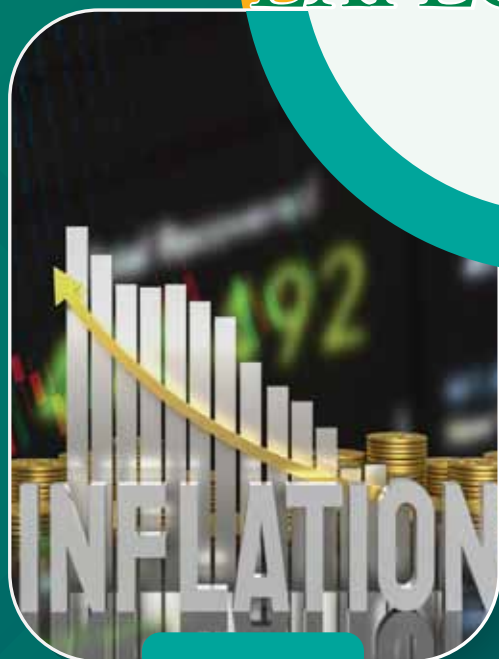


DCCI REVIEW



BUDGET EXPECTATIONS





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Budget expectations

Comes the time for budget, come expectations. As the government and its agencies become busy making preparations for the budget, all quarters come up with what they want to see in the budget. Businesses are no exception. Various business groups and organizations have started putting forth what they want the government to have in the budget for the 2023–2024 fiscal year. The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, one of the business communities that work for the advancement of the cause of businesses and protect their interests, placed a set of 30 recommendations to the National Board of Revenue in the first week of March, with three broad objectives mainly aimed at an increase in investment-GDP ratio in the private sector, the creation of employment and an increased private-sector participation in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The business community has proposed that the government should effect an easy and business-friendly taxation system, which has for long been an issue with the businesses. The organization has also proposed that the government should expand the network of income tax and value-added tax as Bangladesh has close to eight million people holding taxpayer's identification number, but only three million of them submit tax returns. The tax-GDP ratio in Bangladesh has also been the lowest in South Asia. The organization expects that the government should make income tax collection more transparent and automate the taxation system so that tax payment tasks do not entail hassles. The organization also expects that the government should take budgetary measures that would encourage domestic industrialization and safeguard interests of local entrepreneurs and businesses. The organization also expects an investment-friendly business environment for a high economic growth, which is most needed in the wake of Covid outbreak that had slowed down the economy.

Notable among the recommendations are a further reduction in the corporate tax to 2.5 percent for non-listed companies, dispensing with about 10 per cent tax on initial public offerings of listed companies and a change to 10 percent tax rather than the existing

Tk 3.6 million turnover in cash transaction for both listed and non-listed companies. The organization has also sought a rationalization of income tax slabs and an increase in the tax-free income limit for individuals to Tk 0.5 million instead of the Tk 0.3 million, in view of the high inflation and an increased cost of living. The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry has also sought an expansion of the income tax and value-added tax network also to include people living outside Dhaka and Chattogram as most of the tax revenue comes from such areas. The organization has further sought an automation of the tax and VAT administration in an integrated manner.

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry has sought an increase in the annual turnover from Tk 30 million to Tk 40 million for small businesses to remain outside the VAT purview so that small businesses are afforded some relief amid growing inflation and an increased cost of goods production and transport. The government introduced the excise duty of Tk 150 on bank deposits of Tk 0.1 million in 1991–1992. The organization recommends the withdrawal of the excise duty as this is generally imposed to discourage the use of tobacco and similar products with harmful impact and banks already deduct 10–20 percent of tax at source on the deposited amount. Excise duty, which adds to the cost of savings, makes it a case of double tax incidence. While the organization calls for an adherence to World Customs Organization rules in harmonized system codes in import to do away with any ambiguity, it also recommends that the government should use the Bangladesh Single Window for all customs-related tasks so that time and cost for trading come down.

While all this should be in the interests of local business, all such steps could also help the national economy to cope with challenges of the graduation from the least developed country to a developing country, which has been put on hold until 2026. Such fillips for the private sector would help the government to take businesses on board on the country's journey towards development **r**

Businesses urge ease, automation, reforms in tax system



Private Sector Industry and Investment Adviser to the Honourable Prime Minister Salman F. Rahman, MP (third from left) speaking at a live pre-budget (FY2023-24) discussion meeting organized by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry in association with Daily Samakal and Channel 24 held at the BICC on March 22. DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (fourth from left), State Minister for Planning Dr. Shamsul Alam (third from right), former FBCCI Presidents Md. Shafiul Islam (Mohiuddin), MP (second from left) and A K Azad (left), FBCCI President Md. Jashim Uddin (second from right) and Editor of Daily Samakal Mozammel Hossain (right) are seen in the picture.

Business leaders urged simplification of the taxation system and tax reforms to facilitate the private sector to grow so that they can compete on the international market. Bangladesh's economy is quite stable now, but there is no scope for reluctance at global geo-economic challenges, said speakers at a pre-budget discussion that the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized in association with the daily Samakal and Channel 24 at the BICC on March 22.

Salman F Rahman, MP, private sector industry and investment adviser to the prime minister, was present as chief guest. The state minister for planning Shamsul Alam and Md Shafiul Islam (Mohiuddin), MP were present as special guests. Md Jashim Uddin, president of the FBCCI and AK Azad, former president of the FBCCI, were also present as guest of honor.

The DCCI president Barrister Md Sameer Sattar moderated the program. He said that only three million people submitted tax returns

every year but the number should be expanded to at least 10–20 million. He also requested a reduction by at least 2.5 percent in corporate taxes for non-listed companies and increase the tax-free income limit for individuals from the current three lakh to 5 lakh, considering inflation and the cost of living. He later recommended a reduction in source tax on the interest of companies from 20 percent to 10 percent.

He suggested a long-term road map to bring down the amount of non-performing loans. Till 2041, Bangladesh would need an investment of about \$609 billion in the infrastructure sector. He, therefore, urged a financial source mapping for the investment. In order to enhance export competitiveness, “we have to go for export diversification and explore new potential sectors.”

Salman F Rahman said that the Russia-Ukraine war, global energy price increase, interest rate increase by the US Fed impacted the economy. He said that for these reasons, the

Bangladesh Bank took cautionary measures in import and the opening of letters of credit. ‘This is why our reserve is still quite stable.’ He also hoped that by June, the dollar crisis and letters of credit issues will be resolved. He also said, “As our tax-to-GDP ratio is not satisfactory and our revenue collection is low, we have no other options but to increase the tax net.” He underscored the importance of tax automation, the simplification of the taxation system and the use of technology.

Businesspeople should have a mindset to pay taxes willingly. “If we do not pay taxes, where from will the government get revenue?” He said that agriculture, leather, light engineering, pharmaceuticals and other important sectors should get the same facilities as the apparel sector does. He also emphasized the product diversification of exportable items to be competitive after the LDC graduation. The minister of state for planning, Shamsul Alam, said that inflation control, a sustainable economic growth and employment

generation, attracting investment, reducing public sector borrowing, etc would get priority in the budget. Considering the global economic downturn and instability, the next budget would not be overambitious, he added. He said that in all indices, like remittances, export, foreign exchange reserve and foreign direct investment, Bangladesh's growth in past six months was not negative.

Md Jashim Uddin, president of the FBCCI, said that based on the global unstable economic situation, "our private sector is losing its competitiveness that will hurt the whole economy by and large." He hoped that the bad culture of red tapism would soon cease to exist. For the sake of the growth of backward linkage industries, there should be a policy guideline. He also said, "We should not depend only on apparel. Other sectors should also get equal benefits."

Former FBCCI president AK Azad said that recent price hike of power,

energy and gas put the industries and industrial production under pressure. He said that if energy price came down on the international market, prices in Bangladesh should also be revised. He said the gas the country has would last only for five years. "So, we need to think of our future energy security now."

He also emphasized the development of backward linkage industry and man-made fiber, the use of technology and innovation. He also urged reduction in tax on the import of solar power equipment.

The discussion was divided into four sessions: taxation and VAT, financial sector, industry and trade, and infrastructure. Former NBR chairman Md Nojibur Rahman, former NBR member Md Alamgir Hossain, Zaved Akter, managing director of Unilever Bangladesh, Masrur Arefeen, managing director of the City Bank Ltd, Selim Raihan, executive director of SANEM, Arif Khan, chairman

of Shanta Asset Management Ltd, Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman of the Pran RFL Group, Mohammad Ali Khokon, president of the BTMA, Imran Karim, vice-chairman of the Confidence Group and Mainuddin Monem, managing director, Abdul Monem Ltd also spoke.

The speakers stressed on internal resource mobilization and digitization or automation of the taxation system. They urged widening tax net, tax reforms, an increased tax-GDP ratio, the simplification of tax, bond market for long-term financing, sustainable capital market development, safeguard for SMEs, backward linkage industry, inflation control, food security, reduction in corporate tax, bond facility for all export-oriented industries, product diversification, market diversification, the signing of PTAs and FTAs, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, etc.

The Daily Samakal editor Mozammel Hossain also spoke .

DCCI for 2.5pc corporate tax cut for non-listed cos

DCCI places recommendations to NBR for the 2023-24 budget

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry placed a set of budget recommendations to the National Board of Revenue on March 5, mainly focusing on easy and business-friendly taxation system, widening income tax and VAT net, full automation of the taxation system, encouraging local industrialization and ensuring investment-friendly ecosystem to boost economic growth.

Barrister Md Sameer Sattar, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, handed over the budget recommendations to the NBR chairman Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem at the National Board of Revenue during the pre-budget

discussion. The DCCI president proposed 2.5 percent corporate tax cut for non-listed companies in the budget for the 2023–24 fiscal year. He also proposed an increase in tax-free income limit for individuals to Tk 5 lakh, from the current Tk. 3 lakh, considering a high inflation and an increased cost of living. Only 3 million TIN holders now submit returns and for that reason, "our tax-GDP ratio is very low." He said that tax net should be widened to include persons residing outside Dhaka and Chattogram as most tax collection comes from these areas.

He also proposed an "integrated tax administration system" and "integrated VAT administration

system" to ensure the full automation of taxation and VAT systems. He recommended an increase in the maximum limit of annual turnover to Tk 4 crore from Tk 3 crore for cottage and small businesses that are out of VAT purview.

He also said that as the banks charge 10 percent to 15 percent source tax on deposits, the imposing of excise duty on deposit and savings will discourage bank deposits. He, therefore, recommended the withdrawal of excise duty on bank deposits. To ease customs-related processes, he suggested the implementation of the Bangladesh Single Window as soon as possible. It will create a paperless trading



Dhaka Chamber President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (third from left) seen exchanging views with the Chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR) Abu Hena Md. Rahmatul Muneem (left) while placing Chamber's budget recommendations for FY2023-24 at NBR headquarter on March 5. DCCI Senior Vice President S. M. Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) (fourth from left) and Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (fifth from left) were present during the meeting.

system that will reduce time and cost in foreign trade.

The NBR chairman, Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem, said that in order to reduce mistakes in using HS codes, the National Board of Revenue regularly arranged training

for C&F officials. He also urged the business community to be aware regarding the use of correct HS codes. He said that the revenue board had taken various initiatives to simplify the doing business environment, but the NBR's position on compliance would remain stringent. He also

sought cooperation from the business community to ease the business climate more. The Bangladesh Single Window will be effectively implemented towards the end of 2025, he added. Later, he agreed that tax and VAT net should be widened to increase revenue generation **r**

Better India-Bangladesh link will boost bilateral trade

DCCI holds seminar on 'Improved Connectivity: Unlocking Economic Potential between India and Bangladesh'

A seminar on "Improved Connectivity: Unlocking Economic Potential between India and Bangladesh" jointly organized by the High Commission of India in Bangladesh and Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry was held at Le Meridien Hotel in Dhaka on March 16. The adviser to the prime minister on economic affairs Mashiur Rahman was present as chief guest. Mashiur Rahman said that in terms of export and import, "we may think of using local currencies for bilateral trade.

The investment environment in Bangladesh is now very friendly." He, therefore, invited more Indian companies to invest in Bangladesh in the form of joint ventures. In terms of railway connectivity, a few development projects like the construction of the Jamuna railway bridge is under way which would create ample opportunities for bilateral trade. He requested the Indian authorities to consider the issue of anti-dumping duty on raw jute export from Bangladesh. He underscored the importance

of seamless transshipment of Bangladeshi products through India. He also an easy visa process for smooth communication of businesspeople of both the countries.

DCCI President Barrister Md Sameer Sattar said that the trade between Bangladesh and India was worth \$16 billion in the 2022 fiscal year. But there are scopes to expand the bilateral trade to a minimum of \$20 billion by addressing non-tariff barriers and connectivity-related challenges. He referred to the World Bank's report that seamless transport

connectivity of India and Bangladesh had the potential to increase national income by 17 percent in Bangladesh and 8 percent in India. Improved connectivity between the north-eastern of India and Bangladesh was essential to support the regional market needs and improve trade with India.

The High Commissioner of India in Bangladesh, Pranay Verma, said that a smooth connectivity was crucial for boosting trade and commerce between our two countries. He added that land routes, railways and even waterways between Bangladesh and India could be further expanded. In the past decade, the trade between Bangladesh and India remarkably increased and he said that comprehensive economic partnership agreements could be a game changer for both the countries in terms of trade and commerce. A stronger connectivity is the driving force for economic prosperity, he noted. Infrastructure development of seven land customs stations is under


way and this would help to boost both-way trade, he added. He also mentioned that seven border market places are operated but in future, this number would be increased.

Indian High Commission officials made a presentation on connectivity initiatives between India and Bangladesh. The presentation showed that 40 percent trade was taking place through land ports of which 70 percent was happening through the Benapole-Petrapole port. In the past five years, bilateral trade has doubled and in the past three years, Bangladesh's export to India has doubled.

They also underscored developing inland waterways, coastal shipping, air and railway connectivity. The north-east of India offers scopes Bangladesh to do more business. India's access to Mongla and Chattogram ports is beneficial both for Bangladesh and India. After the completion of India-Bangladesh pipeline, one million tonnes of diesel could be transported to Bangladesh each year, they added.

Farooq Sobhan, former foreign secretary of Bangladesh, Anis Ud-Dowlah, former president of the MCCI, former DCCI presidents Matiur Rahman, Asif Ibrahim, Md Sabur Khan and Shams Mahmud, DCCI Directors Khairul Majid Mahmud, Malik Talha Ismail Bari also spoke.

Speakers urged the resolution of issues of tariff and para-tariff barriers and anti-dumping duties on jute through CEPA. They also invited Indian entrepreneurs to invest in the ICT and healthcare sector in Bangladesh. Later, the speakers stressed easing visa procedures, especially business visas, for Bangladeshi to facilitate trade and investment activities. They also requested an increase in the number of border market places and increase infrastructure of land ports on the Indian part. Most of the Indian investments in Bangladesh are G2G, they said, noting that private investment should come more.

DCCI senior vice-president S. M. Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) made the closing remarks 



DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (left) addressing a seminar titled “Improved Connectivity: Unlocking Economic Potential between India and Bangladesh” jointly organized by High Commission of India in Bangladesh and Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) held at Le Meridien Hotel, Dhaka on March 16. Adviser to the Honourable Prime Minister on Economic Affairs, Government of Bangladesh Dr. Mashiur Rahman (right) and High Commissioner of India in Bangladesh H.E. Pranay Verma (centre) are seen in the picture.

China wants to partner with Bangladesh in development: China envoy



President of Dhaka Chamber Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (second from left) presenting a memento to the Ambassador of China in Bangladesh Yao Wen (centre) after a courtesy meeting held on March 02 at the embassy. DCCI Senior Vice President S. M. Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) (left) and Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (second from right) among others were also present during the meeting.

The president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar made a courtesy call on the ambassador of China to Bangladesh Yao Wen at the embassy on March 2. The DCCI president mentioned that Bangladesh had a long-standing partnership with China in promoting sustainable socio-economic development and supporting Bangladesh to unlock its full potential in the journey towards LDC graduation.

China, the top import partner of Bangladesh and the 18th largest export destination of the country, had bilateral trade volume worth \$20.03 billion in the 2021–22 fiscal year. He said that export from Bangladesh to China was worth \$683.43 million and the import from China to Bangladesh was worth \$19.35 billion.

Sameer Sattar also said that the cumulative stock of foreign direct

investment from China to Bangladesh reached \$2.65 billion, especially in textile and wearing, power and construction sectors, and urged Chinese investors to put in money in agribusiness, food processing, ICT, renewable energy, automobile, light engineering, footwear, transport and logistics, medical equipment and shipbuilding.

Chinese ambassador Yao Wen said that China was one of the largest investors in Bangladesh's infrastructure sector. Economic cooperation in terms of boosting bilateral relationship is crucial for both the countries, he added. "Our relation with Bangladesh is solid and we do not have any outstanding issues and disputes," he said.

In a couple of decades, Bangladesh achieved a tremendous economic growth backed by strong macroeconomic fundamentals.

Bangladesh is one of the most successful countries in Southeast Asia.

Bangladesh has a vision of becoming a developed country by 2041 and China wants to be associated with this development journey, he said. Once the Chinese Economic Zone in Chattogram is ready, more than 300 Chinese companies will come here to invest, he said.

If the number increases in future, China will need more economic zones. Bangladesh will need an ICT industrial park with a view to fostering the initiative of Smart Bangladesh. He also suggested diversification of Bangladesh's RMG market to Japan, Korea and the Middle East.

DCCI senior vice-president SM Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) and vice-president Md Junaed Ibna Ali were also present **r**

Co-op sought to develop tourism, blue economy in Bangladesh

The High Commissioner of the Maldives to Bangladesh Shiruzimath Sameer called on the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Barrister Md Sameer Sattar on at DCCI Gulshan Center on March 2. During the meeting, Md Sameer Sattar said that a large number of Bangladeshis were working in the Maldives, but the trade between the two countries was very insignificant.

He said that in the 2021–22 fiscal year, the total bilateral trade recorded \$8.50 million where export and import from Bangladesh was \$5.84 million and \$2.66 million. He said that Bangladesh was self-sufficient in agricultural products and export to the Middle East. Sameer Sattar said that every year, tourists from all over the world visit the Maldives and urged import of agricultural products from Bangladesh.


He also sought cooperation from the Maldives to develop tourism, hospitality management and blue economy sector of Bangladesh.

High Commission of Maldives in Bangladesh Ms. Shiruzimath Sameer informed that each year 1.6 million tourists from all over the world visit Maldives and they have to import fresh vegetables, frozen meat, fruits and other essential commodities to meet the demand of tourists and locals as well. She said, Bangladeshi entrepreneurs has huge potential to export specially agri-based products and urged them to come forward to grab the opportunity.

High Commissioner said, 10 lacks Bangladeshi now working in Maldives in different professions and doctors, nurses and engineers has

huge demand and urged Bangladesh to export skilled manpower.

To attract investment, besides Male, Maldives has already built a new city accommodating with modern facilities and services and Dhaka Chamber can send a business delegation to explore investment opportunities, she said. To develop tourism and fishing industry of Bangladesh, the technical know-how and experience can play a vital role, she said. In the fisheries and tourism sector Maldives has a vast experience and Bangladeshi entrepreneurs can make joint ventures with the entrepreneurs of Maldives in these sectors.

DCCI senior vice-president SM Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) and vice-president Md Junaed Ibna Ali were also present during the meeting 



High Commissioner of Maldives in Bangladesh H.E. Shiruzimath Sameer (second from left) seen receiving a memento from DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (third from left) after a courtesy meeting held on March 02 at DCCI Gulshan Center. DCCI Senior Vice President S. M. Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) (second from right) and Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (right) among others are seen in the picture.

Dhaka Chamber's Iftar Mahfil held



Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) hosted an Iftar Mahfi on March 31, 2023 at the ball room of Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka. Members of the Chamber, Board of Directors, former Presidents of DCCI, Cabinet Ministers, Mayor, diplomats, high government officials, business leaders, dignitaries and representatives from the media attended the function after a long break due to Covid-led pandemic.

Addressing the guests attended the function; President of Dhaka Chamber Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar welcomed all for being present. He said that the economy is in the revival stage after a long time of pandemic. Bangladesh has shown its resilience even in this tough time.

Now we all have to work in a coordinated manner to recover the economy to face the challenges of LDC graduation. He also said that the

concerted effort of the private sector will lead the economy to its targeted level. For the development of the country in all aspects both public and private sector should work hand in hand to achieve the target, he added.

