



Tea shrubs share a patch for growing paddy in Panchagarh. Farmers in the northern region, which produces a large share of the country's rice, are shifting towards plainland tea cultivation as the climate suits it. The photo was taken recently.  
PHOTO: SUKANTA HALDER

## Gold falls as dollar firms

REUTERS

Gold prices dropped more than 1 percent on Thursday, pressured by a firm dollar and fading expectations of a Federal Reserve rate cut in December, as investors waited for a delayed US jobs report later in the day.

Spot gold was down 0.6 percent at \$4,055.20 per ounce at 1104 GMT, recovering some of its earlier 1 percent fall. US gold futures for December delivery fell 0.7 percent to \$4,053.80 per ounce.

The dollar index firmed near a two-week high, making gold more expensive for holders of other currencies.

"Dollar firmness is weighing on gold but the price chopiness is typical for this time of year where we have some good two-way trade with profit-taking and book squaring meeting early investments ahead of the new year," said independent analyst Ross Norman.

# Memory chip crunch set to drive up smartphone prices

AFP, Tokyo

Shoppers could face higher prices for phones, laptops and other gadgets next year, manufacturers and analysts warn, as AI data centres hoover up memory chips used in consumer electronics.

The world's biggest tech companies are ploughing head-spinningly huge sums into building the hardware that powers artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT.

Their insatiable demand is snarling up a supply chain kept tight on purpose by chipmakers who are keen to avoid price drops that dent profits, experts say.

In 2026, supply chain pressure for memory chips "will be far greater than this year", Lu Weibing, president of Chinese electronics giant Xiaomi, said this week.

"Everyone will likely observe that retail prices for products will see a significant increase," he told an earnings call.

William Keating, head of semiconductor and tech consulting firm Ingenuity, expects the same. "All companies that manufacture PCs, smartphones, servers etc will be impacted by the shortage," Keating told AFP.

"End result: consumers will pay more."

In high demand are key chips known as DRAM and storage components called NAND, which are found in everyday gadgets but are also needed to help process the vast amounts of data crunched by generative AI.

That's driving up memory chip prices, which in turn is turbocharging revenue for the firms that produce them such as South Korea's Samsung and SK hynix, and Micron and SanDisk in the United States.

"AI-related server demand keeps growing, and this demand significantly exceeds industry supply," Kim Jae-june of Samsung Electronics said last month.

Samsung said Sunday that it plans to build a new semiconductor plant in South Korea to meet the soaring demand, while SK hynix recently reported its best-ever quarterly performance, "driven by the full-scale rise in prices of DRAM and NAND".

Industry analysts TrendForce have lowered their 2026 global production forecasts for smartphones and notebook laptops.

"The memory industry has begun a robust upward pricing cycle," which "forces downstream brands to hike retail prices,"

TrendForce said.

Cars may also be affected, although Keating noted that a smaller portion of their tech relies on memory chips.

Last week China's largest contract chipmaker SMIC said customers were hesitant to place orders owing to uncertainty over how many phones, cars, or other products the memory chip industry can supply.

The cause of the shortage is two-fold.

AI-driven demand is greater than anticipated, but memory chip makers have also been "drastically cutting" spending on expanding capacity in recent years, Keating explained. "Keep capacity tight, keep prices high is basically their mantra," he said.

"They've done this deliberately to ensure that there's no repeat of the most recent memory price collapse, which cost the memory makers tens of billions in losses."

Price jumps for memory chips "are huge and the trend is continuing", said Stephen Wu, founder of the Carthage Capital investment fund.

"Consumers and enterprises should expect higher memory prices, longer lead times, and more take-or-pay contracts through at least early 2026," Wu said.

## BB branches stop selling savings certificates, prize bonds

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has discontinued the selling of national savings certificates, prize bonds, exchange of damaged notes, and automated chalan-related services from all its branches.

In a press release issued yesterday, the central bank said its branches in Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Bogura, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Barishal, and Rangpur will not provide the aforementioned services anymore from November 20.

It explained that no central bank in the world provides such services directly to the public.

As a Key Point Installation (KPI), Bangladesh Bank has decided to discontinue the services, it added.

For decades, people have availed these services at the central bank's Motijheel office and its branches across the country. They will now be handled entirely by commercial banks.

## Emirates wins 'Best Airline in the World' award

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Emirates has been voted the "Best Airline in the World" for the eighth consecutive year at the ULTRAs travel awards held in Dubai.

Based on votes from Ultratravel's global network of 1.2 million travellers, the UAE-based airline also won the award for "Airline with the Best Premium Economy Class", according to a press release.

