

Star BUSINESS



ICDs raise charges, a day after fuel price hike

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

The recent fuel price hike is rippling through Bangladesh's trade logistics chain, pushing up costs for importers, exporters and freight operators at the same time.

On Sunday night, owners of 21 private inland container depots (ICDs) announced an 8.5 percent increase in container handling charges with immediate effect.

The operators say the increase was obvious after a 15 percent rise in diesel prices. Exporters, however, say it will erode their competitiveness at a time when export growth has been falling for eight consecutive months.

Apparel exporters have criticised the move and called for a government review.

However, the Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association (Bicda) defended the move, saying operators had to adjust costs to keep services running smoothly.

"Following the diesel price hike, cost adjustments became unavoidable to maintain smooth operations," said Md Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of Bicda.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

The latest adjustment comes just months after ICD charges were raised by 20 percent, while the Chittagong Port Authority increased tariffs by more than 41 percent.

Private ICDs handle 20-23 percent of import-laden containers and around 93 percent of export-bound containers moving through Chittagong port.

The revised ICD rates cover six service categories, including container transport, lift-on/lift-off charges, export stuffing, container weight charges and import delivery, according to a circular issued by Bicda.

The association said ICD operations consume more than 70,000 litres of diesel a day, making cost adjustments unavoidable.

At present, ICDs charge an average of Tk 2,046 to transport an empty container between the port and depots. Export stuffing costs about Tk 7,424 for a 20-foot container and Tk 9,900 for a 40-foot container. Rates vary across depots as they are negotiated individually with clients.

Industry stakeholders, however, have raised concerns about the wider impact on trade costs.

READ MORE ON B3

US trade bodies urge USTR not to impose new tariffs

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA), along with several other organisations, has urged the United States Trade Representative (USTR), the US government's chief trade body, not to impose any new tariffs on countries currently under investigation over production capacity.

In a letter sent to the USTR on April 15, the AAFA warned that additional tariffs on supplying countries could raise costs for American consumers.

Last month, the USTR launched an investigation into 60 addresses, including Bangladesh, over alleged failures to address issues related to production capacity and forced labour.

Bangladesh is scheduled to take part in a virtual USTR hearing on the matter on April 29.

The AAFA said in its letter that the US already imposes relatively high tariffs on textiles, apparel, footwear and accessories, even though these products contain significant US value, including intellectual property, raw materials such as leather, and textile inputs like yarns and fabrics.

As a result, textiles, apparel, footwear and travel goods face higher effective tariff rates than most other sectors.

The letter added that this burden disproportionately affects the industry, even though many of these goods are no longer produced in commercial quantities in the US.

It further said that although some countries identified in the investigation may run trade surpluses in certain product categories, these do not necessarily reflect structural excess capacity or practices that distort or restrict US commerce.

The concept of structural excess capacity does not reflect conditions in the US industry, it added.

Instead, the AAFA said, these trade flows are shaped by globally integrated supply chains, where production capacity is developed and used based on business decisions, long-term customer relationships and changing demand patterns.

READ MORE ON B3

Restaurant kitchens struggle to absorb double LPG shock

SUKANTA HALDER

The price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) has risen twice in less than three weeks, piling pressure on restaurants already dealing with red-hot prices of rice, chicken and beef.

Owners say the increase in petroleum gas has come at a difficult time. High inflation has weighed on household spending for years, while shorter shopping hours and a fuel shortage have reduced customer footfall.

Many restaurants raised menu prices one or two months ago to offset rising ingredient costs. Now, as they struggle to steady their

and onions are relatively low, while most vegetables now cost more than Tk 100 per kg.

"We have not yet increased food prices after the latest LPG price hike, as this will increase the pressure on the people. But it is not possible to run like this for long," said Sumon, who is also chairman of Alkaderia Restaurant.

Ismail Hossain, manager of The Mughal Empire restaurant at Mohammadpur area of Dhaka, said higher LPG prices have lifted production costs by nearly 10 percent.

He said a 35kg gas cylinder, widely used in

Golam Mostafa, general manager of Sky Lounge in Dhaka's Mirpur-1 area, said higher LPG prices are severely affecting their profits.

Although gas costs have surged, the restaurant has not raised menu prices, he said, which has squeezed margins further.

Mostafa said the price of gas cylinders had risen from about Tk 3,500 to Tk 4,500, then to Tk 5,500, and now to as much as Tk 6,800, while consumption has remained unchanged.

As a result, operating costs have nearly doubled, he added. To cope, the restaurant is trying to use LPG more efficiently.



PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

DOUBLE BLOW

- LPG prices rose twice in less than three weeks
- Kitchen essentials were already pricier
- Some eateries raised prices 1-2 months ago

FRESH PRESSURE ON SHRINKING MARGINS

LPG hikes raised production costs by around 10% Profit margins fell to about 15% from 30%

WHAT HAPPENS NOW

Most restaurants holding back further price hikes A 5%-10% increase possible if gas prices keep rising

finances, back-to-back LPG hikes have thrown business plans into disarray.

For the moment, most are absorbing the extra costs to their profit margins and watching developments in the Middle East, hoping the conflict will end soon and energy markets will ease as a result.

"In the current situation, the biggest challenge is just to continue the business," said Md Firoz Alam Sumon, first joint general secretary of the Bangladesh Restaurant Owners' Association.

He said the price of Chinigura rice, used to prepare polao, has risen to Tk 160 per kg from Tk 115, while Basmati has climbed from Tk 160 to Tk 280 per kg. Broiler chicken now sells for Tk 250 per kg, up from Tk 180, and Sonali chicken has reached a record Tk 450 per kg. Beef costs Tk 850 per kg.

Sumon said the prices of almost all ingredients, including oil and sugar, have doubled. Only the prices of potatoes

commercial kitchens, now costs around Tk 5,600, up from about Tk 3,500 a few months ago.

Rising ingredient costs have also forced the restaurant to revise some prices. A plate of Kacchi has increased from Tk 300 to Tk 320.

Even so, Hossain said profit margins have shrunk from about 30 percent to 15 percent as fuel and ingredient costs climb.