In this month of holy Ramadan, with the spirit of fasting and self-restraint, may we be blessed with the divine blessings of the Almighty, he prayed 🌙



President of Dhaka Chamber Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar addressing the guests attended the Iftar Mahfi of DCCI held on March 31 at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka.

DCCI President mourns the death of AM Mubash-Shar

The president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar and members on the board of directors mourned and expressed their deep condolences at the death of AM Mubash-Shar, a former senior vice-president of the DCCI, who breathed his last due to old-age complications at his Moghbazar residence on March 9. (Inna Lillahe Wa Inna Ilaihe Rajiun).



He was 92 years old. AM Mubash-Shar served DCCI four times as the senior vice-president during the term 1989–90, 1991–92, 2000 and 2004. He was the proprietor of the EMEM Rubber Industries. After the namaz-e-janaja, he was buried in the Azimpur graveyard in the capital on March 10.



ডিসিসিআই, মতিঝিল ভবনে অফিস স্পেস ভাড়া

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

যোগাযোগঃ

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১০ম তলা - সাইজ : + ২৬৫০ বর্গফুট

প্রাক বাজেট আলোচনা ২০২৩-২৪; বেসরকারি খাতের প্রত্যাশা

ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি (ডিসিসিআই), দৈনিক সমকাল ও চ্যানেল ২৪ গত ২২ মার্চ ২০২৩ তারিখে “লাইভ প্রাক-বাজেট আলোচনা ২০২৩-২৪: বেসরকারি খাতের প্রত্যাশা” শীর্ষক একটি আলোচনা সভার আয়োজন করে। উক্ত আলোচনা সভায় প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে উপস্থিত ছিলেন মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বেসরকারি শিল্প ও বিনিয়োগ বিষয়ক উপদেষ্টা সালমান এফ রহমান, এমপি। বিশেষ অতিথি হিসেবে উপস্থিত ছিলেন পরিকল্পনা প্রতিমন্ত্রী ড. শামসুল আলম এবং মাননীয় সংসদ সদস্য ও এফবিসিসিআই এর সাবেক সভাপতি মো. শফিউল ইসলাম (মহিউদ্দিন), এম.পি। সম্মানিত অতিথি হিসেবে উপস্থিত ছিলেন এফবিসিসিআই-এর সম্মানিত সভাপতি মো. জসিম উদ্দিন এবং এফবিসিসিআই-এর সাবেক সভাপতি ও হামিম গ্রুপের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক এ. কে. আজাদ। অনুষ্ঠানে স্বাগত বক্তব্য রাখেন ডিসিসিআই-এর সভাপতি ব্যারিস্টার মো. সামীর সান্তার। আয়কর ও মূল্য সংযোজন কর, আর্থিক খাত, শিল্প ও বাণিজ্য এবং অবকাঠামো খাত- এই চার পর্বে মূল আলোচনা অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। সেমিনারে আমন্ত্রিত আলোচক হিসেবে উপস্থিত ছিলেন ইউনিলিভার বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড-এর প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা এবং ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক জাভেদ আখতার, সাবেক সভাপতি আইসিএবি ও প্যানেল উপদেষ্টা, এফবিসিসিআই মোহাম্মদ হুমায়ন কবির এফসিএ, জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড (এনবিআর) এর সাবেক সদস্য মোঃ আলমগীর হোসেন, ক্যাপিটাল মার্কেট স্ট্যাংবিলাইজেশন ফান্ড (সিএমএসএফ) এর চেয়ারম্যান মো. নজিবুর রহমান, শান্তা এ্যাসেট ম্যানেজমেন্ট লিমিটেডের ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান আরিফ খান, দি সিটি ব্যাংক লিমিটেড-এর ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক জনাব মাশরুর আরিফিন, সানেম-এর নির্বাহী পরিচালক ড. সেলিম রায়হান, প্রাণ আরএফএল গ্রুপ-এর চেয়ারম্যান ও প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা আহসান খান চৌধুরী, বিজিএমইএ এর পরিচালক আসিফ আশরাফ, বিটিএমইএ এর সভাপতি মোহাম্মদ আলী খোকন, আবদুল মোনেম লিমিটেড-এর ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক মাইনুদ্দিন মোনেম, কনফিডেন্স গ্রুপ-এর ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান ইমরান করিম, নোকিয়া-এর কান্ট্রি হেড মোহাম্মদ আরিফুল ইসলাম (আরিফ)। সেমিনারে সমাপনী বক্তব্য রাখেন দৈনিক সমকাল-এর সম্পাদক মোজাম্মেল হোসেন।

সেশন-০১ : আয়কর ও মূল্য সংযোজন কর

- বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ এর জন্য আয়কর ব্যবস্থাপনা প্রতিযোগিতামূলক হতে হয়। বাংলাদেশে গত কয়েক বছরে কর্পোরেট আয়কর ৩৫% থেকে ক্রমান্বয়ে কমিয়ে নিয়ে আসা হয়েছে। এতে কিন্তু আমাদের অভ্যন্তরীণ রাজস্ব কমে। কিন্তু, ব্যবসায়ীরা আরও উৎসাহিত হয়েছে। এটাকে যতই প্রতিযোগিতামূলক করা হবে ততই ব্যবসা সহযোগি হবে।
- আইএমএফ এর শর্ত অনুযায়ী কমপক্ষে ২% ট্যাক্স-জিডিপি অনুপাত বাড়াতে হবে। এটা একটা বড় চ্যালেঞ্জ। কর জাল বাড়ালে, দীর্ঘ মেয়াদে ফল পাওয়া গেলেও স্বল্প মেয়াদে ফল পাওয়া যায় না। এই মুহূর্তে অভ্যন্তরীণ সম্পদ ব্যবস্থাপনার উপর গুরুত্বারোপের বিকল্প নেই।
- করজাল বাড়ানোকে গুরুত্বের সাথে নিতে হবে। ৩০ লাখ মানুষ রিটার্ন দাখিল করেন, যা জনসংখ্যার মাত্র ২ শতাংশ। করজাল বাড়াতে শুধু এনবিআরের উদ্যোগ যথেষ্ট নয়, ব্যবসায়ী সংগঠনগুলোকেও এগিয়ে আসতে হবে।
- যে অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নকে মাথায় রেখে বিভিন্ন প্রকল্প যেমন অটোমেশন, ইত্যাদিতে খরচ নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছিল সে খরচ অনুযায়ী কাজিত উন্নয়ন সাধিত হয়েছে কিনা তা নিরূপণ করা অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ।
- সুনির্দিষ্টভাবে ট্যাক্সেশন, কাস্টমস এবং ভ্যাট, এই তিনটি ক্ষেত্রে অটোমেশনকে সমন্বিতভাবে চিন্তা করতে হবে। যদি এই অটোমেশন সমন্বিত না হয়, তাহলে কাজিত সুবিধা পাওয়া যাবে না।

- বিশ্বের সার্বিক মন্দা অবস্থা থেকে বাংলাদেশের ব্যবসায়ীরা কীভাবে পরিত্রাণ পাবে সেই উপায়গুলো আগামী বাজেটে ইঙ্গিত থাকা প্রয়োজন।

সেশন-০২ : আর্থিক খাত

- এ বছরের বাজেট একটি বৈশ্বিক অস্থিতিশীল পরিস্থিতিতে প্রণয়ন করা হচ্ছে। সুতরাং যারা বাজেট প্রণয়নে জড়িত তাদেরকে একটি গতানুগতিক পরিস্থিতির বাইরে চিন্তা করতে হবে। এবারের বাজেটে রাজস্ব আদায় মুখ্য না হয়ে কোন বিষয়গুলো প্রবৃদ্ধির জন্য উপযুক্ত হতে পারে সে বিষয়ে ভাবতে হবে।
- পুঁজিবাজারের টেকসই উন্নয়ন করতে পারলে এখন যারা বিনিয়োগ করছেন এবং আগামীতে যারা বিনিয়োগ করবেন উভয়েই লাভবান হবেন। একটি অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক পুঁজিবাজার প্রয়োজন, যেখানে শুধু বড় স্টেকহোল্ডাররা নয়, ছোট ছোট বিনিয়োগকারীরাও লাভবান হবেন।
- পুঁজিবাজারের টেকসই উন্নয়নে মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর রাজনৈতিক দিকনির্দেশনা এবং দৃঢ় রাজনৈতিক স্বদৃষ্টি রয়েছে। এই সুযোগটি কাজে লাগিয়ে পুঁজিবাজারকে পুরোপুরি বিকশিত করার জন্য কাজ করতে হবে।
- বর্তমানে CMSF, জীবন বীমা কর্পোরেশনের সাথে বিনিয়োগকারীদের জন্য একটি সুরক্ষা তহবিল গঠনে কাজ করছে, এ তহবিল তৈরি করতে পারলে দুর্ঘটনার সময়ে বিনিয়োগকারীদের সুরক্ষা দেয়া যাবে।
- এসএমই অর্থনীতিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। এমনকি এসএমই খাতে এনপিএল বা মন্দ ঋণ তিন শতাংশের নিচে রয়েছে। এসএমই কে পুঁজিবাজারে নিয়ে আসতে নিয়ন্ত্রক সংস্থা বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন (বিএসইসি) বছর দুয়েক আগে একটি নীতিমালা করেছিল এবং তার ধারাবাহিকতায় বেশকিছু এসএমই প্রতিষ্ঠান পুঁজিবাজারে এসেছে।
- সিলিকন ভ্যালি ব্যাংক-এর পতন হয়েছে কর্পোরেট গভর্নেন্স-এর অভাবের জন্য নয় বরং জনগণ আস্থা হারিয়ে ফেলে যখন ডিপোজিট তুলে ফেলতে শুরু করেছে তখন।
- রাশিয়া-ইউক্রেন যুদ্ধ পরিস্থিতি আন্তর্জাতিক পরিমন্ডলে ব্যাংকগুলোর উপর বড় প্রভাব ফেলেছে, সে দিক বিবেচনায় বাংলাদেশে এখনও সুরক্ষিত রয়েছে এবং এই সুরক্ষা কবচ কে বাড়ানোর জন্য কাজ করতে হবে।
- বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকিং সেক্টরে তারল্যের ঘাটতি নেই। আস্থার ঘাটতির কারণে কিছু ব্যাংক ইমেজ সংকটে পড়েছে, গ্রাহকরা এসব ব্যাংক থেকে তাদের ডিপোজিট তুলে নিয়ে অন্য ব্যাংকে রাখছেন। এলসি খোলা কমে যাওয়ায় ট্রেড লোন কমে গেছে এবং কিছু পুনঃঅর্থায়ন স্কিম চালু করার ফলে ব্যাংকের লোন দেওয়ার মতো তারল্য বরং বেড়েছে।
- আমাদের দেশের ব্যাংকের মুনাফাকে অনেক বড় করে দেখা হয় কিন্তু এর সাথে যুক্ত খরচকে তেমনভাবে বিবেচনা করা হয় না। ব্যাংক বেশি পরিমাণে মুনাফা করলে লোন দেওয়ার সক্ষমতা বাড়ে। এতে বিনিয়োগ এবং কর্মসংস্থান দুটোই বৃদ্ধি পায়।
- মুদ্রাস্ফীতির সাথে জনগণের খাদ্যনিরাপত্তার সংযোগ রয়েছে। দেশের জনগণের একটি বড় অংশ খাদ্য নিরাপত্তাহীনতায় ভোগে তবে তা ব্যবসার পরিবেশকে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত করতে পারে।
- ৮ম পঞ্চবার্ষিকী পরিকল্পনায় কর ব্যবস্থাপনাকে সংস্কারের ব্যাপারে অনেক বেশি গুরুত্বারোপ করা হয়েছে। এ ব্যাপারে রাজনৈতিক সিদ্ধান্তের অভাব না থাকলেও বাস্তবায়ন পর্যায়ে দীর্ঘদিন ধরে বড় ধরনের ঘাটতি দেখা যাচ্ছে। আমাদের কর ব্যবস্থাপনা সংস্কার বাস্তবায়নে বাধা কোথায় তা শনাক্ত করে দ্রুত সমাধানে যেতে হবে।
- আইএমএফ আমাদেরকে কর-জিডিপি অনুপাত একটি নির্দিষ্ট হারে বাড়াতে পরামর্শ দিয়েছে কিন্তু আমাদের আভ্যন্তরীণ তাগিদ থেকে হওয়া উচিত।



- কর খাতে সংস্কার করতে এর অংশীজনদের পরোক্ষ ও প্রত্যক্ষভাবে সংযুক্ত করা প্রয়োজন যাতে এ প্রক্রিয়ায় পরিপূর্ণ স্বচ্ছতা বজায় থাকে। অতীতে আমরা দেখেছি সংস্কারের উদ্যোগ নেয়া হলেও স্বচ্ছতার ঘাটতির ফলে সে সংস্কারগুলো সঠিকভাবে বাস্তবায়ন হচ্ছে না।
- এলডিসি থেকে উত্তরণের জন্য বাংলাদেশের হাতে আর মাত্র দুই থেকে তিন বছর রয়েছে, এ সময়টি আমাদের জন্য অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। এ ব্যাপারে নানা উদ্যোগ নেয়া হলেও সংস্কারের বিষয়গুলোকে সমন্বিত করে ২০২৬ পরবর্তীতে আমরা কোথায় দাঁড়াবো সে চিত্র আমাদের সামনে সুস্পষ্ট হওয়া দরকার।

সেশন-০৩ : শিল্প ও বাণিজ্য

- বর্তমান চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবিলায় আমাদের সামগ্রিক পণ্য রপ্তানি বাড়াতে দরকার। এ লক্ষ্যে সব রপ্তানি খাতকে বন্ডেড ওয়্যারহাউস সুবিধা দিতে হবে। ব্যবসার জন্য অগ্রিম আয়কর প্রদানের প্রক্রিয়া এবং উত্তরের জেলাগুলোতে বন্ডেড ওয়্যারহাউস সুবিধা প্রদানের প্রক্রিয়া সহজ করা প্রয়োজন যাতে তারা পোশাক শিল্পের মতো বেড়ে উঠতে পারে।
- পোশাক তৈরিতে ম্যান মেইড ফাইবারের বৈশ্বিক চাহিদা বৃদ্ধি পাওয়ায় এ খাতকে শক্তিশালী করার জন্য সরকারকে আগামী বাজেটে প্রণোদনার ব্যবস্থা করা প্রয়োজন।
- ২০২৬ পরবর্তী চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবিলায় সরকারকে মুক্ত বাণিজ্য চুক্তিতে স্বাক্ষরে যেতে হবে এবং এলডিসি প্রাজ্ঞেশনের পরেও বাণিজ্য সুবিধা উপভোগ করতে গ্রেস পিরিয়ড বাড়ানোর আবেদনের উপর গুরুত্বারোপ করতে হবে। এছাড়া, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের জেনারেলাইজড সিস্টেম অফ প্রেফারেন্স (জিএসপি) প্লাস স্ট্যাটাস পাওয়ার জন্য প্রস্তুতি নিতে হবে।
- বিশ্ব বাজারে গত তিন দশক ধরে ম্যান মেইড ফাইবার থেকে তৈরি পোশাকের ব্যবহার বাড়লেও বাংলাদেশের পোশাক রপ্তানি খাতে এর ব্যবহার তেমন বাড়েনি। বাংলাদেশ থেকে এখনও ৭০ শতাংশই প্রাকৃতিক তুলার পোশাক রপ্তানি হয়। বিশ্বব্যাপী পোশাক রপ্তানিতে ম্যান মেইড ফাইবারের পোশাকের চাহিদা আগামীতে ৭০ শতাংশ ছাড়িয়ে যাবে।
- এই ফাইবার দেশে উৎপাদন হয় না, তাই আমরা সম্পূর্ণ আমদানি নির্ভর। তাই এই পণ্যের ওপর অতিরিক্ত শুল্ক অযৌক্তিক। যদিও বাংলাদেশে ম্যান মেইড ফাইবারের সুতা ও কাপড় তৈরিতে বিনিয়োগ বাড়ছে।
- বর্তমানে ব্যবসায়িক পরিষ্কৃতি একটি অস্থির অবস্থার মধ্যে দিয়ে যাচ্ছে। এলসি খোলা যাচ্ছে খুবই কম। সামগ্রিকভাবে ৩০ থেকে ৪০ শতাংশের বেশি উৎপাদন সক্ষমতা ব্যবহার করা যাচ্ছে না।

- এনবিআরকে ইন্ডাস্ট্রি-একাডেমিয়া ও বিশেষজ্ঞদের সাথে নিয়ে কাজ করতে হবে। যাতে করে আমলাতন্ত্র ও ব্যবসায়ীদের মধ্যে দূরত্ব কমানোর মাধ্যমে প্রবৃদ্ধির পথ খুঁজে পাওয়া যায়।

সেশন-০৪ : অবকাঠামো খাত

- শিল্পোন্নয়ন একটি সময় সাপেক্ষ প্রক্রিয়া। একটি দেশের শিল্পোন্নয়ন যে শুধু ইকোনোমিক জোন তৈরির উপর নির্ভরশীল তা নয়, এর সাথে রাস্তাঘাট এবং অন্যান্য অবকাঠামো উন্নয়ন ওতপ্রতোভাবে জড়িত।
- বাংলাদেশকে ২০৪১ সালের মধ্যে উন্নত দেশে রূপান্তরিত করতে হলে দেশে প্রতিষ্ঠিত ইকোনোমিক জোনগুলোর মাধ্যমে স্ট্রাটেজিক লোকেশন খুঁজে বের করতে হবে, যা বাংলাদেশকে ১ থেকে ৩ ট্রিলিয়ন অর্থনীতির দেশে পরিণত করতে সহায়তা করবে।
- এই ক্ষেত্রে রোড কানেক্টিভিটি সব থেকে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করতে পারে। যেমন: পদ্মা সেতু, SASEC করিডর এবং কর্ণফুলী ট্যানেল লজিস্টিক ব্যবস্থাপনার উন্নয়নে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রাখছে। এছাড়া, অন্যান্য প্রজেক্ট যেমন: মেঘনা সেতু, গভীর সমুদ্র বন্দর ইত্যাদি পণ্য পরিবহনের সময় অনেকাংশে কমিয়ে আনবে। এই সকল গুরুত্বপূর্ণ প্রকল্প সম্পন্ন করতে পারলে মাত্র ৬-৭ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে দেশের যে কোনো প্রান্তে পণ্য পরিবহন এবং যাতায়াত সম্ভব হবে।
- বাংলাদেশ এখন একটি জ্বালানী আমদানি নির্ভর দেশ হয়ে উঠছে। HFO, Coal এবং LNG মূলত আমদানিকৃত জ্বালানির মধ্যে অন্যতম। HFO, Coal এবং LNG এর উপর কর যথাক্রমে ৩৪%, ৫% এবং ২২%। বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদনের ৬০-৭৫% জ্বালানি খরচ। HFO, Coal এবং LNG থেকে উৎপাদিত বিদ্যুতের দাম যথাক্রমে ১৪ টাকা, ১৩ টাকা এবং ১২ টাকা কিন্তু ট্যাক্স বাদ দিলে এই দাম কমে দাঁড়াই যথাক্রমে ১০ টাকা, ১১.৫ টাকা এবং ১০ টাকা।
- পেট্রোবাংলা, পিডিবি এবং বিপিসি পাইকারি মূল্যে বিদ্যুৎ আমদানি করে এবং উৎপাদিত বিদ্যুৎ ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানির মাধ্যমে ভোক্তা পর্যায়ে পৌঁছায়। এই ক্ষেত্রে প্রতি লেয়ারে টিডিএস দেয়া হয় ৭%-১০%, যার কোনো যৌক্তিকতা নেই। এই টিডিএসগুলোতে আয়কর অব্যাহতি প্রদান করা প্রয়োজন।
- জ্বালানি ও বিদ্যুৎ ক্ষেত্রে ২৫-২৭ হাজার কোটি টাকার ভর্তুকি দেয়া হয় যা বিদ্যুৎক্ষেত্র থেকে সংগৃহীত ট্যাক্সের প্রায় সমপরিমাণ। এ কারণে ট্যাক্সেশন সিস্টেমের হালনাগাদ না করে ভর্তুকি উঠিয়ে নিলে তা বিদ্যুতের দাম বৃদ্ধির কারণ হতে পারে।

