

star BUSINESS



Monetary policy is working

Says CAL Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's tight monetary measures are beginning to yield results, paving the way for a gradual stabilisation in consumer prices, according to CAL Bangladesh, a financial services company.

Additionally, a decline in global commodity prices and a stable exchange rate are expected to lower import costs, alleviating some pressure on the domestic economy.

Food prices in Bangladesh, except for rice and soybean oil, have declined for three consecutive months, reflecting a positive trend in stabilising prices for essential commodities.

As Ramadan approaches, consumers in Bangladesh may face some price volatility, but inflation is on track to fall sharply by the second half of this year.

In its latest report released on Wednesday at Renaissance Dhaka Gulshan Hotel, the organisation projected that inflation, currently at elevated levels, will stabilise between 8.5 percent and 9.5 percent by June but fall to 6.7 percent by December.

Deshan Pushparajah, a director of CAL Securities, said the economy has passed its worst in terms of exchange rate, inflation and interest rate except for GDP growth rate.

GROWTH OUTLOOK
GDP growth for FY25 is forecast to range between 2 percent and 3 percent, marking a significant slowdown in economic performance.

This decline is linked to persistent macroeconomic challenges, which have continued to weigh on the country's economic prospects.

The economy suffered

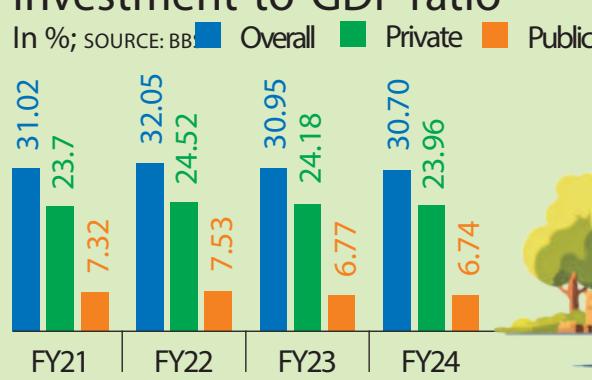
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Declining investments dampen growth outlook

DROP IN INVESTMENT

Investment-to-GDP ratio declined 0.25 percentage points in FY24 to 24.52% from 24.73% in FY23, 23.96% in FY22, and 23.72% in FY21.

Investment-to-GDP ratio



Why investment fell

- Taka depreciation
- High inflation
- Political uncertainty
- Energy crisis
- Corruption & regulatory issues

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Carry out reforms needed to restore macro stability
- Focus on data accuracy for better policy measures
- Take urgent policy steps to prevent further decline



JAGARAN CHAKMA

Bangladesh's investment-to-GDP ratio declined by 0.25 percentage points to 30.70 percent in the fiscal year (FY) 2023-24, according to official data, signalling a potential slowdown in future economic growth.

Businesses say fragile confidence, due to a combination of factors such as a depreciating taka, spiking cost of living and political uncertainty, has deterred fresh investments since the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to economists, this plummeting investment could translate into fewer jobs and lacklustre economic growth in the near future.

The investment-to-GDP ratio refers to the percentage of a country's gross domestic product (GDP) dedicated to investment activities.

It shows how much of a nation's economic output is being reinvested in its future through the purchase of capital goods like machinery, infrastructure and buildings to facilitate growth.

The latest data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) shows that both private and public sector investment have been falling in recent years.

The Russia-Ukraine war, which broke out in 2022, caused global supply chain disruptions, pushing up Bangladesh's import bills. Consequently, the country's fast-depleting foreign exchange reserves led to the local currency falling steeply against the US dollar.

The devaluation of the taka made imports more expensive, raising the cost of capital goods and raw materials essential for investment.

Besides, stubbornly high inflation, which has remained above 9 percent since March 2023, has squeezed disposable incomes and corporate profits, reducing funds available for reinvestment.

Political uncertainty has further

compounded the situation. Frequent policy shifts, regulatory changes and political unrest have made investors cautious, even leading them to delay or cancel planned investments.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, identified corruption, political unrest and the energy crisis as key deterrents to investment, particularly in the private sector.

Many enterprises have been operating at reduced capacities in recent years due to constraints in gas supply and high demand for captive energy generation while power outages are also a concern.

She said, "The low investment-to-GDP ratio reflects the unfavourable conditions for private sector investment due to political



uncertainty and high financing costs."

She emphasised that inflation and overall macroeconomic instability have created uncertainty among investors, discouraging them from making fresh investments or expanding their businesses.

Meanwhile, Asif Ibrahim, former chairman of Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD), identified corruption as a key factor behind escalating business costs.

To improve the investment-to-GDP ratio, he called to curb corruption and focus on economic diversification, reassessment of the incentive structure, protection of small businesses and low-income groups, and reforms in tax incentives.

According to him, incorrect national accounting data misleads policymakers and prevents the government

'ALMOST NO NEW INVESTMENT SINCE COVID'

Businessmen said the country's investment landscape has hit a snag since the pandemic, with private investments almost consistently on a downward trend since FY21.

Al Mamun Mridha, secretary general of the Bangladesh China Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said private investment has been declining since the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the downturn, he blamed an unfavourable investment environment marked by inconsistent energy supplies and macroeconomic vulnerability.

"Some foreign investors closed their businesses in Bangladesh as the cost of doing business increased while the dollar became more expensive," he said.

Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said investment has virtually come to a standstill due to "anti-industrialisation policies", the ongoing energy crisis and a fragile banking sector.

Hatem criticised the government's lack of effective investment policies, citing outdated regulations and poor service delivery. "The regulatory hurdles are delaying our investment process."

Meanwhile, Professor Selim Raian, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling, expressed doubts over the investment figures released by the national statistical agency.

He argued that the reported investment-to-GDP ratio does not align with the economic reality.

"Fresh investment has been almost stagnant -- so how did BBS reveal an investment-to-GDP ratio of more than 30 percent?" Raian questioned, criticising BBS's methodology and the lack of transparency in data disclosure.

According to him, incorrect national accounting data misleads policymakers and prevents the government

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REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The tariffs announced by the Trump administration have started coming into effect, causing major trading partners of the US to realign their trade policy in anticipation of volatility.

