

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▼ 0.01%	▼ 0.16%	\$1,908.31	\$43.05	▲ 0.42%	▲ 0.11%	▼ 0.47%	▼ 0.56%	83.95	97.53	107.64	12.27
4,839.05	8,296.01	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	40,794.74	23,626.73	2,555.59	3,340.78	BUY TK	84.95	101.33	111.44
								SELL TK	84.95	101.33	111.44

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BUSINESS

DHAKA THURSDAY OCTOBER 15, 2020, ASHWIN 30, 1427 BS ● starbusiness@thedailystar.net

Air shipment to Europe hits a snag

Scanners at airport go out of order; vegetable exporters worried of losing buyers

SOHEL PARVEZ

For the last four days, Mohammed Abul Hossain, a vegetable exporter, has been trying to send his consignments to England but each of his attempts ended in failure as two scanners solely used for Europe-bound cargoes are out of order at Hazrat Shahjahal International Airport (HSIA).

The exporter had to make do with selling each consignment of the exportable vegetables at local markets at roughly one-fifth of their export value of Tk 100,000, which is excluding freight charge. Nevertheless, this is causing him to incur losses on his investment.

The problem does not end here.

On Tuesday, his buyer, Bangla Port at the UK, threatened to stop continuing doing business with Bangladeshi suppliers because of their failure to ship cargoes on time.

The buyer was irked by disruptions in supply for traffic gridlocks, floods and problems at airports and over flights.

“He is very annoyed. He told me that he would rather switch to vegetable exporters in India to ensure that supply is smooth. It is really frustrating,” said Hossain, proprietor of Lee Enterprise, over the phone yesterday.

He is one of the 15 regular fresh vegetables exporters who are suffering from the same problem for nearly a week after the last explosive detection system used for examining Europe-bound export cargoes from the Dhaka airport stopped functioning.

The airport has half a dozen scanners at the cargo section of which two are fitted with explosive detection systems to dedicatedly scan vegetables flown to European destinations such as the UK and Italy.

One of the duo went out of order in August this year, said a senior official of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB).

For vegetable exporters, who earned \$164 million in fiscal 2019-20, Europe is the second biggest destination after the Middle East

The second one had been running but it too went out of order early this month, hampering air shipment of all exports including vegetables, garments and other items to European destinations. A senior official of Emirates Dhaka office said all the exporters were suffering because of the breakdown of the scanners.

“Following the malfunctioning of the last machine, bomb detection dogs are being used to check whether there are any explosives in the export cargoes destined to Europe. This is inadequate,” said the airline official seeking to remain unnamed.

“Besides, as the export cargoes have to be rechecked at the transit, shipment time is increasing, so is the cost,” he said, suggesting that the CAAB fix the scanners as soon as possible for the sake of exports.

“It should be solved with due priority,” he said.

For vegetable exporters, who fetched \$164 million as receipts in fiscal 2019-20, Europe is the second biggest destination after the Middle East, the workplace of a majority of Bangladeshi migrant workers.

READ MORE ON B3

Bangladesh set to surpass India in per capita GDP

Indian media praise Bangladesh

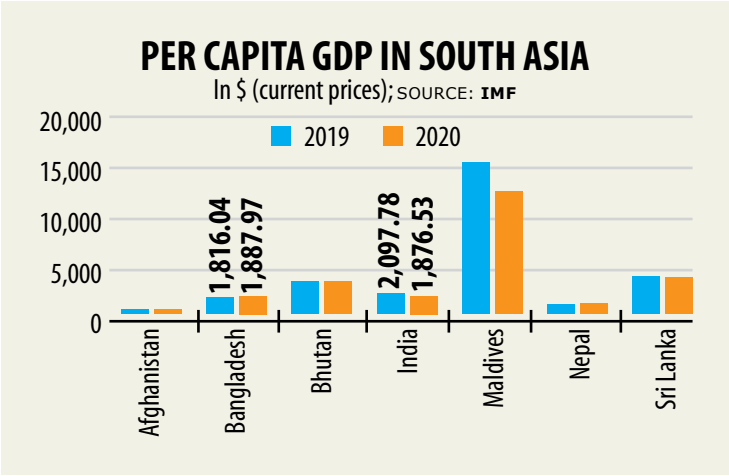
REJAUL KARIM BYRON and
MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh is set to surpass India in terms of per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 thanks to robust agriculture production, exports and remittance despite the coronavirus pandemic, in another testimony to the country’s steadily growing economy.

According to the International Monetary Fund’s latest World Economic Outlook report, Bangladesh’s per capita GDP would rise to \$1,887.97 at current prices at the end of this year, up 3.96 per cent from \$1,816.04 in 2019.