- আমদানিকৃত বিদ্যুতের উপর কোনো করারোপ করা হয় না, কিন্তু দেশে উৎপাদিত বিদ্যুতের উপর কর দিতে হয়। এই ধরনের নীতি বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদনে জড়িত দেশীয় ব্যবসায়ীদের নিরুৎসাহিত করবে।
- দেশের উন্নয়নে ইনফ্রাস্ট্রাকচার ডেভলপমেন্ট যেমন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তেমনি টেলিকম এর মাধ্যমে ইন্টারনেট সেবার ব্যাপ্তিও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। কিন্তু আমাদের দেশে টেলিকম সেক্টরে উচ্চহারে ভ্যাট নেয়া হয় যা এই সেক্টরকে সুলভ মূল্যে সেবা প্রদানে বাঁধাছত্ত করে। যেমনঃ বাংলাদেশে মোবাইল কল এর উপর ভ্যাট ১৫%, বেস স্টেশন এবং টেলিকম হার্ডওয়্যার এর উপর ভ্যাট ৩৭%, টেলিকম সফটওয়্যার এর উপর ভ্যাট ৫৮% এবং ইন্টারনেট চার্জের উপর ভ্যাট ১৫%।
- ইন্টারনেট সেবা কে ইউনিয়ন এবং গ্রাম পর্যায়ে পৌঁছে দিতে আরো বিনিয়োগ এবং এর পাশাপাশি প্রয়োজনীয় হার্ডওয়্যার এবং সফটওয়্যার আমদানি প্রয়োজন। কিন্তু উচ্চ হারে ভ্যাট আরোপ বিনিয়োগ এবং প্রয়োজনীয় আমদানি উভয়কেই নিরুৎসাহিত করছে।

সুপারিশমালা

- যেকোন বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ এর ক্ষেত্রে সম্মানীয় নিয়মের ক্ষেত্রে বিডা এবং এনবিআর এর মধ্যে সমন্বয় থাকা উচিত। এতে বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ আরও সহজ হবে।
- আয়কর ব্যবস্থাপনাকে অটোমেশন করা-একটা ভালো দিক যে আমরা এখন অনলাইনে আয়কর রিটার্ন দাখিল করতে পারছি, কিন্তু আমরা যদি আরও ব্যাপকভাবে অটোমেটেড পদ্ধতি চালু করতে পারি তবে তা ব্যবসা সহজীকরণে সাহায্য করবে।
- পুঁজিবাজারে তালিকাভুক্ত কোম্পানির লভ্যাংশকে করের আওতামুক্ত রাখা, তবে speculative dividend-এর ক্ষেত্রে কর আরোপ করা যেতে পারে। শেয়ারবাজারে ক্রয় বিক্রয়ের ক্ষেত্রে বিভিন্ন ধরনের চার্জ থাকে সেগুলোর উপর থেকে ভ্যাট-ট্যাক্স মওকুফ করতে হবে।
- সঠিকভাবে এসএমই খাতকে পুঁজিবাজারের সাথে সংযুক্ত করতে পারলে এটি অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রাখতে পারে। এর জন্য দরকার এসএমই কে একটি কাঠামোর মধ্যে নিয়ে আসা দরকার। কারণ অবকাঠামোগতভাবে দুর্বল এসএমই প্রতিষ্ঠান-এ বিনিয়োগকারীরা বিনিয়োগ করে ঝুঁকিতে পড়তে পারে।
- ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্পের জন্য দীর্ঘমেয়াদী বন্ডেড ওয়্যারহাউস সুবিধা নিশ্চিতকরণের মাধ্যমে আলাদা অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চল প্রতিষ্ঠা করা প্রয়োজন।
- আমাদের বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণের পাশাপাশি প্রাইভেট ইকুইটি এবং ভেঞ্চার ক্যাপিটাল ফান্ড উন্নয়ন করা দরকার। এসএমই প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলো এ ফান্ডগুলো থেকে বিনিয়োগ নিতে পারবে। ভেঞ্চার ক্যাপিটাল ফান্ড-এ কর অবকাশ দিলে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীরা বিনিয়োগে উৎসাহিত হবে।
- দীর্ঘমেয়াদি অর্থায়নের জন্য বাংলাদেশের ব্যবসায়ী প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলো এখনো অতিমাত্রায় ব্যাংক নির্ভর। এ অবস্থা থেকে উত্তরণে দরকার বন্ড এবং মিউচুয়াল ফান্ডের উন্নয়ন করতে হবে। মিউচুয়াল ফান্ডের আয়ের উপর যে কর দিতে হয় তা মওকুফ করা হলে বাংলাদেশের মিউচুয়াল ফান্ড বর্তমানে এক বিলিয়ন ডলার থেকে অনেক গুণ বেড়ে যেতে পারে।
- পুঁজিবাজার চাঙ্গা করতে বন্ড মার্কেটকে অগ্রাধিকার দিতে হবে, পাশাপাশি সব পণ্যে প্রণোদনা দিতে হবে।
- বাংলাদেশের মতো একটি মুসলিম প্রধান দেশে সুকুক বন্ড হতে পারে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আর্থিক হাতিয়ার। সুকুক থেকে কর কমানো হলে অনেক বিনিয়োগকারী আগ্রহী হবে।
- সুকুক এবং মিউচুয়াল ফান্ড উন্নয়ন করতে পারলে দীর্ঘমেয়াদে অর্থায়নের ক্ষেত্রে ব্যাংকের ওপর অতিমাত্রায় নির্ভরশীলতা কমে আসবে এবং ব্যাংকিং খাতে যে মন্দ ঋণ রয়েছে তা উল্লেখযোগ্য হারে কমে আসবে।
- যে সমস্ত ব্যাংক ইমেজ সংকটে রয়েছে তাদের উচিত আস্থার সংকট কাটিয়ে উঠা এবং মন্দ ঋণ কমিয়ে নিয়ে আসা।
- এই মুহূর্তে আমাদের বাজেটকে ঘিরে তিনটি বড় অগ্রাধিকার রয়েছে। প্রথমত, সামষ্টিক অর্থনীতির স্থিতিশীলতা ফিরিয়ে আনা যায় গত এক বছর ধরে নানাভাবে অস্থিতিশীল হয়েছে; দ্বিতীয়তঃ বহির্বিদেশে কিছু ব্যাংকের পতনের ফলে আমাদের অর্থনীতিতে এর প্রভাব পড়তে পারি কিনা এ ব্যাপারটি নিয়ে আমাদের সতর্ক থাকতে হবে; তৃতীয়ত, মুদ্রাস্ফীতি যা আমাদেরকে অত্যন্ত চেপে ধরে রেখেছে।
- রপ্তানি আয় বাড়তে ম্যান মেইড ফাইবারের ব্যবহার বাড়তে আগামী বাজেটে ম্যান মেইড ফাইবারে সকল প্রকার ট্যারিফ ও নন-ট্যারিফ বাধা দূর করতে সরকারের নীতি সহায়তা প্রয়োজন। তদুপরি, পোশাক বর্জ্য থেকে ফের উৎপাদনের (রিসাইকেল) জন্যও সরকারের সহায়ক নীতিমালা প্রয়োজন।
- আগামী ২-৩ বছরের মধ্যে জ্বালানি ও বিদ্যুৎ থেকে সব ধরনের ভর্তুকি তুলে নেয়া হবে। কিন্তু এই ভর্তুকি সম্পূর্ণরূপে তুলে নেয়ার পূর্বে কর ব্যবস্থাপনার হালনাগাদ করা প্রয়োজন।
- বিপিডিবি least cost method এর ভিত্তিতে বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদন করে, কিন্তু এই পদ্ধতিতে উৎপাদনে বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা অনেক বেশি পরিমাণে দেশের বাহিরে চলে যাচ্ছে। কিন্তু সকল জ্বালানির উপর যদি কর সমান হত তাহলে এর পরিমাণ অনেক কম হত। এই পদ্ধতি অবলম্বন করলে যেমন জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড- এর কর সংগ্রহের পরিমাণ বৃদ্ধি পাবে তেমন বৈদেশিক মুদ্রার দেশের বাহিরে কম যাবে।
- আগামী ৩ বছরের মধ্যে যে সকল অবকাঠামো উন্নয়নের পরিকল্পনা রয়েছে সেগুলোর সব গুলো সঠিক সময়ে শেষ করা প্রয়োজন।
- আমদানি এবং রপ্তানির মধ্যে ব্যবধান কমিয়ে আনার লক্ষ্যে ব্যাকওয়ার্ড লিংকেজ ইন্ডাস্ট্রি শক্তিশালীকরণ এবং পণ্য রিসাইক্লিংয়ে গুরুত্বারোপ করতে হবে। কমপক্ষে ২৫% রিসাইক্লিংয়ের আওতায় আনতে হবে।
- বাজেট প্রণয়নে বৈশ্বিক পরিস্থিতি, এলডিসি উত্তোরণ, স্থানীয় অবকাঠামোর উন্নয়ন, রপ্তানি বহুমুখীকরণ প্রভৃতি বিষয়গুলোকে গুরুত্বের সাথে বিবেচনা করা প্রয়োজন।
- আগামী বাজেটে মূল্যস্ফীতি সহনীয় মাত্রায় রাখা, প্রবৃদ্ধি ও কর্মসংস্থানের সুযোগ তৈরি, বিনিয়োগ উৎসাহিতকরণ এবং সরকারের ঋণ গ্রহণের প্রবণতা হ্রাস প্রভৃতি বিষয়ের ওপর অধিক গুরুত্বারোপ করা প্রয়োজন।
- আগামী বাজেটে করের আওতা বাড়ানোর বিকল্প নেই, তবে এ লক্ষ্যে কর প্রদান প্রক্রিয়া সহজীকরণ ও দেশের রাজস্ব ব্যবস্থাকে অটোমেশনের আওতায় নিয়ে আসা অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, পাশাপাশি ব্যবসায়ীদের কর প্রদানের মানসিকতা বাড়তে হবে।
- তৈরি পোশাক খাতের মতো কৃষি, চামড়া, লাইট ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিংসহ অন্যান্য সম্ভাবনাময় খাতে যথাযথ আর্থিক ও নীতি সহায়তা প্রদান করা প্রয়োজন। বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের পাশাপাশি স্থানীয় বিনিয়োগকে উৎসাহিত করতে কার্যকর পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করা প্রয়োজন।

IP and Youth: Innovating for a Better Future

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Young people are fantastic creators and innovators. The 2022 World Intellectual Property (IP) Day (April 26) theme is “IP and Youth: Innovating for a better future.” The idea is to create an awareness of various forms of IP, young inventors and creators can use their IP rights to achieve their goals, generate income, create jobs, tackle local and global challenges and support community and national development (WIPO). IP refers to expressed creations of the mind. IP may be divided into (i) Industrial Property and (ii) Copyright and Neighbouring Rights/ Related Rights. Some major forms of industrial property, some of which are: (1) Trade secrets, (2) Patents, (3) Geographical Indications, (4) Industrial designs, (5) Layout-designs of integrated circuits, (6) Trade marks etc. The five main types of intellectual property protections in Bangladesh are: trademark, patent, industrial design, copyright, and geographical indication.

Trade secrets: A trade secret is any information which has been kept secret, has commercial value, and retains its commercial value as a result of reasonable steps to keep the information secret. Trade secrets are protected without registration and the unauthorised disclosure of a trade secret may constitute an act of unfair competition as defined in the Bangladesh Competition Commission Act 2012. In Bangladesh, the legal protection of trade secrets is scattered in different laws and protection need combined application of various laws. The protection of trade secrets is afforded through the exercise of Section 49 of the Patent and Designs Act, 1911, the Section 73 of the Contract Act, 1872 entitles a party to receive compensation for breaches of contractual obligations (Confidentiality Agreements and Non-Disclosure Agreements are commonly used to protect confidential information).

Patents: A patent is an exclusive right granted for an invention, which is a product or a process that provides, in general, a new way of doing something, or offers a new technical solution to a problem. Patent law is the branch of intellectual property law that deals with new inventions. Traditional patents protect tangible scientific inventions, such as circuit boards, car engines, heating coils, or zippers. To get a patent, technical information

about the invention must be disclosed to the public in a patent application. A patent is a type of intellectual property that provides its owner or the inventor the legal right to exclude others from inventing, using, or selling the invention for 16 years on payment of the prescribed fees and such period of protection may be renewed. A patent is an exclusive right granted for an invention, which is a product or a process that provides, in general, a new way of doing something, or offers a new technical solution to a problem. In Bangladesh, Patent and Design Rights are guided under the Patents and Designs Act of 1911 and the Patent and Design Rules of 1933. Under these laws, Department of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (DPDT) provides patent protection for 16 years.

Geographical Indications: A Geographical Indication (GI) is defined as “an indication which identifies a good as originating in the territory of a country, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin”. Bangladesh has enacted the Geographical Indication (Registration and Protection) Act 2013. the GI Act of 2013 states that GIs can be used to denote the origin of goods where the quality, reputation, or other characteristics of such goods is essentially attributable to the place of origin of the said goods. The right to use a protected GI belongs to producers in the geographical area defined, who comply with the specific conditions of production for the product. For example –Maslin, Jamdane, Kalijira rice, Sadamati Fajlee mango and Hilsa fish etc are example of GI products in Bangladesh. These products are produce in specific location having unique characteristics.

GI registration allows customers and producers to create trust and confidence on the product’s authenticity and quality in internal or external markets. It helps create a reputation of the product, facilitating fairer prices and access to larger markets for the producers. Protecting GIs will prevent consumers from being misled by third parties not authorized to use the GIs. In turn, this protection will grant legitimate producers the right to prevent the misappropriation of their valuable property.

Industrial designs: An industrial design (ID) constitutes the ornamental or aesthetic aspect of an article and must not be dictated solely or essentially by technical or functional considerations. The ID may consist of three dimensional features, such as the shape of an article

such as bottle of Coca Cola bottle shape, or two dimensional features, such as patterns, lines or colour. In Bangladesh, there is no separate law of Industrial design but ID protect under the Patents and Designs Act 1911 and Patents and Design Rules 1933. Initially a design registration certificate in Bangladesh is issued for term of 5 years and renewable for two (2) further consecutive periods.

An industrial design can be a two- or three-dimensional pattern used to produce a product, industrial commodity or handicraft. In principle, the owner of a registered industrial design or of a design patent has the right to prevent third parties from making, selling or importing articles bearing or embodying a design which is a copy, or substantially a copy, of the protected design, when such acts are undertaken for commercial purposes.

Layout-designs of integrated circuits: In modern technology, integrated circuits are essential elements for a wide range of electrical products, including articles of everyday use, such as watches, television sets, washing machines, and cars, as well as sophisticated computers, smart phones, and other digital devices. Developing innovative layout designs of integrated circuits is essential for the production of ever-smaller digital devices with more functions. Layout designs (topographies) of integrated circuits are a three-dimensional arrangement of elements forming an integrated circuit intended for manufacturing. Integrated circuits – commonly known as “chips” or “micro-chips” – are the electronic circuits in which all the components (transistors, diodes and resistors) have been assembled in a certain order on the surface of a thin semiconductor material (usually silicon). Many countries have law to protect the layout design. This Act does not apply in relation to any idea, procedure, process, system, method of operation, concept, principle or discovery, regardless of the form in which it is described, explained, illustrated or embodied in a layout design. Bangladesh not yet have any law to provide for the protection of layout designs of integrated circuits.

Trademarks: A trademark is a sign capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one enterprise from those of other enterprises. A trademark is a sign capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one trader from



those of other traders. A trademark identifies the brand owner of a particular product or service. However, not all signs or logos qualify for trademark protection. Generally, logos and designs that are used as brand identities for representing businesses are protected as trademarks. As they are original artistic works that have an element of creativity, they are also protected as copyrights.

Trademarks can generally be categorized into one of four categories of distinctiveness, from most to least distinctive: coined, arbitrary, suggestive and descriptive. Words and designs that lack any distinctiveness fall into a fifth category, “generic,” and cannot function as trademarks. Bangladesh has the Trademark Act 2009. The trademark owner can be an individual, business organization, or any legal entity. A trademark may be located on a package, a label, a voucher, or on the product itself. Armed with this information, our youth should be unstoppable in their attempts to innovate for a better future. Innovation does not mean complexity or extravagance. Innovation starts with “an idea whose time has come.”

The theme of IP day 2022 reminded of the power of youths in driving positive change. The theme recognises how young people around the world are stepping up to the challenge of innovation. Through their energy, ingenuity, curiosity and creativity, they are helping steer a course towards a better future. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the framer of the theme wants to encourage more young people to unleash the potential of their innovative ideas. They want to encourage them to start businesses and create things they are passionate about.

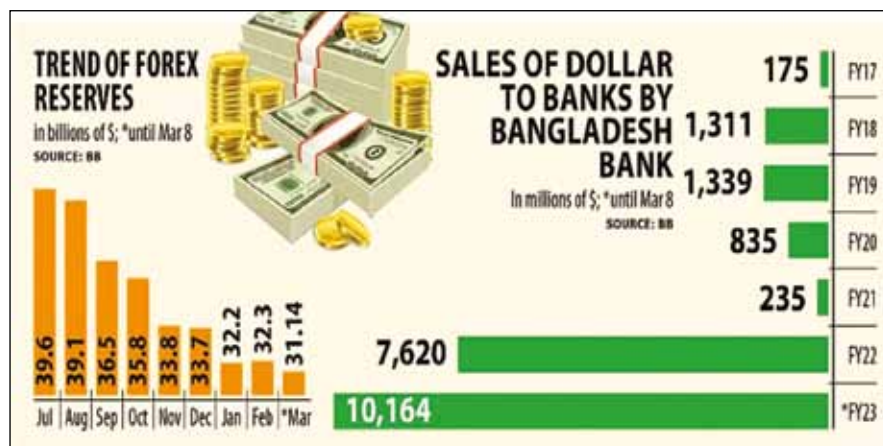
Forex reserves slip to six-year low

Bangladesh's foreign currency reserves have slipped to a six-year low of \$31.15 billion after the central bank cleared import bills to the tune of \$1.05 billion with a number of Asian countries, official figures showed. This means the reserves have fallen by about 30 per cent from \$44.14 billion recorded in March last year. The current level of the reserves is the lowest since the financial year of 2016–17 when it stood at \$33.49 billion. The BB settled the import payments through the Asian Clearing Union on March 06, 2023. The ACU, headquartered in Tehran, is an arrangement to settle payments for intra-regional transactions among member countries: Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Iran, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The countries settle bills every two months.

The forex reserves of Bangladesh have witnessed a major slide in recent months after every ACU payment is made, said a central banker. The reserves surged to \$48 billion in August 2021, the highest in history. However, due to the escalated import payments resulting from high commodity prices amid the Russia-Ukraine war, the reserves have been declining since May 2022.

The sharp decrease in foreign exchange reserves has caused macroeconomic instability amid an acute dollar shortage. The taka has lost its value by about 25 per cent against the American greenback in the past one year. And Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, warned that the reserves might face an additional loss of \$10–12 billion before the national election if the ongoing slide continues.

"We are slowly but surely heading towards a bad situation if existing policies are not fundamentally changed." Zahid Hussain, a former



lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, says only the withdrawal of the ceiling of interest rate on loans and the introduction of a floating exchange rate can stop the deterioration of the reserves. Although the deficit in trade and current accounts have decreased significantly in the last couple of months, the shortfall in the financial account widened to a large extent, worsening the volume of the reserves. Under such a situation, the central bank is injecting dollars into banks almost every working day.

The BB supplied a record \$10.16 billion to the market between July 1 and March 8 this fiscal year. It injected \$924 million in February and \$216 million so far this month. The central bank provided \$7.62 billion to banks in the last financial year to help them clear import bills, which rocketed to over \$82 billion. Mansur also said the central bank should withdraw the interest rate ceiling on loans and make the exchange rate flexible. Bangladesh's forex reserves might face further squeeze in the coming months as the war shows no sign of coming to an end any time soon while import bills are still more than combined receipts through exports and remittance.

The Federal Reserve, the central bank of the United States, has already

indicated that it will further increase its key interest rates, intensifying pressure on all frontier countries, including Bangladesh. "We will have to make money laundering more expensive through the depreciation of the local currency and the withdrawal of the interest rate ceiling on loans," Mansur said.

