

Star BUSINESS



Jobs, returns, environment to decide project approvals

Says finance minister

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

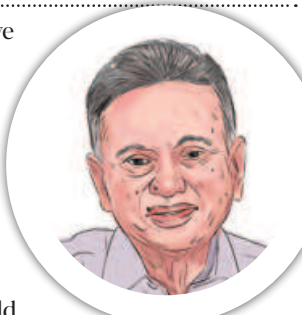
The government will approve development projects only if they meet three key conditions – job creation, return on investment (ROI) and environmental protection, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said yesterday.

He said economic democratisation should go beyond politics, ensuring that ordinary citizens have equal participation in the national economy.

Unprofitable projects taken up without planning in the past are being reviewed, with some already cancelled, the minister said at the “Stepping Forward: Inauguration of RAISE-2,” a programme organised by the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), according to a press release.

Praising PKSF’s work, he said the government’s economic philosophy is aligned with the organisation’s activities. He called for expanding PKSF’s role further, especially in universal healthcare, education and social security, where it could work as a key delivery partner.

On women’s empowerment, Khosru said the government plans to transfer cash directly to women as household budget managers, aiming to increase domestic demand and savings. He added that direct support for farmers and assistance in the health sector are also being prioritised.



Broadband sector set for major overhaul

Reform plan would reduce ISP tiers, formalise informal operators and improve internet speeds

POLICY OVERHAUL

Broadband sector faces massive reform : Govt plans to halve ISP licence categories
Reseller model proposed to speed up expansion : Industry leaders raise concerns over reseller model

OBJECTIVES

Improving services
Boosting market competition
Attracting foreign investment
Bringing the sector under tax net



ISP INDUSTRY

Broadband subscribers: **1.45cr**
Firms with 2 lakh+ users: **15+**
Active ISP licences: **2,500**
Industry jobs: **6-7 lakh**
Annual revenue: **Tk 7,000cr- Tk 8,000cr**

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Bangladesh is preparing a massive overhaul of the broadband internet sector in decades, as the government moves to dismantle a complex licensing regime, introduce a reseller model and attract foreign investment.

In this regard, top government officials have been holding a series of meetings with the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) on broadband reform guidelines prepared under the interim government, according to half a dozen people involved in the process.

The new government is broadly accepting the policy reforms proposed by its predecessor, though it is also introducing several significant changes of its own, according to documents seen by The Daily Star.

Bangladesh ranks near the bottom globally in terms of broadband service quality. Rehan Asad, the prime minister’s adviser on telecom and ICT, recently said the government aims to ensure broadband connectivity with speeds of up to 1 Gbps.

Such speeds are usually available in countries, including Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and France.

Officials said the planned broadband overhaul is a part of that broader push to raise service standards and modernise the country’s digital infrastructure.

One of the major changes under consideration is halving the number of ISP licensing categories.

Bangladesh currently has four tiers of ISP licences. Those are national, divisional, district and upazila-level licences. Under the proposed framework, the government plans to consolidate these into just two: national and district-level.

Existing divisional and upazila operators would be allowed to migrate into the new structure.

Bangladesh currently has around 2,500 ISP licences. Just before the fall of the Awami League in August 2024, the total had nearly reached 3,000, contributing to market disorder, fragmented infrastructure and inconsistent service quality.

Industry insiders say indiscriminate licence approvals over the years, often by political considerations, caused the number to balloon.

A SECTOR BUILT ON RAPID GROWTH
The country’s broadband industry has expanded rapidly over the past two and a half

decades, driven by government digitisation projects and rising internet demand. As of March this year, subscriber numbers stand at around 1.45 crore.

In Bangladesh, internet services formally began in 1999, when the then Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (now the Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited) introduced dial-up services.

Private ISPs began deploying their own infrastructure in the early 2000s, and by the end of 2004, cyber cafés had spread across urban areas.

Many operators gradually extended Ethernet connections directly to homes and businesses, effectively functioning as local ISPs. Internet speeds accelerated significantly after Bangladesh was connected to the SEA-ME-WE-4 submarine cable in 2006.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic proved to be the single biggest catalyst for broadband expansion.

It had taken nearly two decades for the subscriber base to reach 50 lakh. But within roughly a year of the pandemic, the number crossed 1 crore as people turned to the internet for remote work, online education, digital commerce and entertainment.

READ MORE ON B3

KEY POINTS

Loss-making projects under review; some cancelled

Direct cash transfers planned for women

Theatre, sports and music to gain industry status

He also highlighted the “One Village One Product” concept, citing Barishal’s “Shital Pati” as an example of a local product that could reach global markets such as Amazon or Alibaba with better design and skill development support.

The minister further said that theatre, sports and music are being recognised as industries, with the aim of increasing their contribution to GDP.

The event was chaired by PKSF Chairman Zakir Ahmed Khan. Special guests included Najma Mobarek, secretary of the Financial Institutions Division, and Gayle H Martin, acting division director for Bangladesh and Bhutan at the World Bank.

Japanese EZ shows early promise as investment flows in

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The Bangladesh Special Economic Zone is showing promise as a manufacturing hub, with swift land handover and private-sector efficiency drawing investments into the zone, according to the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza).

Three companies currently in operation are driving initial industrial activity at the zone, widely known as the Japanese economic zone, with combined investments exceeding \$97 million and generating thousands of jobs, said the authority.

The investment pipeline at the Japanese economic zone shows a growing mix of manufacturers at various stages of approval.

Out of the 12 companies that have entered the zone so far, three are already in production – Singer in electronics, ArtNature in specialised manufacturing, and Lion Kallol in the chemical sector, said Mohammad Zakaria Mithu, director (MIS and research) at Beza.

