

star BUSINESS



Tax authority to split. Will it bring the desired outcome?

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

The government is set to dissolve the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and replace it with two new divisions, aiming to modernise tax administration, boost revenue collection, and attract more investment.

A draft ordinance has been readied for the separation, outlining the changes.

Under the draft “State Policy and Revenue Management Ordinance, 2025”, both the NBR and the Internal Resources Division will be abolished.

In their place, two new bodies will be created – the Revenue Policy Division and the Revenue Management Division.

Touted as a historic overhaul, the move has ignited debate over whether it will drive meaningful reform or merely deepen the layers of bureaucracy, given the NBR’s persistent failure to meet its targets.

Splitting the revenue board has been a long-overdue task, with multilateral lenders, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF), urging the authorities to improve the country’s tax-to-GDP ratio, which is currently one of the lowest in the world.

In its April issue of the Bangladesh Development Update, the World Bank (WB) also suggested separating tax policymaking and administration.

Apart from external pushes, there is also a question of principle: the same body should not be responsible for both making tax policies and enforcing them.

Now, amid the separation moves, some believe the split could solve persistent complaints about tax harassment from the business community and bring much-needed efficiency.

Others, however, fear it will merely create more opportunities for promotions and power consolidation within the bureaucracy.

In a context already marred by weak tax compliance and bureaucratic red tape, questions hang heavy over whether the split will usher in real change or simply repack old problems with new labels.

Snehasish Barua, managing director of SMAC



Singer records massive Q1 loss despite higher sales

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

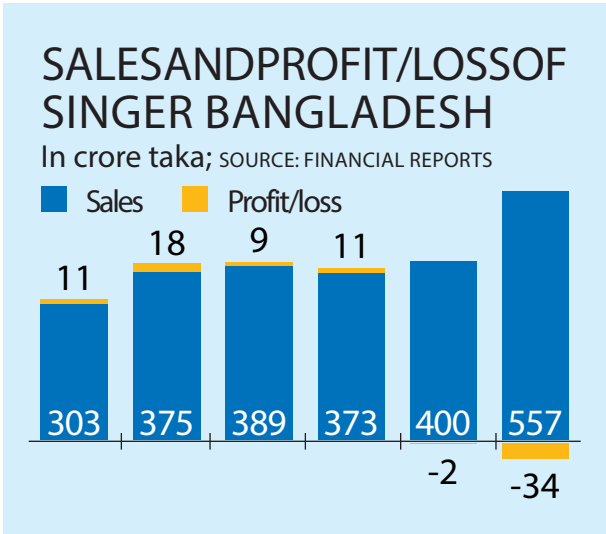
Singer Bangladesh, a listed multinational electronics and home appliance seller, saw a massive year-on-year rise in losses in the first quarter of fiscal year 2025 despite registering higher sales, attributing it mainly to high bank loan and operating costs.

The company reported a loss of Tk 34.89 crore in the latest January-March quarter, a sharp increase from a Tk 2.11 crore loss in the same period a year earlier.

However, sales rose 39 percent year-on-year to Tk 557.85 crore, according to its financial statements.

“While the turnover of the company increased, its gross profit margin has decreased by 1.8 percent year-on-year,” reads the financial report.

It was due to an increase in average product cost, including various offers, discounts, and promotions, whereas the selling price has not been increased or adjusted accordingly, it added.



“Moreover, selling price has been decreased for major products to remain competitive,” it said.

