

Khulna Printing shares triple in a month despite factory closure

AHSAN HABIB

Stocks of Khulna Printing & Packaging Ltd (KPPL) tripled in the past month despite the facts that it is languishing in the "Z" category, its operations have been shut for years, and there have been no positive developments about the company in recent times.

Regarding the recent surge in its stock price, KPPL responded to a Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) notice yesterday saying it had no undisclosed price-sensitive information.

Nonetheless, the printing company's shares surged by around 10 percent to Tk 20.6 yesterday, marking a threefold increase from their starting point of Tk 7.2 last month, according to DSE data.

In August last year, the DSE said one of their teams had visited KPPL's factory and head office in February 2023 to assess its operational status, only to find the facilities closed.

The company's operations remain suspended mainly due to the freezing of its bank accounts in 2021.

That year, KPPL disclosed that a court had ordered all bank accounts belonging to chairman SM Amzad Hossain and associated entities to be frozen.

In recent times, rumours have been circulating that the company's bank accounts may be reopened, meaning production may subsequently resume.

However, the company has not confirmed any such development, according to a top official at a leading brokerage firm who requested anonymity.

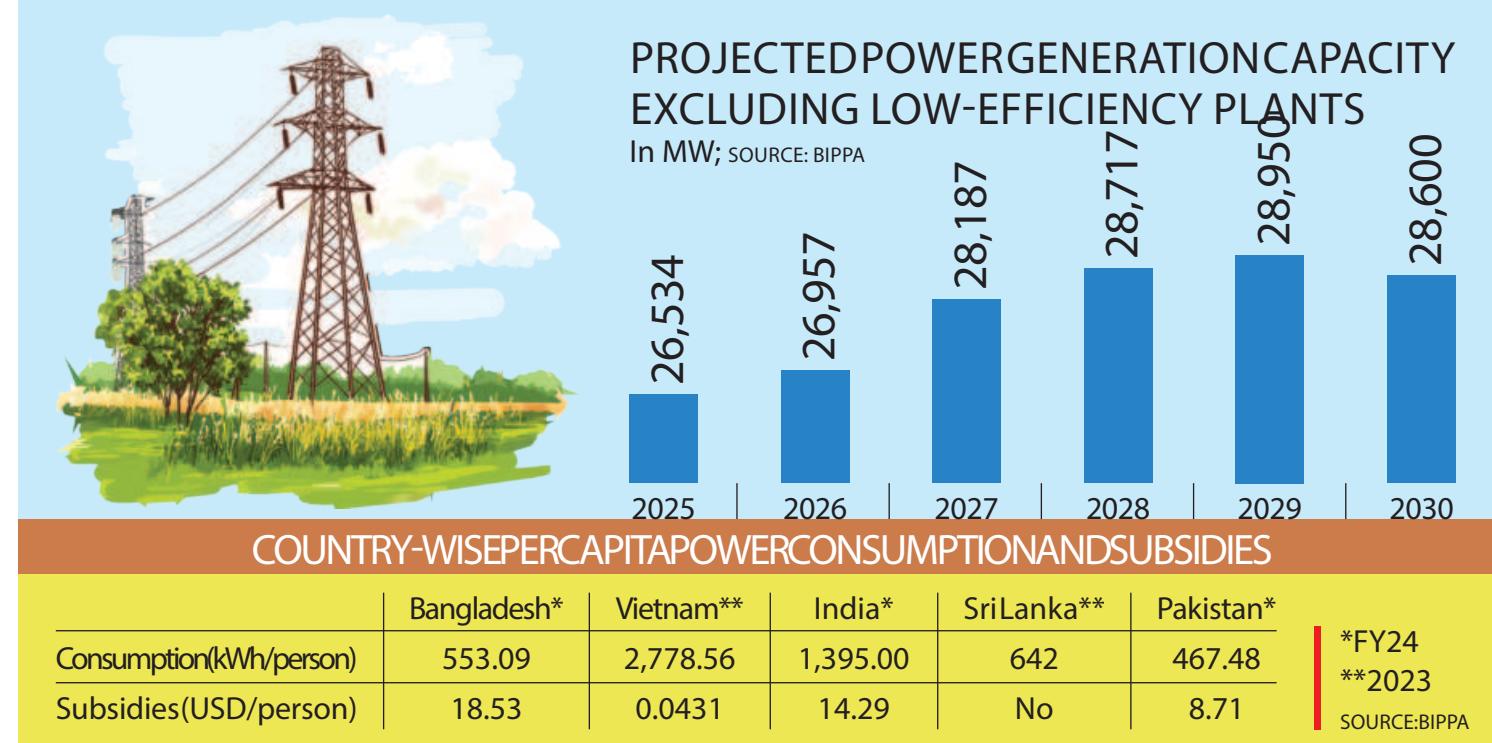
Md Sajedul Islam, a former vice president of the DSE Brokers Association, said: "If the company regains access to its bank accounts, it would suggest the stock price has been rising due to insider trading."

Insider trading is the illegal practice of trading on the stock exchange to one's own advantage by accessing confidential information.

He commented that while institutional investors are maintaining a cautious stance, general investors are now chasing rumours, creating an

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Bangladesh's power subsidies highest among neighbours despite low use



ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh has the highest per capita power subsidies among its four neighbouring countries, including India and Pakistan, despite having the second-lowest per capita consumption, according to an analysis by the Bangladesh Independent Power Producers Association (BIPPA).

BIPPA presented its findings to senior government officials yesterday at Rait Bhaban, near the Bangladesh Secretariat.

