Politics Enters Uncharted Territory After ICT Verdict

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Business Outlook

From the Editor

Maximize Chattogram Port's Potential, But Protect National Security

The quiet revival of historic connectivity across the eastern subcontinent has placed Chattogram Port at the centre of a transformative moment. For decades, much of the Himalayan region—including India's Seven Sisters, Nepal, and Bhutan—was cut off from its shortest access to the sea because of geopolitical ruptures dating back to 1965. Now, renewed interest in transshipment through Bangladesh is restoring a natural economic geography that existed well before 1947. The Asian Development Bank's 2021 brief underscored a simple truth: Chattogram offers the most efficient maritime outlet for the landlocked and semi-landlocked Himalayan states. For India's northeastern region, the route through the narrow Siliguri Corridor is long, costly, and frequently disrupted during monsoon months. By contrast, transshipment through Chattogram shortens travel distance dramatically, reduces logistics costs, and cuts transport time almost by half. The port's proximity to the demand centres of the Seven Sisters makes it a practical route for essential commodities such as food grains, fertilisers, and industrial inputs. Recent developments highlight how this potential is expanding beyond India's northeast. Bhutan has just completed its first cargo trial through Bangladesh under the 2023 transit agreement, marking a significant step toward diversifying its access to the sea. Nepal, too, remains optimistic about greater utilisation of Mongla and Chattogram ports, especially through the Rohanpur–Singhabad railway transit route. These steps reflect a wider regional acknowledgement of Bangladesh's logistical advantage and the strategic value of a revived subregional transport network. Massive investment trends reinforce this shift. Japan's deep-sea port at Matarbari, the World Bank–funded Bay Terminal, and the leasing of key terminals to international operators such as APM Terminals demonstrate the emergence of a modern maritime ecosystem capable of handling large regional cargo flows. With proper management, Bangladesh stands to benefit economically through increased trade volumes, logistics services, and employment opportunities, while also enhancing its diplomatic leverage as a key connector in South Asia. However, ambition must be matched with caution. India's recent termination of Bangladesh's access to its territory for third-country exports serves as a reminder that regional cooperation is often shaped by political considerations. Therefore, Bangladesh must negotiate all port and transit arrangements carefully—ensuring reciprocity, safeguarding sovereignty, and prioritising national security.

The opportunity before Bangladesh is historic. By managing partnerships wisely, modernising port operations, and ensuring security-sensitive policy-making, the country can restore Chattogram's past prominence while shaping a more interconnected, economically vibrant Himalayan subregion. ■

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POLITICS

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NBR Raises Revenue Target For FY26 By 53,000C

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has increased the revenue target for FY26 by Tk53,000 crore. The new target was approved in a notification issued on November 24. The notification said that at the beginning of the financial year, the NBR had set a revenue collection target of Tk499,000 crore. As a result of the new adjustment, the NBR will now have to collect Tk554,000 crore in the remaining seven months. The updated statistics of the NBR say that the total revenue collection in the first four months of the current financial year was Tk119,478 crore. The target for this period was Tk136,697 crore. That is, the deficit from the target stood at Tk17,219 crore, which is 12.60% lower. The revenue growth in the same period of the last financial year was 15.54%. Although growth is at a positive level this year, the growing gap with the target has put additional

pressure on the NBR, according to those concerned. Several officials of the revenue administration said that special initiatives are now needed to slow down economic activity, reduce import duties and increase taxpayer compliance. In the remaining period, strict monitoring of tax management, collection of arrears of taxes and policy-supportive measures may be required to achieve the new target. ■

Pakistan To Export One Lakh Tonne Rice To Bangladesh

Pakistani state authorities have issued a tender to purchase one lakh tonnees of rice from private companies and then export the consignment to Bangladesh. The Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) issued the tender on November 20 but it came to public attention on November 24, the DAWN reported. It would be Pakistan's latest export to Bangladesh since the two countries launched government-to-government trade in February, following decades of frail ties. Pakistani companies have until Friday morning to submit proposals, TCP said in the tender notification. The tender invites “separate sealed bids” from companies, partnerships and sole proprietors for buying 1,00,000 tonnes of long grain white rice (IRRI-6) “for export to Bangladesh in the shape of break bulk cargo” through Karachi ports, DAWN reported. According to Reuters, traders regarded the tender as a possible move to bring Pakistani rice into Bangladesh’s import supplies, with market expectations that Indian-origin rice will be used to supply some recent purchases by Bangladesh. ■

BB To Keep Policy Interest Rate Unchanged

Considering the country's current economic situation, inflation rate and pressure from the foreign sector, Bangladesh Bank has decided to keep the policy interest rate unchanged. The central bank said that inflation may temporarily rise due to the possibility of increasing consumer demand during the upcoming national elections and the month of Ramadan. This information was given in a press release of Bangladesh Bank on November 18. Earlier, a meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) was held, presided by governor Ahsan H Mansur. ■

US Envoy Visits Sonargaon Seeds Crushing Mills

US ambassador to Bangladesh, Tracey Ann Jacobson, visited Sonargaon Seeds Crushing Mills Limited, a sister concern of Meghna Group of Industries, on November 20, according to a press release. She was welcomed by MGI directors Tanjima Mostafa and Tasnim Mostafa, executive director and head of export Sameera Rahman. Other representatives from the US Embassy and senior officials of MGI were also present. During her tour, the US ambassador observed the operations of the soya bean crushing facilities, particularly noting the handling and processing of imported US soya beans — a reflection of the deepening agricultural trade ties between the two countries. The visit underscored the ongoing collaboration following the landmark $1 billion purchase commitment made earlier in November 2025 by a consortium of Bangladesh's top three soy crushing companies, including MGI, in partnership with the US Soybean Export Council. ■

Canada Urges Bangladesh's Supply Chain Competitiveness

Canadian Senior Assistant Deputy Minister for International Trade and Chief Trade Commissioner Sara Wilshaw on November 23 said that her country wants to facilitate Bangladesh to be more competitive globally in terms of enhancing supply chain ecosystem. "The Canadian automotive sector is now looking for new market diversification, in that case Bangladesh could be a great market," she was addressing while meeting between Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) and Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Ajit Singh at DCCI Gulshan Center in Dhaka. Canadian High Commissioner Ajit Singh said that to strengthen the contact between the businesses, chamber to chamber relation is more important. He said the private sector of Bangladesh is engine of growth of this country, and Canada is very much interested to boost its trade with Bangladesh. ■

New Gas Reserves Found In Old Well At Kailashtila Field

New gas reserves have been found by Petrobangla, through a workover of Well No 1 at the Kailashtila gas field in Golapganj upazila of Sylhet. The well is expected to supply five million cubic feet of gas per day to the national grid, said project director of the Kailashtila-1 workover, Shafiqul Islam. The Kailashtila gas field, operated by Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (SGFL), has nine wells. Gas was first discovered in Well No 1 in 1961 and production continued — with a brief pause — until 2019. In 2023, workover operations began on several old wells across the country. Under SGFL, workover activities are underway at 14 wells. Seven of these — including Kailashtila-1 — have already been completed and all seven have yielded new gas reserves. "Once the remaining tasks are completed, the managing director of Sylhet Gas Fields Limited will formally announce the discovery,"

he said. According to SGFL sources, the newly discovered gas could be added to the national grid within two to three days, once all procedures are completed. BAPEX began the workover at Kailashtila-1 about four months ago. Gas was detected at a depth of around 22,000 feet during the process. ■

Politics Enters Uncharted Territory

Historic ICT Verdict Against Hasina

SMS Hasan

With the death sentences handed down to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Bangladesh has stepped into a new and contentious chapter of its political history. This marks the first time a former head of government has been given the highest punishment by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), which found them guilty of crimes against humanity committed during the July mass uprising in which about 1,400 civilians were killed by security forces.

The verdict has significantly reshaped the political landscape. The Awami League— which ruled the country for more than 15 years and is now banned from political activities for alleged terror links—faces an uphill battle to regain its footing. Many analysts argue that the party's fall is more severe than the setback it experienced after the assassination of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. This time, the downfall occurred after a mass uprising, amid widespread accusations of authoritarian rule, political repression, and an overdependence on neighbouring India.

As Bangladesh prepares for the national election scheduled for early February 2026, all major political forces—including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, and the newly formed National Citizen Party (NCP)—are attempting to win over Awami League's considerable grassroots support base. Even after its collapse, the party is believed to command at least 15 percent of the electorate, a bloc that could significantly alter outcomes in closely contested constituencies.

The BNP has already announced candidates in 237 seats, keeping the remainder aside for alliance partners. Jamaat has completed its internal candidate selection but has not made a formal announcement, as negotiations continue with several Islamic parties for coordinated seat-sharing. Initially, the NCP considered joining either the BNP or Jamaat alliance, but these efforts did not

materialise. The party has instead declared plans to form a separate coalition with groups that remain unaffiliated with the two larger blocs. The exact alliance landscape, however, will only become clear after the Election Commission releases the official election schedule.

Various pre-election surveys show that the BNP currently enjoys the highest popularity among political parties, though its standing has weakened in some regions due to the behaviour of local-level leaders and activists. A major challenge for the BNP has emerged from within: internal feuds triggered by the announcement of party nominations. In several constituencies, contenders who failed to secure nomination are openly resisting the chosen candidates, leading to fragmentation within the party ranks. If the leadership does not take decisive action against rebel factions, these rifts could severely hinder the BNP's chances in key seats.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announces a primary list of candidates' names for 237 constituencies at the party's Gulshan office

Alliance partners of the BNP are also expected to face a disadvantage. They will not be able to use the widely recognised BNP election symbol, forcing them to rely on their own lesser-known party symbols. This lack of uniform branding may weaken their visibility and confuse voters, particularly in rural areas.

Another significant factor in this election will be the new generation of voters. More than 30 percent of the electorate is composed of young citizens who did not have the opportunity to vote freely in the past decade. Analysts believe that these voters are more likely to prioritise individual candidates' integrity, competence, and track record—rather than traditional party loyalty or election symbols. Many senior voters may adopt similar behaviour. As a result, personal credibility and local reputation could have a greater impact on electoral outcomes than at any point in recent history.

With shifting alliances, internal conflicts, and an unpredictable new voter base, the 2026 election is shaping up to be one of the most complex and consequential in Bangladesh's political evolution.

Hasina, Asaduzzaman Sentenced To Death; Mamun Gets 5 Years Jail

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 on November 17 sentenced former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal to death in a case filed over crimes against humanity committed during last year's July-August mass uprising.

The three-member tribunal, headed by Chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza Majumder began delivering the verdict around 12:30pm unveiling a 453-page judgment. The tribunal found all three accused guilty of the charges brought against them.

Sheikh Hasina was sentenced to death on two counts of crimes against humanity. Asaduzzaman Khan was awarded the death penalty on one charge. Both of them tried in absentia.

Besides, former Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who testified as a state witness in the case, was sentenced to five years in prison. The tribunal also ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate the property of Sheikh Hasina and Asaduzzaman Khan.

The court also asked the authorities concerned to take steps to provide adequate compensation from this property to the martyrs and injured victims of July-August movement in proportion to the extent of their losses.

About the sentence handed down against Sheikh Hasina under the first charge, the tribunal said the former prime minister was responsible for instigating the crimes, ordering attacks on protesters and failing to act to prevent the offences or take punitive measures against those involved.

She was found guilty of two offences under charge one and sentenced to imprisonment unto death. The tribunal said Sheikh Hasina was held responsible for two crimes under 2nd charge.

One of the two offences is ordering use of helicopters and lethal weapons to suppress the July mass movement.

By issuing this order, she committed offences under Sections 3(1)(ka),

3(2)(chha)(ja) and 4(1)(2)(3) of the International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973, it said.

The second offence concerns the killing of six people in Dhaka's Chankharpul area on August 5 last year and the killing and burning of six others in Ashulia the same day as per her instructions. The tribunal said the court's decision was that the only punishment for these crimes is the death penalty.

The tribunal said two other convicts- Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun -- are equally responsible for the offences. Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal was sentenced to death for the offences, it said.

Although Abdullah Al Mamun also deserves the maximum punishment, as he became a state witness and gave full and truthful testimony regarding the offences, the court showed leniency and sentenced him to five years in prison. He assisted the judicial process in reaching an accurate decision, said the tribunal.

The tribunal also ordered that a copy of the verdict be sent to the Dhaka District Magistrate. As Sheikh Hasina and former minister Asaduzzaman Khan fled the country amid the massive movement on August 5 last year only former IGP Mamun was present at the dock during the delivery of the judgment.

Bangladesh Television (BTV) telecast the verdict live and it was also shown via giant screen at 10 spots of the capital. Initially, Sheikh Hasina was the sole accused in the case.

On March 16 this year, the prosecution appealed to include former IGP Mamun as an accused alongside Sheikh Hasina and the tribunal approved it. After the Awami League government was toppled on August 5, 2024, the ICT was reconstituted. The tribunal conducted its first hearing on October 17 last year, issuing an arrest warrant against Hasina that day.

After extending the deadline several times, the tribunal's investigation agency submitted its final probe report to the Chief Prosecutor's Office on May 12 this year.

Protesters in Kushtia lit tyres on fire and occupied the Mazampur Gate area, halting transport movement temporarily

On June 1, the prosecution formally filed charges against Sheikh Hasina and the two accused.

