

Star **BUSINESS**



Default loans reveal true state of banking sector: Debapriya

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Eminent economist Debapriya Bhattacharya yesterday said the amount of non-performing loans (NPLs) or default loans exposes the real picture of the banking sector.

"In the past, it had been concealed. Shortfalls in provisions and deficits in reserves have also been revealed.

"It is not just that NPLs have increased; capital shortfalls have also come to light," said Bhattacharya, who is a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

He made the comment at the Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) auditorium while he spoke as the chief guest at the launch of a book, titled "Arthanaitik Sangbadikata" (Economic Journalism), written by economists, experts and economic and business journalists.

The book contains articles on 21 topics ranging from challenges and the way forward after Bangladesh's LDC graduation, inflation, reporting on macroeconomic issues, the budget and reporting related to the budget, financial crime and reporting on the banking sector.

Edited by Ziaur Rahman, editor of the Bangla news portal Arthosuchak, Chandrabati Academy published the book, aiming to inform students of journalism and business journalists on major issues related to the economy and business.

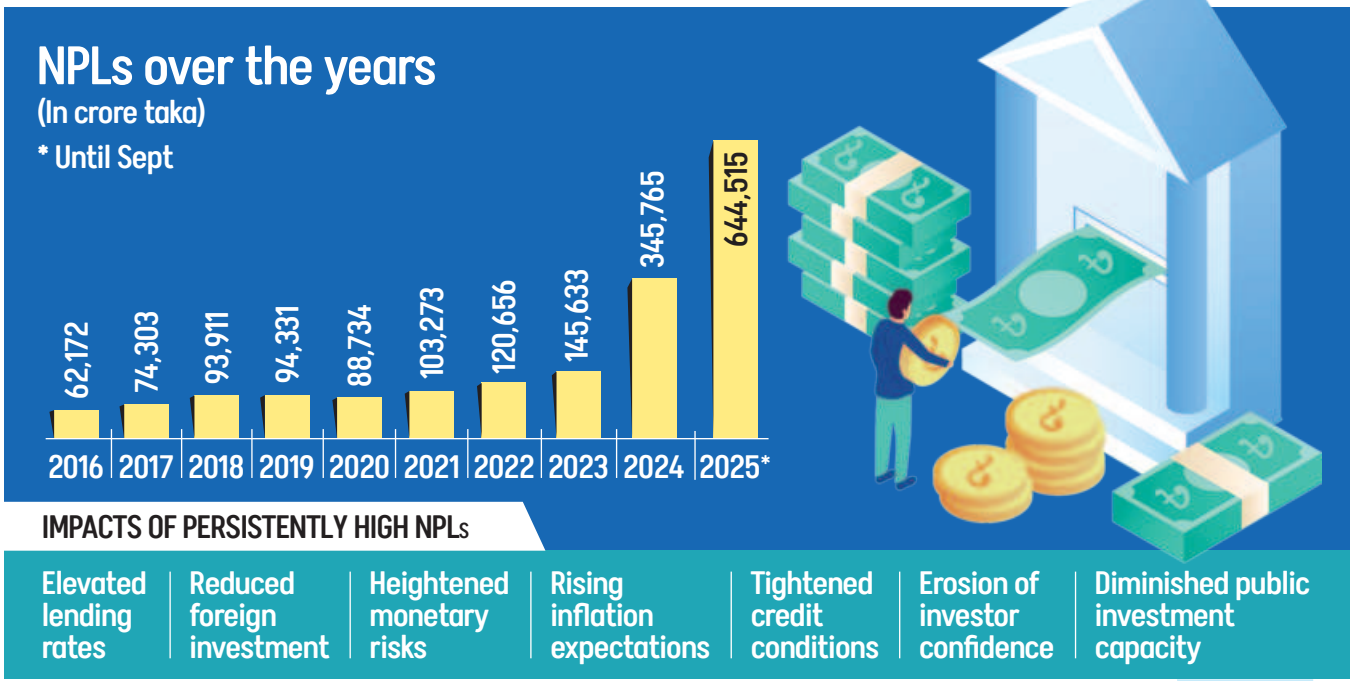
Replying to a question, Debapriya said, "In truth, you did not know your body had so many illnesses. Now that the illnesses have been identified, you are feeling alarmed. I believe there is no reason for distress simply because these internal problems have been exposed."

"The question is: what steps has the current government taken during this period to address these issues?" he said.

"Other than merging the five banks, making these accounts more compliant, appointing administrators in different institutions, and reverting the Banking Companies Act to its previous form — what else has been done? We want to see what has been achieved in terms of good governance."

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High NPLs creating risks of credit crunch, stagflation: PRI



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The high volume of non-performing loans (NPLs) in Bangladesh's banking sector is creating risks of a credit crunch, weakening investment, collapsing investor confidence, and even stagflation, according to the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI).

NPLs, loans that borrowers are failing to repay, have reached Tk 6.44 lakh crore, nearly 36 percent of total disbursed loans, according to a PRI study presented at a seminar on its "Monthly Macroeconomic Insights".

"At least 16 banks have become incapable of issuing new loans," Ashikur Rahman, principal economist of PRI, said while presenting the keynote paper at the event jointly organised by the PRI and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, at the PRI office yesterday.

The paper also noted that distressed assets — the sum of officially classified NPLs along with rescheduled, written-off, and otherwise troubled loans — in the banking sector could now total around Tk 9.5 lakh crore, highlighting the low potential for recovery.

PRI said without decisive action to address rising NPLs, Bangladesh faces mounting financial stability risks.

"Effective NPL resolution will require a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy

— similar to the approaches adopted in the UK, Malaysia, and China — that combines strengthened supervision, robust legal and recovery frameworks, and well designed asset management mechanism," it added.

A CRISIS NEVER ENCOUNTERED BEFORE

When banks hold so many bad loans, they struggle to lend new money, which slows investment, limits public spending, and undermines economic growth. PRI's study warns that the situation could even lead to stagflation, a scenario in which high inflation coexists with low growth and high unemployment.

Rahman noted that with Tk 6.44 lakh crore in bad loans, reducing interest rates is practically impossible.

He said Bangladesh has yet to develop the institutional capacity to implement international best practices for resolving NPLs, largely because the country has never faced a crisis of this magnitude before.

"But the moment has now arrived when such capacity must be built. Bangladesh has much to learn from how countries like Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and China successfully cleaned up their financial sectors," he said.

The economist added that in many countries, specialised asset management companies (AMCs) purchase NPLs from banks' balance sheets to recover value and restore lending capacity.

If the spiralling bad loans remain unchecked, he warned that Bangladesh risks becoming trapped in a high-interest-rate, high-inflation, low-investment, low-growth equilibrium. "Resolving NPLs is no longer a banking issue—it is a macroeconomic imperative."

Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury Parvez, president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI), said businesses are often blamed for rising defaults, but they are not entirely responsible.

"The business environment here is not supportive. Entrepreneurs now have to take fresh loans just to repay earlier ones," he noted.

Chowdhury also pointed out that the loan repayment period, previously six months, has been reduced to three months, meaning loans are now classified as defaulted much faster, which has contributed to the rise in NPLs.

He recommended improving law and order, resolving the energy crisis, ending mob culture, and providing policy support to businesses. "Otherwise, defaulted loans will continue to rise."

The prominent businessman also stressed the importance of a stable political environment and credible elections for sustainable development.