Japanese economic zone

- Emerging as a hub for export-oriented manufacturing
- 3 out of 12 companies already in production
- 70,000-80,000 jobs to be created when fully operational
- Investor interest increased after election

CURRENT STATE

Initial investments exceed \$97m : 3,000 jobs created so far

Singer leads with \$75m+ investment, creating 1,700 jobs

ENERGY SUPPLY

230 kV substation likely to be completed this year

Gas supply remains uncertain

LAND ALLOCATION

Around 230 acres handed over : 268 acres expected to be transferred this year

double its workforce.

Lion Kallol Limited, though smaller in scale, is gradually expanding. ArtNature Bangladesh Limited stands out for its labour-intensive operations, employing more than 2,500 locals alongside a significant number of foreign staff.

Together, these three reflect steady progress in positioning the zone as a hub for export-oriented manufacturing, with further investment and employment expected in the coming years.

Mithu described the progress as encouraging, noting that more investors are expected as pending land issues are resolved.

Around 230 acres have already been handed over, while the remaining 268 acres are expected to be transferred within this year under the development agreement. An additional 500 acres is under discussion for future expansion, subject to negotiations involving the Economic Relations Division and development partners.

According to the Beza director, infrastructure development is also progressing.

A 230 kV substation is likely to be completed this year and handed over through the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, which is expected to significantly improve electricity supply to the zone.

However, Mithu said that gas connectivity remains uncertain amid the ongoing national energy crisis. Although the central gas station has already been constructed, supply will depend on availability.

Employment generation is beginning to take shape, with around 3,000 jobs already created. Once fully operational, the zone is expected to employ between 70,000 and 80,000 people.

Mithu said investor enquiries have increased significantly since February 12, signalling growing confidence among foreign investors under the elected government.

Ashik Chowdhury, executive chairman of Beza, said the zone’s rapid progress highlights the advantages of government-to-government (G2G) collaboration when paired with experienced foreign developers.

READ MORE ON B3

War puts forex market under strain: BB

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh’s foreign exchange market came under mild pressure in March as heightened global uncertainty stemming from the Middle East war situation pushed up exchange-rate volatility and interbank dollar transactions, according to a monthly report by the central bank.

The interbank exchange rate rose to Tk 122.75 per dollar at the end of March from Tk 122.30 per dollar at the end of February 2026, reflecting marginal depreciation.

However, on a year-on-year basis, the movement in the exchange rate resulted in a nominal depreciation of 0.61 percent against the US dollar, said the report on exchange rate and foreign exchange market dynamics.

The variability in the exchange rate increased considerably, and rates moved within a wider range in March 2026 after a period of low variability since December 2025, according to the report published yesterday.

The Bangladesh Bank report said that while the spread in the interbank market and in the bank’s sales to clients remained stable, the spread in the bank’s purchase from the client market edged up on average to Tk 1.19 per US dollar in March from Tk 0.99 per dollar in February.

The global economic uncertainty stemming from the Middle East was propagated through the foreign exchange market, as reflected in the daily average spread of spot exchange rates, defined as the daily maximum minus minimum rate, said the report.

At the same time, the volume of daily average spot transactions rose to \$62.17 million in March from \$37.27 million in February as banks increased dollar trading amid growing global economic uncertainty.

“An increase in exchange rate flexibility and a rise in liquidity in the foreign exchange market led to a rise in interbank spot foreign exchange transaction volume on average in March 2026, with some fluctuation in daily transactions,” said the report.

At the same time, the volume of swap transactions edged up markedly during the period. The average daily swap transaction doubled to \$100.82 million in March from \$53.54 million in February.

Aarong to plant 1.5 lakh trees with Tk 2.89cr from bag sales

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Aarong has earned Tk 2.89 crore from selling bags in the last seven months under its “Bring Your Own Bag” (BYOB) initiative, and will donate the entire amount to environmental and social projects.

The popular retail chain will use the money to distribute 80,000 tree saplings to 40,000 participants of the BRAC Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme across the country, according to a press statement issued yesterday.

The proceeds will also be used to support habitat restoration in the Barind region in Rajshahi, including irrigation support and plantation of 50,000 trees under the Habitat Co-Creation initiative, added the statement.

The BRAC Enterprises-owned retail chain, in partnership with Mission Green Bangladesh, will also use the fund to plant another 20,000 trees through two Miyawaki forests at Damra, Rupganj.

The company realised that producing large quantities of paper bags requires cutting down a significant number of trees, Tamara Hasan Abed, managing director of BRAC Enterprises, said at a press conference at the BRAC Centre Inn in Dhaka yesterday. READ MORE ON B2

Correction

In a report titled “More than half of local banks ineligible for dividend payouts”, published in The Daily Star on May 1, 2026, we mistakenly included Bengal Commercial Bank PLC among the lenders ineligible to declare dividends. We regret the error.

New proposals are emerging in battery manufacturing, with discussions underway with potential Japanese investors.

Mohammad Zakaria Mithu
Director at Beza

This pipeline highlights rising interest in sectors such as electronics, packaging, chemicals and engineering, signalling an expanding industrial base.

“New proposals are emerging in battery manufacturing, with discussions underway with potential Japanese investors,” he added.

Singer Bangladesh Limited leads in both scale and employment, having invested more than \$75 million and employing over 1,700 local workers. The company has plans to nearly

MTB signs deal with Runner Motors for API-driven cash management

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB) has signed an agreement with Runner Motors PLC, an automobile company and a business unit of Runner Group, to provide cash management services.