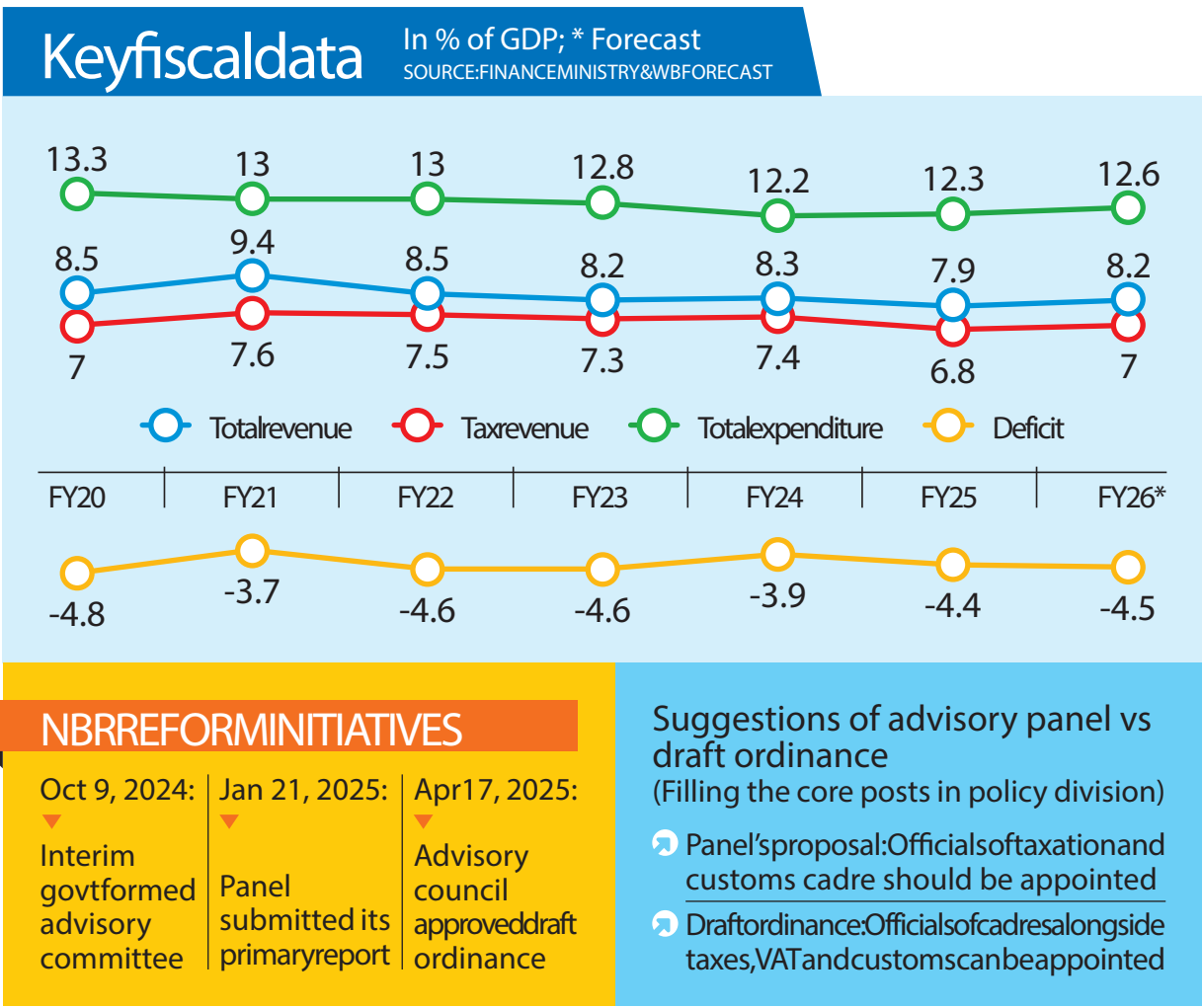
Its operating profit has decreased by 3.7 percent compared to the same period of 2024, mainly due to an increase in advertisement and sales promotions, bank charges, and warranty expenses.

Meanwhile, the overall operating expenses have increased by 38 percent.

Finance costs have also increased by 145 percent due to an increase in short-term borrowing, coupled with an increase in interest rates by more than 3.5 percentage points compared to that in Q1 of 2024, it said.

Income tax expenses have also increased by 108.4 percent due to minimum tax and deferred tax expenses, the company said.

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Advisory Services, said that in theory, the initiative could be seen as timely and progressive.

“When one institution handles policymaking, implementation, and evaluation, transparency and accountability suffer,” he said.

An independent policy division, he argued, would ensure greater autonomy and neutral oversight. However, success would depend on tackling deeper systemic issues.

“The draft ordinance suggests that a secretary or senior secretary will head the new policy division. But the key question is how will their experiences be defined?”

Barua said that beyond administrative ability, a clear understanding of revenue policy, international taxation, and socio-economic context would be essential for the posts.

‘DISASTROUS GAPS’

To push forward NBR reform, the finance ministry formed an advisory committee on October 9 last year.

Among its members were two former chairmen of the revenue board Muhammad Abdul Mazid and Nasiruddin Ahmed; former tax members Md Delwar Hossain and Aminur Rahman; and former customs member Farid Uddin.

The committee’s report, submitted to the finance adviser, outlined the rationale for separating revenue administration from policymaking.

Now, Md Farid Uddin, an advisory committee member, criticises the draft ordinance for not taking into account what they have recommended.

He finds “disastrous gaps” between their recommendations and what the draft outlines.

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Imports of farm machinery tumble

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Imports of tractors and power tillers have fallen this fiscal year owing to higher prices driven by the depreciation of taka against the US dollar and the discontinuation of government subsidies.

The opening of letters of credit (LCs) for agricultural machinery imports plunged 59 percent year-on-year between July and February of the fiscal year (FY) 2024-25, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

Meanwhile, LC settlements dropped 45 percent year-on-year, reaching \$8.3 million in the eight months to the end of February.

“Increased cost of the dollar has pushed up the prices of tractors, and this has affected sales by up to 20 percent,” said Sadid Jamil, managing director of Metal, a farming machinery

importer.