Zahid Hussain says that the recent foreign exchange policies taken by the central bank have not helped the market recover from the economic stress. "The reserves will decline further and the economy might face a chaotic situation unless time-befitting policies are taken." The exchange rate of the Bangladeshi currency stood at Tk 107 for each dollar on March 7, down 26.1 per cent from a year earlier. "The local currency will face more pressure in the coming days if the decline in the reserves can't be stopped," said Hussain.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Center for Policy Dialogue, says Bangladesh will have to narrow its trade deficit in order to tackle the current situation. Between July and January, the trade deficit stood at \$13.38 billion, a decrease of 28.8 per cent year-on-year. "Both remittances and foreign direct investment flow should be geared up to keep the reserves stable," Rahman said **r**

Bangladesh needs strategy to face post-LDC challenges

Bangladesh needs to develop a long-term strategy and action plan, ink trade deal to maintain existing export market access and attract investment mainly to face the post-graduation challenges including erosion of duty benefit. Bangladeshi made garment will face about 11.6 per cent duty after 2029 which is now zero per cent. Bangladesh has been the single largest beneficiary of EU LDC-specific trade preferences as its exports rose to \$23.2 billion in last fiscal which was only \$2.0 billion in 2000–01. The country is also taking the advantage of China's market share most in the EU market mainly because of the duty benefit while Vietnam gains most from China shift to US market.

The suggestions and statistics were made at a seminar on '50 years of EU-Bangladesh Partnership: Charting Ahead on a Legacy of Success' held at a city hotel. Research and Policy Integration for Development and Fredrich-Ebert-Stiftung Bangladesh organized the seminar. Prime Minister's economic affairs adviser Dr Mashiur Rahman was the chief guest while EU ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley was special guest at the seminar moderated by Dhaka University professor and executive director of RAPID M Abu Eusuf.

UNDP Bangladesh country economist Dr Nazneen Ahmed moderated a panel discussion while resident representative of FES Bangladesh Felix Kolbitz, among others, also spoke. Presenting the keynote paper, RAPID chairman MA Razzaque showed how EU's LDC tariff preference helped Bangladesh raising its clothing export market share there, making the country world's second largest clothing exporter. Taking advantage of tariff preference, Bangladesh captures more than 22 per cent of extra-EU apparel imports,

he noted. Bangladesh still has huge export potential in the EU as only 60 per cent of export potential is currently being utilized.

Bangladesh's graduation in 2026 would result in immediate cessation of LDC-related trade preferences in most countries including Canada, China, India, and Japan, he said, adding that only the EU and the UK would provide an additional three-year transition period until 2029. In comparison, while Bangladesh stands to lose trade preferences, free trade agreements could allow its competitors to gain competitive advantages in the EU. Citing example, he said Vietnam will enjoy zero duty to the EU by this time due to its FTA with EU.

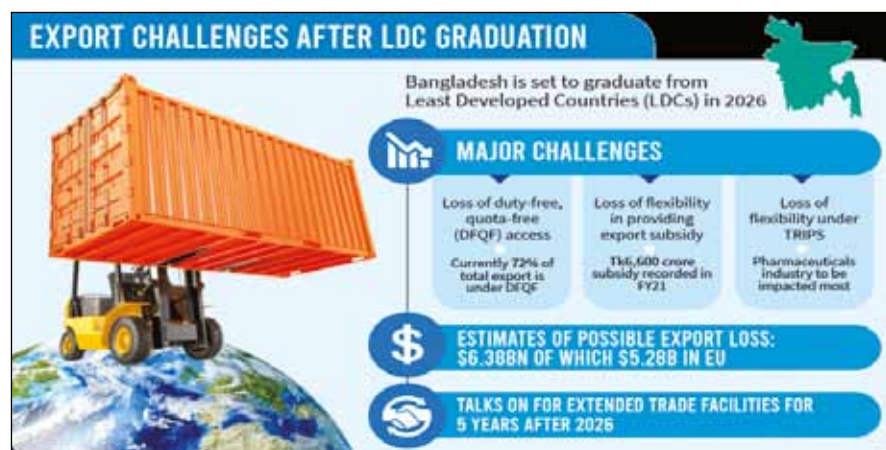
He recommended for developing a national-level consensus on the options about emerging issues like EU Green Deal and its carbon border adjustment mechanism and any policy shifts in the EU. Dr Mashiur Rahman called for improving labor force quality, export product diversification, investment in service sectors including health and education.

Dr Mashiur also preferred not to allow bringing such money in the country, saying it distorts market. Professor of International Relations at Dhaka University Dr Imtiaz Ahmed said money from Bangladesh is laundered to EU which is 'serious problem'.

He noted that money laundering itself a corruption but corruption itself is not the problem. If the corruption money is getting reinvested in Bangladesh it could have been productive but it was getting reinvested in Europe.

Regarding the Bangladeshi Diaspora there, he said the community are different from that of Vietnam saying local Diaspora are not engaged in business or investment here in the country and sought EU's support so that they make investment in not only in industries but also in other areas like education and entertainment. Whiteley said EU has a wide ranging relationship with Bangladesh in last 50 years and it is now changing towards development of humanitarian assistance and trade. EU businesses want to come here but still there is sometimes untoward obstacles to investing or bring them able to a win-win situation, he added. EU has \$2.0 billion investment stock here in Bangladesh while \$6.0 billion in Vietnam. "I think this can change and change quickly if policy makes right in Bangladesh side," he said, terming Bangladesh a great place to do business. He, however, stressed for improving the situation further.

Explaining the measures they are taking to overcome the challenges, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association president Faruque Hassan urged the EU to extend the transition period by



six-year for Bangladesh after its graduation from least developed country in 2026. Taking the geopolitical situation, Russia-Ukraine war, Rohingya crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic into consideration, the EU should allow its duty free market access for Bangladesh up to 2032, he said **r**

Apparel export to EU up by 35.69pc in 2022

The export of apparel items from Bangladesh to the European Union increased by 35.69 percent in 2022 compared to 2021. The import of apparels by EU from the world grew by 20.97 percent during this time. The EU imported \$22.89 billion worth of clothing from Bangladesh in 2022, as per the statistics of Eurostat. With 22.20 percent share of the EU's total RMG import, Bangladesh remains the 2nd largest apparel import source for the EU. The director of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association Mohiuddin Rubel said that on the whole, the export of Bangladeshi RMG items to the EU market was good last year. But, the high export trend of apparel items to the EU market which was evident during the January–June period of last year could not be maintained during the July–December period.

“The main reason behind this was that the first six months were the post Covid-19 period for which the buyers purchased many RMG items. Furthermore, we did well since there was lockdown in China,” he added. He said that after that the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war was huge while the inflation also increased in the EU market leading to low demand for apparel items. “It also put an impact on our exports,”

Rubel also mentioned that the Bangladeshi exporters are facing tough time in maintaining their



export growth in the EU market since the production cost went up. Data showed that EU's imports from the top sourcing country China grew by 17.01 percent year-over-year. EU's import from China reached \$30.14 billion in 2022. On the other hand, EU's import from Turkey, the third largest apparel import source for the EU, increased by 10.09 percent year-over-year and reached \$ 11.98 billion. EU's imports from India and Vietnam increased by 21.02 percent and 35 percent respectively **r**

Govt on track to keep macroeconomic stability: Salman F Rahman

Salman F Rahman, MP, Private Industry and Investment Adviser of the Prime Minister, said that the government is on the right track to maintain macroeconomic stability in the country given the way it has been reacting to the various challenges owing to global conditions. “It's true that the country's macroeconomic situation is facing a lot of challenges.” But, the way we're reacting, we can say that we're on the right track,” he said while addressing a pre-budget discussion of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the next fiscal year (2024 fiscal year) held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center in the capital.

State Minister for Planning Dr Shamsul Alam, former FBCCI president

Md Shafiu Islam (Mohiuddin), and MP spoke as special guests. FBCCI President Md Jashim Uddin and former FBCCI president and Managing Director of Ha-Meem Group spoke as guests of honor. DCCI president Md Sameer Sattar moderated the discussion. The editor of The Daily Samakal, Mozammel Hossain, gave the vote of thanks.

Welcoming the suggestions from businesses ahead of the next budget for the 2024 fiscal year, Salman said that Bangladesh did well to manage the shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. “But, the Russia-Ukraine war was much unexpected for us.” Regarding the shortage of foreign currency reserves in the last few months, he said that the central bank took immediate steps to address the issue, like controlling imports, especially the luxurious items for which the import bills came down at \$5 billion in December.

Salman said that the opening up of LCs would be eased further in the coming days, while the foreign currency reserves would be stable by June this year. He also informed that the single exchange rate would be effective by June this year, while the interest rate cap would be made market-based. Citing that the country's tax-to-GDP ratio is still lower compared to other countries in the world, the adviser said that there is a need to further widen the

tax net, for which automation is very much needed. He opined that if the revenue board could develop a uniform import duty, it would be possible to address various problems, but the revenue would fall in such a case. Noting that the small traders in the country are often reluctant to pay tax and VAT, the Adviser said there is a need to change their mindset while the business community leaders should make a serious propaganda about the necessity of paying tax.

About the capital market, he said that there is a basic structural defect, which is the lower number of institutional investors participating in the daily turnover in the bourses, and the participation of the institutional investors must be increased. He also suggested revitalizing the bond market, giving the same facility to the other export-oriented sectors apart from RMG, ensuring diversification of exportable items.

Salman said that the Prime Minister considers the private sector as the 'driving force' of the economy.

State Minister for Planning Dr Shamsul Alam said centering the next budget, the aim of the government should ensure that inflation does not increase further, keeping the budget deficit within ceiling while growth does not become stunted. "There is no way that the next budget becomes ambitious. We'll continue our efforts so that the private sector doesn't face barriers while the private sector credit growth doesn't get hampered. We're also keeping our macroeconomic stability," he said.

Listing the positive trend of some of the major macroeconomic indicators, Dr Alam said that there is no way that the growth of Bangladesh would become negative. "The economy didn't shrink in any aspect." Mentioning that the FDI fetched \$1.34 billion during the July-January period of the current fiscal year while the private sector

credit growth reaches 13 percent, he said that the force of the economy is still active.

FBCCI president Md Jashim Uddin suggested giving more attention on revenue collection through not harming the businesses, ensuring export diversification, stress on man-made fiber, enhancing capacity of the NBR, withdrawing duty and tax on import of raw materials of generating power, boosting the facilities of backward linkage industry. "Our PM has assured us that there will remain no red tape. Hopefully, there will remain no red tape in the next budget," he added.

During the budget discussion, four separate sessions on taxation & VAT, financial sector, industry & trade and infrastructure were held.

In the taxation & VAT session, Zaved Akhtar, CEO and MD, Unilever Bangladesh Limited, Mohammed Humayun Kabir, former president, ICAB and panel adviser, FBCCI, Md Alamgir Hossain, former member, National Board of Revenue gave their opinions. In the session on financial sector, Md Nojibur Rahman, chairman, Capital Market Stabilization Fund and former principal secretary to the Prime Minister, Mashrur Arefin, managing director, City Bank, Selim Raihan, executive director, SANEM, Arif Khan, vice chairman, Shanta Asset Management Limited and former

commissioner, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission delivered their speeches.

In the session on industry & trade, Asif Ashraf, director, BGMEA, Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and chief executive officer, Pran RFL Group, and Mohammad Ali Khokon, president, Bangladesh Textile Mills Association made their recommendations for the next budget. During the session on infrastructure, Imran Karim, vice chairman, Confidence Group, Mohammad Ariful Islam (Arif), country head, Nokia, Mainuddin Monem, managing director, Abdul Monem Limited spoke 

'Made in Bangladesh' tag in apparel products from Jan 1, 2024

The 'Made in Bangladesh' tag will be used for all RMG products manufactured in Bangladesh in their label in Bengali from January 1, 2024, said BGMEA President Faruque Hassan. He also said that they are working on putting the "Bangladeshe Tairi" tag in Bengali in the export products along with the existing "Made in Bangladesh" tag. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association also wants a change to the Bangladesh EPZ Labor Act in order to guarantee trade union and other rights of the workers, which are also a major demand of the US and European Union authorities.



The apex body for the garment industry also believes that all sectors should have rights that are equal, and BGMEA is dedicated to upholding workers due diligence and human rights. BGMEA President Faruque Hassan revealed it while responding to questions from the journalists at a press conference held at its office in the capital. "We believe that workers have rights to form trade union in everywhere, but problem is the foreign investors, who invest in the Export Promotion Zones, they don't want this," he added. Regarding the minimum wage board, he said that they've already submitted three names to the labor ministry in response to their requirement. Once the ministry forms it, apparel manufacturers would voluntarily embrace the new pay.

In response to a question, Faruque said that Bangladesh would continue to benefit from Generalized System of Preferences treatment from the EU, the UK, and other nations until 2029 due to its graduation from the Least Developed Countries category.

However, the top body is aiming to extend it, at least through 2032, and the government is supporting their initiative as well. They already have held meeting with the World Trade Organization Director General, the EU's senior officials, and the UK's appropriate authority in this regard.

"Our objective is clear. After LDC graduation, we do not want to take punishment (impose responsibility) due to development trap. We might easily enter the global market as competitors if we can keep the GSP till 2032," he added. "We have two reasons to expand facilities. First, we are facing economic crisis due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, which was their (US and EU) problem. The Second issue is, Bangladesh accepted 1.3 million Rohingyas, one of the highest ever refugee acceptances in the world," he added.

So, the global communities should increase the GSP tenure for

Bangladesh considering these issues. In response to another question, he said that businesses are not doing so well. "Our export to the US market has been dropped, though we have tremendous growth in the new markets such as India, Japan and South Korea," he said.


He also said that the rise in the gas price, electricity price is impacting the sector. Moreover, global economic turmoil, inflationary pressures have curtailed the purchasing capacity and the buyers have changed their sourcing pattern. "Currently, they place orders in small slots which are hampering the production planning," he added.

Export earnings post 9.56pc growth in July-Feb

The country's export earnings of goods during the July-February period of the current fiscal year (the 2023 fiscal year) maintained its healthy trend witnessing a growth of 9.56 per cent compared to the same period of the last fiscal year (the 2022 fiscal year). According to the latest statistics of the Export Promotion Bureau, the country's export earnings reached \$37,077.68 million during this eight-month period against \$33,843.45 million fetched during the same period of the last fiscal year. However, the eight-month export target is 0.45 per cent lower than the strategic export target of \$37,244 million. The EPB statistics also showed that the single-month export earnings also maintained their positive trend bagging \$4,630.18 million in February against the export earnings of \$4,294.53 million registered in February last year.

The single-month export earnings are also 3.68 per cent lower than the strategic export target of \$4,807 million. Out of the overall export earnings during this July-February period, RMG still continued to dominate the earnings of greenbacks with \$31,361.89 million with a healthy growth of 14.06 per cent.

Out of that, knitwear accounts for the bulk of the earnings with \$17,060.33 million having a growth of 13.21 per cent while export of woven garments earned \$14,301.56 million with a growth of 15.08 per cent.

Besides, the other best-performing sectors during this July-February period are home textiles with \$769.86 million, primary commodities with \$942.13 million, agricultural products with \$623.18 million, chemical products with \$202.13 million, plastic products with \$138.35 million, leather and leather products with \$832.38 million, handicrafts \$18.99 million, jute and jute goods with \$610.08 million, specialized textiles with \$178.35 million, engineering products with \$349.32 million and other manufactured products with \$264.62 million 

BB inks deals with 32 banks for Tk 5000cr green fund

Bangladesh Bank on March 16, 2023 inked "Participation Agreements" with 32 commercial banks for Tk 5,000 crore Green Transformation Fund with the aim of getting refinancing facility under this fund. The central bank has introduced the refinance fund for acceleration of green practice and sustainable growth in export oriented and manufacturing industries, said a press release.

Sustainable Finance Department of Bangladesh Bank has organized the participation agreement signing ceremony at Jahangir Alam Conference Hall of Bangladesh Bank. BB Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder was present as the chief guest on the occasion while Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank Kazi Saidur Rahman, Executive Director Md Khurshid Alam, Director of Sustainable Finance Department Chowdhury Liakat Ali and other officials of the concerned department were present on the event 

India economy may grow 6pc in FY24: Crisil

India's gross domestic product growth is likely to touch 6 percent in fiscal 2024, compared with 7 percent estimated by the National Statistical Organization for fiscal 2023, rating agency Crisil said on March 17, 2023. The agency also sees the economy averaging a growth rate of 6.8 percent over the next five fiscals. It further said it expects the corporate revenue to log in double-digit rise again next fiscal. "A complex interplay of geopolitical events, stubbornly high inflation and sharp rate hikes to counter that have turned the global environment gloomier," Crisil said.

The rating agency added that on the domestic front, the peak impact of the rate hikes 250 basis points since May 2022, which has pushed interest rates above pre-Covid-19 levels will play out in fiscal 2024. Consumer inflation is expected to moderate to 5.0 percent on average in fiscal 2024 from 6.8 percent in fiscal 2023, owing to high-base effect and some softening of crude and commodity prices. However, a good rabi harvest would help cool food inflation, while the slowing economy should moderate core inflation.


"The risks to inflation are tilted upward, given the ongoing heat



wave and the World Meteorological Organization's prediction that an El Niño warming event is likely over the next couple of months," Crisil said. Amish Mehta, the agency's managing director, said the country's medium-term growth prospects are healthier. Over the next five fiscals, "we expect GDP to grow at 6.8 percent annually", with the next fiscal delivering 6 percent, driven by capital and productivity increases.

He further said what is also good to see is the increasing sustainability footprint of capex. "At present, nearly 9 percent of the infrastructure and industrial capex is green. We see this number rising to 15 percent by fiscal 2027. Down the road, the

impact of climate risk mitigation will be felt across revenue, commodity prices, export markets and capital spending," he added.

"India's external vulnerability is expected to decline with a narrower current account deficit and modest short term external debt. While CAD is expected to narrow to 2.4 percent of GDP (~\$88 billion) next fiscal from an estimated 3.0 percent (~\$100 billion) this fiscal, its financing may face challenges as foreign portfolio flows remain volatile and external commercial borrowings are less attractive," said Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil 

India's new trade policy set \$2t export target

Commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal on March 15, 2023 said the government is expected to release the FTP by the end of this financial year, which will have a five-year roadmap to enhance the country's trade. \$2 trillion by 2030 — that may be the new exports target defined by India in its new Foreign Trade Policy, which will be released later this month, two officials said, asking not to be named.

With exports this year estimated to be at least \$750 billion, that requires a

growth rate of 15 percent. This year, India's exports are expected to grow by at least 12 percent. Commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal said the government is expected to release the FTP by the end of this financial year, which will have a five-year roadmap to enhance the country's trade.

After extension, the current FTP (2015–20) will expire on March 31, 2023. On September last year, the government extended the existing FTP for six months due to adverse

global economic conditions. FTP, which provides guidelines for enhancing exports, driving economic growth and creating jobs, was first extended on March 31, 2020 for one year due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of the officials said the \$2 trillion exports will have equal share of goods and services. The focus of the new policy is expected to be on trade promotion through Free Trade Agreements, import substitution,

import diversification, marketing via Indian missions, nudging every sector through respective ministries and involving states in promotion of exports.

“The \$2 trillion target by 2030 is achievable. Of course, there are global headwinds and situation is not very conducive, but India has certain advantages that it can leverage to its advantage,” said Ajay Sahai, director general and chief executive of the Federation of Indian Export Organizations. He added that free trade agreements, the 20-lakh crore production-linked incentive schemes, inclination of major economies such as the US to rely on India for friend-shoring, diversion of Russian supplies from Europe to India and European supplies from Russia to India are favorable for the country.

“FTP should have two-pronged strategy encouraging sunrise sectors (such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobiles) and incentivizing labor-intensive sectors such as textiles and leather. Services exports are doing exceedingly well. There is a need to also focus beyond IT and ITES. India has immense potential in travel and tourism, health and medical, audit and accounts, films and other professional services” 📌

Pakistani rupee hits record low amid IMF bailout delay

The Pakistani rupee has touched a record low, while a bigger-than-expected interest rate rise has failed to revive its markets as the South Asian country struggles to unlock critical funding from the International Monetary Fund. The rupee hit a record low of 284 per US dollar in local trading, Eikon data showed. It retraced some losses to end at 279 per dollar, still down by some 6 percent.

