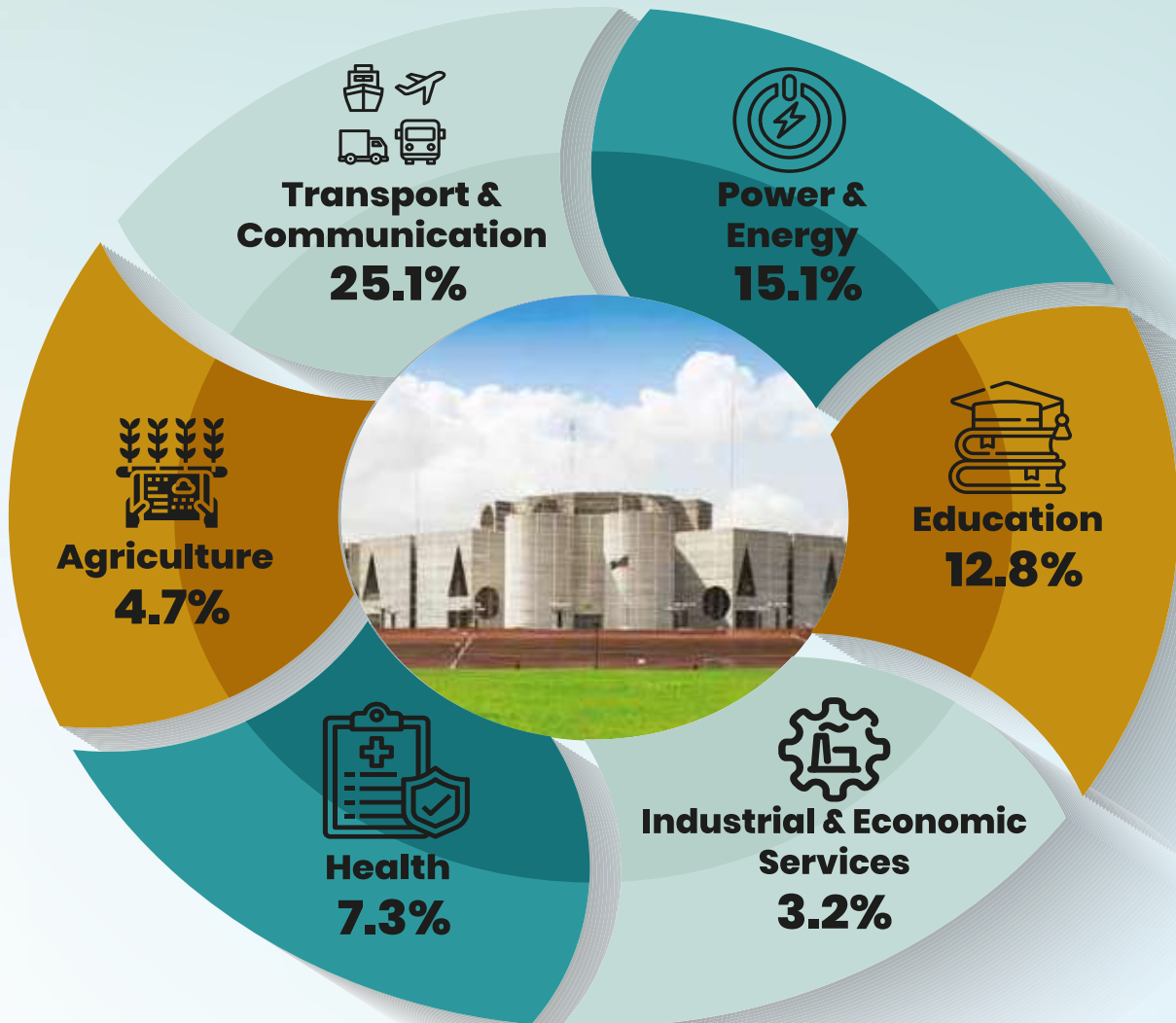
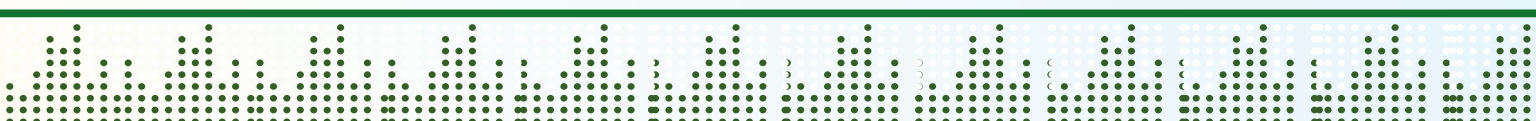


DCCI REVIEW



Budget FY2024-25:

Facing implementation challenges





**Monthly Bulletin of the
Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry
(In-house Circulation Only)**

Vol. XXXIV No. 44 (June-July 31, 2024)
Published on 28 September, 2024

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Budget FY2024-25: Facing implementation challenges

The national budget for the 2024–2025 fiscal year with an outlay of Tk 7,970 billion was passed in the parliament on June 30 after it had been proposed by the finance minister on June 6. The budget which appears timely seems to have put in efforts to increase revenue collection amid the pressure of inflation on the economy. The government can be said to have plans to control the budget deficit, reduce various import duties and advance taxes on various essential products. The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry thinks that this is a good move on part of the government to have reduced import duty on about 30 essential products. Such a move is meant to contain soaring goods prices and afford some relief to citizens who have been under the pressure of inflation for a long time. But the government should ensure that the move works in the desired direction.

While the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomes the move of the government on its borrowing from banks, which is 11.82 percent lower than what it was in the 2023–2024 fiscal year, it still thinks that the amount is high. With a resource crunch amid a slow revenue generation and high interest rates, bank borrowing to this extent could still harm credit flow to the private sector. A high overseas borrowing would not also allow the government to go for a budget of expansion. The government should, therefore, work in a way that does not hamper private sector credit flow. The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry also thinks that the initiative of a prospective tax system, which it also welcomes as a good government move, could help to bring in more foreign direct investment. The Dhaka Chamber also suggests the introduction of a separate tax code for the small and medium enterprise sector.

The rationale behind this suggestion is that the tax administrative system appears complex for the SME sector. This way this would help revenue generation. The 2025 fiscal year budget has a deficit target of about 4.6 percent, which is lower than what it was in the budget for the past year. The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry thinks that the government

would well meet the target but the main challenge that remains here is also the collection of revenue. Without widening the tax net, it would be difficult to collect a higher revenue. The tax-gross domestic product ratio, which now stays below 10 percent, therefore, needs to be pushed to at least 30 percent in the next decade. The liquidity crisis remains another challenge in budget implementation. The growth target that the budget envisages would be reached only if the liquidity crisis could be overcome. And, all this depends on various macroeconomic scenarios as much global geo-economic conditions.

The government has reduced various taxes, including the value-added tax, but has also increased taxes on a few more items which, on the whole, may not harshly impact businesses. The government should, therefore, strive so that such measures should protect local producers and promote the competitiveness of domestic manufacturers. But the challenge that remains is to properly implement the good initiatives that are there in the budget. Besides, the corporate tax rate has been reduced for both listed and non-listed companies by 2.5 percent but on certain conditions. This appears a good move on part of the government. The government should mind issues of agriculture, power and energy, education and health care and ensure democratic governance in the sectors. The implementation of the Annual Development Program would also remain a challenge to ensure sustainable socio-economic development. The government should foster economic self-sufficiency and bolster local production in light of provisions in the budget that aim at supporting domestic industries.

The government should attend to issues of inflation that have left people reeling and the fostering of domestic investment, export diversification, tax net widening and reduction in dependence on the financial sector in implementing the deficit budget. The budget appears appropriate but its implementation could be crucial. What is most needed is the government's ability and will to implement the budget **r**

Timely budget for challenging time: DCCI chief



President of Dhaka Chamber Ashraf Ahmed (front row, middle) seen sharing his initial reaction on the National Budget FY2024-25 with the media on June 06. DCCI Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (front row, right) along with the members of the Board of Directors were present during the event.

The government this year has tried to increase the revenue amid efforts to contain the pressure of inflation on the economy by controlling the budget deficit, reducing various import duties and advance tax on various essential products, said Ashraf Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry on June 6 in a preliminary reaction to the national budget proposal.

Import duties on about 30 essential products have been reduced, he said, noting that this is a good move. He welcomed the government’s bank borrowing target that is about 11.82 percent less than the target in the past fiscal year. But, he thought, it is still high, noting that an increased government borrowing could shrink private sector credit flow.

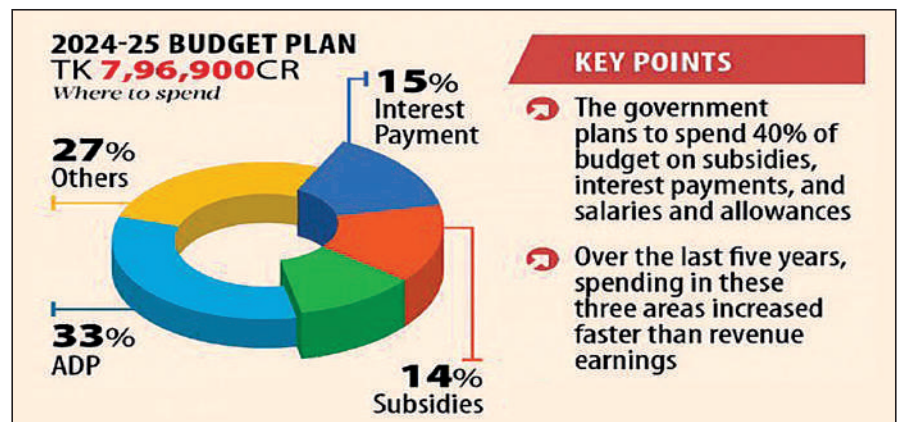
Ashraf Ahmed welcomed the initiative of prospective tax system proposed for the 2024–25 and 2025–26 fiscal years, noting that the good move may boost foreign direct investments. He suggested separate tax codes for the SME sector as the tax administration system is complex for the sector. This year’s budget deficit target is about

4.6 percent which is lower than the targets in the past. This could be achieved but the major challenge is revenue collection, he said. “Without widening the tax net, it will be difficult to increase revenue.

We need to increase the tax-gross domestic product ratio”, he added. “The ratio is now below 10 percent and we need to increase it to at least 30 percent in a decade.” He said, “If we can overcome the liquidity crisis, we could achieve the growth target. This depends on macroeconomic factors and global geo-economic conditions.”

He said that the government had

reduced tax and VAT but “there are still high taxes on a few items. As a whole, the move may not impact businesses too harshly. As for listed and non-listed companies, the corporate tax rate has been reduced by 2.5 percent but with conditions, which is a good move, he said. He emphasized ADP implementation for sustainable socio-economic development. He thanked the government as the proposed budget tried to address inflation issues and foster local investments and export diversification, to widen the tax net and to reduce dependency on financial sector to ease the deficit budget



DCCI urges UK to import more from Bangladesh

More than 94 percent of Bangladesh's export to the United Kingdom accounts for apparel worth \$5.03 billion. A few more items other than apparel are also exported to the United Kingdom, but the volume is not up to expectations, said Ashraf Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry at a meeting with the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke. The British high commissioner paid a courtesy call on the DCCI president at the DCCI Gulshan Centre on June 2. The vice-president of the Dhaka Chamber Md Junaed Ibna Ali and members of the board of directors also attended.

Ashraf Ahmed said that the total trade between Bangladesh and the United Kingdom had reached \$5.73 billion in the 2023 fiscal year. The United Kingdom is the third largest export destination and the 26th largest import source of Bangladesh. In the 2022–23 fiscal year, Export to the United Kingdom was \$5.31 billion and the total import from the United Kingdom was \$415.32 million. The United Kingdom is the second largest foreign

investment source for Bangladesh followed by the United States with \$3.04 billion FDI stock. The potential of economic partnership between the United Kingdom and Bangladesh is very bright, especially in finance, health care, financial technology, business process outsourcing, business process services, tourism, and education.

Moreover, the United Kingdom can also transfer know-how, innovation and skills in information and communication technology, architecture, health care through joint-venture partnership. Both Bangladesh and UK governments need to hold discussions to strike agreements to boost trade and investment after Bangladesh's graduation out of the least developed countries. Discussions need to reflect new priorities and UK investments need new focus as does the connectivity in the private sector, he said.

Sarah Cooke said that Bangladesh had done a lot in the past decade and its economy advanced a lot. She said that the United Kingdom was

interested to work with Bangladesh in economic progress and climate change issues. She said that the United Kingdom would extend its possible support to Bangladesh in a successful graduation from the least developed countries to a middle-income country status. After the graduation, she said, Bangladesh needs to diversify its export beyond apparel to keep export market safe. A both-way trade and export between the United Kingdom and Bangladesh will grow in future, she hoped, noting that the tax-gross domestic product ratio of Bangladesh needs to be increased. Agriculture, sea food, leather goods, light engineering products, especially bicycles, and apparel have huge potential for Bangladeshi exporters on the UK market, she said.

She emphasized producing products of international standards to grab the international market. She suggested that Bangladesh should work more on policy reforms, intellectual property rights, alternative dispute resolution and the repatriation of profit to attract more foreign direct investments **r**



British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke (eighth from right) seen receiving crest from DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (seventh from right) after a courtesy meeting held on June 02 at DCCI Gulshan Centre. DCCI Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (sixth from right) and Members of the Board of Directors were also present at that time.

DCCI seeks Canadian farm technology transfer

Development cooperation, trade & investment and people-to-people contact are three fundamental pillars for transforming the Bangladesh-Canada relation into a comprehensive economic partnership, said Ashraf Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry when Canada's High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dr Lilly Nicholls called on him on June 3.

Ashraf Ahmed said that Canada was the 11th largest export destination and the 13th largest import source of Bangladesh. In the 2022–23 fiscal year, export to Canada was \$1.72 billion and import from Canada was \$1.42 billion. The bilateral trade reached \$3.14 billion in the 2023 fiscal year, he added.

More than 89 percent of Bangladesh's export to Canada accounted for apparel worth \$1.55 billion. Canada is the 20th largest foreign investment source of Bangladesh with a \$178.44 million stock. Bangladesh has the Foreign Private Investment Promotion and Protection Act to protect foreign investors, encourage foreign investments and build confidence among the investors, he said. Ashraf

Ahmed invited Canadians to invest in renewable energy, green technology industries, investment banking, education, health care, medical equipment, waste management and automotive sectors in Bangladesh. He called on Canadians to import more pharmaceutical, leather and leather products, jute and jute goods, handicraft items, bicycles, high-end apparel, ceramics, furniture, plastics, processed and frozen food, software and business process services from Bangladesh.

Dr Lilly Nicholls said that it was a very good time for Canada-Bangladesh commercial relation in trade and investment. The trade relation is growing and it is almost \$4 billion now, she said, adding that Bangladesh's export to Canada needs to be diversified as it is still apparel-centric. Bangladesh in the recent past has progressed a lot and Canada considers Bangladesh an attractive destination. She said that Canada had recently proposed that Bangladesh should sign a foreign investment protection agreement to encourage Canadian investments in Bangladesh. Both the governments

have already begun discussions on the issue. A joint working group composed of businesspeople of both the countries have been set up to identify new areas and sectors that Canada and Bangladesh should work on. This group has already identified few areas such as agro industry, green technology, pharmaceuticals and information and communication technology as potential.

She said that it was very important to know each other's market and for that, she suggested regular visits of trade missions. Bangladesh needs to improve in the ease of doing business to be more attractive. Bangladesh has a large pool of skilled human resources, but it has modernize those skills to meet the target of being a smart Bangladesh.

After the LDC graduation, Canada will give it duty-free, quota-free benefits for three more years, she said, urging market assessment to identify potential sectors for cooperation.

DCCI vice-president Md Junaed Ibna Ali and members of the board of directors also attended **T**



Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dr. Lilly Nicholls (seventh from left) seen receiving a crest from Dhaka Chamber President Ashraf Ahmed (eighth from left) after a bilateral meeting held on June 03 at DCCI Gulshan Centre. DCCI Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (sixth from left) and members of the Board of Directors were also present during the meeting.

Flexible policy urged for more private sector credit flow

The Bangladesh Bank has announced a tight monetary policy for the first half of the 2024–25 fiscal year. The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry acknowledges the central bank's strategy to ensure adequate liquidity for growth sectors and manage inflation at the same time.

The policy aims the control of reserve money and broad money by adjusting the policy rate and managing liquidity through cash reserve ratio, statutory liquidity ratio, open market operation, etc. With the inflation rate having been above 9 percent for the past two fiscal years and an average rate of 9.73 percent in the 2023–24 fiscal year, significant efforts are required to achieve the inflation target of 6.5 percent.

In this policy, the public sector credit growth target for July–December 2025 is set at 14.2 percent which was 27.8 percent in the second half of the 2024 fiscal year. Conversely, private sector credit growth reached 9.8 percent in the second half of the 2024 fiscal year, slightly below the target of 10 percent. The Bangladesh Bank has lowered the private sector credit target to 9.8 percent. The Dhaka Chamber has welcomed the initiative of reduction in public sector credit target. However, the

private sector credit flow needs to be enhanced for the sustenance of economic growth.

The DCCI president emphasized the importance of the crawling peg system and the need for strengthening this measure with innovative approaches to bolster foreign exchange reserve. In this regard, financial assets and liquidity should be increased. The Dhaka Chamber has, however, welcomed the net foreign assets projection of the banking system which is expected to show a positive growth of 17.8 percent in the 2025 fiscal year. Although repo rate remains unchanged at 8.50 percent, there are other market control measures needed to tame inflation by a large extent. The Dhaka Chamber has also stressed the need for appropriate and supportive fiscal policies, which could play a prominent role in this regard. The Bangladesh Bank is encouraged to adopt flexible monetary policies, continuously adjust the policy interest rate and closely monitor their impact on inflation and economic growth to strike the right balance.

A strong coordination between fiscal and monetary policies are crucial to the financial sector stability. Improved risk management

practices and stronger oversight are essential. The Bangladesh Bank is providing the re/pre-financing scheme to key growth sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and CMSMEs through tailored credit facilities to stimulate local economic activities.

Regarding exchange rate stability, the Dhaka Chamber hopes that a return to market mechanisms and crawling peg system may help to address balance of payment challenges. Increasing interest rates on foreign bonds and exemptions of cash reserve ratio for offshore banking units may add value.

The central bank has established a prompt corrective action framework for early detection and rectification of banking issues of weak banks. Moreover, it aims to reduce non-performing loans by 10 percent from state-owned commercial banks and 5 percent from private commercial banks by 2026. The measures could strengthen and stabilize the financial sector. As a whole, the Dhaka Chamber feels the importance of adopting a more flexible monetary policy approach to address inflation, enhance private sector credit flow and support economic growth 

R&D should be prioritised in universities

Research and development should get more priority in both public and private universities to produce skilled graduates to meet the local and international demand, said academicians and industry owners at a discussion. The focus should be on how to mitigate the requirement and skills gap, they said at the discussion, titled “Strengthening Collaboration between Private Sector and Academia: The Way Forward”, organized by Dhaka Chamber of

Commerce and Industry held on July 6. Academicians from public and private universities took part in the discussion.

The DCCI president Ashraf Ahmed said that every year about two million graduates are entering into the job market. “But we are unable to accommodate all of them.” BIDS studies say that unemployment among graduates is 66 percent, he said. A World Bank survey says that 46 percent of employers struggle to

find job seekers with the necessary skills, while 69 percent report shortage of skilled human resources for technical and managerial roles.

Experts are hired from outside for key positions to run the industry and billions of dollars flow out of the country. For lack of skills, “our human resources are not getting high-paid jobs abroad. Industry-academia need to work together to develop soft and hard skills of our graduates”, he said. Besides, shared efforts and

contribution by universities and the private sector to contemporary research can enrich and create learning on macroeconomic matters, he added.

The ULAB vice-chancellor Professor Imran Rahman said that around 40 percent of graduates were still unemployed and for them, “we need to do something.” He said that university students learn little from their their internship. He, therefore, suggested apprenticeship for better learning.

“Many subjects or curricula do not even have much demand on the global market”, he said, noting that popularizing information and communications technology and science-based education should be increased to stay competitive in the rapidly moving world. Private funding in university research and development or student projects should, therefore, get tax benefits, he said.

BUET professor Dr Muhammad Anisuzzaman Talukder said that there should have been mutual trust between industry and academia. He said, “Our university curriculum is quite good. But in some cases, a few other good things can be included. Yet, frequent changes in curriculum will not bring any good for students.”

North South University professor Dr AKM Waresul Karim, Brigadier General Mohammad Saadat Hossain,



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (second from right) seen speaking at a round table discussion titled “Strengthening Collaboration between the Private Sector & Academia: The Way Forward” held on July 06. Vice Chancellor of ULAB, Professor Imran Rahman (second from left), Pro-Vice Chancellor of AIUB Dr. Md. Abdur Rahman (left) and DCCI Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (right) are also seen in the picture.

