

Prime Bank declares 30% dividend for 2025

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC has declared a 30 percent dividend for 2025, including 25 percent in cash, according to a press release.

The decision was taken at a board meeting held at the bank's head office in Dhaka yesterday.

The bank reported a 24 percent year-on-year growth in net profit after tax (NPAT), which rose to Tk 910 crore in 2025 from Tk 732 crore a year earlier. Earnings per share increased to Tk



7.84, up from Tk 6.31 in the previous year.

Net asset value (NAV) per share and net operating cash flow per share (NOCFPS)

stood at Tk 40.00 and Tk 58.07, respectively.

Total assets amounted to Tk 64,890 crore at the end of December 2025.

The bank's capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR) stood at 18.07 percent, one of the highest in the banking industry.

The annual general meeting (AGM) is scheduled for May 21, 2026, while the record date has been set for April 28, 2026.

The dividend declaration reflects the bank's focus on delivering sustainable returns to shareholders while maintaining a strong financial position, the release added.

Prime Bank launches first consumer loan against treasury bonds

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Prime Bank PLC has become the first bank in Bangladesh to launch a consumer loan facility backed by treasury bonds, marking a notable step forward in the country's banking sector.

The central bank issued guidance on April 2, 2026, and Prime Bank moved swiftly to disburse the first loan the following morning, underscoring its operational efficiency.

"This achievement reflects our ability to innovate within regulatory frameworks while delivering meaningful value to customers," said M Nazeem A Choudhury, additional managing director of the bank.

He added that the bank remains focused on introducing financial solutions that enhance accessibility, flexibility and efficiency.

The new product allows customers to access funds by borrowing against their treasury bond holdings, enabling them to meet financial needs without liquidating investments.

Officials said the initiative highlights the bank's commitment to customer-centric services in response to evolving market demands.

The rollout was supported by coordinated efforts among multiple teams, including the Gulshan branch, credit administration division, credit risk management and the wealth management unit, ensuring a smooth approval and disbursement process.

With this move, Prime Bank reinforces its position as an innovative financial institution, contributing to the ongoing development of Bangladesh's banking landscape, the release added.

Midland Bank organises leadership workshop for female employees



Workshop on "Leadership for Women at Work"



Zubayed Ur Rahman, head of human resources of Midland Bank PLC, poses for a group photograph with participants of the workshop, titled "Leadership for Women at Work", at the bank's training institute in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: MIDLAND BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Midland Bank PLC has organised a special workshop, titled "Leadership for Women at Work", aimed at enhancing

the professional skills and leadership capabilities of its female employees.

A total of 41 female officials from various branches and divisions of the bank participated in the programme,

according to a press release.

Zubayed Ur Rahman, head of human resources of the bank, inaugurated the workshop as the chief guest at the bank's training institute in Dhaka recently.

Mohammad Tazul Islam, a professor at the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM); Md Mozaharul Islam, a senior principal officer at Janata Bank Limited; and Shushanta Shekhar Dev, head of the treasury division of Midland Bank PLC, conducted the sessions as resource persons.

They shared valuable insights on leadership, decision-making, professional development, and the role of women in the workplace.

The speakers emphasised that in modern banking, women are not just participants but key drivers of leadership, innovation, and strategic decision-making. Equal participation of both men and women is essential for building a sustainable and inclusive institution.

Midland Bank remains committed to supporting the growth and advancement of its female employees through continuous training, mentorship, and leadership development initiatives, the release added.

US tariffs review disappoints EU steel industry

AFP, Brussels

US changes to tariffs on steel and aluminium products were met with disappointment Friday in Europe, where manufacturers had hoped for a more favourable treatment.

President Donald Trump ordered an overhaul of US metal duties to simplify an onerous system for firms, alongside new tariffs on certain medicines.

"US tariff tweaks on steel derivatives are a step forward but in reality change little: the US 50 percent barrier to European steel introduced last year remains," commented Axel Eggert of European steel industry group Eurofer.

"For EU producers, this means continued disruption, growing uncertainty and mounting pressure across the entire value chain."

Under the changes laid out Thursday, finished products containing substantial amounts of steel, aluminium and copper will face a 25-percent tariff on their full value instead of a 50-percent rate based on the amount of metals they contain.

Citizens Bank holds business review meeting

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Citizens Bank PLC recently held its "Quarterly Business Review Meeting of March 2026" at its head office in Motijheel, Dhaka to assess first-quarter performance and set strategies for the rest of the year.

Alamgir Hossain, managing director of the bank, presided over the meeting as the chief guest, according to a press release. Participants reviewed the bank's business performance for the January-March period, highlighting key achievements as well as areas needing improvement.

They also held detailed discussions on

prevailing macroeconomic conditions, associated challenges and their potential impact on the banking sector.

The meeting emphasised the need for proactive measures, stronger risk management and improved operational efficiency to navigate the current economic environment.

Officials outlined actionable strategies aimed at achieving business targets over the remaining months of 2026, urging employees to remain resilient, innovative and committed to sustaining growth.

Special focus was placed on expanding lending to SMEs, agriculture and other priority sectors to support the country's economic development.



Alamgir Hossain, managing director of Citizens Bank PLC, poses for a group photograph with participants of the bank's "Quarterly Business Review Meeting of March 2026" at its head office in Motijheel, Dhaka recently. PHOTO: CITIZENS BANK

BRAC Bank-backed 'MT Omera Liberty' begins its maiden journey

STAR BUSINESS DESK

An Aframax oil tanker, MT Omera Liberty – the largest newly built vessel under the Bangladeshi flag – has recently begun its maiden voyage from South Korea.

Financed by BRAC Bank PLC, the tanker is owned by MJL Bangladesh PLC, a concern of East Coast Group.

