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CSCX ▲ 0.41%  
8,560.05  
(Wednesday closings)

**Asian Markets**

MUMBAI ▲ 0.70%  
17,464.81

TOKYO Closed

SINGAPORE ▲ 0.62%  
2,897.62

SHANGHAI ▲ 0.45%  
3,277.14

**Commodities**

**Gold** ▲  
\$1,105.20  
(per ounce)

**Oil** ▲  
\$79.83  
(per barrel)  
SOURCE: AFP (Midday Trade)

**News in Brief**

**Ban on aromatic rice export widens**

UNB, Dhaka

The government extended the ban on aromatic rice export for another six months as a measure to keep the domestic market under control.

"Aromatic rice export is prohibited for the next 6 months," the commerce ministry said in a notice.

In the wake of rising price, the ban was imposed initially for six months, which ended yesterday.

**PSI system extended for another year**

UNB, Dhaka

The government has extended the pre-shipment inspection (PSI) system for another year (up to December 31, 2010).

Finance Minister AMA Muhith signed the extension paper last afternoon, the last day of the previous extension.

"Yes, the finance minister signed the extension proposal," NBR Chairman Dr Nasiruddin Ahmed told the news agency over telephone.

The government has extended the contract with the PSI companies for another year in order to give time to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) for adequate capacity building.

**Energy crisis biggest challenge, says Muhith**

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Finance minister AMA Muhith has identified three major challenges for this year -- easing energy crisis, increasing public investment and ensuring good governance.

He billed the energy crisis as the biggest challenge.

"If the deficiency in power and energy sector cannot be minimised, there will be no development. This is the biggest challenge," Muhith said yesterday.

He said these while talking to journalists at the signing ceremony for handing over the undertaking of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank and Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha to newly formed Bangladesh Development Bank Ltd at finance division.

**Contact Us**

If you have views on Star Business or news about business in Bangladesh, please email us at [business@thedailystar.net](mailto:business@thedailystar.net)



SHAFIQUL ALAM

A woman picks her choice from a florist in Dhaka on the New Year's Eve yesterday. Florists count brisk sales as people from all walks of life buy flowers to greet their loved ones with.

## Hope rings in New Year

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Businesses of different sectors have expressed mixed hopes on Bangladesh's economic success this year.

The financial sector sees the declining investment demand as the major challenge for 2010, while telecom, pharmaceuticals and tourism expect a good year on the back of growing domestic demand.

Apparel exporters also predict a good business in 2010 by entering new markets and on the recovery signs in the global economy. For the agriculture sector, it is a challenging year in terms of food security. Stock market hopes to continue its bullish trend.

However, all the sectors have identified energy crisis as the greatest challenge for the year. For the first time, some of the sector people have brought in the traffic congestion issue, which they said, is eating up productivity.

Banks have identified sustenance of demand from the international markets for Bangladeshi products and services as the critical barometer for its economic success.

"Banks' activities will increase because of a growing demand for money from public-private partnership projects, power plants and export processing zones," said Helal Ahmed Chowdhury, managing director of Pubali Bank.

Anis A Khan, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, said exporters were able to maintain their volumes by cutting prices last year, but it is still difficult to forecast for 2010.

Telecom people said the sector's growth would depend on government policy supports and conditions in licence renewal process of four mobile operators -- Grameenphone, Banglalink, AKTEL and Citycell.

Zakiul Islam, president of Association of Mobile

Telecom Operators Bangladesh, said Indian telecom giant Bharti Airtel's entry might bring something new.