Dean, Bangladesh University of Professionals, Lieutenant Colonel Khondoker Zahirul Alam (retd), director, international affairs, BUP, Dr Mohammad Zahedul Alam, professor, BUP, Md Yeashir Arafat, assistant director, FBS, BUP, professor Dr Mohammed Masum Iqbal, dean, Dhaka International University, Dr Md Abdur Rahman, pro-vice-chancellor, AIUB, Dr Partha P Chowdhury, professor, AIUB, Dr Salma Karim, professor, UIU, Dr Md Quamruzzaman, associate professor, UIU, professor Nazmul Ahsan Khan, dean, NUB, Khairul Alam, assistant professor, NUB and Dr Khaled Mahmud, professor, IBA also spoke.

The speakers suggested using corporate CSR fund for university

research and development. They said that if better salary could not be ensured, skilled and meritorious graduates would feel disappointed and would try to go abroad. The speakers recommended a faster approval process of new curriculum by the University Grants Commission.

“We do not have research-based data of exact demand of skills required by the industry. At least we should know the demand for ten years.” They requested the private sector to come forward with project funding.

The DCCI vice-president Md. Junaed Ibna Ali, director Mohammad Saifur Rahman Saif and convenor Ismat Zerine Khan attended **r**

Tax system needs to be shored to improve compliance

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized a workshop on customs, VAT and income tax management at the Dhaka Chamber July 13. The workshop was meant to inform professionals of DCCI member organizations of various changes in relevant acts.

Commissioner (customs, excise and VAT commissionerate, Dhaka East), Md Zakir Hossain, adviser to the Dhaka chamber’s standing committee on customs, VAT and NBR

issues Snehashish Barua, FCA, and vice-president of ICAB MBM Lutful Hadi, FCA, presented the papers.

The DCCI president Ashraf Ahmed urged the government to streamline the tax system to promote a better understanding, an easier compliance and reduce time, visit and cost. Tax calculation for corporates should be in sync with the accounting standards and compliant businesses could be rewarded in some cases to encourage compliance. He said that automation

would reduce discretionary measures and reduce leaks. As for compliance, Ashraf Ahmed said that a compliant business entity never faces any hassle. A transparent and accountable revenue system will reduce hassle. He said that there were a good number of positive things in the VAT, income tax and customs laws, putting out a call for them to be put to work.

Md Zakir Hossain said that no fundamental changes have been made in the new VAT law. There

have only been two changes in the working procedure of the National Board of Revenue.

He said that with a view to increasing the revenue target, pressure on all categories of taxpayers, including VAT-paying companies, will slightly increase, but he requested businesses to have a better understanding of the VAT act to avail various rebate facilities.

Snehasish Barua said that the revenue target for the current fiscal year was Tk 4.8 lakh crore, which is about more than 17 percent of what it was in the previous fiscal year. He said that import duty should be reduced to boost the economy and to expedite industrialization. He emphasized a sustainable revenue system considering the overall condition of the economy.

Lutful Hadi said that the customs law was introduced to reduce the



Dhaka Chamber President Ashraf Ahmed (left) seen speaking at a Workshop titled "Customs, VAT and Income Tax Management" held on July 13. DCCI Vice President Md. Junaed Ibna Ali (third from left), Commissioner (Customs, Excise and VAT Commissionerate, Dhaka East) of National Board of Revenue (NBR) Md. Zakir Hossain (second from right), Adviser to the DCCI standing committee on Customs, VAT and NBR related issues Snehasish Barua, FCA (right) and Vice President of ICAB MBM Lutful Hadi, FCA (second from left) are seen in the picture.

cost of doing business and urged the government to implement the law properly.

About 90 representatives of DCCI member organizations attended

in the workshop. The DCCI vice-president Md Junaed Ibna Ali and directors Kamrul Hasan Tuhin and M Mosharraf Hossain also attended **r**

DCCI receives 'Institutional Appreciation Award 2022'

National Productivity Award given to 21 industries

As a recognition of accelerating "Bangladesh Productivity Movement", Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) has

been awarded the "Institutional Appreciation Award 2022" by National Productivity Organization (NPO) under the Ministry of Industries,

GoB. Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun, MP handed over the awards at a function held on 08 June 2024. Ashraf Ahmed, President of DCCI received the award from the Industries Minister while Senior Secretary, Ministry of Industries Zakia Sultan and Director General of National Productivity Organisation (NPO) Muhammad Mesbahul Alam among others were also present during the occasion.

In his speech, Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun hoped that through such awards and recognition, new thinking will emerge which will enable efficient and effective use of human resources, machines and other materials in the production process.

National Productivity Organization (NPO) has given the 'National Productivity and Quality Excellence Award-2022' award in six categories. The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) won the 'Institutional Appreciation Award 2022' **r**



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (left) seen receiving 'Institutional Appreciation Award 2022' from Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun, MP (third from left) on June 04. FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam (second from left), Senior Secretary, Ministry of Industries Zakia Sultana (fourth from left) and Director General of National Productivity Organisation (NPO) Muhammad Mesbahul Alam (right) among others were also present at that time.

View Exchange Meeting on “Strengthening the collaboration of the Private Sector and Academia : State & Future”

Since the 1970s, the world has seen the rise of various forms of collaboration among the sectors of government, academia and the private sector/industry. These forms include industry specific inter-firm research consortia, government-industry technology transfer, and university-industry research centers. Research indicates that companies with strong collaborations with universities experience greater innovation, higher productivity, and more successful business ventures, underscoring the critical role of industry-academia collaboration. Recognizing this potential, Dhaka Chamber has been diligently collaborating with leading public and private academic institutions in Bangladesh and the University Grants Commission (UGC). These efforts focus on promoting industry-academia partnerships, advancing research and innovation initiatives, enhancing digital infrastructure and resource accessibility, and fostering inclusive growth and social impact. However, there are numerous opportunities to explore and collaborate in response to the evolving demands of the private sector and industry, aiming for focused socioeconomic progress in Bangladesh within the context of our existing cooperation.

In view of the above, the Dhaka Chamber organized a View Exchange Meeting titled “Strengthening the collaboration of the Private Sector and Academia: State & Future” on July 06, 2024. Ashraf Ahmed, President, DCCI moderated the meeting after delivering his welcome remarks. Professor Imran Rahman, Vice Chancellor, ULAB, Dr. Md. Abdur Rahman, Pro Vice Chancellor, AIUB, and Dean & Professors from different Universities including BUET, DU, BUP, NSU, DIU etc. were present as Guests of honor in this event.

Welcome Remarks

- Academia often struggles to meet the human resource demands of industries, creating a gap that requires more robust collaboration. While industry and academia have the potential to achieve significant advancements together, challenges remain.
- Dhaka Chamber has signed numerous MoUs with various universities to bridge this gap, but the execution of the tasks outlined in these MoUs has been insufficient.
- This view exchange meeting aims to explore ways to enhance collaboration between academia and private sector and identify additional initiatives that can align academic outputs with industry needs. Strengthening this partnership, will help better prepare graduates for the workforce, drive innovation, and meet the evolving demands of the private sector.

Remarks by Discussants

- The industry is rapidly evolving, whereas academia progresses more slowly, leading to a gap that requires analysis to meet unmet human resource needs.
- Universities have lack of practical experience to generate skilled personnel required for the industry. Every department of academia may form an advisory committee with representatives from both industry and academia can help bridge this gap.
- Academia needs accurate information on the number of skilled personnel needed in the industry to better prepare graduates.
- Universities may encourage entrepreneurship development. To adequately equip graduates for industry, an assessment of university resources is necessary.
- Engaging students in the learning process at graduate level requires more focus on primary and secondary education.
- Bangladesh lacks a culture of private sector research funding, missing out on potential benefits.
- There is a tendency to focus on finished products rather than understanding the production process. In the era of globalization, preparing graduates for the global market is essential.
- Many research projects are not assessed for their economic implications, rendering them ineffective.
- Creating interest and a sense of necessity for the subjects’ students are studying will help motivate them. Entry-level salaries for fresh graduates are often insufficient, prompting them to seek opportunities abroad.
- Research funding can be sourced from private sector CSR funds, benefiting both sectors through collaborative efforts.
- Flexible policy guidelines are needed to adapt academic syllabi to changes more quickly, as the UGC currently takes too long.
- Communication skills are crucial for career advancement.
- DCCI can serve as a platform for internships, helping graduates gain desired job skills through competitive opportunities from private institutions.
- Many university subjects lack market demand, resulting in a significant skill gap in job descriptions.
- Every year, 800,000 graduates enter the job market, but there is a lack of market research to determine their actual necessity.
- There is a deficiency in analyzing real-world demands, such as the future need for cybersecurity lawyers, which is not currently addressed by universities.

- Proper future forecasting for graduates is lacking. A central framework is needed for academia to meet industry needs, with businesses collaborating on market linkages.
- Students often have unrealistically high expectations for internship remuneration, forgetting that it is part of the learning process.
- Funding smaller university projects and building trust with academicians is essential.
- Collaboration among industry, academia, and government is essential to conduct research that meets domestic needs.
- Developing and implementing an action plan immediately will drive progress.
- Offering tax rebates for the private sector to upskill fresh graduates will incentivize investment in training.
- Universities need to focus on teaching students how to learn, but graduates are often unprepared for industry, ready only to learn through short-cuts .
- Teachers need training to keep pace with the fast-growing industries, and networking is crucial.
- Internships are currently underutilized, with graduates learning little from them. The private sector should give fresh graduates challenging assignments to help them learn, potentially offering apprenticeships.
- Internships should be accessible to students from all disciplines, with the private sector focusing on skills rather than academic subjects.
- Sourcing research funding from private sector CSR funds can benefit both sectors through collaborative efforts.
- Implementing flexible policy guidelines to adapt academic syllabus more quickly is necessary, as current processes are too slow.
- Enhancing communication skills need to be prioritized for students' career advancement.
- DCCI may be used as a platform for internships of graduates, connecting them with potential private institutions.
- Conducting market research to determine the actual and sector specific demand for the graduates is critical.
- Analyzing real-world demands, such as the future need for cybersecurity lawyers, will address gaps in university curricula.
- Developing a central framework for academia to meet industry needs, with businesses collaborating on market linkages, is important.
- Setting realistic expectations for internship remuneration is necessary as it is part of the learning process.
- Funding smaller university projects and building trust with academicians will encourage more effective research.
- Collaboration among industry, academia, and government is essential to conduct research that meets domestic needs.

Recommendations

- We need to form an advisory board with representatives from both industry and academia to bridge the existing gap.
- Accurate information is needed on the number of skilled personnel required in the industry to better prepare graduates.
- It is essential to assess the resources of universities to ensure graduates are well-equipped for industry needs.
- Quality education needs to ensure from primary and secondary education levels to adapt students to a learning culture.
- Developing a culture of private sector-based research funding, similar to practices in other countries, can yield significant benefits.
- Preparing graduates for the global market is vital in the era of globalization.
- Research conducted by universities need to have the economic implications.
- Students need to be motivated by increasing their interest by presenting their subjects in an interesting way.
- Developing and implementing an action plan immediately, while limiting prolonged discussions, will drive progress.
- Offering tax rebates for the private sector to develop fresh graduate skills will incentivize investment in training.
- Creating a common platform through DCCI for problem-solving between industry and academia will facilitate cooperation.
- Training teachers to keep up with fast-growing industries and emphasizing networking are crucial steps.
- Offering quality internship programs by giving graduates challenging assignments and potentially offering apprenticeships will improve their learning experience.
- Focusing on students' skills rather than their academic subjects for internships will better align their education with industry demands.
- Periodic review is needed to have result-oriented initiatives and ensure that academic curricula remain relevant and aligned with industry needs.

Thoughts on The Importers Exporters and Indentors registration order 2023

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The government is updating the various laws & rules promulgated by the military rulers and also making them business friendly to accelerate economic activities in the greater interest of the nation. The government has issued The Importers Exporters and Indentors registration order 2023 dated 3rd January 2024 replacing the previous order namely 'The Importers Exporters and Indentors registration order, 1981 issued on 2nd October 1981.

The repealed order of 1981 defined Indentors (article 2- G) as "Indentor" means a firm, institution, body, organization, person or group of persons registered as an Indentor and holding sole agency; dealership or distribution right from a supplier abroad". The rule identified Indentor as a local trading company.

By this time there were many changes in the policy of the government by accepting open market policy and abiding by the trading rules of World Trade Organization (WTO). Ministers from WTO member-countries decided at the 1996 Singapore Ministerial. They have defined the cross-border service trade. The confirmed four modes of supply, which include: Cross-border trade (Mode 1), consumption abroad (Mode 2), commercial presence (Mode 3), and temporary movement of natural persons (Mode 4).

Bangladesh has bidding obligation to accept the definition of service export incorporated in the Singapore Ministerial Conference in 1996 of WTO. The global organization promoted than exportable of service as exportable commodity. Accordingly, Bangladesh government has incorporated service export in the export policy order in 2015 and listed indenting under 'mode 2' as exportable service. Later, government through an office order dated 1st October 2018 of the Chief Comptroller of Import & Export has declared the Indentors as service exporter and finally issued another public notice on 11th December 2018 confirming the issue of export registration certificates to the Indentors.

After all these changes in policy of the government, the definition of Indentor mentioned the Importers Exporters and Indentors registration order 2023 as ordinary

agent or dealer is contrary to the earlier decisions that Indentors are service exporter. On the other hand, as per the new order, one member of one family will be eligible to get an import, export or indenting license. The eligible enterprises for registration (Sec 4) of The Importers Exporters and Indentors registration order 2023 imposed restriction on the citizen and allowed to get only one license per family. these terms & conditions of registration of importers, exporter and indentor has curtailed the fundamental rights of the citizens.

Any person who attains the age of 18, is eligible for National Identity number (NID) and an independent from his family. He has the right and privilege of being an independent citizen and should have independence to choose a profession and get the business license without any restriction on basis of family membership as a fundamental right of a citizen.

In a similar manner the private limited company was also treated as proprietorship firm considering the registration as importer, exporter or Indentor ignoring the status of independent artificial person. This restriction conflicts with the treatment of limited liability companies without giving status of artificial person as per Companies Act, 1994. An artificial person (company) is independent from it's shareholders. A can sue or be sued for its actions. A company should be eligible to get business license in the name of the company.

The fundamental right ensured under section no: 40 of freedom of profession and occupation given the mandate that subject to any restrictions imposed by law, every citizen possessing such qualifications, if any, as may be prescribed by law in relation to his profession, occupation, trade or business shall have the right to enter upon any lawful profession or occupation, and to conduct any lawful trade or business.

In another article (13-c) of the constitution, referred to the principles of ownership that the private ownership, that is ownership by individuals within such limits as may be prescribed by law. 19. (1) The State shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens.

Regarding Sole agent (article 4- subclause 9), the order has given a bar on working with second Principal (overseas partner) of prior approval from the office of Chief Controller of Import & Export (CCI&E) and this

is impossible to abide by any importer, exporter and Indentor. This restriction will limit the source of supply.

The standard practice and customs of agency business is that Importers, Exporters and Indentors look for overseas buyers /sellers through correspondences and web search and start business on deal-to-deal basis and in due course of business, become sole agent after gaining confidence between two partners companies in home and abroad. It is an impossible condition that overseas partners agree to sole agency before any business experience. Moreover, the prior approval of business relationship with overseas companies from CCI&E is a time-consuming process. Due to nature of the products, some of the products have validity of price is a few hours and Importer, Exporter and Indentor cannot take permission from the office of CCI&E within such short period of time. This condition will curtail the opportunity of business and limit the competition. It will increase the cost of products.

Bangladesh Competition Act 2012 enacted to facilitate competition and guide the government to remove anti-competitive acts and rules. Any restriction or condition which may be anti-competitive shall be contrary to existing competition law.

There was similar policy in the registration of Indentors with Bangladesh Bank in the clause 18A (1) for obtaining permission from Bangladesh Bank for doing business with any new overseas suppliers. The original Foreign Exchange law of 1947 had no such clause, but it was incorporated with the Foreign Exchange Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1976. Subsequently considering the difficulties of Indentors and also for Bangladesh Bank, the clause been deleted through Foreign Exchange Regulation Amendment Act 2015. It is

also important that any barrier to the free flow of products is contrary to the concept of free market as promoted by WTO.

Article 9 of the order has given very wide power to official of CCI&E for inspection and (article 10) have given very uncertain and unexplained authority to CCI&E for cancellation of import export or indenting registration as some of the points need clarification and interpretation. Those are - (Ka) if license holder violates any clause of the order The Importers Exporters and Indentors registration order 2023, for violating anti- money laundering law (kha), for under invoicing and over invoicing, violation of any rule or order (ga), violating any law of supply, stock, quality and price etc, any office related to indenting business (gha). There are specific laws to regulate the supply, stock, quality and price and indenting business and additional punishment under the Importers Exporters and Indentors registration order 2023 will impose regulations of dual law. On the other hand, there is no specific rule for determination of the offences under the subject order.

The Constitution ensures that no person shall be punished for the same offence more than once. A person is not to be put in jeopardy twice for the same offence. This principle has been incorporated in Article 35(2) of the Constitution. The Penal Code under section 71 prescribes a limit of punishment and prohibits double punishment for the same offence.

The Import, Export and Indentor (Registration) order 2024 may be revisited to amend certain clauses considering the existing laws of the countries, previous experience of other laws and WTO rules to facilitate trade and investment in the country.



Tk 7.97 trillion budget proposed

A modestly incremental annual budget of Tk 7.97 trillion for Bangladesh runs in right direction to contain inflation but targeted higher borrowing and taxes on some goods may keep the inflationary pressure on the economy prevalent. Economists think the higher bank borrowing may create a problem in financing businesses, especially the SMEs, in a knock-on impact technically termed “crowding-out effect”. Economists and analysts see such paradoxical situation in the budget proposals although the budget outlay for the fiscal year 2024-25 is only less than 5.0-percent up.

Finance minister, Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, presented the budget in the Jatiya Sangsad as the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina began its fourth straight term, with a substantial deficit funding. The government estimates aggregate revenue earning worth Tk 5.45 trillion to be pooled from taxes and non-tax sources. The arithmetic leaves a deficit of Tk 2.56 trillion, which has to be managed by borrowing mainly from banking system.

In the meticulously calculated new budget the government pledges to pull down inflation from a near-double-digit high to 6.5 percent while maintaining a modest economic growth. As the gross domestic product growth is set at 6.75 percent higher than the cut-down revised rate in the passing fiscal year economists believe it will be a hard task for the new finance minister to steer to the goal as he, in his budget speech in parliament, set forth government plan to maintain the crisis-time austerity in public spending and imports in particular.

Many believe that under such big dependence on domestic sources,



the central bank may print the money which pushes up the inflation hitting hard limited-income group of people. Foreign funding has been drying up in recent times in the context of lingering global crises which shrank then receipt to Tk 762.93 billion, down by around 25 percent from the original budget of the 2023–24 fiscal year.

The finance minister in his budget speech said they prioritized inflation control as number one. “To control inflation various steps are being taken to make the monetary policy a successful one.” “At the same time, supportive policies are being implemented in the fiscal sector as well. Government support like Family Card and OMS Programs are being strengthened to protect the common people from adversities arising from high inflation”, he told the lawmakers.

Economists welcomed the conservative budget but were critical of a plan to increase the price of electricity four times a year over the next three years to withdraw all subsidies from the power sector, which the IMF recommends in a lending package. “Once there be four times increase in prices of power, it will affect consumers and producers and further fuel up the inflation”, says

Dr M Masrur Reaz, chairman and CEO of Policy Exchange Bangladesh.

He thinks subsidy cut could be for the capacity payment to private power producers, rather than ensuring interest of the retail users. The finance minister said that power production increased six times to 30,277 megawatts. “Actually there is no clear-cut outline on how to reduce the inflation in the budget speech,” says Dr Monzur Hossain, director (research) of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali unveiled his first budget with the claim that it has been crafted in addition to controlling inflation, allocating necessary funds to the government’s priority sectors like poverty alleviation, job creation, social-security programs, education, health, agriculture, and climate change. “The budget for this fiscal year has been formulated with the authority of confirmation and future development plan.” Economists were critical of the gross domestic product target amid the ongoing higher inflation persisting for long on the economy. They see some “unrealistic” numbers in the budget speech: 6.75 percent gross domestic product growth, 6.5 percent inflation and tax-gross domestic product ratio up at 10 percent.

In the country's annual fiscal blueprint, styled "March Towards Smart Bangladesh Following the Path of Sustainable Development", he said: I propose to exempt from tax the income arising from any of the following business activities of a resident individual or a non-resident Bangladeshi natural person, for three years, on the condition that all business activities of such person are cashless, namely AI-based solution development; blockchain-based solution development; robotics process outsourcing; software as a service; cyber-security service and so on"

It also says under initiative to develop "Smart Bangladesh", two digital banks aim at providing information and technology-based banking services to the people. The minister stressed the need for ensuring good governance in the banking system. The budget speech reads: "To address the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the finance minister said the government goal is to create at least 1.0 million smart jobs in the information technology sector and attract foreign investment of \$1.0 billion over the next five years."

