

# Star BUSINESS



## Draft telecom policy keeps door open for monopoly

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's (BTRC) draft policy to reform its complex licensing regime arrives with bold promises — streamlining processes, encouraging competition, and attracting foreign investment.

Yet, beneath the surface, certain clauses lack clarity and may safeguard existing market inequalities, empower dominant players, sideline local entrepreneurs, and, in some cases, discourage foreign ownership, said experts.

At the core of the proposed reforms is the consolidation of the licensing structure in the telecommunications sector — where there are over 20 types of licences — into three broad categories: National Infrastructure & Connectivity Service Provider (NICSP), International Connectivity Service Provider (ICSP), and Access Network Service Provider (ANSP).

However, despite its aim to “promote local entrepreneurship by fostering fair competition,” the draft guidelines place no limitations on foreign partners acquiring ownership stakes in any other BTRC licences, which may end up opening the door to cross-ownership and foreign control across all segments — without offering similar leverage to local entities.

Experts warn that this imbalance could lead to anti-competitive consolidation, policy loopholes, and further erosion of domestic participation in a sector vital to national digital sovereignty.

For instance, Axiata Group, which owns Robi Axiata; Telenor, which holds a majority stake in Grameenphone; and Veon, owner of Banglalink, will be eligible to simultaneously hold a stake in licensees from all three categories.

BTRC Chairman Md Emdad ul Bari said the policy had been designed this way to attract traceable foreign investment.

As an example, he cited Axiata Group's investment in edotco Bangladesh despite its existing stake in Robi Axiata.

However, experts have warned that this move could lead to discrimination, discourage local entrepreneurship, and potentially result in monopolistic practices.

Notably, this provision contradicts a clause in the draft itself, which prohibits ANSPs from holding ICSP licences.

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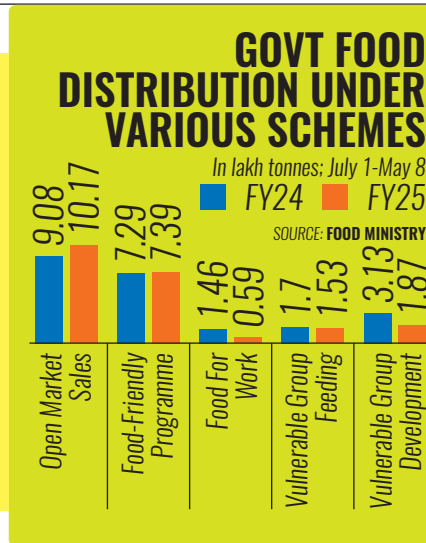
### TCB truck sales

TCB suspended sales of subsidised food items on March 27

Around 400 people used to buy essentials from each truck daily

Earlier, 410 trucks used to sell food items across the country

People could buy soybean oil, lentil, sugar, chickpea, and date



### TCB card sales

Now, only 49 lakh cardholders can access subsidised food

Over 50 lakh cards have been cancelled due to irregularities

They can buy rice, soybean oil, lentil and sugar

A new process is underway to select eligible beneficiaries

## SUBSIDISED FOOD supply shrinks despite poverty fears

SUKANTA HALDER

Although inflation has remained at elevated levels for over two years, the sale and distribution of essential food items by public agencies showed a year-on-year drop until May of fiscal year 2024-25, raising fears that many vulnerable people in the country could be left contending with food insecurity.

For nearly one and a half months, the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) has suspended sales of essentials, including edible oil, lentils, and sugar, at prices below market rates in urban areas, including Dhaka.

Explaining why, Mahbubur Rahman, secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, said that approval for selling essentials through TCB trucks needs to be obtained from the advisory council.

“The proposal for approval will be placed in the upcoming meeting. Once we get approval, sales will resume,” he said.

Before the suspension, the state agency sold essentials to around 400 people from each truck on six days of the week.

Additionally, the TCB provides essentials at subsidised rates to 49 lakh families each month. The list was slashed from the one crore families that received support during the tenure of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, after the interim government found anomalies in the beneficiary selection process.

Until May 9 of this fiscal year, public agencies — including the food and disaster management and relief ministries — distributed about 26.32 lakh tonnes of cereals, down 4 percent year-on-year, owing to a sharp fall in distribution under the Food for Work (FWP) programme, which is primarily run in rural areas.

Food ministry data show that the distribution of food among poor and low-income people also dropped under the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programmes, implemented by the Department of Disaster Management.

Significantly, the drop in the overall distribution of food under various social

safety net programmes is being recorded at a time when overall inflation has remained above 9 percent for 26 consecutive months.

Amid persistent inflation, job losses, and a slowing economy, the World Bank last month projected that overall poverty in Bangladesh might rise to 22.9 percent in 2025, up from 18.7 percent in 2022.

The ratio of people living in extreme poverty — those earning below \$2.15 a day — is expected to nearly double to 9.3 percent, pushing an additional 30 lakh people into this group, it said in its Bangladesh Development Update.

“This is deeply puzzling,” Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, said in reaction to the decline in public food distribution.

He said the condition of many middle-class families had worsened due to high inflation over the past two years.

Food inflation has been easing in recent months, but despite this slight decline, prices remain significantly high, he added.

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## BGMEA election

### What panel leaders say

**The biennial election of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) is scheduled to be held on May 31 to elect the executive committee of the trade body for the 2025-27 tenure. The BGMEA election is being contested by two major panels—Forum and Sammilito Parishad for 35 director posts. This time Mahmud Hasan Khan is contesting as the leader of Forum and Md Abul Kalam as leader of Sammilito Parishad. Refayet Ullah Mirdha of The Daily Star talked to them on their electoral pledges and priorities.**

### Separate ministry needed to boost RMG exports



MAHMUD HASAN KHAN

The Forum Panel leader wants a separate ministry for the garment industry as the sector has already grown to massive proportions and needs its relevant functions to be expedited to take it forward.

Currently, the commerce ministry is the line ministry for dealing with the garment industry. Khan said the commerce ministry was always busy with other activities.

He said if elected, he would appeal to the government for the creation of a separate ministry for the apparel sector.

He also has a plan to appeal for the launch of a separate fund to finance small and medium enterprises (SMEs) so that they can also grow bigger gradually by borrowing low-cost loans from this fund.

To counter the Covid-19 pandemic shock, Vietnam introduced such a fund to support the SMEs. He said the government should also fully digitalise and automate customs processes so that businesspeople can complete audits as soon as possible.

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### Revival of sick factories may be a game changer



MD ABUL KALAM

The Sammilito Parishad leader has a plan to help nearly 200 factories to reopen. These were shut down during and after the July-August uprising last year and for the labour unrest in 2024.

