

# star BUSINESS

## RMG leaders urge rate cuts, energy fixes as US tariffs loom



If we are not making money, we shouldn't keep exporting. Profitability first. We need to move up the value chain and focus on high-end clothing

**Kihak Sung**  
Chairman of Youngone



Govt should form a panel led by an adviser with private sector players, hire lobbyists soon, and engage the ILO and the World Bank for negotiation with the US

**AK Azad**  
Chairman and CEO of Ha-Meem Group



Gas prices rose, while bank interest doubled in the last 3 years. Despite giving higher prices, we are not getting enough electricity and gas

**Anwar-Ul Alam Chowdhury (Parvez)**  
President of BCI



We can also review and cut some of our unnecessary supplementary duties to signal openness. We should not rush to remove export subsidies now

**Mohammad Abdur Razzaque**  
Chairman of RAPID



We have around two months before the US tariffs finally come to effect. Only non-tariff barriers can be resolved during this timeframe, possibly within a week

**Md Fazlul Hoque**  
MD of Plummy Fashions



It will be a win-win situation if we import more US cotton, produce garments, and export duty-free to America. US farmers will benefit from premium cotton rates

**Faruque Hassan**  
Ex BGMEA president



Govt should form a formal national forum for regular and inclusive dialogue to ensure real progress on labour and external trade issues with all stakeholders

**Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed**  
Executive director of BILS



Domestic infrastructure is poor, so the government should work on it. Due to traffic congestion, buyers can't visit factories easily; it should be taken into consideration

**Humayun Rashid**  
CEO of Energypac Power

(BGMEA), contrasted the situation with that in Pakistan, where electricity rates have dropped from 10.7 to 7.57 rupees per unit, and solar power has become cheaper.

"In Bangladesh, every cost of business is climbing. There has been no serious effort to cut expenses or improve competitiveness."

He cautioned that even without US tariffs, the deteriorating business environment could derail the industry.

AK Azad, a former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), voiced similar concerns.

He said senior US embassy officials had recently visited his factory and stressed the need to reduce non-tariff barriers (NTBs).

"For example, American exporters need six licences just to send goods to Bangladesh. That must go," said Azad.

Citing US import data, the business leader said that while China's garment exports to the US dropped nearly 40 percent, from \$27.37 billion to \$16.5 billion in 2024, Bangladesh's exports to the US rose by 35.9 percent during the same period, reaching \$7.34 billion from \$5.4 billion in 2018.

Vietnam's exports jumped by 22.6 percent to \$15.3 billion, India's rose 23.3 percent to \$3.95 billion, and Pakistan's soared by 58.6 percent to \$1.75 billion.

Pakistan's performance was helped by currency depreciation and domestic raw material availability. "Pakistani suppliers don't agree to price cuts. Instead, they ask buyers to raise prices," Azad added.

Azad urged the government to call a meeting with all exporters to discourage undercutting on prices.

Besides, he warned against complacency.

"Officials assume orders won't shift because Bangladesh is cheap. But Indian states like Odisha, Karnataka, and Bihar are offering hefty incentives to attract investment," he said.

In Odisha, for example, investors can receive a 40 percent subsidy on plant and machinery costs up to Rs 50 crore, a 25 percent rebate on land prices, and monthly wage subsidies of Rs 6,000 for female workers and Rs 5,000 for male workers for five years.

READ MORE ON B3

Gas prices have increased, and bank interest rates have doubled in three years. Even after paying more, industries still are not receiving sufficient gas or electricity," he added.

Chowdhury, a former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association



BBS to launch quarterly index for service sector growth

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is set to introduce a Quarterly Index of Service Production in a bid to measure the short-term growth of Bangladesh's service sector—now the dominant contributor to GDP.

The BBS has long published the Quarterly GDP and the Index of Industrial Production to reflect trends in manufacturing and overall economic output.

READ MORE ON B3

Bank Asia

Getting financed is easier with  
**SUBARNO  
WOMEN  
ENTREPRENEURS'  
LOAN**



16205

Govt drafting policy for tax exemptions  
Says NBR chairman

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The interim government of Bangladesh is drafting a tax exemption policy, prohibiting both the government and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) from allowing tax exemptions.

The move is aimed at enhancing fiscal discipline and ensuring transparency in the revenue system, according to the tax authority.

"The right to grant exemptions will rest with parliament," said NBR Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan.

He was speaking at a seminar, styled "Macroeconomic Perspective and Fiscal Measures", organised by the Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) and the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) at the ERF office in Dhaka yesterday.

**The move is aimed at enhancing fiscal discipline and ensuring transparency in the revenue system, according to the tax authority**

Khan said that at present, anyone with good connections or influence can convince revenue officials to provide them with tax exemptions.

But with this move, the path to tax exemption will be more difficult in the future, the NBR chief said. He informed that the NBR constantly gets suggestions from the business community to reduce taxes.

"On the one hand, there is a need to increase revenue. But on the other, there is demand for policy support. So, balancing these is a major challenge," Khan said.

Highlighting poor governance as their biggest problem, he said that tax officials are not properly carrying out their respective duties.

"There are serious deviations at every level. As such, we are suffering across the board. This is why we need to stabilise the rule of law. We are trying to address these issues," he added.

Khan also said that the government doesn't want to face trouble by increasing expenditure through excessive borrowing without raising revenue.

READ MORE ON B3

Matarbari power tariffs to be benchmark for coal-fired plants

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has fixed the power tariff at Tk 8.45 (\$0.766) per kilowatt-hour for the coal-fired Matarbari 1,200MW Ultra Super Critical Power Plant.

The tariff was approved at a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Government Purchases yesterday.

Of the tariff, Tk 5.84 was set against fuel cost and Tk 2.61 would be for capacity payment.

Calculating around 85 percent of the load factor of the plant (PLF), Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) has to pay a total of Tk 2,17,004 crore in the next 30 years to the plant. READ MORE ON B3

Advertisement



**Father's Share Gift to Directly Involve Daughters in Business**

Dato' Engineer Md. Ekramul Haque, Managing Director of listed food and allied sector company Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream PLC, gifted shares to directly involve his daughters in the business. Lovello's Managing Director, Dato' Engineer Md. Ekramul Haque, gifted a total of 1 million shares to his two daughters, Muhsinna Taufika Ekram and Muhsinna Sharika Ekram, each with 500,000 shares, respectively, with a current market value of more than 80 million taka.

As Lovello is listed on the Stock Market, there is a legal obligation to disclose information on the gift of shares. Accordingly, this information was published on the stock exchange website on Tuesday. It disclosed that the Managing Director of Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice Cream PLC, Dato' Engineer Md. Ekramul Haque gifted the said shares to his two daughters, Muhsinna Taufika Ekram and Muhsinna Sharika Ekram.

Company-related sources have revealed that both Muhsinna Taufika Ekram and Muhsinna Sharika Ekram are already involved as directors of the company. They are currently studying at the University of Toronto and McGill University in Canada to pursue higher education. After completing their studies in Canada, they will soon return home and take care of the company's regular business operations. Although they were born and raised abroad, they have a passion for the family business, so the girls were gifted these shares as part of the process of transferring the business to the second generation, so that Lovello's future success can continue by utilizing the girls' education to create new leadership.

**Building the Future, NOW**  
with #AccessToInvestment

For 15 years, Prime Bank Investment Ltd. (PBIL) has been at the forefront of driving sustainable growth in the capital market through landmark equity and debt deals, advisory services, and pioneering bank-managed product-suite for the masses. With a strong commitment to innovation and digitalization, PBIL has been endeavoring to fuel Bangladesh's economic progress.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our valued customers, sponsors, regulators, colleagues, and stakeholders for their unwavering support. Together, we will continue to build a resilient investment ecosystem for generations to come.



Padakhep



**Shape the Future**  
Become a Social Development Leader

Padakhep, a leading development organization in Bangladesh since 1986, with the legacy of 39 years of driving change, has a network of over 700 offices and a family of more than 11K+ employees. It has contributed to the transformation of the digital economy and served over 10 million beneficiaries through a holistic development approach: capacity enhancement, financial choices and market connect.

Job Portal: <https://career.padakhep.org>

BBS to launch quarterly index for service sector growth

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is set to introduce a Quarterly Index of Service Production in a bid to measure the short-term growth of Bangladesh's service sector—now the dominant contributor to GDP.

The BBS has long published the Quarterly GDP and the Index of Industrial Production to reflect trends in manufacturing and overall economic output.

READ MORE ON B3

**PBIL** | Prime Bank Investment Ltd.  
(A Prime Bank Company)

Website  
[www.pbil.com.bd](http://www.pbil.com.bd)

Facebook  
PrimeInvest  
PBIL

# Prime Bank strikes MoU with ICB Asset Management

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ICB Asset Management Company Limited (IAMCL) to boost the sales of units of open-end mutual funds managed by IAMCL.

Prof Abu Ahmed, chairman of the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) and IAMCL, and M Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of the bank, signed the MoU at the ICB head office in Dhaka recently, according to a press release issued by the bank.

The agreement seeks to expand the distribution of IAMCL's open-end mutual fund units, ensuring that services are more accessible to potential clients while also streamlining the sales and service delivery process.

Niranjan Chandra Debnath, managing director of ICB; Nurul Huda, deputy managing director; and Mahmuda Akhter, chief executive officer of IAMCL; along with senior officials from ICB, IAMCL, and Prime Bank, were also present.



Mahmuda Akhter, chief executive officer of ICB Asset Management Company Limited, and M Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank PLC, pose for group photographs after signing the memorandum of understanding at the ICB head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

## IFIC Bank to offer payroll banking to ICB employees



Md Nazimul Hoque, chief manager of principal branch at IFIC Bank PLC, and Md Anwar Shamim, general manager of the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh, pose for photographs after signing the memorandum of understanding at the latter's head office at the BDBL Bhaban on Rajuk Avenue in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: IFIC BANK

## Al-Arafah Islami Bank opens hajj booth in Ashkona

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC has opened a hajj booth to provide services to hajj pilgrims at Ashkona Hajj Camp on Monday.

Mohd Rafat Ullah Khan, managing director (current charge) of the bank, inaugurated the booth as the chief guest, said a press release.

In his speech, Khan said, "Hajj pilgrims are the guests of Allah. Al-Arafah Islami Bank was established with the aim of supporting these hajj pilgrims and is providing various services to fulfill that goal."

He described the bank's various attractive deposit schemes and called on all the pilgrims to engage in Sharia based banking. At this time, he prayed for the pilgrims and wished them good health.

The bank's managing director handed over gift items to the pilgrims. Along with that, the bank will provide the pilgrims with free passport endorsement, foreign currency exchange, information, and other services from the newly opened booth.

Md Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy managing director of the bank, presided over the inaugural ceremony.

SM Abu Jafar, deputy managing director of the bank, Aktar Kamal and Mohammad Habib Ullah, senior executive vice-presidents, and Jalal Ahmed, executive vice-president, along with senior executives and hajj pilgrims, were also present.



Mohd Rafat Ullah Khan, managing director (current charge) of Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, inaugurates the booth for hajj pilgrims at Ashkona Hajj Camp on Monday.

Abdus Salam elected vice-chairman of NCC Bank

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Abdus Salam, a sponsor director, has been elected vice-chairman of NCC Bank PLC.

The election took place during a recent meeting of the bank's board of directors, according to a press release.

Over the decades, he has distinguished himself as an authority in electromechanical installations, making significant contributions to the infrastructure and industrial development of Bangladesh.

Throughout his illustrious career, Salam has had the privilege of collaborating with renowned engineers and specialists from countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, India, and China.

He was the pioneer behind Bangladesh's first combined cycle power plant and its initial optical fibre cable installations, both landmark achievements in the nation's technological evolution.

His exceptional technical expertise and leadership have enabled the establishment of nearly a dozen power stations across the country, with capacities ranging from 50 megawatts (MW) to 400 MW. These undertakings have played a vital role in reinforcing Bangladesh's energy infrastructure.

Among his most noteworthy engineering feats are the construction of extra-heavy rail trolleys capable of bearing 350 tonnes and the development of three floating cranes with lifting capacities of 200 tonnes, 600 tonnes, and 1,000 tonnes—the latter two being the most powerful floating cranes ever constructed in the country.

As an electrical engineer, Salam's entrepreneurial vision is evident in the success of his diverse business ventures, including The Bengal Electric Ltd, Multiple Equipment & Engineering Ltd, Gangatia Fisheries Ltd, and Bengal Shipyard Ltd.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY		
	PRICE (APR 29, 2025)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO
		% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 72-Tk 85	-1.26 ↓ 12.14 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 52-Tk 55	1.90 ↑ 2.88 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	0 0
Lentil (kg)	Tk 100-Tk 110	-2.33 ↓ -2.33 ↓
Soybean (litre)	Tk 165-Tk 172	4.66 ↑ 12.33 ↑
Potato (kg)	Tk 20-Tk 25	0 -55.00 ↓
Onion (kg)	Tk 55-Tk 65	60.00 ↑ -7.69 ↓
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 40-Tk 45	4.94 ↑ 3.66 ↑

SOURCE: TCB

## Trump's low pain

FROM PAGE B4

A proposed law forcing him to ask Congress's approval before imposing tariffs will get nowhere because he has threatened to veto it. But legal challenges to his right to tax imports on a whim might stop him.

Trump said Beijing panicked in its rapid response to his tariffs. But it is the author of the "Art of the Deal" who is now blinking. Chinese President Xi Jinping, who runs an autocratic regime, seems to have a higher tolerance for pain. If there is a deal to cut tariffs, it is likely to favour Beijing.

Military strategists often advise against fighting multiple enemies simultaneously. Trump has launched a war on three fronts - against China, other trading partners including allies, and those who oppose him at home. Ruling mostly through decree, he has attacked universities, law firms and government departments and agencies.

The US president initially seemed unstoppable with his shock and awe tactics. But he is running into increasing resistance on the home front. His opponents' main strategy has been to argue that he does not have the right to do what he is doing - because it is against the law or the constitution or because he

is usurping powers that belong to Congress.

Tesla boss Elon Musk's attempts to slash parts of the state, as head of the Department of Government Efficiency, have run into legal problems and masses of criticism. The world's richest man last week announced he would cut back his time helping Trump to focus on his ailing car business.

Several leading law firms, including Perkins Coie and WilmerHale, are challenging Trump's attempt to bully them. Meanwhile, Harvard University is suing to prevent the administration from freezing \$2.3 billion in government funds after the Boston school rejected a list of demands it said would undermine its independence. Here the US president is going against public opinion: only 28 percent of Americans think he should withhold money from universities he disagrees with, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll.

Trump's assault against immigrants is more popular: 45 percent favour his immigration policies. But the public may not back his administration if it breaks the law in the process: 83 percent think he should obey court orders he disagrees with.

## HSBC sounds Trump tariff

over 2025 and 2026, in line with earlier estimates.

Despite the gloomier economic outlook, HSBC left unchanged its performance target of a mid-teens return on average tangible equity for each of the three years from 2025 to 2027, having hit 14.6 percent in 2024.

However, the bank said its stake in Bank of Communications (BOCOM) will drop to about 16 percent from 19.03 percent, and it will book a loss of up to \$1.6 billion as a result of the Chinese bank's fundraising by private placement of shares.

HSBC said it has also launched a strategic review of its Malta operations, which is still "at an early stage."

