

Prime Bank hosts youth empowerment session at Kuet

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC, in collaboration with Khulna University of Engineering & Technology (Kuet) and the Kuet Business & Entrepreneurship Club (KEBC), recently organised a session, titled "Empowering Youth", at the Kuet campus under its flagship PrimeAcademia initiative.

Prof Md Maksud Helali, vice-chancellor of Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, inaugurated the programme as the chief guest, according to a press release.

Designed for stakeholders in the education sector, PrimeAcademia is a customised service platform that aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry. Through the platform, participants gain access to practical knowledge and real-world experience.

The initiative places special emphasis on enhancing students' financial literacy, career readiness, leadership development, and strengthening industry-academia collaboration.

Through campus engagements, expert-led discussions, interactive workshops, and industry exposure programmes, PrimeAcademia connects future professionals with contemporary banking practices and corporate insights.



Shaila Abedin, senior executive vice-president and head of liability at Prime Bank PLC, presents a crest to Prof Md Maksud Helali, vice-chancellor of Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, on the Kuet campus recently.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

MTB to raise Tier-1 capital of Tk 346cr

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Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB) has approved a proposal to raise Tier-1 capital amounting to Tk 346 crore to further strengthen the bank's core capital base.

The decision was taken at the bank's 330th board of directors meeting recently and represents 32 percent of the bank's paid-up capital, according to a press release.

Commenting on the decision, Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and CEO of Mutual Trust Bank PLC, said the move is aimed at further strengthening the bank's risk-based capital position amid a changing economic and regulatory environment.

He added that the capital will be raised through a rights issue, Repeat Public Offering (RPO), strategic investment, or any other suitable instrument, in line with the regulations of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC).

Pubali Bank holds 'cashless rally' in Lalmatia



Arief Hossain Khan, executive director and spokesperson of Bangladesh Bank, inaugurates Pubali Bank PLC's cashless rally at an exchange of views meeting in Lalmatia, Dhaka recently. Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank PLC, was also present.

PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

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Pubali Bank PLC recently held a cashless rally and view-exchange meeting, and launched Bangla QR code in Lalmatia, Dhaka, aiming to make the cashless transaction system in Bangladesh more dynamic and increase public awareness.

Arief Hossain Khan, executive director and spokesperson of Bangladesh Bank, inaugurated the event as the chief guest at the exchange of views meeting, according to a press release.

He said Bangladesh Bank is consistently working to expand the modern, technology-based banking system.

"When institutions like Pubali Bank PLC go to the field level and motivate customers and the general public about

digital and cashless transactions, it further strengthens the overall economic progress of the country," he said.

"Not only does the digital transaction system make financial activities faster and easier, it also ensures transparency and accountability," he added.

"Digital and cashless transactions not only save time and cost, but also play an important role in building a transparent and secure financial system," said Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank PLC, who attended the event as the guest of honour.

Ali also discussed the importance of the cashless transaction system, digital banking facilities, secure financial transactions, and the role of the modern banking system in building Smart Bangladesh.

China extends gold-buying streak

ANN/CHINA DAILY

China's official gold reserves rose in January despite an increase in gold prices, extending a 15th consecutive month of buying streak, as the country continued to diversify and optimize its international reserves, official data showed on Saturday.

Gold reserves stood at 74.19 million ounces at the end of January, up 40,000 ounces from a month earlier, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange said on Saturday.

The latest gain followed a cumulative net increase of 860,000 ounces in 2025, after the central bank resumed gold buying in November 2024.

Trust Bank signs MoU with Sheba.xyz to launch digital nano loan

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Trust Bank PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sheba.xyz, one of the leading digital fintech platforms in Bangladesh, to promote digital financial inclusion in the country through the introduction of a Digital Nano Loan facility.

Ahsan Zaman Chowdhury, managing director and CEO of Trust Bank PLC, and Mohammad Ilmul Haque, managing director of Sheba Fintech Limited, signed the MoU at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Under this partnership, micro and small entrepreneurs will be able to access collateral-free nano loans through a fully digitised process featuring simplified applications, e-KYC, quick approvals, and seamless disbursement and repayment via digital wallets.



