

# Star BUSINESS

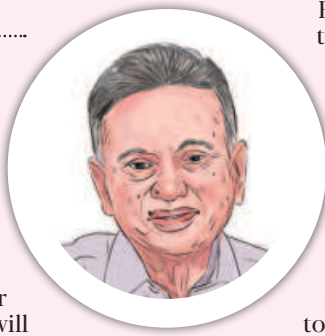


## Promising export sectors to get RMG-style support: Amir Khosru

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will provide all promising export sectors with the same facilities currently available to the readymade garment (RMG) industry, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said yesterday at a meeting with business leaders.

"If any promising export sector comes to us with a proposal, we will extend to that sector the same facilities that are available to the garment industry," he said at the pre-budget meeting organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and the revenue board at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon.



Bonded warehouse facilities, back-to-back arrangements, and all other relevant support will be provided, he added, citing the gold and diamond sectors as examples of industries held back by the absence of such support.

Goldsmiths, he noted, were leaving the country for a lack of opportunities.

Bonded warehouse facilities allow export-oriented industries to import raw materials duty-free, on the condition that finished goods are not sold domestically. Currently, only the RMG sector enjoys the facility in full; the leather goods sector receives it partially.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) had long resisted broader extension, citing fears of

duty-free materials being diverted to the local market, despite calls from economists to extend the facilities across the board.

The minister acknowledged those concerns but said they could not justify inaction. "It cannot be the case that we do nothing out of fear of theft," he said, adding that preventing misuse is a separate issue, and solutions will be addressed accordingly.

On taxation, he said the government could not offer broad incentives at present but would work to lower the cost of doing business.

"Wherever you are facing obstacles, let us know, and we will remove them. Tell us where your costs are increasing, and we will directly address those issues within the next three months," he told businessmen at the meeting.

This is already part of the ruling BNP's

READ MORE ON B2

## Novo Nordisk eyes Bangladesh as an insulin hub

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and JAGARAN CHAKMA



Bangladesh is stepping into high-end pharmaceutical manufacturing as Novo Nordisk begins producing modern insulin locally in partnership with Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd, a concern of Transcom Group.

The move promises to expand access for millions of people with diabetes while positioning the country as a future export hub for advanced biologic medicines.

The Danish drugmaker's transfer of advanced manufacturing technology marks a "milestone" for Bangladesh, said Jay Thyagarajan, the company's senior vice president for Asia Pacific, as it signals a shift from import dependence to building sophisticated biopharmaceutical capability at home.

"This is not just about manufacturing," Thyagarajan told The Daily Star. "It is about building sustainable capability in Bangladesh and demonstrating that the country can produce biologic medicines at the highest global standards."

LIMITED ACCESS

The urgency behind the move is stark. Bangladesh has around 15 million diabetic patients, yet only a small fraction receives insulin therapy due to high costs, inconsistent supply and limited access to treatment facilities.

Globally, more than 600 million people live with diabetes, but in countries like Bangladesh, access gaps remain acute.

"Given the scale of unmet demand, we felt the need to ensure a sustainable local supply," Thyagarajan said.

Local manufacturing is expected to play a critical role in narrowing this gap, particularly as diabetes cases continue to rise alongside urbanisation and lifestyle changes.

## Listed MNCs struggle as inflation, weak demand hit profits

AHSAN HABIB

Listed multinational companies (MNCs) in Bangladesh had another difficult year in 2025, with most failing to claw back profits eroded by inflation and shrinking consumer demand.

Of the 13 MNCs listed in the stock market, 11 follow a December fiscal year end. Ten have published results so far.

As per the published data, three saw profits rise in 2025 but remain below the previous year's level, four hit five-year lows, and two incurred the highest losses in their operational history in the country. Only one, Robi Axiata, posted record profits.

"The economic situation was the main factor," said Shahidul Islam, CEO of VIPB Asset Management Company, who has tracked the companies' performances for years as a major shareholder with billions of taka invested.

Inflationary pressure raised raw material costs, but companies could not pass them on to consumers whose demand had already shrunk, he said.

Analysis of financial reports shows that the damage was broad. Most companies saw sales growth slow last year. Four -- Grameenphone, Bata Shoe, Heidelberg Cement, and Linde BD -- saw sales fall outright.

Among the companies, British American Tobacco's (BATBC) profit fell 67 percent to Tk 584 crore in 2025, from Tk 1,788 crore in 2023, the highest level in the last five years. The figure was Tk 1,750.68 crore in 2024.

