

'Prioritise national API policy implementation'

Says the Alliance for Health Reforms Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Alliance for Health Reforms Bangladesh (AHRB) has called on the chief adviser to personally prioritise and oversee the rapid implementation of the National Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) Policy, citing its critical importance to Bangladesh's economic resilience and public health security.

An open letter was issued yesterday, signed by Syed Abdul Hamid, convenor of AHRB and professor at the Institute of Health Economics of the University of Dhaka, and Syed Muhammad Akram Hussain, chairman of the Department of Clinical Oncology at Bangladesh Medical University and member of the Health Sector Reform Commission.

The alliance underscored the urgency of reducing dependence on imported pharmaceutical raw materials.

The letter said that despite meeting

around 98 percent of domestic medicine demand, Bangladesh remains heavily reliant on imported APIs—materials essential for drug production.

This overdependence, the letter warns, not only drains valuable foreign exchange reserves but also exposes the nation to global supply chain disruptions, as seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, said AHRB.

The Health Sector Reform Commission has already identified local API production, alongside vaccines, medical devices, and diagnostics, as a national strategic priority.

The letter urges the government to treat this policy as more than a bureaucratic reform, but rather a foundational investment in the country's future economic security and health sovereignty.

To ensure rapid progress in strengthening Bangladesh's pharmaceutical self-reliance, AHRB has

outlined five urgent priorities in its appeal to the chief adviser.

These include the swift removal of regulatory and infrastructural hurdles currently obstructing API production, along with the introduction of a

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competitive Production-Linked Incentive scheme to attract domestic and foreign investment.

The alliance also stresses the need for sustained public funding to advance pharmaceutical research and innovation, as well as the creation of strong,

institutionalised partnerships between academia and industry to facilitate technology transfer and develop a skilled scientific workforce.

Finally, AHRB calls for the establishment of an empowered, permanent inter-ministerial task force with full authority to ensure coordinated, time-bound implementation of the National API Policy.

AHRB further stressed that the policy holds the potential to transform Bangladesh into a regional pharmaceutical export hub, with significant gains in foreign exchange savings, skilled employment, and a boost in the country's tax-to-GDP ratio.

"The time for action is now," the letter said, urging the chief adviser and the finance adviser to lead the charge and ensure the policy does not remain on paper but delivers measurable impact for the nation.

Rupali Chowdhury, new president of FICCI

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Rupali Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited, has been elected president of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) for the fourth time.



Rupali Chowdhury

At the same time, Deepal Abeywickrema, chairman and managing director of Nestlé Bangladesh PLC, was elected senior vice-president, and Mohammad Iqbal Chowdhury, CEO of LafargeHolcim Bangladesh PLC, vice-president.

FICCI made the announcements for the 2026-2027 term at its 62nd annual general meeting at Le Méridien Dhaka yesterday.

The newly elected 15-member board of directors will assume office on January 1, 2026, following the end of the current board's tenure on December 31, 2025, led by Zaved Akhtar, chairman of Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, who took charge as FICCI president for the 2024-2025 term.

Climate change

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The government's Industry Policy 2022 encourages cleaner industrial practices by promoting effluent treatment plants, central ETPs, and assistance for industries seeking to apply clean development management to control greenhouse gases.

Producers, however, face steep costs, limited access to finance, technical constraints, and inadequate information and equipment, according to the study.

UNIONISED WORKERS EARNING MORE'

A separate study at the event examined wage patterns among manufacturing workers. Mahmudul Hasan, research associate at BIDS, said unionised workers consistently earn higher wages across all model specifications.

The study found that even after full controls, unionisation remains a strong determinant of earnings.

For garment workers, wages are 19 percent to 22 percent higher due to stronger compliance, formal structures, and higher skill intensity.

The research found no significant wage difference between unionised and non-unionised garment workers once characteristics and compliance were taken into account.

Within the RMG sector, unions advocate for both unionised and non-unionised staff. Spillover effects and compliance norms help lift garment

workers' wages above those in non-RMG industries.

Unionised RMG workers earn markedly more than both non-unionised RMG staff and non-unionised workers in other sectors, the study said.