He further highlighted the need for stronger domestic policy frameworks, a long-term energy strategy,

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Govt cuts 700 MHz spectrum price by 10%

BTRC prepares for auction on Jan 14

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The government has approved a 10 percent reduction in the price of the 700 MHz frequency band, often called the "golden spectrum" for mobile networks, as the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) prepares for an auction.

The move is aimed at expanding mobile coverage and improving service quality nationwide.

"We received approval from the ministry on Tuesday," said Major General (ret'd) Md Emdad ul Bari, chairman of the BTRC. "Preparations for the auction have already begun."

The Finance Division formally approved the reduction, which aligns with global trends where the cost of similar spectrum bands has fallen sharply. According to GSMA, an international mobile industry body, prices for frequencies below 1 GHz have dropped about 75 percent between 2012 and 2023.

After the 10 percent reduction, the base price of 700 MHz spectrum is set at Tk 237 crore per MHz for a 15-year allocation, down from Tk 263 crore per MHz

AUCTION AND PRICE DETAILS

BTRC documents show that after the 10 percent reduction, the base price of 700 MHz spectrum is set at Tk 237 crore per MHz for a 15-year allocation, down from Tk 263 crore per MHz.

Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser for telecom and ICT, said the government had earlier directed the BTRC to lower the spectrum price following requests from global telecom investors.

He explained that under the country's telecom policy, operators could receive an additional 20 percent discount if they meet network rollout targets within the first two years.

Taiyeb also noted that the government plans to allow payment of spectrum charges from the second year, giving operators time to establish their network infrastructure before financial obligations begin.

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Govt aims to save Tk 3,000cr annually on fertiliser

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The interim government is pursuing measures expected to save between Tk 2,000 crore and Tk 3,000 crore annually on fertiliser, according to Mohammad Emdad Ullah Mian, secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The measures have already saved Tk 1,000 crore this year, he said at a seminar on local farm machinery and the challenges of exporting agricultural products at the CIRDP in Dhaka yesterday.

The event was organised by the Bangladesh Agricultural Journalists Forum (BAJF) in celebration of its 25th anniversary, marking the opening of a four-day international conference, "Political Commitment in Agriculture and Food."



The secretary revealed that a long-term plan is being formulated to modernise and develop Bangladesh's agricultural sector over the next 25 years. The final draft is expected by December.

He also stated that Tk 600 crore from the mechanisation project has already been returned to the government.

Md Durrul Huda, chief scientific officer and head of the Farm Machinery and Post-Harvest Technology Division at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, pointed out that Bangladesh faces challenges in producing modern agricultural machinery due to a shortage of skilled workers, outdated infrastructure, and limited access to advanced equipment.

The country's light engineering sector and foundries are not fully modernised, making it difficult to maintain interchangeable parts or adopt assembly-line production, he said. Besides, Huda stressed that domestic production of agricultural machinery requires state support, long-term planning, and low-interest loans.

He called for stronger collaboration between the government and private sector to make local production viable, noting that the absence of state-owned engine manufacturers has hindered progress in both public and private initiatives.

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Bhutan transit shipment begins trial run via Ctg port

Expected to arrive at Burimari today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chattogram port on Wednesday night cleared the first transit shipment for Bhutan, which is expected to reach Burimari land port by this afternoon.

The 20-foot container, imported from Thailand by Bhutanese company Abit Trading, marks the start of a trial run for transporting Bhutanese cargo through Chattogram port and across Bangladesh under a bilateral agreement.

Bangladesh and Bhutan signed the "Agreement on the Movement of Traffic-in-Transit between the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Royal Government of Bhutan" on March 22, 2023, followed by a protocol to implement the agreement.

Chittagong Port Authority Secretary Md Omar Faruk said, "The Bhutan transit consignment was released after all customs formalities were completed."

Md Shahidul Alam Khan, managing director of NM Trading Corporation—the Bangladeshi clearing and forwarding (C&F) agent for Bhutan's cargo—said, "A prime-mover trailer carrying the container left Chattogram port on Wednesday evening and is now heading to Burimari land port. We expect the cargo to reach Burimari by Friday (today) afternoon."

He added that from Burimari, the container will be transported to Bhutan through Indian territory. According to documents, the container holds 6,572 kg of consumer goods, including iced tea, shampoo, dried palm fruit, jelly, candy, and orange juice.

One year after signing the agreement and protocol, a Bangladesh-Bhutan secretary-level trade meeting held in Bhutan in April 2024 decided to conduct two trial runs of transit shipments.

Under the first trial run, a vessel named MV HR Hera carrying the transit container arrived at Chattogram port on September 22 from Laem Chabang port in Thailand, said Md Shahidul Alam of the C&F firm.

"The release of the consignment was

Transit milestone

First Bhutanese transit cargo released at Chattogram port Wednesday night

Trial run begins under 2023 Bangladesh-Bhutan transit agreement

ROUTES

Container heading to Burimari, then to Bhutan via India

Route:Thailand → Chattogram → Burimari → India → Bhutan

Cargo details

Shipment carried 6,572 kg of various consumer items

Imported from Thailand by Bhutanese firm Abit Trading

Agreements & approvals

Protocol signed after agreement to enable transit operations

Delivery delayed due to multiple government approval processes

Revenue

Tk 101,713 earned by three govt offices

Customs collected Tk 68,874 in fees and VAT

delayed because it took time to get approval from various government offices," he added.

On November 17, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) issued an order to complete customs procedures for Bhutan's consignment. On November 20, the Road Transport and Highways Division sent a letter to the NBR regarding tolls and charges for transit shipments.

Following this, the C&F agent NM Trading Corporation began handling Bhutan's cargo.

REVENUE FROM TRIAL TRANSIT SHIPMENT

Three government offices earned a total of Tk 1,01,713 from the trial transit shipment.

Chattogram Custom House received Tk 68,874 in charges and fees, including VAT, covering document processing, transshipment, security, escort, administrative fees, and container scanning.

The Road Transport and Highways Division collected Tk 16,792 as road toll, including

VAT, while the C&F agent paid Tk 16,047 to the Chittagong Port Authority for unloading the container and moving it to the yard.

ROUTE FOR TRIAL TRANSIT

According to the bilateral agreement, the shipment route runs from Laem Chabang in Thailand to Chattogram in Bangladesh, then to Burimari land port, onward to Changrabandha in West Bengal, India, through the Siliguri Corridor and Hasimara-Jaigon, and finally to Phuentsholing in Bhutan. Earlier, five trial runs of Indian transit shipments were conducted using Chattogram and Mongla ports.

The first trial took place in 2020 when the vessel MV Shejyoti arrived at Chattogram port on July 21 carrying four containers of Indian iron rods and pulses, later sent to Tripura and Assam via Akhaura land port.

Following the 13th India-Bangladesh Joint Group of Customs meeting in March 2022, both countries agreed to conduct four more trial runs.

Crown Cement to buy cargo ship worth Tk 148cr

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Crown Cement PLC has announced plans to purchase a second-hand ocean-going mother vessel at a cost of Tk 147.60 crore.

The mother vessel, a large cargo ship that sails long international routes between major ports, carrying bulk goods or containers in large volumes, has a capacity of 53,569 deadweight tonnes, according to a price-sensitive disclosure yesterday.

The acquisition comes as Crown Cement posted stronger earnings in the July-September quarter of FY2025-26, driven by higher sales despite rising import duties and raw material costs.

Its earnings per share rose 80 percent year-on-year to Tk 0.45, compared to Tk 0.25 in the same period of 2024.

The company said the per-unit sales price declined 1.59 percent, while international raw material costs increased, but overall sales growth offset the pressure.

