

Bangladesh may lose

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There had already been uncertainty in the global economy and Brexit exacerbated it further, he said.

According to Zahid, the devaluation of the pound may have an immediate impact on Bangladesh's exports and remittance.

He, however, said the devaluation resulted from an overreaction which would cool down soon.

The UK is Bangladesh's third largest export destination after the US and Germany, and the second largest in Europe.

Bangladesh exported goods worth \$3.23 billion to the UK in 2014-15, registering a 21.28 percent growth from the previous year, according to the Export Promotion Bureau. Garments make up nearly 90 percent of the export figure.

As Britain chose to leave the EU, economists and exporters said it would be a major challenge for Bangladesh to retain duty-free trade privilege of its goods to the UK.

Because of Brexit, the whole EU as well as the UK would face an economic crisis. As a result, people would buy less and the exporting countries would feel the pinch, said Faruque Hassan, vice president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

He said once the UK leaves the EU, it would no longer depend on the EU for crucial decisions. In such a case, the trade privilege may be reduced, as there would be no partner to oppose the decisions.

The UK is not only an export destination. Many international companies are headquartered there. "This country is very important to us. The UK matters greatly in the future plan for expansion of our export basket in terms of value and volume," added Hassan.

Among western economies, the UK is the second biggest source of remittance for Bangladesh after the US. Migrant workers living in the UK send \$1 billion in remittance every year, contributing greatly to Bangladesh's remittance income of more than \$15 billion.

Because of the plunge in the pound,

migrant workers and non-resident Bangladeshis may postpone sending money back home until the currency revives, said Zahid.

The plunge may hit Bangladesh exporters, as purchase of goods or services by the UK from other countries will be more expensive.

Yesterday, the pound fell dramatically as the referendum outcome emerged. At one stage, it hit \$1.3236, a fall of more than 10 percent and a low not seen since 1985.

Zahid said Brexit could be contagious and provoke other EU countries to leave the bloc. And if that happened, Europe would be weakened further.

Brexit could spur a "tariff war" among countries as they may seek to raise customs and other duties to protect their domestic industries. If all countries impose import tariffs, the global trade would squeeze. "If the global trade squeezes, it will affect our economy," he said.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said that as a way forward, the Bangladesh government should start lobbying with the British government to retain the duty benefit Bangladesh enjoys from the EU.

He said Bangladesh's export to the UK would continue to grow because of the big number of non-resident Bangladeshis. "But we have to ensure duty-free market access."

His comments were backed by Zahid of the World Bank.

Exporters said if the UK continues to give Bangladesh duty-free benefit even after its exit from the EU, Bangladesh wouldn't face any challenge in terms of export.

Being a least developed country, Bangladesh has been enjoying the zero-duty benefit since 1971 under Everything But Arms scheme of the EU, a trade bloc of 28 European nations.

The EU is the largest export trade bloc for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh was able to reach its current position of the second largest apparel exporter worldwide due to EU's generous trade benefits since 1971.

Bangladesh now enjoys a 12.5 percent duty benefit, which means

Bangladeshi exporters don't have to pay any duty on export to this trade bloc.

"But if the UK discontinues the benefit, Bangladesh will lose its competitiveness to other competitors," said Ahsan.

The UK is a good destination not only for apparel, but also for fresh vegetables and agro-products because of the significant number of Bangladeshis residing in the UK.

Export of jackfruits and mangoes has risen recently. Other items high in demand are carrot, tomato, potato, eggplant, spinach, cauliflower, papaya, pumpkin, bottle gourd, cabbage, coriander leaf, okra, cucumber, bitter melon, bean, jute leaf, drumstick, radish, fish and meat. Local companies also export agro-processed food to the UK.

Bangladesh exports fruits and vegetables worth more than Tk 400 crore to the UK a year. Nearly 40 percent of the country's total export of vegetables, fruits and allied products a year is destined for the UK.

Garment shipments to the EU increased by 4.11 percent year-on-year to \$15.37 billion last fiscal year, according to the EPB.

At present, the 28-nation economic union accounts for 60.28 percent of the country's garment exports a year.

In Europe, Germany was the prime destination, as in previous years, accounting for \$4.33 billion of the \$15.37 billion export receipts.

The UK came in next, importing garment items worth \$2.9 billion from Bangladesh.

According to a note by London-based research firm Capital Economics, Brexit would cause at most a GDP drop of 0.2 percent across Asia.

The finding is based on a worst-case scenario estimate by London-based think tank National Institute of Economic and Social Research, which said Brexit would reduce British imports by 25 percent worldwide within two years.

Exports to the UK presently account for only 0.7 percent of Asian countries' GDP, said Capital Economics.