On resource mobilization, the finance minister said reforms are being implemented for enhancing revenue collection. Administrative capacity building of the National Board of Revenue, expansion of tax base, automation in revenue collection and management system and programs for automation to reduce the human interface have been undertaken to raise the tax-gross domestic product ratio to 10 percent.

He said the pace of revenue mobilization will be increased through proper implementation of the Income Tax Act 2023, introduction of the Customs Act 2023 and seeking co-operation from private sectors. There

are some tax impositions on popular goods. They are ice-cream, by raising to 10 percent from 5.0 percent, mango bars, mango, pineapple, guava and tamarind juices. The tax on carbonated beverages which are much consumed due to extreme hot weather is raised by 5.0 percentage points to 30 percent, mobile SIM to 15 percent.

Local air-conditioner maker VAT imposition will be 7.5 percent from zero percent. VAT on local refrigerator and fridge making will increase by 2.5 percentage points to 7.5 percent. The tax-free income thresholds of individual taxpayers and firms remained unchanged for the 2024–25 fiscal year.

"One of the conditions for tariff rationalization is to phase out minimum value, tariff value, regulatory duties and supplementary duties." The allocation for social-security programs has been augmented marginally. A sum of Tk 1.36 trillion has been earmarked for the social safety net recipe, nearly 8 percent up from the current fiscal year. Out of 115 social safety net programs, 34 are cash-based, and 19 of these programs are currently disbursing funds directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts or mobile banking accounts via G2P system.

The finance minister said steps have been taken to update the policies related to green bonds with the aim of financing from the domestic sources the activities undertaken to deal with the impact of climate change. He said the government has laid emphasis on taking advantages of Blue Economy including deep-sea fishing, extracting mineral resources from seabed in this budget and an allocation of Tk 1.0 billion for the same.

In conclusion, the finance minister said taking into account the ongoing global political context and domestic

macroeconomic conditions, timely reforms in the revenue sector and towards digital transformation, tax-net growth, non-tax revenue collection and administrative capacity building will be undertaken to ensure adequate resource allocation. "Dependence on foreign sources will be reduced in managing the deficit by keeping the budget deficit at a sustainable level" **r**

Tk 7,97,000cr budget passed

The parliament passed the Tk 7,97,000 crore national budget for the 2024–25 fiscal year with the aim of achieving 6.75 percent gross domestic product growth rate and keeping annual inflation at around six percent. Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali placed the Appropriations Bill 2024, seeking a budgetary allocation of Tk 12,41,752 crore which was passed by voice votes.

Following the proposal mooted in the House by the finance ministry for the parliamentary approval of the appropriation of funds for meeting necessary development and non-development expenditures of the government, the ministers concerned placed justifications for the expenditure by their respective ministries through 59 demands for grants. Earlier, the parliament rejected, by voice votes, a total of only 251 cut-motions that stood in the name of opposition members on 59 demands for grants for different ministries.

A total of seven MPs, including from Jatiya Party Mujibur Huq, Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, and Independent MP Pankaj Nath, Hamidul Haque Khandker, Abul Kalam, Suhra Uddin and Nasser Shahrear Zahedee placed the cut motions.

They were, however, allowed to participate in the discussion on law

ministry, Secondary and Higher Studies Division and Social Welfare Ministry. Later, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury quickened the process of passing the demands for grants for different ministries without giving a lunch break. Opposition and independent MPs were present in the House when the Appropriation Bill was passed, and they did not raise objection to passing the bill **r**

Economy to grow 5.7pc in FY25: WB

Bangladesh's economy is likely to grow 5.7 percent in 2024–25 fiscal year, much lower than the government's projection, supported by increased private consumption for easing inflation and a pick-up in overall investment for implementation of large investment projects, the World Bank said on June 11, 2024. "Shortages of inputs and imported goods are expected to ease gradually. A more flexible exchange rate policy is envisaged to help increase remittance inflows and reduce balance of payments pressures," the multilateral lender said in its Global Economic.

The outlook by the WB comes couple of days after the government, in the budget for the 2025 fiscal year, projected a 6.75 percent growth of the gross domestic product the final value of goods and services produced in an economy in a certain period for the 2025 fiscal year. The WB's forecast is roughly one percentage point lower than the government's target for the year. The Washington-based agency in April predicted 5.7 percent growth for Bangladesh's economy for next fiscal year and it kept the projections unchanged in the latest report. The agency said overall output would expand 5.6 percent in the 2024 fiscal year ending this June.

The WB said industrial activity was disrupted in Bangladesh partly

due to ongoing import restrictions, which have caused shortages of materials and intermediate goods. "The government consumption and investment have supported activity, while elevated inflation has dampened real wage growth and the purchasing power of households, and weighed on private consumption," it said in its Global Economic Prospects. "Additionally, higher borrowing costs have weighed on demand. High levels of non-performing loans in the banking sector dampened investor confidence."

The multilateral lender raised its global growth outlook on the back of resilient consumer spending in the United States, but warned that growth remains weak by historical standards, reports Reuters. In updated forecasts, the Washington-based development lender said it now expects the world economy to grow by 2.6 percent this year in real terms, up 0.2 percentage points from its last update in January **r**

Remittances up by 10pc in FY24

Remittance inflows into Bangladesh increased by 10.66 percent year-on-year in the just-concluded fiscal year, supported by factors including increased manpower exports and a rising dollar rate. Md Mezbaul Haque, spokesperson for the Bangladesh Bank, said the country's banks received remittances

amounting to \$2.54 billion in June – the highest in 47 months. According to data from the central bank, \$23.91 billion arrived in the country in the 2024 fiscal year, which ended on 30 June, compared to \$21.61 billion in the previous fiscal year. Bangladesh recorded its highest remittances during the Covid period in the 2021 fiscal year, amounting to \$24.78 billion. Consequently, remittance inflows in the just-concluded fiscal year were the second highest in history.

Stating that remittance growth has been good, Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, emphasized the importance of the dollar rate in remittances. "Those who send remittances through formal channels have benefited from the increase in the dollar rate under the crawling peg system," she said, adding that one reason for the increase in remittances in June was Eid. She said efforts should focus on maintaining this continuity of remittances in the coming months as well.

The economist said the 2025 fiscal year budget has estimated dollar price at Tk114, which is much lower than the current rate. "We also need to consider other countries in our region. Our neighboring countries are not appreciating their currencies, and we are not in a position to do so either. It's important to bear in mind



that remitters and exporters will suffer if the dollar value is forcibly pegged at a lower level," she added.

Mezbaul Haque said banks have launched various campaigns to increase remittances. Additionally, the attractiveness of investing in the local market and the efforts of law enforcement agencies to curb informal money transfers have also contributed to the rise in remittances. Moreover, adjustments in the dollar price have affected the growth of remittances, he added.

According to data released by the central bank up to 28 June, state-owned banks are performing well in terms of remittance income. Agrani, Janata, and Rupali each brought in over \$100 million in remittances. Janata Bank was the only one among these banks to cross \$100 million last May. Additionally, like other months, private banks led in remittance income in June. Among them, Islami Bank received the highest remittance of \$519 million, with BRAC, Social Islami, National, and City also receiving substantial remittances.

When asked about the increase in remittances in June, Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and chief executive officer at Mutual Trust Bank said that since the official dollar rate had been close to the market rate for the past two months, expatriates were encouraged to send remittances through formal channels. Eid-ul-Adha also triggered the growth.

Referring to the robust remittance growth in the 2024 fiscal year, the banker said, "Our manpower exports have increased significantly over the years. However, despite this export growth, we have not seen the expected growth there. Therefore, banks need to focus on increasing remittance income. Overall, remittance growth in the just-ended fiscal year was better than in the previous two fiscal years."

Analysing central bank data, it was found that the official price of the dollar at the beginning of the 2024 fiscal year was Tk108.70. At that time, the central bank used to determine the dollar rate through two organizations: The Association of Bankers, Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association (Bafeda). However, commercial banks traded dollars in the market at rates higher than those fixed by these organizations.

Later, the Bangladesh Bank increased the dollar rate in phases until the first week of May, reaching a record high of Tk7 under the crawling peg system on 8 May. The mid-rate of the dollar was set at Tk117 during the introduction of this new exchange rate system. Banks were instructed to trade dollars at a rate close to the mid-rate, although no specific band was provided.

Officials at several public and private banks reported that remittances totalled about \$2 billion in July, the first month of the just-concluded fiscal year. During this period, the ABB, and the Bafeda set different rates for remittances, exports, and imports, causing hesitation among banks. Additionally, due to pressure from deferred import payments, many banks acquired remittance dollars at higher prices. However, in August and September, the central bank initiated crackdowns on banks

purchasing remittances at inflated rates, resulting in a drastic drop in remittances during those months. Specifically, remittance income fell to \$1.33 billion in September.

The managing director at a private bank said remittances declined in August and September due to banking pressures, which concerned the central bank. The senior officials of the central bank, including a deputy governor, urged banks not to offer higher dollar rates but did not impose punitive measures. Consequently, remittances began to increase again from October onward.

Remittances have shown significant growth in recent months, particularly in May and June, as the central bank aligned the official dollar rate closer to the market-based rate and maintained a somewhat tolerant stance, he added **r**

What's in budget to boost private investment?

The government's target in the proposed budget for 2024–25 on increasing private sector investment is ambitious and will be difficult to achieve, said businesspeople and experts citing high bank interest rates and a shortage of US dollars. Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali aims to take private sector investment to 27.34 percent of the gross domestic product in the upcoming fiscal year,



up from an estimated 23.51 percent in the current year.

The last six years' average was 24.19 percent, which is 3.15 percentage points lower than the target, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. According to businesspeople, opening letters of credit for importing raw materials and capital machinery was still a challenge alongside accommodating an increase in associated prices due to a hike in the price of the US dollar against the taka. Against this backdrop, making big investments is a big gamble, they said. The banking sector last month returned to a market-driven interest rate regime with the rate reaching as high as 14 percent. The foreign currency reserves stood at \$19.52 billion, as of June 20. Meanwhile, inflation has been persistently high, reaching 9.81 percent last May.

“Now businesses are faced with different drawbacks, including a high cost of business due to high bank interest rates and appreciation of the US dollar,” said Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and chief executive officer of Pran-RFL Group. “As a result, coming up with investments will be a very big challenge,” he said. He said the present reality necessitated devising ways to continue running business operations rather than going for expansion through fresh investments. Considering this, it is quite difficult for the business community to bring in big investments, he said. He suggested focusing on labor-intensive industries at this moment to create employment opportunities.

Local investors do not have sufficient money at hand to make investments and they should lay emphasis on bringing in foreign direct investment through joint ventures, he said. Such joint venture investments are most likely to facilitate the government's


plan on achieving the private investment to gross domestic product target, he said.

Asif Ibrahim, chairman of Chittagong Stock Exchange, said, in order to achieve the target, the government could focus on improving infrastructure, streamlining regulations, offering incentives, promoting FDI and investing in education and skills development. Besides, it needs to ensure political stability, promote innovation and entrepreneurship, and develop the capital market, he said. These efforts can create a lucrative environment for private investors and contribute to economic growth and development, said Ibrahim.

Unfortunately, investors still face red tape and delays in obtaining licences and necessary utility connections and impediments over logistics, he said. According to him, there is a lack of coordination among the agencies responsible for facilitating the ease of doing business. These hurdles need to be overcome to take private sector investment to 27.34 percent of the gross domestic product for the 2025 fiscal year, he suggested.

Ashraf Ahmed, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the proposed budget focused on containing inflation, while the latest monetary policy statement was contractionary in nature, which were constraints for investment. As private sector credit growth, public investment, balance of payments and FDI remain low, it is unlikely that employment and investment will see significant growth in the coming days, he said. In fact, persistence of a high bank interest rate and low liquidity from a crowding out effect could even trigger an economic meltdown, he said. “Unless our policy stances shift after December 2024, it will be difficult to achieve the investment target,” said Ahmed.

Ferdaus Ara Begum, chief executive officer of Business Initiative Leading Development, said it would not be possible to reach the private sector investment target if policies were not consistent and friendly towards investment. She said the investment targets for the private sector have been almost static for long. In the budget for the 2024–25 fiscal year, the target has been increased to 27.34 percent while it was reduced to 23.51 percent in the outgoing fiscal year from 24.18 percent in the 2022–23 fiscal year, she said. According to her, even though public sector investment had increased, it could not support private sector investment. In the government's 8th Five Year Plan, the investment target is 36.59 percent of the gross domestic product in 2025, which is still a far cry, she said. She said policy consistency for investment was the prime requirement.

The policy continuity for the investors in economic zones and hi-tech parks could contribute a significant amount of investment while creating new employment opportunities, she said. She also pointed out that investors are facing problems in availing gas connections and electricity while subsidies for electricity and gas were going to be withdrawn in phases as per the suggestions of the International Monetary Fund .

IMF flags nine risks for Bangladesh

The International Monetary Fund has suggested greater exchange rate flexibility to preserve reserve adequacy, warning failure to do so may create further imbalances in the currency market. This is one of the nine risks the Washington-based lender has identified as the Bangladesh Bank struggles to lift the international currency reserves, contain inflation and restore



macroeconomic stability. They were cited in the program document as the lender approved \$1.15 billion in the third tranche of the \$4.7 billion loan to Bangladesh to shore up its reserves. The risks are both external and internal.

They are intensification of regional conflicts; commodity price volatility; abrupt global slowdown; systemic financial instability; deepening geo-economic fragmentation; failure to maintain exchange rate flexibility; failure to address the problems in the banking system; insufficient international support in resolving the Rohingya crisis; and higher frequency of natural disasters. The central bank will have to take IMF's recommendations seriously as it is set to formulate the monetary policy for the next six months in July. The failure to maintain a higher degree of exchange rate flexibility consistent with the new exchange rate regime, and to clear the foreign exchange market and support orderly external adjustment has been described as a short-term risk factor.

"Further exchange market imbalances and exhausted BB's foreign reserves may ignite disorderly external adjustment with depreciation-inflation spiral," it said. So, the IMF recommended further steps to realign the exchange rate, and tightening monetary policy to sustain positive interest rate differential to gain

credibility and counter speculations.

On May 8, the Bangladesh Bank relinquished its control over fixation of the exchange rate. It also made the bank interest rate market-oriented after nearly four years. It came as the gross forex reserves plunged to \$19.8 billion in March from its peak of \$41.7 billion in August 2021 because of higher outflows against inflows. Official figures suggest continued forex intervention with net sales reaching \$7.8 billion as of March 7 of the outgoing fiscal year.

The IMF said realigning exchange rates to a market-clearing level has been critical to rebuild forex reserves. "This should remain a near-term priority." Furthermore, greater exchange rate flexibility has warranted a tighter monetary policy stance to counter inflationary pressure stemming from the exchange rate pass-through to inflation.

The taka has lost its value by 35 percent against the US dollar in the past two years amid fast depletion of the reserves. The pass-through of the sharp depreciation of the currency accounted for half of the inflation surge seen in Bangladesh in the last fiscal year, according to the IMF. Inflation has stayed above 9.5 percent in the current fiscal year as well.

The IMF said further scaling back of non-monetary use of forex reserves could provide some short-term relief.

Gross forex reserves currently cover about 2.5 months of imports. It is projected to increase to 3.6 months by 2026–27. Over the medium-term, policies to expand and diversify export earnings, and attract FDI inflows should help in maintaining adequate coverage, the IMF said. It said the monetary policy should continue to focus on addressing internal imbalances.

"Still, elevated inflation and inflation expectations will require continued monetary policy tightening until inflation consistently slows down to BB's medium-term target range of 5–6 percent." The IMF also identified some global risk factors like the escalation or spread of the conflict in Gaza and Israel, Russia's war in Ukraine, and the disruption facing the trade of energy, food and supply chains, and the remittances, FDI and financial flows.

The main impact will be a disruption of wheat exports from Ukraine while fuel supply from Russia may increase import prices and reduce food availability, with adverse effects on activity, current account and inflation. The commodity price volatility will widen the current account deficit and fiscal burden, pressures on the exchange rate, and the reserves.

The lender suggested targeted support to the poor and adopting an automatic fuel pricing mechanism. Apart from externalities, the government's wrong policies and some local factors have also been responsible for the lingering macroeconomic instability over the last two years, local economists say.

The government has adopted a crawling peg as a transitional step toward greater exchange rate flexibility to address elevated inflation and falling reserves, said Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali in a letter to the IMF **■**

ADB retains India growth forecast at 7pc for FY25

The Asian Development Bank maintained India's gross domestic product growth forecast at 7 percent for the current fiscal year, citing that a rebound in agriculture is expected given above-normal monsoon projections. The ADB forecast comes a day after the International Monetary Fund revised upward its gross domestic product growth projections for India to 7 percent compared to 6.8 percent projected in April.

Last month, the Reserve Bank of India revised upward its growth forecast to 7.2 percent, from 7 percent estimated earlier. The Indian economy is on track to grow by 7 percent in the 2024 fiscal year (ending 31 March 2025) and 7.2 percent in the 2025 fiscal year, as projected in ADO April 2024, said the July edition of the Asian Development Outlook. The Indian economy logged a growth rate of 8.2 percent for the fiscal year that ended in March 2024, as against 7 percent in the previous fiscal year.

Look at indicators

Services continued to expand robustly in Q4 of the 2024 fiscal year, and the forward-looking services PMI is well above its long-term average,



it said, adding, industry is also expected to grow robustly, driven by manufacturing and strong demand for construction led by housing, it said. "After muted growth in the 2023 fiscal year (previous fiscal), a rebound in agriculture is expected given the above-normal monsoon projections. This is notwithstanding the slower advance of monsoon in June. A rebound in agriculture will be important to sustain growth momentum in rural areas," it said.

Investment demand continues to be strong, led by public investments and bank credit is fueling robust housing demand and improving private

investment demand, it said. However, it said, export growth will continue to be led by services, with merchandise exports showing relatively weaker growth.

The stronger-than-expected fiscal position of the central government could provide a further boost to growth, it said. However, the report said, this must be weighed against downside risks arising from weather events and geopolitical shocks. With regard to inflation, ADO has also retained its forecast at 4.6 percent for the current fiscal year and expects it to marginally decline to 4.5 percent next fiscal **r**

India exports projected to grow 5.4pc in June

India's total exports are projected to grow by 5.40 percent in June 2024, with cumulative exports from April to June increasing by 8.60 percent. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a release on July 12, 2024 that merchandise exports reached \$35.20 billion in June 2024, compared to \$34.32 billion in June 2023, marking a growth of 2.55 percent.

The growth was driven by significant increases in engineering goods, electronic goods, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and coffee exports. During the first quarter of the fiscal year, cumulative merchandise

exports amounted to \$109.96 billion, up from \$103.89 billion in the same period last year, indicating a growth rate of 5.84 percent. India's total goods exported are expected to rise 2.56 percent to \$35.20 billion in June 2024, from \$34.32 billion in June 2023. The total goods imported are expected to rise 4.98 percent to \$56.18 billion in June 2024, from \$53.51 billion in June 2023.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry projects that total services exports will increase by 1.72 percent to \$30.27 billion in June 2024, up from \$27.79 billion in June 2023.

Additionally, services imports are expected to rise by 10.76 percent to \$17.29 billion in June 2024, compared to \$15.61 billion in June 2023, according to the release. According to June 2024 data provided by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, coffee, tobacco, iron ore, and electronic goods were the few commodities India estimated would significantly increase its exports. Pulses, dyeing materials, machine tools, project goods, and silver are estimated to notice a significant increase in imports **r**

IMF sees Pakistan economy expanding at 3.5pc in FY25

The International Monetary Fund on July 17, 2024 maintained Pakistan's growth forecast at 3.5 percent for the current fiscal year but indicated slower global disinflation to keep pressure on the masses amid higher for even longer interest rates. The IMF's unchanged growth forecast at 3.5pc previously made in April this year has been reinforced almost a week after its staff reached an agreement with Pakistan authorities on \$7 billion worth of a 37-month bailout based on detailed deliberations and exchange of financial and economic data including 2024–25 budget.

In its World Economic Outlook Update 2024, the IMF noted that overall risks to the global outlook remained balanced, as reported in April, but some near-term risks had gained prominence with implications for emerging economies and oil-importing countries like Pakistan. These include upside risks to inflation that stem from a lack of progress on services disinflation and price pressures emanating from renewed trade or geopolitical tensions.

IMF staff projections are based on upward revisions to commodity prices, including a rise in non-fuel prices by 5pc in 2024. The fund expected the energy prices

to fall by about 4.6pc in 2024, less than projected in April, "reflecting elevated oil prices from deep cuts by OPEC+ (the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, including Russia and other non-OPEC oil exporters) and reduced, but still present, price pressure from the Middle East conflict".

