



Banking without **THE NOISE**

Premium banking is no longer just a velvet-rope experience for high-net-worth individuals. In Bangladesh, it has matured into a service segment where convenience, speed, and personal attention matter as much as wealth. As the country's urban centres expand and income levels rise, banks are rethinking what it means to deliver value, and customers are responding.

At its core, premium banking is about reducing friction. Clients receive dedicated relationship managers who understand their financial habits, anticipate needs, and serve as a single point of contact. Whether it's arranging a home loan, facilitating a foreign currency endorsement, or handling investment paperwork, the idea is simple: someone else takes care of the hassle.

Physical touchpoints still matter. Most banks now offer premium lounges across key branches, complete with express counters, privacy zones, and appointment-based service. For Bangladesh's time-poor professionals, this controlled environment can be a significant relief compared to traditional banking

halls. Add-on perks such as priority token queues, faster processing, or direct hotline support elevate the experience further.

The digital layer has become just as important. Mobile apps with advanced dashboards, integrated wealth tools, real-time portfolio tracking, and seamless fund transfers are increasingly standard. Many institutions, from private banks to NBFIs, are integrating lifestyle services too: airport meet-and-assist, insurance bundles, medical support, curated travel partnerships — value propositions borrowed from global premium banking playbooks.

But perhaps the strongest appeal of Bangladesh's premium banking is financial guidance. With more people seeking diversification beyond savings accounts — mutual funds, government securities, bonds, and even offshore exposure via regulatory channels — customers appreciate advisers who add clarity and caution. The relationship manager is no longer a service executive; they are part-navigator, part-curator.

As economic confidence continues to rise, premium banking is becoming less of a luxury and more of an expectation. For many, it represents a better-organised financial life: fewer lines, faster decisions, and access to products that actually make money work harder. In a city like Dhaka, where time is currency and trust is everything, this segment is set to grow even faster.

**Prime Bank**

**Priority
Banking**



Exclusivity Redefined for You

Dedicated
Relationship Manager

Centers for
Cozy Banking Services

Preferential Service
At Branches

Exclusive Welcome Gifts
Upon Joining Priority Banking

Exclusive Customer Events
Round the Year

**24/7 Helpline**
16218
primebank.com.bd

**Sign Language**
Video Call Service
013 211 16218
10 AM - 4 PM



M. NAZEEM A. CHOUDHURY
Deputy Managing Director
Prime Bank PLC.

“Prime Bank Priority Banking blends personalised wealth advisory, global travel benefits, and seamless digital convenience, thus creating a premium experience built on trust, exclusivity, and meaningful long-term relationships with our most valued clients.”

CRAFTED EXCELLENCE, THE PRIME WAY

Prime Bank PLC.

Prime Bank’s Priority Banking offers a distinguished, relationship-driven experience for affluent customers, combining tailored wealth solutions, concierge privileges, global travel benefits, and seamless digital services which is designed to deliver superior convenience, personalised advisory, and an elevated lifestyle across its nationwide premium network.

The Daily Star (TDS): How does Priority Banking differ from Prime Bank’s standard retail proposition? What is the current size of your premium client segment?

M. Nazeem A. Choudhury (MNAC): Priority Banking at Prime Bank PLC stands apart from the Bank’s standard retail proposition through its exclusive service model, preferential pricing and tailored eligibility criteria. While retail banking focuses on serving a broad customer base with standardized products, Priority Banking is designed specifically for high-net-worth individuals who require a more personalized and relationship-driven approach. Priority clients receive dedicated Relationship Managers, faster service channels, priority counters and access to exclusive lounges. They also enjoy preferential fees and charges across various banking products, enhanced transaction limits and customized wealth management solutions that are not available to general retail customers.

Eligibility for Priority Banking is based on maintaining a minimum relationship value and deposit threshold, ensuring the segment remains focused on premium customers with sophisticated financial needs. As of September 2025, Prime Bank’s Priority Banking segment comprises 6,508 clients, representing a strong and growing portfolio with total deposits amounting to BDT 6,194

crore, reflecting the Bank’s sustained leadership in the premium banking space.

TDS: What exact eligibility criteria, minimum balances or salary thresholds apply for Priority Banking membership?

MNAC: Priority Banking membership at Prime Bank PLC is offered to clients who maintain a substantial financial relationship with the Bank. The key eligibility criterion is a minimum deposit relationship of BDT 50 lakh and above, which may be held in the form of Savings, Current or Term Deposit accounts. This threshold ensures that Priority Banking remains dedicated to customers with higher financial portfolios who require enhanced services and personalized support. While there is no fixed salary requirement, clients meeting the minimum balance criteria automatically qualify for Priority status and gain access to exclusive benefits, preferential services and specialized financial advisory support tailored to their needs. Which credit/debit card tiers (e.g.: World/Platinum/Visa Signature) and card-linked benefits are central to your premium proposition, and what are the associated annual/visit limits?

TDS: Which credit/debit card tier and card-linked benefits are central to your premium proposition, and what are the associated annual/visit limits?

MNAC: Priority clients enjoy exclusive

access to a range of premium, pre-approved credit cards, including the World Mastercard, Visa Signature Zero and Platinum Credit Card, each designed to offer superior privileges and higher financial flexibility. In addition, Priority customers receive the World Mastercard Priority Debit Card, a multi-currency card equipped with LoungeKey access that allows six complimentary international airport lounge visits annually. The debit card also offers extensive lifestyle benefits, including BOGO offers at five-star hotels, attractive discounts at fine-dining restaurants, reputed hospitals and a wide range of lifestyle and retail outlets, ensuring an elevated banking and lifestyle experience.

TDS: What concierge, travel or lifestyle privileges are available to Priority clients?

MNAC: Priority clients are regarded as highly valued individuals and enjoy an extensive suite of exclusive concierge, travel and lifestyle privileges designed to offer comfort and convenience. These include airport pick-and-drop services, Meet & Greet assistance at Dhaka International Airport, dedicated Travel Assist support and help with arranging international doctor consultations and hospital appointments. To further enhance the experience, Prime Bank has a partnership with Sheba.xyz, enabling Priority clients to access a wide range of on-demand concierge services, from home maintenance

to personalized assistance. These curated privileges ensure seamless travel, premium lifestyle support and differentiated service for every Priority client. Also Mention tickets to global sporting events.

TDS: What preferential fees, rate concessions or waived charges are included for Priority clients compared with retail customers?

MNAC: In order to provide exceptional service and benefits to these clients, we offer preferential fees, rate concessions and waived charges as part of their priority banking packages. These include Account and Debit card charge exemptions, special rate on secured overdraft and even up to 100% waiver on certain types of loans. Additionally, priority banking clients may also receive special privileges such as 50% off on locker services and student file charges. These benefits aim to provide a seamless and hassle-free banking experience for priority banking clients, allowing them to focus on managing their finances and achieving their financial goals.

TDS: How is personalized relationship management integrated with your digital channels to ensure seamless, secure service?

MNAC: Through our My Prime app, our valued Priority Clients are able to access and utilize a range of services such as RTGS, NPSB, BEFTN, bills payment, fund transfer and many other services at their convenience.

PREMIUM BANKING

Plus

PREMIUM BANKING Plus

For the high-end premium customers

Eligibility

- Maintenance of BDT 3 Crore in Current, Savings (CASA) and/or any Fixed Deposit offered by our Bank.

Banking Benefits

- Exclusive Visa Signature Multi-Currency Debit Card
- Double reward points
- Higher cash withdrawal limit of BDT 8 Lacs daily

Travel & Health

- Airport Meet & Greet and Airport Pick & Drop Service
- Complimentary LoungeKey Access
- Exclusive Annual Health Checkup Voucher for couples

Lifestyle & Loyalty

- Complimentary anniversary dinner coupon at 5-star hotels
- Complimentary gifts on birthday
- Exclusive Welcome Pack with vouchers

FROM QUEUE-FREE TO FUTURE-READY:

The Evolution of Premium Banking in Bangladesh

Premium banking in Bangladesh has travelled a long way from its early days of invitation-only rooms and limited perks. Today, it represents one of the most dynamic and competitive segments in the country’s financial services industry. Modern customers expect more than priority counters; they expect experiences that align with global standards.

A major force behind this evolution is lifestyle change. Urban households are busier, financial decisions are more complex, and digital expectations have gone up dramatically. Customers want the stability of a traditional bank with the agility of a fintech app. Premium banking bridges that gap.

THE ROLE OF RMS

The Relationship Manager (RM) remains central to the model. But the role has shifted from passive account handler to proactive financial partner. RMs now use data-driven insights to recommend products, alert clients about regulatory updates, or advise on cash flow management. Banks are investing heavily in training, certification programmes, and automated dashboards to support these teams.

LOUNGES & DIGITAL TOOLS

Premium lounges, once merely quieter spaces, are being redesigned into full-service hubs. Many include dedicated loan desks, investment corners, and discreet zones for sensitive conversations. For frequent travellers, lounge access and airport partnerships are increasingly attractive.

SEE PAGE J3



MD. MAHIUL ISLAM
Deputy Managing Director &
Head of Retail Banking
BRAC Bank PLC.

Our ambition is to evolve Premium Banking from a product set into a long-term partnership model anchored in trust, personalisation and impact. We will enhance digital journeys, broaden advisory offerings, widen curated privileges across wellness, travel and events, and strengthen lounges and relationship teams nationwide”

TAILORED WEALTH, SEAMLESS SERVICE

BRAC Bank PLC.

BRAC Bank's Premium Banking delivers personalised relationship management, priority services, exclusive lifestyle privileges — airport lounges, concierge support, tailored wealth advice and preferential pricing for discerning clients.

The Daily Star (TDS): How does BRAC Bank's Premium Banking proposition differ from standard retail banking? What is the current size of your premium client segment — number of customers and total deposits?

Md. Mahidul Islam (MMI): Launched in 2009, BRAC Bank's Premium Banking is relationship-led and built around dedicated Relationship Managers, priority attention and faster service across 26 Premium Banking centres nationwide. Unlike mass-market retail, which focuses on broad access and standardised products, Premium Banking offers personalised financial guidance, preferential pricing and an elevated service environment. These centres are located in major cities including Dhaka, Chattogram, Sylhet and Rajshahi, enabling localised, consistent service. The segment is growing at about 25% year-on-year, now serving more than 20,000 clients with deposits exceeding BDT 15,000 crore and market leadership.

TDS: What are the precise membership criteria, minimum balances or product thresholds for Premium Banking and Premium Banking Plus and other sub-segments?

MMI: Eligibility for Premium Banking starts at a minimum deposit balance of BDT 30 lakh. Premium Banking Plus — designed for customers seeking greater exclusivity — requires BDT 3 crore and includes a VISA Signature Multicurrency Debit Card with international lounge access, higher withdrawal limits, concierge support

and enhanced lifestyle benefits. Family Banking allows parents, spouses and children to join under one umbrella: the principal client must meet the Premium Banking threshold, while family members can access most privileges with a minimum balance of BDT 10 lakh per member.

TDS: What are the most exclusive perks BRAC Bank provides to its Premium Banking clients? Describe any concierge, travel or lifestyle services available to PB clients.

MMI: We pair superior financial guidance with thoughtful lifestyle support. Premium clients enjoy access to the Balaka Lounge at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and more than 1,500 international lounges. We offer Meet & Greet and Pick & Drop services at Dhaka and Chattogram airports, priority queues in call centres, doorstep banking and fully digital onboarding — including non-resident account opening and access to the Offshore Banking Unit. Faster remittance transfers via the bKash app and local transactions through the Astha app add convenience. Concierge services cover travel and dining reservations, event access and on-demand home services.

TDS: What exclusive wealth-management and advisory services are provided to Premium Banking clients?

MMI: Each Premium Banking client is supported by a dedicated Relationship Manager who acts as a personal financial guide across our suite of

banking, investment and savings products. RMs offer tailored advice on asset allocation, wealth planning and long-term strategy after assessing client profiles and goals. Wealth management is embedded in the Premium experience; PB Plus clients receive even more bespoke advisory support for complex requirements. Relationship Managers receive specialised training and coordinate with capital market and insurance partners to deliver integrated wealth solutions and curated events.

TDS: What preferential fees, waivers or rate concessions do Premium Banking clients receive compared with retail customers?

MMI: Premium clients benefit from a flexible pricing structure that includes reduced transaction charges, lower locker fees, and special pricing on loans and investment products. These concessions reward long-term relationships and support clients' broader financial needs beyond standard retail pricing. Fee benefits also extend to priority processing for foreign exchange and wealth transactions, and tailored servicing on credit facilities.

TDS: How is personalised relationship management integrated with BRAC Bank's digital channels to deliver seamless service and secure transactions to Premium Banking clients?

