



## NBR to verify import taxes through customs database

Officials will pull data directly from ASYCUDA system under new directive

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has ordered income tax officials to use import data directly when calculating tax liabilities, a move aimed at curbing evasion and easing the refund burden on businesses.

Under a directive issued Wednesday, tax inspectors must now pull information on import values and advance income tax (AIT) payments from the Business Intelligence server of the ASYCUDA system, used by the NBR to process trade documentation.

The automated customs platform will allow officials to verify goods and taxes paid at the border without relying on documents submitted by importers.

The order was circulated to tax zones under the income tax wing of the NBR and includes detailed guidelines for officials on how to use the BI server of the ASYCUDA system.

As per the directive, inspecting range officers must retrieve import-related information of taxpayers, if they are importers, from the system while selecting audit cases, reopening tax cases under the Income Tax Act, or correcting erroneous tax assessments.

Sources at the NBR said officials will log into the system from designated computers to collect data and pass verified data to assessment officers in writing. Range officers will also have to record the data regularly in a designated register.

For now, assessors themselves won't have direct access.

NBR said the system will allow officials to ensure accurate AIT credit, help curb tax evasion, speed up case disposal and make the tax refund process more transparent.

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Moazzem Hossain Imran, proprietor of Golden Steel Traders, which imports steel in Keraniganj, told The Daily Star that he pays 7.5 percent AIT on shipments, much higher than his profit margin.

To claim a refund of excess AIT, importers must collect import-related documents from the customs and VAT offices and submit them to the tax authorities, after which they often have to wait a long time, he added.

Tax officials usually need to verify the authenticity of those documents either by visiting the offices concerned in person or through official correspondence, he explained. "Now officials can verify everything themselves."

Amir Hossain, proprietor of Chattogram-based fruit importer Abir Traders, said importers like him pay 5 percent AIT at the import stage. But getting a refund of excess advance tax is quite troublesome.

"Most businesses either fail to get the excess tax back or do not even apply for a refund. With the process becoming simpler now, it will be easier for us to adjust advance income tax and recover any excess payments," he added.

Tax officials say direct access to import data will speed case settlements, improve credit accuracy, and close evasion loopholes.

The NBR also expects the initiative to result in better coordination between customs and income tax wings.

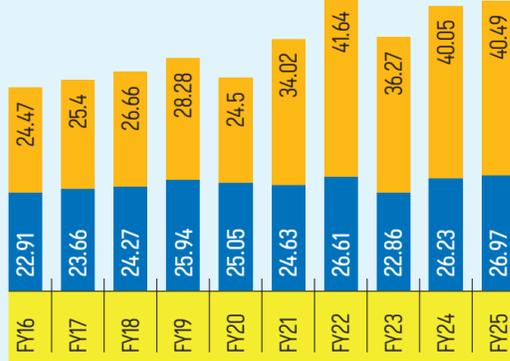
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## Gas rationing shuts five urea factories

Fertiliser production paused over Middle East energy tensions; Boro rice cultivation is expected to remain unaffected

### USE OF CHEMICAL FERTILISER IN BANGLADESH (In lakh tonnes)

■ Urea ■ Non-urea



SOURCE: AGRICULTURE MINISTRY



A view of the Ashuganj fertiliser factory in Brahmanbaria, where urea production has remained suspended for the past one and a half years due to a gas shortage.

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Ctg

Authorities have shut five of the country's six urea fertiliser factories as a precaution amid fears of gas supply disruptions caused by the widening war in the Middle East and Iran's closure of the Hormuz Strait, a key global energy route.

From Wednesday, gas supplies to the urea plants, including one privately owned unit, were suspended as part of an energy rationing, said officials at the state-run Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC).

The corporation runs seven fertiliser factories, including four producing urea. The factories affected are Ghorashal

Polash Fertiliser Public Ltd Company, Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Factory Ltd (CUFL), Jamuna Fertiliser Company Ltd, Ashuganj Fertiliser & Chemical Company Ltd, and the privately run Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Limited (KAFCO). Of these, production has remained suspended in the Ashuganj factory for months.

Officials say that now only the Shahjalal Fertiliser Factory remains operational, though even this may not continue for long.

However, two state-owned non-urea factories that do not rely on gas remain open.

The country meets nearly 30 percent of its gas demand, equivalent to 2,650 million cubic feet per day (mmcfd), through imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) as domestic output continues to fall short.

Officials said about 197 million cubic feet of gas per day are required to run the

five urea factories at full capacity. The factories were already suffering from an inconsistent gas supply before the shutdown.

The suspension of urea output comes at a critical time for farmers planting Boro, the main dry season rice crop, which accounts for more than half of Bangladesh's annual 40 million tonnes of grain.

Bangladesh requires more than 26 lakh tonnes of urea each year. Around 40 percent is produced locally, while the remainder is imported from Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.