He is hopeful that this election will be free, fair and credible as a new voter list has been prepared after scrutiny and many ineligible people were delisted. He said he hated the use of the fake voter list last year.

Kalam said he would also try to get factory owners who failed to fulfil conditions to become voters.

Becoming a member of the BGMEA does not mean he or she can become a voter as there are some preconditions that need to be met, he explained.

As there is a good inflow of work orders from the international clothing retailers and brands, if the factories are revived, there will no problem in running those units, he said.

It is possible to resolve challenges of struggling factories by taking assistance from banks, he said.

Kalam said he would hold

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## NBR staff observe pen-down strike over ordinance

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Officials and employees of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) across Bangladesh observed a three-hour pen-down strike yesterday, protesting the government's recent ordinance to dissolve and restructure the country's revenue administration.

The protesters, under the platform “NBR Reform Unity Council”, went to their workplaces at tax, VAT, and customs offices nationwide but refrained from doing any work from 10:00am to 1:00pm.

Only international passenger services, export operations, and budget-related activities were exempted from the strike.

The protest follows the government's decision last Monday to form two new wings — Revenue Policy Division and Revenue Implementation Division.

As per the ordinance, the policy division will handle tax policy formulation and setting tariffs, while the implementation division will oversee tax collection and enforcement of rules and regulations.

Critics within the customs and income tax cadres argue that the ordinance sidelines experienced tax professionals, transferring policymaking powers to officials from the general administration cadre.

**The strike is part of a three-day protest programme. Further pen-down strikes are scheduled for Thursday and Saturday, from 10:00am to 3:00pm**

They claim the final ordinance includes only a minor revision from the draft version, slightly narrowing the policy division's scope.

They also argue that the policy division will have to oversee enforcement of tax laws and evaluate collection performance — a provision that blurs the intended separation between policy and implementation.

A protester, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, “All other regular functions were suspended during these hours. We will continue the protest until our demands are met.”

“This ordinance was issued unilaterally... it does not reflect the opinions of the officials and employees, despite repeated requests for an inclusive dialogue,” she added.

The strike is part of a three-day protest programme. Further pen-down strikes are scheduled for Thursday and Saturday, from 10:00am to 3:00pm.

The strike in Chattogram led to the suspension of import-related customs clearance and assessment activities at Chattogram Custom House.

Mohammad Saidul Islam, deputy commissioner of Chattogram Custom House, said, “As per the prior decision, all officers and employees observed a three-hour pen-down strike today. Import assessments, examinations, and clearances were suspended during this time.”

He added, “Essential services such as exports and airport passenger operations remained outside the purview of the strike.”

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# Mutual Trust Bank launches AI-powered contact centre agent

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB) has unveiled an AI-driven, voice-based Contact Centre Agent.

This solution is poised to transform MTB's customer service landscape by delivering a faster, more intelligent, and seamless banking experience.

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and CEO of the bank, attended the launch of the Contact Centre AI Agent in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Commenting on the launch, Rahman stated, "The global demand for AI-powered customer service has never been more pressing. In today's fast-paced world, customers are no longer willing to endure long wait times or navigate complicated menu systems."

"Eliminating these inefficiencies and revolutionising the banking journey through cutting-edge digital innovation could prove to be a defining shift."

"As a Digital First bank, MTB is proud to lead this transformation and to continue setting new standards in customer experience," he added.

With the introduction of this AI-powered assistant, MTB customers can now access a wide array of essential banking services such as account and card balance



Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and CEO of Mutual Trust Bank PLC, poses for photographs at the launch of the AI-powered voice MTB Contact Centre Agent in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: MUTUAL TRUST BANK

inquiries, credit card outstanding details, new card activation, PIN generation, and product or service-related queries through natural voice interaction, eliminating the need to press numeric options or endure extended waiting times in call queues.

Customers may simply speak to the AI agent to obtain their desired services and resolve issues efficiently.

Currently, this innovative solution is being rolled out to a select group of customers, with plans to extend access to all valued clients in the near future.

The contact centre service operates 24/7 and continuously improves via machine learning, enabling it to deliver increasingly accurate and personalised responses.

# IPDC Finance's profit soars by 98.8% in Q1

STAR BUSINESS DESK

IPDC Finance PLC has reported a 98.8 percent year-on-year surge in net profit to Tk 3.7 crore for the January-March quarter of 2025, primarily driven by strong returns from its investments in government securities.

Earnings per share rose to Tk 0.09, up from Tk 0.05 in the same quarter of the previous year, according to a press release.

Despite a 22.9 percent rise in financing costs resulting from elevated deposit rates and consecutive policy rate hikes by Bangladesh Bank, the company's gross interest income increased by 16.1 percent to Tk 228.8 crore.

Total investment income rose sharply by 134.8 percent year-on-year to Tk 23.9 crore, bolstered by a remarkable 208.8 percent increase in income from government securities, which amounted to Tk 12.5 crore.

Net operating cash flow per share improved significantly, reaching Tk 4.86, compared to a negative Tk 12.39 in the corresponding period of the previous year. Meanwhile, Net Asset Value (NAV) per share edged up slightly to Tk 17.83.

"We are delighted with our first-quarter results, which demonstrate the resilience of our diversified business model," said Rizwan Dawood Shams, Managing Director of the non-bank financial institution (NBFI).

"By balancing risk-adjusted investments with prudent cost management, we have achieved robust profitability, even in the face of softening credit demand," he added.

"We remain committed to supporting our customers and contributing to Bangladesh's economic growth."

As of March 2025, IPDC's gross assets stood at Tk 7,951 crore, reflecting continued stability and growth. Customer deposits rose by 7.8 percent to Tk 5,578 crore, capturing an estimated 11 percent share of the NBFI deposit market.

Loans and advances grew marginally by 1.1 percent, while the overall investment portfolio remained strong, despite a modest decline of 3.3 percent.



Md Yousuf Shohel, general manager of Saimon Holidays, a preferred agent of Emirates Holidays in Bangladesh, and M Khorshed Anwar, deputy managing director and head of retail and SME banking at Eastern Bank PLC, pose for photographs after signing the agreement in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: EASTERN BANK

# Emirates Holidays offers perks to EBL cardholders

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Eastern Bank PLC (EBL) has signed an agreement with Emirates Holidays, the tour operating arm of Emirates, one of the two flag carriers of the United Arab Emirates.

M Khorshed Anwar, deputy managing director and head of retail and SME banking at the bank, and Md Yousuf Shohel, general manager of Saimon Holidays, a preferred agent of Emirates Holidays in

Bangladesh, signed the agreement in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Under the agreement, Emirates Holidays will extend special benefits on their products and services to EBL cardholders.

