

# star BUSINESS



## KEYPOINTS

Nagad faces case for alleged embezzlement involving Tk 645cr

Lawsuit is against 24 individuals, including Nagad chairman, MD

The case is based on false and fabricated claims: Ex-CEO Tanvir AMishuk

## BB files Tk 645cr embezzlement case against Nagad

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) has filed a case against mobile financial service (MFS) provider Nagad, alleging fraud, embezzlement, and financial irregularities amounting to Tk 645 crore.

On behalf of the central bank, Sarker Mohammad Amir Khusru, joint director of BB's payment systems department, filed the case at Motijheel Police Station on Monday.

The lawsuit names 24 individuals, including 16 officials of Nagad Ltd and eight officials of the Directorate of Posts.

They include Syed Mohammad Kamal, former chairman of Nagad Ltd; Tanvir Ahmed Mishuk, former managing director; and directors Md Shafayet Alam, Maruful Islam Jhalak, Mohammad Aminul Haque, Faisal Ahsan Chowdhury, and Giles Alastair James Farley.

Others from Nagad include Md Rakibul Islam, head of finance operations; Md Abu Raihan, chief technology officer; Ashish Chakraborty, former chief information officer; former directors M Tamzid Rahman, Syed Arshad Reza, Md Mizanur Rahman, and Rezaul Hossain; and Rahel Ahmed, former CEO.

The defendants from the Directorate of Posts include former director generals SM Shahab Uddin, Sushanta Kumar Mondal, Sudhanshu Shekhar Bhadra, Bahija Akter, Md Siraj Uddin, Md Fayzul Azim, Md Harunur Rashid, and Tarun Kanti Shikdar.

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

After the interim government took office in August 2024, Bangladesh Bank appointed an administrator to Nagad due to concerns over operational irregularities.

The administrator's investigation revealed several alleged discrepancies, most notably a Tk 600 crore shortfall resulting from the creation of e-money without corresponding cash backing—an alarming violation in the financial sector.

Additionally, unauthorised withdrawals totalling approximately Tk 1,711 crore were identified from 41 distribution accounts designated for government allowances.

READ MORE ON B3



## Steel, cement makers witness drop in Q2 profits

Reasons include higher raw material costs, lower govt spending

## AHSAN HABIB

Major listed construction-related firms witnessed a massive year-on-year drop in profits during the October-December period of the current fiscal year of 2024-25.

This was mainly due to a rise in raw material costs and a drop in government spending on infrastructure projects amid macroeconomic challenges.

Among the eight major listed steel rod, cement, and ceramic producers, only Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited saw a rise in profits.

BSRM Steels Limited, BSRM Ltd, and GPH Ispat Limited—all rod producers—experienced a drop in profit.

Among the cement producers, the profits of Crown Cement PLC and Premier Cement Mills PLC also declined, while Meghna Cement Mills PLC sank into losses.

RAK Ceramics registered lower profits during the same three-month period.

Despite higher sales, these companies saw a decline in profits mainly due to lower margins, said Kamrul Islam, executive director of GPH Ispat Limited.

In particular, finance costs soared as the banking sector raised interest rates, leading to lower profits. On top of that, labour costs also increased, he said.

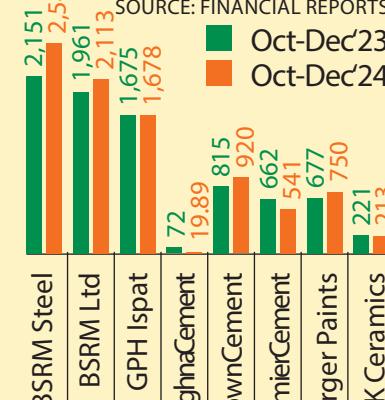
Although sales returned to their previous level in the second quarter of this fiscal year, they were impacted in the first quarter due to nationwide political movements and sluggish government expenditure, he added.

GPH Ispat Limited's profits dropped 29 percent to Tk 24 crore in the second quarter, while its sales grew slightly to Tk 1,678 crore.

BSRM Ltd and BSRM Steels Limited saw

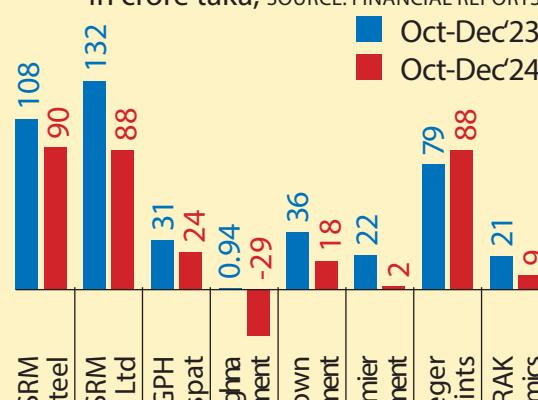
## SALES OF MAJOR FIRMS IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

In crore taka  
SOURCE: FINANCIAL REPORTS



## Profit/loss of major firms in construction sector

In crore taka; SOURCE: FINANCIAL REPORTS



their profits drop by 40 percent and 16 percent, respectively, over the three-month period.

Since construction-related companies require huge investments, they have high leverage with banks. As a result, their profits are affected when interest rates rise, said a researcher at a leading brokerage house.

The three steel rod companies' combined bank loans exceed Tk 10,000 crore. Consequently, their net finance costs rose by around 8 percent to Tk 302 crore.

