



A worker loads old books, collected by hawkers from villages and towns, onto trucks at a godown in Barishal city's Hatkhola area to be sent to various parts of the country, including Dhaka. Each person typically works from 9am to night, earning Tk 800 to Tk 1,000 daily. PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Exports stuck in EU, US orbit

FROM PAGE B1  
and predictable standards. It is therefore unsurprising that policy nudges alone have not altered the destination mix: the centre of global demand pulls, and our current capabilities align with that pull," said the RAPID chairman.

Razzaque, who follows international trade closely, pointed out that many non-garment sectors face difficulties meeting quality and safety standards abroad.

He said domestic weaknesses in certification, testing and recognition abroad add to the problem, raising costs and slowing

access to markets. "In short, non-RMG exports are squeezed by capability deficits and standard frictions; until these are addressed, scale-up in diverse products will remain difficult."

He added that high logistics costs, bottlenecks, poor inland transport and weak risk management further undercut competitiveness.

The country's lack of free trade agreements and reliance on high tariffs to protect domestic firms also discourages outward-looking growth, according to the economist.

"Elevated prices behind

the tariff wall, combined with buoyant demand in a rapidly growing economy, make the domestic market more attractive than the rigours of export competition," he said.

Fazlul Hoque, former president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said exports have increased in Australia, Japan and India.

Hoque believes that only incentives will not work. "Continuous efforts to build new markets are also necessary. We have made huge efforts to develop the market in Japan. We need to target specific markets

and make continuous efforts."

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), said Bangladesh should expand its portfolio beyond garments.

"Bangladesh should invest in developing exportable products beyond RMG, such as light engineering, agro-processed goods, electronics, and IT services, that appeal to a broader global audience. Trade diplomacy needs to be strengthened to forge free trade agreements or reduce tariff barriers with

emerging markets in Asia, Latin America, and Africa," he said.

He added that government support should be better targeted, backed by market research and capacity-building, so exporters can break into new destinations.

Moazzem of CPD agreed, as he said that instead of making incentives end-market-oriented, the country should make them supply-chain-oriented.

He said, "We need to frame a sectoral supply-chain policy incorporating the import of raw materials, manufacturing, and end-market."

Md Anwar Hossain, immediate vice president of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), said foreign investment and an improved business environment are key to diversification.

Hossain said, "We should design policy support in tune with the support given by other countries. Our duty and customs procedures should be made easy, and lead time should be reduced to ensure speed to market."

"If import duty is reduced and exporters are given a level playing field, many products will become competitive," he added.

## WEEKLY STOCKS Market rebounds after declining for two weeks

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks rose last week, rebounding from a two-week losing streak, while turnover also increased, reflecting higher investor activity.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), gained 24.71 points, or 0.46 percent, to close at 5,374.96, DSE data showed.

Other indices at the DSE also posted gains. The DS30, which tracks blue-chip stocks, advanced 0.75 percent to 2,089.44, while the DSES, comprising Shariah-compliant companies, edged up 1.48 percent to 1,180.34.

Turnover, a key indicator of investor activity, stood at Tk 4,535.69 crore, up sharply from Tk 3,445.94 crore the previous week.

On a daily average, turnover was Tk 907.13 crore, higher than Tk 689.18 crore a week earlier, a 31 percent increase in average daily turnover.

The pharmaceuticals and chemicals sector dominated trading, accounting for 18 percent of the average daily traded value. Banks followed with 11 percent, trailed by textile stocks.

In terms of sector-wise returns, paper and printing stocks led with a 9 percent rise. Jute, IT, and general insurance issues also posted notable advances.

Market breadth was positive, with 241 scrips advancing, 129 declining, and 24 remaining unchanged.

Among individual issues, Information Services Network Ltd was the top gainer, soaring 47 percent, while Exim Bank of Bangladesh suffered the sharpest fall, losing 17 percent during the week.

## Pran-RFL ramps up

FROM PAGE 1  
where elevators can be tested at a speed of 3 metres per second.

