

Royal Enfield's Hunter 350 upgrade not coming soon

SUKANTA HALDER

Bad news for bikers. Fans of the Royal Enfield Hunter 350 will have to wait indefinitely for the updated 2025 version, as IFAD Motors, the authorised distributor and manufacturer of the two-wheeler in Bangladesh, is yet to complete the evaluation of the refreshed design.

"We are now carefully evaluating the right time to bring the new variant to Bangladesh. Our approach has always been to listen closely to our riders and align launches with what best suits local market conditions," Taskeen Ahmed, vice chairman of IFAD Group, told The Daily Star recently.

Ahmed said the Hunter 350 has been an incredible success story globally, and Bangladesh has been no exception. Among the four Royal Enfield models currently available in Bangladesh, the Hunter 350 is the most popular among young riders and also the most affordable.

It accounts for about 20 percent of the brand's 13,000 units sold within a year of its launch in the country.

"Riders have responded enthusiastically to its design, agility, and approachable riding experience. It has truly struck a chord with the new generation of motorcyclists," he added.

Royal Enfield entered the Bangladesh market in October last year through a partnership with IFAD Group, setting up a manufacturing and assembly plant in Cumilla. IFAD officials said they received nearly 3,000 purchase orders in the first 10 minutes of opening online and offline bookings. Since then, it has introduced the Classic 350, Bullet 350, Meteor 350, and Hunter 350.

The Hunter 350, first launched globally in 2022, attracted criticism over its harsh suspension and clutch, low lighting, low ground clearance, and other issues. The updated global version, launched this April, addressed these concerns by adding upgraded rear suspension, a slip-and-assist clutch, an LED headlamp, a Type-C USB port, and improved seating, along with new colour options.



IFAD Motors has sold 13,000 units of Royal Enfield bikes within a year of its launch in Bangladesh.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Many Bangladeshi fans had expected the refreshed model to arrive shortly after. Social media groups were abuzz for months with speculation that the bike would land within a couple of months. But IFAD has yet to announce anything regarding the launch, and the model remains available only in three colours – Rebel Red, Black, and Blue.

"When we introduced the Hunter in Bangladesh, the available colour options were carefully chosen to meet both local regulations and market preferences. A few earlier colour variants had to be held back

due to specific government implications," said Ahmed.

According to IFAD, of the total Royal Enfield motorcycles sold in Bangladesh so far, around half were Classic 350 units, while Meteor 350 and Bullet 350 each accounted for about 15 percent of sales. Most units were sold from showrooms in Dhaka, Chattogram, Narsingdi, Jashore, Khulna, Gazipur, and Mymensingh.

"We are delighted by the tremendous response Royal Enfield has received in Bangladesh since our entry into the market in 2024," Ahmed added.

"The demand for premium mid-size motorcycles is rising steadily, and we believe Royal Enfield, with its legacy and pure motorcycling ethos, is well-placed to lead this evolution."

Regarding the issue of higher fuel consumption compared to others available in the local market, he said that as Royal Enfield operates in the mid-size motorcycle segment, it naturally offers a different riding experience.

"We continue to focus on delivering the perfect balance of performance, reliability, and real-world riding economy," he added.

Trust beyond numbers

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

If you have ever seen a group photograph of professional accountants, you might notice something curious. Everyone looks serious, composed, almost expressionless. It is not that accountants dislike joy. They simply know that smiling in public can lead to someone asking for "just a quick look at my accounts", which is never quick, never simple and rarely free of emotional pain.

When you spend your life trying to reconcile numbers that refuse to match, smiling can become a high-risk activity. Especially when a CMO or CTO takes away more budget approval simply by flashing a smile.

Ahead of International Accounting Day on November 10, we are not just celebrating a profession; we are recognising a foundation of how economies uphold trust. In Bangladesh, where the economy has grown impressively, the importance of reliable financial reporting, strong governance and ethical corporate conduct has never been greater. Numbers are not abstract here. They shape investor confidence, creditworthiness, public spending and the credibility of national development.

Yet we must admit we are behind. Our professional accounting ecosystem has not grown at the pace of our economic ambition.

Bangladesh's GDP is among the fastest growing in Asia, but the capacity and enforcement of our financial governance are still developing. Countries such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and even Kenya have made significant progress by empowering both statutory and management accountants, expanding their pool of qualified professionals and ensuring trusted regulatory oversight. They understood that accountants are not just compliance officers. They are architects of financial discipline and strategic decision making.