As of October 31, sponsors and directors held 52.22 percent of shares, while the public owned 29.15 percent. Institutions and foreign

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Pubali Bank launches co-branded credit card with Dhaka University



Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan, vice-chancellor of the University of Dhaka, inaugurates a co-branded credit card, jointly introduced by Pubali Bank PLC and the university, on the university campus in the capital recently.

PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Pubali Bank PLC has recently launched a co-branded credit card with the University of Dhaka at the Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban on the university campus.

Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan, vice-chancellor of the University of Dhaka, inaugurated the card as the chief guest, according to a press release.

Mohammad Ali, managing director and

chief executive officer (CEO) of Pubali Bank PLC, attended the launching ceremony as the special guest.

Under the agreement, all teachers and employees of the University of Dhaka will receive a co-branded credit card bearing the logos of Pubali Bank PLC and the University of Dhaka.

Abu Laich Md Samsujjaman, general manager and regional head of Dhaka Central

at the bank; NM Firoz Kamal, deputy general manager and head of card business; Masuma Khantum, deputy general manager and head of the Shahbagh branch; and Farhana Hoque, assistant general manager and head of the Shishu Park branch, were present.

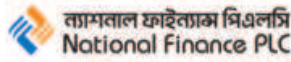
Mossabbir Hossain Talukder, assistant general manager and head of card sales at Pubali Bank PLC, was also present, along with other senior officials from both organisations.

National Finance takes PLC suffix

STAR BUSINESS DESK

National Finance Limited has changed its name to National Finance PLC (public limited company).

According to the non-bank financial institution, Bangladesh Bank has announced that National



Finance Limited has changed its name and will henceforth operate as National Finance PLC.

The name change has been approved under Section 63 of the Finance Companies Act, 2023, and will take effect from November 24, 2025.

Khalid Mahmood Khan made MD of Southeast Bank

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Md Khalid Mahmood Khan has been appointed managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of Southeast Bank PLC, effective yesterday.



Md Khalid Mahmood Khan

Prior to his appointment, Khan served at Mutual Trust Bank PLC as an additional managing director and chief business officer, according to a press release.

He also served the bank as senior executive vice president and head of the wholesale banking division-02.

Khan began his professional banking career at Agrani Bank PLC as a probationary officer in 1994. He later joined Mutual Trust Bank PLC.

During his 26 years of service at Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB), he successfully managed three key branches – the Principal, Dilkusha and Panthapath branches – for a total of 13 years.

Khan graduated from the University of Dhaka and later completed an MBA.

Dollar retreats

REUTERS, Singapore

The dollar was drifting toward its largest weekly drop in four months on Thursday as trade thinned ahead of the US Thanksgiving holiday, leaving investors mulling the coming year where the US is looking increasingly lonely in cutting rates.

The yen drifted 0.4 percent higher to 155.87 per dollar in Asia trade, helped by a hawkish turn in tone from Bank of Japan officials and the euro clambered above \$1.16.

A resurgent New Zealand dollar skipped

out to a three-week peak of \$0.5728 and has gained about 2 percent since a hawkish shift at the central bank a day earlier.

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand cut rates on Wednesday but said a hold was discussed and lagged that the easing cycle was likely over. Helped by some strong economic data on Thursday, markets see rates going higher and price in a hike by December 2026.

That contrasts with more than 90 basis points of cuts priced for the US Federal Reserve between now and the end of next year.



Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, member of the National Standing Committee of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, attends the 25th anniversary event of Popular Life Insurance Company Limited at the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in Dhaka on Wednesday.

PHOTO: POPULAR LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

Popular Life Insurance celebrates 25th anniversary

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Popular Life Insurance Company Limited celebrated its 25th anniversary on Wednesday.

The life insurer organised a programme at the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in Dhaka to celebrate the occasion.

Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, member of the National Standing Committee of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, attended the celebratory event as the chief guest, according to the press release.

Mohammad Jahirul Islam Chowdhury, chairman of Popular Life Insurance Company Limited, presided over the event.

Other senior officials of the insurer were also present.

বাংলাদেশ মস্যা গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট

ময়মনসিংহ-২২০১

স্মারক নং-৩৩.০৪.০০০০.১০৫.৪৬.০০৬.১৭-৩০৪ তারিখঃ ২৬-১১-২০২৫খ্রিঃ

বিষয়ঃ অসত্য তথ্য প্রদান, প্রভাৱণা ও জালিয়াতির মাধ্যমে বাংলাদেশ মস্যা গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট এর উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) পদে চাকুরি গ্রহণ কৰায় জনাব সেখ রাসেল, উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) (সাময়িক বরখাস্ত) কে উক্ত পদ থেকে চূড়ান্তভাবে বরখাস্তকৰণ।

উল্লিখিত বিষয়ে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, আপনি সেখ রাসেল, উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) (সাময়িক বরখাস্ত), বাংলাদেশ মস্যা গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট, সবুজি নদী কেন্দ্র, চাঁদপুর; বাংলাদেশ ইম্পাত ও প্রকৌশল করপোরেশন, ঢাকা সহকারী প্রধান হিসাবরক্ষণ কর্মকর্তা পদে চাকুরিকালীন অত্র ইনস্টিটিউটের স্মারক নং- ৩৩.০৪.০০০০.১০৫.০৩.০০২.১৫-১০৯২০; তারিখঃ ১৪-০৮-২০১৬ইং এর মাধ্যমে প্রকাশিত নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তির প্রেক্ষিতে উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) পদে চাকুরির জন্য অগ্রায়নপত্রসহ আবেদন করেন। অতঃপর নিয়োগ পরীক্ষার মাধ্যমে উত্তীর্ণ হলে ইনস্টিটিউটের উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) পদে ইনস্টিটিউটের পত্র নং ৩৩.০৪.০০০০.১০৫.০৩.০০২.২০১৫-৮৪৬; তারিখঃ ০৪-০৬-২০১৭ইং স্মারকের মাধ্যমে আপনাকে নিয়োগ প্রদান করা হয়। পরবর্তীতে আপনি বাংলাদেশ ইম্পাত ও প্রকৌশল করপোরেশন এর স্মারক নং ৩৬.৯৩.০০০০.০১৬.০৩-৪৯৫; তারিখঃ ১২-০৬-২০১৭ইং এর মাধ্যমে ছাড়পত্র নিয়ে বাংলাদেশ মস্যা গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউটের উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) পদে যোগদান করেন।