Mohammad Ilmul Haque, managing director of Sheba Fintech Limited, and Ahsan Zaman Chowdhury, managing director and CEO of Trust Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the memorandum of understanding at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: TRUST BANK

Midland Bank holds annual business conference

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Midland Bank PLC recently organised its "Annual Business Conference 2026" for officials from its branches, sub-branches, agent banking, Islami banking, retail sales, institutional banking, SME, NRB, cards, and treasury divisions at the Lakeshore Hotel in Gulshan, Dhaka.

Md Ahsan-uz Zaman, managing director and CEO of Midland Bank PLC, inaugurated the conference as the chief guest, according to a press release.

He urged officials to ensure service excellence and help clients achieve their financial goals while remaining compliant

with regulatory guidelines, maintaining asset quality, ensuring the recovery of non-performing loans, and delivering value to shareholders.

Riaz Ahmed Choudhury, independent director of the bank, attended the event as the special guest.

Md Zahid Hossain, deputy managing director and chief risk officer; Md Nazmul Huda Sarkar, deputy managing director and head of information technology and chief technology officer; Didarul Islam, chief financial officer; Md Javed Tarek Khan, head of institutional banking; and Khondokar Toufique Hossain, head of ID, were present.



Md Ahsan-uz Zaman, managing director and CEO of Midland Bank PLC, poses for a group photograph with participants of the "Annual Business Conference 2026" at Lakeshore Hotel, Gulshan in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: MIDLAND BANK

Beyond reform on paper

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with process, and political loyalty with institutional accountability. Nowhere is this more evident than in governance reforms. Judicial appointments insulated from executive whim, criminal procedure safeguards against arbitrary arrest, separation of civil and criminal courts, digitisation of bail and case management, and online access to land and police services all point to a deliberate effort to reset the citizen-state relationship. These reforms alter incentives, redistribute power within institutions, and in some cases directly reduce opportunities for rent extraction. Importantly, several — online GD registration, bail bond software, digitised attestation — have already crossed the threshold from law to lived experience.

Public finance and planning reforms reveal a different dynamic: strong technical intent confronting political gravity. Audit reform, tax expenditure controls, customs automation, and social protection rationalisation reflect a serious effort to restore fiscal credibility and curb discretionary privilege. The emphasis on transparency — particularly in auditing and social spending — addresses long-standing trust deficits. Yet this is also where reform momentum visibly slows. The attempted separation of revenue policy from revenue administration illustrates the problem. The logic is sound and the precedent well established, but resistance from within the system has forced pauses and revisions. This reflects a recurring

pattern in fiscal reform: technical consensus collides with institutional self-preservation. Public finance reform, more than most sectors, creates identifiable losers early and beneficiaries later — a mismatch that complicates last-mile delivery.

Banking and financial sector reforms sit in a similar space. The legal architecture for resolution, solvency, and insurance supervision has been strengthened. These are foundational reforms, essential for stability but largely invisible in normal times. Their real test comes not at enactment but at enforcement — when weak or politically connected institutions must be resolved, merged, or disciplined. If resolution frameworks are not applied when stress emerges, especially to influential actors, the credibility gains from these reforms will evaporate quickly.

Energy and infrastructure reforms reflect a cautious, institution-first approach. The focus is on governance, planning, and regulatory correction rather than headline projects. While sensible in a constrained transition period, this also means tangible improvements — lower costs, better reliability, faster execution — remain distant. The relevance of reform in this sector is unquestionable, but the gap between institutional adjustment and household-level impact is still wide. Absent are hard decisions on pricing, contract renegotiation, or sectoral restructuring — choices that would immediately surface distributional conflict. Trade reform stands

out as an exception. Automation through the Bangladesh Single Window, customs digitisation, bonded warehouse reform, and the introduction of commercial courts combine purpose with operational specificity. The result is measurable improvement: faster clearance, fewer interfaces, and greater predictability. While adjustment challenges remain for smaller traders, this is among the clearest cases of reform translating into real economic gains within a short time horizon.

