

Blanket accusations against businesses improper: Fahmida Khatun

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Businesses involved in wrongdoing must be brought under the law, but genuine entrepreneurs should be allowed to run their operations without obstruction, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). "Most businesspeople want to contribute to the country's development, employment generation and investment," she said, adding that blanket accusations against them are not appropriate. The economist made the remarks yesterday while speaking as the chief

guest at a shadow parliament debate competition organised by Debate for Democracy at the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (FDC) in Dhaka. She said that prolonged geopolitical tensions in the Middle East could put fresh pressure on the economy. "If the geopolitical tensions in the Middle East persist, the economy will face additional strain," Fahmida said, adding that higher fuel prices, job losses and supply chain disruptions could worsen the situation. Against this backdrop, she emphasised maintaining a supportive climate for

entrepreneurs so that economic activity continues without disruption. The CPD executive director also highlighted the importance of restoring stability in the banking sector, describing it as the "guardian of people's money and the centre of the economy." She also said politicisation of the central bank in the past contributed to a rise in willful loan defaults. Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron, chairman of Debate for Democracy, presided over the event. In his remarks, he said the new government has inherited a fragile

economy and that rebuilding confidence among businesses is vital for recovery. He also called for the withdrawal of cases filed to harass businesspeople, arguing that legal complications and restrictions have discouraged investment and disrupted business activity. The debate was held on the motion: "The new government will meet public expectations through achieving economic stability." A team from Primeasia University won the competition, defeating Dhaka International University in the final round.

Gold price rises

REUTERS

Gold rose on Friday after softer US payrolls data kept hopes of a Federal Reserve rate cut alive, but remained on track for its first weekly decline in five weeks as a stronger dollar kept gains in check. Spot gold was up 1.4 percent at \$5,149.14 per ounce as of 01:31 p.m. ET (1831 GMT), but was down 2.4 percent this week. US gold futures for April delivery settled 1.6 percent higher at \$5,158.70. "An alarmingly weak payrolls report that saw heavy private sector job losses along with higher wages whispers stagflation; let's see if this is enough to help gold recover from what has been a disappointing week," said Tai Wong, an independent metals trader. Data showed that nonfarm payrolls decreased by 92,000 jobs last month, compared with economists' expectations for a 59,000 gain, while the unemployment rate rose to 4.4 percent.

Oil may top \$100 if Hormuz flows don't recover: Goldman Sachs

REUTERS

Goldman Sachs said oil prices are likely to exceed \$100 per barrel next week if no signs of a solution emerge to the severe disruption in flows through the Strait of Hormuz, warning that upside risks to its base-case forecast are rapidly growing further. The bank said it plans to revisit its oil price forecast soon if it does not see

evidence supporting its assumption of a gradual normalization in Strait of Hormuz flows over the next few days. Its current base-case Brent forecast is in the \$80s for March and the high \$70s for the second quarter. "We now also think it's likely that oil prices, especially for refined products, would exceed the 2008 and 2022 peaks, if Strait of Hormuz flows were to remain depressed

throughout March," it added. Crude oil was set on Friday for its strongest weekly gain since the extreme volatility of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring of 2020, as conflict in the Middle East kept shipping and energy exports through the vital Strait of Hormuz halted. Goldman Sachs currently estimates that average daily flows through the Strait of Hormuz are down 90 percent.

Bangladesh educates its women

WHY ARE WOMEN'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATES HIGHER?

Mismatch between education and available jobs	Narrower job options due to social and structural barriers	Workplace safety, commuting, and housing concerns	Rigid working hours and lack of flexible jobs	Lack of childcare and daycare facilities
Career breaks due to marriage and motherhood	Gender bias in hiring and promotion	Concentration of women in a few sectors	Higher unemployment among educated urban women	

