Business

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starbusiness@thedailystar.net



Govt repurchases Tk 1,716cr T-bonds in first-ever buyback auction

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has bought back Tk 1,716 crore worth of two-year treasury bonds before their maturity in the country's first-ever government bond buyback auction, opening a new way for it to manage when and how its debt is repaid.

It means the government can now reduce the amount of debt that comes due at a particular time instead of waiting for all the bonds to mature and repaying investors in one go. Besides, such repurchases could help spread out future repayments and give the government more flexibility in managing its borrowing costs and risks.

The Bangladesh Bank conducted the buyback auction yesterday on behalf of the Finance Division. The bonds were issued on November 4, 2024 and were due to mature next month.



The central bank invited bids to buy back up to Tk 6,666.58 crore of the bonds through a multiple-price reverse auction.

It received 56 bids worth Tk 2,016.14 crore and accepted bids worth Tk 1,716.14 crore at the rates set by the auction committee.

The settlement is scheduled for October 12.

A buyback allows the government to repurchase bonds it has already sold before they mature. In effect, investors get their money back early, while the government reduces the amount it will have to repay when the bonds reach maturity.

The central bank described yesterday's auction as a new, market-based approach to managing public debt.

It said the move would make the maturity structure of government debt more balanced, provide greater flexibility in future borrowing and create scope to manage borrowing costs and risks more effectively.

The central bank said further buyback auctions would be held when necessary, depending on market conditions, liquidity,

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Govt secures $3.1b loan to keep fuel and LNG flowing

Indicative interest rate is about 5.38%

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh has secured a $3.1 billion non-concessional loan to finance fuel oil and liquefied natural gas imports, as the government moves to safeguard energy supplies from disruption.

The Standing Committee on Non-Concessional Loan -- the body responsible for approving commercial-rate foreign borrowing -- formally approved the facility on Wednesday, according to finance ministry officials.

The financing comes from the Jeddah-based International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), the trade-finance arm of the Islamic Development Bank Group.

The loan is split between the two state-owned energy companies. The Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation will use $2.5 billion to import fuel oil, while Petrobangla will use $600 million to purchase LNG.

The deal is structured as co-financing. ITFC will provide $600 million from its own resources, while Bangladesh Bank will provide the remaining $2.5 billion, or about 80 percent of the total.

The loan carries an interest rate of six-month term SOFR plus 1.70 percentage points, along with an annual administrative fee of 0.20 percent. Officials said the margin is 0.05 percentage points lower than last year's.

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National Bank depositors to get full access to funds from October 15

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Customers of National Bank PLC will be able to avail themselves of all banking services, including withdrawing money, from October 15, 2026, as per their requirements, from all branches and ATM booths across the country.

From the same day, counter services, the mobile app, internet banking and all other digital and online services of the bank will be fully operational, said the troubled private bank after its top brass met with Bangladesh Bank Governor Md Mostaqur Rahman yesterday at the central bank's headquarters in Dhaka.

At the meeting, the central bank assured National Bank of its support, including providing fresh liquidity to help the lender repay its depositors.

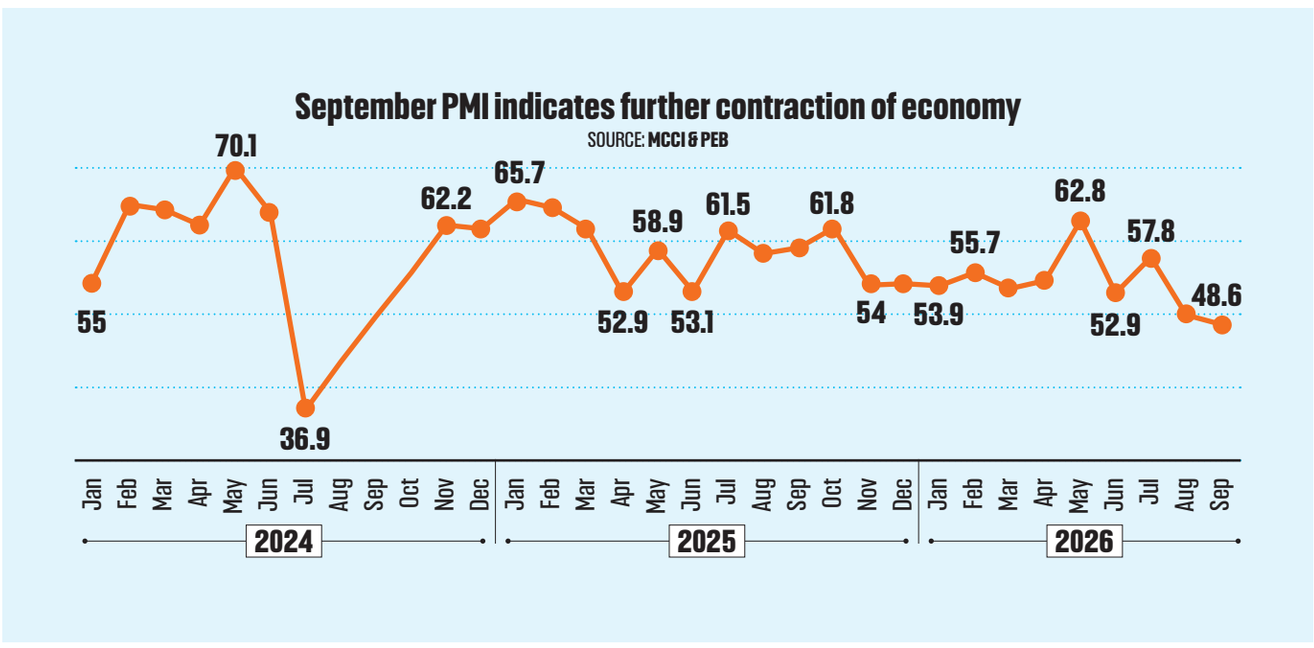
Mostaqur said protecting depositors would remain the regulator's priority and that the central bank would provide liquidity support so customers can access their funds.

He instructed National Bank to take the necessary measures to ensure that all its depositors can withdraw money according to their requirements from all branches and ATM booths of the bank.

"Depositors must not be turned away under any circumstances. From October 15, they will get their money back. In this regard, the bank will be provided with liquidity support as needed," said BB Executive Director and Spokesperson Arief Hossain Khan.

READ MORE ON B3

Private-sector activity falls to lowest since Aug 2024: PMI



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's private-sector activity showed further signs of weakness in September, with the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) falling to its lowest level since August 2024.

