Grabbing a bargain: Japan's claw machines cash in on inflation

AFP, *Kawasaki*

With one eye on her baby in a pushchair, Minae Kamata operates an arcade machine in a Tokyo suburb, manipulating a claw to grab not a stuffed toy but a pack of toilet paper.

As inflation weighs on Japanese households, huge arcades on the outskirts of major cities are installing claw machines filled with eggs, rice, laundry detergent and other necessities.

The "shop-and-play destinations" merge essential buying with entertainment so that families do not feel a choice between bringing home the basics and treating themselves to a day out.

Kamata, a 25-year-old housewife, told AFP she won her prize after only two tries, at 100 yen ($0.64) per attempt.

"If you're a bit lucky, it's the same as buying at a discount," she told AFP.

Experts say the trend is a response to Japan's prolonged wave of inflation, with prices having outpaced wage growth for years.

"Spending on food and everyday products has been continuously declining for five years because these have become targets for budget cuts," said Naoko Kuga, a consumer behaviour specialist at the NLI Research Institute.

So "retailers are trying to make purchasing fun to encourage buying" and ease a sense of guilt, she added.

Claw machines were already booming in Japan before the inflation wave.

The "prize game" market more than doubled in 10 years to reach 417.7 billion yen ($2.7 billion) in 2024, and now accounts for nearly 70 percent of arcade revenues, according to the Japan Amusement Industry Association.

In recent years, families in search of everyday items have become a larger part of their clientele.



A woman organises a pack of paper towels she won at a claw machine game at the Benex amusement park in Kawasaki on October 5. PHOTO: **AFP**



Ariful Islam, chairman of IPDC Finance; Rizwan Dawood Shams, managing director; and other senior officials of the institution are seen inaugurating a new branch in Rajshahi, recently. PHOTO: **IPDC FINANCE**

IPDC Finance opens new branch in Rajshahi

STAR BUSINESS DESK

IPDC Finance PLC, one of Bangladesh's first private-sector financial institutions, has inaugurated a new branch in Rajshahi as part of its efforts to expand its presence and bring financial services closer to people and businesses across the country.

The branch is located at Balughata House, House №22, Sultanabad Station Road, Rajshahi. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Ariful Islam, chairman of IPDC Finance PLC; Rizwan Dawood Shams, managing director; and other senior officials of the institution, according to a press release.

The opening of the Rajshahi branch reflects IPDC Finance's focus on strengthening its service network and improving accessibility for customers across Bangladesh. Through its presence in Rajshahi, the institution aims to build stronger relationships with local communities, entrepreneurs, and businesses while addressing their evolving financial needs.

As one of the country's pioneering private-sector financial institutions, IPDC Finance remains committed to providing financial solutions to support individual aspirations, entrepreneurial initiatives, and business growth. The new branch is expected to strengthen the institution's engagement with customers in Rajshahi and surrounding areas, creating greater opportunities for financial inclusion and economic development.

Commenting on the inauguration, Ariful Islam, chairman of IPDC Finance PLC, said, "The inauguration of our new branch in Rajshahi marks an important step in strengthening IPDC Finance's presence across Bangladesh. Rajshahi has considerable potential for entrepreneurship, business expansion, and economic development. We look forward to building meaningful, long-term relationships with the people and businesses of this region and supporting their aspirations through our financial services."

Rizwan Dawood Shams, managing director of IPDC Finance PLC, said, "At IPDC Finance, we believe that being closer to our customers enables us to understand their needs better and deliver more meaningful financial solutions. The inauguration of our Rajshahi branch reflects our commitment to expanding accessibility, enhancing customer experience, and supporting individuals and businesses in achieving their financial goals. We are delighted to extend our services to the people of Rajshahi and look forward to becoming a trusted financial partner in the region."

Through the inauguration of the new branch in Rajshahi, IPDC Finance reaffirms its commitment to expanding its reach, strengthening customer relationships, and contributing to Bangladesh's economic development.

Community Bank promotes Bangla QR adoption

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Community Bank Bangladesh PLC organised a programme to expand the use of Bangla QR, helping customers and businesses adopt digital payments and participate in an increasingly digital economy.

Held on the ground floor of Police Plaza Concord, adjacent to the bank's head office in Dhaka recently, the programme highlighted the role of accessible and secure transactions in supporting business growth and financial inclusion.

Md Anis Ur Rahman, deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, attended the programme as the chief guest, according to a press release.

The special guests were Md Akram Hossain, BPM (Sheba), additional inspector general of police (finance), Bangladesh Police, and director of Community Bank Bangladesh PLC; and Ahmad Muyeed, BPM (Sheba), additional deputy inspector general, Police Kallan Trust, Bangladesh Police, and director of Community Bank Bangladesh PLC.

Mohammed Emtiaz Uddin, managing director of Community Bank Bangladesh PLC, and senior officials of the bank were also present.

Delivering the opening remarks, Ahmad Muyeed, additional deputy inspector general, Police Kallan Trust, Bangladesh Police, and director of Community Bank Bangladesh PLC, highlighted the importance of public awareness and customer confidence in encouraging digital transactions. He emphasised the responsible use of technology and accessible services to help more people adopt digital payments.

