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REVIEW



Prospects of
SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY



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Prospects of semiconductor industry

Semiconductors—the electronic circuits or units made of materials such as silicon, germanium, silicon carbides and others that are central to electronic devices and systems that have components such as memory devices, logic devices, integrated circuits, memory protection units, micro-controllers, power devices and others — ran into a market size of, as Fortune Business Insights says, \$611 billion in 2023. The size is expected to grow from \$681.05 billion in 2024 to \$2062.59 billion by 2032, showing a compound annual growth rate of 14.9 percent over the period. There is no way for the global semiconductor industry not to grow because of an increased electronic use and integration such as networking, communication devices, data processing, industrial automation, consumer electronics, automotive industry and various government and non-governmental projects. Companies that run in this sector are at the center of technological innovation, human ingenuity and finance.

Bangladesh can also have its share of the semiconductor market in a big way. With a handful of companies now in operation in chip design, Bangladesh is in primary stages of the semiconductor fabrication, which industry insiders think, now fetches \$5 million a year. India, in contrast, earns \$60 billion a year from the semiconductor sector. Industry insiders also believe that Bangladesh can account for \$10 billion of the industry by 2041 if there are proper policy supports and the incentives required. While the development of the semiconductor industry in Bangladesh can well be a successful implementation of import substitution and export diversification, it can also help the country to achieve its goal to increase the valuation of its IT sector from the existing \$1 billion in a couple of years. The potential of the industry to serve as an economic catalyst for Bangladesh's entry into the 4th Industrial Revolution would be a good step forward.

Bangladesh is still an entrant into the flourishing industry although a couple of companies such as UlkaSemi Private Limited, the oldest which began its journey in 2007, and Neural Semiconductor Limited have blazed the trail. There are two other players such as PrimeSilicon Technologies Inc and Toton Electronics. A couple of more companies are heard of planning to enter the market. Although chips are the primary

products of the semiconductor industry, a handful of Bangladeshi players take part in certain phases of chip-making. With other issues having been ready and the investments available, experts believe that Bangladesh has the potential to export semiconductors worth \$3 billion in five years. Bangladesh's imprint on the semiconductor industry is limited by issues such as the shortage of capital and capacity on both the financial and the technological front. Many countries have already started investing heavily in the semiconductor industry. In such a situation, any delay on part of Bangladesh would make the proposition difficult in future.

Investment is the first and foremost condition for Bangladesh to break successfully into the semiconductor industry. This is a complex process and warrants technologies, high-precision equipment and a network of all the parties involved. The procedure runs through electronic design automation on software, actual design, production, packaging and testing. The process requires patents, intellectual property rights, tools and a complex teamwork. Very large-scale integration, or VLSI, is a process that is used in the design and fabrication of integrated circuits. Bangladesh would need more VLSI experts and need to continuously train them for the venture to be beneficial. Bangladesh could initially begin with a focus on design, servicing, packaging and testing, later gradually moving on to other process such as fabrication as it requires a high investment. This way, Bangladesh could reduce its extreme reliance on apparel export as it graduates out of the least developed country to become a developing country beginning in 2026.

In order for that to happen, the government should simplify some administrative procedures so that licensing, permits and export-import regulations for semiconductor business could be easy. The government also needs to ensure a transparent and efficient regulatory framework to encourage investments to reduce operational hurdles. The intellectual property rights should also be strengthened to effect innovation and attract foreign investments. Bangladesh, in fact, needs a holistic framework for the development and growth of the semiconductor industry **r**

Messy traffic takes away Old Town charm as economic hub

DCCI holds discussion on effect of traffic on businesses in Old Town



Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh (third from left), Chief Executive Officer of DSCC Mizanur Rahman (second from left), DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (third from right), Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (right), Executive Director of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) Neelima Akter (second from right), Additional Police Commissioner (Traffic) Md. Munibur Rahman (left) were present at the Round Table Discussion titled “Effect of Traffic Congestion over businesses of old Dhaka and Identify the Way Forward” held on April 02.

Old Town of Dhaka is losing its charm of being one of the largest economic and trading hubs because of unbearable traffic congestion, said Ashraf Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry at a round-table discussion on the “Effect of Traffic Congestion on Businesses of Old Dhaka and the Way Forward” that the chamber organized in its auditorium at Motijheel on April 2.

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh attended as chief guest. Ashraf Ahmed said that Old Town alone probably accounts for about 20 percent to the gross domestic product.

It is one of the largest trading hubs and transactions involving thousands of crores of takas takes place in this city district. But many businesses are now trying to move out because an unbearable traffic congestion. “If the trend continues, the city will

one day lose its long heritage of being the economic heart” he said. Traffic congestion wastes working hour worth about Tk 140 crore every day. Unplanned urbanization and expansion create traffic congestion that result in about 2.9 percent of the gross domestic product loss, he added.

Illegal shops on the footpath, narrow roads, lack of traffic system, illegal use of footpath by shops, illegal rickshaws and vans and illegal hawkers are a few of the major issues that create congestion in Old Town of Dhaka. He suggested a one-way traffic system to ease the situation.

He recommended a traffic signaling system based on artificial intelligence, administrative decentralization, long-term urban development strategy, the expansion of metro rail to Old Town, an integrated circular river route, loading and unloading after nine

o’clock at night and the eviction of illegal hawkers from the footpath.

Dhaka’s south mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said, “We are responsible for unplanned urbanization and unabated expansion. Urban planning should be done by the city authorities.” He added that the Dhaka South City Corporation has been able to nearly double its revenue from around Tk 512 crore to more than Tk 1,031 crore without increasing any taxes and only by improving governance. The city authorities have successfully tackled the solid waste problem and is now focusing on water stagnation. He said that a central business hub would be built at Keraniganj by the River Buriganga.

He also said that from now on, no bus counters would be allowed outside bus terminals. He requested shop owners not to allow any hawkers to sit in front of their shops any more. Eco-friendly and IoT-based transport

system will be soon implemented in Dhaka, he said. It is not an easy task to evict hawkers from the footpath, but the authorities have marked eight spots as yellow and green zones for hawkers to run their trade. He said that they cannot set up temporary shops in red zones that the authorities have marked.

The chief executive officer the city corporation, Mizanur Rahman, said that illegal trade on footpath is one of the major reasons for traffic congestion in Old Town. He said that the authorities regularly conduct eviction drives against illegal hawkers.

He also said that the lost canals are reclaimed to help reduce water stagnation. The feasibility of 60 points has so far been done for the implementation of AI-based traffic signaling system, he said.

The Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority executive director Neelima Akter said, "We need to formulate an action plan or specialized strategic solution." She also urged a better coordination among the public agencies concerned.

Additional police commissioner (traffic) Md Munibur Rahman said that a city such as Dhaka needs roads on 30 percent of its area, "but actually we have only 7–8 percent." The orientation of traffic system of Old Town and the new town of Dhaka will be different because of its heritage and culture.

He said traffic police would be deployed in Old Town as soon as possible. He suggested a smart parking, relocation of bus terminals, inter-city bus counters, coordination among stakeholders, building a few escalator foot bridges and skywalk.

Dhaka Mass Transit Company director (planning and development) Md Abdul Baki Mia said that the government would complete all the six MRT lines by 2030. MRT-2 would connect Old Town to a Gabtali-Narayanganj route. He also a couple of bridges on the River Buriganga to ease traffic in Old Town.

Former DTCA executive director Dr SM Salehuddin said, "We need to ensure harmonization between the

land use plan and the transport plan." He urged a one-way traffic movement in Old Town and a circular river route.

Alhaj Abdus Salam, former senior vice-president, DCCI, Haji Md Abul Hashem, president, Bangladesh Sugar Traders' Association, Alimuzzaman Alam, president, Bangladesh Electrical Association, Mohammed Hossain Alamgir, president, Bangladesh Glass Merchant Association, Mohammed Asaduzzaman Selim, former president, Bangladesh Hardware and Machinery Merchants' Association, Haji Md Golam Mowla, president, Bangladesh Wholesale Edible Oil Traders' Association, Mohammad Jalal Uddin, former director, FBCCI, Hafez Harun, director, FBCCI, Khair M Khan, former director, DCCI, and Alhaj Md Sharfuddin, former director, DCCI, also spoke.

They urged a one-way traffic system, the deployment of traffic police instead of community police, an effective drainage, hawker-free footpath, parking areas at the place of the old prison, and time-based loading and unloading **r**

DCCI mourns death of former DCCI president Rashed Maksud Khan



Rashed Maksud Khan
(30 May, 1940 - 20 April, 2024)

The president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ashraf Ahmed and members of the board of directors condoled on the death of Rashed Maksud Khan, a former president of the Dhaka chamber, who breathed his last at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka on 20 April. (Inna lillahe wa inna ilaihe rajjun). He was 84. Rashed Maksud Khan served as the Dhaka chamber president in 1995 and 1998.

A renowned industrialist, Khan was the founder of Bengal Fine Ceramics

Limited. He was also the chairman of Everest Fine Porcelain Limited and director of Bangladesh German Fine Footwear Limited. He was engaged in different areas of business as manufacturer and exporter of ceramics, apparel and footwear, etc. His namaz-e-janazah was held on 21 April after the Zuhr prayers at the Gulshan Society Mosque, Dhaka. He was later buried in the Banani graveyard **r**

Farmer-friendly technology urged for smart agriculture

DCCI holds seminar on ‘Smart Agriculture: Issues and Challenges in Value Chain Development’

The adoption of smart agriculture practices such as precision agriculture could potentially increase agricultural productivity by 20 to 30 percent, reduce input costs by up to 20 percent and increase farmers’ income by 30 to 40 percent, speakers said at a seminar on “Smart Agriculture: Issues and Challenges in Value Chain Development” that the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry held in its auditorium on May 30.

The Dhaka chamber president Ashraf Ahmed said that from farmers to consumers, “we see at least 40–45 percent post-harvest loss.” He said that logistic and market chains are two very important but separate challenges. He also said that cool-chain and a smooth transport system are necessary to mitigate post-harvest losses. Moreover, we should develop a waste management system so that we can recycle the agricultural waste into other products.” He termed inefficiencies in the supply chain;

market access barriers and limited value addition a few bottlenecks for accelerating value chain development in the agriculture sector. “But our mobile financial service network is impressively strong and if we want, we can get the subsidy to the hand of farmers directly through MFS within a short time.” Later, he emphasized an updated database to create a smart agriculture environment.

The state minister for commerce Ahasanul Islam Titu, who attended as chief guest, said that a fully-functioning one-point service desk would be established at the Dhaka chamber soon to provide online IRC and ERC issuance facilities to importers and exporters. By the end of this year, all services of RJSC will also be paperless, he said, emphasizing a needs-based locally-tailored farmers-friendly technology to implement smart agriculture. The state minister said that it is equally important to ensure better and logical price both for producers and consumers and for

that, a smooth supply chain process, including adequately organized commodity markets across the country, is needed.

He said that standardization and certification processes would ensure better and genuine products, specifying the exact origin of variety. He said that the Logistic Policy 2024 is going to be a game-changer for businesses. He iterated the need of ICT-backed research and innovation to bring about more diversification in the product basket.

Md Shamsul Arefin, secretary, Information and Communication Technology Division, who attended special guest, said that for smart agriculture, “we need to make our farmers or producers smart.” He stressed the need for smart innovation, research and development and a strong knowledge-based economy in the agriculture sector. Without smart government, no sector can be smart, he said, adding that smart citizens and



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (second from left) seen speaking at a seminar on “Smart Agriculture: Issues and Challenges in Value Chain Development” held on May 30. State Minister for Commerce Ahasanul Islam Titu, MP (center), Secretary, Information and Communication Technology Division Md. Shamsul Arefin (second from right), Co-Founder & CEO of iFarmer Limited Fahad Ifaz (right) and Senior Manager (Programme) of Swisscontact Mohammad Sakib Khaled (left) are also seen in the picture.

skilled government officers having good human attributes, honesty and integrity will help the government to be smart.

Malik Talha Ismail Bari, senior vice-president of the Dhaka chamber, in his welcome remarks said that in recent decades, Bangladesh has made a significant stride in agricultural development. But climate change poses a severe threat, with flooding at an increased frequency, cyclones and drought that harm agricultural productivity. Additionally, traditional farming practices often result in low productivity and inefficiencies. To address such challenges, “we must embrace smart agriculture solutions that leverage technology, data and innovative practices. Smart agriculture promises to revolutionize the way we cultivate, process and distribute our agricultural products.”

Fahad Ifaz, co-founder and chief executive officer of iFarmer Limited, presented the first keynote paper on “Opportunities of Frontier Tech Automation in Agro Value Chain.” He highlighted that frontier technology in agriculture can reduce information asymmetries for farmers, facilitate a


greater access to market and services, reduce costs, reduce climate impact and improve yielding. He also sought policy support for an improved technological ecosystem for the overall agricultural system. He urged a farmer-friendly smart agriculture ecosystem.

Mohammad Sakib Khaled, senior manager, programme, Swisscontact, presented another keynote paper on “Addressing Key Issues and Challenges of Smart Agricultural Value Chain.” He said that to fight climate change, “we need a massive transformation of the agriculture sector.” He said that local investment in the livestock sector is increasing and in the next decade, it will double.

A limited supply of quality inputs, lack of good agricultural practices, post-harvest losses, climate vulnerability, lack of integrated supply chain and lack of policy implementation are responsible for overarching gaps in the agriculture value chain. He recommended agricultural technologies that facilitate policies and ensure digital literacy.

In the panel discussion, Md Abdul Kader, national senior lead agronomist, FAO Representation in Bangladesh, Anwar Faruque, vice-president, BSAFE Foundation & former secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Dr Md Abu Bakkar Siddique, additional director, Agricultural Credit Department, Bangladesh Bank, Sayed Rizban Hussain, chief executive officer, Aqualink Bangladesh Limited, Dr Kashfia Ahmed, chief executive officer and founder, Win Incorporate, Medina Ali, founder and chief executive officer, Dr Chashi Incorporation, Dr Muhammad Risalat Siddique, and director and chief executive officer, Kranti Associates Limited, took part in the discussion.

The speakers emphasized low-cost, farmers-friendly locally-manufactured devices and database, ensuring competitive prices for farmers and policy support for smart agriculture. They also urged good agricultural practice and ICT for commercial farming.

DCCI vice-president Md Junaed Ibna Ali and members on the board of directors were also present .

Semiconductor sector can be \$10b industry by 2041

Zunaid Ahmed Palak says at DCCI seminar on potential of semiconductor industry in Bangladesh

Semiconductor manufacturing industry has a great potential to be a billion-dollar sector in Bangladesh. There are a few design houses and they are doing well but in chip fabrication, assembly, testing and packaging, “we still lag behind. Proper policy supports and required incentives can create a \$10 billion semiconductor industry by 2041, said speakers at a seminar on “Unleashing the Potential of Semiconductor Industry in Bangladesh” that the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce

and Industry organized on May 15. The state minister for posts, telecommunications and information technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak attended as chief guest.

The DCCI president Ashraf Ahmed said, “We should prioritize the development of the semiconductor industry for a successful implementation of import substitution, industrialization and export diversification.” Many countries are investing heavily in the semiconductor industry, creating

a high demand for skilled workers, he said. The government should focus on cultivating a skilled work force required to meet the growing demands of the semiconductor industry in Bangladesh. He underscored the importance of the simplification of administrative procedures for setting up semiconductor businesses, including licensing, permits and import/export regulations. He further said that a transparent and efficient regulatory environment will encourage



State Minister for Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology Zunaïd Ahmed Palak, MP (center) seen speaking at a seminar titled "Unleashing the potential of semiconductor industry in Bangladesh" held on May 15. DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (second from left), Managing Director of Bangladesh High-Tech Park Authority G S M Jafarullah, ndc (second from right), Professor of Department of Nanomaterials and Ceramic Engineering, BUET A. S. M. A. Haseeb (left) and Visiting Professor, University of Reading, UK Dr. M Niaz Asadullah (right) are also seen in the picture.

investment and reduce operational hurdles. He recommended a robust protection for intellectual property to encourage innovation and attract foreign investors. Bangladesh also needs a holistic framework to develop an ecosystem for sustainable and inclusive growth of the semiconductor industry, taking into account the views of stakeholders, he said.

The state minister for posts, telecommunications and information technology Zunaïd Ahmed Palak said that the use of microchip, nano chip and manufacturing of semiconductors are growing day by day and "if we can give a right policy support for the sector, it will be possible to earn at least \$10 billion semiconductor export by 2041." He iterated the urgency and need for a semiconductor policy for a fast development of the sector.

At the same time, he urged an industry-academia collaboration to create highly skilled and technologically advanced work force

especially compatible for this sector as the demand is very high at home and abroad.

He later said that government has already established hundreds of digital labs; 5G testing is going on; there are more than 13 crore internet users and 19 crore mobile users. The country has almost fully been electrified. These are some indicators of Bangladesh's digital progresses and readiness. "And, if we can give proper policy support, incentives and guidelines coupled with skilled human resources having high-end sophisticated technology, we will be able to achieve the target of smart Bangladesh by 2041."

He also said, "We have to make planning to create at least 50,000 chip designers." Later, he said that with the help of talented entrepreneurs and an enthusiastic private sector, the country will be able to become knowledge-based smart Bangladesh by 2041.

GSM Jafarullah, NDC, managing director of the Bangladesh High-

Tech Park Authority, said that the government is developing innovation hubs in 10 universities. In Shibchar, Madaripur, on 70 acres of land, the government is establishing Sheikh Hasina Institute of Frontier Technology. Work on 21 high-tech parks out of the targeted 94 has been almost completed.

Moreover, the government is facilitating private-sector entrepreneurs with land and space in knowledge parks and software parks. He invited the private sector to invest in the semiconductor industry more. The government is considering the best possible tax benefits for the ICT sector so that "we can attract more local investments."