It said the monetary policy rates of major central banks were still expected to decline in the second half of 2024, with divergence in the pace of normalization reflecting varied inflation circumstances. "The risk of elevated inflation has raised the prospects of higher-for-even-longer interest rates, which in turn increases external, fiscal, and financial risks", the IMF said adding the prolonged dollar appreciation arising from rate disparities could disrupt capital flows and impede planned monetary policy easing, which could adversely impact growth.

"Persistently high interest rates could raise borrowing costs further and affect financial stability if fiscal improvements do not offset higher real rates amid lower potential growth", the IMF.

Pakistan is among the top nations suffering from high borrowing needs and has higher interest rates amid low growth cycles. Almost all of government revenue earnings

are consumed by debt servicing. The report noted that policies that promote multilateralism and faster implementation of macro-structural reforms could boost supply gains, productivity, and growth, with positive spillovers worldwide.

Advice for central banks

Therefore, the IMF called for future-proofing the economy by persevering with restoring price stability and addressing the legacies of recent crises, including replenishing lost buffers and durably uplifting growth. In the near term, this will require careful calibration and sequencing of the policy mix.

It advised the central banks should to refrain from easing too early and remain open to further tightening should it become necessary. As the space for fiscal manoeuvre narrows, commitments to achieving fiscal consolidation targets should be earnestly adhered to, aided by sound fiscal frameworks and resource mobilization, the IMF suggested.

In emerging markets and developing economies, recent policy divergences highlight the need to manage the risks of currency and capital flow volatility. Given that economic fundamentals remain the main factor in dollar appreciation, the appropriate response is to allow the exchange rate to adjust, while using monetary policy to keep inflation close to target.

Foreign reserves should be used prudently and preserved to deal with potentially worse outflows in the future. To the extent possible, macro-prudential policies should mitigate vulnerabilities from large exposures to foreign currency-denominated debt. Near-term challenges aside, policymakers must act now to revitalize declining medium-term growth prospects.



While emigration of the young and educated population can take a toll on source countries, the costs can be mitigated. Policies that help leverage diaspora networks, maximize the benefits from remittances, and expand domestic labor market opportunities are possible avenues **r**

Sri Lanka economic performance exceeds expectations: ADB

The Asian Development Bank says that Sri Lanka's economic performance in Q1 2024 exceeded Asian Development Outlook April 2024 expectations. The report says that the inflation forecasts for South Asia are nudged up to 7.1 percent in 2024 and maintained at 5.8 percent in 2025. Although inflation forecasts of Bhutan, India, and Pakistan for the 2024 fiscal year and the 2025 fiscal year remain the same as in ADO April 2024, the inflation projections for Bangladesh (double digit) and Maldives (3 percent) are now expected to be higher. In Nepal, average inflation moderated to 5.8 percent.

At 23.06 percent, Pakistan had by far the highest inflation rate among South Asian economies. In contrast, the inflation forecast in Sri Lanka for 2024 is revised down under 2 percent (from 70 percent two years ago) as

supply-side conditions improved alongside better external buffers and the availability of foreign currency.

However, the ADO says that the growth forecasts for Sri Lanka for 2024 and 2025 are retained as there remain uncertainties as the election cycle begins in the latter half of the year. Developing Asia's growth accelerated early this year, supported by a relatively stable global economy with the region's economy remaining robust in the first quarter of 2024, driven by strong export growth and solid domestic demand.

Downward revisions for gross domestic product growth in Bangladesh and Maldives over the forecast period are offset in 2024 by upward revisions for Bhutan, Nepal, and Pakistan, leaving the region's 2024 growth forecast unchanged at 6.3 percent. Dampened performance of the construction sector is the main reason for lower growth forecasts for Maldives in 2024 and 2025, with lower-than-expected growth in the fisheries sector this year also contributing.

Bhutan's gross domestic product growth forecast for 2024 is adjusted upward due to a greater-than-expected increase in the government budget for the 2024 fiscal year (ended June 30, 2024) and better tourism prospects. Nepal's gross domestic

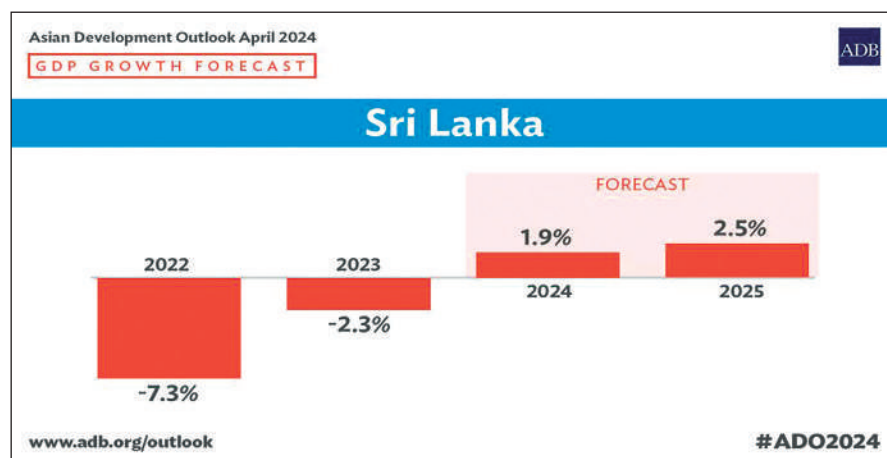
product projection for the 2024 fiscal year (ending mid-July 2024) is also revised up due to higher-than-expected growth in agriculture and services.

The provisional government estimate of gross domestic product growth in Pakistan for the 2024 fiscal year (ending 30 June 2024) stood at 2.4 percent, reflecting robust agricultural output due to improved weather conditions and subsidized government credit, among other factors. While Afghanistan's economy is showing signs of recovery, the weak investment climate, tight fiscal space and waning international humanitarian and basic needs support underlines its fragility.

The Indian economy is on track to grow by 7.0 percent in the 2024 fiscal year and 7.2 percent in the 2025 fiscal year, as projected in ADO April 2024. Services continued to expand robustly in Q4 of the 2023 fiscal year. Industry is also expected to grow robustly, driven by manufacturing and strong demand for construction led by housing. The growth forecast for South Asia remains steady at 6.3 percent for 2024, with the 2025 projection down marginally to 6.5 percent.

Despite some changes in individual economies, growth forecasts for Southeast Asia remain at 4.6 percent in 2024 and 4.7 percent in 2025 and for the Pacific at 3.3 percent in 2024 and 4.0 percent in 2025. East Asia's 2024 growth projection is revised up to 4.6 percent on strong exports of semiconductors and other goods driven by the artificial intelligence boom, with the 2025 projection maintained at 4.2 percent.

The outlook for growth in the Caucasus and Central Asia is raised to 4.5 percent from 4.3 percent in 2024 and 5.1 percent from 5.0 percent in 2025. Interest rates in the



United States and other advanced economies continue to shape the outlook, which is subject to several downside risks. Uncertainty on the United States election outcome, elevated geopolitical tensions and trade fragmentation, property market fragility in the People's Republic of China, and weather-related events could hurt growth **r**

Bhutan aims Nu225.59b in GDP from 7 sectors by 2029

To achieve a \$five billion economy and a gross domestic product per capita exceeding \$6,174 by 2029, the government has projected a Nu 225.59 billion gross domestic product contribution from the identified seven sectors. This is according to the draft 13th Plan. Under the Plan, the agriculture sector's contribution is expected to increase from Nu 36.48 billion in 2023 to Nu 58.7 billion by 2029, with an average growth rate of 8.3 percent. Similarly, the contribution from the mining and quarrying sector is expected to rise to Nu 9.09 billion from Nu 4.63 billion during the same period, reflecting an 11.9 percent growth rate.

The manufacturing sector's contribution is projected to grow from Nu 24.61 billion to 43.59 billion, while electricity and energy's contribution is expected to increase from Nu 30.53 billion to Nu 56 billion. Water and water-based industries are targeted to contribute Nu 103 million by 2029, up from Nu 54 million. The construction sector's contribution is set to reach Nu 43.11 billion from 19.2 billion, and the digital technology sector is expected to contribute Nu 15 billion by 2029.

The 13th Plan aims to transform Bhutan into a high-income country driven by innovation and sustainability. The Plan states that this

objective will be pursued through an overarching outcome that seeks to enhance Bhutan's productivity, diversify its products and markets, and drive sustainable economic growth by 2029. The economic development outcome will be driven by three national programs economic transformation program, twenty-first century skilling program, and ecological diversity and resilience program.

Under the economic transformation program, the government has allocated Nu 80 billion for close to 76 projects. The government aims to achieve an economic transformation program through three key strategies facilitating private sector development and participation, investing in strategic infrastructure, and investing in traditional growth drivers, as well as new sources of growth.

Private sector development and participation will be facilitated by creating a conducive environment for businesses to thrive and drive economic growth. This includes streamlining regulations, improving access to finance, promoting entrepreneurship, and enhancing efficiency across sectors. The government will make investments in strategic infrastructures such as roads, bridges, airports, railways to boost economic development and productivity. This will enhance connectivity, reduce transportation costs, and improve livability of urban settlements.

Investments will be made in traditional growth drivers such as agriculture, hydropower, renewable energy, manufacturing, and digital economy. The draft Plan also states that the twenty-first century skilling program will equip the Bhutanese with necessary education and skills for the modern economy. This will be achieved through initiatives in

technical and vocational education and training, tertiary education, skilling, upskilling and reskilling programs.

Additionally, the ecological diversity and resilience program will focus on sectors like hydropower, tourism, agriculture, forestry, and water management. It aims to decouple gross domestic product growth from greenhouse gas emissions, promote eco-friendly practices, and enhance resilience to climate change impacts through community involvement and private sector partnerships.

The draft Plan states that Bhutan achieved rapid economic growth averaging 10.9 percent since the 1980s with gross domestic product per capita reaching \$3,833.03 in 2022. However, there has been limited job creation with structural changes in the economy driven largely by public sector investments in hydropower.

The Plan identifies several challenges hindering the country's economic diversification. These are geographic challenges, inadequate infrastructure, and institutional barriers. It added that with the persisting challenge of high youth unemployment, Bhutan is facing an increasing out-migration of citizens at prime productive age seeking better economic opportunities.

The Plan also states that economic growth is affected by low productivity across sectors, compounded by high administrative costs and policy hurdles, while market access is constrained by infrastructure limitations and internal and external barriers. Moreover, the weak private sector has limited the sector's capacity for expansion and growth. Bhutan's capital market remains underdeveloped because of limited access to finance, especially for small businesses, due to collateral-based lending and high borrowing costs **r**

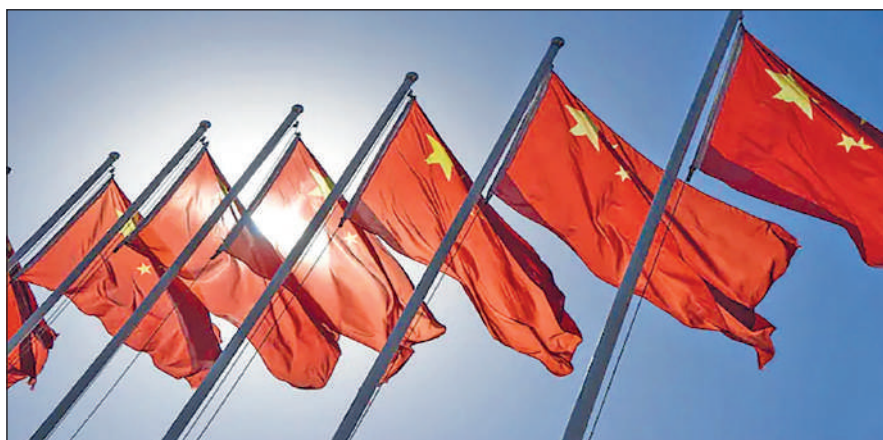
China economy growing slower than expected

China's economy slowed more than expected in the June quarter, increasing the likelihood that a gathering of top officials in Beijing this week will unveil efforts to rekindle growth. The world's second-largest economy expanded by 4.7 percent in the April-June period from a year earlier, the National Bureau of Statistics said on July 15, 2024. That result was down from 5.3 percent growth in the March quarter and the 5.1 percent rate economists had predicted.

The property sector continued to retreat, with total sales of new commercial buildings down 25 percent in the first half of 2024. Retail sales in June were down 0.12 percent from May, underscoring weak consumer sentiment that could make it hard for China to meet its full-year gross domestic product growth target of about 5 percent. The relatively weak quarterly result was bolstered by a record trade surplus of almost \$100 billion in June alone as surplus manufactured goods were shipped overseas. The threat of rising trade barriers, particularly if Donald Trump is re-elected US president later this year, adds to the pressure for China's leaders to reignite growth at home.

The figures came as top Chinese officials gathered in Beijing at a key political meeting that has historically seen officials unveil big-picture economic policy changes. "Turning these [economic] trends around should be front and centre of this week's third plenum," said Harry Murphy Cruise, an economist with Moody's investor services.

Still, the five-yearly event may end up disappointing those seeking major economic changes as "big policy pivots can be taken as an admission of failure and a sure-fire way to lose face" in China, he said. "Instead, we



expect a modest policy tweak that expands high-tech manufacturing and delivers a sprinkling of support to housing and households."

China's president, Xi Jinping, will oversee the ruling Communist party's secretive gathering. Beijing has offered few hints about what might be on the table. State media in June said the delayed four-day gathering would "primarily examine issues related to further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization", and Xi has said the party is planning "major" reforms.

Analysts are hoping those pledges will result in badly needed support for the economy. "The upcoming plenum can't come soon enough," Sarah Tan and Harry Murphy Cruise wrote for Moody's Analytics last week. Beijing should take decisive action to reform the property sector, loosen restrictions on internal migration, boost high-skilled jobs for graduates and modify the tax system to ease local government debt, they said.

But they added that leaders would "probably not" make sweeping reforms, instead choosing "a modest policy tweak that expands hi-tech manufacturing and a sprinkling of supports to housing". The People's

Daily, the Communist party's official newspaper, appeared to confirm those lower expectations when it warned last week that "reform is not about changing direction and transformation is not about changing color".

Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura, said the meeting was "intended to generate and discuss big, long-term ideas and structural reforms instead of making short-term policy adjustments". The third plenum has previously been an occasion for the party's top leadership to unveil major economic policy shifts.

In 1978, then-leader Deng Xiaoping used the meeting to announce market reforms that would put China on the path to rapid economic growth by opening it to the world. More recently, after the closed-door meeting in 2013, the leadership pledged to give the free market a "decisive" role in resource allocation, as well as other sweeping changes to economic and social policy.

Authorities have been clear they want to reorient the economy away from state-funded investment and instead base growth around hi-tech innovation and domestic consumption. But economic uncertainty is fuelling a vicious cycle that has kept consumption stubbornly low.

Among the most urgent issues facing the economy is the beleaguered property sector, which long served as a key engine for growth but is now mired in debt, with several top firms facing liquidation. Authorities have moved in recent months to ease pressure on developers and restore confidence, including by encouraging local governments to buy up unsold homes.

NAB senior economist Gerard Burg said the property sector had contracted year-on-year for the past 28 months. Investment in real estate fell 7.4 percent, accelerating from May's 4.7 percent decline from a year earlier. "Conditions in China's residential property sector remain broadly negative with sales falling by 14.3 percent year-on-year in June, while construction starts fell by 18.3 percent," Burg said.

June retail sales after removing inflation were 1.8 percent higher than for the same month in 2023. That was the weakest result since December 2022, which was negatively impacted by the Omicron wave of Covid-19 and the sudden end of zero-Covid policies. "This continues to point to the soft domestic demand conditions that have persisted since the pandemic," he said. Analysts say much more is required for a full rebound, as the country's economy has yet to bounce back more than 18 months after damaging Covid-19 restrictions ended **r**

China posts record trade surplus as foreign importers rush to beat tariffs

China posted a record \$99 billion (£76.4 billion) trade surplus last month amid signs of importers bringing forward orders to beat higher tariffs on goods from the world's second biggest economy. The latest official figures from Beijing showed exports growing at their fastest rate

in 15 months, while the weakness of China's domestic economy resulted in falling imports.

The size of China's trade surplus was far bigger than the \$85 billion expected by the financial markets and comes at a time of heightened concern in developed countries about Chinese exports. Higher US tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles and other hi-tech products come into force on 1 August, while higher EU import duties on Chinese electric vehicles came into force earlier this month.

Analysts said the disparity between booming exports and sluggish imports highlighted the reliance of China's economy on access to the west's affluent consumers and would put pressure on Beijing to do more to stimulate domestic demand. "This reflects the economic condition in China, with weak domestic demand and strong production capacity relying on exports," said Zhiwei Zhang, the chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management.

"The sustainability of strong exports is a major risk for China's economy in the second half of the year. The economy in the US is weakening. Trade conflicts are getting worse." Exports grew by 8.6 percent year on year in June to \$308 billion (£238 billion) and over the first half of 2024

China's exports totalled \$1.7tn, up by 3.6 percent year on year.

Auto exports rose by 18.9 percent in terms of value in the first half of 2024 and by 25.3 percent in volume amid lower export prices. Lynn Song, the chief China economist at ING Bank, said there was likely to be a front-loading effect before auto tariffs from the EU and US came into effect, "but tariffs could lead to a slowdown in auto exports towards the end of the year".

Household electronics sales climbed by 14.8 percent in value terms but showed even faster volume growth of 24.9 percent.

Semiconductor exports grew by 21.6 percent year on year in terms of value, and by 9.5 percent in terms of volume. "Strong semiconductor export growth shows that China's self-sufficiency push in tech and its pivot towards hi-tech manufacturing is starting to pay some dividends," Song said.

Kelvin Lam, a China economist at Pantheon Macro, said there had been a pickup in Chinese exports to the US, the UK and Germany last month. "Export growth of hi-tech products, mechanical and electrical items, cars, and ships is outperforming those low value-added products that China thrived on in the 1990s" **r**



Singapore world's most competitive economy in 2024: IMD

Singapore beats other economies like Switzerland and Denmark, but its stock market index significantly decreases in ranking. Singapore reclaims the top spot as the world's most competitive economy in 2024, up from fourth place a year ago, according to the International Institute for Management Development World Competitiveness Ranking on June 18.

This is the first time Singapore has been ranked number one since 2020, and has outperformed other economies such as Switzerland and Denmark, says IMD. IMD assesses 67 global economies, over survey data and 164 pieces of statistical data between March and May 2024.

Singapore ranked high in terms of labor market, attitudes and values, and technological infrastructure, but conversely was less competitive on price, health and environment, and societal framework. The country saw improvements in government efficiencies, business efficiency and infrastructure. It also saw improvement in criteria such as the priority that the private sector assigns to attracting and retaining highly skilled talent, the level of motivation of its labor force, and the efficiency of its small and medium enterprises sector.

However, real term gross domestic product growth per capita declined, total general government debt (as a percentage of gross domestic product) dropped four positions, total health expenditure (as a percentage of gross domestic product) and Singapore's Gini coefficient (a measure of economic inequality) slightly declined.

Also, there is a significant decrease in Singapore's standing in the stock market index from 28th to 46th and in its high-tech exports (as a percentage of manufactured exports) from third to 13th. IMD finds that the world's top 10 economies are dominated by smaller economies, a reflection that economic competitiveness is not a question of size. Rounding up the top 10, Hong Kong improved two positions, moving up to fifth place, while Sweden gained two places to take sixth. The UAE rose three places, taking seventh. Taiwan dropped two positions, falling to eighth place, while the Netherlands dropped to ninth. Norway climbed four positions to return to the top 10.

Meanwhile, emerging markets are closing the gap in areas of innovation, digitalization and diversification. Singapore's neighbors such as Malaysia and Thailand, are also either stable or improving, IMD finds. Of all the factors that have the greatest impact on business in 2024, the report found that survey respondents

considered artificial intelligence adoption (55.1 percent), the risk of a global economic slowdown (52 percent), and geopolitical conflicts (36.1 percent) as the top three trends.

AI adoption is one thing, but its use could well be another. One of the key challenges for companies how to implement AI systems that improve efficiency without causing disruption to business activities, the report finds. A related challenge is ensuring their chosen AI system's accuracy, because inaccurate systems lead to inefficiencies and reduced productivity, the report said.

Elsewhere in the survey, while 27 percent of executives surveyed consider the transition to zero emissions to be an important trend in the short term, just 12.2 percent highlighted the impact of global warming as relevant **r**

Hong Kong economy growth beats expectations on brisk exports

Hong Kong's economy grew faster than expected in the second quarter, pointing to some stability in key sectors despite challenges in real estate and retail. Gross domestic product expanded 3.3 percent in the three months ended June from the prior year, according to advance estimates from the Census and Statistics Department on July 31, 2024. That exceeded even the most bullish forecast among 11 economists surveyed by Bloomberg News, and followed strong first-quarter growth that was revised up to 2.8 percent from 2.7 percent.