"We are absorbing the additional costs for now without increasing prices further, but we are closely monitoring the situation," he said.

Dhaka has around 25,000 restaurants, both large and small. Hundreds have opened over the past decade to meet growing demand for fine dining. There are around 481,000 restaurants across the country employing 30 lakh people. Around 2 crore people depend on the sector directly or indirectly, according to the Bangladesh Restaurant Owners' Association.

He said no decision has yet been taken on whether to revise menu prices. Management plans to review the situation over the next month. "If gas prices continue to rise, we may increase menu prices by 5 percent to 10 percent, but for now we are waiting to see how the situation develops."

Faruk Ahmed, customer relationship manager at Skyfall restaurant in Mohakhali, said early closing hours have reduced their evening trade, cutting sales by about 50 percent compared with a few months ago.

Despite higher LPG costs, the restaurant has not raised prices, fearing it would drive away more customers, said Ahmed, adding their margins are under pressure.

An official at Mamagocho restaurant at Gulshan in Dhaka said it had maintained prices, quality and portion sizes, despite rising costs, which have reduced profits.

Now, any decision on price adjustments rests with management, the official added.

Farmers in distress as diesel price rise drives up costs

S DILIP ROY, MOSTAFA SHABUJ and DWOHA CHOWDHURY

The recent diesel price hike has made service providers increase charges for harvesting the largest rice crop, Boro, irrigating farmlands, and threshing the cash crop maize-- and farmers are struggling to cope.

Costs soared because of a 15 percent hike in the price of diesel, a key fuel used by nearly 15 lakh shallow tube well pumps to water the Boro fields.

Farmers in four haor districts of Sylhet also depend on nearly 1,500 combine harvesters -- run on diesel -- for bringing their crops home.

The government increased fuel prices on April 19 to cut

subsidy payment pressure on the state coffers in the wake of increased import costs.

It coincides with a time when farmers have started harvesting Boro paddy, particularly in the Sylhet region, where a majority of the paddy fields require irrigation.

"Now machines are needed for harvesting and threshing paddy and shelling maize-- everything. With diesel price rising, all costs have gone up," said Mozammel Haque, a farmer in Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat.

The 65-year-old farmer cultivated Boro paddy on 12 bighas and maize on 10 bighas this season. He harvested a portion of the ripened

paddy using a diesel-powered harvester machine on Monday.

This year, he has to pay Tk 850 to Tk 900 to harvest the crop per bigha, up from Tk

750 to Tk 800 per bigha in the previous year.

"I am worried whether I would be able to recover my costs after selling the crops."



PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

In Sylhet, where Boro paddy is harvested early, thousands of farmers rely on combine harvesters for faster harvesting. But the cost of renting a combine harvester has doubled in some areas in the Haor.

The rate of harvesting paddy on one acre of farmland has jumped to Tk 7,500 this season, up from Tk 4,500 to Tk 5,000 in the previous Boro season.

Selim Raza Chowdhury, a farmer from Razapur Union in Sunamganj's Dharmapasha upazila, said he offered up to Tk 12,000 to harvest one acre of his Boro paddy, and still could not manage to rent a combine harvester.

"With excessive rates and lower paddy prices in

the market, it is becoming impossible for us to cover the harvesting and processing expenses," he said.

Shahibur Rahman, a 55-year-old farmer in Rangpur sadar upazila, said the rent of harvesters and maize threshers increased within a single day of the diesel price hike.

While it costs an additional Tk 250 to Tk 300 per bigha to harvest paddy, for maize the hike is higher-- Tk 400 to Tk 450.

Sirajul Islam, a harvester operator in Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat, said about two litres of diesel are required to harvest paddy on one bigha of land.

READ MORE ON B3

MGH to build private container terminal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Bangladeshi multinational company, MGH Group, is going to construct the country's first privately built container terminal at Chittagong port on the bank of the Karnaphuli river in Patenga.

Through a competitive bidding process, Transmarine Logistics, a subsidiary of MGH Group, secured the lease of a seven-acre plot of the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) to build the terminal, said a press release issued by MGH.

The group's CEO Anis Ahmed and CPA Chairman Rear Admiral SM Moniruzzaman signed a 20-year land lease agreement at an annual rent of Tk 15 crore yesterday.

MGH Group is a diversified multinational headquartered in Bangladesh, with a presence in 26 countries.

"By integrating private sector agility with green technology, this terminal provides vital strategic value to the Chittagong port," CPA Chairman Moniruzzaman said.

MGH Group CEO Anis Ahmed told The Daily Star that the group will initially invest Tk 550 crore to construct the terminal, hopefully within 18 months.

The terminal would be a green port, integrating cutting-edge sustainable technologies to minimise environmental harm.

It will have a monthly handling capacity of 40,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) and is expected to employ at least 180 people, Ahmed hoped.

READ MORE ON B2

Eastern Bank PLC.

SHANTA Life

আপনার পরিবারের সুবক্ষায় পাশে আছে শান্তা লাইফ এবং ইবিএল

শান্তা ডিজিটাল প্রটেকশন প্লান

শান্তা চাইল্ড এডুকেশন প্লান

বিস্তারিত জানতে কল করুন ১৬২৩০ নম্বরে

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HSBC, M&J bring API-driven trade solution to Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) Bangladesh has signed an agreement with M&J Group to implement an Application Programming Interface (API) integration for trade transactions, marking a milestone in the digitalisation of international trade operations in Bangladesh.

The integration will enable real-time connectivity between M&J Group's internal systems and HSBC's trade platform, streamlining end-to-end processes, reducing manual intervention, enhancing transparency and cutting turnaround times from hours to seconds.

Salahuddin Ahmed, managing director of M&J Group, and Ahmad Rabiul Hasan, country head for global trade solutions at HSBC Bangladesh, signed the agreement at HSBC's management office in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Commenting on the partnership, Ahmed said, "We are proud to partner with HSBC Bangladesh on this pioneering initiative. This integration aligns with our vision of leveraging technology to drive operational excellence and strengthen our global trade capabilities."

Hasan said, "This partnership reflects our continued commitment to supporting our clients with cutting-edge digital solutions. The API integration will not only simplify trade processes but also set new benchmarks for efficiency and innovation in Bangladesh's trade landscape."



