

আপনার বিআরটিএ ফি এবং সকল ইউটিলিটি বিল এসআইবিএল এর যে কোন শাখার মাধ্যমে জমা দিন

* ফ্রি অনলাইন সেবা
যে কোন প্রয়োজনে ০৯৬৯২০০৯২২

Star BUSINESS

DHAKA SUNDAY FEBRUARY 21, 2016

Equip youth with skills to accelerate growth

Economists say at SANEM conference

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh should equip its largely young population with skills to reap the benefits of demographic dividend as it strives to become a higher middle-income country, economists said yesterday.

The country has not benefited from the demographic dividend adequately, said Wahiduddin Mahmud, an economist, while giving a keynote speech at the SANEM annual economists' conference themed "Bangladesh: Way towards a middle-income country".

The daylong event was organised by the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling or SANEM, a non-profit research network of economists and policymakers in South Asia with a special emphasis on economic modelling.

He said Bangladesh had a demographic dividend prematurely in the 1980s despite lower levels of per capita income, which is now helping maintain the current growth rate.

"But the bad news is, we may exhaust the demographic dividend earlier as the proportion of dependants and elderly people is increasing."

Mahmud said the major setback to the demographic dividend is that most of the workforce is untrained, semi-skilled or uneducated.

Creating appropriate employability for the workforce will be a real challenge for Bangladesh, he said.

There is a need for a link between educational institutions and industries so that the former caters to the skill needs of the latter,

according to Mahmud.

He also said attention has to be paid to small and medium enterprises as they are a key growth driver and give cushion to the economy during shocks.

Environmental sustainability, expansion of Dhaka city and climate change are the other key issues that Bangladesh has to deal with in the coming years, Mahmud added.

KAS Murshid, director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, however, said: "If we end up exporting demographic dividend then what benefit will be left?"

Martin Rama, chief economist of the World Bank for South Asia, said Bangladesh has to create jobs that cater to demand in order to reap the benefit of demographic dividend.

Speaking from Nepal through video-conferencing, the WB official also said Bangladesh has to do better in terms of the quality of policies and institutions.

Citing the Global Competitiveness Reports of the World Economic Forum, he said the country has not done well either when it comes to public trust in politicians, judiciary independence and governance agenda.

He said Bangladesh also needs to accelerate growth, better quality of electricity supply and improve port infrastructure.

Speaking at a panel discussion on economic growth, Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive director of the Power and Participation Research Centre, said there is a political stability in Bangladesh at one level, whether through neutralising or managing protests.

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Digital content for grassroots people is the way forward

Analysts say at roundtable organised by Oxfam, The Daily Star and Monash University

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

An ICT expert yesterday recommended generating digital contents or solutions for the grassroots people to get the expected outcomes from the digital drive.

"The importance from the state has been given on providing devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers. But we do not provide contents for them," said Mustafa Jabbar, a former president of Bangladesh Computer Samity.

"We provide the device first and then the contents, when it should be the other way round."

The focus should be on quality, not on quantity, Jabbar said.

"We are developing 500 apps, but if 499 of these are not helpful, what are the benefits of these apps?"

Jabbar came up with the suggestions during a roundtable on the identification of gaps for grassroots people in their access to ICT.

Oxfam, The Daily Star and Monash University jointly organised the roundtable at The Daily Star Centre. The discussion was moderated by MB Akhter, programme director of Oxfam.

Jabbar said the contents would have to be in both online and offline formats. The contents will have to be interactive and multimedia-based.



Analysts attend a roundtable on grassroots people's access to ICT, at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

Earlier, while presenting a keynote paper on "digital Bangladesh", he said the number of mobile connections in Bangladesh was 4.46 crore in 2008. It stood at 13.31 crore in 2015.

The number of internet users, which were 12 lakh in 2008, rose to 5.39 crore in 2015.

Worldwide, the number of mobile connections is 706 crore and the internet users are 320 crore, said Jabbar, also the chief executive officer of Ananda Computers.

"No-one was using Facebook in 2008, but now 1.7 crore people are engaged with the social media in Bangladesh," he said, adding that the most significant issue is that Tk 550 crore are being transacted a day through mobile banking.

Of the handset imports, 20 percent are smartphones and the rest are basic phones.

"It is necessary to transform the situation," he said, while stressing on research on transformation.

Jabbar went on to cite the case of Mexico, where internet access is a constitutional right. "It should be the same in Bangladesh."

Saiful Huda, a professor at Hajeer Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University, said the apps should be developed based on the demand of grassroots people. "We should know what the grassroots people want."

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ERF celebrates gala night

Eight journalists, one economist awarded

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Economic Reporters' Forum yesterday honoured eight journalists for their excellence in business journalism and one economist for his service to the country's economy.

Monzur Ahmed of Bangla-language daily Prothom Alo and Obaidullah Rony of Samakal jointly won the Best Economic Reporting award in the banking category.

