

# star BUSINESS

## Accounts, assets of wilful defaulters must be seized: CPD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has called for closing the accounts of wilful defaulters and holding three former governors accountable for their roles in the beleaguered banking sector.

The main problem in the banking sector is non-performing loans (NPLs), which are deteriorating the asset quality of lenders and affecting liquidity, said Fahmida Khutun, executive director of the CPD, yesterday.

"The assets of wilful defaulters and their immediate family members should be liquidated, and their businesses should be temporarily nationalised," she said while presenting a paper titled "Navigating Expectations in Turbulent Times" during a briefing at the think tank's office on Tuesday.

The CPD organised the briefing to present its assessment of the state of Bangladesh's economy for the fiscal year 2024-25.

The banking sector, long plagued by political interference and weak regulatory oversight, is now at a critical juncture as the interim government attempts to implement reforms.

The CPD recommends blocking transactions of wilful defaulters by sharing their information with global financial networks such as Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT).

READ MORE ON B3

Fuel price can be cut by Tk 15 a litre: CPD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday said the government could reduce fuel prices by Tk 10 to Tk 15 per litre by using a market-based pricing model.

The independent think-tank said fuel prices have been reduced under the automatic pricing formula.

"But the government is still fixing fuel prices, which do not reflect the international market," the CPD said at a briefing at its office to present its assessment of the state of Bangladesh's economy for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

At the International Monetary Fund's request, the government introduced the automated fuel pricing mechanism in March 2024 to reflect international market prices monthly.

For January, the prices of diesel and kerosene were reduced by Tk 1 per litre, which are currently sold at Tk 104 per litre.

However, it kept the prices of every litre of octane and petrol unchanged at Tk 125 and Tk 121 respectively for the month.

At the briefing, CPD researcher Helen Mashiyat

READ MORE ON B3

# Renewable energy crucial for sustainable future: BB governor

STAR BUSINESS DESK

As Bangladesh strives toward a more sustainable future, renewable energy stands out as the key driver of progress, Ahsan H. Mansur, governor of the Bangladesh Bank, said at a roundtable.

However, achieving true sustainability in this sector requires more than just ambition—it necessitates financial viability, structural reforms, and a clear path forward, he also said.

He made the comments at a roundtable organised by Standard Chartered Bangladesh at the Renaissance Dhaka Gulshan Hotel recently. To unlock the full potential of renewable energy, the country must prioritize policy consistency, reduce costs, and address challenges such as land acquisition and financing gaps, Mansur said.

By fostering collaboration with

international partners and exploring innovative financial solutions, such as blended finance and tax reforms, Bangladesh can create a thriving energy sector that benefits both investors and consumers, he added.

Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, adviser to the Ministry of Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources, said, "Bangladesh is moving from subsidies and inefficiencies to a new era of transparency and accountability in energy—a transformation necessary to power our future sustainably."

"We all recognise the need to fast-track the transition. Standard Chartered's Opportunity 2030 report highlights a staggering \$74 billion in private investment needed in Bangladesh's power sector to ensure affordable and sustainable energy for all," said Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh.



Ahsan H. Mansur, governor of the Bangladesh Bank, Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, adviser to the Ministry of Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources, and Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, pose for group photographs with participants of the roundtable organised by the multinational bank at the Renaissance Dhaka Gulshan Hotel recently.

PHOTO: STANDARD CHARTERED BANGLADESH



Nuruddin Md Sadeque Hossain, managing director of Southeast Bank, poses for photographs with participants and guests of the workshop on "Money and Banking Data (SBS-1, SBS-2, and SBS-3) Reporting and Recent Changes" in the capital recently.

PHOTO: SOUTHEAST BANK

## Mercantile Bank holds workshop on Shariah banking

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mercantile Bank PLC recently organised a daylong workshop, titled "Knowledge Sharing on Shariah Banking: An Interactive Session", at Fars Hotel and Resort in the capital's Purana Paltan.

The top management and senior executives of the bank, divisional, regional, and branch heads, in-charges of Islamic banking windows, and officials from the Islamic banking divisions of the bank across the country participated in the event.

Mati Ul Hasan, managing director of the bank, inaugurated the workshop as the chief guest, the bank said in a press release.

Hasan advised the participants to strictly adhere to the compliance of Islamic shariah principles and guidelines in all transactions of the Islamic banking operations of the bank, with the aim of fulfilling the bank's slogan: "Efficiency is our Strength," in his inaugural speech.

Javed Tariq, principal of the bank's training institute, moderated the event.

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Southeast Bank PLC recently organised a daylong workshop on "Money and Banking Data (SBS-1, SBS-2, and SBS-3) Reporting and Recent Changes."

