

star BUSINESS

UN to support Bangladesh's LDC graduation readiness review

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The United Nations (UN) will support an assessment of the country's readiness to graduate from the group of least developed countries (LDCs) in November next year, the Chief Adviser's Office said yesterday.

The review is expected to start within a month and conclude by mid-January 2026, according to UN Under-Secretary-General Rabab Fatima.

The move follows a formal request from the interim government, Fatima said during a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at his hotel in New York on Monday.

Fatima also serves as the UN High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

IPDC ডিপোজিট | ১৬৫১৯

According to the Chief Adviser's Office, the assessment will be carried out by an international consultant alongside a Bangladeshi expert to ensure a comprehensive and balanced evaluation.

It will involve broad consultations with key stakeholders, including government officials, business chambers, development experts, civil society leaders, donors, financial institutions and political representatives, to gauge whether Bangladesh is adequately prepared for the shift.

The announcement comes at a time when entrepreneurs, especially exporters and pharmaceutical producers, are urging the government to seek a deferral of the graduation by up to six years.

Industry leaders argue that preparations remain insufficient to cope with competition in global markets once Bangladesh moves into the developing country bracket.

The country's exports, which currently enjoy duty-free access to the European Union, are expected to face tariffs of up to 12 percent in the EU from 2029 when the three-year grace period on preferential treatment ends.

READ MORE ON B3

How stock investors get scammed through social media

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The fraudsters' strategy is simple: lure stock investors with ads promising quick returns on Facebook or Instagram, bolster credibility of the offer using fake experts in WhatsApp groups. Once the investor is hooked, ask them to register on fake websites and invest through bKash or Nagad.

This is how scammers have been duping thousands of people using social media platforms and mobile financial services (MFS), a month-long sting operation by Dismislab has exposed.

The investigative team joined multiple WhatsApp groups posing as potential investors to follow the scam firsthand. They found at least 20 active groups claiming to represent legitimate brokerage firms, including City Brokerage Limited (CBL) and BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage. Each group guided users through a carefully choreographed process designed to make the operation appear legitimate.

"In September alone, hundreds of advertisements were running from at least 15 Facebook pages, all aimed at drawing users into newly created WhatsApp groups. At least 20 such groups have been identified, with their combined membership exceeding 3,000," states the report published yesterday by the independent fact-checking and media research platform.

In the CBL-branded group, members were directed to download a fake Android app that simulated real trading activity. In the BRAC group, they were sent to a fake website that mirrored the branding of the real firm.

Users were then instructed to transfer money directly to personal accounts via MFS or banks, bypassing licensed brokerage channels. Some of the ads even used the names and images of prominent personalities, including Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, to enhance credibility.

Officials from the affected brokerage firms told Dismislab they had alerted both the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) about the scam.

READ MORE ON B3

With new law, all govt purchases must move online now

Governance experts view it as a shift away from favouritism, political influence

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The government has shifted all public procurement online in a bid to curb corruption and bring greater transparency to spending, ending the decades-old practice of submitting physical tenders.

From now on, all purchases of goods, services and works, worth roughly around \$30 billion a year, will be conducted through the Electronic Government Procurement (e-GP) system, according to a new ordinance issued this week.

The Public Procurement Rules 2025 also abolished the long-debated price cap, which previously allowed bids up to 10 percent higher or lower than the estimated cost. There were criticisms that the provision opened the door to manipulation.

The e-GP system for public purchase was introduced in 2011. However, around 35 percent of the government's annual procurement still took place manually, with tenders submitted on paper, according to the Bangladesh Public Procurement Authority (BPBA).

Under the new Public Procurement Rules (PPR), there is no provision to allow manual or direct procurement, even for small-scale purchases.

SM Moin Uddin, chief executive of the Public Procurement Authority, described the reform as a milestone.

"The Public Procurement Rules 2025 is more than just a revision; it is a comprehensive reform that embeds sustainability, digitalisation, and international best practices into the procurement process," he said.