India’s per capita GDP would fall to \$1,877 in 2020, a decline of 10.3 per cent. Bangladesh’s progress was appreciated by the Indian media yesterday.

DISPLAY CENTRE
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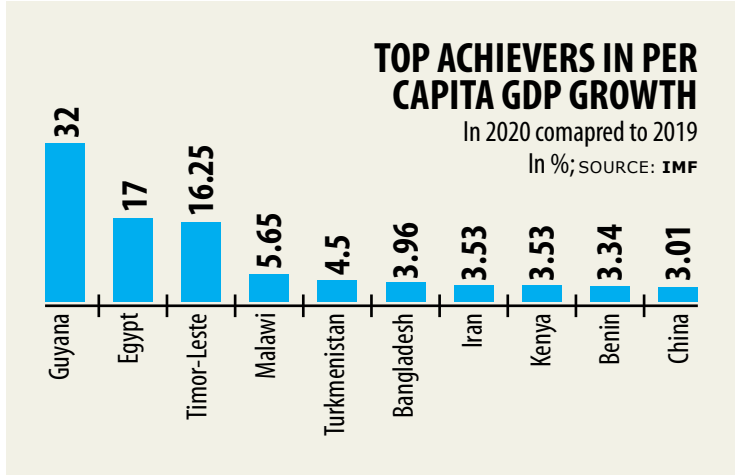
In per capita GDP terms, India was significantly above Bangladesh till a few years ago, but the gap has been substantially closed owing to the country’s

rapidly-rising exports.

Besides, during the intervening period, while India’s savings and investments remained lukewarm, the corresponding numbers for Bangladesh saw a sizeable surge, the Economic Times of India reported. Five years ago, India’s per capita GDP was nearly 40 per cent higher than that of Bangladesh.

In the last five years, Bangladesh’s per capita GDP has grown at a compound annual growth rate of 9.1 per cent, against 3.2 per cent growth posted by India for the period.

“This has allowed Bangladesh



to close the economic gap with its giant neighbour,” said the Business Standard of India.

Not only that, Bangladesh is set to post the highest per capita GDP growth rate in South Asia and the fourth-highest in the whole of Asia in 2020 compared to that of last year, comfortably ahead of India and China, data from the IMF showed.

The country’s per capita GDP growth would be the sixth highest in the world in the current calendar year, as the pandemic has battered most economies in the world in the eight months.

Apart from Bangladesh, only two countries in South Asia, namely Bhutan and Nepal, would register positive growth in the per capita GDP, expanding by 2.2 per cent and 3.4 per cent respectively in 2020.

Pakistan’s per capita GDP was \$1,348.68 in 2019. Its figure for 2020 was not available in the IMF’s report.

In Asia, only Egypt, Timor-Leste and Turkmenistan are ahead of Bangladesh in per capita GDP growth terms, expanding by 17 per cent, 16.25 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively.

READ MORE ON B3

Beef up monitoring to improve construction standards: experts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Using quality materials under adequate supervision at development sites will ensure a higher standard of construction, experts said yesterday.

“The standard of finished projects depends on the use of quality materials and proper supervision during construction,” said Md Shamsul Hoque, director of the Bureau of Research, Testing and Consultation.

Bangladesh is now self-sufficient when it comes to supplying world-class raw materials to the construction sector. However, a lack of supervision by the engineers or managers impacts the overall quality of construction, he added.

Hoque made the comments during a webinar styled “Standard material for safe construction” jointly organised by The Daily Star and BSRM.

M Firoze, adviser for marketing and product development at

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Conduct supervision at construction sites
- » Strengthen capability of BSTI to ensure better compliance
- » Create awareness about compliance
- » Use housing code in construction
- » Adopt local standards along with social value
- » Follow appropriate architectural designs



BSRM, said that the standard for construction work is not being maintained even though quality raw materials are readily available.

Standards are not being maintained even for the Padma Rail Link, one of the biggest ongoing development projects in

the country, as the implementing agency placed an order for raw materials following standards of a neighbouring country, which is a violation of compliance, he said.

“They are not following the standards set by the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution

(BSTI),” he said.

The standard of construction depends on the raw materials used and so the BSTI should monitor compliance in this regard, Firoze added.

According to Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, everyone

is responsible in their own capacity to maintain a certain standard of construction at every level.

“We need sustainable construction plans for bridges, buildings and culverts that do not compromise with the country’s standards,” he said, emphasising the need for legal actions against the violation of regulations.

Besides, the BSTI’s capability to monitor and ensure compliance during the construction of projects should be bolstered to maintain standards, Anam added.

M Shamim Z Bosunia, chairman and managing director of Abode of Consultants and former president of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, stressed the need for enhanced supervision at project sites to ensure the proper use of raw materials.