Chowdhury Akhtar Asif, additional managing director and chief business officer of MTB, and Nazrul Muhammad Islam, managing director of Runner Group, signed the agreement at the bank's corporate head office in Gulshan-1, Dhaka, recently, according to a press release.

Under the agreement, Runner Motors PLC will use MTB's integrated API-driven cash management services for nationwide distributor and sales collections.

The agreement also includes MTB's payment solution, MTB eBank, to manage various payments and online collections through DDL.

Transaction approvals can be completed through biometric authentication on the MTB eBank App, which the bank says is the first such feature in the local banking industry. Syed

Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and CEO of MTB, attended the signing ceremony.

Khalid Hossain, chief digital officer; Md Ashik Iqbal Khan, divisional head of cash management and transaction banking; Tahsin Taher, divisional head of retail segment and

strategy; Md Rozar Ibna Azad, head of the group communication department; Rajesh Kumar Yadav, chief financial officer; and Ahmed Hossain, head of IT, along with other senior officials from both organisations, were also present at the event.



Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and CEO of Mutual Trust Bank PLC, and Nazrul Muhammad Islam, managing director of Runner Group, exchange signed documents of the agreement at the bank's corporate head office in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: MUTUAL TRUST BANK



Md Samsul Islam, chief corporate affairs officer of Nagad Limited; Md Abdul Hannan, additional general manager for Dhaka East Zone of the Bangladesh Post Office; and Pradip Kumar, additional general manager for Rangpur West Zone, pose for a photograph after signing the agreement in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: NAGAD

Nagad partners with post office for digital PLI premium payments

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Nagad Limited has signed an agreement with the Bangladesh Post Office to enable digital premium payments for Postal Life Insurance (PLI), allowing policyholders to pay premiums without visiting post offices or standing in long queues.

Md Abdul Hannan, additional general manager for Dhaka East Zone of the Bangladesh Post Office; Pradip Kumar, additional general manager for Rangpur West Zone; and Md Samsul Islam, chief corporate affairs officer of Nagad Limited, signed the agreement in Dhaka recently,

according to a press release.

Under the agreement, premiums for all types of Postal Life Insurance policies, including Whole Life Insurance, Endowment Insurance, Fixed Term Insurance, and Education and Marriage Endowment Insurance, can now be paid through Nagad.

Kazi Asadul Islam, director general of the Directorate of Posts, said Postal Life Insurance is a trusted financial security service for people across the country.

"We are continuously working to make this service more modern and people-friendly," he said.

NCC Bank, GUK launch climate resilience project in Gaibandha chars



M Abdus Salam, chief executive officer of Gana Unnayan Kendra, and M Shamsul Arefin, managing director of NCC Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the memorandum of understanding at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: NCC BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

NCC Bank PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK), a non-governmental development organisation, to strengthen climate resilience and improve sustainable livelihoods in the char areas of Fulchhari upazila in Gaibandha.

As part of its corporate social responsibility initiatives, NCC Bank will finance a two-year project, titled "The Adaptive Eco Char Project:

A Blueprint for Thriving Dynamic Landscapes", according to a press release.

Implemented in the char areas of Fazlupur and Fulchhari unions, the project aims to strengthen the adaptive capacity of local communities to climate change while ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

Key initiatives include establishing solar-powered Digital Resilience Centers for early disaster warnings, digital services and training, telemedicine-based healthcare services, safe

drinking water systems, and solar power facilities.

The project will also promote climate-resilient agriculture, homestead vegetable cultivation, livestock rearing, women entrepreneurship development, and community-based disaster management capacity.

Thousands of families are expected to gain access to safe water, renewable energy and healthcare services, while more than 300 families will have opportunities to engage in income-generating activities.

M Shamsul Arefin, managing director of the bank, and M Abdus Salam, chief executive officer of GUK, signed the MoU at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently.

Arefin said NCC Bank has long been supporting marginalised communities through education, healthcare and other social initiatives.

"The people of char regions live in extremely vulnerable conditions and face the adverse impacts of climate change every year," he said, adding that the project would help families protect their livelihoods and achieve sustainable economic development.

Salam said the partnership would serve as an effective model for climate resilience and sustainable economic development in Bangladesh's char regions.



Md Abul Hashem, managing director and CEO of Uttara Bank PLC, poses for a group photograph with participants of a "foundation course" for the bank's probationary officers (Batch 2026) at its training institute in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: UTTARA BANK

Shahjalal Islami Bank celebrates 25th anniversary

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC yesterday celebrated its 25th founding anniversary with programmes held at its head office, corporate office, branches and sub-branches across the country.

Mohammed Yunus, chairman of the bank, inaugurated the celebrations as the chief guest, according to a press release.

Speaking at the event, Yunus said Shahjalal Islami Bank has played an important role in various sectors of the country, including agriculture, trade, industry, infrastructure and the broader economy, over the past 25 years.

"We are happy to be a proud partner in the sustainable development and prosperity of the country," he said, adding that the bank has been sincerely serving customers since the beginning of its operations.

He also expressed the bank's commitment to expanding modern banking services to people across the country.

On the occasion, the bank's chairman launched 12 new SME investment products.

Mosleh Uddin Ahmed, managing director of the bank, presided over the programme

and said Shahjalal Islami Bank has earned customer trust and credibility in the banking sector through its service quality and customer-focused initiatives.

"The bank's position in overall indicators, including customer service, deposits, investments and credit ratings, is very satisfactory," he said. He added that the bank has received recognition from various local

and international organisations for banking excellence in recent years.