It added that 11.35 percent of manufacturing workers are unionised overall, earning about 10 percent more than non-unionised workers. Higher wages in RMG may reflect stronger compliance, more effective unions, formal structures, and greater skill intensity.

TECHNOLOGY LIFTING PRODUCTIVITY'

The third study assessed technology use across industrial sectors.

Kazi Zubair Hossain, research associate at BIDS, said annual productivity growth in the garment sector reached 4.19 percent for 2014-2023 due to technological improvements.

RMG firms producing jackets recorded the fastest growth at 6.59 percent a year. Knit-lingerie followed at 6.43 percent and sweater production at 6.05 percent.

Home textiles grew by 5.58 percent, and T-shirt production by 4.39 percent. In contrast, woven shirts rose by 3 percent, woven trousers by 1.15 percent, and denim by 1.81 percent over the same period, the study said.

BIDS Research Director Mohammad Yunus moderated the session.

Tk 4 lakh crore default loans stuck in lawsuits

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back to repayment. Although banks are legally required to file cases to pursue recovery, progress remains slow due to systemic bottlenecks.

The number of money-loan courts is insufficient, they said, and delays are compounded by shortages of judges and by banks not providing lawyers with timely documentation, including collateral papers.

The consequences are mounting. A central bank report warned that the vast sums trapped in litigation are inflicting heavy losses on lenders and weighing on the overall economy.

Md Omar Faruk Khan, managing director of Islami Bank Bangladesh, recently said the bank would adopt a tougher stance against major defaulters, including S Alam Group, noting that its own stock of bad loans has approached Tk 100,000 crore.

The bank has already filed several cases in this regard.

To accelerate recoveries, the Bangladesh Bank has instructed lenders to act under Section 12(3) of the Money Loan Court Act 2003, including issuing auction notices and seeking expedited hearings to vacate High Court stay orders.

Banks have also been advised to file civil miscellaneous petitions with the Appellate Division's Chamber Judge to lift such stays and clear the way for resolution.

Protesting NEIR rollout, handset traders besiege

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Information Technology, last week announced that the government is considering reducing import duties on legally imported smartphones ahead of the NEIR launch.

"Work on the duty cut is already in progress. Any reduction in duties on imported phones will be matched by adjustments to VAT and other taxes for the country's 13 to 14 assembly plants to ensure fair competition," Taiyeb said.

Meanwhile, yesterday afternoon, after a meeting with the BTTC chairman, Md Aslam, president of the Mobile Business Community, said the chairman assured them that he would place their demands before senior government officials at a meeting scheduled for 6pm yesterday and announce the next steps afterwards.

The services sector grew for the 14th month, but growth slowed. Employment and input costs increased, while new business, business activity, and order backlog all fell into contraction.

Looking ahead, future business indices showed faster expansion in agriculture, construction, and services, while manufacturing's growth slowed.

Rising food prices

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He said that the country has been living in a "high-inflation regime for more than three years," while the only major tool used so far has been monetary policy.

"The policy rate has been raised gradually and kept at around 10 percent for more than a year," he said, adding that the key policy gap is the absence of supportive measures to complement monetary tightening.

Striking a similar tone to Raihan, he said, "In Bangladesh, monetary policy alone cannot control inflation."

Mujeri, executive director of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development (InM), highlighted that supply-side factors are a major driver of inflation in Bangladesh, limiting the effectiveness of interest-rate adjustments. Election spending and non-productive expenditures in the coming months could push inflation even higher, he warned.

He said, "If the election is held in February, money circulation - both formal and informal - will rise."

"Candidates will spend heavily, and government expenditure on election-related activities will also increase. These are not production-oriented expenditures."

He added that investment-driven production growth is unlikely during this period, while Ramadan, traditionally associated with price hikes, is likely to further intensify pressures in March.

Four exporters receive

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These efforts strengthen its position as a responsible supplier. Supported by strong process control and a resilient supply chain, the group remains a key backwards-linkage partner to the garment sector.

Janata Jute Mills Limited and Sadat Jute Industries Limited received the award in the non-traditional and emerging sectors manufacturing category for export revenue of \$10 million and above.