অতঃপর বাংলাদেশ ইম্পাত ও প্রকৌশল করপোরেশন হতে তাদের পাওনা টাকা আদায়ের জন্য গত ১২-০৩-২০২৫ইং তারিখে মহামান্য জজকোর্ট, ঢাকায় আপনার বিরুদ্ধে মানিস্টেট মামলা দায়ের করা হয় এবং অত্র ইনস্টিটিউটের মহাপরিচালককে ২নং বিবালী করা হয়। মামলার আপন বাংলাদেশ ইম্পাত ও প্রকৌশল করপোরেশন এর অনুমতি এবং ছাড়পত্র ভিত্তি অত্র ইনস্টিটিউটে চাকুরী করছেন মর্মে উল্লেখ করা হয়। বিষয়টি ইনস্টিটিউটের গোচরীভূত হলে এর সত্যতা যাচাইয়ের জন্য বাংলাদেশ ইম্পাত ও প্রকৌশল করপোরেশনকে ইনস্টিটিউট থেকে ডি-নথির মাধ্যমে পত্র দেয়া হয়। উত্তরে বাংলাদেশ ইম্পাত ও প্রকৌশল করপোরেশন কর্তৃক ডি-নথির মাধ্যমে জানানো হয় যে, আপনার উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) পদে চাকুরি গ্রহণের সময় চাকুরির আবেদনপত্র অগ্রায়ন এবং চাকুরি হতে ছাড়পত্র প্রদানের কোনরূপ পত্র করপোরেশন কর্তৃক জারী করা হয়নি। তাছাড়া এতদসংক্রান্ত অন্য কোন পত্রাদিও করপোরেশন কর্তৃক জারী করা হয়নি। এ প্রেক্ষিতে, অসত্য তথ্য প্রদান, প্রভাৱণা ও জালিয়াতির মাধ্যমে ইনস্টিটিউটের আলোচ্য পদে চাকুরী গ্রহণ কৰায় স্মারক নং ৩৩.০৪.০০০০.০০০.১০৫.০২.০০৩২.২৫.১৯৬; তারিখঃ ১৯-১০-২০২৫ইং মূলে আপনাকে কারণ দর্শনো হয়ে কিন্তু আপনি এর কোন জবাব প্রদান করেননি। এতে ইনস্টিটিউটের নিকট প্রতীয়মান হয় যে, উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) পদে চাকুরী গ্রহণের সময় আপনার প্রদত্ত চাকুরীর আবেদনের অগ্রায়নপত্র এবং চাকুরি হতে ছাড়পত্র সঠিক ছিল না এবং এক্ষেত্রে আপনি প্রভাৱণা ও জালিয়াতির আশ্রয় নিয়েছেন। উল্লেখ্য, ইনস্টিটিউটের নিয়োগ পত্রের ১৩নং শর্তে “চাকুরীতে যোগদানের পর তাঁর চাকুরীর আবেদনপত্রে প্রদত্ত তথ্য মিথ্যা/ভুয়া প্রমাণিত হলে তাঁকে বিনা নোটিশে চাকুরীচ্যুত করা হবে এবং দেশের প্রচলিত আইনে তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নেয়া হবে” মর্মে উল্লেখ আছে। এ প্রেক্ষিতে প্রভাৱণা ও জালিয়াতির বিষয়টি গত ০৩-১১-২০২৫ইং তারিখে মস্যা ও প্রাঙ্গিসম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়ে অন্তর্ভুক্ত ইনস্টিটিউটের সর্বোচ্চ নীতি নির্ধারণী কোরাম বোর্ড অব গভর্নরস এর ৪৪তম সভায় উপস্থাপন করা হলে সভায় নিয়োগপত্রের ১৩নং শর্ত ও নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তির ৯নং শর্ত মোতাবেক আপনার নিয়োগপত্র বাতিল ও আপনারকে চাকুরীচ্যুত করার এবং আপনার অনুকূলে পরিষেখিত বেতন ভাতাদি আদায়ে আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা ও ফৌজদারি মামলা দায়েরের সিদ্ধান্ত গৃহীত হয়।

এমতাবস্থায়, ইনস্টিটিউটের বোর্ড অব গভর্নরস এর সিদ্ধান্ত, ইনস্টিটিউটের নিয়োগপত্রের ১৩নং এবং নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তির ৯নং শর্ত মোতাবেক ইনস্টিটিউটের উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) পদের নিয়োগপত্র বাতিলসহ আপনাকে ইনস্টিটিউটের উপপরিচালক (অর্থ ও হিসাব) পদের চাকুরি থেকে বরখাস্ত করা হলো।

ড. অনুরাধা হুদা
মহাপরিচালক (সাময়িক দায়িত্ব)

জনাব সেখ রাসেল
পিতার নামঃ সেখ সদর উদ্দিন, মাতার নামঃ রেহানা পারভিন
গ্রামঃ ভালুকা, ডাকঘরঃ ভালুকা চৌরঙ্গী বাজার, পোস্ট কোড নং-৭০১০
উপজেলাঃ কুমারখালী, জেলাঃ কুষ্টিয়া
ই-মেইলঃ friends93rasel@gmail.com
মোবাইল নম্বরঃ ০১৭০৪-৭৪২২৮৮

জিডি-২৫৭২

Govt cuts

FROM PAGE B1

The upcoming auction will cover 25 MHz of the 45 MHz spectrum designated for mobile use. The remaining 20 MHz is tied up in a legal dispute dating back to 2007, when BTRC allocated 12 MHz of the band to broadband provider Always On Network Bangladesh Ltd before it was approved for mobile services.

The allocation was later declared invalid, but the case is pending in the Supreme Court. Once the dispute is resolved, the government plans to reserve 10 MHz for state-owned Teletalk.

Operators will need to pay a non-refundable application fee of Tk 15 lakh and a bid deposit of Tk 10 crore. The 25 MHz will be offered in five blocks, and the auction is scheduled for January 14, 2026, according to BTRC's instructions.

THE GOLDEN SPECTRUM

Spectrum is a range of electromagnetic frequencies that telecom companies use to send mobile calls, internet data, and other wireless signals. Different frequency ranges are called bands, and each has unique properties.

For instance, low-band frequencies, like 700 MHz, travel farther and pass through walls and buildings more easily. High-band frequencies can carry more data but have shorter range and are easily blocked by obstacles.

The 700 MHz band is prized worldwide as the “golden spectrum” because it combines long-range coverage, strong indoor signals, and relatively low network deployment costs. This makes it ideal for both rural and urban areas and accelerates the rollout of 4G and 5G services.

OPERATORS NOT HAPPY

Mobile operators have expressed concerns over the limited spectrum and the relatively small discount.

Taimur Rahman, chief corporate and regulatory affairs officer of Banglalink, the country's third-largest

operator, called the 700 MHz band a “digital dividend” that should be affordable for all operators.

“Adequate spectrum has to be ensured so that all can get it. But with only 25 MHz, that may be difficult. Besides, there needs to be a cap on how much spectrum one operator can procure, particularly for the bigger operators,” he added.

Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi Axiata, the second-largest operator, said the proposed 10-20 percent discount is insufficient and largely symbolic, given the high cost of deploying 700 MHz.

“The pricing methodology is flawed. It wrongly pegs 700 MHz rates to older 900 MHz prices. This ignores the reality that 900 MHz is supported by nearly all handsets, whereas only around 60 percent support 700 MHz today,” he said.

“Deploying 700 MHz isn't a simple extension of existing networks,” Alam said. “It requires building a new network layer, which involves significant investment in infrastructure and ecosystem readiness.”

Limiting access to the full 45 MHz band could create market imbalances and harm competition, he also noted. “Unless spectrum pricing reflects current market realities and deployment challenges, these measures will strain operators and ultimately impact affordability for consumers.”

Crown Cement

FROM PAGE B1

investors accounted for the remainder, according to Dhaka Stock Exchange data.

Crown Cement, formerly MI Cement Factory Limited, is the parent company of Crown Cement Group. Established in 1994, it has supplied cement to Bangladesh's domestic market for more than three decades and remains one of the country's leading manufacturers.