Like Anam, Bosunia said widening the BSTI’s activities by strengthening the organisation could lead to better quality control.

READ MORE ON B3

Retrenched workers yet to get govt allowance in absence of beneficiary list

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and
REAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The disbursement of allowances for retrenched workers in the export-oriented garment, leather and footwear sectors will begin once the associations concerned provide

the list of employees, according to a senior official of the finance ministry.

In the meantime, the financial aid meant for workers that have been made redundant by the Covid-19 fallout will continue to remain idle, he said.

The government aims to disburse Tk 3,000 per month for a three-month period to about 10 lakh workers over the next two fiscal years, according to last week’s circular from the labour and employment ministry.

Beneficiaries will receive the

funds directly through their mobile financial service accounts.

Any worker, including lactating mothers, who were employed in any active member factory of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB) and Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BFLFEA) up till February this year will be eligible to receive money from this fund, the circular said.

The authorities concerned can begin disbursing funds from next month onwards, the ministry official added. However, a list of retrenched workers is yet to be submitted to the labour ministry due to various complications, according to the association leaders.

“Since the coronavirus outbreak reached its peak in April-May, it was assumed that many people had returned to work by now,” said BGMEA President Rubana Huq.

READ MORE ON B3



MAJOR POINTS

- » Every retrenched worker will get Tk **3,000** a month
- » Govt targeted to deliver the benefit to 10 lakh workers in two years
- » Workers of four export-oriented sectors will get the benefit
- » The Department of Labour will implement the project
- » EU and Germany are the major donors in the fund
- » Union leader demand transparency in disbursement

এনসিসি ব্যাংক
আপনার সংগে। সকলসময়।

মহাখালী শাখা
শুভ উদ্বোধন

উন্নয়নের ধারাবাহিকতায় ১২২তম শাখা

সকল আধুনিক ব্যাংকিং সেবা নিয়ে গ্রাহক সন্তুষ্টি নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে অক্টোবর ১৫, ২০২০, বুধশনিবার হতে ঢাকার মহাখালী বাণিজ্যিক এলাকায় শুরু হচ্ছে ১২২তম শাখা। যেখানে ব্যাংকিং প্রয়োজনে আমরা আছি আপনার সাথেই। সবসময়।

মহাখালী শাখার এইচ আর কর্মসূত্র, ১০০, বীর উত্তম এ.কে. ফকরার রোড, মহাখালী বা/এ, ঢাকা-১২২১।

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Road Division, Nawabganj

Phone & Fax: 0781-52102

Email: eenaw@rhd.gov.bd

Memo No. 35.01.7000.454.07.001.20.1615(18)

Date: 14/10/2020

E-Tender Notice

e-Tenders is invited in e-GP System (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Nawabganj for procurement of following works:

Tender ID	Name of work	Publishing date and time	Closing date and time
504241 egp/Naw/ 2020-21/15	Supplying skilled and unskilled labour for maintenance works at Rohanpur-Bholahat-BDR Camp (z-6805) Road under RHD, Road Division, Nawabganj during the year 2020-2021.	14-Oct-2020 10:00	29-Oct-2020 14:15
504244 egp/Naw/ 2020-21/16	Maintenance of existing pavement with SBST including necessary repair works at 18th (p) km, 19th (p) km, 20th (p) km, 21st(p) km 22nd(p) km, 23rd (p) km 24th(p) km, 25th(p) km, 26th(p) km 27th(p), 28th(p) km & 29th(p) km of Godagari-Nachole-Niamotpur (Z-6813) Road (Nawabganj Portion) under RHD, Road Division, Nawabganj during the year 2020-2021.	14-Oct-2020 10:00	29-Oct-2020 14:00
504238 egp/Naw/ 2020-21/17	Carpeting and SBST work including strengthening by Aggregate Base Type-II from 20th (p) km, 25th (p) km, 26th (p) km, 27th(p) km and 28th(p) km of Rohanpur-Bholahat-BDR Camp (Z-6805) Road under RHD, Road Division, Nawabganj during the year 2020-2021.	14-Oct-2020 10:00	29-Oct-2020 14:30
504239 egp/Naw/ 2020-21/18	Maintenance with repair of existing pavement with SBST including necessary repair works at 18th (p) km, 19th (p) km, 20th(p) km, 21st(p) km 22nd(p) km, 23rd(p) km 24th(p) km, 25th(p) km, 26th(p) km 27th(p), 28th(p) km & 29th(p) km of Godagari-Nachole-Niamotpur (Z-6813) Road (Nawabganj Portion) under RHD, Road Division, Nawabganj during the year 2020-2021.	14-Oct-2020 10:00	29-Oct-2020 14:45
504236 egp/Naw/ 2020-21/19	Carpeting and SBST work including strengthening by Aggregate Base Type-II from 81st (p) km, 97th (p) km, 98th (p) km and 99th(p) km of Naagoan-Badolgachi-Patnitola-Sapahar-Porsha-Rohanpur-(R-547) Road under RHD, Road Division, Nawabganj during the year 2020-2021.	14-Oct-2020 10:00	29-Oct-2020 14:15
504242 egp/Naw/ 2020-21/20	Carpeting and SBST work including strengthening by Aggregate Base Type-II from 4th(p) m, 9th(p) km, 10th (p) km, 11th (p) km and 12th(p) km of Kansat-Gomestapur-Rohanpur-Bangabari (Z-6802) Road under RHD, Road Division, Nawabganj during the year 2020-2021.	14-Oct-2020 10:00	29-Oct-2020 14:40
504243 egp/Naw/ 2020-21/21	Carpeting and SBST work including strengthening by Aggregate Base Type-II from 18th (p) km, 19th (p) km, 20th(p) km, 21st(p) km and 22nd(p) km of Kansat-Gomestapur-Rohanpur-Bangabari (Z-6802) Road under RHD, Road Division, Nawabganj during the year 2020-2021.	14-Oct-2020 10:00	29-Oct-2020 14:50

