

Star BUSINESS



Inflation eases slightly to 8.17% in Oct

Non-food prices cross the 9% mark again

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Overall inflation fell slightly in October as red-hot food prices cooled a bit, but households continued to face pressure on utility, healthcare, transport and other essential costs.

Owing to a fall in food prices, the headline inflation dropped to 8.17 percent last month, down from 8.36 percent in September, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).



SOURCE: BBS

Non-food inflation, however, rose to 9.13 percent in October, up from 8.98 percent in September. This marks a return to a 26-month streak of non-food prices above 9 percent after a brief slowdown in recent months.

Economists say the slight easing of headline inflation offers little relief for consumers, pointing to the influence of last year's prices on current calculations.

"The base effect softens the headline [inflation], but it does not soften the blow," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office.

He said the small moderation in the headline rate was driven mainly by a minor dip in food prices, too slight to signal any real easing of overall price pressures.

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BGMEA urges govt to sign trade deals with major partners

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Garment manufacturers have urged the government to pursue free trade agreements and economic partnership agreements with the European Union, the UK, Japan, and Canada alongside other potential trading partners.

The deals are required for retaining preferential trade benefits once Bangladesh attains the status graduation from a least developed country (LDC) to a developing one in November 2026, said the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

The BGMEA leaders said this in response to queries from a visiting delegation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during a meeting at the BGMEA office in Dhaka yesterday.

The leaders informed the IMF delegation that the current BGMEA board has already recommended that the government take several measures.

These include ensuring an uninterrupted supply of electricity and gas to industries, improving port efficiency, simplifying customs and bond procedures, reducing interest rates to a single digit, and expediting key infrastructure projects such as the Dhaka Chattogram Highway.

The IMF delegation met with BGMEA President Mahmud Hasan Khan to discuss Bangladesh's preparedness for LDC graduation and other economic issues.

They also discussed the potential impact of US reciprocal tariffs on garment exports, the implications of LDC graduation, strategies for sustainable

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Make stock market efficient to cut reliance on bank funds: experts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government must make the capital market more efficient and reduce regulatory burdens to draw new investors and encourage firms to go public, paving the way for a shift from bank-dependent financing to market-based funding, a group of experts ranging from brokers to regulatory officials and bankers said yesterday.

It should ensure policy continuity, streamline initial public offerings (IPOs), and increase oversight of non-listed firms to attract corporates for listing, they said at a discussion on transitioning from bank finance to capital market finance, organised jointly by The Daily Star and IDLC Investments at the newspaper's auditorium.

"For this transition, the capital market needs to be efficient, prudent, and attractive for both investors and issuers," said Shaheen Iqbal, deputy managing director of BRAC Bank. "Many companies are over-leveraged and need restructuring. If they can trust the capital market, they will go public."

Rupali Chowdhury, president of the Bangladesh Association of Publicly Listed Companies, pointed out that lengthy procedures for raising funds in the stock market remain a major hurdle.

"Bank loans are much easier. If the fund-raising process takes too long, the necessity for funds may change," she said.

Inconsistent policies are another big reason behind the market not appearing attractive to investors, Chowdhury also noted. "For example, a company may get listed to enjoy tax incentives, but if the NBR changes the policy after listing, it discourages multinational companies from entering the market."

Saiful Islam, president of the DSE Brokers Association of Bangladesh (DBA), echoed her concern. "Policy inconsistency is a disaster for the market. It ultimately hurts investors," he said, calling for a clear debt-equity ratio to encourage corporates to tap the capital market for large funding requirements.

He also called for balanced regulatory oversight.

"Once a company goes public, it becomes subject to extensive regulatory requirements, which many see as a deterrent. Bringing non-listed companies under similar oversight could encourage them to consider going public," he said.

Ahmed Rashid Lali, former president of the DBA, said the lengthy IPO process is a key impediment.

REASONS BEHIND LOW STOCK MARKET LISTINGS

- Unattractive company valuations
- Lengthy and complex IPO process
- Limited incentives for listing
- Negative public perception of the market
- Fear of losing control over firms
- Reluctance to face regulatory bindings

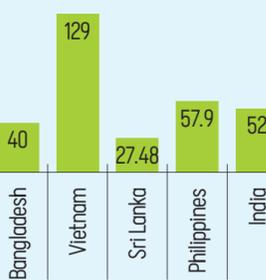
Recommendations

- Introduce a more flexible listing process for large companies
- Ensure a shorter and more efficient IPO timeline
- Develop and implement standardised documentation guidelines
- Offer attractive tax incentives for priority or high-potential sectors
- Maintain long-term policy consistency
- Promote capital market through positive branding

Market cap-to-GDP ratio (in %)



Loan to private sector as % of GDP



SOURCE: IDLC INVESTMENTS

"If an entrepreneur sees it takes two years to raise funds from the stock market, why would they come here? There is no need to grant the DSE 45-60 days to review an IPO application. It would take only seven days for a DSE panel to complete the review," he said.

Responding to this, DSE Chairman Mominul Islam pointed out that the stock exchange needs to conduct the review meticulously, as the financial disclosures of the applicant companies are not always reliable.

Otherwise, he agreed that "it would take only five to seven days to approve IPOs on a disclosure basis."

"The system became stringent because of some bad companies, and the good companies are victims of that," he said, urging stronger enforcement of financial reporting standards.

"A strong debt market is necessary for the country. If we can fix some operational issues, treasury bonds can be tradable on the stock exchange," he added.

Isteqemal Hussain, director of Bangladesh Bank, also spoke of the slow pace in the IPO approval process.

"Corporates seek quick service. Speeding up the approval process for fund-raising could encourage them to come to the market," he said, adding that the banking regulator is taking various measures to make the bond market vibrant.

Md Saifuddin, commissioner of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC), emphasised that the capital market is not only about equity.

"People need to learn from risk-free securities, which are in short supply in the market. Currently, greed dominates, and manipulation is extremely high."