The headline PMI fell 1.3 points to 48.6 in September from 49.9 in August, signalling a second consecutive month of contraction, according to the latest report by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) and Policy Exchange Bangladesh (PEB).

In August 2024, the PMI stood at 43.5 amid political upheaval and social unrest following a mass uprising that led to the ouster of the Awami League-led government. The PMI had plunged to 36.9 in July 2024 from 63.9 in June, marking the lowest reading since the index was launched.

The PMI is a monthly score showing whether businesses across the economy are growing or shrinking, based on a survey of purchasing managers at over 500 private firms. A score above 50 signals growth and below 50 signals contraction, while the further a reading moves from 50, the faster the pace of change.

Manufacturing recorded the sharpest deterioration in September, with its index falling 2.6 points to 44.8.

"New orders, new export orders, output, stocks of input purchases and finished goods, and imports continued to contract at a faster rate," the report said. "Order backlogs recorded a strong contraction, while supplier delivery times recorded a slower expansion."

Employment, however, returned to marginal expansion, while input prices continued to rise.

Construction slipped 3.8 points to 48.5, returning to contraction after expanding in August.

"New business and construction activity

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UN sets up group to review support for LDC graduation

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The United Nations has established a working group to review and update its support framework for countries graduating from the least developed country (LDC) category, as Bangladesh and Nepal await a decision on their requests to defer graduation.

The ad hoc "Working Group on Smooth Transition for Graduating LDCs" will be led by the permanent representatives of Angola and Finland, according to a recent ministerial declaration of the 81st United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The group is mandated to conduct a comprehensive review of existing provisions, support measures, including those introduced under the Doha Programme of Action, such as the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility (iGRAD), and other areas with relevance to smooth transition, according to the UN.

It will assess the implications of graduation, particularly the impact of the loss of LDC-specific international support measures, drawing on country experiences and existing assessments.

The group will also identify challenges faced by graduating countries and their development partners in designing, preparing and implementing smooth transition strategies.

Bangladesh, Nepal and Cambodia are scheduled to graduate from the LDC category in late November this year. However, Bangladesh and Nepal have applied for deferment of their graduation.

Officials who attended the UNGA sessions said the

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SPOTLIGHT

Bangladesh to launch sovereign AI within a year

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh plans to launch its sovereign artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure within the next 12 months and make it available to the private sector, startups, universities and students, said Rehan Asad, adviser to the prime minister on ICT and telecommunications.

The infrastructure will allow local developers to build large language models (LLMs) in Bangla and develop AI-based services, he added.

"Most of the major global tech partnerships are already at a mature stage. We have secured the sourcing of computing chips," Rehan said at the AI and Innovation Dialogue jointly organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Governance Innovation Unit of the Prime Minister's Office at the foreign ministry in Dhaka yesterday.

"We will launch our sovereign AI infrastructure within the next 12 months and open it to the private sector, startups, universities and students to build future LLMs in Bangla and develop innovative services," he said.

The government has opted for a small, modular facility instead of building a large AI centre from the outset, Rehan said.

If demand from the private sector is strong, locally owned companies could co-locate at the facility and

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AkijBashir joins RE100, pledges 100% renewable power by 2050

STAR BUSINESS DESK

AkijBashir Group has become the first Bangladeshi company to join RE100, a global corporate renewable energy initiative, committing to use 100 percent renewable electricity across its operations by 2050.

RE100 is led by Climate Group, an international non-profit organisation working with businesses and governments to accelerate the transition to a clean and sustainable economy.

The initiative brings together more than 400 companies globally that have committed to using 100 percent renewable electricity by 2050 at the latest.

For AkijBashir Group, the commitment provides a framework to make its renewable-energy transition more structured and measurable while strengthening accountability around renewable electricity sourcing.

"Joining RE100 is more than a renewable energy commitment for AkijBashir Group; it is a step towards transforming how we power our business and build sustainable growth," said Sk Bashir Uddin, managing director of AkijBashir Group.

"As the first company from Bangladesh to join this global initiative, we are proud to take a pioneering step towards 100 percent renewable electricity," he said.

The group said its RE100 commitment builds on renewable-energy and energy-efficiency investments already underway across its particle board, ceramics, glass and other manufacturing facilities.

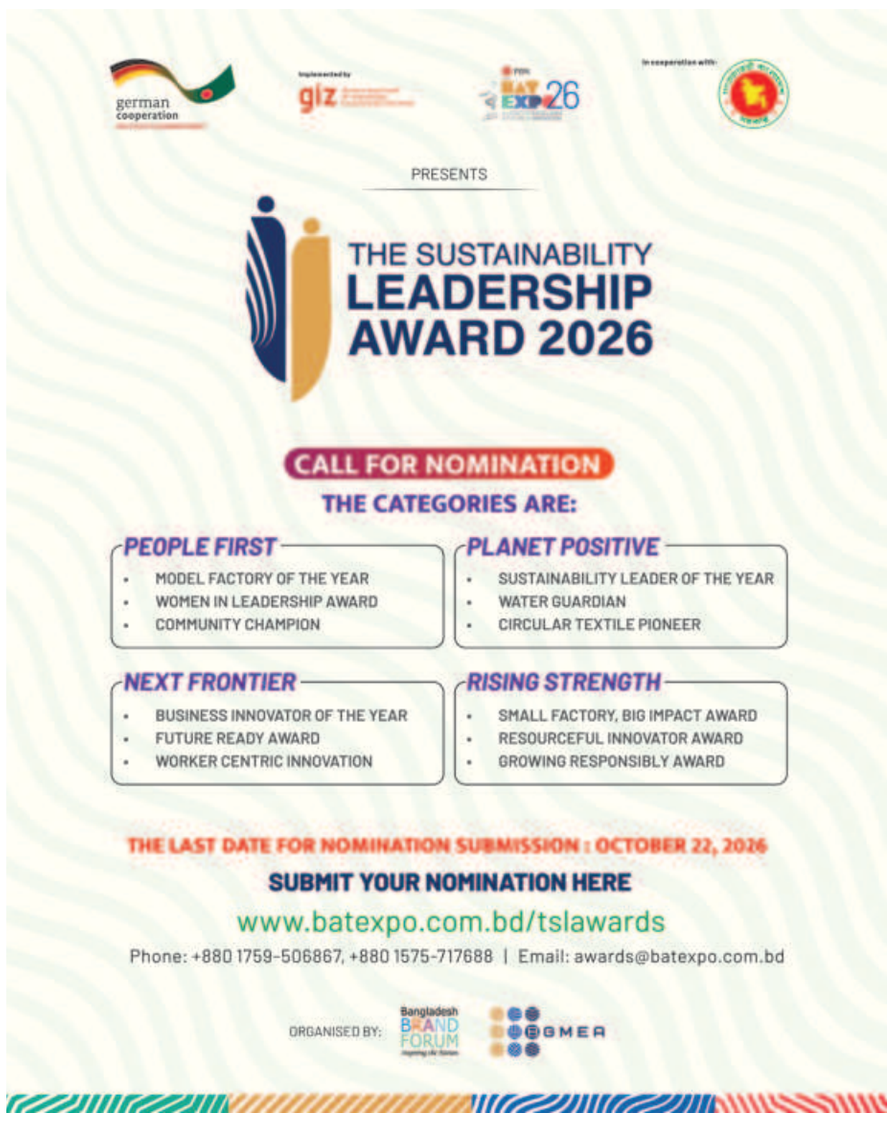
AkijBashir Group has already developed around 90 megawatts (MW) of solar generation capacity and continues to expand its renewable-energy portfolio.

