFR Free Out to buyer's seaport

Load: February 2025 (or later, per buyer)

Price/MT: Per Competitive bidding (in USD)

Link: <http://www.rpxi.com/sales-bids302>

Deadline: January 7, 2025

# Stocks see mixed performance as DSE falls, CSE rises

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The stock markets in Bangladesh witnessed a mixed performance yesterday as the key Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) index experienced a fall while the opposite happened in the case of Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE).

The DSEX, the broad index of the country's prime bourse, dropped by 1.47 points, or 0.03 percent from that on the previous day before closing at 5,169. This was a fall for a third consecutive day.

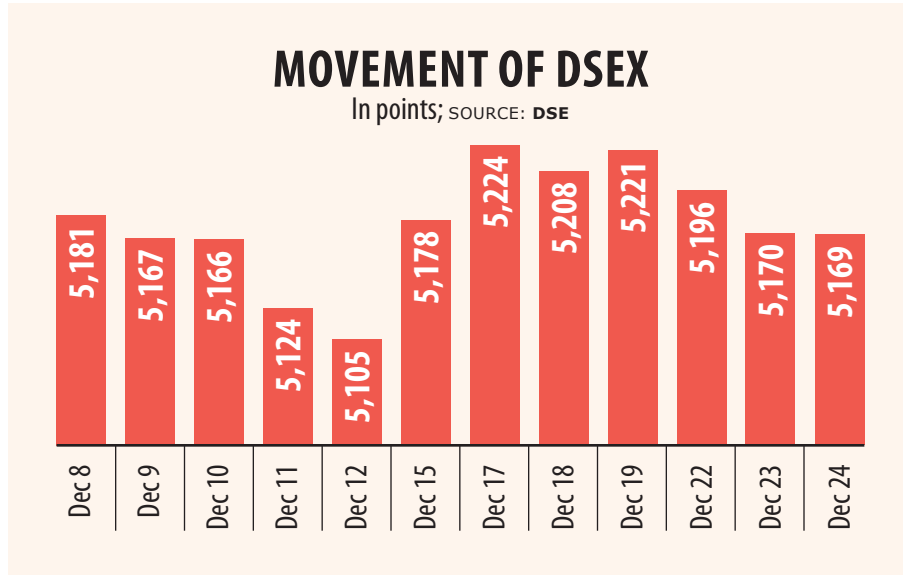
The other two indices of the DSE saw an opposite trend as the DSES index for the Shariah-based stocks rose by 2.78 points, or 0.24 percent, to 1,158.

Meanwhile, the DS30 for the blue chips grew by 0.91 points, or 0.05 percent, to 1,923.

Of the issues that changed hands on the DSE trading floor, 150 saw a price hike, 159 closed lower and the remaining 86 did not witness any price fluctuations.

Turnover, which is the total value of shares that changed hands and a key indicator of the liquidity flow in the market, decreased 9.07 percent to Tk 276 crore.

Orion Infusion Ltd emerged as the most-traded share with a turnover of Tk



18.7 crore.

In its daily market update, Shanta Securities said the market movement was driven by negative changes in the market capitalisation of financial institutions, travel and leisure, and paper and printing scrips.

Market capitalisation is the total

existing market value of a company's existing shares.

Meanwhile, there were positive changes in the market capitalisation of food and allied, miscellaneous, and textile scrips.

Most of the large-cap sectors, meaning those that account for large amounts in market capitalisation, posted a negative

performance, with non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) experiencing the highest loss of 0.92 percent.

The NBFI sector was followed by fuel and power (0.87 percent), food and allied (0.19 percent), telecommunication (0.18 percent) and engineering (0.06 percent).

However, the pharmaceuticals sector logged a gain of 0.13 percent, and the banking sector recorded a 0.51 percent gain.

Companies like Islami Bank Bangladesh, Renata, Eastern Bank, Khan Brothers PP Woven Industries, Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream, Orion Infusion, Fortune Shoes, Heidelberg Materials Bangladesh, Pubali Bank and Olympic Industries drew investors the most, according to LankaBangla Financials.

However, Al-Arafah Islami Bank, National Bank, Beacon Pharmaceuticals, BAT Bangladesh, Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, Beximco Pharmaceuticals, Grameenphone, IFIC Bank, Shahjalal Islami Bank and ACME Laboratories suffered losses.

At the CSE, the CSE All Share Price Index (CASPI), the premier index of the port city bourse, posted a gain as the index rose by 34.6 points, or 0.24 percent, to settle the day at 14,489.

# First Security Islami Bank sacks DMD

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

First Security Islami Bank (FSIB) has fired a newly appointed deputy managing director over his alleged involvement in irregularities at his previous place of employment, Social Islami Bank Limited (SIBL).