(Signature)
14/10/20

Md. Atiqullah Bhuiyan
Executive Engineer (c.c.), RHD
Road Division, Nawabganj

GD-1639



Quazi Osman Ali, managing director of Social Islami Bank, opens the bank's e-account opening operation through its mobile app, SIBL NOW, at the bank's head office in Dhaka yesterday.

MetLife announces global environmental goals

STAR BUSINESS DESK

MetLife has committed to reduce its location-based greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 30 per cent from 2019 levels over the next 10 years.

It also pledged \$20 billion in new MetLife Investment Management (MIM)-managed green investments, and allocated \$5 million to develop products and partnerships that drive climate solutions.

These are just three of the company's 11 global 2030 Environmental Goals, which it announced recently, the company said in a statement.

MetLife also committed to plant 5 million trees prioritising areas vulnerable to natural disasters and to maintain carbon neutrality annually across its global offices, fleet, and business travel, and MetLife Foundation committed to

grant \$10 million for environmental causes.

In addition, MetLife pledged to mobilise 100 of its suppliers to set their own GHG emissions reduction target by 2025, according to the statement.

"These global environmental commitments reflect our purpose as a company," said Syed Hammadul Karim, general manager at MetLife Bangladesh.

"We are here to help our customers build a more confident future, and part of that has to be about using natural resources in a sustainable way and helping to address climate change."

The 11 new goals aim to reduce the environmental impact of MetLife's global operations and supply chain, while leveraging its investments, products, and services to help protect communities and drive innovative solutions.

Beef up monitoring to improve construction standards: experts

FROM PAGE B1

Md Abu Sadeque, executive director of the Centre for Housing and Building Research, urged companies to follow the housing codes while carrying out construction work in rural areas as people often neglect such safety guidelines.

Sadeque also alleged that in many cases, developers lie about how long a finished project may last without having to be reconstructed.

Certain companies claim that their projects will last 100 years by manipulating their accounts to show the use of high-quality materials, he said.

Depending on a project's design, the construction work can be similar to the standards of the EU and the US, said F R Khan, managing director of Building Technology & Ideas (bti).

In most cases, developers do not follow a structured system, which leads to a dip in the overall construction quality.

"We cannot ignore the architectural design, electro-mechanical system for safety or the suitability and standard of construction work," Khan said, adding that maintenance is an important aspect of any project's sustainability.

SM Khorshed Alam, president of the Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry, said that around 65 to 70 per cent of a project's cost is spent on raw materials, which are now locally produced.

To ensure that standard materials are used, a new quality control lab should be set up at the field level as the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology is overloaded with

this work, he added.

Md Tarek Uddin, a professor for civil and environmental engineering at the Islamic University of Technology, urged the country's developers to follow local standards.

He stressed the need for legal frameworks on maintaining the standards of construction work.

AFM Saiful Amin, a professor in the department of civil engineering at the BUET, said there is a lack of knowledge among the public on the standard of construction work in Bangladesh due to lax research.

According to Amin, Bangladesh follows US standards as there is no local building code for mega construction projects.

Tanjim Ferdous, the national consultant of the Unicef, moderated the webinar.

Feeder operators oppose provision of flag vessel law

FROM PAGE B4

In June, two national flag container vessels -- the MV Sahare and MV Sarera -- began transporting goods from Chattogram port to Singapore and Malaysia.

Currently, over 80 feeder vessels are engaged in transporting containerised cargo between Chattogram port and four transshipment ports -- Colombo, Singapore, Port Klang and Tanjung Pelepas -- as well as directly with some Chinese ports.