He also noted that there used to be widespread incentives for certain groups and instances of regulatory forbearance, which the BSEC is now addressing.

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Global garment supply chain in mild slowdown over US tariff

Foreign denim traders say as fair begins in Dhaka

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The global garment supply chain is undergoing somewhat of a slowdown due to US President Donald Trump's recent reciprocal tariffs, as well as political uncertainty in Bangladesh, according to several foreign denim apparel traders.

The rise in tariffs pushed up garment prices, leading to a fall in demand especially for denim products in the US market, which subsequently affected trade for supplier countries such as Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, and Vietnam.

Moreover, uncertainties remain over the Trump administration's reciprocal tariff policy for China and India, two major players in the global garment supply chain, prompting international clothing retailers and brands to adopt a "wait-and-see" approach.

In Bangladesh's case, retailers and brands are making inquiries but are not confirming bulk work orders, said the foreign companies.

Political instability is a problem in Bangladesh, and the country needs to hold elections as soon as possible, as changes are happening, said Sekip Hayit, an executive of Turkish chemical company Resas Chemie.

Buyers are waiting and not confirming all work orders now. A lot of business will come here, but not right now, he added.

Hayit was talking to The Daily Star yesterday

IPDC ডিগেজিট | ১৬৫১৯

at the 19th edition of the Bangladesh Denim Expo, organised by its namesake company at the International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka. Showcasing products from 60 companies across 15 countries, the two-day fair concludes today.

The slowdown is not limited to Bangladesh but is being felt globally because of the tariffs,



Bangladesh Denim Expo, which is showcasing products from 60 companies across 15 countries at the International Convention City Bashundhara, will come to a close today.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Israel-Palestine conflict, he said.

Hayit said Resas Chemie, which produces its products in Turkey, is building a textile chemical manufacturing plant in the Jamalpur Economic Zone.

Mohammad Ziaur Rahman, managing director of Resas Chemie Bangladesh Ltd, said they currently sell \$24 million worth of chemicals in Bangladesh each year and are aiming to reach \$35 million by the end of next year. "The market is tight now," he added.

B Hande Yildirim, sales chief of Turkish denim

fabric supplier Bossa, said her company plans to set up a denim mill in Bangladesh in the future.

At present, Bossa exports about 3 percent of its four million metres of monthly fabric output to Bangladesh.

Currently, Bossa's performance here is not as good as before, said Yildirim, who has been supplying denim fabrics to Bangladesh for the past 15 years.

Stephen Hill, manager (supply chain initiatives) at Australian wool fibre supplier Woolmark, said his company has been training 60,000 farmers

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Tobacco farming on cropland deepens food security risks

Experts say

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Tobacco use and farming are rising nationwide, replacing food crops and deepening the food security crisis, experts said at an event.

Without urgent amendments to the tobacco control law, both tobacco consumption and cultivation may spiral, threatening the country's future food supply, they said.

A strong tobacco control law not only effectively regulates tobacco use but also plays a role in controlling tobacco cultivation, the experts also said.

The Bureau of Economic Research (BER), the Bangladesh Agricultural Journalists Forum (BAJF), and the Bangladesh Network for Tobacco Tax Policy (BNITTP) jointly organised the seminar at the University of Dhaka yesterday.

Syed Mahbubul Alam, a public health and environment policy expert, said the government acts arbitrarily when it comes to increasing food prices but hesitates and delays when it comes to raising the prices and tax rates of tobacco products.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, tobacco cultivation in the country has increased more than ever before, and a multinational tobacco company has recently been permitted to produce nicotine pouches—an act that contradicts a High Court order.

He warned that this decision could have dire

READ MORE ON B2

Pubali Bank signs deal with Visa Worldwide

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Pubali Bank PLC has recently signed an agreement with global digital payment solutions provider Visa Worldwide Pte Ltd to launch promotional and marketing activities and various incentive programmes for Visa card and point of sale (POS) acquiring business by the bank.

Mohammad Ali, managing director and chief executive officer of Pubali Bank PLC, and Sabbir Ahmed, country manager for Bangladesh at Visa, signed the agreement at the bank's head office in Dhaka, according to a press release.

Md Shahnewaz Khan, deputy managing director of Pubali Bank PLC, and Arifur Rahman, director of Visa for South Asia, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, attended the programme.

Endra Mohan Sutradhar, general manager, chief technology officer, and head of the software development division; Md Helal Uddin, general manager and head of the ICT operation division; Ashim Kumar Roy, general manager and head of the card operation division; and Mohammad Liton Miah, general manager, chief financial officer, and head of the central accounts division, were present.

Md Rabiul Alam, deputy general manager and head of the ADC division; NM Firoz Kamal, deputy general manager and head of the card business division; Md Shamsul Alam, assistant general manager of the ADC division; and Md Sayeed Ahmmed, assistant general manager of the ADC division, along with other senior officials from both organisations, were also present.



Sabbir Ahmed, country manager for Bangladesh at Visa, and Mohammad Ali, managing director and chief executive officer of Pubali Bank PLC, pose for photographs after signing the agreement at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

OpenAI signs \$38b deal with Amazon's AWS

AFP, Washington

ChatGPT-maker OpenAI signed a \$38 billion deal Monday with Amazon's AWS cloud computing arm, as the artificial intelligence company continues on a major partnership spree that has also included Oracle, Broadcom, AMD and chip-making juggernaut Nvidia.

Under the seven-year agreement, OpenAI, which is partly owned by AWS's archrival Microsoft, will gain access to computing resources including hundreds of thousands of state-of-the-art Nvidia GPUs, the crucial component of the generative artificial intelligence revolution.

The deal, which will grow over its multi-year term, will also give access to tens of millions of more conventional CPUs that will be used for the everyday deployment of so-called agentic AI.

"Scaling frontier AI requires massive, reliable compute," said OpenAI co-founder and CEO Sam Altman in a joint statement. "Our partnership with AWS strengthens the broad compute ecosystem that will power this next era and bring advanced AI to everyone."