Among others, Mohiuddin Ahmed, vice-chairman of the bank; Md Sanaullah Shahid, Harun Miah, Akkas Uddin Mollah, Khandaker Shakib Ahmed, Md Towhidur Rahman, Fakir Maniruzzaman and Abdul Hakim, directors; and Md Reazul Karim, independent director, were also present.



Mohammed Yunus, chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC, inaugurates the bank's 25th founding anniversary programmes at its head office, corporate office, branches, and sub-branches across the country yesterday. PHOTO: SHAHJALAL ISLAMI BANK

EU opens door Asean eyes oil reserve

FROM PAGE B4

A commission source said some countries, such as Ireland, are more at risk due to a lack of refining capacity, while others, including Finland, appear better prepared.

The same source also voiced concern some airlines may be using the crisis as an opportunity to drop unprofitable routes.

WHAT HAS THE EU ANNOUNCED?

The commission on Friday clarified the rules for governments and airlines on which existing tools can be deployed to ensure jet fuel is used as efficiently as possible and at the lowest possible cost.

It also eased rules restricting "tankering", the practice of aircraft carrying more fuel than necessary to avoid buying more expensive fuel at other airports.

And Brussels confirmed there would be temporary flexibility on airport slots to prevent airlines that exceptionally give up slots because of high fuel costs from being penalised in future slot allocations.

FROM PAGE B4

"It will take time -- at least months -- for damaged infrastructure to be repaired, for the strait to be demined, and for goods to flow through," he told Asean leaders.

A war closer to home was also hotly debated on Friday, with member states arguing over their approach to Myanmar, which has been formally excluded from high-level summits since its military junta snatched power in a 2021 coup.

The coup triggered a bloody civil war that still rages.

"Many of the members aired their frustration about the lack of progress in the process of normalising the situation in Myanmar," Marcos said.

Thailand, which shares a border with its war-torn neighbour, has spent months pushing for higher-level engagement.

A Thai diplomat confirmed at a briefing that Bangkok's foreign minister was pushing for higher-level diplomatic contact with

Myanmar, saying the suggestion had been "received in a positive light" by Asean members.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan told reporters on Thursday his country remained opposed to high-level talks while "oppression is still taking place".

"There are still atrocities towards their own citizens," he said of Myanmar's junta.

Marcos also said the Philippines had not given up hope of completing its long-planned Code of Conduct meant to regulate disagreements between bloc members and China in the South China Sea.

The Philippines, which has seen its ships engage in repeated clashes with Chinese vessels in the disputed waterway, has previously said it wanted to complete the document.

However, talks have stalled repeatedly over disagreements on the code's scope, enforcement and legal status.

Aarong

FROM PAGE B1

Organisations must become more conscious about how their practices affect the environment and climate, she added.

Launched in September 2025 to curb excessive paper bag consumption, Aarong's BYOB initiative replaced free bag distribution with a paid model. Customers who take their own bags to Aarong outlets receive a Tk 15 cashback; those who do not can purchase a paper bag from the outlet.

The shift has had a measurable impact. The retail chain distributed 69.92 lakh free bags between September 2024 and March 2025. Over the same period after the initiative began, usage fell to 23.12 lakh, a reduction of 46.79 lakh units, according to the press statement.

Tamara said that charging for bags is a common practice among retailers in India, Thailand, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

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উত্তরা মডেল টাউন, ঢাকা-১২৩০)

খেয়াঘাট ইজারার দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (সংশোধিত)

অনির্বাচিত কারণ বশতঃ এতদ্বারা সর্বসাধারণের সদয় অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ২৫.০৫.২০২৬ খ্রি. তারিখে সরকারি ছুটি ঘোষণা করায় ঢাকা জেলা পরিষদের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন (সিডিউলভুক্ত) খেয়াঘাটসমূহ ২০২৬-২০২৭ অর্থ বৎসরের (১ জুলাই/২০২৬ হতে ৩০ জুন ২০২৭ পর্যন্ত) ০১ (এক) বছর মেয়াদে ইজারা প্রদানের নিমিত্তে নিম্নরূপভাবে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

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এছাড়া অন্যান্য যাবতীয় শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।

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Bring down corporate tax for private sector

Business leaders say Bangladesh should remain competitive with regional peers

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The corporate tax rate for the private sector should be reduced to remain competitive in attracting foreign investors and supporting industrial growth, business leaders said yesterday.

"Bangladesh should reduce the corporate tax rate to 20 percent from 25 percent to remain competitive with regional economies such as Vietnam, India, and Indonesia, which attract investment through favourable tax policies," said Tarek Rafi Bhuiyan Jun, president of the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI).

He made the remarks at a press conference organised by the chamber at Ascott The Residence in Baridhara, Dhaka, yesterday.

Lower corporate tax would spur industrial expansion, create jobs, and boost long-term revenue through increased economic activity, he said.

The trade body urged the government to restore the 15 percent corporate tax rate for the textile sector, which was raised to 25 percent in FY2025-26, saying the higher rate could hurt export competitiveness and business sustainability.

"The opportunity lies in expanding the tax base and modernising the revenue administration, rather than just increasing the burden on existing compliant taxpayers,"

Bhuiyan said.

Simplifying VAT procedures and rationalising tax deducted at source (TDS) rates would improve compliance and ease cash-flow constraints on small and medium-sized enterprises, he added.

Maria Howlader, secretary general of JBCCI, stressed the need for a more predictable and investment-friendly tax regime.

Japan-Bangladesh Chamber urges government to restore the 15 percent corporate tax rate for the textile sector, which was raised to 25 percent in FY26

Highlighting the chamber's direct tax proposals, Howlader said the recommendations focused on corporate tax rationalisation, reforms to TDS, adjustment of advance tax provisions, minimum tax rationalisation, and faster tax refunds.