The BSAA chairman also said that the two national flagged container vessels carry a small portion of the containerised

cargo.

Mentioning that foreign vessels would face uneven competition if such a provision is made effective, he argued that the time period should be shortened from 15 days to five.

When contacted, MMD Principal Officer Captain Giashuddin Ahmed admitted that applying 15 days ahead of loading is not feasible.

However, he added that everyone should comply with the directive as the concerned authorities have yet to make any changes to the provision.

Teach children H for hand washing: Unilever webinar

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Experts suggested teaching the English letter "H" to children by describing it with the words "Hand Washing" and doing the same with Bangla alphabets in the curriculum to get strengthen the habit among children during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Washing hands in Bangla is pronounced as "Haat Dhua", starting with the Bangla letter "Ho".

The advice was given in a webinar titled "H for Handwashing - A Protected Hand Means a Protected Nation", organised by Unilever Bangladesh yesterday, says a press release.

"A campaign can attain momentum when relevant and Covid-19 has come up with such an opportunity," said

Education Minister Dipu Moni.

"Covid-19 has raised the importance of wearing masks and not touching the nose and mouth with unwashed hands and to wash hands properly," she said.

"We have to ensure that necessary hand washing facilities are present in educational institutions at all levels," said the education minister.

About the inclusion of the issue of hand washing in the education system, she said the subject of cleanliness, including hand wash, was already in the curriculum.

"Bangladesh's progress in overall economic development, including ensuring gender equality and sustainable development, is commendable," said Kedar Lele, chairman and managing director of

Unilever Bangladesh.

"Unilever believes that whatever is good for the country is also good for Unilever. With this belief, Lifebuoy has been running handwashing education and awareness campaigns in Bangladesh for more than a decade," he said.

Shyamal Dutta, editor of The Daily Bhorer Kagoj, moderated the webinar.

Reefat Bin Sattar, director for programme development and quality at Save the Children Bangladesh; Asif Saleh, executive director at Brac; Dara Johnston, chief for the water, sanitation and hygiene section at UNICEF Bangladesh; Orla Murphy, country director at Plan International Bangladesh, and Hasin Jahan, country director at WaterAid Bangladesh, also took part in the discussion.



BANK ASIA

Zakiul Islam, managing director of Northern Electricity Supply Company; ABM Imtiaz Ahmed, deputy manager, and Ahsan-Ul-Alam, senior vice president for agent banking division at Bank Asia, attend a deal signing ceremony at the former's head office recently for collection of utility bills through the bank's agent outlets, micro merchant points and smart app.



JAMUNA BANK

Nur Mohammed, chairman of Jamuna Bank Foundation; Mirza Elias Uddin Ahmed, managing director of Jamuna Bank, and Md Abdus Salam, deputy managing director, open the bank's Satrasta sub-branch under its Ring Road branch in the capital.

Retrenched workers yet to get govt allowance in absence of beneficiary list

FROM PAGE B1

Still though, factories can submit a list in a structured Management Information System format to the BGMEA, which can then be forwarded to the labour ministry and Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment (DIFE).

"We are also asking all BGMEA members to update their list of workers currently working in each factory," she added.

Meanwhile, LFMEAB President Saiful Islam said his association is preparing a list of retrenched workers in the leather sector.

"We will send the list to the ministry concerned as soon as we receive a letter from the Department of Labour in this regard," he said.

Nazma Akter, president of the Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, a platform for workers' rights in the garment sector, said although the EU and German government committed to this fund far earlier, the money is yet to be disbursed due to bureaucratic red-tape.

"Many workers lost their jobs in April, May and June, however, most of them have already been re-employed

by the factories because of a rebound in incoming work orders from international retailers and brands," said Akter.

But even though it would be difficult to make authentic lists of retrenched workers in these sectors, the initiative is good for the workers as they will get financial benefits during this time of hardship.

"Maintaining full transparency is very important so that any authentic retrenched worker is not deprived of the financial benefit," Akter told The Daily Star over phone.

The government will make disbursements from its own fund, grants from the EU and from the German government for fiscals 2020-21 and 2021-22, it added.

The government might extend this service for social safety net purposes beyond this time limit if it is noticed that the workers could not return to their jobs and on the basis of the availability of funds from the government exchequer and from donor agencies.

So, the government also called for increased donations to the fund from the donor agencies.

Many workers lost their jobs because of the two-month nationwide shutdown in March-May or were laid-off for a lack of work orders from international retailers and brands due to the Covid-19 fallout, which has severely jolted the global economy.

Millions of workers at corporate, mills and factories lost their jobs because of the pandemic and neither the country's workers, exports, imports nor corporations were immune to the economic fallout.