The 5 Charges Are:

• Inciting violence in a press conference at Ganabhaban on 14 July 2024;

• Ordering the elimination of protestors using helicopters, drones, and lethal weapons;

• Student Abu Sayed's killing in shooting at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur;

• The killing of six protestors at Chankharpul, Dhaka;

• The burning of six people in Ashulia.

The tribunal formally framed these charges on July 10.

The day the charges were framed, Mamun confessed to the court his involvement in crimes against humanity during the uprising and became a state witness. Arguments in the case began on October 12 and concluded on October 23.

Relatives of victims, including the father of martyr Abu Sayed, testified in the case, along with key witnesses including Nahid Islam, Convener of National Citizen Party (NCP) and Amar Desh editor Dr Mahmudur Rahman.

In total, 54 witnesses testified during the trial.

BNP Struggles With Nationwide Internal Clashes As Nomination Rifts Widen

BNP leaders and activists across the country have been caught in a series of clashes following the party's announcement of potential candidates for the upcoming national election. Most incidents have broken out between supporters of newly announced nominees and those who were left out. Beyond nomination disputes, BNP factions have also clashed over local dominance, business control, committee formation, sports events, and party programmes. Many leaders and activists have been injured in these confrontations, prompting the party to initiate strict organisational action against those accused of disrupting discipline. One such clash erupted in Tanore upazila of Rajshahi-1 on the evening of 25 November, where

two BNP groups fought over nomination disagreements. Local sources said at least 20 people from both sides were injured. The violence involved supporters of BNP's initially nominated candidate Sharif Uddin and those backing Sultanul Islam Tarek, who was denied the nomination.

In Tangail-1, nomination disputes triggered a chase and counter-chase between two BNP groups in Madhupur on 19 November. Followers of nominated candidate Fakir Mahbub Anam Swapan and rejected aspirant Mohammad Ali clashed, leaving three people injured. Two private clinics were vandalised, and a motorcycle was set on fire.

In Noakhali-6, rival BNP groups clashed on 22 November in the Ochkhali area of Hatia upazila, leaving at least 20 people injured. Police and locals said the confrontation took place between supporters of BNP-nominated candidate and central organising secretary Mohammad Mahbuber Rahman Shamim and followers of former lawmaker Fazlul Azim. Similar clashes have erupted in other districts as well – in Sonargaon of Narayanganj over local dominance, in Boalmari of Faridpur over programmes marking the National Revolution and Solidarity Day, in Noakhali Sadar over a football match, and in Raozan of Chattogram – as rival BNP groups confronted each other.

According to data from the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), BNP and its affiliated bodies were involved in 432 internal clashes in the first 10 months of this year, leaving at least 4,065 people injured and 70 dead.

BNP Names Nominations For 237 Seats: Khaleda Back To Polls As Tarique Debuts

Earlier, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told TBS that the party is taking action against those responsible for clashes or disorder. "Many have already been expelled," he said.

Rizvi added that leaders and activists may have personal preferences regarding candidates, but once the party finalises a nomination, no one has the right to block roads or rail lines in protest. "Those who are doing this are facing immediate action from the party, and this will continue," he said. Sources said acting BNP Chairperson Tarique Rahman has assigned individual Standing Committee members to resolve internal disputes. He has also been speaking virtually from London with those who were denied nominations. During these discussions, he has urged disgruntled aspirants to maintain party unity, respect party decisions, and follow organisational discipline.

Leaders of eight parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami nayeb-e-ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher, at a press conference at Khelafat Majlis office in Dhaka

Jamaat Takes A Strategic Stance On Seat-Sharing

Jamaat-e-Islami has yet to clarify its position on seat-sharing for the upcoming national elections, opting instead for a cautious and strategic approach. The party, together with seven like-minded parties including Islami Andolan Bangladesh, is using a unified set of programmes based on five demands to maintain pressure on the government while shaping its electoral strategy.

Alongside this, the parties are conducting constituency-wise surveys based on the principle of "one candidate in each seat," and final nominations will be determined according to survey results. Sources say several more parties may be brought into this potential agreement. For now, Jamaat and the other seven parties are not forming a formal alliance but are advancing toward an "electoral understanding," which party leaders expect to finalise by the first week of December. However, discussions may continue even after the election schedule is announced. In some constituencies, declared or undeclared understandings may also be reached with influential figures or nomination-deprived leaders from other parties.

A senior Jamaat leader, speaking anonymously, told Prothom Alo, "More parties may join the eight like-minded groups. Seat-sharing may bring surprises." Last Saturday, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman told reporters in Chattogram, "We will not form any conventional alliance. But we will have electoral understandings with many parties and forces." Jamaat has not yet disclosed which other parties it is engaging

with. However, discussions with several top leaders of like-minded groups indicate that the eight-party bloc is interested in bringing the National Citizen Party (NCP), Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party), and Gono Odhikar Parishad into the arrangement. Informal contacts are already underway with some of them.

Another political source said a separate effort is ongoing involving AB Party, NCP, Gono Odhikar Parishad, and UP Bangladesh to explore the possibility of forming an electoral alliance. Those involved believe that if such a bloc materialises, it could cut into Jamaat's vote bank; hence Jamaat wants them included in its own understanding. However, NCP Convener Nahid Islam said at a press conference that the NCP would not enter into any understanding with any party for power or seats.

Leaders of the eight-party bloc said that final decisions on seat-sharing will be based not only on political considerations but also on constituency-wise assessments of candidate popularity. Jamaat and Islami Andolan have instructed each party to conduct internal surveys and submit the findings to the liaison committee. Syed Mosaddeque Billah Al Madani, senior presidium member of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, said that surveys are being conducted in all 300 constituencies to assess popularity and winning prospects. The process may be completed by November, after which seat-sharing could be finalised in early December.

New Alliance Forming With NCP, Other Parties

Nasir Uddin Patwary, the Chief Coordinator of the National Citizen Party (NCP), has announced that a new political alliance is set to emerge centering on the 13th National Parliamentary Election. He made the statement on November 25 night after an exchange of views with nomination seekers at the party's temporary office in Banglamotor, Dhaka.

Nasir Uddin Patwary said: "The people of the country will soon witness a new alliance. It will serve as a platform for parties outside the BNP and Jamaat. Its objective will be to realize the aspirations of the July uprising. This alliance will work in favor of reforms, in support of women, in support of Islamic scholars, and against corruption, terrorism, and extortion."

Earlier, on November 23 in Feni, AB Party Chairman Mojibur Rahman Monju had also mentioned the formation of an alliance at a public event. He said: "This alliance will include several parties, including the AB Party and the NCP. The matter will be presented to the public through a national press conference."

Nasir Uddin Patwary speaking on November 25, after exchanging views with nomination seekers at the party's temporary office in Banglamotor, Dhaka

EC Sanaullah: Polls Schedule To Be Announced In First Half Of Dec

The schedule for the upcoming 13th Jatiya Sangsad election will be announced any day in the first half of December, said Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah. "There is not much time left for announcing the election schedule. It will be announced any day in the first half of December," he said.

The election commissioner made these remarks during his opening speech at the second phase of the Election Commission's (EC) dialogue with local election observer organizations at the conference room of Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital's Agargaon on November 25. Chaired by Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin, the dialogue was held in two sessions—morning and afternoon—with representatives of 81 local elections observer organizations. Md Sanaullah said: "We provide a five-year registration to each observation organization from the Election Commission. During this period, they can observe one national election and at least four local government elections."

"Observer organizations submit three types of reports to the EC: a preliminary report within seven days after the national election, a detailed report within one month, and a biennial report. These reports are very important for us. However, the reality is that we have not benefitted much from the reports submitted in the past by those who worked as election observers," he said. ■

Drive For Full Interoperable Payment System Sans Sops

Deal done with Gates Foundation to install system

Business Outlook Report

After hiccups on journey for a cashless society, the regulator now signs deal with Gates Foundation for backbone installation to fully implement interoperable payment system. Under the broader objective, the central bank signed a virtual agreement with the Gates Foundation to have its mojaloop open source software to install an inclusive instant payment system (IIPS) that brings affordable, connected digital financial services to anyone with access to a mobile phone. Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Ahsan H. Mansur disclosed the developments on full operation of the system by July 2027 while speaking as chief guest at an exchange-of-views meet with the stakeholders in implementing the IIPS at a city hotel on November 24. He said they had attempted interoperable system that did not work very well because of various reasons and it need be replaced with something that is tasted globally and can be maintained domestically. Hailing the support of the Gates Foundation for developing an interoperable payment ecosystem through its mojaloop open-source software, the central bank governor

says the process should be completed by July 2027 bringing in all the stake-holders like banks, mobile financial services, microfinance institutions and payment-system operators in the IIPS.

He says the boarder objective is to move towards a cashless or less-cash society, and it will make the economy open, transparent and less corruption-prone while increasing the tax potential significantly.

"It's not an easy task but we've taken the challenge with the support from Gates Foundation," he says. As part of the digital transformation move in the payment space, the governor also informs, the banking regulator will issue instructions to the MFIs or microfinance institutions very shortly, ordering them that any payment by the MFIs should be digital.

"We still have one and a half years in hand to fully implement it. So, now we have to exploit all the avenues available to us because payment- system potential is huge and largely untapped here."

Earlier on November 1st, 2025, the central bank introduced the much-talked-about interoperable payment system that allows instant transfers from mobile wallets, bank accounts, non-bank accounts, or institutional accounts directly into any other account. But most of the institutions have not joined in the system.

Among nine participating institutions, a leading MFS literally turned away from the platform on grounds of lack of preparedness.

Speaking at the event, managing director and chief executive officer of Mutual Trust Bank (MTB) PLC Syed Mahbubur Rahman said the country would be able to formalise informal economy, which will help vibrate the economy significantly. "So, we need to handle this efficiently and smartly," he added.

Deputy Governor of BB Md. Zakir Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of Sonali Bank PLC Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury, director of inclusive financial system (IFS) of Gates Foundation Michael Wiegand, Bangladesh country lead of IFS of the Foundation Snigdha Ali and BB payment system director Md. Sharafat Ullah Khan, among others, also spoke at the event. ■

Bangladesh's Renewable Energy Shift Lags As Region Races Ahead

Business Outlook Report

Bangladesh has significantly expanded its electricity generation capacity over the past decade, but its shift to renewable energy remains among the slowest in Asia. While countries across the region are rapidly replacing fossil fuels with cleaner sources, Bangladesh still generates less than 6% of its total power from renewables. Updated figures from the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) show the country's installed generation capacity at 27,424 megawatts.

Of this, only 1,687.07 MW, about 6%, comes from renewable sources. Solar provides the bulk at 1,393.98 MW from both on-grid and off-grid systems. Wind contributes 62 MW, hydropower 230 MW, and biogas and biomass barely 1 MW. The regional contrast is striking. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency's (IRENA) 2024 report, solar power now supplies 24% of electricity demand in India, 17.16% in Pakistan, and nearly 40% in Sri Lanka. In Bangladesh, solar meets just 5.6% of national demand.

Analysts say the gap has widened because Bangladesh's renewable rollout has been slow from the outset. The country adopted its first renewable-energy policy in 2008, but years of power shortages and industrial pressure pushed the government toward quick-fix fossil-fuel plants. Although solar home systems took off in off-grid rural areas, utility-scale solar was long treated more as a climate initiative than an energy-security priority. Shafiqul Alam, lead energy analyst for Bangladesh at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), said the country "remains almost stuck in place" as its neighbours race ahead.

High project costs, land-acquisition hurdles, and sluggish approvals have repeatedly stalled progress. Despite the global decline in solar prices, Bangladesh still pays some of the region's highest tariffs – US$0.0988 per kilowatt-hour, more than double the global average of $0.043. Production costs underscore the challenge. Bangladesh's solar generation costs range from Tk12.30 to Tk22.38 per unit, compared with Tk4-10 in India, Pakistan, and Vietnam. Officials and industry insiders admit that inflated land prices, procurement flaws, and weak oversight have pushed up expenses at several plants. To address the shortfall, the interim government has launched an ambitious plan to install 3,000 MW of rooftop solar on public buildings by December, 2025. It has also floated tenders for 55 land-based solar parks with a combined capacity of 5,238 MW, though completion may extend to 2028. Bangladesh's new Renewable Energy Policy 2025 targets 20% of power generation from renewables by 2030 and 30% by 2040.

Experts say the goals are achievable, but only with faster implementation and continued cost reductions. Mostafa Al Mahmud, president of the Bangladesh Sustainable and Renewable Energy Association (BSREA), said the country needs stronger project management, better technical skills, and strict quality control. "This isn't just about clean power," he said. "It's about energy security, saving foreign currency, and meeting our climate responsibilities." ■

Cashless Transactions Quietly Rise In Informal Sector

Business Outlook Report

The afternoon sun shone on the large transparent plastic bottles lined up on the wet tiles of the Bashbari WASA water ATM, one of the water collection points the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority has set up in the capital.

Barefoot and focused, 17-year-old Rakib from Mohammadpur moves quickly, lifting one bottle away the moment it fills, sliding the next into place.

Before the water stops dripping, he taps his digital payment card against the machine, recharged earlier through mobile financial service bKash. The flow begins instantly. The second the meter hits the target amount, he pulls the card away, so smoothly that the gesture seems like pure muscle memory. Rakib has never owned a bank account, and his father, a rickshaw-puller, the main breadwinner of the family, never felt the need of one.

Yet here he stands, using a digital payment card to pay for the family's drinking water, something he does every day. 'If I have to pay 80 paisa in cash, it's trouble,' he says shyly, lifting a freshly filled bottle. 'Digital is easy. No change, no hassle.'