Farzana Qader, acting head of retail alliance of EBL, and Md Mahabubur Rahman, operation manager of Saimon Holidays, along with other senior officials from the participating organisations, were also present.

# ONE Bank opens 114th branch in Narsingdi

STAR BUSINESS DESK

ONE Bank PLC has recently opened a new branch at Chinishpur in Narsingdi.

This is the 114th branch of the bank. KH Rashed Akhtar Zaman, senior executive vice-president and head of branch distribution at the bank, inaugurated the new branch as the chief guest, according to a press release.

On the occasion, Zaman conveyed his confidence in ONE Bank's ability to cater to the diverse requirements of its esteemed clientele, offering services aligned with the

expectations from a technologically advanced and forward-thinking banking institution.

"We firmly believe in our competence to meet your banking needs and to deliver satisfaction through our progressive banking services," he added.

He further emphasised that the residents of the area can now place their full trust in the proficient and experienced personnel of ONE Bank to conduct all forms of financial transactions seamlessly.

Rashidul Hasan Rinto, president of the Narsingdi Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Mashur

Rahman Mridha, principal of Narsingdi Independent College; Newaz Khalid Ahmed, executive vice-president and zonal head for Dhaka Prime and West at the bank; and Md Zahidul Islam, executive vice-president and in-charge of the operations division, joined the event.

Mohammad Shahid-Ul-Haque, executive vice-president and head of the retail banking division at the bank, and Md Sabbir Shawkat Hayat, senior vice-president and senior manager of the human resources division, were also present, alongside local entrepreneurs and clients of the bank.



KH Rashed Akhtar Zaman, senior executive vice-president and head of branch distribution at ONE Bank PLC, inaugurates the new branch at Chinishpur in Narsingdi recently. PHOTO: ONE BANK

# NCC Bank launches four Islamic banking windows

STAR BUSINESS DESK

NCC Bank recently launched four new Islamic banking windows at four different branches in Dhaka as part of its initiative to expand services in accordance with Islamic Shariah.

The branches are Gulshan, Baridhara, Dhanmondi, and Shyamoli. M Shamsul Arefin, managing director of the bank, inaugurated the new Islamic banking windows as the chief guest, according to a press release.

Arefin noted that, in light of the current landscape, challenges, and potential of Islamic banking in the country, the bank has embarked on Shariah-compliant Islamic banking operations.

He further highlighted the remarkable response received from clients following the launch of two fully-fledged Islamic banking branches – Gulshan and Muradpur in Chattogram – within a short span of time.

As part of this ongoing initiative, the bank intends to establish Islamic banking windows at 32 conventional branches initially, alongside the launch of additional full-fledged Islamic banking branches.

In line with this plan, Islamic banking operations have already commenced at the Motijheel Principal branch; NCC



M Shamsul Arefin, managing director of NCC Bank, inaugurates Islamic banking windows for Gulshan, Baridhara, Dhanmondi, and Shyamoli branches of the bank in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: NCC BANK

Bank Bhaban branch; and in Feni, Mohipal, Parshuram, Chagalnaiya, Sonagazi, Narayanganj, Barishal, Jashore, and Khulna as well as the newly inaugurated Gulshan, Baridhara, Dhanmondi, and Shyamoli branches.

Going forward, Islamic banking windows will be progressively introduced across all branches and sub-branches of the bank, Arefin said, stressing the bank's unwavering commitment to rigorous compliance with Shariah principles, under the supervision of its Shariah Supervisory Committee.

He encouraged businesspersons and clients to partner with NCC Bank for Islamic banking services and to take advantage of its seamless offerings through the bank's digital platform.

Md Zakir Anam, deputy managing director of the bank; Md Shafiqur Rahman, senior executive vice-president and head of business and branch of Gulshan branch; and Abul Quasem Md Saifullah, executive vice-president and chief of Islamic banking division, were present.

শিল্পে প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাস  
পৃথিবীতে বিকল্প জ্বালানী

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Ref: 28.09.0000.000.032.42.0004.25 Date: 12-05-2025  
28.09.0000.032.42.001.25  
28.09.0000.000.032.42.0003.25

### e-Tender Notice

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

Sl No.	Tender ID	Name of the goods	Document Last Selling/ Downloading Date & Time	Tender Closing/ Opening Date & Time
01	1103901	Procurement of Computer and Electronics goods	21-05-2025 16:00 Hrs. (BST)	22-05-2025 11:00 Hrs. (BST)
02	1107840	Procurement of Desktop Computer, Laptop Computer & CCTV Camera	18-05-2025 16:00 Hrs. (BST)	19-05-2025 11:00 Hrs. (BST)
03	1107995	Procurement of Laptop, Graphics Tablet & Webcam	25-05-2025 11:00 Hrs. (BST)	26-05-2025 11:00 Hrs. (BST)

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

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required and the fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents have to be deposited online through any registered Bank. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

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GD-1163

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Memo No: 46.02.0391.000.14.191.22-564 Date: 12/05/2025

### e-GP: Tender Notice No. 04 (2024-2025) OTM

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

Sl. No.	Package No.	Tender ID & Ref No.	Description of works.	Tender Documents Last selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing (Date & Time)	Tender Opening (Date & Time)
01	e-Tender/PEDP4/BND/RUM/2024-25/W17.1849	1108862, APP ID No: 213556	Major Repair of NYANGKHYONG PARA GPS	27-May-2025 16:00	28-May-2025 16:00	28-May-2025 16:00

The interested persons/firm may visit the website [www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) to get the details of the tender.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline / hard copy will be accepted. In any cases, Sub contractor should not be allowed for implementation of Part or full portion of the approved Scheme. To submit e-tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal is required

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GD-1158

## Draft telecom policy keeps door open

FROM PAGE B1  
Abu Nazam M Tanveer Hossain, a telecom policy expert, said, "In the absence of strict cross-ownership restrictions, dominant players may exploit their market power in one segment to suppress competition in others. A clear separation between service layers is essential to prevent anti-competitive practices. Allowing foreign ownership across multiple layers of licensing undermines this principle."

He also argued that the policy's allowance of up to 49 percent foreign ownership in the ICSP category, 70 percent in NICSP, and 100 percent in ANSP could ultimately stifle foreign investment. Such inconsistency risks enabling regulatory arbitrage and discouraging financially and technically capable international firms from entering the market.

"To create a level playing field and attract long-term, sustainable foreign investment, the policy

should consider removing ownership caps entirely and ensure that equity stakes genuinely reflect foreign capital — not local loans disguised as equity infusions," Hossain said.

Interestingly, the 70 percent foreign investment cap under the NICSP category aligns with the current foreign ownership structure of Summit Communications, the country's largest national transmission service provider, which holds most of the key licences in the telecommunications sector.