Fakhrul Islam Harun and Sujoy Mohajan, both from Prothom Alo, won the accolade in the consumer rights and capital market categories respectively.

Sohel Parvez, a senior reporter of The Daily Star, was awarded for his reporting on the macro-economy, while Alamgir Hossain of Jamuna Television won the award in the TV reporting category.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith handed the awards at the ERF Awards Night at the capital's Sonargaon Hotel.

Shamsul Huq Zahid, joint editor of The Financial Express, and Shahiduzzaman, editor of the News Network, were given the gratitude award for their contribution in establishing the association.

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From right, Shahiduzzaman, editor of the News Network; AMA Muhith, finance minister; Wahiduddin Mahmud, an economist; Sultan Mahmud, president of Economic Reporters' Forum; Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue; Shamsul Huq Zahid, joint editor of The Financial Express; and Sajjadur Rahman, general secretary of the forum, attend the ERF Awards Night at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

State banks' default loans continue to soar

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Default loans of state banks, especially BASIC and Sonali, continue to swell in spite of the performance contracts and restructuring of big loans.

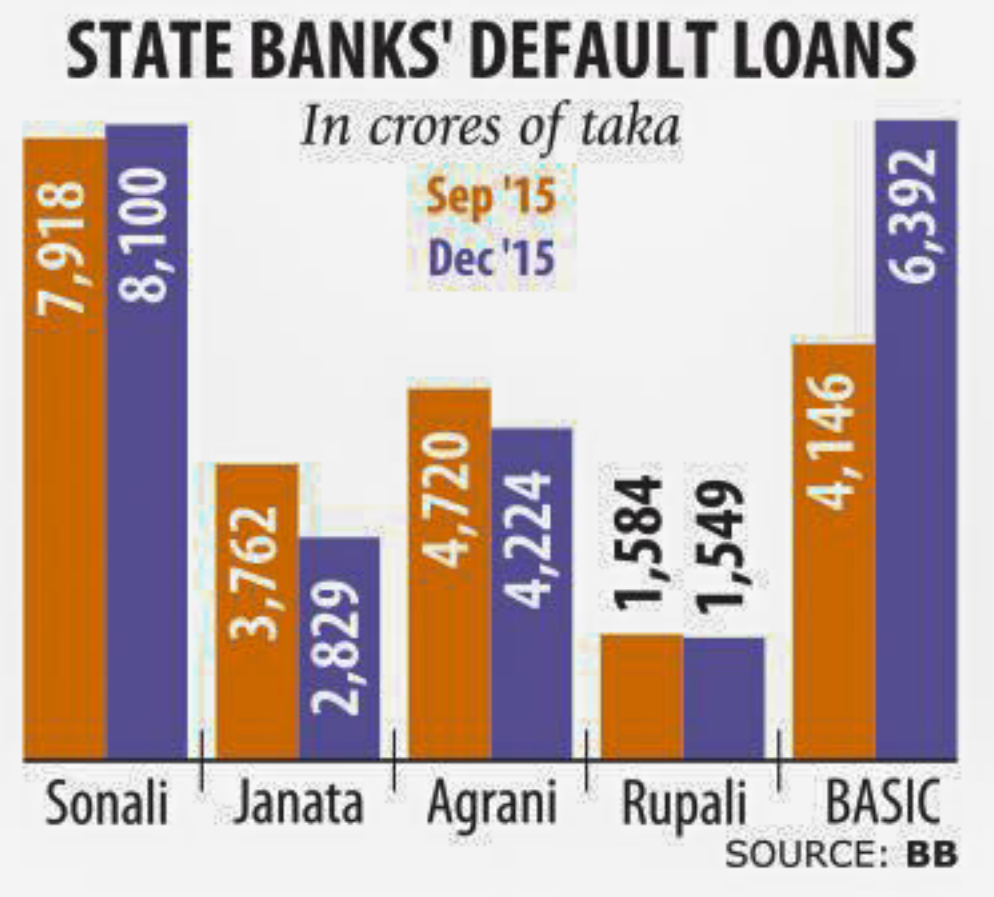
Between September 30 and December 31 last year, BASIC Bank's defaults rose 54 percent. The bank had Tk 6,392 crore of bad loans during the period, which was 50 percent of its total outstanding loans.

The loan situation of Sonali Bank did not improve much either.

At the end of December 2015, the bank's default loans stood at Tk 8,100 crore in contrast to Tk 7,918 crore three months earlier.

The situation of Agrani and Janata has improved though.

Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, a former central bank deputy governor, said if loans are given with a proper professional attitude, it is



unlikely to become bad.

In the last several years, banks sanctioned some loans through corrupt practices, as a result of which the loans of state banks are not being recovered, he said.

If the banks' influential people, especially the chairmen and the managing directors, are dishonest or weak, it is difficult to improve the condition of the banks, he added.