Men, women, students, domestic workers and elderly residents wait in line, cards in hand, collecting water while navigating Bangladesh's steadily expanding cashless ecosystem. Koli, the pump operator who has worked at this booth for three years, has watched the users from up close to adapt to the digital payment environment.

'People used bKash from the beginning of my joining three years ago,' she says. 'If someone doesn't know how to recharge, we help them.' Dhaka WASA began installing water ATM points in the city in 2016. 'Digital payments reduce arguments and confusion,' she adds.

This quiet adoption of technology among people traditionally left outside the banking system reflects a bigger national trend, and by now, the ever expanding net of mobile financial services has rapidly changed the scenario of financial transactions at the grassroots in just 15 years since its introduction in 2011.

People now use digital payments for making payments for hundreds of services. According to Bangladesh Bank's October data, MFS transactions reached Tk 1,51,123.6 crore in August 2025—an increase of Tk 2,557 crore (1.72 per cent) from July. During July–August 2025, MFS transactions increased by Tk 38,847.30 crore (14.89 per cent) compared with the same period last year.

Much of this growth is happening among informal workers, people who

often do not use traditional banks but have found digital tools more accessible, more convenient, and sometimes safer than cash. Sixty-year-old rickshaw-puller Azgar Ali Sheikh never learned to use a mobile phone.

He has no bank account and no MFS account of his own.

Yet for the last four to five years, he has been sending money home through bKash, without ever touching the app.

He walks to an MFS agent in the area he trusts, hands over cash, and watches the money to be sent it his family in Rangpur within minutes.

'I don't understand it,' he says about the system. 'But it works.'

To people like Azgar, digital payments are not modern conveniences, they are lifelines.

In New Market, Harunur Rashid, owner of Casual Corner, scrolls through his bKash app between customers.

For seven to eight years, he has accepted payments digitally.

Each month, he receives Tk 10,000–12,000 in digital transactions—money he uses instantly for family support, business purchases or phone recharge.

His employee, who has family in Jashore, recalls the days before MFS.

'To send money home, I relied on someone travelling—or I had to go myself,' he says. 'Now I can do it anytime.' Still, he believes the ecosystem needs a more unified structure.

He feels the need of a system that will enable him to transact with a big agency or a small, local seller alike—which may be called a universal payment system.

'We need a solution that works everywhere—from a corporate retailer to a local tea stall. Carrying cash feels risky.' In front of the Saudi Visa Centre at Shazadpur, 22-year-old Hasan sells 'jhalmuri', puffed rice mixed with spices. For two years, he has accepted payment through Rocket, an MFS linked to Dutch-Bangla Bank, and bKash, linked to BRAC Bank.

'Many pay digitally, many gives cash,' he says. 'But digital is easier. No need for change.' In Motijheel, Rubel, owner of Adda Fast Food and Juice Corner, uses a Bangla QR sticker installed eight months ago.

'Maybe two or three customers pay digitally each day,' he says. Near Sena Kalyan Bhaban at Motijheel, 37-year-old sanitary shop owner Md Rasel accepts bKash payments, but does not own merchant accounts which is cheaper for his customers.

'The process is very complex, too much hassle,' Rasel says of the requirements for owning a merchant account.

Bangladesh Bank introduced a universal payment system named 'Bangla QR' in 2023 with an aim to make transactions easier at the grassroots, but apparently it has yet to become popular. Tallykhata is another universal payment system, introduced in 2020, has yet to grow popular and is rarely seen to be in use in Dhaka city.

Rony, a seller at Bondhu Tea Stall in Dhanmondi says that still cash payments are more popular for small payments. 'For tea and cigarettes costing 20 or 30 taka, people prefer cash over digital payment,' he says.

Economist Mashrur Reaz says Bangladesh's slow digital transition is tied to the structure of its economy. 'Less than 10 per cent of transactions in Bangladesh are cashless,' he says. 'Informal employment and enterprises dominate.' He believes digital inclusion requires addressing low financial literacy, fear of taxation, and mistrust of digital systems.

'Incentives can help bring informal workers into the digital system,' he adds.

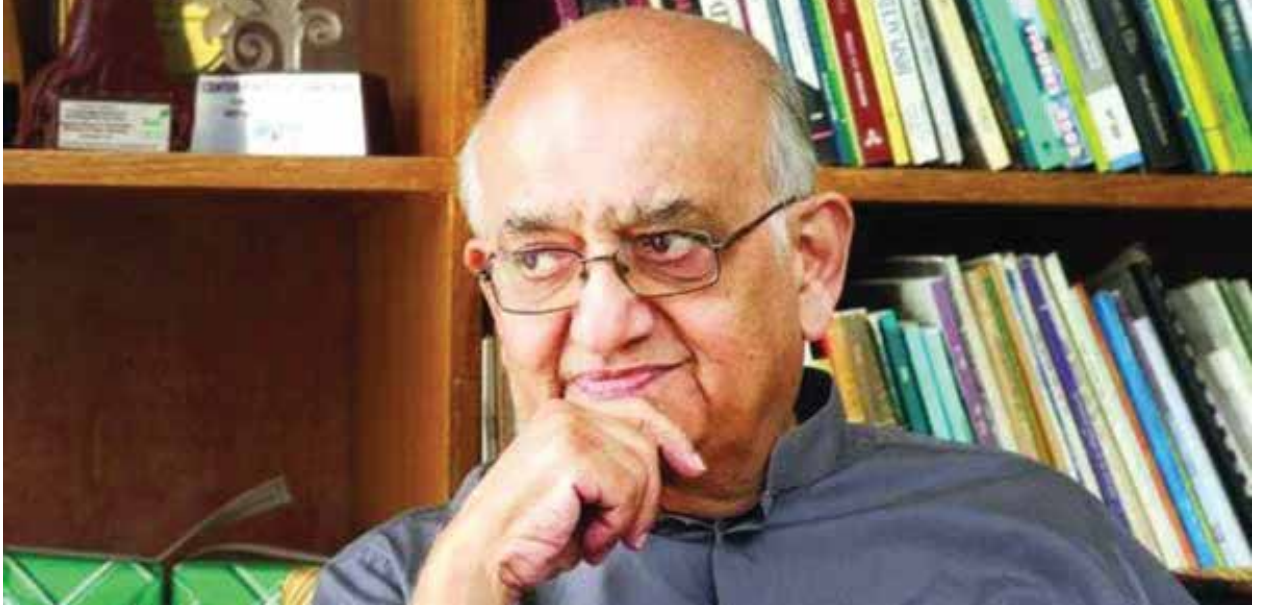
Bkash spokesperson and head of corporate communications, Shamsuddin Haider Dalim, says everyday digital adoption among informal users shows how financial technology is spreading across social and economic boundaries.

He notes that bKash has built a comprehensive digital ecosystem through partnerships with banks, NBFIs, telecom operators, NGOs, and utility services.

Still, he acknowledges persistent barriers: irregular incomes, limited smartphone access, and low digital literacy. 'Coordinated action from all stakeholders, government awareness campaigns, and incentives are essential to accelerate the shift,' he says.

Bangladesh Bank spokesperson and executive director, Areif Hussain Khan, said that the central bank was running community-based digital literacy programmes and school initiatives.

With around 7,50,000 Bangla QR users, he believes Bangladesh could become largely cashless within three to five years, but only with a mindset shift. ■



Embrace Asian-led Economic Order, Boost Private Sector: Rehman Sobhan

Business Outlook Report

Economist Rehman Sobhan has called on Bangladesh to strengthen its private sector and adopt more agile, forward-looking policies to keep pace with the rapidly shifting global economy. Speaking at the "Bay of Bengal Conversation," organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) in Dhaka on November 22, Sobhan warned that without strategic recalibration, Bangladesh risks falling behind as economic power moves decisively toward Asia.

"The world of 2025 is very different. Global economic power is moving to the Global South, especially South, Southeast, and East Asia," he said. He noted that China has already become the world's largest economy in purchasing-power terms, with India rising quickly. By 2050, China, India and Indonesia are projected to sit among the world's top four economies. Sobhan identified three major forces driving this transformation: a realignment of global trade, new patterns of capital flows, and rapid technological advancement. China, he said, has become the largest exporter and principal trading partner for many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, overtaking the long-standing dominance of the United States. It has also emerged as the world's biggest source of capital, providing US$2.1 trillion in loans and aid from 2000 to 2024, outpacing the US. "China, Japan and other Asian economies now dominate global reserves and sovereign wealth funds," he added. Sobhan argued that Bangladesh must reassess its traditional dependence on Western markets.

At independence, Western donors supplied about 12% of the country's GDP; today, aid dependence has fallen to about 2%, with roughly $50 billion in committed assistance still undisbursed, he said. Meanwhile, much of Bangladesh's new investment is coming from Asia, with China alone investing around $40 billion through loans and other financial instruments, the economist mentioned. Despite this shift, Bangladesh continues to rely heavily on the US and Western markets for its ready-made garment exports and still leans on LDC-era trade preferences. Sobhan warned that such dependence is risky, particularly given the unpredictability of US trade policy. He also noted that Bangladesh has not fully capitalised on duty-free access to India since 2010 and has yet to position itself within regional supply chains anchored by China and India. To succeed in the emerging global order, Sobhan said Bangladesh needs a private sector that is ambitious, outward-oriented and technologically capable. Policymakers, he argued, must be more dynamic and strategic. He urged the country to shed what he described as the "LDC cocoon" and integrate itself into Asian-led value chains, where the fastest-growing markets, investments and technologies are concentrated.

"We are entering a new world order," Sobhan concluded. "Bangladesh will need more creative policy-making and a more adventurous private sector to secure its place in the shifting global economy." ■

Ballooning Costs And Broken Promises: IMED Slams Savar Leather Park Performance

Business Outlook Report

A government watchdog has dug out an epitome of operational, environmental, and governance "failures" in a vital project that continue to undermine Bangladesh's leather sector and its global competitiveness, thereby causing the country to miss millions in foreign exchange.

On such a discovery of fiascos, the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) has strongly criticized the performance of the Leather Industrial Park in Savar.

The project, executed at 5.34 times its original budget and 6.17 times the planned timeline, failed to bring the Central Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) up to international standards and could not even comply with the government's own Department of Environment requirements, according to an IMED inspection report. The CETP's inadequate capacity is preventing industrial units from obtaining Leather Working Group (LWG) certification, forcing them to export products to low-cost markets like China instead of 50-60-percent higher-value markets in the European Union, the USA, Australia, Russia, and other countries, according to the report. Experts and industry insiders say

despite global -standard infrastructure, a large number of leather factories have yet to receive LWG certificate, which leads to an annual loss of over $500 million in Bangladesh.

The inability to achieve LWG certification has not only eroded Bangladesh's foreign-exchange earnings but also tarnished the country's reputation as a reliable supplier of

environmentally compliant leather products, they add.

Planning Commission officials say the project, initially approved at an estimated cost of Tk 1.76 billion in 2003-2005 to establish an environment-friendly leather park in Savar and relocate over there tanneries scattered across Hazaribagh at the heart of Dhaka city, was originally scheduled for three years. However, the project of the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) under the ministry of industries completed in June 2021 after long 18.5 years, with the final cost ballooning to Tk 9.38 billion.

The IMED conducted an inspection to assess the project's progress and outcomes, only to its surprise over the fundings. The report reveals that the effluent samples collected by IMED and the Department of Environment show total suspended solids, chromium, biochemical-oxygen demand, and chloride levels far exceeding permissible limits, creating severe risks for rivers and surrounding communities.

Governance weaknesses have exacerbated operational failures, with seventeen project directors appointed over eighteen years, twelve of whom served on a part-time basis, causing continuity and supervision to remain critically weak. The probe finds that the High Court directives issued in 2017 to ensure proper wastewater treatment and environmental safeguards have largely gone unimplemented, with project management failing to enforce compliance across estate-based tanneries.

The project-implementation -monitoring agency also has observed structural flaws in the CETP compound, including cracks in roof slabs, exposed reinforcement in cable drains, insufficient waterproofing, and substandard casting, reflecting poor construction oversights.

"Tannery operators' excessive water use continues to overwhelm the limited capacity of the CETP, while the absence of essential service institutions such as banks, insurance offices, and postal units further hampers daily business operations," the report reads. Despite relocating 155 tanneries from Hazaribagh and developing basic infrastructures such as roads, drains, and dumping yards for solid waste, the project has failed to establish an environmentally compliant leather cluster capable of securing global certifications.

The IMED review warns that unless the Ministry of Industries immediately operationalise the CETP, enforces environmental regulations, and ensures rapid LWG certification, Bangladesh will continue losing competitiveness in premium leather markets.

Industry experts describe the Savar project as a classic example of mismanaged industrial development, where enormous investment and extended timelines have failed to deliver environmental safeguards, global certification, or export competitiveness.

Without immediate corrective measures, the evaluation report cautions, environmental hazards, reputational risks, and opportunity losses for leather exporters are likely to escalate, undermining long-term investor confidence in the sector. ■

Potentials Of Fish Scale Remains Untapped

Apu Ahmed

Ashraful Islam has been selling fishes and also cutting them into fillets at the municipal market in Jhenaidah, a district in the Khulna Division of southwestern Bangladesh, over the past 20 years.

