

Star BUSINESS



Premier Cement goes for merger with two concerns

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Premier Cement Mills PLC has decided to absorb two of its concerns – National Cement Mills and Premier Power Generation – in a bid to streamline and optimise operational efficiencies.

Having reached this decision at a board meeting on March 13, the company announced its plans for the merger through a disclosure on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) website yesterday.

Following the announcement, Premier Cement saw its share price rise 5.85 percent from the previous day to close the session at Tk 52.50 per unit.

Premier Cement will be the sole surviving entity of this merger, which involves exchanging its shares with that of the two subsidiaries, according to Company Secretary Kazi Md Shaifur Rahman.

"It [the merger] is not just an administrative change but in reality, it will provide significant advantages in terms of improving operational efficiency," he said.

Rahman then explained that they currently file separate tax returns, maintain different licences and obtain individual environmental clearance certificates for each of the three companies.

"But after the merger, all of these processes will be consolidated into one, making operations simpler and cost-effective," he added.

Rahman also said the merger will lead to substantial cost savings and synergy between the companies by reducing administrative overheads and improving knowledge-sharing between teams, thereby enabling more seamless operations.

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CPD wants budget anchored in economic stability

CHALLENGES FOR ECONOMY

- ▶ Restoring macroeconomic stability
- ▶ Tackling inflationary pressures
- ▶ Stabilising exchange rate
- ▶ Ensuring fiscal management
- ▶ Revenue mobilisation

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Don't hike gas prices
- Reduce subsidy and increase social spending
- Raise tax-free income limit to Tk 4 lakh from Tk 3.5 lakh
- Allocate funds for the injured and families of martyrs of July uprising
- Withdraw 5% VAT on tuition fees for English medium schools
- Reduce corporate tax for private educational institutes to 10%
- Develop a modern tax structure
- Create a consistent tax policy
- Establish a hassle-free tax payment system



The upcoming budget must prioritise the protection of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and economic recovery.

Fahmida Khatun
Executive Director of CPD



There is an assumption that the tariffs on China could benefit Bangladesh, as we compete in the US market... I don't believe there is a direct benefit for us.

Mustafizur Rahman
A distinguished fellow at CPD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Restoring macroeconomic stability should be the top priority for policymakers amid a challenging environment for the interim government, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) wrote in its budget recommendations yesterday.

"This requires targeted interventions to address inflationary pressures, stabilise the exchange rate, and ensure fiscal prudence," it said.

The think-tank presented its recommendations for the upcoming national budget for fiscal year (FY) 2025-26 at the CPD office in Dhaka.

The CPD said that the interim government inherited an economy characterised by high inflation, subdued revenue collection, sluggish budget implementation, a liquidity

crunch in the banking sector, and fast-depleting foreign exchange reserves.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD, remarked, "The upcoming budget must prioritise the protection of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and economic recovery."

"Short-term corrective actions are needed, along with medium-term reforms in resource mobilisation, public finance management, and spending efficiency," she said.

DO NOT HIKE GAS PRICES

The CPD proposed not hiking gas prices, saying it would adversely impact the inflation scenario – particularly concerning non-food items.

The warning was sounded as consumer prices, despite easing in the last two months, have stayed over 9 percent since March of 2023, eroding purchasing power, especially for low-income households.

Last month, the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission proposed increasing gas prices for new industries to Tk 75.72 per cubic metre, up from the current Tk 30, which drew widespread opposition.

"At this stage, if the proposal to hike gas prices is accepted, it will likely impact inflation adversely. The uncertainty in the global economy owing to the tariff war might add to this," Fahmida added.

The Bangladesh Bank's target

to contain inflation within a 7-8 percent range by end-June 2025 is likely to be missed if gas prices are raised, she said.

RAISE TAX-FREE INCOME LIMIT TO TK 4 LAKH

The CPD also recommended raising the tax-free income threshold to Tk 4 lakh in the next fiscal year's budget to ease the burden on taxpayers amid high inflation.

Currently, the tax-free income threshold stands at Tk 3.50 lakh, which was set in the current fiscal year.

"Inflation eased in the last three months, perhaps due to the seasonal effects and policy intervention. However, it rose earlier in the current fiscal year. Furthermore, food inflation rates were substantially greater in rural areas than in cities," Fahmida said.

ALLOCATE BUDGET FOR JULY UPRISING INJURED AND MARTYRS

The CPD recommended allocating financial assistance in the upcoming national budget to support the families of those killed and injured in the July uprising last year, which led to the ouster of the Awami League government.

"During the July movement, nearly 1,400 people were killed, and 14,025 others were injured," said Khatun, citing reports from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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Satellite company seeks partnership to fast-track Starlink's entry

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited (BSCL) is seeking a partnership with Starlink to facilitate the launch of satellite internet services in Bangladesh.

As part of the effort, the country's sole satellite company has proposed hosting Starlink's gateway at its ground stations in Gazipur and Betbunia, according to documents seen by The Daily Star.

At a meeting with Starlink officials in Dhaka yesterday, BSCL proposed a strategic collaboration and gave a presentation on its capabilities.

Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser with executive authority over the Ministry of Telecom, and Muhammad Imadur Rahman, managing director of BSCL, attended the meeting.