The presentation showed that Bangladesh paid \$18.53 in per capita power subsidies in fiscal year 2023-24, which is higher than India's \$14.29, Pakistan's \$8.74, and Vietnam's \$0.0431.

Island nation Sri Lanka discontinued such subsidies in 2023.

According to the BIPPA analysis, per capita power consumption in Bangladesh is 553 kilowatt-hours (kWh), with only Pakistan consuming less.

Besides, BIPPA said that Bangladesh is the only country among its neighbours where domestic customers consume the highest proportion of electricity, around 56 percent.

Industries and commercial customers consume around 39 percent of the total power generated, which is also the second-lowest after Pakistan, according to the analysis.

According to economists and energy experts, higher power generation costs, rapid expansion of power infrastructure and excessive capacity charges have contributed to the subsidy burden.

More than one third of the government's subsidy allocations in the current budget for

vice-chancellor at the UCSI University's Bangladesh campus, said the increase in power subsidies is due mainly to corruption.

He said that during the previous Awami League government, many agreements were signed without transparency.

Besides, the authorities used the indemnity act to deal with the power sector and awarded quick rental power plants with excessive capacity payments. This eventually increased power generation costs, he said.

Enamul, also a member of the White Paper Committee on the State of Bangladesh Economy, said the power sector was a major source of black money and the government made many wrong decisions, which altogether impacted the economy.

"The sector should be reviewed strategically on how to overcome this situation. We may not get out of some debts due to legal aspects, but we can make a long-term plan to reduce the inflated costs," he said.

Previously, Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), told The Daily Star that capacity payments and higher energy prices in the international market made it necessary to allocate higher subsidies for power in FY25. Even with several hikes in power prices, he

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fiscal year 2025 have been earmarked solely for the power sector.

The government allocated nearly Tk 40,000 crore in the current national budget to bridge the gap between the power purchase from power plants by the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) and its sale to distributors.

Economist Prof A K Enamul Haque, deputy

Cement sector struggles amid political, economic challenges

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Cement sales in Bangladesh plunged in 2024 due to political instability, rising production costs, and the deferment of the implementation of government infrastructure projects, leaving the industry operating at less than half its capacity.

"The cement sales in 2024 declined due to political instability, macroeconomic challenges, inflation, and the suspension of government infrastructure projects," said Mohammad Iqbal Chowdhury, chief executive officer (CEO) of LafargeHolcim Bangladesh PLC.

Industry experts echoed similar concerns, emphasising that these factors have led to significant disruptions in the construction sector.

Mohammed Amirul Haque, managing director and CEO of Premier Cement Mills Limited, highlighted that the suspension of major infrastructure projects, a key customer of the cement industry, has exacerbated the downturn.

Despite these hurdles, Haque expressed optimism, emphasising that political stability and economic

CEMENT INDUSTRY IN 2024

Sales plunged due to political instability
Purchase by individuals dropped over 90%
Industry operating at 45% capacity
Market competition led to a price cut of 15%

recovery could enable a rebound.
"The cement sector has weathered crises before and stands resilient," he said, underscoring the industry's potential for recovery in the coming years.

Haque further said the cement industry in Bangladesh, a critical driver of the construction sector, is grappling with declining demand



REASONS BEHIND SLOWDOWN

Construction approval delays by local government bodies
Deferral of government infrastructure projects
High cost of raw materials

and rising production costs.
"Traditionally, around 60 percent of the country's cement consumption is through individual initiatives," said Md Moshiur Rahman Dalim, head of business at Akij Cement Company Limited.

"...the remaining 40 percent is used in government development projects and infrastructure of other

organisations," he said.

However, the dynamics have shifted drastically, painting a bleak picture for the sector.

He said cement consumption at the individual level has dropped by over 90 percent.

According to him, this decline can be largely attributed to delays in

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তাঁরীন সৰ মুদ্রণের যাত্রা আজো
সার্কেলসমূহ কৰাতে 'ইনিয়েল
উইমেন'স লাই'

মুদ্রিষাসমূহ:
১. সৰ্বোচ্চ ২০ লক্ষ টাকা পর্যন্ত
জামানতবিশীল লাই
২. সৰ্বোচ্চ ৫০ লক্ষ পর্যন্ত মাসিক
কিঞ্চিত মুল মুদ্রণ প্রযোগ
৩. এ কৰত মুদ্রণ আমিক বা
সম্পর্ক লাই মুদ্রিষাসমূহ প্রযোগ
৪. আকর্ষণীয় ইন্টারেস্ট লেই

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BB rejects NRBC Bank's plea to appoint Rabiu as MD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank has rejected NRBC Bank's application to appoint Md Rabiu Islam as its managing director (MD) due to his alleged involvement in irregularities.

In a letter sent to NRBC Bank's chairman on Sunday, the central bank stated: "The appointment of Md Rabiu Islam as the managing director of your bank cannot be reconsidered."

The private bank applied to the central bank on December 2, 2024, seeking approval for Islam's appointment as the new MD.

According to central bank officials, Islam's name was included in a chargesheet filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), leading to the rejection of the application.

The central bank has instructed NRBC Bank to immediately nominate a suitable candidate for the MD position and submit an application for approval.

Islam, currently the bank's deputy managing director, has been serving as the acting managing director for an extended period.

Islam joined NRBC Bank in 2020 after previously working at NCC Bank, Mercantile Bank, and Prime Bank.

Advisory council undecided on Beximco factory sale

To hold meeting on Jan 27 with banks

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

A state advisory council yesterday remained undecided on whether to sell 16 textile and garment factories of Beximco Group, citing that further scrutiny of bank statements was required.