Tim Clark, president of Emirates Airlines, received the "Lifetime Achievement Award for Services to Global Aviation" in recognition of his distinguished career, which began in 1972. He joined Emirates in 1985 and became its president in 2003. Under his leadership, Emirates grew from a modest operation into one of the world's largest international carriers. Clark was also recently honoured by the Wings Club Foundation with its prestigious Distinguished Achievement Award.

Considered among the most respected accolades in the travel industry, the ULTRAs are determined by votes from Ultratravel's global readership—affluent, frequent travellers who are expected to spend over \$1 billion on international travel in 2025.

The honour from Ultratravel also highlights Emirates' newest Premium Economy cabin, which has already garnered several global recognitions. Emirates Premium Economy is now available on flights between Dubai and 61 cities.

Emirates continues to earn global acclaim for its exceptional customer experience, extensive international network, and modern fleet. The airline is renowned for its world-class inflight offerings, including regionally inspired gourmet cuisine, an award-winning entertainment system, and luxurious premium cabins featuring private suites, onboard lounges, and shower spas.

## US trade deficit narrows sharply in August

REUTERS, Washington

The US trade deficit narrowed more than expected in August as businesses imported fewer goods against the backdrop of higher tariffs, a trend that if sustained could be a potential tailwind for economic growth in the third quarter.

But a drop in consumer goods imports to levels last seen early in the Covid-19 pandemic and a decline in capital goods imports, including computer accessories and telecommunications equipment reported by the Commerce Department on Wednesday, could signal slower consumer and business spending last quarter.

President Donald Trump has imposed sweeping tariffs on the nation's trade partners, accusing them of taking advantage of the United States. The US Supreme

Court early this month heard arguments on the legality of Trump's import duties, with justices raising doubts about his authority to impose tariffs under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

"The good news for trade and the US economy is the tariffs are working," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWD BOND. "The bad news for trade and the US economy is the tariffs are working. Markets and Federal Reserve officials will scramble to find which is true, but maybe both are."

The trade gap contracted 23.8 percent to \$59.6 billion, the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis and Census Bureau said on Wednesday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the trade deficit would ease to \$61.0 billion.

## New logistics policy

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It focuses on streamlining and harmonising laws, regulations, policies and procedures relating to trade, investment, customs and logistics.

By fostering a world class, investment friendly environment, it seeks to attract, retain and expand competitive domestic and foreign investment across logistics sub-sectors.

Ultimately, the policy seeks to improve Bangladesh's position in global logistics indicators and transform the economy into a regional logistics hub.

Speaking on the matter, Masrur Reaz, chairman of Policy Exchange of Bangladesh, said it is encouraging that the logistics policy has finally been activated through the release of the 2025 version.

"The policy is critical for addressing

weaknesses in the sector and building the capacity required to improve post-LDC export competitiveness and other pressures," he said.

Reaz noted that expanding port capacity, improving multimodal transport, enhancing storage facilities and strengthening logistics and shipping services should be key priorities. "From this perspective, the new policy sends a strong signal to global trade and investment partners."

However, he cautioned that issuing a policy is only a starting point, as Bangladesh's past record in implementation has not been satisfactory.

"The government must therefore focus on clear implementation arrangements, timelines, inter-agency coordination and effective monitoring to ensure the policy delivers tangible benefits for the economy," he said.

## NBR sets fees

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Bangladesh-Bhutan agreement. The NBR's move comes ahead of the scheduled visit of Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay to Dhaka. He is expected to arrive here with the aim of taking bilateral relations to a new level through enhanced connectivity, trade, and investment tomorrow.

The NBR has fixed the fees in line with the Customs Transit and Transshipment Rules, 2021, and in line with the bilateral agreement on the Movement of Traffic in-Transit and its Protocol, signed between Bangladesh and Bhutan.

Bangladesh and Bhutan signed the agreement in March 2023 in Thimphu, for establishing arrangements for multi-modal communication channels via road, waterways, railways, and airways between the two nations.

## NBR logs

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He said, "To strengthen revenue mobilisation, we must expand the tax net and ensure full end to end automation. Without true interoperability and automation, it will be extremely difficult to achieve the expected level of revenue collection."

Prof Eusuf said "We need a coordinated big push across the NBR, the private sector, bureaucracy, and other stakeholders. Without it, increasing fiscal space and addressing economic, social, and cultural rights will remain impossible."

A recent study by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said Bangladesh could collect taxes equal to 14 percent of its GDP, almost double the present rate of 6.6 percent.