Meanwhile, Crown Cement PLC's profits halved to Tk 18 crore in the second quarter, even as its sales rose by 12 percent to Tk 920 crore.

Due to high inflationary pressure, people's spending on construction declined, which impacted the high growth of sales for construction-related goods producers, according to a stockbroker.

Crown Cement PLC stated in its disclosure that its profit dropped due to additional depreciation resulting from an expansion of its capacity and the impact of interest charged on long-term loans taken for the expansion.

A hike in electricity prices and an increase in investment in advertising and manpower in efforts to expand its market share also raised costs, it added.

READ MORE ON B3

## Inflation eases to single digits in January

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Inflation in Bangladesh eased for the second consecutive month in January, driven by stable food prices due mainly to an abundant supply of winter vegetables to the local market.

The country's Consumer Price Index fell to 9.94 percent in January from 10.89 percent in December, according to data released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) yesterday.

Food inflation saw a notable decline, dropping to 10.72 percent in January from 12.92 percent in December. This reduction comes as an influx of seasonal vegetables helped stabilise prices, providing relief to consumers.

However, non-food inflation edged up slightly, rising to 9.32 percent in January from 9.26 percent in December, indicating continued price pressures in other sectors.

In November, overall inflation stood at 11.38 percent, marking the second-highest level in the last 14 years.

Although overall inflation has been declining for the last few months, consumers in Bangladesh have been struggling with persistent inflationary pressures over the past two years, with inflation remaining above 9 percent since March 2023.

### Consumer Price Index fell to 9.94 percent in January from 10.89 percent in December

In this context, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed said yesterday that the country's inflation is expected to decline to a tolerable level within the next three months.

"We will take several measures in February, March, and April to curb inflation," he said after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase at the Secretariat in Dhaka.

"If inflation can be brought down to 6 percent to 7 percent by June, the interim government will consider it satisfactory."

The 12-month annual average inflation rose to 10.34 percent in January from 9.59 percent a year earlier, according to official data.

"This [decline] was driven notably by an improvement in food production—especially seasonal vegetables—which is reflected in the drop in food inflation," said Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

Furthermore, given that imports picked up substantially in December, there is a likelihood that supply chain disruptions are gradually easing, which should aid in managing inflation, he said.

"However, this level of inflation is still very high and is causing hardship for people with fixed incomes or those living below the poverty line," Rahman added.

READ MORE ON B3

## GP's turnover and profit

In crore taka; SOURCE: FINANCIAL REPORTS



## GP's sales declined, profits rose in 2024

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Grameenphone's profits rose in 2024, although its sales dropped slightly during the year amid weak macroeconomic conditions and high inflation.

The country's top telecommunications company registered a revenue of Tk 15,844 crore last year, compared to Tk 15,871 crore in the previous year.

The yearly turnover declined as the company witnessed lower turnovers in the last two quarters of the year.

The GP's net profit grew by 9.7 percent year-on-year to Tk 3,630 crore from the previous year's Tk 3,307 crore.

An analysis of its financial reports

found that its profit rose mainly due to lower finance expenses.

Finance expenses declined primarily due to the company keeping a provision of Tk 20 crore against regulatory disputes in 2024, compared to Tk 426 crore in the previous year.

The company set aside a lower provision against regulatory disputes this year as it had already paid off a large portion of the disputed amount.

It has been maintaining provisions against regulatory disputes over the past couple of years based on the outcome of court proceedings. Grameenphone has several ongoing disputes.

READ MORE ON B3

## Bank Asia launches 'Hajj Deposit Scheme'

## STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia PLC has introduced the "Hajj Deposit Scheme" to help individuals with low or limited income save for one of the five pillars of Islam – Hajj.

Recognising the financial challenges many face in accumulating the necessary funds for this significant spiritual journey, the bank offers a structured and Shariah-compliant savings plan to support their goal, the bank said in a press release.

This scheme operates on an Islamic savings and investment model, where deposits are invested according to Islamic

financial principles. The profits generated are distributed based on weightage to the depositor's account, making it a secure and Halal way to save for Hajj.

Depositors can open an account for a period ranging from one to 10 years, with installment amounts tailored to match the estimated cost of Hajj at the end of the term. Profits are allocated based on a high weightage.

If a depositor wishes to perform Hajj before the maturity of the scheme and the account has been active for at least one year, they can withdraw all earned profits without any deductions.



At the end of the savings period, the total accumulated amount, including profits, will be available for withdrawal to support the pilgrimage.

This scheme is open to all adult Bangladeshi citizens, including non-resident Bangladeshis, with each individual eligible to open only one account.

To open a Hajj Deposit Scheme, interested individuals can visit any Bank Asia branch, Islamic window, sub-branch, or agent point.

For further information, customers can contact Bank Asia's customer service center at 16205, available 24/7.

## Prime Bank signs agreement with Edison Real Estate



Md Aminur Rashid, chairman and CEO of Edison Real Estate, and Md Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank, pose for photographs after signing an agreement at the realtor's office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

## STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC recently signed a partnership agreement with Edison Real Estate Limited to provide benefits to its customers.

Md Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of the bank, and Md Aminur Rashid, chairman and CEO of the real estate company, signed the deal at the realtor's office in Dhaka, according to a press release.

Under this agreement, Prime Bank customers will enjoy special discounts when purchasing property from Edison's Hermia, Adriana, Iris, and Orleans projects.