## Trust Bank signs MoU with Bangladesh Jail for payroll banking services

STAR BUSINESS DESK



Brig Gen Syed Md Motaher Hossain, inspector general of prisons at Bangladesh Jail, and Ahsan Zaman Chowdhury, managing director and CEO of Trust Bank, exchange signed documents of the memorandum of understanding in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: TRUST BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Trust Bank PLC has recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bangladesh Jail.

Under this MoU, all personnel employed by Bangladesh Jail nationwide will be eligible to open salary accounts with Trust Bank and avail themselves of a comprehensive suite of banking services.

Ahsan Zaman Chowdhury, managing director and CEO of the bank, and Brig Gen Syed Md Motaher Hossain, inspector general of prisons at Bangladesh Jail, signed the MoU at a ceremony held in Dhaka, according to a press release.

"This partnership represents yet another significant milestone for Trust Bank as we continue to broaden the reach of our services," said Chowdhury.

"Backed by the trust and confidence of the nation, Trust Bank PLC remains steadfast in its commitment to providing accessible banking services to all, regardless of location or time," he added.

Senior officials from both sides were also present.

STAR BUSINESS DESK

EXIM Bank yesterday launched a hajj booth at the Ashkona Hajj Camp to provide essential services to pilgrims during the hajj season.

M Akhter Hossain, managing director (current charge) of the bank, inaugurated the booth as the chief guest, according to a press release.

The booth will offer pilgrims round-the-clock assistance, including hajj related information, passport endorsement, and foreign currency exchange services.

Md Lokman Hossain, deputy secretary of the Ministry of Religion and director of hajj office, attended the event as the special guest.

Mohammad Zulkernine, senior vice-president and head of Shariah secretariat of the bank, along with owners of various hajj agencies and senior executives from both the bank and the hajj office, were also present.



M Akhter Hossain, managing director (current charge) of EXIM Bank PLC, inaugurates the hajj booth at the Ashkona Hajj Camp yesterday.

PHOTO: EXIM BANK

## HSBC sounds Trump tariff

over 2025 and 2026, in line with earlier estimates.

Despite the gloomier economic outlook, HSBC left unchanged its performance target of a mid-teens return on average tangible equity for each of the three years from 2025 to 2027, having hit 14.6 percent in 2024.

However, the bank said its stake in Bank of Communications (BOCOM) will drop to about 16 percent from 19.03 percent, and it will book a loss of up to \$1.6 billion as a result of the Chinese bank's fundraising by private placement of shares.

HSBC said it has also launched a strategic review of its Malta operations, which is still "at an early stage."

# BRAC Bank, City Bank surpass Tk 1,000cr in net profits

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Private commercial lenders BRAC Bank and City Bank registered significant profit growth last year.

BRAC Bank's consolidated profit surged 73 percent year-on-year to nearly Tk 1,432 crore, while that of City Bank rose by 59 percent to around Tk 1,014 crore.

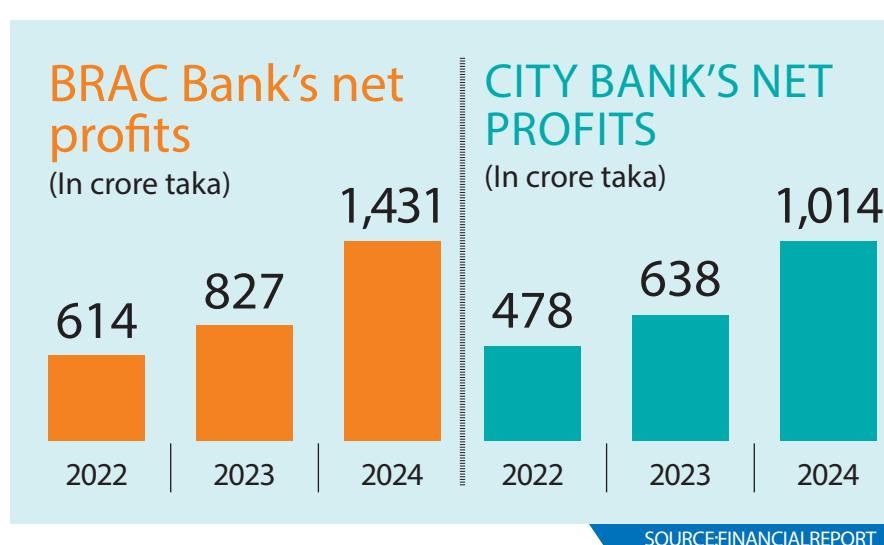
BRAC Bank reported consolidated earnings per share (EPS) of Tk 6.95, up from Tk 4.30 in 2023, the lender said in a disclosure posted on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) website yesterday.

Its shares declined 0.81 percent to close at Tk 49.1 on the DSE yesterday.

The lender's consolidated net operating cash flow per share also rose to Tk 60.91 from Tk 37.05 over the same period.

The board of directors recommended a 12.50 percent cash dividend and a 12.50 percent stock dividend.

The bonus shares have been proposed to strengthen the bank's capital base



and support future business expansion, according to the disclosure.

As of March 31, 2025, sponsors and directors held 46.17 percent of the bank's shares, institutions 14.24 percent, foreign

investors 31.97 percent, and the public 7.62 percent.

BRAC Bank Managing Director and CEO Selim RF Hussain said, "...our success stands as a testament to our unwavering

commitment to our customers, our community, and our country."

City Bank approved its financial statements for 2024 at a board meeting yesterday, declaring a 25 percent dividend—12.5 percent in cash and 12.5 percent in bonus shares.

The bank's EPS rose to Tk 8.06 from Tk 4.57 in 2023.

Similarly, net asset value per share increased to Tk 34.01 from Tk 6.38.

Some 64 percent of the bank's revenue came from interest income on loans, 12 percent from fees and letter of credit commissions, and 19 percent from treasury bills and bond investments.

The remaining 5 percent came from private bonds, dividends, and stock market earnings.

City Bank Managing Director and CEO Mashrur Arefin stated, "People have placed their trust in City Bank, resulting in a surge in deposits. Our cost-to-income ratio dropped from 60 percent to just 42 percent, leading to a substantial rise in profit."

## RMG leaders urge rate cuts, energy fixes

## FROM PAGE B1

"Compare that to Bangladesh. For the past few days, there has been no gas pressure. We are entirely dependent on diesel," Azad said. "We have no gas, no electricity. And now, possibly, tariffs."

Orders have already started to drop since July-August last year, he said, with buyers hesitating to place new ones or shifting deliveries elsewhere.

He called on the government to enlist experienced diplomats and lobbyists, extend export incentives, and remove the source tax on export proceeds to help cushion the blow.

Faruque Hassan, another former BGMEA president, emphasised reducing lead times by importing raw cotton more efficiently.

"We've long discussed setting up a cotton warehouse. That would allow faster access, cut freight costs, and improve our advantage," he said.

Hassan noted that Trump's tariff announcement mentioned three issues: tariffs, currency manipulation, and trade barriers.

"We're not manipulating our currency," he said, adding that a previous non-tariff barrier related to US cotton fumigation had already been resolved.

The former BGMEA president said Bangladesh meets less than 2 percent of its cotton needs domestically.

He predicted that once the deep sea port construction is over and it goes into operation, cotton prices would fall with larger vessels arriving directly.

"But our production

costs must also come down," he said. "Interest rates are too high, utility costs and wages are rising, so rates must be adjusted."

He added that Vietnam sources many raw materials from China, while Bangladesh imports little to no cotton from there.

"In Vietnam and Mexico, Chinese inputs are re-exported to the US. We need to draw attention to these dynamics."

On market diversification, Hassan said that while 75 percent of exports once went to the US, the share has dropped to 19 percent.

"We've made gains in Australia, Japan, India and South Korea. But we must keep diversifying both markets and products."

Fazlul Hoque, former president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said, "When external threats such as Trump's tariffs are looming, we must address our internal problems, especially productivity. But we're not doing enough."

He pointed out that Bangladesh's productivity still lags 10-20 percent behind China and Vietnam. "If we can narrow that gap, we'll be in a better position to tackle price and wage pressures."

Hoque acknowledged progress in technology adoption over the past decade. "But we must pick up the pace. Our rivals are moving faster, and the government must help accelerate improvements."

Regarding Trump's tariffs, he estimated that a 10 percent tariff on \$2 billion worth of upcoming US orders would amount to \$200 million in added costs.

If exporters share that equally with buyers, they will shoulder \$100 million themselves.

"Large exporters might weather the storm, but small and medium manufacturers will struggle," he said, especially since banks have little cotton from there.

"Big firms can negotiate with bank discount committees, small ones can't even get a meeting with a branch manager."

He urged policymakers to direct banks to offer more flexibility, saying that supply chain disruption could lead to labour unrest.

Negotiations for new orders are already slowing, Hoque said. "Uncertainty about what will happen after the 90-day tariff pause is making buyers cautious. If big exporters shift to Europe, that market could get crowded, triggering price drops there too."

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), stressed the importance of diversification.

At the programme, he talked about the reputational damage to the local apparel industry caused by a few non-compliant factories. "If two or ten out of 2,500 don't pay wages, the entire industry's image suffers."

He urged the industry to distance itself from such actors and to build a unified platform involving international and national stakeholders, including the International Labour Organization (ILO).

"United voices make stronger cases," he added.

Humayun Rashid, managing director and

CEO of Energypac Power Generation PLC, called Trump's tariff threat "terrible".

He said the government and BGMEA must jointly seek new markets, much like China did when it faced steep US duties.

"China redirected exports to Asia. We need to do the same, look at regional markets, South America and ASEAN," said Rashid.

He also called for public-private collaboration in policymaking.

The CEO said that poor infrastructure, including chronic traffic congestion, deters buyers from visiting factories. Despite paying for utilities, factories are not getting enough gas or quality electricity, Rashid said.

He urged improvements at the port authority and better cooperation from tax officials.

"Bangladesh has brilliant entrepreneurs who built this industry against all odds. They deserve both respect and support."

He recommended shifting from basic garment manufacturing to producing higher-value goods like car seats, aircraft seats, and technical textiles.

"BGMEA should set up dedicated desks for Europe, Asia, South America and North America to monitor market trends and provide exporters with research support," Rashid said.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of local think-tank RAPID, said Bangladesh's competitiveness is slipping due to high inflation, currently around 10 percent, compared to just 2 percent in Vietnam.

"That's an 8-point loss in competitiveness each year," he said.

"The refusal to allow a market-based exchange rate is also hurting exporters," said the economist. "Greater flexibility could boost both exports and remittances."

He urged the government to continue supporting the industry through targeted subsidies.

Wrapping up the discussion, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said the paper is committed to addressing the issue.

"This is the time to be innovative," he said.

The event was moderated by The Daily Star Deputy Editor Arun Devnath.

Kihak Sung, chairman of Youngone Corporation, joined the event virtually.

The South Korean entrepreneur warned against relying on low-margin exports and highlighted Korea as an attractive market, where Bangladeshi goods are exempt from tariffs.

"If we're not making money, we shouldn't keep exporting," he said. "Profitability must come first. We need to move up the value chain and focus on high-quality, high-end clothing."

He emphasised the importance of timely deliveries and operational efficiency, noting that inefficiencies could hold Bangladesh back.

"Korea remains an opportunity. But we must be faster, better, and smarter if we want to compete. Bangladesh can build a strong supply chain to replace China in many areas," he added.

## Govt drafting policy for tax exemptions

## FROM PAGE B1

"We must align our spending with our income so that we do not increase our debt burden or pass that burden onto the next generation."

The NBR chairman further informed that the chief adviser and financial adviser have instructed that the upcoming national budget for FY26 should be as realistic as possible, not overly ambitious.

"So, we are trying to reduce the budget deficit by cutting expenditure and increasing revenue."

M Masrur Reaz, chief executive officer of Policy Exchange Bangladesh, said the country needs to let go of its fascination with GDP growth for now.

"If we can tackle macroeconomic challenges even with 3-4 percent GDP

growth, that would be a major achievement. There's no need to be disheartened if GDP growth slows a bit in the process," he added.

TIM Nurul Kabir, executive director of FICCI, said the chamber emphasised the importance of collaboration with the NBR to create a more integrated tax system that streamlines revenue collection processes and improves the effectiveness of internal revenue mobilisation efforts.

To attract more foreign direct investment (FDI), he suggested optimising the effective tax rate by withdrawing thresholds for inadmissibility, rationalising tax deducted at source, and gradually eliminating the minimum tax.

These steps are aimed at

creating a more competitive tax environment and would ultimately foster greater FDI inflow, Kabir said.

Recognising the global shift towards sustainability, the FICCI has proposed introducing preferential tax rates and excise benefits to incentivise the development of green supply chains.

This would not only align with global trends but also position Bangladesh as a leader in green manufacturing, he added.

The FICCI recommended the implementation of a unified VAT rate focusing exclusively on value-added tax. This would simplify the VAT structure and reduce complexities for businesses while ensuring the tax system remains efficient and equitable.

ERF General Secretary

Abul Kashem moderated the seminar chaired by ERF President Doulot Akter Mala.

The NBR's Khan also said that Bangladesh is expected to receive a decision on the next tranche of its IMF loan during a key meeting in Washington on May 5.

He explained that the staff-level discussions will determine the IMF loan's approval, with a final decision anticipated at the IMF board meeting on May 23.

"We are optimistic that a positive outcome will be reached regarding the tranche," Khan added.

Khan also highlighted that negotiations with the IMF are ongoing, with significant disagreements surrounding the issue of liberalising exchange rates.

## BBS to launch

## FROM PAGE B1

However, it has lacked a dedicated tool to capture the short-term performance of services, which include transport, finance, education, health, and information technology.

To address this gap, the BBS began collecting data on March 11 from sampled service providing institutions through a structured questionnaire. These data will be compiled quarterly, with the first official publication expected later this year.

The agency stressed the importance of accurate data submission, noting that under the Statistics Act 2013, all individual data will remain confidential and only be reported in aggregated form.

Officials say this move aligns Bangladesh with global statistical practices and will support better policymaking across sectors.

## Banglalink raises data, voice and bundle volumes by up to 25%

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banglalink has launched a new range of data packages, increasing the volume of data, voice minutes, and bundle allocations by up to 25 percent.

Customers can now get 20 percent more data, 22 percent more voice minutes, and expanded bundle volumes under the updated plans, the third-largest operator said in a statement.

The announcement comes as the government has recently taken several steps to bring down internet service costs, including reductions in wholesale bandwidth prices, transmission charges, and granting mobile operators access to dense wavelength division multiplexing (DWDM) infrastructure.

Under the new packages, Banglalink users will also get unlimited access to Toffee, as well as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, without using data from the selected packs. Additional high-volume deals are available through the MyBL App. Johan Buse, chief executive officer of Banglalink, said they welcome the government's recent reform initiatives in the telecom sector, including the approval granting mobile network operators access to dark fibre and DWDM infrastructure.

## Trump expected to ease tariffs impact on automakers

## AFP, New York

US President Donald Trump has agreed to soften the impact of tariffs on automakers who have been hit by multiple levies, US media reported on Monday.

The move comes ahead of a Trump rally planned for Tuesday night near Detroit to mark the president's first 100 days in office.

The shift means companies paying 25 percent tariffs on car imports won't also pay other duties, such as those on steel and aluminum, according to the Wall Street Journal, which was first to report the shift.