Professor A.S.M.A. Haseeb, Department of Nanomaterials and Ceramic Engineering, BUET, presented the keynote paper. He said that the global semiconductor market will reach \$1307.7 billion by 2032. The process of main semiconductor manufacturing process includes design, chip fabrication, assembling,

testing and packaging. It is a labor-intensive industry and at least 81 percent of world's assembling, testing and packaging production is located in Asia.

Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and India are a few Asian countries that give special support to this sector in the form of grants, equity investment, favorable loans, research and development support, tax incentives, etc. Despite having a few design houses here in Bangladesh with a market size of about \$5 million yearly, "we are yet to reach

the expected level in terms of chip fabrication, assembling, testing and packaging sectors. There is a huge opportunity to use the current geo-political scenario in our favor as we have a large pool of young work force with great potential. At this point we need to plan a comprehensive road map for the development of this sector."

Mir Shahrukh Islam, managing director, Bondstein Technologies Ltd, Razib Hasan, co-founder and vice-president, Software Teton Private Ltd, Liakat Ali, additional managing

director, Walton Digi-Tech Industries, and Dr M Niaz Asadullah, visiting professor, University of Reading, UK, also spoke.

The speakers urged policy support, technologically skilled human resources, policy continuation, fiscal incentive, budgetary support and allocation, industry-academia collaboration, research and innovation initiative, tax benefits over investment in research and development, priority fix-up, an IT eco-system and equity investment facility **r**

Indonesia keen to invest in energy

Indonesia's ambassador to Bangladesh Heru Hartanto Subolo visited Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry on May 7. He had a fruitful interactive discussion with Ashraf Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the members of the board of directors. The ambassador said that the trade relation between Bangladesh and Indonesia stands for a long time, but it is his responsibility to make it more structured. He said

that Indonesia is the largest economy in ASEAN. In the ease of doing business index, Indonesia ranks 73 that make the country one of the most attractive investment destinations.

For the past five years, trade between Bangladesh and Indonesia has increased by 19.98 percent every year. The trade volume in 2022 was \$4 billion, he added. He also said that Bangladesh's pharmaceuticals, recycled yarn, shrimp, mango, jack-

fruit and hilsa fish have good prospect in Indonesian market. He stressed the need for regular exchanges of trade missions and business to business networking. He later said that there is an investment opportunity in tourism, manufacturing industry, economic zones, infrastructure, food and agriculture and renewable energy sectors. He also said that one of largest energy companies of Indonesia will soon invest in Bangladesh's energy sector.



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (seventh from left) seen receiving a memento from Ambassador of Indonesia in Bangladesh H.E. Heru Hartanto Subolo (seventh from right) after a bilateral meeting held on May 07. DCCI Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (sixth from left), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (sixth from right) and members of the Board of Directors were also present during the meeting.

Ashraf Ahmed said that the trade between Bangladesh and Indonesia in 2022 was worth \$4 billion where the trade balance is in favor of Indonesia. Indonesia is the 26th largest foreign investment source of Bangladesh with \$47.13 million FDI stock. The total global outbound FDI flow of Indonesia was \$6.85 billion in

2022 whereas Bangladesh received only 0.003 percent out of their total global outbound investment.

Apparel export from Bangladesh to Indonesia faces 23.9 percent tariff as well as safeguard measures and additional duty ranging from \$0.44 to \$11.29. He said that the tariff on apparel products needs

to be rationalized to address the bilateral trade gap. He urged tariff rationalization for export of bicycles from Bangladesh to Indonesia.

DCCI senior vice-president Malik Talha Ismail, Bari, vice-president Md Junaed Ibna Ali and members on the board of directors also attended **r**

DCCI invites more Russian investment in power, energy

Business meeting between Russian trade mission and Dhaka Chamber held

More Russian investment, especially in the power and energy sector, could play a pivotal role in a steady economic progress and industrialization in Bangladesh, said Ashraf Ahmed, the president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry at a business meeting with the visiting Russian trade mission in the DCCI auditorium at Motijheel on May 28. Meanwhile, a 14-member business delegation led by Dr Alexander Rybas, Trade Commissioner of the Russian

Federation in India, visited the Dhaka chamber to explore win-win business opportunities for entrepreneurs of both the friendly countries.

Welcoming the delegation, the Dhaka chamber president Ashraf Ahmed said that currently, trade between these two countries recorded \$965.61 million where export and import of Bangladesh reached \$460.39 million and \$505.22 million respectively. Moreover, the total FDI stock from Russia to Bangladesh stood \$17.26

million. Ashraf Ahmed urged Russian importers to import more products from Bangladesh, especially apparels, pharmaceuticals, jute and jute goods, light engineering products, leather goods, plastic products, footwear, shipbuilding, ceramics, IT & ITES products.

The Dhaka chamber president also said that Russian investors who are already operating their ventures here in Bangladesh have so far been successful. In its continuation, he



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (center) seen speaking at a business meeting between visiting Russian trade delegation and Dhaka Chamber held on May 28. Leader of the Russian delegation and Trade Commissioner of Russian Federation based in India Dr. Alexander Rybas (left) and Minister-Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the Russian Federation in Bangladesh Ekaterina Semenova (right) are seen in the picture.

invited Russian investors to invest in agriculture, science, technology, education, maritime and services sector in Bangladesh since these sectors are very potential for them.

Alexander Rybas, Trade Commissioner of the Russian Federation in India, said that Russia and Bangladesh have been maintaining a cordial trade relation since long and in 1972. Both Bangladesh and Russia signed a joint trade agreement to foster bilateral trade and investments.


He said that Russia has already extended all-out support for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Bangladesh and will continue its cooperation in Bangladesh's energy security and

natural gas exploration. He said that in 2023, Russia exported about 2.67 million tonnes of wheat to Bangladesh. He opined that there are many opportunities for Russia's investment either in the form of single or joint venture, especially in information technology, banking, chemical and mechanical engineering sectors of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's skilled work force has been engaged in the shipbuilding industry in Russia since 2023 and it is expected that this trend will be expanded further in future, added Rybas.

Ekaterina Semenova, minister-counselor and deputy chief of mission,

Embassy of the Russian Federation in Bangladesh, attended the program and said that Russia has the second largest commercial relationship with Bangladesh among South Asian countries and to strengthen this trade ties, she emphasized expanding the relationship between private-sector representatives of the two countries.

After the meeting, members of the Russian delegation took part in a B2B networking where they expressed keen interest in doing business in Bangladesh. They said that Bangladesh is a nice place for investment. Members on the Dhaka chamber the board of directors attended 

ESG compliance reporting standards must for trade, investment

DCCI holds discussion on challenges, opportunities of ESG compliance

Embracing Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance compliance framework will not only allow the businesses to align their values and strategies with sustainability objectives and foster economic growth but also remain competitive beyond LDC graduation.

The absence of culture, weak corporate governance and lack of data are a few of the challenges of adopting ESG in Bangladeshi industries, the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Ashraf Ahmed said this in a round-table discussion on "Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of ESG Compliance in Bangladesh" that the chamber organized on May 18.

Ashraf Ahmed said that as Bangladesh is getting more connected to the world and international trade is also increasing day by day, Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance compliance is becoming mandatory for businesses. Investors consider

ESG factors when assessing a business's potential since it is a sign of resilience and long-term financial health.

The trend of ESG reporting is going upward in Bangladesh. Organizations in different industries have started reporting on their ESG performance and government bodies have also taken initiatives to promote and encourage ESG reporting. Taking into account the importance of ESG compliance, he recommended developing effective ESG compliance strategies in alignment with the global value chain and integrating ESG considerations into decision-making processes and organization culture.

He also underscored the need for educating stakeholders including employees, management, investors, regulators and the public in the importance of ESG compliance and its reporting. Moreover, ESG compliance needs to be prioritized

in other policies such as industrial policy, SME policy, etc, he added.

Md Munim Hassan, director general, Department of Patent, Design and Trademarks, said that in every sector, compliance is mandatory and compliance always increases the credibility of business. He said that for environmental or social compliance, "we individually should take responsibility. We should not look into what others do." He later said that in 2016–2022, 17 products of Bangladesh got GI whereas since 2023 till date, already 14 products have got GI certification and 30 more are in the process of getting GI.

Md Anwarul Alam, director general, Bangladesh Accreditation Board, said that the board is directly linked to ESG. The Bangladesh Accreditation Board works to ensure the quality of goods and services and its certification is accepted worldwide. He urged all to be compliant and requested lab owners to get accredited with



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (third from left) speaking at a Roundtable Discussion titled “Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of ESG Compliance in Bangladesh” held on May 18. Director General, Department of Patent, Design & Trademarks, Ministry of Industries Md. Munim Hassan (third from right), Director General of Bangladesh Accreditation Board (BAB), Ministry of Industries Md. Anwarul Alam (second from left), Country Representative of UNIDO, Bangladesh Zaki Uz Zaman (left), DCCI Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (second from right) and Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (right) were also present during the meeting.

the board. Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance is also interlinked with the vision of Smart Bangladesh, he said.

The keynote speaker Zaki Uz Zaman, country representative, UNIDO, Bangladesh said that “ESG” came into use in the early 2000s, but its foundations were laid in the 1990s. ESG works as an evaluation of a firm’s seriousness in engaging with environmental, social and governance factors. Investors these days are interested progressively, focused on how a company

influences society. He also said that there is no defined format for ESG reporting that makes it challenging for the management to understand what is required to be reported. Compliance with ESG reporting can help Bangladeshi companies to be competitive after LDC graduation.

Dr M Niaz Asadullah, visiting professor of economics, University of Reading, UK, Mohammad Bin Quasem, director, Echotex Ltd, Yeasmin Akther, business manager, Knowledge, Health and Nutrition, SGS Bangladesh Limited, M Abu

Horairah, former vice-president, DCCI, Enamul Haque Patwary, former director, DCCI, and Rashid Shah Shamrat, former director, DCCI, also spoke.

Speakers stressed the need for an ESG policy, creating awareness, and having monitoring and reporting system. They suggested orienting people about what ESG is. For the sake of environmental safety, they put an emphasis on massive afforestation. They also urged concerted efforts as well as the implementation of rules and regulations to implement ESG **■**

Financing crucial for Logistics Policy effectiveness

Bangladesh has achieved what many call a development miracle, evolving into a burgeoning economy while consistently recording over 6 percent growth a year over the past decade. Despite this progress, the country has traditionally been ranked low in terms of the cost of doing business. As Bangladesh transitions from the least developed country status, it aims to diversify and strengthen its trade and economic connectivity by 2026, becoming more multidimensional

and aiming to be a developed economy by 2041.

In this connection, International think-tank estimated the need for \$608 billion infrastructure investment by 2041. However, infrastructure and logistics challenges remain a significant concern. An integrated, seamless and reliable logistics system can address the issues, attract foreign investments and foster greater global interest. In this regard, the logistics policy recently endorsed by the

government is a key step forward and has been widely praised by the private sector.

This is one of the first private sector demand policies in Bangladesh, formulated with significant involvement and participation of the private sector. From this perspective, the policy is distinctly oriented towards the private sector, being among the few in Bangladesh primarily steered by private-sector interests, efforts and research insights

throughout its development process.

If this logistics policy is implemented, the Dhaka chamber expects that it will significantly reduce the cost of doing business in Bangladesh, also encouraging substantial infrastructure investment. Investing in the logistics infrastructure sector is believed to yield significant returns, with each dollar invested potentially generating significant multiples.

Thus, in order to achieve the significant infrastructure investments needed for Bangladesh to become a developed country by 2041, this policy stands as a crucial and timely initiative. The Dhaka chamber believes that for the policy to have a meaningful impact on the economy, a clear financing strategy is necessary. This would enable the private sector and investors to understand how infrastructure investments will

contribute to the overall health of the economy. Consequently, the Dhaka Chamber underscores the importance of incorporating a clear roadmap for investment and infrastructure development financing within the policy framework.

The Dhaka chamber feels that public-private partnership budget process needs to be in line with the annual objective of the Logistics Policy. The process should include annual targets for priority logistics projects, to be originated through the involvement of the line ministries concerned and the private sector.

In addition, the financing of logistics, specifically infrastructure, requires access to long-term debt as well as equity financing. Public sector entities can be funded either from budgetary resources or through

payment assurances of different forms.

In national interests, these issues should be addressed in the proposed policy before it is finalized or put to effect. Historically, Bangladesh's infrastructure and logistics financing have relied heavily on external sources. Considering the current economic challenges, incorporating clear and sustainable infrastructure financing mechanisms in the new policy will significantly benefit all stakeholders, especially the private sector, and provide a substantial boost to the overall economy.

A comprehensive policy with a focus to local and diversified financing will not only enhance the resilience of the infrastructure sector but also make a strong basis for the economic development **r**

Late Rashed Maksud Khan, a pioneer in the industrialization of ceramic sector in Bangladesh

Speakers at a remembrance meeting at DCCI



Dhaka Chamber President Ashraf Ahmed (third from left) seen moderating a memorial meeting in remembrance of DCCI's former President Late Rashed Maksud Khan held on May 11. DCCI former Presidents M A Sattar (fourth from left), Mahbubur Rahman (second from left), M H Rahman (right), M A Momen (left) and Daughter of Late Rashed Maksud Khan Farzana Rubaiyat Khan (second from right) are also seen in the picture.

Late Rashed Maksud Khan worked relentlessly throughout his life for the development of the industrialization of the ceramic sector in Bangladesh,

created employment opportunities as well as helped accelerate the economy and his contribution would be remembered by all of us forever.

Business leaders, well-wishers and his family members expressed these views in a memorial meeting on Late Rashed Maksud Khan organized by

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) on May 11, 2024.

The memorial meeting was conducted by Ashraf Ahmed, President, DCCI. He said, in 1995 and 1998 Rashed Maksud Khan served the Chamber as its President for two terms. Under his leadership a business delegation comprising of 10 members from Dhaka Chamber visited several European countries for 21 days, such as United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Italy.

The delegation, at that time participated in various bilateral business meetings with different trade organizations and business communities. Also, in 1995, Dhaka Chamber Library started providing 'e-mail' service under 'DCCI Information Network' program, which was a landmark initiative for that time.

Remembering his career, former President of DCCI M A Sattar said, he lived a simple life throughout his

entire life as well as worked for the expansion of business and investment in the country. He later prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.


Mahbubur Rahman, former president of Dhaka Chamber and President of International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh said that he had great interest especially in the ceramic industry and he worked relentlessly for the overall development of this industry throughout his life. He said that Rashed Maksud Khan was always involved himself in all activities of DCCI with a positive attitude.

Another former President of Dhaka Chamber M A Momen said, he was all through a very good person not only in business arena but in social activities also and he always worked for the expansion of business activities in the country.

Akbar Hakim, former Director of DCCI, said that he served as the founding President of Bangladesh-Philippines Chamber of Commerce

& Industry. On the occasion of 75th anniversary of the Chemical Engineering Department of the Bangladesh University of Engineering (BUET), he made a special contribution among the alumni of the department. Later he was awarded lifetime achievement at the function.

Daughter of late Rashed Maksud Khan Farzana Rubaiyat Khan said that she was proud for his late father as his father was a very good person. He came to the business in his early life and he tried to contribute to the economy by creating employment opportunities. From the very beginning he tried to develop Bangladesh's ceramic industry and till his death, he continued his endeavor to do the same.

DCCI's former President MH Rahman, former Senior Vice Presidents Alhaj Abdus Salam, Hossain Akhtar, former Director AKD Khair Mohammad Khan also spoke on the occasion 



DCCI former Presidents, members of the Board of Directors, former Senior Vice Presidents, Vice Presidents, Directors along with General Members and DCCI staff joined prayer for the salvation of late Rashed Maksud Khan during a memorial meeting held on May 11.

Seminar on “Unleashing the Potential of Semiconductor Industry in Bangladesh”

The global semiconductor industry is experiencing remarkable growth, driven by increased demand from various sectors such as automotive, smartphones, consumer electronics, industrial automation, telecommunications, and aerospace & defense. This surge is fueled by a global trend toward automation and the adoption of technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Analytics, Internet of Things, Cloud computing, and Industry 4.0. Forecasts indicate that the global semiconductor industry is on track to reach \$1 trillion by 2034, with a projected Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6% over the next decade from its current value of approximately \$574 billion. This growth is supported by proactive governmental support and strategic initiatives worldwide. Many countries have initiated dedicated programs to attract investments and bolster domestic capabilities in this vital sector, recognizing its strategic and security significance.

Bangladesh currently generates around \$5 million in annual revenue from the semiconductor industry, primarily through Integrated Circuit (IC) chip design services. However, IC design represents only one aspect of the semiconductor ecosystem, which also includes wafer production, chip fabrication, packaging, testing, and product integration. To achieve its goal of establishing a \$10 billion semiconductor industry by 2031, Bangladesh will need a focused policy approach and concerted efforts to develop its semiconductor ecosystem.

In view of the above, the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) organized a seminar titled ‘Unleashing the Potential of Semiconductor Industry in Bangladesh’ on May 15, 2024, Wednesday, at 3:00 PM in DCCI auditorium. Mr. Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP, Hon’ble State Minister for Posts, Telecommunications, and Information Technology, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, was present as the Chief Guest, and Mr. GSM Jafarullah, ndc, Managing Director, Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority, was present as the Special Guest. The seminar was chaired by Mr. Ashraf Ahmed, President of DCCI.

The keynote was presented by A. S. M. A. Haseeb, Nanomaterials and Ceramic Engineering Dept., BUET, Dhaka.

Welcome Remarks by DCCI President

- To achieve growth to some extent, we must focus on enhancing our technological capabilities in both manufacturing and innovation.