Ahmad Rabiul Hasan, country head for global trade solutions at HSBC Bangladesh, and Salahuddin Ahmed, managing director of M&J Group, exchange signed documents of an agreement at HSBC's management office in Dhaka recently.
PHOTO: HSBC

Rashid made MD of Eastern Bank

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Hassan O Rashid has been appointed as the managing director of Eastern Bank PLC (EBL).

Prior to this appointment, he served as chief executive officer of Prime Bank PLC, according to a press release.



Hassan O Rashid

With over 31 years of professional experience in both local and multinational banks, he brings extensive leadership expertise across diverse banking domains. Rashid previously worked at Crédit Agricole Indosuez, HSBC and Standard Chartered Bank in various capacities.

During his earlier tenure at EBL as additional managing director (2015-2021), he played a pivotal role in strengthening the bank's position as a leading financial institution.

He currently serves as vice chairman of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh.

Rashid obtained his bachelor's degree in economics and business administration from Capital University, US, and a master's degree in international management from the Garvin School of International Management, Thunderbird, US.

Prime Bank customers to get discounts on DFSK vehicles

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC has signed an agreement with MA Enterprise & MRM Ventures Ltd (DFSK BD) to offer benefits to its customers on the purchase of DFSK vehicles.

Joarder Tanvir Faisal, executive vice-president and head of consumer assets and cards at the bank, and Md Mohtasim Al Rafid, managing director of the enterprise, signed the agreement at Prime Aspire on Gulshan Avenue in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Under the partnership, Prime Bank

customers will enjoy discounts on various models of DFSK cars.

The collaboration aims to provide greater value and convenience by making vehicle ownership more accessible and affordable through attractive financing and discount offers, the release added.

Takiyan Chowdhury, senior vice-president of secured consumer financing and embedded payments at Prime Bank PLC, and Mohammed Mohsin Khan, vice chairman of MA Enterprise & MRM Ventures Ltd, along with other senior officials from both organisations, were also present at the event.



Md Mohtasim Al Rafid, managing director of MA Enterprise & MRM Ventures Ltd, and Joarder Tanvir Faisal, executive vice-president and head of consumer assets and cards at Prime Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the agreement at Prime Aspire on Gulshan Avenue in Dhaka recently.
PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Mastercard announces winners of 'Spend & Win Campaign 2025-26'

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mastercard, a global digital payment service provider, has announced the winners of its flagship initiative, titled the "Safari Spirit Campaign 2025-26".

The grand prize winner, Chan Miah, a Mastercard credit cardholder of Dutch-Bangla Bank PLC, was awarded a four-day, three-night trip for two to Kenya, including round-trip airfare from Dhaka and a premium safari experience. Other prizes included trips for couples to Thailand and Cox's Bazar.

In addition to these travel experiences, other winners received a range of lifestyle rewards, including vouchers for home appliances and gadgets, as well as dining and shopping vouchers for couples.

Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager for Bangladesh at Mastercard, said, "Digital payments are increasingly becoming a part of everyday life in Bangladesh, and initiatives like these play an important role in reinforcing consumer confidence in secure and seamless digital transactions."

"By combining everyday spending with exciting rewards, such campaigns promote cashless payments while strengthening the spirit of collaboration across the banking and financial services ecosystem," he added.

The campaign, which ran from December 1, 2025, to January 31, 2026, witnessed strong

participation from Mastercard debit, credit, and prepaid cardholders across the country.

Under the campaign, Mastercard cardholders could participate by completing at least four qualifying retail transactions -- each valued at a minimum of Tk 1,000 for domestic purchases or \$25 for international purchases -- using

their cards at physical points of sale or on e-commerce platforms.

Winners were determined based on the total points accumulated from these qualifying transactions, following clearly defined criteria and an independently audited selection process to ensure transparency and fairness.



Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager for Bangladesh at Mastercard, poses for a group photograph with winners of the "Safari Spirit Campaign 2025-26" in Dhaka recently.
PHOTO: MASTERCARD

Gold prices fall

REUTERS

Gold prices fell on Monday as the dollar firmed, while news that the Strait of Hormuz is closed again pushed oil prices higher, reviving inflation fears.

Spot gold was down 0.7 percent at \$4,792.89 per ounce, as of 0730 GMT, after hitting its lowest since April 13 earlier in the session.

US gold futures for June delivery fell 1.4 percent to \$4,812.20.

"Gold prices are lower today after the US-Iran war ceasefire that markets celebrated last week appeared to be breaking down," said Ilya Spivak, head of global macro at TastyLive.

That has revived the now-familiar 'war trade' dynamics we've seen since the beginning of the conflict. Crude oil prices gained, which echoed into inflation expectation and drove up both yields and the US dollar."

The dollar index strengthened, making greenback-priced bullion more expensive for other currency holders. Benchmark 10-year US Treasury yields gained 0.6 percent.

Oil prices jumped and stock markets wobbled as rising tension in the Middle East kept shipping in and out of the Gulf to a bare minimum.

The US has seized an Iranian cargo ship that tried to run its blockade and Iran said it would retaliate, raising the possibility that the ceasefire between the two countries might not last for even the two days it is set to remain in force.

Tehran said it would not participate in a second round of negotiations that the US had hoped to kick off before the ceasefire expires on Tuesday.

Gold prices have fallen about 8 percent since the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran in late February, on concerns that higher energy prices could stoke inflation and keep global interest rates higher for longer.

While gold is considered an inflation hedge, higher interest rates crimp demand for the non-yielding asset.

Meanwhile, gold demand during one of India's key buying festivals stayed muted on Sunday as record prices curbed jewellery purchases, offsetting a modest uptick in investment demand.

MGH to build

FROM PAGE B1

The 250-metre jetty would accommodate one container vessel. Import containers would be immediately sent to the inland container depots (ICD) after unloading from the vessel.

Despite limited space, the terminal yard will be able to accommodate 3,500 TEUs, he said.

Among the port's container

currently operational or under construction, the proposed MGH terminal will be the closest to the sea. Located just 2.60 nautical miles (4.8152 kilometres) from the Karnaphuli estuary, it will allow vessels to berth in comparatively less time.