MMI: We combine human insight with digital capability. Relationship

Managers leverage data from Astha, internet and mobile banking — transaction patterns, service requests and preferences — to anticipate needs and make personalised recommendations. Clients enjoy seamless digital onboarding, real-time transactions, bill payments and lifestyle features. Strong authentication, encryption and continuous fraud monitoring protect accounts, and with explicit client consent Relationship Managers can initiate transactions or service requests on behalf of clients to speed execution, always subject to explicit client consent and oversight.

TDS: How do you measure the commercial ROI of premium services (NPS, deposit growth, cross-sell, lifetime value) and which near-term innovations will change your Premium Banking proposition?

MMI: We measure ROI by linking experience metrics to financial outcomes. NPS and satisfaction scores indicate loyalty; deposit growth, cross-sell ratios, average balances and customer lifetime value show commercial returns. We run cohort analyses and predictive models to identify cross-sell opportunities and quantify incremental revenue per client. Near-term innovation emphasises hyper personalisation and intelligent service delivery through digital transformation; expanding wealth management capabilities and partner solutions will deepen advisory reach and drive engagement, revenue and higher share of wallet.

FROM QUEUE-FREE TO FUTURE-READY: The Evolution of Premium Banking in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE J2
Technology has accelerated the transformation. Digital KYC, app-based wealth tracking, automated alerts, and AI-assisted customer support are reshaping expectations. Banks are also offering tier-specific apps or dashboards that segment premium clients and deliver personalised analytics.

LIFESTYLE INTEGRATION
Another emerging trend is the integration of value ecosystems. Beyond banking, customers are receiving access to insurance plans, global remittance solutions, international debit/credit privileges, and even exclusive medical and travel support. This '360-degree lifestyle' proposition mirrors what regional markets in Singapore, Malaysia, and the UAE have crafted successfully.

Trust continues to underpin the entire model. With digital fraud, card scams, and phishing attempts rising, premium customers gravitate toward institutions that demonstrate strong cybersecurity practices. Two-factor authentication, real-time alerts, card-control features, and dedicated fraud desks have become essential offerings.

FUTURE TRENDS
Looking ahead, several shifts are expected:

- Structured wealth and advisory will grow as more customers explore bonds, Mudaraba schemes, treasury products, mutual funds, and Sukuk.
- NRI-focused premium services will expand — especially for families receiving

through legal channels.

- Sustainability-conscious banking will enter the segment, with green deposit options and ESG-linked investment funds.
- Hyper-personalisation will define the next stage — from customised dashboards to AI-based budgeting guidance.

Premium banking in Bangladesh is no longer a niche. It's an evolving promise: fewer queues, better decisions, and stronger financial outcomes in a country where people increasingly value time and clarity. As long as banks continue to sharpen the balance between personal care and technological intelligence, the segment will keep gaining momentum.

— Introducing —

Mercantile
Priority
Zenith
A Meaningful Partnership in Prosperity

EXPERIENCE BANKING
THAT UNDERSTANDS
Your Priorities

📍 MBL Centre
Holding: 82/A, Road: 8/A, Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka



ANM MAHFUZ

Additional Managing Director
Bank Asia PLC.

“Priority Banking follows a value-driven pricing architecture where most premium services such as lounge access, welcome packs, health screenings, and lifestyle privileges are provided without separate charges, contingent on the required deposit thresholds.”

WHERE PRIORITY BANKING BEGINS ANEW

Bank Asia PLC.

Bank Asia is introducing a redefined Priority Banking experience, built to offer high-value clients personalised financial expertise, premium lifestyle benefits, and seamless digital convenience which is positioning the bank as a trusted partner in their broader financial and personal journey.

The Daily Star (TDS): What are the principal objectives behind planning to launch your premium banking proposition?

ANM Mahfuz (ANMM): Bank Asia's Priority Banking has been conceptualised to redefine the experience of high-value clients by offering a harmonised blend of financial expertise, lifestyle privileges, and personalised service delivery. The objective is to establish the bank as a trusted partner in clients' broader life journeys—extending beyond traditional banking to enable convenience, security, and exclusivity. Through this initiative, the bank focuses on strengthening customer loyalty, deepening long-term deposit relationship, cross sales initiatives by elevating service standards to international benchmarks.

TDS: What membership targets have you set for the first 6 months and first 12 months after launch?

ANMM: Our membership roadmap follows a measured and quality-driven growth approach. In the first six months, the emphasis is on onboarding a curated group of high-net worth clients—both existing and new— while ensuring that our service delivery is smooth, accurate, and fully prepared from an operational standpoint. By the 12-month mark, Priority Banking is expected to scale substantially through structured acquisition strategies of high net worth (HNW) clients, deposit-centric segmentation, referral programs, cross-selling of Retail products and strategic alliances with

lifestyle and service partners.

TDS: What will be the eligibility criteria (minimum balance, salary threshold or product-hold requirements)?

ANMM: Priority Banking is offered across three structured tiers based on deposit thresholds. Tier 1 begins at BDT 50 lakh (CASA) or BDT 70 lakh (CASA+FDR), Tier 2 ranges from BDT 1 crore to below BDT 10 crore under CASA and mixed categories, and Tier 3 includes customers maintaining BDT 3 crore (CASA) or BDT 10 crore (CASA+FDR) and above. Additional categories include Priority Family, Priority Payroll, and distinguished individuals of national importance approved under management discretion.

TDS: Which customer segments are you prioritizing for initial onboarding (salared professionals, entrepreneurs, NRBs, HNIs, etc.)?

ANMM: The initial group of Priority Banking clients will comprise a selectively chosen group—generally the existing long-standing high-value customers, senior corporate executives and distinguished UHNW individuals of Bank Asia. By anchoring the proposition in this well-balanced base, Bank Asia aims to ensure stability, diversity in deposits, and a refined service experience from the outset.

TDS: Which card and lounge privileges will be bundled at launch (e.g., Priority Pass / airport lounge access, card tiers)?

ANMM: Clients will receive a custom-designed Visa Signature dual-currency debit card, providing

enhanced global access and a suite of premium lifestyle benefits. Lounge privileges include complimentary access to the InterContinental-operated Balaka Lounge at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, along with extended access to over 1,500 international lounges through Bank Asia's World Elite Mastercard credit card offerings, which will be introduced in phased alignment with internal approvals.

TDS: Which concierge, travel or lifestyle benefits will be available immediately and which are planned later (meet & greet, hotel/restaurant partnerships, bookings)?

ANMM: At launch, Priority Banking customers will enjoy airport pick-and-drop services, meet-and-greet support, and health check-ups both locally and internationally, and an exclusive welcome pack. Lifestyle benefits include celebratory gifts, BOGO dining privileges across 5-star hotels, value coupons, and access to special events locally as well as exclusive offers at a few Michelin Starred restaurants around the world. Subsequent phases will introduce curated travel packages, extended concierge support, and enriched international medical alliances.

TDS: What priority digital features will premium clients get at launch (dedicated app/portal, faster approvals)?

ANMM: We are working on a dedicated suite of digital enhancements is being introduced through Bank Asia's Smart

App, including direct appointment booking with Relationship Managers, priority service requests, instant support routing through a dedicated call center channel, and integrated digital health solutions such as tele-consultations, home diagnostics support etc.

TDS: How will the premium service be priced (one-time joining fee, annual fee, or bundled fee with waivers)?

ANMM: Priority Banking follows a value-driven pricing architecture where most premium services—such as lounge access, welcome packs, health screenings, and lifestyle privileges—are provided without separate charges, contingent on the required deposit thresholds. Each tier has a structured annual service cost framework designed to ensure sustainable service delivery and prudent financial governance.

TDS: What staff training and quality-assurance measures are being put in place to meet premium service standards?

ANMM: To uphold global service excellence, Bank Asia is establishing a structured Priority Banking competency framework. Specialised training modules on relationship management, service etiquette, product expertise, and lifestyle advisory will be delivered through a rigorous certification model. Relationship Managers, Service Relationship Managers, and Center Managers will undergo continuous professional development supported by performance insights, service audits, and customer experience monitoring.

Why premium banking is thriving

Bangladesh's financial landscape is shifting, and at the heart of this transformation is a cohort of customers who want both sophistication and simplicity. Premium banking, once positioned as an exclusive club, is now more democratised, attracting professionals, entrepreneurs, NRBs, and families who value efficiency over extravagance.

SERVICE EFFICIENCY

Today's premium-banking customer isn't looking for marble floors and coffee machines. They're searching for reliability: an adviser who calls back, a process that doesn't drag, a loan that gets approved without three rounds of paperwork. Banks have responded by structuring teams specifically for high-engagement service. Dedicated hotlines, concierge desks, and priority channels ensure that client issues are resolved promptly.

FINANCIAL GUIDANCE

One of the biggest selling points is personalised financial planning. With growing awareness around wealth creation, customers want clearer roadmaps, whether they're saving for children's education, building an emergency fund, or exploring income-generating investments. Relationship managers serve as translators between complex financial products and everyday goals. It's a role built on trust and informed guidance.

TECH INNOVATION

The premium segment has also become a testing ground for innovation. From biometric onboarding to secure digital document signing, many banks introduce new tech features here before rolling them out to the wider market. This early-access model appeals to digitally savvy customers who prefer app-first banking experiences.

Lifestyle benefits are another differentiator.

Airport services, hospital partnerships, dining offers, and even curated events give clients a sense of

belonging. These may seem like small gestures, but they reinforce the idea that premium banking is a holistic ecosystem, not just a financial service.

ENHANCED SECURITY

Security remains a major driver. Premium customers expect heightened fraud protection, card-security layers, and dedicated dispute-resolution teams. In a world of rising digital threats, this reassurance is invaluable. Banks are increasingly deploying AI-driven monitoring systems to detect suspicious activity in real-time, instantly alerting clients to potential breaches. Features like biometric authentication and app-based card controls further empower users to manage risks proactively. Ultimately, this robust defense mechanism transforms security from a basic requirement into a defining pillar of the premium relationship.

FUTURE TRENDS

Looking forward, premium banking in Bangladesh is likely to expand in two directions:

- **Mass Affluent Growth:** As middle-income households rise, banks will continue to offer tiered premium products with flexible eligibility.
- **Wealth & Advisory Expansion:** More structured investment solutions, estate planning, and portfolio management services will enter the mainstream.

In short, premium banking thrives because it solves everyday frustrations. It blends high touch with high tech, offering customers a smoother, safer, and more personalised financial journey. The 'premium' isn't about price, it's about peace of mind.



Elevate your
BANKING EXPERIENCE WITH
MTB PRIVILEGE BANKING

THIS COMES WITH CREDENCE,
CONVENIENCE, ELEGANCE AND CARE

Separate Privilege Banking Centers at your neighborhood

Dedicated relationship manager

Unlimited MTB Air Lounge access

Premium services available at MTB Branches, Lounges

Accounts & investments with no fees / charges

Complimentary services: Airport Pick & Drop, Meet & Greet

Complimentary annual health screening at top-standard hospital

Invitations & celebrations of Special Days

Help us to take a schedule from you.
For Privilege Banking Enquiry +88 01716 123 223 or Email: privilege@mutualtrustbank.com

Conditions apply



MASHRUR AREFIN
Managing Director and CEO
City Bank PLC.

“Citygem combines dedicated lounges, wealth managers and curated lifestyle partnerships to deliver personalised banking and measurable ROI through deposit growth, cross-sell and lasting client loyalty.”



ELITE BANKING, THE CITYGEM WAY

City Bank PLC.

The Daily Star (TDS): How does Citygem differ from standard retail banking in service, pricing and eligibility?

Mashrur Arefin (MA): Citygem is our flagship priority banking wing for High Net-Worth Individuals (HNI), and Sapphire represents our exclusive value proposition for Ultra High Net-Worth Individuals. These propositions offer personalised banking with an unparalleled combination of services that provides a superior experience compared to standard retail banking.

Citygem members can avail themselves of dedicated Citygem lounges that offer optimum comfort and privacy with virtual office facilities, extended-hour locker services and reserved parking. Each client is supported by a dedicated wealth manager, ensuring access to investment opportunities, expert financial advice and tailored solutions.

The proposition also includes curated lifestyle facilities, premium merchant benefits, concierge support and airport lounge access. Eligibility for Citygem and Sapphire membership is determined based on specific relationship criteria aligned with each segment.

TDS: Approximately how large is your premium client base in Bangladesh? What membership criteria and minimum balances or salary thresholds apply for Citygem and Sapphire?

MA: Citygem operates as a dedicated priority banking department and was awarded by Asiamoney as the “Best Bank for Premium Services” in Bangladesh. Citygem has received this prestigious accolade in 2023, 2019, and 2018.

Today, our priority client base includes 14,000-plus Citygem members, while Sapphire remains highly exclusive with only more than 250 HNI clients. Citygem deposit book stands at more than BDT 7,500 crore, making it one of the fastest-growing and strongest portfolios in the country’s priority banking landscape.