Last year, Summit Communications sold 70 percent of its shares to the UAE-based Global Energies and Mauritius-based Sequoia Infra Tech for Tk 170.5 crore.

Axiata Group's stake in edotco also matches the ownership ratio proposed for this category of licence.

BTRC officials, however, claimed this was a mere coincidence.

One commendable proposal in the draft policy is the phasing out

of outdated intermediaries such as operators of Internet Gateways (IG), Interconnection Exchanges (ICX), National Internet Exchanges (NIX), and International Gateways (IGW).

The proposed ANSP licence will consolidate mobile and fixed-line services into two sub-categories: Cellular Mobile Service for operators using technologies like GSM, 5G, and future evolutions; and Fixed Telecom Service for wired or wireless broadband providers.

These licensees will manage last-mile connectivity, offer bundled voice, data, and digital services, and share passive infrastructure such as towers and fibre, though spectrum sharing will require BTRC approval.

Existing mobile operators, ISPs, and Public Switched Telephone Network providers will migrate to these categories, with fixed-line operators barred from holding mobile licences to prevent market dominance.

However, the policy's suggestion to phase out these intermediaries only upon licence expiry could create delays and regulatory loopholes, allowing dominant players to retain multiple licences across categories.

For instance, Summit Communications and Fiber@Home both hold NITN licences, valid until 2039, alongside International Terrestrial Cable (ITC) licences. This overlap creates confusion as to whether they will continue operating across both categories.

Another contentious issue arises from a provision allowing mobile operators to combine radio and wired access technologies to offer enterprise solutions.

This may mean that mobile operators will be allowed to deploy fibre from their towers directly to routers placed within business premises — capturing a significant share of the most lucrative segment of the broadband market, traditionally served

by fixed-line providers.

Md Emdadul Hoque, president of the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh, warned that if the new policy permits mobile network operators (MNOs) to offer last-mile connectivity using radio or cable under the guise of "enterprise solutions," it could directly conflict with the existing fixed broadband licensing framework.

"Therefore, we propose the following clarification," he added. "If BTRC authorises MNOs to deploy last-mile infrastructure, this should be explicitly stated in a separate clause, making it clear that such deployment is limited strictly to MNOs' internal infrastructure needs, such as base transceiver station interconnections."

However, Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer at Robi Axiata, dismissed those objections as "baseless and misconceived."

He argued that MNOs already provide

connectivity solutions under the scope of their existing licences. The draft policy, he noted, merely clarifies an existing practice.

BTRC Chairman Bari reaffirmed the regulator's foundational principle: wired services will be provided by broadband operators, while wireless services will fall under mobile operators.

He said the local entrepreneurship-driven broadband service sector would be kept highly protected, with no foreign investment allowed.

"There will be a clarification on this matter in the final policy," he said.

However, he acknowledged that as technology evolves, the boundaries between wired and wireless segments will inevitably blur.

He added that BTRC is currently reviewing the feedback received on the draft policy and will incorporate necessary revisions before submitting it to the ministry for final approval.

## NBR staff observe

FROM PAGE B1  
Normal operations resumed from 1:00pm."

Benapole customs office also observed the strike for the three hours.

In a statement, the platform said a timely and sustainable reform of the country's revenue administration was crucial in the interest of the nation.

Officials and employees across the NBR have long been advocating for reforms, but not in the form of the ordinance, they said.

"Despite being one of the most important stakeholders in this process, thousands of officers and employees from the customs and tax services were not consulted," said the platform.

"Furthermore, the recommendations made by the government-formed reform committee were neither published nor discussed," it added.

"Instead, an ordinance was issued to implement reforms that, according to the union council, will create chaos in the country's revenue system," it said.

The platform sincerely apologised to taxpayers and service-seekers for the temporary inconvenience.

Several key members of the BCS Customs and VAT Association — including the vice president, general secretary, treasurer, and joint general secretary — have resigned from the executive committee, said the statement.

It was in protest of the indifference towards the interests of the country, the

people, and the service, as well as for other reasons, it said.

Similarly, various officials holding different positions in the Executive Committee of the BCS (Taxation) Association are also gradually resigning from their posts, it said.

On Tuesday, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed dismissed fears that the dissolution of the NBR would disrupt revenue collection and hurt the interests of the tax cadre officials.

"The interests of revenue officials have been safeguarded. A very small division to frame tax policy will be established. So, they have no reason to be worried," he said.

"There will be no effect on revenue collection. It increased 2 percentage points year-on-year in the current fiscal year of 2024-25. So, it is not frustrating. Tax collection will not be lower than the previous year," he said.

Tasken Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), said, "We had long been expecting and demanding that the government separate the NBR's management and policy wings."

"From our association and the broader trade body, we've welcomed this step. While we don't know all the details of the structural changes, any internal reshuffling is ultimately their matter," he said.

Ahmed said there may well be legitimate grievances, and the government should listen. But if the demands are irrational, then as government employees, they must comply with official decisions, he said.

"The NBR is the central institution for Bangladesh's national revenue. If an indefinite deadlock sets in, we certainly don't support that. The government should immediately open dialogue and resolve this," he urged.

## Subsidised food supply shrinks

FROM PAGE B1  
Raihan said, given the overall situation, the government should have expanded food distribution and continued subsidised sales through TCB trucks.

"It is surprising that this has not been done," he said.

Food ministry data show that distribution under the FWP programme dipped 63.20 percent year-on-year to 59,736 tonnes as of May 8 in FY25.

Under the VGF programme, distribution fell 11.56 percent to 1.53 lakh tonnes. In the case of the VGD programme, food distribution slumped 40.26 percent year-on-year to 1.87 lakh tonnes.

Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director

of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development, said the amount of subsidised food an individual can now purchase does not significantly contribute to their household's food security.

In this context, reduced distribution — and in some cases, suspension of distribution to a large number of cardholders — is quite alarming, he said.

Amid high inflation, people living near the poverty line are now at risk of falling into poverty, while those already poor have become even poorer, he added.

Therefore, both the distribution and sales of subsidised food should be

increased, he said.

Food Adviser Ali Imam Majumder said the distribution of 150,000 tonnes of rice and wheat by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is currently stalled. Despite repeated reminders, they have failed to carry out the distribution, he said.

Had that been distributed, the total amount would have been much higher, he added.

The Daily Star also tried to contact Sharmin Shahin, deputy director of the VWB at the Department of Women Affairs, but she did not respond.

Under the VGF programme, food is usually distributed to flood-affected areas. Additionally,

during the two Eids, around 200,000 tonnes of food are distributed, he said.