- The government should focus on cultivating the skilled workforce required to meet the growing demands of the semiconductor industry in Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh has the opportunity to benefit from the growing semiconductor industry by investing in a strong education system to train skilled workers, as evidenced by Malaysia’s interest in recruiting from Bangladesh.
- Studying successful FDI attraction strategies in the semiconductor sector can help Bangladesh develop a tailored approach, potentially including competitive subsidies, favorable business environments, and infrastructure development to attract leading semiconductor firms.

Remarks by Keynote Presenter

- The global semiconductor market is expected to reach USD 1,307.7 billion by 2032, with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.8%.
- The main semiconductor manufacturing process includes design, chip fabrication, assembling, testing and packaging.
- The semiconductor industry is highly labor-intensive, with Asia hosting at least 81% of the world’s semiconductor assembly, testing, and packaging production.
- Despite the presence of a few design houses in Bangladesh contributing to an annual market size of approximately \$5 million, the local semiconductor industry has not yet reached its anticipated level of development.
- Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and India are a few of the Asian countries that give special support to this sector in the form of grants, equity investment, favorable loans, R&D support, tax incentives, etc.
- Semiconductor packaging, an exceedingly labor-intensive process, is predominantly concentrated in Asia, with at least 81% percent of the world’s ATP production located there.
- The Semiconductor Manufacturing Business Model comprises Integrated Device Manufacturers (IDM), Design Houses, Fabless companies, Foundries, and OSATs (Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test).

Remarks by Discussants

- Course Curriculum Upgradation, Government Subsidy in the form of hiring & training resources & other investment modes like capex investment tax holidays.
- We can also focus on OSAT due to commercially efficient engineering resource availability Industry-focused Fund Development from BB & other stakeholders National Semiconductor Policy should be prioritized.
- Talent Development - Graduate EEE engineers - make them interested (over the last 7 years ULKA and NSL have started developing).
- It is crucial to prioritize the development of backward linkages in the semiconductor industry.
- Specialized semiconductor training programs should be launched in collaboration with universities and the government.
- Addressing the challenge of resource scarcity, including skilled employees and employee retention, by implementing practical policies and incentives.
- Bridging the gap between academia and industry collaboration through tangible policies and incentives.
- Exploring opportunities in semiconductor packaging and assembly with support from government, academia, and the private sector.
- Increasing investment in Research and Development (R&D), with the government providing incentives tailored to R&D initiatives.

Remarks by Special Guest

- Bangladesh High-Tech Park Authority informed that the government was establishing innovation hubs in ten universities alongside building Sheikh Hasina Institute of Frontier Technology on a vast 70 acres of land in Shibchar, Madaripur.
- Work of 21 out of 94 planned high-tech parks are nearly complete and also developing innovation hubs in 10 universities in the country.
- An industry-academia collaboration is essential to cultivate a highly skilled and technologically advanced workforce for this sector, given the high demand both domestically and internationally.

Remarks by Chief Guest

- Bangladesh would be able to earn \$10 billion from semiconductor manufacturing by 2041 if proper policy support is ensured.

- The government will devise a semiconductor policy to expedite sectoral development, mirroring the success achieved in localizing the electronics industry over the past decade.
- The government aims to train 50,000 chip designers locally under the Hiring & Training (HAT) program to foster growth in the design industry and anticipates fiscal allocation to support this promising sector.
- With proper policy support, incentive and guidelines coupled with skilled manpower and high-end sophisticated technology, we will be able to achieve the target of smart Bangladesh by 2041.

Recommendations

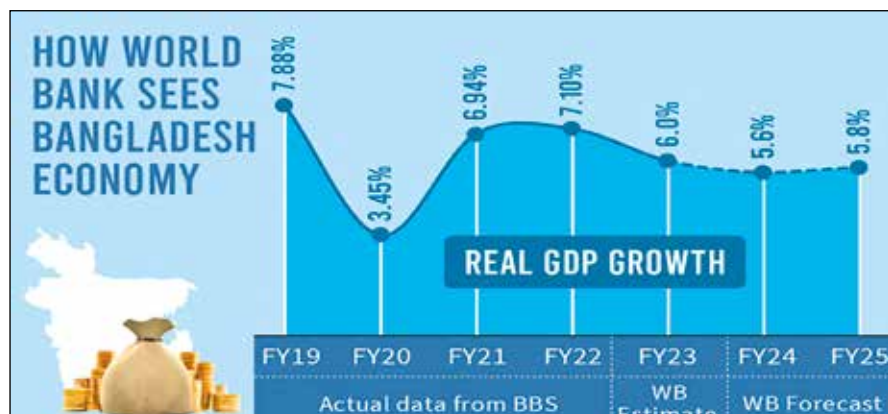
- We should develop a clear roadmap for semiconductor manufacturing, spanning short, medium, and long-term objectives, ensuring sustained growth and success.
- Simplify administrative procedures for setting up semiconductor businesses, including licensing, permits, and import/export regulations. A transparent and efficient regulatory environment will encourage investment and reduce operational hurdles.
- Moreover, it is important to critically review the existing policies affecting the industry and identify policy gaps that need to be addressed.
- Ensure robust protection for intellectual property (IP) to encourage innovation and attract foreign investors. This could involve updating existing IP laws and providing a clear legal framework for enforcing these rights.
- Create financial support mechanisms for semiconductor startups and SMEs, such as low-interest loans, venture capital, or public-private partnerships (PPPs). This will encourage entrepreneurship and allow smaller businesses to grow within the industry.
- Bangladesh's policy support for the RMG sector, including back-to-back LC, bonded warehouses, cash incentives, export credit guarantees, and tax holidays, has bolstered its competitiveness. Similar policy attention is needed for the semiconductor industry to ensure its sustained and inclusive growth.
- The government can be flexible to motivate investors or experts from countries such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan for partnership opportunities, knowledge, and experience to develop the semiconductor industry in Bangladesh in the early stage of development.
- We need a holistic framework to develop an ecosystem for sustainable and inclusive growth of the semiconductor industry taking into account the views of stakeholders.

Bangladesh Economy to grow below 6pc for 2 years: WB

Bangladesh's real gross domestic product growth is projected to remain relatively subdued at 5.6 percent in the current fiscal year, compared to the average annual growth rate of 6.6 percent over the decade preceding the Covid-19 pandemic, the World Bank said on April 2, 2024.

Relatively slower growth is projected to persist in the next fiscal year of 2024–25, at 5.7 percent, driven by a modest recovery in private consumption supported by a moderation in inflation, said the Washington-based lender in its Bangladesh Development Update. "Investment recovery will need support from improved implementation of large public investment projects."

The WB said persistent inflation is expected to weigh on private consumption growth, and shortages of energy and imported inputs combined with rising interest rates and financial sector vulnerabilities are expected to dampen investor sentiment. On the supply side, this will be reflected in higher industrial growth, even though services growth is expected to remain subdued. "Growth is expected to increase gradually over the medium-term as monetary, exchange rate,



financial and structural reforms are implemented."

The WB said even though political uncertainty has diminished with a new cabinet taking oath after the national elections held in January 2024, downside risks to the outlook are significant.

"Inadequate progress in monetary and exchange rate reforms may result in a further decline in foreign exchange reserves and persistent inflationary pressure." Tighter liquidity conditions could exacerbate vulnerabilities in the banking sector. Fiscal risks include a revenue shortfall, potential financial sector fiscal liabilities, and deficit monetization, it said.

"Expediting structural reforms are needed to promote economic diversification and integration into

Global Value Chains and strengthen resilience over the medium to long term. Critical reforms include developing the intellectual property rights regime and strengthening the framework for foreign direct investment."

An efficient resolution framework for non-performing loans is urgently needed, the WB said.

In this regard, it said, conducting a comprehensive asset quality review of the largest banks, establishing legal frameworks for the creation of an NPL market, strengthening corporate governance of the state-owned commercial banks, and efficiently implementing regulations such as the Prompt Corrective Action framework for weak banks are crucial steps

Bangladesh economy faces three risks: CPD

Persistent high inflation, high debt burden and slow economic growth are the three challenges facing the economy, noted economist Debapriya Bhattacharya said on May 5, 2024. The inflation is pushing low-income and marginalized people against the wall and they are finding it extremely hard to afford food and health care, said the distinguished fellow of Center for Policy Dialogue.

Inflation has come down globally, but Bangladesh has not been able to tame it, he told a discussion titled "New Government, National Budget and Citizens' Aspirations." The event was organized by the CPD in association with Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh. In March, consumer prices grew by 9.81 percent, up from 9.67 percent in the previous month, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Actual erosion of purchasing power of low- and fixed-income people may be much deeper than what the official statistics present, Debapriya said

The country's reliance on borrowing for debt servicing and debt risk are increasing, and if the private sector debt is taken into account, Bangladesh's debt-to-gross domestic product ratio is 42 percent, he said.

“The government’s loan from the domestic sources is almost double compared to the foreign debt, which is a sign of big problems. The foreign debt has created pressure on the foreign currency exchange.” Bangladesh has never fallen behind on debt payment, but “around \$5 billion in debt is unpaid in the energy and other sectors.” Besides, the government’s fiscal space for spending is declining due to the slow growth in gross domestic product.


“If the government wants to achieve the annual target of 7.5 percent [gross domestic product growth] by June 2024, they have to achieve over 10 percent growth throughout the rest of the current fiscal year.” In the October-December quarter of 2023, Bangladesh’s gross domestic product growth stood at 3.78 percent, as per BBS data. According to Debapriya, the government is going to place the upcoming 2024-25 budget amid a critical socio-economic and political environment.

“The budget will give us a sign of what the government is thinking about how to rebound from the slowed growth. The upcoming budget is crucial for the government.” He then urged the parliamentary standing committees to meet at least once every month to ensure good governance and accountability. Anisul Islam Mahmud, lawmaker of the Jatiya Party, said MPs and parliamentary standing committees make very little contribution to the preparation of the budget.

The weakness in the financial sector resulted mainly from a lack of good governance, he said.

“So, good governance is a must. Whatever has been done in the past is now past. From now on, good governance should be the top priority in all the sectors,” he added. Echoing the same, former planning minister

MA Mannan said, “Good governance should be on the menu. Every country has its own characteristics of governance. The country should put emphasis on it.”

The lack of good governance is a common reason behind all the problems, he said. Lawmaker AK Azad, also managing director of the Ha-Meem Group of Companies, said “As long as the ministries are free from corruption, the budget benefits will not reach the people, no matter how much allocation is increased” 

Bangladesh expected to eclipse 1.01pc global GDP share by 2028: IMF

Bangladesh is poised for a significant economic milestone as projections from the International Monetary Fund suggest that it will surpass the 1.01 percent mark and contribute to over 1 percent of the global gross domestic product by 2028, as per the latest World Economic Outlook database released in April 2024. Media reports underlined this adding, presently, Bangladesh’s economy constitutes 0.84 percent of the global gross domestic product, with an expected growth of 0.17 percent over the upcoming five years.

This growth trajectory is expected to propel Bangladesh to the 19th position globally in terms of economic size,

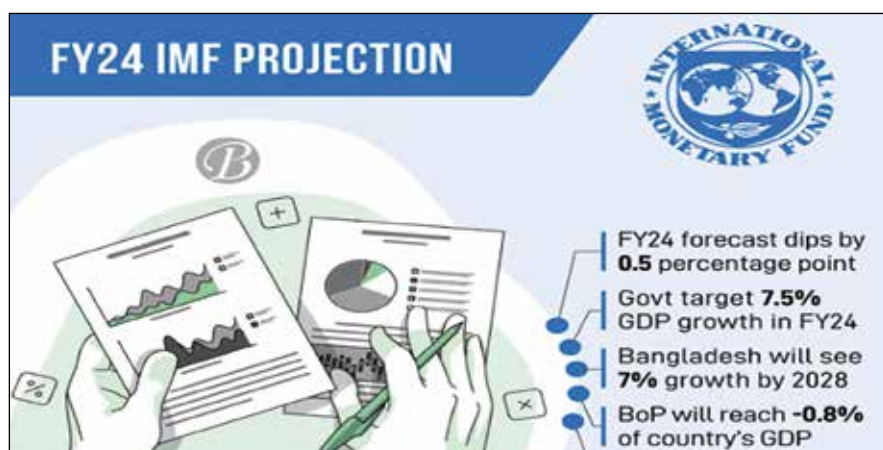
marking a substantial advancement from its current 25th position even as over the next five years, Bangladesh is forecast to surpass several economies, including those of Iran, Thailand, Australia, Poland, Taiwan, and Pakistan. The IMF projects Bangladesh’s gross domestic product to surge by \$245.52 billion over the next five years, reaching \$691.865 billion by 2028 a remarkable 55 percent increase from the previous year’s \$446.349 billion.

This growth is expected to translate into a 54 percent increase in economic activities based on purchasing power parity dollar, alongside a projected 48 percent rise in per capita gross domestic product.

Despite challenges posed by the ongoing economic crisis, Bangladesh’s economy exhibited a growth rate of 6.03 percent in 2023, expected to moderate to 5.70 percent in 2024 before rebounding to 6.60 percent in 2025.

Furthermore, the IMF expects an average gross domestic product growth of 6.72 percent for Bangladesh in the next fiscal year, followed by rates of 7.10 percent in 2026, 7.20 percent in 2027, and 7 percent in 2028.

An analysis of IMF time series data underscores Bangladesh’s remarkable ascent in the global economic



landscape, progressing from the 44th position in 1980 with a 0.376 percent share of the global gross domestic product. This steady climb reflects Bangladesh's emergence as a significant player in the global economy, with experts emphasizing its substantial contributions to the world gross domestic product **r**

BB launches crawling peg, sets Tk 117/\$ as mid-point

Bangladesh Bank today introduced the crawling peg exchange rate system and allowed banks to buy and sell US dollars freely at around Tk 117. "It has been decided to introduce a crawling peg exchange rate system for spot purchases and sales of US dollars," the BB said in a notice.

Under this system, a crawling peg mid rate has been set at Tk 117 per US dollar with an immediate effect. "Scheduled banks may purchase and sell US dollars freely around the CPMR with their customers and in interbank deals," the BB said. The crawling peg, a system of exchange rate adjustments, falls between two extremes: the fixed rate and the floating or market-based rate. The key difference is that a crawling peg allows for limited fluctuations within a predefined range, while a fixed exchange rate has almost no flexibility.

Since mid-2022, the taka has been depreciating against the dollar, a trend primarily attributed to a balance of payments deficit leading to a significant reduction in reserves. The weakening of the taka has fueled domestic inflation as the cost of imports has risen. The BB move comes as an IMF mission team led by Chris Papageorgiou concluded its 15-day visit to Bangladesh today. During the visit, it discussed economic and

financial policies in the context of the second review of the program.

"We welcome Bangladesh Bank's bold actions to realign the exchange rate and simultaneously adopt a crawling peg regime with a band as a transitional step toward greater exchange rate flexibility to restore external resilience," said Papageorgiou in a statement **r**

Policy rate hiked by 50 basis points to tame inflation

The Bangladesh Bank hiked the policy rate by 50 basis points to 8.5 percent on May 08, 2024 in a bid to rein in inflation. The central bank made the disclosure during a press conference.

The decision to increase the policy rate, along with corresponding adjustments to the Standing Lending Facility and Standing Deposit Facility rates, aims to anchor inflation expectations at the desired level. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the point-to-point inflation in Bangladesh rose slightly to 9.81 percent in March compared to 9.67 percent in February. The overall inflation has been above 9 percent since March 2023.

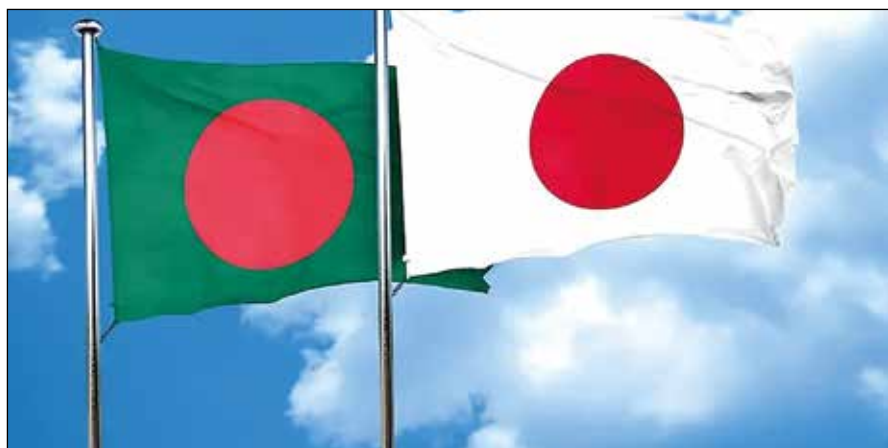
In December 2023, preceding the announcement of the monetary policy

for the second half of the financial year in January, inflation stood at 9.41 percent. The Bangladesh Bank had earlier also raised the policy rate. In the beginning of October last year, for instance, the Bangladesh Bank increased its key policy rate by 50 basis points to 7.75 percent — the largest hike in a decade. In January this year, the policy rate was again hiked by 25 basis points, reaching 8 percent. The hike came less than a week after the formation of the new government. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced her government's main aim was to fight inflation.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at World Bank's Dhaka office said, "The central bank's policy rate and lending rate hikes aim primarily to control inflation. However, it will take some time for the impact to be visible on the market." He also said: "On the other hand, if the policy rate increases, the fund cost of the banks will increase, but the loan cost of the customers will also rise" **r**

Bangladesh, Japan begin talks to sign trade deal

Bangladesh and Japan have formally begun the negotiation to strike a trade deal to allow manufacturers to keep enjoying duty-free export benefits in the post-LDC era and draw investments from the Far East nation. The first round of the talks aimed at



signing an Economic Partnership Agreement started in Dhaka on May 19 and ended on May 23. Details of the meeting were not made public. "In this round of negotiation, both sides exchanged their views on the method of negotiations and a broad range of negotiating areas," said a press release.