The sale is aimed at repaying nearly Tk 50,000 crore in bank loans owed by the group, more than half of which has become non-performing, according to Bangladesh Bank's data from last November.

There are discrepancies in loan and default amounts in financial statements provided by the group's state-appointed administrator and banks, said M Sakhawat Hussain, adviser to the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

So, the council has called a meeting with senior officials of five to six banks on January 27

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Bank Asia celebrates 11th founding anniversary of agent banking wing

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia PLC celebrated the 11th founding anniversary of its agent banking wing on Saturday.

Romo Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of the bank, attended the anniversary programme at the bank's corporate office in the capital's Purana Paltan, Bank Asia said in a press release.

The bank awarded 10 of its best-performing agents for their outstanding performance.

The bank also launched two new services, titled "Wet Market Collection" and "Data Analytics," at the event.

Bank Asia is the pioneer of agent banking in Bangladesh, and the service was rolled out on January 17, 2014.

Through this pioneering initiative, the bank has financially included more than 7.0 million customers, 92 percent of whom are from rural areas, and 64 percent are women.

Members of the board of directors and senior management team of the bank were also present.



Romo Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of Bank Asia PLC, poses for photographs with the best-performing agents at a ceremony at the bank's corporate office in the capital's Purana Paltan on Saturday.

PHOTO: BANK ASIA



SM Shamsul Alam, chairman of Walton Hi-Tech Industries, and SM Mahbubul Alam, managing director, pose for group photographs with the award-winning distributors of the company at a conference, styled "Partners Together-2025", at Walton Hi-Tech Park in Chandra area of Gazipur recently.

PHOTO: WALTON

Dhaka Bank signs MoU with Dhaka North City Corporation to collect bills

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Dhaka Bank PLC signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) for collecting holding tax and trade licence fees from the residents of DNCC.

Sheikh Mohammad Maroof, managing director and CEO of the bank, and Mohammed Masud Alam Siddique, chief executive officer of DNCC, signed the MoU at Nagar Bhaban in the capital's Gulshan yesterday, according to a press release.

Under the MoU, Dhaka Bank will collect fees and taxes at Dhaka Bank branches and sub-branches by establishing API connectivity with the DNCC server in the first phase.

In the next phase, residents of DNCC will be able to pay fees and taxes online, on a real-time basis, from anywhere through the Dhaka Bank mobile app and internet banking.



Mohammed Masud Alam Siddique, chief executive officer of Dhaka North City Corporation, and Sheikh Mohammad Maroof, managing director and CEO of Dhaka Bank, shake hands after signing a memorandum of understanding at Nagar Bhaban in Gulshan, Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: DHAKA BANK

NCC Bank distributes agri-materials, machinery in Maijdee

STAR BUSINESS DESK

National Credit and Commerce Bank (NCC Bank) PLC recently distributed agricultural materials and machinery free of cost among 500 flood-affected and farmers of Maijdee and Chowmuhani in Noakhali under its special corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative.

The materials included various types of vegetable and rice seeds, fertiliser, pesticides, and backpack spray machines.

Md Monirul Alam, deputy managing director and company secretary of the bank, distributed among marginal farmers at a ceremony in Maijdee, said a press release.

Alam said that NCC Bank is working for the food security of the country. In this context, the bank has been distributing various types of vegetable seeds, fertiliser, pesticides, and machinery free of cost in different regions of the country under a special CSR programme to increase agricultural production.

He expressed that this initiative would help the marginal farmers cultivate various vegetable crops and increase their production.

Mohammad Nurul Haque, senior vice-president and regional head for the South-East region of the bank, presided over the ceremony, where Muhammad Shahidul Islam, senior vice-president and manager of the Panthapath branch, attended the event as the special guest.

Md Abdul Khaleque, manager of the Maijdee SME or agri branch, along with managers of other branches of the bank, was also present.



Md Monirul Alam, deputy managing director and company secretary of NCC Bank, poses for photographs while handing over agricultural materials and machinery to a farmer in Maijdee area of Noakhali recently.

PHOTO: NCC BANK

Maksudur made chairman of SBAC Bank audit committee

STAR BUSINESS DESK



Prof Md Maksudur Rahman Sarker, an independent director of SBAC Bank PLC and chairman of the Department of Accounting and Information Systems at the University of Dhaka, has been appointed as the chairman of the Audit Committee of SBAC Bank PLC.

The decision was made during the 189th meeting of the bank's Board of Directors recently, according to a press release.

Sarker is a distinguished academician, researcher, and renowned accountant with expertise in the financial sector.

He is a chartered financial analyst (Level 1), awarded by the Association for Investment Management and Research (USA), and has completed a professional CMA (Cost and Management Accountant) degree from the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh.

He obtained his bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting from the University of Dhaka, where he was awarded first class first in both honours and master's, and subsequently joined the department as a lecturer.

He later obtained an MBA in finance from the University of New Brunswick, Canada.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY		
	PRICE (JAN 20, 2024)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO
	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO	
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 70-Tk 84	4.05 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 52-Tk 58	7.84 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	-10.53 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 105-Tk 110	0
Soybean (litre)	Tk 165-Tk 170	2.13 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 30-Tk 50	-42.86 ↓
Onion (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 70	-40.00 ↓
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 44-Tk 50	-1.05 ↓

SOURCE: TCB

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Ref. No. 28.20.9153.143.18.002.25/01

Date: 20-01-2025

CORRIGENDUM OF TENDER

Tender No: 28.20.9153.143.18.002.25 dated 01-01-2025.