OpenAI will immediately begin utilizing AWS computing, with all capacity targeted to be used before the end of 2026, and the ability to expand further in the coming years. By some estimates, OpenAI has inked approximately \$1 trillion worth of infrastructure deals in 2025, including a \$300 billion Oracle deal and a \$500 billion Stargate project with Oracle and SoftBank.

The massive infrastructure spending comes as revenues in 2025 are expected to be in the tens of billions this year, a very high figure for a startup, but far from the amount needed to recoup the costs of computing needed to power OpenAI's powerful chatbots.

The deal was the first one since OpenAI formalized its new structure, in which the company has a freer hand to move away from its non-profit origins and deliver profits for its investors.

The partnership with AWS builds on existing collaboration between the companies, with OpenAI's more open-source models already available on Amazon servers.

BRAC Bank, MetLife partner to enable seamless payments across all channels



Ala Ahmad, chief executive officer of MetLife Bangladesh, and Tareq Refat Ullah Khan, managing director and CEO of BRAC Bank PLC, pose for photographs after signing an agreement in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: BRAC BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

BRAC Bank PLC has entered into a strategic partnership agreement with MetLife Bangladesh to simplify and streamline insurance premium payments for MetLife policyholders across both digital and physical banking channels.

Through this collaboration, MetLife customers will be able to pay their premiums via BRAC Bank's branches, sub-branches, agent banking outlets, ASTHA internet banking, payment gateways, ATMs/CDMs, and through direct debit instructions.

The integration is enabled by real-time API connectivity between the two institutions, ensuring instant payment reflection, faster reconciliation, and enhanced operational transparency, according to a press release.

Tareq Refat Ullah Khan, managing director and CEO of BRAC Bank PLC, and Ala Ahmad, chief executive officer of MetLife Bangladesh, signed an agreement in this regard at a ceremony held in Dhaka recently.

Khan said, "This partnership reaffirms BRAC Bank's commitment to advancing digital financial solutions and driving ecosystem interoperability."

NRBC Bank unveils 'Sustainability Report-2024'

STAR BUSINESS DESK

NRBC Bank PLC yesterday published its first-ever "Sustainability Report-2024", focusing on sustainable development, social responsibility, and environmentally friendly financing.

This year the report, prepared in line with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards, carries the theme "Inclusive Innovation, Green Tomorrow."

Md Touhidul Alam Khan, managing director and CEO of NRBC Bank PLC, unveiled the report as the chief guest at the bank's head office in Dhaka.

During the event, Khan said the publication of the sustainability report under the GRI guidelines reflects NRBC Bank's long-term commitment to financial stability, environmental responsibility, and social justice.

He added that the bank would continue to expand financing in areas such as green banking, renewable energy, micro and social welfare sectors, and other environmentally friendly initiatives. NRBC Bank remains dedicated to building a livable Bangladesh and a better world for future generations.

According to the report, NRBC Bank conducts its banking activities by prioritising environmental protection, social development, and good governance.

In 2024, the bank achieved significant progress in green and sustainable financing.

Through investments in renewable energy, energy-efficient technologies, sustainable waste management, green buildings, and climate-resilient agricultural initiatives, NRBC Bank is directly contributing to farmers' welfare, national food security, and sustainable development.

The report further states that sustainable banking is synonymous with strong and innovative banking. The positive impact of NRBC Bank's eco-friendly initiatives will benefit customers, borrowers, and shareholders alike. Transparent and responsible banking

practices will enhance the importance of green financing projects. As a result, entrepreneurs will experience reduced long-term costs and increased profitability.

Depositors and shareholders can be assured that their funds and investments are not being used in environmentally harmful sectors.

Harunur Rashid, deputy managing director and chief financial officer of the bank, and Mohammad Abdul Qaium Khan, deputy managing director and chief operating officer, along with other members of the sustainability reporting committee, were also present.



Md Touhidul Alam Khan, managing director and CEO of NRBC Bank PLC, attends the launch of the bank's first-ever "Sustainability Report-2024" at its head office in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: NRBC BANK

Tobacco farming on cropland

FROM PAGE B1

consequences for public health and urged the government to withdraw it.

Professor Rumana Haque of the Department of Economics at the University of Dhaka said that the country must find a way out of tobacco cultivation.

"The first step is to urgently amend the tobacco control law," she said.

She also emphasised the need to reinstate the 25 percent export duty on tobacco leaves and tobacco products, noting that the health costs from tobacco-related diseases are more than double the revenue earned from tobacco.

Sushanta Sinha, a special

correspondent at Ekattor Television, claimed that tobacco companies are misleading the government with false information to block amendments to the tobacco control law and prevent tax increases.

He added that multinational tobacco companies are trying to portray price and tax hikes negatively by spreading stories of smuggling and showing reduced revenue to undermine the effectiveness of such measures.

Shahanuare Shaid Shahin, president of the BAJF, and Abu Khalid, general secretary of the organisation, also spoke at the event.

Global garment supply chain

FROM PAGE B1

to improve wool production as global demand for wool products continues to rise.

Hill added that wool is increasingly being used for garment manufacturing worldwide, including in denim products. Bangladesh's wool imports are also increasing, he said.

Bangladesh imported wool products, mainly yarn and fabrics, worth \$80 million in 2022, he said.

Sana Arshad, deputy general manager of Pakistani denim fabric

supplier Azgard Nine Limited, said her company is performing well with its existing customers in Bangladesh, but new customer acquisition remains limited.

Her company currently ships 80,000 metres of denim fabrics a month to three or four companies in Bangladesh and expects to raise that volume to 400,000 metres in the near future.

"My market is expanding in Bangladesh. This market is fine for us, and we have been supplying denim fabrics here for the last eight to nine years," she said.

Zila Parishad, Pirojpur
www.zp.pirojpur.gov.bd
Date : 05.11.2025

e-Tender Notice: 03/2024-2025 (LTM)

Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement following works details are given below.