So far, Trump has imposed a 25 percent tariff on the import of Mexican goods and levied the same rate on the import of all Canadian goods except energy, which will have a lower 10 percent tariff.

ANALYSIS

In the case of Chinese goods, Trump continued his tough stance after levying a 25 percent tariff during his last tenure as US president. This time, Trump imposed a 10 percent additional duty, bringing the effective rate to 35 percent.

In turn, China not only imposed retaliatory duties on goods imported from the US but also filed a World Trade Organization complaint against the US tariffs.

However, Trump has no intention to deviate from his approach, mentioning plans to impose similar duties on goods imported to the US from the European Union (EU) in recent media interviews.

READ MORE ON B2



STOCKS

DSEX	CASPI
0.22% 5,201.47	0.32% 14,529.47

COMMODITIES

Gold	Oil
\$2,911.99 (per ounce)	\$70.81 (per barrel)

ASIAN MARKETS

MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
▲ 0.07% 76,229.30	▲ 1.28% 39,461.47	▲ 0.08% 3,871.37	▲ 0.42% 3,332.48

Development spending in Jul-Jan hits 15-year low

Potato exports rising as prices drop locally

SUKANTA HALDER

Potato exports from Bangladesh are picking up after last fiscal year's unusual slump, as a sharp drop in domestic prices provides hope that they could reach levels of the past decade or so.

In the past nine years since FY16, Bangladesh annually exported around 50,000 tonnes of potatoes on average, as per the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

However, exports dropped to 12,112 tonnes last fiscal year.

Yet, in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, they have already reached 11,055 tonnes, with the top destinations being Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Nepal, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, Oman, Canada, and the Maldives.

The rising exports will bring some relief to farmers in major potato-growing regions, who have been incurring losses while harvests run in full swing on a record acreage.

Several farmers in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Bogura, and Joypurhat said the popular vegetable was selling for Tk 11 per kilogramme (kg), whereas their production cost was around Tk 15 per kg.

The starchy vegetable was cultivated on a record 5.24 lakh hectares of land this fiscal year, up 15 percent year-on-year, propelled by prices reaching as high as Tk 80 per kg last November.

This fiscal year, total production is expected to reach 1.20 crore tonnes, according to the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association, a major player in the local supply chain.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics has a more moderate estimate of 1.06 crore tonnes.

Last fiscal year, 1.09 crore tonnes were produced, according to DAE data, surpassing the country's annual demand of around 90 lakh tonnes.

Exports are helping recover costs as local sales are not worthwhile, said Abdul Baset, a farmer from Joypurhat who has shipped over 650 tonnes abroad and has several more orders.

Last month, Tk 9,874 crore (3.55 percent) was spent by the government agencies.

In comparison, Tk 12,725 crore (4.63 percent) was spent in the same month last year.

Implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) stood at just 21.52 percent in the first seven months of fiscal year 2024-25 as public works were weighed down by political unrest.

Besides, there were prolonged delays in implementing projects that were approved by the past government.

This was the lowest ADP implementation in roughly the past 15 years, including the same seven months of fiscal year 2020-21, when the Covid-19 pandemic was raging across the globe.

The ADP comprises projects and associated allocations based on each fiscal year's parliament-approved development budget.

According to data of the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division under the planning ministry, development spending stood at Tk 59,877 crore in the July-January period.

Meanwhile, it was Tk 74,464 crore during the same months of the preceding fiscal year, representing more than 27 percent of the total allocation available.

Last month, Tk 9,874 crore (3.55 percent) was spent by the government agencies.

"Implementation of the ADP has increasingly weakened over time, with an average of only 78 percent of budgeted funds utilised over the last decade," said Ashikur Rahman, principal

economist at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

In FY24, ADP implementation fell further to 72 percent due to political uncertainties associated with the national election in January 2024, inefficiencies and funding constraints.

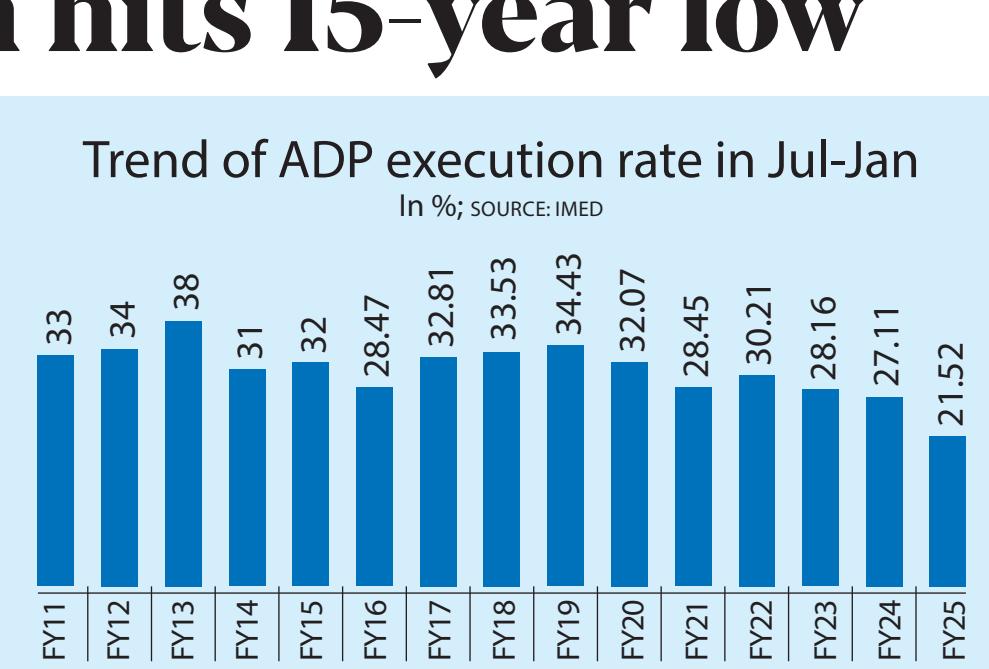
The recent political unrest, mob violence and an unsettled state of bureaucratic machinery have caused additional delays

and cancellations in public programmes," he added.

Rahman also cited a lack of coherence and coordination among government agencies.

"This state of affairs underscores a lack of coherence among different government agencies, and it also highlights the necessity to improve coordination and focus on additional revenue mobilisation," he said.