Tender Title: Appointment of contractor for C&F (Clearing & Forwarding) service of imported goods from Hazrat Shahjalal International Air Port, Dhaka and carrying/transportation of the said imported goods to the project/location/site/fields of Sylhet Gas Fields Limited.

The following Corrigendum in the tender document are hereby made in connection with the submission of tender:

Reference	ITT Sub Clause 22.2 (ক্রিয়ারিং ও ফরোর্ডারিং (সিএফএফ) কার্যের রোপ ক্ষেত্রে স্থিতকোষ কার্যের (আমদানি চালান-বিমান পথে) জন্য)
As per Tender Document	আমদানি চালানের শুরুরনয়েটি মূল্য (প্রতি চালানে) করিশনের হার (টাকা) কাটারারি (ক) শুরুরনয়েটি মূল্যের উপর করিশনের হার ১% (খ) সর্বনিম্ন করিশনের হার ১,৫০০.০০ টাকা
	করিশনের মধ্যে আমদানিকৃত মালামাল ছাড়করণ সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় খরচ (যেমন ডকুমেন্টেশন, ফটোকপি, কোর্ট প্রিং, ট্যাপ সংশ্লিষ্ট এন্টাইজেনেট/এক্সারিনেশন ইত্যাদি) অন্তর্ভুক্ত করাবে। রঞ্জনী চালানের শুরুরনয়েটি মূল্য (প্রতি চালানে) করিশনের হার (টাকা)
	আমদানি কর্তৃত করিশনের মূল্যের উপর করিশনের হার ০.২০% (খ) সর্বনিম্ন করিশনের হার ১,০০০.০০ টাকা
	করিশনের মধ্যে অঞ্জন সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় খরচ (যেমন ডকুমেন্টেশন, ফটোকপি, কোর্ট প্রিং, ট্যাপ সংশ্লিষ্ট এন্টাইজেনেট/এক্সারিনেশন ইত্যাদি) অন্তর্ভুক্ত করাবে। রঞ্জনী চালানের শুরুরনয়েটি মূল্য (প্রতি চালানে) করিশনের হার (টাকা)
	০.১৫% (শুরু দম্পত্তির পাশে শুরু) (খ) সর্বনিম্ন করিশনের হার ১,৫০০.০০ (এক হাজার পাঁচশো) টাকা
	করিশনের মধ্যে অঞ্জন সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় খরচ (যেমন ডকুমেন্টেশন, ফটোকপি, কোর্ট প্রিং, ট্যাপ সংশ্লিষ্ট এন্টাইজেনেট/এক্সারিনেশন ইত্যাদি) অন্তর্ভুক্ত করাবে। দরপত্র উদ্ঘাস্ত করা যা নাই এক প্রতি চালান ক্ষেত্রে ক্রাইরিং ও ফরোর্ডারিং এজেন্টস এসোসিয়েশন-এর সুন্দরপ করিশনের হার ও টেক্স সংক্রান্ত মৌলিক বিষয়ের বিষয়ে প্রতিটি চালানে ক্রাইরিং ও ফরোর্ডারিং এজেন্টস এসোসিয়েশন-এর সুন্দরপ করিশনের হার হবে।

All other information, terms & conditions will remain unchanged.

120125
(Md. Atikur Rahman)
Deputy General Manager (Procurement)

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation "BSC Bhaban", Saltgola road, Chittagong			
REF: 18.16.0000.373.02.241.25	Date: 19.01.2025		
Invitation of Tender			
S.I. No.	Tender ID	Name of the Tender	Publishing & closing date
1.	COMC-01012025 Dated: 19.01.2025 Ref: 18.16.0000.373.02.241.25	BADC-241// INTERNATIONAL LIMITED TENDER FOR TRANSPORTATION 2 nd LOT OF 40,000 MT (+/- 10%) DAP FERTILIZER IN BULK FROM RAS AL-KHAIR, KSA AND DELIVERY IN 50 KG NET BAG TO TRANSPORT AGENT LOCATED AT CHATTOGRAM AND SHIRONOMI GHAT (KHULNA) VIA OUTER ANCHORAGE OF CHATTOGRAM PORT(A/B/C ANCHORAGE), BANGLADESH AND/OR HARBARIA, MONGLA PORT, BANGLADESH AS PACKAGE BASIS (RATIO: CTG & MONGLA : 40%:60%) LAY CAN 18-22 FEBRUARY, 2025 A/C OF BADC.	19-01-2025 & 26-01-2025 12:00 PM

(Capt. Md Mozibur Rahaman)
General Manager (Chartering)
Phone: 031-728269
E-mail: gm-cht@bsc.gov.bd

BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENT BANK PLC. (A State Owned Commercial Bank)						
Reference: 11.2/189(V-II)/38	Date: 19-Jan-2025					
Tender Notice No: BDBPLC/ITOD/OTM/2025/01-02						
e-Tenders have been invited in the national e-GP Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for procurement of the following Goods.						
Sl. No.	e-Tender ID	Description	Method of Procurement	Last Date of Selling Document	Last Date & Time of Tender Submission	Date & Time of Tender Opening
1.	1060629	License/Subscription/Support Renewal (including AMC with Spare Parts Replacement) for Network, Firewall Devices & etc. at Bangladesh Development Bank's Data Center (DC) & Disaster Recovery Site (DRS), for a contract duration of three (3) years from the date of contact signing.	OTM	11-Feb-2025	12-Feb-2025 15:30	12-Feb-2025 15:30
2.	1060639	Supply, installation, and implementation of Network Monitoring System (NMS) & Server Application Monitoring System (SAM) for three (3) years.	OTM	11-Feb-2025	12-Feb-2025 15:30	12-Feb-2025 15:30

These are online tenders, where only e-Tenders will be accepted and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<https://helpdesk.eprocure.gov.bd>) (0176265528-31). (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Kazi Muhammad Najmul Hasan Khan
Deputy General Manager
Tel: 02-57160451

GD-213

NBR may roll back VAT hike on motor garage services

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is expected to retract its decision to impose a 15 percent value added tax (VAT) on services provided at automobile garages and workshops.

