

## Dhaka Bank records higher Q1 earnings

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka Bank said its earnings rose in the first quarter of the financial year 2025 due to increased operating income.

The private bank reported a net profit of Tk 84.63 crore during the January–March period of this financial year, marking an 11 percent rise from Tk 76.5 crore a year ago, according to its unaudited financial statements released yesterday.

Its earnings per share (EPS) rose to Tk 0.84 in the first quarter of 2025, up from Tk 0.76 in the same period the previous year.

However, the private bank reported a 23 percent decline in profit to Tk 128.13 crore in 2024 compared to the previous year, according to its audited financial statement for the year.

Its EPS fell to Tk 1.27 in 2024, down from Tk 1.66 in 2023.

The board of directors of Dhaka Bank recommended a 5 percent cash dividend and a 5 percent stock dividend for the year.

The bank said the bonus shares have been proposed to strengthen its capital base under Basel III, which will be used to support business expansion.

Shares of Dhaka Bank rose 4.08 percent to Tk 10.2 on the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.

## Bida to host China-Bangladesh conference on investment

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The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida) is set to host the China-Bangladesh Conference on Investment and Trade on June 1 as part of efforts to attract foreign investment.

The day-long summit is being jointly organised by the governments of Bangladesh and China.

According to Bida sources, the event will feature around 250 Chinese investors and business delegates representing nearly 100 enterprises, including senior executives from six to seven Fortune 500 companies.

Bida officials described this as the largest-ever Chinese business delegation to visit Bangladesh, signalling a substantial upturn in bilateral commercial engagement.

In addition, representatives from four major Chinese chambers of commerce are slated to attend, underlining China's growing interest in Bangladesh as a strategic investment hub in South Asia.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus will inaugurate the event as the chief guest, while Wang Wentao, China's commerce minister, will attend as the special guest.

Sources within Bida indicate that the summit is widely viewed as a follow-up to Yunus's recent official visit to China and the International Investment Summit held in Dhaka last April.

These diplomatic and economic engagements have laid the groundwork for deepened cooperation, with anticipated Chinese investment in sectors such as infrastructure, manufacturing, technology, and export-oriented industries.

The agenda includes sector-specific sessions focusing on energy, ICT, e-commerce, and construction, with an emphasis on identifying concrete investment opportunities.

Bida is optimistic that the summit will not only catalyse new capital inflows from China but also promote long-term industrial partnerships between the two nations.



PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Though Eid-ul-Azha accounts for nearly 40 percent of the total annual animal slaughter in Bangladesh, farmers across the northwestern districts of Pabna and Sirajganj say demand is worryingly low compared to previous years.

## Eid cattle sales off to a slow start

Farmers, traders disappointed

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Cattle traders and farmers who rear livestock in anticipation of Eid-ul-Azha are disappointed over this year's sales so far, as demand is low with barely a week to go before the festival.

Eid-ul-Azha, the second-largest religious festival for Muslims, accounts for nearly 40 percent of the total annual animal slaughter in Bangladesh.

Yet this year, farmers across the northwestern districts of Pabna and Sirajganj say demand is worryingly low compared to previous years.

Many have already brought their animals to local markets, only to find few buyers and prices falling short of expectations.

Some have been forced to sell at rates lower than they desired, while others have returned home with their cattle unsold.

Local traders, who usually buy animals from farmers and sell them on to larger traders heading to city markets, are also frustrated over the thin crowds and low demand.

Around 1.24 crore animals, of which 56 lakh are fattened bulls and buffaloes, are ready for Eid this year, according to the Department of Livestock Services (DLS). The authorities estimate that just over 1 crore animals will be slaughtered, leaving a surplus of roughly 20.68 lakh this Eid.

Last year, 1.04 crore animals were sacrificed, up from 1.01 crore the year before.

Despite the ample supply, most cattle markets in Pabna and Sirajganj have remained sluggish in recent weeks. Farmers and traders are now banking on last-minute sales in the final days before Eid.

Md Altaf Hossain, a cattle farmer from Binnadari village of Shahzadpur upazila in Sirajganj, brought two cows, each weighing over six maunds (one maund is equivalent to 40kg), to Koromza haat in Bera upazila of Pabna on Tuesday. He

returned home with the cows unsold.

"I asked for Tk 1.8 lakh per cow, but traders were offering below Tk 1.5 lakh. That is far too low for me, so I had no choice but to take them back," he told The Daily Star.

"I'll wait another week, but I must sell the animals before Eid," he added. For the farmer, rearing the livestock each day means added costs for animal feed.

Md Ershad of Jamitri village at Shahzadpur brought two smaller cows to the same market but managed to sell only one.

**Around 1.24 crore animals, of which 56 lakh are fattened bulls and buffaloes, are ready for Eid this year, according to the Department of Livestock Services**

"I sold a two-maund cow for Tk 70,000, though I was hoping for at least Tk 75,000. The other one, which weighs 3.5 maunds, remains unsold. Traders are offering just Tk 90,000, but I can't accept that," said Ershad.