Speaking next, Md Akram Hossain, additional inspector general of police (finance), Bangladesh Police, and director of Community Bank Bangladesh PLC, stressed the importance of customer-friendly services in expanding digital transactions. He highlighted the need for continued engagement with customers and businesses to build familiarity with and trust in modern payment methods.

In his address, Md Anis Ur Rahman, deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, called for coordinated efforts by banks, financial institutions, businesses, and customers to build an accessible, secure, and inclusive digital payment system. He emphasised that collective participation was essential to extending the benefits of digital transactions across the economy.

Mohammed Emtiaz Uddin, managing director of Community Bank Bangladesh PLC, subsequently outlined the bank's approach to making technology serve the everyday needs of customers and businesses. He emphasised that simpler transactions, greater convenience, and customer confidence must guide the bank's digital initiatives.

He reaffirmed the bank's commitment to promoting Bangla QR through sustained engagement with customers and merchants, helping turn access to digital services into regular, practical use.

Through wider adoption of Bangla QR, Community Bank aims to help small traders and entrepreneurs serve customers more conveniently and bring more everyday transactions into formal financial channels. The initiative forms part of the bank's broader efforts to improve business efficiency, expand financial participation, and contribute to Bangladesh's economic development.



Md Anis Ur Rahman, deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, Md Akram Hossain, BPM (Sheba), additional inspector general of police (finance), Bangladesh Police, and director of Community Bank Bangladesh; and Ahmad Muyeed, BPM (Sheba), additional deputy inspector general, Police Kallan Trust, Bangladesh Police, and director of the bank, are seen posing for photographs at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently. PHOTO: **COMMUNITY BANK**



Polat Şen, president of the consumer durables group at Koç Holding; Zafer Üstüner, chief commercial officer for Asia, Russia and South Africa at Beko and CEO of Arçelik Hitachi; Nihat Bayız, chief production and technology officer at Beko, and MHM Fairoz, managing director and CEO of Singer Bangladesh are seen in front of Beko's manufacturing plant in Narayanganj, recently. PHOTO: **SINGER BANGLADESH**

Beko reaffirms commitment to Bangladesh growth

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Senior executives from Koç Holding, Türkiye's leading investment holding company, and Beko, the flagship of Koç Group in the consumer durables industry, recently visited Beko's manufacturing plant in Naraynganj, Singer | Beko concept stores, and Singer Bangladesh's corporate headquarters, reaffirming their commitment to expanding Singer's operations in Bangladesh.

The delegation included Polat Şen, president of the consumer durables group at Koç Holding; Zafer Üstüner, chief commercial officer for Asia, Russia and South Africa at Beko and CEO of Arçelik Hitachi; and Nihat Bayız, chief production and technology officer at Beko, according to a press release.

The visit was hosted by MHM Fairoz, managing director and CEO of Singer Bangladesh, a subsidiary of Beko, and highlighted Bangladesh's importance to the group's global operations.

Singer Bangladesh continues its transformation across manufacturing, retail, and employee experience. Key milestones include the opening of a new manufacturing plant and concept stores, alongside the relocation of its headquarters to a facility aligned with Beko's global workplace standards.

These developments reflect the company's vision of bringing Koç Group and Beko's expertise to Bangladesh to strengthen manufacturing capabilities and enhance the experience of both consumers and employees. Continued investment builds on this foundation, enabling Singer Bangladesh to develop its capabilities and respond to the evolving needs of Bangladeshi households.

Koç Group's presence also contributes to the longstanding economic ties between Türkiye and Bangladesh. Bilateral trade reached approximately $1.36 billion in 2025, with an ambition to increase the volume to $2 billion, opening further opportunities for economic cooperation.

TSMC seeks factory-equipment alternatives to thwart China's rare earths grip, sources say

REUTERS, *Taipei/Singapore*

Taiwan's TSMC is exploring alternatives to rare-earth components in factory equipment, three people familiar with the matter said, aiming to reduce the risk that Beijing's export controls could disrupt operations at plants that make the world's most advanced chips.

The move, reported for the first time, underscores how China's grip on rare earths has become a vulnerability for the global semiconductor industry after the country last year put certain rare-earth materials, magnets and related processing technology under export controls, requiring licences.

Rare-earth magnets are commonly used in motors that power moving parts in industrial equipment, including machinery found in highly automated factories such as those operated by TSMC. A shortage of such specialised parts could disrupt chip production for customers in smartphone, AI system, data centre and defence supply chains.

TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker, has surveyed suppliers on using rare-earth-free motors in factory-automation equipment, according to three industry executives briefed by the company on its plans. One of the people said the effort was driven by concerns about potential supply disruptions from China.

The discussions remain at an early stage and have not yet resulted in a broad rollout of rare-earth-free equipment, according to two of the people. TSMC declined to comment.

TSMC's efforts follow statements from the United States and Taiwan that they would begin looking for ways to reduce their reliance on Chinese rare-earth and critical-mineral supply chains. In June, Raymond F. Greene, the director of the American Institute in Taiwan, Washington's de facto embassy in Taipei, said the United States is working with Taiwan and other partners to develop alternative sources of supply, expand processing capacity and build more resilient supply chains.