Rebecca Slick Hunter, director of Starlink Global Licensing and Market Activation, led the Starlink team.

"We have elaborated on BSCL's technical capabilities and the range of services it can provide to support Starlink's service delivery," Imadur Rahman told The Daily Star.

"Since the chief adviser aims to launch Starlink's service within 90 days from February this year, we are leveraging our capacity to expedite Starlink's entry into Bangladesh," he added.

In a virtual meeting in mid-February this year, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus discussed potential collaboration with Elon Musk to advance the introduction of Starlink's satellite internet service in Bangladesh.

Prof Yunus invited Musk to visit Bangladesh for the potential launch, to which Musk responded positively, saying, "I look forward to it".

At yesterday's meeting, BSCL's presentation to Starlink officials highlighted the advantages of leveraging its infrastructure, including uninterrupted power, true-redundant fibre



KEY PROPOSALS FROM BSCL

Hosting Starlink's gateway at Gazipur and Betbunia ground stations

Offering 99.99% uptime with uninterrupted power, fibre connections

Providing KPI Category A facilities with round-the-clock maintenance

PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS

Faster regulatory approvals, customs clearance

Seamless sales, distribution and revenue collection

Enhanced internet access in remote areas

PROGRESS ON STARLINK ENTRY

NDA signed with SpaceX

Terminal tests completed

BSCL submitted a positive report to BTRC

connections with 99.99 percent availability and round-the-clock maintenance by highly skilled personnel.

The company also emphasised that its facilities offer the highest level of security, classified under the government's Key Point Installation (KPI) Category A.

"Starlink was amazed by BSCL's capacity and said they would convey the proposal to their headquarters," said a satellite company official familiar with the developments.

Under the proposed partnership, BSCL would provide services, including sales and marketing, post-sales customer support, user terminal import and distribution and revenue collection through banking channels.

Besides, the collaboration is expected to streamline regulatory approvals from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and relevant ministries.

The partnership's potential benefits include enhanced nationwide sales and marketing, efficient distribution channels, on-site installation and troubleshooting and a reliable revenue collection mechanism under the government framework.

BSCL also guarantees a secure storage

facility for Starlink kits within its KPI-enlisted premises.

PROGRESS SO FAR

BSCL and Starlink have already made significant progress in potential collaboration, according to officials.

A non-disclosure agreement (NDA) was signed with SpaceX on May 12, 2023, followed by successful testing of five Starlink terminals in Bangladesh.

These tests, conducted in Dhaka, Rangpur, Hatia and the Bay of Bengal, demonstrated Starlink's strong performance in various environments.

BSCL has since submitted a report to BTRC affirming the commendable functionality of Starlink's service across all test locations.

"The collaboration between Starlink and BSCL presents a strategic opportunity to enhance satellite internet connectivity in Bangladesh," said Mustafa Mahmud Hussain, a telecom expert.

"With technical expertise, infrastructure, an existing ground station, priority power supply, backup power and a data center, BSCL can ensure a seamless rollout of Starlink's services," he said.

READ MORE ON B3

Investors flag concerns over 700MHz spectrum auction

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Major international telecom investors expressed concerns about the proposed parameters for the upcoming 700MHz spectrum auction, citing technical, commercial, and economic challenges.

In a joint letter addressed to Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser with executive authority over the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and ICT, the parent companies of Bangladesh's leading mobile network operators urged the government to reconsider the auction's timing and pricing structure.

Copies of the letter were also sent to the secretary of the Posts and Telecommunications Division, the Ministry of Finance, and the chairman of the BTRC.

Signed by senior executives of Axiata, Telenor, and Veon, the letter highlighted three key issues with the current plan: the limited amount of spectrum being released, the disproportionately high pricing, and the limited device compatibility with the 700MHz band.

The investors emphasised that proceeding with the auction under the current conditions could hinder the growth of Bangladesh's telecom sector and delay the delivery of tangible benefits to consumers.

The parent companies of Bangladesh's leading mobile network operators urged the government to reconsider the auction's timing and pricing structure

The 700MHz spectrum auction, planned for the coming months, proposes releasing 2x25MHz of spectrum at a price of Tk 263 crore per MHz.

Investors argued that this pricing is significantly higher than global benchmarks and could increase spectrum costs to 14 percent to 16 percent of revenues, up from the current 9 percent to 12 percent. This, they warned, is unsustainable for the Bangladeshi market.

The investors' concerns come at a critical time for Bangladesh's telecom sector, as the government is seeking to enhance digital connectivity and drive economic growth through improved mobile broadband services.

Additionally, investors pointed out that only 50 percent of 4G capable devices in Bangladesh currently support the 700MHz band.

Even with new devices supporting the band, it would take approximately four years for the spectrum to achieve widespread compatibility, limiting its immediate impact on service quality.

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Reforms on the move

ZAHID HUSSAIN

The Bangladesh Bank has embarked on a series of banking reforms with quiet determination. Most recently, it has tightened regulations regarding dividend payouts by scheduled banks, exemplifying the strategy of seizing low-hanging fruit in the pursuit of structural reforms.

Concurrently, an announcement was made to establish four new departments at the BB head office to bolster its operations and enhance oversight of the financial sector.