The tobacco company said, "2025 was marked by a challenging socioeconomic and geopolitical landscape characterised by inflationary pressures, currency devaluation, and constrained consumer purchasing power."

The global economic slowdown and rising raw material costs added further complexity to the operating environment. The top two segments of the company recorded a volume decline of approximately 10 percent, it added.

### EARNINGS OF LISTED MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

(In crore taka)

YEAR	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Singer	51	7	52	-48	-224
RAK Ceramics	90	67	61	-2	-39
Bata Shoe	-6	41	40	29	1.2
Heidelberg	47	-23	45	46	20
Linde BD	122	88	22	642	34
Unilever	52	73	96	67	79
LafargeHolcim	388	444	594	381	510
BATBC	1,497	1,787	1,788	1,751	584
Robi	180	182	320	702	937
GP	3,412	3,009	3,307	3,630	2,957

SOURCE: FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF COMPANIES

RAK Ceramics posted its highest-ever loss of Tk 39 crore last year, a reversal from Tk 90 crore in profit in 2021.

Singer Bangladesh also incurred a huge loss of Tk 224 crore, the largest in its recent history.

Heidelberg Cement's profit more than halved from its 2021 peak of Tk 47 crore.

The country's largest telecom operator, Grameenphone's profit dropped 18.5 percent year-on-year. The company attributed the decline to economic weakness and political uncertainty following the July 2024 uprising.

"The prolonged political uncertainty weakened business and investor confidence, while persistent inflation subdued job creation, and declining household purchasing power collectively constrained overall market demand," it said.

Unilever Consumer Care and LafargeHolcim remained profitable but 18 percent and 14 percent below their 2023 levels, respectively.

Linde BD's profit collapsed to Tk 34 crore after an anomalous Tk 642 crore in 2024, which was inflated by a one-off asset sale.

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### WHY BANGLADESH -- AND WHY ESKAYEF

Novo Nordisk's decision to localise production was driven by both market need and manufacturing potential. A key part of that strategy is its partnership with Eskayef, a concern of Transcom Group.

Thyagarajan said the choice was based on trust and proven capability. "Eskayef and Transcom have demonstrated over the years that they can maintain high-quality production standards comparable to global benchmarks," he said.

Insulin production is among the most complex processes in pharmaceuticals, requiring precision, consistency and strict regulatory compliance. Novo Nordisk was confident that its Bangladeshi partner could meet those standards.

Equally important was institutional support. Coordination among regulators, policymakers and the medical community helped enable the technology transfer.

"Technology transfer of this scale requires alignment across stakeholders. In Bangladesh, that alignment was there," he said.

### A COMPLEX LEAP INTO BIOTECHNOLOGY

Unlike conventional drugs, insulin is a biological product that demands advanced processes such as fermentation, sterile manufacturing and highly controlled environments.

"It is not a simple molecule," Thyagarajan said. "It requires extremely high levels of control and quality."

Novo Nordisk has transferred proprietary technology from Denmark and ensured that production in Bangladesh adheres to European Union standards. Each batch is tested to match global benchmarks.

READ MORE ON B2

## FBCCI calls for tax reforms to reduce business costs

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Businesses yesterday called for structural reforms in the tax system to reduce the cost of doing business, ease compliance burdens, and improve investment competitiveness.

In this regard, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) placed a set of proposals for the upcoming national budget before the National Board of Revenue (NBR) at a pre-budget discussion held in Dhaka.

FBCCI Administrator Md Abdur Rahim Khan presented the major proposals at the discussion.

The apex trade body called for reducing the minimum tax from 1 percent to 0.25 percent on annual gross turnover, with a long-term plan to phase it out. It said the current rate forces firms to pay tax even in loss-making periods amid high inflation, elevated interest rates, dollar shortages, and rising input costs.

The FBCCI also proposed zero minimum tax for businesses operating at a loss with zero or negative taxable income based on audited accounts, newly established firms



for the first three years, and businesses affected by natural disasters, epidemics, or government-declared economic crises.

The trade body termed the turnover-based minimum tax system unfair, saying it undermines equity in taxation, and urged a more realistic framework reflecting actual business performance.