The administration is also allowing some reimbursements on foreign auto parts, levies that were supposed to take effect on May 3, said the Journal, citing unnamed sources.

US automakers have been among the hardest-hit sectors because the tariffs affect imports from Mexico and Canada.

Detroit carmakers maintained investments in those markets after Trump renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement during his first term.

Analysts have warned that the tariffs could result in higher prices, denting US car sales and threatening jobs.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Trump was "building an important partnership," according to the Journal.

"This deal will be a major victory for the president's trade policy by rewarding companies who are already manufacturing domestically, while providing a runway to manufacturers who have expressed their commitment in investing in America and expanding domestic manufacturing," Lutnick said.

## Matarbari power

## FROM PAGE B1

The PLF is a measure of how efficiently a power plant is being utilised compared to its maximum possible output. The government will use the rate as a benchmark tariff to renegotiate deals with all the other coal-fired power plants.

Fouzul Kabir Khan, adviser to the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, said they were holding talks with representatives of the other power plants.

Due to "other expenses", their price could have differed by Tk 0.30 or Tk 0.40 but the

plants were being paid Tk 3 to Tk 4 higher.

"Why?" he asked in a seminar last Saturday, adding, "We are not taking any arbitrary decisions."

The PDB's annual report on power plants states that Adani was paid Tk 14.88 per kWh, Rampal Tk 15.29 per kWh, Payra Tk 11.83 kWh, SS Power Tk 20.43 per kWh and Barishal 307MW power plant Tk 12.49 per kWh in fiscal year 2

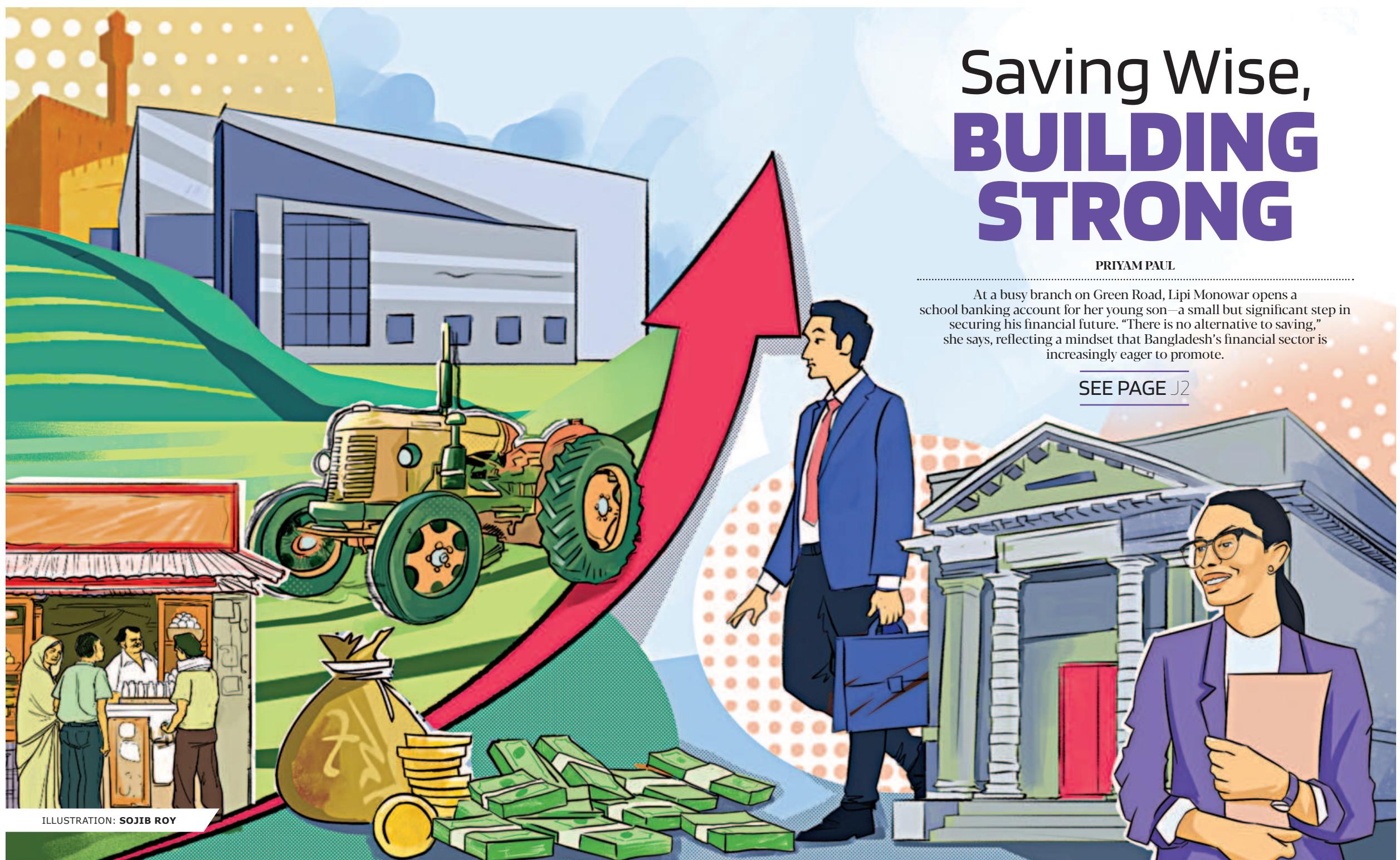


## Saving Wise, **BUILDING STRONG**

PRIYAM PAUL

At a busy branch on Green Road, Lipi Monowar opens a school banking account for her young son—a small but significant step in securing his financial future. "There is no alternative to saving," she says, reflecting a mindset that Bangladesh's financial sector is increasingly eager to promote.

SEE PAGE J2



**UCB**

### A world of 3 Zeros to achieve sustainable growth

UCB is proud to have multiple innovative products to cater a green and sustainable world. We are humbly honoured to be a part of a glorious journey.

**ZERO POVERTY** **সমতা** **প্রগতি** | **ZERO UNEMPLOYMENT** **স্থায়ীন** **মুদ্রা** | **ZERO NET CARBON EMISSIONS** **সবুজ সঞ্চয়** **UCB সবুজ সমৃদ্ধি**

UNITED COMMERCIAL BANK PLC  
United in Integrity, Growing Sustainably

ucb.com.bd | 16419

## Saving Wise, Building Strong



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

### FROM PAGE J1

Savings, long regarded as a cornerstone of personal financial security, are equally critical to the health of a nation's economy. In Bangladesh, banks are stepping up efforts to attract savers by offering an expanding range of products—from fixed deposits to goal-based savings schemes. As custodians of public deposits, banks not only help individuals build financial resilience but also underpin broader economic stability by channelling savings into investment and development activities.

"Savings are a fundamental driver of national development and GDP growth. A nation's economic activities are largely sustained by savings, with national expenditures funded through

both government and private channels. In Bangladesh, however, government savings lag behind private savings. As a result, a significant portion of government financing is sourced from private savings. Banks, as the main custodians of these funds, have struggled with poor management for over a decade, undermining public confidence. Private savings have also been adversely impacted—exacerbated by the central bank's move to cap interest rates at 9 percent for lending and 6 percent for deposits," says Rushad Faridi, Assistant Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Dhaka.

He suggests that the government and banks should ensure trust and transparency regarding the use of private savings, so that people feel more

encouraged to save, ultimately benefiting both individuals and the national economy.

Experts say banks remain the safest option for individual savings, warning that keeping money in informal channels often results in significant losses. Savings are not idle funds; they are future investments. In times of financial distress, access to formal banking systems can serve as a crucial lifeline, providing stability when it is needed most.

Md. Arup Haider, Deputy Managing Director and Head of Retail Banking at City Bank, says that scheduled commercial banks remain the safest place to keep one's savings. "Some may argue that a few banks are currently struggling to honour cheques immediately, but this is a temporary issue. No bank has outright denied returning customers' money. These delays are mostly due to short-term liquidity problems or mismanagement linked to non-performing loans (NPLs), which are being addressed under the supervision of the central bank," he explains.

According to the latest Bangladesh Bank annual report, private commercial banks hold the largest share of deposits, amounting to BDT 15,688.3 billion, 67.1%, followed by state-owned commercial banks with BDT 5600.7 billion, 25.4%.

Banks offer a wide range of popular savings schemes, including Fixed Deposits (FD), Monthly Savings Schemes (MSS), Double or Triple Benefit Deposit Schemes, Pension and Retirement Savings Plans, Special Savings Schemes for Women, Islamic Savings Schemes, children's and student savings accounts, as well as government savings instruments such as various types of Shanchaya Patras.

As of 31 December 2024, Fixed Deposits (FDs) received the highest response among all account types, with 7,196,882 accounts holding a total of BDT 87,529,932 lakh—representing 46.47% of the total deposit amount. Savings deposits ranked second, with 127,355,768 accounts holding BDT 38,576,429 lakh, accounting for 20.48% of the total amount.

Banks are ramping up savings schemes to encourage smarter financial habits, with individual deposits forming a key pillar of Bangladesh's macroeconomic stability.

"At UCB, we are witnessing sustained interest in savings among our customers. Despite economic fluctuations, public trust in our bank remains strong. Our deposit portfolio continues to

savings schemes and receiving positive responses alongside their regular offerings.

"A phenomenal deposit growth we've seen is from our Senior Citizen Programme. We launched a special deposit scheme for them at the end of 2023, and within a year it has already crossed Tk 1,000 crore," states Mohammad Ali, Managing Director & CEO of Pubali Bank.

Banks are increasingly encouraging customers to open and maintain savings programmes through digital platforms to promote cashless transactions across all services. Customers, in turn, are responding positively, finding the process more convenient and accessible.

Shariah-based banks are gaining significant traction among customers seeking secure savings options aligned with Islamic banking principles, thanks to their diverse range of savings schemes.

Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Executive Vice President & Head of Retail Banking Division, Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, says, "What truly sets our savings products apart is their Shariah compliant structure, which appeals strongly to customers seeking ethical and principled banking.

In addition, we offer Shariah-compliant competitive profit and flexible deposit options designed to suit a wide range of financial goals—from short-term liquidity needs to long-term wealth accumulation. We have Internet Banking, Islamic Wallet, and AIBPLC App to access the account 24/7."

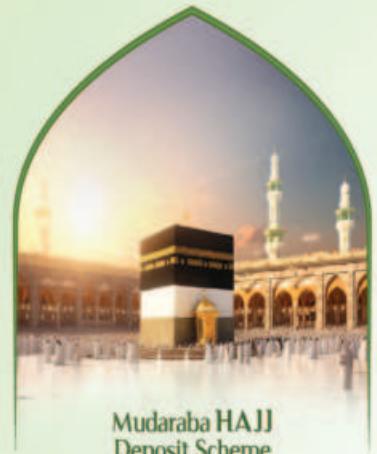
He also adds that Al-Arafah Bank, as of 2025, managed a deposit base exceeding BDT 52,000 crore, serving over 36 lakh customers across the country.

"At Midland Bank, we've observed a significant rise in customers opening savings accounts and schemes digitally through our Midland Online platform," says Md Rashed Akter, Head of Retail Distribution Division and Chief Bancassurance Officer (CBO) of Midland Bank PLC. "Digital users always receive an additional 2.5 percent interest compared to those using physical channels for savings schemes. This has led to strong growth in digital savings."

He added, "Our Super Saver Account has become the most popular savings scheme, and this year, we introduced a new feature—Super Saver Plus—which offers customers up to 7.5 percent interest across various types of savings schemes."

According to him, these initiatives are designed to foster a savings-oriented

**16434**  
aib.com.bd



**Mudaraba HAJJ Deposit Scheme**  
Embark on Your Spiritual Dream Towards the KABA



**Mudaraba STUDENT Deposit Scheme**  
Save Money and Enjoy the Journey



**Mudaraba ADVANTAGE Deposit Scheme**  
Secure Your Business Funds with Confidence



**Mudaraba PENSION Deposit Account**  
For a Stress-Free Retirement



**Mudaraba CASH WAQF Deposit Account**  
Serving Humanity Always



**Mudaraba FOREIGN CURRENCY Deposit Account**  
Earn Globally Save Locally with Offshore Banking



**Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC.**  
আল-আরফাহ ইসলামী ব্যাংক পিছলো



grow, fuelled by both individuals and institutions. Customers are shifting from basic transactional accounts to more structured, goal-based savings plans," says Mohammad Mamdudur Rashid, Managing Director & CEO, United Commercial Bank.

The growing financial independence of women and their increasing participation in economic activities are reflected in their savings patterns. At the same time, it is encouraging to see that the younger generation is also developing a habit of saving.

"What we're seeing at City Bank is a steady rise in the share of deposits from women," says Arup Haider. "Five years ago, female customers made up 22 percent of our retail deposits; now, that share has grown to 30 percent. At the same time, younger customers are also saving, often with short-term goals in mind—like purchasing a mobile phone."

Bank Asia currently maintains approximately 8.7 million savings accounts, with a total balance of BDT 432,442 million.

"To attract more customer savings while meeting expectations around safety, trust, and profitability, Bank Asia PLC has launched segmented products such as youth savings accounts, women-centric accounts, and senior citizen deposit schemes with attractive benefits," says Shaminor Rahman, Head of SMR at Bank Asia Ltd. "We have also expanded our Mudaraba-based savings and term deposit options for our Islamic banking clients, ensuring full transparency in profit calculation."

Banks are introducing new types of

mindset among customers, encouraging them to keep their money within the banking system, which is secure and accessible whenever needed.

Banks are increasingly targeting untapped segments of the population to bring them into the formal banking system. For instance, Al-Mamun Ansar, Head of Liability Business, Liability & Wealth Management at Eastern Bank Limited (EBL), states, "At EBL, we are planning to bring non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) into the banking network. We have proposed a collaboration with the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) to allow prospective migrants to open bank accounts before going abroad. This would enable them to carry out transactions via an app-based banking system, ensuring their remittances are routed through formal channels and helping them save more effectively."

He further added that EBL is currently seeing strong demand for its deposit pension schemes (DPS), particularly the EBL Confidence and EBL Millionaire plans, which cater to both short and long-term savers. These schemes also feature women-focused versions, aimed at promoting greater financial inclusion among female customers.

In addition, with recent developments, banks—partnering with MFS providers—are offering digital deposit products through mobile wallets, enabling customers to make small, convenient deposits. This initiative helps individuals secure their financial futures and holds significant potential to boost the national economy.

## Seamless Saving for Everyday Financial Goals



**ALI REZA IFTEKHAR**  
Managing Director and CEO  
Eastern Bank

Confidence, both ideal for long-term savings with clear financial targets. Additionally, recognising the vital role of women in financial decision-making, we have created special versions of these schemes tailored specifically for them.