Just a few days prior, BB reformed the exit policy for non-performing loans (NPLs), specifically targeting defaulters who were not deemed to have failed in repayment due to wilful neglect or deceptive practices to evade payment.

The new regulations introduced by the BB, combining firmness with strategic leniency, lay the groundwork for a sturdy financial system. This article focuses on the most recent reform concerning dividend payouts, an addition to BB's collection of quickly attainable yet impactful initiatives.

Observed dividend practices

Banks notorious for holding not just bad loans but also poor cash placements have distributed dividends amounting to 10 percent or more of their net paper profits after tax. These profits, termed as 'paper' due to their origins in creative accounting and lenient regulatory oversight, do not reflect real earnings.

Out of the 61 banks in Bangladesh, merely five achieved net profits exceeding Tk 1,000 crore in 2024, primarily due to a flight to safety amidst financial instability. The net interest income, typically the main revenue source for banks, paled in comparison to the returns from government securities.

Depositors shifted funds to institutions perceived as more secure, prioritising financial safety over profitability. Growth of nonperforming loans has outpaced deposit growth for longer than old, aged memories can recall.

Yet, practices in listed banks of Bangladesh show an increasing trend in dividend payments. This is puzzling with pieces that just don't fit together. In a system plagued by tight liquidity, pervasive insolvency, and shaky confidence, positive and often high (above 10 percent) dividend yields observed in reality for a large number of listed financial corporates challenge understanding the drivers of their dividend policy.

Politically influential individuals took out funds and laundered them abroad. At the end of 2024, over one-fifth of the total loans in the banking sector were sour, largely due to embezzlement by owners. Distressed assets are probably two and a half to three times the reported NPLs.

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VAT return deadline extended by 2 days

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has extended the deadline for VAT return submission till March 18 following a technical glitch in its online system, the Integrated VAT Administration System.

In a letter to field offices of customs and value added tax (VAT), the NBR said the issue occurred due to a surge in concurrent users and aging hardware.

March 16 was the last date for filing VAT returns, but as many taxpayers could not complete the process, the deadline was extended, it said.

Dr Md Abdur Rouf, member (VAT Policy) at the NBR, said the problem arose due to the rush of firms seeking to submit their returns.

"If companies file their returns by the 10th of every month, they will be able to do so smoothly," he said.

Currently, around 3.25 lakh VAT-registered entities file returns online, while 23 percent submit hard copies.

In total, roughly 4 lakh firms out of 5.81 lakh VAT-registered entities file returns, according to NBR data.

"We are discouraging submission of hard copies," he added.

Prime Bank partners with As-Sunnah Foundation for charity work

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC recently signed a partnership agreement with As-Sunnah Foundation, a non-political and non-profit religious charity organisation based in Bangladesh.

Md Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of the bank, and Md Sabbir Ahmed, general secretary of the foundation, signed the agreement at the bank's corporate office in the capital's Gulshan, said a press release.

Under the agreement, Prime Bank will collect deposits under the Sadaqah Jariyah Account and invest them based on the Mudaraba principle, ensuring ethical and Shariah-compliant financial growth.

The accumulated profits will be allocated to the foundation at agreed timelines, strictly following established guidelines.

The foundation, in turn, will ensure the funds are utilised exclusively for charitable and welfare purposes, reinforcing its commitment to long-term social impact. This initiative aims to promote continuous giving while fostering economic and social development in Bangladesh.

Syed Ibne Shariar, vice president and head of the Islamic banking division of the bank, and Hafizur Rahman, head of accounts of the foundation, along with other senior officials from both organisations, were also present.



Md Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank, and Md Sabbir Ahmed, general secretary of As-Sunnah Foundation, pose for photographs after signing the agreement at the bank's corporate office in the capital's Gulshan recently.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Uzma Chowdhury elected as chairperson of Meghna Bank

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Uzma Chowdhury has been elected as the chairperson of Meghna Bank PLC.

A distinguished professional in the finance and banking sector of Bangladesh, Chowdhury brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her new role, said a press release.

Uzma Chowdhury has extensive experience in the accounting profession, having worked for over seven years in the petroleum industry in the United States.

She also served as the secretary of the Houston Chapter of the American Women's Society for CPAs for four years.

Since October 2008, Chowdhury has been serving as the director of finance at Pran-RFL Group, a growing business conglomerate in Bangladesh.

She is also a member of the finance and audit committee of the Under-Privileged Children Education Programme, and a committee member of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industries.

Meghna Bank is confident that under Uzma Chowdhury's leadership, the bank will continue to strengthen its position as a leading financial institution, driving growth, innovation and excellence in the banking sector, the press release also said.

Chowdhury obtained her bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Texas at Dallas, US. She is a Certified Public Accountant from the State of Texas, US.



Nazma Mobarek, secretary of the Financial Institutions Division at the finance ministry, inaugurates the fair, styled "TARA Uddokta Mela 2025", organised by BRAC Bank at the Alok Convention Centre in the capital's Gulshan yesterday.

PHOTO: BRAC BANK

BRAC Bank organises TARA Uddokta Mela 2025

STAR BUSINESS DESK

BRAC Bank organised the "TARA Uddokta Mela 2025" at the Alok Convention Centre in the capital's Gulshan, with the aim of promoting locally crafted products from women entrepreneurs.