We have different eligibility criteria starting from BDT 10 lac to BDT 75 lac for Citygem and BDT 2 Crore to BDT 5 Crore for Sapphire. We have another eligibility criterion for salaried professionals where the minimum eligibility criterion is a BDT 5 lac gross monthly salary with a BDT 15 lac deposit relationship with City Bank.

TDS: What wealth-management and advisory services are offered exclusively to premium clients?

MA: Citygem offers exclusive wealth management and advisory services tailored for premium clients. Members have access to dedicated relationship managers from City Bank Capital Resources Limited (CBCRL) and City



Broking Ltd., providing personalised capital market guidance. Through this, clients benefit from portfolio management, investment strategy advisory, share trading, and a full suite of capital market instruments aligned with their financial goals.

TDS: How do you select lifestyle partners (hotels, travel, retail, wellness) and measure the tangible benefits to members and to the bank?

MA: Citygem selects lifestyle partners that cater to HNI clientele’s unique needs and preferences. This can include luxury hotels, exclusive merchants, and high-end retailers. The goal is to offer value-added services and experiences that match their lifestyle and expectations.

To onboard a partner, we assess their market reputation, service excellence, and relevance to our clients’ lifestyle, ensuring partnerships deliver meaningful benefits and unique experiences.

Impact is measured for the bank based on incremental card spending, portfolio growth, cross-sell and customer acquisition and for the Citygem member on usage rates, redeemed benefit value, member satisfaction and engagement for clients. Well-chosen partnerships strengthen loyalty, deepen relationships, and reinforce Citygem’s holistic priority banking proposition.

TDS: How is personalised relationship management integrated with your digital channels to ensure seamless, secure service?

MA: At City Bank, we ensure HNI clients experience seamless, secure, and personalised service through our digital channels. Through Citytouch, clients can open and close FD and DPS accounts, invest in the capital market, initiate BO accounts, and purchase insurance, reducing the need for branch visits. In our branches, we have CityQ – an electronic queue management system where priority customers get preferential queues. Similarly, in our call centre, Citygem members get priority queues to avail any services.

We are expanding capabilities to include Treasury Bills, Bonds, Government Savings Certificates, and other long-term investments, allowing clients to manage diversified portfolios in a single platform. The system also adapts to each client’s preferences and behaviour, providing a curated, highly personalised digital experience that complements their relationship with their dedicated wealth manager.

TDS: What preferential fees or waived charges are included in the Citygem Schedule of Charges compared with the standard retail SOC?

MA: Citygem members benefit from a dedicated Schedule of Charges, offering preferential fees and waivers

across a range of banking services. These include account-related charges, statements and certificates, fund transfers, pay orders, foreign currency services, card fees, and loan-related charges – ensuring a smoother, more rewarding banking experience compared with standard retail clients.

TID: How do you balance attractive interest/insurance features for premium clients with liquidity management and the bank’s risk appetite?

MA: At City Bank, we focus on value over rates for our priority clients. Beyond attractive interest, we offer lifestyle privileges, concierge services, wellness benefits, and advisory support that enhance the overall proposition.

Insurance features are bundled into products like Seniors’ Savings and City Alo deposits, providing financial returns and meaningful coverage without affecting the bank’s liquidity. Lending products also include embedded insurance, balancing customer security with the bank’s risk appetite. Standalone bancassurance solutions are available through Citytouch, which gives the client the option to choose while allowing the bank to manage pricing, liquidity, and capital responsibly.

TDS: Are there premium products that let clients align wealth with ESG goals? How do you measure ROI on premium services – customer satisfaction, deposit growth, product cross-sell, or lifetime value?

MA: City Bank, as a leading sustainable bank, offers products that let clients align wealth with ESG goals. These include green and hybrid auto loans, fully digitalised lending to reduce paper consumption, financing for women entrepreneurs, and the country’s first Green Savings Account, which channels funds into sustainable projects while planting a tree per account.

For Citygem, ROI is measured across four pillars: customer satisfaction, deposit growth, product cross-sell, and lifetime value. Exceptional service drives satisfaction, which strengthens balances, expands cross-sell opportunities, and enhances long-term client value. These metrics, alongside operational factors such as cost-to-income ratio and deposit stability, ensure the proposition delivers meaningful return for both the client and the bank.

TDS: Which near-term innovations will most influence City Bank’s premium proposition over the next 2–3 years?

MA: Citygem continues to innovate to drive growth and enhance client experience. Over the next 2–3 years, key developments will focus on new propositions, enhanced digital platforms, card services and strategic partnerships across our banking channels.

These initiatives will strengthen relationships with existing clients, attract untapped segments, and improve operational efficiency. The future of City Bank’s priority banking will be defined by deeper wealth expertise, smarter digital experiences, and affluent lifestyle offerings, setting a new benchmark for priority banking in Bangladesh.





ALI REZA IFTEKHAR
Managing Director
Eastern Bank PLC.

“By combining data intelligence with human empathy, we will continue to evolve as our clients’ most trusted partner, in every phase of their wealth journey.”

PREMIUM SERVICE, PERSONAL TOUCH

Eastern Bank PLC.

Since 2009, Eastern Bank Limited (EBL) Priority Banking has been redefining premium banking in Bangladesh with visionary service tailored for High Net Worth (HNW) individuals. Through bespoke financial solutions and exclusive lifestyle privileges, EBL Priority has set new industry benchmarks and emerged as a key driver of EBL’s growth — now serving clients through 23 dedicated priority centers across the country.

The Daily Star (TDS) : How is EBL’s premium banking different from regular retail banking? How large is this segment in Bangladesh?

Ali Reza Iftekhar (ARI): EBL Priority is not merely a banking product — it is a lifestyle ecosystem. While traditional retail banking emphasises accessibility and convenience, EBL Priority focuses on exclusivity and personalisation. Each client relationship is managed by a dedicated Relationship Manager and supported by exclusive Priority Centers across Bangladesh. Our vision is to provide a best-in-class experience by delivering world-class financial services tailored to the unique needs of Priority clients. We will be a one-stop destination for bespoke banking, offering a comprehensive suite of personalised financial solutions under one roof. By integrating lifestyle benefits and exclusive partnerships, we aim to enrich our customers’ everyday lives. Guided by customer-centric innovation and a steadfast commitment to trust, we seek continuous growth and stronger revenues for EBL through deep, long-term relationships.

The premium banking segment in Bangladesh has witnessed rapid growth, now accounting for an estimated 5–6% of the total retail deposit base. EBL’s Priority portfolio continues to expand at a double-digit annual growth rate, reflecting the growing financial sophistication of affluent Bangladeshis.

TDS: How does EBL select its lifestyle partners, and how are client benefits

measured?

ARI: Our partnership philosophy centers on relevance and exclusivity. We collaborate only with brands whose values and standards align with EBL’s — from five-star hotels and wellness providers to luxury retailers and travel partners. Each partnership is carefully curated to complement and elevate the lifestyle of our Priority clients.

TDS: How does EBL balance interest, insurance, and risk to maximize client value?

ARI: EBL Priority focuses on value consistency and relationship depth. Our clients enjoy competitive, transparent rates within regulatory parameters, ensuring fairness and stability. Value is further enhanced through exclusive experiences, privileges, and bespoke financial solutions that extend beyond rate-based benefits.

Under Bancassurance guidelines, EBL collaborates with reputable insurance partners to introduce customized life, non-life, and travel products designed specifically for Priority customers — adding meaningful layers of financial security.

TDS: How does EBL blend personal relationship management with digital innovation?

ARI: At EBL, we believe that true Priority service harmonises human warmth with digital intelligence. Our private Priority Centers offer personalised financial consultations, while our digital platforms — EBL SKYBANKING App, EBL 365, Smart IVR, and Self-

Service Hubs — ensure seamless access anytime, anywhere.

Relationship Managers leverage real-time client insights to anticipate needs and deliver proactive, data-informed solutions. This “phygital” (physical + digital) model defines EBL’s signature experience.

TDS: Card-based privileges (SkyLounge, Priority Pass and other card benefits) are visible loyalty drivers; how do you measure the role of these privileges in acquiring, engaging and retaining premium clients?

ARI: Card-based privileges remain one of the most visible hallmarks of EBL Priority. From complimentary SkyLounge access and Priority Pass memberships to exclusive lifestyle rewards, these benefits embody the brand’s appreciation for its clients. But they also serve a deeper purpose: fostering emotional connection and long-term loyalty.

EBL continuously studies client engagement — analysing spending patterns, travel frequency, and card usage — and the data tells a clear story. Clients who actively use Priority cards tend to demonstrate stronger retention, higher satisfaction, and a greater willingness to engage across multiple EBL products.

TDS: What special data-protection, cybersecurity and AML measures does EBL apply to preserve trust for premium relationships?

ARI: In a world increasingly defined by data, trust remains the ultimate

currency. EBL employs one of the most robust data governance and cybersecurity frameworks in Bangladesh, featuring multi-layer encryption, real-time fraud monitoring, and ISO-certified security systems. Every transaction undergoes rigorous AML/CFT screening in full compliance with Bangladesh Bank and BFIU guidelines — ensuring that the bank’s commitment to privacy and compliance is as strong as its service promise.

TDS: Are there premium product features (green loans, impact investment options, dedicated CSR channels) that allow priority clients to align wealth with sustainability?

ARI: EBL also recognises that modern wealth must align with social responsibility. Through initiatives like Green Accounts and Green Deposits, clients are encouraged to support environmentally responsible investments. Priority customers can also participate in green financing, women entrepreneurship programs, and CSR projects in education and healthcare — allowing them to grow their wealth with purpose.

TDS: Looking ahead, which innovations will most shape EBL’s premium proposition?

ARI: Looking ahead, EBL envisions a future where Priority Banking becomes even more intuitive and intelligent. Investments in artificial intelligence, digital identity, and intergenerational wealth management are underway to anticipate client needs before they arise.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FEELING 'TAKEN CARE OF'



ILLUSTRATION: E.RAZA RONNY

BY E. RAZA RONNY

In a world where every tap, swipe, and transaction demands mental bandwidth, the idea of being ‘taken care of’ has quietly become one of the most powerful emotional currencies in modern banking. Premium banking in Bangladesh taps straight into this psychology, not by offering extravagance, but by reducing life’s small frictions that quietly drain us every day.

At its core, feeling taken care of begins with certainty. Human brains love predictability; it reduces stress and frees up cognitive space. When a customer knows their relationship manager will call back, their paperwork will be handled, or

their card issue will be resolved without a marathon phone queue, it creates a sense of psychological safety. This is more about relief than luxury.

The next layer is control

Ironically, people feel more in control when someone trustworthy handles things on their behalf. Clear guidance on investments, transparent explanations, and proactive updates make clients feel actively empowered rather than passively dependent. That sense of partnership resulting in the feeling that “someone is looking out for me” is deeply reassuring.

Then comes recognition

Humans are wired to respond to small

signals that show they matter. Priority service, a quiet lounge, or even a simple expedited process sends a message: your time is valuable. In a high-pressure city like Dhaka, that validation lands hard. After battling through the city’s chaos amidst horns blaring, tempers flaring, and a soundtrack of unsolicited coughing, you shouldn’t have to fight again just to reach your bank. You deserve a little dignity at the finish line.

The digital component also shapes this psychology. A smooth app, instant alerts, fraud protections, or a dashboard that “just works” creates a background sense of competence and stability. When technology behaves predictably, the user

feels anchored. When it doesn’t, anxiety spikes.

But perhaps the biggest driver is reduced mental load.

Modern life piles on decisions from schooling, savings and travel, to emergencies. A banking relationship that quietly shoulders some of that load becomes an emotional buffer. It lightens the brain and creates breathing room.

In the end, premium banking succeeds not because it offers something glamorous, but because it provides something far rarer: the gentle, steady feeling that someone is smoothing out the chaos. And in a country where time is tight and stress is high, that feeling is worth more than any perk.



MATI UL HASAN
Managing Director
Mercantile Bank PLC.

“Priority Zenith is our commitment to delivering faster, smarter, and more personalised banking for Bangladesh’s most discerning customers.”

ZENITH: REDEFINING PRIORITY SERVICE

Mercantile Bank PLC.

Mercantile Bank's Priority Zenith marks its strategic entry into Bangladesh's premium banking segment, offering affluent clients tailored financial solutions, elevated service standards, and exclusive privileges which are designed to strengthen long-term relationships and enhance the bank's position in high-value retail banking.

The Daily Star (TDS): What are the core objectives behind launching Mercantile Priority Zenith?

Mati Ul Hasan (MUH): Mercantile Priority Zenith is designed to position Mercantile Bank PLC as a strong competitor in Bangladesh's premium retail banking segment by directly targeting high-net-worth individuals. The programme has three core objectives:

1. Grow the bank's affluent customer base by offering a clearly differentiated premium banking platform.
2. Increase high-value deposits and strengthen long-term balances through tailored financial solutions, preferential pricing, and dedicated service.
3. Upgrade the bank's brand perception by establishing specialised priority centres, structured relationship management, and a service model built around speed, privacy, and personalised attention.