**TDS:** What initiatives has your bank taken to encourage savings habits among the general people? **ARI:** We believe saving is a foundational financial habit that leads to long term stability and empowerment. That's why we design simple, meaningful products aligned with real-life goals—whether starting a career, planning a family, or preparing for retirement—so saving feels rewarding, not burdensome, and supports every stage of life.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**ARI:** A major focus for us is making banking as easy and accessible as possible. Customers can now open savings accounts online without visiting a branch, saving considerable time. In 2024 alone, around 8,000 accounts were opened digitally. Our EBL SKYBANKING mobile app has transformed how customers manage their savings, allowing them to monitor balances, track deposits, receive alerts, and manage funds securely and conveniently in real time. We have also introduced specialised accounts for freelancers and mariners—groups with unique financial patterns—ensuring they are fully included in our services.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

**ARI:** Looking ahead, our strategy is centred on adaptability, digital transformation, and inclusivity. We recognise that the younger generation is highly tech-driven, preferring solutions that are fast, intuitive, and flexible. To meet these expectations, we are actively developing app-based, paperless savings products that can be accessed and managed on the go. Our aim is to make saving an effortless and seamless part of daily life rather than a complicated or time-consuming task. Sustainability is another major focus, and we are adopting eco-friendly practices wherever possible. Additionally, we are enhancing services for NRBS, making savings more accessible globally.

**The Daily Star (TDS):** Could you provide an overview of the current savings situation at your bank?

**Ali Reza Iftekhar (ARI):** At Eastern Bank (EBL), we've been fortunate to witness consistent year-on-year growth in our retail deposits—a clear indicator of our customers' confidence in the bank and in the product offerings that suit their needs. In 2024, approximately 1.5 lakh new savings and current accounts were opened by individual depositors.

A significant driver behind this growth is the evolving mindset of our customer base. People are more financially literate than ever before, and they are actively seeking out savings avenues that are secure, flexible, and tailored to their needs. The adoption of digital platforms for banking services has also played a pivotal role. Customers value managing finances easily on mobile devices, and EBL ensures its digital tools are intuitive, transparent, and accessible.

**TDS:** What are the top savings schemes that you are currently offering?

**ARI:** At EBL, we design savings products that go beyond simply accumulating funds—they help realise dreams, ensure financial security, and support important life goals. Among our most popular offerings is the Child Future Plan, providing a structured pathway for parents to secure their children's educational and financial future. We also offer the EBL Millionaire Scheme and EBL

## Innovative Savings Products for Every Customer



**SOHAIR R K HUSSAIN**  
Managing Director  
Bank Asia

employees. All products feature attractive rates and flexible options tailored to specific segments.

**TDS:** What initiatives has your bank taken to encourage a savings habit among the general public?

**SRKH:** To promote a sustainable savings culture, Bank Asia has introduced financial literacy programmes, partnered with NGOs, and expanded agent banking in remote areas. With competitive rates and inclusive products for minors, students, women, and senior citizens, the bank aims to boost disciplined saving habits across diverse and underserved communities.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**SRKH:** Bank Asia has embraced digital transformation to make savings more convenient. Through the Bank Asia "SmartApp", users can onboard digitally and manage their accounts with ease. Our 5,000+ agent banking outlets offer services like account opening and cash withdrawals. Many accounts include integrated services such as insurance, EMI options, and utility bill payments. For customers seeking Shariah-compliant solutions, our Islamic Banking Division provides tailored Mudaraba accounts. We have also integrated NID verification and e-KYC to ensure secure onboarding. Additionally, our "Ghore Bose Hisab Khulun" module enables remote account opening anytime, anywhere. We are creating an ecosystem for each customer segment.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

**SRKH:** Our future plans include introducing theme-based and goal-oriented savings schemes, such as, special health insurance support for the NRBS and wage earners, Hajj Savings and Education Funds, complete with budgeting and planning tools to support structured financial goals. We are also developing a gamified savings app specifically designed for youth, using interactive challenges to foster saving as a lifelong habit. In addition, we are implementing AI-powered personal finance advisors to analyse spending patterns and recommend personalised savings strategies. Our Islamic Banking Savings Suite is being expanded with flexible profit-sharing plans, while micro-savings products are being created through collaborations with fintech partners to support lower-income and gig economy workers. Investment in digital infrastructure will continue, ensuring accessibility, flexibility, and enhanced customer experiences across all banking services.

## Banking on Herself

FROM PAGE J4

These initiatives are part of a broader effort, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to significantly reinforce women's empowerment and financial inclusion in Bangladesh."

Such steps are important because access alone is not enough. Women need financial environments where they feel confident, safe, and supported to manage their money and make decisions independently. Dedicated services, outreach efforts, and community education programmes all play critical roles in dismantling the invisible barriers that formal systems too often leave intact.

Sharing more about available schemes, MD Rashed adds, "Last year, we introduced MDB Sathi, a women-centric initiative designed to offer additional benefits to our female customers. This

digital illiteracy, fraud, and exclusion for women without mobile phones. While initiatives like women-only ATMs and digital training offer hope, sustained investment is needed to ensure that new technologies don't deepen existing inequalities.

To better serve their female customers, EBL offers women-focused versions of two of their popular schemes: EBL Confidence, which provides a short-term savings option, and EBL Millionaire, designed for long-term savings. The EBL Millionaire Women DPS is a specialised savings plan crafted exclusively for women, helping them accumulate BDT 1 million over flexible tenures ranging from two to fourteen years. With options for a zero initial deposit, automatic monthly deductions, and an available credit facility, it empowers women to achieve their financial goals with confidence and independence.

"To further support our female clients, we have a dedicated team for women customers, and every EBL branch features a separate help desk for women. We also offer a wide range of female-oriented financial products, including debit cards, credit cards, savings accounts, and DPS schemes. Notably, the female EBL Confidence Card provides more benefits compared to the standard version," says Al Maman Ansar, Head of Liability Business, EBL.

He further states, "At EBL, we are committed to making the banking sector more accessible for women—both from a business and social perspective. The EBL Women's Savings Account comes with special features such as free insurance coverage and locker charge waivers, ensuring that women receive comprehensive support in their financial journey."

The story of women's banking in Bangladesh is not one of sweeping transformation, but of quiet persistence. Arup Haider, DMD & Head of Retail Banking, City Bank, states, "Over the past few years, we have seen a noticeable rise in female participation in financial activities. Five years ago, female deposits accounted for just 22% of total retail deposits. Today, that figure has grown to 30%. This positive shift reflects the increasing involvement of women in the country's financial landscape."

For women like Nasima, every task saved is a choice reclaimed. Every bank visit is a boundary crossed. In a world where financial systems have long ignored women's realities, the growing visibility of gender-intentional banking is not just welcome—it's overdue.

year, we plan to expand those benefits even further. Our vision is to transform Sathi from just a financial product into a complete lifestyle offering. Sathi is also affiliated with Shukhi, a Grameen Healthcare programme that enables female entrepreneurs to access emergency medical consultations via video calls, even from remote areas. Additionally, MDB Sathi offers an extra 0.25% interest rate for digital DPS or FDR accounts opened by women, encouraging financial independence and supporting female entrepreneurship."

Digital banking is another growing frontier. Mobile apps and agent banking outlets have lowered access barriers, but they also introduce new risks—



**DHAKA BANK**  
**SENIOR CITIZENS' FIXED DEPOSIT SCHEME**

**With Attractive Interest Rate**  
Step into your golden years confidently with Dhaka Bank.

Senior citizen **59 years** and above can open

**Any amount** can be fixed  
From **any branch**

Tenure options:  
**3 months/ 6 months/ 12 months**

Attractive **interest rate** & choice of **interest pay-out**

**16474**  
+8809678034674  
For ISO/Overseas Call  
[www.dhakabankltd.com](http://www.dhakabankltd.com)

**DHAKA BANK**  
PLC.  
EXCELLENCE IN BANKING

## Building an inclusive savings ecosystem



**MASHRUR AREFIN**  
Managing Director & CEO  
City Bank

**The Daily Star (TDS):** Could you provide an overview of the current savings situation at your bank?

**Mashrur Arefin (MA):** At City Bank, we have always viewed savings not just as deposits but as trust placed in us by our customers. Despite the challenges in the banking sector, our savings portfolio has shown resilience. Our savings base reflects a balanced contribution from salaried individuals, professionals, small businesses, women, and the youth segment.

With a growing emphasis on financial inclusion and digital banking, our savings mobilisation continues to remain a cornerstone of our retail liability strategy. This growth underscores our commitment to financial inclusion and our role in fostering a savings culture across Bangladesh.

**TDS:** What are the top savings schemes that you are currently offering?

**MA:** City Bank has always prioritised customer needs and interests, offering a wide array of savings products tailored to meet varying financial aspirations. Our City Alo Savings Account is designed for women, empowering them through exclusive benefits, while the Student Savings Account encourages young minds to develop early saving habits. We offer a Shariah-compliant City Islamic Savings Account for customers seeking Islamic banking solutions, and a Freelancer Savings Account for independent professionals. Our Green Savings Account rewards environmentally

responsible behaviours, alongside our Goal-Based DPS promoting disciplined financial planning.

**TDS:** What initiatives have your bank taken to encourage savings habits among the general people?

**MA:** Promoting a savings culture requires outreach and education. Through financial literacy programmes and our partnership with bKash, we are reaching the unbanked. Our City Alo initiative also empowers women by providing financial tools, knowledge, and accessible savings options across communities.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**MA:** Innovation is not just a function—it is our philosophy at City Bank. Through our Citytouch app, customers can transfer funds, manage finances, and access numerous value-added services seamlessly. Our Ekhoni Account App extends this further, enabling instant account opening with just a National ID and a selfie, ensuring convenience and promoting financial inclusion. Our collaboration with bKash facilitates instant nano loans and Islamic DPS, bringing banking to millions. Meanwhile, our expanding Agent Banking network in rural and semi-urban areas is providing savings services, account opening facilities, and financial literacy support, effectively bridging the urban-rural divide.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

**MA:** Looking ahead, our vision is clear: to be the people's bank. Our plans are centred on building a savings ecosystem that serves every segment of society—regardless of their location, income level, or lifestyle. We are actively scaling our presence through traditional branches, sub-branches, and an ever-growing agent banking network that is reaching deep into rural and semi-urban areas.

These physical touchpoints are crucial in bridging the gap for the unbanked and underserved. Looking ahead, City Bank is committed to making savings a right accessible to all, not a privilege for a few. We are investing in infrastructure, technology, and trust to achieve this vision. Just as mobile financial services revolutionised transactions, we aim to redefine how people save—making it easier, smarter, and more accessible—bringing the full power of banking into the palm of every hand.

## Smart Savings with Service and Tech



**SHEIKH MOHAMMAD MAROOF**  
Managing Director & CEO  
Dhaka Bank

**The Daily Star (TDS):** Could you provide an overview of the current savings situation at your bank?

**Sheikh Mohammad Maroof (SMM):** Dhaka Bank places strong emphasis on mobilising retail deposits to ensure a stable and cost-effective funding base. Post-pandemic, customers have shown increased interest in safe, liquid financial instruments, driving demand for savings products. The bank's consistently growing savings portfolio reflects greater public awareness of financial planning, supported by its attractive, accessible, and digitally enabled offerings. Serving a diverse customer base—from professionals to small businesses—Dhaka Bank's success lies in customised savings products, responsive service, and a robust digital infrastructure.

**TDS:** What are the top savings schemes that you are currently offering?

**SMM:** Dhaka Bank offers a wide array of savings products designed to meet the diverse financial needs of its customers. The Regular Savings Account provides flexibility and convenience for everyday banking, offering competitive interest rates, a free debit card, a chequebook, and full access to mobile and internet banking, with digital account opening available via the ezyBank app or assisted service. The Super Savings Plus Account is geared towards middle-to-high-income earners, offering higher returns on larger balances and complimentary life insurance. Fixed Deposit Receipts offer higher interest for fixed tenures ranging from one month to three years. The Double Benefit Scheme allows deposits to double over seven to eight years. The Monthly Income Scheme

provides regular income from a one-time deposit. Other offerings include Shariah-compliant Mudaraba Savings, School Banking for students, Honourable Seniors Savings, Bundle Savings for flexible goals, the Deposit Pension Scheme for disciplined saving, and Short Notice Deposits offering liquidity with strong returns.

**TDS:** What initiatives have your bank taken to encourage savings habits among general people?

**SMM:** Through school banking programmes, the bank partners with schools nationwide to open student accounts and conduct awareness campaigns, issuing debit cards and chequebooks on the same day. Financial literacy campaigns in both urban and rural areas educate citizens on budgeting, savings, and financial management, often in collaboration with NGOs. Special initiatives target women with tailored products and cashless incentives. Additionally, reward programmes and corporate roadshows promote savings products and account openings through engaging, on-site customer enrolment drives.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**SMM:** Customers can now open accounts entirely online through the mobile app using eKYC and live photo verification. Mobile and internet banking platforms offer real-time access for transactions, goal-setting, and automated fund transfers. Select branches feature QR code deposit and smart counter facilities for seamless services. Soon, personalised goal-setting tools will be added to the app. Customers can open term deposits instantly and receive SMS and email confirmations. The app also supports fund transfers, bill payments, recharges, and savings tracking for an efficient digital banking experience.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

**SMM:** Dhaka Bank is introducing goal-based digital savings planners with progress tracking, flexible deposits, and automated reminders to encourage disciplined saving. A Green Savings Account will channel a portion of profits into environmental initiatives, with impact reports shared with customers. Special products for Non-Resident Bangladeshis will support remittance management and family savings. Biometric banking will enhance financial inclusion for rural users, while bundled savings with insurance will target low-income households. Customers will soon be able to issue instant virtual debit cards for seamless contactless and online payments.

# Banking on Herself

## How Women Are Saving for a Brighter Future



**SARAH BINTAY SHAKHAWAT**

In a quiet neighbourhood outside Dhaka, Nasima slips a crisp 1,000 taka note into a small envelope she keeps tucked in a book. It's her savings from last month's embroidery orders. The money isn't much, but it's more than a number—it's a measure of her independence. Like thousands of women across Bangladesh, Nasima doesn't just save to spend; she saves to survive, to plan, and to push back against uncertainty.

Over the past decade, the story of women's savings in Bangladesh has begun to shift. Slowly but unmistakably, women are carving out their own financial identities—not just as consumers, but as decision-makers. Women-specific banking schemes are at the heart of this movement. These schemes are not new, but in recent years they have gained renewed urgency.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a turning point. As incomes shrank and jobs disappeared, especially in

the informal sector where women dominate, many began prioritising emergency savings over long-term aspirations. For some, this meant hiding money away from the household budget to protect it. For others, it meant exploring new tools—mobile money apps, digital wallets, or group-based micro savings schemes. In times of crisis, women became financial buffers for their families. And they began demanding better ways to manage that responsibility.

Recognising this shift, several

financial institutions in Bangladesh began to develop savings products tailored to women's needs. These weren't just cosmetic changes; they were grounded in a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers women face in accessing and benefiting from formal banking.

Bank Asia's "Achol" scheme is one such example. It reflects a broader attempt within the sector to adapt to gendered financial behaviour. It offers features designed exclusively for women, such as flexible monthly deposits, no fees for digital transactions, and linked loan options against savings. But what makes schemes like these significant isn't just what they offer—it's who they acknowledge. For once, financial products are being built with women in mind from the start.

Yet a bank scheme alone doesn't transform a woman's relationship with money. The real impact of such initiatives depends on how women are

defiance. Banking knowledge—how to deposit, borrow, save, invest—isn't just technical; it's deeply tied to identity, confidence, and power.

"Financial literacy remains low across much of the country, with many people struggling to open or maintain a bank account. As a result, a significant portion of both men and women are still outside the formal banking system. The situation is even more concerning for women, many of whom are unable to maintain an account independently. Yet women naturally have a strong instinct for saving. If we can successfully bring this demographic into the mainstream banking system, the nation's overall savings rate could grow substantially," says MD Rashed Akter, Head of Retail Distribution, Midland Bank.

