

DHAKA

Country lost Tk 21,000cr to digital scams in 2006-21
Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said Bangladesh lost an estimated Tk 21,000 crore to digital scams, MLM Ponzi schemes, and corporate fraud between 2006 and 2021.



He made the remark while speaking at the Global Fraud Summit 2026 in Vienna.

Participating in a high level roundtable on the Global Fraud Response Mechanism, Salahuddin stressed the need for coordinated international action and AI-driven technological solutions to combat fraud.

He expressed concern over recent incidents where ordinary people lost billions of taka through platforms such as MTFE and controversial e-commerce ventures.

Quoting a Global Financial Integrity report, he said an average of \$8.27 billion was siphoned out of Bangladesh annually between 2009 and 2018 through trade misinvoicing. He noted that the Penal Code of 1860 is inadequate for tackling

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Homebound passengers crowd the Sadarghat Launch Terminal in Dhaka yesterday as they rush to board launches for their destinations ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. With Eid less than a week away, thousands are leaving the capital each day to celebrate the festival with their loved ones back home.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Cancel trade deal with US

Demands Gonotantrik Juktafront, warns of nationwide protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Gonotantrik Juktafront yesterday demanded the immediate cancellation of the trade agreement signed with the United States and called for the trial of those involved in signing it, including Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman.

They claimed the agreement is unfair and goes against Bangladesh's national interests.

The alliance warned that if the government continues to honour the agreement, they will launch a nationwide protest movement involving workers, farmers, students and progressive groups.

They made the call at a protest rally and march in front of the Jatiya Press Club, criticising the "Reciprocal Trade Agreement (RTA)" signed on February 9, 2026, during the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus.

According to them, a true reciprocal trade agreement should ensure equality between both countries. However, in the 32-page document, the phrase "Bangladesh shall" appears 158 times, while "United States shall" appears only nine times.

Abdullah Al Kafee Ratan, general

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

BANGLADESH-JAPAN EPA
Need coordinated policies to fully utilise potential: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Policymakers and analysts yesterday stressed the need for coordinated policies to help Bangladesh fully utilise the opportunities created by the Bangladesh-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

They made the remarks at a seminar titled "Maximising the Opportunities of the Bangladesh-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)", organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue in partnership with the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh, according to a press release.

Speakers said the EPA is expected to expand trade, strengthen investment links, and support industrial upgrading while helping Bangladesh integrate more deeply into regional and global value chains.

They also said translating the EPA's potential into tangible economic gains will require coordinated policy

The EPA provides an opportunity to deepen and move Bangladesh-Japan economic relations beyond traditional aid-driven cooperation to focus more on trade, investment, and technology collaboration.

FAHMIDA KHATUN, executive director, CPD

reforms, stronger institutions, and continued collaboration between government, industry, and development partners.

Attending as the guest of honour, Saida Shinichi, ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh, said the agreement goes beyond tariff reductions and sets out rules and procedures to facilitate trade and investment in a framework that would encourage greater foreign direct investment in Bangladesh and strengthen the country's industrial capabilities.

CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun, who chaired the programme, said the EPA provides an opportunity to deepen Bangladesh-Japan economic relations beyond traditional aid-driven cooperation and focus more on trade, investment, and technological collaboration.

Presenting CPD's analysis, Fahmida said improved market access and deeper economic cooperation could help diversify Bangladesh's exports and attract greater foreign

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

EID JOURNEY

Long route bus fares hiked by Tk 200-800

Passengers allege; minister claims otherwise

SHAMIMA RITA

Mujibur Rahman Sharif, who lives and works in Dhaka, planned to travel home to his family in Barguna for Eid-ul-Fitr.

He said he found that ticket sales at Meghna Paribahan in Sayedabad had been suspended due to uncertainty over fuel supply. Later, he purchased four tickets from Shyamoli Paribahan at the Kalyanpur counter.

Although the normal non-AC fare on the route ranges between Tk 650-700, he said he had to pay Tk 1,200 per ticket. "In total, they charged about Tk 2,000 extra for four tickets from me."

Mujibur also alleged the operator had issued a token instead of a ticket to conceal the additional charge. "The actual tickets will have to be collected from the bus counter 30 minutes before departure by showing this token. Many others like me have fallen into this trap," he said.

Like him, many passengers said they are being forced to pay Tk 200-800 extra per ticket at different bus terminals and on online platforms for long distance routes from Dhaka ahead of Eid, significantly higher than the rates approved by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

However, Road Transport, Railways, and Bridges Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam yesterday claimed he had received no complaints in the

past week about transport operators charging extra fares.

The minister added that while fares generally do not exceed the official rates, in some cases, passengers may have to pay around Tk 100 more. "Rather, some operators are offering Tk 20-100 discounts to attract passengers ahead of Eid," he said.