She also called for relaxing some conditions tied to the 20 percent tax rate for listed companies, saying the existing requirement of maintaining at least 10 percent public shareholding through IPOs and specific banking transaction conditions was impractical.

"Bangladesh has made notable progress, but structural bottlenecks continue to increase the cost and time of doing business, directly

affecting trade flows, foreign investment and supply chain reliability," said Asif A Chowdhury, former president of JBCCI.

According to him, logistics costs in Bangladesh account for around 12 percent to 15 percent of GDP, compared to 8 percent to 10 percent in competing economies.

Focusing on maritime connectivity, Chowdhury said Chittagong Port Authority should introduce 24-hour operations, including nighttime vessel navigation, to reduce congestion and overall costs.

"Targeted reforms in logistics and trade facilitation can significantly reduce the cost of doing business, improve reliability and position Bangladesh as a more attractive destination for foreign trade and investment," he said.

Manabu Sugawara, former president of JBCCI, expressed optimism over the upcoming national budget, saying the country now has an opportunity to strengthen investor confidence following the signing of the Japan-Bangladesh Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

Sugawara said the EPA had reached a crucial stage and was now awaiting ratification by the parliaments of both countries.

He stressed that focus should not be limited to tax collection alone, adding that the effective utilisation of tax revenues was equally important for sustaining economic growth and attracting foreign investment.

Restaurant owners demand tax relief



PHOTO: STAR/FILE

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Restaurant Owners' Association (BROA) has called on the government to keep VAT and tax rates at a reasonable level in the upcoming national budget while also expanding the tax net to ensure wider compliance.

Although VAT on restaurants was reduced from 15 percent to 5 percent, businesses are still under pressure due to supplementary duties, source tax and other charges, said Imran Hassan, secretary general of BROA, at a press conference held at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

He demanded the withdrawal of the source tax and proposed a fixed 5 percent VAT for canteen and catering services.

Imran also warned that around 80 percent of restaurants in the country remain unregistered, with many allegedly bypassing health and tax regulations while offering cheaper food. According to him, this situation poses risks to both public health and the formal restaurant sector.

He urged authorities to bring all restaurants under the tax system, cautioning that compliant businesses may be discouraged from paying taxes if the imbalance continues.

On the energy situation, Imran identified LPG shortages as a major challenge disrupting restaurant operations and pushing up food prices. He

called for increased LPG imports, improved supply management and stronger market monitoring. He also urged the resumption of new pipeline gas connections for restaurants and the introduction of LPG cards for business owners.

He further said that complex licensing procedures and weak coordination among government agencies are making food safety enforcement difficult. He noted that opening a restaurant currently requires around 10 to 12 different certificates, a process that can take two to six months and significantly increase costs.

He proposed a "one-stop service" to simplify licensing, reduce delays and cut expenses, alongside stronger food safety monitoring.

Imran also criticised what he described as harassment during regulatory inspections, suggesting that representatives from the business community should be included in inspection teams. He called for simple digital systems for licensing and renewals, an end to unfair fines and more business-friendly policies to support investment and job creation.

He warned that the rapid expansion of large corporations is putting pressure on small and medium enterprises and weakening fair competition. He urged the government to introduce policies to prevent monopolies and ensure equal opportunities across the sector.

Broadband sector

FROM PAGE B1

That surge helped many small and medium ISPs grow into large-scale operators, creating employment for engineers, technicians and support staff.

Aminul Hakim, president of the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB), said at least seven or eight companies now directly employ more than 1,000 people each.

"If you include their partner companies, more than two dozen companies now have over 1,000 employees each," he said.

According to industry estimates, the sector now supports around 6 lakh to 7 lakh jobs, including graduate engineers, technicians, customer support staff and field workers.

Hakim said the number of authorised ISP connections stands at around 48 lakh, though the actual broadband

footprint is considerably larger owing to unauthorised operators.

Industry stakeholders estimate Bangladesh has nearly 90 lakh broadband connections serving more than 3 crore users, consuming around 60 percent of the country's nearly 10 Tbps international internet bandwidth and generating annual revenues of Tk 7,000 crore-Tk 8,000 crore.

THE RESELLER PROPOSAL

According to BTRC officials, between 7,000 and 8,000 unlicensed ISP operators are currently active across Bangladesh, leaving much of the sector unregulated and depriving the state of significant tax revenue.

To streamline the sector and attract investment, the BTRC and the telecoms division have agreed in principle to introduce a reseller model.

Under the proposed

framework, unlicensed operators could register with the BTRC and operate legally without holding a full ISP licence.

Maj Gen (Retd) Md Emdad Ul Bari, chairman of the BTRC, said that resellers would not own licences, they would simply sell services provided by licensed ISPs.

However, several industry leaders are unconvinced.

ISPAB President Hakim said legalising resellers could allow politically connected illegal operators to rapidly capture local markets, undermining compliant ISPs.

He said the model could also reduce service quality in remote areas, create pricing irregularities and expose customers to exploitation. Small and medium entrepreneurs who had invested heavily over the years might struggle to survive against locally influential groups.

"I believe introducing a reseller model at this stage could create long-term instability in the broadband sector," he said.

He added that unclear accountability between ISPs and resellers could complicate maintenance, technical support and cybersecurity management.

Without strong regulation, the model risks producing unhealthy competition, fragmented infrastructure and reduced network reliability.

However, a senior BTRC official said many of the unregulated small ISPs, including politically connected ones, are already purchasing bandwidth and riding on the infrastructure of larger ISPs.