READ MORE ON B3



Trend of ADP execution rate in Jul-Jan

In %; SOURCE: IMED

EBL signs payroll deal with foreign service assoc

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Eastern Bank PLC (EBL) has signed a payroll banking agreement with the Bangladesh Foreign Service Association (BFSA) to offer tailored financial services for foreign service officers.

Under the agreement, BFSA members will have access to EBL's exclusive payroll banking facilities, including dual-currency debit cards, customised loan options, and other financial solutions designed for international transactions and professional needs, according to a press release.

Ali Reza Iftekhar, managing director and CEO of EBL, and Muhammad Nazrul Islam, president of BFSA, signed the

agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Speaking on the occasion, Nazrul Islam highlighted the longstanding partnership between EBL and BFSA, dating back to 2018 with the launch of a co-branded credit card.

He noted that the new agreement elevates the collaboration to a new level, offering diversified financial solutions.

Ali Reza Iftekhar emphasised EBL's commitment to providing seamless banking services tailored to the needs of foreign service professionals.

Senior officials from both organisations, including EBL's DMD and Head of Retail and SME Banking M Khorshed Anowar, attended the signing ceremony.

ning Ceremony on Payroll Bank



Ali Reza Iftekhar, managing director and CEO of Eastern Bank PLC, and Muhammad Nazrul Islam, president of BFSA, pose with other senior officials of both organisations during the signing ceremony of an exclusive payroll banking agreement in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: EASTERN BANK PLC

Prime Bank, Rupali Life ink payroll agreement

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC has signed a payroll agreement with Rupali Life Insurance Company Ltd, enabling the insurer's employees to access preferential banking services, including credit card and loan facilities.

Under the agreement, Rupali Life employees will also benefit from PrimePay, a digital platform offering automated salary disbursement and corporate payment solutions, according to a press release.

The signing ceremony was held at

Prime Bank's corporate office, with Deputy Managing Director Md Nazem A Choudhury representing the bank and Managing Director & CEO Md Golam Kibria signing on behalf of Rupali Life Insurance.

Senior officials from both organisations, including Prime Bank's EVP & Head of Distribution Network Mamur Ahmed, VP & Head of Payroll Banking Hasina Fardous, and Rupali Life's AMD & CFO Mithun Chandra Pal, Company Secretary Md Amirul Islam, and EVP Md Abdullah, were present at the event.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Deputy Managing Director of Prime Bank Md Nazeem A Choudhury and Managing Director & CEO of Rupali Insurance Md Golam Kibria pose for photographs with the signed documents of a payroll banking agreement at a function in the capital recently. Other senior officials from both sides were present.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Dhaka Bank to install CRMs at metro rail stations

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Dhaka Bank PLC has signed an agreement with Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL) to install cash recycling machines (CRMs) at all 16 stations of the Dhaka Metro Rail, officially known as MRT Line-6.

This would enhance commuter convenience and financial accessibility, the bank said in a press release.

The agreement was formalised at a signing ceremony on February 12 at DMTCL's headquarters at Diabari Depot in Dhaka.

HM Mostafizur Rahaman, SEVP & head of Retail Business Division, Dhaka Bank PLC, and Khondaker Ehteshamul Kabir, company secretary of DMTCL, signed the agreement in the presence of senior officials from both organisations.

The CRMs will enable commuters to deposit and withdraw cash



HM Mostafizur Rahaman, SEVP & head of retail business division of Dhaka Bank PLC, and Khondaker Ehteshamul Kabir, company secretary of DMTCL, pose with the signed documents of the deal along with other officials of both organisations in the capital recently.

PHOTO: DHAKA BANK PLC

PHOTO: DHAKA BANK PLC

seamlessly, promoting financial inclusion.

Dhaka Bank said this collaboration would contribute

to the modernisation of public transport infrastructure and support the nation's digital financial transformation.

Bangladesh should not solely depend

FROM PAGE B1

As China and Mexico are heavily invested in the garments trade, Trump's latest tariff war will likely benefit Bangladesh and help the country secure more work orders in the sector.

But Bangladesh cannot rely simply on the benefits

arising out of the tariff war, it should instead rethink its trade policy to create a sustainable economy.

This is especially imperative considering another important development, Bangladesh's graduation from least developed country (LDC)

status in November 2026, which will ring in higher tariff thresholds for exports.

The average export duty for Bangladesh may rise between 10 and 12 percent once the country graduates. Currently, 38 countries allow zero-duty or low-duty benefits to Bangladesh since

it is an LDC. Moreover, of total exports, 78 percent is LDC-induced.

After LDC graduation, Bangladesh may lose \$8 billion in exports if appropriate measures, such as GSP Plus facilities and trade deals, are not taken in time. However, Bangladesh is still in the nascent stages when it comes to preparedness.

So far, Bangladesh has signed only one major deal to protect its trade after the country graduates from LDC status, a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Bhutan.

The country has also made some inroads towards signing a bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan and a deal is expected by the end of 2025.

However, despite lobbying with nearly a dozen trading partners, Bangladesh has been unable to sign a single Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Moreover, progress on a much-discussed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India has virtually ground to a halt since the political changeover in August last year.

Similarly, progress on FTAs with Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey have also come to a halt since August last year, as have any developments about joining trade blocs such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Unable to make much headway on bilateral deals, Bangladesh continues to largely depend on the multilateral trading system under the WTO. But the system has come under

threat from Trump's tariffs, creating a fragile situation.

As such, bilateral FTAs, EPAs or CEPAs, along with a stronger regional trading system, are crucial and require Bangladesh to rethink and reposition its trade policy.

Tariff rationalisation has been another buzzword for Bangladesh over the last decade as experts argue that Bangladesh can become more competitive on the global stage by easing duties, which currently hover at around 28 percent on average.

These highly protective measures have created opportunities in the domestic markets, where manufacturers are happy to exploit the protection afforded by high tariffs while being exempt from stringent mandatory compliance standards.

This is one of the major reasons that Bangladesh has not been able to develop or diversify its export sector away from garments, which account for more than 80 percent of its exports.

The US tariffs may also have a side effect on Bangladesh because global trade may come to a standstill as rising prices, triggered by higher global tariffs, could lead to low demand.