Scales Not For Dump

A couple of years ago a businessman from Khulna met him and asked him not to dump the scales generated in the process of separating those from fishes. He suggested Ashraful to give some extra efforts to wash the sales and dry those under the sun for earning extra bucks. The businessman from Khulna assured him that he would buy dry scales. Since then Ashraful never dumps scales and collects around 2 to 3 kilogram of scales every day. He carries those to the house after closing the fish selling and cutting business down in the afternoon. Cleaning those with water he spreads those on the rooftop under the sun to dry them. He sells around 70 to 80 kg of scale for every month earning around Tk 4,000. He says the per kg dry scales helps him to earn around Tk 50 to Tk 60.

Four-Level Marketing

Md Kamruzzaman from Jashore under the Khulna Division has been purchasing dried fish scales from all districts in the southern and northern regions over the one decade. The businessman said that in the past, root level collectors struggled to properly process fish scales. However, after receiving various types of training, most of them can now process the scales efficiently. Buying the dried scales Kamruzzaman says he sells those to another buyer. Like him Mizanur Rahman who runs the AI International Trading Company in the capital city's busy Sonargaon Road also collects dried scales from the root level collectors. He can collect barely 4 to 5 tonnes because of lack of funds. He sells his collection to the next buyer with a profit margin of Tk 10 for each kg. He said two more hands were involved before those were exported to overseas markets.

Fish Scale Export Grows

In the beginning of the scale trading in the country almost a decade ago, scales collection and drying process at different fish selling points including Karwan Bazar and Jatrabari in the capital by the root-level entrepreneurs had been faced with questions from onlookers. Now many have known that scales are exporting to the overseas market. Zenat Ara, Director of Export Promotion Bureau in Khulna, said that the country has been exporting an

average of Tk 200 crore worth of fish scales annually. However, the quantity of exports has increased since 2020. In FY24, exports reached $17 million, equivalent to Tk 206 crore. But many of these root level collectors and middlemen do not know how the dried scales are processed further by the foreign entrepreneurs to produce essential items consumed globally.

Collagen From Fish Scale

Dried fish scales play a crucial role in several domains. Dried fish scales contain collagen, a protein that is highly valued in the cosmetic industry for its skin-firming properties, making it a key ingredient in anti-aging creams and serums. They are a source of essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and calcium. So they are processed into organic fertilizers. The Chinese use them as traditional medicine for its cooling properties and its positive impact in balancing the body's energy while the Thias use dried fish scales as a garnish or seasoning popular dishes. Fish scales are used to create a pearlescent pigment known as pearl essence or guanine, which provides a shimmering, iridescent effect in various applications, including specialized paints for arts and crafts. Besides, they are also used to make pet food and used in jewelry and decorative items.

Global Market To Grow Fast

Driven by increasing utilization of fish by-products in pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, food, and biomaterial industries, the fish scale market is valued at approximately $ 1.8 billion in 2024 and is anticipated to reach around USD 3.2 billion by 2033, according to a new study by DataHorizzon Research, an India based research entity. The cosmetics industry has become a major consumer of fish scale-derived ingredients, driven by the rising demand for natural, marine-sourced beauty products. In addition, fish scales are being explored for use in biodegradable plastics, pigments, and fertilizers, expanding their industrial utility. Asia-Pacific, particularly China, Japan, and Indonesia, dominates production due to abundant fisheries and established seafood processing industries.

Country Imports Collagen

While there are no publicly available annual import figures for just collagen powder in Bangladesh, the country is totally dependent on imports to meet its growing demands. As the item is included under the broader categories of Nutraceuticals and Supplement Powder imports are growing, with key suppliers coming from countries like India, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates. Local drugs makers Square Pharmaceuticals PLC sells a 40 mg collagen based tablet at Tk 20, Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd sells collagen based both a table and a capsule of 40 mg at Tk 30 and Aristopharma Ltd sells a same quantity collagen tablet at Tk 25. Besides, the imported finished collagen based supplements have flooded the market and sold at high prices. bdsupplementstore.com sells 'lpha01 Multi Collagen Complex – (120 Capsules)' at Tk 3490. daraz.com.bd sells 'NeoCell Marine Collagen with Hyaluronic Acid, MSM & Vitamin C - 8g - 200g Unflavored Powder - with Type 1 Marine Collagen at Tk 6,400.

Initiative Needed To Extract Collagen Locally

While the demand for collagen as dietary supplements is growing amiod pushes by local pharmaceutical companies and online products marketing platforms, authorities concerned should strictly monitor the prices. Allegations have grown that the online products marketing platforms are bribing physicians to prescribe patients with collagen they are marketing. The local pharmaceutical companies who are marketing collagen based drugs by importing powder should be given policy support to encourage them to extract collagen from the fish scales through imparting technology from the foreign countries. The effort can easily reduce import dependency and also open a new industry with a promise of creating a pool of experts in future. The process will also check wasting of scales. A 2009 study revealed that 85 per cent of fish scales were dumped. Another 2021 study estimated that the total fish waste from the seafood industry was approximately 17,605 tons per year, with scales being a part of this. Much of this waste, including scales, is discarded due to a lack of proper processing infrastructure.

Abundant Fish Scale

The country's fish production reached 5.02 million tonnes in FY 2023-24, with aquaculture making up about 60 per centof this total.It ranks highly in global fish production, being third in inland open water capture and fifth in aquaculture. It has almost all components other than skill manpower and initiatives to increase value addition from fish scales. ■

Winter Clothes Markets Thrive As Season Arrives

Business Outlook Report

With the arrival of winter, Lalmonirhat's footpath markets have come alive with bustling crowds and brisk trade. From the district town to the upazilas, makeshift stalls and roadside shops are drawing buyers in increasing numbers each day.

Although winter wear remains relatively affordable, many shoppers note that prices are slightly higher than last year. Still, the lure of accessible clothing keeps the sidewalks busy. In the Mogolhat Railgate area, the mobile market has become a hub for low-income families. Jackets, blankets, mufflers, and other essentials, sourced from Dhaka and Rangpur, are being sold at prices ranging from Tk 50 to 800.Dhaka city guide 'Clothes are available for Tk 40 to 700,' said Aklima Akhter Mariam of Mahendranagar, adding, 'I buy from the footpath as the prices are comparatively low here.'

Barabari Bazar witnesses a similar story. Traders Anarul Islam and Ali Hossain recalled that last year, daily sales reached Tk 8,000 to 10,000. Buyers like Abdul Majid remain loyal to these stalls, saying, 'Good quality clothes at low prices are available here and that's why we come here. We are satisfied.' Seller Shamim explained: 'The clothes brought from Dhaka are of good quality. That's why buyers come again and again. Sales will rise further as the cold deepens.' For many vendors, their income increases several times when winter comes. Many families live on the income of this season. Although they are engaged in various activities throughout the year, they set up shops on the sidewalk to earn extra income during the winter.Best clothing retailers

Locals view the roadside markets as a lifeline for lower- and middle-income groups. Affordable options make them attractive, though many believe stricter price control would benefit everyone. Meanwhile, footpath markets appear to be drawing customers away from formal shopping malls. The presence of buyers in various shopping malls including Shahan Shopping Complex, Patwari Shopping Complex, Pauro Shopping Complex, Fashion Park, Choice Fashion, City Garments, Aarong Fabrics and Dulal Garments in the district town is seen to be low.

Employees at Narsingdi Bastralay and Kazi Fashion admitted that sales of new clothes have yet to pick up. 'Lower and middle-class buyers are being drawn to the footpath market where prices are cheaper, and for this, the mall shops are facing losses,' they said. ■

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CTG Port Turning Maritime Hub Again?

Apu Ahmed

On July18, 2021, a brief titled 'Using Chattogram Port as a Transshipment Hub for the North Eastern Region of India' by the Asian Development Bank said northern regions of the present India was connected to the rest of the country and the outside world largely through present-day Bangladesh prior to the partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947.

Indo-Pakistan War In 1965

In fact, cargo originating from the Indian northern region, Bhutan and Nepal, all are parts of the larger Himalayan range, transited through rail and river routes to Chittagong (now Chattogram) and Kolkata ports, two closest sea routes at the foothills of the world's largest mountain range, right till 1965. In that year, a war between India and Pakistan put a break on most transport connectivity links between India and what was then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The suspension turned landlocked Bhutan and Nepal to depend solely on ports in India to maintain maritime trade. The suspension of connectivity has also rendered seven northern states of India-- Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh—almost landlocked with the Siliguri Corridor, a merely 22 kilometers wide, as the sole connecting link with the rest of India.

Seven Sisters

Also called Seven Sisters, the states which were integrated with India after 1947 have access to the Kolkata Port in India state of West Bengal via the Siliguri Corridor. But a cargo generated from seven sisters has to travel approximately 1,570 km, requiring transportation time of 8–10 days and transportation cost of India Rupee of 6,300–7,000 per ton. But the transshipment route via Chattogram port is shorter with a sea distance of about 360 nautical miles that is about 650 km from Kolkata to Chattogram port and onwards inland distance of about 250 km from Chattogram port to Agartala in Tripura via Akhaura in Bangladesh, according to the ADB brief. As shared with the study team by various logistics service providers in the region, the ADB brief said a composite transportation cost of Rupee 5,000–5,800 per ton may be incurred with transportation time of 5 days. The Chattogram sea port has

advantages as the gateway with demand centers in the Seven Sisters located close to the Bangladesh border. The regular movement of the cargo from the Seven Sister through Bangladesh seems viable, specifically for essential bulk commodities such as food grain and fertilizers.

SASEC

During the monsoons when North Bengal and Assam are often flooded, Chattogram offers the most suitable route for the incoming and outgoing cargoes from Seven Sisters. Accessing sea through the Chattogram port also serves an alternative option for both Nepal and Bhutan who are now dependent on the Port of Kolkata for maritime trade. Well-known as the oldest and the third-largest port in India, the Port of Kolkata has been facing problems like high turnaround time, detention fees, congestion fees, and other costs which are major deterrents to flow of goods from South Asia through this old port. While it takes 13-20 days for goods to reach North Europe through the Port of Colombo, it takes 25-32 days via the Kolkata hub. The Manilla based ADB that has been supporting the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) forums since 2001 for more integration among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka emphasizes on connectivity. As the founding member of SASEC, Bhutan which left the left the least developed countries bloc in 2023 signed the 'Agreement on movement of traffic-in-transit and its Protocol' with Bangladesh in the same year.

Trial Runs

In line with the agreement, the Himalayan Kingdom has completed its first cargo transit trial through Bangladesh in the past week. The trial coincides with the three-day official visit of Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan, to Dhaka from 22–24 November 2025. Both countries had earlier agreed to conduct two trial runs before the agreement could be fully operationalized. Bhutan notified Bangladesh in October that a 15-ton shipment imported from Thailand had already arrived at Chattogram Port for the first trial, handled by logistics operator M/s Abhi Cargo. The consignment was transported from Chattogram Port to Burimari Land Port, then through Indian territory before entering Bhutan. Upon successful completion of a second trial, Bhutan will be able to carry out regular commercial transit via Bangladesh, covering a 684-kilometer corridor. The trial runs should be seen as an alternative option by Bhutan to access sea other than India. It also came at a time when Bhutan has been implementing its Thirteenth Five Year Plan for 2024-2029 with aims to ensure inclusive growth by pursuing strategic objectives in the areas of economic development, social development, security, and governance. The plan aims to help Bhutan become a high-income country driven by innovation and sustainability by 2029. The plan also aims to foster regional and international cooperation to help drive sustainable growth.

Nepal Shows Interest

Bangladesh has generously granted Nepal access to the Mongla and Chattogram ports as trade between two countries takes place through the Banglabandha land port. The use of seaports remains limited, primari-

ly due to distance and higher cost of transshipment. Nepal remains optimistic about greater utilization of the ports for both bilateral and third-country trade, particularly through the Rohanpur-Singhabad railway transit route, which offers possibilities for enhanced connectivity. Bangladesh has deals with India to allow Delhi to use Chattogram port as the transshipment hub. In 2020, India had completed the trial run of transshipment of Indian goods to its north-eastern states through the Chattogram port as part of a larger agreement that allowed Bangladesh to use Indian territory for its exports to third countries.

India Scraps Transshipment Facility

However, in April 2025, India terminated this transshipment facility for Bangladeshi exports, citing congestion at its own ports and the demand of its exporters. The decision came following the ouster of the Awami League regime in August 2024, in the wake of the mass uprising. It is clear that Delhi prefers cooperation with Dhaka through the engagement with the AL. Despite slowing down the progress on the front of connectivity between Dhaka and Delhi, the growing interest by Nepal on connectivity with ports in Bangladesh and the test trial by Bhutan carry a lot of significance. From Bangladesh's perspective, facilitating Bhutanese transit strengthens its role as a regional logistics hub, boosting potential trade, including textile and apparel exports, while enhancing geopolitical influence in South Asia.

Investment In Chattogram

Japan, which has strong influence in the ADB, is investing in different infrastructure projects in Chattogram to make it a maritime hub to serve the entire Himalayan region. Japan is building a deep-sea port in Matarbari in Cox's Bazar under the Chattogram Division. The World Bank has financed the construction of a Bay Terminal in the Chattogoram, close to the current sea port at the estuary of the Karnaphuli river. The Chittagong Port Authority which runs the ports in Chattogram and elsewhere has already lease out operation of its three major terminals including one to the Netherlands-based APM Terminals BV, a unit of Danish shipping giant AP Moller – Maersk's Transport and Logistics division for streamlining the port congestion and turn-around time.