"At the meeting, we mainly shared information on the 17 sectors that were identified in the joint study," said a senior official of the government of Bangladesh and a member of the negotiation team, requesting anonymity. The joint study group has identified the sectors, which include trade in goods, trade remedies, rules of origin, customs procedures, and trade facilitation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures. The other sectors are technical barriers to trade, trade in services, investment, electronic commerce, government procurement, intellectual property, competition, improvement of the business environment, labor, environment, transparency, cooperation, and dispute settlement.

The meeting was attended on the Japanese side by Taketani Atsushi, ambassador in charge of economic diplomacy and deputy director-general of the Economic Affairs Bureau of the foreign affairs ministry, and representatives from other ministries, according to the statement.

Ahmad Munirus Saleheen, chairman of the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission, and representatives from relevant ministries attended from the host side. Iwama Kiminori, Japanese ambassador to Bangladesh, and Ahasanul Islam Titu, state minister for commerce, took part in the opening session.

Three rounds of meetings of the joint study group were held last year to pave the way for last week's formal launch of the negotiation. Bangladesh

is in talks with major trading partners to pen pacts such as the free trade agreement, the preferential trade agreement, the comprehensive economic partnership agreement, and the EPA to retain the zero-duty benefit on exports after the graduation of the country from the group of least-developed countries in November 2026.

Bangladeshi products will be subject to up to 18 percent duty in the Japanese market from the current zero-duty benefit if the EPA is not signed.

Bangladesh risks losing \$8 billion in exports annually in the post-LDC era if the trade preference ends in all markets. Currently, 73 percent of the country's shipments enjoy LDC-linked benefits. Japan is Bangladesh's 12th largest trading partner in exports and seventh-largest in imports. It is the lone country in Asia where Bangladesh's exports crossed the \$1-billion mark nearly a decade ago on the back of the duty benefit. The export of merchandise, especially garment items, to the Far East nation stood at \$1.90 billion in the last fiscal year of 2022–23 while imports amounted to \$2.02 billion, data from the commerce ministry showed.

About 85 percent of the local and Japanese companies with operations in both nations want their governments to sign an FTA, according to a survey of the Japan Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2021.

About 15 years ago, textile and logistics industries from Japan began to expand their footprint in Bangladesh thanks to its abundant and inexpensive labor force. In recent years, firms such as motorcycle manufacturers, major telecommunication companies and IT companies have invested in the country to tap the business potential

in the fast-growing consumer market of 17 crore, the joint study group report said.

The number of Japanese companies operating in Bangladesh has tripled over the past decade to nearly 350. The stock of foreign direct investments from the country was \$533.66 million in December 2023.

More investments are expected through the Bangladesh Special Economic Zone, which partially opened in December 2022. Located in Narayanganj, it is the first zone developed by a Japanese company in partnership with the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority. Both sides have targeted to conclude the negotiation by December 2025. In December 2020, Bangladesh signed a PTA with Bhutan to safeguard the duty benefit, its first bilateral trade deal with any nation **r**

Industries created more jobs amid downturn in Q1

Bangladesh's industrial sector witnessed a growth in employment in the first quarter of 2024 while the farming and service sectors shed jobs during the period, according to the latest Quarterly Labor Force Survey data. However, the findings raised questions among economists, who were puzzled by the growth at a time when the economy had been facing a slowdown due to high inflation, a downtrend in export growth, and falling imports. During the January-March period of this year, the country had 1.27 crore employed people in the industrial sector, representing a 4 percent year-on-year increase.

On the other hand, employment in the agricultural sector, which accounts for the largest share of jobs, dropped 0.34 percent year-on-year to 3.18 crore in the quarter **r**

WB projects India economy to grow at 7.5pc in 2024

The Indian economy is projected to grow at 7.5 percent in 2024, the World Bank has said, revising its earlier projections for the same period by 1.2 percent. Overall, growth in South Asia is expected to be strong at 6.0 percent in 2024, driven mainly by robust growth in India and recoveries in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the World Bank said in its latest South Asia Development Update on April 03, 2024. According to the report, South Asia is expected to remain the fastest-growing region in the world for the next two years, with growth projected to be 6.1 percent in 2025.

“In India, which accounts for the bulk of the region’s economy, output growth is expected to reach 7.5 percent in the 2023–24 fiscal year before returning to 6.6 percent over the medium term, with activity in services and industry expected to remain robust,” the bank said in its report. In Bangladesh, output is expected to rise by 5.7 percent in the 2024–25 fiscal year, with high inflation and restrictions on trade and foreign exchange constraining economic activity.

Following the contraction in the 2022–23 fiscal year, Pakistan’s economy is expected to grow by 2.3 percent in the 24–25 fiscal year as business confidence improves. In Sri Lanka, output growth is expected to strengthen to 2.5 percent in 2025, with modest recoveries in reserves, remittances, and tourism.

“South Asia’s growth prospects remain bright in the short run, but fragile fiscal positions and increasing climate shocks are dark clouds on the horizon,” said Martin Raiser, World Bank Vice President for South Asia. “To make growth more resilient, countries need to adopt policies to boost private investment and strengthen employment growth,”



he said. “South Asia is failing right now to fully capitalize on its demographic dividend. This is a missed opportunity,” said Franziska Ohnsorge, World Bank Chief Economist for South Asia.

If the region employed as large a share of the working-age population as other emerging markets and developing economies, its output could be 16 percent higher, Ohnsorge said. In India, the World Bank said, economic activity surprised on the upside in 2023Q4, with growth of 8.4 percent from a year ago. “The expansion was supported by rapid increases in investment and government consumption. More recent survey data point to continued strong performance,” it said.

In February, India’s composite purchasing managers index stood at 60.6, well above the global average of 52.1 (a value above 50 indicates expansion). Growth in the 2023–24 fiscal year is estimated to have exceeded earlier forecasts, it said. According to the report, in India, inflation has remained within the Reserve Bank of India’s 2-6 percent target range since a spike in mid-2023, and the policy rate has remained unchanged since February 2023. Food price inflation has been elevated, partly reflecting a weak

harvest due to El Nino, it said.

Financial conditions in India have remained accommodative. Domestic credit issuance to the commercial sector (including public and private borrowers) grew by 14 percent (year-on-year) in December 2023, the fastest pace since 2013. Financial soundness indicators continued to improve. The nonperforming-loan ratio fell to 3.2 percent last year, well below its recent peak, in March 2018, of about 11 percent. Regulatory capital totaled 17 percent of bank assets in the second quarter of 2023, surpassing both regulatory requirements and peer averages. FDI as a share of gross domestic product fell in 2023, but a rebound in foreign portfolio investment inflows in the 2023–24 fiscal year contributed to foreign reserves rising 8 percent in the year to January 2024, reaching a level sufficient to cover about 11 months of imports, the World Bank report said.

“In India, output growth is projected to reach 7.5 percent in the 2023–24 fiscal year on the back of robust growth in Quarter 3 of the 2023–24 fiscal year. Growth is expected to moderate to 6.6 percent in the 2024–25 fiscal year before picking up in subsequent years as a decade of robust public investment yields

growth dividends,” the bank said. The expected slowdown in growth between the 2023–24 and the 2024–25 fiscal years mainly reflects a deceleration in investment from its elevated pace in the previous year, it said. “Growth in services and industry is expected to remain robust, the latter aided by strong construction and real estate activity. Inflationary pressures are expected to subside, creating more policy space for easing financial conditions,” it said.

“Over the medium term, the fiscal deficit and government debt are projected to decline, supported by robust output growth and consolidation efforts by the central government,” the report said **r**

IMF warns of significant downside risks for Pakistan

The International Monetary Fund has issued a stark warning about Pakistan’s economic future, highlighting exceptionally high downside risks in its latest report. The report, released ahead of talks between the Pakistani government and the IMF on a new long-term program, underscores concerns about the country’s stability and the challenges it faces, Dawn reported.

According to the IMF staff report, “Downside risks remain exceptionally

high. While the new government has indicated its intention to continue the SBAs (standby arrangement) policies, political uncertainty remains significant.”

This uncertainty, it warns, could have profound effects on policy-making, particularly given the high cost of living and other political complexities. The IMF also cautions that policy slippages, coupled with decreased external financing, could derail Pakistan’s progress towards debt sustainability and put pressure on the exchange rate. Furthermore, external stability is threatened by factors such as higher commodity prices, shipping disruptions, and tighter global financial conditions, all of which could exacerbate the nation’s financial challenges, as reported by Dawn.

Emphasizing the urgency of the situation, the IMF stresses the importance of timely disbursements of post-program external financing. While Pakistan recently completed a short-term \$3 billion program, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has underscored the need for a fresh, longer-term arrangement to address the country’s ongoing economic issues. Last summer, Pakistan narrowly avoided default, and since then, the economy has stabilized, with inflation dropping from a record high of 38 percent in May to around 17

percent in April. However, significant challenges persist, including a high fiscal shortfall and stagnant growth, which is projected to be around 2 percent this year, compared to negative growth last year.

To address these challenges, Pakistan is expected to seek at least \$6 billion from the IMF and request additional financing from the Fund under the Resilience and Sustainability Trust, Dawn reported **r**

Sri Lanka holds rates to manage inflation, foster economic stability

Sri Lanka’s central bank held interest rates steady on May 28, 2024 to ensure inflation pressures remain in check as authorities look to foster economic stability and lift growth following the South Asian nation’s worst financial crisis in decades. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka kept the Standing Deposit Facility Rate at 8.50 percent and the Standing Lending Facility Rate at 9.50 percent, it said in a statement. The decision surprised some in the market as eight out of 15 economists and analysts polled by Reuters had projected rates to be cut by 50 basis points. Sri Lanka’s key annual inflation rate was at 1.5 percent in April, down from 6.4 percent at the start of the year, and prices appear well anchored, the central bank said in a statement.

“Incoming data suggests that headline inflation is likely to be below the targeted level of 5 percent in the upcoming months due to the combined impact of the administered price adjustments and eased food prices, although some upside risks remain,” the central bank said.


CBSL reduced rates by 50 bps in March as it continued an easing cycle that has seen rates drop by 700 bps since June, partially reversing





the 1,050 bps in increases made since April 2022 when the economy plunged into crisis.

Space remains for market lending interest rates to decline further given the prevailing accommodative monetary policy stance, CBSL Chief P. Weerasinghe told reporters at a post-policy press conference. The governor reiterated the need for lenders to pass on the benefits of lower rates to borrowers without further delay and support the pick up of private sector credit to boost overall growth. "There could be space for rates to be adjusted lower later on when the economy has stabilized more but we will make those decisions based on data," Weerasinghe said.

Economists say private sector credit growth remains key to shoring up the economy. "The weighted average lending rate need to adjust more. That is what will assist people to borrow. It's clear the central bank wants private sector credit to expand to boost growth," said Udeeshan Jonas, chief strategist at equity research firm CAL Group 

Bhutan sustains strong growth amid economic hurdles

Bhutan's economy continues its strong recovery from the COVID-19


pandemic, according to two new World Bank reports launched on May 03, 2024. The April 2024 Bhutan Development Update indicates that economy is showing signs of a strong recovery with an expected 4.6 percent real gross domestic product growth in the 2022–23 fiscal year, driven by higher growth in tourism activity, following economic contraction over two consecutive years due to the Covid-pandemic. Growth is expected to accelerate to 4.9 percent in the 2023–24 fiscal year.

"To maintain a strong and inclusive growth, Bhutan can do more to enable the business environment to attract Foreign Direct Investments and promote the private sector to create more jobs that appeal to the aspirations of its citizens," said Abdoulaye Seck, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan. "Further, it will equally be important for the government to timely address the increasing stress on services delivery because of human resources challenges."

Despite the relatively robust growth in recent years, downside risks to the economy persist. The fiscal deficit is expected to widen in the 2023–24 fiscal year to 5 percent of gross domestic product as expenditure outpaces revenue, due to significant salary increases for public sector

employees. Over the last year, there has been a significant decline in international reserves, but they have begun to stabilize as the current account deficit showed signs of narrowing in the first quarter of the 2023–24 fiscal year, following a significant expansion in the 2022–23 fiscal year. Risks include delayed fiscal consolidation, vulnerabilities in the financial sector, volatile international commodity prices and delays in hydropower projects.

The report includes a special section on labor market and jobs. Bhutan's labor remains predominantly employed in the low productivity sectors. Workers face many challenges, including limited inclusion of women in meaningful employment and persistence of low-productivity agricultural employment. Employment quality outside of the public sector remains weak, leading to public sector queuing, rising unemployment among urban workers, and a record number of Bhutanese migrating abroad. The 2023 Public Expenditure Review for Bhutan emphasizes the critical importance of efficient public spending and enhanced domestic resource mobilization to help achieve Bhutan's long-term development goals.

Bhutan's revenue collection remains largely driven by the hydropower sector, which contributes significantly to both tax and non-tax revenue collection. However, the contribution from the direct taxes without the hydropower sector remained stagnant. Bhutan's capital expenditure as a share of gross domestic product is among the highest globally, and expenditures on salary and allowances consume a significant portion of the current expenditure. While Bhutan's commitment to education and healthcare remains robust, there are opportunities to improve spending efficiency 

Chinese factory activity falls in hit to economic momentum

China's manufacturing activity unexpectedly fell in May, according to an official survey, adding to pressure on policymakers seeking to boost momentum in the world's second-biggest economy. The country's official manufacturing purchasing managers' index came in at 49.5 in May, missing expectations of an expansion and reversing recent increases in April and March. A reading of above 50 marks an expansion compared with the previous month. President Xi Jinping's government has emphasized high-end manufacturing and an upgraded industrial sector at a time when a prolonged property slowdown and weak consumer demand have weighed on economic momentum.

Other recent data indicators have pointed towards the effects of that shift, with industrial production in April beating forecasts to rise 6.7 percent. Exports also returned to growth in the same month amid growing international scrutiny of China's industrial strategy and its impact on global trade. The non-manufacturing PMI came in at 51.1 in May, still in growth territory but down from a reading of 51.2 in April. The manufacturing PMI was previously in contractionary territory from October to February. In May, it showed new orders and overseas orders were in decline.

"Most of the demand in industry is still in the domestic market and it's pretty weak," said Dan Wang, chief economist at Hang Seng Bank China. Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management, said China "cannot depend only on exports to drive its economy" and that fiscal policy "needs to become more proactive to boost domestic demand." Beijing has maintained a cautious approach towards stimulus since a cash crunch swept through



its vast property sector in late 2021. Policymakers have gradually cut benchmark lending rates and emphasized the need to complete unfinished construction projects.

But recent announcements have indicated that the government is stepping up its support. New measures unveiled in mid-May will allow state-owned enterprises to purchase unsold housing and were described in domestic media as a "historic" shift in policy. Wang said housing "was performing worse than last year" and that there had been "very little" policy support. Recent official data showed new home sales by floor area fell 23.4 percent year on year in the first quarter.

China has set an economic growth target of 5 percent for the full year. Gross domestic product in the first quarter grew 5.3 percent compared with early 2023, when Covid-19 outbreaks erupted across the country. This week, the IMF upgraded China's growth forecast but warned that the country needed to boost domestic demand and "scale back" its industrial policies. Retail sales in April grew just 2.3 percent year on year, in a further sign of weak consumption that has left consumer price growth in deflationary territory for part of the past year. Lynn Song, chief economist for China at ING, noted that while

survey data "can be fickle," the "PMI disappointments may send a warning sign for growth." "This is especially the case as industrial activity has been the primary source of strength in the first four months of the year," he added **r**

China export-import return to growth in April

China's exports and imports returned to growth in April, suggesting that demand is improving despite an uneven economic recovery, according to customs data released on May 09, 2024. The report showed exports grew 1.5 percent in April compared to a year earlier, after falling 7.5 percent in March, the first contraction since November. Imports surged 8.4 percent in April, beating analysts' expectations and up from a 1.9 percent decline in March.

China has introduced various policy support measures in recent months to support growth and boost confidence in the world's second-largest economy. China's trade surplus grew to \$72.35 billion, up from \$58.55 billion in March. However, the outlook is not entirely positive given broader global trends, analysts said. "We think export volumes will retreat over the coming months due to cooling consumer

spending in advanced economies and the diminishing tailwind from lower export prices,” Zichun Huang of Capital Economics said in a note.

Export growth was mainly due to a lower base of comparison in the previous year, Huang said. She said that import volumes were likely to bounce back further in the near future due to “fiscal spending supporting import-heavy construction” **1**

Singapore economy misses forecasts with 2.7pc growth

Singapore’s economy grew slower than expected in the first quarter, as a struggling manufacturing sector weighed on tourism spending from events including Taylor Swift’s concerts. The city-state’s economic performance is often seen as a barometer of the global environment because of its reliance on international trade. Gross domestic product expanded 2.7 percent on-year, the Ministry of Trade and Industry said, faster than the previous three months but weaker than the 3.0 percent projected in a Bloomberg poll of economists. It grew just 0.1 percent on-quarter.

The advance estimates are computed largely from data in January and February and are subject to revision

when March figures come in. Manufacturing, a pillar of the trade-reliant economy, rose 0.8 percent on-year and contracted 2.9 percent from October to December. The services sector, which includes accommodation and food, grew 2.9 percent. “In all likelihood, the slew of concerts which attracted many international visitors to Singapore’s shores, did have a temporal boost to the consumer-facing industries, namely the hospitality and entertainment-related activities,” said Selena Ling, chief economist at banking group OCBC.