At Akij Ceramics in Trishal, a 24.39 MWp rooftop solar project is expected to generate around 28,050 megawatt-hours of clean electricity annually and reduce about 22,440 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year.

Of the total capacity, 10 MW has been connected to the national grid through net metering.

AkijBashir Glass in Habiganj has installed an 18.2 MW rooftop solar

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‘Bubble tea diplomacy’ can strengthen Bangladesh-Malaysia ties

Malaysian charge d’affaires says

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bangladesh and Malaysia can deepen their longstanding bilateral ties through greater people-to-people exchanges, including food and beverage businesses, said Hazwan Hasnol, charge d’affaires of the Malaysian High Commission and head of chancery.

He made the remarks while inaugurating an outlet of Malaysian bubble tea brand Tealive Bangladesh in Banani, Dhaka yesterday.

“Malaysia and Bangladesh have long enjoyed close, friendly bilateral relations. Our cooperation continues to expand across various sectors, including trade, investment, education, tourism, healthcare and cultural exchanges,” Hazwan said.

He described the entry and expansion of Tealive in Bangladesh as a new dimension of bilateral relations, calling it “bubble tea diplomacy”.

“We often speak about diplomacy through official meetings, negotiations and agreements. But I believe that diplomacy can also happen in much simpler and more enjoyable ways -- over a cup of tea,” he said.

Hazwan Hasnol, charge d’affaires of the Malaysian High Commission, described the entry and expansion of Malaysian bubble tea brand Tealive in Bangladesh as a new dimension of bilateral relations.

He said the entry and expansion of Malaysian brands in Bangladesh could create opportunities for greater commercial engagement between businesses of the two countries, particularly in the food service and consumer sectors.

Tealive offers a range of beverages in Bangladesh, including milk tea, fruit tea and matcha, and is targeting younger consumers.

The Banani outlet is part of the brand’s expansion in Bangladesh, with the food and beverage sector attracting both local and international brands.

Ashmita Irad Ali, managing director of A&I Food and Beverage, said the company has opened two Tealive outlets in Dhaka, in Gulshan-2 and Banani.

She said the idea came from her family’s love for bubble tea.

“We used to have bubble tea almost every day, and my husband said, ‘If you love it so much, you should have your own brand.’ That’s the story behind Tealive’s opening,” she said.

Tealive is halal-certified and uses biodegradable cups, she said. The brand offers both hot and cold beverages and aims to cater to consumers across generations.

She said the company will open another outlet in Chattogram on October 15.

Mohammad Irad Ali, group managing director of A&I Group; Ammar Hashmi, chief operating officer of Tealive Bangladesh; Khairul Anuar Bin Baharuddin, international operation manager of Tealive in Malaysia; and Md Anwar Shahid, president of the Bangladesh-Malaysia Business Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with guests from the high commissions of Singapore and Malaysia, also attended the event.

Mahbubor made chairman of SBAC Bank Investment

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mohammad Mahbubor Rahman has been elected chairman of SBAC Bank Investment Limited (SBIL), a DSE-registered brokerage and investment banking subsidiary of SBAC Bank PLC.

The election was held at the company’s 30th board meeting in Dhaka on Wednesday, according to a



press release. He currently serves as chief executive officer and director of Finance at Intec Solution.

Mahbubor is the representative director of SBAC Bank PLC, nominated by Intec Solution, and a distinguished professional accountant and corporate executive with more than 27 years of leadership experience across six countries – Bangladesh, Malaysia, Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand and Cambodia.

He has held senior positions at organisations including Starwood Hotels & Resorts and Marriott International.



Mahmudul Bari, group adviser of Sandhani Group, and Shaila Abedin, senior executive vice-president and head of liability and women banking at Prime Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the memorandum of understanding at the bank’s head office in Dhaka yesterday. PHOTO: **PRIME BANK**

Prime Bank, Sandhani Group team up for financial, business services

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sandhani Group to build a strategic cross-industry partnership aimed at creating mutual business opportunities and offering better financial and corporate benefits to their stakeholders.

The partnership will draw on Prime Bank’s banking ecosystem and Sandhani Group’s presence across healthcare, investment, higher education services and various financial services, according to a press release.

Shaila Abedin, senior executive vice-president and head of liability and women banking at the bank, and Mahmudul Bari, group adviser of the group, signed the MoU at the bank’s head office in Dhaka yesterday, according to the press release.

Under the deal, Prime Bank will offer banking solutions to eligible Sandhani Group entities and their employees, clients and students. These include multi-channel fee collection, institutional internet banking through Prime Pay, payroll solutions, financing facilities, digital banking services, savings products, education-related financial services and overseas education support.

The bank will also explore financial literacy initiatives, skill development programmes, and campus ambassador and internship opportunities.

The two sides will further explore collaboration in bancassurance, insurance solutions, institutional investment, mutual fund distribution, wealth management, capital market investment and investment banking services.



Md Mojibur Rahman Sheikh, executive director of Bangladesh Bank, poses for a group photograph with participants of the “Annual Risk Management Conference-2026” organised by NCC Bank PLC at the latter’s head office in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: **NCC BANK**

NCC Bank holds annual risk conference

STAR BUSINESS DESK

NCC Bank PLC recently held its “Annual Risk Management Conference-2026” at its head office in Dhaka to raise awareness of risks, strengthen its risk management system and ensure compliance with regulatory directives.

Md Mojibur Rahman Sheikh, executive director of Bangladesh Bank, inaugurated the conference as the chief guest, according to a press release.