Sales of combine harvesters have also nosedived since the government scrapped subsidies that had been aimed at speeding up farm mechanisation, cutting reliance on manual labour, reducing production costs, and improving yields.

Previously, farmers received up to 70 percent subsidy on the purchase of combine harvesters. However, this support was withdrawn in the last fiscal year following allegations of irregularities.

Jamil said the situation for power tillers, the most widely used farm machinery for cultivation, mirrors that of tractors.

He said that the subsidy had given a major boost to agricultural mechanisation and urged the government to reinstate it.

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About 24 percent of the total credit disbursements for agriculture went to livestock and poultry businesses during July-February of FY25, while the share was 25 percent during the corresponding months of FY24.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Credit for livestock and poultry creeps downward

SUKANTA HALDER

The share of credit disbursement to the livestock and poultry subsectors of the agriculture industry slipped slightly in the first eight months of the current fiscal year (FY), according to a report by Bangladesh Bank.

It said that about 24 percent of the total credit disbursements for agriculture went to livestock and poultry businesses during the July-February period, while the share was 25 percent during the corresponding months of FY24.

Meanwhile, the crops subsector continued to dominate, claiming 48 percent of the disbursements in the first eight months of FY25 compared to 45 percent during the same period of FY24.

However, the fisheries subsector got the smallest share of 15 percent in July-February of FY25 compared to 14 percent for the same period of FY24.

The report also said that scheduled banks in the country disbursed a total of Tk 22,125 crore for agriculture in the July-February period of FY25, reflecting a decrease of 6.60 percent year-on-year.

This significant downturn is due to reduced disbursements by private commercial banks (16.71 percent) and state-owned commercial banks (0.64 percent).

On the other hand, disbursements by state-owned specialised banks and foreign

commercial banks increased 12.85 percent and 4.93 percent respectively compared to their values in the July-February months of FY24.

Mohammad Ali, managing director of Pubali Bank, told The Daily Star that entrepreneurs in the poultry and livestock subsectors secured favourable prices for their products in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

He explained that farmers’ profit margins improved at the same time, thereby reducing their reliance on loans and causing a subsequent decline in overall borrowing.

Ali further said that as inflation has eased from double to single digits, the resulting decrease in production costs curbed the demand for agricultural loans.

An official of Bangladesh Krishi Bank said their credit disbursements to livestock and poultry businesses increased by Tk 102 crore year-on-year in the July-February period.

At the same time, overall agriculture credit disbursements increased by Tk 689 crore, he added.

THE SITUATION A FARMER FACED WHILE TAKING A LOAN

Mohammad Azizul Islam, a farmer from Dinajpur, said he took a loan of Tk 50,000 from a private bank last year at an interest rate of 4 percent without collateral.

Although the loan documents mentioned Tk 50,000, he claims to have received only Tk 48,000.

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BTRC approves licence for Starlink

Sends proposal to telecom ministry for final nod

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Bangladesh’s internet regulator has given the green light for Starlink to obtain a satellite internet licence, sending a letter to the telecom ministry last week for final approval.

As per telecom law, it is mandatory for the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to obtain pre-approval from the ministry before taking key decisions, including granting licences.

“We already sent a letter to the ministry for pre-approval last week,” said BTRC Chairman Md Ennadul Bari.

“Once it is granted, we will issue the licence upon payment of the required fees,” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

This is the swiftest recommendation from the BTRC for any such licence, according to an official of the regulator

According to the document, Starlink Services Bangladesh Ltd applied for the licence on April 7 under the regulatory framework titled “Guidelines for Non-Geostationary Orbit (NGSO) Satellite Services Operators in Bangladesh” issued by the BTRC.

The company’s registration states that its local office is in a building in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka.

After receiving the application from Starlink, the BTRC formed a seven-member committee to evaluate it. The committee found all the documents authentic and proper, and recommended Starlink for the licence.

Later, a two-member committee of the BTRC also visited Starlink’s Bangladesh office and recommended in favour of granting the licence.

This is the swiftest recommendation from the BTRC for any such licence, according to a BTRC official.

The development comes as Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus in March this year directed the authorities to ensure Starlink’s commercial launch within 90 days.

Starlink has been trying to enter the Bangladesh market since 2021.

In April last year, the BTRC approved the formation of a committee comprising officials from various divisions to draft guidelines for satellite-based internet services.

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BP celebrates 40-year milestone with Meghna Petroleum

Md Abul Quasem, M Shahjahan Mina, and Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil, directors of the company; Sumon Das, chief executive officer; Md Anisul Alam Sarker, company secretary; and Md Nahid Raza, head of finance, among others, were also present.



Romana Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of Bank Asia Securities Limited, signs the company's audited financial statement for the year that ended on December 31, 2024 during its 14th annual general meeting at the Rangs Bhavan on Bijoy Sarani in Dhaka recently.