Swift performed only in Singapore in March for the Southeast Asian leg of her Eras Tour, while Coldplay played in January and the Singapore Airshow, the biggest in Asia, was held in February. Veteran economist Song Seng Wun said he expected an “upward adjustment” to the overall first-quarter growth when the effects of Swift’s concerts are fully counted.

There could also be “spillover effects” into March of spending from the Singapore Airshow, added Song, at financial services firm CGS International Singapore. “The bottom line is that the economy is still recovering post-pandemic,” he said. In a separate announcement, the central bank Monetary Authority of Singapore kept its monetary policy unchanged for a fourth straight time,

saying it needed to keep inflation in check. As the city-state imports most of its needs, it deals with imported inflation by allowing for a stronger Singapore dollar **1**

South Korea growth beats forecast as exports rise

South Korea’s economic growth accelerated more than expected in the last quarter as exports recovered and construction investment rebounded, brightening prospects for President Yoon Suk-yeol after an election setback that threatens his economic initiatives. Gross domestic product advanced 1.3 percent in the three months to March versus the previous quarter, the Bank of Korea said on April 25, an advance that soundly outpaced economists’ consensus for a 0.6 percent expansion. The economy grew 3.4 percent year on year.

South Korea expects its economic growth to accelerate to more than 2 percent in 2024, as exports continue to advance. Global demand for technology products such as semiconductors has been a key driver, while momentum is starting to broaden to other industries. Growth in exports sped up to 8.3 percent in the first quarter from 5.7 percent in the previous period, according to Bloomberg Economics economist Hyosung Kwon.

Construction investment returned to growth in the first quarter after a 4.5 percent contraction in the previous three-month period. The government said in February that it would accelerate the implementation of infrastructure projects and public-private partnerships to shore up industry, where activity has been hurt by credit risks. From the previous quarter, private consumption rose 0.8 percent, while government spending was up 0.7 percent. Exports in real





terms increased 0.9 percent, as facilities investment fell 0.8 percent, according to the BOK. Manufacturing output increased 1.2 percent from the previous quarter, with chemical products and transportation equipment leading the activity.

Public works and building construction played a central role in boosting the construction industry, which grew 4.8 percent in the first quarter, the central bank said. Risks remain for the economic outlook. Central banks around the world have kept interest rates elevated to tame inflation, and Middle East tensions are flaring up. South Korea's currency briefly weakened to the key psychological level of 1,400 won per US dollar last week, prompting warnings of intervention from policymakers.

Debt concerns continue to cast a shadow over the construction industry and consumers are tightening their budgets as they cope with persistent price pressures. "The fact that net exports are a core driver of growth with the largest contribution will stay unchanged as inflation keeps putting pressure, and real purchasing power among households remains insufficient," KB Securities economist Gweon Heejin said in a note before the gross domestic product release.

Government spending has also slowed compared with the pandemic

era, when stimulus helped tide the economy over.

Yoon has sought to restore fiscal health by exercising restraint ever since taking office in 2022. That policy stance may change in the wake of parliamentary elections earlier in April that resulted in a drubbing for his People Power Party. He will now be under pressure to accommodate opposition demands for more stimulus. Lee Jae-myung of the opposition Democratic Party has called in particular for handouts worth about 275,000 won (\$270) for each citizen.

The electoral defeat also complicates Mr Yoon's efforts to reduce wealth taxes and buttress relations with the US and Japan during the remainder of his tenure that ends in 2027.

Yoon has made stronger economic and technology ties with the US a centerpiece of his administration. The trend in worldwide trade bodes well for South Korea, with the World Trade Organization expecting a gradual recovery in the early months of 2024. "But any gains could be easily derailed by regional conflicts and geopolitical tensions," the global organization said in March.

China will play a key role for its neighbor. The nation remains South Korea's biggest trading partner, with its exports to the world's second-largest economy rising 9 percent

from a year earlier for the first 20 days of April. South Korea's shipments to the US rose 22.8 percent, while those to Vietnam grew 26.6 percent.

There are signs the situation in China is improving. Its manufacturing activity expanded in March for the first time since September, while gross domestic product figures for the first quarter soundly beat expectations, with the nation targeting about 5 percent growth for the year. Still, growth was mostly driven by public investment, with private demand remaining fragile.

As South Korea's economic growth picks up, it can provide more scope for the central bank to keep its benchmark rate restrictive for longer. Keeping its focus on inflation, the BOK held the rate steady for a 10th time earlier in April. "Part of the reason is the economic recovery so far powered by external demand has remained remarkably strong even with restrictive levels of interest rates," Mr Kelvin Lam, a Pantheon Macroeconomics economist, said in a note. He expects a rate cut in the third quarter of 2024 **■**

Vietnam needs drastic reforms for growth: experts

Vietnam's economy has a good start with a growth rate of 5.66 percent in the first quarter of this year, the highest rate since 2020. However, with a gross domestic product growth rate target set at 7 percent per year by 2030, the Vietnamese economy needs to expand at 8 percent per year on average in the next six years, requiring hastened efforts to accelerate business environment reforms to create a firm ground for economic growth.

Insiders said public investment will remain a major growth driver this year. According to experts, Vietnam should also take the opportunities arising from digital economy, circular economy, green growth, regional linkage, and international integration to promote the economic growth more sustainably **■**

How will Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 enhance economy

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is a nationwide plan to tap into various sectors of the country to transform and unlock the potential of its people and demonstrate the Kingdom's commitment to diversifying and sustaining its economy beyond oil and gas. Under this new roadmap, the Kingdom aims to boost economic growth and job creation for its citizens and attract global talent by opening the country to more foreign investment. Vision 2030 prioritizes the youth and seeks to improve Saudi Arabia's business environment, restructuring its economic cities, and deregulating the energy market to make it more competitive.

2030 economic targets

Vision 2030 aims to achieve the following economic objectives in the next six years, thereby actualizing Saudi Arabia's plan to revitalize its economy globally.

Progress so far

As Saudi Arabia moves past the midpoint of its ambitious Vision 2030 journey, first and second-level performance indicators show significant progress toward the 2030 targets, with some metrics surpassing their goals. According to the initiative's official web page, the Kingdom's unemployment rate



decreased from 12.3 percent in 2016 to 8.6 percent in the third quarter of 2023. More than 1.2 million SMEs have registered in the country as of last year. More women are joining the labor force, and the country's Public Investment Fund assets under management have grown from \$192 billion in 2016 to \$749 billion in 2023.

The Kingdom's global gross domestic product ranking has also improved from 20th in 2016 to 17th in 2023. The private sector now contributes 45 percent to the gross domestic product, aligning with the annual target and working towards a Vision target of 65 percent. In the tourism sector, Saudi Arabia welcomed 106 million visitors in 2023, including

27.4 million international tourists, positioning it second in terms of growth rate among international tourists.

Home ownership among citizens has reached 63.74 percent, achieving the annual target and progressing toward the Vision goal of 70 percent.

In its eighth year, the 2023 annual report for Saudi Vision 2030 highlights the successful implementation of the vision's programs. An impressive 87 percent of the 1,064 initiatives planned for 2023 are completed or on track. Key performance indicators for 2023 include 243 metrics, with 81 percent achieving their third-level targets and 105 indicators surpassing their future targets for 2024-2025 **r**

Saudi Arabia's Q1 GDP shrinks by 1.8pc

Saudi Arabia's real gross domestic product decreased 1.8 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, flash estimates by the government's statistical authority showed on April 30, 2024, as a decline in oil activities continued to hurt overall growth. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, is pumping around 9 million barrels per day, well below its around 12 million bpd capacity

after it cut production as part of an agreement with OPEC and other oil producers. activities were down 10.6 percent in the first quarter compared with the previous year, estimates from the General Authority for Statistics showed, while non-oil gross domestic product grew 2.8 percent year on year and government activities increased 2 percent.

On a quarterly basis, seasonally

adjusted growth was up 1.3 percent from the previous quarter, driven by a 2.4 percent increase in oil activities and a 0.5 percent growth in non-oil activities, although government activities decreased by 1 percent. The Kingdom's economy contracted 0.9 percent in 2023, the data showed, pulled lower by the oil sector, while non-oil activities grew by 4.6 percent last year **r**

UAE aims to boost industrial investment

The UAE aims to boost the momentum of industrial investments at the third Make it in the Emirates forum, underpinning the vital role the sector plays in the country's economic and diversification strategies. The forum, which will run on May 27 and 28 in Abu Dhabi, will build on the strength of the Dh120 billion (\$32.7 billion) worth of local procurement agreements forged through more than 100 deals signed at past events. This year's event will highlight investment opportunities in several crucial industries, foremost of which are energy, telecoms, aerospace, health care, and food and beverage.

Speakers will include Dr Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, Sarah Al Amiri, Minister of State for Public Education and Advanced Technology, Badr Al Olama, director general of the Abu Dhabi Investment Office and Faisal Al Bannai, secretary general of Abu Dhabi's Advanced Technology Research Council. Topics dominating the two-day forum include the growth of UAE's Operation 300bn industrial initiative, using artificial intelligence in industries, the Emirates' space ambitions and boosting the youth's role in the industry, among others.

The event will be hosted by the ministry, in co-operation with the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development. Adnoc will convene executives from global corporations, government and private sector officials, small and medium enterprises, and start-ups, among others.

Make it in the Emirates has also enabled Dh6 billion in financial solutions, 30 industrial projects collectively worth more than Dh6 billion, and about 5,000 job opportunities for Emiratis in the industrial sector, according to data



from the Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology.

"The UAE is today one of the top destinations for industrial investments," Dr Sultan Al Jaber said on the ministry's website.

"The country offers a range of competitive advantages, including credibility, reliability, transparent laws, solid governance, competitive financing and an excellent quality of life within a diverse, tolerant and safe society, as well as a strategic geographical location with advanced infrastructure." Growing the UAE's industries and adopting advanced technology are among the central aspects of the UAE's economic diversification strategy several programs have been launched in this regard as it steers away from dependence on oil.

The Arab world's second-largest economy expanded by 3.6 percent to Dh1.68 trillion last year, driven by strong non-oil sector growth, preliminary estimates from the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre showed. At current prices, meanwhile, the Emirates' gross domestic product stood at Dh514.13 billion, representing an annual expansion of about 2.3 percent. The UAE has also recorded a 49 percent increase in the industrial sector's contribution to the gross domestic product, reaching Dh197 billion,

since the creation of the ministry, while industrial exports have surged 60 percent to Dh187 billion, it was reported in March.

Industrial productivity has increased by 18 percent compared to 2020 and the UAE was ranked first regionally and 29th globally last year in a UN agency's competitive industrial performance index, climbing seven spots since 2020. The surge is underpinned by various programs such as the National In-Country Value program, through which, more than Dh237 billion being spent outside the UAE was redirected into the national economy, Dr Al Jaber had said in March. So far, 16,000 Emiratis have been employed across ICV-certified companies. The UAE also launched its industrial strategy, Operation 300bn, in 2021 to position the country as an industrial center by 2031. The 10-year strategy focuses on increasing the industrial sector's contribution to gross domestic product to Dh300 billion by 2031, from Dh133 billion in 2021.

The ministry also launched initiatives to allow easy financing and minimize risks for industrial companies.

Last year, it provided Dh5.3 billion in financing solutions for the industrial sector in co-operation with its partners including Emirates Development Bank, First Abu Dhabi Bank and Mashreq Bank **r**

US economic growth slows but inflation grows

The US economy grew by less than forecast in the first three months of this year but inflation gathered pace, which could delay an interest rate cut. Official figures revealed the economy expanded at an annualized rate of 1.6 percent, far below expectations and the growth seen in the final months of 2023. Meanwhile, inflation, which measures the pace of price rises, has increased. At the start of the year, experts had been forecasting a series of interest rate cuts in the US.

However, inflation is yet to fall back to the Federal Reserve's 2 percent target, and figures from the US Department of Commerce showed that inflation increased by 3.4 percent in the first three months of 2024. This is compared to an increase of 1.8 percent in the final three months of 2023. Raising interest rates makes borrowing for things such as loans and mortgages more expensive and theoretically is meant to encourage people to spend less. The idea is that this helps to bring inflation down by dampening demand. However, US inflation has not fallen back as quickly as expected.

At the same time, economic growth measured as gross domestic product has slowed from 3.4 percent growth



in the final three months of last year to 1.6 percent. Economists had been expected it to decelerate but only to 2.4 percent. Olu Sonola, head of US economic research at Fitch, the credit rating agency, said: "The hot inflation print is the real story in this report. "If growth continues to slowly decelerate, but inflation strongly takes off again in the wrong direction, the expectation of a Fed interest rate cut in 2024 is starting to look increasingly more out of reach."

The key US interest rate is between 5.25 percent to 5.5 percent the highest level in more than 20 years. Stuart Cole, chief macro economist at Equiti Capital in London, said the US Federal Reserve, which sets

interest rates, was "now finding itself caught between a rock and a hard place." "The growth numbers suggest monetary policy has worked its magic and the Fed's foot on the monetary brake can be eased somewhat," he said.

"But the inflation figures suggest otherwise, and potentially even point to the need for a further tightening." The 1.6 percent growth figure is the first estimate of gross domestic product. A second reading, "based on more complete source data," will be released on 30 May. Nevertheless, the economy is a key issue as the US heads towards an election later this year **r**

US economy backbone dealt a serious blow

US consumers could be reaching their breaking point. After dealing with elevated inflation and the highest interest rates in decades, they're starting to rein in their spending. Last month, retail sales were unchanged from March, when spending increased by a downwardly revised 0.6 percent, the Commerce Department reported on May 14, 2024. April spending missed the 0.4 percent increase that economists had projected, according to FactSet.

The figures are adjusted for seasonal swings but not inflation.

By comparison, a year ago, retail sales surged by 3 percent. Stripping away auto sales, April retail sales were up by 0.2 percent last month, matching economists' expectations. By sector, the biggest monthly increase in spending was at gas stations, where sales were up 3.1 percent in April compared to March. That's likely a result of surging gas

prices experienced in the previous two months. However, they've started to cool in recent weeks.

Spending was also higher at clothing and accessory stores (+1.6 percent), food and beverage stores (+0.8 percent) as well as at restaurants and bars (+0.2 percent). Almost all other sectors saw monthly declines in spending. The biggest decline was online retail sales, which fell by 1.2 percent last month. That's a

significant development given online sales have been a bright spot in prior months.

Separately, new inflation figures released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed some improvement. The nation's annual inflation rate eased from 3.5 percent in March to 3.4 percent in April, in line with expectations. That came after March's unexpected jump in inflation. Both pieces of data are welcome news for Federal Reserve officials: Central bankers have been looking for signs that inflation will return back to the Fed's 2 percent target.

Financially stressed consumers are ushering in an economic slowdown

The retail report is another piece of evidence that the economy is slowing. That's good in the sense that it doesn't give retailers the ability to pass along higher prices to consumers if they aren't willing to accept them, which had previously been the case. "But if that transitions into a deeper slowdown it could herald some economic problems that markets would not welcome," Seema Shah, chief global strategist at Principal Asset Management, said in a note. For the time being though, she said the retail sales report gives the Fed more of a reason to ponder cutting interest rates at upcoming meetings. Many economists now feel that the Fed could cut interest rates as soon as September.

The much weaker-than-expected retail sales data comes as the nation's unemployment rate ticked up last month to 3.9 percent as the pace of hiring slowed. Also, the number of people applying for first-time unemployment benefits recently rose to the highest level since August.

The weakening labor market is causing consumers to act with "more prudence," EY senior economist Lydia Boussour said in a note.

Consumers are also taking on a lot more debt to support their spending but increasingly aren't making payments on time, according to data released earlier this week by the New York Fed. Notably, the percentage of credit card balances in serious delinquency (90 days or more late) climbed to its highest level since 2012 **r**

UK growth to accelerate in 2025 as barriers fall: EY

While the UK's economic outlook is expected to remain modest this year, growth is predicted to build throughout 2024 before accelerating in 2025 thanks to falling inflation, higher consumer spending and anticipated reductions in interest rates, according to the new EY ITEM Club Spring Forecast. The EY ITEM Club now expects gross domestic product growth of 2 percent in 2025, up from 1.8 percent in January's Winter Forecast. However, the growth forecast for 2024 from EY ITEM Club has been downgraded from 0.9 percent to 0.7 percent as the lagged effects of the 2023 technical recession continue to be felt this year.

While it is uncertain whether Consumer Price Index inflation will decline to the Bank of England's 2 percent benchmark in April due to sticky services inflation, the EY

ITEM Club expects it to do so by the second half of 2024, thanks to falling prices of wholesale energy, as well as slowing inflation of food and goods prices. The EY ITEM Club then expects inflation to average just below 2 percent for the rest of the year.

However, despite an improving inflationary outlook, the EY ITEM Club now expects Bank Rate to end 2024 at 4.50 percent following 75 basis points of cuts across the remainder of this year a less significant reduction compared to the 125bps of cuts predicted in January's Winter Forecast.

Since January's forecast, the Monetary Policy Committee's messaging has suggested that rates may need to stay high for longer. The EY ITEM Club now anticipates that the first rate cut will come in June 2024, amid expectations of a period of below-target inflation.

Hywel Ball, EY UK Chair, comments: "Although growth in 2024 is forecast to remain subdued, we still expect this year to mark a turning point for the UK economy and provide a launchpad for a far brighter 2025. High inflation, energy prices and interest rates have mired the UK in economic stagnation in recent years but all three obstacles to growth have now either fallen away already or are expected to diminish in 2024.



“Business investment is predicted to see modest growth this year before accelerating in 2025. Rising business confidence and spending, alongside improved economic conditions, should set the stage for a welcome return to growth in the near future.”