"In reality, they already exist in the ecosystem. Bringing them under at least a minimum regulatory structure would improve oversight and accountability," the official said, preferring anonymity.

Japanese EZ

FROM PAGE B1

"Once the zone was handed over, the Japanese side moved very quickly with development," he said.

Chowdhury noted that foreign partners typically operate with clear commercial targets, enabling faster decision-making and higher execution standards.

"They have experience running economic zones elsewhere, and that reflects in both speed and quality," he added.



Jalalabad Gas Transmission & Distribution System Ltd.
(A Company of Petrobangla)
(Gas Bhaban, Mendibag, Sylhet-3100)

গ্যাস ব্যবহারে সশ্রয়ী হোন এবং সময়মত গ্যাস বিল পরিশোধ করুন

বিনা কারণে গ্যাসের চুলা জ্বালিয়ে রাখা আর বিপদকে ডাকা একই বিষয়

Ref. No: 28.16.9100.098.07.001.26.648

Date: 10-05-2026

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concerned that the following International Tender published through the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) as stated below:

SL. No.	Tender ID, Package No & Tender Publication Date	Description	Tender Document Last Selling Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time	Tender Opening Date & Time
01.	Tender ID: 1270691 Tender Package No: 28.16.9100.098.07.001.26.06 Tender Publication Date: 10-May-2026 Time: 15:00	Procurement of Gas Pipeline Fittings	21-June-2026 Time: 16:00	22-June-2026 Time: 15:00	22-June-2026 Time: 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. Interested tenderers may visit the website <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd> to obtain the detailed tender notice and tender documents.

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Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal or from the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Engr. Md. Masud Rana)
Deputy General Manager (Procurement Department)
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GD-1077



Jalalabad Gas Transmission & Distribution System Ltd.
(A Company of Petrobangla)
(Gas Bhaban, Mendibag, Sylhet-3100)

গ্যাস ব্যবহারে সশ্রয়ী হোন এবং সময়মত গ্যাস বিল পরিশোধ করুন

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Ref. No: 28.16.9100.163.00.001.26.47

Dated: 10-05-26

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Sl. No.	Tender ID, Package No. & Date of Publishing	Name of the Work	Tender Last Selling and Closing Date & Time
01.	Tender ID :1271128 Package No: JGTDSL.IT.PPS-01 Date Of Publishing : 10-May-2026, 15:45	Installation, Testing & Commission of Central Internet and Data Management System and Related Service for 46 locations including Head Office, 17 Regional Distributional Office (RDO), important establishment (DRS, TBS) at JGTDSL franchise area.	Last Selling Date: 25-May-2026, 12:00 & Time Closing Date: 25-May-2026, 15:00 & Time Opening Date: 25-May-2026, 15:00 & Time

The interested person/firms may visit the web site <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd> to get the details of the tender. 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. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branch.

Further information and guideline are available in the e-GP system portal/ e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Engr. Mohammad Rafiqul Islam)
Deputy General Manager
(IT Department), Additional Charge
Jalalabad Gas T & D System Ltd.
E-mail: dgm_it@jgtdsl.gov.bd

GD-1073

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Rapid Action Battalion-5 Rajshahi, Mollapara

Invitation For e-Tender

For financial year 2026-2027, e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of :

SL	Tender ID No & Referecne No	Description of goods.	Last selling Date & Time	Closing/Opening Date & Time
1.	1272821 RAB-5/53333/1/Ration/01 Date: 05/05/2026	Fresh Ration	25 May 2026 09:00	25 May 2026 12:00
2.	1272822 RAB-5/53333/1/Ration/01 Date: 05/05/2026	Supply Of Fire Wood	21 May 2026 09:00	21 May 2026 12:00
3.	1272823 RAB-5/53333/1/Ration/01 Date: 05/05/2026	Wheat Crushing	21 May 2026 09:00	21 May 2026 12:00
4.	1272824 RAB-5/53333/1/Ration/01 Date: 05/05/2026	oods, Dry Ration Load/Unload	21 May 2026 09:00	21 May 2026 12:00

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 system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) 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 branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Tender having clarity requirements are requested to contact at 01777-710503 (Assistant Director. Adj. RAB-5)

MONJURUL KABIR PIAL
Major
2IC
For Commanding Officer
RAB-5, Rajshahi

GD-1081

TCB to start truck sales of essentials today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) will begin selling three essential commodities to low-income and poor people through mobile trucks today.

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir is expected to inaugurate the programme, according to a press release from the ministry.

Under the initiative, TCB will sell edible oil, sugar and lentils at subsidised rates through 720 mobile trucks across the country.

Each truck will serve around 400 people daily, and the operation will continue for 10 days.

The ministry said TCB is continuing its regular distribution of edible oil, sugar and lentils at subsidised prices among low-income families holding TCB cards.

In Dhaka, 50 trucks will be deployed, while Chattogram city will have 20 trucks. In the remaining six divisional cities, 15 trucks will operate in each city.

Additionally, 10 trucks will be deployed in each of the 56 district towns.

Under the open market sale (OMS), each buyer will be able to purchase up to two litres of edible oil at Tk 130 per litre, one kilogramme (kg) of sugar at Tk 80, and two kgs of lentils at Tk 70 per kg.

The commerce ministry said around 35,000 tonnes of essential commodities will be distributed among 72 lakh TCB card-holding families ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, one of the largest religious festivals for Muslims.

Sri Lanka to hike power tariff amid energy crisis

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka will increase electricity rates by up to 18 percent from Monday to offset the additional costs of generating power using thermal plants due to the Middle East war, the Public Utilities Commission said.