No	Package No	Tender ID No	Tender Last selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing & Opening (Date & Time)
1.	ZPP/REV/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-01	1161468	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
2.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-02	1161469	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
3.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-03	1161470	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
4.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-04	1161471	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
5.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-05	1161472	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
6.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-06	1161473	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
7.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-07	1161474	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
8.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-08	1161475	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
9.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-11	1161476	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
10.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-12	1161477	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
11.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-13	1161478	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
12.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-14	1161479	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
13.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-15	1161480	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
14.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-16	1161481	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
15.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-17	1161482	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
16.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-18	1161483	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
17.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-19	1161484	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
18.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-20	1161485	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
19.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-21	1161486	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
20.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-22	1161487	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
21.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-23	1161488	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
22.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-24	1161489	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
23.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-25	1161490	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
24.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-26	1161491	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
25.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-27	1161492	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
26.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-28	1161493	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
27.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-29	1161494	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00
28.	ZPP/ADP/LTM/T-02/2024-2025/P-30	1161495	19 Nov 2025, 17.00	20 Nov 2025, 14.00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to 06 November-2025, 09.00 AM. Further, information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). For any queries interested tendered are requested communicate with the undersigned during office hours.

(Sheikh Nurul Alam)
Chief Executive Officer (Acting)
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GOVT. OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (EED)
KURIGRAM.

Invitation for e-GP-Tender (LTM)

Tender Notice No: eGP-25/SHED/4931/Govt. Rep/Kur/2025-26

Memo No: XEN/EED/KUR/2025/4736 **Date: 04.11.2025**

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The Tender who have registered in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is eligible to participate in this Tender. The fees of downloading the e-Tender documents of following Packages from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branches up to the following date and time.

SL No.	Package No.	Name of Works & Location	Tender ID No.	Tender Document Last Selling	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	Exen/EED/Kur/Rev/SHED/4931/2024-25/20	Construction works of Internal Roads at Bhurungamari Pilot govt. high School under Bhurungamari Upazila, District Kurigram.	1160392	18-11-2025 Time 16:00	19-11-2025 Time 12:00
2.	Exen/EED/Kur/Rev/SHED/4931/2024-25/21	Repair & Renovation works of Model Building at Fulbari Joshimia Model Government High School under Fulbari Upazila, District- Kurigram.	1160393	18-11-2025 Time 16:00	19-11-2025 Time 12:00
3.	Exen/EED/Kur/Rev/SHED/4931/2024-25/22	Construction works of Internal Roads at Office of the Executive Engineer's under Sadar Upazilla, District Kurigram.	1160394	18-11-2025 Time 16:00	19-11-2025 Time 12:00
4.	Exen/EED/Kur/Rev/SHED/4931/2024-25/23	Repair & Renovation works of the Teacher's Auditorium at Thanahat A. U. Pilot govt. high School under Chilmari Upazila, District Kurigram.	1160395	18-11-2025 Time 16:00	19-11-2025 Time 12:00

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Abu Taher)
Executive Engineer (C.C.)

Chinese drone maker plans \$3.5m factory at Bepza EZ

STAR BUSINESS DESK

AeroSynth Limited, a company based in China, has announced plans to invest \$3.5 million to set up a drone manufacturing factory in the Bepza Economic Zone at Mirsharai, Chattogram.

The company plans to produce around 150,000 drones annually, including those meant to be children's toys, for fishing, and for lightweight product delivery. The project will create employment opportunities for 70 people, according to a press release.

Md Ashraf Kabir, member (investment promotion) of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), and Hu Dandan, an authorised representative of AeroSynth Limited, signed an agreement in this regard at the Bepza Complex in Dhaka yesterday.

Maj Gen Mohammad Moazzem Hossain, executive chairman of Bepza, thanked AeroSynth Limited for

choosing the Bepza Economic Zone to make the investment in the high-tech venture.

He reaffirmed Bepza's commitment to provide round-the-clock support to ensure smooth business operations.

This will be the second drone manufacturing project at the Bepza Economic Zone.

The first project, which is already under implementation, focuses on producing drones for spraying agricultural pesticides, firefighting, emergency rescue, product delivery, cinematography, and mapping.

As of September, six companies have started manufacturing and exporting goods from the Bepza Economic Zone.

These operational industries have created jobs for nearly 4,000 workers and exported goods worth around \$19.92 million.

Several more companies are preparing to initiate production processes soon, the press release added.

New system to block illegal phones won't trouble users

NEIR will protect consumers and legitimate businesses, industry owners say

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The implementation of the National Equipment Identity Register (NEIR) will prevent illegally imported or unregistered mobile phones from being used in the country, industry representatives said yesterday.

The new system, slated to be rolled out on December 16, will protect consumers and legitimate businesses rather than inconvenience them, members of the Mobile Phone Industry Owners' Association of Bangladesh (MIOB) said at a press briefing.

The launch of NEIR by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) will finally bring order to a market long plagued by the dominance of illegal or "gray" handsets, which MIOB said account for nearly 60 percent of all phones in use.

By blocking illegal or unregistered devices from functioning on local networks, NEIR will help secure investments of over Tk 2,500 crore made by 17 local and foreign handset manufacturers and protect more than 1 lakh jobs

across the industry, the association also said.

They added that curbing gray phones will also ensure billions of taka in government revenue and restore fair competition for both importers and local manufacturers.

MIOB leaders dismissed what they described as "attempts by unscrupulous business groups" or "luggage parties" to spread confusion about the new system.

"These groups have built a parallel business of stolen, counterfeit, and refurbished handsets that evade taxes and cheat customers," the association said, adding that the BTRC has taken steps to make NEIR user-friendly and ensure that no consumer faces harassment.

The association further noted that VAT and tax exemptions given to domestic producers are standard industrial incentives seen in developing economies to encourage local manufacturing.