The data signals resilience in the region's financial hub after several years of pressure from the pandemic and high borrowing costs. Increasing trade and capital flows from mainland China into the city have helped buoy growth so far this year.



Exports grew at a double-digit pace for the last three straight months, driven by strong global demand. But the outlook remains challenged by the real estate sector downturn and a slowing economy in China, the city's largest trading partner.

Hong Kong's economy is one of the slowest-growing in the region. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg expect growth will dip to a 2.7 percent pace this year from 3.3 percent in 2023, the only developed economy in Asia forecast to slow except Japan. On a quarterly basis, gross domestic product expanded 0.4 percent from the first quarter, according to the statement. The city's government set a growth target of 2.5 to 3.5 percent for 2024 **r**

Malaysia GDP growth surprises as recovery accelerates

Malaysia's economy grew faster than initially estimated in the first quarter, driven by private spending and a rebound in exports. Gross domestic product expanded 4.2 percent in the January–March period, according to Malaysia's central bank and statistics department in a joint briefing. That's higher than the 3.9 percent advance estimate as well as the median forecast in a Bloomberg survey. On a sequential basis, the economy grew 1.4 percent from the previous three months.

While strong services sector and manufacturing output helped drive the economy, a better than previously expected out-turn in farm and construction segments contributed to lifting overall growth. Forward-looking indicators point to continued growth for the Malaysian economy, Bank Negara Malaysia Governor Abdul Rasheed Ghaffour said at a briefing in Kuala Lumpur. He expects consumer spending to improve,



aided by higher income levels, sound balance sheets and support from the government.

Malaysia's economic outlook for 2024 looks brighter after tepid global demand caused growth to moderate last year. A sustained recovery in China – its largest trading partner – could help the Southeast Asian nation's manufacturing sector and boost tourist arrivals as well as investment. Bank Negara Malaysia expects gross domestic product to expand between 4 percent and 5 percent this year on improving external demand. The risk of slowing domestic spending, a key growth driver, also looks to be fading. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim indicated signaled he was in no rush to cut fuel subsidies on concerns it would spur price pressures and strain consumption. The central bank anticipates that inflation, which had been below 2 percent since September, may average as much as 3.5 percent this year should subsidies be phased out.

The inflation forecast is based on the assumption that the government will unwind the fuel subsidies in a "gradual and sequential" manner, Abdul Rasheed said. In the short term, the subsidy reforms may impact consumption and investment, though this will be mitigated by the government's targeted assistance **r**

IMF raises 2024 growth outlook for South Korea to 2.5pc

The International Monetary Fund said on July 16, 2024 it revised up the 2024 growth outlook for South Korea to 2.5 percent on the back of stable global economic expansion. The latest projection marked a 0.2 percentage-point increase from its April forecast, when the organization maintained the outlook at 2.3 percent. The latest projection is on par with that made by the Bank of Korea. The South Korean government and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development presented a 2.6 percent expansion.

The IMF, however, slashed the growth forecast for next year by 0.1 percentage point to 2.2 percent. The South Korean economy has been recovering led by rising exports, particularly solid global demand for semiconductors. Exports, a key growth engine, rose 5.1 percent on-year to \$57 billion in June, the ninth straight monthly gain, as chip exports surged 50.9 percent to reach an all-time monthly high, according to government data.

This file photo by Reuters shows the International Monetary Fund logo seen outside the headquarters building in Washington, DC **r**

IMF praises Saudi Arabia's economic transformation

A preliminary statement issued on June 14, 2024 by the International Monetary Fund under Article IV, affirmed that Saudi Arabia's unprecedented economic transformation is progressing well. The statement praised the Kingdom's wise macroeconomic policies and its transformative changes, including the financial reforms and the regulatory business environment. Headline inflation has decelerated rapidly despite some pressure pockets. After peaking at 3.4 percent in January 2023, year-on-year inflation receded to 1.6 percent in April 2024. The preliminary statement affirmed that the efforts to diversify the economy have started to bear fruit and that building on these successes will be important to sustain the non-oil growth momentum.

Additionally, it will maintain financial sector stability, continue to mitigate the risk of overheating, reverse declining total factor productivity and ensure inter-generational equity. The IMF pointed out that the Kingdom's economic activities will remain robust and that real non-oil growth decelerated from 5.3 percent in 2022 to a still robust 3.8 percent in 2023. This is driven mostly by private consumption and non-oil investment, with the latter tapering off to 11.5 percent (down from an exceptional 32 percent growth in 2022).

Oil gross domestic product contracted by 9 percent in 2023 due primarily to Saudi Arabia's OPEC+ and voluntary oil production cuts, leading to a 0.8 percent contraction in overall gross domestic product. Conversely, the non-oil growth for the first quarter this year indicates some moderation in economic activity and the IMF estimates that the output gap remains in positive territory, close to 2 percent of the non-oil potential gross



domestic product. The statement touched favorably on unemployment in the Kingdom after it reached historic lows of 7.7 percent in 2023, inching closer to the 2030 Vision objective of 7 percent. Additionally, the Saudi economy added over one million jobs by 2023, primarily in the private sector and the women's rate still comfortably exceeding the Vision 2030 goal of 30 percent.

The IMF projected non-oil gross domestic product to grow to about 3.5 percent in 2024 and that overall gross domestic product growth will accelerate to about 4.5 percent in 2025 before stabilizing at 3.5 percent per year over the medium term. The Saudi Central Bank's holding of net foreign assets reached \$423.7 billion in April 2024, which was slightly above the end-2023 level. Reserves remain ample, representing 15.6 months of imports and 208 percent of the IMF's reserve adequacy metric by end-2023. Despite the positive opinion of the Kingdom's economy and the reforms since the launch of Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016, the IMF statement draws attention to an expected current account shifting to a deficit in 2024, averaging about 2.3 percent of gross domestic product between 2026 and 2029 due to lower

oil export proceeds and increased investment-linked imports.

External buffers, however, are ample despite a weaker current account and international reserves will remain ample, averaging 13 months import cover over the medium term. Also, foreign assets held by the Public Investment Fund and other government-related entities offer strong additional buffers. It is worth mentioning that Article IV falls within the IMF's Articles of Agreement under which it holds bilateral discussions with its 190 member countries, usually every year. During these consultations, a staff team visits the country, collects economic and financial information, and discusses the country's economic development and policies.

I believe that the IMF has succeeded in showcasing the strength of the Kingdom's economy and the effectiveness of its economic reforms. I also believe that despite the moderate risks cited in the IMF statement, the Kingdom's economy is capable of dealing with such risks through the determination and devotion to the economic transformation strategy guided by the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030 **r**

Saudi Arabia's annual inflation rate rises to 1.5pc: GASTAT

Saudi Arabia's annual inflation rate reached 1.5 percent in June compared to the same month last year, driven primarily by rising housing costs, according to the latest data. The report from the General Authority for Statistics highlighted that the 8.4 percent increase in the prices of housing, water, and electricity, as well as gas, and other fuels significantly contributed to the inflation rate. Actual housing rents saw an increase of 10.1 percent, with villa rentals rising by 7.9 percent. This category's substantial weight in the overall index had a considerable impact on the inflation rate. Saudi Arabia's inflation rate, while influenced by domestic factors such as housing and fuel costs, remains relatively moderate compared to other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which have faced varying inflationary pressures due to different economic policies and market conditions.

According to the GASTAT report, food and beverage prices also saw an increase of 1.1 percent, influenced by a 6.5 percent rise in vegetable prices. The prices of restaurants and hotels rose by 2.4 percent, driven by a 9.8 percent increase in accommodation services. The education sector witnessed a 1.1 percent increase, mainly due to a 4.1 percent rise in fees for intermediate and secondary education.

Conversely, the prices of furnishing and home equipment decreased by 3.7 percent, influenced by a 6.0 percent decline in furniture, carpets, and flooring prices. Clothing and footwear prices dropped by 3.6 percent, with ready-made clothing prices falling by 6.3 percent. Transportation costs also decreased by 2.7 percent, primarily due to a 4.6

percent reduction in vehicle purchase prices. Communication services saw a slight drop of 0.1 percent.

Monthly inflation

On a monthly basis, the consumer price index recorded a slight increase of 0.1 percent in June compared to the previous month. This monthly increase was mainly influenced by the rise in housing, water, electricity, gas, and other fuels by 0.5 percent, driven by a 0.7 percent increase in actual housing rents and prices. The report also noted minor increases in food and beverages with 0.1 percent, restaurants and hotels, and personal goods and services with 0.3 percent each, compared to the previous month.

Meanwhile, the prices of clothing and footwear decreased by 0.2 percent. Furnishings, household equipment, and maintenance saw a decline of 0.5 percent. Recreation and culture prices dropped by 0.3 percent, while communications also fell by 0.3 percent. Health expenses decreased by 0.1 percent, and tobacco prices went down by 0.2 percent. The prices of education and transportation products remained stable.

Wholesale price index

In another report, GASTAT revealed that the wholesale price index increased by 3.2 percent in June compared to the same month of

the previous year. This increase was mainly driven by a 13.4 percent rise in prices of basic chemicals and an 11.9 percent increase in prices of refined petroleum products. The category of other transportable goods saw an 8.0 percent increase, significantly impacted by these price rises.

Prices of food products, beverages, tobacco, and textiles rose by 1.3 percent, with leather, leather products, and footwear prices increasing by 6.6 percent, and grain mills, starch, and other food products rising by 4.6 percent. However, on a monthly basis, the WPI decreased by 0.1 percent in June compared to May, attributed to a 0.3 percent decrease in the prices of ores and minerals, food products, beverages, tobacco, and textiles. The prices of basic metals decreased by 0.6 percent, while prices of agriculture and fishery products increased by 0.4 percent, driven by a 1.8 percent rise in the prices of live animals and animal products.

Average prices

In a separate bulletin from the GASTAT, notable shifts in the average prices of goods and services across Saudi Arabia for June were revealed. The data, which tracks price movements on a monthly basis, highlighted both increases and decreases in various categories, reflecting dynamic market conditions. Several goods and



services recorded substantial price increases in June compared to May.

Furnished apartments saw the highest increase at 22.47 percent, followed by hotel accommodation at 20.38 percent, Indian pomegranates at 8 percent, local cucumbers at 7.24 percent, and local fig at 7.23 percent. The prices of 99mm, 300mm, and 120mm national electric cables increased by 3.39 percent, 3.37 percent, and 3.10 percent, respectively.

Conversely, several items experienced significant price drops during the same period. Local melons saw the highest decrease at 16.39 percent, followed by imported onions at 14.15 percent, local onions at 11.52 percent, Lebanese peach at 9.51 percent, and Pakistani mango at 8.79 percent. Aluminum slightly decreased by 0.92 percent, 6mm national reinforcing iron by 0.80 percent, coal by 0.10 percent, and 15cm black block by 0.02 percent. These reports provide a comprehensive overview of the price movements in Saudi Arabia, reflecting the diverse factors influencing inflation and the cost of living in the Kingdom. The data highlighted the complexity of the economic landscape, with significant variations across different sectors and categories **T**

UAE economy up 3.6pc last year, exceeds estimate

The UAE economy's growth in 2023 was stronger than the most recent estimate, driven by non-oil sector growth. Arab world's second-largest economy expanded by 3.6 percent last year, compared to the 3.1 percent estimated by the Central Bank of the UAE in the fourth quarter, the banking regulator said. Non-oil gross domestic product expanded by 6.2 percent during the period, it said in its annual report.

It, however, downwardly revised its growth projections for 2024 to 3.9 percent from the previous estimate of 4.2 percent. Growth is projected to accelerate to 6.2 percent in 2025, as oil production is forecast to increase significantly due to the Opec+ decisions and continued expansion of the non-oil sector, according to the bank.

This month, Opec+ agreed to extend output cuts of 3.66 million barrels per day, which were initially planned to end this year, until the end of 2025. However, the group plans to gradually unwind the voluntary curbs of 2.2 million bpd on a monthly basis from October 2024 until September 2025, but said that "the monthly increases can be paused or reversed subject to market conditions".

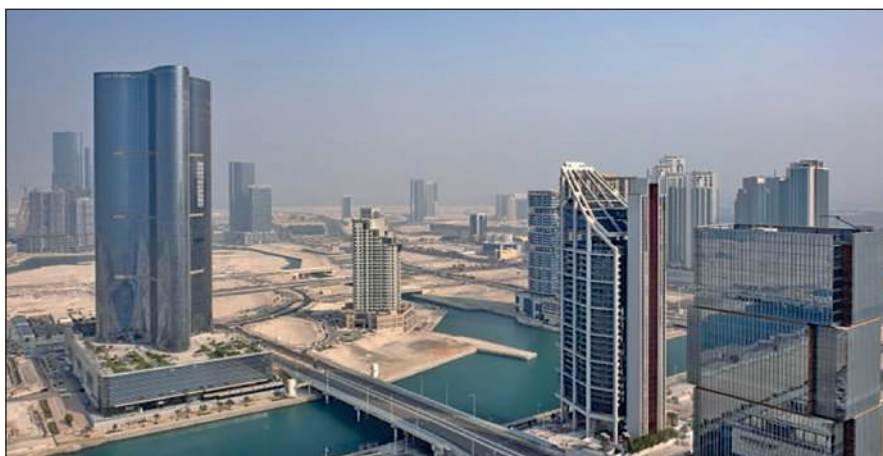
Next year, oil gross domestic product is expected to expand by 8.4 percent with production levels in line with the Opec+ policy. "The CBUAE projects that the UAE's real gross domestic product will increase in 2024, driven by a robust growth of 5.4 percent in the non-oil sector," Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed, Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court, said.

Sheikh Mansour also added the UAE is "committed to sustainability and effectively combating climate change, demonstrated by the successful hosting of Cop28". "The

conference set higher standards for climate action, with the UAE placing an emphasis on addressing climate change through an ambitious climate action strategy and its Net Zero 2050 initiative."

The non-oil sector continued to perform strongly in 2023, the UAE Central Bank said. "After recording a growth rate of 7.1 percent in 2022, non-oil gross domestic product expanded by 6.2 percent in 2023.," it said. "The strong performance reflects a variety of factors, including the recovery in global travel and tourism in the aftermath of the full removal of Covid 19-related restrictions, the strong performance in real estate and construction sectors propelled by migration inflows."

For 2024, the Central Bank projects non-oil gross domestic product growth to slow to 5.4 percent due to "a stabilization of migration inflows, slowing growth in key trading partners, and carryover effects from a strong 2023". In 2025, non-oil gross domestic product growth is expected to remain steady at 5.3 percent, it said, adding that "successful reform implementation and a decline in interest rates in advanced economies, which could boost external demand and trigger capital inflows in emerging markets, pose upside risks to non-oil growth" **T**



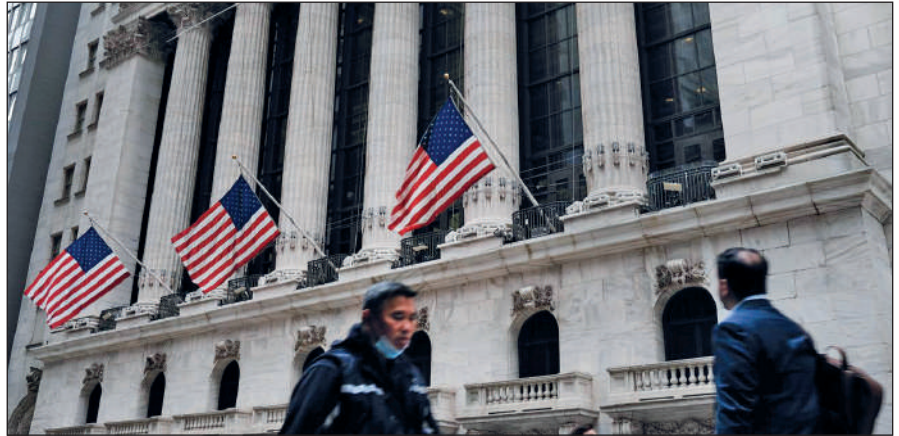
US growth last quarter revised up slightly to 1.4pc annual rate

The American economy expanded at a 1.4 percent annual pace from January through March, the slowest quarterly growth since spring 2022, the government said in a slight upgrade from its previous estimate. Consumer spending grew at just a 1.5 percent rate, down from an initial estimate of 2 percent, in a sign that high interest rates may be taking a toll on the economy. The Commerce Department had previously estimated that the gross domestic product the economy's total output of goods and services advanced at a 1.3 percent rate last quarter.

The first quarter's gross domestic product growth marked a sharp pullback from a strong 3.4 percent pace during the final three months of 2023. Still, the report showed that the January-March slowdown was caused mainly by two factors a surge in imports and a drop in business inventories that can bounce around from quarter to quarter and do not necessarily reflect the underlying health of the economy.

Imports shaved 0.82 percentage point off first-quarter growth. Lower inventories subtracted 0.42 percentage point. Picking up the slack was business investment, which the government said rose at a 4.4 percent annual pace last quarter, up from its previous estimate of 3.2 percent. Higher investment in factories and other nonresidential buildings and in software and other types of intellectual property helped boost the increase. Prices fell in June for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

Americans weighed down by fast-rising prices for three years just received more encouraging news on the inflation front. The Consumer Price Index, a measurement of the average change in prices for



a commonly purchased basket of goods and services, dropped 0.1 percent from May, which helped to slow the annual rate of inflation to 3 percent from 3.3 percent in May, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' latest report.

Falling gas prices as well as a drop in new and used car prices helped to usher in the first month-on-month decline since May 2020, BLS data showed. On an annual basis, consumer prices are increasing at their slowest pace since June 2023, matching the lowest annual rate since early 2021.

The better-than-expected inflation report further bolstered hopes that a Federal Reserve rate cut could come sooner than later and help make borrowing money less expensive. Interest rates have been planted for months at a 23-year high as a result of the central bank's inflation-fighting campaign. "With another good CPI print under their belt, the window is open for the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates as early as September, and potentially again in December, assuming the inflation data continues to cooperate," Skyler Weinand, chief investment officer at Regan Capital, wrote in a note to clients.

Economists were expecting a 0.1 percent monthly increase and an

annual gain of 3.1 percent, according to FactSet consensus estimates. Excluding energy and food prices, a closely watched "core" index of underlying inflation also slowed more than expected. The core CPI rose 0.1 percent from May its slowest pace since August 2021 nudging the annual rate of core inflation lower, to 3.3 percent from 3.4 percent, and marking a fresh three-year low.

US stocks jumped on the news but quickly gave up those initial gains and settled lower. The blue-chip Dow fell 90 points in morning trading. The S&P 500 dipped into negative territory and the tech-heavy Nasdaq was flat. US Treasury yields fell, which could be good news for consumers: Loans like mortgages are tied to the 10-year yield.

Retailers cutting prices for cost-wary consumers

In recent months, a slew of major retailers have announced price cuts. That trend very well could continue as consumers become more restrained, House said. "I think you have seen consumers feel and act increasingly strained, and that's going to make it harder for businesses to pass on prices as we moved throughout the year," Wells Fargo's House told CNN earlier this week. "(Discounting) also pressures other retailers. If they want

to keep their share of the pie, they're going to have to compete more on price, given that consumers are more squeezed at this stage of the cycle."

Core goods prices fell on a monthly basis by 0.1 percent and are down 1.8 percent for the 12 months ended in June, according to BLS report. Food prices saw a modest uptick last month, rising 0.2 percent overall with grocery and restaurant prices increasing 0.1 percent and 0.4 percent, respectively.

Long-lasting effects of high inflation

Prices may not be rising as quickly as they have been, but that might not bring much solace to American households who see that the overall CPI is a good 20 percent higher than it was in February 2020. (In recent history, that index would typically rise about 10 percent over a 54-month period, BLS data shows).

The sticker shock of the past three years could leave a lasting impression on consumer behavior, said Michael Weber, an associate professor at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business who has studied how inflation surges affect consumer behavior. "For many consumers, when we look at the price tags, walking down the aisles of the supermarket, that price tag compared to two, three years ago will be permanently higher, given the cumulative inflation we've witnessed over the last three years," Weber told CNN in an interview.

"It's ingrained in the memory," he added. The Fed closely monitors gauges of near-, medium- and long-term inflation expectations as those could be self-fulfilling prophecies for consumers: If people think prices will be higher in the future, they might spend more now or even demand higher wages. In turn, businesses faced with higher costs might end up raising prices as a result. While Americans' near-term

inflation expectations have lessened, the fallout from high prices is being seen on a grander stage: The US presidential election.