As a result, a good number of workers lost their jobs. Of those recently unemployed, some may get jobs in another factory but not at substantial rates, according to industry insiders.

However, many workers who could not complete a one-year tenure in their position will still be allowed to avail the fund.

Director General of the Department of Labour will lead disbursements from the fund while senior officials from the DIFE, labour and employment ministry, BGMEA, BKMEA, LFMEAB, BFLLEA and EU will act as members and provide assistance as needed, the circular said.

Bangladesh set to surpass India in per capita GDP

FROM PAGE B1

China, the world's second-largest economy, would see its per capita GDP growth rise at 3.01 per cent.

In Africa, only Malawi's per capita GDP growth would be higher than that of Bangladesh as it would expand by 5.65 per cent.

Among the Latin American and Caribbean countries, only Guyana is ahead of Bangladesh: its per capita GDP would increase by 32 per cent this year, the IMF data showed.

No other country in the world is ahead of Bangladesh when it comes to per capita GDP growth in 2020 and most of them would see a contraction because of the pandemic.

"Agriculture, exports and remittance are behind the country's strong economic growth," said Prof M Shamsul Alam, a member of General Economics Division of the planning ministry.

He said Bangladesh's rice production rose by 2 million tonnes alone last fiscal year compared to that a year ago. The country brought home its highest-ever remittance in FY20 and the flow has kept its momentum even during the pandemic.

"We have always said that the economy has been growing at a

higher pace but some civil society organisations and experts did not take our words into consideration. Now, a multilateral organisation's data is showing that we have been right," Prof Alam told The Daily Star yesterday.

India's top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been critical of the centre over the state of the economy, hit out at the government after the IMF projections.

"Solid achievement of 6 years of BJP's hate-filled cultural nationalism. Bangladesh set to overtake India," he tweeted yesterday.

Bangladesh's GDP grew 5.2 per cent last fiscal year, which was the highest among 46 countries in Asia, said the Asian Development Bank recently. India's economy declined by 9 per cent and Pakistan's economy grew by 0.4 per cent.

The ADB has forecasted that Bangladesh's economy would expand by 6.8 per cent in FY21 to post the fourth-highest growth in the region.

Three countries would be ahead of Bangladesh this fiscal year: China's economy would grow by 7.8 per cent, India's by 8 per cent and that of the Maldives by 10 per cent.

Pakistan's economy would expand by 2 per cent.

Air shipment to Europe hits a snag

FROM PAGE B1

Shipment to Europe brings nearly 40 per cent of the total export earnings from fresh vegetables, said Mohammed Monsur, general secretary of the Bangladesh Fruits Vegetables and Allied Products Exporters' Association.

He said vegetable shipment to the Middle East has continued but exports to Europe has almost got stopped because of the scanning issue at the HSIA in Dhaka.

Hossain said on a normal day they export 10 to 12 tonnes of fresh vegetables to Europe.

Now, the quantity of shipment has reduced to 2 to 3 tonnes as the limited number of bomb detection dogs can not

screen all the export cargoes at the airport.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman could not be reached over the phone and text messages to comment on the issue.

Contacted, HSIA Director Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan said the scanners stopped functioning as their "bearings" needed to be changed.

"The bearings have already been brought from abroad. Tools, engineers and technician from Dubai, India and Malaysia are expected to come within the next seven days," he said.

The machines will become operational once the bearings are changed, he added.

Ahsan said problems over visa issuance for the Covid-19 pandemic

delayed the process of fixing the problem. "We have been told that by the first week of November the machines will be workable," he added.

And export cargoes can again be screened by the scanners from the second week of November, according to the CAAB official.

Ahsan said the frequency of screening by dogs has been increased to facilitate shipment of export cargoes to Europe.

However, the exporters' association General Secretary Monsur said a section of importers would inevitably switch to suppliers in other countries because of the shipment problem.

"Once they go, it becomes difficult to get them back," he said.

Feeder operators oppose provision of flag vessel law

Applying for waiver certificates 15 days prior to loading cargo is illogical, they say



A container vessel is leaving Chattogram port through Karnaphuli channel.

DWAIPAYAN BARUA from Chattogram

The mandatory provision for obtaining waiver certificates 15 days before loading any cargo as per the Flag Vessel (protection) Act 2019 has caused trouble for foreign container feeder vessels at Chattogram port.

The law was passed last November with a provision for locally owned vessels to carry 50 per cent of all sea-bound cargoes.

According to the law, foreign vessels need to apply to the Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) in Chattogram to obtain a waiver certificate 15 days before they load

or unload any cargo for Bangladesh, which would enable national flag vessels get adequate cargoes.

In a circular issued on September 17, the MMD stated that the provision would be effective from today.

However, container carrying feeder vessel operators find the provision to be an obstacle to their trade.

