

# Six new rice varieties approved for nationwide cultivation

Varieties boast high vitamin content, high yield, and tolerance to adverse conditions

**STAR BUSINESS REPORT**

The Ministry of Agriculture has approved six new rice varieties, including two hybrids, for nationwide cultivation, aiming to boost production and strengthen food security for a growing population.

With the approval, the total number of rice varieties developed by the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) rises to 127, according to a press release.

The six rice varieties include one enriched with vitamin E, one high-yielding and lodging-resistant, and another tolerant to salinity and also resistant to blast disease.

Three other varieties include a cold-tolerant strain for haor regions and two hybrid strains designed to withstand lodging.

The newly developed BRRI Dhan 115 is a vitamin E- and antioxidant-rich variety. It is also Bangladesh's first high-yielding black rice variety.

Its grains contain 14.98 mg/kg vitamin E and 29.12 mg/kg C3G, a beneficial antioxidant. The average yield is 7.4 tonnes per hectare, the statement said.

BRRI Dhan 116 is a high-yielding, late-maturing variety for the Boro season. The plant is strong and sturdy, making it resistant to lodging.

Lodging in rice refers to the bending of stems near ground level. This makes the crop difficult to harvest, causing a significant drop in yield. Therefore, lodging resistant crops generally produce higher yields.

In yield trials across ten regions, this variety produced about 13.75 percent higher yields than BRRI Dhan 92. The grain is also finer than that of BRRI Dhan 92, making the new variety a potential



PHOTO: COLLECTED

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substitute for the old one. The average yield is 8.59 tonnes per hectare. Moreover, it can reach the maximum yield of up to 10.36 tonnes per hectare.

BRRI Dhan 117 is a short-duration, salt tolerant, and blast disease-resistant variety for the Boro season. Its average yield is 8.6 tonnes per hectare, which can increase to as much as 9.90 tonnes per hectare. The protein content of the grains is 9.3 percent.

BRRI Dhan 118 is a cold-tolerant rice variety suitable for haor regions. Usually, haor areas experience

unexpected flooding around the time rice reaches its semi-mature to mature state, causing a huge drop in yield. However, BRRI Dhan 118 can be sown early, and it will be at the reproductive stage during such floodings. As it is cold-tolerant at that stage, it will survive through the submersion.

Such a situation will not cause sterility, and the variety can yield at least 6.0 tonnes per hectare. The medium-sized grain has a protein content of 9.1 percent.

BRRI Hybrid Dhan 9 is lodging-tolerant and salt-tolerant to some extent.

From seedling to maturity, it can tolerate salinity levels of 4-8 dS/m. In coastal regions, the yield is 6.5-7.0 tonnes per hectare. The grains are medium in size, and the protein content is 9.3 percent.

BRRI Hybrid Dhan 10 is also lodging-tolerant. Under normal field conditions, farmers can gain yields of 9.7-10.7 tonnes per hectare. The grains are slender, and the protein content is 9.1 percent.

Including the newly developed varieties, BRRI has developed 39 rice varieties that are tolerant to adverse conditions such as floods, drought, salinity, and waterlogging, the statement said.

# US, India unveil interim trade framework

REUTERS, Washington, New Delhi

The United States and India moved closer to a trade pact on Friday, releasing an interim framework that would lower tariffs, reshape energy ties and deepen economic cooperation as both countries seek to realign global supply chains.

The framework reaffirms a commitment to negotiations toward a broader bilateral trade agreement, the two governments said in a joint statement, while noting that further negotiations were needed to complete the pact.

Separately, US President Donald Trump in an executive order removed the additional 25 percent tariff imposed on Indian goods for Russian oil purchases as New Delhi "committed to stop directly or indirectly importing" Russian oil.

However, US officials will monitor and recommend reinstating the tariff if India resumes oil procurement from Russia, the order said, as Washington maintains pressure on India to restrict energy ties with Moscow.