Through this initiative, Prime Bank continues to strengthen its position as a customer-centric financial institution, providing seamless banking and lifestyle solutions. The collaboration also highlights Edison Real Estate's dedication to delivering premium real estate projects tailored to the evolving needs of homebuyers.

Sajid Rahman, senior executive vice-president and corporate and institutional banking of the bank; Joarder Tanvir Faisal, executive vice-president and head of cards and retail asset; and Ahmed Pasha, director of product and marketing of the realtor; SM Shahedul Karim Munna, additional director of operation; SM Faysal Reza, head of finance, along with other senior officials from both organisations, were also present.

## Sonali Bank announces 100-day special programme

## STAR BUSINESS DESK

Sonali Bank PLC has announced a 100-day special programme from 5 February to 15 May this year in order to create major breakthroughs in all business indicators and achieve targets for 2025.

Md Shawkat Ali Khan, managing director and CEO of the bank, inaugurated the special programme at the bank's head office in the capital's Motijheel yesterday, according to a press release.

Khan urged all employees to work relentlessly to achieve at least 40 percent of the target by implementing the 100-day programme. He emphasised the collection of remittances, growth of deposits, export trade, green banking, collection of defaulted loans, and the implementation of annual performance agreements.

The bank's managing director informed that the best performers would be rewarded.

Subhash Chandra Das, deputy managing director of the bank, presided over the event.

Among others, deputy managing directors, general managers, deputy general managers of the head office, heads of all general managers' offices, the principal office, corporate branches, and managers of all branches, were also present.



Md Shawkat Ali Khan, managing director and CEO of Sonali Bank, inaugurates a 100-day special programme of the bank at its head office in the capital's Motijheel yesterday.

PHOTO: SONALI BANK

## Opec+ sticks to oil output plan

AFP, Vienna

An Opec+ panel on Monday reaffirmed the oil cartel's plan to gradually hike output starting from April, after US President Donald Trump called for lower prices.

In a bid to boost prices, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) headed by Saudi Arabia and Russian-led allies have cut supply by almost six million barrels per day (bpd) since 2022.

The Opec+ alliance has repeatedly postponed putting some of the withheld barrels back on the market.

In December, eight Opec+ countries announced they would start phasing out 2.2 million bpd of voluntary supply cuts from April, at a rate of 120,000 bpd each month for 18 months.

In a statement following a videoconference, the members of the Opec+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) "reaffirmed their commitment" to the output policy decided on December 5.

The decision to stick to the alliance's timetable to unwind cuts comes after Trump said last month that he would ask Saudi Arabia and Opec to lower oil prices.

In recent weeks, oil prices have been muted, hovering around \$75 per barrel.

Analysts say maintaining the timetable was also a sign of caution amid uncertainties the markets face as Trump announced tariffs against Canada, China and Mexico.

Oil prices rose Monday as the measures include a 10-percent tariff on Canadian oil.

Amid various uncertainties, "it makes in my view sense to stick to the current path and not change it", UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo told AFP.

Following sanctions by Washington and London against Russia's energy sector announced in January, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said the new measures "could result in a tightening of crude and product balances".

The alliance also emphasised the improved compliance of Kazakhstan and Iraq, two members which had been criticised for producing more than their quotas.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (FEB 4, 2025)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 70-Tk 85	0.65 ↑	13.14 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 52-Tk 56	2.86 ↑	8.00 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	0	-13.27 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 105-Tk 110	0	0
Soybean (litre)	Tk 175-Tk 176	6.69 ↑	8.67 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 20-Tk 30	-52.38 ↓	-37.50 ↓
Onion (kg)	Tk 45-Tk 55	-25.93 ↓	-45.95 ↓
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 44-Tk 47	-4.21 ↓	-2.15 ↓

SOURCE: TCB



Mati Ul Hasan, managing director of Mercantile Bank, attends a "Town Hall Meeting" at Chittagong Club in the port city recently.

PHOTO: MERCANTILE BANK

## Mercantile Bank holds 'Town Hall Meeting' in Chattogram

## STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mercantile Bank PLC recently held a "Town Hall Meeting" at the Chittagong Club in the port city.

Mati Ul Hasan, managing director of the bank, attended the meeting as the chief guest, according to a press release.

Hasan delivered a speech highlighting non-performing loans,

future planning, deposits, and the importance of ensuring modern, tech-savvy customer services.

Mebzah Uddin Ahmed, executive vice-president and head of the Chittagong zone of the bank; Md Zakir Hossain, Adil Raihan, Shamim Ahmed, Ashim Kumar Saha, and Md Zahid Hossain, deputy managing directors, were also present.

Mohammad Iqbal Rezwan,

executive vice-president and head of the international division of the bank, and Farid Uddin Ahmed Bhuiyan, senior vice-president and head of the Cumilla-Noakhali zone, along with the heads of branches and sub-branches, executives, and officers from 58 branches and sub-branches under the Chittagong and Cumilla-Noakhali zones, were also present.

## International tourism fair to begin in Dhaka tomorrow

## STAR BUSINESS DESK

A three-day international tourism fair titled "US-Bangla Airlines Dhaka Travel Mart 2025" will begin at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on February 6.

Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, adviser to the cultural affairs ministry, is expected to inaugurate the fair, said a press release.

Kazi Wahidul Alam, editor of the Bangladesh Monitor, spoke at a press conference at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on Monday, highlighting various aspects of the upcoming tourism fair.