Around 85 female entrepreneurs from across the nation are showcasing their unique, locally-made products at the two-day event, which commenced yesterday.

Nazma Mobarek, secretary of the Financial Institutions Division at the finance ministry, inaugurated the fair as the chief guest, said a press release.

The entrepreneurs are presenting an eclectic array of Bangladeshi-made products, including bespoke boutiques, hand-stitched garments, artisanal crafts, clay and jute goods, processed leather items, Jamdani and Moslin textiles, culinary offerings, organic skincare products, as well as bamboo and rattan creations.

In addition, the fair offers several special attractions, such as an Iftar and dinner food court, Hawai Mithai for visitors, a bioscope for the younger generation, free mental well-being sessions and health checkups, as well as travel consultancy and tour management services.

Sonali Bank holds business conference in Chattogram

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Sonali Bank PLC recently organised a "Divisional Business Conference-2025" for officers of Chattogram North and South at the World Trade Centre in the port city.

Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury, chairman of the bank, attended the conference as the chief guest, said a press release.

Md Shawkat Ali Khan, managing

director and CEO of the bank, and Mohammed Jahangir Alam, director, attended the programme as special guests.

Among others, Subhash Chandra Das, Shamim Uddin Ahmed and Md Abu Sayed, deputy managing directors of the bank, Md Musa Khan, general manager of GM office Chattogram North, and Md Jasim Uddin Khan, general manager of GM office Chattogram South, were also present.



Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury, chairman of Sonali Bank, attends the "Divisional Business Conference-2025" for officers of Chattogram North and South at the World Trade Centre in the port city recently.

PHOTO: SONALI BANK

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (MAR 16, 2025)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 70-Tk 85	-0.64 ↓	13.14 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 55	0	5.00 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	0	-10.53 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 105-Tk 110	0	-2.27 ↓
Soybean (litre)	Tk 157-Tk 172	-9.86 ↓	8.58 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 20-Tk 30	0	-33.33 ↓
Onion (kg)	Tk 35-Tk 50	-5.56 ↓	-46.88 ↓
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 38-Tk 45	-2.35 ↓	-2.35 ↓

SOURCE: TCB

University of Rajshahi
Central Science Laboratory
Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh
www.ru.ac.bd

Memo No. 34/25 C.S.Lab Date: 16.03.2025

Invitation for (OTM)
e-Tender Notice No. 01/16.03.2025

e-Tender is being invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procuring the following works. Details are given below.

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description of goods and related services	Tender/proposal publication date and time	Tender last selling (date & time)	Tender closing & opening (date & time)
1.	1087121	RU-CSLEQUIPM-ENT-2024-25-01	Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation and Maintenance of Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope (FESEM) with Accessories.	24-Mar-2025 11:00	07-May-2025 13:00	08-May-2025 13:00
2.	1088129	RU-CSLEQUIPM-ENT-2024-25-02	Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation, and Maintenance of X-Ray Diffraction (XRD) System with Accessories.	24-Mar-2025 11:00	07-May-2025 14:00	08-May-2025 14:00
3.	1088130	RU-CSLEQUIPM-ENT-2024-25-03	Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation, and Maintenance of Inductively Coupled Plasma Optical Emission Spectrometer (ICP-OES) with Accessories.	24-Mar-2025 11:00	07-May-2025 15:00	08-May-2025 15:00

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>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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GD-675

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
District Primary Education Office
Bhola
<http://dpe.bhola.gov.bd>