Two-thirds of the annual urea demand falls between November and March, mainly for Boro rice cultivation.

Contacted, Md Moniruzzaman, director of production and research at BCIC, said the corporation currently holds 468,000 tonnes of urea in stock, enough to cover demand for the rest of the Boro season.

"So, there will be no shortage of the fertiliser during the current Boro rice cultivation season," he said.

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## Banks can rent branch space without BB approval

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banks can now rent office space for branches and other business centres without prior approval from the central bank, provided the rent remains within a maximum limit.

According to a Bangladesh Bank (BB) circular issued yesterday, banks operating in Bangladesh can decide on renting or leasing premises for business centres, signing new agreements, and renewing existing contracts with the approval of their own boards of directors, without seeking prior permission from the regulator.

However, the provision will apply only if the rent remains within the maximum limit specified by the central bank, depending on the location.

Under the revised ceiling, the maximum rent per square foot has been fixed at Tk 104 in Dhaka, Tk 61 in Chattogram, Tk 34 in Rajshahi, Tk 40 in Sylhet, Tk 34 in Khulna, Tk 45 in Rangpur, Tk 48 in Barishal, and Tk 36 in Mymensingh for locations within city corporation areas.

For municipalities and rural areas, the rent ceilings are lower.

Banks must inform the central bank within 10 working days of signing any rental agreement under this provision, the circular said, adding that

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## Inflation outpaces wages, squeezing real incomes

GED report says nominal wage adjustments can't keep pace with inflationary dynamics

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Rising food and service costs are eroding household purchasing power, particularly for lower-income groups whose consumption baskets are more heavily weighted toward essentials, according to the latest monthly economic update by the General Economics Division (GED).

The report released yesterday said the divergence between wage growth and price inflation widened further in January 2026.

While general inflation rose to 8.58 percent, wage growth remained stagnant at 8.08 percent, following 8.07 percent in December.

Since September 2025, inflation has consistently outpaced wages: inflation moved from 8.36 percent in September to 8.17 percent in October, 8.29 percent in November, 8.49 percent in December, and 8.58 percent in January.

In contrast, wage growth hovered narrowly between 8.01 percent and 8.08 percent over the same period.

"This sustained gap signals pressure on real incomes," said the report, adding, "The persistence of this mismatch suggests that nominal wage adjustments are failing to keep pace with inflationary dynamics."

"This identifies a need for coordinated wage and price management, as inflationary pressures continue to undermine real income stability," added the report by GED under the planning ministry.

Food inflation rose to 8.29 percent in January from 7.71 percent in December, the report said, while non-food inflation moderated to 8.81 percent from 9.13 percent over the same period, narrowing the inflation differential between the two components.



The divergence between wage growth and price inflation widened further in January 2026.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

"The recent trend indicates continued pressure from food prices within the overall inflation framework."

Food remains the largest contributor to overall inflation and accounted for 43.06 percent in January, up 3 percentage points from December.

Housing and utilities contributed 15.05 percent, while miscellaneous goods and services accounted for 9.31 percent.

"The increase in food's contribution suggests a greater concentration of inflationary pressure within essential consumption items."

The report said notable increases

were recorded in clothing and footwear, housing and utilities, and food.

It, however, said the internal composition warrants closer examination, citing that the contribution from rice to inflation decreased, but contributions from other food components continue to sustain overall food inflation.

"Despite a good harvest, higher vegetable prices are largely attributed to increased transportation costs and unhealthy profit motives among wholesale and middlemen traders. This highlights the need for improved

supply chain management of food items, particularly rice, vegetables, and fish, to contain inflationary pressures more effectively."

"Closer examination of item-wise prices at the market level remains essential for targeted policy action."

The GED report also highlighted lower-than-targeted revenue collection by the National Board of Revenue and weak implementation of the government's Annual Development Programme (ADP), suggesting urgent reform in planning, procurement, and fund release.

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Md Hsan Ullah

## Adviser to BB governor resigns

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Md Hsan Ullah, adviser to the Bangladesh Bank governor, has resigned from his post, citing discomfort following an incident of a "mobicratic nature" at the central bank headquarters.

He submitted his resignation to the new BB Governor, Md Mostaqur Rahman, on Wednesday.

In his letter, Hsan Ullah said that he had to leave the bank premises on February 25 by official transport due to an unpleasant occurrence.

The resignation comes in the wake of a "mob incident" that occurred on the day Hsan H Mansur was ousted from his position of governor.

Around 3pm on February 25, Hsan Ullah was allegedly mobbed and forced out of the central bank premises by a group of officials, an incident that took place after Mansur left the office amid news that the government had appointed a new governor.

A group of BB officials gathered and escorted Hsan Ullah out of the building. He was allegedly grabbed by the collar and placed into a vehicle.

In his resignation, he said, "Because of such an unpleasant occurrence, I do not feel comfortable remaining engaged with the esteemed position of Adviser to the Governor."