Overall, Priority Zenith aims to convert high-potential customers into loyal, long-term partners of the bank while improving market visibility and credibility in the upper segment.

TDS: What are your target numbers for membership in the first 6 and 12 months? Which customer segments are you prioritising?

MUH: The bank aims to onboard 200 qualified Priority Zenith customers within the first 12 months, supported by roughly Tk. 100 crore in new

deposits. Rather than targeting a single demographic, the bank is focusing on all eligible high-value segments:

1. HNIs and emerging affluent clients
2. Salaried professionals with strong earnings
3. Business owners and entrepreneurs
4. NRBs seeking premium banking support

The objective is to build a high-quality portfolio defined by relationship value, not by occupation.

TDS: What minimum balance or product thresholds will determine eligibility? Will members receive dedicated RMs? Planned RM-to-customer ratio?

MUH: Eligibility requires one of the following: BDT 50 lakh in total deposits across savings, FDR, and schemes OR BDT 20 lakh maintained solely in a savings account.

Every approved customer receives a dedicated relationship manager from day one.

The programme begins with a 1:20 RM-to-customer ratio to ensure hands-on portfolio management and quick response times. Ratios may be adjusted as the customer base grows.

TDS: Which concierge or lifestyle benefits will be available immediately, and which will roll out later?

MUH: Available from launch:
1. Dedicated Relationship Manager
2. Preferential pricing on deposits

and loans

3. Special chequebook and dual-currency debit card
4. Priority access to lockers
5. Dedicated service counters at branches
6. Complimentary access to Balaka Lounge (with one companion)
7. Airport meet-and-greet assistance
8. Discounts across vetted premium lifestyle partners
9. Reserved parking at priority centres

Planned for rollout:

1. A dedicated Mercantile airport lounge (domestic and international terminals)
 2. Global lounge access partnerships
 3. Private meeting rooms inside Priority Centres
 4. A Zenith digital e-card
- These additions are planned as infrastructure and partnerships are finalised.

TDS: What priority digital features will premium customers access?

MUH: Zenith customers receive a unique digital identifier in the bank's core system. This ensures:

1. Instant recognition on tellers' and officers' dashboards
 2. Real-time service alerts for staff when a Zenith member initiates a transaction or visits a branch
 3. Faster approvals and priority routing of requests
- Members also get full access to the

Rainbow digital banking platform, enabling secure messaging, online portfolio management, and high-limit transactions—reducing reliance on branch visits.

TDS: How will you price the premium service?

MUH: Priority Zenith has no membership fee at launch. The bank is using a value-added strategy to build an initial pipeline of affluent customers, deepen deposit relationships, and strengthen retention before considering fee-based enhancements.

TDS: What staff training and quality-assurance measures are in place?

MUH: The first phase is being led by the bank's strongest service and portfolio-management personnel. Training includes:

1. Intensive in-house grooming on high-net-worth customer management
 2. Protocol training for confidential and rapid service delivery
 3. Portfolio monitoring and proactive engagement standards
- In the next phase, the bank will engage reputable local and international training organisations to introduce advanced modules on:
1. Wealth advisory
 2. Customer-experience excellence
 3. Global premium-banking best practices
 4. Quality standards will be monitored through periodic audits and customer feedback mechanisms.



open
your world of exclusive
privileges and convenience



Aesthetic and
strategically located
Priority centers



Dedicated Relationship
Manager offering
Tailored services



Global standard
lifestyle privileges



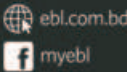
Travel concierge



Preferential pricing



Recognition on
Special occasions





“The proposition to cater high net worth clients, is packaged & titled as MTB Privilege Banking – this comes with credence, convenience and care. This is essentially premium retail banking.”

Mutual Trust Bank PLC.

Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB) Privilege Banking packages high-touch relationship management with premium travel, lifestyle and financial benefits for affluent individuals and families, which is delivered through dedicated centres, MTB Neo digital integration, and a growing suite of bespoke wealth products and conveniences.

The Daily Star (TDS): How does MTB Privilege Banking differ from standard retail banking in services and eligibility? What is the size of your premium client base?

Syed Mahbubur Rahman (SMR): MTB Privilege Banking is premium retail banking for high-net-worth individuals and families, combining dedicated relationship managers at Privilege Centres with fee-free premium accounts and travel and lifestyle services. The program serves roughly 10,500 clients with FUM of Tk. 110,000 million (Tk. 11,000 crore).

TDS: What are the eligibility criteria, minimum balances or salary thresholds for Privilege Banking?

SMR: Any Bangladeshi citizen with deposits of Tk. 4 million (40 lac) or more qualifies; jointly/family accounts need Tk. 8 million (80 lac).

TDS: Which premium travel amenities are provided (MTB Air Lounge locations, access rules, guest policy, timings)?

SMR: MTB operates eight premium Air Lounges across Bangladesh at commercial airports. Access is complimentary for Privilege clients and immediate family. The Dhaka (HSLA) lounge is 24-hour for international travellers; domestic lounges follow flight schedules and provide F&B, comfortable seating and business facilities.

TDS: Which credit/debit card privileges (LoungeKey, Visa Signature, MasterCard

World) are bundled with premium tiers, and what are the visit/annual caps?

SMR: Privilege clients get pre-approved high-tier credit cards (Visa Signature, MasterCard World). MTB Air Lounges allow unlimited access for high-tier cards. International LoungeKey access provides 10 complimentary visits per calendar year (guest visits count toward this total).

TDS: What concierge-like services or lifestyle privileges do you offer (meet & greet, airport pick-up/drop, partner hotel/restaurant benefits)?

SMR: Complimentary round-the-clock airport pick-up/drop-off and meet-and-greet are available for international travel. Clients receive discounts and privileges at partner hotels and restaurants, complimentary annual health screening (United Hospital & Medix Center), invites to exclusive events, and personalised festival/gift services.

TDS: What exclusive financial products are available only to Privileged clients (preferred deposit schemes, bespoke loans, wealth management or protection plans)?

SMR: Privilege Savings / Yaqeen Privilege Savings with preferential rates and no maintenance fee; discounted locker fees (50%) and student file services (30%); popular Monthly Benefit Plan; overdraft against investments; and bespoke lending/investment avenues tailored for high-net-worth clients.

TDS: How is personalised relationship management integrated with MTB's digital channels (internet/mobile banking) to ensure seamless service?

SMR: The MTB Neo mobile app and an online service portal enable real-time collaboration between clients, relationship managers and service providers. Digital onboarding, multi-gateway payments (EFT, RTGS, NPSB, QR, MFS) and portal features (Pick & Drop, Meet & Greet booking, and event coordination) provide a high-touch yet digitally enabled experience.

The core philosophy is that, the Bank integrates personalized Relationship Manager based banking service with digital banking channels to provide a high-touch but digitally enabled experience for its Privilege Banking clients. Furthermore, this year MTB introduced an Online Service Portal for Privilege Banking Clients where all the stakeholders (Clients, Relationship Managers & Service Providers) are holding hands in the same digital platform at the same time to render urgent services such as Pick & Drop, Meet & Greet, Birthday Celebrations etc.

TDS: What preferential fees, rate concessions or waived charges apply to Privilege clients versus retail customers?

SMR: Privilege Banking clients enjoy preferential pricing at every aspect for their trust, sheer business size, family relationships, and being long-standing

patrons of the Bank.

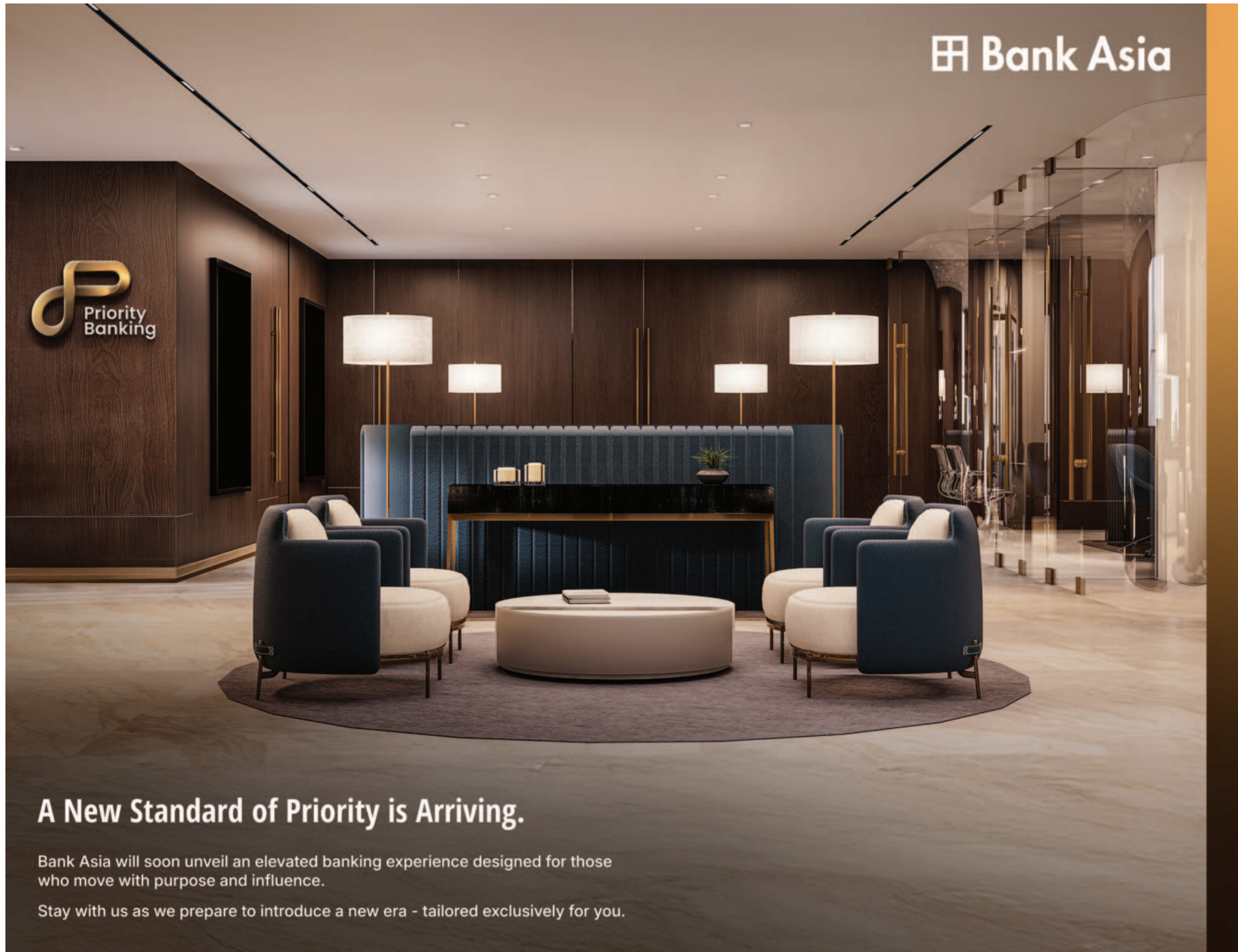
In case of Privilege Banking accounts – all account service related fees are waived such as account maintenance fee, SMS fee, fees for any statements, bank certificates, solvency or tax certificates, cheque books, pay orders, demand drafts, foreign currency endorsements, stop payment of cheques, inter-city cash deposit or withdrawals. Exactly similar facility with waivers are being enjoyed by Privilege Islamic Banking Clients.

In case of Cards, Privilege Banking Clients get free pre-approved Credit Cards of highest tiers, with one year free of annual charge; 2nd year onwards annual fee can be waived via reward points. Nevertheless, the fee for Debit cards or PIN replacements - all are free for Privilege Banking Clients.

Furthermore, Privilege Banking Clients enjoy 50% discount on the Locker fee for all sized lockers. Moreover, they enjoy 30% discount on Student File Fee or File Renewal Fee for their family members.

TDS: Are there ESG or sustainability-linked investment or lending options tailored for high-net-worth clients?

SMR: Yes — MTB plans sustainability-linked loans and ESG investment portfolios. Proposed incentives include lower rates for rooftop solar, benefits for hybrid/EV adoption, and investment options targeting renewable energy, green housing, EV supply chains and firms with ethical governance.





Staff of five merging banks may face pay cuts

Fresh Tk 350cr liquidity support approved

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Employees of five shariah-based banks, which will be merged soon, are likely to face cuts in salary and other benefits due to the poor financial health of these banks.

The five — First Security Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank, Union Bank, Global Islami Bank, and EXIM Bank — are struggling to pay their employees.