Consumer spending and house price growth expected in 2024

The EY ITEM Club Spring Forecast brings welcome news for homeowners, with house prices predicted to grow by 1.3 percent this year. Property prices are then forecast to increase by a further 2 percent in 2025. The recent fall in mortgage rates has put a floor under prices, which have shown more resilience than expected at the start of 2024. The EY ITEM Club therefore expects an improving economy to drive a steady recovery in house prices this year and in 2025.

In line with expectations for gross domestic product, growth predictions for consumer spending in 2024 have been downgraded from 0.9 percent to 0.7 percent due to a weaker-than-expected end to 2023. However, 2025 is forecast to see more substantial growth of 2.2 percent with the anticipated fall in interest rates likely to prompt households to borrow more and save less. According to the Spring Forecast, the unemployment rate is expected to edge up slightly due to the lagged effect of a weaker-than-expected end to 2023 on business hiring decisions. However, as the economy begins to recover, unemployment should remain low by historic standards.

Peter Arnold, EY UK Chief Economist, comments: “The UK may have slipped into a mild technical recession at the end of 2023, but there are still indications that the UK’s extended period of economic stagnation has already started to draw to a close. Falling inflation and interest rates, alongside tax cuts, should help

unlock growth in consumer spending, house prices and real incomes. While 2024 isn’t expected to be a year of enormous economic momentum, it should provide a stepping stone to a far brighter 2025.

“The UK’s performance so far this year suggests that stagnation is lifting, with activity surveys signaling a return to growth across various sectors and improved consumer confidence. The Bank of England’s next set of forecasts in May should show a period of below-target inflation and we believe that Bank Rate cuts could follow as early as June, with a total of up to 75 basis points of cuts this year. As well as alleviating some of the financial pressures on households, this should also create a more positive environment for business investment” **r**

Eurozone, EU GDP up by 0.3pc quarter-on-quarter in Q1

Compared to the same period in 2023, the indicator increased by 0.4 percent in the Eurozone and by 0.5 percent in the EU. In January-March 2024, the seasonally adjusted gross domestic product of the euro area and the European Union increased by 0.3 percent quarter-on-quarter. In the fourth quarter of 2023, the euro area economy fell by 0.1 percent

quarter-on-quarter, while the EU remained stable. This is evidenced by preliminary data from Eurostat. Compared to the same period in 2023, gross domestic product grew by 0.4 percent in the euro area and by 0.5 percent in the EU. On average, analysts predicted that the gross domestic product of the euro area and the EU would grow by 0.1 percent quarter-on-quarter and 0.2 percent year-on-year in Q1.

The euro area’s economic growth in quarterly terms was the highest since the third quarter of 2022. Germany’s gross domestic product in January-March increased by 0.2 percent quarter-on-quarter and decreased by 0.2 percent year-on-year. France’s gross domestic product grew by 0.2 percent quarter-on-quarter and 1.1 percent year-on-year, Italy’s grew by 0.3 percent quarter-on-quarter and 0.6 percent year-on-year. Spain’s economy grew by 0.7 percent quarter-on-quarter and 2.4 percent year-on-year.

The European Commission has downgraded its growth forecast for the eurozone economy for 2023 and 2024, as inflation is still too high, consumer spending is declining, and Germany, the region’s largest economy, is slipping into recession. The eurozone’s gross domestic product is expected to grow by 1.3 percent in 2024 **r**



বাংলাদেশ বিজনেস ক্লাইমেট ইনডেক্স ২০২৩-২৪

ব্যবসায়িক পরিবেশের সূচকে সবচেয়ে বেশি অবনতি অর্থায়ে

দেশে এক বছরের ব্যবধানে ব্যবসায়িক পরিবেশের আরো অবনতি হয়েছে। বাংলাদেশ বিজনেস ক্লাইমেট ইনডেক্স ২০২৩-২৪ প্রতিবেদনে এমন চিত্র উঠে এসেছে। সম্প্রতি মেট্রোপলিটন চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ (এমসিসিআই) কার্যালয়ে আয়োজিত এক অনুষ্ঠানে এ প্রতিবেদন প্রকাশ করা হয়। প্রতিবেদনের তথ্য অনুযায়ী, ২০২৩-২৪ অর্থবছরে দেশের ব্যবসা পরিবেশ সূচক ৫৮ দশমিক ৭৫ পয়েন্টে নেমেছে, যা এর আগের অর্থবছরে ছিল ৬১ দশমিক ৯৫ পয়েন্ট।

অর্থাৎ এক বছরের ব্যবধানে সূচকমান কমেছে ৩ দশমিক ২ শতাংশীয় পয়েন্ট। এর মধ্যে অর্থায়েনে প্রবেশাধিকার এবং ব্যবসা শুরু সূচকে অবনতি হয়েছে সবচেয়ে বেশি। প্রকাশিত প্রতিবেদনে বলা হয়, ব্যবসা শুরু, জমির প্রাপ্যতা, আইনি তথ্যপ্রাপ্তি, অবকাঠামো, শ্রম নিয়ন্ত্রণ, বিরোধ নিষ্পত্তি, বাণিজ্য সুবিধা, কর পরিশোধ, প্রযুক্তি সংযোজন, অর্থায়েনে প্রবেশাধিকার এবং পরিবেশগত নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও মানের ওপর ভিত্তি করে জরিপটি করা হয়েছে।

এবারে জরিপে দেখা গেছে, এ ১১টি সূচকের মধ্যে বাংলাদেশ সবচেয়ে খারাপ করেছে অর্থায়েনে প্রবেশাধিকার সূচকে। এ সূচকমান নেমেছে ২৮ দশমিক ১১ পয়েন্টে। গত বছরের জরিপে বলা হয়েছিল, ব্যবসায়ীদের অর্থায়েনের বিষয়টি জটিল আকার ধারণ করেছে। কৃষি ও বনায়ন, নির্মাণ, ইলেকট্রনিকস ও হালকা প্রকৌশল,

আর্থিক মধ্যস্থতাকারী, খাদ্য ও পানীয়, চামড়া ও ট্যানারি, ওষুধ ও রাসায়নিক, আবাসন, তৈরি পোশাক, বস্ত্র, পরিবহন, খুচরা ও পাইকারি ব্যবসা মোট ১২টি খাতের ওপর জরিপটি পরিচালনা করা হয়েছে। ২০২১-২২ অর্থবছরে সামগ্রিকভাবে ব্যবসার পরিবেশ সূচক ছিল ৬১ দশমিক ১ পয়েন্ট। ২০২২-২৩ অর্থবছরে তা বেড়ে হয় ৬১ দশমিক ৯৫ পয়েন্ট।

অনুষ্ঠানের প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্যে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বেসরকারি শিল্প ও বিনিয়োগ উপদেষ্টা সালমান এফ রহমান, এমপি বলেন, ‘বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক ডলারের দাম বাজারের ওপরে ছেড়ে দিয়েছে। এখন ডলার রেট ১১৭-তে চলে এসেছে। ফলে ডলার সংকট কিছুটা কাটছে। আমাদের মূল্যস্ফীতির সমস্যা আছে, যার কারণে সুদের হার বাড়ানো হচ্ছে। আমরা আশাবাদী সামনের দিনগুলোতে মূল্যস্ফীতি কমাতে শুরু করবে।’ তিনি বলেন, ট্যাক্স যারা দিচ্ছে, তাদের কাছ থেকে কীভাবে আরো ট্যাক্স আদায় করা যায়, সে বিষয়টি চিন্তা করা দরকার। আমাদের ট্যাক্স-জিডিপি অনুপাত গত বছরের তুলনায় কমেছে। এটা আমাদের জন্য একটি সমস্যা। এ সমস্যা মোকাবেলা করতে হবে।’

তিনি বলেন, ‘আমাদের দেশি-বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ দরকার। অনুকূল পরিবেশ তৈরি করতে বিডা কাজ করছে। এ সরকার সব সময় ব্যবসা-বান্ধব। আমাদের পুঁজিবাজার আরো শক্তিশালী থাকা

দরকার। এজন্য বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, এনবিআর, এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন সবার সঙ্গে কথা বলছি। পুঁজিবাজারকে শক্তিশালী করতে আমাদের যা প্রয়োজন তা করতে হবে।’

এমসিসিআই সভাপতি কামরান টি রহমান বলেন, ‘আমরা একটি সংকটময় অবস্থায় রয়েছি। এ মুহূর্তে আমাদের পলিসি নির্ধারণ, উদ্ভাবন, ইকোসিস্টেম প্রস্তুত এবং উদ্যোক্তা তৈরির পথ মসৃণ করতে হবে। যৌথ উদ্যোগের মাধ্যমে আমরা উন্নতি ও স্থায়িত্বের উদাহরণ তৈরি করতে পারব।’

মূল প্রবন্ধে পলিসি এক্সচেঞ্জ বাংলাদেশের চেয়ারম্যান ও সিইও মাসরুর রিয়াজ বলেন, ‘আমরা তিন বছরের ডাটা বিশ্লেষণে ছয়টি পিলারে মিশ্র ফলাফল পেয়েছি। ভূমি প্রাপ্তি, প্রযুক্তির সংযোজন এবং বাণিজ্য সুবিধার ক্ষেত্রে ক্রমাগত উন্নতি হয়েছে। অন্য সবগুলো পিলারের ক্ষেত্রে নেতিবাচক প্রভাব দেখা গেছে।’ বিভাগগুলোর ব্যবসায়িক পরিবেশ উল্লেখ করে মাসরুর বলেন, ‘বিভাগগুলোর মধ্যে ঢাকা ও রাজশাহী ভালো করছে। কিন্তু তাদের স্কের খুব বেশি নয়। ব্যবসায়িক ক্ষেত্রে ঢাকা ভালো করেছে। কিন্তু অন্যান্য বিভাগের তুলনায় খুব বেশি উন্নতি হয়নি। চট্টগ্রামের ব্যবসায়িক পরিবেশ ক্রমাগত খারাপ হচ্ছে। অন্য বিভাগগুলোর ব্যবসায়িক পরিবেশ মিশ্র অবস্থায় রয়েছে’

সুদহার ১৪ শতাংশের কাছাকাছি রাখার প্রত্যাশা কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের

গভর্নরের সঙ্গে ব্যবসায়ী নেতাদের বৈঠক

গত সপ্তাহে ব্যাংক ঋণের সুদহার শতভাগ বাজারের ওপর ছেড়ে দিয়েছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। দেশের অনেক ব্যাংকেই ঋণের সুদ উঠেছে ১৫ শতাংশের কাছাকাছি। যদিও বর্তমান কস্ট অব ফান্ড বিবেচনায় ঋণের সুদহার ১৪ শতাংশ ছাড়াই না বলে প্রত্যাশা করছে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক। ঋণের সুদহার, ডলারের বিনিময় হারসহ দেশের চলমান অর্থনৈতিক পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে বিভিন্ন খাতের ব্যবসায়ী নেতারা সম্প্রতি বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের গভর্নর আব্দুর রউফ তালুকদারের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসেন। সেখানেই কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের পক্ষ থেকে এমন প্রত্যাশা ব্যক্ত করা হয়। এতে ব্যবসায়ীদের নেতৃত্ব দেন

ফেডারেশন অব বাংলাদেশ চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রির (এফবিসিসিআই) সভাপতি মাহবুবুল আলম। বৈঠকে গভর্নর ছাড়াও চার ডেপুটি গভর্নর ও বিভিন্ন বিভাগের সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্মকর্তারা উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

বৈঠকে বিনিময় হার নিয়ে আলোচনার সময় কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়, ডলারের বিনিময় হার ১১৭ টাকার আশপাশে থাকবে। আগামী ডিসেম্বরের মধ্যে চলমান সংকট কেটে যাবে। এ সময় কোনো ব্যাংক ঘোষিত বিনিময় হারের চেয়ে বেশি দরে ডলার বিক্রি করলে তা বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংককে জানানোর

পরামর্শও দেয়া হয়েছে বলে বৈঠক সূত্রে জানা গেছে। বৈঠকে ব্যবসায়ী নেতাদের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়, বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক কোভিডের সময় নানা নীতিমালা গ্রহণ করে ব্যবসায়ীদের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছিল। কিন্তু এখন বিপরীতমুখী আচরণ করছে। ডলারের বিনিময় হার ও ঋণের সুদহার বেড়ে যাওয়ায় অনেক ব্যবসায়ী লোকসানের মুখে পড়েছেন। এরই মধ্যে অনেক কারখানা বন্ধ হয়ে গেছে। আরো অনেক কারখানা বন্ধের অপেক্ষায় আছে। এ পরিস্থিতি চলতে থাকলে ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্যে স্থবিরতা নেমে আসবে। এতে ব্যাংকে খেলাপি ঋণের পরিমাণও অস্বাভাবিক হরে বেড়ে যাবে। কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের পক্ষ থেকে ঘন ঘন

নীতির পরিবর্তন করা হচ্ছে। এতে ব্যবসায়ীদের ক্ষতির পরিমাণ আরো বাড়ছে। এ পরিস্থিতিতে ব্যবসায়ীরা ঘন ঘন নীতির পরিবর্তন না করে আলোচনার ভিত্তিতে দীর্ঘমেয়াদি নীতি প্রণয়নের পরামর্শ দেন। আর ডলারের বিনিময় হারজনিত লোকসানকে দীর্ঘমেয়াদি ঋণে রূপান্তরেরও দাবি জানান তারা।

সভা শেষে এফবিসিসিআই সভাপতি মাহবুবুল আলম গণমাধ্যম কর্মীদের বলেন, “ঋণের সুদহার, ডলারের দরসহ দেশের অর্থনীতির সার্বিক পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে ব্যবসায়ী নেতারা গভর্নরসহ বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের কর্মকর্তাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলেছেন। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়েছে, ডলারের দাম ১১৭ টাকার মধ্যে থাকবে। ব্যাংকভেদে এক টাকা কম-বেশি হতে পারে। সব ব্যবসায়ী যেন একই দরে ডলার পান, আমরা সেটি নিশ্চিত করতে বলেছি। এখনো ডলারের কিছু সমস্যা আছে, তবে আগের চেয়ে সমস্যা কমেছে। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক বলেছে, আগামী ডিসেম্বরের মধ্যে সংকট কেটে যাবে।”

মাহবুবুল আলম বলেন, “বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক জানিয়েছে সুদহার নির্ধারণের দায়িত্ব বাজারের ওপর ছেড়ে দেয়া হয়েছে। তবে সুদহার ১৪ শতাংশের ওপরে উঠবে না বলে তারা আশাবাদী। কোনো কোনো ক্ষেত্রে তা ১ শতাংশ কমবেশি হতে পারে। এসএমই খাতের ওপর অতিরিক্ত ১ শতাংশ মাঙ্গুল প্রত্যাহার করা হয়েছে বলে আমাদের জানানো হয়েছে। আমরা বলেছি, বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক বারবার নীতি পরিবর্তন করায় ব্যবসায় সমস্যা হচ্ছে। সামনে এভাবে বারবার নীতি পরিবর্তন হবে না বলে আমাদের জানানো হয়েছে। ব্যবসায়ীদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করে নীতি নিলে ভালো হয়, এটা আমরা গভর্নরকে জানিয়েছি।” তিনি বলেন, “ডলারের দর বৃদ্ধির কারণে অনেক ব্যবসায়ী ১০০ কোটি টাকা, কেউ আবার ৪০০-৫০০ কোটি টাকার লোকসানে পড়েছেন। এসব হিসাব ব্যাংকগুলোর কাছে আছে। আমরা এ লোকসানের অর্থ দীর্ঘমেয়াদি ঋণে রূপান্তর করে পুনঃতফসিল করে দেয়ার জন্য বলেছি। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক এতে রাজি হয়েছে।” তিনি আরো বলেন, “কোনো সং ব্যবসায়ী অর্থ পাচার করতে পারেন না। আমরা অসং ব্যবসায়ীদের সঙ্গে নেই।”

নিট পোশাক শিল্পের মালিকদের সংগঠন বিকেএমইএর নির্বাহী সভাপতি মোহাম্মদ হাতেম বলেন, “ডলারের অভাবে আমরা এলসি খুলতে পারছি না। রফতানি উন্নয়ন তহবিল (ইডিএফ)

কমিয়ে তিন বিলিয়নে নামিয়ে আনা হয়েছে। এ কারণে ব্যবসায়ীরা ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হচ্ছেন। এ সমস্যা সমাধানে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের বিকল্প একটি তহবিল ব্যবহারের পরামর্শ দেয়া হয়েছে।” তিনি বলেন, “কোনো ব্যবসায়ীর কাছ থেকে বেশি টাকা নেয়া হলে তা নিয়ে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকে অভিযোগ করতে বলা হয়েছে। সে ক্ষেত্রে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক ব্যবস্থা নেবে বলে আশ্বস্ত করেছে।”

এফবিসিসিআইয়ের সাবেক সভাপতি মো. জসিম উদ্দিন বলেন, “ডলারের ঘোষিত দর এতদিন ১১০ টাকা থাকলেও অনানুষ্ঠানিকভাবে তা অনেক বেশি ছিল। এখন তা ১১৭ টাকা নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে। ডলারের বিনিময় হার যেন হঠাৎ করে না বাড়ে, তা নিশ্চিত করা দরকার।” তিনি বলেন, “সুদহার ও ডলারের দামের কারণে খেলাপি ঋণ বাড়বে। ডলারের দামের কারণে যে ক্ষতি হয়েছে, তা দীর্ঘমেয়াদি ঋণে রূপান্তরের জন্য রোডম্যাপ প্রণয়ন করা যেতে পারে। বাংলাদেশে ব্যবসা থেকে প্রস্থান করার কোনো নীতি নেই, এমন নীতিমালা করা দরকার।”