In his speech, he said there is no alternative to effective risk management to ensure long-term, orderly and sustainable operations in all areas of banking.

He urged all concerned to ensure the bank’s stability by properly identifying, assessing and controlling various risks, including those arising from changing economic conditions, technological advancements, AI and cyber threats, credit, liquidity and operational risks.

NCC Bank has always conducted its operations in line with Bangladesh Bank’s directives and prevailing policies and has been working to ensure effective risk management, M Shamsul Arefin, managing director of NCC Bank PLC said while presiding over the conference.



Pubali Bank Managing Director Mohammad Ali hands over the keys of a bus donated by the bank to Comilla Victoria Government College Principal Professor Md Abul Basher Bhuiyan at a ceremony in Cumilla on Wednesday. PHOTO: **PUBALI BANK**

Pubali Bank donates bus to Comilla Victoria College

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Pubali Bank PLC has donated a bus to Comilla Victoria Government College to facilitate transportation for its students as part of the bank’s social responsibility initiatives.

Mohammad Ali, managing director of the bank, handed over the keys to Prof Md Abul Basher Bhuiyan, the college principal, at a ceremony held at the college’s Zia Auditorium, according to a press release issued yesterday.

Prof Md Abdul Majid, vice-principal of the college, and Md Mainul Islam, deputy general manager and head of the bank’s Comilla region, attended the event.

Mohammad Ali said ensuring safe and comfortable transportation for students was a shared responsibility. He said the bank would continue its social responsibility initiatives in education, health and public welfare.

Prof Md Abul Basher Bhuiyan thanked Pubali Bank for the initiative, saying the bus would help ensure safer and more comfortable travel for students.

The event also featured a tree-planting programme on the college campus and the inauguration of an electronic booth of Pubali Bank.

Gazi Muhammad Golam Sohrab Hasan, secretary of the Teachers’ Council; and Prof Abdul Kuddus; Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, assistant general manager of the bank; along with senior officials from both organisations, were also present.



Md Nurul Azim, managing director and CEO of Shimanto Bank PLC, and AKM Nurunnabi, director of the Sustainable Finance Department at Bangladesh Bank, pose for a photograph after signing the agreement at the central bank’s headquarters in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: **SHIMANTO BANK**

Shimanto Bank partners with BB to boost ICT financing

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Shimanto Bank PLC has recently signed a participatory agreement with Bangladesh Bank to facilitate financing at a concessional interest rate and on simplified terms for the development of the ICT sector.

AKM Nurunnabi, director of the Sustainable Finance Department at Bangladesh Bank, and Md Nurul Azim, managing director and CEO of Shimanto Bank PLC, signed the agreement at the central bank’s headquarters in Dhaka recently, according to a press release.

To foster the development of the information technology (IT) sector, loans of up to Tk 50 crore will be provided at the customer level at an interest rate of 4 per cent per annum for a maximum term of 10 years under the scheme.



Md Khalid Mahmood Khan, managing director and CEO of Southeast Bank PLC, cuts the ribbon to inaugurate seven new “Shagotom” agent banking outlets alongside senior executives, bank officials and outlet proprietors recently. PHOTO: **SOUTHEAST BANK**

Southeast Bank launches seven agent banking outlets

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Southeast Bank PLC has launched seven agent banking outlets in Satkhira, Jashore, Faridpur, Manikganj, Brahmanbaria, Tangail and Bogura to provide banking services to unbanked people, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.

Md Khalid Mahmood Khan, managing director and CEO of the bank, recently inaugurated the outlets, according to a press release.

Senior executives and officials from the bank’s head office and branches, along with the proprietors of the seven agent outlets, attended the launching ceremony.

Branded as “Shagotom”, the agent banking service offers conventional and ‘Tijarah’ Islamic banking services through technology-driven platforms.

Customers can open savings and current accounts, deposit and withdraw cash, transfer funds, use BEFTN and RTGS services, and receive foreign remittances.

The outlets also offer cheque book, debit card and credit card processing, BO account opening and share transaction services.

Customers can apply for micro, medium and agricultural loans with insurance benefits. They can also pay utility bills, repay loan instalments, receive government allowances, access regular customer loans and use internet banking services.

The bank said recycler ATMs at the outlets provide round-the-clock access to essential banking services.

The initiative aims to promote financial inclusion and expand banking services nationwide, it said.

Govt eases rule on yarn release from port

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The government has allowed the release of 10- to 30-count yarn without bank guarantees from the port, which was imported through letters of credit (LCs) opened before September 7.

But yarn imported through LCs opened after that date will require bank guarantees, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) said in a circular yesterday.

However, local spinners argued against allowing yarn imports without bank guarantees, saying easing the process would harm the domestic industry as they are capable of supplying these kinds of yarns, for which dependence on foreign sources is not needed.

The 10- to 30-count yarns are widely consumed mainly for making fabrics for knitwear items such as T-shirts, polo shirts and trousers.

Earlier, local garment exporters raised their voices when the customs department denied releasing yarn without bank guarantees, which was imported through LCs opened before September 7 following a commerce ministry circular published on the same date.

In another circular on September 13, the ministry withdrew the condition of having a bank guarantee, but so far, customs officials have been denying receiving any go-ahead from the authorities concerned to release the yarn without such a guarantee.

Because of this mix-up, garment exporters feared having to resort to expensive air shipments.

"I was supposed to ship the finished knit trousers to my buyers in October and November, made from the imported 100 tonnes of yarn," said a garment exporter asking not to be named.

"So, I have to send the goods through expensive air shipment to maintain the strict lead time, for which I cannot make any profit from this shipment."

AkijBashir joins

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system supported by battery energy storage, allowing the facility to use solar-generated electricity beyond daylight hours and reduce exposure to load-shedding.

The glass facility also combines solar power with waste-heat-recovery steam-turbine generation. AkijBashir Group said 71 percent of the facility's energy is sourced from renewable sources.

At Janata Jute Mills, rooftop solar meets the mill's full electricity demand, supported by battery storage that extends the use of renewable energy beyond daytime generation.

Meanwhile, Akij Particle Board Mills has installed an 8.1 MWp rooftop solar photovoltaic system, which is expected to generate around 9.3 million kilowatt-hours of clean electricity annually and avoid about 7,452 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year.

The group has also worked with Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL) on renewable-energy and energy-efficiency projects and is pursuing measures such as waste-heat recovery, water reuse, net metering and more efficient production technologies.

Govt repurchases Tk 1,716cr T-bonds

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investor demand and the structure of government borrowing.