"Your service in the bank is no longer required," reads the job termination letter signed by Syed Waseque Md Ali, managing director of the FSIB, and sent to the dismissed official, Md Akmal Hossain, at the beginning of this week.

The letter mentioned that the SIBL had officially informed the FSIB of having discharged Hossain from service on December 19 this year.

"In this situation, we have no option but to cancel your joining in our bank service and advise you to refund all the emoluments you received from this bank from the date of joining," read the termination letter.

Hossain had joined the FSIB as deputy managing director on September 29 this year, showing his letter of resignation from the post of senior executive vice-president at the SIBL.

He had served the SIBL's international division from 2012 to 2022. The Daily Star came to know of an allegation that Hossain was involved in various irregularities related to foreign trade at the SIBL which benefited S Alam Group, a Chattogram-based conglomerate.

The Group had taken a huge amount of loans from a number of banks, far exceeding their single borrower exposure limit.

"Social Islami did not show any specific reason for my dismissal and First Security also did not want to hear anything from me before cancelling my appointment," Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I was not involved in any irregularity at Social Islami, rather I was awarded for foreign trade achievements in the bank," he said.



# China plans to issue \$411b special treasury bond next year

**REUTERS, Beijing**

Chinese authorities have agreed to issue 3 trillion yuan (\$411 billion) worth of special treasury bonds next year, two sources said, which would be the highest on record, as Beijing ramps up fiscal stimulus to revive a faltering economy.

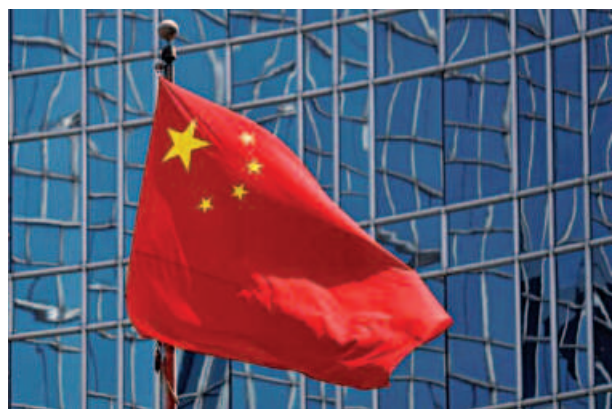
The plan for 2025 sovereign debt issuance would be a sharp increase from this year's 1 trillion yuan and comes as Beijing moves to soften the blow from an expected increase in US tariffs on Chinese imports when Donald Trump takes office in January.

The proceeds will be targeted at boosting consumption via subsidy programmes, equipment upgrades by businesses and funding investments in innovation-driven advanced sectors, among other initiatives, said the sources.

The sources, who have knowledge of the discussions, declined to be identified due to sensitivity of the matter.

The State Council Information Office, which handles media queries on behalf of the government, the finance ministry and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

China's 10-year and 30-year treasury yields rose 1 basis point (bp) and 2 bps, respectively, after the news.



The planned special treasury bond issuance next year would be the largest on record and underscores Beijing's willingness to go even deeper into debt to counter deflationary forces in the world's second-largest economy.

The issuance "exceeded market expectations," said Tommy Xie, head of Asia Macro research at OCBC Bank.

"Furthermore, as the central government is the only entity with meaningful capacity for additional leverage, any bond issuance at the central level is perceived as a positive development, likely providing incremental support for growth."

China does not generally include ultra-long special bonds in annual budget plans, as it sees the instruments as an extraordinary measure to raise proceeds for specific projects or policy goals as needed.

As part of next year's plan, about 1.3 trillion yuan to be raised through long-term special treasury bonds would fund "two major" and "two new" programmes, said the sources with knowledge of the matter.

The "new" initiatives consist of a subsidy programme for durable goods, allowing consumers to trade in old cars or appliances and buy new ones at a discount, and a separate one that subsidises large-scale equipment upgrades for businesses.

The "major" programmes refer to projects that implement national strategies such as construction of railways, airports and farmland and build security capacity in key areas, according to official documents.

The state planner NDRC said on Dec. 13 Beijing had fully allocated all proceeds from this year's 1 trillion yuan in ultra-long special treasury bonds, with about 70 percent of proceeds financing the "two major" projects and the remainder going towards the "two new" schemes.

**TARIFFS THREAT**

Another big portion of the planned proceeds for next year would be for investments in "new productive forces", Beijing's shorthand for advanced manufacturing, such as electric vehicles, robotics, semiconductors and green energy, the sources said.

One of the sources said more than 1 trillion yuan would be earmarked for that initiative.