চট্টগ্রাম পানি সরবরাহ ও পয়নিষ্কাশন কর্তৃপক্ষ

Chattogram Water Supply & Sewerage Authority

WASA Office Building, Dampara, Chattogram, Bangladesh

Memo No. 46.06.0000.335.23.011.2025-53

Date: 26.11.2025

Chattogram Water Supply Improvement Project (CWSIP)

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (REOI) FOR Consultancy Service for Preparation of Digital Transformations Strategy for Chattogram WASA (Package-CWSIP/S3) (Firm Selection)

- The Government of the people's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB) has received a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of 'Chattogram Water Supply Improvement Project (CWSIP)', to be implemented by Chattogram Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWASA), an autonomous entity of the GoB and intends to apply a part of the proceeds of this credit to pay against the Consultancy Service for Preparation of Digital Transformations Strategy for Chattogram WASA (CWASA)
- The main objective of the proposed consulting services is to Develop a comprehensive digital transformation strategy, and roadmap that contain a list of proposed digital solutions that CWASA can implement over the coming years.
- CWASA will appoint a Consulting firm to achieve the above objectives. The consultant under this assignment will render the following services mainly:
 - Develop a comprehensive digital transformation strategy, and roadmap that contain a list of proposed digital solutions that CWASA can implement over the coming years. The document should also serve the following strategic purpose:
 - Foundation for Digital Transformation: The document acts as the official blueprint of CWASA to transition into a digitally advanced organization. This means using data analytics to optimize water distribution, anticipate maintenance needs, improve customer service, and ensure sustainable water management practices.
 - Strategic Alignment: The strategy ensures digital initiatives align with CWASA's budget, available resources, and strategic goals. This alignment is crucial to prioritizing initiatives that deliver the most value and are feasible within the utility's operational constraints.
 - Blueprint for Technology Adoption: The document provides a technical roadmap for future IT changes or additions, acting as a guiding framework for evolving CWASA's technology architecture. This encompasses immediate IT improvements and longer-term digital innovation, such as smart metering systems, advanced water quality monitoring, and automated billing and customer service platforms.
 - Blueprint for Advanced IT Organization: Forming a capable IT organization within CWASA is pivotal for driving technological advancements and supporting the utility's data-driven transformation. This document proposes the capabilities required to drive the change.
 - Assess feasibility of proposed solutions, along with necessary hardware requirement as well as data storage requirements, data digitization needs; assess the costs (CAPEX and OPEX) & system requirements of various solutions, implementation & operations models.
 - Design an integrated digital & data management system/ERP for CWASA (including module specific requirements and key business process maps for key functions) and GIS based Asset Management System for CWASA.
- CWASA now invites eligible consulting firms ("Consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services. The short-listing criteria are:
 - General experience of the Firm(s);
 - Experience in similar projects of compatible size, complexity and technical specialty as a consultant; especially projects related to Developing Digital transformation strategy, roadmap and implementation of ERP in any organization preferably Water utility/Sewerage Utility/Power Utility.
 - Overall staffing and logistics of the firm.

Consultants are requested to submit the following supporting documents in support of the above-mentioned criteria:

(a) Registration paper of the firm; (b) JV agreement /letter of intent (if applicable); (c) Firm's brochure; (d) service experience record (including nature, total cost, total input in terms of man month, employer, location of service etc.)

- The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to section III, Conflict of Interest paragraphs, 3.14, 3.15, and 3.16 of the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, Fifth Edition, September, 2023.
- Consultants may associate to enhance their qualification, but should mention whether the association is in the form of a "joint-venture" or "sub-consultancy". In the case of an association, all members of such "association" should have real and well-defined inputs to the assignment and in such "association" it is preferable to limit the total number of firms including the associates to a maximum of three.
- A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method set out in the Procurement Regulations.
- Interested Consultant may obtain further information from the address below during office hours (i.e. 0900 to 1700 hours) and the intending entities may contact for any clarification and background information at the address given below. Terms of Reference (if necessary, may be modified) will be available in the CWASA's website (www.ctg-wasa.org.bd).
- Expression of Interest (EoI) (both hard copy and soft copy preferable) needs to be submitted (either in person or by mail or by email) to the following address by 15:00 hours (BST) (GMT+6) on or before December 21, 2025. Please clearly mention "Expression of Interest (EoI) for Consultancy Service for Preparation of Digital Transformations Strategy for Chattogram WASA (CWASA) (Package Number: CWSIP/S3) under Chattogram Water Supply Improvement Project (CWSIP), CWASA" on the top of the envelope.
- The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EoI proposals either in part or in full without assigning any reason, whatsoever.

(Md. Rejaul Ahsan Chowdhury)
Project Director
Chattogram Water Supply Improvement Project (CWSIP)
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SPR 178
27/11/25

GD-2580

Businesses should unlock ceramic export potential: adviser

Four-day Ceramic Expo Bangladesh begins in Dhaka

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin has urged businesses to fully tap into the country's growing ceramic industry and transform it into a stronger export-oriented sector.

He made the call while inaugurating the Ceramic Expo Bangladesh 2025 as the chief guest at the International Convention City Bashundhara in Purbachal, Dhaka yesterday, according to a press release.

More than 70 factories producing tableware, tiles, sanitary ware, and other ceramic products are currently operating in Bangladesh.

The domestic market for these items stands at around Tk 8,000 crore annually. Production and investment in the industry have surged by nearly 150 percent over the past decade.

Bangladesh now exports ceramic products to over 50 countries, earning approximately Tk 5 billion a year. Overall investment in the sector has exceeded Tk 18,000 crore, while nearly five lakh people are



Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin visits a stall after inaugurating the “Fourth Ceramic Expo 2025” at the International Convention City Bashundhara in Purbachal, Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: BCMEA

employed directly and indirectly.

Calling for constructive engagement from the business community, the adviser said, “Not just complaints, but come up with logical, acceptable, and realistic proposals. The government is supportive of you. We are obliged to ensure your facilities. But it must be based on fair and standard industrial conduct.”

He added that the country's shifting political landscape has made it clear that “connection-based business” will no longer be effective. “The time is now for skills, competence, and technology,” he said.

The adviser also questioned why the ceramic industry has not achieved export prominence similar to the ready-made garment

sector, which grew rapidly within a decade.

“Because we still have challenges in sustainable cost competitiveness, design innovation, logistics efficiency, productivity, and energy management. We need to identify these and move towards realistic solutions,” he added.

Organised by the Bangladesh Ceramic Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BCMEA), the four-day fair will run until November 30.

A total of 135 organisations and 300 brands from 25 countries, including Bangladesh, are participating in the expo. Around 500 international representatives and buyers from the sector are also attending.

Ceramic Expo Bangladesh 2025, one of the largest ceramic exhibitions in Asia, will feature three seminars, a job fair, business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) meetings, live demonstrations, spot orders, raffle draws, and new product launches.

The fair will remain open to visitors from 10am to 6pm daily.

BTRC vows stable handset prices after NEIR launch

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The telecom regulator will remain vigilant to ensure that local mobile manufacturers do not hike handset prices after the launch of the National Equipment Identity Register (NEIR), said Mahmud Hossain, commissioner of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

He said the BTRC is already monitoring current handset prices in the market.

“It is keeping detailed records of how much each handset model costs right now, so that no one can increase prices after the NEIR launch,” he said.

Hossain spoke at a seminar titled “The Importance of the NEIR System in Ensuring the Use of Legal and Safe Handsets,” organised by the Telecom and Technology Reporters’ Network Bangladesh (TRNB) at the RAOWA Complex in Dhaka yesterday.

Asked whether NEIR would push up handset prices, he said the BTRC has lifted all restrictions on handset sales by mobile operators through provisions that allow them to sell devices in instalments by locking the device or SIMs.

He expressed hope that after NEIR is launched, manufacturers will increase production volume, which will ultimately bring down handset prices.