Memo No. 38.01.0900.001.00.000.2025/291 Date: 11.03.2025

e-Tender Notice No. 02/2024-25

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

Sl No.	Name of Scheme and Package No.	Tender ID No.	Tender/proposal publication date & time	Tender/proposal document last selling/downloading date & time	Tender/proposal closing date & time	Procurement method
1	Goods: Furniture Supply for 81 Nos. Class Room, 09 Nos. Teachers Room of Selected 18 Nos. Govt. Primary School at Lalmojon Upazilla In Bhola District. 1. CHAR KOCHHOPIA GPS, 2. CHAR CHUAKHALI SHAHID AOLAD HOSSAIN GPS 3. DAKHIN MOHISHKALI GPS 4. DAWRI HAT GPS 5. DHOLI GOUR NAGAR-2 GPS 6. DOKKHIN CHAR TITIA GPS 7. FATEMABAD GPS 8. HAZI GONJ GPS 9. LORD HARDINGE NO.-1 GPS 10. POSHCHEM BAWRIA GPS 11. POSHCHEM CHAR UMED NO. 2 GPS 12. PYARIMOHAN GPS 13. SATANI GPS 14. SUMSOL HAWLADER GPS 15. SYEDABAD GPS 16. UTTAR BAWRIA GPS 17. ASOLI GPS 18. DOKKHIN LALMOHAN GPS) at Different Location of Bhola District. (Package No- NBIDGPS-1/G1.0541)	1073035	17/3/2025 14:00	09/04/2025 17:00	10/4/2025 14:00	OTM
2	Goods: Furniture Supply for 74 Nos. Class Room, 05 Nos. Teachers Room of Selected 16 Nos. Govt. Primary School at Bhola Sadar & Tazumuddin Upazilla In Bhola District. 1.DAKKHIN ILISHA GPS 2. DOKKHIN RATANPUR GPS 3. MURAD SABULLAH GPS 4. POSHCHEM DHONIA GPS 5. PURBA GUPTAMUNSHI GPS 6. RATAN PUR GPS 7. UTTOR MURAD SABULLAH GPS 8. CHACHRA POSHCHEM PARA GPS 9. CHAR MOJAMMEL GPS 10. DIDAR MAJHI GPS 11. DOKKHIN ARAJIA GPS 12. JAGANNATH PUR (1) GPS 13. MODDHYO CHANDPUR GPS 14. POSHCHEM RAMDEBPUR GPS 15. PURBO BISHARAM PUR GPS 16. UTTOR SHAMBHUPUR GPS (Package No- NBIDGPS-1/G1.0542)	1077414	17/3/2025 14:00	09/04/2025 17:00	10/4/2025 14:00	OTM
3	Goods: Furniture Supply for 52 Nos. Class Room, 06 Nos. Teachers Room of Selected 12 Nos. Govt. Primary School at Borhanuddin, Charfission & Daulatkhon Upazilla In Bhola District. DAKHIN PURBO DALAL PUR GPS 2. DEWLA TALUKDER BARI GPS 3. DOKKHIN FUL KACHIA GPS 4. MIRZA KALU H/A GPS 5. MULA POTTON GPS 6. MODDHYO UTTOR FASSION GPS 7. AYESHA BAG GPS 8. CHOR SOTTEN GPS 9. DHAL CHOR GPS 10. SHARIF PARA GPS 11. DOKKHIN NOLDUGI BAIKHUNTUPUR GPS 12. UTTOR SYED PUR GPS (Package No- NBIDGPS-1/G1.0543)	1077441	17/3/2025 14:00	09/04/2025 17:00	10/4/2025 14:00	OTM

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/Proposal document from the National e-GP Portal to be deposited online through any registered bank's branch. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Aminul Islam
District Primary Education Officer
Bhola
Email: dpeobhola@gmail.com

GD-670

বাগদাদ-ঢাকা কার্পেট ফ্যাক্টরী
উত্তর কাটালী, পাহাড়তলী, চট্টগ্রাম।
ফোন-০১৮৪৪১৭৩৪১৭, ই-মেইল-bdcfproduction@gmail.com
(বাংলাদেশ পাটকল করপোরেশনের একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান)

"বিক্রয় দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি"

এতদ্বারা জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, বাগদাদ ঢাকা কার্পেট ফ্যাক্টরীর অভ্যন্তরে বিভিন্ন স্থানে রক্ষিত জুপ মালামাল যেখানে যে অবস্থায় আছে সে অবস্থায় বিক্রয়ের জন্য নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্ত সাপেক্ষে আগ্রহী দরদাতার নিকট হতে মিলের নির্ধারিত সিডিউলে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্র. নং	বিক্রয়ত্ব্য মালামালের বিবরণ	পরিমাণ (কেজি/টন)	প্রতি সেট সিডিউলের মূল্য (টাকা) নগদ	দরপত্র জামানত (টাকা)	দরপত্র দলিল বিক্রয়ের সময়সূচী ও স্থান	দরপত্র গ্রহণ/জামানতের সময়সূচী ও স্থান	দরপত্র খোলার সময়সূচী ও স্থান
১	১মিসের সিডিউলে উল্লেখিত (অগ্রিশ) আইটেমের জুপ মালামাল।	৩০ মেটন	১,০০০/-	প্রদত্ত মোট মূল্যের ১৫%	দরপত্র দলিল বিক্রয়ের সময়সূচী: ১৭/০৩/২০২৫ তারিখ রোজ সোমবার হতে ১৫/০৪/২০২৫ তারিখ রোজ মঙ্গলবার অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।	দরপত্র গ্রহণের সময়সূচী: ১৬/০৪/২০২৫ তারিখ রোজ বুবার (BST) দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।	দরপত্র খোলার সময়সূচী: ১৭/০৪/২০২৫ তারিখ রোজ বুহশ্পতিবার (BST) পর্যন্ত।

দরপত্র দলিল বিক্রয়ের স্থান: ক) বিজেএমসি প্রধান কার্যালয়, হিসাব বিভাগ, বাগদাদ-ঢাকা কার্পেট ফ্যাক্টরী, উত্তর কাটালী, চট্টগ্রাম।

দরপত্র গ্রহণ/জামানতের স্থান: ক) বিজেএমসি প্রধান কার্যালয়, হিসাব বিভাগ, বাগদাদ-ঢাকা কার্পেট ফ্যাক্টরী, উত্তর কাটালী, চট্টগ্রাম।

দরপত্র খোলার স্থান: ৭ নং ক্রমিক উল্লেখিত স্থানসমূহ হতে প্রাপ্ত দরপত্রসমূহ মুখ বন্ধ অবস্থায় একত্র করে মিলের প্রশাসন বিভাগে খোলা হবে।