Over 50 organisations from the UAE, Iran, the Maldives, Malaysia, Thailand, Nepal, Jordan, India, and Bangladesh will showcase their products and services.

The fair will open from 10am to 8pm every day. Visitors can attend the fair for a Tk 50 entry fee.

Participating organisations represent national tourism organisations, airlines, travel agencies, hotels and resorts, tour operators, financial institutions, and others involved in travel and tourism. Organisations will offer attractive discounts on domestic and international air tickets, tour packages, hotel and resort rooms,

and tourism products and services for the visitors.

The Bangladesh Monitor is organising the 20th edition of the popular tourism fair, while US Bangla Airlines, the leading private sector carrier, is supporting the event as the title sponsor.

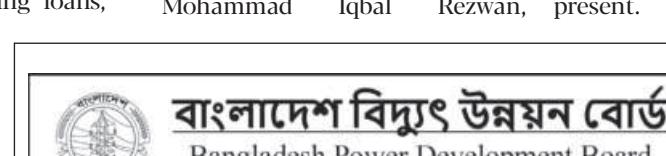
Among others, Kamrul Islam,

general manager (public relations) of US Bangla Airlines; AKM Shohidul Hasan, deputy general manager (marketing) of Biman Bangladesh Airlines; Hasnain Rafiq, chief operating officer of Firsttrip; and Md Abu Bakar Siddik, head of the card division of Mutual Trust Bank, were also present.



Kazi Wahidul Alam, editor of the Bangladesh Monitor and organiser of Dhaka Travel Mart, speaks at the press conference at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on Monday.

PHOTO: THE BANGLADESH MONITOR



### e-Tender Notice

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

SL No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Reference No.	Description of goods/works	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time	Opening date and time
01	ID-1071942	EE-GRL-22 (FY-2024-25)	27.11.0000, 304.25.214, 25 Date: 04/02/2025	Supply of 04 Nos. 33/1kV, 10/13.33MVA Power Transformer (Fauzderhat Store)	09-Mar-2025, 17:00	10-Mar-2025, 14:00	10-Mar-2025, 14:00

These are online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches.

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

For more details please contact to the PE's Support Desk (01768015538).

বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড  
Bangladesh Power Development Board  
[www.bpdb.gov.bd](http://www.bpdb.gov.bd)

Directorate of Purchase  
WAPDA Building (10th Floor)  
Motijheel, Dhaka-1000  
Tel: 01819223401  
E-mail: [dir\\_purchase@bpdb.gov.bd](mailto:dir_purchase@bpdb.gov.bd)

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*Danase*  
Md. Nannu Miah  
ID No. 1-01304  
Director  
Directorate of Purchase  
BPDB, Dhaka

GD

# Govt to set up water treatment plant at Tk 518cr in Mirsharai EZ

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has approved the construction of a water treatment plant with a capacity of 50 million litres per day in the National Special Economic Zone (NSEZ) at Chattogram's Mirsharai.

A joint venture of ZHEC BOW-SMEDRIC has been awarded the Tk 518.61 crore contract for the project, which is scheduled for completion by June 2026.

This initiative will play a crucial role in supporting industries within the economic zone by ensuring a steady and sufficient water supply, said Md Helal Ahmed, the project director.

Although the plant is designed to treat 50 million litres of water daily, it has the capacity to supply up to 100 million litres,

he added.

At a meeting yesterday, the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase approved the project proposal submitted by the Office of the Chief Adviser.

Once operational, the water treatment plant is expected to enhance investment prospects in the NSEZ, making the region more attractive to both local and foreign investors, Ahmed said.

The plant's ability to provide treated water will help industries maintain regulatory compliance while contributing to a sustainable industrial ecosystem, he noted.

The economic zone in Mirsharai is one of the country's most significant industrial zones, and ensuring a reliable water supply is a key factor in making it

investment-friendly, Ahmed added.

Industries such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, electronics, and agro-processing will benefit significantly from the facility.

**The initiative will play a crucial role in supporting industries within the economic zone by ensuring a steady and sufficient water supply, said Md Helal Ahmed, the project director**

Additionally, an uninterrupted water supply will reduce risks associated with shortages, ensuring smooth industrial operations and preventing production disruptions, he stated.

Ahmed believes that commissioning the plant will greatly enhance the infrastructure of the economic zone, fostering an environment conducive to industrial expansion and economic growth.

The National Special Economic Zone is expected to generate employment opportunities for thousands of workers, both directly and indirectly, contributing to socio-economic development in the region, he said.

With this approval, Beza moves a step closer to ensuring an uninterrupted water supply in the NSEZ, aligning with the government's vision of accelerating industrialisation and economic development in Bangladesh, Ahmed added.

## 80% of jewellers

### BB files Tk 645cr embezzlement case against Nagad

FROM PAGE B1

However, the NBR has yet to complete this, which reflects a weakness in the government's revenue collection efforts, he said.

Given the typical transaction volume in Bangladesh, collecting only Tk 100 crore in VAT annually from the jewellery sector seems unrealistic, he said, adding, "The actual figure should have been much higher."

It should also be investigated whether those responsible for collecting VAT from these stores are receiving any benefits from them, he commented.

Moazzem further said that structural issues are preventing proper collection from many establishments, even though there is huge potential for revenue collection in remote areas.

To address this, he said, NBR officials should increase their physical presence in the field.

Besides, prompt measures should be taken to collect revenue from these establishments through digital means, added the CPD research director.