The tax administration yesterday assured owners and workers of such workshops that it would reduce VAT to the previous rate of 10 percent in the face of protests from stakeholders.

Led by the Bangladesh Automobile Workshop Malik Samity, over 100 protesters formed a human chain in front of the NBR headquarters yesterday, demanding the VAT rate be reduced to 5 percent.

Md Zahurul Haque, senior vice-president of the Bangladesh Automobile Workshop Malik

Samity, criticised the NBR for imposing the VAT without consulting stakeholders.

"The hike in VAT would harm our businesses," he said.

He also expressed concerns about a new ordinance that reduced the value-added tax threshold from Tk 3 crore to Tk 50 lakh, stating that it would disproportionately burden small and medium-sized enterprises.

Haque also argued that VAT should be levied on landowners instead of workshop owners, calling the current policy a "forceful imposition."

Following the protest, the NBR held a meeting with representatives of the Bangladesh Automobile Workshop Malik Samity and assured them that VAT would be charged at

the previous rate of 10 percent.

The VAT hike is part of the NBR's broader initiative to increase revenue collection as Bangladesh has one of the lowest tax-GDP ratios in the world.

On January 9, the revenue board raised VAT and supplementary duties on nearly 100 goods and services, a decision that was met with criticism from many quarters.

Similar to this retraction, the NBR also assured restaurant owners amid protests that it would reduce the VAT from 15 percent to 5 percent.

Alongside that, the NBR is also considering reducing the VAT on some other items, including clothes, sweets, mobile talktime, and internet services.

However, the NBR has not issued any official announcements yet.

Bangladesh's power subsidies

FROM PAGE B1
said the government still needs to subsidise the sector for capacity payments to power plants currently under construction.

Moazzem added that the government could reduce the subsidy burden by retiring inefficient and old power plants and suspending capacity charges when plants are not generating electricity.

Electricity prices increased by 8.5 percent in February of last year and by 5 percent three times in 2023.

BIPPA, representing mostly owners of power plants run by furnace oil, made the presentation on the relevance of those plants.

The power producers said that summer power demand (March to September) may reach 18,232 megawatts (MW), with heavy fuel oil (HFO) based plants possibly required to generate up to

4,149 MW.

The association calculated that while gas-fired plants have a capacity of 10,667 MW, they may only generate up to 6,400 MW, and coal based plants may generate up to 5,558 MW.

"Even under a conservative scenario where median peak demand is 16,000 MW, HFO-based power plants are relevant as they would be required to produce up to 2,878 MW and will continue to be so," said the analysis presented by Imran Karim, a former president of the organisation.

Currently, there are 5,525 MW of HFO based power plants, a figure projected to decrease to 4,025 MW by 2030.

The presentation showed that independent power producers are facing payment delays of 120-180 days despite a 30-day payment term in their purchase agreements.

These delays have forced companies to borrow additional working capital, incurring an extra Tk 3,200 crore in interest costs.

Moreover, foreign currency shortages have hindered companies' ability to open letters of credit (LCs) for fuel imports, forcing them to operate below capacity.

According to PDB officials, PDB has now been struggling to pay the overdue payments to the power plants.

The power plants have outstanding dues of around Tk 21,000 crore, with around Tk 9,000 crore under the BIPPA.

Adviser to the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Muhammad Fouzil Kabir Khan, Power Division Secretary Farzana Mamta, PDB Chairman Md Rezaul Karim, incumbent president of BIPPA David Hasan and members joined the meeting.

difficult situation. The same manpower required to produce 10 lakh tonnes of cement is being utilised for just one lakh tonne. Despite the downturn, we have not resorted to layoffs," said Dalim. Adding to the burden is a discrepancy in import duties on raw materials, he said.

Cement sector struggles

FROM PAGE B1
the issuance of approvals from local government bodies, including city corporations, municipalities, and urban development authorities, which are crucial for construction projects.

People also face hurdles in obtaining necessary clearances due to the absence of elected public representatives in the local government bodies, further stalling individual construction projects, he said.

Bangladesh boasts 42 cement factories with a combined production capacity of 84 lakh tonnes per month, according to the Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers Association.

However, Dalim said sales have plummeted to just 34 lakh tonnes per month, leaving the industry operating at a mere 45 percent of its capacity.

This sector, where annual growth in consumption typically ranges from 9 to 10 percent, saw an unprecedented decline in sales of around 12 percent in 2024, he said.

The industry's woes are compounded by soaring costs of production, driven by hikes in electricity and fuel prices, he added.

"We are now in a

Patuakhali's new coal-fired power plant starts trial run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A new 1,320-megawatt coal-fired power plant constructed on the banks of the Ramnababu river in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali, some 270 kilometres south of capital Dhaka, has started generating electricity on a trial basis.

One of its two 660MW units was turned on around noon yesterday, said officials.