Its proximity to the sea will enable fuel savings of between 0.6 and 1.3 tonnes per vessel call, according to MGH.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Environment
"Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division" Project (A component of HELP Project)
1st Floor, Room: 202, Poribesh Bhaban New Building
E/16, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
www.doe.gov.bd

Request for Expression of Interest (EoI) for Selection of Individual Consultants (National)

1.	Ministry/Division	: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
2.	Agency	: Department of Environment (DoE)
3.	Procuring entity name	: Project Director
4.	Procuring entity district	: Dhaka
5.	Expression of Interest for Selection of	: Individual Consultant (National)
6.	For Package No. S-3; EoI Ref No.	: 22.02.0000.20.11.004.26.63
7.	For Package No. S-4; EoI Ref No.	: 22.02.0000.20.11.005.26.64
8.	Date	: 20 April 2026

KEY INFORMATION

9.	Procuring method	: Selection of Individual Consultant (SIC)
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FUNDING INFORMATION

10.	Source of funds	: Development Budget
11.	Grant No.	: E325-BD

PARTICULAR INFORMATION

12.	Project ID	: P501274
13.	Project code	: 224403000
14.	Project name	: Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division
15.	EoI closing date and time	: 6 May 2026, 11:00am

Information for Applicants

Package No.	Name of positions	Number of positions	Duration	Terms of References (ToR) including Educational Qualification
S-3	Environmental Specialist	1 (One)	3 months	B.Sc./Master's in Environmental Engineering, Soil, Water and Environment, Geography & Environment, Biological Science, Geology, Forestry/Wildlife, or Environment Science or equivalent relevant degree is desirable; minimum Bachelor's in the above-mentioned subject is a must.
S-4	Social Specialist	1 (One)	3 months	Masters in Social Science, Sociology or related field

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

16.	Name of official inviting EoI	: Md. Samsuzzaman Sarker
17.	Designation of official inviting EoI	: Project Director, Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division
18.	Address of official inviting EoI	: Department of Environment 1st Floor, Room: 202, Poribesh Bhaban New Building E/16, Agargaon Administrative Area Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
19.	Contact details of official inviting EoI	: Phone: 88-(02)-223-375062, Email: helpdoepd@gmail.com
20.	Place of submission of EoI	: Project Director, Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division 1st Floor, Room: 202, Poribesh Bhaban New Building E/16, Agargaon Administrative Area Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
21.	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EoIs without showing any reason.	

The Department of Environment is implementing the "Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division" Project. The overall objective of the project is to assess the environmental impact and damage occurred out of Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram division.

Project Director of the "Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division" invites eligible applicants to express their interest in providing the services. Applicants are advised to provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services in completed Curriculum Vitae (CV) and proven documents with a cover letter. Request for Application Form with detailed Terms of References (ToR) are available in the website of the Department of Environment (www.doe.gov.bd).

Completed Curriculum Vitae (CV) must be submitted in the Project office on or before 6th May 2026, 11:00am in sealed envelope and be clearly marked the position for Expression of Interest.

The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all EoI. Persons who are in service should submit EoI through the proper channel, otherwise EoI will be rejected.

-signed-
Md. Samsuzzaman Sarker
Project Director
Email: helpdoepd@gmail.com

GD-867

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Jail Superintendent
Sirajganj District Jail
Email: jssganj@prison.gov.bd
Memo No. 58.04.8800.135.05.006.26-1733 Date: 19.04.2026

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal:

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Name of work	Publishing date & time	Closing/opening date & time
1	1259423	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Animal Protein Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ka) Package-1 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
2	1259424	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Animal Protein Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ka) Package-2 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
3	1259425	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Animal Protein Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ka) Package-3 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 19:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
4	1259426	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Animal Protein Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ka) Package-4 for the Period from July 2026 to December 6	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
5	1259428	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Animal Protein Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ka) Package-5 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
6	1259429	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of vegetable Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Kha) Package-1 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
7	1259430	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of vegetable Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Kha) Package-2 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
8	1259431	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of vegetable Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Kha) Package-3 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
9	1259432	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of vegetable Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Kha) Package-4 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
10	1259433	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Oil, Spices, Food Ingredients and Miscellaneous Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ga) Package-1 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 19:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
11	1259434	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Oil, Spices, Food Ingredients and Miscellaneous Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ga) Package-2 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 19:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
12	1259435	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Oil, Spices, Food Ingredients and Miscellaneous Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ga) Package-3 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
13	1259436	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Oil, Spices, Food Ingredients and Miscellaneous Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ga) Package-4 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 19:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
14	1259438	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Oil, Spices, Food Ingredients and Miscellaneous Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ga) Package-5 for the Period from July 2028 to December 2026	19-April-2026 19:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00
15	1259439	Goods, Procurement of Supply of Various Types of Oil, Spices, Food Ingredients and Miscellaneous Items (Cats-2 to Schedule-Ga) Package-6 for the Period from July 2026 to December 2026	19-April-2026 17:00:00	30-April-2026 11:00:00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Rafiqul Islam
Jail Super
Sirajganj District Jail
Phone: 02588830244 (Office)

GD-862

Sheba's fuel queue service draws mixed reactions

MAHMUDUL HASAN

On-demand service platform Sheba.xyz has launched a "Fuel Refuelling Driver Service" that allows customers to hire a driver to queue at a filling station on their behalf and refuel the vehicle. The move has drawn mixed reactions online as fuel shortages continue to grip Dhaka and other cities.

The company announced the service through its verified social media page, saying customers can book a driver via the Sheba app or a dedicated hotline. The driver will collect the vehicle, wait in the fuel queue, refuel it, and return it -- sparing users hours of waiting.

The service is priced at Tk 175 per hour during the day and Tk 225 per hour at night.

The launch comes as motorists across the country have been forced to wait several hours at pumps or leave without fuel following supply disruptions linked to escalating tensions stemming from the US-Israel war on Iran.

The announcement received a mixed reception on social media. Supporters called it a practical workaround.

"This is called entrepreneurship.