Many Positive Signs

There are plenty that the sea port in Chattgogram is going to emerge as a major maritime hub again. Or, to say otherwise that it is going to get back its glorious identification of the past to serve the landlocked regions in the Himalaya- a reputation that was lost for a while because of the geo-politics. ■

Western Marine Delivers Three Vessels To Its UAE Client

The "Western Marine Shipyard Limited (WMShL)," a Chattogram-based shipbuilder renowned for exporting world-class vessels, handed over three more landing crafts to its buyer from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

With this latest delivery, the shipbuilder's total exports reach 39 vessels valued at over $140 million. The buyer "Marwan Shipping" which first imported a vessel from the WMShL in 2017, placed a fresh order in 2023.

The order includes four landing crafts, two tugboats and two oil tankers. With delivery on November 20, six of the eight vessels have now been delivered.

A handover ceremony for the three landing crafts was held on a vessel near the yard of WMShL in Patiya upazila in the district on November 20.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador Abdulla Ali Abdulla Khaseif Alhmoudi attended the event as the chief guest while Ministry of Commerce Additional Secretary and FBCCI Administrator Abdur Rahman Khan and the buyer Marwan Shipping & Tr Co LLC Managing Director Ahmed Mohamed Hussain Al Marzooqi were present as special guests. WMShL officials said they received orders for eight vessels worth $8.5 million from the Marwan Shipping in 2023.

The three delivered landing crafts – Maya, SMS Emy and Muna – were built under the classification of Bureau Veritas. Each vessel is 69 metres long and equipped with modern technology as per the buyer's specifications.

Construction of the remaining two vessels for the buyer and eight others for local clients is currently underway at the yard, they added. ■

Agent Banking Drives Women's Participation, Rural Remittances

Business Outlook Report

Agent banking is rapidly expanding financial inclusion across Bangladesh, significantly boosting women's participation in the formal economy and driving strong growth in remittance transactions. According to Bangladesh Bank, agent banking has evolved from a basic transaction platform into a key driver of women's empowerment in rural areas and an essential channel for distributing remittance income.

As of September 2025, women own 49.4% of all agent banking deposit accounts, a milestone indicating that more women in remote and underserved regions are entering the formal financial system. The number of women entrepreneurs in the sector is also rising, with 9.46% of agent banking outlets now operated by women. These women-led outlets are strengthening community-level trust and generating new employment opportunities. Launched in 2013, agent banking has transformed access to financial services for marginalised and rural populations by enabling banks to operate without traditional branches.

Over the past decade, the model has achieved record growth in customer numbers, deposits, loans, and remittance collections. Between July and September 2025, Bangladesh received Tk92,398 crore in remittances, of which Tk8,151 crore, or 8.8%, came through agent banking channels. Notably, remittances collected in rural areas via agent banking were 10 times higher than those in urban locations, underscoring the concentration of migrant families in villages and their preference for convenient, local agent points. During the same period, the 30 banks running agent banking operations mobilised Tk47,700 crore in deposits. Islami Bank topped the list with Tk21,383 crore, followed by Dutch-Bangla Bank with Tk6,752 crore and Bank Asia with Tk6,263 crore.

BRAC Bank led loan disbursements, with the sector distributing Tk31,910 crore between July and September. BRAC Bank alone disbursed Tk22,712 crore, while City Bank provided Tk3,563 crore and Bank Asia Tk1,684 crore. Bangladesh Bank data shows that 30 banks currently operate agent banking services, with a total of 25.14 million accounts. Dutch-Bangla Bank has the highest number of accounts at 7.61 million, followed by Bank Asia with 7.43 million and Islami Bank with 5.61 million. Nationwide, there are 20,488 agent banking outlets. Dutch-Bangla Bank operates 5,620 outlets, Bank Asia 5,035, and Islami Bank 2,792.

The number of accounts continues to climb. Total agent banking accounts stood at 24.07 million in December 2024 and rose to 25.11 million by September 2025, an increase of 1.03 million accounts in just nine months. Bank officials say agent banking was initially introduced to simplify transactions for people in remote areas, but its popularity has now spread nationwide. Customers can receive services at their doorstep and even access loans from agent points, contributing to record performance across the sector.

Bangladesh Bank spokesperson Arief Hossain Khan said, "The record growth in agent banking is not just a statistic, it represents a revolution in delivering financial services to remote regions. Agent banking has become a major channel for distributing remittance income and has connected rural families to inclusive financing." ■

Under its transaction banking and cash management, NCC Bank has launched a new digital service, enabling customers to pay 206 types of government fees-including passport fees, income tax, VAT, customs duties, and surcharges-using the online A-Chalan platform. From now on, customers can pay these fees from anywhere, at any time, through the bank's internet banking. ■

The Bangladesh Semiconductor Industry Association (BSIA) has successfully completed a high-impact three-day Malaysia Semiconductor Road show in Penang, positioning Bangladesh as a rising partner in the global semiconductor supply chain and laying early foundations for a South-South Silicon Corridor between the two nations. ■

A bilateral agreement was signed between the Sarkari Karmachari Hospital and the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) on Thursday for the proper management and quality services at the cafeteria of the 500-bed hospital located in Fulbaria, Dhaka. Under the agreement, Parjatan Corporation will serve as the management operator of the cafeteria to provide catering services. ■

The Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) signed land lease agreements with two fully foreign-owned companies to establish new industrial units at the BEPZA Economic Zone, marking an inflow of USD 70.66 million in the light engineering and garment accessories sectors. ■

Prime Bank has signed an agreement with the Bangladesh Bank (BB) to avail of the central bank's refinance facility for digital nano loans. The signing ceremony took place at the Bangladesh Bank office recently. This initiative marks a significant step toward expanding access to affordable, digital credit facilities for underserved and unbanked segments of society, in line with the government's and Bangladesh Bank's vision of building a cashless Bangladesh. ■

The 9th meeting of the Board of Directors of Shippers' Council of Bangladesh (SCB) for the term 2024 & 2025 was held at its office at Dhanmondi in Dhaka, with its Chairman Md. Rezaul Karim in the chair. ■

Prime Bank, in collaboration with the Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), recently organised a seminar titled "Financial Inclusion: Engaging & Inspiring Youth in Banking" under its flagship PrimeAcademia initiative. ■

Mutual Trust Bank (MTB) and upay have jointly launched the MTB Islamic DPS, a fully digital and Shariah-compliant solution that allows customers to open Islamic DPS accounts instantly through the upay app - without any paperwork or branch visit. ■

DBL and Bright Ceramics hosted their Annual Business Conference 2025 on November 14 and 15, bringing together business partners from across the nation. ■

BRAC Bank has entered into a partnership with SMC Enterprise Ltd. to streamline its nationwide receivable operations through a modern cash management solution. Through this arrangement, SMC Enterprise will utilise BRAC Bank's virtual account system to collect payments from distributors in real time, ensuring accuracy in receivables and reducing manual intervention. ■

A partial view of the discussion meeting between the Bangladesh China Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCCI) and the visiting 11-member business delegation from Yunnan Province, China, held at the BCCCI office in Dhaka recently. The BCCCI delegation was led by Mohd. Khorshed Alam, President of BCCCI, visiting Yunnan delegation was headed by Ms. Tan Shasha, General Manager of Yunnan Living Room Supply Chain Management Co., Ltd. Executive Committee members and members of BCCCI were also present in the meeting. ■

AB Bank won the `Mastercard Excellence Award- 2025' in the category of Mastercard Credit Business (Domestic) for the year 2024-2025. Syed Mizanur Rahman, managing director & CEO of AB Bank, received this honour on behalf of the bank from Md. Zakir Hossain Chowdhury, deputy governor of the Bangladesh Bank. Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur, BB governor, graced the programme as chief guest. ■

NBR Extends Income Tax Return Filing By Another Month

Business Outlook Report

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has extended the deadline for filing income tax returns for individual taxpayers for the 2025-26 tax year by one month. In a special order issued on November 19, the new deadline for filing returns was set at December 31, 2025. The NBR confirmed this information on Sunday.

It said that taxpayers who are unable to file their returns online due to complications related to registration in the e-return system can apply to the concerned Excise Commissioner by December 15, citing reasonable reasons. This year, online filing of returns has been made mandatory for senior taxpayers aged 65 years or above, persons with special needs, taxpayers residing abroad, taxpayers filing returns through legal representatives of deceased taxpayers, and all other categories of taxpayers, except foreign nationals working in Bangladesh. However, taxpayers who have been exempted from the obligation can also file e-returns if they wish. According to the NBR, there is also an opportunity to file returns online through the taxpayer's authorized representative.

Taxpayers residing abroad can also register in the e-return system by sending their passport, NID and e-mail address information to ereturn@etaxnbr.gov.bd to collect OTP and registration link. By adding information about income, expenses, assets and liabilities without any paperwork, taxpayers can pay taxes from home through debit/credit cards, internet banking or mobile financial services and immediately collect acknowledgement slips and income tax certificates. As a result, e-return filing is becoming increasingly popular among taxpayers residing in the country and abroad. To facilitate e-return filing, NBR has once again trained taxpayers, tax lawyers, chartered accountants, cost and management accountants and chartered secretaries. In addition, a special call center has been launched for e-return related assistance—09643 71 71 71. In addition, taxpayers are getting necessary services from the website www.etaxnbr.gov.bd and helpdesks set up in tax regions across the country.

NBR said that more than 1.8 million individual taxpayers have already filed their returns online this year. The organization has requested all taxpayers to file their returns through e-return within the stipulated time. ■

Gas Shock Looms Over Agriculture

Business Outlook Report

The agriculture sector in the country is bracing for fresh cost pressures after the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) on November 23 approved an 83% gas tariff hike for fertiliser factories – a move economists warn could deepen food inflation, squeeze farmers' incomes and push up rice prices unless subsidies are expanded.

Gas rates for fertiliser production will rise from Tk16 to Tk29.25 per cubic metre from December, at a time when household budgets are already straining under soaring food prices and stagnant wages. Announcing the decision in Dhaka, BERC said the revised tariff was lower than the Tk40 proposed by Petrobangla and gas distribution companies at a public hearing in October, yet still represents one of the steepest single increases in recent years.

Agriculture Under Strain As Growth Slows

The timing has raised concern across the sector. Provisional BBS data show agricultural growth slipped to 3.01% in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25) from 4.11% a year earlier – well below its long-term average.

Meanwhile, food inflation has surged, rising from 7.08% in October 2025 to a provisional 13.8% in November 2024, sharply eroding household purchasing power. Rural wages increased by just 8.02% in September and 8.01% in October, leaving millions worse off in real terms.

Economists warn the higher gas price will raise fertiliser production costs unless the government increases subsidies or resolves supply bottlenecks quickly.

Farmers Already Paying More Amid Market Distortions

For many farmers, the official price matters less than the difficulty of obtaining fertiliser at state-set rates. Media investigations this year uncovered malpractice across the distribution network – dealer syndicates, artificial shortages, delayed unloading of imports, diversion of subsidised fertiliser to tobacco farms, weak local oversight and inadequate storage.

As a result, farmers in Chandpur, Nilphamari, Jhenaidah and Rangpur are paying Tk1,400–1,700 for a 50-kg bag of DAP, against the official Tk1,050.

"Even with good harvests, the profit margin disappears once we add the higher fertiliser and irrigation costs," said Shiblur Rahman, a farmer from Shahrasti, Chandpur.

Rabi Season Risks:

Higher Costs, Heightened Vulnerability

The Rabi season – November to March – accounts for 40% of annual fertiliser demand. But domestic factories already face gas shortages and ageing machinery, forcing Bangladesh to rely on imports for nearly 80% of its fertiliser needs. Experts warn that if the tariff hike inflates production costs, the impact will ripple through the food supply chain, worsening inflation and increasing the subsidy burden.

Agricultural economist Prof AHM Saiful Islam said Bangladesh cannot afford instability in fertiliser supply during global volatility.

"Food inflation in Bangladesh is fundamentally rice-driven, and rice production is fertiliser-dependent. Any disruption today means the government may need to import rice tomorrow – at heavy cost to the economy and foreign reserves," he said.

He called for a comprehensive fertiliser management plan involving seasonal demand assessment, strict dealer monitoring, faster unloading, modern storage facilities and preventing diversion to tobacco cultivation.

Energy Vs Agriculture: A Delicate Balancing Act

BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed said the new tariff reflects a "balanced approach" between rising LNG import costs and safeguarding agriculture, which supports more than 20 million people despite contributing only 12% to GDP. But agricultural economists say that without higher subsidies, farmers may reduce fertiliser use – a pattern historically linked to lower yields and supply shortages. Prof Jahangir Alam noted that fertiliser makes up about 20% of Bangladesh's production costs. "If production costs rise, paddy prices will follow. This will ultimately push up rice prices at the consumer level," he said. "Unless the government increases subsidies, farmers may be forced to cut fertiliser usage, which will have a negative impact on total crop output."

Govt Response: 'No Price Hike For Farmers'

The Ministry of Agriculture maintains that farmers will not be affected. Officials say the government has 630,000 tonnes of urea in stock and strong reserves of TSP, DAP and MOP, and will adjust subsidies to keep prices stable. Md Khorshed Alam, Joint Secretary of the Fertiliser Management and Monitoring Wing, said that the government "will not allow the price of urea or other fertilisers to rise for farmers". He added, "Even if production costs increase due to the new gas rate, farmers will not bear the burden. The government will take every measure, including subsidy adjustments, to ensure price stability."