Banks are increasingly recognising the need to create spaces that feel safe and welcoming for women. As a representative from Bank Asia explained, "Bank Asia has pioneered

**The COVID-19 pandemic was a turning point. As incomes shrank and jobs disappeared, especially in the informal sector where women dominate, many women began prioritising emergency savings over long-term aspirations.**

prepared, informed, and supported to use them. Financial literacy remains alarmingly low among many women in Bangladesh, especially those outside urban centres. Without adequate understanding of interest rates, digital tools, or long-term planning, many sign up for bank accounts but never fully engage with them.

In many households, women are expected to defer financial decision-making to male relatives. Opening an account might seem small, but for some women, it's a quiet act of

the establishment of women-only ATM booths in Bangladesh, aiming to encourage female participation in digital banking. Our first women's ATM booth was launched at Sonakanda in Keraniganj, Dhaka, with the purpose of facilitating women's access to digital transactions and improving financial management. We also inaugurated a Women's Corner inside the Sonakanda Agent Outlet, and we have plans to set up more women-only ATM booths across the country.

SEE PAGE J3

# Why saving money from an early age could be the best gift you give your child (or yourself)

EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

Ever caught yourself saying, "If only I had started saving earlier..."?

Yeah. We all have. And that little regret right there? That's why saving money from an early age matters—whether it's helping a child understand value, guiding a teen toward better choices, or even trying to fix our own habits as adults.

Saving may sound boring next to all

holding on to money long enough to get something bigger, better, later.

That's still the foundation. But today, saving tools have evolved. For older teens already using mobile devices, digital finance apps can help reinforce these habits. Some platforms now offer auto-saving, monthly reminders, and even cashback-based incentives.

That said, for younger children, it's best to keep things offline. A jar full of coins, a family savings chart, or a



that dopamine-spiking spending. But done right, it's actually a confidence booster, a planning tool, and a secret weapon for smarter living. In today's Bangladesh, a single tap on your mobile finance app and half your salary disappears on food delivery. Flashy phone ads glare down from every Dhanmondi billboard. Learning to save isn't just smart—it's survival training.

sticker-based goal tracker can do more good than a screen ever could. The key is to make saving feel visible and doable.

#### Parents make the best teachers (even if we're still figuring it out)

If you want your kids to understand money, don't just tell them—show them. Let them watch you withdraw cash from an ATM and explain where that money came from. Show them your bank app and walk through how you track expenses. Talk about saving goals, even if it's just setting aside a bit for groceries or bills.

Many banks in Bangladesh now offer school banking services and special savings accounts for minors that are managed by parents till the children are 18.

These schemes are designed to help kids grow money discipline, and they often come with zero fees and basic financial education.

Next Eid, instead of letting your child spend all their salami on toys and chips, try guiding them to save a portion. You could even promise a bonus or a family treat once they reach a target. It's about building habits, not withholding joy.

#### What saving really teaches

Here's what kids (and honestly, adults too) gain from learning to save:

**Mental discipline:** Learning to wait, prioritize, and make smarter choices.

**Planning skills:** Understanding how



#### What the science says

A Cambridge University study found that by age seven, children already form money habits they'll carry into adulthood. Think about that—your kindergarten-going child might already be hardwired to either save or splurge.

Meanwhile, research from the University of Kansas showed that kids as young as five understood the concept of delayed gratification. In one experiment, children were asked to choose between one candy now or two later. Many were willing to wait. That's the seed of saving right there.

#### More than just taka in a tin

For many of us, saving started with a humble tin coin box—or those clay banks that were more fun to smash than to fill. It wasn't about interest rates or retirement plans. It was about

**Many banks in Bangladesh now offer school banking services and special savings accounts for minors that are managed by parents till the children are 18.** These schemes are designed to help kids grow money discipline, and they often come with zero fees and basic financial education.

#### Age-wise saving milestones for kids/teens in Bangladesh

- ⌚ Age 5–7: Piggy bank, learning coins, understanding "saving for later"
- ⌚ Age 8–10: Weekly allowance, small savings targets, reward-based incentives
- ⌚ Age 11–13: Basic bank visits, opening up savings account for minors
- ⌚ Age 14–17: Mobile finance apps (with parental oversight), savings goals (gadgets, books, events)
- ⌚ Age 18+: DPS accounts, freelance income saving, budgeting skills

**For many of us, saving started with a humble tin coin box—or those clay banks that were more fun to smash than to fill. It wasn't about interest rates or retirement plans. It was about holding on to money long enough to get something bigger, better, later.**

to work toward a goal, one step at a time.

**Financial resilience:** A saver is less likely to fall for scams or land in debt.

**Confidence:** Knowing they're in control, even with small amounts.

**Tips for teen and young adult savers**  
If you're in your late teens or just earning your first paycheck, saving can still be part of your story. Try these:

- Save first, spend later. Don't wait to see what's left—move money the moment you get paid.

- Automate savings using your financial app. Out of sight, out of temptation.

- Try the 50 30 20 rule: 50% for needs, 30% for wants, 20% for savings.

- Set up a DPS (Deposit Pension Scheme) account—it's a solid way to ensure we lock away a preset amount for a set number of years.

- Track your spending. Even your cha-fuchka routine adds up fast.

**Making saving fun (Yes, even for kids)**  
You don't have to turn into a mini financial planner. Just make it a game.

Set a monthly savings target. For example, save BDT 500 this month and we'll grab some street fuchka or go for a simple cold drinks & snack outing. The treat doesn't have to be big—it just has to be earned.

Offer small incentives. "Save part of your Eid gift money and I'll match it."

I tried this with my teenager who was eyeing a game controller. Not only did he agree to save—he upped the goal for an even better one. That's progress.

With my younger child, I use stickers and a savings poster. Every coin saved earns a sticker. When the chart's full, he gets to choose a little treat.

The key is to give them a sense of control. Even if it's a tiny amount, knowing it's theirs makes all the difference.

**Pro Tip:** Next Eid, instead of letting your child spend all their salami on toys and chips, guide them to save a portion. Maybe they get a reward later when the account hits a goal. Small steps, big impact.

#### Final words: Start Small. Think Big.

The earlier someone starts saving, the more powerful the habit becomes. Not just because of interest or returns—but because of mindset. In a country where economic uncertainty is common and money talk isn't always part of the school curriculum, teaching kids to save might be one of the most useful lessons we can pass on.

So whether it's a clay coin bank, a DPS account, or a promise to match their next BDT 100 in savings—start where you can. Because every small act of saving is a step toward their strength, stability, and confidence in the real world.

**BRAC BANK**  
গোপনীয় অধিবল

**ব্রাক ব্যাংকে  
আমানত  
সম্পূর্ণ নিরাপদ**

**মর্বাচ ক্রেডিট রেটিং**

**দেশজুড়ে নেটওয়ার্ক**

**সেরা ডিজিটাল সার্ভিস**

**অভিজ্ঞ ও স্বতন্ত্র পরিচালনা পর্যবেক্ষণ**

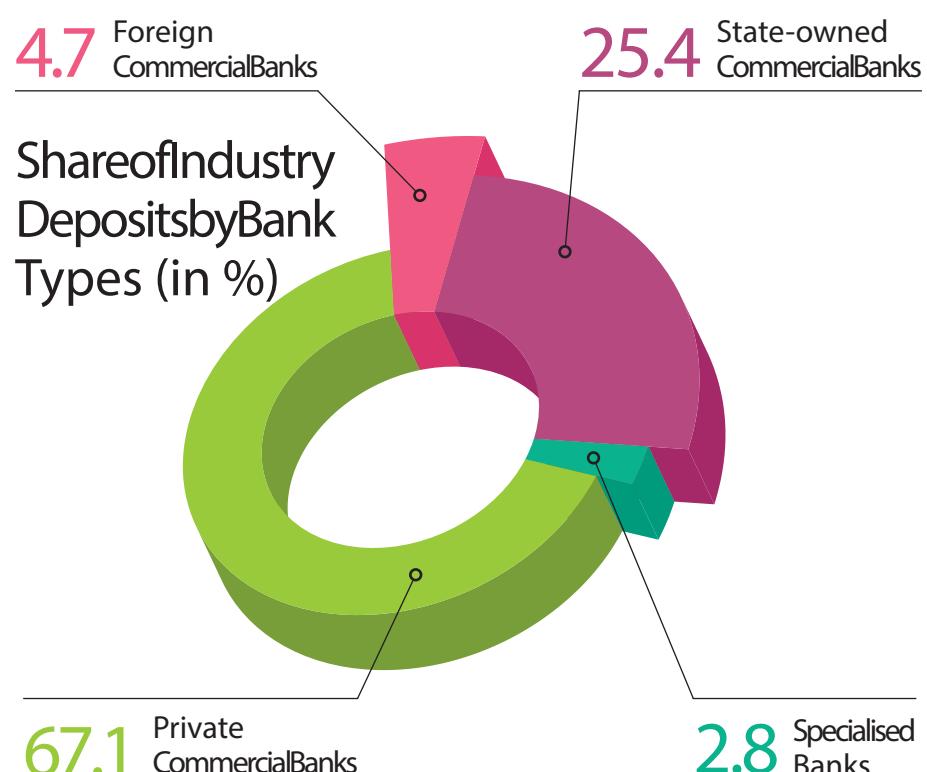
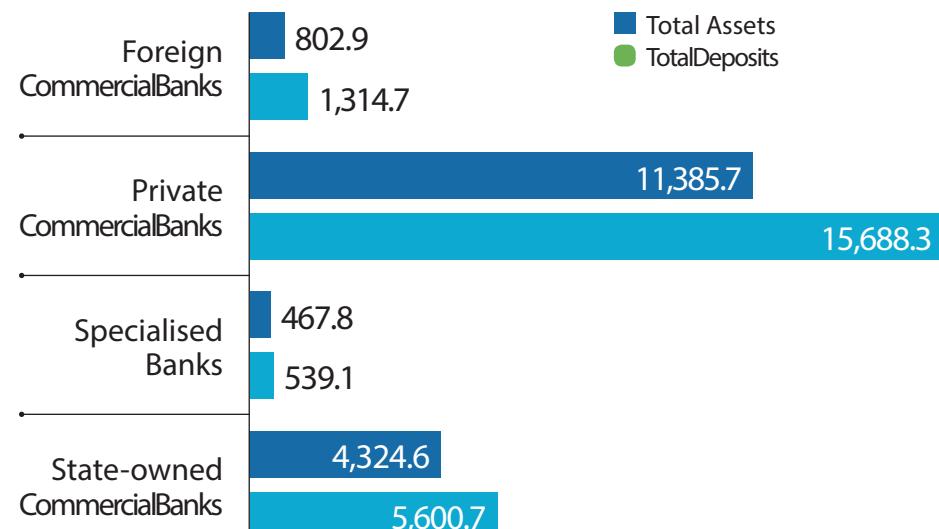
16221

bracbank.com  
in f o

## SAVINGS LANDSCAPE OF BANGLADESH

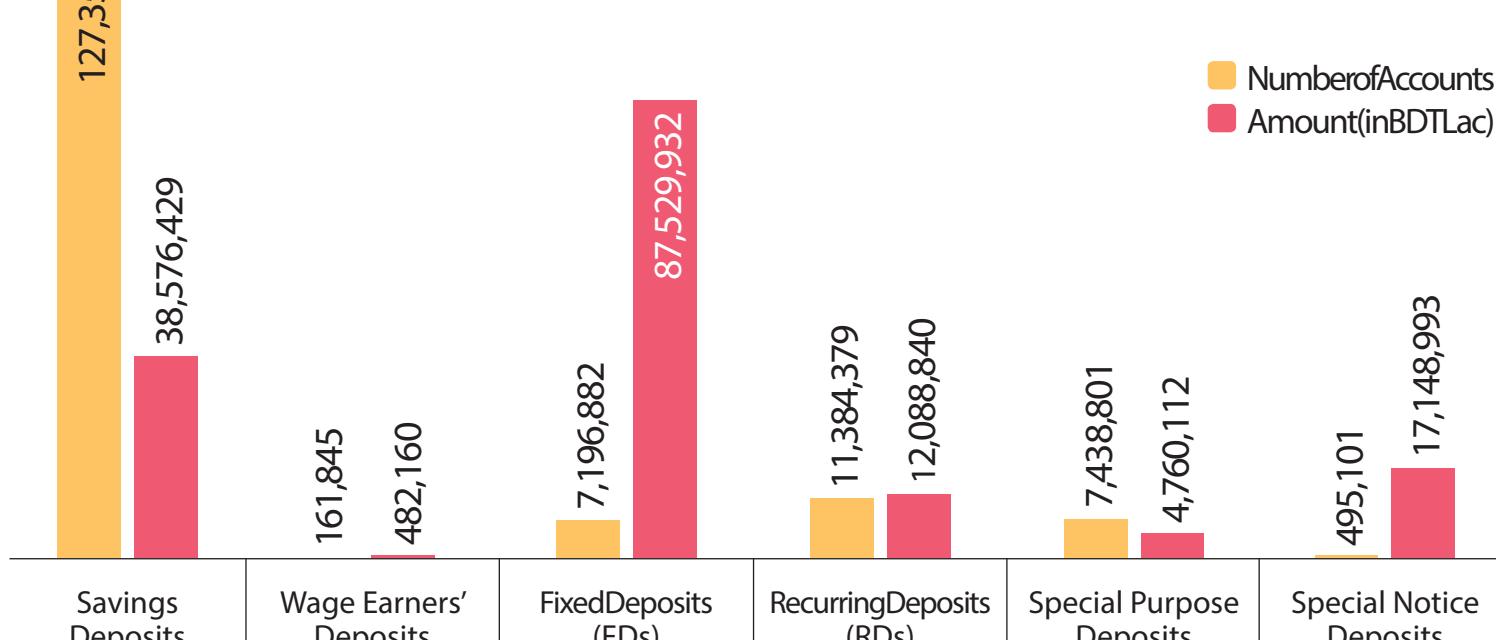
### Assets and Deposits Share by Bank Types

as of 2022 (in BDT Billion)



