Pubali Bank profit rises 38% in Apr-Jun

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Pubali Bank's profit surged by 38 percent year-on-year in the April-June quarter, buoyed by its higher investment income.

The bank posted a profit of Tk 393 crore in the second quarter of 2025, according to a disclosure published on the Dhaka Stock Exchange website yesterday.

Its consolidated earnings per share (EPS) stood at Tk 3.02 for the quarter, up from Tk 2.19 (restated) in the same quarter of the previous year. The bank attributed the increase in EPS to higher income from investments, commission, exchange and brokerage activities, and other income sources.

Its consolidated net operating cash flow per share (NOCFPS) rose to Tk 38.38 for the first half of 2025, compared to Tk 28.18 (restated) in the corresponding period of 2024.

The bank said the improvement in NOCFPS reflects strong operational performance driven by high-yield lending, diversification of fee-based income, cost optimisation, and digital transformation.

Increased deposit mobilisation and growth in other liabilities contributed to higher free cash flows in the half-year ending June 30, it added.

MTB profit down 16% in Q2

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB) reported a 16 percent year-on-year drop in profit in the April-June quarter of 2025.

The private commercial bank posted a profit of Tk 31.06 crore for the quarter, according to its financial statements released yesterday.

The bank's consolidated earnings per share stood at Tk 0.32 for the quarter, down from Tk 0.38 in the same period last year.

Its consolidated net operating cash flow per share also dropped significantly to Tk 2.97 for the January-June period, compared to Tk 21.91 in the corresponding half of 2024.

As of June 30, 2025, sponsor-directors held 33.26 percent of the bank's shares, institutional investors 31.29 percent, and the general public 35.45 percent, according to data from the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

Aus, Aman, and Boro season paddies are cultivated on about 116 lakh hectares of land annually, while hybrid varieties are grown on about 19 lakh hectares, according to data from the agriculture ministry.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Govt eases rules to encourage hybrid rice cultivation

SUKANTA HALDER

The interim government of Bangladesh recently introduced updated rules for the evaluation and registration of hybrid rice, aiming to encourage the cultivation of more varieties, strengthen agricultural innovation, and ensure food security.

Government officials say that for the last couple of years, hybrid rice cultivation has been gaining popularity among farmers due to its higher yield—up to 20 percent more than traditional rice varieties.

Aus, Aman, and Boro season paddy are annually cultivated on about 116 lakh hectares of land, with hybrid varieties grown on about 19 lakh hectares, according to data from the Ministry of Agriculture.

The government made the updates public on July 20, and they were welcomed by experts and the private agricultural sector.

The rules have been developed with the aim of registering hybrid rice seed varieties—both those developed locally through research and those imported—under the National Seed Board.

WHAT CHANGES HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED

Previously, the organisation seeking the evaluation and registration needed to have facilities for seed processing, storage, and dehumidified preservation.

Now the organisation can also enter into agreements with the government and private entities to use their facilities, as per the updates.

The amendments introduced a new rule—the amylose content must be at least 20 percent for ordinary and aromatic rice, while it could be lower for glutinous and speciality varieties.

Amylose is a type of starch found in rice, and previously 23.05 percent was required.

Moreover, the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute was earlier the authority for the verification of data, such as that of amylose content, before the Seed Certification Agency could present the findings to the National Seed Board for a variety's registration.

Now, any "competent laboratory" can carry out the verification.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE

Before applying for registration, the organisation concerned must conduct at least one field evaluation of the proposed hybrid variety under its own supervision.

The information regarding the trial must be communicated to the respective district seed certification officer.

A minimum of six on-station trials and six on-farm trials must be conducted in at least six out of the 14 designated agricultural zones in the country.

Hybrid rice cultivation has been gaining popularity among farmers due to its higher yield—up to 20 percent more than traditional rice varieties, officials said

An on-station trial refers to an experiment or evaluation conducted within the confines of an agricultural research station, typically managed by researchers, and often involving controlled conditions and specific experimental designs.

Each on-station trial should be arranged using a Randomised Complete Block Design (RCBD).

An RCBD is an experimental design where experimental units are grouped into blocks, and each treatment is randomly assigned to one unit within each block.

This helps control for variability within blocks, making the experiment more precise in detecting differences among treatments.

For varieties tolerant to adverse conditions, such as floods, flash floods, drought, cold, salinity, waterlogging, and tidal effects, trials must be conducted in at least four zones, with four on-station tests and four on-farm tests.