The 250-metre-long vessel, with a carrying capacity of up to 115,000 tonnes of fuel oil, began its maiden journey on March 31, 2026.

The commissioning ceremony was held at Daehan Shipbuilding in South Korea on March 25, according to a press release. Azam J Chowdhury, chairman of East Coast Group, attended the event.

"We are proud to partner with MJL Bangladesh in financing the largest Bangladeshi-flagged oil

tanker," said Tareq Refat Ullah Khan, managing director and CEO of BRAC Bank.

"This milestone reflects our capability to deliver large-scale foreign currency financing in collaboration with global partners," he said, adding that the initiative would support trade growth, energy security and long-term economic development.

The addition of MT Omera Liberty is expected to enhance MJL Bangladesh's operational capacity, strengthen maritime logistics and support the country's growing energy demand.

Industry insiders said deploying large oil tankers will help reduce foreign currency outflows for fuel transportation, while opening opportunities to earn foreign exchange through international

freight services.

The move is also expected to create jobs for Bangladeshi maritime professionals, the release added.

Earlier, BRAC Bank arranged a \$95.77 million financing package for MJL Bangladesh to acquire two Aframax tankers – MT Omera Liberty and MT Omera Galaxy – marking the largest single-ticket foreign currency offshore term loan by a local private bank for the sector.

Among others, David Kim, chairman of Daehan Shipbuilding; Toufiqul Islam, Bangladesh ambassador to South Korea; Captain Minhazur Reza Chowdhury, chief executive officer of MJL Shipping; and Abu Sadat Chowdhury, area head -I, corporate, commercial and institutional banking of the bank, were also present.

Vietnam growth slows as costlier energy tests target

REUTERS, Hanoi

Vietnam's economy slowed in the first quarter from the three months prior, data showed on Saturday, as heavy exposure to Middle Eastern oil imports boosted inflation, presenting a challenge in reaching an annual growth target, authorities said.

Gross domestic product grew 7.83 percent in the quarter from January to March over the corresponding period a year earlier, but below 8.46 percent in the fourth quarter, the National Statistics Office said in a report.

"The pressure from rising input costs and energy prices on inflation remains, posing challenges for

economic governance," the NSO added on Saturday.

Consumer prices rose 4.65 percent in March on the year, driven by a surge of 10.81 percent in transport costs, it said, accelerating from a rise of 3.35 percent in February.

This year's growth target of at least 10 percent is under pressure as the Southeast Asian economy imports more than 80 percent of crude oil supplies from the Middle East, where the Iran war, now in its sixth week, has disrupted shipments.

"Entering the second quarter, Vietnam's socio-economic situation continues to face obstacles, and meeting the 2026 growth target

remains a big challenge," said NSO Director Nguyen Thi Huong.

Rising fuel prices have spurred Vietnamese airlines to scale back operations and government efforts to cut costs, such as reducing taxes on fuel, subsidising prices and encouraging remote work to reduce consumption. Growth was up from the 7.05 percent on-year expansion of the first quarter of 2025.

Exports rose 20.1 percent in March to \$46.44 billion from a year earlier, the report said. March industrial production rose 6.9 percent from a year earlier, but slowed from growth of 8.6 percent in the corresponding month last year.

Pharma logistics in demand

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As the US-Israeli war against Iran has impacted global shipping, "we are seeing that some customers are requesting increased storage volumes here, which are essential for their production, in order to ensure the availability of raw materials," she told AFP during a visit to the site.

SUPER-COLD STORAGE

The fragility of global supply chains remains a constant concern, even though Hoelter said the Florstadt site is less dependent on shipping through the troubled Strait of Hormuz than on the Suez Canal, which remains open.

Despite repeated global crises, the logistics sector continues to expand, as does the drug industry.

According to healthcare data analytics firm Iqvia, the global pharmaceutical market could exceed \$2.6 trillion by 2030, driven by the United States as well as major emerging markets.

In the therapeutics sector, cancer and weight management treatments show the highest growth prospects, according to the LBBW bank.

For the DHL Group, also known as Deutsche Post, the logistics business – particularly in the pharma sector – is helping to offset losses from the decline in mail and disruptions to trade caused by conflict and tariff wars.

In Florstadt, automated procedures coexist with manual handling at fixed workstations, such as preparing a single contact lens ordered by an optician for a specific patient for further shipping.

Strict safety and hygiene standards are key. Behind the glass of a sterile room, two employees in full protective suits could be seen extracting an insulin component from a large vat to send a test sample to a customer.

"We are able to simulate any regulatory requirements here," said Hoelter.

"This covers all possible temperature ranges," she said, adding that they can be dropped "as low as minus 80 degrees (Celsius) to account for the varying sensitivities of individual products."

US INVESTMENT RUSH

The first warehouse at the site

opened in 2015, dedicated to distributing medications from a laboratory of the pharmaceuticals firm STADA.

It has since grown into a four-building complex with storage capacity for 140,000 pallets and room for more.

DHL plans to invest two billion euros (\$2.3 billion) worldwide by 2030 in pharmaceutical logistics, about a quarter of it in Europe.

Half will go to North America, mainly the United States, where European drugmakers are relocating some production in response to President Donald Trump's tariffs and his efforts to lower drug prices.

In five years, the DHL division's revenue is expected to double, reaching 10 billion euros, compared to 84 billion euros for the group last year.

Hoelter said this growth reflects a broader trend among drugs companies to outsource logistics and other work, so that they can "focus on their core businesses: pharmaceutical research and production".



Azam J Chowdhury, chairman of East Coast Group, poses for a group photograph with the crew of the newly commissioned MT Omera Liberty and senior officials of the shipbuilding company at Daehan Shipbuilding in South Korea recently. PHOTO: BRAC BANK