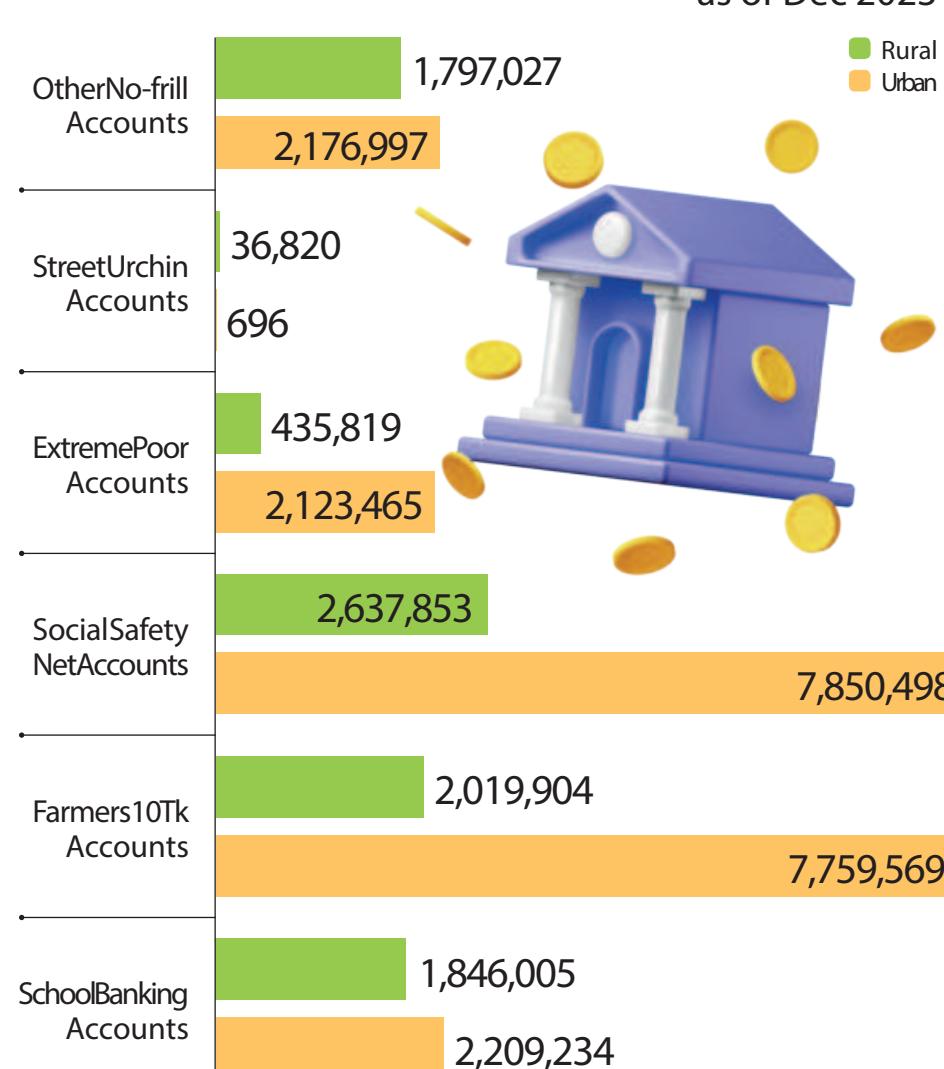
### Savings Outlook by Types of Accounts at All Scheduled Banks

as of 31 Dec 2024



### Rural-Urban Distribution of No-frill Savings Accounts

as of Dec 2023



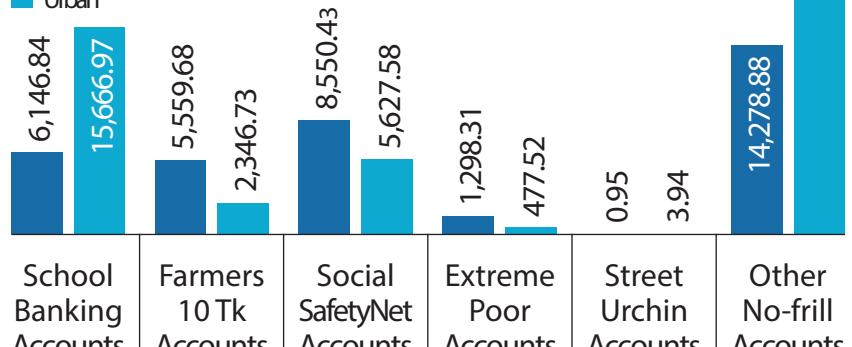
### Savings Scenario in the Microfinance Sector

Sep-23 Dec-23

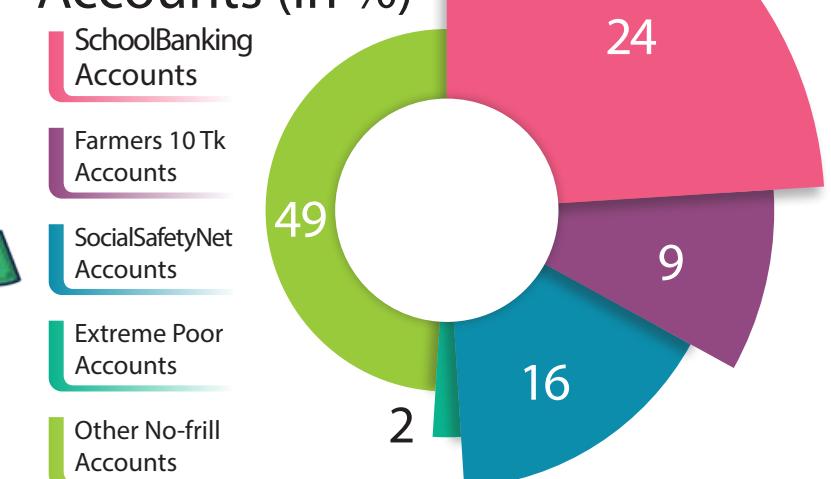


### Area-wise Deposit Amount in No-frill Savings Accounts

as of Dec 2023 (in BDT Million)

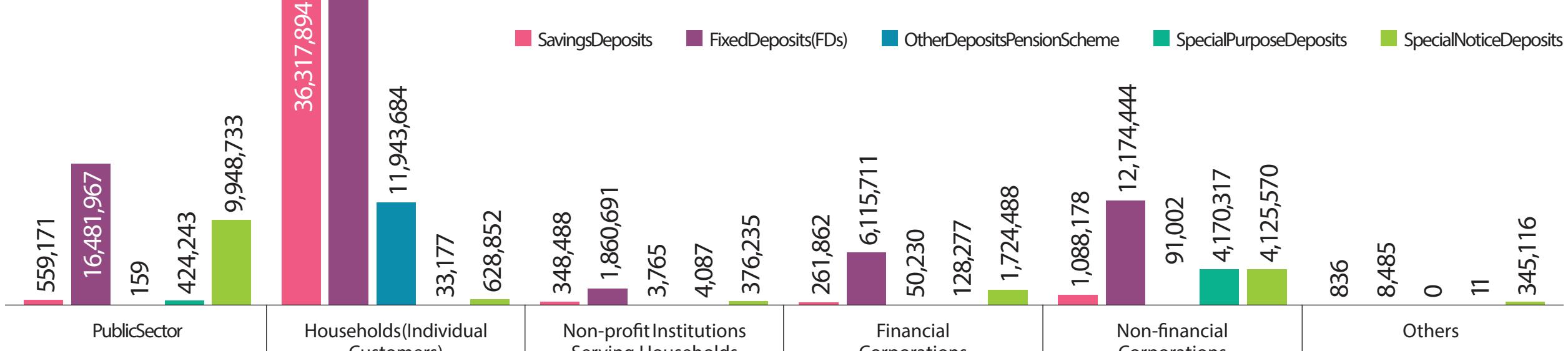


### Cumulative Deposit in No-frill Savings Accounts (in %)



### Savings Overview by Different Depositors at All Scheduled Banks

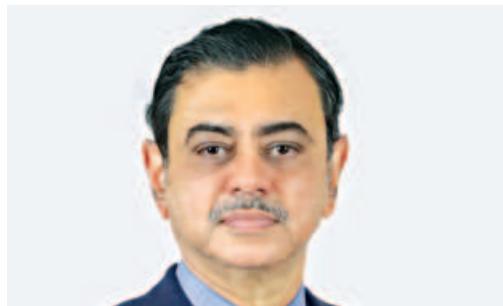
as of 31 Dec 2024 (in BDT Lac)



SOURCE: BANGLADESH BANK

## EMPOWERING

Communities with Essential Savings Knowledge



**SELIM R. F. HUSSAIN**  
Managing Director & CEO  
BRAC Bank

**The Daily Star (TDS):** Could you provide an overview of the current customer deposit and savings situation at your bank?

**Selim R. F. Hussain (SRFH):** As of September 2024, BRAC Bank recorded a 34% annualised growth, reflecting the deep trust customers place in the institution. By October, its retail deposit portfolio exceeded BDT 30,000 crore, driven by a wide range of products tailored to varied customer needs. Savings accounts, fixed deposits, and interest-bearing options, coupled with digital banking innovations, have accelerated deposit mobilisation. With eKYC and the Astha App, customers can now open accounts, including DPS and FDR, anytime, from anywhere, ensuring convenience and financial accessibility.

**TDS:** What are the top savings schemes that you are currently offering?

**SRFH:** BRAC Bank offers a comprehensive range of deposit and savings products tailored to meet the diverse financial needs of its customers. The Triple Benefits Savings Account delivers an attractive interest rate, helping customers grow their deposits more effectively. For younger savers, the Future Star Account is designed to build financial awareness among children under 18. Operated by their legal guardians, it includes engaging features to encourage early saving habits.

The Golden Benefits Savings Account provides senior citizens with exclusive privileges, while other products—such as the TARA Golden Benefits Savings Account, Happy Savers Account, and TARA Happy Savers Account—offer simplified savings schemes that help customers plan for future financial goals

with ease.

To meet international banking requirements, the Resident Foreign Currency Deposit (RFCID) Account enables customers to manage foreign currency from anywhere. The Foreign Currency (FCY) Account for NRIs allows expatriates to manage their foreign income reliably.

For those seeking interest-free banking, the MUKTI and TARA MUKTI Current Accounts are designed for high-net-worth individuals preferring Shariah-compliant and fee-waived options. BRAC Bank also serves freelancers and mariners with specialised accounts, including USD options, offering global flexibility and convenience.

**TDS:** What initiatives has your bank taken to encourage the savings habit among the general public?

**SRFH:** BRAC Bank actively promotes a savings culture through diverse financial literacy initiatives. As the lead bank in Bangladesh Bank's School Banking Conference in different districts, BRAC Bank educates students on banking services and instils early saving habits among them. The bank also conducts deposit campaigns and roadshows at universities and corporate offices, encouraging corporate professionals and students to adopt disciplined saving practices. Financial literacy programmes like 'Uthan Boithak' are conducted through its 1,100+ agent banking outlets nationwide.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented at your bank to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**SRFH:** The Astha digital banking app enables customers to open FDR and DPS accounts online, streamlining the savings process. Furthermore, the introduction of electronic Know Your Customer (eKYC) procedures allows expatriate Bangladeshis to open accounts remotely. In collaboration with bKash, BRAC Bank offers micro-savings options, encouraging regular saving habits with minimal initial investments. These initiatives collectively foster a robust savings culture across various population segments.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products at your bank?

**SRFH:** BRAC Bank aims for over 30% deposit growth in 2025, building on its strong past performance. To achieve this, it will launch tailored savings schemes to reach diverse customer segments and promote financial inclusion. Digital innovation remains key, with continued investment in platforms like the Astha app to ensure accessible, customer-friendly banking across Bangladesh.

## CLIENT TRUST POWERS

Our Deposit Growth



**MOHAMMAD ALI**  
Managing Director & CEO  
Pubali Bank

Pension Scheme, Senior Citizen Programme, and Swadhin Sanchay Swapno, make up the remaining 20% of Pubali Bank's deposit portfolio.

**TDS:** What initiatives have your bank taken to encourage savings habits among the general people?

**MA:** There has been considerable innovation in savings. At the retail level, we introduced an automated payroll system for garment workers, resulting in a diverse range of savings. Corporate transactions have also been automated, enabling companies to transact directly from their premises and contributing to deposit growth. Agent banking has brought in substantial retail deposits. In 2024, we launched merchant acquiring, attracting nearly BDT 1,000 crore in deposits. Through technological platforms like batch transactions, BFTN, RTGS, and e-GP, we have extended services to the grassroots, driving automatic deposit growth.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**MA:** We are observing a strong presence of large corporates with our bank. Our vast branch network supports their supply chain, sales, and marketing operations, including the management of dealers and distributors across the country, giving us a competitive advantage. Our strong online network has also simplified transactions among distributors, dealers, and suppliers, particularly for industries and MNCs.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

**MA:** Technological innovation is now our major area of focus, and we are placing special emphasis on the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across all operations—whether it is in the prevention of money laundering, deposit management, customer decision-making, or the development of loan and advance products. This is truly the age of Artificial Intelligence, and we are committed to leading in this transformation. For each product—be it related to financing, deposits, or security—we are working to integrate AI solutions. We are deploying world-leading AI tools in our data centres for disaster recovery, network management, and enhancing customer convenience through chatbots and robotic communications. We must also train our officials in AI tools and ensure their active implementation to deliver lifelong value to our customers.

## RAINY DAYS AND RETIREMENT:

Why Savings Matter More Than Ever



AYMAN ANIKA

its elderly.

### A system long in need of reform

Traditionally, Bangladesh has relied on family-based elder care, but this safety net is rapidly weakening due to urban migration, shrinking family units, and economic pressures. While government officials and public sector employees receive structured pensions, this covers only a small portion of the elderly population.

In response, the Universal Pension Scheme has been launched.

Introduced in 2023, the Universal Pension Scheme aims to provide structured retirement support for everyone, including formal and informal sector workers. With modules like Probash, Progoti, Surakha, and Samata, the scheme encourages citizens aged 18-50 to make monthly contributions and receive lifelong pension payouts after turning 60. Yet while promising, this programme's long-term success hinges on deep-rooted behavioural and institutional change.

As Bangladesh witnesses a demographic shift with an increasing elderly population, the conversation around savings and pensions has become more critical than ever. In response, the Government of Bangladesh introduced the Old Age Allowance (OAA) programme in the 1997-1998 fiscal year to support low-income senior citizens. As of the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the monthly allowance has increased to Tk 600 per person, benefiting approximately 5.8 million elderly individuals.

So, here is how Bangladesh is reimagining the financial security of

### Banks step up: New schemes, new mindsets

Banks are increasingly filling the pension gap with innovative savings products tailored for elderly customers.

### Midland Bank: The family support model

Md Rashed Akter, Head of Retail Distribution at Midland Bank, emphasises a practical problem faced by retirees: "After retirement, if you do an FDR, you'll only get the money at maturity. But monthly expenses need to be met regularly. That's why we designed the Family Support Scheme—it allows people to earn monthly returns from a fixed deposit, helping them manage recurring costs."

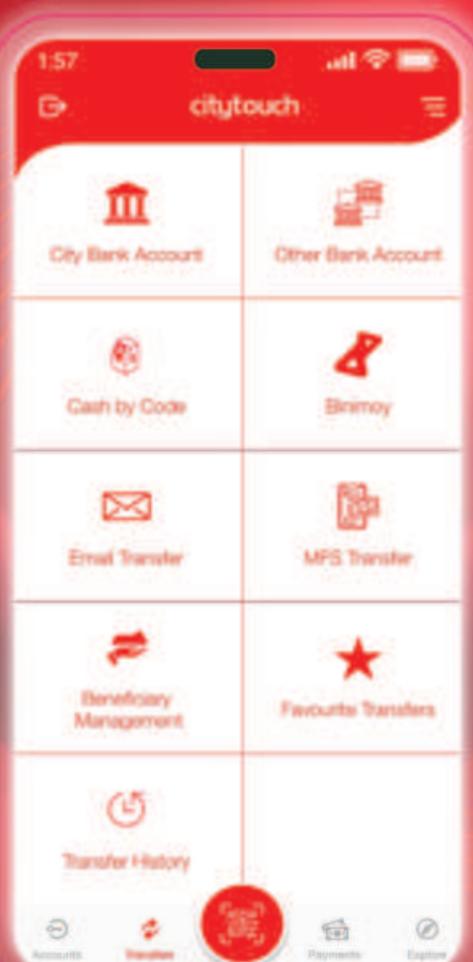
Midland has also extended its savings tenure from three to up to 20 years for long-term planners. For first-time savers or low-income groups, the bank offers a Tk 250 DPS—a rare nano-savings model.