In this case, if the proposed variety yields 20 percent more than the highest-yielding seasonal inbred variety in three zones through three on-station tests and three on-farm tests, it will be considered eligible for zone-based registration.

However, in special cases where it is not possible to conduct trials in at least four zones due to different circumstances, trials can be conducted in fewer zones but at a minimum of six sites (three on-station and three on-farm).

In this scenario, if the proposed variety yields at least 20 percent more than the highest-yielding seasonal inbred variety in at least four sites (two on-station and two on-farm), it will be considered eligible for zone-based registration.

On receiving approval for registration, the organisation concerned may produce and import the seed for commercial use, in accordance with the specified conditions.

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS SAY

FH Ansarey, managing director of ACI Agribusinesses, a leading agricultural integrator in Bangladesh, said the updating of the rules was a timely and effective step that would benefit the country by boosting rice yields.

He explained that the percentage of amylose content required was lowered from the previous 23.05 percent, and this was closely linked to yield potential.

"With this adjustment, we can now expect improved yields," he said.

To meet the growing demand for rice, he emphasised the need to further expand the coverage of hybrid varieties, which would also help reduce the country's reliance on imports.

According to data from the Directorate General of Food, 12.75 lakh tonnes of rice were imported by the public and private sectors during fiscal year 2024-25. In the preceding year, there was no import of rice.

READ MORE ON B2

From CEO to scapegoat

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

Being a CEO is like being the goat at a family wedding: pampered, praised, and then served at dinner. One wrong question or bruised ego, and the corner office starts to feel like a trapdoor. The same board that once called you "family" suddenly avoids eye contact. It's a shiny job title wrapped in politics, where survival depends more on diplomacy than performance.

Interestingly, whenever corporate injustice strikes, my phone somehow rings. Maybe it's fate, or perhaps I have become the country's unpaid coach, therapist, and crisis hotline for wronged executives. Just last week, two former colleagues—bright minds, strong spines—shared their heartbreaking journeys. Ishaq (not his real name), once a high-performing professional and later a CEO known for his integrity, made the mistake of exposing financial irregularities involving the owner's family. The reward? A clean chit and a swift push out the door. No explanation, no farewell, no parachute. In the years since, his life has spiralled out of control—jobless, shunned, and forced to sell his only home to fund his son's education. He's gained 20 kilos, lost his dignity, and when we finally met, he wept like a child. I didn't have the heart to remind him that this is Bangladesh!

The second case? Equally tragic, but with a touch of theatre. Another respected leader clashed with a peer, only to be blindsided by vague accusations: he "shouted at subordinates" and "created stress". An inquiry committee was quickly formed, conveniently staffed with loyalists of the complainant. No fraud, no misconduct, no sexual scandal—just the dark art of corporate chess, played by those who mastered politics better than performance.

Globally, CEOs are typically ousted for tangible misconduct, such as sexual harassment, fraud, bribery, insider trading, or conflicts of interest. In South Asia, we often prefer more mysterious causes: internal politics, ego clashes, and power games, often masked by fabricated HR drama. Today's CEOs must be masters of not only strategy and governance but also survival in environments where integrity is admired until it becomes inconvenient.

Some companies, both regional and global, proudly proclaim "zero tolerance" as a corporate anthem. Yet behind closed doors, they dispense bribes to politicians, manipulate regulatory arms, and exploit their own HR and legal policies for organisational and personal gain. It's not hypocrisy; it's advanced corporate politics—bending ethics while keeping a straight face. Zero tolerance doesn't apply when zeroes are added to the right of the cheque. The power abuser forgets that evil deeds don't stay hidden; life finds a way to return them.

Even bank CEOs aren't spared—some quietly removed, others even assaulted—yet no action, no protest, no headlines. Unity among senior leaders? A fading myth. Fear keeps everyone silent. Childhood slogans like "Unity is strength" now belong to school debates, not boardrooms. And the media? Let's not expect much when advertising cheques speak louder than truth. In the end, silence remains the only and safest strategy. In our world, standing tall often means standing alone.

Legally, CEOs and CXOs (chief experience officer) in Bangladesh live in a grey zone. The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 protects labourers, but senior executives? They're included only when it's time to pay into the Workers' Profit Participation Fund. When it comes to protection from unfair termination or governance-related harassment, they are left fending for themselves. No unions, no ombudsman, no formal support network—just silence and shame.