A total of 62 officials from various branches of the bank participated in the event.

Nuruddin Md Sadeque Hossain, managing director of the bank, inaugurated the workshop in the capital, the bank said in a press release.

Hossain urged the participants to realise the importance of timely and accurate reporting and to perform their responsibilities with diligence and expertise.

The primary objective of the workshop was to enhance the professional knowledge of the bank officials while emphasizing the importance, process, and recent changes in SBS reporting.

Additionally, hands-on training was provided on assets, liabilities, and classified loans.



Mati Ul Hasan, managing director of Mercantile Bank, poses for group photographs with participants of the workshop, titled "Knowledge Sharing on Shariah Banking: An Interactive Session", at the Fars Hotel and Resort in the capital's Purana Paltan recently.

PHOTO: MERCANTILE BANK

## Pubali Bank opens relocated regional office in Narayanganj

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Pubali Bank PLC opened its relocated Narayanganj regional office, along with the Narayanganj branch, Islamic banking window, and the Narayanganj digital booth of Pubali Bank Securities Limited, with a commitment to providing modern banking services.

Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO of the bank, inaugurated all of these as the chief guest yesterday, according to a press release.

Masuduzzaman, president of the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce and Industries, and M. Solaiman, president of the Bangladesh Yarn Merchants Association and Narayanganj Club, were present as guests of honour.

Md. Moniruzzaman, deputy general manager and regional manager for the Narayanganj region



Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank, inaugurates the relocated Narayanganj regional office, Narayanganj branch, and Islamic banking window, along with the digital booth of Pubali Bank Securities Limited in the district yesterday.

PHOTO: PUBLI BANK

of the bank, presided over the programme.

Mohammed Ahsan Ullah, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank Securities Limited, and Dewan Jamil Masud, general manager and head of the Islamic banking wing of the bank, were present as special guests.

Local businessmen, the bank's clients, and other guests, were also present.

## Meghna Bank holds conference on corporate banking

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Meghna Bank PLC recently held a corporate banking conference titled "Driving Excellence - Corporate Banking Performance 2024 and Future Strategies," aiming to provide a comprehensive outlook on the current landscape of corporate banking and outline the strategies that will drive future success.

The event saw the active participation of corporate banking units, members of the management committee, and senior leadership from the bank.

Kazi Ahsan Khalil, managing director and CEO of the bank, inaugurated the event at the Lakeshore Heights Hotel in Dhaka as the chief guest, said a press release.

In his speech, Khalil emphasised the importance of a unified approach across the bank's divisions, stressing that success in corporate banking will be a collective achievement.

"At Meghna Bank, we

are committed to fostering collaboration and innovation across all our divisions.

Our approach is centered on creating a seamless and integrated banking experience for our

corporate clients," he added.

"With the combined strength of our team and the strategic focus we have set for 2025, I am confident that we will continue to drive excellence in the industry," he continued.



Kazi Ahsan Khalil, managing director and CEO of Meghna Bank, poses for group photographs with participants of the corporate banking conference, titled "Driving Excellence - Corporate Banking Performance 2024 and Future Strategies," at the Lakeshore Heights Hotel in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: MEGHNA BANK

## Dollar steadies ahead of Fed decision

REUTERS

The dollar steadied on Wednesday ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision, with investors on edge for hints of how much interest rates might fall this year, while they broadly expect the central bank to keep policy unchanged for now.

Expectations that trade policies under President Donald Trump could boost US growth, but also push up inflation, had left markets betting on higher-for-longer interest rates in the lead-up to the inauguration, which in turn supported the dollar.

But as the tariff action investors had braced for has yet to materialise, currency markets have been volatile since Trump took office and the dollar has weakened.

Markets on Wednesday turned their attention to the outcome of the first Fed meeting of the year - less than a week after Trump said he wants the central bank to cut interest rates.

The dollar index, which measures the dollar against a basket of other major currencies, was up 0.1 percent at 108.

The index touched a one-month low on Monday at 106.96 amid a global sell-off in technology stocks and rush to safe-haven currencies like the Japanese yen and Swiss franc, but the index is still up more than 4 percent since the US election in November.

Money markets expect the central bank to hold rates steady, as Fed officials weigh how the Trump administration's economic agenda may affect sticky inflation and solid growth trends.

US stocks ended higher on Tuesday, with Nvidia and other AI-related shares recovering from sharp losses a day earlier. But investors will be attentive for any hints from Fed Chair Jerome Powell on whether a rate cut could happen soon if inflation eases closer to the Fed's 2 percent annual target.