To ease the massive liquidity crisis, these lenders sought around Tk 1,000 crore in liquidity support from the central bank, which in response approved around Tk 350 crore.

The approval came from a meeting at the Bangladesh Bank headquarters in Dhaka yesterday between the administrators of the five banks and the central bank.

Governor Ahsan H Mansur presided over the meeting organised by the Bank Resolution Department.

At least three central bank officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed to The Daily Star that the administrators of the five banks had sought Tk 1,000 crore in liquidity support to pay salaries and allowances.

After approving the Tk 350 crore fund exclusively for employee salaries, the central bank governor reportedly asked the administrators to reduce salaries and other benefits due to the weak financial condition of the lenders.

One of the administrators, who also preferred anonymity, said the salary cuts are likely to be implemented soon in the five banks, which collectively employ around 16,000 staff members.

An official from the Bank Resolution Department told The Daily Star that they are working on measures to reduce salaries and other benefits.

An employee of Union Bank said the staff is currently under severe financial stress due to the fragile situation of their bank.

He added that while employees receive salaries in their accounts, they are unable to withdraw or use the funds immediately.

READ MORE ON B3

NBFI liquidation plan: How much shareholders stand to lose

8 LISTED NBFIs THAT MAY BE LIQUIDATED

FAS Finance, Bangladesh Industrial Finance Company, Premier Leasing, Fareast Finance, GSP Finance, Prime Finance, People's Leasing, International Leasing

FINANCIAL CONDITION

The non-banks' liabilities exceed their assets

Average NAV of 7 NBFIs negative Tk 95 per share

They held 52% of the sector's Tk 25,089cr bad loans in 2024

Combined paid-up capital Tk 1,450cr

INVESTOR HOLDINGS & POTENTIAL RISK

Investors hold shares with face value of Tk 947cr

Shareholders expected to recover nothing once liquidation begins

BSEC says it will ask govt to protect small investors

AHSAN HABIB

When Bangladesh Bank (BB) recently announced that shareholders of five weak shariah banks slated for merger would receive nothing for their holdings, it sent shockwaves through the market. The move meant an estimated Tk 4,500 crore in paper wealth turning to dust overnight. Investor confidence plunged, with the DSE key index falling to its lowest level in four months.

Now, another fear is looming over the market. Shareholders in eight non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs), all earmarked for liquidation, may also lose almost everything.

BB Governor Ahsan H Mansur said in August that nine NBFIs would be shut down because their financial condition had deteriorated beyond repair.

Eight of those are listed on the stock exchanges: FAS Finance, Bangladesh Industrial Finance Company, Premier Leasing, Fareast Finance, GSP Finance, Prime Finance, People's Leasing, and International Leasing.

Together, these eight NBFIs have a combined paid-up capital of about

Tk 1,450 crore. Stock-market investors hold roughly two-thirds of this, with a face value of Tk 947 crore, which they are likely to lose entirely if the firms go into liquidation.

Even the current market value of those shares, reportedly above Tk 100 crore, matters little, since liquidation payments are based on actual realised asset value, not market speculation.

NOTHING FOR SHAREHOLDERS

The problem is that the NBFIs' liabilities far exceed their assets: their net asset value (NAV) per share is deeply negative for most. In other words, when the companies' assets are sold off and debts cleared, there will be nothing, or far too little, left for ordinary shareholders.

In such insolvency-driven liquidation, shareholders sit at the very bottom of the list of claimants.

For small investors, it is another chapter in a difficult month. Share prices have stayed depressed, and now the looming NBFI liquidations have darkened the mood further.

Rony Haider, a retail investor, said he bought thousands of shares of People's Leasing at Tk 3 last year, hoping the

company would recover the way several weak banks once did after receiving government support.

"Now the share is trading below Tk 1. I have already suffered huge losses," he told The Daily Star. "The government stepped in to save some banks, so I thought something similar might happen here. But no support came for the NBFIs."

He believes years of unchecked irregularities in banks and NBFIs have left small investors exposed and unprotected.

Updated financial reports paint an equally grim picture. Seven of the eight listed NBFIs have an average net asset value of negative Tk 95 per share. Prime Finance is the exception, but even its last disclosed figure — Tk 5.31 per share in 2023 — offers little comfort given the sector's steep deterioration.

"This situation had been building for years," said Saiful Islam, president of the DSE Brokers Association of Bangladesh.

"We warned that a financial crisis was brewing because banks and NBFIs were being drained. Their non-performing loans (NPL) grew so large that they had

READ MORE ON B2

Inequality to deepen further: WB

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Economic inequality is set to widen in Bangladesh in the short-term, as persistent inflation, stagnant wages, and declining household purchasing power push poorer families further from economic security, according to new estimates from the World Bank.

The Gini index or coefficient, a key measure of inequality, is climbing steadily from 2022 through 2025, underscoring a growing divide between richer and poorer households.

According to the WB report, released Tuesday in Dhaka as part of the Poverty & Equity Assessment 2025, both income inequality and the prosperity gap, which measures how far people are from a decent standard of living, are expected to increase, signalling heightened stress among low- and middle-income groups.

While inequality in household consumption has remained broadly stable nationally, regional trends diverged. In rural areas, disparities in consumption fell slightly, with the Gini index declining from 29.2 to 28.2, whereas in urban centres it rose from 33.1 to 34.5, indicating growing gaps in city living standards.

The Gini index is measured on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 represents perfect equality and 100 signifies perfect inequality.

Meanwhile, income inequality, which includes earnings, remittances, and returns on assets, worsened, with the Gini index rising from 51 to 54 points, states the WB report.

The report comes at a time when Bangladesh has already been grappling with deepening inequality over the past two decades.

READ MORE ON B3

BB curbs foreign travel of bankers ahead of polls

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) has restricted foreign travel for officials and employees of all banks and financial institutions until the upcoming national election, except in cases of absolute necessity.

In a notice yesterday, the central bank said managing directors, chief executive officers, and all other officials must refrain from overseas travel unless it is deemed indispensable.

"The restriction will stay in place until the end of the national election, scheduled for February next year.

The BB issued the directive under the Bank Company Act, 1991, but did not clarify what would count as essential travel.

UN panel queries Bangladesh's economic readiness for LDC exit

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The United Nations Committee for Development Policy (UN CDP) has asked Bangladesh to provide clarification on its economic situation ahead of the country's scheduled graduation from least developed country (LDC) status.

During a virtual meeting with senior government officials Tuesday, the panel inquired about Bangladesh's readiness for graduation and its progress in implementing the Smooth Transition Strategy (STS), a guideline designed to ensure a sustainable transition from the LDC category.

The meeting followed Bangladesh's submission of its 2025 annual country report to the UN panel, which evaluates LDC graduation against established thresholds. The report was submitted on November 10. Bangladesh is scheduled to graduate from LDC status in November 2026.



Anisuzzaman Chowdhury, special assistant to the chief adviser, led the Bangladesh delegation, while senior UN CDP officials and representatives from other UN bodies participated.

"The UN CDP team and other UN officials focused mainly on the government's report," said a meeting participant, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They sought information on macroeconomic stability, foreign currency reserves with the central bank, balance of payments, private sector investment, and the tax-to-GDP ratio. The officials also discussed various other economic issues highlighted in the report," the participant added.

"The committee has been reviewing Bangladesh's economic position to provide feedback in February, ahead of the country's scheduled graduation to a developing nation on November 24 next year," the participant said.

"They also requested updates on Bangladesh's preparations to obtain EU Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) status," they added.

Another participant, speaking anonymously, said the UN CDP team also sought information on Bangladesh's current economic situation, including employment, exports, and imports. "The meeting also covered the private sector's recent performance in trade, business, and the economy," they added.

READ MORE ON B3

Bangladesh yet to benefit from GI products: BUILD study

Many heritage items are at risk of losing their GI tag to other countries

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Despite securing the first geographical indication (GI) status in Bangladesh, the Jamdani industry is struggling amid poor commercialisation and weak enforcement.

While the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) Jamdani Industrial Estate located in Narayanganj generates Tk 30-32 crore annually, many weavers earn just Tk 5,000-7,000 per month — barely enough to survive.

GI certificate holders have received no training, limiting its impact. Export volumes remain untracked, and past gains from a 25 percent cash incentive in 1997 — which boosted exports to \$19.69 million — have faded, according to a recent study by the Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD), a public-private dialogue platform.

Without proper support, the industry risks decline, even during peak seasons such as Eid, when projected sales reach Tk 150-160 crore, the study added.

The report said that despite registering 60 GI products, Bangladesh has yet to unlock their commercial

MAJOR GI PRODUCTS OF BANGLADESH

Jamalpur's Nakshi Katha

Chapainawabganj's Khirsapat mango

Rajshahi-Chapainawabganj's Fazli mango

Dhakai Muslim

Jamdani sari

Gopalganj's Rosagolla

Tangail sari

Sundarbans' honey



A view of the Jamdani sari market in Narayanganj's Rupganj. Although the Jamdani sari has received a GI certificate, the manufacturers have not approached the local office to take the initiative further.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

value due to limited international recognition, weak market strategy, and a lack of producer involvement.

The study draws a sharp contrast between flagship GIs like Hilsa, Jamdani, and Nakshi Kantha, and the reality that many remain "paper GIs" with minimal economic return.

GI, a form of intellectual property, links products to their place of origin and ensures authenticity.

Globally, it is known to boost rural incomes, preserve heritage, and enhance export competitiveness. But in Bangladesh, most GIs remain stuck at the registration phase.

The Department of Patents, Designs, and Trademarks (DPDT) started issuing

GI certifications in 2016. Nearly 90 percent of applications came from government agencies, and efforts to reap benefits from GI-tagged products have so far been very limited.

Ferdous Ara Begum, chief executive officer of BUILD, said, "We have only completed the first step of the GI process. We need to implement a full GI lifecycle, which includes infrastructure, financing, marketing, and community mobilisation".

The report said legal recognition alone is not enough. "Without coordinated branding, market access, and international protection, GI-tagged goods cannot command the premium prices they deserve."

The paper noted that GI-tagged

products often fetch 20-30 percent higher prices in global markets. For small producers, this could mean increased revenues and improved livelihoods. Yet, Bangladesh's GI ecosystem lacks strategic marketing, value chain financing, and export incentives.

The study said the country's GI-tagged items reportedly generated \$840 million in exports in the fiscal year 2024-25. But most of this value comes from non-GI-certified products falling under similar trade codes.

In fact, none of the registered GIs are currently exported under official GI labels — limiting their market leverage and global recognition.

READ MORE ON B3

Pubali Bank holds CLS agent conference

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Pubali Bank PLC recently organised the “CLS Agent Conference-2025” at its head office in Motijheel, Dhaka.

Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank PLC, attended the conference as the chief guest, according to a press release.

Ali emphasised increasing the efficiency of CLS agents, improving customer-friendly services, enhancing transparency in the loan disbursement system, and making network activities more dynamic through this conference.

He said the bank will take various initiatives to make CLS services more modern and technology-based in the future.

“Pubali Bank always values efficiency, honesty and cooperation. Today’s award will boost their motivation, and the bank’s growth will be further accelerated,” he added.

Md Malekul Islam, deputy general manager and head of the retail business division, presided over the programme.

The bank awarded the top 13 performing CLS agents for the year 2024.

Mohammad Esha, Ahmed Enayet Manzur, Md Shahnewaz Khan and Mohammad Anisuzzaman, deputy managing directors of the bank, along with regional managers and division heads from the head office, were also present.



Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank PLC, poses for a group photograph with the award-winning CLS agents and participants of the “CLS Agent Conference-2025” at the bank’s head office in Motijheel, Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

IFIC Bank gets new DMD

STAR BUSINESS DESK

IFIC Bank PLC has appointed Sheikh Akhter Uddin Ahmed as a deputy managing director (DMD), effective from November 25, 2025.

Ahmed began his professional banking career at National Bank PLC as a probationary officer in 1998, according to a press release.

He developed strong foundations in general banking, credit management, foreign exchange, and remittance operations.

Over the years, he advanced through diverse leadership roles at both branch and head office levels, consistently demonstrating operational excellence and strategic foresight.

With a distinguished career spanning 27 years in both domestic and international banking, Ahmed brings a wealth of expertise and proven leadership to IFIC Bank.



Sheikh Akhter Uddin Ahmed

National Bank launches ‘remittance cash payment automation’ system



PHOTO: NATIONAL BANK

Adil Chowdhury, managing director of National Bank PLC, inaugurates the “Remittance Cash Payment Automation” system at the bank’s head office in Dhaka on Tuesday.

STAR BUSINESS DESK

National Bank PLC has launched the “Remittance Cash Payment Automation” system, marking a bold step forward in the bank’s digital transformation.

Adil Chowdhury, managing director of

National Bank PLC, inaugurated the new system at the bank’s head office in Dhaka on Tuesday, according to a press release.