To try to tackle soaring inflation, shore up its currency and fulfill another IMF demand, Pakistan’s central bank announced a larger-than-expected 300-basis-point interest rate hike. Policymakers lifted the key lending to 20 percent, its highest level since October 1996, by bringing forward a meeting that had originally been scheduled for March 16. The country’s international bonds fell by more than three cents in the dollar. The currency, which has weakened by nearly 20 percent since the start of the year, has been sliding after delays in a deal between Pakistan and the IMF.

“A delay in IMF funding is creating uncertainty in the currency market,” said Mohammed Sohail of Topline Securities, a Karachi-based brokerage house. The IMF funding is critical for the country, which has been in economic turmoil, to unlock other bilateral and multilateral external financing. Pakistan’s central bank’s foreign exchange reserves have fallen to levels barely enough to cover three weeks of imports.

IMF demands

Pakistan entered a \$6b IMF program in 2019, which was expanded to \$6.5b last year. It received a tranche of \$1.17b in August last year, but the next tranche of \$1b has not been released as IMF conditions are still unmet. Last month, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the IMF conditions were “beyond

imagination” but Islamabad had no choice but to agree to the bailout conditions. “Our negotiations with IMF are about to conclude and we expect to sign a staff-level agreement with IMF by next week,” said finance minister Ishaq Dar on Twitter though his comments did little to reassure the markets.

The IMF’s prerequisites are aimed at ensuring Pakistan shrinks its fiscal deficit in advance of its annual budget which is expected to be announced in June. Pakistan has already taken most of the other prior actions, which included increases in fuel and energy tariffs, the withdrawal of subsidies in export and power sectors, and generating more revenues through new taxation in a supplementary budget. The fiscal adjustments demanded by any deal, however, are likely to add to record high inflation, which hit 31.5 percent year-on-year in February, analysts said. Bilateral and multilateral external financing have been among the other IMF demands, but progress has been slow. Long-time ally China is the only country that has refinanced \$700m to Islamabad.

Speaking at a regular China foreign ministry media briefing in Beijing, spokeswoman Mao Ning said China and Pakistan were “all-weather strategic partners and solid friends” and called on all creditors to “act together and play a constructive role in stabilizing Pakistan’s economy



and society". Last's year devastating floods that caused damage worth more than \$30b have further compounded hardship in the country mired in political crises **r**

Lanka's economy shrinks by record 7.8pc last year

Sri Lanka's crisis-hit economy shrank by a record 7.8 percent last year, official data shows, as the country struggles with its worst financial crisis in seven decades. The island's fourth-quarter gross domestic product contracted by 12.4 percent, according to the figures released by the state-run census and statistics department on March 17, 2023. Sri Lanka's growth is expected to shrink by 3 percent this year, Moody's Investors Service said on March 11, 2023 but growth is expected to rebound in 2024. An unprecedented economic crisis sparked huge protests in the island nation, culminating last July when a mob stormed the home of then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, forcing him to flee the country and resign. Since then, a new government has worked to repair Sri Lanka's battered public finances and secure a sorely needed International Monetary Fund bailout.

Last year's contraction the biggest in the country's 75 years of independence compared with 3.5 percent growth in 2021 and a 4.6 percent contraction in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic hit. It was "caused by the deepening of the economic crisis ... frequent power disruptions, shortages in fuel, raw materials, (and) foreign currency", the census and statistics department said in a statement.

The data showed some improvement in Sri Lanka's fiscal position with inflation moderating to about 50 percent in February, down from a record high of 69.8 percent in September. President Ranil

Wickremesinghe has raised taxes and ended generous subsidies on fuel and electricity to boost government revenue after his predecessor defaulted on Sri Lanka's \$46b foreign debt last year.

The reforms are a precondition of a \$2.9b rescue package from the IMF, which Sri Lanka expects to finalize next week. But the tax and price hikes have been roundly unpopular, triggering protests and industrial stoppages around the country. About 40 trade unions warned they planned a general strike next week if their demands for concessions on the austerity program were not met.

Sri Lanka aims to announce a debt-restructuring strategy in April and step up talks with commercial creditors ahead of an IMF review of a bailout package in six months, its central bank governor said last week. Wickremesinghe has said Sri Lanka can expect to remain bankrupt until at least 2026 and insisted his government has no option but to implement the reforms demanded by the IMF. The census and statistics department said the agriculture sector shrank 4.6 percent last year, while industries contracted 16 percent, and services dropped 2 percent from a year earlier.

Sri Lanka's economy shrank 11.8 percent in the July-September quarter from a year ago, the second-worst quarterly contraction ever for the country. "These numbers are broadly in line with expectations. In the last three months of 2022, Sri Lanka was hit by very high inflation, fuel shortages and high interest rates," said Sanjeewa Fernando, senior vice president of research at Asia Securities.

"For the rest of this year, with IMF funds expected, the central bank should be able to keep the currency strengthened, eventually reduce interest rates, and continue to see inflation ease" **r**

Nepal's foreign reserves improve, but real economy faces headwinds

Nepal's gross foreign exchange reserves rose 10.2 percent to \$10.50 billion in mid-February, boosted mainly by remittances from overseas, to a level that will cover about nine months of imports, the central bank said in a report released on March 12, 2023. Reserves rose from \$9.54 billion in mid-July 2022, as Nepalis working abroad sent money home, data showed. A large part of the flows came from the Middle East, South Korea and Malaysia.

Data from Nepal Rastra Bank showed remittance inflows increased 16.4 percent to \$5.30 billion in the mid-July 2022 to mid-February 2023 period against a decrease of 5.3 percent in the same seven-month period in 2021-22. Nepal typically follows a mid-July to mid-July fiscal year based on a local calendar. The central bank has stated in the past that its goal is to maintain external reserves that are adequate to cover more than seven months of imports.

"We are in a comfortable position in the external sector, but there is pressure on internal front of the economy," Prakash Kumar Shrestha, chief of the Economic Research Department of the central bank, said.

Domestic sector concerns

Nepal imports most essential commodities. A lack of manufacturing facilities due to a shortage of power and reduced fund flows to industries have been hurting the economy. Businesses and industry officials have protested in recent weeks against high lending rates, which have now risen to more than 16 percent compared with around 12 percent a year ago. Rates have risen after Nepal's central bank upped its benchmark lending rate to 8.5 percent from 7 percent in July to tame inflation, which hit a six-year high of 8.56 percent in June **r**

China economy recovers as industry, retail, investment grow

China's economy continues to show improvement in combined figures of the first two months of 2023, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on March 05, 2023. "The restarting of China's growth engine is gathering pace, supported by robust industrial output, the rebound of consumption and service activities as well as expanding investment in infrastructure and manufacturing," Pang Ming, chief economist and director of Research at JLL Greater China said. China's value-added industrial output, an important economic indicator, went up 2.4 percent year on year, NBS data showed.

The growth rate rose by 1.1 percentage points compared to December 2022, and the two-year average growth rate stood at 4.9 percent. China's retail sales of consumer goods increased 3.5 percent year on year, marking the first gain since October last year.

China's fixed-asset investment, a gauge of expenditure on items including infrastructure, property, machinery and equipment, went up 5.5 percent, which is 0.4 percentage points higher than the full-year growth rate of 2022. "The data in January



and February as a whole represents a trend of stabilization and recovery," NBS spokesperson Fu Linghui said. Fu noted four positive signs, namely, rising production demand, stable employment and consumer prices, and improved market expectations.

However, real estate investment in January and February fell again, dropping by 5.7 percent compared to the same period last year, although the decline was at a slower pace compared to the 12.2 percent drop in December. "Property investment remains a laggard, yet we expect it to gradually improve in the next several quarters on the back of an unevenly recovering physical market," said Pang.

After its economy grew by three percent last year, China has set an annual growth target of around five percent this year during the just concluded "two sessions" the annual meetings of China's top legislature and political advisory body. "To deliver a steady and sustainable recovery with equal emphasis on growth and quality, China will have to depend on a substantial improvement in consumer demand," Pang noted. Various departments are already planning policies to expand demand this year, which will help achieve the annual growth target, according to Fu **r**

China sets growth target at 5pc in 2023

China's government announced plans for a consumer-led revival of the struggling economy as its legislature opened a session that will tighten President Xi Jinping's control over business and society. Premier Li Keqiang, the top economic official, set this year's growth target at "around 5 percent" following the end of anti-virus controls that kept millions of people at home and triggered protests. Last year's growth in the world's second-largest economy fell to 3 percent, the second-weakest level since at least the 1970s.

"We should give priority to the recovery and expansion of consumption," Li said in a speech on government plans before the ceremonial National People's Congress in the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing. The full meeting of the 2,977 members of the NPC is the year's highest-profile event but its work is limited to endorsing decisions made by the ruling Communist Party and showcasing official initiatives.

This month, the NPC is due to

endorse the appointment of a government of Xi loyalists including a new premier after the 69-year-old president expanded his status as China's most powerful figure in decades by awarding himself a third five-year term as party general secretary in October, possibly preparing to become leader for life. Li, an advocate of free enterprise, was forced out as the No. 2 party leader in October.

Xi's new leadership team will face challenges ranging from weak global

demand for exports and lingering US tariff hikes in a feud over technology and security to curbs on access to Western processor chips due to security fears. Separately, the Ministry of Finance announced a 7.2 percent budget increase for the ruling party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, to 1.55 trillion yuan (\$224 billion), the 29th straight annual increase. China's military spending is the world's second highest after the United States. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute says the two countries together account for half of global military outlays.

Li's report called for boosting consumer spending by increasing household incomes but gave no details in his unusually brief, 53-minute speech. It was less than half the length of work reports in some previous years. The premier called for "building up our country's strength and self-reliance in science and technology," an area in which Beijing's state-led efforts to create competitors in electric cars, clean energy, telecoms and other fields have strained relations with Washington and other trading partners. They complain China steals or pressures foreign companies to hand over technology and improperly subsidizes and shields its fledgling competitors in violation of its market-opening commitments.

Xi earlier singled out encouraging jittery consumers and entrepreneurs to spend and invest as a priority at the ruling party's economic planning meeting in December. Beijing needs to "fully release consumption potential," Xi said, according to a text released last month. Since taking power in 2012, Xi has promoted an even more dominant role for the ruling party. He has called for the party to return to its "original mission" as China's economic, social and cultural leader and carry out the "rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation" **r**

Japan revises GDP to nearly flat

Japan's economy grew at an annual pace of 0.1 percent in October–December, in a downgrade from an earlier 0.6 percent increase, showing how the world's third-largest economy was barely eking out growth. The Cabinet Office's revised figure for seasonally adjusted gross domestic product, or GDP, for the last three months of 2022 showed growth on quarter was flat, down from an earlier estimate given in February at 0.2 percent growth. The annual rate shows what the growth would have been if the on-quarter rate continues for a year. Domestic demand shrank 0.3 percent, worse than the earlier release, showing a 0.2 percent decline, according to the data released. Public demand stood unchanged from the initial figure at plus 0.3 percent.

The latest numbers underline Japan's fragile recovery, although the easing of restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic has helped. Japan has struggled over a shortage of imported parts from China, and the rest of Asia, such as computer chips for the auto industry, as well as inflation, especially the higher prices of energy, worsened by Russia's war in Ukraine.

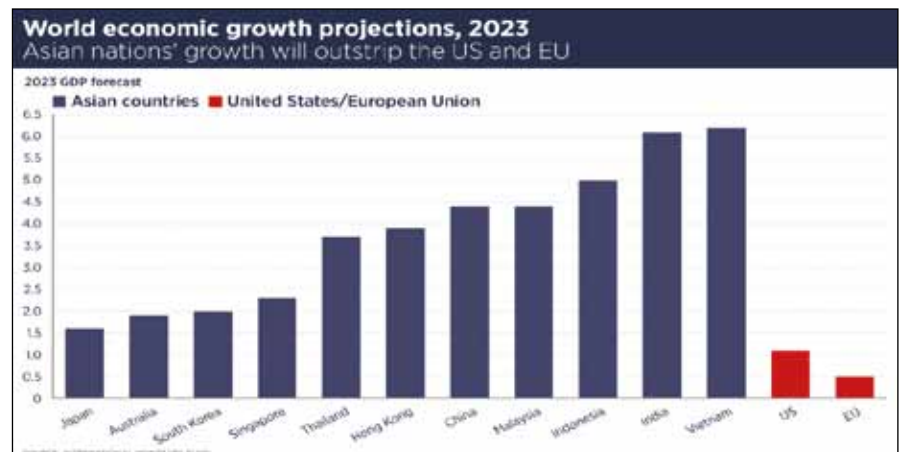
The return of economic activity, especially tourism, is expected to

bolster the rebound. Restaurants and other businesses are welcoming the return of crowds, as vaccination is generally widespread in Japan. Although Covid cases still persist, including deaths, the nation has been gradually relaxing measures, such as crowd size restrictions or mask-wearing requirements. Japan's economy shrank 0.3 percent in the July–September period from the previous quarter. GDP is the total value of goods and services produced in a country **r**

Economists lift Singapore's 2023 growth forecast to 1.9pc

Private sector economists have raised slightly their forecast for Singapore's economic growth in 2023, with the pace seen accelerating to 2.5 per cent in 2024, according to a Monetary Authority of Singapore survey. Most of the 21 economists and analysts who participated in the quarterly survey believe robust growth in China, underpinned by economic reopening and policy easing, better-than-expected global growth, and a faster technology sector recovery could further boost Singapore's outlook.

The median forecast for gross domestic product growth in the survey, which was conducted in February, came in at 1.9 per cent for the whole of 2023. This was up



from the 1.8 per cent GDP growth projected in the previous survey published last December. The estimate lands within the top half of the Government's broad forecast range of 0.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent growth for 2023.

The median forecast in the survey for Consumer Price Index-All Items, also called headline inflation, for 2023 was 5 per cent, down from 5.2 per cent in the December survey. But the forecast for core inflation, which excludes accommodation and private transport costs, was raised a notch to 4.1 per cent, from 4 per cent previously.

MAS expects headline inflation to average 5.5 per cent to 6.5 per cent, and core inflation, 3.5 per cent to 4.5 per cent, in 2023. The respondents to the MAS survey kept their overall unemployment rate at 2.2 per cent for the end of 2023, unchanged from the December survey. However, 56 per cent of the respondents warned that an escalation in geopolitical tensions and inflationary pressures were the two prominent risks to their forecasts.

Meanwhile, spillovers from an external growth slowdown was also ranked in the survey as the top downside risk, by 31 per cent of respondents. The median of forecasts for various economic sectors in the survey showed manufacturing would not be able to record an expansion in 2023, finance and insurance would grow by 2.5 per cent, and construction would expand by 4.2 per cent.

The wholesale and retail trade sector would likely grow by 1.9 per cent, while accommodation and food services would post growth of 3.2 per cent. The respondents expect non-oil domestic exports to shrink by 4 per cent in 2023. For the whole of 2023, 86 per cent of the respondents expect corporate profitability to decline. At

the same time, 57 per cent expect private residential property prices to increase in 2023.

Respondents cited tighter global financial conditions, a stronger US dollar and elevated inflation as the main factors that could potentially weigh on financial markets and lending conditions in Singapore. However, all respondents identified a slower pace of tightening of global financial conditions, including less aggressive rate hikes by central banks, as an upside driver of domestic financial market and lending conditions.

Respondents also listed capital inflows into Singapore, a weaker trade-weighted Singapore dollar and improved external economic outlook as other potential upside drivers for the market. However, hopes of less aggressive tightening by the United States Federal Reserve were dashed after chairman Jerome Powell cautioned that US rates are likely to head higher than expected and officials were ready to speed up the pace of hikes if inflation remains hot.

The comments triggered a broad sell-off in US and Asian stock markets and a rally in the US dollar. Respondents to the MAS survey also expect the Singapore dollar to appreciate to \$1.31 against the US dollar in 2023. That is higher than the December survey's median forecast of \$1.34 per US dollar for 2023 **r**

South Korea to build chip-making center with Samsung's \$230b

South Korea says it will build an enormous facility to make computer chips in greater Seoul, with about \$230 billion in investment from memory chip giant Samsung Electronics. The plans were announced by President Yoon Suk Yeol and confirmed by the electronics giant. "We will build the world's largest new 'high-tech

system semiconductor cluster' in the Seoul Metropolitan area based on large-scale private investment of almost 300 trillion Korean won," he said. "In addition, we will grow the 'semiconductor mega cluster' to the world's largest in connection with the existing memory semiconductor manufacturing complexes."

A government statement sent to CNN said the chip cluster would be located in Gyeonggi province, which is part of the Seoul Metropolitan area, and the total investment would be completed in about 20 years. In order to protect intellectual property, the country will revise its Industrial Technology Protection Act, according to the statement, which did not offer additional details.

Last May, Samsung outlined a plan to pour more than \$350 billion into its businesses and create tens of thousands of new jobs through 2026. It said it would primarily invest in core businesses such as chip-making and biopharmaceuticals. It wasn't immediately clear whether the previously announced investment would overlap with the one announced by the government. Samsung is best known for its electronics division, with its popular smartphones and televisions. In recent years, the company has leaned further into its role as a provider of semiconductors as manufacturers around the world suffer from shortages.

Memory chips, which have proved to be a key moneymaker for Samsung, will continue to be a focus area with further investment planned, according to the firm. In the area of high-end computer chips, Samsung competes directly with Intel and Taiwan's TSMC. The vast majority of the world's advanced microchips are made in just two places, Taiwan and South Korea **r**

Inflation low in GCC, expected to fall globally

Inflation in the GCC averaged at around the 4 per cent mark and showed a downward trend for most member countries during the first half of 2022, according to a new report. "The proactive policies by the governments in the region and subsidies on food and energy items helped to keep inflation at relatively low levels," the Kuwait-based investment strategy and research firm Kamco Invest said in its latest report.

The year 2022 was a turbulent year for the global economy with runaway inflation and the cost-of-living crisis being dominant issues facing the bulk of the countries globally. The Gulf Cooperation Council economies were no exception that faced the challenges of higher prices that worsened due to excessive reliance on imported products," it added. The report further said that global energy prices sky-rocketed during 2022 mainly driven by the Russia-Ukraine conflict as Russia's energy exports were sanctioned.

The EU countries, Russia's biggest natural gas and oil export destination, started to diversify and look elsewhere for energy imports to curtail Russia's ability to wage war. The sanctioning of Russia's energy exports created a supply drop in global energy markets hence pushing oil and natural gas prices up. The Russia-Ukraine conflict also created a negative sentiment in energy markets as the war nears its first anniversary. In 2022, European natural gas prices reached record highs, the Kamco Invest report said.

Russia and Ukraine are key producers of global foodstuffs. Between them, the two countries export nearly one-third of the world's wheat exports and barley and over 70 per cent of its sunflower. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has prevented the export of food grains from those countries from leaving their shores causing



worldwide price increases in food as well as other repercussions such as fear of food shortages, inflation, and political instability.

Inflation reached a peak of 9.1 per cent in June 2022 in the US and has mostly trended downwards thereafter. Inflationary pressure is also expected to ease in the near term. According to the IMF, nearly 84 per cent of the countries in the world are forecast to have lower consumer price index inflation growth in 2023 than in 2022 when inflation reached the highest level in decades. In terms of global inflation growth, the IMF forecast in its latest World Economic Report, that global headline inflation would fall from an annual average of 8.8 per cent in 2022 to 6.6 per cent in 2023 and further to 4.3 per cent in 2024. The IMF attributed its lower inflation projection to declining international fuel and non-fuel commodity prices due to weaker global demand.

Efforts to control inflation via tighter monetary policies, including higher interest rates, are expected to continue in 2023, the report said. After raising the rate by 25 bps in 2023, the US Fed is expected to undertake further rate hikes as indicated in their statement as well as probability surveys from Bloomberg that show at least two more rate hikes of 25 bps this year.

GCC rate hikes and inflation

In its latest response at the start of February 2023, Saudi Arabia's Central Bank increased its repo rate by 0.25 per cent to 5.25 per cent while the UAE Central Bank lifted its base rate for overnight deposit facility from 4.4 per cent to 4.65 per cent. Similarly, Kuwait's Central Bank has raised its discount rate by 50 bps from 3.5 per cent to 4 per cent whereas the Central Bank of Bahrain raised its one-week deposits rate by 25 basis points to 5.5 per cent. On the other hand, the Central Bank of Qatar kept its rates intact; its repo rate at 5.25 per cent, its deposit rate at 5 per cent and its lending rate at 5.5 per cent. GCC central banks follow the US Federal Reserve's rate changes since their local currencies are pegged to the US dollar barring Kuwait which has its currency pegged to a basket of currencies.