However, they urged the government to consider a more balanced tax structure to sustain both importers and local manufacturers. Locally produced handsets remain more

affordable despite rising dollar and component prices, the association said, crediting manufacturers' efficiency and cost-control measures. In contrast, gray phones appear cheaper only because they evade taxes and lack warranty, software support, and safety assurances.

MIOB emphasised that NEIR will empower consumers by enabling them to verify a phone's legality, receive proper warranty and after-sales support, and enjoy enhanced data security.

"Doing business legally is not just a legal duty; it's a moral responsibility," the association said, calling on all stakeholders to reject rumour-mongering and support NEIR for the sake of fair competition and national interest.

Jakaria Shahid, president of MIOB; Rezwanul Haque, vice president; Syfuddin Tipu, executive director of Excel Telecom; Mohammad Zahurul Islam, managing director of Smart Hi-Tech Industries Ltd; Imam Uddin, representative of Vivo; and Rahul Kapuria, organising secretary of the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Distributor Association, were present at the event.

Make stock market efficient to cut reliance on bank funds: experts



Participants at a discussion titled "Bridging the Gap - Transitioning from Bank Finance to Capital Market Finance" organised jointly by The Daily Star and IDLC Investments at the newspaper's office yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

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Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, managing director of IDLC Investments, highlighted the structural imbalance caused by over-reliance on bank loans.

"Bangladesh's rapid economic growth has largely been bank-financed. This over-reliance on bank loans created a structural imbalance, where long-term investments are met through short-term deposit-based funding," he said.

He said globally, emerging economies have market capitalisation-to-GDP ratios of 50 percent to 70 percent, while developed markets often exceed 100 percent.

The ratio is over 100 percent in India, around 51 percent in Vietnam, but only 7 percent in Bangladesh.

"This low ratio shows corporates depend heavily on bank loans, creating systemic vulnerabilities like rising non-performing loans, governance issues, and asset-liability mismatches," he added.

Despite the cost of capital market funding being very low, he said, corporates avoid the market due

to poor valuation and lengthy IPO processes.

"To bridge this financing gap, Bangladesh must energise its capital market through high-quality listings from large private and public enterprises, simplified processes and credible incentives for new issuances, a vibrant corporate bond market, and restored investor confidence with enhanced transparency and governance," he added.

Mazeda Khatun, president of the Bangladesh Merchant Bankers Association, noted that the market has not seen a single IPO in the last year, meaning nearly 60 merchant banks are now hungry for work.

She suggested using these entities for advisory services, such as ongoing mergers and acquisitions of banks.

She also said, "The government should plan in the national budget how to raise funds through the issuance of bonds and state-run firms' equity."

Meanwhile, Reza Uddin Ahmed, executive director of City Group, announced that the conglomerate is preparing to get listed on the stock market.

"We are reorganising our board, preparing quarterly reports, and ensuring proper auditing and other things needed to meet regulatory requirements," he said.

Shahidul Islam, former president of CFA Society Bangladesh, warned that the stock market has only 25-30 investable companies, while the rest cannot even borrow from banks because of their poor balance sheets.

"How can investors invest in these companies? Reliability in financial reports and proper enforcement must be ensured," he said.

Sabbir Ahmed, FCA and partner at Hoda Vasi Chowdhury & Co, stated that some companies occasionally fabricate financial reports, and that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh is taking action against auditors involved in such fabrication.

He also highlighted that compliant companies often face high effective tax rates, which should be addressed.

He questioned the state of enforcement, asking how Beximco Ltd was allowed to issue a Tk 3,000 crore sukuk despite having defaulted on a debenture in the 1990s.

BGMEA urges govt to sign trade deals

FROM PAGE B1

industrial growth and diversification into value-added products, and the possible effects of the evolving global economic landscape.

The BGMEA leaders highlighted the industry's contribution to the national economy and shared insights into various aspects of the sector, according to a statement from the association.

They outlined the industry's strategic vision, noting that it is transitioning from a labour-intensive model to a higher-value model driven by innovation, value addition, and technological advancement.

As part of this transformation, the industry is focusing on expanding its capacity in man-made fibre and technical textile-based apparel, as well as improving workers' skills.

Both parties also discussed measures to reduce the cost of doing business and improve the ease of doing business in Bangladesh, the BGMEA statement added.

US factory activity shrinks in October

AFP, Washington

Economic activity in the US manufacturing sector contracted at a faster rate in October, survey data showed Monday, as demand and output both remained weak.

The Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) manufacturing index came in at 48.7 percent, down slightly from September's 49.1 percent reading.

This figure has been below the 50-percent reading that would indicate growth in the sector for eight straight months now.

"In October, US manufacturing activity contracted at a faster rate, with contractions in production and inventories leading to the 0.4-percentage point decrease," said ISM survey chair Susan Spence in a statement.

She noted that while all four of the demand indicators — new orders, new export orders, backlogs and customers' inventories — showed improvements, they remained in contraction territory overall.

Meanwhile, "production

deteriorated and employment contracted at a slower pace," she added. A majority of panelists indicated that managing headcount is still the norm at companies, rather than hiring.

Spence also noted that 58 percent of the manufacturing economy's gross domestic product (GDP) contracted in October.

While this was a smaller proportion than in September, the percent of GDP in "strong contraction" was significantly higher, said Spence.

"Business continues to remain difficult, as customers are cancelling and reducing orders due to uncertainty in the global economic environment and regarding the ever-changing tariff landscape," said a respondent in the chemical products sector.

Another respondent, in the machinery industry, added: "Tariffs continue to be a large impact to our business. The products we import are not readily manufactured in the US, so attempts to reshore have been unsuccessful."

Inflation eases slightly

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Hussain said the key reason for the decline is the unusually high base from October last year. Food inflation then stood at 12.66 percent due to floods and political disruptions that destabilised supply chains.

"When this year's prices are compared with that elevated benchmark, the year-on-year rate appears lower even though prices are still rising," said the economist.