Currently, the number of registered VAT payers in Bangladesh is just over 5 lakh, as a large number of eligible businesses remain outside the VAT net.

FROM PAGE B1

In light of these findings, the central bank has taken legal action to address the alleged misconduct and ensure financial integrity.

Officials stated that corrective measures have been implemented under the leadership of the appointed administrator to eliminate financial irregularities within Nagad.

The authorities have assured customers that steps are being taken to ensure stability and transparency in the company's operations.

Additionally, the central

bank will appoint auditors to conduct a forensic audit of Nagad's previous operations, alongside a regular audit for the fiscal year 2023-24.

When contacted, Tanvir Ahmed Mishuk, former CEO of Nagad Ltd, told The Daily Star via WhatsApp messages that they had been given hints in different ways that lawsuits would be filed, though the reason was unclear.

"Now, it is a fact that several top officials of Nagad and former postal directorate officials are facing legal action," he added.

What's shocking is that the case is based on false and fabricated claims.

They allege a Tk 645 crore e-money shortfall, but Bangladesh Bank itself confirmed in a November letter that the actual shortfall was Tk 48.6 crore," he said.

"So, the question is whether the new administrators were responsible for creating this shortfall," he asked.

"Instead, they are trying to shift the blame onto us. We are preparing for legal action to expose this," he added.

prices, he added.

Meanwhile, inflation had outpaced wage growth for 36 months until this January, despite wages increasing gradually since January 2021.

As a result, many low-income and unskilled workers in Bangladesh's agriculture, industrial, and service sectors have been compelled to reduce their consumption, as rising inflation has eroded their real incomes over the past three years.

## Inflation eases

FROM PAGE B1

Accordingly, Bangladesh Bank needs to remain committed to a contractionary monetary policy, while the interim government must ensure that supply chain disruptions are avoided in the future by addressing issues related to law and order, collusion in the commodity market, and extortion in the transportation sector, Rahman suggested.

The finance adviser emphasised that inflation cannot be reduced overnight and requires coordinated efforts. "We have held discussions with Bangladesh Bank and commercial banks. They have assured us that the required US dollars will be made available to facilitate imports of fuel, fertiliser, rice, and edible oil," he said.

The commerce ministry is also engaging with business leaders to stabilise

## Steel, cement

FROM PAGE B1

Premier Cement Mills PLC's profits also fell by 90 percent to Tk 2 crore, while Meghna Cement Mills PLC sank into losses of Tk 29 crore, despite logging a profit of Tk 94 lakh in the same quarter of the previous year.

According to Meghna Cement Mills PLC, it was unable to open a letter of credit (LC) on time due to a significant US dollar crisis and several days of general holidays caused by political unrest.

When it attempted to open an LC, banks demanded a 120 percent margin, meaning the company had to pay a high amount upfront for importing raw materials, it said.

At the same time, the interest rate increased from 9 percent to 14.50 percent, and the price of raw materials rose significantly, resulting in decreased profits, it said.

During the period, sales collections declined amid high inflation and a challenging economic situation, impacting the company's cash flow, it added.

In the second quarter, only Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited's profits rose slightly to Tk 88 crore, compared to Tk 79 crore in the same period of the previous year.

Meanwhile, RAK Ceramics saw a drop in profits to Tk 9 crore from Tk 21 crore in the same quarter of the previous year.

Following the lower revenue generation, its operating profit declined,

## Dollar edges higher as China tariffs kick in

REUTERS

The dollar strengthened on Tuesday after US tariffs on Chinese goods came into effect, triggering swift retaliation from Beijing and prompting a sell-off in the Chinese yuan and the Australian dollar.

The Canadian dollar and Mexican peso also weakened, after rising the day before as those countries won a reprieve on their own US tariffs. The euro declined, with Washington threatening the European Union may be next in line for trade levies.

US President Donald Trump's administration imposed additional 10 percent tariffs on imports from China from 12:01 a.m. ET on Tuesday (0501 GMT).

"That Trump wants to negotiate is clear, but at the same time, there is a basic idea that tariff revenues should finance tax cuts, and from that perspective, one could wonder if one can go back on tariff plans every time," said Marcus Widén, an economist at SEB.

## GP's sales declined, profits rose in 2024

FROM PAGE B1

For instance, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) carried out an information system audit of Grameenphone for the period from 1997 to 2011 in 2012 through a BTRC appointed auditor.

It then issued a notice to Grameenphone, claiming an amount exceeding Tk 3,034 crore in the form of outstanding dues under various categories.

Due to the increase in profits, the company announced a 170 percent cash dividend, bringing its total yearly dividend to 330 percent.

This is the highest amount of dividend paid in the company's history since its listing on the stock exchange in 2009.

It claimed that it had demonstrated resilience in business, efficiently navigating a tough economic climate.

In the second quarter, only Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited's profits rose slightly to Tk 88 crore, compared to Tk 79 crore in the same period of the previous year.

Meanwhile, RAK Ceramics saw a drop in profits to Tk 9 crore from Tk 21 crore in the same quarter of the previous year.

Following the lower revenue generation, its operating profit declined,

Its net operating cash flow per share rose to Tk 45.91, compared to Tk 44.88 in 2023.

Yesterday, the company's stock price rose by 0.47 percent to Tk 338 on the DSE.

The company claimed that it saw industry-leading customer growth, fuelled by the best network and best value combination.