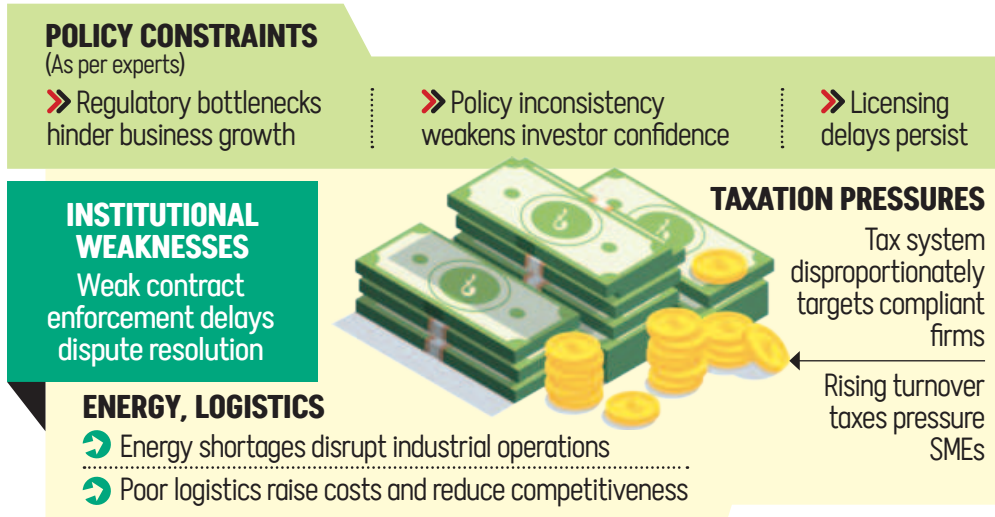
It also demanded raising the personal tax-free income threshold to Tk 500,000 and reducing corporate tax rates to ease pressure on individuals and firms.

The FBCCI called for a gradual reduction of advance income tax (AIT) at the import stage, saying it raises upfront costs and strains liquidity for import-dependent industries.

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## Policy uncertainty, weak trust weigh on investment

Experts say regulatory bottlenecks take a toll on confidence



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's business climate is being held back by regulatory bottlenecks, inconsistent policies, weak trust, and institutional inefficiencies, which are reducing investment

potential and weakening long-term investor confidence, experts said at a dialogue yesterday.

The remarks were made at a discussion titled "Business climate dialogue on improving the investment climate: why it is critical for the new government priorities the

upcoming national budget", organised by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) at its auditorium at Police Plaza in Gulshan.

"The real challenge is not competition but entering the market itself. Firms must be ready for a long-term commitment because operational hurdles -- from licensing delays to compliance burdens -- can discourage even established companies," said Zinnia Hug, chief financial officer of Unilever Bangladesh.

She said regulatory approvals often take months due to weak coordination among agencies, which leads to conflicting requirements, such as dividend remittance rules clashing with tax approvals.

She added that legal risks remain high as cases move through multiple channels, reducing predictability.

Hug further said that labour regulations are uncertain because interpretations often change and are sometimes applied retrospectively, making business planning difficult.

Tax administration, she added, sometimes raises large initial claims against compliant firms, which are later adjusted after review.

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# Prime Bank, CPA launch co-branded Visa card to streamline port transactions

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC, in collaboration with the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), has launched the "CPA-Prime Bank Co-Branded Visa Card", aiming to enhance financial convenience and offer benefits to stakeholders within the port ecosystem.

The card is designed to ensure seamless transactions, improve operational efficiency, and provide tailored financial solutions for individuals and businesses associated with the port community.

Rear Admiral SM Moniruzzaman, chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority, inaugurated the card as the chief guest at Sheraton Dhaka on Tuesday.

Moniruzzaman said, "We believe our initiative to advance digital transformation at the port will be strengthened by this partnership with



PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Rear Admiral SM Moniruzzaman, chairman of Chittagong Port Authority; Azam J Chowdhury, chairman of Prime Bank Foundation; and Faisal Rahman, acting chief executive officer of Prime Bank PLC, pose for a group photograph after inaugurating the "CPA-Prime Bank Co-Branded Visa Card" at Sheraton Dhaka on Tuesday.

Prime Bank. We congratulate all those involved in making this collaboration possible.

"This partnership will modernise the port's payment system, making it more efficient and user-friendly, while simplifying business operations. Users will benefit from more secure and transparent transactions.

"We are confident that such initiatives will enhance operational efficiency and support the port's continued growth."

Azam J Chowdhury, chairman of Prime Bank Foundation, and Faisal Rahman, acting chief executive officer of Prime Bank PLC, attended the launch ceremony.

At the event, Chowdhury said, "We are proud to be associated with CPA, a key driver of Bangladesh's economy. We believe this partnership will bring positive change to society."

# Dollar gets safe-haven lift

REUTERS, Singapore/London

The dollar edged higher on Wednesday as investors awaited a closely watched Federal Reserve rate decision in what was likely to be Chair Jerome Powell's swan song, against a backdrop of an Iran war that shows little sign of imminent resolution.