Of that, 100,000 tonnes for Eid-ul-Azha have yet to be distributed. Hopefully, it will be dispatched within the next two to three days, he added.

Besides, the Food Friendly Programme, which previously operated for five months a year, will be extended to six months starting from the next fiscal year, he said.

The interim government plans to raise its food subsidy allocation by nearly 12 percent to Tk 8,100 crore in the upcoming fiscal year, aiming to expand food distribution programmes and offer greater support to low-income groups.

## Separate ministry

FROM PAGE B1  
So, Bangladesh should sign free trade agreements (FTAs) with the major trading partners so that the exports of the country remain unaffected even after the LDC graduation, he said.

The future of Bangladesh's garment industry is bright as the sector has been stable and growing and improving, said Khan.

The government should also ensure adequate supply of gas and electricity so that the exports continue to grow, he said.

He committed to working with the government and the factory owners to improve

the energy supply to the garment sector.

Establishing a healthy industrial relationship among the factory management, workers and union leaders is essential. "We will improve this relationship so that the workers can feel dignified in their jobs," Babu said.

## Revival

FROM PAGE B1  
He said he would also try to run the BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology under a new trustee board if elected.

Regarding garment workers, he said over 4 million workers were

continuing with their jobs as they "consider those to be dignified roles".

He assured working for enhancing compliance of factories to rules and regulations and improving industrial relations in consultation with union leaders.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার  
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ভোলা-৮৩০০  
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স্মারক নং: ৪১.০১.০৯০০.০০০.০০০.০৭.০০০১.২৫.১০২ তারিখ: ২৩ জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৪৩২  
০৬ মে ২০২৫

### উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১. মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	: সমাজকল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়
২. এজেন্সী	: সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর
৩. সংগ্রাহক সত্তার নাম	: মহাপরিচালক, সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর, ঢাকা-এর পক্ষে জেলা প্রশাসক, ভোলা
৪. সংগ্রাহক সত্তার জেলা	: ভোলা
৫. যে কাজের দরপত্র	: ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরে সমাজসেবা অধিদফতরের আওতাধীন ফাতেমা খানম সরকারি শিশু পরিবার (বালক) ও সরকারি শিশু পরিবার (বালিকা), ভোলা এর নিবাসীদের জন্য খাদ্য, খাদ্যানুযায়িক ও শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য, প্রসাধনী এবং বিবিধ মালামাল সরবরাহ
৬. দরপত্র নম্বর ও তারিখ	: ৪১.০১.০৯০০.০০০.০০০.০৭.০০০১.২৫.১০২ তারিখ: ০৬/০৫/২০২৫
৭. দরপত্র প্রচারের তারিখ	: ১২-১৫ মে, ২০২৫ এর মধ্যে ১ দিন
৮. সংগ্রহের পদ্ধতি	: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (ও.টি.এম)
৯. বাজেট এবং তহবিল উৎস	: রাজস্ব বাজেট, জি.ও.বি
১০. দরপত্রের প্যাকেজ নং	: ক, খ এবং গ মোট= ০৩ টি
১১. দরপত্রের প্যাকেজ নাম	: ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরে সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর পরিচালিত ফাতেমা খানম সরকারি শিশু পরিবার (বালক) ও সরকারি শিশু পরিবার (বালিকা), ভোলা এর নিবাসীদের জন্য 'ক', 'খ' গুপ-খাদ্য ও খাদ্যানুযায়িক (অপচনশীল ও পচনশীল) 'খ'-গুপ-শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য, প্রসাধনী ও অন্যান্য এবং 'গ'-গুপ-বিবিধ মালামাল সরবরাহ
১২. দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	: ২৯/০৫/২০২৫, পুন: ১৭/০৬/২৫, ২য় পুন: ২৪/০৬/২৫ খ্রি: (অফিস চলাকালীন সময়)
১৩. দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: ০৩/০৬/২০২৫, পুন: ২২/০৬/২৫, ২য় পুন: ২৯/০৬/২৫ খ্রি: দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা
১৪. দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	: ০৩/০৬/২০২৫, পুন: ২২/০৬/২৫, ২য় পুন: ২৯/০৬/২৫ খ্রি: দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা [দরদাতা বা তার প্রতিনিধির উপস্থিতিতে দরপত্র দলিল খোলা হবে যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন।]
১৫. কার্যালয়ের নাম ও ঠিকানা: ক. মূল দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয় খ. দরপত্র দলিল গ্রহণ গ. দরপত্র দলিল খোলা	: সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রতিষ্ঠান ও জেলা সমাজসেবা কার্যালয়, ভোলা জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ভোলা, জেলা সমাজসেবা কার্যালয়, ভোলা জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ভোলা
১৬. দরদাতার যোগ্যতা	: ১. বৈধ সরকারি প্রতিনিধিত্ব ২. সিডিউল ক্রয়ের টেন্ডারী চালানের মূল কপি, পূর্বে অনুরূপ কাজ করার অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র (যদি থাকে), হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, ব্যাংক সঞ্চলতার সনদ, আয়কর সনদ এবং ভ্যাট প্রদান (২০২৩-২০২৪) সনদ এর অধিকারী হতে হবে
দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	: দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য টেন্ডারী চালানের মাধ্যমে কোড-১-২৯৩১-০০০০-২৩৬৬ তে (অফিসের মাধ্যমে) জমা দিতে হবে
১৭. গুপ-সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ	: সিডিউল মূল্য
ক. খাদ্য ও খাদ্যানুযায়িক (অপচনশীল ও পচনশীল)	: ২০০/-
খ. শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য প্রসাধনী ও অন্যান্য	: ৮০০/-
গ. বিবিধ মালামাল	: ২০০/-
১৮. দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম	: মোঃ আজাদ জাহান
১৯. দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী	: জেলা প্রশাসক
২০. দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা	: জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ভোলা
২১. দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার সাথে যোগাযোগের নম্বর	: ০২৪৭৮৮২৯৩৬৬

শর্তাবলী:  
(ক) টেন্ডার সিডিউলটি বাবদ উদ্ধৃত মূল্যের ৫% অর্থ পে-অর্ডারের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।  
(খ) পি.পি.এ-২০০৬ এবং পি.পি.আর-২০০৮ (সংশোধিত সহ) এ প্রদত্ত ক্রয় সংক্রান্ত পদ্ধতি যথাযথভাবে অনুসরণ করতে হবে।  
(গ) গৃহীত দরদাতার নিকট হতে উদ্ধৃত দরের ১০% পারফরমেন্স সিডিউলটির অর্থ প্রাপ্তি সাপেক্ষে কার্যদেপ প্রদান করা হবে।  
(ঘ) 'গ' গুপের ক্ষেত্রে বরাদ্দ প্রাপ্তি সাপেক্ষে কার্যদেপ প্রদান করা হবে।  
(ঙ) কর্তৃপক্ষ কারণ দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।  
(চ) দরপত্র ক্রয়ের তারিখ হতে দরপত্র খোলার তারিখের নির্ধারিত সময় পর্যন্ত দরপত্র দাখিল করতে পারবেন।  
(ছ) বিশেষ নির্দেশনা: বিস্তারিত তথ্য দরপত্র সিডিউল ও শর্তাবলীতে বর্ণিত আছে।