"Powell's constraint is that it's difficult to judge how the macro picture will evolve with uncertainty around tariffs and the fiscal policy," said Mohit Kumar, chief economist and strategist for Europe at Jefferies.

### PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY

	PRICE (JAN 29, 2024)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 70-Tk 85	3.33 ↑	13.14 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 54-Tk 56	4.76 ↑	5.77 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	0	-13.27 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 105-Tk 110	0	0
Soybean (litre)	Tk 171-Tk 174	4.86 ↑	7.81 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 20-Tk 30	-58.33 ↓	-44.44 ↓
Onion (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 50	-37.93 ↓	-52.63 ↓
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 44-Tk 48	-3.16 ↓	-1.08 ↓

SOURCE: TCB

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয়

বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান ও শিল্প গবেষণা পরিষদ

ড. কুদ্রাত-এ-খুদা রোড, ধানমন্ডি, ঢাকা-১২০৫।

[www.bcsir.gov.bd](http://www.bcsir.gov.bd)

### INVITATION FOR TENDER – OTM (International Competition)

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Science and Technology
2. Agency	Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (BCSIR)
3. Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (BCSIR), Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh.
4. Procuring entity district	Dhaka
5. Invitation for	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Scientific Equipments. [Name of equipments: Item no.(01)Simultaneous TG-DTA-DSC, (02) Simultaneous ICP-OES spectrometer, Item no.(03) FT-IR Spectrometer with ATR Module & Item no. (04) Surface area analyzer/ physical adsorption analyzer (Details will be found in the Tender Document)].
6. Invitation ref. no.	39.02.0000.022.35.323.25
- Date	29.01.2025
KEY INFORMATION	
8. Procuring method	Open Tendering Method (International Competition)
9. Budget and source of fund	GoB
PARTICULAR INFORMATION	
10. Tender last selling date	16.03.2025 during office hour
11. Tender closing date & time	17.03.2025 at 1.00 PM.
12. Tender opening date and time	17.03.2025 at 2.00 PM.
13. Name & address of the office(s) selling tender document	Cashier, BCSIR, Secretariat building (3 <sup>rd</sup> floor), Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.
14. Name & address of the office(s) receiving tender document	Office of the Secretary, Secretariat building (4 <sup>th</sup> floor) BCSIR, Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.
15. Name & address of the office(s) Opening tender document	Office of the Secretary, Secretariat building (4 <sup>th</sup> floor) BCSIR, Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.
INFORMATION ON AWARD	
16. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Science and Technology
17. Eligibility of tenderer	*The Tenderer shall have a minimum of 5 (five) years of overall experience in the supply of goods and related services. *The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least 2 (two) contract(s) successfully completed within the last 5 (five) years, each with a value of at least BDT 100% (hundred percent) of the total value of the item(s) quoted by the Tenderer. * Details will be found in the Tender Data Sheet (TDS) of the Tender Document.
18. Brief description of goods	As per attached specification in the tender document.
19. Brief description of related services	
20. Price of tender document	Tk. 2,000.00 (Two Thousand) (Non-refundable)
21. Evaluation will be done "Item by Item" basis.	
22. Description of goods	Tender security (Tk.)
Scientific Equipment (As per attached specification in the tender document)	The amount of Tender Security shall be 2.5% (Two point five percent) of the total value of the item(s) quoted by the Tenderer in favour of secretary, BCSIR by a tender security.
PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS	
23. Name of official inviting tender	Mohammad Shohedul Hoque Patwary
24. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Secretary, BCSIR, Dhaka.
25. Contract details of official inviting Tender	Secretary, Secretariat building (4 <sup>th</sup> Floor), BCSIR, Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205, Tel: 58610717
26. The Procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.	

29/01/2025  
(Mohammad Shohedul Hoque Patwary)  
Secretary

# Beximco reports massive loss, Beximco Pharma a profit

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Beximco, a leading conglomerate of Bangladesh, yesterday reported a substantial decline in net earnings in the second quarter of fiscal year 2024-25, citing a production shutdown due to the unavailability of banking facilities.

In contrast, Beximco Pharmaceuticals, another major concern of the troubled Beximco Group, said its earnings rose 28 percent year-on-year to Tk 184.31 crore in the October-December period.

However, share prices of the leading drugmaker fell 1.4 percent to close at Tk 75.20 at the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday, which was apparently a reflection of investors losing confidence in it.

The interim government has decided to sell shares of Beximco Pharmaceuticals and Shinepukur Ceramics Ltd to pay salary arrears and service benefits of laid-off employees of the group's factories, which were recently shut down.