Activity was tempered by markets in Japan closing for a public holiday and by caution ahead of a string of major central bank decisions over the coming 48 hours, along with the likes of Amazon, Microsoft and Meta reporting earnings after Wednesday's closing bell.

Against the dollar, the euro dipped 0.07 percent to \$1.1705 while sterling slipped 0.05 percent to \$1.3513, as both currencies edged further away from their highs earlier this month.

The euro is around 1 percent below where it was at the end of February when the war broke out, while the pound is roughly unchanged.

The Fed's rate decision will later take centre stage. The central bank is widely expected to keep rates on hold, leaving the focus on policymakers' assessment of the war's impact on the economy and on Powell's future.

# Policy uncertainty

FROM PAGE B1  
Nuria Lopez of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh said the main issue is not a lack of opportunity but weak investor confidence, adding that an unfriendly business environment and unclear policy direction continue to discourage foreign investment.

She also said that taxation places additional pressure on businesses, as authorities often rely heavily on compliant firms, especially multinationals, creating an uneven playing field.

Sector-specific lobbying limits competition and makes it harder for new firms to enter the market, she added.

Lopez further said that institutional weaknesses, energy shortages, and the lack of a clear investment roadmap are increasing uncertainty, warning that Bangladesh could fall behind regional competitors.

Margub Kabir of Margub

Kabir and Associates said trust is central to investment decisions and depends largely on dispute resolution.

He said Bangladesh remains weak in enforcing contracts and has previously ranked among the lowest globally due to a slow and overloaded judicial system.

Kabir also said arbitration, which foreign investors often prefer as it helps avoid court delays, offers limited benefit. This is because enforcing arbitral awards still requires going through the same lengthy court process, which reduces their effectiveness.

He added that the main problem is not a lack of laws but weak implementation, stressing the need to simplify procedures, appoint specialised commercial judges, and introduce faster enforcement systems.

Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh

Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said improving the business environment must begin with core infrastructure reforms.

He said a reliable energy supply is the most urgent need, especially for industries moving into higher-value production. He added that man-made fibre manufacturing requires uninterrupted power, as even short outages can stop production completely.

He also pointed to inefficiencies in key logistics routes, including the Dhaka-Chattogram highway and port operations, which are increasing costs and reducing competitiveness.

M Masrur Reaz of Policy Exchange Bangladesh said Bangladesh's past growth has been driven largely by private sector investment, which helped manufacturing rise from 8 per cent of GDP decades ago to 25 per cent today.

However, he said

this momentum is now slowing, with private investment declining and foreign direct investment remaining below 1 per cent of GDP, far behind regional peers.

He said this slowdown comes at a critical time, as the country aims to become a \$1 trillion economy and create millions of jobs. These goals depend heavily on higher investment.

He added that the upcoming budget will be an important policy signal.

Reaz also highlighted practical challenges, including weak logistics, low productivity, energy shortages, and limited export diversification, which are worsened by fragmented reforms and poor coordination across sectors.

Farooq Ahmed, secretary general of MCCI, Sumitra Kumar Mutsuddi, head of corporate at BSRM, and Sumaiya T Ahmed, head of sustainability at Pran-RFL Group, also spoke at the event.

# Airbus profits slide as deliveries drop

AFP, Paris

Airbus said Tuesday its first-quarter profit fell as it delivered fewer planes to customers, falling behind rival Boeing for the first time in years.

The drop in deliveries to 114 in the first quarter, compared to 143 for Boeing, was primarily due to a shortage of Pratt & Whitney engines.

Net profit slumped 26 percent from the same quarter last year to 586 million euros (\$686 million), with revenues sliding seven percent to 12.65 billion euros.

The first quarter results "reflect the lower level of commercial aircraft deliveries", said Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury.

"In commercial aircraft, we continue to ramp up and produce as per our plan while navigating the shortage of Pratt & Whitney engines," he added.

# Listed MNCs

FROM PAGE B1  
Robi Axiata bucked the trend, with profits rising 33 percent year-on-year to Tk 937 crore in 2025.

Marico and Berger Paints, which follow a March fiscal year-end, were excluded from the analysis.

The outlook for MNCs, Shahidul said, has darkened sharply in recent months.

A few months ago, conditions looked promising, but the US-Israel war on Iran has introduced new uncertainty.

"Now, the outlook depends on the war, thus the oil price. The overall economic situation may worsen if oil prices rise and the war is prolonged. It will impact the performance of the companies," he added.