Bangladesh Shipping Agents Association (BSAA) Chairman Ahsanul Huq Chowdhury sent letters to the MMD's principal officer and director general of the Department of Shipping on September 21 and September 29 respectively, demanding a full withdrawal of the circular.

In his letter, the BSAA chairman said vessels go to and from Chattogram port and other ports in the sub-continent and neighbouring countries in a very short period of time with voyages not lasting more than 5 days.

But it is not possible for feeder operators to select vessels, book cargoes and complete other related procedures within 15 days, the letter read.

This is why applying for the waiver certificate 15 days before loading cargo is quite impossible, Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

He went on to say that like all other countries that offer different

facilities to ship import or export goods in order to support foreign trade, the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) has relaxed the cut-off time or gate-in time of export-laden containers to support the apparel sector.

Garment exports would be hampered due to the MMD circular, according to the letter.

The BSAA came to know from the MMD website that they also need permission from the Bangladesh Ocean Going Ship Owners Association to obtaining a waiver certificate, which is illogical, Chowdhury said.

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NBR looking into Evaly's tax records

SOHEL PARVEZ

The National Board of Revenue has opened an investigation to find out whether e-commerce platform Evaly has dodged income tax, according to a senior official of the NBR.

"We are working on it," said the official, who is a member of the NBR's Central Intelligence Cell (CIC), on condition of anonymity yesterday.

The NBR decided to look into Evaly's tax compliance records following a recommendation from the commerce ministry last month.

The ministry also said that it received complaints of anti-consumer rights practices against the e-commerce platform. It carried out a primary investigation into the company.

The commerce ministry wanted a closer examination of the company's tax payment records after it found that Evaly's paid-up capital was Tk 5 lakh when it was registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms in 2018. The paid-up capital grew to Tk 1 crore as of February this year, according to a document from the ministry.

The NBR was asked to check if Evaly is compliant with the country's income tax laws and informed the ministry of its findings.

As such, the CIC asked Evaly to submit its business model, transaction, accounting procedure and income tax payment records.

The cell also directed Evaly Managing Director Mohammad Rassel to appear for a hearing on Tuesday, which he duly attended, the official said.

The e-commerce company submitted its income tax returns for the years 2018-19 and 2019-20, according to the NBR.

Earlier this month, the NBR sought the account information of Evaly Chairman Shamima Nasrin and the managing director from their banks.

"We are yet to receive any information on their banking accounts or transaction history," said another tax official.

In August, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit froze the bank accounts of Rassel and Nasrin following reports of over-charging by the company and allegations of rampant delays in product delivery even after taking money from customers.

Rassel was not available for comments.

The NBR was asked to check if Evaly is compliant with the country's income tax laws and informed the commerce ministry of its findings

A boost for daily wage earners at govt offices

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has increased the daily wage by Tk 100 for skilled regular and unskilled irregular workers employed at the offices of city corporations and other district and divisional administrations.

The increment came about to counter the fallouts of the coronavirus pandemic and the high cost of basic commodities, a senior official of the finance ministry said.

The ministry issued a circular on October 12 in this regard with immediate effect.

According to the circular, a skilled regular worker at the city corporations of Dhaka and Chattogram will now receive Tk

600 per day.

The amount has been fixed at Tk 575 per day for unskilled irregular workers in city corporations of Dhaka and Chattogram.

The skilled regular workers at the offices of divisional and other city corporations of the country will receive Tk 600 as their wage every day. The amount for the unskilled irregular workers employed on a daily basis at those offices has been fixed at Tk 550.

The amount is Tk 550 a day for skilled regular workers at the offices at district and upazila levels and Tk 500 for unskilled irregular workers. The offices will have to bear the costs from their coffer, the circular said.

Local assembly should ensure fair competition in car industry

Says a leader of reconditioned vehicle importers' association

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The government's plan to introduce 'made in Bangladesh' cars will benefit the country only if a level playing field is created for the reconditioned and locally assembled motor vehicles.

The government should not provide one-sided benefit to the manufacturers, while it should also be ensured that the locally assembled vehicles meet international standards.

So says Mohammad Shahidul Islam, secretary general of the Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association (Barvida).

"We are not against the Automobile Industry Development Policy 2020, but the government should move to eliminate any uneven competition in the market," said Islam, also the chairman of HNS Group, a major trading house that imports cars from Japan.

"We want 'Made in Bangladesh' cars since it will be a source of national pride if international standards are met," he said during an interview with The Daily Star recently.

The automobile industry is highly sophisticated as vehicles have to meet certain safety measures and so, maintaining compliance with international standards is crucial.

Therefore, the government should first ensure that factories are compliant before rushing into the manufacturing process, Islam added.