### LEGAL NOTICE

SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION  
(ORIGINAL STATUTORY JURISDICTION)

COMPANY MATTER NO. 123 OF 2025

Muntasir Prince Kareem.

— Petitioner.

— VERSUS —  
Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms.

— Respondent.

It is hereby notified that an application under Section 81(2) read with section 85(3) of the Companies Act 1994 for condonation of delay and extension of time for Holding 2021, 2022 and 2023 Annual General Meetings of Emkay Enterprise Ltd. which were scheduled to be held in December 2021, December 2022 and December 2023 respectively has been filed by the petitioner in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon Hearing the matter the Hon'ble Company Bench, presided over by Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, was pleased to admit the application on 26.01.2025 and passed an order to publish notice in the newspaper. Any person desirous of contesting the application may appear before the Hon'ble Court either in person or through duly appointed Advocate on the date fixed. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of requisite cost.

Fatema S. Chowdhury, Barrister-at-Law, for the petitioner, SOBAN & SOBAN (Legal Advisers), House No. 15, Road No. 109, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212.

### LEGAL NOTICE

SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION  
(ORIGINAL STATUTORY JURISDICTION)

COMPANY MATTER NO. 122 OF 2025

Muntasir Prince Kareem.

— Petitioner.

— VERSUS —  
Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms.

— Respondent.

It is hereby notified that an application under Section 81(2) read with section 85(3) of the Companies Act 1994 for condonation of delay and extension of time for Holding 2021, 2022 and 2023 Annual General Meetings of Naji Electro Power Ltd. has been filed by the petitioner in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon hearing the matter the Hon'ble Company Bench, presided over by Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, was pleased to admit the application on 26.01.2025 and passed an order to publish notice in the newspaper. Any person desirous of contesting the application may appear before the Hon'ble Court either in person or through duly appointed Advocate on the date fixed. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of requisite cost.

Fatema S. Chowdhury, Barrister-at-Law, for the petitioner, SOBAN & SOBAN (Legal Advisers), House No. 15, Road No. 109, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212.

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Government of The Peoples Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Office of the Executive Engineer

District: Naogaon.

www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No.: 46.02.6400.07.000.001.25-373

Date: 03/02/2025 শুক্রবার

২০/১০/১৪৩১ বঙ্গাব্দ

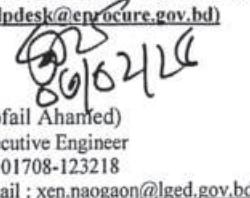
### e-Tender Notice No :52/2024-25

#### Tendering Method (OTM)

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

Sl No	Description of Work & Package No.	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing (Date & Time)	Tender Opening (Date & Time)	Estimated Cost (Tk.)/ Remarks
01	Construction Of 2x3.00x4.00m RCC Box Culvert at Ch: 30.00m on the Sabal Hat Bridge R&H -Narayanpur Road Under Manda Upazila, District: Naogaon (Road ID: 164474003). Salvage Cost Tk 2,02,936.00 Package No. (UTMIDP-NAOG/MAND/WB-153), (Tender ID: 1069926).	03-Mar-2025 17:00	04-Mar-2025 12:00	04-Mar-2025 12:00	OTM
02	Development of (A) Sabaihat Bazar & Chakuti Hat (B) Delubari Hat & Bhalagari Bazar Under Manda Upazila, District: Naogaon Package No. (UTMIDP-NAOG /MAND/WK-M-90), (Tender ID: 1069925).	03-Mar-2025 17:00	04-Mar-2025 12:00	04-Mar-2025 12:00	OTM

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) 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 up to Last Selling Date & Time as mentioned above. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

  
Dhruba Lal Datta Banik  
Executive Engineer  
Naogaon District  
Ph: +8802478890373  
e-mail : [xen.naogaon@lged.gov.bd](mailto:xen.naogaon@lged.gov.bd)

# Sales of trucks rebound on pent-up demand

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Even amid a business slowdown, sales of heavy-duty trucks and covered vans showed a year on year increase last year, according to company and vehicle registration data, as commercial vehicle distributors attribute this rise to pent-up demand since the pandemic.

Industry insiders also link this resurgence to the usual fleet replacement cycle, as transport operators upgraded their ageing vehicles rather than expanding their fleets amid economic uncertainties.

According to them, while economic challenges cloud business activities, the demand for commercial vehicles remains steady, driven by essential sectors such as logistics, e-commerce, and manufacturing.

Key players in the local market include Indian brands Ashok Leyland, Tata, and Eicher, Japanese brand Hino, and Chinese brand Foton.

Local distributors of these vehicles forecast that the need for trucks and covered vans will also remain strong in the coming years.

Trucks and covered vans are essential for local goods transportation, supporting industries such as garments, pharmaceuticals, fast-moving consumer goods, agriculture, and e-commerce.

Sales of these vehicles—a rough proxy for gauging the country's business activity and economic performance—had been sluggish since the Covid outbreak.

The situation worsened with the Russia-Ukraine war breaking out in 2022 and the country facing a severe dollar shortage due to higher import bills, according to Hafizur Rahman Khan, chairman of Runner Group, the local distributor of Indian Eicher trucks.

Faced with dwindling dollar stocks, the government imposed restrictions on opening letters of credit (LCs), which hampered sales, Khan said.

"Besides, the weakening taka against the US dollar saw vehicle prices go up, discouraging potential buyers from making purchases."