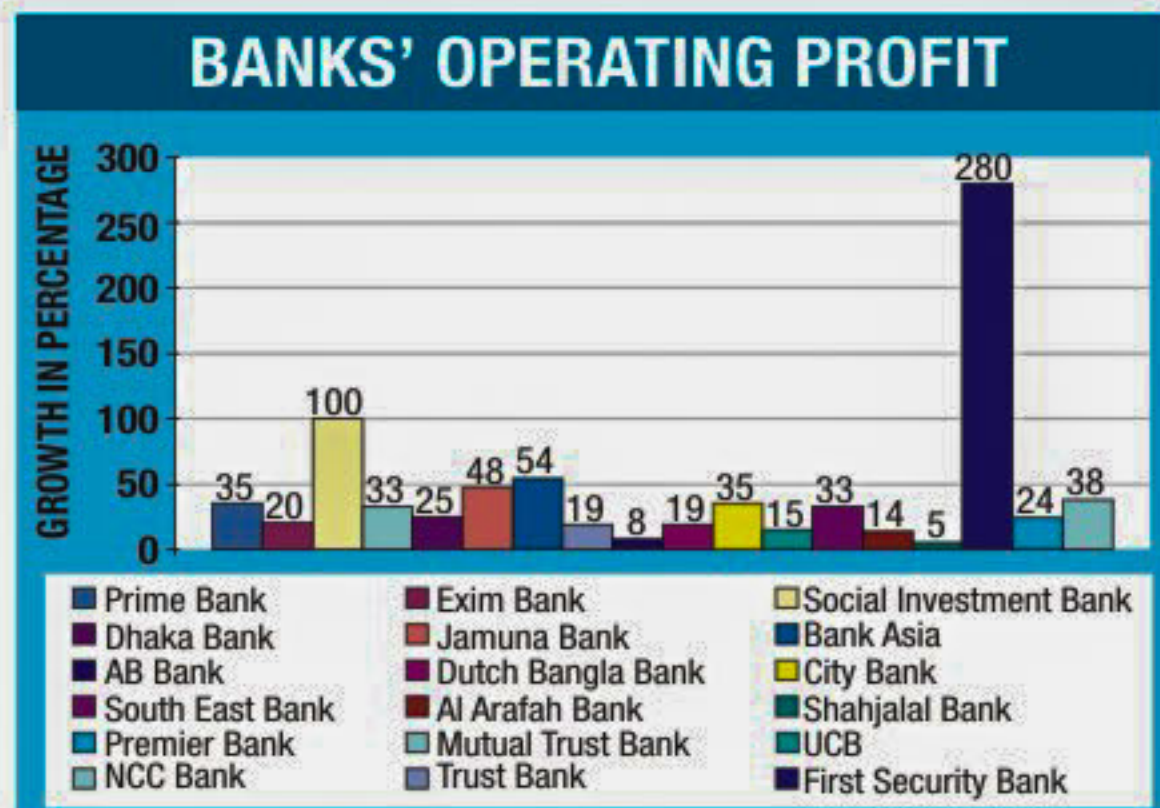
Pharmaceutical industry hopes the business would grow by 15-20 percent in 2010. Leading pharmaceutical companies such as Acme, Square, Eskayef and ACI are set to expand operations this year to meet the growing local demand for anti-cancer and anti-AIDS drugs.

Apparel exporters are upbeat, and cautious too.

"We hope the world economy will rebound this year. If the environment remains calm, we will be able to export more," said KM Rezaul Hasanat, chairman and managing director of Viyellatex Group.

Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Ziaul Haque Khondker said: "SEC considers introducing special products to attract investors and maintain a stable growth."

## Banks shine



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Banks made hefty profits in 2009, despite sluggish investment and the global recession.

Barring a few exceptions, most banks made operating profits between 20 percent and 40 percent in 2009, compared to a year ago.

The banks fleshed out balance sheets on the last day of 2009, but statistics of accounts were not available with all banks.

Officials said private banks were able to make huge profits from the share market.

Besides, their earnings were boosted by the remittances and export-import business. Among the banks, Islami Bank profited Tk 843 crore this year, 2 percent higher than last year.

## State of the economy in 2009

WAHIDUDDIN MAHMUD

The outgoing year of 2009 coincides with the first year of the newly elected Awami League-led government. Economic performance, however, reflects the effects of policies only with a time lag, so that the positive or negative outcomes of this year cannot be directly attributed to what policies the government pursued since its coming to power. The year's economic performance also largely reflects the impact of the global recession, making it difficult to pass a judgment about whether an outcome is because of, or in spite of, certain policies.