A Bangladesh Bank official said the government normally repays such bonds only when they mature. "Usually, the government has to pay interest until maturity. Since these bonds were bought back about a month early, the government will not have to pay interest for that month," he said.

But the bigger benefit, according to the Finance Division, is managing the repayment schedule rather than simply saving a month's interest.

The finance ministry said the buyback would reduce the burden of large repayments falling due at the same time, lower refinancing risk and help make the government securities market more efficient.

"A buyback allows the government to repurchase outstanding securities from the market before maturity, and it is a widely recognised Liability Management Operation (LMO) tool," the ministry said in a statement.

As of March 2026, the government's outstanding debt through treasury bonds and special purpose treasury bonds stood at Tk 6,28,168 crore. Debt through shariah-based bonds, or sukuk, stood at Tk 36,500 crore, according to finance ministry data.

The ministry said the buyback marked a step towards more active, modern and market-based debt management and was part of efforts to balance the cost and risk of public borrowing.

The government may conduct more buyback auctions in line with its Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy, taking into account market conditions, liquidity, investor demand, its cash position and the structure of public debt, the ministry said.

The auction also gives banks another option for managing their holdings of government bonds. Banks that need cash can sell some of their bonds before maturity, while those that are comfortable holding them can wait for repayment.

Market reaction, however, has been mixed. Some banks, especially those facing liquidity shortages, are interested in selling, while others prefer to hold the bonds until maturity.

Govt secures

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Based on the six-month SOFR rate of 3.68 percent on October 1, the indicative interest rate is about 5.38 percent.

Each drawdown must be repaid in full in a single payment after six months. As the loan is expected to be rolled over at the end of each period, the central bank's outstanding exposure would be about $195 million at any one time, according to a committee document.

The exposure could rise to a maximum of $1.25 billion if repayments were delayed.

To ensure uninterrupted fuel imports, the committee's chair cleared the proposal on an urgent basis, following which the full committee approved it.

The two sides reached a preliminary agreement on the financing amounts at a negotiation meeting on June 29.

Bangladesh classifies a loan as non-concessional when its grant element -- a measure of how far its terms are softer than market rates -- falls below 25 percent.

Such loans face tighter scrutiny under the government's debt rules, which cap annual debt servicing on this type of borrowing at the lower of 10 percent of export earnings or 15 percent of revenue.

UN sets up group to review support for LDC graduation

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requests are under consideration and that a decision could come from the General Assembly this month.

The ministerial declaration also said LDCs can derive significant benefits from a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization.

The declaration expressed concern that the multilateral trading system is increasingly under threat, with trade restrictions, including tariffs inconsistent with WTO rules, principles and commitments, rising globally amid heightened trade tensions and stalled multilateral negotiations.

Bangladesh to launch sovereign AI within a year

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use its computing infrastructure, he added.

The government is also working to secure high-end graphics processing units (GPUs), which are needed to train and run advanced AI models.

Rehan said Bangladesh would be able to secure the world's best GPUs for government data centres and Bangladesh-owned private companies through ongoing government-to-government discussions.

Securing high-end GPUs can be difficult, as delivery times can stretch to several years even when buyers have sufficient funds, he said.

"We will not face challenges in securing GPUs very soon," Rehan said, adding that work was underway to ensure access to advanced computing hardware.

The government is also working to secure memory chips and plans to hold discussions with major industry players, with the aim of ensuring adequate supplies of both computing and memory chips for the next decade.

POWER, WATER CONCERNS

Power and water availability will be major considerations in developing AI infrastructure, Rehan said.

A conventional Google search uses about 0.3 watt-hours of electricity, while an AI-generated response on current platforms can use around 2.9 watt-hours, he said. This means AI computing is much more power-intensive.

Although AI systems are expected to become more efficient as the technology advances, overall electricity demand will remain a concern, he added.

Water availability is also important because AI infrastructure requires significant cooling capacity.

The government is therefore considering both power and water availability when selecting locations for AI facilities, Rehan said.

He added that the facilities would have multiple power sources and their own power-generation capacity instead of relying entirely on the national grid, as uninterrupted power is essential for such operations.

Ashfaq Zaman, founder of Dhaka Forum, said Bangladesh already has the basic building blocks of a digital state, including biometric NIDs, mobile financial services, a national QR code standard, around 300 million archived Bangla documents and D-Nothi across 17,000 offices.

"The real constraint is not the lack of systems but their failure to connect. AI can help bridge this gap. A single Bangla large language model for the government, trained on public-sector documents and hosted domestically, could help officials review drafts instead of starting from scratch," said Ashfaq, who delivered a keynote at the event.

If each officer saves 20 minutes a day, 250,000 officers could save about 10,400 working years each year, he said.

Such gains should be measured through public-service targets covering time, cost and the number of interactions required, turning AI into a measurable governance reform, Ashfaq said.

He added that this would allow AI adoption to be assessed based on measurable improvements in public services rather than simply treating it as an information technology project.

Md Ismail Zabihullah, adviser to the prime minister on public administration affairs, said AI is no longer just a policy ambition but is becoming a practical tool for transforming public administration.

AI-enabled recruitment and postings, along with a unified digital identity and wallet, can make government services faster, more transparent and more citizen-focused, he said.

At the same time, strong data protection and cybersecurity must remain a priority.

Bangladesh should also move beyond being a technology consumer and build the capacity to develop, own and export high-value technology products and AI-based services, he added.

Humaiun Kobir, state minister-1 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Shama Obaed Islam, state minister-2, also spoke.

National Bank

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National Bank incurred nearly Tk 9,000 crore in losses in the four years since 2022. In 2025, the private bank suffered a loss of Tk 2,430 crore, which is 41 percent higher than the previous year's loss of Tk 1,722 crore, according to its annual report.

The bank's non-performing loan ratio to total outstanding loans stood at 59.69 percent at the end of 2025.

At the meeting, National Bank Chairman Melita Mehjabeen told the governor that the central bank's recent measures had made good governance possible at the bank, and that positive changes had been made in senior management to improve its efficiency and capability.

The latest decision to provide liquidity to the bank comes after four depositors of the bank approached the High Court last month seeking access to their savings.

NBL, one of the oldest private banks in Bangladesh, is among the lenders that received uncollateralised liquidity support from BB over the last several years amid fund shortages and high non-performing loans.

As of early June 2026, BB had provided Tk 76,000 crore ($6.2 billion) in liquidity support to weak banks, said Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury in parliament in late June. NBL received Tk 10,568 crore from the central bank.