On a positive note, a handful of countries and regional trade blocs have promised to continue allowing preferential trade benefits for Bangladesh after it graduates from LDC status.

The EU promised to afford the benefits to Bangladesh for three years up to 2029 as it does for graduating LDCs. Similarly, the UK, Australia and Canada will continue preferential trade benefits for a certain period, albeit with a lot of stringent conditions.

Commercial Bank of Ceylon's global MD to visit Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Sanath Manatunge, global managing director of Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC, is expected to arrive in Dhaka today.

He will preside over the bank's Annual Staff Conference on February 15, the bank said in a press release. During his visit, Manatunge is scheduled to meet key clients and diplomats. Commercial Bank of Ceylon operates in Bangladesh with several branches and financial services.



Sanath Manatunge

Gold firms

REUTERS

Gold gained on Thursday as markets closely tracked developments in US President Donald Trump's tariff plans, which could further escalate a global trade war, while investors awaited crucial US data due later in the day.

Spot gold added 0.6 percent to \$2,922.29 per ounce as of 0528 GMT, moving back towards its record peak of \$2,942.70 hit on Tuesday. US gold futures firms 0.7 percent to \$2,949.30.

Trump said that he would impose reciprocal tariffs as soon as Wednesday evening on every country that charges duties on US imports, in a move that ratchets up fears of a widening global trade war and threatens to accelerate US inflation.

"Gold continues to serve as a key diversifier amid trade uncertainties, as market participants seek to mitigate portfolio volatility," IG market strategist Yeap Jun Rong said.

Guardian Life launches 'Nirbhar' insurance plan

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Guardian Life Insurance Limited has introduced a new insurance plan, Nirbhar, designed to offer regular income benefits after a limited premium payment period.

The launching ceremony was held at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh (KIB) in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Nirbhar allows policyholders to pay premiums for a fixed period within a 10-25 year policy term while receiving life insurance coverage for the entire duration. At maturity, customers will receive the remaining amount along with maturity benefits.

The plan can be initiated with a minimum investment of Tk 1 lakh.

Sheikh Rakibul Karim, additional managing director and acting CEO of Guardian Life, highlighted the company's commitment to customer-centric innovation, stating, "Nirbhar



Sheikh Rakibul Karim, additional managing director and acting CEO of Guardian Life, poses for photographs with other officials of the company at a function in the capital recently.

PHOTO: GUARDIAN LIFE INSURANCE

is a simple and reliable insurance plan that will provide financial security to our customers."

Guardian Life currently covers over 1.2 crore policyholders and provides cashless healthcare services through more than 450 partner hospitals. Customers can access these services via the Guardian Life App or its 24/7 helpline, 16622.

With the launch of Nirbhar, Guardian Life aims to further its mission of 'Insurance for All' by making financial protection more accessible and convenient for customers across Bangladesh, as per the press release.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Noakhali Road Division, Noakhali

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Reference No. 35.01.7500.457.11.004.20-280

Date: 13.02.2025

e-Tender Notice

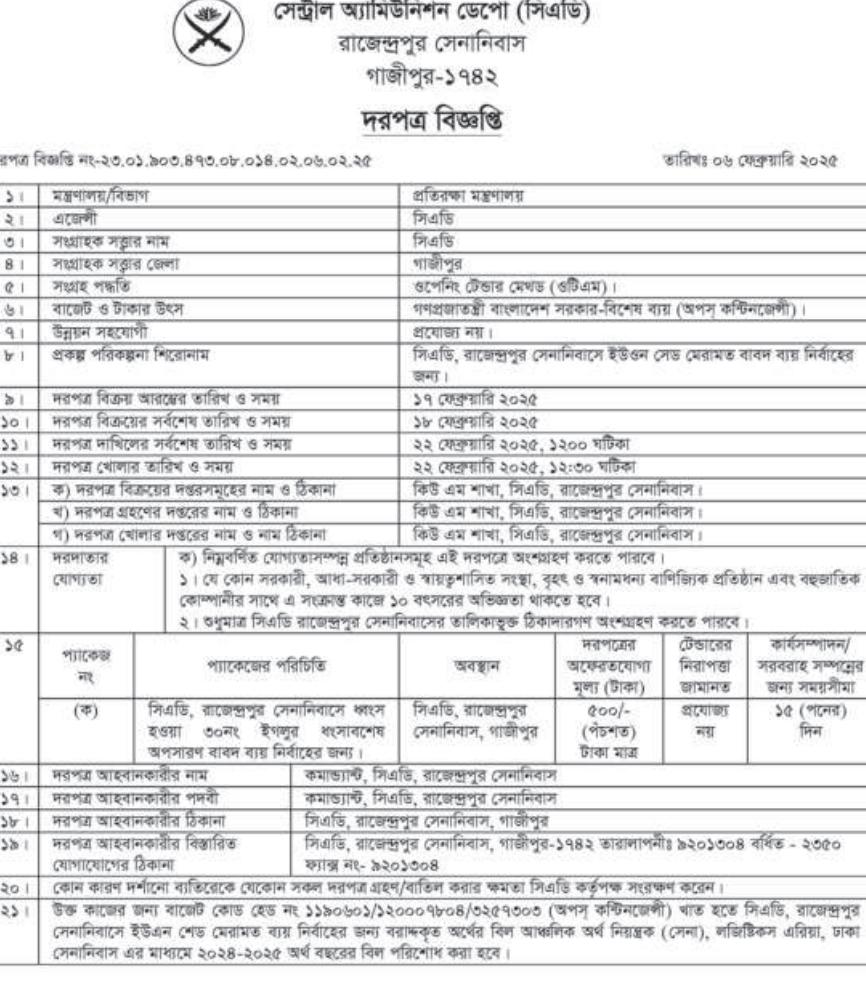
e-Tenders are invited in National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Noakhali for the Procurement of following works :