Consumers using more than 180 units (kilowatt hours) of electricity a month will have to pay an additional 18 percent from Monday, while those using less than that will not see their bills affected.

"The increase will apply to industries, hotels, businesses and government institutions and religious places of worship consuming more than 180 units a month," the commission said in a statement Sunday.

Asean eyes oil reserve, shared grid

AFP, Cebu

Southeast Asian nations hit by soaring fuel and food prices caused by the Middle East war are weighing solutions that include setting up a regional oil reserve, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos said on Friday.

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) called for the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, while also debating a series of ambitious projects aimed at stemming the effects of the next global crisis.

Marcos said all member states agreed on the need to act with speed, speaking to reporters hours after an overnight flare-up in the critical waterway.

"We needed it yesterday, if not sooner," Marcos said of the raft of energy proposals. "That's the way we are approaching the problem."

A closing statement called for the swift ratification of the bloc's Framework Agreement on Petroleum Security, a fuel-sharing scheme aimed at ensuring energy stability.

Members also signed off on a push for an Asean Power Grid, aimed at connecting national electricity networks to enable cross-border power trading.

Marcos said the idea was agreed unanimously, but conceded the devil was in the details.

"Let's talk about the fuel reserve. Is it going to be in one single place? Is it going to be scattered throughout the whole of Asean?" he said.

"Some countries have a surplus of a certain kind of fuel. Other people have a shortage," Marcos said. "We're trying to balance that out."

Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong expressed support during a morning session for both the power grid and the fuel reserve concept, while warning that the effects of the strait's closure would linger long after it was reopened.

READ MORE ON B2



The light engineering sector lacks formal recognition and technical support, entrepreneurs in Pabna say. This photo of workers was taken from a workshop in Pabna's Gachhpara area.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Small entrepreneurs struggling to go big

Light engineering sector in Pabna grapples with market linkages, Kumarkhali handlooms fight to survive market competition

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Bangladesh's small and medium enterprise (SME) sector accounts for 99 percent of the country's industries, yet many businesses remain trapped by poor market linkages, limited modernisation, and inadequate industrial support.

A recent visit to two major SME clusters – the light engineering hub in Pabna and the handloom cluster in Kumarkhali, Kushtia – found entrepreneurs struggling to expand despite receiving training and loans from the state-run SME Foundation.

LIGHT ENGINEERING STRUGGLING TO SCALE

For many in Pabna, light engineering has long offered a path out of poverty.

Rabiul Islam Farhad, owner of Baba Engineering, spent decades rising from labourer to entrepreneur.

"I bought a machine with my savings ten years ago. Now, I employ ten workers," he said.

Despite producing intricate vehicle parts and industrial components, the sector still lacks formal recognition and technical support.

"With even minimum technical support, our handmade products could be recognised in the national automobile sector," Rabiul added.

Gias Uddin Shiplu, a third-generation entrepreneur at Kafil Uddin Engineering, manages 27 machines but says growth remains constrained by shortages of raw materials, processing facilities, and automated machinery.

"As Pabna is already one of the leading hubs for light engineering in Bangladesh, establishing moulding facilities would help the sector flourish," he suggested.

Shiplu noted that training is less of a concern, as many workers have already received instruction from the SME Foundation, which has also organised workshops to build business networks.

HANDLOOM SECTOR LOSING GROUND

In Kumarkhali's handloom cluster, entrepreneurs say the industry is shrinking rapidly.

Md Abdur Rafiq, owner of Bulbul Textile,

said the number of operational looms has fallen from 5,000 two decades ago to just 1,500 today.

"Our production costs are too high to compete due to the lack of automated machinery," he said.

Md Masud Rana, owner of Rana Textile and a fourth-generation entrepreneur, said Kumarkhali bedsheets received Geographical Indication (GI) recognition but producers still lack export facilities.

"We are dependent on a local market that is too small to support expansion," he said.

Rana suggested supplying thread at mill rates to help improve profit margins and

said most entrepreneurs inherit their trades but lack sufficient technical knowledge and advanced skills.

Since its establishment in 2007, the foundation has surveyed enterprises nationwide and focused on developing entrepreneurial and technical skills, he said.

Farzana Khan, another deputy general manager, said the foundation has disbursed Tk 295 crore in loans through 15 scheduled banks and financial institutions and plans to provide another Tk 440 crore.

Entrepreneurs can access loans ranging from Tk 1 lakh to Tk 25 lakh at single-digit interest rates.



sustain the sector.

SECTOR-WIDE CHALLENGES

According to SME Foundation data, around 70,000 factories operate across 177 SME clusters nationwide, generating an annual turnover of Tk 30,000 crore.

A 2024 report by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics said there are 1.18 crore industries in the country, 99 percent of which are SMEs. The sector contributes 30 percent to the economy and provides 85 percent of industrial employment, involving more than 3 crore people.

Mohammed Morshed Alam, deputy general manager of the SME Foundation,

Beyond financing, the foundation regularly organises training programmes in Dhaka and across industrial clusters with support from the Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistance Center (BITAC), chambers of commerce, and district administrations.

Around 20 lakh people have received training over the past two decades. The foundation also organises fairs in Dhaka and other major cities to improve market linkages for SMEs.

According to foundation data, both loans and training support have been extended to the Pabna Light Engineering Cluster and Kumarkhali Textile Cluster.