Shinepukur Ceramics lost 8.33 percent to close at Tk 11 yesterday.

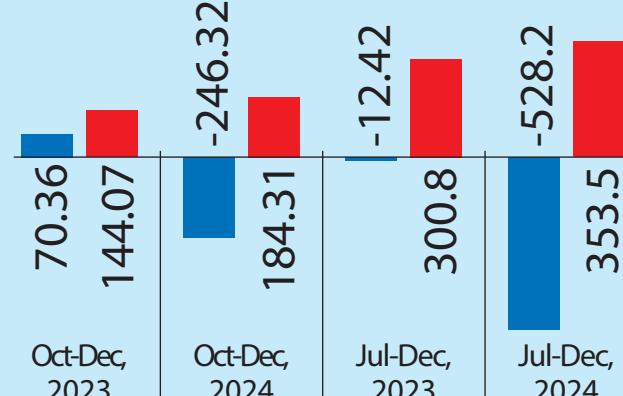
The government on Tuesday said the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission and the Financial Institutions Division would take steps to sell the shares

### PROFIT/LOSS OF BEXIMCO LTD AND BEXIMCO PHARMA

In crore taka;

Beximco Ltd  
Beximco Pharma

SOURCE: FINANCIALSTATEMENTS



to clear the dues, which amount to around Tk 550 crore. Earnings per share (EPS) of Beximco Pharmaceuticals stood at Tk 4.1 during the three month period. It was Tk 3.21 in the same period of 2023.

With the October-December earnings, the total income of Beximco Pharmaceuticals rose 17 percent year-on-year to Tk 353.50 crore in the fiscal year's first half, which ended

last December.

However, Beximco Ltd reported losses. This major concern of the group fell into trouble after banks stopped providing funds due to the accumulation of default loans following the political changeover in early August last year.

For the quarter ending in December 2024, Beximco posted a loss per share of Tk 2.58, which

is in stark contrast to an EPS of Tk 0.82 recorded in the same period of the previous year.

The company incurred a loss of Tk 246 crore during the quarter, whereas it had posted a profit of Tk 71 crore in the same period a year ago.

For the six months ending in December 2024, Beximco Ltd reported a massive spike in losses, amounting to Tk 528 crore, compared to a loss of only Tk 12.4 crore in the same period a year ago, according to the company's financial statements.

As such, the loss per share of Beximco Ltd rose to Tk 3.78 in the first half of the current fiscal year, down from an EPS of Tk 0.03 in the corresponding period a year earlier.

Despite this setback, the company managed to attain a notable improvement in its net operating cash flow per share in the six months.

It was Tk 12.58 in the six-month period, up from Tk 1.44 in the previous year.

Beximco attributed the downturn to a near-complete production shutdown, as banks stopped opening letters of credit from August 2024, making it impossible to procure raw materials.

Additionally, the company was forced to sell fabric and yarn stocks at prices below cost, as garment factories remained non-operational.

# BRAC Bank secures B+ credit rating from S&P

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

BRAC Bank has secured a 'B+' credit rating with a stable outlook, as affirmed by the world's leading credit rating agency, S&P Global Ratings.

Despite challenges in the banking sector, the US-based credit rating agency has expressed confidence in BRAC Bank, maintaining a solid 'B+' rating with a stable outlook.

This is equivalent to the sovereign rating of Bangladesh and the highest among the banks' S&P rates in the country, the bank said in a press release.

The credit rating agency, in a statement, said, "BRAC Bank has been able to establish a good branch network and online presence. The bank's access to retail remittances and export-oriented clients will help it navigate the challenges arising from Bangladesh's weak external position."

"We believe the bank will maintain its satisfactory franchise, particularly in the SME and retail segments in the underpenetrated Bangladeshi market. BRAC Bank also benefits from above-industry average asset quality," it added.

## Govt plans

### FROM PAGE B4

"If I had to make one single comment, I would say that such a database should be maintained continuously."

He mentioned if that happens, this would undoubtedly be a good initiative.

However, one concern remains. Since this is being developed under a project framework, there need to be periodic updates. A farmer's information -- such as land ownership details -- must be updated whenever land is bought or sold."

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) published the draft on its website on January 28 seeking feedback from the public by today.

The formulation of the

policy is a part of a five-year government "Programme on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship and Resilience" initiated in July 2023.

Implementing the programme will cost around Tk 7,000 crore, to be jointly provided by the government, World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

According to the Agriculture Census 2019, there are approximately 16.9 million agricultural households in the country. Around 61.7 percent of Bangladesh's total land area of 14.3 million hectares is arable.

For the first time, the BBS has introduced some new indicators that highlight problems faced by economic units.

