Dhaka Bank sponsor gifts Tk 11.56cr shares to wife

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Abdul Wahed, a sponsor of Dhaka Bank PLC, has transferred 1.03 crore shares to his wife, Zaheda Wahed Khan, as a gift outside the trading system of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), according to a disclosure on the DSE website yesterday.

The transaction is valued at around Tk 11.56 crore based on Tuesday's closing price of Tk 11.20 per share.

Dhaka Bank's profit declined in 2024, falling 23 percent year-on-year to Tk 127.83 crore, its financial statements show.

The bank's board has recommended a 5 percent cash dividend and a 5 percent stock dividend for the year.

As of June 30, 2025, sponsor-directors held 41.03 percent of the bank's shares, while institutional investors owned 12.34 percent and the general public, 46.63 percent, according to DSE data.

DSEX crosses 5,000-point mark after over two months

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, crossed the 5,000-point mark yesterday after two and a half months.

The index gained 53.82 points, or 1.08 percent, to close at 5,035.46, rallying for the fifth consecutive session.

The DSEX closed at 5,022.47 points on April 23, the last time it was above 5,000 points.

The Shariah-compliant DSES index rose 0.95 percent to 1,094.11, while the DS30, which represents blue-chip stocks, gained 1 percent to 1,894.20.

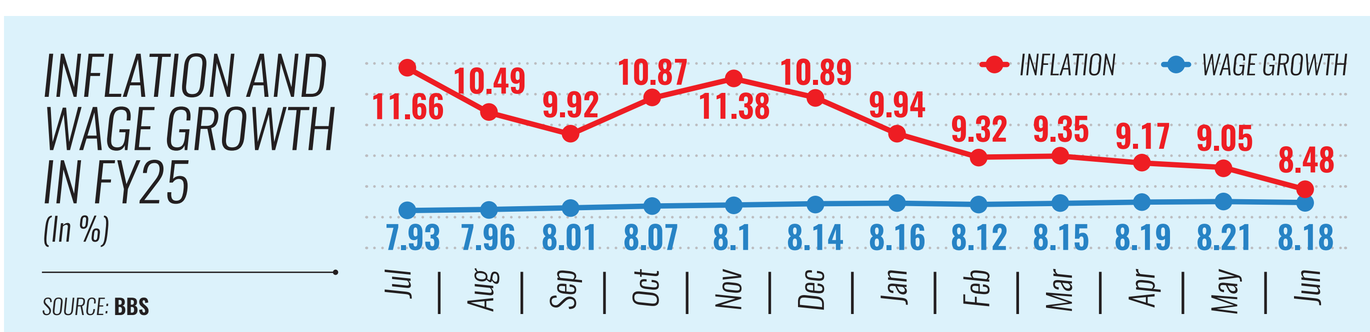
Turnover, a key indicator of market activity, was Tk 690.62 crore, up from Tk 601.75 crore in the previous session. A total of 208,093 trades were executed during the session, with block transactions amounting to Tk 15.06 crore across 32 scrips.

Market breadth was mixed, with 273 issues advancing, 78 declining, and 46 remaining unchanged.

Among A-category shares, 147 advanced, 44 declined, and 26 were unchanged. In the B category, 59 scrips gained and 17 declined, while the N category had no trading activity.

Three days of continuous rain in Khulna disrupted public life and reduced job opportunities for daily wage workers. Many labourers arrive in the morning in search of work but are forced to return home empty-handed due to the rain. The photo was taken from Moylapota intersection in Khulna city yesterday. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Real wage growth remains negative for 41 months



MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Bangladesh's real wage growth remained negative for the 41st consecutive month in June, even as the inflation rate eased to its lowest level in nearly three years, according to the latest data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Year-on-year, wage growth stood at 8.18 percent in June—0.30 percentage points below the month's inflation rate of 8.48 percent, as per the recently released BBS Wage Rate Index (WRI).

A similar trend was observed in May, when wages across 63 occupations in the agriculture, industry, and services sectors grew by 8.21 percent, 0.84 percentage points below inflation at the time.