# India reviews \$30b sulphur-cutting programme for coal plants

**REUTERS, New Delhi**

India is reviewing a decade-old \$30 billion programme requiring coal-fired power plants to install equipment to cut sulphur emissions after government-backed studies showed they had little impact on curbing pollution, according to a document reviewed by Reuters.

Nearly 540 power plant units were required by 2026 to install flue-gas desulphurization (FGD) systems that remove sulphur from the plants' exhaust gases but only about 8 percent have done so, including those run by state-run NTPC and privately held JSW Power.

The government previously said expensive foreign technology and manpower were some of the hurdles in achieving the target. But with cities like New Delhi and Kanpur some of the most polluted in the world, India's government is under pressure to reduce the impact of the sectors' emissions.

Instead of FGDs, government officials have proposed deploying locally made electrostatic precipitators that remove fine particles such as dust and smoke from emissions and are one-fifth of the cost of an FGD system, according to a document from the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Indian government summarising a Nov. 13 meeting between the Office and the ministries of power, coal and the environment.

Representatives of the ministries and Ajay Kumar Sood, the principal scientific adviser to the government



Chimneys of a coal-fired power plant are seen in New Delhi. PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

who chaired the meeting, did not immediately respond to requests seeking comment.

The document showed several of the attendees agreed Indian power plants would be better off focusing on cutting emissions of tiny particulate matter that can lodge deep in the lungs rather than on sulphur reductions.

"This is due to the predominance of other pollution sources in urban areas and the very low sulphur content of Indian coal coupled with the effective dispersion of (sulphur dioxide) generated from thermal power plants due to the tall stacks and the climactic conditions in India," the document cited R. Srikanth, the head of the engineering school at India's National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), as saying.

Srikanth did not immediately

reply to a request for comment.

The document cited a NIAS study that said Indian coal, which is used to generate 92 percent of the country's thermal power, has a sulphur content of only 0.5 percent. The range globally is 0.5 percent to 5 percent.

The study said the coal's high ash content was a bigger problem for power plants, and high-efficiency electrostatic precipitators would be better at curbing that pollution.

The document also cited government-backed studies by the NIAS, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and National Environmental Engineering Research Institute that showed power plants with the FGD systems showed negligible improvement in air quality. A FGD system costs 12 million rupees (\$141,000) per megawatt of capacity.

# Brace! Risks stack up for global economy in 2025

**REUTERS**

No sooner had the global economy started to put the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic behind it than a whole new set of challenges opened up for 2025.

In 2024, the world's central banks were finally able to start lowering interest rates after largely winning the battle against inflation without sparking a global recession.

Stocks hit record highs in the United States and Europe and Forbes declared a "banner year for the mega-wealthy" as 141 new billionaires joined, opens new tab its list of the super-rich.

But if this was supposed to be good news, someone forgot to tell voters. In a bumper election year, they punished incumbents from India to South Africa, Europe and the United States for the economic reality they were feeling: a merciless cost of living crisis brought on by cumulative post-pandemic price rises.

For many, it might get tougher in 2025. If a Donald Trump presidency enacts US import tariffs that spark a trade war that could mean a fresh dose of inflation, a global slowdown or both. Unemployment, currently near historic lows, could rise.

Conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, political logjams in Germany and France, and questions over the Chinese

economy further cloud the picture. Meanwhile, rising up the rank of concerns for many countries is the cost of climate damage.

**WHY IT MATTERS**

According to the World Bank, the poorest countries are in their worst, opens

new tab economic state for two decades, having missed out on the post-pandemic recovery. The last thing they need are new headwinds - for example, weaker trade or funding conditions.

In richer economies, governments need to work out how to counter the

conviction of many voters that their purchasing power, living standards and future prospects are in decline. Failure to do so could feed the rise of extremist parties already causing fragmented and hung parliaments.

New spending priorities beckon for national budgets already stretched after Covid-19, from tackling climate change to boosting armies to caring for ageing populations. Only healthy economies can generate the revenues needed for that.

If governments decide to do what they have been doing for years - simply piling on more debt - then sooner or later they run the risk of getting caught up in a financial crisis.

**WHAT IT MEANS FOR 2025**

As European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde said in her press conference after the ECB's final meeting of the year, there will be uncertainty "in abundance" in 2025.

It is still anyone's guess whether Trump will push ahead with tariffs of 10-20 percent on all imports, rising to 60 percent for Chinese goods, or whether those threats were just the opening gambit in a negotiation. If he goes ahead with them, the impact will depend on what sectors bear the brunt, and who retaliates.



An employee works on a shirt production line at a clothing factory in Suqian, in eastern China's Jiangsu province. The world's second-largest economy faces mounting pressure to begin a deep transition as its growth impetus of recent years runs out of steam. PHOTO: AFP/FILE