মোঃ আজাদ জাহান  
জেলা প্রশাসক  
ভোলা।

GD-1159

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার  
সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর  
সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধী মেয়েদের প্রশিক্ষণ ও পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র, বরিশাল  
trc.barisal.gov.bd

স্মারক নং ৪১.০১.০৬০০.০২৭.০০০.০৭.০০১৫.২৫.০৮ তারিখ: ১২-০৫-২০২৫ খ্রি.

### দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধী মেয়েদের প্রশিক্ষণ ও পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র, জাগুয়া, বরিশাল নিবাসীদের ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরের জন্য ক গুপ-খাদ্য সামগ্রী, খ গুপ-শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য, প্রসাধনী ও আনুষঙ্গিক মালামাল এবং গ গুপ- নিবাসীদের ব্যবহার্য বিবিধ মালামাল সরবরাহের নিমিত্ত প্রকৃত ঠিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে নিম্নলিখিত শর্তাবলীর আলোকে সিলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

০১. মন্ত্রণালয়	: সমাজকল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়
০২. এজেন্সি	: সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর, সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধী মেয়েদের প্রশিক্ষণ ও পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র, জাগুয়া, বরিশাল।
০৩. সংগ্রাহক সত্তার নাম	: মহাপরিচালক, সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর, ঢাকা এর পক্ষে জেলা প্রশাসক, বরিশাল।
০৪. সংগ্রাহক সত্তার জেলা	: বরিশাল।
০৫. কাজের বিবরণ	: সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধী মেয়েদের প্রশিক্ষণ ও পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র, জাগুয়া, বরিশাল নিবাসীদের ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরের জন্য ক গুপ-খাদ্য সামগ্রী, খ গুপ-শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য, প্রসাধনী ও আনুষঙ্গিক মালামাল এবং গ গুপ- নিবাসীদের ব্যবহার্য বিবিধ মালামাল সরবরাহ।
০৬. দরপত্রের স্মারক নম্বর ও তারিখ	: ৪১.০১.০৬০০.০২৭.০০০.০৭.০০১৫.২৫.০৮ তারিখ: ১২-০৫-২০২৫ খ্রি.
০৭. সংগ্রহ পদ্ধতি	: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (ও.টি.এম)
০৮. বাজেট এবং তহবিলের উৎস	: রাজস্ব বাজেট (জিওবি)
০৯. দরপত্রের প্যাকেজ সংখ্যা	: ০৩(তিন)টি
১০. দরপত্রের প্যাকেজের নাম	: ক গুপ-খাদ্য সামগ্রী (অপচনশীল ও পচনশীল) ও গুপ-শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য, প্রসাধনী ও অন্যান্য আনুষঙ্গিক মালামাল এবং গ গুপ- নিবাসীদের ব্যবহার্য বিবিধ মালামাল
১১. দরপত্রের সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের তারিখ	: ১৫.০৫.২০২৫ হতে ০১.০৬.২০২৫ খ্রি. (সকাল ১০.০০ টা হতে বিকাল ০৪.০০ টা পর্যন্ত) সরকারি ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত
১২. দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও শেষ সময়	: ০২.০৬.২০২৫ খ্রি. তারিখ দুপুর ০১.০০ টা
১৩. দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	: ০২.০৬.২০২৫ খ্রি. দুপুর ০২.০০ টা
১৪. ক. দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয় খ. দরপত্র সিডিউল দাখিলের স্থান	: উপপরিচালক, জেলা সমাজসেবা কার্যালয়, বরিশাল ও সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রতিষ্ঠান। (১) জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, বরিশাল ও (২) জেলা সমাজসেবা কার্যালয়, বরিশাল।
১৫. দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	: জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, বরিশাল।
১৬. দরপত্র সিডিউল ও শর্তাবলীর মূল্য	: ক গুপের জন্য ১০০০/-টাকা, খ গুপের জন্য ৮০০/-টাকা এবং গ গুপের জন্য ২০০/-টাকা টেন্ডারী চালানের মাধ্যমে ১-২৯৩১-০০০০-২৩৬৬ কোডে জমা দিয়ে চালানের মূলকপি জমা দিতে হবে।
১৭. দরদাতার যোগ্যতা	: (১) বৈধ সরকারি প্রতিনিধিত্ব হতে হবে (২) টেন্ডারী চালানের মূলকপি থাকতে হবে (৩) হালনাগাদ ট্রেডারী লাইসেন্স থাকতে হবে (৪) হালনাগাদ ব্যাংক সঞ্চলতার সনদ থাকতে হবে (৫) সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা সনদ থাকতে হবে (নূনতম ২ বৎসর) (৬) TIN নম্বরসহ হালনাগাদ আয়কর সনদ ও ভ্যাট প্রদানের রশিদ/প্রমাণপত্র থাকতে হবে।
১৮. টেন্ডার সিডিউলটির পরিমাণ	: উদ্ধৃত দরের ২.৫% হারে পে-অর্ডারের মাধ্যমে ব্যবস্থাপক, সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধী মেয়েদের প্রশিক্ষণ ও পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র, জাগুয়া, বরিশাল বরাবর দরপত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে।
১৯. অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী	: ১) পিপিএ-২০০৬ এবং পিপিআর-২০০৮ (সংশোধিত) এ প্রদত্ত ক্রয় সংক্রান্ত পদ্ধতি যথাযথভাবে অনুসরণ করা হবে। ২) গৃহীত দরদাতার নিকট হতে উদ্ধৃত দরের ১০% পারফরমেন্স সিডিউলটির অর্থ প্রাপ্তি সাপেক্ষে কার্যদেপ প্রদান করা হবে। ৩) কর্তৃপক্ষ কারণ দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। ৪) গ গুপের ক্ষেত্রে বরাদ্দ প্রাপ্তি সাপেক্ষে কার্যদেপ প্রদান করা হবে। ৫) বিশেষ নির্দেশনা ও অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিডিউলে বর্ণিত আছে।

২০. দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম : শেখ জাহির উদ্দিন আহমদ  
২১. দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী : ব্যবস্থাপক (সে.দা.)  
২২. দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা : সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধী মেয়েদের প্রশিক্ষণ ও পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র, বরিশাল  
২৩. দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার মোবাইল নম্বর : ০১৭১২৫৫২৯২৫

শেখ জাহির উদ্দিন আহমদ  
ব্যবস্থাপক (সে.দা.)  
সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধী মেয়েদের প্রশিক্ষণ ও পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র  
সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর, বরিশাল

GD-1156

# Bangladesh set to remain world's top cotton importer in MY26

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Bangladesh is on track to retain its status as the world's biggest cotton importer in the marketing year (MY) 2025-26, with imports projected to reach 8.5 million bales, according to a record setting forecast by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Vietnam is set to follow closely with 8 million bales, marking an all-time high for both countries, as per the USDA's latest Cotton: World Markets and Trade report.