In Bangladesh, tradition partly slowed progress. For decades, statutory auditing dominated under a single umbrella, while management accounting, the discipline that drives efficiency, productivity and internal governance, remained undervalued. As a result, many institutions operate with passion but lack data discipline. Meanwhile, only a fraction of the professional accountants needed for a trillion-dollar future economy are currently available. The shortage is real, and the demand will only grow.

Bangladesh does not need fewer accountants. It needs more across oversight, industry, advisory, public finance and corporate leadership. Statutory auditors ensure compliance, but management accountants strengthen systems, controls and value creation within institutions. One without the other is like a cricket team with only bowlers or only batsmen. Technically a team, but unlikely to win.

Let us accept reality. Our professional ecosystem has not matured to match the scale of our economy. Countries including Malaysia, Vietnam and Kenya have built strong financial reporting systems backed by empowered accounting bodies and rigorous regulatory oversight.

Regulators must keep evolving. The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) has already taken bold steps to enforce discipline and curb misleading reporting. The BSEC has tightened its scrutiny of listed companies. These actions should not be feared. They should be welcomed. Strong enforcement is not a threat to business. It is the foundation of sustainable business.

So today, let us celebrate the accountants who protect the integrity of our financial story. They may not smile often, but they stand between order and chaos. If Bangladesh is to reach its full economic potential, we must support them, increase their numbers and elevate their role.

And perhaps next International Accounting Day, we will see a few accountants smiling in the group photo. Not because the numbers magically balanced themselves, but because the nation finally understood the value of those who make sure they do.

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



China buys first US wheat cargoes since 2024

REUTERS, Singapore/Beijing

China has booked two cargoes of US wheat following last week's meeting between the countries' leaders, traders said on Thursday, the first such purchases since October last year, signalling easing trade tensions between Washington and Beijing.

Investors welcomed the meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping in South Korea, which helped ease concerns over the trade dispute between the world's two largest economies that had disrupted flows of goods including key agricultural products.

Beijing on Wednesday announced that from November 10 it would scrap tariffs that it had announced on March 4 for some US agricultural goods. The move includes removing a 15 percent duty on US wheat.

The purchases of around 120,000 metric tons for December shipment include one cargo of US soft white wheat and one of spring wheat, the sources said.

"This is more of China showing commitment to buy US grains as US wheat is not the cheapest wheat around," said one Singapore-based grains trader who has direct knowledge of these deals. "So it is more of political move to buy these cargoes."

China, the top market for US farmers, has turned its vast appetite for US crops into a powerful trade war bargaining chip.

OpenAI seeks govt backing to boost AI investments

AFP, San Francisco

ChatGPT creator OpenAI, the world's largest private company, is asking the US government to provide loan guarantees for its massive infrastructure expansion that will eventually cost more than \$1 trillion.

Speaking at a Wall Street Journal business conference, OpenAI CFO Sarah Friar explained that government backing could help attract the enormous investment needed for AI computing and infrastructure, given the uncertain lifespan of AI data centers.

"This is where we're looking for an ecosystem of banks, private equity, maybe even governmental," Friar said.

Federal loan guarantees would "really drop the cost of the financing," she explained, enabling OpenAI and its investors to borrow more money at lower rates to meet the company's ambitious targets.

The proposal – unusual for a

Silicon Valley tech giant – would theoretically reduce OpenAI's borrowing costs since the government would absorb losses if the company defaulted.

Such guarantees would also dramatically expand OpenAI's potential lender pool, as many

OpenAI CFO Sarah Friar explained that government backing could help attract the enormous investment needed for AI computing and infrastructure

banks and financial institutions face strict limits on high-risk lending.

OpenAI's request for government support comes amid a massive spending spree on computing infrastructure, raising questions about how the company will recoup these investments.

By some estimates, OpenAI has committed to approximately \$1 trillion in infrastructure deals this year alone, including a \$300 billion partnership with Oracle and a \$500 billion Stargate project with Oracle and SoftBank.

While the company expects revenues in the tens of billions this year – impressive for any startup – that figure falls far short of covering the computing costs required to power OpenAI's advanced chatbots.

During the interview, Friar dismissed reports that OpenAI plans to go public soon.