The India-US joint statement did not mention India's Russian oil purchases or a formal pledge from India to confirm the move.

Trump announced a deal with India on Monday to cut US tariffs on Indian goods to 18 percent from 50 percent in exchange for India halting purchases of Russian oil and lowering trade barriers.

Half of the 50 percent rate had been imposed separately by Trump as punishment for India's purchases of Russian oil, which he said were fuelling Moscow's war effort in Ukraine. Trump signed an executive order on Friday rescinding that 25 percent portion after India agreed this week to shift its oil buying to the US and Venezuela. However, the statement indicated that New Delhi resisted Washington's push to broadly open its agricultural market.

Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said the agreement safeguards farmers' interests and rural livelihoods by "completely protecting sensitive agricultural and dairy products".

Imports of genetically modified agricultural products would not be directly allowed as there was no such provision in the pact, while fruits like apples would be allowed under a tariff quota, he said at a press briefing.

## Allergy drugs emerge

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sales of cholesterol and hypertension medicines grew by more than 50 percent, while diabetic medicines rose by 37 percent.

ACI's Zaman pointed out that while cholesterol-lowering drugs are used globally, the high incidence of hypertension and heart disease in Bangladesh is largely influenced by dietary habits alongside genetic factors.

"Increased protein intake over the past 10 to 20 years has contributed to rising cases of hypercholesterolemia and other cardiovascular conditions," he said.

He cautioned that without greater public awareness about fatty food consumption and improved health education, these trends are likely to worsen in the future.

Yet none match the dominance of gastric and ulcer treatments, which reached Tk 5,444 crore in the first nine months of last year, an 8 percent increase from the same period in 2024.

These account for roughly 15 percent of total pharmaceutical sales, a figure that says much about Bangladeshi

eating habits.

The top three acid-suppressing medicines - Healthcare's Sergel, Renata PLC's Maxpro and Incepta Pharmaceutical's Pantonix - together generated nearly Tk 1,900 crore in sales.

Sergel alone notched Tk 918 crore.

The trio has held the top spots for at least four years. Other leading names in the top 10, including Radiant Pharmaceutical's Exium and Square Pharmaceutical's Seclo and Nexum, also saw strong demand for similar conditions.

Beximco Pharmaceutical's Napa and Bisoran, Square's Sef-3, and ACME Laboratories' Monas were additional top performers, each recording sales exceeding Tk 200 crore during this period.

"People's eating habits are the main reason for the high demand for gastric and ulcer medicines," said AMShamim, founder and managing director of Labaid Group.

"Here, people prefer very spicy foods, which often cause gastric problems. Their meal routines are also irregular,

so sales of gastric medicines are the highest in the country. We also see this trend in diagnostic centres."

He added that people have become more health-conscious and now get tested whenever they feel unwell, which has led to more diagnoses of cholesterol problems.

Meanwhile, ACI's Zaman noted that the unusually high consumption of hyper-acidity medicines is largely driven by food adulteration and the widespread intake of spicy and compromised food ingredients.

"These factors have made acidity-related conditions extremely common, leading to routine prescription and over the counter use of medicines such as raniitidine, omeprazole and esomeprazole for decades," he said.

He recalls that even in the 1990s, international pharmaceutical companies were surprised by the volume of these drugs consumed locally.

After gastric medicines, antibiotics ranked second, with sales reaching Tk 2,255 crore, up 7 percent year-on-year.

## Over 76% of voters interpret

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their understanding of development is largely tied to conventional infrastructure-focused models.

She said that such a narrow perception could, over time, overshadow critical issues such as sustainable development, environmental protection and climate adaptation.

Despite the dominance of infrastructure in how development is defined, voters identified the environment, education and health as their top three aspirations for the next decade.

Education ranked as the highest priority across all age groups, according to the survey.

Among social indicators, health and quality education emerged as the most pressing concerns for Bangladesh in the years ahead. Many of these challenges, however, are closely linked to environmental degradation, said CPD.