Under this agreement, customers of the realtor will be able to avail themselves

Abidur Rahman Chowdhury, deputy managing director of the bank, and Mohammad Rakib Hossain, general manager for sales at Tropical Homes, along with other officials from both organisations, were also present.



PHOTO: **SOUTHEAST BANK**

Md Rashed Akter, head of retail distribution and chief bancassurance officer at the bank; and Khondoker Imran Hossain, bancassurance manager; and AHM Nazmus Shahadat Mia and Md Abul Kalam Azad, faculty members of the BIA; along with other executives and officers of both the bank and the BIA, were also present.



PHOTO: MIDLAND BANK



Kedar Lele, vice-president for South Asia at BP Lubricants, and Md Tipu Sultan, managing director of Meghna Petroleum, inaugurate the celebration programme in Dhaka recently.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (APR 27, 2025)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 72-Tk 85	-1.26 ↓	13.14 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 55	0	0.96 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	0	0
Lentil (kg)	Tk 100-Tk 110	-2.33 ↓	-2.33 ↓
Soybean (litre)	Tk 158-Tk 172	2.48 ↑	9.27 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 20-Tk 25	0	-53.13 ↓
Onion (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 65	53.33 ↑	-2.54 ↓
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 38-Tk 45	2.47 ↑	-1.19 ↓

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“দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি”

২০২৪-২০২৫ অর্থবছরে বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম-এর যোগেশহর প্রধান কার্যালয়ের জন্য নিম্নবর্ণিত কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী সরবরাহের নির্দিষ্ট কম্পিউটার প্রস্তুতকারী/সরবরাহকারীর নিকট হতে পিসিয়ার, ২০০৬ (সর্বশেষ সংশোধনকৃত) এর নিয়মানুসারে নিম্নবিধিত শর্তসমূহীয় সীলমোহরকৃত নামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্রঃনং	স্থাপত্য/বিবরণ	পরিবেশ, বন ও জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন মন্ত্রণালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।
১।	দরপত্র আওয়াকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান	বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম
২।	ক্রয়/যোগাদেশকারীর নাম	সচিব, বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, ই-১০-১৩, এম এ কে খলিল সড়ক, পশ্চিম পাথার, বাংলাদেশ বন গবেষণা ইনসটিটিউট ক্যাম্পাস, যোগেশহর, চট্টগ্রাম। ফোন নং-০২৪৩৩০০৬৭
৩।	দরপত্র বিবরণ	"২০২৪-২৫ অর্থ বছরে বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম-এর জন্য কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী সরবরাহ"
৪।	অফের উদ্দেশ্য	জিওবি
৫।	সঙ্গেই পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)
৬।	দরপত্র বিরতির শেষ তারিখ ও স্থান	১১ মে ২০২৫ খ্রি: অফিস চ্যাংকালাই পর্যন্ত। স্থান: সেবা শাখা, বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম।
৭।	দরপত্র দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৮ মে ২০২৫ খ্রি: সকাল ১১.০০ টা পর্যন্ত।
৮।	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান	বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম।
৯।	দরপত্রপ্রদানের ব্যোক্ততা	উচ্চ লাটের ক্ষেত্রে দরপত্রপ্রদাতাকে প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/প্রদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে হবে এবং ১ টি ভুক্তিতে ন্যূনতম ০২ (দুই) লাখ টাকা কর্তৃক কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী সরবরাহের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
১০।	কার্যের মেয়াদ	কার্যসময় প্রান্তির ৩০ (ত্রিশ) দিনের মধ্যে।
১১।	দরপত্র সিডিভিশনের মূল্য	প্রান্তির ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা (অফেন্ডিংমেটা) দিয়ে সিডিভিশন ত্রয় করতে হবে।
১২।	জমাৎ	লট ০১ এর ক্ষেত্রে ১০,০০০/- (দশ হাজার) টাকা ও লট ০২ এর ক্ষেত্রে ৫০০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার) টাকা যে কোন তফসিলি ব্যাংক হতে ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/চেং-অর্ডার বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড - এর অনুকুলে দরপত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে।
১৩।	দরপত্র ঘোষণার তারিখ; সময় ও স্থান	১৮ মে ২০২৫ খ্রি:, দুপুর ১১.০৫ ঘটিকা স্থান: সফেন্দে কক্ষ, বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম
১৪।	দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিলতব্য কাগজাদির নমুনা	১। তফসিলি ব্যাংক কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত অর্থিক স্বাক্ষরহীন সনদ, হাস্যানুদান বৈধ ব্রেক হাইসেম, আরকর সনদ, ভ্যাট নিবন্ধন পত্রের কপি, জারী পরিত্র পত্রের সত্যাকৃতি ছায়াচিত্র, দরপত্রের সনদ ফোটা ২(দুই) কপি পার্সপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল এবং দরপত্র ত্রুটিগুলোর সহজে মুদ্রা সন্দেহজনক/মুদ্রা প্রশংসিত করে হবে। ২। দরপত্রের সাথে সিডিভিশন মেটাফর্ম প্রান্তির আইটেমের ১টি কপি নমুনা দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৫।	কার্যের সফলতার বিবরণ: লট ০১ : মিনিট ০৪টি, কিবোর্ড ০৪টি, ইউপিএস ০৪টি, মাউস ২ ডজন, টেনার ২ ডজন, প্রিন্টার ০৪টি, পেনড্রাইভ ২০ টি, হার্ডডিস্ক ০১টি লট ০২ : সিপিউ ০৪টি, হার্ডডিস্ক ০১ টি	

দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী:

১। দরপত্র স্পষ্টভাবে উন্মুক্ত রূপে অথবা কথায় লিখিত হবে। দরপত্র কোন কার্টাট, ঘাঘাওয়া করা যাবে না। দরপত্র অবশ্যই সীল মোহরকৃত নামে দাখিল করতে হবে কোন অসম্পূর্ণ দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবেনা। দরপত্রের সনদ কার্যক্রম পালনিক প্রক্রিয়াধর্মিত বিধিমালা, ২০০৬ মোতাবেক পরিলক্ষিত হবে। দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী ও অন্যান্য তথ্যাদি অফিস চ্যাংকালাই এবং গুয়েবসাইট www.rubberboard.gov.bd এর মাধ্যমে জানা যাবে।

২। দরপত্র প্রার্থীর বিরুদ্ধে তত্ত্ব টেনার ডুকুমেন্ট(সিডিভিশন) -এ বর্ণিত থাকবে। দরপত্রপ্রদাতাদের সিডিভিশনের শর্ত মোতাবেক দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে। নামের উপর স্পষ্টভাবে লট নং উল্লেখপূর্বক "২০২৪-২৫ অর্থ বছরে বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম-এর জন্য কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী সরবরাহ" লিপিত হবে।

৩। দরপত্র দাখিলকারী যেকোন প্রতিষ্ঠান লট-১ ও লট-২ এর যেকোন একটি বা উভয় লটের জন্য দরপত্র দাখিল করতে পারবে।

৪। দাখিলকৃত বিদের উপর বিধি মোতাবেক আয়কর ও ভ্যাট কর্তন করা যাবে।

৫। নির্দিষ্ট সময়ে যথা মাল্যমান সরবরাহ করতে বাধ্য হলে, সিডিভিশন বর্ণিত সামগ্রী যথাযথভাবে গণগতমান ও স্পেসিফিকেশন বহিষ্কৃত হলে তা গ্রহণ করা হবে না। সে ক্ষেত্রে সঠিক সরবরাহকারীর কারণে বিভিন্ন পূর্বক জামানত ব্যোক্তায় করা হবে। দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিলকৃত জামানত ত্রুটি(নিম্ন) যথা পর্যন্ত সন্তোষ করা হবে। সরবরাহের পর সরবরাহকৃত মাল্যমানের ত্রুটির বিষয়ে কোন আপত্তি না পাওয়া গেলে তবেই জামানতের টাকা ফেরত প্রদান করা হবে।

০৬। কোন দরপাত্র দাখিলকৃত দরপত্র প্রত্যাহার করতে চাইলে দরপত্র বাজ় ঘোষণার পূর্বেই প্রত্যাহারের আবেদন দরপত্র বাজ়ে দাখিল করতে হবে।

০৭। সকল সামগ্রী সরবরাহকারীকে নিজ ঘর থেকে বাংলাদেশ রাবার বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম এর যোগেশহর প্রধান কার্যালয়ে দাখিল করতে হবে। সরবরাহকৃত সামগ্রীর গণগতমান মূল্যমান কর্মিট কর্তৃক যাচাই বাজ়াই আছে সন্তোষজনক বিবেচিত হলে এবং অন্যকারী কর্তৃক অসম্মতি হলে বিশেষ অর্থ পরিশোধ করা যাবে। অগ্রীম কোন বিল প্রদান করা যাবেনা। সর্বশেষ বিক্রয় ও ঘোষণার তারিখে সরকার কর্তৃক ঐতি মেটাফর্ম করা হলে পরবর্তী কার্যক্রম বিক্রয় ও ঘোষণার দিন গণ্য হবে।

০৮। কাগজের যাচাইকৃত ক্রয় প্রমাণিত হলে বা একজনের সার্টিফিকেট অন্যজনে ব্যবহার করলে বা একজনের নামে অন্যজনের জামানতের পে-অর্ডার বা ব্যাংক ড্রাফট দাখিল করলে জামানত ব্যোক্তায় সাহ দরপত্র বাতিল করা হবে এবং আইনগত ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

০৯। দরপত্র আওয়াকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান সরকারী স্বার্থে দরপত্রের যে কোন শর্তাবলী পরিবর্তন/পরিবর্তন প্রস্তাব করতে পারবেন এবং কোন প্রকার কারণ দর্শাতে ব্যতিরেকে যেকোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

(Signature)
সচিব
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Narrowing gender gap an economic necessity: speakers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Beach Hatchery Limited was the

Uddin also criticised the

"But in the ordinance, that requirement was completely left out. Now, the government can appoint any officer they choose as secretary," he commented.