In his remarks, Chowdhury emphasised the transformative nature of the milestone. “With the introduction of Remittance Cash Payment Automation, National Bank has taken another

significant step toward technology and modernisation.”

“From now on, customers will be able to receive remittance funds sent by their loved ones from any branch or sub-branch of National Bank in the shortest possible time. Additionally, this automated process will ensure complete accuracy and the fastest reconciliation.”

The new system is set to dramatically enhance the customer experience for millions of remittance beneficiaries, ensuring faster turnaround, improved service quality, and hassle-free remittance payments nationwide.

Kazi Kamal Uddin Ahmed, deputy managing director (in-charge), and Milton Roy, head of the foreign remittance division and retail liability department, highlighted the bank’s expanding technological capabilities and reaffirmed National Bank’s strong performance and leadership in the remittance sector.

With this launch, National Bank PLC reinforces its commitment to innovation, service excellence, and building a more efficient, technology-driven banking future for Bangladesh, the release added.



Md Abul Hashem, managing director and chief executive officer of Uttara Bank PLC, inaugurates the bank’s contact centre in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: UTTARA BANK

Uttara Bank launches ‘contact centre’ in Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Uttara Bank PLC yesterday launched a Contact Centre in Dhaka.

Md Abul Hashem, managing director and chief executive officer of Uttara Bank PLC, inaugurated the centre as the chief guest, according to a press release.

Equipped with modern and advanced

technology, the centre will provide banking information round-the-clock (24 hours) through hotline number 16645.

Maksudul Hasan, additional managing director of the bank, Md Rezaul Karim and Khandaker Ali Samnoon, deputy managing directors; along with other senior officers and executives were also present at the launching event.

Al-Arafah Islami Bank signs MoU with Sunlife Insurance for digital premium services

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sunlife Insurance Company Limited, enabling seamless premium collection, enhanced data security, real-time reporting, and efficient financial reconciliation across Sunlife’s operational network.

This partnership sets a new benchmark in digital financial services by improving customer experience and operational efficiency.

Md Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy managing director of Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, and Md Rafique Ahmed, chief executive officer of Sunlife Insurance Company Limited, signed the MoU at the bank’s head office in Dhaka on Tuesday, according to a press release.

The collaboration will ensure a more secure and effective collection management system for corporate clients through innovative banking technology.



PHOTO: AL-ARAFAH ISLAMI BANK

Md Rafique Ahmed, chief executive officer of Sunlife Insurance Company Limited, and Md Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy managing director of Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, exchange signed documents of a memorandum of understanding at the bank’s head office in Dhaka on Tuesday.

NBFI liquidation plan

FROM PAGE B1

nothing left to rebuild with. Now, with liquidation coming, small investors are being hit hardest,” he added.

Islam said many investors were misled because financial statements did not reflect the true extent of the problems.

“Auditors and credit rating agencies must be held accountable. Regulators, too, cannot avoid responsibility,” he added.

According to BB data, the eight NBFIs accounted for 52 per cent of the sector’s Tk 25,089 crore in defaulted loans at the end of last year. Twelve institutions alone carried 73.5 per cent of all bad loans in the sector.

In January, the central bank classified 20 NBFIs as financially “red-category” – meaning they had dangerously high defaulted loans and weak capital positions – and asked them to justify why their licences should not be cancelled.

Nine failed to provide satisfactory answers and have been put on the initial liquidation list.

DIFFERENT TREATMENT FOR NBFIs?

A senior official of the Bangladesh

Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) said the regulator would communicate with the government if liquidation proceeds, in order to safeguard small investors, though he declined to specify how that might be done.

“The government doesn’t consult us before making such decisions. We are left out,” said another BSEC official.

Earlier, during discussions on the five bank merger, the BSEC had urged the central bank to ensure that general shareholders did not lose everything – a plea that went unanswered.

The BB governor later said investors of the five banks would not get anything from the merger, adding that the government could decide separately whether to offer compensation. No such announcement has been made for the NBFIs so far.

Asif Khan, president of the CFA Society, an association of investment professionals, said, “There is no difference between what happened in several banks and these NBFIs. But as banks are larger, the government thought to save some of them.”

“The situation of the NBFIs has already impacted the price of their stocks. Shares of many are down below Tk 1 or around Tk 2,” he stated.

He added that NBFIs are already bankrupt and have failed to repay depositors’ funds for several years. “In this situation, shareholders have nothing to get back. Depositors have priority in repayment. Even if the government wanted to give something to shareholders, who would bear the cost?”

Khan suggested that a system should be created to prevent such cases, with proper reporting of NPLs and accountability for regulators. “Finally, wrongdoers should be made to send a signal,” he said.

A top official of a leading NBFI noted that while shareholders accept market risks, it is unfair that general shareholders bear full losses caused largely by misconduct.

“Whatever decision the government takes regarding banks, it should be similar for NBFIs,” he said on condition of anonymity.

BB spokesperson Arief Hossain Khan said there has been no update on the liquidation of the NBFIs as of now.



বিদ্যুৎ জ্বালানি ও খনিজ সম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়
নর্দান ইলেকট্রিসিটি সাপ্লাই পিএলসি
(বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ডের একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান)
কোম্পানি সচিব এর দপ্তর
প্রধান কার্যালয়: বিদ্যুৎ ভবন, হেডেম খাঁ, রাজশাহী-৬০০০
www.nesco.gov.bd

Memo No. 27.29.0000.082.011.11.25.261

Date: 26/11/2025

Re-Circular of Job Opportunity

With reference to the Recruitment Circular Memo No. 27.29.0000.082.011.11.25.312; Date: 20/10/2025 published in NESCO website, career site along with The Daily Star & Daily Jugantor by Northern Electricity Supply PLC, re-circular has been made for the following post. However, Candidates who have already applied in aforesaid circular needn't to apply further.

1.0 Brief introduction to the Company
Northern Electricity Supply PLC (NESCO) is a State-Owned Company (SOC), responsible for distributing electricity across the distinctive parts of Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions, encompassing 16 districts. Established in August 2005 and commencing commercial operations since October 2016, NESCO has significantly contributed to the region's power distribution, ensuring reliable & uninterrupted electricity supply to its customers. Now, NESCO invites applications from eligible candidates from the bona fide citizens of Bangladesh for immediate appointment for the following post on a contractual basis:

Sl.	Name of the Post	NESCO Pay Grade	Basic Salary	No. of Post	Age
01	Executive Director (Finance)	Grade-II	Tk. 1,49,000/-	01	Between 45-60 years of age as on 22/10/2025

2.0 Job Description
The Executive Director (Finance) is the Chief Finance Officer of the Company reporting to the Managing Director. It is a strategic level post. The incumbent shall act as a member of the management team of the Company to assist the Managing Director for overall financial management, ensuring compliances of laws, rules and regulations for good governance including development of setup, systems and financial functions of the organization. He/She should formulate business strategies and financial plans that reflect the long-term corporate goals and priorities established by the company. He/She should implement Financial Module under Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) particularly with emphasis on software-based accounting system for all Regional Account Offices (RAOs). He/She should prepare annual budget and revised budget considering income, expenditure, load and consumer growth, investment possibilities as well as other relevant financial matters; Identify multiples sources of investment opportunities, making comparative statement of their advantages and disadvantages; Identify possible sources of increasing non-operating income and taking appropriate measures to that end. Prepare bi-monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, yearly accounts and cumulative accounts in comparison with similar accounts of preceding year and reporting to competent authority. He/She should supervise collection of online bill, new connection application fees, consumer security deposit, disconnection & reconnection fees and estimate money through all banks with the help of ICT department and other relative means. He/She should endeavor to raise capital from the Capital Markets if required.

3.0 Educational Qualification and Requirements
a. At least MBA/MCom in Finance/Accounting from any recognized university. Professional qualification such as ACA/ACMA will be counted as an added advantage;
b. Candidates passed in the grading system must possess at least CGPA 3.5 on a scale of 5.0 and CGPA 2.5 on a scale of 4.0. Candidates passed in the conventional system (Class/Division) must possess at least 2nd class/division. No third Division/Class at any stage of the academic career shall be acceptable;
c. **In case of Public Sector (GoB/SOE's/Autonomous Bodies)**, the candidate should have at least 18 years of experience of which at least 3 years in a senior management position (National Pay Scales substantive grade 4 & above) in power sector;
d. **In case of State-owned companies (SOCs) of the power sector**, the candidate should have at least 18 years of experience, of which at least 3 years in a senior management position (DGM or equivalent & above) in power sector;
e. **In case of private sector**, the candidate should have at least 18 years of experience, of which 3 years in senior management/leadership position in well reputed organization(s) in power sector. Moreover, the candidate's experience certificate must include detailed job responsibilities authorized by competent authority;
f. Must be able to demonstrate knowledge about relevant Govt. rules & regulations, PPA and PPR, etc.
g. Must be able to demonstrate knowledge in business laws, labor law, Tax/VAT Laws, Total Quality Management (TQM), Total Productive Management (TPM), Corporate Governance, Strategic Management, etc.;
h. Must demonstrate strong participatory leadership ability and possess adequate knowledge in corporate Management;
i. Able to express information, in both English and Bangla, to individuals or groups effectively; make clear and convincing presentations, write concisely, and convincingly for the intended audience;
j. Strong business acumen with a deep understanding of financial management, Procurement, strategic planning, and operational management.
k. Excellent Negotiation skills with government agencies, development partners and private investors will be an advantage.

4.0 Age
Minimum: 45 years, Maximum: 60 years as on 22/10/2025.

5.0 Tenure of Appointment
The initial contract will be for 3 years subject to the maximum age limit of 65 years. It can be extended for two more terms of 3 years subject to the maximum age limit of 65 years in case of competent candidate.

6.0 Salary and Allowances
Basic pay Tk. 1,49,000/- (One lac forty-nine thousand) only per month plus house rent 40% of basic pay, 2 (two) festival bonus, Boishakhi allowance (20% of basic) per year, gratuity, contributory provident fund, group insurance, leave encashment, reimbursement of medical expenses and other fringe benefits will be admissible as per provisions of the company. He/She will also be entitled to a full-time transport with fuel and driver. Income tax shall be paid by the incumbent.

7.0 Submission of Application
i) Interested candidates are requested to apply only through the 'Online Application Form' where in a scanned recent photograph, signature, NID, all academic certificates, transcripts and relevant experience certificates (Mentioning detailed job responsibilities authorized by competent authority for each position with duration of service) must be duly uploaded.
ii) Candidates still serving in GoB/SOE's/Autonomous bodies/SOC's must upload one additional document i.e., **NOC** from the Authority.
iii) The online application form will be available in NESCO career site <https://career.nesco.gov.bd>. Before filing up the application form please read the instructions carefully which will be available in the career section of NESCO website (<https://nesco.gov.bd>) along with notice section of career site (<https://career.nesco.gov.bd>). Online Application should be submitted from 27/11/2025 (9.00am) to 10/12/2025 (upto 5.00pm). Required updated information about this recruitment will be available in NESCO website and NESCO career site. Candidates are requested to collect relevant information about this recruitment from NESCO website and NESCO career site.

8.0 Please note that only short-listed candidates will be called for interview/recruitment test. Candidates applied for the post shall have to pay Tk. 2000/- (Two Thousand) for submitting this application. No TA/DA will be given for participating in the interviews.

9.0 The NESCO authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the applications without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

GD-2559

Most. Ismat Ara
Company Secretary
Email: cs@nesco.gov.bd
Phone: 01713-850768

26.11.2025

Expand climate risk insurance for vulnerable communities: experts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government should remove barriers and formulate the necessary policies to introduce climate risk insurance (CRI) products, encouraging private insurance companies to enter the market, experts urged yesterday.

The recommendations came at an event titled “From Risk to Resilience: Institutionalising Climate Risk Insurance into Bangladesh’s Social Protection and Disaster Management Systems,” jointly organised by the World Food Programme, Oxfam, and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka.

Experts also suggested the government consider value-added tax exemptions for micro-insurance, revise commission ceilings, and develop a targeted premium subsidy framework based on vulnerability and climate exposure.

Prof Suborna Barua, chairman of the Department of International Business at the University of Dhaka, said, “Opening reinsurance markets to more private or foreign firms will give insurance companies greater choice, improve service quality, reduce costs, and boost efficiency, including for CRI.”

He added, “The government should formally recognise climate and disaster risk insurance in national plans and policies and provide fiscal incentives such as VAT exemptions. Better coordination between ministries is also needed to accelerate the adoption of CRI.”

Bangladesh is one of the world’s most climate-exposed countries, regularly facing floods, cyclones, storm surges, and unpredictable rainfall that threaten livelihoods, food security, and rural incomes. For millions of smallholder farmers and vulnerable households, a single climate event can destroy a season’s income, pushing them further into debt and poverty.