Motorists across the country have been forced to wait several hours at pumps or leave without fuel following supply disruptions.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Wonderful," commented Facebook user Arzan Hosen on Sheba's post.

Another user, Md Jahidul Islam, said time was more valuable than money, while others described the idea as "unique."

Facebook user Itekkhar Uddin questioned the value proposition, noting that if fuel worth Tk 1,000 takes three to

four hours to obtain, the total cost under the service would rise to Tk 1,525 to Tk 1,700 during the day and Tk 1,675 to Tk 1,900 at night.

He argued that service charges could exceed the cost of fuel itself during long waits, and added that high-volume vehicle owners typically have personal drivers

who handle such tasks at no extra cost.

Anan Imtiaz Halim, chief executive officer of Sheba, said the service grew directly out of customer feedback.

"We began receiving calls and messages from our existing customers, especially those who already use our 'On-Demand Driver service,'" he said.

"Someone shared that he had to take leave from work just to stand in line for fuel. Another mentioned that his driver spent the entire night at a pump and then had to drive during the day without proper rest."

"This service is not designed to compete with fuel pricing; it is about saving time, reducing stress, and offering an option to those who cannot afford to wait in long lines," he said, acknowledging the cost concern.

"For someone who has the time and flexibility, the queue may be manageable. But for many working professionals and families, it isn't."

On safety, Halim said all drivers had been verified and trained, with tracking and support systems in place. He described the service as temporary.

"We are optimistic that the fuel supply situation will stabilise soon, and this need will naturally go away," he said.

Midland Bank signs MoU with Axentec to adopt Tier-4 cloud technology

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Midland Bank PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Axentec PLC, a connectivity, cloud and technology solutions company and a subsidiary of Robi Axiata PLC, to adopt advanced cloud technology for its data centre and computing needs.

Imtiaz U Ahmed, managing director and CEO of the bank, and Md Adil Hossain Noble, managing director and CEO of the technology solutions company, signed the MoU at the bank's head office in Gulshan-2, Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

Axentec recently launched the country's first locally hosted Tier-4 cloud platform, titled "Axentec Cloud", marking a milestone in Bangladesh's

digital infrastructure landscape.

Under the agreement, Midland Bank will use the platform to enhance operational efficiency, data security and the scalability of its technology

infrastructure. Axentec will also support the bank's computing and cloud service needs, helping accelerate its digital transformation and improve customer services.



Md Adil Hossain Noble, managing director and CEO of Axentec PLC, and Imtiaz U Ahmed, managing director and CEO of Midland Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the memorandum of understanding at the bank's head office in Gulshan-2, Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: MIDLAND BANK

ICDs raise charges

FROM PAGE B1

"With the latest ICD hike, the cost of import and export business will rise sharply," said Khairul Alam Suzan, former vice-president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association (BAFFA), pointing to earlier increases in charges and tariffs in December last year.

Shipping agents have echoed similar concerns, warning that the higher costs could weigh on external trade performance.

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has criticised the decision as unilateral, calling for a government-led committee to assess the actual cost impact before any tariff adjustments are made.

SM Abu Tayyab, director of the BGMEA, said the combined pressure of higher port tariffs, ICD charges and rising freight costs would hit the already struggling readymade garment sector hard.

Bangladesh's merchandise exports, heavily dependent on apparel, have recorded eight consecutive months of decline as of March. Exports fell by more than 18 percent year-on-year,

dropping to \$3.48 billion last month from \$4.25 billion a year earlier.

The dual increase in logistics and handling costs is likely to squeeze profit margins further, particularly in low-margin sectors.

"With exports already on a softer trend, this will push exporters further onto the back foot," said Riad Mahmud, managing director of industrial manufacturing company National Polymer Group.

He said truck fares rose by 6 percent to 7 percent within hours of the fuel hike announcement and are likely to settle 18 percent to 20 percent higher. "These are cumulative pressures," he said. "Transport costs are rising, and ICD handling charges are also going up. All of this directly increases export costs."

He added that exporters are especially exposed because most orders are agreed in advance. "We cannot revise prices after contracts are signed. The additional costs must be absorbed by exporters."

Salauddin Sikder, general manager (export) at RFL, said the impact is particularly severe for exporters of non-traditional goods such as

plastics, doors and luggage, where shipments are smaller and fixed costs per document are higher.

He said the total cost per container has risen from around Tk 14,000 to about Tk 23,000, an increase of nearly 70 percent to 80 percent.

"Exporters are facing a double burden. Raw material prices have surged due to global geopolitical tensions, while local charges have also increased, leaving little room to absorb costs," said Sikder.

"If our prices rise disproportionately compared with competitors like China or Vietnam, we risk losing orders," he added.

Meanwhile, businesses are bracing for further changes as the Department of Shipping is due to meet stakeholders in Dhaka tomorrow to discuss cost adjustments for lighter vessels.

Shafiq Ahmed, convener of the Bangladesh Water Transport Coordination Cell, said a lighter vessel currently consumes around 3,500 litres of diesel on a round trip between Chattogram and Dhaka. Freight for transporting cement clinker stands at Tk 550 per tonne.

Farmers

FROM PAGE B1

"Even after standing in line at the pump, fuel is not available. Diesel price has also increased. We were compelled to raise the machine rent," he said.

"In a few more days, when the full season of rice and maize harvesting begins, pressure will increase further."

Maize thresher operator Rafiqul Islam from Kurigram, another northern district, has started charging Tk 200 to Tk 300 more than last year.

More than four litres of fuel are needed to thresh maize grown on one bigha of land, he said.

"Diesel price has gone up. There are labour costs too. This is also resulting in arguments with farmers."

Farmer Ranju Mia of Kharjani Char in Gaibandha sadar upazila cultivated maize on 12 bighas of land, investing Tk 250,000.

Due to fertiliser and fuel shortages, the yield has been poor this year. Again, because of the sudden rise in fuel prices, threshing and transportation costs have increased, he said, fearing losses.

"There is no electricity in the char area, and the soil does not retain water. Frequent irrigation is needed. The amount of paddy we will get will not even cover the expenses," said Ruhul Amin, another grower from Rasulpur Char in the Fulchhari upazila.