Initially it generated 170MW of electricity and its full 660MW capacity will be gradually added to the national grid, Md Tawfiq Islam, director of the project, told The Daily Star.

Efforts are underway to get the second unit running by March and, following trial runs, to start commercial production at both units by either May or June, he added. Once operational, the plant will meet around 10 percent of the country's demand, said Ashraf Uddin, the plant's supervising engineer.

Construction of the plant in Londa village began in 2019, but production was delayed due to various challenges. "We are delighted to finally begin trial production after overcoming all obstacles," he said.

Bangladesh Lamps Limited

Head office: House-22, Road-4, Block-F, Banani, Dhaka-1213
2nd Quarterly Financial Statements (October-December 2024)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (UN - AUDITED)

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	As at 31 December 2024 Taka	As at 30 June 2024 Taka
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	138,203,898	98,583,822
Intangible asset	45,013,136	47,585,734
Right-of-use asset (ROU)	82,518,529	89,451,593
Investments:		
At cost	88,527,133	88,527,133
Fair value adjustment	366,902,876	339,465,928
455,430,009	427,993,061	
Loans and deposits	4,100,911	5,093,759
Total non-current assets	725,266,483	668,707,969
Current assets		
Inventories	916,499,869	685,805,486
Trade and other receivables	159,247,578	182,391,573
Advance, deposit and prepayments	56,099,609	54,698,767
Advance income tax	469,767,155	439,401,229
Cash and cash equivalent	48,593,983	37,956,748
Total current assets	1,650,208,194	1,400,253,803
TOTAL ASSETS	2,375,474,677	2,068,961,772
EQUITY & LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	100,265,500	100,265,500
Reserves and surplus	373,405,670	412,298,115
Shareholders' equity	473,671,170	512,563,615
Non-current liabilities		
Deferred liability - gratuity payable	19,630,026	16,978,991
Deferred tax liability	25,761,950	26,014,479
Lease liabilities - Net off current portion	74,828,911	80,760,318
Total non-current liabilities	120,220,887	123,753,788
Current liabilities		
Lease liabilities- Current portion	20,400,000	20,400,000
Short term finance	1,277,346,810	1,002,931,164
Trade and other payables	224,844,957	157,570,204
Other liabilities	35,446,402	33,571,533
Unclaimed dividend	1,475,221	1,497,061
Provision for tax	222,069,230	216,674,407
Total current liabilities	1,781,582,620	1,432,644,369
TOTAL EQUITY & LIABILITIES	2,375,474,677	2,068,961,772

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (UN - AUDITED)					
FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024					
1 July to 31 December	1 July to 31 December	1 July to 31 December	1 July to 31 December	1 July to 31 December	1 July to 31 December
Revenue	89,137,419	762,777,851	477,456,491	319,673,847	
Cost of sales	(70,414,633)	(136,524,877)	(86,680,707)	(54,441,342)	
Gross profit	19,722,786	136,251,974	114,746,784	14,936,505	
Other income	5,635,603	360,000	5,535,603	360,000	
Operating expenses	(16,782,217)	(101,710,612)	(80,161,387)	(57,565,566)	
Profit/(loss) before net finance cost	17,076,172	(109,997,638)	40,241,000	(22,020,061)	
Finance cost	(73,334,468)	(49,782,264)	(39,335,717)	(25,10,011)	
Finance income	74,773	34,726	37,726	37,726	
Net finance cost	(73,259,995)	(44,757,404)	(39,296,391)	(22,733,124)	
Profit/(loss) before contribution to workers participation fund & welfare fund	(56,173,823)	(109,835,042)	947,609	(44,533,185)	
Contribution to workers participation fund & welfare fund					
Profit/(loss) before income tax	(56,173,823)	(109,835,042)	947,609	(44,533,185)	
Current tax	(5,394,824)	(4,578,828)	(2,864,739)	(2,389,088)	
Deferred tax	2,996,223	1,321,271	2,194,012	91,012	
Net profit/(loss) for the period	(58,574,244)	(112,591,699)	271,382	(46,421,252)	
Other comprehensive income					
Changes in fair value of shares available for sale	27,436,948	(2,465,232)	(15,124,664)	(8,409,142)	
Deferred tax income/(expenses)	(2,743,694)	246,523	1,512,467	80,914	
Net other comprehensive income	24,693,254	(2,218,709)	(13,612,197)	(7,568,228)	
Total comprehensive income/(loss)	(33,879,170)	(114,810,408)	(13,340,315)	(53,589,480)	
Earnings per share (par value Tk 10 each)	(5.84)	(11.23)	0.08	(4.63)	

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS (UN-AUDITED)

FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	1 July to 31 December	2024	1 July to 31 December	202
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NBR plans to install nearly 20,000 EFDs in jewellery shops

SUKANTA HALDER

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) plans to install nearly 20,000 electronic fiscal devices (EFDs) in jewellery shops across the country to boost revenue collection from the sector.

As part of this nationwide initiative, the tax administration has initially selected 17 districts, including Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Munshiganj, Manikganj, Savar, Gazipur, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Kishoreganj, Sherpur, Tangail, Jamalpur, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Khagrachhari, and Rangamati.

According to NBR sources, the administration issued a letter to the leaders of the Bangladesh Jewellers Association (Bajus) and held a meeting with them to facilitate the process.

The NBR is scheduled to hold a virtual meeting with stakeholders on Thursday to raise awareness about the initiative.

Genex Infosys PLC Ltd has been assigned to install the EFDs, as stated in an official letter issued by the NBR.

