

UCB hosts 'Cashless Bangladesh Initiative' programme in Kushtia

STAR BUSINESS DESK

United Commercial Bank PLC (UCB) yesterday organised a daylong programme, titled "Cashless Bangladesh Initiative", in Kushtia under an initiative of Bangladesh Bank to promote a cashless financial system.

Md Amzad Hossain Khan, executive director of Bangladesh Bank's Rajshahi office, inaugurated the programme as the chief guest at the Kushtia Shilpkala Academy, according to a press release.

In his speech, Khan said the government spends a significant amount every year on printing, transporting and securing cash. Expanding digital transactions, particularly the use of Bangla QR, would substantially reduce these costs while enhancing financial security for the public, he added.

As a special guest, Arief Hossain Khan, executive director and spokesperson of the central bank, said implementing the Cashless Bangladesh initiative would ensure greater transparency, efficiency and security in financial transactions.

He added that expanding digital

payment systems would also help bring rural and marginalised communities under enhanced financial inclusion.

Mohammad Mamdudur Rashid, managing director and CEO of UCB, said expanding digital transactions would make the country's economy more transparent, dynamic and secure.

"UCB is working on digital platforms to provide customers with easy, fast and modern banking services," he said.

"We believe that building a cashless Bangladesh will reduce corruption, increase revenue and further strengthen the rural economy. UCB is proud to be part of this transformation," he added.

ANM Moinul Kabir, director of the Payment Systems Department-1 at Bangladesh Bank, presided over the event.

Md Mizanur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner (education and ICT, and development and human resource management) of the Kushtia district administration, along with senior officials of UCB and other banks and participants from various professions, were also present.



PHOTO: UNITED COMMERCIAL BANK
Md Amzad Hossain Khan, executive director (grade-1) of Bangladesh Bank's Rajshahi office, inaugurates the daylong programme, titled "Cashless Bangladesh Initiative", organised by United Commercial Bank PLC, in Kushtia yesterday.



Iqbal Ahmed, chairman of NRB Bank PLC, poses for a group photograph with participants of the bank's "Annual Business Conference-2026" at the Gulshan Club Limited in Dhaka on Saturday.

PHOTO: NRB BANK

Pubali Bank organises annual business conference

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Pubali Bank PLC yesterday held its "Annual Business Conference 2026" at the bank's head office in Motijheel, Dhaka.

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

Ali highlighted business acquisition and analysis at the conference and outlined the steps that need to be taken

to achieve the bank's goals.

Mohammad Esha, Mohammad Shahadat Hossain, Ahmed Enayet Manzur, Md Shahnewaz Khan and Mohammad Anisuzzaman, deputy managing directors of the bank, attended the event as special guests.

The conference framed necessary strategies and plans to achieve the bank's targets for 2026.

Md Rabiu Alam, deputy general manager and head of the ADC Division, presided over the conference.



Mohammad Ali, managing director and chief executive officer of Pubali Bank PLC, inaugurates the bank's "Annual Business Conference 2026" at its head office in Motijheel, Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

American CEOs

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In August, Neil Bradley, the Chamber's chief policy officer, told Reuters the group aimed to respond to Trump in a nonpartisan way, to preserve support for free markets.

Trump's approval rating on the economy currently stands at a lackluster 36 percent, below his overall 41 percent rating even as he portrays his economic policies as succeeding by conventional measures.

"Under our administration, growth is exploding, productivity is soaring, investment is booming, incomes are rising, inflation is defeated, America is respected again like never before," Trump said in Detroit on Tuesday.

A few prominent CEOs have openly questioned some of his actions.

On January 9, Exxon's Woods told Trump that Venezuela is "uninvestable," undercutting White House messaging about the industry's future in the country. Woods added he was confident in Trump's plans and that the company could soon dispatch a technical team to assess conditions there. Even so, two days later, Trump said he might keep Exxon out of future deals in the country.

"I didn't like their response. They're playing too cute," Trump told reporters.

An Exxon representative declined to comment for this story.

On January 13, JPMorgan's Dimon said he supported the independence of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, days after the administration opened a criminal investigation into Powell's conduct. Dimon added that Trump's meddling in the Fed could spike inflation. "I don't care what he says," Trump told Reuters about Dimon's comments.

A JPMorgan representative declined to comment for this article.

A day earlier, Albert Bourla, CEO of Pfizer, said he was annoyed by Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr's move to roll back vaccine recommendations for children. "I'm

seriously frustrated, because what is happening has zero scientific merit," he told journalists in San Francisco.

Pfizer representatives did not respond to questions.

LOBBYING IS DIFFERENT NOW

The Conference Board this week released a survey showing that for US CEOs, the biggest risk factor in 2026 is uncertainty. Dana Peterson, chief economist at the Conference Board, said the survey did not specifically ask about Trump, but that "the executives I've spoken with understand that lobbying is different now."