US trade bodies urge

FROM PAGE B1

The association urged the USTR to avoid any action that would further increase tariffs on these goods.

It also said the broad, multi-country investigation appears to be aimed at a pre-determined outcome rather than a focused review of specific practices.

The AFAA added that the investigation may be used to recreate tariff rates and structures that existed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).

It also cited Treasury Secretary Bessent, who said, "We will get back to the same tariff level for the countries. It will be just in a less direct and slightly more convoluted manner."

The association warned that this approach could weaken the government's ability to properly investigate and address specific foreign trade barriers.

In conclusion, the letter said the industry should not face unintended negative impacts from these investigations. It warned against further tariffs on an already heavily taxed sector, saying such measures would raise costs for American families while doing little to boost domestic production due to existing capacity and investment limits.

BANGLADESH EXPORTS SHOW STRONG GROWTH IN US MARKET

For example, in 2025, clothing exports -- accounting for 86 percent of Bangladesh's total exports to the

US -- rose by 12.36 percent to 266.15 crore square metre equivalents (SME). In value terms, exports increased by 11.75 percent to \$8.20 billion compared with 2024, according to the USTR.

Footwear exports from Bangladesh reached 1.78 crore pairs, a rise of 76.43 percent in 2025 compared with 2024. In value terms, footwear exports grew by 52.67 percent to \$391.77 million.

Travel goods exports increased by 26.32 percent to 2.15 crore pieces in 2025. Their value also rose by 35.44 percent to \$12.37 million, the USTR said.

In another letter, the Forced Labor Working Group (FLWG) of the AFAA, along with 17 other trade organisations, urged the USTR not to impose tariffs linked to forced labour investigations.

They said companies that have invested heavily in compliance systems and are working to eliminate forced labour in supply chains should not be penalised through broad tariff measures that do not distinguish between responsible firms and bad actors.

The letter added that, under Agreements on Reciprocal Trade (ART) and related framework negotiations with the US, several economies -- including some covered by the investigation -- have already committed to protecting labour rights and banning imports made with forced labour.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Office of the Police Commissioner
Rangpur Metropolitan Police
www.rmpm.gov.bd

Memo No. RPMP/053/Ration Date: 20 April 2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are hereby invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the following goods for Ration Supply of Rangpur Metropolitan Police for the 4th Quarter of FY 2025-2026.

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Name of procurement	Last selling	Closing date
1.	1261465	Procurement of Soybean Oil	29-Apr-2026 16:00	30-Apr-2026 16:00

Important Instructions:

- ▶ This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal.
- ▶ To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal is required.
- ▶ The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branch.
- ▶ Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from the e-GP help desk.

Md. Habibur Rahman
BP No. 7601116165
Deputy Police Commissioner
(Headquarters & Administration)
Rangpur Metropolitan Police
Mobile: +880 1320-073020
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GD-868

গাজীপুর উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ
গাজীপুর

স্মারক নং: ২৫.১২.৩৩০০.০০০.০০১.০০.০০০১.২৪-১৮১ তারিখ: ০৭ বৈশাখ ১৪৩৩
২০ এপ্রিল ২০২৬

পেশাজীবী প্রকৌশলী ও স্থপতি হিসেবে তালিকাভুক্তির লক্ষ্যে বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গাজীপুর উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষের আওতাভুক্ত এলাকার মধ্যে ভবন/হিয়ারত নির্মাণের লক্ষ্যে জনসাধারণ হতে যেসকল আবেদন (নকশা) অত্র দপ্তরে জমা দেওয়া হয়, ঐ সকল নকশায় প্রকৌশলী ও স্থপতি স্বাক্ষর করে থাকেন। স্বাক্ষরকারী প্রকৌশলী ও স্থপতিগণ গাজীপুর উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষের তালিকাভুক্ত হওয়ার প্রয়োজনীয়তা রয়েছে। এমতাবস্থায়, গাজীপুর উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষে প্রকৌশলী ও স্থপতি হিসেবে তালিকাভুক্তির লক্ষ্যে আগামী ১২ মে ২০২৬খ্রিঃ তারিখের মধ্যে নিম্নোক্ত শর্তে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে।

শর্তাবলিঃ

1. IEB/IAB/IDEB পেশাজীবী সংগঠন এর তালিকাভুক্ত প্রকৌশলী ও স্থপতি হতে হবে।
2. আবেদনপত্রে আবেদনকারীর নাম, পিতার নাম, মাতা/স্বামীর নাম, স্থায়ী ঠিকানা, বর্তমান ঠিকানা, বয়স ও অভিজ্ঞতা ইত্যাদি উল্লেখপূর্বক পূর্ণাঙ্গ জীবন বৃত্তান্ত দিতে হবে।
3. আবেদনের সঙ্গে সদ্য তোলা ০২ (দুই) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি এবং NID কার্ডের ফটোকপি সংযুক্ত করে দিতে হবে।
4. একাডেমিক সার্টিফিকেট (বি.এস.সি ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং/এম.এস.সি/পি.এইচ.ডি) যুক্ত করতে হবে।
5. প্রফেশনাল সার্টিফিকেট PEng, DMINB, SEng, MIAB সংযুক্ত করতে হবে এবং
6. এতদসংক্রান্ত কোনো অভিজ্ঞতা থাকলে অভিজ্ঞতার ডকুমেন্টস বা বিস্তারিত বিবরণ সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।

Md. Hasnatul Hossain
মোঃ মেহেদী হাসান
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জিডি-১৮-৬৬

India pushes for regional energy hub in Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

Indian officials called for the swift implementation of a proposed regional energy hub in Sri Lanka, at the start of bilateral talks in Colombo on Sunday.

The planned oil hub in the northeastern port of Trincomalee featured in a meeting with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake, India's visiting Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told reporters.

The project, which also involves the United Arab Emirates, has been under discussions since 2023, he added.

"There is no further time to lose in making progress on strategic projects such as these," said Misri, who is visiting the Sri Lankan capital along with India's Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan.

Sri Lanka, India and the UAE signed an agreement a year ago, following two years of talks, to set up a multi-product oil pipeline connecting the two South Asian neighbours and to establish the Trincomalee oil storage complex.