This initiative comes at a time when the revenue board is struggling to meet its collection targets and has recorded a year-on-year decline in revenue.

During the first five months of the current fiscal year, the tax administration collected Tk 130,185 crore, marking a 2.62 percent decrease compared to the same period last year.

Additionally, on January 9, the NBR raised value-added tax (VAT) and supplementary duty (SD) on nearly 100 goods and services, despite concerns that the move could exacerbate inflation and slow economic activity.

The VAT and SD hike aligns with recommendations from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which approved a \$4.7 billion loan for Bangladesh in



PHOTO: STAR

In the first phase, electronic fiscal devices will be installed across jewellery shops in the Dhaka and Chattogram divisions.

January last year.

The IMF advised that the government rationalise tax exemptions, improve compliance with tax laws, and implement reforms to strengthen domestic revenue collection in the country, which has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world.

The NBR's letter also requested a list of jewellery establishments located in various markets and areas under the jurisdiction of the Dhaka Commissionerate.

If it is not possible to provide the complete list at once, it is requested to

submit it in phases," the letter added.

Masudur Rahman, spokesperson for Bajus, told The Daily Star that in the first phase, EFDs will be installed across all jewellery shops in the Dhaka and Chattogram divisions.

The installation will continue in phases across the remaining divisions, he added.

Currently, the number of registered VAT payers in Bangladesh is just over 500,000, as a significant number of eligible businesses remain outside the system.

According to Bajus, many jewellery

shops in the country do not have VAT registration. The government's revenue will increase if EFDs are set up across all establishments, as such shops would be required to register.

According to government estimates, the demand for gold in the country stands at roughly 20 to 40 tonnes per year.

The commerce ministry says almost 80 percent of the demand is met through smuggling. Bajus added that gold worth around Tk 73,000 crore is smuggled into the country each year.

Govt to turn closed jute mills into fertiliser storages

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Abandoned and closed state-owned jute mills in Bangladesh will be turned into fertiliser storage facilities, according to a senior official of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mohammad Emdad Ullah Mian, secretary of the agriculture ministry, said this initiative will help tackle potential shortages of the key farming input in local markets.

"Domestic fertiliser crises will be eliminated. As part of a long term plan, steps have been taken to increase the country's fertiliser storage capacity," he said.

Mian informed that the move is expected to save Bangladesh between Tk 1,500 crore and Tk 2,000 crore annually by reducing the need for local importers to place multiple orders. At present, fertiliser importers have to curtail their purchases considering the country's existing storage capacity.

As such, they have to order numerous batches of the agricultural input each year, thereby increasing expenses related to logistics and placing them at the mercy of exchange rate fluctuations.

He made these comments at the closing ceremony of a training programme for agricultural journalists held at the Press Institute of Bangladesh in Dhaka yesterday. Furthermore, Mian said a separate project for constructing new warehouses is also underway to enhance the country's fertiliser storage capacity.

"However, we do not want to increase the overall budget for such agricultural projects by even a single taka in the coming days," he added.

Mian also said a balance will be achieved in funding such projects, with unnecessary initiatives being shut down while essential ones will receive higher allocations.

Additionally, the agriculture secretary mentioned that instead of focusing solely on developing new seeds for crop production, efforts should be made to boost the supply of those already being used.

Policy consistency critical for attracting foreign investment

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin questioned why foreign investors would be interested in investing in Bangladesh if even local entrepreneurs do not find the country's business environment conducive.

He stated that attracting local or foreign investment requires relevant policy support, adding that policy consistency is critical.

However, he opined that there is no alternative to increasing the private sector's capacity to meet the challenges of trade and investment in the future.

The commerce adviser made these comments during a meeting with Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) President Taskin Ahmed at the former's office at the secretariat yesterday.

Uddin noted that the student-led mass uprising in July, its subsequent impacts on the overall law and order situation, and floods across the country had caused supply chain interruptions and disrupted local business activities last year.

However, he added that the overall situation is already improving and that the government is working relentlessly to enhance the environment further.

He also expressed hope that prices of essential commodities would stabilise during the holy month of Ramadan, set to begin at the end of February.



Sk Bashir Uddin

He said the recent rise in rice prices had come to the government's attention and assured that efforts are being made to keep prices tolerable.

He emphasised that containing inflation and ensuring the continuation of overall economic development requires expanding tax collection and widening the tax net.

Mentioning that the private sector will face numerous challenges after Bangladesh graduates from the list of least developed countries (LDCs), the commerce adviser

stressed that reforms in trade and investment-related policies, along with collective efforts from all stakeholders, would be indispensable for the economy's betterment.

DCCI President Ahmed stated that radical reforms and modernisation of existing frameworks related to trade and investment -- including import-export policy, revenue

structure, financial management, logistics policy, national budget, and monetary policy -- are essential to addressing the challenges of LDC graduation.

He noted that Bangladesh could not adequately prepare for the challenges of the post-LDC era due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, unrest in the Middle East, and political instability in the country in 2024.

Ahmed suggested that the government consider deferring the process to allow sufficient time for preparation since the country will lose significant preferential trade benefits on the international market upon graduation.

He also criticised recent initiatives by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to increase VAT, supplementary duty, excise duty, and taxes on over a hundred products, saying these measures have already caused concern among the general public and businesses.

Ahmed cautioned that if these measures are implemented in the current economic context, the impacts would include increasing inflation, raising the cost of doing business, and potentially hindering both local and foreign investment.