১। দরপত্রের সাথে ৫ নং ক্রমিক বর্ণিত জামানতের সমপরিমাণ অর্থ বর্ণিত জামানতের সমপরিমাণ অর্থ কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংকের ডিমান্ড ড্রাকট/পে-অর্ডার আকারে- মিলের অনুকূলে অবশ্যই জমা দিতে হবে। জামানত ব্যতীত/নির্ধারিত অংকের কম পরিমাণের জামানত/ডেবিত/জামানত/ডুয়া জামানতের কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না। কৃতকার্য দরদাতার জামানতের অর্থ মালামালের মূল্যের সাথে সমন্বয়/কেনরতযোগ্য। অন্যান্য দরদাতার জামানতের অর্থ দরপত্র সুল্যায়নের পরে ফেরৎ দেয়া হবে। উদ্ধৃত দর কোন কাটাকাটি/ঘষামাজা করা যাবে না। উদ্ধৃত দর অংক ও কথায় লিখতে হবে। উদ্ধৃত একক দর ও মোট দরের মধ্যে কোন পার্থক্য পরিলক্ষিত হলে একক দরের ভিত্তিতে মূল্যায়ন/হিসাব করা হবে।

২। দরপত্রের সাথে সিডিউল ক্রয়ের রশিদ, এনআইডি, র ফটোকপি, ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদ, হালনাগাদ আয়কর সনদ, ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সনদ, থাকতে হবে।

৩। উত্তর সিডিউলের যাবতীয় শর্তাবলী দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির শর্তাবলী হিসেবে বিবেচিত হবে। দরপত্র সুল্যায়নে এসব শর্তাবলীও বিবেচিত হবে।

৪। সিডিউলের সকল আইটেম ১ টি প্যাকেজ হিসেবে গণ্য করে সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতার নিকট সমস্ত মালামাল বিক্রয় করা হবে।

৫। কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন/সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করে।

৬। দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি বিজেএমসি'র ওয়েবসাইট www.bjmc.gov.bd তে দেখা যাবে।

(মোঃ বেলাল হোসেন)
প্রকল্প প্রধান
বাগদাদ-ঢাকা কার্পেট ফ্যাক্টরী
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GD-678

Luxury hotels hit hard as political uncertainty deters foreign guests

Unique Hotel CEO discusses challenges in an interview with The Daily Star

SUKANTA HALDER

Bangladesh's luxury hotel industry is experiencing a downturn as political uncertainty reduces the number of foreign guests, according to a top executive of the local hospitality sector.

The decline in international visitors is putting pressure on high-end hotels that rely heavily on business travelers and tourists, said Shakawath Hossain, chief executive officer of Unique Hotel & Resorts PLC, which owns The Westin Dhaka, Sheraton Dhaka, and HANSA.

"We are currently going through such an uncertain situation that nothing is clear," he said in an interview with The Daily Star on February 27.

He said that there is a travel ban on Japanese and Korean citizens to Bangladesh, while restrictions on American travelers have eased slightly. Visa restrictions for Indian citizens remain in place.

Providing a financial comparison, Hossain said that if the company earned Tk 20 crore in February 2023, revenue dropped to Tk 17 crore in the same month this year.

Although room occupancy rates appear to be 100 percent, guests are spending less, he explained. Although the revenue has declined, operational costs have remained unchanged.

Previously, the majority of foreign guests at their hotels were business owners or CEOs.

Now, visitors are mainly mid or junior-level employees, startup officials or NGO representatives. Some small business owners also make up a portion of the clientele, according to the CEO.

He said a significant portion of their customers used to come from India, but their numbers have fallen sharply due to the current political climate. Likewise, Japanese and Korean visitors are absent.

Businesspeople from most European countries are also staying away, Hossain further said.

"Currently, demand is low, but supply is high," said the CEO, who has over 20 years of experience in Bangladesh's tourism

KEY POINTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

- Room occupancy rates have reached 100%
- Guests are spending less than before
- Previously, most foreign guests were business owners or CEOs
- Now, visitors are mainly mid- or junior-level employees, startup executives, or NGO representatives
- To stay competitive, hotels have reduced room rates
- Previously, a night's stay cost \$200, but now it is available for \$150
- More than 50% of the company's revenue comes from room bookings



Shakawath Hossain

SUGGESTIONS

- Establish an independent tourism authority
- Reduce dependency on imports by promoting local production of hospitality items
- Lower VAT and supplementary duties on imported goods

and hospitality industry.

To stay competitive, hotels have had to lower room rates. Previously, a night's stay at their hotel cost \$200, but now it is available for just \$150.

"If rooms remain vacant, we cannot survive. Our main objective now is to retain market share. Given the situation, we are quite concerned about law and order," he said.

He added that if the company previously had a 10 percent profit margin, it has now dropped to 8 percent.

"Operational costs remain unchanged at the end of the day and we must pay staff salaries at the end of the month. Besides, dividends must be distributed to shareholders at the end of the year," he said.

More than 50 percent of the company's revenue comes from room rentals, while 45 percent is generated from food and beverage sales. The remaining 5 percent comes from transportation, fitness and

spa services.

Hossain mentioned that many international companies are interested in doing business with Unique Hotel & Resorts, but the current situation is not conducive to investment.

As a result, potential partners from Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Japan and China are adopting a wait-and-see approach.