Industry Concerns Amid Broader Gas Crisis

Petrobangla officials, speaking anonymously, told local media that domestic gas shortages necessitated higher tariffs to secure LNG imports. They said four fertiliser factories shut due to gas shortages could reopen if LNG supply increases. Meeting demand could require seven additional LNG cargoes per year. Industry has already been hit by steep gas tariff hikes this year. In April, rates for new industries and captive power rose by up to 33% – a move business leaders say is deterring investment and worsening the operating environment. A Petrobangla director told the Daily Sun that factories now face a significant gas shortfall. Proposals from the Ministry of Industries and the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) led to Petrobangla's tariff request. "The additional revenue would allow the import of more LNG for fertiliser production, ensuring gas supply to four factories that are currently closed due to shortages," he said. To meet an additional demand of 60 million cubic feet per day, Bangladesh would need seven extra LNG cargoes annually, he added.

Rising Risks And Shrinking Margins

With food inflation climbing, wages stagnant and global fertiliser markets volatile, analysts warn the new gas tariff may amplify existing vulnerabilities in Bangladesh's agro-economy if not carefully managed. Unless corruption in the dealer network is curbed and logistical inefficiencies reduced, increased production costs may still spill into retail prices – undermining farmer incentives and pushing up the cost of essential food items. Experts say Bangladesh now faces a critical policy test: securing fertiliser supplies, protecting farmer incomes and keeping food affordable while absorbing the fiscal impact of increased LNG imports. How effectively the government navigates this trade-off will help determine the country's agricultural and inflation outlook for 2025. ■

G2G Framework Proposed For Recruiting Bangladeshi Doctors, Nurses To Saudi Arabia

Business Outlook Report

In institutionalised G2G framework has been proposed for recruiting Bangladeshi doctors, nurses, caregivers, technicians and allied staff to Saudi Arabia. The proposal was discussed during a recent meeting between Neyamat Ullah Bhuiyan, senior secretary of the Bangladesh's Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, and Mohammed Bin Hassan Al-Dughaither, director general of General Administration for Contracting and Foreign Offices Affairs, Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia.

The meeting was held during the recent official visit of Neyamat Ullah Bhuiyan to Riyadh, according to an official document. During the meeting, the issue of recruitment of 1,200 Bangladeshi graduate nurses during 2024-25 was appreciated, while Bangladesh sought feedback on their performance, professionalism, and service quality and requested suggestions for improving training, language skills, and overall readiness. To facilitate private-sector employment for qualified nurses, Dhaka also sought exemption of Prometric exam for nurses and proposed adapting a recruitment model similar to the Saudi Ministry of Health's system for public hospitals.

Bangladesh stressed the need for exploring collaboration with the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCFHS) to ease evaluation and licensing, and proposed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or agreement, form joint working group/technical committee on accreditation, curriculum alignment. Feedback from Saudi Ministry of Health revealed that a draft agreement was finalised by both sides before transformation of health sector that can be modified in line with transformation policy. It was informed at the meeting that there was a huge demand for critical care nurses in Saudi Arabia and Bangladeshi nurses work as technical nurse in general ward under the supervision of an independent nurse. The Saudi Ministry of Health Sector is no more recruiting health professionals, while the Health Holding Company (HHC) is responsible for the recruitment of health professionals in Saudi Arabia.

Prometric exam, professional experience, accreditation of professional qualification by the Saudi council of Health, Saudi license for practicing as nurse and insurance to cover medical error are mandatory requirements for recruiting nurses both in public and private sector, the document read. ■

World Bank: South Asia's Climate Resilience Will Depend On Private Sector

Business Outlook Report

By 2030, about 90 percent of South Asia's people will be at risk of severe heat waves, and about a quarter of the population will suffer from severe floods. This will be compounded by increasing salinity in coastal areas—which is already having a major impact on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people, said the World Bank on November 24.

A new report published by the World Bank, "From Risk to Resilience: Helping People and Firms Adapt in South Asia", says that the burden of climate adaptation is now mainly on households and the private sector. The survey found that three-quarters of households and organizations in South Asia are at risk of climate-related shocks in the next 10 years.

Of these, 63% of organizations and 80% of households have taken some form of adaptation action. But in most cases, they are relying on low-cost, generic solutions rather than advanced technology or infrastructure. A survey conducted in 250 villages along the coast of Bangladesh found that climate-resilient infrastructure is now the biggest unmet need.

In the long term, 57% of households identified the lack of adequate disaster-resilience infrastructure as a major challenge; 56% of households said they were unable to make the necessary adaptations due to financial constraints. The impact is not just environmental—poor and agricultural households suffer the most. The report said that government investments in Bangladesh, including dams and cyclone shelters, have saved many lives. Case studies in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan have shown that well-targeted social protection programs and up-to-date information can be scaled up quickly; which can be a great help to poor people during disasters.

But the scope of government initiatives is limited due to the financial crisis—in this situation, a comprehensive policy package is needed to bring the private sector to

the forefront of climate adaptation. "Bangladesh's climate resilience is being repeatedly tested anew. While adaptation is extensive, risks are growing rapidly, so more effective action is needed," said Jean Pesme, World Bank division director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

He said that to build the country's resilience, early warning systems, social protection, climate-smart agriculture, and risk-based financing must be increased. Targeted interventions in urban areas are also necessary. The report urges the adoption of a comprehensive and multifaceted adaptation strategy.

It also says that about one-third of climate-related losses can be avoided if early warning systems, insurance, and access to formal credit are improved. If the private sector can quickly invest and transfer resources to where they are needed, the pace of adaptation will increase further. Even in a budget crisis, the government can create an enabling environment for the private sector by improving transport and digital infrastructure, increasing access to finance, and introducing flexible social protection frameworks. "Bangladesh is an important example for South Asia in climate adaptation," said Siddharth Sharma, co-author of the report and lead economist at the World Bank.

According to him, households and businesses are already adapting; but the nature of the crisis is so complex and widespread that the government and the private sector need to take more coordinated and urgent action. The report also says that Bangladesh can build a strong foundation for the future by building on past experiences.

The benefits of long-term investments in early warning and cyclone centers have already been reaped—losses of life have been significantly reduced. This shows that if the right investments and effective institutions are built, it is possible to further increase success in local adaptation. ■

Techtextil And Texprocess-2026 To Be Launched On 21 April In Frankfurt

Business Outlook Report

The Techtextil and Texprocess-2026, a leading technical textiles and machinery exhibition, will be launched on 21 April 2026 in Germany's Frankfurt. Messe Frankfurt — the global leader in textile trade shows with over 60 international textile events — hosted an exclusive press conference on November 20 at The Westin Dhaka to announce the Techtextil and Texprocess 2026. The conference highlighted the significance of these leading international fairs in driving innovation and value addition across the textile and apparel industries.

Scheduled to take place from 21-24 April 2026 in Frankfurt, Techtextil and Texprocess will once again bring together global experts to showcase the most comprehensive range of technical textiles, functional apparel fabrics, nonwovens, and advanced garment machinery— all under one roof. Bangladesh has been chosen as one of the five most important countries for visitors to the show as it remains a world leader in garments. The conference was organised by Rumana Afroze, head of operations, Messe Frankfurt SP Bangladesh, who emphasised Bangladesh's growing role and contribution to the global textile and technology sectors. Country Manager (Sales) of Veit Md Arifur Rahman and Messe Frankfurt Business Development Executive Yumna Amjad from Pakistan also attended the programme. A Bangladesh pavilion, jointly organised by the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and BGMEA, showcased five companies specialising in technical and value-added textiles.

Following its successful participation in 2022 and 2024, an even larger pavilion is anticipated for 2026. Over 100 trade visitors from Bangladesh attend the exhibition every year where they meet exhibitors and buyers from all over the world. 14 country pavilions at Techtextil, including Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, and Switzerland, and two pavilions at Texprocess from China and Taiwan offered Bangladeshi visitors valuable access to cutting-edge textile and garment technologies, machinery, and innovations. The exhibition boosted networking, knowledge exchange, and collaborations, helping Bangladeshi manufacturers modernise production, improve quality, and compete globally. Participation in such international exhibitions not only opens new avenues for trade and technology transfer but also strengthens Bangladesh's position as a hub for sustainable and high-performance textile production.

By connecting with global innovators, suppliers, and machinery manufacturers, Bangladeshi companies gain valuable insights into emerging trends such as smart textiles, automation, and eco-friendly processes — enabling them to enhance competitiveness, diversify product offerings, and expand their footprint in international markets. ■

Digital Wave Cuts Corporate Diary, Calendar Orders

Printing houses shift to book production amid plunging traditional orders

Business Outlook Report

The long-standing tradition of distributing printed diaries, calendars and greeting cards as New Year gifts is fading fast as corporate houses in Bangladesh accelerate their shift to digital communication.

Once central to annual branding and client engagement, these printed items are now rapidly losing relevance in an increasingly tech-driven business landscape, industry insiders say. Printing usually begins in early November and runs through mid-December, but the rise of digital tools and shifting marketing strategies has sharply reduced demand. For decades, banks, insurance companies, industrial groups and major corporate houses placed bulk orders for diaries and calendars in November, making the year-end the busiest season for printing houses.

However, printers report that orders for 2025 have so far dropped by around 40% compared with last year, reflecting both changing consumer behaviour and the evolution of corporate marketing strategies. Many companies have either reduced their print quantities or abandoned printed diaries altogether, opting instead for digital greeting cards, QR-code-based calendars, e-planners and mobile app organisers. Shariful Islam, owner of Atik Digital Printing Press in New Market, told the Daily Sun that he has not received any diary-related work this season.

"Banks and multinational companies are not giving orders like before. Order volumes have fallen sharply, and the variety has also reduced. Previously, 15-20 types of corporate diaries were printed, but now it has come down to only six or seven," he said. Echoing similar concerns, Asadud-doula Asad of Ahad Printers & Packaging in Fakirapool said, "There is virtually no diary or calendar work anymore. We once invested heavily in machinery for this segment, but now we are focusing more on book printing," he said.

"While a few banks still place orders, quantities have shrunk. A corporate client that used to order 10,000 calendars now orders only 5,000, and

some have stopped printing diaries entirely," he added. Anwar Hossain, vice-chairman of the Bangladesh Mudran Shilpa Samity (BMSS), a platform for printing entrepreneurs, said that demand for diaries and calendars has yet to return to earlier levels.

"I have personally shifted from printing diaries to printing books," he said.

houses and employing about 300,000 people directly or indirectly. The annual printing market, including textbooks, is valued at around Tk4,000 crore, with export earnings of roughly Tk160 crore, according to the association.

The decline in seasonal demand is squeezing margins for many print-

Alam, owner of Master Products in Paltan, said, "Sales have dropped sharply. By this time last year, I had sold about 150,000 calendars. This year, I've sold only 30,000 so far."

"Political uncertainty, rising inflation, and shrinking purchasing power all play a role. With smartphones and smart watches now

products on social media is easier and reaches a wider audience, so the company is increasingly focusing on that platform," he said.

"Technology simplifies many tasks. People now check dates through mobile apps. While diaries can still be used for product branding, they no longer meet expectations, as everyone gets

"As institutions embrace technology-driven marketing, printed New Year items are gradually disappearing," added Anwar.

According to BMSS, around 7,000 printing companies, including small and medium businesses, operate across the country, with nearly 2,000 able to compete with foreign printing

ers. Prices heavily depend on volume. Larger print runs lower unit costs, while smaller orders drive prices up.

Currently, diaries sell for Tk250-Tk300 each, calendars for up to Tk100, and greeting cards for Tk20-Tk30. Retailers of ready-made calendars are also experiencing a sharp decline in demand. Md Khorshed

common, people rely on digital calendars and no longer spend on paper ones," he said.

Amir Hossain Jony, public relations officer of National Life Insurance, told the Daily Sun, "Every year we print diaries and calendars for company branding. We even have a dedicated department for this." "However, promoting

this information on their phones. As technology advances, demand for printed materials will continue to decline," added Amir Hossain.

As corporate communication in Bangladesh goes increasingly digital, printers are rethinking their business models, with book printing emerging as a key survival strategy for many. ■

Govt Aims To Complete Aman Procurement Before Election: Food Adviser

Business Outlook Report

The government aims to complete the bulk of its seasonal procurement of Aman rice well ahead of the national election scheduled for mid-February, Food Adviser Ali Imam Majumdar said on November 20. He made the remarks following the official inauguration of the Aman rice collection drive.

Speaking to reporters at his office in the Ministry of Food, Majumdar said the drive will continue until 28 February, but noted that district- and upazila-level food officials will be heavily involved in election duties by mid-February. "Keeping this in mind, instructions have been given to all concerned to meet the collection targets before mid-February. No laxity will be acceptable," he added.

The adviser mentioned that the government wants to hand over a comfortable and adequate food stock to the next administration. "The government will try to collect almost its entire target before the election. We are committed to this." This season, the procurement rates have been set at Tk34 per kg for paddy, Tk50 per kg for parboiled rice, and Tk49 per kg for atap rice. Agreements with millers have already been finalised, and formal procurement began on November 20.

The government has set minimum collection targets of 50,000 tonnes of paddy, 600,000 tonnes of parboiled rice, and 50,000 tonnes of atap rice. Majumdar said these targets represent the minimum baseline. "The more we can collect, the more we can reduce our dependence on imports." He said the government maintains food stocks to support the Public Food Distribution System and strives to keep reserves at a safe, satisfactory level. This year's Boro season collection had reached record levels, he added. The adviser also highlighted the expansion of the public food distribution network. The number of beneficiaries under the Food Friendly Programme has increased by 500,000, now covering 5.5 lakh families, each receiving 30kg of rice per month at Tk15 per kg.