The new law introduces clearer definitions of procurement roles, streamlined procedures and stronger accountability measures to tackle irregularities and end syndication.

MEASURES TO BE TAKEN

Transparency & accountability

Disclosure of beneficial ownership in contract awards | Establishment of a Debarment Board | Expansion of framework agreements and negotiation provisions | Clearer rules for asset disposal

Digitalisation & systems

Mandatory use of e-GP system for all public procurement | Mandatory procurement strategies for all entities

Policy & reform measures

- ◆ Removal of the ±10% price cap in national works procurement
- ◆ Formal adoption of sustainable public procurement
- ◆ Recognition of physical services as a separate procurement category



It sets detailed rules on contract pricing, defect liability and sustainability benchmarks, while requiring disclosure of beneficial ownership in contract awards.

For the first time, physical services, such as security or maintenance work, are recognised as a distinct procurement category. Other major reforms include wider use of framework agreements, creation of a debarment board to blacklist offenders, and stricter guidelines for the disposal of state assets.

Officials say the rules also introduce sustainable public procurement, which incorporates environmental and social responsibility into public spending decisions.

Procuring agencies now will have to prepare strategy documents before initiating purchases.

Md Kamal Uddin, secretary of the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED), welcomed the changes. "This is a great step forward in ensuring competition and fairness in the public procurement process," he said.

Economists and governance experts have also praised the new procurement law.

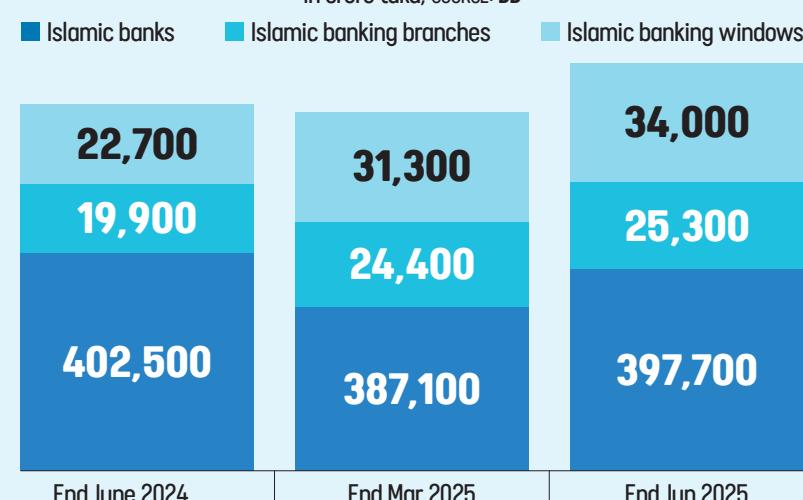
Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), called the abolition of the price cap

READ MORE ON B3

Islamic bank deposits keep rising

DEPOSIT TRENDS IN ISLAMIC BANKS

In crore taka; SOURCE: BB



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Deposits flowing to Islamic banks rose in the April-June quarter of 2025, buoyed by a sharp increase in the number of customers thanks to a renewal of confidence.

Total deposits stood at Tk 4.57 lakh crore at the end of June, up 3.22 percent from Tk 4.42 lakh crore three months earlier.

The volume of deposits was also 2.67 percent higher than that a year ago, Bangladesh Bank said in its quarterly report on Islamic banking.

Of the total, deposits of 10 full-fledged Islamic banks amounted to Tk 3.97 lakh crore, while Islamic banking branches of conventional banks held Tk 25,333 crore and Islamic windows Tk 34,083 crore.

The 10 dedicated Islamic banks accounted for 87 percent of the system's deposits, with branches and windows representing 5.54 percent and 7.45 percent, respectively.

This was the third consecutive quarter in which Shariah-based banks recorded growth in deposits since the July-September period, when savings fell as low as Tk 4.36 lakh crore due to an erosion of confidence amid allegations of loan irregularities.