The largest share of the BB support went to First Security Islami Bank, with outstanding borrowing of Tk 15,810 crore. BB also provided Tk 12,010 crore to EXIM Bank, Tk 10,841 crore to Social Islami Bank, Tk 5,420 crore to Union Bank and Tk 5,000 crore to Premier Bank.

Private-sector activity falls to lowest since Aug 2024: PMI

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contracted, while employment remained unchanged. Input costs continued to expand strongly but at a slightly slower rate. Order backlogs reverted to expansion," the MCCI-PEB report said.

Services recorded a second consecutive month of marginal contraction, with its index declining 0.2 points to 49.0.

"New business and business activity reverted to contraction, while employment experienced slower contraction. Input costs expanded strongly while order backlogs remained in contraction," the report said.

Agriculture remained the only sector in expansion, extending its growth streak to 13 months. Its index, however, declined 1.3 points to 55.2 as new business, business activity and employment expanded more slowly, while input costs continued to expand strongly despite a slight reduction.

The latest PMI reading comes after the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics reported that the economy grew 4.6 percent in the April-June quarter, more than twice the 2.05 percent growth recorded a year earlier.

The rebound was supported by stronger growth in manufacturing and services, although economists cautioned that weak private-sector credit, energy supply constraints and financial-sector vulnerabilities continued to weigh on the economy.

"Bangladesh's economic dynamism remains under pressure, as weakness in manufacturing, construction and services weighed on overall performance," PEB Chairman and CEO M Masrur Reaz said on the latest PMI readings.

He said agriculture's expansion provided resilience and positive expectations offered a basis for recovery.

The Future Business Index pointed to expansion across all four sectors, reflecting cautious optimism about business conditions in the coming months, according to the report.

"Strengthening domestic and export demand, ensuring reliable energy supply, easing financing constraints and containing cost pressures will be important to restore momentum," Masrur said.

The PMI, initiated with support from the UK government, has been published by MCCI and PEB since 2024.

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
BRAHMANBARIA

Invitation for e-Tender

Tender Notice No: 17/e-GP/EED/BRAH/5974SHED/2025-26 **Date: 07/10/2026**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the following packags Tender:

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of Work	Tender Document Last Selling/ Date & Time	Last Date and Time for Tender/Proposal Security Submission	Tender Opening Date & Time
1	1348179	Repair & Renovation Works (FY: 2025-26) at Paharpur Union High School, Bijoynagar Upazila, Brahmanbaria.	26-Oct-2026 15:30	26-Oct-2026 16:00	27-Oct-2026 12:00
2	1348180	Repair & Renovation Works (FY: 2025-26) at Merasani Polytechnic Academy, Bijoynagar Upazila, Brahmanbaria	26-Oct-2026 15:30	26-Oct-2026 16:00	27-Oct-2026 12:00
3	1348181	Repair & Renovation Works (FY: 2025-26) at Gokorna Syed Wali Ullah School & College, Nasirnagar Upazila, Brahmanbaria.	26-Oct-2026 15:30	26-Oct-2026 16:00	27-Oct-2026 12:00
4	1348182	Repair & Renovation Works (FY: 2025-26) at Chilokut High School, Sadar Upazila, Brahmanbaria	26-Oct-2026 15:30	26-Oct-2026 16:00	27-Oct-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 of following Package from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's Branches up to the Following Date & Time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

07.10.26
(Khandaker Nazmul Islam)
Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Brahmanbaria.

GD-2452

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Civil Surgeon
Civil Surgeon Office, Sirajganj.
E-mail: serajganj@cs.dghs.gov.bd

Memo No.CS/SIRAJ/e-GP-TENDER/2026-2027/ 2017 Date: 08-October-2026

e-Tender Notice (NCT)

e-Tender is in the e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procuring of following goods.

Tender ID	Name of Tender	Package No	Last Selling Date	Closing & Opening Date	Remarks
1345569	Supply of MSR Goods (Non-EDCL Medicine) for Khokshabari 10 bed Hospital, Sirajganj in FY 2026-2027	KHOKSHA/SIRAJ/ 26-27/MSR-09	18-Oct-2026 11:00 pm	18-Oct-2026 12:00:00 pm	OTM
1345570	Supply of MSR Goods (Gauze-Bandage-Cotton) for Khokshabari 10 bed Hospital, Sirajganj in FY 2026-2027	KHOKSHA/SIRAJ/ 26-27/MSR-10	18-Oct-2026 11:00 pm	18-Oct-2026 12:00:00 pm	OTM
1345651	Supply of MSR Goods (Instrument) for Khokshabari 10 bed Hospital, Sirajganj in FY 2026-2027	KHOKSHA/SIRAJ/ 26-27/MSR-12	18-Oct-2026 11:00 pm	18-Oct-2026 12:00:00 pm	OTM
1345654	Supply of MSR Goods (Linen Items) for Khokshabari 10 bed Hospital, Sirajganj in FY 2026-2027	KHOKSHA/SIRAJ/ 26-27/MSR-15	18-Oct-2026 11:00 pm	18-Oct-2026 12:00:00 pm	OTM
1345650	Supply of MSR Goods (Hospital Furniture) for Khokshabari 10 bed Hospital, Sirajganj in FY 2026-2027	KHOKSHA/SIRAJ/ 26-27/MSR-11	18-Oct-2026 11:00 pm	18-Oct-2026 12:00:00 pm	OTM
1345652	Supply of Patient's Food Items for Khokshabari 10 bed Hospital, Sirajganj in FY 2026-2027	KHOKSHA/SIRAJ/ 26-27/MSR-13	18-Oct-2026 11:00 pm	18-Oct-2026 12:00:00 pm	OTM
1345653	Supply of Goods (Linen Washing) for Khokshabari 10 bed Hospital, Sirajganj in FY 2026-2027	KHOKSHA/SIRAJ/ 26-27/MSR-14	18-Oct-2026 11:00 pm	18-Oct-2026 12:00:00 pm	OTM

1. 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.
2. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.
3. Details about the Tender have shown in e-Tender notice and e-Tender document. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Dr. Md Nurul Amin)
Civil Surgeon
Civil Surgeon Office, Sirajganj.

GD-2450

Dhaka-Kolkata Maitree Express train may restart if India wants

Bangladesh Railway says the train would run via the Padma Bridge if New Delhi sends a formal proposal

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The Maitree Express train connecting Dhaka in Bangladesh to Kolkata in West Bengal may resume only after India makes a formal request through diplomatic channels, according to a senior Bangladesh Railway official, as the new service would take a shorter route via Padma Bridge instead of the previous lengthy route across the Jamuna river.