The programme has also been extended from five to six months. "We believe these steps will help keep rice prices stable in the market for a long time." ■

WEEKLY SELECTED ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Chief Economist's Unit
(Policy Support Wing)
23 November 2025

1.		20 November 2024		30 June 2025		30 October 2025		20 November 2025			
	Foreign Exchange Reserve (in million US$)	24269.81	18497.70 (BPM6)	31723.79	26707.31 (BPM6)	32148.96	27540.68 (BPM6)	31143.61	26432.55 (BPM6)		
2.		20 November 2024		30 June 2025		30 October 2025		20 November 2025			
	Interbank Taka-USD Exchange Rate (average)	120.0000		122.7735		122.2859		122.5805			
3.	**Overnight Call Money Rate**	20 November 2024		30 June 2025		30 October 2025		20 November 2025			
	Weighted Average Rate (in Percent)	10.02		10.05		9.80		9.90			
4.	**Broad/Overall Share Price Index**	20 November 2024		30 June 2025		20 November 2025		Percentage change			
								20 Nov. 25 over Jun 25		20 Nov. 24 over Jun 24	
	a) Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE)	5245.26		4838.39		4869.01		0.63		-1.56	
	b) Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE)	14672.12		13438.38		13642.13		1.52		-2.62	
5.		October, 2024		July-October, FY25		October, 2025[P]		July-October, FY26 [P]		FY25	
	a) **Wage Earners' Remittances** (in million US$)	2395.08		8937.11		2563.48		10148.80		30328.81	
	b) Annual Percentage Change	21.49		29.93		7.03		13.56		26.83	
6.		September, 2024		July- September, FY25		September, 2025[P]		July- September, FY26 [P]		FY25 [P]	
	a) **Import (C&F)** (in million US$)	5651.48		16170.71		6212.13		17705.31		68354.20	
	b) Annual Percentage Change	7.09		1.64		9.92		9.49		2.44	
		September, 2024		July- September, FY25		September, 2025[P]		July- September, FY26 [P]		FY25 [P]	
	a) **Import(f.o.b)** (in million US$)	5277.57		15191.39		5914.65		16799.91		64347.00	
	b) Annual Percentage Change	4.90		0.87		12.07		10.59		1.75	
7.		September, 2024		July- September, FY25		September, 2025[P]		July- September, FY26 [P]		FY25 [P]	
	a) **Export** (f.o.b) (in million US$)	3392.54		10552.56		3163.39		11087.47		43958.00	
	b) Annual Percentage Change	10.69		4.99		-6.75		5.07		7.72	
8.		July- September, FY25				July- September, FY26 [P]		FY25 [P]			
	Current Account Balance (in million US$)	59.6				-481.0		149.0			
9.		October, 2024		July- October, FY25		October, 2025		July-October, FY26		FY25	
	a) **Tax Revenue** (NBR) (BDT in crore)	27854.39		103409.17		28473.00		119478.00		370874.03	
	b) Annual Percentage Change	3.75		1.05		2.22		15.54		2.23	
10.	**Investment in National Savings Certificates** (BDT in crore)	September, 2024		July- September, FY25		September, 2025[P]		July- September, FY26 [P]		FY25	
	a) Net Sale	8332.80		4109.09		373.30		1945.59		-6063.33	
	b) Total Outstanding	354601.85		354601.85		340444.52		340444.52		338498.93	
11.		September, 2024		June, 2025		September, 2025	Percentage change				
							Sep.'25 over Sep.'24	Sep.'25 over June'25		Sep.'24 over June'24	June'25 over June'24
	a) **Reserve Money** (RM) (BDT in crore)	375273.20		413179.00		388196.40	3.44	-6.05		-9.28	-0.11
	b) **Broad Money** (M2) (BDT in crore)	2025148.80		2174621.80		2189977.70	8.14	0.71		-0.40	6.95

12.	**Total Domestic Credit** (BDT in crore)	2106299.90	2284353.00	2321166.10	10.20	1.61	-0.44	7.98
	a) Net Credit to the Govt. Sector	406813.80	488177.80	517559.60	27.22	6.02	-4.25	14.90
	b) Credit to the Other Public Sector	47242.00	48488.30	47517.30	0.58	-2.00	-4.41	-1.88
	c) Credit to the Private Sector	1652244.10	1747686.90	1756089.20	6.29	0.48	0.67	6.49

		July- September FY25		July- September FY26 P		Percentage change		
						July- Sep. FY26 over July- Sep. FY25		FY25
13.	**L/C Opening and Settlement** (in million US$)	Opening	Settlement	Opening	Settlement	Opening	Settlement	Settlement
	a) Consumer Goods	1338.53	1398.02	1589.81	1326.55	18.77	-5.11	-0.29
	b) Capital Machinery	383.89	498.81	471.67	444.34	22.87	-10.92	-25.42
	c) Intermediate Goods	1039.24	1151.32	1055.81	948.42	1.59	-17.62	-8.85
	d) Petroleum	2152.81	2418.22	2204.31	2290.07	2.39	-5.30	6.42
	e) Industrial Raw Materials	5934.61	5826.30	6274.44	5765.61	5.73	-1.04	8.37
	f) Others	5362.73	5307.98	6370.69	5996.39	18.80	12.97	6.97
	Total	**16211.81**	**16600.65**	**17966.73**	**16771.38**	**10.82**	**1.03**	**4.18**
	Back to Back L/C	**2977.14**	**2505.20**	**2660.74**	**2536.33**	**-10.63**	**1.24**	**18.62**

14.	**Rate of Inflation on the basis of Consumer Price Index for National (Base:2021-22=100)**	January, 2025	February, 2025	March, 2025	April, 2025	May, 2025	June, 2025	July, 2025	August, 2025	September, 2025	October, 2025
	a) Twelve Month Average Basis	10.34	10.30	10.26	10.21	10.13	10.03	9.77	9.58	9.45	9.22
	b) Point to Point Basis	9.94	9.32	9.35	9.17	9.05	8.48	8.55	8.29	8.36	8.17
	Corresponding Period	January, 2024	February, 2024	March, 2024	April, 2024	May, 2024	June, 2024	July, 2024	August, 2024	September, 2024	October, 2024
	a) Twelve Month Average Basis	9.59	9.66	9.69	9.73	9.73	9.73	9.90	9.95	9.97	10.05
	b) Point to Point Basis	9.86	9.67	9.81	9.74	9.89	9.72	11.66	10.49	9.92	10.87

15.	**Classified Loan**	March, 2023	June, 2023	September, 2023	December, 2023	March, 2024	June ,2024	September, 2024	December, 2024	March, 2025
	a) % of Classified Loan to Total Outstanding	8.80	10.11	9.93	9.00	11.11	12.56	16.93	20.20	24.13
	b) % of Net Classified Loan to Net Outstanding	0.30	1.58	1.22	0.59	2.44	3.68	5.89	10.57	15.00

16.	**Agricultural and Non-farm Rural Credit (BDT in crore)**	September,'24	October,'24	July- October, FY25	September,'25P	October,'25P	July- October, FY26 P	FY25	FY24	FY23
	a) Disbursement *	2587.27	2933.18	9391.36	3663.44	3438.30	11927.77	37326.52	37153.90	32829.89
	b) Recovery	3764.51	3112.45	12322.42	4470.81	3446.85	13991.24	38024.50	35571.62	33010.09
	c) Outstanding	54927.74	55084.42	55084.42	59500.11	59880.74	59880.74	60232.42	58119.59	52704.45

17.	**SME Loan (BDT in crore)**	Oct-Dec, FY24	Jan-Mar, FY24	April-June, FY24	July-Sept., FY25	Oct.-December, FY25	Jan.-Mar, FY25	Apr. June, FY25 P	FY25 P	FY24
	a) Disbursement	64841.99	53107.48	54526.41	44202.85	62580.78	47813.01	50896.52	205493.16	225130.79
	b) Outstanding	304241.45	303970.10	306119.87	299958.54	313175.76	302174.59	310713.40	310713.40	306119.87

18	**Industrial Term Loan (BDT in crore)****	Oct-Dec.' FY24	Jan-Mar.' FY24	April-June, FY24	July-Sept., FY25	Oct.-Dec, FY25	Jan-Mar, FY25	Apr-June, FY25	FY25	FY24
	a) Disbursement	27049.00	20061.00	20773.00	22146.00	31082.00	19614.47	24296.00	97138.47	88738.00
	b) Recovery	28933.00	21148.00	20478.00	20505.00	33175.00	26436.36	27181.00	107297.36	94148.00
	c) Outstanding	304760.00	331247.00	343338.00	359498.00	379994.00	389282.43	384854.00	384854.00	343338.00

19.		FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24 R	FY25 P
	GDP Growth Rate (Base: 2015-16)	6.59	7.32	7.88	3.45	6.94	7.10	5.78	4.22	3.97

Weekly basis commodity Statement of LCs Opened and Setteled for the month of August/2022

In million US $(Provisional)