Among the nine challenges identified, nearly 86 percent of entrepreneurs cited a lack of capital.

Additionally, 34 percent reported difficulties in accessing easy term loans.

"The number of entrepreneurs is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. But rural entrepreneurs face discrimination in accessing capital," Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud said while speaking as the chief guest at the report launching event in

Agargaon. He explained that while urban business tycoons secure loans and often default, rural entrepreneurs struggle to access financing for their businesses.

He used Beximco Group as an example.

"They have grown rich overnight based on loans. They have nothing other than loans. Now most of the factories are closed. The government is running their operations," he said.

"There is no shortage of entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, but access to capital remains a real challenge," he added.

Furthermore, job opportunities in rural areas have shrunk over the 11 years since 2013, reflecting a lack of growth in non-farm activities.

The census reveals that 56.82 percent of 3.07 crore were engaged in economic activities in rural areas in 2024, down from 61.23 percent in 2013.

However, the number of people involved in economic activities increased during this period as the economy expanded, leading to an increase in the number of economic units, the BBS

stated while launching the census at its office yesterday.

On the other hand, urban areas have created more economic opportunities since 2013. The BBS reported that 43.18 percent of people were engaged in economic activities in urban areas in 2024, up from around 39 percent in 2013.

In urban areas, the number of people involved in economic activities stood at 1.32 crore in 2024, with Dhaka division accounting for 89 percent of the total. Chattogram ranked second, followed by Rajshahi.

Overall, the BBS found that 70.27 percent of economic units in the country operate in rural areas, while 29.73 percent are located in urban areas.

Dhaka division hosts the highest number of economic units, totaling 32.1 lakh, contributing 27.03 percent of the total in 2024, up from 24.23 percent in 2013.

Additionally, the country has 116,978 e-commerce economic units, with Dhaka hosting the largest portion of around 47.42 percent or 55,474 units.

## Accounts, assets

FROM PAGE B1  
"This would prevent them from conducting transactions abroad, ensuring accountability and deterring financial misconduct," according to the report.

The report also stated that three former governors of Bangladesh Bank, who undermined the banking sector's stability during Sheikh Hasina's 15 year regime, should be held accountable for their failures.

A bank resolution-type Asset Management Company (AMC) can help reduce NPLs. The merger of weak banks with strong banks is another option for improving the health of the banking sector, she said.

Merging weak banks with stronger ones can enhance the efficiency of weaker institutions. However, careful planning, transparency, thorough audits of weak banks, and proper consultations are required to avoid penalising stronger banks, she added.

She also noted that if weak banks are merged with stronger ones, not all employees will be retained -- some job cuts will be necessary. "This is a social cost that must be accepted."

The social cost would be much higher if the government allowed the closure of some strong banks, so mergers and acquisitions should be considered.

NPLs in Bangladesh's banking sector surged to Tk 284,977 crore as of September 2024, accounting for nearly 17 percent of total outstanding loans in the country.

This figure is 2.7 times higher than the combined budget allocations for education and health in the fiscal year 2024, underscoring the severity of the crisis.

"The opportunity cost is huge," Fahmidha said.

State-owned commercial banks are the worst affected, with an NPL ratio of 40.35 percent.

The liquidity situation is equally dire.

Excess liquidity, which is crucial for banks to absorb unexpected financial shocks, has declined sharply.

The root cause of the banking sector's problems lies in weak governance and rampant political interference, she said, adding that board members of state banks and several private banks have historically been appointed based on political connections rather than competence, leading to poor decision-making and widespread corruption, she added.

The independence of Bangladesh Bank, the country's central bank, has also been undermined.

Given the strong vested interest groups, an all-out effort must be made and sustained, backed by political commitment at the highest level, to continue banking reforms.

Additionally, the CPD recommends establishing specialised courts and tribunals to expedite the resolution of loan default cases.

At the event, Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the CPD, and Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the CPD, were also present.

## Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh

### Office of the Executive Engineer

#### Pirojpur PWD Division

ee\_peroj@pwd.gov.bd

Memo No. 25.36.7900.150.1.8.134/10

Date: 28/01/25 Eng

### e-Tender Notice

(Tender No. pjy/pwd/2024-25/app-94, 95, 96, 97)

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

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of works	Procurement method	Tender Last Selling Date & Time	Tender Security Last submission Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
01	1067384	Emergency repair work at Sadar Fire Service of Pirojpur district.	OTM	10-Feb-2025 16:00 PM	11-Feb-2025 11:00 AM	11-Feb-2025 12:00 PM
02	1067385	Electrical repair work of Pirojpur Nursing Institute.	OTM	10-Feb-2025 16:00 PM	11-Feb-2025 11:00 AM	11-Feb-2025 12:00 PM
03	1067386	Civil sanitary emergency repair work of court building in Mathbaria upazila of Pirojpur district.	OTM	10-Feb-2025 16:00 PM	11-Feb-2025 11:00 AM	11-Feb-2025 12:00 PM
04	1067387	Civil Sanitary Emergency Repair Work of Pirojpur District Additional Superintendent of Police Mathbaria Circle Office.	OTM	10-Feb-2025 16:00 PM	11-Feb-2025 11:00 AM	11-Feb-2025 12:00 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents form the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank branches up to 11-Feb-2025 at 11:00 AM. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

(Md. Kharifuzzaman)

Executive Engineer

PWD Division, Pirojpur.

GD- 308

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

### Office of the Project Director

Procurement of Equipment for Search, Rescue Operation and Emergency communication for Earthquake and Other Disaster Project (Phase-III)

#### Department of Disaster Management

83-88, Bangladesh Parjontor Corporation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mohakhali C/A, Dhaka-1212

Ref No- 51.01.0000.000.07.81.23.1391

Date: 29/01/25

### Invitation for e-Tender Notice

1 Ministry  
2 Implementing Department  
3 Project Name  
4 e-Tender ID & Package No  
5 Description of Tender: Procurement of life jacket, radio, life boy, torch light and signal flyer for 7600 boat man in 19 coastal river and adjacent district for CPP.

Kazi Safiqul Alam  
Project Director, (Joint Secretary)  
Address: 83-88, Bangladesh Parjontor Corporation,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mohakhali C/A, Dhaka-1212  
phone: +880 193 707 0707  
E-mail: safiq737@hotmail.com

This is online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested persons/firms can see details in the website: [www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)

GD-317

# Govt plans smart cards for farmers

The move will ensure delivery of subsidies, other benefits

SUKANTA HALDER

The government is formulating a policy with the aim of distributing smart cards among farmers to ensure the delivery of subsidies and other government support, such as that for coping with natural disasters.

The draft "Farmer Smart Card Policy 2025" proposes adopting data technologies and creating a national database of farmers featuring profiles and registration IDs by 2030.

The process of creating and distributing smart cards for farmers is similar to that for national ID cards, Mohammad Emdad Ullah Mian, secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, told The Daily Star.

The project was taken up by the previous government and was reviewed by the interim government prior to the formulation of the draft policy, he said.

This card will help farmers avail agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers and pesticides. They will also be afforded assistance in crop cultivation, storage and sale.

It will also be used for the expansion of financial inclusion, such as through loan disbursements, promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and delivery of services such as weather forecasts, agricultural advice and market data.

Overall, the cards will increase productivity and food security, enable economic empowerment, improve farmers' quality of life and ensure sustainable development.

"This is a good initiative. However, there is always a concern about proper implementation," said Mohammad Jahangir Alam, a professor of the Department of Agribusiness and Marketing at the Bangladesh Agricultural



The government is formulating "Farmer Smart Card Policy 2025" that proposes adopting data technologies and creating a national database of farmers.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

University.

This database will store crucial information and when a farmer needs access to government support or subsidies, this card will be used, he said.

"Another reason why this initiative is necessary is, for example, when there are government programmes to procure rice or paddy, many farmers use cards to sell

their produce at procurement centers in order to secure better prices than the market rate," he added.

He said the problem here is that the card alone may not be sufficient. For the system to function effectively, stakeholders and implementation officials must ensure transparency.

The purpose of this card is to

address that issue by ensuring proper identification -- whether a person is a small farmer, large farmer, original farmer, or medium-scale farmer, he said.

He added that those involved in implementing this system must manage it properly and work with the administration transparently and honestly.

READ MORE ON B3

## Titas Gas suffers Tk 523cr loss in Q2

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company, the state-owned gas distributor, reported a significant loss in the second quarter of fiscal 2024-25, driven by a sharp increase in system losses.

System losses refer to the amount of natural gas lost during transmission and distribution.

The company posted a loss of about Tk 523 crore for the October-December quarter.

Titas shares closed at Tk 19.20 yesterday on the DSE, losing 3.52 percent from the previous day.

According to its financial statements, Titas Gas reported a loss per share of Tk 5.28 for the quarter, a stark contrast to the earnings per share (EPS) of Tk 0.40 a year earlier.

For the first half of FY25, the company's loss per share stood at Tk 7.19, compared to an EPS of Tk 0.47 a year earlier.

