

Neural Semiconductor signs MoUs to strengthen research ecosystem

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Neural Semiconductor Limited, the sole sponsor of the Center of Research Excellence in Semiconductor Technology (CREST), recently signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission to strengthen the country's semiconductor research ecosystem.

The agreements establish a structured national framework allowing CREST-approved projects to access advanced scientific infrastructure, including thin-film deposition systems, cleanroom facilities, photolithography tools, device processing lines, and precision characterisation and metrology laboratories.

As CREST's principal sponsor,

Neural Semiconductor Limited will provide financial and strategic support for research fellowships, approved experiments, and ecosystem coordination.

However, facility operations, regulatory oversight and access decisions will remain under the full authority of BCSIR and BAEC, according to a press release.

The initiative reflects the company's long-term commitment to developing Bangladesh's deep-technology capabilities by aligning national infrastructure with structured research programmes, human capital development and industry-focused innovation.

"Bangladesh already possesses valuable scientific infrastructure," said MA Jabbar, managing director of Neural Semiconductor Limited.



MA Jabbar, managing director of Neural Semiconductor Limited, poses for a group photograph after signing memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: NEURAL SEMICONDUCTOR

United Commercial Bank opens 234th branch in Daganbhuiyan



Mohammad Mamdudur Rashid, managing director and chief executive officer of United Commercial Bank PLC, inaugurates the bank's new branch in Daganbhuiyan, Feni recently.

PHOTO: UCB

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United Commercial Bank PLC (UCB) recently launched a new branch at Rahman & Brothers, Faziler Ghat, in Daganbhuiyan, Feni, aiming to deliver modern, fast and reliable banking services to local customers.

With this addition, the bank's branch network has expanded to 234 outlets, according to a press release.

Mohammad Mamdudur Rashid, managing director and chief executive officer of United Commercial Bank PLC, inaugurated the branch as the chief guest.

He noted that a significant portion of the country's population still remains outside the formal banking system.

"The bank is working gradually to bring this segment under the umbrella of banking services," he said, adding that expanding digital services to accelerate financial inclusion remains one of UCB's key priorities.

The branch formally commenced operations in a festive atmosphere, attended by local business leaders, clients and senior officials of the bank.

Through the new branch, individuals and businesses in the area will gain easier access to deposit and loan facilities, remittance services, digital banking solutions and other modern financial services.

UCB said the expansion reflects its continued commitment to strengthening financial inclusion and supporting economic activities at the grassroots level.

Pubali Bank holds 200th risk committee meeting

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Pubali Bank PLC recently organised its 200th meeting of the Executive Risk Management Committee.

Mohammad Ali, managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of Pubali Bank PLC, inaugurated the meeting, which was held virtually, according to a press release. In his opening speech, Ali emphasised the utmost importance of risk identification and mitigation.

He also stressed the independence of

the Risk Management Division and ICC in fostering a strong risk and compliance culture, essential for the bank's sustainable growth.

Md Monjurul Islam Mojumder, chairman of the Executive Risk Management Committee, general manager and chief risk officer of the bank, presided over the meeting.

Deputy managing directors and other committee members thoroughly discussed various risk statuses and their resolutions.



Mohammad Ali, managing director and chief executive officer of Pubali Bank PLC, inaugurates the bank's 200th meeting of the Executive Risk Management Committee virtually.

PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

NRBC Bank rolls out Ramadan campaign to boost remittance inflow

STAR BUSINESS DESK

NRBC Bank PLC yesterday launched a campaign, titled "Special Remittance Service Month", during the holy month of Ramadan to encourage expatriates to send funds through formal banking channels and further strengthen its remittance services.

As part of the campaign, the bank is offering special gifts to remittance beneficiaries until Eid to share the festive joy with expatriates' families, according to a press release.

Md Touhidul Alam Khan, managing director and chief executive officer of NRBC Bank PLC, inaugurated the campaign as the chief guest.