Brig Gen Md Aminul Hoque, director general at the BTRC, said a huge number of handsets are currently being cloned in the market.

Citing BTRC's database, he said around 50 lakh handsets are active against only five valid IMEI numbers, indicating widespread cloning.

An IMEI is a unique 15-digit identifier assigned to every mobile device, enabling regulators and operators to track, verify authenticity, block stolen phones, and ensure network access for legal handsets.

Govt aims

FROM PAGE B1

Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing director at PRAN-RFL Group, said while the global agro-processing market is valued at \$4 trillion, Bangladesh currently accounts for only \$1 billion, meaning the country has significant potential in this sector.

However, he noted that gaps in product variety and quality prevent many producers from meeting high international standards.

Kamal also criticised the complex regulatory process for agricultural exports, which “requires approvals from 18 different departments”, raising both costs and timelines.

He argued that a one-stop service and stronger country branding are essential, alongside improvements in quality control and internationally accredited laboratories.

Currently, he said many tests must be conducted abroad, as Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) standards are not recognised globally. Ensuring quality from farm to table, he said, is critical to guaranteeing safe food.

Office of the Regional Election Officer

Sylhet Region, Sylhet
www.ecs.gov.bd

Memo No.17.07.0000.000.69.001.25-763 Date: 26 November 2025

Invitation for Tenders

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

1	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Election Commission
2	Agency	Bangladesh Election Commission
3	Procuring entity name	Regional Election Officer, Sylhet Region, Sylhet
4	Procuring entity code	Not applicable
5	Procuring entity district	Sylhet
6	Invitation for	Tender - Single Lot
7	Invitation Ref No.	REG/Sylhet/25-26/RD/GSG
8	Date	26.11.2025

KEY INFORMATION

9	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
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FUNDING INFORMATION

10	Budget and source of funds	Revenue
11	Development partners (if applicable)	Not applicable

PARTICULAR INFORMATION

12	Project / programme code (if applicable)	Not applicable
13	Project/ programme name (if applicable)	Not applicable
14	Tender Package No.	1
15	Tender package name	Reconstruction of the Damaged Garage, Collapsible Gate and Steel Gate of the Regional Server Station, Sylhet
16	Tender publication date	Date: 28.11.2025
17	Tender last selling date (up to the day prior to the day of Deadline for Submission)	Date: 15.12.2025
18	Tender closing date and time	Date: 15.12.2025 Time: 12.30pm
19	Tender opening date and time	Date: 15.12.2025 Time: 1.00pm
20	Name & address of the officer(s)	Address: Office of the Regional Election Officer, Sylhet
21	Selling tender document (principal)	Office of the Regional Election Officer, Sylhet
22	Selling tender document (others)	Not applicable

No conditions apply for sale, purchase or distribution of tender documents

23	Receiving tender document	Office of the Senior District Election Officer, Sylhet
24	Opening tender document	Office of the Senior District Election Officer, Sylhet

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

25	Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	As Per IDS
26	Brief description of works	Reconstruction of the Damaged Garage, Collapsible Gate and Steel Gate of the Regional Server Station, Sylhet
27	Brief description of physical services	Construction Work
28	Price of tender document (Tk)	1000/-

Lot No	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in days	
29	1	Reconstruction of the Damaged Garage, Collapsible Gate and Steel Gate of the Regional Server Station, Sylhet	Sylhet	2.75%	60 days

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

30	Name of official inviting tender	Mohammad Monjurul Alam		
31	Designation of official inviting tender	Senior District Election Officer, Sylhet		
32	Address of official inviting tender	Upashar, Sylhet		
33	Contact details of official inviting tender	01550042653 02997703594 sdco@btrc@gmail.com		
34	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings.			

Mohammad Monjurul Alam
Senior District Election Officer, Sylhet
Email: sdco@btrc@gmail.com
Phone: 02997703594

GD-2574

High NPLs creating

FROM PAGE B1

fiscal support, more effective tax administration, banking sector reforms, and comprehensive skill development to build a resilient, competitive economy.

Meanwhile, chairing the event, Zaidi Sattar, chairman of PRI, said the Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER) index - which measures price competitiveness against trading partners - has been rising since May, causing concerns for exporters.

A rising REER signals that Bangladeshi goods are becoming relatively more expensive in global markets.

“The Bangladesh Bank can no longer purchase dollars from the market to depreciate the taka; therefore, loosening import restrictions is the only viable option. This would also benefit exporters,” he added.

The central bank has been purchasing dollars from the market to rebuild foreign exchange reserves and maintain stability in the exchange rate in recent months.

Nasiruddin Ahmed, former chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), called for allowing politicians to formulate tax policy and the business community, instead of bureaucrats, some of whom he believes contribute to

the problem.

He also highlighted employment and the lack of quality, job-oriented education as major national concerns that the next government must address.

Wasel Bin Shadat, research director at public-private dialogue platform Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD), raised concerns over fairness in implementing penalties for tax-related violations.

“Compliant taxpayers are being penalised, which goes against the principle of tax justice. This is one of the main reasons why 85 percent of the economy remains informal,” he said.

Moreover, he said election manifestos across political parties fail to address the economic situation with sufficient seriousness.

AKM Atiqur Rahman, professor at North South University, said the July uprising led to the disclosure of the true scale of rising NPLs. Otherwise, he said the figures would have remained hidden, raising doubts about the economy's ability to sustain itself.

He emphasised the urgent need for export diversification beyond RMG, warning that potential Trump-era tariffs and a REER above 6 percent are already weakening competitiveness.

Default loans

FROM PAGE B1

Debapriya, who headed a panel on the white paper on the state of Bangladesh's economy, said the bureaucracy provided strong support to the previous government in carrying out its misappropriations.

“If we have to name two or three individuals, the head of the central bank would be among the key accused. Within this entire process, his wrongdoing is particularly serious because it was his responsibility to ensure accountability, transparency and related matters,” he said.

At the event, he lauded the role of economic reporters for uncovering issues, including loan scams during the tenure of the Awami League government ousted in August last year. Now, they can play a significant role in accelerating efforts to bring transparency and carry out reforms.

Responding to another question on the interim government's move to sign deals with foreign investors for the operation of two terminals at the Chattogram port, he said, despite the slow pace of reforms in other areas, the government moved fast here.

“In one area the government undertook no reforms at all, yet in another area it completed such a major task within 13 days,” he said. “I was stunned. This means that

if you want to, you can. Then why was it not done elsewhere?”

This means that somewhere there remains a lack of political intent, a lack of incentives, he said.

If good work is not done properly, and if stakeholder participation does not take place with transparency, then such work does not become sustainable, he said.

Moreover, among the three port agreements, one was started during the previous government, and yet, even in that case, we did not see proper transparency.

“The overall lack of transparency has given me room to doubt your intentions. As a result, you have handled the entire matter in such a way that you have created a burden for the next government.”

“What I fear is that, in the end, this may stand as a negative example when it comes to attracting foreign direct investment.”

Later at the event, Md Faruque Hossain, a former secretary and now procurement policy consultant, said the initiatives to hire a foreign operator for the Laldia terminal were taken several years ago.

So, it cannot be said that the process was completed in 13 days.

Debapriya also criticised the government for its inertia in undertaking reform in line with the recommendations of the Media Reform Commission.