Industry, employment, and business regulation reforms expose the widest gap between ambition and material change. The reform record leans heavily toward labour process improvements — expanded labour courts, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, upgraded inspection systems, and proposed amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) — while leaving deeper questions of industrial competitiveness largely untouched. This is not to dismiss the intrinsic value of stronger labour protections or safer workplaces. However, even the much-cited BLA amendments and the prospective ratification of additional ILO conventions are best understood as defensive reforms: they restore international credibility and manage compliance pressure more than they rewire how firms invest, scale, innovate, or compete.

On industry itself — productivity growth, technology upgrading, access to finance, competition policy, exit of non-viable firms, or

reduction of policy-driven distortions — the reform agenda remains thin. Many measures are procedural or presentational, improving documentation or dispute resolution without materially altering incentives. In business regulation, digitisation and legal streamlining reduce friction at the margins but do not fundamentally change the political economy of regulation. Rules may be clearer on paper, but enforcement remains uneven. For smaller firms, regulation is still a source of uncertainty; for larger or better-connected firms, it remains negotiable.

The last-mile challenge here is therefore not legal drafting or international alignment, but institutional power. Labour law amendments and ILO ratifications will matter only if inspectors are insulated, penalties are applied consistently, and large firms face the same discipline as small ones. Without that shift, these reforms risk becoming compliance theatre — technically correct, internationally legible, and domestically safe, yet insufficient to transform industrial outcomes or employment quality at scale.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MAKING REFORM STICK

The overarching lesson from this reform record is that design is not the binding constraint. Political economy is. The most difficult reforms are precisely those that threaten entrenched interests. Bangladesh's recent experience with stalled or softened initiatives on revenue

authority separation, port container terminal leasing, bank mergers, and central bank reform underscores a general truth: losers do not passively accept reform; they organise against it.

Reform, therefore, requires a political game plan, not just technical design. Anticipating resistance, sequencing change, and managing pushback must be treated as core reform tasks, not implementation details. Transparency helps, but it rarely shifts incentives on its own. Reformers must identify in advance who stands to lose, how those actors are likely to resist, and which counter-coalitions can be mobilised in response. Sometimes this means compensating losers; sometimes isolating them; often moving faster than opposition can coalesce.

This is where the next elected government can do things differently. The real value of this reform compendium is not that it closes a chapter, but that it opens a playbook. It shows where reforms advanced when political cover existed, and where they slowed when vested interests pushed back. A future government that treats this record as a tactical guide — rather than a ceremonial handover — can lower the cost of continuity, raise the cost of reversal, and plan reform offensives with eyes wide open. If it succeeds, reform will no longer be something that merely survives elections; it will be something that survives its first serious confrontation with power.

The writer is a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
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Invitation for Tender

BCG Base Agrajatra e-GP Invitation No. 44.08.7895.453.49.301.26.127 Date: 22 January 2026
BCG Base Agrajatra e-GP Invitation No. 44.08.7895.453.49.301.26.128 Date: 22 January 2026
BCG Base Agrajatra e-GP Invitation No. 44.08.7895.453.49.301.26.161 Date: 05 February 2026
BCG Base Agrajatra e-GP Invitation No. 44.08.7895.453.49.301.26.162 Date: 05 February 2026

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| Ser | Tender ID | Package name | Method | Date & time | | |
|-----|-----------|---|--------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | Publication | Last selling | Closing and opening |
| 1 | 1218230 | Procurement of furniture for 2 (two) in number flat in Payra Building at BCG Base Agrajatra | LTM | 09/02/2026 12:00pm | 24/02/2026 15:00pm | 25/02/2026 10:00am |
| 2 | 1220632 | Repair & maintenance of Sailor Residential Buildings at BCG Base Agrajatra | LTM | 09/02/2026 12:00pm | 24/02/2026 15:00pm | 24/02/2026 10:00am |
| 3 | 1221857 | Procurement of curtain for wardrobe and Payra Building at BCG Base Agrajatra | LTM | 09/02/2026 12:00pm | 24/02/2026 15:00pm | 24/02/2026 10:00am |
| 4 | 1222691 | Repair and maintenance of Support Centre Ancillary Work at BCG Base Agrajatra | OTM | 09/02/2026 12:00pm | 24/02/2026 15:00pm | 24/02/2026 10:00am |

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Kaniz Azad
Lt Commander BN
For Commandant

GID-280