The report highlights a modest rebound in global cotton consumption, which is expected to hit a five-year high of 118.1 million bales. This resurgence is attributed to stable economic activity, particularly in major textile-exporting countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam.

For Bangladesh, the surge in cotton imports reflects the continued expansion of its ready-made garment (RMG) industry — the backbone of its export economy.

In the first 10 months of FY25, Bangladesh's RMG exports grew 10.86 percent year-on-year to \$30.25 billion, according to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data.

Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said Bangladesh's decision to import more cotton from the US is part of a broader strategy to reduce the trade gap between the two countries.

He noted that the record volume of cotton imports would also strengthen Bangladesh's case for securing duty-free access for its RMG products in the US market.

"The government has already taken necessary initiatives in this regard," Hatem said.



## KEY POINTS

- Bangladesh will import **8.5m bales of cotton in marketing year 2025-26**
- Vietnam will import **8m bales this marketing year**
- Global cotton use to hit **five-year high in 2025-26**
- Bangladesh's RMG exports rose **10.84% to \$30.25b in Jul-Apr**
- More import of US cotton to **reduce trade gap**
- Import of more US cotton **boosts duty-free access hopes**

He further stated that US cotton is considered the best in the world in terms of quality and consistency, making it the preferred choice for local spinners and manufacturers.

"With global buyers increasingly prioritising sustainable sourcing and natural fibres, cotton remains a vital raw material for Bangladesh's spinners and knitwear producers," Hatem added.

He viewed the USDA's import forecast as a strong endorsement of Bangladesh's capability to maintain and expand its leadership in the global apparel value chain.

The global cotton trade is also forecast to rise by 2.3 million bales to 44.8 million bales in MY26, indicating a broader uptick in demand across textile-producing economies.

China, which imported 15 million bales

in MY24, is projected to import only 7 million bales in MY26. The country's shift away has left space for Bangladesh to rise to the top, which analysts say marks a notable structural shift in global cotton trade flows.

The USDA also anticipates stable cotton prices globally, aided by adequate supply, a weakening US dollar, and declining energy costs. These trends may ease cost pressures for Bangladeshi millers, who have grappled with high input costs over the past two years.

On March 17 this year, Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain said Bangladesh intends to import more cotton from the US, creating mutual benefits for US suppliers and local businesses.

He added that such trade ties could offer Bangladesh protection amid former

US President Donald Trump's tariff-centric policies.

Although the Trump administration has levied high tariffs on many countries, Bangladeshi goods have so far remained outside the purview of such punitive measures.

Hossain argued that sourcing more US cotton could further dissuade the administration from targeting Bangladesh, whose products face an average tariff of 15.62 percent in the US market.

He also stressed the need to boost domestic cotton production to meet at least 20 percent of the country's annual demand, amounting to about 9 million bales.

Currently, local production covers just 2 percent of that requirement.

## Making meetings matter

MD TAJDIN HASSAN

Meetings are a staple of corporate culture. From corner offices to startup lounges, professionals gather every day with an agenda — or at least the hope of one. Yet, in reality, many meetings fail to deliver results, often consuming precious time without driving outcomes. As businesses across Bangladesh strive to boost productivity and innovation, it's time we ask: are our meetings truly effective, or are they just habitual routines dressed in formal attire?

In my journey across multinational companies, media houses, and startups, one consistent complaint I have encountered is about unproductive meetings. Employees sigh at back-to-back calendar blocks, where real work is postponed and energy drained. Yet meetings, when done right, can be the engine room of collaboration, decision-making, and alignment. The gap between potential and reality, however, lies in how we plan, conduct, and follow up on these sessions.

An effective meeting begins long before people walk into the room — or log in to Zoom. It starts with clarity of purpose. What are we trying to achieve? A meeting should not be a default response to uncertainty. If an email can do the job, there's no need to assemble five people in a meeting room for 45 minutes. A clear agenda, shared in advance, signals respect for others' time and prepares participants to contribute meaningfully.

Time discipline is another often overlooked yet critical element. In our context, meetings frequently start late, stretch indefinitely, and leave participants wondering what was actually decided. Starting and ending on time isn't just about punctuality — it's about professionalism and focus. A well-facilitated meeting respects the clock and delivers on its objectives within the allocated window.

The role of the moderator or meeting leader is pivotal. This person must ensure everyone is heard, discussions don't go off track, and key points are captured. In hierarchical cultures, junior members often hesitate to speak up. A good leader creates psychological safety, encouraging diverse perspectives while managing time and tone. Meetings should not be monologues by the most senior person in the room; they should be dialogues that leverage collective intelligence.

In our increasingly digital and hybrid work environments, engagement becomes even more vital. Online meetings suffer from multitasking, distractions, and reduced attention spans. To counter this, ground rules such as keeping cameras on, limiting meeting size, or using collaborative tools can keep energy and accountability high.

Perhaps the most underutilised part of any meeting is the follow-up. Great discussions without action points are like blueprints never turned into buildings. Assigning responsibilities, setting deadlines, and sharing minutes within 24 hours ensure that talk leads to tangible outcomes. Bangladesh's corporate culture is evolving rapidly. We are embracing agility, cross-functional teams, and remote work. But our meeting practices are yet to catch up. It's time to move from a "meeting-heavy" to a "meeting-smart" culture. Organisations should train managers and team leads in meeting facilitation, audit time spent in meetings monthly, and actively challenge the necessity of each scheduled session.

In conclusion, effective meetings are not just a matter of protocol — they are a strategic imperative. They reflect a company's respect for time, clarity of thought, and collaborative spirit. If we want to build high-performing teams and agile organisations, we must start by reclaiming our calendars and making every meeting count.