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Package No	Description of Works	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing (Date & Time)	Tender Opening (Date & Time)
01	1072769	NRD/ADP/OSTETM/CLCLBSR/PW-06/2024-2025	Widening, Strengthening, Surfacing, Construction of Rigid Pavement, Hard Shoulder, 4 Nos. Different Size RCC Box Culvert, Bus-bay, Side Road, Road Divider, Protective work, Road Side Drain & Road Safety work at Ch.10+000 to 20+000 of Begumganj-Sonaimuri-Ramganj Road (R-142) under Noakhali Road Division during the year 2024-2025 (PW-06).	16/03/2025 up to 4:00 PM	17/03/2025 12:15 PM	17/03/2025 12:15 PM
02	1072770	NRD/ADP/OSTETM/CLCLBSR/PW-07/2024-2025	Widening, Strengthening, Surfacing, Construction of Rigid Pavement, Hard Shoulder, 5 Nos. Different Size RCC Box Culvert, Bus-bay, Side Road, Road Divider, Protective work, Road Side Drain & Road Safety work at Ch.20+000 to 30+000 of Begumganj-Sonaimuri-Ramganj Road (R-142) under Noakhali Road Division during the year 2024-2025 (PW-07).	16/03/2025 up to 4:00 PM	17/03/2025 12:30 PM	17/03/2025 12:30 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any Member of Scheduled Banks branches up to 4:00 PM on 16-03-2025.


Sowmya Talukder
ID No.602316
Executive Engineer (C.C), RHD
Road Division, Noakhali.



Proactive action plan needed to cure labour market woes: expert

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A proactive action plan, incorporating demand driven training, apprenticeships for youth, and strategies to foster entrepreneurship, must be adopted to address the severity of unemployment, wage disparity, and gender inequality, said a top expert on labour markets and employment.

Labour intensive sectors must be expanded through macroeconomic strategies, integrating modern agricultural technology to introduce high-value products, and structured training programmes to foster youth entrepreneurship and employment, said Rushidan Islam Rahman, a former research director at

Job creation should prioritise high productivity and earnings. Otherwise, the pace of rising inequality cannot be curbed, she said



Rushidan Islam Rahman

Auditorium yesterday.

To ensure labour rights across both regulated and unregulated sectors, oversight must be strengthened and government agencies must be equipped with the necessary capacity.

Now is the time to assess the demand for skilled labour in migrant employment and align training programmes accordingly, said Rushidan.

She said these strategies have been discussed before, but turning them into reality requires swift, sincere, and

corruption free action.

"What we need now is a renewed national awakening – an awareness that productive employment and proper preparation are essential for nation-building," she said.

She added that this movement must engage all stakeholders, including the workforce, unemployed youth, the government, NGOs, private entrepreneurs, educators, and business leaders.

Despite a declining unemployment rate, the number of jobless young men (15-29) in Bangladesh, neither in education nor training, doubled from 8 percent in 2017 to 16 percent in 2022, posing a crisis, she stressed.

With 28 unemployed young men and 25 women per village, inadequate employment could lead to despair and instability.

Rushidan said sectoral employment distribution shows a decline in men's participation in agriculture, as expected, but a rise among women. This surge has led to an 8 percent drop in per-worker agricultural productivity from 2016-17 to 2022.

Meanwhile, women's participation in industry has declined, despite rising productivity, signalling a sharp deterioration in job quality for women.

AHM Shafiquzzaman, secretary to labour and employment, Mahfuzul Haque, a member of the interim government's Labour Reform Commission, SM Zulfiqar Ali, research director at BIDS, Aziza Rahman, deputy director of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of BILS and head of the Labour Reform Commission, also spoke.

Ahmed Javed Chowdhury, an assistant professor at City University, moderated the event.

Housing fair begins in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A four day housing exhibition, REHAB Chattogram Fair 2025, began yesterday with the aim of showcasing flats, plots, and other real estate and housing products.

Chattogram City Corporation Mayor Shahadat Hossain inaugurated the fair as chief guest at a ceremony held at Radisson Blu Chattogram Bay View.

This is the 16th edition of the fair, organised by the Chattogram regional office of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB).

At the opening ceremony, the mayor urged real estate firms to comply with the national building code and the regulations of the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) when constructing buildings to minimise vulnerability to earthquakes.

He cited that many apartment buildings were constructed too close to one another, violating the CDA regulations.

This lack of spacing prevents rainwater from naturally seeping into the ground, causing a decline in groundwater levels, he said.

The mayor also called on realtors to allocate sufficient open spaces in apartment projects where children would be able to play.

REHAB President Md Wahiduzzaman, Senior Vice President Liakat Ali Bhuiyan, and Vice President and Chairman of the Chattogram Regional Committee Delwar Hossain also spoke at the event.

A total of 16 real estate firms from Dhaka and Chattogram, five building material manufacturers, and five financial institutions are participating in the fair by showcasing their products and services through 42 stalls.

the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

She said job creation should prioritise high productivity and earnings. Otherwise, the pace of rising inequality cannot be curbed, she added.

Rushidan was speaking on the topic of unemployment and inequality in Bangladesh's labour market and the prospects of a transformation during the "Economics and Social Thought Lecture Series - 4".

The event was organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) and Banglar Pathshala Foundation at Dhaka University's RC Majumdar

Monetary policy

FROM PAGE B1
a contraction during the July-September quarter, driven by disruptions in production and trade.

A slowdown in consumption has further dampened growth, as rising inflation and economic uncertainty have strained household incomes.

Lower investments have also compounded these issues, with high interest rates and uncertainty discouraging private sector activity.

CAL Bangladesh's outlook also projects the exchange rate to stabilise between Tk 125 and Tk 130 against the dollar.

Interest rates are expected to remain high, with the one year treasury bill rate ranging from 9.8 percent to 10.5 percent by June 2025, which could present challenges for

Declining investments dampen

FROM PAGE B1
from addressing real economic challenges effectively.

Similarly, former BUILD chairman Asif Ibrahim underscored the need for accurate and non-inflated economic data to facilitate effective policy decisions.

With the BBS revising the GDP growth projection for FY24 to 4.22 percent, Ibrahim urged the interim government to focus on restoring macroeconomic stability.

MACRO OUTLOOK NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

M Masrur Reaz, chairman and CEO of Policy Exchange Bangladesh, stressed the need to ensure macroeconomic stability, enhance business confidence and foster an investor friendly environment.

"The private sector investment to GDP ratio has been hovering between 22 to 23 percent for the last few years, which is lower than the target," he said.

Reaz acknowledged that while government investment has seen some growth, the private sector continues to face critical issues that hinder progress.