## Zila Parishad, Sylhet

www.zp.sylhet.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.60.9100.001.01.002.26.857(50)

Date: 28-04-2026

### e-Tender Notice No. 09/2025-2026 (OTM)

e-Tender has been invited in the National e-GP System (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following work:

Sl No.	e-Tender ID No. & Package No.	Name of works
1	Tender ID No: 1260630 e/zpsyl/2025-26/RB-21	Construction of Chief Executive Officer's residence, Zilla Parishad, Sylhet.
2	Tender ID No: 1260631 e/zpsyl/2025-26/RB-23	Construction of Cycling Track, Road side wall with Grill, Putting Lamp post and Renovation main building interior decoration with colour at Nolja Dakbanglow, Gowainghat Upazila.
Tender publication date & time		: 28 April 2026 15.00
Tender documents last selling date & time		: 12 May 2026 15.00
Tender closing & opening date & time		: 13 May 2026 14.00

These are 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 System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) as well as Sylhet Zila Parishad Contractor License (2025-2026) shall be required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches. The Authority reserve the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceeding. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

Md. Moyazzem Hossain  
Assistant Engineer  
Zila Parishad, Sylhet



GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH  
Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation

### Open Tender (International) for Petroleum Products

1	Ministry/Division	Energy and Mineral Resources Division.
2	Agency	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).
3	Procuring Entity Name	General Manager (Com. & Ops.), Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).
4	Procuring Entity District	Chattogram, Bangladesh.
5	Invitation for	Invitation for Open Tender (International) for import of High Sulphur Furnace Oil (HSFO) 180 Cst and Gasoline 95 Unleaded during "June 1 <sup>st</sup> to August 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2026".
6	Invitation Ref. No	28.03.0000.000.045.01.0013.26.
7	Date	30 <sup>th</sup> April, 2026
KEY INFORMATION		
8	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
FUNDING INFORMATION		
9	Source of Funds	Own Fund
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
10	Tender Package No.	PG-03 and PG-04
11	Tender Package Name	PG-03: Invitation for Open Tender (International) for import of High Sulphur Furnace Oil (HSFO) 180 Cst. PG-04: Invitation for Open Tender (International) for import of Gasoline 95 Unleaded.
12	Tender Publication Date	30/04/2026
13	Tender Last Selling Date and time	13/05/2026; 4:00 PM (BST) (GMT+6)
14	Tender Closing Date and time	14/05/2026; 12:30 PM (BST) (GMT+6)
15	Tender Opening Date and time	Date: 14/05/2026 ; PG-03: 12:45 PM (BST) (GMT+6) PG-04: 01:30 PM (BST) (GMT+6)
16	Name and Address of the Office(s)	
17	Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban (1st Floor), Saltgola Road, Chattogram-4100, Bangladesh.
	Selling Tender Document (Others)	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BTMC Bhaban, Level-10, 7-9 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh.
	Receiving Tender Document	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban (1st Floor), Saltgola Road, Chattogram-4100.
	Opening Tender Document	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban (1st Floor), Saltgola Road, Chattogram-4100.
18	Place/Date/Time for Pre-Tender Meeting	Virtual Meeting (Zoom Platform). 06/05/2026; 12:45 PM (GMT+6)
19	Tender Validity/ Offer Validity Period	The Offer must be valid till 22/06/2026.

#### INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

20	Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer	(i) A maximum of three (03) litigation history against the tenderer over a period of the last three (03) years. (ii) The Tenderer(s) must have minimum 3 (Three) years' general experience in the export of petroleum products. (iii) The Tenderer(s) must have specific experience of executing at least 02 (two) contracts with a minimum value of USD 75.00 Million each in last three years in the supply of goods similar to the proposed goods. (iv) The Tenderer(s) must own refinery(ies) or more than 50% equity of a refinery. The processing capacity of the refinery(ies) must be at least 2.00 million metric tons per year. Or, The Tenderer(s) must satisfactorily complete the export of at least 2.50 million Metric tons of petroleum products annually for the last three years. (v) Annual turnover of the Tenderers during last 3(three) years must be equivalent to minimum US\$ 1.50 billion. (vi) The minimum amount of liquid asset or working capital facility must be US\$ 1.00 billion. (vii) The Tenderer(s) must be free from any interditory/embargo/sanction from international organization like UNO, OPEC, WTO etc. (viii) The Tenderer(s) must comply with international safety standard and environment compliances.		
21	Brief Description of Goods	PG-03: The total quantity to be supplied is 150,000-200,000 Metric Tons of High Sulphur Furnace Oil (HSFO) 180 Cst (+/-10% at Buyer's Option). PG-04: The total quantity to be supplied 0.215 - 0.430 Million Barrels (25,000-50,000 Metric Tons) of Gasoline 95 Unleaded (+/-10% for Buyer's Option). Minimum and Maximum range of importable quantity for each package is at Buyer's option.		
22	Tender Document Price	Tender Document Price: BDT 12,000.00 / US\$ 100.00 for each package, Non-Refundable by Cash / Pay Order / Bank Draft drawn in favor of "Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation".		
23	Package No	Identification	Tender Security Amount	Completion Time
	PG-03 and PG-04	PG-03	USD 0.30 Million	01 <sup>st</sup> June - 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2026 (3 Months)
		PG-04	USD 0.20 Million	01 <sup>st</sup> June - 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2026 (3 Months)

#### PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

24	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Mohammad Zahid Hossain
25	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	General Manager (Commercial & Operations), BPC.
26	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban (1st Floor), Saltgola Road, Chattogram-4100, Bangladesh.
27	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel. No: +88-02-3333-16121 Mobile: +88 01713755377/+880 1762-921229 Fax No: +88 2333320147 Email: gm_commercial@bpc.gov.bd

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.

Mohammad Zahid Hossain  
General Manager (Commercial & Operations)  
Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC)

## Oil prices rise further

AFP, Hong Kong

Oil prices rose Wednesday as talks to end the Iran war appeared to be at a standstill and the crucial Strait of Hormuz no nearer being reopened.

While the White House has said Donald Trump and his team were considering Tehran's latest proposal to restore traffic through the waterway, CNN and the Wall Street Journal said the president was sceptical.

The Islamic republic this week submitted a plan that would reportedly see it ease the chokehold and Washington lift its retaliatory blockade on the country's ports as talks continued, including over its nuclear programme.

While US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Iran's proposal was "better than what we thought they were going to submit", he insisted any eventual deal had to be "one that definitively prevents them from sprinting towards a nuclear weapon".



Farmers wash freshly harvested potatoes beside a pond in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha, as growers struggle to sell amid a supply glut that has outpaced demand this year.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

# Higher exports bring no relief to potato farmers

Retail price in Dhaka remains the same as last year, as per TCB

MOSTAFA SHABUJ, Bogura

Potato exports this year so far surpass last year's figures by 10.7 percent, yet that is not enough to cover a surplus in production and bring relief to farmers.

As per provisional data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), so far, approximately 1.17 crore tonnes of potatoes have been produced this year, compared to about 1.15 crore tonnes last year. This indicates a possible increase of over 200,000 tonnes year-on-year.

The official Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data on potato production is yet to be published, however.

On the other hand, according to the DAE, the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association (BCSA), and the Bangladesh Potato Exporters Association, the annual demand for potatoes in Bangladesh is 85 to 90 lakh tonnes.

BCSA said 36 lakh tonnes of potatoes are currently stored in cold storage, which is 1 lakh tonnes more than last year.

Meanwhile, the Plant Quarantine Wing of the DAE shared that potato exports in

FY26 so far (as of April 29) were 52,293 tonnes. Exports in FY25 till April 30 stood at 47,225 tonnes. The increase stands at a little over 5,000 tonnes, not nearly enough to cover the excess production this year.

Experts in this sector have blamed several factors for the meagre exports, namely, low cultivation of export-quality potatoes and higher production costs than neighbouring nations.

### GAP BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND EXPORT

AKM Mafidul Islam, deputy director (export) of the Plant Quarantine Wing, said the export momentum is better this year compared to previous years.

"Furthermore, the Vietnamese market has recently opened up for Bangladeshi potato exporters."

He remained hopeful that potato exports would rise this year.

Ferdousi Begum, chairman of the Bangladesh Potato Exporters Association, said, "The demand for potatoes in Bangladesh is only 85 lakh tonnes, but we have had a surplus since 2007."

"There is not much demand for Bangladeshi potatoes anywhere except Malaysia."

Some go to Nepal, but the potatoes get damp from rain in July during the loading and unloading process, and it lowers the quality, she said.

Mostafa Chowdhury Babu, president of the BCSA, said, "The main problem with exporting potatoes from Bangladesh is that

### KEY POINTS

- ➔ Potato output to exceed last year's 1.15cr tonnes
- ➔ Exports up 10.7% y-o-y so far this fiscal year
- ➔ Bangladesh has had a surplus since 2007
- ➔ Annual demand for potato is 85 lakh tonnes

the production cost is higher than in neighbouring countries."