Mutasim Billah Faruqi, president of the BCS Taxation Association, said they initially welcomed the separating initiative in the greater interest of the state, even though it involved splitting the board.

Starlink currently operates over 6,000 satellites and serves more than three million users worldwide. The service is seen as a potential game-

If approved by the telecom ministry, Starlink could begin offering services in Bangladesh within a few months, marking a significant milestone in the country's digital connectivity ambitions.

"As a result, many are now shifting towards tractors, which offer better efficiency and cost advantages," he added.

The company's net operating cash flow per share (NOCFPS) improved

Since diversifying into consumer durables in 1985, Singer has evolved into a multi-brand retailer operating through a broad network of retail outlets, dealers, and corporate partners.

The brunt of the crisis is being felt by the middle and lower-middle classes, many of whom have saved for years in the hope of owning a small apartment in the city. With fewer new

As such, overall loan disbursements have decreased, he said, while adding that the banks need to take a more proactive approach to support these industries.

The brunt of the crisis is being felt by the middle and lower-middle classes, many of whom have saved for years in the hope of owning a small apartment in the city. With fewer new

"We are not opposing planning," Latif said. "We are calling for balanced, inclusive, and economically viable planning."

Calling for meaningful dialogue with stakeholders, he said, "Real estate is not just about profits. It's about people's right to shelter, dignity, and stability."

GD-1000

DEBATE OVER DETAILED AREA PLAN

Dhaka’s rapid expansion has prompted a clash between sustainability goals and the real estate boom. At the centre lies the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) 2022-2035 for Dhaka, with urban planners and developers offering differing views in recent interviews with The Daily Star

DAP hurts home buyers: REHAB

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Regulations in the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) are limiting housing responses to meet Dhaka’s growing accommodation needs, according to realtors, as they argue that current urban policies are doing more harm than good.

“The new regulations may look good on paper, but in practice, they make it almost impossible to build affordable housing,” said Abdul Latif, vice-president of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB).

Latif, also the managing director of Basic Builders Ltd, said the floor area ratio (FAR) restrictions in the new DAP are strangling their ability to respond to Dhaka’s housing needs.

The FAR defines how much floor space can be constructed on a given plot of land. Under the new rules, the maximum allowable construction has been significantly reduced in many zones across Dhaka and adjacent areas.



ABDUL LATIF
Vice-president of REHAB

the cost of steel, cement, bricks, and other core materials has risen by nearly 30 percent, driven by global supply chain disruptions, inflation, and rising fuel costs.

Meanwhile, apartment prices have remained flat in many parts of Dhaka as buyer confidence erodes amid economic uncertainty.

“Our input costs have gone up, but demand has softened. Many buyers are taking a wait-and-see approach. Some have cancelled bookings altogether,” Latif said.

He pointed out that higher diesel prices and import duties have also pushed up transportation and logistics costs, further straining developers.

“We are running on razor-thin margins now. For many firms, it is no longer a profitable business,” he added.

“The DAP promotes density control, but in the wrong places,” Latif said. “In high-demand, working-class areas like Mirpur, Badda, and parts of Uttara, developers are being asked to reduce vertical growth. But these are the zones where the housing pressure is highest.”

At the same time, luxury zones like Gulshan, Banani, and Baridhara already operate under strict regulations. In many parts of the city, designated “growth zones” still lack basic infrastructure – such as public transport, sewage, and water – making development there practically impossible.

Latif emphasised that a blanket policy does not work for a city as complex as Dhaka.

“You cannot apply one rule across such a diverse urban landscape. What Dhaka needs is targeted, data-driven planning,” he said.

In response to growing population pressure, the government has pushed for decentralisation – a strategy aimed at moving administrative functions and industry outside Dhaka to ease congestion.

READ MORE ON B3

Unchecked growth not an option: BIP

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The Detailed Area Plan (DAP) aims to strike a balance between development and sustainability of Dhaka, according to the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), as it says relaxing DAP guidelines to favour real estate interests would cause long-term consequences to the liveability of the megacity.

“The new DAP introduces area-based population density norms for the first time in Dhaka’s history, which is essential for sustainable city planning,” said BIP President Adil Mohammed Khan. “We cannot afford to let Dhaka grow unchecked any longer.”