READ MORE ON B3

Foreign workers must get security clearance via Bida OSS

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida) has made it mandatory for every foreign investor and employee to obtain security clearance for work permits exclusively through Bida's One Stop Service (OSS) portal.

Bida sources said the OSS portal requirement takes effect today for all foreign workers.

If no objection is raised during verification, the clearance will be deemed automatically approved within 21 working days.

Failure to apply for security clearance within the stipulated timeframe mentioned in the work permit will result in the automatic cancellation of the permit.

Speaking on the development, Bida Executive Chairman Ashiq Chowdhury said: "The digitisation of the security clearance process will allow investors to receive services that are faster, more transparent, and more reliable. We believe this reform will play a significant role in making Bangladesh more investment friendly."

"We are especially grateful to the Ministry of Home Affairs for their support in implementing this important step with the investors' experience in mind."

Senior Home Secretary Nasimul Ghani also welcomed the move, stating: "The digital security clearance process will strengthen inter-agency coordination and simplify visa- and work permit-related services for foreign investors."

"The home ministry will continue close coordination with Bida to

Independence of BB is imperative

PRI says weak governance is the root cause of high NPLs

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

An independent central bank is important to enforce strict governance standards to ensure low levels of non-performing loans (NPL) and bring about discipline in the financial sector, stated think tank Policy Research Institute (PRI) of Bangladesh yesterday.

"Enhanced autonomy of the central bank would insulate monetary policy from short-term political pressures, enabling more effective inflation targeting and exchange rate management," said Ashikur Rahman, principal economist of the PRI.

He was addressing a discussion on the macroeconomic situation of the country organised by the PRI in partnership with the Australian government at the PRI office yesterday.

The root causes of high NPLs are weak governance, political interference, poor recovery practices, and fragmented oversight. On this ground, it is imperative to ensure the independence of the central bank, Rahman said.

By reducing the scope for political interference in lending and oversight, an independent central bank can enforce stricter governance standards, improve loan recovery, and help reverse the longstanding deterioration in asset quality, he said.



The NPLs have reached 24 percent of total loans in FY25, he said.

Economic stability has been painstakingly achieved through contractionary fiscal and monetary policies, and through difficult measures to restore governance in the banking sector, said Rahman.

These can yield long-term dividends only if Bangladesh invests in the capacity and autonomy of its economic institutions, most importantly Bangladesh Bank, he said.

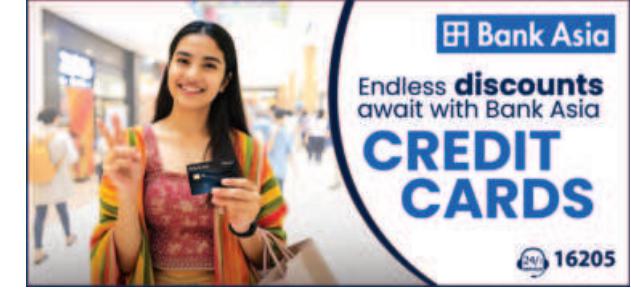
History offers a cautionary lesson, he said.

The deliberate erosion of Bangladesh Bank's independence and technical capacity has enabled the rise of economic oligarchs who have operated with impunity, extracting rents in a manner reminiscent of the East India Company, said Rahman.

"Their unchecked financial irregularities pushed our banking system to the brink of collapse, undermining public trust and weakening the economy's foundations," he said.

To prevent any repeat of this near meltdown, the interim government must commit to granting complete independence to Bangladesh Bank and adopt a governance model comparable to the Bank of England or the Federal Reserve in the United States, he said.

Such a reform would empower the central bank with both the authority and the technical capacity to safeguard



Achieve your Hajj dream through Shariah-based monthly savings

- Term: 2 to 10 years
- Multiple accounts allowed



To Know More

16201

Call Now

16201

READ MORE ON B3