According to him, the base effect is evident in the data.

Food prices rose 2.7 percent between September and October 2025, yet the annual inflation rate fell. "That looks like a paradox," Hussain said.

Despite a sharp monthly increase, the annual figure appears subdued because last year's index was so high. The same dynamic applies to the overall price level, which rose 1.89 percent in October. If this pace continued, the annual inflation rate would exceed 25 percent, he said.

Hussain said non-food inflation tells a similar story, but in reverse.

It stood at 9.34 percent in October 2024 and 9.13 percent this year. Because last year's base was relatively

low, even small monthly increases now look larger in annual terms, he commented.

In rural areas, non-food inflation remained steady, while urban areas saw a slight rise.

Both food and non-food components recorded strong month-on-month growth, reinforcing the view that price pressures remain high. "This is not to say the data is wrong; the numbers are accurate. The trick lies in how we interpret them," Hussain said.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Lutfor Rahman, an economics professor at Jahangirnagar University, said the rise in non-food inflation is largely driven by higher transport and housing costs.

"Commuting expenses from regular school trips to office travel have gone up as rickshaw pullers and CNG drivers adjust fares immediately to keep pace with rising living costs," he said.

"House rent has also increased across the country, especially in urban areas like Dhaka. Transport and rent are the major contributors to the surge in non-food inflation," said Prof Rahman.

October also marked the 45th consecutive month in which wage growth has failed to keep pace with price increases. Wage growth has declined for three months in a row, reaching 8.01 percent last month.

Prof Rahman said the government needs to monitor these areas closely, especially as wages fall despite rising costs.

"It is quite alarming. Most private investors are following a 'wait-and-see' policy amid political uncertainty. They are not ready to take new investment risks until the situation becomes clearer," he said.

"As investment slows, the labour force keeps expanding, but demand for labour has not increased. Naturally, wages remain flat," he added.

"When wages do not rise, low-income workers struggle to meet even their basic nutritional needs," Prof Rahman said, adding that this could have longer-term consequences for productivity.

"If daily wage earners cannot afford proper nutrition now, their productivity will fall, and even when the economy recovers, it may not return to the desired level," he said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA)
New Airport Road, Banani, Dhaka-1212
Invitation for Tender (IFT)

1	Ministry/Division	Road Transport and Highways Division
2	Agency	Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA)
3	Procuring Entity Name	Director (Operation)
4	Invitation for	Procurement of Nineteen (19) number of rental microbus services for BRTA Mobile Court.
5	Invitation Ref No and date	35.03.0000.001.07.041.23-2379 Date: 05.11.2025
KEY INFORMATION		OTM (National)
FUNDING INFORMATION		Operational/ GOB
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
8	Tender Package No.	BRTA(A)-S-01
9	Tender Package Name	Procurement of Nineteen (19) Number of rental Microbus Services including driver, fuel & Others for 01 (One) Year.
10	Tender Publication Date	06 November 2025
11	Tender Last Selling Date	19 November 2025 Up to 4:00PM
		Date Time
12	Tender Closing Date and Time	20 November 2025 14:00 BST
13	Tender Opening Date and Time	20 November 2025 14:30 BST
14	Name & Address of the office(s)	Address
	-Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Accounts Officer, Account Section, BRTA HQ, BRTA Bhaban, 6 th Floor, North Block, Banani, Dhaka-1212
NO CONDITIONS APPLY FOR SALE, PURCHASE OR DISTRIBUTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS		
	-Receiving Tender Document	Director (Administration), BRTA HQ, BRTA Bhaban, 6 th Floor (Room-701), South Block, Banani, Dhaka-1212
	-Opening Tender Document	Deputy Director (Administration), BRTA HQ, BRTA Bhaban, 6 th Floor (Room-702), North Block, Banani, Dhaka-1212
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER		
15	Eligibility of Tenderer	a) The minimum number of years of general experience of the Tenderer in contracting industries in public sector as Prime Contractor/Sub Contractor/Management Contractor shall be Five (05) years. Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper. b) The minimum specific experience as a Prime Contractor for public sector in providing non-Consultant Service of at least TWO (02) contracts of similar nature, complexity and methods/technology completed over a period of Five (05) years, sum of these contracts with a value of at least of Tk 2.5 Crore (two crore fifty lac) shall be required. Contract for providing Service will be treated as similar nature. c) Others are as described in tender document.
16	Brief Description of Services	Procurement of Nineteen (19) Number of rental Microbus Services including driver, fuel & Others for 01 (One) Year at B RTA HQ (10), BRTA Chittagong (03), Rajshahi(01), Khulna(01), Sylhet(01), Barisal(01), Rangpur(01) and Mymensingh(01) Divisional offices.
17	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	Tk. 2,000/- (Two Thousand) only to be deposited in favor of Chairman, BRTA in Bangladesh Bank through Treasury chalan in the code: 1500301132187-1422328
18	Tender Security Amount (Tk)	Tk. 95,000/- (Ninety five thousand) only
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
19	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Najnin Hossain
20	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Director (Administration), A.C
21	Address of Official Inviting Tender	BRTA HQ, BRTA Bhaban, 6 th Floor (Room-701), South Block, Banani, Dhaka-1212
22	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel. No. +88041082996, e-mail: da@bta.gov.bd
23	The Purchaser reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the Tender proceedings at any time.	

Director (Administration)
Phone: +88-02-41082996

GD-2347

No licence for travel agencies without full local ownership

Tourism ministry proposes in draft amendment as Bida calls move not justifiable

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has proposed that travel agencies must have 100 percent local ownership to get a licence.

The draft amendment to the Bangladesh Travel Agency Registration and Control Ordinance says that the changes are needed "to prevent customer harassment on online and offline platforms" and "to ensure good governance in air travel".

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has published the draft online and allowed seven days for public feedback.

The ministry says the proposals have been prepared in line with opinions received at discussions of the relevant committee and by reviewing laws in other countries.