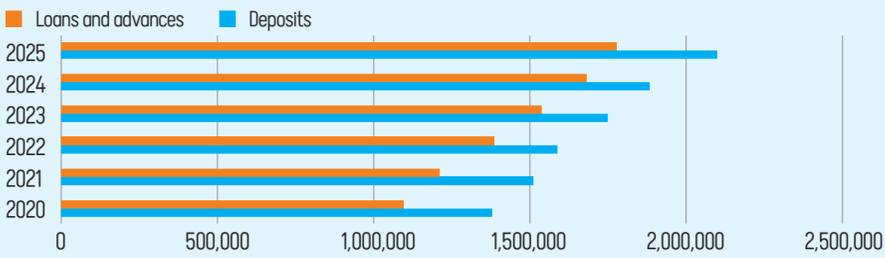
FROM PAGE B1 understate the problem, as unemployment is counted based on just one hour of work in the previous week. Labour market trends consistently show that unemployment among women remains higher than among men. "One key reason is the mismatch between the types of jobs available and the expectations of highly educated job seekers," Prof Bidisha added. Individuals with higher degrees usually look for jobs that match their educational qualifications. But the number of such jobs is limited, particularly for women, she pointed out. The range of job options available to women is often narrower because of social and structural constraints. "Many women have to consider safety, commuting, housing, and rigid working hours when looking for employment," she said. "These factors naturally limit the range of jobs they are able or willing to pursue." She also noted that progress in women's education has yet to translate into equal representation in senior roles. "Only about 6.2 percent of managerial positions are held by women," said the economics professor. "This shows that even though the gender gap in education has narrowed, women's presence in high-skill and leadership roles remains very limited." She also pointed to broader structural issues, including the lack of childcare services and flexible workplace arrangements. "Many educated women initially enter the labour market but later drop out because supportive facilities such

as daycare centres and flexible work arrangements are still quite limited." Resolving these issues will be crucial for improving employment prospects for educated women, she said. "Without creating more opportunities that accommodate women's needs, many qualified female graduates will continue to struggle to find suitable employment." The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has pledged to address some of these gaps in its electoral manifesto. "Through education and skills development, the government will expand women's employment in the formal sector," it states. "Increasing women's employment will raise family income and facilitate education for children and poverty reduction targets," it adds. The manifesto also promises to establish childcare centres at workplaces and set up breastfeeding corners in garment factories, industrial units, offices, and courts where mothers can safely nurse their newborns. Providing interest-free loans to women in micro, cottage, and small industries, along with tax exemptions and marketing support to increase the self-reliance of women have also been promised. Munia Zaman, executive director of eco-friendly lifestyle brand Kalindi and an entrepreneur, says many women abandon jobs or never enter the workforce at all because balancing family life and career proves too difficult. "Some even end their professional careers during motherhood, especially when there is no one to look after their child at home, or they cannot take the child to the office," she said. Reflecting on her own

choice to leave a traditional job before venturing into entrepreneurship, she said, "I felt to become an entrepreneur because it allows me to balance family, personal life, and work more easily." Yet entrepreneurship is no panacea. "Many women have tried, and some have succeeded, but most get stuck in documentation or business formalities. The government still has a lot to do to support women in these areas." Rizwanul Islam, former special adviser for the employment sector at the International Labour Office in Geneva, said that in the absence of rigorous analysis, one can only speculate about the causes of higher female graduate unemployment. Possible explanations span both supply and demand, and location – rural versus urban – may also matter. The labour market may be segmented along gender lines, he said. "If women prefer certain sectors such as education and health, and opportunities in those areas are limited or stagnant, unemployment is likely to rise." Islam also pointed to a rural-urban divide. "Urban educated women, particularly young job seekers, often show higher unemployment rates than their rural counterparts." On the education side, he highlighted the role of subject choice. "If they choose fields with limited labour market opportunities, higher unemployment is an inevitable outcome." He added that gender discrimination in recruitment could be a factor. "With men dominating managerial positions, this may be a real factor contributing to women's limited access to high-skill jobs."

Bank deposit growth hits five-year high

DEPOSITS IN BANKS AND THEIR ADVANCES AT THE END OF DEC '25 (In crore taka)



SOURCE: BB

FROM PAGE B1 The BB had to inject funds into those weak banks to help them overcome a liquidity crisis. A top banker at a private bank said a number of banks still face challenges in attracting savers. The Bangladesh Bank Quarterly – another report by the central bank – said, "A gradual easing of inflationary pressure apparently halted dissaving by households and businesses, leading to strong inflows into time

and savings deposits." It said the robust expansion of bank deposits reflects increased savings and a higher public propensity to hold financial assets in the formal banking sector. "This trend was further supported by heightened public confidence in the banking industry, likely resulting from recent political developments that fostered greater stability and trust," it said. Despite deposit expansion, banks

recorded the slowest growth in loans and advances in 2025 amid muted investment demand from the private sector due to rising interest rates and banks' cautious lending to avoid a buildup of default loans. Banks gave Tk 17.77 lakh crore in loans and advances, up 5.6 percent from a year ago. The BB in its quarterly report said advance growth remained steady, reflecting banks' cautious lending amid high NPLs and tighter monetary policy.



"Say No to Corruption, Adhere to Integrity"

Pashchimanchal Gas Company Limited

(A Company of Petrobangla)
Nalka, Sirajganj

"Energy security is the top priority"

Specific Procurement Notice

Request for Bids

Plant

Design, Supply and Installation

(Two-envelope Bidding Process, Without Prequalification)

Memo No: 28.18.0000.000.087.99.0007.25/160

Date: 5 March 2026

Employer: Paschimanchal Gas Company Limited (PGCL)

Project: Gas Sector Efficiency Improvement and Carbon Abatement Project (P179009)

Contract title: Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Smart Prepaid Gas Meters, Meter Calibration System, Web system (Cloud Hosting) & Automated Grievance Redress Centre with design, drawing, necessary hardware & software.

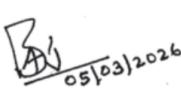
Country: Bangladesh

Credit No.: 7386-BD, 7387-BD, 7388-BD

RFB No: BD-PGCL-PGM-GD5

Issued on: 09 March 2026

- The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (hereinafter called "Borrower") has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the "Gas Sector Efficiency Improvement and Carbon Abatement Project", and intends to apply a part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Smart Prepaid Gas Meters, Meter Calibration System, Web system (Cloud Hosting) & Automated Grievance Redress Centre with design, drawing, necessary hardware & software at PGCL Franchise Area. This contract will be jointly financed by the Credit from IDA, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB) and PGCL. Bidding process will be governed by the World Bank's Procurement Regulations. For this contract, the Borrower shall process the payments using the Direct Payment disbursement method, as defined in the World Bank's Disbursement Guidelines for Investment Project Financing, except for those payments, which the contract provides to be made through letter of credit.
- The Paschimanchal Gas Company Limited (PGCL) now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Smart Prepaid Gas Meters, Meter Calibration System, Web system (Cloud Hosting) & Automated Grievance Redress Centre with design, drawing, necessary hardware & software at PGCL Franchise Area. This includes 128,000 Smart Prepaid Gas Meter, One (01) Meter Calibration System, One (01) Web based Smart Prepaid Gas Metering System (Software) and One (01) Automated Grievance Redress Centre served from Six (06) regional offices of PGCL in project area. Site locations will be Sirajganj, Pabna, Bagura and Rajshahi districts of Bangladesh. Total contract period will be 17 months.
- Bidding will be conducted through international competitive procurement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" February 2025 (6th edition) ("Procurement Regulations") and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.
- Bids will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation process set out in the bidding documents. The following weightings shall apply for Rated Criteria (including technical and non-price factors): 50% and for Bid cost: [50 %].
- Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Engr. Debdip Barua, Project Director, Installation of Smart Pre-paid Gas Meters, SCADA & GIS at PGCL Franchise Area Project, Paschimanchal Gas Company Limited (PGCL), electronic mail address: pdpsg.pgcl@gmail.com, and inspect the bidding document during office hours from 09:00 to 17:00 hours at the address given below.
- The bidding document in English may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of BDT 12,000 or USD 100. The method of payment will be in the form of Cash or Pay Order against 'Installation of Smart Prepaid Gas Meters, SCADA & GIS at PGCL Franchise Area Project'. For the direct payment to bank, account-name: 'Installation of Smart Prepaid Gas Meters, SCADA & GIS at PGCL Franchise Area Project.' Account No. 4215003000082 Bank-name: Sonali Bank PLC. Sirajganj Branch, Sirajganj, Bangladesh. Routing No. 200881874 SWIFT Code BSONBDDHSRJ in USD. The document will be sent by e-mail or can be collected Hard Copy from address mentioned below or PGCL Dhaka Liaison Office, Petrocentre (13th Floor), Petrobangla, 3, Kawranbazar, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh.
- Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 30 April 2026 at 2 PM (BST) (UTC+6:00). Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. The outer Bid envelopes marked "ORIGINAL BID", and the inner envelopes marked "TECHNICAL PART" will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend, at the address below, Time: 2:15 PM (BST) (UTC+6:00) and Date 30 April 2026. All envelopes marked "FINANCIAL PART" shall remain unopened and will be held in safe custody of the Employer until the second public Bid opening.
- All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of US\$300,000 (USD Three hundred thousand only) or an equivalent amount in any freely convertible foreign currency or BDT 37,000,000 (Thirty-Seven million).
- Attention is drawn to the Procurement Regulations requiring the Borrower to disclose information on the successful bidder's beneficial ownership, as part of the Contract Award Notice, using the Beneficial Ownership Disclosure Form as included in the bidding document.
- The address referred to above is:
Office of the Project Director



05/03/2026

Engr. Debdip Barua
Project Director
Installation of Smart Prepaid Gas Meters, SCADA & GIS at PGCL Franchise Area Project
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PGPR-35/2025-2026

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