"People aren't economists, they don't think like economists, they don't look at the rate of change in consumer prices ... they're looking at how much a dozen eggs cost now compared to two years ago," Bernard Yaros, lead US economist at Oxford Economics, told CNN. "This is really where I think Biden has gotten dinged by, in terms of his public image of his handling of the economy" **I**

UK economy to grow faster than expected: IMF

The International Monetary Fund has confirmed that it is expecting the UK economy to grow faster than previously expected this year. The Washington-based fund, which was predicting only last October the UK would be the slowest of all the G7 nations this year, now expects it to be firmly in the middle of the pack. The upgrade which takes expected growth this year from 0.5 percent to 0.7 percent does not reflect the recent change of government, since it was first announced in May, when the IMF conducted its annual assessment of the UK economy. However, it was welcomed by new Chancellor Rachel Reeves, who has pledged to improve

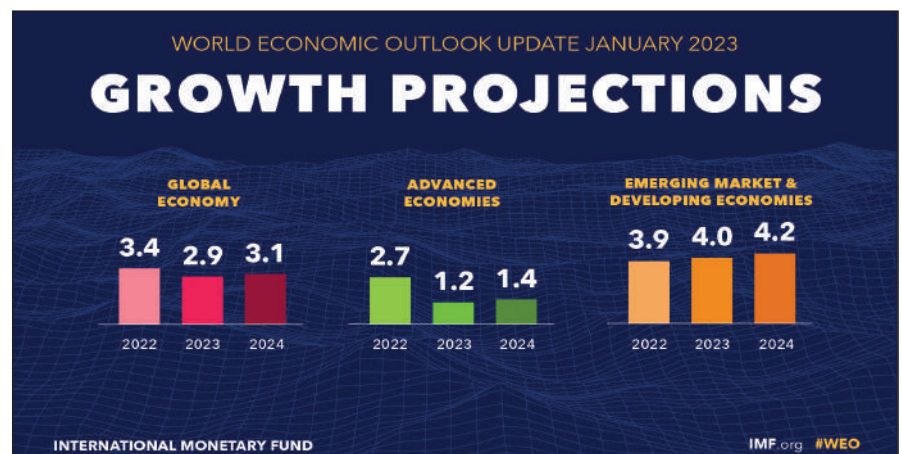
Britain's economic growth.

She said: "While it's welcome that the IMF is forecasting growth to pick up this time, I am under no illusion to the scale of the challenge facing the economy and the inheritance this new government faces. That is why we are already taking the tough decisions to fix the foundations of our economy, so we can rebuild Britain and make every part of our country better off."

Falling short of political promises

Labour have committed to achieving the fastest economic growth as measured by gross domestic product per capita in the G7 during their time in office. But the IMF forecasts suggest the UK will fall far short of this both this year and next, with its 0.7 percent growth this year considerably smaller than the 2.6 percent expected in the US, and next year's 1.5 percent smaller than Canada's projected 2.4 percent.

The fund upgraded its 2025 global growth forecast by 0.1 percentage points to 3.3 percent, but warned that much would depend on political circumstances this year and next. It said: "The potential for significant swings in economic policy as a result of elections this year, with negative spillovers to the rest of the world, has increased the uncertainty around the baseline. "These potential shifts entail



fiscal profligacy risks that will worsen debt dynamics, adversely affecting long-term yields and ratcheting up protectionism. Trade tariffs, alongside a scaling up of industrial policies worldwide, can generate damaging cross-border spillovers, as well as trigger retaliation, resulting in a costly race to the bottom" **r**

Europe growth lags US again as Germany remains problem child

Europe's economy saw modest growth in the April-June quarter even as the US outperformed expectations, highlighting a persistent transatlantic growth gap. Germany, the leading European economy, remained in the dumps while hesitant consumers saved more rather than spending on new houses or cars. Gross domestic product, the total output of goods and services, rose 0.3 percent in the second quarter in the 20 countries that use the euro currency, according to official figures released by European Union statistics agency Eurostat. Germany slid back into contraction, recording a 0.1 percent fall in output. The figures follow a similar 0.3 percent performance from the January-March quarter, the first significant growth after more than a year of stagnation just above, at, or below zero.

By contrast, the US economy grew 0.7 percent in the second quarter from the first quarter, or 2.8 percent on an annualized basis. US consumers are spending freely, while support from larger budget deficits and subsidies for business investment, for instance in renewable energy under the Inflation Reduction Act and in semi-conductor production and infrastructure, are also contributing to US growth. Those two trends are reversed in Europe, where consumers are saving at record levels and

governments have started restricting spending to reduce budget deficits.

"The outperformance of the US is largely due to strong private consumption and domestic investment," said Thomas Obst, senior economist at the German Economic Institute in Cologne. "Fiscal policy support was higher in the US than in other advanced economies, overall spending 25 percent of gross domestic product." Meanwhile, higher interest rates have had less impact on lending and the economy than in Europe, he said. The middling growth figure from the first half of this year follows five straight quarters of essentially zero growth caused by an outburst of inflation that robbed consumers of purchasing power. Energy prices soared after Russia cut off most supplies of natural gas in 2022 over the invasion of Ukraine, and as the global economy rebounded from the pandemic, straining supplies of parts and raw materials.

Those headwinds have eased, but Europe faces lingering effects as new labor agreements restore real wages with a lag and government support payments and tax breaks, aimed at easing, the energy crisis are phased out. Governments have shifted to trimming deficits that swelled during the energy crunch.

Obst, the economist, noted that while Europe avoided mass layoffs during the pandemic by paying employers to keep workers on, those measures "restricted the ability of the eurozone economy to adapt" and shift resources to new businesses. "It sounds cliché, but a lot of the output gap stems from higher business dynamism in the US than in the eurozone," he said.

Europe's growth is also held back by longer-term factors such as higher taxation and burdensome regulation that will mean average annual real gross domestic product growth rates at least one percentage point lower than in the US, said economist Salomon Fiedler at Berenberg bank. "If the eurozone wants to catch up with the US economically, it needs to raise its productivity and increase investment in productive capital."

In Germany's case, politicians and economists say overly complicated permissions processes, where it can take years to get the green light to build a new wind energy facility, lack of skilled labor and lagging investment in infrastructure are among the main issues the country needs to tackle. Higher interest rates from the European Central Bank have helped bring inflation down from 10.6 percent in October 2022 to 2.5 percent in June but have also held back construction activity and quashed a year-long rally in house



prices. New car sales were up 4.3 percent in the first half of the year from the same period last year but remain some 18 percent below pre-pandemic levels.

Another factor is European consumers' unusually high level of precautionary savings, which reached 15.4 percent in the first three months of the year, a record high excluding the pandemic years. Reasons for setting aside more money could be the chance to earn higher interest rates by saving, feeling poorer due to lower house prices, and fears about the future, despite low unemployment of 6.4 percent.

The high savings rate and consumer surveys indicate that "intentions to make major purchases are extremely low," said Jack Allen-Reynolds, deputy chief eurozone economist at Capital Economics **r**

German factory orders slump as recovery falters

German factory orders unexpectedly fell in May, marking the latest setback to the recovery in Europe's largest economy. Factory demand in Germany defied analyst estimates of a 0.5 percent increase. Data on July 04, 2024 on showed that orders dropped 1.6 percent from April, extending the slump to five months. Orders were down 8.6 percent on



the year, highlighting the persistent struggles of German manufacturers. The decline would have been even worse without above-average bulk orders, the release said. There was also a marked drop in demand outside the eurozone.

"Together with the recent deterioration in business expectations in the manufacturing sector, the continuing decline in orders points to rather subdued momentum in industry in the coming months," Germany's Economy Ministry said. "Orders are only likely to stabilize once global trade continues to recover and demand for industrial products gradually picks up," the ministry added.

The report adds to some less-than-positive figures of late on Germany's rebound. In June, private sector activity, as well as investor confidence, rose less than expected, as measured by the ZEW institute.

Still, the Bundesbank said last month that despite headwinds weighing on growth, there are "increasing bright spots". The bank estimates that gross domestic product advanced "slightly" in the second quarter. The latter half of the year is expected to be stronger as rising wages feed higher spending by households. Slower inflation will also help – gains in consumer price moderated to 2.5 percent in June **r**

IMF raises Russia growth forecast for 2024

The International Monetary Fund has upgraded its forecast for Russia's economic growth in 2024, as surging military spending helps shield the sanctions-battered country from an economic downturn. Russia's economy is expected to grow 3.2 percent this year, up from the previous forecast of 2.6 percent issued in January, the IMF said in its World Economic Outlook report published this month.



The Kremlin has earmarked 10.8 trillion rubles (\$115 billion) for defense spending in 2024, thus placing its economy more firmly on a war footing as the conflict in Ukraine drags on with seemingly no end in sight. The splurge in spending has helped Russia defy predictions of a sharp downturn that some observers initially predicted when President Vladimir Putin launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

But the mobilization of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, an increase in domestic arms production and an exodus of men seeking to avoid being drafted into the military have created deep labor shortages in parts of the economy. All of that has combined to create a spiral of rising wages and consumer prices. Russia's Central Bank kept interest rates unchanged last month, as Governor Elvira Nabiullina warned that the economy continued to show signs of overheating **r**

২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরের বাজেট ঘোষণা

২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরের জন্য ৭ লাখ ৯৭ হাজার কোটি টাকার বাজেট প্রস্তাব করা হয়েছে। এ বাজেটে অনুদান ছাড়া ঘাটতি ধরা হয়েছে ২ লাখ ৫৬ হাজার টাকা। গত ০৬ জুন, ২০২৪ তারিখে জাতীয় সংসদে ২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরের বাজেট প্রস্তাব তুলে ধরেন অর্থমন্ত্রী আবুল হাসান মাহমুদ আলী। আগামী অর্থবছরে মূল্যস্ফীতি সাড়ে ৬ শতাংশ থাকবে বলে আশা করছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। চলতি অর্থবছরের বাজেটেও মূল্যস্ফীতির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা সাড়ে ৬ শতাংশ ছিল। মূল্যস্ফীতি সাড়ে ৬ শতাংশে নামিয়ে আনার পাশাপাশি আগামী অর্থবছরের জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ৬ দশমিক ৭৫ শতাংশ নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে। ২০২৩-২৪ অর্থবছরের বাজেটে জিডিপি প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা সাড়ে ৭ শতাংশ ধরা হয়, পরবর্তী সময়ে তা কমিয়ে করা হয় সাড়ে ৬ শতাংশ।

মূল্যস্ফীতি কমিয়ে বড় প্রবৃদ্ধির আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করে অর্থমন্ত্রী যে বাজেট প্রস্তাব উত্থাপন করেছেন, সেখানে অনুদান ছাড়া ঘাটতি ধরা হয়েছে ২ লাখ ৫৬ হাজার কোটি টাকা। অনুদানসহ সামগ্রিক ঘাটতি ধরা হয়েছে ২ লাখ ৫১ হাজার ৬০০ কোটি টাকা। এছাড়া ৪ হাজার ৪০০ কোটি টাকা

অনুদান পাওয়ার লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে। এ ঘাটতি মেটাতে বৈদেশিক ঋণের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে ১ লাখ ২৭ হাজার ২০০ কোটি টাকা। বৈদেশিক ঋণ পরিশোধ করা হবে ৩৬ হাজার ৫০০ কোটি টাকা। এতে নিট বৈদেশিক ঋণ দাঁড়াবে ৯০ হাজার ৭০০ কোটি টাকা।

আর অভ্যন্তরীণ ঋণ নেয়া হবে ১ লাখ ৬০ হাজার কোটি টাকা। এর মধ্যে ব্যাংক ব্যবস্থা থেকে নেয়া হবে ১ লাখ ৩৭ হাজার ৫০০ কোটি, যার ৭২ হাজার ৬৮২ কোটি টাকা দীর্ঘমেয়াদি ঋণ এবং ৬৪ হাজার ৮১৮ কোটি টাকা স্বল্পমেয়াদি ঋণ। ব্যাংকবহির্ভূত ঋণ নেয়া হবে ২৩ হাজার ৪০০ কোটি টাকা। সঞ্চয়পত্র বিক্রির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হচ্ছে ১৫ হাজার ৪০০ কোটি টাকা। প্রস্তাবিত বাজেটে ঋণের সুদ পরিশোধের ব্যয় ধরা হয়েছে ১ লাখ ১৩ হাজার ৫০০ কোটি টাকা। এর মধ্যে অভ্যন্তরীণ ঋণের সুদ ৯৩ হাজার কোটি টাকা। আর বৈদেশিক ঋণের সুদ ২০ হাজার ৫০০ কোটি টাকা।

এবার রাজস্ব আয়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে ৫ লাখ ৪১ হাজার কোটি টাকা। এর মধ্যে জাতীয়

রাজস্ব বোর্ডের (এনবিআর) লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ৪ লাখ ৮০ হাজার কোটি টাকা। এনবিআর বহির্ভূত কর ধরা হয়েছে ১৫ হাজার কোটি টাকা। আর কর ব্যতীত প্রাপ্তির লক্ষ্যমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে ৪৬ হাজার কোটি টাকা। বাজেটে পরিচালন ব্যয় ধরা হয়েছে ৫ লাখ ৬ হাজার ৯৭১ কোটি টাকা। পরিচালন ব্যয়ের মধ্যে আবর্তক ব্যয় ৪ লাখ ৬৮ হাজার ৯৮৩ কোটি টাকা। আর দেশী-বৈদেশী ঋণের সুদ পরিশোধ ১ লাখ ১৩ হাজার ৫০০ কোটি টাকা। এবার মূলধন ব্যয় ধরা হয়েছে ৩৭ হাজার ৯৮৯ কোটি টাকা।

বাজেটে উন্নয়ন ব্যয় ধরা হয়েছে ২ লাখ ৮১ হাজার ৪৫০ কোটি টাকা। এর মধ্যে স্কিমে ব্যয় হবে ৫ হাজার ৯৪৩ কোটি টাকা। এডিপি বহির্ভূত বিশেষ প্রকল্পের ব্যয় ধরা হয়েছে ৭ হাজার ৬২৭ কোটি টাকা। বার্ষিক উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচিতে ব্যয় ধরা হয়েছে ২ লাখ ৬৫ হাজার কোটি টাকা। আর কাজের বিনিময়ে খাদ্য কর্মসূচি (এডিপি বহির্ভূত) ও স্থানান্তরে ২ হাজার ৮৮৪ কোটি টাকা ব্যয় ধরা হয়েছে।

বড় কোনো পরিবর্তন ছাড়াই বাজেট পাস

বড় কোনো পরিবর্তন ছাড়াই জাতীয় সংসদে পাস হয়েছে ২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরের বাজেট। অর্থমন্ত্রী নির্দিষ্টকরণ বিল, ২০২৪ সংসদে উপস্থাপন করলে তা কঠোরভাবে পাস হয়। ৭ লাখ ৯৭ হাজার কোটি টাকার এ বাজেট নতুন অর্থবছরের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দিন অর্থাৎ ০১ জুলাই থেকে কার্যকর হচ্ছে। ২০২৩-২৪ অর্থবছরের চেয়ে এবারের বাজেটের আকার বেড়েছে ৪ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশ। মূল্যস্ফীতি ৬ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশে নামিয়ে আনা এবং মোট দেশজ উৎপাদনের (জিডিপি) প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ৬ দশমিক ৭৫ শতাংশ অর্জন করার লক্ষ্য ঠিক করেছে সরকার। নতুন বাজেটে ১৫ শতাংশ কর দিয়ে কালো টাকা সাদা করার সুযোগ রাখা হয়েছে। সাধারণ করদাতাদের আয়ে সর্বোচ্চ করহার ২৫ শতাংশ বহাল রাখা হয়েছে।

এবারের বাজেটে ঘাটতি ধরা হয়েছে ২ লাখ ৫৬ হাজার কোটি টাকা। বাজেট ঘাটতি মেটাতে বৈদেশিক উৎস থেকে ৯০ হাজার ৭০০ কোটি এবং অভ্যন্তরীণ উৎস থেকে ১ লাখ ৬০ হাজার ৯০০ কোটি টাকা ঋণ নেয়া হবে। বাজেটে

রাজস্ব আয়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা থাকছে ৫ লাখ ৪১ হাজার কোটি টাকা। এর মধ্যে জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডের (এনবিআর) মাধ্যমে কর হিসেবে ৪ লাখ ৮০ হাজার কোটি টাকা আদায় করা যাবে বলে আশা করছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। ফলে এনবিআরের কর আদায়ের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা বাড়ছে ১৭ শতাংশের বেশি। টাকার ওই অংক মোট বাজেটের ৬০ শতাংশের মতো।

গতবারের মতো এবারও সবচেয়ে বেশি কর আদায়ের লক্ষ্য ঠিক করা হয়েছে মূল্য সংযোজন কর বা ভ্যাট থেকে, ১ লাখ ৮২ হাজার ৭৮৩ কোটি টাকা। এ অংক বিদায়ী অর্থবছরের সংশোধিত লক্ষ্যমাত্রার তুলনায় ১৫ দশমিক ৬৩ শতাংশ বেশি। বিদায়ী অর্থবছরের বাজেটে ভ্যাট থেকে রাজস্ব আদায়ের লক্ষ্য ধরা ছিল ১ লাখ ৬৩ হাজার ৮৩৭ কোটি টাকা। সংশোধনে তা কমিয়ে ১ লাখ ৫৮ হাজার ৬৬ কোটি টাকা করা হয়। আয়কর ও মুনাফার ওপর কর থেকে ১ লাখ ৭৫ হাজার ৬২০ কোটি টাকা রাজস্ব পাওয়ার আশা করা হয়েছে এবারের বাজেটে। বিদায়ী সংশোধিত বাজেটে এর পরিমাণ ছিল

১ লাখ ৪৫ হাজার ৮৬৫ কোটি টাকা। নতুন বাজেটে আমদানি শুল্ক থেকে ৪৯ হাজার ৪৬৪ কোটি টাকা, সম্পূরক শুল্ক থেকে ৬৪ হাজার ২৭৮ কোটি টাকা, আবগারি শুল্ক থেকে ৫ হাজার ৮০৫ কোটি টাকা এবং অন্যান্য কর ও শুল্ক থেকে ১ হাজার ৯৮০ কোটি টাকা আদায়ের পরিকল্পনা করেছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী।

মুদ্রানীতি ঘোষণা

কমবে বেসরকারি খাতের ঋণ প্রবৃদ্ধি

দেশে ব্যাংক ঋণের সুদহার ৯ থেকে বেড়ে ১৬ শতাংশে ঠেকেছে। এত উচ্চ সুদেও প্রত্যাশা অনুযায়ী মিলছে না ঋণ। এ পরিস্থিতিতে ধুকতে থাকা বেসরকারি খাতে ঋণ প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্য আরো কমিয়ে এক অংকের ঘরে নামিয়ে এনেছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। নতুন মুদ্রানীতিতে এ খাতে ঋণ প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্য ধরা হয়েছে মাত্র ৯ দশমিক ৮০ শতাংশ। যদিও দেশের অর্থনীতি ও কর্মসংস্থানের ৮০ শতাংশই বেসরকারি খাতনির্ভর। গত এক যুগেও বেসরকারি খাতে এত কম ঋণ প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণ করতে

দেখা যায়নি। ২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরের মুদ্রানীতি ঘোষণা করেছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, এতে মূল্যস্ফীতি নিয়ন্ত্রণকে প্রধান অগ্রাধিকার দেয়া হয়েছে। কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক বলেছে, ‘মূল্যস্ফীতি সহনীয় মাত্রায় না আসা পর্যন্ত সংকোচনমূলক মুদ্রানীতি অব্যাহত থাকবে।’ গত অর্থবছরের মুদ্রানীতিতেও মূল্যস্ফীতি নিয়ন্ত্রণকে প্রধান লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছিল। মূল্যস্ফীতি ৬ শতাংশে নামিয়ে আনার লক্ষ্য থাকলেও ২০২৩-২৪ অর্থবছরে গড় মূল্যস্ফীতির হার ছিল ৯ দশমিক ৭৩ শতাংশ। চলতি অর্থবছরে মূল্যস্ফীতি ৬ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশে নামিয়ে আনার লক্ষ্য ঘোষণা করা হয়েছে।

মুদ্রানীতিতে নীতি সুদহার (রেপো রেট) ৮ দশমিক ৫০ শতাংশ অপরিবর্তিত রাখা হয়েছে। একই সঙ্গে অপরিবর্তিত রাখা হয়েছে বিশেষ রেপো বা স্ট্যান্ডিং লেন্ডিং ফ্যাসিলিটির (এসএলএফ) উর্ধ্বসীমা ও সুদহার করিডোরের নিম্নসীমা রিভার্স রেপো বা স্ট্যান্ডিং ডিপোজিট ফ্যাসিলিটি (এসডিএফ)। বর্তমানে এসএলএফ ও এসডিএফের সুদহার যথাক্রমে ১০ ও ৭ শতাংশ। তারল্যর প্রয়োজনে বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংক যখন কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক থেকে ধার করে, তখন তার সুদহার ঠিক হয় রেপোর মাধ্যমে। আর রিভার্স রেপোর মাধ্যমে ব্যাংকগুলো তাদের উদ্বৃত্ত অর্থ কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকে জমা রাখে। রেপো রেটকে নীতি সুদহার নামে অভিহিত করা হয়।