He emphasised that addressing regulatory inefficiencies and improving investor confidence are crucial to reversing the declining investment trend.

Development spending

FROM PAGE B1

This is less than encouraging state of ADP implementation means that GDP growth in FY25 is expected to remain stagnant if things do not improve significantly over the next four months, but that looks very unlikely.

Furthermore, low government spending contributes to low revenue collection, as cited by officials of the National Board of Revenue who frequently blame slow growth in the construction sector, he added.

By the end of the first half of the current fiscal year, the tax authority was around 25 percent behind its required revenue collection target.

Last month, Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud said the pace of ADP implementation slowed this year because the government needed to scrutinise and amend many projects in the first few months, which was quite time consuming.

"Now, we have accelerated the scrutiny," he told journalists following a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council in January.

Mahmud, also a noted economist, expressed hope

that ADP implementation would pick up in coming months as less verification would be required for several new projects that are aligned with priorities of the current administration.

Amid the absence of parliament members and the fragile state of local governments, temporary administrators appointed by the government are managing local governance, and their demand for new projects has been minimal.

"I have urged local officials to submit project proposals, and the Planning Commission is also analysing the needs of the people while approving new projects," Mahmud added.

Among public offices with the highest allocations, the Health Services Division utilised the lowest portion of its funds, with just 5.15 percent having been spent during the last seven months.

The Ministry of Science and Technology spent the most, utilising 36.55 percent of its allocation, followed by Power Division with 33.64 percent, Local Government Division with 29.63 percent, and Ministry of Agriculture with 25 percent.

Honda and Nissan say merger talks called off

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese auto giants Honda and Nissan confirmed on Thursday they had scrapped merger talks announced in December, ending a tie-up that would have created the world's third-largest

automaker.

The firms said in a joint statement that they "agreed to terminate the MOU (memorandum of understanding) signed on December 23 last year for consideration of a business integration between the two companies".

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer
Madaripur Public Works Division, Madaripur

Phone: 0661-61825

Fax: 0661-61418

Memo No. 25.36.5400.111.07.066.24-644

Date: 12.02.2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are being invited through Open Tendering Method (OTM) in e-GP system by Executive Engineer, Madaripur Public Works Division, Madaripur for the Procurement of:

SL. No.	ID Reference No.	Name of procurement package	Publishing date	Closing date
01.	1074320	Retrofitting works of 320 Police Line, Madaripur	12-Feb-2025 11:00am	27-Feb-2025 12:00am

These are online tenders, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Shahriar Hussain
Executive Engineer
Public Works Division
Madaripur
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GD- 424

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Plant Quarantine Wing
Department of Agricultural Extension
Khamarbari, Dhaka-1215.

www.dae.gov.bd

Date: 13-02-2025

E-GP Tender Notice

Tender ID	Brief Description of Goods and Related Service	Tender Publication	Last Selling	Tender Security Submission	Closing & Opening
					Date and Time
1074884	Aluminium Phosphide 56% active ingredient.	13-Feb-2025 12:00	26-Feb-2025 12:00	27-Feb-2025 11:00	27-Feb-2025 12:00

The above mentioned tender is an online tender, where e tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline copies will be accepted. To Submit e-Tender register in the e-GP portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd). The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of the mentioned package from the national e-GP portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank by up to particular date specified on the tender notice. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP portal and e-GP help desk.

(Dr. Md. Hazrat Ali)
Director
Plant Quarantine Wing
Department of Agricultural Extension
Khamarbari, Dhaka.
Phone: 55028745
E-mail: dpqw@dae.gov.bd

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

Memo no: 27.22.4785.700.50.003.25.38

Dated: 12/02/2025

Prequalification (PO) - Amendment No. 1 (GD-4)

This is for general information to all concern that the following amendment has been made to the Invitation of Prequalification for "Procurement of Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Twelve (12) 33kV AIS Bays and One (1) Switching Station with Substation Automation System on turnkey basis (GD-4)" under the Project 'Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I' with reference no. 27.22.4785.700.50.001.24.210; Dated: 24/12/2024, BMZ No. 2016 67 971, KfW Procurement No.: 33kV Bay Extension/Construction – 512180, Package No. GD-4.

SL. No.	Reference	Existing	Amended As (Amendment No. 1)
01	Tender Notice (SL. 17)	Prequalification Last Selling Date and Time Date: 16/02/2025; Time: During Office Hour (9:00 AM-05:00 PM) Bangladesh Time.	Prequalification Last Selling Date and Time Date: 16/03/2025; Time: During Office Hour (9:00 AM-05:00 PM) Bangladesh Time.
02	Section II, ITA 17.1 & Tender Notice (SL. 18)	The Original Application shall be submitted not later than Date: 17th February 2025 Time: 11:30 AM Bangladesh Standard Time (GMT+6)	The Original Application shall be submitted not later than Date: 17th March 2025 Time: 11:30 AM Bangladesh Standard Time (GMT+6)
03	Section II, ITA 19.1 & Tender Notice (SL. 19)	The opening of the Applications shall be on 17 th February 2025 at 12:00 PM Bangladesh Standard Time (GMT+6).	The opening of the Applications shall be on 17 th March 2025 at 12:00 PM Bangladesh Standard Time (GMT+6).

All other terms and conditions of the prequalification document shall remain unchanged.

Ranjan
12-02-2025
(Md. Saifuzzaman)
Project Director
Modernization of Power Distribution-Smart Grids Phase I Project
WZPDCL, Khulna.

GD- 426

GD- 427

Coats plans to go greener in Bangladesh

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The UK-headquartered thread manufacturer Coats Group has been expanding its operations in Bangladesh to meet the growing demand from local customers, according to a top official.

The globally leading thread-maker is also opting to go green as it aims to take the "driving seat in sustainability," said David Paja, the group chief executive officer (CEO) of Coats.

In an interview with The Daily Star at a hotel in Dhaka last week, Paja said the group has set targets to use 60 percent recycled content by 2026 and 100 percent non-virgin raw materials by 2030.

Currently, Coats uses 45 percent of its raw materials from non-virgin sources.

In Bangladesh, the thread-maker runs two production plants -- one in Gazipur and another in Chattogram. The Chattogram factory was built 35 years ago, while the second plant was opened in Gazipur in 2002.