Instead, the tax to GDP ratio has fallen, reflecting the country's heavy dependence on indirect taxes and limiting funds for essential services such as education and healthcare.

On Wednesday, NBR Chairman Md Abdur Rahman Khan said

HM Kabir, deputy commissioner of Chattogram Custom House, said they have already received instructions to collect the prescribed fees for the trial transshipment. "We will ensure that all charges are collected at the designated rates."

Earlier, the two countries renewed the agreement on the use of inland waterways between Bangladesh and Bhutan for five years until 2027. The deal was signed in 2017.

Bangladesh and Bhutan also implemented a preferential trade agreement (PTA) from July 2022 to boost bilateral trade by easing trade barriers between the two countries. Bhutan is the first country to sign a PTA with Bangladesh.

Under the agreement, Bangladesh gets duty benefit on the export of 100 local products and Bhutan enjoys duty benefit on its 34 products.

Bangladesh currently has 1.2 crore registered taxpayers. "But many more, especially those living in rural areas, must be brought into the formal system."

He said poorer people often shoulder a larger share of taxes, while large businesses and investors enjoy exemptions that skew the system. "This undermines fairness and limits our ability to expand direct taxation."

## ADP spending

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Among the top performers, the Ministry of Science and Technology used 22.85 percent of its allocation, followed by the Energy and Mineral Resources Division at 16.02 percent and the Bridges Division at 14.57 percent.

Health-related sectors, however, lagged far behind, with the Health Services Division implementing just 1.13 percent and the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division 1.61 percent.

## Revenue goal hiked

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Monetary Fund under its loan programme. Despite that backdrop, the NBR's new target for this fiscal year has been increased to Tk 503,000 crore, up by Tk 1,000 crore from the original.

An NBR official said collections from customs, income tax and VAT rose notably in the first quarter, prompting the upward revision. Overall, NBR's revenue collection grew by 20.3 percent during the period, compared with just 1.9 percent growth last year, while VAT and supplementary duty collections increased by more than 22 percent.

Two former NBR chairmen said tax collection could rise further if the capacity and focus of field-level officials were strengthened.

A senior NBR official, meanwhile, pointed to seven factors behind the increased target's achievability. Chief among them is making it mandatory for all individual taxpayers to submit income tax returns online.

The e-return system also enables automated data collection from various institutions through API links - a system that enables different databases to share information directly with the NBR. For instance, banks, employers, government agencies and utility service providers can transmit taxpayer information directly to the tax authority's server. Officials expect it to curb evasion and boost compliance.

The NBR has also introduced a medium- and long-term revenue strategy with several planned measures. To raise VAT receipts, the enlistment threshold has been reduced from Tk 50 lakh to Tk 30 lakh, and the registration threshold from Tk 3 crore to Tk 50 lakh. VAT on many items has been aligned at 15 percent.

Another important reform is the split of NBR into the Revenue Policy Division and the Revenue Administration Division through an ordinance. The government also adopted a Tax Expenditure Policy and Management Framework to rationalise exemptions and tighten tax expenditure controls.

Former NBR chairman Abdul Majid said the board should be given a higher target because "it has the

capacity to collect more revenue than it currently does".

With the election ahead, he said the NBR has increased scope to scrutinise candidates' declared assets against their tax records, which could uncover evasion.

He noted that a similar exercise during his tenure in 2008 resulted in significant collections, and questioned whether NBR has investigated the asset declarations and income tax files of those who participated in the 2024 election in the past one and a half years. "If that had been done, tax evasion could have been uncovered."

Regarding the new target, he added that post-election improvements in business confidence and investment are likely to support stronger revenue growth. However, former NBR chairman Nasiruddin Ahmed said achieving the hiked target will be challenging.

"I think setting the target through the Coordination Committee meeting will not work. NBR itself should analyse the country's economic situation and revenue collection trends and set its own target," he said.

He said officials should not rely solely on automated systems but strengthen field-level enforcement to raise collections. Though he acknowledged that full automation remains the most important step for sustainable revenue growth.

## BTRC inspection

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company's rollout, saying it complied fully with BTRC guidelines and that reported gaps largely relate to specific spots or buildings.

"Based on technical validation and supporting evidence, BTRC officially cleared our rollout obligations," he said.

He noted that the recent report appears to refer to specific spots or buildings. "As per regulations, operators are not obligated to ensure 4G coverage in every individual spot or structure. That said, we routinely carry out field visits and technical optimisation in such cases to enhance coverage."

The Daily Star approached Grameenphone for comment, but to no avail.