Sl. No.	Name Of The Commodity	First week		Second week		Third week		Fourth week		Fifth week		Total	
		Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled	Opened	Settled
1.	Rice	6.54	2.75	6.74	6.05	16.40	4.26	8.36	3.21	4.98	0.51	43.03	16.78
	i) Private Sector	6.52	2.75	6.74	6.05	16.37	4.26	8.36	3.21	4.98	0.51	42.97	16.78
	ii) Public Sector	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00
2.	Wheat	35.70	11.42	0.91	12.04	0.68	6.45	18.73	10.57	119.26	3.62	175.29	44.10
	i) Private Sector	13.28	11.42	0.91	12.04	0.68	6.45	18.73	10.57	119.26	3.62	152.87	44.10
	ii) Public Sector	22.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	22.42	0.00
3.	Sugar	3.36	10.09	0.07	10.78	0.02	5.27	2.53	24.36	0.04	10.33	6.02	60.83
	a. Raw	0.00	5.09	0.04	5.78	0.02	5.27	2.53	14.36	0.00	10.28	2.59	40.78
	i) Private Sector	0.00	5.09	0.04	5.73	0.02	5.27	0.00	14.36	0.00	10.28	0.06	40.73
	ii) Public Sector	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	2.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.53	0.06
	b. Refined	3.36	5.00	0.03	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00	0.04	0.06	3.43	20.04
	i) Private Sector	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.98	0.04	0.06	0.04	20.03
	ii) Public Sector	3.36	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	3.39	0.02
4.	Milk Food	10.02	10.82	3.15	6.34	1.93	1.75	4.01	8.15	0.09	0.53	19.21	27.60
5.	Edible Oil (Refined)	47.55	36.81	49.28	51.78	91.38	46.41	57.07	17.37	0.00	4.03	245.29	156.40
	a) Soyabean	2.93	18.50	14.18	0.00	4.81	2.49	0.00	8.66	0.00	0.00	21.92	29.65
	b) Palm Oil	4.77	13.76	0.01	28.85	19.57	16.25	57.07	4.86	0.00	4.03	81.42	67.75
	c) Others	39.85	4.55	35.09	22.93	67.00	27.67	0.00	3.85	0.00	0.00	141.95	59.00
6.	Edible Oil (Crude)	39.50	40.14	9.36	15.78	44.59	54.37	51.72	23.16	0.01	17.45	145.17	150.91
	a) Soyabean	10.23	13.30	6.52	10.69	17.56	45.18	21.30	22.74	0.00	11.50	55.60	103.41
	b) Palm Oil	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.10	0.00	9.17	30.40	0.37	0.00	0.00	30.40	14.63
	c) Others	29.27	26.84	2.84	0.00	27.04	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.01	5.95	59.17	32.86
7.	Dry Fruits	0.60	0.32	0.32	0.52	0.41	0.14	0.57	0.24	0.07	0.03	1.97	1.25
	a) Dates	0.09	0.06	0.11	0.29	0.22	0.03	0.40	0.06	0.04	0.01	0.86	0.45
	b) Others	0.50	0.26	0.21	0.24	0.19	0.10	0.17	0.18	0.03	0.03	1.10	0.80
8.	Pulses	0.57	0.82	1.27	0.71	1.06	15.39	8.53	7.58	2.06	2.56	13.49	27.05
	a) Masur Dal	0.44	0.70	1.14	0.71	1.01	15.06	8.43	7.14	2.02	0.58	13.03	24.19
	b) Chola Dal	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	c) Others	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.00	0.06	0.32	0.10	0.43	0.04	1.98	0.46	2.86
9.	Onion	3.46	3.32	3.30	3.86	2.78	2.19	3.44	3.55	0.87	0.65	13.85	13.58
10.	Ginger	0.16	0.44	0.64	0.51	0.26	0.21	0.18	0.50	0.03	0.07	1.27	1.73
11.	Drugs & Medicines	2.48	1.72	1.03	2.37	0.20	1.62	1.22	0.81	2.07	0.12	7.01	6.63
12.	Poultry Feeds	7.98	17.10	2.67	22.62	4.17	3.44	3.06	17.58	2.51	3.41	20.38	64.15
13.	Coal	14.98	2.96	13.32	0.59	8.39	0.16	0.45	0.28	0.11	0.21	37.25	4.19
14.	Cement	2.73	4.39	4.33	0.53	1.07	4.29	2.40	4.86	0.00	1.31	10.53	15.38
15.	Clinker	15.81	8.51	24.36	12.69	20.46	4.70	20.95	19.74	2.33	6.72	83.90	52.36
16.	B.P Sheet	2.64	1.11	3.42	1.41	0.29	0.81	0.92	0.57	0.70	0.35	7.98	4.25
17.	Scrap Vessels	12.06	8.88	22.93	2.72	0.00	3.31	1.66	6.09	0.00	11.82	36.66	32.82
18.	Paper	2.11	2.68	1.16	2.31	0.86	2.96	0.83	3.71	0.29	0.93	5.24	12.60
	i) Newsprint	0.01	0.24	0.00	0.09	0.54	0.15	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.55	0.55
	ii) Others	2.10	2.44	1.16	2.22	0.32	2.81	0.83	3.65	0.29	0.93	4.69	12.05
19.	Zinc Ingot	0.61	0.79	1.91	4.89	0.00	2.11	5.75	0.95	1.85	0.08	10.13	8.83
20.	Raw Cotton	38.87	70.33	42.74	65.53	27.12	63.07	33.07	74.82	6.44	22.88	148.24	296.63
21.	Synthetic/Mixed Yarn	21.65	24.52	13.22	26.10	17.13	20.06	12.57	22.86	3.38	6.47	67.95	100.00
22.	Cotton Yarn	27.29	50.04	29.08	53.21	22.55	42.60	27.32	52.75	7.26	12.68	113.49	211.29
23.	Textile Fabrics	25.43	18.18	23.03	19.82	15.03	16.66	16.59	23.26	1.53	4.19	81.62	82.12
24.	Textile Accessories	18.41	21.01	17.34	16.99	10.97	15.95	22.04	22.73	5.72	8.80	74.47	85.48
25.	Back-to-Back L/Cs	171.73	155.03	131.06	160.80	80.92	117.43	125.50	185.55	18.89	48.03	528.10	666.85
	a. Fabrics	124.44	108.31	89.84	110.88	55.79	81.34	92.85	132.42	11.86	35.42	374.78	468.38
	b. Accessories	42.05	42.33	38.36	42.70	22.42	33.74	31.09	49.26	6.71	11.38	140.64	179.41
	c. Others	5.23	4.39	2.86	7.22	2.71	2.35	1.56	3.87	0.32	1.23	12.68	19.06
26.	Pharmaceutaical Raw Materials	19.59	17.20	12.10	12.53	11.21	13.11	14.78	18.77	1.99	3.77	59.67	65.37
27.	Chemicals & Chemical Products	65.36	22.53	78.18	109.53	34.82	54.94	19.88	198.75	3.89	18.13	202.12	403.88
	a. Chemical Fertilizer	39.74	6.19	20.47	88.18	23.53	40.30	3.22	179.42	0.48	3.46	87.43	317.55
	i) Urea	33.85	0.21	0.63	0.05	1.40	0.93	0.38	0.13	0.00	0.00	36.26	1.33
	ii) TSP	0.27	0.03	14.14	30.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	28.97	0.00	0.00	14.41	59.46
	iii) MOP	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	20.70	29.02	0.04	57.71	0.00	0.11	20.74	86.87
	iv) DAP	2.78	0.62	3.18	50.82	0.09	0.25	0.08	88.78	0.00	0.00	6.13	140.47
	v) Others	2.84	5.33	2.52	6.82	1.34	10.09	2.72	3.84	0.48	3.36	9.89	29.43
	b. Other Chemicals & Chemical Product	25.62	16.34	57.71	21.35	11.28	14.65	16.66	19.33	3.41	14.66	114.69	86.33
28.	P.O.L.	53.95	62.39	48.86	216.24	48.89	49.31	46.46	104.75	44.78	0.00	242.95	432.69
	i) Crude	2.50	0.09	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.12	0.06	0.20	0.00	0.00	2.62	0.41
	ii) Refined	51.45	62.30	48.81	216.24	48.88	49.19	46.40	104.55	44.78	0.00	240.33	432.28
29.	Capital Machinery	39.67	60.15	30.44	72.01	18.97	58.71	54.02	62.79	6.14	21.98	149.24	275.64
30.	Machinery For Mise Industries	40.80	38.27	36.40	26.25	33.05	46.50	40.34	48.12	10.81	12.19	161.40	171.34
31.	Motor Vehicle	9.83	15.82	4.24	16.59	1.19	7.30	7.55	9.67	1.18	4.16	23.99	53.54
32.	Computer, Its Accessories & Spares	4.49	4.33	1.11	5.08	3.04	5.07	3.14	2.92	0.06	0.90	11.85	18.29
33.	Medical, Surgical & Dental Equipments	1.62	2.12	2.18	2.20	1.07	2.10	2.28	3.90	0.77	0.57	7.92	10.90
34.	Others	391.39	369.18	331.13	427.49	255.00	403.68	326.46	452.04	76.18	150.14	1380.15	1802.54
	Grand Total	1138.93	1096.19	951.28	1388.85	775.92	1076.34	944.39	1436.97	326.30	379.63	4136.82	5377.98

Data downloaded: on 31.08.22

First Bhutan Transit Consignment Starts Clearance At Ctg Port

Business Outlook Report

The clearance of the first trial transit consignment imported by Bhutan has begun at the Chattogram port. The cargo reached the port from Thailand two months ago. The cargo is set to be released today and dispatched by road through India to Bhutan, a land-lock country, according to the appointed clearing and forwarding agent NM Trading Corporation.

'We're completing the process smoothly. We expect to finish clearance by tomorrow noon,' said NM Trading managing director Shahidul Alam Khan. 'The container will then move by road to Bhutan,' he added. Under the trial run, the route's first stretch was from Thailand's Laem Chabang port to Chattogram. From Chattogram port the container will head to the Burimari land port by road and through the Changrabandha land port across Burimari will enter India. In the last stretch of the route, the cargo will then go from Chengrabandha to Siliguri in West Bengal state of India and from there it will enter Bhutan at Phuentsholing.

The trial container from Thailand carries 6,530 kilogram (6.5 tonnes) of goods, including shampoo, dried palm fruit, iced tea, chocolate and juice, while the exporter is Abit Trading Company Ltd of Thailand and the importer is Bhutan's Abit Trading. Having no seaport, Bhutan imports third-country goods via neighbours. To facilitate the movement, Bangladesh and Bhutan signed the 'Agreement on the Movement of Traffic-in-Transit' and its protocol on March 22, 2023. Under this framework, the trial consignment arrived at Chattogram on September 22 aboard the Bangladesh flag carrier MV HR Hera. Three agencies are collecting charges for the trial move inside Bangladesh—Chattogram Customs, Chattogram Port Authority, and the Roads and Highways Department.

Earlier, a National Board of Revenue order issued on November 17 set the following document processing fee at Tk 30 per consignment; trans-shipment fee Tk 20 per tonne; security charge at Tk 100 per tonne; escort fee Tk 85 per container per kilometre; administrative charge Tk 100 per tonne; and scanning fee Tk 254 per container. Road tolls and charges for the trial have also been fixed. According to a Roads and Highways Department letter sent to the NBR on November 20, the transit corridor from Chattogram port to Burimari spans 684 kilometres.

This includes a 12km tolled Port Access Road at Tk 45, and bridge tolls totalling Tk 4,815 for the Meghna, Meghna-Gomati, Jamuna and Teesta bridges. Based on the trailer's gross weight, an additional per-tonne charge applies to the 672km toll-free segment which stands at Tk 1,462 total for a cargo weighing one tonne. ■

Loan Write-Offs: Customers Will Now Get 10 Days' Notice In Advance

Business Outlook Report

Bangladesh Bank has issued new guidelines for banks to write off classified bad loans. From now on, the concerned customer will have to be given notice at least 10 working days before writing-off or writing off a borrower's loan. On November 19, the central bank issued a circular in this regard and directed the managing directors of all scheduled banks to implement it immediately.

Earlier, in the circular issued on October 19, it was mandatory to inform the customer 30 days before writing off. However, the time has been reduced to 10 days, citing the need to settle a case for a long time, said an official of Bangladesh Bank.

The circular also states that banks will be able to provide cash incentives to the concerned officials for recovering written-off loans as per their own policies. Banks that do not have such policies will have to formulate new policies subject to the approval of their board of directors. Bangladesh Bank's directive states that if a customer's loan is in both the bad and harmful categories, it can be written off.

Older and non-recoverable loans will be written off on a priority basis. However, the customer will remain a defaulter until the entire liability is paid. Banks can write off any bad loan if 100% provision is reserved against the loan. If there is a shortfall in the provision, it will have to be met by adjusting it from the current year's income, the directive states. According to Bangladesh Bank's 'Financial Stability Report-2024', the amount of written off loans in the country stood at Tk62,300 crore. On the other hand, at the end of March 2025, the total defaulted loans in the banking sector stood at Tk420,000 crore. Of this, Tk342,000 crore was bad and harmful loans, which is 81.37% of the total defaulted loans.

The circular says that banks can, if they wish, remove write-off loans from the balance sheet after meeting the necessary provisions among these classified bad loans. With the new directive coming into effect, borrowers will be able to be

informed in advance about the write-off process and it is expected that the write-off management of banks will also be more transparent. Deputy Governor Md Habibur Rahman, Chief Economist Mohammad Akhtar Hossain, BIDS Director General Dr. AK Enamul Haque, Dhaka University Professor Masuda Yasmin, Executive Director Dr. Md. Ejazul Islam and Member-Secretary Mahmud Salahuddin Naser participated in the meeting.

The MPC's assessment shows that inflation in the country is gradually decreasing. Overall inflation has come down to 8.36% in September 2025—a positive development in recent times. However, the risk of price increases remains due to disruptions in the supply of food products in some areas. The report said that interbank call money and repo rates have decreased slightly. There has been some relief in interest rate pressure due to increased investment in government securities. On the other hand, due to uncertainty surrounding the national elections, demand for credit in the private sector has decreased. Although export growth in the foreign sector was moderate, imports increased.

The committee said that this increase in imports was expected due to the relaxation of LC margins for essential goods ahead of Ramadan. At the same time, remittance flows were also satisfactory. It was also warned that additional pressure on inflation could be created due to the possible impact of weather-related damage to Aman paddy, elections, Ramadan and the announcement of a new salary structure. Considering everything, the Monetary Policy Committee decided to keep the policy interest rate unchanged at 10%. In addition, the SDF rate will remain at 8% and the SLF rate at 11.5%.

The MPC said that the tight monetary policy will continue until the actual policy interest rate reaches 3%. The decision to maintain this policy has been taken to maintain macroeconomic stability and control inflation. ■

New Postal Ordinance To Redefine Legal Address

Business Outlook Report

The government has moved to frame the country's postal laws to give citizens a legally recognized address and secure access to financial services, as it moves to replace the 127-year-old Post Office Act of 1898 with the Post Services Ordinance 2025.

The new law will create a national digital addressing system and turns Bangladesh Post into a legally mandated provider of universal services, positioning it as a key pillar of communication, financial inclusion and state delivery. Under the ordinance, universal postal service will become a statutory obligation. Bangladesh Post must reach every citizen at a uniform and affordable rate, including areas where private operators would not operate. The legally mandated services will include letters, government documents, court papers, identity-related deliveries, stipends, allowances and postal savings. One of the most significant reforms is the expanded definition of 'address'.

The draft law recognises physical locations, digital lockers, email identifiers and any functional operating point of a person or institution as valid legal addresses. Bangladesh Post will also be allowed to assign address methods for floating or displaced citizens. This is designed to support digital identity, KYC verification for financial services and public benefits delivery. Bangladesh Post will be responsible for creating and maintaining a national address database. Every holding in the country will be mapped and standardised. This digital repository is expected to improve the accuracy of e-commerce deliveries, reduce fraud in financial services and help track climate migration by archiving addresses lost to river erosion and other environmental shocks.

The draft introduces specific provisions to ensure access for minors, women under seclusion, people with disabilities, the visually impaired, those with contagious diseases and citizens without permanent housing. The postal authority will be empowered to design special procedures so that the absence of a stable address cannot exclude anyone from essential communication or state services. The ordinance also establishes the legal base for expanding rural service delivery and small-scale employment. Postal e-service centres, franchise outlets and post shops can be set up using unused postal facilities. These will function as local hubs for digital government services while offering new commercial opportunities for rural entrepreneurs. The financial chapter modernises postal savings and payment services.

All deposits must be held in the government's treasury single account and backed by state security. Investments will be routed through treasury instruments, giving depositors protection and aligning postal finance with national fiscal discipline. ■

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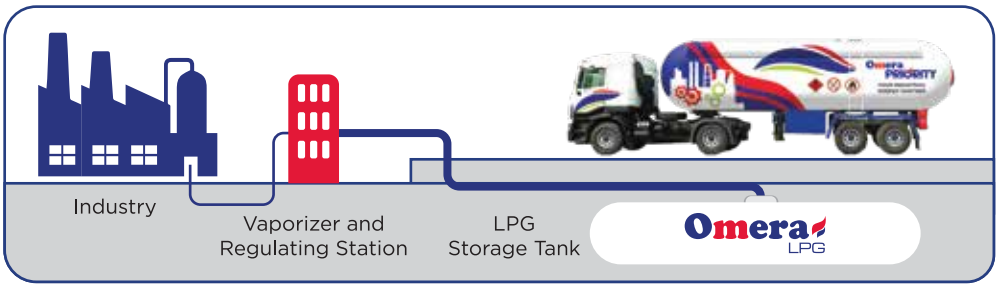

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