SEE PAGE J8

**Banking made simple  
with just one app**

*Citytouch is the one-stop solution for all banking services. From fund transfer to opening DPS and more, fulfill all your banking needs in just a few taps. Open your City Bank account today and download the Citytouch app.*

*Enjoy all banking facilities in one convenient place.*



## Transforming Savings Culture Through Digital Solutions



**MD. AHSAN-UZ ZAMAN**  
Managing Director & CEO  
Midland Bank

Savings promote inclusive, Shariah-compliant banking for women and faith-based customers.

**TDS:** What initiatives has your bank taken to encourage the savings habit among the general public?

**MAZ:** Midland Bank has taken proactive steps to promote financial literacy and savings awareness nationwide. We observed Financial Literacy Day on 3 March 2025, followed by a dedicated week of activities across branches, sub-branches, and agent banking centres. These efforts target underserved communities, highlighting the benefits of saving and responsible planning. Our inclusive DPS schemes allow monthly savings from BDT 250 to BDT 5 lakh, over periods ranging from 3 months to 20 years. Aligned with government guidance, we promote online banking for convenience and use digital reminders, ads, and app notifications to help customers build consistent saving habits.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**MAZ:** At the core of MDB's innovation is 'Midland Online', a user-friendly, free mobile banking app that empowers customers to open and manage accounts, transfer funds, pay bills, request cheque books, and monitor FDRs, DPSs, and card bills—without visiting a branch. A standout feature is the ability to apply for a Digital Secured Loan against FDRs or DPS from home. The app also integrates Binimoy, a web-based platform for seamless fund transfers. We've launched MDB Super Saver Plus and MDB Super High Performance Corporate in both conventional and Islamic formats, alongside digital KYC and paperless onboarding, ensuring faster, more inclusive banking experiences.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

**MAZ:** MDB is actively expanding its savings portfolio with a strong focus on innovation, personalisation, and financial inclusion. We plan to introduce Child DPS accounts and savings schemes bundled with insurance, offering added protection. Our women-focused offerings will be enhanced with value-added services to meet lifestyle and business needs. Looking ahead, our roadmap includes goal-based digital savings, ESG-aligned products like green savings, and AI-powered planning tools. We aim to foster a disciplined savings culture that supports retirement, education, or emergencies.

**The Daily Star (TDS):** Could you provide an overview of the current savings situation at your bank?

**Md. Ahsan-uz Zaman (MAZ):** Midland Bank (MDB) has consistently maintained a strong savings portfolio, reflecting customers' trust in our technology-driven, secure, and value-focused banking platform. Even amid the global disruption caused by COVID-19, our commitment to growth and service remained steadfast. Post pandemic, MDB has seen steady growth in digital savings, as more customers favour online over traditional banking. Savings deposits now comprise 8.33% of our total deposit base, indicating a stable and sustainable structure. By mid-April 2025, savings deposits grew by BDT 29 crore since December 2024, driven by our strategic focus on inclusive banking and continued investment in digital transformation.

**TDS:** What are the top savings schemes that you are currently offering?

**MAZ:** To meet diverse customer needs, Midland Bank offers a wide range of innovative savings schemes. The flagship MDB Deposit Pension Scheme is available in both conventional and Islamic formats, with flexible tenures and attractive returns, accessible manually or digitally. High yield products such as MDB Double Benefit Plus, Kotipoti, Millionaire, and Shiksha Shanchay schemes offer rates of up to 10.75%. Digital FDRs earn an extra 0.25% interest, and customers may access secured loans up to 90% of the deposit via the Midland Online app. MDB Sathi and Saalam

## Nurturing Financial Goals Through Inclusive Savings



**NURUDDIN MD SADEQUE HOSSAIN**  
Managing Director  
Southeast Bank

a flexible deposit plan with small instalments and attractive returns; the Hajj Savings Scheme, which helps customers prepare financially for their sacred pilgrimage; the Millionaire Deposit Scheme, tailored for savers aiming to accumulate substantial wealth; and the Special DPS for Differently Abled Children.

**TDS:** What initiatives has your bank taken to encourage the savings habit among general people?

**NMSH:** Southeast Bank promotes a savings culture through financial literacy programmes in schools, colleges, and rural areas. Digital and branch-based campaigns encourage regular saving with tailored incentives. Advisory services at all branches and National Savings Week workshops empower individuals to adopt disciplined saving habits and plan for a secure financial future.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**NMSH:** The SEB Digital Banking App empowers customers to manage their accounts anytime, anywhere. Agent Banking and Mobile Booths extend our services to remote areas, while specialised support for women and senior citizens—including dedicated desks and tailored products—ensures inclusivity. We have adopted e-KYC for seamless, paperless account opening. Real-time savings tracking via our app and internet banking offers greater financial control. Strategically placed branches and sub-branches maximise customer service. As financial advisors, we strive to deliver the best outcomes for every customer's investment goals.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

**NMSH:** Looking ahead, Southeast Bank is focused on enhancing its savings products to meet evolving customer expectations. Planned initiatives include AI-driven goal-based digital savings tools, eco-friendly Green Savings Accounts for sustainable banking, and smart micro savings schemes in partnership with fintechs.

With 135 branches and 22 sub-branches nationwide, we are establishing dedicated retail windows to serve existing, prospective, and unbanked customers. Our 128 agent outlets, primarily in rural areas, will be doubled to expand access. We also aim to partner with hospitals, garment factories, NGOs, and educational institutions to provide payroll services that encourage systematic savings across diverse communities.

**Bank Asia**  
Today's Investment is  
Tomorrow's Wealth

**Shanchay Plus**



To know more visit :

[www.bankasia-bd.com](http://www.bankasia-bd.com)

T & C Apply

24/7  
16205

## Rainy Days and Retirement: Why Savings Matter More Than Ever

FROM PAGE J7

"Even if it's just 250 Taka for 20 years – that's how real savings growth happens," said Akter. "The most important thing is consistency."

Digital banking is further incentivised at Midland, where online customers earn 0.25 per cent more interest through schemes like Super Saver Plus.

**City Bank: Lifecycle-based financial planning**

City Bank's approach is rooted in understanding how savings needs evolve over time.

"Savings begin at your child's birth and shift as life progresses," shared Arup Haider. "By the time you retire, you're looking at financial stability, not risk."

City Bank offers fixed deposit options designed for retirees, with monthly interest payouts that help cover day-to-day expenses. Haider recalls cases where retirees deposited gratuity or provident fund payouts – sometimes up to Tk 1.5 crore – to generate steady monthly income.

On bank selection,

he's clear: "For a difference of Tk 10,000 in interest, you don't want to risk Tk 5 lakh in a poorly rated bank. The principal must remain intact."

**EBL: Banking with dignity**

Eastern Bank Limited (EBL) takes a value-added approach, offering senior citizens premium services through its exclusive account.

"We provide Platinum Debit Cards, free insurance, and locker waivers for our elderly customers – without any extra cost," said Al Mamun Ansar, Head of Liability Business at EBL.

The bank's savings products – like EBL Confidence and EBL Millionaire – are structured for long-term returns. EBL Confidence, for instance, starts at Tk 500/month and can run for 10 years, making it accessible for entry-level earners.

But for elderly citizens who want a monthly income, EBL also offers fixed deposits that pay out interest each month – a crucial feature for retirees managing regular expenses.

"The return of your deposit is

more important than the return on your deposit," emphasised Ansar. "That's what we prioritise."

**Tackling the cultural hurdles**

Despite these advances, a major barrier remains: mindset. "In our country, we spend bonuses and take credit card debt," said Akter of Midland Bank. "In contrast, in India, people are more disciplined about savings. We need to move toward a savings-first culture."

This gap is not only about education but also about habit. Many people still wait until their 50s to start thinking about retirement, when ideally, savings should begin in their 20s.



City Bank's Haider agrees: "If someone has a monthly income, they should go for a DPS. If they have a lump sum, fixed deposits make more sense. But the earlier you start, the better your options."

However, a promising shift is occurring in demographics.

"Five years ago, female depositors were 22 per cent of our total retail deposits. Now it's 30 per cent," said Haider. "Also, Gen Z isn't just spending – they're saving for goals, like buying an iPhone. These are early signs of planning behaviour."

At EBL, specialised women's savings accounts come with added benefits – including free insurance and fee waivers – making savings more attractive for women of all ages.

**Rethinking savings for retirement: What you should know**

When planning for retirement – either for yourself or for ageing parents and relatives – it's important to approach savings with strategy and foresight. The first principle is to start early. Even small monthly deposits, if made consistently, can grow substantially over time due to the power of compounding.

Diversifying your savings is equally important. A healthy financial plan might combine DPS (Deposit Pension Schemes), FDRs (Fixed Deposit Receipts), and insurance-linked products to balance security and returns.

It's also essential to choose your bank and savings products wisely – not just based on interest rates, but also on service quality, digital accessibility, and overall reliability. Liquidity should be a key consideration as well. Savings schemes that allow monthly interest payouts or flexible withdrawal options – without breaking the principal – are especially valuable during retirement.

Lastly, savings should always be tied to specific life goals, whether it's ensuring access to healthcare, paying for housing, or supporting grandchildren's education. With thoughtful planning, retirement can be a time of dignity, independence, and peace of mind.

**The road ahead: From reactive to proactive**

Bangladesh's financial sector is finally responding to the needs of its ageing population – not just with products, but with empathy. The shift from "save when you can" to "save with a plan" is redefining retirement.

Still, there's much work to be done. Financial literacy must deepen, digital platforms must be more accessible, and social norms around elder care must evolve to value autonomy over dependence.

Because ultimately, savings isn't just about money. As Akter put it: "It's about peace of mind. About knowing that when the working years end, life doesn't have to stop – it can begin again."





PHOTO: STAR

## SHAPING a Saving Generation

MUJIB RAHMAN

Youth represent one of the most vital and dynamic segments of Bangladesh's population, with over 45% under the age of 25. Recognising the transformative potential of this demographic, Bangladesh has prioritised youth financial inclusion, embedding it into the broader development agenda. At the heart of this effort is Bangladesh Bank's School and Youth Banking initiative—a visionary programme designed to instil financial literacy, promote savings habits, and foster responsible engagement with the formal financial system from an early age.

Launched in November 2010 and formalised through a comprehensive policy in 2013, the School Banking programme offers students under 18 access to modern banking services. Through School Banking Accounts (SBAs), students learn to engage with essential financial tools, including digital platforms. These accounts seamlessly transition into standard savings accounts once students turn 18, ensuring long-term financial engagement and trust in the banking system.

As of February 2025, nearly five million active school banking accounts have been opened, with private commercial banks facilitating over 70% of them. Notably, girls now hold 48.94% of these accounts, reflecting significant progress toward gender-inclusive financial access. Once dominated by urban participation, the programme now sees rural students comprising 53% of account holders, thanks to increased outreach and mobile banking innovations. However, disparities remain—urban students still account for 71% of total deposits, compared to just 29% from rural areas—highlighting the need for deeper financial empowerment in underserved communities.

Although deposit volumes have declined slightly since September 2023, likely due to inflationary pressure on lower and middle-income families, the continued increase in account numbers signals growing financial awareness and trust among the youth.

Bangladesh Bank's efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2024, it received the prestigious Global Youth Financial Inclusion Award from the Alliance for Financial Inclusion. Its core strategies include integrating financial literacy into the national curriculum, launching a dedicated website for literacy, and issuing youth banking guidelines. In March 2025, the central bank mandated that all scheduled banks conduct school banking through their nearest branches—ensuring accessibility and deepening community engagement.

A defining feature of the programme is its inclusivity.

**By embedding financial literacy into early education and ensuring accessible banking for all youth—urban or rural, student or freelancer—Bangladesh is laying the foundation for a more financially secure and resilient future.**



Student friendly policies, such as low or no minimum balance requirements and waived service charges, make banking accessible even for students from low-income families. In rural areas, these accounts often serve as the first point of contact with formal financial systems, helping to bridge the urban-rural financial divide.

This success is amplified through active parental engagement and the support of educational institutions. Since 2014, School Banking Conferences have served as critical platforms for promoting financial literacy at the grassroots. These community events bring together students, teachers, parents, and local officials through workshops, speeches, and interactive sessions.

Challenges persist. Urban students enjoy better banking infrastructure and educational resources, often resulting in higher savings rates and more active use. Overcoming these gaps requires sustained outreach, improved infrastructure, and awareness campaigns

tailored to underserved communities.

Looking ahead, schools and banks are encouraged to adopt automated financial systems and fully integrate financial education into the curriculum. Normalising banking in students' daily lives will reinforce positive financial behaviour and prepare them for financially responsible adulthood.

School and youth banking in Bangladesh is more than a financial service—it is a transformative tool for empowerment and national development. By promoting savings, fostering financial literacy, and ensuring inclusive banking access, these initiatives are shaping a generation of informed citizens ready to lead Bangladesh into a more equitable and prosperous future.

The momentum behind youth financial inclusion extends beyond school-based programmes.

SEE PAGE J12

## New to Savings? Pick a Plan that Pays Off

FROM PAGE J12

EBL has consistently maintained a strong reputation as one of the top three banks in the country, ensuring customers' funds are always accessible.

Moreover, customers should consider the quality of service and advancements in digital banking when choosing savings schemes with a certain bank. "A digitally advanced bank can save time and hassle; for instance, instead of visiting the branch for something as simple as a balance certificate, our customers can access it instantly through Citytouch," added the DMD of City Bank.

After you have made up your mind about a bank, here are a few things to consider if you are torn between DPS and FD:

### Availability of funds

DPS is ideal if you want to save gradually over time with monthly contributions. FD is better if you have a lump sum amount ready to invest. While FDs suit those with immediate surplus funds, DPS works better for salaried individuals or those with regular income who prefer to save regularly in smaller amounts.

### Required minimum deposit

Naturally, FDs require a large amount of initial deposit compared to DPS. However, be aware of the monthly installment requirements for DPS. Missed installments may result in penalty charges or reduced final maturity value. If several consecutive installments are missed (usually 3–6 months, depending on bank policy), the bank may choose to prematurely close the account.

In case of early closure or irregular payments, the interest rate might be recalculated at a lower "savings account" rate rather than the promised DPS rate. "Customers should choose a scheme with a monthly deposit amount they can consistently maintain—regardless of financial struggles, job insecurity, or unforeseen challenges," mentioned the Retail Distribution Head of Midland Bank.

### Interest rate & flexibility

FDs usually offer higher interest rates than DPS schemes. Compare rates across banks and see which option yields better returns over your desired period. Moreover, consider that DPS requires consistent monthly deposits for a chosen period, while FDs require no ongoing commitment after the initial deposit.

### SAVINGS SLIP-UPS TO AVOID

- ⌚ Align the chosen scheme with your goals – don't lock in funds for long term that you'll need soon.
- ⌚ Don't ignore the profit calculation method – know how compounding interest or Islamic profit sharing works.
- ⌚ Be aware of withdrawal policies or tax implications, which can diminish your profits.
- ⌚ Don't chase after shiny returns – high rates mean nothing without bank stability.