Md Golam Mostafa, a farmer from Char Paikarhaat of Santhia upazila in Pabna, said, "There just are not enough buyers."

"Those who plan to sacrifice animals are not turning up at the wholesale markets. Traders are buying from us, but we are not getting the prices we expected," he said.

Mostafa brought four fattened cows, each weighing over six maunds, to market this week but sold only one.

"I sold a seven-maund cow for Tk 1.8 lakh to a local trader, but no one else is offering reasonable prices. Buyers from Dhaka and other big cities are still missing. Only local traders are here, so the market is dull," Mostafa said.

Cattle trader Md Raihan told The Daily

Star that business is slower this year.

"Sales are poor compared to last year. I have been to dozens of wholesale markets in Pabna, Sirajganj, Natore and Rajshahi over the past few weeks but found few serious customers," he said.

"Last year, I sold 15 to 20 cows every week in three to four markets ahead of Eid. This year, I can't even manage to sell more than 10 in a week," Raihan said.

Still, many traders and farmers remain hopeful that sales will pick up in the last three or four days before Eid, when last-minute buyers usually crowd the markets.

This season, traders and farmers said that smaller and medium-sized animals, those weighing under five maunds, are seeing more interest than larger ones.

Meanwhile, spiralling feed costs are adding to the burden for farmers.

Md Saiful Islam, a farmer at Faridpur upazila in Pabna, said, "The price of bran and oilcake has risen by over Tk 100 in recent weeks. We are spending more on feed and medicine to fatten the cattle ahead of Eid."

"Feeding a large cow costs Tk 350 to 400 a day, while a medium-sized one needs at least Tk 200," he added.

Livestock officials say supply is more than sufficient in both Pabna and Sirajganj, and with Indian cattle imports strictly restricted, local farmers do not need to worry.

Sirajganj District Livestock Officer AKM Anwarul Haque said, "A total of 6,55,904 sacrificial animals, including 1.84 lakh cattle and 4 lakh goats, have been prepared in the district for Eid. Local demand is around 2,59,241, and the remaining 3.96 lakh will be supplied to other districts."

Pabna District Livestock Officer AKSM Musharaf Hossain said, "We have readied 6,48,204 sacrificial animals, including 1.98 lakh cows and 3.72 lakh goats. The local demand is 3,12,826, while the surplus 3.35 lakh will be sent elsewhere across the country."

## The workaholic trap

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

Meet Imran Bhai. His last vacation was during the 2018 hartal. He thinks "OOO" means "Only On Outlook," not "Out of Office." His hobbies include forwarding work emails to himself at 2:00 AM and replying to "Happy Birthday" messages with a Gantt chart. Imran Bhai isn't alone; he is the unofficial president of Bangladesh's ever-growing workaholic club.

And here is the confession: I used to be like Imran Bhai. In fact, I might have been his mentor without realising it. I have proudly pulled all-nighters to finish presentations no one asked for, replied to emails mid-daawat, and once joined a Teams call from my son's hospital bed (true story, and no, I wasn't the doctor).

This isn't about ambition or leadership. This is about people who treat "just a quick call" at midnight like a love language. In Dhaka's corporate jungle, working late is seen as a badge of honour, and leaving the office on time is considered an early retirement plan. This glorification of round-the-clock hustle isn't just absurd, it's also one of the subtle yet powerful reasons why we don't see enough women leaders in Bangladesh.

Recent global surveys reveal that nearly 30 percent of people identify as workaholics, while 85 percent report experiencing burnout due to work stress. Work-life balance has now become more important than salary for most employees, with 82 percent expecting active support from employers to manage stress, ensure mental well-being, and create healthier, more flexible work environments.

A recent Harvard Business Review article says it's time to rethink this madness. Apparently, working nonstop doesn't mean you are

a superstar; it just means your personal life has been declared MIA. But in Bangladesh, we don't quit. We survive on caffeine, chaos, and compliments like "Bhai, you're always online!"

Take the "I'm Always Available" community. These are the legends who respond "Noted" to emails faster than their bosses can hit send. Some even reply while stuck in traffic on Gulshan Avenue, proving they value deadlines more than their own lives.

Then there are the champions of sleep deprivation, who proudly announce, "I slept only three hours last night," as if they have just won the Dhaka Marathon in office attire.

You will also find the "weekend warriors". These brave souls book tickets to Sylhet, only to cancel at the last minute because a client "just wants a small revision" on the 87-slide pitch deck. Their only true companion? The spreadsheet. The one they name "final\_final\_v7\_updated\_revised.pptx."

The solution begins with accepting that something is not right. If you feel uncomfortable watching an entire movie without checking your email, that's a clear sign you're working too much. Try setting aside time in your calendar not just for meetings, but also for rest and personal moments, such as getting enough sleep or spending quality time with family and friends.

And about our bosses, they are not bad people. They have just learned to expect constant availability from everyone. It's okay to set some limits. For instance, you can write an email at 10 PM if needed, but schedule it to be sent the next morning. That shows you are responsible, but also respectful of work-life balance.