বাংলাদেশ পানি উন্নয়ন বোর্ড

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর
ময়মনসিংহ পানি উন্নয়ন বিভাগ
বাপাউবো, ময়মনসিংহ
ফোনঃ ০২৯৯৬৬৬৫৯৮৮
E-mail: ceemymensinghbwd@gmail.com

Memo No. T-2/537 Date: 26/11/2025

e-Tender Notice-[Mym-02]

An e-Tender has been invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of the following work:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No. & description	Location of the works/supply	Tender/proposal document last selling date & time	Tender/proposal closing & opening date & time
1	1181180	MYM/GOB/Ayman/Bridge-1 Construction of 20m Span Bridge over Ayman River at Payarkandi Village in Upazila- Muktagacha, District- Mymensingh under Mymensingh WD Division, BWDB, Mymensingh during the financial year 2025-26.	Muktagacha, Mymensingh	14-Dec-2025 4:00pm	15-Dec-2025 3:00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to banking hours as stated on Tender Notice. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) (01762625528-31) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

পানি-৩২৩/২০২৫-২০২৬
৫x৩

Shameem Hossain Mahmud
ID No. 910318002
Executive Engineer
Mymensingh WD Division
BWDB, Mymensingh

GD-2581

বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট

হাইকোর্ট বিভাগ, ঢাকা
www.supremecourt.gov.bd

উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ক্রঃ নং	পণ্য ও দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত তথ্যাদি
১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ
২	প্রতিষ্ঠান
৩	সংগ্রাহক প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা
৪	সংগ্রাহক প্রতিষ্ঠানের কোড
৫	সংগ্রাহক প্রতিষ্ঠানের জেলা
৬	দরপত্র আহবানের বিষয়
৭	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর
৮	নথি নং
৯	ক্রয় পদ্ধতি
১০	পণ্য সংগ্রহ পদ্ধতি
১১	বাজেট ও তহবিলের উৎস
১২	উদয়ন সহযোগী (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে)
১৩	প্রকল্প/প্রোগ্রাম কোড
১৪	প্রকল্প/প্রোগ্রাম এর নাম
১৫	দরপত্র প্রক্রিয়ার নাম
১৬	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ
১৭	দরপত্র দলিল বিতরণ
১৮	দরপত্র দলিল দাখিলের স্থান
১৯	দরপত্র বিতরণের শেষ তারিখ
২০	দরপত্র দলিল দাখিলের সময়ে তারিখ ও সময়
২১	দরপত্র উন্মুক্তকরণের তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান
২২	দরপত্র আহবানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা
২৩	পণ্য ও সেবার সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ
২৪	দরপত্রদাতাগণের যোগাযোগ
২৫	দরপত্র দলিলের মূল্য
২৬	একক লট
২৭	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম
২৮	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী
২৯	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা
৩০	দরপত্র আহবানকারীর সহিত যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম
৩১	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল করার পূর্ণ ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের স্বাক্ষরক্রমে

২৬.১১.২০২৫
মেফতাহুল জাভান
সহকারী রেজিস্ট্রার (অর্থ)
বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট
হাইকোর্ট বিভাগ, ঢাকা

GD-2515

Gold eases from two-week high

REUTERS

Gold edged lower on Thursday on profit-taking after it hit a near two-week high in the previous session, while investors weighed the possibility of a December US interest rate cut amid conflicting signals from the Federal Reserve.

Spot gold fell 0.3 percent to \$4,153.49 per ounce, as of 0616 GMT. US gold futures for December delivery slipped 0.5 percent to \$4,150.0 per ounce.

"What they're looking to do is take profits (after Wednesday's climb)... The Fed isn't clear of what they're going to do next, so gold is just consolidating," GoldSilver Central MD Brian Lan said.

Conflicting signals on the timing and magnitude of rate cuts have accelerated hedging flows into derivatives tied to overnight rates, with investors seeking protection against heightened policy uncertainty.



Entrepreneurs in Mothurapur now use online platforms, efficient trade networks and modern sheds to sell high-value dairy cows nationwide, creating jobs and driving local economic growth.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Mothurapur: From a quiet village to a dairy cow trading hub

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Mothurapur village, under Chatmohar upazila of Pabna, has transformed over the past two decades from a poverty-stricken settlement into a bustling hub for dairy cow trading.

Life in the village was once defined by low-paying farm work, little savings, and limited opportunities. Today, roads are lined with dairy sheds and signboards, reflecting a thriving livestock trade.

Interestingly, villagers do not rear or breed cows themselves. Instead, they focus on fast, high-value trading—buying top, often pregnant cows and reselling them within days to farmers nationwide, earning Tk 10,000–Tk 20,000 per animal. This entrepreneurial approach has lifted the village out of poverty, showing that ingenuity, rather than traditional farming, drives its prosperity.

LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS LEAD THE WAY

Md Rashidul Islam, a middle-aged man from the village, was a tea vendor struggling to earn a living two decades ago.

In 2005, he saved some money and took a loan to buy a pregnant cow for Tk 75,000. Within a week, a dairy farm owner purchased the cow for Tk 1 lakh, giving Rashidul a profit of Tk 25,000.

"I first started selling cows just to earn some extra income, but the business was more profitable than I expected. So, I invested more and built a shed like a small farm where I could keep 10 to 12 cows," he said.

Rashidul now sources high-quality milk-producing cows from Chatmohar, Bhangura, Faridpur, Baghabari, and other hubs, keeping them in his shed for a few days before posting videos online.

"Within days, customers from different districts contact me. I sell each cow with



a minimum profit of Tk 10,000 to Tk 15,000 and sell at least 10 to 12 cows every month," he added.

His Ratul Dairy Farm now supplies cows nationwide, providing jobs for three to four previously unemployed people.

Md Jony Islam, another villager who completed a diploma in engineering, chose not to pursue low-paying jobs. Instead, he set up a modern shed a decade ago, using online platforms to attract buyers.

"Through online platforms, dairy farmers from across the country contact us. Sometimes they come here in person to see the animals and buy according to their preference and budget," he said.

Jony now trades 15 to 20 milk-producing cows every month, with prices ranging from Tk 2 lakh to Tk 4 lakh depending on breed and milk capacity. His shed includes modern facilities, such as a restroom for customers travelling long distances.

A VILLAGE TRANSFORMED

Md Hasmat Ali, a vegetable trader, reflected on the village's journey, saying, "A couple of decades ago, villagers had very few ways to earn a living. Most people had to travel to other areas to work as labourers.

"The cow trading business has quickly changed the socio-economic condition of the village. Many villagers have built sheds along both sides of the road and display their animals for customers. This is how Mothurapur, once a typical village, has become known as a dairy hub."

Md Rafikul Islam Bepari, an experienced livestock trader, explained that the hub grew gradually. "Years ago, dairy farmers from faraway places used to travel to remote villages to find animals. Many of them would rest in our village because there was plenty of open space, and they paid only a small amount," he said.

"At first, it was a no-investment

business. We managed one or two cows on a selling agreement. When more customers started coming to the village, we invested money and built our own sheds," he added.

Today, Mothurapur has around 25 to 30 large sheds, with 20 active farms trading 250 to 300 animals every month.

DAIRY HUBS BOOST INDUSTRY, BENEFIT FARMERS

Md Jahurul Islam, upazila livestock officer, said the dairy sector in Pabna has grown significantly over the past few decades. "About 9,665 dairy farms are registered in the district, and over 8.48 lakh cows are officially recorded, though the real numbers are likely higher. Every month, the district produces around 25,000 tonnes of milk," he said.

"The supply of livestock in the district is much higher than the demand. Pabna is one of the leading dairy-producing districts in the country. With the growth of the dairy industry, job opportunities have also increased," he added.