According to experts, it will take the UK at least two years -- if not more -- to sort out the historic exit from the 28-country bloc.

Sanders to vote

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be a disaster for this country if he were to be elected president."

Sanders has not yet formally conceded the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, but Clinton became the presumptive Democratic nominee as superdelegates committed to the former secretary of state and she won primaries in New Jersey and California.

Since then, Sanders has been plotting his political future and held a series of meetings with top Democrats, including President Barack Obama and Clinton herself as the party works to unify after the contentious primary.

On CNN, Sanders said while he knows he hasn't run a campaign that won the Democratic nomination, he still sees the chance for victory of sorts.

"I don't have the votes to become the Democratic nominee, you know that, I know that, we're good at arithmetic," Sanders told Cuomo.

But he said if he can get the party to embrace free public college tuition, a \$15 minimum wage and an aggressive battle with climate change, "you know what? I think I've run a winning campaign."

Office cake

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He will say nearly 65,000 adults every year need hospital treatment for tooth decay.

Prof Hunt will say: "Cake culture also poses difficulties for those who are trying their hardest to lose weight or become healthier - how many of us have begun such diets only to cave in to the temptation of the doughnuts, cookies or the triple chocolate biscuits?"

While he does not believe office cake should be banned, he will say it should be purchased in smaller quantities and consumed only with lunch.

Dentists recommend cutting down on sugary or starchy foods between meals as they give bacteria fuel to produce acids that decay teeth.

At the dinner, which is being rounded off with mint panna cotta, British strawberries and chocolate soil, Prof Hunt will say: "Ideally office workers should consider other alternatives altogether like fruit platters, nuts, or cheese.

"Responsible employers should take a lead and avoid such snacks in meetings."

Classes

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an international seminar on "Publishing in a Free World" jointly organised by the National Book Centre of the ministry of cultural affairs and the Academic and Creative Publishers Association of Bangladesh (ACPAB) at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel.

The two-day seminar concludes today. Founded in 1896, and based in Geneva, Switzerland, the IPA represents more than 60 associations in 50-plus countries, including the ACPAB, on all aspects of book and journal publishing.

Steward said the IPA recently joined forces with 15 NGOs, including PEN Bangladesh, PEN International, and Reporters Without Borders, that are equally worried about Bangladesh over its freedom of expression and freedom to publish "to urge the United Nations to concentrate more effort in the country."

"The UN Human Rights Council -- of which Bangladesh is a member -- is currently meeting in Geneva for its 32nd sitting, which includes discussion of a statement that we have jointly submitted.

"That text asks the Human Rights Council to press to press the government of Bangladesh to take urgent,

concrete steps to address the worsening conditions that are strangling freedom of expression in this country, he said.

Professor Emeritus Dr Anisuzzaman said bloggers and publishers were killed for their views. "In Bangladesh, majority of the people express their views against narrow-mindedness and bigotry, and I think any sensible man anywhere will join hands to stop these," he said.

He hoped that free thinking would triumph over. Richard Charkin, president of the IPA, said that freedom of expression around the world faces threats from the governments and misguided ideologists.

HT Imam, adviser to the prime minister, said the government is liberal in regard to freedom of expression. "Everyone has a right to talk, publish. I always personally believe that there is a distinction between liberty and licence," he said, adding that one must not attack other people's sentiment in the name of liberty.

Aktari Mamatz, secretary of the ministry of cultural affairs, Osman Gani, president of the ACPAB, and Mohammad Aktaruzzaman, director of the National Book Centre, among others, also spoke.

Cameron to resign by Oct

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by the move.
Cameron promised to try to "steady the ship" over the next months.

"I do not think it would be right for me to try to be the captain that steers our country to its next destination," the British leader said outside his Downing Street residence in London.

He said his successor should trigger the formal process for Britain to leave the European Union.

Flanked by his wife Samantha, Cameron said he had fought to retain Britain's membership of the EU "head, heart and soul -- I held nothing back".

But he added: "The British people have made a very clear decision to take a different path and as such, I think the country requires fresh leadership to take it in this direction."

Cameron called the referendum to attempt to solve party infighting and see off the threat of the Eurosceptic United Kingdom Independence Party.

It was a move that backfired spectacularly and led to his dramatic announcement exit after Brexit -- an erasing moment that will no doubt lead to him being remembered for generations to come as the man who took the country out of the European Union.

It's a huge blow to Cameron, who led the Conservative Party to victory in the 2015 general election and saw off the threat of Scottish independence a year before that.

Cameron had been regarded as a lucky politician by some of his closest colleagues but that luck ran out as the "Leave" campaign won 51.9 percent of the vote to win by 1,269,501 votes, with turnout at 72 percent.