Inflation in the Middle East and North Africa region is expected to affect economic growth despite being low when compared to global economies. Efforts such as price controls and consumption subsidies in some countries in the MENA region helped to control prices. However, these measures are expected to result in additional costs to oil-importing countries in the region. According to the World Bank, developing oil-

importing countries in the region might need to find new revenues, increase deficit, debt, or even cut government spending in other areas of the economy to fund the costs of the inflation mitigation programs.

In contrast, there is no such fiscal pressure for the GCC and other oil-exporting countries in the region as state revenue growth mainly from higher oil prices is expected to more than compensate for additional inflation mitigation costs incurred by governments. In the GCC region, inflation is expected to diminish in 2023 led by higher interest rates and slowing global growth. According to PWC, inflation in the region is expected to average 2.7 per cent in 2023.

The GCC region is also expected to gain from its relative stability in its financial covers thanks to higher oil prices and higher energy exports in 2022. This would allow countries in the region to invest in critical sectors to protect from future fluctuations in key food and component prices **r**

Saudi Arabia inflation slows as food, transport prices dip

Saudi Arabia's inflation rate slowed to 3 percent in February compared with 3.4 percent in January as prices of food and transportation, softened, government data showed on March 15, 2023. The monthly consumer price index was tempered by a 0.7 percent decrease in food prices, the data showed. Transportation prices also fell by 0.5 percent in February versus the previous month. However, on a year-on-year basis the inflation rate was higher compared with 1.6 percent in February 2022. The food & beverage basket was higher by 3.1 percent while the non-food basket rose by 7 percent year-on-year.

“Actual rents for housing increased by 8.3 percent in February 2023, reflecting the increase in rents



for apartments by 21.4 percent” Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Statistics said. The consultancy, Capital Economics, said this could mark the start of a gradual easing in inflation and they expect it to settle at 1.5–2.0 percent year-on-year by the end of this year. “Looking ahead, last month's reading is consistent with our view that inflation peaked in January and will continue to ease over the rest of this year. We expect that the headline rate to reach 1.5–2.0 percent y/y by the end of this year and it will hover around this level over 2024.”

The consultancy added that the risks to the inflation forecast lie to the downside. “If oil prices remain elevated, as we expect, this will provide the government with scope to loosen fiscal policy further and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has hinted at a cut to the VAT rate” **r**

Saudi Arabia invests \$51b in first wave of Shareek diversification

Saudi Arabia launched \$51.2 billion of investments guided by local companies including Saudi Aramco, SABIC and Ma'aden, among others, in a signing ceremony on March 2. The event was held to announce the first wave of projects across eight companies supported by the Shareek

program, which is dedicated to large companies and seeks to unlock the full potential of Saudi Arabia's private sector, according to the country's government news agency SPA.

The program was first established in 2021 by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as part of the kingdom's Vision 2030, which now has a total of 28 companies enrolled. About \$32 billion will be spent by the end of 2030 by large companies, with the goal of adding \$124.50 billion to Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product by 2040 and more than 64,000 local jobs. Shareek will implement 12 projects across four non-oil sectors, stated SPA.

Saudi Aramco will receive support to accelerate five projects to create more than 10,000 jobs including joint venture steel plate manufacturing. It will carry the goal of making Saudi Arabia 100 percent self-sufficient for steel plate demand by 2030. ACWA Power will receive support to construct the world's largest hydrogen plant, developed in partnership with NEOM Green Hydrogen Company and Air Products Qudra. Saudi Arabian mining company Ma'aden will receive backing to build its phosphate 3 project in the kingdom's northern region of Wa'ad Al Shamal, which is set to position the company as the third-largest producer of phosphate fertilizers globally by 2029 **r**

US Fed announces latest interest hike in wake of banking turmoil

The United States Federal Reserve has announced its latest interest rate hike, a move aimed at lowering inflation by making borrowing more expensive for consumers. The increase of a quarter of a percentage point on March 22, 2023 sets the US central bank's benchmark overnight interest rate in the 4.75 to 5 percent range, its highest level in 15 years. The increase was widely expected and underscores the Federal Reserve's determination to rein in inflation, which remains above policymakers' long-term annual target of two percent.

But the interest rate increase follows the sudden failures this month of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank. Critics blamed the Fed's relentless rate hikes for contributing to the failures, part of the biggest banking sector meltdown since the 2008 financial crisis, and some observers speculated that policymakers would be forced to pause the interest rate increases. When asked if such a pause had been considered for the latest cycle, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said, "We did consider that." Nevertheless, the policy statement said the US banking system is "sound and resilient". It added that recent stress in the sector was "likely to result in tighter credit conditions for households and businesses and to weigh on economic activity, hiring, and inflation". The Fed also indicated



that a pause in interest rate increases may be on the horizon. The latest policy statement omitted the oft-repeated language that "ongoing increases" in interest rates "will be appropriate".

That phrase had been in every policy statement since March 16, 2022, when the Fed made its decision to start hiking rates to address inflation. Now, the language has been softened. The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee said instead that "some additional policy firming may be appropriate". That leaves open the chance that the Fed may still lift rates one more quarter percentage point, perhaps at its next meeting in May, but it also suggests that the next hike could represent an initial stopping point for the rate increases. The hike was the same size as the central bank's previous rate decision in February.

The three major US stock indexes, which were mostly languid prior to the Fed announcement, moved higher in the immediate aftermath, as investors digested the hike and the accompanying statement. Meanwhile, Powell said that while recent stress on the banking system has added uncertainty to the outlook it's still possible the economy may not face a sharp downturn as the Fed works to contain inflation. In terms of a soft landing for the economy, "There's a pathway to that, and that path still exists," Powell said. Officials also projected the unemployment rate would end the year at 4.5 percent, slightly below the 4.6 percent seen in projections issued in December. The outlook for economic growth also fell slightly to 0.4 percent from 0.5 percent in the previous projections **r**

US services sector grows steadily, prices remain high

The US services sector grew at a steady clip in February, with new orders and employment rising to more than one-year highs, suggesting the economy continued to expand in the first quarter. The Institute for Supply Management survey on March 03, 2023 described companies as "mostly positive about

business conditions." The survey added to robust consumer spending and labor market in suggesting the economy was not near a recession. But the economy's resilience could see the Federal Reserve keep raising interest rates through midyear.

"Activity is not slowing much and that is keeping pressure on prices and on

margins," said Tim Quinlan, a senior economist at Wells Fargo in Charlotte, North Carolina. "The fact that this is occurring alongside an upswing in hiring gives the Fed the green light for further rate increases." The ISM's non-manufacturing PMI dipped to 55.1 from a reading of 55.2 in January. A reading above 50 indicates growth



in the services industry, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the economy. The PMI is well above the 49.9 level, which the ISM said over time indicates growth in the overall economy. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the non-manufacturing PMI would decrease to 54.5.

Thirteen services industries, including construction, retail trade, accommodation and food services as well as professional, scientific and technical services, reported growth last month. Wholesale trade and information were among the four reporting a contraction. Commentary from businesses was mixed. Accommodation and food services businesses viewed sales activity as “generally strong, despite economic headwinds.” Professional, scientific and technical services companies said they were “starting the new business cycle with a noticeable uptick in demand.”

While businesses that manage companies and offer support services reported activity was slowing down, they were not seeing “a collapse like in 2009.” Companies in the information sector said it was “getting harder to reduce costs,” adding they have had to “reduce the employee base more aggressively to achieve margins.”

Overall, the services sector is benefiting from a switch in consumer

spending from goods, which are typically bought on credit. The ISM said that its manufacturing PMI contracted for a fourth straight month in February. The ISM survey’s gauge of new orders received by services businesses increased to 62.6 last month, the highest level since November 2021, from 60.4 in January. According to the ISM, comments from businesses ranged from “increased requests for service and components” to “customers starting to ramp up for the spring season”. US stocks were trading higher. The dollar slipped against a basket of currencies. US Treasury prices rose.

Supply significantly improved

The services sector is now at the center of the fight against inflation, as services prices tend to be stickier and less responsive to interest rate increases. With the labor market still tight and inflation stubbornly high, the odds have increased that the Fed will raise interest rates at least three more times this year instead of twice.

The US central bank has increased its policy rate by 450 basis points since last March from the near-zero level to the current 4.5 percent to 4.75 percent range, with the bulk of the increases coming between May and December. A measure of prices paid by services industries for inputs fell to 65.6, the lowest in two years, from 67.8 in January. Some economists

have viewed the ISM services prices paid gauge as a good predictor of personal consumption expenditures inflation. The Fed, which has a 2 percent inflation target, tracks the PCE price indexes for monetary policy. Sixteen service industries reported an increase in prices paid last month. Only accommodation and food services reported a decline.

Prices remained elevated despite a significant improvement in supply chains. The survey’s measure of services industry supplier deliveries dropped to 47.6, indicating the fastest delivery performance since June 2009, from 50.0 in January. A reading below 50 indicates faster deliveries.

“Robust services demand could keep inflation sticky, putting more pressure on the Fed to keep going with rate hikes,” said Priscilla Thiagamorthy, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets in Toronto. Hiring increased last month, with the survey’s measure of services industry employment rising to 54. That was the highest reading since December 2021 and was up from 50 in January. Anthony Nieves, chair of the ISM Services Business Survey Committee, described the employment picture as having “improved for some industries,” but also noted that “several industries reported continued downsizing” **r**

UK growth confirms recession avoided in 2022

The UK economy performed better than previously estimated at the end of last year, revised official figures show. It was previously thought the economy had not grown in the last three months of 2022, but new Office for National Statistics data shows it grew by 0.1 percent. The latest figures confirm that the UK economy avoided falling into recession at the end of 2022. The ONS said telecommunications, construction


and manufacturing had all fared better than initially thought. It also said household finances had been helped by the government's energy bill support scheme. The main driver of the economy in the UK the services sector was boosted by a sizable jump for travel agents.

Manufacturing growth was driven by the drugs industry, and construction growth was up much more than previously thought. The ONS also revised up its estimate for the economy's performance in the July–September quarter. It now says GDP the value of the goods and services the country produces fell by 0.1 percent, compared with its previous estimate of a 0.2 percent fall. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said the figures “show there's underlying resilience in the UK economy”.

However, he added that “families up and down the country is facing real pressure”. A recession is usually defined as when the economy contracts for two three-month periods in a row, so the growth at the end of 2022 means the UK avoided one. Last week, the Bank of England said that the economy was expected to grow only slightly in the coming months.

However, Bank governor Andrew Bailey said he was “much more hopeful” for the economy, and it was no longer heading into an immediate recession. Mr Bailey's comments came after the Bank increased interest rates to 4.25 percent from 4 percent. Interest rates have been repeatedly hiked as the Bank attempts to get the soaring pace of price rises under control. Inflation, which is the rate at which prices rise, remains close to its highest level for 40 years, and hit 10.4 percent in the year to February.

Ruth Gregory of Capital Economics said the revised ONS figures showed that high inflation took a slightly smaller toll on the economy than

thought. However, she said most of the impact of higher rates was yet to be felt. “We still think the economy will slip into a recession this year,” she said. Separately, house prices slid in March at the fastest annual rate since 2009, mortgage lender Nationwide said 

UK job vacancies fall for eighth time in a row

Job vacancies in the UK have fallen for the eighth time in a row as companies blamed economic pressures for holding back on hiring new staff. The official figures come a day ahead of Budget when the chancellor is expected to set out plans to encourage people back into work. The number of jobs on offer between December and February fell by 51,000 compared with the three months before. Despite the drop, the number of job vacancies remains high at 1.1 million. There are also 328,000 more vacancies compared to the pre-pandemic period of between January and March 2020. The rate of economic inactivity people aged between 16 to 64 who are not in work and not seeking a job dipped to 21.3 percent between November and January.


This was driven by younger people aged between 16 to 24 either getting jobs or looking for work. However, there are still nine million economically inactive Britons who are not part of the workforce either because they are students, have retired or are suffering from long-term illness. On March 14, 2023, it was anticipated that Chancellor Jeremy Hunt will detail how the government intends to entice people back into work. One measure expected to be announced is a boost to the amount that people can save for their pensions before it is taxed.

Danni Hewson, head of financial analysis at AJ Bell said this move

was “an incredibly welcome start”, but added: “It does little to address labor issues at the lower end of end of the scale.” James Reed, chairman of recruitment firm Reed, said that while there was a fall in new jobs “it's not cause to panic”. He said: “Actually there are over 300,000 more vacancies than there were this time pre-pandemic, three years ago, so the labor market is pretty buoyant still which is surprising many people.”

Robin Clevett, a self-employed carpenter and joiner who manages up to 10 subcontractors on construction projects, said that he was having to turn down work because there are not enough skilled workers available. “Business is really buoyant at the moment,” he said. “Everyone needs trades they need people to do insulation work, they need people to do new builds, refurbish old builds, replace cladding. There's so much work but there's not enough labor to go around so that's what has driven this massive demand and adverts everywhere for all kinds of trades.”

He added: “I personally won't take on work now knowing I'm not going to find the staff. So I'm turning down opportunities.” On the eve of the chancellor's so-called “back to work” Budget, the official numbers show that is already beginning to happen. Employment has risen again, but this time driven by part-time and the self-employed. While vacancies have fallen, they still remain very high. Wages are growing in cash terms versus last year but by still well below the inflation rate. On a month-to-month basis though, there is some evidence that pay growth is starting to stall.

With unemployment still very low by international standards, and employment high, the jobs market remains a bright spot in the figures. This has underpinned a consumer more resilient than might be expected to the massive energy price shock 

এলডিসি থেকে উত্তরণ নতুন সুযোগ সৃষ্টির পাশাপাশি চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখোমুখি হবে বাংলাদেশ: প্রধানমন্ত্রী

উন্নয়নশীল দেশে উত্তরণ বাংলাদেশের সামনে অব্যাহত সুযোগ সৃষ্টি করবে উল্লেখ করে প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা বলেছেন, ‘একই সঙ্গে আমাদের অনেকগুলো চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবেলা করতে হবে। আমরা এখন ২০২৬ সালে এলডিসি থেকে বের হয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য পাঁচ বছরের প্রস্তুতিমূলক সময় পার করছি। আমি বিশ্বাস করি, কঠোর বাণিজ্য প্রতিযোগিতাসহ নানা চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবেলার ক্ষেত্রে আমরা যথেষ্ট সক্ষমতা অর্জন করব। দেশের ব্যবসায়ী সম্প্রদায়কে এসব সুযোগ কাজে লাগাতে এবং চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবেলার প্রস্তুতি নিতে আহ্বান জানাচ্ছি।’ দেশের ব্যবসা ও বিনিয়োগ সম্প্রসারণের লক্ষ্যে সম্প্রতি এফবিসিসিআই আয়োজিত তিনদিনব্যাপী ‘বাংলাদেশ বিজনেস সামিট-২০২৩’-এর উদ্বোধন অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্যে তিনি এসব কথা বলেন। যুক্তরাজ্য, সৌদি আরব, চীন, ভুটান, সংযুক্ত আরব আমিরাতসহ ১২টি দেশের বিভিন্ন আন্তর্জাতিক সংস্থার প্রধান নির্বাহীরা এবং দুই শতাধিক বিদেশী বিনিয়োগকারী, ১৭টি দেশের ব্যবসায়ী নেতারা এতে অংশগ্রহণ করেন।

অনুষ্ঠানে আরো বক্তব্য রাখেন পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী ড. এ কে আব্দুল মোমেন, বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী টিপু মুনশি, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বেসরকারি শিল্প ও বিনিয়োগ উপদেষ্টা সালমান ফজলুর রহমান, সৌদি আরবের বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী মাজিদ বিন আবদুল্লাহ আল কাসাবি, ভুটানের বাণিজ্য ও কর্মসংস্থানমন্ত্রী কর্ম দর্জি, বিশ্ব বাণিজ্য সংস্থার (ডব্লিউটিও) উপ-মহাপরিচালক জিয়াংচেন জং। এফবিসিসিআই সভাপতি মো. জসিম উদ্দিন অনুষ্ঠানে স্বাগত বক্তব্য প্রদান করেন।

এলডিসি উত্তরণ-পরবর্তী চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবেলার প্রস্তুতি নিতে ব্যবসায়ীদের আহ্বান জানিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, ‘এখানে কোনো হতাশার কথা শুনতে চাই না। এখন থেকে নিজেদের এমনভাবে তৈরি করতে হবে যেন সামনে যেসব চ্যালেঞ্জ আসবে, সেগুলো আমরা মোকাবেলা করতে পারি। উত্তরণ-পরবর্তী পরিবেশের চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবেলায় সরকার আপনাদের সব ধরনের সহযোগিতা করে যাবে, সেটা আমি কথা দিচ্ছি।’ বিনিয়োগ পরিবেশ উন্নয়নের পাশাপাশি আমলাতান্ত্রিক জটিলতা নিরসনেরও আশ্বাস দেন সরকার প্রধান। তিনি বলেন, ‘সরকার এফডিআই এবং স্থানীয় বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগ উভয়ের জন্য পরিবেশ উন্নয়নের ওপর সর্বোচ্চ গুরুত্ব দিয়েছে।

বাংলাদেশ ইনভেস্টমেন্ট ডেভেলপমেন্ট অথরিটি (বিডা) এখন বাংলাদেশের জাতীয় ব্যবসায়িক পরিবেশ কর্মসূচি প্রকল্প বিআইসিআইপি বাস্তবায়ন করছে। এর আওতায় আগামী ৫০ সপ্তাহে ৫০টি সংস্কার এবং আগামী তিন বছরে ১০০টি বিনিয়োগ পরিবেশ সংস্কার করা হবে। লালফিতার দৌরাভ্য সিরিয়ে দেয়া হবে। সিদ্ধান্তের বাস্তবায়ন সঙ্গে সঙ্গে হবে।’

বৃহত্তম ভোক্তা বাজার হিসেবে বাংলাদেশ আগামী ২০৩০ সালের মধ্যে যুক্তরাজ্য বা জার্মানির মতো দেশকে ছাড়িয়ে যাবে বলে আশা প্রকাশ করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তিনি বলেন, ‘বাংলাদেশ প্রায় ১৭ কোটি জনগোষ্ঠীর দেশ। আমাদের নিজস্ব অর্থনৈতিক বাজার সৃষ্টি হচ্ছে, মানুষের ক্রয়ক্ষমতা বাড়ছে। এটা ২০৩০ সালের মধ্যে নবম বৃহত্তম ভোক্তা বাজারে পরিণত হবে বলে আমরা বিশ্বাস করি। তখন যুক্তরাজ্য বা জার্মানির মতো প্রতিষ্ঠিত বাজারগুলোর চেয়ে এবং বর্তমান উচ্চপ্রবৃদ্ধির ডিয়েনাম বা থাইল্যান্ডকে ছাড়িয়ে যেতে সক্ষম হবে বলে আশা করি। ২০২৫ সাল নাগাদ বাংলাদেশে ক্রমবর্ধমান মধ্যবিত্ত ধনিক শ্রেণীর সংখ্যা হবে ৩ কোটি ৪০ লাখ। ২০৪০ সালের মধ্যে আনুমানিক মাথাপিছু জিডিপি দাঁড়াবে ৫ হাজার ৮৮০ মার্কিন ডলার।’

দেশের ভৌগোলিক অবস্থানজনিত সুফল তুলে ধরে প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা বলেন, ‘কৌশলগত ভৌগোলিক অবস্থানের কারণে বাংলাদেশ ৩০০ কোটি মানুষের আঞ্চলিক বাজারের কেন্দ্রস্থল হতে পারে। যোগাযোগের ক্ষেত্রে প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্যের সেতুবন্ধনে বাংলাদেশ বিশেষ ভূমিকা রাখতে পারে।’ তিনি বলেন, ‘আমার সরকার এফডিআইসহ বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগকে উচ্চপ্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জনের প্রধান হাতিয়ার হিসেবে গ্রহণ করেছে। আমরা ২০৩১ সালে জিডিপিতে বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগের অনুপাত ৩১ দশমিক ৪৩ শতাংশে উন্নীত করতে চাই। বাংলাদেশে এখন জ্বালানি, পানি, লজিস্টিক, পরিবহন খাতে অবকাঠামো উন্নয়নের সুযোগ রয়েছে। ২০২৫ সালের মধ্যে শুধু লজিস্টিক খাতই ৯০ বিলিয়ন মার্কিন ডলারের বাজারে পরিণত হবে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে।’ এ সময় দেশের উন্নয়নে বেসরকারি খাতের অবদানও তুলে ধরেন শেখ হাসিনা। তিনি বলেন, ‘উৎপাদন খাত ছাড়াও এ অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধির সাফল্যের পেছনে রয়েছে ব্যক্তি খাতের ভোগ বৃদ্ধি, প্রাথমিকভাবে সহায়তা করেছে