বৈঠকে ব্যবসায়ী নেতাদের মধ্যে এফবিসিসিআইয়ের সিনিয়র সহ-সভাপতি আমীন হেলালী, ঢাকা চেম্বারের সভাপতি আশরাফ আহমেদ, বিটিএমএ সভাপতি মোহাম্মদ আলী খোকন, মেট্রোপলিটন চেম্বার অব কমার্সের সভাপতি কামরান টি রহমান, চট্টগ্রাম চেম্বারের সভাপতি ওমর হাজ্জাজ, প্রাণ-আরএফএল গ্রুপের সিইও আহসান খান চৌধুরী, সিটি গ্রুপের চেয়ারম্যান মো. হাসানসহ ব্যবসায়ী নেতা ও কয়েকজন বড় ব্যবসায়ী উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

সার্বিক মূল্যস্ফীতি ৯.৭৪%

চলতি বছরের এপ্রিলে দেশে সার্বিক মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ছিল ৯ দশমিক ৭৪ শতাংশ। এর আগে মার্চে এ হার ছিল ৯ দশমিক ৮১ শতাংশ। গত মাসে দেশে খাদ্যবহির্ভূত মূল্যস্ফীতি কিছুটা কমলেও আবারো ১০ শতাংশের ওপরে উঠেছে খাদ্য মূল্যস্ফীতি। বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরোর (বিবিএস) সম্প্রতি প্রকাশিত তথ্য অনুযায়ী, এপ্রিলে খাদ্য মূল্যস্ফীতির হার বেড়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে ১০ দশমিক ২২ শতাংশে, যা আগের মাসে ছিল ৯ দশমিক ৮৭ শতাংশ। আর গত বছরের এপ্রিলে এ হার ছিল ৮ দশমিক ৮৪ শতাংশ। দেশে সার্বিক মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ৯ শতাংশের ওপরে রয়েছে টানা ২৩ মাস ধরে। মূল্যস্ফীতি নিয়ন্ত্রণে অর্থবছরের শুরু থেকেই একের পর এক পদক্ষেপ নেয় সরকার ও কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক। ব্যাংক খাতে ঋণের সুদহার ৯ শতাংশ থেকে কয়েক

দফা বাড়িয়ে উন্নীত করা হয়েছে ১৪ শতাংশে। সংকোচনমূলক মুদ্রানীতির অংশ হিসেবে টাকা ছাপিয়ে সরকারকে ঋণ প্রদানের নীতি থেকেও সরে এসেছে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক। বাজার নিয়ন্ত্রণে কয়েক দফায় নির্দিষ্ট কিছু নিত্যপণ্যের দরও নির্ধারণ করে দেয়া হয়। মজুদদারি নিয়ন্ত্রণে বারবার অভিযানেও নেমেছে আইন-শৃঙ্খলা রক্ষাকারী বাহিনী। এত সব প্রয়াস সত্ত্বেও দেশে মূল্যস্ফীতির হার নিয়ন্ত্রণে আনা যায়নি।

বিবিএসের তথ্যমতে, গত ডিসেম্বরে খাদ্য মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ছিল ৯ দশমিক ৫৮ শতাংশ। আর নভেম্বরে ছিল ১০ দশমিক ৭৬ শতাংশ। পাঁচ মাসের ব্যবধানে এপ্রিলে তা আবারো ১০ শতাংশ ছাড়িয়েছে। গ্রাম ও শহর উভয় স্থানেই গত মাসে খাদ্য মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ছিল ১০ শতাংশের বেশি। এ সময় গ্রামাঞ্চলে খাদ্য মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ছিল ১০ দশমিক ২৫ শতাংশ। শহরে এ হার ছিল ১০ দশমিক ১৯ শতাংশ। বিবিএস প্রকাশিত তথ্যে দেখা গেছে, দেশের গ্রামাঞ্চলে গত মাসে মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ছিল শহরের তুলনায় বেশি। এপ্রিলে শহরে সাধারণ মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ছিল ৯ দশমিক ৪৬ শতাংশ। আর গ্রামে এ হার ছিল ৯ দশমিক ৯২ শতাংশ। এ সময় শহরে খাদ্যবহির্ভূত মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ছিল ৯ দশমিক শূন্য ১ শতাংশ। আর গ্রামাঞ্চলে ছিল ৯ দশমিক ৬০ শতাংশ।

এফডিআই আকর্ষণে মালদ্বীপ-শ্রীলংকার চেয়ে পিছিয়ে বাংলাদেশ; আইসিসিবি র ত্রৈমাসিক বুলেটিন

রফতানি আয় বাড়ানো ও বৈদেশিক মুদ্রার রিজার্ভ বাড়ার অন্যতম প্রধান উপাদান প্রত্যক্ষ বৈদেশিক বিনিয়োগ (এফডিআই)। অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চল উন্নয়ন, ওয়ান স্টপ সার্ভিস প্রবর্তন ও অন্যান্য বিভিন্ন পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ সত্ত্বেও এক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ মালদ্বীপ ও শ্রীলংকার চেয়ে অনেক পিছিয়ে রয়েছে। এশিয়া প্যাসিফিক অঞ্চলে এফডিআই আকৃষ্ট করার ক্ষেত্রে চীন, ভারত ও ইন্দোনেশিয়ার পর ভিয়েতনাম চতুর্থ স্থানে রয়েছে। ইন্টারন্যাশনাল চেম্বার অব কমার্স বাংলাদেশের (আইসিসিবি) ত্রৈমাসিক বুলেটিনে এসব বলা হয়েছে। একই সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশের এফডিআই আকর্ষণের জন্য ভিয়েতনামের কৌশল পর্যালোচনা করা উচিত বলে জানিয়েছে সংগঠনটি। আইসিসিবি বলছে, বাংলাদেশ চলতি বছর ক্রমবর্ধমান মুদ্রাস্ফীতি, বাজেটের ঘাটতিসহ পরিশোধের ভারসাম্য ঘাটতি, বৈদেশিক মুদ্রার রিজার্ভ হ্রাস, রেমিট্যান্স

সংকোচন, মুদ্রার অবমূল্যায়ন, ক্রমবর্ধমান আয় বৈষম্য ও এনার্জি খাতে চাহিদা-সরবরাহের ভারসাম্যহীনতা, ঋণ খেলাপির মাধ্যমে পঙ্গু-দুর্বল ব্যাংকিং খাত ইত্যাদির মতো একাধিক ক্ষেত্রে অর্থনীতি চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখে পড়বে।

বুলেটিনে আরো বলা হয়, আমদানীকৃত জ্বালানির ওপর নির্ভরশীলতার কারণে বাংলাদেশ জ্বালানি সংকটের সম্মুখীন হচ্ছে এবং বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদনের জন্য বছরে প্রায় আনুমানিক ২৫০ কোটি মার্কিন ডলার ব্যয় হচ্ছে। এছাড়া নবায়নযোগ্য ও ক্লিনটেক বিকল্পের অভাব রয়েছে। প্রকৃতপক্ষে, নবায়নযোগ্য শক্তির উৎস অনুসন্ধানের দিকে এগিয়ে যাওয়ার পরিবর্তে বাংলাদেশ জীবাশ্ম জ্বালানি যেমন: কয়লা, তেল ও এলএনজি ব্যবহারের দিকে ঝুঁকছে। মুদ্রার অবমূল্যায়ন ও বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদনের জন্য আমদানি করা জ্বালানির ওপর নির্ভরতা বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদন খরচ আরো বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে। আইসিসিবি চলতি বছর দেশের অর্থনীতির বেশকিছু সম্ভাবনার কথাও বলেছে। যেখানে বলা হয়েছে বিভিন্ন মেগাপ্রকল্প যেমন: পদ্মাবহুমুখী সেতু, ঢাকা এলিভেটেড এক্সপ্রেসওয়ে, বঙ্গবন্ধু টানেল, ঢাকার সঙ্গে কক্সবাজারের রেলওয়ে সংযোগ, হযরত শাহজালাল আন্তর্জাতিক বিমান বন্দরের তৃতীয় টার্মিনালের সূফল পাওয়া শুরু হবে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে।

আমদানি ও রফতানি আইন অনুমোদন

পণ্যের মতো সেবা বাণিজ্যেও অনুমতি লাগবে মন্ত্রণালয়ের

পণ্য আমদানি-রফতানির মতো সেবাকেও বৈদেশিক বাণিজ্যের নীতিমালার আওতায় এনে নতুন আইন করার প্রস্তাবে সম্মতি দিয়েছে সরকার। নতুন আইনানুযায়ী, সেবা আমদানি ও রফতানির ক্ষেত্রে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের অনুমোদন লাগবে। সম্প্রতি প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কার্যালয়ে অনুষ্ঠিত মন্ত্রিসভা বৈঠকে ‘আমদানি ও রফতানি আইন, ২০২৪’-এর অনুমোদন দেয়া হয়। এতে সভাপতিত্ব করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা। বৈঠক শেষে সচিবালয়ে প্রেস ব্রিফিং এ তথ্য জানান মন্ত্রিপরিষদ সচিব মো. মাহবুব হোসেন। মন্ত্রিপরিষদ সচিব বলেন, ‘আমদানি ও রফতানি নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও নিষিদ্ধকরণের ১৯৫০ সালের আইন আছে। পুরনো আইনগুলো পর্যায়ক্রমে যুগোপযোগী করার নির্দেশনা আছে। এজন্য নতুন আইনের খসড়া করা হয়েছে।’ এজন্য নতুন আইনের খসড়া করা হয়েছে। বিদ্যমান

আইনের মতো এবার নিয়ন্ত্রণ শব্দটি আর রাখা হচ্ছে না।

তিনি বলেন, ‘আগের আইনে নতুন করে কিছু বিষয় সংযুক্ত করা হয়েছে। আগে শুধু পণ্যের কথা বলা ছিল। এখন বাণিজ্যিকভাবে সেবা কার্যক্রমকেও এখানে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা হয়েছে। সেবা আমদানি ও রফতানির ক্ষেত্রে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের অনুমোদন লাগবে। এ আইনের আওতায় সেবাকে যুক্ত করা হয়েছে। কমোডিটির পাশাপাশি সার্ভিসকে যুক্ত করা হয়েছে।’ খসড়া আইনে থাকা সেবার সংজ্ঞা তুলে ধরে তিনি বলেন, ‘ওয়ার্ল্ড ট্রেড অর্গানাইজেশনের অধীন জেনারেল অ্যাগ্রিমেন্ট অন ট্রেড ইন সার্ভিস চুক্তিতে বর্ণিত সংজ্ঞা অনুযায়ী যেকোনো সেবা। সরকার কোনো পণ্য বা সেবা নিয়ন্ত্রণ বা নিষিদ্ধ করতে পারবে। এ সম্পর্কিত আদেশ ও বিধিবিধান প্রণয়ন করতে পারবে। আমদানি ও রফতানি নীতি প্রণয়নের দায়িত্ব বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়কে দেয়া হয়েছে।’ এ আইনে মাত্র ১৬টি ধারা থাকছে জানিয়ে সচিব বলেন, ‘বিধিতে আরো বিস্তারিত থাকবে’।

দেশের অর্থনীতির ৩০-৪০ শতাংশ সরকারি হিসাববহির্ভূত: এনবিআর

জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডের (এনবিআর) হিসাবে দেশের অর্থনীতির আকার (জিডিপি) ৪৫৪ বিলিয়ন ডলার। এর বাইরে সরকারি হিসাব-বহির্ভূত অর্থনীতি রয়েছে জিডিপির ৩০-৪০ শতাংশ বা ১৩৬-১৮০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের মতো। ছোট ব্যবসা থেকে শুরু করে বৃহৎ অনেক অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ড অবৈধভাবে পরিচালিত হওয়ায় এ খাতটি দিন দিন বড় হচ্ছে। সরকারি হিসাবের বাইরে থাকায় এখান থেকে কোনো রাজস্বই পায় না সরকার। আন্তর্জাতিক মুদ্রা তহবিলের (আইএমএফ) প্রতিনিধি দলের সঙ্গে সম্প্রতি অনুষ্ঠিত এক বৈঠকে এনবিআরের পক্ষ থেকে এ তথ্য জানানো হয়।

প্রত্যাশা অনুযায়ী রাজস্ব আদায় বাড়তে না পারায় প্রতি অর্ধবছরই সরকারের ঘাটতি বাজেটের আকার বড় হচ্ছে। জিডিপি অনুপাতে রাজস্ব আদায়ের দিক থেকে বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান একেবারেই পেছনের সারিতে। বর্তমানে দেশের রাজস্ব-জিডিপির অনুপাত মাত্র ৭ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশ, যা দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার মধ্যেও সর্বনিম্ন। এ অবস্থায় আইএমএফ থেকে ঋণ প্রাপ্তির শর্ত হিসেবে রাজস্ব-জিডিপির অনুপাত সাড়ে ৯ শতাংশে উন্নীত করার শর্ত দেয়া হয়েছে। এ শর্ত পরিপালনে রাজস্ব আয় বাড়ানোর বিষয়ে নিজেদের পরিকল্পনা তুলে ধরে এনবিআর।

সম্প্রতি “রেভিনিউ মোবাইলাইজেশন: ট্রেডস অ্যান্ড স্ট্র্যাটেজিক ইন বাংলাদেশ” শীর্ষক এক পজিশন পেপারে সরকারি হিসাবের বাইরে থাকা অর্থনীতির চিত্র সামনে আনা হয়েছে।

এনবিআরের প্রতিবেদনে বলা হয়, দেশের নিবন্ধিত করদাতার (টিআইএন নম্বরধারী) সংখ্যা এক কোটি। এর মধ্যে আয়কর রিটার্ন দাখিল করেন অর্ধেকেরও কম, মাত্র ৪০ লাখ। দেশে সরকারি হিসাবের বাইরে থাকা অর্থনীতি ও জিডিপির অনুপাত ৩০-৪০ শতাংশ। অর্থনীতির বিরাট এ অংশ গণনার বাইরে থেকে যাওয়ার কারণেই কর-জিডিপির অনুপাত বাড়ানো সম্ভব হচ্ছে না। ব্যক্তিশ্রেণীর করদাতাদের পাশাপাশি নিবন্ধিত প্রতিষ্ঠান থেকেও যথাযথ শুল্ক আদায় করতে পারছে না এনবিআর। সংস্থাটির হিসাবে, দেশে নিবন্ধিত শুল্কধারীর সংখ্যা ৪ লাখ ৮০ হাজার। অথচ শুল্ক আয় করা সম্ভব হচ্ছে ৪ লাখ ৫০ হাজার প্রতিষ্ঠান থেকে। এক্ষেত্রে অন্তত ৩০ হাজার প্রতিষ্ঠান শুল্ক দিচ্ছে না। বিশেষজ্ঞরা বলছেন, প্রতিবেশী দেশ ভারত ও পাকিস্তানেও বাংলাদেশের চেয়ে বড় অপ্রতিষ্ঠানিক খাত রয়েছে। তারপরও রাজস্ব আদায়ের হারে অনেক এগিয়ে রয়েছে তারা। সরকারি হিসাবের বাইরে থাকা অর্থনীতির কারণে রাজস্ব আয় কম হচ্ছে বিষয়টি এমন নয়। বরং দেশের অনেক প্রতিষ্ঠিত ব্যবসায়ী ও শিল্প গ্রুপও কর ফাঁকি দিচ্ছে। যে কারণে জিডিপির আকার এত বড় হওয়া সত্ত্বেও রাজস্ব আয় বাড়ানো সম্ভব হচ্ছে না।

বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতির অন্যতম বড় অনুষঙ্গ এখন অপরাধমূলক অর্থনৈতিক কার্যক্রম। চোরাচালান, ডলার বিনিময় হার-সংক্রান্ত অসামঞ্জস্যতা, রফতানি পণ্যের গরমিল দেখিয়ে অর্থ পাচার, দুর্নীতির মাধ্যমে অর্জিত অর্থ পাচার ও শ্রমশক্তির যথাযথ হিসাব না থাকা। সেই সঙ্গে স্বর্ণ-মাদকসহ অন্যান্য দ্রব্য চোরাচালান ও মানব পাচারের মতো অপরাধমূলক কার্যক্রমে ছন্ডি-হাওয়ার ব্যবহার এখন বৃহৎ আকারে বেড়েছে। অত্যন্ত রক্ষণশীলভাবে হিসাব করে দেখা গেছে, দেশে ছন্ডি-হাওয়ার বাজার ৩০-৩৫ বিলিয়ন (৩ হাজার থেকে সাড়ে ৩ হাজার কোটি) ডলার ছাড়িয়েছে। হিসাব অনুযায়ী, দেশে আন্তর্জাতিক পণ্য বাণিজ্যে ছন্ডি-হাওয়ার মাধ্যমে লেনদেনকৃত অর্থের পরিমাণ কমপক্ষে ১৫ বিলিয়ন ডলার। রেমিট্যান্স হিসেবে আসছে আরো ১০ বিলিয়ন ডলার। এছাড়া দুর্নীতি ও কালোবাজারির মাধ্যমে অবৈধ অর্থ পাচার, স্বর্ণ ও অন্যান্য পণ্য চোরাচালান, মানব পাচারের মতো কার্যক্রমে ছন্ডি-হাওয়ার অবদান ৫-১০ বিলিয়ন ডলার।

TRADE INFORMATION

April-May 2024

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

Home Design and Remodeling Show 2024

Date: 30 Aug - 02 Sep 2024
 Venue: Greater Ft. Lauderdale / Broward County Convention Center, Fort Lauderdale, USA
 Organizer: Home Show Management Corp.
 Phone: 305.667.9299
 E-mail: info@homeshows.com
 Website: <https://homeshows.com/>