"If they [India] send a proposal, the government will consider the matter," said Al Fattah Md Masudur Rahman, additional director-general at Bangladesh Railway.

He, however, said no decision has been taken to resume the service so far.

The Maitree Express was launched in April 2008 to provide passenger rail connectivity between Bangladesh and India. It became popular among Bangladeshi passengers travelling to India, particularly for medical treatment and tourism.

Before India suspended the service in July 2024 amid the uprising, the Maitree Express ran from Dhaka Cantonment Railway Station through Tangail, the Jamuna Bridge, Ishwardi and Darsana. The 392km journey from Dhaka to Kolkata used to take about seven hours and 45 minutes.

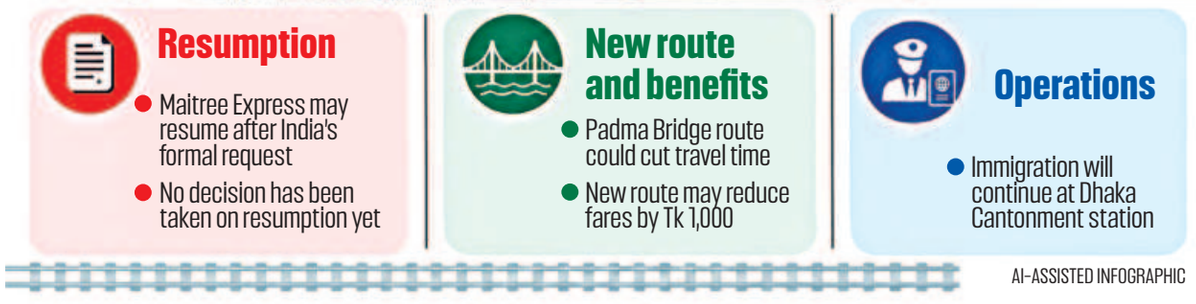
Indian authorities in September proposed that the train use a new route via the Padma Bridge, Jashore and Benapole. The shorter route could cut travel time to about six hours, while the fare is estimated to fall by about Tk 1,000 per ticket.

However, these are projections and would depend on the final route, timetable and operational arrangements.

Apart from the Maitree Express, services of two other trains, Bandhan Express and Mitali Express, have also been suspended between the two neighbours since 2024.

Bangladesh Railway Additional Director-General Masudur said Bangladesh Railway did not suspend the services. Rather, the Indian authorities suspended them.





He said that if the Maitree Express resumes via the Padma Bridge, immigration clearance would continue at Dhaka Cantonment Railway Station.

The Maitree Express previously departed from Dhaka Cantonment, where immigration formalities were completed for passengers travelling in both directions.

"The necessary arrangements for immigration are already there. If we do it at Kamalapur Railway Station, a new setup would be required," he said.

To run the train via the Padma Bridge, it would have to pass through Kamalapur before joining the new railway line towards the bridge.

In September, the proposal to run the Maitree Express through the Padma Bridge was discussed at a meeting between railway authorities from Bangladesh and India. But India has yet to send a formal proposal.

Following the three-day Inter-Governmental Railway Meeting, Railway Ministry Additional Secretary Ziaul Haque said on September 10 that Bangladesh would review the matter if India formally proposed restarting the services.

Ziaul said Indian delegates had proposed discussions on operating the Maitree Express through the Padma Bridge, but no formal proposal had been submitted.

He also said the proposed route would require assessment of several technical and operational issues, including route capacity, train movement arrangements, turning facilities, fare adjustments and immigration procedures.

Bangladesh Railway data show that 288,360 passengers travelled on the Maitree Express from fiscal year 2022-23 till July 19, 2024. About 95 percent of them were Bangladeshis.

Average occupancy was between 80 and 85 percent, rising above 95 percent during the Eid and Durga Puja holidays.

Bangladesh Railway received 75 percent of the apportioned earnings from the service under the cross-border passenger train arrangement, with the remaining 25 percent going to Indian Railways.

Promotion? No, thanks

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

A young executive is invited into the boss's room. The boss smiles, offers tea and announces, "Congratulations, you have been promoted." The employee asks four questions: How much more will I earn? How many people will I manage? Will I have greater authority? And must I answer WhatsApp messages at midnight? By the fourth answer, congratulations sounds suspiciously like condolences.

For generations, promotion simply meant success. A larger title, a bigger office and a new line on the business card confirmed progress. Refusing a promotion was unthinkable. Today, more young employees are saying, "No, thanks."

Deloitte's 2026 global survey found that only 25 percent of Gen Z and 21 percent of millennials prefer rapid career progression through promotions. Most favour steady growth, while some are willing to move sideways or step back for experience. This is not the death of ambition. Some 76 percent of Gen Z respondents and 67 percent of millennials remain interested in senior leadership. They want leadership, but not this version.

What do they see? Managers caught between ambitious targets above and anxious employees below. Gartner reports that 47 percent of managers are working harder than a year earlier. They spend about nine hours a week addressing employees' personal and emotional concerns, despite limited influence over pay, staffing or policy. The manager is expected to be a strategist, counsellor, firefighter and cheerleader.

In some companies, promotion brings a grander designation, a larger team, more meetings and a modest pay rise. In my last job, the salary adjustment was only 5 percent, while responsibility increased manifold. Authority remained with the owner or the boss's boss. An Assistant General Manager becomes General Manager and discovers that the only thing removed from the job is the word "Assistant".

Technology has made the burden clearer. Email once waited. WhatsApp has no such respect for office hours, weekends or family dinners. Instant replies signal commitment; pauses



Perhaps ambition has changed. Many now value skills over titles, wellbeing over visibility and sustainable achievement over theatre.

can look like a lack of it. Young employees watch this lifestyle and make a rational calculation. The ladder may still go upwards, but every step carries more weight.

Generations have rarely differed so sharply. A senior leader opens Excel, prepares PowerPoint and posts on Facebook, feeling modern; Gen Z considers all three museum pieces. Employers may mistake digital confidence for impatience, while younger employees mistake experience for obsolescence. Reverse mentoring must replace suspicion.

Companies promote technical performers into management without asking whether they can, or even want to, lead people. Gallup found that only 45 percent of frontline supervisors had received supervisory training in the previous year, while 23 percent had never received any. The younger generation is not entirely right. Leadership cannot become a permanent comfort zone. Greater responsibility requires difficult decisions, longer thinking and sacrifice. An organisation cannot build its future if everyone wants influence, but nobody accepts accountability.

However, companies must make promotions worth accepting. That means fair compensation, genuine authority, manageable teams, leadership training and protection from permanent availability. Technical specialists should have career paths that do not require becoming reluctant managers. Growth should have more than one path.

Senior leaders often complain that young people lack loyalty and ambition. Perhaps ambition has changed. Many now value skills over titles, wellbeing over visibility and sustainable achievement over theatre.

If the next generation refuses to climb, management should inspect the ladder before blaming the climbers. A promotion should recognise success and enable greater contribution. When "Congratulations" sounds like a punishment, the problem may not be the employee. It may be the promotion.

The writer is the founder of BuildCon Consultancies Ltd and BuildNation Ltd

Money changers can now sell up to $3,000 in cash

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank has raised the amount of US dollar notes and coins that licensed money changers can sell at a time to outbound Bangladeshi travellers to $3,000 from $2,000, to ease their foreign exchange needs.

In a circular issued yesterday, the central bank allowed licensed money changers to sell the higher amount against travellers' annual private travel entitlement.

Beyond the dollar cash limit, the balance of a traveller's annual travel entitlement may be released in notes and coins of other freely convertible or usable currencies, subject to availability and the traveller's remaining entitlement.

The revised facility is expected to give outbound travellers greater flexibility in buying foreign currency cash from money changers.

BSEC to allow financial advisers to curb rumour-based trading

Aims to reduce investors' reliance on unauthorised tips, hearsay and unverified market claims

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) plans to formulate and issue the "Registered Financial Adviser Rules" within the next one or two months to protect general investors from fraud and market rumours and promote professional investment guidance.

BSEC Commissioner Nafiz Al Tarik disclosed the plan at a seminar on Wednesday, saying the proposed rules would bring financial advisers under regulatory oversight and help investors make more informed capital market decisions.

The seminar was jointly organised by CDBL and Central Counterparty Bangladesh Limited (CCBL) at the DSE building in Dhaka to mark "World Investor Week 2026".

Under the new rules, investors will no longer have to rely on unauthorised tips, hearsay or unverified claims from brokerage house representatives when making capital market decisions, the commissioner said.

Instead, they will be able to seek structured, certified advice from licensed financial advisers operating under direct regulatory oversight and monitoring.

Addressing investor vulnerability, the BSEC commissioner said retail investors frequently suffer heavy losses by blindly following informal tips or advice from brokerage representatives.

He cited a recent instance in which a high-profile national cricketer entrusted his capital to a brokerage house based on personal trust, only to lose nearly 80 percent of his portfolio value and face severe financial distress while attempting to repay associated loans.

To build financial resilience, he advised general investors to shift towards diversified mutual funds managed by experienced asset managers, which can help cushion portfolios during market downturns compared with direct stock holdings.

At the event, Md Abdul Mutaleb, managing director of CDBL, said the company plans to launch a mobile application for investors this October.

Through the app, investors will be able to directly view information on their Beneficiary Owner (BO) accounts and portfolios, as well as receive transaction updates and notifications.

ACI Beverages launches MacCoffee in Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS DESK

ACI Beverages, a business unit of ACI Foods Limited under Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI) PLC, has launched the globally popular instant coffee and beverage brand "MacCoffee" in Bangladesh.

To this end, the Bangladeshi company signed a strategic partnership agreement with Empire International Sdn Bhd, a member of Singapore-based Food Empire Holdings Limited, facilitated by Mitsui & Co (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd.

Zakir Ibne Hai, executive director and chief operating officer of ACI Food and Beverage, and Tan Boon Hua, general manager of Empire International Sdn Bhd, signed the agreement at a launch ceremony at a Shwapno outlet in Banasree, Rampura, Dhaka, on Wednesday, according to a press release.

The partnership marks another milestone in ACI Beverages' efforts to diversify its beverage portfolio in Bangladesh.

ACI Beverages entered the beverage category by distributing Sunquick fruit concentrates and fruit drinks, followed by the launch of ACI Electrolyte Drinks.

Recognising the potential of the hot beverage segment in Bangladesh, the company has now partnered with Empire International to introduce MacCoffee to consumers across the country. The initial rollout will feature MacCoffee Original and MacCoffee Gold in jars. The partners also plan to introduce local packaging in the longer term, alongside new products to expand the brand's presence in the market.

MacCoffee is available in more than 60 countries and aims to bring its global coffee experience to Bangladesh's growing consumer market.

Govt working for stable supply of Ramadan commodities: Muktadir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir yesterday said the government is working to ensure an uninterrupted supply of essential commodities and reasonable prices for consumers during the upcoming Ramadan.

Urging importers and traders to play their roles in ensuring continuous supply and market stability, the minister said the government would not tolerate any attempt by traders to form syndicates and raise the prices of essential commodities during Ramadan.

He made the comments as the chief guest at a meeting with importers and traders organised by the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) at its office in the port city.

"There is currently an adequate volume of essential commodities like edible oil, sugar and others in the import pipeline ahead of Ramadan. Therefore, there will be no shortage of essential goods during Ramadan, and supplies will remain normal," the minister said.



Steps are being taken to rationalise duties on fruits and dates to reduce import costs, the commerce minister said. PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Steps are being taken to rationalise duties on fruits and dates to reduce import costs, while the government would discuss with the authorities lowering interest rates on loans for importing consumer goods and removing obstacles to the transportation and clearance of commodities, he said.

He said efforts are underway to reduce the duty on fruits and make them affordable for ordinary consumers.

A letter has been sent to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) seeking a reduction in the duty on dates, he informed.

Muktadir stressed the need for a planned supply system to ensure the availability of essential commodities, particularly vegetables, at relatively stable prices throughout the year.

At the meeting, businesses from Chattogram raised objections to the 13-tonne weight limit on transporting goods on roads connecting Chattogram with other parts of the country.

They said the restriction was increasing transportation costs, which in turn was driving up the prices of commodities.

CCCI President Mohammad Amirul Haque said businesses are committed to ensuring an uninterrupted supply of essential commodities during the upcoming Ramadan.

He also said the Chittagong chamber would hold regular meetings with importers and traders to monitor the supply and prices of key commodities.

The chamber president urged the minister to take steps to withdraw the discriminatory 13-tonne weight limit on transporting goods on highways only from Chattogram and to halt the serial system for allocating lighter vessels to unload import cargo from mother vessels.

These two systems are the main reasons behind rising costs of imported goods, Haque said.

He also called for a review of the system for fixing lighter-vessel freight rates and for greater competition in the sector.