Sri Lanka, India and the UAE signed an agreement a year ago, following two years of talks, to set up a multi-product oil pipeline connecting the two South Asian neighbours

Misri said that in Sunday's talks, both sides agreed on the need to get the project off the ground quickly.

Had the energy hub been completed, it could have been useful "especially at a time like this", he added.

Sri Lanka, which imports all its oil requirements as well as coal needed for power generation, has raised fuel and electricity prices since the Middle East war began in late February, when the United States and Israel began bombing Iran.

The conflict has disrupted energy supplies globally and sent prices soaring.

Sri Lanka's Trincomalee is already home to a 99-tank oil storage farm from the British colonial era, but only 14 containers are in use under a previous agreement with an Indian oil firm.

Last year, both India and Sri Lanka expressed hope of expanding the proposed hub to include a refinery. They also discussed a power line to share electricity between them.



Workers are seen making various types of eco-friendly goods in the Lam Creation factory at Basdi village under Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur. The photo was taken recently.
PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

Eco-friendly handicraft venture creates 400 rural jobs

SUZIT KUMAR DAS, Faridpur

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Sabekunnahar Mitu, a young woman from Faridpur, had vague notions, but no concrete plans of becoming an entrepreneur. An unlikely event made her curious about eco-friendly handicrafts, and she now not only makes a good profit from her venture but also employs around 400 people in her locality.

Mitu completed her Secondary School Certificate in 2015 and got married while preparing for her Higher Secondary School Certificate. She later enrolled in the Management Department at Government Rajendra College in Faridpur.

"I kept thinking about becoming an entrepreneur while studying at the college," she said.

One day, while visiting the Kolarhat area of Rajbari in late 2019, Mitu got caught in a sudden rainstorm and took shelter in a roadside shed, where handicraft workers were busy making different products.

"I became curious and started asking questions. That is where the dream began."

After that visit, Mitu researched online and contacted BD Creation, a large handicraft exporter in Dashuria, Pabna. She visited the factory with her

husband next year.

"At first, they did not let me enter, but later they allowed me to look around, although photography was restricted," she said. The experience bloomed the idea of starting a business.

Encouraged by the experience, she sold her gold jewellery for Tk 2 lakh and received another Tk 1 lakh from her husband, Rezaul Karim, who works as a sub-assistant engineer at the Department of Public Health Engineering in Baliakandi, Rajbari.

With this money, she bought 12 used sewing machines from a business in Pabna that was about to close. She started her factory in a small, rented room near Basdi Bazar.

From the same business that sold her the sewing machines, she hired two operators from Pabna to train 10 local women.

Mitu's business took off in 2020 and gradually expanded. Seven years later, the step into eco-friendly entrepreneurship has made her a strong example of women's economic empowerment in the community.

GROWTH OF LAM CREATION

Mitu now runs two production units and has invested Tk 50 lakh in total so far.

A recent visit to the factory showed workers producing eco-friendly goods using jute, hogla leaves, water hyacinth and thatch.

The factory produces more than 50 items, including bags, mats, pet houses, file boxes, baskets, plant pots, bowls, laundry boxes, lunch boxes and tissue boxes. Prices range from Tk 50 to Tk 1,500 depending on design and quality.

"We produce goods worth Tk 30-

35 lakh every month. After expenses, I earn around Tk 2-3 lakh," Mitu said.

Production work is divided among teams responsible for stitching, finishing, quality checks and export preparation. Around 100 men and women work in the two units, while about 300 women from villages in Faridpur and Rajbari work from home as contractual artisans.

The initiative has significantly changed lives in the area.

"My father works as a day labourer. I couldn't continue education beyond 10th grade," said Safia Sultana, 21. She now earns Tk 6,500 to Tk 7,000 a month.

Mosammam Aklima Khatun, 24, a homemaker, said, "After household chores, I come here and earn. It's a blessing for us."

Rojina Begum from Rajbari earns Tk 3,500 to Tk 4,000 a month by working from home.

Factory manager Humayun Karim, 26, said he now earns Tk 12,000 a month after failing to find a job despite trying in many places.

The permanent workers employed at the two units are paid based on their work volume. Completing more work means more payment.

They also have the option to receive the payment on a weekly basis or a monthly basis.

Mitu's husband, Rezaul Karim, recalled a tragic memory while talking about the business.

"We lost a newborn in 2021, which left her devastated. Working helped her return to normal life. We now have a six-year-old son. She manages everything herself, and I am very proud of her," he said.

Lam Creation's products are currently exported through larger companies like BD Creation.

"My biggest dream is to establish a direct export line and expand the business so that women here no longer have to depend on others," she said.

Time to consider deep-sea LPG terminal for energy security

TARIQ ALAM

Bangladesh's LPG market has expanded rapidly in response to real energy needs, and yet the infrastructure supporting this growth has not kept pace.

The country's LPG import system remains dependent on small, pressurised vessels, typically carrying between 2,500 and 5,000 tonnes. This fragmented approach raises costs and exposes the market to delays and supply disruptions, affecting reliability.

A refrigerated LPG terminal at a deep-sea location such as Matarbari in the Moheshkhali area provides a clear way forward.

Matarbari offers the conditions required to accommodate Very Large Gas Carriers (VLGCs), which carry around 45,000 tonnes per shipment.

Such vessels require a draft of 12 to 14 metres, which existing LPG import points are not designed to handle. This makes it well-suited for large-scale, cost-efficient LPG imports.

This is a compelling bankable infrastructure opportunity for the private sector and foreign investors.

A terminal with an initial capacity of around 1.5 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) is likely to require capital investment in the range of Tk 1,800-2,300 crore, depending on configuration and marine infrastructure.

Structured under a public-private partnership (PPP) or concession model, such a project can attract long-term investment while limiting upfront public capital. Under this approach, a project developer would be responsible for the design, construction, financing and operation of the terminal over a defined concession period.

This aligns incentives around efficiency and performance, while allowing the government to retain strategic oversight.

The impact of such a terminal will depend not only on where it is built but also on how it is operated.

An open-access model, where the terminal functions as a neutral service provider rather than an LPG supplier, offers the most balanced solution.