*The writer is the chief business officer of The Daily Star and the chief operating officer of Keeron, an upskilling platform in Bangladesh*



# Gold prices fall China, US slash sweeping tariffs in trade war climbdown

REUTERS

Gold prices fell on Wednesday as easing US-China trade tensions soothed fears of a potential global recession, boosting investor risk appetite and weighing on bullion's safe haven appeal.

Spot gold fell 0.4 percent to \$3,233.69 an ounce, as of 0828 GMT. Prices scaled a record high of \$3,500.05 last month amid elevated trade war fears.

US gold futures eased 0.3 percent to \$3,238.10.

The US and China agreed to a 90-day suspension of reciprocal tariffs following discussions in Geneva over the weekend, with the US planning to reduce the "de minimus" tariff for low-value shipments from China to 30 percent, as per a White House executive order and industry experts.

"After the tariff truce announced over the weekend, we've seen stock markets surge higher, and at least in the short term, this has removed some of the safe haven focus that has helped propel gold to record highs in recent months," said Ole Hansen, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank.

"There's a risk of further downside if we take out that \$3,200 level, then we could fairly quickly test \$3,165."

Global shares have rallied amid easing Sino-US trade war concerns, while also taking support from a relatively benign US inflation data.

Traders now await US producer price index data, due on Thursday, for cues on the Federal Reserve's interest rate trajectory after cooler-than-expected April consumer price index data fuelled speculations of possible rate cuts later this year.

The market is expecting 53 basis points of rate cuts by the Fed this year, starting in September.

While gold is traditionally viewed as a hedge against inflation, it also tends to thrive in a low-interest rate environment as it yields no interest.

AFP, Beijing

The United States and China slashed sweeping tariffs on each others' goods for 90 days on Wednesday, after a temporary ceasefire in a brutal trade war that roiled global markets and international supply chains.

Washington and Beijing agreed to drastically lower sky-high tariffs in a deal that emerged from pivotal talks at the weekend in Geneva.

US President Donald Trump said Washington now had the blueprint for a "very, very strong" trade deal with China that would see Beijing's economy "open up" to US businesses, in an interview broadcast Tuesday on Fox News.

"We have the confines of a very, very strong deal with China. But the most exciting part of the deal... that's the opening up of China to US business," he told the US broadcaster while aboard Air Force One on the way to the start of his Gulf tour.

"One of the things I think that could be most exciting for us and also for China, is that we're trying to open up China," he added, without elaborating on details.

Trump had upended

international commerce with his sweeping tariffs across economies, with China hit hardest.

Unwilling to budge, Beijing had responded with retaliatory levies that brought tariffs on both sides well over 100 percent.



After billions were wiped off equities and with businesses ailing, negotiations finally got underway at the weekend in Geneva between the world's trade superpowers to find a way out of the impasse.

Under the deal, the United States agreed to lower its tariffs on Chinese goods to 30 percent while China will reduce its own to 10 percent — down by over 100 percentage points.

The reductions came into effect just after midnight Washington time (0401 GMT) on Wednesday,

a major de-escalation in trade tensions that saw US tariffs on Chinese imports soar to up to 145 percent and even as high as 245 percent on some products.

Markets have rallied in the glow of the China-US tariff suspension.

Chinese officials have kept their cards closer to their chests, pitching themselves at a summit in Beijing with Latin American leaders this week as a stable partner and defender of globalisation.

"There are no winners in tariff wars or trade wars," Xi told leaders including Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, while his top diplomat Wang Yi swiped at a "major power" that believed "might makes right".

Deep sources of tension remain, too — the US additional tariff rate remains higher than China's because it includes a 20 percent levy over Trump's complaints about Chinese exports of chemicals used to make fentanyl.

Washington has long accused Beijing of turning a blind eye to the fentanyl trade, something China denies. And while the US said it sees room for progress on the issue, Beijing on Tuesday warned Washington to "stop smearing and shifting blame" onto it.

## Boeing April deliveries hit by US-China trade war

AFP, New York

Boeing commercial plane deliveries rose slightly in April despite a hit from the US trade war with China, according to figures released Tuesday.

The American aviation giant delivered 45 commercial aircraft, up from 41 in March, the data showed. Yet only two planes went to Chinese customers during the month as the company's commercial ties to Beijing became a political hot potato between the world's two largest economies.

Last month Boeing's CEO Kelly Ortberg said plane deliveries to China had been halted due to the trade dispute. Subsequent criticism of China from US President Donald Trump over Boeing prompted a sharp response from Beijing.

But on Monday, the United States and China agreed to significantly scale back tariffs on each other after weekend negotiations in Switzerland.

Chinese officials have taken steps to immediately lift the ban, but the exact timing of deliveries has yet to be determined, a person familiar with the matter told AFP.

Of Boeing's commercial deliveries in April, 30 came from the 737 family and eight from the 787 Dreamliner. The rest were split between the 777 and 767.

The two planes that went to Chinese customers, China Southern and CES Leasing, were likely delivered at the start of April. Separately, Boeing announced Tuesday its first order from Av Lease, a global plane leasing company owned by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund.

The order includes a firm purchase for 20 737 MAX 8 jets and options for 10 more. Deliveries are scheduled through 2032, Av Lease said in a statement.

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump's rollercoaster tariff row with Beijing has wreaked havoc on US companies that rely on Chinese manufacturing, with a temporary de-escalation only expected to partially calm the storm, analysts and business owners say.

"The only option is to try to keep your head above water and be tossed by the waves, or to go out of business," said Anna Barker, whose Mississippi-based firm Glo sells luminous toys designed in the United States and made in China.

She told AFP that the 90-day reprieve beginning Wednesday is just a mere "blip on the radar." Placing orders, manufacturing products and shipping them to the United States takes much longer.

Trump's escalating trade war since his return to office saw US duties on Chinese goods — including toys — reach a whopping 145 percent, while Beijing's countermeasures hit 125 percent.

The world's two biggest economies however agreed at talks last weekend in Switzerland to temporarily lower the levies, bringing US tariffs down to 30 percent and China's corresponding duties to 10 percent.

While cautiously optimistic about the ongoing negotiations, Barker warned the

30 percent rate remains "massive for a small company."

Trump has argued that companies will enjoy zero tariffs if they manufacture in the United States, overlooking costs for any machinery or raw materials that would still need to be imported.

"We're an American company," Barker said. "Our biggest priority, if it was just up to us, will always be the US market. But it simply can't be right now."

To stay afloat, she is looking abroad for growth. The pause "may temporarily help unstuck" an effective trade embargo since



A customer shops for toys at a big box retailer in Chicago, Illinois on May 12. US President Donald Trump has argued that companies will enjoy zero tariffs if they manufacture in the United States.

PHOTO: AFP