ক্রমবর্ধমান মধ্যবিত্ত শ্রেণীর বিকাশ, শক্তিশালী গ্রামীণ অর্থনীতি, প্রবাসী আয় বৃদ্ধি, গ্রামীণ ও জ্বালানি খাতের অবকাঠামো উন্নয়ন এবং যোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থার উন্নয়ন। দেশের অভাবনীয় প্রবৃদ্ধির নেতৃত্বে রয়েছে আমাদের বেসরকারি খাত। তাদের নেতৃত্বে রফতানি আয় ২০০৮ সালে ১৬ দশমিক ১৮ মার্কিন ডলার থেকে বৃদ্ধি পেয়ে ২০২২ সালে ৬০ বিলিয়ন ডলারে উন্নীত হয়েছে।’

প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, ‘বাংলাদেশ বর্তমানে বিশ্বের দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম পোশাক রফতানিকারক দেশ। আমি মনে করি বেসরকারি খাতকে যদি আমরা বেশি গুরুত্ব না দিই, তাহলে ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্য বিনিয়োগ উন্নত করা সম্ভব নয়। তাই এ খাতের বিকাশে প্রায় সবকিছুই উন্মুক্ত করে দিয়েছি।’ বিচক্ষণ সামষ্টিক অর্থনৈতিক ব্যবস্থাপনা, অর্থনৈতিক উদারীকরণ এবং বাণিজ্য সহায়তাকরণের ওপর ভিত্তি করে বাংলাদেশের এ টেকসই অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি অর্জন সম্ভব হয়েছে বলে উল্লেখ করেন সরকার প্রধান। তিনি বলেন, ‘২০১৫ সালে আমরা মধ্যম আয়ের দেশের মর্যাদা লাভ করেছি। আমরা আশা করি, ২০২৬ সালে উন্নয়নশীল দেশ হিসেবে যাত্রা শুরু করে ২০৩৭ সালের মধ্যে বাংলাদেশ বিশ্বে ২০তম বৃহৎ অর্থনৈতিক দেশে পরিণত হবে।’

তিনি আরো বলেন, ‘আমরা ব্যাপক হারে টেকসই অবকাঠামো নির্মাণ করেছি, যোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থার উন্নতি করেছি। এগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে এলিভেটেড এক্সপ্রেসওয়ে, নদীর তলদেশের টানেল এবং গণপরিবহন ব্যবস্থার সম্প্রসারণ। আমাদের যোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থায় গত জুনে যুক্ত হয়েছে পদ্মা বহুমুখী সেতু। নিজস্ব অর্থায়নে আমরা এ সেতু নির্মাণ করতে সক্ষম হয়েছি। আমরা যে পারি সেটা প্রমাণ করেছি একটা সিদ্ধান্তে। এ সেতু শুধু বাংলাদেশের দক্ষিণাঞ্চলে নয়, আমাদের আঞ্চলিক যোগাযোগের ক্ষেত্রেও বিরাট অবদান রাখবে। পাশাপাশি অভ্যন্তরীণ ও আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য বাড়াবে এবং ন্যূনতম ১ দশমিক ২৩ শতাংশ হারে জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধিতে সহায়তা করবে। গত ডিসেম্বরে আমরা মেট্রোরেল যুগে প্রবেশ করেছি। সাফল্যের ওপর দাঁড়িয়ে বাংলাদেশ ২০৩১ সালের মধ্যে উচ্চমধ্যম আয়ের দেশ এবং ২০৪১ সালের মধ্যে উন্নত দেশের রূপান্তরিত হতে চায় এবং সেটাই আমাদের লক্ষ্য।’

আগামী ছয় মাস ইতিবাচক ধারায় থাকবে দেশের ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্য বিশ্বের বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স সার্ভে

আগামী ছয় মাস দেশের ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্য ইতিবাচক ধারায় ফিরবে বলে মনে করছে বিজনেস ইনিশিয়েটিভ লিডিং ডেভেলপমেন্ট (বিল্ড)। ‘বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স সার্ভে রিপোর্ট ২০২২-২৩’ শীর্ষক এক সমীক্ষায় এমনটা জানায় সংস্থাটি। সম্প্রতি রাজধানীর একটি হোটেলে আয়োজিত এক অনুষ্ঠানে সমীক্ষার তথ্য তুলে ধরা হয়। এতে প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে উপস্থিত ছিলেন শিল্পমন্ত্রী নূরুল মজিদ মাহমুদ হুমায়ূন, এমপি। মূল প্রবন্ধ উপস্থাপন করেন বিল্ডের প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা (সিইও) ফেরদৌস আরা বেগম।

সমীক্ষা অনুযায়ী, ২০২২ সালে সামগ্রিক বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স ইনডেক্স (বিসিআই) দাঁড়ায় ৭৪ দশমিক ৪ পয়েন্টে, যা আগামী ছয় মাসের মধ্যে ব্যবসা পরিস্থিতিতে ইতিবাচক ধারার ইঙ্গিত দিচ্ছে। এ সময় উৎপাদন খাতের ক্রয়াদেশ, সেবা খাতে চাহিদা, বিক্রয় মূল্য ও বাণিজ্যিক কার্যক্রম বাড়বে। যদিও উৎপাদন ব্যয় নিয়ে ব্যবসায়ীরা ‘নিম্ন আস্থা’ (হতাশা) প্রকাশ করেছেন। এমন পরিস্থিতিতে বিদ্যুৎ, পানি, গ্যাস, বাড়ি ভাড়া ও অন্যান্য সরঞ্জাম সংক্রান্ত ব্যয়ের বোঝা কমানোর দাবি জানিয়েছে বিল্ড। গত বছরের সেপ্টেম্বর থেকে নভেম্বর পর্যন্ত এ সমীক্ষা চালানো হয়। এতে ৫৬৭ জন উদ্যোক্তার মতামত নেয়া হয়েছে। সমীক্ষার মূল উদ্দেশ্য ছিল গত বছরের মার্চ-আগস্ট পর্যন্ত ব্যবসা পরিস্থিতি বিশ্লেষণ ও ডিসেম্বর থেকে চলতি বছরের জুন পর্যন্ত অর্থনৈতিক কার্যক্রমের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়গুলো সম্পর্কে ধারণা দেয়া। পাশাপাশি উদ্যোক্তাদের ঝুঁকি প্রশমনের প্রস্তুতি নেয়ার ও পরিকল্পনা করার সক্ষমতা প্রদান।

অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্যে শিল্পমন্ত্রী নূরুল মজিদ মাহমুদ হুমায়ূন বলেন, বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক সংকটের মধ্যে বাংলাদেশ বর্তমানে নানা চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন। এর পরও বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স ইনডেক্স (বিসিআই) আমাদের ব্যবসায় পরিস্থিতি সম্পর্কে একটি ইতিবাচক ইঙ্গিত প্রদর্শন করায় আমরা আনন্দিত। সংকট মোকাবেলা ও উত্তরণের ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ যথেষ্ট সক্ষমতা প্রদর্শন করেছে। তিনি ব্যবসায় বিশেষজ্ঞ, থিংকট্যাংক, আন্তর্জাতিক সংস্থা, বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগকারী, ব্যবসায়ী ও গ্রাহকসহ সবাইকে সরকারের সঙ্গে একাত্ম হয়ে কাজ করার আহ্বান জানান।

বিল্ডের প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা (সিইও) ফেরদৌস আরা বেগম বলেন, এ বছরের

বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স সার্ভেতে সাতটি কম্পোনেন্টের মধ্যে ছয়টি কম্পোনেন্টেই উন্নতি পরিলক্ষিত হয়েছে। এ ছয়টি কম্পোনেন্ট হলো কর্মসংস্থান, ক্রয়াদেশ, সেবার চাহিদা, ব্যবসায় কার্যক্রম, বিক্রয় মূল্য ও বিনিয়োগ। শুধু ব্যবসায় ব্যয় সম্পর্কিত মতামতের ক্ষেত্রে নেতিবাচক সাড়া পাওয়া গেছে। এ গবেষণায় ব্যবহৃত ডিফিউশন ইনডেক্সে স্টাডি রেঞ্জ ধরা হয়েছে শূন্য থেকে ১০০ এবং মধ্যবিন্দু ধরা হয়েছে ৫০। প্রাপ্ত ফলাফল ৫০-এর কম হলে সংকোচন বা নেতিবাচক হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা হয়েছে এবং ৫০-এর বেশি হলে সম্প্রসারণ বা ইতিবাচক হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা হয়েছে। আমরা তিনভাবে বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স দেখেছি। একটা হচ্ছে ওভারঅল বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স, আরেকটা হচ্ছে ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিং বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স এবং সার্ভিস সেক্টরের বিজনেস কনফিডেন্স। আমাদের তৈরি পোশাক খাতের ব্যবসায়ীদের কাছ থেকে সবচেয়ে বেশি নেতিবাচক সাড়া পাওয়া গেছে। তারা খরচ বেড়ে যাওয়া নিয়ে হতাশার কথা জানিয়েছেন। যেখানে আমাদের উৎপাদন খাতের সবচেয়ে বড় খাত তৈরি পোশাক, সেখানে উৎপাদন খরচ বেড়ে যাওয়া এবং ব্যবসায়ীদের মধ্যে হতাশা বৃদ্ধি পাওয়া উদ্বেগজনক।

ব্যবসার পরিবেশ উন্নয়নে করহার কমানোর দাবি

এফআইসিসিআই-এমসিসিআইয়ের প্রাক বাজেট আলোচনা

ব্যবসায়ীদের জন্য দেশে বর্তমান কার্যকর করহার অনেক বেশি। এজন্য প্রতিবেশী দেশের সঙ্গে মিল রেখে কার্যকর করহার কমানোর দাবি জানিয়েছে ফরেন ইনভেস্টমেন্টস চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি (এফআইসিসিআই)। সম্প্রতি জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডের (এনবিআর) সঙ্গে প্রাক-বাজেট আলোচনায় এসব দাবি তুলে ধরে এফআইসিসিআইর সভাপতি নাসের এজাজ বিজয়ের নেতৃত্বে প্রতিনিধি দল। এদিন মেট্রোপলিটন চেম্বার অব কমার্সের (এমসিসিআই) সভাপতি মো. সাইফুল ইসলাম বাজেট প্রস্তাব উপস্থাপন করেন। বাজেট আলোচনায় এনবিআর চেয়ারম্যান আবু হেনা মো. রহমাতুল মুনিমের সভাপতিত্বে শুক্র বিভাগের সদস্য মো. মাসুদ সাদেক, ভ্যাটনীতির সদস্য জাকিয়া সুলতানা ও আয়কর নীতির সদস্য সামস উদ্দিন আহমেদ উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

এফআইসিসিআই তাদের প্রস্তাবে আরো জানায়, বর্তমান পাবলিকলি ট্রেডেড প্রতিষ্ঠানের জন্য ২০ শতাংশ ও প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড কোম্পানির

জন্য ২৭ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ করপোরেট ট্যাক্স ধার্য করা হয়েছে। কিন্তু উৎসে কর কেটে নেয়ার পাশাপাশি আয়কর আইনের ৩০বি ও ৮২সি (২) প্রয়োগের ফলে কার্যকর করহার অনেক বেশি হয়ে যায়। অনেক সময় এটা ৪০ থেকে ৫০ শতাংশও হয়ে যায়, যা প্রতিবেশী দেশের সঙ্গে মিল রেখে সমন্বয়ের জন্য এনবিআরকে প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে এফআইসিসিআই। এছাড়া উৎসে কর কর্তনও যৌক্তিকভাবে সমন্বয় করার আহ্বান জানিয়েছে সংগঠনটি।

এফআইসিসিআইর পক্ষ থেকে আরো জানানো হয়, ক্যাশলেস সমাজ গড়তে সমন্বয়যোগ্য পদক্ষেপ নিতে হবে। বর্তমান নিয়ম অনুযায়ী, একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান বছরে ৩৬ লাখ টাকার ওপরে নগদ লেনদেন করলে ২ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ অতিরিক্ত কর দিতে হয়। এ হার শূন্য শতাংশে নামিয়ে আনার প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে এফআইসিসিআই।

এছাড়া এমসিসিআই সভাপতি মো. সাইফুল ইসলাম তাদের প্রস্তাবে, অর্থ আইনের কিছু ধারা বাতিলের দাবি জানান। ওইসব ধারার জন্য করপোরেট করহার ২ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ কমানোর সুবিধা ব্যবসায়ীরা পাচ্ছেন না বলে জানান তিনি। এছাড়া অননুমোদিত ব্যয় ও উৎসে কর কেটে নেয়ার জন্য করপোরেট করহার পাবলিক লিমিটেড কোম্পানির জন্য ৪০ থেকে ৫০ শতাংশ হয়ে যাচ্ছে। এ অতিরিক্ত করের বিষয়ে প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা নিতে এনবিআরকে জানিয়েছে তারা। এমসিসিআই ভ্যাট ব্যবস্থাপনা সফটওয়্যারের মাধ্যমে বর্তমানে প্রায় সব কোম্পানি মাসিক ভ্যাট রিটার্ন দিয়ে থাকে। তবে এ ব্যবস্থা পূর্ণাঙ্গভাবে অটোমেশন নয়। ই-ইনভয়েসিংয়ের মাধ্যমে এ অটোমেশন ব্যবস্থা গতিশীল হবে বলে এমসিসিআই মনে করে।

এনবিআর চেয়ারম্যান আবু হেনা মো. রহমাতুল মুনিম বলেন, ‘আমাদের নতুন ভ্যাট আইনটি সম্পূর্ণ ডিজিটাল অপারেশন, ডিজিটাল ম্যানেজমেন্ট, ডিজিটাল সিস্টেমভিত্তিক আইন। এ আইনের সঠিক ব্যবহার করতে গেলে আমাদের ডিজিটালের জায়গায় পৌঁছতে হবে। কিন্তু আমরা তো আইনটা করেছি মাত্র, তাই নানা অসুবিধা দেখা দেয়। এটা আস্তে আস্তে সংশোধিত হবে।’ তিনি আরো জানান, ডিজিটাল ইনভয়েস হলে আর কিছু লাগে না। কিন্তু আমাদের দেশে ইনভয়েসের চর্চা অনেক কম জনগণের মাঝে। দোকানদার যদি দেয়, তা ফেলে দিই। এছাড়া রিটার্ন জমা দেয়া সহজ করা হচ্ছে বলেও জানান তিনি।

অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন গ্যাস বিদ্যুতের দাবি ব্যবসায়ীদের

শিল্পপ্রতিষ্ঠানে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন গ্যাস ও বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ কঠিন হয়ে পড়েছে। এমন পরিস্থিতিতে ব্যবসায়ীদের দাবি, দেশের অন্যান্য স্থানে গ্যাস-বিদ্যুৎ থাকুক বা না থাকুক, বিশেষ অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলগুলোয় সরবরাহ নিরবচ্ছিন্ন রাখতে হবে। এফবিসিসিআই আয়োজিত বাংলাদেশ বিজনেস সামিটের শেষ দিন 'ইনভেস্টিং ইন ইকোনমিক জোনস: প্রগ্রস অ্যান্ড প্রায়োরিটি অপরচুনিটিজ ইন বাংলাদেশ' শীর্ষক সেমিনারে ব্যবসায়ীরা এ দাবি জানান। অনুষ্ঠানে মডারেটর ছিলেন আনোয়ার ফ্রপের এমডি হোসেন খালেদ। মূল প্রবন্ধ উপস্থাপন করেন আব্দুল মোনেম ইকোনমিক জোনের ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক এ এস এম মঈনউদ্দীন মোনেম ও বাংলাদেশ অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চল কর্তৃপক্ষের (বেজা) নির্বাহী চেয়ারম্যান শেখ ইউসুফ হারুন।

মঈনউদ্দীন মোনেম বলেন, 'ইকোনমিক জোনে গ্যাস-বিদ্যুতের নিরবচ্ছিন্ন সরবরাহ রাখার নীতি গ্রহণ করতে হবে। এখানে স্বল্পমেয়াদি নয়, দীর্ঘমেয়াদি বিনিয়োগের ব্যবস্থা থাকতে হবে। অনেক প্রতিষ্ঠান ভূমি অধিগ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে নানা জটিলতায় পড়ে, এটি দূর করতে হবে।

এফবিসিসিআইয়ের সাবেক সভাপতি কাজী আকরাম উদ্দিন বলেন, 'অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন গ্যাস-বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ নিশ্চিত করতে হবে। অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চল বা ইপিজেডকে অন্য অঞ্চলের সঙ্গে তুলনা করলে চলবে না। অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলগুলোর বড় বড় শিল্প-কারখানায় বিনিয়োগ আসছে। ব্যাকওয়ার্ড লিংকেজ ও সাপ্লাই চেইনে বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানো এখন বড় চ্যালেঞ্জ। ব্যাকওয়ার্ড লিংকেজ প্রডাক্টে বিনিয়োগ আনতে হবে।'

ডান অ্যান্ড ব্রাডস্ট্রিট সামের প্রধান নির্বাহী (সিইও) রাজেশ মিরচান্দানি বলেন, 'বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ আকর্ষণে ইজ অব ডুয়িং বিজনেসে বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান ভালো নয়। বাংলাদেশকে অবশ্যই অবস্থার উন্নতি করতে হবে। যদিও এ সূচক পরিমাপের প্রক্রিয়া নিয়ে প্রশ্ন রয়েছে।'

বাংলাদেশ সাপ্লাই চেইন সোসাইটির সিইও নকিব খান বলেন, '১০ লাখ মানুষের কর্মসংস্থান তৈরি হবে ১০০ অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলে। আমাদের জন্য সাপ্লাই চেইন এখন বড় চ্যালেঞ্জ। এ খাত ছাড়াও লজিস্টিক সাপোর্টের বিনিয়োগ বাড়াতে হবে।'

আমেরিকান চেম্বার অব কমার্স ইন বাংলাদেশের (অ্যামচেম) সভাপতি সৈয়দ এরশাদ আহমেদ

বলেন, 'ইকোনমিক জোন আছে। কিন্তু এর বাইরেও উন্নতি করতে হবে। বিমানবন্দরের উন্নতি করতে হবে। ওয়্যারহাউজের নিয়ম অনেক পুরনো। কাস্টমস এবং ওয়্যারহাউজের আইন অন্যান্য দেশের মতো সংস্কার করে আধুনিক করতে হবে। এতে রাজস্ব আয়ও বাড়বে। রেল বাংলাদেশের জন্য খুব গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। কার্গো পরিবহনে রেলকে কাজে লাগাতে হবে। ১৫ বছর ধরে এয়ারপোর্টে প্রফেশনাল স্ক্যানার নেই। এটা নিয়ে আমরা বলে আসছি। তার পরও কোনো দৃশ্যমান উদ্যোগ নেই।'

সোর্সিং কৌশল পরিবর্তন করেছেন তৈরি পোশাকের ক্রেতারা; সংবাদ সম্মেলনে বিজিএমইএ সভাপতি