Currently, 210 employees are working at the factory, and more than 1,000 people are involved in installation and servicing.

The company plans to hire an additional 5,000 technicians to expand its services nationwide.

Industry people said demand for elevators is mainly concentrated in large cities — 45 percent in and around Dhaka and 20 percent in Chattogram.

Around 4,500-5,000 units worth Tk 1,300 crore are sold annually in Bangladesh, and the industry is growing at 10 to 15 percent every year, industry insiders said.

Paul said through their long experience in this sector, they have seen that customers want world-class lifts with assured safety and security, but they also want them at an affordable price, tailored to their needs.

He said the price of imported elevators was high, and the opportunity to install customised elevators in old buildings was also limited.

## Protectionism endangers

FROM PAGE B1  
access after it graduates from least-developed-country (LDC) status in late 2026, the reconfiguration of supply chains away from China, and the surge in protectionist trade rules. Duty-free access, once the country's great advantage, is ending.

"First-generation advantages such as duty-free access are coming to an end," he noted, adding that Bangladesh must now prioritise industrial diversification, productivity, and performance-based incentives.

Titimur urged a three-pronged approach that includes expanding into new industries beyond garments, upgrading logistics, technology, and skills, and reforming incentives with transparency and accountability.

The professor stressed that parliament should engage in more strategic decisions.

"Bangladesh's biggest asset is resilience. We've bounced back before, and we will again," he said.

Economist and political analyst Zia Hassan said Bangladesh's survival now hinges on a renewed push for export-led growth, arguing that domestic investment alone cannot

sustain recovery given depleted reserves and rising import costs.

"We must attract FDI, and the \$8 billion trade relationship with the US is crucial," he noted, pointing to opportunities as global firms diversify away from China under the 'China Plus One' approach, under which companies diversify their supply chains and manufacturing beyond China by establishing operations in other countries.

Untapped sectors like electronics, leather, and sportswear could drive growth if proper foundations are built.

He laid out three conditions for attracting investment: social harmony and rule of law, a stable government to avoid political volatility, and a lower cost of doing business through reduced taxes, energy, and logistics costs.

Also speaking at the event, Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, said no strategy to boost foreign direct investment (FDI) will succeed unless Chattogram port's efficiency is significantly improved.

"FDI won't wait for our logistics to catch up. We have low-cost labour, but that's not enough. If global brands can't ship high-

value fashion goods within 10 days of order, they will go elsewhere. And they are—many to Vietnam," said Alam.

He continued that logistics, not wages, is now the real frontline. "Chattogram port is our obvious 'low-hanging' fruit. If we can't fix that, we can't aim higher."

Referring to the US tariff talks, the press secretary said the negotiations exposed key structural challenges: logistical bottlenecks, reform gaps, and the need for better global positioning to sustain Bangladesh's export-led growth in a post-preference world.

"This government understood its limitations and went after actionable, visible reforms," he also said, citing the scrapping of the Special Powers Act within 10 days of taking office.

He stated that while more extensive tariff reform remains incomplete, Bangladesh has already made progress on the macroeconomic front: inflation has eased, reserves have grown, and GDP growth stands at 4 percent.

On the US tariff talks outcome, he said the 20 percent rate was the result of strategic groundwork by a triad led by Professor

Muhammad Yunus, National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman, and Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin.

"While critics bemoan the 20 percent, even close allies like the UK and Vietnam got the same. Over 100 countries still have no deal. This is a positioning win," Alam added.

Meanwhile, Shafiqur Rahman, director of BRAIN, cautioned that there is no guarantee the 20 percent reciprocal tariff offered by the US will remain stable.

"At any moment it could rise to 50 percent, given the unpredictability of the Trump administration," he said at the event.

Rahman stressed that Bangladesh must adopt a well-defined strategy to compete with global peers and safeguard its economy amid such volatility.

"The unpredictable and often unsuitable tariff regime is not a challenge only for Bangladesh, but for all countries," he added.