He said that due to deteriorating law and order and various business challenges, the company recently met with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus to express their concerns.

Highlighting import challenges, he noted that taxes on interior items and hotel furniture have risen to over 200 percent, compared to around 20 percent previously.

Besides, the import of premium meat has been halted, while hard liquor imports face an average duty of 600 percent. These tax burdens need to be

revised, Hossain commented.

"There are no policymakers who truly understand the challenges of this industry. We need experienced professionals at the ministry level," he said.

Hossain suggested that Bangladesh should establish an independent Tourism Authority, with the ministry focusing solely on policy. Bureaucratic red tape is causing the country to lose out on significant opportunities, he added.

He encouraged young people interested in hospitality to pursue careers in the sector, describing it as "a highway with no traffic" and full of potential for growth.

To address industry challenges, he outlined three key priorities: appointing technically skilled and internationally experienced professionals at the ministry level, reducing dependency on imports by promoting local production and lowering VAT and supplementary duties on imported goods.

Resilience -- the foundational skill that makes an entrepreneur

BEN JEFFREYS

"Entrepreneurship is about experimentation: the probabilities of success are low, extremely skewed, and unknowable until an investment is made."

After being an entrepreneur for a decade operating across Asia, I agree with this statement down to my core. It's an uncomfortable fact, but the reality is -- not everyone is built to be an entrepreneur.

The ability to get back up after failure is the defining factor between those who make it and those who don't. It's not about intelligence, funding, or even having the best idea -- it's about resilience. How you react the first time you get knocked down will tell you everything about whether this path is right for you.

When I co-founded ATEC back in 2016, we believed we had a solution that would change lives -- clean cooking technology that could replace traditional, polluting cooking as well as have a significant impact on climate change and household incomes.

The potential was both clear and enormous, but the reality was far more difficult. In Cambodia, we faced everything from sceptical customers to logistical nightmares.

At times, it felt impossible to move forward.



That was the first of many moments of truth -- give up, or find a way to push through. We chose to adapt, refine our model by listening to our customers, and then grind our way to success.

But resilience isn't a one-time requirement; it's a constant test. Some 10 years, more than \$10 million investments and 100,000 lives impacted later, I'm still tested every day -- potentially even more so than in the early days.

When we expanded into Bangladesh as our second market at the end of 2019, we were confident we had learned most of the hard lessons. Yet, we were confronted with new challenges -- unexpected regulatory issues, partnership promises that weren't fulfilled, and a distribution model that didn't fully translate.

Then to top it off, Covid-19 hit. Once again, we had to decide whether to fold under pressure or find another way and once again, resilience made the difference. Following the golden rule of startup recruitment -- ensuring your first hire is the best damn person you can find -- also certainly helped.

This ability to rise after failure isn't something everyone has. Some people hit that roadblock and decide entrepreneurship isn't for them -- and that's okay. Not everyone is suited for this life and we need a whole range of people in society.

But if you get knocked down and feel an instinctive drive to get back up, humbly admit where you were wrong, and try again, that's the clearest sign you are an entrepreneur. You can be born with this, or it can be learnt, the only way to find out is to thrust yourself into the uncomfortable void of trying and failing.

You do this and survive, then you're on the entrepreneurship path.

But please, save the glorified success stories for your next social media post. Every real entrepreneur knows deep down the reality that real entrepreneurship isn't glorious -- it hurts -- but we wouldn't do anything else.

The author is co-founder and CEO of ATEC Global

Baidu releases new AI model to compete with DeepSeek

AFP, Beijing

Chinese internet search giant Baidu released a new artificial intelligence reasoning model Sunday and made its AI chatbot services free to consumers as ferocious competition grips the sector.

Technology companies in China have been scrambling to release improved AI platforms since start-up DeepSeek shocked its rivals with its open source and highly cost-efficient model in January.

In a post on WeChat, Baidu announced the launch of its latest X1 reasoning model -- which the company claims performs similarly to DeepSeek's but for lower cost -- and a new foundation model, Ernie 4.5.

Baidu also made its AI chatbot Ernie Bot free for individual users more than two weeks ahead of schedule. Previously, users had to pay a subscription to access the company's latest AI models via Ernie Bot.

Ernie 4.5 "outperforms" US-based OpenAI's GPT-4.5 model in "multiple benchmarks", while Ernie X1 features "enhanced capabilities in understanding, planning, reflection, and evolution", Baidu said.

The Beijing-based company was one of China's first to roll out a generative AI platform publicly, in 2023, but rival chatbots from companies such as TikTok owner ByteDance and Moonshot AI have since gained more users.

Baidu faces stiff competition in the consumer-facing AI sector where startup DeepSeek shook up the industry at home and abroad with a model that performed comparably to competitors such as US-made ChatGPT, but cost much less to develop.

Since then, Chinese companies and local government agencies have rushed to incorporate DeepSeek's open-source model into their work, while other technology companies have been playing catch-up.

Fed likely to keep rates steady

AFP, Washington

The US Federal Reserve is widely expected to keep interest rates unchanged at its policy meeting this week, treading carefully amid uncertainty over President Donald Trump's economic policies, which include spending cuts and sweeping tariffs.

