

Star BUSINESS



One-third of listed firms saw sales decline in FY25

Companies faced high inflation, political uncertainty and rising borrowing costs, while weak demand and supply disruptions hit sales and profits

AHSAN HABIB

Listed companies endured another difficult year as macroeconomic stress and political headwinds weighed on sales and profits in fiscal year 2024-25, according to their financial disclosures.

So far, 158 listed firms, excluding banks, non-bank financial institutions and insurers, have published their financial reports.

An analysis by The Daily Star shows that overall sales growth of the companies slowed, while one-third of the companies, or 61 firms, reported a fall in sales in FY25.

Many of these firms were already under pressure from stubbornly high inflation and rising import costs due to a weaker taka.

Those strains did not ease last fiscal year. Instead, a nationwide mass uprising that ultimately ousted the Awami League government in August 2024 and subsequent political uncertainty added further stress.

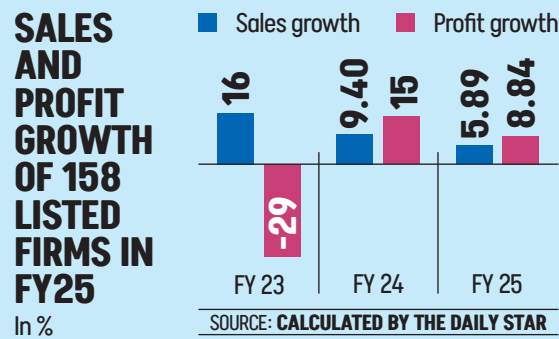
Business leaders now see little improvement ahead. With the US-Israel war on Iran spilling across the Middle East, they say conditions could deteriorate sharply. Some say the fallout could rival the disruption seen during the Covid pandemic if the war drags on and energy supplies are hit.

In FY25, combined sales growth for the 158 firms stood at 5.89 percent, down from 9.4 percent a year earlier. It was 16 percent in FY23.

Profit growth also slowed to 8.8 percent from 15 percent the previous year. In FY23, overall profit growth was dragged into negative territory by huge losses at state-owned Titas Gas and Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO).

Companies that saw sales declining in FY25 said disruptions during the July-September quarter due to the nationwide protests were a key factor. In an effort to contain the unrest, the then Awami League government imposed an internet blackout lasting at least ten days, alongside curfews and factory closures. Production suffered, and supply chains were shaken.

After the government fell, an interim administration took charge. But labour unrest in industrial belts seeking pay hikes and other perks, weak law and order, and fragile business confidence continued to squeeze company earnings.



AT A GLANCE (Number of companies)

Returned to profit	5
Profit rose	26
Profit fell	42
Remained in losses	30
Incurred loss for first time	13

In a bid to curb inflation and restore macroeconomic stability, the interim government raised lending rates and shelved development projects. Tighter monetary policy pushed up borrowing costs, while reduced public investment damped demand for many businesses.

"For good business, a conducive environment is necessary. But there were several headwinds in the entire last fiscal year. Those impacted the business," said Taskeen Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI). He added that the strain was widespread. "Law and order situation was at its lowest level last fiscal year, while foreign investors hesitated to run businesses amid political uncertainty."

"So, the overall business condition was under severe pressure," he said. Ahmed said that although borrowing costs surged, companies were unable to pass these on to consumers. It squeezed their margins.

The analysis of the financial reports shows that combined finance costs for listed firms rose by about 26 percent in FY25, even as their borrowing increased only marginally.

Throughout 2025, weak confidence and macroeconomic stress kept credit

demand subdued.

Private sector credit growth slowed to 6.5 percent by June 2025, down from 9.84 percent a year earlier, according to the Bangladesh Bank. By December 2025, it slipped further to 6.10 percent, the lowest in at least four years.

Alongside supply-side pressures, demand remained weak in FY25, said Ahmed, also the vice-chairman of IFAD Group.

With inflation averaging 10.03 percent last fiscal year, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), consumers cut back on non-essential spending.

"As a result, demand for construction-related products and other sectors that are relatively not immediately necessary dropped. It hit the overall businesses of the firms," he added.

LARGE FIRMS SHOW RESILIENCE

Among the 158 companies, five returned to profit in FY25 after posting losses the previous year, while 26 recorded higher profits.

In contrast, profits fell at 42 firms, 30 remained in the red, and 13 newly slipped into losses.

Riad Mahmud, president of the Bangladesh Association of Publicly Listed

Companies, said reduced government development spending hit many firms directly and indirectly.

He said smaller companies were more exposed to falling sales, while larger, well-governed firms proved more resilient.