India, by contrast, offers valuable lessons. SEBI's Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements Regulations, 2015, mandate transparent disclosures of top-level resignations. Forums like the National Association of Software and Service Companies and the Confederation of Indian Industry allow senior professionals to raise their voices.

Leaders for the future must take note: we need clear executive contract laws, independent inquiry processes, whistleblower protections, and a safe platform for CXOs. Until leadership is protected, governance will always be performative, and justice will remain optional.

Until CEOs are protected by law and principle, leadership will remain a title—glamorous outside, vulnerable and disposable within.

The writer is the president of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh and founder of BuildCon Consultancies Ltd

Pakistan says it wins US tariff deal

Provides no breakdown of export tariffs

REUTERS, *Islamabad/Washington*

The United States and Pakistan hailed a trade deal on Thursday that Islamabad said would lead to lower tariffs and increased investment, but without specifying the level of tariff to be levied on Pakistani exports.

"This deal marks the beginning of a new era of economic collaboration especially in energy, mines and minerals, IT, cryptocurrency and other sectors," the Pakistan finance ministry said in a statement following a final round of talks in Washington.

Islamabad described the deal as a marker of a broader partnership with Washington, and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, who led the final round of talks, said there was a larger economic and strategic agreement.

"From our perspective, it was always going beyond the immediate trade imperative, and its whole purpose was, and is, that trade and investment have to go hand in hand," he said, in video-taped remarks.

Pakistan had faced a potential tariff of 29 percent, which was later suspended - as with other nations - to allow trade talks up to an August 1 deadline. Islamabad was aiming at a tariff less than regional trade rivals such as Vietnam, which had a 20 percent tariff imposed by Trump, and India, which is threatened with a 25 percent tariff.

Islamabad's trade surplus with Washington was around $3 billion in 2024, mainly due to textile exports. The United States is Pakistan's biggest market for textiles.

US tariff keeps India in China plus one, for now

REUTERS, *Hong Kong*

Donald Trump's shake-up of the world's China-plus-one trade is not creating any decisive winners or losers. The US president's decision on Wednesday to impose a 25 percent tariff on imports from India is a blow to the South Asian country, but the rate, if it sticks, could still allow it to remain a desirable manufacturing destination for global companies like Apple.

Unlike other world leaders, Narendra Modi did not secure a reduction on Trump's threatened tariff rate for his country, which sent $87 billion of goods to the US last year. The prime minister's apparent refusal to open up India's agriculture and dairy markets to US imports may be why. Doing so would have risked another showdown with millions of poor and politically powerful farmers.

Whether India wins or loses, though, will depend on other factors. The $4 trillion economy has sought to court companies that want to diversify their supply chains away from the People's Republic. Here India's rivals include Bangladesh, Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia, and to some extent, Mexico. These competitors currently face US import tariffs ranging from 19 percent to 40 percent.

On the face of it, India will now be less competitive as a manufacturing destination than Vietnam, which Trump slapped with a 20 percent tariff. India's weighted average tariff rate would be five to 10 percentage points higher than Asian peers, Citi economists estimate.

Its status as a top buyer of Russian energy and weapons is also a negative, with Trump now threatening an unspecified penalty for participating in such trade. Russia accounts for up to 40 percent of India's crude oil imports and offers it an implied discount of up to $4 per barrel. Giving up that benefit would be economically and politically disadvantageous for India.

Employees stitch clothing materials for dresses at an apparel manufacturing unit at Bhiwandi in the Thane district of India's Maharashtra state on Wednesday. US President Donald Trump said that imports from India will face 25 percent tariffs.

PHOTO: AFP

But Southeast Asia's deep links to Chinese exporters and investment mean the bloc faces stiff penalty tariffs, too, if the US president follows through on his threat to crack down on tariff evasion, or transshipment, by Chinese exporters.

In this scenario, Trump would double the levy for goods they send through Vietnam, for example. This risk will only increase with any deterioration of the Sino-American relationship. Some companies may ignore the tariff differential and stick with India because it offers access to a large domestic consumer market, and it is less exposed to China.

Whether Trump cares more about brokering peace in Ukraine or containing the world's second-largest economy is anyone's guess. The upshot is that he has negotiated or unilaterally declared trade pacts that set diverging tariffs on all the major China plus-one countries. Ideally, that ought to have provided some clarity for companies currently stuck in limbo to resume capital expenditure. But the US president's outstanding promises to penalise transshipment and those who deal with Russia will leave global companies in no better position to decide how, if at all, to reconfigure their supply chains.