In practice, this may take the form of a hybrid structure, where a portion of capacity is reserved for anchor users under long-term commitments to support project bankability, while the remainder is made available on an open-access basis.

Under this structure, all licensed importers can access the facility on transparent and equal terms, while continuing to source LPG independently.

An open-access terminal provides them with access to larger, more cost-efficient shipments, eliminating the need for major capital investments individually.

The structure reinforces the project's investment appeal: revenues based on clearly defined terminal fees rather than commodity trading provide the predictability that investors and lenders require.

However, shared infrastructure raises concerns around utilisation and coordination among multiple users.

A well-defined Terminal Access Code can be a solution, ensuring transparent allocation of capacity, prioritising committed users and preventing hoarding. Operational arrangements such as coordinated cargo scheduling and inventory-sharing mechanisms can help optimise utilisation.

For established operators, the terminal frees up capital for downstream expansion. For the National Board of Revenue, increased and more efficient import volumes can translate into more predictable and higher fiscal revenues.

For Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, it provides a reliable supply backbone that strengthens national energy security while enabling more efficient bulk procurement when needed.

For the private sector, it reduces costs, improves logistics and enables growth without duplicating infrastructure.

For investors, it offers a scalable opportunity in a high-growth market through a concession-based framework.

Over time, the terminal could support transshipment and regional trade, enhancing commercial viability and positioning Bangladesh as an efficient energy logistics hub.

With a development timeline of around three years, a terminal commissioned near 2030 would enter a market approaching 3 million tonnes per year and projected to grow to 4 to 5 million tonnes by 2036.

Turning this opportunity into a bankable project will require a clear and disciplined approach. A competitive selection process and a bankable concession structure will be essential alongside clear access rules.

Phased development will allow capacity to scale in line with demand, balancing efficiency with utilisation.

A Phase 1 capacity of 1-1.5 MTPA provides a practical starting point - large enough to capture economies of scale, yet aligned with realistic utilisation - while allowing for expansion as demand grows.

Any forward-looking government should seriously consider this idea, which provides an opportunity to align infrastructure, market development and long-term investment in a way that strengthens both energy security and economic resilience.

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Is it time to abandon hope the Strait of Hormuz will open soon?

ANALYSIS

REUTERS, Lاونceston

A consistent theme in global oil markets since the US and Israel attacked Iran is that the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz will be short-lived, and therefore so will the disruption to the supply of crude and refined products.

That expectation has consistently been reflected in pricing for crude oil futures, which have risen sharply since the conflict began on February 28, but are still well short of the highs reached in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In effect, the paper crude market has believed US President Donald Trump's slew of social media posts since the bombing started that the conflict will be short, and result in Iran accepting US terms for a peace deal.

The problem is that the reality on the ground doesn't match the social media claims, and the longer the Strait of Hormuz remains closed the more severe the energy crisis will

become, especially in Asia.

Brent crude futures fell 9.1 percent on April 17 to end at \$90.38 a barrel in the wake of Trump's post that the Strait of Hormuz was fully open. But they jumped 6.9 percent in early Asian trade on Monday to \$96.59 when it became clear the waterway was still closed.

The latest round of optimism that the Strait of Hormuz would re-open began after a Trump social media post on April 17 that the waterway that carried as much as 20 percent of the world's crude oil and refined product supply prior to the war was "fully open and ready for full passage."

Trump's assertion was even backed by elements within the Iranian government, but the optimism proved short-lived as Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps moved to keep the strait closed, given Trump's decision to maintain a US naval blockade of Iranian ports.

There are several questions that the market should be asking about the current situation.

Does this mean that the Strait of Hormuz is now effectively being closed by the United States?

Would it re-open if Trump ended

the blockade of Iranian ports?

Is there sufficient trust between the warring parties to accept a principle that the strait should be open to all?

Who is really in control in Iran, and are they willing to negotiate with a US administration that has a track

record of abandoning agreements?

While these are issues for debate, the only fact that really matters is that the strait isn't open and the risk of attack is likely to keep it that way for the hundreds of vessels waiting either side of the crucial waterway.



An aerial view of the Iranian shores and Port of Bandar Abbas in the Strait of Hormuz. The longer the strait remains closed, the more severe the energy crisis will become, especially in Asia.
PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

SUPPLY STRESS

In the meantime crude oil and refined product supply chains are becoming more stressed, especially in Asia, which was the destination for about 80 percent of all the shipments via the Strait of Hormuz prior to the conflict.

While crude futures have largely traded on the daily news flow and an underlying optimism that the conflict will be of a limited duration, physical oil and refined products have reflected a more dire near-term supply situation.

Refined products in the Asian trading hub of Singapore have remained at extreme levels, with jet fuel ending at \$204.13 a barrel on April 17, more than double the \$93.45 close on February 27, the day before the war started.

Gasoil, the building block for diesel, ended at \$145.27 a barrel on April 17, up 59 percent since the conflict started, although down from the record \$199.89 hit on March 30.

The problem for Asia is that the worst of the supply crunch is probably still to come, as crude shipments into the region fall sharply.

Asia's seaborne crude imports are estimated at 20.62 million barrels per

day (bpd) in April, down from 22.36 million bpd in March, according to data compiled by commodity analysts Kpler. However, both March and April are well down on the 26.76 million bpd average for the three months prior to the attacks on Iran.

The situation is especially worrying for countries that are major refining centres and exporters of fuels to the region.

Singapore's crude imports are forecast at 388,000 bpd in April, down from 715,000 bpd in March and 980,000 bpd in January.

South Korea's crude imports are estimated at 1.68 million bpd in April, down from 2.24 million bpd in March and 2.74 million bpd in January.

Japan's April imports are expected to be 921,000 bpd, a drop from 1.63 million bpd in March and 2.16 million bpd in January.

Only India is bucking the trend, with April imports estimated by Kpler at 4.67 million bpd, up from 4.45 million bpd in March, but below January's 5.15 million bpd.

India has been able to secure Russian oil to help offset the loss of barrels from the Middle East, with 1.64 million bpd arriving in April, up from 1.06 million bpd in February.