The main opposition Labour party was not immune from the turmoil, either.

Its leader, veteran socialist Jeremy Corbyn, had campaigned reluctantly to keep Britain in the EU.

An MP has tabled a motion of no confidence in him following the result after many traditional Labour areas backed Brexit.

"The ramifications leave one giddy," wrote political commentator Matthew d'Ancona in The Guardian.

"Yes, this will have immense consequences for the Westminster drama: not only for David Cameron, who bet the farm and lost; but also for Jeremy

Concern over 'worsening'

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It's time to negotiate with UK

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would be huge, and competitive trade advantages may be eroded or compromised if Bangladesh fails to start negotiations to maintain status quo until the UK adopts new rules and regulations, experts said.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior Bangladeshi diplomat in the UK said the British government would start negotiations with the EU only after electing a new prime minister, likely in October.

"Negotiations may take years before the UK interacts with the rest of Europe on trade, common laws and movement of labour. However, things would change ultimately," he added.

Bangladeshi diplomats in Dhaka and in some Bangladesh missions in Europe said the government and the other authorities concerned have to observe carefully how India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka respond to the changes, because they might gain privileges than what they used to get previously.

It is generally assumed that the UK would maintain status quo for Bangladesh, but it might not be true as countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong, special administrative region of China, might get more privileges now, according to the diplomats.

Some politicians and experts argued that Britain won't do anything that might adversely affect Bangladesh. They viewed that the UK in the long run would be better off outside the EU, with full sovereignty and unfettered control over immigration and economic regulations. They were optimistic

about easing visa rules for Bangladeshis, immigration and student exchange.

The EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement, concluded in 2001, provides a broad scope for cooperation in the areas of trade and economic development, human rights, good governance and environment.

Bangladesh has been a WTO member since 1995 and it benefits from the EU's Everything but Arms (EBA) arrangement, which grants duty and quota-free access for all exports, except for arms and ammunition.

Immigration had been a key issue in the run-up to the UK referendum.

"The negative vote on EU is a momentous event. It will have many spillover effects into the UK, EU and other parts of the world," former Bangladesh ambassador to the USA Humayun Kabir told this correspondent yesterday.

He said some procedural challenges might emerge before Bangladesh, but no real substantive problems would be there.

About trade relations, he said Bangladesh's duty-free market access would continue, but the country might have to renegotiate a new trade agreement in place of EBA.

About the probable impact on UK-Bangladesh ties, the former ambassador said Britain's development assistance and security cooperation between the two countries might remain unchanged.

However, if the UK economy plummets or the UK government gets too busy with its domestic challenges, the

bilateral ties might see some fluctuations, he added.

About immigration, Kabir said Bangladeshis either having UK work permit or citizenship will face no problem. However, those who recently moved to the UK or planning to relocate there from other EU countries might face tighter immigration regulations.

It is likely that Britain would tighten its immigration regime further, which could affect Bangladeshis planning to visit or stay in the UK for a longer period, he stated.

Diplomatic sources said over the last few years, thousands of Bangladeshis, who are citizens of other EU countries, flocked to the UK to settle there.

However, they said there is no definite word yet from Brexiters about what would happen to other EU nationals living in Britain.

On the other hand, the British curry industry, overwhelmingly dominated by Bangladeshis, has been a big Brexit backer. Bangladesh caterers association officially backed the Leave campaign.

For quite sometime, they said the sector has been reeling from huge shortage of skilled curry chefs due to ever stringent immigration rules which have virtually stopped recruitment from Bangladesh.

They are now looking for a break on free labour movement from EU countries which would lead to easing of recruitment from Bangladesh. But there is fear that the void might be filled with people from Pakistan and India.

Charge sheets this week

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part of a conspiracy to create anarchy, put pressure on the government and send a message to foreigners that they were not safe in Bangladesh.

Quayum's brother MA Matin hired three killers to kill a "white man" (foreigner) and Tavella became their prey, they added.

The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police have almost finalised the charge sheet against seven people, including Quayum, BNP's Dhaka City joint convener and former ward commissioner, his brother Matin and five others for Tavella's killing.

"We have finalised the charge sheet against seven people and have a plan to submit it to a court on Sunday or Monday," said Deputy Commissioner (north) of DB Shaikh Nazmul Alam, who is supervising the investigation.

DB sources said the other people to be named in the charge sheet were Tamjid Ahmed Rubel, Russell Chowdhury and Minhajul Arefin, who is also known as Bhagne Russell. They directly took part in the killing.

Two other accused are Sohel (also known as Bhagari Sohel), who supplied firearms, and Shakhawat Hossain Sharif, who provided the motorcycle used in the killing, detectives said.

Quayum and Sohel are on the run while the rest five are behind bars.