Division-wise, wage growth rose only in Rangpur, while it declined in all other divisions.

The continued decline has forced many to cut back on consumption as their real incomes shrink, with economists warning that if nothing changes, millions might fall victim to malnutrition.

"The persisting outpacing gap has been pushing low- and limited-income groups to the brink for years," said Mohammad Lutfor Rahman, a professor in the Department of Economics at Jahangirnagar University.

A report released earlier this year by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on Bangladesh supports the assertion.

The FAO said the number of people in Bangladesh facing high levels of acute food insecurity increased by 70 lakh to 2.36 crore in December last year, compared to 1.65 crore during the April-October period of 2024.

Prof Rahman attributes part of the stagnation in wage growth to Bangladesh Bank's contractionary monetary policy, which, while successful in controlling inflation, has increased borrowing costs, discouraging large investment.

"While inflation control is a positive outcome, without coordinated efforts to reduce interest rates and boost employment, the economic recovery remains uneven and exclusionary," noted the economist.

The central bank raised the policy rate to 10 percent in October 2024, the 11th hike since May 2022, in a bid to tame inflation by making borrowing more expensive.

"At current lending rates, very few entrepreneurs are willing to take the risk of borrowing to invest, especially in sectors that generate large-scale employment," Rahman said.

With no corresponding increase in labour demand, a growing surplus in the workforce is suppressing wage growth, even as inflation softens, he added.

"Concerns are growing that many lower- and middle-income households are unable to meet basic dietary needs, raising long-term health and productivity risks," the JU professor noted.

Echoing the same, Mustafa K Mujeri,

READ MORE ON B2

Calculator with a brain

AHMED HUMAYUN MURSHED

Why do accountants never play hide and seek? Because it's hard to hide when they always want everything to be balanced.

That reverse logic applies to taxation, too. There is always a hide-and-seek relationship between the tax authority and the taxpayer.

Around the world, governments are working to close gaps, reduce leakages, and ensure everyone contributes fairly. One of the most powerful tools enabling this today is artificial intelligence, or AI.

In countries like the United Kingdom, South Korea, and Estonia, tax authorities are using AI to speed up processes, reduce errors, and improve compliance. Simple but time-consuming tasks such as scanning invoices, pulling figures from documents, or matching declarations across systems can now be completed in seconds. As a result, tax officers spend less time on paperwork and more on informed decision-making.

In Bangladesh, we still rely on a human-driven tax system. That is not a flaw. It reflects the hard work and dedication of our officers who, despite limited resources, keep the system running.

But as the economy grows and transactions become more complex, the workload increases significantly. Without the right tools, it becomes difficult to keep pace.

This is where AI can step in as a powerful support.

Imagine a system that quietly reviews tax filings, checks figures against databases, detects irregularities, and flags them for attention. It works without breaks or delays, allowing officers to focus on analysis and judgment rather than routine checks. Audits could then be prioritised based on real-time risk profiles, and assessments could be completed with more clarity and consistency.

AI can also help expand the tax net. Today, a small portion of taxpayers carry most of the burden, while many remain outside the system. This is not always intentional. Many individuals and small businesses are simply left out because the system lacks the capacity to identify and engage them. AI can help by analysing mobile transactions, utility bills, or digital payments to spot economically active but unregistered individuals. These people could then be brought in through information, guidance, and support.

We are not starting from zero. Bangladesh has already made progress with e-TINs, online VAT systems, and electronic return filing. These are meaningful steps. But real transformation will require deeper integration of technology into every part of tax operations, from return processing to audit, enforcement, and dispute resolution.

This shift will not happen through technology alone. We must invest in secure, organised, and connected data systems. Officers and staff will need practical training so they can use these tools with confidence. The goal is not to replace human expertise but to enhance it, allowing professionals to work more efficiently and with greater impact.

There is also a bigger picture. If we can expand the tax base, we can consider reducing tax rates over time. High rates often result from low participation. A wider base would ease the burden on compliant taxpayers and help build a system that feels more balanced and fairer. People are more likely to pay taxes when they trust the system and find it easy to comply.