"It was a testing year for companies in terms of risk management and governance, and those that lacked these were hit hardest," said Ali Imam, founder and chief executive of EDGE Asset Management.

Highly leveraged firms, those relying heavily on borrowed funds, were particularly vulnerable during the downturn, he further said.

"In Bangladesh, many local companies are highly leveraged, so higher interest rates and lower sales hit them hard. By contrast, the impact was comparatively low for firms with lower leverage," he said.

Firms with strong governance and risk management performed better, he added, as larger companies were able to capture market share and exert pricing power.

The CEO of the asset management firm cited BSRM Steels, BSRM Ltd and Square Pharmaceuticals, along with most multinationals, as outperformers.

He also pointed to stricter auditing

COMPANIES WITH HIGHEST PROFITS (In crore taka)

Square Pharma	2,239
United Power	1,074
Walton	1,036
Jamuna Oil	648
Meghna Petroleum	643
BSRM Ltd	614
Padma Oil	562
BSRM Steels	517
MJL Bangladesh	360
Summit	360

COMPANIES WITH HIGHEST SALES (In crore taka)

Titas Gas	35,428
ACI PLC	13,790
BSRM Steels	10,366
BSRM Ltd	9,572
Square Pharma	7,628
DESCO	7,342
Walton	7,082
GPH Ispat	5,752
MJL Bangladesh	4,483
Renata	4,289

Govt buys LNG at lower rates as global prices cool

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and JAGARAN CHAKMA

Bangladesh will import two liquefied natural gas (LNG) cargoes from the spot market at prices lower than its recent purchases, as global fuel rates ease amid diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the US-Israel war on Iran.

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase yesterday approved the procurement for delivery in late April.

UK-based TotalEnergies Gas & Power Ltd offered \$19.77 per MMBtu (metric million British thermal unit) for both cargoes, down from over \$20 per MMBtu in deals struck earlier this month. The total cost is estimated at Tk 1,667 crore.

Officials at the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources said the lower rate reflects a recent dip in global energy prices, driven by expectations of a negotiated end to the Middle East conflict, which has outweighed concerns over supply disruptions in the Gulf.

Oil prices have softened in recent days, creating a window for cheaper spot purchases.

According to US media reports, prices fell as a diplomatic push by the US to end the war gathered pace, eclipsing news of more troops being sent to the region and the Strait of Hormuz remaining largely shut.

Brent sank as much as 7 percent toward \$97 a barrel before paring the drop, while West Texas Intermediate was near \$88.

The US drafted a 15-point plan to help bring the conflict to a close, according to news reports. The proposal was delivered to Iran via Pakistan.

On March 17, the government approved two LNG cargoes from Aramco Trading Singapore at \$20.96 and \$20.92 per MMBtu.

Prior to that, three cargoes were secured at above \$20, including one from TotalEnergies at \$21.58 and two from South Korea's Posco International at \$20.76. The three shipments are expected to arrive between April 5 and April 13.

Immediately after the war began on February 28, Petrobangla, the state-owned agency responsible for managing gas, bought two emergency cargoes at significantly higher rates - \$28.28 per MMBtu from US-based Gunvor and \$23.08 from Vitol.

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Gold prices drop by Tk 36,000 per bhoari in three weeks



SUKANTA HALDER

Domestic gold prices have fallen by nearly Tk 36,000 per bhoari over the past 23 days, driven by a sharp decline in global rates amid shifting geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

The price of gold per bhoari stood at around Tk 2.41 lakh yesterday, down from around Tk 2.77 lakh on March 3, according to data from the Bangladesh Jeweller's Association (Bajus).

The domestic market has adjusted prices 12 times between March 1 and March 25, with 10 of those changes reflecting downward revisions.

The decline comes after a month-long rally that saw gold prices more than double in just over a year. In January 2025, 22-carat gold was priced at around Tk 1.40 lakh per bhoari. By the start of this year, it had risen to Tk 2.22 lakh, and peaked at Tk 2.86 lakh on January 29, 2026.

The recent drop mirrors volatility in international markets, where gold prices have fallen by \$757.43 per ounce over the past 30 days.

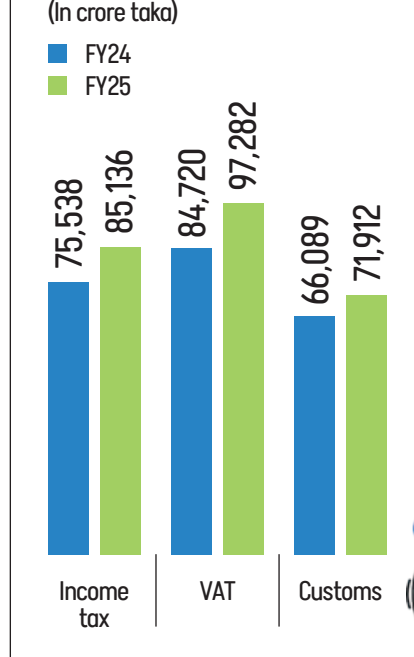
On Monday, spot gold briefly touched \$4,100 per ounce, its lowest level since December 11, before recovering to \$4,545.34 by yesterday, buoyed by a weaker dollar and falling oil prices.