But, the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida) argued in its recommendation to the draft that "it is difficult to justify the draft" as the existing 2013 law already covers relevant matters.

Under current rules, an applicant for a travel agency licence must be a Bangladeshi citizen.

Bida, which operates under the Chief Adviser's Office, said this Bangladeshi citizen requirement discourages foreign and joint venture investment in the travel industry, which in turn deprives customers of competitive services.

Rather than insisting on full local ownership, it recommended removing the citizenship requirement and replacing it with a condition that the company must be registered in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, leading travel agencies with foreign investment have also criticised the proposed draft.

"Restricting foreign participation now would roll back progress and dampen innovation across multiple sectors related to tourism," said Ridwan Hafiz, managing director of GoZayaan Ltd, a travel tech firm.

He said startups such as GoZayaan and ShareTrip have attracted more than \$20

Sadia Haque, co-founder and chief executive officer of ShareTrip, also opposed the draft, calling it a setback for Bangladesh's vision of a technology-driven and globally competitive economy.

She said the draft goes against

send discouraging signals to both local entrepreneurs and international investors, damage confidence and undermine Bangladesh's reputation as a digital economy.

"Such restrictions could curb growth in the travel and startup sectors," which she said have become

POLICY PROVISIONS
Draft policy mandates 100% local ownership in travel firms
Bida, however, recommends allowing foreign investment in travel

REACTION
Leaders warn move could undo years of progress
Restrictions could isolate sector from partnerships

INDUSTRY CONTEXT
Startups like GoZayaan, ShareTrip drew global capital
Sector valued at \$2.5b-\$3b

POTENTIAL IMPACT
Policy may hinder tech advancement and efficiency
Ripple effect feared across fintech, e-commerce
Growth, jobs, and innovation may decline

million in foreign direct investment from Singapore, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom so far.

This funding brought capital, global expertise, innovation and jobs, he said, adding that foreign investment helped modernise the travel industry and enabled local firms to compete globally.

"Now, if foreign ownership is banned and industries suffer under restrictive rules, can Bangladesh truly expect foreign investment to return, or are we closing the doors to our own future growth?" he questioned.

national goals to attract investment and support innovation.

"The travel industry is far from a small, cottage sector," she said. "This is a \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion industry that significantly contributes to national revenue, employment, and global connectivity."

Haque said the sector is not listed as a protected industry under Bangladeshi law and cited Bida recommendation to encourage rather than restrict foreign investment.

She said the amendments could

major drivers of innovation and economic development.

In the recommendation, Bida also noted that as Bangladesh prepares to graduate from least developed country status in November 2026, sector-specific trade barriers should be lifted and conflicting provisions between local and foreign investment laws should be repealed.

Regarding the draft amendment, The Daily Star approached two senior officials at the tourism ministry. But they did not respond to calls or messages.

The automation paradox

PARVEZ MURSHED

If you walk into a McDonald's in Singapore or Hong Kong, you can place your order through digital touchscreens and make payments through the POS machines attached to them. A few years ago, there were three or four cash counters. Today, most restaurants have only one. At Uniqlo Singapore, you can place your clothes in a basket next to the screen, the system scans the barcodes, displays the total amount due, and you can check out through the POS without speaking to anyone. Grocery stores in Singapore adopted self-checkout counters years ago.

Recently, Swapno introduced self-checkout at selected outlets in Dhaka. In countries like Singapore, South Korea and Japan, where population growth is zero or negative, automation has become the way forward. It addresses labour shortages and reduces costs. In advanced economies, many do not want to do these repetitive jobs, and it is difficult to recruit foreign workers, train them and familiarise them with local culture.

While automation makes sense in many East Asian countries, is it the way forward for us in a country with high unemployment and a growing young population?

We can delay technology adoption, but we cannot stop the inevitable. In our childhood, typists outside the High Court and in offices made a living by typing documents.

That profession disappeared with the arrival of word processors and then PCs and laptops. We became our own typists.

Today, with robots able to clean floors, take orders at restaurants and perform security duties, the question is what will happen to the thousands of jobs at the bottom of the pyramid. Even gig economy work, like food delivery, could be taken over by drones. The garment industry is moving towards automation and 3D printing, which could make thousands of jobs redundant and lead to social unrest. Driverless cars could soon make the role of drivers obsolete.

Human nature tends to seek comfort and resist change. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and hope that automation will pass us by. It will affect us in more profound ways than we imagine. We must prepare our current and future workforce for this shift.

First, we need to change the mindset that education ends at graduation. Learning and skills training must continue throughout professional life, whether through self-learning or institutional programmes.

Second, our education curriculum needs a significant transformation, with a greater focus on skills and technology. Students should be prepared for the jobs of the future, which will demand training in areas such as Agentic AI, robotics and cyber security. There will also be high demand for nursing and primary health care due to ageing populations, especially in overseas markets like East Asia.

We must prepare the next generation not just to survive the automation wave but to navigate it wisely and seize opportunities in the new economy. This will promote social justice, support social mobility and help us make full use of the rare population dividend we currently enjoy in Bangladesh.

The writer is former regional head of supply chain finance at Citibank, NA, and former head of product and platform solutions at TASConnect, a Standard Chartered Ventures portfolio company



China bans foreign AI chips from state-funded data centres

REUTERS

The Chinese government has issued guidance requiring new data centre projects that have received any state funds to only use domestically-made artificial intelligence chips, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

In recent weeks, Chinese regulatory authorities have ordered such data centres that are less than 30 percent complete to remove all installed foreign chips, or cancel plans to purchase them, while projects in a more advanced stage will be decided on a case-by-case basis, the sources said.

The move could represent one of China's most aggressive steps yet to eliminate foreign technology from its critical infrastructure amid a pause in trade hostilities between Washington and Beijing, and achieve its quest for AI chip self-sufficiency.

China's access to advanced AI chips, including those made by Nvidia, has been a key point of friction with the US, as the two wrestle for dominance in high-end computing power and AI.