None of this is possible without the people at the heart of the system. Our tax officers are already doing difficult and essential work. With the right support, their impact could be even greater.

What we need now is not just automation. We need a calculator with a brain, one that can support tax officers, help widen the net, and make compliance easier. A system that is professional, objective, and built to strengthen those who serve it.

The writer is the CEO of Accfintax.

Indonesia signs energy, grain deals with US

AFP, *Jakarta*

Indonesia's state oil company and agricultural firms have signed deals to increase their purchases of US goods, the country's chief economic minister told AFP on Wednesday, as Jakarta lays the groundwork to avoid the worst of President Donald Trump's tariffs.

Southeast Asia's biggest economy has pledged to step up agriculture, energy and merchandise imports to close the trade gap with Washington and earlier this week struck a $1.25 billion deal to buy more US wheat.

Trump has threatened Jakarta with a 32 percent tariff on top of a base 10 percent if it does not strike a new trade agreement by August 1.

Chief economic minister Airlangga Hartarto, who has travelled to Washington for trade talks, said Wednesday that state oil firm Pertamina signed a memorandum of understanding pledging more US energy purchases, without providing more details.

Agriculture firms Sorini Agro Asia Corporindo, a member of Indonesia's Corn Mill Association, and FKS Group also signed memorandums of understanding to buy up their purchases.

He did not disclose the value of the deals signed in Washington but last week he told reporters that Indonesian businesses would make a total spending commitment worth $34 billion.

The Indonesian embassy in Washington said the agreements were struck at meetings in Washington on Tuesday.

Trump plans to impose 50% tariff on copper imports

AFP, *Washington*

US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he would not extend an August 1 deadline for higher US tariffs to take effect on dozens of economies, while announcing plans for a separate 50 percent duty on copper imports.

The copper levy would broaden a slate of sector-specific actions Trump has imposed since returning to the White House, and sent prices for the metal soaring.

"Today we're doing copper," the president told a cabinet meeting Tuesday. "I believe the tariff on copper, we're going to make it 50 percent."

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick told CNBC shortly afterward that the rate will likely be implemented at the end of July or on August 1.

Trump also said Washington would soon make an announcement on pharmaceuticals, but officials would allow manufacturers time to relocate their operations into the country.

"We're going to give people about a year, a year and a half to come in, and after that, they're going to be tariffed," he said. "They're going to be tariffed at a very, very high rate, like 200 percent."

In recent months, Trump has ordered probes into imports of copper, pharmaceuticals, lumber, semiconductors and critical minerals that could lead to further levies.

Lutnick told CNBC that the studies on pharmaceuticals and semiconductors would be completed by the end of the month, with Trump to set policies thereafter.

Beyond tariffs impacting sectors, Trump also slapped a sweeping 10 percent tariff on goods from almost all trading partners in April.

These would have swiftly risen to steeper levels for dozens of economies including the European Union and Japan, but Trump paused their implementation until July 9.

In recent months, Donald Trump has ordered probes into imports of copper, pharmaceuticals, lumber, semiconductors and critical minerals that could lead to further levies. PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

The president this week again delayed their reimposition, pushing it to August 1 while insisting that "no extensions will be granted."

In a push for further trade deals, Trump sent a first batch of letters to more than a dozen partners on Monday, including key US allies Japan and South Korea.

Products from both countries would be hit with 25 percent duties, Trump wrote in near-identical documents to leaders in Tokyo and Seoul.

Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand, South Africa and Malaysia were among other countries facing duties between 25 percent and 40 percent.

Most countries receiving the letters so far saw US tariffs at similar or unchanged rates from those threatened in April, although some like Laos and Cambodia received notably lower levels.

In his messages to foreign leaders, Trump warned of further escalation if there was retaliation against his levies.

Lutnick said 15 to 20 more letters could go out in the next two days.

Trump added Tuesday that members of the emerging BRICS bloc of nations will face an added 10 percent tariff.