The factories employ more than 2,000 workers.

The company says it has been facing growing demand from local customers as Bangladesh's apparel exports have increased substantially. The demand for apparel accessories, such as thread, is also on the rise.

It now supplies sewing thread to more than 800 customers in Bangladesh, Paja said.

He added that the group now looks to produce sustainable and recyclable products, as the demand for items like recycled thread, yarn and apparel has been increasing worldwide due mainly to



David Paja

changing consumer habits in fashion.

According to Paja, the thread business is promising in Bangladesh due to its ready customer base, geographical proximity to manufacturing hubs and the country's large number of manufacturing units.

Moreover, Bangladesh holds a strong position in the global tariff regime and has a solid track record about its apparel might.

Besides, the country gets the benefit from a ready workforce, with more than 20 lakh people entering the job market every year.

The group CEO said that over the last five years, the group has continued to invest in expanding its capacity in Bangladesh, as

the market is very promising.

Also, the company has set a target to invest in water recycling processes to reuse 50 percent of its wastewater as part of its sustainability plan.

Coats has been planning its sustainability strategy around five pillars: reducing emissions; transitioning materials from virgin to recycled products; water recycling; ensuring zero waste to landfill; and making Coats a great place to work for its people and promoting female leadership.

Paja said, "Coats has been the global leader in thread for decades, and it has a responsibility. We have decided to take

the driving seat in sustainability. We have an energy roadmap for 2050."

Regarding energy costs and availability, Paja said his company has already focused on energy sustainability, which is why energy efficient tools have been installed at its plants.

The company has invested in heat recovery systems and motors to reduce energy consumption. Currently, 30 percent of the company's energy demand is met by solar panels installed on its rooftops, while 60 percent is generated by the company itself. The remaining 10 percent of the energy requirement comes from the national grid.

When asked whether Bangladesh could benefit from the Trump administration's decision to impose tariffs on China and other countries, Paja said it is difficult to anticipate and forecast.

However, Bangladesh has already benefited from the additional tariffs, as work orders have shifted from China to Bangladesh.

Apart from the apparel accessories sector going green, Paja said the fashion industry itself needs to transform, as consumers are now demanding more sustainable products.

Digital technologies must be further developed, as brands face pressure to provide greater traceability of raw materials and finished products. Digital solutions help consumers trace products accurately, he added.

The group CEO said that three key issues -- sustainability, digital technology and innovation -- will shape the future of the fashion industry; and Coats is well ahead in all three areas.

Swadeshi Islami Life's fine for 'excessive commission' upheld

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA) has upheld a Tk 5 lakh fine on Swadeshi Islami Life Insurance Company for excessive commission expenses.

Additionally, the insurance regulator has directed Swadeshi Islami Life to immediately pay the fine through a pay order or bank draft in the name of the IDRA or face action as per the Insurance Act 2010 and the prevailing laws of the country.

An official of the IDRA told The Daily Star that the fine was imposed on May 10, 2023.

However, Swadeshi Islami Life had submitted a review application requesting a waiver of the fine, he said.

The authority rejected the review application, upheld the previous order, and instructed the company to pay the fine, the official added.

Trump blames Biden for uptick in US inflation

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday blamed his predecessor Joe Biden for last month's unexpected acceleration in consumer inflation, as he looked to deflect a moment of potential political peril early in his second term.

The consumer price index (CPI) edged up to 3.0 percent in January from a year ago, the Labor Department said in a statement -- slightly above economists' estimates.

Stripping away volatile food and energy costs, so-called core inflation rose by 3.3 percent over the past 12 months, which was also slightly above expectations.

"BIDEN INFLATION UP!" Trump wrote on Truth Social shortly after the data was published, seeking to blame Biden for the CPI figures, which included 12 days in which was Trump was in office.

"It's far worse than I think anybody anticipated, because unfortunately, the previous administration was not transparent in where the economy truly was," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters in Washington later Wednesday.

Inflation increased by 0.5 percent in January from a month earlier, while core inflation rose by 0.4 percent

Inflation increased by 0.5 percent in January from a month earlier, while core inflation rose by 0.4 percent.

On the campaign trail, Trump frequently touted inflation and the cost of living under his predecessor as key issues, along with immigration, as he looked to capitalize on negative public perceptions of Biden's handling of the economy.

Now Trump faces the worrying prospect that the increase in prices of essential items could continue to accelerate on his watch.

The cost of eggs surged more than 15 percent last month as farmers contended with avian flu, marking the largest increase in the index since June 2015, according to the Labor Department.

Gasoline prices also jumped, along with several other politically potent price points.

"President Trump campaigned on lowering costs for working families but today's inflation data highlights how he is failing to deliver on that promise," Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren said in a statement.

The January inflation data will likely fuel calls for the Federal Reserve -- the independent US central bank -- to hold its key lending rate at between 4.25 and 4.50 percent as it waits for price pressures to ease.

Speaking in Congress on Wednesday, Fed chair Jerome Powell said the CPI data reinforced the bank's recent cautious approach on interest rate cuts.

India's retail inflation eases to 4.6% in January

ANN/THE STATESMAN

India's Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation eased to 4.6 percent in January from 5.22 percent in December. This marks a decline of 91 basis points in headline inflation compared to the previous month, making it the lowest year-on-year inflation since August 2024.

Corresponding inflation rate for rural and urban areas are 6.31 percent and 5.53 percent, data from the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) said.

The significant decline in headline inflation and food inflation during the month of January, 2025 is mainly attributed to decline in inflation of vegetables, egg, pulses & products, cereals and products, education, clothing and health.

Further, the year-on-year inflation rate based on All India Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) for the month of January 2025 over January, 2024 is 6.02 percent.

The data said a significant decline was observed in headline and food inflation in rural areas at 4.64 percent (provisional) in January, 2025 compared to 5.76 percent in December last.

The CFPI based food inflation in rural sector is observed as 6.31 percent in January, 2025 in comparison to 8.65 percent in December last.



A shopkeeper washes mud from ginger as he sets up his roadside vegetable shop in Mumbai.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

In the urban sector, sharp decline from 4.58 percent in December, 2024 to 3.87 percent (Provisional) in January, 2025 is observed in headline inflation. Similar decline is observed in food inflation which has decreased from 7.9 percent in December, 2024 to 5.53 percent in January, 2025.