অর্থ সংকটে থাকা সরকার ঋণের জন্য দেশের ব্যাংক খাতনির্ভর হয়ে পড়েছে। চলতি অর্থবছরের ঘাটতি বাজেট পূরণে ব্যাংক খাত থেকে ১ লাখ ৩৭ হাজার ৫০০ কোটি টাকা ঋণ নেয়ার লক্ষ্য ঘোষণা করা হয়েছে। এ ঋণের জোগান দিতে সরকারি খাতে ঋণ প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্য বাড়িয়েছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। মুদ্রানীতিতে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক বলেছে, আগামী জুন পর্যন্ত বেসরকারি খাতে ঋণের প্রবৃদ্ধি হবে ৯ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশ। আর সরকারি খাতে ঋণ প্রবৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্য হবে ১৭ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশ।

মুদ্রানীতিতে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক বলেছে, বাংলাদেশ বর্তমানে বেশ কয়েকটি সামষ্টিক অর্থনৈতিক সমস্যার সম্মুখীন। এসব সমস্যা অর্থনৈতিক স্থিতিশীলতা ও প্রবৃদ্ধির জন্য বাধা হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে। এ চ্যালেঞ্জগুলো অভ্যন্তরীণ ও আন্তর্জাতিক উভয় দিক থেকে উদ্ভূত। এটি নীতিনির্ধারকদের জন্য কঠিন পরিস্থিতির সৃষ্টি করেছে। ক্রমাগত উচ্চ মূল্যস্ফীতির ফলে ক্রয়ক্ষমতা ও প্রকৃত আয় হ্রাস পাচ্ছে। এতে আয়বৈষম্য আরো বেড়ে যাচ্ছে। এ

অবস্থা মোকাবেলায় উৎপাদন বৃদ্ধি ও কর্মসংস্থান সৃষ্টির লক্ষ্যে কৃষি ও সিএসএমই খাতে ঋণ প্রবৃদ্ধি বাড়িতে চায় বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক।

ডলার সংকট সামলাতে দুই অর্থবছর ধরে আমদানি নিয়ন্ত্রণ করে আসছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। এজন্য বেশির ভাগ পণ্য আমদানিতে শতভাগ মার্জিন রাখার বিধান জারি করা হয়েছিল। তবে নতুন মুদ্রানীতিতে এ নীতি থেকে কিছুটা সরে আসা হয়েছে। কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক বলেছে, আমদানি উদারীকরণের জন্য বিলাসবহুল পণ্য (যেমন: গাড়ি, ফুল, ফল, প্রসাধনীসহ অনুরূপ অন্যান্য আইটেম) ব্যতীত অন্য সব পণ্যের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় এলসি মার্জিন ব্যাংক-গ্রাহক সম্পর্কের ভিত্তিতে নির্ধারিত হবে। মুদ্রানীতিতে বলা হয়, ‘উচ্চ খেলাপি ঋণ আর্থিক স্থিতিশীলতা নষ্ট করে। উৎপাদনশীল বিনিয়োগের জন্য ঋণের প্রাপ্যতা সীমিত করে দেয়। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক স্বচ্ছতা, সুশাসন ও প্রায়োগিক দক্ষতার ওপর জোর দিয়ে খেলাপি ঋণ কমাতে পদক্ষেপ নিয়েছে’।

স্থিতিশীলতা ফিরছে বৈশ্বিক প্রবৃদ্ধিতে; বিশ্বব্যাংকের প্রতিবেদন

বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি ২০২৪ সালসহ টানা তিন বছরের মতো কমে গেল। বরং দুই বছর ধরে ২ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশে স্থির রয়েছে। চলতি বছর যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের প্রবৃদ্ধি পূর্বাভাসের তুলনায় ভালো হয়েছে। ফলে বিশ্ব অর্থনীতিতে এর ইতিবাচক প্রভাব পড়েছে। তবে সার্বিকভাবে বৈশ্বিক প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ২০২৬ সাল নাগাদ কোভিড-১৯ মহামারীপূর্ব হারের তুলনায় কম থাকবে। সম্প্রতি বিশ্বব্যাংকের সর্বশেষ গ্লোবাল ইকোনমিক প্রসপেক্ট প্রতিবেদনে এসব তথ্য জানানো হয়েছে। বিশ্বব্যাংকের তথ্যমতে, কোভিড-১৯ মহামারীর পর ২০২১ সালে প্রথমবারের মতো মোট দেশজ উৎপাদন (জিডিপি) প্রবৃদ্ধি বাড়ে। ২০২৩ সালেও অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধির হার ছিল ২ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশ। ২০২৪ সালেও এ হার ২ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশে স্থির রয়েছে, যা জানুয়ারিতে দেয়া বিশ্বব্যাংকের পূর্বাভাসের চেয়ে দশমিক ২ শতাংশীয় পয়েন্ট বেশি।

মূলত যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের উচ্চ চাহিদার ওপর ভিত্তি করে আগের পূর্বাভাস প্রস্তুত করা হয়েছিল। বিশ্বব্যাংকের প্রতিবেদন অনুসারে, যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে উচ্চ চাহিদা ও মূল্যস্ফীতির কারণে সুদহার কমানোর বিষয়ে ফেডারেল রিজার্ভ তেমন আগ্রহ দেখাচ্ছে না। এর আগে দ্বিতীয় বছরের মতো দেশটির প্রবৃদ্ধি কমে যাওয়ার পূর্বাভাস দেয়া হয়েছিল। এমনকি চলতি বছরের শুরুতেও ১ দশমিক ৬

শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধির পূর্বাভাস দিয়েছিল বিশ্বব্যাংক। কিন্তু এখন বিশ্বব্যাংকই ওই পূর্বাভাস পরিবর্তন করে ২ দশমিক ৫ শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধির কথা বলছে।

এর আগে বিশ্বব্যাংক ২০২৫ ও ২০২৬ সালের জন্য ২ দশমিক ৭ শতাংশ বৈশ্বিক প্রবৃদ্ধির পূর্বাভাস দিয়েছিল, যা কোভিড-১৯ মহামারীপূর্ব ৩ দশমিক ১ শতাংশের চেয়ে অনেক কম। সংস্থাটি এখন বলছে, আগামী অন্তত তিন বছর সুদহার ২০০০ থেকে ২০১৯ সালের গড় সুদহারের চেয়ে দ্বিগুণ হবে। ফলে অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি বাধাগ্রস্ত হবে। একই সঙ্গে উদীয়মান অর্থনীতির দেশগুলোর ওপর ঋণের বোঝা আরো বাড়বে। প্রতিবেদনে বলা হয়, বিশ্বের ৮০ শতাংশ জনসংখ্যা এবং প্রবৃদ্ধির প্রতিনিধিত্ব করে, এমন দেশগুলোয় ২০২৬ সাল নাগাদ করোনাপূর্ব সময়ের তুলনায় ধীরগতিতে প্রবৃদ্ধি হবে।

প্রতিবেদনে উন্নত অর্থনীতির দেশগুলোয় দীর্ঘ মূল্যস্ফীতির কারণে লম্বা সময়ের জন্য সুদহার বাড়িয়ে রাখার একটি বিকল্পের কথা বলা হয়েছে। এতে ওয়ার্ল্ড ব্যাংকের মূল পূর্বাভাসের তুলনায় দশমিক ৪ শতাংশীয় পয়েন্ট সুদহার বাড়িয়ে রাখার কথা বলা হয়, যাতে পণ্যের মূল্য স্থিতিশীল রাখা যায়। তবে এতে বৈশ্বিক প্রবৃদ্ধি ২ দশমিক ৪ শতাংশে নেমে যেতে পারে। প্রতিবেদনে চীনের প্রবৃদ্ধির আগের পূর্বাভাস ৪ দশমিক ৫ থেকে পরিবর্তন করে ৪ দশমিক ৮ শতাংশ এবং ভারতের ৬ দশমিক ৪ থেকে ৬ দশমিক ৬ শতাংশে উন্নীত করা হয়েছে। তবে জাপানের প্রবৃদ্ধির হার দশমিক ৯ থেকে কমিয়ে দশমিক ৭ করা হয়েছে। অন্যদিকে, ইউরোজোনের দশমিক ৭ শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধি হার অপরিবর্তিত রাখা হয়েছে। গাজা, ইউক্রেন ও মধ্যপ্রাচ্যের যুদ্ধবিস্তার কারণে বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধি বাধাগ্রস্ত হবে বলে জানিয়েছে বিশ্বব্যাংক।

২০২৩ সালে প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশী

বিনিয়োগের প্রবৃদ্ধি হার

কম্বোডিয়ায় ১০.৬১% ভিয়েতনামের ৩.৩৫% আর বাংলাদেশের -১৩.৬৭%

গত বছর বৈশ্বিকভাবে প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ (এফডিআই) প্রবাহ ১০ শতাংশের বেশি কমে ১ দশমিক ৩ ট্রিলিয়ন ডলারে স্থবির রয়েছে। উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোয় এফডিআই প্রবাহ কমেছে ৭ শতাংশ। যদিও দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ার দেশ কম্বোডিয়ায় এফডিআই প্রবাহ বেড়েছে ১০ দশমিক ৬১ শতাংশ, ভিয়েতনামে ৩ দশমিক ৩৫ শতাংশ। দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার পাকিস্তানে বেড়েছে

২৪ দশমিক ৩৫ শতাংশ। তবে বাংলাদেশে এফডিআই প্রবাহ নেতিবাচক। যার হার ঋণাত্মক ১৩ দশমিক ৬৭ শতাংশ। ২০২২ সালের তুলনায় ২০২৩ সালে প্রবৃদ্ধির চিত্র জাতিসংঘ বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগ সম্পর্কিত সংস্থা আঙ্কটোড প্রকাশিত ওয়ার্ল্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্ট রিপোর্ট ২০২৪-এ প্রকাশ পেয়েছে। প্রতিবেদনের মুখবন্ধে বলা হয়েছে, টেকসই উন্নয়নের জ্বালানি হলো বিনিয়োগ। এসডিজি লক্ষ্য অর্জন এবং জলবায়ু অর্থায়নের ঘাটতি মেটাতে আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে প্রতিবছর আনুমানিক ৫০০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের সরকারি অর্থায়ন এবং ৫০০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের বেসরকারি অর্থায়ন প্রয়োজন, যার বেশির ভাগই হবে প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ (এফডিআই) হিসেবে। কিন্তু অনেক উন্নয়নশীল দেশে এর পরিমাণ শূন্য হাতে চলছে।

বৈশ্বিক ও আঞ্চলিক সংকট, বাণিজ্য উত্তেজনা এবং কঠোর অর্থায়নের পরিস্থিতি বিদেশী প্রত্যক্ষ বিনিয়োগের ওপর একটি শীতল প্রভাব ফেলেছে, যা ২০২২ সালের পর ২০২৩ সালেও স্থবির ছিল। বৈদেশিক প্রত্যক্ষ বিনিয়োগের বৈশ্বিক প্রবাহ ১ দশমিক ৩ ট্রিলিয়ন ডলারে স্থবির রয়েছে। উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোয় নতুন শিল্প ও অবকাঠামো প্রকল্পগুলোয় প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশী বিনিয়োগ হ্রাস পেয়েছে। টেকসই উন্নয়ন লক্ষ্য অর্জনের সঙ্গে প্রাসঙ্গিক খাতে নতুন বিনিয়োগ হ্রাস পেয়েছে ১০ শতাংশেরও বেশি। প্রতিবেদনের তথ্য অনুযায়ী, দুর্বল প্রবৃদ্ধির সম্ভাবনা এবং অব্যাহত বাণিজ্য ও ভূ-রাজনৈতিক উত্তেজনার ফলে ২০২৪ সালের সম্ভাবনাগুলো চ্যালেঞ্জের মধ্যে রয়েছে। এ পরিস্থিতিতেও ২০২৩ সালে বাংলাদেশে নতুন বিদেশী বিনিয়োগের ঘোষণা বেড়েছে ৩৪৫ শতাংশ। ২০২৩ সালে বাংলাদেশে ঘোষিত গ্রিনফিল্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্ট প্রকল্পের অর্থমূল্য ছিল ২৮৩ কোটি ১০ লাখ ডলারের। ২০২২ সালে যার পরিমাণ ছিল ৬৫ কোটি ডলার।

ওয়ার্ল্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্ট রিপোর্ট ২০২৪-এ প্রাপ্ত তথ্যে দেখা যায়, ২০২০ সালের চেয়ে ২০২১ সালে এফডিআই প্রবাহ বেড়েছিল ১২ দশমিক ৯৪ শতাংশ। ২০২২ সালে প্রবাহ ২০ দশমিক ১৬ শতাংশ বেড়ে ছিল ৩৪৮ কোটি ডলার। ২০২৩ সালে ১৩ দশমিক ৬৭ শতাংশ কমে প্রবাহ হয়েছে ৩০০ কোটি ৪০ লাখ ডলারের। ২০২২ সালের তুলনায় ২০২৩ সালে ভিয়েতনামে বেড়েছে ৩ দশমিক ৩৫ শতাংশ। কম্বোডিয়ায় এফডিআই প্রবৃদ্ধি ২০২৩ সালে হয়েছে ১০ দশমিক ৬১ শতাংশ। পাকিস্তানে এফডিআই প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে ২৪ দশমিক ৩৫ শতাংশ। ২০২৩ সালে ৪৫টি

স্বল্পোন্নত দেশে (এলডিসি) এফডিআই ১৭ শতাংশ বেড়ে ৩১ বিলিয়ন ডলারে দাঁড়িয়েছে। এর প্রায় ৫০ শতাংশ প্রবাহ কেন্দ্রীভূত ছিল কম্বোডিয়া, ইথিওপিয়া, বাংলাদেশ, উগান্ডা ও সেনেগাল-এ পাঁচ দেশে। গত এক দশকে স্বল্পোন্নত দেশের বহিঃখাতগুলোয় অর্থায়নের অন্যান্য উৎসের তুলনায় এফডিআই প্রবৃদ্ধিই পিছিয়ে আছে। সামগ্রিকভাবে উন্নয়ন সহায়তা ও রেমিট্যান্স হার স্বল্পোন্নত দেশের তুলনায় উন্নয়নশীল অর্থনীতিগুলোর তুলনায় বেশি **r**

অর্থবছরের ১১ মাসে রফতানি ৫ হাজার ১৫৪ কোটি ডলারের পণ্য; ইপিবি

বাংলাদেশ থেকে ২০২৩-২৪ অর্থবছরের ১১ মাসে (জুলাই-মে) বিশ্ববাজারে ৫ হাজার ১৫৪ কোটি ২৭ লাখ বা ৫১ দশমিক ৫৪ বিলিয়ন ডলারের বেশি পণ্য রফতানি হয়েছে। জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড (এনবিআর) থেকে সংগৃহীত তথ্যের ভিত্তিতে এ দাবি করেছে রপ্তানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরো (ইপিবি)। ২০২২-২৩ অর্থবছরের একই সময়ে রফতানি হয়েছিল ৫ হাজার ৫২ কোটি ৭২ লাখ ৪০ হাজার ডলারের পণ্য। সে হিসাবে ১১ মাসে ২ দশমিক শূন্য ১ শতাংশ বেশি রফতানি হয়েছে বলে জানিয়েছে ইপিবি। চলতি অর্থবছরের শুরুতেই রফতানিকারকদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা শেষে ৬ হাজার ২০০ কোটি ডলারের পণ্য রফতানির লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণ করে দেয় সরকার। এ হিসাবে লক্ষ্যপূরণে অর্থবছরের শেষ মাস জুনে আরো ১ হাজার ৪৫ কোটি ৭৩ লাখ বা ১০ দশমিক ৪৫ বিলিয়ন ডলারের পণ্য রফতানি করতে হবে রফতানিকারকদের।

তবে মে মাসে দেশ থেকে রফতানি কমেছে ১৬ দশমিক শূন্য ৬ শতাংশ। গত মাসে ৪০৭ কোটি ৯ লাখ ৩০ হাজার ডলারের পণ্য বিশ্ববাজারে রফতানি হয়েছিল। আগের বছরের একই মাসে রফতানি হয়েছিল ৪৮৪ কোটি ৯৬ লাখ ২০ হাজার ডলারের পণ্য। ইপিবির সম্প্রতি প্রকাশিত প্রতিবেদন অনুযায়ী, অর্থমূল্য বিবেচনায় বাংলাদেশ থেকে রফতানি হওয়া শীর্ষ পণ্যগুলোর মধ্যে পোশাক, চামড়া ও চামড়াজাত পণ্য, কৃষিপণ্য, পাট ও পাটজাত পণ্য এবং হোমটেক্সটাইল অন্যতম। চলতি ২০২৩-২৪ অর্থবছরের প্রথম ১১ মাসে দেশের মোট রফতানির ৯১ দশমিক ৬১ শতাংশজুড়েই ছিল এসব পণ্য। তবে শীর্ষ পণ্যগুলোর মধ্যে পোশাক ও কৃষি ছাড়া বাকিগুলো রফতানিতে নেতিবাচক প্রবৃদ্ধি দেখা গেছে।

আগের অর্থবছরের প্রথম ১১ মাসের তুলনায় চলতি অর্থবছরের একই সময়ে পোশাক রফতানি বেড়েছে ২ দশমিক ৮৬ শতাংশ। চামড়া ও চামড়াজাত পণ্য রফতানি কমেছে ১৪ দশমিক ১৭ শতাংশ। পাট ও পাটজাত পণ্য রফতানি কমেছে ৭ দশমিক ৫৩ শতাংশ। হোমটেক্সটাইল পণ্য রফতানিও ২৪ দশমিক ২৯ শতাংশ কমেছে। তবে কৃষিপণ্য রফতানি বেড়েছে ৮ দশমিক ২ শতাংশ। ইপিবি প্রকাশিত হালনাগাদ প্রতিবেদন অনুযায়ী, অর্থমূল্য বিবেচনায় বাংলাদেশ থেকে মোট রফতানির ৮৫ দশমিক শূন্য ৭ শতাংশই ছিল তৈরি পোশাক। চলতি অর্থবছরের জুলাই-মে পর্যন্ত বিশ্ববাজারে ৪ হাজার ৩৮৫ কোটি ৭ লাখ ডলারের তৈরি পোশাক রফতানি করেছে বাংলাদেশ। আগের অর্থবছরের একই সময় ৪ হাজার ২৬৩ কোটি ৭ লাখ ৯০ হাজার ডলারের পণ্য রফতানি হয়েছিল। এবার নিটওয়্যার তৈরি পোশাক রফতানিতে ৬ দশমিক ১৫ শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে। ওভেনে প্রবৃদ্ধি কমে ঋণাত্মক ১ দশমিক শূন্য ৯ শতাংশ হয়েছে **r**

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের রফতানি আয়ের হিসাব সংশোধন

নতুন হিসাবে রফতানি আয় কমেছে প্রায় ৩০%

বাংলাদেশ রপ্তানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরোর (ইপিবি) রফতানির তথ্য থেকে ১৩ দশমিক ৮০ বিলিয়ন বা ১ হাজার ৩৮০ কোটি ডলার বাদ দিয়েছে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। দেশের ব্যালাঙ্গ অব পেমেন্টের (বিওপি) হিসাবায়ন করতে গিয়ে এ সংশোধন আনা হয়েছে। ২০২৩-২৪ অর্থবছরের প্রথম ১০ মাসের (জুলাই-এপ্রিল) বিওপির পরিসংখ্যান সম্প্রতি প্রকাশ করেছে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক। এতে গত অর্থবছরের এপ্রিল পর্যন্ত রফতানি দেখানো হয়েছে ৩৩ দশমিক ৬৭ বিলিয়ন ডলার। যদিও একই সময়ে ইপিবি রফতানি দেখিয়েছে ৪৭ দশমিক ৪৭ বিলিয়ন ডলার। অর্থাৎ ইপিবির তথ্য সংশোধন করে সেখান থেকে ১৩ দশমিক ৮০ বিলিয়ন ডলার বা ৩০ শতাংশের কাছাকাছি বাদ দিয়েছে, বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক।

বিওপির অনেক খাতেই রফতানি থেকে প্রায় ১৪ বিলিয়ন ডলার বাদ পড়ে যাওয়ার প্রভাব পড়েছে। মার্চ পর্যন্ত বিওপিতে দেশের বাণিজ্য ঘাটতি দেখানো হয়েছিল মাত্র ৪ দশমিক ৭৪ বিলিয়ন ডলার। কিন্তু এপ্রিলে এসে এ ঘাটতি ১৮ দশমিক ৬৯ বিলিয়ন দেখানো হয়েছে। এক ধাক্কা বাণিজ্য ঘাটতি প্রায় চার গুণ বেড়ে যাওয়ার প্রভাবে উদ্বৃত্ত থেকে ঘাটতিতে রূপ নিয়েছে চলতি হিসাবের ভারসাম্য। মার্চ পর্যন্ত

