Prime Bank clients to get discounts on Nirman Builders' products

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC recently signed an agreement with Nirman Builders & Developers Ltd, a Dhaka-based real estate developer, enabling the bank's customers to enjoy discounts and special offers on the company's products and services.

Mamur Ahmed, senior executive vice-president and head of distribution at the bank, and Rahat Kamal, managing director of the real estate developer, signed the agreement at the realtor's corporate office in the Tejgaon Industrial Area of Dhaka, according to a press release.

Under the partnership, Prime Bank PLC customers will be entitled to discounts from Nirman Builders & Developers Ltd, adding greater value to their banking experience and supporting their homeownership and real estate aspirations.

The collaboration reflects Prime Bank's continued commitment to delivering privileges and lifestyle benefits to its customers through strategic partnerships with leading brands and businesses, the release added.

The initiative further reinforces the bank's efforts to enhance customer value by providing access to attractive offers across a wide range of sectors.

Joarder Tanvir Faisal, head of cards and retail banking at the bank; Takiyan Chowdhury, executive vice-president and head of secured consumer financing and embedded payments; and Suman Kumar Saha, head of customer relations at the real estate company, along with other senior officials from both organisations, were also present at the ceremony.

Rahat Kamal, managing director of Nirman Builders & Developers Ltd, and Mamur Ahmed, senior executive vice-president and head of distribution at Prime Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing an agreement at the realtor's corporate office in the Tejgaon Industrial Area of Dhaka recently. PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Sakhawat made BB executive director

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Md Sakhawat Hossain

Md Sakhawat Hossain, director (research) of Bangladesh Bank, has been promoted to the post of executive director (research).

Prior to his promotion, Sakhawat served as director of the research department, according to a press release, issued by the Bangladesh Bank yesterday.

He also served as a faculty member at the Bangladesh Bank Training Academy from June 2019 to February 2024. He joined Bangladesh Bank as an assistant director in 1994.

During his distinguished 32-year career, Sakhawat held several important positions in the research department, policy analysis unit, and chief economist's unit of the central bank.

He obtained both his bachelor's and master's degrees in economics from Jahangirnagar University.

Eastern Bank retains highest AAA credit rating

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Eastern Bank PLC (EBL) has been awarded the highest long-term credit rating of AAA by the Credit Rating Agency of Bangladesh Limited (CRAB).

Along with this, the bank also earned a short-term rating of ST-1 and a Stable Outlook, reaffirming its strong financial position and resilience.

This marks the fourth consecutive year that EBL has achieved this recognition, according to a press release.

Eastern Bank PLC.

The recognition reflects EBL's sustained financial strength, prudent risk management, strong asset quality, and unwavering commitment to sustainable growth. It reinforces the bank's position as a trusted financial institution driven by sound governance, innovation, and long-term value creation for its customers, shareholders, and stakeholders. The rating underscores EBL's robust capital base, healthy liquidity, disciplined credit culture, and consistent operational performance.

It also highlights the bank's ability to navigate evolving economic conditions while maintaining high standards of corporate governance and financial stability.

Pubali Bank approves 30% dividend for 2025

Monzurur Rahman, chairman of Pubali Bank PLC, presides over the bank's 43rd annual general meeting (AGM), held virtually on Tuesday. The meeting approved a 30 percent dividend, including a 10 percent cash dividend, for 2025. PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Pubali Bank PLC has approved a 30 percent dividend, including a 10 percent cash dividend, for the year that ended on December 31, 2025.

The approval came at the bank's 43rd annual general meeting (AGM), held virtually on Tuesday, according to a press release. Monzurur Rahman, chairman of the bank, presided over the meeting.

Addressing the shareholders, he said that despite the challenges faced by both the global and domestic economies, Pubali Bank further strengthened its position in 2025 as a stable and trusted financial institution through sound governance, prudent risk management, and a strong capital base.

"The board's recommendation of a 30 percent dividend reflects its confidence in the bank's financial strength and future prospects. "Pubali Bank remains committed to creating long-term value and safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders through technology-driven, inclusive, and sustainable banking," he added.

In his speech, Mohammad Ali, managing director and CEO, said, "The bank's total assets increased to Tk 118,013 crore, deposits reached Tk 89,519 crore, and net profit rose to Tk 1,079 crore. At the same time, the bank maintained an NPL ratio of only 2.20 percent, ensuring a secure, stable, and well-governed banking structure."

He further said, "As part of its ongoing digital transformation journey, the number of active users of Pubali Bank's PI Digital Platform reached 528,000, through which 18.6 million transactions were completed."

In addition, through the integration of Bangla QR, POS networks, self-service banking, and one of the country's largest branch and sub-branch networks, Pubali Bank is building one of Bangladesh's strongest "phygital banking ecosystems," enabling customers to access banking services in a secure, convenient, and seamless manner.