Police have yet to recover the firearms, but said they were going to press charges anyway.

Rubel, Russell Chowdhury, Minhajul and Shakhawat have made confessional statements before a Dhaka court.

Investigators said although Matin admitted his involvement during interrogation by police, he refused to give any confessional statement before a court.

Family members earlier claimed the five arrestees were innocents and that they were forced to give statements under torture.

Meanwhile, police have almost completed the investigations into Kunio Hoshi's murder and the shooting of Piero Parolari.

"We are ready to submit the charge sheet within this month," Abdur Razzak, superintendent of Rangpur police, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Kunio Hoshi, 66, was shot dead in broad daylight on his way to his farm. He was buried in Rangpur 10 days later.

Abdul Kader Zilani, who is investigating the case, said they arrested nine people in this connection.

Three of them are involved with banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). Of them, Masud Rana, a regional commander of JMB, was arrested last year and he "confessed" to his involvement in the killing, he said.

Based on information gleaned from him, primary school teacher Khaibor Hossain was arrested in December from Pargachha in Rangpur. He is an associate of Masud Rana. Another JMB member Ishaque Ali was arrested from Pargacha.

The police officer, however, would not say who are going to be named in the charge sheet.

Asked about the investigation into the gun attack on Piero Parolari, Dinajpur SP Ruhul Amin said they were going to submit the charge sheet in a week, as they have gathered enough evidence.

He said they were looking for another suspect.

After being shot, Parolari, 66, was brought to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka by a helicopter for treatment. Around 10 days later he left Bangladesh after partial recovery. He did not come back.

Bazlur Rashid, a sub-inspector of DB in Dinajpur, earlier told this paper that they arrested six people in the case, and three of them were JMB men.

Of them, Shariful Islam was arrested on December 10 during a gun attack on Iskon temple in Kaharol upazila of Dinajpur.

Shariful made confessional statement before the court, said Rashid, also the investigating officer of the case.

KOLKATA-AGARTALA BUS Silver items seized, 3 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kolkata

Indian customs officials on Thursday recovered silver items worth around Rs 75 lakh from a Bangladesh-bound BRTC bus at Petrapole border, opposite to Benapole border, and arrested three bus staff, including the driver.

The arrestees are driver Fazlul Haque Iran, supervisor Mohammad Alamgir and helper Motiur Rahman Akhand. They are Bangladeshis.

Ahijit Chakraborty, officer at Petrapole Customs House, told The Daily Star that acting on a tip-off that some silver items were being smuggled into Bangladesh in the bus, they raided the vehicle around 4:30pm.

"The items were kept hidden inside the false ceiling of the bus in such a way that no one could notice them easily. It took three hours to get the items," he said.

He said there were some silver chains, coins and plates among the items. He could not immediately confirm whether the items were antique and said that those were sent to a laboratory for tests.

Contacted, Oboni Ghosh, owner of Shyamoli Paribahan in India, said Shyamoli and Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) are jointly operating buses on Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala route.

Fire from lift crash

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Most of the injured were pedestrians, including children, who sustained wounds as pieces of glass and other fittings fell on them from different floors.

"The impact of the explosion was so huge that glass shattered from up to the fifth floor," said a firefighter.

Three of the injured -- a father and his two kids -- suffered critical burns. The father and one of his kids -- with 80 percent and 53 percent burns respectively -- were being treated at the intensive care unit of the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The fire service DG said they suspected there was an explosion followed by the fire. The explosion might have happened from accumulated gas as some security guards said there was a complaint of gas leakage since the last three days.

He also said many powerful electric cables for air condition connections at the mosque at the basement and electric lines might also cause sparks and then an explosion.

"We suspect there was an explosion as parts of the mosque's wall were blown away," he said, adding that what actually happened and how would be known after a complete probe.

But he initially blamed poor maintenance of the lift for its collapse.

Thirteen units of the fire service doused the blaze around 7:25pm, over an hour after it broke out, said Mozammel Haq, deputy director of fire service.

The fire didn't spread to any of the upper floors of the building, which mostly house shops, but the ceiling of the ground floor came off, damaging shops, doors and windows.

Contacted, M Abu Sadeque, director of House Building and Research Institute, said majority of the buildings in Dhaka were built without following the National Building Code.

He added that the risky malpractice continued unabated as there was no regulatory authority entrusted with the task of implementing the code in building high-rises.

Red alert

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the country. Several suspected militants have been killed in recent incidents of "crossfire" with law enforcers.

Over the last three years, suspected militants have attacked and killed university professors, writers, publishers, secular bloggers, gay rights activists, foreigners, policemen and members of religious minorities, including Shia and Sufi Muslims, Christians and Hindus.