A key component of the plan is the regulation of the floor area ratio (FAR) – the ratio of a building’s total floor area to the size of the plot on which it stands.

The DAP 2022 introduces a varying FAR system from the city centre to peripheral areas based on the level of urban area as well as infrastructure, services and utility



ADIL MOHAMMED KHAN
President of Bangladesh
Institute of Planners

density not only affects comfort and convenience, but it also directly impacts safety and liveability. Many neighbourhoods in Dhaka already suffer from narrow lanes and unplanned construction. With increased density and relaxed building rules, these areas risk becoming fire hazards.

“We’re seeing more cases where fire cars can’t enter alleys during emergencies because the lanes are too narrow and congested,” Khan said. “If we allow indiscriminate high-rise construction in these same neighbourhoods, we will make the situation worse. In a fire accident, response delays can cost lives.”

According to Khan, this loss of accessibility for emergency services – especially the fire department – is one of the most critical dangers of poorly planned urban expansion. The consequences are not hypothetical; recent fire incidents in the capital have exposed how fatal it can be when infrastructure is ignored in favour of vertical growth.

The DAP 2022 differs significantly from its predecessor, the 2008 plan. The earlier version prioritised rapid development and was more lenient with FAR values and construction permissions.

In contrast, the updated DAP aims to strike a balance between development and sustainability, emphasising green spaces, improved infrastructure, and population control.

“We are trying to correct the mistakes of the past,” Khan said. “The 2008 DAP allowed fast growth but overlooked critical issues like traffic congestion, pollution, and emergency access. This time, we want to build a city that can breathe.”

“Developers may see a dip in profits initially, but these policies are necessary for the city’s long-term survival,” said the BIP president.

“We are not against development, we’re against uncontrolled, unsafe, and unsustainable development.”

BIP SAYS

- Unchecked density risks turning Dhaka into a death trap
- Relaxing building rules may cripple future liveability
- DAP aims to fix past planning mistakes for a healthier city

capacities of particular areas to control density and infrastructure strain.

But developers have pushed back, seeking to raise the FAR limits and revert to a uniform, plot-based system.

Such a move, Khan warns, would be disastrous.

“For example, the FAR in areas like Badda could increase from 2 to 3.4 and dwelling units per katha could increase from 1.6 to 3,” Khan explained.

“That means the number of families on a two-katha (1,440 sqft) plot could double from three to six. Multiply that across hundreds of neighbourhoods, and you’re looking at density levels exceeding 50,000 people per square kilometre – well beyond what any liveable megacity should sustain.”

He added that high population

Heidelberg Materials Bangladesh’s profit drops 50% in Q1

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Heidelberg Materials Bangladesh saw its profit decline in the January-March quarter of 2025 due to lower sales.

The cement producer’s profit slumped 50 percent year-on-year to Tk 19.6 crore in the first quarter of this year, according to its financial statements. Its earnings per share (EPS) fell to Tk 3.48 in the first quarter from Tk 6.96 in the same period a year earlier.

Shares of the company declined 3.17 percent to close at Tk 225.8 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday. The net operating cash flow per share (NOCFPS) also dropped, standing at Tk 2.97 in the negative compared to Tk 23 a year ago.

The cement manufacturer attributed the fall in EPS to a lower net sales price per tonne and reduced sales volume.

The decrease in NOCFPS was due to lower sales volume and collection, the company said in the financial statement.

The company noted that its net asset value per share rose during the January-March period, mainly supported by the net profit recorded in the first quarter.

As of March 31, 2025, sponsors and directors held 60.67 percent of the company’s shares, while institutional investors owned 28.42 percent, foreign investors 0.04 percent, and general stakeholders 10.87 percent, according to the DSE data.

Heidelberg Materials Bangladesh is one of the largest cement producers in the country. Part of the global Heidelberg Materials Group, which operates in over 50 countries, it strengthened its local presence by establishing a floating terminal and packing facilities in Chattogram, as per its website.

Runner Automobiles back in profit in Q3

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Runner Automobiles returned to profit in the third quarter of the fiscal year (FY) 2024-25, buoyed by a rise in revenue from its three-wheeler business.

The company recorded a profit of Tk 4.88 crore during the January to March period, according to a disclosure on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday. This marks a turnaround from a loss posted in the same quarter a year earlier.

The company’s consolidated earnings per share (EPS) stood at Tk 0.43 for the third quarter of FY25, compared to a loss of Tk 1.35 during the corresponding period of FY 2023-24.

Despite the improved performance, shares of Runner Automobiles fell by 3.03 percent to close at Tk 28.8 at the DSE.

Over the first nine months of the current fiscal year, from July 2024 to March 2025, the company reported a consolidated EPS of Tk 0.07, a recovery from a loss of Tk 3.57 recorded during the same stretch of the previous year.

Runner’s consolidated net operating cash flow per share (NOCFPS) also rose, increasing to Tk 14.28 from Tk 13.18 a year earlier. The company credited the improvement to higher sales collections.