Sonali Bank opens Dasar branch in Madaripur

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Sonali Bank PLC recently opened its new Dasar branch in Madaripur.

This is the bank's 1,235th branch, according to a press release.

Md Shawkat Ali Khan, managing director and chief executive officer of the bank, and Khandaker Mashukur Rahman, administrator of the district council in Madaripur, jointly inaugurated the branch.

Earlier, the bank organised a function to mark the inauguration of the branch at the Dasar Upazila Parishad conference room.

Md Tangimul Islam, general manager (in-charge) of the bank's General Manager's Office in Faridpur, presided over the inauguration ceremony.

Md Abu Sayed, deputy managing director of the bank, attended the function as a special guest.

Among others, bank officials and representatives of different communities were also present at the event.

Md Shawkat Ali Khan, managing director and CEO of Sonali Bank PLC, and Khandaker Mashukur Rahman, administrator of the district council in Madaripur, jointly inaugurate the bank's Dasar branch in Madaripur recently. PHOTO: SONALI BANK

Budget signals shift to 'new economic model'

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The government plans to raise education spending to 5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and health spending to 2 percent, he said, adding that it intends to recruit 5,000 doctors and up to 1 lakh health workers.

Bangladesh's banking sector could become the biggest obstacle to economic recovery unless urgent reforms are undertaken, PRI Chairman Zaidi Sattar warned yesterday, arguing that stronger banks are essential to restoring investment and sustaining growth.

He described the budget as a "useful stabilisation and confidence budget" that appropriately prioritises macroeconomic stability, fiscal discipline, expenditure efficiency and debt management.

While the government's diagnosis of the economy's key challenges is broadly accurate, the proposed remedies remain insufficient, Sattar said.

He noted that achieving the targeted 6.5 percent growth rate would require a substantial increase in investment, which is unlikely without comprehensive banking sector reforms.

Sattar called for independent asset quality reviews, bank-specific resolution plans, stronger governance, recapitalisation linked to restructuring and tougher action against wilful defaulters.

Echoing concerns over growth and implementation, Naser Ezaz Bijoy, former CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, said the proposed budget seeks to balance macroeconomic stability with growth, but its success will depend on effective execution.

He described the budget as broadly business-friendly and praised the government for avoiding measures that could have undermined business activity despite difficult economic conditions.

However, he warned that the ambitious revenue target would be difficult to achieve. With revenue collection likely to fall short of this year's target, aggressive collection efforts could place greater pressure on existing taxpayers.

Bijoy also cautioned against excessive bank borrowing to finance the budget deficit, saying it could worsen liquidity shortages, crowd out private-sector credit and push up interest rates.

He called for a clearer roadmap to curb inflation and accelerate reforms in banking, tax administration and governance. Gas shortages, he said, remain a major constraint on investment and industrial expansion.

MCCI President Kamran T Rahman said the proposed Tk 9.38 lakh crore budget comes at a critical time as Bangladesh seeks to revive growth, attract investment, generate employment and rein in inflation.

While welcoming measures to modernise tax administration and simplify business procedures, he expressed concern over the ambitious revenue target of Tk 6.95 lakh crore.

With revenue collection reaching only 65 percent of the revised target through April, he warned that undue pressure to meet the target could burden existing taxpayers.

Instead, he called for broadening the tax base and strengthening implementation capacity.

Hasan Mahmud, chairman of MCCI's Tariff and Taxation Committee, said the proposed budget leaves several key concerns unresolved.

He criticised the unchanged minimum turnover tax, saying it imposes a burden on businesses regardless of profitability.

He also warned that higher personal tax rates and reduced tax rebates on investments would increase pressure on salaried taxpayers and discourage savings.

UK inflation holds steady in May

AFP, *London*

Britain's annual inflation rate was unchanged at 2.8 percent in May as higher petrol prices caused by the US-Iran war were offset by lower food costs, official data showed Wednesday.

The Consumer Prices Index level matched April's reading, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said, while an analysts' consensus forecast had been for an increase to 3.0 percent.

"While the war in the Middle East pushes prices up globally, we have got the right economic plan and inflation has held steady," finance minister Rachel Reeves said in response.

Even though the United States and Iran agreed this week to a deal to end the conflict, inflation could still rise in the coming months with energy costs remaining above pre-war levels.

The better-than-expected inflation data for May could meanwhile prove fruitless for the Labour government, which is facing a special vote Thursday expected to set in motion an attempt to oust Keir Starmer as prime minister.

Longtime Starmer critic Andy Burnham is hoping to win an election for a parliament seat in northwest England so that he can run for the Labour leadership, and the premiership.

The inflation data also comes before an interest rate decision by the Bank of England, which is expected to hold borrowing costs steady Thursday after energy prices tumbled in recent days thanks to the US-Iran deal.