Earlier, on March 13, after visiting BRTC bus terminals in Gulistan, Rabiul Alam said that any transport operator charging even one taka

more than a dozen passengers who alleged they had to pay additional fares.

They also alleged that ticket prices have been strategically increased: first citing higher demand ahead of Eid, and then using the rise in global oil prices amid tensions in the Middle East.

Despite the change in government, the practice of collecting extra fares during the Eid journey has remained much like in previous years, they lamented.

A passenger, Srabonti Akter, alleged that some operators create an artificial ticket shortage by booking tickets through their own agents before releasing them to the public.

"For Dhaka-Shatkira route, the AC fare on Green Line was Tk 1,000 earlier. Now they are charging Tk 1,600," she complained.

She added that other operators, such as Dhaka Line and Golden Line, were selling tickets for Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,200 for AC and sleeper coach on the same route.

Nazmul, a ticket seller at Green Line Paribahan in Arambagh, however, denied charging extra fares.

"Our fare is Tk 1,000 for economy class and Tk 1,600 for business class. We are not charging more than that," he said.

Mohammad Sumon, a ticket seller at Shyamoli Paribahan's Kalyanpur counter, said, "The BRTA-fixed fare for Dhaka-Barguna route

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

extra would face punishment.

"There will be no shortage of oil for public transport during Eid journey. Fares will not increase," he said.

However, the scenario at the different bus terminals in the capital — including Sayedabad, Arambagh, Kalyanpur, and Gulistan — tells a different story.

This correspondent spoke with

SRABONTI AKTER, a passenger

Some operators create an artificial ticket shortage by booking tickets through their agents before releasing them to the public. For Dhaka-Shatkira route, the AC fare on Green Line was Tk 1,000 earlier. Now they are charging Tk 1,600. Other operators were selling tickets for Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,200 on the same route.

Uttara mall vandalised over rickshaw-puller death rumour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A shopping mall in Dhaka's Uttara was attacked and vandalised late Sunday night over a rumour that a rickshaw-puller had been beaten to death inside the compound, police said.

The attackers vandalised the ground floor of "Uttara Square" and blocked the road in front of the building. As police attempted to intervene, sporadic clashes broke out, prompting law enforcers to fire sound grenades. The situation was brought under control around 4:00am yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Over 100 migrants unpaid in Malaysia for six months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 100 Bangladeshi workers employed by a Malaysian company in Johor Baru have not been paid their wages and overtime claims for the last six months, according to an investigation by the Malaysian labour department.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Human Resources of Malaysia said upon media reports on the issue, the country's Department of Labour conducted an investigation into the allegations of delayed salaries involving Pasir Gudang based Esstar Vision Sdn Bhd, a company involved in construction and civil engineering.

The probe found that the company employs a total of 169 workers, including 104 workers from Bangladesh.

"Investigations revealed that salary payments have been delayed starting from September 2025

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Will explore market-based power trade with India: PM's adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is exploring market based electricity trade with India and reviewing existing energy and power agreements with the country to ensure they serve Bangladesh's interest, said Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, the prime minister's adviser on finance and planning, yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after separate meetings with the Indian ambassador and the Chinese envoy in Dhaka, Titumir said the government is reassessing past arrangements in the energy sector while seeking new cooperation frameworks based on market mechanisms and investment rather than loan dependence.

He said Bangladesh may explore joining India's power exchange, which operates on a market-based pricing system.

"If we connect to that grid, the price paid by Nepal, Bhutan, or even a state in India could serve as benchmarks. That means it is a market-based system," he said, adding that no decision has yet been taken.

Titumir said the government is reviewing energy and power agreements signed during the previous administration, as some were found to be unequal.

The meeting also discussed projects financed under India's lines of credit.

Titumir said both sides will review the status of those projects, including completed and ongoing ones, and assess whether they align with Bangladesh's current development roadmap.

"We will review whether the projects taken earlier should continue. India also wants a review. It will be an open-minded process," he said.

He added that Bangladesh wants to strengthen regional cooperation in power and energy among South Asian countries, particularly India, Bhutan and Nepal.

Titumir said the discussions were part of the government's efforts to increase investment to revive an economy it claims was left in a "devastated condition" by the ousted Awami League government.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Customers crowd to purchase fresh and crisp banknotes, sold at inflated prices, in Dhaka's Gulistan area yesterday. Keeping Eid in mind, people usually rush to buy such notes to give them as 'salami' to their loved ones during the festival. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Form ad hoc committees for private institutions

Govt directs education boards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday directed education boards to form ad hoc committees for the governing and managing bodies of private educational institutions at the lower secondary, secondary, and higher secondary levels.

The Secondary and Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education issued a circular under the Regulations for Governing Bodies and Managing Committees of Private Educational Institutions, 2024, amended on August 31, 2025.

The circular states that the chairman of an ad hoc committee must hold at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification. In special cases, the ministry may appoint a chairman based on contributions to education or other relevant qualifications.