Maribeth Black, head of vulnerability analysis and monitoring at the World Food Programme, said, “WFP is working closely



Experts are seen at a roundtable discussion on institutionalising climate risk insurance in Bangladesh, jointly organised by the World Food Programme, Oxfam, and The Daily Star, at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

with Bangladesh to design and test climate insurance products and to review existing policies and legislation to integrate CRI guidelines into future response mechanisms.”

Tarik Ur Rahman, consultant at Green Delta Insurance, said, “With rising climate risks, GDI’s proven, scalable, tech-driven, and farmer-centric model is ready for national and global replication, giving vulnerable communities the confidence to face an uncertain future.”

Mohammad Emran Hasan, head of climate justice and natural resource rights at Oxfam Bangladesh, stressed, “The government and private actors must carefully introduce new insurance products into the market.”

Imanun Nabi Khan, assistant country representative of FAO Bangladesh, noted, “Loss and damage are inevitable and must be accurately measured. During last year’s floods, even households receiving remittances lacked basic resources and could not communicate

with family abroad. This shows that money alone is not enough—precise data and technologies are essential.”

Md Najmul Alam, deputy secretary to the Ministry of Planning, said, “Bangladesh is one of the world’s most climate-exposed countries.”

He urged development partners to work with the government to help cover part of farmers’ insurance premiums, noting that the government already provides extensive subsidies.

M Aslam Alam, chairman of the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority, said, “The current insurance law does not cover parametric insurance, but the proposed amendment to the Insurance Act includes it. Once approved, this will remove the legal barrier.”

Muhammad Tanjim Ferdous, in charge of NGO and foreign missions at The Daily Star, moderated the event.

Inequality to deepen further

FROM PAGE B1

It warns that the trend is now accelerating as economic pressures mount.

Bangladesh’s upward movement on the Gini scale suggests that the benefits of growth are increasingly concentrated among higher-income households.

Since 2016, consumption growth has become less pro-poor, with gains concentrated among middle- and upper-income groups while the poorest households have benefited least.

The World Bank estimates that nearly 20 lakh additional people will fall into poverty in 2025, pushing the national poverty rate above 21 percent. Since 2022, around 60 lakh people have fallen into poverty, with the poverty gap projected to widen by two points by the end of this year, signalling deeper deprivation among the poor.

Impacts have been uneven: since 2022, households with high-skilled workers, those in quality jobs, and remittance recipients have largely been insulated from the downturn, in some cases maintaining or even improving their welfare.

“This divergence in household welfare is anticipated to increase inequality by

nearly 2 Gini points by 2025,” said the WB report.

However, the assessment also highlights improvements in educational equity. The influence of inherited circumstances, such as gender, place of birth, and ethnicity, on years of formal education has declined sharply, from explaining 50 percent of inequality among those born in the early 1960s to 20 percent among those born in the 1990s.

This progress is largely due to the expansion of primary education, which has reached most children regardless of background, and gender- and geography-based disparities have nearly disappeared. Similarly, the gap has been shrinking over generations, showing convergence for those born in the late 1970s and for younger cohorts.

The report cautions, however, that gains in secondary education have been less egalitarian. While enrolment has increased at all levels due to policies implemented since the 2000s, inherited circumstances continue to influence access to upper secondary education, meaning inequality remains more pronounced beyond the primary level.

Staff of five merging banks

FROM PAGE B1

A recent Bangladesh Bank statement showed that the five banks are paying staff salaries from depositors’ funds.

For instance, First Security Islami Bank recorded a negative operating income of Tk 4,308 crore, while salary and allowance expenses stood at Tk 652 crore as of December last year.

This indicates that staff salaries were being drawn from depositors’ funds.

The bank posted a net loss of Tk 5,450.15 crore last year, while total operating expenses were Tk 1,051.61 crore.

On August 26, the central bank wrote

to the bank’s chairman, stating that a BB inspection had found “serious governance failure.”


Earlier this month, Bangladesh Bank granted initial approval and issued a letter of intent to the government for the formation of Sammilito Islami Bank PLC, a new state-owned bank created through the merger of the five troubled shariah-based banks.

Since the installation of the interim government last year, Bangladesh Bank has so far extended around Tk 35,300 crore as liquidity support to those five banks, but the lenders are yet to repay the fund to the banking watchdog.

**Rupali Bank PLC**
Procurement Division, Head Office, Dhaka - 1000

Invitation for New Enlistment & Renewal

RUPALI BANK PLC		
1. Ministry/Division	Rupali Bank PLC, Procurement Division	
2. Procuring Entity Name	Rupali Bank PLC, Procurement Division, Head Office, Dhaka	
3. Procuring Entity District	All over Bangladesh	
4. Invitation for	Category for Renewal of Enlistment: 01) Civil & Electrical Works 02) Mechanical & Electro-mechanical 03) ICT Items 04) Internet & Data Connectivity Service Provider 05) Furniture & Fixture supply, Installation & Repairing 06) Sign Board supply, Installation & Repairing 07) Table Stationeries, Crockeries, Towel, Jainamaz, Paper, Toner cartridge etc 08) Printing Stationery 09) Rubber & Revolving Stamp/Token/Crest/Name Plate/Honor Board 10) Tires & Batteries of Motor Vehicle 11) Motor Vehicle Repairing Category for New Enlistment: 12) Fire Safety 13) Social Purchasing	
5. Invitation Ref No	RBPLC/Procurement/2025/2047	
6. Date of Invitation	26.11.2025	
KEY INFORMATION		
7. Procurement Method	Limited Tendering Method (LTM)	
FUNDING FORMATION		
8. Budget and source of Funds	Own Fund	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
9. Application Closing Date and Time	Date 09.12.2025	Time 4:00 PM
10. Name & Address of the Office(s)	Rupali Bank PLC, Procurement Division, Head office, Dhaka Eunoo Trade Centre (Level -14), 52-53, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000	
- Application Form Availability	From Date: 27.11.2025 to Date: 10.12.2025, Time: 10.00AM – 3.00PM	
- Receiving Application Form	From Date: 27.11.2025 to Date: 10.12.2025, Time: 10.00AM – 4.00PM	
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT		
11. Eligibility of Applicant	a. Must have valid & updated Trade License; b. Must have e-TIN Certificate; c. Must have updated Income Tax Certificate; d. Must have valid VAT Registration Certificate; e. Other documents or qualifications mentioned in Application Form; f. Any firm/company or owner of the firm/company debarred or blacklist by Banks, Financial Institutions, Govt. Organization, Semi Govt. Organization & Autonomous Organization is not eligible for the Enlistment; g. Applicants in other categories cannot apply in the “ Social Purchasing ” category; h. Only the following applicants are eligible to apply for the “ Social Purchasing ” category: i. Micro and small enterprise: Any person or organization that has been awarded a contract for a maximum aggregate value of 1 (one) crore taka, regardless of the type of procurement, under PPR rules, within 3 (three) years from the date of invitation to enlistment. ii. Women-owned enterprise: All those sole proprietorships in which the owner is a woman. iii. New enterprise: All individuals or organizations that have obtained their first business registration within 2 (two) years prior to the date of invitation to enlistment.	
12. Price of Application Form (Non-refundable)	Interested new applicants & existing enlisted applicants have to apply their official letter-head pad along with a Pay-order/Demand Draft Tk. 1,000.00 (One Thousand Only) issued from any schedule bank of Bangladesh in favor of “ Rupali Bank PLC, Head Office, Dhaka ” to collect each application form of enlistment.	
13. New Enlistment/Renewal Fee (Non-refundable)	After the evaluation of enlistment only eligible organization shall be noticed to submit New Enlistment/Renewal Fee in the form of a Pay-order/Demand Draft issued from any branch of Rupali Bank PLC in favor of “ Rupali Bank PLC, Head Office, Dhaka ” are as follows- a. New Enlistment Fee Tk. 5,000.00 (Five Thousand) only; b. Renewal Fee Tk. 2,000.00 (Two Thousand) only; c. If the organization is sole proprietorships in which the owner is a woman- i. New Enlistment Fee will be Tk. 3,000.00 (Three Thousand) only; ii. Renewal fee will be Tk. 1,500.00 (One Thousand Five Hundred) only.	
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
14. Name of Official Inviting Application	MOHAMMED SHAJAHAN CHOUDHURY	
15. Designation of Official Inviting Application	General Manager	
16. Address of Official Inviting Application	Rupali Bank PLC, Procurement Division, Head office, Dhaka Eunoo Trade Centre (Level -14), 52-53, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000	
17. Contact details of Official Inviting	+880247121284, +8801557054720	
18. The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all Applications.		


(MOHAMMED SHAJAHAN CHOUDHURY)
General Manager

GD-2567

Bangladesh yet to benefit

FROM PAGE B1

The report compares Bangladesh’s GI performance with countries like India and Italy. Italy’s GI sector contributes over \$19 billion to its economy annually, supported by strong legal frameworks, producer associations, and global market strategies.

India, meanwhile, has moved swiftly to register and protect shared cultural products, sometimes beating Bangladesh to key filings.

In a recent example, India secured GI registration for the “Tangail Sari of Bengal” before Bangladesh, complicating future branding and export efforts. Other shared heritage items, including Jamdani and Sundarbans’ Honey, face similar risks.

Md Saiful Islam, chairman of BSCIC, said that although the Jamdani sari has received a GI certificate, the manufacturers have not approached the local office to take the initiative further.

“Achieving the certificate is not the end — it requires active efforts to use it as a brand,” he said, adding, “The manufacturers should be proactive in engaging with us for the next steps.”

Unfortunately, BSCIC officials do not receive cooperation from the Jamdani craftsmen due to a lack of awareness, he added.

Chandra Shekhar Saha, president of the Bangladesh Jatiya Karushipia Parishad and a Jamdani expert, said

that while GI registration is a step forward, key steps like creating an official logo or trademark remain unaddressed.

“I’m not aware of any framework for how a logo would be used or maintained,” he said.

He added that beyond the GI announcement, there has been little follow-up.

On counterfeits, Saha said machine-made imitations are widespread and hard to regulate under current laws. “Imitations aren’t new — China and others have replicated fabrics for years. We’re surrounded by them,” he said.

Begum said there is a need for dedicated display centres, stronger producer networks, and coordinated public-private efforts. “A clear roadmap must be included in the national GI policy, with time-bound implementation targets,” she added.

The BUILD study recommends formulating a comprehensive National GI Policy under the Ministry of Industries. This policy should include time-bound targets for export promotion, capacity building, community mobilisation, and diplomatic coordination on shared heritage.

It also urges the government to fast-track the long-pending GI Tag system, implement product traceability, and move from direct cash incentives to branding subsidies and production-linked incentives for GI producers.

UN panel queries

FROM PAGE B1

Earlier, on November 10, a team led by Roland Mollerus, acting director of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, met with business leaders, independent economists, senior government officials, and labour union representatives.

They discussed the country’s macroeconomic stability, while business leaders urged a deferment of graduation by at least

six years, citing insufficient readiness.

Despite these calls, the interim government has repeatedly affirmed its intention to maintain the graduation timeline. The independent UN commission is preparing a report on the visit, which will be submitted to the UN CDP soon.

The UN panel is scheduled to review both Bangladesh’s 2025 annual report and the commission’s findings in February before finalising decisions on the country’s LDC graduation or any possible deferment.

**ইস্টার্ন রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড**
Eastern Refinery Limited
(A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)

e-Tender Notice No. ER/TN/e-GP/C-09/2025-2026
Open Tendering Method (OTM)

e-Tender has been invited in the National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of work as stated below:

SL No.	Tender ID No.	Tender Package No. & Description	Tender publication date and time	Tender last selling/ downloading date and time	Tender closing & opening date and time
1	1181885	ER/C-15/2025-2026 Sinking and installation of 14"x8" diameter MS Deep Tube Well at ERL Tank Farm Area (at the South Area of Tank-T6109 Dyke)	25 November, 2025 15:06 Hrs	08 December, 2025 16:00 Hrs	09 December, 2025 15:00 Hrs

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 (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

GD-2565

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department, Kishoreganj
e-Mail: ee_kis@eedmoe.gov.bd

Memo No. 37.07.4800.001.07.013.25-606

Date: 26-11-2025


Tender Notice
LTM

e- Tender is invited the National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of Works as stated below:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of Work/Description of Package	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Security Submission (Last Date & Time)	Tender Closing/Opening (Date & Time)
1	1179055	Repair & Renovation Works of Madhakholia Kamil Madrasa at Hossainpur, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
2	1179056	Repair & Renovation Works of Mongalbaria Kamil Madrasa at Pakundia, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
3	1179057	Repair & Renovation Works of Kagarchar Hossainia M.U Girls Dakhil Madrasa at Pakundia, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
4	1179058	Repair & Renovation Works of Chilikara Rashidia Girls Dakhil Madrasa at Pakundia, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
5	1179059	Repair & Renovation Works of Mongalbaria Girls Dakhil Madrasa at Pakundia, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
6	1179060	Repair & Renovation Works of Chouganga Senior Madrasa at Itna, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
7	1179061	Repair & Renovation Works of Austagram Hossainia Fazil Madrasa at Austagram, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
8	1179062	Repair & Renovation Works of Fekamar F.U Girls Dakhil Madrasa at Katiadi, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
9	1179063	Repair & Renovation Works of Moshua Dakhil Madrasa at Katiadi, Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00
10	1147220	Modernization at principle room and construction of single toilet room works at Kishoreganj govt.women college.sadar,Kishoreganj.	14/12/2025 at 16.00	15/12/2025 at 14.00	15/12/2025 at 16.00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd> is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd> and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). All other terms and conditions will remain unchanged.