বর্তমানে ইউরোপ ও যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে মূল্যস্ফীতি রেকর্ড পর্যায়ে অবস্থান করছে। ফলে এসব অঞ্চলের ভোক্তারা ভোগ্যপণ্যের ব্যয় কমিয়ে এনেছেন। বাংলাদেশের তৈরি পোশাকের ক্রেতা প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোও ক্রয়াদেশ কমিয়ে এনেছে। তবে তারা সোর্সিং কৌশল পরিবর্তন করেছেন। একসঙ্গে বড় ক্রয়াদেশ না দিয়ে ছোট ছোট স্টুটে দিচ্ছেন। বাংলাদেশ পোশাক প্রস্তুতকারক ও রফতানিকারক সমিতি (বিজিএমইএ) কমপ্লেক্সে আয়োজিত এক সংবাদ সম্মেলনে এসব কথা বলেন সংস্থাটির সভাপতি মো. ফারুক হাসান। তিনি বলেন, 'মূল্যস্ফীতির কারণে পশ্চিমা ক্রেতাদেশগুলোর ভোক্তারা পোশাকে ব্যয় কমিয়ে এনেছেন। এরই ধারাবাহিকতায় এসব দেশে পোশাকের চাহিদাও কমে আসছে। এতে করে তারা মূল্যছাড়ে পণ্য কেনার ক্ষেত্রে অগ্রহ বেশি দেখাচ্ছেন। কোভিড-১৯ পরিস্থিতির পর পরই ভূ-রাজনৈতিক পরিস্থিতির কারণে বিশ্ব অর্থনীতিতে এক অস্থির পরিস্থিতি বিরাজ করছে। যার প্রভাব পড়েছে বিশ্বের অন্য দেশের মতো বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতি ও শিল্পেও।'

বিশ্বব্যাপী বাণিজ্যনীতিতে পরিবর্তনের কথা উল্লেখ করে বিজিএমইএ সভাপতি বলেন, 'বাণিজ্যনীতির পরিবর্তনের বিষয়ে আমরা অবগত আছি। এ বিষয়ে আমাদের যথেষ্ট প্রস্তুতি রয়েছে। প্রস্তুতিতে কোনো ঘাটতি থাকলে আমাদের বড় ধরনের সংকটের মধ্যে পড়তে হবে। অন্যদিকে ইউরোপের বিভিন্ন দেশ মানবাধিকার ও ডিউ ডিলিজেস প্রটোকল (অর্থনৈতিক, আইনি ও আর্থিক পরিস্থিতি) গ্রহণ করছে। এ জায়গায় আমাদের ক্ষমতা তৈরিতে অনেক কাজ করতে হবে। অন্যদিকে এ বিষয়গুলো যেন ব্যবহারকারীদের মাঝে কোনো রকম অস্বস্তি

তৈরি না করে, সে বিষয়ে আন্তর্জাতিক অঙ্গনে আমাদের জোরাল ভূমিকা রাখতে হবে।'

বিজিএমইএ সভাপতি বলেন, 'গত ফেব্রুয়ারিতে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে রফতানি কমেছে। রফতানিতে পোশাক পণ্যের সংখ্যা কমেছে। তবে উচ্চমূল্যের পণ্যের ক্রয়াদেশ বৃদ্ধি পাওয়ায় আমাদের প্রবৃদ্ধি বাড়ছে। কিন্তু রফতানিতে সংখ্যাগত ঋণাত্মক অবস্থান আমাদের ভাবাচ্ছে। আমরা চেষ্টা করছি এটি স্বাভাবিক করতে। বর্তমানে তৈরি পোশাকের পাঁচ-ছয়টি পণ্যই ৮০ শতাংশ রফতানি হয়। এক্ষেত্রে পণ্যের বৈচিত্র্য আনা প্রয়োজন।'

এলডিসি গ্র্যাজুয়েশন-পরবর্তী সময়ে রফতানির বিষয়ে তিনি বলেন, 'এলডিসি উত্তরণের পর যেন সুযোগ-সুবিধা বন্ধ হয়ে না যায়, সেজন্য আমরা বিশ্ব বাণিজ্য সংস্থার মহাপরিচালকের সঙ্গে কথা বলেছি। পরবর্তী ১০ বছর পর্যন্ত এসব সুবিধা বহাল রাখার জন্য অনুরোধ করেছি। তিনি আমাদের ছয় বছরের কথা বলেছেন, অর্থাৎ ২০৩২ সাল পর্যন্ত। আমরা এ নিয়ে বিভিন্ন দেশের সঙ্গে আলোচনা চলমান রেখেছি।'

আন্তর্জাতিক অঙ্গনে বাংলাদেশের ব্র্যান্ডিং বিষয়ে বিজিএমইএ সভাপতি বলেন, 'আমরা নানাভাবে বাংলাদেশের ব্র্যান্ডিংয়ের কাজ চালিয়ে যাচ্ছি। এ ধারাবাহিকতায় বাংলাদেশের সংস্কৃতি ও ভাষাকে আন্তর্জাতিক অঙ্গনে ছড়িয়ে দিতে আগামী বছরের ১ জানুয়ারি থেকে ইংরেজি বর্ণে মেড ইন বাংলাদেশের পাশাপাশি বাংলা বর্ণমালায় বাংলাদেশে তৈরি লিখে দেয়া হবে। আন্তর্জাতিক এবং স্থানীয় সব বাজারের ক্ষেত্রেই উৎপাদিত পোশাকের লেভেলে এটি লেখা হবে।' তিনি আরো বলেন, 'বর্তমানে আমাদের পোশাক খাতে প্রায় পাঁচ লাখ টনের মতো রুট তৈরি হয়। এর একটি অংশ বাংলাদেশ রফতানি করে। এখান থেকে প্রতিবছর প্রায় ৪০০ মিলিয়ন ডলার আয় হয়।

কিন্তু আমরা যদি এ পণ্যগুলোকে রিসাইক্লিং করে পণ্য উৎপাদন করি, তাহলে এখান থেকে প্রায় ৫ বিলিয়ন ডলারের পণ্য উৎপাদন করা সম্ভব। তাই আমরা সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করছি যেন রিসাইক্লিংয়ের সঙ্গে যুক্ত সব প্রক্রিয়ায় পণ্য ও সেবাকে শুল্ক ও ভ্যাটের আওতামুক্ত রাখা হয়। তাহলে এ খাতে বিনিয়োগকারীরা আকৃষ্ট হবেন।'

কিউআর কোড লেবেলিং চালুর উদ্যোগের কথা জানিয়ে বিজিএমইএ সভাপতি বলেন, 'পণ্যের স্বচ্ছতা ও নকল পণ্য ঠেকাতে কনভেনশনাল লেবেলিংয়ের পরিবর্তে কিউআর কোড পদ্ধতি চালু করা প্রয়োজন। এজন্য আমরা মার্কিন সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করছি।'

TRADE INFORMATION

March 2023

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

FAIRS & EXHIBITIONS

Texworld Evolution Paris

Date: 03 - 05 Jul, 2023
 Venue: Paris Expo Porte de Versailles, Paris, France
 Organizer: Messe Frankfurt France S.A.S.
 Tel: +44 203 514 06 68
 E-mail: info@trade-fair-trips.com
 Website: <https://texworld-paris.fr.messefrankfurt.com/paris/en/>

Hardware Pioneers Max 2023

Date: 13 Jul 2023
 Venue: Business Design Centre, London, UK
 Organizer: Hardware Pioneers UK
 Tel: +44 7920035495
 E-mail: hello@hardwarepioneers.com
 Website: <https://www.hardwarepioneers.com/>

Cosmohome Tech Expo

Date: 19 - 21 Jul, 2023
 Venue: Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, India
 Organizer: Nexus Exhibitions Pvt Ltd
 Tel: +91 9971811937
 E-mail: ruchi.cosmotechexpoindia@gmail.com
 Website: <http://www.cosmotechexpoindia.com/#>

ANME Trade Show 2023

Date: 02 - 04 Aug 2023
 Venue: Tuscany Suites & Casino, Las Vegas, USA
 Organizer: Army Navy Military Expo
 Tel: + 810-225-9801
 E-mail: info@anmexpo.com
 Website: <https://anmexpo.com/>

The Bioprocessing Summit

Date: 14 - 17 Aug 2023
 Venue: Sheraton Boston Hotel, Boston, USA
 Organizer: Cambridge Innovation Institute
 Tel: 7819725400
 E-mail: chi@healthtech.com
 Website: <https://www.bioprocessingsummit.com/>

The Energy Expo 2023

Date: 22 - 24 Aug 2023
 Venue: Miami Airport Convention Center, Miami, USA
 Organizer: Miami Airport Convention Center, Miami, USA
 Tel: +305-412-7945
 E-mail: mail@showwinnerscorp.com
 Website: <https://www.theenergyexpo.com/>

Vietnam Asean International Furniture & Home Accessories Fair 2023

Date: 29 Aug - 01 Sep 2023
 Venue: Saigon Exhibition and Convention Center, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam
 Organizer: Lien Minh Company
 Tel: +84 28 7306 7887
 E-mail: info@hawacorp.com.vn
 Website: www.vifafair.com

China International Adhesives and Sealants Exhibition 2023

Date: 04 - 06 Sep 2023
 Venue: Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC), Shanghai, China
 Organizer: CCPIT Sub-Council OF Chemical Industry
 Contact Person: Serena Cui
 Tel: 010-64275419
 Email: cuijingjing@ccpitchem.org.cn
 Website: <http://en.chinaadhesive2000.com/index.html>

International Crop Science Conference & Exhibition 2023

Date: 07 - 08 Sep 2023
 Venue: Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, Gurgaon, India
 Organizer: Pesticides Manufacturers & Formulators Association of India
 Contact Person: Serena Cui
 Tel: 010-64275419
 Email: cuijingjing@ccpitchem.org.cn
 Website: <http://en.chinaadhesive2000.com/index.html>

Lagos Fashion Fair 2023

Date: 12 - 14 Sep 2023
 Venue: Eko Hotels & Suites, Lagos, Nigeria
 Organizer: Atlantic Exhibition Nig Ltd
 Tel: +234 809 719 9117
 Email: cuijingjing@ccpitchem.org.cn
 Website: info@atlanticexhibition.com

Note: Information about trade fairs and events may change. To get more information, please contact the organizers.

Share Market (As of March 31, 2023)

TOP GAINERS (DSE)

COMPANY	CLOSING PRICE	%CHANGE	TURNOVER (BDT MN)
AARMANET	51.40	9.6%	68.75
ORIONINFU	527.40	8.7%	109.40
KOHINOOR	469.30	8.2%	17.88
ANWARGALV	236.20	7.8%	83.94
AGNISYSL	23.00	5.0%	22.22
DGIC	32.50	4.5%	9.42
ARAMIT	290.20	4.2%	7.39
BEXGSUKUK	89.00	4.1%	5.94
GENEXIL	81.00	3.6%	123.27
ADVENT	25.40	3.3%	46.79

TOP LOSERS (DSE)

COMPANY	CLOSING PRICE	%CHANGE	TURNOVER (BDT MN)
MONNOCERA	122.70	-1.4%	104.01
HWAWELLTEX	45.00	-1.1%	2.93
CAPMBDBLMF	9.90	-1.0%	0.00
NORTHRNINS	39.60	-1.0%	0.01
EASTRNLAB	1605.00	-1.0%	0.35
RAHIMTEXT	209.00	-1.0%	0.02
LIBRAINFU	857.50	-1.0%	0.04
PRIMETEX	40.00	-1.0%	0.00
BEACHHATCH	40.10	-1.0%	0.01
SAVAREFR	251.00	-1.0%	0.00

Market Capitalisation by Sector (DSE)

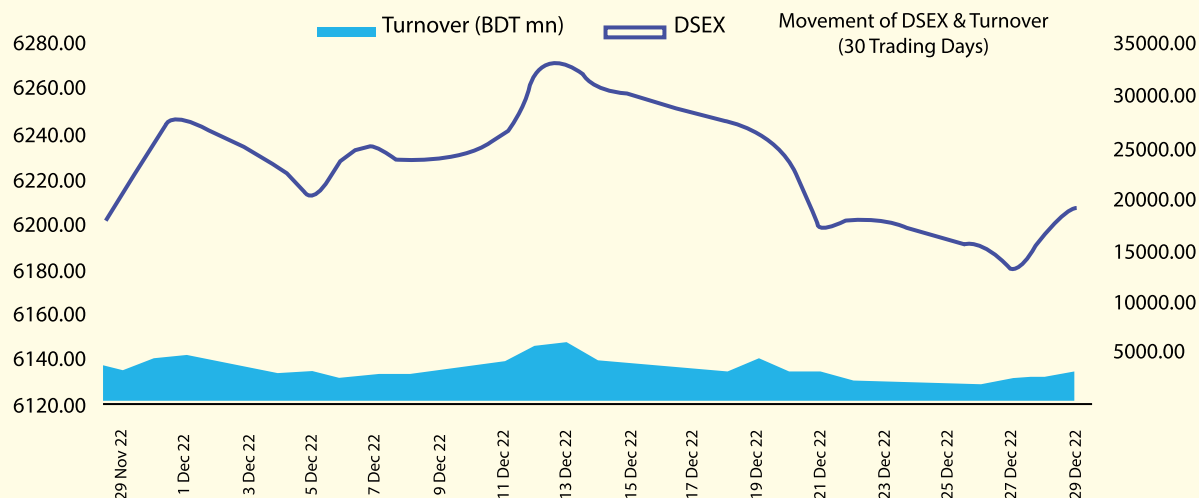
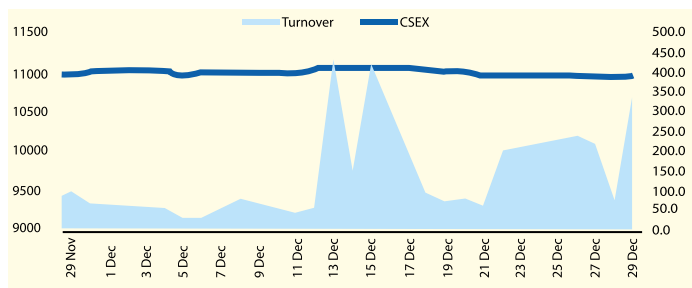
Telecommunication	13%	Life Insurance	2%
Textile	4%	IT Sector	1%
Travel & Leisure	1%	Jute	0%
Bank	15%	Miscellaneous	5%
Cement	3%	Mutual Fund	1%
Ceramic	1%	NBFI	4%
Engineering	12%	Paper & Printing	1%
Food & Allied	9%	Pharmaceuticals	16%
Fuel & Power	10%	Service & Real Estate	1%
Gen. Insurance	2%	Tannery	1%

TURNOVER LEADERS (DSE)

COMPANY	CLOSING PRICE	TURNOVER (BDT MN)
INTRACO	40.50	171.69
GENEXIL	81.00	123.27
ORIONINFU	527.40	109.40
MONNOCERA	122.70	104.01
BPML	75.60	103.76
BSC	115.30	97.41
ORIONPHARM	82.70	97.08
ANWARGALV	236.20	83.94
EHL	78.90	70.46
SEAPEARL	186.70	69.46

TURNOVER LEADERS (CSE)

COMPANY	CLOSING PRICE	TURNOVER (BDT MN)
BGIC	61.90	135.32
BANKASIA	20.50	111.15
MARICO	2380.00	27.57
BENGALWTL	30.20	9.78
SEAPEARL	177.1	9.25
SAPORTL	30.20	3.79
BPML	75.9	2.96
ACI	261.20	2.78
BEACONPHAR	289.10	2.78
GENEXIL	80.90	2.64





DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (second from right) speaking as a panel speaker at the Parallel session titled “Leveraging SMEs for Vibrant Supply Chain Linkage and Productivity Spillovers” under Bangladesh Business Summit 2023 organized by FBCCI on March 13. Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank Abu Farah Md. Nasser (fifth from right), President of The Chittagong Chamber of Commerce & Industry Mahbubul Alam (third from right), High Commissioner of Malaysia in Bangladesh H. E. Haznah Md. Hashim (fourth from right) and SME Foundation Chairperson Dr. Md. Masudur Rahman (sixth from right) among others are seen in the picture.

Director General, JETRO (New Delhi) and Regional Chief Takashi Suzuki (seventh from right) seen receiving a crest from DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (sixth from right) after a business networking meeting held on May 12 at DCCI Gulshan Center. DCCI Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (fifth from right) and Members of the Board of Directors were present during the meeting.



Dhaka Chamber President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (sixth from right) seen receiving a memento from President of UK-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry (UKBCCI) M G Moula Miah (seventh from right) after a courtesy meeting held on March 12 at DCCI Gulshan Center. Chairman of UKBCCI Iqbal Ahmed (fifth from left), DCCI Senior Vice President S. M. Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) (fifth from right), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (second from right) and members of the DCCI Board of Directors and UKBCCI are seen in the picture.



DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (third from right) receiving a token of appreciation from Deputy Director General of Ministry of Trade and Commerce of Viet Nam Do Quoc Hung (second from left) after a business networking meeting held on March 15. Vietnamese Ambassador in Bangladesh H.E. Pham Viet Chien (second from right), DCCI Senior Vice President S. M. Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) (right) and Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (left) are also seen in the picture.

DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (third from right) presenting a memento to Charge D' Affaires of Ethiopian Embassy based in New Delhi Ms. Bizunesh Meseret Tegegne (third from left) after a courtesy meeting held on March 30 at DCCI Gulshan Centre. DCCI Senior Vice President S. M. Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman) (second from right), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (right), former President of DCCI and Consul for Ethiopia in Bangladesh Shams Mahmud (left) among others are seen in the picture.



DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar (right) speaking at a seminar titled "Innovation Business Opportunities from Belgium" held on March 22 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka. Minister for Information and Broadcast Dr. Hasan Mahmud, MP (left), Ambassador of Belgium in Bangladesh H.E. Didier Vanderhasselt (second from left) among others are seen in the picture.



As a contribution from DCCI Foundation, President of Dhaka Chamber Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar handed over 2000 blankets to the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency's (TIKA) Dhaka Programme Coordination Office recently in order to distribute among the earthquake affected people in Turkiye.

Coordinating Director Nasiruddin A. Ferdous (fourth from left), Convenor Mohammad Saifur Rahman Saif (third from right), Joint Convenor Kanij Fatima (third from left) along with other members were present during the 1st meeting of Blue Economy standing committee held on March 11.



Coordinating Director Razeev H Chowdhury (fourth from left), Convenor M. S. Siddiqui (centre), Joint Convenor Eazaz Mohammed (fourth from right) along with other members of Country Competitiveness standing committee were present during the 1st meeting of the committee held on March 14.

Dhaka Chamber's Iftar Mahfil: A Glimpse



DCCI former Presidents M. A. Sattar, Mahbubur Rahman, Aftab Ul Islam, FCA, Benajir Ahmed, Matiur Rahman, M. A. Momen, Abul Kasem Khan and former Principal Secretary Abul Kalam Azad are seen at the Iftar Mahfil of Dhaka Chamber held on March 30 at the Pan Pacific Sonargoan Hotel, Dhaka.

Attorney General of Bangladesh Abu Mohammad Amin Uddin, Chairman of Capital Market Stabilization Fund (CMSF) Md. Nojibur Rahman, Additional IGP of Bangladesh Police Mahbubur Rahman, Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division Lieutenant General Waker-Uz Zamaan, and ADB Country Director in Bangladesh Edimon Ginting are seen at the Iftar Mahfil of Dhaka Chamber held on March 30 at the Pan Pacific Sonargoan Hotel, Dhaka.



President, FICCI Naser Ezaz Bijoy, DCCI Directors M. Mosharraf Hossain, Razeev H Chowdhury, former Senior Vice President Kamrul Islam, FCA among others are seen at the Iftar Mahfil of Dhaka Chamber held on March 30 at the Pan Pacific Sonargoan Hotel, Dhaka.

Dhaka Chamber's Iftar Mahfil: A Glimpse



Ambassador of France H.E. Marie Masdupuy, High Commissioner of Maldives H.E. Shiruzimath Sameer, Japanese Ambassador H.E. IWAMA Kiminori, High Commissioner of Malaysia Her Excellency Haznah Md. Hashim, Consul of the Republic of Singapore Sheela Pillai among others are seen at the Iftar Mahfil of Dhaka Chamber held on March 30 at the Pan Pacific Sonargoan Hotel, Dhaka.

DCCI former Senior Vice President, Directors along with members are seen at the Iftar Mahfil of Dhaka Chamber held on March 30 at the Pan Pacific Sonargoan Hotel, Dhaka.



DCCI President Barrister Md. Sameer Sattar, Senior Vice President S. M. Golam Faruk Alamgir (Arman), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali along with other members of the Board are seen at the DCCI Iftar Mahfil.



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For further information, please contact:

01913745062, 01766018659, 02 47122986 (Ext.281/137/124)
dbi@dhakachamber.com, www.dcci-dbi.edu.bd



ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry

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