It said the surge in three-wheeler sales not only boosted overall revenue but also contributed to achieving a positive EPS in the latest quarter.

As of 31 March 2025, sponsors and directors collectively held 49.93 percent of the company’s shares, while institutional investors owned 24.86 percent and general shareholders 25.21 percent, according to DSE data.



Automated electric trucks transport shipping containers at the Long Beach Container Terminal in Long Beach, California. Some companies didn't wait for Trump's April 2 announcement of massive “reciprocal” trade tariffs: they had already begun shipping more of their goods to the United States.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

Trump trade war pushes firms to consider stockpiling

AFP, Paris

Stockpiling is the reflex response by firms to the imposition of tariffs, but with the rapidly changing position of the Trump administration, companies are finding that it isn't so straightforward this time around.

Whether it's the luxury, electronics or pharmaceutical sectors, US President Donald Trump's unpredictability complicates the calculations of firms.

Some companies didn't wait for Trump's April 2 announcement of massive “reciprocal” trade tariffs: they had already begun shipping more of their goods to the United States.

In the end, Trump backed down quickly on the “reciprocal” tariffs, pushing them for 90 days except for China.

That still left the global 10 percent

tariff in place, as well as the 25 percent tariffs on European steel, aluminium and cars.

French cosmetics firm Clarins didn't hesitate and stepped up shipments to the United States at the beginning of the year.

“We’ve built up three months of stocks, which represents \$2 million in goods,” said Lionel Uzan, the head of Clarins’s US operations.

With all of its products made in France, Clarins had few other options to mitigate the tariffs.

Even if they don't all acknowledge it so openly, firms in many different sectors are stockpiling their products in the United States.

In March, exports of Swiss watches to the United States jumped nearly 14 percent compared to the same month last year.

Harnessing the potential of digital payments to accelerate economic growth

SABBIR AHMED

Our country has made remarkable strides in digital payments recently – adopting debit cards, QR codes, credit cards, mobile wallets and e-commerce – embracing it all. There is immense potential for digital payments as we move towards a Digital Bangladesh.

Visa has been in Bangladesh for over three decades and is deeply committed to its digitisation journey. We work closely with partners across the financial ecosystem to enable simple, secure payments for consumers and businesses. As per GSMA, smartphone users in Bangladesh will rise to 63 percent by 2025, unlocking opportunities through democratised internet access.

Deepening contactless payments for everyday use

More people in Bangladesh are using debit and credit cards, with increased digital spending online and in-store, buoyed by the popularity of mobile financial services (MFS) and linked cards.

Domestic contactless payments, with their inherent value, convenience and speed, have tripled in one year and are a part of our daily lives, allowing users to tap their Visa cards to pay. World over, contactless cards are commonly used in retail stores, restaurants, transportation and daily commute. In many countries, one can save card details on smartphones and pay, eliminating the need to carry cards.

Visa is also working closely with digital wallets to enable wallet top-ups or direct payments using Visa on the app, digitally

enabling more people with better payment experiences.

Strengthening security and fraud prevention

Security and privacy are crucial for consumer trust. Visa has globally invested \$12 billion in cutting-edge security technologies over the past five years alone and is working closely with partners every day to secure payment experiences.



Our fraud prevention tools help detect and stop fraud, alongside dispute management solutions that safeguard the ecosystem. Two powerful products, Visa Advanced Authorization (VAA) and Visa Risk Manager (VRM) give global issuers integrated, comprehensive fraud risk management for informed decisions, enhancing cybersecurity and protecting consumers.

Encouraging adoption for accelerated growth

At Visa we understand the needs of different segments and tailor how we serve them with customised card offerings, SMB digitisation initiatives and investing in

technology.

Businesses in Bangladesh, both big and small, can gain a lot from digitising payments – managing cash flows better, securing transactions and tracking expenses conveniently. By using commercial cards, businesses can be part of a more efficient and transparent financial system. Plus, digital transactions make it easier to monitor financial activities and advanced technology helps to protect against fraud.

Looking ahead

Scalable digital payments should enable one to pay anytime, anywhere. We have seen transit payments visibly boost digital adoption. Imagine if you could just tap your smartphone to pass through your daily commute. Visa has implemented 750+ public transit projects globally and enabled open-loop transit payment systems for more efficient, user-friendly public transportation in cities like London, Osaka and New York.

At Visa, we are committed to enhancing the digital payments ecosystem in Bangladesh with our promise of trust, security, simplicity, and efficiency. With technology and key partnerships, we aim to strengthen financial inclusion, making digital payments accessible for everyone. As Bangladesh continues to embrace digitisation, the potential for economic growth and financial inclusion is huge, and Visa is here to help pave the way for a more prosperous and inclusive economy.

The writer is the country manager (Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan) at Visa.