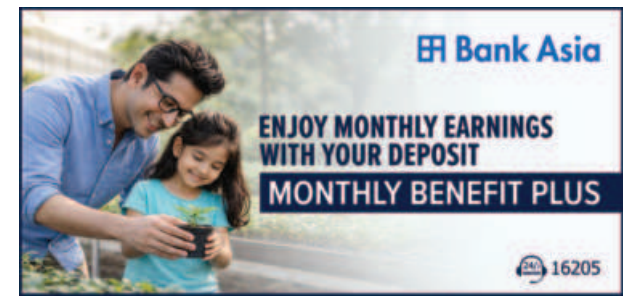


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Excessive bank borrowing to harm economy

Says Fahmida Khatun

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Although the introduction of family and farmers' cards may bring some relief, excessive reliance on bank borrowing to finance the budget deficit is harmful to the economy, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). She made the remarks yesterday at a shadow parliament debate programme organised by Debate for Democracy at the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (FDC) in Dhaka.

Fahmida said government social safety net initiatives, such as the family and farmers' card, are promising, but their success depends on transparency and accountability in selecting and managing beneficiaries. She added that past social protection schemes have often suffered from irregularities and corruption.

Fahmida also said subsidies must be properly targeted, with priority given to agriculture, irrigation, and public transport.

She stressed that the next budget should set clear policy directions—given limited resource mobilisation, and ensure cost-efficiency.

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Bangladesh off US IP watch lists

Washington still urges Dhaka to strengthen intellectual property enforcement in Bangladesh as Vietnam, India and Pakistan appear in USTR report

Bangladesh stayed off USTR's 2026 watch lists

US SAYS

Dhaka must do more against counterfeit goods

Failure to improve could affect future trade talks

May also strain trade relations with Washington

THE COUNTRY STILL CITED BY USTR FOR

- Ranking among the top five sources of fake clothing
- Severe trademark registration delays

IN THE RECIPROCAL TRADE DEAL

Dhaka committed to

- Stronger IP enforcement
- Transparency in geographical indications (GI)
- Action against IP theft
- Protection of common product names

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh has stayed off the latest United States intellectual property (IP) rights watch lists, but Washington has still urged Dhaka to strengthen enforcement to prevent unfair trade practices.

In its annual Special 301 Report released on Thursday, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) identified 26 trading partners for intellectual property protection and enforcement concerns.

It grouped them into three categories -- Priority Foreign Country, Priority Watch List and Watch List.

In this year's report, Vietnam has been designated a Priority Foreign Country, a rare and severe classification that can trigger a trade investigation. The USTR said Vietnam has failed to address long-standing concerns over intellectual property protection and enforcement.

The designation is reserved for countries with the most serious IP-related practices that have a significant impact on US industries and are not making meaningful progress in negotiations or reforms.

The report said Vietnam had shown a persistent failure to resolve long-standing concerns. The United States first raised the issue in 2020 through a proposed IP Work Plan, followed by a revised proposal in 2023.

The USTR report added that Vietnam has made little progress in later bilateral engagement, including talks linked to an Agreement on Reciprocal, Fair, and Balanced Trade. Vietnam's actions or inactions are causing significant damage to industries reliant on intellectual property in the US and other markets.

This year, the USTR placed six countries on its Priority Watch List. Those are Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Russia and Venezuela.

READ MORE ON B3

BB waives provisioning for funds in merging banks

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has waived the requirement to maintain provisions against funds of banks and non-bank financial institutions stuck in five merging shariah-based lenders.

The decision was taken at a recent internal meeting of the central bank, officials familiar with the matter said, at a time when more than Tk 15,000 crore remain tied up in the troubled institutions.

As these funds have not been recovered for a prolonged period, the regulator has lifted the requirement to maintain provisions against them, they added.

The five merging banks are First Security Islami Bank, Global Islami Bank, Union Bank, Social Islami Bank, and Exim Bank. They were brought under the merger process by the interim government through the Bank Regulation Ordinance, 2025.

Around Tk 10,000 crore of the stuck funds belong to Islami Bank Bangladesh alone.

Banks are required to set aside 0.5-5 percent of operating profit against general category loans, rising to 20 percent for substandard loans, 50 percent for doubtful loans, and 100 percent for bad or loss category loans.

Initially, the BB's bank supervision departments and the financial institutions and markets department had instructed banks to maintain provisions against funds stuck in the troubled banks.

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