The rebound followed US President Donald Trump's announcement of a five-day delay in planned strikes

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NBR misses Jul-Feb revenue target by 28% despite growth

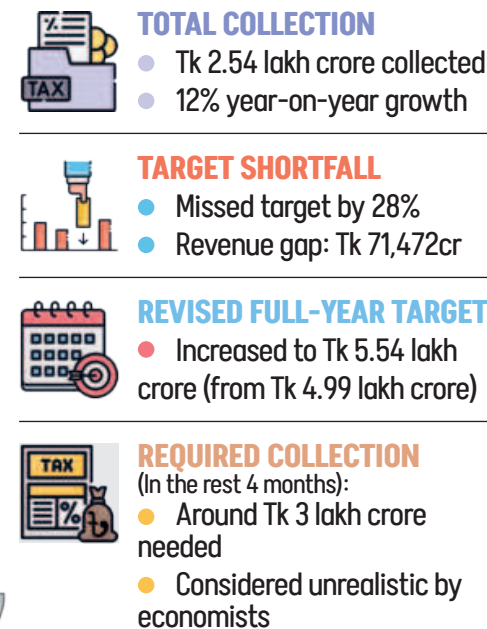
REVENUE COLLECTION IN JUL-FEB PERIOD (In crore taka)



If the annual growth target is to be met, tax collection will need to increase by 59.4 percent during February to July of FY26

Fahmida Khatun
Executive director of CPD

REVENUE PERFORMANCE (FY26: Jul-Feb)



MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) fell short of its revenue target by 28 percent during July-February of fiscal year 2025-26 (FY26), leaving a gap of Tk 71,472 crore.

As per provisional data released yesterday, the shortfall came despite a 12 percent year-on-year rise in collections to Tk 2.54 lakh crore, buoyed largely by robust VAT (value-added tax) receipts from domestic trade and economic activity.

The deficit underscores the widening

gap between the tax authority's ambitions and ground reality. The board has consistently missed its target over the last decade.

Yet, in late November, the previous interim government had revised the NBR's full-year target upward to Tk 5.54 lakh crore from Tk 4.99 lakh crore, following strong first-quarter collections.

Meeting that goal would now require mobilising around Tk 3 lakh crore over the remaining four months of the fiscal year, an outcome economists say is highly unrealistic given persistent inflation,

sluggish development spending, and broader economic weakness.

Amid this sluggish revenue performance, the government is increasingly turning to borrowing to finance its expenditures.

According to provisional data from Bangladesh Bank, net borrowing from the banking sector crossed Tk 48,800 crore by January 25, nearly five times higher than the Tk 10,558 crore borrowed during the same period a year earlier, highlighting the growing fiscal strain.

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Veon eyes satellite-based call service in Bangladesh

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Global telecom investor Veon plans to introduce direct-to-cell satellite connectivity in Bangladesh, allowing smartphones to connect straight to satellites through a partnership with Starlink and its subsidiary, Banglalink.

Kaan Terzioglu, chief executive officer of Veon, told The Daily Star recently that the company aims to replicate the same technology it is already using in Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

"We want to provide direct-to-device connectivity like in Ukraine, so every 4G-capable phone can link to satellites orbiting more than 400 kilometres above," Terzioglu said.

Unlike traditional mobile networks that rely on ground-based towers, Starlink's direct-to-cell technology uses satellites as cell towers in space. This allows ordinary mobile phones to connect directly, expanding coverage to areas with little or no ground infrastructure.

Terzioglu told Reuters that Veon is Starlink's largest partner by customer base for direct-to-cell services.

In Ukraine, the technology has already served nearly five million users in just four months, sending more than seven million messages through the network.

Ukraine's top operator, Kyivstar, also owned by Veon, signed an agreement with Starlink in 2024 to launch the satellite-to-phone service. In December, Veon said its operator Beeline had successfully trialed the service in Kazakhstan.

"Bangladesh will be next for the rollout, followed by Uzbekistan and Pakistan," Terzioglu added.

Officials at Banglalink said the company is progressing in discussions to finalise a partnership with Starlink for Bangladesh.

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