Effective governance needs honest dissent

MD TOUHIDUL ALAM KHAN

Good governance is not about ticking boxes or following a prescribed set of rules. It is reflected in the decisions made every day; decisions that require clarity, integrity and the courage to confront reality. It means choosing what protects the long-term wellbeing of an institution, even in difficult moments. At its core, governance depends on a culture that values honesty over blind agreement, structured thinking over individual dominance and independent judgement over passive compliance. A "yes-sir" culture strips an organisation of a vital defence: the ability to identify and address problems before they spiral.

An effective system begins with clearly defined roles and robust processes. Boards must have both the authority and the capacity to ask difficult questions, seek timely and relevant information, and meet when risks emerge. Management, in turn, must provide information that is accurate, complete and prompt. Excessive optimism, weak controls or the withholding of information can disrupt this flow and heighten risk. Clarifying responsibilities, formalising decision-making authority and ensuring reliable reporting mechanisms are essential to reducing uncertainty and strengthening oversight.

Equally important is an environment where dissent can be expressed safely. Constructive disagreement is not obstruction; it is a form of internal quality control. It tests assumptions, challenges strategy and ultimately strengthens decisions. Independent committees, external reviews, whistleblower protections and structured dialogue all help legitimise differing views and ensure concerns are heard. Leaders must treat challenge not as a threat but as a responsibility.

Internal transparency matters as much as external reporting. Addressing issues early, conducting thorough reviews and taking corrective action signal institutional maturity and limit harm. Concealing failure may offer short-term comfort, but it usually magnifies damage over time. Openly acknowledging setbacks protects credibility and allows organisations to improve. Incentives play a part. When integrity and problem-solving are recognised as core values, people are more likely to raise concerns rather than suppress them.

Governance also requires renewal. Over time, boards and executive teams can fall into familiar patterns of thinking, increasing the risk of blind spots. Regular assessments of board composition, skills and performance help keep governance relevant. Genuine diversity of background and experience is not a box-ticking exercise; it strengthens judgement. Board rotation, succession planning and independent evaluations introduce fresh perspectives and challenge embedded assumptions. Such measures ensure oversight remains responsive to evolving risks.

Rigorous governance can be demanding. Discussions may be slower and more probing. But these are investments in resilience. The costs of failure, such as financial loss, regulatory penalties and reputational damage, almost always exceed the effort required to prevent them. Investors, regulators and stakeholders increasingly reward well-governed institutions, recognising that they carry lower risk and deliver steadier performance over time.

Ultimately, governance goes beyond compliance. It creates an ethical framework that guides decisions, supports informed risk-taking and keeps risk visible and managed. It requires humility from executives and courage from boards. Leaders must accept scrutiny, admit mistakes and apply rules consistently, while boards must challenge assumptions and act decisively. Governance must also be embedded in daily practice, reinforced through incentives, training and clear communication.

Good governance is both discipline and mindset. It is sustained not by rules alone, but by consistent practice, ethical leadership and transparent communication that align daily actions with long-term goals. Institutions that embrace these principles are better placed to navigate uncertainty, adapt to change and retain the trust of stakeholders. By embedding accountability and courage at every level of decision-making, they turn governance from a formal obligation into a durable source of strength and credibility.

The writer is managing director and chief executive officer of NRBC Bank and a qualified cost and management accountant



EU opens door to using US jet fuel as shortages loom

AFP, Brussels

How big is the jet fuel threat to Europe's summer holidays? The EU says it is not facing shortages yet, but it is readying for the worst – and weighing options including using US kerosene as a back-up.

The US-Israeli war with Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz have sent aviation fuel prices soaring and raised the spectre of shortages during Europe's peak travel season.

On Friday, the EU Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) cleared the way for the use of Jet A, a US-produced aviation fuel that is not currently used in Europe except on return flights from the United States for technical reasons.

In new recommendations, EASA said: "A potential introduction of Jet A in Europe or in other parts of the world would not generate safety concerns provided that its introduction is properly managed."

US-produced Jet A has a higher freezing point than the Jet A-1 fuel used elsewhere in the world – making it less resistant to very low temperatures during long-haul flights.

The EASA conditioned its use, warning that its introduction into a system

historically running on Jet A-1 could see "operational" risks when both fuels are used.

At the same time, the European Commission outlined measures available to member states to optimise jet fuel use, including aircraft loading and the allocation of airport slots.

WHAT ABOUT EUROPE'S JET FUEL

STOCKS?

Brussels has repeatedly insisted the 27-nation EU is not yet facing jet fuel shortages.

"At this stage, this is more a problem of economics and fuel costs than availability," Matteo Miolo, an aviation transport specialist, told AFP.

But "we do have to think about supply,

especially as this will not be the last crisis we face."

Before the Middle East war, around 20 percent of the kerosene consumed in Europe transited through the Strait of Hormuz that has been effectively closed by the conflict.

As prices have surged, several airlines, particularly low-cost carriers, have announced flight cancellations.

If the crisis drags on, Brussels is preparing for possible "security of supply issues," EU energy commissioner Dan Jorgensen said Tuesday.

"We are not there yet, but it can happen," Jorgensen said.

The commission said last week it would establish a "fuel observatory" to track EU production, imports, exports and stock levels of transport fuels. It is expected to be up and running in coming days.

Until now, the EU has lacked a detailed overview of strategic fuel stocks across member states.

European legislation requires countries to hold oil stocks equivalent to 90 days of net imports and 61 days of domestic consumption, but does not distinguish between different products such as petrol, diesel or jet fuel.

READ MORE ON B2



Passengers wait to board an aircraft of low cost Irish airline Ryanair at Antonio Canova airport, Italy. The US-Israeli war with Iran have sent aviation fuel prices soaring, raising the spectre of shortages during Europe's peak travel season.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE