Business

DHAKA THURSDAY OCTOBER 15, 2026, ASHWIN 30, 1433 BS
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B4 SOUTH ASIA'S YOUTH BOOM: OPPORTUNITY OR PRESSURE?

More goods could push UK exports to $10b

Say stakeholders

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh could more than double its export earnings from the UK to $10 billion a year if businesses look beyond readymade garments to products such as pharmaceuticals, food, shrimp, agricultural goods, bicycles, light engineering goods and plastics, stakeholders said.

The country shipped goods worth $4.67 billion to the UK in fiscal year 2025-26, mostly apparel, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

But a more diverse export basket could lift that figure to $10 billion, said Mohammad Hasan Arif, vice-chairman and chief executive officer of the bureau.

Speaking at a workshop titled "Export Growth in the UK Market: Opportunities Beyond RMG" in Dhaka yesterday, he said Bangladesh accounts for only 0.49 percent of total UK imports of $948 billion, which points to significant room for growth.

"Increasing the share to 1 percent could take Bangladesh's exports to the UK to around $10 billion," Hasan said in his keynote presentation.

Bangladesh shipped goods worth $4.67 billion to the UK in FY2025-26, mostly apparel, but a more diverse export basket could lift that figure to $10 billion, said Mohammad Hasan Arif, vice-chairman and chief executive officer of EPB.

Besides reducing reliance on garments, he called for stronger value-chain management, internationally recognised testing and standards facilities, and better understanding among exporters of UK regulations and market opportunities.

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), the EPB and the British High Commission in Dhaka jointly organised the event. Participants of the programme focused on helping exporters make the most of the UK Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), particularly as Bangladesh nears graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category.

The DCTS is a UK trade preference programme that cuts tariffs and simplifies trading rules. It replaces the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP).

In his welcome address, DCCI President Taskeen Ahmed said the scheme could help Bangladeshi businesses expand their presence in Britain, but exporters would need to prepare to benefit from it.

He said exports to the UK remain heavily dependent on garments, leaving considerable scope to ship other products.

READ MORE ON B3

Take growth forecast downgrades seriously

Economists worry about low growth and high inflation forecast by IMF, World Bank and ADB, calling for urgent policy response



In the current situation, growth in FY27 will be low. Recovery will depend on how quickly energy supply improves, investment returns and inflation eases. The government should restore confidence with predictable policies and faster business approvals.

Fahmida Khatun
Distinguished fellow at CPD



The weakness in growth is not the result of one temporary shock. Private investment has remained stagnant, private-sector credit growth is exceptionally weak, and high interest rates have raised the cost of doing business.

Selim Raihan
Executive director of SANEM



We are confronting more than a temporary slowdown: Banking distress, energy shortages and weak fiscal capacity are constraining investment, while high inflation continues to erode household purchasing power. The WB assessment reinforces this diagnosis.

Ashikur Rahman
Principal economist of PRI



High interest rates and low investment, both public and private, are likely to bring economic growth down. But it is hard to tell the extent. Inflation is weighing more on the poor. The only way to push the growth rate is to boost public investment in the short run.

Kazi Iqbal
Research director of BIDS

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) this week cut its growth forecast for Bangladesh to 3.2 percent for the current fiscal year, close to its 3.4 percent projection for global growth in 2027. If realised, it would be the lowest GDP growth Bangladesh has recorded in 37 years.

The World Bank had earlier cut its forecast for fiscal year 2026-27 to 3.4 percent, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in September projected 4 percent growth. Both are well below the government target of 6.5 percent for FY27.

All three agencies expect inflation to stay high after four years of elevated prices. The IMF projects average inflation of 10.9 percent for the current fiscal year.

Economists said the downgrades should be taken seriously. They pointed to weak investment, persistent inflation, energy shortages and weaknesses in the banking sector.

They said high interest rates and rising production costs are holding back growth, while high non-performing loans hurt businesses and low revenue limits how much the government can spend on public investment.

Fahmida Khatun, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a local think tank, said the estimates "point to a prolonged slowdown and a fragile recovery".

Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI), said the revisions did not surprise him.

He put growth for FY27 at around 3-4 percent and average inflation at roughly 9-11 percent, calling them "judgement-based estimates".

Ashikur saw little basis for expecting the 6.5 percent target to be met without a substantial improvement in investment and productive capacity.

Selim Raihan, executive director at the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), said the government's growth target "now looks increasingly detached from economic realities".

He expects growth of 3.5-4 percent and average inflation of about 9-10 percent, with upside risks from energy prices, exchange rates and domestic costs.

Kazi Iqbal, research director at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said the economy is under stress and inflation is weighing more heavily on the poor.

He said spending more under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) is the only short-term way to lift growth.

'RESTORE CONFIDENCE'

CPD Distinguished Fellow Fahmida said recovery in FY27 will depend on how quickly energy supply improves, investment returns and inflation comes under control.

She said, "The government should restore confidence with predictable policies and faster, simpler business approvals."

The economist added that the government should strengthen banks through transparent loan classification and recovery or resolution of insolvent lenders, while preserving sound borrowers' access to credit.

"Reliable energy requires better planning, domestic exploration, efficiency and transmission investment. Public funds should support well-prepared projects with clear returns," said Fahmida.

According to her, revenue reforms can fund productive investment and targeted aid for low-income households.

"These measures will not produce an immediate rebound. But without progress, lower investment, weak job creation, and high inflation may continue to reinforce one another," she commented.

'FREE UP CREDIT FOR BUSINESS'

Selim said the broad message of the forecasts is that Bangladesh is experiencing unusually weak growth, made worse by persistently high inflation. If realised, the IMF projection of 10.9 percent inflation would mean another year of serious erosion in household purchasing power.

"Bangladesh is therefore facing an uncomfortable combination: businesses are struggling with weak demand, high financing and energy costs, while households continue to face rising living costs," he said.

"The weakness in growth is not the result of one temporary shock. Private investment has remained stagnant, private-sector credit growth is exceptionally weak, and high interest rates have raised the cost of doing business," he said.

"The energy shortage has become a binding constraint for many industries, while uncertainty over gas and electricity supply makes firms reluctant to undertake new investment."

Selim, also an economics professor at Dhaka University, said weak banks have further damaged lending, while low revenue is forcing the government to borrow heavily from banks, potentially squeezing private-sector credit.

"Political uncertainty, concerns over law and order, and policy unpredictability are also affecting business confidence."

"These problems reinforce each other. Weak investment reduces growth and employment; weaker growth constrains revenue; low revenue

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Govt wants to shift from Chinese loans to investment

Khosru says

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Bangladesh is pushing to move its financing partnership with China from loans to investment, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said yesterday on the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank annual meetings in Bangkok.

"We are gradually moving away from the state-to-state model towards investment and partnership," he said after meetings with the Chinese Exim Bank and the US Treasury.

"Future Chinese financing should shift from loans to investment, and we hope for a joint change in this regard," he added.

Emphasising joint and direct investment, he said: "Our main economic policy focus is on investment. We are moving away from loans."

He added that he had held long discussions with the Exim Bank.

He also met the US Treasury, where talks covered American assistance, debt management and Bangladesh-US relations. They also discussed grants from a US agency.

"We have not received much in the past," he said.

Bangladesh had told the US side that the relationship had reached a stage where it was buying aircraft, oil, soybeans and other commodities from the United States, he said. The imports were also helping reduce the trade imbalance.

"The time has come for US support to flow. If not now, when?" he said. "They have agreed to support. Let's see."

Separately, Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, the prime minister's adviser on finance and planning, said development partners had expressed confidence in the government's strategy to revive the economy.

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ANALYSIS

Fertiliser subsidy reform: Who will bear the cost?

TASNEEM TAYEB

Bangladesh is under pressure to reform its costly fertiliser subsidy system, but how the government would protect small and marginal farmers from higher input costs remains unclear.

The World Bank has recommended gradually replacing administered fertiliser prices with market-based pricing, backed by electronic vouchers for vulnerable farmers. Its latest assessment found that the largest 20 percent of landholders receive about half of all fertiliser subsidy benefits, while the smallest 40 percent receive just 13 percent.



The findings have renewed scrutiny of a subsidy bill that has nearly quadrupled in five years to around Tk 28,000 crore.

However, the distribution figures need context. Larger farms buy more fertiliser and therefore receive greater subsidies in absolute terms. For poorer households, even a smaller subsidy can represent a larger share of income.

The World Bank estimates that direct and indirect fertiliser subsidies account for 1.04 percent of income for the poorest fifth of households, compared with 0.10 percent for the richest fifth.

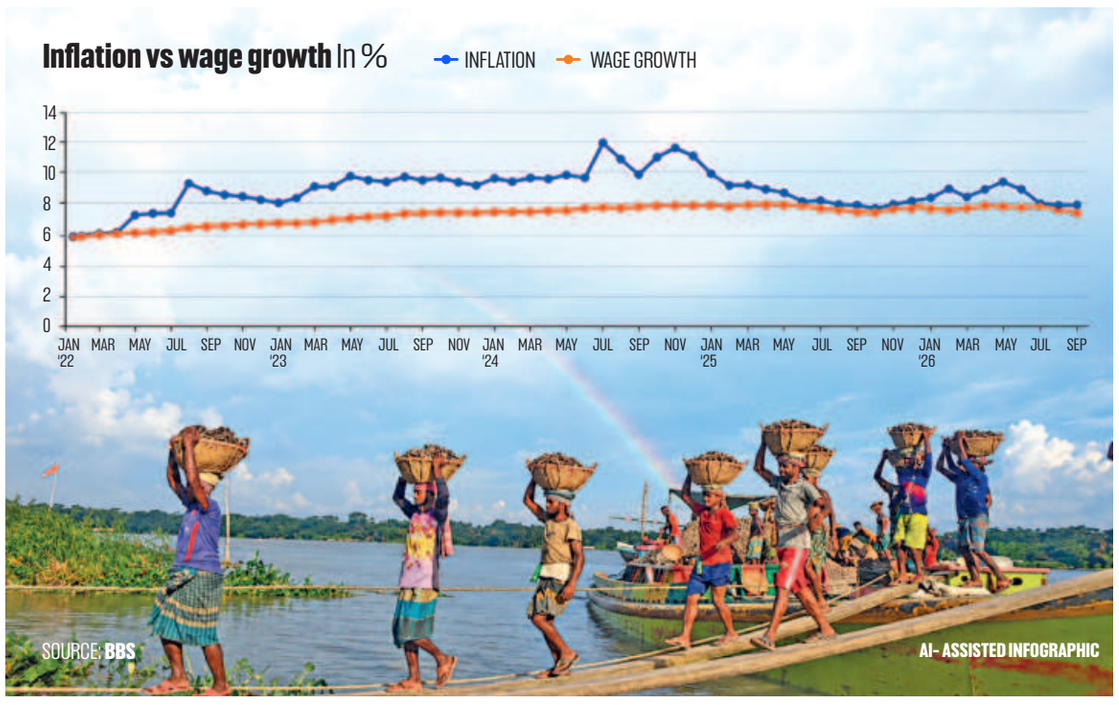
Bangladesh imports more than 85 percent of its fertiliser needs, leaving subsidy costs exposed to global prices, exchange-rate fluctuations and supply disruptions. The Middle East conflict has heightened these risks, threatening to increase import costs and the fiscal burden.

International lenders have long called for reform. In 2025, the IMF cited government plans to reduce subsidy costs through better storage, lower import expenses and higher selling prices.

The World Bank recommends phased price increases supported by digital farmer registries and electronic vouchers.

Yet the government had no plan to raise fertiliser prices while preparing the FY2026-27 budget, despite rising costs and subsidy spending, The Daily Star reported in June. A review of subsequent public announcements found no confirmed decision to introduce market-based pricing.

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Inflation outpaces wage growth for 56 months: Why are workers losing out?

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Wages in Bangladesh are growing more slowly than prices, squeezing workers' purchasing power as a recent energy price hike threatens to add to living costs.

Inflation has outpaced wage growth for 56 consecutive months, government data show, leaving wage earners with less to spend on food, healthcare, education and other essentials.

In September, wage growth fell to 7.9 percent from 8.05 percent in August, according to the Wage Rate Index (WRI) of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). The index tracks monthly wages of low-paid skilled and unskilled workers across 63 occupations in agriculture, industry and services.

Wage-earning households continued to face pressure on their real purchasing power in August, the General Economic Division (GED) said in its monthly update.

Whether that pressure eases will depend on the movement of wages and inflation, the GED said, particularly whether the recent moderation in food prices holds while non-food inflation stays elevated.

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Garment sector must go green to retain global markets

Dutch vice-minister says during factory visit

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's garment industry must invest in cleaner production and transparency to remain competitive in global markets as the country prepares to graduate from least developed country (LDC) status, Steven Collet, vice-minister for international cooperation of the Netherlands, said on Monday.

"Bangladesh's garment industry is an important part of global value chains, and its future depends on factories that combine competitiveness with responsibility," he said during a visit to TEAM Group's outerwear manufacturing facility, 4A Yarn Dyeing Ltd, in Dhaka.

A seven-member Dutch delegation visited the factory to explore cooperation in sustainable apparel manufacturing and trade amid changing global trade rules and emerging sustainability requirements.

Afroza Shahin, managing director of TEAM Group, and Abdullah Hil Nakib, deputy managing director, welcomed the delegation.

Discussions with TEAM Group's senior management covered Bangladesh's LDC graduation, a proposed Bangladesh-European Union free trade agreement, decarbonisation, responsible sourcing, supply chain traceability and compliance with emerging EU sustainability regulations.

The two sides also explored collaboration with Dutch apparel brands and development partners in clean energy, circularity, digital product passports and workforce development.

Steven praised the factory's investment in clean energy and transparency, saying the Netherlands looked forward to continuing its partnership with Bangladesh to promote a sustainable and inclusive textile sector.

"It was inspiring to see how 4A Yarn Dyeing is investing in clean energy and transparency," he said.

"Bangladesh's garment industry is an important part of global value chains, and its future depends on factories that combine competitiveness with responsibility," Steven Collet said.

Afroza said sustainability investments were essential to maintaining the apparel industry's competitiveness.

"The Netherlands has long been a partner in our industry's journey towards safer, fairer and greener production," she said. "Changing trade rules and the energy crisis both point in the same direction: the factories investing in sustainability today are the ones that will keep their markets tomorrow."

She said TEAM Group looked forward to strengthening its partnership with the Netherlands.

The delegation observed the factory's rooftop solar power plant, rainwater harvesting system, fair price shop and childcare facilities.

Pubali Bank launches global debit card for offshore clients

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Pubali Bank PLC has launched Bangladesh's first offshore banking debit card, "Pubali Bank Mastercard Offshore Banking World Debit Card" in collaboration with Mastercard, the global digital payment service provider.

The card offers eligible non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) and foreign nationals a convenient way to manage offshore banking assets while enjoying travel and lifestyle benefits. It provides access to banking services in approved foreign currencies, helping customers meet cross-border financial needs.

Mohammad Ali, managing director of the bank, and Zakia Sultana, country manager for Bangladesh at Mastercard, jointly inaugurated the card at a ceremony in Dhaka yesterday, according to a press release.

At the launch ceremony, Ali said, "We are committed to strengthening our Offshore Banking Division with solutions that meet the evolving needs of NRBs and international customers.

The Pubali Bank Mastercard Offshore Banking World Debit Card combines foreign-currency flexibility, convenient payments and travel benefits to make offshore banking more seamless and accessible."



Zakia Sultana, country manager for Bangladesh at Mastercard, and Mohammad Ali, managing director of Pubali Bank PLC, pose for a photograph after inaugurating the country's first offshore banking debit card, "Pubali Bank Mastercard Offshore Banking World Debit Card," at a ceremony in Dhaka yesterday. PHOTO: PUBALI BANK

Zakia said, "Powering the launch of Bangladesh's first offshore banking debit card reflects our commitment to enabling more connected, secure and convenient financial experiences for different consumer segments."

"Through this collaboration, we are bringing together Mastercard's global network, innovation capabilities and trusted payment infrastructure to help cardholders access and manage their finances with greater ease and flexibility, wherever life takes them," she added.

Available exclusively to customers of the bank's offshore banking unit, the World Mastercard debit card can be linked to offshore savings and current accounts held in US dollars and other approved foreign currencies. It supports e-commerce purchases, point-of-sale (POS) transactions and other international payments.

Midland Bank launches Bangla QR service



Midland Bank Managing Director Imtiaz U Ahmed, along with bank officials, cuts the ribbon to inaugurate the bank's Bangla QR service at a retail merchant outlet. PHOTO: MIDLAND BANK PLC

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Midland Bank PLC (MDB) recently launched Bangla QR services at selected retail merchant locations across the country.

The initiative is part of the bank's ongoing commitment to promoting digital payments and fostering a cashless Bangladesh, Midland Bank said in a press statement issued recently.

Imtiaz U Ahmed, managing director of Midland Bank, officially inaugurated the Bangla QR service, joined by senior officials of the bank.

Bangla QR enables customers to make convenient payments by scanning a merchant's QR code using compatible mobile banking applications and digital payment platforms.

This service is designed to simplify everyday transactions, making them faster and more convenient, while simultaneously reducing reliance on cash.

Speaking at the launch, Imtiaz said, "The introduction of Bangla QR marks another significant step in Midland Bank's digital transformation journey. Through this service, we aim to encourage both customers and merchants to embrace secure and convenient digital payments, thereby contributing to Bangladesh's transition towards a cashless economy."

Through this initiative, Midland Bank seeks to integrate more retail merchants into the digital payment ecosystem and encourage broader adoption of QR-based transactions nationwide, according to the press statement.

Bank Asia partners with Rancon Motor Bikes for motorcycle loans

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Rancon Motor Bikes Limited, a manufacturer, assembler and distributor of Suzuki motorcycles and scooters in Bangladesh, to offer convenient and attractive loan facilities to prospective motorcycle buyers.

Md Sabbir Hossain, additional managing director and chief operating officer of the bank, and Imran Zaman Khan, divisional director of the manufacturing company, signed the MoU recently at Bank Asia Tower in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka, according to a press release.



Imran Zaman Khan, divisional director of Rancon Motor Bikes Limited, and Md Sabbir Hossain, additional managing director and chief operating officer of Bank Asia PLC, pose for a photograph after signing the memorandum of understanding at Bank Asia Tower in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka recently. PHOTO: BANK ASIA

Under the partnership, customers of Rancon Motor Bikes Limited will be able to avail themselves of Bank Asia's two-wheeler loan facilities at competitive interest rates.

The collaboration will also include joint marketing initiatives, customer engagement programmes and promotional activities to raise customer awareness and improve access to financing.

The partnership is expected to simplify access to two-wheeler financing, enabling customers to fulfil their aspirations of owning quality motorcycles through convenient financing solutions, the release added.

Furthermore, the collaboration aims to strengthen the institutional relationship between the two organisations while contributing to the growth of Bangladesh's motorcycle industry and financial services sector.

Akij Board, Akij Door hold business conference in Malaysia

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Akij Board and Akij Door -- two leading brands of the AkijBashir Group -- hosted the "Evolve Beyond Business Conference 2026" with Robin Resources, a sister concern of the AkijBashir Group, at Berjaya Times Square Hotel in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The event brought together 800 participants, including 400 business associates, dealers and business representatives from Akij Board and Akij Door, along with 400 employees and dealers of Robin Resources, creating an atmosphere of unity, pride and celebration. Sk Bashir Uddin, managing director of AkijBashir Group, inaugurated the conference as the chief guest, according to a press release.

In his speech, he said, "Akij Board has always believed in innovation. Recently, we introduced Synchro Melamine Board, Ultimatt Board, Deep Embossed Board and Matching Digital Edge Band."

"Soon, we will introduce furniture components and densified wood to meet the diverse needs of our customers," he added.

The company launched four innovative products on the occasion: Synchro Melamine Board, Deep Embossed Board, Ultimatt Board and Digital Edge Band.

All the products are designed to complement a wide range of colours.



Sk Bashir Uddin, managing director of AkijBashir Group, poses for a group photograph with participants of the "Evolve Beyond Business Conference 2026" at Berjaya Times Square Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia yesterday. PHOTO: AKIJBASHIR GROUP

Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department, Sunamganj.
www.eedmoe.gov.bd

Tender Notice No: e-Tender-06/6821/SHED/FUR/XEN/EED/SUN/2026-2027 Date: 13/10/2026

Invitation for e-Tender (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal ((http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of Works mention below under Education Engineering Department, Sunamganj District.

Sl No	Tender/proposal package No.	Tender ID	Name of Works/ Package description	Last date & Time of Selling Documents	Last date & Time of Submission Documents	Tender/ Proposal Opening Date and Time
01	WD_6821_SHED_SUN_2024-25_01	1353785	Manufacturing & Supply of Furniture (FY 2024-25) For Academic Cum Residential Building at Bangladesh Female Academy , Derai, Sunamganj. (RMS ID NO 1047189).	25-Oct-2026 Time 15:00	26-Oct-2026 Time 11:00	26-Oct-2026 Time 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 (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

The fees for downloading the e- Tender Documents of Said Package from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' branches up to 25/10/2026 Time:15:00.

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

13.10.2026
(Md.Kamruzzaman)
Executive Engineer (C.C.)
Education Engineering Department.
Sunamganj.

GD-2506

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Munshiganj Road Division
Dashkani, Panchasar (Mukterpur), Munshiganj.
Phone # 02-998847019
E-mail. eemunrhd@gmail.com

Memo No.35.01.5900.447.04.008.26-2581 Date: 13/10/2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in The National e-Gp system portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) by the Executive Engineer, RHD, Munshiganj Road Division, Munshiganj for the procurement of

SL No	Tender ID & Package No	e-Tender Description	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1	1351180, 04-Dev/e-GP/Mundiv/ 2026-2027.	Widening, Reconstruction, Surfacing, Rigid Pavement, Underpass Construction, Protective work and Road Safety work at Ch. 05+000 Km to 08+000 Km Munshiganj (Hatimara)-Kunder Bazar-Sreenagar (Sonbari) Road (Z-8004) of Munshiganj Road Sub-division under Munshiganj Road Division during the year 2026-2027 (WP-05).	15-11-2026 16:00	16-11-2026 12:00	16-11-2026 12:00

1. The above tender is online Tender. Where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-Gp portal and no Offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-Gp system portal (http:/www.eprocure.gov.bd).
2. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National E-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks Branch.
3. Further information and guidelines are available in the National E-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Masud Mahmud Sumon)
ID No-602165
Executive Engineer, RHD
Munshiganj Road Division.

GD-2504

Customs intelligence alleges Tk 85cr revenue evasion by UAGM BD

Company denies allegations

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Customs intelligence officials have accused UAGM BD Limited of evading Tk 85.21 crore in revenue by misusing bonded warehouse facilities, citing idle machinery and discrepancies between declared production and electricity consumption at its factory in Siddhirganj, Narayanganj.

Jashim Uddin Gazi, managing director of the company, denied the allegations, saying all its goods had been exported.

"All our goods have been exported. There is nothing wrong with that," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

In a press statement yesterday, the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID) said a team raided the factory on September 9 and found inadequate arrangements for regular production.

The company, a deemed exporter under the Customs Bond Commissionerate, Dhaka (South), had been importing raw materials duty-free under the bonded warehouse facility and declaring exports through back-to-back letters of credit (LCs), the statement said.

The directorate alleged that the company obtained Utilisation Permissions (UPs) and showed exports on paper while selling the imported duty-free raw materials in the domestic market. Acting on confidential information, a preventive team raided the factory at Mijmiji Dakshin Para in Siddhirganj, the agency said.

Officials found production machinery lying idle in heaps and electricity consumption that was grossly inconsistent with the declared production volume, according to the statement.

Inflation outpaces

FROM PAGE B1

Economists blame deeper labour market problems: widespread informality, weak bargaining power, more jobseekers than jobs, and stagnant investment.

INVESTMENT AND JOBS

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairperson of the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), said the long gap between wages and inflation reflects economic stagnation and a shortage of productive employment.

"Wage growth is not increasing because investment is not taking place, and employment opportunities are not being created. We are not seeing productive employment," he said.

Pay rises are not set by market forces alone, he noted.

"It is not simply a question of supply and demand. It is also a question of institutional bargaining power," he said, adding that workers' leverage is weakened by an abundant labour supply and by state repression of collective organising.

Prolonged erosion of real wages could push more people into poverty, he warned.

"There is also a growing risk that people who were previously above the poverty line could fall back into poverty," he said.

NO SYSTEM TO PROTECT WAGES

Sayema Haque Bidisha, a professor of economics at the University of Dhaka, said the problem starts with the absence of a wage protection system.

"Overall, the main issue is the absence of a system for minimum-wage legislation and regular wage adjustments," she said.

"Informality often means workers lack bargaining power," she said. A union need not be formally registered, but workers need some platform to raise concerns collectively, and that is often missing.

The slowdown has made things worse. "When demand weakens, workers have less bargaining power," she said.

The market is also oversupplied, she said. New entrants each year are joined by earlier jobseekers who found no adequate work and by the underemployed.

"If we consider all these groups, labour supply is substantially greater than the demand for labour," she said.

Demand is weakening too. "Moreover, demand is weakening because employment elasticity is low, particularly in the manufacturing sector," she said.

WHAT THE DATA MAY MISS

Bidisha cautioned that official figures may not show the full picture. The WRI mainly tracks daily wage workers, and while their pay may be rising, others may be doing worse.

"But if we consider the labour market as a whole, wages may actually be declining in many places," she said.

"There may be groups of workers whose wages are actually declining, but we do not necessarily know whether or to what extent this is happening because the available data do not capture the entire labour market."

"INDIVIDUAL CHANGES, REMUNERATION DOES NOT"

Wage stagnation is particularly pronounced in the informal sector, where workers often receive no pay increase even when they change jobs, a BBS official said.

"The individual changes, but the remuneration does not," the official said, pointing to brick kilns, poultry farms and other labour-intensive sectors where employers can readily replace workers without raising wages.

Some daily labourers receive fixed weekly or monthly payments, which can leave them earning less than they would under a daily payment arrangement, the official said. Workers who seek higher wages or leave over mistreatment can be replaced by others willing to accept the same pay.

Garment workers have a formal wage structure, but many in agriculture, poultry and other sectors lack similar protections, the official said.

More women are also taking up farm work as some men move into other jobs, including driving auto-rickshaws, but women are often paid less.

"If you look at places where men previously accounted for perhaps even 80% of the workforce, that proportion is declining. Women are increasingly taking up those agricultural jobs, but their wages are lower than men's," the official said.

Available data do not show where workers go when they leave agriculture, whether to industry or services, and that needs further research, the official said.

Take growth

FROM PAGE B1

increases government borrowing; and greater government borrowing can further restrict financing for private investment."

Selim said the slowdown should not be treated as a cyclical downturn, because it reflects structural and institutional weaknesses built up over many years.

According to him, reviving growth will take more than new credit schemes or investment incentives.

The immediate task, he said, is to win back the confidence of private investors. Businesses need predictable energy supply, greater certainty over taxes and tariffs, better access to finance, improved law and order, and assurance that economic policies will not change abruptly.

He said domestic gas exploration should be accelerated, energy imports diversified and taxes and duties on fuel imports reviewed, so that energy prices can be kept at a tolerable level without creating unsustainable subsidies.

"Revenue reform is equally urgent, but additional revenue should come from broadening the tax base, reducing unjustified exemptions and improving tax administration rather than repeatedly increasing the burden on compliant taxpayers," added the economist.

'SEEK SUPPORT FROM DEVELOPMENT PARTNER'

PRI Principal Economist Ashikur said his team saw this coming. "Our team warned of the stagflationary risks facing Bangladesh eleven months ago."

"My assessment is that we are confronting more than a temporary slowdown: banking distress, energy shortages and weak fiscal capacity are constraining investment and production, while persistent inflation continues to erode household purchasing power. The World Bank's latest assessment reinforces this diagnosis."

He said weak banks are impairing credit and investor confidence, while energy shortages and high production costs deter investment and inflation squeezes consumption.

Ashikur said global uncertainty is making matters worse but is not the sole cause. The inflation outlook is particularly uncertain because of energy costs and supply pressures, and further external shocks would weaken growth while raising prices.

The central difficulty, he said, is that the banking sector needs financial support on a scale the state is not currently equipped to provide.

"Restoring bank capital, protecting small depositors and restructuring distressed institutions require resources, yet the government already faces severe competing demands on a narrow revenue base. In my assessment, financing the banking-sector clean-up entirely from domestic public resources would risk undermining other essential spending."

He said emergency lending can help manage immediate funding pressures but cannot replace capital lost through bad loans. "Prolonged central-bank support to weak banks risks adding to inflation and exchange-rate instability. We must therefore distinguish between keeping banks temporarily liquid and restoring their long-term financial viability."

Bangladesh needs stronger, coordinated support from the IMF, World Bank, ADB and bilateral partners, he said.

"The government should seek concessional budget and balance-of-payments financing, alongside technical assistance for bank restructuring."

"Such support should create room to repair the financial sector while preserving essential public investment and targeted assistance to vulnerable households, not finance an unconditional bailout of bank owners," added Ashikur.

He said, "Without strong development-partner support and decisive fiscal and financial-sector reforms, I do not see a credible route out of the stagflationary trap. External financing can give us the resources and time to manage the adjustment; reforms must ensure that we do not return to the same crisis."

'SPEED UP PUBLIC SPENDING'

BIDS Research Director Iqbal said high interest rates and low investment, both public and private, are likely to bring economic growth down. But it is hard to tell the extent.

"The only way to push the growth rate is to boost public investment in the short run," he said, adding that ADP implementation is the key.

Fertiliser subsidy

FROM PAGE B1

Higher fertiliser prices would immediately raise cultivation costs, while farmers would recover those expenses only after harvest. Their ability to do so would depend on yields, crop prices and access to finance.

Sharecroppers and farmers leasing land face additional pressure. The World Bank estimates that three-quarters of marginal rice farmers consume more rice than they produce, leaving them dependent on market purchases to meet their food needs.

The bank warns that abrupt price increases could force cash-strapped farmers to reduce fertiliser use or struggle with higher costs.

Higher prices would not automatically reduce output or fuel food inflation, however. The impact would depend on the scale of the increase, current fertiliser application rates and whether compensation reached farmers in time.

Launched in April, the government's farmer-card programme aims to provide digital identification and access to agricultural inputs, subsidies and financial assistance.

The FY27 budget allocates Tk 1,062.5 crore to distribute 42.5 lakh cards across 100 upazilas. Eligible landless, marginal and small farmers are to receive Tk 2,500 annually.

On September 30, Agriculture Minister Mohammed Aminur Rashid said 100,047 farmers were scheduled to receive assistance in the first phase, while a database covering around 43 lakh farmers was being developed.

The World Bank recommends linking digital farmer registries to electronic vouchers so assistance can be targeted according to farmers' circumstances and input needs.

But registries based mainly on land ownership could miss landless farmers who cultivate leased plots. Fertiliser requirements also vary by cultivated area, crop and cropping frequency, making a uniform payment an imperfect substitute for existing subsidies.

The Tk 2,500 annual assistance has not been designated as compensation for fertiliser price increases, and no published calculation shows how much of any additional cost it would cover.

The World Bank's e-voucher pilot documentation also identifies beneficiary selection, dealer participation, digital infrastructure, legal requirements and monitoring as issues that need to be addressed before implementation.

A World Bank study based on 2019 survey data found that farmers paid an average of 27 percent above official fertiliser price ceilings.

The Daily Star has also reported farmers paying inflated prices when authorised dealers could not meet demand. Despite reports of adequate national stocks, local shortages and disruptions to the dealer network have left some farmers facing higher prices.

Electronic vouchers could improve the traceability of subsidies, but they would not solve distribution problems on their own. Farmers would still need functioning dealers and timely access to fertiliser.

On October 5, Bangladesh signed a $300 million financing agreement with the World Bank to maintain fertiliser supplies during critical planting periods amid global price volatility and supply disruptions.

The Emergency Support for Food Security Project will run from July 2026 to June 2027, supporting fertiliser imports and smallholder farmers. The Finance Division will implement it in coordination with the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation and the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation.

The financing addresses immediate supply risks, not compensation for higher fertiliser prices. It also does not specify how a replacement voucher system would work. Bangladesh is therefore seeking external financing to maintain fertiliser availability even as international lenders press for changes to the subsidy system.

The World Bank's recommendations point to four requirements for reform: gradual price adjustments, reliable identification of eligible farmers, timely assistance and adequate fertiliser supplies.

Larger farms receive more subsidy in absolute terms because they cultivate more land. That alone does not establish whether their support is excessive or how reducing it would affect production. Nor do aggregate subsidy figures reveal how individual farmers would fare under a replacement system.

The government has yet to announce whether it will adopt market-based fertiliser pricing. If it does, the central question will be whether targeted support reaches small and marginal farmers before they face higher costs.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Chuadanga.
E-mail: eechu@rhd.gov.bd
Phone & Fax: 02-477789139

Memo No.: 35.01.1800.409.05.001.26- 1966 Dated: - 14/10/2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the Procurement of the following works:

Tender ID	Tender No and Description	Last selling Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
1349436	e-GP/CHURD/07/2026-2027. Construction of Rigid Pavement from Ch. 0+000 Km (Chuadanga Rail Station) to Ch 0+198 Km (Chuadanga Rail Station) Length=198.00m of Chuadanga Rail Station - Court More Road (Chuadanga Old Town Road) (Z-7407) under Road Division. Chuadanga, during the year 2026-2027.	25-Oct-2026 16:00	26-Oct-2026 11:00

- 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 (http://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 Member of Schedule Banks for e-GP.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

(Md. Shakirul Islam) 14/10/26
ID No. 602272
Executive Engineer (C.C), RHD
Road Division, Chuadanga.
01730-782778.

GD-2509

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Chittagong Road Division, Chattogram.
Phone: 88-0233363232
www.rhd.chittagong.gov.bd

CORRIGENDUM NOTICE-02

This is an information for all concern that due to unavoidable circumstances the e-Tender Notice circulated vide this office memo no. 35.01.1541.408.31.002.26-4255, date: 14.09.2026 of Chattogram Road Division has been changed as follows:

Package: e-GP/PMP Bridge/06/EE/CRD/RHD/2025-26 (Tender ID- 1332445)

Previous		Replaced	
Tender Last Selling/ Dowloading Date	: 14.10.2026 16:00	Tender Last Selling/ Dowloading Date	: 18.10.2026 16:00
Tender Closing Date & Time	: 15.10.2026 12:00	Tender Closing Date & Time	: 19.10.2026 12:00
Tender Opening Date & Time	: 15.10.2026 12:00	Tender Opening Date & Time	: 19.10.2026 12:00
Tender Security Submission Last Date & Time	: 15.10.2026 11:00	Tender Security Submission Last Date & Time	: 19.10.2026 11:00

Except the above changes, all other Terms and Conditions of the tender will remain unchanged.

14-10-26
(Md. Mohinul Islam)
ID No. 700244
Sub Assistant Engineer,RHD
Chattogram Road Division.

14.10.2026
(Mohammad Yunus)
(ID No. 700158)
Asstt. Engineer, RHD,
(Addl. Charge)
Road Division, Chattogram.

(Md. Maidul Islam)
(ID No. 602361)
Executive Engineer(C.C), RHD
Road Division, Chattogram.

GD-2512

More goods could push UK exports

FROM PAGE B1

He urged businesses to improve product quality, meet international standards, strengthen certification and supply-chain traceability, and invest in packaging and branding.

Better access to market intelligence and stronger compliance would also help exporters compete in the UK, he said.

Taskeen also called for the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to boost bilateral trade and investment.

James Goldman, acting British high commissioner to Bangladesh, said the two countries have longstanding relations and a growing trade and investment partnership.

He said continued access to the UK market after LDC graduation would help businesses plan ahead, expand operations and make investment decisions with greater certainty. He hoped Bangladeshi businesses would take advantage of the opportunities.

Ellie Parker, regional trade adviser for South Asia, Central Asia and the South Caucasus at the British High Commission, led a technical session on the DCTS.

She covered market access under the scheme, including after LDC graduation, preferential tariff arrangements and the practical steps exporters must take to benefit.

During a panel discussion, speakers from the National Board of Revenue's Customs Bond Commissionerate in Chattogram, the Footwear, Leather Goods and Accessories Exporters Association, Hortex Foundation, Meghna Group, Cupcake Exports Ltd, MUC Foods Ltd and Bangladesh Flexible Packaging Industries Association talked about ways to expand non-RMG exports.

Govt wants to shift from Chinese loans

FROM PAGE B1

Partners agreed the government was addressing a fragile economy transparently and trying to rein in inflation and ease the fuel burden despite the Middle East crisis, and welcomed safety net programmes such as the Family Card and Farmers Card.

He said the tax system would be digitised and harassment reduced without raising rates. The tax-GDP ratio (tax collection as a share of the economy), below 7 percent under the previous government, was showing signs of improvement.

চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন
প্রকৌশল বিভাগ
নগরভবন, টাইগারপাস, চট্টগ্রাম
www.ccc.gov.bd

স্মারক নং-৪৬.১১.১৬০০.০০২.৩৯.২৬.০১/১০৮ তারিখ- ১২-১০-২০২৬ইং

"পুনঃনিলামে দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি"

০১	মন্ত্রণালয়	স্থানীয় সরকার পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মন্ত্রণালয়	
০২	এজেন্সী	চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন	
০৩	সংগ্রহকারী সংস্থার নাম	প্রকৌশল বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন	
০৪	বিজ্ঞপ্তির উদ্দেশ্য		
০৫	দরপত্রের স্বাক্ষর নম্বর	প্রযোজ্য নহে	
প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্যাবলী ঃ			
০৬	সংগ্রহকারী পদ্ধতি	ও,টি,এম	
যোগানদাতার বিবরণ ঃ			
০৭	বাজেট ও অর্থের উৎস	প্রযোজ্য নহে	
বিস্তারিত বিবরণ ঃ			
০৮	টেন্ডার প্যাকেজ নং	প্রযোজ্য নহে	
০৯	টেন্ডার প্যাকেজ এর নাম	নিলাম প্রক্রিয়া	
১০	বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ	তারিখ ঃ ১২.১০.২০২৬	
১১	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	তারিখ ঃ ২৬.১০.২০২৬	সময় ঃ ৪ টা
১২	টেন্ডার গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ ঃ ২৭.১০.২০২৬	সময় ঃ ১২.০০টা
১৩	টেন্ডার খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ ঃ ২৭.১০.২০২৬	সময় ঃ ২.৩০ টা
১৪	অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা	ঠিকানা সমূহ	
	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট বিক্রয়	প্রকৌশল বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন	
	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট গ্রহণ	নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী ডি-২, কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন।	
	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট খোলা	দরপত্র উন্মুক্তকরণ কমিটি, চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন।	
কোটেশন দাতার তথ্যাবলী ঃ			
১৫	দরপত্র দাতার যোগ্যতা	চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশনের ও অন্যান্য সংস্থার বৈধ তালিকাভুক্ত, ট্রেড লাইসেন্স ও সদ্য নবায়নের সনদ, আর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতা, আয়কর, ভ্যাট ও অভিজ্ঞতা সনদ দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করিতে হইবে। কোন কালো তালিকাভুক্ত ঠিকাদার ও ব্যাংক হইতে দেউলিয়া ঘোষিত এমন দরদাতা অংশগ্রহণ করিতে পারিবে না।	
১৬	কাজের বিস্তারিত বিবরণ	সিডিউলে উল্লেখ থাকিবে	
১৭	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্টের মূল্য ও ধরন	প্রতিসেট ২,০০০/- টাকা (পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট) বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পরবর্তী তারিখের হইতে হইবে।	
১৮	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট গ্রহণ	উর্দ্ধৃত দরের ১০% হারে মেয়র, চসিক অনুকূলে বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পরবর্তী তারিখের পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট প্রদান পূর্বক সিডিউলের সাথে দাখিল করিতে হইবে। (এম,আই,সি,আর নং বিহীন পে-অর্ডার গ্রহণযোগ্য হইবে না)	
কাজের বিবরণ ঃ			

১৯	কাজের নং	কাজের নাম	কাজের স্থান	প্রতি সেট দরপত্রের মূল্য	নিরাপত্তা জামানতের পরিমাণ (লক্ষ টাকায়)
		সুগন্ধা আ/এ মুখে স্থিত অফিসার্স কোয়ার্টার জরাজীর্ণ পুরাতন ভবন ভেঙ্গে পুনঃনিলামে বিক্রয় প্রসঙ্গে।	সুগন্ধা আ/এ	২,০০০/-	উর্দ্ধৃত দরের ১০%

দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তা ঃ		
২০		মাহামুদ শাফকাত আমিন
২১		নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী অঞ্চল-২
২২		চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন
২৩	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার ফোন, ফ্যাক্স ও ই-মেইল	

ক) দরপত্র আহবানকারী সংস্থা যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন।
খ) দরপত্র মূল্যায়ন কমিটির সুপারিশ ও যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রশাসনিক অনুমোদন পাওয়ার পর নোটিফিকেশন অব এওয়ার্ড প্রদান করা হইবে।
গ) দরপত্রের সকল শর্তাবলী সিডিউলে বিস্তারিত বর্ণিত আছে।
ঘ) দরপত্রের বিস্তারিত তথ্যাবলী প্রকৌশল বিভাগ হইতে সংগ্রহ করা যাইবে।
ঙ) দরপত্রের আর্নেস্টমানি ও নিরাপত্তা জামানতের জন্য জমাকৃত পে-অর্ডার দরপত্রের আহবানের পরবর্তী নির্ধারিত তারিখের মধ্যে হইতে হইবে।
চ) কাটাকাটিজনিত ও অসম্পূর্ণ পূরণকৃত বি ও কিউ বাতিল বলিয়া গণ্য হইবে।
ছ) নিলামকারীকে ভ্যাট আয়করের টাকা উদ্ধৃত দরের ২৫% হারে আলাদাভাবে উল্লেখ করিতে হইবে।

চসিক/জস-৫৪/২৬-২৭ (৮" X৩)

মাহামুদ শাফকাত আমিন
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী অঞ্চল-২
চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন

GD-2505

South Asia's youth boom: opportunity or pressure?

IMF says investment in people is key

MD MEHEDI HASAN, *from Bangkok*

South Asia's young population presents both an opportunity and a challenge for policymakers, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said yesterday.

At a press conference on the Global Policy Agenda at the 2026 Annual Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in Bangkok, the IMF said advanced economies and some emerging markets are ageing fast, while Africa and South Asia are experiencing a youth bulge, an unusually large share of young people in the population.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva took part in the conference.

According to a Unicef report, South Asia has the world's largest population of young people, with more than 340 million adolescents and over 700 million people under the age of 24.

In Bangladesh, nearly 46 million people, or one-fourth of the population, are aged 15-29, making it one of the region's largest youth populations, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The IMF said countries with growing youth populations should prioritise investment in education, skills and health. Modernising labour markets requires expanding retraining opportunities, increasing labour force participation, easing worker mobility and supporting workers through transitions rather than trying to preserve specific jobs.



The IMF said countries with growing youth populations should prioritise investment in education, skills and health.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

The IMF also described a vibrant private sector as essential for generating growth and employment. It recommended simplifying regulations, strengthening competition and governance, expanding access to finance and designing efficient tax systems while maintaining openness to trade and investment.

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital finance offers new opportunities but could also disrupt labour markets and widen inequality, the multilateral lender said. Realising the benefits of AI will require investment in digital infrastructure, sustainable energy and skills, alongside policies to ensure productivity gains translate into broad improvements in living standards.

The IMF urged governments to reprioritise public spending to protect growth-supporting investment and essential social expenditure.

$18,000 foreign travel quota, but limited ways to spend it

MIZANUR RAHMAN

The Bangladesh Bank's decision to increase the annual foreign exchange entitlement for adult travellers from $12,000 to $18,000 is welcome. It recognises the rising cost of international travel. Yet a higher annual entitlement offers little benefit if travellers cannot use it for ordinary and essential expenses.

I experienced this contradiction during a family trip to the United States.

I needed to buy domestic air tickets in the US for myself, my wife and my child. Like many cost-conscious travellers, I looked for cheaper fares. But when the combined fare exceeded $300, I could not complete the transaction because of the limit on online international card payments.

Although I had sufficient funds within my approved travel entitlement, I could not use them for a legitimate family expense.

The problem became more serious after I landed at Los Angeles International Airport with my daughter around midnight. I could either take an expensive airport taxi or use a much cheaper app-based service such as Uber. Unfortunately, my Bangladeshi-issued card could not be used to pay for the Uber ride.

With a tired child beside me, I had no practical choice but to take the more expensive option. The journey cost more than twice as much as an Uber ride would have.

The next morning, I asked a friend living in New York to add his credit card to my Uber account. A genuine traveller with an approved foreign exchange entitlement should not have to depend on someone else's foreign card to pay for basic transport.



The $18,000 travel entitlement means little if travellers cannot use their cards for legitimate expenses such as flights, hotels and basic transport abroad.

Recent measures allowing international cards to be used for certain airline ticket purchases are positive. But travellers do not always buy directly from airlines. Many use platforms such as Trip.com or compare fares on Skyscanner to find cheaper options.

The same issue arises with hotels. Travellers frequently use Booking.com or Agoda because these platforms often offer better rates than hotels' own websites. A policy that permits payment to a direct provider but restricts payments through a recognised, lower-cost intermediary simply makes travel more expensive.

When legitimate card payments fail, travellers may be forced to carry more cash or turn to informal payment channels. This weakens the formal financial system rather than protecting it.

Bangladesh must, of course, protect its foreign exchange reserves and prevent misuse. But restrictions should be proportionate to the actual risk. Banks already maintain detailed transaction records, while financial and tax systems are becoming increasingly integrated. Authorities can identify and investigate suspicious transactions without blocking routine travel expenses.

The Bangladesh Bank should therefore consider raising the single-transaction ceiling to a reasonable level and introducing clear exemptions for genuine travel services. These should cover domestic air tickets purchased abroad, recognised hotel-booking platforms, app-based transport, rail tickets and car rentals.

Banks should also receive uniform instructions so that legitimate payments are not declined simply because a merchant is classified as an online intermediary rather than an airline or hotel.

The principle is simple: if the state authorises a traveller to use a certain amount of foreign currency, that person should be able to spend it on legitimate, traceable travel expenses.

Increasing the annual entitlement to $18,000 is progress. But the reform will remain incomplete until it works in real life, at the airport, on booking platforms and during a late-night journey with a child.

The writer is the head of operations and CFO of The Daily Star

Garment workers' wages need review as living costs rise

Factory owners, union leaders and economists say

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Factory owners, trade union leaders and economists yesterday called for a review of garment workers' wages to reflect the rising cost of living.

They made the call at a seminar organised by the Garment Workers' Trade Union Center (GWTUC) at the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka.

In a statement presented at the seminar, the GWTUC said the latest minimum wage for garment workers was fixed in 2023 and took effect on December 1 that year.

The minimum monthly wage was raised from Tk 8,000 to Tk 12,500, but the increase was only half of what workers had demanded, the statement said. Since then, the cost of living has continued to rise, while the minimum wage has remained unchanged.

The statement estimated that goods and services that cost Tk 8,000 in 2018 would now require Tk 14,500 to Tk 15,000 to buy.

Despite nominal wage increases, workers' purchasing power has therefore declined, it said.

Workers' incomes are insufficient to cover essential expenses such as food, rent, healthcare, education and transport, according to the statement. Many are forced to work excessive overtime but still struggle to maintain a basic standard of living for their families.



PHOTO: STAR/FILE

It said wage determination should take into account the actual cost of living, inflation, productivity and the equitable distribution of wealth generated by the industry.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, former president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, said workers' interests and the garment industry's interests were not contradictory.

Fair wages, better working conditions, skills development and investment in technology could strengthen the industry's long-term competitiveness, he said.

Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said employers supported the formation of a wage board, but the timing of its formation was for the government to decide.

He said the BGMEA's current leadership would not interfere in the selection of workers' representatives to the board.

Employers would also need time to implement a new wage structure, he added.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, president of Knowledge Hub Institute Trust, said garment workers had already taken to the streets demanding higher wages.

Although the minimum monthly wage for the lowest grade is Tk 12,500, workers in a lower grade are paid Tk 9,875, he said.

Moazzem urged workers to remain united, select their own representatives to the wage board and announce their choices publicly.

He also called for garment workers' wages to reflect the industry's productivity.

GWTUC President Montu Ghosh chaired the seminar.

PKSF signs Tk 500cr solar power deal with Finance Division

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) has signed a Tk 500 crore agreement with the Finance Division of the Ministry of Finance to expand the use of solar power across Bangladesh.

Nazneen Sultana, joint secretary of the Finance Division, and AKM Nuruzzaman, senior general manager of PKSF, signed the agreement at a ceremony held in Dhaka on Tuesday, according to a press release.

Under the initiative, PKSF will extend loans to end users at an interest rate of 6 percent through its partner organisations.

To this end, PKSF has launched a specialised Renewable Energy Financing Programme to facilitate financing for solar power installations and accelerate the adoption of renewable energy across the country.

The initiative is expected to strengthen Bangladesh's energy security by diversifying energy sources and promoting wider access to clean, renewable power, the release added.

It will also contribute to environmentally sustainable energy solutions, reduce reliance on conventional power sources and encourage greater private-sector participation in the country's transition towards sustainable development.

Global economy weathers shocks, but risks mount: IMF

MD MEHEDI HASAN, *from Bangkok*

The global economy has weathered a series of shocks better than expected, but repeated disruptions are eroding countries' capacity to respond, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Wednesday.

Presenting the fund's Global Policy Agenda at a press conference during the 2026 Annual Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in Thailand, she said global growth is projected at 3.1 percent in 2026, unchanged from the April forecast but below last year's 3.4 percent.

The IMF said the stable headline figure masks "divergent outcomes" across economies.

Two opposing forces are at work. Wars in the Middle East and Ukraine are disrupting supply chains and driving up commodity prices, while rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are boosting investment, trade and stock markets.

The energy shock proved less damaging than feared, thanks to flexible supply responses, inventory drawdowns, lower oil dependency and fiscal support.

A downturn has been avoided "for now", the IMF said, but growth remains modest and inflationary pressures persist.

Energy exporters not directly affected by the conflicts, economies integrated into technology value chains, such as Thailand and Malaysia, and countries with strategic reserves have fared better. Energy importers, countries with limited policy buffers and those less exposed to the technology boom are facing greater strain.

Many low-income and fragile states fall into the latter group, raising the risk of widening income disparities across countries.

ERODING BUFFERS

Policy buffers have weakened, the IMF warned. Global public debt is approaching 100 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), while rising sovereign bond yields in advanced economies are putting additional pressure on emerging and developing economies, particularly low-income countries facing high debt-service costs.



IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva gestures during a briefing at the IMF-World Bank Group annual meetings in Bangkok yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Other risks include trade tensions, El Niño's potential impact on food markets, a possible market correction linked to AI, vulnerabilities in non-bank financial institutions and cyber threats.

Georgieva said cyber threats were already causing real-world damage, citing an incident in France in which a cyberattack caused refrigerator temperatures to rise, spoiling food. As such attacks become more frequent, they could target financial systems, turning cyber risk into a financial stability concern.

POLICY PRIORITIES

The IMF urged governments to protect people rather than prices, recommending temporary, targeted support for vulnerable households instead of broad price controls.

Credible fiscal consolidation remains a top priority, the fund said. A restrictive monetary stance is generally still warranted but should be calibrated to country-specific conditions. Monetary policy should tighten further if inflation expectations risk becoming unanchored.

Temporary foreign exchange intervention may be justified to curb disorderly currency movements, but it should not replace broader macroeconomic adjustment. Financial supervisors should also contain excessive leverage, particularly in technology-related exposures.

The fund said its "Bangkok Blueprint" aims to strengthen safeguards for digital finance, improve cyber protection and combat digital fraud.

It also cited research suggesting that AI could raise sub-Saharan Africa's GDP by up to 4 percent cumulatively over a decade.

For low-income countries, the IMF stressed the need to address debt vulnerabilities despite declining official development assistance. It said it was involved in debt restructuring cases under the Common Framework.