The company was recognised for expanding jute into technical textiles, geo textiles and sustainable packaging, with exports reaching nearly 90 countries.

Alongside classic hessian and sacking, the firm now produces technical textiles, geo textiles, non-woven felt, retail accessories and eco-friendly packaging.

This shift reflects how a heritage industry can evolve into a globally competitive, future-focused manufacturing segment.

The use of renewable energy, resource-efficient operations and investment in workforce development highlight its advancement as an emerging leader in modern manufacturing.

Ulkasemi Pvt Limited won in the non-traditional and emerging sectors

category for export revenue of \$5 million and above.

The company represents a strong example of Bangladesh's progress in high-tech services, delivering advanced semiconductor design from its main engineering centre in Dhaka.

As a design centre alliance partner of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, one of only 29 globally, Ulkasemi provides design, verification, custom layouts and post-silicon services for clients in the United States, China, Taiwan and India.

Its talent pipeline, industry-academia programmes and investment in low-power, energy-efficient chip design place the company at the forefront of Bangladesh's movement into cutting-edge technology services.

"Today's awards celebrate the grit and ambition of our exporters, but the path ahead requires strategic evolution," said HSBC Bangladesh CEO Rahman.

"While acknowledging the current success, we must work collaboratively for the country to achieve greater market diversification and maximise the benefits of existing and future preferential trade agreements," he added.

ARMY HEADQUARTERS E IN C'S BRANCH WORKS DIRECTORATE DHAKA CANTONMENT INVITATION FOR TENDER					
MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES					
1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs.				
2. Agency	Military Engineer Services				
3. Procuring Entity Name	E in C				
4. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka				
5. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)				
6. Budget and source of Funds	GOB, Development Budget				
7. Development Partners (if applicable)	None				
8. Project / Programme Name (if applicable)	Conservation of Old Dhaka Central Jail History, Historical Buildings & Development of Surroundings area-1st Revised.				
9. Selling of Tender will commence from	09 December 2025 (from 1200 hours to 1400 hours in Office Time).				
10. Selling of Tender will close on	06 January 2026 (from 1200 hours to 1400 hours in Office Time).				
11. Last date and time of submission of Tender	07 January 2026 upto 1200 hours.				
12. Date and time of opening of Tender	07 January 2026 at 1230 hours.				
13. Name & Address of the Office(s)	Tender Selling & Information Centre of Works Directorate at GE (Army) Central Dhaka and AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantt.				
- Selling Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre of Works Directorate at GE (Army) Central Dhaka.				
- Receiving Tender Document	-Do-				
- Opening Tender Document	-Do-				
14. Eligibility of Tenderer	a. MES enlisted contractors Class - 'A' b. Contractors enlisted in other Govt, Semi Government & Autonomous Organization of similar capacity may also participate in tenders having security clearance from DGFI.				
15. Brief Description of Works					
Lot No	Identification of Lot	Location	Price of Tender Document (Taka)	Tender Security Amount in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/Bank Guarantee in favour of AHQ, E in C's Br, Wks Dic, Dhaka Cantt (Taka)	Completion Time in weeks/ months
a.	Remaining works for Construction of Multipurpose Complex 06 storied building and 02 basement with Mat foundation (Structural works 4th & 5th floor, finishing works Basement to 5th floor) including ancillary works Zone-A for Conservation of Old Dhaka Central Jail History, Historical Buildings and Development of Surroundings area, Dhaka (Group-03).	South City Corporation, Dhaka	96,000.00	2,09,00,000.00	10 (Ten) Months
16. Name of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
17. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
18. Address of Official Inviting Tender	AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment Web address : www.army.mil.bd				
19. Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Army Headquarters, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment Tel No. : 9832870 Fax No : 9832906				
20.	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.				

XEN B/R
For Director of Works
Army Headquarters
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Works Directorate
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GD-2681

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
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Khamarbari, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

Corrigendum Notice (e-GP)

Memo no. : 12.01.0000.040.07.010.23.1119
RFA Publication Date and Time : 23-Nov-2025 & 12:00PM
Tender ID : 1164648
Package No. : SD/PARTNER-DAE/02