World Food Istanbul 2024

Date: 03 - 06 Sep 2024
 Venue: Tuyap Fair, Convention and Congress Center, Istanbul, Turkey
 Organizer: ICA Events
 Phone: +90 212 266 7010
 E-mail: info.turkey@icaevents.com.tr
 Website: <https://worldfood-istanbul.com/>

Precision Machining Expo China 2024

Date: 03 - 05 Sep 2024
 Venue: Shanghai New International Expo Centre(SNIEC), Shanghai, China
 Organizer: HJT Exhibition (Shanghai) Co. Ltd.
 Phone: +86 21 63232733
 E-mail: katelyn.xue@hjtexpo.com
 Website: <https://www.pme.cn/en/>

China International Paper Technology Exhibition and Conference 2024

Date: 24 - 27 Sep 2024
 Venue: Wuhan International Expo Center, Wuhan, China
 Organizer: China Pulp & Paper Magazines Publisher
 Contact Person: Liang Chuan
 Phone: 8610-64778157 13521808647
 E-mail: zhilinzhan@sina.com
 Website: <http://www.chinapaperexhibition.com>

China International (Guangzhou) Fisheries & Seafood Expo 2024

Date: 25 - 27 Sep 2024
 Venue: Guangzhou Pazhou · China Import and Export Fair Complex, Guangzhou, China
 Organizer: Guangzhou Boyi Global Exhibition Co. Ltd.
 Phone: +86-20-66319008
 E-mail: info@gzboyi.com.cn
 Website: <http://www.chinafishex.com/lianxiwomen/?lang=en>

Boiler India 2024

Date: 25 - 27 Sep 2024
 Venue: CIDCO Exhibition Centre, Mumbai, India
 Organizer: Orangebeak Technologies Pvt. Ltd
 Phone: +919987026115
 Email: anosh@orangebeak.com
 Website: <http://orangebeak.com/>
 Li-ion Battery Europe 2024
 Date: 08 - 10 Oct 2024
 Venue: The Egg, Brussels, Belgium
 Organizer: SMM Information & Technology Co., Ltd.
 E-mail: averyhuang@metal.com
 Website: <http://www.chinafishex.com/lianxiwomen/?lang=en>

China International Medical Equipment Fair 2024

Date: 12 - 15 Oct 2024
 Venue: Shenzhen World Exhibition & Convention Center, Shenzhen, China
 Organizer: Reed Sinopharm Exhibitions Co. Limited
 Contact Person: Tina Wu (International Marketing and Visitor Issue)
 Phone: +86-010-84556578
 E-mail: yiwen.wu@reedsinopharm.com
 Website: <https://www.cmef.com.cn/en>

Global Sources Consumer Electronics Show 2024

Date: 11 - 14 Oct 2024
 Venue: AsiaWorld-Expo, Hong Kong
 Organizer: Global Sources Exhibitions
 Contact Person: Ms. Fairness Li
 Phone: (86-755)88282068
 Email: Fairnessli@globalsources.com
 Website: <https://www.globalsources.com/trade-fair/hongkongshow>

Mobile Electronics Show 2024

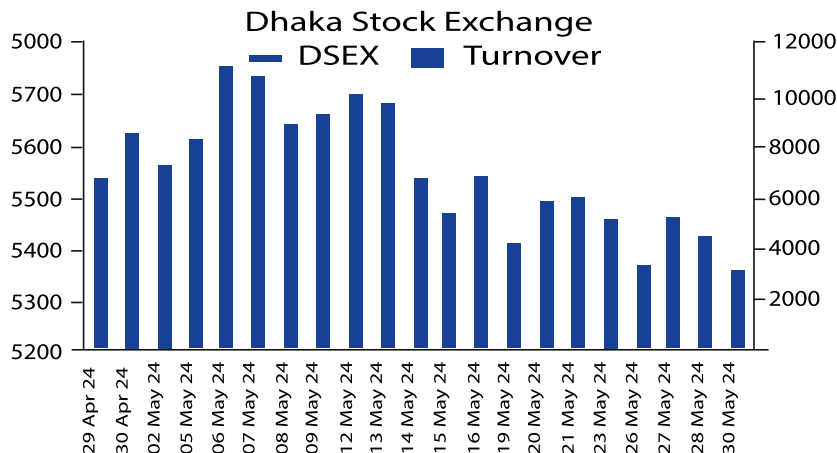
Date: 18 - 21 Oct 2024
 Venue: AsiaWorld-Expo, Hong Kong
 Organizer: Global Sources Exhibitions
 Contact Person: Ms. Fairness Li
 Phone: (86-755)88282068
 Email: Fairnessli@globalsources.com
 Website: <https://www.globalsources.com/trade-fair/hongkongshow>

Malaysia International Automotive & Parts Expo 2024

Date: 22 - 24 Nov 2024
 Venue: MINES International Exhibition & Convention Centre, Seri Kembangan, Malaysia
 Organizer: Motonation
 Contact Person: Ms. Fairness Li
 Phone: +60183932118 (Whatsapp)
 Email: jet@motonation.com.my
 Website: <https://malaysiaautopartsexpo.com/>

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

Share Market (As of May 30, 2024)



Sector Overview			
Sector	Avg. MCAP (BDT mn)	P/E	Turnover (Avg. BDT mn)
Bank	317.0	6.5	317.0
Financial Institute	76.4	33.8	76.4
Mutual Funds	65.1	—	65.1
Pharmaceuticals	990.5	13.8	990.5
Engineering	617.6	25.0	617.6
Cement	101.6	12.7	101.6
Fuel & Power	120.8	10.2	120.8
Service & Real Est.	40.2	17.6	40.2
Food & Allied	425.6	14.7	425.6
IT	106.2	23.7	106.2
Textile	535.3	21.0	535.3
Travel & Leisure	220.9	25.6	220.9
Ceramic	278.1	36.9	278.1
Telecom	121.7	12.6	121.7
Tannery	108.9	25.7	108.9
Paper & Printing	57.0	29.3	57.0
Insurance	364.8	26.2	364.8
Miscellaneous	85.7	42.6	85.7
Jute	14.6	36.2	14.6

Top 20 Gainers (DSE)

Company	Close Price	% Price	Turnover (BDT mn)
SPCERAMICS	43.40	9.87	234.31
INTECH	25.80	9.79	2.32
MALEKSPIN	37.40	9.38	188.51
CITYGENINS	88.70	8.44	51.52
MAKSONSPIN	12.10	8.04	13.65
TALLUSPIN	7.00	7.69	0.34
SAFKOSPINN	14.50	6.62	1.43
METROSPIN	18.60	6.29	2.37
IPDC	27.30	5.81	71.28
CENTRALINS	56.60	5.70	19.23
FORTUNE	44.60	5.44	134.13
GSPFINANCE	13.70	5.38	11.43
GLDNJMF	10.50	5.00	4.54
BDFINANCE	23.40	4.93	7.99
SAIFPOWER	21.50	4.88	13.42
MONNOCERA	82.40	4.83	5.39
FAREASTFIN	4.40	4.76	0.2
MATNSPINN	48.90	4.71	0.96
FEDERALINS	24.60	4.68	1.02
ISLAMICFIN	13.60	4.62	2.25

Top 20 Losers (DSE)

Company	Close Price	% Price	Turnover (BDT mn)
IBBLPBOND	751.00	-6.12	0.00
ASIATICLAB	45.70	-5.19	205.52
RECKITBEN	4687.90	-4.96	5.56
BIFC	6.40	-4.48	0.23
FIRSTFIN	4.30	-4.44	0.05
UTTARAFIN	22.80	-3.80	0.37
KEYACOSMET	5.10	-3.77	2.02
VAMLRBBF	5.30	-3.64	1.37
NITOLINS	36.80	-2.65	0.58
FAMILYTEX	3.70	-2.63	1.73
RUPALILIFE	137.40	-2.48	34.71
ARAMIT	261.30	-2.46	11.24
ZAHEENSPIN	8.20	-2.38	1.43
GOLDENSON	21.70	-2.25	125.36
EXIMBANK	9.30	-2.11	9.66
PLFSL	4.70	-3-2.08	2.04
PREMIERLEA	4.90	-2.00	1.23
DELTA SPINN	5.70	-1.72	0.26
SONALILIFE	74.50	-1.59	1.66
NAVANAPHAR	88.30	-1.56	3.88

Top 20 Market Cap. (DSEX)

Company	Close Price	% Price	Turnover (BDT mn)
GP	237.80	0.85	321.101
BATBC	403.80	1.76	218.052
WALTONHIL	650.00	-0.88	196.903
SQRUPHARMA	217.70	0.05	192.980
ROBI	27.60	0.73	144.587
BEXIMCO	115.60	0.00	101.302
RENATA	776.00	1.20	89.004
UPGDCL	145.00	1.19	84.056
BERGERPBL	1787.60	0.81	82.905
LHBL	88.30	-0.73	79.322
MARICO	2444.90	0.00	77.014
BRACBANK	40.20	-0.25	64.675
ISLAMIBANK	32.60	0.00	52.486
BXPHARMA	116.40	1.57	51.927
ICB	56.20	-0.35	48.740
BEACONPHAR	205.40	3.58	47.447
DUTCHBANGL	55.80	1.64	41.735
BESTHLING	36.90	-0.27	39.086
EBL	32.00	-0.31	38.632
UNILEVERCL	2003.30	-0.91	38.612

Latest Share Price

Trading Code	LTP	High	Low	Closep	YCP	Change	Trade	Value mn	Volume
1JANATAMF	3.4	3.4	3.4	0	3.4	0	2	0.017	5070
1STPRIMFMF	33.5	33.5	33.5	0	34.4	-0.9	1	0.101	3000
AAMRANET	32.8	33	32.7	0	33.6	-0.8	15	0.097	2950
AAMRATECH	21.5	21.5	21.5	0	21.5	0	2	0.116	5400
ABB1STMF	0	0	0	0	3.3	--	0	0	0
ABBBANK	6.6	6.8	6.6	0	6.8	-0.2	19	0.91	135843
ACFL	0	0	0	0	16.8	--	0	0	0
ACI	123.5	123.5	123.5	0	126.4	-2.9	3	0.009	70
ACIFORMULA	123	130.2	123	0	126.2	-3.2	3	0.062	501
ACMELAB	68.3	68.5	68.3	0	69	-0.7	6	0.144	2100



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (second from right) seen speaking at the 44th meeting of National Consultative Committee of National Board of Revenue (NBR) jointly organized by NBR and FBCCI held on April 04.

Dhaka Chamber President Ashraf Ahmed (right) seen speaking at a Seminar titled Bangladesh's Domestic Resource Mobilisation Imperatives and a Roadmap organized by Policy Research Institute (PRI) on April 30. Adviser to the Prime Minister on Economic Affairs Dr. Mashiur Rahman (fourth from left), State Minister for Finance Ms. Waseqa Ayesha Khan (fifth from left), Chairman of NBR Abu Hena Md. Rahmatul Muneem (sixth from left) and FBCCI President Md. Mahbulul Alam (third from left) among others are seen in the picture.



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (left) addressing a discussion session titled "Budget for 2024-25: Key Challenges and Way Forward" held on April 02 organized by RAPID. State Minister for Planning Md. Shahiduzzaman Sarker, MP (third from left), former NBR Chairman Dr. Mohammed Abul Majid (second from left) and Chairman of RAPID Dr. M A Razzaque (right) were also present during the meeting.



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (center), Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (right), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (second from left) and members of the Board of Directors are seen at the 4th Board Meeting of Dhaka Chamber held on April 27.

DCCI Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (third from left) seen receiving a token of appreciation from Chairman of Sri Lanka National Arbitration Center Hiran de Alwis AAL (fourth from left) after a bilateral meeting held on April 18. DCCI Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (second from left) among others were present during the meeting.



Coordinating Director Md. Siaam Al-Ddin Malik (fourth from right), Convenor SK Md. Waliul Islam (fifth from left) and members of the Law & Order standing committee were present during the 2nd meeting held on April 28.



Meeting of Bangladesh-USA Business Council held on May 06 at the Ganabhaban, while Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, MP (third from left), Private Industry and Investment Adviser to the HPM Salman F Rahman, MP (second from left), FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam (left) and DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (right) among others were present during the meeting.

FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam (fourth from right) seen presenting a bouquet to Governor of Bangladesh Bank Abdur Rouf Talukder (third from right) after a bilateral meeting held on May 16. DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (second from left), MCCI President Kamran T Rahman (fourth from left), FBCCI former President Md. Jashim Uddin (seventh from left), Deputy Governors of Bangladesh Bank Kazi Sayedur Rahman (right) and Dr. Md. Habibur Rahman (second from right) among others are seen in the picture.



Dhaka Chamber President Ashraf Ahmed (second from left) addressing a dialogue titled "Investment Climate for Smart Bangladesh" organized by Venture Capital & Private Equity Association of Bangladesh (VCPEAB) held on May 05. Private Industry and Investment Adviser to the HPM Salman F Rahman, MP (fourth from right), State Minister for Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology Zunaïd Ahmed Palak, MP (second from right), President of VCPEAB Shameem Ahsan (fifth from right), DCCI former President Asif Ibrahim (left) among others are seen in the picture.



Financial Sector standing committee of Dhaka Chamber organized a Focus Group Discussion titled “Banking Sector: Expectations and New Reality” on May 07 at DCCI Gulshan Center. DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (fifth from left) moderated the session, while Chief Adviser, East West University and Former Governor, Bangladesh Bank Professor Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin (sixth from left), Executive Director of Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI) Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur (third from right), Managing Director & CEO, The City Bank Limited Mashrur Arefin (third from left), Chief Executive Officer of Standard Chartered Bangladesh Naser Ezaz Bijoy (fourth from left), DCCI Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (left), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (second from right), Director Nayeemur Rahman (right) and former Senior Vice President Kamrul Islam, FCA (second from right) were also present during the meeting.

Ambassador of UAE in Bangladesh H.E. Abdulla Ali Alhmodi (center) seen receiving a crest from Dhaka Chamber President Ashraf Ahmed (left) after a courtesy meeting held on May 08 at DCCI Gulshan Center. DCCI Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (right) is also seen in the picture.



Chairman of Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkiye (DEİK) Hidayer Onur Ozdan (10th from right), Turkish Ambassador in Bangladesh H.E. Ramis Sen (ninth from right), DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (11th from right), Senior Vice President Mailk Talha Ismail Bari (second from right), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (10th from left), members of the Board of Directors and members of the Turkish Business Delegation are seen in the picture after a bilateral meeting held on May 13.





DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (fifth from right) presenting DCCI publication to Chief Executive Officer of IBD Partnership Gorup, UK Raja Ali (sixth from right) after a bilateral business meeting held on May 29. DCCI Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (seventh from right), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (fourth from right), members of the Board of Directors and representatives from visiting UK delegation are also seen in the picture.

DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (right) seen addressing a seminar titled “Research and Innovation: Industry Needs and Perspective” organized by BUET on May 14.



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (left) seen addressing a seminar titled “Resolving Investment Dispute: Strategies for Successful outcome and need for a Robust ADR Framework” organized by Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre (BIAC) on the occasion of celebrating 13th founding anniversary of BIAC held on May 26. BIAC Chairman Mahbubur Rahman (fourth from left), Vice Chairman of BIAC Muhammad A. (Rumee) Ali (second from left) and Vice President of ICC Bangladesh A K Azad, MP (right) among others were also present during the occasion.



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (fifth from left), Senior Vice President Malik Talha Ismail Bari (fourth from left), Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (third from left), members of the Board of Directors and Representatives from USAID are seen in a group picture after a bilateral meeting held on May 12.

DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (front row, fourth from left) along with other participants are seen in the group picture after a dialogue titled “SME Entrepreneurs: Challenges and Opportunities” jointly organized by Daily Prothom Alo and IDLC on May 02.



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (right) seen speaking at a dialogue on “Better Work Better Lives: Elevating RMG Industry in Bangladesh” organized by The Daily Star held on May 15. Member of Parliament Nahim Razzaq (third from right) along with other discussants are also seen in the picture.

Admission Going On...

Online Certificate Courses on

FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY (FIN-TECH)

jointly with Daffodil International University (DIU)

BUSINESS DATA ANALYSIS & FINANCIAL FORECASTING

jointly with Daffodil International University (DIU)

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

jointly with Daffodil International University (DIU)

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING (FA)

jointly with The Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB)

PROFESSIONAL MARKETING (CPM)

jointly with American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB)

Course Fee:

Tk. 12,000/- (for each course) payable in favour of 'Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry' by BEFTN/ PO/ Cheque. It could also be paid through bKash merchant number 01766018659 (Payment) with bKash charge. Fee includes cost of tuition, course materials, exams & certificate and excludes VAT & Tax.

Admission Procedure:

The intending candidates may collect the Registration Form from DBI Office for submitting to DBI after duly filling it out or log on to <https://dcci-dbi.edu.bd/> for completing the registration process.

Admission Deadline:

September 30, 2024. Seats are limited. First Come First Served.

For further information, please contact:
01777364474, 01766018659, 02 47122986 (Ext.1015), 09-666319653
dbi@dhakachamber.com, www.dcci-dbi.edu.bd



Admission Going on...

Online Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) in

CUSTOMS, VAT AND INCOME TAX MANAGEMENT

&

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE (EXPORT & IMPORT)
MANAGEMENT**

Jointly with

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-BANGLADESH (AIUB)

Total twenty four (24) online sessions/classes (each 3:00 hours) will be held on Friday

Session: October 2024 to March 2025; Admission deadline is 30th September 2024

Certificate will be issued jointly by **DBI & AIUB**

Fee: Tk. 25,000/- for each course, payable in favour of 'Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry' by BEFTN/ Pay Order/ Cheque/ Cash Deposit. It could also be paid through bKash merchant number 01766018659 (Payment) with bKash charge. Fee includes cost of tuition, course materials, exams, certificate, and excludes VAT & Tax.

For further information, please contact:

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