Gary Clyde Hufbauer, senior fellow of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said CEOs may be calibrating their comments to avoid blowback and to position their companies to benefit from Trump's policies or interests.

But unless companies push back, this could open the door to heavier regulation after Trump leaves office, Hufbauer said.

"My guess is they (CEOs) think the actions are a passing fad," Hufbauer said. "Since state capitalism is catnip both to progressive Democrats and to some MAGA Republicans, executives and investors could be asleep at the switch," he said.

AI bull case

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already includes what TSMC has pledged. Though details were lacking, such as timeframes and which other firms will participate, Wei separately revealed that his company bought a second "large" piece of land in the US to support current expansion plans and "provide more flexibility" for future demand.

Against the backdrop of rising AI bubble fears, TSMC offers a powerful endorsement. At the same time, though, that one of the industry's most cautious spenders is splurging also suggests that any downturn will be painful and far-reaching.

IFIC Bank hands over Tk 8cr startup fund cheque to BB

STAR BUSINESS DESK

IFIC Bank PLC has handed over a cheque of more than Tk 8 crore to Bangladesh Bank (BB) as part of initiatives undertaken in line with the central bank's directives on the formation and operations of Bangladesh Startup Investment Company PLC.

Md Rafiqul Islam, deputy managing director and chief of branch business at IFIC Bank PLC, presented the cheque to Nawshad Mustafa, director of the SME and Special Programmes Department of Bangladesh Bank, at the BB's headquarters in Motijheel, Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Through the initiative, IFIC Bank reaffirmed its commitment to Bangladesh Bank's policy directives and its active role in strengthening the country's startup ecosystem.

The bank said it remains focused on promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth in Bangladesh.

Helal Ahmed, head of operations at IFIC Bank PLC, was also present at the event.



Md Rafiqul Islam, deputy managing director and chief of branch business at IFIC Bank PLC, and Nawshad Mustafa, director of the SME and Special Programmes Department of the Bangladesh Bank, pose for a photograph during the handover of a cheque at the BB headquarters in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: IFIC BANK

Shahjalal Islami Bank holds annual business conference

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC organised its "Annual Business Conference 2026" at a resort in Gazipur on Saturday.

Mohammed Younus, vice-chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC, inaugurated the conference as the chief guest, according to a press release.

The meeting evaluated the bank's performance over the past year and adopted necessary strategies and action plans to achieve targets for the rest of the year. Mosleh Uddin Ahmed, managing director of the bank, presided over the conference.

The bank awarded managers from different branches and executives from the corporate head office in various

categories for their outstanding performance.

Md Abul Bashar, senior executive vice-president and company secretary, and Rumana Kutubuddin, senior executive vice-president and head of the investment monitoring division, moderated the programme.

Imtiaz U Ahmed, additional managing director of the bank; Rashed Sarwar, MM Saiful Islam and Md Jafar Sadeq, deputy managing directors, attended the event.

Among others, Md Sanaullah Shahid, Akkas Uddin Mollah, Khandaker Shakib Ahmed and Fakir Akhteruzzaman, directors of the bank, and Abdullah Masum, a member of the Shariah Supervisory Committee, were also present.



Mohammed Younus, vice-chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC, attends the bank's "Annual Business Conference 2026" at a resort in Gazipur on Saturday.

EU warns against Trump's tariff threat over Greenland

AFP, Brussels

European Union leaders on Saturday warned against US President Donald Trump's threat to impose tariffs on European countries until he has achieved his purchase of Greenland.

Cyprus, which holds the rotating presidency of the European Council, announced an extraordinary meeting of EU ambassadors in Brussels for Sunday afternoon.

And one senior German MEP said Trump's latest threat raised a question mark over the EU-US trade deal agreed last year.

EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa, president of the European Council, issued the joint statement hours after Trump threatened multiple European nations with tariffs of up to 25 percent.

"Tariffs would undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral," they wrote in a post on social media.

"Europe will remain united, coordinated, and committed to upholding its sovereignty," they added.

The statement came days after Danish and Greenlandic officials held talks in Washington over Trump's bid to acquire the territory, without reaching agreement.

Trump said that from February 1, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Finland would be subject to a 10-percent tariff on all goods sent to the United States

"The EU stands in full solidarity with Denmark and the people of Greenland," said the EU statement.

"Dialogue remains essential, and we are committed to building on the process begun already last week between the Kingdom of Denmark and the US."

Trump said that from February 1, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Finland would be subject to a 10 percent tariff on all goods sent to the United States.

German MEP Manfred Weber, head of the largest group in the European Parliament, the conservative EPP, said Trump's latest remarks called into question the EU-US trade deal negotiated last year.

"The EPP is in favour of the EU-US trade deal, but given Donald Trump's threats regarding Greenland, approval is not possible at this stage," he posted on X.

"The zero percent tariffs on US products must be put on hold," he added.

Brussels and Washington clinched a deal in July for most EU exports to face a 15 percent US levy, but both sides are still pushing for additional trade concessions.