Among others, Jyoti Rahman, economist, Md Rubaiyath Sarwar, managing director of Innovation Consulting, Shamarukh Mohiuddin, director of The Cadmus Group, and Ishrafil Khasru, a readymade garments exporter, addressed the roundtable.

## Govt to buy potato

FROM PAGE B1  
An expansion of cultivation area and higher yield owing to favourable weather boosted the overall production of the popular vegetable this year, said the BBS.

Farmers grew the tuber on 4.92 lakh hectares in the 2024-25 fiscal year, up 8 percent year-on-year.

At the press meet, the agriculture adviser also discussed Bangladesh's reliance on imports.

The tissue culture of potatoes, pineapples, dates, and various flowers is being

carried out at BADC's tissue culture centre, he said.

"We import dates from abroad. If saplings produced through this technology are widely distributed locally, dependence on imports will decrease," he said.

"We have to buy potato seeds at high prices from countries like the Netherlands. If we can produce high-quality potato seeds inside Bangladesh, it will be beneficial for our agriculture."

He added that BADC's tissue culture lab is working towards this goal.

If agricultural research is strengthened, Bangladesh will no longer need to import seed potatoes from abroad, and production costs will decrease further, he said.

About the recent price hikes, the adviser said vegetable fields were damaged due to rain, which has affected the market.

"Once the weather returns to normal, this problem will go away."

In response to a

journalist's question about reducing dependence on jute seed imports, Chowdhury said farmers prefer growing other, more profitable crops than jute.

Jute seeds take a long time to grow, during which farmers can harvest paddy two to three times, he said.

And it has not been possible to meet the demand for jute seeds through local production because of land scarcity, the adviser said, hinting at the continuation of jute seed imports.

**Institute of Business Administration**

### ADMISSION NOTICE TRAINING ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The Entrepreneurship & Business Development Certification Program is offered in joint collaboration between Prime Bank PLC and the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka. The program seeks to equip aspiring entrepreneurs with the essential knowledge, skills, and resources required to successfully launch and scale sustainable ventures. By integrating rigorous academic frameworks with real-world financial expertise, the program offers a comprehensive curriculum covering business model development, strategic marketing, financial management, risk assessment, and digital transformation.

Through this collaboration, Prime Bank and IBA are committed to cultivating a dynamic community of future business leaders capable of driving socio-economic progress and creating lasting value in the regional and global marketplace, fostering entrepreneurial mindset.

The resource persons for the program comprise faculty members from IBA, University of Dhaka and leading practitioners from relevant industry.

#### Eligibility Criteria

Prospective candidates must fulfill the following eligibility criteria for admission:

- Bachelor's degree in any discipline, and
- Be an entrepreneur (self-employed) or a full-time professional serving entrepreneur.

Eligibility criteria might be relaxed for exceptional candidates.

#### Program Schedule

This is an eight-week program. Classes will take place during weekends (Friday/Saturday) only.

#### Admission Procedure

Eligible candidates are invited to submit their applications through <https://mdp.iba-du.edu/EBD>. The last date of application is Thursday, September 11, 2025.

Only shortlisted applicants will be called for the assessment test on a rolling basis.

#### Certification

Participants will engage in interactive workshops, case studies, and mentorship sessions led by seasoned industry practitioners and academic experts, fostering a practical learning environment. At the end of successful completion of the course, participants will be awarded certificates to be issued by the institute.

#### Course Fee

The program is partially subsidized by Prime Bank PLC. However, each participant or his/her employer/sponsor will have to pay only a subsidized amount of BDT 19,500 (Nineteen Thousand Five Hundred Taka) as course fee.

#### Contact Details

For application and information, please contact:

**Management Development Program (MDP)**  
IBA, University of Dhaka, Dhaka 1000  
Cell: 01726885329 or 01766993390  
E-mail: [acba@iba-du.edu](mailto:acba@iba-du.edu)  
Website: [www.iba-du.edu](http://www.iba-du.edu)

PRIME SME BANKING

**EMPOWERING THE ENTREPRENEURS OF TOMORROW!**

Supported By:

