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IN RETROSPECT 2020



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2020: in retrospect

The year 2020 began with hopes despite the detection of cases of novel coronavirus infection reported from Wuhan in China in December 2019, with no one knowing that the outbreak of the disease that the virus caused could soon become a pandemic and shut almost the whole world. By the time the infection caused by the virus which had till then been known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 but was later officially renamed as SARS-CoV-2 and the disease came to be called COVID-19 was first detected in Bangladesh early March 2020, the pandemic took the cases of global infection to about 0.78 million, with about 37,800 of them having died. The first death from the infection in Bangladesh was reported after the third week of March and the COVID-19 pandemic started leaving a great impact on the global as well as the Bangladesh economy.

In Bangladesh, the government ordered a general holiday as other countries around the world ordered lockdown, partially or wholly as a preventive measure against the spread of the COVID-19 infection beginning on March 26, 2020. Educational institutions were, however, closed on March 17. Everything came to an almost halt — offices, industries, businesses, transports and all. People were asked to stay indoors as much as possible and maintain physical distancing, if they at all need to go out, as a non-pharmaceutical infection control action that had by then been on adoption across the world.

The restrictions on people's mobility, in some extreme cases enforced by the law enforcement agencies, stalled the economy, constraining the lives of people, especially the poor and the fixed- and low-income groups. They had their savings eroded and many of them lost job, calling for food and cash aid by the government.

The pandemic slowed down factories in China, where the outbreak of the disease could be effectively managed in a short span of time, and many countries, especially in South Asia, faced problems in the import of raw materials and ingredients for the apparel and the pharmaceutical sector. A crisis in businesses of all sorts was looming large. As support for small and medium enterprises and

larger businesses is crucial for maintaining employment and financial stability, governments found themselves in trouble in helping their citizens. The initial impact, primarily limited to health issues, started straining all other sectors. COVID-19 threatened the livelihood of millions in Bangladesh because of the economic disruption caused by the disease. An estimated 50 million workers that work in the informal sector in Bangladesh started bearing the brunt as many of them could not be readily covered by food or cash aid of the government.

The government began a gradual withdrawal of the restrictions on businesses, industries and transports beginning on May 31, but the move could not gear the economic activities that slowed down in the initial days of the COVID-19 infection to their normal pace. Offices and businesses reopened and the transport sector had functioned on a limited scale until the end of August. The apparel sector, which employs about four million people, is identified to have faced an immediate threat.

The sector then faced the cancellation of work orders of about \$3 billion, with fears that about a half of the work force in the sector might lose job. This drew an immediate attention of the government and the government announced a package of Tk 50 billion, the first in a series of economic measures announced during the COVID-19 outbreak to cope with the situation, for industries in export-oriented industrial sectors to pay wages to workers at a service charge of 2 per cent.

People increasingly turned to technology, which also pushed up the demand for online shopping and entertainment, although the use of technology could not effectively address what went amiss in the education sector. All this the problems and their solution warrants that the government, preferably along with actors in the private sector, should devise means to attend to the issues in both the short and the long run in a sustainable manner as it is feared that the health threat may stay for a longer duration, forcing people to adapt to the new normal **r**

Rizwan Rahman to lead DCCI as president for 2021

DCCI's 59th annual general meeting held

Rizwan Rahman, Managing Director of ETBL Securities and Exchange Ltd., has been elected President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry for 2021 while N. K. A. Mobin, FCS, FCA has been re-elected Senior Vice-President and Monowar Hossain has been elected Vice-President for 2021.

The new board of directors took over charge at the 59th annual general meeting of the DCCI held in its auditorium through Zoom on December 29, 2020.

The newly elected directors are Golam Zilani, Hossain A. Sikder, Khairul Majid Mahmud, M. A. Rashid Shah Shamrat and Nasiruddin A. Ferdous.

The newly elected DCCI president Rizwan Rahman, in his wide-ranging business career, has headed several segments of ETBL Holdings Ltd., a renowned local conglomerate with diversified financial services, dredging infrastructure, commodities trade, cold storage, furniture, print media, etc. He is a director of Eastland Insurance Company Ltd. and the Financial Express. He has been engaged with the DCCI in different capacities since 2006, contributing to the private-sector development, upon completion of his higher education from the United Kingdom.

In his diverse career, Rizwan also served as director of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, the Bangladesh Philippines Chamber of Commerce and Industry and as the former vice-president of the Dutch-Bangla Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the improvement of multilateral trade and investment relation.



Rizwan Rahman
President



N K A Mobin, FCS, FCA
Senior Vice-President




Monowar Hossain
Vice-President

Re-elected senior Vice-President N. K. A. Mobin, FCS, FCA is the managing director and chief executive officer of Emerging Credit Rating Ltd. and has been engaged in credit rating of corporate business houses, banks and financial institutions and insurance business since 2009. He completed his BBA and MBA in finance from the University of Dhaka. He completed his triple EMBA from Stockholm Business School,

Sweden, the National University of Singapore and INSEAD in France. He is currently a fellow member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh and the Institute of Chartered Secretaries Bangladesh. He has also been a government-nominated

director on the board of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd. since 2016.

He is the board member in Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Ltd., Mobil Jamuna Bangladesh Ltd. and Shasha Denims Ltd. His expertise covers top management leadership, financial management and project management skill, ERP solutions and company secretarial practices.

Newly elected vice-president Monowar Hossain is the proprietor of Monowar Trading, from Old Dhaka, specialized in export and import with different countries. He is also involved in business of importing reconditioned vehicles from Japan. He previously served the DCCI as the director for 2020. He completed his graduation in business from Dhaka. Hossain is also a member of the Uttara Club Ltd. 

Hanoi for boosting trade with Dhaka

Hanoi will enhance bilateral cooperation, ties and share business opportunities with Dhaka to realize \$2.0-billion trade potential between the countries, Vietnamese ambassador Pham Viet Chien said on December 21.

“Leaders of two countries set the volume of bilateral trade at \$2.0 billion, but the current volume is close to \$1.0-million,” he said. “We will enhance the relationship, cooperation and sharing business opportunities together to realize \$2 billion,” Chien continued. Addressing a webinar, he said that Vietnam and Bangladesh have a long-standing traditional and close relationship.

“Two countries bilateral trade and economic cooperation has been promoted in recent years. There is a lot of room for business opportunities between the two countries and we

need to exploit the potential.” The envoy spoke at the plenary session of a three-day Vietnam-Bangladesh Business Matching Webinar on Consumer Goods 2020.

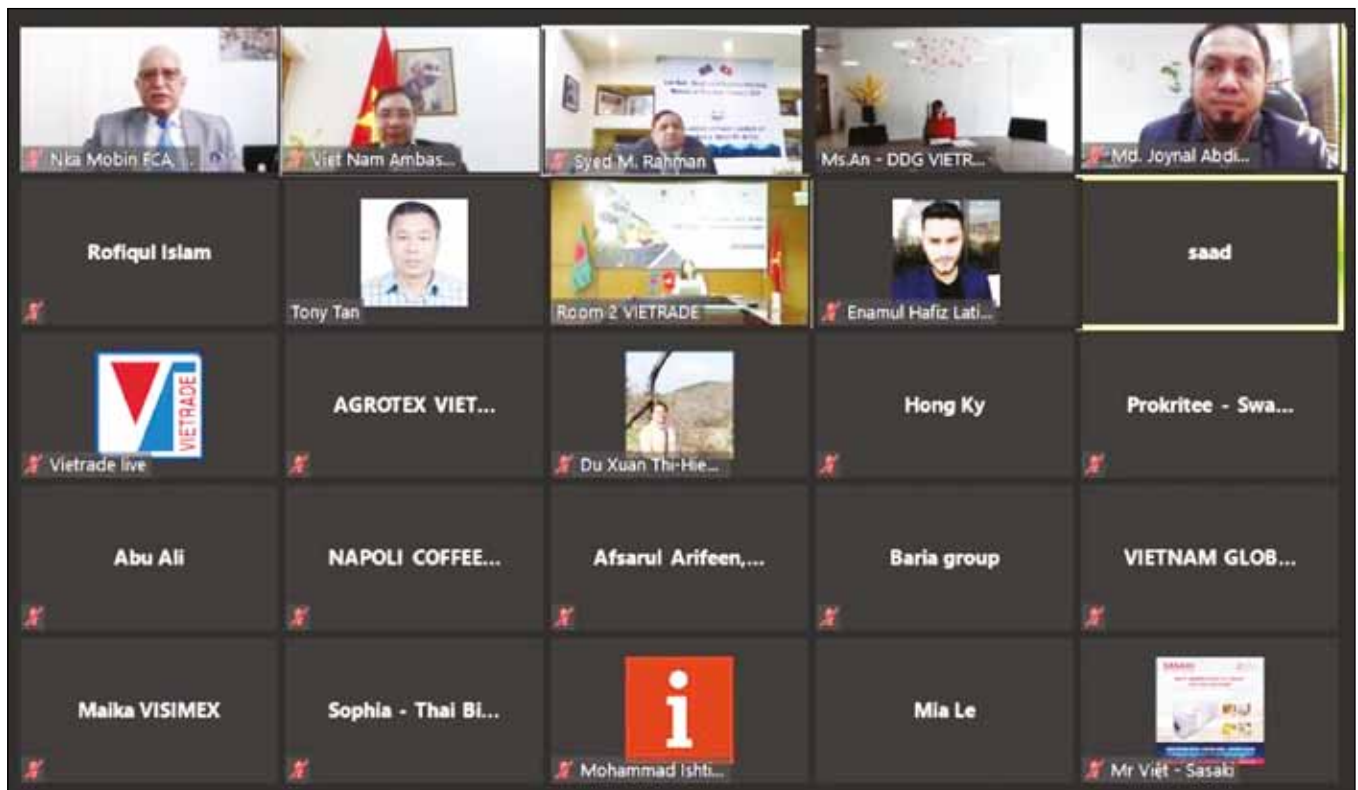
The Vietnam Trade Promotion Agency, the Embassy of Vietnam in Bangladesh, the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Bangladesh-Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry co-hosted the event. Vietnamese suppliers and exporters and their Bangladeshi counterparts involved in agricultural products, seafood, consumer products, footwear and apparel joined the program.

During the event, the acting DCCI president N. K. A. Mobin, FCA, FCS said that investors and entrepreneurs of both countries could leverage the dynamics of fastest-growing economies and align with their

investment and business interests. Considering the total international trade of Vietnam and Bangladesh, he said that bilateral trade of the two countries was insignificant at \$603 million in the fiscal year 2019-20.

N. K. A. Mobin said that Vietnam exported goods worth \$555 million to Bangladesh. On the other hand, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$48 million in the period, he said. He said that involvement of both the private sector and the stakeholders concerned of both nations needs to be boosted to scale up trade under a win-win framework.

Vietnam has recently been in a more advantageous position in international trade because of free trade agreements with the European Union and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.



Participants are seen at the webinar on ‘Vietnam-Bangladesh Business Matching’ held on December 21.

“To seize a new market, Vietnam can invest in our manufacturing hub for sourcing low-cost export items,” Mobin observed. It can invest directly or as joint venture in sectors like textile, high-end ready-made garment, agro-processing, consumer products, tourism, blue economy, construction, health care, light engineering and leather, he noted.

Mobin said that both countries need

to revisit various areas to boost trade and investment relations. A direct flight between Bangladesh and Vietnam and easing business visa for increasing people-to-people contacts are also important.

Preferential trade agreements or FTA for substantial trade benefits can also boost bilateral trade, he said. “Bangladesh could be allowed as an observer in ASEAN to increase trade

with Vietnam and ASEAN members,” Mobin further said.

The BVCCI president S. M. Rahman said that both Vietnam and Bangladesh may organize trade fairs in their respective countries to boost bilateral trade. Vietnam has business opportunities in consumer goods and its tradespeople should come and explore potential here, he suggested **1**

Climate, clean energy investment chances for Bangladeshi companies

PFAN facilitates climate resilience project financing



Participants are seen at the webinar on “Climate and Clean Energy Investment Opportunities in Bangladesh” organized jointly by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Private Financing Advisory Network held on December 22.

Bangladeshi companies working in the climate-resilient, environment-friendly, clean and renewable energy efficient sector have a great opportunity to get project financing from the Private Financing Advisory Network, experts urged in a webinar titled “Climate and Clean

Energy Investment Opportunities in Bangladesh” organized jointly by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Private Financing Advisory Network on December 22, 2020.

N. K. A. Mobin, FCS, FCA Acting President of the DCCI, in his

welcome address said that the private sector plays the biggest role in the development of Bangladesh and needs to contribute to the paradigm shift caused by the climate change. Businesses are taking action to address climate risks and opportunities by incorporating environmental

consideration into decision-making process. For clean energy financing and culture in Bangladesh, he recommended a strategy to minimize gradual dependence on fossil fuel in industries, more low-cost investment in renewable energy, low-cost green fund for diverse industries and creating climate change resilience refinancing fund.

Peter du Pont, Ph. D., PFAN regional coordinator of Asia, highlighted the activities of the PFAN. He said that the PFAN advises low-carbon, climate resilient businesses in developing countries and matches projects to

appropriate private financing. The PFAN has so far supported 675 projects since its inception in 2008. All PFAN projects raised a total of \$1.8 billion, he said. Till December 2020, 94 projects in Asia are in the pipeline.

Jamorn Teo Hoonsiri, PFAN advisor, Thailand, said that Bangladesh has huge potential to woo Thai investment in the renewable energy and agriculture sector. PFAN Thai will focus to facilitating Thai investments in agriculture, renewable energy, tourism, health, energy efficiency and waste and circular economy.

Shaymal Barman, PFAN country coordinator Bangladesh, said that Thai strategic investments can consider Bangladesh to be a preferred destination in the shrimp export sector. generating good number of projects in solar solution. Solar IPP needs more than 10 years' finance for which banks are not suitable.

Mohammad Saifullah, head of business, ACI Agro link Ltd., Masudur Rahim, chief executive officer, Omera Renewable Energy Limited and Nancy Nguyen, PFAN Asia Network Support Manager also spoke on the occasion **r**

DCCI Membership Online Service inaugurated

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry has created a separate portal named Membership Online Service to issue one of its two major services certificates of origin and membership certificates completely online.

According to the memorandum of understanding signed between the DCCI and BIDA back in August 2020,

the DCCI's Membership Online Service is integrated with the national online One Stop Service window. Very soon, the DCCI services will be available fully online on the OSS platform. The DCCI is the first private-sector organization in Bangladesh to be associated with BIDA to provide its major services digitally.

The Bangladesh Investment

Development Authority executive chairman Md. Sirazul Islam inaugurated the Membership Online Service. The inaugural event was held through Zoom on December 24, 2020.

Md. Sirazul Islam said that after the launch of the OSS in February 2019, it now provides 36 services. BIDA plans to increase it to 41 adding



Participants are seen at the virtual inaugural ceremony of DCCI Membership Online Service held on December 24.

six more services. And by the end of January 2021, BIDA has plans to accommodate 50 services under the OSS, he said. He also reiterated the need for the completion of necessary technical tasks to integrate the DCCI's services into OSS as early as possible. Besides, he emphasized transparency and most possible security of data while providing online services to businesspeople. He urged the DCCI to suggest that businessmen should get services through the OSS and

requested the DCCI president to make the OSS familiar to the business community.

During the integration launch ceremony, the DCCI President Shams Mahmud said that the OSS is an online facilitation mechanism that brings relevant agencies and stakeholders together, coordinated and streamlined, to provide efficient and transparent services for investors to improve on doing business environment. An effective

implementation of the OSS will facilitate the overall local and foreign investment, employment generation, boost economic development and help attain the vision of becoming a developed nation by 2041 and fulfilling the dream of becoming a Digital Bangladesh. He hoped that very soon, preparatory works will be finished to integrate the DCCI's two important services in the OSS for greater benefits of the business community. ■

DCCI signs MoU with ULAB

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.

The DCCI President Shams Mahmud and ULAB Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. H. M. Jahirul Haque signed the document on behalf of respective organizations. The memorandum

was signed on December 27, 2020 at the permanent ULAB campus.

According to the memorandum, both the organizations will work for joint research as an initiative of industry-academia collaboration for the greater benefits of the economy. Both the DCCI and ULAB will jointly organize seminars, workshops, job

fairs, develop models for industry-academia linkage and business conferences.

The DCCI President Shams Mahmud said that it is a milestone for industry-academia joint collaboration to help the future generation to become a skilled workforce. He emphasized technical and vocational education



DCCI President Shams Mahmud (seated right) and Vice-Chancellor of ULAB Professor Dr. H. M. Jahirul Haque (seated, second from right) seen exchanging MoU signed on December 27. DCCI Convener Golam Zilani (third from right, back row) is also seen.

which will meet the demand of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. He proposed that ULAB researchers should use the platform of Research and Innovation Bangladesh Foundation, an initiative of the DCCI.

ULAB Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. H. M. Jahirul Haque said that

by signing the memorandum, both the parties would be able to work together on research and skills development. But to give a better output to industries, “we need to conduct more research.”

Secretary General (acting), DCCI Afsarul Arifeen, Secretary, DCCI

Md. Joyal Abdin and convener of the DCCI’s standing committee on Skills Development, Golam Zilani were also present during the signing ceremony **r**

DCCI inks MoU with ICSB and Daffodil University



DCCI President Shams Mahmud (fifth from left) and ICSB President Muzaffar Ahmed (fourth from right) exchanging MoU signed on December 28. DCCI Senior Vice President N K A Mobin, FCA, FCS (sixth from left), Vice President Mohammad Bashiruddin (fifth from right) among others are also seen in the picture.

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a memorandum of understanding with the Institute of Chartered Secretaries Bangladesh and Daffodil International University on December 28, 2020.

The DCCI President Shams Mahmud, the ICSB President Muzaffar Ahmed and DIU acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. S. M. Mahbulul Haque signed the memorandum on behalf of their respective organizations.

The DCCI President Shams Mahmud said that a strong secretariat and its effective compliance could play a vital role in a company to help economic development in the country. He suggested new modules of professional courses jointly by the DCCI Business institute and the ICSB. He said that the industrial sector of Bangladesh needs a large number of skilled professionals and universities should focus on this issue.

Daffodil International University

board of trustees chairman Dr. Md. Sabur Khan urged the DBI to conduct research to identify resourceful course modules so that universities can outline such curriculum. For the development of economy, industry and academia should work hand in hand. He also urged entrepreneur-friendly curriculum so that after the academic carrier, students can hope to be new entrepreneurs.

The ICSB President Muzaffar Ahmed said that research is an important



DCCI President Shams Mahmud (fourth from right) and Acting Vice-Chancellor of DIU Professor Dr. S. M. Mahbulul Haque (sixth from left) exchanging MoU signed on December 28. DCCI Senior Vice President N K A Mobin, FCA, FCS (third from left), Vice President Mohammad Bashiruddin (second from right), Director S M Zillur Rahman (right), President (Elected) Rizwan Rahman (fourth from left), Vice President (Elected) Monowar Hossain (second from left) and former President Md. Sabur Khan (fifth from left) among others are seen in the picture.

element of economic development. The private sector can play a driving role in the development of research, he said. An efficient secretariat helps the company to grow financially, he added.

DCCI Senior Vice-President N. K. A. Mobin, FCA, FCS, Vice-President Mohammad Bashiruddin, Directors Monowar Hossain and S. M. Zillur Rahman, DCCI president-elect Rizwan Rahman, Convenor of the

DCCI's standing committee on Skills Development Golam Zilani, Secretary General (acting) Afsarul Arifeen and Secretary Md. Joyal Abdin were present at the signing ceremony. **L**



ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি

অফিস স্পেস ভাড়া

ঢাকার প্রাণ কেন্দ্র মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকায় অবস্থিত ঐতিহ্যবাহী ঢাকা চেম্বার বিল্ডিং এর বিভিন্ন তলার নিম্নোক্ত স্পেসগুলো অগ্রাধিকার ভিত্তিতে ব্যাংক, বীমা প্রতিষ্ঠান, ইন্সুরেন্স কোম্পানী, লিজিং কোম্পানী মাল্টিন্যাশনাল কোম্পানী ও বিভিন্ন কর্পোরেট অফিসের জন্য জরুরী ভিত্তিতে ভাড়া দেয়া হবে, প্রয়োজনে আংশিক স্পেস ভাড়া দেয়া যেতে পারে।

অবস্থান	ব্যবহার উপযোগী জায়গা	কমন স্পেস	ভাড়া প্রদানযোগ্য স্পেস
৪র্থ তলা	+ ৮,৬০০ বর্গফুট	২,২০০ বর্গফুট	+ ১০,৮০০ বর্গফুট
৫ম তলা	+ ৮,৬০০ বর্গফুট	২,২০০ বর্গফুট	+ ১০,৮০০ বর্গফুট
৯ম তলা	+ ৫০৬৩ বর্গফুট	১,৫৩৭ বর্গফুট	+ ৬,৬০০ বর্গফুট
১০ম তলা	+ ২৮৫০ বর্গফুট	৮০০ বর্গফুট	+ ৩,৬৫০ বর্গফুট
মোট	+ ২৫,১১৩ বর্গফুট	৮৮৬৫ বর্গফুট	+ ৩১৮৫০ বর্গফুট

যোগাযোগ :

ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি
৬৫-৬৬, মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা।
ফোন : ৯৫৫২৫৬২ (এক্স- ১৩১, ১২৭)

Webinar on The Future of Jobs and Skills: Preparing for A Post-Covid World

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) organized a webinar on “The Future of Jobs and Skills: Preparing for A Post-Covid World” on November 21, 2020, Saturday through a webinar. DR. M. Masrur Reaz, Chairman, Policy Exchange, made the keynote presentation. Mr. Shams Mahmud, President, DCCI, presided over the program and gave the welcome speech and also moderated the program.

Mr. Md. Ashadul Islam, Senior Secretary, Financial Institution Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People’s, Republic of Bangladesh graced the occasion as the Chief Guest while Mr. Dulal Krishna Saha, (Secretary), Executive Chairman, National Skills Development Authority; Mr. Shudipto Mukerjee, Resident representative, UNIDO; Mr. Zaki Uz Zaman, Country Representative, UNIDO; Mr. Tuomo Poutiainen, Country Director, ILO were present as Special Guest of the program.

Besides, as designated discussants, Mr. Yasir Azman, CEO, Grameen Phone Ltd; Mr. Rahat Ahmed, Founding Partner and CEO, Anchorless Bangladesh; Ms. Marianne Oehlers, Program Manager, Generation Unlimited, UNICEF Bangladesh; Mr. Iqbal Hossain, Education Specialist, UNICEF Bangladesh also participated on that webinar.

Summary of Recommendations

- Alongside the new skills, we also need to address improvement of conventional skills to exploit the demographic dividend as our workforce are diverse by skills and education to meet employment needs in home and abroad.
- The online business also needs access to payment gateway service like Paypal to leverage business growth and economic digitalization.
- Strengthen Industry-academia collaboration to orient emerging skills and redesign the education curricula based on market demand.
- Need to Modernize the trade and investment environment and strengthen systems that protect workers and build resilience
- Improving policies and programs that enhance access to jobs for priority / vulnerable populations
- Developing Long-term Skills Strategy/Master plan/ Program Aligning With National Growth Strategies and Projected Key Growth Drivers
- Public Private Partnership in delivery of skills: helps in high skills matching and high employment outcomes
- Employment-linked performance-based financing of skills program would yield better employment outcomes
- Skills training for females: Will lead to high female labor force participation and employment
- Common strategy for the development of occupational standards, curriculum and training materials through the official channels (BTEB)
- Greater emphasis on soft skills training as part of the technical/vocational skills training program
- We need to improve the statistics of the e-commerce although a lot of e-commerce industry in Bangladesh.
- We need to give focus on how we can bring wealth in Bangladesh.
- Data Since is very important like python can give more jobs in future and the youth can have ownership and wealth generation capacity through skilling themselves in Data Science and in this way we can keep money in Bangladesh.
- The freedom of choice needs to be given. The youths need to choose what they will do with right skill and give them opportunity to learn something technological.
- We need to modernize secondary education with soft skill development and TVET module
- We need to connect the private sector for specific agenda for skill development
- The private sectors need to give sector based demand information and for this there need to develop a data warehouse.
- Need an online platform and a good communication with NSDA and the sectors, govt., private sector and stakeholders.
- We will have to invest in digital literacy to make the youth enable in working from home.
- Industrial Cluster development is one of the major concerns for SMES and need to make it stronger.
- There will be a need of at least 10000 mechanics in rural areas for new technology adaptation. They will need to be placed and well skilled with handling the new machines.
- ILO has job strategy with modern technology with entrance of women, TVET, connectivity with NSDA with private sector.

Bangladesh need MSME law instead of SME policy

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There is every reason to devote public resources to strengthen MSMEs in any country. MSME generate most of the employment opportunities in any country. The growth of MSME can make a balanced development through economic, social and environmental protection of a country. It ensure relatively fair distribution of wealth among the citizen.

Most of the countries have policy or law for development of MSME. The overarching goal of a MSME policy or law is to reduce poverty by increasing economic growth and decreasing income inequality so that all share in a growing economy.

A standard MSME policy element is covers four areas: legal/regulatory reforms, access to markets, access to finance, and building skills and knowledge. The policy and its implementation frame-work fit well with Government's commitment to rapid, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and to the role of a strong private sector in that growth. The Industrial policy and strategy policy documents of Bangladesh also highlighted the role of SME in poverty elimination and economic development of the country.

Bangladesh adapted MSME policy 2019 for strengthening SME sector by enhancing efficiency, improving business environment, providing easy access to finance, ensuring better marketing facilities, upgrading technology and innovative capabilities and creating employment opportunities. It has been proposed to implement from 2019 to June 2024. It has focuses on the followings 6 different kinds of services to the SME: (1) access to finance; (2) access to technology and innovation; (3) access to market; (4) access to education and training; (5) access to business support services; and (6) access to information. The female entrepreneurs proposed to get similar kinds of facilities for running their SME units.

The policy also include the strategies, which is set for the development and strengthening of the country's SME sector in line with the Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives described in the SME Policy 2019. The policy include (1) to improve business environment and institutional framework; (2) to increasing scope of the

SME sector to receive institutional funding facility; (3) to support to increase competitiveness capability and access to SME products market; (4) to support short-term, low cost SME business support services to the start-ups; (5) to develop and expand SME Cluster-based Business Network; (6) to increase use of ICT and other technologies; (7) to expand of skill developing education and training programs for entrepreneurs; (8) to expand women entrepreneurship development programs and providing specialized services; (9) to establishing SME as a backward and forward linkage enterprises to the large industries and ensure protection of SME products; (10) to establish environment-friendly SME industries and develop better capacity for waste management; and (11) to institutionalize SME statistics and conduct research and development activities.

The SME shall register with the relevant department. The administrative procedures of SME entrepreneurship will be simple to improve the SME related business environment and to protect the rights of investors. Necessary steps will take to attract domestic and foreign investment to ensure desired development of SME, especially export-oriented SME industries and its capacity building.

It include strategic tools to simplify the legal and administrative procedures for enhancing SME business, simplification and rationalization of SME tax policy. It propose to provide investment and revenue incentives for export-oriented SME sector, strengthening of coordination among institutional structures, strengthening capacity building activities of BSCIC, SME Foundation and other SME related trade bodies.

The strategic objectives of the policy also include introducing guarantee fund, providing loan on soft conditions to SMEs, assisting the start-ups, making the start-up process easier, provide training, loan and other facilities for women entrepreneurs, preparing data server over SMEs, promoting SMEs to set up environment-friendly industrial enterprises.

The policy comes with a Credit Guarantee Fund (CGF) to act as guarantors for them when they apply for loans to banks or financial institutions to launch their venture. The CGF will arrange collateral-free loan for small and medium entrepreneurs, especially start-ups. Entrepreneurs



will not need to submit any document as mortgage to banks or financial institutes as the government will be the guarantor under the CGF.

The suggested necessary measures will be taken to simplify procedures to receive trade license, expedite the provision of start-up support services with easy access of SMEs online registration facilities, one-stop service centre and other types of financial and non-financial support for SMEs. CGF will act through some companies form under it's regulations to act as guarantor for the SME loans.

A start-up cell will form under the SME policy. Start-ups will have to apply to the cell first and officials will scrutinise the applications. The start-up cell will help fresh entrepreneurs to get loans, licences and other necessary documents and find market-related information.

It proposes to start an appropriate entrepreneurial education and training programme in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education system of the country to develop skilled human resources in the SME sector. The regulators will organize SME related training and curricula, research work, demand-based training, internship etc.

It will ensure the effective communication and cooperation with private sector will be increased through steps will be taken to facilitate setting up forward linkage and backward linkage Industries in order to maintain

balance of demand and supply to ensure sustainable SME sector as well as SMEs can intake easily and utilise technology know-how and production process of large industries.

The responsibility for overall implementation of strategic goals and action plans described and entrusted to BSCIC and the SME Foundation. BSCIC will implement its own strategic action plans in collaboration with other implementing agencies subject to the approval of the Ministry of Industries. The SME Foundation will inform Ministry of Industries about its own yearly strategic action plan and implement it in collaboration with implementing agencies. The Ministry of Industries will regularly monitor and evaluate the progress and implementation of the action plans/activities of BSCIC and SME Foundation and will provide necessary financial and other supports.

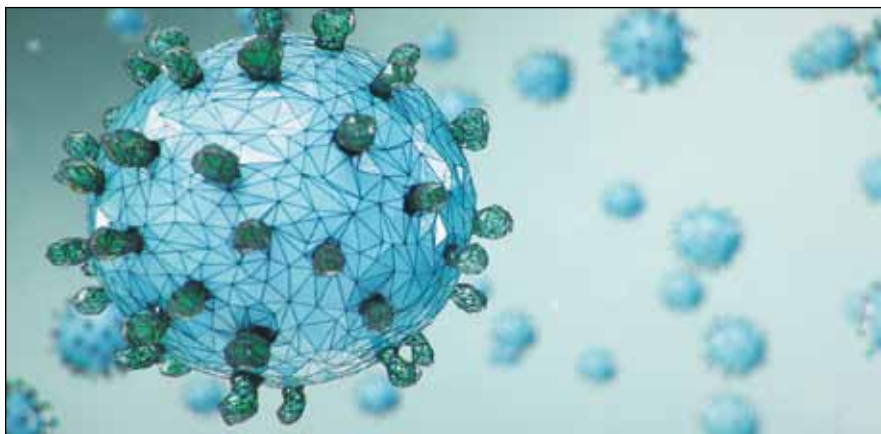
A policy is a mostly a wish list and the regulating authorities are not bound by law. The regulating authorities seem inactive and financial institutions hardly abide by the policy to give priority to MSME. The tax authority have does not incorporate any special tax rebate or easy procure for MSME yet. The other countries included such policy in an appropriate law. The law should also include micro enterprises along with SME. Bangladesh should have a Medium, small, micro and medium (MSME) law making all policy mandatory for all the stakeholders including government agencies.

PM orders fresh stimulus plan for second COVID wave

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the finance ministry and other related ministries and divisions to formulate another financial stimulus package plan keeping the second wave of COVID-19 in consideration. The prime minister gave the directive while presiding over a meeting held at Ganabhaban to finalize the 8th Fifth Year Plan (2021-2025). Deputy Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Hasan Jahid Tusher briefed the reporters after the meeting.

Hasina had announced the first packages in March when the pandemic ravaged the global economy. Later, the incentives were raised past Tk 1 trillion, or 4.34 percent of the country's total GDP. Readymade garment factories, the main exporting sector of Bangladesh, paid their workers and cut lay-offs by taking loans from the packages.

Funds were also given to other sectors. Economists hailed the packages that softened the blow of the pandemic to the economy. But exports stumbled again as Europe and the US have re-imposed tough curbs even during the Christmas holiday season after being hit by the second wave.



The apparel industry entrepreneurs and industrialists of other sectors have sought more government help. General Economics Division member (senior secretary) of the Planning Commission Dr Shamsul Alam presented the final 8th Fifth Year Plan (2021-2025) with the slogan — Towards the prosperity with all.

The prime minister witnessed the plans of various ministries and divisions in the 8th Fifth Year Plan (2021-2025) and gave necessary directives. She asked the Planning Commission to make separate highlights on the strategy and action plan of the 8th Fifth Year Plan (2021-2025).

The 8th Fifth Year Plan (2021-2025)

will be approved in the next ECNEC meeting. The prime minister in the meeting said that she planned a roadmap for the development of the country while she was in the sub-jail during the 1/11 caretaker government. She asked the concerned to work for expanding markets of Bangladeshi products in regional and international arena side by side of creating a stronger domestic market.

Cabinet Secretary Khandaker Anwarul Islam, Principal Secretary of PMO Dr Ahmad Kaikus, Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazle Kabir, Senior secretary to the Planning Commission M Asadul Islam and senior secretary to the finance ministry Abdur Rouf were present at the meeting **I**

India minister assures Bangladesh of coop in barrier-free trade

India has assured Bangladesh of cooperation in ensuring barrier-free trade. Accordingly, the assurance was conveyed by Minister of Railways, Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food and Public Distribution Piyush Goyal.

Addressing the India-Bangladesh Digital Conference on Agriculture Sector, he said that we have offered duty-free market access to Bangladesh in many products, including, agri-exports. The minister

said that together we can aspire for a better and brighter future for people of both the countries, particularly for the farmers of both countries to benefit from economic prosperity.

“Our ties have witnessed an upswing in the last 6 years,” he said. “We have scaled up trade and economic engagement, besides implementing a number of connectivity and infrastructure projects.” Goyal said that with over 50 percent of the population in both the countries

involved in the agriculture sector, it has huge socio-economic dimension.

“We are delighted that Bangladesh has now become self-sufficient in food, and the goal is to modernize agriculture. This is an area where we both should work with greater synergies and collaboration. Agriculture can have game-changing potential between our two countries. Bilateral cooperation in this sector can pave the way to overcome the current economic challenges,” he

added. "Agriculture sector has huge socio-economic dimensions. Being the prominent sector of the economy, bilateral cooperation in this sector can pave the way to overcome the current economic challenges our countries are facing" **r**

Entire Padma Bridge becomes visible

The last span of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge was installed on December 5, 2020, making the entire bridge visible. The last span of the bridge was put on pillar 12 and 13 around 11:00am and with installation of the 41st span, a total of 6.15km main structure of the Padma Bridge has become visible.

Project director of Padma Multipurpose Bridge Md Shafiqul Islam said that they were hopeful about setting up of the remaining last span by December, adding, 'Then the main structure of the mega bridge will be visible.'

The Padma Bridge is the largest construction infrastructure since the independence of Bangladesh initiated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The construction work began in December 2014 with government's own fund.

The construction of the main bridge is being carried out by China Major Bridge Engineering Company, a

Chinese contractor company, and the river management is being done by Sino Hydro Corporation of China.

Padma Bridge is expected to change not only the socioeconomic structure of southern parts of Bangladesh, but also create positive impacts on the whole economy of the country. It will also connect many countries of South and Southeast Asia and contribute to communication, trade, industry, tourism and many other sectors in various ways **r**

Padma Bridge: a gateway to economic aspirations

It is, indeed, a historic moment to witness the realization of a dream the completion of the Padma Bridge that seemed quite impossible when the World Bank, followed by other donors, pulled out their funding alleging corruption, allegations that were later proven untrue. But thanks to the quick and bold decision of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to build the bridge using the country's own resources, we now have a bridge that connects Dhaka to 21 southern districts bringing in immense economic opportunities that may change the lives of over 30 million people in the region.

The Tk 30,193 crore bridge will, for example, connect multi-lane expressways and railway lines with

Dhaka from Mongla port and Payra, the largest deep sea port. It will link Bangladesh with India, Nepal and Bhutan and catalyze regional trade along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway Network. It will not only benefit the southwest region but there will also be economic spillovers all over the country as new jobs are created because of better connectivity between both sides of the Padma River. Studies have predicted an increase in national GDP growth rate by 1.2 percent, and this despite the huge additional costs the project has incurred due to delays and implementation problems.

The benefits for the south-western region are predicted to be enormous as lack of connectivity has left it as one of the least developed parts of the country, with most of the people living below the poverty line. In Khulna and Barishal districts, there are more people below the poverty line compared to other districts. Farmers especially suffer because there is a lack of access to markets, soil has been adversely affected by salinity, and because of lack of fresh water in the dry seasons. More importantly, the people have remained isolated from the rest of the country. With the bridge, travel time from Dhaka to Khulna will be four hours instead of about 13.

As an economist has pointed out, the bridge provides an economic corridor and we must make full use of its potential. This means attracting investments by building economic zones. The private sector has to be incentivized to encourage foreign direct investment. Clearly, the bridge is going to bring an unprecedented boost in economic activities including in farming, trade, labor movement, growth of small and medium industries, tourism, export-oriented manufacturing and so on.



Special economic zones and industrial parks can generate many job opportunities for the local population. For this, there must be skills training programs to train the local people. There must be more and better education opportunities for the young people in these regions. Backward and forward linkage industries have to be established along with marketing channels to service the production hubs.

The Padma Bridge promises to give a huge boost to our economy and change the lives of the most deprived sections of the population. It has the potential to accelerate our development dreams. But to make this happen, we must work hard to create an enabling environment for these aspirations to come true. The nation must be united in their efforts to take on these tasks with sincerity, efficiency, honesty and innovation **T**

Bangladesh economy recovers more strongly than expected

Economic activity in Bangladesh has recovered more strongly than expected with both exports and remittances growing in recent months amid the COVID-19 pandemic, said a new report of Asian Development Bank. But the country still has external risks to face as COVID-19 outbreaks renew in major export destinations, according to the new growth forecast, presented in a regular supplement to the Asian

Development Outlook 2020 Update. The report forecasts that economic activity in developing Asia will grow by 6.8 percent in 2021 as the region is moving towards recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It also said that economy in this region would contract by 0.4 percent in 2020 before getting momentum in the next year. The new growth forecast is an improvement from the -0.7 percent gross domestic product growth forecast in September, while the outlook for 2021 remains unchanged. But prospects are diverging within the region, with East Asia set to grow this year while other subregions are contracting, said the report.

“Most of developing Asia’s subregions are forecast to contract this year. East Asia is the exception, with an upgraded growth forecast of 1.6 percent for 2020 on the back of faster than expected recoveries in the PRC and Taipei, China. East Asia’s growth outlook for 2021 is maintained at 7.0 percent.” According to ADB, South Asia’s GDP is forecast to contract by 6.1 percent in 2020, revised up from the 6.8 percent contraction expected in September. Growth in South Asia is forecast to rebound to 7.2 percent in 2021.

“The growth forecast for India, the subregion’s largest economy, for the fiscal year 2020 is raised to -8.0 percent, from the -9.0 percent projection in September, while

outlook for the fiscal year 2021 is kept at 8.0 percent.”

Economic growth in Southeast Asia remains under pressure as COVID-19 outbreak and containment measures continue, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The subregion’s growth forecast for 2020 is revised down to -4.4 percent from -3.8 percent in September, the report reads. The subregion’s outlook for 2021 is also downgraded, with Southeast Asia now expected to grow 5.2 percent next year compared to the 5.5 percent growth forecast in September **T**

Agro industries hold key to economic recovery

The use of artificial intelligence and skilled manpower in Bangladesh’s agro-based industry will be vital for ensuring a speedy economic recovery and food security during the post-pandemic era, according to experts. Besides, both public and private sector investment is required to expand agricultural production in the country, they added. During Eid-ul-Azha, held at the end of July, people used digital platforms to make purchases from home in a bid to avoid being exposed to the rogue pathogen while the amount of inbound remittance sent through the official channels increased as well, said Ahmad Kaikaus, principal secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office.

Kaikaus made the comments during a webinar styled ‘Post COVID 19: Challenges and Opportunities for Entrepreneurship and Employment in Agro-based Industry’, jointly organized by the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority and France Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The government is set to implement a credit guarantee scheme for the agro-based industry, including aquaculture and livestock companies, to promote



entrepreneurship in the sector and help small and medium enterprises meet their credit needs, Kaikaus said.


As part of the government's move to ramp up agricultural production, the prime minister previously approved a special program for the food processing sector so that agro-based industries make a greater contribution to economic growth, employment and export.

Bangladesh welcomes international collaboration, including foreign investment, for the research and development of its agro-based production and processing sectors, Kaikaus said, adding that the government believes in balanced trade cooperation between countries.

Meanwhile, BIDA Executive Chairman Md. Sirazul Islam reiterated his organization's commitment to work alongside the various stakeholders of the agro-based industry to increase investment and employment in the sector. BIDA will conduct policy dialogues, formulate action plans and facilitate the agro-industrial transformation in coordination with key stakeholders in both the government and private sector, he said.

In this regard, a high-level committee, headed by the PMO and coordinated by BIDA may be formed to advise on the development of agro-based production, processing, value addition and marketing, Islam added. Ever since Bangladesh achieved independence, agriculture has played the most significant role in providing food security, creating jobs, generating income and reducing poverty in the country, said CCIFB President Syed Mahmudul Huq. Currently, the agriculture industry accounts for about 13 percent of the annual GDP while its share in employment generation is nearly 40 percent, indicating very low levels of productivity in the sector.

Sattar Mandal, an emeritus professor of Bangladesh Agriculture University, led discussions on the agro-based industry's broader role for the economy at the event.

He also spoke on the challenges to be faced by people looking to grab entrepreneurship or employment opportunities in the post-pandemic period. Fawzia Yasmeen, director of Ispahani Agro, called for the creation of an enabling environment for investments in digital or smart agriculture, internet-plus rural infrastructure and communication to boost knowledge intensity and efficiency in production and processing 

Bangladesh to become 25th largest economy by 2035: CEBR

Bangladesh will become the 25th largest economy in the world by 2035, advancing from 41st place this year thanks to steady growth, a new report said.

According to the UK-based Centre for Economics and Business Research, the size of the economy will nearly treble to \$855 billion in 2035 from \$301 billion in 2020 in US dollar constant prices. In current terms, Bangladesh will become more than a trillion-dollar economy before the period, showed the latest edition of the World Economic League Table of the think tank.

In its annual league table on the growth prospects of 193 countries, the consultancy group said that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh was able to escape a contraction in 2020.

The rate of gross domestic product growth in Bangladesh is anticipated to have dipped to 3.8 percent in 2020. This compares to 8.2 percent GDP growth recorded in 2019. Government debt as a share of GDP rose to 39.6 percent in 2020, which remains a low level. The government


operated a fiscal deficit of 6.8 percent in 2020, facilitated in part by the low debt to GDP ratio.

"This will have bolstered the economy in the past months," the report said.

Between 2021 and 2025, the annual rate of GDP growth will accelerate to an average of 6.8 percent. However, over the remainder of the forecast horizon, economic growth is expected to decline to an average of 6.5 percent per year. Bangladesh had a purchasing power parity-adjusted GDP per capita of \$5,139 in 2020, making it a lower-middle-income country. Bangladesh came 168th in the World Bank's 2020 Ease of Doing Business rankings, suggesting that the regulatory environment is not conducive to a thriving private sector, the think-tank said. The CEBR said the economy enjoyed a strong rate of GDP growth in the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, despite a modest rate of population growth, which averaged just 1 percent per year over the past five years.

While the harm to public health inflicted by the pandemic has been relatively limited, the effect of the outbreak on global demand and international supply chains means that the economic damage has been considerable.

China will overtake the US to become the world's largest economy by 2028, five years earlier than previously forecast, the report said.

India is tipped to become the third-largest economy by 2030 and Pakistan will be placed at 36th in 2035. Sri Lanka will become the 67th largest economy and Nepal will be placed at 95th. Japan would remain the world's third-biggest economy until the early 2030s, when it will be overtaken by India, pushing Germany down from fourth to fifth. The United Kingdom, currently the fifth-biggest economy by the CEBR's measure, would slip to sixth place from 2024 

India Ratings revises FY21 GDP growth forecast to -7.8pc

India Ratings and Research has revised its expectation for India's fiscal year 21 gross domestic product growth to negative 7.8 percent from negative 11.8 percent due to the easing of the COVID-19 headwinds and better-than-expected 2QFY21 GDP numbers. However, the question remains, how sustainable is the recovery witnessed in 2QFY21, as a significant part of the impetus came from the festival and pent-up demand.

Although the headwinds emanating from COVID-19 related challenges are unlikely to go away till mass vaccination becomes a reality, perhaps the economic agents and economic activities not only have learned to live with it but also are adjusting swiftly to the post COVID-19 world.

Ind-Ra now expects the GDP growth in the third quarter of the fiscal year 2021 to come in at negative 0.8 percent and 4QFY21 GDP growth to turn positive at 0.3 percent as against its earlier expectation it turning positive in 4QFY22. The agency expects the fiscal year 2022 growth to be 9.6 percent, mainly due to the favorable/weak base of the fiscal year 2021.

The non-contact intensive sector such as manufacturing/electricity and other utilities in 2QFY21 recorded positive growth, and the mining and construction sectors saw significant reduction in negative growth. However, the same is not true for the contact-intensive services sectors such as trade, hotel, real estate, and tourism and they are likely to remain subdued for some more time due to social distancing norms and risk aversion.

Agriculture has been a bright spot even through the COVID-19 related



lockdown and continues to be so, riding on the back of the favorable 2020 monsoon. Ind-Ra therefore expects agriculture, industry and services to grow at 3.5 percent, negative 10.3 percent and negative 9.8 percent year-on-year, respectively, in 21.

Private consumption, which has been the mainstay of aggregate demand, came under significant pressure in the fiscal year 2020 which got aggravated in 21 due to COVID-19 headwinds. Although rural demand, on the back of four consecutive good harvests, is lending support to the consumption demand, it is inadequate to compensate for the loss of urban demand.

Urban demand, despite gaining some momentum lately, may remain subdued due to the depressed consumer sentiment and lower economic activity/employment generation. On the other hand, monetary and fiscal measures, although have eased the liquidity requirements and are supportive of consumption, may still not be sufficient to spur investments as capacity utilization has not yet fully recovered even to the pre-COVID level.

Ind-Ra expects private final consumption expenditure and gross

fixed capital formation to fall 13.4 percent and 16.8 percent year-on-year, respectively, in 21. Of the other two demand-side growth drivers, while government expenditure is expected to grow at just 3.3 percent year-on-year due to significant expenditure compression, exports could fall 7.9 percent year-on-year in 21 due to a combination of the ongoing trade conflict and COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the uncertainty in the global economy.

Government expenditure declined by 22.2 percent year-on-year and gross value-added of public administration and defense declined by 12.2 percent year-on-year in the second quarter of the fiscal year 2021.

Food and crude oil prices are the two key factors that drive inflation in the Indian context. Although international crude prices are benign and likely to remain so during the remainder the fiscal year 2021, its benefit did not percolate to the domestic economy, as the government raised excise duty on petrol and diesel to garner additional revenue.

On the other hand, due to supply-side disruptions and seasonal sensitivities of certain fruits and vegetables, the food inflation and thus retail inflation has remained elevated **r**

Pakistan trade with Africa at \$4.18b in 2019-20

Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood said Pakistan's trade with African countries touched \$4.18 billion in 2019-20, which was increased by seven percent as compared to the previous year (2018-19).

As a result of Pakistan's new engagement with African countries through "Look Africa Campaign" started by government of Pakistan, despite COVID-19 pandemic, exports to Africa increased by seven percent in 2019-20 from US \$1.38 billion in 2018-19 to US \$1.48 billion in 2019-20, the advisor said.

The advisor said total trade with Africa has increased from \$3.19 billion in 2016-17 to \$4.18 billion in 2019-20. Untapped African Market. Replying to a question, he said under the "Look Africa Policy" of Ministry of Commerce, "We are taking different initiatives including six new Commercial Sections have been opened in Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Senegal, Sudan and Tanzania, in addition to four existing Commercial Sections in Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa, to cover top ten economies of Africa".

He informed that 'Look Africa Trade Forums' have been organized in all major cities of Pakistan to create awareness among business community of Pakistan about potential of African markets. He added that establishment of bilateral linkages with major African countries was under way. Razak Dawood said Joint Working Group with Egypt and Joint Trade Committee with Kenya have been established while memorandum of understanding has been shared with multiple African countries. He said that the government also prioritized to increase more participation in Trade exhibitions in Africa in future to enhance the economic and trade integration with these countries **r**

Dedicated CSI market outlet set up in Bhutan

Access to market is one of the constraints faced by enterprises during establishment and operation, according to the Enterprise Survey Report 2010. Notably, limited infrastructure (market outlet and land) and transportation have been the major challenges, the Cottage and Small Industry faced in the country. But not anymore. The Economic Affairs Ministry inaugurated a dedicated CSI market place at Changzamtog Service Center in Thimphu.

This will promote CSI products in the market, both the domestic market as well as for visiting tourists. It will improve the competitiveness of CSI products through quality, standard, image and branding. The market outlet will exclusively assemble local CSI products developed by Bhutanese entrepreneurs, adding value for better marketability.

Ngawang Choden, the industry officer with the Department of Cottage and Small Industry said, "currently most of the Bhutanese production and manufacturing sectors had challenges of not getting the right platform to market their produce despite their hard work and perseverance.

"For this reason, we have come up with this platform where all the Bhutanese producers and manufacturers will bring their products with good packaging and we will sell their products through this platform," she added. During the inauguration, the 8th edition of the Bhutan Enterprise Award was also held to acknowledge the entrepreneurs. Six new authentic products were also launched which will hit the market soon. The products include Bhutan Yoedhen Farm, Touch from Heaven, B Music- Music Application, Bidhas Food Products, Druk Infinity Services and Deki Natural Dyes **r**

Lanka to welcome tourists from countries with vaccination

Sri Lanka will admit tourists from countries which will begin to vaccinate their populations using a WHO-approved plan the country's Tourism Minister told a Parliamentary Consultative Committee meeting. Minister of Tourism Prasanna Ranatunga, he said that the island "should consider opening the Airport for tourism when the US and Europe initiate the COVID vaccination



process.” MP Premitha Bandara Tennakoon told the committee that the United Kingdom has declared it will be the first country to approve the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine soon to be followed by Europe and the US.

The MP highlighted that with the availability of a vaccine, soon tourists will begin to fly to destinations and thus Sri Lanka tourism should plan to benefit from it. Ranatunga added that the plan to reopen the airport allowing foreign tourists to enter Sri Lanka has been prepared in accordance with the COVID-19 guidelines and added that once the approval from the health authorities is given the airport will be opened for tourist traffic.

Addressing the Committee, MP Diana Gamage raised her concerns over the safety of tourists who visit the Country. Responding to the concern, SLTDA Chair Kimarli Fernando stated that for the first time President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has appointed a DG for tourism.

Adding to it the SLTDA Chair also highlighted that they have created Sri Lanka’s first-ever mobile app to assist tourists utilizing technology going forward. She stated that the App consists of an “emergency button” where the location of the tourist will be shared with the nearest police station. Version One of the Sri Lanka Tourism Travel App is scheduled to be made available by the third quarter of 2021.

With regard to long queues, passengers will have to experience at the immigration, Chairman of Airport and Aviation Services Major General G. A. Chandrasiri said that two separate cubicles have been established already to facilitate first-class passengers and business class passengers and it will operate as soon as the airport reopens **r**

Maldives signs \$100,000 debt relief deal with US

The Maldives and the United States of America have signed a debt relief agreement under the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative. With the aim to temporarily suspend debt-service payments owed to bilateral creditors, Maldives High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Omar Abdul Razzak and US Ambassador to Maldives Alaina B. Teplitz signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments, during a ceremony held at the High Commission of Maldives in Colombo.

The agreement was signed for debt relief worth \$100,000. Following the agreement-signing ceremony, the US Ambassador took to Twitter, expressing hope that international partners will join in the efforts to help countries redirect their resources towards fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. G20 announced a six-month extension in October, giving developing countries until the end of June 2021 to prioritize expenses towards health care and emergency stimulus programs rather than repaying debts. \$5 billion has been delivered as a relief to over 40 eligible countries, under the initiative **r**

ADB approves \$100m grant for Afghanistan

The Asian Development Bank approved a \$100 million grant to help the government of Afghanistan respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. “ADB reaffirms its full commitment to supporting Afghanistan in its fight against COVID-19 and reducing the adverse impact of the pandemic on the lives of Afghans and the economy,” said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa. “The assistance will help strengthen the health system, expand

social protection for the poor and vulnerable population while ensuring gender mainstreaming, and support macroeconomic stabilization and job creation in Afghanistan.”

Afghanistan’s economic outlook has deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic because of business lockdowns, a sharp drop in household incomes, and a downturn in regional trade and remittances. ADB forecasts Afghanistan’s gross domestic product to contract by 5.0 percent this year. Nearly 250,000 micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, accounting for over 80 percent of non-agricultural employment, have been hit hard. The unemployment rate is projected to rise to 37.9 percent in 2020 from 23.9 percent in 2019. The budget deficit including grants has nearly tripled, reaching 3 percent of GDP in 2020, compared to 2019. Spikes in food prices due to disruptions in the food supply have increased the food insecurity risks.

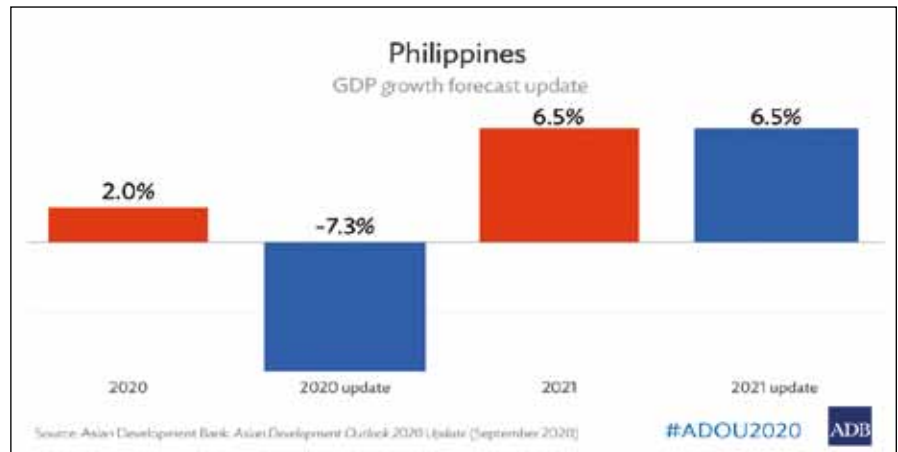
The national poverty rate is projected to reach up to 72 percent this year from 55 percent in 2017, with an additional 6 million people falling into poverty. A health emergency of such magnitude has aggravated the pressure on the country’s inadequate health care system, compounded by increasing transmission risks from internally displaced persons, returning migrants, and refugees. To mitigate the adverse impacts of the pandemic, the government rolled out its comprehensive counter-cyclical pandemic response package of \$633.9 million, comprising health, social protection, and macroeconomic stabilization measures. ADB’s COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Program grant will support the delivery of the government’s response package **r**

Philippine pandemic losses to breach 10pc of GDP in 2020-2021

The impact of COVID-19 on economies will spill over to next year, such that the pandemic-induced economic losses in the Philippines would exceed 10 percent of gross domestic product both in 2020 and 2021 no thanks to slow recovery in consumer confidence, according to the Asian Development Bank. The Manila-based multilateral lender's chief economist Yasuyuki Sawada told the Asian Development Bank Institute annual conference that across developing Asia, economic losses were estimated to breach 9 percent of GDP this year, citing the estimates of a forthcoming ADB report titled "The impact of COVID-19 on Developing Asia: The Pandemic Extends into 2021."

Both this year and next year, the COVID-19 crisis will most badly hit tourism-dependent countries while also inflicting massive losses on the services sector, Sawada said. In the case of the Philippines, Sawada's presentation showed that the pandemic will shed over 10 percent of GDP in 2020, with the biggest reduction to be wrought by domestic demand decline.

In Southeast Asia, Cambodia and Thailand will have bigger reductions in GDP this year on the back of the slump in global tourism as international borders mostly



remained closed to avoid the virus from further spreading.

Next year, the ADB's estimates showed that the Philippines' GDP would suffer from an about 10-percent reduction — poised to be the biggest in the region, still due to weak domestic demand. The impact of a tourism slump and other global spillovers to domestic GDP was seen to be relatively smaller. In terms of sectors, expected to incur larger losses during the next two years in the Philippines were business, trade, personal and public services, as well as light/heavy manufacturing, utilities and construction.

The government had been gradually opening up the economy while fighting the spread of COVID-19 to resume consumer and business

confidence. Private-sector and household consumption accounted for about three-fourths of the Philippine economy. In June, the ADB estimated the Philippines could shed as much as \$38.1 billion (almost P1.9 trillion) or 11.5 percent of GDP if COVID-19 quarantine restrictions dragged on for six months.

Most of the country will remain under less-restrictive general community quarantine until end-December, even as the region's longest and most stringent COVID-19 lockdown was first imposed in mid-March, stopping 75 percent of the economy at its height and leaving millions of Filipinos jobless. Sawada said reverting to pre-pandemic GDP levels across developing Asia-Pacific will be a slower "L-shaped" taking several years **r**

Vietnam 2020 growth among world's highest

A 4.48 percent fourth quarter growth has propelled Vietnam's annual growth to 2.91 percent for the year, the General Statistics Office said. "This is the lowest GDP growth level in the 2011-2020 period. However, given the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is considered a success for Vietnam, with the growth rate among the world's highest," Nguyen Thi Huong, head

of the GSO, said at a press briefing. The annual growth rate matches an earlier projection by the Ministry of Planning and Investment.

A GSO report says agriculture, forestry and aquaculture grew 2.68 percent, manufacturing and construction 3.98 percent, and the services sector 2.34 percent. While the COVID-19 pandemic

wreaked socio-economic havoc, the services sector has tanked, several commercial and consumer services enjoyed growth in the last months of 2020. Domestic transportation is recovering, while international transportation and tourism services are still in the doldrums.

The value of imported and exported goods this year rose 5.1 percent year-

on-year to \$543.9 billion. In this, exports and import values rose 6.5 percent and 3.6 percent year-on-year to \$281.5 billion and \$262.4 billion, respectively. This helped the country compile a trade surplus of \$19.1 billion, the highest since 2016.

Labor productivity rose \$290 over 2019 to VND117.9 million (\$5,081) per worker, and the consumer price index rose 3.23 percent. Earlier this month, a World Bank report had said that with a GDP growth of 2.8 percent, Vietnam will be among the fastest-growing economies in a COVID-19-ravaged year. The country will be one of only three nations in Asia that will post positive growth this year, the others being China and Myanmar **r**

Cambodia economy expected to bounce back in 2021: WB

Cambodia's economy is projected to bounce back and grow by 4 percent in 2021 after it has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic this year, said a World Bank's press statement. The kingdom's growth in 2020 is forecast to contract by 2 percent, the statement said. With the easing of social distancing measures, domestic economic activity is gradually returning to normal, the statement said, citing the bank's latest economic update for Cambodia.

"Consumption is being partly underpinned by unprecedented government intervention, while inflation remained subdued," the statement said. "Foreign direct investment inflows to projects in non-garment industries and agriculture have been rising, likely attracted by Free Trade Agreements." Although total manufacturing exports have been hit by the pandemic, exports of bicycles, electrical parts, and vehicle

parts and accessories are rising, and exports of rice and other agricultural commodities have surged, it said, adding that domestic tourists have supported a partial recovery of the travel and tourism industry.

"Significant uncertainty remains to Cambodia's growth outlook. The most important policy goal must be to urgently regain jobs lost and suspended due to the pandemic," said Inguna Dobraja, World Bank country manager for Cambodia. "Looking ahead, it is essential that domestic and foreign investments are encouraged to take advantage of recent bilateral and regional free trade agreements," she said. "This would be possible through prompt introduction of a competitive investment law and incentive schemes, together with moves to improve the ease of doing business" **r**

Indonesia raises export levy on crude palm oil to \$180/mt

The Indonesian government has raised the export levy on crude palm oil to \$180/mt from \$55/mt earlier, with effect from December 10, according to a finance ministry document seen by S&P Global Platts.

The combined levy and duty on crude palm oil exports from

Indonesia will now total \$213/mt for December cargoes. The market had been expecting the announcement with sellers pricing in a higher export levy of \$120/mt as early as in November. However, some had initially dismissed the move as premature in the absence of official confirmation. The market had largely been "paralyzed" by uncertainty around the levy.

"Without official news, sellers were quoting the levy at a wide range, from \$80/mt to as high as \$180/mt, but few were willing to pay up as they feared they would end up paying more than they had to," a Malaysia-based trader said. Some sellers had just refused to quote for December cargoes at all, he added. "The levy increase just confirms the expectation, it is not a game changer in reducing Indonesian CPO price competitiveness. But it will be a game changer for the Indonesian biodiesel funding pool by raising the prospect of B40 on the table again for 2021," Sathia Varqa, owner and co-founder of Singapore based Palm Oil Analytics, said.

"The Indonesian government finally revised the much talked about and highly anticipated palm oil export levies. Although the levies are higher, it is mostly well priced in specially in BMD CPO futures. The future



course of palm oil market trend would depend on fresh demand from key buyers India and China now," Anilkumar Bagani, head of research at Sunvin Group India, said. Following news of the export levy, the benchmark February contract on the Bursa Malaysia rose to MR3,355/mt as of 5:19 pm Singapore time, up from the mid-day close level at MR 3,326/mt **r**

Thailand eyes 6m tonnes of rice export in 2021

Thailand is expecting to ship 6 million tonnes of rice in 2021, 5 percent higher than last year, when it exported its lowest volume of the grain in two decades, the commerce ministry said.

The 5.27 million tonnes exported last year means the country has moved to number three in the world for rice exports, overtaken by Vietnam, which shipped 6.2 million tonnes of the grain.

"Six million tonnes is a challenging target," Kirati Ratchano, director-general of Department of Foreign Trade, told a news conference after meeting exporters.

"The baht will likely continue to appreciate, making Thai rice more expensive than competitors."

The currency has gained 9 percent against the US dollar since April 2019, making rice export prices consistently higher than those for similar grades produced by Vietnam and by India, the world's biggest rice exporter.

Rice exporters have bemoaned more challenges this year, including a global lack of shipping containers that have caused logistical disruptions and undermined sales **r**

Southeast Asian economies to face bumpy recovery

Prolonged lockdowns and social distancing measures are forecast to cap global gross domestic product growth this year, making it unlikely that a return to pre-COVID-19 economy growth and trade activity to take place before late 2021.

In Southeast Asia, growth will likely be constrained by social distancing measures, but restrictions will continue to be eased next year, especially in economies that are able to roll out vaccines relatively quickly, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) said.

"While uncertainties remain, and most economies will take time to recoup lost output, risks have become more balanced with recent positive news on vaccines and regional growth prospects for Southeast Asia in the medium to long term are optimistic," it said in a statement.

To recap, the latest economic outlook report from Oxford Economics, commissioned by ICAEW, predicted that GDP across Southeast Asia will contract by 4.1 percent in 2020 before a sharp rebound to 6.2 percent in 2021.

The chartered accountancy body said the economic outlook report found that an economic rebound

in 2021 remains contingent on the easing of lockdown restrictions, global recovery momentum and the successful rollout of coronavirus vaccines.

As such, progress on vaccination will be an important barometer for growth in 2021, with services likely to catch up faster in economies that are better placed with regards to vaccine procurement and distribution.

The Malaysian economy, it said had experienced a V-shape recovery early on but the extension and widening of areas under the Conditional Movement Control Order to contain the rise in COVID-19 infections will put a strain on economic activity in the short-term, leading to a double-dip in recovery.

In Indonesia, the pace of recovery is still uncertain, driven primarily by weak mobility trends, a double-digit slip in imports and weakening momentum in retail sales.

The pandemic is expected to leave permanent scars on GDP levels, and it is forecast to contract by 2.2 percent this year before rebounding to 6.0 percent in 2021, with the help of consumer spending and infrastructure, said ICAEW.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Philippines has suffered strict and extended lockdowns and its fiscal response has been meager **r**



Saudi Arabia plans 7pc spending cut in 2021

Saudi Arabia announced a 990-billion-riyal (\$263.91 billion) budget for 2021, approximately 7 percent less than estimated spending for this year, as the world's biggest oil exporter seeks to tame a huge deficit caused by lower petroleum revenues and the coronavirus crisis. The kingdom expects to post a deficit of 298 billion riyals (\$79 billion) this year, or 12 percent of gross domestic product, as crude revenues are slated to drop by more than 30 percent, and 141 billion riyals (\$38 billion) or 4.9 percent of GDP next year, according to a budget statement. It plans to nearly balance its budget by 2023.

The finance ministry said the budget reflected "the ability to adopt appropriate policies to balance between growth, economic stability and fiscal sustainability in the medium and long term". Saudi Arabia expects the economy to shrink by 3.7 percent this year but to swing back to a 3.2 percent growth next year. Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan said in a news conference that most economic sectors had started to recover from the pandemic's effect in the second half of this year. "I think that the economic recovery of economic activities in the third and fourth quarters bodes well for economic growth in the coming years," he said.



Brent crude oil prices have rebounded since plunging to a more than 20-year low in April, but at approximately \$50 a barrel, they are significantly below the \$67.9 a barrel that Saudi Arabia would need to balance its budget next year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, said the deficit target for next year looked ambitious, "but this year we have seen vital support to the budget through strong Aramco dividend and investment returns, and these are likely to be key factors in 2021."

Saudi Arabia expects public debt to increase to 937 billion riyals (\$249 billion) next year from 854 billion riyals (\$228 billion) this year. Government reserves at the Saudi

central bank are expected to drop to 280 billion riyals (\$75 billion) next year from an estimated 346 billion this year (\$92 billion), the finance ministry said.

Saudi Arabia tripled a value-added tax in July to 15 percent to boost state coffers and offset the drop in oil revenues. The world's biggest oil exporter has cut oil output this year as part of a deal with OPEC and other producers to stabilize the oil market, which hit a 21-year low below \$16 a barrel in April. "In view of the uncertainty surrounding the pace of the global economic recovery and the potential persistence of the crisis, predicting the state of the oil market becomes increasingly challenging," the ministry of finance said in the budget statement **r**

Dubai trade with Bahrain skyrockets 170pc in 10 years

Dubai Customs released Dubai external trade with Bahrain figures on the occasion of the National Day of Bahrain, which falls on 16 December. Trade grew 170 percent in 10 years (2010-2019) to reach Dh16.37b in 2019 compared to Dh6b in 2010.

In the first half of 2020, mutual trade between Dubai and Bahrain

amounted to Dh5.37b. Imports had the lion's share at Dh2.4b, followed by re-exports at Dh2b and imports at Dh918m.

"We congratulate our brothers in the Kingdom of Bahrain on their 49th National Day and look forward to more cooperation and mutual trade with them in the coming

years," said HE Ahmed Mahboob Musabih, Director General of Dubai Customs. "We have very coherent and strong historic relationships with the Kingdom of Bahrain; these relationships have grown and become more solid thanks to the shared strategies and vision of the two brotherly states **r**

Egypt only country to achieve growth despite COVID-19

Hala El-Said, Egypt's Minister of Planning and Economic Development, on behalf of Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, delivered the opening speech of the second edition of the 2020 Economic Summit for Egypt, organized by the Seventh Day Foundation, under the patronage of the Prime Minister.

During her speech, El-Said said that the summit comes as an affirmation and reinforcement of the participatory approach adopted by the government in its efforts to achieve development in various sectors, confirming the state's keenness to encourage community participation in addressing all issues related to public affairs, especially the economic aspect.

El-Said added that when reviewing the development experience of Egypt in recent years, the view of it must be more comprehensive and familiar with the variables and challenges that shaped the work environment and from which this experience was based, following up that an accurate estimate of the size of achievement is measured by the size of the challenge.

Egypt has witnessed many major political, economic, and social changes and challenges in recent years, specifically since January 2011 and the consequent accumulation of structural imbalances that the Egyptian economy has suffered from



for decades, whether in the real sector, in the financial and monetary sector, or the external sector.

El-Said added that all these challenges negatively affected the decline of most macroeconomic indicators from the decline in growth rates to their lowest level in 2010/11 by about 1.8 percent, which is much lower than the rate of population growth, noting that achieving development requires the sustainability of positive economic growth to exceed the least weak population growth rates, following the increase in the severity of the challenges facing the Egyptian economy in light of the political and economic changes, regional and international events that the Arab region and neighboring countries have witnessed in recent years, and the new outbreak of the corona pandemic and the associated negative health, economic and social effects.

There was only an intensification of serious and continuous work, which was based on comprehensive planning and an ambitious vision for the future, for the Egyptian state to formulate a sustainable development strategy: Egypt's Vision 2030

UAE economy seen contracting more than estimated

The United Arab Emirates will likely suffer a deeper economic contraction this year than previously estimated, hurt by disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic and lower oil prices. Gross domestic product in the Arab world's second-largest economy is estimated to shrink about 6 percent in 2020, compared with a previous forecast for a decline of 5.2 percent, the central bank said in its quarterly review. The economy is expected to grow 2.5 percent in 2021.

The outlook is slightly better than forecasts from the International Monetary Fund, which expects a decline of 6.6 percent this year. The UAE economy last contracted by more than 5 percent in 2009, according to the fund. "As an oil exporter, the UAE is likely to feel the fallout from reduced global demand for oil due to the contraction of economic activities worldwide, including transportation and international travel," according to the central bank report. "Real oil GDP is projected to contract in 2020, corresponding to an average oil production of 2.8 million barrels per day for the year as a whole"

Iraq devalues dinar as oil prices squeeze revenues



Iraq's central bank increased the sale price of US dollars to banks and currency exchanges to 1,460 dinars, from 1,182 dinars, seeking to compensate for a decline in oil revenue due to low crude prices, the bank said. The central bank of Iraq said the key reason behind the dinar's devaluation was to close the gap of widened 2021 budget inflation after a collapse in global oil prices, a major source of Iraq's financial resources.

"The financial crisis which Iraq suffered due to the coronavirus pandemic caused a decline in oil prices that caused decreasing oil revenues, altogether have caused a large deficit in the federal budget,"

the central bank said in a statement. The devaluation decision came as a preemptive move to prevent “draining Iraq’s foreign reserves” and help government to secure public servants’ salaries, the bank said. Iraq depends on oil revenue for 95 percent of its income.

The last devaluation was in December 2015 when it raised the sale price of US dollars to 1,182 dinars from 1,166. But in Iraq’s largely dollar-denominated economy, lowering the value of its dinar by a significant rate, which was the highest devaluation rate since 2003, would immediately raise the price of goods, hitting living standards.

Combined with other pending painful economic reforms by the government of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, this could lead to further unrest in a country where protests broke out on October 1, 2019 and continued for several months, with hundreds of thousands of Iraqis demanding jobs, services and the removal of the ruling elite, which they said was corrupt. Iraqi security forces and anti-riot police were deployed near central bank headquarters, state banks and other financial offices in Baghdad in anticipation that protests could erupt after the central bank decision, said two security officials **[R]**

2021 Syria budget shows depth of economic woes

On September 28, the Syrian government proposed the 2021 budget, planned at 8.5 trillion Syrian pounds (\$2.7 billion). The breakdown of the budget is still being debated in parliament. Due to the sharp depreciation of the Syrian pound and the accelerated slowdown in economic activity over the course of the current year, the 2021 budget is not only a 27 percent decrease

compared to last year in inflation-adjusted (real) US dollar terms, but is also the smallest budget since the uprising in 2011.

The latest contraction in Damascus’s spending is nothing new. Since 2010, our calculations show that Syria’s per capita budget spending has declined by 70 percent. Though it is well known that government spending has been shrinking in Syria since the uprising began, examining spending on a per-capita basis highlights the true severity of the country’s economic crisis.

To put this in perspective, the government will spend about three times less on its citizens in 2021 than it did in 2010, despite the fact that there are only about half the number of people living under its control (11.7 million in 2020 versus 21.4 in 2010).

The continual decline in Syria’s budgetary spending reflects a shrinking revenue base from which Damascus can draw. In 2021, total revenue is a whopping 83 percent lower than the pre-war budget of 2010. The composition of total revenue has changed as well.

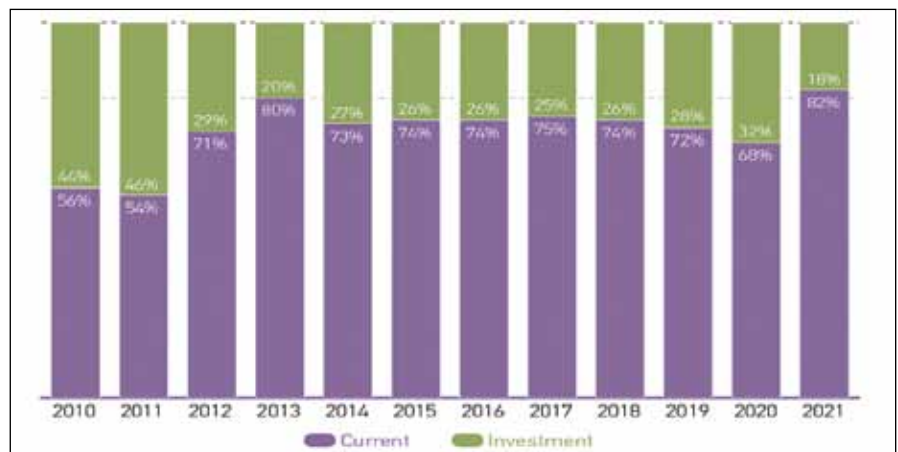
According to a report by the Syrian Center for Policy Research, in 2019, non-taxation related income represented only a third

of annual public revenue, due in large part to a 90 percent drop in oil production in regime-held areas since 2011 (368,000 barrels per day compared with 22,000 bpd in 2020). Comparatively, non-tax revenue constituted two-thirds of government revenues in the pre-war 2010 budget.

How much the government can continue to squeeze out of people in taxes without stoking pre-existing grievances remains to be seen. Prior to the current economic crisis, over 80 percent of the population lived in “extreme poverty,” according to the United Nations in March 2019.

Though the 2021 budget specifics are still being debated in the People’s Council, the vast majority of spending (82 percent) will be “current spending.” Current spending mainly services social support programs like fuel and food subsidies and the wages of public employees, who make up about a third of the workforce (1.6m people).

The proportion of this year’s budget dedicated to current spending is the highest in the last decade. The sudden increase also reverses a three-year trend starting in 2018, where current expenditures were gradually decreasing. Given the depth of the economic crisis Damascus is currently undergoing, the increase in current spending is quite logical **[R]**



China to overtake US as world's biggest economy by 2028

China will overtake the US as the world's biggest economy before the end of the decade after outperforming its rival during the global COVID-19 pandemic, according to a report. The Centre for Economics and Business Research said that it now expected the value of China's economy when measured in dollars to exceed that of the US by 2028, half a decade sooner than it expected a year ago.

In its annual league table of the growth prospects of 193 countries, the UK-based consultancy group said China had bounced back quickly from the effects of COVID-19 and would grow by 2 percent in 2020, as the one major global economy to expand.

With the US expected to contract by 5 percent this year, China will narrow the gap with its biggest rival, the CEBR said. Overall, global gross domestic product is forecast to decline by 4.4 percent this year, in the biggest one-year fall since the second world war. Douglas McWilliams, the CEBR's deputy chairman, said: "The big news in this forecast is the speed of growth of the Chinese economy.

We expect it to become an upper-income economy during the current five-year plan period (2020-25). And we expect it to overtake the US a full five years earlier than we did a year ago. "Other Asian economies are



also shooting up the league table. One lesson for western policymakers, who have performed relatively badly during the pandemic, is that they need to pay much more attention to what is happening in Asia rather than simply looking at each other."

China's share of global GDP has increased from 3.6 percent in 2000 to 17.8 percent in 2019 and will continue to grow, the CEBR said. It would pass the per capita threshold of \$12,536 (£9,215) to become a high-income country by 2023.

Even so, living standards in China will remain much lower than in the US and western European countries. In the US, the average per capita income is just over \$63,000, while in the UK it is just over \$39,000. The CEBR said departure from the EU would not prevent the United Kingdom likely to be the world's fifth

biggest economy in 2020 — from being one of the better performing economies in the next 15 years.

"We expect the trend rate of growth for the UK to be 4.0 percent annually from 2021-25 and 1.8 percent annually from 2026-30 and 1.8 percent annually from 2031-35," the consultancy said. "The UK is forecast to be overtaken by India in 2024 but otherwise holds its place in the league table to 2025.

By 2035, UK GDP in dollars is forecast to be 40 percent more than that of France, its long-standing rival and neighbor." India, after overtaking France and the UK last year, had fallen back behind the UK as a result of a sharp fall in the value of the rupee. But the dip will be short-lived, with the world's second most populous country on course to be its third biggest economy by 2035 **r**

US-China trade remains indispensable on global stage

Despite having hardships, the trade relationship between the United States and China is indispensable, and one of the most influential on the global stage. Dr. Wendong Zhang, an Ohio State graduate and current assistant professor at Iowa State University, discussed the current situation between the two countries

as part of the 2020 Agricultural Policy and Outlook Conference hosted by The Ohio State University College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Science.

Agricultural trade in the US is unique. It remains an area with a surplus, whereas the nation's general

global trade is yielding a deficit. Part of what makes the US unique as an exporter compared to competitors is that agricultural trade is influenced by many other issues which impact bilateral political relations. Zhang notes that while there is a deterioration in these relations from certain parts of Asia, there are signs

that both nations are working hard to keep the trade deal alive.

It was just in 2018 when the trade war first broke out, and now the Phase One deal and communication between the US Trade Representation with the Chinese administration remains arguably the only functioning high-level talk channels between the two nations. Both are making efforts to ensure the trade deal continues, with China making notable progress in recent months to meet targets. Certain US agricultural products are heavily reliant on global trade, including nuts, soybeans and feed grains. China is a critical force in the rising global demand for these commodities.

The trends and growth of the Chinese economy and population are important to consider regarding the future of global trade. "I think commodity agriculture has a comparative advantage for the US but not China," said Zhang. He explained that looking at a map, it is easy to assume China has similar land to US for food production. However, he pointed out 90 percent of the Chinese population (1.4 billion people) live where crops and livestock are being produced. "China only has 7 percent to 9 percent of the arable land and 20 percent of the population, while the US has 4 percent of the population and 15 percent of the arable land," he said. "That alone is why China needs to buy a whole lot more, especially when it comes to land-intensive feed grains and proteins" **r**

UK, Turkey reach post-Brexit free trade agreement

Turkish official hails deal as most significant trade pact for Turkey since the signing of a customs union agreement with the EU in 1995. Turkey and the United Kingdom signed a free-trade agreement as the



UK prepares to leave the European Union's economic orbit at the start of the new year. The deal, which will come into effect on January 1, aims to support trade between the two countries which was worth more than \$25 billion in 2019.

It is one of many post-Brexit trade deals the British government is pursuing with nations around the world and came days after it finalized a trade agreement with the EU. The UK left the EU on January 31 but remained subject to the bloc's business regulations and within its customs union during a transition period that ends on December 31. Turkish Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan and Dominick Chilcott, the British ambassador to Turkey, signed the British-Turkish agreement.

Pekcan hailed the deal as the most significant trade pact for Turkey since the signing of a customs union agreement with the EU in 1995. "The free trade agreement is a new and special milestone in the relationship between Turkey and United Kingdom," Pekcan said during the ceremony. Britain is Turkey's second-largest export market.

A British government statement said the deal will secure existing preferential tariffs for some 7,600 British businesses that exported goods to Turkey in 2019, ensuring the

continued tariff-free flow of goods. Both countries have said the deal will lead to a more comprehensive agreement in the future **r**

Turkey's exports exceed 2020 target: minister

Turkey's annual exports exceeded the 2020 target of \$165.9 billion as of December 25 by reaching \$166 billion, the country's trade minister said. Turkey will achieve several more targets, Ruhsar Pekcan said.

In the new economy program, unveiled in September, the country's export targets were \$165.9 billion for 2020, \$184 billion for 2021, \$198 billion for 2022 and \$214 billion for 2023. The country's exports were \$171.5 billion in 2019 and \$167.9 billion in 2018.

In 2020, the country posted a significant export performance, while several countries faced difficulties due to the novel coronavirus pandemic **r**

Australia economic outlook positive: CBA

The economic and market outlook for Australia in 2021 is looking more positive, according to Commonwealth Bank's chief economist Stephen Halmarick.

Halmarick said while the spread of COVID-19 had undoubtedly had a significant impact on the Australian economy, financial markets, and monetary and fiscal policy, the implications have pleasingly been less severe than originally predicted.

“Australia has done a better job than just about any other nation in controlling the spread of the virus,” Halmarick said. “This, combined with fiscal and monetary policy support being provided to the economy, and the role played by the Australian banking system, means the economic impact of COVID-19 has been less severe in Australia than many other nations, and less severe than initially expected.”

“To be sure, Australia’s 30-year run without a recession has come to an end, and the human toll of the sharp rise in the unemployment rate has been very real. But, the outlook for Australia is improving.”

Halmarick said one key consequence of the current health pandemic had been its impact on monetary policy. “The recession, the rise in the unemployment rate, the global economic environment, and the expectation that inflation will remain below the 2 to 3 percent target range for years, has seen monetary policy in Australia enter unconventional

space for the very first time,” he said.

“The cash rate target is expected to remain at just 0.1 percent for at least three years. The RBA is funding the banking system for three years at 0.1 percent, and the RBA is targeting the three year Commonwealth bond yield at 0.1 percent.

In addition, the RBA is now engaged in a quantitative easing program and will buy \$A100 billion of Commonwealth and state government bonds over the six months to April 2021. This strategy provides the nexus between monetary policy and fiscal policy in Australia **L**

Forex-Euro rises above \$1.22 for first time in 2 years

Strong euro zone survey figures and hopes of progress on Brexit negotiations pushed the euro above \$1.22 versus the US dollar for the first time since April 2018. The euro has been gaining since the European Union announced a recovery fund in May, rising nearly 13 percent since then. Economic activity data in recent months have also boosted bets that Europe is outperforming the US. Those expectations got a further boost with manufacturing survey data from Germany and France indicating that Europe’s biggest economies may be recovering quickly.

Against the US dollar, the euro rose 0.4 percent to \$1.22065, putting it on track for its biggest annual rise since 2017. “European PMIs, Brexit and a likely dovish Fed is boosting risk appetite in the currency markets,” said Kenneth Broux, a strategist at Societe Generale in London. The European Union’s chief executive said she could not say whether the EU and Britain would reach a trade agreement, but progress had been made and the next few days would be critical.

Investors are also keeping an eye on the outcome of a two-day Federal Reserve policy meeting. Policymakers are expected to keep the overnight interest rate near zero and signal it will stay there for years to come, a decision that analysts say will further boost risk sentiment. “There’s a feel-good momentum in the market,” said Bart Wakabayashi, Tokyo branch manager of State Street Bank in Tokyo **L**

S Africa’s GDP improves, but worst not over

The South African economy recovered lost ground in the third quarter boosted by productive sectors, but the latest figures hide an ugly reality: difficult times lie ahead. For starters, while chief economists Isaaah Mhlanga and Chifipa Mhango both welcomed the third-quarter growth of 13.5 percent, they point out it came from a low base. That is important because of the drastic second-quarter contraction of 51.7 percent. Mhlanga, the chief economist at financial services company Alexander Forbes, tells The Africa Report that in rand terms the South African economy went up R353 billion (\$23.5 billion) in the third quarter, compared to the R512 billion contraction documented in the second quarter.



This means “we recovered just over half of what was lost in the second quarter,” according to Mhlanga. Looked at historically, the dismal second-quarter performance meant South Africa’s GDP dropped to levels last recorded in the second quarter of 2007.

The third-quarter outcome is in line with where GDP was in the second quarter of 2018. “We have some way to go before we recover all the lost GDP,” says Mhlanga. Statistics South Africa, the government statistics agency, released the country’s third-quarter GDP figures on December 8. The annualized rate was 66.1 percent, but the quarter-on-quarter measure showed a 13.5 percent improvement in economic growth.

The annualized rate of 66.1 percent is better than the consensus expectation of 54.4 percent. Mhlanga explains: “We need to note [the numbers] are recovering from a very low base and the numbers are annualized. Nonetheless, the production side performed well.

He continues: “But we did not see the same level of performance in the service sector. Largely because it’s impacted by social-distancing measures – as we now see in Nelson Mandela Bay – that impacted GDP much more compared to the production sector.”

Improvements in, among others, manufacturing, mining, exports and construction helped lift the third-quarter GDP performance: Manufacturing was boosted by “basic iron and steel, non-ferrous metal, and metal products and machinery; petroleum, chemical products, rubber and plastic products; transport equipment; and food and beverages,” wrote Stats SA. Mining benefited “largely on account of the

easing of local and global lockdown restrictions,” explained the statistical agency **R**

Russia economy loses pace amid COVID-19 resurgence

The Russian economy contracted in the second quarter by 8 percent and in the third quarter by 3.4 percent. This negative momentum is expected to continue in quarter 4 amidst the resurgence of the pandemic, according to the World Bank’s latest Russia Economic Report (#44 in the series). The report also says that fiscal, monetary and social policies put in place have helped contain the impact of the pandemic-induced crisis to date.

Russian economic growth is projected at -4 percent in 2020, a less severe contraction than the forecast in September. The revision reflects the better-than-anticipated economic performance in quarter 3. Consumer and business confidence is expected to improve assuming a vaccine deemed safe and effective is rolled out; this would pave the way for a gradual rebound at 2.6 and 3.0 percent in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

However, a more adverse scenario suggesting a sharp growth in new COVID-19 cases continuing in the

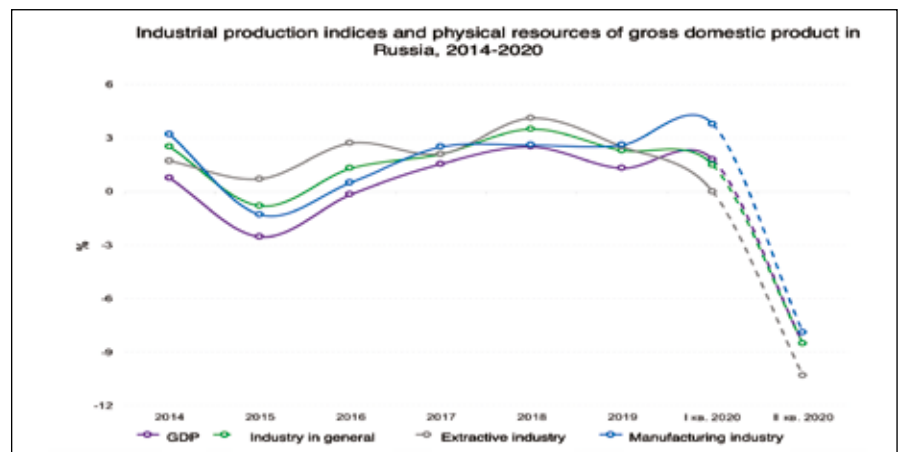
second half of 2021 could further weigh on economic activity. In such a case, GDP in 2021 is projected to grow by 0.6 percent, with consumers and investment demand affected more deeply, and to increase by 2.8 percent in 2022.

Counter-cyclical fiscal policy and sizable macro-fiscal buffers have helped contain the impact of the crisis. The general government deficit is expected to reach 4.6 percent of GDP in 2020, compared to a surplus of 1.9 percent of GDP in 2019.

After a stronger fiscal stimulus in 2020, Russia’s fiscal consolidation in 2021-2022 will be deeper than in other emerging markets and developing economies and become a drag on growth.

The effects of the pandemic have touched various spheres of the Russian economy: the unemployment rate increased to 6.3 percent in October 2020, the highest in eight years.

Approximately half a million jobs have been lost in each of three large sectors: manufacturing, construction, and retail and hospitality services between the second quarters of 2020 and 2019. The national poverty rate increased to 12.6 percent and 13.2 percent in the first and second quarter of 2020, respectively **R**



সব ঋণের বিপরীতে অতিরিক্ত ১% সঞ্চিতি সংরক্ষণের নির্দেশ; কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের প্রজ্ঞাপন

করোনা পরিস্থিতির কারণে ব্যাংকঋণের কিস্তি পরিশোধে বছরব্যাপী ছাড় চলছে। সেই সুবাদে চলতি বছর এক টাকাও ঋণ পরিশোধ না করে খেলাপি হওয়া থেকে বেঁচে যাচ্ছেন গ্রাহকরা। অন্যদিকে খেলাপি ঋণ না বাড়ায় পরিচালন মুনামফার বড় অংশই নিট মুনামফায় নেয়ার সুযোগ পাচ্ছে ব্যাংকগুলো।

এ অবস্থায় ব্যাংকের ভিত যাতে দুর্বল হয়ে না যায়, সেজন্য ব্যাংকগুলোকে সাধারণ সঞ্চিতি (প্রভিশন) সংরক্ষণের পাশাপাশি সব ঋণের বিপরীতে অতিরিক্ত ১ শতাংশ সঞ্চিতি সংরক্ষণের নির্দেশ দিয়েছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। সম্প্রতি কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের 'ব্যাংকিং প্রবিধি ও নীতি' বিভাগ থেকে জারীকৃত এক প্রজ্ঞাপনে এ নির্দেশনা দেয়া হয়।

কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের নির্দেশনায় বলা হয়েছে, চলতি বছরের ৩১ ডিসেম্বরের ঋণ স্থিতির বিপরীতে বাড়তি এ সঞ্চিতি সংরক্ষণ করতে হবে। অতিরিক্ত সঞ্চিতিকে 'স্পেশাল জেনারেল প্রভিশন কভিড-১৯' নামে ব্যাংকের ব্যালান্স শিটে পৃথকভাবে প্রদর্শন করতে হবে।

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের তথ্য অনুযায়ী, চলতি বছরের অক্টোবর পর্যন্ত দেশের বেসরকারি খাতে

ব্যাংকগুলোর বিনিয়োগ বা ঋণ ছিল ১১ লাখ ১৪ হাজার ৩২২ কোটি টাকা। ৩১ ডিসেম্বর পর্যন্ত এ ঋণের পরিমাণ প্রায় ১২ লাখ কোটি টাকায় উন্নীত হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। সেই হিসেবে ১ শতাংশ হারে 'স্পেশাল জেনারেল প্রভিশন-১৯' বাবদ প্রায় ১২ হাজার কোটি টাকা অতিরিক্ত সঞ্চিতি রাখতে হবে ব্যাংকগুলোকে।

ব্যাংকগুলোর নগদ আদায় ব্যতিরেকে ঋণের ওপর আরোপিত সুদ আয় খাতে নেয়ার বিষয়েও সুনির্দিষ্ট নীতিমালা প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের প্রজ্ঞাপনে। দেশের সব তফসিলি ব্যাংকের শীর্ষ নির্বাহীর কাছে পাঠানো ওই প্রজ্ঞাপনে বলা হয়, ঋণের স্থিতি ১০ কোটি টাকা বা তার বেশি হলে আরোপিত সুদ আয় খাতে স্থানান্তরের জন্য ব্যবস্থাপনা কর্তৃপক্ষের পর্যালোচনা (যৌক্তিকতা উল্লেখপূর্বক) অডিট কমিটির সুপারিশসহ পরিচালনা পর্ষদ কর্তৃক অনুমোদিত হতে হবে। ঋণের স্থিতি ৫ কোটি বা তার বেশি কিন্তু ১০ কোটি টাকার কম হলে আরোপিত সুদ আয় খাতে স্থানান্তরের জন্য শাখা প্রধানের সুপারিশসহ ব্যাংকের প্রধান নির্বাহীর অনুমোদন প্রয়োজন হবে। আর ঋণের স্থিতি ৫ কোটি টাকার কম হলে আরোপিত সুদ আয় খাতে

স্থানান্তরের ক্ষেত্রে শাখা প্রধানের সুপারিশসহ তার নিয়ন্ত্রণকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমোদন নিতে হবে।

উল্লিখিত বিষয়গুলো বিবেচনায় নিয়ে কোনো ঋণের বিপরীতে আরোপিত সুদ আয় খাতে স্থানান্তর করা না হলে তা 'ইন্টারেস্ট সাসপেন্স' হিসেবে স্থানান্তর করতে হবে বলেও প্রজ্ঞাপনে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। প্রজ্ঞাপনে বলা হয়, ঋণের বিপরীতে স্পেসিফিক প্রভিশন সংরক্ষণের ক্ষেত্রে ঋণের শ্রেণীকরণ ও প্রভিশনিংয়ের বিধান অনুযায়ী আবশ্যিক প্রভিশন হিসাবায়নপূর্বক যথারীতি প্রভিশন সংরক্ষণ করতে হবে।

আর জেনারেল প্রভিশন সংরক্ষণের ক্ষেত্রে ঋণের শ্রেণীকরণ ও প্রভিশনিংয়ের বিধান অনুযায়ী আবশ্যিক প্রভিশন হিসাব করে তা সংরক্ষণ করতে হবে। এছাড়া ৩১ ডিসেম্বর ২০২০ ভিত্তিক হিসাব চূড়ান্ত করার ক্ষেত্রে এসএমই ঋণসহ সব অশ্রেণীকৃত ঋণের বিপরীতে অতিরিক্ত ১ শতাংশ জেনারেল প্রভিশন সংরক্ষণ করতে হবে। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক কর্তৃক পরবর্তী নির্দেশনা না আসা পর্যন্ত বিশেষ এ প্রভিশন অন্য কোনো খাতে স্থানান্তর করা যাবে না।

বিনিয়োগ নয়, পরিস্থিতি সামলাচ্ছেন বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগকারীরা; এমসিসিআই'র পর্যালোচনা

কোভিড-১৯ মহামারীর সঙ্গে এখনো লড়াই চালিয়ে যাচ্ছে বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতি। সংক্রমণ প্রতিরোধে মার্চের মাঝামাঝি ঘোষণা হয় সাধারণ ছুটি। মে মাসের শেষে অবরুদ্ধ এ পরিস্থিতি শিথিল হলে অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ড কিছুটা গতি পায়। তবে এরই মধ্যে শুরু হয়েছে কোভিডের দ্বিতীয় ঢেউ মোকাবেলার তৎপরতা। উদ্যোক্তারা এখনো পরিস্থিতি পর্যবেক্ষণ করছেন।

দেশের প্রাচীনতম বাণিজ্য সংগঠন মেট্রোপলিটন চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি (এমসিসিআই) চলতি ২০২০-২১ অর্থবছরের প্রথম প্রান্তিকের (জুলাই-সেপ্টেম্বর) অর্থনৈতিক পর্যালোচনায় বলাছে, নতুন বিনিয়োগ না করে কোভিডের প্রভাবে সৃষ্ট পরিস্থিতি সামলাতে ব্যতিব্যস্ত বিনিয়োগকারীরা।

প্রথম প্রান্তিকের পর্যালোচনায় সংগঠনটি বলছে, চলতি বছর মে মাসের শেষে সংক্রমণ প্রতিরোধে দেয়া কঠোরতা শিথিল হলেও স্বাভাবিক সময়ের

চেয়ে অনেক দূরে ছিল অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ডের প্রাণচাঞ্চল্য। মহামারীর সঙ্গে লড়াই চালিয়ে যাওয়া বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতি চলতি অর্থবছরের প্রথম প্রান্তিকে স্বাভাবিকত্ব ফিরে আসার ইঙ্গিতই দিয়েছে। এ সময় ব্যবহার বেড়েছে বিদ্যুৎ, তেল ও গ্যাসের।

অনানুষ্ঠানিক শিল্প, সেবা ও অন্যান্য কার্যক্রম পুনরায় শুরু হলেও সেগুলো চলছে প্রকৃতর চেয়ে অনেক কম সক্ষমতায়। রফতানিমুখী পোশাক, চামড়া ও স্থানীয় বাজারমুখী ইম্পাত, খাদ্য প্রক্রিয়াজাত ও পরিবহন খাত সচল থাকলেও তা পূর্ণাঙ্গ সক্ষমতায় নয়।

বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগকারীরা নতুন বিনিয়োগ না করে পরিস্থিতি সামলাচ্ছেন এমন মত উল্লেখ করে এমসিসিআই বলছে, ভালো বিষয় হলো অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ড পর্যায়ক্রমে বাড়ছে। উচ্চপ্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্য অর্জনে বাংলাদেশ এখন কিছু চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখোমুখি দাঁড়িয়ে আছে। এ চ্যালেঞ্জগুলোর মধ্যে আছে উন্নয়ন

প্রকল্পের শুল্কগতির বাস্তবায়ন, বিনিয়োগস্বল্পতা ও রাজস্ব আহরণের মন্থর প্রবৃদ্ধি। বার্ষিক উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচিগুলোও সবসময়ের মতোই ধীরগতির। প্রতিবছর বরাদ্দ বাড়লেও মন্ত্রণালয় ও বিভাগগুলো তা ব্যয় করতে পারছে না। কোভিড-১৯ মহামারীও ধীরগতির বাস্তবায়নের কারণ। প্রতিযোগিতা সক্ষমতা বজায় এবং আরো প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জনে সরকারি ও বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগের উল্লেখযোগ্য বৃদ্ধি প্রয়োজন।

উৎপাদনমুখী বা ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিং শিল্প নিয়ে পর্যালোচনায় এমসিসিআই বলছে, সামগ্রিক শিল্প খাতের উৎপাদনমুখী উপখাতে রেকর্ড পরিমাণ কম প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন হয়েছে। মূলত কোভিডের প্রভাবে ২০১৯-২০ অর্থবছর শেষে প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ছিল ৫ দশমিক ৮৪ শতাংশ। ২০১৮-১৯ অর্থবছর শেষে এ হার ছিল ১৪ দশমিক ২০ শতাংশ। উৎপাদনমুখী শিল্পের মধ্যে বৃহৎ ও মাঝারি আকারের খাতগুলোর নৈপুণ্য ছিল দুর্বল। ২০১৮-১৯ অর্থবছর শেষে ১৪ দশমিক ৮৪

শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন হলেও ২০১৯-২০ শেষে প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে ৫ দশমিক ৪৭ শতাংশ।

ছোট আকারের ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিং শিল্পও কম প্রবৃদ্ধির আবেতাই ছিল। ২০১৮-১৯ অর্থবছর শেষে প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ১০ দশমিক ৯৫ শতাংশ হলেও ২০১৯-২০ অর্থবছর শেষে প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে ৭ দশমিক ৭৮ শতাংশ। যদিও মোট দেশজ উৎপাদনে (জিডিপি) ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিং উপখাতের অংশ ২০১৯-২০ অর্থবছরে বেড়ে হয়েছে ২৪ দশমিক ১৮ শতাংশ। ২০১৮-১৯ অর্থবছরে এ হার ছিল ২৪ দশমিক শূন্য ৮ শতাংশ।

ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিংয়ের মধ্যে বৃহৎ ও মাঝারি আকারের শিল্প উপখাতগুলোর অংশ জিডিপিতে বেড়ে হয়েছে ২০ দশমিক ২২ শতাংশ। ২০১৮-১৯ অর্থবছর শেষে এ হার ছিল ২০ দশমিক ২১ শতাংশ। জিডিপিতে ছোট আকারের শিল্প উপখাতগুলোর অংশও বেড়েছে। ২০১৮-১৯ অর্থবছর শেষে ৩ দশমিক ৮৭ শতাংশ থাকলেও ২০১৯-২০ অর্থবছরে বেড়ে হয়েছে ৩ দশমিক ৯৪ শতাংশ।

দুর্নীতিকে ছাপিয়ে ব্যবসার বড় বাধা অদক্ষ প্রশাসন; গ্লোবাল কম্পিটিটিভনেস প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশকালে সিপিডি

বাংলাদেশে ব্যবসা করতে গিয়ে ব্যবসায়ীরা অনেক সমস্যা মোকাবেলা করেন। এক্ষেত্রে আগে প্রধানতম বাধাগুলোর মধ্যে প্রথমেই দুর্নীতিকে চিহ্নিত করতেন ব্যবসায়ীরা। বর্তমানে তারা প্রধান সমস্যা হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করছেন আমলাতন্ত্রের অদক্ষতাকে। বাংলাদেশে ব্যবসার পরিবেশ নিয়ে ব্যবসায়ীদের কাছ থেকে পাওয়া এ মতামত তুলে ধরেছে বেসরকারি গবেষণা সংস্থা সেন্টার ফর পলিসি ডায়ালগ (সিপিডি)।

ওয়ার্ল্ড ইকোনমিক ফোরামের (ডব্লিউইএফ) নিয়মিত বৈশ্বিক প্রতিবেদন ‘গ্লোবাল কম্পিটিটিভনেস রিপোর্ট’ (জিসিআর) প্রকাশকালে এ মতামত তুলে ধরা হয়। তবে এ সময় আরো জানানো হয়েছে, এদিকে চলমান কোভিড-১৯ মহামারীর কারণে দেশের বড় ব্যবসাগুলো আরো বড় হওয়ার সুযোগ তৈরি হচ্ছে।

এবার করোনার কারণে অন্যান্য বছরের মতো বৈশ্বিক প্রতিযোগিতা সক্ষমতা সূচকের র্যাংকিং প্রকাশ করা হয়নি। তবে কোন দেশের কী সমস্যা তা জানতে স্থানীয় ব্যবসায়ীদের

মতামতভিত্তিক একটি জরিপ পরিচালনা করা হয়েছে। ডব্লিউইএফের পক্ষে বাংলাদেশে কাজটি করেছে সিপিডি। ১০ কোটি টাকার ওপর সম্পদ আছে, এমন ৫৫টি প্রতিষ্ঠানের শীর্ষ নির্বাহীদের মতামতের ভিত্তিতে এ জরিপ পরিচালনা করা হয়।

সে হিসেবে প্রকাশিত ‘হাউ কাফ্রিজ আর পারফর্মিং অন দ্য রোড টু রিকভারি’ শীর্ষক প্রতিবেদনটিকে ডব্লিউইএফের প্রতিবেদনের বিশেষ সংস্করণ বলা চলে। প্রতিবেদনে বিভিন্ন দেশের করোনার প্রভাব কাটিয়ে পুনরুদ্ধারের পথে অগ্রযাত্রার পর্যালোচনা করা হয়। প্রতিবেদনের বাংলাদেশ অংশে এখানে ব্যবসা করতে গিয়ে ব্যবসায়ীরা যেসব সমস্যার মুখোমুখি হচ্ছেন, সেগুলো তুলে ধরা হয়েছে।

সিপিডির উপস্থাপনা অনুযায়ী, উদ্যোক্তারা ব্যবসা করতে গিয়ে প্রধান যে সমস্যাগুলোর মুখোমুখি হয়েছেন, তার মধ্যে প্রথমেই রয়েছে অদক্ষ আমলাতন্ত্র। জরিপে অংশগ্রহণকারীদের ৭২ শতাংশই এ সমস্যার কথা উল্লেখ করেছেন। দ্বিতীয় সমস্যা হিসেবে চিহ্নিত হয়েছে দুর্নীতি। জরিপে অংশ নেয়া ৬৮ শতাংশ এ সমস্যার মুখোমুখি হওয়ার কথা উল্লেখ করেছেন। প্রধান সমস্যাগুলোর মধ্যে তৃতীয় স্থানে রয়েছে সীমিত অর্থায়ন সুবিধার কথা। ৬৬ শতাংশ উত্তরদাতা এ সমস্যার মুখোমুখি হয়েছেন বলে জানিয়েছেন।

উপস্থাপনায় আরো জানানো হয়, এ সীমিত অর্থায়ন সুবিধার বিষয়টি ক্রমেই আরো উদ্বিগ্নজনক পরিস্থিতির দিকে ধাবিত হচ্ছে। বিশেষ করে ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি উদ্যোক্তাদের জন্য এটি বড় একটি সমস্যা হিসেবে দেখা দিয়েছে। ব্যবসায়ীদের গত বছর মোকাবেলা করা সবচেয়ে বড় সমস্যাগুলোর মধ্যে চতুর্থ স্থানে রয়েছে অপ্রতুল অবকাঠামো। এছাড়া গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সমস্যা হিসেবে শিক্ষিত শ্রমিকের অপর্യാপ্ততার কথাও জানিয়েছেন ব্যবসায়ীরা। এ সমস্যার বিষয়ে জানিয়েছেন ৩৪ শতাংশ উত্তরদাতা। শ্রমিকের কাজের নৈতিকতার মতো সমস্যার কথা জানিয়েছেন ৩২ শতাংশ। উপস্থাপনায় ব্যবসায়ীদের জানানো প্রধান সমস্যা হিসেবে শীর্ষ ১৬টির বিষয়ে উল্লেখ করেছে সিপিডি।

প্রতিবেদন নিয়ে উপস্থাপনায় সিপিডির গবেষণা পরিচালক খন্দকার গোলাম মোয়াজ্জেম বলেন, ব্যবসায়ীদের কাছে একেক সময় একেকটি সমস্যা প্রকট হয়ে দাঁড়ায়। একসময় দুর্নীতি ছিল বড় সমস্যা। পরে অবকাঠামো বড় সমস্যা হয়ে

দেখা দিয়েছে। এখন আবার ব্যবসায়ীরা অদক্ষ প্রশাসনকে বড় সমস্যা মনে করছেন। ব্যবসার ঝুঁকির ক্ষেত্রে ধারণাগুলো নিয়ে ব্যবসায়ীরা এক ধরনের বিভ্রান্তির মধ্যে রয়েছেন। এ মানসিকতা ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে প্রক্ষেপণে ব্যবসায়ীদের জন্য বাধা সৃষ্টি করতে পারে।

তিনি বলেন, ব্যাংক খাত নিয়ে ধারণার অবনমন হয়েছে ব্যবসায়ীদের। ৭৫ শতাংশ উদ্যোক্তা ব্যাংক খাতের বড় সমস্যা হিসেবে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের দুর্বল নজরদারির বিষয়টি উল্লেখ করেছেন। ৭৩ শতাংশ জানিয়েছেন, ব্যাংকগুলো যে সমস্যাগুলো মোকাবেলা করছে, তা অভ্যন্তরীণ বাণিজ্যে মারাত্মক প্রভাব ফেলবে। উপস্থাপনায় আরো জানানো হয়, ২০১৯ সালে পুঁজিবাজার আরো দুর্বল হয়েছে বলে মত প্রকাশ করেছেন ব্যবসায়ীরা। এক্ষেত্রে তাদের মধ্যে ৮০ শতাংশ সিকিউরিটিজ এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশনের দুর্বল নজরদারির বিষয়টি উল্লেখ করেছেন।

প্রতিবেদনে বাংলাদেশে ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্যকে আরো প্রতিযোগিতাসক্ষম করতে ১২টি বিষয়ের প্রতি জোর দেয়া হয়েছে। এগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে সুশাসন, অবকাঠামো, প্রযুক্তি, মানবসম্পদ, অর্থায়নের পরিবেশ, বৈদেশিক বাণিজ্য, স্থানীয় ব্যবসায়ীদের মধ্যে প্রতিযোগিতা, ব্যবসা পরিচালনা, নিরাপত্তা, ঝুঁকি ইত্যাদি।

প্রতিবেদন সম্পর্কে উপস্থাপনার সমাপনীতে গোলাম মোয়াজ্জেম বলেন, করোনা পরিস্থিতির সঙ্গে মিলিয়ে বলতে গেলে বলতে হয়, সুশাসনের জায়গাটি পরিবর্তন করতে গেলে আরো অনেক বেশি উন্নয়নের প্রয়োজন পড়বে। আমরা দেখছি, সরকারি বিনিয়োগ বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগকে যতটা আকৃষ্ট করার কথা ছিল, ততটা আকর্ষণ করছে না।

কীভাবে ব্যয় কমিয়ে সাশ্রয়ী প্রকল্প করা যায়, সে বিষয়েও নজর দিতে হবে। ডিজিটাল ডিভাইড কমিয়ে আনতে হবে। মানবসম্পদকে ডিজিটাল মানবসম্পদে রূপান্তর করতে হবে। আর্থিক খাতের ইতিবাচক প্রভাব এসএমইর ক্ষেত্রে দেখা যায়নি। এ বিষয়ে নতুন মডেল ভাবতে হবে।

প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশকালে ভবিষ্যৎ রূপান্তরের জন্য চারটি বিষয়ের ওপর জোর দিয়েছে সিপিডি। এগুলো হলো: ব্যবসার পরিবেশ রূপান্তর, মানবসম্পদ রূপান্তর, বাজার রূপান্তর ও উদ্ভাবনমুখী রূপান্তর।

রাষ্ট্রপতির শিল্প উন্নয়ন পুরস্কার পেল ১৯টি শিল্পপ্রতিষ্ঠান

১৯টি শিল্পপ্রতিষ্ঠান রাষ্ট্রপতির শিল্প উন্নয়ন পুরস্কার ২০১৮ পেয়েছে। এদের মধ্যে বৃহৎ শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে চারটি, মাঝারি শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে চারটি, ক্ষুদ্র শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে তিনটি, মাইক্রো শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে তিনটি, কুটির শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে তিনটি এবং হাই-টেক শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে দুটি।

বৃহৎ শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে ব্রিটিশ-আমেরিকান টোব্যাকো বাংলাদেশ কোম্পানি লিমিটেড, ইনসেস্টা ফার্মাসিউটিক্যালস লিমিটেড, এনার্জিপ্যাক ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং লিমিটেড ও অলিম্পিক ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ লিমিটেড পুরস্কার লাভ করে। মাঝারি শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে তাফরিদ কটন মিলস লিমিটেড, শেলটেক টেকনোলজি লিমিটেড, অকো-টেক্স লিমিটেড ও মেসার্স এনভয় ফ্যাশন লিমিটেড পুরস্কার লাভ করে। ক্ষুদ্র শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে কনসেন্ট নিটিং লিমিটেড, এপিএস ডিজাইন ওয়ার্কস লিমিটেড ও সামিট অয়েল অ্যান্ড শিপিং কোম্পানি লিমিটেড পুরস্কার লাভ করে।

মাইক্রো শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে ট্রিম টেক্স বাংলাদেশ, মাসকো ওভারসিজ লিমিটেড ও ক্রিমসন রোসেলা সি ফুড লিমিটেড; কুটির শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে ক্লাসিক্যাল হ্যান্ডমেড প্রডাক্টস বিডি, ইন্টেলিজেন্ট কার্ড লিমিটেড ও রূপকথা যুব ও মহিলা উন্নয়ন সংস্থা; হাই-টেক শিল্প ক্যাটাগরিতে সার্ভিস ইঞ্জিন লিমিটেড ও মেটাটিউড এশিয়া লিমিটেড পুরস্কার লাভ করে।

আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে এসব সেরা শিল্পপ্রতিষ্ঠানকে রাষ্ট্রপতির শিল্প উন্নয়ন পুরস্কার ২০১৮ দেন শিল্পমন্ত্রী নূরুল মজিদ মাহমুদ হুমায়ূন এমপি। বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন শিল্প প্রতিমন্ত্রী কামাল আহমেদ মজুমদার এমপি ও এফবিসিসিআই সভাপতি শেখ ফজলে ফাহিম।

প্রধান অতিথির বক্তৃতায় শিল্পমন্ত্রী নূরুল মজিদ মাহমুদ হুমায়ূন এমপি বলেন, বিশ্ব অর্থনীতির পরিবর্তিত পরিস্থিতি, এসডিজি-২০৩০ ও রূপকল্প-২০৪১ বিবেচনা করে জাতীয় শিল্পনীতি-২০২১ প্রণয়নের উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে। এ লক্ষ্যে ইতোমধ্যে সংশ্লিষ্ট স্টেকহোল্ডারদের সঙ্গে নিয়ে নতুন শিল্পনীতি প্রণয়নের কাজ শুরু করেছে শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয়।

হালকা প্রকৌশল শিল্প খাতের উন্নয়নে ইতোমধ্যে একটি পরিকল্পিত ও সময়াবদ্ধ রোডম্যাপ প্রণয়ন করা হচ্ছে। পাশাপাশি একটি বিশ্বমানের ইন্ডাস্ট্রিয়াল ডাটাবেজ এবং শিল্প বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় স্থাপনেরও উদ্যোগ নেয়া হয়েছে। শিল্প খাতে উন্নয়নের চলমান অভিযাত্রা অব্যাহত রেখে বাংলাদেশ নির্ধারিত সময়ের আগেই শিল্পসমৃদ্ধ রাষ্ট্রে পরিণত **r**

প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজ বাস্তবায়নে গতি আনতে ব্যাংকগুলোকে বাধ্য করার তাগিদ

চলমান করোনা মহামারী গত মার্চ থেকে সব ধরনের অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ডে অচলাবস্থার সৃষ্টি করে। অর্থনীতি পুনরুদ্ধারে ১ লাখ ২১ হাজার ৩৫৩ কোটি টাকার ২১টি প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজ ঘোষণা করে সরকার। কিন্তু সাত মাস পার হয়ে গেলেও প্রণোদনার প্রায় অর্ধেকই বাস্তবায়ন হয়নি। তাই বাস্তবায়ন হার বাড়তে ব্যাংকগুলোকে বাধ্য করার তাগিদ দিয়েছেন সংশ্লিষ্ট মহল। করোনা মোকাবেলা ও অর্থনৈতিক পুনরুদ্ধার নিয়ে অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়ের অর্থ বিভাগ আয়োজিত এক মতবিনিময় সভায় বক্তারা এসব কথা বলেন।

‘কোভিড-১৯ মোকাবেলা এবং টেকসই ও অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক অর্থনৈতিক পুনরুদ্ধারে বাংলাদেশ সরকারের নেয়া প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজ’ শীর্ষক এ সিরিজ মতবিনিময়ের দ্বিতীয় সভায় প্রধান অতিথি ছিলেন পরিকল্পনামন্ত্রী এম এ মান্নান, এমপি। অনুষ্ঠানে বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের গভর্নর ফজলে কবির। এতে ‘কর্মসৃজন ও গ্রামীণ অর্থনীতি পুনরুজ্জীবন’ শীর্ষক মূল প্রবন্ধ উপস্থাপন করেন অর্থ সচিব আবদুর রউফ তালুকদার।

পরিকল্পনামন্ত্রী বলেন, অর্থনীতি পুনরুদ্ধারে ২১টি প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজ ঘোষণা করা হয়েছে। এতে অর্থনীতিতে অনেক গতি এসেছে। তারপর প্রণোদনার অর্থ সরকার পাঠালেও তার একটা বড় অংশ উপকারভোগীদের কাছে পৌঁছাচ্ছে না। ফলে অনেকেই এর উপকার ভোগ করতে পারছেন না। এ বিষয়ে ব্যবস্থা নিতে অর্থ সচিব ও বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের গভর্নরের প্রতি দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করেন তিনি।

ফজলে কবির বলেন, বড় বড় প্রতিষ্ঠানের জন্য ওয়ার্কিং ক্যাপিটাল তহবিল থেকে যে হারে ঋণ দেয়া হচ্ছে, সে হারে সিএসএমই খাতের উদ্যোক্তাদের ঋণ দেয়া যাচ্ছে না। সিএসএমই

খাতের জন্য যে ২০ হাজার কোটি টাকার প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজ ঘোষণা করা হয়েছে, সেখান থেকে এ পর্যন্ত ঋণ দেয়া হয়েছে ৪১ দশমিক শূন্য ৯ শতাংশ। টাকার অংকে সেটা ৮ হাজার ২১৮ কোটি টাকা। এ ঋণ বিতরণে গতি আনতে আমরা ২ হাজার কোটি টাকার ক্রেডিট গ্যারান্টি স্কিম চালু করেছি। অর্থ সচিব বলেন, করোনা দুই ধরনের ক্ষতি হচ্ছে। একটা হচ্ছে স্বাস্থ্য খাতের ক্ষতি, অন্যটা অর্থনীতির ক্ষতি।

স্বাস্থ্য খাতের কী পরিমাণ ক্ষতি হচ্ছে, সে বিষয়টি নিয়মিত আপডেট দিচ্ছে স্বাস্থ্যসেবা বিভাগ। অর্থনীতিতে যে ক্ষতি হচ্ছে, সেটা নির্ধারণে আরো একটু সময় লাগবে। এটা এখনই বলা সম্ভব হবে না। সেন্টার ফর পলিসি ডায়ালগের (সিপিডি) সিনিয়র ফেলো মোস্তাফিজুর রহমান বলেন, করোনাকালে গ্রামীণ অর্থনীতি বিশেষ করে কৃষি আমাদের বাঁচিয়ে রেখেছে **r**

বড় শিল্পকে শক্তিশালী করতে এসএমইর বিকল্প নেই; কর্মশালায় বক্তারা

করোনার ফলে সৃষ্ট অর্থনীতি পরিস্থিতি মোকাবেলায় পরিচলন ও প্রো-অ্যাকটিভ পলিসি গ্রহণ করে অর্থনীতির সব খাতের মধ্যে সমন্বয় নিশ্চিত করতে হবে। এজন্য বড় শিল্প খাতকে শক্তিশালী করতে সংশ্লিষ্ট এসএমই খাত বিকশিত করার কোনো বিকল্প নেই বলে মনে করছেন খাতসংশ্লিষ্টরা। সম্প্রতি রাজধানীর এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনে ইকোনমিক রিপোর্টার্স ফোরাম (ইআরএফ) আয়োজিত এক কর্মশালায় এসব কথা বলেন আলোচকরা। ইআরএফের সদস্যদের জন্য আয়োজিত ‘কন্সটিবিউশন অব এসএমই, স ফর দ্য ইকোনমিক ডেভেলপমেন্ট অব বাংলাদেশ: এ পোস্ট-কভিড-১৯ পারসপেকটিভ’ শীর্ষক এ কর্মশালার উদ্বোধন করেন শিল্পমন্ত্রী নূরুল মজিদ মাহমুদ হুমায়ূন।

অনুষ্ঠানে বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের সাবেক গভর্নর ড. আতিউর রহমান, ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রির সভাপতি শামস মাহমুদ এবং সিপিডির গবেষণা পরিচালক ড. খন্দকার গোলাম মোয়াজ্জেম। বাংলাদেশ উন্নয়ন গবেষণা প্রতিষ্ঠানের (বিআইডিএস) সিনিয়র রিসার্চ ফেলো ড. নাজনীন আহমেদ কর্মশালায় মূল প্রবন্ধ উপস্থাপন করেন। এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের চেয়ারপারসন অধ্যাপক ড. মো. মাসুদুর রহমানের সভাপতিত্বে অনুষ্ঠানে অন্যদের মধ্যে এসএমই ফাউন্ডেশনের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক মো. সফিকুল ইসলাম, ইআরএফের

সভাপতি শারমীন রিনতী ও সাধারণ সম্পাদক এসএম রাশিদুল ইসলাম বক্তব্য দেন।

প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্যে শিল্পমন্ত্রী বলেন, চতুর্থ শিল্প বিপ্লবের ফলে বিশ্বব্যাপী প্রযুক্তিনির্ভর শিল্পায়নের যে ধারা তৈরি হয়েছে, সেটির সঙ্গে সামঞ্জস্য বজায় রাখতে শিল্প খাতের উন্নয়নে সরকার কাজ করেছে। শিল্পমন্ত্রী বলেন, বৈশ্বিক অর্থনীতির এ ধরনের অপ্রত্যাশিত দূরবছার মধ্যেও বাংলাদেশ জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধির ইতিবাচক ধারা বজায় রাখতে সক্ষম হয়েছে। ২০১৯-২০ অর্থবছরে যেখানে শিল্পোন্নত দেশগুলোয় নেতিবাচক প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে, সেখানে বাংলাদেশ ৫ দশমিক ২৪ শতাংশ জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন করেছে। আমাদের জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধি দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার দেশগুলোর জিডিপি এবং বৈশ্বিক গড় জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধির চেয়ে বেশি।

তৃণমূল পর্যায়ের এসএমই উদ্যোক্তাদের উৎপাদিত পণ্য বাজারজাতকরণের লক্ষ্যে রাজধানীর পূর্বাচলে একটি স্থায়ী সেলস অ্যান্ড ডিসপেন্সে সেন্টার স্থাপনের উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে উল্লেখ করে অনুষ্ঠানে শিল্পমন্ত্রী বলেন, এখানে ক্ষুদ্র উদ্যোক্তাদের পণ্য বিক্রয়, প্রদর্শন এবং বাজারজাতকরণের জন্য সব ধরনের সুবিধা গড়ে তোলা হবে।

ড. আতিউর রহমান বলেন, করোনার ফলে সৃষ্ট অর্থনীতি পরিস্থিতি মোকাবেলায় পরিচ্ছন্ন ও প্রো-অ্যাকাটিভ পলিসি গ্রহণ করে অর্থনীতির সব খাতের মধ্যে সমন্বয় নিশ্চিত করতে হবে। তিনি আরো বলেন, বাজারে পণ্যের চাহিদা যাতে অব্যাহত থাকে সেজন্য সাধারণ মানুষের হাতে আরো অর্থ পৌঁছানোর ব্যবস্থা করতে হবে। এজন্য এসএমই খাতের জন্য প্রণোদনা আরো বৃদ্ধির প্রস্তাব করেন তিনি।

সিপিডির গবেষণা পরিচালক ড. খন্দকার গোলাম মোয়াজ্জেম বলেন, সারভাইভাল এসএমইগুলোকে কর্মশীল্য ভায়াবেল এসএমইতে পরিণত করতে হবে। বড় শিল্প খাতকে শক্তিশালী করতে সংশ্লিষ্ট এসএমই খাত বিকশিত করার কোনো বিকল্প নেই উল্লেখ করে তিনি বলেন, এর ফলে একটি শক্তিশালী সাপ্লাই চেইন গড়ে উঠবে।

কর্মশালায় মূল প্রবন্ধে ড. নাজনীন আহমেদ বলেন, এসএমই খাতে নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের অংশগ্রহণ দিন দিন বৃদ্ধি পাচ্ছে। তবে সে অনুপাতে নারী উদ্যোক্তারা প্রয়োজনীয় ঋণসহায়তা পাচ্ছেন না।

গড় জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধি ৮ শতাংশে তোলার লক্ষ্য; অষ্টম পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনা অনুমোদন

গড় জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধি ৮ শতাংশে তোলার লক্ষ্য নিয়ে অষ্টম পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনা দলিলের চূড়ান্ত খসড়ার অনুমোদন দিয়েছে জাতীয় অর্থনৈতিক পরিষদ (এনইসি)। শেরেবাংলা নগরের এনইসি সম্মেলন কক্ষ ও সচিবালয়ের মন্ত্রিপরিষদ কক্ষে সম্প্রতি অনুষ্ঠিত এনইসির ডিজিটাল সভায় এ অনুমোদন দেয়া হয়েছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও এনইসি চেয়ারপারসন শেখ হাসিনা গণভবন থেকে ভিডিও কনফারেন্সিংয়ের মাধ্যমে যুক্ত হয়ে এ সভায় সভাপতিত্ব করেন।

সভায় অষ্টম পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনার সারসংক্ষেপ উপস্থাপন করেন সাধারণ অর্থনীতি বিভাগের সদস্য (সিনিয়র সচিব) ড. শামসুল আলম। চলতি বছরের জুলাইয়ে শুরু হয়ে ২০২৫ সালের জুন পর্যন্ত সময়ে এ পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়ন হবে। এটি বাস্তবায়নে ব্যয় হবে ৬৪ লাখ ৯৫ হাজার ৯৮০ কোটি টাকা। এর মধ্যে অভ্যন্তরীণ (স্থানীয়) উৎস থেকে ব্যয়ের লক্ষ্য ধরা হয়েছে ৫৭ লাখ ৪৮ হাজার ৩৯০ কোটি টাকা, যা মোট ব্যয়ের ৮৮ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ। অন্যদিকে বৈদেশিক উৎস থেকে সংস্থান করা হবে ৭ লাখ ৪৭ হাজার ৫৯০ কোটি টাকা, যা মোট ব্যয়ের ১১ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ।

পরিকল্পনার লক্ষ্য অনুযায়ী, এটি বাস্তবায়নকালে জিডিপির গড় প্রবৃদ্ধি হবে ৮ শতাংশ। পরিকল্পনার শেষ অর্থবছরে তা উন্নীত হবে ৮ দশমিক ৫১ শতাংশে। পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়নে নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে নতুন কর্মসংস্থান তৈরি হবে ১ কোটি ১৩ লাখ ৩০ হাজার। এর মধ্যে বৈদেশিক কর্মসংস্থান ৩২ লাখ ৫০ হাজার ও দেশীয় কর্মসংস্থান ৮০ লাখ ৫০ হাজার। নিজস্ব অর্থায়নে মোট ব্যয়ের প্রায় ৯০ শতাংশ নির্বাহের বিষয়টিকে এবারের পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনার উল্লেখযোগ্য দিক হিসেবে দেখছেন সংশ্লিষ্টরা। ১৯৭২-৭৩ অর্থবছরে গৃহীত প্রথম পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়নে দেশের বাইরের অর্থায়ন ছিল প্রায় ৮৮ শতাংশ এবং অভ্যন্তরীণ অর্থায়ন ছিল মাত্র ১২ শতাংশ।

এ বিষয়ে বৈঠক শেষে এনইসি সম্মেলন কক্ষে সাংবাদিকদের ব্রিফিংকালে পরিকল্পনামন্ত্রী এমএ মান্নান বলেন, পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়নে অর্থায়নের এ পরিবর্তন গৌরবের, এ অর্জন আনন্দের। নিজেদের সক্ষমতার বহিঃপ্রকাশ হিসেবে বাংলাদেশের এ অবস্থান তৈরি করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তবে আমরা বৈদেশিক অর্থায়নকে

একেবারেই নিরুৎসাহিত করব না। কোনো দেশ বা সংস্থা অনুদান অথবা ঋণ দিতে চাইলে সুবিধাজনকভাবে তা গ্রহণ করা হবে। অষ্টম পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনা প্রণয়নে সপ্তম পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনার বাস্তবায়ন অভিজ্ঞতা ও অর্থনীতিতে কোভিড-১৯ সৃষ্ট বিরূপ প্রভাব মোকাবেলার বিষয়টি বিশেষভাবে বিবেচনা নেয়া হয়েছে।

এবারের পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনা বাস্তবায়নে ব্যক্তি খাতের প্রাধান্যই থাকবে বেশি। অনুমোদিত খসড়া অনুযায়ী, পরিকল্পনায় মোট ব্যয়ের ১২ লাখ ৩০ হাজার ১২০ কোটি টাকা বা প্রায় ১৯ শতাংশ ধরা হয়েছে সরকারি উৎস থেকে। বেসরকারি খাত থেকে ধরা হয়েছে ৫২ লাখ ৬৫ হাজার ৮৬০ কোটি টাকা বা ৮১ শতাংশ।

অনুমোদিত অষ্টম পঞ্চবার্ষিক পরিকল্পনার লক্ষ্য অনুযায়ী, মাথাগুণতি দারিদ্র্যের হার ২০২৫ সালের মধ্যে ১৫ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশে এবং চরম দারিদ্র্য হার ২০২০-২১ অর্থবছরের ১২ শতাংশ থেকে ২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরের মধ্যে ৭ দশমিক ৪ শতাংশে নামিয়ে আনা হবে। এ সময় মূল্যস্ফীতিকেও নিয়ন্ত্রণে আনা হবে। চলতি অর্থবছরে সার্বিক সিপিআই মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ৫ দশমিক ৬৫ শতাংশ থেকে ২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরে ৪ দশমিক ৭৬ শতাংশে নামিয়ে আনা হবে। এ সময়ে জিডিপিতে কৃষি ও সেবা খাতের অবদান আরো কমবে। অন্যদিকে শিল্প ও ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিং অবদান বৃদ্ধি পাবে। একই সঙ্গে পরিকল্পনায় ২০২৫ সাল নাগাদ কর জিডিপির অনুপাত বর্তমানের (২০২০-২১) ৮ দশমিক ৯০ শতাংশ থেকে বাড়িয়ে ১২ দশমিক ৩০ শতাংশে উন্নীত করার কথাও বলা হয়েছে।

এনইসি বৈঠকে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দেয়া নির্দেশনা তুলে ধরে পরিকল্পনামন্ত্রী বলেন, ইউনিয়ন পর্যায়ে জমির সর্বোচ্চ গুরুত্ব দিতে হবে। আর ফসলি জমি নষ্ট করা যাবে না। এজন্য ইউনিয়ন পর্যায়ে ভূমি মহাপরিকল্পনা তৈরির নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

ড. শামসুল আলম বলেন, রাজস্ব আয় বৃদ্ধি এবং বাণিজ্য শুল্কের ওপর নির্ভরতা কমাতে পরিকল্পনায় রাজস্ব আইনের অধিকতর সংস্কার এবং কর প্রশাসনের আধুনিকায়ন ও শক্তিশালীকরণে প্রচেষ্টা অব্যাহত রাখার সুপারিশ করা হয়েছে। এছাড়া সরকারি-বেসরকারি অংশীদারিত্বের (পিপিপি) মাধ্যমে প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের ক্ষেত্রে প্রয়োজনীয় অর্থায়নের ওপর জোর দেয়া হয়েছে। এছাড়া পরিকল্পনা মূল্যায়নের জন্য ১৫টি ক্ষেত্রে পরিবীক্ষণ ও মূল্যায়নের লক্ষ্যে ১০৪টি সূচক নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে।

প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজের মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি ও নতুন সহায়তা বিবেচনার আস্থান; সংবাদ সম্মেলনে বিজিএমইএ