Titas Gas attributed the losses to system losses of 10.63 percent in the July-December period, significantly higher than the allowable limit of 2 percent. This led to substantial purchase liabilities without corresponding revenue.

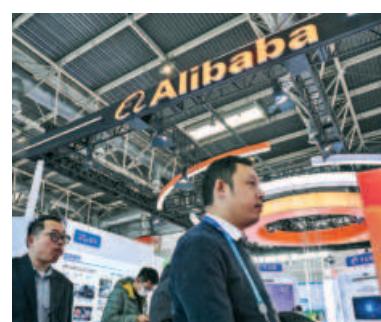
The company also mentioned the removal of a significant tax exemption as a contributing factor. This exemption previously allowed gas transmission and distribution companies to claim refunds on excess tax deducted at source.

With the exemption removed, Titas Gas had to recognise the full deducted amount as a current tax expense, resulting in a net loss of Tk 71L43 crore for the first six months of the fiscal year.

Despite the losses, the company's net operating cash flow per share increased to Tk 5.53 in July-December, up from Tk 0.60 a year earlier.

## Alibaba releases AI model it says surpasses DeepSeek

REUTERS, Beijing



Chinese tech company Alibaba on Wednesday released a new version of its Qwen 2.5 artificial intelligence model that it claimed surpassed the highly-acclaimed DeepSeek-V3.

The unusual timing of the Qwen 2.5-Max's release, on the first day of the Lunar New Year when most Chinese people are off work and with their families, points to the pressure Chinese AI startup DeepSeek's meteoric rise in the past three weeks has placed on not just overseas rivals, but also its domestic competition.

"Qwen 2.5-Max outperforms ... almost across the board GPT-4o, DeepSeek-V3 and Llama 3.1-405B," Alibaba's cloud unit said in an announcement posted on its official WeChat account, referring to OpenAI and Meta's most advanced open-source AI models.

The January 10 release of DeepSeek's AI assistant, powered by the DeepSeek-V3 model, as well as the January 20 release of its R1 model, has shocked Silicon Valley and caused tech shares to plunge, with the Chinese startup's purportedly low development and

usage costs prompting investors to question huge spending plans by leading AI firms in the United States.

But DeepSeek's success has also led to a scramble among its domestic competitors to upgrade their own AI models.

Two days after the release of DeepSeek-R1, TikTok owner ByteDance released an update to its flagship AI model, which it claimed outperformed Microsoft-backed OpenAI's of in AIM, a benchmark test that measures how well AI models understand and respond to complex instructions.

This echoed DeepSeek's claim that its R1 model rivalled OpenAI's of on several performance benchmarks.

What we strive to do is to show to the world that flying V is a viable alternative to the Cuban wing airplane that we're flying with now and it can be as safe but much more energy efficient.

### DEEPESEEK VERSUS DOMESTIC COMPETITORS

The predecessor of DeepSeek's V3 model, DeepSeek-V2, triggered an AI model price war in China after it was released last May.

The fact that DeepSeek-V2 was open-source and unprecedentedly cheap, only 1 yuan (\$0.14) per 1 million tokens - or units of data processed by the AI model - led to Alibaba's cloud unit announcing price cuts of up to 97 percent on a range of models.

Other Chinese tech companies followed suit, including Baidu, which released China's first equivalent to ChatGPT in March 2023, and the country's most valuable internet company Tencent.

Liang Wenfeng, DeepSeek's enigmatic founder, said in a rare interview with Chinese media outlet Waves in July that the startup "did not care" about price wars and that achieving AGI (artificial general intelligence) was its main goal.

## Rupee weakens

REUTERS, Mumbai

The Indian rupee weakened on Wednesday on the back of strong dollar bids related to importers' month-end payments, while a decline in the cost of hedging against the currency's decline added to the persistent headwinds troubling the currency.

The rupee was at 86.5850 against the US dollar as of 10:00 a.m. IST, down about 0.1 percent on the day. The currency is hovering within touching distance of its all-time low of 86.6475 hit earlier in the month.

The heightened demand to buy dollars at the daily reference rate published by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), called the fix, troubled the rupee in early trading, traders said.

Meanwhile, a fall in dollar-rupee forward premiums due to the Reserve Bank of India's measures to inject liquidity into the banking system could magnify pressure on the rupee amidst persistent portfolio outflows and jitters about US President Trump's tariff policies.

The 1-month dollar-rupee forward premium hit a more than-one-month low of 15.50 paisa on Wednesday, nearly halving from the over-two-year peak of 28.25 paisa hit earlier in the month.