Speaking at the event, he said that, as a remittance-focused bank, NRBC has always accorded the highest priority to expatriate income services.

"The board of directors and management consider the remittance sector one of the bank's key strategic service areas," he said.

"These special gifts are a small gesture to share the joy of Eid with expatriates' families."

The bank reiterated its commitment to delivering remittances quickly, securely and conveniently through its nationwide network of branches and sub-branches.

To enhance service quality, dedicated 'Remittance Service Desks' have already been introduced at all outlets.

The gift distribution programme will continue throughout Ramadan as part of the bank's broader effort to promote formal remittance inflows and strengthen customer engagement.

Muhammad Abdul Qaium Khan, deputy managing director of the bank; Faisal Ahmed, chief human resources officer; Serajul Amin Ahmed, chief risk officer; Hasnat Reza Mohibbul Alam, head of international division; and Rasedul Islam, chief financial officer, were also present, along with other senior officials of the bank.



Md Touhidul Alam Khan, managing director and chief executive officer of NRBC Bank PLC, inaugurates the campaign, titled "Special Remittance Service Month", yesterday at the bank's head office in Dhaka.

PHOTO: NRBC BANK

Where AI lives: Southeast Asia's data centre boom

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AI AT WORK

At the Indonesian data centre, racks of metal-cased servers in tall white cabinets were busy answering AI queries for local users – an intensive, heat-generating process.

A "closed-loop" water cooling system, which works a bit like a car radiator and does not require regular refills, prevents them from malfunctioning.

Higher performance chips "require a lot more intensity", Noelle Walsh, head of the company's cloud operations, told AFP.

"We've had to adapt our data centres' designs to accommodate

different power structures and different cooling mechanisms."

Super-connected Singapore was long Southeast Asia's data centre hotspot, but the city state halted developments between 2019 and 2022 over energy, water and land use worries.

That, along with an explosion of AI interest after ChatGPT's debut, brought a surge of data centres to neighbouring Malaysia, and increasingly Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

"The boom is there," with companies racing for "first-player advantage", said Trung Ghi of the consulting firm Arthur D. Little.

Hosting data centres is a "win-win situation" for governments, he said, noting it boosts business efficiency with faster online tools and grows local economies as people come to work at new tech parks.

HYPERSCALE

The data centre expansion will increase demand on power grids that are still heavily coal dependent.

Power consumption by data centres in Indonesia – where coal generates nearly 70 percent of electricity – will likely quadruple by 2030, according to energy think tank Ember.

Microsoft's Jakarta facilities, spread out to mitigate risks from earthquakes and floods, are part

of a \$1.7 billion investment with a potential "hyperscale" capacity that would need hundreds of megawatts of electricity.

The company says it works to "green" local grids by incentivising energy transition plans.

"We don't build power plants, but we work with utility providers," Microsoft's Walsh said.

"In some parts of the world it is wind power, in other parts of the world it is solar, we also use hydropower, and in some countries it's nuclear. So we support all of those."

Microsoft recently signed a deal with Indonesia's state-owned electricity provider to raise the

nation's renewable energy capacity by around 200 megawatts over a decade.

SINKING CITY

Microsoft's rivals Amazon and Google, as well as Chinese tech giants Alibaba and Tencent, also run data centres in the Jakarta region.

The metropolitan area of 42 million is sinking, partly due to groundwater extraction. Officials plan to eventually relocate the capital.

The data centre boom "will put even greater strain on the region's water resources, which have historically been overexploited and badly managed," said scientist Olivia Jensen from the National University of Singapore.

Microsoft projects water consumption will grow until 2028 before stabilising at 660 million litres the year after as the company adds more closed-loop systems.

"We're evolving fast, and what we're building now will consume zero water on a daily basis," Walsh said.

As AI technology develops apace, the company has swathes of land reserved on its Jakarta site for future builds.