Since January, Trump has imposed levies on major trading partners Canada, Mexico and China, and on steel and aluminum imports, roiling financial markets and fanning fears that his plans could tip the world's biggest economy into a recession.

The Trump administration has also embarked on unprecedented cost-cutting efforts that target staff and spending, while the president has promised tax reductions and deregulation down the road.

But Fed Chair Jerome Powell emphasized this month that it is the "net effect" of policy changes that will matter for both the economy and monetary policy.

Analysts widely expect the central bank to hold the benchmark lending rate steady at 4.25 percent to 4.50 percent, after similarly doing so in January.

"Recent Fed commentary has reinforced a wait-and-see approach, with officials signaling little urgency to adjust policy as they assess the economic impact of recent policy shifts," said EY chief economist Gregory Daco.

Powell himself has said that policymakers are focused on separating signal from noise as the outlook evolves.

Sri Lanka seeks JV investments in Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Sri Lanka has expressed its willingness to invest in joint ventures in Bangladesh, particularly in synthetic fabric manufacturing, which holds significant potential for investors from both nations, Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dharmapala Weerakkody said yesterday.

He made these remarks during a courtesy call on Taskeen Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI), at the chamber's office in the capital, according to a press release.

Weerakkody highlighted several sectors as highly promising for joint venture investments, including healthcare, tourism, large hotels, information technology, education, and pharmaceuticals.

He pointed out that both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and have maintained a strong and friendly bilateral

diplomatic relationship for many years.

He urged Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to leverage Sri Lanka's experience and technical expertise to develop the country's local tourism sector.

Weerakkody highlighted several sectors as highly promising for joint venture investments, including healthcare, tourism, large hotels, IT, education and pharmaceuticals

The high commissioner also said that Sri Lanka has already signed preferential trade agreements (PTAs) with several countries, and negotiations with Bangladesh are set to begin soon to further expand bilateral trade and investment.

During the meeting, DCCI President Taskeen Ahmed stated

that bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka reached \$134.06 million in the fiscal year (FY) 2023-24.

This marked a significant increase from the \$93.11 million recorded in FY 2019-20, reflecting a notable annual growth rate of 9.5 percent, he said.

Taskeen added that a substantial number of Sri Lankan investors, particularly from the banking, textile, power, construction, and pharmaceutical sectors, have already made foreign direct investments of \$428.56 million in Bangladesh.

He also encouraged Sri Lankan entrepreneurs to consider investing further in agriculture and food processing, the construction industry, healthcare, tourism, IT, and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG).

Taskeen Ahmed emphasised Sri Lanka's expertise and technical assistance in areas such as deep sea fishing, tourism, and the shipping industry.

US tariff tantrum threatens pricing progress

REUTERS, Washington

Reading the latest US inflation report is like flicking through old vacation photos: it looks nice, but the experience was only temporary. Consumer prices in February broke a recent hot streak, coming in below economists' expectations. Problem is, President Donald Trump's haphazard trade policies risk raising costs, choking off this progress and pinching households and already-flagging growth. That raises the grim possibility of true stagflation.

Annual growth in consumer prices of 2.8 percent is still above the US Federal Reserve's 2 percent target. Still, aided by a 1 percent monthly decline in gasoline costs, the increase from January fell to 0.2 percent, the lowest reading since October. That might ordinarily be an encouraging sign that the trend is coming back under control. Yet the imposition of new 25 percent steel and aluminum tariffs, and resulting European and Canadian retaliation, just ahead of the inflation report's release on Wednesday scrambles the picture.

The Fed's Beige Book business survey, published last week, warned that firms around the country expected to pass along tariff costs, with some doing so preemptively. A National Federation of

Independent Business survey found a 10 percentage point jump in the proportion of companies raising prices. The NFIB report raised concerns that core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy categories, could reaccelerate from its February rate of 3.1 percent towards 4

percent. There remains some narrow hope that the tariff blitz may yet force trading partners to agree to collective disarmament, resulting in a negotiated outcome that actually reduces levies around the world. A glimmer of

encouragement appeared on Tuesday, as the Canadian province of Ontario backed down from threats to cut off electricity supplies to the northeastern US power grid in return for Trump nixing 50 percent tariffs on metals. But the seemingly arbitrary application of trade policy has spooked markets and driven up the risk of recession, with JPMorgan now penciling in a 40 percent chance of one in 2025, up from 30 percent.

A bit of froth coming off richly valued stock markets can be a sensible readjustment. As investors rush to safer assets, 10-year treasury yields have fallen to 4.22 percent from a recent high of 4.79 percent in January. That could have a stimulatory effect by lowering financing costs and mortgage rates. But the rest of Trump's agenda, like hard-to-unwind lumber and steel tariffs and immigration restrictions, risks the worst of both worlds: higher costs, lower growth. The vacation is over, and the re-entry is rough.

The US consumer-price index rose 2.8 percent over the prior year in February, lower than economists' consensus prediction of 2.9 percent. Core prices, which exclude volatile food and energy categories, advanced at a 3.1 percent pace in February, above the Federal Reserve's target pace of 2 percent.



Customers shop for produce at an H-E-B grocery store on February 12 in Austin, Texas. Annual growth in consumer prices of 2.8 percent is still above the US Federal Reserve's 2 percent target.

PHOTO: AFP