"This year, the cost of producing one kilogramme of potatoes in the Northern districts was Tk 15 and Tk 19 in Munshiganj. In contrast, the production cost in India is around Tk 10. Due to this, Nepal is buying from India instead of Bangladesh this year, Babu said.

"Furthermore, the cultivation of export-quality potatoes in Bangladesh is still significantly low."

### GROWING FRUSTRATION FOR POTATO GROWERS

Farmers have complained of low prices despite a record harvest.

Rafiqul Islam, a farmer from Chhatianpara village in Bogura's Shibganj upazila, said his potato crop on 9 bighas of land was damaged by rain. Despite the government's assurances, he has yet to receive any assistance.

Abdul Motin, a farmer at Shibganj's Kichak bazar, a major hub for potato wholesalers, said that the price of local variety 'Pakri' potatoes has dropped by half compared to the start of the season. The surplus supplies have kept prices low, he told this correspondent, while farmers are struggling to sell off the excess.

Discouraged by the lack of profit, Sakiul Islam, a farmer from Rajahar village in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila, said he plans to only grow enough potatoes for personal consumption in the future.

Nayeem Islam, a farmer from Biala

village in Joypurhat's Kalai upazila, said he plans to drop potato cultivation entirely from next year.

Meanwhile, retail prices for potatoes in Dhaka have remained between Tk 20 and Tk 25 per kilogramme, as per the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB). The prices were the same this time last year.

### LIKELY MEASURES TO CONTAIN THE CRISIS

Farmers are currently producing more potatoes than needed, said Abdur Rahim, director general of the DAE.

"For this reason, the government is working to increase potato usage by processing them alongside exports."

He said the government plans to create a database in the future using farmer cards.

"We will then be able to determine exactly how much land should be used for potato cultivation based on national demand," the DG added.

Talking to The Daily Star, prominent agricultural economist Jahangir Alam Khan listed several measures the government could take to mitigate this crisis.

"This year, the government could set a minimum procurement price for potatoes."

He suggested the government buy and store at least 10 percent of the total production at this fixed price to stabilise the market, releasing the potatoes later when prices rise.

## Bangladesh's withheld IMF tranche and the limits of stabilisation

FAHIM CHOWDHURY

When the IMF's Asia-Pacific director signalled to Bangladesh's delegation in Washington last week that the expected \$1.3 billion tranche would not be released in June, the key message was not financial but what Bangladesh can credibly offer in return, and what it cannot.

The Spring Meetings' macro position was the strongest in three years. Gross reserves are roughly \$35 billion, the BPM6 measure is above \$30 billion for the first time since mid-2023, and March remittances reached a record \$3.75 billion. At this level, the IMF pause signals reform credibility rather than liquidity.

The four unmet conditions remain unchanged: revenue mobilisation, banking governance, removal of electricity and gas subsidies, and a market-determined exchange rate. All were agreed under the \$4.7 billion programme approved in January 2023 and expanded to \$5.5 billion in June 2025. All have been monitored. None has moved materially in eighteen months. The interim administration stabilised the currency and rebuilt reserves, but did not deliver structural reform.

Pakistan in 2014 is a relevant comparison. It entered a three-year IMF programme in September 2013 with reserves near \$6 billion, an 8 percent fiscal deficit, and similar reform conditions. By mid-2014, reviews had stalled on comparable structural issues.

The difference was what Pakistan could offer. I worked on the privatisation of state oil and gas firms during that programme. The value was not only revenue but a pipeline of sellable state assets. When the Oil and Gas Development Company's follow-on was delayed in November 2014 due to falling oil prices, the IMF accepted it because the broader privatisation programme remained intact. A credible

monetisation pipeline strengthens negotiating position. That lever is absent in Bangladesh. It has never issued a Eurobond. Commercial borrowing is around 11 percent of external debt, with the rest largely concessional. This worked when multilateral flows were predictable, but becomes a vulnerability as LDC graduation on November 24, 2026 (or delayed) shifts financing terms, and IMF support is uncertain.

There is also no asset pipeline. The BSEC has identified fifteen profitable state-owned enterprises and multinational subsidiaries for listing over three years, but none have progressed. Banks are under restructuring, with the ADB's \$500 million banking-sector support focused on stabilisation, not privatisation. The Sammito Islami Bank merger, formalised in December, remains far from saleable.

The core constraint is fiscal, not external. Tax-to-GDP fell to 6.56 percent in FY25, below the programme assumption of 7.9 percent for FY24, with projections reaching 10.5 percent only by FY35. The Centre for Policy Dialogue has repeatedly highlighted this, and Fahmida Khatun has stressed rising debt service pressure as LDC graduation approaches. Without revenue mobilisation, remittance-led stabilisation will fade, and monetary policy will carry an unsustainable burden.