Similarly, the 1-year dollar-rupee implied yield has declined about 60 basis points from a peak of 2.74 percent hit earlier in the month. Lower forward premiums can spur a pick up in hedging demand from importers and also cuts the cost of betting against the rupee, traders said. I think there was an overreaction yesterday and now we're getting a really nice bounce.

The currency has declined 1.1 percent over January so far, the most among major regional peers.

Later in the day, the focus will turn to the Federal Reserve's policy decision, due during US market hours. The Fed is widely expected to keep rates unchanged and investors will keep a close eye on commentary from Fed Chair Jerome Powell.

## India's economy faces slowing growth ahead of new fiscal year

REUTERS, New Delhi

in the economic survey and the actual GDP growth rate

Weak growth in wages has impacted discretionary spending of urban middle-class Indians, according to large consumer companies on their quarterly earnings calls, even as rural demand has improved due to a strong monsoon in 2024.

The growth slowdown amid global volatility has wiped out a recent stock market rally.

### INFLATION

India's retail inflation in December eased to a four-month low of 5.2 percent, raising hopes the country's central bank would start cutting interest rates in February.



A vendor arranges spices and dry fruits at a spice market in New Delhi. Economists expect that policy changes aimed at strengthening consumption will boost growth.

## Saint Martin's businesses seek shorter travel ban

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

All tourist vessels to Saint Martin's island will cease operations from the start of February, with travel to the country's only coral island prohibited from February to October as per government directives.

The decision, announced in October last year, sparked concerns among local businesses, who are dependent on tourism for their livelihoods.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change restricted tourist visits to just three months of the year -- November, December, and January -- in order to reduce pollution and protect the island's environment and biodiversity.

Previously, tourist vessels operated from October to March, leaving the island residents to contend with severe financial strains due to the shortened season.

As such, they have been urging the authorities to extend the tourism period until the end of February to mitigate financial losses.

Nilufa Yasmin Chowdhury, convener of the committee regulating tourism to Saint Martin's Island and upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Cox's Bazar Sadar confirmed the government's decision.

"As per directives, tourists can visit Saint Martin's until January 31. After that, all tourist vessels will stop operating," she said, adding that no further instructions had been received regarding an extension.

MA Rahim Jihadi, president of the Hotel, Motel, and Resort Owners' Association of the island, lamented the decision.

"This is an unprecedented crisis for the island. If tourists are barred, thousands of people who rely on tourism will suffer."



Hossain Islam Bahadur, general secretary of the Sea Cruise Operators Owners Association of Bangladesh, urged the government to reconsider.

"At least keep Saint Martin's open to tourists for February. This will help mitigate the financial losses faced by the island's residents and businesses," he said.

Taib Ullah, owner of St Martin Mermaid Resort, said, "It is impossible for the people on Saint Martin's to survive for 10 months of the year with just two months of income. We urge the government to keep the island open until February."

He added that tourism would naturally decline in March due to Ramadan.

Tourist travel to Saint Martin's resumed on December 1 from the BIWTA jetty at Nuniachhara in Cox's Bazar, with six vessels currently operating on the Cox's Bazar-Saint Martin's route.

In previous years, tourist vessels operated from October to March, with services suspended during the monsoon due to rough seas.

However, new restrictions have also imposed limits on overnight stays -- banning them outright in November and capping them at 2,000 tourists per night in December and January.

Starting February, all tourist visits will be banned.

Previously, tourist ships also operated from Teknaf, but sediment accumulation in the Naf River and border skirmishes in Myanmar have halted vessel operations along that route.

With the ban set to take effect from February, business owners and residents are anxiously awaiting a government response to their appeals for an extension.

But inflation in food items, which account for nearly half of the consumption basket, continued to remain high at 8.39 percent in December, with vegetable prices rising at an eye-watering pace of 26.56 percent.

The Dow gained about three tenths of a percent, the S&P 500 added over nine-tenths and the tech-heavy Nasdaq climbed more than 2 percent.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Modi continues to face criticism for not creating enough jobs in the world's most populous country. Government estimates of India's unemployment rate and those by private forecasters vary widely.

Government estimates show, opens new tab the unemployment rate for persons aged 15 years and above fell to 3.2 percent in 2023-24 from 6 percent in 2017-18.

Private forecaster Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) pegs the unemployment rate in the same category at a much higher 8.05 percent in 2023-24 compared to 7.56 percent in the previous year.

FISCAL DEFICIT

Modi's administration is looking to contain its fiscal gap under 4.9 percent for 2024-25 as initially targeted, and aims to bring it down below 4.5 percent in the next financial year. The country's fiscal gap had ballooned to 9.3 percent in 2020-21 during the pandemic.