The survey also found that voters have yet to fully grasp the role of energy transition in environmental

protection and restoration.

Most respondents focused on immediate and visible environmental problems, while struggling to link renewable energy or the phase-out of fossil fuels with day-to-day environmental challenges.

When asked about environmental problems, voters cited air pollution, rising temperatures and health hazards as the top three sources of public suffering. Yet the solutions they proposed largely remained traditional, such as planting trees or reducing plastic use.

"This shows that they are not really thinking about why these problems are occurring," Moazzem said, pointing to a lack of attention to industrial emissions, brick kilns, unregulated chemical industries, river filling and sand extraction.

He said this could reflect limited awareness, fear of challenging powerful interests, or political reluctance to confront the root causes of pollution.

If meaningful change is to occur, Moazzem said, authorities

must rein in groups responsible for environmental degradation, including those involved in illegal industrial units, brick and sand businesses and river encroachment.

While political parties have issued national-level election manifestos, he said similar commitments are needed at the local government level, backed by concrete action.

He said area-based employment is important, but it should not come at the cost of environmental damage through brick kilns, sand mining or real estate development on reclaimed land.

Moazzem said members of parliament, local institutions and the government must work together to promote environmentally sustainable, green jobs, alongside investments in health and education.

He also stressed third-party monitoring to assess whether manifesto promises are realistic and implemented, calling for stronger involvement of civil society and respected community members at the local level.

## Govt to seal US trade deal tomorrow

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The prospect of preferential access has already shifted sourcing patterns. Imports of cotton and soybeans from America have increased as Bangladeshi millers and traders redirect their purchases from other countries.

The signing ceremony will be held in a hybrid format. Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin and Secretary Rahman will attend virtually, while a handful of senior commerce ministry officials will travel to Washington to attend in person alongside their American counterparts.

"We will send the documents to the US as only a few of our officials will fly there to attend the deal signing ceremony," Secretary Rahman said.

The commerce adviser cannot attend in person because the government has only one working day before the national elections

scheduled for February 12, he added.

The agreement follows intense negotiations to reduce the US tariff burden on Bangladesh. The country exports more than \$8 billion worth of goods to the US but imports only \$2 billion, creating a substantial trade gap.

In his Liberation Day announcement on April 2 last year, US President Donald Trump imposed a 37 percent additive reciprocal tariff on Bangladeshi exports. After negotiations, the Trump administration agreed to lower the rate to 20 percent in exchange for Bangladesh's commitment to import more US products.

Bangladesh has pledged to buy American aircraft from Boeing, along with greater quantities of cotton, soybeans, liquefied petroleum gas and other goods to reduce the trade gap with the US. An agreement has

been signed to import 3.5 million tonnes of wheat from America over five years, with approximately 660,000 tonnes already purchased.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association said in a statement that negotiations with the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) regarding the deal have been ongoing for over six months.

"Although we are informed that a formal trade deal will be signed on February 9, we urge the Ministry of Commerce and all parties negotiating with the USTR to ensure that the signing is completed within this timeframe so that Bangladesh can start preparing itself with the preferential deal of utilising US cotton to attain zero tariff access, which we understand as the centrepiece of the trade deal," the association added.

## EPA with Japan to benefit apparel

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In fiscal year 2024-25, Bangladesh exported \$1.41 billion worth of garments to Japan, while Japan's total global imports stood at approximately \$23 billion.

Japan is the world's second-largest garment importing country after the United States when considered as a single market. Despite this scale, Japan currently accounts for only about 3 percent of Bangladesh's total garment exports.

As Bangladesh aspires to reach \$100 billion in garment exports by 2035, having the EPA in effect and increasing Japan's share to at least 10 percent should be a clear strategic objective. An initial assessment of the EPA shows that it favours Bangladesh's ready-made garment sector by ensuring uninterrupted duty-free market access and maintaining favourable rules of origin.