US President Donald Trump said in an interview aired on Sunday following talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week that Washington will "let them deal with Nvidia but not in terms of the most advanced" chips.

The move could represent one of China's most aggressive steps yet to eliminate foreign technology from its critical infrastructure

The latest move by Beijing, however, would dash Nvidia's hopes of regaining Chinese market share, while giving local rivals, including Huawei, yet another opportunity to secure more chip sales.

It is unclear whether the guidance applies nationwide or only to certain provinces, sources said. The sources did not identify which Chinese regulatory bodies had issued the order. They declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

Besides Nvidia, other foreign chipmakers that sell data centre chips to China include AMD and Intel.

The Cyberspace Administration of China and the National Development and Reform Commission, two of Beijing's most powerful regulators, did not respond to requests for comment. Nvidia and AMD did not respond, while Intel declined to comment.

AI data centre projects in China have drawn over \$100 billion in state funding since 2021, according to a Reuters review of government tenders. Most data centres in China have received some form of state funding to aid their construction, but it is not immediately clear how many projects are subject to the new guidance.

Some projects have already been suspended before breaking ground as a result of the directive, including a facility in a northwestern province that had planned to deploy Nvidia chips, one of the sources said.

The project, being developed by a private technology company that received state funding, has been put on hold, the source said.



Gold rebounds from one-week low

REUTERS

Gold prices rose on Wednesday, as bargain hunters stepped in after bullion dropped to a near one-week low in the previous session, while focus was also on the US private payroll data for cues on future interest rate cuts.

Spot gold rose 0.9 percent to \$3,966.65 per ounce by 0713 GMT. Bullion fell more than 1.5 percent on Tuesday, hitting its lowest since October 30.

US gold futures for December delivery rose 0.4 percent to \$3,975.30 per ounce.

The dollar held just under three-month highs touched in the previous session.

"It's just bargain-buying and broader risk-off sentiment across financial markets supporting safe-haven demand for gold," said Jigar Trivedi, a senior currency analyst at Reliance Securities.

Asian stocks extended an overnight selloff on Wall Street in early trading as investor concerns about stretched valuations sapped confidence.

Where things stand on China-US trade after Trump and Xi talk

AFP, Beijing

China and the United States have lowered the temperature in their spiralling trade war, bringing a precarious end to months of back-and-forth measures between the economic and technological powerhouses.

The detente -- reached at last week's meeting between presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping in South Korea -- marks a new phase in a fierce standoff that has rumbled since 2018.

Here are the main issues and where they now stand:

TARIFFS

Trump imposed tariffs on China during his first presidential term, decrying intellectual property theft and other "unfair" trade practices.

His successor, Joe Biden, largely maintained those duties and added to them in strategic technological sectors including electric vehicles and semiconductors.

At last week's meeting with Xi, Trump agreed to cut blanket tariffs on all Chinese goods by 10 percent from November 10 and approve separate one-year exemptions for

certain products.

Making the deal official, China said Wednesday it will extend a suspension of its own additional 24 percent tariff on US goods for one year, while also scrapping levies of up to 15 percent on various farm products from the country.

A 10 percent Chinese tariff on all US goods will remain in place, Beijing's finance ministry said.

The new arrangement brings total US tariffs on Chinese goods down to an average of about 45 percent -- still a hefty impediment to trade between the world's two largest economies.

FENTANYL

China is the primary origin of precursor chemicals used to make fentanyl, the highly potent opioid underpinning a deadly drug epidemic in the United States.

Beijing says it cracks down on illicit shipments, but trans-Pacific flows of the chemicals into the United States -- especially through Mexico -- have continued.

The 10 percent reduction in US tariffs, formalised Tuesday in an executive order, is an easing of the 20 percent fentanyl-related penalty imposed by Trump since March.

Trump previously said Xi assured him China will "work very hard to stop the flow".

RARE EARTHS

The presidents reached a tentative agreement for securing supplies of rare earths -- critical for the defence, automotive and consumer electronics sectors.

Their mining and processing are dominated by China.

Beijing's tightening control over their export this year has snarled supply chains and halted production in factories globally.

More sweeping measures introduced last month -- including restrictions on related technologies

-- provoked a furious response from Trump, who threatened blanket 100 percent tariffs on China in retaliation.

That move was averted, however.

After last week's meeting, the White House said China will issue export licences for rare earths, as well as gallium, germanium, antimony and graphite.

Confrontation over rare earths this year has spurred Washington and allies including Japan and Australia to shore up domestic production -- but experts say it could take years to reduce reliance on China.

EXPORT CONTROLS

Washington has agreed to suspend for one year its latest expansion of "Entity List" export restrictions on Chinese firms, originally imposed citing national security concerns.

But the United States has steadily expanded other export controls in recent years, particularly in advanced chips and digital infrastructure.

US officials remain concerned over the use of American technology by Chinese firms as competition heats up -- the rivalry likely to continue through coming years.

"The announced outcomes do little to resolve underlying structural issues

that are at the heart of (the) bilateral economic tensions," said Wendy Cutler, senior vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute, in a statement following the leaders' meeting.

SOYBEANS

Beijing has retaliated against the US tariffs with levies on American agricultural products, including soybeans, hurting a key source of Trump's political support: farmers.

More than half of US soybean exports went to China last year, but Beijing halted all orders as the trade dispute deepened.

The White House said China agreed to purchase at least 12 million metric tons of American soybeans in the last two months of 2025.

As expected following the meeting between Trump and Xi, Beijing announced Wednesday that it would suspend retaliatory tariffs on various US agricultural products, including soybeans.

But it remains to be seen if US farmers can regain lost market share.

TIKTOK

Washington has sought to wrest TikTok's US operations from Chinese parent company ByteDance, citing national security concerns.



People watch a news programme in Taipei on October 30 showing the meeting of US President Donald Trump and China's President Xi Jinping in South Korea. PHOTO: AFP