Ariful Islam Khan
Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Kishoreganj

GD-2562



Sohail RK Hussain

Bank Asia ramps up retail-SME drive, bets on digital banking

Managing director shares plans with The Daily Star

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Bank Asia plans to accelerate the expansion of retail and SME lending, strengthen its presence at home and abroad, widen its agent network, and continue leading digital innovation in the coming years. The private bank wants to expand SME and retail loans to at least 50 percent of the total portfolio within the next three years.

To achieve this, Bank Asia is crafting a business ecosystem through an integrated approach. At the same time, it is reinforcing its risk management and credit monitoring frameworks to ensure responsible expansion.

“We are focusing on strong, reputable clients with proven track records and solid business fundamentals while closely reviewing marginal accounts in our existing corporate portfolio and taking targeted actions to address early warning signals,” said Sohail RK Hussain, managing director of Bank Asia PLC.

He shared the plan in an interview with The Daily Star, marking the 26th anniversary of the bank. It began operations on November 27, 1999.

Hussain, who led two leading private commercial banks prior to joining Bank Asia, said the lender has tightened the alignment between facility approvals and the borrower's business fundamentals, and placed greater emphasis on post-disbursement monitoring to ensure credit is used as intended.

“Ultimately, our objective is clear: to support sectors with genuine growth potential while safeguarding asset quality and maintaining a well-balanced, resilient loan portfolio,” he said.

As of September 2025, Bank Asia's loans and advances stood at Tk 28,908 crore, while deposits and other accounts totalled Tk 44,615 crore, according to its quarterly report.

The private commercial bank logged Tk 351 crore in net profit in the January-September period of the current financial year, surpassing its full-year earnings in 2024. The profit surge was driven by stronger treasury operations, improved cost efficiency, lower tax expenses, and a strategic shift in lending and digital priorities.

Hussain said the bank aims to

position itself among Bangladesh's top two or three banks within the next three to five years— not only in size and profitability but also in efficiency, asset quality, governance, capital strength, sustainability, and inclusion.

The bank is making a “deliberate strategic shift” towards SME and retail lending, targeting these segments to account for at least half of its total loans within the next three years. He said these groups offer more sustainable long-term growth and a more diversified risk profile.

To support this transition, the lender is strengthening its market positioning, redesigning products around customer needs, restructuring teams, and

districts across the country, with more than 5,000 agent outlets, ensuring convenient access to banking services in remote and underserved areas.

To further extend the service to the doorstep of customers, it has innovated the micro merchant channel and onboarded 28,800-plus micro merchants to date, he added.

“Our substantial rural presence — 89 percent rural agents, 90 percent rural accounts, 83 percent rural deposits, 85 percent rural loans, and 64 percent female account ownership — demonstrates our dedication to financial inclusion through agent banking,” he said.

Some 580 agent outlets are owned

interference, and poor risk management practices have weakened the health of many banks and financial institutions.

“Secondly, past lenient loan classification and generous rescheduling policies allowed banks to understate the true extent of their non-performing loans. With the central bank tightening regulations under the interim government, the real picture has now come to light,” he said.

Hussain also spoke about the increased non-performing loan (NPL) ratio of his own bank.

He said NPLs at Bank Asia crossed double digits but said the bank maintains a strong provisioning buffer. Its loan-loss provisions stand at Tk

TAKEAWAYS FROM INTERVIEW



Strategy & expansion

Bank Asia targets to be among top 2-3 banks in 3-5 years

Retail and SME to form 50% of loans within 3 years

Expanding agent and micro merchant networks, rural branches, and nano loans

Digital transformation

Digital banking now central to growth strategy

Over 70% of retail and card transactions are digital

SmartApp to offer instant digital nano loans after pilot success

Financial performance

Net profit up 71% to Tk 351cr (Jan-Sept 2025)

Treasury income up 97% to Tk 1,930cr

Inclusion & sustainability

85% of loans and 90% of accounts originate outside urban centres

580 agent outlets run by women, prioritising ESG and gender finance

Sri Lanka counts on IMF funds as vehicle import costs surge

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's central bank said Wednesday it was counting on the IMF releasing a \$350 million loan instalment to bolster foreign reserves owing to a surge in vehicle imports since a five-year ban was lifted in February.

Governor Nandalal Weerasinghe said he was hopeful of receiving the sixth tranche of a \$2.9 billion, four-year bailout agreed in early 2023 as part of a deal to support the island's tottering economy.

“With the IMF instalment and other funding, we expect an inflow of about \$750 million next month,” Weerasinghe told reporters in Colombo after a review of the economy.

Officials imposed a raft of import restrictions in 2020 when the country was running out of foreign exchange.

The government lifted the ban on vehicle imports in February, sparking a huge splurge by Sri Lankans.

Weerasinghe said about \$1.2 billion had been spent on bringing in cars between February and September, far more than expected.

“We are seeing the pent-up demand easing since July and next year we won't have the same level of vehicle imports,” he said.

How China leveraged its rare earths dominance over US

AFP, Beijing

China's stranglehold on the rare earths industry — from natural reserves and mining through processing and innovation — is the result of a decades-long drive, now giving Beijing crucial leverage in its trade war with the United States.

The 17 key elements will play a vital role in the global economy in coming years, as analysts warn that plans to secure alternative supply chains by Western governments could take years to bear fruit.

Rare earths are crucial for the defence sector — used in fighter jets, missile guidance systems and radar technology — while also having a range of uses in everyday products including smartphones, medical equipment and automobiles.

Visited this month by AFP, the southeastern mining region of Ganzhou — which specialises in “heavy” rare earths including yttrium and terbium — was a hive of activity.

Media access to the secretive industry is rarely granted in China, but despite near-constant surveillance by unidentified minders, AFP journalists saw dozens of trucks driving in and out of one rare earths mine, in addition to several bustling processing facilities.

Sprawling new headquarters are being built in Ganzhou for China Rare Earth Group, one of the country's two largest state-owned companies in the industry following years of consolidation directed by Beijing.

Challenges this year have “paved the way for more countries to look into expanding rare earth metal production and processing”, Heron Lim, economics lecturer at ESSEC Business School, told AFP.

“This investment could pay longer-term dividends,” he said.

TRADE WAR

Sweeping export restrictions China imposed on the sector in early October sent shockwaves across global manufacturing sectors.

The curbs raised alarm bells in Washington, which has been engaged in a renewed trade war with Beijing since President Donald

Trump began his second term.

At a high-stakes meeting in South Korea late last month, Trump and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping agreed to a one-year truce in a blistering tariff war between the world's top two economies.

The deal — which guarantees supply of rare earths and other critical minerals, at least temporarily — effectively neutralised the most punishing US measures and was widely seen as a victory for Beijing.

“Rare earths are likely to remain at the centre of future Sino-US economic negotiations despite the tentative agreements thus far,” Heron Lim told AFP.

“China has demonstrated its willingness to use more trade levers to keep the United States at the negotiating table,” he said.

“The turbulence has created a challenging environment for producers that rely on various rare earth metals, as near-term supply is uncertain.”



A view of the under-construction Rare Earth Industrial Park in Anyuan county, in eastern China's Jiangxi province, on November 21.

PHOTO: AFP

Can AI solve farmers' problems?

ZULKARIN JAHANGIR

There is a rule in complex systems: fragility gathers at the bottom, but the tremor is felt at the top. Bangladesh's food system follows this rule to the letter.

Every season, millions of farmers behave like rational agents trapped inside an irrational market. They generate the most granular data ecosystem in the country — soil moisture, pest movement, rainfall shifts, seed-quality microclimate anomalies — far richer than anything in Dhaka's dashboards.

Yet paradoxically, the farmer has the least access to the intelligence produced by his own labour. This is the Agricultural Intelligence Paradox: the people who generate the data have the least claim over its value.

Economists label this as market failure, technologists call it a systems gap, activists/philosophers call it injustice and farmers simply call it loss. And loss compounds.

Walk through any bazaar in Bangladesh and you will see two different nations: one that grows the food and another that controls its fate. The prices of potatoes, onions and vegetables appear to rise and fall mysteriously. But mystery is merely a polite word for opacity, which in turn is a polite word for power.

For the farmer, each season is a gamble without probabilities. He sells without knowing what others are selling. He stores without knowing who else is storing. He buys fertiliser without knowing the expected return. He takes loans without knowing the real risk.

In Nassim Nicholas Taleb's language, he is exposed to full downside and denied the upside.

Everyone in the chain is hedged — the trader hedges with information, the wholesaler with storage and the exporter with forward contracts. Only the farmer walks naked into volatility.

The zeitgeist of our times, AI, can actually help here, can actually matter, if we let it.

Most conversations about AI are marinated in buzzwords and grandstanding. Large models, digital nations, predictive governance — too often spoken from air-conditioned rooms far from the realities that matter.

But in agriculture, AI becomes brutally simple: it converts uncertainty into probability. It turns volatility into foresight. It turns the blindfold into a window.

Imagine this: price signals two weeks ahead; crop disease detection from a simple photo; storage facility mapping within a 5-10 km radius; hyperlocal weather intelligence instead of vague national alerts; and decision trees for when to sell, store, bargain or wait.

This is not technology hype; it is the mathematics of survival. And survival is political. A nation reveals its priorities by what it chooses to formalise. For decades, we formalised bureaucracy, not intelligence. A Farmer's ID changes that.

It has the potential to be the first institutional acknowledgment that farmers deserve a share of the intelligence they produce.

Through it, a farmer gains: predictive price insights, targeted subsidies, credit access rooted in real data, verified production identity and crop advisory aligned with market cycles. Along with the visibility of storage and transport options.

In other words, that ID shifts the farmer from a price-taker to a player. He gains optionality — the ability to choose rather than be chosen for.

Bangladesh's economy can survive many shocks, but food system fragility is not one of them. A nation collapses not when it lacks food, but when it loses trust in prices. And food prices are simply signals distorted by missing intelligence.

When syndicates can manipulate markets because farmers lack information, you get structural injustice. When farmers take loans without knowing demand curves, you get debt traps. When storage is absent or invisible, you get waste disguised as fate.

AI does not solve politics. But it forces transparency into places where manipulation once hid comfortably. That alone alters power.

The Agricultural Intelligence Paradox is not resolved by apps, dashboards or another round of rural training workshops. These are cosmetic technicalities applied to a structural wound. It is resolved when the intelligence generated by farmers serves the farmers first. When the producer has more information than the middleman. When the price-taker becomes the price-negotiator. When the most fragile actor finally claims the upside.

This is how you restore symmetry in a system built on asymmetry. And that is not just digital reform. It is a political reform. For decades, Bangladesh has built agricultural institutions but not agricultural intelligence.

The Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and a constellation of specialised agencies produced reports, trials and pilot projects, yet the intelligence loop never reached the farmer.

Data stayed in silos, research stayed on paper, and decisions stayed in ministries. The system optimised for bureaucratic output, not farmer outcomes.

Every agency guarded its turf; none built a coherent intelligence layer that connected plots to prices, storage to supply, weather to yield or risk to credit.

In a system where information is fragmented, the farmer remains fragmented. The way forward is not another department, another project or another dashboard — it is integration. A single farmer-centric intelligence spine linking BARC's science, DAE's extension network, Barind Multipurpose Development Authority's irrigation data, the Department of Agricultural Marketing's market prices and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' production cycles.

When these silos speak to each other — and to the farmer — Bangladesh finally moves from agricultural administration to agricultural intelligence.

Food-independent countries — whether the Netherlands, Denmark or Japan — did not achieve security through land or luck, but through relentless investment in farmer intelligence. They removed the blindfold.

The Farmer's ID, strengthened with AI, price prediction and storage mapping, is more than a programme. It is a correction and rebalancing. The future of food security in Bangladesh will not be written in conferences or policy memos.

It will be written in the fields, by farmers who finally see, decide, negotiate and win. With their intelligence comes the nation's stability.

The author is an assistant professor at North South University and member of UNESCO AI Ethics Experts Without Borders. He can be reached at zulkarin@gmail.com