At present, Bangladesh enjoys duty-free access to Japan under the GSP scheme. However, post-LDC graduation, Bangladesh would otherwise face Japan's general Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariffs, which range from 8 to 15 percent for knitwear and from 10 percent to more than 15 percent for woven garments.

The BGMEA also said that under the EPA, customs duties on garment items will be eliminated entirely from the date of entry into force.

Furthermore, Bangladesh is deeply thankful to Japan for the extraordinary flexibility extended in the rules of origin, particularly for garment products, the association said.

Chapter 3 and Annex 2 of the agreement specify that garments produced under single-stage processing will qualify for duty-free access in Japan under the EPA. This is similar to the current Japan GSP rules of origin

and is among the most favourable arrangements for a garment-exporting country like Bangladesh.

As the EPA creates a favourable and predictable trade environment, it is now imperative for Bangladesh to develop a clear roadmap to fully utilise its benefits and potential in line with the \$100 billion garment export vision.

Bangladesh currently runs a trade deficit of approximately \$456 million with Japan. The BGMEA believes the EPA will also play a significant role in reducing this gap. It presents an opportunity to diversify exports beyond garments while encouraging greater engagement from Japanese garment importers, retailers, machinery suppliers, and long-term investors.

The Japan-Bangladesh EPA should be seen as the beginning of a broader and much-needed shift in Bangladesh's trade policy direction.

## Traders split over keeping shops

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They urged people not to be misled.

Earlier in the day, the Shop Business Owners' Association, launched in 2022, said it has decided to keep shops, commercial establishments and malls across Bangladesh closed for two days, including on February 12.

In a press statement, the association said the decision was taken to ensure broader public participation in the polls and the referendum.

The government had earlier declared a general holiday on February 11, the day preceding the election, while election day itself, February 12, is already observed as a

general holiday.

In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Employment has declared a general holiday on Tuesday, February 10, for workers and employees in various industrial zones.

As a result, industrial workers will enjoy three consecutive holidays from February 10 to 12.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
**Bangladesh Police**  
**Office of the Commanding Officer, Rapid Action Battalion-14**  
**Aqua Bypass, Mymensingh**  
**Invitation for e-Tender**

For Financial year 2025-2026, e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) for the procurement of:

Sl	Tender ID No & Reference No	Description of Works	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing/Opening Date & Time
1.	1222132, RAB-14/14208/Q/Repair/1 Date: 05/02/2026	Repair and Maintenance of DAD Mess, CQ Store, and Force Mess of Jamalpur Camp, CPC-1, RAB-14.	22-Feb-2026 17:00	23-Feb-2026 13:00
2.	1222133, RAB-14/14208/Q/Repair/2 Date: 05/02/2026	Repair and Maintenance of boundary wall with painting, installation of barbed wire fence on the wall, repair of RP post and motorcycle garage of Bhairab Camp, CPC-2, RAB-14.	22-Feb-2026 17:00	23-Feb-2026 13:00
3.	1222134, RAB-14/14208/Q/Repair/3 Date: 05/02/2026	Repair and Maintenance of force line toilet pipeline, submersible pump, DAD line, Recreation room, officers' waiting room, Kote, CQ store racks, trunks, installation of 03 toilet tins and 03 wash basins outside, and boundary wall of Tangail Camp, CPC-3, RAB-14.	22-Feb-2026 17:00	23-Feb-2026 13:00
4.	1222135, RAB-14/14208/Q/Repair/4 Date: 05/02/2026	Repair and Maintenance of force mess doors and windows, installation of barbed wire security fence on the wall, permanent security light poles with electric lines, and renovation of separate washrooms for female RAB members of Tangail Camp, CPC-3, RAB-14.	22-Feb-2026 17:00	23-Feb-2026 13:00

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 portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-tender Documents from the national e-GP portal have to be deposited online through any Registered bank branches. Further information and guide lines are available in national e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)). For details, please contact at 01777711403 (Senior Assistant Director, Quarter Master, RAB-14).

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