A programme lapse would not cause immediate stress, given strong reserves, but the structural cost would be significant. ADB and World Bank operations are cross-conditioned on IMF continuity and would be reoriented if it fails. The policy anchor would weaken just as graduation removes concessional financing advantages.

Between now and the October Annual Meetings, a credible alternative is needed. A B2/negative Eurobond would be costly. More viable options include a remittance-backed Sukuk, a diaspora instrument, or partial listing of a profitable state entity. The Finance Ministry could task the central bank and Privatisation Commission with a monetisation pipeline before the June ECOSOC meetings.

Stabilisation without reform is a rolling arrangement. The challenge is what can credibly be placed on the table in return.

The writer is managing director at RetailBook, a London Stock Exchange platform backed by Rothschild & Co and Jefferies, and has worked on over 500 transactions raising more than \$200 billion across more than 30 markets.

## UAE exit from Opec to boost supply, lower oil prices

Russia says

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said on Wednesday that the decision by the United Arab Emirates to leave Opec will mean the oil-producing countries will boost production, bringing down global prices in the future.

Russia is a member of the Opec+ group of countries and has been coordinating its policies with Opec members. Russia is seen as the main beneficiary of the spike in global oil prices due to the war in the Middle East.

"Today we hear that one of the countries, the United Arab Emirates, is leaving Opec. What does this mean? It means that the country can produce as much oil as its production capacities allow and release it onto the market," Siluanov said.

Siluanov's comments marked Russia's first reaction to the surprise UAE exit. Russia has strong ties with both the UAE and Opec leader Saudi Arabia.

"If Opec countries conduct their policies in an uncoordinated manner (after UAE exit) and produce as much oil as their production capacities allow and as much as they want, prices will go down accordingly," he added.

He stressed that for now the oil prices were supported by the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, and that his predictions of oversupply referred to the situation when the passage would open at some point in the future.

## Lending rates to be brought down to tolerable level: commerce minister

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Double-digit bank lending rates will be brought down to a tolerable level to make them more investment-friendly, Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir said yesterday.

Industries such as textiles cannot survive with high-cost financing under the current double-digit interest rate regime, the minister said.

Muktadir was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the four-day Bangladesh International Textile, Knitting and Garment Industry Exhibition (BTKG Expo 2026), held at the International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka.

Energy shortages and high interest rates, ranging between 13 and 14 percent, remain major challenges for the garment and textile sectors, he added.

Bangladesh requires around 4,300 million cubic feet per day (MMCFD) of gas, while domestic production stands between 1,700 and 2,300 MMCFD, with an additional 900 MMCFD supplied through imported liquefied natural gas (LNG).

This leaves a deficit of around 1,400 to 1,700 MMCFD. To address this gap, the government is willing to increase LNG imports.

Infrastructure limitations also remain a challenge. Currently, the country has two floating storage and regasification

units (FSRUs) with a combined capacity of around 1,100 MMCFD, operating at about 90 percent efficiency.

The government plans to invite tenders for additional FSRUs to expand gas supply and support gas-based industries, he said.

Emphasising the importance of energy security, he said any disruption in fuel

supply would severely affect industrial production and overall economic activity.

In the longer term, the government is prioritising renewable energy and plans to fast-track the generation of 10,000 MW of solar power.

The minister said the government is taking steps to simplify licensing



Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir speaks at the inaugural ceremony of the four-day international textile, knitting and garment industry exhibition, titled "BTKG Expo 2026", at the International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: BKMEA

procedures to facilitate business. He noted that obtaining multiple licences -- around 25 to 26 at present -- can take months or even years, discouraging foreign investment.

He added that efforts are underway to streamline bond and tax-related procedures to make them more business-friendly and reduce harassment, according to a statement from the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA).

Organised jointly by the BKMEA and Inforchain Digital Technology Co Ltd, the expo will continue until May 2, showcasing machinery and technology related to the textile, knitwear, and garment sectors.

BKMEA President Mohammad Hatem presided over the inaugural ceremony, while Exhibition Convener Fazlee Shamim Ehsan and Inforchain Executive Director Spencer Lin also spoke.

Around 900 exhibitors from nearly 28 countries, including Bangladesh, are taking part in this year's exhibition.

The event features about 1,200 booths spread across roughly 20,000 square metres. Companies from countries such as Canada, China, Taiwan, Belgium, France, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates are showcasing their latest products and technologies.