Jahurul also noted that Pabna has two major dairy cow trading hubs — Mothurapur and Harupara in Bhangura upazila — both created by local people without external support. "These rural trading hubs provide opportunities for dairy farmers across the country," he said.

Dairy farmers from different districts praised these hubs for simplifying their work. Nur Mohammad, from Moulvibazar, said, "A few years ago, we had to travel across districts to find the best quality animals. Now, we can easily view animals online and contact specific traders, so we don't need to travel as much."

Iqbal, a farmer from Sylhet, added, "Local cattle hubs often deliver animals to our farms after receiving payment through banking transactions. In this way, rural trading hubs are playing a vital role in the country's dairy industry."

Digital bank: The missed bus to the future

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

If digital banking were a cricket match, Bangladesh would still be warming up while Kenya and Ghana are already batting in the Super Over. The idea is simple: if a country wants to take banking to the unbanked, it must go where the unbanked actually live, outside traditional banking halls, far away from the marble floors and token queues. Most African nations figured this out early.

Kenya allowed both banks and telecom operators to operate mobile money services. Today, M-Pesa handles transactions worth over 50 percent of Kenya's GDP. Nigeria opened its doors to Payment Service Banks, where telecoms and fintechs coexist. Even India, our giant next door, has over 300 million digital bank accounts thanks to a liberal ecosystem where banks, telcos, fintechs, and government platforms compete, collaborate, and irritate each other into innovation.

Bangladesh, meanwhile, is debating who should be allowed to innovate. On paper, we have the ambition to obtain a Digital Bank licence to expand financial inclusion. In reality, we tend to design policies around preferred players. During the previous regime, the digital bank initiative essentially circled around one player, Nagad, while bKash, the country's largest MFS provider with millions of users, was mysteriously sidelined. The process was so opaque that even Faluda would need a Freedom of Information request.

Today, as Bangladesh Bank reopens the process, experts suspect déjà vu. The intention appears tilted toward bKash. Do not get me wrong, bKash absolutely deserves a Digital Bank licence. Their scale, governance, and track record speak for themselves. But if the goal is national financial inclusion, then the question should not be "Who is our favourite child?" but rather "How big is the family we want to build?"

And this is where telecom operators and other big players with similar capacity come in. Globally, every successful digital banking model rests on two pillars, connectivity and distribution reach. Telcos own both. They have the SIMs, towers, agents, and customer relationships that no bank, digital or otherwise, can match cost-effectively. In Kenya, Safaricom did not just support digital banking; it became digital banking. In Pakistan, JazzCash, backed by a telecom operator, serves nearly 40 million users. Even India's Airtel Payments Bank has over 40 million monthly transacting users.

Bangladesh, ironically, has three telecom operators, and they have been politely kept outside the MFS and digital banking sandbox for a decade. Meanwhile, our MFS pricing remains among the highest in the region. For instance, Bangladesh's cash out fees hover around 1.85 percent to 2 percent, compared to Pakistan's 0.5 percent to 1 percent, India's 0.65 percent, and Kenya's tiered rates that are significantly lower for small value transactions. Competition is not just good economics; it saves crores for the poor.

There is also the matter of deep pockets. Running a digital bank is not like launching an app, it is like building the Padma Bridge with a better user experience. You need capital, technology, risk management, cybersecurity, and the stamina to navigate regulatory paperwork that can outlive governments. Telcos and established MFS players have both the money and the muscles.

So here is the policy question that matters. Do we want a digital bank landscape that mimics our telecom duopoly, our political duopoly, and our cricket selection committee, or do we want real competition? If Bangladesh truly wants inclusion, transparency, and lower costs for citizens, the digital banking licence must be open to all credible players, banks, fintechs, and yes, telecom operators.

Otherwise, we risk ending up with the same old wine in a slightly shinier bottle, sold at a slightly higher cash-out fee.

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



India approves \$800m plan to boost rare earth magnet production

AFP, Mumbai

India has approved a more than \$800 million plan to boost production of rare earth magnets in an effort to secure supplies and cut its dependence on imports from countries like China.

Rare earth permanent magnets (REPMs), some of the strongest types of permanent magnets, made from alloys of rare earth elements, are used in many critical sectors, including electric vehicles, aerospace and renewable energy.

New Delhi currently meets its demand primarily through imports, with the government estimating that the country's needs could double by 2030.

India's cabinet approved on Tuesday a 72.8 billion rupee (\$815.3 million) scheme to promote the production of REPMs, which the government said will help secure the "supply chain for domestic industries".

The plan involves offering sales-linked incentives and subsidies to help establish a manufacturing capacity of around 6,000 metric tons per year.

"This first of its-kind initiative aims to establish 6,000 MTPA (metric tons per annum) of integrated REPM manufacturing in India, thereby enhancing self-reliance and positioning India as a key player in the global REPM market," the government said in a statement.

Local industry groups welcomed the move, with the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) saying it will provide long-term resilience to the automotive supply chain.

China's next economic shift is primed for backlash

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Made in China 2025 is "very insulting", then-US President Donald Trump complained in 2018, because it "means in 2025, [the country is] going to take over, economically, the world...that's not happening". Launched a decade ago, Beijing's 10-year masterplan, laid out sweeping goals across aviation, robotics and other sectors aimed at transforming the world's second largest economy into a "manufacturing superpower". But the industrial blueprint drew intense backlash from Washington and Brussels, which accused China of trying to displace Western businesses unfairly. As Made in China 2025 draws to a close, its successor will reshape global trade over the next few years - and spark even fiercer pushback.

The US leader's comments at the time underscored the fallout of President Xi Jinping's grand ambitions. Beijing's alleged use of state subsidies, preferential treatment of domestic companies, forced technological transfers and other tactics formed a major justification of Washington's first trade war with China, as well as for sweeping sanctions on telecommunications equipment makers Huawei and ZTE.

Though Chinese officials quietly

dropped mentions of Made in China 2025 from policy documents, domestic firms led by private-sector champions like Huawei as well as state-backed giants all stepped up. A US government report published in November found that across the 10 strategic industries identified in Made in China 2025, the country has "met

or exceeded many of the very ambitious global market share, local sourcing and technological development targets".

Battery-powered and hybrid vehicles, for example, are a notable success. Beijing targeted annual production from its automakers of 3 million units by 2025; in 2021, the industry, led by the \$117 billion



The photo shows BYD electric cars waiting to be loaded to a carrier for exports at the Taicang Port in Suzhou, China. By 2023, China's share of global manufacturing as measured by value hit 28.8 percent, up from 25.9 percent in 2015.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

BYD, churned out 3.5 million vehicles. High-end medical devices, ships and space equipment scored similar wins.

By 2023, China's share of global manufacturing as measured by value hit 28.8 percent, up from 25.9 percent in 2015, according to the same US report. In the Made in China 2025 industries, the People's Republic accounted for nearly one-quarter of global growth in exports in the eight years since the plan was launched, capturing 20 percent of exports by 2023.

These gains stand out, even if the country has fallen short in critical areas like semiconductors and aviation. Western governments today are floundering to bring back strategic manufacturing sectors and supply chains from shipbuilding to critical minerals.

Against this backdrop, all eyes are on China's next economic blueprint. Indeed, a Made in China 2035 plan is probably already underway, though given its predecessor's controversy, Beijing is keeping its masterplan under wraps. Yet under Xi's political slogan of "new productive forces", which refers to the country's next growth drivers, planners have already spelled out industrial targets in various planning documents and directives.