চলতি হিসাবে প্রায় ৫ দশমিক ৮০ বিলিয়ন ডলার উদ্বৃত্ত দেখানো হলেও এপ্রিলে এসে সেটি প্রায় ৫ দশমিক ৭৩ বিলিয়ন ডলারের ঘাটতিতে রূপ নিয়েছে।

তবে বিপরীত পরিস্থিতি দেখা যাচ্ছে দেশের ফাইন্যান্সিয়াল অ্যাকাউন্ট বা আর্থিক হিসাবের ক্ষেত্রে। গত দুই অর্ধবছরেই আর্থিক হিসাবের বড় ঘাটতি নিয়ে উদ্বেগে ছিল বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক। মার্চ পর্যন্ত অর্ধবছরের নয় মাসে দেশের ফাইন্যান্সিয়াল অ্যাকাউন্টে ঘাটতি দেখানো হয়েছিল প্রায় ৯ দশমিক ২৬ বিলিয়ন ডলার। কিন্তু এপ্রিলে এসে আর্থিক হিসাবে ২ দশমিক ২৩ বিলিয়ন ডলার উদ্বৃত্ত দেখানো হয়েছে। আর এপ্রিল শেষে বিওপির মোট ঘাটতি দেখানো হয়েছে ৫ দশমিক ৫৬ বিলিয়ন ডলার। ইপিবি'র তথ্য বলছে, ২০২০-২১ অর্ধবছরে দেশ থেকে ৩৮ দশমিক ৭৬ বিলিয়ন ডলারের পণ্য রফতানি হয়েছে। এক্ষেত্রে অর্ধবছরটিতে রফতানি প্রবৃদ্ধি হয়েছে ১৫ দশমিক ১০ শতাংশ। অর্ধবছরটিতে রফতানি দেখানো হয় ৫২ দশমিক শূন্য ৮ বিলিয়ন ডলার। রফতানিতে প্রবৃদ্ধি দেখানো হয় প্রায় ৩৪ দশমিক ৩৮ শতাংশ। এ ধারাবাহিকতায় ২০২২-২৩ অর্ধবছরে রফতানি দেখানো হয় ৫৫ দশমিক ৫৬ বিলিয়ন ডলার। এক্ষেত্রে প্রায় ৬ দশমিক ৬৭ শতাংশ প্রবৃদ্ধি দেখানো হয়। ইপিবি'র তথ্য অনুযায়ী, সদ্য শেষ হওয়া ২০২৩-২৪ অর্ধবছরের প্রথম ১১ মাসে (মে পর্যন্ত) ৫১ দশমিক ৫৪ বিলিয়ন ডলারের পণ্য রফতানি হয়েছে। আগের অর্ধবছরের একই সময়ের তুলনায় রফতানি প্রবৃদ্ধি দেখানো হয়েছে ২ শতাংশের বেশি। যদিও ইপিবি'র দেয়া রফতানির তথ্যের সঙ্গে দেশে রফতানি মূল্যে হিসাবে আসা অর্থের হিসাব মিলছে না।

খেলাপি ঋণ বাস্তবে ২০ থেকে ২৫ শতাংশ

ইকোনমিক রিপোর্টার্স ফোরামের (ইআরএফ) আয়োজিত 'বাংলাদেশে ব্যাংক খাতে দুরবস্থার কারণ' শীর্ষক আলোচনা সভায় অর্থনীতিবিদ ড. আহসান এইচ মনসুর বলেছেন, 'দেশের রফতানির হিসাবে বড় ধরনের গরমিল বের হয়েছে। গরমিল আছে আর্থিক খাতের অন্যান্য তথ্যেও। ব্যাংক খাতে খেলাপি ঋণ ১১ শতাংশ বলা হলেও বাস্তবে সেটি ২০-২৫ শতাংশ। প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্যে পলিসি রিসার্চ ইনস্টিটিউটের (পিআরআই) নির্বাহী পরিচালক আহসান এইচ মনসুর বলেন, দেশের স্বার্থেই এখন ব্যাংক খাতের সংস্কার খুবই জরুরি।' তিনি

বলেন, 'আন্তর্জাতিক মুদ্রা তহবিল (আইএমএফ) বাংলাদেশকে ঋণ দিয়েছে, সেটা ভালো। কিন্তু নিজেদের স্বার্থেই আমাদের সংস্কার দরকার। আমরা ব্যাংকগুলোর আমানত খেয়ে ফেলেছি। এভাবে কত দিন ব্যাংক চলবে? ব্যাংক খাত নিয়ে স্বেতপত্র প্রকাশ করা দরকার। সেটা করতে হবে সরকারকেই। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংককে দিয়ে নয়। ব্যাংক খাতে আজ যে এই অবস্থা হলো, তার কারণ খুঁজে বের করতে হবে।' ড. মনসুর আরো বলেন, 'বাংলাদেশে আর্থিক খাতে দীর্ঘদিন সংস্কার হয়নি। ফলে এ বাজারের উন্নতি ঘটেনি। এখন ব্যাংক আমানতের নিশ্চয়তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন উঠেছে। ঋণের সুদহার বাড়ছে। আসলে সম্পদ বাইরে চলে যাওয়া অব্যাহত থাকলে এসব ঠিক হবে না। তাই দেশের আর্থিক খাতের সংকট মোকাবেলায় রাজনৈতিক সদিচ্ছার কোনো বিকল্প নেই।'

আর্থিক দুরবস্থার কারণে বাংলাদেশ দিন দিন ঋণনির্ভর হয়ে পড়ছে বলেও মন্তব্য করেন আহসান এইচ মনসুর। তিনি বলেন, 'ঋণনির্ভর হয়ে পড়ার পাশাপাশি ধীরে ধীরে বাংলাদেশের ঋণ পাওয়ার সক্ষমতাও কমছে। ভারত থেকে হতাশ হয়ে আসতে হয়েছে, চীনও সাড়া দেয়নি। অন্যদিকে পর্যাপ্ত রাজস্ব আদায় করতে পারছে না সরকার। ফলে এখন বাজেট বাস্তবায়নের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় টাকাও নেই, ডলারও নেই। এ কারণে সরকার জ্বালানি খাতসহ বিভিন্ন খাতের বিল পরিশোধ করতে পারছে না। অনেক বিদেশী কোম্পানি তাদের দেশে অর্থ নিতে পারছে না।' আহসান এইচ মনসুর বলেন, 'কিছু ব্যাংক ঋণ আদায় না করে ঋণের সুদকে আয় দেখিয়ে বেশি মুনাফা দেখাচ্ছে। সেই মুনাফার অর্থ থেকে লভ্যাংশ দিচ্ছে, আবার সরকারকে করও দিচ্ছে। আসলে ওই সব ব্যাংকের কোনো আয়ই হয়নি। আমানতের অর্থ লুটে খাচ্ছে কয়েকটি গোষ্ঠী। সরকারের সহযোগিতায় তারা পুষ্ট হয়ে উঠেছে। তাদের কারণেই এখন আর্থিক খাতে বিশৃঙ্খলা সৃষ্টি হয়েছে।'

আলোচনা সভায় সভাপতিত্ব করেন ইআরএফ সভাপতি রেফায়েত উল্লাহ মীরধা। সংগঠনের সাধারণ সম্পাদক আবুল কাশেমের সঞ্চালনায় সভায় ইআরএফের পক্ষ থেকে একটি প্রবন্ধ উপস্থাপন করা হয়। এতে বলা হয়, দেশে এখন আলোচনার অন্যতম বিষয়বস্তু হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে ব্যাংক খাত। একটি দেশের ব্যাংক খাতের ভালো-মন্দের বিষয়টি নির্ভর করে সে দেশের নিয়ন্ত্রক সংস্থার ওপর। আরো পরিষ্কারভাবে বললে নিয়ন্ত্রক সংস্থার প্রধান আসলে কেমন চাইছেন তার ওপর। বর্তমান সরকারের সময়ে পদ্মা সেতু,

মেট্রোরেল, বঙ্গবন্ধু টানেলের মতো অনেক বড় বড় প্রকল্প হয়েছে। এসব প্রকল্পের সুফল হিসেবে কর্মসংস্থান বেড়ে মূল্যস্ফীতি নাগালের মধ্যে থাকার কথা। কিন্তু ডলার সংকট, ব্যাংক খাতে দুরবস্থার কারণে দীর্ঘদিন ধরে উচ্চ মূল্যস্ফীতি মানুষকে চরম অস্বস্তিতে ফেলে দিয়েছে।

প্রবন্ধে আরো বলা হয়, মোটা দাগে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের অন্যতম প্রধান তিনটি কাজ হলো মুদ্রানীতি প্রণয়নের মাধ্যমে মূল্যস্ফীতি কাঙ্ক্ষিত মাত্রায় রাখা, বৈদেশিক মুদ্রাবাজার স্থিতিশীল রাখা এবং তদারকি ব্যবস্থার মাধ্যমে ঋণের সঠিক ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করে আর্থিক খাতে শৃঙ্খলা বজায় রাখা। কিন্তু এ তিনটি দায়িত্ব পালনে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক ব্যর্থ হয়েছে।

আমদানি শুল্ক কমিয়ে দ্রব্যমূল্য নিয়ন্ত্রণের চেষ্টায় সুফল মিলছে না; সিপিডি

আমদানি শুল্ক কমিয়ে পণ্যে দাম কমানোর চেষ্টায় সুফল মিলছে না বলে মনে করছে গবেষণা সংস্থা সেন্টার ফর পলিসি ডায়ালগ (সিপিডি)। এক্ষেত্রে কতিপয় আমদানিকারক শুল্ক কমানোর সুফল নিচ্ছেন বলেও মত তাদের। সম্প্রতি সিপিডি আয়োজিত 'বাংলাদেশ অর্থনীতি ২০২৩-২৪: তৃতীয় অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন পর্যালোচনা' শীর্ষক মিডিয়া ব্রিফিংয়ে এসব পর্যবেক্ষণ উঠে আসে। ব্রিফিংয়ে মূল প্রবন্ধ উপস্থাপন করেন সংস্থাটির গবেষণা পরিচালক খন্দকার গোলাম মোয়াজ্জেম। এ সময় তিনি বলেন, '২০১৯ সালের তুলনায় ২০২৪ সালে মিনিকেট চালের দাম ১৭ ভাগ বেড়েছে। একই সময়ে পাইজামের দাম বেড়েছে ১৫ ভাগ এবং মোটা চালের ৩০ ভাগ। অর্থাৎ মুনাফাখোররা বেশি লাভ করছে। এক্ষেত্রে বাজার মনিটরিং ব্যবস্থায় দুর্বলতা দেখা গেছে। আমদানি শুল্ক কমিয়েও পণ্যের দাম কমানোর চেষ্টায় সুফল মিলছে না। শুল্ক কমানোর সুফল কিছু আমদানিকারক ব্যবসায়ী নিয়ে যাচ্ছেন। কতিপয় ব্যবসায়ীর মজির ওপর বাজার চলতে পারে না।'

তিনি আরো বলেন, 'মূল্যস্ফীতি নিয়ন্ত্রণে রাখতে না পারা সরকারের বড় ধরনের ব্যর্থতা। ২০১৯ সাল থেকে খাদ্যমূল্য বিবেচনা করলে মূল্যস্ফীতি অস্বাভাবিক। আয় কম, কিন্তু খাবারের ক্ষেত্রে সবচেয়ে বেশি ব্যয় করতে হয়। যার ভুক্তভোগী গরিব ও সাধারণ মানুষ। ফলে ধনী ও গরিবের বৈষম্য বেড়েছে।'

TRADE INFORMATION

June-July 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

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>

Fall Home Expo 2024

Date: 01 - 03 Nov 2024
 Venue: Exchange Center, Tulsa, USA
 Organizer: Tulsa Home Shows
 Phone: 918-605-5480
 Fax: 918-742-2260
 E-mail: frank@tulsahomeshows.com
 Website: <https://www.tulsahomeshows.com/fall-home-expo>

Battery Safety Summit 2024

Date: 04 - 05 Nov 2024
 Venue: The Westin Alexandria, Alexandria, USA
 Organizer: Cambridge Innovation Institute
 Phone: 781-972-5400
 Fax: 781-972-5425
 E-mail: ce@cambridgeenertech.com
 Website: <https://www.cambridgeenertech.com/battery-safety>

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/>

Smart City Expo - Dubai 2024

Date: 26 - 27 Nov 2024
 Venue: Dusit Thani Dubai, Dubai, UAE
 Organizer: Smart Cities Expo World Forum
 Email: E-mail: Info@SmartCityExpo.ae
 Website: <https://www.smartcityexpo.ae/>

Automechanika Shanghai 2024

Date: 02 - 05 Dec 2024
 Venue: National Convention & Exhibition Center, Shanghai, China
 Organizer: Messe Frankfurt (Shanghai) Co. Limited
 Phone: +86 21 6160 1155
 Fax: +86 21 6168 0788
 Email: info@china.messefrankfurt.com
 Website: <https://www.hk.messefrankfurt.com/hongkong/en.html>

Drug Discovery Chemistry Europe 2024

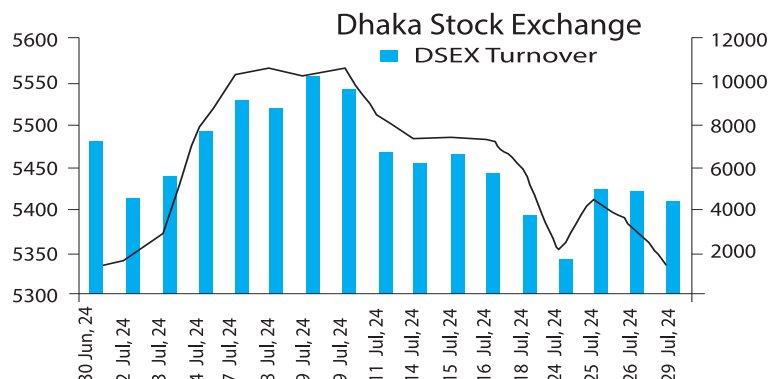
Date: 03 - 05 Dec 2024
 Venue: InterContinental Barcelona, an IHG Hotel, Barcelona, Spain
 Organizer: Cambridge Innovation Institute
 Phone: 781-972-5400
 Fax: 781-972-5425
 E-mail: ce@cambridgeenertech.com
 Website: <https://www.drugdiscoverychemistry.com/europe>

Saudi Indian Forum and Expo

Date: 18 - 20 Jan 2025
 Venue: Khamis Mushait, Saudi Arabia
 Organizer: Better Event & Chamber of Abha
 Phone: +966 55 578 4993
 E-mail: info@betterevent.com.sa
 Website: <https://betterevent.com.sa/en>

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

Trade & Market (As of July 31, 2024)



DSE Top 20 Market Cap.

Company	Close Price	% Price	Turnover BDT mn
GP	254.20	-1.09	343,246
SQURPHARMA	214.20	0.94	189,878
WALTONHIL	605.90	-1.80	183,544
BATBC	330.80	-0.15	178,632
ROBI	23.40	-2.50	122,568
BERGERPBL	1818.60	-1.46	84,343
RENATA	723.20	-1.27	82,949
UPGDCL	130.00	-1.29	75,360
MARICO	2219.90	0.27	69,927
BRACBANK	37.50	-0.53	66,364
LHBL	55.90	-2.27	64,921
INILEVERCL	2571.90	0.19	49,572
BXPHARMA	109.10	-2.94	48,671
ICB	54.70	-0.91	47,439
DUTCHBANGL	47.80	-0.83	42,008
EBL	26.20	-1.13	35,583
BEACONPHAR	133.40	-1.98	30,815
PUBALIBANK	24.70	-1.59	28,574
BESTHLDNG	26.80	-2.55	28,387
CITYBANK	20.40	0.49	27,480

DSE Top 20 Gainers

Company	Close Price	% Price	Turnover BDT mn
TECHNODRUG	51.10	9.89	24.55
NEWLINE	49.10	6.28	0.10
LIBRAINFU	920.10	4.51	72.64
RENWICKJA	720.60	4.43	0.02
UNITEDFIN	11.90	4.39	9.80
RUPALILIFE	160.40	3.55	115.94
MEGCONMILK	31.10	2.98	4.38
GEMINISEA	321.60	2.42	130.90
SAIHAMTEX	14.50	2.11	4.83
PHARMAID	742.80	1.84	60.83
NBL	6.40	1.59	2.09
RECKITBEN	4764.30	1.29	1.90
ONEBANKPLC	8.00	1.27	26.94
SUNLIFEINS	59.10	1.20	50.21
SQURPHARMA	19.50	1.04	0.39
ESQUIRENIT	214.20	0.94	133.43
SALVOCHEM	49.00	0.62	103.82
MONNOAGML	444.70	0.54	9.77
CITYBANK	20.40	0.49	71.78
PADMAOIL	190.00	0.48	0.19

DSE Top 10 Gainers

Company	Close Price	% Price	Turnover BDT mn
HRTEX	42.10	-3.00	3.32
EPGL	19.40	-3.00	0.80
PHENIXFIN	29.10	-3.00	0.56
PHOENIXFIN	6.50	-2.99	0.34
SONARGAON	26.00	-2.99	4.14
RANFOUNDRY	165.40	-2.99	3.72
JANATAINS	29.20	-2.99	0.28
STANDARINS	35.70	-2.99	3.81
PF1STMF	6.50	-2.99	2.91
LEGACYFOOT	65.20	-2.99	5.83

Overview of Global Markets

Country	Stock Exchange Index				GDP (Current Mkt. Price)		Inflation	Int.
	June, 2024	May, 2024	% Change Last Month	% Change Last Year current Month	% Change Previous Year	% Change Previous Year	(10-year Govt. Bond)	
Bangladesh (DSEX)	5328.40	5251.96	1.46	(21.25)	12.41	7.87	12.52	
India (S&P BSE SENSEX)	79039.73	73885.60	6.98	22.13	7.80	4.70	7.00	
Pakistan (KSE 100)	78444.96	75878.48	3.38	89.82	2.80	11.80	14.10	
Indonesia (Jakarta Comp)	7063.58	6970.74	1.33	6.03	5.10	2.80	7.10	
Malaysia (KLSE Composite)	1590.09	1596.68	(0.41)	15.50	4.20	2.00	3.90	
Thailand (SET)	1300.96	1345.66	(3.32)	(13.45)	1.50	1.50	2.80	
Taiwan (Taiwan Weighted)	23032.25	21174.22	8.77	36.16	6.60	2.20	1.70	



FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam (fourth from left), Senior Vice President Md. Amin Helaly (third from left), DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (third from right) and MCCI President Kamran T Rahman (second from left) among others were present during the Press Conference of FBCCI on proposed National Budget FY2024-25 held on June 08 at FBCCI Auditorium.

Dhaka Chamber President Ashraf Ahmed (second from right) seen speaking at a Post-Budget Discussion titled "Budget and Business Outlook" organized by American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh held on June 10. FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam (fourth from left), former NBR Chairman Dr. Muhammed Abdul Mazid (third from left), Chairman of Policy Exchange Bangladesh Dr. M. Masrur Reaz (left), former President of MCCI Nihad Kabir (second from left) among others are seen in the picture.



DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (second from left) seen speaking at the post budget discussion session organized by RAPID on June 14 at the National Press Club Auditorium. Economic Adviser to the HPM, Dr. Mashiur Rahman (right), Director General of BIDS Dr. Binayak Sen (second from right), Executive Director of RAPID Dr. M Abu Eusuf (third from left) are also seen in the picture.



State Minister for Commerce Ahasanul Islam Titu, MP (sixth from left), President of ICC Bangladesh Mahbubur Rahman (fifth from left), FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam (third from right), DCCI President Ashraf Ahmed (left) among others were present at the 58th Meeting of Board of Directors of Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute (BFTI) held on June 22.

Dhaka Chamber President Ashraf Ahmed (second from right) seen speaking at a Roundtable Discussion titled "Responsible Business Conduct in the RMG Industry: Achievement and Way Forward" held on June 01. Senior Vice President of FBCCI Md. Amin Helaly (second from left) and Research Director of CPD Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem (third from right) among others are seen in the picture.



ডিসিসিআই, মতিঝিল ভবনে অফিস স্পেস ভাড়া

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

যোগাযোগঃ

ঢাকা চেম্বার অব কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি
ঢাকা চেম্বার ভবন, ৬৫-৬৬, মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা।
ফোন : +৮৮-০৯-৬৬৬৮৮৮৫৫৫ এক্স- ১০১১, ১৩১, ১৩৬
মোবাইলঃ ০১৭১৫৭৮৪৭১৮

৮ম তলা - সাইজ : + ২৬৫০ বর্গফুট
৯ম তলা - সাইজ : + ৬৬০০ বর্গফুট
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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 15th October 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:

**01913745062, 01766018659, 02 47122986 (Ext.124), 09-666319653
dbi@dhakachamber.com, www.dcci-dbi.edu.bd**

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:

15th October 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