In terms of housing, the Housing inflation rate for January on year-on-year basis has been recorded at 2.76 percent as compared to 2.71 percent in December.

MoSPI also released the Quick Estimates of Index of Industrial

Production (IIP) which stands at 3.2 percent for December 2024 as compared to 5.2 percent in November.

The growth rates of the three sectors, Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity for the month of December 2024 are 2.6 percent, 3 percent and 6.2 percent, respectively.

The top three positive contributors for the month of December are manufacture of basic metals (6.7 percent), manufacture of electrical equipment (40.1 percent) and manufacture of coke and refined petroleum products (3.9 percent), data from the Ministry said.

US trade deficits at core of Trump tariff moves

AFP, Paris

Imposing punitive tariffs on countries with high trade surpluses with the United States has been at the heart of US President Donald Trump's economic policy.

Trump has lived up to his campaign pledges to resume his hardball trade diplomacy.

But analysts say trade imbalances can sometimes be the result of US policy itself.

What is a trade deficit?

A trade deficit occurs when a country's imports exceed its exports to another country. The balance is usually calculated on trade of goods such as cars, electronics, farm products or oil and gas, among other things.

International comparisons usually focus on goods but some analysts say trade in services -- such as financial systems, transports, tourism or communications services -- should also be taken into account to get the full picture.

The United States, for instance, has a large trade deficit with many of its partners when just considering goods, but once services are taken into account the overall imbalance is less.

"Politicians are obsessed with the material nature of physical goods,"

said Nicolas Poitiers, a research fellow at Brussels' think tank Bruegel.

Poitiers noted that countries can't impose tariffs on services, hence Trump's insistence on focusing on goods.

Who is Trump targeting?

"We have deficits with almost every



A worker arranges aluminium parts in a Taiwan-funded factory which produces aluminium automotive parts for export in Huai'an, in China's eastern Jiangsu province on February 12.

A comedy of exploitation

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

Move over nine-to-five office hours! In Bangladesh, where traffic jams are our unofficial "overtime", the idea of a 90-hour workweek sounds like a plot twist in a Dhallywood movie. With CEOs in India and the US are turning employees into marathon runners, this trend could initiate the next 24/7 workathon! Bangladeshis are perfecting the art of balancing work and debating whether "office time" includes the two hours in traffic. So, before you clock in those extra hours, remember: Work hard, but not that hard!

Recent calls for extreme workweeks by global and regional leaders have sparked heated debates on workplace culture. SN Subrahmanyam, CEO of Larsen and Toubro, suggested a 90-hour workweek.

Infosys co-founder NR Narayana Murthy advocated a 70-hour workweek while Elon Musk claimed his teams clock 120-hour workweeks, setting an even higher benchmark. These remarks raised concerns about work-life balance, employee wellbeing, and sustainability of such gruelling schedules.

While corporate leaders push for relentless workhours, Gen Z isn't having it. They prioritise mental health, a work-life balance, and personal fulfilment. For them, success means flexibility, purpose and maybe a well-timed powernap. Unlike previous generations, they challenge the notion that productivity is measured by hours worked rather than efficiency and innovation.

And while India and the US see leaders pushing extreme hours, China, Japan and South Korea offer contrasting lessons. China encourages post-lunch naps, and Japan and Korea, despite their intense work ethics, are tackling karoshi (death by overwork) by promoting a better work-life balance. This underscores a crucial point: Productivity isn't about working longer, but working smarter.

For Bangladesh, where daily life involves battling traffic, bureaucracy and power outages, excessively long workhours could prove disastrous. Long workweeks can strain personal relationships, reduce family time, and lower overall well-being. Simply put, if inefficiencies in infrastructure and governance already consume so much time, then adding more workhours is counterproductive.

Ethical concerns also arise when companies demand 70 to 120 hour workweeks without proportional compensation or incentives. This approach raises questions about whether businesses prioritise employee well-being or merely seek higher profits. Such demands echo outdated labour practices that undermine worker dignity. Fair compensation, respect and sustainable work models should define modern leadership -- not an exploitative grind that benefits only the top tier.

Instead of pushing for extreme workhours, business leaders must adapt to new workforce dynamics. With Gen Z making up 25 percent of today's workforce, sustainability lies in flexibility, empathy and innovation. Companies should prioritise performance over hours worked by offering remote work options, mental health support and fair incentives. Encouraging efficiency and creativity fosters loyalty and productivity without burning employees out. A rigid, exploitative approach is unsustainable; adaptation is key to a thriving work culture.

A 2021 study by the World Health Organization (WHO) found that working over 55 hours weekly increases the risk of stroke by 35 percent and heart disease by 17 percent. In South Asia, including India, over 60 percent of employees report working beyond standard hours, citing burnout and stress. A Deloitte survey found that 77 percent of Gen Z workers have experienced burnout, emphasising their prioritisation of mental health and flexibility over excessive workhours. These findings highlight the impracticality of extreme work demands in today's evolving workforce.

So, before you sign up for a 120-hour workweek, maybe it's time to rethink what productivity really means. After all, even robots need recharging, and let's be honest -- Bangladeshis already work overtime dodging potholes, power cuts and traffic. Let's aim for efficiency, not exhaustion!

The author is president of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh and founder of BuildCon Consultancies Ltd

2024, \$63 billion with Canada and \$172 billion with Mexico, according to the US Department of Commerce.

While the tariffs on China were implemented, Trump agreed to delay those against Mexico and Canada.

With the European Union, the deficit reached \$157 billion in 2023, according to the Eurostat data agency, driven by trade surpluses in Germany, Italy and Ireland.

Japan, South Korea and India are also among the 10 countries with the largest surpluses.

Is the data reliable?

The numbers should be dealt with carefully as calculations can vary from one country to the next depending on local accounting norms, the exchange rate used, or to what extent transportation costs are included.

Such inconsistencies mean that some countries can go from having a surplus to having a deficit. France, for instance, had a goods surplus of \$14 billion in 2023, according to US statistics, but a deficit of \$7 billion according to French customs.

There are differences within the European Union, too, where national figures can differ from those of the European Commission.

READ FULL STORY ONLINE