But next-generation systems will likely require more computing power, Ghi warned.

"If these things get larger and larger and more thirsty, then something has to give," Ghi said.

Emirates to boost Bangladesh, India cargo operations

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Emirates SkyCargo, the cargo arm of Emirates, is expanding its South Asia operations to meet rising demand in Bangladesh and India.

From April 2026, the airline will launch a dedicated weekly freighter service to Dhaka, enhancing connectivity between Bangladesh and global markets via Dubai.

The service aims to provide exporters with reliable, scheduled cargo capacity, faster transit times, and improved supply chain resilience, according to a press release.

As one of the world's leading garment-exporting nations, Bangladesh is expected to benefit significantly from the additional uplift.

In India, Emirates SkyCargo will add two more weekly freighter services from March – one to Mumbai and another to Ahmedabad – raising total regional cargo capacity to an average of 3,000 tonnes per week.

Currently, the airline operates three weekly freighters to India, supplemented by bellyhold cargo capacity on 167 passenger flights per week across nine Indian gateways.



Beyond air cargo, Emirates has developed an extensive trucking network connecting offline destinations across India. In 2025, more than 1,000 SkyCargo trucks transported nearly 5,500 tonnes of cargo nationwide.

The airline's continued investment in freighter aircraft, road feeder services, and specialised solutions, including temperature-controlled logistics, underscores its strategy to support fast-growing South Asian markets.

Currently, Emirates operates 21 weekly wide-body passenger flights with bellyhold cargo capacity to and from Dhaka, providing seamless connectivity to over 140 global destinations through its Dubai hub.

Oil steadies

REUTERS, London

Oil prices inched up on Thursday as investors assessed whether US-Iran talks could avert a military conflict that risks supply disruptions, though gains were capped by a build in US crude inventories.

Brent futures were trading at \$71.02 per barrel, up 17 cents, or 0.24 percent, by 0847 GMT. WTI futures rose 12 cents, or 0.2 percent, to \$65.54 per barrel.

Brent rose on Monday to its highest since July 31 as Washington positioned military forces in the Middle East to press Iran to negotiate an end to its nuclear and ballistic missile programme.

"Investors are focusing on whether military conflict will be averted in the US-Iran negotiations," said Toshitaka Tazawa, an analyst at Fujitomi Securities.

Nvidia smashes forecasts

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For the full fiscal year ending January 25, 2026, Nvidia reported revenue of \$215.9 billion, up 65 percent from the previous year, with data center revenue reaching \$193.7 billion – a 68 percent annual gain. Perhaps more significant for investors was Nvidia's guidance for the current quarter.

The company said it is not assuming any data center computing revenue from China in its outlook, an acknowledgement of the ongoing impact of US export controls on its ability to sell advanced chips to the world's second-largest economy.

Even if the US government has greenlit exports of "small amounts" of lower-powered chips to China, "we have yet to generate any revenue, and we do not know whether any imports will be allowed into China," Nvidia CFO Colette Kress told analysts.

The company forecast the current quarter's revenue at \$78 billion, plus or minus two percent – comfortably above the roughly \$72 billion Wall Street had been expecting, and a figure that analysts said would go a long way toward silencing doubts about the durability of AI infrastructure spending.

US tariffs hit

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market economies, before extending its reach to the Middle East, North Africa and parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

"The impact of the US tariffs for our countries of operation has been limited, much lower than anticipated," Javorcik said.

In its latest report released on Thursday, the EBRD forecast growth to accelerate to 3.6 percent this year and rise further to 3.7 percent in 2027.

"There are some countries that

potentially could gain to see lower tariffs, like Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova or Tunisia, but overall the picture is unchanged," Javorcik said.

She cautioned that "we have not felt the full impact of tariffs yet," as a large share of 2025 exports reached US markets before the measures took effect. The EBRD also said that the artificial intelligence boom has boosted US imports of technology-related goods, including semiconductors.