Early this month, Finance Minister AMA Muhith, at the annual conference of Janata Bank, said it will take a long time to recover from the losses inflicted by Sonali's and BASIC's reckless business practices.

A big robbery and a scam took place at Sonali and looting in the hands of high-level officials at BASIC Bank, Muhith said.

"We will have to work hard to heal the wounds these two banks have inflicted upon us. It shouldn't be correct to say that we have fully recovered -- it will take awhile to recover from the losses."

Banking Division Secretary M Aslam Alam said the government has been taking steps to improve the condition of state banks.

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Smartphone imports rise 39pc

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Smartphone imports through legal channels increased 39 percent to 56.27 lakh pieces in 2015 from a year earlier, mostly led by low-cost devices.

Although smartphone imports and sales are increasing fast, the market is still dominated by the feature phones accounting for 50 percent of the market in 2015, according to Bangladesh Mobile Phone Importers Association.

Around 21 percent of the mobile phones imported last year were smartphones. Basic phones accounted for 29 percent of imports.

Although last year's smartphone sales did not meet expectations, Rezwanul Hoque, general secretary of BMPIA, is optimistic, going so far as to forecast a trebling of market share in the next five years.

In 2015, the association failed to reach its target of importing 60 lakh pieces of smartphones.

"Smartphones will rule the future market for handsets," Hoque said.

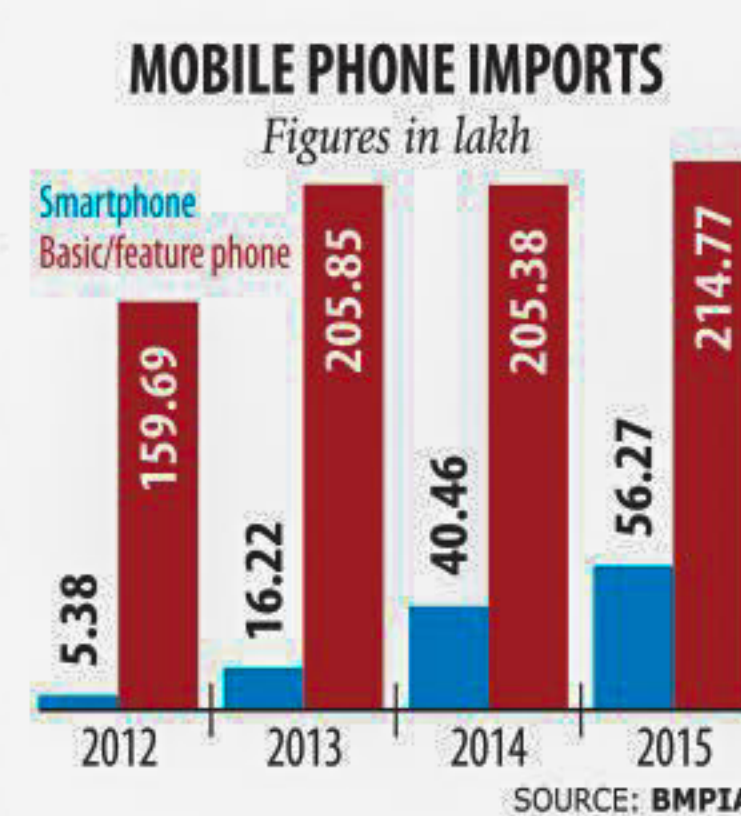
For 2016, BMPIA has set the target of importing 90 lakh pieces of smartphones. The total import target for mobile phones is about three crore.

Around 30 percent of the 8.92 crore active handsets in Bangladesh were brought in through illegal channels, according to the association.

To improve the situation, importers have moved to curb the inflow of unregistered and smuggled handsets into Bangladesh. At present, handsets worth about Tk 9,000 crore are sold a year and the amount is expected to reach Tk 25,000 crore by 2020, according to the importers' association.

Currently, the average price of a smartphone in the country is about Tk 3,500, which is Tk 1,200 for basic and feature phones, importers said.

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Banglalink employees seek PM's help in resolving dispute

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Some aggrieved employees of Banglalink yesterday sought help from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the successful registration of a proposed employee union.

"We are calling for the intervention of the prime minister in some critical areas -- registration of our union, stopping harass-

ment by the management and job security," said Bakhtiar Hossain, general secretary of the proposed Banglalink Employees Union. Hossain spoke at a press briefing at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

The employees also demanded reinstating Shariful Islam, a senior manager and an engineer at Banglalink.

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বিস্তারিত জানতে: ০২-৯৮৯২২২১

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যাদের মহান আহুত্যাগে একুশ পেয়েছে আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবসের স্বীকৃতি সেই সকল নির্ভীক ডায়া সৈনিকদের প্রতি আমাদের সশ্রদ্ধ অভিবাদন

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