Although the government announced it would reconsider the proposed tariff hikes for several sectors, the DCCI president remarked that the timing of such moves, especially with Ramadan on the horizon, is unacceptable.

Trump's inauguration poses new test for Western firms in Russia

REUTERS, London/Moscow

Hold or fold?

That is the dilemma facing the hundreds of Western companies still operating in Russia as Donald Trump returns to the White House with a promise to end the Ukraine conflict while Moscow's tougher exit conditions make it costlier to leave.

Many companies, including Renault, McDonald's and Heineken have left Russia since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, usually taking hefty writedowns and selling their assets at steep discounts demanded by the Kremlin.

Others have stayed. Makers of food and hygiene products, such as PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble and Mondelez have maintained a presence citing humanitarian reasons. European lenders Raiffeisen Bank International and UniCredit remain ensnared by profits stuck in Russia and the need for exit approval from Moscow.

Russia tightened its exit terms in October to encourage businesses to stay, demanding discounts of at least 60 percent on exit transactions and a 35 percent "voluntary contribution" to Russia's budget from the deal price, termed an "exit tax" by Washington.

Reuters spoke to 15 lawyers, bankers, advisers and business people involved in dozens of Western corporate exits from Russia for this story. They said that companies still present would be

carefully watching what Trump, who will be sworn as president of the United States on Monday, can deliver and adjusting their plans accordingly. Some requested anonymity to speak freely.

"Trump's election victory adds another layer of uncertainty for multinationals with assets in Russia," said Ian Massey, Head of Corporate

Intelligence, EMEA, at global risk consultancy S.R.M. "While the Kremlin continues to ratchet up the costs of leaving the Russian market, Trump may reduce the costs of staying, creating a kind of stasis."

It is far from clear what Trump can accomplish in his second term, with his advisers now



In this file photo, people queue outside an H&M clothing store, which opened the final sales before shutting down its business operations in Russia, at the Metropolis shopping centre in Moscow.

Germany's Hellmann to buy 40% stake in Summit subsidiary

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Germany's Hellmann Worldwide Logistics International GmbH, one of the world's largest international logistics service providers, is going to buy a 40 percent stake in Container Transportation Services Ltd (CTS) to strengthen its presence in Bangladesh.

Hellmann and the CTS, a subsidiary of Summit Alliance Port Ltd (SAPL), signed a share subscription agreement in this regard on January 19, the SAPL said in a disclosure on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday.

Under the agreement, Hellmann is set to purchase 3.33 lakh newly issued shares of the CTS for Tk 2.21 crore. Each share will bear a face value of Tk 10 while the premium will be Tk 56.50, subject to shareholder approval and regulatory compliance.

Upon completing the transaction, the ownership structure of the CTS will comprise the SAPL holding a 60 percent stake while Hellmann will hold the remaining 40 percent.

This will pave the way for stronger collaboration between the two entities, according to the SAPL, a major local off-dock service provider for exporters and importers.

Shares of the SAPL soared 9.9 percent to Tk 22.2 per unit yesterday at the DSE.

The disclosure came six months after the CTS began freight forwarding and shipping agency operations in July 2024 as the local agent of Hellmann Worldwide.

A freight forwarding agency organises the transportation of goods while a shipping agency handles the work directly related to shipping.

A positive impact of this venture was reflected in the SAPL's financial statement for the quarter that ended on September 30 last year, said the company, which handles over one-fifth of containerised exports and one-tenth of imports through Chattogram port.

Bangladesh begins potato export to Nepal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Over the past two days, Bangladesh exported 84 tonnes of potato to Nepal through the Bangabandha land port in Panchagarh, which also connects the country to neighbouring India and Bhutan.

The local exporter, called Things to Supply, used clearing and forwarding agent Taseen Trade Link to ship the potatoes, which were delivered to the Siddhi Binayak Potato Store in Nepal.

A shipment of 42 tonnes was sent daily on Sunday and Monday, marking the start of this season's potato exports via the port, said Mithun Roy, assistant manager of Bangabandha land port.

The potatoes were sourced from Pirojganj upazila in Thakurgaon and exported at \$152 per tonne, according to Mominur Islam, a representative of Taseen Trade Link. He said the potatoes were shipped to Kakarbhitta in Nepal, with regular exports expected to continue.

About 95 percent of all imports through Bangabandha land port consist of stone from India and Bhutan, with others including tea-processing machinery, molasses, ginger and onion from India and Nepal.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh mainly exports raw jute, cotton rags, glass, medicine, batteries, food products and tissue paper through the port to India and Nepal.

conceding the conflict will take at least months to resolve.

Yet his mere arrival may give some companies the political cover to stay on in Russia, while others could see prospects for potential sanctions relief as an opportunity to leave.

"We might see some sanctions being dialled down if the new administration is able to negotiate a settlement of the conflict in Ukraine," said Alan Kartashkin, Partner at Debevoise and Plimpton. That could unfreeze some foreign-owned assets stuck in Russia, unlocking another wave of exit deals, he said.

Companies already reluctant to leave may be more likely to wait things out, said an M&A investor who has worked on dozens of deals. Another person, who has advised on over 100 exits, said Trump's return may also cause those looking to cut ties with Russia to change plans and decide to stay.

Alexei Yakovlev, director of the finance ministry's financial policy department, told Reuters in December that negotiations on exit deals were ongoing, without naming specific companies.

Asked whether Trump's arrival may pause exits or see some companies return, he said: "That's beyond our understanding."

A lot has changed since the relative free-for-all in dealmaking of 2022, six of the people said, particularly in terms of navigating the whims and demands of the exit committee.