## US manufacturing ends 26-month contraction

AFP, Washington

US manufacturing activity expanded last month for the first time in more than two years on improving demand and production, according to survey data published Monday.

The Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) manufacturing index hit 50.9 percent last month, rising 1.7 percentage points from November to cross the 50-point mark separating expansion from contraction.

This was slightly above the median expectation of 50.0 in a survey of economists conducted by Dow Jones Newswires and The Wall Street Journal, and came in the same month Republican Donald Trump returned to the White House after his presidential election win in November.

"US manufacturing activity expanded in January after 26 consecutive months of contraction," survey chief Timothy Fiore said in a statement.

"Demand and production improved; and employment expanded. However, staff reductions continued with many companies, but at weaker rates," he added.

Fiore also noted that price growth was moderate, "indicating that further growth will put additional pressure on prices."

## Gold hits record high in global market

REUTERS

Gold prices hit an all-time high on Monday, bolstered by safe-haven inflows after US President Donald Trump's tariffs on Canada, China and Mexico added to concerns of inflation that would dent economic growth.

Spot gold rose 0.8 percent to \$2,818.99 per ounce by 04:45 p.m. ET (1845 GMT), after hitting a record of \$2,830.49 earlier in the session.

US gold futures settled 0.8 percent higher at \$2,857.10. Despite the usual dampening effect of a strong dollar on the gold market, prices have been rallying due to the safe-haven demand driven by uncertainty surrounding Trump's tariffs, said David Meger, director of metals trading at High Ridge Futures.

The 25 percent tariffs imposed by Trump on Canadian and Mexican imports from Tuesday, along with a 10 percent charge on Chinese goods, fuelled fears of a trade war that could slow global growth and feed inflation.

Canada and Mexico ordered retaliatory measures while China said it would challenge the tariffs at the World Trade Organization and take unspecified countermeasures.

However, Trump announced a month-long pause on tariffs the US had slapped on Mexico.

The market is not fully convinced about the extent of the trade war, Bart Melek, head of commodity strategies at TD Securities, said.

"We haven't seen a complete response from gold and if this trade war continues for a considerable period, it could lead to significantly higher gold prices down the road," Melek added. Gold is often considered as a safe-haven investment during periods of economic or geopolitical instability.

JPMorgan said bearish contagion from equities could weigh on gold in the near term, but disruptive tariffs were a medium-term bull case for bullion.



## Trucks and covered vans registered with BRTA

■ Truck  
■ Covered van

SOURCE: BRTA



Now, as the interim government has eased some of the LC restrictions and allowed vehicle imports, sales picked up in the last quarter of last year, Khan said.

"The overall sales recovery last year was due largely to sales improvement in the October-December quarter," he added.

However, Taskin Ahmed, vice-chairman of IFAD Group, the local distributor of Ashok Leyland, said the market showed signs of recovery as commercial vehicle operators began replacing their ageing fleets.

"The increase in sales of covered vans and trucks is linked to regular fleet replacement rather than overall economic growth," he commented.

Ahmed pointed out that the commercial vehicle market in the country is relatively small, with only a few key

players. This makes it easier to analyse market trends and predict demand shifts.

"While new purchases may not be driven by business expansion, the necessity of fleet renewal ensures steady demand," he added.

ACI Motors, the distributor of Chinese commercial vehicle giant Foton, recorded 82 percent growth in 2024 compared to the previous year, according to Subrata Ranjan Das, deputy managing director of ACI Motors.

He said that misconceptions about Chinese products are now being cleared, which is positively impacting sales. Besides, the fuel efficiency of Foton trucks and covered vans has boosted buyer confidence.

In 2023, 1,874 new covered vans were registered, while in 2024, 2,949 were

added, according to the latest data from the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). This indicates a 57 percent increase in new registrations.

On the other hand, truck registrations in 2024 stood at 2,671, whereas in 2023, it was 2,292, according to BRTA data. This represents 16.5 percent growth.

Das said that this does not reflect the actual sales data, as there is scope to register vehicles after purchase.

Suvenkar Gosh, general secretary of the Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners Association, said the number of covered vans and new trucks on the road has increased.

Although sales of covered vans and trucks grew last year, the actual transport business declined by around 40 percent, he commented.

## LDC graduation: Boon or bane?

ASIF IBRAHIM

Bangladesh is on the path to graduating from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category. The United Nations uses specific criteria to determine whether a country is eligible to graduate from the LDC category. These criteria are reviewed every three years by the Committee for Development Policy, a body of the UN Economic and Social Council. To qualify for graduation, a country must meet thresholds in at least two of the three criteria or have a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita above a certain threshold. Bangladesh apparently met the graduation criteria for the second time in 2021 (the first time being in 2018), making it eligible for graduation in 2026. Bangladesh's GNI per capita was above the threshold of \$2,554 in 2021, exceeding twice the threshold. In the human assets index (HAI) and the economic and environmental vulnerability index (EVI), the numbers were within the threshold of graduation.

However, according to the White Paper committee formed by the interim government, one of the major issues identified was that there were grave problems with the data on growth, and there was politicisation of data and information. The White Paper committee also observed that if the growth narrative presented for a long time cannot be dissected, it will be difficult to move forward with reform. Hence, the first compelling argument for requesting an extension for graduation is the lack of credibility of the data.

Apart from this, the proposed transition presents several challenges and obstacles that need to be addressed to ensure a smooth and sustainable graduation. As an LDC, Bangladesh benefits from preferential access to markets in the European Union, Canada, and other developed countries. After graduation, it may lose these privileges, making its exports, especially ready-made garments, less competitive.