On the positive side, Bangladesh has emerged as one of the countries least affected by the global economic downturn. Export growth, which has been near zero on a year on year basis, may appear disappointing, but is still far superior to the large contraction of export experienced worldwide, including in most developing countries. The growth of GDP has been fairly robust at nearly 6 percent annually, made possible by strong growth performance of agriculture and other sectors -- mainly construction, services and informal manufacturing -- mostly catering to the domestic market. Both disbursement and repayment of agricultural credit has increased substantially. The growth of remittances from migrant workers remains strong, in spite of falling numbers of workers going abroad. And the government's revenue earnings have increased at a modest rate, despite the stagnation, and even decline, in import trade.

On the negative side, there are several risk factors confronting the economy. First, although there are signs of a global economic recovery, our export trade is not still out of the woods. Globally, garment exports were affected to a lesser extent and at a later stage than the exports of, say, electronic products or automobiles. And, among the garment exporting countries, Bangladesh has been less severely affected because of its reputation as one of the lowest-cost sources of supply. But the process may now work in the reverse order, making Bangladesh's export outlook less encouraging as and when a global economic recovery begins. Moreover, the garment industry in Bangladesh is extremely diverse in terms of size of factories, management cultures, and production and marketing efficiency. Some units have closed down, while others have expanded their operation even during the recession. There will be a need for

restructuring of the sector in order to stay competitive, particularly as there will be more pressure for wage increases.

The second worrying aspect is the sign of continuing lack of business confidence. The import of capital machinery and industrial raw materials have continued to fall, as much as by about 20 percent, on a year on year basis, in each of these two import categories during the first quarter of the current fiscal year. The accumulation of foreign reserves is partly due to strong growth in workers' remittances, but is partly also a reflection of stagnation or contraction in investment and manufacturing activities. In the absence of hard evidence-based analyses, one can only guess about the factors that are inhibiting private investment: excess production capacity resulting from export shortfall, uncertainty about the policy environment, and a poor outlook for the gas and power supply.

Thirdly, the inflation rate, after an initial cooling down, is on the rise again. As expected, the price hikes in the markets for essentials are continuously subjected to public scrutiny; but less attention is paid to the rate of expansion of money supply -- currently at about 19 percent annually -- which underlies the overall inflationary tendencies. The build-up of foreign reserves is one factor that fuels domestic money supply; but a picking up of the rate of expansion of credit to the private sector is also adding to the pressure on the money supply. How does one explain this credit expansion in the face of dwindling import demand and stagnating levels of industrial activities? It is true that agricultural credit disbursement has accelerated, but so has credit repayment. Industrial term loan has in fact fallen. The central bank should look at the uses of the borrowed money and should satisfy itself that the credit expansion is contributing to economic recovery.

The lack of reliable up-to-date data remains the single most important obstacle in assessing the current performance of the economy. At a time of economic volatility, economic analyses need to be based on at least quarterly, if not monthly, data. The state of our official national statistics is such that, on a real-time basis, not merely the future, even the past is uncertain. The situation calls for a remedy on an urgent basis.

Wahiduddin Mahmud is professor of economics, University of Dhaka, and chairman, Panel of Economists for the Sixth Five Year Plan.



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**Duties and Responsibilities**

- Organize and maintain CEO & MD's office so that day to day office functioning of CEO & MD's Secretariat runs smoothly
- Compose and prepare various types of reports for CEO & MD's information. Maintain all documents / Correspondences of CEO & MD's Secretariat in systematic manner
- Follow up all the assignments given by CEO & MD with the deadline to accelerate the work & follow up actions on pending matters
- Plan and arrange travel itineraries, schedules and process expenses
- Check mail of CEO & MD and go through minutely for the next course of action and present it timely to CEO & MD

**Required qualifications and Experience**

- Bachelor's/Master's degree in any subject from any reputed university
- Minimum 3 years experience in secretarial/administrative support management

**Competencies**

- Smart, self motivated, excellent interpersonal skills
- Excellent communication skills in English both verbal & written
- Knowledge of Microsoft Office and telephone protocol
- Excellent organizational skills and discretion with confidential information

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