We need to rethink our approach to productivity. Working long hours doesn't always mean you are doing great work. It can also mean you are losing balance in life. You are not a machine, and you don't have to be available all the time. Taking proper rest and doing simple things that bring you peace can also make you more focused and effective at work.

So, let's break up with our toxic relationship with overwork. Bangladesh has enough overachievers. What we need now are well-rested, joyful humans who know how to log out. Work will still be there tomorrow. Your peace of mind might not.

Let's go ahead, mark yourself unavailable. The world won't end. But your headache might.

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



## US court blocks most Trump tariffs

REUTERS, New York

A US trade court blocked most of President Donald Trump's tariffs in a sweeping ruling on Wednesday that found the president overstepped his authority by imposing across the board duties on imports from US trading partners.

The Court of International Trade said the US Constitution gives Congress exclusive authority to regulate commerce with other countries that is not overridden by the president's emergency powers to safeguard the US economy.

"The court does not pass upon the wisdom or likely effectiveness of the President's use of tariffs as leverage," a three-judge panel said in the decision to issue a permanent injunction on the blanket tariff orders issued by Trump since January. "That use is impermissible not because it is unwise or ineffective, but because [federal law] does not allow it."

Financial markets cheered the ruling. The judges also ordered the Trump administration to issue new orders reflecting the permanent injunction within 10 days. The Trump administration minutes later filed a notice of appeal and questioned the authority of the court.

The court invalidated with immediate effect all of Trump's orders on tariffs since January that were rooted in the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), a law meant to address "unusual and extraordinary" threats during a national emergency.

The court was not asked to address some industry-specific tariffs Trump has issued on automobiles, steel and aluminum, using a different statute.

The decisions of the Manhattan-based Court of International Trade, which hears disputes involving international trade and customs laws, can be appealed to the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, DC, and ultimately the US Supreme Court.

## Govt plans to form new bodies to drive post-LDC trade

Says member of General Economics Division

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government is working to form new bodies to boost trade and enhance competitiveness in the post-LDC era, said a member of the LDC graduation committees.

A proposal has been made to merge the Export Promotion Bureau and Business Promotion Council into a trade diversification body, said Monzur Hossain, a member of the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission.

He made the comment at a book launching ceremony held at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) in Dhaka yesterday.

Rushidan Islam Rahman, a senior fellow and former research director of BIDS, authored the book Shilpayan O Roptanibhittik Poshakshilpo (Industrialisation and Export-Based Garment Industry).

Hossain, a member of all three LDC graduation committees, said a separate international trade division may be created under the commerce ministry, as trade issues often get less priority due to the ministry's other responsibilities.

The government has also been working on how to reduce hidden costs in customs and the banking sectors to ensure smooth business operations in the garment sector, Hossain

added.

It is expected that these initiatives will make doing business easier and smoother, ultimately reducing the cost of doing business and shortening the time needed to enhance Bangladesh's international trade competitiveness in the post-LDC period, he said.

The economist urged the private sector to support the government with innovative ideas to stay competitive post-LDC.

He noted that exporters are already benefiting from a favourable dollar rate and suggested revising industrial policy to help sectors like leather, rawhides, ICT, and electronics match the garment industry's success.

He added that while the future of large-scale industries in Bangladesh may be uncertain, there are better prospects for small and medium enterprises.

A separate study can be conducted to examine why the workforce in the garment sector is shifting to other areas, Hossain said.

Zaidi Sattar, chairman of the Policy Research Institute, said industrial growth in Bangladesh began in the 1990s, marking the transition from agriculture to manufacturing.

Entrepreneurs in sectors such as footwear produce goods for both domestic and international markets, but many prefer to sell in local markets rather than export, he said.

## ICX operators demand data-driven review of new licensing policy

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Industry stakeholders have expressed strong reservations over a telecom licensing policy proposed in April that seeks to phase out interconnection exchange (ICX) operators.

ICX operators are providers of switching systems that facilitate interconnection between different telecommunication networks of operators.

They act as a central hub, connecting various networks like mobile, fixed line, and international gateways, enabling seamless communication and routing of calls.

Speaking at a workshop and briefing session at ROAWA Complex in Dhaka yesterday, the ICX operators alleged that the proposed changes lacked data-driven analysis.

Before making major structural shifts in the voice network, there must be pilot projects and data-backed assessments, they said. They recommended a trial approach to regulating the international SMS sector—currently open and unregulated—by introducing a structured ICX model and evaluating its outcomes.

While the number of ICX licence holders may seem high, ICX operations across the country have already been streamlined and consolidated into five key Points of Interconnection in Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Bogura, and Sylhet, they added.

This consolidation has effectively created an integrated national ICX platform, significantly reducing technical complexity for telecom operators, said the operators.

Operationally, the current ICX structure already functions as if there were a single ICX. Further administrative refinements can be made if necessary, they said.

But the proposed reforms in the voice layer are not innovative—they simply attempt to revert to a pre-International Long Distance Telecommunications Services policy framework.