"IPO is not on the cards right now," she said, emphasizing that the company's current priority is growth.

Recent media reports had suggested OpenAI was preparing for a public offering after completing a complex governance restructuring that would allow the company to accept public shareholders on Wall Street.

Paris accord will defeat fossil fuels – eventually

REUTERS, Melbourne

The transition to green energy is messy, contradictory and too slow. It's roughly a decade since 195 countries struck the Paris Agreement, opens new tab at the United Nations's 21st Conference of the Parties (COP) in France, pledging to hold the average global temperature to "well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels".

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has effectively declared dead, opens new tab the more stretching goal of limiting the increase to 1.5 C. The climate denialism of US President Donald Trump is indeed impeding the fight. Yet, the future is brighter for renewables than it seems.

As delegates head to next week's COP30 summit in the Brazilian city of Belém, two conflicting accounts of the energy transition are true. For the first time, solar, wind and other renewable power is now generating more electricity globally than coal, per research outfit Ember.

Yet more of the carbon-heavy rock is being burned than at any point in history. It helps stoke the argument, popularised

by Daniel Yergin, author and founder of Cambridge Energy Research Associates that renewables are not replacing fossil fuels, but merely adding to the mix as energy use increases.

That story requires ignoring some basic facts. The process is called a transition for a reason: it takes time. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2018 report on how to limit the average global temperature rise to 1.5 C assumed that emissions wouldn't peak until this year in any event. On top of that, money talks.

The low-carbon economy will attract some \$2 trillion in investment globally this year, according to Aniket Shah, head of sustainability at Jefferies. He points out that number has grown more than fivefold since the Paris Agreement, and is roughly double what's heading to fossil fuel-related projects. More solar and wind energy is now being installed than was projected a decade ago by the IEA and others.

The trouble is, it's not enough: the planet is warming faster than scientists had expected, in part due to emissions increasing and in part due to knock-on effects

like reduced ice sheets meaning less solar radiation gets reflected back into space. Limiting the global average temperature rise to 2 C by hitting net zero emissions in 2060 – 10 years later than the stated goal – would require spending an average of \$4.3 trillion a year, estimate analysts at Wood Mackenzie.

The consulting firm reckons emissions may not now hit their peak until 2028 and will only decline 2 percent a year for a while afterwards. Based on decarbonisation plans submitted over the past year by 60 or so countries, the UN calculates that greenhouse gas pollution will only fall 10 percent

by 2035 from 2005 levels, compared with the required level of 60 percent as estimated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

There are plenty of reasons for the shortfall. But the person who made the most succinct explanation in a prescient speech, also a decade ago, was



Solar panels and wind turbines work in an integrated power station in Yancheng city, in Jiangsu province, of China.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

then governor of the Bank of England Mark Carney. He dubbed the problem the tragedy of the horizon, opens new tab, pointing out that the "catastrophic impacts of climate change will be felt beyond the traditional horizons of most actors," meaning business and political cycles as well as the remnants of agencies like central banks, and thus "imposing a cost on future generations that the current generation has no direct incentive to fix". So once global warming becomes a pressing financial problem, it may be too late to stop. Carney himself now arguably risks falling victim to his own prognostication. Since becoming prime minister of Canada in March, he has rolled back some of predecessor Justin Trudeau's climate-related initiatives, opens new tab and tried to improve relations with the country's fossil-fuel industry.

Going too slow is a big problem: it locks more carbon, methane and other planet-warming gases in the atmosphere, pushing up temperatures and increasing the likelihood and intensity of floods, droughts, wildfires and

the like. But global momentum is on decarbonisation's side. Renewables projects are now cheaper than their fossil fuel counterparts nine times out of 10, reckons Christina Figueres, who as executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change played a key role in COP21.

Assuming a 5 percent annual growth rate for clean energy – far slower than it has managed to date – renewables would effectively oust fossil fuels by 2065, calculates EcoPragma Capital co-Managing Partner Michael Liebreich. Granted, that would mean missing the 2050 net zero target by miles. And some sectors of the economy that are big emitters, like steel and cement production, remain in the very early stages of transitioning. But adoption, as Liebreich points out, is likely to go much faster than his deliberately understated model suggests.

Moreover, most places are not like Canada: 80 percent of people live in countries with limited or no local oil, coal or natural gas. Those states have an interest in reducing their dependence on dirty energy

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