পোশাক শিল্পের আকাশে মেঘ ঘনীভূত হচ্ছে। উদ্যোক্তার একার পক্ষে যা মোকাবেলা করা সম্ভব হবে না। প্রয়োজন আছে প্রস্তুতির। এ পরিস্থিতিতে শিল্পের জন্য প্রদত্ত প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজের মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি ও নতুন সহায়তার প্রয়োজন সরকারকে বিবেচনার অনুরোধ জানিয়েছে পোশাক শিল্প মালিকদের সংগঠন বিজিএমইএ। গতকাল এক সংবাদ সম্মেলনে এ অনুরোধসহ খাতের পরিস্থিতি সম্পর্কে বিস্তারিত উপস্থাপন করে সংগঠনটি।

সম্প্রতি ভার্সুয়াল পাটফর্ম 'কভিড-পূর্ববর্তী এবং চলমান কোভিড পরিস্থিতিতে পোশাক শিল্পের বাস্তবতা' শীর্ষক সংবাদ সম্মেলনের আয়োজন করে পোশাক শিল্প মালিক সংগঠন বিজিএমইএ। সংবাদ সম্মেলনে লিখিত বক্তব্যে সভাপতি ড. রুবানা হক বলেন, বিশ্ববাজারে আমরা পোশাক রফতানিতে দ্বিতীয় স্থানে থাকলেও বিশ্ববাজারে আমাদের শেয়ার মাত্র ৬ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশ। এ বাজারে আরো অংশ করায়ত্ত করার সুযোগ রয়েছে। যদিও ভিয়েতনামকে আমাদের মূল প্রতিযোগী হিসেবে দেখা হয়। বাস্তবতা হলো, রাতারাতি তাদের পক্ষে সামর্থ্য বৃদ্ধি সম্ভব নয়। তাছাড়া পোশাক পণ্য ভিয়েতনামের প্রধান রফতানি পণ্য নয়। আবার কম্বোডিয়া ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নে জিএসপি সুবিধা হারিয়েছে। অন্যদিকে ইথিওপিয়ায় সংঘটিত অস্থিতিশীলতা তাদের শিল্প ও অর্থনীতিকে হুমকির মুখে ফেলেছে। এগুলোর বিপরীতে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দূরদর্শী নেতৃত্বে বাংলাদেশ যেভাবে বিভিন্ন সূচকে এগিয়ে যাচ্ছে, তাতে বলা যায় সবাই মিলে এ দুর্ভোগপূর্ণ সময়টি মোকাবেলা করতে পারলেই আগামীতে আমাদের পোশাক শিল্পের রয়েছে অসংখ্য সম্ভাবনা।

কোভিডের দ্বিতীয় ঢেউ আগামী জুনের পর আর দীর্ঘায়িত হবে না এমন আশা প্রকাশ করে বিজিএমইএ সভাপতি বলেন, এ সময়ে আমাদের অর্জনগুলো ধরে রাখতে সবাই মিলে সর্বোচ্চ প্রচেষ্টা অব্যাহত রাখা প্রয়োজন। আজকের এ সংবাদ সম্মেলনের মাধ্যমে সরকারের প্রতি আমাদের বিনীত অনুরোধ, অনুগ্রহ করে শিল্পের জন্য যে প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজটি দিয়েছেন, তার মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি করে দিন।

ড. রুবানা হক প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজের মেয়াদ দুই বছরের জায়গায় পাঁচ বছর করা এবং মোরটারিয়াম ছয় মাসের জায়গায় এক বছর করার আস্থান জানান। তিনি বলেন, তারপর যদি

কোভিডের ইম্প্যাক্ট খারাপ হয়, যেটা এরই মধ্যে বোঝা যাচ্ছে, তাহলে আমাদের কয়েক মাসের সাপোর্ট লাগবে। জুন থেকে আমরা ঘুরে দাঁড়াতে পারব। আমরা এখনো অন্ততপক্ষে পর্যবেক্ষণের চেষ্টা করছি যে, কতটুকু ধাক্কা আমরা সামলাতে পারব।

অর্থবছরের প্রথম পাঁচ মাসে রফতানি প্রবৃদ্ধি ০.৯৩%

টানা দুই মাসের নেতিবাচক ধারা কাটিয়ে গত মাসে আবারো প্রবৃদ্ধির ইতিবাচক ধারায় ফিরে এসেছে দেশের রফতানি খাত। এর পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে চলতি অর্থবছরের প্রথম পাঁচ মাসে (জুলাই-নভেম্বর) দেশের রফতানি খাতে প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে দশমিক ৯৩ শতাংশ। অন্যদিকে একক মাস হিসেবে শুধু নভেম্বরে এ প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে দশমিক ৭৬ শতাংশ। দেশের রফতানি বাণিজ্যে কভিড-১৯-এর প্রভাব পড়তে শুরু করে চলতি বছরের শুরুতেই। টালমাটাল পরিস্থিতি কাটিয়ে জুলাইয়ে চলতি অর্থবছরের (২০২০-২১) শুরুতেই ধনাত্মক প্রবৃদ্ধিতে ফিরে আসে রফতানি খাত। এর পরের দুই মাস সেই ধারা বহাল থাকার পর সেপ্টেম্বরে আবারো পতন হয় রফতানিতে, যা অক্টোবরেও অব্যাহত ছিল। এরপর গত মাসে সেখান থেকে আবারো ইতিবাচক ধারায় ফিরে এসেছে রফতানি প্রবৃদ্ধি।

রপ্তানী উন্নয়ন ব্যুরোর (ইপিবি) পরিসংখ্যান অনুযায়ী, চলতি অর্থবছরের প্রথম পাঁচ মাসে পণ্য রফতানি হয়েছে ১ হাজার ৫৯২ কোটি ৩৫ লাখ ৯০ হাজার ডলারের। গত অর্থবছরের একই সময়ে রফতানি হয়েছিল ১ হাজার ৫৭৭ কোটি ৭০ লাখ ৭০ হাজার ডলারের পণ্য। অন্যদিকে একক মাস হিসেবে নভেম্বরে পণ্য রফতানি হয়েছে ৩০৮ কোটি ডলারের। গত বছরের

নভেম্বরে এর পরিমাণ ছিল ৩০৬ কোটি ডলার। সে হিসেবে গত মাসে রফতানি বেড়েছে আগের বছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় দশমিক ৭৬ শতাংশ।

ইপিবির পরিসংখ্যান অনুযায়ী রফতানি প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জনের পেছনে মূল ভূমিকায় ছিল ২১টি পণ্য। এর মধ্যে নিটওয়্যারে প্রবৃদ্ধি ছিল ৪ দশমিক ৮০ শতাংশ। পাট ও পাটজাত পণ্যের ক্ষেত্রে এ হার ৩৬ দশমিক ৭২ শতাংশ। এছাড়া জুট ইয়ার্ন অ্যান্ড টোয়াইনে প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ৪৯ দশমিক ২৭ শতাংশ, কাঁচাপাটে দশমিক ৯২, হোম টেক্সটাইলে ৫০ দশমিক ৬১ ও জুতায় (চামড়া ব্যতীত) ১৩ দশমিক ৬১ শতাংশ রফতানি প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে। এর বাইরে প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জনকারী অন্যান্য পণ্যের মধ্যে রয়েছে কেমিক্যাল, প্রকৌশল দ্রব্যাদি, প্রকৌশল যন্ত্রাংশ, ইলেকট্রিক পণ্য, কার্পেট, গুঁড়, হ্যাভিগ্রাফটস, বাইসাইকেল, অন্যান্য ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিং দ্রব্য, কৃষিপণ্য, গুঁড়া মসলা, শুকনো খাবার, রাবার, কপারওয়্যার ও চা।

পরিসংখ্যান অনুযায়ী, অর্থবছরের প্রথম পাঁচ মাসে তৈরি পোশাক রফতানি হয়েছে ১ হাজার ২৮৯ কোটি ৪৬ লাখ ডলারের, যা গত বছরের একই সময়ের চেয়ে ১ দশমিক ৪৮ শতাংশ কম। তবে নিটওয়্যারের রফতানি বেড়েছে। পাঁচ মাসে ৭১৩ কোটি ৬৩ লাখ ডলারের নিটওয়্যার পণ্য রফতানি হয়েছে, যা লক্ষ্যের চেয়ে ৮ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ এবং গত বছরের একই সময়ের চেয়ে প্রায় ৫ শতাংশ বেশি। হিমায়িত মাছ রফতানি কমেছে ১ দশমিক ১২ শতাংশ। ৬৪ শতাংশ কমেছে শাকসবজি রফতানি। চামড়া ও চামড়া পণ্যের রফতানি কমেছে ৮ শতাংশ। এছাড়া হিমায়িত মাছের রফতানি ১ শতাংশ ও ফলমূলের রফতানি কমেছে ৭১ শতাংশ। অন্যদিকে বাইসাইকেল ও চায়ের রফতানি বেড়েছে যথাক্রমে ৩৬ ও ২৭ শতাংশ।



TRADE INFORMATION

December 2020

The following **Trade Inquiries** have been received in the Chamber from different sources abroad. Interested member-firms may like to contact them directly without any obligation on the part of DCCI.

FAIRS & EXHIBITIONS

Solarex Istanbul

Date: 01 April-03 April, 2021
 Venue: Istanbul Expo Center (Istanbul Fuar Merkezi), Bakırköy, Turkey
 Organizer: Voli fuar Hizmetleri AS
 Contact Person: Mr. Ibrahim Arslan, Int'l Sales & Marketing
 E-mail: ibrahim.arslan@solarexistanbul.com
 Website: www.solarexistanbul.com

AgroMach Africa

Date: 07 April-08 April, 2021
 Venue: Online, Virtual Trade Show
 Organizer: TAB group
 Contact Person: Mr. Mohammad Talha
 Tel: +91 82679 42696
 E-mail: mohammad.talha@tab-global.com
 Website: www.agro-mach.com

International Trade Fair, Business and Investors Summit

Date: 12 April-16 April, 2021
 Venue: Calgary Harley-Davidson, Calgary, Canada
 Organizer: Beyond Banking Group
 E-mail: ITFBIS@blader.com
 Website: www.itfbiscalgary.canadainternationalconference.com

China Import and Export Fair (Phase 1)

Date: 15 April-19 April, 2021
 Venue: China Import and Export Fair(Canton Fair Complex), Guangzhou, China
 Organizer: China Foreign Trade Centre (Group)
 Contact Person: Mr. Tom Liu, Marketing Manager
 E-mail: liuxiang@cantonfairad.com
 Website: www.thecantonfairchina.com

Toronto Gift + Home Market

Date: 18 April-21 April, 2021
 Venue: The Toronto Congress Centre, Toronto, Canada
 Organizer: Canadian Gift Association
 Contact Person: Ms. Kate Easter Magsino
 E-mail: info@internationalcentre.com
 Website: www.cangift.org

International Gem & Jewelry Show

Date: 30 April-02 May, 2021
 Venue: Donald E Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, USA
 Organizer: The International Gem & Jewelry Show inc
 Contact Person: Ms. Carol
 E-mail: carol@intergem.net
 Website: www.intergem.com

China Import and Export Fair (Phase 3)

Date: 01 May-05 May, 2021
 Venue: China Import and Export Fair(Canton Fair Complex), Guangzhou, China
 Organizer: China Foreign Trade Centre (Group)
 Contact Person: Mr. Tom Liu, Marketing Manager
 E-mail: liuxiang@cantonfairad.com
 Website: www.thecantonfairchina.com

E-World Energy & Water Exhibition

Date: 04 May-06 May, 2021
 Venue: MESSE ESSEN GmbH, Essen, Germany
 Organizer: Messe Essen GmbH
 E-mail: visitorsupport@e-world-essen.com
 Website: www.e-world-essen.com

Transport Logistic

Date: 04 May-07 May, 2021
 Venue: Exhibition Munich, Munich, Germany
 Organizer: Messe Munchen GmbH
 Tel: +49 89 949-20271
 E-mail: exhibitor@transportlogistic.de
 Website: www.transportlogistic.de

China International Bicycle Fair

Date: 05 May-08 May, 2021
 Venue: Shanghai New International Expo Centre(SNIEC), Shanghai, China
 Organizer: Shanghai Xiesheng Exhibition Co. Ltd.
 Contact Person: Mr. Stanley
 E-mail: dxj@e-chinacycle.com
 Website: www.e-chinacycle.com

Arabian Travel Market Dubai

Date: 16 May-19 May, 2021
 Venue: Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE
 Organizer: Reed Exhibitions Middle East
 Contact Person: Ms. Kate Scott, Event Director
 E-mail: kscott@reedexpo.com
 Website: www.arabiantravelmarket.wtm.com

Cosmetic Business

Date: 09 June-10 June, 2021
 Venue: MOC, Munich, Germany
 Organizer: Leipziger Messe GmbH
 Contact Person: Ms. Klaudia Kutzner, Project Manager
 E-mail: k.kutzner@leipziger-messe.de
 Website: www.cosmetic-business.com

Note: Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, information about trade fairs and events may change. To get more information, please contact the organizers.

Share Market (as on December 30, 2020)

Top 5 Turnover Leaders

Dhaka Stock Exchange				Chittagong Stock Exchange			
Company	Close Price	% Ø Price	Turnover (BDT mn)	Company	Close Price	% Ø Price	Turnover (BDT mn)
BEXIMCO	82.70	1.36	868.67	BDFINANCE	31.00	3.33	166.26
BATBC	1698.60	6.25	834.57	MIRAKTHER	90.20	-9.98	129.68
ROBI	44.90	-4.06	682.54	MARICO	2129.40	-0.11	93.26
LANKABAFIN	40.50	3.32	430.40	CITYBANK	30.30	2.36	93.09
BEXPHARMA	177.70	2.95	263.42	IFIC	13.80	0.73	87.70

Top 5 Market Capitals

Dhaka Stock Exchange				Chittagong Stock Exchange			
Company	Close Price	% Ø Price	Turnover (BDT mn)	Company	Close Price	% Ø Price	Turnover (BDT mn)
GP	383.20	1.81	517,435	GP	383.70	3.06	518,110
WALTONHIL	1058.40	-2.47	320,619	WALTONHIL	1063.40	-3.63	322,134
BATBC	1698.60	-6.25	305,748	BATBC	1701.90	-6.24	306,342
ROBI	44.90	-4.06	235,183	ROBI	44.90	-3.85	235,183
SQURPHARMA	229.60	1.82	203,529	SQURPHARMA	229.20	-2.00	203,175

Currency Valuation (as on December 30, 2020)

Currency	Buying	Selling
US\$	86.20	87.00
EUR	94.20	97.00
GBP	110.20	113.60
AUD	59.00	61.00
YEN	0.75	0.77
Saudi Riyal	22.50	23.20
S'pore\$	62.65	64.00

A Glimpse of 59th Annual General Meeting 2020



Newly elected President of DCCI Rizwan Rahman addressing the 59th Annual General Meeting of DCCI held on December 29.

DCCI former President Aftabul Islam, FCA (left) seen administering the oath taking ceremony of the newly elected President Rizwan Rahman (right) on December 29.



Newly elected President of DCCI Rizwan Rahman (left) administering the oath taking ceremony of the newly elected Directors on December 29.

A Glimpse of 59th Annual General Meeting 2020



Newly elected President of DCCI Rizwan Rahman was seen greeted by the former Presidents of DCCI in his office after the 59th AGM.

Re-elected Senior Vice President of DCCI N K A Mobin, FCS, FCA was greeted by the former Presidents of DCCI in his office after the 59th AGM.



Newly elected Vice President of DCCI Monowar Hossain has been greeted by the former Presidents of DCCI in his office after the 59th AGM.



DCCI President Rizwan Rahman (right) presenting 'Genesis of DCCI' to the Commerce Secretary Dr. Md. Zafar Uddin (center) on December 31. DCCI Senior Vice President N K A Mobin, FCS, FCA (left) is also seen in the picture.

DCCI newly elected President Rizwan Rahman (center) has been greeted by CEO of BUILD Ferdaous Ara Begum (right) on December 31. DCCI Senior Vice President N K A Mobin, FCS, FCA (left) is also seen in the picture.



DCCI President Shams Mahmud (fourth from left), Senior Vice President N K A Mobin, FCA, FCS (third from left), Vice President Mohammad Bashiruddin (third from right), President (Elected) Rizwan Rahman (fourth from right) and Members of the Board of Directors were present during the Board Meeting held on December 27.



DCCI Acting President N K A Mobin, FCS, FCA (third from left) presenting 'Genesis of DCCI' to Minister Agriculture Attache of Argentina Embassy based in Delhi Mariano Beheran (second from left) on December 22. Second Secretary of Argentina Embassy Denise Ana Bozic (left) is also seen in the picture.

On behalf of DCCI Foundation, Deputy Secretary (R&D) of DCCI Harunur Rashid (fourth from right) and Senior Officer (Accounts) Tanver Ahmed (third from right) distributing warm cloths among the cold-hit people of Rangpur on December 21.



On behalf of DCCI Foundation, Assistant Secretary (Administration) of DCCI Md. Tamzid (fourth from right) distributing warm cloths among the cold-hit people of Dinajpur at the premises of Dinajpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry on December 21.



On behalf of DCCI Foundation, Deputy Secretary (R&D) of DCCI Harunur Rashid (fifth from left) distributing warm cloths among the cold-hit people of Lalmonirhat on December 22.

On behalf of DCCI Foundation, Senior Officer (PR & Event) of DCCI Syed Abrarul Haque Sami (third from left) distributing warm cloths among the cold-hit people of Thakurgaon on December 22.



On behalf of DCCI Foundation, Assistant Secretary (Administration) of DCCI Md. Tamzid (fifth from right) distributing warm cloths among the cold-hit people of Panchagar on December 23.



Online Training Courses and Workshops of DBI for the month of March 2021

1	Online Training on "Supply Strategies and Supplier Relationship Management (SRM)"	1,525/-	5-6 March 2021 3.00 pm - 5.00 pm
2	Online Workshop on "English for Better Communication: Meet the Need"	1,525/-	5-6 March 2021 7.00 pm - 9.00 pm
3	Online Training on "Inventory Control and Effective Store Management"	1,525/-	12-13 March 2021 3.00 pm - 5.00 pm
4	Online Workshop on "Public Procurement and e-GP Tender Procedure"	1,525/-	12-13 March 2021 7.00 pm - 9.00 pm
5	Online Training on "Effective Communication and Presentation Skills"	1,525/-	19-20 March 2021 3.00 pm - 5.00 pm
6	Online Workshop on "Effective Warehousing and Distribution Management"	1,525/-	19-20 March 2021 7.00 pm - 9.00 pm

Registration Deadline : at least 1 day before starting date

Contact : DBI, 65-66 Motijheel C/A, (11th fl), Dhaka-1000
Cell : 01718-972656, 01913-756587 & 01913-745062
Phone : 9552562 Ext. 281, 124 & 137
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