Bangladesh may no longer qualify for Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) benefits, which could increase tariffs on its exports and reduce its global market share. LDCs have access to concessional loans and grants from international financial institutions and development partners. After graduation, Bangladesh may face higher borrowing costs and reduced access to such financing. As a climate-vulnerable country, Bangladesh relies on international climate funds, many of which are earmarked for LDCs. Access to these funds may become more difficult in the post-graduation period.

The RMG sector accounts for over 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports. The lack of diversification of the export basket makes the economy vulnerable to external shocks and limits its ability to adapt to post-graduation challenges. The bitter truth is that poverty and income inequality in Bangladesh still remain high. Graduation could exacerbate these issues if economic growth is not inclusive.

The workforce lacks the skills needed for higher-value industries, which could hinder economic transformation. Strengthening institutions to manage the transition effectively is a major challenge. This includes improving governance, regulatory frameworks, and public service delivery. These issues can hinder investment and economic growth. Fluctuations in global demand, rising protectionism, and geopolitical tensions could negatively impact Bangladesh's export-oriented economy.

To mitigate the risks associated with graduation, Bangladesh needs to diversify its economy by promoting sectors like leather and footwear, IT, pharmaceuticals, and light engineering. We need to enhance trade competitiveness through improved infrastructure, logistics, and trade facilitation. We must strengthen human capital by investing in education and skills development.

There has to be a collective effort to improve governance and institutional capacity to attract foreign investment. We also need to negotiate for extended trade preferences and transitional support from international partners, focus on climate resilience and advocate for continued access to climate financing.

Are we ready to do those?

The writer is a former president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

## Govt relaxes rules to speed up rice imports



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government yesterday relaxed public procurement rules to buy one lakh tonnes of rice from the international market through private suppliers within a shorter period, according to a decision of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).

Under the new directive, the food ministry can now seek bids from private suppliers within 15 days of tender

floatation instead of the previous 28 days, said a senior official of the Directorate General of Food.

The move comes as the government ramps up efforts to bolster public foodgrain stocks, including rice, through imports and curb the staple's rising price.

The interim government earlier planned to import 700,000 tonnes of rice—the highest in seven fiscal years—to replenish stocks and intervene in the market to stabilise prices.

At the end of December last year, foodgrain reserves in government storages stood at 11.95 lakh tonnes, down 22 percent year-on-year, according to the food ministry.

"We will not allow any decline in the supply of essential commodities," said Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed after the CCEA meeting at Bangladesh Secretariat.

Additionally, the committee approved the purchase of 10,000 tonnes of lentils from Nabil Naba Foods Ltd, a concern of the Nabil Group of Industries, for nearly Tk 98 crore.

It also cleared proposals from state agencies to procure 40,000 tonnes of diammonium phosphate (DAP) fertiliser and 60,000 tonnes of granular fertiliser.

## Tariff whiplash fires up China stimulus games

After implementing 25 percent tariffs on North American trading partners, Donald Trump suspended them two days later and raised the possibility of a similar stay for the People's Republic. A hike of 10 percentage points on existing levies on Chinese exports took effect on Tuesday but the US President also warns this is merely an "opening salvo". For policymakers in Beijing, it adds to their most pressing headache: when to ramp up measures to boost weak domestic consumption.

The Chinese government hit back shortly after the tariffs deadline passed, announcing an antitrust investigation into Alphabet's Google, as well as levies of up to 15 percent on coal, liquefied natural gas, agricultural equipment and oil from the US, among other moves. Overall, the retaliation looks soft, which shows good strategic sense. Should negotiations fail to deliver a reprieve, the hit to the sputtering Chinese economy should be manageable.

Analysts at UBS estimate the 10 percent American tariff on Chinese goods could knock about half a percentage point off GDP growth. Beijing's opening gambit for

negotiations might be focused on "restoring a trade agreement" signed in 2020 with the United States. That so-called Phase One agreement, which eventually ended tit-for-tat tariff hikes, committed China to buying an extra \$200 billion in

American goods and services, which it did not.

A hawkish White House is unlikely to give Chinese negotiators extra credit for belatedly honouring an old deal.

Trump's team may seek more substantial concessions that could extend



Employees work at a factory that builds charging stations for electric cars in Ruichang, in central China's Jiangxi province. Analysts estimate that the 10 percent American tariff on Chinese goods could knock about half a percentage point off China's GDP growth.

A beyond trade to, for example, helping bring an end to Russia's war in Ukraine. Such a move may also be in Beijing's self-interest because it would remove one obstacle to investments by Chinese companies in Europe.

If China balks at such demands, however, it should be prepared for escalating threats - Trump has warned of levies up to 100 percent. Beijing's chief channel of response will again come courtesy of the renminbi's exchange rate: analysts at Capital Economics reckon a 1.4 percent depreciation of the currency in trade-weighted terms would be enough to offset a 10 percent tariff increase. But a big fall for the currency will limit the central bank's capacity for more monetary easing, putting more pressure on the central government to rapidly ramp up fiscal stimulus instead.

That will require unusual agility from Chinese planners who like to plan, often for years in advance. Analysts expect further clarity on economic measures when a political summit in Beijing convenes next month, though a US investigation into unfair trade practices is due to wrap up in April. Trump's tariff war may force Xi's hand but the waiting game will only hurt China.