STOCKS	Week-on-week	COMMODITIES	As of Friday	ASIAN MARKETS			Friday closings	CURRENCIES		STANDARD CHARTERED BANK		
DGEN	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI		USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
▲ 1.73%	▲ 2.07%	▼ $1,548.60 (per ounce)	▼ $92.51 (per barrel)	▼ 1.62%	▼ 0.45%	▼ 0.44%	▼ 0.58%	BUY TK	77.20	99.29	116.13	0.74
3,720.35	7,060.46			18,242.56	13,487.88	3,294.19	2,206.78	SELL TK	78.20	103.30	120.13	0.83

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Star BUSINESS

DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 14, 2013, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

Work to become next China must start now: WB

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country has the potential to capture at least 15 million jobs in the next ten years, said the World Bank.

"Recent reports (e.g., McKinsey/USAID) have shown that the productivity of Bangladeshi workers is on par with Chinese workers in well-managed firms with their wages being five times lower than those of their Chinese counterparts (half those in Vietnam)," said the WB.

The country's unique competitive position comes at a time when China is in the process of outsourcing 80 million jobs from labour-intensive industries.

"This historical opportunity will not last for infinite period -- it is time-bound. So to avail the opportunity we have to start working to that end right now," said Zahid Hussain, WB's lead economist, yesterday.

Accordingly, the multilateral financial institution suggested four tangible actions for the government.

Based on its calculations on Bangladesh's export processing zones (EPZs) and those of other countries, it said around 40,000 acres of land is needed, to be dedicated to EPZs, for the purpose of creating 15 million jobs.

"Economic zones will provide the private sector with easy access to land and an improved infrastructure and streamlined administrative procedures."

Some of the land could come from rejuvenating idle state-owned enterprises (following the successful model of the Adamjee Jute Mills) and moribund tea estates, it said.

The public-private partnership office need to manage the tendering for needed infrastructure such as power and transport that the zones will need to operate.

An additional 5,000 megawatt of electricity will be needed for the creation of 15 million jobs, according to WB.

"This does not need to be a drain on public finances as the private sector would be eager to pay the full market price for quality power and transport infrastructure."

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From right, **AK Azad, president of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries; Osman Farruq, former education minister; Rehman Sobhan, chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue; Tofail Ahmed, a lawmaker and former minister; Abdul Awal Mintoo, former president of FBCCI; and Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of CPD, attend a dialogue on the implications of political shocks on the economy, at Hotel Lakeshore in Dhaka yesterday.**

Economy in double jeopardy: CPD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The ongoing violent political activities have put the economy in "double jeopardy", an economist said yesterday.

There is already a slowdown in investment and economic growth, and political shocks on economy are leading to a further downtrend, Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said.

"All these may not only compel Bangladesh to miss out on the emerging global opportunities, but also weaken the attained socio-economic achievements of the country," Bhattacharya said.

The research organisation yesterday came up with a new estimate on how shutdowns put financial burden on the economy.

If a shutdown causes at least 1 percent decline in the supply of capital, it will eventually eat up around 0.9 percent or $1 billion of the country's GDP a year, it said.

Exports lose $583 million and imports $284 million a year due to the 1 percent capital loss, which is equivalent to $562.5 million (Tk 4,500 crore).

Bhattacharya was speaking at a dialogue -- Bangladesh 2013: Assessing Economic Implications of the Present Political Shocks -- at Hotel Lakeshore in Dhaka.

Whatever the reasons for the shutdowns may be, the fact of such programmes being economically harmful at multiple levels cannot be ignored, Bhattacharya said.

He said due to the ongoing political agitations, often manifested through violent and series of shutdowns, concerns are being raised about their economic consequences.

The economist also said the International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and global rating agency Moody's have expressed concern about the political turmoil in the country and warned of a lower economic expansion this year.

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Taka continues to gain against dollar

Exports get expensive, imports cheaper

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

The taka continues to rise against the dollar, meaning the country's exports have become more expensive and imports cheaper.

The central bank's purchase of dollars from banks could not stop the fall of the greenback.

The inter-bank exchange rate was Tk 78.05 on April 10, which was Tk 78.75 on March 10, Bangladesh Bank data shows.

The dollar traded at Tk 79 on February 10, Tk 79.60 on January 10, Tk 80.9 on December 10 and Tk 81.68 on November 10.

The BC (bills for collections/import payments) selling rate is Tk 0.50 higher than the inter-bank rate, meaning that an importer can buy a dollar at Tk 78.50, which was Tk 82.50 a year ago.

"We are getting 5 percent less value for a dollar than six months ago. It is becoming difficult for us to adjust this price fall of the dollar against the taka," said Mahmud Hasan Khan, managing director of Rising Group, a leading apparel exporter.

Exporters blamed lower imports for this continuous fall. BB data validates exporters' claim.

Letters of credit against imports worth $2.509 billion were settled in February against $2.771 billion in January 2013, while LCs worth $2.789 billion were opened in February compared to $3.228 billion in January.

"Imports have gone down further to around $2 billion in March due to the violent political situation," said a senior BB official seeking anonymity as the data is yet to be officially finalised.

The taka depreciated by more than 15 percent against the dollar in 2011. In the beginning of 2011, a dollar sold at Tk 71 for import payments. The exchange rate crossed Tk 85 in January 2012. However, the taka began appreciating against the dollar in the second quarter of 2012.

The exchange rate was steady at Tk 68-Tk 69 for a long time, between 2004 and 2010.

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First Bangla search engine Pipilika takes off

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Third from right, **ICT Minister Mostafa Faruque Mohammed launches the first-ever Bangla search engine at a ceremony at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.**

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The first Bangla-language search engine, pipilika.com, took off yesterday, aiming to bring about further advancement of the language.

The search engine, with a storage capacity of 4 terabyte, was born out of an undergraduate project at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), with technical and financial assistance from Grameenphone IT Ltd.

"Not many nations have a claim to such a search engine in their own language," said Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, professor of the university, who supervised the project.

The site is backed up by a dictionary of Bangla Academy spelling rules, which will suggest corrections for all mistakes in the language.

The search engine will fish out content from all Bangla newspapers, blogs, encyclopaedia, business, politics, entertainment, lifestyle, sports, and government websites.

Ruhul Amin Sajib, chief researcher of the project, said they have taken all possible preparations to manage hits on the search engine, including speed, storage and security.

"When search through Bangla language increases, the number of Bangla websites will also increase," he said.

Mostafa Faruque Mohammed, minister of information and communication technology, who inaugurated the website, said the search engine would spark off content development in Bangla and ultimately contribute to the advancement of the language.

A team of 11 researchers and developers of Computer Science and Engineering Department of SUST has developed the search engine, which will be operated by both GPIT and SUST as a joint venture.