The government should allow the

use complete-knock down-kits (CKD) instead of semi-knock-down (SKD) kits for local assembly, he said.

If entrepreneurs set up CKD assembly or manufacturing plants, it will generate employment and brighten the country's image in the process.

Various automakers from India are planning to assemble their cars in Bangladesh to provide the vehicles at a cheaper rate.

However, the government will have to keep customer choice and product quality in mind when allowing these companies to set up operations here, Islam said.

Bangladeshi consumers are very aware about automobile standards and typically prefer Japanese cars.

Barvida caters to 95 per cent of the total domestic demand for motor vehicles by importing over 100 different models to meet varying demands.

"It would not be possible to locally assemble this many cars of different makes and models to suit customer demand," he added.

Barvida imports environment-friendly Japanese cars at a cheap rate but due to high custom duties, the price increases at consumer level.

To address this issue, the authorities concerned should keep a maximum 70 to 80 per cent gap in import duties between CKD kits and completely-built-units (CBU), or reconditioned cars, to maintain competitiveness.

But under the proposed policy,



Mohammad Shahidul Islam

CKDs would be given preference even though there is already a substantial gap between the two segments.

"The new duty structure has national interest. So, the National Board of Revenue should play a pivotal role in this regard," Islam said.

Currently, Pragoti locally assembles cars made by Japan's Mitsubishi Motors while PHP Motors, a sister concern of the PHP Family based in Chattogram, assembles cars designed by Malaysia's PROTON Holdings Berhad.

Besides, Indian automotive giants Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra recently showed interest in setting up similar partnerships with local manufacturers to grab a bigger slice of the growing Bangladesh automobile market.

At present, about 63 vehicles are

sold across the country each day.

When the market had just started to take off in 2012, the daily figure was 29, indicating a 117 per cent increase in the last eight years, according to Barvida.

In 2019, car sales amounted to Tk 5,000 crore, which was more or less the same as the receipts for the year before.

Bangladesh's thriving automobile sector has grown 8 per cent on average annually since 2012, industry insiders said.

According to the draft policy, the local automobile industry has been considered a potentially major industrial sector for the last two decades as it has registered impressive annual compound growth and contributes greatly to the national economy.

The sector is nearing critical mass thanks to its ability to adopt new technologies and increased efficiency in human resource management.

At present, the passenger car market in Bangladesh sees 23,000 units sold per year with around just 3,000 of these units being brand new.

The demand for passenger cars could cross 100,000 units though when locally manufactured cars become available as it will subsequently bring prices down to a reasonable level, as per the proposed policy.

The growing demand for motor vehicles is a result of the rise in purchasing power of the burgeoning middle-class.

Bangladesh's automobile industry could even become a part of the global supply chain in the future, it added.

Under the new policy, the government will help provide manufacturing facilities to private industries in order to attract more foreign direct investment for the automobile sector and reduce the country's dependence on imported cars.

Policy incentives from foreign automakers can be applied for SKD assembly as the market develops as well.

The capacity of SKD production may vary widely from 2,000, 3,000 units to 12,000 units per year.

However, if the annual sales figure struggles to cross 5,000 units, then the foreign automakers would go for tie-ups with local companies to assemble or manufacture vehicles using original equipment, instead of making direct investment.

To ensure safety, product efficiency and environmental sustainability in the automotive industry and programmes will be put in place to promote the research, design, and development of locally produced automotive products, according to the policy.

The government will also promote research and development (R&D) in the automotive industry by providing suitable fiscal and financial incentives.

Barvida's Islam appreciated the government's U-turn on implementing a total ban on the import of reconditioned cars over the next five years as an immediate ban would be suicidal for the economy.

This is because the government earns at least Tk 4,000 crore directly from the import duties on reconditioned cars each year.

Besides, Barvida helps the government in terms of economic development by paying value added tax and income tax.

Over the last 30 years, around Tk 20,000 crore has been invested in the sector, which generates at least 30,000 opportunities for direct employment at different showrooms and offices across the country, Islam said.

Imported reconditioned cars have zero carbon emissions as the Japanese government provides environmental clearance before exporting any vehicle while brand new cars do not face any such scrutiny, he added.

Islam urged the government to set up a quality control institute for both the imported brand new and reconditioned passenger cars in order to avoid any adverse environmental complications due to increased carbon emissions.

Islam also suggested that detailed studies should be conducted before setting up CKD assembly or manufacturing plants to ensure the feasibility of investment as there is lack of necessary physical infrastructure for cars in Bangladesh.

"We need huge advancements in connectivity, which means new flyovers, expressways and improved rural road connectivity before giving go-ahead to an increase in the number of passenger cars."

The government should not provide one-sided benefit to the manufacturers, while it should also be ensured that the locally assembled vehicles meet international standards