### Tenor & early encashment conditions

Consider how long you can afford to keep your money locked in. Both DPS and FD offer different tenor options; FDs often offer schemes with longer duration. In case of premature withdrawal before fulfilling designated tenor, FDs may allow you partial benefits.

For DPS, customers usually need to complete the full term and only get the self-deposited amount without any benefits in case of early encashment. Some banks may also charge for early encashment, check with your bank before opting for a savings scheme.

Additionally, many banks now offer goal-based savings options—such as schemes for education, motherhood, retirement, or home purchase—so you can choose one that aligns with your financial goals. Most banks also offer savings schemes in both traditional and Shariah compliant formats—choose the one that aligns with your preferences and values. Finally, look into the tax implications of the interest earned, which can affect your net returns.



## BANGLADESH'S

### MOST

### Attractive Savings Schemes

MD ZAHIDUR RABBI

In an increasingly uncertain economic landscape, savings schemes are becoming essential tools for individuals seeking financial security and long-term stability. Across Bangladesh, banks are offering an impressive range of savings products, each designed to cater to specific life stages, ambitions, and financial needs. From retirement planning to digital banking solutions, today's offerings are as diverse as the country's evolving economy.

**Bank Asia: Targeted Solutions for Women, Seniors and Aspiring Millionaires**

Bank Asia has positioned itself as a frontrunner in

such as lifestyle perks and insurance coverage.

For customers maintaining larger savings balances, the EBL Premium Savings Account offers higher returns along with exclusive privileges. Meanwhile, the EBL Confidence DPS encourages disciplined monthly savings, helping customers build wealth steadily over time to achieve major financial goals.

These products reflect EBL's strategy of supporting financial inclusion while rewarding prudent saving habits across different customer segments.

**Midland Bank: Embracing Technology for Greater Convenience**

Midland Bank has taken significant strides in providing fully digitalised savings solutions. The MDB Digital



delivering tailored savings solutions. Its ACHOL scheme is a specialised monthly savings product developed exclusively for women aged 18 and above. Additional benefits include the opportunity to open multiple ACHOL accounts with varying instalment amounts and access to loan facilities against deposited amounts, according to the bank's secured overdraft policy.

For senior citizens, Bank Asia has introduced Nirbhabona, a term savings product specifically crafted to ensure financial security and peace of mind during retirement. Available to individuals aged 60 and above, the scheme offers a fixed deposit tenure of either three or five years, with monthly benefits credited directly to a linked account. The minimum deposit requirement is set at BDT 100,000 for single accounts and BDT 6,000,000 for joint accounts. The scheme also offers loan facilities against deposits, providing flexibility to account holders.

Bank Asia's Sanchay-E-Kotipoti scheme, meanwhile, caters to those aspiring to build significant wealth over the long term. Designed for individuals aged 18 and above, including minors under the supervision of a guardian, the scheme promotes disciplined monthly savings with the ultimate goal of becoming a millionaire.

**BRAC Bank: Merging Digital Convenience with Traditional Savings**

BRAC Bank has embraced the digital transformation of financial services through its Virtual Savings Account. Targeted at customers aged 18 and above, the Virtual Savings Account replaces traditional debit cards with a multicurrency virtual card, allowing instant issuance without physical delivery. Customers benefit from monthly interest accrual, higher interest rates, and the ability to transact via QR codes and e-commerce platforms. Furthermore, no maintenance fee is charged if the account maintains an average balance above BDT 50,000. Reward points on spending and the facility to withdraw cash through Astha cash-out at BRAC Bank ATMs enhance the account's appeal to the digital generation.

**United Commercial Bank: Flexible Solutions for Modern Savers**

United Commercial Bank (UCB) has developed a suite of products tailored to the changing financial habits of Bangladeshis. The UCB AYMA Savings Account specifically targets women, promoting financial independence through attractive interest rates and enhanced banking privileges. In response to the booming freelance economy, the UCB Swadhin Account supports service exporters with easy management of foreign currency earnings alongside local transactions.

For long-term planners, UCB offers the Super Flex Deposit Premium Scheme, a monthly savings product designed to help customers achieve future goals such as education, travel, or home improvement through disciplined instalments and competitive returns. For affluent individuals seeking to maximise returns, the Dynamic Benefit Savings Account combines higher interest rates with flexible account management and fee waivers, offering a premium banking experience.

**Eastern Bank: Products for Empowerment and Disciplined Growth**

Eastern Bank (EBL) provides a range of savings solutions designed to meet the evolving aspirations of its customers. The EBL Smart Women's Savings Account is tailored to women, combining flexible savings options with attractive interest rates and additional benefits

**Customers today have a wealth of choices, whether they seek a secure retirement, a pathway to millionaire status, a digital-first banking experience, or simple, flexible saving tools for everyday needs.**

Savings Account can be opened entirely online without the need for an initial deposit. Customers receive a free lifetime debit card, free internet banking, and free SMS banking for the first year. Interest is calculated daily and credited monthly, and customers benefit from a generous transaction limit, with a waiver on foreign currency endorsement charges.

Building on its digital-first approach, Midland Bank's MDB Digital DPS offers a flexible deposit scheme accessible through online banking. Instalment amounts start as low as BDT 250 and can go up to BDT 500,000, with tenures ranging from three months to twenty years. No physical documentation is required, making it one of the most accessible and convenient savings products in the market.

For savers with larger balances, the MDB Super Saver Plus offers an enhanced interest rate for those maintaining a daily minimum balance of BDT 50,000. The account includes free internet banking, a free debit card for the first year, and a free cheque book, combining profitability with everyday banking convenience.

**Prime Bank: Accessible Savings Options for Every Stage of Life**

Prime Bank's offerings include the Prime Savings Account, a flexible product requiring only a minimal initial deposit of BDT 500. Customers can earn daily interest, provided a minimum balance of BDT 10,000 is maintained, with interest paid out on a half-yearly basis. Free internet banking and access to debit and cheque book facilities add to its convenience.

For younger savers, Prime Bank offers the Prime First Account, designed for students under 18 years old and operated by their guardians. With no minimum balance requirement, daily interest accrual, and complimentary banking services such as free debit cards and internet banking, the Prime First Account supports early financial literacy and independence.

Women seeking comprehensive financial solutions may opt for the Prime Women's Savings Account, which combines attractive interest rates with a range of benefits, including free health insurance coverage up to BDT 1 lakh, discounts on loan processing fees and locker charges, and access to certification courses aimed at personal development.

**Matching Aspirations with Opportunities**

The landscape of savings schemes in Bangladesh is more vibrant and diverse than ever before. From traditional deposit plans to fully digital accounts, banks are offering products that not only secure savings but also align with broader goals of empowerment, financial inclusion, and wealth creation.

With a thoughtful evaluation of personal goals and financial requirements, savers in Bangladesh can now find schemes perfectly suited to their aspirations and lifestyle.

## Securing the Financial Future of Bangladesh



**MOHAMMAD MAMDUDUR RASHID**  
Managing Director & CEO  
United Commercial Bank (UCB)

encourages disciplined saving, and Fixed Deposits (FDs) deliver higher returns through structured, long-term commitments.

**TDS:** What initiatives have your bank taken to encourage savings habits among the general public?

**MMR:** At UCB, we believe financial inclusion begins with the habit of saving. We are actively promoting savings across all demographics through school programmes, community outreach, and digital content aimed at building early awareness. Our agent banking network extends secure savings options to rural and underserved communities. Innovation drives our approach—customers can now open accounts within minutes via the UCB Digital App, while biometric agent banking allows account access using only a fingerprint. Goal-based schemes such as the Millionaire products help customers save for specific life goals. Whether a student or a retiree, our inclusive solutions empower all to save confidently.

**TDS:** What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

**MMR:** Digital adoption plays a vital role in UCB's ongoing transformation. A significant volume of customer activity is now conducted digitally, including account openings, term and recurring deposit setups, e-commerce transactions, POS and ATM/CRM usage, fund transfers, and bill payments. This growing engagement reflects increasing comfort with technology-driven financial services. Customers now view UCB not merely as a bank, but as a trusted financial partner. Despite recent sectoral changes, UCB remains financially robust. Following the restructuring of our Board under the interim government, we have maintained stability and achieved growth—without any financial support from Bangladesh Bank—thanks to strong fundamentals and strategic foresight.

**TDS:** What are the top savings schemes that you are currently offering?

**MMR:** UCB offers a wide array of savings products designed to serve diverse customer needs. The UCB Shomota Savings Account provides low-cost access for the unbanked, while the AYMA Savings Account empowers women across all segments with attractive rates and special privileges. For affluent clients, the Dynamic Benefit and Imperial Savings Accounts offer enhanced returns and premium services. The UCB Swadhin Account supports freelancers and service exporters in managing foreign income, while the NRB Savings Account caters to non-resident Bangladeshis. Our Monthly Savings Scheme (DPS)

This growing trust is evident in the numbers. In just the first 36 working days of 2025, over 100,000 new accounts were opened across branches, agent outlets, and digital platforms. In February alone, we saw a net deposit growth of BDT 13.32 billion, which rose to BDT 23.6 billion in March.

**TDS:** What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

**MMR:** Our future roadmap focuses on personalisation, digital-first experiences, and social responsibility. We will soon launch AI-powered tools that analyse customer behaviour and recommend personalised savings strategies. In support of sustainability, we are developing green savings products to encourage paperless, eco-friendly banking. We also aim to integrate savings, investment, and insurance into a unified platform for comprehensive financial management.

**midland**  
online

**midlandbank**  
bank for inclusive growth

# এমজিবি

# ডিজিটাল ডিপিএস

## সঞ্চয় করুন সহজেই ঘরে বসে

The app screen shows the 'MY SCHEMES' section with a red box highlighting the 'Monthly Savings' option. The background of the app shows a blurred view of a living room with a sofa, plants, and a lamp.

- ৩/৬/৯ মাস থেকে ১/২/৩/৫/৮/১০/১৫/২০ বছর পর্যন্ত সুবিধাজনক  
যেকোনো মেয়াদ ২৫০/৫০০/১,০০০/২০,০০০/২৫,০০০/৫০,০০০/৭৫,০০০/১,০০,০০০ টাকা থেকে ৫,০০,০০০ টাকা পর্যন্ত আপনার  
সামর্থ্য অনুযায়ী সঞ্চয় করুন।

# New to Savings? Pick a Plan that Pays Off



MIFTAHL JANNAT

Choosing the right savings option is not just about interest rates—it is about matching your money habits with goals, lifestyle, and income pattern. What works for a student might not suit a new parent or a retiree. Whether you want to open a simple savings account, disciplined Deposit Pension Scheme (DPS), or the dependable returns of a Fixed Deposit (FD), each option differs in terms of nature, flexibility and growth. Before you commit your hard-earned money, it is worth weighing a few key factors—ensuring your savings do not simply sit idle, but grow with purpose.

**But, why trust a bank with your savings?**  
Your liquid assets deserve more than just a hiding spot—they should grow, stay secure, and be ready

when you need them most. Banks offer a variety of secure, structured savings options designed to help your money achieve just that, tailored to your financial situations. Such savings serve as a crucial safety net during unexpected financial burdens like medical emergencies or job loss.

"Bangladesh does not have a strong savings culture, with many people spending their entire bonuses and relying on credit cards; shifting this mindset to treat a portion of earnings and bonuses as extra income for saving can significantly boost financial security," said Md. Rashed Akter, Head of Retail Distribution & Chief Bancassurance Officer, Midland Bank.

Whether it is building an emergency fund, planning for retirement, or working toward long-term goals, saving through a bank helps foster

discipline and consistency. With the added benefits of security, interest earnings, and ease of access, banks provide a trusted environment not just for storing your money—but also for increasing it effectively.

"To grow your savings efficiently, both time and mindset matter. Starting early—like saving BDT 1,000 monthly from age 25 at 11% interest—can grow to over BDT 86 lakh in 40 years, thanks to compound interest. If that same person starts at 30, they miss out on the full potential of compound interest," added Akter from Midland Bank.

**What to check before choosing a savings account?**  
A savings account is the most basic and accessible way to start saving money. Offered by almost all banks, it allows you to deposit and withdraw funds with ease while earning a modest interest on your balance. Ideal for day-to-day banking and emergency funds, these accounts usually come with low or no minimum balance requirements and user-friendly features.

There are a few key factors that customers should consider when selecting a savings account. Firstly, convenience is key, as modern customers value their time and prefer avoiding lengthy forms and in-branch visits.

Mohammad Ali, Managing Director and CEO of Pubali Bank highlighted this trend, saying, "Deposits coming through technological channels

are showing a growth rate of nearly 30–40%, while the overall average remains around 20%."

"Look for a bank that allows fully digital account opening—where you can upload documents and complete the process from home," suggested Al Mamun Ansar, Head of Liability Business, Liability & Wealth Management at EBL.

Next, evaluate the bank's mobile app. Can you perform essential transactions? Does it provide full services, or will you still need to visit a branch for most after-sales support? A good app should offer a seamless, end-to-end experience.

"Also consider the debit card: how widely accepted is it, how reliable the card network is, and does it work smoothly wherever you go, as long as there's money in the account? Ask peers about their experiences," added Ansar from EBL.

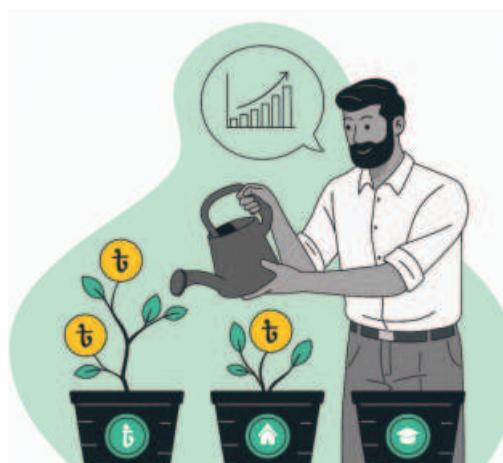
Finally, assess the availability and functionality of ATMs near your home or workplace. While the interest rates may not be as high as other savings options, the flexibility and liquidity of savings accounts make them reliable choices for short-term financial needs and building a habit of saving.

**DPS vs FD—which is the smarter pick?**  
Both Deposit Pension Scheme (DPS) and Fixed Deposit (FD) fall under the broader category of savings schemes, which provide higher returns compared to regular savings accounts. DPS is a monthly savings plan where you deposit a fixed amount each month over a chosen period. In contrast, a FD requires a one-time lump sum investment for a set tenor, usually offering higher interest rates than DPS.

While opening such savings schemes, especially FD or schemes requiring a large amount of deposit, it is crucial to consider the bank's reputation and their liquidity situation before anything. "While interest rate is a key factor, higher returns often come with higher risk. It is wiser to choose a reputable bank. Many are drawn to cooperative banks offering 13–14% rate, but if the money isn't returned, the gain is meaningless," points out Arup Haider, DMD & Head of Retail Banking, City Bank.

Ansar from EBL also draws attention to this point, saying "Return on your deposit is not as important as return of your deposit—what's crucial is getting your money back when needed."

SEE PAGE J10



Prime Bank



MyPrime

**SAVE SMART**  
OPEN DEPOSIT SCHEME  
& FIXED DEPOSIT  
WITH MYPRIME APP

Download  
MyPrime  
Mobile App

Sign Language  
Video Call Service  
013 211 16218  
10 AM - 4 PM

24/7 Helpline  
16218  
primebank.com.bd